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| **Overview of Buddhism in Asia** | | |
| ***Southern Buddhism***  (150 million) | ***Eastern Buddhism***  (360 million) | ***Northern Buddhism***  (18 million) |
| Thailand (61 m.) | China (228 m.) | Tibet (5 m.) |
| Burma (45 m.) | Japan (52 m.) | Mongolia (3 m.) |
| Sri Lanka (15 m.) | Vietnam (43 m.) | Nepal (3 m.) |
| Cambodia (13 m.) | South Korea (11 m.) | Bhutan (0.5 m) |
| Laos (4 m.) | Taiwan (8 m.) |  |
|  | Malaysia (6 m.) |  |
|  | North Korea (3 m.) |  |
|  | Singapore (2 m.) |  |
|  | Hong Kong (1 m.) |  |
| ▪ Theravāda (with a few tantric elements)  ▪ Buddhism within the parameters of Indian culture  ▪ Study: Emphasis on both *Sūtras* and systematizing treatises  ▪ Meditation: Emphasis on mindfulness of ordinary experience especially in *vipassanā* meditation  ▪ "Worship of pre-Buddhist nature gods has continued, while, especially in Sri Lanka, Buddhists also worship gods whose cults are Indian in origin. Most Buddhists would not see this as a betrayal of Buddhism, but just an attempt to interact with minor powers of the cosmos for some worldly advantage: like a person asking a member of parliament to try and help him" (Harvey, p.5).  ▪ Nature of Path: Gradual development, but sudden realizations | ▪ Mahāyāna  ▪ Buddhism within the parameters of Chinese culture  ▪ Study: Emphasis on *Sūtras*  *▪* Meditation: Emphasis on mindfulness of ordinary experience especially in Sōtō in Zen  ▪ In China, Taiwan, Korea and Vietnam, Buddhism has co-existed with Confucianism (more a system of social philosophy than a religion), the Daoist religion, and much folk religion. People have often partaken of elements of all these traditions. In Japan, Buddhism has existed alongside the indigenous nature-orientated religion of Shintō, and the Confucianism that it brought with it from China (From Harvey, p.5).  ▪ Nature of Path: Chan/Zen downplays or abandons gradual working towards perfection; Jōdo Shin sees assurance of salvation as obtained 'simply' by true faith. | ▪ Mahāyāna  ▪ Tantric elements are dominant  ▪ Buddhism within the parameters of Indian culture  ▪ Study: Emphasis on systematizing treatises  ▪ Meditation: Emphasis on mindfulness of ordinary experience especially in *Dzogch'en* and *Mahāmudrā*  ▪ A relationship exists with the indigenous Bön religion of Tibet.  ▪ Nature of Path: Gradual development, but sudden realizations |
| **Notes**:  ▪ There are around 7 million Buddhists outside Asia.  ▪ There is an overall total of around 535 million Buddhists in the world.  ▪ "One can see these as like the three main branches of the ‘tree’ of Buddhism, though as all parts of a tree are genetically identical, this underplays the differences that have developed within Buddhism over time. Yet one can trace a series of transformations linking early and later forms in a causal continuum; just as Buddhism says that a person in one life and the next rebirth is ‘neither (unchangingly) the same nor (completely) different’, this can be said of the various forms of Buddhism that have evolved. A better image than branches of a tree is branches of a large ‘family’. There are ‘family resemblances’ across all three branches, though certain features and forms are more typical of, and sometimes unique to, one of the three branches" (Harvey, p.4).  ▪ "Buddhism’s concentration on the essentials of spiritual development has meant that it has been able to co-exist both with other major religions and with popular folk traditions which catered for people’s desire for a variety of rituals. There has hardly ever been a ‘wholly Buddhist’ society, if this means a kind of religious one-party state. Buddhism has been very good at adapting to different cultures while guarding its own somewhat fluid borders by a critical tolerance of other traditions. Its style has been to offer invitations to several levels of spiritual practice for those who have been ready to commit themselves" (Harvey, p.5). | | |
| **Source**:  Harvey, P. (2013) *An introduction to Buddhism: teachings, history and practices*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pp. 4-7; 376-418.) Note: Buddhist population figures (millions) are approximate.  Alexander Peck (22 May 2015) | | |