

BUDDHISM IS NOT well understood, even among people who call themselves “Buddhists.” *Budh* in Sanskrit means “to understand.” The Buddha is said to be the only one in history who “fully and clearly” came to understand the meaning of life and the universe. He is not a god, but he knew more about gods and heavens (plural) than religions do; and he is not to be worshipped or believed in blind faith, but to be learned from and followed, as a human being who fulfilled our mission of being conscious.

Buddhism disappeared from its land of origin - destroyed by Muslim invaders - and moved east where it became the leading ideology of the Far East. It produced a Golden Age of Enlightenment, an age the West can learn from, to resolve the myths and superstitions, differences and contradictions that divide us. The main points in the Eastern wisdom teachings that are absent in or contradicted by Western religions are:

- Karma: we are the result of our own former activity, not the (deficient) creation of an almighty heavenly Lord.
- Life and the world are not created by God but are part of a “beginning-less and never ending” process of evolution, of which gods are not eternal but impermanent products.
- There are many different heavens and gods; the Trinity is from a lower level than most other “pure realms” in the Buddhist cosmic overview.
- Reincarnation: or rather rebirth, because there is no permanent, unchanging, immortal substance or soul in a person. We too are part of a beginning- and end-less process of evolution, moving up and down the ladder of existence, now as humans, then as angels, ghosts, or animals.
- There is a way out of this endless process of rebirth; enlightenment is the breakthrough, the only dissolution of our bondage in Samsara. Nirvana is the name for the pure, blissful, omnipresent and eternal dimension of reality.
- The “Ground of Being” and supreme Lord in the whole universe and beyond, is Mind, of which we are a feeble participant but capable of realizing its fullness.
- The way of recovery is threefold: 1. Discipline/morality/virtue, 2. Concentration and meditation, and 3. Wisdom. These are like the legs of a tripod; if one leg is missing, the tripod staggers.
- Wisdom is called “transcendental” because it is the means to overcome and transcend the cycle of birth and death. This wisdom <i>is</i> power. When it is gained, there is nothing unknown anymore. Enlightenment is therefore also called “omniscience.”