



# Readings on Buddhism

## General

### Beginning level

Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Buddha's teachings on social and communal harmony: An anthology of discourses from the Pali canon*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016. (Showing the social context of the Buddha's teachings.)

Vishvapani Blomfield. *Gautama Buddha. The life and teachings of the awakened one*. London: Quercus Publishing, 2016. (A very readable and well-informed introduction to the life and teachings of the Buddha.)

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. (Another excellent general introduction to Buddhism.)

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

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

Bhikkhu Anālayo. *A meditator's life of the Buddha based on the early discourses*. Cambridge: Windhorse Publications, 2018. Cambridge: Windhorse Publications, 2018. (Not so much a

biography as a thorough source-book for the early texts on the Buddha's life, along with advice on how to apply these stories and teachings to one's own practice.)

Bhikkhu Anālayo. *Rebirth in early Buddhism and current research*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2018. (A characteristically thorough study of the teaching of rebirth and its place in the Buddha's teaching, along with research into the topic. Excellent for getting a sense of the issues involved.)

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: Dhamma Dana Publications, 2004. (This is a study of the transmission of the Mahāsi method of meditation from Burma to the West. If you Google it, you will probably find a free download.)

Richard Gombrich. *Buddhism and Pali*. Oxford: Mud Pie Books, 2018. (A very readable study of the role of the Pāli language in early Buddhism, which argues that the Buddha himself spoke Pāli.)

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.)

Ronald E. Purser. *McMindfulness. How mindfulness became the new capitalist spirituality*. London: Repeater Books, 2019. (The case for the prosecution against the secularisation and commercialisation of contemporary mindfulness teaching and practice. It gives an excellent overview of the problems facing the adaptation of the Buddha's practice in our contemporary world.)

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

Michael Bunting & Patrick Kearney. *A Practical Guide to Mindful Meditation*. Worksmart Australia, 2016. (I wrote the first draft of this book. It contains some of the practical instructions I give during retreats and workshops.)

Joseph Goldstein. *Mindfulness. A practical guide to awakening*. Louisville: Sounds True, 2016. (A comprehensive guide to satipaṭṭhāna based on Bhikkhu Anālayo's more technical *Satipaṭṭhāna. The direct path to realization*. This book takes Anālayo's approach and applies it to the practicalities of mindfulness practice.)

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.)

Sayādaw U Tejaniya. *When awareness becomes natural*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2016. (An excellent introduction to U Tejaniya's approach to meditation, which emphasises the centrality of mindfulness in everyday life, placed in the context of his life story.)

### Advanced level

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

Mahāsī Sayādaw. *Manual of insight*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016. (This is a translation of the original work by Mahāsī Sayādaw in which he lays out his approach to satipaṭṭhāna practice. It can be considered the root text of his lineage. The work is dense and technical, and not for the faint-hearted.)

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 Silānanda. *The four foundations of mindfulness*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1990. (Thorough, but very traditional, study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, limited to the perspective of Mahāsi 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*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The numerical discourses of the Buddha. A translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2012.

Bhikkhu Bodhi. *The Suttanipāta. An ancient collection of the Buddha's discourses together with its commentaries*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2017.

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

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

## Internet resources

### Beginning level

Access to insight. [www.accesstoinsight.org](http://www.accesstoinsight.org). (A treasure trove of translations from early teachings, although it is now essentially an archive – no new work seems to be happening on it.)

BuddhaNet. [www.buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net). (A heritage collection of material on all aspects of Buddhism.)

Dhammatalks. <https://www.dhammatalks.org/index.html>. (This is the central address for translations and other writings, along with audio and video files, by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro.)

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

Sutta Central. <https://suttacentral.net/>. (Original texts, translations, guides and commentaries. As its name suggests, this is now a central resource for those wanting to explore the early teachings.)

Sayādaw U Tejaniya. <https://ashintejaniya.org/>. (Audio talks, videos, written texts and other information regarding U Tejaniya's approach to meditation practice.)

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. <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/jgb/index.php/jgb/>. (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.)