

BUDDHISM AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Kishore Sherchand
ksherchand@yahoo.com

Buddha, Buddhism and its philosophy came through the enlightenment of Sidhartha Gautama who universally known as “Shakyamuni Buddha” born in the ancient village of Lumbini Nepal 644 B.C. Since then, Buddhism took a turning path at three-plus historic phases.

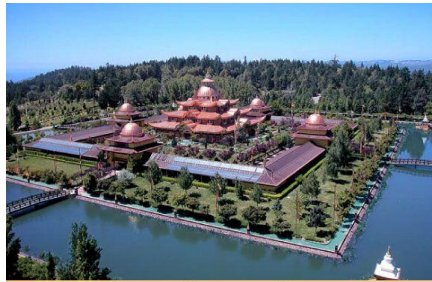


1. Ancient Phase: Ancient phase took place by the rise of Maurya Ruler of Indian Subcontinent Emperor Ashoka who took Buddhism basically as a religion via ancient Silk Road carried by silk traders as far as Greece. This turning point made a collaborative exchange between the East and the West. Buddhism gave Relics, Images and Monasticism to the West and the West gave Image (Idol/Image worship) to Buddhism (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX2f6QHkU-I>).
Ancient Mogao Caves, Dunhuang, China
Simultaneously, Buddhism spread Southward via Sri Lanka and then to many South East Asian Countries. The ancient Buddhist Text Tipitaka (Pali Canon) was the first written in Sri Lanka in the early century.

2. Medieval Phase: The medieval phase lost Buddhism from Nepal and India by the reason of the Muslim invasion in India and by the uprise of so-called Hinduism in India. Buddhism totally vanished in the Indian sub-continent and barely survived in the foot-hills of the Himalaya. Sri-Lanka is the only South Asian Country that survived to retain this peaceful religion. However, Buddhism took its sustaining root in many East and South-East Asian countries.

3. Modern Phase: Buddhism is now universal especially by the West of self-realization. It is becoming accepted more of a philosophical and spiritual than the ritual. So western scholars advocate Buddhism both religion and philosophy as a universal religion. Further, world renowned scientist Albert Einstein foresees the universal religion as a cosmic religion in which human being is the part of the whole. He experienced himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few

persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty. Wisdom, Buddhist teaching, meditation and yoga practices are the keys to a way



COPPER MOUNTAIN TEMPLE
CONSTRUCTED 1975-1988
Udiyan Retreat Center, California



First Tipitaka Chanting Celebration, USA



Public Meditation For Mindfulness, USA

of life <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/religion-and-science-albert-einstein/1101957900?ean=2940012572189>. Parliament Of World Religions held in Chicago, USA in 1893 was a landmark call to the west and the whole world. Especially with respect to USA, Chinese immigrants with the establishment of the States of California were primarily responsible for erecting the first Buddhist temple in the city of San Francisco, CA, USA in 1853 and introduced Buddhism in the mainland United States. Other immigrants from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Thailand, Sri-Lanka were the key to spread to the West. India and Nepal had very little role in modern history.

4. The Future: The future is likely to be the synergism between Buddhism and the western religion especially with Christianity. Scholars of both sides including monks and nuns will have much to say in the mid of war, political and social unrest. Both think that via discussion and forums these two religions may come together to address and complement the global issues than other religions. Both would agree to the tips of compassion, loving-kindness, social justice, non-violence, and liberation.

World renowned and Man of the Century Albert Einstein wrote in his quote, “The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.” (https://www.azquotes.com/author/4399Albert_Einstein/tag/buddhism).