

Buddhism

A Historical Overview:

Buddhism, founded by Gautama Buddha in the 6th century BCE, began as a reform against ritualistic practices in ancient India. Centered on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, it seeks liberation (Nirvana). The religion spread across Asia, profoundly influencing cultures and spiritual traditions.

Life of Gautama Buddha

- ◆ **Born:** 563 BCE in Lumbini, Nepal (Shakya Republic).
- ◆ **Died:** 483 BCE in Kusinagar, Uttar Pradesh (Malla Republic).
- ◆ **Parents:**
 - **Father:** Suddhodana (elected ruler of Kapilavastu, head of the Shakya clan).
 - **Mother:** Maya Devi (princess of the Koshalan dynasty).

Early Life

- ◆ Born into a Shakya Kshatriya noble family near Kapilavastu, identified with Piprahwa in Basti district near the foothills of Nepal.
- ◆ Like Mahavira, Gautama belonged to a noble family but was deeply moved by the suffering of people.
- ◆ At **age 29**, renounced worldly life.
- ◆ Wandered for seven years, seeking enlightenment.
- ◆ At **age 35**, attained knowledge under a Peepal tree in Bodh Gaya, becoming the **Buddha (The Enlightened One)**.

Key Events in Buddha's Life

Event	Age	Symbol	Place
Birth (Janma)	-	Elephant	Lumbini
Renunciation (Mahabhinishkramana)	29	Horse	Kapilavastu
Enlightenment (Bodhi)	35	Bodhi Tree	Bodh Gaya
First Sermon (Dharmachakra Pravartana)	36	Wheel	Sarnath (near Benaras)
Death (Mahaparinirvana)	80	Stupa	Kusinagar



Teachings of Buddha (Dhamma)

Three Core Teachings

1. Nothing is lost in the universe:

- Matter transforms into energy and vice versa.
- Actions towards others reflect back upon oneself.
- Advocated non-violence and respect for all life.

2. Everything changes:

- Impermanence is the nature of life (e.g., dinosaurs ruled once but are now extinct).
- Emphasized adapting to change with mindfulness.

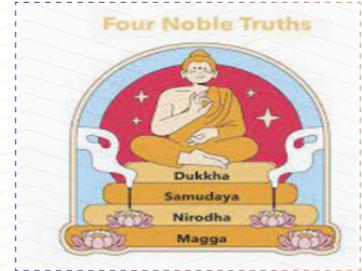
3. Law of Cause and Effect (Karma):

- Actions (good or bad) have consequences.
- The kind of seed sown will produce that kind of fruit."



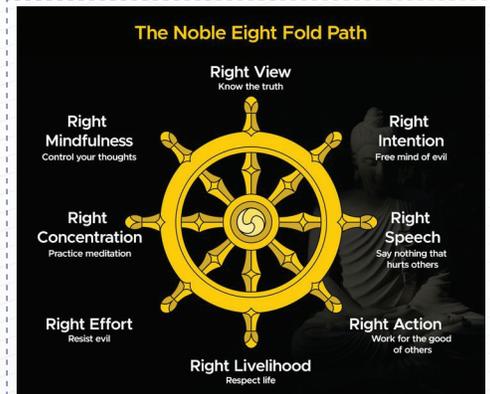
Four Noble Truths (Chatur Arya Satya)

- 1. Dukkha:** Life is full of suffering.
- 2. Dukkha Samudaya:** There is a cause for suffering.
- 3. Dukkha Nirodha:** Suffering can be stopped.
- 4. Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Pratipada:** There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering.



The Eightfold Path (Ashtangika Marga)

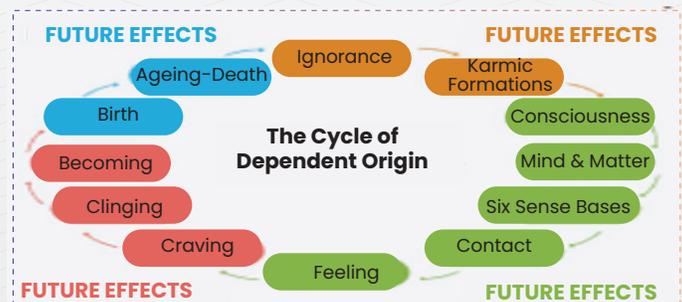
Category	Path
Wisdom	Right View, Right Intention
Ethical Conduct	Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood
Mental Discipline	Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation



- ◆ **Right View:** Understanding the nature of suffering and its cessation.
- ◆ **Right Intention:** Compassion and goodwill.
- ◆ **Right Speech:** Truthful and kind communication.
- ◆ **Right Action:** Ethical conduct (avoiding killing, stealing, lying, etc.).
- ◆ **Right Livelihood:** Engaging in honest and ethical work.
- ◆ **Right Effort:** Striving to overcome negativity.
- ◆ **Right Mindfulness:** Awareness of body, mind, and surroundings.
- ◆ **Right Concentration:** Focused meditation for inner peace.

Concepts of Buddhism

- ◆ **Nirvana:** Liberation from the cycle of birth and death (moksha).
- ◆ **Karma:** Actions influencing future outcomes.
- ◆ **Ahimsa:** Non-violence towards all living beings.
- ◆ **Dhamma:** Practical teachings for alleviating suffering.



Buddhist Social Order

1. Sangha (Monastic Order): Highest group, devoted to spreading Buddha's teachings. Open to all irrespective of caste or gender.

◆ **Legislation:**

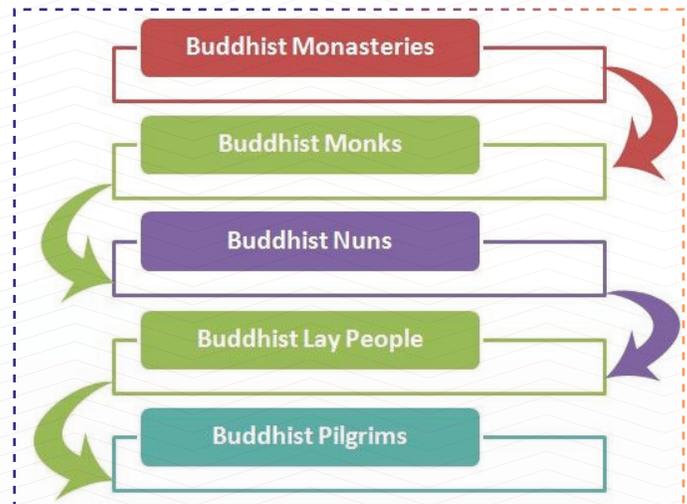
- Based on the law of Karma.
- Strict rules and regulations recorded in Vinaya Pitaka.

2. Monks (Bhikkhus): lived simple lives, meditated, and begged for food.

3. Nuns (Bhikkhunis): Assistants to monks, respected in society.

4. Laypeople: Support monks with necessities like food and shelter.

5. Pilgrims: Seekers traveling to gain spiritual knowledge.



Spread of Buddhism

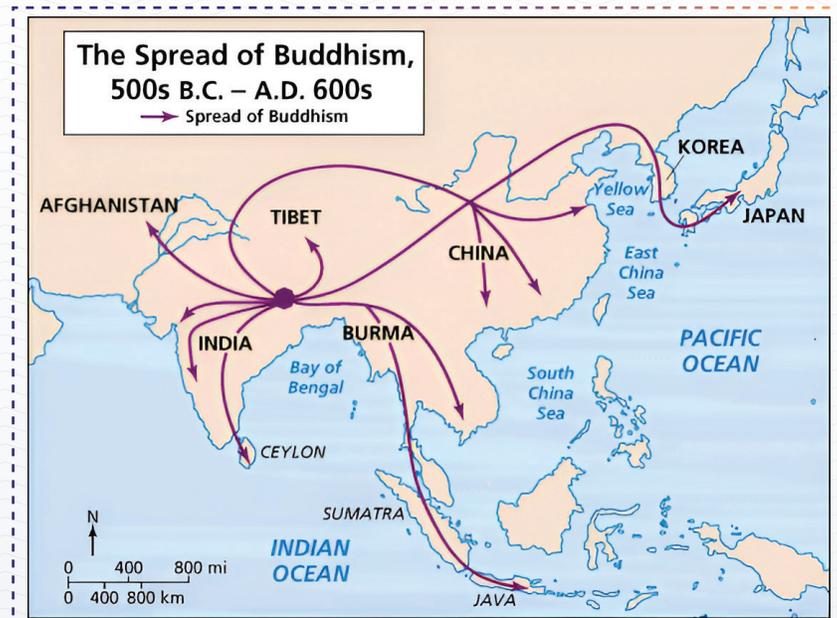
◆ **Early Expansion:**

◆ Spread across India during Buddha's lifetime.

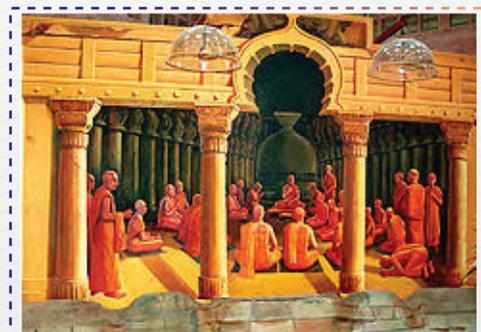
◆ **King Ashoka** (Mauryan Dynasty) played a key role in its propagation.

- Sent missionaries (e.g., his son **Mahendra** and daughter **Sanghamitra**) to Sri Lanka and beyond.

◆ **Emperor Kanishka:** Promoted Mahayana Buddhism in Central Asia.



Global Reach:		
Region	Form	Period
Sri Lanka, Burma	Theravada	3rd century BCE
China, Korea, Japan	Mahayana	2nd century CE
Tibet, Mongolia	Vajrayana (Tibetan)	7th century CE

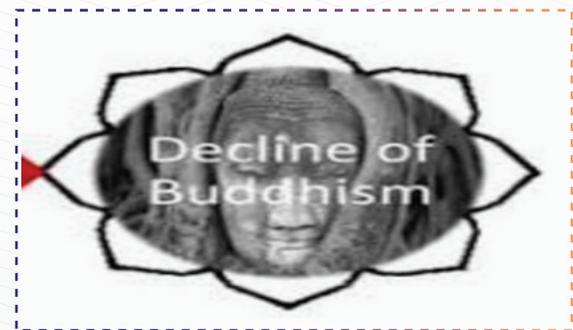


Buddhist Councils

Council	Year	Venue	Chairman	Patron	Key Outcome
1st	483 BCE	Rajgriha (Saptaparni Cave)	Mahakassapa	Ajatashatru	Compilation of Sutta Pitaka and Vinaya Pitaka.
2nd	383 BCE	Vaishali	Sabbakami	Kalashoka	Schism into Sthaviravadins and Mahasanghikas.
3rd	383 BCE	Patliputra (Asokarama)	Mogaliputta Tissa	Ashoka	Compilation of Abhidhamma Pitaka; missionary expansion initiated.
4th	98 CE	Kashmir (Kundalavana)	Vasumitra (Chair), Ashvaghosha (Vice Chair)	Kanishka	Division into Hinayana and Mahayana; Mahavibhasha Shastra compiled

Causes of Decline of Buddhism in India

- 1. Shift to Ritualism:** Adoption of idol worship and ceremonies, leading to loss of original simplicity.
- 2. Language Barrier:** Abandonment of Pali (people's language) for Sanskrit (elite language).
- 3. Corruption in Monasteries:** Accumulation of wealth and moral degeneration.
- 4. Opposition:**
 - ◆ Attacks by Hunas (e.g., Mihirakula) and Turks (e.g., Bakhtiyar Khilji).
 - ◆ Hostility from Shaivites and Vaishnavites.
- 5. Social Isolation:** Monks became detached from common life.



Special Features of Buddhism

- ◆ Rejected the concept of God and the permanent eternal soul.
- ◆ **Simple Teachings:** Avoided complex philosophy; appealed to common people.
- ◆ **Equality:** Criticized the Varna system, gaining lower caste support.
- ◆ **Non-Vedic Roots:** Appealed to people in non-Vedic areas like Magadha, outside Aryavarta.
- ◆ **Methodology:** Promoted ethical conduct and universal compassion.

Key Contributions of Buddhism

- ◆ Promoted **non-violence, equality**, and spiritual discipline.
- ◆ Played a role in cultural and educational advancements (e.g., Nalanda and Takshashila).
- ◆ Facilitated trade and cultural exchange through the **Silk Road**.

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