

# *What Is Buddhism?*

Whenever Buddhism is mentioned, people have the impression of a temple with monks reciting Buddhist sutras and mantras, and believe that is Buddhism. Or they know about praying through divination and offering of incense, and believe that is Buddhism. Or they know there is a place where all affairs in the mundane world can be discarded which is the so-called 'flight to emptiness'. Or helping the poor and needy people in societies which is the so-called 'doing of good deeds'. These are all forms of the common understanding of the superficial appearance of Buddhism. So, what is the true meaning of Buddhism?

Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha. There is only one Buddha on the Earth we are currently residing in, just like there is only one venerable teacher in each class. The Buddha is the venerable teacher for all sentient beings. The contents of Buddha's teachings became Buddhism. The Buddha teaches sentient beings the relationship of cause and effect, and how to practice the five precepts and ten wholesome deeds for people to keep the human form, and prevent them from falling into the three lower paths where there is a lot of suffering. The Buddha teaches sentient beings what afflictions are, how to eliminate afflictions to attain liberation, what Buddha Bodhi is, and how to personally realize the Bodhi and eventually achieve Buddhahood and the great liberation. Buddhism can be and must be personally realized by Buddhist practitioners. It is not just a philosophy or metaphysics.

The Buddha has realized all the elements and functions required to reach Buddhahood. The Buddha knows everything in the universe and beyond. The Buddha's great wisdom enables Him to have matchless capabilities. For example, Buddha knows the fate, karmic retribution, cause-and-effect, and intellect of every single sentient being. Thus, He can make the best arrangement for every sentient being. But Buddha cannot grant liberation to any sentient being, nor judge who should go to heaven, nor who should fall into the three lower paths of transmigration. The outcome is a result of the karmic retribution each sentient being acquires and it therefore has to be accepted by each individual sentient being; hence the saying: good deeds render good karmic reward and evil deeds render evil karmic retribution. It is not that there is no consequence, but the time has not come yet.

The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Twelve Links of Dependent Arising, etc.--these are merely Buddhist terms and do not represent Buddhism by themselves; these terms need to be properly defined to conform to the Buddha's teachings, otherwise, they do not represent Buddhism.

When the Buddha appeared to enter nirvana, He left two instructions to the disciples: to follow and regard the Precepts as Teacher, and to follow and regard the Dharma as Teacher. The Precepts represent complete pureness, not something bizarre, freakish, and against the morals and ethics in the mundane world. The Dharma is the Buddha's teachings. Any deviation from the Buddha's teachings is not Buddhism, even if the terms used are identical, not to mention

the terms or teachings that are created or invented by ordinary people. All of us will benefit from learning Buddhism, not only this lifetime, but future endless lifetimes. There is a Chinese saying: Like drinking water, only the person drinking it will know whether the water is hot or cold. You must personally realize and experience to know how deep, wide, wonderful and unimaginable of Buddhism is. Someday, when we want to know the answer to the meaning of life, the purpose for living, and what becomes of us after death, the karmic connection to Buddhism is then established. The Buddha can only help liberate those who incline towards Buddhism! The Buddha waits patiently for the conditions to mature for every sentient being to the point where He can help them attain Buddhahood in the future