TRAD101
Languages & Cultures of East Asia
Buddhism I
Peng
Before Buddhism

- In the 6th to 5th Century BC | India
  - 16 kingdoms or states
- Hinduism was the dominant religion
  - the caste system divided people into four classes:
    - Brahman (monks for religious rites)
    - Kshatriya (civil rulers and military knights)
    - Vaisya (common civilian)
    - Sudra (slaves).
- People from the last two classes were suffered by the rigid and ridiculous systems and the corruption of Brahman class. The only way to change their class was to burden the bitter life in silence and to expect to be reborn in a higher class in the next life. They are waiting for a new revolutionary faith to challenge the authority of Brahman.
Buddha

the ‘Enlightened One’ or the ‘Awakened One’
born around 563 BC
in what is now Nepal, near the Indian border.
full name was *Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyas.*
Siddhartha was the given name and Gautama was the surname, and Sakya was the name of the clan to which his family belonged.
Buddha

- Baby Gautama was predicted to be either a Chakravartin (Universal King 轉輪聖王) or a Buddha.
- Gautama received the best education including literature, philosophy, religion, ethics, handicraft, medicine and military art. He mastered them all.
- Aged 16: married a princess from neighbor kingdom.
- According to the famous legend of *The Four Passing Sights*, about 20 years old, Gautama saw four shocking images when he went out—
  - the image of old age, the image of disease, the image of death and the image of the life of withdraw from the world
Buddha

- **Aged 29**: His wife born a boy. However, he made his final decision to leave the palace to seek the enlightenment to end human suffering permanently.

- In 6 years he mastered and practiced all Hinduism theories and their applications, including the extreme asceticism, yet they did not bring him the enlightenment.

- Then Gautama decided to find out his own way to achieve the enlightenment. One evening near Gaya in northeast India, south of the present city of Patna, he sat down under a peepul tree, vowing not to arise until enlightenment was his.
Buddha

- Resisting devil’s temptations and requests, Gautama finally got enlightened in 49 days. He achieved Buddha-hood and became a Buddha.
- Buddha then began to preach his message around India in the rest of his life.
- Around 483 BC, Buddha died from dysentery after eating a meal of dried boar’s flesh in the home of Cunda the smith. He was 80 years old that year.
The history of Buddhism in India lasted about 1500 years & can be divided into 500 year periods.

-- distinctive forms of Buddhism emerged

-- where Buddhism spread & what forms of Buddhism became dominant
Theravâda Buddhism ("Teaching of the Elders")

- called "Hînayâna," the "Lesser Vehicle," by the Mahâyâna
- In India, 5th century BC to 1st century AD.
- Distinctive doctrines:
  1. The Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, Shakyamuni) is gone, and individual practitioners must work out their salvation on their own.
  2. The Buddha was unique, and individual practitioners cannot become Buddhas, only arhats ("saints"). There will be a future Buddha, Maitreya, but not for thousands of years.
  3. Nirvâna (liberation) and samsâra (the place of death and rebirth) are definitely different. Samsâra is a place of suffering to be left behind. Nirvâna is a liberation that is free of death and rebirth but is beyond description and rational understanding.
Spread of Theravâda Buddhism
("Teaching of the Elders")

► presently practiced in *Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Burma, Thailand, & Cambodia.*

► preserve the Buddhist canon, the *Tripit.aka* (the "Three Baskets"), in the Pâli language.

► During the Theravâda period, Buddhism also spread into *Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Indonesia*; but all those places subsequently converted to Islâm.
The Spread of Buddhism
Mahâyâna Buddhism
("Great Vehicle")

► In India, 1st century AD to 6th century
► Distinctive doctrines:

1. The Gautama Buddha is not gone, and individual practitioners are not on their own. Instead, the Buddha taught the dharma out of compassion, and his compassion would prevent him from being unavailable to practitioners now. Indeed, to emulate the compassion of the Buddha, practitioners become bodhisattvas, who vow to carry all beings with them into salvation. Bodhisattvas are also available, like the Buddhas, to help people work out their salvation. Maitreya is presently a bodhisattva, but the most important bodhisattva is probably Avalokiteshvara, who developed into the Chinese goddess of Mercy, *Guanyin* (Kwan-in in Wade-Giles, Kannon in Japan).
2. The Buddha was *not* unique, and individual practitioners who have become bodhisattvas *can* become Buddhas. There are already multiple Buddhas besides Shakyamuni. Most important are Mahâvairocana and Amitâbha. Amitâbha is famous for his Western Paradise, or Pure Land, where he has Vowed to cause anyone who calls on him for help to be born, so they will be free of the world of suffering to work out their ultimate liberation. In Japan Amitâbha is known as *Amida* and Mahâvairocana as *Dainichi*. Most of the famous Buddha statues in Japan are *not* Shakyamuni: the great outdoor bronze Buddha at Kamakura is Amida, and the Buddha enshrined in the *Tôdaiji* ("Great Eastern") Temple in Nara (the largest wooden building in the world), is another Buddha named Locana.
Mahâyâna Buddhism
("Great Vehicle")

3. *Nirvân.a and samsâra are no longer definitely different.* The "Fourfold Negation" is applied to the relationship between the two. *Samsâra and nirvân.a* are thus neither the same, nor different, nor both the same and different, nor neither the same nor different. This allows some room for maneuver, which may have made Buddhism more palatable in China, where Confucianism never did approve either of the world-denying metaphysics or the monasticism of Buddhism. Distinctively Chinese schools of Buddhism developed, like T'ien-t'ai (*Tendai* in Japan) and Ch'an (*Seon* [*Son*] in Korea, *Thien* in Vietnam, *Zen* in Japan), for whom samsâra and nirvân.a were virtually identical, so that enlightenment and nirvân.a *transformed* the world rather than eliminated it. The *paradoxical metaphysics* of Buddhism could be assimilated to the similar paradoxical doctrines of the native Chinese philosophical school of Taoism.
Spread of Mahāyāna

- presently practiced in *China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.*

- Buddhism was propagated in China by missionaries from India, like Kumārajīva (344-413), who arrived in China in 401, and Buddhhabhadra (359-429), who arrived in 408, and by Chinese pilgrims who traveled to India, like Fa-Hsien (Fa3xian3), who travelled to India between 399 and 414, and Hsüan-tsang (Xuánzang3, 600-664), who went to India between 629 and 645.

- These journeys were difficult, either by sea around Malaya, where many ships were attacked by pirates or sunk by storms, or by land through Central Asia, on the "Silk Road" caravan route, through deserts and over some of the highest mountains in the world.
Spread of Mahâyâna

Kumârajîva, Fa-Hsien, and Hsüan-tsang all brought Buddhist texts from India to China and translated them. The Buddhist canon as it arrived in China was in Sanskrit, and it included many special Mahâyâna Sûtras that are not in the Pâli Canon (though many are now suspected of being Chinese forgeries).
The Pilgrimage of Xuan-zang

The Pilgrimage of Hsuan-tsang to India 629-645
Vajrayâna Buddhism
("Thunderbolt Vehicle")

- In India, 6th to 11th century
- Distinctive doctrines:
  1. - *Tantric* Buddhism, often called Esoteric Buddhism.
     - diamond (i.e. hard), the *vajra* (*kôngô* in Japanese)
     - originally the thunderbolt of Indra
  2. It symbolizes the magical power of Tantrism. Tantric magic could be worked through sacred diagrams, sacred formulas for recitation (the most famous one being, "Om, mane padme hum" -- "The jewel is in the lotus"), & sacred gestures.
  3. This Tantric magic could be merely thaumaturgical ("wonder working") or could be regarded as means of achieving liberation in addition to or apart from meditative or meritorious practices.
Vajrayâna Buddhism ("Thunderbolt Vehicle")

- female figures emphasized
  - to balance male Bodhisattvas with female Bodhisattvas as attendants of the various Buddhas.

Buddhas tend to be regarded as male in all branches of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism supplies female figures corresponding to each Buddha
  - e.g. the "savioresses" Green Târâ, White Târâ, and Mâmakî, who actually vow to always be reborn as women in the process of leading all beings to salvation.
Vajrayâna Buddhism
("Thunderbolt Vehicle")

► Vajrayâna symbolism always balances male and female.

► The extent to which Vajrayâna practiced real sexual union, as part of its Tantrism is unclear and disputed.

► right-handed Tantrism vs. left-handed Tantrism
  - R: in symbolic, iconographic form
    (mainly what remain in Tibet & Japanese Shingon today)
  - L: practiced literally
    (Tibetan art sometimes still portrays the more violent and disturbing aspects of Tantric practice -- rape, bestiality, etc.)
Spread of Vajrayâna Buddhism ("Thunderbolt Vehicle")

- Tibet & then Mongolia
- In Tibet: Lamaism (the monks: Lamas)
  - The present Dalai Lama
  - the priestly ruler of Tibet until he fled China in 1959
  - successive incarnations of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.
- In China, Japan: special "esoteric" schools
  - (Japanese Shingon school)
  - The great temple at Borobudur (c.800)
- In Indonesia: Buddhism gave way to Islâm.
Buddhism from India to East Asia

- the end of Buddhism in India (11th century)
  - almost indistinguishable from the Tantric forms of Hinduism
  - Isâm influence
The Four Noble Truth

- Target: the suffering of human life & how to end it
- the Four Noble Truth (四聖諦)

1. **Dukkha (苦諦 the truth of suffering).** Existence is suffering. Once be born to this world, eight sufferings are unavoidable: the trauma of birth, the morbidity of decrepitude, the pathology of sickness, the phobia of death, to be tied to what one dislikes, to be separated from what one loves, the impossible satisfaction of desires, and the uncontrollableness of desires.
The Four Noble Truths

2. *Tanha* (集諦 the truth of desire). The cause of suffering is desire. In other words, the accumulation of desires is the cause of the arising of Dukkha, there can never be a different cause.

- thirst for sensual pleasure
- thirst for existence
- thirst for non-existence
The Four Noble Truth

3. **The Truth of Cessation** (*Nirodha*) (滅諦).

Dukkha can be destroyed if the cause of Dukkha, the accumulation of desires, is destroyed, for if the cause is destroyed the result must also be destroyed.

→ withdraw from it, renounce it, reject it, liberate from it, not attach to it.
The Four Noble Truth

4. **The Truth of the Path (Magga)** (道諦).
   To accomplish the goal of the cessation of Dukkha, there is indeed a practical way to go (the Noble Eightfold Path)
How?

- The Buddha’s approach to the problem of life in the Four Noble Truth was essentially that of a physician.
  - to exam the symptoms of the disease;
  - to find out the cause of the disease;
  - to announce that the disease can be cured;
  - to cure the disease through treatment
The Noble Eightfold Path

1. **Right Views** (正見).
   the acceptance of Buddhist teachings and later their experiential confirmation

2. **Right Intent/Resolve** (正思).
   Making a serious commitment to developing right attitudes
The Noble Eightfold Path

3. **Right Speech** (正言)
   telling the truth & speaking in a thoughtful & sensitive way

4. **Right Conduct** (正業)
   - abstaining from wrongful bodily behavior - Right Conduct is guaranteed in the basic Five Buddhist Precepts (佛門五戒): Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not lie; Do not be unchaste; Do not drink intoxicants.
5. **Right Livelihood** (正命)
- not engaging in an occupation which causes harm
- Several professions are not compatible with spiritual seriousness: poison peddler, slave trader, prostitute, butcher, brewer, arms maker, & tax collector.
- job as a means to live, not the goal of live.

6. **Right Effort** (正精進)
- gaining control of one’s thoughts and cultivating positive states of mind
- Buddha laid tremendous tress on the will. Reaching the goal requires immense exertion; there are virtues to be developed, passions to be curbed, and destructive mind sates to be expunged so compassion and detachment can have chance.
The Noble Eightfold Path

7. **Right Mindfulness** (正念)
   - cultivating constant awareness
     “All we are is the result of what we have thought.”
     “All things can be mastered by mindfulness.”
     *(Dhammapada《法句经》)*

8. **Right Concentration/Meditation** (正定)
   - developing deep levels of mental calm through various techniques which concentrate the mind & integrate the personality