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*Buddhism:  
An Exhibit  
in Honor  
of the Dalai  
Lama's Visit*

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**The Teachings of the Buddha**

This is an introduction to the life of the Buddha and the origins of Buddhism. The books on exhibit and the illustrations used are from children's books in the Library's Instructional Materials Center.

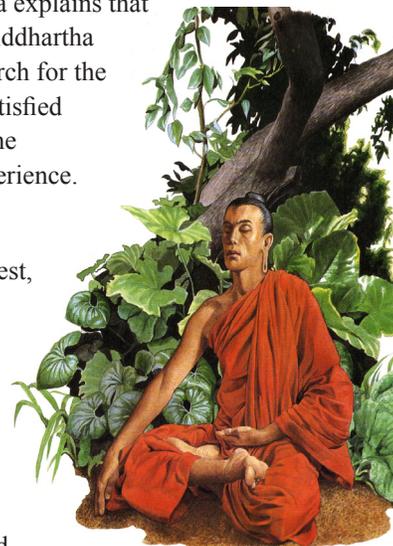
**What is Buddhism?**

Buddhism is the religion that has developed over the centuries around the teachings, ethics and practices of the historical Buddha and his followers.

Buddha lived sometime during the period from the sixth through the fourth centuries BCE. Historical facts about the early life of the Buddha are vague but tradition and legend tell us that the Buddha was born to a King, and thus to a life of privilege. Buddha's personal name was Siddhartha. The word "Buddha" is a title that means awakened, wise or learned. His father adored his son and within the palace walls was able to shelter Siddhartha from the pain and suffering of life. As a young man Siddhartha wanted to see the world outside the walls and so he ventures out

with his servant Channa. There for the first time he encounters people who are suffering: an old man who is crippled, another who is sick, and then one who has died. In each case Channa explains that this is what happens to everyone eventually. Seeing this suffering had a profound effect on Siddhartha. Finally they encounter an ascetic. Channa explains that the monk is seeking truth. Siddhartha realizes that he too must search for the truth, for he will never be satisfied until he can find a cure for the suffering that all people experience.

Siddhartha left his father's palace and wandered the forest, studying with one teacher after another. After learning all that his various teachers knew, he still hadn't found the answers that he was seeking. He then set out on his own. After a series of insights he achieved



the breakthrough that led to his enlightenment under the bodhi tree. After seven years he had finally found complete freedom from suffering.

The Buddha then began to teach the truths that he awoke to, first to fellow monks, and then to others who came to study with him. He taught until his death almost fifty years later.

### **Buddha's Realization of the Middle Way**

Siddhartha spent years in the forest in his quest for truth. He began a practice of austerity that left him so weak that his fellow ascetics needed to carry him from place to place. He would faint from lack of food. Then one day he overheard a fisherman teaching his companion how to play the lute. "If you tighten the strings too much they will break, and if they are too loose they won't play." At this point Siddhartha realized that the path between the extremes was the path to follow. He then began to eat food and take in nourishment, much to the dismay of his fellow ascetics, who believed that Siddhartha had forsaken the search for truth and they abandoned him.

This story has been compiled from several different sources, one of which is: *The Prince Who Ran Away: The Story of Gautama Buddha* by Fahimeh Amiri, and Anne F. Rockwell. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001. IMC Juv BQ892.R63 2001

### **Four Noble Truths**

The Four Noble Truths are the most basic expression of the Buddha's teaching. The first sermon that the Buddha gave after his awakening was on the Four Noble Truths. Ajahn Sumedho, a Buddhist abbot at Amaravati Buddhist Monastery just north of London described this sermon: "The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Buddha's teaching on the Four Noble Truths, has been the main reference that I have used for my practice over the years. It is the teaching we used in our monastery in Thailand. The Theravada school of Buddhism regards this sutta as the quintessence of the teaching of the Buddha. This one sutta contains all that is necessary for understanding Dhamma and for enlightenment." Sutta is a Pali word that refers to a discourse by the Buddha.

Source: The text of the Four Noble Truths as translated by Venerable Dr. Rewata Dhamma is from: *Revatadhamma. The First Discourse of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of Dhamma*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997. King Library (2nd floor) BQ1339.5.D457R48 1997

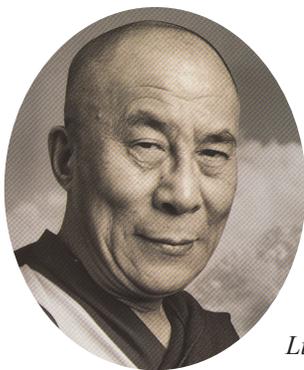
**FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

"This, O bhikkhus (monks), is the Noble Truth of suffering: Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering, association with the unloved or unpleasant condition is suffering, separation from the beloved or pleasant condition is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering."

"This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering: It is craving which produces rebirth, bound up with pleasure and greed. It finds delight in this and that, in other words, craving for sense pleasures, craving for existence or becoming and craving for nonexistence or self-annihilation."

"This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering: It is the complete cessation of suffering; giving up, renouncing, relinquishing, detaching from craving."

"This, O bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely: Right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right awareness, and right concentration."



### **His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama**

"Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, is the spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetan people. His tireless efforts on behalf of human rights and world peace have brought him international recognition. He is a recipient of the Wallenberg Award (conferred by the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Foundation), the Albert Schweitzer Award, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, and the Nobel Peace Prize." From the dust jacket of *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*.

"His Holiness describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk." From the Dalai Lamas web site.

### **Books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama On Exhibit**

*[All are located on King Library (2nd floor) unless otherwise noted]*

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## Buddhism in America

Interest in Buddhism in the United States dates back to the 1800's. Thoreau and Emerson were familiar with Buddhist teachings. The Beat generation helped to popularize Zen in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. By the 1960's and 70's a new generation was exploring Buddhism in Southeast Asia. The Dalai Lama's 1989 Nobel Peace Prize has renewed interest in Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism has been popularized in modern movies, and in contemporary music. American bookstores have whole sections of books on Buddhism, and there are several major American magazines devoted to Buddhism.

There are Buddhist meditation groups throughout the United States, including sitting groups here in the Midwest. Cincinnati, Dayton and Yellow Springs have groups in the Tibetan, Zen, and Vipassana traditions. There is also a sitting group here in Oxford. Contact information is available on request.

## Some Local Buddhist Organizations

Tri-State Dharma, Cincinnati (Theravada, Vipassana)	<a href="http://www.tristatedharma.org/">http://www.tristatedharma.org/</a>
Yellow Springs Dharma Center, Yellow Springs (Vipassana, Vajrayana and Zen)	<a href="http://www.ysdharma.org/">http://www.ysdharma.org/</a>
Gar Drolma Buddhist Center, Dayton (Tibetan)	<a href="http://www.gardrolma.org/">http://www.gardrolma.org/</a>
Buddhist Dharma Center of Cincinnati (Vipassana and Zen)	<a href="http://www.cincinnatiidharma.org/">http://www.cincinnatiidharma.org/</a>
Cincinnati Zen Center	<a href="http://www.cincinnatiizencenter.org/">http://www.cincinnatiizencenter.org/</a>
Ohio Buddhist Vihara, Cincinnati (Sri Lanka Theravada)	<a href="http://www.ohiovihara.org/">http://www.ohiovihara.org/</a>
Hamilton Zen Center	<a href="http://www.hamiltonzencenter.com/">http://www.hamiltonzencenter.com/</a>
Eastside Sangha, Cincinnati (In the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh)	<a href="http://eastsidesangha.com/">http://eastsidesangha.com/</a>

## Thai Fortune Telling Manuscripts

### Siamese Dream Book

Early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Khoi paper, folded. Chalk, mineral and plant pigments.

A folding book of the sort usually found in Buddhist monasteries. The paper is made from the bark of the khoi tree (*Streblus asper*), folded accordion style. This example has black pages with text in a yellow ink made from gambodge (a tree resin from *Garcinia hanburyi*).

This text was extremely popular among the expatriate community in Bangkok, Thailand in the middle of the nineteenth century and was featured in Fitch W. Taylors', *The Flag Ship: or A Voyage around on the World, in the United States Frigate Columbia...* (New York: D. Appleton, 1840). Siam is an early name for what became known as Thailand.

Although the focus is on dreams, many aspects are related to astrological concerns, such as the time of day, day of the week and planetary associations.



*If an individual dreams on Sunday, whether it be good or evil, it pertains to others, and will not affect the happiness or misery of the person himself. If any one dreams on Monday, whether good or evil, it will affect his friends and relations, but not himself. If on Tuesday, it forebodes good or evil to the parents of the dreamer. If on Wednesday, the omen pertains to the consort and children of the individual who dreams. If on Thursday, it relates to the dreamer's teachers or benefactors. If on Friday, the omen belongs to the servants or cattle of the individual. If on Saturday, it forebodes good or ill to the dreamer himself.*

*If he dreams of reading prayers or sacred books, it denotes that all his sins shall be pardoned by the gods. If he dreams of placing an image of the Lord Buddha in a temple, it is an omen of supreme happiness. If one dreams of eating the sun or moon, it denotes that he shall be a great prophet and magician.*

*If he dreams of seeing the moon fall and then eating it, it is an omen of the greatest possible good, let him remember it. If he dreams of bathing in a pool, dressed entirely in white, of being able to walk on the water, and bringing up a lotus-flower from the pool, it denotes an imminent and happy marriage.*

If one dreams of seeing his house consumed by fire, and of being much burned, let him take a lighted candle, flowers, and other offerings, to the bank of a river or canal, and there relate his dream to some friend. If he fails to do this, some great calamity shall surely befall him.

The book concludes with the following passage: *Whoever has the foregoing dreams, whether man or woman, may rely upon the interpretation here given. If one dreams in the first watch of the night, after eight months the dream shall be accomplished. If he dreams in the second watch, after four days the dream shall be fulfilled. If he dreams in the third watch, in one day the result shall be made known. If he dreams in the fourth watch of the night, the period for the accomplishment of the dream is uncertain.*



wood, gold, fire, and iron. The particular combination of these animals and elements determines an individual's fate.

### Thai Astrological Manuscript

Mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Khoi paper, folded. Chinese ink, mineral and plant pigments.

A Thai astrological table prefaces a series of planetary signs and their interpretation. Each of the segments of the chart is related to planetary positions and times of day. Representations of the twelve signs derived from the Chinese zodiac are found in the outer perimeter: rat, ox, tiger, hare, large serpent (dragon), small serpent, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog, and pig. Each birth year displays four forms of the animal for that year and a personified "mascot" and animal vehicle. In addition, each year is assigned a particular element: water, earth,

### Thai Fortune Telling Manuscript

Mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Khoi paper, folded. Chinese ink, mineral and plant pigments.

Another fortune telling text with paired animals and objects, tells the prospects of couples, dependent upon the year of their birth and associated animals.



### Ancient Thai Palm Leaf Book

"Sample leaves of an ancient book written on palm leaves by the priests of that period. They are now about 600 years old. The language of the ancient Pbali which preceded the modern Siamese language. The leaves are bound together with a string through the two holes which you note. Each book is composed of several hundred leaves and the edges were gilded. There are still signs of the gold leaf if you carefully examine the leaves. The writing is very beautiful and all was done by hand.



This is a transcription of a document found with the book. Source unknown.

To pronounce "Pbali" correctly is difficult. The nearest way we can come to it is to pronounce boli by giving a puff as a starter. The a is broad in pbali."

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