

THE PRINCIPLE OF TOLERANCY IN THE BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONCEPTION

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Buddhism is a religion to about 300 million people around the world. The word comes from 'budhi', 'to awaken'. It has its origins about 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, was himself enlightened at the age of 35.

To many, Buddhism goes beyond religion and is more of a philosophy or 'way of life'. It is a philosophy because philosophy 'means love of wisdom' and the Buddhist path can be summed up as: (1) to lead a moral life, (2) to be mindful and aware of thoughts and actions, and (3) to develop wisdom and understanding.

Science is knowledge which can be made into a system, which depends upon seeing and testing facts and stating general natural laws. The core of Buddhism fit into this definition, because the Four Noble truths (see below) can be tested and proven by anyone in fact the Buddha himself asked his followers to test the teaching rather than accept his word as true. Buddhism depends more on understanding than faith.

Buddhism is also a belief system which is tolerant of all other beliefs or religions. Buddhism agrees with the moral teachings of other religions but Buddhism goes further by providing a long term purpose within our existence, through wisdom and true understanding. Real Buddhism is very tolerant and not concerned with labels like 'Christian', 'Moslem', 'Hindu' or 'Buddhist'; that is why there have never been any wars fought in the name of Buddhism. That is why Buddhists do not preach and try to convert, only explain if an explanation is sought.

The Buddha taught many things, but the basic concepts in Buddhism can be summed up by the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

In summary, the Noble 8-fold Path is being moral (through what we say, do and our livelihood), focusing the mind on being fully aware of our thoughts and actions, and developing wisdom by understanding the Four Noble Truths and by developing compassion for others.