



Today in the world we find many different forms or *cults* of Buddhism. It is not true that all of them are authentic and represent what Buddhism actually *is*

.

To state what Buddhism is, we have to trace back to the person who found Buddhism more than 2,500 years ago in India: *Gotama*.

The words *Buddha*, *Tathagata*, *Blessed One*, etc., are called by the world towards Gotama to admire and appreciate his various qualities. In the most ancient and authentic canon of Buddhism (*Pali Canon*), there is description of what he actually *looks like*.

Generally speaking, he has golden hair, blue eyes, his hands can reach his knees without bending, etc. There are 32 distinct marks on him that distinguish him from the rest of human beings. And there is a lot of historic proof of his existence in history. Therefore the Buddha (Gotama) is a real existing person in human history. (more of his life stories can be read from the Buddha's Life section)

After he has reached the ultimate *Enlightenment - Nibbana* (the state that is beyond life and death or suffering), he preached in India for 45+ years till the end of his life. Right after his

passing, his most disciplined disciples gathered together and compiled the Pali Canon, which was the most ancient and authentic teachings of the Buddha. The compilation session is known as

The First Great Council

. Throughout human history, there has been 6 Great Councils, and each was held for different purposes. (for more information, please see Councils and Schism section)

The truth is, ever since the *Second Great Council*, schism began to arise. The cause was that some monks refused to observe the *Patimokkha* (rule) that were laid down by the Buddha to be practiced and observed by monks; it also governs the monks) and began to practice impure ways, such as taking money from *lay people* (worldly people) directly (the Buddha forbids this, and if a person wishes to donate money to a monk, another lay person has to keep the money for the monk).

It was documented in history that between the *Second Great Council* and the *Third Great Council* the group of monks who refused to observe the *Patimokkha* gathered together by themselves and formed a new Council, which was known as the *Mahayana Council*. The word *Mahayana* literally means the *Great Beacon* or the *Greater Path*. The name arose from the group of monks' self-conceited minds. And in order to distinguish between the Original Buddhism and the newly aroused sect, the name *Theravada* was established for the group of monks who upheld the *Patimokkha* and the original teachings of the Buddha. The word *Theravada* literally means *the Elders*.

Furthermore, as Buddhism became the mainstream religion in India, most Kings and countries favor Buddhist monks, and as a result, many "priests" and "monks" from other religions

converted to Buddhism. However, most of them did not convert their beliefs and practices. This polluted the teaching of the Buddha and divided the original Buddhism into 18 *sects* or *cults* in

the

Third Great Council,

which then became the sole purpose of the

Third Great Council

- to clear out these wrong views and practices in Buddhism. However, in the end many sects or cults still persisted in their ways and misrepresent Buddhism in human history till today.

The Pali Canon has always been the most well-preserved original teachings of the Buddha because it is maintained by disciples who have faith and reached *Arahantship* (meaning the person has realized

Nibbana

and this being the last round of birth).

New comers of Buddhism are highly recommended to steer into the Pali Canon before stepping into any other forms or cults of Buddhism.

Here is a compiled list of what Buddhism *is* and *is not* in general:

What Buddhism IS NOT:

-

A religion specializes in making rituals or ceremonies

-

A religion specializes in magick

-

A religion only to reach superhuman state

-

A religion that supports the view of One God

-

A religion that promotes material gains and supports material views

-

A religion that promotes music and songs (including singing and acting)

-

A religion that relies on unique artifacts (such as magical necklace, beads, etc)

-

A religion that supports mass advertising, mindless preaching, and making businesses.

-

A religion that relies on a "Savior" to save us all from the mass of suffering.

-

A religion that condemns non-believers or non-followers to Hell.

- A religion that assigns chief authority to a single person or group (e.g. Pope, Vatican, etc.) after the Buddha had passed away. (since doing so gives rise to potential status quo problem, false claims of the Buddha status, and various other reasons)

- A religion that believes chanting mantras (sacred words), performing ceremonial rites, practicing self-motification (such as walking on fire, going naked, fasting, etc.), practicing singleness of mind (*Samadhi* meditation), etc., can achieve enlightenment.

What Buddhism IS:

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to achieve peace

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to achieve bliss

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to conquer the mind

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to achieve right concentration

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to attain Nibbana

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to achieve right mindfulness

-

A religion, as a set of practices, to achieve perfect morality