

## Critical Thinking Questions For "Sacred Texts Unit"

Author: Buddha

Title: The Buddha's path to Enlightenment

Name : Mickelly A.

1. What do you think the work's main argument, point, or conclusion might be?

The work describes the life of Siddharta Gautama, from a wealthy young man to leaving behind his worldly possession in the pursuit of a life as an ascetic monk. It also describes the missionary efforts of his followers in sharing his teachings and spreading Buddhism widely. The work offers a better idea in understanding the thoughts and philosophy of the buddhist or so the path to enlightenment.

2. Give three ways the text(s) address the natural world and/or man and woman's place in it:

-Buddhism encompasses several concepts from karma and rebirth to other core teachings related to the origin and cessation of suffering and also Nirvana. The texts discusses the experience of the young Siddharta and how it relates to us and ultimately defines us. My attention was mostly centered on the the second knowledge regarding the passing away and re-appearing of human beings, described in the text through the following quote " I saw- by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human beings passing away and re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful& ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their Kamma: 'These beings-who were endowed with bad conduct of body,speech & mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views-with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But these beings- who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech & mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views-with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in the good destinations, in the heavenly world". This second knowledge provided to Siddharta allows us to understand the root of the discrepancies or inequalities of the world. It bolds the fact that God or enlightened beings are fair and that the cause of us being one way or another, fortunate or unfortunate is solely related to the choice of actions that we've made. Hence, the law of cause and effect. It's important to stress that the law of cause and effect or Karma is completely associated with how we manage our thoughts, words and actions, whatever seed we plant shall we harvest.

"I am the owner of my karma .  
I inherit my karma.

I am born of my karma.  
I am related to my karma.  
I live supported by my karma.  
Whatever karma I create, whether good or evil, that I shall inherit."  
*The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya V.57 - Upajjhatthana Sutta*

Therefore, our place in the world is sacred and governed by those natural laws that allow us to generate our future everyday.

-The text also places a lot of emphasis on "The Wheel of Truth", origin and cessation of suffering, which is as well directly associated with us since it's more like a prescription on how to cease suffering. We can consider the guidelines of *Shakyamuni Buddha* "I teach about suffering and the way to end it". Such teachings began nearly seven weeks after *Shakyamuni Buddha* attained enlightenment in Bodhgaya and they are known to contain the Buddhist path. According to the Buddha, regardless the life we live, it is often related or tied to aspects of sufferings. And happiness is transitory, and although this may reflect a pessimistic point of view it appears to be a realistic one, we can only have temporary happiness and pleasure in life. The essence of life is suffering. Even in our happiest moments we know for sure it's about to fade and vanish, and regardless of how hard we work and how much we gain we either lose part of it or have it spent in some other manner. Afterall we find ourselves again in the pursuit of more and more and finally we die. We spend our youth acquiring money even if it's detrimental to our health and we spend our old days paying back that money trying to acquire health, realistically does that seem to make sense ? That seems to be part of our misery, our sufferings. The Buddha offers a simple way to eradicate suffering, detailed in the Wheel of Truth. It all comes to correcting our mind, our way of thinking and acting, can help us end suffering and enter Nirvana. Those should be our aspirations in this world, those are what the buddhists desire.

3. How might the historical period and location (i.e. context) have affected how the content of the text(s)?

I do not believe that the era or location really impacted the content, maybe the original dialect used for the creation of the text(Pali language) but the content and teachings of the buddha were well accepted by the followers. However, I find six centuries to be quite a long time prior to exposing and sharing the knowledge and forming modern schools of buddhism.

4. During the time period when the work was created: what social groups (for example: economic class; religious affiliation; political group; ethnic/linguistic group; gender) was being addressed? Why do you think so?

The work was mainly written for the benefit of everyone, however it mainly focused towards the occupants of the Indian subcontinent and becoming the predominant religion in Southeast Asia and Tibet, influencing both the Chinese and Japanese culture. Afterall,

Siddhartha appears to have been born in the foothills of the Himalayas, although the opinions diverge on that fact.

5. What is the role of the human being in the text(s) in the world? In the cosmos and/or afterlife?

The text stresses the role of the human being as an obedient servant of the teachings. Working hard to purify the mind in order to avoid suffering and achieve Nirvana. Avoiding lewdness, avoiding harming others in words or actions, avoid lying and engaging in divisive speech or gossip, in conclusion developing genuine wisdom and put end to the cycle of rebirth. Always love and value our peers. I will not refrain myself in also sharing the ideas of the eminent writer and author Alan Watts "without others there is no self, and without somewhere else there is no here, so that -in this sense-self is other and here is there". Peace can be made only by those who are peaceful, and love can be shown only by those who love. Hence let's show peace and love always. Those define the roles of human being, those represent the truth of who we really are.