

Buddhism

by Judah Etinger

Buddha's life and teachings reveal the importance of overcoming desire and achieving enlightenment to attain true salvation.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:21, Matthew 5:6, Matthew 16:26, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Philippians 4:11

Topics: "World Religions", "Comparative Theology"

Description

Judah Etinger delves into the life of Buddha, born as a prince in India, who embarked on a spiritual journey to find true salvation. After years of searching through meditation and asceticism, Buddha discovered that intense desire was the root cause of human misery and renounced all desires to attain enlightenment. He then shared his experience with others, leading to the establishment of the Buddhist monastic order and the spread of his teachings, which attracted thousands of followers. Buddha's focus was on psychology rather than speculative philosophy, emphasizing the importance of clarity in religious fundamentals and the belief in gods, karma, and the transmigration of souls.

Transcript

Born about 560 B.C. as a prince, son of a king in India, Buddha was married at the age of 19 and had a son in his late twenties. With a growing interest in matters of religion, he left the life of a householder at that time, and went on to search for true salvation. For six years he searched along the two most widely recognized roads to salvation known to India: philosophic meditation and bodily asceticism (life without pleasures), but he yielded no results.

So Buddha decided to take a new approach. He entered into a process of meditation at the foot of a tree (a tree which came to be known most simply as the Bo-tree) and said to himself determinedly, "Though skin, nerves, and bone shall waste away, and life-blood itself be dried up, here sit I till I attain enlightenment."^[5]

And then suddenly the answer came to him: The stumbling block to his own salvation, and the cause of all human misery, was desire, too intense desire (tanha, "thirst," "craving,") -- desire for the wrong things, arising out of the carnal will-to-live-and-have. As this insight grew within him, Buddha realized that he was now without desire. He realized that he was the Enlightened One. As he said "I have lived the highest life."^[6]

Following his experience of enlightenment, Buddha had a discussion lasting several days with five of his former colleagues, during which he opened to them this experience. He challenged the five to believe his testimony, to admit that he was an "arahat" (a monk who had experienced enlightenment), and to try to become arahats themselves. The five people were converted, and thus the Buddhist monastic order came into being.

While Buddha wandered about preaching, other conversions continued to follow, until the number rose to 60, and eventually multiplied into the thousands. And as the numbers grew, so did the Buddhist Order rulebook, in which Buddha continually added rules and regulations to organize his newfound religion.[7]

Religiously, Buddha's interests were not so much in speculative philosophy, but rather in the realm of psychology, as the Buddhist records transmit: "Bear always in mind what it is that I have not made clear, and what it is that I have made clear. And what have I not made clear? I have not made clear that the world is eternal; I have not made clear that the world is not eternal; I have not made clear that the world is finite; I have not made clear that the world is infinite; I have not made clear that the soul and the body are identical; I have not made clear that the monk who has attained (the arahat) exists after death; I have not made clear that the arahat does not exist after death; I have not made clear that the arahat both exists and does not exist after death; I have not made clear that the arahat neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why have I not made this clear? Because this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion; therefore I have not made this clear." [8]

Buddha did, however, believe that the universe abounded in gods, goddesses, demons, and other nonhuman powers, whom he believed to be subject to death and rebirth, just as humans were. He also believed in the "law of karma" and in the transmigration of souls. (He later modified both these doctrines, however.)

After 45 years of preaching, teaching, and constructive planning, Buddha's life ended unexpectedly after a meal of pork brought on a sudden mortal illness.[9]

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/judah-etinge/buddhism/>

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