

Amitabha Buddha: The buddha who guards humanity between the departure of the Buddha Shakyamuni and the appearance of the Buddha Maitreya.

Arhat: Sanskrit for "one who is worthy," a perfected person, one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence. In China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet, arhats are the close disciples of the Buddha who also achieved nirvana.

Avalokiteshvara: A bodhisattva of infinite compassion, from the Sanskrit term "the lord who looks in every direction."

Bodhi Tree: The tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. A pipal tree or *Ficus religiosa*, a member of the fig family. It is believed that a descendant of the original tree is preserved at Bodh Gaya, India, and in Sri Lanka.

Bodhidharma: *Ta-mo* (Chinese) or *Daruma* (Japanese), an Indian monk who brought meditational or *Ch'an* (Zen in Japan) Buddhism to China. Legend has it that he spent nine years meditating in a cave, a cut off his eyelids so he wouldn't fall asleep.

Bodhisattva: A Sanskrit term meaning "one whose essence is enlightenment," a being who is destined for enlightenment or who could become a Buddha, but who puts it off to help others.

Buddha: Awakened or enlightened being.

Buddha Maitreya: A bodhisattva who will come in the future and save the world from lawlessness. He will be enthroned by Buddha Shakyamuni as the next Buddha. "Maitreya" means benevolence and friendship. In China, Maitreya is often depicted as the Laughing Buddha, who promises prosperity and happiness.

Buddha Shakyamuni: The name means "Sage of the Shakyas," the clan into which Prince Siddhartha was born in Nepal in the 6th century B.C.

Dharma: The teachings of the Buddha, which offer the path to enlightenment.

Earth Touching Gesture: The Buddha touched the earth and called on it to witness the moment of his enlightenment.

Enlightenment: Wisdom, the understanding of the true nature of reality, and compassion for others; the final release of the soul from the cycle of rebirth. Also known as *Nirvana*.

Guanyin: Chinese name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

Historical Buddha: The Buddha who lived in the 6th century B.C. in India. Through existence, there have been countless buddhas, some of which are also venerated by certain form of Buddhism. Also known as the *Buddha Shakyamuni*.

Kannon: Japanese name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

Lama: Tibetan for "superior one" or spiritual leader.

Lohan: A Chinese term for a perfected person, one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence. In China, Japan, Korea, and Tibet, arhats are the close disciples of the Buddha who also achieved nirvana.

Mahayana Buddhism: A form of Buddhism that stresses universal salvation and compassion for others rather than the pursuit of individual perfection.

Mandala: A geometric diagram of a perfected world; often including deities, bodhisattvas, and incarnations of the Buddha.

Manjushri: A bodhisattva associated with wisdom, possibly a disciple of the historical Buddha.

Mantra (Sanskrit): A powerful or sacred syllable or phrase recited as a form of meditation; it is often associated with a particular deity.

Meditation: Focused concentration and emptying of the mind. A tool for understanding the true nature of reality.

Mudra: A Sanskrit term meaning "seal," "mark," or "gesture." Often hand gestures that have specific symbolic meanings.

Nirvana: Enlightenment; release from the cycle of rebirth. From the Sanskrit word for "extinction" or "blowing out."

Noble Eightfold Path: The essential teachings of the Buddha that help followers overcome desire and attachment: (1) right view, (2) right thought, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right living, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration.

Pagoda: A temple that evolved from the Indian stupa. Found in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

Parinirvana: At the Buddha's death--his final release from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Samsara: The endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, to which souls are chained.

Sangha: The community of monks and nuns as well as the lay community that supports them.

Sanskrit: The language of the earliest Buddhist texts.

Siddhartha Gautama: The historical Buddha was one of many buddhas who have become or will be enlightened beings and break the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. The name means "Sage of the Shakyas," the people into which Prince Siddhartha was born in Nepal in the 6th century B.C. He became known as Gautama when he became a monk.

Stupa: A Buddhist monument housing relics of the Buddha or other holy figures. The basic form originated in India as a circular structure, often set on a base. In China, Japan, and Korea, the multi-tiered pagoda is a form of stupa, and in many countries, miniature stupas are included on Buddhist altars.

Sutras: Sacred Buddhist texts.

Sauvastika [Sanskrit]: The sauvastika rotates counter-clockwise and is, like the swastika, a sign for prosperity and good fortune.

Swastika: From the Sanskrit term "conducive to well-being," a symbol in Asian art that often stands for "prosperity" or "good fortune." The swastika rotates clockwise.

Thangka: Tibetan scroll painting that shows deities, sacred lands, or mandalas.

Theravada Buddhism: Sanskrit for "way of the elders." A form of Buddhism that stresses monasticism, the sutras, and meditation.

Ushnisha: A bump on the Buddha's head signifying wisdom; one of the 32 marks of greatness.

Vajrayana Buddhism: Emphasizes the assistance that rituals and sacred beings such as bodhisattvas and deities can give to help believers attain enlightenment. *Vajra* means "diamond" or "thunderbolt" in Sanskrit, referring to what is eternal and indestructible in us all.

Wheel of the Law: The wheel represents the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth or samsara. The Wheel of the Law or *daruma* stands for the teachings of Buddha, which provide a path to enlightenment.

Zen Buddhism: From the Sanskrit *dhyana* or meditation, a Japanese form of Buddhism that emphasizes meditation, the relationship between the teacher and student, and the use of conundrums to induce enlightenment.