Buddhism is not like other faiths. Its followers, who are called Buddhists, live according to the teachings of Buddha. Its founder, Buddha did not believe in a supreme god, so Buddhists do not worship Buddha in that way. Instead they pay respect to him and to all living beings. Buddha taught that life moves in an endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. If people live with neither too much nor too little and are kind, they come closer to a joyful state of understanding called enlightenment. This is the goal of Buddhists.

**Buddha’s Life**

Buddha was born a prince in India about 500 B.C. One day he saw death, pain and disease. He also saw a holy man who had achieved peace of mind. Buddha thought deeply about this until he became enlightened on how to live.

**How Buddhists Worship**

Buddhists visit monasteries or temples to think about Buddha and his teachings and to celebrate festivals. Buddhist homes often have a shrine with an image or statue of Buddha surrounded by candles, flowers, small bells, bowls of water, or sticks of fragrant incense.

**Holy Books**

After Buddha died, his followers wrote his teachings down on palm leaves and placed them in three baskets. These scriptures are known as the Tipitaka, or the Three Baskets.

**Symbol**

The wheel of Dharma, (teaching) is the symbol of Buddhism. Buddhists believe that Buddha set this wheel of learning in motion. It also represents the cycle of life and death.

**A Place of Pilgrimage**

Buddhists believe that there are sacred places – buildings, mountains, or trees – that are worthy of a special visit. The Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, India is important to Buddhists because it was built in the exact spot where Buddha achieved enlightenment.

**Schools of Buddhism**

All Buddhists believe in the truth of Buddha’s teachings, but different groups feel that there are separate paths to the truth. **Theravada** Buddhists are often encouraged to become monks and nuns and to follow Buddha’s teachings as closely as possible. **Mahayana** Buddhists share the belief that anyone can become enlightened, without having to become a monk or a nun.