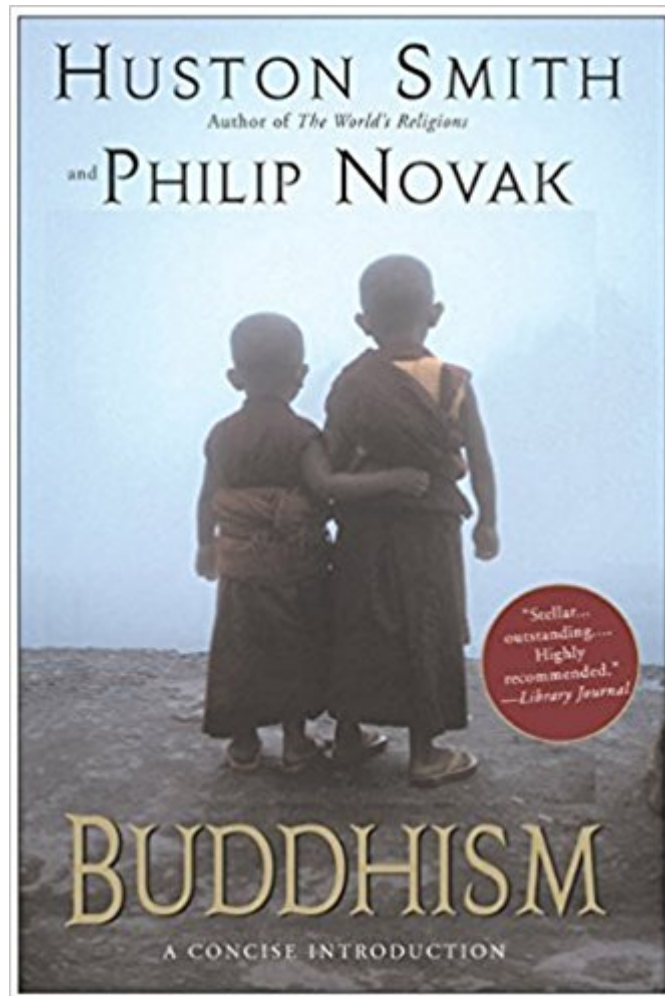




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Buddhism: A Concise Introduction



Synopsis

A concise and up-to-date guide to the history, teachings, and practice of Buddhism by two luminaries in the field of world religions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bookshelves abound with introductions to Buddhism, many written by luminaries and spiritual giants of the faith. But this primer co-written by Smith, whose magnum opus *The World's Religions* has sold more than two million copies, is distinguished by its gentlemanly erudition and thoughtful attention to Buddhist diversity. The book's first half is an expanded and updated version of the Buddhism sections of *The World's Religions* and was penned by Smith. Special attention is given to Theravada Buddhism, which "was overshadowed by Mahayana" in the original version; one chapter provides a helpful side-by-side chart illuminating the basic differences between the traditions, while the next features an in-depth discussion of Theravada's influence in South Asia and its emphasis on insight meditation. The primer's all-new second half-written by Smith's former doctoral student Novak-presents the story of Buddhism in the West, discussing its multifaceted presence in the United States. While Novak devotes time to the rise of Buddhism in Germany, England and France, it is clear that he finds the "New Buddhism" of America, with its emphasis on lay involvement, social engagement and the cross-pollination between Buddhist traditions, to be the source of the most exciting contemporary innovations. Smith's helpful afterword gauges the rising importance of Pure Land Buddhism in America, though this vital information should have merited a full chapter. Novak

and Smith's collaboration is a fine contribution to the admittedly crowded corpus of introductions to Buddhism: the strokes are broad, the writing style engaging and the chapters short and accessible. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Smith, the dean of religious studies in America, and his former student, philosophy and religion professor Novak, offer a concise, readable, enlightening introduction to Buddhism. They present the history of the man Buddha, born about 563 B.C.E. in what is now Nepal, and of the religion, which they compare with its Hindu roots. They examine Buddhism's original teachings and what Buddhism was (an empirical, pragmatic, therapeutic, and egalitarian response to the world of its founding) and what it was not (a religion devoid of authority, ritual, and tradition). They discuss such Buddhist essentials as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path and such other basic concepts as nirvana, the three marks of existence, and emptiness. Like most other religions, Buddhism has not been immune to schism, and Smith and Novak explain why it split into its present many divisions. They devote a goodly portion of the book to Zen Buddhism and Buddhism's increasing popularity in the West and to its remarkable resiliency, especially evident in the meditation-centered New Buddhism of America. June Sawyers Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A true history of Buddhism would take up volumes, but for an basic introduction to essential buddhist ideas, a fast overview of buddhism's long history, with a timely, succinct discussion of the Buddhism's transmission to the West, particularly the United States. Other books cover these topics in far greater depth and detail, but for a good solid overview, there really is no substitute.

The book talks about the fundamental beliefs of Buddhism and then goes into details on the various types of Buddhism. Helpful for anyone who wants to understand this non-theistic religion. Many people in the world find that it provides the answers they need in their lives. A Burmese (Myanmar) man I went to church with many years ago once told me that he was from one of the minority groups in Burma and that his people were animists. He said that it was not so hard to convert his people to Christianity because they were animists and didn't have a good religion. He said the Buddhists in his country would not become Christians because they already had a good religion. This book helped me to better understand that religion. I was dismayed though, after reading that one of the things the Buddha was pacifism, to read in the news that Buddhists in Myanmar were attacking

foreign aid groups because they were perceived as favoring a Muslim minority group. But then I'm a Christian and I have to confess that although many refer to Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace, there have been an awful lot of wars fought in the name of Christ. We all have a hard time living up to the precepts of our various religions.

Of the dozens of Buddhist books I've purchased, this book provides the clearest, most understandable introduction to Buddhism. It gives a succinct historical background, complete with context (religions that were prominent where Buddhism's roots sprouted). It then lays out the foundations of Buddhism (4 noble truths, eightfold path, etc.). The authors do a great job explaining some of Buddhism's complex terms (dependent arising, non-self, etc.), and do not confuse matters by relying too heavily on Sanskrit or Pali terminology. Although the description of the various branches of Buddhism was a bit short, it did lay out the fundamental thoughts of each branch, and compare/contrast with the others. The authors detail meditation types (vipassana, samatha) and how the different branches use meditation differently. Finally, there is a summary of how Buddhism migrated to the western world, and how it is practiced today. An excellent book, I would highly recommend it.

Brief introduction into Buddhism. Very easy to understand! It removed so many of my wrong preconceptions about Buddhism.

Before completing this introduction, I was not certain that I could finish any book describing the history of any world religion or belief. It is scholarly yet very readable. I had just completed listening to Jack Kornfield's Buddhism for Beginners which piqued my interest in a history of the Buddha's thoughts translated through 2500 years of encounter with human "thoughts" and fears and neediness. This book provided me the overview I sought and has given me a basis for further exploration down a path of wisdom and compassion first experienced as a child in the words and lives of Jesus and Francis of Assisi.

great overview of BUDDHISM

This is for class so I can't complain too much. It's not too preachy and it's well-written. I have only read the first chapter, but no complaints so far.

Yes, this was a most impressive and very concise volume of Buddhism and its place in the theologies of the world.\.

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