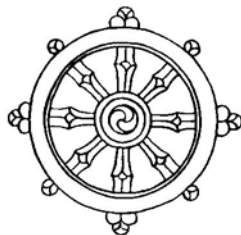


Gnosis is a Cosmic Teaching that aims to restore within ourselves
the ability to live Consciously and Intelligently.



Understanding Gnosis in Religion: Introduction to Buddhism

Buddhism should be understood in its manifestation as a religion that grew out of the soil of Hinduism.
Much like Christianity must be understood from its roots in Judaism.



Buddha said, "The goals of religion are reached through the efforts, the meditation and the achievements of the individual.
The gods, sacrifice and prayer are of minor consequence."

Gnosis of Long Beach: www.GnosisLongBeach.com 562-981-0058 (mailbox #2)
800 Wardlow Road, Suite D, Long Beach, CA 90807

Brief Description of the life of the Gautama Buddha

Much of what we know about **Siddhārtha Gautama** is from Buddhist scriptures. Siddhārtha means "He who has accomplished his goals" or "The accomplished goal" and Gautama was the family name. He was also known as **Śākyamuni** or **Shakyamuni** ("sage of the Shakyas"). According to legend, he was born a prince.

His father was **King Suddhodana**, the chief of the Shakya nation, one of several tribes in ancient India (in what is now southern Nepal).

His mother, **Queen Maha Maya** (Māyādevī) and Suddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess (Koliya was the tribe next to the Shakyas). Maha means 'great' and Maya means 'illusion', so his mother was the "Queen of the Great Illusion".

Queen Māyā and King Suddhodana did not have children for **twenty years** into their marriage. On the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a **white elephant with six white tusks** entered her right side.

It was the Shakya tradition for the mother to **return to her father's kingdom** in order to give birth, so Queen Maya set out on her journey home. During her journey, Queen Maya **stepped down** from her palanquin (wheelless carriage) to have a walk in the beautiful flower garden of Lumbini Park (in what is now Nepal). She was delighted by the park and she reached for the **branch of a tree** under which she intended to take a rest.

It was at this time, according to legend, that **Prince Siddhārtha emerged from her right side** and was born in the gardens beneath a sal **tree**. It was the **eighth day** of April.

	Western Christianity	Eastern Christianity
Easter is always on a Sunday:	Between March 22 – April 25	Between April 4 – May 8
2007	April 8 th	
2008	April 27 th	March 23 rd
2009	April 12 th	April 19 th
2010	April 4 th	
2011	April 24 th	
Next time it will be April 8 th	2012	2018

-<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter>

Queen Maya gave the child his first bath in the Puskarini pond. The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhatta), or "he who achieves his aim".

Seven days after the birth of the Buddha-to-be, his mother died. Her sister Prajāpatī (Pāli: Pajāpatī or Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī) became the child's foster mother.

(Later, after Prince Siddhartha had gained perfection and became the Buddha, he visited his mother in heaven for **three** months to pay respects and to teach her the Dharma).

During the birth celebrations, a hermit-seer **Asita** journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king or a great holy man.

His father, wishing for Siddhartha to be a great king, shielded his son from religious teachings and all knowledge of human suffering.

At the age of **16**, his father arranged a marriage for him and his wife eventually gave birth to a son (Rahula).

At the age of **29**, Siddhartha left his palace in order to meet his subjects. Despite his father's effort to remove the sick, aged and suffering from the public view: Siddhartha was said to have seen an old man (1).

Disturbed by this sight, he inquired more about the man's condition and was told that all people would eventually grow old and die. The prince, then, went on further trips from the palace where he encountered: a diseased man (2), a decaying corpse (3), and an ascetic¹ (4).

Deeply depressed by these sights, he sought to overcome old age, illness, and death by living the life of an ascetic and **departed the royal court**. It is said that **on the same day he left, his son was born**.

Siddhartha began his new life by begging for food and seeking religious teachers. He studied under many Sages and learned all he could. As his studies progressed, he was drawn to practices of self-denial and began seeking spiritual experiences through almost complete deprivation of worldly goods, including food and practicing self-mortification².

From nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around a leaf or nut per day (some say it was a single grain of rice), he **collapsed in a river** while bathing and almost drowned. After this experience, Siddhartha began to reconsider his path.

He remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season's plowing and he fell into a naturally concentrated & focused state that was blissful and refreshing: the **Dhyāna/Jhāna**.

In Hinduism, dhyana is considered an instrument to gain self-knowledge, separating maya (illusion) from reality to help attain the ultimate goal of Moksha (*liberation* from the wheel of samsara).

In Buddhism, Jhana is sometimes translated as "concentration" or "meditative stability." ...the Buddha describes four progressive states of absorption meditation or jhāna. The jhānas are said by the Buddha to [help one 'detach' from the material world] ...but they must not be mistaken for the final goal of Nirvana.

¹ **as·cet·ic:** A person who renounces material comforts and leads a life of austere self-discipline, especially as an act of religious devotion.

² **self-mortification:** voluntary self-punishment in order to atone for some wrongdoing

The jhānas are states of meditation where the mind is free from **the five hindrances (craving, aversion, sloth, agitation, doubt)** and incapable of discursive thinking. ... When a meditator emerges from jhāna, his/her mind is clear and able to penetrate into the deepest truths of existence.

Jhānas are normally described according to the nature of the mental factors which are present in these states:

1. Movement of the mind onto the object, **Vitakka** (Sanskrit: **Vitarka**)
2. Retention of the mind on the object, **Vicāra**
3. Joy, **Pīti** (Sanskrit: **Prīti**)
4. Happiness, **Sukha**
5. Equanimity, **Upekkhā** (Sanskrit: **Upekṣā**)
6. One-pointedness, **Ekaggatā** (Sanskrit: **Ekāgratā**)

Equivalent terms are "Chán" in modern Chinese, "Zen" in Japanese, "Seon" in Korean, "Thien" in Vietnamese, and "Samten" in Tibetan.

-<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jhana>

After practicing asceticism, concentrating on meditation and “Ana-pana-sati” (awareness of breathing in and out), Siddhartha is said to have discovered what Buddhists now call the **Middle Path**—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

He accepted a little milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata, who wrongly believed him to be the spirit that had granted her a wish. She thought he was a spirit because he was so emaciated³ in his appearance.

Then, sitting under a pipal tree (now known as the **Bodhi tree** in Bodh Gaya), he vowed never to arise until he had found the Truth.

After **49 days** meditating, at the **age of 35**, he attained Enlightenment; according to some traditions, this occurred approximately in the **fifth lunar month**, and according to others in the **twelfth**. From then on Siddhartha was known as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One", also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One".

The Buddha's realization was one of complete awakening and **insight into the nature and cause of human suffering** (which is **ignorance**), along with steps necessary to eliminate it. These truths were then categorized into the **Four Noble Truths**, which lead to the deliverance from suffering called **Nirvana** (the state of supreme liberation).

Immediately after his Enlightenment, the Buddha was wondering whether or not he should teach the *Dharma* to human beings. He was concerned that, as human beings were overpowered by greed, hatred and delusion, they would not be able to see the true *Dharma*, which was subtle, deep and hard to understand.

³ **Emaciated:** To make or become extremely thin, especially as a result of starvation.

However, a divine spirit, Brahmā Sahampati, interceded and asked that he teach the *dharma* to the world, as "there will be those who will understand the *Dharma*". With great compassion for all beings in the universe, the Buddha agreed to become a teacher.

The Sanskrit term **Dharma** signifies the underlying order in nature and life. Dharma may be seen as an ultimate and transcendent truth which is utterly beyond worldly things. We could say that this term is referring to the "truth" or ultimate reality or "the way things are".

The word *Dharma* is generally translated into English as 'law' and literally translates as 'that which upholds or supports' (from the root 'Dhr' - to hold), here referring to the order which makes the cosmos and the harmonious complexity of the natural world possible; therefore meaning: "that which uphold or supports the cosmos".

In Hindu civilization, the concept of natural or divine law has governed ideas about the **proper conduct of living**. The symbol of the dharma - the wheel - is the central motif in the national flag of India:



In its most frequent usage (in the sphere of morality and ethics) dharma means 'right way of living', 'proper conduct', 'duty' or 'righteousness'. With respect to spirituality, dharma might be considered **the Way of Higher Truths**. What is in the West called religion, in India falls within the general scope of dharma.

Thus, the various religions of India are different versions of Dharma — versions of what is considered to be 'right' or **in truest accord with the deepest realities of nature**. Each of the various Indian religions emphasize Dharma as the correct understanding of reality in their teachings.

-<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma>

For the remaining **45 years of his life**, the Buddha is said to have traveled throughout Southeast Asia teaching his doctrine and discipline to an extremely diverse range of people— from nobles to outcaste street sweepers, to mass murderers and cannibals. He also founded the community of Buddhist monks and nuns (called the *Sangha*) to continue the dispensation after his physical death.

At the **age of 80**, the Buddha announced that he would soon enter the final deathless state abandoning the earthly body and entering Nirvana. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which, according to different translations, was either a mushroom delicacy or soft pork (that he had received as an offering from a **blacksmith**) which caused him to become violently ill.

First Truth

What is the Noble Truth of Suffering?

Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering,
dissociation from the loved is suffering,
not to get what one wants is suffering:
in short the five categories affected by **clinging** are suffering.

There is this Noble Truth of Suffering:

such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing,
and light that arose in me about things not heard before.

This Noble Truth has been **penetrated by fully understanding** suffering:

such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing,
and light that arose in me about things not heard before.

[Samyutta Nikaya, LVI, 11]

About Buddhism (<http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/>)

The greatest achievement is selflessness.
The greatest worth is self-mastery.
The greatest quality is seeking to serve others.
The greatest precept is continual awareness.
The greatest medicine is the emptiness of everything.
The greatest action is not conforming with the ways of the world.
The greatest magic is transmuting the passions.
The greatest generosity is non-attachment.
The greatest goodness is a peaceful mind.
The greatest patience is humility.
The greatest effort is not concerned with results.
The greatest meditation is a mind that lets go.
The greatest wisdom is seeing through appearances.

-Atisha (11th century Tibetan Buddhist master)

[Those students in the West who study the authentic Buddhist doctrine] are the ones who, being expected to live closest to the Grand Doctrine, stray furthest away from it, getting caught up with ideas, concepts, and mental games that send them off into an abyss of intellectual struggles. **The Dharma is something that is supposed to be practiced by the students of Occultism, not argued about.** This is a great problem that has degenerated even the greatest and most valuable institutions of Esotericism.

-A. Trevor Barker in Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett

Essentials of Buddhism

"I teach about suffering and the way to end it"

-*Shakyamuni Buddha*

Four Noble Truths

1. **Suffering exists** (Life is suffering)
2. **Suffering arises from attachment to desires** (Suffering is due to attachment to desire)
3. **Suffering ceases when attachment to desire ceases** (When attachment stops, suffering stops)
4. **Freedom from suffering is possible**
by practicing the Eightfold Path (Stop attachment with the 8 fold path)

Noble Eightfold Way

Three Qualities	Eightfold Path	Sanskrit	Pali
Wisdom (<i>panna</i>)-discernment	Right View	<i>Samyag Drsti</i>	<i>Samma Ditthi</i>
"concentrated insight"	Right Intention	<i>Samyag Samkalpa</i>	<i>Samma Sankappa</i>
Morality (<i>sila</i>)-conduct or virtue	Right Speech	<i>Samyag Vac</i>	<i>Samma Vaca</i>
"[principles of] ethical behavior"	Right Action	<i>Samyag Karmanta</i>	<i>Samma Kammanta</i>
	Right Livelihood	<i>Samyag Ajiva</i>	<i>Samma Ajiva</i>
Meditation (<i>samadhi</i>)-concentration	Right Effort	<i>Samyag Vyayama</i>	<i>Samma Vayama</i>
"to acquire integration or wholeness"	Right Mindfulness	<i>Samyag Smriti</i>	<i>Samma Sati</i>
	Right Concentration	<i>Samyag Samadhi</i>	<i>Samma Samadhi</i>

Three Characteristics of Existence

1. **Transiency** (all things are impermanent)
2. **Sorrow** (all beings suffer from all situations due to unclear mind)
3. **Non-Self** (the perception of a constant "self" is an illusion)

Five Hindrances

1. **Sensuous lust** (craving)
2. **Aversion and ill will** (avoiding)
3. **Sloth and torpor** (laziness)
4. **Restlessness and worry** (agitation)
5. **Skeptical doubt** (doubting)

Seven Factors of Enlightenment

1. **Mindfulness** (contemplation of the body, feeling, mind, and mental objects)
2. **Investigation** (analysis of the true nature of all things)
3. **Energy** (a mental property and the 6th of the 8-fold path: Right Effort)
4. **Rapture** (also a mental property and it permeates both the body and mind.)
5. **Tranquility** (calmness of feelings, perception, activities and of the mind)
6. **Concentration** (steadiness of the mind; a mind that is undisturbed from its focus)
7. **Equanimity** (neutrality, it is mental equipoise and not hedonic indifference)

Explanation:

What is Right View?

- Knowledge of pain: (understanding suffering)
- Knowledge of the cause of pain: (understanding its origin)
- Knowledge of the cessation of pain: (understanding its cessation)
- Knowledge of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: (understanding the way leading to its cessation)

What is Right Intention?

- Intention to renounce: (intention of renunciation)
- Intention to not hurt: (intention of good will)
- Intention to not injure: (intention of harmlessness)

What is Right Speech?

- Refraining from falsehood (no lying)
- Refraining from malicious speech (no slander)
- Refraining from harsh speech (no yelling)
- Refraining from frivolous speech (no idle chatter)

What is Right Action?

- Refraining from taking life (not killing)
- Refraining from taking what is not given (not stealing)
- Refraining from sexual misconduct
sometimes also translated as 'unchastity' (not fornicating)

What is Right Livelihood?

- Abandoning a false livelihood (giving up wrong livelihood)
- Living by right livelihood (earning one's living by a right form of livelihood)

What is Right Effort?

- Not producing bad or evil thoughts (the effort to restrain defilements)
- Exercising will
- Puts forth effort (the effort to abandon defilements)
- Begins to make exertion
- Application and exertion of one's mind (the effort to develop wholesome states)
- Developing and filling up of good thoughts (the effort to maintain wholesome states)

What is Right Mindfulness?

- Being Mindful of the body (mindful contemplation of the body)
- Being mindful of the feelings (mindful contemplation of feelings)
- Being mindful of Thoughts (mindful contemplation of the mind)
- Dispelling longing and dejection towards the world (mindful contemplation of phenomena)

What is Right Concentration?

- Free of passions & evil thoughts (the first **Dhyāna/Jhāna**)
 - This allows us to attain and abide in the first trance of joy and pleasure
 - First trance is accompanied by reasoning & investigation and arises from seclusion
- Ceasing of reasoning & investigation (the second **Dhyāna/Jhāna**)
 - in a state of internal serenity and with the mind fixed on one point
 - one attains and abides in the second trance of joy and pleasure
 - Second trance arises from concentration and free from reasoning & investigation
- Equanimity & indifference towards joy (the third **Dhyāna/Jhāna**)
 - One abides mindful and self-possession
 - One attains and abides in the third trance
- Dispelling pleasure & pain (the fourth **Dhyāna/Jhāna**)
 - Even before the disappearance of elation and depression
 - One attains and abides in the fourth trance
 - The Fourth trance is without pleasure & pain and with the purity of mindfulness and equanimity

What is Non-Self?

In Buddhism, **anatta** (Pāli) or **anātman** (Sanskrit) refers to "non-self" or "absence of separate self". It has also been described as meaning "non-selfhood, the absence of limiting self-identity in people and things". Its opposite is *atta* (Pāli) or *ātman* (Sanskrit).

What is normally thought of as the "self" is in fact a jumbled cluster of constantly changing physical and mental constituents (**skandhas**). The Buddha repeatedly emphasizes not only that the five *skandhas* of living beings are "not-self", but that clinging to them as if they were an immutable self or soul (*ātman*) gives rise to unhappiness.

Skandhas are “impermanent constituent elements of the mundane body and mind of each being”. They are the five "aggregates" which categorize or constitute all individual experience and a person is made up of these five aggregates, beyond which there is no "self".

Suffering arises when one identifies with or otherwise clings to an aggregate; hence, suffering is extinguished by relinquishing attachments to aggregates. Ultimate freedom is realized by deeply penetrating the intrinsically empty nature of all aggregates.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Form or Matter | (body and external form) |
| 2. Sensation or Feeling | (senses) |
| 3. Perception or Cognition | (senses + mind) |
| 4. Mental formation or Volition ⁴ | (mind or conditioned mind) |
| 5. [Subjective] Consciousness | (the so called “vigil state”) |

Outside of Buddhist didactic contexts, skandha can mean mass, heap, pile, bundle or tree trunk.

⁴ **Volition:** the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action

Summary of Terms:

Dharma = proper conduct of living or the proper “way to live”, incorporating the correct ‘mentality’ or psychological perspective into our lives.

One might also say that dharma is **the Way of the Higher Truths**. What we, in the West, call ‘religion’, in India falls within the general scope of ‘dharma’.

Dhyāna/Jhāna = similar to the term ‘Zen’, it denotes a “clear mental state” – achieved through mediation – where one is able to distinguish illusion (maya) from reality. It is the progressive states of concentration leading up to complete concentration.

Samadhi = complete concentration. “The calm concentrated mind sees things as they really are. The unified mind brings the five hindrances under subjugation.”

“Concentration is the intensified steadiness of the mind comparable to the unflickering flame of a lamp in a windless place.”

- Piyadassi Thera

Middle Path = a path of moderation. Staying away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification

Four Noble Truths = craving and desire cause suffering. When we stop being attached to desire, we stop suffering. This is possible through a right psychological state, which is called the ‘Eight Fold Path’ in Buddhism.

Insight into the Buddha’s Enlightenment = the nature and cause of human suffering is ignorance of Cosmic Truths

Nirvana = deliverance from suffering (the state of supreme liberation), sometimes called “extinction” or “deathlessness”. It is a Sanskrit word that literally means “to cease blowing” (as when a candle flame ceases to flicker) and/or *extinguishing* of the passions.

Nirvana was used by the Buddha to describe the perfect peace of the mind that is free from craving, anger and other ‘afflictive states’. This peaceful state is the fundamental nature of the mind and is revealed when the *root causes* of the afflictive states are dissolved.

The causes themselves lie deep within our psychology (very similar to the unconscious) but their undoing is gradually achieved by living a disciplined life: Eightfold path.

Additional Resources:

The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering by Bhikkhu Bodhi

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/waytoend.html>)

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment by Piyadassi Thera

(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/piyadassi/wheel001.html>)

