10 THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

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THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

In the course of the last 2600 years, Buddhism spread from India through various Asian countries. However, it disappeared in its country of origin, India, due to Islamic conquests in the 11th and 12th centuries. Attempts to make Buddhism accessible to a larger amount of interested people in the 19th century, mostly Theravada, in Central Europe and the USA, failed largely because of the living conditions at the time and the lack of authentic transmission. In Tibet, 99.9% of the Buddhist infrastructure was destroyed in the mid-20th century due to Chinese invasion. Since the 1970s, Buddhism has become increasingly popular, especially in Western countries.

No direct written sources exist of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, who lived around 560 BC. His disciples kept the teachings in memory and wrote them down after his death. Buddhist historiography is therefore based on both texts and oral transmissions.

After his enlightenment, the Buddha wandered around northern India teaching for 45 years. In the first years he taught mainly the basics of the Path of the Elders (Theravada), which aims at liberation from personal suffering. Building on this was the teaching of the Great Way (Mahayana), centered on compassion and wisdom. Finally, Buddha also taught the Diamond Way (Vajrayana), which aims directly at the realization of Buddha nature, that is, all the qualities inherent in the mind.

The Path of the Elders spread in the following centuries in India and later far beyond the country's borders. In the 1st century A.D., the teachings of the Great Way became increasingly known in northern India, where they experienced their spiritual heyday from the 5th century onward. After being passed on only from teacher to student in India, the Buddhist teachings first became known in Tibet in the form of the Diamond Way around the 8th century.

In the 11th and 12th centuries A.D., Buddhism was consolidated in Southeast Asian countries as the Way of the Elders (Theravada, also "Southern Buddhism"). In the areas north and east of India, the Great Way and the Diamond Way (also "northern Buddhism") spread.

Buddhism was lost in its country of origin during this period. In the eleventh century, Turkic peoples (the Ghurids) began to take control of India from the northwest. As a result, Buddhism disappeared in Kashmir by the thirteenth century. Teachers and practitioners fled east to the central Indian plains or across the mountains to Tibet. A good hundred years later, the conquerors finally ruled over much of northern India. In the final phase of Indian Buddhism, the lineage holders made every effort to fully transmit the teaching to those countries that had opened themselves to it. In all the countries that embraced Buddhism, it shaped the culture for centuries, if not for a whole millennium, right up to our own time (an exception to this is Indonesia, which became Muslim in the 14th/15th centuries. Here Buddhism lasted for a total of 900 years). Thus Buddhism today unites an extraordinarily rich spiritual life from two and a half millennia with very different cultural backgrounds.

Buddhism grew strong where people were open to it. After Buddha's death, his disciples continued to spread the teaching. The Indian monastic university of Nalanda became the spiritual center of the new movement for a whole millennium. Traveling merchants brought Buddhism to other countries, which then invited scholars from India. Sometimes kings from different regions supported the new teaching, such as Ashoka in India (304 - 232 BC), Songtsen Gampo (604 - 650) and Trisong Detsen (742 - 796) in Tibet, or the Chinese emperor Yung-lo (1360 - 1424). Another important factor in the geographical expansion of Buddhism beyond India was the codification of Buddhist texts. This allowed them to form the basis for the study of Buddhist philosophy and to be widely disseminated. Later, the emergence of Buddhism in other regions of the world was very different: In the 16th/17th century, Mongolian tribes brought the teachings of the Great Way and Diamond Way to what is now Mongolia and Russia. In the USA, on the other hand, it was mainly immigrant Koreans and Chinese, the latter founding the first Buddhist center in San Francisco in the mid-19th century.

At the same time, the first delicate approaches to Buddhism emerged in the German-speaking world among the upper middle classes and in artistic circles. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 - 1860; "The world exists in consciousness") spoke of "Buddhaism", Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 - 1900), Richard Wagner (1813 - 1873), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 - 1926), C.G. Jung (1875 - 1961) and Hermann Hesse (1877 - 1962) likewise showed a strong inclination towards Buddhism.

The hippie era, the search for new levels of consciousness by means of drugs, protests against the Vietnam War, peace demonstrations at the time of the Cold War, music with all its extreme manifestations (e.g. the festival in Woodstock), the student and civil rights movements, the politicization of everyday life, the trying out of new ways of life, which in Western Europe and North America expressed a break with the encrusted old traditions and the urge for individual freedom, testified to the changed consciousness of the young generation in the 1960s. Part of this freedom movement arose specifically from a desire for intellectual development.

Research and science also opened up to new ways of thinking. For example, newly emerged branches of science are wisdom research, resilience research, and happiness research.
For example, a branch of humanistic psychology that focuses on the potential of human development and is characterized by a free, non-moralizing, and compassion-based attitude is similar to the Buddhist view of inherent qualities. However, psychology generally describes states in the mind, whereas Buddhism ultimately aims at the full realization of the nature of mind.

The scientific findings of quantum physics about entangled particles and their behavior in space ("space is information") can be related to the statements of the historical Buddha about "form is emptiness, emptiness is form" etc.. This may have facilitated the opening to Buddhist views. In general, however, science is more about knowledge, while Buddhism is about experience.

Buddhist teachings have become widely available and popular in many sectors of society. They inspire - often not even explicitly declared as "Buddhist" (e.g. the development of more mindfulness) - and can change people's attitude towards lasting happiness.

Since the late 20th century, Buddhist teachings have spread to many Westernized countries. There are many communities of different Buddhist directions that live Buddha's way in everyday life and continue his teachings in an exemplary way.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

COURSE OF LESSON – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- explain where Buddhism has its historical origin.
- explain how and in which countries it spread and disappeared until today.
- understand the connection between religious freedom in free democratic countries and the interest in Buddha's teachings.

(OPTIONAL) RESEARCH	The spread of Buddhism has produced different emphases and forms of expression. Search the Internet for Buddhist groups and centers worldwide.	**Exercise 4 to WS 1** Students research online (Theravada, Great Way, Zen, Diamond Way) Discussion
EXERCISE 3	Conditions for the spread of Buddhism in the West and its appeal	**Material 4** **WS 2 and Answers to WS 2** Students consider connection
DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE	The diversity of Buddhism in different forms and manifestations	**Material 3** Students discussion images
EXERCISE 2	Timeline with spread of Buddhism - world map	**Material 2** **WS 1** Students place information on world map Presentation
EXERCISE 1	Origin of Buddhism	**Material 1** Students research
INTRO	Where have you encountered Buddhism? Where does it actually come from?	Students compile answers

BASIS

What might interest the students about the topic:

- Where does Buddhism actually come from?
- Did Buddhism only spread in Asia?
- In which countries does Buddhism exist today?

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

1. explain where Buddhism has its historical origin.
2. explain how and in which countries it spread and disappeared until today.
3. understand the connection between religious freedom in free democratic countries and the interest in Buddha's teachings.

INTRODUCTION

Buddhist symbols can be found almost everywhere in our country, e.g. in advertising, movies and idols. Where is it visible today in the modern world? Where do you hear or see something "Buddhist"?

The pupils collect experiences of their contact in the class discussion. The following list gives a possible selection: small and clearly formatted

- Buddha statues can be found in hardware stores, wellness hotels, shopping stores, hair salons, etc...
- In many places there are martial arts schools and Buddhist centers.
- The destruction of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan in 2001, which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, triggered worldwide protests.
- Travel to Asian countries influenced by Buddhism are among the most popular destinations. Tour operators and travel magazines in the media highlight sights of Buddhist culture(s) in addition to the dream booths.
- The oppression of Tibet by the Chinese occupiers often finds the interest of the media.
- Businesses advertise using Buddhist symbols and themes.
- Movies such as "Seven Years in Tibet," "Enlightenment Guaranteed," "Little Buddha," "Kundun," "World Tour with Buddha," and "Wheel of Time" have become box office successes, and prominent actors have declared in public that they are Buddhists.
- Buddha bracelets, emblems and necklaces are widely distributed as costume jewelry, there are bestsellers such as "Bad Karma".

EXERCISE 1

The introduction to the topic takes place via the guiding question: "Where does Buddhism come from and how has it spread around the world?

The students bring in their previous knowledge. The teacher shows **Material 1** (Origin of Buddhism) with a map of India and pictures of Bodhgaya, the place of Buddha's enlightenment and a core statement of Buddha.

EXERCISE 2

The students are given **Material 2** with a timeline and work out the content with the help of the world map and the tasks on **Worksheet 1** in partner work. It is a good idea to copy the world map onto (A3 format) paper. This will give the students an overview of the historical and current spread of Buddhism.

Task 4 can be given as homework. Or the research can be done at the end of the lesson, depending on the time the teacher wants to devote to this topic.

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE

To give the pupils a visual impression of the variety of manifestations of Buddhist schools, **Material 3** is presented to them with a small selection of typical pictures. The differences in the manifestations are identified in discussions in plenary.

EXERCISE 3

Here, the prerequisites for the spread of Buddhism in Western democracies and its attractiveness in more recent times are addressed. The students read **Material 4** and work in small groups on the tasks on **Worksheet 2**. **Answers to WS 2** are presented in plenary.

Finally, the students reflect on the connection between the spread of Buddhism in the West and the message of the historical Buddha (**Exercise 4 and 5**). The offer to apply the methods and to "recognize the clear light of the mind" (cf. **Material 1**) is used by people with an interest in inner development on their own initiative. In recent times, Buddhism has spread mainly in democratic countries. The basic values of freedom of expression and free practice of religion on the basis of a good general education provide the space for integrating the teachings of the Buddha into one's own life.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH, OPTIONAL

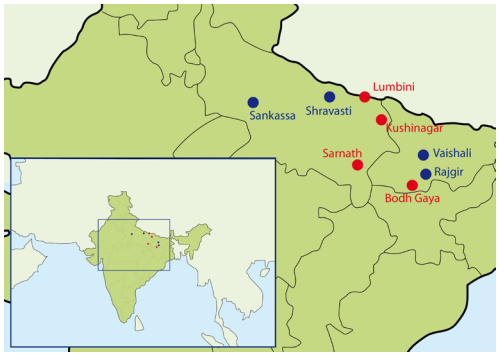
This research assignment can also be given as a one to two-week homework. In doing so, the students deepen the impression they had already gained through **Material 3**, and they should now be able to make an assignment more easily.

The students research in groups or in individual work, where today mainly Theravada (behavior, cause and effect), Great Way (attitude, compassion and wisdom), Zen and Diamond Way (identification with the intrinsic Buddha qualities) are taught. They collect typical images related to the manifestations. (See **Exercise 4 from Worksheet 1**)

The pupils find out what the respective content focus is, which forms of expression have developed and where the respective school can be found today (cf. basic text on "Buddha's teachings)". It is a good idea to search for Buddhist teachers and lay Buddhism, for stupas, temples and monasteries. The main point here is that the pupils get an impression of the abundance. A plenary discussion in a follow-up lesson is appropriate.

MATERIAL 1

ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM



About 560 B.C. Buddha was born in Lumbini as a king's son. At the age of 35 he reached enlightenment in Bodhgaya, he died after 45 years of teaching in Kushinagar, North India.



Stupa in Bodhgaya, the location of Buddha's enlightenment



Buddha statue in Bodhgaya

Buddha attained enlightenment, a state of being unshakable, supreme joy and boundless compassion. He said, "I teach because all beings desire happiness and wish to avoid suffering. Find your own Clear Light."

MATERIAL 2

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM – TIMELINE

ca. 560 BC	Buddha's birth in Lumbini, his enlightenment in Bodhgaya, 45 years of teaching in northern India
from ca. 380 BC	Spread of Theravada in India
ca. 3rd century BC	Buddhism establishes itself in Ceylon/Sri Lanka under emperor Ashoka
1st century AD	Great Way becomes stronger in Indian
from 1st century	Buddhism reaches China
from 2nd century	Buddhism reaches China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and became established there in the 11th and 12th centuries as Theravada, also known as "Southern Buddhism"
from 4th century	Buddhism in Korea
from 6th century	Emergence of Zen Buddhism in Japan
from 8th century	Buddhism reaches Tibet mainly through King Songtsen Gampo, 100 years later strengthened by King Trisong Detsen, who invited Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)
10th century	Buddhism flourishes in Kashmir, Afghanistan and Pakistan
from 11th century	Diamond Way Buddhism flourishes for 1000 years in Tibet
from 11th century	Buddhism is destroyed in India by Muslim tribes
from 12th century	Buddhism is destroyed in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir by Muslims
from 13th century	Mongolia and parts of Russia (the western and northern Mongolian tribes of Kalmykia, Buryatia and Tuva) become Buddhist
from 15th century	Destruction of Buddhism in Malaysia (partly) and Indonesia (completely) by Muslims
from 16th century	Dalai Lamas rule Tibet
from 19th century	First attempts to establish Buddhism in Western countries (Central Europe, USA)
1951 – 1959	Forced annexation of Tibet by Chinese; almost complete destruction of all Buddhist traditions; flight of many Tibetans; Forced resettlement of Buddhist ethnic groups in the communist Soviet Union under Stalin
from ca. 1970	Increased interest in Buddhism in the western free countries, in its different forms Theravada, Mahayana / Zen and Diamond Way Buddhism as a religion recognized by the state, e.g. in Austria (1983), Russia (1991) and Denmark, Slovenia (2007)
1989 **from ca. 1990**	The 14th Dalai Lama receives the Nobel Peace Prize Increased interest in Buddhism in the states of the former Warsaw Pact
from ca. 2000 and after	Worldwide travels and activities of Buddhist teachers of different traditions
from about 2000	Buddhism has established itself outside the traditional Buddhist countries on a small scale in the Western world

WORKSHEET 1

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM – MAP

EXERCISES

Read the information in **Material 2** and discuss with your partner.

1. On **Material 2**, mark countries in which Buddhism spread in yellow.
2. On **Material 2**, mark the information about destruction with a black dot.
3. Fill in other information, such as dates and countries in the world map above.
4. Research on the Internet for Buddhist centers in your area, in the nearest big city, in Europe and worldwide. Get an overview.



MATERIAL 3

PICTORIAL IMPRESSIONS OF DIFFERENT BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

THERAVADA , e.g. in Thailand, Sri Lanka






GREAT WAY in Japan, Vietnam, Korea






DIAMONDWAY, e.g. in Tibet, Bhutan, Europe






MATERIAL 4

CONDITIONS FOR THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN RECENT TIMES AND ITS ATTRACTIVENESS

Art 1:
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Art. 3:
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)(UDHR, 1948)

Art. 18:
Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

Art. 19:
Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

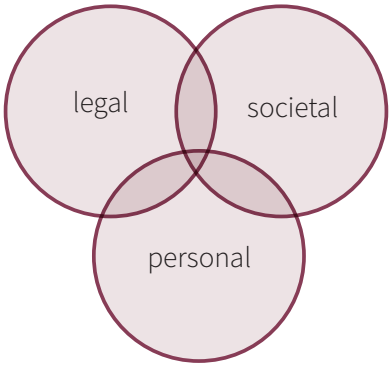
(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

Art. 20:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)



Art. 26: Everyone has the right to education. [...] Education must be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

(https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights)

The hippie era in the 1960s with its search for new levels of consciousness by means of drugs and music with all its extreme manifestations (e.g. the festival in Woodstock) as well as the politicization of everyday life with peace demonstrations, student and civil rights movements brought new wind into society with the urge for individual freedom and a break with the encrusted old traditions.

Many people were looking for a new way of life and tried out new forms of living together. Buddhist teachings became generally accessible in many areas of society and influenced - often not even explicitly declared as "Buddhist" - people's attitude to life. For example, humanistic psychology, which focuses on the potential of human development and is characterized by a free, non-moralizing attitude based on compassion, was inspired by Buddhist teachings.

Also the materialistic/mechanistic world view was broken up by the scientific realizations of quantum physics about entangled particles and their behavior in the space. This new understanding about the reality can be assigned to the statements of the historical Buddha about form and emptiness.

WORKSHEET 2

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN RECENT TIMES AND ITS APPEAL

EXERCISES

1. Why has interest in meditation increased in recent times and Buddhism become attractive to many?

2. Consider what conditions in a country allow people to freely choose a path?

3. What attitudes in a society promote openness to other religions and ways of life?

PERSONAL REASONS	POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES	SOCIETAL OPENESS

4. Explain the overlap of the three areas.

5. Explain why you think Buddhism cannot gain a foothold in some countries even if there is an interest among people in a country.

ANSWERS TO WS 2

THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM IN RECENT TIMES AND ITS APPEAL

EXERCISES

1. Why has interest in meditation increased in recent times and Buddhism become attractive to many?

2. Consider what conditions in a country allow people to freely choose a path?

3. What attitudes in a society promote openness to other religions and ways of life?

PERSONAL REASONS	POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES	SOCIETAL OPENESS
• desire for individual development • interest and openness • self-realization • desire for meaning • curiosity to gain experience • need to find one's way • ...	• human dignity • free development of the person • freedom of belief, freedom of religion • freedom of expression • freedom of assembly • right to education • other basic rights that the students know, freedom of movement, freedom to travel, etc. could be added. …	• interest and openness • respectful handling • with different points of view • recognition of other cultures • diverse media • discussion and formation of opinions is possible...

4. Explain the overlap of the three areas.
   There is an interaction in the interplay of the three domains, for example, social and political freedoms bring about personal freedoms. For example, books are not censored and premarital relations are not prohibited.

5. Explain why Buddhism cannot gain a foothold in some countries even if people there are interested.
   In dictatorships or countries without religious freedom, there is no possibility to practice Buddhism publicly because dissenting opinions and lifestyles are suppressed or even persecuted.