

## BUDDHIST BASICS: The ABC's of Buddhism

### The Life of the Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama was born  
in the sixth century B.C.  
in what is now modern Nepal.  
His father, Suddhodana,  
was the ruler of the Sakya people  
and Siddhartha grew up living  
the extravagant life of a young prince.  
According to custom,  
he married at the young age of sixteen  
to a girl named Yasodhara.  
His father had ordered  
that he live a life of total seclusion,  
but one day Siddhartha ventured out  
into the world  
and was confronted with the reality  
of the inevitable suffering of life.  
The next day,  
at the age of twenty-nine,  
he left his kingdom and new-born son  
to lead an ascetic life a  
nd determine a way to relieve universal suffering.  
For six years,  
Siddhartha submitted himself  
to rigorous ascetic practices,  
studying and following  
different methods of meditation  
with various religious teachers.  
But he was never fully satisfied.  
One day, however,  
he was offered a bowl of rice from a young girl  
and he accepted it.  
In that moment,  
he realized that physical austerities  
were not the means to achieve liberation.  
From then on,  
he encouraged people to follow  
a path of balance rather than extremism.  
He called this The Middle Way.  
That night Siddhartha sat under the bodhi tree,

and meditated until dawn.  
He purified his mind of all defilements  
and attained enlightenment  
at the age of thirty-five,  
thus earning the title Buddha,  
or "Enlightened One."  
For the remainder of his eighty years,  
the Buddha preached the dharma  
in an effort to help other sentient beings  
reach enlightenment.

### The Four Noble Truths

In his first teaching,  
the Buddha expounded  
the basic doctrine  
of the Four Noble Truths.

He first declared what he had learned  
the day he left the palace;  
namely, that suffering  
is universal and inevitable.

In the Second Noble Truth,  
he explains that  
the immediate cause  
of suffering  
is desire.  
The ultimate cause of suffering,  
however,  
is ignorance  
concerning the true nature of reality.

The Third Noble Truth  
encourages humanity,  
asserting that there is a way  
to dispel ignorance  
and relieve suffering.

This path is detailed  
in the Fourth Noble Truth  
in the form of  
the Eightfold Path.

### The Eightfold Path

According to the Buddha,  
the Eightfold path is the means  
to achieve liberation from suffering.

Specifically, this path includes

- (1) Right View,
- (2) Right Thought,
- (3) Right Speech,
- (4) Right Action,
- (5) Right Livelihood,
- (6) Right Effort,
- (7) Right Mindfulness,
- and (8) Right Concentration.

This page maintained by [tricycle@well.com](mailto:tricycle@well.com)