

Wendy Doniger, "Hinduism", *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, c. I, edit. Jack Miles, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015. s. 725-1470  
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## INTRODUCTION In the World of the Buddha

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Among all the world religions, Buddhism enjoys a particularly positive reputation, widely respected for its teachings of love and compassion, its promotion of nonviolence and commitment to a vegetarian diet, and its renunciation of war. In fact, Buddhism does teach love and compassion and it does promote nonviolence. But the Buddha himself ate meat and he did not forbid his monks from doing so. And wars have been fought by Buddhists in the name of Buddhism. Thus, there is some dissonance between the commonly held view of Buddhism and its history, a dissonance that may have much to do with Western yearnings for a religion founded by a man who declared that there is no God, a religion whose primary practice is to sit cross-legged on the ground and calm the passions.

When the term "world religion" was first coined by European scholars in the nineteenth century, only two were deemed worthy of the name: Christianity and Buddhism. They were called world religions because European scholars believed that their teachings had spread around the world by the force of their truths, not by the force of their armies. All the other religions were somehow local. Indeed, Buddhism has been so highly regarded that it is often claimed that Buddhism is not a religion at all—it is rather a philosophy or simply a way of life, one whose tenets can be selectively adopted regardless of religious affiliation, or lack of one.

Yet, as we will see in what follows, Buddhism is a religion, regardless of how one might seek to define that indefinable term. Some 350 million people around the world are counted, either by themselves or by others, as Buddhists. But what makes someone a Buddhist? The traditional answer is that a Buddhist is someone who "takes refuge" in what are called "the three jewels": the Buddha, the dharma (which here means his teachings), and the sangha (or community, a term that we will consider in more detail below). Someone who says three times, "I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the dharma. I go for refuge to the sangha," is a Buddhist. "Refuge" here means protection from the sufferings of life, and a Buddhist is thus someone who has concluded that the best protection from those sufferings is provided by the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of his disciples. But as is so often true of religions, affiliation is not always a matter of conscious reflection and logical conclusion. And in the case of Buddhism, even this classical definition of a Buddhist does not preclude one from seeking assistance from other quarters on matters less weighty than liberation from suffering. Buddhism has a long history of accommodating the religious traditions of the cultures it encounters, making it rarely an all-or-nothing proposition.