

Overview of Buddhist Traditions

Every Buddhist tradition:

- unites stable attention (shamatha) and insight (vipashyana) to dismantle the perceptual, emotional, and behavioral patterns that create suffering
- uses various methods of raising energy to fuel insight and release of patterns: metta, impermanence, posture, chanting, bowing, visualization, devotion, etc
- includes removing obstacles, cultivating virtues & powers, and opening to full experience
- relies on the transmission of knowledge, insight and faith through lineages of teachers
- integrates with local cultures & worldviews (Hindu, Taoist, Confucian, animist, scientific, psychological)

TRADITION	BASIS	TEACHINGS & PRACTICES	MAJOR TEXTS	WHERE	FOUNDERS
THERAVADA	ethics & renunciation mindfulness concentration	morality, concentration, wisdom insight into 3 marks refuge & precept vows 4 noble truths, 8-fold path interdependent origination & karma bare attention concentrative absorptions (jhanas) brahma-viharas esp. lovingkindness (metta)	Vinaya monastic rules Sutta teachings (incl Dhammapada, Satipatthana Sutta, Anapanasati Suttas) Abhidhamma analyses (incl Visuddhimagga)	India Sri Lanka Thailand Burma Laos Cambodia	Shakyamuni Buddhaghosa
MAHAYANA Mind Only Middle Way	emptiness compassion bodhisattva vow	unites insight into emptiness with compassion 6 perfections (paramitas) buddha nature awakening mind (bodhicitta), bodhisattva vow prayer: bodhicitta, 7-branch, etc 4 immeasurables, esp. compassion graded stages of the path (lam rim) taking & sending (tonglen)	Perfection of Wisdom incl Heart & Diamond Sutras Lankavatara Sutra Lotus Sutra Flower Garland Sutra Shantideva's Guide Vimalakirti Sutra	Tibet China Vietnam Japan	Nagarjuna Dignaga Dharmakirti Vasubhanda Asanga Shantideva Atisa
ZEN Chinese Ch'an Jap. Soto & Rinzai Korean Son	insight direct transmission 4 vows	4 vows simply sitting (shikantaza) insight through koans bowing, chanting, walking, work	Heart Sutra Platform Sutra of Hui-Neng Gateless Gate (Mumonkan) Dogen's Shobogenzo Transmission of the Light	China Japan Korea	Mahakashyapa Bodhidharma Hui-Neng Lin-chi (Rinzai) Dogen
PURE LAND Jodo Shinshu	faith in other-power humility gratitude	other power: relying on Amida's vows compassion & service	Pure Land sutras Shinran's writings	China Japan	Honen Shinran Renryo
NICHIREN Nichiren Shu Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai	faith	chanting veneration of the Lotus Sutra	Lotus Sutra Nichiren's writings	Japan	Nichiren Nikko
VAJRAYANA tantra Shingon	faith & devotion energy transformation samaya bond	samsara is nirvana 100,000 preliminaries (ngondro) rituals 3 roots: guru, yidam, protectors mantra, visualization, internal energy yogas direct presence: mahamudra & dzogchen	father (illusory body) tantras incl Guhyasamaja, Vajrabhairava (Yamantaka); mother (clear light) tantras incl Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Vajrayogini, Kalachakra	Tibet Japan	84 mahasiddhas Padmasambhava Naropa Milarepa Kukai