

Worksheets on the life and teaching of the Buddha



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Siddhartha Gautama The Buddha

Buddhism began in India some 2500 years ago. Its founder was an Indian Hindu prince named Siddhartha Gautama, who was born into a Kshatriya (warrior/ruler) family in 560 B.C. He became known as the Buddha, the Enlightened One, after he believed that he had found the answer to the world's suffering as a result of meditating. He spent the rest of his life travelling around North India teaching his ideas and encouraging people to live lives of love and kindness to all living creatures.

The Main Events In The Buddha's Life

1. He was born in North India in about 560 B.C.E into a Hindu family. His father was the local ruler. He wanted his young son to take over after him.
2. He lived a life of luxury & never saw anything of the unpleasant side of life.
3. Aged sixteen, he married Yasodhara and later they had a son, Rahula.
4. Aged twenty-nine, his life changed dramatically after he saw a group of poor, suffering and ill people. He also saw a dead man.
5. He left home after shaving his head and dressing as a holy man; he said he was going to search for the meaning of life.
6. For the next six years he wandered around North India; he met monks and other holy people without finding a satisfactory answer to his quest.



7. Eventually at a village called Bodh Gaya he sat and meditated for 46 days under a fig tree. Then finally he achieved 'enlightenment' i.e. the answer to the meaning of Life. After that he was called 'the Buddha' which means 'the Enlightened One.'

8. Later, near Benares, he preached his first sermon outlining his new teaching which he called the Middle Way.

9. For the next 45 years he travelled around North India preaching his new ideas and many people became followers.

10. He set up a community called the Sangha, which in time became the Buddhist monastic order.

11. He died aged eighty; his teaching was widely accepted by then and the Sangha was firmly established.

12. After his death, Gautama's body was cremated and his remains were divided up amongst his followers; these remains were placed in stupas (special shrines) and they became centres of Buddhist devotion.

Your Work 1. Where and when was the Buddha born and who was his father? 2. What kind of life did the Buddha lead and what changed it? 3. How did he discover the meaning of life? 4. What did he do afterwards? 5. What community did he set up? 6. When did he die? 7. What happened to his remains? 8. Find out more about the Buddha in the library or on the internet and write it down. 9. Or draw 3 or 4 pictures about key events in the Buddha's life. 10. Or draw a mind map about the Buddha.

Is The Buddha The Greatest Teacher Of All?

Soon after the Buddha began teaching, he gained a great number of disciples who followed him from place to place. Some of them accepted whatever he said without thinking for themselves. One keen fan came up to him and said,

“O Blessed One, you are certainly the greatest of all teachers who have ever lived!”



The Buddha was not pleased by this praise. Instead he asked the disciple: “Have you met all the great teachers who have appeared in the past?”

“No,” he answered.

“Do you know all the teachers who are alive now or will be born in the future?”

“No, I do not.”

“Then it is foolish to say that I am the greatest of all

teachers. You have no way of knowing if this is true or not.”

“But I only wanted to praise you because your teachings are so outstanding and helpful,” the disciple replied.

Then Buddha said, “If you find my teachings helpful, the best thing to do is practise them. Do not waste your time praising me. The only reason I have come into this world is to teach others. If you want to please me, follow the teachings. This will please me much more than praise.”

The Buddha taught his disciples to test what he taught just as they would not buy gold without testing it first to make sure it was the real thing.

The Buddha replied, “You should never accept what I say as true simply because I have said it. Rather, you should test the teachings yourself to see if they are true or not. If you find that they are true and helpful, then practise them. But do not do so merely out of respect for me. ”

“Also, do not criticize the teaching of others and say they are no good. There are many other great teachers in the world and they all have their own way of helping people. So do not insult any of them. This is not your business. Your only business is to find happiness and help others find it, too.”

The Buddha, then, was well ahead of his time in what he taught. He taught his followers to think for themselves; to be kind to others and to respect everyone.

QUESTIONS

1. What did one of the Buddha's enthusiastic followers say about him? 2. Why did the Buddha describe his follower's praise as foolish? 3. What would please the Buddha more than praise? 4. Why do you test gold before you buy it? 5. Why should one not criticize other great teachers in the world? 6. Write out the last sentence about what the Buddha taught his followers. 7 What do you think of the Buddha's attitude as described on this page?

The Buddha And Animal Sacrifice

In the days of the Buddha, it was common for people to kill animals as a sacrifice, or offering to their gods. This was intended to make the gods pleased and willing to reward those who made the sacrifices with answers to their prayers.

The Buddha saw that this custom was cruel and mistaken. Even as a young boy (and boys are often cruel to animals and insects), he had tried to protect animals from suffering.



He not only wished to save the sheep and cows and other animals from the suffering of being sacrificed, but he wished to protect the people who wanted to kill these poor animals from the suffering that would follow their acts.

He knew that those who sacrificed animals were actually creating the cause for their own future suffering. The Buddha taught:

"It is not right to make another unhappy so that you can be happy. Everyone wants to remain alive just as you do. Therefore, if you sacrifice an animal, you are just being selfish. And I have said again and again that a selfish person finds nothing but unhappiness in life."

Many of the people who heard these words realised that they were true. Immediately they gave up their custom of sacrificing animals. In this way a great deal of unhappiness was brought to an end and the Buddha had taken a big step towards achieving his life mission of lessening the sufferings of both humans and animals.

QUESTIONS

1. What was a common **custom** for people in the days of the Buddha? 2. Why did the people kill **animals**? 3. What did the Buddha think of this custom? 4. Who did the **Buddha** wish to save? 5. Why would the person who killed the animal **suffer** (as well as the animal)? 6. What was the **reaction** of the people to the words of the Buddha? 7. Is it right to **eat animals** in your opinion?

The Buddha Teaches Unselfish Kindness Through The Story Of The Tree Spirit

When the Buddha wanted to teach people about love and kindness, he would tell them stories that would catch their imagination. One of his stories involved a king and a tree.



A long time ago there lived a selfish king. He wanted to build a large palace so he ordered the cutting down of the largest tree in the forest.

Deep in the forest his men found such a tree. It was very tall and stood surrounded by many other smaller trees. They told the king that they had found what he wanted: The King was very happy and went to sleep

However, the king had a strange dream that night. He dreamt that a spirit, which lived in that great tree, appeared before him.

"O King," it said, "please do not cut down the tree in which I live. If you do so, each cut will hurt me and I shall die."

But the King answered, "Yours is the finest tree in all the forest. I must use it for my palace." The spirit pleaded, but the King insisted the tree

would be cut down. The spirit must die.

Finally, the tree spirit said to him, "All right, you may cut it down. But please do it like this. Do not cut it down from the bottom. Instead, have your men climb to the top of the tree and cut it down bit by bit. First have them cut off one piece, then another, until they have cut down the whole tree."

The King was astonished and said, "But if I have my men do as you say and cut through your tree many times, it will cause you much more pain than if they cut it down just once from the bottom."

The spirit answered, "Yes, this is true. But it is better for the other creatures in the forest if you do as I suggest. You see, my tree is very tall. If it falls down in one big piece, it will fall down on the other small trees around it and kill many small animals. Many birds and insects will lose their homes and many smaller trees will be destroyed. But if you cut it down bit by bit, it will not do so much damage."

Then the King awoke. He thought, "That spirit would have let itself be cut many times so that the small animals of the forest would not suffer. How brave and kind it is! And how selfish of me to want to cut that tree down for my own pleasure and pride. Instead of cutting it down, I should honour it! This dream has taught me that I should *also be kind and gentle to everyone.*" The King went into the forest the next day and decorated the tree. He was a kind and just ruler from that day onwards.

Questions 1. Why did the Buddha tell people stories? 2. What did the king want a tall tree for? 3. What did the tree spirit ask for from the king? 4. Why was the king impressed by the tree spirit? 5. How did the king treat the tree after his dream? 6. What kind of ruler did the king become? 7. Has the Buddha's story confirmed or changed your own attitude to other living creatures?

The Buddha Demonstrates The Power Of Love

The Buddha's popularity as a great and respected teacher aroused the jealousy of his cousin, Devadatta. Devadatta enlisted the help of the son of King Bimbisara to murder the Buddha and King Bimbisara himself.

One day, the Buddha was walking with several of his closest disciples. Devadatta and the king's son knew he was on his way and were ready.

They had bought an elephant and had given it lots of intoxicating liquor to drink. When it was drunk, they beat it with sticks until it was mad with anger. Then they let it go free in the direction of the Buddha.

They hoped the elephant would trample him to death.

When the disciples saw the enraged elephant charging towards them, they ran away in terror. However, Ananda, the Buddha's closest companion, stayed by his teacher's side, holding on to Buddha's robe.



Buddha saw the elephant charging and instead of being frightened or angry, felt great love and pity for the poor animal. Even though the elephant was drunk and crazed, it felt the power of the Buddha's love. It slowed down, walked over to the Buddha meekly, and bowed down its huge head at his feet.



Buddha patted the elephant gently and turned to Ananda, "The only way to destroy hatred is with love. Hatred cannot be defeated with more hatred. This is a very important lesson to learn."

Questions 1. What did Devadatta and the King's son do to prepare the elephant to kill the Buddha? 2. What did most of the Buddha's disciples do when they saw the elephant? 3. What did Ananda do? 4. How did the Buddha react towards the elephant? 5. What did the elephant do? 6. Write out the Buddha's comments to Ananda after the danger was over.

KEY TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA - SCOP

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS The acronym 'SCOP' can help you remember these in the right order.

Suffering is everywhere. It is in the world as a whole and it is in each individual in physical and mental suffering or dissatisfaction. Even our happiest moments do not last.

Suffering is caused by selfish desire. If we were not continually concerned with our own success and happiness we would not suffer nearly as much.

Suffering can be overcome by overcoming selfish desire. There is hope; we can overcome suffering by overcoming selfish desire.

The way to overcome selfish desire is to follow the eightfold path.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH - VISA LEMC

VISA LEMC is an acronym which can help you remember the 8 paths

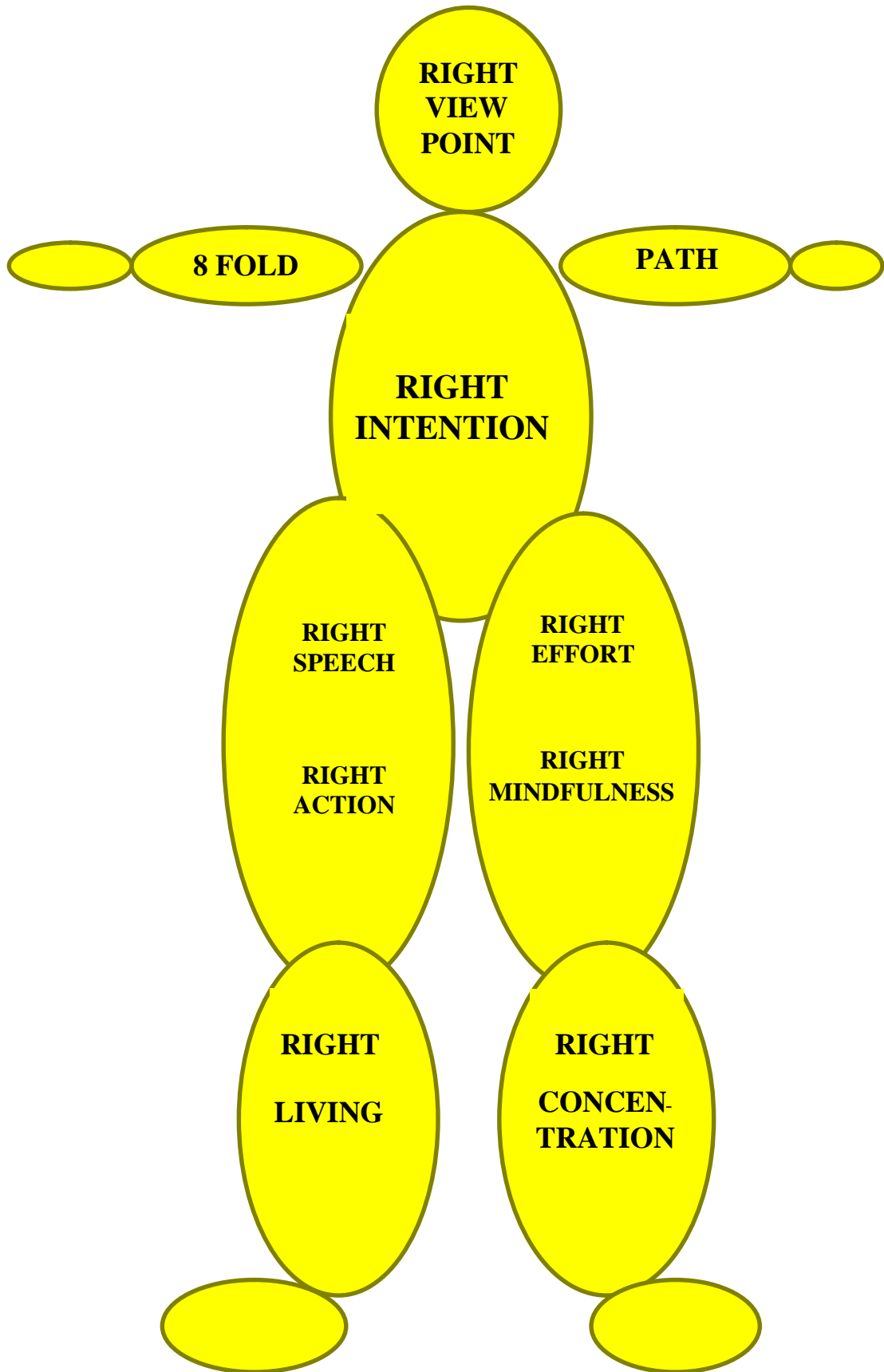
1. **Right Viewpoint** Understand and accept the four noble truths.
2. **Right Intention** Be determined to follow the eight fold path.
3. **Right Speech** Avoid lying and gossip & swearing. Use kind words.
4. **Right Action** Do good deeds and avoid bad ones like stealing, killing, adultery, drinking alcohol, taking drugs.
5. **Right Living** Avoid any work which involves violence or dishonesty. Choose a job which helps people and/or animals.
6. **Right Effort** Make an effort to avoid all evil thoughts and maintain and increase **good** thoughts.
7. **Right Mindfulness or Awareness.** Maintain mindfulness or awareness of your body and mind and of worldly things.
8. **Right Concentration** Practise **Meditation**.

Paths 1 and 2 - **WISDOM** - are like the body of Buddhism
Paths 3,4,5 - **MORALITY** - are like one leg of Buddhism
Paths 6,7,8 - **CONCENTRATION** -are like the other leg.

Your Work

1. Make a *mind map* of the *four noble truths* and the *eight fold paths* and/or
2. *Draw a body* and *label* it with the *8 paths* (see the next page) or
3. Copy out the *4 noble truths* and the *8 fold path*.
4. What four words does the acronym *SCOP* stand for?
5. Play the flash card game in your group i.e. Write each truth and path on a single sheet of paper. See who can arrange the 4 noble truths in the correct order fastest. Then have a go at the eightfold path. Use the acronym *VISA LEMC* if you find it helpful.

The Eightfold Path



Conclusion

I hope you have found the above worksheets useful. More may be added on the Buddha and his teaching later.

If you have any of your own worksheets you would like to offer other teachers for free on this site please send them to me at

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Best wishes with your teaching

John Watson

