



# GLOBAL BUDDHISM

Encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs and spiritual practices focused on personal spiritual development and attainment of deep insight into the 'true nature' of life

- An estimated **488 million** Buddhists worldwide
- Represent **7%** of the world's total population
- World's **fourth** largest religion

## HISTORIC TIMELINE

- Sometime between 600-300 BC - Siddhartha Gautama lives in present-day Nepal, which is in religious disarray as Hinduism is losing favour
- 150 AD - Trade brings Indian people and beliefs to wider Asia, particularly China
- 3rd century - Teachings of Buddha are translated to Chinese
- 4th century - Buddhist teachings introduced to Korea
- 6th century - Buddhist teachings introduced to Japan
- 1100-1200 AD - Muslims dominate India, Buddhism becomes a very minor religion in the country
- 1800s - Introduced to the United States by immigrants, mostly on the west coast
- 1959 - Dalai Lama, the Buddhist leader in Tibet, flees to India to escape Chinese rule

## BACKGROUND

## OF BUDDHISM



DOCTRINE FIRST APPEARED IN PRESENT-DAY NEPAL  
INTRODUCED BY BUDDHA - PRIMARY FIGURE IN BUDDHISM

- Born as **Prince Siddhartha** sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BC
- **Abandoned wealth** in his youth
- Left his palace in search of the '**ultimate truth**'
- Became monk, sage, philosopher, teacher and religious leader
- Is believed to have achieved '**enlightenment**' ('knowledge', 'wisdom', 'awakened intellect', 'insight into transcendental truth or reality')
- **Shared his insights** to help others escape cycle of rebirth and suffering



## BUDDHIST DEMOGRAPHICS

### DOMINANT RELIGION IN

- Cambodia - 96.9%
- Thailand - 93.2%
- Myanmar - 80.1%
- Bhutan - 74.7%
- Sri Lanka - 69.3%
- Laos - 66.0%
- Mongolia - 55.1%

### LARGE BUDDHIST POPULATIONS IN

- Japan - 36%
- Taiwan - 35%
- Singapore - 33%
- South Korea - 23%
- China - 18%
- Macau - 17%
- Hong Kong - 15%
- North Korea - 14%
- Nepal - 11%
- Vietnam - 10%



• Half of the world's Buddhist population live in **China**

• The vast majority of all Buddhists (nearly 99%) live in the **Asia-Pacific region** - but only about 1 in 8 (12%) of people in that region are Buddhist

• **North America** (3.9 million) and **Europe** (1.3 million) have more than 1 million Buddhists

### 3 MAJOR BRANCHES

- Mahayana Buddhism** largest - concentrated in China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam
- Theravada Buddhism** second largest - Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia
- Vajrayana Buddhism** smallest - Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Mongolia

Dozens of different sects of Buddhism are derived from these schools - have **different characteristics** but **sharing basic beliefs**

- **Zen Buddhism** is a Japanese school derived from Mahayana Buddhism
- **Tibetan Buddhism** which is derived from the Vajrayana Buddhism



## CORE BELIEFS

### REINCARNATION

People are trapped in a cycle of death and rebirth

### KARMA

Good and bad deeds/behavior will be visited back on individuals - this is the basis for living a good, moral life

### NIRVANA

There is a transcendent state of no suffering or desire or sense of self - this is the final goal of Buddhism



## 4 NOBLE TRUTHS

Traditionally accepted as first teachings of Buddha

Considered one of most important teachings in Buddhism

1. **DUKKHA**: Life is always accompanied by suffering (seen as realistic, not pessimistic)
2. **SAMUDAYA**: The source of all suffering lies in passion and craving (greed and desire, ignorance and delusion, hatred and destructive urges)
3. **NIRODHA**: Escaping the cycle of birth and death and ending suffering (reaching Nirvana) is possible by liberating oneself from attachment
4. **MARGA**: The path to Nirvana is made up of eight steps (the Noble Eightfold Path) - also known as the 'Middle Way', focused on moderation and balance between extremes of self-indulgence and self-deprivation



## NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Early summary of Buddhist practices that lead to enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of rebirth (Nirvana)

### REFERS TO

- RIGHT VIEW/UNDERSTANDING** - accepting Buddhist teachings but judging them for oneself
- RIGHT RESOLVE** - committing to cultivating right attitudes
- RIGHT SPEECH** - speaking truth and avoiding slander, gossip and abusive speech
- RIGHT CONDUCT** - behaving peacefully and harmoniously; refraining from stealing, killing and overindulging in sensual pleasure
- RIGHT LIVELIHOOD** - making a living in ways that do not cause harm to people or animals
- RIGHT EFFORT** - cultivating positive states of mind; freeing oneself from evil
- RIGHT MINDFULNESS** - developing awareness of the body, emotions and state of mind
- RIGHT CONCENTRATION** - developing mental focus necessary for greater awareness

## IMPORTANT SYMBOLS ASSOCIATED WITH BUDDHISM

The Wheel of Dharma - represents the Eightfold Path

The Lotus flower - symbolises the journey to enlightenment

The symbol for "Om" - symbolises perfection, wholeness and the infinite

The Swastika - symbolises the footprints of Buddha in Sanskrit texts

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Buddhists **don't believe in a god**
- There is **no holy book**, but many important texts
- **Buddha** (Siddhartha Gautama) never claimed to be a prophet or god
- A 'buddha' is a person who has **achieved enlightenment or nirvana** - Siddhartha Gautama was the first, but there have been several after him (this is why the faces of Buddha statues differ)
- Buddhist monks and nuns **shave their hair** - this is symbolic of readiness to commit, to leave their past behind and to discourage vanity
- Buddhists don't kill animals, and they eat a **vegetarian diet**
- The **Dalai Lama** is the spiritual leader for Tibetan Buddhism, which is part of the Vajrayana branch

## Sharing Jesus with Buddhists

## BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me.'"

- John 14:6

- Buddhists believe that people can be 'saved' by their **own good works**, unlike Christians who believe that salvation is only found through belief in **Jesus Christ**
- But many Christian qualities match the **values** that Buddhism teaches - many converts from Buddhism report being drawn by Christ-like qualities in believers who engage with them
- Sharing the Gospel with Buddhists could focus on the **uniqueness of Jesus** as both fully man and fully God, and the assurance that He **promises eternal life through His grace**

## SOURCES

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