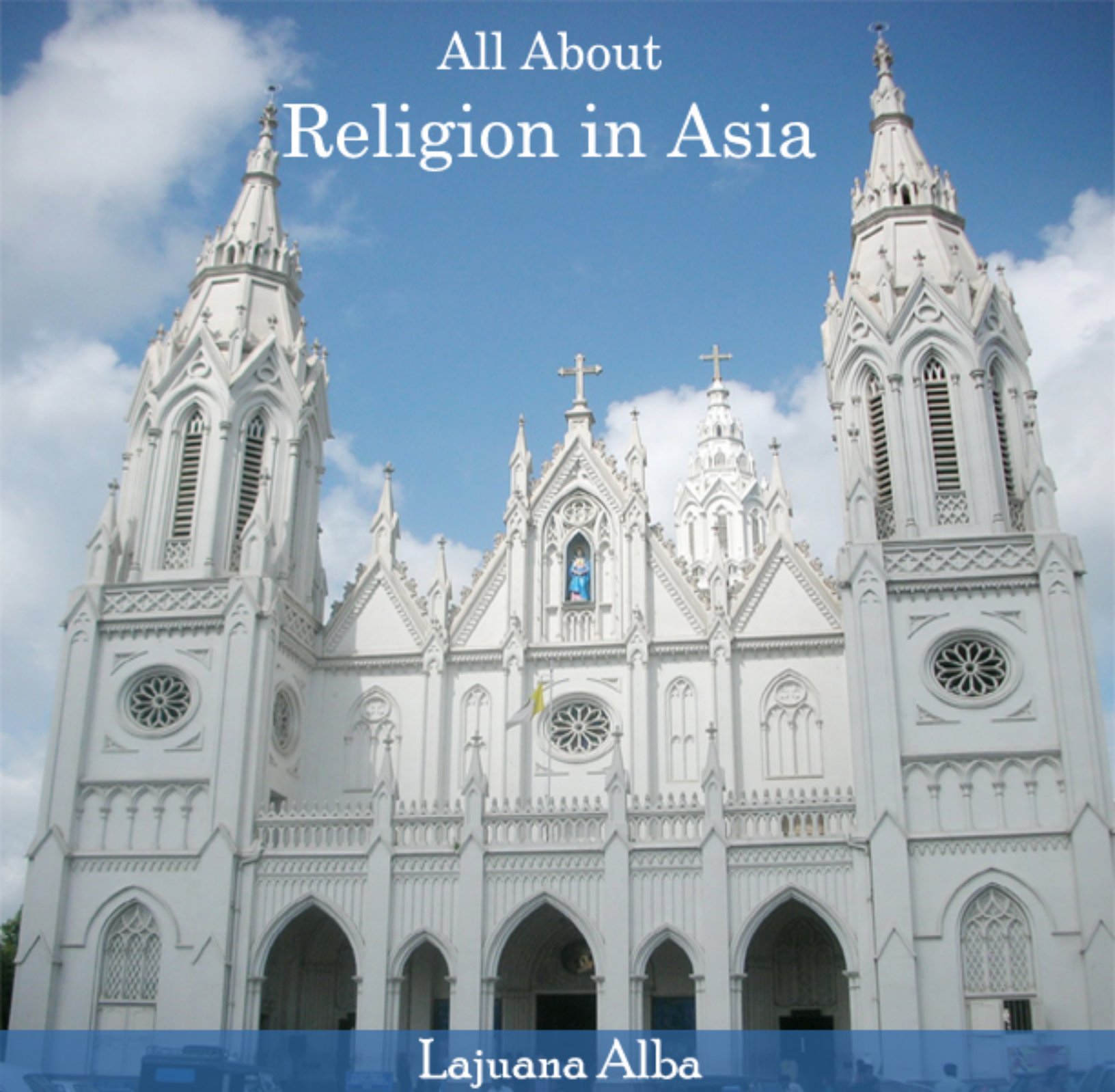
All About
Religion in Asia
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Chapter- 1

Introduction to Religion in Asia

Asia is the world's largest and most populous continent, with millions of different peoples following a wide variety of different **religions**. Asia was the birthplace of most of the world's mainstream religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastranism as well as many other beliefs

Abrahamic religions

Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is an Abrahamic religion although it is quite different from Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. It was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in what was then Persia (also known as Iran) Today the largest national population of Bahá'ís is in India with between 1.7 million to 2.2 million, where there is also the Lotus Temple. Significant populations are found in many countries including Vietnam and Malaysia where "about 1%", some 260,000, of the population are Bahá'ís. In other places, like Kazakhstan there are 25 Local Spiritual Assemblies.

In modern day Iran, the religion is severely persecuted. In neighboring Turkmenistan, Bahá'í Faith is effectively banned, and individuals have had their homes raided for Bahá'í literature.

Christianity/Christianism

CSI - The first Anglican Church in India

Christianity is a widespread minority religion in Asia. Only four countries are predominantly Christian, Cyprus which is predominantly Greek Orthodox, the Philippines, which is the 4th largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, and East Timor. South Korea has the largest percentage of Protestant believers in all of Asia, with believers accounting for almost 31% of the population (Christianity accounts for 25% of South Korea's population, 50% of its religious population). There are small Christian communities in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. More than 24 million Christians live in India, concentrated especially in the North-Eastern and Southern parts of the country. There are also many Christians in China and Israel.

Islam

Southeast Asia is home of the most populous Muslim countries, with Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh having more than 100 million adherents each. According to U.S. government figures, in 2006 there were 20 million Muslims in China. In the Middle East, the non-Arab countries of Iran and Turkey are the largest Muslim-majority countries. In South Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the countries with the largest Muslim-majority. Maldives and Saudi Arabia from the Middle East are basically 100% Muslim countries.

Mosque in Afghanistan

Ahmadiyya

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a minority Muslim sect, originated on the Asian continent in 1889 in Qadian, India. The community had 10 million members as of 1980s. As of 2008, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been established in all Asian countries except for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Georgia and North Korea. Ahmadis are most persecuted in Asia, particularly in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and India.

East Asian religions

East Asian religions, also called Taoic religions, are Confucianism, Shinto, and Taoism. Far Eastern religions is a similar grouping, but includes Chinese folk religion.

Confucianism

Confucianism was founded in China by the famous philosopher, Kong Fu Zi (more commonly known in English-speaking countries as Confucius). Confucianism is a complex system of moral, social, political, philosophical, and quasi-religious thought that has had tremendous influence on the culture and history of East Asia. Some consider it to be the state religion of East Asian countries because of governmental promotion of Confucian values.

Shinto

Shinto is almost unique to Japan and the Japanese diaspora. It is a set of practices carried out to establish a connection between present day Japan and its ancient past. Shinto practices were first recorded and codified in the written records of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki in the 7th and 8th century. Still, these earliest Japanese writings do not refer to a unified "Shinto religion", but rather to disorganized folklore, history, and mythology. Shinto today is a term that applies to public shrines suited to various purposes such as war memorials, harvest festivals, romance, and historical monuments, as well as various sectarian organizations. Practitioners express their diverse beliefs through a standard language and practice, adopting a similar style in dress and ritual, dating from around the time of the Nara and Heian Periods.

Taoism

Taoism, also called Daoism, is a series of political and religious concepts and practices. It was founded by Lao Tse in 4th century BCE.refers to a variety of related philosophical and religious traditions that have influenced Eastern Asia for more than two millennia, and have had a notable influence on the western world particularly since the 19th century. The word 道, Tao (or Dao, depending on the romanization scheme), roughly translates as, "path" or "way" (of life), although in Chinese folk religion and philosophy it carries more abstract meanings. Taoist propriety and ethics emphasize the Three Jewels of the Tao: compassion, moderation, and humility, while Taoist thought generally focuses on nature, the relationship between humanity and the cosmos (天人相应), health and longevity, and wu wei (action through inaction), which is thought to produce harmony with the Universe.

Reverence for ancestor spirits and immortals is also common in popular Taoism. Organized Taoism distinguishes its ritual activity from that of the folk religion, which some professional Taoists (Daoshi) view as debased. Chinese alchemy (including Nei-dan), astrology, cuisine, Zen Buddhism, several Chinese martial arts, Chinese traditional

medicine, feng shui, immortality, and many styles of qigong breath training disciplines have been intertwined with Taoism throughout history

Indian religions

Indian religions, also called Dharmic religions, are the predominant and oldest religions of Asia. Most of Asia's population follows Indian religions. Asia is the home for Indian religions; all Indian religions originated in South Asia. These religions all have the concepts of dharma, karma, and reincarnation.

Hinduism

Hinduism is a way of living according to the one's understanding of principles of Vedas and Upanishads. Veda is revealed knowledge. Just as the knowledge of gravity was revealed to Newton, similarly, in India, many Rishis or Seers were awakened to certain transcendental Eternal Truths. These Rishis realized that their real nature was not concerned with or linked with 'body or mind', nor was it dependent on sense perceptions, but was in fact identical with the Universal Consciousness.

Hinduism is the majority religion in India and Nepal, with strong minorities in the Asian nations of Bhutan, Fiji, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. Before the spread of Buddhism and Islam, Hinduism (and Shaivism in particular) was the most widely practiced religion of Southeast Asia.

Hinduism as we know it can be subdivided into a number of major currents. Of the historical division into six darshanas, only two schools, Vedanta and Yoga survive. The main divisions of Hinduism today are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Smartism and Shaktism. The vast majority of present day Hindus can be categorized under one of these four groups, although there are many other, partly overlapping, allegiances and denominations.

Hinduism is the world's oldest religion. It predates recorded history, with historians and scholars dating its earliest beginnings from around 6000 to 8000 BCE. It has no single founder; rather, it is a diverse melange of traditions, practices, and lineages., Jainism and Sikhism emerged in India from Hinduism.

Buddhism

Buddhism is the majority religion of Asia and dominant in Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore. It also has strong minorities in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal and Russia.

Buddhism was founded by Siddartha Gautama, also known as Buddha, in India.Buddha is sometimes also referred to as an incarnation of lord vishnu according to the indian mythology.

Jainism

Jainism is the fourth largest of Indian religions. Jains are mostly found in India. It is based on the teachings of Mahavir Jain.

Sikhism

Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world. It is a monotheistic religion. Founded by Guru Nanak Dev in the 1500s, the religion professes its roots in the area of Punjab, whose territories form part of India and Pakistan. Sikhism, founded in fifteenth century Punjab on the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev and ten successive Sikh Gurus (the last one being the sacred text Guru Granth Sahib), is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. This system of religious philosophy and expression has been traditionally known as the Gurmat (literally the counsel of the gurus) or the Sikh Dharma. Sikhism originated from the word Sikh, which in turn comes from the Sanskrit root śiṣya meaning "disciple" or "learner", or śikṣa meaning "instruction". Their sacred book is called."Guru Granth Sahib"

Iranian religions

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism(Zoroastrianismo) was once the state religion of the Persian Empire, but is now a minority mostly found in India and Iran. It worships a monotheistic god, Ahura Mazda, and was founded by Zoroaster. It is the original Iranic religion, and spawned Manichaeism and Mazdakism.Zoroastrianism is a religion and philosophy based on the teachings of prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra, in Avestan), probably founded some time before the 6th century BC in Iran. The term Zoroastrianism is, in general usage, essentially synonymous with Mazdaism, i.e., the worship of Ahura Mazda, exalted by Zoroaster as the supreme divine authority.

In Zoroastrianism, the Creator Ahura Mazda is all good, and no evil originates from Him. Thus, in Zoroastrianism good and evil have distinct sources, with evil (druj) trying to destroy the creation of Mazda (asha), and good trying to sustain it. Mazda is not immanent in the world, and His creation is represented by the Amesha Spentas and the host of other Yazatas, through whom the works of God are evident to humanity, and through whom worship of Mazda is ultimately directed. The most important texts of the religion are those of the Avesta, of which a significant portion has been lost, and mostly only the liturgies of which have survived. The lost portions are known of only through references and brief quotations in the later works of (primarily) the 9th-11th centuries.

Zoroastrianism is of great antiquity. In some form, it served as the national- or state religion of a significant portion of the Iranian people for many centuries before it was gradually marginalized by Islam from the 7th century onwards. The political power of the pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties lent Zoroastrianism immense prestige in ancient times, and

some of its leading doctrines were adopted by other religious systems. It has no major theological divisions (the only significant schism is based on calendar differences), but it is not monolithic. Modern-era influences have a significant impact on individual/local beliefs, practices, values and vocabulary, sometimes complementing tradition and enriching it, but sometimes also displacing tradition entirely.

Manichaeism

Manichaeism was founded by the prophet, Mani. It was once a strong minority in Iran and a majority in Central Asia.

Shamanism and Animism

Shamanism has historically been practised in northern Asia as far west as northern Europe.

Chapter- 2

Christianity in Asia

Christianity spread from Western Asia to China between the 1st to the 14th century AD, and further to Eastern Asia from the 16th century with the European Age of Discovery.

Christianity in Asia has its roots in the very inception of Christianity, which originated with Jesus Christ, and then spread through the missionary work of his apostles. Christianity first expanded in the Levant, taking roots in the major cities such as Jerusalem and Antioch. According to tradition, further eastward expansion occurred via the preaching of Saint Thomas the Apostle, who established Christianity in the Parthian Empire (Iran) and India. The first Asian nations to adopt Christianity as a state religion were Armenia, in 301, and Georgia, in 327. After the First Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Nestorian Schism, Christianity split into the Western (Roman) versions, and the Eastern or Nestorian Christianity, though the term Nestorian was sometimes used as a catchall phrase to refer to several different Eastern doctrines. Nestorians began converting Mongols around the 7th century, and Nestorian Christianity was probably introduced into China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Mongols tended to be tolerant of multiple religions, with several Mongol tribes being primarily Christian, and under the leadership of Genghis Khan's grandson, the great khan Mongke, Christianity was a small religious influence of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century. Around that same time, there was some effort to reunite Eastern and Western Christianity. There were also numerous missionary efforts from Europe to Asia, primarily by Franciscan, Dominican, or Jesuit missionaries. In the 16th century, Spain began to convert Filipinos. In the 18th century, Catholicism developed more or less independently in Korea.

In modern times, Christianity continues to be the predominant faith in Armenia, Georgia, Russia, the Philippines, and East Timor, with significant minorities in Lebanon, Syria, Kazakhstan and several other countries in Asia.

Early spread in Asia

Western Asia

Levant

Christianity spread through the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean) from the 1st century AD. One of the key centers of Christianity became the city of Antioch, previous capital of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire, located in today what is modern Turkey. Antioch was evangelized perhaps by Peter the Apostle, according to the tradition upon which the Antiochene patriarchate still rests its claim for primacy, and certainly by Barnabas and Paul. Its converts were the first to be called *Christians*. They multiplied rapidly, and by the time of Theodosius (347–395) were reckoned by Chrysostom (347–407), Archbishop of Constantinople, at about 100,000 people. Between 252 and 300, ten assemblies of the church were held at Antioch and it became the seat of one of the original five patriarchates, along with Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome.

Caucasus

Saint Nino (290–338) is credited with establishing Christianity as a state religion in Georgia.

Armenia and Georgia were the first nations to adopt Christianity as a state religion, in 301 and 327 respectively.

Christianity had been preached in Armenia by two of Jesus' twelve apostles — Thaddaeus and Bartholomew — between 40-60 AD. Because of these two founding apostles, the official name of the Armenian Church is Armenian Apostolic Church, and it is considered to be the world's oldest national church. The Church of Caucasian Albania was established in 313, after Caucasian Albania (located in what is now Azerbaijan) became a Christian state.

In Georgia, Christianity was first preached by the apostles Simon and Andrew in the first century. It became the state religion of Kartli, Iberia (the area of Georgia's capital) in 327. The conversion of Georgia to Christianity is credited to the efforts of Saint Nino of Cappadocia (290–338).

Parthian Empire

Christianity further spread eastward under the Parthian Empire, which displayed a high tolerance of religious matters. According to tradition, Christian proselytism in Central Asia, starting with Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau, was put under the responsibility of Saint Thomas the Apostle, and started in the first century AD. Saint Thomas is also credited with the establishment of Christianity in India.

The Christians of Mesopotamia and Iran were organized under several bishops, and were present at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Expansion to Central Asia

The spread of Christianity in Central Asia seems to have been facilitated by the great diffusion of Greek in the region (Seleucid Empire, Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Indo-Greek Kingdom), as well as Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. The spread of the Jews in

Asia since the deportation from Babylon and the capture of Jerusalem by Titus also seems to have been a contributing factor.

The earliest known references to Christian communities in Central Asia is from a writing by Bar Daisan around 196 AD: "Nor do our sisters among the Gilanians and Bactrians have any intercourse with strangers".

The Sasanians also proved rather tolerant of the Christian faith until the persecution by the Zoroastrian priest Kartir under Bahram II (276−93 AD). Further persecutions seem to have taken place under Shapur II (310-379) and Yazdegerd II (438-457), with events in 338 having brought significant damage to the faith.

India (1st century AD)

According to tradition, the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares was proselytized by St Thomas, who continued on to southern India, and possibly as far as Malaysia or China.

According to Eusebius' record, the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew were assigned to Parthia (modern Iran) and India. By the time of the establishment of the Second Persian Empire (AD 226), there were bishops of the Church of the East in northwest India, Afghanistan and Baluchistan (including parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan), with laymen and clergy alike engaging in missionary activity.

An early third-century Syriac work known as the *Acts of Thomas* connects the apostle's Indian ministry with two kings, one in the north and the other in the south. According to the *Acts*, Thomas was at first reluctant to accept this mission, but the Lord appeared to him in a night vision and compelled him to accompany an Indian merchant, Abbanes (or Habban), to his native place in northwest India. There, Thomas found himself in the service of the Indo-Parthian King, Gondophares. The Apostle's ministry resulted in many conversions throughout the kingdom, including the king and his brother.

Thomas thereafter went south to Kerala and baptized the Jewish settlers and a few natives, whose descendants form the Saint Thomas Christians or the Syrian Malabar Nasranis.

Piecing together the various traditions, the story suggests that Thomas left northwest India when invasion threatened, and traveled by vessel to the Malabar Coast along the southwestern coast of the Indian continent, possibly visiting southeast Arabia and Socotra enroute, and landing at the former flourishing port of Muziris on an island near Cochin in 52. From there he preached the gospel throughout the Malabar Coast. The various Churches he founded were located mainly on the Periyar River and its tributaries and along the coast, where there were Jewish colonies. He preached to all classes of people and had about 170 converts, including members of the four principal castes. Later, stone crosses were erected at the places where churches were founded, and they became pilgrimage centres. In accordance with apostolic custom, Thomas ordained teachers and leaders or elders, who were reported to be the earliest ministry of the Malabar church.

Thomas next proceeded overland to the Coromandel Coast in southeastern India, and ministered in what is now the Madras area, where a local King and many people were converted. One tradition related that he went from there to China via Malacca in Malaysia, and after spending some time there, returned to the Madras area. Apparently his renewed ministry outraged the Brahmins, who were fearful lest Christianity undermine their social caste system. So according to the Syriac version of the *Acts of Thomas*, Mazdai, the local king at Mylapore, after questioning the Apostle condemned him to death about the year AD 72. Anxious to avoid popular excitement, the King ordered Thomas conducted to a nearby mountain, where, after being allowed to pray, he was then stoned and stabbed to death with a lance wielded by an angry Brahmin.

Expansion of Nestorian Christianity (431-1360 AD)

In 410 the Sassanid emperor summoned the Persian church leaders to the Synod of Seleucia. His purpose was to make the Catholicos of Seleucia-Ctesiphon the minority

leader of the Christians in the Empire, and personally responsible for their good conduct throughout the Persian empire. The synod accepted the emperor's wish.

In 424 the bishops of Persia met in council under the leadership of Catholicos Dadiso and determined that there would be no reference of their disciplinary or theological problems to any other power, especially not to any church council in the Roman Empire. The formal separation from the See of Antioch and the western Syrian Church under the Roman (Byzantine) Emperors, occurred at this synod in 424.

Nestorianism

The eastern development of Christianity continued to separate from the west, pushed along by such events as 431's Council of Ephesus, in which the Syrian bishop Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople since 428, was accused of heresy for preaching his brand of Christianity, labelled Nestorianism after him. He and his followers were banished from the Byzantine Empire, and other religious and political institutions gave him sanctuary. Eastern Christianity seceded to form what is sometimes called the Church of the East, or Syro-Oriental Church, though some historians refer to it with the catchall term Nestorian Church, even though many Eastern Christians were not following the doctrine preached by Nestorius.

Expansion to Sogdiana and eastern Central Asia

Proselytism, combined with sporadic Sassanian persecutions and the exiling of Christian communities in their own area, caused the spread of Christianity to the east.

The Edict of Milan in 313, granted Christianity toleration by the Roman Empire. After the Emperor Constantin's conversion to Christianity, the indigenous Christians of Persia were considered a political threat to the Sassanians. They exiled Christian communities to the east, such as a community of Orthodox Melchites who were installed in Romagyri near Tashkent, or a community of Jacobites, who were sent to Yarkand in the Xinjiang at the doorstep of China. The Hephthalites are known to have been open somewhat to Christianity since 498, and they requested the Nestorian Catholicos to establish a diocesan bishop in their lands in 549.

By 650, there were 20 Nestorian dioceses east of the Oxus river. The development of Islam in the late 7th century further cut off Asian Christianity from the western Christians, but eastern expansion of the faith continued nonetheless. Relations with Islam were good enough for the Catholicos to leave Seleucia-Ctesiphon to set up his seat in Baghdad upon the establishment of the Abbassids in 750.

From the 7th century onward, the nomadic Turks of Central Asia started to convert to Nestorian Christianity. Mass conversions are recorded in 781−2 and later in 1007, when 200,000 Turks and Mongols reportedly became Christians. The Turkish Kipchaks are also known to have converted to Christianity at the suggestion of the Georgians as they allied in their conflicts against the Muslims. A great number were baptized at the request

of the Georgian king David II. From 1120, there was a Kipchak national Christian church and an influential clergy.

Early Christianity in China

The Nestorian Stele in China, erected in 781. The title is: 大秦景教流行中國碑 "Stele of the propagation of the luminous Roman faith in China"

Christianity may have existed earlier in China, but the first documented introduction was during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) A Christian mission under the leadership of the priest Alopen (described variously as Persian, Syriac, or Nestorian) was known to have arrived in 635, where he and his followers received an Imperial Edict allowing for the establishment of a church. In China, the religion was known as *Dàqín Jǐngjiào* (大秦景教), or the *Luminous Religion of the Romans*. 大秦 Dàqín designates Rome and the Near East, though from the Western view, Nestorian Christianity was considered heretical by the Latin Christians.

Opposition arose to the Christians in 698-699 from the Buddhists, and then from the Daoists in 713, but Christianity continued to thrive, and in 781, a stone stele (the Nestorian Stele) was erected at the Tang capital of Chang-an, which recorded 150 years of Emperor-supported Christian history in China. The text of the stele describes flourishing communities of Christians throughout China, but beyond this and few other fragmentary records, relatively little is known of their history. In later years, other emperors were not as religiously tolerant. In 845, the Chinese authorities implemented an

interdiction of foreign cults, and Christianity diminished in China until the time of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century.

Christianity among the Mongols

Overall, Mongols were highly tolerant of most religions, and typically sponsored several at the same time. They had been proselytized by Nestorian Christians since about the 7th century, and several Mongol tribes, such as the Kerait, Naimans, Merkit, and to a large extent the Kara Khitan (who practiced it side-by-side with Buddhism), were also Christian.

The founder of the Mongol Empire, Genghis Khan (1162–1227) was a shamanist, but showed great tolerance to other religions. His sons were married to Christian princesses of the Kerait clan, such as Sorghaghtani Beki and Doquz Khatan, a remarkable Kerait noblewoman, the granddaughter of Toghrul Khan and a passionate Christian who held considerable influence at the court of the Khan. She made no secret of her dislike of Islam and her eagerness to help Christians of every sect.

Under the rule of Genghis's grandson Möngke Khan (1205–1259), son of Sorghaghtani, the main religious influence was that of the Christians, to whom Mongke showed especial favour in memory of his mother.

East-West rapprochement

Following the 1054 East-West Schism, various efforts, over several centuries, were made at reuniting eastern and western Christianity, with the objective of putting both under the rule of the Pope.

Armenian Church

The Armenian king Hetoum II, as a Franciscan monk.

In 1198, a Union was proclaimed between Rome and the Armenian Church by the Armenian catholicos of Sis Grigor VI Apirat. This was not followed in deeds however, as the local clergy and populace was strongly opposed to such a union. Again in 1441, the Armenian Catholicos of Sis Grigor IX Musabekiants proclaimed the union of the Armenian and Latin churches at the Council of Florence, but this was countered by an Armenian schism under Kirakos I Virapetsi, which installed the Catholicos see at Edjmiatzin, and maginalized Sis.

Numerous Roman Catholic missions were also sent to Cilician Armenia to help with rapprochement. The Franciscans were put in charge of these missions. William of Rubruck visited Cilicia in 1254, and John of Monte Corvino in 1288. The Armenian king Hethoum II (1266–1307) would himself become a Franciscan monk upon his multiple abdications. Another such monk was the historian Nerses Balients, who was a member of the "Unitarian" movement advocating unification with the Latin Church.

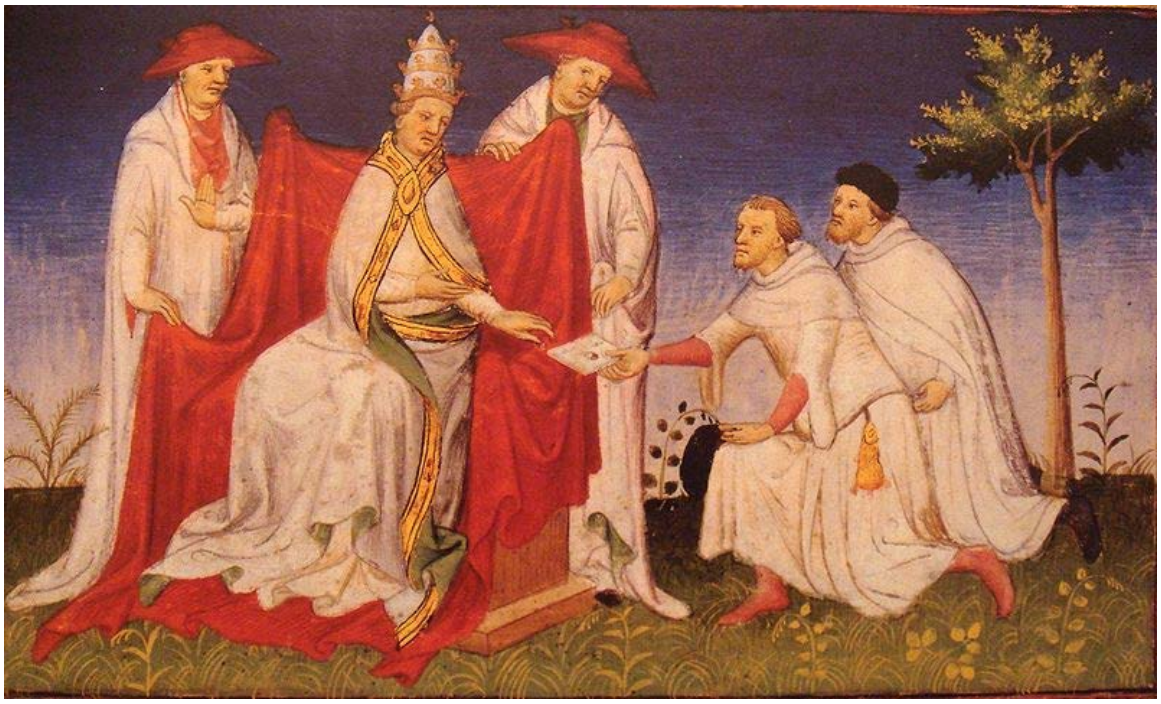
Byzantine church

Various efforts were also made by the Byzantine Church to unite with Rome. In 1272, John of Montecorvino was commissioned by the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos to communicate with Pope Gregory X, to negotiate for the reunion of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. The objective was to drive a wedge between the pope and supporters of the Latin Empire, who had views on reconquering Constantinople. A tenuous union between the Greek and Latin churches was signed at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. Michael VIII's concession was met with determined opposition at home, and prisons filled with many opponents to the union. At the same time the unionist controversy helped drive Byzantium's Orthodox neighbors Serbia and Bulgaria into the camp of Michael VIII's opponents. For a while the diplomatic intent of the union worked out in the West, but in the end Pope Martin IV, an ally of Charles of Anjou, excommunicated Michael VIII.

Roman Catholic missions to China and the Mongols

Contacts between the Mongols and the West occurred in the 13th century, as the Mongol Empire expanded towards Europe and Palestine, coinciding with the latter part of the Crusades. Initial contacts showed that the Mongols had the impression that the Pope was the leader of the Europeans, and sent him messages insisting that he submit Europe to Mongol authority. In return, the Mongols stated that after they conquered Jerusalem, they would return it to the Crusaders. The various popes, for their part, seemed to be unaware that Christianity already existed in the East, and tended to respond with messages insisting that the Mongols convert to Christianity and accept baptism. Later communications between the Mongols and Europe saw attempts to form a Franco-Mongol alliance against the Muslims.

In 1253, King Louis IX sent the Franciscan William of Rubruck to the Mongol capital of Karakorum to convert the Tartars. William visited the court of the great khan Mongke in 1254, and observed representatives of several religions there. He engaged in a famous debate set up by Mongke, with representatives of each religion debating (unsuccessfully) which was best. He left in August 1254, bearing Mongke's reply to King Louis.



Niccolo and Maffeo Polo remitting a letter from Kubilai to Pope Gregory X in 1271.

In 1268, Marco Polo's father and uncle returned from China with an invitation from Kublai Khan to the pope, imploring him that a hundred teachers of science and religion be sent to reinforce the Christianity already present in Kublai's empire. However, this came to naught due to the hostility of influential Nestorian Christians within the largely Mongol court. Kublai did request Western assistance to secure Mongol rule over the Chinese Yuan Dynasty. In 1289, Pope Nicholas IV sent the Franciscan John of Monte Corvino to China by way of India. Although Kublai had already died by the time John arrived in 1294, the court at Khanbaliq received him graciously and encouraged him to settle there. John was China's first Roman Catholic missionary, and he was significantly successful. He laboured largely in the Mongol tongue, translated the New testament and Psalms, built a central church, and within a few years (by 1305) could report 6,000 baptized converts. He also established a lay training school of 150 students. Other priests joined him, John was consecrated a bishop, and centers were established in the coastal provinces of Kiangsu (Yangchow), Chekiang (Hangchow) and Fukien (Zaitun). Under John's influence, many Mongols, such as those of the Ongut tribe, changed allegiance from the Eastern Nestorian (Syro-Oriental) Church, to Western Roman Catholicism.

Following the death of Monte Corvino, an embassy to the French Pope Benedict XII in Avignon was sent by Toghun Temür in 1336, requesting a new spiritual guide. The pope replied by appointing four ecclesiastics as his legates to the khan's court. In 1338, a total of 50 ecclesiastics were sent by the Pope to Peking, such as John of Marignolli, who arrived in Khanbaliq in 1342, and stayed until 1347, then returning to Avignon in 1353.

However, the Mongol-established Yuan Dynasty in China was in decline, and in 1368 was overthrown by the Ming Dynasty founded by the native Chinese. The last Catholic

bishop of Quanzhou, Giacomo da Firenze, was killed by the Chinese in 1362. By 1369 all Christians, whether Roman Catholic or Nestorian (Syriac Orthodox, or Syro-Oriental), were expelled.

European voyages of exploration

The European voyages of exploration in the 16th century would create new opportunities for Christian proselytism.

Catholicism in the Philippines

At the end of the 16th century, Hasekura Tsunenaga led a mission to the Pope and was baptized a Christian.

Magellan's arrival in Cebu represents the first attempt by Spain to convert Filipinos to Roman Catholicism. The story goes that Magellan met with Chief Humabon of the island of Cebu, who had an ill grandson. Magellan (or one of his men) was able to cure or help this young boy, and in gratitude Chief Humabon allowed 800 of his followers to be 'baptized' Christian in a mass baptism. Later, Chief Lapu Lapu of Mactan Island killed Magellan and routed the ill-fated Spanish expedition. This resistance to Western intrusion makes this story an important part of the nationalist history of the Philippines. Many historians have claimed that the Philippines peacefully 'accepted' Spanish rule; the reality is that many insurgencies and rebellions continued on small scales in different places through the Hispanic colonial period.

After Magellan, the Spanish later sent the explorer Legaspi to the Philippines, and he conquered a Muslim Filipino settlement in Manila in 1570. Islam had been present in the southern Philippines since some time between the 10th and 12th century. It slowly spread north throughout the archipelago, particularly in coastal areas.

Jesuits in China

Jesuits in China

The missionary efforts and other work of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, between the 16th and 17th century played a significant role in continuing the transmission of knowledge, science, and culture between China and the West, and had an impact on Christian culture in Chinese society today. Members of the Jesuit delegation to China

were perhaps the most influential of the different Christian missionaries in that country between the earliest period of the religion up until the 19th century, when significant numbers of Catholic and Protestant missions developed. Prominent Jesuit missionaries included the Spanish St. Francis Xavier, and the Italian Matteo Ricci. At the time of their peak influence, members of the Jesuit delegation were considered some of the emperor's most valued and trusted advisors, holding numerous prestigious posts in the imperial government. However, between the 18th and mid-19th century, nearly all Western missionaries in China were forced to conduct their teaching and other activities covertly.

Independently formed Catholic movements (Korea)

The history of Catholicism in Korea began in 1784 when Yi Sung-hun was baptized while in China under the Christian name of Peter. He later returned home with various religious texts and baptized many of his fellow countrymen. The Church in Korea survived without any formal missionary priests until clergy from France (the Paris Foreign Missions Society) arrived in 1836 for the ministry.

Portrait of Saint Andrew Kim.

During the 19th century, the Catholic Church suffered persecution by the government of the Joseon Dynasty, chiefly for the religion's refusal to carry out ancestral worship, which it perceived to be a form of idolatry, but which the State prescribed as a cornerstone of culture. A century-long persecution produced thousands of martyrs - 103 of whom were canonized by Pope John Paul II in May 1984, including the first Korean priest, St. Andrew Dae-gun Kim, who was ordained in 1845 and martyred in 1846. Despite the persecution though, the Church in Korea expanded. The Apostolic Vicariate of Korea was formed in 1831, and after the expansion of Church structure for next century, the current structure of three Metropolitan Provinces each with an Archdiocese and several suffragen Dioceses was established in 1962.

Currently Deokwon (덕원) in North Korea is the See of the only territorial abbey outside Europe. The abbey was vacant for more than 50 years until Fr. Francis Ri was appointed as abbot in 2005. The abbey was never united with or changed into a diocese presumably due to the lack of effective church activity in the area since the division of Korea at the end of World War II.

Christianity in Asia today

Today, Christianity is the predominant faith in two Asian countries, the Philippines and East Timor, and also in three others that are partially in Asia: Armenia, Georgia and Russia. In South Korea, while the largest proportion of the population is irreligious, Christianity represents the most widespread religion, closely followed by Buddhism.

Christianity exists as a minority faith in most other Asian countries, the most significant minorities being found in India, Lebanon, Syria, Kazakhstan and Indonesia. Small Christian communities are present in the China, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Chapter- 3

Hinduism in Southeast Asia

Hinduism in Southeast Asia influenced the former Champa civilization in southern parts of Central Vietnam, Funan in Cambodia, the Khmer Empire in Indochina, the Srivijayan kingdom on Sumatra, the Singhasari kingdom and the Majapahit Empire based in Java, Bali, and the Philippine archipelago. The civilization of India influenced the languages, scripts, calendars, and artistic aspects of these peoples and nations.

Prominent Hindus (e.g., Swami Sadananda Maharaj) from India have visited South East Asia for the purpose of exploring the Hinduism of these places.

History

Indian scholars wrote about the Dvipantara or Jawa Dwipa Hindu kingdom in Java and Sumatra around 200 BC. Southeast Asia was frequented by traders from eastern India, particularly Magadha, as well as from the kingdoms of South India.

The Taruma kingdom occupied West Java around 400. There was a marked Buddhist influence starting about 425.

These seafaring peoples engaged in extensive trade, which attracted the attention of the Mongols, Chinese and Japanese, as well as Islamic traders, who reached the Aceh area of Sumatra in the 12th century.

Some scholars have pointed out that the legends of Ikshvaku and Sumati may have their origin in the Southeast-Asian myth of the birth of humanity from a bitter gourd. The word Ikshvaku means "bitter gourd". The legend of Sumati, the wife of King Sagar, tells that she produced offspring with the aid of a bitter gourd.

Modern era

Vibrant Hindu communities remain in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia (as in Java, Bali, Sulawesi and Kalimantan), and the Philippines mainly due to presence of Indians. One notably Southeast Asian aspect of Hinduism is the festival of Thaipusam.

The resurgence of Hinduism in Indonesia is occurring in all parts of the country. In the early seventies, the Toraja people of Sulawesi were the first to be identified under the umbrella of 'Hinduism', followed by the Karo Batak of Sumatra in 1977 and the Ngaju Dayak of Kalimantan in 1980. In an unpublished report in 1999, the National Indonesian Bureau of Statistics admitted that around 100,000 Javanese had officially converted or 'reconverted' from Islam to Hinduism over the previous two decades.. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, as of 2007 estimates there to be at least 10 million Hindus in Indonesia

The growth of Hinduism has been driven also by the famous Javanese prophesies of Sabdapalon and Jayabaya.

Many recent converts to Hinduism had been members of the families of Sukarno's PNI, and now support Megawati Sukarnoputri. This return to the 'religion of Majapahit' (Hinduism) is a matter of nationalist pride.

The new Hindu communities in Java tend to be concentrated around recently built temples (*pura*) or around archaeological temple sites (*candi*) which are being reclaimed as places of Hindu worship. An important new Hindu temple in eastern Java is Pura Mandaragiri Sumeru Agung, located on the slope of Mt. Semeru, Java's highest mountain. Mass conversions have also occurred in the region around Pura Agung Blambangan, another new temple, built on a site with minor archaeological remnants attributed to the kingdom of Blambangan, the last Hindu polity on Java, and Pura Loka Moksa Jayabaya (in the village of Menang near Kediri), where the Hindu king and prophet Jayabaya is said to have achieved spiritual liberation (*moksa*). Another site is the new Pura Pucak Raung in East Java, which is mentioned in Balinese literature as the place from where Maharishi Markandeya took Hinduism to Bali in the 5th century AD.

An example of resurgence around major archaeological remains of ancient Hindu temple sites was observed in Trowulan near Mojokerto, the capital of the legendary Hindu empire Majapahit. A local Hindu movement is struggling to gain control of a newly excavated temple building which they wish to see restored as a site of active Hindu worship. The temple is to be dedicated to Gajah Mada, the man attributed with transforming the small Hindu kingdom of Majapahit into an empire. Although there has been a more pronounced history of resistance to Islamization in East Java, Hindu communities are also expanding in Central Java near the ancient Hindu monuments of Prambanan.

The current estimates of Hinduism in Indonesia range from 4 to 8 percent

Regions

Burma

Thuyathadi seated on a hamsa, and holding pamphlets (representing literature) by a river.

Hinduism in Burma is practised by less than 2% of the population (approximately 240,000), with most practitioners being Burmese Indians. Because a reliable census has not been taken in Burma since colonial times, the given figures are rough estimates. Despite its minority designation today, Hinduism has been greatly influential in Burmese history and literature. Hinduism, along with Buddhism, greatly influenced the royal court of Burmese kings in pre-colonial times, as seen in the architecture of cities such as Bagan. Likewise, the Burmese language contains many loanwords from Sanskrit and Pali, many of which relate to religion. Several aspects of Hinduism can be found in Burma today. In nat worship, which is practised by the dominant Bamar ethnic group, Burmese adaptations of Hindu gods are worshipped. For example, the king of the nats, Thagyamin, is identified with the Hindu god Indra. Burmese literature has also been enriched by Hinduism, including the Burmese adaptation of the Ramayana, called Yama Zatdaw. Many Hindu gods are likewise worshipped by Burmese Buddhists, including Saraswati (known as Thuyathadi in Burmese), the goddess of knowledge, who is often worshipped before examinations.

According to the Myanmar government, the distribution of Hindus there is as follows:

DIVISION	Pop	Hindus	Hindu %
Rakhine State	2,744,000	5,500	0.20%
Mon State	2,466,000	29,600	1.20%
Kayin State	1,431,377	11,500	0.80%
Shan State	4,851,000	14,600	0.30%
Kayah State	259,000	300	0.10%
Kachin State	1,270,000	15,200	1.20%
Chin State	480,000	500	0.10%
Bago Division	5,099,000	35,700	0.70%
Mandalay Division	7,627,000	15,300	0.20%
Sagaing Division	5,300,000	5,300	0.10%
Magwe Division	4,464,000	4,500	0.10%
Tanintharyi Division	1,356,000	2,700	0.20%
Yangon Division	5,560,000	55,600	1.00%
Ayeyarwady Division	6,663,000	6,700	0.10%

Cambodia and Laos

Angkor Wat, in Cambodia, was built as a Hindu temple.

Cambodia was first influenced by Hinduism during the beginning of the Funan kingdom. Hinduism was one of the Khmer Empire's official religions. Cambodia is the home to one of the only two temples dedicated to Brahma in the world. Angkor Wat of Cambodia is the largest Hindu temple of the world.

Laos used to be part of Khmer Empire. The Wat Phou is one of the last influences of that period. The Laotian adaptation of the Ramayana is called Phra Lak Phra Lam.

Thailand

A number of Hindus remain in Thailand. They are mostly located in the cities. In the past, the nation came under the influence of the Khmer Empire, which had strong Hindu roots. The epic, Ramakien, is based on the Ramayana. The city, Ayutthaya, is named after Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama. Numerous rituals derived from Brahminism are preserved in rituals, such as use of holy strings and pouring of lustral water from conch shells. Furthermore, Hindu deities are worshipped by many Thais alongside Buddhism, such as the famous Erawan shrine, and statues of Ganesh, Indra, and Shiva, as well as numerous symbols relating to Hindu deities are found, e.g., Garuda, a symbol of the monarchy. The famous Hindu rituals of The Giant Swing and the Triyampavai-Tripavai ceremony depict a legend about how the god created the world.

The élite, and the royal household, often employ Brahmans to mark funerals and state ceremonies such as the ploughing ceremony to ensure a good harvest. The importance of Hinduism cannot be denied, even though much of the rituals has been syncretised with Buddhism.

Vietnam

Po Nagar, built by the Champa near modern-day Nha Trang.

The Champa civilization was located in the more southern part of what is today Central Vietnam, and was a highly Indianized Hindu Kingdom, practicing a form of Shaivite Hinduism brought by sea from India. Mỹ Sơn, a Hindu temple complex built by the Champa is still standing in Quang Nam province, in Vietnam. The Champa were conquered by the Vietnamese and today are one of the many ethnic minorities of Vietnam. Hindu temples are known as *Bimong* in Cham language and the priests are known as *Halau Tamunay Ahier*.

The Balamon Hindu Cham people of Vietnam make up only 25% of the overall Cham population (the other 75% are Muslims or Cham Bani). Of these, 70% belong to the Nagavamshi Kshatriya caste (pronounced in Vietnamese as "Satrias"), and claim to be the descendants of the Champa Empire. A sizeable minority of the Balamon Hindu Cham are Brahmins.

In all, approximately 50,000 Chams in Vietnam are Hindu, with another 4,000 Hindus living in Ho Chi Minh City; some of these are ethnic Cham, but most are Indian (Tamil) or of mixed Indian-Vietnamese descent. The Mariamman Temple is one of the most notable Hindu temples in Ho Chi Minh City. In Ninh Thuan Province, where most of the Cham in Vietnam reside, Cham Balamon (Hindu Cham) numbers 32,000; Out of the 22 villages in Ninh Thuan, 15 are Hindu.

Malaysia and Indonesia

A Hindu ceremony in Bali.

Malaya and Sumatra

The last prince of the Srivijayan kingdom of Sumatra, after the loss to the Majapahit, founded the Sultanate of Malacca on the Straits of Malacca between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. He later converted to Islam in 1414. As the Portuguese came to trade for spices, they began to ally with the Islamic powers, which did not help the Majapahit. One third of the Bataks, particularly the Toba and Karo Bataks.

Hinduism was deeply ingrained into the customs of local people in the form of local *adat*, or norms of customary law and conflict resolution.

Java

The Singhasari kingdom fell to Kediri. The last Singhasari king's son-in-law, Raden Wijaya took over the kingdom by allying himself with the Mongols in 1293 and created the Majapahit kingdom. The Majapahit then turned on Kublai Khan's forces and drove them out. This established Majapahit hegemony over Java. Today there are a few remaining Hindu communities in Java. The Tenggerese, some Osings, and to some extent the Baduis are still Hindus.

Bali

Bali is the only area in South-East Asia where Hinduism is still the dominant religion. The last Hindu court eventually retreated from Java to Bali about 1500. The original Hinduism in Bali itself is still prevalent in Trunyan village.

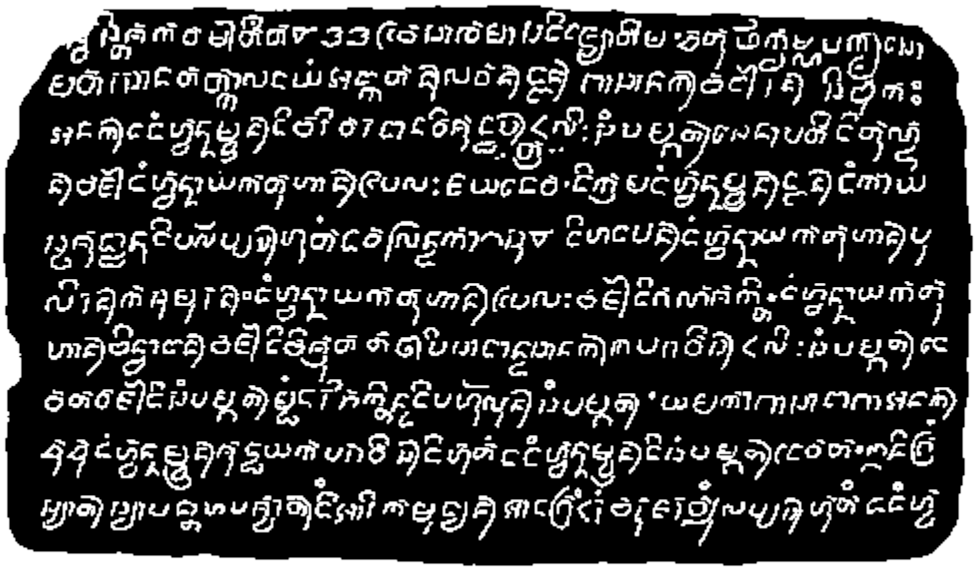
Borneo and Sulawesi

The Dayaks, the original inhabitants of Borneo, follow the religion of Kaharingan, which the Indonesian government has classified as a form of Hinduism. The Dayak Hinduism is allied to the Balinese Hinduism.

Singapore

The introduction of Hinduism into Singapore dates back to the early 19th century, when immigrants from southern India, mostly Tamils, arrived as labourers for the British East India Company, bringing with them their religion and culture. Their arrival saw the building of Dravidian temples throughout the island, and the beginnings of a vibrant Hindu culture. The first temple, Sri Mariamman Temple in Singapore's Chinatown. There are currently about thirty main temples in Singapore, dedicated to various gods and goddesses from the Hindu pantheon. Today, two government bodies deal with all Hindu affairs: The Hindu Endowments Board and The Hindu Advisory Board.

The Philippines



The first document found in the Philippines, the Laguna Copperplate Inscription (circa 900 AD), shows direct Hindu influences present in Filipino culture prior to Spanish colonization in the 16th century

Until the arrival of an Arab trader to Sulu Island 1450 and Ferdinand Magellan, who sailed in behalf of Spain 1521, the chiefs of many Philippine islands were called *Rajas*, and the script was derived from Brahmi. Karma, a Hindu concept is understood as part of the traditional view of the universe by many Philippine peoples, and have counterparts such as *kalma* in the Pampangan language, and Gabâ in the Cebuano language. The vocabulary in all Philippine languages reflect strong Hindu influences.

In the archipelago that was to become the Philippines, the statues of the Hindu gods were hidden to prevent their destruction by a religion which destroyed all cult images. One statue, a "Golden Tara", a 4-pound gold statue of a Hindu-Malayan goddess, was found in Mindanao in 1917. The statue, denoted the *Agusan Image*, is now in the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. The image is that of a Hindu-Malayan female deity, seated cross-legged. It is made of "twenty-one carat gold and weighs nearly four pounds." It has a richly ornamented headdress and many ornaments in the arms and other parts of the body. Scholars date it to the late 13th or early 14th century. It was made by local artists, perhaps copying from an imported Javanese model. The gold was used from this area, since Javanese miners were known to have been engaged in gold mining in Butuan at this time.

The existence of these gold mines, this artefact and the presence of "foreigners" permit us to surmise on the existence of some foreign trade, gold as element in the barter economy, and of cultural and social contact between the natives and "foreigners." As previously stated, his statue is not housed in The Philippines. Prof. Beyer in 1918 tried to get the government to buy it for the National Museum, but as the bullion exceeded 4,000 pesos

(at the old rate), funds were not available. Mrs. Leonard Wood (whose husband was military-governor of the Moro Province in 1903-1906 and governor general in 1921-1927) raised funds for its purchase by the Chicago Museum of Natural History. It is now on display in that museum's Gold Room.

According to Prof. Beyer, considered the "Father of Philippine Anthropology and Archaeology", a woman in 1917 found it on the left bank of the Wawa River near Esperanza, Agusan, projecting from the silt in a ravine after a storm and flood. From her hands it passed into those of Bias Baklagon, a local government official. Shortly after, ownership passed to the Agusan Coconut Company, to whom Baklagon owed a considerable debt. Mrs. Leonard Wood bought it from the coconut company..."

Another gold artifact of Garuda, the phoenix who is the mount of Vishnu was found on Palawan.

Today, there is a Hindu temple at Mahatma Gandhi Street on U N avenue in Paco area, Manila, Metro Manila and about 15 minutes away, there is a Sikh temple at U.N. Avenue and as per estimate there is 22 gurudwaras in all over Philippines today. Although most of the adherents are Indians, Sri Lankans and Nepalese. There are various Hare Krishna groups that are gaining in popularity. Indians have been in the Philippines even before the Spaniards but blend into society and tend to maintain a low profile.

Hinduism was deterred by the spread of Christianity by the Spaniards and the spread of Islam by Malay and Javanese missionaries before the Spaniards.

Chapter- 4

Buddhism in Asia

A statue of Gautama Buddha in Bodhgaya, India. Bodhgaya is traditionally considered the place of his awakening

Buddhism (Pali/Sanskrit: *Buddha Dharma*) is a religion and philosophy encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha (Pāli/Sanskrit "the awakened one"). The Buddha lived and taught in the northeastern Indian subcontinent some time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end suffering (or dukkha), achieve nirvana, and escape what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth.

Two major branches of Buddhism are recognized: Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle"). Theravada—the oldest surviving branch—has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, Tendai and Shinnyo-en. In some classifications Vajrayana—a subcategory of Mahayana practiced in Tibet and Mongolia—is recognized as a third branch. While Buddhism remains most popular within Asia, both branches are now found throughout the world. Estimates of Buddhists worldwide vary significantly depending on the way Buddhist adherence is defined. Lower estimates are between 350-500 million. However, when including Chinese religion which has traditionally consisted of forms of Mahayana Buddhism alongside Chinese folk religion the number would range from 1—1.6 billion.

Buddhist schools vary on the exact nature of the path to liberation, the importance and canonicity of various teachings and scriptures, and especially their respective practices. The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community). Taking "refuge in the triple gem" has traditionally been a declaration and commitment to being on the Buddhist path and in general distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist. Other practices may include following ethical precepts, support of the monastic community, renouncing conventional living and becoming a monastic, the development of mindfulness and practice of meditation, cultivation of higher wisdom and discernment, study of scriptures, devotional practices, ceremonies, and in the Mahayana tradition, invocation of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Life of the Buddha

Ascetic Gautama with his five companions, who later comprised the first Sangha. Wall painting in a Laotian temple

The evidence of the early texts suggests that the Buddha was born in a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the northeastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE. It was either a small republic, in which case his father was an elected chieftain, or an oligarchy, in which case his father was an oligarch.

This community was not yet likely to have been absorbed into Brahmanical culture (the tradition that would evolve into Hinduism), and it is even possible that the Buddha's mother tongue was not Indo-Aryan.

According to the Theravada Tipitaka scriptures (from Pali, meaning "three baskets"), the Buddha was born in Lumbini, around the year 563 BCE, and raised in Kapilavastu, both in modern-day Nepal.

According to this narrative, shortly after the birth of young prince Siddhartha Gautama, an astrologer visited the young prince's father—King Śuddhodana—and prophesied that Siddhartha would either become a great king or renounce the material world to become a holy man, depending on whether he saw what life was like outside the palace walls.

Śuddhodana was determined to see his son become a king so he prevented him from leaving the palace grounds. But at age 29, despite his father's efforts, Siddhartha ventured

beyond the palace several times. In a series of encounters—known in Buddhist literature as the four sights he learned of the suffering of ordinary people, encountering an old man, a sick man, a corpse and, finally, an ascetic holy man, apparently content and at peace with the world. These experiences prompted Gautama to abandon royal life and take up a spiritual quest.

Gautama first went to study with famous religious teachers of the day, and mastered the meditative attainments they taught. But he found that they did not provide a permanent end to suffering, so he continued his quest. He next attempted an extreme asceticism, which was a religious pursuit common among the Shramanas, a religious culture distinct from the Vedic one. Gautama underwent prolonged fasting, breath-holding, and exposure to pain. He almost starved himself to death in the process. He realized that he had taken this kind of practice to its limit, and had not put an end to suffering. So in a pivotal moment he accepted milk and rice from a village girl and changed his approach. He devoted himself to anapanasati meditation, through which he discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way (Skt. *madhyamā-pratipad*): a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Gautama was now determined to complete his spiritual quest. At the age of 35, he famously sat in meditation under a sacred fig tree — known as the Bodhi tree — in the town of Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise before achieving enlightenment. After many days, he finally destroyed the fetters of his mind, thereby liberating himself from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, and arose as a fully enlightened being (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*). Soon thereafter, he attracted a band of followers and instituted a monastic order. Now, as the Buddha, he spent the rest of his life teaching the path of awakening he discovered, traveling throughout the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent, and died at the age of 80 (483 BCE) in Kushinagar, India.

The above narrative draws on the *Nidānakathā* biography of the Theravāda sect in Sri Lanka, which is ascribed to Buddhaghoṣa in the 5th century CE. Earlier biographies such as the *Buddhacarita*, the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu*, and the Mahāyāna / Sarvāstivāda *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, give different accounts.

Scholars are hesitant to make unqualified claims about the historical facts of the Buddha's life. Most accept that he lived, taught and founded a monastic order but do not consistently accept all of the details contained in his biographies. According to author Michael Carrithers, while there are good reasons to doubt the traditional account, "the outline of the life must be true: birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death."

In writing her biography of Buddha, Karen Armstrong noted, "It is obviously difficult, therefore, to write a biography of the Buddha that will meet modern criteria, because we have very little information that can be considered historically sound... [but] we can be reasonably confident Siddhatta Gotama did indeed exist and that his disciples preserved the memory of his life and teachings as well as they could."

Buddhist concepts

Life and the world

Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Thangka depicting the "Wheel of Life" with its six realms

Karma

Karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") in Buddhism is the force that drives saṃsāra—the cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skillful deeds (Pāli: "kusala") and bad, unskillful (Pāli: "akusala") actions produce "seeds" in the mind which come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. The avoidance of unwholesome actions and the cultivation of positive actions is called śīla (from Sanskrit: "ethical conduct").

In Buddhism, karma specifically refers to those actions (of body, speech, and mind) that spring from mental intent ("cetana"), and which bring about a consequence (or fruit, "phala") or result ("vipāka"). Every time a person acts there is some quality of intention at the base of the mind and it is that quality rather than the outward appearance of the action that determines its effect.

In Theravada Buddhism there can be no divine salvation or forgiveness for one's karma, since it is a purely impersonal process that is a part of the makeup of the universe. Some Mahayana traditions hold different views. For example, the texts of certain Mahayana sutras (such as the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Angulimaliya Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra*) claim that reciting or merely hearing their texts can expunge great swathes of negative karma. Some forms of Buddhism (for example, Vajrayana) regard the recitation of mantras as a means for cutting off previous negative karma. The Japanese Pure Land teacher Genshin taught that Amida Buddha has the power to destroy the karma that would otherwise bind one in saṃsāra.

Rebirth

Two Tibetan Buddhist monks in traditional clothing.

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception to death. Buddhism rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul, as it is called in Hinduism and Christianity. According to Buddhism there ultimately is no such thing as a self independent from the rest of the universe (the doctrine of anatta). Rebirth in subsequent existences must be understood as the continuation of a dynamic, ever-changing process of "dependent arising" ("pratītyasamutpāda") determined by the laws of

cause and effect (karma) rather than that of one being, transmigrating or incarnating from one existence to the next.

Each rebirth takes place within one of five realms according to Theravadins, or six according to other schools. These are further subdivided into 31 planes of existence:

1. Naraka beings: those who live in one of many Narakas (Hells)
2. Preta: sometimes sharing some space with humans, but invisible to most people; an important variety is the hungry ghost
3. Animals: sharing space with humans, but considered another type of life
4. Human beings: one of the realms of rebirth in which attaining Nirvana is possible
5. Asuras: variously translated as lowly deities, demons, titans, antigods; not recognized by Theravāda (Mahavihara) tradition as a separate realm
6. Devas including Brahmas: variously translated as gods, deities, spirits, angels, or left untranslated

Rebirths in some of the higher heavens, known as the Śuddhāvāsa Worlds (Pure Abodes), can be attained only by skilled Buddhist practitioners known as anāgāmis (non-returners). Rebirths in the arupa-dhatu (formless realms) can be attained only by those who can meditate on the arūpajhānas, the highest object of meditation.

According to East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism, there is an intermediate state (Tibetan "Bardo") between one life and the next. The orthodox Theravada position rejects this; however there are passages in the *Samyutta Nikaya* of the Pali Canon (the collection of texts on which the Theravada tradition is based), that seem to lend support to the idea that the Buddha taught of an intermediate stage between one life and the next.

Saṃsāra

Sentient beings crave pleasure and are averse to pain from birth to death. In being controlled by these attitudes, they perpetuate the cycle of conditioned existence and suffering (saṃsāra), and produce the causes and conditions of the next rebirth after death. Each rebirth repeats this process in an involuntary cycle, which Buddhists strive to end by eradicating these causes and conditions, applying the methods laid out by the Buddha and subsequent Buddhists.

Suffering's causes and solution

The Four Noble Truths

Polish Buddhists

According to the Pali Tipitaka and the Āgamas of other early Buddhist schools, the Four Noble Truths were the first teaching of Gautama Buddha after attaining Nirvana. They are sometimes considered to contain the essence of the Buddha's teachings:

1. Life as we know it ultimately is or leads to suffering/uneasiness (dukkha) in one way or another.

2. Suffering is caused by craving. This is often expressed as a deluded clinging to a certain sense of existence, to selfhood, or to the things or phenomena that we consider the cause of happiness or unhappiness. Craving also has its negative aspect, i.e. one craves that a certain state of affairs not exist.
3. Suffering ends when craving ends. This is achieved by eliminating delusion, thereby reaching a liberated state of Enlightenment (bodhi);
4. Reaching this liberated state is achieved by following the path laid out by the Buddha.

This method is described by early Western scholars, and taught as an introduction to Buddhism by some contemporary Mahayana teachers (for example, the Dalai Lama).

According to other interpretations by Buddhist teachers and scholars, lately recognized by some Western non-Buddhist scholars, the "truths" do not represent mere statements, but are categories or aspects that most worldly phenomena fall into, grouped in two:

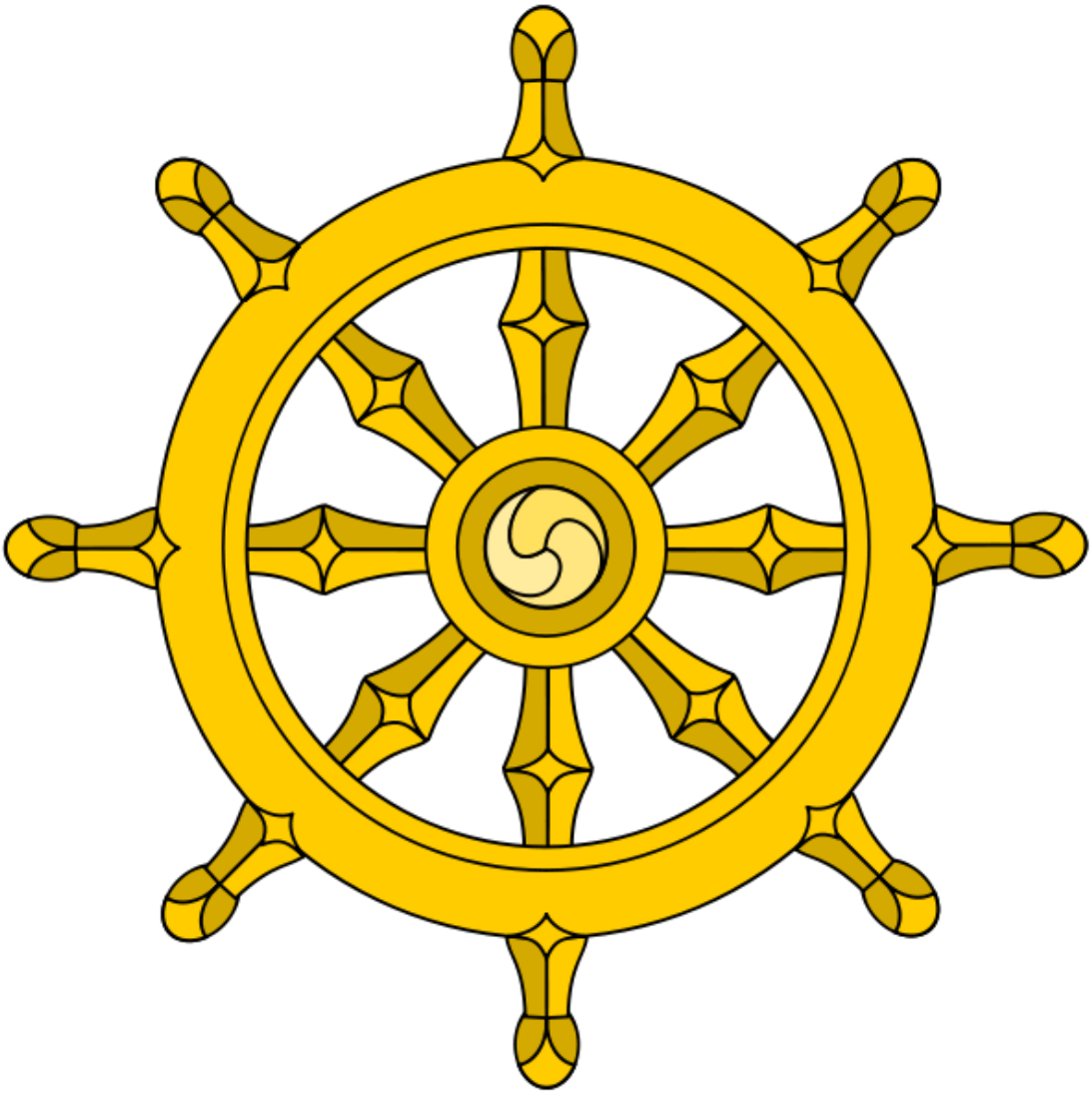
1. Suffering and causes of suffering
2. Cessation and the paths towards liberation from suffering.

Thus, according to the Macmillan *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* they are

1. "The noble truth that is suffering"
2. "The noble truth that is the arising of suffering"
3. "The noble truth that is the end of suffering"
4. "The noble truth that is the way leading to the end of suffering"

The traditional Theravada understanding is that the Four Noble Truths are an advanced teaching for those who are ready for them. The East Asian Mahayana position is that they are a preliminary teaching for people not yet ready for the higher and more expansive Mahayana teachings.

The Noble Eightfold Path



The *Dharmachakra* represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path—the fourth of the Buddha's Noble Truths—is the way to the cessation of suffering (dukkha). It has eight sections, each starting with the word "samyak" (Sanskrit, meaning "correctly", "properly", or "well", frequently translated into English as "right"), and presented in three groups known as the three higher trainings. (NB: Pāli transliterations appear in brackets after Sanskrit ones):

- **Prajñā** is the wisdom that purifies the mind, allowing it to attain spiritual insight into the true nature of all things. It includes:

1. dṛṣṭi (ditthi): viewing reality as it is, not just as it appears to be.
2. saṃkalpa (sankappa): intention of renunciation, freedom and harmlessness.

- **Śīla** is the ethics or morality, or abstention from unwholesome deeds. It includes:

3. vāc (vāca): speaking in a truthful and non-hurtful way
4. karman (kammanta): acting in a non-harmful way
5. ājīvana (ājīva): a non-harmful livelihood

- **Samādhi** is the mental discipline required to develop mastery over one's own mind. This is done through the practice of various contemplative and meditative practices, and includes:

6. vyāyāma (vāyāma): making an effort to improve
7. smṛti (sati): awareness to see things for what they are with clear consciousness, being aware of the present reality within oneself, without any craving or aversion
8. samādhi (samādhi): correct meditation or concentration, explained as the first four jhānas

The practice of the Eightfold Path is understood in two ways, as requiring either simultaneous development (all eight items practiced in parallel), or as a progressive series of stages through which the practitioner moves, the culmination of one leading to the beginning of another.

The Middle Way

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the Middle Way (or Middle Path), which is said to have been discovered by Gautama Buddha prior to his enlightenment. The Middle Way has several definitions:

1. The practice of non-extremism: a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification
2. The middle ground between certain metaphysical views (for example, that things ultimately either do or do not exist)
3. An explanation of Nirvana (perfect enlightenment), a state wherein it becomes clear that all dualities apparent in the world are delusory.
4. Another term for emptiness, the ultimate nature of all phenomena (in the Mahayana branch), a lack of inherent existence, which avoids the extremes of permanence and nihilism or inherent existence and nothingness

Nature of existence

Debating monks at Sera Monastery, Tibet

Buddhist scholars have produced a remarkable quantity of intellectual theories, philosophies and world view concepts (see, for example, Abhidharma, Buddhist philosophy and Reality in Buddhism). Some schools of Buddhism discourage doctrinal study, and some regard it as essential, but most regard it as having a place, at least for some persons at some stages in Buddhist practice.

In the earliest Buddhist teachings, shared to some extent by all extant schools, the concept of liberation (Nirvana)—the goal of the Buddhist path—is closely related to the correct understanding of how the mind causes stress. In awakening to the true nature of

clinging, one develops dispassion for the objects of clinging, and is liberated from suffering (dukkha) and the cycle of incessant rebirths (saṃsāra). To this end, the Buddha recommended viewing things as characterized by the three marks of existence.

Three Marks of Existence

The Three Marks of Existence are impermanence, suffering, and not-self.

Impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*) expresses the Buddhist notion that all compounded or conditioned phenomena (all things and experiences) are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent. Everything we can experience through our senses is made up of parts, and its existence is dependent on external conditions. Everything is in constant flux, and so conditions and the thing itself are constantly changing. Things are constantly coming into being, and ceasing to be. Since nothing lasts, there is no inherent or fixed nature to any object or experience. According to the doctrine of impermanence, life embodies this flux in the aging process, the cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra), and in any experience of loss. The doctrine asserts that because things are impermanent, attachment to them is futile and leads to suffering (dukkha).

Suffering (Pāli: *dukkha*; Sanskrit*duḥkha*) is also a central concept in Buddhism. The word roughly corresponds to a number of terms in English including suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness, sorrow, affliction, anxiety, dissatisfaction, discomfort, anguish, stress, misery, and frustration. Although the term is often translated as "suffering", its philosophical meaning is more analogous to "disquietude" as in the condition of being disturbed. As such, "suffering" is too narrow a translation with "negative emotional connotations" which can give the impression that the Buddhist view is one of pessimism, but Buddhism seeks to be neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic. In English-language Buddhist literature translated from Pāli, "dukkha" is often left untranslated, so as to encompass its full range of meaning.

Not-self (Pāli: *anatta*; Sanskrit: *anātman*) is the third mark of existence. Upon careful examination, one finds that no phenomenon is really "I" or "mine"; these concepts are in fact constructed by the mind. In the *Nikayas* anatta is not meant as a metaphysical assertion, but as an approach for gaining release from suffering. In fact, the Buddha rejected both of the metaphysical assertions "I have a Self" and "I have no Self" as ontological views that bind one to suffering. When asked if the self was identical with the body, the Buddha refused to answer. By analyzing the constantly changing physical and mental constituents (skandhas) of a person or object, the practitioner comes to the conclusion that neither the respective parts nor the person as a whole comprise a self.

Dependent arising

The doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda (Sanskrit; Pali: paticcasamuppāda; Tibetan: rten.cing.'brel.bar.'byung.ba; Chinese: ▪起) is an important part of Buddhist metaphysics. It states that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. It is variously rendered into English as "dependent origination",

"conditioned genesis", "dependent co-arising", "interdependent arising", or "contingency".

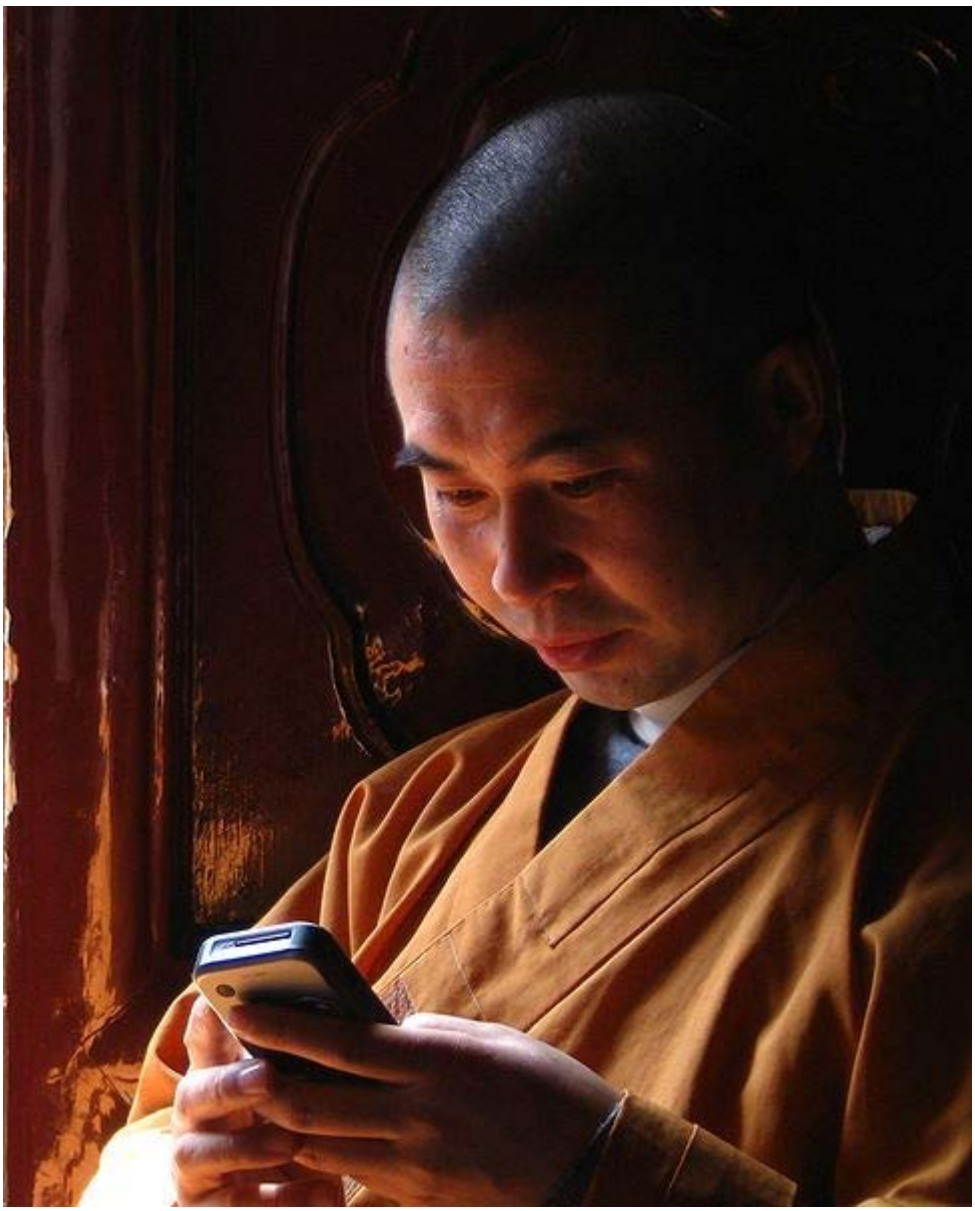
The best-known application of the concept of pratītyasamutpāda is the scheme of Twelve Nidānas (from Pāli "nidāna" meaning "cause, foundation, source or origin"), which explain the continuation of the cycle of suffering and rebirth (saṃsāra) in detail.

The Twelve Nidānas describe a causal connection between the subsequent characteristics or conditions of cyclic existence, each one giving rise to the next:

1. Avidyā: ignorance, specifically spiritual ignorance of the nature of reality
2. Saṃskāras: literally formations, explained as referring to karma
3. Vijñāna: consciousness, specifically discriminative
4. Nāmarūpa: literally name and form, referring to mind and body
5. Ṣaḍāyatana: the six sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-organ
6. Sparśa: variously translated contact, impression, stimulation (by a sense object)
7. Vedanā: usually translated feeling: this is the "hedonic tone", i.e. whether something is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral
8. Tṛṣṇā: literally thirst, but in Buddhism nearly always used to mean craving
9. Upādāna: clinging or grasping; the word also means fuel, which feeds the continuing cycle of rebirth
10. Bhava: literally being (existence) or becoming. (The Theravada explains this as having two meanings: karma, which produces a new existence, and the existence itself.)
11. Jāti: literally birth, but life is understood as starting at conception
12. Jarāmaraṇa: (old age and death) and also śokaparidevaduḥkhadaurmanasyopāyāsa (sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and misery)

Sentient beings always suffer throughout saṃsāra, until they free themselves from this suffering by attaining Nirvana. Then the absence of the first Nidāna—ignorance—leads to the absence of the others.

Emptiness



A monk in the Jade Buddha Temple, Shanghai, China.

Mahayana Buddhism received significant theoretical grounding from Nagarjuna (perhaps c. 150–250 CE), arguably the most influential scholar within the Mahayana tradition. Nagarjuna's primary contribution to Buddhist philosophy was the systematic exposition of the concept of śūnyatā, or "emptiness", widely attested in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras which were emergent in his era. The concept of emptiness brings together other key Buddhist doctrines, particularly anatta and pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination), to refute the metaphysics of Sarvastivada and Sautrantika (extinct non-Mahayana schools). For Nagarjuna, it is not merely sentient beings that are empty of ātman; all phenomena (dharmas) are without any svabhava (literally "own-nature" or "self-nature"), and thus

without any underlying essence; they are "empty" of being independent; thus the heterodox theories of svabhava circulating at the time were refuted on the basis of the doctrines of early Buddhism. Nagarjuna's school of thought is known as the Mādhyamaka. Some of the writings attributed to Nagarjuna made explicit references to Mahayana texts, but his philosophy was argued within the parameters set out by the agamas. He may have arrived at his positions from a desire to achieve a consistent exegesis of the Buddha's doctrine as recorded in the Canon. In the eyes of Nagarjuna the Buddha was not merely a forerunner, but the very founder of the Mādhyamaka system.

Sarvastivada teachings—which were criticized by Nāgārjuna—were reformulated by scholars such as Vasubandhu and Asanga and were adapted into the Yogacara (Sanskrit: yoga practice) school. While the Mādhyamaka school held that asserting the existence or non-existence of any ultimately real thing was inappropriate, some exponents of Yogacara asserted that the mind and only the mind is ultimately real (a doctrine known as cittamatra). Not all Yogacarins asserted that mind was truly existent; Vasubandhu and Asanga in particular did not. These two schools of thought, in opposition or synthesis, form the basis of subsequent Mahayana metaphysics in the Indo-Tibetan tradition.

Besides emptiness, Mahayana schools often place emphasis on the notions of perfected spiritual insight (prajñāpāramitā) and Buddha-nature (tathāgatagarbha, meaning "Buddha embryo" or "Buddha-matrix"). According to the *Tathāgatagarbha Sutras*, the Buddha revealed the reality of the deathless Buddha-nature, which is said to be inherent in all sentient beings and enables them all eventually to reach complete enlightenment, i.e. Buddhahood. Buddha-nature is stated in the Mahayana *Angulimaliya Sutra* and *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* to not be śūnya, but to be replete with eternal Buddhic virtues. In the *Tathāgatagarbha Sutras* the Buddha is portrayed proclaiming that the teaching of the tathāgatagarbha constitutes the "absolutely final culmination" of his Dharma—the highest presentation of truth (other sūtras make similar statements about other teachings) and it has traditionally been regarded as the highest teaching in East Asian Buddhism. However, in modern China all doctrines are regarded as equally valid. The Mahayana can also on occasion communicate a vision of the Buddha or Dharma which amounts to mysticism and gives expression to a form of mentalist panentheism.

Liberation

Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, India, where Gautama Buddha attained Nirvana under the Bodhi Tree (left)

Nirvana

Nirvana (Sanskrit; Pali: "Nibbana") means "cessation", "extinction" (of craving and ignorance and therefore suffering and the cycle of involuntary rebirths (saṃsāra), "extinguished", "quieted", "calmed"; it is also known as "Awakening" or "Enlightenment" in the West. The term for anybody who has achieved *nirvana*, including the Buddha, is *arahant*.

Bodhi (Pāli and Sanskrit, in devanagari:) is a term applied to the experience of Awakening of arahants. *Bodhi* literally means "awakening", but it is more commonly translated into English as "enlightenment". In Early Buddhism, *bodhi* carried a meaning synonymous to *nirvana*, using only some different metaphors to describe the experience, which implies the extinction of *raga* (greed, craving), *dosa* (hate, aversion) and *moha* (delusion). In the later school of Mahayana Buddhism, the status of *nirvana* was downgraded in some scriptures, coming to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained *nirvana*, and that one needed to attain *bodhi* to eradicate delusion:

An important development in the Mahayana [was] that it came to separate nirvana from bodhi ('awakening' to the truth, Enlightenment), and to put a lower value on the former (Gombrich, 1992d). Originally nirvana and bodhi refer to the same thing; they merely use different metaphors for the experience. But the Mahayana tradition separated them and considered that nirvana referred only to the extinction of craving (passion and hatred), with the resultant escape from the cycle of rebirth. This interpretation ignores the third fire, delusion: the extinction of delusion is of course in the early texts identical with what can be positively expressed as gnosis, Enlightenment.
—Richard F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*

Therefore, according to Mahayana Buddhism, the *arahant* has attained only *nirvana*, thus still being subject to delusion, while the *bodhisattva* not only achieves *nirvana* but full liberation from delusion as well. He thus attains *bodhi* and becomes a *buddha.* In Theravada Buddhism, *bodhi* and *nirvana* carry the same meaning as in the early texts, that of being freed from greed, hate and delusion.

The term *parinirvana* is also encountered in Buddhism, and this generally refers to the complete *nirvana* attained by the *arhat* at the moment of death, when the physical body expires.

Buddhas

Gautama Buddha, 1st century CE, Gandhara

Theravada

In Theravada doctrine, a person may awaken from the "sleep of ignorance" by directly realizing the true nature of reality; such people are called *arahants* and occasionally *buddhas*. After numerous lifetimes of spiritual striving, they have reached the end of the cycle of rebirth, no longer reincarnating as human, animal, ghost, or other being. The commentaries to the Pali Canon classify these awakened beings into three types:

- *Sammasambuddha*, usually just called Buddha, who discovers the truth by himself and teaches the path to awakening to others
- *Paccekabuddha*, who discovers the truth by himself but lacks the skill to teach others
- *Savakabuddha*, who receive the truth directly or indirectly from a Sammasam-buddha

Bodhi and *nirvana* carry the same meaning, that of being freed from craving, hate, and delusion. In attaining *bodhi*, the *arahant* has overcome these obstacles. As a further distinction, the extinction of only hatred and greed (in the sensory context) with some residue of delusion, is called *anagami.*

Mahayana

The Great Statue of Buddha Amitabha in Kamakura, Japan

In the Mahayana, the Buddha tends not to be viewed as merely human, but as the earthly projection of a beginningless and endless, omnipresent being beyond the range and reach of thought. Moreover, in certain Mahayana sutras, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are viewed essentially as One: all three are seen as the eternal Buddha himself.

Celestial Buddhas are individuals who no longer exist on the material plane of existence, but who still aid in the enlightenment of all beings.

Nirvana came to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained Nirvana. Bodhi became a higher attainment that eradicates delusion entirely. Thus, the *Arahant* attains Nirvana but not Bodhi, thus still being subject to delusion, while the Buddha attains Bodhi.

The method of self-exertion or "self-power"—without reliance on an external force or being—stands in contrast to another major form of Buddhism, Pure Land, which is characterised by utmost trust in the salvific "other-power" of Amitabha Buddha. Pure Land Buddhism is a very widespread and perhaps the most faith-orientated manifestation of Buddhism and centres upon the conviction that faith in Amitabha Buddha and the chanting of homage to his name will liberate one at death into the "happy land" (安樂) or "pure land" (淨土) of Amitabha Buddha. This Buddhic realm is variously construed as a foretaste of Nirvana, or as essentially Nirvana itself. The great vow of Amitabha Buddha to rescue all beings from samsaric suffering is viewed within Pure Land Buddhism as universally efficacious, if only one has faith in the power of that vow or chants his name.

Buddha eras

Buddhists believe Gautama Buddha was the first to achieve enlightenment in this Buddha era and is therefore credited with the establishment of Buddhism. A Buddha era is the stretch of history during which people remember and practice the teachings of the earliest *known* Buddha. This Buddha era will end when all the knowledge, evidence and teachings of Gautama Buddha have vanished. This belief therefore maintains that many Buddha eras have started and ended throughout the course of human existence. The Gautama Buddha, then, is *the Buddha of this era*, who taught directly or indirectly to all other Buddhas in it.

In addition, Mahayana Buddhists believe there are innumerable other Buddhas in other universes. A Theravada commentary says that Buddhas arise one at a time in this world element, and not at all in others. The understandings of this matter reflect widely differing interpretations of basic terms, such as "world realm", between the various schools of Buddhism.

The idea of the decline and gradual disappearance of the teaching has been influential in East Asian Buddhism. Pure Land Buddhism holds that it has declined to the point where few are capable of following the path, so it may be best to rely on the power of the Amitabha Buddha.

Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattva means "enlightenment being", and generally refers to one who is on the path to buddhahood, typically as a fully enlightened buddha (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*). Theravada Buddhism primarily uses the term in relation to Gautama Buddha's previous existences, but has traditionally acknowledged and respected the bodhisattva path as well.

Mahāyāna Buddhism is based principally upon the path of a bodhisattva. According to Jan Nattier, the term *Mahāyāna* ("Great Vehicle") was originally even an honorary synonym for *Bodhisattvayāna*, or the "Bodhisattva Vehicle." The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, an early and important Mahāyāna text, contains a simple and brief definition for the term *bodhisattva*, and this definition is the following:

Because he has enlightenment as his aim, a bodhisattva-mahāsattva is so called.

Mahāyāna Buddhism encourages everyone to become bodhisattvas and to take the bodhisattva vows. With these vows, one makes the promise to work for the complete enlightenment of all beings by practicing six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*). According to the Mahāyāna teachings, these perfections are: giving, discipline, forbearance, effort, meditation, and transcendent wisdom.

Practice

Devotion

Devotion is an important part of the practice of most Buddhists. Devotional practices include bowing, offerings, pilgrimage, and chanting. In Pure Land Buddhism, devotion to the Buddha Amitabha is the main practice. In Nichiren Buddhism, devotion to the Lotus Sutra is the main practice.

Yoga

Amitābha Buddha meditating, sitting in the lotus position. Borobodur, Java, Indonesia.

Buddhism traditionally incorporates states of meditative absorption (Pali: *jhāna*; Skt: *dhyāna*). The most ancient sustained expression of yogic ideas is found in the early sermons of the Buddha. One key innovative teaching of the Buddha was that meditative absorption must be combined with liberating cognition. The difference between the Buddha's teaching and the yoga presented in early Brahminic texts is striking. Meditative states alone are not an end, for according to the Buddha, even the highest meditative state is not liberating. Instead of attaining a complete cessation of thought, some sort of mental activity must take place: a liberating cognition, based on the practice of mindful awareness.

Meditation was an aspect of the practice of the yogis in the centuries preceding the Buddha. The Buddha built upon the yogis' concern with introspection and developed their meditative techniques, but rejected their theories of liberation. In Buddhism, mindfulness and clear awareness are to be developed at all times, in pre-Buddhist yogic practices there is no such injunction. A yogi in the Brahmanical tradition is not to practice while defecating, for example, while a Buddhist monastic should do so.

Another new teaching of the Buddha was that meditative absorption must be combined with a liberating cognition.

Religious knowledge or "vision" was indicated as a result of practice both within and outside of the Buddhist fold. According to the *Samaññaphala Sutta* this sort of vision arose for the Buddhist adept as a result of the perfection of "meditation" (Skt. *dhyāna*) coupled with the perfection of "discipline" (Skt. *śīla*). Some of the Buddha's meditative techniques were shared with other traditions of his day, but the idea that ethics are causally related to the attainment of "transcendent wisdom" (Skt. *prajñā*) was original.

The Buddhist texts are probably the earliest describing meditation techniques. They describe meditative practices and states which had existed before the Buddha as well as those which were first developed within Buddhism. Two Upanishads written after the rise of Buddhism do contain full-fledged descriptions of yoga as a means to liberation.

While there is no convincing evidence for meditation in pre-Buddhist early Brahminic texts, Wynne argues that formless meditation originated in the Brahminic or Shramanic tradition, based on strong parallels between Upanishadic cosmological statements and the meditative goals of the two teachers of the Buddha as recorded in the early Buddhist texts. He mentions less likely possibilities as well. Having argued that the cosmological statements in the Upanishads also reflect a contemplative tradition, he argues that the Nasadiya Sukta contains evidence for a contemplative tradition, even as early as the late Rg Vedic period.

Refuge in the Three Jewels

Footprint of the Buddha with Dharmachakra and triratna, 1st century CE, Gandhāra.

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking refuge in the Three Jewels (Sanskrit: *tri-ratna*, Pāli: *ti-ratana*) as the foundation of one's religious practice. The practice of taking refuge on behalf of young or even unborn children is mentioned in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, recognized by most scholars as an early text (cf. Infant baptism). Tibetan Buddhism sometimes adds a fourth refuge, in the *lama*. In Mahayana, the person who chooses the *bodhisattva* path makes a vow or pledge, considered the ultimate expression of compassion. In Mahayana, too, the Three Jewels are perceived as possessed of an eternal and unchanging essence and as having an irreversible effect: "The Three Jewels have the quality of excellence. Just as real jewels never change their faculty and

goodness, whether praised or reviled, so are the Three Jewels (Refuges), because they have an eternal and immutable essence. These Three Jewels bring a fruition that is changeless, for once one has reached Buddhahood, there is no possibility of falling back to suffering."

The Three Jewels are:

- The Buddha. This is a title for those who have attained Nirvana. The Buddha could also be represented as a concept instead of a specific person: the perfect wisdom that understands *Dharma* and sees reality in its true form. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha can be viewed as the supreme Refuge: "Buddha is the Unique Absolute Refuge. Buddha is the Imperishable, Eternal, Indestructible and Absolute Refuge."
- The *Dharma*. The teachings or law of nature as expounded by the Gautama Buddha. It can also, especially in Mahayana, connote the ultimate and sustaining Reality which is inseparable from the Buddha. Further, from some Mahayana perspectives, the Dharma embodied in the form of a great sutra (Buddhic scripture) can replace the need for a personal teacher and can be a direct and spontaneous gateway into Truth (Dharma). This is especially said to be the case with the Lotus Sutra. Dr. Hiroshi Kanno writes of this view of the *Lotus Sutra*: "it is a Dharma-gate of sudden enlightenment proper to the Great Vehicle; it is a Dharma-gate whereby one awakens spontaneously, without resorting to a teacher".

- The *Sangha*. Those who have attained to any of the Four stages of enlightenment, or simply the congregation of monastic practitioners.

According to the scriptures, Gautama Buddha presented himself as a model. The Dharma offers a refuge by providing guidelines for the alleviation of suffering and the attainment of Nirvana. The Sangha is considered to provide a refuge by preserving the authentic teachings of the Buddha and providing further examples that the truth of the Buddha's teachings is attainable.

Buddhist ethics

Japanese Mahayana Buddhist monk

Śīla (Sanskrit) or *sīla* (Pāli) is usually translated into English as "virtuous behavior", "morality", "ethics" or "precept". It is an action committed through the body, speech, or mind, and involves an intentional effort. It is one of the *three practices* (*sila*, *samadhi*, and *panya*) and the second *pāramitā*. It refers to moral purity of thought, word, and deed. The four conditions of *śīla* are chastity, calmness, quiet, and extinguishment.

Śīla is the foundation of *Samadhi/Bhāvana* (Meditative cultivation) or mind cultivation. Keeping the precepts promotes not only the peace of mind of the cultivator, which is internal, but also peace in the community, which is external. According to the Law of

Karma, keeping the precepts are meritorious and it acts as causes which would bring about peaceful and happy effects. Keeping these precepts keeps the cultivator from rebirth in the four woeful realms of existence.

Śīla refers to overall principles of ethical behavior. There are several levels of *sila*, which correspond to "basic morality" (five precepts), "basic morality with asceticism" (eight precepts), "novice monkhood" (ten precepts) and "monkhood" (*Vinaya* or *Patimokkha*). Lay people generally undertake to live by the five precepts, which are common to all Buddhist schools. If they wish, they can choose to undertake the eight precepts, which add basic asceticism.

The five precepts are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate well:

1. To refrain from taking life (non-violence towards sentient life forms), or *ahimsā*
2. To refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft)
3. To refrain from sensual (including sexual) misconduct
4. To refrain from lying (speaking truth always)
5. To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (specifically, drugs and alcohol)

The precepts are not formulated as imperatives, but as training rules that laypeople undertake voluntarily to facilitate practice. In Buddhist thought, the cultivation of dana and ethical conduct will themselves refine consciousness to such a level that rebirth in one of the lower heavens is likely, even if there is no further Buddhist practice. There is nothing improper or un-Buddhist about limiting one's aims to this level of attainment.

In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made more strict, and becomes a precept of celibacy. The three additional precepts are:

6. To refrain from eating at the wrong time (only eat from sunrise to noon)
7. To refrain from dancing and playing music, wearing jewelry and cosmetics, attending shows and other performances
8. To refrain from using high or luxurious seats and bedding

The complete list of ten precepts may be observed by laypeople for short periods. For the complete list, the seventh precept is partitioned into two, and a tenth added:

6. To refrain from taking food at an unseasonable time, that is after the mid-day meal
7. To refrain from dancing, music, singing and unseemly shows
8. To refrain from the use of garlands, perfumes, ointments, and from things that tend to beautify and adorn (the person)
9. To refrain from (using) high and luxurious seats (and beds)
10. To refrain from accepting gold and silver

Monastic life

Vinaya is the specific moral code for monks and nuns. It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 rules for monks in the Theravadin recension. The precise content of the vinayapitaka (scriptures on Vinaya) differ slightly according to different schools, and different schools or subschools set different standards for the degree of adherence to Vinaya. Novice-monks use the ten precepts, which are the basic precepts for monastics.

Regarding the monastic rules, the Buddha constantly reminds his hearers that it is the spirit that counts. On the other hand, the rules themselves are designed to assure a satisfying life, and provide a perfect springboard for the higher attainments. Monastics are instructed by the Buddha to live as "islands unto themselves". In this sense, living life as the vinaya prescribes it is, as one scholar puts it: "more than merely a means to an end: it is very nearly the end in itself."

In Eastern Buddhism, there is also a distinctive Vinaya and ethics contained within the Mahayana Brahmajala Sutra (not to be confused with the Pali text of that name) for Bodhisattvas, where, for example, the eating of meat is frowned upon and vegetarianism is actively encouraged. In Japan, this has almost completely displaced the monastic vinaya, and allows clergy to marry.

Meditation

Buddhist monks praying in Thailand

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore itself and other phenomena. According to Theravada Buddhism the Buddha taught two types of meditation, *samatha* meditation (Sanskrit: *śamatha*) and *vipassanā* meditation (Sanskrit: *vipaśyanā*). In Chinese Buddhism, these exist (translated *chih kuan*), but Chan (Zen) meditation is more popular. According to Peter Harvey, whenever Buddhism has been healthy, not only monks, nuns, and married lamas, but also more committed lay people have practiced meditation. According to Routledge's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, in contrast, throughout most of Buddhist history before modern times, serious meditation by lay people has been unusual. The evidence of the early texts suggests that at the time of the Buddha, many male and female lay practitioners did practice meditation, some even to the point of proficiency in all eight jhānas.

Samādhi (meditative cultivation): samatha meditation

In the language of the Noble Eightfold Path, *samyaksamādhi* is "right concentration". The primary means of cultivating *samādhi* is meditation. Upon development of *samādhi*, one's mind becomes purified of defilement, calm, tranquil, and luminous.

Once the meditator achieves a strong and powerful concentration, his mind is ready to penetrate and gain insight (vipassanā) into the ultimate nature of reality, eventually obtaining release from all suffering. The cultivation of mindfulness is essential to mental concentration, which is needed to achieve insight.

Samatha meditation starts from being mindful of an object or idea, which is expanded to one's body, mind and entire surroundings, leading to a state of total concentration and tranquility (*jhāna*) There are many variations in the style of meditation, from sitting cross-legged or kneeling to chanting or walking. The most common method of meditation is to concentrate on one's breath (anapanasati), because this practice can lead to both *samatha* and *vipassana'*.

In Buddhist practice, it is said that while *samatha* meditation can calm the mind, only *vipassanā* meditation can reveal how the mind was disturbed to start with, which is what leads to knowledge (*jñāna*; Pāli *ñāṇa*) and understanding (*prajñā* Pāli *paññā*), and thus can lead to *nirvāṇa* (Pāli *nibbāna*). When one is in jhana, all defilements are suppressed temporarily. Only understanding (*prajñā* or *vipassana*) eradicates the defilements completely. Jhanas are also states which *Arahants* abide in order to rest.

In Theravāda

In Theravāda Buddhism, the cause of human existence and suffering is identified as craving, which carries with it the various defilements. These various defilements are traditionally summed up as greed, hatred and delusion. These are believed to be deeply rooted afflictions of the mind that create suffering and stress. In order to be free from suffering and stress, these defilements need to be permanently uprooted through internal investigation, analyzing, experiencing, and understanding of the true nature of those defilements by using *jhāna*, a technique which is part of the Noble Eightfold Path. It will then lead the meditator to realize the Four Noble Truths, Enlightenment and *Nibbana*. Nibbana is the ultimate goal of Theravadins.

Prajñā (Wisdom): vipassana meditation

Prajñā (Sanskrit) or *paññā* (Pāli) means wisdom that is based on a realization of dependent origination, The Four Noble Truths and the three marks of existence. *Prajñā* is the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about *bodhi*. It is spoken of as the principal means of attaining *nirvāṇa*, through its revelation of the true nature of all things as *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (not-self). *Prajñā* is also listed as the sixth of the six *pāramitās* of the Mahayana.

Initially, *prajñā* is attained at a conceptual level by means of listening to sermons (dharma talks), reading, studying, and sometimes reciting Buddhist texts and engaging in discourse. Once the conceptual understanding is attained, it is applied to daily life so that each Buddhist can verify the truth of the Buddha's teaching at a practical level. Notably, one could in theory attain Nirvana at any point of practice, whether deep in meditation, listening to a sermon, conducting the business of one's daily life, or any other activity.

Zen

Zen Buddhism (禅), pronounced *chán* in Chinese, *seon* in Korean or *zen* in Japanese (derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, meaning "meditation") is a form of Buddhism that became popular in China, Korea and Japan and that lays special emphasis on meditation. Zen places less emphasis on scriptures than some other forms of Buddhism and prefers to focus on direct spiritual breakthroughs to truth.

Zen Buddhism is divided into two main schools: Rinzai (臨済宗) and Sōtō (曹洞宗), the former greatly favouring the use in meditation on the koan (公案, a meditative riddle or puzzle) as a device for spiritual break-through, and the latter (while certainly employing koans) focusing more on *shikantaza* or "just sitting".

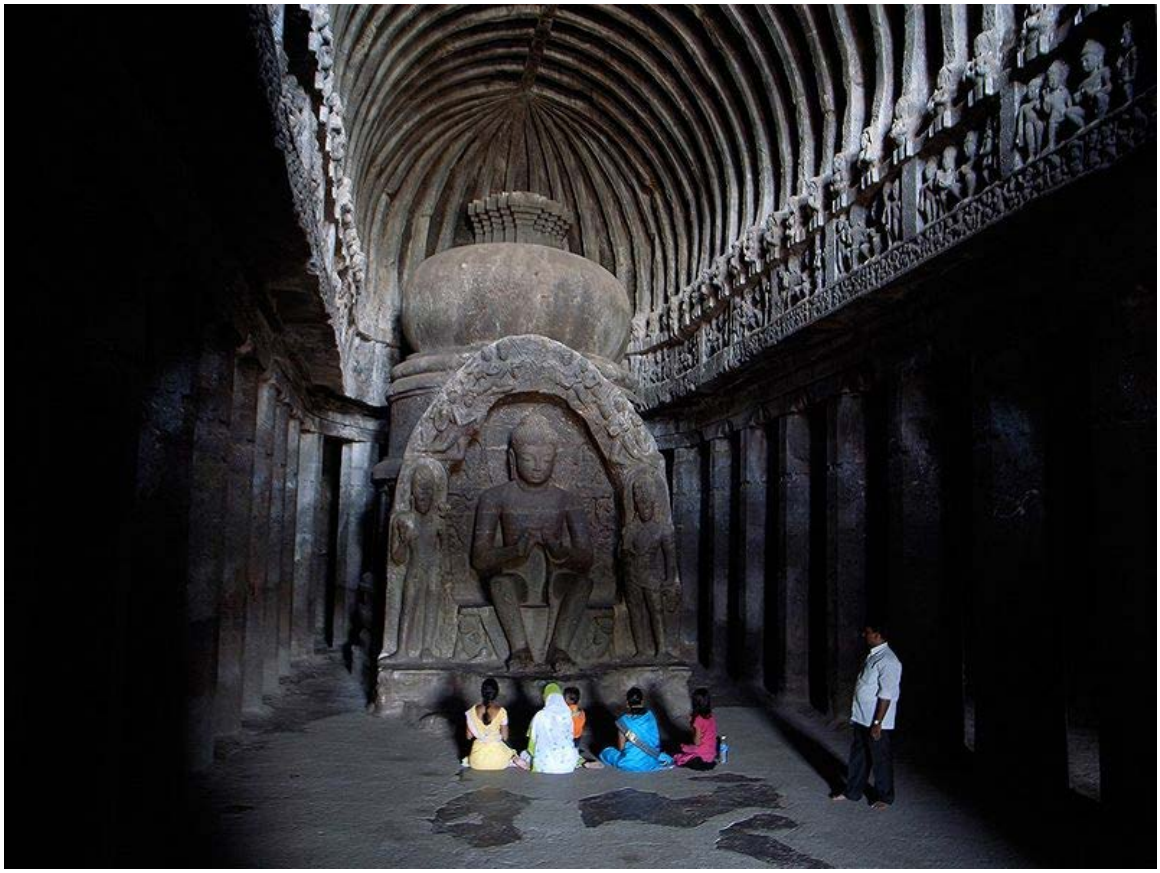
Zen Buddhist teaching is often full of paradox, in order to loosen the grip of the ego and to facilitate the penetration into the realm of the True Self or Formless Self, which is equated with the Buddha himself. According to Zen master, Kosho Uchiyama, when thoughts and fixation on the little 'I' are transcended, an Awakening to a universal, non-dual Self occurs: ' When we let go of thoughts and wake up to the reality of life that is working beyond them, we discover the Self that is living universal non-dual life (before the separation into two) that pervades all living creatures and all existence.'. Thinking and thought must therefore not be allowed to confine and bind one. Nevertheless, Zen does not neglect the scriptures.

Vajrayana and Tantra

Though based upon Mahayana, Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism is one of the schools that practice *Vajrayāna* or "Diamond Vehicle" (also referred to as Mantrayāna, Tantrayāna, Tantric Buddhism, or esoteric Buddhism). It accepts all the basic concepts of Mahāyāna, but also includes a vast array of spiritual and physical techniques designed to enhance Buddhist practice. Tantric Buddhism is largely concerned with ritual and meditative practices. One component of the Vajrayāna is harnessing psycho-physical energy through ritual, visualization, physical exercises, and meditation as a means of developing the mind. Using these techniques, it is claimed that a practitioner can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, or even as little as three years. In the Tibetan tradition, these practices can include sexual yoga, though only for some very advanced practitioners.

History

Philosophical roots



The Buddhist "Carpenter's Cave" at Ellora in Maharashtra, India.

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of Ancient India during the second half of the first millennium BC. That was a period of social and religious turmoil, as there was significant discontent with the sacrifices and rituals of Vedic Brahmanism. It was challenged by numerous new ascetic religious and philosophical groups and teachings that broke with the Brahmanic tradition and rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmans. These groups, whose members were known as shramanas, were a continuation of a non-Vedic strand of Indian thought distinct from Indo-Aryan Brahmanism. Scholars have reasons to believe that ideas such as samsara, karma (in the sense of the influence of morality on rebirth), and moksha originated in the shramanas, and were later adopted by Brahmin orthodoxy. At the same time, they were influenced by, and in some respects continued, earlier philosophical thought within the Vedic tradition as reflected e.g. in the Upanishads. These movements included, besides Buddhism, various skeptics (such as Sanjaya Belatthiputta), atomists (such as Pakudha Kaccayana), materialists (such as Ajita Kesakambali), antinomians (such as Purana Kassapa); the most important ones in the 5th century BC were the Ajivikas, who

emphasized the rule of fate, the Lokayata (materialists), the Ajnanas (agnostics) and the Jains, who stressed that the soul must be freed from matter.

Many of these new movements shared the same conceptual vocabulary - atman ("Self"), buddha ("awakened one"), dhamma ("rule" or "law"), karma ("action"), nirvana ("extinguishing"), samsara ("eternal recurrence") and yoga ("spiritual practice"). The shramanas rejected the Veda, and the authority of the brahmans, who claimed to be in possession of revealed truths not knowable by any ordinary human means; moreover, they declared that the entire Brahmanical system was fraudulent: a conspiracy of the brahmans to enrich themselves by charging exorbitant fees for the performance of bogus rites and the giving of futile advice. A particular criticism of the Buddha's was Vedic animal sacrifice. Their leaders, including Buddha, were often known as śramaṇas. The Buddha declared that priests reciting the Vedas were like the blind leading the blind. According to him, those priests who had memorized the Vedas really knew nothing. He also mocked the Vedic "hymn of the cosmic man". He declared that the primary goal of Upanishadic thought, the Atman, was in fact non-existent, and, having explained that Brahminical attempts to achieve liberation at death were futile, proposed his new idea of liberation in life. At the same time, the traditional Brahminical religion itself gradually underwent profound changes, transforming it into what is recognized as early Hinduism. In particular, the brahmans thus developed "philosophical systems of their own, meeting the new ideas with adaptations of their doctrines".

Indian Buddhism

The history of Indian Buddhism may be divided into five periods: Early Buddhism (occasionally called Pre-sectarian Buddhism), Nikaya Buddhism or Sectarian Buddhism: The period of the Early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, Later Mahayana Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism (also called Vajrayana Buddhism).

Pre-sectarian Buddhism

Pre-sectarian Buddhism is the earliest phase of Buddhism, recognized by nearly all scholars. Its main scriptures are the Vinaya Pitaka and the four principal Nikayas or Agamas. Certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout the early texts, so most scholars conclude that Gautama Buddha must have taught something similar to the Three marks of existence, the Five aggregates, Dependent origination, Karma and Rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Nirvana. Some scholars disagree, and have proposed many other theories.

Early Buddhist schools

According to the scriptures, soon after the parinirvāṇa (from Sanskrit: "highest extinguishment") of Gautama Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held. As with any ancient Indian tradition, transmission of teaching was done orally. The primary purpose of the assembly was to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission. In the first council, Ānanda, a cousin of the Buddha and his personal

attendant, was called upon to recite the discourses (*sūtras*, Pāli *sutta*s) of the Buddha, and, according to some sources, the abhidhamma. Upāli, another disciple, recited the monastic rules (*vinaya*). Scholars regard the traditional accounts of the council as greatly exaggerated if not entirely fictitious.

According to most scholars, at some period after the Second Council the *Sangha* began to break into separate factions. The various accounts differ as to when the actual schisms occurred. According to the *Dipavamsa* of the Pāli tradition, they started immediately after the Second Council, the Puggalavada tradition places it in 137 AN, the Sarvastivada tradition of Vasumitra says it was in the time of Asoka and the Mahasanghika tradition places it much later, nearly 100 BCE.

The root schism was between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṅghikas. The fortunate survival of accounts from both sides of the dispute reveals disparate traditions. The Sthavira group offers two quite distinct reasons for the schism. The Dipavamsa of the Theravāda says that the losing party in the Second Council dispute broke away in protest and formed the Mahasanghika. This contradicts the Mahasanghikas' own *vinaya*, which shows them as on the same, winning side. The Mahāsāṅghikas argued that the Sthaviras were trying to expand the *vinaya* and may also have challenged what they perceived to be excessive claims or inhumanly high criteria for arhatship. Both parties, therefore, appealed to tradition.

The Sthaviras gave rise to several schools, one of which was the Theravāda school. Originally, these schisms were caused by disputes over vinaya, and monks following different schools of thought seem to have lived happily together in the same monasteries, but eventually, by about 100 CE if not earlier, schisms were being caused by doctrinal disagreements too.

Following (or leading up to) the schisms, each Saṅgha started to accumulate an Abhidharma, a detailed scholastic reworking of doctrinal material appearing in the Suttas, according to schematic classifications. These Abhidharma texts do not contain systematic philosophical treatises, but summaries or numerical lists. Scholars generally date these texts to around the 3rd century BCE, 100 to 200 years after the death of the Buddha. Therefore the seven Abhidharma works are generally claimed not to represent the words of the Buddha himself, but those of disciples and great scholars. Every school had its own version of the Adhidharma, with different theories and different texts. The different Adhidharmas of the various schools did not agree with each other. Scholars disagree on whether the Mahasanghika school had an Abhidhamma Pitaka or not.

Early Mahayana Buddhism

Statue of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, with Sanskrit in the Siddham script. Singapore.

The origins of Mahāyāna are still not completely understood. The earliest views of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the West assumed that it existed as a separate school in competition with the so-called "Hīnayāna" schools. Due to the veneration of buddhas and bodhisattvas, Mahāyāna was often interpreted as a more devotional, lay-inspired form of Buddhism, with supposed origins in stūpa veneration, or by making parallels with the history of the European Protestant Reformation. These views have been largely dismissed in modern times in light of a much broader range of early texts that are now available. The old views of Mahāyāna as a separate lay-inspired and devotional sect are now largely dismissed as misguided and wrong on all counts.

There is no evidence that Mahāyāna ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas. Paul Williams has also noted that the Mahāyāna never had nor ever attempted to have a separate Vinaya or ordination lineage from the early schools of Buddhism, and therefore each bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī adhering to the Mahāyāna formally belonged to an early school. This continues today with the Dharmaguptaka ordination lineage in East Asia, and the Mūlasarvāstivāda ordination lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore Mahāyāna was never a separate rival sect of the early schools. From Chinese monks visiting India, we now know that both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks in India often lived in the same monasteries side by side.

The Chinese monk Yijing who visited India in the 7th century CE, distinguishes Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna as follows:

Both adopt one and the same Vinaya, and they have in common the prohibitions of the five offences, and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths. Those who venerate the bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna sūtras are called the Mahāyānists, while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.

Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts. These Mahāyāna teachings were first propagated into China by Lokakṣema, the first translator of Mahāyāna sūtras into Chinese during the 2nd century CE. Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the Prajñāpāramitā series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya Buddha, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.

Late Mahayana Buddhism

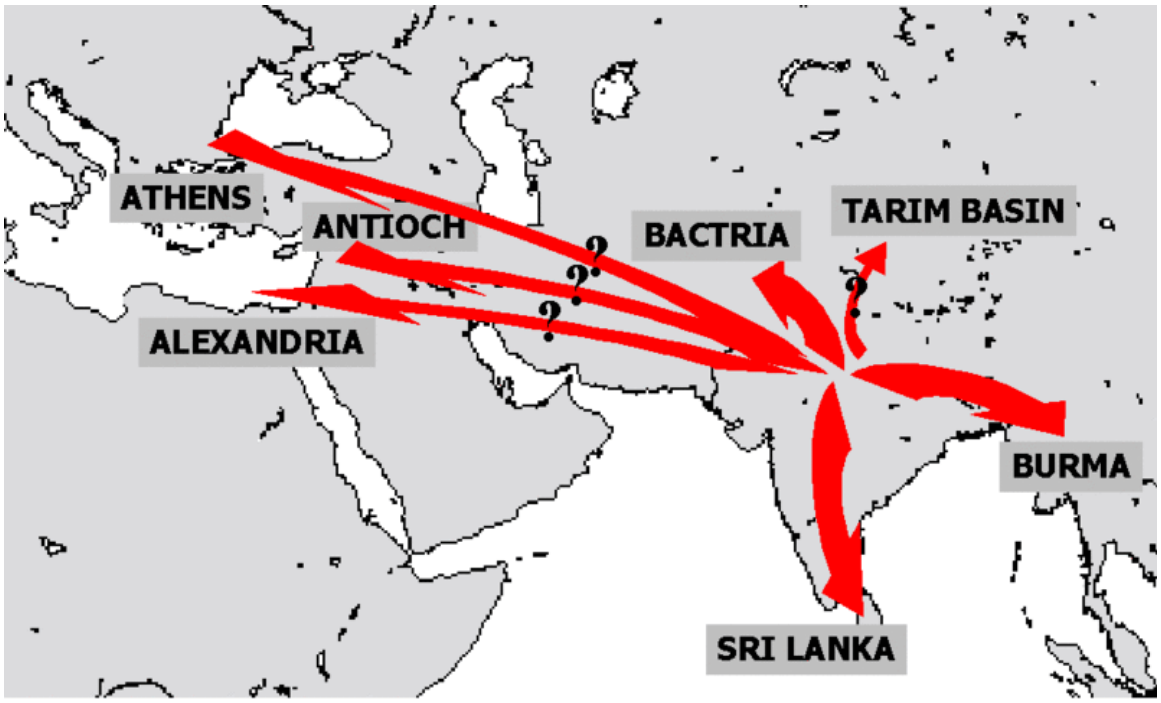
During the period of Late Mahayana Buddhism, four major types of thought developed: Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Tathagatagarbha, and Buddhist Logic as the last and most recent. In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahayana were the Madhyamaka and the later Yogacara. According to Dan Lusthaus, Madhyamaka and Yogacara have a great deal in common, and the commonality stems from early Buddhism. There were no great Indian teachers associated with tathagatagarbha thought.

Vajrayana (Esoteric Buddhism)

Scholarly research concerning Esoteric Buddhism is still in its early stages and has a number of problems which make research difficult:

1. Vajrayana Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism, and therefore the research has to include research on Hinduism as well.
2. The scriptures of Vajrayana have not yet been put in any kind of order.
3. Ritual has to be examined as well, not just doctrine.

The early development of Buddhism



Buddhist proselytism at the time of emperor Ashoka (260–218 BCE).

Buddhist tradition records in the Milinda Panha that the 2nd century BCE Indo-Greek king Menander converted to the Buddhist faith and became an arhat.

Buddhism may have spread only slowly in India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who was a public supporter of the religion. The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (Buddhist religious memorials) and to efforts to spread Buddhism throughout the enlarged Maurya empire and even into neighboring lands—particularly to the Iranian-speaking regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia, beyond the Mauryas' northwest border, and to the island of Sri Lanka south of India. These two missions, in opposite directions, would ultimately lead, in the first case to the spread of Buddhism into China, and in the second case, to the emergence of Theravāda Buddhism and its spread from Sri Lanka to the coastal lands of Southeast Asia.

This period marks the first known spread of Buddhism beyond India. According to the edicts of Aśoka, emissaries were sent to various countries west of India in order to spread Buddhism (Dharma), particularly in eastern provinces of the neighboring Seleucid Empire, and even farther to Hellenistic kingdoms of the Mediterranean. This led, a century later, to the emergence of Greek-speaking Buddhist monarchs in the Indo-Greek Kingdom, and to the development of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. During this period Buddhism was exposed to a variety of influences, from Persian and Greek civilization, and from changing trends in non-Buddhist Indian religions—themselves influenced by Buddhism. It is a matter of disagreement among scholars whether or not these emissaries were accompanied by Buddhist missionaries.

The Theravada school spread south from India in the 3rd century BC, to Sri Lanka and Thailand and Burma and later also Indonesia. The Dharmagupta school spread (also in 3rd century BC) north to Kashmir, Gandhara and Bactria (Afghanistan). In the 2nd century AD, Mahayana Sutras spread from that general area to China, and then to Korea and Japan, and were translated into Chinese. During the Indian period of Esoteric Buddhism (from the 8th century onwards), Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and Mongolia.

Buddhism today

By the late Middle Ages, Buddhism had become virtually extinct in India, and although it continued to exist in surrounding countries, its influence was no longer expanding. It is now again gaining strength in India and elsewhere. Estimates of the number of Buddhist followers by scholars range from 230 million to 500 million, with most around 350 million. Most scholars classify similar numbers of people under a category they call "Chinese folk" or "traditional" religion, an amalgam of various traditions that includes Buddhism.

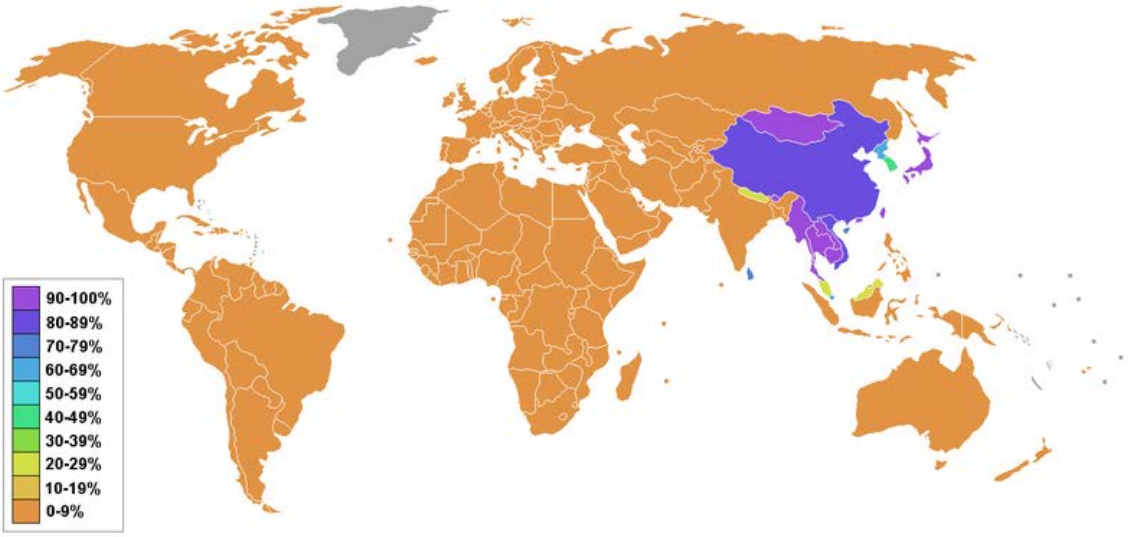
Typical interior of a temple in Korea

Formal membership varies between communities, but basic lay adherence is often defined in terms of a traditional formula in which the practitioner takes refuge in The Three Jewels: the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* (the teachings of the Buddha), and the *Sangha* (the Buddhist community).

Estimates are uncertain for several reasons:

- difficulties in defining who counts as a Buddhist;
- syncretism among the Eastern religions. Buddhism is practiced by adherents alongside many other religious traditions- including Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, traditional religions, shamanism, and animism- throughout East and Sout-heast Asia.
- difficulties in estimating the number of Buddhists who do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies;
- official policies on religion in several historically Buddhist countries that make accurate assessments of religious adherence more difficult; most notably China, Vietnam and North Korea. In many current and former Communist governments in Asia, government policies may discourage adherents from reporting their religious identity, or may encourage official counts to underestimate religious adherence.

Demographics



Buddhism is most prevalent in the Far East.

According to one analysis, Buddhism is the fourth-largest religion in the world behind Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The monks' order (Sangha), which began during the lifetime of the Buddha, is among the oldest organizations on earth.

- Theravāda Buddhism, using Pāli as its scriptural language, is the dominant form of Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma. The Dalit Buddhist movement in India (inspired by B. R. Ambedkar) also practices Theravada. Approximately 124 million adherents.
- East Asian forms of Mahayana Buddhism that use Chinese scriptures are dominant in most of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam as well as such communities within Indochina, Southeast Asia and the West. Approximately 185 million adherents.
- Tibetan Buddhism is found in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, surrounding areas in India, China, Nepal, and the Russian Federation. Approximately 20 million adherents.

Most Buddhist groups in the West are at least nominally affiliated with one of these three traditions.

At the present time, the teachings of all three branches of Buddhism have spread throughout the world, and Buddhist texts are increasingly translated into local languages. While in the West Buddhism is often seen as exotic and progressive, in the East it is regarded as familiar and traditional. Buddhists in Asia are frequently well organized and well funded. In a number of countries, it is recognized as an official religion and receives state support. Modern influences increasingly lead to new forms of Buddhism that significantly depart from traditional beliefs and practices.

Overall there is an overwhelming diversity of recent forms of Buddhism.

Schools and traditions

Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravada or Mahayana. This classification is also used by some scholars and is the one ordinarily used in the English language. An alternative scheme used by some scholars divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas: Theravada, East Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism.

Some scholars use other schemes. Buddhists themselves have a variety of other schemes. Hinayana (literally "lesser vehicle") is used by Mahayana followers to name the family of early philosophical schools and traditions from which contemporary Theravada emerged, but as this term is rooted in the Mahayana viewpoint and can be considered derogatory, a variety of other terms are increasingly used instead, including Śrāvakayāna, Nikaya Buddhism, early Buddhist schools, sectarian Buddhism, conservative Buddhism, mainstream Buddhism and non-Mahayana Buddhism.

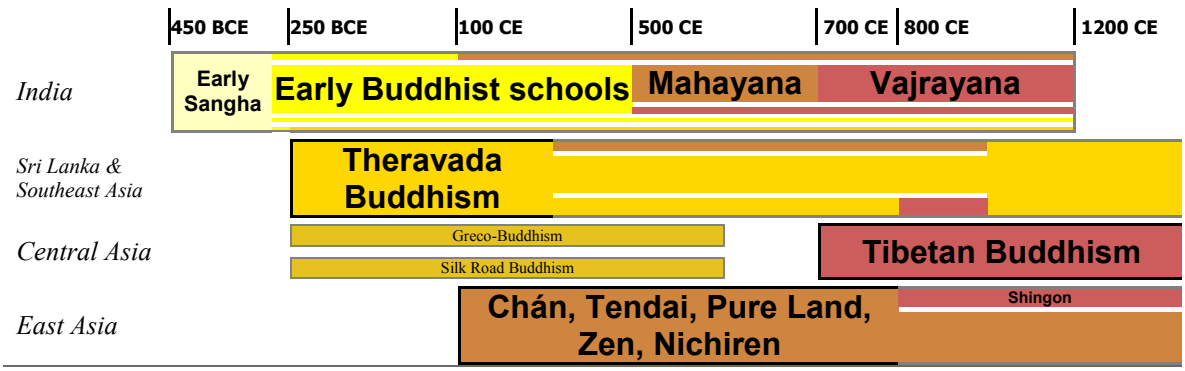
Not all traditions of Buddhism share the same philosophical outlook, or treat the same concepts as central. Each tradition, however, does have its own core concepts, and some comparisons can be drawn between them. For example, according to one Buddhist ecumenical organization, several concepts common to both major Buddhist branches:

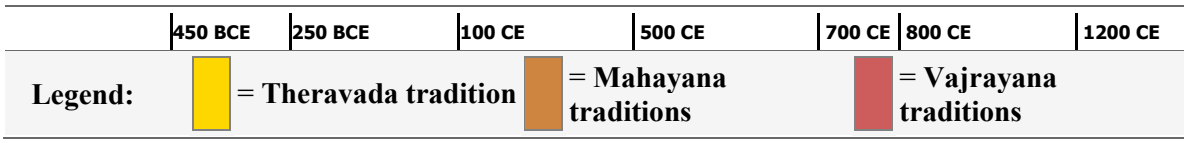
- Both accept the Buddha as their teacher.
- Both accept the Middle way, Dependent origination, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Three marks of existence.
- Both accept that members of the laity and of the sangha can pursue the path toward enlightenment (bodhi).
- Both consider buddhahood to be the highest attainment.

Timeline

This is a rough timeline of the development of the different schools/traditions:

Timeline: Development and propagation of Buddhist traditions (ca. 450 BCE – ca. 1300 CE)





Theravada school

Theravāda ("Doctrine of the Elders", or "Ancient Doctrine") is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It is relatively conservative, and *generally* closest to early Buddhism. This school is derived from the Vibhajjavāda grouping which emerged amongst the older Sthavira group at the time of the Third Buddhist Council (c. 250 BCE). This school gradually declined on the Indian subcontinent, but its branch in Sri Lanka and South East Asia continues to survive.

The Theravada school bases its practice and doctrine exclusively on the Pāli Canon and its commentaries. After being orally transmitted for a few centuries, its scriptures, the Pali Canon, were finally committed to writing in the 1st century BCE, in Sri Lanka, at what the Theravada usually reckon as the fourth council. It is also one of the first Buddhist schools to commit the complete set of its canon into writing. The Sutta collections and Vinaya texts of the Pāli Canon (and the corresponding texts in other versions of the Tripitaka), are generally considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature, and they are accepted as authentic in every branch of Buddhism.

Theravāda is primarily practiced today in Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia as well as small portions of China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Bangladesh. It has a growing presence in Europe and America.

Mahayana traditions

Blue-eyed Central Asian and Chinese Buddhist monks. Bezeklik, Eastern Tarim Basin, China, 9th–10th century.

Mahayana Buddhism flourished in India from the 5th century CE onwards, during the dynasty of the Guptas. Mahāyāna centres of learning were established, the most important one being the Nālandā University in north-eastern India.

Mahayana schools recognize all or part of the Mahayana Sutras. Some of these sutras became for Mahayanists a manifestation of the Buddha himself, and faith in and veneration of those texts are stated in some sutras (e.g. the Lotus Sutra and the

Mahaparinirvana Sutra) to lay the foundations for the later attainment of Buddhahood itself.

Native Mahayana Buddhism is practiced today in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, parts of Russia and most of Vietnam (also commonly referred to as "Eastern Buddhism"). The Buddhism practiced in Tibet, the Himalayan regions, and Mongolia is also Mahayana in origin, but will be discussed below under the heading of Vajrayana (also commonly referred to as "Northern Buddhism". There are a variety of strands in Eastern Buddhism, of which "the Pure Land school of Mahayana is the most widely practised today.". In most of this area however, they are fused into a single unified form of Buddhism. In Japan in particular, they form separate denominations with the five major ones being: Nichiren, peculiar to Japan; Pure Land; Shingon, a form of Vajrayana; Tendai; and Chan/Zen. In Korea, nearly all Buddhists belong to the Chogye school, which is officially Son (Zen), but with substantial elements from other traditions.

Vajrayana traditions

Bodhnath Stupa, Kathmandu, Nepal

The Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism spread to China, Mongolia, and Tibet. In Tibet, Vajrayana has always been a main component of Tibetan Buddhism, while in China it formed a separate sect. However, Vajrayana Buddhism became extinct in China but survived in elements of Japan's Shingon and Tendai sects.

There are differing views as to just when Vajrayāna and its tantric practice started. In the Tibetan tradition, it is claimed that the historical Śākyamuni Buddha taught tantra, but as these are esoteric teachings, they were passed on orally first and only written down long after the Buddha's other teachings. Nālandā University became a center for the development of Vajrayāna theory and continued as the source of leading-edge Vajrayāna practices up through the 11th century. These practices, scriptures and theories were transmitted to China, Tibet, Indochina and Southeast Asia. China generally received Indian transmission up to the 11th century including tantric practice, while a vast amount of what is considered to be Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayāna) stems from the late (9th–12th century) Nālandā tradition.

In one of the first major contemporary academic treatises on the subject, Fairfield University professor Ronald M. Davidson argues that the rise of Vajrayana was in part a reaction to the changing political climate in India at the time. With the fall of the Gupta dynasty, in an increasingly fractious political environment, institutional Buddhism had difficulty attracting patronage, and the folk movement led by siddhas became more prominent. After perhaps two hundred years, it had begun to get integrated into the monastic establishment.

Vajrayana combined and developed a variety of elements, a number of which had already existed for centuries. In addition to the Mahāyāna scriptures, Vajrayāna Buddhists recognise a large body of Buddhist Tantras, some of which are also included in Chinese and Japanese collections of Buddhist literature, and versions of a few even in the Pali Canon.

Buddhist texts

Buddhist scriptures and other texts exist in great variety. Different schools of Buddhism place varying levels of value on learning the various texts. Some schools venerate certain texts as religious objects in themselves, while others take a more scholastic approach. Buddhist scriptures are written in these languages: Pāli, Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese, along with some texts that still exist in Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text that is universally referred to by all traditions. However, some scholars have referred to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the common core of all Buddhist traditions. This could be considered misleading, as Mahāyāna considers these merely a preliminary, and not a core, teaching. The Tibetan Buddhists have not even translated most of the āgamas (though theoretically they recognize them) and they play no part in the religious life of either clergy or laity in China and Japan. Other scholars say there is no universally accepted common core. The size and complexity of the Buddhist canons have been seen by some (including Buddhist social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar) as presenting barriers to the wider understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

The followers of Theravāda Buddhism take the scriptures known as the Pāli Canon as definitive and authoritative, while the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism base their faith

and philosophy primarily on the Mahāyāna sūtras and their own *vinaya*. The Pāli sutras, along with other, closely related scriptures, are known to the other schools as the *āgamas*.

Over the years, various attempts have been made to synthesize a single Buddhist text that can encompass all of the major principles of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, condensed 'study texts' were created that combined popular or influential scriptures into single volumes that could be studied by novice monks. Later in Sri Lanka, the Dhammapada was championed as a unifying scripture.

Dwight Goddard collected a sample of Buddhist scriptures, with the emphasis on Zen, along with other classics of Eastern philosophy, such as the Tao Te Ching, into his 'Buddhist Bible' in the 1920s. More recently, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar attempted to create a single, combined document of Buddhist principles in "The Buddha and His Dhamma". Other such efforts have persisted to present day, but currently there is no single text that represents all Buddhist traditions.

Pāli Tipitaka

The Pāli Tipitaka, which means "three baskets", refers to the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Sutta Pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The *Vinaya Pitaka* contains disciplinary rules for the Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as explanations of why and how these rules were instituted, supporting material, and doctrinal clarification. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains discourses ascribed to Gautama Buddha. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* contains material often described as systematic expositions of the Gautama Buddha's teachings.

The Pāli Tipitaka is the only early Tipitaka (Sanskrit: *Tripiṭaka*) to survive intact in its original language, but a number of early schools had their own recensions of the Tipitaka featuring much of the same material. We have portions of the Tipitakas of the Sārvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, Sammitya, Mahāsaṅghika, Kāśyapīya, and Mahīśāsaka schools, most of which survive in Chinese translation only. According to some sources, some early schools of Buddhism had five or seven pitakas.

According to the scriptures, soon after the death of the Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held; a monk named Mahākāśyapa (Pāli: Mahākassapa) presided. The goal of the council was to record the Buddha's teachings. Upāli recited the *vinaya*. Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, was called upon to recite the dhamma. These became the basis of the Tripitaka. However, this record was initially transmitted orally in form of chanting, and was committed to text in the last century BCE. Both the sūtras and the *vinaya* of every Buddhist school contain a wide variety of elements including discourses on the Dharma, commentaries on other teachings, cosmological and cosmogonical texts, stories of the Gautama Buddha's previous lives, and various other subjects.

Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically "Theravadin", but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings. According to Peter Harvey, it contains material which is at odds with later Theravadin orthodoxy. He states: "The Theravadins, then, may have *added* texts to the

Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period."

Mahayana sutras

The Tripiṭaka Koreana, an edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon carved and preserved in over 81,000 wood printing blocks.

The Mahayana sutras are a very broad genre of Buddhist scriptures that the Mahayana Buddhist tradition holds are original teachings of the Buddha. The adherents of Mahayana accept both the early teachings (including in this the Sarvastivada Abhidharma, which was criticized by Nagarjuna and is in fact opposed to early Buddhist thought) and the Mahayana sutras as authentic teachings of Gautama Buddha, and claim they were designed for different types of persons and different levels of spiritual understanding.

The Mahayana sutras often claim to articulate the Buddha's deeper, more advanced doctrines, reserved for those who follow the bodhisattva path. That path is explained as being built upon the motivation to liberate all living beings from unhappiness. Hence the name *Mahāyāna* (lit., *the Great Vehicle*).

According to Mahayana tradition, the Mahayana sutras were transmitted in secret, came from other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or were preserved in non-human worlds because human beings at the time couldn't understand them:

Some of our sources maintain the authenticity of certain other texts not found in the canons of these schools (the early schools). These texts are those held genuine by the later school, not one of the eighteen, which arrogated to itself the title of Mahayana, 'Great Vehicle'. According to the Mahayana historians these texts were admittedly unknown to the early schools of Buddhists. However, they had all been promulgated by the Buddha. [The Buddha's] followers on earth, the sravakas ('pupils'), had not been sufficiently advanced to understand them, and hence were not given them to remember, but they were taught to various supernatural beings and then preserved in such places as the Dragon World.

Approximately six hundred Mahayana sutras have survived in Sanskrit or in Chinese or Tibetan translations. In addition, East Asian Buddhism recognizes some sutras regarded by scholars to be of Chinese rather than Indian origin.

Generally, scholars conclude that the Mahayana scriptures were composed from the 1st century CE onwards: "Large numbers of Mahayana sutras were being composed in the period between the beginning of the common era and the fifth century", five centuries after the historical Gautama Buddha. Some of these had their roots in other scriptures composed in the 1st century BCE. It was not until after the 5th century CE that the Mahayana sutras started to influence the behavior of mainstream Buddhists in India: "But outside of texts, at least in India, at exactly the same period, very different—in fact seemingly older—ideas and aspirations appear to be motivating actual behavior, and old and established Hinnayana groups appear to be the only ones that are patronized and supported." These texts were apparently not universally accepted among Indian Buddhists when they appeared; the pejorative label *hinayana* was applied by Mahayana supporters to those who rejected the Mahayana sutras.

Only the Theravada school does not include the Mahayana scriptures in its canon. As the modern Theravada school is descended from a branch of Buddhism that diverged and established itself in Sri Lanka prior to the emergence of the Mahayana texts, debate exists as to whether the Theravada were historically included in the *hinayana* designation; in the modern era, this label is seen as derogatory, and is generally avoided.

Comparative studies

Buddhism provides many opportunities for comparative study with a diverse range of subjects. For example, dependent origination can be considered one of Buddhism's contributions to metaphysics. Additionally, Buddhism's emphasis on the Middle way not only provides a unique guideline for ethics but has also allowed Buddhism to peacefully coexist with various differing beliefs, customs and institutions in countries in which it has resided throughout its history. Also, Its moral and spiritual parallels with other systems of

thought—for example, with various tenets of Christianity—have been subjects of close study.

Chapter- 5

East Asian Religions

A traditional representation of *The Vinegar Tasters*, an allegorical image representing Buddhists, Confucianists, and Taoists

In the study of comparative religion, the **East Asian religions** (also known as **Far Eastern religions**, **Chinese religions**, or **Taoic religions**) form a subset of the Eastern religions. This group includes Caodaism, Chen Tao, Chondogyo, Confucianism, Jeungism, Shinto, Taoism, I-Kuan Tao and elements of Mahayana Buddhism.

These traditions or religious philosophies focus on the East Asian concept of Tao 道 ("The Way"; pinyin *dào*, Korean *do*, Japanese *tō* or *dō*, Vietnamese *đạo*).

The place of East Asian religions among major religious groups is comparable to the Abrahamic religions and Indian religions.

Early Chinese philosophies defined Tao and advocated cultivating De in that Tao. Some ancient schools have merged into traditions with different names or are no longer active, such as Mohism (and many others of the Hundred Schools of Thought), while some such as Taoism persist to the modern day. East Asian religion is usually polytheistic or

nontheistic, but henotheistic, monotheistic, pantheistic, panentheistic and agnostic varieties exist, inside and outside of Asia. East Asian religions have many Western adherents, though their interpretations may differ significantly from traditional East Asian thought and culture.

Terminology

Despite a wide variety of terms, the traditions described as "Far Eastern religions", "East Asian religions" or "Chinese religions" are recognized by scholars as a distinct religious family.

Syncretism is a common feature of East Asian religions, often making it difficult to recognize individual faiths. Further complications arise from the inconsistent use of many terms. "Tao religion" is often used for Taoism itself, especially Tao chiao, as well as being used as an identifying term for Tao-based new religious movements. The term "Far Eastern religion" can be used to refer only to faiths incorporating "Tao", may include Ch'an and Japanese Buddhism, and can even inclusively refer to all Asian religions. These problems in distinguishing religious practices and with inconsistency in terminology can make discussion of East Asian religions difficult.

Tao

The Chinese character for "Tao"

Tao can be roughly stated to be the "flow" of the universe, or the force behind the natural order. Believed to be the influence that keeps the universe balanced and ordered, Tao is associated with nature, due to a belief that nature demonstrates the Tao. The flow of qi, as the essential energy of action and existence, is compared to the universal order of Tao. Similar to the negative theology of Western scholars, Tao is compared to what it is not. It is often considered to be the source of both existence and non-existence.

De

Tao is often associated with "proper" attitude, morality and lifestyle. In practice, the exact meaning of "proper" varies among the East Asian faiths and their branches. This is intimately tied to the complex concept of *De* (literally, "virtue"). De is the active expression of Tao. Generally, those religions closer to Taoism express this as "integrity"

or "wholeness", while those faiths closer to Confucianism express this concept as "morality" or "sound character".

Traditions

The three major East Asian traditions are Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. Buddhism, although it may be classified as a Dharmic tradition, has significant "Taoic" features in East Asia. Mahayana Buddhism is often considered as having joint heritage in Dharma and Tao traditions. The tentative larger classification of Eastern religions avoids this overlap and cross-pollination of "Indian" and "Far Eastern" religious thought, but loses the importance of the distinct unifying doctrines of Tao and Dharma.

Taoism

Taoism consists of a variety of related religious and philosophical traditions; category-zation of Taoist schools and movements can be very controversial. In general, Taoist propriety and ethics place an emphasis on the unity of the universe, the unity of the material world, and the spiritual world, the unity of the past, present and future; Three Jewels of the Tao; love, moderation, humility. Taoist theology focuses on doctrines of wu wei ("non-action"), spontaneity, relativism and emptiness.

Most traditional Chinese Taoists are polytheistic, but there are disagreements regarding the proper composition of their pantheon. Popular Taoism typically presents the Jade Emperor as the head deity. Intellectual (or "elite") Taoism usually presents Laozi and the Three Pure Ones at the top of the pantheon. Nature and ancestor spirits are common in popular Taoism, but this sort of shamanism is eschewed for an emphasis on internal alchemy among the "elite" Taoists. Tao itself is rarely an object of worship, being treated more like the Central Asian concept of atman.

Confucianism

Confucian temple in Kaohsiung, Republic of China (Taiwan)

Confucianism is a complex system of moral, social, political, and religious thought, influential in the history of East Asia. It is commonly associated with legalism, but actually rejects legalism for ritualism. It also endorses meritocracy as the ideal of nobility. Confucianism includes a complicated system governing duties and etiquette in relationships. Confucian ethics focus on familial duty, loyalty and humaneness. Confucianism recognizes the existence of animistic spirits, ghosts and deities. It advocates paying them proper respect, but paradoxically also encourages avoiding them. Confucian thought is notable as the framework upon which the syncretic Neo-Confucianism was built.

Neo-Confucianism

A bronze statue of Confucius

Neo-Confucianism was deliberately created as a syncretism of Taoism, Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism. It is recognized as being formulated and established during the Song dynasty, but its roots can be traced to scholars of the Tang dynasty. It combined Buddhist religious concepts with Taoist yin yang theory and the I Ching, and placed them within the framework of classic Confucianism.

Despite Neo-Confucianism's incorporation of the "best" elements of Buddhism and Taoism, its apologists still decried both faiths. However, its influence on Chinese society has blurred the distinction between all three faiths, even into modern times. Neo-

Confucianism was an officially endorsed faith for over five centuries, deeply influencing all of East Asia.

New Confucianism

New Confucianism is a modernist Confucianism, which accommodates modern science and democratic ideals, while remaining conservative in preserving traditional Neo-Confucianist positions.

Shinto

Shinto is an animistic folk religion from Japan. Shinto literally means "the way of the gods". Shinto and Asian Buddhism are inextricably linked in Japan. Many Japanese Shintoists also identify themselves as Buddhists. Japanese Pure Land Buddhism is deeply tied with the Shinto faith. Shinto practitioners commonly affirm tradition, family, nature, cleanliness and ritual observation as core values. Taoist influence is significant in their beliefs about nature and self-mastery. Ritual cleanliness is a central part of Shinto life. Shrines have a significant place in Shinto, reflecting the animistic veneration of the kami. "Folk", or "popular", Shinto features an emphasis on shamanism, particularly divination, spirit possession and faith healing. "Sect" Shinto is a diverse group including mountain-worshippers and Confucian Shintoists.

Chan Buddhism

Chan Buddhism (more commonly known in the West as **Zen Buddhism**) is a form of Mahayana Buddhism deeply influenced by Taoism which emphasizes awareness, meditation and direct experience. Chan Buddhism takes a critical view of textual hermeneutics, the limitations of language and dogmatic assertions. Zazen, sitting meditation, is a central practice. Eschewing scriptural study for direct communication, Chan places a high regard for the teacher-disciple relationship. Ideal instructors are lionized in Chan stories. The lineage of a teaching is considered more important than its comparison with a test of orthodoxy. Dialogues and stories called koans are a distinctive feature of Chan Buddhism. Koans often appear paradoxical or meaningless, but they are deployed as vehicles for the transformation of the perspective or consciousness of a disciple.

Chinese Folk Religion

Chinese folk religion is a syncretic faith, originating in ancient tribal shamanism, that incorporates elements of Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, ancestor veneration and nature worship. It is historically the main source of Chinese mythology and has co-existed, both alongside and as part of, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Taoism and Confucianism

The terms Tao and De are religious and philosophical terms shared between Taoism and Confucianism. The authorship of the Tao Te Ching is assigned to Laozi, who is traditionally held to have been a teacher of Confucius. However, some scholars believe the Tao Te Ching arose as a reaction to Confucianism. Zhuangzi, reacting to the Confucian-Mohist ethical disputes in his "history of thought", casts Laozi as a prior step to the Mohists by name and the Confucians by implication. However, secular scholars usually consider Laozi and Zhuangzi to have been essentially mythological figures.

Early Taoist texts reject the basic assumptions of Confucianism which relied on rituals and order, in favour of the examples of "wild" nature and individualism. Historical Taoists challenged conventional morality, while Confucians considered society debased and in need of strong ethical guidance.

Interaction with Dharmic traditions

A painting of Confucius presenting a young Buddha to Laozi

The entry of Buddhism into China from India was marked by interaction and syncretism with Taoism in particular. Originally seen as a kind of "foreign Taoism", Buddhism's scriptures were translated into Chinese using the Taoist vocabulary. Chan Buddhism was particularly modified by Taoism, integrating distrust of scripture, text and even language, as well as the Taoist views of embracing "this life", dedicated practice and the "every-moment". In the Tang period Taoism incorporated such Buddhist elements as monasteries, vegetarianism, prohibition of alcohol, the doctrine of emptiness, and collecting scripture into tripartite organisation. During the same time, Chan Buddhism grew to become the largest sect in Chinese Buddhism.

Buddhism was not universally welcomed, particularly among the gentry. The Buddha's "Dharma" seemed alien and amoral to conservative and Confucian sensibilities. Confucianism promoted social stability, order, strong families, and practical living, and Chinese officials questioned how a monk's monasticism and personal attainment of nirvana benefited the empire. However, Buddhism and Confucianism eventually reconciled after centuries of conflict and assimilation.

Ideological and political rivals for centuries, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism deeply influenced one another. They did share some similar values. All three embraced a humanist philosophy emphasizing moral behavior and human perfection. In time, most Chinese people identified to some extent with all three traditions simultaneously. This became institutionalised when aspects of the three schools were synthesised in the Neo-Confucian school.

Chapter- 6

Indian Religions

A Statue of Shiva

A Statue of the Buddha.

A Statue of Jain deity Bahubali.

Indian religions is a classification for religions that originated in the Indian subcontinent; namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. These religions are also classified as Eastern religions. Although Indian religions are connected through the

history of India, they constitute a wide range of religious communities and Indian religions are not confined to the Indian subcontinent.

The documented history of Indian religions begins with historical Vedic religion, the religious practices of the early Indo-Aryans, which were collected and later redacted into the *Samhitas*, four canonical collections of hymns or mantras composed in archaic Sanskrit. These texts are the central *shruti* (revealed) texts of Hinduism. The period of the composition, redaction and commentary of these texts is known as the Vedic period, which lasted from roughly 1500 to 500 BCE.

The late Vedic period (9th to 6th centuries BCE) marks the beginning of the Upanisadic or Vedantic period. This period heralded the beginning of much of what became classical Hinduism, with the composition of the Upanishads, later the Sanskrit epics, still later followed by the Puranas.

Indian philosophy is a confluence of Śramaṇic (self-reliant) and Vedic streams that co-exist and influence each other. Jainism and Buddhism belong to the sramana tradition. Jainism was established by a lineage of 24 enlightened beings culminating with Parsva (9th century BCE) and Mahavira (6th century BCE). Buddhism was historically founded by Siddhartha Gautama, a Kshatriya prince-turned-ascetic, and was spread beyond India through missionaries. It later experienced a decline in India, but survived in Nepal and Sri Lanka, and remains more widespread in Southeast and East Asia.

Certain scholarship holds that the practices, emblems and architecture now commonly associated with the Hindu pantheon and Jainism may go back as far as Late Harappan times to the period 2000-1500 BCE.

Hinduism is divided into numerous denominations, primarily Shaivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Smarta and much smaller groups like the conservative Shrauta. Hindu reform movements such as Ayyavazhi are more recent. About 90% of Hindus reside in the Republic of India, accounting for 83% of its population.

Sikhism was founded in the 15th century on the teachings of Guru Nanak and the nine successive Sikh Gurus in Northern India. The vast majority of its adherents originate in the Punjab region.

Common traits

Aum

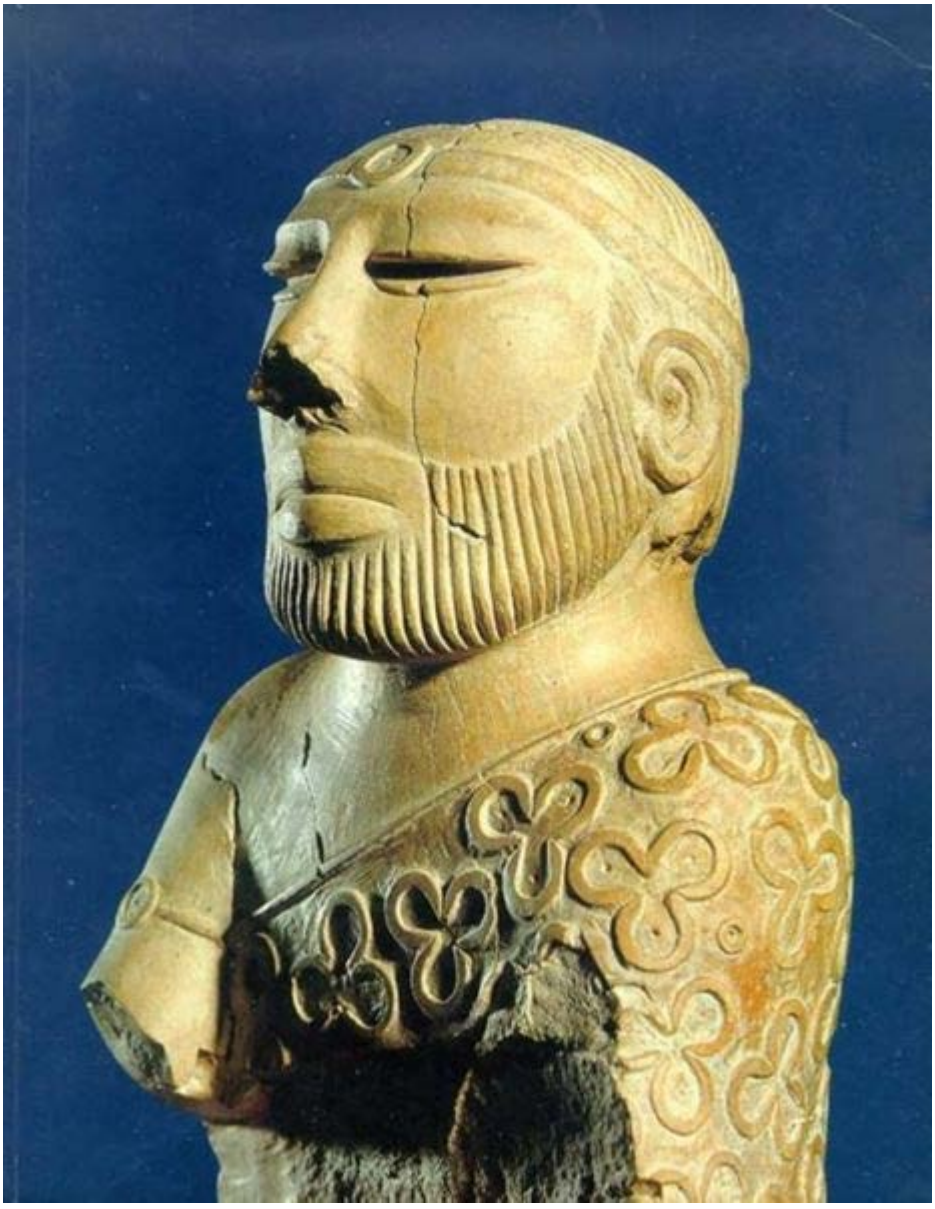
Sometimes summarised as *Dharmic* religions or dharmic traditions, (though subtleties in the meaning of *Dharma* or *dhamma* differs according to the religion), Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism share certain key concepts, which are interpreted differently by different groups and individuals.

Common traits can also be observed in both the ritual and the literary sphere. For example, the head-anointing ritual of *abhiseka* is of importance in three of these distinct traditions, excluding Sikhism (in Buddhism it is found within Vajrayana). Other noteworthy rituals are the cremation of the dead, the wearing of vermilion on the head by married women, and various marital rituals. In literature, many classical narratives and purana have Hindu, Buddhist or Jain versions. All four traditions have notions of *karma*, *dharma*, *samsara*, *moksha* and various *forms of Yoga*. Of course, these terms may be perceived differently by different religions. For instance, for a Hindu, *dharma* is his duty. For a Jain, *dharma* is righteousness, his conduct. For a Buddhist, *dharma* is usually taken to be the Buddha's teachings. Similarly, for a Hindu, yoga is the cessation of all thoughts/activities of the mind. For Jains, Yoga is sum total all physical, verbal and mental activities.

Rama is a heroic figure in all of these religions. In Hinduism he is the God-incarnate in the form of a princely king; in Buddhism, he is a Bodhisattva-incarnate; in Jainism, he is the perfect human being. Among the Buddhist Ramayanas are: *Vessantarajataka*,

Reamker, Ramakien, Phra Lak Phra Lam, Hikayat Seri Rama etc. There also exists the *Khamti Ramayana* among the Khamti tribe of Asom wherein Rama is an avatar of a Bodhisattva who incarnates to punish the demon king Ravana (B.Datta 1993). The *Tai Ramayana* is another book retelling the divine story in Asom.

Prehistory



"Priest King" of Indus Valley Civilization

Evidence attesting to prehistoric religion in the Indian subcontinent derives from scattered Mesolithic rock paintings such as at Bhimbetka, depicting dances and rituals. Neolithic agriculturalists inhabiting the Indus River Valley buried their dead in a manner

suggestive of spiritual practices that incorporated notions of an afterlife and belief in magic. Other South Asian Stone Age sites, such as the Bhimbetka rock shelters in central Madhya Pradesh and the Kupgal petroglyphs of eastern Karnataka, contain rock art portraying religious rites and evidence of possible ritualised music. The Harappan people of the Indus Valley Civilization, which lasted from 3300–1300 BCE (mature period, 2600-1900 BCE) and was centered around the Indus and Ghaggar-Hakra river valleys, may have worshiped an important mother goddess symbolising fertility, a concept that has recently been challenged. Excavations of Indus Valley Civilization sites show small tablets with animals and altars, indicating rituals associated with animal sacrifice.

Vedic tradition

Vedic period

The Vedic Period is most significant for the composition of the four Vedas, Brahmanas and the older Upanishads (both presented as discussions on the rituals, mantras and concepts found in the four Vedas), which today are some of the most important canonical texts of Hinduism, and are the codification of much of what developed into the core beliefs of Hinduism.

The Vedas reflect the liturgy and ritual of Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age Indo-Aryan speaking peoples in India. Religious practices were dominated by the Vedic priesthood administering domestic rituals/rites and solemn sacrifices. The Brahmanas, Aranyakas and some of the older Upanishads (such as BAU, ChU, JUB) are also placed in this period. Many elements of Vedic religion reach back to early Bronze Age Proto-Indo-Iranian times. The Vedic period is held to have ended around 500 BCE.

Akshardham the largest Hindu temple in the world.

Tirumala Venkateswara Temple the most visited and richest Hindu temple in the world.

Specific rituals and sacrifices of the Vedic religion include:

- The *Soma* cult described in the Rigveda, descended from a common Indo-Iranian practice.
- Fire rituals, also a common Indo-Iranian practice:
  - The *Agnihotra* or oblation to Agni.
  - The *Agnistoma* or Soma sacrifice (including animal sacrifice).
  - The *Agnicayana*, the sophisticated ritual of piling the Uttara fire altar.
- The Darsapaurnamasa, the fortnightly New and Full Moon sacrifice
- The Caturmasya or seasonal sacrifices (every four months)
- a large number of sacrifices for special wishes (Kāmyeṣṭi)
- The *Ashvamedha* or horse sacrifice.
- The *Purushamedha*, or sacrifice of a man, imitating that of the cosmic Purusha and Ashvamedha
- The rites referred to in the Atharvaveda are concerned with medicine and healing practices, as well as some charms and sorcery (white and black magic).
- The domestic (grihya) rituals deal with the rites of passage from conception to death and beyond.

Vedanta

Hindu Swastika

The period of *Vedanta* (Sanskrit: end of Vedas), typically thought to have begun around 600 BCE, marked the end of the evolution of the main Vedic texts; it also accompanied the transformation of the semi-nomadic nature of the Indo-Aryan tribes to agriculture-based polities, as they increasingly formed permanent settlements in the Indo-Gangetic plain and other parts of Northern India. This period was foreshadowed by the Brahmanas that interpreted the four canonical Vedas in various fashions, which finally led to the Upanishads. While the ritualistic status of the four Vedas remained undiminished, the early Upanishads mainly relate to spiritual insights. At this time, the concepts of reincarnation, samsara, karma, and moksha began to be accepted in ancient India within the sphere of the priestly establishment i.e. the Brahmana class. Some scholars think that these new concepts developed by aborigines outside the caste system, others detect Sramana or even Ksatriya influence. These concepts were eventually accepted by Brahmin orthodoxy, and were to form much of the core philosophies of the later epics and Hinduism, as well as, against a different philosophical and religious background, in Buddhism and Jainism.

Astika and Nastika categorization

Astika and *nastika* are sometimes used to categorise Indian religions. Those religions that believe that God is the central actor in this world are termed as *astika*. Those religions that do not believe that God is the prime mover and actor are classified as *nastika* religions. From this point of view the Vedic religion (and Hinduism) is an *astika* religion, whereas Buddhism and Jainism are *nastika* religions.

Another definition of the terms *astika* and *nastika*, followed by Adi Shankara, classifies religions and persons as *astika* and *nastika* according to whether they accept the authority of the main Hindu texts, the Vedas, as supreme revealed scriptures, or not. By this definition, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta are classified as *astika* schools, while Charvaka is classified as a *nastika* school. By this definition, both Buddhism and Jainism are classified as *nastika* religions since they do not accept the authority of the Vedas.

Shramana (self-reliant) tradition

A statue of Gautama Buddha.

A statue of Mahavira.

Vedic Brahmanism of Iron Age India co-existed and closely interacted with the parallel non-Vedic shramana traditions. These were not direct outgrowths of Vedism, but separate movements that influenced it and were influenced by it. The shramanas were wandering ascetics. Buddhism and Jainism are a continuation of the Shramana tradition, and the early Upanishadic movement was influenced by it. The 24th Jain Tirthankar, Mahavira (599–527 BCE), stressed five vows, including *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing) and *aparigraha* (non-attachment).

The historical Gautama Buddha, who was a Buddha, was born into the Shakya clan of Angirasa and Gautama Rishi lineage, just before the kingdom of Magadha (which lasted

from 546–324 BCE) rose to power. His family was native to Kapilavastu and Lumbini, in what is now southern Nepal.

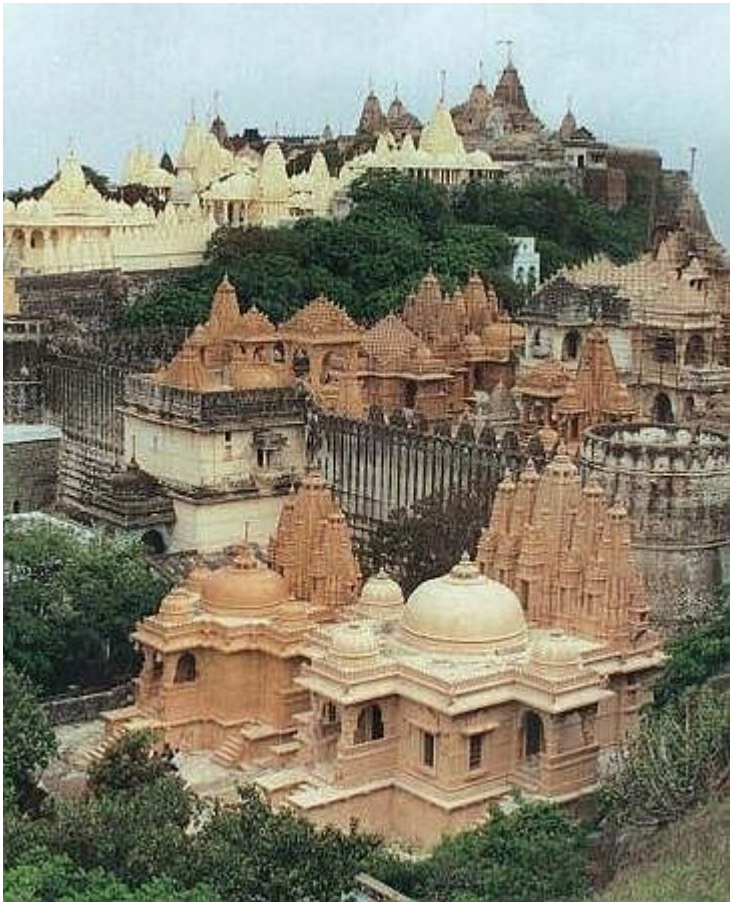
The Ajivikas and Samkhyas, both of which did not survive, also belonged to the sramana tradition.

Rise and spread of Jainism and Buddhism

Buddhist Mahabodhi Temple

Both Jainism and Buddhism spread throughout India during the period of the Magadha empire. Scholars Jeffrey Brodd and Gregory Sobolewski write that *"Jainism shares many of the basic doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism.*" and scholar James Bird writes, "*But*

when primitive Buddhism originated from Hindu schools of philosophy, it differed as widely from that of later times, as did the Brahmanism of the Vedas from that of the Puranas and Tantras."



Palitana Jain Temples

Buddhism in India spread during the reign of Asoka the Great of the Mauryan Empire, who patronised Buddhist teachings and unified the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century BCE. He sent missionaries abroad, allowing Buddhism to spread across Asia. Jainism began its golden period during the reign of Emperor Kharavela of Kalinga in the 2nd century BCE.

Both Jainism and Indian Buddhism started declining following the rise of Puranic Hinduism during the Gupta dynasty. Buddhism continued to have a significant presence in some regions of India until the 12th century. Jainism continues to be an influential religion and Jain communities live in Indian states Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Jains authored several classical books in different Indian languages for a considerable period of time.

Period after 200 BCE

After 200 CE several schools of thought were formally codified in Indian philosophy, including Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva-Mimamsa and Vedanta. Hinduism, otherwise a highly polytheistic, pantheistic or monotheistic religion, also tolerated atheistic schools. The thoroughly materialistic and anti-religious philosophical Cārvāka school that originated around the 6th century BCE is the most explicitly atheistic school of Indian philosophy. Cārvāka is classified as a *nastika* ("heterodox") system; it is not included among the six schools of Hinduism generally regarded as orthodox. It is noteworthy as evidence of a materialistic movement within Hinduism. Our understanding of Cārvāka philosophy is fragmentary, based largely on criticism of the ideas by other schools, and it is no longer a living tradition. Other Indian philosophies generally regarded as atheistic include Classical Samkhya and Purva Mimamsa.

Between 400 CE and 1000 CE Hinduism expanded as the decline of Buddhism in India continued. Buddhism subsequently became effectively extinct in India but survived in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

There were several Buddhistic kings who worshiped Vishnu, such as the Gupta, Pala, Malla, Somavanshi, and Sattvahana. Buddhism survived followed by Hindus. *National Geographic* edition reads, "*The flow between faiths was such that for hundreds of years, almost all Buddhist temples, including the ones at Ajanta, were built under the rule and patronage of Hindu kings.*"

Post-Vedic development of Hinduism

A Statue of Lord Vishnu.

The end of the Vedantic period around the 2nd century AD spawned a number of branches that furthered Vedantic philosophy, and which ended up being seminaries in their own right. The output generated by these specialized tributaries was automatically considered a part of the Hindu or even Indian philosophy. Prominent amongst these developers were Yoga, Dvaita, Advaita and the medieval Bhakti movement. The modern day popular movements were the ones founded by Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Raja Ram Mohan Roy among others.

In the latter Vedantic period, several texts were also composed as summaries/attachments to the Upanishads. These texts collectively called as Puranas allowed for a divine and mythical interpretation of the world, not unlike the ancient Hellenic or Roman religions. Legends and epics with a multitude of gods and goddesses with human-like characterristics were composed. Two of Hinduism's most revered *epics*, the Mahabharata and Ramayana were compositions of this period. Devotion to particular deities was reflected from the composition of texts composed to their worship. For example the *Ganapati Purana* was written for devotion to Ganapati (or Ganesh). Popular deities of this era were Shiva, Vishnu, Durga, Surya, Skanda, and Ganesh (including the forms/incarnations of these deities.)

Bhakti Movement

The Bhakti Movement began with the emphasis on the worship of God, regardless of one's status - whether priestly or laypeople, men or women, higher social status or lower social status.

The movements were mainly centered around the forms of Vishnu (Rama and Krishna) and Shiva. There were however popular devotees of this era of Durga.

Vaishnavism

The most well-known devotees are the Alwars from southern India. The most popular Vaishnava teacher of the south was Ramanuja, while of the north it was Ramananda.

Several important icons were women. For example, within the Mahanubhava sect, the women outnumbered the men, and administration was many times composed mainly of women. Mirabai is the most popular female saint in India.

Sri Vallabha Acharya (1479–1531) is a very important figure from this era. He founded the Shuddha Advaita (*Pure Non-dualism*) school of Vedanta thought.

Shaivism

The most well-known devotees are the Nayanars from southern India. The most popular Shaiva teacher of the south was Basava, while of the north it was Gorakhnath.

Female saints include figures like Akkamadevi, Lalleshvari and Molla.

Recent groups

The largest religious gathering ever held on Earth, the 2001 Maha Kumbh Mela held in Prayag attracted around 70 million Hindus from around the world.

The modern era has given rise to dozens of Hindu saints with international influence. For example, Brahma Baba established the Brahma Kumaris, one of the largest new Hindu religious movements teaches the discipline of Raja Yoga to millions. Representing traditional Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Prabhupada founded the Hare Krishna movement, also international with many followers. In late 18th century India, Swaminarayan founded the Swaminarayan Sampraday. Anandamurti, founder of the Ananda Marga, has influenced many worldwide. Through all these new Hindu denominations traveling international, many Hindu practices such as yoga, meditation, mantra, divination, vegetarianism have become absorbed by new coverts and others influenced.

Sikhism

Harmandir Sahib or ***The Golden Temple*** of the Sikhs.

Sikhism originated in fifteenth century Northern India with the teachings of Nanak and nine successive gurus. The principal belief in Sikhism is faith in *Vāhigurū*— represented by the sacred symbol of *ēk ōaṁkār* [meaning one god]. Sikhism's traditions and teachings are distinctly associated with the history, society and culture of the Punjab. Adherents of Sikhism are known as Sikhs (*students* or *disciples*) and number over 23 million across the world.

Status in the Republic of India

In a judicial reminder, the Indian Supreme Court observed Sikhism and Jainism to be sub-sects or *special* faiths within the larger Hindu fold, and that Jainism is a denomination within the Hindu fold. Although the government of British India counted Jains in India as a major religious community right from the first Census conducted in 1873, after independence in 1947 Sikhs and Jains were not treated as national minorities. In 2005 the Supreme Court of India declined to issue a writ of Mandamus granting Jains the status of a religious minority throughout India. The Court however left it to the respective states to decide on the minority status of Jain religion.

However, some individual states have over the past few decades differed on whether Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs are religious minorities or not, by either pronouncing judgments or passing legislation. One example is the judgment passed by the Supreme Court in 2006, in a case pertaining to the state of Uttar Pradesh, which declared Jainism to be undisputably distinct from Hinduism, but mentioned that, "The question as to whether the Jains are part of the Hindu religion is open to debate. However, the Supreme Court also noted various court cases that have held Jainism to be a distinct religion.

Another example is the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill, that is an amendment to a legislation that sought to define Jains and Buddhists as denominations within Hinduism. Ultimately on July 31, 2007, finding it not in conformity with the concept of freedom of religion as embodied in Article 25 (1) of the Constitution, Governor Naval Kishore Sharma returned back the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2006 citing the widespread protests by the Jains as well as Supreme Court's extrajudicial observation that Jainism is a "special religion formed on the basis of quintessence of Hindu religion by the Supreme Court"

Chapter- 7

Ahmadiyya

Ahmadiyya (Urdu: احمدیہ) is an Islamic religious movement founded in India near the end of the 19th century, originating with the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908). Ghulam Ahmad was an important religious figure who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecies about the world reformer of the end times, who was to herald the Eschaton as predicted in the traditions of various world religions and bring about the final triumph of Islam as per Islamic prophecy. He claimed that he was the Mujaddid (divine reformer) of the 14th Islamic century, the promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by Muslims. The adherents of the Ahmadiyya sect are referred to as Ahmadis or Ahmadi Muslims. Ahmadi emphasis lay in the belief that Islam is the final law for humanity as revealed to Muhammad and the necessity of restoring to it its true essence and pristine form, which had been lost through the centuries. Thus, Ahmadis view themselves as leading the revival and peaceful propagation of Islam. The Ahmadis were among the earliest Muslim communities to arrive in Britain and other Western countries.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded the movement on 23 March 1889 and termed it the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at* (community), envisioning it to be a revitalisation of Islam. Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims and claim to practice Islam in its pristine form; however, Ahmadiyya views on certain beliefs in Islam have been controversial to mainstream Muslims since the movement's birth. Many mainstream Muslims do not consider Ahmadis to be Muslims, citing in particular the Ahmadiyya viewpoint on the death and return of Jesus, the Ahmadiyya concept of Jihad as peaceful and the community's view of the finality of prophethood with particular reference to the interpretation of Qur'an 33:40. In several Islamic countries today Ahmadis have been marginalised by the majority religious community; severe persecution and often systematic oppression have led many Ahmadis to emigrate and settle elsewhere.

History

Baitul Futuh Mosque of the "Ahmadiyya Community", London. Largest in Western Europe.

At the end of the 19th century, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian proclaimed himself to be the "Reformer of the age" (Mujaddid), Promised Messiah and the Mahdi awaited by the Muslims and obtained a considerable number of followers especially within the United Provinces, the Punjab and Sind. He and his followers claim that his advent was foretold by Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, and also by many other religious scriptures of the world. In 1889, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad laid down the foundation of his community, which was later given the name of "Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at". Ahmadiyya emerged in India as a movement within Islam, also in response to the Christian and Arya Samaj missionary activity that was widespread in the 19th century.

Soon after the death of the first successor of Ghulam Ahmad, the movement split into two groups over the nature of Ghulam Ahmad's prophethood and his succession. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believed that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had indeed been a "non-law-bearing" prophet and that mainstream Muslims who categorically rejected his message were guilty of disbelief in Islamic prophecies. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, however, affirmed the traditional Islamic interpretation that there could be no

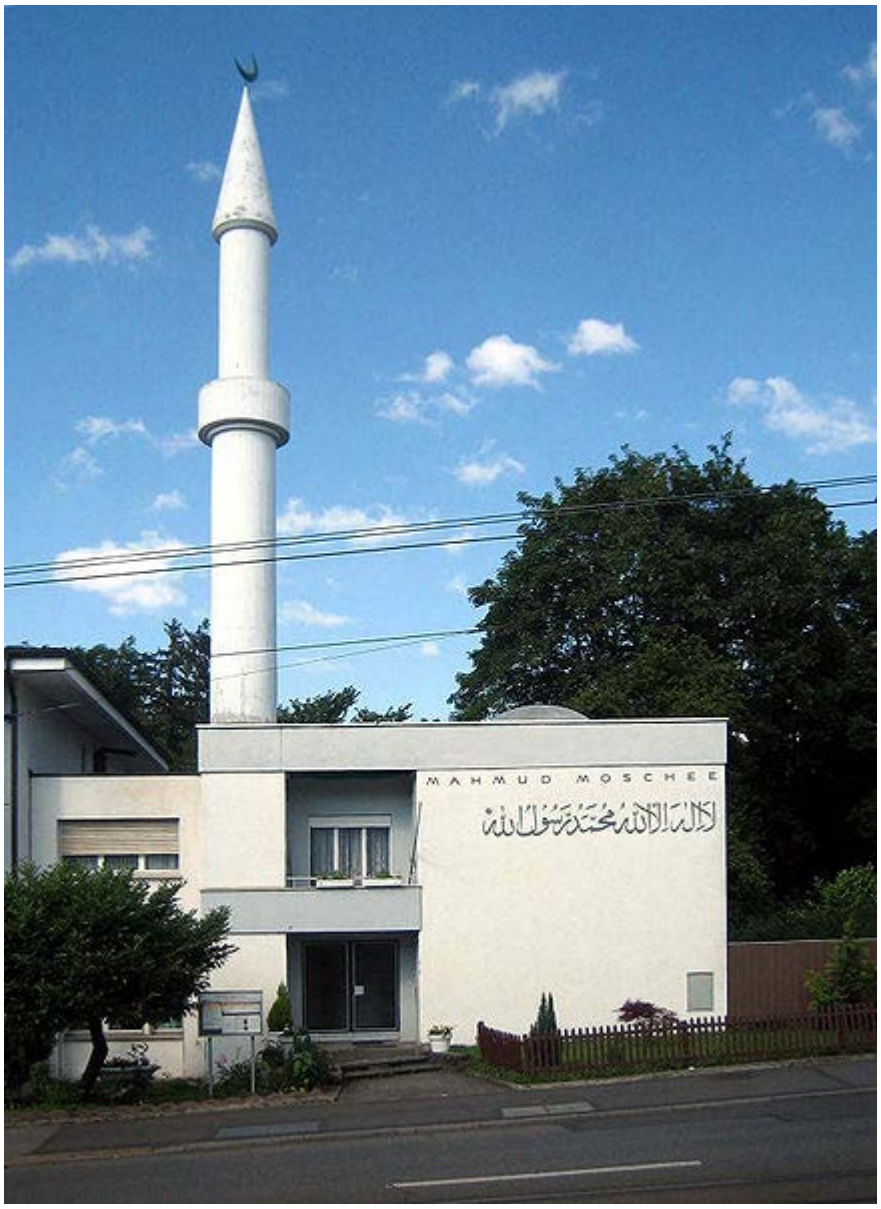
prophet after Muhammad and viewed itself as a reform movement within the broader *Ummah*. The question of succession was also an issue in the split of the Ahmadiyya movement. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement believed that an *Anjuman* (body of selected people) should be in charge of the community. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, however, maintained that Caliphs (successors of Ghulam Ahmad) should continue to take charge of the community and should be left with the overall authority.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has established centers in 195 countries and claims to have a population exceeding tens of millions, while the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement is established in 17 countries of the world.

Overseas Ahmadiyya missionary activities started at an organised level as early as 1913 (the UK mission in Putney, London). For many modern nations of the world, the Ahmadiyya movement was their first contact with the proclaimants from the Muslim world. The Ahmadiyya movement is considered by some historians as one of the precursors to the African-American Civil Rights Movement in America. According to some experts, Ahmadiyya were "arguably the most influential community in African-American Islam" until the 1950s.

The Ahmadiyya faith claims to represent the latter-day revival of the religion of Islam. Today, the Ahmadiyya community has a presence in 195 countries and in every country but Pakistan, they are legally identified as Muslims. In Pakistan they are prohibited by law from self-identifying as Muslims.

Origin of the name



Mahmood Mosque, Zürich

The Ahmadiyya movement was founded in 1889, but the name Ahmadiyya was not adopted until about a decade later. In a manifesto dated November 4, 1900, Ghulam Ahmad explained that the name did not refer to himself but to Ahmad, the alternative name of the prophet Muhammad. According to him, 'Muhammad', which means 'the most praised one', refers to the glorious destiny, majesty and power of the prophet who adopted the name from about the time of the Hegira; but 'Ahmad', an Arabic elative form which means 'highly praised' and also 'comforter', stands for the beauty of his sermons, for the qualities of tenderness, gentleness, humility, love and mercy displayed by

Muhammad, and for the peace that he was destined to establish in the world through his teachings. According to Ghulam Ahmad, these names thus refer to two aspects or phases of Islam and in later times it was the latter aspect that commanded greater attention.

Accordingly, in Ghulam Ahmad's view, this was the reason that the Old Testament prophesied a Messenger ‘like unto Moses’ referred to as Mohammad, while according to the Qur'an, Jesus foretold of a messenger named Ahmad.

In keeping with this, he believed, his object was to defend and propagate Islam globally through peaceful means, to revive the forgotten Islamic values of peace, forgiveness and sympathy for all mankind and to establish peace in the world through the spiritual teachings of Islam. He believed that his message had special relevance for the Western world, which, he believed, had descended into materialism.

Beliefs

Overview

Ahmadiyya Mosque of the “Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam”, Berlin

Ahmadiyya shares beliefs with Islam in general, including belief in the prophethood of Muhammad, reverence for historical prophets, belief in the oneness of God (tawhid). They accept the Qur'an as their holy text, face the Kaaba during prayer, accept the authority of Hadiths (reported sayings of and stories about Muhammad) and practice the Sunnah.

Central to the Ahmadiyya is the belief in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. Ahmadis emphasize the implementation of the Kalima (the fundamental creed of Islam) as essentially linked with the Islamic principles of the rights of God (Arabic: *Haqooq-Allah*) and the rights of His creation (mankind) (Arabic: *Haqooqul-Ibād*).

Ahmadis believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was divinely commissioned as a true reflection of Muhammad's prophethood to establish the unity of God, remind mankind of their duties towards God and God's creation, to emphasize both aspects of religion which Ahmadis believe is the need of the present age. As such Ahmadis hold that Ghulam Ahmad was the representative and spiritual readvent of all previous prophets. From the Ahmadiyya perspective, the Christians have erred with regards to the rights of God in that they have attributed divine status to a mortal human, and it is on this account that in Islamic eschatology the promised reformer has been named the *Mahdi* (the "Guided One"—a title meaning *one who is naturally guided and is an heir to all truths and in whom the attribute of "guide" of the Almighty is fully represented*). Ahmadis also hold that the Muslims have erred with regard to the rights of creation for they, *unjustly raising the sword and calling it Jihad*, have misunderstood the concept and purpose of jihad in Islam; it is on this account that he has been called the *Isa Messih* ("Jesus the Messiah")—a term which relates to his function in re-establishing the rights of people by reforming their distorted, violent notion of "Jihad" just as Jesus Christ came principally to reform the hearts and attitudes of the Jewish nation.

Giving precedence to faith over worldly pursuits is also a fundamental principle in Ahmadiyya teachings with emphasised relevance to the present age of materialistic prevalence.

Distinct Ahmadiyya beliefs

Although the central values of Islam (prayer, charity, fasting, etc.) and the six articles of belief are shared by Muslims and Ahmadis, distinct Ahmadiyya beliefs include the following:

- That the prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus were metaphorical in nature and not literal, and that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad fulfilled in his person these prophecies and the second advent of Jesus, that he was the promised Mahdi and Messiah.
- The continuation of divine revelation. Although the Qur'an is the final message of God for mankind, He continues to communicate with his chosen individuals in the same way he is believed to have done in the past. All of God's attributes are eternal.
- That Jesus, contrary to mainstream Islamic belief, *was* crucified and survived the four hours on the cross. He was later revived from a swoon in the tomb. Ahmadis believe that Jesus died in Kashmir of old age whilst seeking the Lost Tribes of Israel. Jesus' remains are believed to be entombed in Kashmir under the name

Yuz Asaf. Ahmadis believe that Jesus foretold the coming of Muhammad after him, which Christians have misinterpreted.

- That Jesus Christ did not bring a new religion or law, i.e., that he was not a law-bearing prophet, but was last in the line of Israelite prophets who appeared within the dispensation of Moses akin to that of David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Isaiah, etc.
- That the "Messiah" and the "Imam Mahdi" are the same person, and that it is through his teachings, influence, his prayers and those of his followers that Islam will defeat the Anti-Christ or Dajjal in a period similar to the period of time it took for nascent Christianity to rise and that the Dajjal's power will slowly melt away like the melting of snow, heralding the final victory of Islam and the age of peace.
- That the history of religion is cyclic and is renewed every seven millennia. The present cycle from the time of the Biblical Adam is split into seven epochs or ages, parallel to the seven days of the week, with periods for light and darkness. That Mirza Ghulam Ahmad appeared as the Promised Messiah at the sixth epoch heralding the seventh and final age of mankind, as a day in the estimation of God is like a thousand years of man's reckoning. According to Ghulam Ahmad, just as the sixth day of the week is reserved for Jumu'ah (congregational prayers), likewise his age is destined for a global assembling of mankind in which the world is to unite under one universal religion: Islam.
- The two Ahmadiyya groups have varying beliefs regarding the finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes that Muhammad brought prophethood to perfection and was the last law-bearing prophet and the apex of man's spiritual evolution. New prophets can come but they must be subordinate to Muhammad and cannot exceed him in excellence nor alter his teaching or bring any new law or religion. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement believes that Muhammad is the last of the prophets and no prophet, new or old, can come after him.

Comparison

Article of faith	Mainstream Islam	Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement	Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
Return of Jesus	Only few with different belief (mainly in 20th Century), but most believe that at the "end of days" Jesus himself will descend from	References to the second coming of Jesus among the Muslims are allegorical in that one was to be born and rise as a prophet within the dispensation of	References to the second coming of Jesus among the Muslims are allegorical in that one was to be born and rise as a prophet within the dispensation of

	heaven in the flesh.	Muhammad who by virtue of his similarity, and affinity with Jesus and the similarity between the Jews of Jesus' time and the Muslims of the time of the promised one (The Mahdi) is called by the same name. The prophecy of the second coming was fulfilled in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.	Muhammad who by virtue of his similarity, and affinity with Jesus and the similarity between the Jews of Jesus' time and the Muslims of the time of the promised one (The Mahdi) is called by the same name. The physical coming of Jesus (an old Israelite prophet) would disqualify Muhammad as the final prophet. The prophecy of the second coming was fulfilled in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.
Status of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad	Mainstream Muslims consider him an apostate and believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was one of the 30 false claimants to prophethood about whom the prophet Muhammad had warned Muslims 1400 years ago.	Ahmad was a Mujaddid (Islamic Reformer) of the 14th Islamic century (19th Century Gregorian), the promised Mahdi and the second coming of Jesus. He is referred to as a prophet in the metaphorical sense only (as other recognized Islamic saints and sufis are similarly referred to), not a prophet in the technical meaning of the word.	Ahmad was a prophet ("Rasul" as mentioned in 2:285 [We make no distinction between any of His Messengers]) but subordinate and deputy to the Prophet Muhammad. The Messiah, Imam Mehdi and Mujaddid of the 14th Islamic century, and the second coming of Jesus.

Who is a Muslim?	Professing the Kalima is required to become a Muslim with a belief that in the finality of Prophets came at Prophet Muhammad. The amended Pakistani constitution (Article 260, clause 3) defines a "Muslim" as a person who believes in the oneness of God, in the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad, and does not believe in any person who claims to be a prophet after the prophet Muhammad. Most Muslim sects that believe in the concepts of Masih ad-Dajjal (Antichrist), Mahdi, and return of Jesus also believe that it will be required for believers to accept the promised Mahdi as their leader. One exception to this is the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement which considers that it is not required for a believer to accept the promised Mahdi	Anyone professing the Kalima is a Muslim and cannot be declared a non-Muslim by anyone else.	Anyone professing the Kalima is a Muslim and cannot be declared a disbeliever of Islam by anyone else. However, a distinction is made if someone explicitly claims to be against Ahmadiyyat. Yet this distinction does not put anybody outside the fold of Islam. However, a person who knowingly rejects Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim is a *kafir* (non-believer) in the sense of forming a rebellion against God's revelation.
Finality of	The meaning of	The meaning of	Muhammad brought

the Prophethood of Muhammad	"Seal of the prophets" is that Muhammad is the last of the prophets.	"Seal of the prophets" is that Muhammad is the last of the prophets. No prophet, either new or old can come after him. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the Mujaddid (reformer) of the 14th century Hijra and not a true prophet.	prophethood to perfection, he sealed prophethood and religious law, thus being the last law-bearing prophet. New prophets can come but they must be subordinate to Muhammad and cannot exceed him in excellence, alter his teaching, nor bring any new law or religion. They shall be sent for the revival of the true spirit of Islam.
Jesus, Son of Mary	Born of a miraculous birth from the virgin, Mary. Did not die on the cross but was transported to heaven, where he lives to return in the flesh to this world shortly before Doomsday. Since Jesus (considered a prophet) came before Muhammad, his return to Earth would not disqualify Muhammad as the "last" prophet. Jesus will come to earth not as a prophet but as a follower of Muhammad and preach the teachings of Muhammad.	Similar to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community belief except that the question of Jesus's virgin birth is not an essential requirement of faith and is left to the individual's personal conviction.	Believes in virgin birth of Jesus but not that he is son of God. He survived the crucifixion and did not die an accursed death. Everything with Jesus was natural like other human beings regarding his birth and his death and that is the Lord's rule. Instead he travelled east to India in search of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Jesus lived a full life and died on earth, specifically Jesus's tomb lies in Kashmir under the name Yuz Asaf.

Armed jihad	Jihad literally means "to strive or exert to the fullest". On an ongoing basis this refers to striving against the devil, one's low desires (self) and the peaceful propagation of Islam with special emphasis on spreading the true message of Islam by the sword. However, in all four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence, and the equivalent in Shi'ite law, jihad has a legal meaning which supersedes any purely linguistic meaning. Defensive jihad is when Islam is attacked. This obligates all Muslims to join in defense of their lands and people.	Jihad primarily means "to strive or exert to the fullest". On an ongoing basis this refers to striving against the devil, one's low desires (self) and the peaceful propagation of Islam with special emphasis on spreading the true message of Islam by the pen. In special circumstances jihad could be an armed struggle, but only as a defensive war against extreme persecution.	The word jihad is interchanged with the meaning of "Ijtihad" and primarily means to strive or exert to the fullest. This refers to striving against the evil of one's low desires and the peaceful propagation of Islam, with special emphasis on spreading the true message of Islam by the pen. As per prophecy, the Messiah rendered the concept of violent jihad unnecessary in modern times. They believe that the answer of hate should be given by love. Their khalifas said that "if anyone attacks us we must not attack him and should treat them with love and kindness"; this is called “Jihaad-e-Akbar” (The Greater Jihad).

Current status

Ahmadis have been subject to various forms of persecution since the movement's inception in 1889. The Ahmadiyya faith emerged from the Sunni tradition of Islam and its adherents believe in all the five pillars and articles of faith required of Muslims. The Ahmadis are active translators of the Qur'an and proselytizers for the faith; converts to Islam in many parts of the world first discover Islam through the Ahmadis. However, in many Islamic countries the Ahmadis have been defined as heretics and non-Muslim and subjected to persecution and often systematic oppression.

India

India has a significant Ahmadiyya population. Most of them live in Rajasthan, Orissa, Haryana, Bihar, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and a few in Punjab in the area of Qadian. In India, Ahmadis are considered to be Muslims by the Government of India. This belief is supported by a court verdict (*Shihabuddin Koya vs. Ahammed Koya, A.I.R. 1971 Ker 206*). There is no legislation that declares Ahmadis non-Muslims or limits their activities.

The Islamic University of India and Darul Uloom Deoband have declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslims.

The book *Who Are Qadyanes?*, written by Indian Islamic scholar Maulana Yousuf Ludyanvi, explains in detail the mainstream Muslim view of the Ahmadis.

Ahmadis are not allowed to sit on the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, a body of religious leaders that India's government recognises as representative of Indian Muslims.

Pakistan

Pakistan has 4 million Ahmadis and is the only state to have officially declared the Ahmadis to be non-Muslims; here their freedom of religion has been curtailed by a series of ordinances, acts and constitutional amendments. In 1974 Pakistan's parliament adopted a law declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims; the country's constitution was amended to define a Muslim “as a person who believes in the finality of the Prophet Muhammad”. In 1984 General Zia-ul-Haq, the then military ruler of Pakistan, issued Ordinance XX. The ordinance, which was supposed to prevent "anti-Islamic activities", forbids Ahmadis to call themselves Muslim or to "pose as Muslims". This means that they are not allowed to profess the Islamic creed publicly or call their places of worship mosques. Ahmadis in Pakistan are also barred by law from worshipping in non-Ahmadi mosques or public prayer rooms, performing the Muslim call to prayer, using the traditional Islamic greeting in public, publicly quoting from the Quran, preaching in public, seeking converts, or producing, publishing, and disseminating their religious materials. These acts are punishable by imprisonment of up to three years. In applying for a passport or a national ID card, all Pakistanis are required to sign an oath declaring Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be an impostor prophet and all Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. Because he was an Ahmadi, the word "*Muslim*" was erased from the gravestone of the Nobel prize winning theoretical physicist Abdus Salam.

As a result of the cultural implications of the laws and constitutional amendments regarding Ahmadis in Pakistan, persecution and hate-related incidents are constantly reported from different parts of the country. Ahmadis have been the target of many attacks led by various religious groups. All religious seminaries and madrasahs in Pakistan, belonging to different sects of Islam, have prescribed essential reading materials specifically targeted at refuting Ahmadiyya beliefs.

In a 2005 survey in Pakistan, pupils in private schools of Pakistan expressed their opinions on religious tolerance in the country. The figures assembled in the study reflect that even in the educated classes of Pakistan, Ahmadis are considered to be the least deserving minority in terms of equal opportunities and civil rights. In the same study, the teachers in these elite schools showed an even lower amount of tolerance towards Ahmadis than their pupils.

28 May 2010 saw the worst single incident of violence against Ahmadis to date, when several members of an extremist religious group (allegedly Tehrik-e-Taliban Punjab) entered two Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, opened fire, and three of them later detonated themselves. In total, the attacks claimed the lives of 95 people and injured well over 100. The members were gathered in the mosques attending Friday services.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, fundamentalist Islamic groups have demanded that Ahmadiyyas be "officially" declared to be *kafirs* (infidels). Ahmadiyyas have become a persecuted group, targeted via protests and acts of violence. According to Amnesty International, followers have been subject to "house arrest", and several have been killed. In late 2003, several large violent marches, led by Moulana Moahmud Hossain Mumtazi, were directed to occupy an Ahmadiyya mosque. In 2004, all Ahmadiyya publications were banned.

Indonesia

In 2008, many Muslims in Indonesia protested against the Ahmadiyya movement. With violence and large demonstrations, these religious conservatives put pressure on the government to monitor, and harass the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia. Public opinion in Indonesia is split in three ways on how Ahmadiyya should be treated: (a) some hold it should be banned outright on the basis that it is a heretical and deviant sect that is not listed as an officially recognised religion in Indonesia; (b) others hold that it should not be banned because of the freedom of religion article in the Constitution, but also should not be allowed to proselytise under the banner of "Islam" on the basis that this is misleading; (c) still others hold that it should be free to do and say as it pleases based on the Constitutional right to freedom of religion. In June 2008, a law was passed to curtail "proselytizing" by Ahmadiyya members. An Ahmadiyya mosque was burned. Human rights groups objected to the restrictions on religious freedom.

Views of mainstream Muslims

Orthodox Muslims consider both Ahmadi movements to be heretical and non-Muslim for a number of reasons, chief among them being the question of finality of prophethood, since they believe members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community do not regard the Islamic prophet Muhammad as the last prophet. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement does not subscribe to this belief; its members, in fact, do not see Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet in the conventional sense. Ahmadis claim that this is a result of misinterpreting Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's statements referring to his coming "in the spirit of Muhammed",

(similar to John the Baptist coming in the spirit and power of Elijah). Ahmadi Muslims believe Ghulam Ahmad to be the Mahdi and promised Messiah.

Mainstream Muslims do not accept this claim, and do not believe Ghulam Ahmad to have fulfilled the prophecies about the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. According to mainstream Muslims, Ghulam Ahmad's failure to establish a perfect worldwide Muslim government invalidates his claim to be the promised Mahdi and Messiah and hence he is seen as a false prophet. The Muslim World League held its annual conference at Mecca, Saudi Arabia from 14th to 18th of Rabiul Awwal 1394 H (April 1974) in which 140 delegations of Muslim countries and organizations from all over the world participated. At the conference, the League issued a declaration that the Ahmadiyya movement is outside the fold of Islam.

Both Ahmadi movements are considered non-Muslims by the Pakistan government, and have this fact recorded on their travel documents. By contrast, Ahmadi citizens from Western countries and other moderate Muslim nations perform Hajj and Umra, as the Saudi government is not made aware that they are Ahmadis when they apply for a visa. A court decision has upheld the right of Ahmadiyyas to identify themselves as Muslims in India.

As the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement's view regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's status as a Prophet is closer to traditional Islamic thought, the literature published by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has found greater acceptance among the Muslim intelligentsia.

Some mainstream Muslims group both Ahmadi movements together and refer to them as "Qadianis", and their beliefs as "Qadianism" (after the small town of Qadian in the Gurdaspur District of Punjab in India, where the movement's founder was born). However most, if not all, Ahmadis of both sects dislike this term as it has acquired derogatory connotations over the years and furthermore they prefer to differentiate their two separate movements. Most mainstream Muslims will not use the term "Muslim" when referring to Ahmadis, even though both sects refer to themselves as such, citing the fatwas given by the Islamic scholars. However, as members of Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement deny the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, some orthodox Islamic Scholars consider the Lahore Ahmadiyya to be Muslims. In earlier times in Pakistan and India, there was widespread persecution of Ahmadis by certain Muslim groups. Sporadic violence as well as persecution of a more subtle nature against Ahmadis continues even today.

Relationship with Christians

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was actively engaged in debates, *prayer duels* and written arguments with the Christian missionaries. The Ahmadiyya view of Jesus' survival from the crucifixion, his subsequent travels to the east in search of the 'Lost Sheep of Israel' and his natural death, as propounded by Ghulam Ahmad, have been a source of ongoing friction with the Christian church. Western historians have acknowledged this fact as one of the features of Ghulam Ahmad's legacy. Francis Robinson states:

At their most extreme religious strategies for dealing with the Christian presence might involve attacking Christian revelation at its heart, as did the Punjabi Muslim, Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), who founded the Ahmadiyya missionary sect.

The Ahmadiyya teachings also interpret the prophecies regarding the appearance of the Dajjal (Anti-Christ) and Gog and Magog in Islamic eschatology as foretelling the emergence of two branches or aspects of the same turmoil and trial that was to be faced by Islam in the latter days and that both emerged from Christianity or Christian nations. Its *Dajjal* aspect relates to deception and perversion of religious belief while its aspect to do with disturbance in the realm of politics and the shattering of world peace has been called *Gog and Magog*. Thus Ahmadis consider the widespread Christian missionary activity that was 'aggressively' active in the 18th and 19th centuries as being part of the prophesied Dajjal (Antichrist) and Gog and Magog emerging in modern times. The emergence of the Soviet Union and the USA as superpowers and the conflict between the two nations (i.e., the rivalry between communism and capitalism) are seen as having occurred in accordance with certain prophecies. This has also proven controversial with most Christians. Freeland Abbott observed in his book *Islam and Pakistan*:

The primary significance of the Ahmadiyya Movement lay in its missionary emphasis. Every Muslim believed that Islam was the only religion free from error. The Ahmadis made it part of their principles to show the errors of other religions to their adherents and to proselytize energetically for Islam. In a sense, the Ahmadis represent the Muslims emerging, religiously speaking, from the withdrawal that had begun with the arrival of the British, just as the Muslim League represents the political emergence from that same withdrawal … Although the sect most attacked by Muslims in India and Pakistan, it has also been the one which has worked hardest, in both its branches, to defend and extend Islam against the competition offered by other faiths.
—Freeland Abbot, *Islam and Pakistan*