

BODHIDHARMA: THE FATHER OF ZEN AND SHAOLIN



BODHIDHARMA



- In Sanskrit and Pali, "Bodhi" (बोधि) generally means awakening or enlightenment.
- In Sanskrit, "Dharma" (धर्म) generally means duty, law, righteousness, or natural order.
- Therefore, Bodhidharma can be understood as the "Dharma of Awakening" or the "Law of Enlightenment."

THE PRINCE WHO BECAME A MONK

- Born in Kanchipuram, India, around 450-500 AD.
- Third son of a king, but chose a monastic life.
- His lineage traces back to Siddhartha Gautama Buddha.
- The 28th patriarch, having received his robe and bowl, symbolic of the Buddha's transmission, from Prajnatarra, the 27th patriarch in India.
- This lineage is a cornerstone of the Chan/Zen tradition, emphasizing a direct line of spiritual transmission.





THE PRINCE WHO BECAME A MONK

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- Wished to transmit the "Mind Seal" (a key aspect of Chan/Zen Buddhism of direct transmission) to China, where he believed people were receptive.
 - Traditional accounts place his arrival in China around 520 AD.

BODHIDHARMA'S LIFE, TEACHINGS, AND LEGACY

- Revered as the founder of Chan Buddhism in China, later known as Zen in Japan.
- His life and teachings have been intertwined with legend and historical accounts.
- He is also linked to the origins of Shaolin Kung Fu.



WHERE DOES ZEN BUDDHISM FIT IN? UNDERSTANDING THE DIVERSITY OF BUDDHISM

- Buddhism founded in India over 2,500 years ago by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha.
- While all schools share the fundamental goal of liberation from suffering and the attainment of enlightenment, they approach this goal with distinct emphasis and methods.
- While each of the main branches of Buddhism have distinct philosophies and practices, they all share core beliefs based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

WHERE DOES ZEN BUDDHISM FIT IN? UNDERSTANDING THE DIVERSITY OF BUDDHISM

- Buddhism emphasizes the elimination of suffering and the pursuit of enlightenment.
- Theravada and Mahayana are broad categories, and within each branch, there are various schools and traditions with their own unique characteristics and interpretations of the Dharma.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM



- Meaning: "Way of the Elders".
- Emphasis: Often regarded as the oldest form of Buddhism, it focuses on the original teachings of the Buddha as preserved in the Pali Canon, written four hundred years after Siddhartha Gautama's death.
- Goal: To become an Arhat, a perfectly enlightened being who achieves liberation through their own efforts.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM



- Practices: Strong emphasis on monastic discipline, meditation (Samatha and Vipassana), and adherence to the Vinaya Pitaka (monastic rules).
- Geographical Distribution: Primarily practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

- Meaning: "Great Vehicle".
- Emphasis: Focuses on the concept of universal salvation and the idea that all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature and can attain Buddhahood.
- Goal: To become a Bodhisattva, an enlightened being who delays their own enlightenment to help all beings achieve liberation.

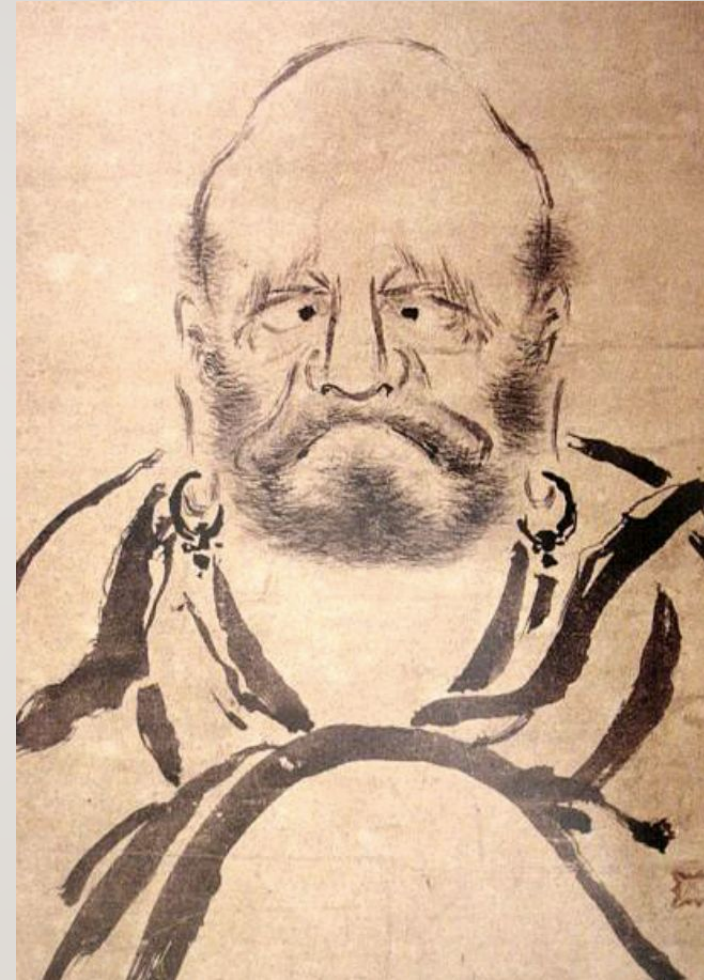


MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

- Practices: Includes various schools and practices, such as Zen (Chan), Pure Land, and Tibetan Buddhism, often incorporating devotion to a pantheon of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- Geographical Distribution: Widely practiced in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Tibet, and other East Asian countries.



THE STORIES OF BODHIDHARMA



THE LEGEND OF THE UNCONVENTIONAL MEETING

- Emperor Wu, a patron of Buddhism, sought an audience with Bodhidharma.
- Emperor Wu inquired about the merit he had gained from supporting Buddhism.
- Bodhidharma's reply: "None whatsoever," indicating that actions performed with a self-serving intention lacked true merit.



THE LEGEND OF THE UNCONVENTIONAL MEETING

- Emperor Wu then asked, "Who are you?", and Bodhidharma replied, "Don't know".
- This encounter highlights Zen's unconventional teaching methods and focus on direct experience.



NINE YEARS OF WALL-GAZING AT SHAOLIN

- According to legend, after his meeting with Emperor Wu, Bodhidharma went to the Shaolin Monastery.
- He is said to have spent nine years meditating in a cave facing a wall.
- This act became a symbol of intense concentration and spiritual endurance.
- Legends also describe miraculous events related to his meditation, such as the emergence of tea plants from his severed eyelids.
- Legend is that he cut off his eyelids to keep his eyes open and tea plants grew so he could make and drink tea to stay awake.





SHAOLIN

- Shaolin (少林) refers to both the Chinese Buddhist monastery and its associated martial arts.
- The name literally translates to "young forest", reflecting its location in a young forest at the foot of Shaoshi Mountain in the Songshan range.
- Shaolin is known as the birthplace of Chan Buddhism and the cradle of Shaolin Kung Fu.
- Shaolin is deeply intertwined with Buddhist practice, meditation, and the development of martial arts.

THE FATHER OF SHAOLIN KUNG FU?

- Legend credits Bodhidharma with introducing physical exercises at Shaolin to improve the monks' health and prepare them for long meditation sessions.
- These exercises are said to have formed the basis of Shaolin Kung Fu.
- While his direct role in creating Kung Fu is debated, his influence on the monastery's physical culture is undeniable.
- Shaolin Kung Fu emphasizes both physical and mental discipline.



THE LEGEND OF HUIKE

- There was a man named Huike who wanted to learn from Bodhidharma. He went to the cave that Bodhidharma was living in and requested to become his student. Bodhidharma refused, telling him to go away.
- Huike didn't give up. He stood outside Bodhidharma's cave in the middle of winter, waiting for Bodhidharma to change his mind. He stood until snow was up to his waist.
- In the morning, Bodhidharma asked Huike what he wanted and Huike said, "I want a teacher to open the gate of the elixir of universal compassion to liberate all beings".



THE LEGEND OF HUIKE

- Bodhidharma refused, saying, “How can you hope for true religion with little virtue, little wisdom, a shallow heart and an arrogant mind? It would just be a waste of effort.”
- After continuing to wait, Huike demonstrated his determination by cutting off his own arm.
- Bodhidharma was impressed by his commitment and accepted Huike as his student, eventually making him his heir.
- Is this story true?



BODHIDHARMA'S TEACHING: DIRECT POINTING TO THE MIND

- He is credited with speaking of "A special transmission outside the scriptures, not depending on words and letters; directly pointing to the mind, seeing into one's true nature and attaining Buddhahood."
- Emphasis on meditation (Zazen) and direct experience: Enlightenment is not solely gained through scriptures or rituals, but through insight into one's own mind.
- Focus on the present moment and everyday life: Zen is not limited to formal meditation; it can be found in all actions.
- Mindfulness and discipline: Cultivating awareness and control over thoughts and actions.

BODHIDHARMA: TWO ENTRANCES AND FOUR PRINCIPLES

- Emphasizes realizing the essence of Buddhism through instruction and seeing the shared true nature of all living things, while also emphasizing practical principles for daily life.
- In essence, the Two Entrances and Four Practices offer a roadmap for the Zen practitioner, guiding them towards the understanding of the ultimate reality and the cultivation of a compassionate and mindful life.



THE TWO ENTRANCES

- **1. Entrance by Principle:**

This involves direct insight and understanding through faith, contemplation, and the realization of one's own Buddha-nature. It emphasizes a non-dualistic understanding, where the self and others are seen as one, and the world is viewed as empty and constantly changing.

- **2. Entrance by Practice:**

This involves following specific practices that lead to enlightenment, such as the "Four Practices". These practices are not merely actions, but embody the essence of Zen principles.

THE FOUR PRACTICES (PRINCIPLES)

- **1. Receiving retribution (or accepting adversity):**

This principle emphasizes the acceptance of karmic consequences and the understanding that everything is interconnected and in constant flux. It encourages a willingness to endure hardship with equanimity.

- **2. Adapting to conditions:**

This practice involves being flexible and adaptable in response to changing circumstances. It highlights the importance of non-attachment and the understanding that nothing is permanent.

THE FOUR PRACTICES (PRINCIPLES)

- **3. Not seeking:**

This principle emphasizes the relinquishment of desire and attachment. It encourages a focus on the present moment and the letting go of expectations.

- **4. According with the Dharma (or the Law of Nature):**

This principle involves aligning one's actions and thoughts with the natural order of things. It emphasizes acting with mindfulness and compassion, and recognizing the inherent interconnectedness of all beings.

- In essence, the Two Entrances and Four Practices offer a roadmap for the Zen practitioner, guiding them towards the understanding of the ultimate reality and the cultivation of a compassionate and mindful life.

BODHIDHARMA'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

- **Father of Chan/Zen Buddhism:** His arrival and teachings were instrumental in establishing this school of Buddhism in China and beyond.
- **Shaolin Monastery:** Became a center of Chan Buddhism and martial arts, with Bodhidharma as its honored patriarch.



BODHIDHARMA'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

- Cultural Icon: Bodhidharma's image and stories have become symbols of perseverance, discipline, and wisdom in East Asian culture.
- Inspiration for Martial Arts: His association with Kung Fu continues to inspire practitioners worldwide.



THE STORY OF THE ONE SHOE

- The story of Bodhidharma and one shoe recounts a legend about the Buddhist monk's death and return.
- After Bodhidharma's death and burial, a Chinese diplomat claimed to have seen him walking in the mountains, barefoot and carrying only one shoe.
- When the monk's tomb was later opened, it was found to contain only one shoe, confirming the story and suggesting his spirit had returned to India.





A FIGURE OF LEGEND AND ENLIGHTENMENT

- His emphasis on direct experience and mindfulness continues to resonate with those seeking spiritual growth and physical well-being.
- Bodhidharma's legacy highlights the potential for profound transformation through dedicated practice.