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World Civilization OA

The Life of Buddha

Buddah, a young prince who lived five hundred years before Christ, went out on a journey through pain and suffering in order to arrive at nirvana, the state of ultimate pleasure. One of the foundations of his teachings would be the realization that everything was interconnected and that every action had repercussions. He entered a trance as his mind concentrated on these profound ideas; this would be the first step on the path to enlightenment. Buddha, who sat under a tree and simply focused and entered a meditation state known as a first Jana while doing that. This state was immensely pleasant and happy. Buddha's behavior deeply unsettled the King because religious tradition insisted that sons should follow in the footsteps of their fathers.

Buddha set out with his charioteer to guide him on four journeys, and saw the four signs as predicted by the palace fortune-teller. His journey reveals to him an aspect of life which had been deliberately hidden from him. Away from his father's influence, Buddah went on a trip out into the country and noticed an old man and was explained the aging process, next the reality of disease, and death after seeing a funeral. Buddah left home to find his own answers to life's suffering, and to find a solution to the pain of existence.

One story recalls how a hypnotic mist sent the guards to sleep allowing him to escape with China through the eastern gate of the palace. In the cities, Buddah saw people being thrown together when there was a lot of disease, the emphasis on suffering accentuated the kind of universal problems any human can face.

Buddah realized in order to find an answer to the suffering surrounding him he would have to challenge the Brahman religion. The Brahmins believed sacred knowledge centered on knowing certain texts called the Vedas. The position of Brahman families remained assured until a new wave of thinkers began to challenge this, ancient philosophers such as Plato and Socrates. Buddha tried to cut the way through that, he realized that the solution to life suffering needed to be available to everyone rather than an exclusive few like the Brahmin tradition. When Buddha tried to achieve this state of liberation by fasting, and when he broke his fast his followers lost faith in him. They no longer believed he had the strength to live up to his spiritual convictions and abandoned him.

By chance Buddah came across a musician tuning his sitter, when the string was too slack it would not play and when it was too tight it snapped somewhere in the middle. When Buddah realized something of great importance, it was the middle way that would lead him to the state of mind he was looking for. Buddha says mindfulness is which neither ignores it nor tries to forcefully mastery. It's a kind of middle way.