WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

A DISCUSSION BY VIPASSANA TEACHER JACK KORNFIELD
Our Understanding of Buddhism is helped by seeing the structure of the entire spiritual path, by understanding its essence and how it brings about human happiness and freedom. The essential path taught by Buddha has three parts to it. The first is kindness of heart, which is practiced by a combination of virtue and generosity. The second is inner stillness or concentration. The third aspect of all Buddhist practice is developing virtue that entails the nonharming of other beings and generosity of heart.

These three aspects of practice themselves are but the means to the final freedom of the heart. As Buddha himself said, "The purpose of my teaching of the life of the Dharma is not for merit, nor good deeds, nor concentration, nor insight, but the sure heart's release." This and this alone is the reason for the teaching of Buddha. The purpose of all these practices is to bring us to freedom.

The many practices of Buddhism are like paths up a mountain, outwardly different approaches that are appropriate for different personalities and character types. Yet, through skillful guidance and skillful teachers, many of these paths can be used to lead one to universal vision at the summit of the mountain…

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Siddhartha Gotama, through his extraordinary realization, planted a seed of timeless wisdom and compassion.

Over the centuries, the seed has grown and produced an enormous and wonderful tree, which has a trunk and branches, flower and fruit. Some people claim that the roots are the true Buddhism; others claim, "No, it's the great trunk of the tree," or, "the fruit of the Vajrayana," or, "the roots of Theravada." In fact, all parts of the tree support one another. The leaves give nourishment back to the roots; the roots draw moisture and nourishment to the leaves, and they in turn provide for the flowers and fruit. It is all part of the whole, and to understand that is to see the creative and dynamic forces that were set loose from the seed of the Buddha's awakening.

ACTIVITIES 2003-2004

• Introductory Meditation Classes

• Regular Group Meditation

• Stress-Reduction Courses
  For students, faculty, and staff

• Off-Campus retreats

• Lectures on Buddhist Cultural Traditions

• Visits from local teachers

• Celebrations

• Meditation

Meditation is held Monday nights, 7:00 to 8:00 pm, and Wednesday 12:30 to 1 pm in the Meditation Room, Lower Chapel. All are welcome.

In meditation, we return to our experiences of the present moment. The essential path has three parts: compassion, concentration, and insight.

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http://www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/rel/buddhism/index.html