

Welcome to our quarterly newsletter

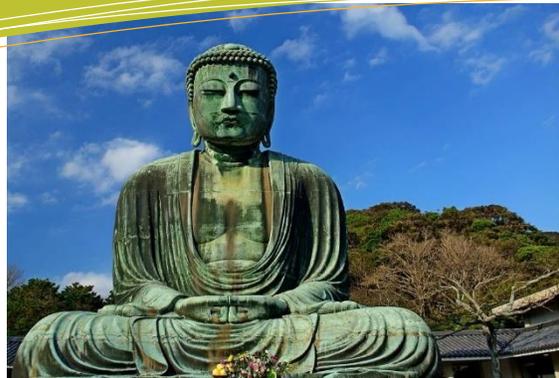
Welcome to the third edition of the What about RELIGION? quarterly newsletter. This is the best way for you to keep up-to-date with our ongoing research about religion facts. Enjoy the reading!

We will do our best every three months to give you the more interesting facts about the religions of the world, in a objective way.

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this issue

Famous buddhists

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STEVE JOBS

A Practicing Buddhist, an Entrepreneur, and an Innovator

Steve Jobs, who died on October 5, 2011 at 56 years of age, was a practicing Buddhist in Soto Zen Buddhist meditation. He was also a founder and the leader of Apple Inc., which as of August 2011, became the world's most valuable company. This essay answers the questions that follow. What do Buddhist virtues have to do with economic development? How did a practicing Buddhist create the world's most valuable company? What are the virtues and is there shadow side of Steve Jobs? After explaining a little about Buddhism, we explore four virtues common to the mind of Buddha and which Steve Jobs lived: non-dualism, removing excess thought, simple living, and self-reliance.

First, we will tell a little of Jobs' Buddhist background. Steve was dedicated to the Soto School of Zen Buddhism. The Soto School was founded by Dogen Zenji who lived from 1200 to 1253 in Japan (Bodiford, 1993; Suzuki, 1970). The school is known for its non-dualism and its integration of Enlightenment with practice. After Daisetz Suzuki brought Zen Buddhism to the West early in the twentieth century, Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi

started the Zen Center in San Francisco, the Mountain Center at Tassajara, California, and authored the book, "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind" (Suzuki, 1970). Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi had an assistant, Kobun Chino Otagawa, who was a Zen teacher to Jobs. After Jobs knew Kobun for 17 years he performed a marriage ceremony for Jobs and his wife, Laurene Powell. Over the years, Steve and Kobun often meditated together. At one time, Steve asked Kobun if he should give up business for meditation. Kobun answered that Steve should stay in business and the benefits of meditation would accrue naturally. Kobun was appointed by Jobs as the spiritual advisor at Apple. Kobun died in 2002. Jobs was undoubtedly close to his teacher who died a year before Jobs found out that he himself had pancreatic cancer.

Walter Isaacson (2011) wrote a biography which was endorsed by Steve Jobs. Although Jobs gave Isaacson many interviews, he said he would not even read the biography before it was published. In the biography Isaacson says that Jobs' major characteristic was intensity.

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“Buddhism has been a major role in my life. It has given me an inner peace and calmness that I think I wouldn’t have achieved at such an early age.”

He also says that Jobs was ambitious to make Apple flourish as an organization after his own death. Isaacson gives the example of the Hewlett Packard organization, which outlived its founders. This is similar also to the mind of Buddha which wanted Buddhism to flourish after the death of its founder, Gautama Buddha. There are many obstacles and people who rise up against the founding of an organization or even a way of being. The ambition to make the way plain especially given opposition is a sign of leadership.

Extracted from
<http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/>

Tiger Woods

Yes, with close to six million hits on Google he’s bigger than Richard Gere, more popular even than the Dalai Lama. Maybe even God. But then one prophet did foretell, “Tiger will do more than any other man in history to change the course of humanity ... He is the Chosen One.” (That was Earl, Tiger’s dad). And another seer spoke thus: “He can hold everyone together. He is the Universal Child.” (Yes, that was Koltida, his mom).

And in case you think that quasi-religious adoration of Tiger is limited to his doting parents, here’s Michael Jordan’s take: “I really do believe he was put here for a bigger reason than just to play golf. I don’t think that he is a god, but I do believe that he was sent by one.”

Despite these accolades, we’re not entirely sure whether to regard Tiger as a Buddhist. He’s said, “I believe in Buddhism ... not every aspect, but most of it. So I take bits and pieces,” which could make him sound like a dilettante, but then even the Dalai Lama has expressed similar sentiments so we’re giving Tiger the benefit of the doubt.

Woods has also said, “I don’t practice Buddhism on a day-to-day basis, just when I feel like it.” So on the bad side he’s not a consistent practitioner, while on the good side he does practice. Again, that counts him in. That practice and background (mom Koltida is a Thai Buddhist) have helped Tiger become the almost inscrutably equanimous player he’s become: “Buddhism has been a major role in my life. It has given me an inner peace and calmness that I think I wouldn’t have achieved at such an early age.”

George Lucas

The Adoption of Buddhist Motifs in Star Wars

The Star Wars film-series has been an unprecedented commercial success in the history of cinema and has made a huge cultural impact.

This is not least because of its creator George Lucas making wide use of religious and mythological elements, in his search for a new spiritual and moral guidance for a young audience. In this process, Lucas also adopts Buddhist symbols, values, and ideas in his concept of the order of the Jedi and their spirituality. These include sitting meditation, mindfulness, compassion, interdependence, or the overcoming of attachment.

Thus, Star Wars represents and promotes Buddhist elements, but deprives them of their Buddhist origin, as Buddhism as a tradition does not exist in Lucas' 'galaxy far, far away'. Although Star Wars might serve as a vehicle to bring Buddhist ideas to Western audiences, in fact Lucas uses the distance of Asian and Buddhist culture to the Western world to also enact the Jedi as the Other, mysterious and fascinating, in an approach that can be defined as orientalist.

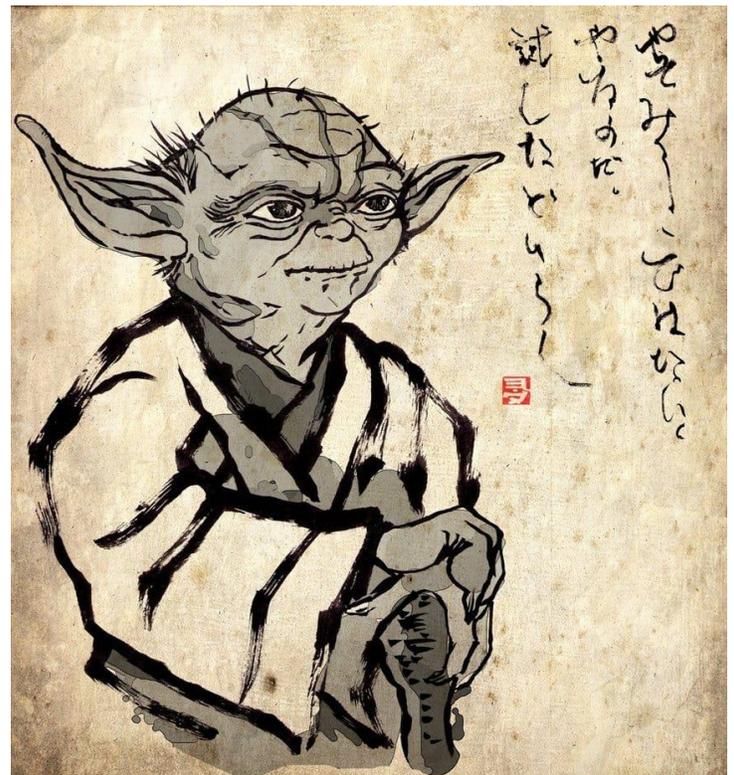
Star Wars is loved by many Buddhists for its hidden Buddhist teachings (more on that in our excerpt from Matthew Bortolin's *The Dharma of Star Wars*). But there may be an even more direct connection. According to Buddhist scholar Alexander Berzin, George Lucas traveled to Dharamsala, India, prior to making Star Wars, and met a Tibetan Buddhist teacher named Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche, a debate partner and tutor of the Dalai Lama. In "A Portrait of Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche," Berzin — who was a student of Serkong Rinpoche and lived in Dharamsala at the time — writes

"Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche was a massive man — a monk with shaved head, red robes, and a deeply lined face that made him look more ancient than his years. His humble, wise manner and gentle humor made him appear like the



"[Rinpoche] had these deep, deep wrinkles on his forehead; it was the model for Yoda in Star Wars," said Berzin in a talk.

Dharamsala, for instance, the makers of the popular film Star Wars decided to use him as the model for Yoda, the spiritual guide of the epic. Rinpoche never saw the movie, but would undoubtedly have been amused at the caricature."



An illustrator named Gitoku caught on to Yoda's monk-like image when he was illustrating old sages and Bodhisattvas. He writes, "I thought, 'These guys look like Yoda!'" Gitoku put that inspiration into a now-Internet-famous illustration of Yoda in the Zenga style alongside a calligraphy of "No, try not. Do! Or do not! There is no try!"