



# Readings on Buddhism

## General

### Beginning level

Rupert Gethin. *The foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. (An excellent general introduction to Buddhism.)

Peter Harvey. *An introduction to Buddhism. Teachings, history and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Peter Harvey. *An introduction to Buddhist ethics. Foundations, values and issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Richard P. Hayes. *Land of no Buddha. Reflections of a sceptical Buddhist*. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1998. (Fascinating, although idiosyncratic, essays by a contemporary Buddhist practitioner who is also an academic in Buddhist Studies.)

David L. McMahan. *The making of Buddhist modernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. (An indispensable guide to the idiosyncrasies of contemporary Buddhism.)

Nyanaponika Thera & Hellmuth Hecker. *Great disciples of the Buddha. Their lives, their works, their legacy*. Edited & with an introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997.

Thich Nhat Hanh. *Old path white clouds. Walking in the footsteps of the Buddha*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991. (A very accessible life and interpretation of the Buddha.)

Richard H. Robinson, Willard L. Johnson & Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. *Buddhist religions. A historical introduction*. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2005. (The best general introduction to Buddhism I have found.)

Andrew Skilton. *A concise history of Buddhism*. Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1994. (An excellent single volume history of Buddhism.)

### Advanced level

Steven Collins. *Nirvāṇa. Concept, imagery, narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. (Very academic, but very thorough examination of the concept of the Buddha's teaching on nirvāṇa.)

Jake H. Davis. *Strong roots. Liberation teachings of mindfulness in North America*. Barre, Massachusetts: Dharma Dana Publications, 2004. (This is a study of the transmission of the Mahāsi method of meditation from Burma to the West. Available as a free download from Barre Centre for Buddhist Studies, along with other books, at [www.bcbsdharma.org](http://www.bcbsdharma.org).)

Richard Gombrich. *What the Buddha thought*. London: Equinox, 2009. (A very readable account of the Buddha's teaching placed in its historic context – the tradition of the Vedas and Upaniṣads.)

Ingrid Jordt. *Burma's mass lay meditation movement. Buddhism and the cultural construction of power.* Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007. (A study of the rise of the modern lay meditation movement in Burma, including its central role in Burmese politics.)

Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. *The life of the Buddha.* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1992. (A traditional biography of the Buddha consisting of a compilation of translations from the Pāli texts.)

H. W. Schumann. *The historical Buddha. The times, life and teachings of the founder of Buddhism.* Translated by M. O'C. Walshe. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004. (An excellent introduction to the historical context of the Buddha.)

Richard Shankman. *The experience of samādhi. An in-depth exploration of Buddhist meditation.* Boston & London: Shambhala, 2008. (A study of the nature of samādhi and jhāna in early and Theravāda Buddhism. Contains an analysis of the Pāli texts supported by a series of interviews with contemporary meditation teachers, both lay and monastic, Western and Asian.)

Paul Williams & Anthony Tribe. *Buddhist thought. A complete introduction to the Indian tradition.* London & New York: Routledge, 2000. (An excellent introduction to the evolution of Buddhist traditions — with the exception of their chapter on early Buddhism, which is disappointing.)

## Meditation

### Beginning level

Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield. *Seeking the heart of wisdom. The path of insight meditation.* Shambhala, 1987.

Mahasi Sayadaw. *Practical insight meditation. Basic and progressive stages.* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971. (The foundational introduction to the Mahāsī method of meditation, by Mahāsī Sayādaw himself. Traditional, technical, and totally reliable.)

Nyanaponika Thera. *The heart of Buddhist meditation. A handbook of mental training based on the Buddha's way of mindfulness.* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society: 1992. (A classic introduction to the Mahāsī method of meditation. Thorough, but technical, and at times not entirely clear.)

Sayadaw U Pandita. *In this very life. The liberation teachings of the Buddha.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1993. (An in-depth, yet accessible, account of the practice of the Mahāsī method.)

### Advanced level

Anālayo. *Satipaṭṭhāna. The direct path to realization.* Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2003. (Now the standard reference book for the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.)

Matara Sri Ñāṇarāma. *The seven stages of purification and the insight knowledges. A guide to the progressive stages of Buddhist meditation.* Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993. (A classic guide to the “stages of insight” that define Theravāda “insight meditation.” Traditional and dense.)

Venerable U Sīlānanda. *The four foundations of mindfulness.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1990. (Thorough, but very traditional, study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, limited to the perspective of Mahāsī Sayādaw's approach to meditation.)

## Scriptures

### Beginning level

Bhikkhu Bodhi. *In the Buddha's Words. An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005. (Takes the reader step-by-step through the Buddha's teachings, with readings

from the early teachings supported by introductory essays. If you want to read the suttas, this is the best entry point.)

#### Advanced level

Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The connected discourses of the Buddha. A new translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The middle length discourses of the Buddha. A new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

Nyanaponika Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The numerical discourses of the Buddha. A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012.

Maurice Walshe. *The long discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Dīgha Nikāya.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu. *The wings to awakening. An anthology from the Pāli canon.* Barre, Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications, 1996. (Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu is, along with Bhikkhu Bodhi, an indispensable translator and interpreter of the Buddha's teachings. This book, along with other translations and other books by him, is available as a free download from [www.dhammadata.org](http://www.dhammadata.org). You can also find his translations of the suttas at [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org).)

## Internet resources

#### Beginning level

Access to insight. [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org). (A treasure trove of translations from early teachings.)

Ajahn Sujato's blog. [sujato.wordpress.com](http://sujato.wordpress.com). (Actually, there is much content here that I would classify as "advanced," but I include it here in the beginning section to encourage everyone to take a look. It's a great blog.)

BuddhaNet. [www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net). (Contains a vast amount of material on all aspects of Buddhism.)

Buddhist Geeks. [www.buddhistgeeks.com](http://www.buddhistgeeks.com). (Find out what's hip and happening in contemporary "western" (i.e., mostly USA-ian) dharma culture.)

Dharma Seed. [www.dharmaseed.org](http://www.dharmaseed.org). (A treasure trove of audio files of dharma talks.)

#### Advanced level

Bhikkhu Bodhi. [bodhimonastery.org/religion/audios](http://bodhimonastery.org/religion/audios). (A collection of audio courses given by Bhikkhu Bodhi.)

Journal of Buddhist Ethics. [blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics](http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics). (Academic studies on Buddhist ethics and related themes.)

Journal of Global Buddhism. [www.globalbuddhism.org](http://www.globalbuddhism.org). (Academic articles on contemporary Buddhism.)

Ñāṇavīra Thera Dhamma Page. [www.nanavira.org](http://www.nanavira.org). (Commentaries on the Buddha's teachings that are invariably interesting and stimulating.)