

## Beginnings of Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama, a Hindu prince, witnessed old age, sickness, and death for the first time.

Gautama gave up his wealth, family, and life of ease to find the causes of human suffering.

Gautama studied with Hindu philosophers, but their ideas did not satisfy him.

He decided to stop looking outwardly for answers, and tried to find understanding in his own mind by meditation. He believed he found the answer after 49 days of meditation and fasting.

Gautama shared his knowledge across India and became known as the Buddha, or "Enlightened One." His teachings became known as Buddhism.

The Buddha taught that the end to human suffering was through right thinking and self-denial. A person is released from suffering by giving up desires for wealth, power, and pleasure. This can be achieved through the Middle Way, which avoids too much pleasure or worry.

Buddhism taught that all people are equal and anyone could follow the path to nirvana, or lasting peace, regardless of social class.

Buddhism and Hinduism came to share many beliefs. However, over time Buddhism died out almost completely in India.

Missionaries and traders carried Buddhism to other countries. Today, Buddhism is part of the cultures of such countries as Japan, the Koreas, China, Tibet, and Vietnam.