

BUDDHISM: PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

BUDDHA'S LIFE STORY - HIGHLIGHTS

- Rich symbolic elements:
 - Miraculous conception
 - Symbolic birth motifs (e.g. new star; healings; born under a tree at full moon; heavenly beings appear)
 - Confounding of the elders (tree miraculously shades young Siddhartha all day)
 - Enlightenment attained under a tree, under a full moon
- Four Sights (illness, old age, death, monk) launch spiritual quest
- Middle Path: learns that neither indulgence (princely life) nor harsh asceticism (nearly starves to death) edifies



BUDDHA'S KEY TEACHINGS

Four Noble Truths

1. Life is unsatisfactory
 2. Dissatisfaction is caused by wants/craving
 3. There is a release from suffering (nirvana)
 4. The path to release is the eightfold path
- Practical emphasis: Buddha as physician, diagnosing a problem (suffering) & proposing a solution
 - Eightfold path are practices for healing individuals
 - No call for devotion (reflects Buddha's non-theistic vision)

Eightfold Path

1. Right Understanding
 2. Right Intention
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action
 5. Right Work
 6. Right Effort
 7. Right Mindfulness
 8. Right Concentration
- Begins with right understanding → because chief problem is ignorance, not sin.
 - Focus is individualistic. No rules for organizing a just society (as in Judaism and Islam).

Three Marks of Reality

- Dukkha - life is unsatisfactory
- Anicca - All is impermanent (joys, pains, even physical objects)
- Anatta - no self (meaning no eternal essence)
 - reincarnation stems from past activities but requires no unchanging soul
 - person made of five aggregates (body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, consciousness) that are all in flux



MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

- Largest branch (over 50% of world's Buddhists)
- Emphasizes devotion to multiple figures (who seem deity-like):
 - Avalokiteshvara (bodhisattva of compassion); often in female form
 - Amitabha (creates a Pure Land for devotees)
 - Maitreya (the future Buddha)
- Parallels (and resembles) rise of bhakti devotion in Hinduism

