

# Learning About Buddhism

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Buddhism was founded over 2500 years ago in India by Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha. Buddhism is a very popular religion, not only in Asia, where it originated, but all over the world. Its popularity has grown not only in terms of its religious beliefs, but of its practices as well.

## Core Buddhist Beliefs

- Samsara is the cycle of birth and death, believed that we could be reborn as people, animals, titans, ghosts, in heaven, or in hell
- Humans do not have a soul as it is not present in the 5 things Buddha noticed when meditating. The body, perceptions, feelings, thoughts and consciousness
- Nirvana is being able to leave the process of rebirth and achieving eternal peace. It is achieved by eliminating all desire, especially the three 'fires' which are passion, aversion, and ignorance. It involves practicing morality, meditation and wisdom.



## History of Buddhism in East Asia

- Buddhism arrived via Central Asia around 1<sup>st</sup> CCE with merchants/traders during the Han Dynasty
- In Confucianism, which was what dominated East Asia at the time, they cared very much about tradition and Buddhism contradicted those views. Buddhists are renunciants, they renounced everything, their jobs, siblings, parents, and kids.
- Confucianists believed in filial piety, which is to honor and praise their parents, so they viewed Buddhists as people who had abandoned their culture and family.
- Buddhism rose with the fall of the Han Dynasty, as non-Chinese invaders and rulers liked that Buddhism was not native to the land
- Chinese interest in Buddhism was in terms of nature + minds, the essential purity immanence of enlightenment + universality of Buddhahood. Believed that enlightenment was not something to strive after, but something you realize about yourself. Had the saying: If you see the Buddha out there, kill him.
- After the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907) most schools of Buddhism declined and disappeared

## The Buddhist Temple of Chicago:

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago was founded on October 8, 1944, by survivors of Japanese internment camps. At the end of the war, Japanese-Americans were released into selected areas spread out all over the country in small groups in order to prevent them from forming large communities. Including areas in Illinois. The temple was founded in Hyde park by Gyomay Kubose who was a Japanese– American Buddhist teacher. Having this temple allowed a community to form among Japanese – Americans as they came together for a sermon but would stay after to share stories and have dinner together, an act that is still practiced today. The altar displayed below was constructed in an internment camp and was brought to the temple.



## Quotes

- It has assumed parts of other cultures
- Very flexible, allows it to adapt to other forms
- There is no deity or rituals, it is more of a lifestyle
- Enlightenment is all around us, we just need to control our ego
- Important concepts added on: heaven, reincarnation