**Secular Buddhism Timeline**

**1976** *Insight Meditation Center* established – focusing on vipassana meditation in a secular context

**1976** S.N. Goenka establishes his first *Meditation Centre* – focused on his non-sectarian approach to vipassana meditation

**1983** *Gaia House* established – focused on vipassana meditation in a non-sectarian context

**1991** *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* – a book by Jon Kabat-Zinn in which he describes a vipassana-based practice to help alleviate stress – with little or no Buddhist references

**May 2009** *The Secular Buddhist* (podcast by Ted Meissner) – as far as I know, the first public use of the term ‘secular Buddhism’

**Aug 2012** *Coming Out as a Secular Buddhist* & *A Secular Buddhism* – essays by Stephen Batchelor

**2012** *Agents of Uncertainty* – book by JD arguing for links between scepticism and Buddhism

**Oct 2012** *Secular Buddhist Association* started

**Oct 2016** *Exeter Meditation Circle* started

**2016/2017** *Bodhi College* – ‘Secular Dharma’ courses begin online & via retreats

**2017** *Secular Buddhism: Imagining the Dharma in an Uncertain World* – book by Stephen Batchelor

**2018** *Secular Buddhist Network* established (as far as I can ascertain)

**Extracts from various sources to indicate different perspectives on ‘secular Buddhism’:**

From: <https://secularbuddhism.org/starting-out/>

In May of 2009, the podcast called The Secular Buddhist was published. It was the first time the term “Secular Buddhism” appeared in popular media, and quickly became a hub of a diverse and global community. The development of the site sprang from the needs of our members, who wanted to learn about Buddhism, and also to understand how Secular Buddhism differs from other traditions.

That podcast began out of a very common experience: while there are many different kinds of Buddhism in the world today, the teachings and practice are finding new ways to connect with people in different personal, social, and cultural contexts……

Secular Buddhism is not in antagonism to heritage Buddhism,……. It’s acknowledging that not everyone is culturally Asian or from Gotama’s time……. Instead, the dhamma is doing what it has always done: touching my life as it is, and making changes……

…. in general, we agree the following Buddhist concepts are very important to understanding Buddhism in general and to one’s secular practice:

[What Are the Four Noble Truths?](https://secularbuddhism.org/the-four-noble-truths/)

[What Are the Three Marks of Existence?](https://secularbuddhism.org/what-are-the-three-marks-of-existence/)

[What is the Eightfold Path?](https://secularbuddhism.org/what-is-the-eightfold-path/)

**From:** [**http://secularbuddhism.org.nz/about/**](http://secularbuddhism.org.nz/about/)

**WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED SECULAR BUDDHISM, AND HOW DID IT GET HERE?**

 ….. Most Buddhist practitioners in western countries belong to Asian diasporas and preserve the practices of their countries of origin.

The next most numerous group of practitioners consists of ethnic westerners who have adopted, and sometimes adapted, one or more of the longstanding Asian forms of practice, with their associated beliefs and organisational culture (including discriminatory gender relations, hierarchy and concepts of authority).

The third, emerging category of Buddhist practitioners in the west encompasses those who seek to develop forms of practice, community and thought that harmonise with their own culture and its more progressive values – starting with egalitarianism, inclusiveness and democratic self-rule. It is this third group which attracts the secular Buddhism label……

A secular approach to Buddhism shares authority and responsibility among peers, believing that everyone is capable of understanding and practicing the four tasks, of taking responsibility for their own practice, and being the spiritual friend for others.

# **From: COMING OUT AS A SECULAR BUDDHIST**

By [**Stephen Batchelor**](http://secularbuddhism.org.nz/author/agnostic/) | Published August 3, 2012 [http://secularbuddhism.org.nz/coming-out-as-a-secular-buddhist]

I am a secular Buddhist. It has taken me years to fully “come out,” and I still feel a nagging tug of insecurity, a faint aura of betrayal in declaring myself in these terms. My practice as a secular Buddhist is concerned with responding as sincerely and urgently as possible to the suffering of life in our *saeculum*—this world, this age in which we find ourselves now and future generations will find themselves …… I thus give central importance to those teachings in the Buddha’s dharma that cannot be derived from the worldview of 5th century BCE India.

Tentatively, I would suggest that this ‘bracketing’ of metaphysical views, leaves us with four distinctive key ideas that do not appear to have direct precedents in Indian tradition. I call them the four Ps:

1. The principle of conditionality
2. The process of four noble tasks (truths)
3. The practice of mindful awareness
4. The power of self-reliance

….. Thus what is truly original in the Buddha’s teaching, I discovered, [is] his secular outlook.

…. ‘Enlightenment,’ ….. – though I prefer the term ‘awakening’ – is not a mystical insight into the true nature of mind or reality….. but rather the opening up of a way of being-in-this-world that is no longer determined by one’s greed, hatred, fear and selfishness. Thus awakening is not a state but a process: an ethical way of life and commitment that enables human flourishing. As such it is no longer the exclusive preserve of enlightened teachers or accomplished yogis.

From: <http://www.meditationcircle.org.uk/secular-buddhism/>

**SECULAR BUDDHISM – as described in Exeter Meditation Circle website**

secular: from the Latin, ‘*saeculum*‘ – of this age, time, world

–  that is, a Buddhism of this time and place, making sense and working within our culture, meeting our everyday needs and aspirations, open to the same kinds of reasonable questioning and rational enquiry we would apply to any other activity – ‘secular’ or ‘agnostic’ Buddhist practice is not in any way opposed to formal religious institutions and traditions, but a complement to them.

The term, ‘secular Buddhism’ is not intended to refer to a particular category of Buddhism, let alone a new school or sect. In our understanding, the term refers to an informal process – an exploratory movement of individuals and groups who are developing forms of Buddhist practice that meet the needs and demands of people living in twenty-first century cultures across the globe. Our Buddhist practices are grounded in this life – our daily life with all its ups and downs, shocks and surprises, messiness and mystery. Mindful awareness of our daily experience is the primary method for understanding and coming to terms with life’s ever-changing pleasures and pains.

Participants in the Exeter Meditation Circle come from many different backgrounds, contributing to the Circle in ways that reflect their life-experiences and their experience of different approaches to Buddhism, other religions, philosophies, sciences and arts. We place particular value on personal responsibility and self-reliance, within the context of a deepening understanding of how we are all interconnected and interdependent. In a small way, we are working to create a culture of awakening in which all beings, and the environment in which we live, are valued and cared for.