

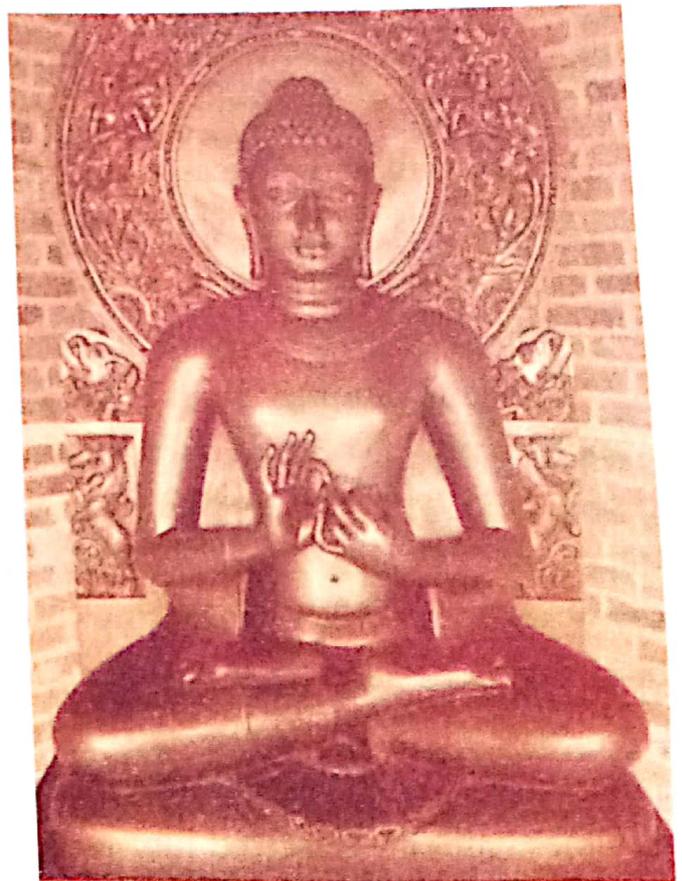


Lord Buddha

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Buddhism has spread to all five continents by this century. In addition, there are a large number of people who retain another religious faith but find the Buddhist teaching and life very attractive. All that Buddha said and believed, and all that the principal exponents of the Buddhist faith said were written in a triplet called the 'Tripitaka' (literally, 'triple basket'). There have been a large number of mythical stories associated with the life of Buddha but the history of Lord Buddha is not a myth or legend. The keyword in the story of how the Prince Gautama became the Lord Buddha is : self-introspection, or searching through oneself. The best gurus could not satisfy him. The most valuable sacred texts could not attract him. Life and experience only made him more confused. Penance or meditation could not take him to the Truth. Finally, he could attain the 'True Knowledge' which meant to be 'Buddha', only through searching within oneself. We have many lessons to learn from the life of this great Indian who was born 2500 years ago.

By the 5th century B.C. or we can say about 2500 years ago, the Aryan invaders in India had already been beyond the Punjab to the plains in North India. They established small kingdoms along the valley of the Ganges. One of these Aryan tribes, called the Shakyas, lived in Kapilvastu, about one hundred miles north-east of Benares and at least thirty miles south of the Himalayas. They were agricultural people with fair prosperity. Suddhodana, the king, had married two daughters of the King of the Koliyans— a neighbouring tribe. Both were



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childless for long until in old age in 563 B.C., the elder one gave birth to Gautama, the Prince, and died within seven days. Afterwards, he was named Siddhartha. He was extremely delicately brought up by his father, the king. Later, he married Yashodhara, the daughter of the King of Koli, at an early age and lived happily free from all problems of life, until one day the whole world appeared quite different to the prince.

On his twenty-ninth year, Siddhartha suddenly noticed that men who had reached old age and decay saw other persons broken down with age and fell troubled, ashamed, disgusted and forgetful that they had themselves in one such stage. He soon discovered that those with disease too thought the same way. Again, one feels similarly disgusted and ashamed to see another about to die and forgets that he too will meet with the same fate. Once, he had these visions and realised that he was not beyond old age, disease or death, all pride in him deserted the prince. He thus felt more restless and insecure as the days passed by and was dissatisfied with the vanity of life. Moreover, when a son was born to him on the eleventh year of his marriage, he only felt that there was one more tie to be broken before he could go away to solve the deep problems of life and find a way of escaping the suffering which otherwise seemed inevitable.

So, on the same night, when no one was awake, Siddhartha left the palace taking only his horse with him, and attended only by his charioteer Channa. He wanted to hold his son in his arms before departing but found him asleep with Yashodhara. He was afraid that all would wake up and therefore left without bidding good-bye to them.

Siddhartha now became a homeless wanderer. It was a dangerous and hard life for one who was always there in bed of roses. But "it is danger and hardship, and not safety or happiness, that lure men to great deeds", said Sister Nivedita commenting on the life of Buddha.

In the beginning, Siddhartha went to various Brahmin hermits at Rajagriha in the Vindhya hills to attain superhuman power and insight. Siddhartha was obviously dissatisfied with the teachings of these hermits who could not answer his searching questions. Therefore, he decided to begin meditation in a lonely forest. He endured the severest privations or hardships during this period and had found a number of disciples as he had by then got reputation as a saint. But this penance or meditation could not take him nearer to enlightenment that he sought. So he abandoned his life and began taking regular food. Thus, he willingly gave up his reputation and his disciples naturally deserted him in disillusionment.

But Siddhartha was himself disillusioned too. It was at this time of loneliness and failure came to him the great temptation and assault, known as the 'Maara', or the evil one. Unvanquished and unmoved, he walked along the river Nairanjara and took a seat under a bo-tree. He also took a simple meal from the hands of Sujata, daughter of a neighbouring villager, who thought he was a deity. The whole day he sat there with doubt and temptation in his mind. But as the nightfall approached, his mind seemed to grow clearer and clearer and his doubts began disappearing. A great peace came over him as the significance of all events, actions, thoughts and natural laws made itself apparent to him. Prince Siddhartha became Buddha, the Enlightened One.

Buddha suddenly realised that it would be difficult to share this wisdom with men less wise and less earnest than himself. He was not sure if he would be able to pursue anyone of the truth of this doctrine of self-salvation simply by love, peace and self-restraint, without going through complicated rituals and religious teaching. Such isolation comes to all great leaders. But his love for humanity made his determination stronger. He was now ready to face the hazard of misunderstanding or failure to preach the true knowledge. So he went to Benares to try and "turn the wheel of the law", the wheel of the world empire of truth and righteousness.

Buddha established himself in the deer park called Isipatana near Benares and began teaching. Some of his old disciples and a few other men had accepted his teaching quite early. He told them that there were two 'extremes' which he had given up. There was this extreme of 'pleasures' which was degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble and profitless. Then there was another extreme of 'mortifications' which was painful and without profit. He explained that the Middle Path that led man to insight, wisdom and brought him calm, knowledge and salvation, was the best course. That was how he had himself become the Supreme Buddha.

Very soon, Buddha had thousands of followers or Bhikkhus all over. He took them to Gayasisa for further teaching and gave one of the most important sermons. He said, all senses were burning. "The eye, O Bhikkhus, is burning, visible things are burning; the mental impressions based on the eye are burning; the contact of the eye with visible things is burning; the sensation produced by the contact of the eye, be it pleasant, be it painful, or be it neither pleasant nor painful, even that is burning. I declare unto you that it is burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance; it is burning with the anxieties of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair."

Therefore, he urged all his followers to free their mind from all pleasures, pains and attachments, and try to learn the True Knowledge of peace, harmony and tranquility – the knowledge which he attained through self-introspection.



GEARED UP

A. Write few sentences on “Wisdom is got by character, not by age; age merely spices wisdom” in your own words.

B. Read the following sentences carefully. Tick (✓) the right statement and cross (X) the wrong one :

1. Buddha was a great warrior.
2. A son was born to him on the eleventh year of his marriage.
3. Siddhartha left the palace with his wife and son.
4. Buddha realised that it would be difficult to share this wisdom with man less wise and less earnest than himself.
5. He urged all his followers to free their mind from all pleasures, pains and attachments.

C. Fill in the blanks by choosing the correct word from the box :

humanity, appeared, stories, texts, Siddhartha

1. There have been a large number of mythical _____ associated with the life of Buddha.
2. The most valuable sacred _____ could not attract him.
3. Until one day the whole world _____ quite different to the prime.

4. _____ left the palace taking only one horse with him.
5. But his love for _____ made his determination strong.

D. Answer the following questions :

1. What does 'Buddha' mean?
2. What does Buddhism teach us ?
3. What is the meaning of 'tripitaka' ?
4. Write the Buddha's view on old age, disease and death.
5. Why did Buddha think that all senses were burning ?



ACTION MODE

Read these quotations :

“Empty reputations find only a temporary resting place, only wisdom can make it lasting”

— J. J. Rousseau

“Thought is free, it cannot and should not be coerced.”

— Baltasar Gracian



CONVERSATION

HONOURABLE TEACHERS

Ask students to find out more about the Buddhist 'sanghas'. Try to learn how far Buddhism had spread in other Asian countries.

ARTS INTEGRATED PROJECT

IMAGINATION

You know that Siddhartha left the palace when no one was awake, what happen if he had done so in day time?