

Chapter 3

Gotama



Buddha Preaching, Library of Congress

From the reading...

“Be aware of too much wisdom!”

Ideas of Interest from “Gotama”

1. Why doesn't it bother these holy men to beg for a living? Explain the difference in cultural values.
2. How was it that Siddhartha could instantly recognize the Buddha and Govinda could not?

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3. Why did Govinda break with his friend, Siddhartha?
4. What need be renounced in order to follow Buddha? From a psychological point of view, why would these sacrifices be required?
5. Why did Siddhartha knowingly relate to Govinda the false statement, “Very good are the teachings of the exalted one, how could I find a fault in them?”
6. Explain in your own words the seeming contradiction in Buddha’s doctrine of causality as described by Siddhartha. If all events, including mental events are caused, how can any action be considered right or wrong?
7. Evaluate Buddha’s pragmatic and implied response that his disciples are better off with him than in the world of desires even though they will not find salvation through his teachings. Is Buddha intentionally deceiving his disciples “for their own good”?

The Reading Selection from “Gotama”

In the town of Savathi, every child knew the name of the exalted Buddha, and every house was prepared to fill the alms-dish of Gotama’s disciples, the silently begging ones. Near the town was Gotama’s favourite place to stay, the grove of Jetavana, which the rich merchant Anathapindika, an obedient worshiper of the exalted one, had given him and his people for a gift.

All tales and answers, which the two young ascetics had received in their search for Gotama’s abode, had pointed them towards this area. And arriving at Savathi, in the very first house, before the door of which they stopped to beg, food has been offered to them, and they accepted the food, and Siddhartha asked the woman, who handed them the food: “We would like to know, oh charitable one, where the Buddha dwells, the most venerable one, for we are two *Samanas* from the forest and have come, to see him, the perfected one, and to hear the teachings from his mouth”

Quoth the woman: “Here, you have truly come to the right place, you *Samanas* from the forest. You should know, in Jetavana, in the garden of Anathapindika is where the exalted one dwells. There you pilgrims shall spend the night, for there is enough space for the innumerable, who flock here, to hear the teachings from his mouth.”