

BUDDHISM

Origins



- 2,500 years old
 - Began in India
 - Spread and diversified throughout the Far East
 - Moved to Tibet, China, Korea, & Japan
 - A philosophy, religion, and spiritual practice followed by more than 300 million people
 - Based on the teachings of the Buddha
- The "middle way of wisdom and compassion"

The "Three Jewels" of Buddhism



Buddha – the teacher



Dharma – the teachings



Sangha – the community

Who was the Buddha?



- Born Siddhartha Gautama – of noble caste in India, 563 B.C.E. (died in 483)
 - Studied and Lived as a Hindu
- Several interpretations about his parents and his birth
 - Queen Maya and King Suddhodana
- Raised in great luxury to be a king
 - Never exposed to pain or suffering, only pleasures
 - His father protected him to help him be a great leader
- Married at age 19 and had a son
 - Wanted to see the world outside of the palace walls

The Four Sights

- Siddhartha left the palace and saw:
 - An old man
 - A sick person
 - A corpse
 - A wandering ascetic
 - He felt this was the only way to deal with the inevitable suffering of the first 3 sights

Siddhartha's Journey to Enlightenment

- Siddhartha left his family and the palace & went to the forest
- Followed a strict ascetic lifestyle for six years
 - Starved himself and nearly died
 - Developed empathy and compassion
- He then rejected this extreme and moved to meditation
 - Under the Bo Tree
 - Tempted by many demons, etc. By eliminating desire, he:
 - Achieved *Nirvana* – an awakening to the truth about life
 - Became the Buddha, the "Awakened One" at the age of 35
- Spent the remaining 45 years of his life teaching others how to achieve the peace of mind he had achieved

What did the Buddha teach?

The Four Noble Truths:

1. To live is to suffer
2. The cause of suffering is self-centered desire & attachments (craving)
3. The solution is to eliminate desire and attachment, thus achieving *Nirvana* ("extinction")
4. The way to *Nirvana* is through the "Eight-Fold Path"

*These were outlined in his first sermon at Varanasi



What is the Eight-Fold Path? (Also called the Middle Path)

Wisdom:

- Right understanding/view
- Right motivation/aim

Moral discipline:

- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood

Mental discipline:

- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right meditation/concentration



The Eight-Fold Path



How does Buddhism differ from Hinduism?

Buddhism rejects...

- ☞ Authority of the ancient Vedic texts
- ☞ The Vedic caste system
- ☞ The Vedic and Hindu deities
- ☞ The efficacy of Vedic worship and ritual
- ☞ The concept of Brahman

How does Buddhism differ from Jainism?

Buddhism rejects...

- ☞ The concept of Atman
- ☞ The practice of strict asceticism and withdrawal from the world (preferring the "middle way")
- ☞ Vegetarianism as required

What do Buddhists believe?

- ☞ Reincarnation/Samsara
 - But you can escape in this lifetime
- ☞ Karma
 - Psychological and not physical (desire, attachment to world, etc.)
- ☞ Nirvana is a peaceful, detached state of mind
 - Escape from the cycle of rebirth and suffering
- ☞ Non-theistic
 - *Buddha is not* the Buddhist God – he is just a revered teacher
 - Once Siddhartha became enlightened, he ceased to exist as a distinct being



Buddhist Metaphysics

- ☞ *Dukkha*: life in this world is filled with suffering
- ☞ *Anicca*: everything in this world is impermanent
 - Therefore no ability for traditional gods
- ☞ *Anatta*: the self/soul is also impermanent – there is no eternal, unchanging self (“no soul” – no atman)
- ☞ Suffering is a state of mind – achieve a balanced, peaceful, detached state of mind and suffering can be extinguished (*Nirvana*)

The Problem for Humans

- ☞ Suffering
 - Caused by human ignorance
- ☞ The Solution:
 - Knowledge
 - Learn the cause of suffering and what to do about it
 - Achieve Nirvana
 - Release from the cycle of suffering

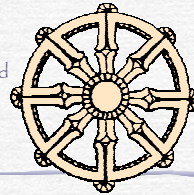
Scripture

- ☞ Large collection of sacred writings important to Buddhists
- ☞ *Tripitaka* (the *Pali* Cannon) – the “Three Baskets”:
 - *Vinaya* (“discipline”) – rules for monastic life
 - *Sutta* (“discourse”) – sermons of the Buddha
 - *Abhidhamma* (metaphysical “teachings”)
- ☞ *Dhammapada* – collected sayings of the Buddha
- ☞ Other texts used by specific schools



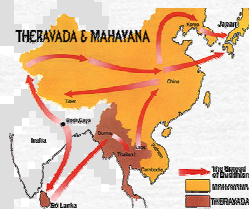
Rituals & Symbols

- ☞ Image of Buddha
 - Worshippers bring offerings
- ☞ Wheel of Law, or *Dharma*
 - Reminder of perfect way of release offered by Buddha
 - Stands for his teachings



The Spread of Buddhism

- ☞ Within two centuries after the Buddha died, Buddhism began to spread north and east into Asia
- ☞ By 13th century Buddhism had disappeared from India



Schools of Buddhism - Theravada

- ☞ The “Way of the Elders” (a.k.a.: the “small vehicle”)
- ☞ Oldest school of Buddhism—most conservative
- ☞ Found in southern Asia (Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc.)
- ☞ Follow Buddha’s example of monasticism or asceticism
- ☞ A “do-it-yourself” approach to enlightenment
- ☞ Focus on wisdom and meditation
- ☞ Goal is to become a *Buddha*
- ☞ Fairly unified in belief & practice (some cultural differences)



Schools of Buddhism - Mahayana

The "Great Vehicle"

- Developed first century C.E.
- Found in Northern Asia (China, Japan, etc.)
- Lay Buddhism - Buddhism "for the masses"
 - More liberal than Theravadin
 - Everyone is a potential Buddha
- Goal is to become a *bodhisattva*
 - One who has achieved Nirvana but stays to help others
 - Focus on compassion



Schools of Buddhism - Tibetan

Vajrayana - the "Diamond Vehicle"

- Developed 7th century C.E.
- A mix of Theravada & Mahayana:
 - Rituals (*Tantra*):
 - *Mantras* (chanting)
 - *Mandalas & Thangkas* (symbolic images)
 - *Mudras* (hand gestures)
 - *Bodhisattvas*, including living *Lamas* (Dalai Lama)
 - Meditation, monasticism, wisdom & compassion
- *Bardo Thodol* - Tibetan Book of the Dead



Schools of Buddhism - Zen

The "meditation" school:

- Found in Japan and China
- Lay and monastic
- *Koans* (paradoxical riddles to confound reason)
- Beauty, arts & aesthetics - gardens, archery, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, haiku



Buddhism in the West

Over the past two centuries, especially since the later half of the 20th century, Buddhism has made inroads into the Western world through...

- Immigration of Asian peoples who have brought their diverse forms of Buddhism to the West
- Western followers who tend to adopt meditation practices and the philosophy rather than more devotional forms of Buddhism
 - Many such western followers remain within their own faith traditions, finding Buddhism to be a complement to rather than in conflict with other religions

The two groups remain independent of one another



Web Resources:

[Buddhanet.net](http://www.buddhanet.net/): Buddhist information and education network. Includes online resource for [Buddhist Studies](#) and other Buddhism resources: <http://www.buddhanet.net/>



[Dharma the Cat](http://www.dharmathecat.com/): a multi award winning, lighthearted but informed look at Buddhism. Includes original comic strip expressing Buddhist teachings, an interfaith forum discussing Buddhist ideas from the perspective of other religions, and many other contributions from a wide variety of folks: <http://www.dharmathecat.com/>

Learn more about Tibetan Buddhism at [Osel Shen Phen Ling Tibetan Buddhist Center](http://www.fpmt-ose.org/): <http://www.fpmt-ose.org/>

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