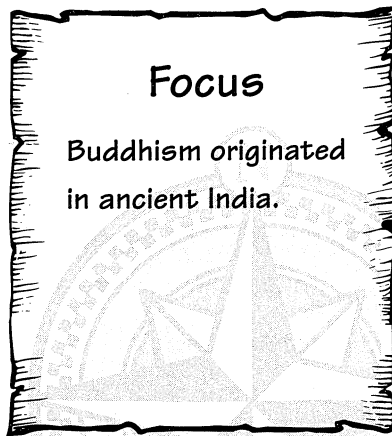


Buddhism

Brief #2



Buddhism is a religion that originated in India in about the fourth century B.C. The religion was founded by a man named Siddhartha Gautama.

According to Buddhist texts, Siddhartha was born into a wealthy and noble family. His father wanted to protect him from the ugliness in the world, so he discouraged him from ever leaving the safety of the palace.

As Siddhartha grew older, he left the palace. He got to experience what life was like for most people. He saw that many people were sick and old. He saw much unhappiness and suffering. These experiences caused Siddhartha to leave the comfort of his privileged life and try to figure out how to ease suffering in the world.

Siddhartha traveled and met many other religious monks who were also trying to figure out how to end human suffering. He tried many different techniques. He ate and slept very little. Some monks believed that if you deprived the body of food and sleep, it would be easier for you to see the truth of what causes suffering.

But Siddhartha thought there might be a better way. According to Buddhist texts, he meditated under a tree for a long time. **Meditation is the practice of sitting quietly and clearing the mind of thought.** It was during this meditation that Siddhartha believed he found the answers to his questions. **From that point on he was known as the Buddha, or the enlightened one.** He spent the rest of his life traveling and teaching people what he had learned through his meditation.

Vocabulary

1. Buddhism
2. Siddhartha Gautama
3. meditation
4. Buddha
5. Four Noble Truths
6. Eightfold Path
7. enlightenment



The Teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha taught that if you wanted to live a peaceful life free from suffering, then you had to understand the **Four Noble Truths**:

- **Suffering is a part of life. Everyone suffers.**
- **Suffering is caused because people think that material possessions can make them happy and they spend all of their time craving these things.**
- **If you stop craving material things, you can achieve happiness.**
- **There are things you can practice that will help you stop craving things.**

Buddhism (cont.)

Brief #2



The Teachings of the Buddha (cont.)

The Buddha established an **Eightfold Path** that he believed could help people to learn how to live a more peaceful and happy life. **The Eightfold Path teaches people how to change their speech, thoughts, and behavior to achieve happiness. It also teaches the importance of meditation in easing suffering.**

The Buddha believed that any person, whether rich or poor, young or old, had the ability to become enlightened. **Enlightenment means achieving a state in which you have significantly reduced or eliminated suffering.**



The Legacy of the Buddha

The Buddha lived to be eighty years old. He died around 479 B.C. After his death, his followers helped to spread his teachings far and wide. Ashoka the Great was responsible for sending Buddhist missionaries to different parts of Asia to help spread the Buddhist philosophy.

Today, millions of people in nearly every country in the world practice Buddhism.

