Buddhism

Buddhism (/ˈbʊdɪzəm/, US: /ˈbuːd-/)[1][2] is the world's fourth-largest religion[3][4] with over 520 million followers, or over 7% of the global population, known as **Buddhists**.[web 1][5] Buddhism encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices largely based on original teachings attributed to the Buddha and resulting interpreted philosophies. It originated in ancient India as a Sramana tradition sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, spreading through much of Asia. Two major extant branches of Buddhism are generally recognized by scholars: Theravada (Pali: "The School of the Elders") and Mahayana (Sanskrit: "The Great Vehicle").

Most Buddhist traditions share the goal of overcoming suffering and the cycle of death and rebirth, either by the attainment of Nirvana or through the path of Buddhahood.[6][7][8] Buddhist schools vary in their interpretation of the path to liberation, the relative importance and canonicity assigned to the various Buddhist texts, and their specific teachings and practices.[9][10] Widely observed practices include taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, observance of moral precepts, monasticism, meditation, and the cultivation of the Paramitas (perfections, or virtues).

Theravada Buddhism has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Mahayana, which includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Shingon and Tiantai (Tendai), is found throughout East Asia.

Vajrayana, a body of teachings attributed to Indian adepts, may be viewed as a separate branch or as an aspect of Mahayana Buddhism.[11] Tibetan Buddhism, which preserves the Vajrayana teachings of eighth-century India, is practised in the countries of the Himalayan region, Mongolia,[12] and Kalmykia.[13]

Standing Buddha statue at the Tokyo National Museum. One of the earliest known representations of the Buddha, 1st–2nd century CE.

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Life of the Buddha

Buddha in Sarnath Museum (Dhammajak Mutra)

Buddhism is an Indian religion[14] attributed to the teachings of the Buddha,[15][16] supposedly born Siddhārtha Gautama, and also known as the *Tathāgata* ("thus-gone") and *Sakyamuni* ("sage of the Sakyas"). Early texts have his personal name as "Gautama" or "Gotama" (Pali) without any mention of "Siddhārtha," ("Achieved the Goal") which appears to have been a kind of honorific title when it does appear. The details of Buddha's life are mentioned in many Early Buddhist Texts but are inconsistent, and his social background and life details are difficult to prove, the precise dates uncertain.[17][note 1]

The evidence of the early texts suggests that he was born as Siddhārtha Gautama in Lumbini and grew up in Kapilavasthu,[note 2] a town in the plains region of the modern Nepal–India border, and that he spent his life in what is now modern Bihar[note 3] and Uttar Pradesh.[25][17] Some hagiographic legends state that his father was a king named Suddhodana, his mother was Queen Maya, and he was born in Lumbini gardens.[26] However, scholars such as Richard Gombrich consider this a dubious claim because a combination of evidence suggests he was born in the *Shakyas* community – one that later gave him the title *Shakyamuni*, and the *Shakya* community was governed by a small oligarchy or republic-like council where there were no ranks but where seniority mattered instead.[27][note 4] Some of the stories about Buddha, his life, his teachings, and claims about the society he grew up in may have been invented and interpolated at a later time into the Buddhist texts.[30][31]

"The Great Departure", relic depicting Gautama leaving home, first or second century (Musée Guimet)

According to the Buddhist sutras, Gautama was moved by the innate suffering of humanity and its endless repetition due to rebirth. He set out on a quest to end this repeated suffering. Early Buddhist canonical texts and early biographies of Gautama state that Gautama first studied under Vedic teachers, namely Alara Kalama (Sanskrit: Arada Kalama) and Uddaka Ramaputta (Sanskrit: Udraka Ramaputra), learning meditation and ancient philosophies, particularly the concept of "nothingness, emptiness" from the former, and "what is neither seen nor unseen" from the latter.[32][33][note 5]

Finding these teachings to be insufficient to attain his goal, he turned to the practice of asceticism. This too fell short of attaining his goal, and then he turned to the practice of *dhyana*, meditation. He famously sat in meditation under a *Ficus religiosa* tree now called the Bodhi Tree in the town of Bodh Gaya in the Gangetic plains region of South Asia. He gained insight into the workings of karma and his former lives, and attained enlightenment, certainty about the Middle Way (Skt. *madhyamā-pratipad*)[36] as the right path of spiritual practice to end suffering (*dukkha*) from rebirths in Saṃsāra.[37] As a fully enlightened Buddha (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*), he attracted followers and founded a *Sangha* (monastic order).[38] Now, as the Buddha, he spent the rest of his life teaching the Dharma he had discovered, and died at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, India.[39][20]

The gilded "Emaciated Buddha statue" in an Ubosoth in Bangkok representing the stage of his asceticism

Buddha's teachings were propagated by his followers, which in the last centuries of the 1st millennium BCE became over 18 Buddhist sub-schools of thought, each with its own basket of texts containing different interpretations and authentic teachings of the Buddha;[40][41][42] these over time evolved into many traditions of which the more well known and widespread in the modern era are Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism.[43][44][note 6]

The problems of life: *dukkha* and *saṃsāra*

Four Noble Truths – *dukkha* and its ending

The Buddha teaching the Four Noble Truths. Sanskrit manuscript. Nalanda, Bihar, India.

The Four Truths express the basic orientation of Buddhism: we crave and cling to impermanent states and things, which is *dukkha*, "incapable of satisfying" and painful.[47][48] This keeps us caught in saṃsāra, the endless cycle of repeated rebirth, dukkha and dying again.[note 7] But there is a way to liberation from this endless cycle[54] to the state of nirvana, namely following the Noble Eightfold Path.[note 8]

The truth of *dukkha* is the basic insight that life in this mundane world, with its clinging and craving to impermanent states and things[47] is *dukkha*, and unsatisfactory.[49][60][web 2] *Dukkha* can be translated as "incapable of satisfying,"[web 6] "the unsatisfactory nature and the general insecurity of all conditioned phenomena"; or "painful."[47][48] *Dukkha* is most commonly translated as "suffering," but this is inaccurate, since it refers not to episodic suffering, but to the intrinsically unsatisfactory nature of temporary states and things, including pleasant but temporary experiences.[note 9] We expect happiness from states and things which are impermanent, and therefore cannot attain real happiness.

In Buddhism, dukkha is one of the three marks of existence, along with impermanence and anattā (non-self).[66] Buddhism, like other major Indian religions, asserts that everything is impermanent (anicca), but, unlike them, also asserts that there is no permanent self or soul in living beings (*anattā*).[67][68][69] The ignorance or misperception (*avijjā*) that anything is permanent or that there is self in any being is considered a wrong understanding, and the primary source of clinging and dukkha.[70][71][72]

Dukkha arises when we crave (Pali: *taṇhā*) and cling to these changing phenomena. The clinging and craving produces karma, which ties us to samsara, the round of death and rebirth.[73][web 7][note 10] Craving includes *kama-tanha*, craving for sense-pleasures; *bhava-tanha*, craving to continue the cycle of life and death, including rebirth; and *vibhava-tanha*, craving to not experience the world and painful feelings.[73][74][75]

Dukkha ceases, or can be confined,[76] when craving and clinging cease or are confined. This also means that no more karma is being produced, and rebirth ends.[note 11] Cessation is *nirvana*, "blowing out," and peace of mind.[78][79]

By following the Buddhist path to *moksha*, liberation,[56] one starts to disengage from craving and clinging to impermanent states and things. The term "path" is usually taken to mean the Noble Eightfold Path, but other versions of "the path" can also be found in the Nikayas.[80] The Theravada tradition regards insight into the four truths as liberating in itself.[62]

The cycle of rebirth

Saṃsāra

Saṃsāra means "wandering" or "world", with the connotation of cyclic, circuitous change.[81][82] It refers to the theory of rebirth and "cyclicality of all life, matter, existence", a fundamental assumption of Buddhism, as with all major Indian religions.[82][83] Samsara in Buddhism is considered to be *dukkha*, unsatisfactory and painful,[84] perpetuated by desire and *avidya* (ignorance), and the resulting karma.[82][85][86]

The theory of rebirths, and realms in which these rebirths can occur, is extensively developed in Buddhism, in particular Tibetan Buddhism with its wheel of existence (*Bhavacakra*) doctrine.[84] Liberation from this cycle of existence, *nirvana*, has been the foundation and the most important historical justification of Buddhism.[87][88]

The later Buddhist texts assert that rebirth can occur in six realms of existence, namely three good realms (heavenly, demi-god, human) and three evil realms (animal, hungry ghosts, hellish).[note 12] Samsara ends if a person attains nirvana, the "blowing out" of the desires and the gaining of true insight into impermanence and non-self reality.[90][91][92]

Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Thangka depicting the Wheel of Life with its six realms

Rebirth

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception to death.[93] In Buddhist thought, this rebirth does not involve any soul, because of its doctrine of anattā (Sanskrit: *anātman*, no-self doctrine) which rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul, as it is called in Hinduism and Christianity.[94] According to Buddhism there ultimately is no such thing as a self in any being or any essence in any thing.[95]

Ramabhar Stupa in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh, India is regionally believed to be Buddha's cremation site.

The Buddhist traditions have traditionally disagreed on what it is in a person that is reborn, as well as how quickly the rebirth occurs after each death.[96][97] Some Buddhist traditions assert that "no self" doctrine means that there is no perduring self, but there is *avacya* (inexpressible) self which migrates from one life to another.[96] The majority of Buddhist traditions, in contrast, assert that vijñāna (a person's consciousness) though evolving, exists as a continuum and is the mechanistic basis of what undergoes rebirth, rebecoming and redeath.[49][96] The rebirth depends on the merit or demerit gained by one's karma, as well as that accrued on one's behalf by a family member.[note 13]

Each rebirth takes place within one of five realms according to Theravadins, or six according to other schools – heavenly, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts and hellish.[99][100][note 14]

In East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism, rebirth is not instantaneous, and there is an intermediate state (Tibetan "bardo") between one life and the next.[110][111] The orthodox Theravada position rejects the wait, and asserts that rebirth of a being is immediate.[110] However there are passages in the *Samyutta Nikaya* of the Pali Canon that seem to lend support to the idea that the Buddha taught about an intermediate stage between one life and the next.[112][113]

Karma

In Buddhism, karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") drives *saṃsāra* – the endless cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skilful deeds (Pāli: *kusala*) and bad, unskilful deeds (Pāli: *akusala*) produce "seeds" in the unconscious receptacle (*ālaya*) that mature later either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth.[114][115] The existence of karma is a core belief in Buddhism, as with all major Indian religions, it implies neither fatalism nor that everything that happens to a person is caused by karma.[116][note 15]

A central aspect of Buddhist theory of karma is that intent (*cetanā*) matters and is essential to bring about a consequence or *phala* "fruit" or vipāka "result".[117][note 16] However, good or bad karma accumulates even if there is no physical action, and just having ill or good thoughts creates karmic seeds; thus, actions of body, speech or mind all lead to karmic seeds.[116] In the Buddhist traditions, life aspects affected by the law of karma in past and current births of a being include the form of rebirth, realm of rebirth, social class, character and major circumstances of a lifetime.[116][121][122] It operates like the laws of physics, without external intervention, on every being in all six realms of existence including human beings and gods.[116][123]

A notable aspect of the karma theory in Buddhism is merit transfer.[124][125] A person accumulates merit not only through intentions and ethical living, but also is able to gain merit from others by exchanging goods and services, such as through *dāna* (charity to monks or nuns).[126] Further, a person can transfer one's own good karma to living family members and ancestors.[125][note 17]

Liberation

The cessation of the *kleshas* and the attainment of nirvana (*nibbāna*), with which the cycle of rebirth ends, has been the primary and the soteriological goal of the Buddhist path for monastic life since the time of the Buddha.[56][129][130] The term "path" is usually taken to mean the Noble Eightfold Path, but other versions of "the path" can also be found in the Nikayas.[note 18] In some passages in the Pali Canon, a distinction is being made between right knowledge or insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*), and right liberation or release (*sammā-vimutti*), as the means to attain cessation and liberation.[131][132]

Nirvana literally means "blowing out, quenching, becoming extinguished".[133][134] In early Buddhist texts, it is the state of restraint and self-control that leads to the "blowing out" and the ending of the cycles of sufferings associated with rebirths and redeaths.[135][136][137] Many later Buddhist texts describe nirvana as identical with *anatta* with complete "emptiness, nothingness".[138][139][140][note 19] In some texts, the state is described with greater detail, such as passing through the gate of emptiness (*sunyata*) – realising that there is no soul or self in any living being, then passing through the gate of signlessness (*animitta*) – realising that nirvana cannot be perceived, and finally passing through the gate of wishlessness (*apranihita*) – realising that nirvana is the state of not even wishing for nirvana.[129][142][note 20]

The nirvana state has been described in Buddhist texts partly in a manner similar to other Indian religions, as the state of complete liberation, enlightenment, highest happiness, bliss, fearlessness, freedom, permanence, non-dependent origination, unfathomable, and indescribable.[144][145] It has also been described in part differently, as a state of spiritual release marked by "emptiness" and realisation of *non-self*.[146][147][148][note 21]

While Buddhism considers the liberation from saṃsāra as the ultimate spiritual goal, in traditional practice, the primary focus of a vast majority of lay Buddhists has been to seek and accumulate merit through good deeds, donations to monks and various Buddhist rituals in order to gain better rebirths rather than nirvana.[151][105][note 22]

Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, India, where Gautama Buddha attained nirvana under the Bodhi Tree (left)

The path to liberation: *Bhavana* (practice, cultivation)

While the Noble Eightfold Path is best-known in the west, a wide variety of practices and stages have been used and described in the Buddhist traditions. Basic practices include *sila* (ethics), *samadhi* (meditation, *dhyana*) and *prajna* (wisdom), as described in the Noble Eightfold Path. An important additional practice is a kind and compassionate attitude toward every living being and the world. Devotion is also important in some Buddhist traditions, and in the Tibetan traditions visualisations of deities and mandalas are important. The value of textual study is regarded differently in the various Buddhist traditions. It is central to Theravada and highly important to Tibetan Buddhism, while the Zen tradition takes an ambiguous stance.

Refuge in the Three Jewels

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking Three Refuges, also called the Three Jewels (Sanskrit: *triratna*, Pali: *tiratana*) as the foundation of one's religious practice.[152] Pali texts employ the Brahmanical motif of the triple refuge, found in the *Rigveda* 9.97.47, *Rigveda* 6.46.9 and *Chandogya Upanishad* 2.22.3–4.[153] Tibetan Buddhism sometimes adds a fourth refuge, in the *lama*. The three refuges are believed by Buddhists to be protective and a form of reverence.[152]

Triratna symbol

The Three Jewels are:[154]

- The Gautama Buddha, the historical Buddha, the Blessed One, the Awakened with true knowledge
- The Dharma, the precepts, the practice, the Four Truths, the Eightfold Path
- The Sangha, order of monks, the community of Buddha's disciples

Reciting the three refuges is considered in Buddhism not as a place to hide, rather a thought that purifies, uplifts and strengthens.[154]

The Buddhist path

Theravada – Noble Eightfold Path

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the Middle Way (*madhyamapratipad*). It was a part of Buddha's first sermon, where he presented the Noble Eightfold Path that was a 'middle way' between the extremes of asceticism and hedonistic sense pleasures.[155][156] In Buddhism, states Harvey, the doctrine of "dependent arising" (conditioned arising, *pratītyasamutpāda*) to explain rebirth is viewed as the 'middle way' between the doctrines that a being has a "permanent soul" involved in rebirth (eternalism) and "death is final and there is no rebirth" (annihilationism).[157][158]

The *Dharmachakra* represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the Theravada canon, the Pali-suttas, various often irreconcilable sequences can be found. According to Carol Anderson, the Theravada canon lacks "an overriding and comprehensive structure of the path to *nibbana*."[159] Nevertheless, the Noble Eightfold Path, or "Eightfold Path of the Noble Ones", has become an important description of the Buddhist path. It consists of a set of eight interconnected factors or conditions, that when developed together, lead to the cessation of dukkha.[160] These eight factors are: Right View (or Right Understanding), Right Intention (or Right Thought), Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

This Eightfold Path is the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, and asserts the path to the cessation of *dukkha* (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness).[161][162] The path teaches that the way of the enlightened ones stopped their craving, clinging and karmic accumulations, and thus ended their endless cycles of rebirth and suffering.[163][164][165]

The Noble Eightfold Path is grouped into three basic divisions, as follows:[166][167][168]

Division	Eightfold factor	*Sanskrit, Pali*	Description
Wisdom (Sanskrit: *prajñā*, Pāli: *paññā*)	1. Right view	*samyag dṛṣṭi, sammā ditthi*	The belief that there is an afterlife and not everything ends with death, that Buddha taught and followed a successful path to nirvana;[166] according to Peter Harvey, the right view is held in Buddhism as a belief in the Buddhist principles of karma and rebirth, and the importance of the Four Noble Truths and the True Realities.[169]
	2. Right intention	*samyag saṃkalpa, sammā saṅkappa*	Giving up home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant in order to follow the path;[166] this concept, states Harvey, aims at peaceful renunciation, into an environment of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to lovingkindness), away from cruelty (to compassion).[169]
Moral virtues[167] (Sanskrit: *śīla*, Pāli: *sīla*)	3. Right speech	*samyag vāc, sammā vāca*	No lying, no rude speech, no telling one person what another says about him, speaking that which leads to salvation.[166]
	4. Right action	*samyag karman, sammā kammanta*	No killing or injuring, no taking what is not given; no sexual acts in monastic pursuit,[166] for lay Buddhists no sensual misconduct such as sexual involvement with someone married, or with an unmarried woman protected by her parents or relatives.[170][171][172]
	5. Right livelihood	*samyag ājīvana, sammā ājīva*	For monks, beg to feed, only possessing what is essential to sustain life.[173] For lay Buddhists, the canonical texts state right livelihood as abstaining from wrong livelihood, explained as not becoming a source or means of suffering to sentient beings by cheating them, or harming or killing them in any way.[174][175]
Meditation[167] (Sanskrit and Pāli: *samādhi*)	6. Right effort	*samyag vyāyāma, sammā vāyāma*	Guard against sensual thoughts; this concept, states Harvey, aims at preventing unwholesome states that disrupt meditation.[176]
	7. Right mindfulness	*samyag smṛti, sammā sati*	Never be absent minded, conscious of what one is doing; this, states Harvey, encourages mindfulness about impermanence of the body, feelings and mind, as well as to experience the five skandhas, the five hindrances, the four True Realities and seven factors of awakening.[176]
	8. Right concentration	*samyag samādhi, sammā samādhi*	Correct meditation or concentration (*dhyana*), explained as the four jhānas.[166][177]

Mahayana – Bodhisattva-path and the six paramitas

Dāna or charitable giving to monks is a virtue in Buddhism, leading to merit accumulation and better rebirths.[178]

Mahāyāna Buddhism is based principally upon the path of a Bodhisattva.[179] A *Bodhisattva* refers to one who is on the path to buddhahood.[180] The term *Mahāyāna* was originally a synonym for *Bodhisattvayāna* or "Bodhisattva Vehicle."[181][182][183]

In the earliest texts of Mahayana Buddhism, the path of a bodhisattva was to awaken the *bodhicitta*.[184] Between the 1st and 3rd century CE, this tradition introduced the *Ten Bhumi* doctrine, which means ten levels or stages of awakening.[184] This development was followed by the acceptance that it is impossible to achieve Buddhahood in one (current) lifetime, and the best goal is not nirvana for oneself, but Buddhahood after climbing through the ten levels during multiple rebirths.[185] Mahayana scholars then outlined an elaborate path, for monks and laypeople, and the path includes the vow to help teach Buddhist knowledge to other beings, so as to help them cross samsara and liberate themselves, once one reaches the Buddhahood in a future rebirth.[179] One part of this path are the *Pāramitā* (perfections, to cross over), derived from the *Jatakas* tales of Buddha's numerous rebirths.[186][187]

The Mahayana texts are inconsistent in their discussion of the *Paramitas*, and some texts include lists of two, others four, six, ten and fifty-two.[188][189][190] The six paramitas have been most studied, and these are:[186][190][191]

1. *Dāna pāramitā*: perfection of giving; primarily to monks, nuns and the Buddhist monastic establishment dependent on the alms and gifts of the lay householders, in return for generating religious merit;[192] some texts recommend ritually transferring the merit so accumulated for better rebirth to someone else
2. *Śīla pāramitā*: perfection of morality; it outlines ethical behaviour for both the laity and the Mahayana monastic community; this list is similar to Śīla in the Eightfold Path (i.e. Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood)[193]
3. *Kṣānti pāramitā*: perfection of patience, willingness to endure hardship
4. *Vīrya pāramitā*: perfection of vigour; this is similar to Right Effort in the Eightfold Path[193]
5. *Dhyāna pāramitā*: perfection of meditation; this is similar to Right Concentration in the Eightfold Path
6. *Prajñā pāramitā*: perfection of insight (wisdom), awakening to the characteristics of existence such as karma, rebirths, impermanence, no-self, dependent origination and emptiness;[190][194] this is complete acceptance of the Buddha teaching, then conviction, followed by ultimate realisation that "dharmas are non-arising".[186]

In Mahayana Sutras that include ten *Paramitas*, the additional four perfections are "skillful means, vow, power and knowledge".[189] The most discussed *Paramita* and the highest rated perfection in Mahayana texts is the "Prajna-paramita", or the "perfection of insight".[189] This insight in the Mahayana tradition, states Shōhei Ichimura, has been the "insight of non-duality or the absence of reality in all things".[195][196]

Śīla – Buddhist ethics

Śīla (Sanskrit) or *sīla* (Pāli) is the concept of "moral virtues", that is the second group and an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path.[169] It consists of right speech, right action and right livelihood.[169]

Śīla appear as ethical precepts for both lay and ordained Buddhist devotees. It includes the Five Precepts for laypeople, Eight or Ten Precepts for monastic life, as well as rules of Dhamma (*Vinaya* or *Patimokkha*) adopted by a monastery.[197][198]

Precepts

Buddhist scriptures explain the five precepts (Pali: *pañcasīla*; Sanskrit: *pañcaśīla*) as the minimal standard of Buddhist morality.[199] It is the most important system of morality in Buddhism, together with the monastic rules.[200] The five precepts apply to both male and female devotees, and these are:[197][201]

1. Abstain from killing (Ahimsa);
2. Abstain from stealing;
3. Abstain from sensual (including sexual) misconduct;
4. Abstain from lying;
5. Abstain from intoxicants.

Undertaking and upholding the five precepts is based on the principle of non-harming (Pāli and Sanskrit: *ahiṃsa*).[202] The Pali Canon recommends one to compare oneself with others, and on the basis of that, not to hurt others.[203] Compassion and a belief in karmic retribution form the foundation of the precepts.[204][205] Undertaking the five precepts is part of regular lay devotional practice, both at home and at the local temple.[206][207] However, the extent to which people keep them differs per region and time.[208][207] They are sometimes referred to as the *śrāvakayāna precepts* in the Mahāyāna tradition, contrasting them with the *bodhisattva* precepts.[209]


Head of a Buddha statue from Gandhara, 2-3rd century CE

The five precepts are not commandments and transgressions do not invite religious sanctions, but their power has been based on the Buddhist belief in karmic consequences and their impact in the afterlife. Killing in Buddhist belief leads to rebirth in the hell realms, and for a longer time in more severe conditions if the murder victim was a monk. Adultery, similarly, invites a rebirth as prostitute or in hell, depending on whether the partner was unmarried or married.[210] These moral precepts have been voluntarily self-enforced in lay Buddhist culture through the associated belief in karma and rebirth.[211] Within the Buddhist doctrine, the precepts are meant to develop mind and character to make progress on the path to enlightenment.[212]

The monastic life in Buddhism has additional precepts as part of *patimokkha*, and unlike lay people, transgressions by monks do invite sanctions. Full expulsion from *sangha* follows any instance of killing, engaging in sexual intercourse, theft or false claims about one's knowledge. Temporary expulsion follows a lesser offence.[213] The sanctions vary per monastic fraternity (*nikaya*).[214]

Lay people and novices in many Buddhist fraternities also uphold eight (*asta shila*) or ten (*das shila*) from time to time. Four of these are same as for the lay devotee: no killing, no stealing, no lying, and no intoxicants.[215] The other four precepts are:[216][215]

1. No sexual activity;
2. Abstain from eating at the wrong time (e.g. only eat solid food before noon);
3. Abstain from jewellery, perfume, adornment, entertainment;
4. Abstain from sleeping on high bed i.e. to sleep on a mat on the ground.

All eight precepts are sometimes observed by lay people on *uposatha* days: full moon, new moon, the first and last quarter following the lunar calendar.[215] The ten precepts also include to abstain from accepting money.[215]

In addition to these precepts, Buddhist monasteries have hundreds of rules of conduct, which are a part of its *patimokkha*.[217][note 23]

Vinaya

Vinaya is the specific code of conduct for a *sangha* of monks or nuns. It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 offences including 75 rules of decorum for monks, along with penalties for transgression, in the Theravadin tradition.[219] The precise content of the *Vinaya Pitaka* (scriptures on the Vinaya) differs in different schools and tradition, and different monasteries set their own standards on its implementation. The list of *pattimokkha* is recited every fortnight in a ritual gathering of all monks.[219] Buddhist text with vinaya rules for monasteries have been traced in all Buddhist traditions, with the oldest surviving being the ancient Chinese translations.[220]


Monks performing a ceremony in Hangzhou, China

Monastic communities in the Buddhist tradition cut normal social ties to family and community, and live as "islands unto themselves".[221] Within a monastic fraternity, a *sangha* has its own rules.[221] A monk abides by these institutionalised rules, and living life as the vinaya prescribes it is not merely a means, but very nearly the end in itself.[221] Transgressions by a monk on *Sangha* vinaya rules invites enforcement, which can include temporary or permanent expulsion.[222]

Samadhi (*dhyana*) – meditation


Bhikkhus in Thailand

A wide range of meditation practices has developed in the Buddhist traditions, but "meditation" primarily refers to the practice of *dhyana* c.q. *jhana*. It is a practice in which the attention of the mind is first narrowed to the focus on one specific object, such as the breath, a concrete object, or a specific thought, mental image or mantra. After this initial focusing of the mind, the focus is coupled to mindfulness, maintaining a calm mind while being aware of one's surroundings.[223] The practice of *dhyana* aids in maintaining a calm mind, and avoiding disturbance of this calm mind by mindfulness of disturbing thoughts and feelings.[224][note 24]

Origins

The earliest evidence of yogis and their meditative tradition, states Karel Werner, is found in the Keśin hymn 10.136 of the Rigveda.[225] While evidence suggests meditation was practised in the centuries preceding the Buddha,[226] the meditative methodologies described in the Buddhist texts are some of the earliest among texts that have survived into the modern era.[227][228] These methodologies likely incorporate what existed before the Buddha as well as those first developed within Buddhism.[229][note 25]

According to Bronkhorst, the *Four Dhyanas* was a Buddhist invention.[233] Bronkhorst notes that the Buddhist canon has a mass of contradictory statements, little is known about their relative chronology, and "there can be no doubt that the canon – including the older parts, the Sutra and Vinaya Pitaka – was composed over a long period of time".[234] Meditative practices were incorporated from other sramanic movements;[235] the Buddhist texts describe how Buddha learnt the practice of the formless dhyana from Brahmanical practices, in the Nikayas ascribed to Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta.[236][237] The Buddhist canon also describes and criticises alternative dhyana practices, which likely mean the pre-existing mainstream meditation practices of Jainism and Hinduism.[238]

Buddha added a new focus and interpretation, particularly through the Four Dhyanas methodology,[239] in which mindfulness is maintained.[240][223] Further, the focus of meditation and the underlying theory of liberation guiding the meditation has been different in Buddhism.[226][241][242] For example, states Bronkhorst, the verse 4.4.23 of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with its "become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring, concentrated, one sees soul in oneself" is most probably a meditative state.[243] The Buddhist discussion of meditation is without the concept of soul and the discussion criticises both the ascetic meditation of Jainism and the "real self, soul" meditation of Hinduism.[244]

Four *rupa-jhāna* and four *arupa-jhāna*


Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji Area

For Nirvana, Buddhist texts teach various meditation methodologies, of which *rupa-jhana* (four meditations in the realm of form) and *arupa-jhana* (four meditations in the formless realm) have been the most studied.[245] These are described in the Pali Canon as trance-like states in the world of desirelessness.[246] The four dhyanas under *rupa-jhanas* are:[246]

1. First dhyana: detach from all sensory desires and sinful states that are a source of unwholesome karma. Success here is described in Buddhist texts as leading to discursive thinking, deliberation, detachment, *sukha* (pleasure) and *priti* (rapture).[245][note 26]
2. Second dhyana: cease deliberation and all discursive thoughts.[246] Success leads to one-pointed thinking, serenity, pleasure and rapture.[245]
3. Third dhyana: lose feeling of rapture. Success leads to equanimity, mindfulness and pleasure, without rapture.[245]
4. Fourth dhyana: cease all effects, lose all happiness and sadness. Success in the fourth meditation stage leads to pure equanimity and mindfulness, without any pleasure or pain.[245][246]

The *arupa-jhanas* (formless realm meditation) are also four, which are entered by those who have mastered the *rupa-jhanas* (Arhats).[246][247] The first formless dhyana gets to infinite space without form or colour or shape, the second to infinity of perception base of the infinite space, the third formless dhyana transcends object-subject perception base, while the fourth is where he dwells in nothing-at-all where there are no feelings, no ideas, nor are there non-ideas, unto total cessation.[247] The four *rupa-dhyanas* in Buddhist practice lead to rebirth in successfully better *rupa* Brahma heavenly realms, while *arupa-dhyanas* lead into arupa heavens.[248][249]

Richard Gombrich notes that the sequence of the four *rupa-jhanas* describes two different cognitive states. The first two describe a narrowing of attention, while in the third and fourth jhana attention is expanded again.[250][note 27][251] Alexander Wynne further explains that the *dhyana*-scheme is poorly understood.[252] According to Wynne, words expressing the inculcation of awareness, such as *sati*, *sampajāno*, and *upekkhā*, are mistranslated or understood as particular factors of meditative states,[252] whereas they refer to a particular way of perceiving the sense objects.[252][note 28][note 29]

Meditation and insight


Statue of the Buddha in meditation position, Haw Phra Kaew, Vientiane, Laos

The Buddhist tradition has incorporated two traditions regarding the use of dhyāna (meditation, Pali *jhāna*).[235] There is a tradition that stresses attaining prajñā (insight, bodhi, kenshō, vipassana) as the means to awakening and liberation. But it has also incorporated the yogic tradition, as reflected in the use of jhana, which is rejected in other sutras as not resulting in the final result of liberation.[135][235][254][note 30] Lambert Schmithausen, a professor of Buddhist Studies, discerns three possible roads to liberation as described in the suttas,[note 31] to which Vetter adds the sole practice of *dhyana* itself.[257][note 32] According to Vetter and Bronkhorst, the earliest Buddhist path consisted of a set of practices which culminate in the practice of *dhyana*, leading to a calm of mind which according to Vetter *is* the liberation which is being sought.[257][258] Frauwallner notes that the Buddha regarded *tanha*, "thirst," craving, to be the cause of suffering, not ignorance. But this was in contradiction to the Indian traditions of the time, and posed a problem, which was then also incorporated into the Buddhis teachings.[259] Later on, "liberating insight" came to be regarded as equally liberating.[260][258] This "liberating insight" came to be exemplified by *prajna*, or the insight in the "four truths,"[260][258] but also by other elements of the Buddhist teachings.[257][261]

The *Brahma-vihara*

The four immeasurables or four abodes, also called *Brahma-viharas*, are virtues or directions for meditation in Buddhist traditions, which helps a person be reborn in the heavenly (Brahma) realm.[262][263][264] These are traditionally believed to be a characteristic of the deity Brahma and the heavenly abode he resides in.[265]


Statue of Buddha in Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, Phitsanulok, Thailand

The four *Brahma-vihara* are:

1. Loving-kindness (Pāli: *mettā*, Sanskrit: *maitrī*) is active good will towards all;[263][266]
2. Compassion (Pāli and Sanskrit: *karuṇā*) results from *metta*; it is identifying the suffering of others as one's own;[263][266]
3. Empathetic joy (Pāli and Sanskrit: *muditā*): is the feeling of joy because others are happy, even if one did not contribute to it; it is a form of sympathetic joy;[266]
4. Equanimity (Pāli: *upekkhā*, Sanskrit: *upekṣā*): is even-mindedness and serenity, treating everyone impartially.[263][266]

According to Peter Harvey, the Buddhist scriptures acknowledge that the four *Brahmavihara* meditation practices "did not originate within the Buddhist tradition".[267][note 33] The Brahmavihara (sometimes as Brahmaloka), along with the tradition of meditation and the above four immeasurables are found in pre-Buddha and post-Buddha Vedic and

Sramanic literature.[269][270] Aspects of the Brahmavihara practice for rebirths into the heavenly realm have been an important part of Buddhist meditation tradition.[271][272]

According to Gombrich, the Buddhist usage of the *brahma-vihāra* originally referred to an awakened state of mind, and a concrete attitude toward other beings which was equal to "living with Brahman" here and now. The later tradition took those descriptions too literally, linking them to cosmology and understanding them as "living with Brahman" by rebirth in the Brahma-world.[273] According to Gombrich, "the Buddha taught that kindness – what Christians tend to call love – was a way to salvation."[274]

Visualizations: deities, mandalas

Mandala are used in Buddhism for initiation ceremonies and visualisation.[275]

Idols of deity and icons have been a part of the historic practice, and in Buddhist texts such as the 11th-century *Sadanamala*, a devotee visualises and identifies himself or herself with the imagined deity as part of meditation.[276][277] This has been particularly popular in Vajrayana meditative traditions, but also found in Mahayana and Theravada traditions, particularly in temples and with Buddha images.[278]

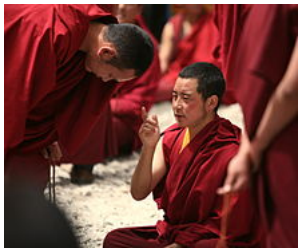
In Tibetan Buddhism tradition, mandala are mystical maps for the visualisation process with cosmic symbolism.[275] There are numerous deities, each with a mandala, and they are used during initiation ceremonies and meditation.[275] The mandalas are concentric geometric shapes symbolising layers of the external world, gates and sacred space. The meditation deity is in the centre, sometimes surrounded by protective gods and goddesses.[275] Visualizations with deities and mandalas in Buddhism is a tradition traceable to ancient times, and likely well established by the time the 5th-century text *Visuddhimagga* was composed.[275][279]

Practice: monks, laity

According to Peter Harvey, whenever Buddhism has been healthy, not only ordained but also more committed lay people have practised formal meditation.[280] Loud devotional chanting however, adds Harvey, has been the most prevalent Buddhist practice and considered a form of meditation that produces "energy, joy, lovingkindness and calm", purifies mind and benefits the chanter.[281]

Throughout most of Buddhist history, meditation has been primarily practised in Buddhist monastic tradition, and historical evidence suggests that serious meditation by lay people has been an exception.[282][283][284] In recent history, sustained meditation has been pursued by a minority of monks in Buddhist monasteries.[285] Western interest in meditation has led to a revival where ancient Buddhist ideas and precepts are adapted to Western mores and interpreted liberally, presenting Buddhism as a meditation-based form of spirituality.[285]

Prajñā – insight



Monks debating at Sera Monastery, Tibet

Prajñā (Sanskrit) or *paññā* (Pāli) is insight or knowledge of the true nature of existence. The Buddhist tradition regards ignorance (avidyā), a fundamental ignorance, misunderstanding or mis-perception of the nature of reality, as one of the basic causes of *dukkha* and *samsara*. By overcoming ignorance or misunderstanding one is enlightened and liberated. This overcoming includes awakening to impermanence and the non-self nature of reality,[286][287] and this develops dispassion for the objects of clinging, and liberates a being from *dukkha* and *saṃsāra*.[288][289][290] *Prajñā* is important in all Buddhist traditions, and is the wisdom about the dharmas, functioning of karma and rebirths, realms of samsara, impermanence of everything, no-self in anyone or anything, and dependent origination.[291]

Origins

The origins of "liberating insight" are unclear. Buddhist texts, states Bronkhorst, do not describe it explicitly, and the content of "liberating insight" is likely not original to Buddhism.[292] According to Vetter and Bronkhorst, this growing importance of "liberating insight" was a response to other religious groups in India, which held that a liberating insight was indispensable for *moksha*, liberation from rebirth.[293][294][note 34]

Bronkhorst suggests that the conception of what exactly constituted "liberating insight" for Buddhists developed over time. Whereas originally it may not have been specified as an insight, later on the Four Noble Truths served as such, to be superseded by *pratityasamutpada*, and still later, in the Hinayana schools, by the doctrine of the non-existence of a substantial self or person.[296]

> Other descriptions of this "liberating insight" exist in the Buddhist canon: that the five Skandhas are impermanent, disagreeable, and neither the Self nor belonging to oneself"; "the contemplation of the arising and disappearance (*udayabbaya*) of the five Skandhas"; "the realisation of the Skandhas as empty (*rittaka*), vain (*tucchaka*) and without any pith or substance (*asaraka*).
>
> — Lambert Schmithausen[297]

In the Pali Canon liberating insight is attained in the fourth dhyana.[298] However, states Vetter, modern scholarship on the Pali Canon has uncovered a "whole series of inconsistencies in the transmission of the Buddha's word", and there are many conflicting versions of what constitutes higher knowledge and samadhi that leads to the liberation from rebirth and suffering.[299] Even within the Four Dhyana methodology of meditation, Vetter notes that "penetrating abstract truths and penetrating them successively does not seem possible in a state of mind which is without contemplation and reflection."[300] According to Vetter, *dhyāna* itself constituted the original "liberating practice".[257][note 32]

Carol Anderson notes that insight is often depicted in the Vinaya as the opening of the Dhamma eye, which sets one on the Buddhist path to liberation.[301]

Theravada

Vipassanā

In Theravada Buddhism, but also in Tibetan Buddhism, two types of meditation Buddhist practices are being followed, namely samatha (Pāli; Sanskrit: *śamatha*; "calm") and vipassana (insight).[302][303] Samatha is also called "calming meditation", and was adopted into Buddhism from pre-Buddha Indian traditions. *Vipassanā* meditation was added by Buddha, and refers to "insight meditation". Vipassana does not aim at peace and tranquillity, states Damien Keown, but "the generation of penetrating and critical insight (panna)".[304]


Shwezigon Pagoda near Bagan, Myanmar

The focus of Vipassana meditation is to continuously and thoroughly know impermanence of everything (*annica*), no-Self in anything (*anatta*) and the *dukkha* teachings of Buddhism.[305][306]

Contemporary Theravada orthodoxy regards samatha as a preparation for vipassanā, pacifying the mind and strengthening the concentration in order to allow the work of insight, which leads to liberation. In contrast, the Vipassana Movement argues that insight levels can be discerned without the need for developing samatha further due to the risks of going out of the course when strong samatha is developed.[307]


Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Dependent arising

Pratityasamutpada, also called "dependent arising, or dependent origination", is the Buddhist theory to explain the nature and relations of being, becoming, existence and ultimate reality. Buddhism asserts that there is nothing independent, except the state of nirvana.[308] All physical and mental states depend on and arise from other pre-existing states, and in turn from them arise other dependent states while they cease.[309]

The 'dependent arisings' have a causal conditioning, and thus *Pratityasamutpada* is the Buddhist belief that causality is the basis of ontology, not a creator God nor the ontological Vedic concept called universal Self (Brahman) nor any other 'transcendent creative principle'.[310][311] However, the Buddhist thought does not understand causality in terms of Newtonian mechanics, rather it understands it as conditioned arising.[312][313] In Buddhism, dependent arising is referring to conditions created by a plurality of causes that necessarily co-originate a phenomenon within and across lifetimes, such as karma in one life creating conditions that lead to rebirth in one of the realms of existence for another lifetime.[314][315][316]

Buddhism applies the dependent arising theory to explain origination of endless cycles of *dukkha* and rebirth, through its Twelve Nidānas or "twelve links" doctrine. It states that because Avidyā (ignorance) exists Saṃskāras (karmic formations) exists, because Saṃskāras exists therefore Vijñāna (consciousness) exists, and in a similar manner it links Nāmarūpa (sentient body), Ṣaḍāyatana (six senses), Sparśa (sensory stimulation), Vedanā (feeling), Taṇhā (craving), Upādāna (grasping), Bhava (becoming), Jāti (birth), and Jarāmaraṇa (old age, death, sorrow, pain).[317][318]

By breaking the circuitous links of the Twelve Nidanas, Buddhism asserts that liberation from these endless cycles of rebirth and dukkha can be attained.[319]

Mahayana

Emptiness


The Great Statue of Amitābha in Kamakura, Japan

Śūnyatā, or "emptiness", is a central concept in Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka school, and widely attested in the Prajñāpāramitā sutras. It brings together key Buddhist doctrines, particularly anatta and dependent origination, to refute the metaphysics of Sarvastivada and Sautrāntika (extinct non-Mahayana schools). Not only sentient beings are empty of ātman; all phenomena (dharmas) are without any svabhava (literally "own-nature" or "self-nature"), and thus without any underlying essence, and "empty" of being independent; thus the heterodox theories of svabhava circulating at the time were refuted on the basis of the doctrines of early Buddhism.[320]

Representation-ony c.q. mind-only

Sarvastivada teachings, which were criticised by Nāgārjuna, were reformulated by scholars such as Vasubandhu and Asanga and were adapted into the Yogachara school. One of the main features of Yogācāra philosophy is the concept of *vijñapti-mātra*. It is often used interchangeably with the term *citta-mātra*, but they have different meanings. The standard translation of both terms is "consciousness-only" or "mind-only." Several modern researchers object to this translation, and the accompanying label of "absolute idealism" or "idealistic monism".[321] A better translation for *vijñapti-mātra* is *representation-only*,[322] while an alternative translation for *citta* (mind, thought) *mātra* (only, exclusively) has not been proposed.

While the Mādhyamaka school held that asserting the existence or non-existence of any ultimately real thing was inappropriate, some later exponents of Yogachara asserted that the mind and only the mind is ultimately real (a doctrine known as *cittamatra*). Vasubandhu and Asanga however did not assert that mind was truly existent, or the basis of all reality.[web 9]

These two schools of thought, in opposition or synthesis, form the basis of subsequent Mahayana metaphysics in the Indo-Tibetan tradition.

Buddha-nature

Buddha-nature is a concept found in some 1st-millennium CE Buddhist texts, such as the *Tathāgatagarbha sūtras*. This concept has been controversial in Buddhism, but has a following in East Asian Buddhism.[323][324] These Sutras suggest, states Paul Williams, that 'all sentient beings contain a Tathagata' as their 'essence, core inner nature, Self'.[325][note 35] The *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine, at its earliest probably appeared about the later part of the 3rd century CE, and it contradicts the Anatta doctrine (non-Self) in a vast majority of Buddhist texts, leading scholars to posit that the *Tathagatagarbha Sutras* were written to promote Buddhism to non-Buddhists.[327][328] However, the Buddhist text *Ratnagotravibhāga* states that the "Self" implied in *Tathagatagarbha* doctrine is actually "not-Self".[329][330]

Devotion

Devotion is an important part of the practice of most Buddhists.[331] Devotional practices include ritual prayer, prostration, offerings, pilgrimage, and chanting.[332] In Pure Land Buddhism, devotion to the Buddha Amitabha is the main practice. In Nichiren Buddhism, devotion to the Lotus Sutra is the main practice. Bhakti (called *Bhatti* in Pali) has been a common practice in Theravada Buddhism, where offerings and group prayers are made to deities and particularly images of Buddha.[333] According to Karel Werner and other scholars, devotional worship has been a significant practice in Theravada Buddhism, and deep devotion is part of Buddhist traditions starting from the earliest days.[334][335]

Bhatti (devotion) at Jokhang, Tibet. Chanting during *Bhatti Puja* is part of the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

Guru devotion is a central practice of Tibetan Buddhism.[336][337] The guru is considered essential and to the Buddhist devotee, the guru is the "enlightened teacher and ritual master" in Vajrayana spiritual pursuits.[336][338]

For someone seeking Buddhahood, the guru is the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, wrote the 12th-century Buddhist scholar Sadhanamala.[338] The veneration of and obedience to teachers is also important in Theravada and Zen Buddhism.[339]

Buddhist texts

Buddhism, like all Indian religions, was initially an oral tradition in ancient times.[340] The Buddha's words, the early doctrines and concepts, and the interpretations were transmitted from one generation to the next by the word of mouth in monasteries, and not through written texts. The earliest texts were transmitted in Middle Indo-Aryan languages called Prakrits, such as Pali, through the use of communal recitation and other mnemonic techniques.[341]

A depiction of the supposed First Buddhist council at Rajgir. Communal recitation was one of the original ways of transmitting and preserving Early Buddhist texts.

The first Buddhist canonical texts were likely written down in Sri Lanka, about 400 years after the Buddha died.[340] The texts were part of the *Tripitakas*, and many versions appeared thereafter claiming to be the words of the Buddha. Scholarly Buddhist commentary texts, with named authors, appeared in India, around the 2nd century CE.[340] These texts were written in Pali or Sanskrit, sometimes regional languages, as palm-leaf manuscripts, birch bark, painted scrolls, carved into temple walls, and later on paper.[340]

Unlike what the Bible is to Christianity and the Quran is to Islam, but like all major ancient Indian religions, there is no consensus among the different Buddhist traditions as to what constitutes the scriptures or a common canon in Buddhism.[340] The general belief among Buddhists is that the canonical corpus is vast.[342][343][344] This corpus includes the ancient *Sutras* organised into *Nikayas* or *Agamas*, itself the part of three basket of texts called the *Tripitakas*.[345] Each Buddhist tradition has its own collection of texts, much of which is translation of ancient Pali and Sanskrit Buddhist texts of India. The Chinese Buddhist canon, for example, includes 2184 texts in 55 volumes, while the Tibetan canon comprises 1108 texts – all claimed to have been spoken by the Buddha – and another 3461 texts composed by Indian scholars revered in the Tibetan tradition.[346] The Buddhist textual history is vast; over 40,000 manuscripts – mostly Buddhist, some non-Buddhist – were discovered in 1900 in the Dunhuang Chinese cave alone.[346]

Early Buddhist texts

The Early Buddhist Texts refers to the literature which is considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist material. The first four Pali Nikayas, and the corresponding Chinese Āgamas are generally considered to be among the earliest material.[347][348][349] Apart from these, there are also fragmentary collections of EBT materials in other languages such as Sanskrit, Khotanese, Tibetan and Gāndhārī. The modern study of early Buddhism often relies on comparative scholarship using these various early Buddhist sources to identify parallel texts and common doctrinal content.[350] One feature of these early texts are literary structures which reflect oral transmission, such as widespread repetition.[351]

Gandhara birchbark scroll fragments (c. 1st century) from British Library Collection

The Tripitakas

After the development of the different early Buddhist schools, these schools began to develop their own textual collections, which were termed *Tripiṭakas* (Triple Baskets).[352]

Many early *Tripiṭakas*, like the Pāli *Tipitaka*, were divided into three sections: *Vinaya Pitaka* (focuses on monastic rule), *Sutta Pitaka* (Buddhist discourses) and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, which contain expositions and commentaries on the doctrine.

The Pāli *Tipitaka* (also known as the Pali Canon) of the Theravada School constitutes the only complete collection of Buddhist texts in an Indic language which has survived until today.[353] However, many *Sutras*, *Vinayas* and *Abhidharma* works from other schools survive in Chinese translation, as part of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. According to some sources, some early schools of Buddhism had five or seven *pitakas*.[354]

Much of the material in the Pali Canon is not specifically "Theravadin", but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings. According to Peter Harvey, it contains material at odds with later Theravadin orthodoxy. He states: "The Theravadins, then, may have *added* texts to the Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period."[355]

Abhidharma and the Commentaries

A distinctive feature of many Tripitaka collections is the inclusion of a genre called Abhidharma, which dates from the 3rd century BCE and later. According to Collett Cox, the genre began as explanations and elaborations of the teachings in the suttas but over time evolved into an independent system of doctrinal exposition.[356]

Over time, the various Abhidharma traditions developed various disagreements which each other on points of doctrine, which were discussed in the different Abhidharma texts of these schools.[40] The major Abhidharma collections which modern scholars have the most information about are those of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools.[357]

In Sri Lanka and South India, the Theravāda Abhidhamma system was the most influential. In addition to the Abhidharma project, some of the schools also began accumulating a literary tradition of scriptural commentary on their respective Tripitakas. These commentaries were particularly important in the Theravāda school, and the Pali commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*) remain influential today. Both Abhidhamma and the Pali Commentaries influenced the *Visuddhimagga*, an important 5th-century text by the Theravada scholar Buddhaghosa, who also translated and compiled many of the *Aṭṭhakathās* from older Sinhalese sources.[358][359]

The Sarvāstivāda school was one of the most influential Abhidharma traditions in North India.[360] The magnum opus of this tradition was the massive Abhidharma commentary called the *Mahāvibhaṣa* ('Great Commentary'), compiled at a great synod in Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka II (c. 158–176).[361] The *Abhidharmakosha* of Vasubandhu is another very influential Abhidharma work from the northern tradition, which continues to be studied in East Asian Buddhism and in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.[362]

Mahāyāna texts

The Tripiṭaka Koreana in South Korea, an edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon carved and preserved in over 81,000 wood printing blocks

The Mahāyāna sūtras are a very broad genre of Buddhist scriptures that the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition holds are original teachings of the Buddha. Modern historians generally hold that the first of these texts were composed probably around the 1st century BCE or 1st century CE.[363][364][365]

In Mahāyāna, these texts are generally given greater authority than the early Āgamas and Abhidharma literature, which are called "Śrāvakayāna" or "Hinayana" to distinguish them from Mahāyāna sūtras.[366] Mahāyāna traditions mainly see these different classes of texts as being designed for different types of persons, with different levels of spiritual understanding. The Mahāyāna sūtras are mainly seen as being for those of "greater" capacity.[367]

The Mahāyāna sūtras often claim to articulate the Buddha's deeper, more advanced doctrines, reserved for those who follow the bodhisattva path. That path is explained as being built upon the motivation to liberate all living beings from unhappiness. Hence the name *Mahāyāna* (lit., *the Great Vehicle*). Besides the teaching of the bodhisattva, Mahāyāna texts also contain expanded cosmologies and mythologies, with many more Buddhas and powerful bodhisattvas, as well as new spiritual practices and ideas.[368]

The modern Theravada school does not treat the Mahāyāna sūtras as authoritative or authentic teachings of the Buddha.[369] Likewise, these texts were not recognized as authoritative by many early Buddhist schools and in some cases, communities such as the Mahāsāṃghika school split up due to this disagreement.[370]

Buddhist monk Geshe Konchog Wangdu reads Mahayana sutras from an old woodblock copy of the Tibetan Kanjur.

Recent scholarship has discovered many early Mahāyāna texts which shed light into the development of Mahāyāna. Among these is the *Śālistamba Sutra* which survives in Tibetan and Chinese translation. This text contains numerous sections which are remarkably similar to Pali suttas.[371][372] The *Śālistamba Sutra* was cited by Mahāyāna scholars such as the 8th-century Yasomitra to be authoritative.[373] This suggests that Buddhist literature of different traditions shared a common core of Buddhist texts in the early centuries of its history, until Mahāyāna literature diverged about and after the 1st century CE.[371]

Mahāyāna also has a very large literature of philosophical and exegetical texts. These are often called *śāstra* (treatises) or *vrittis* (commentaries). Some of this literature was also written in verse form (*karikās*), the most famous of which is the *Mūlamadhyamika-karikā* (Root Verses on the Middle Way) by Nagarjuna, the foundational text of the Madhyamika school.

Tantric texts

During the Gupta Empire, a new class of Buddhist sacred literature began to develop, which are called the Tantras.[374] By the 8th century, the tantric tradition was very influential in India and beyond. Besides drawing on a Mahāyāna Buddhist framework, these texts also borrowed deities and material from other Indian religious traditions, such as the Śaiva and Pancharatra traditions, local god/goddess cults, and local spirit worship (such as yaksha or nāga spirits).[375][376]

Some features of these texts include the widespread use of mantras, meditation on the subtle body, worship of fierce deities, and antinomian and transgressive practices such as ingesting alcohol and performing sexual rituals.[377][378][379]

History

Historical roots

The Buddhist "Carpenter's Cave" at Ellora in Maharashtra, India

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of Iron Age India around the middle of the first millennium BCE.[380] This was a period of great intellectual ferment and socio-cultural change known as the "Second urbanisation", marked by the composition of the Upanishads and the historical emergence of the Sramanic traditions.[381] [382] [note 36]

New ideas developed both in the Vedic tradition in the form of the Upanishads, and outside of the Vedic tradition through the Śramaṇa movements.[385][386][387] The term Śramaṇa refers to several Indian religious movements parallel to but separate from the historical Vedic religion, including Buddhism, Jainism and others such as Ājīvika.[388]

Several Śramaṇa movements are known to have existed in India before the 6th century BCE (pre-Buddha, pre-Mahavira), and these influenced both the āstika and nāstika traditions of Indian philosophy.[389] According to Martin Wilshire, the Śramaṇa tradition evolved in India over two phases, namely Paccekabuddha and Savaka phases, the former being the tradition of individual ascetic and the latter of disciples, and that Buddhism and Jainism ultimately emerged from these.[390] Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical ascetic groups shared and used several similar ideas,[391] but the Śramaṇa traditions also drew upon already established Brahmanical

concepts and philosophical roots, states Wiltshire, to formulate their own doctrines.[389][392] Brahmanical motifs can be found in the oldest Buddhist texts, using them to introduce and explain Buddhist ideas.[393] For example, prior to Buddhist developments, the Brahmanical tradition internalised and variously reinterpreted the three Vedic sacrificial fires as concepts such as Truth, Rite, Tranquility or Restraint.[394] Buddhist texts also refer to the three Vedic sacrificial fires, reinterpreting and explaining them as ethical conduct.[395]

The Śramaṇa religions challenged and broke with the Brahmanic tradition on core assumptions such as Atman (soul, self), Brahman, the nature of afterlife, and they rejected the authority of the Vedas and Upanishads.[396][397][398] Buddhism was one among several Indian religions that did so.[398]

Indian Buddhism

The history of Indian Buddhism may be divided into five periods:[399] Early Buddhism (occasionally called pre-sectarian Buddhism), Nikaya Buddhism or Sectarian Buddhism: The period of the early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, later Mahayana Buddhism, and Vajrayana Buddhism.

Rock-cut Lord Buddha statue at Bojjanakonda near Anakapalle in the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, India

Pre-sectarian Buddhism

According to Lambert Schmithausen Pre-sectarian Buddhism is "the canonical period prior to the development of different schools with their different positions."[400]

The early Buddhist Texts include the four principal Nikāyas [note 37] (and their parallel Agamas) together with the main body of monastic rules, which survive in the various versions of the patimokkha.[401][402][403] However, these texts were revised over time, and it is unclear what constitutes the earliest layer of Buddhist teachings. One method to obtain information on the oldest core of Buddhism is to compare the oldest extant versions of the Theravadin Pāli Canon and other texts.[note 38] The reliability of the early sources, and the possibility to draw out a core of oldest teachings, is a matter of dispute.[257] According to Vetter, inconsistencies remain, and other methods must be applied to resolve those inconsistencies.[404][note 39]

Sanchi Stupa near Vidisha , Madhya Pradesh , India.

According to Schmithausen, three positions held by scholars of Buddhism can be distinguished:[408]

1. "Stress on the fundamental homogeneity and substantial authenticity of at least a considerable part of the Nikayic materials;"[note 40]
2. "Scepticism with regard to the possibility of retrieving the doctrine of earliest Buddhism;"[note 41]
3. "Cautious optimism in this respect."[note 42]

Core teachings

According to Mitchell, certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout the early texts, which has led most scholars to conclude that Gautama Buddha must have taught something similar to the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, Nirvana, the three marks of existence, the five aggregates, dependent origination, karma and rebirth.[415] Yet critical analysis reveals discrepancies, which point to alternative possibilities.[416][417][418]

Buddhist Chakras at ASI Museum, Amaravathi

Bruce Matthews notes that there is no cohesive presentation of karma in the Sutta Pitaka,[419] which may mean that the doctrine was incidental to the main perspective of early Buddhist soteriology.[419] Schmithausen has questioned whether karma already played a role in the theory of rebirth of earliest Buddhism.[420][421][note 43] According to Vetter, "the Buddha at first sought "the deathless" (*amata/amrta*), which is concerned with the here and now. Only later did he become acquainted with the doctrine of rebirth."[423] Bronkhorst disagrees, and concludes that the Buddha "introduced a concept of karma that differed considerably from the commonly held views of his time."[424] According to Bronkhorst, not physical and mental activities as such were seen as responsible for rebirth, but intentions and desire.[425]

Another core problem in the study of early Buddhism is the relation between *dhyana* and insight.[135][235][254] Schmithausen states that the four noble truths as "liberating insight", may be a later addition to texts such as Majjhima Nikaya 36.[256][426][427]

According to both Bronkhorst and Anderson, the Four Noble Truths became a substitution for prajna, or "liberating insight", in the suttas[428][429] in those texts where "liberating insight" was preceded by the four jhānas.[430] The four truths may not have been formulated in earliest Buddhism, and did not serve in earliest Buddhism as a description of "liberating insight".[431] Gotama's teachings may have been personal, "adjusted to the need of each person."[430]

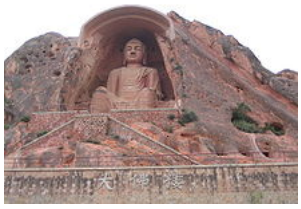
The three marks of existence – Dukkha, Annica, Anatta – may reflect Upanishadic or other influences. K.R. Norman supposes that these terms were already in use at the Buddha's time, and were familiar to his hearers.[432] According to Vetter, the description of the Buddhist path may initially have been as simple as the term "the middle way".[135] In time, this short description was elaborated, resulting in the description of the eightfold path.[135] Similarly nibbāna is the common term for the desired goal of this practice, yet many other terms can be found throughout the Nikāyas, which are not specified.[433][note 44]

Early Buddhist schools

According to the scriptures, soon after the *parinirvāṇa* (from Sanskrit: "highest extinguishment") of Gautama Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held. As with any ancient Indian tradition, transmission of teaching was done orally. The primary purpose of the assembly was to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission. Richard Gombrich states that the monastic assembly recitations of the Buddha's teaching likely began during Buddha's lifetime, similar to the First Council, that helped compose Buddhist scriptures.[435]

The Second Buddhist council resulted in the first schism in the Sangha, probably caused by a group of reformists called Sthaviras who split from the conservative majority Mahāsāṃghikas.[436] After unsuccessfully trying to modify the Vinaya, a small group of "elderly members", i.e. *sthaviras*, broke away from the majority Mahāsāṃghika during the Second Buddhist council, giving rise to the Sthavira Nikaya.[437]

The Sthaviras gave rise to several schools, one of which was the Theravada school. Originally, these schisms were caused by disputes over monastic disciplinary codes of various fraternities, but eventually, by about 100 CE if not earlier, schisms were being caused by doctrinal disagreements too.[438] Buddhist monks of different fraternities became distinct schools and stopped doing official Sangha business together, but continued to study each other's doctrines.[438]


Buddha at Xumishan Grottoes, c. 6th century CE[434]

Following (or leading up to) the schisms, each Saṅgha started to accumulate their own version of Tripiṭaka (Pali Canons, triple basket of texts).[42][439] In their Tripiṭaka, each school included the Suttas of the Buddha, a Vinaya basket (disciplinary code) and added an Abhidharma basket which were texts on detailed scholastic classification, summary and interpretation of the Suttas.[42][440] The doctrine details in the Abhidharmas of various Buddhist schools differ significantly, and these were composed starting about the third century BCE and through the 1st millennium CE.[441][442][443] Eighteen early Buddhist schools are known, each with its own Tripitaka, but only one collection from Sri Lanka has survived, in a nearly complete state, into the modern era.[444]

Early Mahayana Buddhism

Several scholars have suggested that the Mahayana Buddhist tradition started in south India (modern Andhra Pradesh), and it is there that Prajnaparamita sutras, among the earliest Mahayana sutras,[445][446] developed among the Mahāsāṃghika along the Kṛṣṇa River region about the 1st century BCE.[447][448][449][note 45]


A Buddhist triad depicting, left to right, a Kushan, the future buddha Maitreya, Gautama Buddha, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and a monk. Second–third century. Guimet Museum

There is no evidence that Mahayana ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas.[452] Initially it was known as *Bodhisattvayāna* (the "Vehicle of the Bodhisattvas").[453] Paul Williams states that the Mahāyāna never had nor ever attempted to have a separate Vinaya or ordination codes from the early schools of Buddhism.[454] Records written by Chinese monks visiting India indicate that both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks could be found in the same monasteries, with the difference that Mahayana monks worshipped figures of Bodhisattvas, while non-Mahayana monks did not.[455]

Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts. These Mahayana teachings were first propagated into China by Lokakṣema, the first translator of Mahayana sutras into Chinese during the 2nd century CE.[note 46] Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the Prajnaparamita series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.[448][note 47]

Late Mahayana Buddhism

During the period of Late Mahāyāna, four major types of thought developed: Madhyamaka, Yogachara, Tathagatagarbha, and Buddhist logic as the last and most recent.[458] In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahayana were the Madhyamaka and the later Yogachara.[459] According to Dan Lusthaus, Madhyamaka and Yogachara have a great deal in common, and the commonality stems from early Buddhism.[460] There were no great Indian teachers associated with tathagatagarbha thought.[461]

Vajrayana (Esoteric Buddhism)

Scholarly research concerning Esoteric Buddhism is still in its early stages and has a number of problems that make research difficult:[462]

1. Vajrayana Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism, and therefore research must include exploring Hinduism as well.
2. The scriptures of Vajrayana have not yet been put in any kind of order.
3. Ritual must be examined as well, not just doctrine.

Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism may have spread only slowly in India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who was a public supporter of the religion. The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (Buddhist religious memorials) and to its spread throughout the Maurya empire and into neighbouring lands such as Central Asia and to the island of Sri Lanka. These two missions, in opposite directions, would ultimately lead, in the first case to the spread of Buddhism into China, Korea and Japan, and in the second case, to the emergence of Sinhalese Theravāda Buddhism and its spread from Sri Lanka to much of Southeast Asia.


The spread of Buddhism within South Asia and beyond.

This period marks the first known spread of Buddhism beyond India. According to the edicts of Aśoka, emissaries were sent to various countries west of India to spread Buddhism (Dharma), particularly in eastern provinces of the neighbouring Seleucid Empire, and even farther to Hellenistic kingdoms of the Mediterranean. It is a matter of disagreement among scholars whether or not these emissaries were accompanied by Buddhist missionaries.[463]

In central and west Asia, Buddhist influence grew, through Greek-speaking Buddhist monarchs and ancient Asian trade routes. An example of this is evidenced in Chinese and Pali Buddhist records, such as *Milindapanha* and the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. The *Milindapanha* describes a conversation between a Buddhist monk and the 2nd-century BCE Greek king Menander, after which Menander abdicates and himself goes into monastic life in the pursuit of nirvana.[464][465] Some scholars have questioned the *Milindapanha* version, expressing doubts whether Menander was Buddhist or just favourably disposed to Buddhist monks.[466]

The Kushans (mid 1st–3rd century CE) came to control the Silk Road trade through Central and South Asia, which brought them to interact with ancient Buddhist monasteries and societies involved in trade in these regions. They patronised Buddhist institutions, and Buddhist monastery influence, in turn, expanded into a world religion, according to Xinru Liu.[467] Buddhism spread to Khotan and China, eventually to other parts of the far east.[468]

Coin depicting Indo-Greek king Menander, who, according to Buddhist tradition records in the Milinda Panha, converted to the Buddhist faith and became an arhat in the 2nd century BCE

Some of the earliest written documents of the Buddhist faith are the Gandharan Buddhist texts, dating from about the 1st century CE, and connected to the Dharmaguptaka school. These texts are written in the Kharosthi script, a script that was predominantly used in the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms of northern India and that played a prominent role in the coinage and inscriptions of their kings.[469][470][471]

The Islamic conquest of the Iranian Plateau in the 7th-century, followed by the Muslim conquests of Afghanistan and the later establishment of the Ghaznavid kingdom with Islam as the state religion in Central Asia between the 10th- and 12th-century led to the decline and disappearance of Buddhism from most of these regions.[472]

To East and Southeast Asia

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to China is most commonly thought to have started in the late 2nd or the 1st century CE, though the literary sources are all open to question.[473][note 48] The first documented translation efforts by foreign Buddhist monks in China were in the 2nd century CE, probably as a consequence of the expansion of the Kushan Empire into the Chinese territory of the Tarim Basin.[475]

White Horse Temple (est. 68 CE), traditionally held to be at the origin of Chinese Buddhism.

The first documented Buddhist texts translated into Chinese are those of the Parthian An Shigao (148–180 CE).[476] The first known Mahāyāna scriptural texts are translations into Chinese by the Kushan monk Lokakṣema in Luoyang, between 178 and 189 CE.[477] From China, Buddhism was introduced into its neighbours Korea (4th century), Japan (6th–7th centuries), and Vietnam (c. 1st–2nd centuries).[478][479][478]

During the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907), Chinese Esoteric Buddhism was introduced from India and Chan Buddhism (Zen) became a major religion.[480][481] Chan continued to grow in the Song dynasty (960–1279) and it was during this era that it strongly influenced Korean Buddhism and Japanese Buddhism.[482] Pure Land Buddhism also became popular during this period and was often practised together with Chan.[483] It was also during the Song that the entire Chinese canon was printed using over 130,000 wooden printing blocks.[484]

During the Indian period of Esoteric Buddhism (from the 8th century onwards), Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and Mongolia. Johannes Bronkhorst states that the esoteric form was attractive because it allowed both a secluded monastic community as well as the social rites and rituals important to laypersons and to kings for the maintenance of a political state during succession and wars to resist invasion.[485] During the Middle Ages, Buddhism slowly declined in India,[486] while it vanished from Persia and Central Asia as Islam became the state religion.[487][488]

Angkor Thom build by Khmer King Jayavarman VII (c. 1120–1218).

The Theravada school arrived in Sri Lanka sometime in the 3rd century BCE. Sri Lanka became a base for its later spread to southeast Asia after the 5th century CE (Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and coastal Vietnam).[489][490] Theravada Buddhism was the dominant religion in Burma during the Mon Hanthawaddy Kingdom (1287–1552).[491] It also became dominant in the Khmer Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries and in the Thai Sukhothai Kingdom during the reign of Ram Khamhaeng (1237/1247–1298).[492][493]

Schools and traditions

Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravada or Mahayana.[494] This classification is also used by some scholars[495] and is the one ordinarily used in the English language.[web 10] An alternative scheme used by some scholars[note 49] divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas: Theravada, East Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism.

Distribution of major Buddhist traditions

Some scholars[note 50] use other schemes. Buddhists themselves have a variety of other schemes. Hinayana (literally "lesser or inferior vehicle") is used by Mahayana followers to name the family of early philosophical schools and traditions from which contemporary Theravada emerged, but as the Hinayana term is considered derogatory, a variety of other terms are used instead, including Śrāvakayāna, Nikaya Buddhism, early Buddhist schools, sectarian Buddhism and conservative Buddhism.[497][498]

Not all traditions of Buddhism share the same philosophical outlook, or treat the same concepts as central. Each tradition, however, does have its own core concepts, and some comparisons can be drawn between them:[499][500]

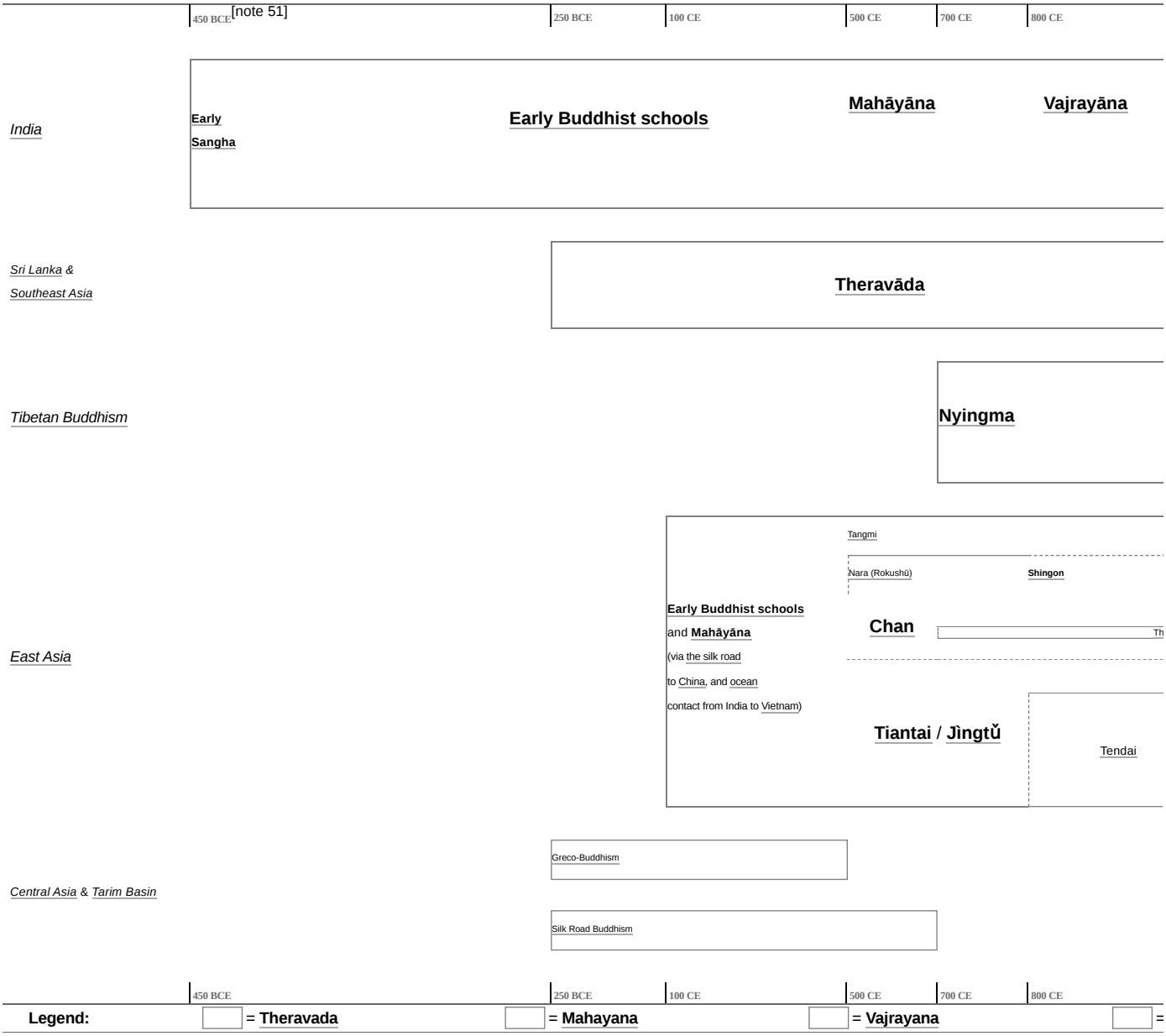
Young monks in Cambodia

- Both Theravada and Mahayana traditions accept the Buddha as the founder, Theravada considers him unique, but Mahayana considers him one of many Buddhas
- Both accept the Middle Way, dependent origination, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the three marks of existence
- Nirvana is attainable by the monks in Theravada tradition, while Mahayana considers it broadly attainable; Arhat state is aimed for in the Theravada, while Buddhahood is aimed for in the Mahayana
- Religious practice consists of meditation for monks and prayer for laypersons in Theravada, while Mahayana includes prayer, chanting and meditation for both
- Theravada has been a more rationalist, historical form of Buddhism; while Mahayana has included more rituals, mysticism and worldly flexibility in its scope.[501]

Timeline

This is a rough timeline of the development of the different schools/traditions:

Timeline: Development and propagation of Buddhist traditions (c. 450 BCE – c. 1300 CE)



Theravada school

The Theravada tradition traces its roots to the words of the Buddha preserved in the Pali Canon, and considers itself to be the more orthodox form of Buddhism.[503][504]

Theravada flourished in south India and Sri Lanka in ancient times; from there it spread for the first time into mainland southeast Asia about the 11th century into its elite urban centres.[505] By the 13th century, Theravada had spread widely into the rural areas of mainland southeast Asia,[505] displacing Mahayana Buddhism and some traditions of Hinduism which had arrived in places such as Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia around the mid-1st millennium CE. The later traditions were well established in south Thailand and Java by the 7th century, under the sponsorship of the Srivijaya dynasty.[506][507] The political separation between Khmer and Sukhothai led the Sukhothai king to welcome Sri Lankan emissaries, helping them establish the first Theravada Buddhist *sangha* in the 13th century, in contrast to the Mahayana tradition of Khmer earlier.[508]

Sinhalese Buddhist reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries portrayed the Pali Canon as the original version of scripture. They also emphasised Theravada being rational and scientific.[509]

Theravāda is primarily practised today in Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia as well as small portions of China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Bangladesh. It has a growing presence in the west.

A young bhikkhu in Sri Lanka

Mahayana traditions

Mahayana schools consider the Mahayana Sutras as authoritative scriptures and accurate rendering of Buddha's words.[371] These traditions have been the more liberal form of Buddhism allowing different and new interpretations that emerged over time.[510]

The ideas of the 2nd century scholar Nagarjuna helped shape the Mahayana traditions.

Mahayana flourished in India from the time of Ashoka,[371] through to the dynasty of the Guptas (4th to 6th-century). Mahāyāna monastic foundations and centres of learning were established by the Buddhist kings, and the Hindu kings of the Gupta dynasty as evidenced by records left by three Chinese visitors to India.[511][512] The Gupta dynasty, for example, helped establish the famed Nālandā University in Bihar.[511][513] These monasteries and foundations helped Buddhist scholarship, as well as studies into non-Buddhist traditions and secular subjects such as medicine, host visitors and spread Buddhism into East and Central Asia.[511][514]

Native Mahayana Buddhism is practised today in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, parts of Russia and most of Vietnam (also commonly referred to as "Eastern Buddhism"). The Buddhism practised in Tibet, the Himalayan regions, and Mongolia is also Mahayana in origin, but is discussed below under the heading of Vajrayana (also commonly referred to as "Northern Buddhism"). There are a variety of strands in Eastern Buddhism, of which "the Pure Land school of Mahayana is the most widely practised today.".[515] In most of this area however, they are fused into a single unified form of Buddhism. In Japan in particular, they form separate denominations with the five major ones being: Nichiren, peculiar to Japan; Pure Land; Shingon, a form of Vajrayana; Tendai, and Zen. In Korea, nearly all Buddhists belong to the Chogye school, which is officially Son (Zen), but with substantial elements from other traditions.[516]

Vajrayana traditions

7th-century Potala Palace in Lhasa valley symbolises Tibetan Buddhism and is a UNESCO world heritage site.[517]

The goal and philosophy of the Vajrayāna remains Mahāyānist, but its methods are seen by its followers as far more powerful, so as to lead to Buddhahood in just one lifetime.[518] The practice of using mantras was adopted from Hinduism, where they were first used in the Vedas.[519]

Various classes of Vajrayana literature developed as a result of royal courts sponsoring both Buddhism and Saivism.[520] The Mañjusrimulakalpa, which later came to classified under Kriyatantra, states that mantras taught in the Saiva, Garuda and Vaisnava tantras will be effective if applied by Buddhists since they were all taught originally by Manjushri.[521] The Guhyasiddhi of Padmavajra, a work associated with the Guhyasamaja tradition, prescribes acting as a Saiva guru and initiating members into Saiva Siddhanta scriptures and mandalas.[522] The Samvara tantra texts adopted the pitha list from the Saiva text *Tantrasadbhava*, introducing a copying error where a deity was mistaken for a place.[523]

Tibetan Buddhism preserves the Vajrayana teachings of eighth-century India.[11] Tantric Buddhism is largely concerned with ritual and meditative practices.[524] A central feature of Buddhist Tantra is deity yoga which includes visualisation and identification with an enlightened yidam or meditation deity and its associated mandala. Another element of Tantra is the need for ritual initiation or empowerment (abhiṣeka) by a Guru or Lama.[525] Some Tantras like the Guhyasamāja Tantra features new forms of antinomian ritual practice such as the use taboo substances like alcohol, sexual yoga, and charnel ground practices which evoke wrathful deities.[526][527]

Zen

Zen Buddhism (禅), pronounced *Chán* in Chinese, *seon* in Korean or *zen* in Japanese (derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, meaning "meditation") is a form of Mahayana Buddhism found in China, Korea and Japan. It lays special emphasis on meditation, and direct discovery of the Buddha-nature.[510][note 53]

Ginkaku-ji, a Zen temple in Kyoto, Japan

Zen Buddhism is divided into two main schools: Rinzai (臨済宗) and Sōtō (曹洞宗), the former greatly favouring the use in meditation on the koan (公案, a meditative riddle or puzzle) as a device for spiritual break-through, and the latter (while certainly employing koans) focusing more on *shikantaza* or "just sitting".[note 54]

Zen Buddhism is primarily found in Japan, with some presence in South Korea and Vietnam. The scholars of Japanese Soto Zen tradition in recent times have critiqued the mainstream Japanese Buddhism for *dhatu-vada*, that is assuming things have substantiality, a view they assert to be non-Buddhist and "out of tune with the teachings of non-Self and conditioned arising", states Peter Harvey.[530]

Buddhism in the modern era

Buryat Buddhist monk in Siberia

Colonial era

Buddhism has faced various challenges and changes during the colonisation of Buddhist states by Christian countries and its persecution under modern states. Like other religions, the findings of modern science has challenged its basic premises. One response to some of these challenges has come to be called Buddhist modernism. Early Buddhist modernist figures such as the American convert Henry Olcott (1832– 1907) and Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) reinterpreted and promoted Buddhism as a scientific and rational religion which they saw as compatible with modern science.[531]

East Asian Buddhism meanwhile suffered under various wars which ravaged China during the modern era, such as the Taiping rebellion and the World War II (which also affected Korean Buddhism). During the Republican period (1912–49), a new movement called Humanistic Buddhism was developed by figures such as Taixu (1899–1947), and though Buddhist institutions were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), there has been a revival of the religion in China after 1977.[532] Japanese Buddhism also went through a period of modernisation during the Meiji period.[533] In Central Asia meanwhile, the arrival of Communist repression to Tibet (1966–1980) and Mongolia (between 1924–1990) had a strong negative impact on Buddhist institutions, though the situation has improved somewhat since the 80s and 90s.[534]

Buddhism in the West

While there were some encounters of Western travellers or missionaries such as St. Francis Xavier and Ippolito Desideri with Buddhist cultures, it was not until the 19th century that Buddhism began to be studied by Western scholars. It was the work of pioneering scholars such as Eugène Burnouf, Max Müller, Hermann Oldenberg and Thomas William Rhys Davids that paved the way for modern Buddhist studies in the West. The English words such as Buddhism, "Boudhist", "Bauddhist" and Buddhist were coined in the early 19th-century in the West,[535] while in 1881, Rhys Davids founded the Pali Text Society – an influential Western resource of Buddhist literature in the Pali language and one of the earliest publisher of a journal on Buddhist studies.[536] It was also during the 19th century that Asian Buddhist immigrants (mainly from China and Japan) began to arrive in Western countries such as the United States and Canada, bringing with them their Buddhist religion. This period also saw the first Westerners to formally convert to Buddhism, such as Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott.[537] An important event in the introduction of Buddhism to the West was the 1893 World Parliament of Religions, which for the first time saw well-publicized speeches by major Buddhist leaders alongside other religious leaders.

1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago

The 20th century saw a prolific growth of new Buddhist institutions in Western countries, including the Buddhist Society, London (1924), Das Buddhistische Haus (1924) and Datsan Gunzechoinei in St Petersburg. The publication and translations of Buddhist literature in Western languages thereafter accelerated. After the second world war, further immigration from Asia, globalisation, the secularisation on Western culture as well a renewed interest in Buddhism among the 60s counterculture led to further growth in Buddhist institutions.[538] Influential figures on post-war Western Buddhism include Shunryu Suzuki, Jack Kerouac, Alan Watts, Thích Nhất Hạnh, and the 14th Dalai Lama. While Buddhist institutions have grown, some of the central premises of Buddhism such as the cycles of rebirth and Four Noble Truths have been problematic in the West.[539][540][541] In contrast, states Christopher Gowans, for "most ordinary [Asian] Buddhists, today as well as in the past, their basic moral orientation is governed by belief in karma and rebirth".[542] Most Asian Buddhist laypersons, states Kevin Trainor, have historically pursued Buddhist rituals and practices seeking better rebirth,[543] not nirvana or freedom from rebirth.[544]

Buddhism has spread across the world,[546][547] and Buddhist texts are increasingly translated into local languages. While Buddhism in the West is often seen as exotic and progressive, in the East it is regarded as familiar and traditional. In countries such as Cambodia and Bhutan, it is recognised as the state religion and receives government support.

In certain regions such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, militants have targeted violence and destruction of historic Buddhist monuments.[548][549]

Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan in 1896 (top) and after destruction in 2001 by the Taliban Islamists.[545]

Neo-Buddhism movements

A number of modern movements in Buddhism emerged during the second half of the 20th century.[550][551] These new forms of Buddhism are diverse and significantly depart from traditional beliefs and practices.[552]

In India, B.R. Ambedkar launched the Navayana tradition – literally, "new vehicle". Ambedkar's Buddhism rejects the foundational doctrines and historic practices of traditional Theravada and Mahayana traditions, such as monk lifestyle after renunciation, karma, rebirth, samsara, meditation, nirvana, Four Noble Truths and others.[553][554][555] Ambedkar's Navayana Buddhism considers these as superstitions and re-interprets the original Buddha as someone who taught about class struggle and social equality.[556][557] Ambedkar urged low caste Indian Dalits to convert to his Marxism-inspired[555] reinterpretation called the Navayana Buddhism, also known as Bhimayana Buddhism. Ambedkar's effort led to the expansion of Navayana Buddhism in India.[558][559]

The Thai King Mongkut (r. 1851–68), and his son King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), were responsible for modern reforms of Thai Buddhism.[560] Modern Buddhist movements include Secular Buddhism in many countries, Won Buddhism in Korea, the Dhammakaya movement in Thailand and several Japanese organisations, such as Shinnyo-en, Risshō Kōsei Kai or Soka Gakkai.

Some of these movements have brought internal disputes and strife within regional Buddhist communities. For example, the Dhammakaya movement in Thailand teaches a "true self" doctrine, which traditional Theravada monks consider as heretically denying the fundamental *anatta* (not-self) doctrine of Buddhism.[561][562][563]

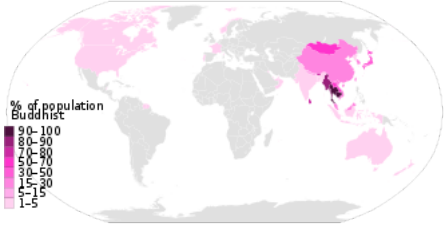
Demographics

Buddhism is practised by an estimated 488 million,[web 1] 495 million,[564] or 535 million[565] people as of the 2010s, representing 7% to 8% of the world's total population.

China is the country with the largest population of Buddhists, approximately 244 million or 18% of its total population.[web 1][note 55] They are mostly followers of Chinese schools of *Mahayana*, making this the largest body of Buddhist traditions. Mahayana, also practised in broader East Asia, is followed by over half of world Buddhists.[web 1]

According to a demographic analysis reported by Peter Harvey (2013):[565] *Mahayana* has 360 million adherents; *Theravada* has 150 million adherents; and *Vajrayana* has 18.2 million adherents.

According to Johnson and Grim (2013), Buddhism has grown from a total of 138 million adherents in 1910, of which 137 million were in Asia, to 495 million in 2010, of which 487 million are in Asia.[564] Over 98% of all Buddhists live in the Asia-Pacific and South Asia region.[567] North America had about 3.9 million Buddhists, Europe 1.3 million, while South America, Africa and the Middle East had an estimated combined total of about 1 million Buddhists in 2010.[567]



Percentage of Buddhists by country, according to the Pew Research Center, as of 2010

Buddhism is the dominant religion in Bhutan,[568] Myanmar,[568] Cambodia,[568] Tibet,[568] Laos,[568] Mongolia,[568] Sri Lanka[568] and Thailand.[568][569] Large Buddhist populations live in China (18%),[568] Japan (36%),[568] Taiwan (35%),[568] Macau (17%),[568] North Korea (14%),[568] Nepal (11%),[568] Vietnam (10%),[568] Singapore (33%),[568] Hong Kong (15%)[568] and South Korea (23%).[568]

In Russia, Buddhists form majority in Tuva (52%) and Kalmykia (53%). Buryatia (20%) and Zabaykalsky Krai (15%) also have significant Buddhist populations.[570]

Buddhism is also growing by conversion. In United States, only about a third (32%) of Buddhists in the United States are Asian; a majority (53%) are white. Buddhism in the America is primarily made up of native-born adherents, whites and converts.[571] In New Zealand, about 25–35% of the total Buddhists are converts to Buddhism.[572][573]

After China, where nearly half of the worldwide Buddhists live, the 10 countries with the largest Buddhist population densities are:[567]

Buddhism by percentage as of 2010[567]

Country	Estimated Buddhist population	Buddhists as % of total population
Cambodia	13,701,660	97%
Thailand	64,419,840	93%
Burma	38,415,960	80%
Bhutan	563,000	75%
Sri Lanka	14,455,980	69%
Laos	4,092,000	66%
Mongolia	1,520,760	55%
Japan	45,807,480 or 84,653,000	36% or 67%[574]
Singapore	1,725,510	34%
Taiwan	4,945,600 or 8,000,000	21% or 35%[575]
China	185,000,000+	16%

See also

- Outline of Buddhism
- Buddhist philosophy
- Buddhism by country
- Buddhism and science
- Jewish Buddhist
- Chinese folk religion
- Easily confused Buddhist representations
- Iconography of Gautama Buddha in Laos and Thailand
- Index of Buddhism-related articles
- Buddhism and Hinduism
- Indian religions
- List of books related to Buddhism
- List of Buddhist temples
- Nonviolence
- Criticism of Buddhism
- Vaishnavism
- Akriyavada

Notes

1. Buddhist texts such as the Jataka tales of the Theravada Buddhist tradition, and early biographies such as the *Buddhacarita*, the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu*, the Sarvāstivādin *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, give different accounts about the life of the Buddha; many include stories of his many rebirths, and some add significant embellishments.[18][19] Keown and Prebish state, "In the past, modern scholars have generally accepted 486 or 483 BCE for this [Buddha's death], but the consensus is now that they rest on evidence which is too flimsy.[20] Scholars are hesitant to make unqualified claims about the historical facts of the Buddha's life. Most accept that he lived, taught and founded a monastic order, but do not consistently accept all of the details contained in his biographies."[21][22][23][24]
2. The exact identity of this ancient place is unclear. Please see Gautama Buddha article for various sites identified.
3. Bihar is derived from *Vihara*, which means monastery.[25]
4. Other details about Buddha'a background are contested in modern scholarship. For example, Buddhist texts assert that Buddha described himself as a *kshatriya* (warrior class), but states Gombrich, little is known about his father and there is no proof that his father even knew the term *kshatriya*.[28] Mahavira, whose teachings helped establish another major ancient religion Jainism, is also claimed to be *ksatriya* by his early followers. Further, early texts of both Jainism and Buddhism suggest they emerged in a period of urbanisation in ancient India, one with city nobles and prospering urban centres, states, agricultural surplus, trade and introduction of money.[29]
5. The earliest Buddhist biographies of the Buddha mention these Vedic-era teachers. However, outside of these early Buddhist texts, these names do not appear which has led some scholars to raise doubts about the historicity of these claims.[32][34] According to Alexander Wynne, the evidence suggests that Buddha studied under these Vedic-era teachers and they "almost certainly" taught him, but the details of his education are unclear.[32][35]
6. The Theravada tradition traces its origins as the oldest tradition holding the Pali Canon as the only authority, Mahayana tradition revers the Canon but also the derivative literature that developed in the 1st millennium CE and its roots are traceable to the 1st century BCE, while Vajrayana tradition is closer to the Mahayana, includes Tantra, is the younger of the three and traceable to the 1st millennium CE.[45][46]

7. On samsara, rebirth and redeath:
   * Paul Williams: "All rebirth is due to karma and is impermanent. Short of attaining enlightenment, in each rebirth one is born and dies, to be reborn elsewhere in accordance with the completely impersonal causal nature of one's own karma. The endless cycle of birth, rebirth, and redeath, is samsara."[49]
   * Buswell and Lopez on "rebirth": "An English term that does not have an exact correlate in Buddhist languages, rendered instead by a range of technical terms, such as the Sanskrit *Punarjanman* (lit. "birth again") and *Punabhavan* (lit. "re-becoming"), and, less commonly, the related PUNARMRTYU (lit. "redeath")."[50]

   See also Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2006) pp. 32–34, [51] John J. Makransky (1997) p. 27.[52] for the use of the term "redeath." The term *Agatigati* or *Agati gati* (plus a few other terms) is generally translated as 'rebirth, redeath'; see any Pali-English dictionary; e.g. pp. 94–95 of Rhys Davids & William Stede, where they list five Sutta examples with rebirth and re-death sense.[53]
8. Graham Harvey: "Siddhartha Gautama found an end to rebirth in this world of suffering. His teachings, known as the dharma in Buddhism, can be summarized in the Four Noble truths."[55] Geoffrey Samuel (2008): "The Four Noble Truths [...] describe the knowledge needed to set out on the path to liberation from rebirth."[56] See also [57][58][59][49][60][55][61][web 2][web 3]

   The Theravada tradition holds that insight into these four truths is liberating in itself.[62] This is reflected in the Pali canon.[63] According to Donald Lopez, "The Buddha stated in his first sermon that when he gained absolute and intuitive knowledge of the four truths, he achieved complete enlightenment and freedom from future rebirth."[web 2]

   The *Maha-parinibbana Sutta* also refers to this liberation.[web 4] Carol Anderson: "The second passage where the four truths appear in the *Vinaya-pitaka* is also found in the *Mahaparinibbana-sutta* (D II 90–91). Here, the Buddha explains that it is by not understanding the four truths that rebirth continues."[64]

   On the meaning of moksha as liberation from rebirth, see Patrick Olivelle in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.[web 5]
9. As opposite to *sukha*, "pleasure," it is better translated as "pain."[65]
10. This explanation is more common in commentaries on the Four Noble Truths within the Theravada tradition: e.g. Ajahn Sucitta (2010); Ajahn Sumedho (ebook); Rahula (1974); etc.
11. Ending rebirth:
    * Graham Harvey: "The Third Noble Truth is nirvana. The Buddha tells us that an end to suffering is possible, and it is nirvana. Nirvana is a "blowing out," just as a candle flame is extinguished in the wind, from our lives in samsara. It connotes an end to rebirth"[55]
    * Spiro: "The Buddhis message then, as I have said, is not simply a psychological message, i.e. that desire is the cause of suffering because unsatisfied desire produces frustration. It does contain such a message to be sure; but more importantly it is an eschatological message. Desire is the cause of suffering because desire is the cause of rebirth; and the extinction of desire leads to deliverance from suffering because it signals release from the Wheel of Rebirth."[57]
    * John J. Makransky: "The third noble truth, cessation (*nirodha*) or nirvana, represented the ultimate aim of Buddhist practice in the Abhidharma traditions: the state free from the conditions that created samsara. Nirvana was the ultimate and final state attained when the supramundane yogic path had been completed. It represented salvation from samsara precisely because it was understood to comprise a state of complete freedom from the chain of samsaric causes and conditions, i.e., precisely because it was unconditioned (*asamskrta*)."[59]
    * Walpola Rahula: "Let us consider a few definitions and descriptions of Nirvana as found in the original Pali texts [...] 'It is the complete cessation of that very thirst (tanha), giving it up, renouncing it, emancipation from it, detachment from it.' [...] 'The abandoning and destruction of craving for these Five Aggregates of Attachment: that is the cessation of *dukkha*. [...] 'The Cessation of Continuity and becoming (*Bhavanirodha*) is Nibbana.'"[77]
12. Earlier Buddhist texts refer to five realms rather than six realms; when described as five realms, the god realm and demi-god realm constitute a single realm.[89]
13. This merit gaining may be on the behalf of one's family members.[96][97][98]
14. The realms in which a being is reborn are:[101][102][subnote 1]
    1. Naraka: beings believed in Buddhism to suffer in one of many Narakas (Hells);
    2. Preta: sometimes sharing some space with humans, but invisible; an important variety is the hungry ghost;[103]
    3. Tiryag (animals): existence as an animal along with humans; this realm is traditionally thought in Buddhism to be similar to a hellish realm because animals are believed to be driven by impulse; they prey on each other and suffer.[104]
    4. Manusya (human beings): one of the realms of rebirth in which attaining Nirvana is possible; A rebirth in this realm is therefore considered as fortunate and an opportunity to end the endless Samsara and associated Dukkha.[105][106]
    5. Asuras: variously translated as lowly deities, demi-gods, demons, titans, or anti-gods; recognised in Theravada tradition as part of the heavenly realm;[107]
    6. Devas including Brahmās: variously translated as gods, deities, angels, or heavenly beings. The vast majority of Buddhist lay people have historically pursued Buddhist rituals and practices motivated by rebirth into the Deva realm.[105][108][109]
15. Diseases and suffering induced by the disruptive actions of other people are examples of non-karma suffering.[116]
16. The emphasis on intent in Buddhism marks its difference from the karma theory of Jainism where karma accumulates with or without intent.[118][119] The emphasis on intent is also found in Hinduism, and Buddhism may have influenced karma theories of Hinduism.[120]
17. This Buddhist idea may have roots in the *quid-pro-quo* exchange beliefs of the Hindu Vedic rituals.[127] The "karma merit transfer" concept has been controversial, not accepted in later Jainism and Hinduism traditions, unlike Buddhism where it was adopted in ancient times and remains a common practice.[124] According to Bruce Reichenbach, the "merit transfer" idea was generally absent in early Buddhism and may have emerged with the rise of Mahayana Buddhism; he adds that while major Hindu schools such as Yoga, Advaita Vedanta and others do not believe in merit transfer, some bhakti Hindu traditions later adopted the idea just like Buddhism.[128]
18. Another variant, which may be condensed to the eightfold or tenfold path, starts with a *Tathagatha* entering this world. A layman hears his teachings, decides to leave the life of a householder, starts living according to the moral precepts, guards his sense-doors, practises mindfulness and the four jhanas, gains the three knowledges, understands the Four Noble Truths and destroys the taints, and perceives that he is liberated.[80]
19. The early Mahayana Buddhism texts link their discussion of "emptiness" (*shunyata*) to *Anatta* and *Nirvana*. They do so, states Mun-Keat Choong, in three ways: first, in the common sense of a monk's meditative state of emptiness; second, with the main sense of *anatta* or 'everything in the world is empty of self'; third, with the ultimate sense of *nirvana* or realisation of emptiness and thus an end to rebirth cycles of suffering.[141]
20. Some scholars such as Cousins and Sangharakshita translate *apranaihita* as "aimlessness or directionless-ness".[143]
21. These descriptions of nirvana in Buddhist texts, states Peter Harvey, are contested by scholars because nirvana in Buddhism is ultimately described as a state of "stopped consciousness (blown out), but one that is not non-existent", and "it seems impossible to imagine what awareness devoid of any object would be like".[149][150]
22. Scholars[108][109] note that better rebirth, not nirvana, has been the primary focus of a vast majority of lay Buddhists. This they attempt through merit accumulation and good *kamma*.
23. The hundreds of rules vary by the *sangha*; 11th-century Chinese monastic texts include rules such as only reciting the Buddha's Word alone, not near commonplace people; not eating prohibited foods such as meat, fish, cheese, onions, garlic, animal fat; abstain from anything that can lead to sensual thoughts; etc.[218]
24. Williams refers to Frauwallner (1973) p. 155
25. Many ancient Upanishads of Hinduism describe yoga and meditation as a means to liberation.[230][231][232]
26. The state is described in a number of additional characteristics in different Buddhist texts. For example, success in the First Dhyana leads to a gem-like outer light emanating from the body, according to *Samahitabhumi* by Asanga; the nature of emanating light from one's body changes as the meditation successfully progresses from the first to the fourth Dhyana.[245]

27. Gombrich: "I know this is controversial, but it seems to me that the third and fourth jhanas are thus quite unlike the second."[250]
28. Wynne: "Thus the expression *sato sampajāno* in the third *jhāna* must denote a state of awareness different from the meditative absorption of the second *jhāna* (*cetaso ekodibhāva*). It suggests that the subject is doing something different from remaining in a meditative state, i.e., that he has come out of his absorption and is now once again aware of objects. The same is true of the word *upek(k)hā*: it does not denote an abstract 'equanimity', [but] it means to be aware of something and indifferent to it [...] The third and fourth *jhāna-s*, as it seems to me, describe the process of directing states of meditative absorption towards the mindful awareness of objects."[253]
29. According to Gombrich, "the later tradition has falsified the jhana by classifying them as the quintessence of the concentrated, calming kind of meditation, ignoring the other – and indeed higher – element."[250]
30. The problem was famously voiced in 1936 by Louis de La Vallee Poussin, in his text *Musila et Narada: Le Chemin de Nirvana*.[255] See Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Musial and Narad* (http://www.gampoabbey.org/documents/kosha-sources/La-Vallee-Poussin-Musila-and-Narada-The-Path-of-Nirvana-1937.pdf). Translated from the French by Gelongma Migme Chödrön and Gelong Lodrö Sangpo.
31. Schmithausen:[256]
    1. The four Rupa Jhanas themselves constituted the core liberating practice of early buddhism, c.q. the Buddha;[257]
    2. Mastering the four Rupa Jhanas, where-after "liberating insight" is attained;
    3. Mastering the four Rupa Jhanas and the four Arupa Jhanas, where-after "liberating insight" is attained.
32. On Vetter and dhyana, see, for example, Vetter 1988:
    - page xxvii: "Originally this ["the fourth stage [...] that state of pure equanimity and awareness"] may have been the only ground of an experience of release."
    - page xxviii: "Incidentally, this state of pure equanimity and awareness may also have been the origin of the method of discriminating insight."
    - page xxviii–xxix: "In order to solve [...] a very practical way."
    - page xxxiii: "an older stage of the same path to salvation ends in the right samadhi,"
33. The Buddha never claimed that the "four immeasurables" were his unique ideas, in a manner similar to "cessation, quieting, nirvana".[268] The Buddhist scripture *Digha Nikaya* II.251 asserts the Buddha to be calling the Brahmavihara as "that practice", and he then contrasts it with "my practice".[268]
34. Tillmann Vetter: "Very likely the cause was the growing influence of a non-Buddhist spiritual environment·which claimed that one can be released only by some truth or higher knowledge. In addition the alternative (and perhaps sometimes competing) method of discriminating insight (fully established after the introduction of the four noble truths) seemed to conform so well to this claim."[295]

    According to Bronkhorst, this happened under influence of the "mainstream of meditation," that is, Vedic-Brahmanical oriented groups, which believed that the cessation of action could not be liberating, since action can never be fully stopped. Their solution was to postulate a fundamental difference between the inner soul or self and the body. The inner self is unchangeable, and unaffected by actions. By insight into this difference, one was liberated. To equal this emphasis on insight, Buddhists presented insight into their most essential teaching as equally liberating. What exactly was regarded as the central insight "varied along with what was considered most central to the teaching of the Buddha."[294]
35. Wayman and Wayman have disagreed with this view, and they state that the *Tathagatagarbha* is neither self nor sentient being, nor soul, nor personality.[326]
36. While some interpretations state that Buddhism may have originated as a social reform, other scholars state that it is incorrect and anachronistic to regard the Buddha as a social reformer.[383] Buddha's concern was "to reform individuals, help them to leave society forever, not to reform the world... he never preached against social inequality". Richard Gombrich, quoted by Christopher Queen.[383][384]
37. The Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya and Anguttara Nikaya
38. The surviving portions of the scriptures of Sarvastivada, Mulasarvastivada, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka and other schools.[404][405]
39. Exemplary studies are the study on descriptions of "liberating insight" by Lambert Schmithausen,[256] the overview of early Buddhism by Tilmann Vetter,[135] the philological work on the four truths by K.R. Norman,[406] the textual studies by Richard Gombrich,[254] and the research on early meditation methods by Johannes Bronkhorst.[407]
40. Well-known proponents of the first position are A. K. Warder[subnote 2] and Richard Gombrich.[410][subnote 3]
41. A proponent of the second position is Ronald Davidson.[subnote 4]
42. Well-known proponents of the third position are J.W. de Jong,[412][subnote 5] Johannes Bronkhorst[subnote 6] and Donald Lopez.[subnote 7]
43. According to Schmithausen, "the karma doctrine may have been incidental to early Buddhist soteriology."[422]
44. Vetter: "I am especially thinking here of MN 26 (I p. 163,32; 165,15; 166,35) *kimkusalagavesi anuttaram santivarapadam pariyesamano* (searching for that which is beneficial, seeking the unsurpassable, best place of peace) and again MN 26 (passim), *anuttaramyagakkhemam nibbiinam pariyesati* (he seeks the unsurpassable safe place, the nirvana). *Anuppatta-sadattho* (one who has reached the right goal) is also a vague positive expression in the Arhatformula in MN 35 (I p, 235), see chapter 2, footnote 3, Furthermore, *satthi* (welfare) is important in e.g. SN 2.12 or 2.17 or Sn 269; and *sukha* and *rati* (happiness), in contrast to other places, as used in Sn 439 and 956. The oldest term was perhaps *amata* (immortal, immortality) [...] but one could say here that it is a negative term."[433]
45. Anthony Barber and Sree Padma note that "historians of Buddhist thought have been aware for quite some time that such pivotally important Mahayana Buddhist thinkers as Nagarjuna, Dignāga, Chandrakirti, Aryadeva, and Bhāviveka, among many others, formulated their theories while living in Buddhist communities in Āndhra."[450] They note that the ancient Buddhist sites in the lower Kṛṣṇa Valley, including Amaravati, Nāgārjunakoṇḍā and Jaggayyapeṭa "can be traced to at least the third century BCE, if not earlier."[451]
46. "The most important evidence – in fact the only evidence – for situating the emergence of the Mahayana around the beginning of the common era was not Indian evidence at all, but came from China. Already by the last quarter of the 2nd century CE, there was a small, seemingly idiosyncratic collection of substantial Mahayana sutras translated into what Erik Zürcher calls 'broken Chinese' by an Indoscythian, whose Indian name has been reconstructed as Lokaksema."[456]
47. "The south (of India) was then vigorously creative in producing Mahayana Sutras" Warder[457]
48. See Hill (2009), p. 30, for the Chinese text from the *Hou Hanshu*, and p. 31 for a translation of it.[474]
49. (Harvey 1990),(Gombrich,1984); Gethin (1998), pp. 1–2, identifies "three broad traditions" as: (1) "The Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka and South-East Asia, also sometimes referred to as 'southern' Buddhism"; (2) "The East Asian tradition of China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, also sometimes referred to as 'eastern' Buddhism"; and, (3) "The Tibetan tradition, also sometimes referred to as 'northern' Buddhism."; Robinson & Johnson (1982) divide their book into two parts: Part One is entitled "The Buddhism of South Asia" (which pertains to Early Buddhism in India); and, Part Two is entitled "The Development of Buddhism Outside of India" with chapters on "The Buddhism of Southeast Asia", "Buddhism in the Tibetan Culture Area", "East Asian Buddhism" and "Buddhism Comes West"; *Penguin Handbook of Living Religions*, 1984, p. 279; Prebish & Keown, *Introducing Buddhism*, ebook, Journal of Buddhist Ethics, 2005, printed ed, Harper, 2006
50. See e.g. the multi-dimensional classification in *Encyclopedia of Religion*[496]
51. Cousins, L.S. (1996); Buswell (2003), Vol. I, p. 82; and, Keown & Prebish (2004), p. 107. See also, Gombrich (1988/2002), p. 32: "… [T]he best we can say is that [the Buddha] was probably Enlightened between 550 and 450, more likely later rather than earlier."

52. Williams (2000, pp. 6-7) writes: "As a matter of fact Buddhism in mainland India itself had all but ceased to exist by the thirteenth century CE, although by that time it had spread to Tibet, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia." [502] (Originally 1958), "Chronology," p. xxix: "c. 1000-1200: Buddhism disappears as [an] organized religious force in India." See also, Robinson & Johnson (1970/1982), pp. 100-1, 108 Fig. 1; and, Harvey (1990/2007), pp. 139-40.
53. According to Charles S. Prebish:[528] "Although a variety of Zen 'schools' developed in Japan, they all emphasize Zen as a teaching that does not depend on sacred texts, that provides the potential for direct realization, that the realization attained is none other than the Buddha nature possessed by each sentient being ..."
54. Prebish comments (op. cit., p. 244): "It presumes that *sitting in meditation itself* (i.e. *zazen*) is an expression of Buddha nature." The method is to detach the mind from conceptual modes of thinking and perceive Reality directly. Speaking of Zen in general, Buddhist scholar Stephen Hodge writes: "... practitioners of Zen believe that Enlightenment, the awakening of the Buddha-mind or Buddha-nature, is our natural state, but has been covered over by layers of negative emotions and distorted thoughts. According to this view, Enlightenment is not something that we must acquire a bit at a time, but a state that can occur instantly when we cut through the dense veil of mental and emotional obscurations."[529]
55. This is a contested number. Official numbers from the Chinese government are lower, while other surveys are higher. According to Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, in non-government surveys, "49 percent of self-claimed non-believers [in China] held some religious beliefs, such as believing in soul reincarnation, heaven, hell, or supernatural forces. Thus the 'pure atheists' make up only about 15 percent of the sample [surveyed]."[566]

Subnotes

1. The realms of rebirths in Buddhism are further subdivided into 31 planes of existence.[web 8] Rebirths in some of the higher heavens, known as the Śuddhāvāsa Worlds or Pure Abodes, can be attained only by skilled Buddhist practitioners known as anāgāmis (non-returners). Rebirths in the Ārūpyadhātu (formless realms) can be attained by only those who can meditate on the arūpajhānas, the highest object of meditation.
2. According to A.K. Warder, in his 1970 publication "Indian Buddhism", from the oldest extant texts a common kernel can be drawn out.[405] According to Warder, c.q. his publisher: "This kernel of doctrine is presumably common Buddhism of the period before the great schisms of the fourth and third centuries BC. It may be substantially the Buddhism of the Buddha himself, although this cannot be proved: at any rate it is a Buddhism presupposed by the schools as existing about a hundred years after the parinirvana of the Buddha, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was formulated by anyone else than the Buddha and his immediate followers."[409]
3. Richard Gombrich: "I have the greatest difficulty in accepting that the main edifice is not the work of a single genius. By "the main edifice" I mean the collections of the main body of sermons, the four Nikāyas, and of the main body of monastic rules."[254]
4. Ronald Davidson: "While most scholars agree that there was a rough body of sacred literature (disputed)(sic) that a relatively early community (disputed)(sic) maintained and transmitted, we have little confidence that much, if any, of surviving Buddhist scripture is actually the word of the historic Buddha."[411]
5. J.W. De Jong: "It would be hypocritical to assert that nothing can be said about the doctrine of earliest Buddhism [...] the basic ideas of Buddhism found in the canonical writings could very well have been proclaimed by him [the Buddha], transmitted and developed by his disciples and, finally, codified in fixed formulas."[412]
6. Bronkhorst: "This position is to be preferred to (ii) for purely methodological reasons: only those who seek nay find, even if no success is guaranteed."[413]
7. Lopez: "The original teachings of the historical Buddha are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recover or reconstruct."[414]

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Jan Gonda (1987), *Indian Religions: An Overview – Buddhism and Jainism*, Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd Edition, Volume 7, Editor: Lindsay Jones, Macmillan Reference, ISBN 0-02-865740-3, p. 4428;
K.T.S. Sarao; Jefferey Long (2017). *Encyclopedia of Indian Religions: Buddhism and Jainism* (https://books.google.com/books?id=m0_njwEACAAJ). Springer Netherlands. ISBN 978-94-024-0851-5., Quote: "Buddhism and Jainism, two religions which, together with Hinduism, constitute the three pillars of Indic religious tradition in its classical formulation."
15. Gethin 1998, pp. 7–8.
16. Bronkhorst 2013, pp. ix–xi.
17. Gethin 1998, pp. 13–14.
18. Swearer 2004, p. 177.
19. Gethin 1998, pp. 15–24.
20. Keown & Prebish 2010, pp. 105–106.
21. Buswell 2004, p. 352.
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319. Harvey 1990, p. 54, Quote: "The main concrete application of the abstract principle is in the form of a series of conditioned links (*nidanas*), culminating in the arising of dukkha." (...) "This [doctrine] states the principle of conditionality, that all things, mental and physical, arise and exist due to the presence of certain conditions, and cease once their conditions are removed: nothing (except *Nibbana*) is independent. The doctrine thus compliments the teaching that no permanent, independent self can be found.".
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324. Hookham 1991, pp. 100–104.
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