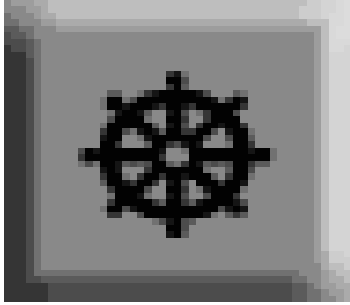


BUDDHISM





History of Buddhism

➤ Siddhartha Gautama

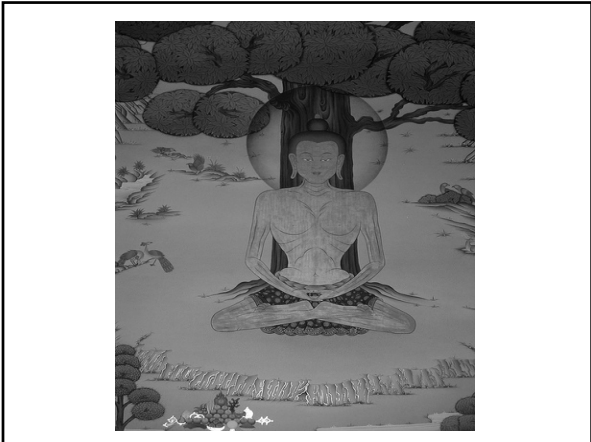
- the founder of Buddhism
- born in the city of Lumbini circa 485 BC (BCE) and raised in Kapilavastu in a wealthy family (his father was King Suddhodana)
- he grew up never knowing hunger, pain or suffering.
- he led a protected life behind the walls of his family's palace.
- Siddhartha will marry Yasodhara, they will have a son, Rahula, who later became a Buddhist monk.

- according to certain scriptures, right after Siddhartha's birth, he stood up and walked and proclaimed, "Supreme am I in the world. Greatest am I in the world. Noblest am I in the world. This is my last birth. Never shall I be reborn."
- a wise man visited his father, King Śuddhodana, stating that Siddhartha would either become a great king (*chakravartin*) or a holy man (*Sadhu*) based on whether he saw life outside of the palace walls.
- the King of course wanted his son to follow him to the throne & young Siddhartha was never allowed to venture or see past the palace walls.
- it would not be until Siddhartha was around 29 or 30 yrs. old that he was see the world outside his home.

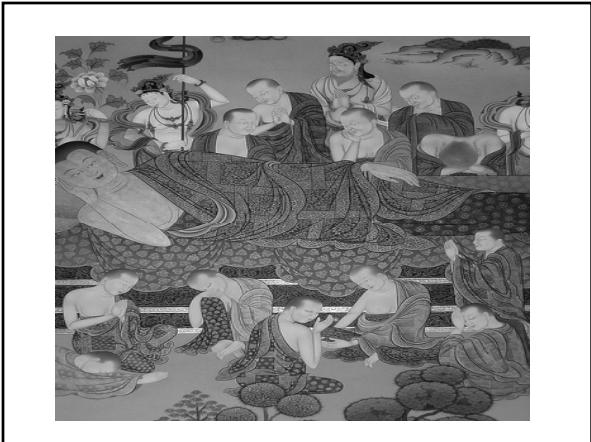
The Four Sights

- As a result of sneaking out, he saw the suffering of his people through encounters with an old man, a diseased man, a rotting corpse, and an ascetic.
- These are known as "The Four Sights", one of the first contemplations of Siddhartha.
- The Four Sights prompted Siddhartha to abandon royal life and take up a spiritual quest to free himself from suffering by living the life of a mendicant or "begging" ascetic.
- He found companions with similar spiritual goals and teachers who taught him various forms of meditation, including *jhāna* (complete stillness).
- Ascetics also practiced many forms of self-denial, including starvation.

- After almost starving to death, Siddhartha accepted a little milk and rice from a village girl named Sujata.
- After this experience, he concluded that ascetic practices such as fasting, holding one's breath, and exposure to pain brought little spiritual benefit.
- He viewed them as counterproductive due to their reliance on self-hatred and mortification.
- He abandoned asceticism, concentrating instead on *anapanasati* meditation (awareness of breathing).
- Buddhists will call this the Middle Way, a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.
- After discovering the Middle Way, he sat under a sacred fig tree or Bodhi tree, in the town of Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise before achieving Nirvana.



- After 5 years, (35 yrs. old) of sitting there meditating, Siddhartha will claim he has become "The Buddha" or "The Enlightened or Awakened One"
- After his spiritual awakening he attracted a band of followers and instituted a monastic order.
- He will spend the rest of his life teaching the Dharma, travelling throughout the northeastern part of India.
- He died at the age of 80 (405 BC or BCE) in Kushinagar, India.



Beliefs

➤ The Four Noble Truths

- The Four Noble Truths contain the essence of the Buddha's teachings. It was these four principles that the Buddha came to understand during his meditation under the bodhi tree.
- The truth of suffering (Dukkha)
- The truth of the origin of suffering (Samudāya)
- The truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha)
- The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)

➤ Suffering (Dukkha)

- Suffering comes in many forms but mainly: old age, sickness and death.
- Humans are always subject to desires and cravings, even when we are able to satisfy these desires, it is only temporary. Pleasure does not last; or if it does, it becomes monotonous.
- Even when we are not suffering from outward causes like illness or bereavement, we are unfulfilled, unsatisfied. **This is the truth of suffering.**
- The Buddha's teachings do not end with suffering; rather, they go on to tell us what we can do about it and how to end it.

➤ Origin of suffering (Samudāya)

- The Buddha taught that the root of all suffering is desire, *tanhā*.
- This comes in three forms, which he described as the Three Roots of Evil, or the Three Fires, or the Three Poisons.
- The three roots of evil & the ultimate causes of suffering:
 - Greed and desire, represented in art by a rooster
 - Ignorance or delusion, represented by a pig
 - Hatred and destructive urges, represented by a snake

➤ **Cessation of suffering (Nirodha)**

- The Buddha taught that the way to extinguish desire, is to liberate oneself from attachment.
- This is the third Noble Truth - the possibility of liberation.
- The Buddha was a living example that this is possible in a human lifetime.
- **Nirvana** means extinguishing. Attaining nirvana - reaching enlightenment - means extinguishing the three fires of greed, delusion and hatred.
- Someone who reaches nirvana does not immediately disappear to a heavenly realm. Nirvana is better understood as a state of mind that humans can reach. It is a state of profound spiritual joy, without negative emotions and fears.
- Someone who has attained enlightenment is filled with compassion for all living things.

➤ **Path to the cessation of suffering (Magga)**

- This is a set of principles called the Eightfold Path.
- **The Eightfold Path** is also called the Middle Way: it avoids both indulgence and severe asceticism, neither of which the Buddha had found helpful in his search for enlightenment.

➤ **The Eightfold Path (divisions)**

- The eight stages are not to be taken in order, but rather support and reinforce each other:
 - Right Understanding
 - Accepting Buddhist teachings.
 - Right Intention
 - A commitment to cultivate the right attitudes.

- Right Speech
 - Speaking truthfully, avoiding slander, gossip and abusive speech.
- Right Action
 - Behaving peacefully and harmoniously; refraining from stealing, killing and overindulgence in sensual pleasure.
- Right Livelihood
 - Avoiding making a living in ways that cause harm, such as exploiting people or killing animals, or trading in intoxicants or weapons.
- Right Effort
 - Cultivating positive states of mind; freeing oneself from evil and unwholesome states and preventing them arising in future.
- Right Mindfulness
 - Developing awareness of the body, sensations, feelings and states of mind.
- Right Concentration
 - Developing the mental focus necessary for this awareness.

➤ **Karma**

- Teachings about karma explain that our past actions affect us, either positively or negatively, and that our present actions will affect us in the future.
- Buddhism uses an agricultural metaphor to explain how sowing good or bad deeds will result in good or bad fruit (phala; or vipāka, meaning 'ripening').

Theravada Buddhism

- Also called the “Lesser Vehicle or Wheel”.
- It means 'the Doctrine of the elders' - the elders being the senior Buddhist monks.
- They believe that it has remained closest to the original teachings of the Buddha.
- It does not over-emphasize the status of these teachings in a fundamentalist way - they are seen as tools to help people understand the truth, and not as having merit of their own.
- The only surviving branch of non-Mahayana groups.
- Characterized by the pursuit of Nirvana.

Mahayana Buddhism

- Also known as the “**Great Vehicle or Wheel**”
- Mahayana Buddhism is not a single group but a collection of Buddhist traditions: Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism.
- It is characterized by the ideal of the *bodhisattva* (the 'enlightenment being') one who tries to bring all to Nirvana & it is the ideal way for a Buddhist to live.
- Anyone can embark on the bodhisattva path. This is a way of life, a way of selflessness; it is a deep wish for all beings, no matter who they are, to be liberated from suffering.
- Theravada and Mahayana are both rooted in the basic teachings of the historical Buddha, and both emphasize the individual search for liberation from the cycle of samsara (birth, death, rebirth...). The methods or practices for doing that, however, can be very different.

Vajrayana Buddhism

- Means "Diamond or Thunderbolt Vehicle"
- Characterized by Tantric practices & is the only form of Buddhism that focuses on Tantric use.
- Heavily influenced by Hinduism, it is not mentioned in any form in the oldest of the Buddhist scriptures.
- It is seen as the esoteric branch of Buddhism.

The Spread of Buddhism

- Monks from both branches began to spread the teachings of The Buddha around the Indian countryside.
- As people converted, Buddhism began to spread outside of India through the monks & also by Indian merchants & traders.
- Buddhism spread throughout China, Southeast Asia, & Japan rather rapidly.
- It is now in practically every country in the world.
