

Buddhism culture

[Philosophy](#)



Buddhism and the Body Buddhism traces its roots in the ancient Indian philosophy. Its main proponent is Siddharta Gautama (Buddha) who thrived during 563-4883 BC and asserted a belief based on " continuous enlightenment." Buddhism shares with Hinduism the ideology of reincarnation, aside from stressing spiritual purity and freedom from human cares (Buddhism 213).

Buddhism teaches that existence involves an amount of unhappiness and that the sole cause of unhappiness is an individual's attachment to material desires, which are only temporary. Therefore, happiness can be acquired by detachment from worldly things. Buddhism defined nirvana which is a blissful state free from ego which is available only to those who follow the Noble Eightfold Path (Buddhism 213).

These basic teaching of Buddha, capitulated in the Four Noble Truths or Dhamma place a great importance in looking after our body. Siddharta Gautama had realized the significance of maintaining the health and vitality of the body by going through extreme situations. As a wandering ascetic for six years, he had subjected himself to the most intense form of fasting. However, he found out that denying the body of its vital requirements was not the key to spiritual enlightenment. In the same way, he also concluded that overindulgence is not good for the body as it always lead to ill health. He therefore proposed a " middle way" and asserted to " look on the body as if it were a wound that needed to be treated daily with appropriate medicine (Flanagan 5)."

The great importance placed by the Buddhist in a healthy lifestyle is evident to their adherence to a lot of health techniques. Buddhists are very particular of their diet as they are strictly vegetarians. The first lay precept in

Buddhism strongly prohibits killing. As eating meat usually implies killing animals, Buddhist sects especially Mahayana strongly denounces consumption of meat.

Buddhists are also known for their utilization of different meditation techniques as a " great liberating force and a means of gaining enlightenment (Flanagan 7)." Meditation is usually exercised to gain a state of total relaxation and being one with one's self.

The New York Times recognized the health benefits of Buddhism practices, specifically meditation. It stated that regular meditation maximized our mental potential. Improved mental fitness is attained after a few weeks of regular meditation as individual experience increased positivity, relaxation, and peace. These amazing benefits can be more lasting and profound if meditation is incorporated in daily lifestyle (Is Buddhism Good for Your Health 5).

As Buddhism recognizes that the body changes and is subject to sufferings, diseases become inevitable. However, Buddhists still strongly practice the teachings of Buddhism in hospitals. An American nurse caring for an ailing Buddhist should adhere to their philosophy. A good example can be seen when making bio-ethical decisions. Buddhists believe that life support equipments should not be used in extending a person's existence if his mind is no longer alert. Alertness of the mind and not being in " excessive pain" are the significant factors which affects in the Buddhist bio-ethical decision making process. Death is deemed not appropriate if the mind is still alert and if the patient does not suffer from " excessive pain." Buddhists also believe that the most essential consideration is to give a natural and peaceful death to patients (Buddhist Beliefs and Practices Affecting Health Care 11).

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The ancient philosophy of Buddhism is still practiced nowadays. It is notable that aside from its adherents, its teachings on physical health, especially on meditation, has gained wide acceptance all over the world. This only signifies the potency of their ancient health practices.

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