

Title: Conversations

Subtitle: Buddhism

Second Subtitle: Buddhism

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Quotation:

"Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion that transcends a personal God, avoids dogmas and theology; it covers both the natural and the spiritual, and is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things, to a sense of meaningful unity" Albert Einstein

Overview:

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, being exceeded in number by Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It was founded in Northern India by the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, born circa 563 BCE in Lumbini which is in modern-day Nepal. At the age of seven, he was exposed to children and political involvements in order to seek truth. It was an acceptance of the world that led some men to leave their family and lead the life of an ascetic. He studied various religions and rejected them. In 535 BCE, he attained enlightenment and assumed the title of Buddha (the awakened).

He is also referred to as the Sakyamuni, (sage of the Sakya clan). He practiced the middle way, rejecting both extremes of the mortification of the flesh and of hedonism. He taught the path to Nirvana. He had many disciples and accumulated a large public following. He died in his early 80's in 483 BCE.

Two and a half centuries later, a council of Buddhist monks collected his teachings and traditions of the faith into written form, called the Tripitaka. This included the scriptures, commentaries and traditions; most are called Sutras (discourses).

As Buddhism expanded across Asia, it evolved into two main forms, which developed independently from each other:

Theravada Buddhism (sometimes called Southern Buddhism; occasionally also called Nikaya Buddhism) has been the dominant school of Buddhism in most of Southeast Asia since the establishment of the monarchies in Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Laos.

Mahayana Buddhism (sometimes called Northern Buddhism) is largely found in China, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia.

To which might be added:

Tibetan Buddhism, which developed in isolation from Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism due to the isolation of Tibet.

Since the late 19th century:

Modern Buddhism has emerged as a truly international movement. It started to produce a single form of Buddhism, without local accretions, that all Buddhists could follow.