

Study Guide: Mahayana Buddhism

Core Beliefs of Buddhism

Four noble truths are one of the beliefs that remained common to all variations of Buddhism, even as the religion changed as it changed cultures, and became more widespread.

- Dukkha, existence is in a state of constant suffering
- Trishna, suffering has a cause, which is desire and attachment
- Nirvana is a state of existence with no suffering
- To achieve nirvana, Buddhists believe in following the “eightfold path” outlined on the ‘Wheel of Dharma’ where each value represents a spoke on the wheel, converging at the center, symbolizing the perfection of the Buddha's teachings.
 - right views
 - right resolve
 - right speech
 - right action
 - right livelihood
 - right effort
 - right mindfulness
 - right concentration
- The rim of the wheel symbolizes the ability to hold all of the teachings together through meditation and concentration.

Facts

- Mahayana Buddhism promises salvation to anyone as long you regard the religion as a lifestyle and actively practice it.
- In Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha became a supreme and all-knowing force and assumed the role of a god and creator.
- Mahayana Buddhism’s ideal was collective enlightenment, not as much as individual enlightenment

- Mahayana Buddhism helped increase social cohesion in east Asia, by creating a shared values system, which replaced the older ones of early Buddhism and allowed people to become part of a religious community where people could relate to one another.
- The religion also helped various governments, especially The Chinese to justify their actions, which gave them a connection to the religion, and thus the support of its followers.
- Mahayana Buddhism also gave many of its followers a goal to pursue, which was the achievement of nirvana, which they could attain by essentially being good people. This also helped the society, because it gave people an encouragement to be good, which enforced the already existing discouragement of doing certain bad things by law which might be detrimental to society.

