



Buddha

Deepak Chopra

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BUDDHA is an inspiring re-imagining of the life of a prince who gave up the trappings of royalty for something much more important—wisdom and enlightenment. This revolutionary journey has changed the world forever, and the lessons Buddha taught continue to influence every corner of the globe today. This is a new form of teaching for beloved Chopra and with it he brings us closer to understanding the true nature of life and ourselves.

From the Author's Note:

"I wrote this book as a sacred journey, fictionalized in many of its externals but psychologically true, I hope, to what the seeker's path feels like. In all three phases of his life—Siddhartha the prince, Gautama the monk, and Buddha the Compassionate One—he was as mortal as you and I, yet he attained enlightenment and was raised to the rank of an immortal. The miracle is that he got there following a heart as human as yours and mine, and just as vulnerable. "

Buddha Details

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David says

The story of the Buddha has been told time and time again, and various accounts of his life story have been recorded in books, films, and other media. This version, *Buddha: A Story of Enlightenment*, was written by Deepak Chopra, an alternative medicine advocate in the New Age movement. I hadn't read any of Chopra's other books prior to this one, so I approached this book with very few expectations.

The book is broken up into three main sections: "Siddhartha The Prince", "Gautama The Monk", and "Buddha". Each section describes the stages of the Buddha's development and evolution. Before the Buddha became the Buddha, he was Gautama, a wandering monk. And before Gautama came Siddhartha, a prince stuck in his father's walled kingdom. Chopra goes into great detail on the topic, throwing in a lot of intriguing anecdotes of which I was previously unaware.

I really enjoyed this one. I've read and listened to several variations of the Buddha's story, but none that were this in-depth and engaging. I'm sure it won't be the last Buddha book that I read, but for now, this has been the best!

Rachel Bird says

When I saw this at a bookstore I felt joy wash over me. I had to get it even if I had already read Siddhartha and felt the territory had been covered. I'd never read a book by Chopra and really wanted to give it a shot.

I just finished it this morning and am reeling from it. I was disappointed a lot of the way through because I felt that Guatama's (Buddha name as a prince) coming-of-age story was largely irrelevant. What I really wanted to know were the details of how he became enlightened. There was so much darkness and disappointment for him, not the way I'd previously imagined, and it got me down.

When he became awakened I was even more depressed. It seemed joyless to break out of the cycle of samsara (suffering) and reach Nirvana. This is allegedly a point where good and bad no longer exist. At that point Buddha could choose whether he would stay in this world or go. He chose to stay and help people.

Therein lies my question. If there is no good or bad why choose a life of compassion, kindness and non-violence? What does it matter? The writing after the awakening seemed inconsistent and therefore frustrating, especially when Deepak acknowledged that he is not a Buddhist or Buddhist scholar. Where's his credibility supposed to come from?

I'm confused, profoundly affected and more confused. The Epilogue answered some of my questions but not enough. That's fine because Deepak is probably not the best source for the answers. I'm sure they come from looking within although I'm convinced a Master is pretty necessary for an awakening.

General consensus: I'm still unclear on what I read. Trying to figure it out.

Theresia says

First thing first, I honestly have no idea of what to call this book with.

I broke the spin of my copy, fyi, for I read and reread it. I was moved, I admit, as much as I was shaken by the message.

In the first part, Chopraji managed to sow the story of feral, raw, ancient India so well, so unbelievably human, Siddhartha included. It wasn't difficult to, say, picture the characters. Unfortunately, it degrades in the second part, "Gautama the Monk." Chopraji said in his foreword that Buddha is as human as the rest of the world, and in this part Siddhartha is all but human. It's as if he's this kind of a mortal simply elevated to be an immortal. There's neither enough space for his turmoil nor suffering since it's concentrated on his journey toward enlightenment. In other words, the plot is sacrificed for the message's sake. And the part "Buddha the Compassionate" makes me wonder if this should be aptly titled "Buddhist Preaches Through Chopraji's."

As Chopraji wonderfully put, Buddha begins as a mere man, a wealthy one but nevertheless a man. I just don't get it from the rest of the book. This is really a book about "a life like no other, and I wonder is this would be much, much better if put not in the form of a novel.

Or perhaps it's just that Buddha's teachings are radical, and Chopraji is too out of my league, and my mind is a small pool in the beach morosely trying to contain the whole ocean.

Aditya says

One major reason I liked this book is because it takes a 'what-if' approach to the story of Gautam Buddha and presents an alternative explanation of events. I also liked the last part where the author discusses the teachings of Buddha in a Q&A section. I think this should have been put in the narrative itself coming directly from Buddha. That said, there were some of the teachings in his conversations with his new disciples. The writing/language was pretty ordinary, compared to books like Siddhartha (Herman Hesse). There were a few instances where the author used the language superbly to paint a very vivid picture of the setting; I wish he had used this kind of language more consistently throughout the book.

Uma says

I ploughed through the book, because I thought something would come up... I liked the first part about Siddhartha the Prince. However, when it came to Gautama the Monk, I thought the austerities and the practices that were explained and dramatised were more of heresy and taken from other books rather than what might have actually happened... but that is also ok since it is a work of fiction... The reduce the final Enlightenment to "flying up to the clouds"... "Becoming the moon"... "being able to look into people's minds" "living ten thousand lives at the same time"... It is my personal opinion that the enlightenment was reduced to magic and inexplicable happenings... I can understand if the author says that "Enlightenment is something that cannot be explained because the ones who achieve it do not explain it and even if you do those who havent experienced it cannot understand it..." But to reduce it to something trivial was not

expected...

Brendan says

As the author points out in the preface, the story of the Buddha is a story that is naturally shrouded in mystery. Over the past 2000 years, people have added to the story, embellished, and recounted the life of the Buddha in various ways. Mr. Chopra is no different. In this book, he takes these same liberties in creating his own version of the story of the Buddha. In his words, he takes the opportunity to "fictionalize" but tries to keep the book "psychologically true." In doing so, he takes the reader on a journey to an ancient kingdom, where Siddhartha grows up as the sheltered and privileged son of a blood-thirsty king. There are stories of demons, murder, lust, and rape all of which Mr. Chopra ties together in a well-connected and logical plot.

Unfortunately, I think he takes the fantasy and fiction too far and this is why I was ultimately disappointed in the book. In the preface, he points out that the Buddha story had become "chock-full of miracles and gods that stuck onto its surface" when Buddha likely "held a doubtful view of both." Then why did Mr. Chopra then write such a fantasy driven book with talking demons and such? I'm not sure, but I found it to be distracting and made the Buddha seem like more of a fictional character himself.

Sher says

Book 53 2012 Reading Challenge-- This retelling of the Buddha's life was okay. Like, Siddhartha written by Hesse , this text also has Hindu elements. I began by listening to this book on tape, but I wasn't able to enjoy Deepak Chopra's narration. I found the heavy accent and emotional emphasis added to certain words and phrases --distracting. Normally I can tolerate any narrator, but not this time. So, I switched and read the book in print. I found the story has a quite a bite to it and a variety of elements- such as a the role of Mara in Buddha's development- at odds.

The writing doesn't compare artfully to White Clouds or Hesse's Siddhartha, and the sensational elements may make this a more popular novel about Gotama's origins and development attractive, but, for me it was unbalanced and overdone. I wasn't reading this book just for fun though; I was looking at it quite critically to decide whether to add it as a text for a literature / Buddhist themes class.

Ann says

The life of the Buddha is far too long & complicated to put down easily in such a small volume but overall good starts for those who want to read & learn how Buddhism come about. It is light and easy to read. Since this partly fictionalized version, the historical backgrounds have to be taken as just that while the fictional part lacks interesting quality in my opinion. Buddha's life can be concluded in three phases: the Prince, the Monk, and the Enlightened Buddha. I like the way Deepak throw in great spirituality insight & motivation word in his writing as well. In other word, this book is more spiritual then historical.

Every living being has the same basic wish – to be happy and to avoid suffering. If we want to decrease our suffering and the suffering of others, then we have to wake up to our own potential.

It all begin with Prince Siddhartha realize that all living beings without exception have to experience the sufferings of birth, sickness, ageing and death. Because he understood the laws of reincarnation he also realized that they experience these sufferings not just once, but again and again, in life after life without cessation. Seeing how all living beings are trapped in this vicious circle of suffering he felt deep compassion for them, and he developed a sincere wish to free all of them from their suffering. Realizing that only a fully enlightened Buddha has the wisdom and the power to help all living beings in this way, he resolved to leave the palace and retire to the solitude of the forest where he would engage in profound meditation until he attained enlightenment.

At the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. These discoveries became known as the "Four Noble Truths", which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching, the secret to true peace and happiness. Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or Nirvana, is believed to be possible for any being. The Buddha described Nirvana as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states, or "defilements".

Natali says

This book is a great personification of a historical figure. I really enjoyed reading it and can see myself referring to it again in my lifetime.

Following the story, Chopra offers a synthesis of the Buddhist doctrines that he hopes you will learn from the novel. This explanation leaves a little to be desired but I think his intention is that the reader use the story as a springboard to deeper exploration of Buddhism.

Sara Montgomery says

Well, it's fiction, so that's disappointing. I must say, I have a much darker view of Buddha after reading this and that leaves a bad taste in my mouth for Chopra. I know Chopra is supposed to be a great spiritual teacher but I think he did a poor job of carrying the story and his journey to enlightenment in an understandable and valuable way. He made the error of assuming the reader had his knowledge of the subject and didn't take the lead to unfolding Buddha's enlightenment. More of a bystanders approach, and one who didn't seem to be invested much, at that. As the author, especially of a fiction novel about such an historical figure, it was his job to do that and he failed and failed Buddha miserably. Glad I got it at the used bookstore cheap and have no desire to keep this in my personal collection, so I'll be selling it back to them.

Patrick says

I picked up this book because I love Buddha. He was a sweet dude and I dig what he did for humanity. So did Herman Hesse and that's why he wrote Siddhartha an amazing work of insight and revelation about the core of Buddhist thought and the life of a man who brought his message of silence and contemplation to the world.

Chopra does a great disservice to Siddhartha and all people with his book. Not only does he muddle the

concepts of Buddhism, but he completely misrepresents the man and what he was. He was not a god, he was not immortal, he was not invincible. He was merely awake. He was as human as you or I. He realized that people come to the Way of their own accord and that the world turns by itself. Whether or not you fight against it is your choice. He just reminded people they had the choice not to fight, but to understand suffering and what it really means.

Chopra gives us a super-human character that is really shallow, and consumes the majority of the plot with happy go lucky relationships and events that aren't even close to being related to his real life. The result is that we have a story that is better fit for readers digest because people like myself, who are actually concerned with getting the word out on who the Buddha was and what his life meant to transforming our own persons, it kills us to read this shit. Fortunately Chopra is writing another historical account about Jesus, because I'm sure he's intimately familiar with the Christian Tradition as well.

Swetha Chodavarpu says

I've always wanted to learn more about Buddhism.

The more I read about it, the more intrigued I got.

While the plot at the beginning of the novel was as interesting and informative as the story in the end, somewhere in the middle, I lost interest.

Buddha the Compassionate One was the best part in my opinion; Finally! Some questions answered!

In the end, the book left me with many questions of my own about the religion, and it helped me answer a few I had before.

The epilogue was really interesting as well.

If you are looking out for a book that teaches you about Buddhism or if you're expecting crisp detail on the life of Buddha himself, this isn't the best book.

However, if you've just introduced yourself to Buddhism and want a book to start off with (and you don't mind some dull pages in between), go ahead and read on :)

Shawn Sorensen says

A fascinating, readable fictionalized account of Buddha's life, conveniently broken into three sections: prince, monk, Buddha. We learn that Buddha's mission was to conquer fear and desire and live in total freedom - and that this was his calling from an early age. We learn that he gave up the life of prince and husband and father to live alone in the mountains - and survived an encounter with an enraged serial killer in the woods by simply walking away. We learn that Buddha avoided thinking in opposites like good and evil so he could live without judgment - and that he could walk through battles and with his presence and a few words, get all the soldiers to drop their weapons.

I'm drawn to studying Buddha precisely because he was a real person, precisely because he gave up everything to understand the true roots of suffering and then have compassion. The book held my interest in the parts of it where the Buddha wasn't performing miracles in order to move the plot along.

I'm sure the publisher required the author to keep the book to about 200 pages. Yet I probably would have read it more quickly had it been twice as long. Buddha as a human being living a long, varied and challenging life would have been more compelling.

Yet there was a lot to learn here, and "Buddha" would make a solid introductory primer for teens/college students or anyone who is interested in a belief system that has the potential to be ingrained into any of the world's faiths or non-faiths, to be a positive force in anyone's life to whatever degree they choose. The book has excellent (though again, too short) 'Epilogue' and 'The Art of Non-Doing' chapters in the back that explain many important aspects of Buddhism, including mindfulness and meditation.

The big point from the book is that Buddha was not afraid of death. Because he believed that human beings are continually reincarnated, the bigger challenges are overcoming desire, fear and judgment in order to be free and open. This whether death is near or, so far, avoided.

Paul Wilder says

This was a very entertaining and inspiring fictional account of the life of the Buddha. Most of the characters and events of the novel are from the passed down story of Buddha, but it is the depiction of his inner experience that is imagined. The scope of the novel is wonderful in that it starts with his life as Prince Siddhartha, moves next into his years as Gautama the monk, then to his enlightenment and subsequent transformation into the Buddha. He was truly an Everyman, and his story demonstrates that of which we are all capable.

Roniq says

This book was wonderful!! A tale of Buddha as imagined by Deepak Chopra. We learn of Siddhartha's birth, His relationship to all those around him and about his life protected from the world behind walls of the kingdom while trying to find his own true path. A tale full of war, love, Jealousy, death, passion and following ones true Soul calling. This book is a great descriptive read full of fantasy, adventure and spirituality. Included are Buddha's life after enlightenment and a breakdown of the eight fold path. A great read!!!!
