



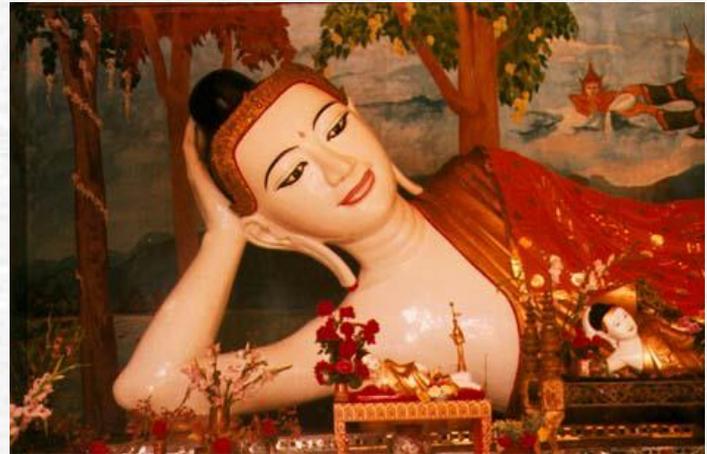


Buddhism

Theravada Temple, Laos



Theravada Temple, Burma



Theravada Temple, Mandalay

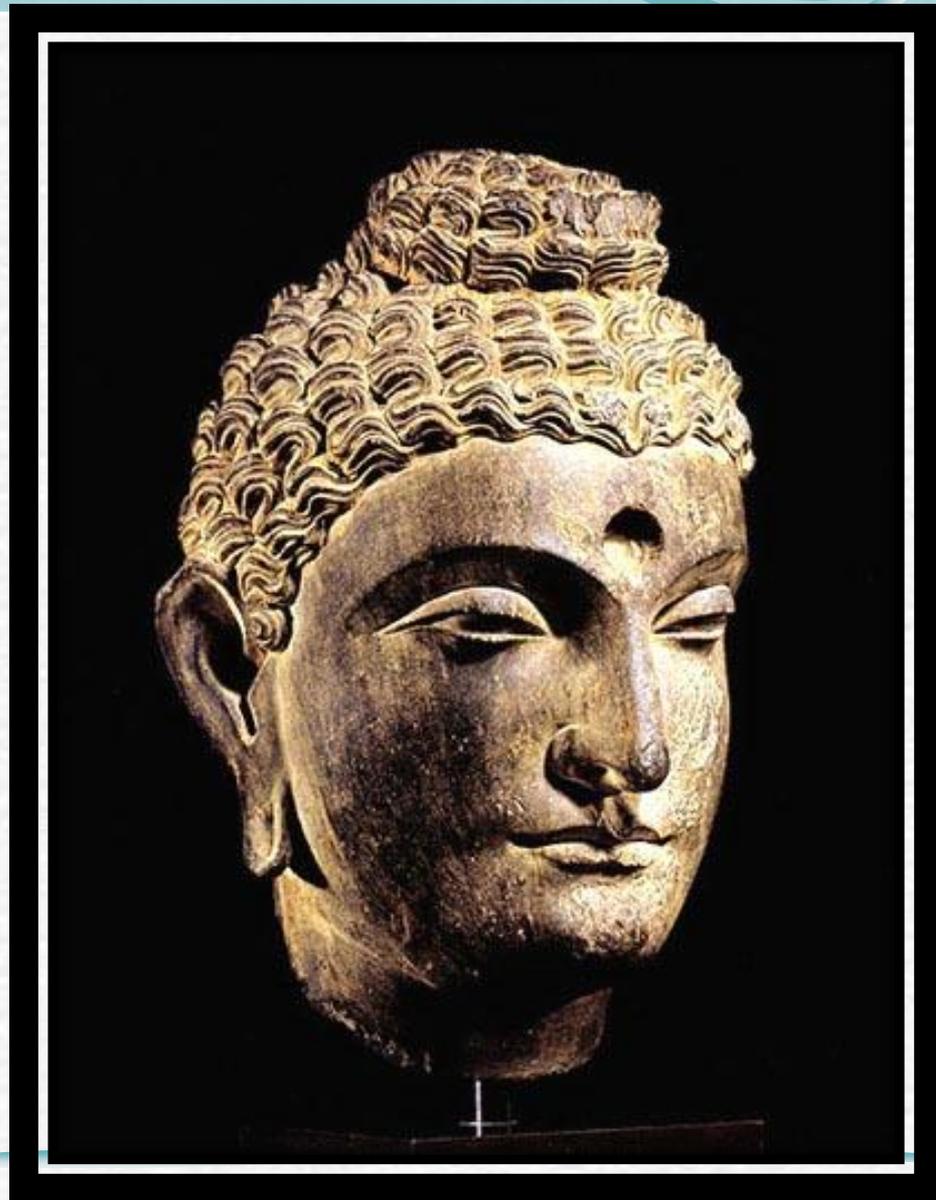


Bagan, Burma



Buddhist Altar





Buddha's
head:

2c

Pakistan

Is Buddhism a religion?

- ☞ There are no sacred texts.
- ☞ There is no God or gods.
- ☞ There are no prophets or spokesmen.
- ☞ There is no system of faith or statement of dogma.
- ☞ There are no standard answers to the basic worldview questions.

If not religion, what is Buddhism?

In Buddhism there is not, as in most other religions, an Almighty God to be obeyed and feared. The Buddha does not believe in a cosmic potentate, omniscient and omnipresent. In Buddhism there are no divine revelations or divine messengers. A Buddhist is, therefore, not subservient to any higher supernatural power which controls his destinies and which arbitrarily rewards and punishes. Since Buddhists do not believe in revelations of a divine being, Buddhism does not claim the monopoly of truth and does not condemn any other religion. But Buddhism recognizes the infinite latent possibilities of man and teaches that man can gain deliverance from suffering by his own efforts independent of divine help or mediating priests.

Buddhism is

- A philosophy of life that seeks to end personal and universal pain.
- A self-help lifestyle that seeks personal peace through personal choice.
- A do-it-yourself smorgasbord of thoughts and practices to bring about self-fulfillment.
- The “middle way of wisdom and compassion.”

The Primary Practice of Buddhism - Yoga

- Concentration, meditation, mental development. Developing one's mind is the path to wisdom which in turn leads to personal freedom. Mental development also strengthens and controls the mind; this helps one maintain good conduct.
- Discernment, insight, wisdom, enlightenment. This is the real heart of Buddhism. Wisdom will emerge if your mind is pure and calm.

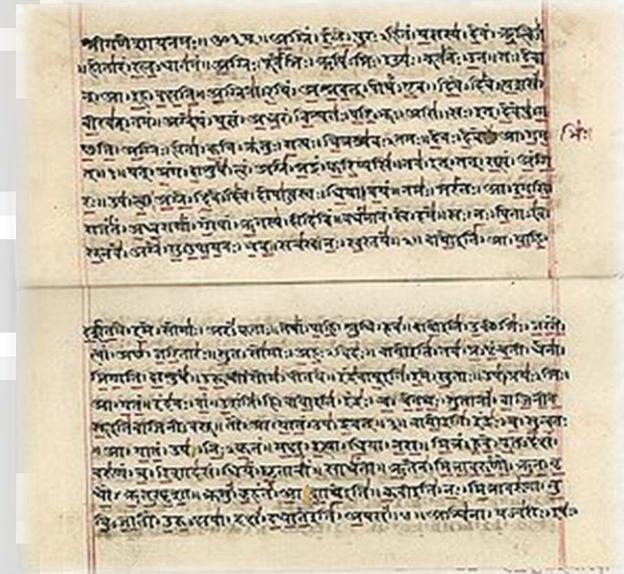
Definition of Yoga

- 1. a school of eastern philosophy advocating and prescribing a course of physical and mental disciplines for attaining liberation from the material world and union of the self with the Supreme Being or ultimate principle.
- 2. any of the methods or disciplines prescribed, especially a series of postures and breathing exercises practiced to achieve control of the body and mind, tranquility, etc.
- 3. union of the self with the Supreme Being or ultimate principle.

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 and Individual Soul





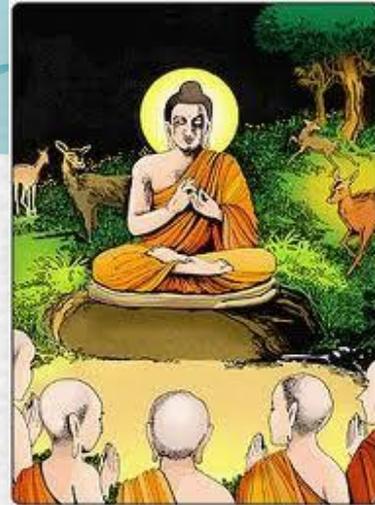
Who was the Buddha?

- Born Siddhartha Gautama – of noble caste in India, 563 B.C.
- Raised in great luxury to be a king
- Empathy for the suffering of others; at age 29 rejected the life of luxury to seek enlightenment and the solution to suffering
- Followed a strict ascetic lifestyle for six years
- Rejected this extreme, sat in meditation, achieved Nirvana: an awakening to the truth about life, becoming a Buddha, the “Awakened One” at age 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:

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



Basic Buddhist Beliefs

1. Life means suffering.

To live means to suffer, because the human nature is not perfect and neither is the world we live in. During our lifetime, we inevitably have to endure physical suffering such as pain, sickness, injury, tiredness, old age, and eventually death; and we have to endure psychological suffering like sadness, fear, frustration, disappointment, and depression.

2. The origin of suffering is attachment.

The origin of suffering is attachment to transient things and the ignorance thereof. Transient things do not only include the physical objects that surround us, but also ideas, and - in a greater sense - all objects of our perception. Ignorance is the lack of understanding of how our mind is attached to impermanent things.

Basic Buddhist Beliefs

3. The cessation of suffering is attainable.

The cessation of suffering can be attained through nirodha. Nirodha means the unmaking of sensual craving and conceptual attachment. The third noble truth expresses the idea that suffering can be ended by attaining dispassion.

4. The path to the cessation of suffering.

There is a path to the end of suffering - a gradual path of self-improvement, which is described more detailed in the Eightfold Path. It is the middle way between the two extremes of excessive self-indulgence (hedonism) and excessive self-mortification (asceticism); and it leads to the end of the cycle of rebirth.



**Fear is the path to the dark side.
Fear leads to anger,
anger leads to hate,
hate leads to suffering.
~Yoda**

Words of a Guru

- For my ally is the Force – and a powerful ally it is. Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you: here. Between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere, yes. Even between the land and the ship.
- Death is a natural part of life. Rejoice for those around you who transform into the Force. Mourn them do not. Miss them do not. Attachment leads to jealousy. The shadow of greed, that is.



What do Buddhists believe?

- Rebirth (reincarnation) results from attachments (karma).
- Nirvana is a peaceful, detached state of mind.
- Achieving Nirvana means escape from the cycle of rebirth.
- Once Gautama Buddha died, after 80 years of life in this world, having achieved Nirvana and teaching multitudes his way of life, he ceased to exist as a distinct being
- Buddhism is non-theistic: Buddha is not the Buddhist God – he is just a revered teacher.

What is the Eight-Fold Path?

Wisdom:

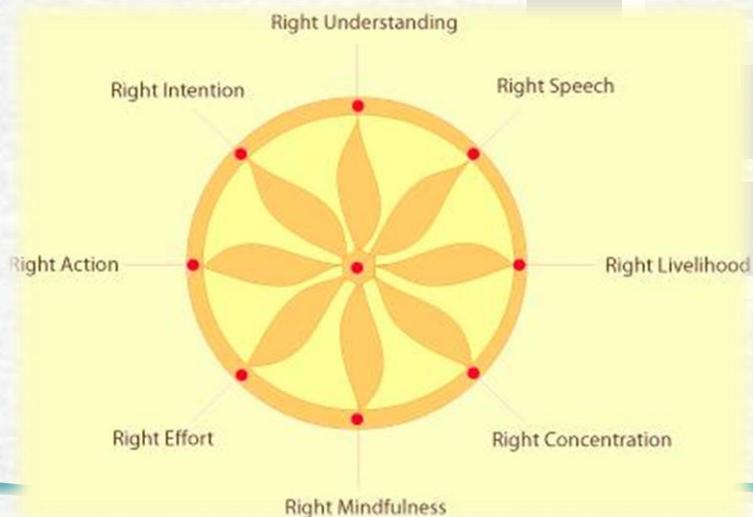
- Right understanding
- Right motivation

Moral discipline:

- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood

Mental discipline:

- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right meditation



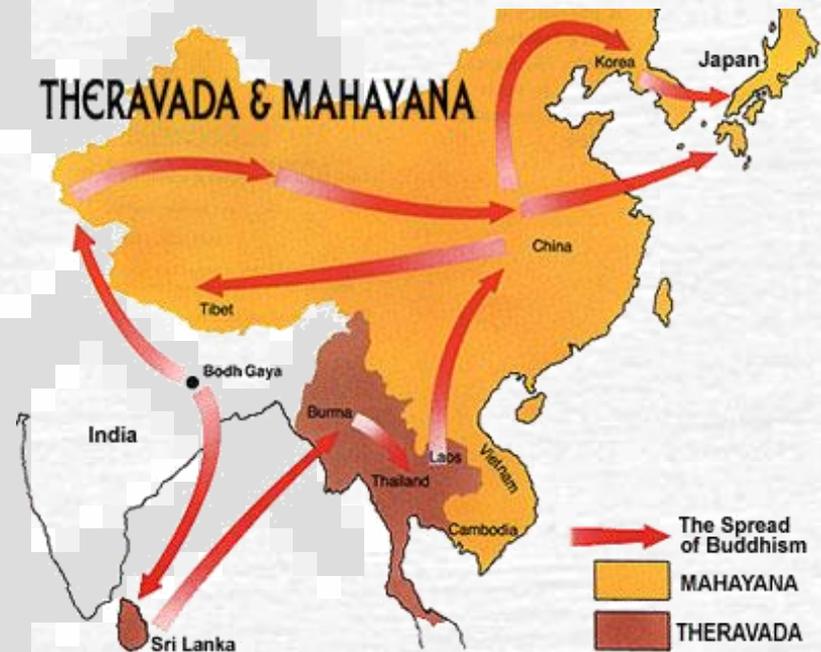
Precepts

These are rules to live by. They are somewhat analogous to the second half of the Ten Commandments. However, they are recommendations, not commandments. Believers are expected to use their own intelligence in deciding exactly how to apply these rules.

- ☞ Do not kill. This is sometimes translated as "*not harming*" or an absence of violence.
- ☞ Do not steal. This is generally interpreted as including the avoidance of fraud and economic exploitation.
- ☞ Do not lie. This is sometimes interpreted as including name calling, gossip, etc.
- ☞ Do not misuse sex. Adultery is forbidden, along with any sexual harassment or exploitation, including that within marriage.
- ☞ Do not consume alcohol or other drugs. The main concern here is that intoxicants cloud the mind. Some have included as a drug other methods of divorcing ourselves from reality -- e.g. movies, television, the Internet.

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
 - Monasticism is the ideal life for achieving Nirvana
 - Focus on wisdom and meditation
 - Goal is to become a Buddha



Schools of Buddhism - Mahayana



The "Great Vehicle"

- Lay Buddhism – Buddhism "for the masses"
- Devotional – seek guidance from Bodhisattvas ("wise beings") & heavenly Buddha's
- Focus on compassion
- Goal is to become a Bodhisattva and assist others toward enlightenment



Schools of Buddhism - Tibetan

- A mix of Theravada & Mahayana:
 - Rituals (Tantra):
 - Mantras (chanting)
 - Mandalas & Thankas (symbolic images)
 - Mudras (hand gestures)
 - Living Lamas (Dalai Lama)
 - Meditation, monasticism, wisdom & compassion



Schools of Buddhism – Zen



The “meditation” school:

- Lay and monastic
- Seeks sudden enlightenment through meditation, arriving at emptiness and the “Buddha Nature”
- Use of meditation masters (Roshi)
- Beauty, arts & aesthetics – gardens, archery, the tea ceremony, calligraphy, etc.



Buddhism in the West



- Western followers who tend to adopt meditation practices and the philosophy rather than more devotional forms of Buddhism
- Over the past two centuries, especially since the later half of the 20th century, Buddhism has made inroads into the Western world through yoga, the New Age movement, and postmodernism.



Theravada temple, Thailand

