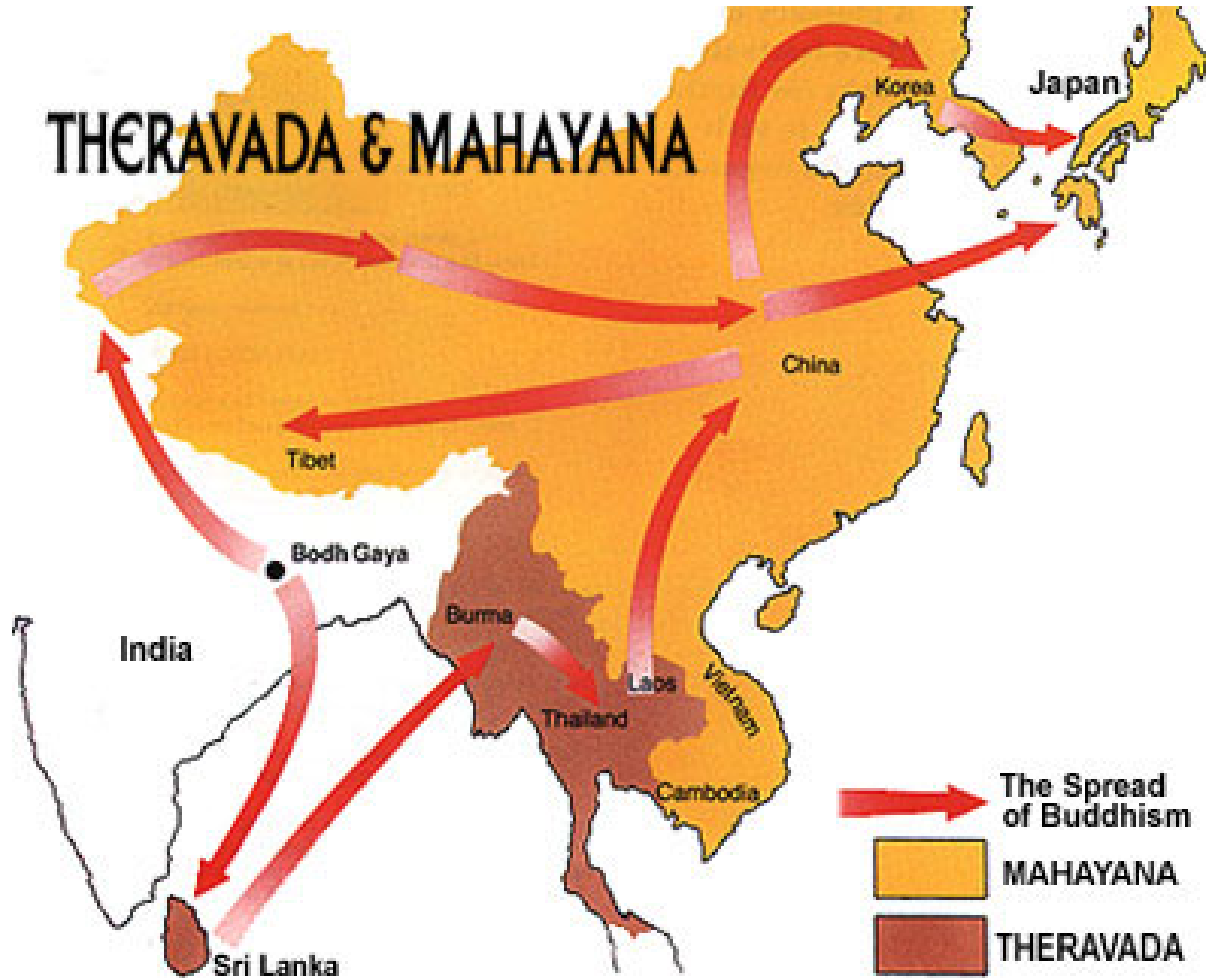


THERAVĀDA
the way of the elders



- Only surviving early Buddhist sect as of 200 BCE
- Claims to preserve authentic teaching of Śakyamuni Buddha
- Particularly conservative regarding *anātman* doctrine, *vinaya* practice
- Mauryan emperor Aśoka (r. 274-236 BCE) endorses Theravāda and sponsors missionaries throughout South and Southeast Asia
- Only men accepted as monastics since 13th century CE; order of Theravāda nuns extinct

CHRONOLOGY

- **480?-400? BCE:** Lifetime of Śakyamuni Buddha
- **294 BCE:** Pali canon (collection of Theravāda scriptures) attains oral form
- **250 BCE:** Theravāda introduced to Sri Lanka by Aśokan missionaries
- **100 BCE:** Pali canon transcribed in written form – the *Tipitaka* (Sanskrit: *Tripitaka*, “three baskets”)
 1. *sutta* (Sanskrit: *sūtra*) – discourses of the Buddha
 2. *vinaya* – monastic regulations
 3. *abhidhamma* (Sanskrit: *abhidharma*) – speculative philosophical and psychological writings
- **100 CE:** Theravāda introduced to Burma and central Thailand
- **600s CE:** Theravāda begins to disappear from India; Islamic regimes play a role
- **1200s CE:** Theravāda introduced to Laos and Cambodia
- **1279 CE:** Last orthodox Theravāda nuns (in Burma)
- **1498 CE:** Portuguese Christian missionaries attack Theravāda in Sri Lanka
- **Late 1800s CE:** Westerners help revive Theravāda in Sri Lanka; first Westerner ordained as Theravāda monk
- **1893 CE:** Sri Lankan monk Anagarika Dharmapala attends World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, introducing Americans to Theravāda
- **1932 CE:** Thai monk Buddhadasa Bhikku establishes Suan Mokkh (“Garden of Liberation”) as retreat and think tank for development of Theravāda solutions to economic and political problems (“dhammic socialism”)
- **1956 CE:** Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), Indian political leader, leads mass conversion to Theravāda by “untouchable” community
- **1956 CE:** Newly independent (since 1948) Sri Lanka declares Theravāda its state religion
- **1958 CE:** A. T. Ariyaratne (1931-) founds Sarvodaya (“uplifting of all”), a Theravāda social justice organization that promotes *shramadana* (“donation of labor”) as practical solution to social problems of poverty, political disempowerment, etc.
- **1989 CE:** Sulak Sivaraksa (1933-), Thai Theravāda activist, organizes International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)