

Miniature sheet consisting of six commemorative stamps on the 2550 years  
Of Parinirvana of the Gautama Buddha Shakyamuni.

"Buddha" means "one who is awake." The Buddha who lived 2,600 years ago was not a god. He was an ordinary person, named Siddhartha Gautama, whose profound insights inspired the world.

*Buddha* is not a name, but a title. It is a Sanskrit word that means "a person who is awake." What a buddha is awake to is the true nature of reality.

Simply put, Buddhism teaches that we all live in a fog of illusions created by mistaken perceptions and "impurities" — hate, greed, ignorance. A buddha is one who is freed from the fog. It is said that when a buddha dies he or she is not reborn but passes into the peace of Nirvana, which is not a "heaven" but a transformed state of existence.

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**Who Was Buddha?**

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Most of the time, when someone says *the Buddha*, it's in reference to the historical person who founded Buddhism. This was a man originally named Siddhartha Gautama who lived in what is now northern India and Nepal about twenty five centuries ago.

The traditional story begins with Siddhartha Gautama's birth in Lumbini, Nepal, in about 567 BCE. He was the son of a king, raised in sheltered opulence. He married and had a son.

Prince Siddhartha was twenty-nine years old when his life changed. In carriage rides outside his palaces he first saw a sick person, then an old man, then a corpse. This shook him to the core of his being; he realized that his privileged status would not protect him from sickness, old age, and death. When he saw a spiritual seeker — a mendicant "holy man" — the urge to seek peace of mind arose in him.

*He sat in meditation beneath "the Bodhi tree" until he realized enlightenment.*

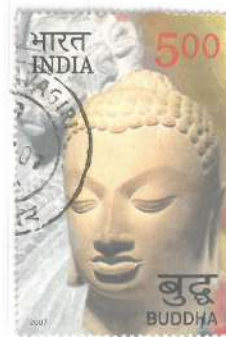
The prince renounced his worldly life and began a spiritual quest. He sought teachers and punished his body with ascetic practices such as extreme, prolonged fasts. It was believed that punishing the body was the way to elevate the mind and that the door to wisdom was found at the edge of death. However, after six years of this, the prince felt only frustration.

Eventually, he realized that the path to peace was through mental discipline. At Bodhi Gaya, in the modern Indian state of Bihar, he sat in meditation beneath a ficus tree, "the Bodhi tree," until he awakened, or realized enlightenment. From that time on, he would be known as the Buddha.

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Commemorative stamp

Value 5rs 2007



Post card by India Post on Gautama Buddha Parinirvana