

3.6 Buddhist Milestones

Early Life

Becoming a Monk

Marriage

Buddhist Funerals

Milestones

Early Life

- When a baby boy reaches one month of age, the parents invite the monks to the house or take the baby to the temple for his head to be shaved
- Sometimes parents will take their male children to stay with the monks for an extended period of time
- When a boy is brought into the temple, he comes as a novice, or a monk in training

Milestones

Early Life

- The novice participates in all activities of becoming a monk

Milestones

Becoming a Monk

- Two stages

Stage One

- Takes place when a boy is 7 or 8 yrs old
- He enters the monastery as a novice
- Undertakes the Ten Precepts
- Acts as an attendant to a senior monk

Milestones

Becoming a Monk

- The senior monk is responsible for teaching the novice Buddhist:
 - Rituals
 - Scripture
 - Philosophy
 - As well as anything else he deems necessary

Stage 2

- Ordination
- Occurs when a young man reaches the age of 20 and is able to read, write and chant a few simple texts

Milestones

Becoming a Monk

- Once ordained, a monk must:
 - shave his head as a sign of rejecting vanity,
 - Take a religious name
 - Wear the appropriate robe
- Upon ordination, Buddhist monks renounce their possessions and keep only those things that are absolutely necessary:
 - Robe → filter for water
 - Alms Bowl → toothpick
 - Belt
 - Razor

Milestones

Marriage

- The bride and groom go to the monastery to feed the monks in order to receive a blessing
- The monks never attend the weddings themselves

Milestones

Buddhist Funeral

- Marks death in an elaborate, ritualized way
- Based on the cremation customs of Hinduism
- Cremation is a costly option (because wood is so expensive) so burial is acceptable
- Ceremony consists of a precession, prayer, water-pouring ritual, cremation, final prayers and a shared meal

Milestones

Buddhist Funeral

- Route to the cemetery is cleared of potholes, weeds and overgrown grass
- The body is then placed into a funeral pyre (pile of wood used to start a fire) so that it is hidden from view
- The monks perform a short funeral service that includes chants and prayers

Milestones

Buddhist Funeral

- Everyone recites the Triple Refuge, and the Five Precepts
- While a prayer is chanted, holy water is poured on the body by family members and friends
- The pyre is then lit (usually by the eldest son)
- On the 6th day after death, a dharma-preaching service is held at the home
- On the 7th day Dana follows (again after 3 months, 1 yr)