

## Buddhism

### The Story of Buddha's Enlightenment

Buddhism began almost 2500 years ago. The foundation of Buddhism rests on the life of one teacher, an Indian named Prince **Siddhartha Gotama**. Prince Siddhartha grew up in a small kingdom in northeast India, an area which now rests in Nepal. His father, King Sudhodana, ruled over the Shakya people. Although the King hoped his son would carry on his legacy, the prince had a very different calling ~ one which made him one of history's most famous & influential figures.

In order to understand the principals of Buddhism, one must begin with the life of its founder. The deeds & words of Lord Buddha are the source & inspiration behind this popular faith.

Prince Siddhartha was **born c. 563 BCE**, the son of King Sudhodana & Queen Maya. Even before his birth, the queen had premonitions of great happenings. Legend tells us that in her dreams a radiant white elephant descended from the sky...& as he descended, its 6 large tusks pierced the queen's womb...& she was filled with light.

That morning, the king & queen sought the counsel of the wise, for this was no ordinary dream! The fortune tellers explained that the queen would give birth to a son, & he would be a great leader. The couple was overjoyed at hearing this. King Sudhodana was thrilled, for now he would have a successor!

About ten months later, on the full moon night, in the Indian month of Vaishakha (May/June,) Queen Maya was on her way to her father's house in the town of Lumbini. Suddenly, she halted her escorts, climbed down from her carriage & entered a lush, beautiful garden. There she gave birth to a son. Legends tell of the sacred silence which anointed the



**T or F** (← circle 1): Your **birthright or inheritance** is often considered your legacy.



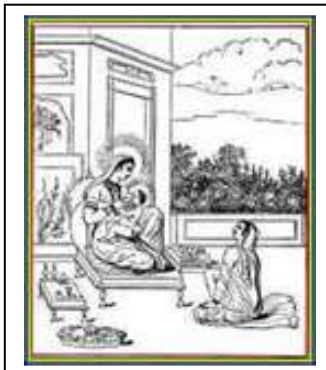
A premonition might be thought of a(n) \_\_\_\_.

a. intuition	d. hunch
b. feeling	e. all the above
c. omen	f. a & c only

Applying past knowledge:

A synonym for "successor" is \_\_\_\_.

a. male	c. predecessor
b. heir	d. ancestor



← the birth of Siddhartha

garden that night & of a peace which flowed throughout the land.

The royal couple decided to name the baby Siddhartha, which means "the one who brings all good." News of the prince's birth spread, & there was much celebration. Many visitors came to pay **tribute** to Siddhartha. One of these visitors was the holy **sage**, Asita. Asita told the parents that the prince would either be a great king or a great saint. Then something strange happened...When Asita's eyes met the infant's, the sage began to weep. This worried the king & queen, but Asita explained that these were bittersweet tears he shed for himself, for he saw that this indeed was a special child ~ one who would lead others to peace. Now the holy man wept because, after a lifetime of searching, he would not live to hear Siddhartha's teachings.

Both the king & queen were happy, but Sudhodana wanted to be certain that his son became a great emperor, not a saint! Therefore, he set out to give Siddhartha all he could desire.

But the couple's joy was quickly ended when shortly thereafter Queen Maya became gravely ill. Within 7 days of giving birth, she lay on her deathbed...dying... She asked her sister, Prajapati, to mother her son; she agreed. Soon afterwards, the queen passed away.

Prajapati raised Siddhartha as though he were her own son, & the prince lived a carefree childhood within the palace walls. His father made certain that the boy received the finest education, for Asita's **prophecy** remained with him. The prince learned quickly. In fact, legend has it that after only a few lessons, he had no need of teachers ~ he had learned ALL they could teach him!

As Siddhartha grew, his intelligence was matched with a *compassionate gentleness*. Unlike his peers, he spent a great deal of time alone, wandering the palace gardens. He did not participate in the common games of boys, but

Making analogies of a prince's birth:

\_\_\_\_\_ : Christianity ::

**Siddhartha** : Buddhism

**tribute = gift**

The holy sage, Asita, wept at the sight of **Siddhartha** because \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Siddhartha was not a true prince
- b. this baby wouldn't live up to their prophecy of him
- c. this child was indeed special
- d. he would not live to see/hear this child's teachings
- e. a & b only
- f. c & d only



Give a **synonym** for **prophecy**: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Use that thesaurus!)

Making inferences: What do you think it means to be possessed of "*compassionate gentleness*"?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

sought the company of animals & nature.

It was on one of these garden days that the prince came upon a wounded white swan ~ an arrow still piercing its wing. He removed the arrow & comforted the bird, tending to its wounds. Shortly thereafter, Devadatta, his cousin, came running. Adorned with bow & arrow, Devadatta demanded the swan he had hunted. But the Prince refused. The boys argued until they agreed to settle their dispute in the palace's court.

When Devadatta came before the judges, he claimed that because he shot the bird, it should belong to him. When Siddhartha spoke, he said that he had saved the swan's life, & therefore, it belong to him. The judges sided with the prince, agreeing that the bird's **savior** has a greater right.

Years went by, & as the prince became a young man, he continued in his gentle, quiet ways. This disturbed his father, who wanted his son more involved in worldly matters. But the King's worries were calmed when Siddhartha met Princess Yasodhara, daughter of King Suprabuddha. The young couple wanted to be married, but the neighboring king needed proof of Siddhartha's bravery & skills. Only then would he give his daughter in marriage.

Although he had little experience in warrior games, the prince gladly agreed to take part in a contests against other suitors. Now, even Siddhartha's father was worried. How could the prince compete against the other young men who had spent years in training?

But the prince surprised everyone with his abilities. He began by winning the archery match, defeating his cousin, Devadatta. Next he won the swordsmanship contest when, in one lightning quick stroke, he slashed through a tree ~ a tree with 2 trunks! However, though the prince was powerful, it was his *gentleness* which won him the final contest.

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(Focus on the word COMPASSIONATE!)



Drawing conclusions: *Why* would the judge have given the swan to Siddhartha *instead of* Devadatta?

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T or F (← circle 1): A **savior** could also be *synonymous with* the word **rescuer**.

Each of the suitors was given an opportunity to mount a wild horse. One by one they were thrown by the wild, kicking beast!

The horse was so fierce that the judges were about to stop the competition...but when the Prince approached the animal, stroking it softly & speaking kind words, the horse became calm. The prince mounted the horse, & the contest was over. The Prince & Princess were wed.

Although the King was happy, he remained worried that his son may yet become a saint. So, he built the newlyweds 2 enormous, heavenly palaces ~ one for winter & one for summer. These dwellings were surrounded by walls. Only beautiful servants, accomplished musicians, & the finest foods were allowed in the lush, natural settings. In this way, the king hoped Siddhartha would never be disturbed or seek to go outside the palace. And for years the prince & princess lived undisturbed within those palace walls. In time, they gave birth to a son, Rahula.

Now, although Siddhartha had all the luxuries in the world, he had yet to do one thing: venture outside the palace walls. From servants he had heard tales of other lands & wonders of different peoples, language & landscapes. A stirring began inside him.

Shortly after, he asked his father's permission to visit the capital city of his kingdom. The king consented, but he ordered his subjects to hide away anyone who was ill or old & to decorate their houses in festive colors ~ for Sudhodana did not want any sights to trouble his son.

So, aboard his chariot, Siddhartha entered the city of Kapilavastu. The streets, lined with onlookers, were filled with gaiety & celebration. The cheerful citizens, all healthy & young, showered him with praise. Momentarily, he was pleased, thinking that this city was *just* like his.

The marriage of Siddhartha & his bride. →



T or F (← circle 1): Siddhartha lived a life of luxury.

But amidst the crowd stood an elderly man, saddened & bent with age. In all his years, the Prince had never seen such a sight. In fact, he did not even know that people grew old. This knowledge stunned him, & when he returned to the palace, he sat alone, deep in thought.

In time, the Prince journeyed again into the city, & again the streets were lined with happy faces. However, among the citizens was a sick man, coughing & pale. In all his palace years, sickness was unknown to Siddhartha. Now, he learned of disease. He learned that anyone can fall ill at any time. And this news saddened him profoundly.

But the prince's 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to the city affected him most deeply. Riding along in his chariot, he saw a group of mourners carrying a coffin. Inside the coffin, he saw a dead man wrapped in white. Now he learned of death & the rites of cremation. He was overwhelmed with the thought that even his beloved wife & son would some day die.

Siddhartha became very depressed & spent his time alone. His father tried to cheer him, but to no avail. The prince wondered how people could live happily knowing that old age, sickness, & death awaited them. His gloom deepened, until one day he rode out again on his chariot.

This time he traveled to the countryside. There he saw a saint meditating under a tree. He learned that this hermit had exchanged all worldly pleasures to see for truth. This man had also seen the suffering in the world & sought to go beyond it to enlightenment. Prince Siddhartha was deeply moved by the sight. He returned to the palace, *sure* of his calling.

Siddhartha's mind was made up: he would *leave his life of luxury & search for truth*. Knowing he would not receive consent, that very night as everyone lay sleeping, he bid a silent good-bye to his wife & son, mounted his horse & set

Making inferences: *Why* was finding an elderly man amidst the crowd *so surprising* to Siddhartha?

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On Siddhartha's 2<sup>nd</sup> journey outside his castle walls, he **learned of** \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ ~ both of which were **unknown to him**.

Upon his 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to the city, Siddhartha finally **observed a dead man & learned of** \_\_\_\_\_ & the \_\_\_\_\_ **of cremation**.



#### Connection to English Class

This revelation might be called the "turning point" in his life. Another word for this would be: \_\_\_\_\_

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| a. Theme  | b. Plot    |
| c. Climax | d. Setting |

out for the forest on the far reaches of the land where holy men gather.

When he arrived, he cut his long hair & donned the robe in an ascetic (man of solitude searching for wisdom.) Now, at the age of 29, his journey had begun...

The Prince spent the next 6 years in the forest.

He studied the most famous sages, but still he did not find an end to suffering. He joined a group of men who believe enlightenment could be found by denying the body of nourishment & sleep, thereby mastering pain. For years, the prince ate & slept very little. He grew as thin as a skeleton, & though the rain & sun beat down on him, he did not waver from his practices.

Finally, he realized that he was getting nowhere. Though he had neglected his bodily needs, he had not found an end to suffering. Thus, when a young woman came to him offering food, he accepted. Now that he was nourished, he sat in meditation under a **bodhi tree** in the town of Bodhgaya. He sat down & vowed, come what may, he would not move until he found an end to sorrow. Although demons tempted him with images of his past & evil spirits brought nightmares upon him, the prince was centered on his goal.

Finally, under the Tree of Enlightenment, Siddhartha became Buddha, the Enlightened One. He went on to become a great world teacher, just as Asita had prophesied, & from his teachings, *Buddhism was born!*

### Buddha's Teachings

After his enlightenment under the **bodhi tree**, **Buddha** (also called the "Awakened One") began teaching others. Once he truly understood the cause of sorrow, he could begin to free people. What, then, did he teach?

Buddha delivered his first sermon in the deer park in the city of Sarnath. He taught that all humans are caught in the **Wheel of Dharma**.



It was under the \_\_\_\_\_ tree that Siddhartha became \_\_\_\_\_, known as the "\_\_\_\_\_."



They go through lifetimes in a cycle of birth & death, creating situations which create **consequences**. Until an individual can free him- or herself from the wheel, s/he will be subject to the ups & downs of life.

The only way to free oneself, preached Buddha, is to be free of desire. Thus, desire is the root of suffering. Then he taught his first disciples **The 4 Noble Truths**, & these truths form the bedrock of Buddhist belief, itself.

**T or F** (← circle 1): Throughout the cycle of birth & death, Buddhists create positive & negative consequences.

The only way to free yourself from the cycle of birth & death is to **free yourself from** \_\_\_\_\_.

### The Four Noble Truths

#### I. **Dukkha**: The Noble Truth of Suffering

Life is full of suffering, full of sickness & unhappiness. Although there are passing pleasures, they vanish in time.

#### II. **Samudaya**: The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering

People suffer for one simple reason: they desire things. It is greed & self-centeredness which bring about suffering. Desire is never satisfied.

#### III. **Nirodha**: The Noble Truth of the End of Suffering

It is possible to end suffering if one is aware of his/her own desires & puts an end to them. This awareness will open the door to lasting peace.

#### IV. **Magga**: The Noble Truth of the Path

By changing one's thinking & behavior, a new awakening can be reached. This is called the **Middle Way** & can be followed in the Eightfold Path.

The **Eightfold Path**, also called the **Wheel of Law**, contains eight steps for eliminating **dukkha** (also called suffering). By following this path, one can bring an end to his/her own **karma** & be released from continuous rebirth. Buddha introduced these ideas during his first sermon at Sarnath. This teaching is often symbolized by a wheel with eight spokes.

The *Five Precepts* represent the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of laws governing Buddhist thought. Although not "commandments" in the strict sense of the word, they are vows which ensure right behavior.



Explain *why* the 8-spoked wheel is such a *good* representation for Buddhism? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### The Eightfold Path

#### **Right Understanding**

Strive to clearly understand the 4 Noble Truths.  
Strive to understand the workings of your own mind.

#### **Right Thought**

Think kindly of others & avoid dwelling on the past or future.

#### **Right Speech**

Speak kindly & truthfully

#### **Right Action**

Act kindly toward all living things.  
Do not be attached to the results of actions

#### **Right Work**

Have a vocation that does not harm others.

#### **Right Effort**

Be determined to cleanse the mind.

#### **Right Mindfulness**

Be fully aware of what you are doing, always with concern for others.

#### **Right Concentration**

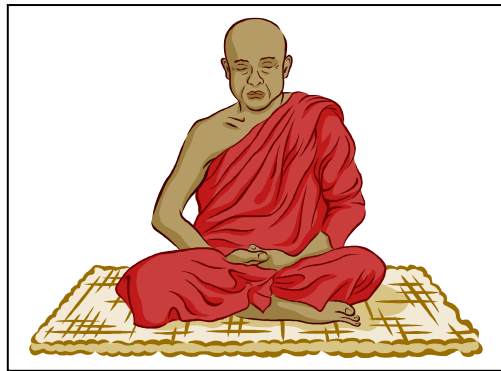
Intensely concentrate during meditation to focus on being one with any situation.

### Meditation

You have probably heard the word "**meditation**" many times in your life. You may have seen pictures of people sitting in meditation with crossed legs & eyes closed. You may even know someone who meditates. But what exactly is meditation? What is its purpose?

Buddhist followers **meditate** in order to still their mind & to let go of the running thought inside their brains. If you stop to notice, your thoughts go on from the moment of waking until you sleep, even appearing in dreams. For Buddhists, meditation is a means of finding what lies beyond these thoughts, & this takes practice. There are many forms of meditation. Usually, Buddhists sit still, spine straight & eyes closed. By focusing on their breath, they become more "present," more *aware* of themselves. Although the stream of thoughts continues, the student simply watches them go by like clouds in a sky. Thus, he or she begins to be free of the grip of thinking.

Zen Buddhists have some unusual meditation practices. One such practice is called a **koan**, or a riddle. The master asks a puzzling question which the student must answer correctly ~



Buddhists *meditate to* \_\_\_\_\_.

- let go of thoughts running through their head
- rest their minds
- become more aware of themselves
- all the above
- only a & b



although it may take days to comprehend. Thus, the koan provides the means for meditation.

**One famous riddle** tells the story of a high government official who approached a Zen master.

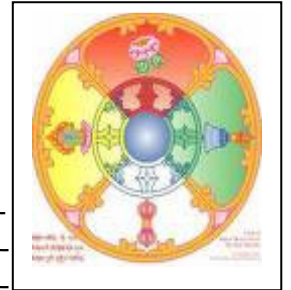
**Officer:** A man once kept a goose in a bottle. The goose grew larger until it could not escape. The man, not wishing to harm the goose, could not break the bottle. How would you remove the goose?

**Master:** O, Officer!

**Officer:** Yes!

**Master:** There, the goose is out!

Tibetan Buddhists like to focus on mandalas during meditation. **Mandalas** → are elaborate designs rich with color & detail. They are often circular, containing either portraits of various gods or intricate patterns. After meditating on the mandala, the student will close his/her eyes & try to visualize the picture. Thus, the mind is disciplined while the heart *merges* with the spirit of the mandala.



**Why** do Buddhists prefer to *focus on* mandalas? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_