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These were the lines the Buddha was believed to have said before he passed away at 80 years old (Boeree, 1999) after founding a way of thinking that would become one of the world’s biggest religions. Prince Siddhartha had everything in life: a lovingfamilyand riches beyond imagining. However, in spite of such abundance, Siddhartha had a lingering discontent. As Hesse (trans. Rosner, 1971) wrote in is his book, “…He still lacked all joy in his heart. Dreamsand restless thoughts came into his mind…” Such restlessness compelled him to leave the comforts and safety of his kingdom to search for life’s purpose.

Thus began Prince Siddhartha’s journey to enlightenment. After achieving the awakening that he desired, Siddhartha called himself Buddha or the Enlightened One, whose teachings became the foundations of Buddhism. WHAT I LIKE ABOUT BUDDHISM I can honestly say that my previous knowledge of Buddhism was limited to what I witnessed in the musical The King and I, which isn’t much if you have seen it. So reading about this particular religion was really fascinating and an eye-opener as well. As I learned more about Buddhism, I realized it is not an organized religion; more of a way of thinking.

As Keown (1996) once said, “ Problems of the kind just mentioned confront us as soon as we try to define what Buddhism is. Is it a religion? Aphilosophy? A way of life? A code of ethics? It is not easy to classify Buddhism as any of these things, and it challenges us to rethink some of these categories. ” Indeed, it is not for us to classify or label Buddhism, or any other philosophy for that matter. I suppose it should just be taken for the way it is and for the ideas that is espouses. In Buddhism, you are welcome to come and leave as you wish.

The path of Buddha is a simple, ethical life, and awareness of thoughts and actions, that leads to wisdom and understanding. Buddhists payrespectto Buddha not to worship him; but to thank him for showing them the path to enlightenment. A major aspect of Buddhism is meditation. Buddhists believe that by going into your own thoughts, you cleanse and purify your soul. Meditation, while relaxing the body, sharply focuses the mind, thus enabling us to purge negative energy and achieve clarity of thought. Meditation is a keystone in Buddhism; without which one cannot achieve the awakening that they are looking for.

For Buddhists the mediation technique can calm them, but it does not lead entirely away from all of our sufferings. There are a number of different approaches to Buddhism meditation. Meditation as keystone of meditation came from the fact that Buddha himself attained enlightenment during a long period of mediation. The first approach is samatha or calm meditation. The idea here is to calm the body and mind and bring one’s self into a state of perfect concentration. To attain this, breathing is very important; there has to be consciousness of one’s breath as it drifts in and out of the body.

To the Buddhists, concentrating this way leaves no room for disruptive mental thoughts, known as the five hindrances: sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and work, and skeptical doubt. When all these disruptions have been removed, this kind of calm meditation leads to a blissful state known as jhanas. But regardless of the benefits that calm meditation offers, it does not provide a complete pathway to enlightenment. Many Buddhists merge the calm meditation with or insight meditation. This type of meditation is intended for developing within us awareness of the world as it really is.

It asks us to be aware of what we are doing at the precise moment we are doing it. Some people call this process metacognition, or awareness of our awareness. I have been practicing meditation for some months now. And studying Buddhism, I am able to appreciate the process even more. It is amazing how I find so much peace just by closing my eyes and be aware of every breath that I take. I agree with the Buddhists, meditation definitely brings inner peace and contentment. It renews the spirit and gives me the strength to cope with life’s uncertainties.

WHAT I DON’T LIKE ABOUT BUDDHISM It’s hard to think of something that I would like to change about Buddhism. It has withstood the test of time, and deserves respect for that. Religion, if Buddhism is one of them, is one of the things that must abide in this world. Buddhism must be constant, a stronghold for people who are looking for peace and meaning in their lives. Buddhism advocates non-violenceand respect for all living creatures. The ultimate goal of a Buddhist is to reach a state of sustained self-enlightenment or Nirvana, which is liberation from the bonds of reincarnation.

This can be achieved through constant meditation and consciousness of thought and action. Buddhists are fierce vegetarians and are known for their stark, simple lifestyles and pacifist beliefs. They welcome anyone who wants to espouse their ways and do not impose that you forsake your own religious beliefs. The Buddha said that it did not matter what a person’s status in the world was, or what their background or wealth or nationality might be. All were capable of enlightenment, and all were welcome into the Sangha or community of followers. (Boeree, 1999)

If I were a leader of Buddhism, I will resolve to remain faithful to the spirit in which Buddhism has been founded. Perfection can lead to complacency. The very philosophy of Buddhism renders it imperfect because it is always striving to attain awakening and enlightenment. The desire to change and better ourselves is the impetus that will keep us searching in life and within ourselves. However, if I were to choose something I don not like about Buddhism, it would have to be their stubborn refusal to make a stand and fight for their way of life.

This refusal to fight in defense of their own has been the cause of their oppression. In the highlands of Tibet and Nepal, where Buddhism has established an unbroken, traditional way of living, there has been an upheaval because neighboring countries have been trying to take over these majestic lands and rule them. I believethat Buddhism has earned the right to keep their way of living, and no country has the right to come in and take that away, all in the name of progress. And Buddhist, in defense of their right to keep their traditions and simple living should fight for it.

Of course I understand that fighting goes against the very grain of Buddha’s teachings of non-violence. But if the espousal of non-violence threatens their very existence, and will change their way of life to the very core, then that justifies fighting by all means. By fighting, I don’t mean the aggressive kind, but the kind of fighting that one needs to do when there is a clear and present danger that threatens your territory and life. Everyone, regardless of creed or color has the right to defend himself.

That is a basic human right that everyone should respect and protect. Indeed, there is room for righteous fighting; even in the non-violent world of Buddhism. REFERENCES: Boeree, G (1999). The Life of Siddhartha Gautama. Shippensburg University http://webspace. ship. edu/cgboer/siddhartha. html Keown, D (1996). Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press. Oxford. Hesse, H (1971). Siddhartha. (H. Rosner, Trans). Bantam Books. (Original work published 1922). Hopfe L. M. & Woodward. M. R. (2007). Religions of the World. PearsonEducationInc. New Jersey.