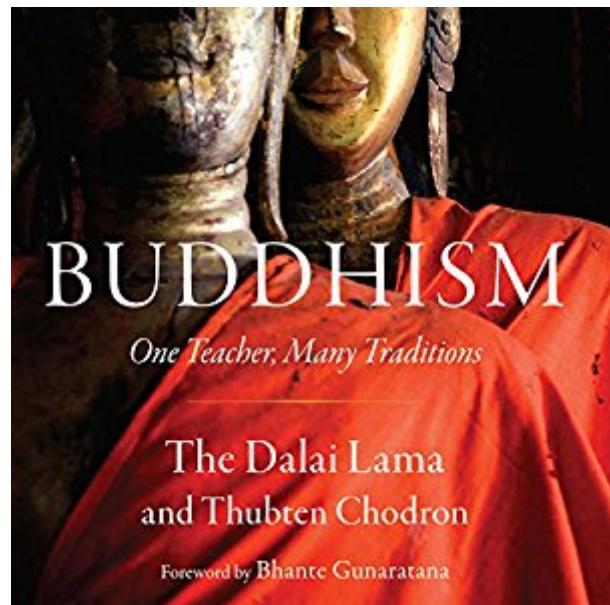


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# Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions



## Synopsis

Explore the common ground underlying the diverse expressions of the Buddha's teachings with two of Tibetan Buddhism's best-selling authors. Buddhism is practiced by hundreds of millions of people worldwide, from Tibetan caves to Tokyo temples to redwood retreats. To an outside viewer, it might be hard to see what they all have in common. In *Buddhism*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and American Buddhist nun Thubten Chodron map out with clarity the convergences and the divergences between the two major strains of Buddhism - the Sanskrit traditions of Tibet and East Asia and the Pali traditions of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Especially deep consideration is given to the foundational Indian traditions and their respective treatment of such central tenets as the four noble truths, the practice of meditation, and the meaning of nirvana enlightenment. The authors seek harmony and greater understanding among Buddhist traditions worldwide, illuminating the rich benefits of respectful dialogue and the many ways that Buddhists of all stripes share a common heritage and common goals.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In its essence, Buddhism is not a religion but rather an incredibly exhaustive collection of knowledge about the human condition and advice on how to renounce the unpleasant, suffering aspects of it to become happy - happiness being synonymous with freedom, that is liberation from causes and conditions (both karmic and self-inflicted) that cause suffering. Unlike religions and cults, Buddhism does not have a God - the Buddha was simply a man who obtained insight into human suffering and

was moved, through intense compassion, to empower his fellow humans to follow his steps. Over a couple of millennia, his words have percolated through myriads of philosophical treatises, cultural filters and traditions, styles of ordination and meditation/tantric practices. This impressive book looks at the fundamental principles characterizing the 3 key Buddhist traditions (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana); placing them side by side it demonstrates how they approach the same key points (sunyataa, dukkha, niroddha, impermanence etc) from slightly different angles. The amazing amount of scholarship and meditation mastery that underpin it cannot be overstated. There is, for example, what seems an almost effortless synthesis of the three main vinayas; there is spirited analysis of insights that fuel the key Mahayana schools (eg, Yogacara, Madhyamaka, Saarvastivada etc); discussions of classical works by Dharmakirti, Vasubandhu's Abhidarmakosa... for anyone even remotely interested in Buddhist ontology and psychology this book is a treasure trove that provides a link between the tradition and the contemporary world. A large section is devoted to the relationship between Pali texts and what some might call 'classical' Madhyamika/Nagarjuna views of inherent (non)existence, dependent arising and aggregate theory. Mahayana practitioners typically spend an enormous amount of time pondering these questions which to me sometimes seem like tautological sophistry. On the other hand, the discussion of the 4 jhanas & the psycho-physiological processes involved in transitioning between them, is superb and I'd say original. We learn how to recognize the signs for each stage as well as signs of the transition between the stages, as well as how to effect those transitions. Highly practical - if hard to accomplish at commitment levels of most practitioners. There is also HHs vision for the future as well as much that is between the lines. An example of the former is his whole-ringing endorsement of monastic ordination for women in the Tibetan (i.e., Mula-Saarvastivadin) vinaya lineage which would bring it closer to the Chinese and Southeast Asian traditions. Another is his view of how (male) monks should practice and behave, and dress. He cannot hide his distaste of (Tibetan) "monks" or teachers who dress in lavish robes, sit on gilded thrones and encourage blind veneration; many of them are married, have Western groupies/lovers or use sex with female acolytes to prolong their lives. They, suggests the Dalai Lama, should not wear the saffron of the monk but rather lay garments - something that will happen when, shall we say, the hell freezes over. What shines through this book is HHs desire to bring together Buddhist practitioners of all stripes without defensiveness - but rather by exuberating in the teachings of every tradition. As far as I know, the dialogue between the three schools has rarely, if ever, been conducted with so much clarity, completeness and authority. Ultimately, the differences turn out to be cosmetic; what matters is the inward orientation of the practitioner, his/her intent to hold to ethical standards and to ceaselessly

strive to help all beings by realizing the nature of what is real. Reading original Abhidarmic texts is something that few lay people can withstand let alone comprehend; in any case, most are out of our reach simply because they haven't been translated yet from Sanskrit. This book, on the other hand, lays them out in transparent and easy-to-understand prose, something that has become HHs specialty and his unique contribution to us all. We are lucky to have him, and we are lucky to have this book.

A great look at two different Buddhist traditions - what they have in common, where they differ, and how they both grew from the same root teachings.

In a time when diversity and inclusiveness are so important, *Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions* illuminates for us Dharma student/practitioners, many of us practicing within one tradition, the variety and nuance of Buddhist thought and dispels myths that were never helpful. The book is scholarly yet very accessible and concisely probes many topics in such a way that it also can serve as a meditation manual, enabling the practitioner to bring in helpful interpretations that were previously unfamiliar. Written by two very inspiring teachers of our time, it is a joy to read and think about.

*Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions* masterfully presents the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha by juxtaposing the fundamental elements and standard language of the Pali and Tibetan traditions from soup to nuts. For certain key topics (ethics, meditative practice, bodhicitta, buddha nature) the Chinese, and related traditions<sup>TM</sup>, views and vocabulary are also summarized and included in the comparison. By carefully delineating differences in formal structure, practice emphasis, terms, and concepts of *path* that have developed in various traditions, the authors illuminate the core teachings that unite us as Buddhists, and clarify the points of divergence. Concise explanations of potentially contentious topics gives one an appreciation of the same underlying intent of the teachings, despite the differing presentations and emphases. This is an authoritative work, unencumbered by any sectarian agenda. No view, group or teacher is elevated or demeaned. It will serve as a marvelous introduction to Buddhism, as well as being a heartwarming summary to refresh and encourage current practitioners of any tradition to see all Buddhists, indeed all sentient beings, as family.

The one star given on this book has to do more with the Dalai Lamas views on Shugden

practitioners than on the content of this book. Look up Shugden and you will understand why the Dalai Lama and most Buddhists don't take them seriously. Decide for yourself.

Very clear and concise exposition of the differences and commonalities among the various traditions in Buddhism. Some of the statements outlining the Buddha's central teachings alone are worth the price of this book. Highly recommended.

A must have read for students and those - well, anyone - attracted to Buddhism and the philosophy. Venerable Chodron, the author of several books on Buddhism, clearly has a talent for helping the reader understand the 'one garden, many paths' approach to the subject. As a novice Buddhist, I found this book to be a wonderful clarification of the different traditions of Buddhism.

Ven. Thubten Chodron work here a master piece. This book was beyond my expectations. Best of her work so far. A must have for the Buddhist practitioner.

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