CHAPTER SIX: BUDDHISM

Chapter Outline and Unit Summaries

I. Introduction: The Buddhist “Middle Way”

A. Origins in Sixth Century B.C.E. Indian Reaction Against Mainstream Hinduism

B. Unlike Jainism, Buddhism Teaches Middle Way Between Radical Asceticism and Worldliness

C. Buddhism Becomes Missionary Religion in Asia and Diminishes in India

II. The Life of Gautama

A. Early Life of Siddhartha Gautama (circa. 560-480 B.C.E.)

1. Son of a Raja (Chieftains / Warrior)

2. Legends About Seers Predicting Siddhartha’s Life Path

3. Father Shields Siddhartha from Life’s Ugliness and Pain

4. Siddhartha Marries Cousin at Age Nineteen, Has Son

5. Siddhartha Discovers Ugliness and Pain of Life, Concludes that Life is Suffering

6. Siddhartha Runs Away from Home, Wife, Son to Find Answers to Life’s Miseries

   a. Studies Philosophy with Guru, Still Unsatisfied
   b. Practices Severe Monastic Asceticism for Six Years
   c. Quits Asceticism, Meditates Under Fig (bo) Tree
   d. Becomes the Buddha (Enlightened One)
   e. Vision Shows Him Life is Endless Cycle of Life and Death Because of tanha (desire, thirst, craving)

B. The Buddha’s Religious Mission

1. Finds Former Fellow Monks in Deer Park, Preaches Middle Way Between Indulgence and Asceticism

2. Forms Sangha (Buddhist monastic order)
a. Buddha Teaches that all People Irrespective of Caste or Gender can be Enlightened
b. Serious Followers Shave Heads, Wear Coarse Yellow Robes, Possess Only Begging Bowl
c. Buddhist Monks Vow to
   (1) Abstain from Killing
   (2) Abstain from Taking what is not Given
   (3) Abstain from Lying, Frivolous, Slanderous, or Harsh Talk
   (4) Abstain from Improper Sexual Conduct
   (5) Abstain from Comfort and Adornments
   (6) Abstain from Dancing, Singing, Music, Shows
   (7) Abstain from Worldly Commerce, Errands
   (8) Abstain from Injuring Seeds or Plants
   (9) Eat Only One Meal a Day

3. Non-Monastic (Lay) Buddhists Vow to Abstain from
   a. Killing
   b. Stealing
   c. Lying
   d. Improper Sexual Conduct
   e. Intoxicants

4. Death of Buddha at Age Eighty
   a. Probable Cause: Eating Spoiled Pork Curry
   b. Followers Organize New Religion After Buddha’s Death by Formalizing his Critique of Hinduism

III. The Teachings of the Buddha

A. Buddha’s Mixed Critique of Hinduism
   1. Accepted Most Hindu Religious Categories and Vocabulary
   2. Taught Enlightenment Possible for All Irrespective of Caste
   3. Opposed to Brahmin System of Worship and Sacrifice
   4. Rejects Religious Authority of the Vedas
   5. Believed People Ought to Find Own Enlightenment, not Seek Gods / Goddesses as Patrons
B. New Teachings of the Buddha (the Tathagata, truth-gatherer)

1. Individual Soul Does Not Exist—People are in State of Non-Soulness (anatman)

2. Combination of Body, Feelings, Understanding, Will, and Consciousness Constitute Human Personality / Self

3. The Four Noble Truths
   a. Life is Painful Because of Craving, Grasping Desire
   b. Desire Combined with Pleasure and Lust Leads to a Cycle of Rebirths
   c. Detachment from All Desire—Even the Desire to Exist—is the Way to Release from Pain and Rebirth
   d. The Eightfold Path Leads to Detachment

   (1) Right Views
   (2) Right Intention
   (3) Right Speech
   (4) Right Action
   (5) Right Livelihood
   (6) Right Effort
   (7) Right Mindfulness
   (8) Right Concentration

4. Enlightenment is to Have Self Extinguished (Nirvana)
   a. Extinguishing Desire, Thirst, Craving (tanha)
   b. A Saint (arhat) is One Who Reaches Enlightenment

IV. The Development of Buddhism

A. A Religion for Self-Disciplined, Intelligent Individuals

B. Sectarian Infighting Begins Early After Buddha’s Death

1. First Council of Buddhists Gather One Year After Buddha’s Death to Determine True Meaning of Teachings

2. Second Council of Buddhists (390 B.C.E) Controlled by Conservative Minority Declares Most Buddhists Heretical
   a. Conservative Minority: Exclusive Way (Hinayana)
   b. Liberal Majority: Expansive Way (Mahayana)
C. Indian Emperor Asoka Converts to Buddhism

1. The “Constantine” of Buddhism Rules 268-232 B.C.E
2. Asoka Uses Imperial Throne to Support Indian Buddhists
3. Asoka Sends Buddhist Missionaries to World
   a. Sent Son Mahinda to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on Successful Missionary Project
   b. Sent Missionaries as Far as Burma, Syria, Greece
4. Asoka Calls Third Council of Buddhism (247 B.C.E.) to Determine Authoritative List of Buddhist Scriptures
5. Asoka’s Efforts Guarantee Survival of Buddhism After It Virtually Ceases to Exist in India
   a. Hinduism Absorbs Buddhism by Teaching Siddhartha Gautama an *avatar* of Vishnu
   b. Presence of Islam in India Further Erodes Buddhist Presence

V. Theravada Buddhism

A. Dominant Sect among Conservative Minority *Hinayana*

1. Considers Itself Closer to Original Teachings of Buddha
2. Dominant in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos

B. Teachings and Practices of Theravada Buddhism

1. People Must Achieve Enlightenment for Themselves Without Reliance on Gods or Any External Forces
2. Detached, Begging Monk is Ideal Buddhist, Most Likely to Attain *Nirvana*
3. Lay Buddhists Ought to Support Monks, Sometimes Join Monastic Life Temporarily
4. Ritual / Ceremony Based on Veneration of Buddha’s Relics
5. Believe Many Buddhas Before and After Siddhartha
6. The *Jataka* Tales of Siddhartha’s Many Prior Lives before Enlightenment Released Him Provide Common Themes in Theravada Art, Preaching, Writings

7. The Theravada *wat*: A Complex of Religious Buildings
   a. The *bot* or *vihara* is Hall for Teaching, Preaching and Meditation
   b. The *stupas* or *paGodas*: Originate as Relic Mounds, Used Today as Worship and Festival Centers
      (1) Focus not Worship of Buddha or Saint, but Respect Ideas of Buddhahood
      (2) Places to Meditate

8. Types of Theravada Meditation
   a. Sammatta: Intense Concentration to Attain Spiritual State the open Path to Enlightenment
   b. Vipassana: Effort to Gain Sudden, Intuitive Realization of Buddhist Truths, as Siddhartha had Under the *bo* Tree

VI. Mahayana Buddhism

   A. The Principles of Mahayana

   1. Claim that Buddha Taught Secret Principles to Select Few Serves as Warrant for Expansive Interpretations of Basic Buddhist Concepts

   2. Between Third Century B.C.E. and First Century C.E. Mahayana Sects Teach Buddha was More than Human, a Compassionate Godlike Being Incarnate as a Man

   3. Siddhartha Gautama Not Only Buddha to Whom People can Appeal, but Only One of Many Incarnations of the Eternal Buddha
      a. The Rise of a New Type of Veneration and Worship
      b. Cultic Systems Develop for Many Eternal Buddhas
      c. Missionary Buddhists Adapt Native Cultic Practices to Worship of Eternal Buddha
      d. The Rise of Veneration of Buddhist Saints (*Bodhisattvas*) who Postpone *Nirvana* to Spend Time Compassionately Aiding the Living
B. The Spread of Mahayana Buddhism

1. Third Century C.E. Mahayana Spreads in China

2. From China Mahayana Spreads to Korea (Fourth Century C.E.) and Japan (Sixth Century C.E.)

3. Mahayana Spreads to Bali, Sumatra, Java, Mongolia, Tibet

C. Mahayanist Sects

1. The Pure Land Sect (*Ching-t’u, Jodo*)
   a. Most Popular and Widespread
   b. Goal is Life after Death in Land of Bliss
   c. Cosmic *Bodhisattvas*, Such as Dhyani Buddhas, Preside Over Heavenlike Buddha-lands
   d. *Amitabha*: Popular Pure Land *Bodhisattva* who Presides Over a Paradise Called the “Pure Land,” Object of Worship in Pure Land “churches”
   e. Deviation from the Historical Buddha’s Doctrine?

2. The Intuitive Sects (*Ch’an, Zen* )
   a. Recall that Buddha Failed to Attain Enlightenment While Studying Philosophy Under a Guru
   b. Enlightenment Comes Suddenly, Intuitively
   c. Monk Bodhidharma Found Meditative Sects in Fifth Century C.E.
   d. In China Bodhidharma’s Meditative (Vipassana) Form of Buddhism is Known as “Ch’an” and in Japan it is Known as “Zen”
   e. Basic Principles of *Ch’an, Zen*
      (1) Enlightenment is Sudden Flash (satori)
      (2) Enlightenment is Individual Matter and thus Other People or Institutions or Gods Cannot Aid the Process
      (3) Reason Distrusted Because Cannot Lead to Enlightenment
      (4) Zen *koans*: Riddles to Confuse Reason and Make Enlightenment Possible
   f. Zen Buddhism Flourished in Japan, Shaped Much of its Culture, Architecture, and Aesthetics
3. The Rationalist Sect (T’ien-t’ai, Tendai)
   a. Originates in Sixth Century C.E. China
   b. Use Reason and Study of Buddhist Scriptures to Attain Enlightenment
   c. Founded by Monk Chih-I
   d. Known as T’ien-t’ai in China, Tendai in Japan

4. The Sociopolitical Sect (Nichiren)
   a. Japanese Founder Nichiren (Sun Lotus) Lived in Thirteenth Century C.E.
   b. Nichiren Begins as Tendai Monk, but Decides all Current Japanese Versions of Buddhism are Perverting Buddha’s True Teachings
   c. Nichiren Emphasizes Priority of Lous Sutra
   d. Nichiren and Soka Gakkai Sects Challenge Japan to Purify its Buddhist Beliefs and Practices

D. Tibetan Buddhism

1. Buddhism Introduced to Tibet in Seventh Century C.E. by King Srong-brtsan-sgam-po and His Indian and Chinese Buddhist Wives

2. Unique Attributes of Tibetan Buddhism
   a. Belief in Magical Words and Formulas as Means to Achieve Goals Deeply Influences Tibetan Buddhism
      (1) Native Tibetan Religion Relied on Incantations and Spells to Protect People from Dark Spirits
      (2) Bon: Folk Buddhism in Tibet based More on Native Tibetan Religion than Buddha’s Doctrine of Enlightenment
      (3) Tantric Buddhism: Tibetan Buddhist Manuals (tantras) Teaching Magical Words and Spells
      (4) The Sexual-Hedonistic Development and Excesses of Tantric Buddhism
b. Prayer to *Bodhisattva* Avalokiteshvara, Patron of Tibetan People

c. The Prayer Wheel

d. The Tibetan Clergy: The *Lamas* (Superior Ones)

(1) Originate in Ninth Century C.E. as Wealthy and Powerful Monastic Leaders
(2) The *Lamas* Displace Kings, Rule Theocratic Tibet by Fourteenth Century C.E.
(3) The Yellow Hat School
   (a) Led by Dalai Lama
   (b) Dalai Lama is Reincarnation of Previous Dalai Lamas
   (c) Dalai Lama was Theocratic Ruler of Tibet Until China’s 1950 Invasion
(4) The Red Hat School
   (a) Scriptural Book: Tibetan Book of the Dead (*Bardro Thodol*)
   (b) The *Bardo*: Near-Death and/or Post-Death State which One Either Moves on to *Nirvana* or is Reborn
   (c) Ritual Practices Designed to Help Dying Move through *Bardo* to *Nirvana*

VII. Buddhist Festivals and Holy Days

A. New Year

1. Theravada Buddhists Celebrate in April
2. Characterized by Carnival Atmosphere

B. Buddha’s Birthday

1. Celebrated on April 8th in China and Japan
2. Celebrated on Last Day of May in Southeast Asia
3. Flower Festivals Common
4. Washing of Infant Buddha Statues Common
5. Children Dress Up Like Little Buddha

C. The Festival of Souls (Ullambana)

1. July (Japan) or August (China)
2. Purgatory Opened and Souls of Dead Wander Earth
3. Families Leave Gifts of Food for Wandering Spirits
4. Priests Perform Rituals to Provide Souls of the Dead Comfort and Release from Purgatory

D. The Robe Offering

1. November in Theravada Buddhism
2. Celebration of Emperor Asoka’s Sending of First Buddhist Missionaries
3. Laity Present New Yellow Robes to Monks
4. Public Feast and Display of Robes on a Wishing Tree Make Up the Ceremony
5. Season Ends with Presentation of Great Robe (mahakathina) to Commemorate Act of Buddha’s Mother Weaving Him a Mendicant Robe in One Night

VIII. Buddhism Today

A. Buddhism Quiescent After Missionary Period Until Twentieth Century Revival

B. Factors Contributing to the Buddhist Revival

1. Christian Missionaries Translate Buddhist Texts, Some Convert, and Cause Fascination with Buddhism in the West

2. The Rise of Asian Nationalism Leads to Rise of Theravada Buddhism
   a. Asian Buddhism More Compatible with Science than Christianity
   b. Asian Buddhism More Peaceful and Tolerant than Secular or Christian West

C. Renewal of Buddhist Missionary Societies

D. Renewed Interest in Post-Maoist China and America

E. Mahayana Remains Living Force in Lives of Many Japanese and Koreans

F. Currently 324 Million Buddhists in the World
### Key Names, Concepts, and Terms

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