



## Elements of My Buddhist Practice

My current practice can be characterized as non-sectarian and agnostic. Ritual is sparing and primarily serves to mark certain times and places as special for my practice rather than anything as grandiose as demarcating the sacred from the secular. Generally, lineages, robes, ethnic traditions, and cultural rituals are of little interest other than to simply satisfy my historical curiosity. My goal has more to do with reshaping character and behavior than attaining otherworldly states. It is practice oriented and seeks to realize *bodhicitta* or "awakening mind/heart/attitude". Call it a path of transformation if you will. By that I do not mean I seek some metaphysical transcendence of life's ordinariness. Rather I look to see and react to the "same old same old" in a new way that is fresh, that opens the heart, and expands my vision.

### A. Grounding ideas:

1. The Buddha's dhamma is chiefly "therapeutic and practical rather than speculative and metaphysical." Batchelor, *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, p. 100.
2. The Buddha's dhamma includes faith in our own enlightenment (awakening) potential--we have within us the seeds of enlightenment, awakening to a way of understanding the world and then a way of behaving in the world. Stephen Batchelor. "Suspending Belief", *Inquiring Mind*, vol. 27 no. 1.
3. The Buddha's dhamma provides a framework of values and practices that help one create a path in life. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, p. 181.

4. The Buddha's dhamma is a path of self-*effort*—no one and no thing can intercede on one's behalf; progress is dependent on one's own diligence and practice. Right-effort on the Eightfold Path.
5. The Buddha's dhamma is true because it is useful, it works, and it brings tangible benefits to humans and all creatures. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*, p. 199.

## B. The core principles:

1. the **principle of interbeing**: [Pratīyasamutpāda, conditioned arising, interdependent co-arising]:

- Canonical texts:
  - See [Assutavā Sutta](#) (SN 12.61); [Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta](#) SN 12.2; [Maha-nidana Sutta](#) DN 15
  - Complementary idea: emptiness (Śūnyatā)
    - [Suñña Sutta](#) SN 35.85; Heart Sūtra (*Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya*)
- Other sources:
  - “The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the Earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise -- then we can build a noble environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we shall perish.”  
Buddhadassa Bhikku. **Buddhasanik Kap Kan Anurak Thamachat** [Buddhists and the Conservation of Nature] (Bangkok: Komol Keemthong Foundation, 1990), p.34.
- Practice:

- Breathe, and bring yourself wholly into the present moment. Experience yourself as part of a continuum, part of the natural world.
- Metaphors:
  - waves and water: a wave = manifestation of water in a process of continual transformation
  - metaphor for interbeing (the interconnectedness of all things, interpenetration of all phenomena) as expressed in the metaphor of Indra's Net or Tower of Maitreya—see [Avataṃsaka Sūtra](#)

## 2. the process of the Four Noble Truths:

- Canonical texts:
  - there is suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction; (2) the cause of suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction is craving; (3) there is an end of suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction and (4) there is a path to the end of suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction (Eightfold Path) [Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta](#) SN 56.11
  - *See also* [Tivtha Sutta](#) 3.61; [Maha-satipatthana Sutta](#) DN 22; [Maha-parinibbana Sutta](#) DN 16
- Other sources:
  - [The Path – Reworded for Modern Practitioners](#)
- Practice: apply the Four Noble Truths to our experience, the path of practice is the [Eightfold Path](#)
  - [What is the Eightfold Path?](#)

## 3. the practice of mindful awareness [sati]:

- Canonical texts:

- “This is the direct way [Pāli: *ekāyano ... maggo*], monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realization of nibbāna....”  
[Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#) (MN 10)
- See also [Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#) (MN 10); [Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta](#) (DN 22)
- Practice:
  - Mindfulness of Breathing: [Ānāpānasati Sutta](#) MN 118

#### 4. the power of self-reliance:

- Canonical texts:
  - "By oneself is evil done, by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone, by oneself is one purified. Purity and defilement depend on oneself; no one can purify another"  
[Attavagga: The Self Dhp 12:165](#)).
  - See also [Dhammapada. 165](#); [Kalama Sutta](#) AN 3.65; [Cakkavatti Sutta](#) DN 26
  - "Therefore, Ananda, be islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge. [Maha-parinibbana Sutta](#) DN 16:2, 33
  - “And the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus, saying: “Behold now, bhikkhus, I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness!” This was the last word of the Tathagata.” [Maha-parinibbana Sutta](#) DN 16:6, 8
  - "And what, monks, is right effort? (i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of

evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. (iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. (iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort." SN 45.8, Magga-vibhanga Sutta

5. and **compassion** as an ethical stance—an empathetic relationship to ourselves, others and the world [*karuṇā and mettā*]:

- Canonical texts:
  - "He keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. [Kalama Sutta](#) AN 3.65
  - "As a mother would risk her life to protect her child, her only child, even so should one cultivate a limitless heart with regard to all beings." Khuddakapatha 9, [Karaniya Metta Sutta](#)
  - See also: [Sankha Sutta](#) SN 42.8; [Aghatavinaya Sutta](#) AN 5.161; [Kakacupama Sutta](#) (MN 21); [Karaniya Metta Sutta](#) (Sn 1.8); [Sankhita Sutta](#) (AN VIII.63)

- Practice: [Tonglen](#)/Mettā practice: oneself, a good friend, a "neutral" person, a difficult person, and then gradually the entire universe
  - [Cultivating Compassion](#)

See also:

- [The Pali Canon: Source Texts for Secular Buddhism](#). Compiled by *Stephen Batchelor*
- [Secular Buddhist Association \(SBA\)](#)
- [Secular Buddhism: No Robes. No Ritual. No Religion.](#)
- *Winton Higgins*. "The Coming of Secular Buddhism: a Synoptic View," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 13 (2012): 109-126
- Humanistic Buddhism: [Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center](#)
- Thích Nhất Hạnh. *The Heart of Understanding*. Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 1988.
- Bhikkhu Bodhi. [The Buddha and His Dhamma](#)
- Pema Chödrön. [Tonglen](#). Halifax: Vajradhatu Publications, c2001.
- Pema Chödrön. [Awakening Loving-Kindness](#). Boston & London: Shambhala, c1996.
- Shantideva. *Bodhisattvacharyavatara (A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life)*. Translated into English by Stephan Bachelor. (6th Revised ed.), Snow Lion Publications, 1992.
- Life is our monastery: [Center for Pragmatic Buddhism](#)
- James Ure. [The Buddhist Blog](#): (1) [Buddhism and Secular Humanism](#), (2) [In the End, We All Must Walk Alone](#)
- Jack Kornfield. ["The Eightfold Path for the Householder"](#)

Xin Yue

