

Title: The Story of Gautama Buddha

Subject: History

Level: Upper Primary (class VI)

Target Audience: Students

Language: English

Tags/Key words: Buddha, astrologers, fundamental truths of life, enlightenment, meditate.

Description: The following resource deals with the life story of Buddha. Gautama Buddha, the historical Buddha, lived between 563 and 483 BC in the area known now as the Indo-Nepalese region. As a bodhisattva, he had passed through thousands of existences before coming to Earth for his ultimate transmigration. This last lifetime he began as a son of the King of the realm Sakya, Sudhodana, who ruled at Kapilavastu, in Ancient India on the border of present-day Nepal, and was born in a village called Lumbini into the warrior tribe called the Sakyas (from where he derived the title Sakyamuni, meaning "Sage of the Sakyas"). According to ancient tradition, Queen Maya, his mother, first had a dream of a beautiful white elephant coming down into her womb, and this was interpreted as a sign that the Buddha, or a universal emperor, was about to be born. When her time came, Queen Maya went into the garden and gave painless birth to the bodhisattva. He immediately walked, spoke, and was received by Brahma. Five days after his birth, the young prince received the name of Siddhartha. When his parents took him to the temple, the statues of the gods prostrated themselves before him, great were the rejoicings of the people over the birth of this illustrious prince. Also at this time a devout old man named Asita came down from the Himalayas to meet the newborn prince. An ascetic of high spiritual attainments, Asita was particularly pleased to hear this happy news. Having been a tutor to the King, he visited the palace to see the royal baby. The king, who felt honoured by his unexpected visit, carried the child up to him in order to make the child pay him due reverence. To the surprise of all, the child's legs turned and rested on the matted locks of the ascetic.

Instantly, the ascetic rose from his seat and recognizing in the young child the 80 signs that are pledges to a highly religious vocation, and foreseeing with his supernormal vision the child's future greatness, saluted him with clasped hands. The Royal father did likewise. The great ascetic smiled at first and then was sad. Questioned regarding his mingled feelings, he answered that he smiled because the prince would eventually become a Buddha, an Enlightened One, and he was sad because he would not be able to benefit from the superior wisdom of the Enlightened One owing to his prior death and rebirth in a Formless Plane. After seven days Queen Maya died, and her place as mother was taken by her sister, whose devotion and love became legendary. When the young prince was in his twelfth year, the king called the wise Brahmans in council. They revealed that Siddhartha would devote himself to asceticism if he cast his eyes on age, sickness, or death ~ and, if he were to meet a hermit.

Wanting his son to be a universal monarch instead, the king surrounded the palace with a triple enclosure and guard and proclaimed that the use of the words death and grief were forbidden. The most beautiful princess in the land, Yasodhara, was found for his bride, and after Siddhartha proved himself in many tournaments calling for strength and prowess, when he was 16, the two were wed.

Siddhartha was kept amused and entertained for some time by this privileged life behind the palace walls until one day his divine vocation awoke in him, and he decided to visit the nearby town. The king called for everything to be swept and decorated, and any ugly or sad sight to be removed. But these precautions were in vain for while Siddhartha was travelling through the streets, an old wrinkled man appeared before him. In astonishment the young prince learned that decrepitude is the fate of those who live life through. Still later he met an incurable invalid and then a funeral procession. Finally heaven placed in his path an ascetic, a beggar, who told Siddhartha that he had left the world to pass beyond suffering and joy, to attain peace at heart. Confirmed in his meditation, all these experiences awakened in Siddhartha the idea of abandoning his present life and embracing asceticism. He opened his heart to his father and said, "Everything in the world is changing and transitory. Let me go off alone like the religious beggar."

Grief-stricken at the idea of losing his son, the king doubled the guard around the walls and increased the pleasures and distractions within. And at this point, Yasodhara bore him a son whom he called Rahula (meaning "chain" or "fetter"), a name that indicated Gautama's sense of dissatisfaction with his life of luxury, while the birth of his son evoked in him much tenderness. His apparent sense of dissatisfaction turned to disillusion when he saw three things from the window of his palace, each of which represented different forms human suffering: a decrepit old man, a diseased man, and a corpse. Yet even this could not stop the troubling thoughts in his heart or close his eyes to the realizations of the impermanence of all life, and of the vanity and instability of all objects of desire.

His mind made up, he awoke one night and, casting one last look at his wife and child, mounted his horse Kataka and rode off accompanied by his equerry Chandaka. At the city gates Siddhartha turned over his horse to Chandaka, then he cut off his hair, gave up his sumptuous robes, and entered a hermitage where the Brahmins accepted him as a disciple. Siddhartha had now and forever disappeared. He became the monk Gautama, or as he is still called, Sakyamuni, the ascetic of the Sakyas. For many years Gautama studied the doctrines until, having felt the need to learn more elsewhere, he traveled and fasted. His two teachers had showed him how to reach very deep states of meditation (samadhi). This did not, however, lead to a sense of true knowledge or peace, and the practice of deep meditation was abandoned in favour of a life of extreme asceticism which he shared with five companions. But again, after five or six years of self-mortification, Siddhartha felt he had failed to achieve true insight and rejected such practices as dangerous and useless. Resolved to continue his quest, Siddhartha made his way to a deer park at Isipatana, near present day Benares. Here he sat beneath a tree meditating on death and rebirth. Discovering that excessive fasts destroy strength, he learned that as he had transcended earthly life, so must he next transcend asceticism. Alone and weak, he sat beneath the sacred Bodhi tree of wisdom, and swore to die before arising without the wisdom he sought. Mara, the demon, fearful of Gautama's power, sent his three beautiful daughters to distract him. When that failed, Mara sent an army of devils to destroy him. Finally, Mara attacked Gautama with a terrible weapon capable of cleaving a mountain. But all this was useless, and the motionless monk sat in meditation.

It was here that Siddhartha attained a knowledge of the way things really are; it was through this knowledge that he acquired the title Buddha (meaning "awakened one"). This awakening was achieved during a night of meditation, which passed through various stages as the illumination that Gautama had

sought slowly welled up in his heart. He knew the exact condition of all beings and the causes of their rebirths. He saw beings live, die and transmigrate. In meditating on human pain, he was enlightened about both its genesis and the means of destroying it.

In this first stage he saw each of his previous existences, and then understood the chain of cause and effect. In the second he surveyed the death and rebirth of all living beings and understood the law that governs the cycle of birth and death. In the third he identified the Four Noble Truths: the universality of suffering, the cause of suffering through selfish desire, the solution to suffering and the way to overcome suffering. This final point is called the Noble Eightfold Path, this being eight steps consisting of wisdom (right views, right intention) ethics (right speech, right action, right livelihood), mental discipline (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration), which ultimately lead to liberation from the source of suffering. When day came, Gautama had attained perfect illumination, and had become a Buddha.

RESOURCE 7

The Story of Gautama Buddha!



There was once a king named **Suddhodana** and a queen named **Mahamaya** who lived in the city of Kapilavastu in the sixth century B.C. One day, as the queen was resting in her palace, she dreamt that a white elephant carrying a white lotus in its trunk entered her right side. Sometime later, a **baby was born** to the queen. He was named Siddhartha Gautama.

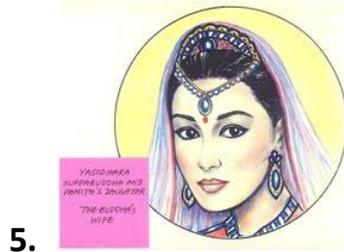
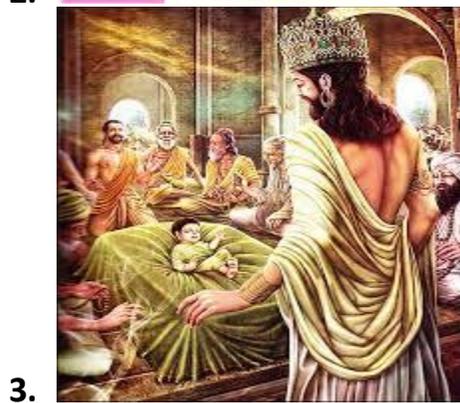
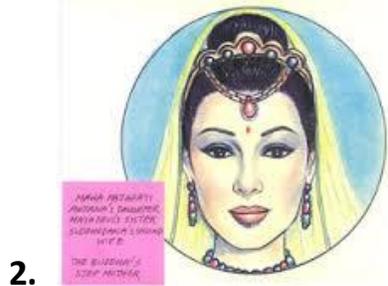
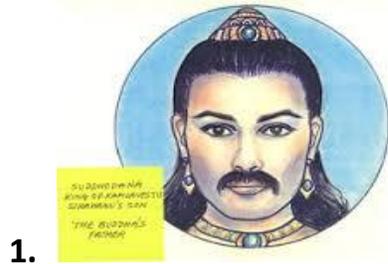
A group of **astrologers** predicted that the young prince would grow up to be either a great emperor, or that he would turn his back on privilege and power to become a great spiritual leader. The prince grew up within the palace walls, having no contact with the outside world. He learnt the skills and engaged in the pastimes of princes. Prince Siddhartha married a beautiful princess named **Yashodhara** and they had a son. The little boy was named **Rahula**. They all lived happily together within the world of wealth and power. Until one day, when Prince Siddhartha finally persuaded his father to let him go outside the palace walls to see the city. What Siddhartha did not know was that his father had ordered the city streets cleared of anyone who was old or sick. So when Siddhartha and his groom set out for their tour of the city in chariots they saw many young and happy people. However, they also happened upon **a feeble old man** who was lying at the side of the road. As this was different from anything Siddhartha had ever seen before, he asked someone to explain what was wrong with the man. It was only then that Siddhartha learned about how people get old. Siddhartha was very moved by the suffering of the old man. He journeyed out into the city three more times and saw a sick man, a dead man and a sage. These visits led to his realizing the fundamental truths of life. Siddhartha **left his wife and son at the palace** and set out to learn the way of finding salvation and understanding.

At the edge of the city, he took off his princely robes, cut his hair and sent his groom back to the palace with his horse. Siddhartha wandered through the forests seeking understanding from wise men and ascetics. However, this did not bring him satisfaction or greater understanding.

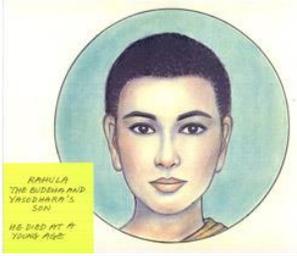
Finally, **Siddhartha settled under a tree to meditate**. While he sat under the tree, demons came to tempt him. However, he resisted them. After many days of meditating, Siddhartha achieved Enlightenment. From that point, he was known as the **Buddha**.

NOTE TO CIET

The highlighted terms need to be converted into hyperlinks so that when the child clicks on it the following images will pop-up.



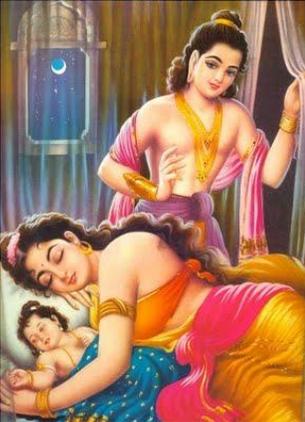
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7.



8.



9.



10.



ACTIVITY TIME!

Story Mapping: Re-arrange the following points in the correct sequence to obtain the story of Buddha's life.

1. Siddhartha left his wife and son at the palace and set out to learn the way of finding salvation and understanding.
2. There was once a king named Suddhodana and a queen named Mahamaya who lived in the city of Kapilavastu.
3. Siddhartha settled under a tree to meditate. While he sat under the tree, demons came to tempt him.
4. Siddhartha learned about how people get old.
5. One day, as the queen was resting in her palace, she dreamt that a white elephant carrying a white lotus in its trunk entered her right side. Sometime later, a baby was born to the queen.
6. A group of astrologers predicted that the young prince would grow up to be either a great emperor, or that he would turn his back on privilege and power to become a great spiritual leader.
7. Prince Siddhartha married a beautiful princess named Yashodhara and they had a son. The little boy was named Rahula.
8. The prince grew up within the palace walls, having no contact with the outside world.
9. Prince Siddhartha finally persuaded his father to let him go outside the palace walls to see the city.
10. At the edge of the city, he took off his princely robes, cut his hair and sent his groom back to the palace with his horse.
11. After many days of meditating, Siddhartha achieved Enlightenment. From that point, he was known as the Buddha.

Note to CIET –

The students should be able to drag and arrange the points in the correct sequence. For every wrong placement – ‘try again’ should flash on the screen with the audio as well. 2 attempts to solve the puzzle. Time limit given – 3 minutes.

Answer – **2,5,6,8,7,9,4,1,10,3,11.**