

# Syncretism of Buddhism

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# Agenda

## 1. **Brief History of Buddhism**

- a) The founder Siddhartha Gautama
- b) Historical scriptures in India
- c) Buddhism Spreading/Persecution in Asia

## 2. **Syncretism of Buddhism**

- a) Ritual syncretism
- b) Ideology syncretism
- c) Affection from family to world.

## 3. **Summary**

# World Background

Around 500 BC, there emerged many world influential figures.

1. in ancient Greek: Socrates 469-399 BCE, Plato 427–347 BCE, Aristotle 384–322 BCE,
2. in ancient China: Kongzi 551-479 BC, Mengzi: 372-289 BC, Laozi 531BC, Zhuangzi 370-287 BC,
3. in ancient India: Siddhartha Gautama 5th century BC.

## About the founder of Buddhism

1. Siddhartha Gautama, or called Gautama Buddha, was born about 5th century BC in India area.
2. According to the Buddhist tradition, Gautama was born in Lumbini, now in modern-day Nepal, died in Kushinagar, India. The exact birth and death of date and place of Gautama is unknown.
3. Gautama is family name; Siddhartha is first name means 'to finish the goal'.
4. The title of Buddha literally means enlightened one, a knower, the awakened.

# Historical Scriptures of Buddhism

1. Earliest historical scriptures mentioned the Buddhism can be found in 'Edict of Ashoka' who reigned from 269 BC to 232 BC in India. Archaeological evidence for Buddhism before the time of Ashoka (3th century BC) is scarce; after the time of Ashoka it is abundant.
2. The oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts fragments are reported to have been found in western Pakistan, and now preserved in the British Library. They are dated from the first half of the 1st century.
3. Earliest Buddhism 'canon' was called 'Pali Tripitaka', composed in North India and was preserved orally until it was committed to writing during the Fourth Buddhist Council in Sri Lanka in 29 BC.

4. The main Sanskrit Buddhist 'Canon' (Sutras佛经) dated back from 1st to 6th century: no complete copy is found, discovered from Eastern Turkistan, mixed with translation of Chinese and Tibetan, related to Pali but some contradict to each other.

Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Buddhism started from the 1st century, with a more adaptable approach and was open to doctrinal innovations, was written in Sanskrit (梵文) .

# Buddhism Spreading in Asia

1. Buddhism flourished during the Indian Maurya dynasty孔雀帝國(321-184 BC), especially during Emperor Ashoka(269-232 BC) as official royal religion.
2. Buddhism in India gradually diminished after 6th century due to:
  - a) the Muslim invasions in India 623 AD,
  - b) the Hinduism advancing.
3. Buddhism began to spread in mainland China in 1st century AD and suddenly flourished in China in 6th century AD.
4. Buddhism began to spread in Tibetan in 6th century AD and flourished in 12th century AD.
5. China Buddhism entered Korea in 4th century AD, entered into Japan in 6th century AD.

# Imperial Persecutions of Buddhist in China

Buddhist experienced several imperial persecutions in China history:

1. In 567
2. In 574-577,
3. In 845,
4. In 955,
5. In 1966-76 Cultural Revolution.

The results of persecutions made it more durable, flexible and capricious in syncretism and eventually became the world biggest syncretism religion.



# Syncretism of Buddhism

The syncretism is the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought.

The syncretism history analysis method is a way to study how different religions, cultures, or schools of thought were amalgamated into the particular religion or area in its history.

The syncretism history analysis method is the most efficient method so far to help us to better understand the essence of Buddhism.

# From a thought to a religion

Among all ancient influential philosophers, only Gautama's thoughts gradually became into today's world wide religion.

Seldom people ever explored the process of Gautama's conversion from philosophy to religion.

- The lack of authentic or reliable data, no real 'canon' in Buddhism;
- The complexity of sects and ethnographies;
- The different languages with false translations, large confictions;

# Animism Rituals Elements Syncretism

Just like other ancient world influential philosophers, Gautama was merely a master or teacher to teach students to spread his thoughts. There was no any religious ritual elements at that times.

During the long history, Gautama's followers keep developing and absorbing all kinds of folk religions and eventually formed today's biggest animism symcretism religion. Some of them can be seen directly, but most are hard to tell which absorb which.

# Buddhist Temple in India (3rd century AD)



Mulagandhakuti Vihara, [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarnath) Buddhist temple at Sarnath (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarnath>)



The [Colosseum](#) in Rome, Italy

# Chinese Buddhism Temple (5th century)



Hena ShaoLin Buddhism Temple, China



Emperor's Tianmen Building,  
Beijing, China

# Idols of Sculpture (80 BC in India)



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



Augustus of Prima Porta, statue of the emperor Augustus, 1st century CE. Vatican Museums

# Buddhism Worship Idols Today (1st century)



Buddhist worship



Catholic worship





# Short hair to bald head in Buddhism(5th century)



Early in India



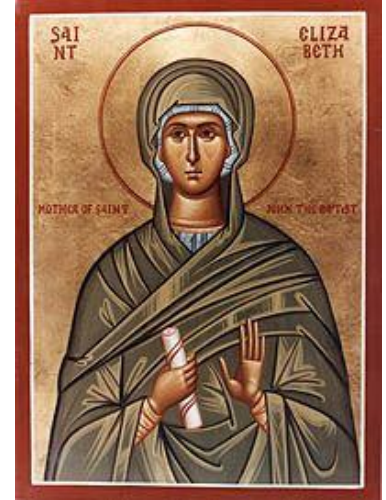
Today in China



# Circle on the head in picture(1st century)



3th century,  
Dunhuan China



Early Chritian  
Picture

# Buddhism Altar/Offering/Insense/Taotism



In Catholic church

In Chinese  
Buddhist Temple

## - Symbolism (4th century BC)

- the Dharma wheel, began in the 4th century BCE in India.
- the Bodhi tree (early in India)
- the lotus flower. (5th Century in China).
- Swastika 卐 (Falun Gong adopt it recently in China)





# others

- Buddha pray beads (Rosary )(4th Century AD)
- Crown (5th Century AD)
- clothing/robs
- Vegetarianism (7th Century AD)
- Gongfu (life power, martial, 500 AD in China Henan)
- divination/prediction (5th century AD)
- taboo (5th Century AD)
- Literature/arts (6th century AD)
- novels (16th century AD)



# Recent Syncretism Adopted from Christian Church

- Music / songs / Choir (recent years)
- Children Care (recent years)
- Sunday School (recent years)
- Acceptance of children monks (recent years)
- Public leaflet/movies/multimedia flooding (recent years)

Buddhism is undergoing a radical change in its history that I never saw before recently.



## Rituals Syncretism Summary

In summary, almost all elements in Christian/catholic, Islam, Jewish rituals or other folks religions elements can be found in Buddhism.

Buddhism affection can be found in China everywhere in our daily life.

# Buddhist Thoughts Syncretism

## 1). Foundation of Thoughts (500-400 BC)

Gautama's ideology originated from the thinking of experiences of suffering (aging, illness, death, fears, failure/loss, etc) -- where does the suffer come from, how can we remove suffer to gain long lasting happiness. (Contrast to John 1:13)

After around 5th century AD, there are more than 84,000 different sects or thoughts in Chinese Buddhism, all of them essentially are based on this issues.

## 2). Four Noble Truths and Eight Paths ( 5th Century AD from Sanskrits in India)

a)**Dukkha**: incapable of satisfying; Life in this mundane world with its craving and clinging to impermanent states and things, is unsatisfactory and painful.

b)**Samudaya**: cycle suffering; This craving and clinging produces karma which leads to renewed becoming, keeping us trapped in rebirth and renewed dissatisfaction

c)**Niroda**: the cessation of suffering: By stopping this craving and clinging, no more karma is produced, and rebirth and dissatisfaction will no longer arise again;

d)**Magga**: the path to the cessation of, or liberation from dukkha:. By following the Noble Eightfold Path.



## Noble Eightfold Path.

1. right view: our actions have consequences; death is not the end, and our actions and beliefs have also consequences after death;
2. right resolve: the giving up home and adopting the life of a religious mendicant
3. right speech: no lying, no rude speech etc
4. right conduct: no killing or injuring,
5. right livelihood: beg to feed,
6. right effort: guard against sensual thoughts;
7. right mindfulness: never be absent minded
8. right samadhi: practicing four stages of meditation

### 3). Earliest Rules From Pali Tipitaka (2th century BC in India)

- Abstain from any sexual intercourse.
- No theft
- No any intentionally deprive a human being of life.
- No liars

#### 4). Honor or respect parents (6th century AD in China)

When a person decided to be converted as a monk, his original name will be replaced by Buddhism name. Eg. Original name of Dalai Lama is Lhamo Dondrub.

The celibacy monk's life was contradicted to earlier Chinese patriarch/patrilineal/patrilocal clan tradition. To escape the normal family was considered to be irresponsible for parents and family in China.

So since 6th century, Buddhism began to emphasize the teaching of respecting of parents, and enumerated many samples to follow.

## 5) Good deed (6th century AD)

Similar to the concept of atonement volume from Catholic church, when Buddhism enter into the real life, they advocate good deed in public.

6) wholism

7) Reason-Results

8) life-cycle;

9) Chinese Buddhism has five commandments五戒:

1. Not kill any life(including animals) 不殺生、2. No theft不偷盜、3. No adultery不邪淫、4.No absurd words不妄語、5. No drink不飲酒。

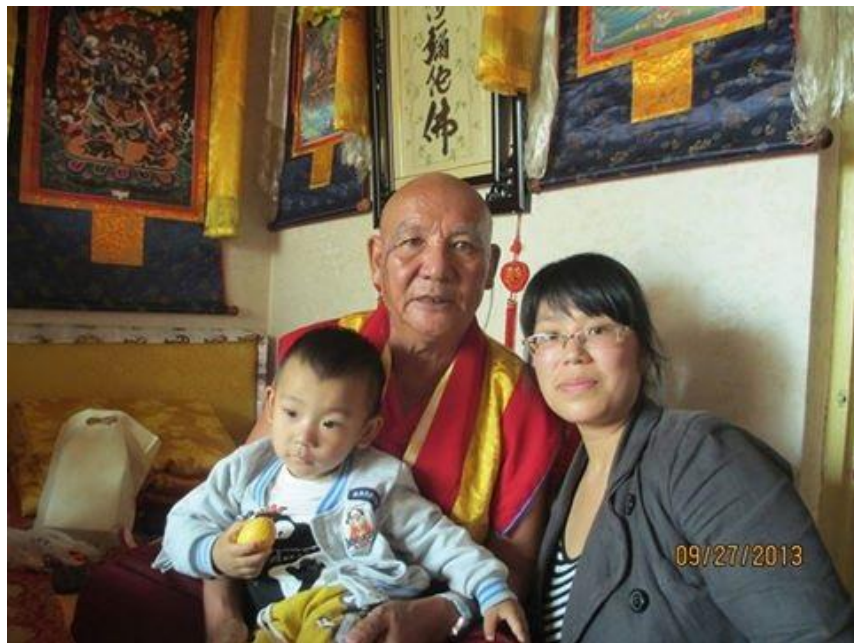
Many Christian concepts were adopted in Buddhism Teaching (recent years)

- Love: love all including animal, plant and nature.
- Tolerance: nonviolence/co-existence.
- Thanksgiving: always thanks.
- Righteous: be righteous person.
- Jesus: In youtube, some monks taught public that Jesus is the incarnation of Buddha.

# Buddhism Influence in the World

Buddhism is widely considered the most peaceful religion in the world. Over the past two thousands of years, experienced several times of persecution, the Buddhism had eventually conquered all the Chinese earlier thoughts and culture, and became the master religion of China. Now with the sympathy of being discriminated, Buddhism had steadily spread into American and other Christian territory and seems to be winning all hearts of the world silently.

Prominent Figures include Albert Einstein, Dalai Lama, Mark Zuckerberg, etc.



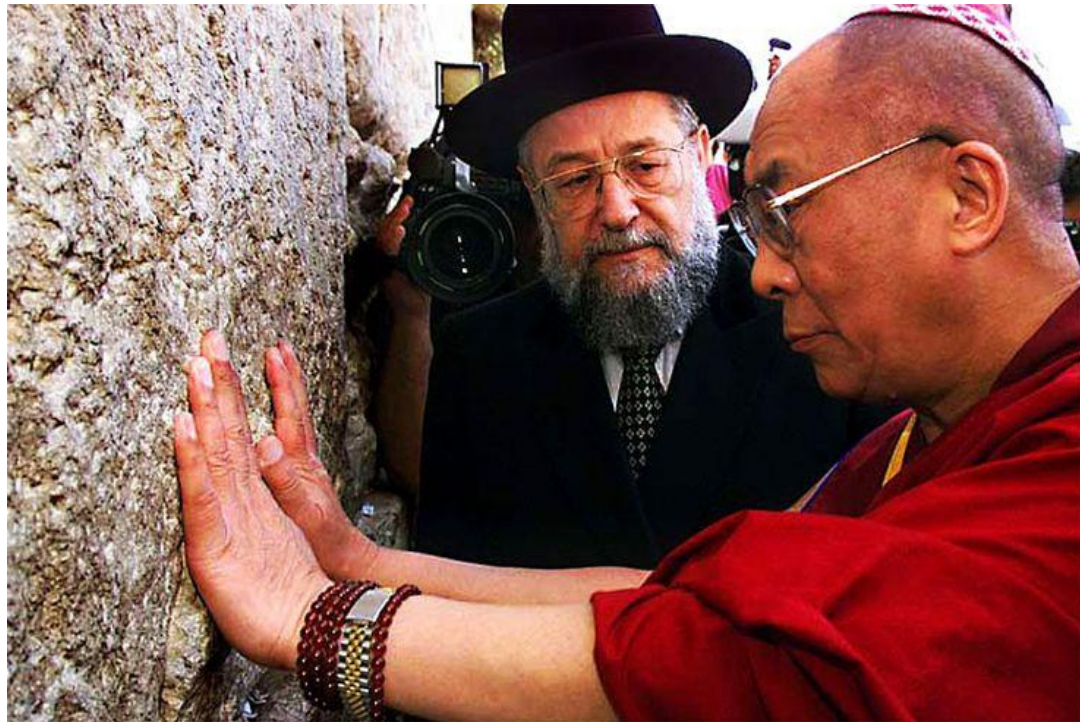
A mother brought her child to Buddhist monk for divination and to seek the protection, benevolence and bless.




(Albert Einstein 1941)

“The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal god and avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual and a meaningful unity.

Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism.”



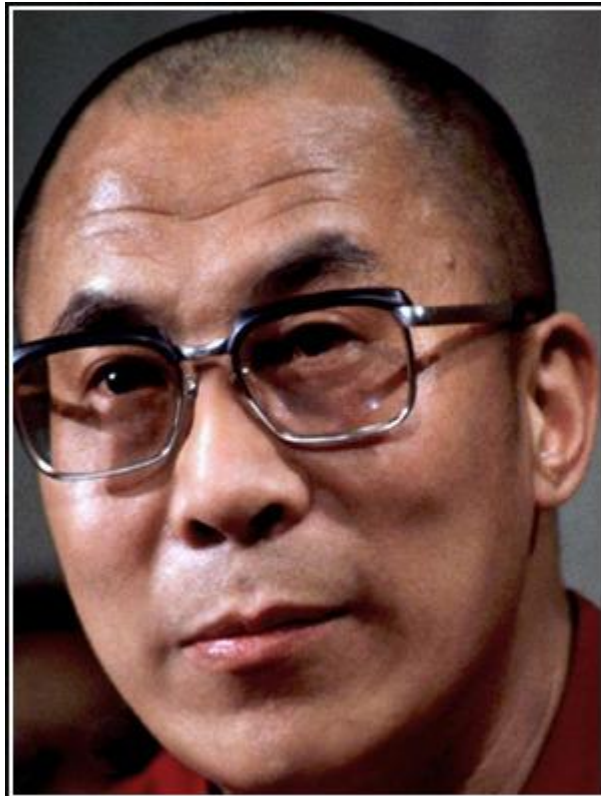
Dalai Lama with kippah on bald head in western wailing wall, Jerusalem, Mar 22, 1994.



What is Love?  
Love is the  
absence of  
judgement.

~Dalai Lama

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pain is inevitable,suffering is optional...  
we have bigger houses,but smaller  
families. More conveniences,but less  
time. We have knowledge,but less  
judgements; more experts,but more  
problems ; more medicines but less  
health.

— Dalai Lama —

AZ QUOTES



The Dalai Lama once said that 'If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change!' This is a great thought! And great thoughts belong to great men only!

— Mehmet Murat Ildan —

AZ QUOTES



Maybe the Dalai Lama is the only person who is totally honest, and even with him, he's skillful not to hurt anybody. He's skillful.

(Richard Gere)





Mark Zuckerberg in Xi'an,  
China, October 26, 2015

# Summary

- Buddhism was originally the thoughts from Gautama similar to the thoughts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kongzi, etc.
- It was due to its syncretism both in rituals and thoughts that Buddhism eventually became a world religion. Without syncretism, no Buddhism religions of today, and Gautama would not be the religious lord but a great philosopher.
- Buddhism is branded as most peaceful religion. Abstained from sexuality, it was the most flexible, durable, capricious religion in the world. In quantity, it has become the third largest religion in the world. But in permeability, the syncretism makes Buddhism the strongest among all folk religions. (ref John10:10)