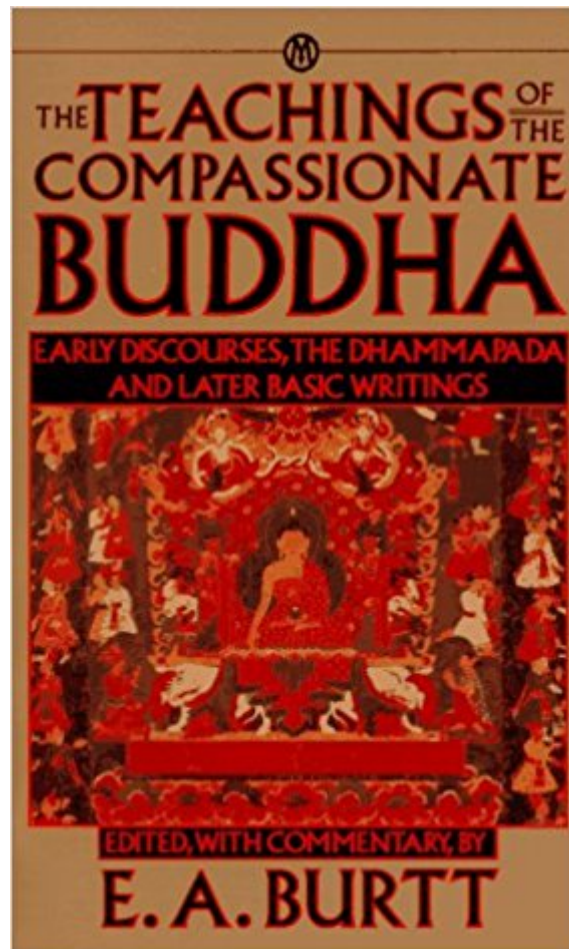




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The Teachings Of The Compassionate Buddha (Mentor)



Synopsis

The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha (Mentor)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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Excellent. No instructions for what robes to wear, when to light incense. Buddhism the philosophy, not the religion it has been turned into.

Bought this book to replace one I lost in a fire....I've read it 3 or more times. It is always enlightening

Great condition.

I got this book title off of a college website as one of the books that students of an Eastern Religions class were required to read. I didn't want to take a college class, but I wanted to learn more about Buddhism and Taoism. The other books listed were: "Opening to our Primordial Nature", "Taoism: The Road to Immortality" and "When Things Fall Apart". Although "Teachings of a Compassionate Buddha" is not an "easy read", it was an interesting and good introduction to Buddhism, as it details the differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

I purchased this for a course on Buddhism and christianity and it provided a good overview on the topic.

Edwin A. Burtt has edited this volume, including some of the key passages from Buddhist thinking, and provided a strong introduction, placing Buddhism in a larger context. Among concepts noted in the Introduction: Brahman (Page 17: "Out of Brahman come all things; to Brahman all things return"), "atman" (Page 17: "The soul or self"), karma, dharma (Page 19: ". . .the way that man should follow in order to fulfill his true nature and carry out his moral and social responsibilities"), and so on. On to the primary sources on Buddhism. . . . One, "The Four Noble Truths." The editor summarizes the essence: 1. Existence is unhappiness; 2. Unhappiness is caused by selfish craving; 3. Selfish craving can be destroyed; 4. It can be destroyed by following the eightfold path. . . . "Some thoughts on "The Wise Man" from "The Way of Truth," an important document. The lines speak for themselves: "As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, wise people waver not amidst blame and praise" Or, from the same document, "The Thousands": "If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors." Or, an item from "Punishment": "He who, seeking his own happiness, does not punish beings who also long for happiness, will find happiness after death." And on it goes. The volume does a nice job of providing some of the primary sources of Buddhism, allowing the reader to get a sense of this orientation. If interested, this is not a bad starting point for those who want to get a sense of Buddhism. I believe that I purchased this as an undergraduate student many years ago, and I have held onto this across a multitude of moves since then.

The author wrote in the Introduction to this 1955 book, "the field from which selection can be made is vast... even of the translations now at hand only a very few combine all three virtues that are essential to a good translation of religious writings: scholarly accuracy, deep spiritual perceptiveness, and thorough familiarity with the conceptual framework presupposed by thinkers who use the language of the translation... this book aims to reach the general reading public rather than scholars ... I have not found it necessary... to pass any judgment on the interesting question: Of the various scriptures which were, presumably, committed to writing quite early, which come closest to communicating the actual words of Gautama himself, and which reveal changes that had slowly taken place ... before this material was written down?" Here are some additional quotations from the book: "The fact that Buddha accepted so much but not more of the religious, philosophical and psychological framework of thought that was being developed in the Upanishads at the time he

lived indicates both the degree to which his thinking was embedded in the Indian heritage and the degree to which he was ready to criticize that heritage and strike out along radically novel lines." (Pg. 19)"It is as if, Malunkyaputta, a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinfolk, were to prepare for him a physician or surgeon; and the sick man were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior caste, or to the Brahmin caste, or to the agricultural caste, or to the menial caste.'" (Pg. 35)"Overcome with emotion, (the mother) ... carried her son('s body) to the burning-ground, and holding him in her arms, said, 'Dear little son, I thought that you alone had been overtaken by this thing which men call death. But you are not the only one death has overtaken. This is a law common to all mankind.'" (Pg. 45)"(T)he Buddha seems clearly to have taught that Nirvana is a state which is the natural and inevitable result of the extinction of craving... Did he go beyond this, and positively teach that this state involves the dissolution of conscious awareness as such... Or was he agnostic on this point? ... We do not need to decide, but it is clear that many Theravada thinkers insist without qualification on the more extreme position." (Pg 85)"...the main purpose of some of the most popular and frequently quoted parables was to ... (develop) the thought that although the Buddha had a far more wonderful truth to give to those who could understand it, he was not deceiving the minds of the beginners by teaching them Theravada ideas. Such teaching was all they could receive and it would lead them in the right direction." (Pg. 141)

This is a comprehensive primer on Buddhist thought. Simple, but informative. Burt begins with an excellent synopsis on the nature of religion and religious thought in general. It covers the two main branches of Buddhism- Hinayana (or Theravada) and Mahayana. It seems to be that the Theravadins are the followers of more conventional Buddhism with an orthodox canon, whereas the Mahaynas are more universal in their ideas and use later basic writings. Using the Tathagata's words, other things are argued e.g. taking on the life of a monk. The parables are very helpful, and the one sticking to me most is the one about the acceptance of death. (mustard seed) There is less coverage pertaining to the Theravada school. These ideas of the Mahayanans I find more attracted to, except in some work from the later centuries where they start to argue for things like subjective idealism. The Mahayana religious ideal I do advocate however [pp. 124] 'The central idea in Buddhist teaching is the gospel of universal salvation based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all beings.'

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