

**Meditation makes life better.** This is Buddhism's core message.

Around 2500 years ago, Buddha Gautama founded a religion based on meditation and the insights he'd gained from it. The Buddha taught the Dharma, and his followers formed a community called the Sangha. The key elements of the Buddha's teaching are that existence is fundamentally stressful, impermanent and not-self.

You can find out more about the Buddha's story, key points of his Dharma, and the history of the Sangha, by selecting questions from the FAQ on the right.

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=What is Buddhism?}

### What is Buddhism?

Buddhism is a recipe for happiness.

It says that there is a problem in life - dukkha - which can be translated as mental suffering, undue stress, or lack of balance, and this problem robs us of happiness. It says that this problem is not in the world itself, but in our flawed approach of it. It says that you can overcome the problem, and live a life of balance, without dukkha. It offers a route to this happy state, by changing behaviour and practicing meditation.

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=Is Buddhism a religion?}

### **Is Buddhism a religion?**

This question has been, and will be, the cause of many debates.

In practical terms, many people who practice Buddhism do not follow any (other) religion.

Insofar as it fills the gap that (other) religions seek to fill, it can be called a religion.

In contrast to other, particularly Mediterranean, religions, it is not a call to acceptance of, belief in, or devotion to, a god or gods. It offers a rational diagnosis of human suffering, and ways for alleviate it. The only authority these teachings have is that they work. In this, Buddhism is more like a practical philosophy than a religion.

Does this answer your question?

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=How did Buddhism start?}

### **How did Buddhism start?**

**Coming soon!**

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=Where and when has Buddhism flourished?}

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**Coming soon!**

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=What kinds of Buddhism are there?}

### What kinds of Buddhism are there?

Coming soon!

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=What are Buddhist technical terms?}

### What are Buddhist technical terms?

Buddhism, like most other traditions of religion or learning, has developed special meanings for many words. Through the centuries, Buddhism has been practiced in a number of different languages (eg *Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Korean, English*) some of which have left their traces as technical terms. The bulk of terms come from Sanskrit, often with alternative forms from Pali.

Some of the many important terms are **anatman, anitya, arahant, avidya, bhiksu, bodhi, bodhisattva, buddha, dana, dharma, dhyana, dukkha, hinayana, karma, jataka, mahayana, mandala, mantra, maya, mudra, nirvana, prajña, paramita, samadhi, samsara, sangha, skandha, stupa, sutra, ?unyata, tantra, tathagata, tripitaka, vajrayana, vinaya**

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=What does 'buddha' mean?}

### What does 'buddha' mean?

The word **buddha** is Sanskrit for *awakened*. As a noun, it refers to someone who has woken up.

In Buddhism the word refers to someone who has *woken up to* the true nature of themselves and the world around them. In some traditions, it is reserved for Gautama Shakyamuni, his traditional predecessors and successors. In others, it is widely used with reference to teachers regarded as enlightened.

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=Is it 'Buddha' or 'the Buddha'??}

### Is it 'Buddha' or 'the Buddha'?

The word **buddha** has two uses: as a title and as a noun. As a title, it doesn't take the article, so we should write Buddha Maitreya (or, less well, Maitreya Buddha) without any article, and in capitals. In the context of Buddhism, there is one buddha who is more prominent than any other: Buddha Gautama Shakyamuni, the historical buddha who founded the religion. He is often referred to as **the Buddha** (note the capital). In other contexts, we should always talk about **a buddha, buddha**

**s** **buddha(s)** or **the**

{jospagebreak\_scroll title=What does Buddhism teach?}

### What does Buddhism teach?

There are some key Buddhist teachings, in the sense that they are important in the various kinds of Buddhism. There are other teachings, which are shared widely, but are of more importance in some schools than in others. Other teachings are shared but interpreted differently. Still further teachings are peculiar to the different strands of Buddhism.

Here are key teachings which are shared by and important in all forms of Buddhism:

- the precepts: non-killing, non-stealing, sexual responsibility, non-lying, non-intoxication
- the four noble truths: stress, the causes of stress, nirvana, the path to nirvana
- the characteristics of existence: impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and emptiness