

Name: _____ Date: _____

Buddha Avatar

The Ninth Incarnation of Lord Krishna

Lord Buddha is an incarnation of Krishna that appeared about 2000 years ago. He came for the special purpose of stopping the people from committing violence.

Lord Buddha appeared as the son of a king in northern India. His name was Siddhartha Gautama. He lived in fantastic palaces, enjoying the best food, clothing and entertainment. He could have anything he wanted. He was kept protected from the rest of the world and had no idea what it was like beyond His palaces.

After sometime He became curious about the world. He wanted to see how others lived. He went off in His chariot to visit the village near His palace. Gautama was shocked and horrified! He saw sick people, poor people, dying people and others who had died being carried off to be cremated. He never realized that suffering existed like this. His only thought became to try to find a way to end suffering.

He was so determined to find an answer to suffering that He slipped out of His palace one night, leaving His beautiful wife and baby behind. He removed His gorgeous silk robe and put on a torn and faded orange cloth. He cut off His fine black hair and gave away all His jewelery to His servant. He took only a simple begging bowl and, sending His servant home, went on to find an answer to His great question.

He asked spiritual teachers to teach Him everything they knew. He performed great austerities, living in wild forests, burning in the heat of the day and freezing cold at night, and sleeping on a bed of thorns. He fasted until His body became very thin and weak.

Still He didn't find any answers to His question. He knew that if He continued in this way, He would die. So He took a little food to give Him strength and went on by Himself.

He came to a place call Gaya where He found a huge tree. He made a cushion of grass and sat beneath the tree, determined to stay there until He found an answer to His question.

He began a deep meditation, no longer asking questions and being taught by others, but looking within Himself. Gautama began to understand a state of being that could not be affected by suffering, a state where there are no desires. His final understanding came after a full moon night in May. As dawn broke, He looked up and saw the morning star rising. At that moment He saw the truth for Himself. He was not called Gautama any longer, but the Buddha, or "Enlightened One."

Buddha began spreading His teaching throughout northern India. For forty-five years, He walked from village to village, preaching and gaining followers.

Buddha's teachings cover many things. But one main aspect of His preaching was *ahimsa*, non-violence. At the time when Lord Buddha appeared, people were not so religious and liked to eat animal flesh. There are parts of the *Vedas* that teach about animal sacrifices. But with the proper animal sacrifice, the animal that is put into the fire gets a new body and comes out of the fire with that new, younger, stronger body. This was possible because the brahmans could chant special mantras that would make this happen. In these days, we don't have any brahmans that are expert enough to do that. The people were doing these animal sacrifices but they were really doing it so that they could eat the animal that was sacrificed. They were using the Vedic scriptures to pretend what they were doing was actually a religious principle.

Lord Buddha preached to the people not to follow the *Vedas* but to follow Him. He taught them to be non-violent and He taught that meat-eating is bad for them. Animal killing is so sinful that the Lord came especially to stop it.

His incarnation is unusual because He said NOT to follow scripture. Normally, Krishna and His incarnations will try to get people back on the path of following scripture. But because people were doing sinful activities in the name of religion, Lord Buddha fooled them by telling them not to follow the *Vedas* but to follow Him. Since He is the Supreme Lord, they would become purified by following Him directly.

