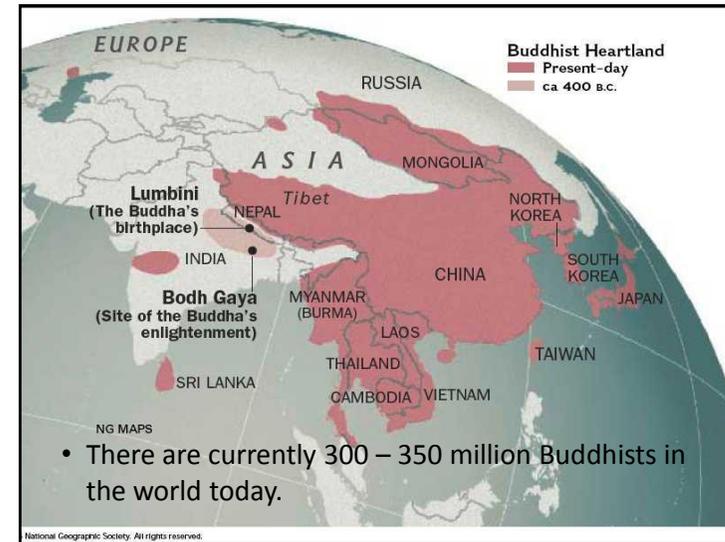


## World Religions Study

Buddhism: Striving Towards Nothingness.



## Origins

- Buddhism finds its origin in Hinduism.
- Founded by Prince Siddhartha Gautama.
  - Lived on the boarder of Nepal and India around 485 – 405 BC.
- Prophecy was given during childbirth.
  - Would be a great king, if he stayed home.
  - Would be a savior of humanity, if he left home.
- Father sheltered him, wanting him to be a great ruler.

## Origins

- At the age of 35 Guatama left home to see the world.
- Father attempted to clean out all undesirable things. On the journey however, Guatama came across the four struggles that he was sheltered from.
- As a result he left home to pursue release from the pain of life through meditation. This is called "The Great Renunciation."

## The Great Renunciation

- For six years, Gautama sought peace but was unsatisfied.
  - Only ate a grain of rice every day for two years hoping to receive knowledge.
- At the end of journey he came to rest under a fig tree and stayed in deep meditation for seven days, until he reached nirvana.
- Name was changed to “Buddha” meaning Enlightened One.
- He would spend the next 45 years teaching his insights (dharma) in India.

## Buddha's Teaching

- First revelation was the “Sermon at Benares”.
- Sermon contained the *Four Noble Truths* and *Eightfold Noble Path*.
- These teachings make up the core teaching of Buddhism.
- Buddhism is just as confusing as Hinduism.
- How a Buddhist believes and exercises their faith depends on where they live and what other religion they have combined with it.

## Buddha's Teaching

- Buddhism is a philosophy of life, not a religion.
- Buddhism does not embrace a god and specifically rejects the gods of Hinduism.
  - Buddha found no comfort in the vague system of Hinduism.
  - Buddhism though is greatly influenced by Hinduism.
    - Nirvana
    - Reincarnation
    - Karma

## Contrasting with Hinduism

- There is no atman (soul) which is part of the paramatman (world soul – Brahman).
- Evil is real.
- Buddha denied that the Vedas and Upanishads were divine writings.
- Rejection of Caste System
- The goal is to reach nirvana, which is total self extinction.

This rejection makes Buddhism heresy in Hindu India.

## Four Noble Truths

1. Suffering is life
  2. Cause of suffering is desire
  3. To stop suffering one must stop desire
  4. The way to stop desire, which stops suffering, is the Eightfold Noble Path.
- Accomplishing this leads to *samyak*, “perfection”
  - Not doing so leads to reincarnation until it is accomplished.

## Eightfold Noble Path



## The Middle Way

- Achieving the Eightfold Noble Path is done by following the *Middle Way*.
- The Middle Way, also known as moderation, keeps the person from either indulging the flesh or punishing the flesh.
- Keeping the Middle Way brings calm and peace which brings the Buddhist to nirvana.

## Scriptures of Buddhism

- Pali Canon is regarded as a general guide for the Buddhist. Also called “The Three Baskets”.
  - Offers a very strict way to live life, contrasting to the vagueness of Hinduism.
- Do not have a closed canon, revered literature varies from group to group.

## Main Groups of Buddhism

- Theravada Buddhism – the religion of and for monks (spiritual leaders). Buddha is just a teacher.
  - Followers that are not monks take great care of the monks in hopes of being reincarnated at a higher level leading to becoming a monk.
  - Monks vow to follow the Ten Precepts:

Not to take any life	Not to steal
Not to commit sexual immorality	Not to lie
Not to take intoxicating drinks	Not to eat in excess, or after noon
Not to attend any entertainment	Not to decorate oneself or use cosmetics
Not to sleep in high or wide beds	Not to touch any gold or silver

## Main Groups of Buddhism

- Mahayana Buddhism – the predominate group of Buddhism.
- Accommodates the needs of the laypeople.
- Buddha is a savior for all people.
- Benevolent compassion is the motivating force of living life.

## Main Groups of Buddhism

- Zen Buddhism – developed 1200 years after founding of Buddhism.
- The emphasis of Zen Buddhism is reaching nirvana through meditation.
- Does not rely on texts of Buddhism, but on the teachers, or Zen Masters.
- Most popular form of Buddhism in the Western World.

## Buddhist Practices

- Very difficult to make generalizations due to the many different schools of Buddhism.
- Worship in temples.
- Cremate the dead. Heaven is an intermediary place before the life is reincarnated.
- New year begins in April.
- Celebrate Buddha's birthday
- Day of the dead - souls that are in between incarnations are thought to come back and cause mischief. Festivals are offered to restrict any trouble caused.

## So you meet a Buddhist...

- Not all Buddhists believe the same way.
  - They do agree evil is real and generally have a negative attitude toward life.
  - As long as there is existence there is suffering.
- Buddhism finds its origin in speculative philosophy.
  - Christianity is based on a set of bedrock data – 1 Peter 1:16.
  - Because of this distinction, evangelism is difficult.

## So you meet a Buddhist...

- The exclusive claims of Jesus, “I am...” frustrates the Buddhist because to them history does not matter.
- Effective evangelism is accomplished through drawing the Buddhist to the problem of evil.
  - The Buddhist cannot resolve this, only to not exist anymore through Nirvana.
  - Sharing that they were atoned for on the cross of Jesus Christ, and that He overcame sin, the devil, hell, and death is a profitable way to bring Buddhists to faith in Christ.