Name _____ Class _____ _____

Date

Lesson 3 Origins and Beliefs of Buddhism Lesson Summary

Who Was the Buddha?

Siddhartha Guatama was likely born during the 500s BCE in what is now Nepal. A Hindu prince, he became bothered by the suffering of others. He left his father's home to study with religious teachers. Later, after a long period of **meditation**, or deep thought, he reached **enlightenment**. This is a state of perfect wisdom. He became the Buddha, or "Enlightened One." Then he shared his message with others.

What Are Key Buddhist Beliefs?

The Buddha accepted the idea of karma. He did not believe in the idea of a permanent soul, however. He thought that the self would disappear when a person reached enlightenment. The Buddha also moved away from the belief in Gods.

The Buddha taught that to gain enlightenment, people had to follow a Middle Way, which meant accepting the Four Noble Truths:

1. All of life involves suffering.
2. Wanting things for oneself causes suffering.
3. Giving up all selfish desires ends suffering.
4. Following the Eightfold Path helps to overcome selfish desires.

The Eightfold Path has eight steps of spiritual action. Following them leads a person to gain the Three Qualities: wisdom, morality, and meditation. Following the Eightfold Path leads a person to **nirvana**. This is a state of blissful peace, free of desire and suffering and free from reincarnation.

The Spread of Buddhism

Some of Buddha's followers belonged to **monasteries**. In these religious communities, they could study and meditate. Other followers became **missionaries**. They traveled to spread the religion.

Over time, Buddhism split into two major branches. One, Theravada, focuses on the Buddha's wisdom. The other, Mahayana Buddhism, focuses on the Buddha's compassion. However, all Buddhists accept the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Today, most Buddhists live in Asia. Theravada Buddhism is the main religion of Sri Lanka, Myanmar (or Burma), Thailand, and Cambodia. Mahayana Buddhism is widespread in Bhutan, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Mongolia, North and South Korea, and Japan.

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