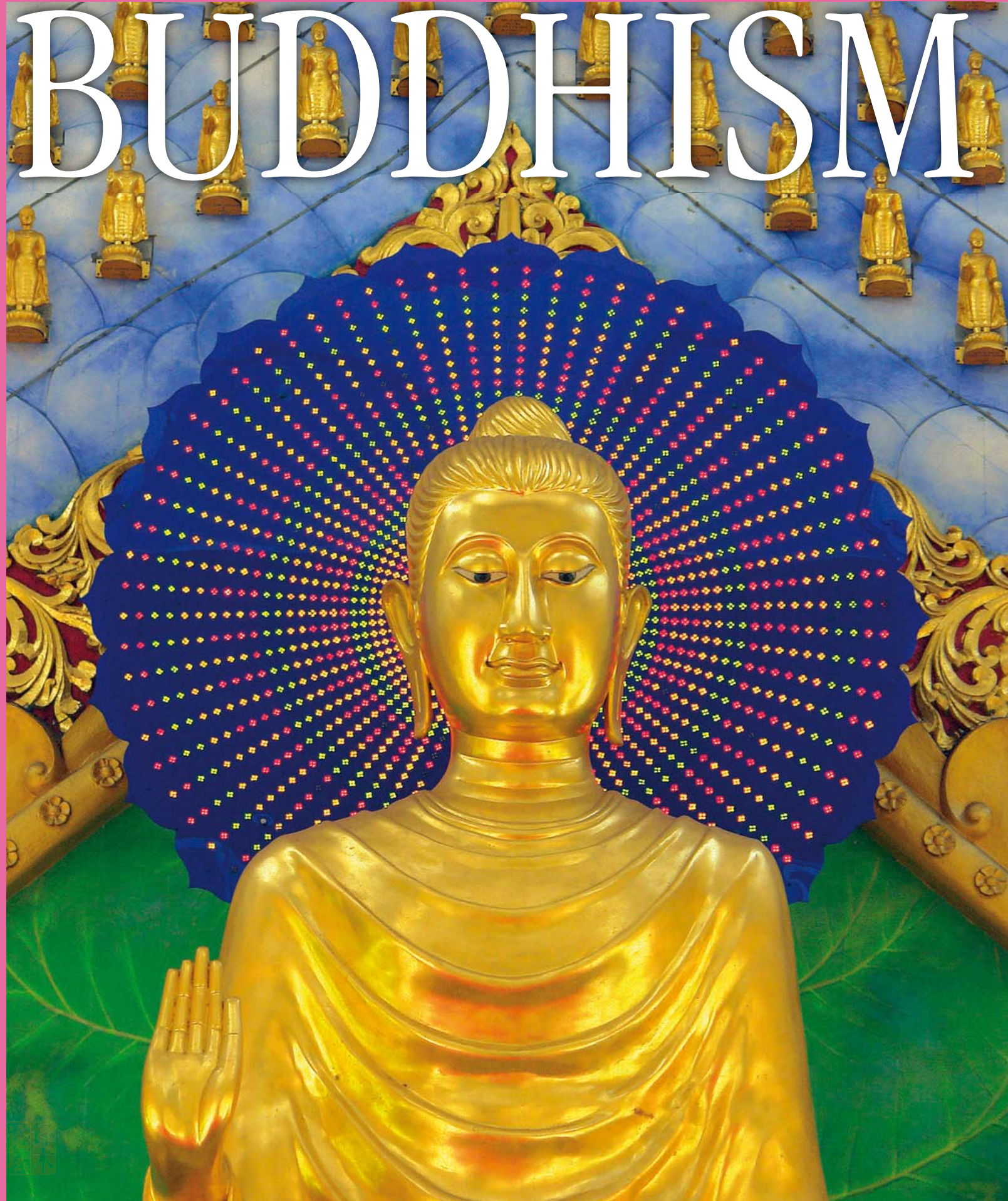




Eyewitness



# BUDDHISM





# Eyewitness Buddhism





A Buddhist monk's possessions



Statue of the Buddha as a child



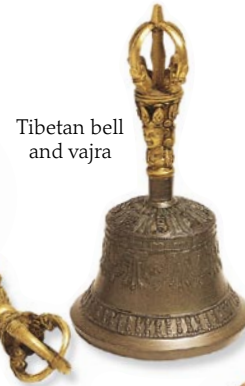
Crystal relic case in the shape of a stupa



Ornamental conch shell



Burmese monk collecting alms



Tibetan bell and vajra



Lotus flowers



Ceremonial headdress worn by a Tibetan lama



# Eyewitness Buddhism

Written by  
PHILIP WILKINSON

Photographed by  
STEVE TEAGUE



Plaque showing the  
Wheel of Law and  
two deer



DK Publishing, Inc.





Chinese reclining Buddha

Tibetan prayer wheel



Lion statue from a temple entrance in the UK



LONDON, NEW YORK,  
MELBOURNE, MUNICH, and DELHI

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Tibetan prayer beads



Tibetan figure with prayer wheel and beads

Tibetan lama performing part of a prostration sequence



Ornate Burmese alms bowl

This Eyewitness® Guide has been conceived by Dorling Kindersley Limited and Editions Gallimard

Hardback edition first published in Great Britain in 2003

This edition published in Great Britain in 2003

by Dorling Kindersley Limited,  
80 Strand, London WC2 0RL

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Penguin Group

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 9 7807 8949 8335

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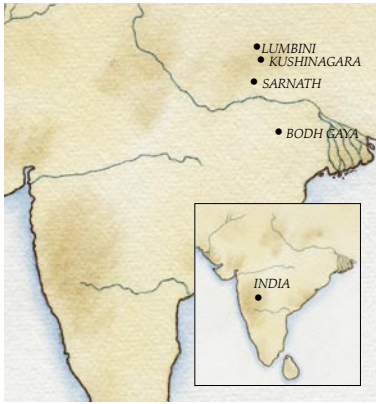
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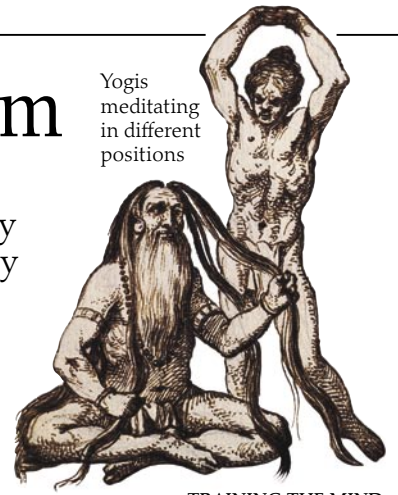


**BIRTHPLACE OF BUDDHISM**  
 Many people believe that Buddhism was born when the Buddha preached his first sermon (p. 16) in Sarnath, near Benares (now called Varanasi) in northern India. Buddha's birth in Lumbini (p. 8), his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, and his death in Kushinagara (p. 10) are also central to the story of Buddhism.

# Introducing Buddhism

**BUDDHISM BEGAN** in India in the 5th century BCE (before the common era, the term used by non-Christians for BC). It spread across Asia and is now practiced by people all over the world. Buddhism is not based on belief in a god or gods. It is instead founded on the teachings of its leader, the Buddha, "the enlightened one." The Buddha taught his followers how to conquer suffering and distress and advised them on how to lead their lives. By following his example, Buddhists move closer to the heightened state of awareness, or enlightenment (p. 10), experienced by the Buddha himself.

Yogis meditating in different positions

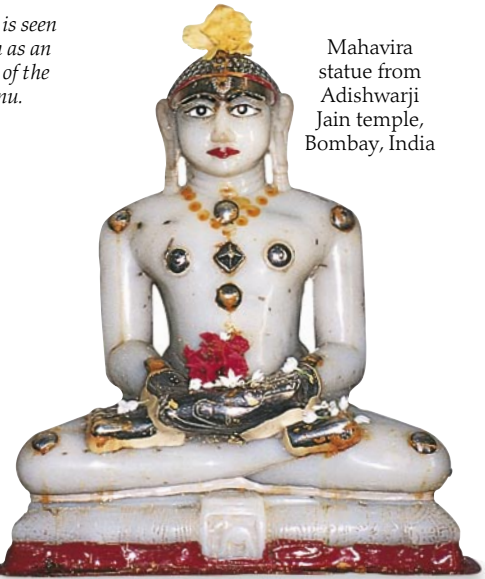


### TRAINING THE MIND

Early Buddhists learned the skill of meditation from ancient Indian traditions, such as yoga. Meditation is a way of training, calming, and purifying the mind. Buddhists often begin meditation by concentrating on their breathing. They hope to go on to reach a deep understanding of the nature of life.



The Buddha is seen in Hinduism as an incarnation of the god Vishnu.



Mahavira statue from Adishwarji Jain temple, Bombay, India

### FOLLOW THE LEADERS

When the Buddha was alive, another great religious leader, Mahavira, was attracting many followers. He was the leader of the Jains, who believe that their faith has always existed, but was rediscovered at this time. The popularity of both the Buddha and Mahavira shows that, at this time, India was a melting pot of religious ideas.

Indra pays homage to the Buddha.

The Buddha sits on a throne decorated with lotus flowers.

### ADVICE FROM THE GODS

Many people in India at the time of the Buddha were Hindus, and he is often depicted alongside Hindu gods. Brahma, "the Creator," and Indra, "God of Rain and Warfare," are two of the most important Hindu gods. It is said that when the Buddha achieved enlightenment, Brahma and Indra persuaded him to teach others the truths that he had learned. The Buddha knew this would not be easy.

Stone fragment showing the Buddha with Indra and Brahma





**PORTRAYING THE BUDDHA**  
 Depictions of the Buddha vary greatly, depending on where they come from and when they were made. But they all succeed in putting across a sense of the high esteem in which he is held. Statues of the Buddha are often golden and large. This stresses the fact that he was an important figure and worthy of reverence.

*The Buddha wears a robe with a decorative border.*

Modern statue of the Buddha made of gilded plaster

*The Buddha's right hand is turned toward the ground in the Earth-witnessing gesture (p. 15).*

*The Buddha's left hand is in his lap in the meditation gesture.*

*The Buddha's feet are crossed in the lotus position, a posture often used during meditation.*

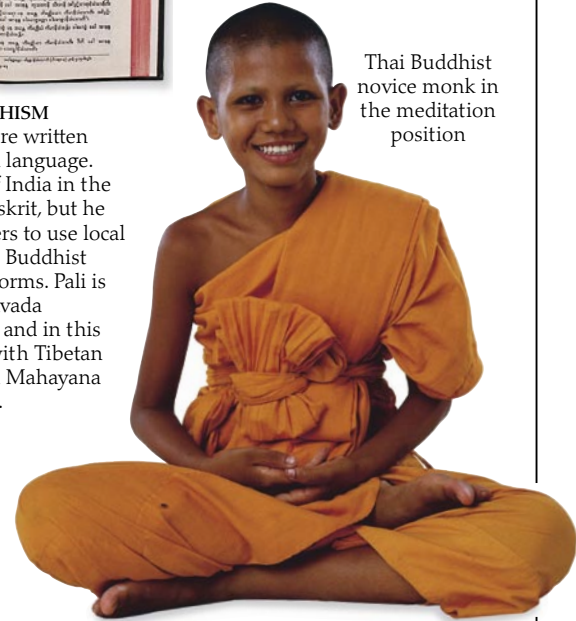
Modern book containing Buddhist scriptures in Pali



**LANGUAGES OF BUDDHISM**

The early scriptures were written down in Pali, an Indian language. The sacred language of India in the Buddha's time was Sanskrit, but he encouraged his followers to use local languages and dialects. Buddhist words have two main forms. Pali is the form used in Theravada Buddhism (pp. 20–21) and in this book. Sanskrit, along with Tibetan and Chinese, is used in Mahayana Buddhism (pp. 24–25).

Thai Buddhist novice monk in the meditation position



**THE BUDDHA'S FOLLOWING**

Today, there are Buddhists all over the world. They come from many different places and traditions. The Buddha was a great teacher. He spent most of his time traveling and preaching with a group of followers. These followers grew in number and became the first Buddhist monks, who continued to spread the faith.

*“Completely have I understood what must be understood, though others failed to understand it. That is the reason why I am a buddha.”*

**BUDDHACARITA**

The meeting with the mendicant

*It is said that the Buddha had webbed toes, rounded ankles, and projecting heels – these are some of the 32 marks of a great man (pp. 14–15).*



Burmese statue of the Buddha as a child



**BABY BUDDHA**

Many statues of the young Siddhatta show him pointing one hand to the Earth and the other to Heaven. After his birth, Siddhatta is said to have taken seven steps each to the north, south, east, and west. He then declared that he alone, on the Earth and in Heaven, was worthy to be revered.

# The life of the Buddha

**T**HE MAN WHO WAS to become the Buddha was born Siddhatta Gotama during the 5th century BCE, in an area of India that is now part of Nepal. His family was from the upper class and, according to some accounts of his life, Siddhatta's father was the ruler of a tribe called the Shakya. Siddhatta was therefore a prince. He left his privileged background to search for the truth of human existence and to reach a state of enlightenment. He finally became the leader of what is today one of the oldest and most widespread of all world faiths.



**SIGNS OF GREATNESS**

Accounts of Siddhatta's birth are full of signs predicting he would lead an exceptional life. He was born in a grove among woods near Lumbini when his mother was on her way to visit her family. In some accounts of the birth, the young prince emerged from his mother's side. He was said to be spotlessly clean when he was born and able to walk right away.

*"When born, he was so lustrous and steadfast that it appeared as if the young Sun had come down to Earth."*

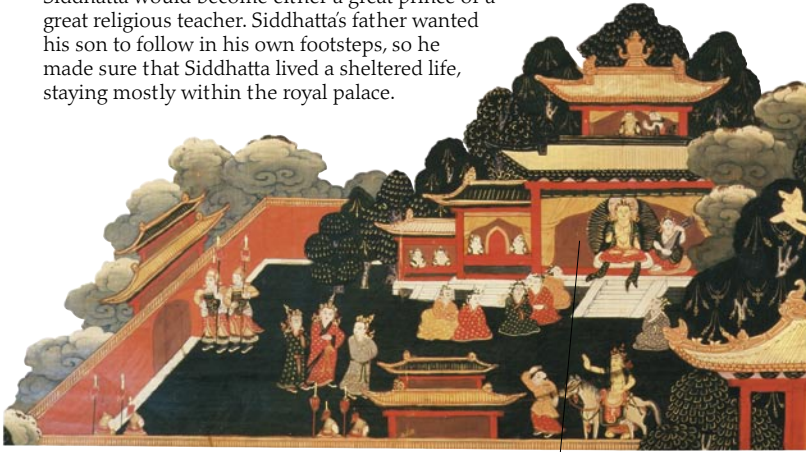
**BUDDHACARITA**  
The birth of the bodhisattva

18th-century Tibetan painting showing the Buddha taking his first steps



**A SHELTERED LIFE**

Soon after Siddhata was born, a holy man called Asita visited him at his father's palace. Asita predicted that Siddhata would become either a great prince or a great religious teacher. Siddhata's father wanted his son to follow in his own footsteps, so he made sure that Siddhata lived a sheltered life, staying mostly within the royal palace.



*The artist has given the palace a Chinese appearance.*

18th-century Tibetan picture of Siddhata in his father's palace



**READY TO RULE**

The young prince Siddhata lived a life of luxury. This 10th-century Chinese painting shows him riding with one of his servants. Siddhata's father protected him from life's hardships because he didn't want his thoughts to turn toward religion. Siddhata married a beautiful young woman called Yashodhara, and it seemed that he would become a ruler of his people as his father wished.



*Siddhata witnesses death for the first time.*

18th-century Tibetan depiction of Siddhata watching a funeral procession



*Relatives mourn a dead man.*

**SEEING SUFFERING**

When Siddhata did leave the palace, his father ordered all signs of human suffering to be hidden. But one day Siddhata caught sight of an old man bent double over his walking stick. The next day, he saw a sick man, and the day after that a funeral procession. On the following day, Siddhata saw a holy man who had reached a state of calm by leaving behind all worldly comforts.

*Siddhata's faithful servant says farewell.*

*Gods support the hooves of Siddhata's horse, so that they make no noise as he leaves the palace in secret.*

*Siddhata leaves the palace on his horse Kanthaka.*

Section of frieze from the Amaravati stupa in southern India

*Prince Siddhata gives up his horse.*

**GIVING IT ALL AWAY**

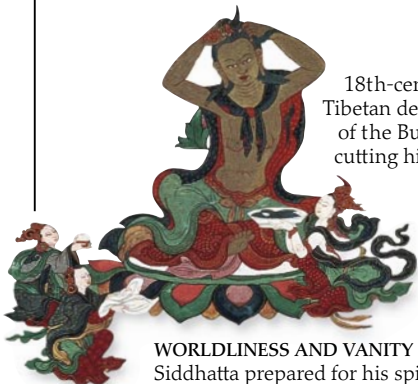
Siddhata decided to give up the comforts of the palace, his fine horses and chariots, and his loving wife and newborn son, Rahula. He believed that this was the only way in which he would find out the truth about human suffering and achieve the peace of mind of the holy man he had seen.





## Great going forth

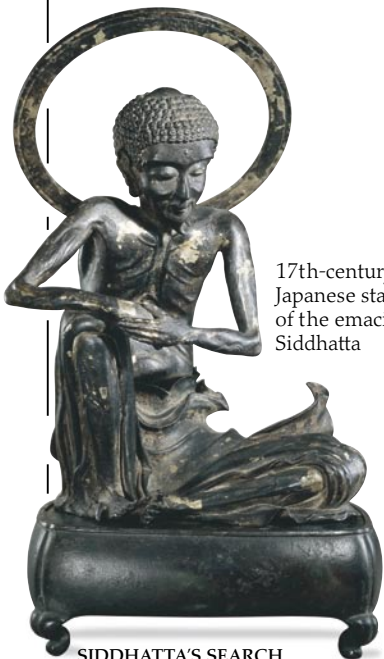
Siddhatta “went forth” into the world to achieve enlightenment. If he succeeded, he would escape the cycle of suffering, death, and rebirth (pp. 16–17) and develop a new understanding of life and the universe. Siddhatta’s quest was not quick or easy—he had to try several different routes before he finally succeeded.



18th-century Tibetan depiction of the Buddha cutting his hair

### WORLDLINESS AND VANITY

Siddhatta prepared for his spiritual search by giving up everything to do with his worldly past. He shaved off his long hair, because in India at that time hair was thought to be symbolic of vanity.



17th-century Japanese statue of the emaciated Siddhatta

### SIDDHATTA’S SEARCH

After studying with different spiritual teachers, Siddhatta continued his quest alone. He became an ascetic—someone who gives up all comforts—sleeping outdoors and eating only a little food. But this did not give him the answers he was searching for.

### MARA’S ARMY

Mara is an embodiment of death and desire. He attacked Siddhatta with the help of his beautiful but deceitful daughters and his army of demons. Siddhatta called on the Earth Goddess to bear witness to his merit (p. 15), and Mara and his army ran away in fear.



Animal-faced demons surround Mara.

Mara carries a mace, ready to attack Siddhatta.

Stone relief showing a group of demons in Mara’s army





**THE ENLIGHTENED ONE**  
Siddhata meditated under a tree (now known as the Bodhi Tree) at Bodhi Gaya in northeast India. After three days and nights, he finally reached enlightenment. He was free from the fear of suffering and from the cycle of death and rebirth. He could truly be called the Buddha, "the enlightened one."



Leaves from a descendant of the first Bodhi Tree

Chinese depiction of the Buddha beneath the Bodhi Tree



Triptych showing the Buddha with two of his followers

*"His body gave him no trouble, his eyes never closed, and he looked into his own mind. He thought: 'Here I have found freedom.'"*

**BUDDHACARITA**  
The enlightenment

*The Buddha told his followers to be calm because he was passing on to his final death.*

**PASSING AWAY**

About 45 years after reaching enlightenment, the time came for the Buddha to achieve parinibbana, or pass on to his final death. Scriptures record that he ate some poisoned food. Knowing that it would cause death, he stopped others from eating it. He then lay on his side and meditated until he passed away.

*In depictions of his death, the Buddha always rests his head on his right arm.*



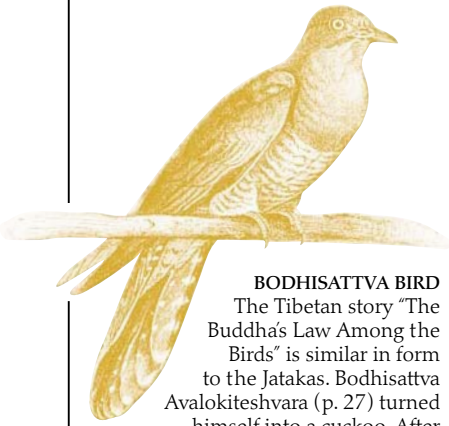
*Animals and demons mourn the death of the Buddha.*

**FIRST FOLLOWERS**

After achieving enlightenment, the Buddha meditated alone for several weeks. He then began to teach others, and soon followers such as Sariputta and Moggallana were learning how the Buddha had attained enlightenment. The Buddha had succeeded through neither extreme luxury nor through asceticism, but through following a Middle Way (pp. 18–19).



# Living for buddhahood



## BODHISATTVA BIRD

The Tibetan story "The Buddha's Law Among the Birds" is similar in form to the Jatakas. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (p. 27) turned himself into a cuckoo. After meditating for a year, he taught all the other birds that they should not be satisfied with the endless round of death and rebirth, but should study the teachings of the Buddha.

HUNDREDS OF STORIES are told to help people understand the Buddha's teachings (pp. 16–19). Many of the tales concern the previous lives of the Buddha, before he was born as Siddhatta Gotama. They are called Jataka stories and form part of the scriptures in the Pali language (pp. 20–21). The stories show the Buddha-to-be reborn (pp. 16–17) in many different forms. In most cases, he carries out a virtuous deed or an act of self-sacrifice, showing his unique character and ensuring that each of his rebirths is a step on the way to buddhahood.



Ancient Chinese wine pot in the shape of a monkey

Serpents are often portrayed with many heads.



## SERPENT'S SPIRIT

"The Serpent King" is about a serpent who often left his watery kingdom to fast, or go without food. One day, the serpent was caught by a human king. The serpent showed the king his beautiful underwater home. "Why do you want to leave this place?" asked the king. "Because I want to be reborn as a man and purify my spirit," replied the serpent.

18th-century Burmese elephant chesspiece



## A MOVING TALE

"The White Elephant" is a tale about a fine white elephant who worked for a king. The king noticed that the elephant was sad and asked what was wrong. The elephant explained that he wanted to go back to the forest to care for his old, blind mother. The king was so moved that he let him return to the forest.

## BUILDING BRIDGES

"The Monkey King" is a tale about the King of Benares, who went out hunting monkeys. He saw a monkey king stretch his body across a river to make a bridge so his tribe could escape. In the process, the monkey king injured his back and could not escape himself. The King of Benares was so amazed by the monkey's self-sacrifice that he bathed the animal's wounds.



## GREAT SACRIFICE

"The Hungry Tigress" is a tale about the Buddha-to-be in human form. He and one of his followers came across a starving tigress who was about to eat her own cubs. The Buddha-to-be sent away his follower, then offered his own body to the starving animal. Both the tigress and her cubs feasted on his flesh.

Stone head of a Naga serpent



Shakra, "King of the Gods," is sitting in the posture of royal ease.

Emperor Mandhata is surrounded by dancing women.

Limestone depiction of the Mandhata Jataka

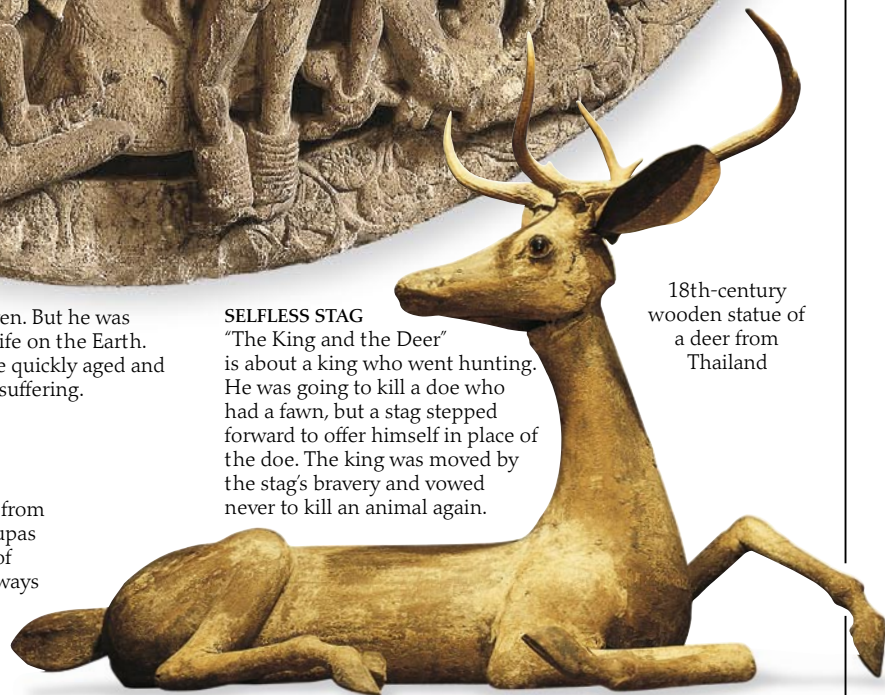


**LETHAL LONGING**  
Emperor Mandhata, the subject of the "Mandhata Jataka," was a great emperor who lived in Heaven. But he was bored and longed for the pleasures of life on the Earth. Mandhata returned to the Earth, but he quickly aged and died, showing that all longing leads to suffering.

**TEACHING TALES**  
Carved reliefs of the Jatakas, like these from Amaravati in India, appear on many stupas (pp. 44–45). The stories illustrate acts of selflessness and virtue, so they have always been used to teach people how to live their lives. In the days before most people could read, monks used the carvings in their lessons.

**SELFLESS STAG**  
"The King and the Deer" is about a king who went hunting. He was going to kill a doe who had a fawn, but a stag stepped forward to offer himself in place of the doe. The king was moved by the stag's bravery and vowed never to kill an animal again.

18th-century wooden statue of a deer from Thailand

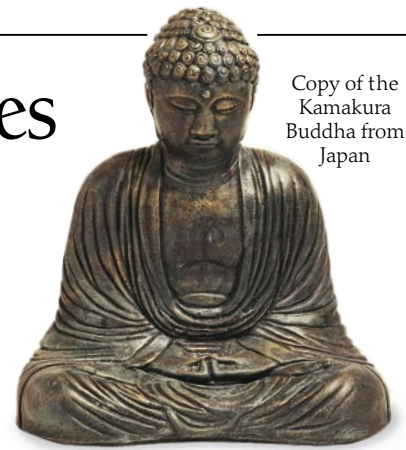




# Features, poses, and gestures



Copy of an early depiction of the Buddha from Burma



Copy of the Kamakura Buddha from Japan

LONG BEFORE THE BUDDHA'S time on the Earth, Indian wise men said that there were 32 marks, or features, to be found on a great man. The Buddha had all of these, from the wisdom bump on his head to the wheels on the soles of his feet (p. 43), although not all are shown on every image of him. Each of the 32 features has a special meaning, as do the Buddha's various poses and hand gestures. They represent aspects of his character, and events and activities from his lives.



Burmese Buddha with Mucalinda

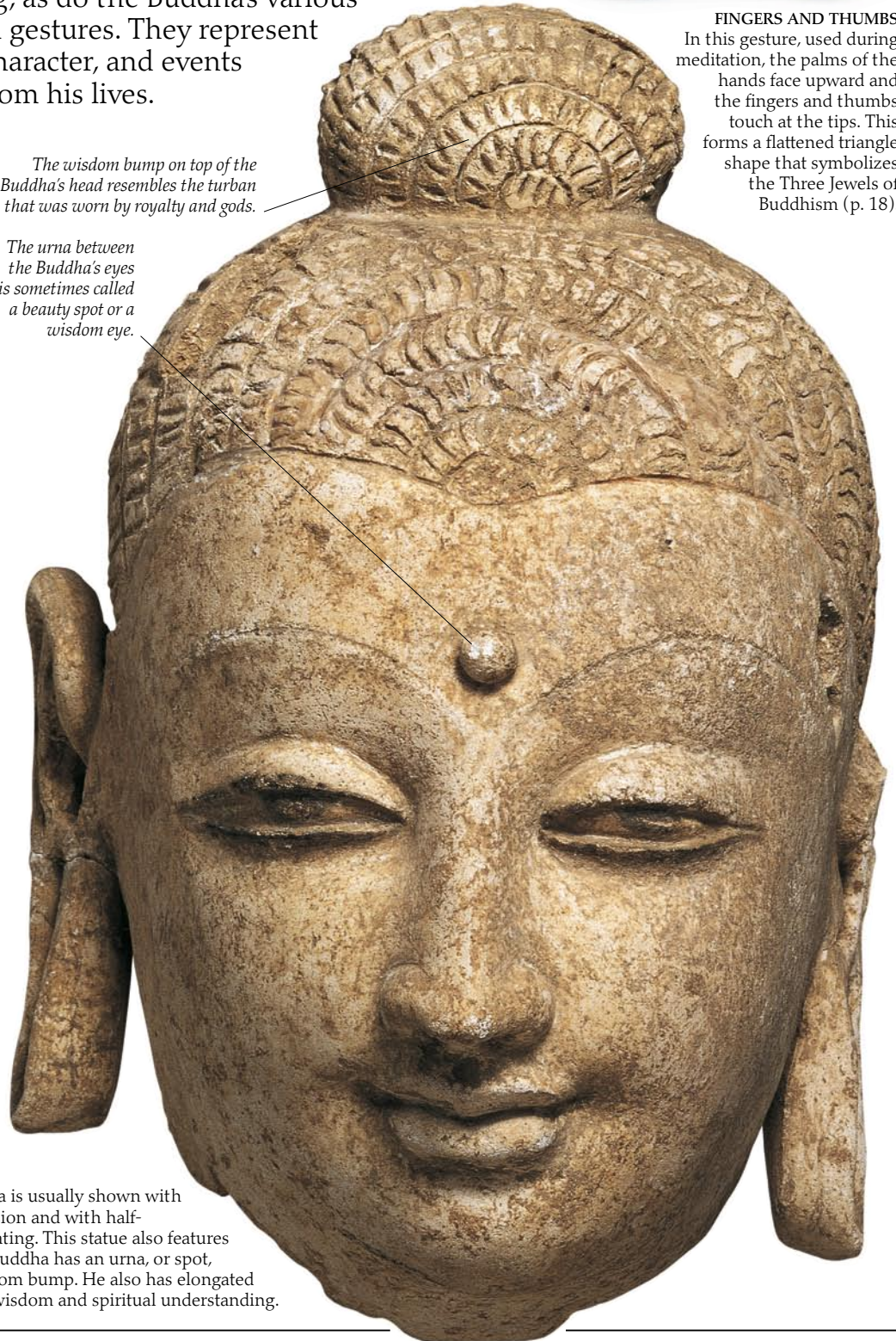
**SHELTER FROM THE STORM**  
This statue symbolizes an event in the Buddha's life. The Buddha was meditating during a rainstorm. A cobra called Mucalinda coiled himself around the Buddha and arched his hood over the Buddha's head to form a protective umbrella.

**THE FACE OF THE BUDDHA**  
As depicted here, the Buddha is usually shown with a calm or withdrawn expression and with half-closed eyes, as if he is meditating. This statue also features some of the 32 marks. The Buddha has an urna, or spot, between his eyes and a wisdom bump. He also has elongated ear lobes, which symbolize wisdom and spiritual understanding.

*The wisdom bump on top of the Buddha's head resembles the turban that was worn by royalty and gods.*

*The urna between the Buddha's eyes is sometimes called a beauty spot or a wisdom eye.*

**FINGERS AND THUMBS**  
In this gesture, used during meditation, the palms of the hands face upward and the fingers and thumbs touch at the tips. This forms a flattened triangle shape that symbolizes the Three Jewels of Buddhism (p. 18).



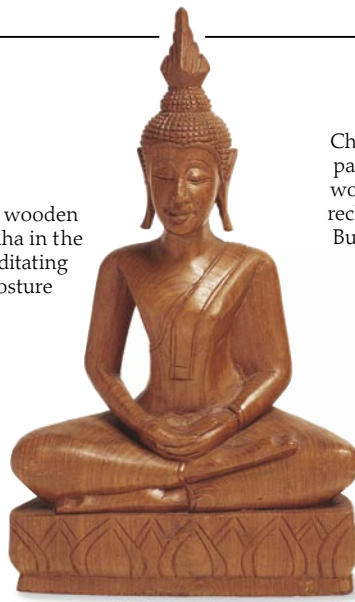


The flamelike  
headdress represents  
the light of supreme  
knowledge.

Thai bronze  
Buddha making the  
Earth-witnessing  
gesture



Thai wooden  
Buddha in the  
meditating  
posture



**CROSS-LEGGED**  
When meditating, the Buddha  
is often shown with his legs  
crossed in the half-lotus  
position shown here. This  
posture had been used for  
meditation in yoga for many  
hundreds of years.

Chinese  
painted  
wooden  
reclining  
Buddha



**DEATH POSTURE**  
The Buddha is said to have died  
lying on his side in the reclining  
posture. The reclining Buddha is  
often shown wearing monk's  
robes (pp. 48–49) and resting his  
head on his right hand, while his  
left hand is on his hip. His  
expression is usually serene.

**WITHOUT WEAPONS**  
This gesture, with the  
right hand raised to  
shoulder height, is  
common in images of  
the standing Buddha. It  
represents fearlessness  
and also blessing and  
friendship. It makes  
clear that the person  
making the gesture  
holds no weapon.

**CALLING THE EARTH GODDESS**

The Earth-witnessing gesture shown here symbolizes the moment in the Buddha's life when he touched the ground during his struggle with Mara. This gesture summoned the Earth Goddess. The Buddha called her to bear witness to the merit, or virtue, he had acquired in his previous lives and the steadfastness with which he withstood Mara's attack.

**CALMING THE ELEPHANT**

The Buddha is sometimes shown with both hands raised in a gesture of strength and fearlessness. According to one story, the Buddha was once attacked by an angry elephant. The Buddha channeled his great power into this simple gesture and calmed the beast.

*"The soles of his feet were  
marked with wheels ... his  
fingers and toes were  
joined by webs ... a circle  
of soft down grew between  
his eyebrows ..."*

**BUDDHACARITA**  
Asita's visit



Standing Buddha  
making the gesture  
of fearlessness  
and friendship



# Buddhist teachings

Copy of a decoration from the roof of the Potala Palace, Lhasa, Tibet



## THE FIRST SERMON

After his enlightenment, the Buddha went to a deer park in Samath, near the city of Benares in northern India. He explained to others the truths that had come to him under the Bodhi Tree and told them how they too might reach the state of enlightenment known as nibbana (p. 40).

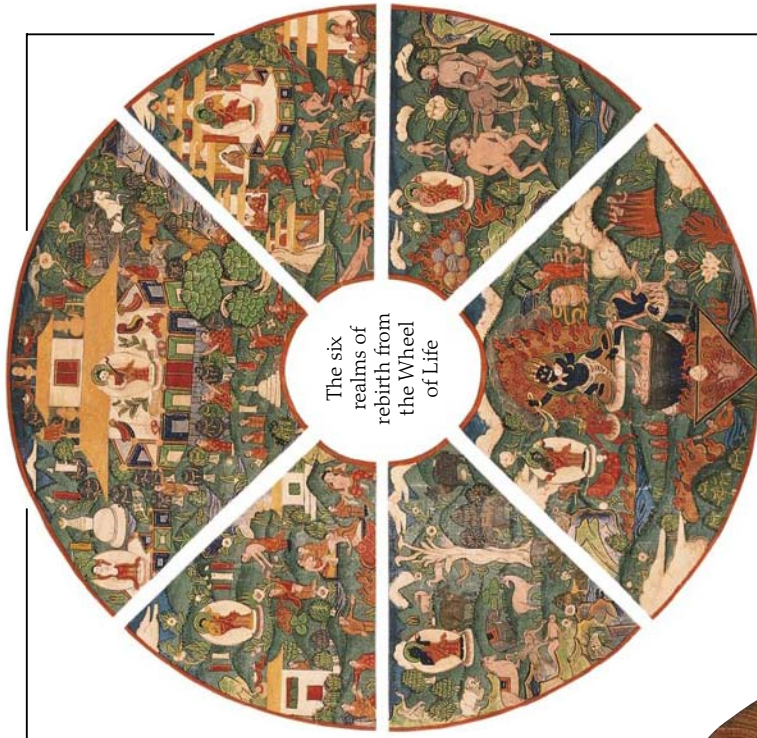
## WHEEL OF LAW

The Buddha's sermon in Samath became known as 'the first turning of the Wheel of Law.' The Buddha's teachings are also referred to as the dhamma, which means doctrine, truth, or law. The dhamma sums up the essence of the Buddha's ideas about human suffering and the way to end it.

Hand of the Buddha making the dhamma, or teaching, gesture



THE BUDDHA'S MOST important teachings concerned basic truths about existence and advice about how his followers should live. He told people that their lives were part of a repeating cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The Buddha summed up the problems that most humans have to endure in Four Noble Truths about suffering (pp. 18–19). He then offered a way to overcome suffering through the Noble Eightfold Path. This path allows some people to break free from the cycle of rebirth and achieve the state of enlightenment.



The six realms of rebirth from the Wheel of Life

**BORN AGAIN**  
The endless cycle through the realms of rebirth is known as samsara. Buddhists believe that when a person dies he or she is reborn and a new being is created. This new being could be an animal or even one of the gods. Buddhists do not believe in an essential soul or self, so each reborn being is distinct from the previous life.

Yama, "Lord of Death," grips the wheel with his teeth.

The scenes around the edge of the wheel illustrate the law of kamma, in which every action depends on the actions.

Heaven, or the realm of the gods, is the highest of the six realms, but it is still only a step on the route to enlightenment.

The realm of the asuras is a place of envy and continuous war.



**WHEEL OF LIFE**  
Tibetan Buddhists illustrate the cycle of rebirth with the Wheel of Life. The main body of the wheel shows the six realms into which one can be reborn. These are the realms of gods, humans, animals, asuras (warlike demons), hungry spirits, and Hell. Around the edge of the wheel, 12 scenes show how kamma works in human life (p. 40).

Wheel of Life from a Tibetan wall hanging



The realm of the humans is important because humans have the power to choose to take the path toward enlightenment.

The three animals at the center stand for three principal faults—greed (the cock), hatred (the snake), and ignorance (the pig).

Beings act on their instincts in the realm of the animals.

The realm of the hungry spirits is a place of greed, thirst, and hunger.

Hell is the realm where beings suffer torment.

A potter molds his own fate in the pots he produces—this illustrates kamma.

**RIGHT ACTION**  
Kamma means action or activity. It is important to Buddhists because it is part of the law of cause and effect. This means that a person's actions—their thoughts, words, and deeds—influence their next rebirth. Good actions will lead to a more favorable rebirth than bad ones.

A monkey swinging from the branch of a tree represents the absence of control over consciousness.

In each realm, a bodhisattva teaches the inhabitants how to take the next step toward enlightenment.

The six main sections illustrate the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.



**BREAKING FREE**  
This Chinese banner shows the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, known as “the master of the six realms of rebirth.” Buddhists aim to break free of the cycle of samsara by achieving enlightenment or nibbana. Few reach this state, but all hope for a favorable rebirth. This means passing at the end of each life to a higher realm of rebirth, so moving closer and closer to nibbana.



The potter from the Wheel of Life





**SUFFERING SICKNESS**

This painting shows the Buddha helping a monk who is suffering through illness. The Four Noble Truths at the center of the Buddha's teachings are closely linked to human suffering. The Buddha saw that people suffer when they crave things they cannot have. For example, people may crave eternal life, even though everyone has to die.

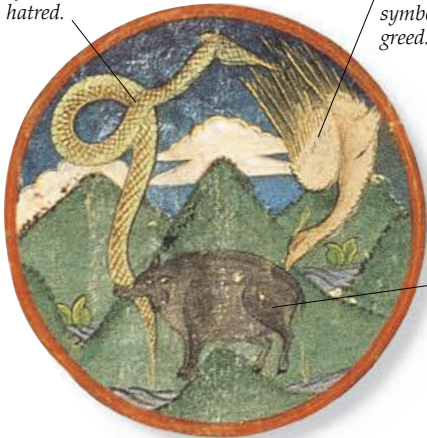
**The Middle Way**

There are Four Noble Truths at the center of the Buddha's teachings: all life is suffering, the cause of suffering is craving, the end of suffering comes with release from craving, and the release from suffering comes from following the Noble Eightfold Path. In order to follow the moral guidance of the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhists must find the balance between luxury and hardship known as the Middle Way. They do not usually wear fancy clothes or rags, instead they dress practically. They do not normally feast or fast, instead they share simple meals.

The snake symbolizes hatred.

The cock symbolizes greed.

The pig symbolizes ignorance.



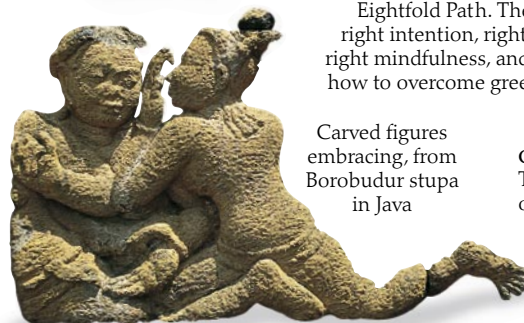
**CONSTANT CRAVINGS**

The animals in the center of the Wheel of Life symbolize three faults that the Buddha believed people must overcome. These faults are hatred, ignorance, and greed—all of which involve craving. Hatred involves the craving to destroy. Ignorance and greed bring about craving unnecessary things. The three animals chase each other in an endless circle, symbolizing the strong link between the three faults.



**INSPIRING TEACHER**

This Tibetan mural shows the Buddha teaching the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight parts of this path are right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The path teaches Buddhists how to overcome greed, hatred, and ignorance, which lead to suffering.



Carved figures embracing, from Borobudur stupa in Java

**CONSEQUENCES OF CRAVING**

These figures are wrapped up in the world of desire and craving and are ignoring the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddhists believe that it is important to find release from craving because craving leads to moral faults. These faults can, in turn, bring about a poor rebirth.





Thai novice monk caring for a kitten

The eye is drawn upward to the eight discs that decorate the spire.



**THE RIGHT JOB**

Doi Suthep-Doi forest in Thailand is protected and cared for by Buddhist monks. Buddhists try to observe the Noble Eightfold Path in their livelihood, or work, just as they do in the rest of their lives. They avoid jobs that involve causing suffering to others, such as working as a butcher or trading in arms, and try to do work that benefits other living things. This is known as right livelihood.

**PEACE AND HARMONY**

The Buddha said that people should behave in a caring way toward other living things to encourage harmony in the world. This is known as right action. He taught people not to harm or kill other beings and not to steal. Early Buddhists reinforced this advice with Five Moral Precepts. These are to avoid harming others, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking drugs and alcohol.

Images of the Buddha decorate the model.

**EIGHTS EVERYWHERE**

The qualities of the Noble Eightfold Path are often represented on stupa spires by a series of eight discs. The Wheel of Law has eight spokes and the stupa in Borobudur is made up of eight levels. This repeated use of the number eight reminds Buddhists of the importance of the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight parts are of equal importance. Buddhists aim to practice them all together because they reinforce each other.

This model stupa may once have contained relics of the Buddha.



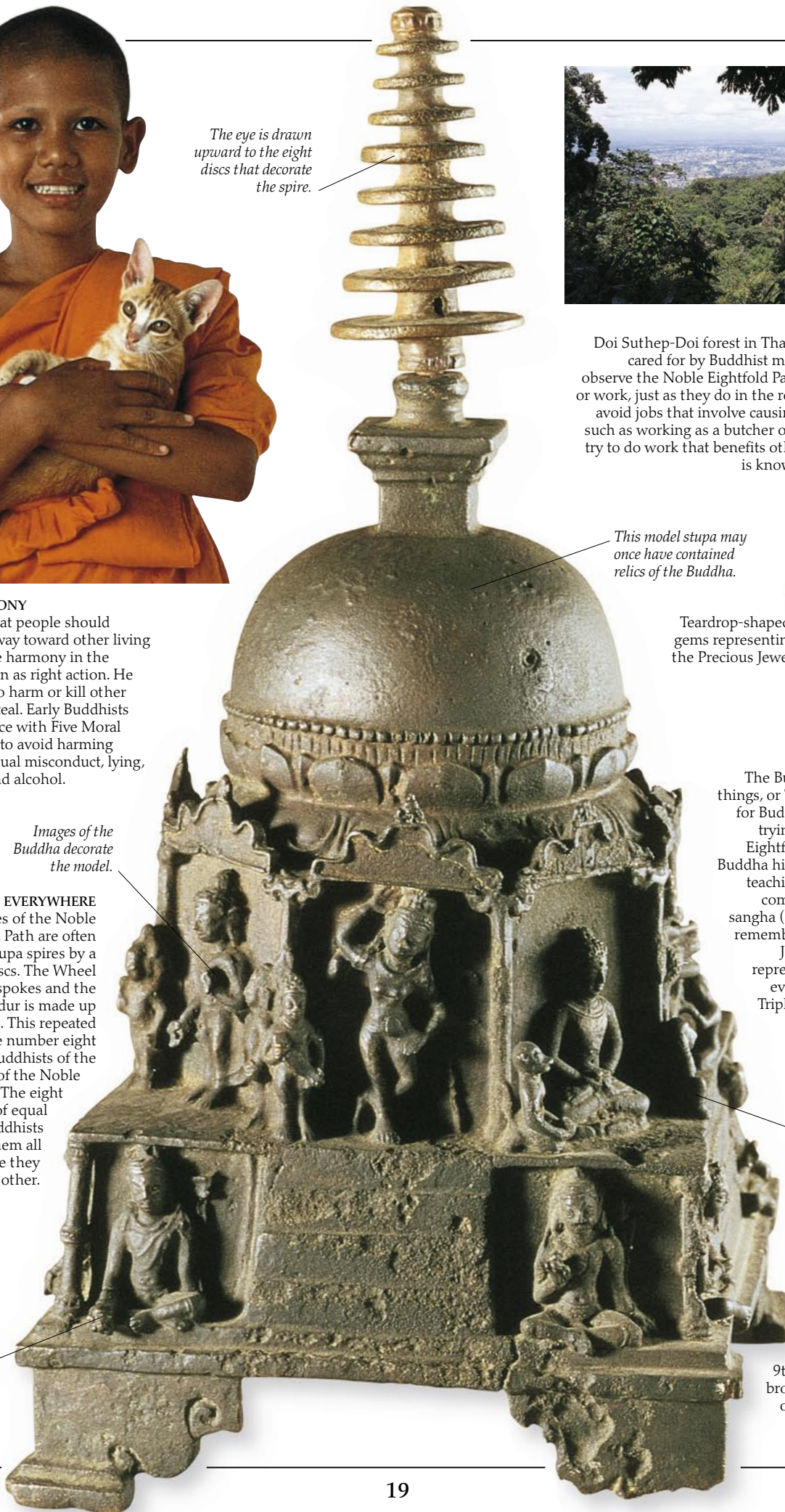
Teardrop-shaped gems representing the Precious Jewels

**LITTLE GEMS**

The Buddha described three things, or Three Precious Jewels, for Buddhists to turn to when trying to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. They are the Buddha himself, his dharma, or teachings, and the monastic community known as the sangha (pp. 48–51). Buddhists remember the Three Precious Jewels, which are often represented by three gems, every time they take the Triple Refuge (pp. 54–55).

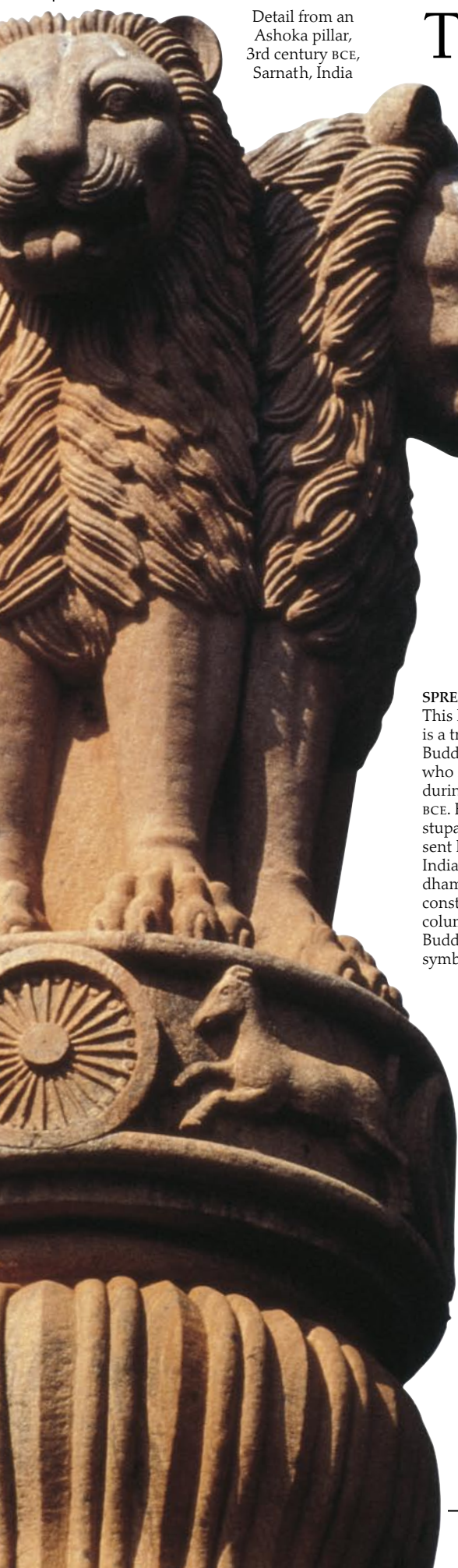
The Buddha is touching the Earth with his right hand.

The Buddha is in a meditational position.



9th-century bronze model of a stupa





Detail from an Ashoka pillar, 3rd century BCE, Sarnath, India

# Theravada Buddhism



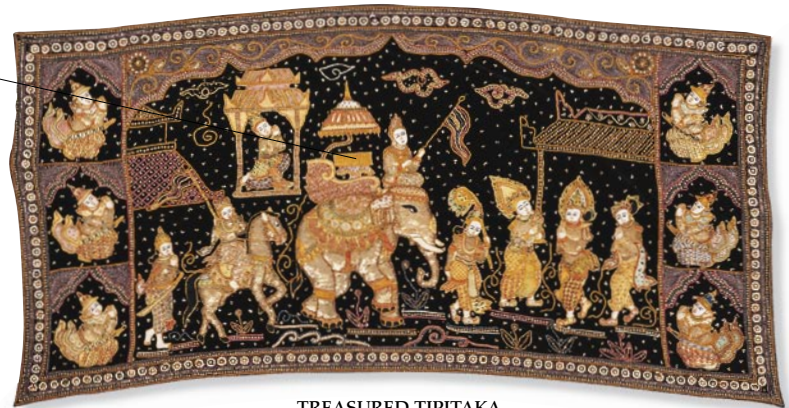
Guardian spirits detail from the Tipitaka wall hanging



**T**HERAVADA BUDDHISM IS practiced mainly in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma (also known as Myanmar). Theravada Buddhists traditionally place the greatest importance on the Buddha himself and on his teachings, written in Pali in the ancient scriptures. The sangha, or community of monks, are also central to this strand of the faith. In the past, the practice of meditation was restricted to monks, who could reach enlightenment. Ordinary people could only live a life of merit in the hope of a favorable rebirth. Today, however, many Theravada Buddhists practice meditation and hope to move quickly along the path to enlightenment.

*The Tipitaka is being paraded on the back of an elephant.*

**SPREADING THE WORD**  
This lion-topped column is a trademark of the great Buddhist emperor Ashoka, who ruled much of India during the 3rd century BCE. He built a number of stupas (pp. 44–45) and sent his followers across India to teach others the dhamma. Ashoka also constructed many huge columns inscribed with Buddhist scriptures and symbols (pp. 42–43).



## TREASURED TIPITAKA

This wall hanging shows a procession in which the Pali scriptures are carried on the back of an elephant. The scriptures are known as the Tipitaka, or triple basket, because the manuscripts were originally carried in three baskets. Each basket held one of the three main parts of the scriptures—the Vinaya Pitaka, the Sutta Pitaka, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka.



200-year-old palm Pali scriptures in Burmese script bound with cord



## PALI ON PALMS

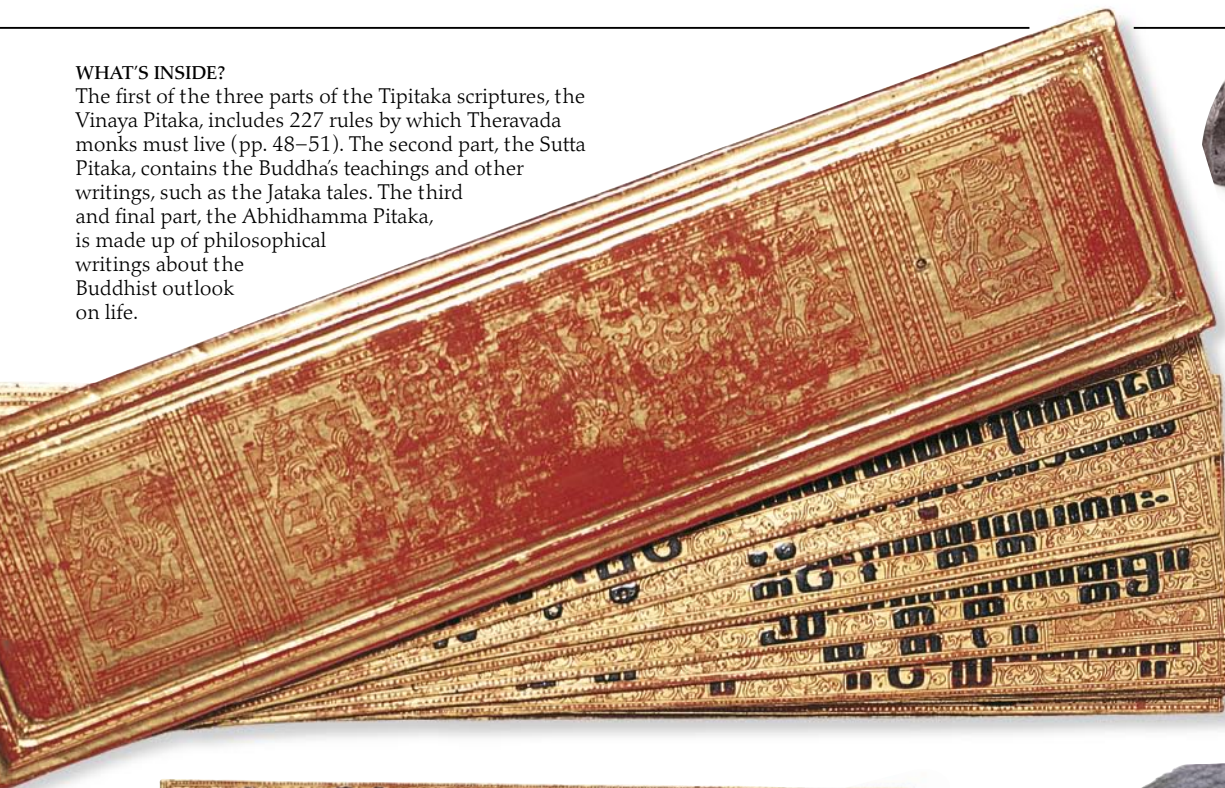
In South and Southeast Asia, Pali scriptures are traditionally written on pressed palm leaves. Narrow strips of leaves are bound with cords or ribbons and protected with a wooden cover. Pali is said by some to be the language used by the Buddha. It is a spoken language with no script of its own, so can be written in the script of any language.

20th-century palm scriptures in a wooden case bound with ribbons



**WHAT'S INSIDE?**

The first of the three parts of the Tipitaka scriptures, the Vinaya Pitaka, includes 227 rules by which Theravada monks must live (pp. 48–51). The second part, the Sutta Pitaka, contains the Buddha's teachings and other writings, such as the Jataka tales. The third and final part, the Abhidhamma Pitaka, is made up of philosophical writings about the Buddhist outlook on life.



**FIRST EDITIONS**

The scribes who made early copies of the Pali texts used a bronze stylus like this to write on palm leaves. They first prepared the leaves by cutting them to size, boiling them in milk or water, and rubbing them down to produce a smooth, pale finish. They then used the stylus to write out the texts in black ink. Some palm scriptures were highly decorated and coated with gold leaf.



Lacquered palm Tipitaka scriptures in Pali with Burmese script



Modern Pali scriptures containing the Dhammapada



Ananda's statue stands 23 ft (7 m) tall.

Giant statue of Ananda, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka

**PALI IN PRINT**

Modern scriptures like these are often printed on strips of cardboard to mimic earlier palm versions. One of the most popular parts of the Tipitaka today is the Dhammapada. This collection of the Buddha's sayings is part of the Sutta Pitaka. It is full of advice about living well, doing good, and purifying the mind. Many Buddhists learn it by heart.

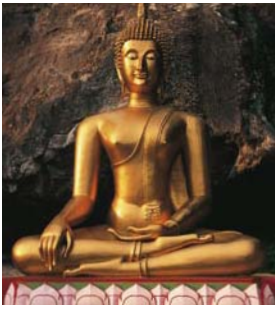
**FAVORITE FOLLOWER**

The Buddha's cousin and favorite follower, Ananda, was one of the first arahats, or Buddhist saints. He had not reached enlightenment when the Buddha died, but he did so soon afterward as a result of his deep devotion to the great teacher. All Theravada Buddhists hope to reach enlightenment and become arahats.



# Buddhism moves south

*Hundreds of golden ornaments adorn the elephant's red velvet costume.*



## TYPICALLY THAI

In Thailand, the Buddha is often shown making the Earth-witnessing gesture. The tightly curled hair style, pointed headdress, and fine features are also typical of statues of the Buddha from this part of the world.

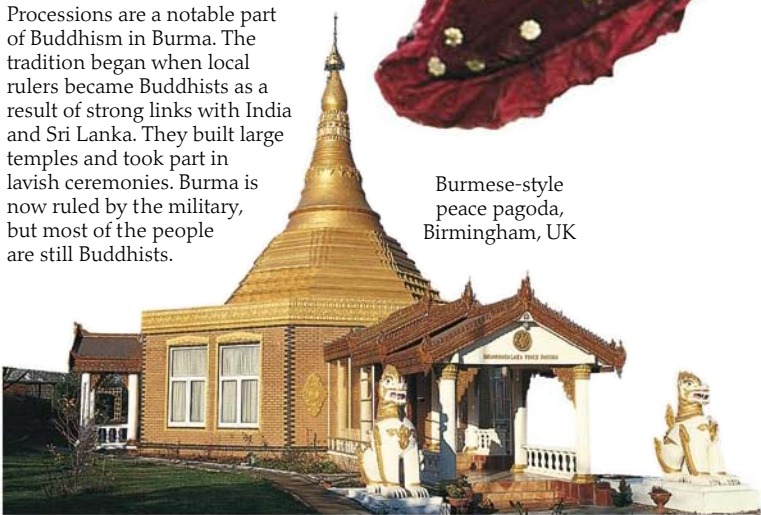
**DURING THE 3RD** century BCE, Buddhism spread southward from India to the island of Sri Lanka. From here, news of the Buddha's life and teachings was carried along the trade routes across the Indian Ocean. It then reached Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Fine temples were built in cities such as Pagan, in Burma, and Angkor, in Cambodia, as the Buddha's teachings were spread all over the region. Theravada Buddhism is popular in these countries to this day. For example, more than 90 percent of the population of Thailand follows this branch of Buddhism.



Buddhists at a religious procession in Kyaukpadaung, Burma

## BUDDHIST BURMA

Processions are a notable part of Buddhism in Burma. The tradition began when local rulers became Buddhists as a result of strong links with India and Sri Lanka. They built large temples and took part in lavish ceremonies. Burma is now ruled by the military, but most of the people are still Buddhists.



Burmese-style peace pagoda, Birmingham, UK

## BUILDING FOR MERIT

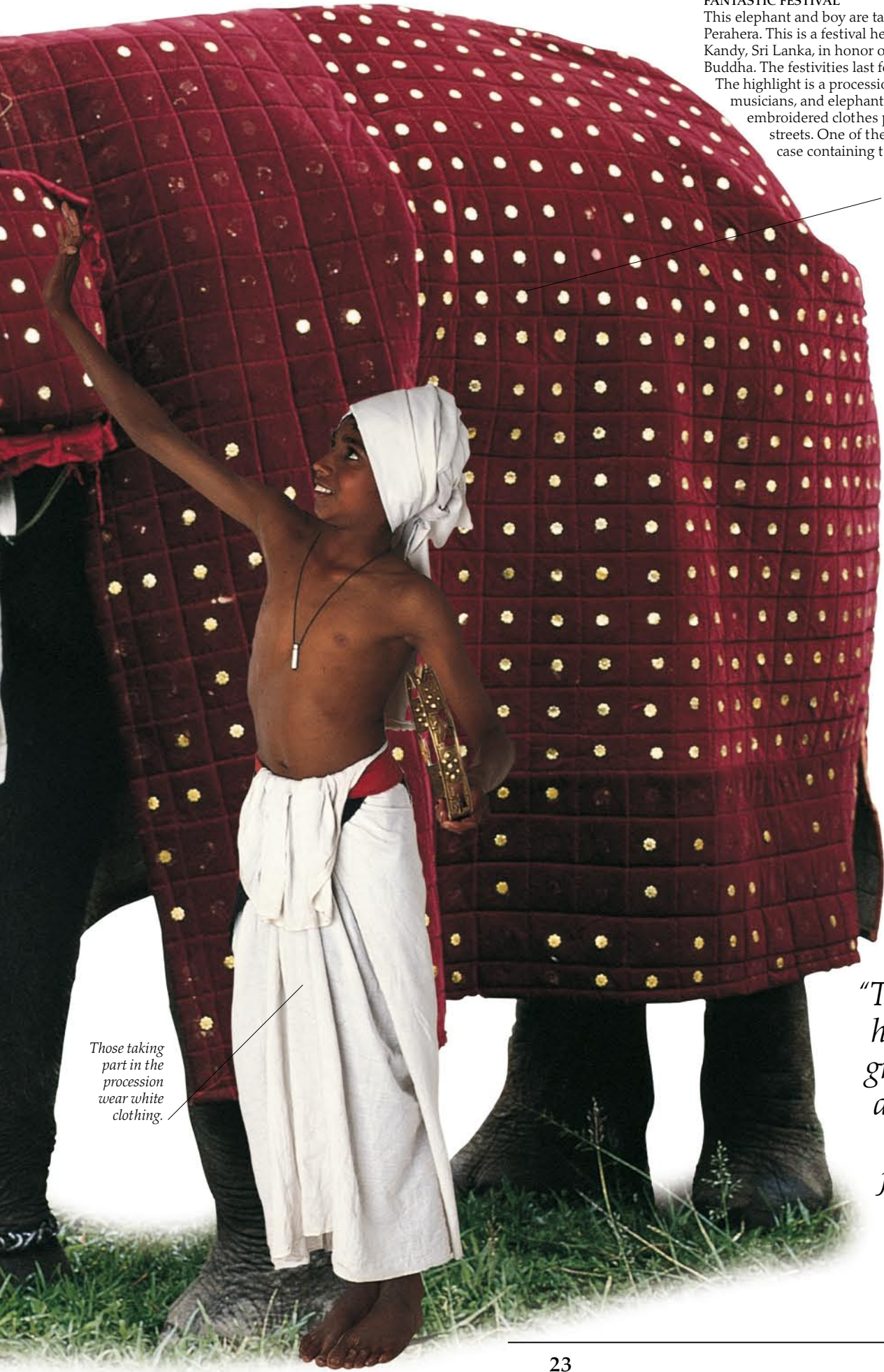
Theravada Buddhism has spread widely. There are now many Burmese-style buildings in the Western world. Burmese temples often have golden roofs, and Shwedagon pagoda in Burma is the world's largest gold-covered building. Buddhists build these monuments in the hope of gaining merit.



## TEMPLE OF THE TOOTH

Sri Lanka's most precious relic is the tooth of the Buddha, kept at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. The Portuguese invaded Sri Lanka in the early 1500s and claimed to have destroyed the tooth. But locals claimed it was miraculously saved and built the temple to house it.





**FANTASTIC FESTIVAL**

This elephant and boy are taking part in Esala Perahera. This is a festival held every year in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in honor of the tooth of the Buddha. The festivities last for several nights.

The highlight is a procession in which dancers, musicians, and elephants dressed in beautiful, embroidered clothes parade through the streets. One of the elephants carries a case containing the sacred tooth.

*The elephant's decorated covering is called a caparison.*



**Ornate Burmese alms bowl**

**GENEROUS GIFTS**

This ornate alms bowl (p. 51) has a pointed lid that resembles the roof of a Burmese temple. It is typical of the lavish gifts given to Buddhist monks by Buddhist members of the public. Monks live simple lives, but people hope that these rich gifts will earn them merit.

*Those taking part in the procession wear white clothing.*

*"These jars now hold the relics great in virtue, as mountains hold their jeweled ore."*

**BUDDHACARITA**  
The relics



# Mahayana Buddhism

The text is a Chinese translation of the Diamond Sutra.

**T**HE BRANCH of the faith called Mahayana, or northern, Buddhism developed in the 1st century CE (common era, the term used by non-Christians for AD). It spread across China, Mongolia, and Tibet, before reaching Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Some Mahayana practices and beliefs differ from those of Theravada Buddhists. Mahayana Buddhists hope to become bodhisattvas (pp. 26–27). They have a more devotional approach both to the Buddha and to the bodhisattvas. They also have some scriptures, known as sutras, not used in Theravada Buddhism.



Spirit from the Diamond Sutra

#### CUTTING WORDS

This Chinese copy of the Diamond Sutra dates from 868. It is the oldest printed book in the world. As with other Mahayana scriptures, the Diamond Sutra was originally written in Sanskrit. Its title suggests that it is able to cut through ignorance like a diamond. The text is a sermon by the Buddha describing a bodhisattva's journey toward wisdom.



7th-century Korean wooden printing block

#### MIRROR IMAGE

Printing was developed in Korea in order to produce copies of the Mahayana scriptures. The printer had to carve a mirror image of the words of each section into a flat block of wood. This could then be coated with ink and pressed onto a scroll to make a copy of the text.

#### SHORT, BUT SWEET

The Heart Sutra is a short, very popular scripture. It is recited regularly in numerous Mahayana monasteries, especially the Zen monasteries of Japan (pp. 38–39). The text is known as the “doctrine of emptiness.” It says that, in order to become a bodhisattva, a person has first to achieve selflessness through wisdom and compassion.



Painting showing the Heart Sutra being written



The Buddha is making the teaching gesture with his right hand.

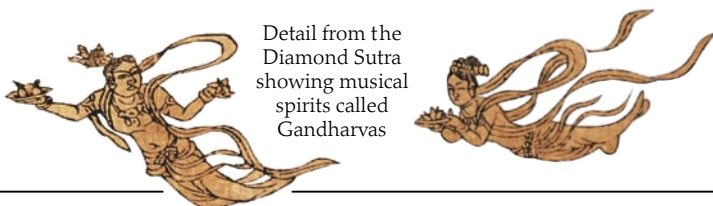
The bodhisattvas, with their haloes and crowns, listen to the Buddha's teaching.



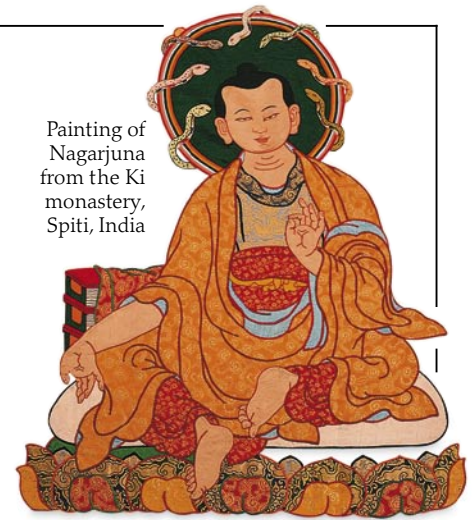
The Buddha wears a symbol of good fortune on his chest.

Many monks listen as the Buddha first speaks the words of the Diamond Sutra.

Wealthy followers of the Buddha have gathered to listen to the sermon.



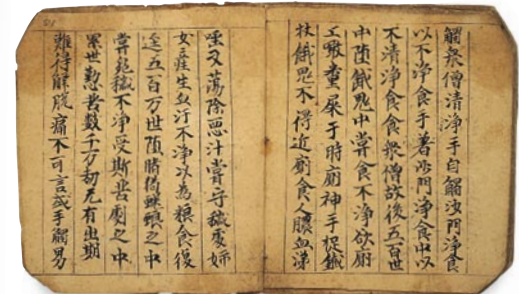
Detail from the Diamond Sutra showing musical spirits called Gandharvas



Painting of Nagarjuna from the Ki monastery, Spiti, India

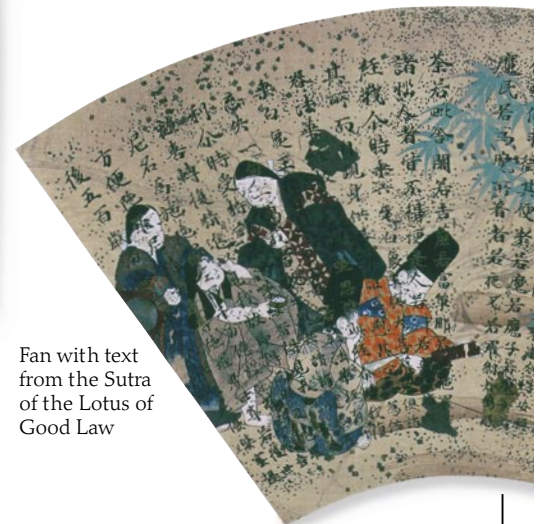
**LOST AND FOUND**

The scholar Nagarjuna was born in India, probably in the 2nd century. According to legend, he discovered and taught sutras that had previously been lost. He founded a school of Buddhism called Madhyama, which sought to find a middle way between extremes of thought, belief, and action. It had a huge influence on Mahayana Buddhism.



**GUARDIAN AND GUIDE**

The Lotus Sutra, shown here in Chinese script, describes the Buddha as a being dwelling in a paradise with thousands of faithful followers. He watches over people on the Earth with great compassion. The Lotus Sutra is an example of how skillfully the Buddha's teachings are adapted for people worldwide.



Fan with text from the Sutra of the Lotus of Good Law

**SIGNIFICANT SUTRAS**

The sutras are so important to Mahayana Buddhists that words from them are often written on everyday objects such as fans. Sutra is a Sanskrit word used in Mahayana Buddhism for texts that are written as if spoken by the Buddha himself. These texts include the Pali suttas as well as works written originally in Sanskrit but surviving only in translations.



# Other buddhas and bodhisattvas



**SIDDHATTA GOTAMA** is said to be just one of many buddhas. He was preceded by other people who had, like him, achieved supreme enlightenment and escaped the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Buddhists believe that there are also people who reach the point of enlightenment but who remain in the realm of ordinary existence. They die and are reborn in order to help others reach enlightenment. These people are known as bodhisattvas. Like the buddhas, they are widely revered, especially in the Mahayana tradition.

## AVOIDING ANGER

Akshobya, "the imperturbable" (calm and not excitable), avoided emotions such as anger so that he could achieve any task he set himself. He is said to dwell in a paradise in the east where there is no evil or suffering. He is one of the Jinas, or Cosmic Buddhas (p. 30).

*Akshobya's right hand touches the Earth, indicating his enlightenment.*



*Dipankara's right hand is making the gesture of dhamma, or teaching.*

## CREATOR OF LIGHT

The first of the earlier buddhas was called Dipankara, which means "creator of light." A Jataka story tells how the Buddha himself, in an earlier life, met Dipankara and was greatly inspired by his wisdom and compassion.



*Amoghasiddhi's right hand is in the position that represents fearlessness or blessing.*

## SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

Amoghasiddhi is one of the Cosmic Buddhas and is most commonly depicted along with the others. This buddha's name means "he who does not work in vain" or "he who is always successful."



*Vairocana's hands form the dhyana mudra, or meditational gesture.*

*Amoghasiddhi's left hand rests in his lap in a gesture of meditation.*

## UNIVERSAL BUDDHA

Another of the Cosmic Buddhas, Vairocana is seen differently in various branches of Buddhism. For some, he embodies the Historical Buddha; for others, he is a supreme being who embodies the entire universe.





**BUDDHA OF THE FUTURE**  
Maitreya, whose name means benevolence or friendship, is known as “the Buddha of the future.” It is said that, in thousands of years’ time, he will leave the Tushita Heaven, the place where future buddhas dwell. He will then come to the Earth to be the next human buddha.

*Maitreya stands, ready to step into the world.*

**FULL OF MERCY**

Renowned for his mercy, Avalokiteshvara is also known as “the protector of the world.” He is prepared to be reborn in any form to save living beings from suffering. Although he is widely revered as a male bodhisattva, in eastern Asia, Avalokiteshvara is seen as a female figure. She is known in China as “the goddess of mercy,” Kuan Yin (p. 35).



*Tara wears the jewels and crown typical of a bodhisattva.*

**MOTHER OF BUDDHAS**

Tara, meaning star, is also known as “she who saves.” She is greatly revered in Tibet and is referred to as “the mother of all buddhas.” Tibetans see her as the ancestor of their people. Tara can take many forms. The best known are the peaceful White Tara and the fierce Green Tara.

*Manjushri holds a sword to cut through ignorance.*



**THE GENTLE HOLY ONE**

The bodhisattva Manjushri, “the gentle holy one,” is renowned for his wisdom. In Tibet, great teachers are sometimes said to be incarnations of Manjushri. He is often seen as “the master of all bodhisattvas” and is said to live in a paradise on top of a five-peaked mountain.



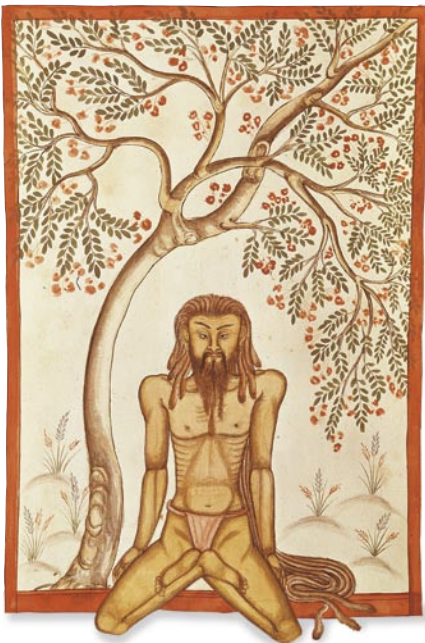
# Tibetan Buddhism



## FAMILY VALUES

These wooden figures from Tibet show a Buddhist monk and two members of his family. While the monk meditates, the members of his family turn prayer wheels. These figures show the importance of monks and lay people in Tibetan Buddhism—both can achieve buddhahood.

scholars and teachers. Tibetan Buddhism also has some unique elements, such as the mystical collection of writings and practices known as Tantric Buddhism. When communist China invaded Tibet in 1950, many Buddhist leaders had to leave the country. But this has made the faith stronger, because Tibetan Buddhism has spread all over the world.



## ANCIENT PRACTICES

This 17th-century French illustration shows an ascetic practicing yoga. In the Tibetan strand of Buddhism, meditation is particularly important. The Tibetan word for meditation is “gom.” It means to familiarize your mind with something of spiritual significance. Tibetan teachers pass on spiritual knowledge and the teachings of the Buddha through the practice of meditation.

*A Tibetan lama's robes are similar in style to those of other monks and nuns (pp. 48–49).*

A DISTINCTIVE type of Mahayana Buddhism developed in Tibet. As in other strands of the Mahayana, Tibetan Buddhists revere the bodhisattvas, in particular Avalokiteshvara and “the mother of all buddhas,” Tara. But, like Theravada Buddhists, they place great importance on the role of monks as

## PURE MINDFULNESS

This Tibetan lama (pp. 30–31) is chanting a mantra. A mantra is a word or series of words repeated over and over to help focus the mind during meditation. As the lama concentrates on the rise and fall of his voice and the meaning of the words he is chanting, all other thoughts fall away. He reaches a state of calm and “pure mindfulness.”

*The lama counts the beads as he chants.*





Prayer beads made of ivory, jade, and sandalwood

**RED HAT, YELLOW HAT**  
 These monks belong to a school of Tibetan monks called the Gelugpas, or "Yellow Hats." Monasticism is very important in Tibetan Buddhism, and there are four main schools of monks. The other three schools are the Nyingmapa, Kargyupa, and Sakya. These monks all wear red hats.



**BUDDHIST BEADS**

Many Tibetan Buddhists carry prayer beads to help them count the number of times they repeat a mantra or the Triple Refuge (pp. 54–55). Most strings are made up of 108 beads, which is the number of desires that must be overcome before reaching enlightenment. Some prayer beads are made from the bones of dead holy men or lamas.

*Milarepa holds a hand to his ear, listening to the songs he wrote down.*

18th-century Tibetan bronze statue of Milarepa

*Milarepa wore thin, cotton robes because the type of meditation he practiced generated heat.*



**SINGING SAINT**

Milarepa was a sinner in early life, but he began to regret his actions and became a Buddhist. Milarepa joined up with a Buddhist wise man called Marpa. The pair founded the Kargyupa school of Buddhism, and Milarepa became Tibet's greatest saint. He wrote down thousands of Buddhist songs and became a teacher of other holy men.

*"If you have deserved it ... a white light will guide you into one of the heavens ... you will have some happiness among the gods."*

**TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD**

The dawning of the lights of the six places of rebirth



*The weighted chain helps the wheel to turn.*

*Protective cover*

*The scroll contains a printed mantra.*

Complete prayer wheel (above left) and prayer wheel opened out to show how it works

*The metal spindle holds the scroll.*

*The handle is usually grasped in the right hand to spin the wheel.*

**AROUND AND AROUND**

Tibetan prayer wheels contain a roll of paper on which the sacred mantra "Om mani padme hum" ("Hail to the jewel in the lotus") is written many times. When the wheel turns, the mantra spins, in effect being repeated continuously. This spreads blessings and well-being and calls up Avalokiteshvara.





## Tibetan lamas

The most senior monks (pp. 48–51) in Tibetan Buddhism are known as lamas. They are usually people who have achieved mastery of Tibetan-style meditation and the related rituals. Most exalted of all lamas are those known as tulkus. These lamas are believed to be reincarnations of saints or bodhisattvas. They are reborn to teach and to help people to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. Some of the most inspiring of all Buddhist teachers have been lamas and tulkus.

### ADORED ASHES

These medallions are made from the ashes of lamas who have been cremated after death. The ashes are mixed with clay, formed into discs, and then stamped with an image of the lama. Lamas are widely revered because they devote their lives to spiritual matters.



Clay medallions preserving the ashes of venerated Tibetan lamas

*"I now transmit to you the profound teachings which I have myself received from my Teacher and, through him, from the long line of initiated gurus."*

TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD  
Preamble



His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje

### THE CHOSEN ONES

Toward the end of his life on the Earth, a lama or tulku usually gives clues to help his followers find the site of his next rebirth. After his death, monks follow these hints until they find a child who fits the description. The chosen child, like this young lama, is taken to a monastery to begin a life of study and spirituality.

Vairocana transforms delusion into wisdom.

Ratnasambhava transforms pride and greed into wisdom.

Vajrasattva transforms hate into wisdom.

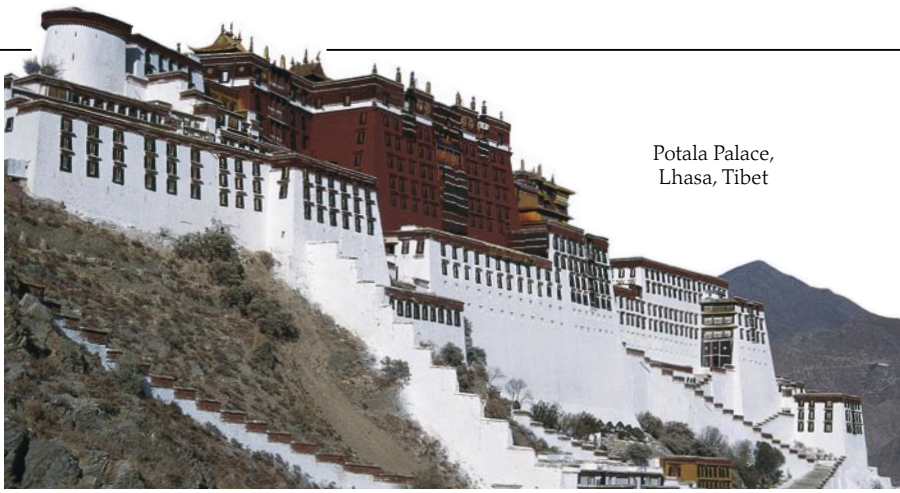
Amitabha transforms lust into wisdom.

### THE BUDDHAS OF WISDOM

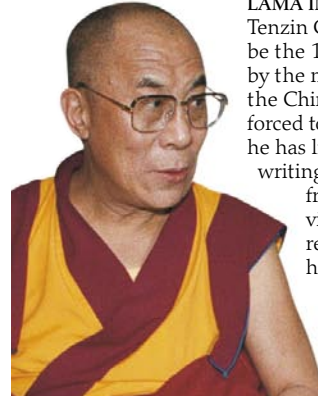
Ritual headdresses worn by lamas are usually decorated with depictions of the Cosmic Buddhas of Mahayana Buddhism. They are also known as "the buddhas of wisdom." These figures are very important because they are said to transform negative emotions into wisdom. This is a quality which, along with compassion, is one of the two most important aspects of enlightenment.

Lama's ornate ritual headdress





Potala Palace,  
Lhasa, Tibet



**LAMA IN EXILE**

Tenzin Gyatso was declared to be the 14th Dalai Lama in 1937 by the monks of Lhasa. After the Chinese takeover, he was forced to leave Tibet. Since then he has lived in exile, teaching, writing, and campaigning for freedom without violence. He is widely revered, especially in his homeland of Tibet.

**POTALA PALACE**

This huge palace was built for the Dalai Lama at Lhasa in southern Tibet. The Dalai Lama is the head of the school of Tibetan monks called the Geluggas. During the 1600s, the Geluggas became the political, as well as the spiritual, leaders of Tibet. In 1950, Communist China invaded Tibet and brought this unique period of rule to an end.

**MUSIC FOR MEDITATION**

This lama is holding a bell and a kind of small drum called a damaru. Tibetan Buddhists use these instruments during rituals. The sounds they produce call on "the bodhisattvas of wisdom," provide musical offerings, and are a focus for meditation.

Tibetan lama  
meditating with  
a bell and drum



*The drum is carved  
from wood and has  
a brocade tassel.*

*Amoghasiddhi  
transforms envy  
into wisdom.*



*The bell's handle  
is shaped like a  
vajra (p. 43).*

Ngawang Losang  
Gyatso from Samye  
monastery, Tibet



**THE GREAT FIFTH**

Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617-82), the fifth Dalai Lama, was the first lama to rule Tibet. He built the Potala Palace and formed an alliance with the Manchus, the dynasty who ruled neighboring China. He was a powerful but compassionate ruler and is known to Tibetans as the Great Fifth.

*The bell's  
beautiful  
sound is said  
to awaken the  
listener from  
ignorance.*



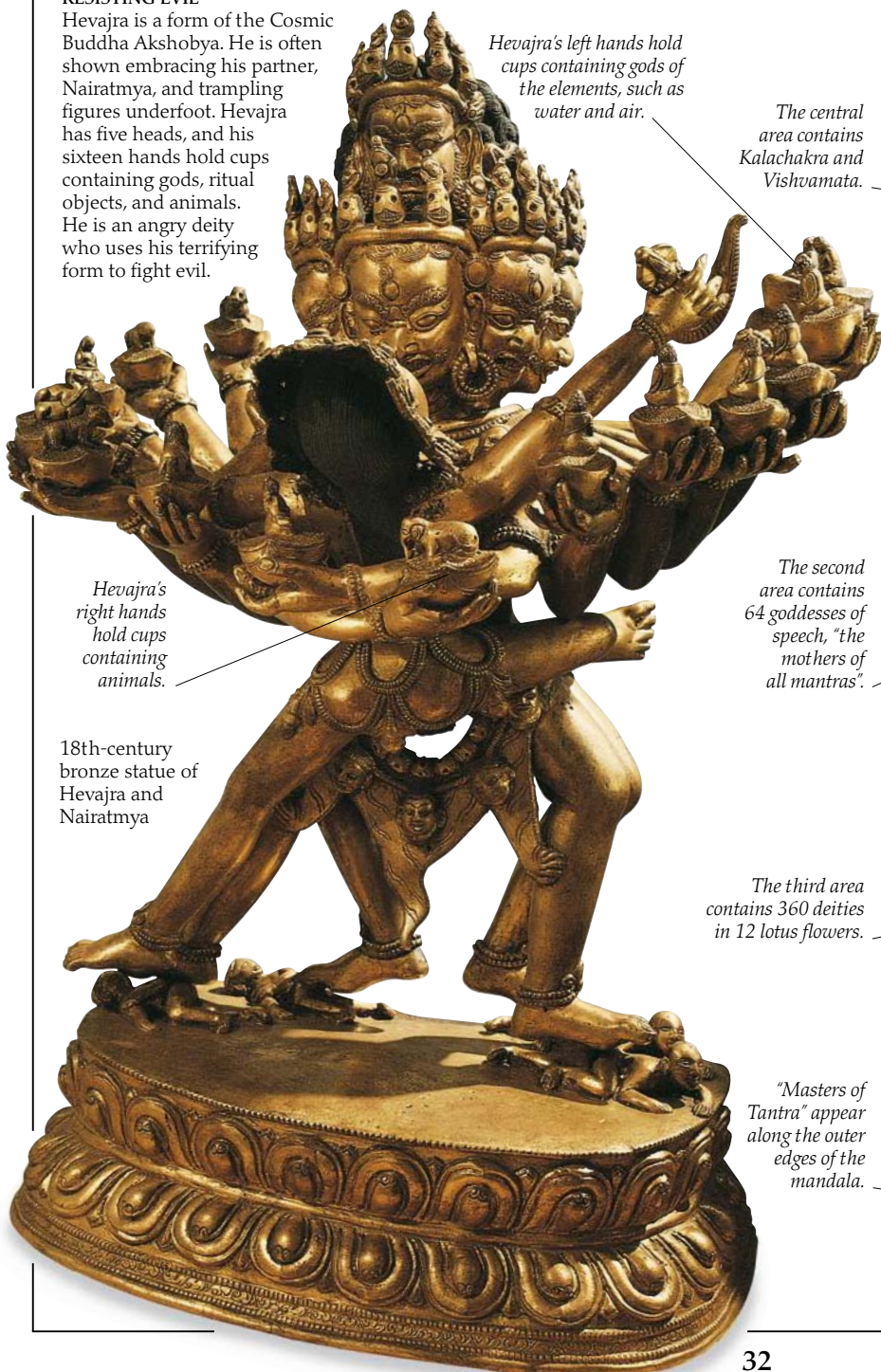


# Tantric Buddhism

This form of Buddhism is based on Tibetan texts called the tantras. It teaches that all thoughts and emotions, even negative ones, are part of the essential buddha-nature—the potential of all beings to reach enlightenment. Under the guidance of a guru, or spiritual teacher, Tantric Buddhists learn to identify with one of the Cosmic Buddhas, hoping to come to a deep understanding of buddha-nature. By using meditation and special rituals Tantric Buddhists aim to reach nibbana much more quickly than other Mahayana Buddhists, who follow the less direct path of the bodhisattvas.

## RESISTING EVIL

Hevajra is a form of the Cosmic Buddha Akshobya. He is often shown embracing his partner, Nairatmya, and trampling figures underfoot. Hevajra has five heads, and his sixteen hands hold cups containing gods, ritual objects, and animals. He is an angry deity who uses his terrifying form to fight evil.

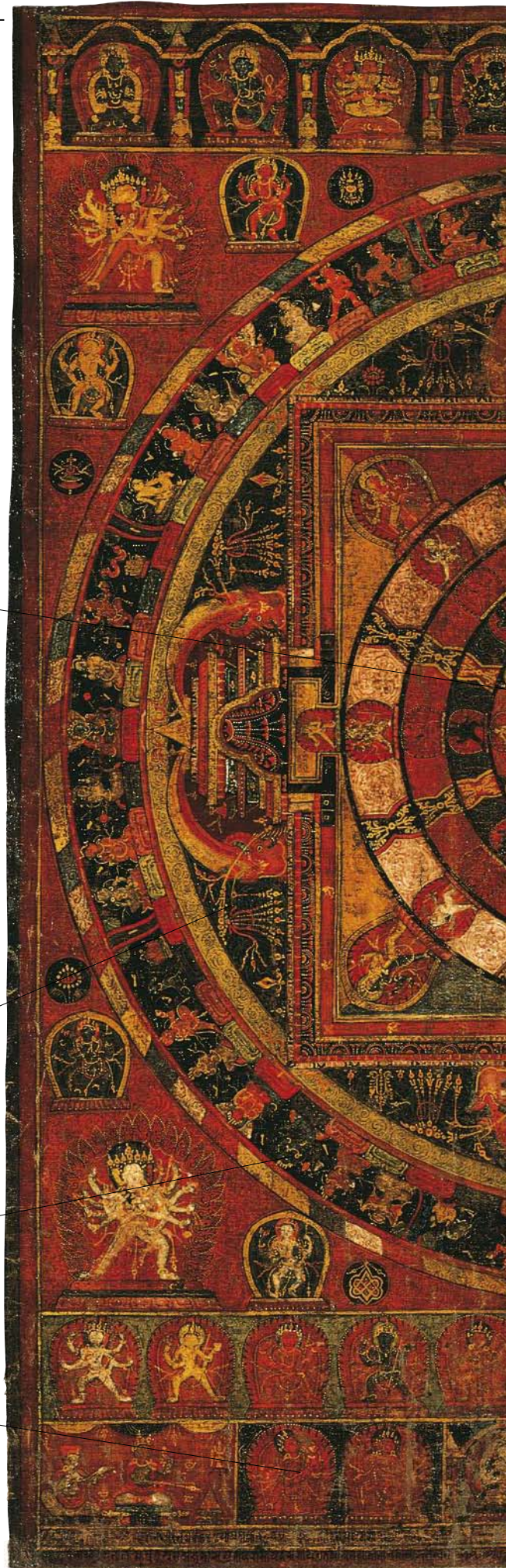


Hevajra's left hands hold cups containing gods of the elements, such as water and air.

Hevajra's right hands hold cups containing animals.

18th-century bronze statue of Hevajra and Nairatmya

**PERFECT WORLD**  
Tantric Buddhists use complex representations of the Buddhist Cosmos, called mandalas, to help them meditate and reach harmony with buddha-nature. The Buddha Kalachakra sits in the center of this 16th-century mandala with his partner, Vishvamata. They are surrounded by a series of enclosures containing gods and goddesses, making up a perfect world. Tantric Buddhists look at a mandala until they become absorbed in its ideal world and move toward harmony with Kalachakra.



The central area contains Kalachakra and Vishvamata.

The second area contains 64 goddesses of speech, "the mothers of all mantras".

The third area contains 360 deities in 12 lotus flowers.

"Masters of Tantra" appear along the outer edges of the mandala.





*He holds a magical staff in his right hand.*

Tibetan gilt bronze statue of Padmasambhava

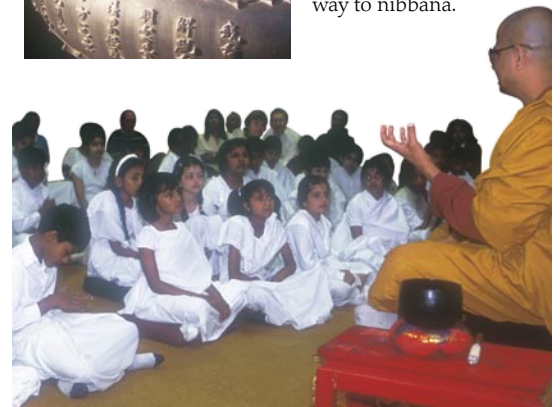
*He holds a symbolic weapon in his left hand.*

#### FLOWER CHILD

According to legend, the Indian monk Padmasambhava was born from a lotus blossom and was a form of the Buddha Amitabha. He helped to convert the Tibetans to Buddhism and taught them Tantric rituals. It is said that he used supernatural powers to repel demons who were preventing the spread of Buddhism in Tibet.



**CLEARING THE WAY**  
Tantric Buddhists like these in Nara, Japan, put items such as grains into a fire at their temple. The objects placed in the fire stand for ignorance and for the emotions and thoughts that stand in the way of their enlightenment. The fire destroys the symbolic objects, helping clear the way to nibbana.



#### TANTRIC TEACHER

Tantric masters guide their followers in meditation, choosing the right methods and practices for each individual. They teach skills such as breath control, the memorizing of mantras, the use of ritual hand gestures called mudras, and the use of mandalas for meditation. All this brings their pupils closer to buddha-nature.



# Chinese and Korean Buddhism

**B**UDDHISM CAME TO China from Central Asia and spread gradually eastward across the country until it reached Korea. At first, there were tensions between Buddhism and established Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism, but the different belief systems learned to live together. They were even combined into a popular religion that saw the bodhisattvas as gods and goddesses who could help people in their everyday lives. China also produced its own schools of Buddhism, some based on intense study, and others based on a simpler path.



*Confucius, founder of Confucianism, taught people to respect others.*

*The infant Buddha*

Hsüan Tsang mural, Mogao cave temple, Dunhuang, China

*Lao Tsu, founder of Taoism, taught people to live a simple, self-sufficient life.*

### THREE FAITHS

This 18th-century Chinese painting is an artist's impression of what might have happened if the Buddha had gone to China. Two of the most famous Chinese thinkers, Lao Tsu and Confucius, are shown caring for the infant Buddha. The philosophers had different belief systems, but they respected others, and the three faiths usually got along well in China.



### TRAVELING TEACHER

Hsüan Tsang was born in Honan in China. He became a Buddhist monk in the year 620 and made a lengthy pilgrimage across China to India. The journey lasted 16 years and covered more than 40,000 miles (64,000 km). Hsüan Tsang's travels took him through Afghanistan and all around India, where he learned Sanskrit. He translated many scriptures and brought them back to China.

### SUTRA STORAGE

This 13th-century lacquered Korean box was made to hold sutras. By the 7th century, Buddhism was flourishing in China, and some emperors were eager to spread the Buddha's teachings around their vast empire. Monks copied the sutras and distributed them across China and into neighboring Korea. These precious manuscripts were often kept in beautiful boxes.







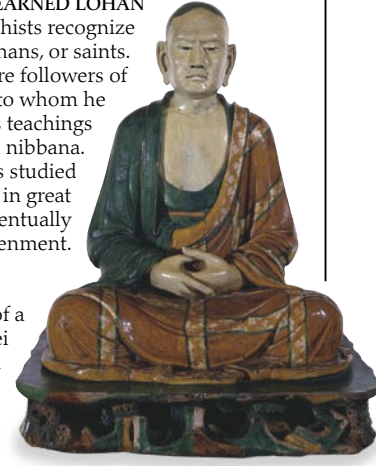
Stucco head of Bodhisattva Kuan Yin dating from the 8th or 9th century

**THE COMFORTER**

Kuan Yin, the Chinese form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, inspires love all over China. She is the compassionate “Goddess of Mercy,” who listens to the cries of those in distress. Many people keep an image of her in their homes and look upon her as a comforter of those who are sick, lost, or frightened.

**LEARNED LOHAN**

Chinese Buddhists recognize 18 immortal lohans, or saints. The lohans were followers of the Buddha to whom he entrusted his teachings before his final nibbana. All 18 lohans studied Buddhist law in great depth and eventually achieved enlightenment.



Statue of a lohan from Hebei Province, China

*Kuan Yin is usually depicted wearing a crown—a symbol of royalty.*



**RITUAL CLEANSING**

These 12th-century water jars come from Korea, and similar ones are often seen in Korean paintings of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Monks often sprinkle water during ceremonies to cleanse ritually the statues and people present in the temple. Water containers like this are kept near the altar, or shrine. They are used with a sprinkler made from a willow branch.



# Japanese Buddhism

FROM ABOUT the 7th century, travelers began to bring Buddhist ideas to Japan from China and Korea. By this time, there were many different schools of Buddhism in China, all of which were part of the Mahayana strand of the faith. Most Japanese schools of Buddhism, such as Tendai, Shingon, and Jodo Buddhism, are based on forms that began in China. However, one new school, Nichiren Shu, was founded in Japan by a monk who began as a follower of the Tendai school.

## PURE LAND PARADISE

Amida Buddha is extremely important in the Jodo, or Pure Land, school. Jodo Buddhists believe that Amida, "the Buddha of infinite light," dwells in a Pure Land, or paradise, in the west. Amida has displayed supreme goodness over a vast number of years, and it is said that all who turn to him will be reborn in the Pure Land.



## TAKING IT EASY

Many different sects of Mahayana Buddhism are popular in Japan, so temples and statues of the Buddha are common and varied. This statue shows the Buddha in the royal ease posture. It is also known as the relaxation posture. It suggests harmony and indicates the Buddha's state of enlightenment.

Wooden head of Amida Buddha





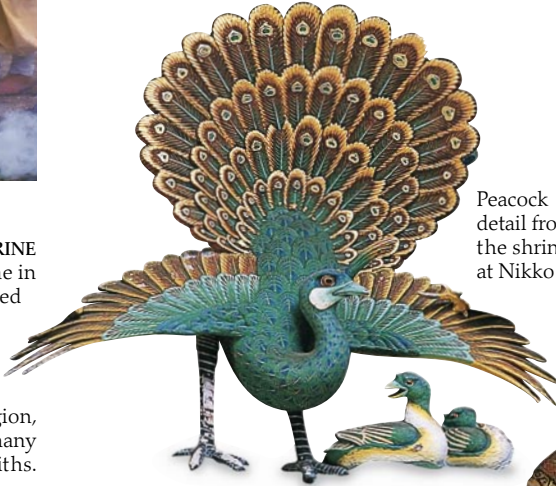


**PURIFYING FIRE**

Rituals practiced by members of the Tendai school include fire ceremonies. Tendai monks pray for 1,000 days—taking only a little sleep and food each day—and tend fires as acts of purification. Some walk across hot ashes to demonstrate that their spiritual purification protects them from injury.

Firewalking ceremony in Hiroshima, Japan

**SHARED SHRINE**  
There is a beautiful Tendai shrine in Nikko in central Japan, decorated with painted animals and gods. It has been a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of years. The shrine at Nikko is sacred to Buddhists and to followers of Japan's native religion, Shinto. It is popular because many Japanese people follow both faiths.



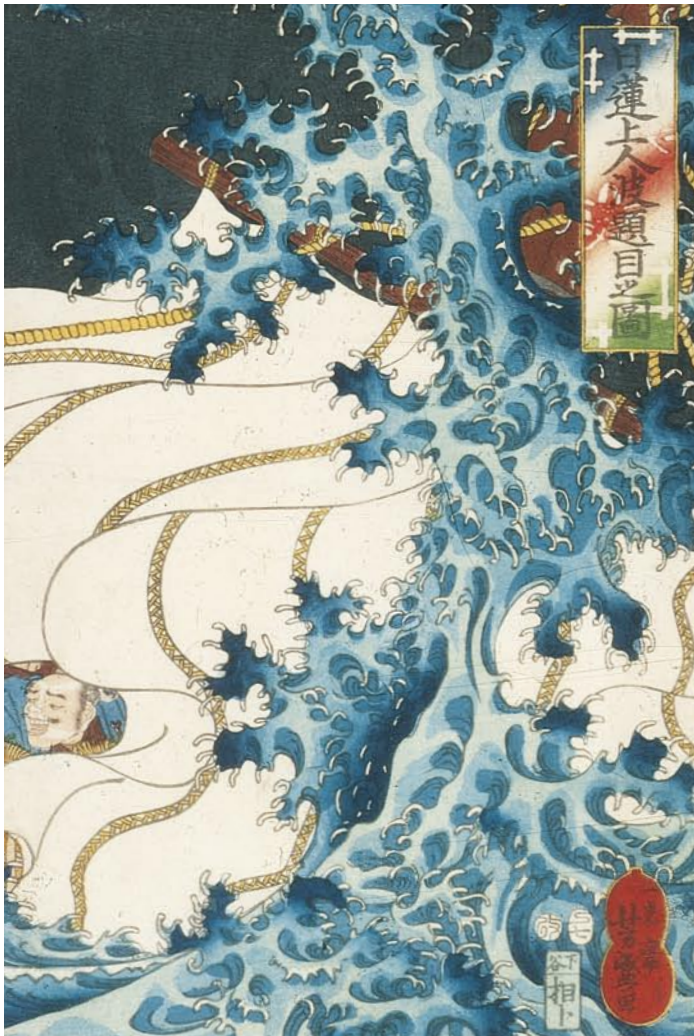
Peacock detail from the shrine at Nikko

**PROTECTIVE POWERS**

In Japan, the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is called Kannon and is revered by the Tendai, Shingon, Jodo, and other Japanese schools of Buddhism. Kannon can take male or female form. The bodhisattva is often portrayed standing in water, on a fish, or with other sea creatures. This serves as a reminder that Kannon is said to protect sailors and fishermen.

Gilded statue of Kannon

*Kannon holds a golden lotus flower in her left hand.*



**TAKING REFUGE**

The Japanese monk Nichiren, seen in this trio of pictures using his faith to calm a storm at sea, was devoted to the Lotus Sutra. He developed a school of Buddhism based on study of the sutra, acceptance of its teachings, and the reciting of the phrase, "I take refuge in the wondrous Sutra of the Lotus."



# Zen Buddhism

A FORM OF Buddhism called Ch'an began in China in the 6th century. The school was brought to Japan by a traveling monk called Eisai. The Chinese term Ch'an (which means meditation) became Zen in Japanese. The main feature of Zen is the use of meditation in order to discover the essential buddha-nature that is present in everything and everyone. Zen also has a distinctive style of teaching, often using riddles and stories to help people understand buddha-nature more clearly.

## MARATHON MEDITATION

The Indian monk Bodhidharma (right) is said to be the founder of Ch'an Buddhism. He traveled to China to spread the Buddha's teachings and show people how to meditate. According to legend, Bodhidharma meditated in the lotus position for nine years and lost the use of his legs.



## SURROUNDED BY BEAUTY

Zen monks, like the one in this Japanese painting on silk, are aware of the beauty and buddha-nature in everything around them. They spend long periods of time meditating in order to encourage natural clarity of mind and move closer to this ever-present buddha-nature.





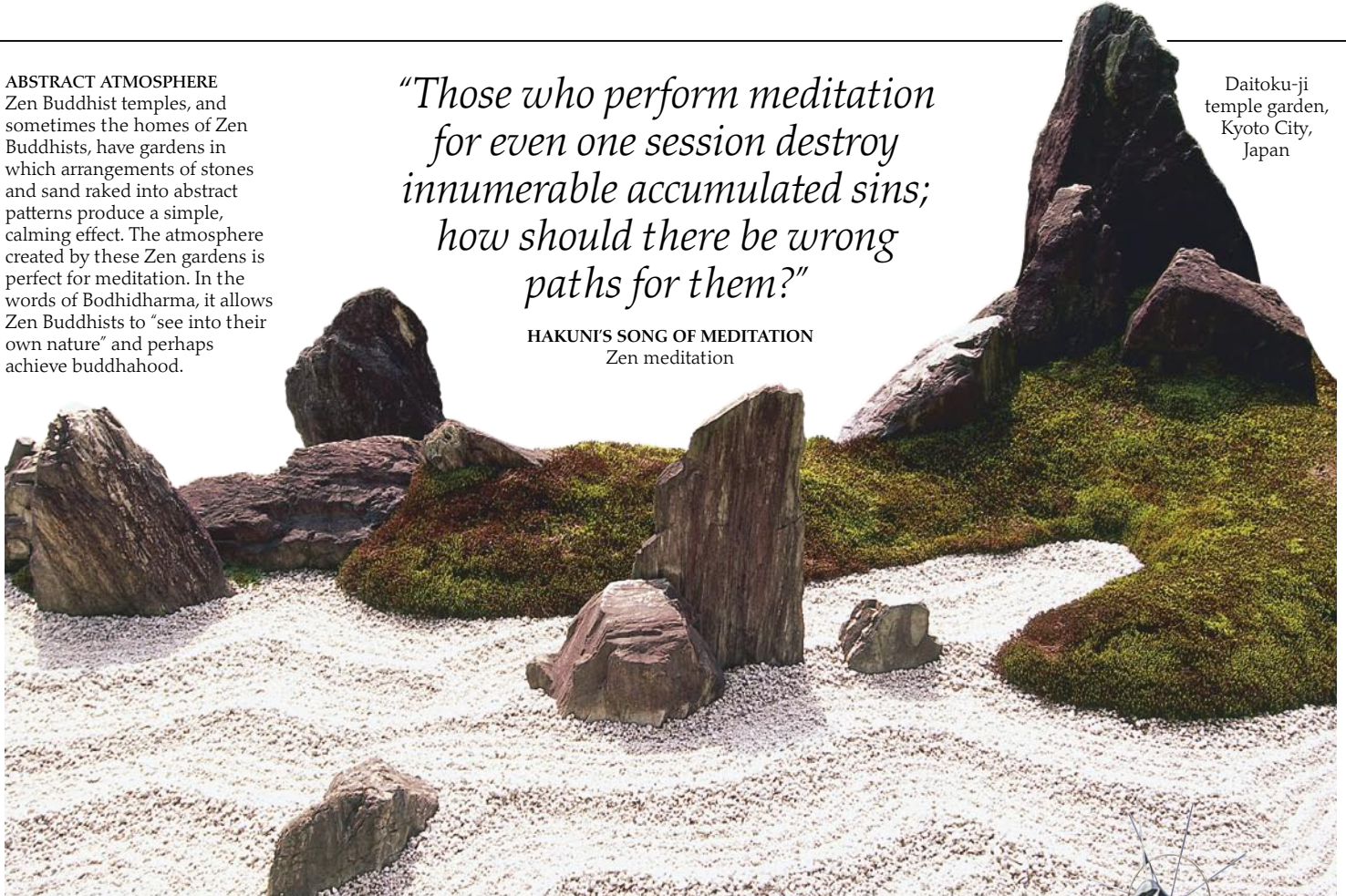
**ABSTRACT ATMOSPHERE**

Zen Buddhist temples, and sometimes the homes of Zen Buddhists, have gardens in which arrangements of stones and sand raked into abstract patterns produce a simple, calming effect. The atmosphere created by these Zen gardens is perfect for meditation. In the words of Bodhidharma, it allows Zen Buddhists to “see into their own nature” and perhaps achieve buddhahood.

*“Those who perform meditation for even one session destroy innumerable accumulated sins; how should there be wrong paths for them?”*

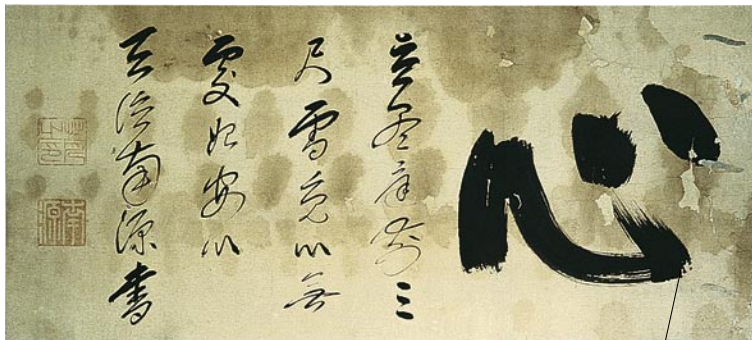
**HAKUNI'S SONG OF MEDITATION**  
Zen meditation

Daitoku-ji temple garden, Kyoto City, Japan



**THE ART OF WRITING**

For the Chinese, calligraphy, or beautiful writing, is an art form that people practice for many years. Zen scholars in both China and Japan take calligraphy extremely seriously. They concentrate on the beauty of each character as they write it, in the hope that it will be true to the nature of the object or action it portrays.



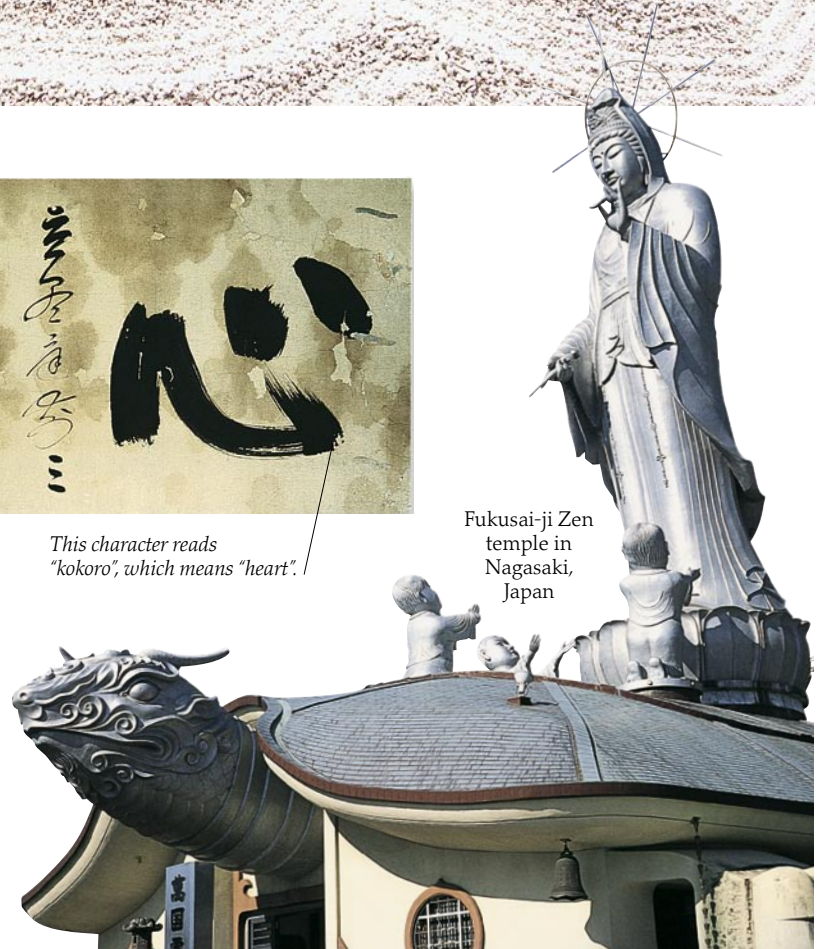
This character reads “kokoro”, which means “heart”.

Fukusai-ji Zen temple in Nagasaki, Japan



**INTERIOR DESIGN**

The interior of this temple in Kyoto, Japan, is in typical Zen style. It is simple and spacious, and decorated with paintings showing natural scenes. There are cushions for the monks to sit on when listening to teachings, and musical instruments such as large gongs for use during ceremonies.



**TURTLE-TOPPED**

One popular form of Kannon shows the bodhisattva standing on the back of a turtle. At this Zen temple, built in 1979, the whole roof has been built in the form of the turtle’s back, with its head outstretched above the door. The statue of Kannon towers above. This is a modern version of traditional Zen buildings, whose large, curving roofs are often the dominant feature.



# Demons and gods



## SAND GODS

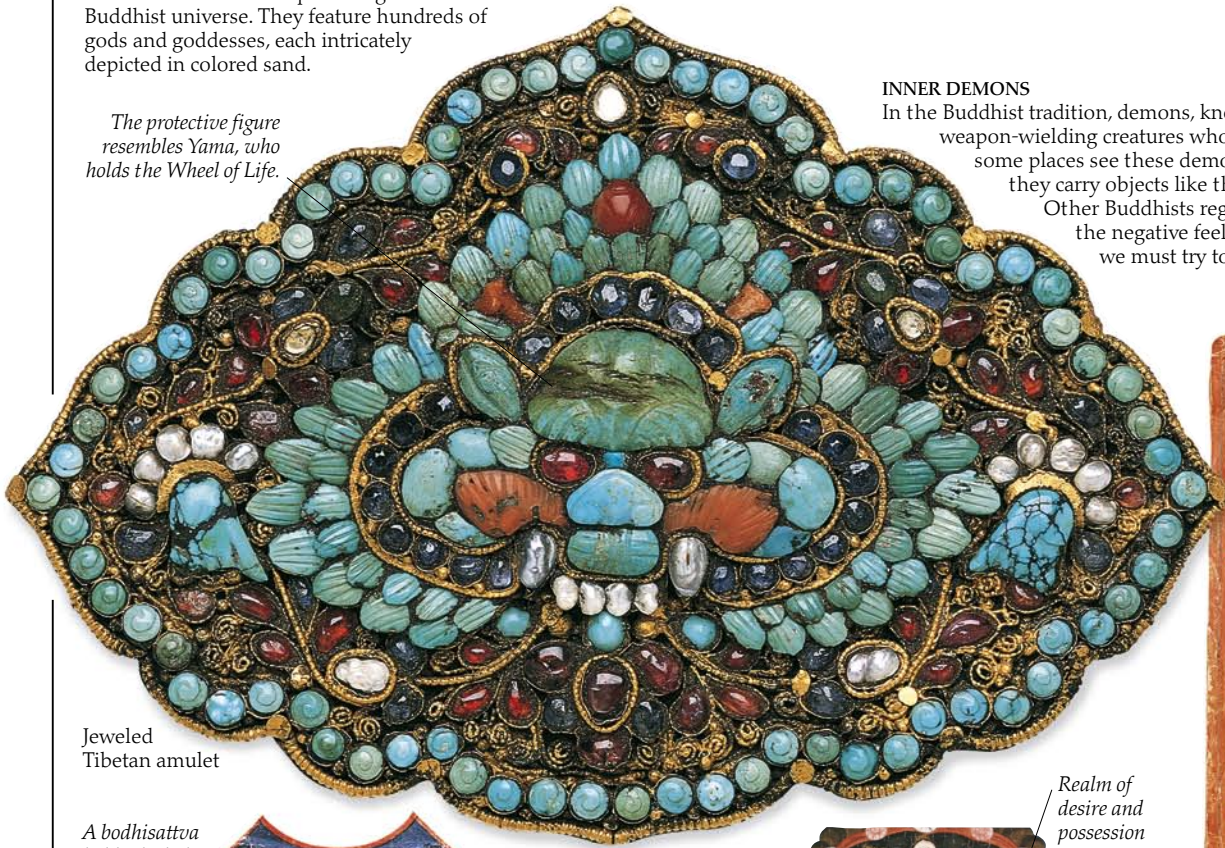
These Tibetan monks are making a mandala from sand of different colors. Each sand mandala is made for a specific ritual and is destroyed afterward. Like other mandalas, sand mandalas are complex images of the Buddhist universe. They feature hundreds of gods and goddesses, each intricately depicted in colored sand.

*The protective figure resembles Yama, who holds the Wheel of Life.*

**BUDDHISM BEGAN IN** India among people who believed in many different demons and gods. The Buddha taught that these were beings caught up in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, just like humans. These supernatural beings range from gods living in Heaven to demons in the realm of Hell at the very bottom of the Wheel of Life. Some Buddhists believe that all these beings have the power to influence the world. These Buddhists worship the gods in the hope that they will help them in their everyday lives.

## INNER DEMONS

In the Buddhist tradition, demons, known as asuras, are fearsome, weapon-wielding creatures who fight the gods. Buddhists in some places see these demons as forces to be feared, and they carry objects like this amulet to protect themselves. Other Buddhists regard the demons as portrayals of the negative feelings we all have, and which we must try to avoid.



Jeweled Tibetan amulet

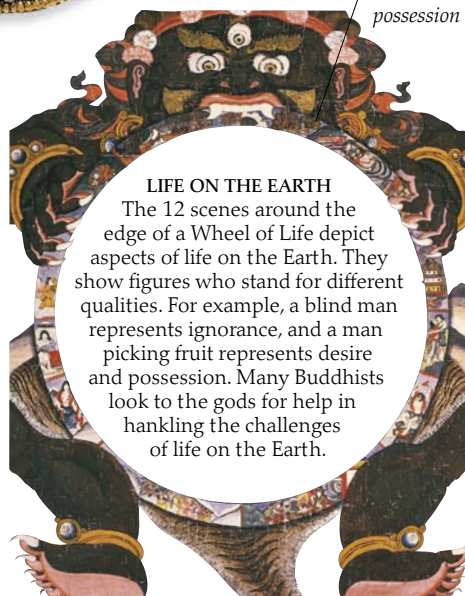
*A bodhisattva holds the light of hope.*



## HOPE IN HELL

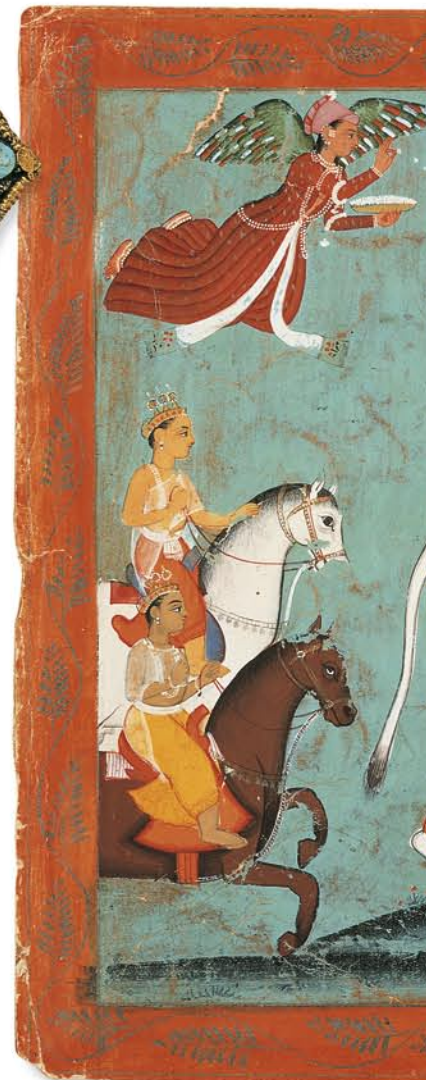
This section from a Wheel of Life shows Hell—the lowest of the six realms of rebirth. It is a place of torment where beings are tortured in both icy cold and scorching heat. Among the fear and anger in this realm of demons stands a bodhisattva. He preaches a message of hope, which is symbolized by the light of the fire he brings with him.

*Realm of desire and possession*



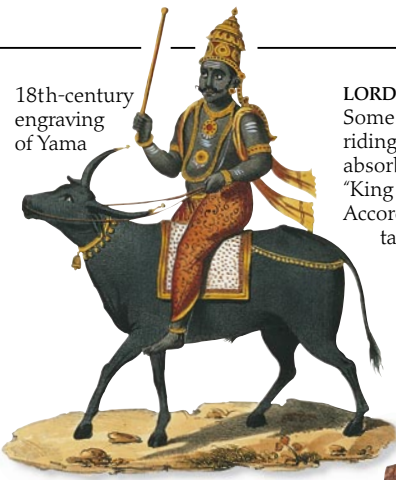
## LIFE ON THE EARTH

The 12 scenes around the edge of a Wheel of Life depict aspects of life on the Earth. They show figures who stand for different qualities. For example, a blind man represents ignorance, and a man picking fruit represents desire and possession. Many Buddhists look to the gods for help in handling the challenges of life on the Earth.





18th-century engraving of Yama



**LORD OF DEATH**

Some images of the ancient Indian god Yama show him riding a bull. In others, he has a bull's head. Yama was absorbed into Buddhist culture as "Lord of Death," "King of Hell," and "protector of the Buddhist law." According to some traditions, he judges the dead and takes them to the correct realm to be reborn.

**HAPPY IN HEAVEN**

This section from a Wheel of Life shows the realm of the gods, or Heaven, where everyone is happy. Trees and flowers flourish, and there are fine palaces and stupas (pp. 44–45). A bodhisattva holding a lute stands at the center. He reminds the gods that when their good kamma runs out they will have to be reborn in a lower realm.



**NATURE SPIRITS**

This 100-year-old Burmese folding book shows the variety of different forms taken by the demonic beings known as nats. These supernatural beings are nature spirits with a long history in Burma. Like the gods and goddesses of India, nats have been absorbed into local Buddhist belief.



Healing mantras in Burmese script surround the nats.

Indra travels on the back of a white elephant—a form of transportation fit for a king.

11th-century Indian depiction of Indra, "King of the Gods"

**KING OF THE GODS**  
In Hinduism, Indra is "King of the Gods." He holds a similar position among the gods and goddesses of the Buddhist realm of Heaven. Indra is also known as Shakra, "the mighty one," and in some of the sutras he is referred to as Vajrapani. He is a faithful guardian of the Buddha.







**MAJESTIC ELEPHANT**

The elephant is just one of the animals that often appears in Buddhist art. It is a quiet, strong creature that sums up the calm majesty aspired to by Buddhists. A rare white elephant even appears in the story of the Buddha's conception. Other animals appear at the center of the Wheel of Life and as guardians of temples.

# Buddhist symbols

**IN THE EARLY DAYS** of the Buddhist faith, symbols were often used in place of more complex images. An empty throne, for example, could be used to stand for the Buddha's presence, and a simplified Bodhi Tree could represent the moment of his enlightenment. Symbols have continued to appear in art, on objects, and in buildings. Some symbols are drawn from the natural world. Others may be ritual objects, items associated with the Buddha's life, or symbols that have been adapted from other faiths and traditions.



**FERTILE FISH**

Fish have thousands of offspring, so in Buddhism these creatures are symbols of fertility. They are usually golden and are often portrayed in pairs, placed head to head. The fish, umbrella, treasure vase, lotus, conch shell, knot, banner, and wheel are the Eight Auspicious (lucky) Symbols of Buddhism.

**VOICE OF THE BUDDHA**  
In India, the conch shell is traditionally blown like a horn to call people to meetings or gatherings. Its low sound carries for long distances. It symbolizes the voice of the Buddha and the way in which his teachings are spread throughout the world.

Chinese enameled vase in the shape of two fish



Ceremonial conch with

*The knot symbolizes the infinite*

**PRECIOUS PRINTS**

Before his death, the Buddha stood on a rock in Kushinagara in Nepal facing toward the south. When he moved, he is said to have left his footprints in the stone. Ever since, images of these prints have been used as symbols of his presence on the Earth. They appear at many temple sites, where they are treated with special reverence. Pictures and carvings of the footprints are often covered with



*Long, straight toes of even length are said to be one of the 32 marks of a great man.*

*The swastika is an ancient*

Stone footprints from the Amaravati stupa in southern India



Vajra-shaped



Tibetan

**SPIRITUAL WEAPON**

Translated as either "diamond" or "thunderbolt," the vajra is a symbolic weapon. It is said to be able to cut through any substance. It is used, especially in Tibet, as a symbol of the spiritual power that can cut through ignorance. Some Buddhists hold the vajra in one hand and a bell in the

Modern Buddhist



The umbrella is made of golden paper decorated

**PROTECTION AND POWER**

In the Buddha's time, members of royalty were protected from the rain and sun by umbrellas held by servants. The umbrella became a symbol of protection and the Buddha's spiritual power. Stupas are often topped with umbrella-



**REACH FOR THE SKY**

The lotus is a symbol of spiritual growth. It grows in muddy water, but its stems and flowers reach upward to the Sun, as if toward nibbana. The Buddha is often depicted on a throne made of lotus petals, and people bring lotus flowers as offerings to Buddhist

**GUARDIAN LION**

As Buddhism spread around the world, it adopted traditional symbols from the places where it took root. The use of lion statues to guard temples was originally a Chinese tradition. Many Buddhist

Lion guardian at a temple entrance,



The footprints are framed by a border of intertwined

The Wheel of Authority, which can have up to 1,000 spokes, represents the Buddha as "King of

This three-pointed symbol represents



# Stupas and pagodas



**LITTLE AND LARGE**  
Model stupas like this are used for personal devotion at home. When visiting a full-size stupa, Buddhists walk around it as an act of respect to the relic kept there.

**AFTER THE BUDDHA** died, his body was cremated. His ashes were divided and buried in a number of different places in India. A large, dome-shaped mound called a stupa was built over the relics, or remains, at each burial place. Later, many other stupas were built all over the Buddhist world. Some were constructed over the remains of Buddhist saints, and others were built over copies of the scriptures. Many existing stupas were

clad with decorative carved stone and given elaborate gateways. They soon became popular places of pilgrimage (p. 54). In China, Japan, and parts of Southeast Asia, tall structures called pagodas developed from the stupa form.

## IN RUINS

This structure was built in the 5th century in Sarnath near Benares. It marks the site where the Buddha gave his first sermon. The stupa is now in ruins. The large, dome-shaped covering on the top has not survived, but the carved lower walls are still intact. The first stupa at this important site was built by the great Indian emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE.

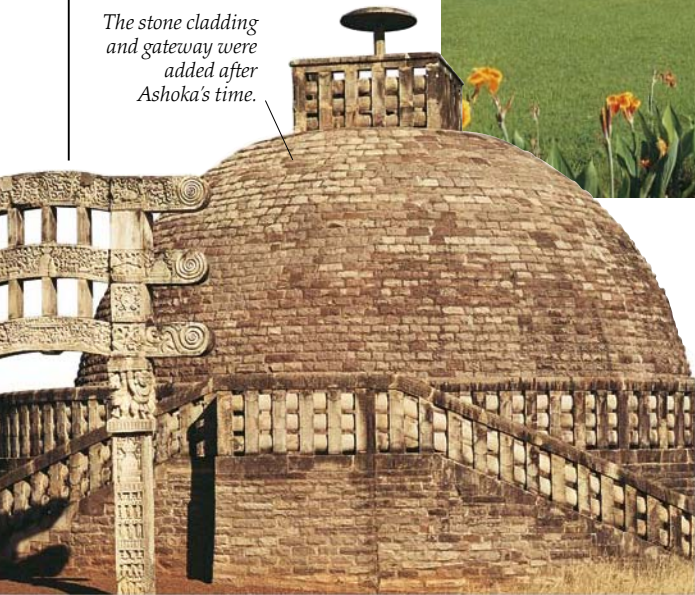


*A row of pillars, called ayaka, top the gateway through which pilgrims would enter the stupa.*

*The gateway is guarded by lions.*

*A rich young man has come to the stupa to make an offering.*

*The stone cladding and gateway were added after Ashoka's time.*



## CARVED IN STONE

This carved stone slab once decorated a stupa at Nagarjunakonda in southern India. It shows the great, curving shape of a stupa decorated with symbols and scenes from the Buddhist tales. In front of the gateway stands a young man, perhaps a prince, with several followers. The young man holds up his hand to make an offering to the Buddha, gaining merit as he does so.



## MAKING AMENDS

This stupa, on the site of an early monastery in Sanchi in India, was built by the emperor Ashoka. He became a Buddhist after leading his army into a battle in which thousands were killed. Ashoka regretted the violence and devoted himself to spreading Buddhism and erecting thousands of stupas and shrines.





19th-century illustration of Borobudur



**SUPER STUPA**

Borobudur is an enormous stupa in Java. The lower levels are richly decorated with relief carvings showing scenes from the Buddha's life. The upper levels are plainer, and contain a series of smaller stupas. Each of the small stupas on the upper levels contains a statue of the Buddha.

*The umbrella-shaped finial is a symbol of kingship that stands for the Buddha's spiritual rule.*

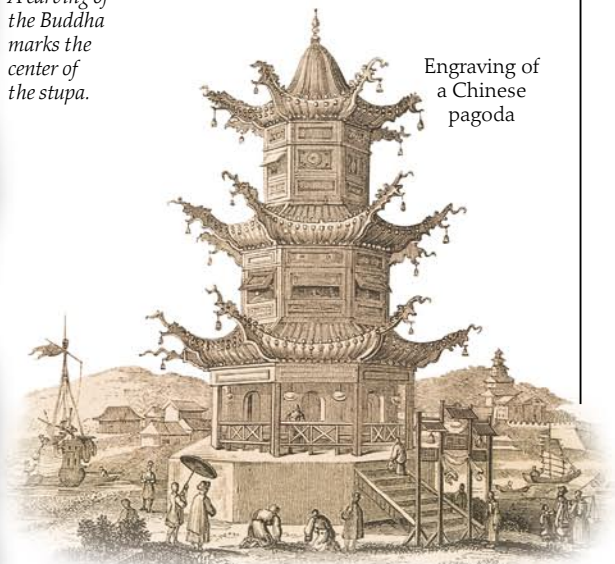
*Spirits offer garlands of flowers to the Buddha.*

*A carving of the Buddha marks the center of the stupa.*

*"There, with the appropriate ceremonies, they erected in their capital cities stupas for the relics of the Seer."*

**BUDDHACARITA**  
The relics

Engraving of a Chinese pagoda



**TALL AND BEAUTIFUL**

In China, Japan, and Korea, Buddhist relics are housed in pagodas. Chinese and Korean pagodas are usually built of stone or brick. Those in Japan are wooden. A long pole inside connects the relics buried at the base to the top of the structure. Pagodas are stunning buildings. They are often very tall and have ornate roofs with delicate, upturned corners.



# Temples and complexes



## THE WALLS HAVE EYES

Above one of the entrances to the Baiju temple in Gyantse in Tibet, there is a mural of the Buddha's eyes, with the urna between them. The half-open eyes seem to watch over those who enter the temple. At the same time, they bring to mind a state of deep meditation.

Mahabodhi temple, Bodh Gaya, India

*The main tower is covered with detailed carvings.*

ALL BUDDHIST TEMPLES contain statues of the Buddha. They are places in which Buddhists can gather and make offerings, and they also provide a focus for devotion and pilgrimage. Buddhist temples vary greatly in shape and size. Some are quite small, comprising just an entrance area and a simple inner shrine. Others are huge complexes, which may consist of many small stupas containing relics. Some temples are plain and unadorned. Others, such as the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya and the temples on the Silk Road in Central Asia, are decorated with stunning carvings and paintings.

## TEMPLE BY THE TREE

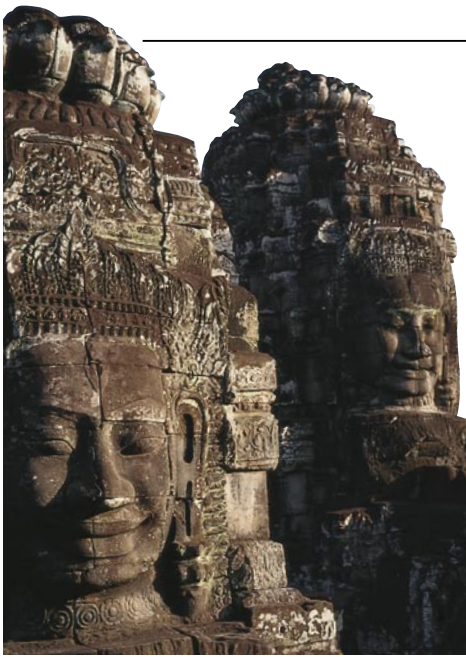
The Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya is one of the most important destinations of Buddhist pilgrimage. It marks the site where the Buddha became enlightened. Building work started in the 6th century next to a tree that is believed to be a descendant of the one under which the Buddha meditated. The large temple complex fell into disrepair between the 13th and 19th centuries, but was eventually restored and extended by monks and pilgrims.

*The small stupas match the shape of the main tower.*

*Some of the miniature stupas contain the ashes of pilgrims who died in Bodh Gaya.*







**FACE TOWERS**

The Bayon in Angkor in Cambodia is a beautiful temple built by the Khmer king Jayavarman VII (1181–1219). The enormous faces carved in the walls of the Bayon are said to represent the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, but they may be based on the features of Jayavarman himself.



**CARVED IN CLIFFS**

In Ellora, in the northwest of India's central Deccan region, more than 30 temples have been carved into the local cliffs. People cut their way through tons of solid rock to hollow out large halls and shrines. Pillars, statues, and vaulted ceilings have also been carved from the rock inside the cave temples.



Vajravira holds a staff above his head.

Vajravira's body is protected by golden armor.

Vajravira at the Taiyuin-byo shrine in northern Honshu



**CROSSING THE STREAM**

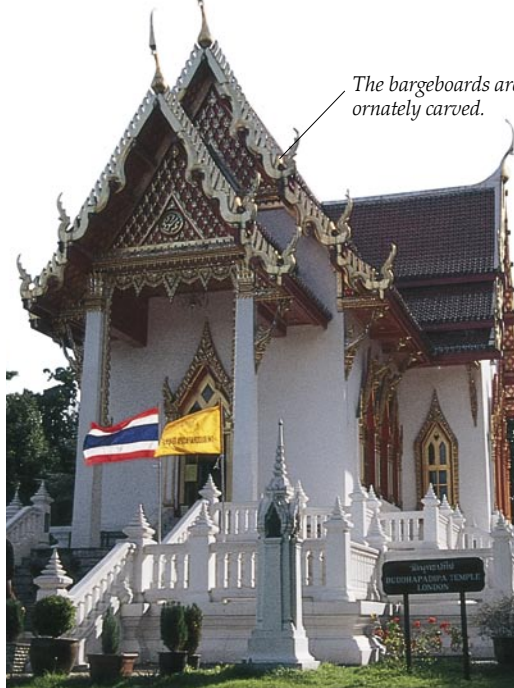
The walls and roof of this small temple in Ayuthaya in Thailand are reflected in the nearby water. As well as enhancing the beauty of the temple's surroundings, the water is an important symbol. Buddhists sometimes use the phrase "crossing the stream" to describe the process of passing through the world of suffering on the way to enlightenment.

**GREEN GUARDIAN**

This figure, Vajravira, is one of the Four Guardian Kings. Found guarding entrances or shrines, especially in Japanese temples, the Guardian Kings are said to protect the four points of the compass. They are usually shown as warriors, wearing armor, brandishing weapons, and trampling on demons. Vajravira protects the west and can be identified by his green skin.

This detail is called a cho fa, or "tassel of air."

The bargeboards are ornately carved.



*"When you have performed the acts of worship, help will come from the guardian angels."*

**BYA CHOS**

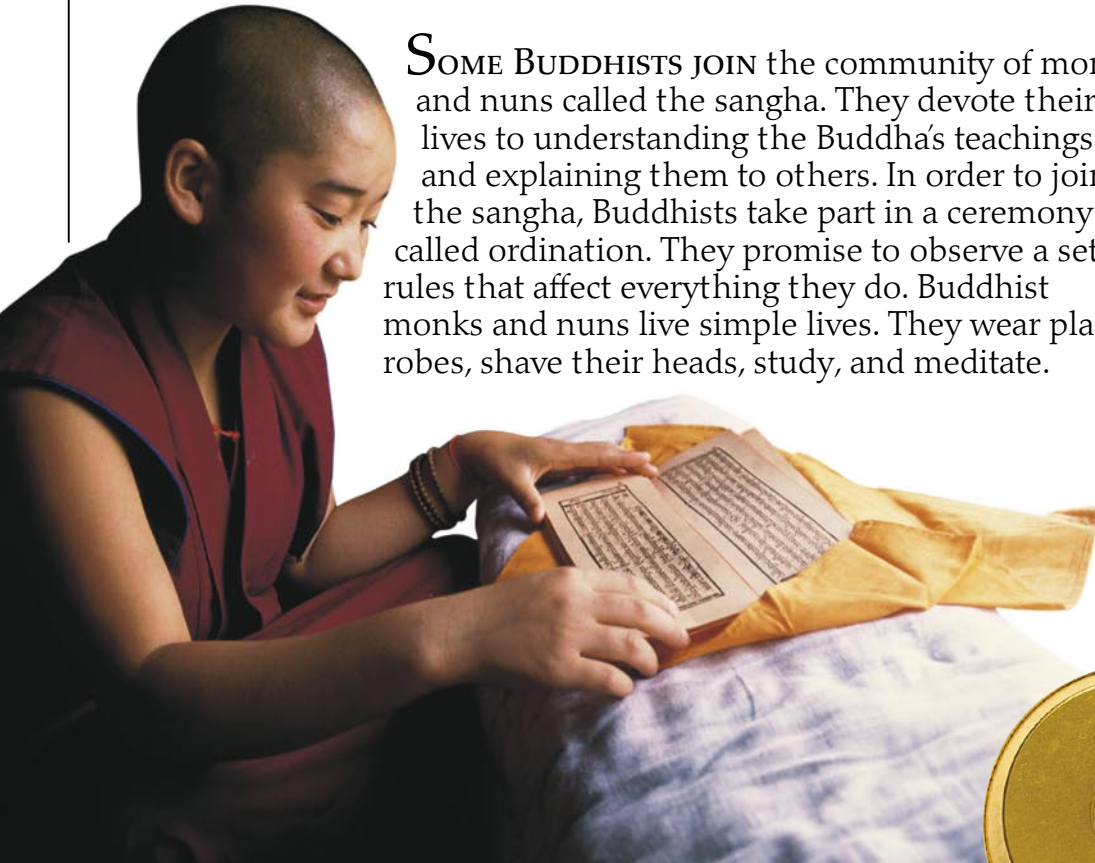
The Buddha's law among the birds

**WESTERN TEMPLE EASTERN STYLE**

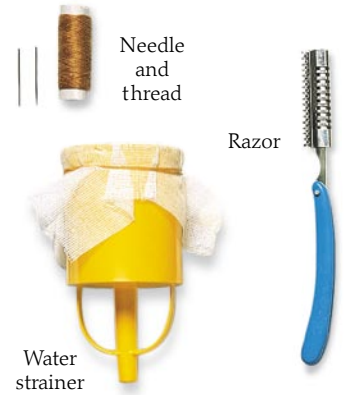
This British Buddhist temple, like many in the West, is built in a style influenced by the architecture of Southeast Asia. The pitched roofs, pointed windows, and carved details give the building an Eastern appearance. The "tassels of air" are said to be based on simplified statues of the bird Garuda, a Hindu god who protected people from evil.



# Buddhist monks and nuns



SOME BUDDHISTS JOIN the community of monks and nuns called the sangha. They devote their lives to understanding the Buddha's teachings and explaining them to others. In order to join the sangha, Buddhists take part in a ceremony called ordination. They promise to observe a set of rules that affect everything they do. Buddhist monks and nuns live simple lives. They wear plain robes, shave their heads, study, and meditate.



Needle and thread  
Water strainer

Razor



Alms bowl

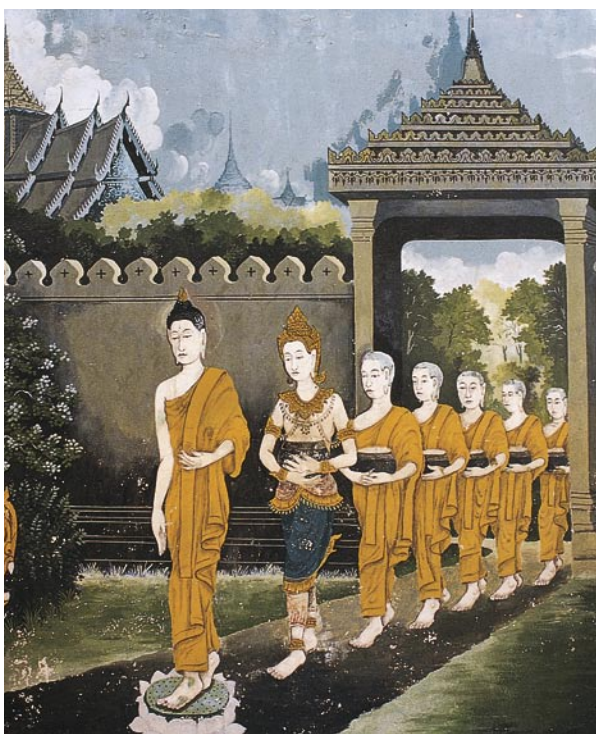


Lid from alms bowl, used as a plate

**FEW THINGS**  
Buddhist monks are allowed to have very few possessions. The basics are robes, a place to live, an alms bowl, and medicine. They may also own a razor, a needle and thread for mending their robes, a belt, and a strainer to ensure that insects are not swallowed along with drinking water.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In most branches of Buddhism, women like this Tibetan nun may be ordained and become members of the sangha. Some of these nuns have become important spiritual leaders. Women can become nuns in all traditions of Buddhism, but in Theravada Buddhism, nuns have a lower status than monks.



Lower robe, worn around the hips



Upper robe, worn over the shoulder



Outer robe, worn for travel and sleeping



Belt or girdle

## COMMON COLOR

Monks' robes are traditionally dyed a saffron, or orangey-yellow, color, as seen in this Thai mural. This is said to date back to the time when the Buddha founded the sangha. He and his followers made their robes by sewing together scraps of cloth and dyeing them a common color.

## ROBE RULES

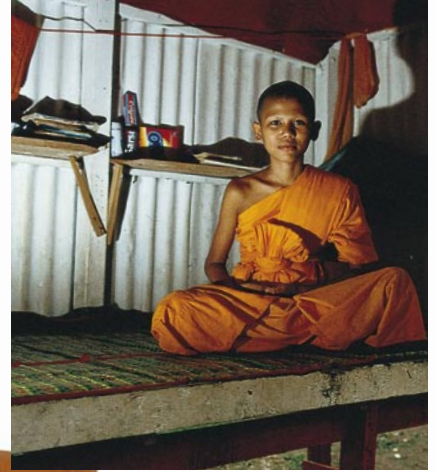
A Buddhist monk is allowed three robes made of plain, dyed material. The color of the robes varies according to the branch of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, the robes are yellow or orange. Tibetan monks wear maroon robes, and Zen members of the sangha wear black.



Both monks and novices shave their heads.

The upper robe is worn covering only the left shoulder within the monastery.

Thai novice monk in his simple hut



**LET US BE HAPPY**

In the early days of Buddhism, many monks lived in caves or other simple shelters. They spent much of their lives traveling from place to place. Monks and nuns today usually live in permanent monasteries, but they still live simple lives. A monk's life should be one of fulfillment. As one scripture says, "Let us be happy, then, we who possess nothing."

The upper robe is tied firmly around the novice's body.

These robes are made from cotton, but the scriptures also allow other plant-based fabrics to be used.

Traditionally, the robes are colored using dyes derived from clay, plants such as the saffron flower, and other natural materials.

**IN IT FOR LIFE**

Boys as young as seven or eight may enter monasteries as novices. They learn about the dharma and can be ordained as monks in their late teens. Not all monks stay in the monastery for life. In some places, it is traditional for young men to spend anything from a few weeks to several years in a monastery. During this time, they are educated and acquire merit. Other Buddhists dedicate their entire lives to the sangha.

Thai Buddhist monk with two novices

Monks and novices traditionally go barefoot.





## The monastic way of life

Buddhist monks and nuns agree to obey more than 200 rules, covering everything from their relations with other people to the clothes they wear and the food they eat. They give up sexual contact, live in monasteries, and practice meditation. Monks and nuns, however, are not isolated from the world. In addition to teaching, some members of the sangha help to run health clinics, take care of orphaned children, or care for the elderly and the sick.

*"The homeless wanderer ... is content with little, easily pleased ... not addicted to society, energetic, independent, solitary, perfect in his conduct ..."*

MILINDAPANHA  
Laymen and monks

### DAILY DUTIES

Every day, monks like these in Thailand meet to chant verses from the sutras to honor the Buddha. They may also recite the monastic rules to remind them of the discipline under which they live. Buddhist monks also meditate regularly. This trains their minds to become calm and encourages right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

### TIME TO TEACH

Buddhist monks spend a lot of their time teaching others about the dharma. The Buddha depended on his followers to pass on his ideas. This teaching can take different forms. It may involve explaining the texts of Buddhist scriptures or showing people how the Buddha's ideas can help them overcome their problems.

*The monk sits in the half-lotus position when teaching.*



*Fans were originally carried to help monks keep cool in hot climates.*



### ACCEPTING ALMS

Many monks and nuns accept alms, or gifts. Alms are donated by lay people—Buddhists who are not members of the monastic sangha. In the early days of Buddhism, monks had to depend entirely on alms for survival. Rich lay Buddhists then began making gifts of land to groups of monks. Strictly speaking, this is against monastic rules, but it allows monks and nuns to settle down, build monasteries, and grow their own food.



The outer robe is worn outside the monastery.

Rice and lotus flower offerings



The alms bowl is held out ready to receive food.

Monks are not allowed to take gifts directly in their hands.

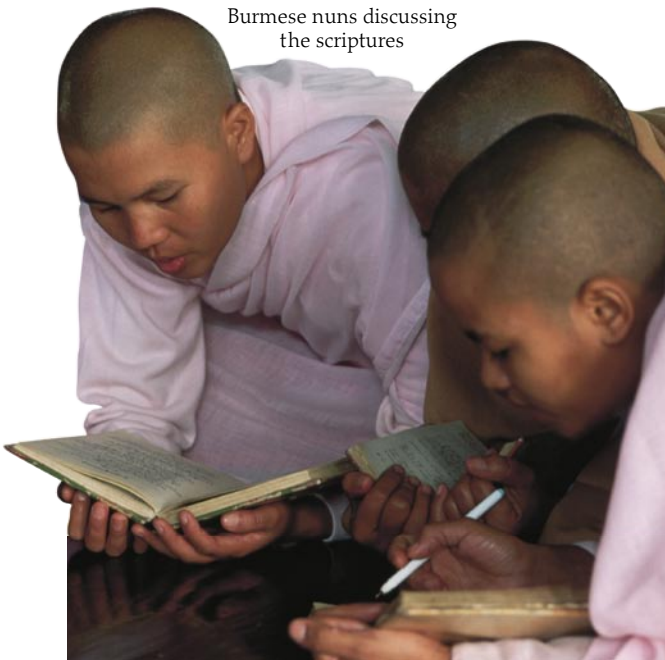
### GIVING AND RECEIVING

In places where monks still rely upon direct gifts from lay people, they hope for practical alms of things like food and medicine. Such gifts also help those who give. By giving, lay people gain merit that will lead them toward better rebirths and perhaps membership of the sangha in a future life.

### MORNING STROLL

In places such as Thailand, monks still spend part of each day walking through the streets so that people can place food into their alms bowls. This daily alms round takes place in the morning so that the monks can gather enough food for their main meal, which they have to eat before midday.

Burmese nuns discussing the scriptures



### GROUP STUDY

Monks and nuns study regularly, often meeting to discuss the scriptures. Members of the sangha have always preserved and studied Buddhist scriptures. In the early days, they did this by reciting them aloud; later, they wrote out texts by hand. Today, the texts are printed in books and available on the internet.



Monk collecting alms



# The Buddhist way of life

Stone carving showing two princes and a monk offering flowers to the Buddha



## ONE OF MANY

There are a very large number of Buddhist shrines and temples. One reason for this is that putting up a new one is a way for lay people to gain merit. A rich person might pay for a whole temple. Poorer people can join groups to collect funds for building, or build simple shrines like this.

**B**UDDHISTS REGULARLY visit temples to make offerings, but their faith goes further than this. It affects their whole lives. When the Buddha described the Noble Eightfold Path, he meant for its eight parts to influence every activity. Whether Buddhists are at home, at work, or on vacation they try to live according to their beliefs. Above all, Buddhists try to act in a caring way. They think positively, help others, and promote peace. In doing so, they hope to build up merit to improve their next rebirth. Buddhists also hope to make the world a better place for everyone to live in.

## GIVE IT UP

Making offerings to the Buddha is one of the most familiar rituals for lay Buddhists like the princes shown in this carving. It is a symbolic way of following in the footsteps of the Buddha himself, because in his previous lives he gave up his possessions, and sometimes even his life, to help others.



Burning incense sticks



Chinese bronze incense pot

## ODOROUS OFFERINGS

One way to make an offering is to do so by burning the aromatic substance incense. Doing this allows lay people to build up merit, which will help to ensure a favorable rebirth. In a similar way, Tantric Buddhists sometimes make offerings of fire.

## MERIT SHARING

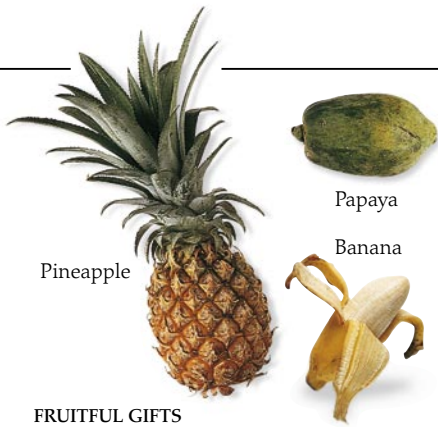
These vessels are used for a merit-sharing ceremony in which water is poured slowly from one vessel to the other while chanting takes place. Buddhists traditionally consider people to be responsible for their own merit. But it is possible to share merit, for example, by passing it on to a dead person in the hope that a better rebirth will result.



Water vessels used for merit sharing







Pineapple

Papaya

Banana

**FRUITFUL GIFTS**

Lay people may make offerings of fruit and other foods directly to the Buddha by placing them on a shrine. They can also offer them to monks in the form of alms. Providing that the fruit is clean and offered sincerely, the variety is not important.

Rice offering from a Tibetan Buddhist shrine



**REVERED RICE**

Rice is a common and welcome gift for Buddhist monks in Asia. It is a nourishing food and a symbol of blessing. Rice is also one of the offerings most often placed on shrines for the Buddha. Buddhists hope that in return for the rice offerings their community will be blessed with enough food. The rice placed on shrines should be changed every full moon. The old rice is taken outside and fed to birds, fish, or other animals.

*This elaborate container for rice offerings is made to look like a stupa.*



Laundry day, Holy Island, Scotland



Gardening, Holy Island, Scotland



Preparing food, Holy Island, Scotland

**MERIT IN THE MUNDANE**  
A Buddhist's beliefs affect every aspect of his or her life. Even everyday tasks like doing laundry, gardening, and cooking should be carried out in a way that is mindful of the Buddha's teachings and does not harm others. Many Buddhists do not eat meat because this involves killing living things. Some Buddhists do not even dig in the soil for fear of harming any creatures living in it.



**REACHING OUT**

This Buddhist monk is working with prisoners in the UK. He tells them about the Buddha's teachings and explains why it is wrong to harm others. Monks also build gardens in prison grounds, creating peaceful spaces for inmates to visit. Some convicted criminals change their way of life as a result of this work.

**PEACE PROTEST**

These Buddhist monks and nuns are demonstrating against the war in Kosovo in 1999. Buddhists oppose killing and most believe in ahimsa, or nonviolence. They will not fight in wars, and often take part in antiwar protests.





# Devotion to the Buddha

THE BUDDHA IS an enlightened being, not a god, so he is not worshipped in the way gods are worshipped in other religions. Buddhists do have great respect for the Buddha. They perform rituals of devotion to confirm their commitment to the Buddha, his dhamma, and the sangha. This is known as the Triple Refuge. Buddhists express their devotion in various ways. They make pilgrimages, meditate, give offerings, and prostrate themselves. In each case, the act of devotion also serves to help the devotees. It encourages them to follow the dhamma and reminds them of the Eightfold Path.



**FOOTPRINT FOCUS**  
Images like this one of the Buddha's footprint provide a focus for devotion. The footprint features many key Buddhist symbols and some of the marks of a great man. It reminds Buddhists of the Buddha's remarkable life and teaching.

*The case is ornately carved and decorated with jewels.*



**SPIRITUAL SITES**  
These Buddhists have made a pilgrimage to Shwedagon pagoda in Burma, where some relics of the Buddha are kept. Buddhists visit places linked with the life of the Buddha, shrines where relics are kept, and other sites with spiritual links. Pilgrimages are especially important to lay people. They allow them to follow in the Buddha's footsteps and to focus on spiritual matters.



**JOY AND CONTEMPLATION**  
This case was used to preserve a relic of a Buddhist saint. Buddhists have always revered the relics of the Buddha and of notable teachers and saints. Pilgrimages to relics of the Buddha can be times of joyful celebration of his life and teaching, but also times of quiet contemplation and spiritual growth.

## Prostration and meditation

Prostration is usually performed before a statue of the Buddha. It is repeated three times as a dedication to the Triple Refuge. It is an expression of reverence and helps Buddhists to develop qualities such as humility. Meditation is a vital part of the Buddhist faith. The calm and focused state it provokes brings the devotee closer to wisdom and even enlightenment.

**1 DEDICATED BODY**  
Standing facing a statue of the Buddha, this lama puts his hands together, with the fingers touching and the palms slightly cupped. He raises his hands to his forehead to demonstrate that his body is dedicated to the Triple Refuge.





**2 RIGHT SPEECH**  
Still in the standing position, the lama lowers his hands to just below his mouth to show that he devotes his speech to the Triple Refuge. In doing this, he also recalls the third part of the Eightfold Path—right speech.

*The lama clasps his robe to prevent it from falling.*

**3 DEVOTED HEART AND MIND**  
Next, the lama lowers his hands farther so that they are in front of his chest. This position shows that his heart, and therefore also his mind, are devoted to the Triple Refuge. He then prepares to prostrate himself.

*The lama kneels on all fours before sliding to the floor.*

*The lama is now fully prostrated.*

**4 PROSTRATION POINTS**  
The lama kneels down and places his palms on the floor. From this point, he performs a full prostration with his whole body lowered to the floor. Many Buddhists perform a five-point prostration instead. On all fours, they lower their foreheads to the floor so that five parts of their body—their lower legs, their forearms, and their forehead—are in contact with the floor.

*A comfortable posture is essential for meditation.*



Gong

Hammer

**FREEING THE MIND**  
Meditation clears and purifies the mind. It leads Buddhists to right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration—three parts of the Eightfold Path. Most Buddhists begin meditation by focusing on their breathing. In some branches of Buddhism, devotees concentrate on an image or object to help them to free their minds from everyday thoughts. Others bang a gong after meditating to spread the merit earned by their act of devotion.



Buddhist dancing figure



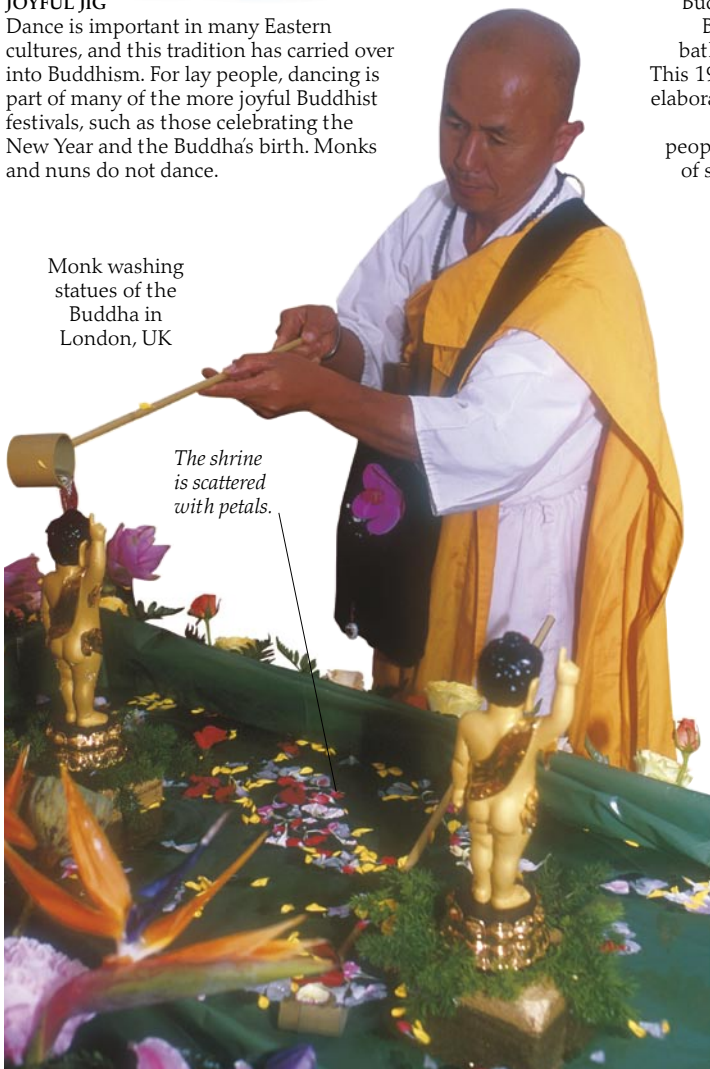
# Buddhist festivals

**B**UDDHISM HAS adapted to the many different places where it has taken root, so its festivals vary from one country to another. The various schools of the faith also celebrate different festivals. Theravada Buddhists, for example, mark the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha with a single festival. They also have set days throughout the year when lay people join monks in fasting and meditation. Mahayana Buddhists have a variety of festivals, including celebrations at the New Year and separate ones for the key stages in the Buddha's life.

## JOYFUL JIG

Dance is important in many Eastern cultures, and this tradition has carried over into Buddhism. For lay people, dancing is part of many of the more joyful Buddhist festivals, such as those celebrating the New Year and the Buddha's birth. Monks and nuns do not dance.

Monk washing statues of the Buddha in London, UK



The shrine is scattered with petals.

## WATER FESTIVAL

Water plays an important part in New Year celebrations in several Buddhist countries. Images of the Buddha are washed and people bathe or are sprinkled with water. This 19th-century painting shows an elaborate New Year's water festival in Burma. The use of water helps people start the New Year in a state of spiritual purity and cleanliness.



People fill pots with water in preparation for the festivities.

## FREEING THE FISH

This Thai Buddhist is releasing a captive eel into the wild to mark the festival of Vesak, or Buddha Day. Vesak is a Theravada celebration of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha. It is a time for being especially kind to living things. In Thailand, some people avoid farm work in which living creatures may be harmed and release captive animals to build up merit.



## CEREMONIAL CLEANING

In some temples, Vesak is marked by the ceremonial cleaning of statues of the Buddha as a child. People then make offerings of flowers and incense. Lights are lit in temples and trees to symbolize the Buddha's enlightenment. Parades, Jataka readings, and plays reenacting the Buddha's birth also take place in some areas.





*A golden statue of the Buddha is central to the festivities.*

*Devotees prostrate themselves before the Buddha.*



#### CONVERTING THE KING

In Sri Lanka, monks and lay people gather for a special festival called Posen. This is to celebrate the arrival of Buddhism on the island during the time of the Indian emperor Ashoka. The gathered Buddhists make offerings at Mihintale, where Ashoka's son, Mahinda, is said to have converted the king of Sri Lanka to the faith.



#### MASKED MONKS

Tibetan New Year is celebrated at the festival of Losar. People wear new clothes and eat special foods, such as cakes called kapse. At the end of the festival, Buddhist monks put on fearsome masks. They then perform a ritual to frighten away any evil spirits that have appeared during the previous year.



Japanese children preparing paper flowers for Hana Matsuri

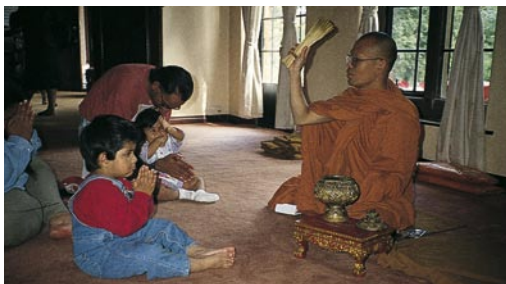
#### FLOWER POWER

The Japanese celebrate the Buddha's birth at the festival of Hana Matsuri. People make whole gardens of paper flowers as a reminder of the lush gardens in Lumbini, where the Buddha was born. In Japan, perfumed tea is poured over statues of the Buddha because it is said that the gods provided scented water for Siddhatta's first bath.



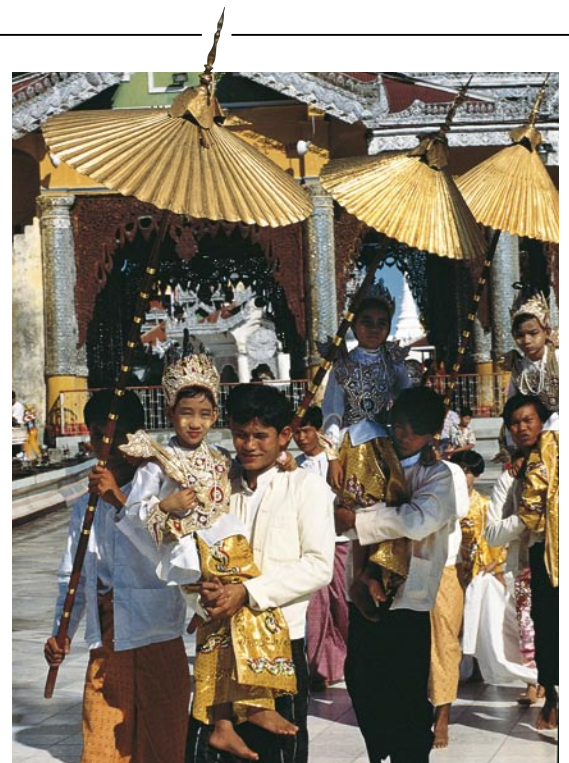
# The cycle of life

ALL RELIGIONS DEVELOP ceremonies to mark the key stages in a person's life. In Buddhism, two kinds of ceremonies have special importance. The first are rituals of initiation, in which a child or teenager is welcomed into adult Buddhist society and becomes a part of the monastic community for a short while. The second are funeral rites that mark a person's passing from life and signal their future rebirth. Buddhism has spread so widely around the world that these ceremonies vary greatly. But they are all occasions during which Buddhists meet to share a special moment and celebrate their faith.



## BIRTH BLESSINGS

Some Buddhist monks, like this one in the UK, invite new parents to have their babies blessed. But Buddhism does not place great importance on rituals to mark the birth of a child. Parents who wish to mark their child's arrival often use local traditional rituals. Monks are not necessarily involved in these ceremonies.

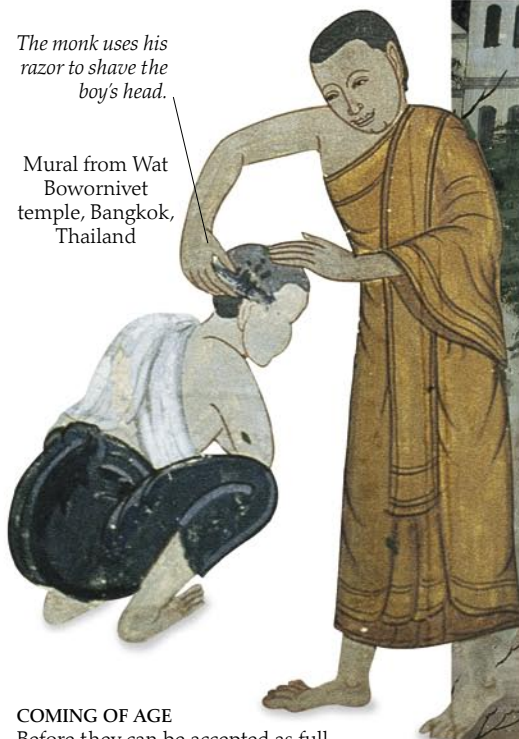


## LITTLE PRINCES

These boys are having their initiation ceremony at the Shwedagon pagoda in Rangoon, Burma. After this, they will join the monastery for a short period. Unlike boys in some other Buddhist countries, they are not immediately given monks' robes to wear. They are dressed in rich clothes, like those Siddhatta wore before leaving his father's palace to seek enlightenment.

*The monk uses his razor to shave the boy's head.*

Mural from Wat Bowornivet temple, Bangkok, Thailand



## COMING OF AGE

Before they can be accepted as full members of the Buddhist community, young boys are taken to their local monastery. Monks shave their heads and give them an alms bowl and robes. They stay at the monastery, sometimes just for one night, but often for several days. At the end of this period the boys are no longer regarded as children.







Buddhist nun blessing a marriage

**RELIGIOUS REMINDER**

Buddhism stresses the importance of the role and life of monks and nuns, so weddings are not looked on as religious events. Buddhist couples choose to have a civil, or nonreligious, ceremony sometimes followed by a blessing from a monk or nun. The blessing reminds the couple that the sangha will remain important in their lives.



Lotus flowers

Candle

**FAMILY FAVORS**

When a person dies, relatives usually make offerings such as flowers and candles to the local monks. They gain merit by doing this, and hope that the merit will be transferred to the deceased, helping them on the way to a more favorable rebirth.



**FUNERAL TRADITIONS**

When Buddhists die, they are usually placed in caskets decorated with cloths and flowers. They are then taken in a procession to the temple, where monks chant scriptures concerning kamma and rebirth. In the Theravada tradition, the deceased person is usually cremated, as the Buddha was, but Mahayana Buddhists bury their dead.



Funeral procession in Burma

*“Sweet-scented barks and leaves, aloewood, sandalwood, and cassia they heaped on the pyre, sighing with grief all the time. Finally they placed the Sage’s body on it.”*

**BUDDHACARITA**  
The relics

**IN THE NEXT LIFE**

This ornate stupa-shaped case was probably made to hold the cremated remains of a notable Buddhist saint or teacher. The cremation is the climax of Theravada funeral services. Family members usually keep the ashes in an urn. After the funeral, the relatives may burn the favorite possessions of the deceased so that he or she can enjoy them in the next life.



Stupa-shaped case for relics from Bihar in India

**STAYING POSITIVE**

Although it is sad when a friend or relative dies, funerals are positive occasions for Buddhists because they lead to a rebirth. Ceremonies to honor the deceased may involve burning incense. This reminds those present of the Buddha’s enlightened teaching that death is merely an interval between two lives.





Chinese laughing Buddha statue



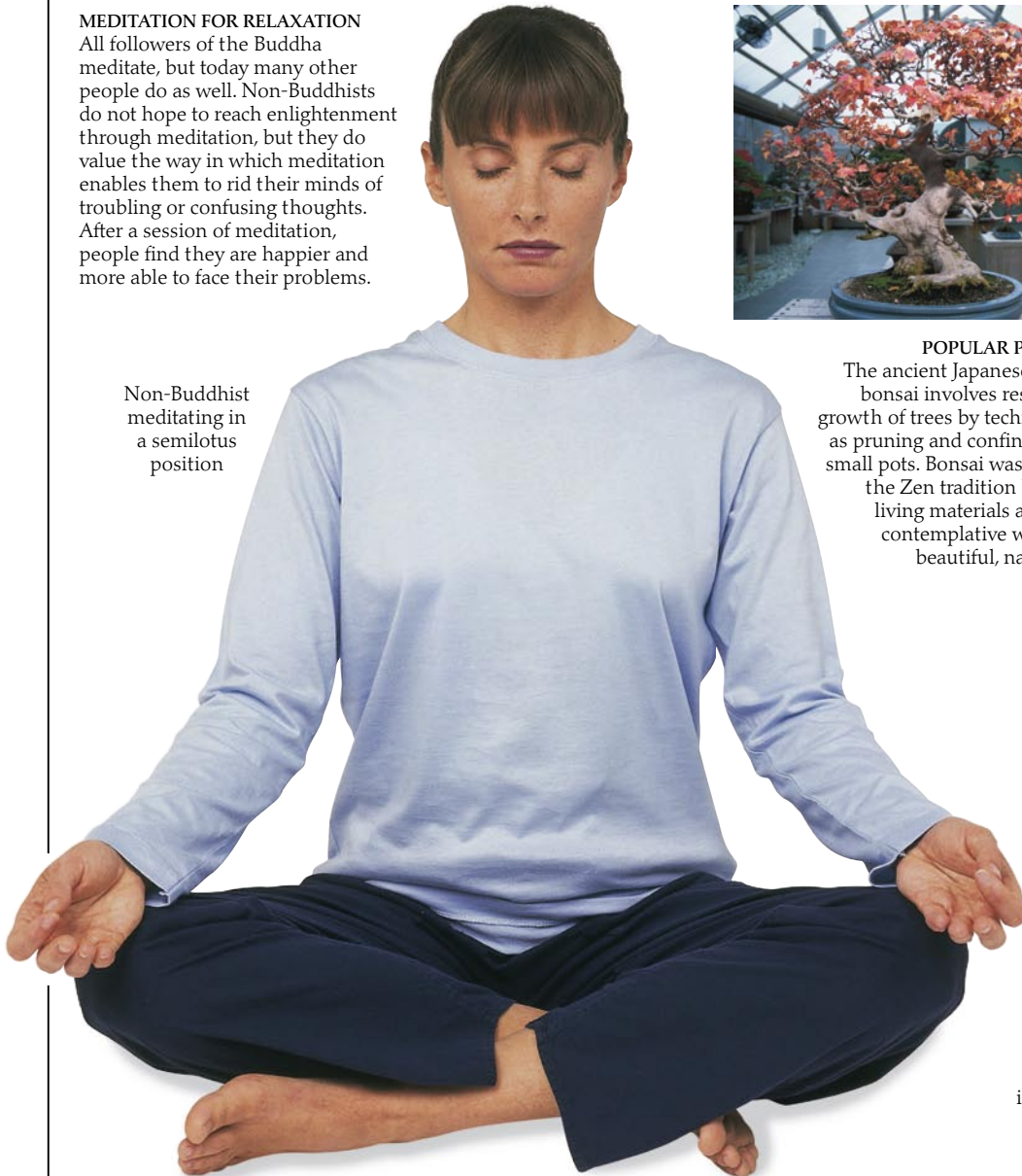
**ORNAMENTAL BUDDHAS**  
People worldwide own statues of the Buddha. Even non-Buddhists admire their spirituality and calm. This is a Chinese representation of Maitreya, "the Buddha of the future." It is an adaptation of their god of wealth and prosperity.

# Buddhist culture

**BUDDHISM HAS** flourished during the 20th and 21st centuries. Many new Buddhist movements have been founded in Asia, and a large number of Asian Buddhists have traveled to the West, bringing their ideas with them. Many Western people have become Buddhists, encouraged in part by movements such as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, founded in the UK. As a result, there has been a worldwide spread of Buddhist culture involving everything from meditation to movies and art. This cultural spread has influenced a huge number of people, many of whom are not Buddhists.

**MEDITATION FOR RELAXATION**  
All followers of the Buddha meditate, but today many other people do as well. Non-Buddhists do not hope to reach enlightenment through meditation, but they do value the way in which meditation enables them to rid their minds of troubling or confusing thoughts. After a session of meditation, people find they are happier and more able to face their problems.

Non-Buddhist meditating in a semilotus position



**POPULAR POT PLANTS**  
The ancient Japanese practice of bonsai involves restricting the growth of trees by techniques such as pruning and confining them to small pots. Bonsai was adopted by the Zen tradition because the living materials are used in a contemplative way to create beautiful, natural forms.



Japanese woman creating an ikebana display



**ELEGANT OFFERINGS**  
Buddhist flower offerings do not have to be presented in an elaborate way, but Japanese Buddhists developed a tradition for beautifully arranged offerings. Ikebana grew from this practice. These elegant arrangements are now popular among non-Buddhists worldwide.





*“Think of not thinking of anything at all. Be without thoughts—this is the secret of meditation.”*

**CONTROLLING THE MIND**  
Zen meditation

**FAMILY AFFAIR**

Actress Uma Thurman comes from a Buddhist family. Her father, a professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist studies, was the first Westerner to become a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Uma is not a practicing Buddhist but, like many people, she says that the faith has had a major influence on her life.



**GOLDEN BOY**

This section from a shrine frieze in Bangkok, Thailand, includes an image of British soccer player David Beckham (above right). Normally, only gods, bodhisattvas, and saints would be featured in this kind of frieze. But Beckham is a figure from popular culture with a reputation that has won him a place among the gods.



**GOING PUBLIC**

Famous Buddhists like Hollywood actor Richard Gere have helped to introduce Buddhism to a wider public in the West. Gere became a Buddhist following a trip to Nepal in 1978. Since then, he has been a tireless campaigner for religious freedom in Tibet. He is a supporter of the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan Buddhist exiles.



## Buddhism in the Arts

The Buddha and his ideas have inspired artists for hundreds of years. Sculptors and painters have produced countless images of the Buddha, ranging from small pictures for display indoors to large outdoor statues that can be seen from great distances. Artists in many fields, from illustrators to filmmakers, are inspired by Buddhism. They tell stories and paint pictures based on Buddhist teachings, on the lives of Buddhist monks or nuns, and on the role of Buddhism in modern life.

### PAST GLORY

The world's two largest standing Buddhas were in Bamiyan in Afghanistan. The larger of the two was more than 185 ft (55 m) tall. By 400, there were many monasteries and thousands of monks in Bamiyan. But the monasteries went into decline when the area converted to Islam. In 2001, the huge Buddhas were destroyed by the Taliban, who were then in power.



### BIG BUDDHA

This enormous statue is the largest seated Buddha in the world. It was carved out of the rock face of Lingyun Hill in Leshan in China in about 800. The statue represents the Buddha Maitreya, who sits with his hands on his knees. It is a popular attraction for both tourists and pilgrims, drawing more than 300,000 visitors a year.

*The statue is about 230 ft (70 m) tall and the shoulders measure 90 ft (30 m) across.*



### SIGN OF THE TIMES

Kinkaku-ji pagoda at Kansai in Japan was built in 1955 on the site of a 14th-century Buddhist temple. Building stupas and pagodas is a way of gaining merit, so many have been rebuilt a number of times. Instead of the steeply upturned roof lines of more traditional pagodas, Kinkaku-ji's lines are straighter, like other city structures built in the 1950s.

*The figure is so large that 100 people can stand on one of its enormous feet.*



**PEACE MAKER**

This modern painting by Liz Wright is called *East Meets West*. It is a version of the story of the patron saint of England, Saint George, and the Dragon. In the original story George kills the dragon, who has been devouring innocent people. In this picture the Buddha sits on the dragon's back and raises his arm to stop George. It is as if the Buddha is trying to make peace between the enemies.



*Saint George raises his lance to strike the dragon.*

*The Buddha makes a restraining gesture toward Saint George.*

**SHINING LIGHT**

In this modern painting from India, the Buddha is shown sitting beneath the Bodhi Tree. The halo of light around his head suggests that he has achieved enlightenment. The forefinger and thumb of his right hand touch to make the dharma gesture—a sign that he is ready to start teaching.

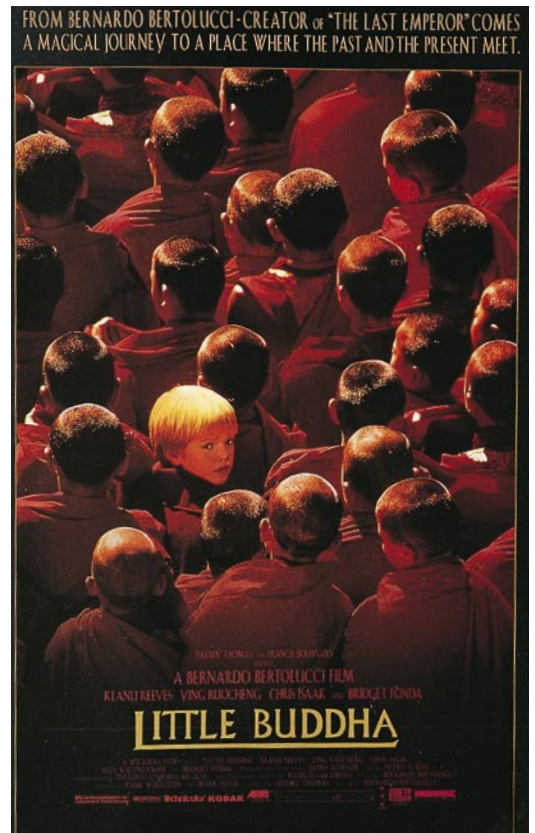


**ARTIST'S IMPRESSION**

Buddhism has a rich store of images that are inspiring to some modern artists. This stylized oil painting shows a Tibetan monk in his maroon robe. He is surrounded by birds, flowers, and water. This symbolizes the respect and reverence that Buddhists have for the natural world and all living things.

**LIFE STORY**


*Little Buddha* is a film by Italian director Bernardo Bertolucci. It tells the story of a group of monks who go in search of the reincarnation of a great Buddhist lama. The person they find is a small boy living in Seattle. The film also tells the life story of the Buddha himself.

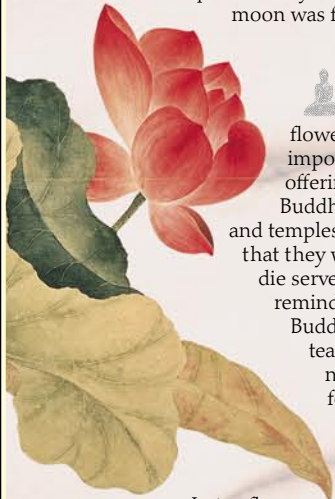





# Did you know?


## FASCINATING FACTS


 Most Buddhist festivals take place at the time of the full moon because Buddhists believe that the Buddha was born, reached enlightenment, and passed away when the moon was full.





Lotus flower


 Fresh, colourful flowers are important offerings at Buddhist shrines and temples. The fact that they will wilt and die serves as a reminder of the Buddha's teachings that nothing lasts forever.

 In Buddhist art, the white lotus symbolizes purity and spiritual perfection. The red lotus stands for love and compassion, and the blue lotus is the symbol of intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge. The pink lotus is reserved for the highest deity, and is the lotus of the historical Buddha.

 At midnight on New Year's Eve, the bells in Japanese temples are rung 108 times. In Buddhist teaching, it is said that there are 108 faults or things that can go wrong in a person's life (such as being greedy, selfish, or lazy) and ringing the bells is said to get rid of these faults.


 Buddhist monks eat only one meal a day, before midday. After this, they go without food until the following day, but are allowed to drink water.

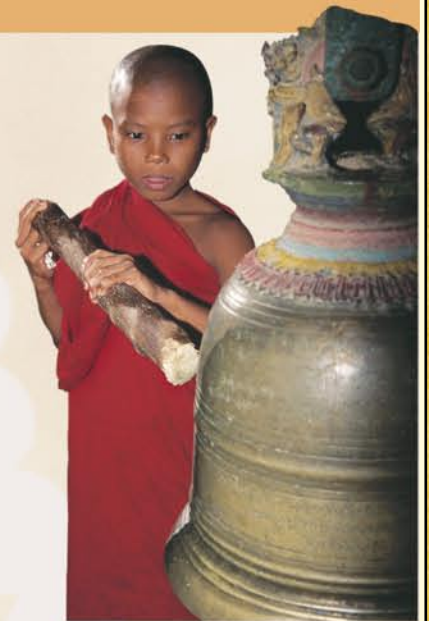
 The Buddhist flag was designed by J. R. de Silva and Colonel Henry S. Olcott to mark the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1880. The flag was accepted as the International Buddhist Flag by the 1952 World Buddhist Congress.

 On the Buddhist flag, the blue stripe symbolizes compassion, yellow is for the Middle Path or holiness, red is for blessings and wisdom, white is for purity and freedom, and orange is for wisdom.





Buddhist flag

 At some Tibetan festivals, monks construct elaborate mandalas out of grains of coloured sand and the dust of precious stones. At the end of the festival, the mandala is swept away and put as a blessing in the nearest river, expressing how nothing lasts – even the things we most cherish.





Young Buddhist monk

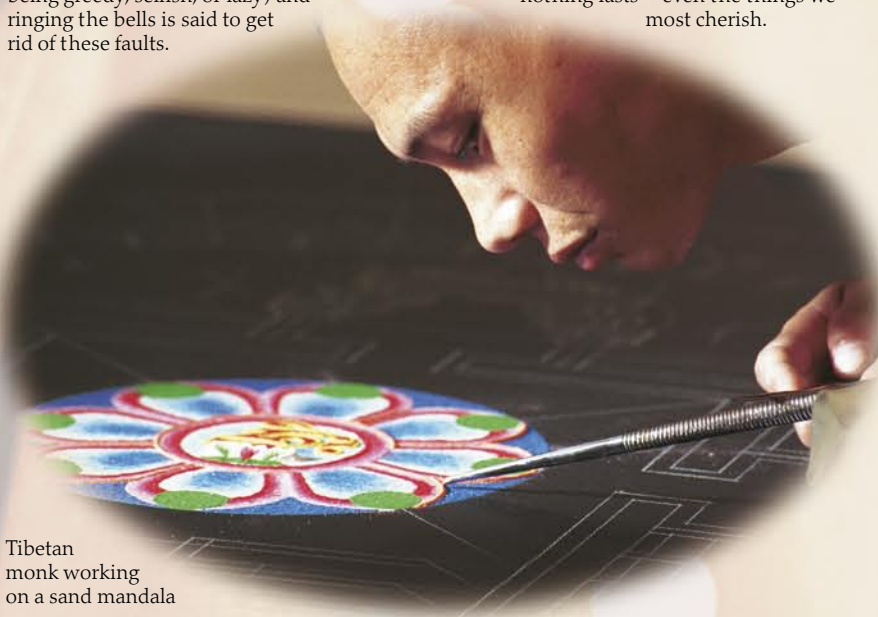
 There are more than 220 rules governing the conduct of Buddhist monks and nuns. However, the first four rules are the most important: members of the sangha must remain celibate, must not steal, must not take a human life, and must not falsely proclaim miraculous powers. A monk or nun breaking one of these rules will be expelled from the order.

 In Buddhist countries, such as Thailand, Buddha images are respected by being set up off the floor above people's heads. People also take care never to point their feet towards a statue of the Buddha.

 The famous solid gold Buddha statue in the Temple of the Golden Buddha, Bangkok, Thailand, was discovered by accident in 1950 when the statue, which had been covered in plaster, was dropped from a crane while it was being relocated.

 The word dalai is Mongolian meaning "great ocean", and lama means "spiritual teacher", so Dalai Lama means "Great Ocean Spiritual Teacher" – a great guru with an ocean of wisdom.

 The whole structure of the Borobudur Temple in Java, comprising a stepped-pyramid, three circular terraces, and a central stupa, is built in the form of a lotus, the sacred flower of Buddhism.



Tibetan monk working on a sand mandala



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q** What are the main differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism?

**A** The goal of the Theravada Buddhist is to become an arahat – someone who has attained enlightenment, or nibbana, and is free from suffering. Theravada Buddhists believe that every person can become an arahat, but must achieve this on his or her own, with help from a teacher. In Mahayana Buddhism, the goal is to become a bodhisattva, and then bring release to the suffering of others. Theravada Buddhists teach the Pali Canon, also called the Tipitaka. Mahayana Buddhists also use an originally Sanskrit Canon, now in Tibetan and Chinese, which includes extra teachings of the Buddha not found in the Pali Canon. Theravada Buddhism has remained fairly unified, but Mahayana Buddhism has divided into several types, including Zen, Pure Land, and Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. Today, Theravada Buddhism is found in Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka. Mahayana Buddhism is found in Japan, Tibet, and Korea. All forms are in the West.



Mahayana Buddhist monk

**Q** What are butter sculptures?

**A** Giant sculptures made of barley flour and butter are sometimes constructed on frames of wood and leather at Tibetan festivals. Some have been as tall as a three-storey building. Like sand mandalas (see page 64), the painted sculptures are collapsed at the end of the ceremony.

**Q** Is Buddha a god?

**A** The Buddha did not claim that he was a god or a messenger from a god, or gods, so Buddhism is said to be a religion without a god. When Buddhists kneel or prostrate themselves, therefore, they are not praying to a god but honouring the potential Buddha

within themselves and expressing thanks for the Buddha's teachings. Offerings of flowers, or rice, or lighting an incense stick or a candle are all ways of honouring the Buddha. Images of the Buddha are reminders to develop peace and inner harmony.

**Q** How many people follow the Buddhist religion?

**A** It is estimated that there are around 350 million Buddhists worldwide, or 6 per cent of the world's population. This makes Buddhism the world's fourth-largest religion (after Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism).

## Record Breakers



### BIGGEST BUDDHA

The largest Buddha figure in the world is at Leshan, China, and was carved in about 800 CE. The statue is around 70 m (230 ft) tall. However, a 152 m (500 ft) bronze statue of Maitreya (future Buddha) is being built in India, near Bodhi Gaya.



### BRONZE BUDDHA

The world's largest gilded bronze Buddha, called Daibatsu, is housed in Todai-ji Temple, Nara, Japan, and is 15 m (49 ft) tall.



### BIGGEST BUDDHIST MONUMENT

The largest Buddhist stupa in the world is Borobudur, on Java, Indonesia. The monument, which is built of lava rock with three circular terraces and a central stupa, is 55,000 sq m (21,000 sq ft).



### GOLDEN BUDDHA

The world's most expensive religious statue is the Golden Buddha, housed in Wat Traimit, Bangkok, Thailand. Made of solid gold, the statue stands 3 m (15 ft) tall and weighs 5.5 tonnes (tons).



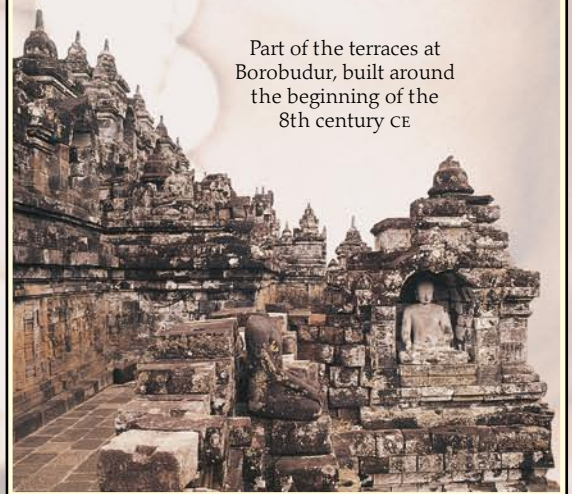
Gateway of the stupa at Sanchi, India

**Q** What is a stupa?

**A** Originally a burial mound, a stupa contained the ashes of a Buddha, an arahat (a saint), an important Buddhist teacher, or copies of sacred texts. In Tibet, a stupa is called a chorten; in Sri Lanka, it is called a dagoba, and in China and Japan (where the building style changed), it is called a pagoda.

**Q** What is the significance of the wheel symbol in Buddhism?

**A** In Buddhism, the wheel symbolizes the Wheel of Buddhist Law, or the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Wheels have either four spokes (standing for the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, first discourse, and parinibbana), or eight, symbolizing the Noble Eightfold Path.



Part of the terraces at Borobudur, built around the beginning of the 8th century CE



# Timeline of Buddhism

This timeline shows some of the key dates in the history of Buddhism. It is difficult to be certain about the century of the Buddha's birth, the establishment of the original Buddhist Canon, or the spread of Buddhism from India, so some of the early dates are approximate.

## 5TH CENTURY BCE

- Siddhatta Gotama is born in Lumbini, Nepal. At around the age of 35, he reaches enlightenment at Bodh Gaya and preaches his first discourse at Sarnath. He passes away at Kushinagara at the age of 80.

- The First Buddhist Council takes place at Rajagaha, India, soon after the Buddha's parinibbana, and the Buddhist Canon (the Tipitaka) is established as an oral tradition in the Pali language by Buddha's disciples.

## 4TH CENTURY BCE

- The Second Buddhist Council is held at Vesali (c. 330), at which Mahayana Buddhists becomes divided from the Theravada Buddhists in the interpretation of the Buddhist scriptures.

## 3RD CENTURY BCE

- Buddhism becomes a major religion of India during the reign of the Emperor Ashoka (c. 269–232 BCE), who builds many stupas throughout India.

- The Third Buddhist Council is held at Pataliputra (c. 250) under the patronage of Emperor Asoka.

- Asoka's son, Mahinda, becomes a Buddhist monk and spreads the teachings of the Buddha in Sri Lanka.

- Asoka's daughter, Sanghamitra, establishes an order of nuns in Sri Lanka.

## 2ND CENTURY BCE

Basic texts of several Mahayana sutras, including the Heart Sutra and the Diamond Sutra, are created.

## 1ST CENTURY BCE

- The Pali Canon (Tipitaka) of Theravada Buddhism is written down for the first time, in Sri Lanka, in the local script.

- Buddhist monasteries are established in northern Afghanistan, Tadjikistan, and Chinese Turkestan along ancient trade routes, such as the Silk Road.

## 1ST CENTURY CE

- Buddhism enters China.

- Buddhism spreads into southern Vietnam from India, and into northern Vietnam from China.

## 2ND CENTURY CE

- The Fourth Buddhist Council is held at Jalandhar in northern India (c. 100). However, commentaries compiled on the scriptures by the Council are not recognized by Theravada Buddhists.

- The first images of the Buddha are made.

## 4TH CENTURY CE

- Buddhism is spread into northern Korea through Central Asia by Chinese monks.

- Mahayana Buddhism spreads into Cambodia.

## 5TH CENTURY CE

- Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-Hsien visits India (399-414).

- Indian monk Buddhaghosa studies at the monastic university in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka (c. 430), translating existing commentaries into Pali. His work becomes the authoritative interpretation of the Pali Canon for Theravada Buddhists.

- Buddhism spreads into Indonesia.

## 6TH CENTURY CE

- T'an Luan (476-542)

establishes the Ching T'u school, a Pure Land school of Buddhism, in China.



Cambodian image of the Buddha, 11th century CE

- Bodhidharma, regarded as the founder of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism, is said to arrive in China from India (c. 520), and teaches the importance of calm meditation (yogacara).

- Emperor Kimmei of Japan receives a gift of Buddha statues and copies of sutras from a kingdom in Korea (c. 552), marking the beginning of Buddhism in Japan.

- Emperor Yomei of Japan (reigned 586-7) becomes the first Japanese Buddhist ruler.

- Yomei's son, Prince Shotoku (574-622), spreads Buddhism in Japan, building many temples and writing moral guides.

- Buddhism flourishes in Indonesia.

## 7TH CENTURY CE

- Hsüan Tsang, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, travels to India (602-664), returning to China with Buddhist texts, which he later translates into Chinese.

## 8TH CENTURY CE

Mahayana and Tantric Buddhism are spread into Tibet from India through the teachings of Buddhist monks, such as Padmasambhava and Shantarakshita.

- Emperor Shomu (724-749) spreads Buddhism in Japan, building many pagodas, monasteries, and temples.

- Building work is started on the great temple complex of Borobudur in central Java, Indonesia.

## 9TH CENTURY CE

- Many Buddhist monasteries and temples are destroyed by the Chinese emperor; only the Ch'an and Pure Land schools survive.

- The Japanese priest Saicho (also known as Dango Daishi, 767-822) introduces the Tendai school to Japan.



Emperor Ashoka



Indian carvings of the Buddha, 2nd-4th centuries CE



### 11TH CENTURY CE

• The Dagpo Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism is established by Marpa the translator (1012–97), his student, Milarepa (1040–1123), and Milarepa's student, Gampopa (1079–1153).

• Konchog Tyalpo founds the Sakya tradition of Buddhism in Tibet.

• Theravada Buddhism becomes the main religion of Burma and Cambodia.

• Buddhism declines in India.

### 12TH CENTURY CE

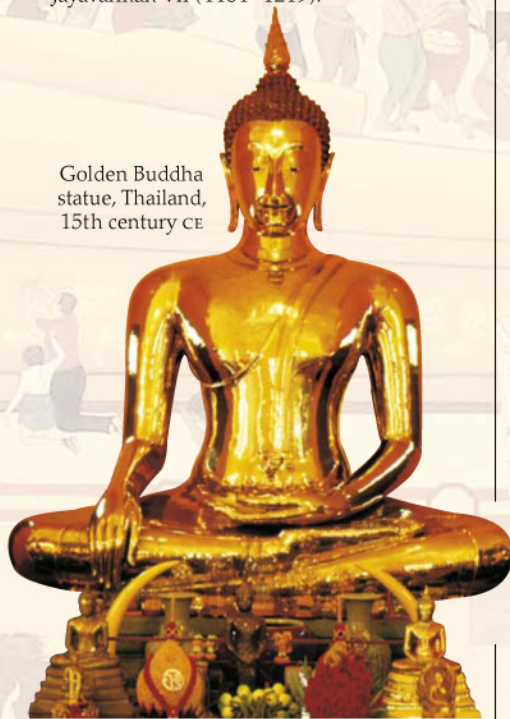
Genku (also known as Honen Shonin, 1130–1212) founds the Jodo sect of Buddhism in Japan, building the sect's main temple – the Chion-in Temple.

• Eisai (1141–1214) returns to Japan from China and founds pure Zen Buddhism.

• Buddhism flourishes in Korea under the Koryo Dynasty (1140–1390).

### 13TH CENTURY CE

Buddhism becomes the main religion of Cambodia under the Khymer King Jayavarman VII (1181–1219).



Golden Buddha statue, Thailand, 15th century CE

• Buddhism spreads into Mongolia from Tibet.

• The Soto Zen sect and Nichiren sect (which focuses on the Lotus Sutra) of Buddhism are founded in Japan.

• Buddhism begins to decline in Indonesia, with the spread of Islam.

### 14TH CENTURY CE

• Theravada Buddhism gains the support of the Thai king, Ramkham-haeng, who invites monks to teach in his capital, Sukothai, and Theravada Buddhism becomes the state religion of Thailand.



Devotees turning prayer wheels at Labrang monastery, founded in 1709 in Tibet, China

• Theravada Buddhism spreads into Laos.

• Tsongkhapa Lozang Dragpa (1367–1419) founds the Gelug ("Yellow Hat") tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.

### 15TH CENTURY CE

The Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia (founded in the 12th century) becomes a Buddhist centre.

### 16TH CENTURY CE

Tibet's Gelug guru Sonam Gyamtsho (1543–88) receives the title "Dalai Lama" from the Mongol leader Altan Khan (1578).

### 19TH CENTURY CE

• The teachings of the Sri Lankan monk, Gunananda, attract the interest of the American H. S. Olcott, who supports the revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

• Olcott and de Silva design the Buddhist flag (1880).

• In Japan, many Buddhist temples are destroyed during the Meiji Era (1868–1912), with its emphasis on modernization. Japanese Buddhism becomes fragmented into smaller sects and associations.

• The fifth Buddhist Council is held in Mandalay, Burma (1868–1871), at which the Pali canon is revised and inscribed on marble.

• T. W. Rhys Davids founds the Pali Text Society (1881).

### 20TH CENTURY CE

• Founding of the Buddhist Mission Society in Germany (1903), the British Buddhist Society (1907), and the World Fellowship of Buddhists (1952).

• The sixth Buddhist Council is held at Rangoon, Burma (1954–56).

• Buddhism is suppressed in China under the Communist government.

• The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is exiled from Tibet (1959) and flees to India.

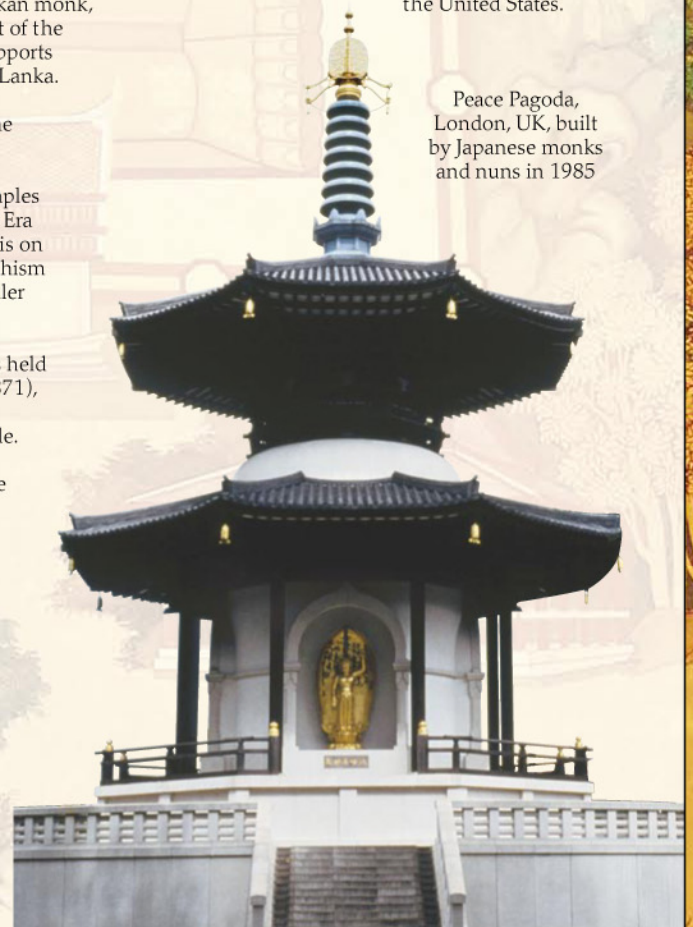
• First Theravada Buddhist monastery is established in the United States (1966).

• The Western Buddhist Order is founded in London (1968) by Sangharakshita.

• The Dalai Lama receives the Nobel Peace Prize (1989).

### 21ST CENTURY CE

• Buddhism becomes increasingly popular in the West, and Buddhist groups from all schools and geographical areas continue to establish themselves in Europe and the United States.



Peace Pagoda, London, UK, built by Japanese monks and nuns in 1985



# Find out more

There are many ways you can find out more about Buddhism. One of the best places to start is to read some of the teachings of the Buddha or one of the many guides and introductions that have been compiled for western readers. Look on the internet to find out if there's a Buddhist temple near you, or to find out about Buddhist retreats. You can learn about the history of Buddhism by looking at artefacts in museums or, by travelling to such countries as India, Sri Lanka, or Thailand to visit ancient Buddhist sites.

## VISIT A MUSEUM

Many museum collections include images of the Buddha from different cultures and periods in history. This stone carving depicting the life of the Buddha is from what is now Pakistan and dates from the 1st century CE. It is currently housed in the Musée Guimet, Paris, France.



## ANCIENT BUDDHIST SITES

The white plaster Ruwanweli Dagoba stupa stands at the site of the ancient city of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, once one of the great centres of Buddhism in South Asia. The site, now a World Heritage Centre, contains the ruins of the great Mahavihara monastery, several restored stupas, and reservoirs filled with floating lotus flowers. It also has a tree said to be grown from a cutting of the actual tree of enlightenment brought to Anuradhapura in the 3rd century BCE by Emperor Ashoka's daughter, Sanghamitra.



## BUDDHA STATUES

Modern images of the Buddha, such as these Thai statues, are sold in many countries in the West. The statues may be bought by monasteries, or by individuals who wish to make a shrine to the Buddha in their homes. Although ancient Buddha statues may occasionally be sold at auction, it is illegal to buy antique images in many Asian countries and export them to the West.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

- Buddhist information network about all things Buddhist: <http://www.buddhanet.net/>
- Online reading selections from the suttas of the Pali Canon, and poems and stories: <http://buddhistreading.com/>
- History, philosophy, and practice of Buddhism: <http://www.acay.com.au/~silkroad/Buddha>
- Buddhist sounds files gallery (in the Buddhist art section): <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism>
- Selection of readings in Theravada Buddhism: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>
- Information about all kinds of Buddhism: <http://thebuddhistsociety.org.uk/>

## ON PILGRIMAGE

According to tradition, anyone visiting one of the four main pilgrimage sites of Buddhism will have a favourable rebirth. The four sites are Lumbini near Kapelavatstu in Nepal, where the Buddha was born, and where visitors can see the stone pillar set up by King Ashoka to mark his own visit in the 3rd century BCE; Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha reached a state of enlightenment; Sarnath Deer Park, near Varanasi (Benares) in India, where the Buddha preached his first discourse; and Kushinagara, the site of the Buddha's passing away.

Monk meditating on a text at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India



## VISIT A BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Non-Buddhists are made welcome at most Buddhist temples, and it is a Buddhist belief that Buddhist teaching should be free, open, and truthful. Look in local newspapers or on the internet for information about services. If you do visit a temple, whether in the West or in an Asian country such as Thailand, take along an offering, such

as flowers or food. If you do not wish to participate in communal rituals, such as chanting texts or meditating, then simply observe in silence from the back or side of the room.



Incense burned as an offering to the Buddha

Buddhist temple in Hong Kong, China

## ON A RETREAT

Buddhism is steadily growing in western countries and today there are many centres where you can find out more about Buddhism of all kinds. Some centres, such as Plum Village in France, founded by the famous Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hahn, or the Nan Tien Temple, at Wollongong in Australia, offer retreats where visitors can stay for several days, meditating and receiving personal instruction from a monk. Browse the internet to find a centre that suits you.



## BUDDHIST FESTIVALS

If you visit a country such as Thailand or Japan, find out if any Buddhist festivals are taking place at the time of your stay. The Buddhist festival of Songkran, held in April, marks the beginning of the Thai and Buddhist New Year. During the three-day festival, people visit monasteries, taking offerings of food and flowers to the monks. There are also boat races and water fights. The festival ends with the ringing of temple and monastery bells at midnight on the third day.



Colourful flowers decorate a Songkran festival float

## Places to visit

### INDIA:

#### • Bodh Gaya, Bihar

At the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, visitors can see the tree, said to be a direct descendant of the actual Bodhi Tree, and the restored Mahabodhi Temple.

#### • Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh

Here, visitors will find one of the most complete monuments in India – Sanchi's great stupa, with its four free-standing gates decorated with sculptures of Hindi-Buddhist deities, elephants, and lions.

### NEPAL

#### • Swayambhunath and Bodhnath, Katmandu

These impressive square-based stupas in a Nepalese style are decorated with immense eyes of inlaid metal and ivory.

### SRI LANKA

#### • Anuradhapura, north-central Sri Lanka

Here, a huge park contains the ruins of the great Mahavihara Monastery and the Ruwanweli Dagoba and Thuparama stupas.

#### • Polonnaruwa, north-eastern Sri Lanka

Visitors can see the famous recumbant parinibbana buddha statue and a colossal meditating buddha, along with several early 13th-century Buddhist monuments.

### THAILAND

#### • Wat Phra Kaeo Temple, Bangkok

The centre of Thailand's religious life, this famous temple in the precincts of the Grand Palace houses the revered figure of the Emerald Buddha.

### CHINA

#### • Jokhang Monastery

This monastery is the most sacred of all Tibetan pilgrimage sites, with a famous gilded roof.

#### • Potala Palace, Lhasa

Formerly the home of the Dalai Lama, the palace is now a state museum.

#### • Yung-Kang caves

These contain immense rock-carved Buddhas and shrines.

### JAPAN

#### • Kyoto

This ancient Japanese capital has many Zen monasteries and temples with rock and sand gardens, such as Tenryuji and Ryoan-ji.

#### • Todai-ji temple, Nara

As well as Todai-ji temple with its immense bronze Buddha, visitors to Nara can see many pagodas and early Buddhist shrines.



Buddha image at Nan Tien Temple, Wollongong, Australia – the largest Buddhist temple outside Asia



# Glossary

**ABHIDHAMMA** Further teachings of the Buddha and one of the three parts of the scriptures of the Tipitaka, or Pali scriptures, central to Theravada Buddhism.

**AMITABHA** Name given to a Buddha who is said to live in the Pure Land, a place without suffering; known as Amida Buddha in Japan. *See also* JODO BUDDHISM

**ARAHAT** (Sanskrit: arhat) In early and Theravada Buddhism, someone who has attained enlightenment. *See also* SAMBARA

**ASCETIC** Someone who gives up all comfort (eating little and sleeping outdoors) to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

**BODHISATTVA** (Pali: bodhisatta) Sanskrit word for someone who has attained enlightenment but who has chosen to be reborn to help others reach enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhists believe that anyone can become a bodhisattva and, eventually, an enlightened buddha.

**CH'AN BUDDHISM** "Meditation" school of Buddhism founded in China in the 6th century CE by Bodhidharma, an Indian monk; called Zen Buddhism in Japan. *See also* ZEN BUDDHISM



Heart Sutra on Chinese scroll

**COSMIC BUDDHA** One of five Buddhas also known as the buddhas of wisdom and compassion, revered by Mahayana Buddhists – Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava, Vairocana, and Vajrasattva.

**DALAI LAMA** Spiritual leader for Tibetan Buddhists.

**DHAMMA** (Sanskrit: Dharma) Buddha's teachings, meaning doctrine, truth, or natural law; the second of the Three Precious Jewels. *See also* THREE PRECIOUS JEWELS

**DHAMMAPADA** Collection of Buddha's advice about how to live a good life and purify the mind; part of the Sutta Pitaka in the Pali canon.

**DIAMOND SUTRA** One of the Mahayana scriptures on wisdom.



Statue of Amitabha

**DUKKHA** Pali word meaning suffering, said to be used by the Buddha to explain the central state of unhappiness at the heart of human life because nothing is ever exactly as we wish. Dukkha is the First Noble Truth. *See also* FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

**ENLIGHTENMENT** *See* NIBANNA

**FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS** Central to the Buddha's teachings – that all life is suffering; the cause of suffering is craving; the end of suffering comes with release from craving; and the craving ceases after following the Noble Eightfold Path. *See also* NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

**GOM** Tibetan word for meditation.

**HEART SUTRA** One of the Mahayana scriptures on wisdom.

**JODO BUDDHISM** Strand of Mahayana Buddhism in which followers call on the name of Amida Buddha so that they will be reborn in his Pure Land in the West, where he can help them reach enlightenment. *See also* AMITABHA

**KAMMA** (Sanskrit: Karma) Meaning "action", describes the law of cause and effect or the way in which a person's thoughts, words, and deeds will influence his or her rebirth.

**LAMA** Religious teacher and senior monk in Tibetan Buddhism.

**LOHAN** Chinese terms for arahat.

**LOTUS SUTRA** One of the Mahayana scriptures describing the Buddha's teaching on "skilful means" and how the many paths, including that of the bodhisattva, have the same goal. *See also* BODHISATTVA

**MAHAYANA BUDDHISM** Meaning "great vehicle"; a strand of Buddhism that developed in India, later spreading through China, Mongolia, and Tibet to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Some of its scriptures, regarded by Mahayana Buddhists as the words of the Buddha himself, are not used in Theravada Buddhism. Strands of Mahayana Buddhism include the Tibetan, Pure Land, and Zen Buddhist schools, and many new religious movements.

**MAITREYA** Bodhisattva and "future Buddha" who will come to the Earth to be the next human Buddha.

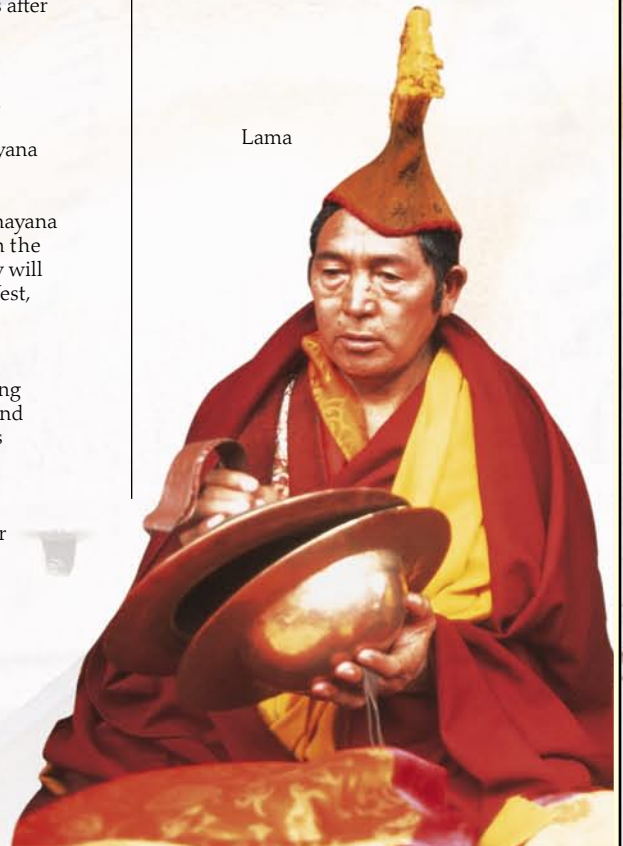
**MANDALA** Meaning "circle", a complex pattern, often made with coloured sand and the dust of precious stones, used to help in meditation. The Wheel of Life is a kind of mandala showing the Buddha's teaching. *See also* WHEEL OF LIFE

**MIDDLE WAY** A balance between living a life of hardship and one of luxury; illustrated in the Noble Eightfold Path. *See also* NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

**MUDRA** Hand gesture used in teaching and meditation.

**NIBBANA** (Sanskrit: Nirvana) The state of mind and heart when the "fires" of greed, hatred, and ignorance have died out; the ultimate goal for Buddhists, which frees them from samsara. *See also* SAMBARA

Lama





**NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH** A way people can live to overcome suffering, said to be the subject matter of the Buddha's first teaching. It comprises right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

**PALI** Indian dialect in which the Buddha's words are recorded in Theravada Buddhism.

**PARINIBBANA** Buddha's final passing away.

**PURE LAND BUDDHISM** See JODO BUDDHISM

**SAMSARA** The endless cycle of rebirth through the realms of the Wheel of Life.

**SANGHA** Community of those who follow the teachings of the Buddha, especially the Buddhist monks and nuns whose way of life is governed by the monastic code set out in the Vinaya; the third of the Three Precious Jewels. See also VINAYA



The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

**SANSKRIT** Sacred language of India used in the scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism.

**STUPA** Mound developed over the remains of the Buddha, a Buddhist saint, or an ancient scripture.

**SUTTA** (Sanskrit: Sutra) Teaching texts attributed to the Buddha. In Theravada Buddhism, the Sutta Pitaka is part of the Tipitaka, or Pali Scriptures. Much of the Tipitaka is also used by Mahayana Buddhists, with other sutras.

**TANTRA** Ritual texts said to be originally given by the Buddha, which include invoking deities and how to attain enlightenment through meditation, mantra, and yoga. The practice of Tantra depends on receiving personal and often secret instruction from a guru (called a lama in Tibet). See also TANTRIC BUDDHISM

**TANTRIC BUDDHISM** Tibetan school of Buddhism also known as Vajrayana Buddhism, which uses meditation and special rituals thought to speed devotees to enlightenment more quickly than by more conventional paths.

**THERAVADA BUDDHISM** (Sanskrit: Sthaviravada) Meaning "teachings of the elders"; a conservative school of Buddhism that is practised mainly in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma that places the greatest importance on the Buddha and his teachings. Its scriptures are the Tipitaka, written in the Pali language. See also MAHAYANA BUDDHISM, TIPITAKA

**THREE PRECIOUS JEWELS** The three things that Buddha advised his followers to turn to when trying to follow the Noble Eightfold Path – the Buddha himself; his dhamma, or teaching; and the monastic community, or sangha. See also SANGHA

**TIPITAKA** (Sanskrit: Tripitaka) Collection of Buddhist scriptures regarded as the word of the Buddha, at first passed on by word of mouth, then committed to memory, then written down. The Pali Tipitaka of the Theravada school of Buddhism is claimed to be the oldest surviving complete version. It is made up of around 29 separate works. The texts were originally written on palm leaves.

**TRIPLE REFUGE** Threefold commitment by a Buddhist to the Buddha, the dhamma, and the sangha (or the Three Precious Jewels).

**TULKU** In Tibetan Buddhism, a revered lama, believed to be a reincarnation of a saint or bodhisattva.

**VAJRA** Derived from Hindu mythology, the vajra was a diamond-hard thunderbolt used as a weapon by the gods. In Buddhism, it is used as a symbol of Buddhist authority and the piercing nature of wisdom. Vajrayana (or Tantric) Buddhism means "diamond way" or "thunderbolt way". See also TANTRIC BUDDHISM

**VIHARA** Pali and Sanskrit term for a Buddhist monastery, still used in Theravada Buddhism. A vihara provides accommodation for monks; halls for an image of the Buddha, reciting the scriptures, and ordaining monks; and a Bodhi tree. Small village viharas may just house two or three monks. Larger more important centres may have hundreds of monks.

**VINAYA** First of the three parts of the Tipitaka scriptures, written in Pali, which includes the rules by which Theravada Buddhist monks and nuns live.



Arahat

**WHEEL OF LIFE** Illustration of the cycle of rebirth by Tibetan Buddhists, the centre of which shows the three root evils of greed, hatred, and ignorance surrounded by six realms into which a person can be reborn.

**ZEN BUDDHISM** A kind of Mahayana Buddhism that began in China and is now mainly practised in Japan and Korea. It stresses the practice of meditation and often uses riddles and stories in its teachings.



Zen Buddhist monastery garden, Kyoto, Japan



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# Acknowledgements

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank: Birmingham Buddhist Vihara, UK, especially Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma and Yann Lovelock, and Karma Ling Temple, Birmingham, UK. Special thanks also go to the models: Yann Lovelock, Lama Rabsang, and Venerable Nagasena Bhikkhu.

All quotations used are taken from *Penguin Classics: Buddhist Scriptures*, selected and translated by Edward Conze.

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