

World religions: buddhism

Religion



On Sunday October 24, 2010, I attended a Buddhist service at the Buddhist Church of Florin. The service was held at 10: 00 a. m. and it lasted for about an hour. The morning service began with the ringing of the kansho. The reverend and his assistant entered bowing to the area where the Amida Buddha Statue was and they placed fruits and flowers in the table that was in front of the statue. They chanted a nembutsu, “ Namo Amida Butsu”, which means “ I rely upon Amida Buddha”.

This was followed by the singing of a sanbutsuka and the reading of a passage, the " Golden Chain. After the sanbutsuka and reading, a brief silent, seated meditation period was followed by the reading of a second passage, the " Three Treasures. " After the second reading, children that attend the dharma school were asked to come to bow in front of where they offered oshoko. They came in order of lowest grade to the upper grades and their parents came as well to do the same ritual. This was followed by the chanting of a sutra or gatha and a Dharma talk. The Dharma speech was about Gratitude-the giving of thanks to everything, after this, we gasho and chanted.

The service is concluded with the singing of another sanbutsuka, the " Ondokusan” and announcements are made. After the announcements are finished, everyone gets up and offer oshoko, offering of Incense. Proceed toward the altar and bow lightly at a distance of about two steps in front of the shoko table. Step up to the table, and with the right hand take a pinch of granulated incense and drop it over the burning incense. Take two or three steps backward, bow, and return to your seat. It is symbolic of the followers purifying their mind and body before paying homage to Buddha.

At the same time the smoke rising from the burning incense teaches us a lesson on the transiency of all existence. I noticed that there were a lot of symbols around the church. The first symbol I noticed was, "The Wheel of Law", known as the Wheel of Life or Wheel of Dharma. It is called Dharmacakra in Sanskrit and Dhammacakka in Pali. The eight spokes of the wheel represent the Noble Eightfold Path. Their equal length symbolizes justice. The tire around the wheel represents the all-embracing Wisdom of Buddhahood. The hub teaches us modesty and thoughtfulness.

The axle is the unchanging Truth upon which the Wheel turns. The idol in front of the church, "Amida Buddha", had jewels hanging from above its shrine, which represented the jewels that the prince took off as he was giving away his life of luxury and beginning his quest of spiritual awareness. The Four Noble Truths comprise the essence of Buddha's teachings, they are the basic tenets. These tenets are incorporated in our everyday life. They are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering.

More simply put, suffering exists; it has a cause; it has an end; and it has a cause to bring about its end. The notion of suffering is not intended to convey a negative world view, but rather, a pragmatic perspective that deals with the world as it is, and attempts to rectify it. The concept of pleasure is not denied, but acknowledged as fleeting. Pursuit of pleasure can only continue what is ultimately an unquenchable thirst. The same logic belies an understanding of happiness. In the end, only aging, sickness, and death are certain and unavoidable.

The Four Noble Truths are a contingency plan for dealing with the suffering humanity faces -- suffering of a physical kind, or of a mental nature. The First Truth identifies the presence of suffering. The Second Truth, on the other hand, seeks to determine the cause of suffering. In Buddhism, desire and ignorance lie at the root of suffering. By desire, Buddhists refer to craving pleasure, material goods, and immortality, all of which are wants that can never be satisfied. As a result, desiring them can only bring suffering.

Ignorance, in comparison, relates to not seeing the world as it actually is. Without the capacity for mental concentration and insight, Buddhism explains, one's mind is left undeveloped, unable to grasp the true nature of things. Vices, such as greed, envy, hatred and anger, derive from this ignorance. The Third Noble Truth, the truth of the end of suffering, has dual meaning, suggesting either the end of suffering in this life, on earth, or in the spiritual life, through achieving Nirvana.

When one has achieved Nirvana, which is a transcendent state free from suffering and our worldly cycle of birth and rebirth, spiritual enlightenment has been reached. The Fourth Noble truth charts the method for attaining the end of suffering, known to Buddhists as the Noble Eightfold Path. The steps of the Noble Eightfold Path are Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Moreover, there are three themes into which the Path is divided: good moral conduct (Understanding, Thought, Speech); meditation and mental development (Action, Livelihood, Effort), and wisdom or insight (Mindfulness

and Concentration). The Dharma talk at the service focused on all of these tenets. They spoke about gratitude and how one should give thanks to everything in this world. To treat others as one should want to be treated. We are interdependent to one another. The actions of others can directly or indirectly affect us. Work out your own salvation", the Buddha said before he died. The eightfold path is the guidelines provided that each individual must traverse by themselves. Assistance from gods or humans is impossible. In other words, Buddha is the enlightened one and he has brought to us the teachings of the basics instructions on how one should live their life in order to break the cycle of rebirth. Even though there is the concept anatman in Buddhism, which means "no eternal self", the believe of rebirth is present. When the desire in human life has ceased then the cycle of rebirth will stop.

To shinshu devotees, Amida is the idea that grows as their daily experience deepens with feelings of gratitude for loyal friendships, for the good fortune of a loving spouse and joys of witnessing the wonderful birth of their children and for all the other heart-warming occurrences that brighten their complex life of interdependence. The three ethical issues that I choose are: War, killing, and violence/ Abortion/ Sexual Ethics, Adultery, premarital sex and homosexuality. There is "Ten precepts"; the first five apply to the followers of Buddha.

These rules are (1) Refrain from taking life, (2) Do not take what is not given, (3) Practice chastity, (4) Do not lie or deceive and (5) Do not take intoxicants. Non-violence is at the heart of Buddhist thinking and behavior. The first of the five precepts are all that Buddhists should follow is "Avoid killing, or harming any living thing." Buddhism is essentially a peaceful

<https://assignbuster.com/world-religions-buddhism-essay-samples/>

tradition. Nothing in Buddhist scripture gives any support to the use of violence as a way to resolve conflict. The Buddha was quite clear in his renunciation of violence: " Victory creates hatred.

Defeat creates suffering. The wise ones desire neither victory nor defeat... Anger creates anger... He who kills will be killed. He who wins will be defeated... Revenge can only be overcome by abandoning revenge... The wise seek neither victory nor defeat. " But Buddhism, like the other great faiths, has not always lived up to its principles - there are numerous examples of Buddhists engaging in violence and even war. Abortion follows along the same line of disobeying one of the " Ten precepts", refrain from taking life.

There is no question that terminating a pregnancy is an extremely serious matter. Buddhism does consider abortion to be the taking of a human life. At the same time, Buddhists generally are reluctant to intervene in a woman's personal decision to terminate a pregnancy. Buddhism may discourage abortion, but it also discourages imposing rigid moral absolutes. In Buddhist teachings, abortion is strongly discouraged. The third precept tells us, " Practice chastity" which is most commonly translated " Do not indulge in sexual misconduct" or " Do not misuse sex. However, for laypeople, the early scriptures are hazy about what constitutes " sexual misconduct. "

The precepts are principles, not rules. It's up to us to decide how to apply the principles. This takes a greater degree of discipline and self-honesty than the legalistic, " just follow the rules and don't ask questions" approach to ethics. The Buddha said " be a lamp unto yourself. " He taught how to use our own

judgments about religious and moral teachings. You can find anti-homosexual teachings in some schools of Buddhism, but I believe these are based on cultural attitudes.

My understanding is that the historical Buddha did not specifically address homosexuality, and I do not know of a Buddhist teaching that would call for homosexual relationships to be treated differently from heterosexual relationships. The sayings of the Buddha, as recorded in the Pali Canon, do not I believe include any explicit reference to homosexuality or to homosexual acts. This has been taken to mean that the Buddha did not consider that one's sexual orientation was relevant to his message, which was how to escape from suffering and achieve enlightenment.

If it was not important enough to mention, homosexuality could not have been considered a barrier to one's moral and spiritual development. The third moral precept advises against all forms of sexual misconduct, which include rape, adultery, promiscuity, paraphilia, and sexual perversions. Actually, the Buddhist commentary emphasizes adultery more than anything else, but if we take into account the purpose and intention of the precept, it is clear that the precept is intended to cover all improper behavior with regard to sex.

The broadest interpretation even purports to mean abstention from the misuse of the senses. The expression "misuse of the senses" is somewhat vague. It could refer to any morally unwholesome action committed under the influence of sensual desire or to the inability to control one's own senses. In any case there is no doubt that the third precept aims at promoting,

<https://assignbuster.com/world-religions-buddhism-essay-samples/>

among other things, proper sexual behavior and a sense of social decency in a human civilization where monogamy is commonly practiced and self-restraint is a cherished moral value.

At first when I entered the church I was a bit nervous because I didn't know what to expect, but after being greeted by the assistant of the reverend, I got a warm feeling of acceptance. The ceremony seemed very similar to the catholic service, except that the rituals are bit different. They had their idol, Amida Buddha, but they focused more during their readings and talks about how is the right way to live. They chanted to Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

They believe that Amida has created a Pure Land in the west and that those who have faith and repeat Amida's name in prayer will go there. Yet they also believe that Amida is really within them. I didn't dislike anything from the service. I just saw how peaceful everyone was and how the teachings help to find the comfort to ones problems. If you really follow to what the teachings of Buddha states, you realize how for example, if something bad happened in your life, you tend to get mad.

In Buddhism they say that all reality is impermanent, nothing remains the same. Life is in a constant motion and we just have to guide ourselves on how to adapt to the constant changes that the world might present to us. As I read about Buddhism, I realized just how different to other religions it was. Whereas others heavily featured such as belief in a creator god, being obedient and pleasing to such god, and worshipping the entity, Buddhism

much more focused upon setting ourselves right, and then radiating out into the world about us.

It was a far more practical and self-activated religion, involving much practice in everyday life. I like their idea of how is the proper way of life. Their teachings tell and help people to become that perfect person that everyone needs to be in order for all the violence and negativity that this world has become, would someday cease. In conclusion, my views about this religion are positive in the aspect of the morals, the truths, teachings and spirituality that Buddhism wants people to know.

I don't consider that this religion to be too judgmental compared to others. It doesn't force you to believe in one thing. It seems as though is guiding you the best way it can without causing pressure on you. Buddhism doesn't focus on the praising on a god in the sense that if you don't, you will be punished and you will go to hell. The way they teach is that you should follow the right paths in life in order for you to have the dharma and for one day to be enlightened and have reached nirvana.