

Reaching enlightenment through buddhism philosophy essay



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Inner peace, enlightenment, and true happiness are all sought out by many people with very diverse beliefs and religions. This path to eternal peace is the bonding point that ties most religions together. Some of these religions however, require a belief in a figure of higher power or in a higher God such as Christianity. It is possible to still live a morally good life and reach that point of inner peace without having to believe in God or other spiritual figures. Buddhism is an alternative choice for reaching enlightenment that requires no worshipping of Gods or a Bible which to live by. With Buddhism, the Buddhist is able to live a life free of suffering when nirvana is reached by choosing to be a better person and following the path of Buddha. When compared to Christianity, Buddhism offers a more tangible way of seeking inner peace.

Buddhism was founded in India during 500 B. C. E by a spiritual leader by the name of Siddhartha Gautama. Gautama, later known as Buddha, discovered suffering and that he was not happy with his wealthy life as a Prince. At the age of twenty-nine, Prince Gautama decided that he wanted more than anything to discover how one might overcome suffering. " Siddhartha studied for six years with a group of five ascetics, practicing austerities and self- mortifications; however, his practices were so astounding that soon the five ascetics were followers of Siddhartha" (Boeree 2). When Siddhartha realized that he needed to find medium between the life of luxuries and self- mortification, the ascetics left him, assuming he had given up. Siddhartha Gautama then traveled to a village where he sat under a certain bodhi tree and made the decision to stay there until the answers to his questions came to him.

He sat there for many days, first in deep concentration to clear his mind of all distractions, then in mindfulness meditation, opening himself up to the truth. He began, they say, to recall all his previous lives, and to see everything that was going on in the entire universe. On the full moon of May, with the rising of the morning star, Siddhartha finally understood the answer to the question of suffering and became the Buddha, which means “ he who is awake” (Boeree 2).

Buddha only agreed to teach his path to enlightenment when the king of gods, Brahma, convinced Buddha by suggesting to him that some of us have only a little dirt on our eyes and could awaken if we heard his story. ‘ In a deer park he preached his first sermon to the group of five ascetics his first started his practices with; this sermon is called “ setting the wheel of the teaching in motion”’ (Boeree 3). Buddha explained to them the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, they then became his first of over 330 million followers of Buddhist philosophies. Siddhartha Gautama died at the age of eighty under a grove of sala trees. His last words were “ Impermanent are all created things; Strive on with awareness.”

All Buddhists have faith in three major areas of Buddhism: Buddha himself, his teachings, called the dharma, and the religious community he founded, called the Sangha. Buddhist believe in Siddhartha as being the Buddha and the story of his journey to enlightenment. Although Buddha wrote no books, he taught his followers, and they taught their followers, who in turn did the same. Buddhists believe in the teachings of Buddha even though all his followers cannot agree on them. For this reason there is no Buddhist Bible.

Most Buddhists can agree on certain teachings. They do agree that the Buddha taught that pain, suffering, and unhappiness must be expected as a natural part of life. Men expect only happiness and therefore they are disappointed when they do not receive it. To avoid this disappointment, the Buddha taught that one should expect nothing. Buddha also teaches that if one knows the cause of unhappiness, one also knows the cure. He further states that one can escape unhappiness by getting rid of all selfish desires.

The man who understands the whole truth and accepts it will understand that he should never steal or cheat or grow angry. He will not stir up trouble by repeating hurtful things. The man who understands what the Buddha taught will “bear the burdens of those who are tired and weary,” and he will “harm no living thing” (Buddha 423b).

Once a Buddhist is able to be rid of their selfish desires, life becomes very precious to them; so precious in fact, that most Buddhist would not kill a fly but rather catch it, and release it outdoors. Buddhists also have faith in the Sangha. Sangha was founded by Buddha and is a place where Buddhist take refuge in it as the perfect life. No matter what sect of Buddhist one may be, all Buddhist share the faith in these three key parts of Buddhism.

There are many different types of Buddhism found around the world but three of the largest groups are Theravada, or Hinayana Buddhists, Mahayana Buddhists, and the Zen Buddhists. Theravada Buddhists, Theravada meaning “the way of the elders,” believe that every man must find his own path to nirvana, inner peace. No one is to help him, not even spirits or gods. Buddha did all that one person can do for others; he showed civilization what they

must do for themselves by setting an example. The Mahayana, which means “ the greater vehicle,” thought that the Theravada was only part of Buddha’s teachings; this is why they give the Theravada the name Hinayana, meaning “ the little vehicle.”

Mahayana Buddhists teach that men should follow the Buddha’s example of doing good for others. Another belief of these Buddhists is that the Buddha is a god who aids and protects those who pray to him and call upon him. They also believe that men can call upon a number of good spirits, called Bodhisattvas, who devote themselves to helping suffering mankind. (Buddha 423b).

Zen Buddhists have some very different beliefs from the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhists. Zen Buddhists of Japan say very little about gods and spirits but in fact, say that it is impossible to explain Buddhist teachings in words at all. Either you understand what enlightenment is, or you do not. The Zen believe if you don’t understand, there is nothing that can be said to make it clear to you. Besides these three different Buddhists groups, there are over sixty different Buddhists groups in Japan alone. “ Since Buddhism includes such a variety of branches, it

has been described as a group of religions and of ways of thinking rather than a single religion” (Buddha 424b).

Although Buddhism is classified as a religion, it is actually more of a philosophy to live by. Buddhism is a way of looking inside to find that path to inner peace. A journey where the path chosen has to be discovered from a much deeper place in oneself than just read from a book. When comparing <https://assignbuster.com/reaching-enlightenment-through-buddhism-philosophy-essay/>

Buddhism with Christianity, there are many similarities but also a few major differences. In Christianity, a Christian worships their creator, God, and seeks inner peace from his forgiveness of sins. Christians live their life by a certain set of standards based upon their Creator's ability to be "perfect" and spend much of their life trying to live up to these expectations of being a good Christian and doing as God would have done, who is once again "perfect." Trying to live up to the expectations of a perfect Christ can only lead to the disappointment that comes from failure. Confess thy sins and ask for forgiveness, and one shall find peace from God's understanding. An important difference to note when looking at Christianity and Buddhism is the lack of scare tactics used in Buddhism as compared to Christianity. Often one may hear from a Christian, "you will be condemned to Hell if you do not ask for forgiveness," or "you will suffer if you deny God." Comments like these are used merely to frighten those unsure of their faith, and persuade them to choose Christ. In Buddhism, there is no punishment or consequence for choosing not to follow Buddha. In Buddhism, an individual is able to follow another religion as long as it still promotes peace and prosperity; and with the example of a mortal being to follow, Buddhism takes a more tangible approach to inner peace. Siddhartha Gautama was able to achieve inner peace on his own by allowing himself to fully understand what caused his suffering and how he could get rid of it. Siddhartha took his own path and was able to reach his point of enlightenment without a Bible or Spiritual God to guide him. Buddhists have some set beliefs to follow but only what any good moral person would have for themselves. Buddhists choose to live a better life for their own benefit and with their own way

of getting there. Buddhism is a very non-violent belief and really pushes on treating others how you want to be treated.

All beings tremble before violence.

All fear death.

All love life

See yourself in others.

Then whom can you hurt?

What harm can you do?

He who seeks happiness

By hurting those who seek happiness

Will never find happiness.

For your brother is like you.

He wants to be happy.

Never harm him

And when you leave this life

You too will find happiness (Teachings 10).

Buddhism is a very wise philosophy and a good way to choose to live life.

One could find the path to enlightenment through the methods of Buddha.

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Religion, beliefs, and inner peace are three very controversial subjects.

Religion and belief go hand and hand and both are a big part of the journey to inner peace. Buddhism, both religion and philosophy, has been around many years and continues to spread throughout the world. When looking for a morally

good way to live life, Buddha's journey to enlightenment is a great example to follow. No belief in a creator, spirits, or demons is required. To reach that point of enlightenment, Buddhism suggests finding the cause of one's suffering by clearing the mind of all things and then one can know the cure for suffering. This way of life is much more realistic than Christianity and gives more grounds to follow. Buddhism is a philosophy one can live by.