

## Editor **XIANYANG CARL JEROME** introduces the central teachings of the Buddha as a giant skillful means practice.



**Xianyang Carl Jerome's** is the editor of *Rightview Quarterly* magazine and editor and founding teacher of [RightviewOnline.org](http://RightviewOnline.org)

The heart and core of Buddhist practice may be found in the four noble truths. The Indian prince Siddhartha Gotama essentially discovered this view of the human condition during a night of intense meditation. He revealed his insight soon thereafter and spent the rest of his long life teaching and demonstrating the way to end dukkha (suffering). For the past 2500 years, the teachings and practices of the Buddha have spread throughout the world.

Meditation is the central practice of those teachings. Meditation is supported by a series of guidelines for making ethical decisions, most importantly, the precepts and the paramitas; and by the development of wisdom, the understanding of how things really are rather than how we perceive them to be with our dukkha-oriented minds. When we practice with these teachings and see that they work in our lives, our efforts are reinforced, and the role of karma and its companion teaching, dependent origination, become more evident.

A belief in karma, the immutable law of cause and effect, underlies Buddhist practice. Karma, which might be called the essence of the second noble truth, is integrally related to several other core teachings, in particular the concept of dependent origination, the twelve-point description of the conditional relationship of phenomena in samsara, *aka* the human condition. Karma answers the questions that make Buddhism a spiritual practice: Where do we come from? Why are we here? What should we be doing while we are here? And where do we go next?

Faith, which can be defined as the conviction to follow the teachings of the Buddha because one has seen through personal experience that they work, is the cornerstone of practice. Without faith, without believing that these teachings and practices are effective, it is not possible to stay on the path for very long because following this path requires commitment, determination, and diligence, all of which can falter without faith.

In summary, the Buddhist path is a triad of supporting practices, with meditation at the center, and with moral discipline and wisdom flanking and supporting it. Karma makes this practice possible and faith allows us to continue on the path.

Other key concepts include the three dharma seals (impermanence, no-self, and nirvana), the three marks of existence (suffering, impermanence, and no-self), and the four heavenly abodes, sometimes called the four immeasurables.

These key teachings may be reviewed in more detail in beginning on page 11. They are necessarily brief and incomplete, but are an attempt to crystallize some of the ideas that are unique to this non-theistic, and some would say, scientific religious system.

It should be remembered that all of these teachings are a meta-praxis, a skillful means to get us to the other shore, where we then are encouraged to abandon the ship (the words and views) that got us there.

Articles and stories in Rightview are centered around the core teachings of the Buddhadharma and are supplemented by supporting commentaries, essays, and poetry. They are selected from the teachings of all three major traditions: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, and are presented without judgment. They are not meant for comparison, either with each other or with your own practice. They are meant simply to shed light on the path.

**NOTE:** In our last issue, authorship of the personal essay "*Where Do We Go When We Die?*" was wrongly attributed to Sara Jenkins. It was, in fact, written by Judith Toy. Carl Jerome personally apologizes to both writers for the error.