

Siddhartha gautama



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The feeling of having a full understanding of oneself and who you are is something that everyone strives for. Being able to avoid pleasures and laziness to reach self fulfillment and clarity is achieving enlightenment.

Siddhartha Gautama, a prince from the Shakya Kingdom, went on a journey to discover himself and the reasons for human suffering.

Siddhartha led a very interesting life, starting with his younger years. As he aged, he became more significant because of his theories and religion development. Today, he is still a very important historical figure because of his discoveries, and many people worship him. Siddhartha's quest to enlightenment shaped an entirely new way of thinking, and he should always be remembered for his legacy.

Around 536 BC in the Himalayan mountain region in a city called Lumbini, Siddhartha Gautama was born into wealth. His father, Suddhodana, and his mother, Mahamaya gave him his name because it meant wish fulfiller or he who has attained his goals (Pearson, 2). It is said that his parents predicted him to become a Buddha at birth, therefore they named him a name with such a meaning (Pearson, 4). Two days after he was born, his mother died, leaving him in the care of his sister, Mahapajapati because his father was a very busy ruling king for the Shakya kingdom.

Growing up, Siddhartha lived in comfort and luxury because of his father, however, he was very sheltered so that he would age only experiencing wealth, and follow in the footsteps of his father. While living in royalty, he was given a very high level of education, and was taught philosophy, literature, and even martial arts. At age sixteen he was arranged to marry

Yasodhara, and they had a child when he was twenty nine. From the time he was married up until his son was born, Siddhartha began questioning his life and what was going on around him. He noticed a lot of suffering going on from the common people of where he lived. All of this exposure made him get very anxious and paranoid. The thought of him being susceptible to old age, disease, death, and many other types of suffering sent him into a crisis.

Ascetics were very self disciplined and avoided all forms of self indulgence. This way of life intrigued Siddhartha, which is why he became so disgusted with the people in his village. He was also influenced by exposure to ascetics, men who had renounced all worldly goods in the belief that practicing self-denial as spiritual discipline could bring enlightenment, (Pearson, 6). He first became a monk, then slowly transitioned to full asceticism because he thought that way of life was the only path that would lead him to enlightenment. He gave up everything for this journey; his family, his home, and all his material goods. He was determined to discover something that he considered very important.

He experienced many hardships on his quest, and had to reevaluate what he was doing many times in order to be successful.

As a monk he started to practice yoga and meditation often. He wanted to start to get in touch with his mind and his body. Arada Kalama and Udraka Ramaputra were his leaders, and they tried to teach him, but Siddhartha was not satisfied (Violatte, 14). He turned to asceticism for a more severe and tasking method to reach enlightenment. According to Pearson, ascetics would, practice severe deprivation of food and sleep, along with other self-induced physical hardship. They would use yogic meditation to relieve pain

and conserve energy, There was a forest that was of importance to the Hindus, a common religion for the people in the area, where Siddhartha went to live as an ascetic.

The trials that Siddhartha had to face were physical, mental, and spiritual.

He experienced a lot of struggle and hardships during the six year time period he was living in the forest. Sometimes, his own thoughts and ideas lead him to danger. Fasting was a common thing for monks to practice, and Siddhartha thought that if he fasted for an extended amount of time, he could get a better grasp on his consciousness and attain enlightenment. A woman that was traveling through and noticed Siddhartha came over and offered him food, and it was not until that point that Siddhartha realized that enlightenment wouldn't come from deprivation. He then decided to focus on a concept called The Middle Path(Pettinger). The middle path is something that would be taught by Siddhartha in the future. After living in starvation for years, he came to the conclusion that he should avoiding excesses of both fasting and feasting, (Pettinger). After this realization he began to focus harder and became more determined.

According to John Pearson, who wrote a biography on Siddhartha Gautama for EBSCO, he is said to have experienced the death of his former being. This means going beyond the experience of life as a cycle of birth, death and rebirth (known as samsara), to instead experience nirvana, what he called 'the utter extinction of aging and dying.' It took him six years to attain this enlightenment, and it would end up being one of the most important days in history. After Siddhartha attained nirvana, he became known as the Buddha, which means enlightened one.

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The concept of enlightenment is very interesting and complicated. It is very self oriented and it is something that cannot be taught. Nirvana is a state that a person is in while the event of enlightenment takes place- nirvana also happens at death. According to Immanuel Kant from Columbia University, Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage.

Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. This means that enlightenment is something that is personal and the feeling of being in nirvana will become apparent and all of a person's suffering will end. It is the idea that doing things for yourself and not waiting for others to tell you to do it, and stepping forward in your life instead of staying back. Nirvana is described as blissful consciousness by Pettinger. Enlightenment is a completely new outlook on life, and Siddhartha was able to find that, and keep it with him for the rest of his life on earth.

After experiencing nirvana, he continued to meditate for weeks after because he wanted to enhance his learning and experience more of his new reality. Of enlightenment. Buddha decided that he wanted to teach others about his wisdom, and spread his new ideologies to everyone. He then made the choice to go back to samsara the physical world, and begin to educate. Buddha wanted people to understand The Four Noble Truths, which was something he composed while in enlightenment.

They were: Human existence is suffering, suffering is caused by desire, only by ending desire can humans end suffering, the Buddha's eightfold path can

end desire, (Pearson). The Eightfold Path is the track to enlightenment. He also taught a concept called the Middle Way. These three ideologies became the foundation for Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths are the basic thoughts of Buddha on suffering and are the essence of Buddhism. They spread the idea that suffering is inevitable, but that suffering can come to an end. According to PBS, the notion of suffering is not intended to convey a negative world view, but rather, a pragmatic perspective that deals with the world as it is, and attempts to rectify it. Each Truth was carefully thought out and determined by the Buddha in efforts to explain life on earth and why there is suffering. He composed these ideas based off his own experiences seeking enlightenment. They provide guidance through the physical world and let people know that enlightenment is attainable. The last Truth describes the Buddha's Eightfold path, and how it can lead people to live a life without earthly desires. All the elements of Buddhism link together and were created by The Buddha.

The Eightfold Path is like the practices or morals that, according to Buddha, should be followed to ensure enlightenment. The eight aspects are, The correct understanding the correct way of thinking the correct way of speaking the correct livelihood the correct effort the correct mindfulness and the correct concentration, (Gale Resource). These things can be taught and explained, however, part of the Buddhist religion is about thinking for oneself and discovering what a concept means to an individual. These practices encourage people to be respectable and do what they know is right. Buddha chose these specific principles because they all lead to a well rounded person that is more likely to be able to reach enlightenment.

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The Middle Way simply is the Buddha's view on life. Soka Gakkai International says that it is, the way or path that transcends and reconciles the duality that characterizes most thinking. The middle way is the perfect balance between having too much and too little. Buddha discovered this when he first had a lot of luxury, and then had almost nothing in the forest. He came to the conclusion that indulgence or not enough indulgence wouldn't lead to enlightenment, but somewhere in the middle would. Some even interchange the phrase The Middle Way and Buddhism because the concept of the middle way completely grasps the basis of Buddhism. Buddha thought that all of these ideas and notions should be formed into a religious belief. Buddha assumed that people would follow what he was saying and commit to this new belief system of enlightenment. He wanted others to have the same liberating experience as he had (Hallisey, 13).

Buddha returned back to his homeland to talk about his experiences and to teach others in and around India. He gave his first religious talk- or sermon- called Turning the Wheel of Truth, in a place called Sarnath. He gave many more talks for the remainder of his life. His goal was to spread the Four Noble Truths, his thought on enlightenment and nirvana, and the Middle Way. When creating this belief system, he made efforts to not have it become an organized religion with a church and hierarchy (Pearson). He believed that his teachings could be used for guidance to further oneself but not to rely on fully.

It is said that Buddha experienced three changes of heart during his life. They were when he gave up his life as a prince, the day he attained enlightenment, and the day he made his decision to teach his findings.

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These changes of heart influenced his teaching style and impacted what kind of teacher he was. He wanted to be motivational yet practical and never tried to force his thoughts upon people. In order to adhere to multiple types of listeners, the Buddha gave his message in various ways, adjusting what he had to say according to the capabilities and predispositions of his audience, (Hallisey). He avoided all incidences of rules coming about as he gained more followers- he wanted Buddhism to remain as personal to the individual as possible.

As Buddha became more established as a teacher, he gained some committed followers called sangha, who became Buddhist monks (Berkley). He had to grant him the right to teach his philosophies correctly because he didn't want any of his oral lessons to be altered or misinterpreted. Buddha continued to teach for forty five more years until he died of dysentery at age eighty. He passed in 483 BC in his home town Kushinagara where his legacy carried on and his ideologies stuck with many people. Some say that he left his physical body and continued on to reach parinirvana, which was where enlightened people went when they died (Berkley). The sangha continued to teach Buddhism and established it as a religion so that more people could join the following if they wanted to. It spread all around India and Nepal, and eventually made its way to China.

So many people were infatuated with the concept of becoming enlightened and experiencing nirvana.

Buddhism is one of the most vastly spread religions in the modern world, and it is because of Siddhartha Gautama. He had a vision and did not give up

until he succeeded with goal of realization in the physical world. He is as important to Buddhist as Jesus Christ is to Christians (Violatti).

It has many similarities and differences with Hinduism, which was the predominant religion before buddhism came about. Jainism is another religion that branched off from Buddhism, and it is far more intense and consumes people's lives. Most Jainists are acesitics or live a comparable life to an ascetic. This religion developed after Buddha's passing and it is said that he would not have liked it because during his time in the forest, he realized that acesitics would never reach enlightenment because they give up too much. Since all of Buddha's teachings were oral, there is some argument on what the core of Buddhism is. Some say its non- violence while others believe that it is humanity. (Violatti).

Buddha never saw himself as a religion leader, but just as a teacher. He thought that ceremonies and rituals that consumed people's lives was unnecessary and thought that people should be able to worship as much or as little as they felt was crucial. Violatti says that he feels it's ironic how Buddha ended up being worshipped like a god after his death, and was viewed as a hierarchical being.

Indian traditions started associating with Buddhist lifestyles and so gods and goddesses that represented different aspects of Buddhism started to be worshipped. Buddha did not want this to happen but he also created Buddhism to be celebrated however an individual wished.

Siddhartha Gautama was a very insightful person who made a monumental change in his life for the betterment of himself and others.

His realization of suffering and the fact that he had been blind to it for his younger years gave him this change of heart. His achievements in creating a new religion, which has 488 million followers today. 7% of the world's population follows the faith of the Buddha in hopes of reaching enlightenment. Buddhists go on their own personal journey of finding themselves and what is important to them.