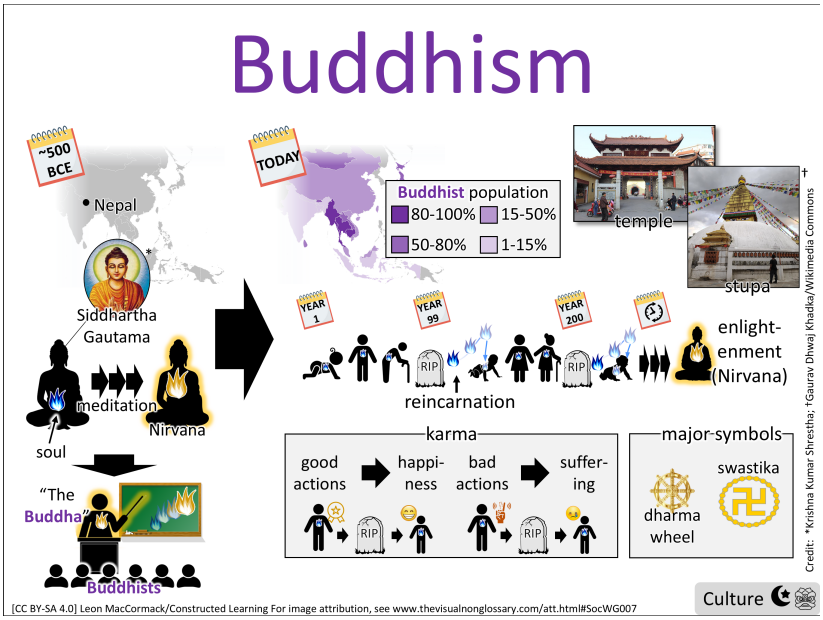
The Visual Non-Glossary™

Buddhism has more than 500 million followers today. It is most commonly practiced in countries across Asia like Thailand, Japan, and China, but it also has followers around the world. Even in places where it is not a main religion, ideas like karma—the belief that actions have consequences—are well known. The history of Buddhism begins with Siddhartha Gautama, a prince in ancient India who lived over 2,500 years ago. He wanted to understand why people suffer.

The purpose for reading is to understand the core beliefs of Buddhism, how they influence how people behave in everyday life, and how the religion spread to different parts of the world.

Look Out For:

- The core beliefs of Buddhism
- What karma means and how it affects actions
- The goal of Nirvana and how it is achieved
- How Buddhism spread to other parts of Asia and the world
- How Buddhist beliefs might lead followers to avoid violence



Siddhartha Gautama left his royal life after seeing pain and sickness in the world. He gave up wealth and comfort to find answers. After years of searching, he meditated under a Bodhi tree and found enlightenment—a deep understanding

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about how to escape suffering. He learned that life is a cycle of birth, pain, death, and rebirth. This cycle can end by reaching **Nirvana**, a state of peace that frees a person from suffering.

He taught that this freedom comes from understanding the Four Noble Truths, which explain that suffering is caused by desire. To stop suffering, people must follow the Eightfold Path, a guide for how to think, act, and live. These ideas are part of the Dharma, or the deeper truths of life, and are shown in symbols like the Dharma Wheel. Another symbol used in **Buddhism** is the swastika, which represents good fortune and spiritual well-being. Although it was first used in **Hinduism**, it became part of **Buddhist** tradition as well. **Buddhism** teaches people to live with peace, compassion, and mindfulness.

Followers of **Buddhism** believe that their actions can affect both their current life and future ones. This is the idea of **karma**, and it shapes how **Buddhists** act and treat others. They also try to avoid being attached to material things, which are believed to bring more suffering. By following the Eightfold Path, they hope to reach **Nirvana** and break free from the cycle of **reincarnation**.

Buddhism spread through Asia using trade routes like the Silk Road. As it moved to new places, it blended with local traditions. In Japan, it became linked with **Shintoism**, and many people practice both. For example, they may follow **Buddhist** customs for funerals and **Shinto** ones for festivals.

Buddhism is different from many Western religions because it does not focus on a god or creator. The **Buddha**, **Siddhartha Gautama**, is not a god but a teacher who showed others the path to peace. In **Buddhism**, people must work toward enlightenment through their own actions. Some **Buddhist** stories include powerful beings called devas, but they are not in control of the world. Like humans, they experience **karma** and rebirth and are not the key to reaching **Nirvana**.

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Hinduism, which also began in India, shares ideas like **karma** and **reincarnation** with **Buddhism**. But they also have differences. **Hindus** believe in an eternal soul called the ātman, while **Buddhists** believe in anātman, which means there is no unchanging self. These two religions are often used by scholars as examples of how nearby religions can be similar but still have different beliefs.

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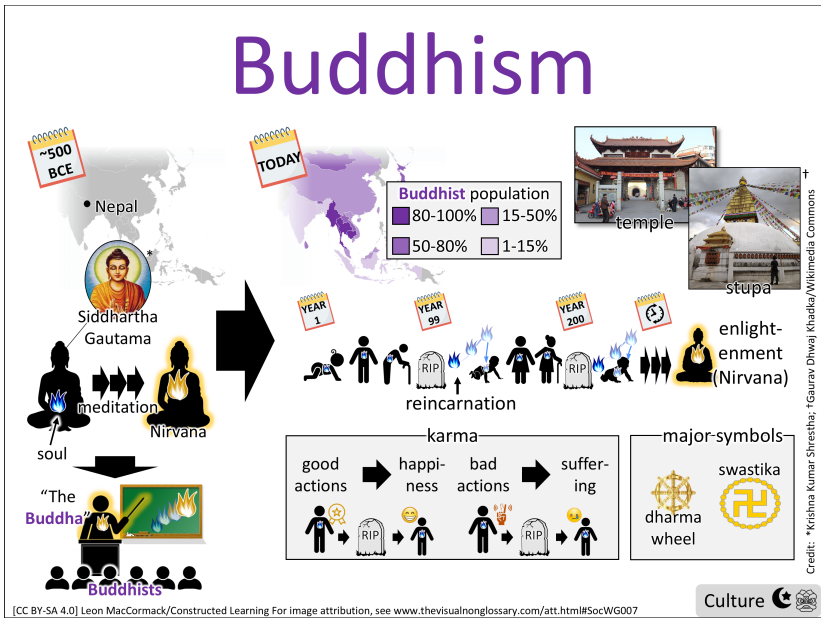
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Buddhism is followed by over 500 million people around the world today. While it is most commonly practiced in Asian countries such as Thailand, Japan, China, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, it has followers in many other parts of the world as well. Even in places where the religion is not widely practiced, ideas like karma—the belief that actions have consequences—have become common in everyday conversations. The roots of Buddhism lie in the journey of Siddhartha Gautama, a prince who lived in ancient India over 2,500 years ago and sought answers to the problem of human suffering.

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Born into a royal family, **Siddhartha Gautama** lived in wealth and protection. One day, he left the palace and saw suffering for the first time—an old man, a sick man, and a dead body. Troubled by these sights, he gave up his riches to search for the truth about human suffering. After years of study and self-denial, **Siddhartha** sat beneath a Bodhi tree and entered deep meditation. There, he reached enlightenment—a deep understanding of the cause of suffering and how to overcome it. He realized that life is a cycle of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth, but this cycle can be broken. By reaching enlightenment, a person can escape this endless cycle and enter a state of perfect peace called **Nirvana**.

His insights formed the foundation of **Buddhism**. The Four Noble Truths explain that suffering is part of life, but it can be overcome by letting go of desire. The Eightfold Path offers a guide to right understanding, right actions, and right living. These principles are often represented by the Dharma Wheel, a symbol of the **Buddha's** path and the deeper truths of existence. Another symbol found in **Buddhist** art is the swastika, which represents good fortune and spiritual well-being. Although it was used in **Hinduism** even earlier, it became part of **Buddhist** symbolism long before modern history changed its meaning in other contexts. Although **Buddhism** has many forms, its values often focus on peace, compassion, and mindfulness.

Buddhists believe that following the Eightfold Path leads to **Nirvana**, a peaceful state that ends the cycle of **reincarnation**. They also believe in **karma**, which means that a person's actions—good or bad—can influence both their current life and future lives. These ideas shape how **Buddhists** treat others, avoid attachment to material things, and view their role in the world.

Buddhism spread through Asia along trade and cultural routes. One important network was the Silk Road, which connected India with Central Asia, China, and beyond. As it moved into new regions, **Buddhism** often blended with local traditions. In Japan, it became closely linked with **Shintoism**, and many people still practice both

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today. For example, families may follow **Buddhist** customs for funerals and **Shinto** customs for festivals.

Unlike many Western religions that center around a creator god, **Buddhism** is non-theistic at its core. The historical **Buddha**, **Siddhartha Gautama**, is not worshiped as a god but respected as a teacher. Enlightenment in **Buddhism** is achieved through personal effort—not through the power of a deity. While some **Buddhist** texts mention supernatural beings, or devas, these figures are not eternal or all-powerful. Like humans, they are also affected by **karma** and the cycle of rebirth, and they are not central to reaching **Nirvana**.

Hinduism, which also originated in India, shares several core beliefs with **Buddhism**, including **karma**, **reincarnation**, and the idea that life is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. However, they differ in key ways. **Hindus** believe in an eternal soul called the ātman, while **Buddhists** believe there is no unchanging self—a belief known as anātman. These differences shape how each religion understands the self and the path to spiritual freedom. Scholars often use **Hinduism**and **Buddhism** as examples of how religions that develop near one another can share similar features while still maintaining unique beliefs.

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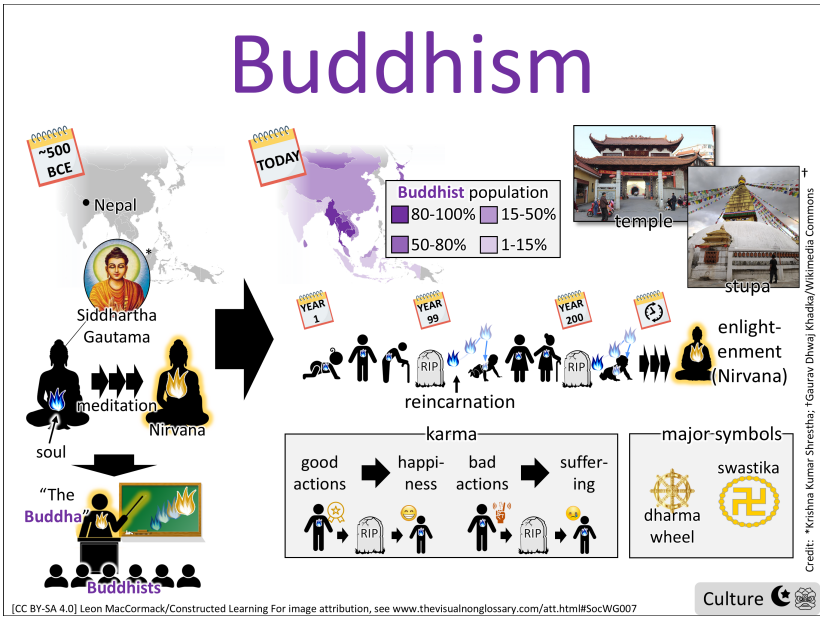
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With over 500 million followers worldwide, Buddhism is most commonly practiced in Asian nations such as Thailand, China, and Japan, though it has followers throughout the world. Its influence even reaches non-Buddhist societies through ideas like karma, the belief that intentional actions bring future consequences. The origins of Buddhism are rooted in the life of Siddhartha Gautama, a 6th-century BCE Indian prince who sought to understand the nature of human suffering.

The purpose for reading is to understand the core beliefs of Buddhism, how they influence how people behave in everyday life, and how the religion spread to different parts of the world.

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After encountering illness, aging, and death for the first time, **Siddhartha Gautama** renounced his life of privilege and began a spiritual quest. Following years of intense meditation and self-discipline, he attained enlightenment while meditating

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beneath a Bodhi tree. He came to understand that life is marked by suffering and continuous rebirth, but that this cycle can be broken. The end of this cycle—complete liberation from suffering—is called **Nirvana**.

From this awakening emerged the central teachings of **Buddhism**, including the Four Noble Truths, which state that suffering is caused by desire, and that liberation comes through its release. The Eightfold Path outlines ethical and mental disciplines to achieve this goal. These principles are part of the Dharma, which refers to both the **Buddha's** teachings and the deeper truths of existence. The Dharma Wheel symbolizes this journey. Another important **Buddhist** symbol is the swastika, which represents good fortune and spiritual well-being. Its presence in ancient art and iconography predates the modern misuse of the symbol, and it remains meaningful in many Asian cultures.

In **Buddhist** belief, a person's choices affect both their present experience and their future lives. This is the principle of **karma**, and it plays a critical role in shaping a follower's behavior. By cultivating wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline, **Buddhists** hope to reach **Nirvana** and end the ongoing cycle of **reincarnation**. A rejection of materialism is also common, as attachment is seen as a major source of suffering.

The expansion of **Buddhism** throughout Asia was aided by networks like the Silk Road, through which it encountered and adapted to new cultural settings. In Japan, it developed alongside **Shintoism**, and many practitioners still observe customs from both traditions. For example, **Buddhist** rites are often used for funerals, while **Shinto** rituals mark seasonal festivals.

In contrast to Western theistic religions that emphasize a creator god, **Buddhism** is fundamentally non-theistic. **Siddhartha Gautama**, the historical **Buddha**, is honored as an enlightened teacher rather than a divine figure. Spiritual liberation is achieved through individual discipline and insight, not divine intervention. Though

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some **Buddhist** texts reference supernatural beings called devas, these entities are impermanent and subject to **karma** and rebirth. They serve symbolic or supporting roles, not central ones in the path toward **Nirvana**.

Though distinct, **Hinduism** and **Buddhism** share foundational concepts such as **karma** and **reincarnation**, reflecting their shared origin in India. However, they diverge on fundamental ideas: **Hindus** believe in the ātman, an unchanging soul, while **Buddhists** hold to anātman, the belief in no permanent self. These contrasts illustrate how religious systems can arise from common ground yet evolve into separate paths of understanding.

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