



# BUDDHISM

# BACKGROUND

- Founded in India about 500 B.C. by a teacher called the Buddha
- Buddhism has been a dominant religious, cultural, and social force in most of Asia
- Today, Buddhism has about 350 million followers
  - Most live in Tibet and other regions of China, and in Japan, the Korean Peninsula, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia

# THE BUDDHA

- Buddha is a title given to a person believed to have transcended the cycle of rebirth known as samsara and attained nirvana (enlightenment)
- The first Buddha and founder of Buddhism was **Siddhartha Gautama**, born in the 500s or 400s B.C. in Nepal

# THE BUDDHA

- As a young man, Gautama decided to leave his family and palace life to seek spiritual liberation or enlightenment
- He became an ascetic, a person who denies himself worldly comforts and pleasures
- He traveled throughout northeastern India for 6 years
  - During his travels he experienced nirvana and discovered the Four Noble Truths

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- **The Four Noble Truths state:**
  - 1. Life is full of suffering, pain, and sorrow
  - 2. The cause of suffering is nonvirtue—or negative deeds
  - 3. The only cure for suffering is to overcome nonvirtue
  - 4. The way to overcome nonvirtue is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- Eventually, Gautama decided to teach his message
  - His followers called him the Buddha, which means the “enlightened one”
  - For the rest of his life, the Buddha preached the message of how to overcome suffering which is called the dharma

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- Another key belief is the Eightfold Path
  - It focuses on the right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right mindfulness, and the right contemplation
  - This was the path to end a life of suffering

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- It was believed that if a person led a moral life he could achieve enlightenment through meditation
- For a Buddhist, the final goal is nirvana—union with the universe and release from the cycle of rebirth

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

- After the Buddha's death, his followers collected his teachings in a set of texts called the Tripitaka

