

Won Buddhism

Wŏn Buddhism (Korean: 원불교) is a modernized form of Buddhism that seeks to make enlightenment possible for everyone and applicable to regular life. The scriptures are simplified so that they are easy to understand and their applications to life are made clear. Practice is simplified so that anyone, regardless of their wealth, occupation, or other external living conditions, can still practice Buddhism. Practices that are considered outdated, confusing, or unnecessary are removed. Because of the major changes that Won Buddhists have made to their practice, Won Buddhism can be regarded either as anew religious movement or as a form of Buddhism.^[1]

Won Buddhism	
Hangul	원불교
Hanja	圓佛敎
Revised Romanization	<i>Wonbulgyo</i>
McCune–Reischauer	<i>Wŏnbulkyo</i>

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History

According to Wŏn Buddhist sources, Bak Jungbin (Hangul: 박중빈, hanja: 朴重彬, 1891–1943, aka Sotaesan) attained bodhi in 1916 and had a precognition of the world entering an era of advancing material civilization to which humans would be enslaved. The only way to save the world was by expanding spiritual power through faith in genuine religion and training in sound morality. With the dual aims of saving sentient beings and curing the world of moral ills, Sot'aesan began his religious mission. He founded a new religious order with Buddhist teachings as its central doctrine, establishing the Society of the Study of the Buddhadharma at Iksan, North Jeolla Province, in 1924. Bak edified his followers with his new doctrine until his death in 1943. The central doctrine was published in the *Bulgyo jeongjeon* (*The Correct Canon of Buddhism*) in 1943.

In 1947, Song Gyu (Hangul: 송규, 1900–1962), the second patriarch, renamed the order "Won Buddhism" and published a new canon, *Wonbulgyo gyojeon* (*The Scriptures of Wŏn Buddhism*), in 1962.

Doctrine

Won Buddhist doctrine is split into two gates by which enlightenment is attained. The first, the Gate of Faith, is made up of the Fourfold Grace and the Four Essentials, which together make up the necessary *mindset* of a practitioner. The second gate is the Gate of Practice, composed of the Threefold Study and the Eight Articles, which make up the necessary *behaviors* of a practitioner.

Il-Won: The One Circle

Il-Won is the symbol that Won Buddhists use to represent the ultimate truth. This ultimate truth is said to be beyond the limits of what words can describe, so the circle is often said to be like a finger pointing at the Moon. In addition to representing the ultimate truth, *Il Won Sang* also represents everything we know, because for the ultimate truth to *be* ultimate, it must cover everything—therefore, everything must be a representation of the truth. As Buddhas' minds are one with the truth, Buddha-nature, *Il-Won* is the symbol of the dharmakāya of the Buddha and of all enlightened masters; it is the true nature of all sentient beings, regardless of whether they have awakened to it or not. That means it is the original source of the Four Graces (heaven and earth, parents, fellow beings, and laws) to which one owes one's life. The practice of *Il-Won* lies in wisdom (*prajñā*), fostering concentration (*samādhi*), and using virtue (*śīla*) upon enlightenment to the Buddha-nature continuously in daily life.

The Fourfold Grace

The Four Graces are the embodiment of the *Il-won* in its different forms; that is, all that exists in the universe can be separated into the Four Graces. The Graces are written from the perspective of gratitude owed by the practitioner; so even though parents are a type of fellow being, the debt of gratitude owed by practitioners to their parents is special and different compared to the debt of gratitude owed to other fellow beings.

1. The Grace of Heaven and Earth, which is requited by harboring no thought after rendering beneficence, and no attachment to joy, anger, sorrow, or happiness;
2. The Grace of Parents, which is requited by protecting the helpless;
3. The Grace of Fellow Beings, which is requited by learning to benefit oneself by benefiting others;
4. The Grace of Laws, which is requited by doing justice and forsaking injustice.

The Four Essentials

1. Developing Self-Power;
2. Primacy of the Wise;
3. Educating others' children;
4. Venerating the public-spirited.

The Threefold Study

- *samādhi*, cultivation of spirit;
- *prajñā*, inquiry into facts and principles; and
- *śīla*, the heedful choice in karmic action.

The threefold practice is carried out through Zen, which holds as its central principle that when the six sense organs are at rest, one should nourish the One Mind by clearing the mind of worldly thoughts; when they are at work, one should forsake injustice and cultivate justice.

The Eight Articles

The Four Articles to Develop

Belief
Zeal
Questioning
Dedication

The Four Articles to Forsake

Unbelief
Greed
Laziness
Foolishness

Scriptures and writings

Scriptures of Won Buddhism include *The Principal Book of Won Buddhism* (*Wonbulgyo chongjon*) and *The Discourse of the Great Master Dharma Words* (*Daejonggyeong*).^{[2][3]}

Connection to other Eastern philosophies

In addition to combining Buddhist schools, Won Buddhism can also be considered an amalgamation of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.^[4]

Translations of the name

The name "Won Buddhism" comes from the Korean words 원/圓 *won* ("circle") and 불교/佛教 *bulgyo* ("Buddhism"), literally meaning "Round Buddhism" or "Consummate Buddhism." By "consummate," Won Buddhists mean that they incorporate several different schools of Buddhist thought into their doctrine; that is, where some schools focus only on practicing meditation (*samādhi*), some schools devote themselves fully to studying scriptures (*prajñā*), and still others practice only their school's precepts (*śīla*), Won Buddhism believes in incorporating all three into daily practice.

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- Truth & Grace of Won Buddhism (http://user.chollian.net/~cok6789/)
- The Principal Book of Won-Buddhism (https://web.archive.org/web/20070213212514/http://wonbuddhism.info/sd/sd_1.html)
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External links

- (in Korean) Official website
- (in English) Won Buddhism
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