

“It All in Your Mind”

Buddhism and Jainism

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1. Last week we saw how Indian writers during the so-called “Axial Age,” the period from about 800 BC to 200 BC, redefined their ideas about the divine.
2. The *Upanishads* talked about a transcendent god called “Brahman” that had many incarnations.
3. Next week we will talk about how the great Jewish prophets of that period taught that the transcendent god Yahweh could not have any incarnations.
4. Today, we will look at Buddhism and briefly at Jainism, both born during the Axial Age, that take a different tack altogether – they do not recognize any all powerful gods at all.

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1. In much the same way that Christianity arose in the context of Judaism and some of its principles reflect that context, Buddhism arose in the context of Hinduism and many of its beliefs reflect that context.
2. In fact, some Hindus today claim that the founder of Buddhism was simply one incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu.
3. That is why there is an image of the Buddha on this Hindu temple in India.

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1. Most people believe that Buddhism was founded by a real person living in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent in what is now Nepal.
2. There are various dates given for his birth, with the most common being 566 BC, about the time of the exile of the Jews to Babylon.
3. The story of the life of the founder of Buddhism was first written down at about the time of Jesus, by which time it had become what one author describes as a “**fairy tale.**” Prothero, *God is Not One* at 168.
4. According to that story, which Buddhists may believe as fact, a clan with the last name of Guatama was ruled by King Suddhodhana and his wife Queen Maya.

5. Queen Maya had taken a spiritual vow of celibacy and, as a result, the couple was childless.
6. One night while Queen Maya was sleeping, she had a dream that a magnificent white elephant with six gleaming trunks was caressing her right side with a lotus flower.
7. She woke up with a feeling of new life within her and she and the king were told by the royal counselor that she would give birth to a son destined to save the world.
8. The baby was named “Siddhartha,” which means “every wish fulfilled.”

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1. Queen Maya died soon after Siddhartha’s birth and the king was determined that Siddhartha would save the world by becoming a great emperor.
2. So, Siddhartha was raised in the palace surrounded by extreme luxury, protected from everything that might be unpleasant.
3. At age 29, with his beautiful wife pregnant with their first child, he left the palace with a coach driver to see what life was like in the world beyond.
4. Although his father tried to prevent him from seeing any disturbing sights, he saw what are called the “Four Sights,” images of suffering that can still be seen in India.

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1. First he saw an old man with white hair, wrinkled skin and weak legs, walking with the aid of sticks.
2. His driver told him that aging is the destiny of every human being and that he too would someday look like this old man.
3. Sitting in the palace gardens, he asked himself: **“Knowing what I do about old age, what pleasures can these gardens now afford me?”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 5.

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1. In another trip away from the palace, Siddhartha saw a sick person in the street.
2. Not being aware of sickness, he was told by his driver that sickness is also the destiny of all human beings.
3. Siddhartha again wondered what pleasure he could take from life in the palace if he could someday expect to become sick.

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1. Having not been aware of death, he became even more troubled when he encountered a body being carried to the funeral pyre.
2. Again, he was told by his driver that death is inevitable and that he too someday would die.

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1. In his fourth trip away from the palace Siddhartha saw a monk with a shaved head and wearing a simple orange robe begging for money in the street.
2. Although the monk obviously did not have the wealth that Siddhartha had believed was essential to happiness, the monk looked serene.

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1. Siddhartha was told by his driver that the monk had left behind his wife and possessions in search of liberation from the endless cycle of death and rebirth of the *Atman*, the soul of living beings.
2. He learned that the people of India believed that the nature of that new body into which the *Atman* was reborn depended on the *karma* balance of the deceased, a kind of scorecard based on how well he or she had followed the duties called “*dharma*” given to them during life.
3. The continued cycle of birth and rebirth of the soul is called “*samsara*.”

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1. As Huston Smith writes: “**Many [at the time of Siddhartha] had come to accept the round of birth and rebirth as unending, which was like resigning oneself to a nightmarish sentence to hard labor for eternity.**” Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 96.
2. Siddhartha came to share this view, since he is quoted as saying: “**Through many a birth in *samsara* have I wandered in vain, seeking the builder of this house (of life). Repeated birth is indeed suffering!**”

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1. Having now seen suffering in the form of sickness and aging and having learned about the endless cycle of birth and rebirth, Siddhartha was no longer able to look at life in the palace as he had before.
2. “**Looking at his life through the prism of the suffering of sickness, old age, and death, Siddhartha decides that there must be more to human existence than profit, power, pleasure, and prestige.**” Prothero, *The World is Not One* at 170.

3. So, just after the birth of his son, which reminded him of the endless cycle of birth and death, Siddhartha left his wife and son and the comfort of the palace in what is now known as the “Great Departure.”
4. He shaved his head, put on a simple robe and became a wandering monk to try to **“find out for himself and all humankind how to escape life’s great troubles, or at least how to understand and tolerate them better.”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 6.
5. The scene of Siddhartha leaving his family behind is celebrated today in the ceremonies welcoming new monks and nuns.

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1. For six years, Siddhartha studied with the great Hindu meditation teachers of his time and engaged in a number of standard self-denial practices, including sleeping on a bed of spikes and eating his own feces.
2. He starved himself at one point to such an extent that it was said that he could touch his spinal column from the front of his body, as shown in this statue.
3. No matter how much effort he put into study and no matter how much he punished himself, **“[t]here was no hint of the peace and liberation he sought.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 329.

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1. Deciding to abandon the search for truth through starvation, he accepted a gift of curds from a girl who was taking the curds as an offering to a sacred fig tree.
2. Siddhartha sat down under that sacred tree, which is now called the “*bodhi*” or “enlightenment” tree.
3. **“Vowing not to rise again until he achieved enlightenment, he crossed his legs, lowered his eyes, and began to meditate.”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 7.

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1. While he was sitting under the *bodhi* tree seeking enlightenment, Siddhartha was tempted by Mara, the incarnation of evil, in what Huston Smith describes as a **“temptation scene reminiscent of Jesus’ on the eve of his ministry.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 86.
2. Mara first tempted him sexually, sending his three voluptuous daughters to dance provocatively in front of him.
3. When that failed, he appealed to Siddhartha’s pride, saying: **“It is shameful for a prince to live like a beggar. Take command of your people, and be the true warrior that you are!”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 11.

4. Finally, Mara came at Siddhartha with hurricanes and flaming rocks.
5. But Siddhartha stayed under the tree, trying to find the path away from suffering.

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1. After 49 days of meditation under the *bodhi* tree, Siddhartha finally came to a state of “awakening” or “enlightenment” in which he recognized the source of suffering and the way to eliminate it.
2. Siddhartha concluded that he had both eliminated his own suffering and had found a way to stop *samsara*, the endless cycle of death and rebirth that led to ongoing suffering.
3. From this point forward, Siddhartha became known as the “Buddha,” meaning one who is awakened or enlightened.

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1. The Buddha called the state that he had achieved to eliminate suffering and rebirth “*nirvana*.”
2. The *nirvana* that the Buddha accomplished was not a supernatural experience and was not associated with any god.

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3. As the Dalai Lama explains: “[**The Buddha’s realization**] means that we have **it in our own hands to bring about our own happiness and to overcome our own suffering.**” Dalai Lama, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* at 21.
4. As a result, the Buddha “**vigorously denied the worth of the Hindu sacrificial system, advising his followers to ‘work out your own salvation with diligence.’**” Bowker, *World Religions* at 61.

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1. The Buddha decided to teach others how to avoid suffering and the endless cycle of death and rebirth in their own lives.
2. In a deer park, he found five former disciples who had abandoned him when he had rejected asceticism and gave them the first sermon about what he had learned about how to eliminate suffering.

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1. In his sermon in the deer park, the Buddha set out what are called the “Four Noble Truths.”

2. The first truth is that ordinary life inevitably brings about suffering.
3. The second truth is that the origin of suffering is attachment.
4. The third truth is that the cessation of suffering is attainable.
5. And the final truth is that there is an eightfold path to the cessation of suffering.

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1. When the Buddha taught that ordinary life brings suffering, he used a word related to the Sanskrit word “*dukkha*,” which describes what happens when the hub on a cart wheel doesn’t quite fit the axle and the wheel wobbles or binds.
2. The word “*dukkha*” therefore can also mean a constant sense that things are not right.
3. Other words that might be used instead of “suffering” are “incoherence,” “dislocation,” “frustration,” and the like.
4. **“Being forced into proximity with what we hate is suffering; being separated from what we love is suffering; not getting what we want is suffering.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 331.

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1. In his state of enlightenment, the Buddha concluded that all suffering is the result of a conflict between desire and reality.
2. So, the second noble truth is that the origin of suffering is attachment or desire to something that we don’t have.
3. Many people have noted similarities between the second noble truth and the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, which includes such lines as: **“Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.”** *Ecclesiastes* 5:10.

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1. The third noble truth -- that it is possible to eliminate suffering -- is really a corollary of the first two.
2. As Huston Smith writes: **“If the cause of life’s dislocations is selfish craving, its cure lies in the overcoming of such craving.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 103.
3. Since suffering comes from a conflict between desire and reality, what is needed to eliminate suffering is to eliminate the desire for something other than that reality.
4. As Karen Armstrong writes: **“The Buddha would still suffer; he would grow old and sick like everybody else, but by assiduous meditation and ethical effort, he**

had found an inner haven, which enabled a man or woman who put this regimen into practice to live with pain, take possession of it, affirm it, and experience a profound serenity in the midst of suffering.” Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 334.

5. Again, this insight is also found in *Ecclesiastes*: “[W]hen God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy with his work – this is a gift of God. *Ecclesiastes* 5:19.

6. Buddhists believe that the first step toward avoiding suffering is to acknowledge its existence: **“If we are afraid to touch our suffering, we will not be able to realize the path of peace, joy and liberation.”** Nahn, *The Heart of Buddha’s Teaching* at 45.

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1. The fourth noble truth is probably the most significant of the Buddha’s contributions because it provides a step by step formula for eliminating suffering without the help of any God.

2. The eight steps of this so-called “Eight Fold Path” are Right Understanding; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; and Right Meditation.

3. Although the steps are always presented in this order, the path is represented as a wheel to illustrate that no one step is more important than the others, that there is no particular starting point and that the wheel must be constantly turning.

4. The sum of all the teachings of Buddha is called *Dharma* and the process of putting those teachings into action is called “turning the wheel of *Dharma*.”

5. The “Right Action” step of the wheel of *Dharma* looks like a Buddhist version of that part of the Ten Commandments that governs how individuals interact with each other – don’t kill, don’t steal, don’t lie, don’t engage in sexual immorality and don’t drink intoxicants.

6. But as Buddhists point out, these statements are not really commandments **“because there is no commander or almighty god in Buddhism to lend them authority.”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 137-38.

7. Buddhists follow these precepts because the Buddha taught that they are essential to achieving the end of suffering.

8. The last two of the eight steps are the basis of the meditation practices that Buddhists believe can eventually lead to the mental state called *nirvana*.

9. One common meditation technique is simply to follow one’s own breathing, recognizing that the body breathes on its own without conscious control, one of the keys to letting go of feelings of self-importance that Buddhists believe prevent enlightenment.

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1. As scholars have noted, some of the claimed sayings of the Buddha, first recorded long after his death, find parallels in the teachings of Jesus.
2. One of the most dramatic is probably the almost identical teachings about the futility of storing up treasures on earth.
3. There are a number of theories supporting the idea that Christianity is based on the teaching of the Buddha, the most elaborate being that Jesus spent time among the Buddhists in India and Tibet before beginning His ministry in Galilee.
4. There are probably an equal number of theories that some Buddhist teachings were copied from Christians.

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1. The term “*nirvana*” that the Buddha used to describe the state in which suffering is eliminated means “blown out” or “extinguished” in the way a candle flame is blown out.
2. So the *nirvana* that the Buddha described as the end of suffering is simply the extinguishment of those desires or attachments that create a conflict with reality, such as greed, delusion, envy and the like.
3. For Buddhists, “***nirvana* is not some static place you go after death. It can be achieved in this lifetime.**” Prothero, *God is Not One* at 183.

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1. If, as the Buddha had discovered, egotistical desire is the reason for suffering during life, it must also be the reason for the suffering of *samsara*, repeated rebirth.
2. The Buddha concluded that it is the ego that seeks to be reborn and elimination of the ego can eliminate *samsara* as well as current suffering.
3. Said another way, the Buddha concluded that the Hindu idea of an eternal soul creates the suffering of *samsara* and it must therefore not be real if suffering is to be avoided.
4. As one Buddhist author writes: “**When we delude ourselves with the notion of a fixed self operating as its own agent, we kindle unquenchable, self-originating desires, which in turn give rise to suffering.**” Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 88.
5. According to Buddhist teachings, it is only when people recognize that they have no soul that the endless cycle of birth and rebirth can stop.

6. As one author writes: **“Descartes said, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ Buddhists say if you think carefully enough you will see that you are not.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 179.
7. The Buddha called this idea *anatman*, meaning “no soul.”

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1. The Buddha used analogies to demonstrate that the idea of self or a soul is an illusion.
2. For example, he pointed to a stream and noted that although people give a stream a name and talk of the stream as if it had some existence, the water in it is always changing and its level and flow are never exactly the same.
3. In the same way, the Buddha taught that what people imagine is self is simply a name given to a temporary combination of what they perceive at any given time.

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1. As Huston Smith writes: **“Authentic child of India, the Buddha did not doubt that the reincarnation was in some sense a fact, but he was openly critical of the way his [Hindu] contemporaries interpreted the concept.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 115.
2. What the Buddha rejected was the Hindu concept that reincarnation results from the soul moving from one body to the next in a process called “transmigration of the soul.”
3. The Buddha taught that seeing the soul as an illusion was the key to *nirvana*.
4. But the Buddha did not reject the “law of *karma*,” in which the sum total of the actions of one person while living can affect the life of another.
5. It was precisely because of this endless cycle of birth and rebirth that had led him to seek a way out of this cycle called “*samsara*” in the first place.
6. But if there is no soul to be reborn in a new body, how can the *karma* balance at the end of one life affect a succeeding life?
7. **“The Buddha compared the process of rebirth to a flame which lights a lamp, from which a second lamp is lit, and so on until the flame is extinguished. If somebody is still aflame at death with the wrong attitude, he or she will simply light another lamp. But if the fire is put out, the cycle of suffering will cease and nirvana will be attained.”** Armstrong, *A History of God* at 33.
8. Another analogy is a moving billiard ball, in which the angle and speed of the ball represents a person’s *karma* balance at the end of life.

9. When that ball hits another ball, the speed and direction of the second ball are determined by that *karma* balance, even though nothing tangible is transferred and the first ball stops.

10. Using this analogy, *nirvana* occurs when the energy in the first ball is totally extinguished *before* it hits another ball – at that point there is no further effect of the first ball and the cycle of *samsara* is ended.

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1. The Buddha rejected the idea of caste differences and that rejection is one of the reasons that his teachings were so widely accepted among the Hindu people.

2. As Huston Smith states: **“Surface distinctions of class and caste meant so little to him that he often appears not even to have noticed them. Regardless of how far individuals had fallen or been rejected by society, they received from the Buddha a respect that stemmed from the simple fact that they were fellow human beings.”** Smith, *The World’s Religions* at 89.

3. The Buddha added to the categories into which people could influence another life.

4. In addition to a person being reborn as an animal, Buddhists believe that human beings can be reborn as various spiritual beings, including ghosts and demons.

5. Some of these spiritual beings, called *devas*, are shown here celebrating the birth of Siddhartha.

6. *Devas* **“are not permanent, let alone eternal; they are themselves subject to rebirth and must seek enlightenment.”** Bowker, *World Religions* at 70.

7. **“In most traditions, the realm of the gods consists entirely or partly of beings who were once human and are waiting to return to be reborn into the human realm, where they will again have an opportunity to become enlightened.”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 28.

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1. Although Buddhists may believe in a variety of spiritual beings that are subject to death and the law of *karma*, most Buddhists do not believe in anything that is comparable to the transcendent creator gods of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and most other religions.

2. As Karen Armstrong writes: **“Buddha always denied the existence of a supreme being, because an authoritative, overseeing deity could become another prop or fetter that would impede enlightenment.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 335.

3. **“The Buddha had, therefore, no theories about the creation of the world or the existence of God.”** *Id.* at 339.
4. In fact, most Buddhists reject a supernatural explanation for the creation of the universe.
5. As the Dalai Lama says: **“Buddhism and science share a fundamental reluctance to postulate a transcendent being as the origin of all things.”** Dalai Lama, *The Universe in a Single Atom* at 84.
6. Most Buddhists believe that the universe has always existed and use stories to illustrate the idea of a **“beginningless past.”** Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at 7.
7. One such story tells of an eagle whose wing tip just brushes the top of a high mountain once every hundred years.
8. The time it would take that brushing to wear down the mountain cannot begin to approach the infinite time the universe has existed.
9. The Buddha himself refused to answer questions about the origins of the universe.
10. He said that people seeking *nirvana* no more needed to know about the origin of the universe than a person seeking treatment for a life-threatening wound from an arrow needed to know who had shot the arrow.

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1. After 45 years of wandering throughout northern India turning the wheel of *Dharma* to teach people how to avoid suffering and repeated rebirth, the Buddha died at the age of 81.
2. Buddhists believe that at the instant of his death, the whole earth trembled, just as it did when Jesus died on the cross. *Matthew 27:51*.
3. His death is called *“parinirvana,”* meaning the final extinction.
4. During his life, the Buddha had refused to answer questions about what happened after death to a person who had achieved *nirvana* and therefore was no longer subject to being reborn.
5. He dismissed this and similar questions of existence as “improper,” saying that they were no more pertinent than asking where a flame goes when it goes out.

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1. After the death of the Buddha, he was cremated and his teeth and bones distributed as relics.
2. Those relics were placed in ten mounds called *“stupas.”*

3. Later Buddhist shrines took the form of these early mounds, at least some of them containing what are claimed to be relics of the Buddha.

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1. After the Buddha's death, there were debates about how he should be followed.
2. Three councils tried without complete success to resolve the differences.
3. The primary debate was whether the teachings of the Buddha could be of value only to people who removed themselves from society and achieved *nirvana* or whether they had value among the people generally.
4. One view gave rise to the tradition that is called "*Theravada*" and today is predominant in Cambodia, Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
5. Because of European colonies in these areas, *Theravadin* Buddhism is the form of Buddhism known best by Europeans.
6. **"For *Theravadins*, the only way to achieve *nirvana* was to withdraw from the worlds of family, work, sex and money into the celibate life of a monk or nun."**
Prothero, *God is Not One* at 187.
7. Buddhists who follow this tradition believe that meditation and wisdom are the primary virtues and spend endless hours alone seeking *nirvana* for themselves.
8. *Theravadin* Buddhists do not believe that the Buddha was in any sense divine, although they erect statues of him to remind them of his teachings.
9. To prove this, they point out that, when asked to explain whether he was a god or an angel, the Buddha had replied only that he, unlike those around him, was awake.

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1. Another group of Buddhists thought the *Theravadins* were selfish because they were concerned only with their own enlightenment and made no effort to help those around them escape suffering.
2. They pointed out that after the Buddha had become enlightened, he spent the rest of his life helping those around him deal with their own suffering.
3. This second form of Buddhism is known as "*Mahayana*" and predominates in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Tibet.
4. In *Mahayana* Buddhism, ordinary people can seek enlightenment without giving up on either love or worldly success.
5. Because Americans have been involved in wars with Japan, Korea and Vietnam, most Americans are most familiar with *Mahayana* Buddhism.

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1. To assist ordinary people in seeking enlightenment, at about the time of Jesus *Mahayana* Buddhism developed the concept of a *bodhisattva*, a person who comes close to *nirvana* and turns to helping others actually achieve it.
2. As one religion teacher says: **“I describe the *bodhisattva* as someone standing on the front porch of *nirvana*, holding open the door while waving others into the party ahead of him, refusing to enter until everyone else has entered first.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 189.
3. Because *bodhisattvas*, by definition, never achieve *nirvana*, *Mahayana* Buddhists believe that *bodhisattvas* continue to exist as spirits until they are reborn.
4. *Bodhisattvas* are therefore often pictured and worshipped.

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1. Because *bodhisattvas* give up their own hope of escaping suffering for the benefit of others, they are often compared to Jesus. See Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 458.
2. The Dalai Lama is thought by Tibetan Buddhists to be the reincarnation of an important *bodhisattva*.
3. Like all *bodhisattvas*, he has taken a vow not to seek *nirvana* for himself until everyone else has been relieved from suffering.
4. The Dalai Lama himself says that **“[Jesus’] self-sacrifice, born out of altruism and universal love for all beings, is a perfect example of what Buddhists might term the *Bodhisattva* ideal.”** Dalai Lama, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* at 57.

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1. Just as *Mahayana* Buddhism has developed a view of *bodhisattvas* that have supernatural powers, it has also developed a view of the Buddha himself that differs from that of the *Theravadins*.
2. **“While *Theravadins* saw the Buddha as a pathfinder and a human being, *Mahayanists* came to see him as eternal and omniscient – a supernatural being who could answer prayers and reward devotion.”** Prothero, *God is Not One* at 189-90.

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1. The influence of Buddhism in India can be seen in its flag, in which the wheel in the center can represent either the Buddhist Wheel of Dharma or the spinning wheel of Gandhi.

2. In about 1200 AD, a series of Muslim invasions destroyed the major Buddhist monasteries in Northern India.
3. Already weakened by the appeal of traditional Hinduism with its pantheon of gods, Buddhism was effectively eliminated from India.

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1. On the other hand, another religion that began at about the same time as Buddhism has survived in India.
2. Some of its core beliefs are so similar to those of Buddhism that the Dalai Lama calls the religion “**Buddha’s twin sibling.**” Dalai Lama, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* at 24.
3. That religion, called “Jainism,” was founded by Lord Mahavira.
4. Like the Buddha, Lord Mahavira left a life of luxury to become a wandering ascetic seeking enlightenment.
5. After 12 years, he found his own enlightenment and sought to teach others how to achieve it.
6. Some people think that the founder of Jainism and the Buddha knew each other and may have influenced each other.
7. Like Buddhists, Jains do not believe in “**the notion of a Transcendent Being as the creator of all things. The universe has no beginning, nor an end.**” *Id.* at 25.
8. Like Buddhism, Jainism teaches that *samsara*, continued death and rebirth, leads to continued suffering and seeks to avoid that suffering through individual effort.

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1. Unlike Buddhists, Jains believe that every person possesses a soul that they call “*jiva.*”
2. Jains do not believe that souls exist only in humans.
3. Jains believe that “**animals, plants, water, fire, air, and even rocks and stones each had *jivas* too; they had been brought to their present existence by the *karma* of their former lives.**” Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 286.
4. Jains believe that the way out of the endless cycle of birth and rebirth is to be non-violent to anything that has a soul.
5. So they “**must approach every single being, animal, plant, insect, or pebble with friendship, goodwill, patience, and gentleness.**” *Id.* at 288.

6. Jains go out of their way to avoid hurting anything that has a soul, no matter how insignificant.
7. To prevent the accidental swallowing of insects, they wear masks over their noses and mouths, sweep the path in front of them to avoid stepping on insects and do not walk in the dark for fear of running into something.
8. Strictly vegetarians, most Jains won't even eat anything that came from tilling the soil because that would lead to the killing of insects and some eat only nuts and fruit that have already fallen to avoid hurting the trees.
9. They refuse to be carpenters because that would hurt the wood.

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1. Unlike Hindus and Buddhists, Jains see *karma* as a kind of physical substance that builds up on the soul and pulls a soul into rebirth unless the *karma* is entirely removed by following a strict discipline of meditation and purification.
2. Jains are expected to spend 48 minutes each day meditating.
3. Jains believe that if the *karma* is entirely removed from their souls, the soul will be liberated and continue to exist without the need to be reborn.
4. In their elaborate temples they have icons of their founder and other enlightened beings who they believe went before him in transmitting the truth and are now free souls living beyond the world.
5. Looking into the eyes of these icons is a transforming experience for Jains.

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1. We have talked about Buddhism and Jainism, calling them both “religions.”
2. But should we call these belief systems “religions,” since they rely almost entirely on individual effort and reject a God at the center of human activity.
3. As the Dalai Lama writes about Buddhism: **“The idea of a religion with no place for God is, for many, a contradiction, or at best a paradox.”** Dalai Lama, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* at 134.
4. But denying that Buddhism and Jainism are religions may simply mean that our traditional conception of “religion” is inadequate.
5. A Buddhist author says: **“Our Judeo-Christian culture predisposes us to assume, erroneously, that a religion by definition must include belief in a creator god and a soul. In fact, the basis of a religion can be any organized system of beliefs**

based on faith rather than reason, on the heart (or, if you prefer, the intuition), rather than the intellect alone.” Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* at xv. .

6. Under that definition, Buddhism and Jainism are religions and bring comfort and hope to millions of people around the world.

7. For those who claim that only God can provide moral guidance, Buddhists and Jains respectfully disagree.

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