

MOMENTOUS DECISIONS

Buddhism

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Who?

Siddhārtha Gautama.

What decision?

To seek enlightenment.

When?

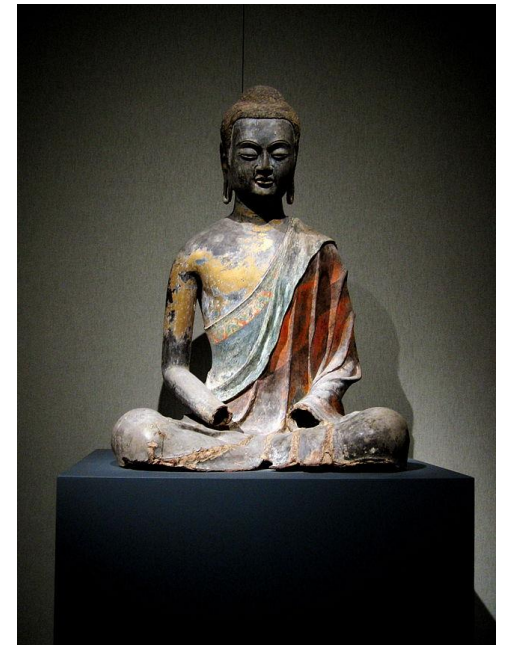
Sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE.

Why?

After a privileged upbringing he was confronted by the pain and misery of the common people.

Birthplace?

- Where?
- According to Buddhist tradition, Kapilavastu is the name of the ancient city where Siddhartha Gautama, was raised and lived until the age of 29, when he renounced worldly life.
- Various collections of teachings attributed to him were passed down by oral tradition, and first committed to writing about 400 years later.



Uncertainty about location.

- There is some controversy about the exact location of Kapilavastu.
- Some versions say that it is located in present-day Rummindei, in the Terai region of Southern Nepal, not far from the Indian-Nepalese border.
- Other versions hold that Kapilavastu is located in Northern India, and that the Piprahwa village used to be within Kapilavastu.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 1

- Buddhism started with the Buddha.
- The word 'Buddha' is a title, which means 'one who is awake' — in the sense of having 'woken up to reality'.
- The Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Nepal around 2,500 years ago.
- He did not claim to be a god or a prophet.
- He was a human being who became Enlightened, understanding life in the deepest way possible.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 2

- Siddhartha was born into the royal family of a small kingdom on the Indian-Nepalese border.
- According to the traditional story he had a privileged upbringing, but was jolted out of his sheltered life on realising that life includes the harsh facts of old age, sickness, and death.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 3.

- This prompted him to puzzle over the meaning of life.
- Eventually he felt impelled to leave his palace and follow the traditional Indian path of the wandering holy man, a seeker after Truth.
- He became very adept at meditation under various teachers, and then took up ascetic practices.
- (Extreme self discipline)



According to the Buddhist Centre. 4.

- This was based on the belief that one could free the spirit by denying the flesh.
- He practised austerities so determinedly that he almost starved to death.
- Prince Siddhartha shaved his hair and becomes an ascetic.
- But he still hadn't solved the mystery of life and death.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 5.

- True understanding seemed as far away as ever.
- So he abandoned this way and looked into his own heart and mind; he decided to trust his intuition and learn from direct experience.
- He sat down beneath a pipal tree and vowed to stay there until he'd gained Enlightenment.
- After 40 days, on the full moon in May, Siddhartha finally attained ultimate Freedom.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 6.

- Buddhists believe he reached a state of being that goes beyond anything else in the world.
- If normal experience is based on conditions — upbringing, psychology, opinions, perceptions — Enlightenment is Unconditioned.
- A Buddha is free from greed, hatred and ignorance, and characterised by wisdom, compassion and freedom.
- Enlightenment brings insight into the deepest workings of life, and therefore into the cause of human suffering — the problem that had initially set him on his spiritual quest.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 7

- During the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha travelled through much of northern India, spreading his beliefs.
- His teaching is known in the East as the Buddha-dharma or 'teaching of the Enlightened One'



According to the Buddhist Centre. 8

- He reached people from all walks of life and many of his disciples gained Enlightenment.
- They, in turn, taught others and in this way an unbroken chain of teaching has continued, right down to the present day.



According to the Buddhist Centre. 9

- The Buddha was not a god and he made no claim to divinity.
- He was a human being who, through tremendous effort of heart and mind, transformed all limitations.
- He affirmed the potential of every being to reach Buddhahood.
- Buddhists see him as an ideal human being, and a guide who can lead us all towards Enlightenment