

Origins of Buddhism

The background features a dark blue gradient. A large, wavy, abstract shape in shades of orange and red flows across the lower half of the image, creating a sense of movement and depth.

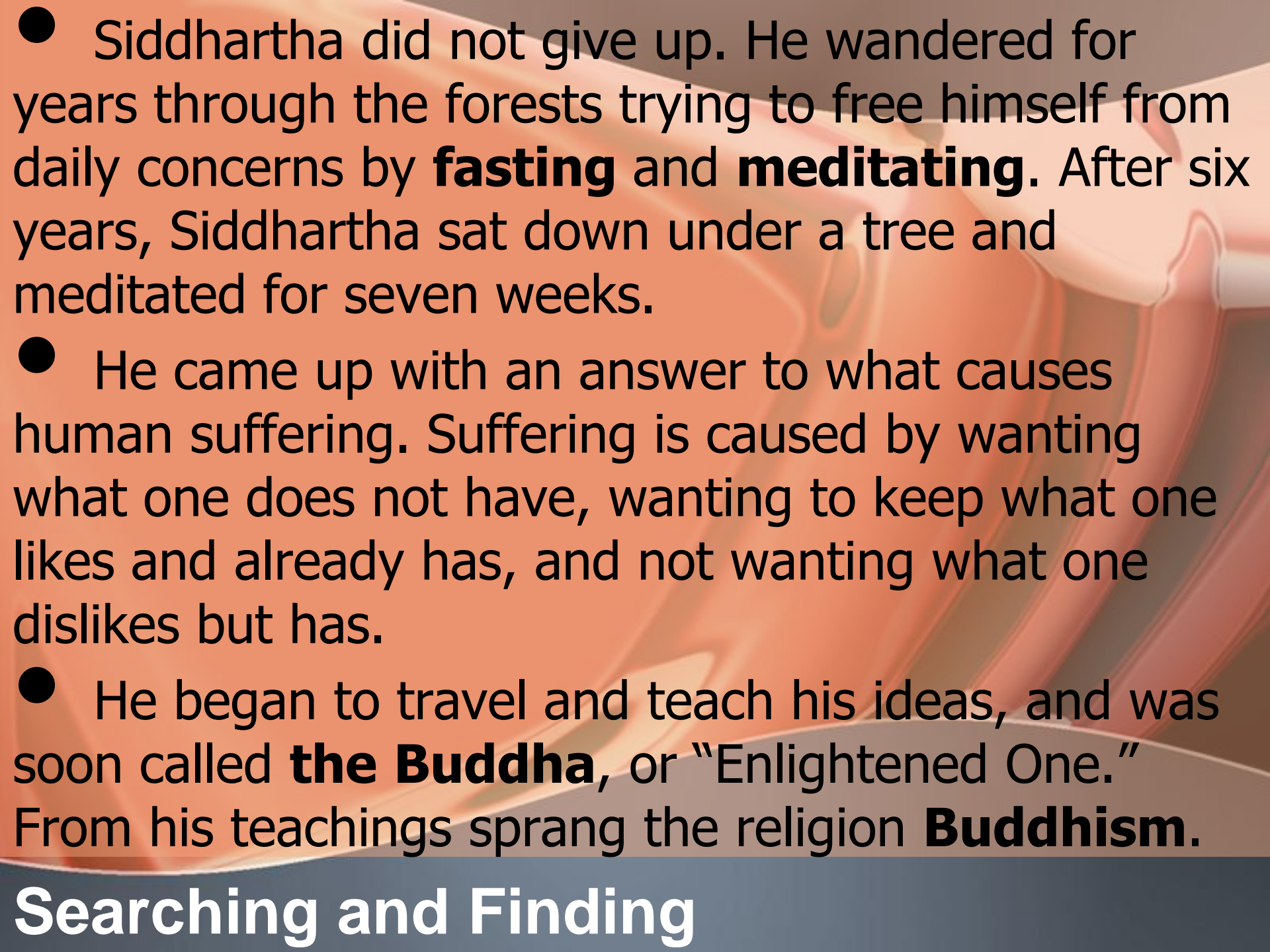
Siddhartha's Search for Wisdom

- Not everyone in India accepted Hinduism.
- In the late 500s BC, a major new religion began to develop from questions posed by a young prince named Siddhartha Gautama (si-DAHR-tuh GAU-tuhmuh).
- Siddhartha was born to a wealthy family and led a life of comfort, but he wondered at the pain and suffering he saw all around him.
- By the age of 30, Siddhartha left his home and family to travel India. He talked to many priests and wise men, but he was not satisfied with their answers.

The Great Departure



In this painting, Prince Siddhartha leaves his palace to search for the true meaning of life, an event known as the Great Departure. Special helpers called *ganas* hold his horse's hooves so he won't awaken anyone.



● Siddhartha did not give up. He wandered for years through the forests trying to free himself from daily concerns by **fasting** and **meditating**. After six years, Siddhartha sat down under a tree and meditated for seven weeks.

● He came up with an answer to what causes human suffering. Suffering is caused by wanting what one does not have, wanting to keep what one likes and already has, and not wanting what one dislikes but has.

● He began to travel and teach his ideas, and was soon called **the Buddha**, or “Enlightened One.” From his teachings sprang the religion **Buddhism**.

Searching and Finding

Statue of Buddha



This giant statue of the Buddha is just south of the town of Gaya in Bodhi Gaya, India—the place where Buddhists believe Siddhartha reached enlightenment.

Teachings of Buddhism

- Buddhism is intent on relieving human suffering. It is based upon the Four Noble Truths.
- These truths are: Suffering and unhappiness are part of life; suffering stems from our desire for pleasure and material goods; people can overcome their desires and reach **nirvana**, a state of perfect peace, which ends the cycle of reincarnation; and people can follow an eightfold path to nirvana, overcoming desire and ignorance.

Buddha's Teachings

- These teachings were similar to some Hindu concepts, but went against some traditional Hindu ideas.
- Buddhism questioned the need for animal sacrifice.
- It also challenged the authority of the Brahmins.
- The Buddha said that each individual could reach salvation on his or her own.
- Buddhism also opposed the caste system.

Early Spread of Buddhism



Map: Early Spread of Buddhism. Young Buddhist students carry gifts in Sri Lanka, one of the many places outside of India where Buddhism spread. The original Buddhist area included the city of Bodh Gaya. It spread south into India down into Sri Lanka, northwest into Persia, north into Central Asia and across the Bay of Bengal into Southeast Asia. The inset photo shows young Buddhists carrying gifts into Sri Lanka. These children are dressed in red and orange robes. They are carrying things in their hands. Th

Buddhism Spreads

- Buddhism spread quickly throughout India.
- With the help of Indian king Asoka, Buddhist **missionaries** were sent to other countries to teach their religious beliefs.
- Buddhism quickly took hold in neighboring countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, and China.
- Buddhism soon became very influential in Japan and Korea.
- In modern times, Buddhism has become a major global religion.