

BUDDHISM

Buddhism, the fourth greatest religion in the world, originated in Indis. It received state patronage from kings like Ashoka the Great, and it spread toneighbouring countries like Myanmar. Sri Lanka, Japan, Vietnam and Thailand.

Founded around sixth century BC, the causes for the rise of Buddhism are:

- (a) Vedic rites had become very complicated and expensive.
- (b) Domination of Brahmins, who monopolised religion.
- (c) Use of difficult and outdated language in religious ceremonies.

Buddha in Hinduism

In Hinduism, Buddha is considered to be the ninth avatar of Vishnu. There are many stories about Buddha's lives and are called Jatakas. Jataka Tales shows how he acquired greater knowledge and strength as he was reborn to another life. There are many versions of his lives.

Founder

Buddhism was founded by Gautama Siddhartha who was a Kshatriya prince of the Saka clan. He left his family at the age of 29 in search of truth (also called the Great Renunciation) and wandered for approximately seven years; Siddhartha received enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, under a pipal tree and became the Buddha. He delivered his first sermon at Sarnath in Banaras and spread his message for approximately 40 years, before dying at the age of 80 in 487 BC at Kushinagar in Deoria district of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The Schism (or Split) in Buddhism

During the fourth Buddhist Council held in Kashmir, the Buddhists split into two groups: the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

The **Hinuyanas** believed in the simple teachings of Buddha. They did not worship Buddha in the form of his image but honoured his foot prints, umbrella and other objects, Pali was their main language.

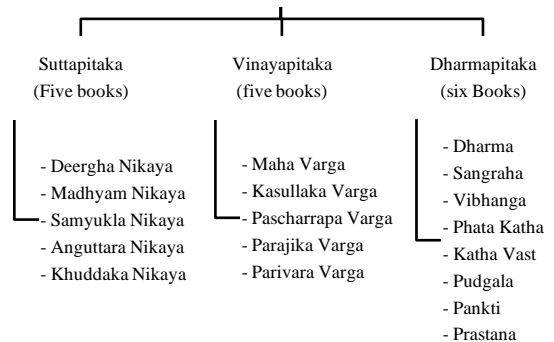
The **Mahayanas** worshipped the image of Buddha. Sanskrit was their language. They preached and hence got all of Buddha's teachings translated into Sanskrit. They became popular in the Kushana period. Ashwagosha Nagarjuna, Vasubhandu were some of the greatest philosophers of Mahayanism. Buddha was regarded as God and the doctrine of Bhakti became an integral part of the Mahayana Buddhism.

Influence of Buddhism

POLITICAL

Buddhism destroyed the rising militant spirit and fostered a sense of national unity and universal brotherhood.

Tripitakas or Three Pitakas in Buddhism
(the collection of teachings, in Buddhist literature)



Important Fact About Buddha

Birth of Gautama Buddha :	563 BC (by some historians)
Birthplace :	Lumbini (near Kapilavastu)
Father :	Suddhodana, the king of Shakyas
Mother :	Mahamaya
Wife :	Yashodhara
Son :	Rahul
Cousin :	Devedatta

Charioteer (Horsel	:	Channa (Kanthaks)
Teacher of meditation	:	Alara Kama
Place of enlightenment	:	Gaya in Magadha (of the age of 35)
nirvana	:	Tree of Wisdom
Tree under which he attained enlightenment	:	Bodhi
Famous 'words	:	Tree (or Pipal)
First run and his foster mother	:	'I am his witness'
	:	
Gotra of Buddha (Siddhartha)	:	Gautami
	:	Gautama
Died at	:	Kushinagar 483 BC (at the age of 80).

SOCIAL

Buddhism struck a strong blow to the caste system and fostered an atmosphere of peace, stressing on purity of life

And metal upliftment. During this period, the development of art and architecture also took place. Educational centres were founded at the Buddhist viharas and Indian culture spread to regions outside India during the reigns of the emperors Ashoka and Kanishka.

Decline of Buddhism

When King Ashoka embraced Buddhism and ruled the country between 274 and 232 BC, he became a propagator of Buddhism. King Ashoka made every effort to turn it into a world religion by sending missionaries of Buddhism outside the India mainland. At one time, Buddhism flourished in India under the patronage of monarchs such as Ashoka and Kanishka. The latter lived in the second century AD and patronised the missionary activities of Buddhism in his vast empire, which stretched beyond the borders of India to central Asia. But by the twelfth century, Buddhism had begun to decline in India. The introduction of tantric practices was one of the factors in its growing unpopularity. Also, by coming under the spell of Hindu Shaktism and Tantrism, Buddhism lost its own religious identity. Another factor responsible

for the decay and decline of Buddhism in India was that by taking a receptive attitude towards other religions. Buddhism became assimilated into Hinduism; for example, the Vaishnavite made Buddha an avatar of Vishnu. A third factor was the revived and resurgent Hinduism under the Guptas (332-185 BC) when Hinduism experienced its golden age. Thereafter, Buddhism declined as Hinduism advanced with the rise of the Rajputs as a military force. Lack of unity among Buddhists and the increased use of Sanskrit led to a decline in Buddhism. Hinduism started absorbing Buddhism and the later Gupta kings also did not give the needed support to Buddhism. Influential monasteries fell to corruption and also the monks and nuns resorted to immoral ways of life. Muslim invasions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries led to its further disintegration.



Doctrines of Buddhism

The main precepts of Buddhism are

- (a) The Four Great Truths
 - (i) The world is full of sorrow and misery.
 - (ii) The cause of all pain and misery is desire,
 - (iii) Pain and misery can be ended by killing or controlling desire.
 - (iv) Desire can be controlled by following the eight-fold path.
- (b) The Eight-Fold Path, Right faith, Right thought, Right action, Right means of livelihood, Right exertion of efforts, Right speech, Right remembrance and Right concentration or meditation.
- (c) Belief in Nirvana: When desire ceases, rebirth ceases and nirvana, a state of bliss and rest is attained, that is freedom from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth is gained by following the eight-fold path.
- (d) Belief in Ahimsa: One should not cause injury to any living being, animal or man.
- (e) Law of Karma: Man reaps the fruit of his past deeds.
- (f) Existence of God: Buddhism is silent about the existence of God.

Buddhist Councils

Buddhist man gathered fourtimes after the death of Gautama Buddha and the result of these events had

their effect on Buddhism. The following table highlights the outcomes of these meetings. (Note: There were two Fourth Buddhist Councils held by two different sects.)

TABLE 1.3 Buddhist Councils

Place	Year	Chairmanship	King	Result of the Event
1. Rajagriha (Bihar)	483 BC	Mahakassapa	Ajatashartu	At this Council, Upali lone of the chief disciples) recited the first part of the Tripitaka—the Buddhist sacred text written in Pali language. The first part, which is called Vinaya Pitaka, contains rules of the order. The second part of the Tripitaka Suttapitaka, containing the great collection of Buddha's sermons on matters of doctrine and ethical beliefs, was read by Ananda.
2. Vaishali (Bihar)	383 BC	sabakmi	Kalasoka	At the second General Council meeting held at Vaishali, a schism resulted, ostensibly, over small points of monastic discipline and the followers divided into Sthavirmadins or Theravadins and Mahasanghikas.
3. Pataliputra	250 BC	Mogalipatta Tissa	Ashoka	The third Council meeting held at Pataliputra resulted in the expulsion of many heretics and the establishment of the Sthavirmada School as an orthodox school. Here, in this Council, the third part of the Tripitaka—the Katha Vatthu of Abhidhamma Pitaka, which deals with psychology and the philosophy of Buddhism, was coded in Pali.
4. Tambapanni (Sri Lanka)	29 BC	Mahinda	Vattagewani	Main reason for its convening was the realisation that it was now not possible for the majority of works to retain the entire Tripitaka in their memories. The aim was achieved by monk Maharakkhita and 500 other monks.
5. Kundalvana (Kashmir)	AD 72	Vasumitra (President) Asvaghosa (V.P.)	Kanishka (Kushan ruler)	The development of new ideas resulted in the division of Buddhism into the Mahayana and Hinayana sects. Codification of Sarvastivadin doctrine as Mahavibhasa took place.

Notable Dynasties In Magadh

- (a) Haryanka Dynasty Originally founded in 566 BC by the grandfather of Bimbisara, the actual foundation of the Magadhan Empire was laid by Bimbisara and Ajatashatru who annexed the neighbouring territories and established it as the centre of political activity in North India.
- (b) Shishunaga Dynasty The Haryanka Dynasty was overthrown by Shishunaga and the followed the Shishunaga Dynasty in 413 BC, which ruled for about half a century, the kingdom of Vatsa, Avanti and Kosala were annexed to Magadha, Kalashoka (396-395 BC) was the king when the second Buddhist Council was held.
- (c) The Nanda Dynasty had its origin in the region of Magadha. It started during the fourth century BC and had the period between 345 and 321 BC. The Nanda rulers had extended their empire from Bengal to Punjab and up to the Vindhya Range. Chandragupta Maurya conquered the Nanda Empire who was the founder of the Maurya Empire. The first known Empire builders in the history of India are the Nanda: rulers They extended the Magadha Empire up to the far off places and also desired to expand it further. They had maintained a large army of 2,00,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry, 2000 war chariots and 3000 war elephants to obtain their purpose of expansion.

The Nandas were also very famous for their wealth. They started many irrigation projects to help agriculture. Trade flourished during

their rule in Magadha. The fame of the Nanda Empire was also mentioned in the Sangam literature of the Tamil people. However, they became unpopular in the masses because of financial extortion which led to a revolution. Chandragupta Maurya and Kautilya took the opportunity and overthrew the Nanda Empire. Dhanananda was the last ruler of this dynasty who ruled over Magadha from 329 BC to 321 BCE.

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