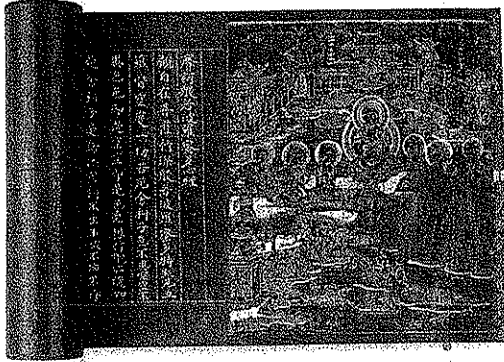


Symbol

The Wheel of Dhamma (teaching) is the symbol of Buddhism. Buddhists believe that Buddha set this wheel of learning in motion. It also represents the cycle of life and rebirth.



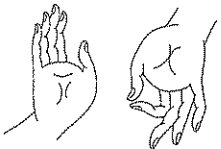
Holy books

After Buddha died, his followers wrote his teachings down on palm leaves and placed the manuscripts in three baskets. These scriptures are known as the Tipitaka, or the Three Baskets.

Buddha's hand gestures

In Buddhist art, the gestures Buddha makes with his hands have special meanings.

Statues of Buddha often show him with one hand raised, a gesture of blessing and fearlessness.



An open hand that points downward is an expression of generosity. Buddha teaches with an open hand.

Buddha's right hand touches the ground to remind Buddhists that the Earth is a witness to the truth.



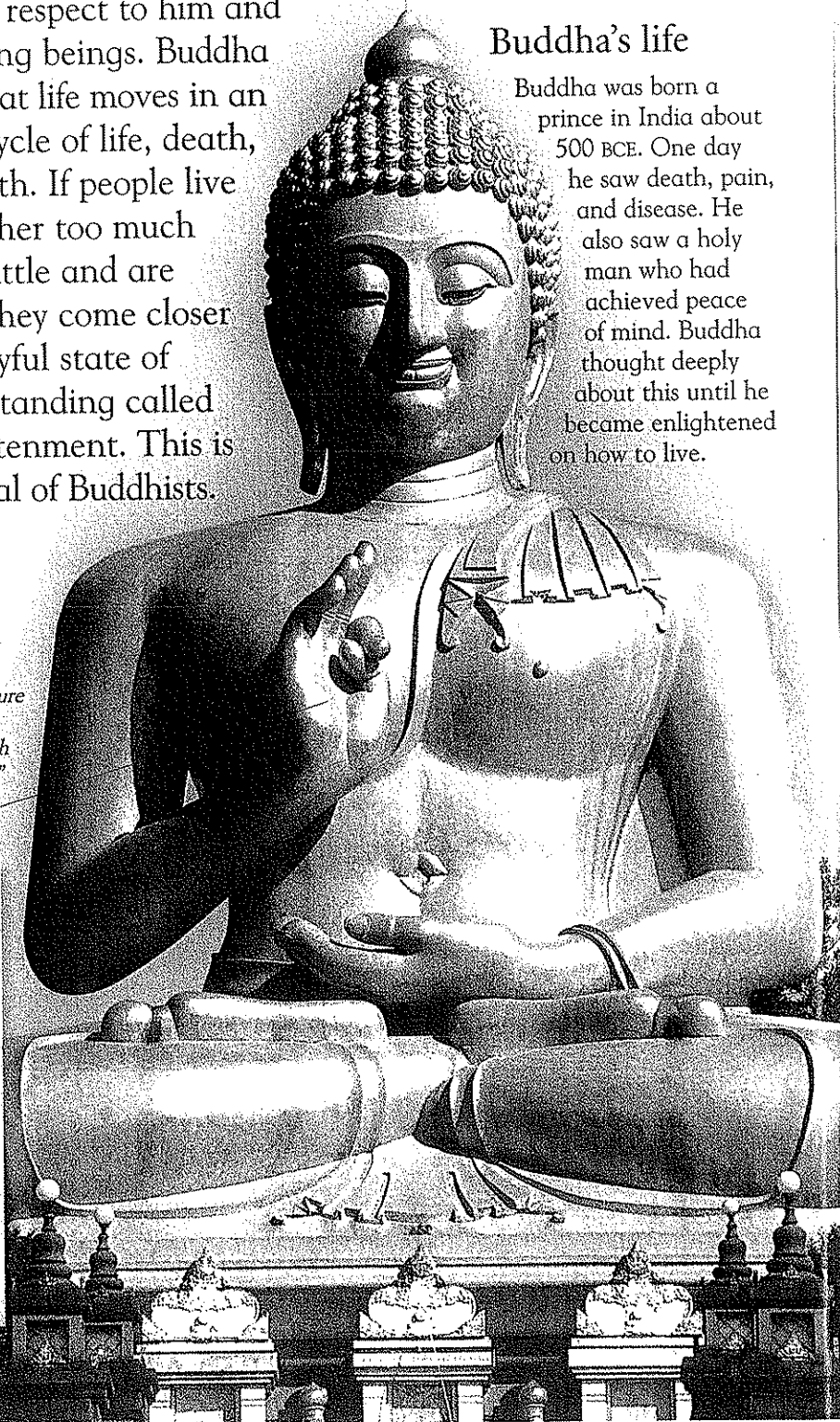
Here Buddha's forefinger and thumb make the dhamma, or teaching, gesture.

Buddhism

BUDDHISM IS NOT LIKE OTHER FAITHS. Its followers, who are called Buddhists, live according to the teachings of Buddha, its founder. Buddha did not believe in a supreme god, so Buddhists do not worship Buddha in that way. Instead, they pay respect to him and to all living beings. Buddha taught that life moves in an endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. If people live with neither too much nor too little and are kind, they come closer to a joyful state of understanding called enlightenment. This is the goal of Buddhists.

Buddha's life

Buddha was born a prince in India about 500 BCE. One day he saw death, pain, and disease. He also saw a holy man who had achieved peace of mind. Buddha thought deeply about this until he became enlightened on how to live.



How Buddhists worship

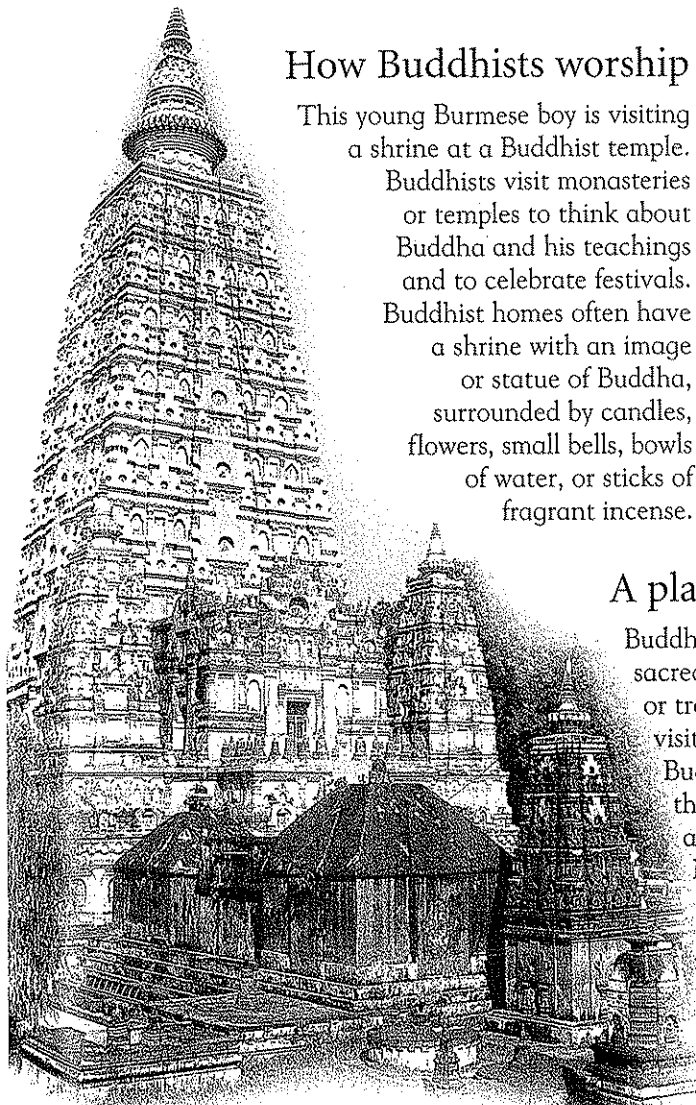
This young Burmese boy is visiting a shrine at a Buddhist temple.

Buddhists visit monasteries or temples to think about Buddha and his teachings and to celebrate festivals. Buddhist homes often have a shrine with an image or statue of Buddha, surrounded by candles, flowers, small bells, bowls of water, or sticks of fragrant incense.



Rites of passage

Some Buddhist boys become novice monks, shaving their heads and living a simple life. Other Buddhists give food and support to monks to gain merit.



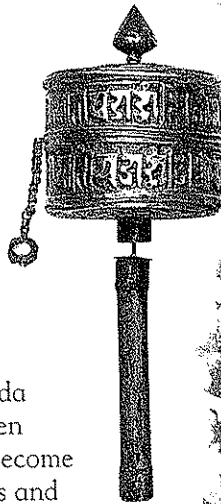
A place of pilgrimage

Buddhists believe that there are sacred places—buildings, mountains, or trees—that are worthy of a special visit. This temple is important to Buddhists because it was built in the exact spot where Buddha achieved enlightenment. The Mahabodhi temple is in Bodhi Gaya, India. The main tower is 177 ft (54 m) tall, and its brick walls are decorated with beautiful carvings. A gigantic golden statue of the Buddha is housed inside.

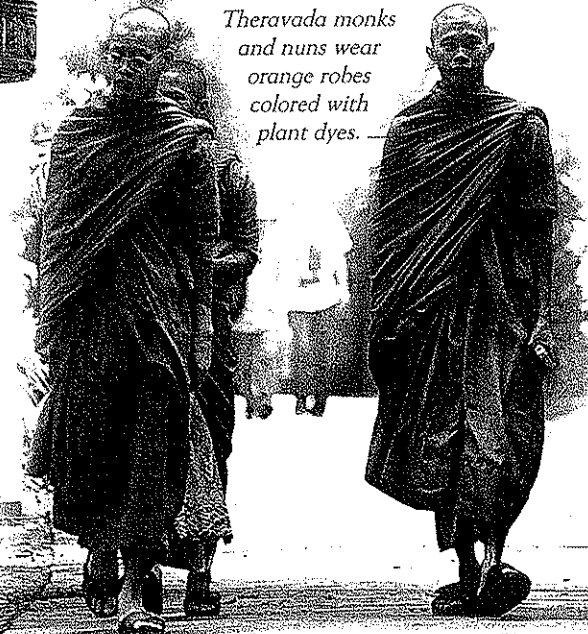
Schools of Buddhism

All Buddhists believe in the truth of Buddha's teachings, but different groups feel that there are separate paths to the truth. Theravada Buddhists are often encouraged to become monks and nuns and to follow Buddha's teachings as closely as possible. Mahayana Buddhists share the belief that anyone can become enlightened, without having to become a monk or a nun.

Tibetan Mahayana Buddhists use prayer wheels to spread blessings.



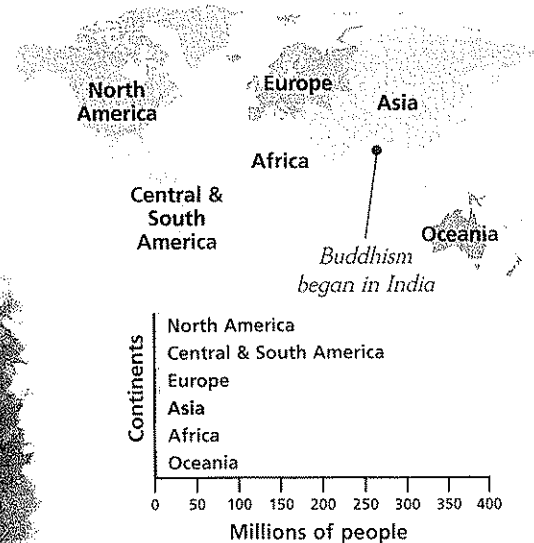
Theravada monks and nuns wear orange robes colored with plant dyes.



Main festivals

- Parinirvana (Mahayana) Buddha's death *February*
- Hana Matsuri (Mahayana) Buddha's birth *April*
- Wesak (Theravada) Celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death *April*
- Obon (Mahayana) The story of Buddha *July*
- Esala Perahera (Theravada) Festival of the Tooth *July/August*
- Kathina (Theravada) Offerings are given to monasteries *October*
- Nirvana Day (Mahayana) Buddha's enlightenment *December*

Where Buddhists live



There are about 500 million followers of Buddhism throughout the world. The greatest number of Buddhists live in Asia, which is the region where Buddhism was founded.

Training to be a monk

LIVING ACCORDING TO BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

MY NAME IS JANG-CHUB, and I am 11 years old. For the past year I have been living away from my family and friends as a novice monk. Being a novice means that I live and study at the Buddhist monastery, but I haven't yet taken my vows to stay forever. My father helped me to decide to become a novice when I was 10, but some children join when they are eight or nine. The thing I like best is learning the dhamma, Buddha's teachings.



Jang-chub from Tibet



At the monastery, everyone has his head shaved.

My friend does mine for me. We all wear the same clothes, too. In the outside world, clothes and hair can distract people from how they ought to live.

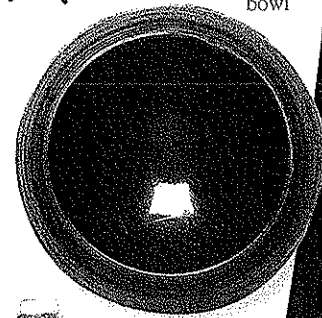
The dhamma is the most important thing to me

We try to follow in Buddha's path.

If a boy joins a monastery, it is a great honor for his family. Some boys are dressed in fancy clothes and paraded through the streets first. They enter the temple for a grand ceremony. Then they change into plain robes.



Razor

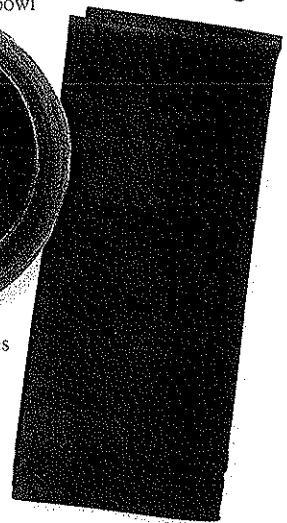


Alms bowl



Needle and thread

Robes



South Korea

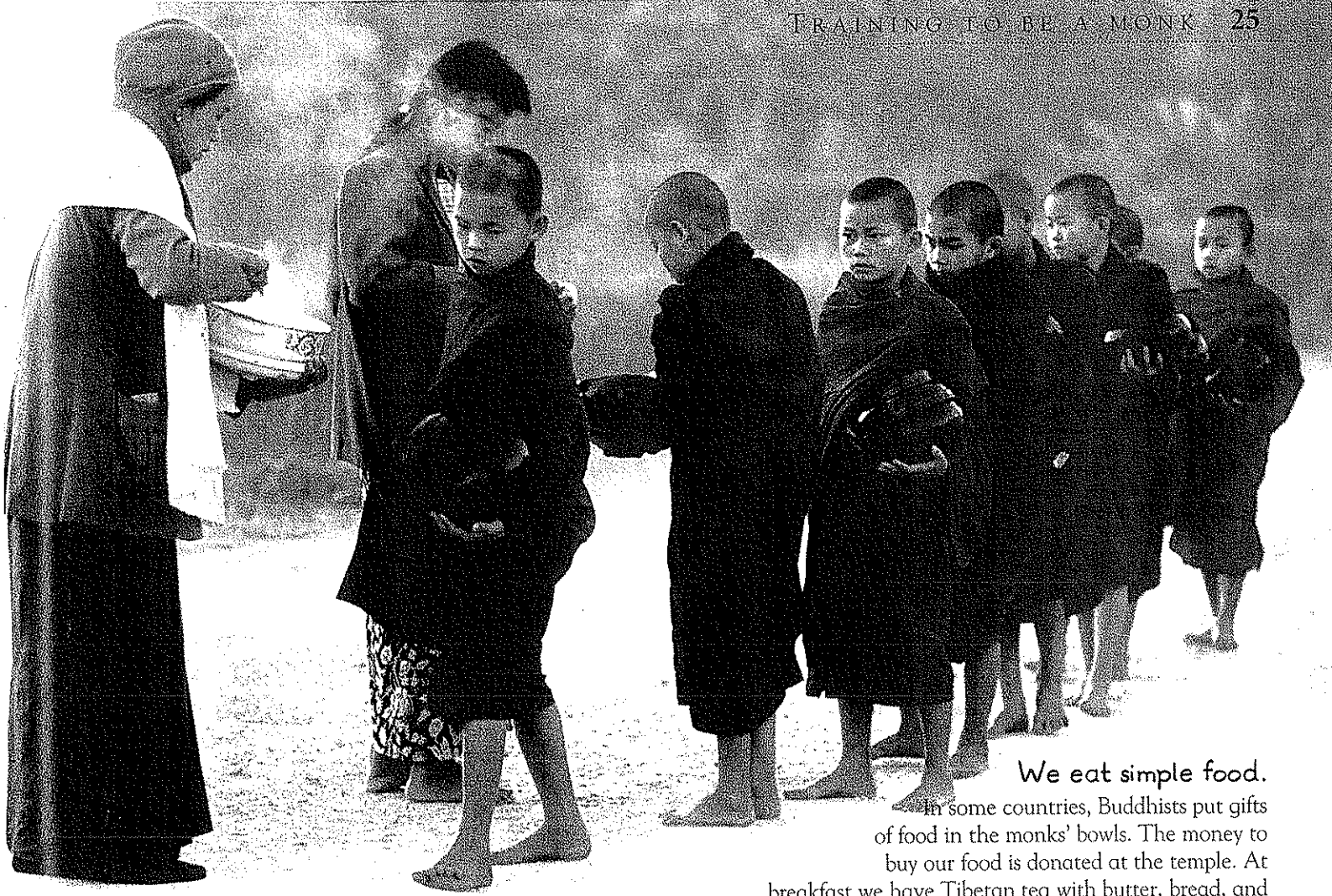
I get up at 4 a.m. each day to worship the Buddha statue. I also study the scriptures and have learned to play the wooden drum while prayers are being recited. Sometimes we go on a picnic.



Seong-ho

We don't need much.

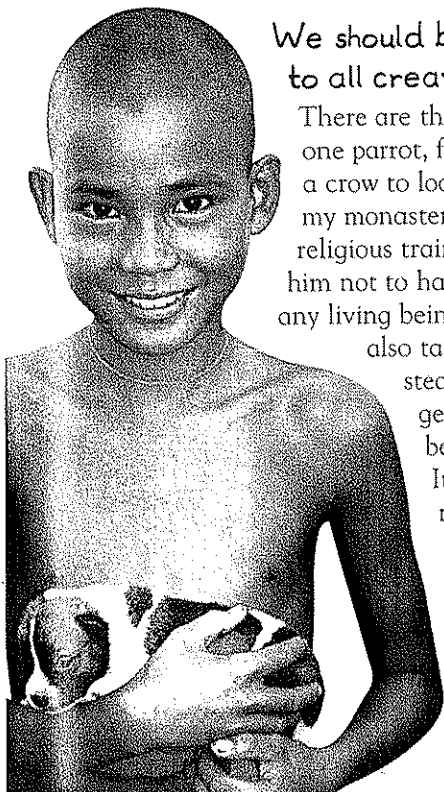
Everything we need is given to us. We wear plain red robes and flip-flops inside the monastery, and shoes outside. We have a razor to shave our heads, and a needle and thread to repair our robes. Some monks have alms bowls, but Tibetan monks don't.



Novices monks in Burma receive alms from local people.

We eat simple food.

In some countries, Buddhists put gifts of food in the monks' bowls. The money to buy our food is donated at the temple. At breakfast we have Tibetan tea with butter, bread, and potato curry. Lunch is dhal (lentil soup), rice, vegetables, and meat. Dinner is the same, but maybe with noodles.



We should be kind to all creatures.

There are three dogs, one parrot, four fish, and a crow to look after at my monastery. A monk's religious training teaches him not to harm or kill any living beings. We are also taught not to steal, tell lies, get married, or behave badly. It's easy to remember.

This novice in Burma cares for a puppy.

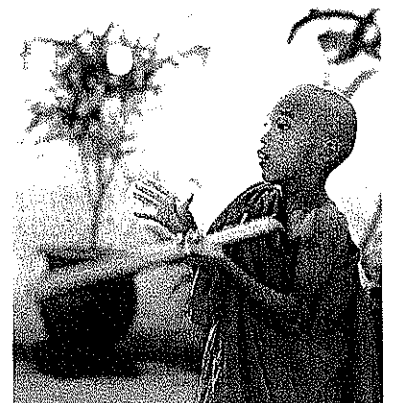


I love learning at the monastery.

We wake up at sunrise and have a Nepali class for one hour. After breakfast, we read Tibetan texts. We study Tibetan writing before tea. If we miss a class, we have to pay 25 rupees (60 cents).

I enjoy my free time.

Before lunch and after tea, I have time for myself. Sometimes I study, but I like to play games, too. Sunday is the only day I can leave the monastery to visit my family and see my friends.



Wesak

BUDDHA DAY

I'M JEFFREY, and I'm eight years old. One day I would like to be a dentist and a pianist. My favorite hobby is playing chess. When my brother was alive, he used to play games with me. He taught me to keep trying and never to give up. Now I am learning to be brave like my brother. I go to the temple a few times a year. I like the chanting songs. I feel happy when I hear them. My favorite celebration is Wesak. It is the day that we celebrate the birth of Buddha.



Jeffrey from Canada



Everyone tries to be kind.

We make lanterns and send greeting cards to each other and everyone is happy. The Buddha taught us not to harm other living creatures and to love everyone. It is good to be a vegetarian for a day on Wesak to remember that Buddha cared for all creatures.

We bathe the Buddha.

At the temple, I help to wash the small statues of Buddha as a child. These are often scattered with flower petals. The monk gives away blessing strings as a birthday gift. If we tie the string around our wrists, it will bring us good luck.



I help bathe the Buddha to get his blessing

On Wesak, my mom buys flowers and fruits.

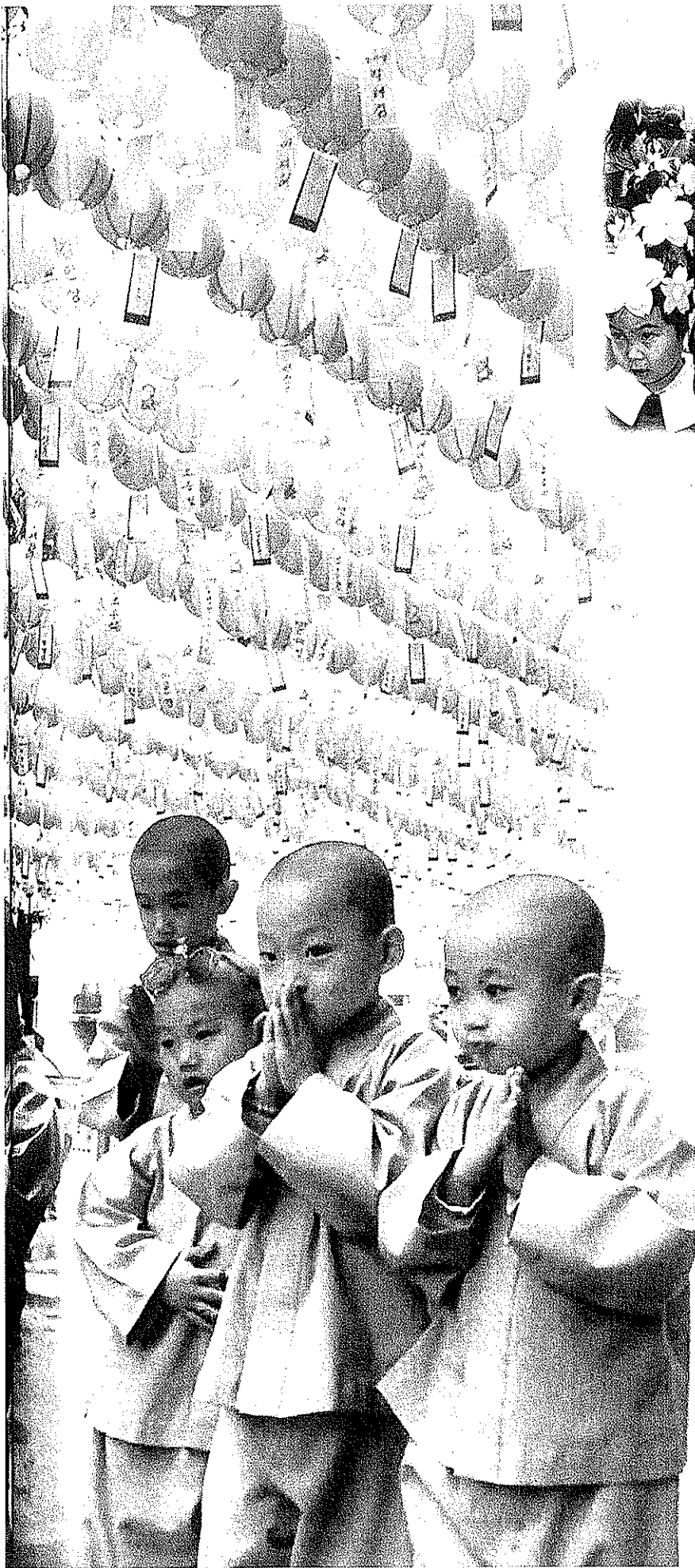
These are for our prayer offering at the temple. The temple is so crowded. People leave their offerings by the statue. I bow to Buddha and remember my brother as I chant and meditate.

We hang up lanterns. All around the world, Buddhists decorate temples and trees with lanterns and lights. The lights help us to think about Buddha's enlightenment. In some places, Buddhists parade through the streets holding lighted candles.



Flowers like this lotus blossom are offered to Buddha.





Hana Matsuri

Buddhists in Japan celebrate Buddha's birthday at Hana Matsuri, a flower festival. Children make paper flowers to remind them of the beautiful gardens where Buddha was born. They dress in their best clothes and walk beside floats full of flowers in a parade to the temple. Everyone throws lotus flowers into the path of the procession.



At night, we parade with our lanterns.

It's called a light parade. We also have lanterns when we celebrate the Moon festival. Children are allowed to stay up late. We play with lanterns until the full Moon rises. Some people pray to the Moon because they believe an angel lives up there.



Suzzane

Borneo

On Wesak I gave the Buddha a bath. The monk distributed flowers, and we used them in the bath. The scent of flowers is nice.



Leanne Son

Australia

I go to the Cambodian temple to pray on special occasions. We prepare food and serve it to the monks, who say prayers to the gods and ancestors.

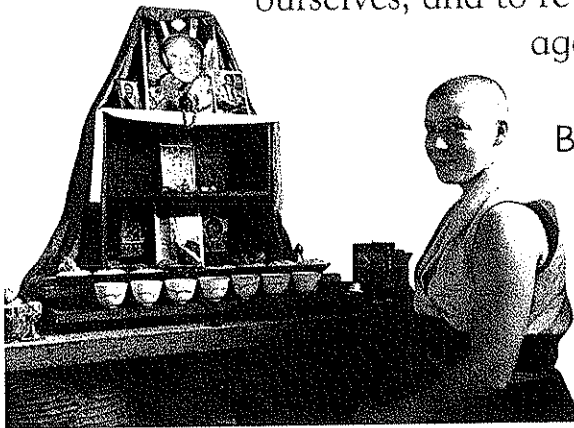
Ways of worship

DEVOTION TO BUDDHA

HELLO, MY NAME IS MAIKO. I enjoy listening to pop music and walking our family dog. So far, I have traveled to Germany and Australia. I dream of visiting more places, and meeting people on the way. I live in a temple because both my parents work as priests. My father began to teach me how to recite a sutra (scripture) called the O-kyo when I was three years old. Buddhism teaches us to be aware of ourselves, and to review our attitudes again and again.



Maiko from Japan



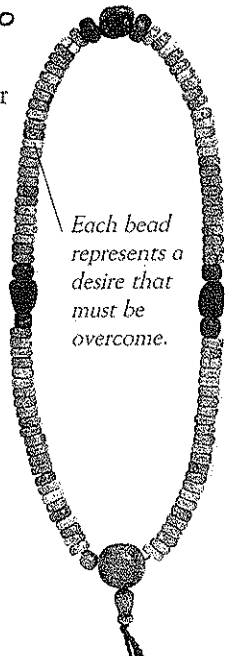
A nun in Scotland sits at her bedroom shrine.

Buddhists spend time chanting at home.

I feel calm and softened when we recite the O-kyo sutra at home. For us, it is very important to do this.

We recite the O-kyo using prayer beads.

As we recite the sutra, our fingers move from one bead to the next. Most juzu have 108 beads.



Each bead represents a desire that must be overcome.



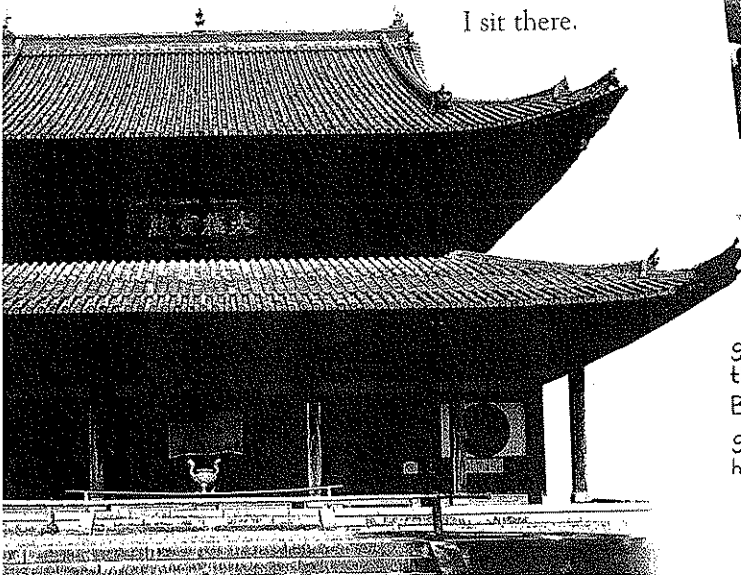
Outside the temple is a gong.

It is struck 10 times every day, at sunset and during religious celebrations. I'm very fond of striking it, since I've done it since I was small.

My religion has always been with me

Our temple is also my home.

The main building in the middle of the temple complex is called the hondo. At the heart of the hondo is my favorite place in the temple, the Amida-sama, or Buddha statue. I feel very calm when I sit there.



Hoang

Vietnam

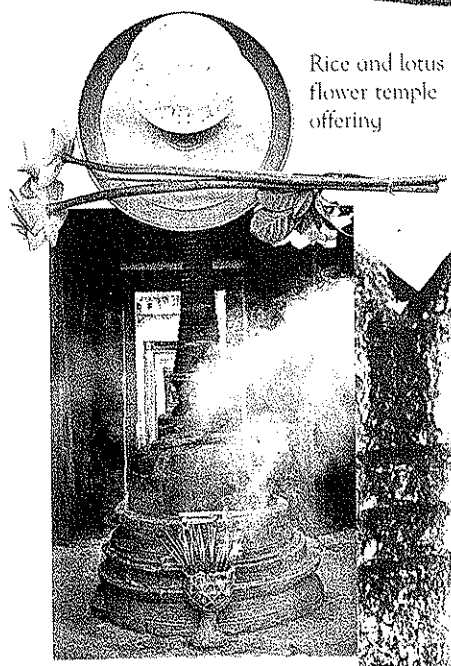
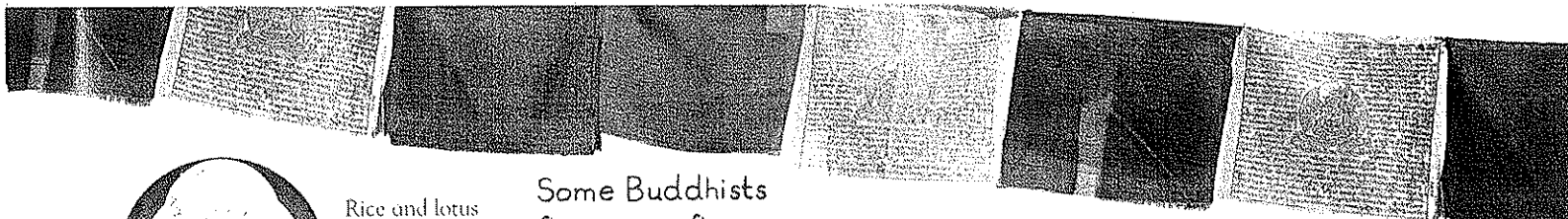
I go with my mom and dad to my grandad's grave. I light the incense and pray to Buddha to look after grandad in Heaven. I hope Buddha hears me.



Zoe

US

Buddhism is very peaceful. My brother and I chant to overcome challenges. We also chant for the happiness of others. When friends ask what the altar is, I say it's where we pray.



Rice and lotus flower temple offering

Some Buddhists fly prayer flags.

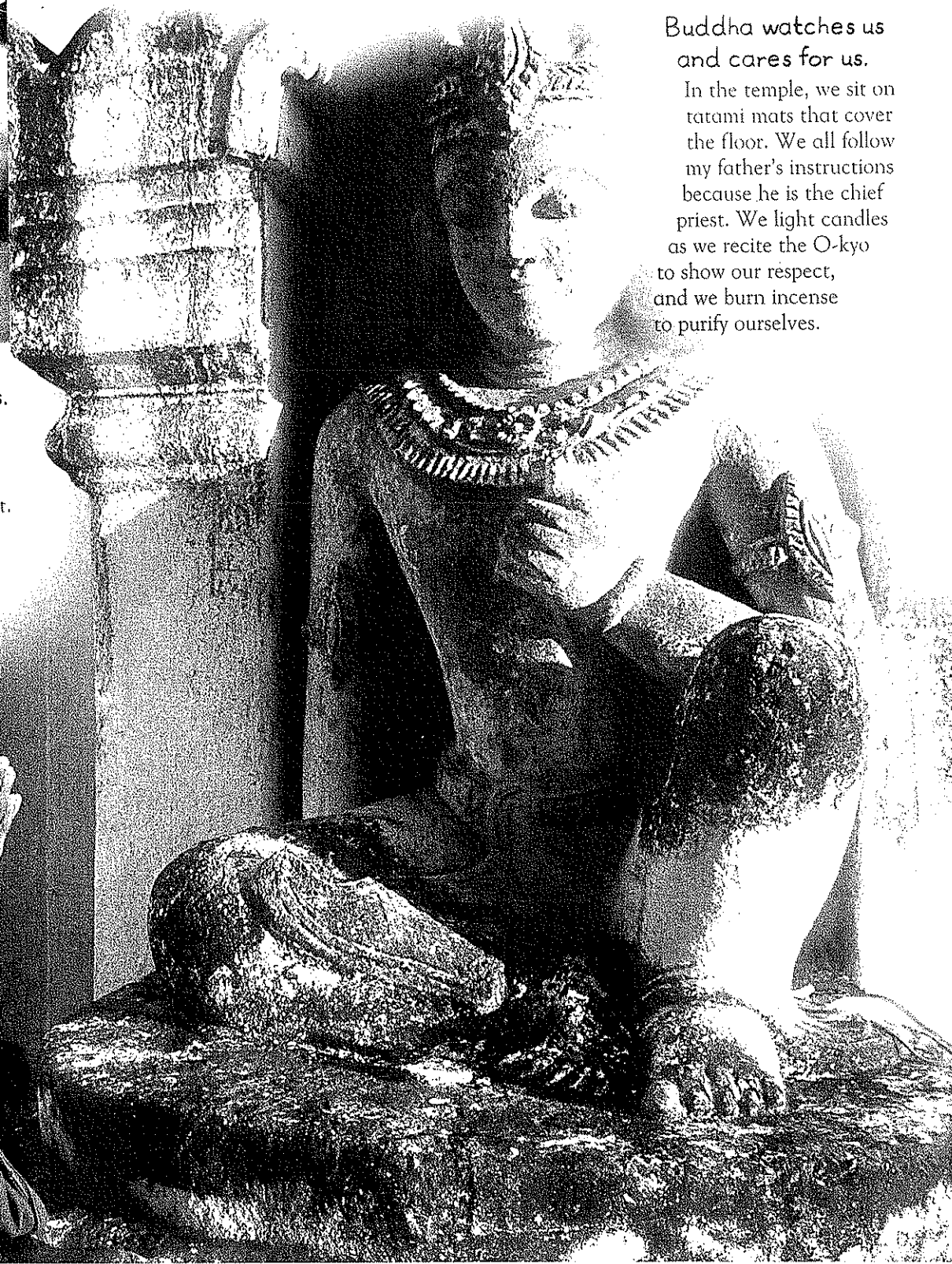
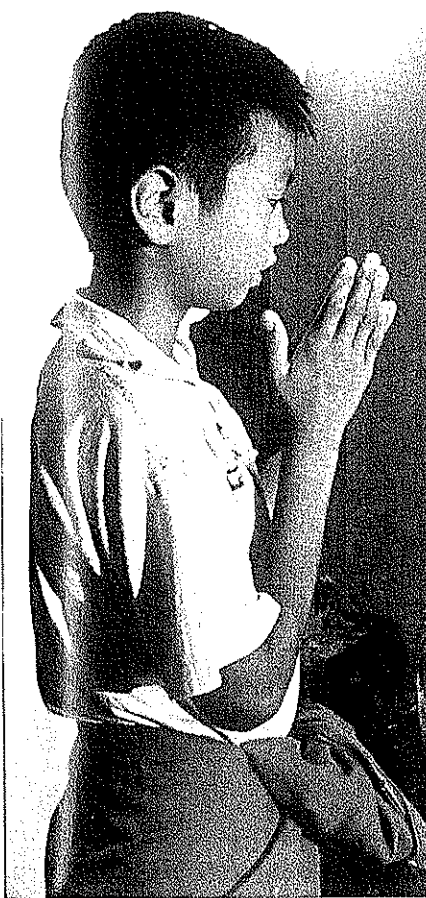
When the wind blows, the prayer flags flutter and carry blessings for goodness, healing, and happiness through the breeze to everyone in the world.

Buddha watches us and cares for us.

In the temple, we sit on tatami mats that cover the floor. We all follow my father's instructions because he is the chief priest. We light candles as we recite the O-kyo to show our respect, and we burn incense to purify ourselves.

We thank Buddha by making offerings.

People don't have to give money. Working for the temple or spreading his teaching is also important.



Esala Perahera

FESTIVAL OF THE TOOTH

MY NAME IS HASINI. I am 10 years old, and my favorite hobby is collecting stamps and stickers. I like reading books, and when I graduate I want to be a scientist. Once or twice a week I visit the temple. It is built of white-washed plaster, with high steps leading up to a Buddha statue. Every year, we celebrate a festival in honor of Buddha's tooth.



Hasini from Sri Lanka

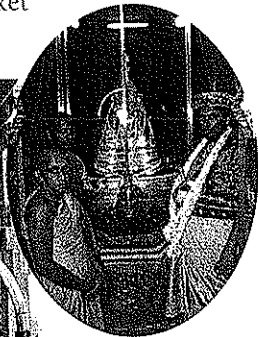
The elephants walk along so slowly and proudly

I have seen Buddha's tooth twice. His tooth is very brown and about 1½ in (4 cm) long. It sits on a velvet base covered by a glass bowl. The tooth is so precious that a temple was built here in Kandy to house it. During the festival, the tooth is paraded in a casket on an elephant's back.

The Raja—a very large elephant—carries the sacred tooth under a canopy.



Inside the Temple of the Tooth



The casket is made of gold and studded with gems.

First, we have the Kap ceremony.

The night before the festival starts, a branch of a jackfruit tree that has never borne fruit is planted near the temple. Then the festival can begin.



This girl is holding up a jackfruit.



Sri Lanka

The procession is very short at the beginning of the festival. Every day it gets longer and longer as more elephants join in. They are covered in tiny lightbulbs at night. Last time, I saw about 113 elephants, and two baby elephants as well. I like the dancers best.



Dilrupa

The sights and sounds at night are so exciting.

The first sound you hear is the whip cracklers, then the parades begin. There are drummers, dancers, stilt walkers, somersaulters, and singers. I have also seen the colorful floats of the gods. Everything sparkles with gold and jewels. I have fun with my family, especially my cousins, who are all my age. We watch everything together.

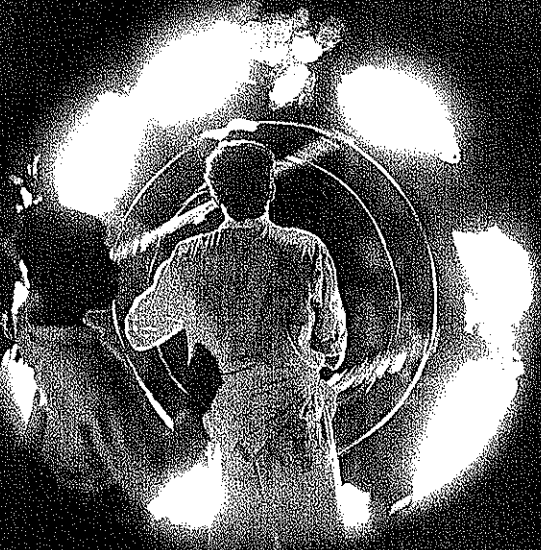
The dancers that follow the elephants have the brightest costumes.

One year I counted 55 elephants.

I usually watch the parades from the balcony of a friend's store. The elephants are one of the best parts. They are always dressed in rich, dark colors, with each color representing a different god. Sometimes the elephants are sprinkled with gold dust. The festival lasts for two weeks.



Drummer playing a thammattama drum



Fire-eaters carry lighted torches.

