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**NON-  
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Jinananda  
**The  
Middle  
Way**

The Story of  
Buddhism

Read by  
**David Timson**  
with  
**Anton Lesser**  
**Heathcote Williams**

NA314612D

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	– An ill man	
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**Total time: 3:56:04**

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# Jinananda

## The Middle Way

### The Story of Buddhism

The life of the Buddha is the story of a man. Siddhartha was a human being like you or me. He was not, of course, an ordinary human being; and in this too he was like you or me. He was as distinct and separate from us as we are from each other. The extra difference in a Buddha, in anyone who attains what the Buddha attains, is that he no longer experiences his own essential difference, his own separateness.

The sense of our separation from one another, of being trapped in our own separate universes, is the very taste of human existence, and it is what Siddhartha tasted. We know this is our world because we have all looked beyond it, and some of us have even stepped out of it for a dizzying, dazzling moment. But the Buddha walked out of that separate universe and never returned. What he – and those who followed him – tasted was the taste of freedom.

Since the 1960s there has been an unprecedented explosion of interest in Buddhism in the West. It is not just that a lot of people actually practise Buddhism. There have always been plenty of those, at least up

till recently in east Asia. But in the West a lot of people simply like the idea of Buddhism. Some people feel able to call themselves Buddhists without practising it or indeed knowing anything about it at all. They have just absorbed something of the message of Buddhism from looking at a simple image of a meditating Buddha. It represents an ideal that they respond to intuitively. Others actually practise Buddhism without really liking the idea of calling themselves Buddhists. There is also a flourishing academic industry centred around Buddhism, which has produced some of the richest and most profound religious literature in the world.

The special place that Buddhism holds within world religions is that it is essentially non-threatening. This is firstly because according to Buddhism the use of force, even when it is just manipulation, is a reflection of a mistaken view of the way things are and therefore needs to be avoided. Secondly, it is because the Buddhist view is never one that separates the Buddhist from others. Again, this is regarded as simply a reflection of the

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nature of things.

Buddhism is one of the most influential belief systems of today, and also one of the oldest. What makes it at once so mysterious and so approachable is that it is not fixed in any specific formulation. It is not in its essence really a belief system as such at all. This gives it a protean ability to explain itself from within the assumptions of any culture within which it finds itself. The reason it is not tied to any external forms of expression whatsoever, not even to a form of belief system, is what it is all about.

When one examines Buddhism one sees first of all smiling monks in yellow or maroon robes; one also sees images of unearthly refinement and beauty, of wild sexual abandon, and of nightmare horror. One perhaps smells incense and hears deep-throated chanting. One may even find oneself thinking profound philosophical thoughts. One may go on adding elements of these kinds as much as one likes – one may think of meditation or karma – but though all these things may be of concern to Buddhists, they do not describe it at all.

It is significant that there is no Buddhist creed of any kind. Some people may say Buddhism is basically about impermanence or the fact that actions have consequences or that it is about letting go, or the interpenetration of all things. But no agreement can be reached, because

Buddhism is specifically about seeing through the notion of a consensus world out there. And as soon as someone agrees with that statement then the point has been missed. Buddhism is not actually about anything at all. It is always a direct pointing to the true nature of things, now.

To those who asked 'Where do we come from' the Buddha would give the example of a man with an arrow in his eye. 'Would that man', the Buddha replied, 'say "Before you take the arrow out of my eye, could you tell me who made it?"'

There are three aspects of the Buddhist faith, three most precious things that the Buddhist places at the centre of their life. These are known as the Three Jewels or Refuges: the Buddha jewel, representing the ideal of Awakening or Enlightenment to which all Buddhists aspire; the Dharma jewel, which represents the Buddhist teachings by which that ideal is realised in one's individual life; and the Sangha jewel, standing for the community of Buddhists, through which those teachings are communicated and practised.

It is perhaps no coincidence that Buddhism is establishing itself so strongly in the West at a period when science and technology are in firm control of the way the world works.

**Notes by Jinananda**

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*Jinananda, also known as Duncan Steen, was born in 1952 in Bedford and brought up in Mauritius, Scotland and Bedford, receiving an education at Bedford School. He has worked as an antiquarian bookseller and a gardener. He was ordained into the Western Buddhist Order in 1986, and since 1990 has worked as an editor for his teacher, the Venerable Sangharakshita. He teaches meditation and Buddhism at the West London Buddhist Centre.*

### **Acknowledgments**

The account of the Buddhist faith in this recording has been put together from many sources. Translations from original texts have been simplified and often abbreviated. If the text of these tapes has any virtue, it comes from those sources, and from my teacher, the Venerable Sangharakshita; its faults are all my own.

Sources not mentioned in the text:

#### **The Buddha**

Opening verse: Dhammapada

Birth: Nidanakattha; Ashvaghosha:

Buddhacarita

Life at home: Anguttara Nikaya 33, 38

The four sights: Ashvaghosha: Buddhacarita

Going forth: Majjhima Nikaya 26, 36

Austerities: Majjhima Nikaya 36

Enlightenment: Dhammapada; Majjhima

Nikaya 36

Compassion: Majjhima Nikaya 26

Conversions at Uruvela: Vinaya,

Mahavagga 1

Angulimala: Majjhima Nikaya 86

Vaikkali: Samyutta Nikaya 22,87

Parinirvana: Digha Nikaya 16

### **The Dharma**

The Kalamas: Anguttara Nikaya 3, 65

Stanzas (passim): Dhammapada

Sariputra: Vinaya, Mahavagga 1

Dependent Origination: Samyutta Nikaya

11, 92

The First Sermon: Vinaya Mahavagga 1

Sona: Vinaya, Mahavagga 5

The Buddha's Compassion: Upasaka Sila

Sutra

Vacchagotta: Samyutta Nikaya 14, 10

Nirvana: Udana 80

The Buddha's Way: Ryokan

### **The Sangha**

Sending forth: Vinaya 1, 21

Dogmatism: Majjhima Nikaya 74

Blind men and the elephant: Udana 6

The sick monk: Vinaya Mahavagga 8

The taste of freedom: Vinaya, Cullavagga

The sparrow chick: Shantideva: Siksa

samuccaya

Mumon: the Gateless Gate

Bahia: Udana 1



**David Timson** has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode* and *The Seagull*. He has appeared on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*.



**Anton Lesser** has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company, including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. His other theatre credits include *Wild Oats* and *Art*. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Politician's Wife*. He also plays the title role in Naxos AudioBooks' recording of *Hamlet*.



**Heathcote Williams** is a poet, playwright and actor, best known for his extended poems on environmental subjects: *Whale Nation*, *Sacred Elephant* and *Autogeddon*. As an actor he has taken memorable roles in *Orlando*, *Wish You Were Here*, *The Odyssey* and Derek Jarman's *The Tempest*. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and *Dracula* are also available on Naxos AudioBooks read by Heathcote Williams.

Cover picture: Gautama the Buddha, Nepalese (gilt copper).  
Christie's Images/Bridgeman Art Library, London.



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## Music

Chanting: Padmapani, Jinananda, Tim Lissimore. Recorded at Bucks Audio Recordings.

Natan Chudur – from The Three Refuges  
Voices of the Dip Tse Chok Ling Monastery

Excerpt from **Sacred Ceremonies Volume Three: Ritual Music of Tibetan Buddhism**

Celestial Harmonies

13132-2

Kang Ling (an instrument made from a human thigh bone).

Monks of the Dip Tse Chok Ling Monastery

Excerpt from **Sacred Ceremonies Volume Two: Ritual Music of Tibetan Buddhism**

Celestial Harmonies

Fortuna Records 17092-2

Both tracks used with permission from Celestial Harmonies.

**Music programming by Nicolas Soames**



The Buddha.



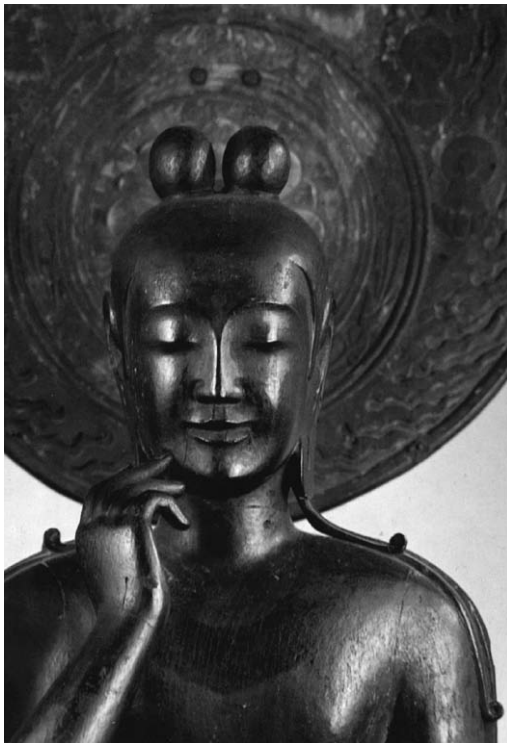
Padmasambhava, who brought the Dharma to Tibet.  
Courtesy of Windhorse Publications.



Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisttva of Compassion in his eleven-headed/  
thousand-armed form. Courtesy of Windhorse Publications.



The Wheel of Life. Courtesy of Windhorse Publications.



The Bodhisattva Maitreya in the Japanese form of Miroku from Chugu-ji, Kyoto.



Buddhism in its Western form, the shrine room of the London Buddhist Centre.



The head of the Buddha – Java.





Sitting Cliff Buddha, Sri Lanka.

Photographer: Dharmacari Mokshapriya. Used by courtesy Clear Vision, Manchester.

# The Middle Way

## The Story of Buddhism

Read by **David Timson**  
with **Anton Lesser** and **Heathcote Williams**

General interest in Buddhism has never been higher. The story and teachings of a man who lived 2,500 years ago have a special resonance for us today, perhaps because he taught a way of life that was not based on belief in a creator god but rather on personal experience.

'Test my words for yourself,' he said.

But what lies behind those distinctive images of the Buddha, seated with unshakeable poise, with eyes half-closed and a slight smile? How did Buddhism develop, from the austere style which governed the life of the yellow-robed monks in ancient India to the more colourful, even magical expression of Tibet? And where does Zen fit in?

In *The Middle Way*, Jinananda, a Western-born Buddhist, divides the subject into The Three Jewels – The Buddha (a life of the historical figure), The Dharma (an account of the fundamental teachings) and The Sangha (the disciples, both lay and monastic throughout the world).

With extracts from some of main sutras, Jinananda explains the key concepts that lie behind a system of thought and behaviour which, like the universe itself, is continuously expanding.

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Engineer (speech): Alan Smyth, Bucks Audio Recordings

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