



The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings

By Donald S. Lopez Jr.

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- How and when did the many schools of Buddhism emerge?
- How does the historical figure of Siddhartha Guatama relate to the many teachings that are presented in his name?
- Did Buddhism modify the cultures to which it was introduced, or did they modify Buddhism?

Leading Buddhist scholar Donald S. Lopez Jr. explores the origins of this 2,500-year-old religion and traces its major developments up to the present, focusing not only on the essential elements common to all schools of Buddhism but also revealing the differences among the major traditions. Beginning with the creation and structure of the Buddhist universe, Lopez explores the life of the Buddha, the core Buddhist tenets, and the development of the monastic life and lay practices. Combining brilliant scholarship with fascinating stories -- contemporary and historical, sometimes miraculous, sometimes humorous -- this rich and absorbing volume presents a fresh and expert history of Buddhism and Buddhist life.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Much of what we hear about Buddhism today in the West focuses on its philosophy, and how it can change one's life. Throughout history, however, Buddhism's mythology, scriptures, heroes, and its promise for salvation from rebirth have been the Buddhist teachings that most people have known. Religion professor Donald Lopez has mastered a good deal of this immense lore and managed with *The Story of Buddhism* to get it into a manageable package. Rather than providing a chronological history or country-by-country breakdown, Lopez explores general topics, meandering through two-and-a-half millennia, from India to Japan. In sections such as "Monastic Life," "Tantra," and "Pilgrimage," he talks about the origins of each topic and its mainstream manifestations. In addition, he spices up his work with delectable, if occasionally bizarre, examples from specific cultures. There is, for instance, the story of the depraved man who, once having said the words "Lotus Sutra," was saved from Hell. And the tale of the practice called the "act of truth," in which a perfectly candid statement can have magical powers. Or the story of the monk who attempted to rescue some maggots by opening his own flesh for them. No doubt, Buddhism is interesting, but it takes a competent scholar and a good storyteller to get it just right. Lopez fills the bill. --*Brian Bruya*

From Publishers Weekly

Lopez, a professor of Buddhist studies at the University of Michigan, says that his primary aim for this book is "to focus on Buddhist practice as a religion." Unlike more superficial how-to books on Buddhism, this book gives a thorough historical and theological explanation of Buddhism's major tenets, starting with Buddhist cosmology and then moving to chapters dedicated to the Three Jewels of Buddhism (the Buddha, dharma and sangha) before ending with a chapter on enlightenment. Interspersed are anecdotes intended to teach key principles in keeping with the idea of Buddhism-as-story; unfortunately, these vignettes are a bit overpowered by lengthy discourse on the history and interpretations of those principles. The bulk of the chapter on "lay practice," for example, focuses on various countries' traditions of lay ordination and funeral rituals, as well as monasteries' relations with their respective states, rather than explicating actual daily lay practice. In trying to explain not only Buddhism's key teachings but also their variations by country, region, teacher and school, the text loses focus. Lopez provides a list for further reading at the end of each chapter as well as a bibliography and glossary at the end of the book, which should be helpful for the student of world religions. His command of the subject is obvious, but his prose is sometimes dry, and the scope may be overly ambitious for the general reader.

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Review

"At long last we have here an introductory volume on Buddhism that goes beyond the usual clichés."
(Bernard Faure, Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University)

"Heads my list of books to give to someone ready to be introduced to the Four Noble Truths." (Phil Catalfo, Yoga Journal)

"The clearest book we have on the history, variety, and meaning of what we now call Buddhism." (Kenneth Woodward, Newsweek)

“The Story of Buddhism is one of those rare books that gives fresh insights on repeated readings.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

“A portrayal of Buddhism that...is readily accessible and appealing...[a] good introduction to Buddhism.” (Choice)

“Aims to make the tradition both accessible and compelling, as well as to demystify its practices, teachings, and schools.” (Tricycle)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Doris Simmons:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or all their friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book might be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the guide untitled The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings can be very good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

Nicholas Hess:

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book mainly book entitled The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unknown for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a guide then become one contact form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get before. The The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings giving you one more experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful data for your better life in this particular era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

William Coker:

This The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings is great guide for you because the content which can be full of information for you who all always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it info accurately using great organize word or we can point out no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole data in it. Doesn't mean it only provides straight forward sentences but hard core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to Its History & Teachings in your hand like having the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous just one. We can say that no publication that offer you world with ten or fifteen minute right but this guide already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. stressful do you still doubt that?

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