



# To Cross the River

From the Near Shore to the Farther Shore

# Three Jewels

- To cross the river, one takes refuge in Three Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
  - Follow in the footsteps of the Buddha
  - To practice the Buddhist dharma, one lives one's life according to the Middle Way (the Noble Eightfold Paths).
  - Support in the Buddhist community

# Crossing the River

- The focus of Buddhism is to go from this shore (samsara), cross the river, and reach the other shore—to be in nirvana.
- Notice that this is just a metaphor. The river symbolizes the constantly changing reality. The two shores symbolize two different perspectives of looking at (or, experiencing) the reality.
- The river is the same river. This is why “samsara is nirvana.”

# Extinguishing the Flame

- Nirvana—“blowing out, cooling off”
  - the state in which all the burning desires are extinguished
  - the state transcending all pairs of opposites
  - the state in which one fully realizes the Dharma

# Nirvana—the Other Shore

- Samsara is a state of existence, a state of experiencing the reality; nirvana is another different state of experiencing the reality.
- Eating food with attachment is eating in samsara. Eating food without attachment is eating in nirvana. It's the same act of eating, but two very different states of experience.



# Void and Nirvana

- To reach nirvana is to truly realize that reality is empty.
- Void—the absence of own-being
- Void—the stream of becoming  
(Hence, the metaphor of a river, or a movie without the tape or film)
- stream of becoming—dependent arising

# The Bodhisattva

- A Bodhisattva is one who has attained enlightenment but, because of his or her compassion, vows to be reborn again and again in order to help others reach nirvana.
- Bodhisattvas accumulate a great stock of merit through their sacrifices. Bodhisattvas can give the merit to the true followers of Buddhism and enable them to achieve nirvana.

# Vows of the Bodhisattva

“I take upon myself the burden of all suffering;... At all cost I must bear the burdens of all beings. ... I am resolved to abide in each single state of woe for numberless eons; and so I will help all beings to freedom...”

“If I don’t go to hell, who will?”

我不入地獄，誰入地獄？



# 1,001 Bodhisattvas



Sanjuusan Gendo Temple in Kyoto

# Theravada Buddhism

Theravada (the “Path of the Elders”)

- also called Hinayana (the “Small Vessel”)
- focuses on becoming an *arhat* by following in the Buddha’s footsteps.
- emphasizes the structures of sangha and lay supports
- follows the teachings in *tripitaka* (the Pali Canon that records Buddha’s life and teachings)

# Five Precepts (Dedications)

1. abstain from taking life
2. abstain from taking more than what one needs
3. abstain from sexual misconducts
4. abstain from false speech
5. abstain from intoxicants



# Mahayana Buddhism

## Mahayana (the “Great Vessel”)

- provides more paths to nirvana
- emphasizes the compassion of the Bodhisattva
- in addition to *tripitaka*, also accepts the *Prajnaparamita* (later *sutras* written in Sanskrit).

# The Three Bodies (*Trikaya*)

- The Three Bodies Doctrine explains the Mahayana notion of Buddhahood:
  1. the Transformation Body—the human Buddha
  2. the Bliss Body—the heavenly Buddha
  3. the Dharma Body—The Buddha is the Dharma.





Buddha Statue at Kamakura

# Major Mahayana Schools

- Pure Land School
- Chan (Zen) School
- Huayan School
- Tiantai (Tendai) School
- Vajrayana Buddhism (Thunderbolt or Diamond Vessel) in Tibet

# Chan (Zen) Buddhism

- The origin of Chan Buddhism comes from a story of Gautama Buddha.
- One day in front of his disciples, Gautama Buddha picked up a flower and smiled. Only one of his disciple named Kashyapa also smiled. The Buddha said to Kashyapa that he had learned the truth about Nirvana.





# The Founding of Chan

- It is said that the famous Indian monk Bodhidharma around 520 c.e. founded Chan Buddhism in China.
- The teaching of Chan was handed on in succession to various patriarchs (or the great Chan masters).
- The sixth Chan master Hui-Neng (637–713 c.e.) was the most famous and greatly advanced the teaching of Chan.



# Chan and Gong-An

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- Two major practices in Chan Buddhism are *Da-Chan* (*Zazen* in Japanese) and *Can-Chan* (*Sanzen* in Japanese).
- *Da-Chan* is the seated meditation.
- *Can-Chan* is the study and discussion of *Gong-An* (*Koan* in Japanese), Chan conundrum, with the Chan master.
- The goal of *Da-Chan* and *Can-Chan* is to gain enlightenment.
- Although *Da-Chan* and *Can-Chan* are very important practices in Chan Buddhism, they are not the only ways to reach Nirvana.