

Gautama The Buddha, The Enlightened One

1. Buddhism.

Date: Around 570 BC.

2. Family name of Prophet:

Siddartha Gautama.

3. Holy Name:

The Buddha, The Enlightened One.

4. Name For God:

**The Promised One: Maitreya Buddha, Amitabha
"Source of Wisdom, Unbounded Light.**

While not much is known about the earliest forms of Buddhism, it seems the earliest followers believed that there was only the one Buddha and that no more would follow. Soon, however, a doctrine of the *Maitreya*, or "Future Buddha," began to assert itself. In this, Buddhists believed that a second Buddha would come and purify the world; they also believed that the first Buddha prophesied this future Buddha.

5. Birth Legends and Life:

He was the chief's son of a tribal group, the Shakyas, so he was born a *Kshatriya*. At the age of twenty-nine, he left his family in order to lead an ascetic life. A few years later he reappears with a number of followers; he and his followers devote their lives to "The Middle Way," a lifestyle that is midway between a completely ascetic lifestyle and one that is world-devoted. At some point he gained "enlightenment" and began to preach this new philosophy in the region of Bihar and Uttar Kadesh.

His teaching lasted for several decades and he perished at a very old age, somewhere in his eighties

6. Manner of Revelation:

Unknown: But (see above) Gautama leaves his home, receives "enlightenment" and reappears with disciples.

This same outline (from the perspective of the homeland) can be seen in the stories of Abraham, Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed etc.

7. Revealed Book:

Tripitaka “Three Baskets”.

While Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, spent several decades teaching, none of his teachings were written down until several hundred years later. In the third century, Asoka, the great Mauryan emperor, converted to Buddhism and began to sponsor several monasteries throughout the country. He even sent missionaries out to various countries both east and west. During his reign, the teachings of Buddha spread all across India and Sri Lanka.

Disturbed by the prolific growth of Buddhist heresies, a council of Buddhist monks was convened at the Mauryan capital of Patna during the third century BC to purify the doctrine. What arose from that council, more or less, were the definitive teachings of Theravada Buddhism.

When the teachings of Buddha were finally written into a canon, This canon is called the **Tripitaka**, or "Three Baskets," for it is divided into three parts, the *Vinaya* , or "Conduct," the *Sutta* , or "Discourses," and the *Abhidhamma* , or "Supplementary Doctrines."

The second part, the "Discourses," are the most important in Buddhism. These are discourses by the Buddha and contain the whole of Buddhist philosophy and morality. . Theravada Buddhism holds that Buddha was a historical person who, on his death, ceased to exist. There were, however, strong tendencies for Buddhists to worship Buddha as a god of some sort; these tendencies probably began as early as Buddha's lifetime.

The Mahayanists developed a theology of Buddha called the doctrine of "The Three Bodies," or **Trikaya**. The Buddha was not a human being, as he was in Theravada Buddhism, but the manifestation of a universal, spiritual Being. This Being had three bodies. When it occupied the earth in the form of Siddhartha Gautama, it took on the Body of Magical Transformation (*nirmanakaya*). This Body of Magical Transformation was an emanation of the Body of Bliss (*sambhogakaya*), which occupies the heavens in the form of a ruling and governing God of the universe.

There are many forms of the Body of Bliss, but the one that rules over our world is Amithaba who lives in a paradise in the western heavens called **Sukhavati**, or "Land of Pure Bliss." Finally, the Body of Bliss is an emanation of the Body of Essence (*dharmakaya*), which is the principle underlying the whole of the universe. This Body of Essence, the principle and rule of the universe, became synonymous with *Nirvana* . It was a kind of universal soul, and *Nirvana* became the transcendent joining with this universal soul.

(Note: the resemblance of Asoka to Constantine in Christian history.)

6. Basic Teachings:

The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

The Basics of Buddhist Wisdom

The Four Noble Truths

1. *Life is suffering;*
2. *Suffering is due to attachment;*
3. *Attachment can be overcome;*
4. *There is a path for accomplishing this.*

1. Suffering is perhaps the most common translation for the Sanskrit word **duhkha**, which can also be translated as imperfect, stressful, or filled with anguish.

Contributing to the anguish is **anitya** -- the fact that all things are impermanent, including living things like ourselves.

Furthermore, there is the concept of **anatman** -- literally, "no soul". Anatman means that all things are interconnected and interdependent, so that no thing -- including ourselves -- has a separate existence.

2. Attachment is a common translation for the word **trishna**, which literally means thirst and is also translated as desire, clinging, greed, craving, or lust. Because we and the world are imperfect, impermanent, and not separate, we are forever "clinging" to things, each other, and ourselves, in a mistaken effort at permanence.

Besides trishna, there is **dvesha**, which means avoidance or hatred. Hatred is its own kind of clinging.



The Eightfold Path

1. *Right view is the true understanding of the four noble truths.*
2. *Right aspiration is the true desire to free oneself from attachment, ignorance, and hatefulness.*

These two are referred to as **prajña**, or wisdom.

3. **Right speech** involves abstaining from lying, gossiping, or hurtful talk.

4. **Right action** involves abstaining from hurtful behaviors, such as killing, stealing, and careless sex.

5. **Right livelihood** means making your living in such a way as to avoid dishonesty and hurting others, including animals.

These three are referred to as **shila**, or morality.

6. **Right effort** is a matter of exerting oneself in regards to the content of one's mind: Bad qualities should be abandoned and prevented from arising again; Good qualities should be enacted and nurtured.

7. **Right mindfulness** is the focusing of one's attention on one's body, feelings, thoughts, and consciousness in such a way as to overcome craving, hatred, and ignorance.

8. **Right concentration** is meditating in such a way as to progressively realize a true understanding of imperfection, impermanence, and non-separateness.

The last three are known as **samadhi**, or meditation.

The Kalama Sutta

In the Kalama Sutta, we find the Kalamas, a people of apparently skeptical natures, asking Buddha for guidance in distinguishing good teachers from bad ones, and proper teachings from evil ones. The Buddha answers in three parts, which are treasures of wisdom. First, he outlines the criteria we should use to distinguish good from bad teachers and teachings:

"It is proper for you, Kalamas, to doubt, to be uncertain.... Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher....'

*"What do you think, Kalamas? Does **greed** appear in a man for his benefit or harm? Does **hate** appear in a man for his benefit or harm? Does **delusion** appear in a man for his benefit or harm?" -- "For his harm, venerable sir." -- "Kalamas, being given to greed, hate, and delusion, and being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally by greed, hate, and delusion, this man takes life, steals, commits adultery, and tells lies; he prompts another too, to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and ill?" -- "Yes, venerable sir...."*

*"Kalamas, **when you yourselves know**: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them. "*

Next, Buddha presents The Four Exalted Dwellings or **Brahma Vihara**:

*"The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who in this way is devoid of coveting, devoid of ill will, undeluded, clearly comprehending and mindful, dwells, having pervaded, with the thought of **amity**, all corners of the universe; he dwells, having pervaded because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of amity that is free of hate or malice.*

*"He lives, having pervaded, with the thought of **compassion**, all corners of the universe; he dwells, having pervaded because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of compassion that is free of hate or malice.*

*"He lives, having pervaded, with the thought of **gladness**, all corners of the universe; he dwells, having pervaded because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of gladness that is free of hate or malice.*

*"He lives, having pervaded, with the thought of **equanimity**, all corners of the universe; he dwells, having pervaded because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of equanimity that is free of hate or malice.*

And finally, Buddha reveals how, no matter what our philosophical orientation, following this path will lead to happiness, **The Four Solaces**:

"The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who has such a hate-free mind, such a malice-free mind, such an undefiled mind, and such a purified mind, is one by whom four solaces are found here and now.

"'Suppose there is a hereafter and there is a fruit, result, of deeds done well or ill. Then it is possible that at the dissolution of the body after death, I shall arise in the heavenly world, which is possessed of the state of bliss.' This is the first solace found by him.

"'Suppose there is no hereafter and there is no fruit, no result, of deeds done well or ill. Yet in this world, here and now, free from hatred, free from malice, safe and sound, and happy, I keep myself.' This is the second solace found by him.

"'Suppose evil (results) befall an evil-doer. I, however, think of doing evil to no one. Then, how can ill (results) affect me who do no evil deed?' This is the third solace found by him.

"'Suppose evil (results) do not befall an evil-doer. Then I see myself purified in any case.' This is the fourth solace found by him.

"The disciple of the Noble Ones, Kalamas, who has such a hate-free mind, such a malice-free mind, such an undefiled mind, and such a purified mind, is one by whom, here and now, these four solaces are found."

(quotations adapted from The Anguttara Nikaya 3.65, Soma Thera Trans., emphases added.)

Once again. There is little in Buddhism that one can argue with. Certainly the "Four Noble Truths and the "Eightfold Path" agree in essence with teachings of the other Faiths covered in this website.

The parallel histories of

1. the Emperor Asoka of Mauryan convening a council of Buddhist monks to purify the doctrine with the resulting canonization of the Tripitaka; and
2. The Emperor Constantine convening a group of bishops to purify Christian doctrine and the resulting canonization of the Bible, is unmistakable.

Home Site: <http://onenessbecomesus.com>

References sites: <http://www.buddhistwisdom.com> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page