

Some important terms:

Buddha (560-480 BCE?) – The Awakened One, title (among others) for Siddhartha Gotama, prince who, upon seeing “sickness, old age and death” sought liberation from suffering. Found it under the Bodhi Tree as insight into reality and ultimate detachment.

Dhamma/Dharma – The “Truth”, the teachings of the Buddha.

- The 4 Noble Truths: life is suffering (*dukkha*), desire causes suffering, ending desire by enlightenment ends suffering, the 8-fold path is the way to gain enlightenment.

Emptiness, Voidness, No-self, Conditioned Existence – What the Buddha saw, i.e., the liberating fact of reality. One sees that nothing has substance of permanence, all things are merely caused by other things, nothing can satisfy. Seeing this fact causes the end of desire, hence the end of suffering.

- The cheerleader in love story; or the invisible jewel thief...

Nibbana/Nirvana – “Extinction” the “going out of a flame,” utter peace and equanimity of the enlightened state.

- Satori – Especially in Zen, this refers to the awakening experience, sudden illumination.
- In Theravada B’ism: An enlightened monk is *Arahat*, but few can achieve it

Theravada – Modern sect most like “original” Buddhism (called Hinayana, the “Small Vehicle,” by rivals)

Mahayana – The “Great Vehicle,” developing B’ist schools around 1<sup>st</sup> century; new scriptures, new ideas, but insisting it is still the teaching of the Buddha.

Upaya – “Skillful Teaching,” the ability of the Buddha or Bodhisattva to adjust Buddhist teaching to whatever the student needs to hear to find liberation. Justifies Mahayana innovations and more.

- The burning house parable

Bodhisattva – A “being of enlightenment,” a person who COULD enter Nirvana, but chooses not to, choosing instead to accept rebirth into the world in order to become a “savior,” a teacher of others, ultimately a complete and perfected Buddha.

- For example, the Dalai Lama (the 14<sup>th</sup>, Avalokiteshvara), and many other Lamas
- Bodhisattva must teach others out of compassion, but know all things are “empty” and so have DISpassion. Thus the famous paradoxical vow: “I shall forego Nirvana and be reborn so that I may labor to enlighten all other beings, knowing that there are no beings to enlighten.”

Pure Land Buddhism – A sect that asserts the existence of Amida, the Buddha of the Pure Land of the West. In his compassion, he creates another world and brings to rebirth there all who call on him.

- Explicitly for those unable to gain enlightenment themselves (note, this inability is not sin against righteousness).
- “Saved” = reborn into the Pure Land where one can find liberation oneself.

Zen – “Meditation School”, Chinese form of Buddhism that stresses our innate Buddha nature and thus everyone’s ability to awaken to Buddhahood instantly. Only need to clear the mind of its obscuring rationality.

- Zazen, seated meditation, simply sitting with a clear consciousness, letting all experience come and go.
- Koan, a nonsense riddle intended to stifle the rational mind and thus to let Pure Mind “see reality.”

Vajrayana – The “Diamond Vehicle,” special name for Tibetan Buddhism having special “dangerous” aspects

- Tantra: Special magical, sexual imagery of worship and practice adapted from Hindu Shiva worship
- Chakras: Energy centers of the body to be found, cultivated by meditative and physical practices
- Deity yoga: Visualization of celestial beings and cultivation of their Bodhisattvas qualities

Sin or ignorance? Morality or skillfulness? Joy from God or peace of mind? Sanctification or self-control?  
Prayer and worship or meditation?

### Some quotations:

“Now that I have comprehended suffering, have given up its cause, have realized its stopping, and have developed this path – now I can say my organ of spiritual vision has been opened.” The Buddha’s 1<sup>st</sup> sermon.

“The ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, even the mind itself are all on fire with passion. When one distances oneself from desire, then passion fades away, and one is liberated. Birth is exhausted; there is no more beyond.” The “Fire Sermon” of the Buddha

Ever mindful the monk breathes in, and ever mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows, “I am breathing in a long breath,” [etc.]. And further, the monk reflects on this very body, full of manifold impurities, thinking; “There are in this body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, ... kidneys, heart, liver, ... feces, bile, phlegm, pus, [etc.]. [...] Further, just as a monk sees a body dead one, two or three days, swollen, blue and festering [etc.], so he thinks, “My own body, too, is of the same nature... (The Buddha, Sermon on Mindfulness)

[After his enlightenment, the Buddha said to himself,] It may be better not to give out my thoughts, and so he remained silent and at peace. The god Brahma, learning of this, came to the Buddha radiant with light, asking him to preach for the sake of suffering beings. The Buddha, moved by the god’s solicitation and ever more compassionate toward the sentient beings, was prompted to teach. (The Buddhacarita)

Gautama [the Buddha] said to Kisagotami, “You thought that you alone had lost a son; the law of death is that among all living creatures there is no permanence.” When Gautama had finished preaching the law, Kisagotami was established [as a disciple]. (from Buddhagosa)

Almost all religions are built on faith – rather blind faith it would seem. But in Buddhism emphasis is laid on “seeing”, knowing, understanding, and not on faith or belief.... The Buddha’s teaching is meant to carry man to safety, peace, happiness, tranquility, the attainment of Nirvana. He was a practical teacher and taught only those things which would bring peace and happiness to man. (Rahula, p 8 & 12)

No, O Lord Buddha, the man who saved the children was not a speaker of falsehood, since it only was a skillful device to persuade his children to go out of the burning house and save their lives. (Conclusion of the “Burning House Parable” from the *Lotus Sutra*)

A Bodhisattva Vow (adapted from the *Diamond Sutra*): “I vow to save all sentient beings from the realm of *samsara*, knowing that there are no sentient beings in *samsara* to save.”

“When I attain Buddhahood, all sentient beings with sincere mind and entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my Pure Land, saying my name perhaps even ten times, shall be born there.” Amida’s “primal vow.”

If anyone hears the Sudden Doctrine, and if they do not place their trust in external practices, but only in their own minds, always raise correct views in regard to their own original natures, even sentient beings filled with passions and troubles will at once gain awakening. (Zen Master Hui-neng, *The Platform Scripture*)

The way of beneficially transforming the mind is, first to think about the disadvantages of bad states of consciousness, identifying them from our own personal experience. Then we must recognize the good states of consciousness. If familiarity with them is developed through thinking again and again, about their advantages and about their supporting validators, then the various types of good states of consciousness will become stronger. (Dalai Lama)

“The bliss arising from desire is itself part of the process of overcoming desire when it is used to realize Emptiness.” Jeffrey Hopkins, *The Tantric Distinction*

“I was raised Quaker, but wanted something stronger, a spiritual technique, something non-intellectual, focused on now.” Many converts in his Zen community were Christian, “but their older religion did not satisfy, never really hit the mark for them.” (from my interview with Jarys Meiers, Zen priest)