



Future of Buddhism in America

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Early American Buddhist History

- ❑ 1875: **Theosophical Society** in New York: Found by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott.
- ❑ 1882: The **World's Parliament of Religion** in Chicago.
- ❑ 1932: Dwight Goddard published **The Buddhist Bible**.
- ❑ Jack Kerouac: **Dharma Bums**: A seminal novel.
 - Gary Snyder, a poet, libertarian, & utopian: Link Buddhism to Native American myths + ecology.
 - Immigration affected the landscape of Buddhism: Starting from 1960s.

Major Traditions in America

Chinese Buddhist

- ❑ Even the present of Chinese immigrants since 1850s, most centers are young within 35 years.
- ❑ Mostly are Chinese American.
- ❑ Serve a link back to Chinese culture.

Japanese Buddhist

Shin: Relatively unknown and misunderstood Buddhist teaching.

Zen: -D.T.Suzuki and others: Initiated the Zen boom and Asian religion in 1950s.

-Alan Watts published Beat Zen, Square Zen: Americanization of Zen (1959).

Nichiren Shoshu and Saka Gakkai: Chants Lotus Sutra.

Major Traditions in America (cont.)

Tibetan Buddhist

- ❑ Relate mostly with Dalai Lama: Political + Spiritual influences.
- ❑ Major centers: Namgyal Institute in Ithaca (NY), Naropa Institute in Boulder (CO), Wisdom Publication, Snow Lion.
- ❑ Gelugpa + Sakyapa: Focus on textual study + translation.
- ❑ Kagyu + Nyingma: Meditation + tantric initiation.
- ❑ Child tulkus is accepting in American psyche.

Major Traditions in America (cont.)

Korean Buddhist

- ❑ Kwan Um Zen school: Seung Sahn's Sung-S'on monastic model.
- ❑ Samu Sunim: engage in cross-culture exchange.
- ❑ The monastics: Unable or unwilling to learn English. Remain in isolation from Western Buddhism.
- Sunday church: Hold on the cultural heritage.

Vietnamese Buddhist

- Mainly Sunday Services to hold on cultural and religious identities.
- Lack of proper training capable, credential, linguistic, spiritual, & intellectual monastic.
- Lack of an elite class of lay followers.

Exception: Thich Nhat Hanh's influential work

Major Traditions in America (cont.)

Theravada Buddhist

- Bhikku-sangha: May be died out without importing monastic staff from Asian Buddhist countries (mainly Thailand + Sri Lanka).
- May transform its self into Insight meditation group.

Insight Meditation-Lay Buddhist movement

- Minimal share of doctrine, ritual, institution, & cultural identity.
- Vipassana movement has great impact on Americanization of Buddhism + Introduction of Buddhism into American mainstream.
- Oriented into mysticism or religious individualism:
- Quickly adapt Western values (psychology + health) and worldviews.

Current and Future Issues

- Preserve tradition within Ethnic communities.
- Plurality: White Buddhists, Ethnic Buddhists, and Racism.
- Gender.
- Social engagement.
- Challenge

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Preserve the tradition within Asian Buddhist community

- ❑ 75% ~ 80% of Buddhists in the U.S: Asian.
- ❑ Religious service: Wedding, funeral, hospice care.
- ❑ Education: Has not fulfilled spiritual demand from young and newly converted Buddhists.
- ❑ Elementary, Middle, & School: Private + Charter school.
- ❑ Develop Virtue Secondary School (CA), UWEST (CA), Naropa University (CO), [Soka University of America](#) (CA),
- ❑ The [Institute of Buddhist Studies](#) (CA), Tinicum Art and Science (PA), [Pacific Buddhist Academy](#) (HI), [Hongwanji Mission School](#) (HI).

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Multicultural Buddhism and Racism

- Religious, cultural, and social communities:
 - BCA, CTTB, Fo-Kwang-shan, Vietnamese Buddhist communities.
 - Strongly emphasize on faith.
 - Rarely having White-Asian fellowships.
 - White Buddhists: Feel empty, outsider, different lifestyle and mentality, & dialectic sectarian.
- Racism: Real attachment to the ego.
 - Happening in any community.

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Plurality

❑ White Buddhist:

- Initiated by Col. Henry Steel Olcott + Madam Blavatsky after taking 5 precepts.
- Countercultural movements: Antiwar + psychedelic consciousness.
- Retain pure teaching: Esoteric wisdom + engaged Buddhism.
- Remove superstitious elements.
- Community life: Emphasis on meditation: Practiced in coed Dharma centers and retreats.

Current and Future Issues (*cont.*)

Plurality (*cont.*)

- Young practice of Zen. Lay-based movement:
- Engaged affair, power abused, live un-zenlike lifestyle.
- Follow trustworthy figures: Dalai Lama + Thich Nhat Hanh:
Advocate social engagement.
- Focus on vipassana, mindfulness of breathing, & Tibetan styles. -
- More practical senses: Can work together with Western psychology.
- Influenced sharply by feminist insight and critiques.
- Infuse with social and political engagement.

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Gender Equity

- ❑ Women status in patriarchic society.
- ❑ Many women than men in religious/spiritual life: In every tradition.
- ❑ Lay women status in Buddhism.
 - Same 5 and 8 precepts.
 - Differences in Monk's vs. Nun's precept.
 - Sakyadhita: International Association of Buddhist Women.

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Social Engagement

- ❑ Thich Nhat Hanh's Inter-being-order: 1960s.
- ❑ Buddhist Peace Fellowship (1960s), Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement-BASE, Zen Peace Order (1990):
Homeless program. Health care: Hospice.
- Ecology + environment + life science: Interdependence.
- ❑ Western psychology + psychotherapies: Treating the mind.

Current and Future Issues (*cont.*)

Social Engagement (*cont.*)

- ❑ Meditation as Engaged Buddhism: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: Jon Kabat-Zinn.
- ❑ Educational Engagement: Naropa + UWest.
- ❑ Buddhist Prison Ministries:
 - Jodo-Shinshu + BCA: San Francisco.
 - Zen Mountain Monastery, National Buddhist Prison Sangha, Engaged Zen Foundation, Prison Dharma Network.

Current and Future Issues (cont.)

Challenge

- ❑ Staying and growing in the U.S:
- ❑ Form Universal Ethics: Expansion of 5 precepts:
 - Right livelihood and ethics in business: FWBO (Friends of the Western Buddhist Order).
- ❑ Unity in Diversity: Unity of doctrine: Humanistic Buddhism.
- ❑ Reach out to non-Buddhist individuals: Non-dogmatic.
- ❑ Mass Media: Publication, booklets,
- ❑ Cyber-information + teaching.
- ❑ Spiritual competition?
- ❑ Innovative approach: Be ready for any challenge.

Current and Future Issues (*cont.*)

Challenge (*cont.*)

- ❑ Meeting the future demand: Developments of organization and Institutions:
 - Not enough schools + Institute for the younger generations.
 - Increase in number of institutions, depth and variety of courses, professors in service, research, & publications.
- ❑ Leadership with Charisma Approach: Dalai Lama.
 - Set moral example, provide proper religious teaching and guideline.
- ❑ Movements for peace and non-violence.
- ❑ Hollywood and the movie industry: Richard Gere.