


# World Religions *and* Ethical Systems

## Buddhism



Buddhism has influenced Asian religion, society, and culture for over 2,500 years. Today, most Buddhists live in Sri Lanka, East and Southeast Asia, and Japan. Buddhism consists of several different sects. A religious sect is a group within a religion that distinguishes itself by one or more unique beliefs.

Buddhists are united in their belief in the Buddha's teachings, known as the dharma. Because the Buddha is said to have "set in motion the wheel of the dharma" during his first sermon, his teaching is often symbolized by a wheel, as shown above. The Buddha taught that the key to happiness was detachment from all worldly goods and desires. This was achieved by following the Noble Eightfold Path, or the Middle Way, a life between earthly desires and extreme forms of self-denial.

 [hmhsocialstudies.com](http://hmhsocialstudies.com)

**RESEARCH WEB LINKS** Go online for more on Buddhism.



### ▲ Worship Practices

Statues of the Buddha, such as this one in China, appear in shrines throughout Asia. Buddhists strive to follow the Buddha's teachings through meditation, a form of religious contemplation. They also make offerings at shrines, temples, and monasteries.

### Ritual ▶

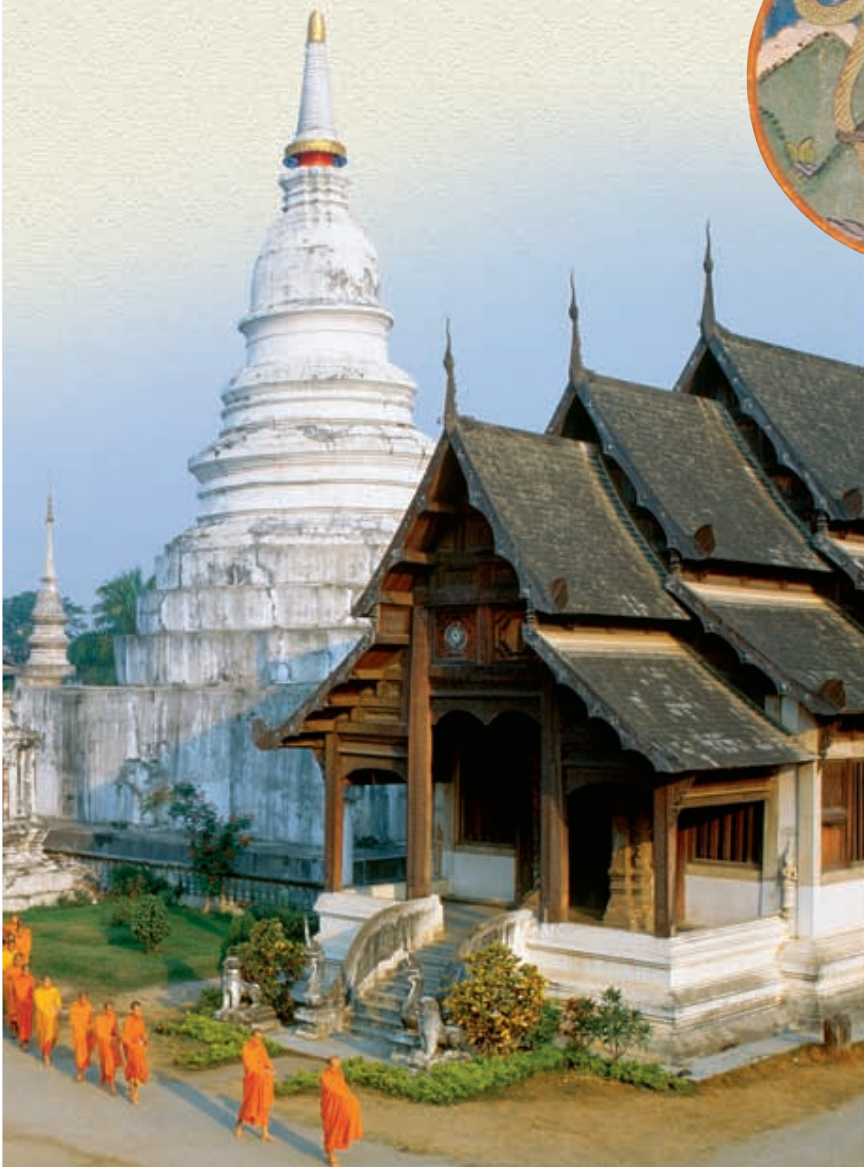
Women in Rangoon, Myanmar, sweep the ground so that monks can avoid stepping on and killing any insects. Many Buddhists believe in rebirth, the idea that living beings, after death, are reborn and continue to exist. Buddhists believe that all living beings possess the potential for spiritual growth—and the possibility of rebirth as humans.



### ▼ Leadership

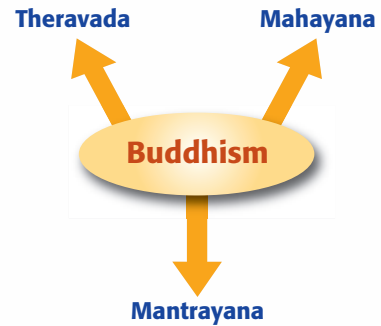
Those who dedicate their entire life to the teachings of the Buddha are known as Buddhist monks and nuns. In many Buddhist sects, monks are expected to lead a life of poverty, meditation, and study. Here, Buddhist monks file past shrines in Thailand. To learn humility, monks must beg for food and money.





## Learn More About Buddhism

### Major Buddhist Sects



### The Three Cardinal Faults



This image depicts what Buddhists consider the three cardinal faults of humanity: greed (the pig); hatred (the snake); and delusion (the rooster).

### Dhammapada

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

One of the most well-known Buddhist scriptures is the *Dhammapada*, or *Verses of Righteousness*. The book is a collection of sayings on Buddhist practices. In this verse, Buddhists are instructed to avoid envying others:

*Let him not despise what he has received, nor should he live envying the gains of others. The disciple who envies the gains of others does not attain concentration.*

*Dhammapada 365*

#### Chapter Connection

For a more in-depth examination of Buddhism, see pages 68–71 of Chapter 3, and page 193 of Chapter 7.