

Buddhism



Mark D. Harris

MD, MPH, MBA, MDiv,
PhD, ThM, DBA

MD Harris Institute Inc.

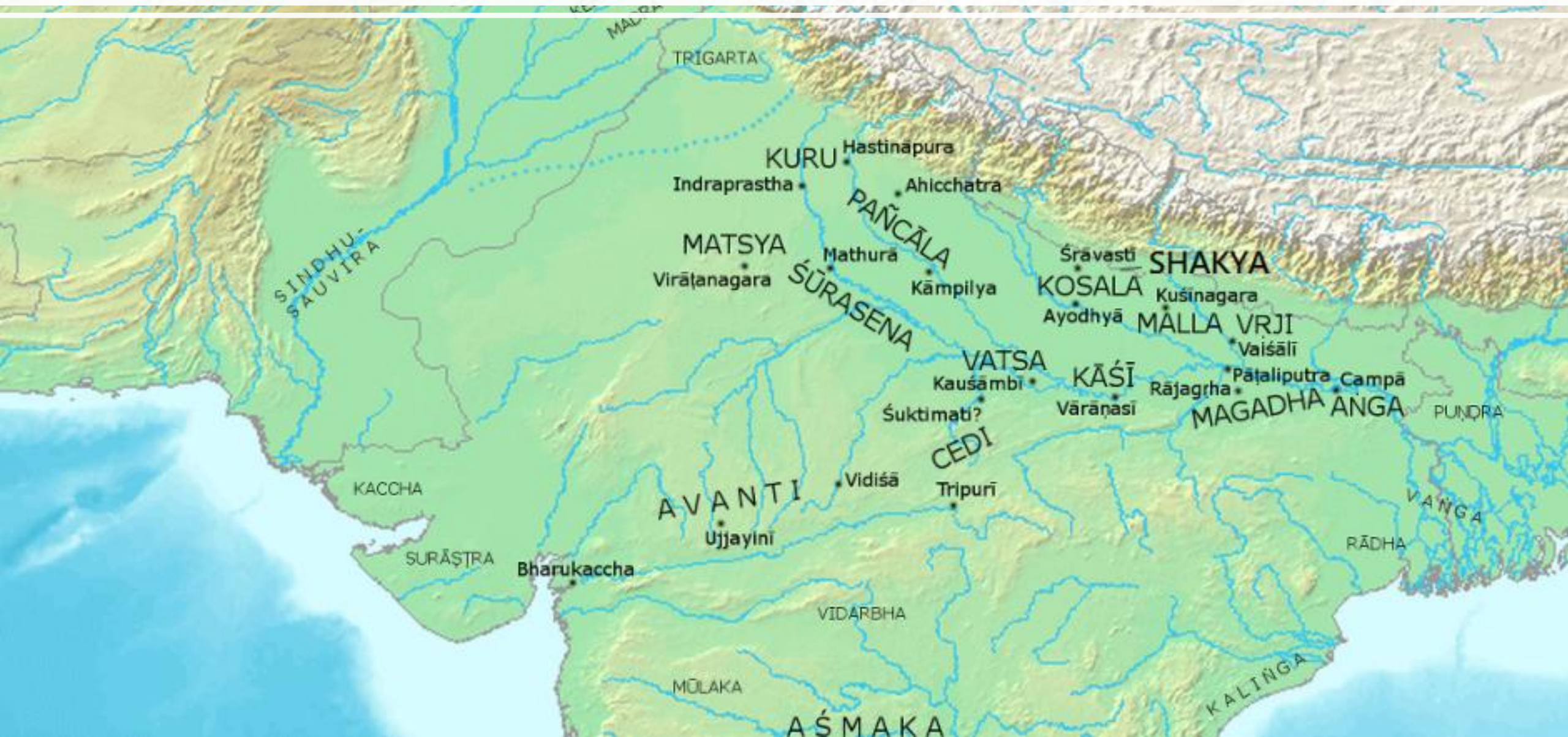
The Life of the Buddha (1)

- Siddhartha Gautama (560-480 BC) was born a prince in the Sakya kingdom (modern Nepal)
- Gautama traveled through the countryside at age 30 and for the first time encountered aging, disease, death, and an ascetic. These “four sights” disturbed and inspired him.
 - A crippled old man
 - A sick man
 - A corpse
 - A wandering holy man
- After pondering such sights, Siddhartha decided to leave his royal prerogative and seek enlightenment as an ascetic, abandoning his wife, son, inheritance, and position. Having experienced worldly wealth and power as a prince, Gautama tried asceticism to find enlightenment.

The Life of the Buddha (2)

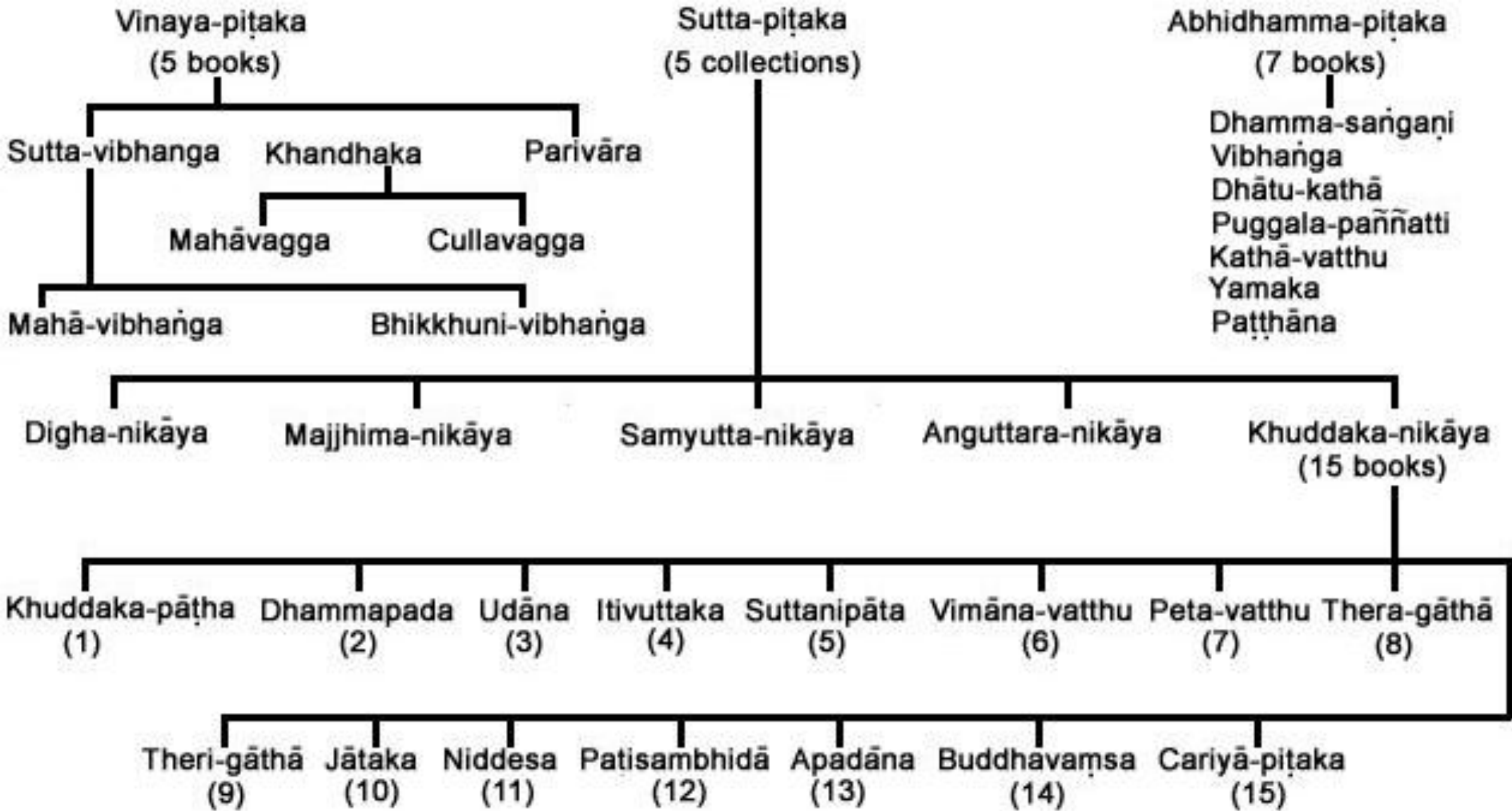
- After nearly dying several times, he abandoned self-denial just as he had done self-indulgence.
- Meditating under a Bodhi (enlightenment) tree, Gautama found enlightenment and became a Buddha.
- For the next 40 years, the Buddha traveled about, accumulating disciples, and spreading his ideas about enlightenment to anyone who would listen.
- When he died, he may have had over a thousand followers.
- Tathagata sought governmental approval
 - He served as counselor to King Bimbisara (Magadha, 543-491 BC) and King Pasenadi (Kosala, 6th or 5th century BC)

Homeland of the Buddha



History of Buddhism (1)

- The earliest Buddhists were the Theravada Buddhists, who followed the teachings in the Tipitaka.
- These canonical scriptures included the *Vinaya Pitaka* (regulations for monks), *Sutta Pitaka* (discourses of the Buddha), and *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (summary of *Sutta Pitaka*).
- Around 350 BC, a Second Buddhist Council met to discuss doctrinal issues and ended up giving birth to numerous schools of interpretation.
- The Mauryan Empire (322-180 BC) adopted Buddhism and gained suzerainty over much of the Indian subcontinent. Mauryan money and power helped Buddhism spread throughout India.



History of Buddhism (2)

- Schools – starting 250 BC
 - Madhyamaka – Founded by Nagajuna
 - Yogacara – Vasubandhu and Asanga
 - Chinese schools – Tien Tai, Huayen, Chan, Pure Land
 - Japanese schools (post WW2) – Soka Gakkai, Risshokoseikai
- The first major split in Buddhism came with the development of Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism in the first century BC.
- Mahayana Buddhists added sutras such as the Lotus Sutra, Diamond Sutra, and Heart Sutra to their list of holy books. Mahayana spread to Central Asia, China, Korea, and Japan over the next 800 years.
- Theraveda expanded into Southeast Asia during the same time.
- Vajarayana-Tantric Buddhism, which arose in Tibet, appeared in the 7th century.

BUDDHIST SYMBOLS

Dharma wheel

Represents Buddha's teachings, the path to enlightenment.



Lotus flower

Stands for spiritual purity, overcoming challenges, and rebirth.

Bodhi tree

Symbolizes the place where Buddha attained awakening.



Vajra

Represents wisdom, power, and unshakeable mind.

OM

A sacred syllable representing the universe, oneness, and the divine.



Swastika

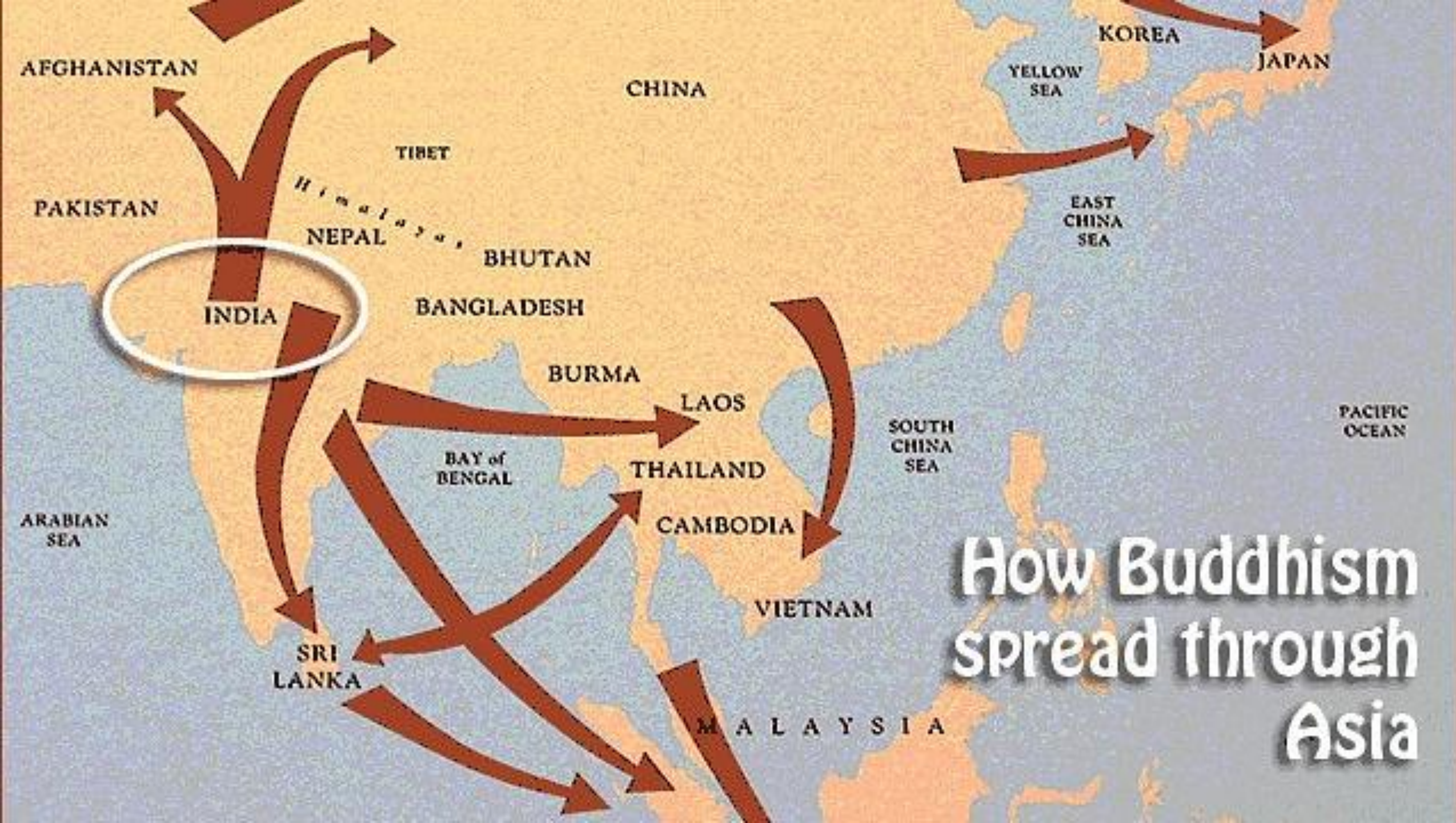
An ancient symbol representing auspiciousness

Unalome

Depicts a stylized spiral path, signifying the journey to spiritual awakening.



Key Symbols in Buddhism, especially mahayana



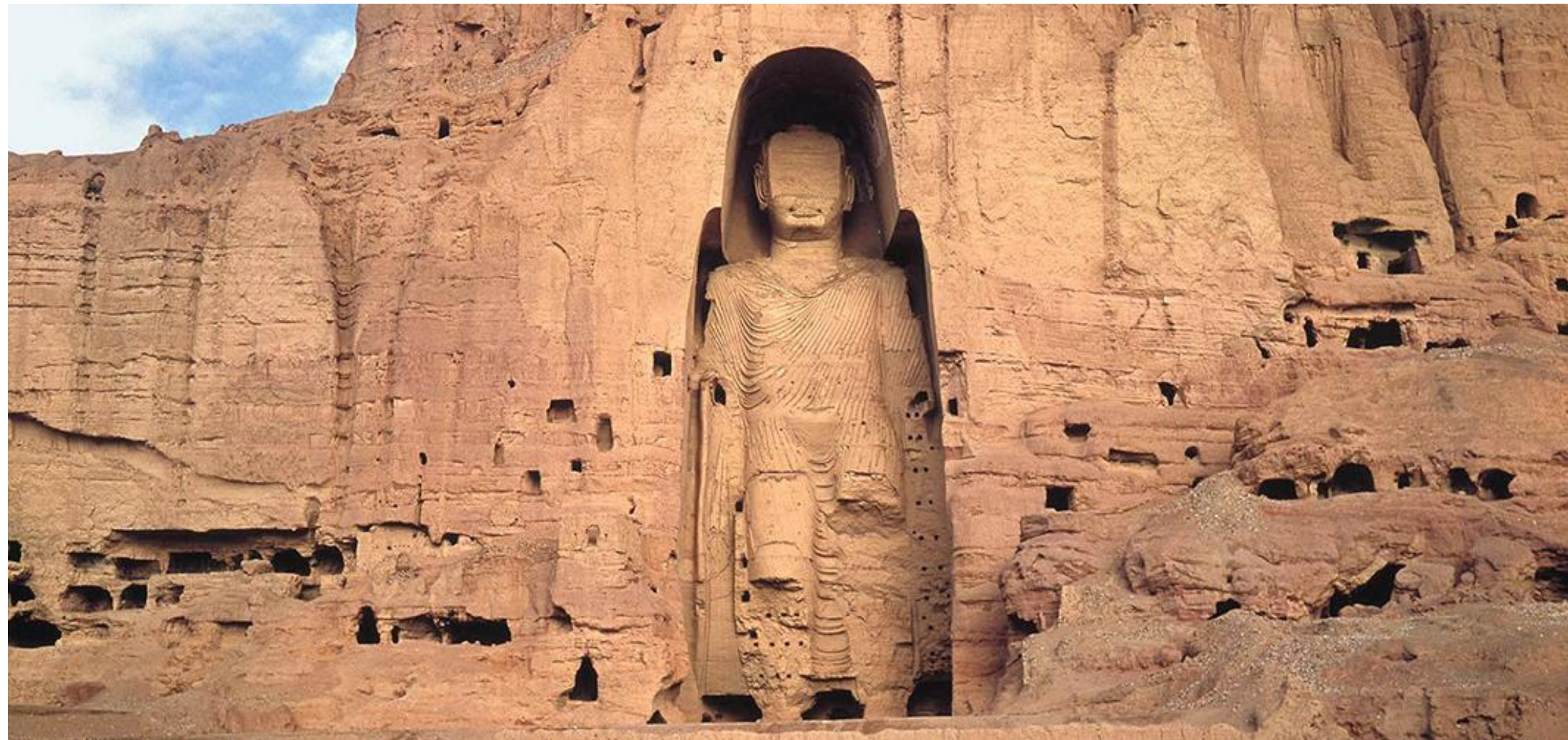
History of Buddhism (2)

- The invasions of the Huns (AD 458 and 470) weakened Buddhism in northwest India, and the Muslim invasions from the 700s to the 1200s did the same.
- Combined with a Hindu resurgence, Buddhism was nearly eliminated from India.
- Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan (1215-1294) converted to Buddhism, but it does not seem to have affected his love for war.
- Colonial European powers challenged Buddhist beliefs.
- Buddhism played a major role in justifying Japanese militarism in the 20th century
- Buddhist monks played a significant and often combative role in Vietnam.



Hunnic
invasions

Bamiyan Statue of Buddha in Afghanistan



Kublai Khan

- Tried to invade Japan and lost due to Divine Wind (kamikaze)



Buddhist Beliefs (1)

- Human experience is five-fold
 - Form denotes material existence
 - Sensations (Vedana)
 - Perceptions (samjna)
 - Mental constructs (samskara)
 - Consciousness (vijnana)
- God – largely atheistic, but Pure Land Buddhism worships the Amitaba Buddha.
- Man – a bundle of properties with no real existence.
- Sin – ignorance of the true nature of reality
- Salvation from ignorance via the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold path

Human Experience and Reincarnation

- Person 1 (P1)– form (P1F), sensations (P1S), perception (P1P), mental constructs (P1M), consciousness (P1C)
- P1 dies. His form, sensations, perception, mental constructs, and consciousness migrate to new bodies.
 - Same – how is P1F, P1S, P1P, P1M, and P1C different than a soul?
 - Different -



Buddhist Beliefs (2)

- Scripture
 - Vinaya Pitaka – rules of conduct for the Sangha
 - Sutta Pitaka – the discourses of the Buddha
 - Abidhamma Pitaka – texts of basic teachings about mind and matter
- Afterlife – total release from illusion into Nirvana. Although if there is no soul or immaterial part to man, one wonders what merges into Nirvana.
- Mahayana – everyone will eventually make it (universalism)

Great Stupa at Sanchi



Buddhist Distinctive Beliefs (1)

- Buddha – not a god and not unique in Mahayana. Many Buddhas have lived over the eons
- Four boundless states – love, compassion, joy, and temperance
- Buddhist shrines – purpose is to house images or representations of the Buddha. They can also hold relics from Buddhist holy men.
- Three marks of conditioned existence
 - Anatman – no self. There is no permanent soul or locus of personhood.
 - Anitya – all things and experiences are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent
 - Duhkha – needless suffering due to ignorance

Four Noble Truths

1. Dukkha (Suffering) – Life is full of suffering, sickness, unhappiness, and death.
2. Samudaya (Cause of Suffering) – People suffer for one simple reason: they desire things (physical items, people, and even personal existence).
3. Nirodha (End of Suffering) – To extinguish desire is to extinguish suffering. If a person wants nothing, neither fame, wealth, power, lack of physical pain, other people, or even personal existence, they cannot suffer. To want nothing, truly nothing, is to remove the possibility of anything being taken away (like sickness taking away health or death taking away life).
4. Magga (The Path) – The way to extinguish desire is to follow the eightfold path.



Dukkha (Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness)

The Truth of Suffering: The primary sublime truth admits that we all experience suffering.

We share a variety of physical and emotional anguish from birth to death. Buddha understood that suffering is a necessary component of human existence and that by comprehending its origins, we are able to overcome it.

Samudaya (Origin of Suffering)

The Truth of the Origin of Suffering: According to Buddha, craving and desire are the leading cause of suffering. Our constant wants and attachments result in unhappiness and ongoing dissatisfaction.

This reality serves as a reminder to evaluate our wants and attachments and develop a feeling of dissatisfaction in order to experience genuine inner calm.

Nirodha (Cessation of Suffering)

The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering: Freedom from suffering is achieved by the third noble truth.

We can achieve a state of perfect tranquility—the end of suffering—by relinquishing all of our commitments and aspirations. This reality motivates us to look for a route leading to the realization of our self and letting go.

Magga (Path to the Cessation of Suffering)

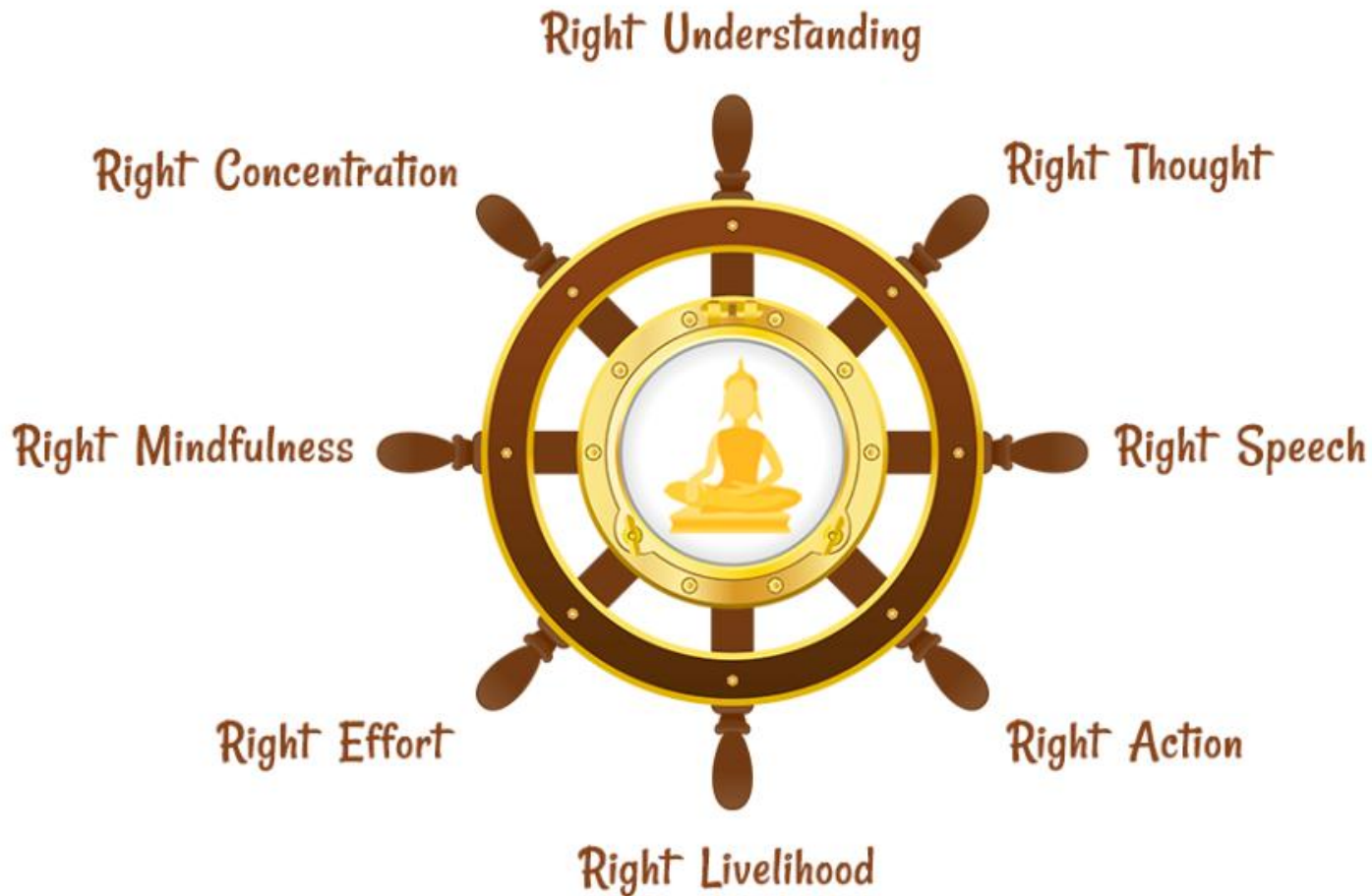
The Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering: The Eightfold Path is a detailed roadmap for overcoming suffering and achieving enlightenment. It is described as the fourth noble truth. This route encourages us to improve moral behavior, exercise mindfulness, and foster paradigms of clear thought. It incorporates ethical behavior, mental cultivation, and wisdom.



The Noble Eightfold Path (1)

- Right understanding (Samma ditthi) – Buddhists must reject falsehoods in all varieties. The teachings of the Buddha are a sure guide.
- Right thought (Samma sankappa) – Buddhists must rid themselves of improper thoughts, whether they be evil, false, or both.
- Right speech (Samma vaca) – Buddhists must speak clearly and truthfully, advancing the true doctrines in all circumstances.
- Right action (Samma kammanta) – Buddhists must be virtuous in action.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH



The Division of Wisdom

- 1.) Right Understanding
- 2.) Right Thought

The Division of Ethical Conduct

- 3.) Right Speech
- 4.) Right Action
- 5.) Right Livelihood

The Division of Mental Discipline

- 6.) Right Effort
- 7.) Right Mindfulness
- 8.) Right Concentration

The Noble Eightfold Path (2)

- Right livelihood (Samma ajiva) – Buddhists must not be butchers, arms dealers, alcohol salesmen, or poison producers. Buddhism contains no prohibition on serving as a soldier, however.
- Right effort (Samma vayama) – Buddhists must focus on detachment from the world.
- Right mindfulness (Samma sati) – Buddhists must be aware of the nature of reality. For example, maya is illusion, and those hoping to advance in Buddhism must eliminate all illusion from their thoughts.
- Right concentration (Samma samadhi) – Buddhists must put aside all distractions.

Other Key Concepts

1. Five precepts – don't injure or kill any living thing, don't steal, no sexual immorality, don't lie, no intoxicants
2. Triple refuge – Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha* (monastic community) – one can take emotional and spiritual refuge in these things in time of crisis
3. Three cardinal virtues – non-attachment (do not be attached to anyone or anything in this world), benevolence, understanding
4. Three poisons (*akusala-mula* – root of unskillfulness, not “evil”.) – ignorance (*moha*), hatred (*dvesha*), delusion/greed (*lobha*)
5. Four heavenly abodes – compassion, kindness, joy, peace

Buddhist Morality

Buddhist Five Precepts

The Pali version of Fives Precepts

- ◆ *panatipata veramanisikkhapadamsamadiyami.*
- ◆ *Adinnadana veramanisikkhapadamsamadiyami*
- ◆ *Kamesumicchacara veramanisikkhapadamsamadiyami.*
- ◆ *Musavada veramanisikkhapadamsamadiyami.*
- ◆ *Suramerayamajja pama datthana veramanisikkhapadamsamadiyami.*

English version:

- ◆ I pledge to observe abstaining from killing living beings.
- ◆ I pledge to observe abstaining from taking what is not given.
- ◆ I pledge to observe abstaining from committing sexual misconduct
- ◆ I pledge to observe abstaining from telling lies
- ◆ I pledge to observe abstaining from taking any intoxicant.

Buddhism (Mahayana)

- Founded at the 4th Buddhist council (AD 100) -
- Theraveda seeks individual enlightenment, while Mahayana holy men (bodhisattvas) stay on earth and postpone their enlightenment to help others.
- Every person's true nature is a Buddha-nature, which is ubiquitous
- Evil, suffering, and disease are unreal
- Bodhicitta – compassion
- Paramitas – 6 virtues (transcendent wisdom, patience, generosity, moral perfection, unflagging effort, and concentration in meditation)
- Present day - 187 million adherents, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam

Schools of Buddhism

- Theravada (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia)
- Mahayana (China, Vietnam, Korea)
- Vajrayana (Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal)
- Zen Buddhism



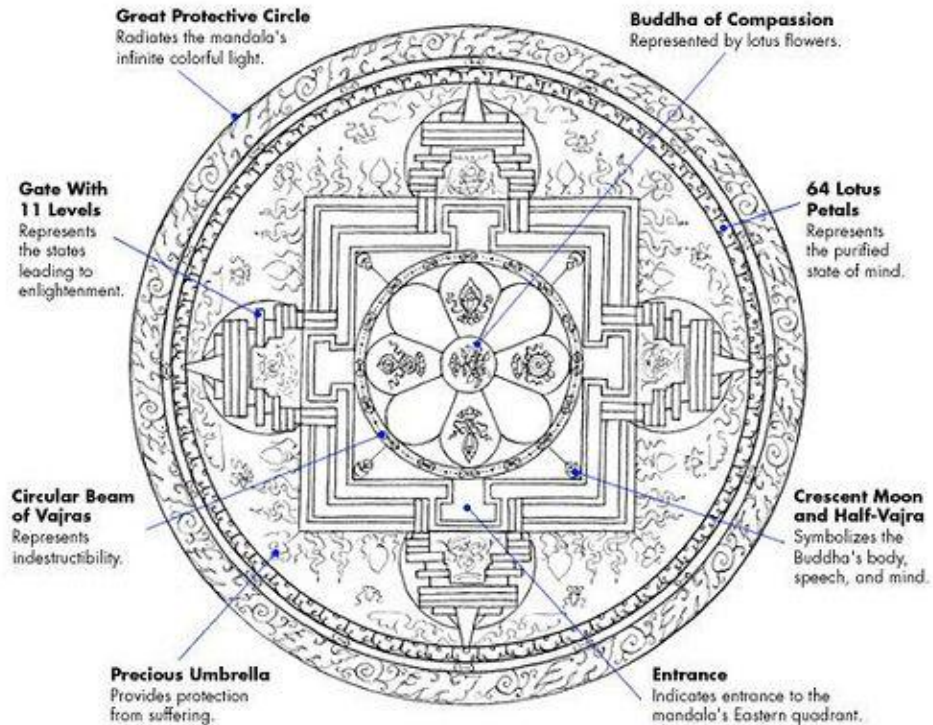
Buddhism – Vajrayana (1)

- Founded in Tibet in the early 5th century BC.
 - Common also in Nepal, Bhutan, and Mongolia
 - Spread into Indonesia but was destroyed there by Islam
 - Ended in China after the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)
- Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) is the leader
- Scripture – Kangjur (word of the Buddha) and Tanjur (teachings of the Buddha)
- Man – everyone has a Buddha-nature with three bodies
 - Created body (nirmana-kaya)
 - Mutual enjoyment body (sambhoga-kaya)
 - Reality or truth body (dharma-kaya)
- Afterlife – Bardo is the intermediate state after death

Buddhism – Vajrayana (2)

- Tantra – techniques to accelerate reaching nirvana.
- Ritual sex between an experienced female and young male monk
- Ghanta – ritual bell
- Mandala diagram – representing various paths to enlightenment.

Mandala Diagram





Wheel of Life (Bhavachakra)

- Greed – rooster
- Hatred – viper
- Ignorance – pig
- Wheel - Samsara

Buddhism and Hinduism

- Buddhism jettisoned the caste system of Hinduism.
- As a result, low caste Hindus often rejected Hinduism because it limited their potential to be king or high military or governmental officials.
- Rejecting caste attracted those disenfranchised by Hinduism.
- Buddhism adopted the Hindu belief in the cycle of lives (*samsara*) from which a person had to escape (achieve *moksha*) to enter Nirvana (similar to paradise).
- Adopting reincarnation turned away those who believed in one life followed by death and judgment.

The Buddhist Monastic Community (Sangha)

- Buddhism is focused on its monks. The majority of the Tipitaka addresses what the monastic community, the Sangha (male – *bhikkhu*, female – *bhikkhuni*), should and should not do.
- The *Vinaya Pitaka* is exclusively about monks and nuns, and the teachings in the *Sutta Pitaka* apply first and foremost to them. In addition to strictly adhering to the Eightfold path, monks must abstain from violence, meat, sex, and intoxicants. They raise their livelihood by collecting alms from lay Buddhists.
- Lay Buddhists are called upon to be vegetarian and avoid intoxicants, but they live normal lives and pursue secular occupations. Lay members earn spiritual merit by commissioning idols and supporting monks and nuns. However, lay men usually must be reborn as a *bhikkhu* before earning moksha.

Sangha



Buddhism and Violence

- Used by Japan in WW2
- DT Suzuki
- If killing someone now will prevent them from committing a heinous crime tomorrow, it is OK

Buddhism Today

- Buddhism today boasts almost 500 million adherents worldwide. Many who would not consider themselves Buddhists per se practice Buddhist meditation and hold Buddhist beliefs without self-identifying with the religion.
- Gautama is variously known as the Sakyamuni (sage of the Sakyas), the Tathagata (enlightened One), and the Buddha (one who is awake).
- In Buddhist Myanmar, Buddhist rebels are fighting a Buddhist army



Conclusion



Discussion

References

- H. Wayne House, Charts of World Religions, Zondervan, 2006

