

Siddhartha & Enlightenment

The Story of Siddhartha's Enlightenment

Siddhartha sat under a peepul tree and began to mediate. **Mara** (a demon), the evil one, appeared to try to stop him from achieving enlightenment. Mara tried a number of different tactics:

He sent his daughter to seduce Siddhartha

He sent his armies to attack Siddhartha

He offered Siddhartha control of his Kingdom

Mara himself tried to attack Siddhartha

Throughout it all, Siddhartha stayed focused on his meditation. He ignored the temptation of Mara's daughter. **Arrows directed at him from the armies turned to flowers before they could hit him.** Towards the end of his meditation, Mara said to Siddhartha that if he reached **enlightenment with no witnesses that no one would believe him.** **Siddhartha touched the ground and the earth shook to acknowledge that the earth is the only witness he needs.**

How is this story interpreted?

Most Buddhists interpret this **story as a metaphor**. They believe it is a story to show Buddhists how to reach enlightenment. For example, Mara is not literally a demon, instead **Mara represents the temptation** we face in life. Mara is testing Siddhartha and tempting him to show negative emotions such as **greed, and lust**. Siddhartha rejecting these temptations shows he is **near enlightenment**.



Key Terms

Buddha (bud-a)	The awakened or enlightened one.
Dhammapada (darma—pada)	A Buddhist scripture that contains the teachings and sayings of Buddha.
Enlightenment	The state of being 'awakened' to the truth about life.
Karma	The forces that influence people's fortune and future rebirth.
Meditation	The practice of focusing the mind.
Nirvana	A state of complete bliss, entered into by souls that are not reborn - experience by those who have reached enlightenment.
Samsara	The continual process of life, death and rebirth.
Bhikkhu (beh-cue)	A Buddhist monk or nun.
Laity (lay-etty)	Buddhists who are not monks or nuns.
Dukkha (do-ka)	The suffering or dissatisfaction of all living things.
Middle Way	A lifestyle between luxury and having nothing at all.
Four Noble Truths	The basis of Buddha's teachings.
Ascetic	Someone who lives a life of simplicity and self-denial.
Fasting	Not eating or drinking for a long period of time.

Key Beliefs and Practices

Samsara

Buddhists believe that when someone dies, they will be reborn again as something else. What they are reborn as depends on their actions in their previous life (**karma**). The cycle of rebirth is called **samsara** and it is an ongoing cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Humans go through an unknown number of cycles of rebirth over many lifetimes. Skilful actions lead to a good rebirth and unskilful actions lead to a bad rebirth. Through doing skilful actions in their life, a person can be reborn into one of the **six realms**:

1. the realm of the gods
2. the realm of the angry gods
3. the realm of the animals
4. the realm of the tormented beings
5. the realm of the hungry ghosts
6. the realm of humans

Buddhists believe that the human realm is the best one to be in if they want to reach **enlightenment**. If they gain good karma and follow the teachings of the Buddha, they will be reborn into a more preferable realm. The main aim for Buddhists is to reach enlightenment and break free of the cycle of rebirth, as this is what creates suffering.

Meditation

Meditation is essential in Buddhism. Therefore, in order to achieve **enlightenment**, Buddhists must know how to meditate properly. There are two main kinds of meditation:

- **Samatha meditation** - This is known as calming meditation and Buddhists believe that it leads to deeper concentration. It is important as it allows Buddhists to let go of cravings and therefore achieve **nibbana**. It focuses on mindfulness of breathing.
- **Vipassana meditation** - This is known as insight meditation. When a Buddhist meditates, they believe that they can see things as they really are. This allows them to gain realisation and understand the impermanence of things and the nature of reality. It is not just about focusing on breathing - it is also about focusing on exploration. It can even be done when walking.

The Buddha practised both forms of meditation. Buddhists imitate his methods in order to achieve enlightenment. Both forms of meditation are important, and Buddhists take time to make sure their meditation is suited to their needs.