

Buddha's Sermon in the Deer Park at Benares

There is a middle path, a path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment. What is that middle path? Verily it is this noble eightfold path: that is to say: Right views; Right aspirations; Right speech; Right conduct; Right livelihood; Right effort; Right mindfulness; Right contemplation.

This is the truth concerning suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, union with the unpleasant is painful, separation from the pleasant is painful. These six aggregates which spring from attachment are painful.

This is the truth concerning the origin of suffering. It is that thirst accompanied by starving after a gratification or success in this life, or the craving for a future life.

This is the truth concerning the destruction of suffering. It is the destruction of this very thirst, the harboring no longer of this thirst.

And now this knowledge and this insight has arisen within me. Immovable is the emancipation of my heart. This is my last existence. There will now be no rebirth for me.

Sherman Lee included this sermon in his book, *A History of Far Eastern Art*, as well as the following comments (the following are excerpts from Chapter 5 "Early Art in India"):

The Buddha's traditional dates are c. 563-c.483 B.C.E. We know that he was a prince, probably from the region of Nepal, and that in his lifetime he was a great teacher of ethics. We do not know that he claimed religious leadership or attempted to form a religious order. But his world was undergoing rapid and violent political and social change, and in the resulting instability and uncertainty the Buddha's teachings must have become a source of great moral strength to the people who knew him. His relationship to earlier Indian thought, Brahmanism, was that of a reformer rather than a revolutionary. He attempted to modify, reinterpret, and revivify the teachings laid down in the earlier religious texts. He preached a very simple message: that the world was fundamentally illusory, impermanent, and painful, and that the only way of fulfillment was to escape from the Wheel of Existence, an escape to be accomplished through non-attachment, meditation, and good works. . . . Despite his idea that the world was illusory, he taught moral behavior, kindness, and love as a means of coping with worldly problems.

Sherman E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art* (fifth edition), ed. Naomi Noble Richard. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994; pg. 81.