

Buddhists beliefs, temples, and monks

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



In this paper we will put to an end to the ongoing question if the Buddhists are bowing down to Idols or Gods and why they do what they do. This paper will go into detail about the temple that I went to and the different tours that I was able to go on and the interview I was able to hold. I will also go into great detail about what you experience during one of the services in the Main Shrine. The Hsi Lai Temple sits on 15 acres of land and has a floor area of 102, 432 sq. ft. and is located at 3456 Glenmark Drive, Hacienda Heights CA 91745. The architecture when you first drive up is mind blowing and beautiful. The architecture stays true to the traditional styles of buildings, gardens, and statuary of the ancient Chinese monasteries. They started the planning and building of the temple in 1978 and finished the building ten years later in 1988. Hsi Lai means “ coming west” and signifies the dedication of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order to spreading the teachings of the Buddha. Fo Guang Shan is the largest monastery and covers over 370 acres.

When you walk up the first set of steps you come to what they call the gate. On the top part of the sign it says Hsi Lai Temple which again means “ coming west” and then on the four pillars it says the four universal vows, which are “ to save all sentient beings, to eradicate all worries, to study the boundless Dharma, and to attain supreme Buddhahood. ” After you walk up the steps from the lower parking lot where the gate is you walk up more steps to the upper parking lot and then from there you walk up more steps to what they call the Bodhisattva Hall.

Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings that made a vow to selflessly serve others with loving-kindness and compassion and are committed to liberating

all beings from suffering. It is said that each one of the bodhisattvas represents a virtuous quality essential to all Buddhists. When talking about the bodhisattvas they made a point to make sure that we understood that when we saw that people were bowing to them that they were not bowing to an idol, but rather a sign of showing respect and seeking their guidance to develop the virtuous qualities they represent. Bowing also shows our own humility and the curbing of our ego.

There are five bodhisattvas are: Samantabhadra Bodhisattva which is symbolic of great practice, and helping us achieve more discipline in our daily life, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva which was known for his great vow to help all beings in hell and would not stop till hell was emptied of all beings, Maitreya Bodhisattva is the future Buddha and is the symbol of great benevolence and is often referred to as Happy Buddha, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva which symbolizes the perfection and loving-kindness, and Manjusri Bodhisattva which is known for great wisdom which empowers one to distinguish universal morality from wrongdoing.

Underneath the five bodhisattva are engraved Chinese characters from the Diamond Sutra. Next to the Heart Sutra the Diamond Sutra is the most widely read of the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, and is highly valued among sects in Chan Buddhism.

While I was at the His Lai Temple I found that they have an information where you can go on two different types of tours of their temple: the first being a self-guided audio tour where they give you a cd player and it gives you valuable information about the temple and all its rooms and buildings as well as the gardens and information on the statues that are found

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throughout the temple, The second type of tour they offer is with a docent who is more than willing to answer any questions that may come up during the tour, while they inform you about everything within the temple.

The two gardens I was able to see within the temple was: the first being the Arhat Garden where the eighteen arhats are seated. The Arhats have realized the truth of no-self and that all is a composite of the five aggregates dependant on other phenomena originally empty and subject to impermanence. It is said that the eighteen Arhats were able to overcome the difilements of greed, anger, and ignorance.

The eighteen Arhats are: Cudapanthaka which is the door watching arhat, Jivaka which is the heart exposing arhat, Vajraputra which is the persuading arhat, Subinda which is the pagoda holding arhat, Panthaka which is the arhat with stretched arms, Kalika which is the dust cleaning arhat, Bhadra which is the arhat that crossed the river, Pindola which is the arhat with long eyebrows, Nakula which is the silently seated arhat, Ajita which is the arhat riding the deer, Maitreya which is the tiger taming arhat, Angaja which is the arhat with a sack, Vananasim which is the arhat under the banana tree, Rahula which is the arhat in deep conversation, Manakassapa which the dragon subduing arhat, Kanakabharadavaja which is the arhat holding the alms bowl, Nagasena which is the ear cleaning arhat, and Kanakavatsa which is the jolly arhat. The second garden is the Avalokitesvara Garden. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is seated on a giant rock with both her attendants, Shanci and Longnu who are standing beside her.

Surrounding the pond are the four Deva Kings: Virudhaka of the Southern Kingdom which is holding the sword, Virupaksa of the Western Kingdom

which is holding the dragon, Dhanada of the Northern Kingdom which is holding the umbrella, and the Dhrtarastra of the Eastern Kingdom which is holding a sitar. The four Deva Kings are revered as guardians who protect devout sentient beings from being harmed by unwholesome elements. Standing around the four Deva Kings are the four Dragon Kings of the Four Seas. The flowing water in the garden is symbolic of the Dharma water flowing everywhere to purify people's minds. Although the Buddhist love informing people of their religion and teaching you about their beliefs. They are really not very forth coming when it comes to helping someone who is there for a school assignment.

I was asked by the individual to leave his name out and was further informed that they do not normally do this kind of interview. When asked about the holidays and traditions he said the most important holiday is Wesak Day which comes in May on the day of the full moon. As for traditions he said that it all depends on the form of Buddhism tradition that you followed. When asked how has his life has been shaped by the Buddhism religion he said that it has made him a more understanding person to what he called the true nature of life. When asked what the biggest challenge is to the Buddhist religion he said that with all beliefs the biggest challenge is changing you.

He has been practicing Buddhism since he was born and was taught by monks and other teachers about the Buddhist religion. When asked if there were any dietary restrictions, he did not come out and say that you had to be vegan but stated that it was more wholesome to be vegan. During our interview I found that it was real simple to become a Buddhist and that all you really have to do is follow the teachings. After that question he seemed

to be in a real hurry to end the interview but I thanked him for his time and let him know that what I was able to get answered was very helpful. When it came to comparing this religion to another I chose Christianity, not because it was the easier to compare because I found them to have very obvious differences.

In Christianity when you become a Christian you accept God into your heart as Lord and Savior and then are baptized as a symbol of the washing of your sins. When you become a Buddhist you just start following the teachings of the Buddha. The other difference that stood out to me was that Christians believe in a heaven and hell and Buddhist believe that hell is only in the mind. Christians believe that when you die you go to heaven to be with your Lord and Savior, Buddhist believe that when you are done with this life you are reincarnated in the next life. I found this religion to be incredibly interesting as well as beautiful. This religion is all about selflessness, which I found in this day and age to be comforting.

In order to become a Buddhists you, you are told to give up all your worldly possessions. Today, everything is about worldly possessions from the cell phone that they have the designer clothes they own, to the car that they drive. When the subject of material possessions is brought up it starts making you think about what is really important in your life and how much thought you actually put into material possessions. I have found that people say that theirfamilyand friends are important, but if someone were to ask them to give up these possessions what do you think they would say? These people would tell you that you were out of your mind and then proceed to give you every excuse under the sun on why they could not do this.

I believe that it takes an amazing person to be able to put someone else's life before their own and to truly be devoted unconditionally. As I watched the monks interact with people throughout the times I was there it seemed like they were truly at peace and seemed like they had it all figured out when it came to life. When I first started the assignment I thought that it was going to be stuffy and that I would have to deal with someone who did not want to truly be in the place of having to help someone with a school paper. I found that to be completely false and actually found that not only the monks were willing to answer questions, but all the staff members were happy to answer whatever questions that anybody came up with.

At the end of this assignment I found that Buddhism not only left you with such a serene feeling not only while you were in the temple but when you left it made you feel like you could accomplish anything if you just believed. They believe that the only way to truly achieve happiness is by giving up yourself and start paying more attention to others. References: An Introduction to Buddhism. (2000). Retrieved from <http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/buddhaintro.html> Religious Tolerance. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/buddhism.htm> buddhanet. (2013). Retrieved from https://ecampus.phoenix.edu/secure/aapd/cwe/citation_generator/web_01_01.asp