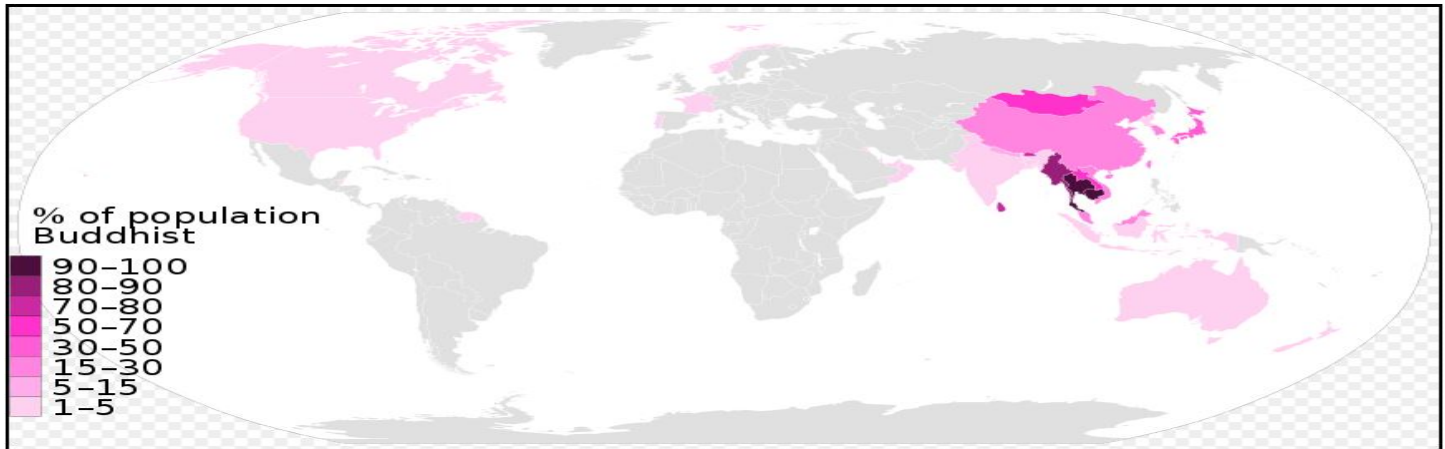


Buddhism



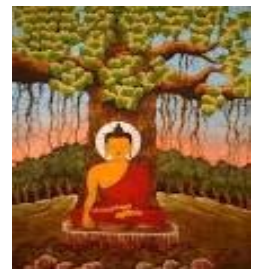
Origin/Founder: Buddhism was founded in India by Siddhartha Gautama around 500 B.C.E. Gautama, who came to be called Buddha, taught that peaceful states of minds creates happiness and good fortune. Since then, millions of people around the world have followed the same spiritual path of meditation that Buddha outlined in his teachings.

History: The son of an Indian warrior-king, Siddhartha Gautama led an extravagant life. But when he bored of the indulgences of royal life, Gautama wandered into the world in search of understanding. After encountering an old man, an ill man, a corpse and an ascetic (one who lived plainly), Gautama was convinced that suffering lay at the end of all existence. He became a monk, depriving himself of worldly possessions in the hope of comprehending the truth of the world around him. The culmination of his search came while meditating beneath a tree, where he finally understood how to be free from suffering, and ultimately, to achieve salvation. Following this epiphany, Gautama was known as the Buddha, meaning the "Enlightened One."



Symbols: The dharma wheel, or *dharmachakra*, is a common symbol used to represent the Buddha's teachings. The wheel of dharma often has eight spokes to represent the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to Nirvana. There are many different variations representing different teachings, but the wheel generally represents the dharma, or Buddha's teachings.

Tenets: 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 Four Noble Truths include *Dukkha* (suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction), *Samudāya* (Origin of Dukkha is human desire), *Nirodha* (Freedom from Dukkha), and *Magga* (the follower sets out to achieve the Eightfold Path).



Deity: Buddhism does not worship any one deity; there is no belief in a personal god. Buddhists believe that nothing is fixed or permanent and that change is always possible. The path to Enlightenment is through the practice and development of morality, meditation and wisdom.

Afterlife: Existence is endless because individuals will experience reincarnation over and over again, experiencing suffering throughout many lives. Only achieving liberation, or *nirvana*, can free the soul from the cycle of life, death and rebirth.



Scriptures: The Tripitaka is the earliest collection of Buddhist writings, divided by subject matter. The first collection is Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), which set out the rules and guidelines for living the monastic life. The second is Discourse (Sutra Pitaka), containing records of the Buddha's teachings and sermons, matters of theology, and moral behavior for all Buddhists. The third are the Special Teachings (Abhidharma Pitaka), a collection of writings containing songs, poetry, and stories of the Buddha and his previous lives. The Tripitaka is the main holy book for those that follow Theravada Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism reveres the Tripitaka as a holy text, they add to it sacred writings called Sutras. The Sutras were put into writing between the second century BCE and the second century CE, when the split between Theravada and Mahayana developed. Since there are so many new works, different divisions of Mahayana develop in different directions depending on which Sutras they use and emphasize.

Practices: The Eightfold Path of the Buddha is taught by all of the sects that exist today. Emphasis is placed on different aspects of the path but the ultimate goal is the same: to achieve Enlightenment and reach Nirvana.

- ❖ Right Views – Define the problem.
- ❖ Right Intent – Are you sure you want enlightenment?
- ❖ Right Speech – Think carefully before you speak.
- ❖ Right Conduct – 5 Rules to Follow
 - Do not kill
 - Do not steal
 - Do not lie
 - Do not be unchaste
 - Do not drink intoxicants
- ❖ Right Livelihood – Engage in occupations that promote life and spiritual progress.
- ❖ Right Effort – Will yourself to continue and you will reach your goal.
- ❖ Right Mindfulness – Become aware of why and how you do every things.
- ❖ Right Concentration – Your mind should be fine tuned to not stray from what you are thinking.

