

Buddhism in India

Buddhism is one of the main religions in the world. Buddhism in India began with Siddhartha Gautama between 563 and 483 BCE, and throughout the following millennia, it spread throughout Asia and the rest of the world. Buddhism holds that although rebirth and suffering are a constant part of human existence, this cycle can be broken permanently by attaining enlightenment (nirvana).

The first person to achieve this degree of enlightenment was Siddhartha Gautama, who is currently referred to as the Buddha. Buddhists don't believe in any sort of deity or god, but they do believe in supernatural beings who can aid or obstruct a person's journey toward enlightenment.

Founder of Buddhism

Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama is known as the founder of Buddhism. He recognized that human life is painful after witnessing the suffering of the poor and the dying in the fifth century B.C.E.

- He gave up his fortune, lived in poverty for a while, meditated, and traveled, but he was ultimately dissatisfied and decided to follow what is known as "The Middle Way."
- This theory implied that the path to enlightenment was not one of extreme poverty or extreme prosperity but rather a style of living that fell somewhere in the middle of the two.
- He eventually attained enlightenment, or nirvana, beneath the Bodhi tree (the tree of awakening) while engaged in intense meditation. Siddhartha Gautama is also referred to as the proponent of Buddhism.

Buddhism History

Over 2,600 years ago, Buddhism emerged in India as a way of life with the ability to transform a person. The founder of the religion, Siddhartha Gautam, who was born around 563 BCE, provided its foundational principles.

- At the age of 29, Gautama abandoned his family, turned away from his life of luxury, and chose an ascetic lifestyle.
- At Bodhgaya, a village in Bihar, under a pipal tree, Gautama achieved Bodhi (enlightenment) after 49 days of nonstop meditation.
- In the UP village of Sarnath, close to the city of Benares, Buddha delivered his first speech. This is referred to as Dharma-Chakra-Pravartana (turning of the wheel of law).
- At the age of 80, he died in Kushinagar, a town in UP, in 483 BCE. The day is referred to as Mahaparinibban.

Sects of Buddhism

There are three main sects of Buddhism. These are also known as the three principal schools of Buddhism.

1. Theravada Theravada
2. Mahayana Theravada
3. Vajrayana Buddhism

Theravada Buddhism

Hinayana Buddhism, School of the Elders: The oldest branch of Buddhism is called Theravada, or the School of the Elders. Its techniques are based on the oldest teachings of Buddhism. It doesn't follow the worship of idols.

Arhat, or a completely enlightened being, is the ultimate goal of Theravada Buddhism. This can be accomplished by meditating, reflecting on sutras, and adhering to the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha.

Mahayana Buddhism: The Greater Path

Most people practice Mahayana Buddhism in Nepal, Japan, China, Tibet, and Korea. Mahayana refers to "Great Vehicle" in Sanskrit. Anyone can become a bodhisattva in the Mahayana school of Buddhism.

Additionally, bodhisattvas strive to assist others in finding relief from suffering. This branch of Buddhism worships idols of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and regards them as gods. It supports both spiritual advancement and the worldwide emancipation of all beings from suffering.

Vajrayana Buddhism: The Diamond Vehicle

According to this school, obtaining so-called vajra-magical abilities will lead to salvation.

It likewise emphasizes the value of Buddhistavas, but it favors the violent Taras deities.

The role of the Lama, a guru who has mastered ritualistic and philosophical traditions, is one that is highly valued. Lamas come from a long line of people. A famous Tibetan Lama is The Dalai Lama. It occurs predominantly in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and Mongolia.

Buddhism Beliefs

The Ariya-Sacchani (four noble truths), Ashtangika-Marga (eightfold path), Middle Path, Social Code of Conduct, and Attainment of Nibbana/ Nirvana are the fundamental tenets of the Buddha's teachings.

Buddha exhorts people not to cling to anything (including his teachings). The teachings are not dogma; rather, they are just upaya (skilful means or practical tools). The three pillars of the teachings of Buddhism are as follows:

- Buddha - Founder/ Teacher
- Dhamma - Teachings
- Sangha - Order of Buddhist Monks and Nuns

Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

The four noble truths of Buddhism summarize its fundamental philosophy: dukkha, or suffering that is "incapable of satisfying," is caused by our desire for and clinging to transient situations and objects. This keeps us trapped in samsara, the never-ending cycle of recurring death, dukkha, and rebirth. But there is a path out of this never-ending cycle and into the state of nirvana. Buddha preached the following four noble truths of Buddhism.

- The first truth, "Suffering (dukkha)," states that everyone experiences some form of suffering in life.
- The "Origin of Suffering (Samudya)" is the second truth. According to this, all pain is caused by desire (tanha).

- The third truth, "Cessation of suffering (nirodha)," implies that enlightenment is achievable and that suffering can be put to an end.
- The fourth truth, "Path to the end of suffering (magga)," discusses the Middle Way, or the steps to enlightenment.

Eight-Fold Paths of Buddhism

The eightfold path in Buddhism emphasizes uncovering rather than learning or learning to unlearn. The eightfold path, which comprises eight connected tasks, aids in getting over conditioned reactions that hide one's true character. The following are the components of the Ashtangika-Marga:

- **Right View:** The right view is held in Buddhism as a belief in the Buddhist principles of karma and rebirth, as well as the significance of the Four Noble Truths. It also includes the belief that there is an afterlife and that not everything ends with death.
- **Right Intention:** This concept aims at peaceful renunciation into an atmosphere of non-sensuality, non-ill-will (to lovingkindness), and away from cruelty.
- **Right Speech:** Speaking the truth that brings salvation means not lying, not acting rudely, and not telling someone else what they are saying about him.
- **Right Action:** Buddhist lay people are prohibited from engaging in sensual misbehavior such as having intercourse with someone who is already married or with an unmarried woman who is being protected by her parents or other relatives. Killing or harming is also prohibited, as is taking something that is not being offered.
- **Right Livelihood:** Monks rely on begging for their food and only have what they need to survive. For lay Buddhists, the canonical texts define right livelihood as refraining from bad livelihood, which is defined as not causing pain to sentient beings by defrauding, torturing, or killing them in any way.
- **Right Effort:** Avoid sensual ideas; this idea tries to stop unhealthy states that interfere with meditation.
- **Right Mindfulness:** To experience the five skandhas, the five hindrances, the four True Realities, and the seven components of awakening, as well as to be careful of one's actions and aware of the impermanence of one's body, feelings, and mind.
- **Right Concentration:** It entails immersing one's entire existence in different consciousness levels or states.

Holy Book of Buddhism

The Tripitakas are regarded as the holy book of Buddhism. The Tripitakas are a compilation of Buddha's teachings. It is made up of three major types of texts that together make up the canon of Buddhism: Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka, and Abhidhamma Pitaka.

- **Vinaya Pitaka (Discipline Basket):** Rules for monks and nuns of the monastic order (Sangha) are found in the Vinaya Pitaka. It also contains the Patimokka, a list of offenses against monastic rule and corresponding atonements. Additionally, the Vinaya literature contains expositions of doctrine, ritual texts, biographies, and some Jatakas, or "birth stories."
- **Sutta Pitaka (Basket of Discourses):** The writings in the Sutta Pitaka are also referred to as Buddha vacana or the Buddha's word. It includes the Buddha's conversational talk on numerous doctrinal issues.
- **Abhidhamma Pitaka (Basket of Higher Teachings):** In this, the teachings of Sutta Pitaka are thoroughly examined and systematized, which includes summaries, questions and answers, lists, etc.

Buddhism Symbol

In order to demonstrate his teachings, the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama himself, avoided using portraits of himself and instead employed a wide variety of symbols. These eight Buddhist symbols mentioned below are considered auspicious, and it is believed that God gave them to Buddha when he attained enlightenment.

- Canopy: Security
- Umbrella: Respect
- Lotus Flower: Purity
- Fishes: Plentiful
- Conch Shell: Call to prayer
- Heavenly Elixir-Filled Vase: Lasting peace
- Wheel: Magnificence of the law
- Never-ending knot: Destiny

Buddhist Councils

Four councils were held following the death of Buddha.

Buddhist Council	Time	Location	Honored by	Council President	Features
First	483 BC	Rajagriha	Ajatshatru	Mahakassappa	Tripithakas were compiled.
Second	383 BC	Vaishali	Kalasoka	Sabbakami	Division of Sthaviravadins and Mahasanghikas.
Third	250 BC	Pataliputra	Ashoka	Mogaliputta Tissa	Buddhist missionaries were sent to several nations.
Fourth	1 Century	Kashmir	Kanishka	Vasumitra	Divided into Mahayana and Hinayana

Teachings of Buddhism

A brilliant individual, the Buddha established a separate religious society based on his original teachings. Like the Buddha himself, some of the members of the group were wandering ascetics. Others were laypeople who respected the Buddha, adhered to some of his teachings, and gave the wandering ascetics the necessary material support. Some of the teachings of Buddhism are discussed below.

- All human sadness comes from desire, so removing desire is the guaranteed method to put an end to misery.
- Death is inevitable, and there is no way to avoid it, which causes suffering by causing rebirth. The only way to break this cycle of suffering is to find salvation.
- Being free from future birth and death, nirvana, is the ultimate goal of life.
- "Set in motion, the wheel of Law" was the title of the Buddha's first sermon.

Causes for Rise of Buddhism

Buddhism gained widespread acceptance and appreciation and quickly took root across India. It expanded across central Asia, west Asia, and Sri Lanka with the help of emperor Ashoka.

Buddhism's growth and spread have a number of causes, including the following.

- Buddhism was much more liberal and democratic than Brahmanism. As it attacked the varna system, it earned the hearts of the lower classes. All castes were welcomed, and women were allowed to join the Sangha. As the orthodox Brahmanas hated the people of Magadha, the people of Magadha adopted Buddhism with open arms.
- The Buddha spoke to the masses in their everyday language of the people. The majority language was Pali, which was what the Buddha spoke. Only the Brahmin-exclusive Sanskrit language could be used to understand the Vedic religion.
- Buddhism was affordable because it lacked the costly rituals that made up the Vedic religion. It promoted a spiritual path devoid of any financial obligations in which Brahmins and gods may be pleased through offerings and rituals.
- The Buddha's charisma made both him and his religion popular among the general public. He had no ego and was gentle. The general public was drawn to him by his serene demeanor, pleasant words of straightforward philosophy, and life of renunciation. He was prepared with ethical responses to the issues facing the populace.

Difference Between Jainism and Buddhism

The difference between the philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism are given below.

- Compared to Buddhism, Jainism is a religion that has a significantly longer history. Mahavira was the final of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, according to Jaina tradition.
- The Jaina idea of the soul is distinct from Buddhist thought. According to the Jain religion, even water and stone have souls of their own. Buddhism rejects this concept.
- Compared to Jainism, Buddhism placed a greater emphasis on the abolition of caste distinctions.
- Buddhism counseled its Upasakas to pursue the intermediate road or Tathagata marga, whereas Jainism advised practicing severe asceticism to achieve liberation.
- Jainism was less flexible than Buddhism in terms of adaptability. That is why Jainism was restricted to India alone, but Buddhism extended throughout Asia and took into account the local population's traditions.

Similarities Between Jainism and Buddhism

The similarities between the philosophies of Jainism and Buddhism are given below.

- They both acknowledge that there is much suffering in the world and that a man's salvation is his freedom from the cycle of birth and death that never ends.
- Both of these philosophies rejected the concept of God.
- Both of them were caste opponents.
- Both philosophies promoted the idea of sacrifice and established a monastery.
- Both emphasized how actions, both good and bad, had an impact on a person's future births and eventual salvation.