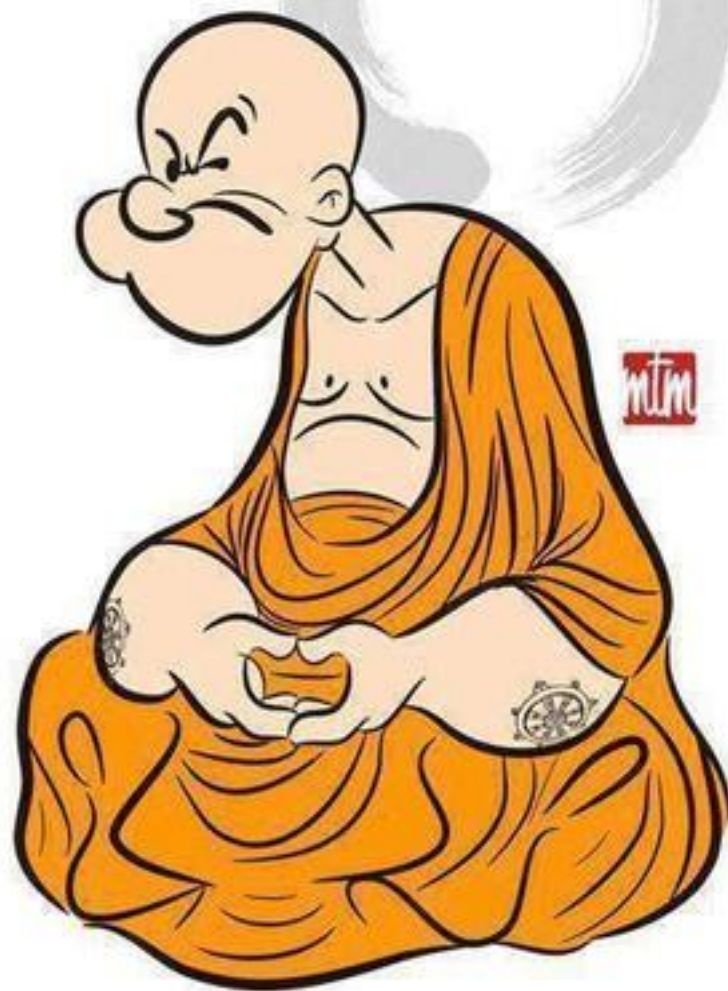


# Buddhism in the Ranks

What YOU need to know

Crafted by CH (CPT) Christopher Mohr

i am what i am,  
and thats all that i am.

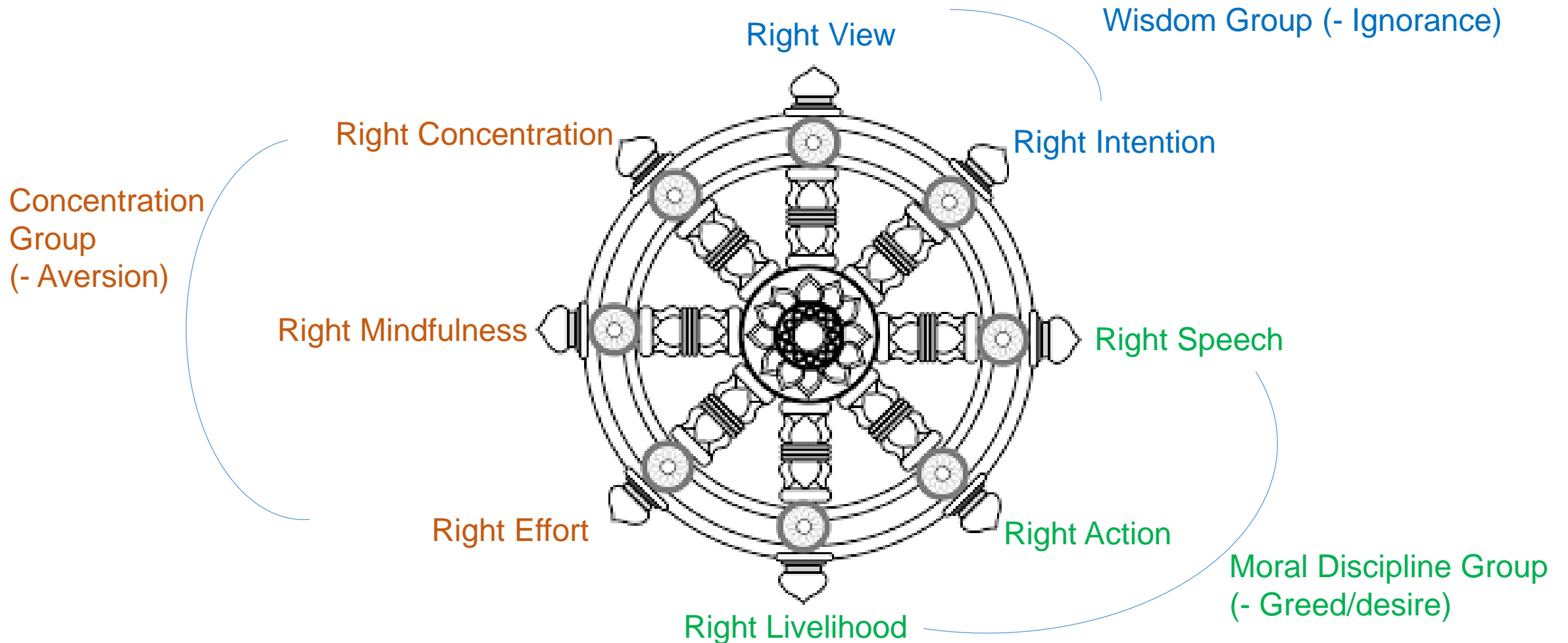


# Basic Beliefs

## 4 Noble Truths

- DUKKHA
  - Translations: “unsatisfactoriness”, suffering, stress, etc.
- Arising of dukkha
  - Causes of dukkha: craving, aversion, ignorance (we’ll go into these later)
- Cessation of dukkha
  - One can cause dukkha to cease by recognizing these causes and abandoning them
- The path to the cessation of dukkha
  - This is the Eightfold Noble Path (see description and diagram, next 2 slides)

# Basic Beliefs Eightfold Noble Path



# Basic Beliefs

- The Noble Eightfold Path
  - Right View:
    - see reality just as it is, proper discernment
  - Right Intention/Resolve:
    - **WHY** you do things matters, your intentions drive your actions
  - Right Speech:
    - being mindful that words have power, speak only those which do no harm
  - Right Action:
    - acting in a wholesome, skillful, blameless way that is praised by the wise
  - Right Livelihood:
    - be mindful of what harm your job produces and minimize it
  - Right Effort:
    - “Cease to do evil, learn to do good, and purify your mind” - Buddha
  - Right Mindfulness:
    - Meditation practice is key to spiritual liberation and Awakening/Enlightenment
  - Right Concentration:
    - What, how, and why you focus on things matters

# Basic Beliefs

- Three Poisons:
  - Lobha/Raga (greed/attachment/desire)
  - Dosa/Dvesha (anger/aversion/hatred)
  - Moha/Avidhya (ignorance/foolishness/delusion)
- 4 Divine Abodes/Sublime States:
  - Karuna (compassion)
  - Metta/Maitri (loving kindness)
  - Mudita (sympathetic/altruistic joy)
  - Upekkha/Upeksha (equanimity)
- Three Jewels/Triple Gem
  - Buddha (teacher), Dharma (~teaching), Sangha (community\*)
  - Buddha is respected, but he was NOT a god, and is NOT worshipped.
    - Buddhism is a NON-theistic religion. It's not that god or gods are present or absent, it's that their existence/non-existence matters **less** than **your actions**.

# Basic Beliefs

- Karma (literally means “action”) – volitional acts and the chain of results each act generates. NOT “divine justice” or “divine retribution” or punishment, it is simple cause and effect: you are responsible for your actions AND their results
- Impermanence: All compounded things are changing, and therefore are impermanent. To exist, a thing must be permanent.
  - This is what we refer to as “emptiness” or “no-thingness”. If a thing is without a permanent, unchanging essence, it is called “empty” \*
- Middle Way – avoiding the extremes of annihilationism and eternalism, neither of which are useful or skillful in Buddhism.
- Not-self (anatta/anatman). In Buddhism, there is no unchanging, eternal soul emanating from a divine essence\*
- No fixed hierarchy of privilege: caste/race, gender, status, rank, position, wealth, looks, and all external characteristics **are meaningless** to the path, **all are capable of enlightenment**. The Buddha proved this by ordaining women and members of the “untouchable” caste as well as powerful rulers and householders. In a way he was one of the world’s first Equal Opportunity Leaders.

\*We can, however, say that in conventional terms a thing or being may be more or less constant on a **relative** level, but not an **absolute** one.

# Basic Beliefs

- Samsara and Cosmology: Samsara is the cycle of rebirth/recycling, commonly shown as some variation of the picture to the left. The six realms it shows are:
  - Divine/deva realm (multiple heavens)
  - Asura (warring devas) realm
  - Human realm
  - Animal realm
  - Hungry ghost realm
  - Hell realm (multiple hells)\*

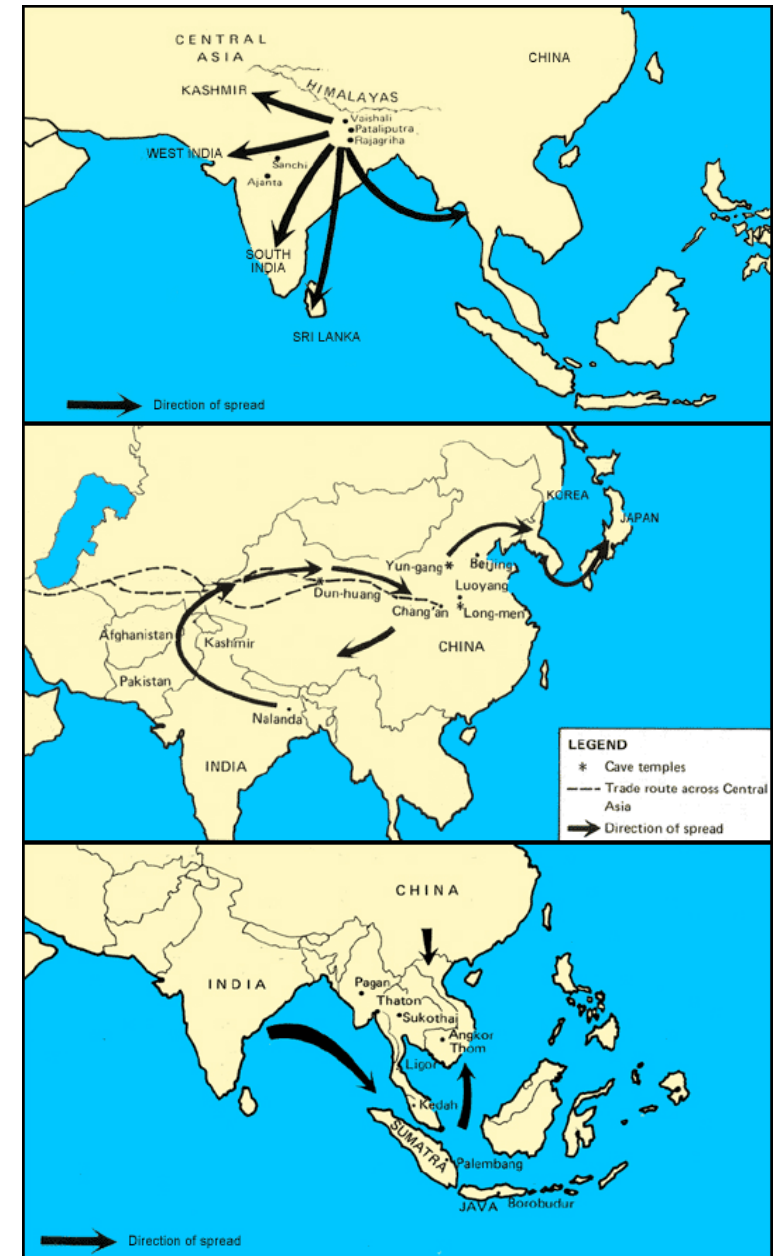




# Historical underpinnings, 1/2

Buddhism began in a relatively small area of modern day Nepal, and spread over time from there. Some key points:

- Clement of Alexandria (2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE) wrote about the Buddha, indicating early interaction with Greece and Rome in Antiquity.
- Buddhism went where the trade routes did, following the Silk Road into China(though it had a rocky start there), from there it went where Chinese trade and culture did.
- “Southern” Buddhism, largely Theravada, spread by travel by land and by ocean (later, Vajrayana took a similar route).



# Historical Underpinnings, 2/2

- “Northern Buddhism” went around the Himalayas, into China, and developed into a wide variety of practice methods, based on where it was (“84000 ways to practice”).
  - Several waves of translator-monks made their way to China, bringing with them “new” texts, which caused the building of a rich diversity of Buddhist schools and religious orders.
    - Also allowed for inclusion, rather than fighting locals to give up their customs & practices.
  - These monks had to rely on official Chinese patronage and operate under Chinese cultural norms, which was...more than a little problematic.
    - This is where we get the Chinese (and Chinese cultural sphere) Buddhist focus on hierarchy.
    - It is also where Buddhists as vegetarians began.
  - Places these types of Buddhism can be found: China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, and with cultural transplants, it can also be found everywhere from Australia to Brazil, to Africa, to England and several places in North America.

# Buddhism in the US – a brief history

- By the early 1800s, immigrants from China and Japan had successfully brought Buddhism to the US. In fact, the Buddhist Churches of America can date their history back to 1893, when the first Jodo Shinshu priests arrived in San Francisco. They built their first temple on US soil in 1899, when it was called the Buddhist Mission of North America (name changed in 1944).
- Both the Army AND the BCA wanted to field a Buddhist chaplain as far back as WWII, but the BMNA was not an endorsing body, and the US military didn't have a Buddhist chaplain until 2006 (USN, Chaplain Jeanette Shin).
- 1950s and 1960s. Buddhism was picked up and adapted by the Beatniks and other counter-culture movements. We haven't yet fully recovered.
- Post-Vietnam, the US saw a large number of very small Vietnamese Buddhist temples pop up where the refugees of that war arrived.
- Recently Buddhist-inspired groups like Insight Meditation have sprung up.

# Primary types of Buddhism you might encounter

- Theravada (from Sri Lanka to Laos)
- Zen/Ch'an/Seon (Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean)
  - Soto, Rinzai, Obaku, Jogye, Taego
- Jodo/Jodo Shinshu/Pure Land (Mostly Chinese and Japanese)
- Offshoots of the Nichiren School (Mostly Japanese)
- Shingon/Shen'yen/Tibetan Vajrayana (statistically, Japanese, but western imagination calls this "Tibetan" Buddhism)
- Various western Buddhist practitioners (Insight/Vipassana)
- There are other schools, but they are very rare in the US Buddhist population, and probably will not be in your units. Feel free to contact me to ask for advice on accommodations if you do have one.

# Theravada

- Theravada = “Way of the Elders”,
- Typically found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and very small pockets in China, Japan, and western nations.
- Theravada tends to be the most conservative of all the schools of Buddhism
  - Believe that they are the most authoritative, follow the Pali Canon: **45 volumes** of the Buddha’s teaching, supposedly directly from the Buddha’s mouth. This is why we don’t have a Buddhist “bible” for Service Members
  - One focus for the lay community is making merit by supporting the monastic community as they seek to attain liberation.
  - Monks/nuns usually focus on attaining liberation (being an arahant/arhat) and teaching the laity
- Common practices: meditation (usually seated), chanting, holidays and festivals.

# Zen, Chan, Seon/Son: important practices & info

The name comes from the Sanskrit “dhyana” (Pali “jhana”), and literally means meditation. One can guess where their focus is.

- Types of meditation (typically) practiced:
  - Seated – this is the one most commonly associated with Buddhism. It can be done any number of ways.
  - Walking – exactly what it says. Usually this is done between longer periods of meditation (for example, 1-15 minute walking session between 2-45 minute seated sessions).
  - Eating – each part of the eating process, done deliberately and mindfully.
  - Extended retreats – these are anywhere from three days to several months, and involve intensive sessions of all of the above in a format that is essentially silent and where all distractions are minimized.
- Zen tends to be the most austere and the most antinomian.

# Jodo/Jodo Shinshu and Pure Land groups

- Jodo has typically been a more devotional Buddhism (and is often called “Buddhism’s Protestant denomination”)
- Typically found in China/Japan, small pockets in the US, most on the Coasts and Great Lakes.
- Focus is on the Pure Land Sutras and the teachings of Honen/Shinran, and practices focus on being reborn in the Western Pure Land.
  - Administered by Amida Buddha, this is a place where there are no obstacles to practice, and attaining enlightenment is an absolute guarantee.
  - “Self-power” vs. “other power”
  - Salvation through faith in Amida Buddha/chanting the Nianfo/Nembutsu (Namo Amitofo/Namu Amida Butsu)
- The DOD’s first Buddhist chaplain comes from Jodo Shinshu.
- Back in the 1300s, a Jodo group fielded Buddhist “chaplains” for the Japanese warlords (Rokuji Nembutsushu’s itinerant monks).

# Offshoots of the Nichiren school

- Nichiren Buddhism is a school (with offshoots) following the teachings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century monk Nichiren.
  - Nichiren successfully predicted the “divine wind” or kamikaze that would drive off the invading Mongol horde of Kublai Khan, and used that to gain influence in 13<sup>th</sup> century Japan.
  - He was prosecuted (his followers say persecuted) and nearly killed several times by authorities, and this experience filtered down amongst his followers through the centuries.
  - His followers built some of the most “aggressive” Buddhist organizations, known for their strong emphasis on devotion and conversion (Sokka Gakkai, especially, though even they have moderated quite a bit in recent decades).
  - Primary teachings revolve around the Lotus Sutra, and it is very common to hear these groups continuously chanting “Namu Myoho Renge Kyo”, roughly translated “Praise to the Lotus Sutra” or “Praise to the brightly shining lotus scripture”.



# Vajrayana (“thunderbolt” vehicle)

- Kukai brought it to Japan, where it became quite successful (currently 25 million adherents). It also went to Tibet, where it became the dominant faith (currently about 7.5-10 million adherents). This is the most mystic/esoteric side of the Buddhist house, focusing on direct experience of enlightenment "as quickly as a thunderbolt".
- Types of meditation (typically) practiced:
  - Seated (such as moon-disk meditation)
  - Chanting mantras
  - Visualization (usually using symbols or characters to spur an awakening)
  - Inter-being with various spiritual forces/beings
  - Heavy on ritual practices as skillful means
- Belief that one can become enlightened “in this body”, or in an instant, with the right practice, hence the thunderbolt.

VAJRA →



# Various Modern/Western Practitioners

- Insight Meditation Centers
  - This is vipassana (focused awareness, a type of meditation) based
- Mindfulness Meditation
  - Most notable because of the contributions of Jon Kabat-Zinn
  - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
  - Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
  - Derived from vipassana, but has been completely secularized.
  - HEAVILY researched in the past few decades, with rather astounding results.
- Shambhala communities
  - Tibetan-based, largely Vajrayana in nature