

Fact Sheet

Buddhism



The Scout Association of Australia includes Members of every faith, background and religion. The following fact sheet has received the approval of the heads of the leading religious bodies.

- In Australian Scouting, we use an inclusive approach to 'Duty to God', focusing on exploring spiritual beliefs and the use of reflection as a tool for development. You will notice this approach to Duty to God, including spiritual development, reflected in our Promise.
- Members should develop their relationship with the spiritual values of life by adhering to their spiritual principles, whilst respecting the spiritual choices of others.

The beginnings

Buddhism started not with a revelation from God (Buddhists do not believe in a personal God), but with a quest of a man who wanted to find out how to end suffering. The man was Siddhartha Gotma, later known as the Buddha, who was born in the country now known as Nepal (c563-483 BCE).

Before Siddhartha's birth his mother dreamed that a white elephant entered her side. This indicated that her child would grow up to be a great person. His mother died one week after his birth. His father was determined to shield his son from suffering and as a result Siddhartha grew up in great luxury. He married and had a son but was dissatisfied with his existence.

Siddhartha begins his search

Curious about life outside his palace, Siddhartha gained his father's permission to visit a nearby town. He visited the town four times and on each occasion he was confronted by the fact that suffering is an inescapable part of the human condition. On his first three visits he saw an old man, a sick man and a dead body. On his fourth visit he saw a Sadhu, a holy man, who had given up all worldly pleasures and possessions. Siddhartha decided that he too would give up everything and search for the answer to the question 'Why do people suffer?' He gave away all his

clothes and jewellery and set out to find the answer. He was reported to be 29 years old.

Joining the Sadhus

After spending some time with spiritual teachers, from whom he learned the techniques of meditation, Siddhartha joined a group of five Sadhus. He spent several years in their company, subjecting himself to extremes of self-denial, and going without food and shelter and any form of comfort. He became ill and eventually collapsed from exhaustion. He decided to leave his five companions and take some food and rest.

Becoming the Buddha

He decided to follow the Middle Way, treading between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. One night under a full moon, Siddhartha began to meditate. He was tempted by Mara, the Buddhist personification of evil but he successfully resisted all temptations and reached a state of perfect peace and awareness. He attained 'Nibbana' and he had become 'The Buddha'.

The Buddha was 35 years old when he achieved enlightenment and he devoted the rest of his life to travelling through India spreading the wisdom that he had acquired.

Buddhists follow the Eight Fold Path:

- Right View or Understanding
- Right Thought or Aspiration
- Right Speech
- Right Action
- Right Livelihood
- Right Effort
- Right Mindfulness
- Right Concentration

Buddhists have a strong ecological concern and try to live in balance and harmony with nature. Many Buddhists are vegetarian.

The practice of meditation

Meditation is an important practice for all Buddhists. Many methods of mediation have been developed and

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aids to meditation are also often used e.g. flowers, stones, and images of the Buddha.

Buddhists also meditate by repeatedly chanting sacred sounds and phrases called mantras.

