

Clearing

Misconceptions

about Buddhism



“Buddha is a God”

The Buddha was not a god.

A man asked the Buddha if he was a god, he replied that he was not. When asked if he was a human, he again replied he was not. When asked what he was, the Buddha replied, “I am awake”. Buddha means “The Awakened One”, one free from defilements and awake to the true nature of life. He was a man who perfected himself and attained wisdom by his own effort. He taught that if we followed his example, we could perfect ourselves and become Buddhas too.

“Buddhists must be Vegetarians”

Buddhists need not be vegetarians.

The Buddha himself was not a vegetarian. He did not restrict his disciples to be vegetarians. The most important thing in Buddhism is the quality of your mind, not the contents of your diet.

“Hunting, killing, stealing, lying, cheating and tricking, twisting the scriptures and committing adultery; these make one impure, not the eating of meat.”

Some Buddhists become vegetarians out of compassion for the animals that would be killed for their diet.



“Buddhists offer beautiful flowers in temples to please the Buddha”

Flowers are a reminder that although something may be beautiful now, it will still wither and die in the end, losing whatever radiance and colour it had before.

This brings the idea of impermanence; with arising, there will also be ceasing.

This reminds us not to be too attached to our image and successes, as this will build up our ego, which leads to negative consequences in the future.

“Kamma is fatalistic”

Kamma is the result of our actions.

No being, apart from ourselves, can create or influence our kamma

Therefore, we are in complete control of our fate.

Our current conditions are the results of our previous actions, be it in this life or in previous lives.

The Law of Kamma teaches Buddhists to be mindful and responsible for their actions.



“Buddhists believe in using lucky charms and magical amulets”

The Buddha considered practices such as using lucky charms to be superstitious and strongly discouraged such ‘low arts’.

Most of the amulet and charm culture arose from local cultural contexts.

The Buddha taught that we create our own destiny.

Dependence on lucky charms does little to counter the effects of kamma.

“Buddhists meditate to gain supernatural powers”

Meditation is to calm our mind and to realise the path of Buddha’s teaching.

The Buddha taught his followers that the practice of meditation

is not for the attainment of supernatural powers.

Meditation helps us understand the concept of impermanence, non-self and dissatisfaction.

Thus, Buddhists do not meditate to levitate or to walk through walls.

They do so for a greater reward - that is the cessation of suffering.

