



During a night of deep meditation under the Bodhi tree, Siddhartha achieved enlightenment.

nirvana an ideal state of happiness and peace

Buddhism the religion founded by Siddhartha, which teaches that life brings suffering that one can escape by seeking nirvana through enlightenment

Four Noble Truths the four basic doctrines, or principles, of Buddhism

Eightfold Path a key idea of Buddhism whereby followers should live their lives according to these eight teachings

16.6 The Prince Becomes the Buddha

Siddhartha had learned that giving up bodily pleasures did not bring enlightenment. He decided to find a balance between the extremes of pleasure and pain. He would be neither a prince nor an ascetic. Instead, he would **seek** a “middle way” as a path to enlightenment.

The prince’s new way of thinking caused the other ascetics to abandon him. But he was content to be alone. Although he had not yet found enlightenment, he believed that he was now on the right path.

A full moon rose on Siddhartha’s 35th birthday. He bathed in the river and rested quietly in a grove of trees. When he awoke, he had a strong feeling that he would soon become enlightened. Then a grass cutter gave him eight handfuls of soft grass as a present. Siddhartha walked until he reached a tree that would become known as the Bodhi (BOH-dee), or Enlightenment, tree. He placed the grass at the foot of the tree and sat down. He vowed to meditate under the tree until he reached enlightenment.

According to Buddhist tradition, while Siddhartha was meditating, a wicked god named Mara tried to frighten him. Then Mara sent his three daughters—Discontent (unhappiness), Delight, and Desire—to try to tempt Siddhartha. But Siddhartha resisted them all. He then meditated through the rest of the night about the nature of reality and the way to reach **nirvana**, or true happiness and peace. During the night, his mind filled with the truths he had been seeking. He saw his past lives and the great cycle of rebirth. He saw the importance of karma. Eventually, he saw how to gain freedom from the continuous cycle, and therefore end all suffering.

By morning, the young prince had become the Buddha, the Awakened One. He had reached enlightenment.

The truths that the Buddha discovered under the Bodhi tree are the basic principles of **Buddhism**. They are often called the **Four Noble Truths**. The Buddha would spend the rest of his life sharing these truths with the people of India.

The Four Noble Truths

1. Suffering is present in all things, and nothing lasts forever.
2. Suffering is caused by cravings (desires and wants).
3. The way to end suffering is to give up all cravings.
4. The way to give up all cravings is to live life according to the **Eightfold Path**.