



Image from: [A Buddhist monk sweeps around a temple \(Wat... in Encyclopedia of Time: Science, Philosophy, Theology, & Culture](#)

Summary Article: **Theravāda**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

One of the two major forms of Buddhism, common in Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar); the other is the later Mahāyāna.

Theravāda Buddhism, or the Way of the Elders, is also known as the Hinayana, or Lesser School. It follows the Tripitaka ('three baskets'), or Pali Canon, and emphasizes the monastic life of meditation as the way to reach enlightenment. Theravāda Buddhists believe that enlightenment is reached by one's own effort, using the dharma (teachings) as a guide. Theravāda Buddhism centres round the monastery and support for the monks. Traditionally, Theravāda monks wear yellow robes.

The journey towards enlightenment is marked by three stages: **arahat**: one who, under the guidance of a Buddha, has gained insight into the true nature of things; **paccekabuddha**: an enlightened one who lives alone and does not teach; and fully awakened **Buddha**.

**Ordination** Theravāda Buddhists regard becoming a monk as an ideal for which to aim. During the rainy season, young boys aged around 11, who intend to become monks, join the monastery to study. Sometimes they just stay for the period of the rains and then return home as a mark of their entry to adulthood. Others will stay and work towards ordination. Rules for joining include having their parents' permission, not having a serious illness, and not having any debts. The day before ordination, the applicants dress in rich finery and walk through the streets with their friends and family in a joyful musical procession. The ritual commemorates the life and dress of Siddhartha Gautama (the historic Buddha) before he left the palace. On reaching the monastery, the applicants' heads are shaved and the fine clothes removed. They are presented by their fathers to the monastery, where they have to answer questions asked by a group of at least five elder monks, and their suitability is decided. After ordination, they will follow the Ten Moral Precepts, including celibacy and refusal of money, and also study under a teacher.

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What is Theravada Buddhism?

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Theravāda. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/therava%CC%84da\\_buddhism](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/therava%CC%84da_buddhism)



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## APA

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## Chicago

"Theravāda." In *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon. Helicon, 2018. [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/therava%CC%84da\\_buddhism](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/therava%CC%84da_buddhism)

## Harvard

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## MLA

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