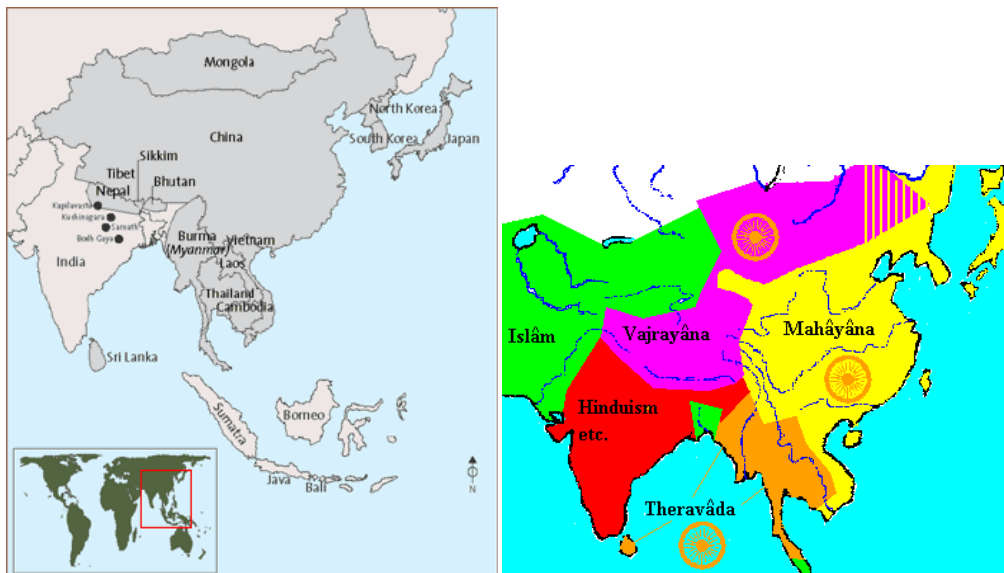


# BUDDHISM



## History

- 1820 – Chinese immigrants arrive in US
- 1849 – Chinese arrive in large numbers to US following California Gold Rush
- 1853 – First Buddhist temple in America built in San Francisco
- 1882 – The Chinese Exclusion Act slowed the growth of the Chinese-American population
- 1880's – Japanese immigrants arrive in US
- 1893 - World Parliament of Religions in Chicago: Sri Lankan layman Anagarika Dharmapala, Rinzai priest Shaku Soyen, and other Buddhist representatives presented the Buddha Dharma
- 1896 – First Japanese temple in US built in Hawaii
- 1899 – First Japanese temple in continental US built in San Francisco
- 1900 – Approximately 400 Chinese temples on the west coast of the US
- 1903 – Korean immigrants arrive in US
- 1965 – Immigration Act: increased number of immigrants from China, Vietnam, and the Theravada-practicing countries of Southeast Asia.
- The U.S. census does not ask religious affiliation, so the counting of Buddhists in the US is difficult. It is estimated that between 0.5% - 4% of Americans are Buddhists and that there are approximately 10-15 million Buddhist immigrants living in America.
- Three Main Regions of Buddhism:
  - Theravada: southeast Asia and Sri Lanka
  - Mahayana: China, Japan, North and South Korea
  - Vajrayana: Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Western China



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### **Health Concerns/Beliefs**

- Health concerns will vary by region. Health concerns are more likely related to country of origin and cultural practices than to Buddhism.
- Buddhists traditionally believe that anything that happens to them is a result of cause and effect or Karma from a previous life. Illness may be viewed as a result of bad karma or wrong living.
- Often, people who are ill or injured will be advised to permit love and kindness and this is believed to cure the person of the ailment. They may also visit the monk for blessings in which the monk blesses the ill person with love and kindness.
- Buddhists often consult a *vedamahattaya* (medicine man) for preventative medicine and to treat ailments. Whether there was money or not, all people are treated.
- Ayurvedic medicine is common in many regions where Buddhism is practiced.
- Herbal medicines are often used in treatment of ailments.

### **Food Management Practices**

- Because Buddhism does not promote any particular form of the family or family relationships, Buddhist family life generally reflects pre-existing cultural and religious values, customs, and socially sanctioned modes of expression. Within Asian Buddhist cultures, this typically translates into a traditional, patriarchal family structure with clearly defined familial roles
- Buddhists believe in shared labor and mutual respect in the family. All members of the family may contribute to cooking and food preparation.
- Five precepts (provide ethical framework for family life): abstaining from harming living beings; abstaining from taking what is not given; abstaining from sexual misconduct or sensual desires (5 aggregates) ; abstaining from false speech; abstaining from intoxicants.

### **Foods**

- There are not set dietary laws in Buddhism, customs vary with region.
- Vegetarian is common due to the principle of nonviolence and the avoidance of suffering.
- Theravada and Mahayana: often do not eat meat and fish, some are vegan.
- Theravada and Mahayana from China and Vietnam: do not eat garlic, onion, chives, shallot or leek (five pungent spices – believed to increase one’s sexual desire and anger)
- Tibetans: never eat fish, usually will not eat fowl. It is believed that it is better to eat red meat because the animal killed was very large and only one life had to be taken to feed many people. Other vegetation is limited in Tibet, so eating of meat is permitted.
- Alcohol is typically avoided due to the effects on the mind and mindfulness. One is not to consume addictive materials. Monks are forbidden to consume addictive materials, some lay people may also follow.

- Theravada monks go on begging rounds, giving people the opportunity to put food in their bowls. They are expected to show no interest in the qualities of the food and even mix the food donations together.
- Mahayana monks eat food that is prepared by lay devotees in the monastery.
- Monks are prohibited from eating meat from animals that were specially killed for an offering.
- Zen cooking was developed by Zen monks and is a type of vegetarian cooking that aids in meditation and spiritual life. Food is prepared as a spiritual exercise with attention to balance, harmony, and delicacy. Conscious eating is followed among all Buddhists.
- Buddha advised monks to avoid eating 10 kinds of meat for self-respect and protection: humans, elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, lions, tigers, boars and hyenas.



### Specific Food Practices

- Five Contemplations While Eating: one considers if one deserves the food, if one's own mind is not greedy, if the food is a necessity and a healing agent for the body, and if the food is eaten for the purpose of a part of reaching enlightenment.
- Buddhist monks fast completely on the days of the new moon and full moon each lunar month; they also avoid eating any solid food after noon. Monks are expected to show moderation in all things, including eating.
- Food rites mark changes in personal status, serving as temporal boundary markers through the life cycle. In Theravada traditions, rituals may feature rice and milk-based dishes.
- Buddhists believe that you should eat to maintain life and nourish the body but not cling to the sensual pleasures of eating. Monks concentrate on the repulsiveness of food in order to reduce their craving for food.
- Monks always say blessings before consuming food.

### Major Celebrations

- Theravada: Vesak is the birth, the enlightenment, and the death of Buddha celebrated in one day
  - Milk rice and oil cake is typically offered to the Buddha on Vesak and every full moon.
  - Four times in the lunar month people bring rice or dishes containing rice to the temple as a gift to the monks. After the monks have eaten, the lay people consume the remaining foods.

- Mahayana: the birth, the enlightenment, and the death are celebrated in three festivals
  - Harvest celebrations make confections from foods such as rice, peanuts, sugar, and sesame seeds.
  - Puffed rice is used during celebrations as a symbol of purification and at funerals to symbolize rice that cannot be grown again.
- Wan Payawan – Thailand New Year: people visit monasteries to offer gifts like rice, fruits, sweets and food for the monks.
- Losar –Tibetan New Year: Families eat sumptuous meals together that include Kapse (a cake) and Chang (a warm alcoholic drink). Celebrations begin two days before the New Year
- Gutor – Tibetan New Year preparation: Special dishes are cooked such as a soup consisting of 9 ingredients – rice, wheat, meat, sweet potatoes, cheese, green peppers, vermicelli, peas, and radishes. Dumplings are served containing paper which are used to tell the future ahead.

### **Communication Style**

- Non-confrontational: public dispute or criticism is to be avoided at all costs
- The eight-fold path includes right speech: to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.
- The eight-fold path includes right action: to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships harmless to others.
- It is proper in Buddhism to always keep eye contact while communicating, however, distance should be kept between persons and they should not be directly in front of each other, but at an angle.
- Children may greet parents with respect by touching five points to the floor (forehead, elbows, and knees)
- When Buddhists greet each other they raise their hands with palms together and fingers pointing up as if in prayer and slightly bow.

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