

**Brief Presentation**  
**to a Volunteer Group of Glenbow Museum**  
**in the Asian Gallery**  
**who visited the centre in May 28, 2005**

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**Cambodian-Canadian Community in Calgary**

***History and Resettlement***

The influence of Vietnamese War had pushed Cambodia into decades of interior war. During 1975-1979, Cambodia was controlled by the genocidal regime called Khmer Rouge and there were about two millions of innocent people were died by the punishment, starvation, over hard work and sickness.

After the Khmer Rouge was overthrown by Vietnamese invasion in January 7, 1979; there were many people were rescued in the refugee camps along the border line with Thailand. Those suffered people are supported and helped by the United Nation. And most of them were welcomed to resettle in the new, hoped land such as USA, Canada, Australia, French, New Zealand, Swiss, etc.

It is the awareness of Cambodian people in everywhere who love their own way of lives, identity, culture, heritage, language and religion. Anywhere that has Cambodian people live more than ten families; they shall create their own community and afford to construct the Temple to centre their identities.

So, the same in Calgary when a few Cambodians had arrived Calgary before the war and there were a lot Cambodians had arrived after the war. They have resettled almost everywhere throughout Alberta province such as in Edmonton, Calgary, Brooks, Red Deer, Medicine Hate and Let Bridge etc.

Firstly, Cambodian-Canadian Association was created in the year 1980 and purchased a home to use for monk residence in 1989. Our present Temple was purchased and renovated in June 22, 2001.

Our Khmer-Canadian Buddhist Cultural Centre here is very useful and accessible to all people to come and do research independently. As a Non-Profit Organization, we aim to have our Khmer people enrich the multi-cultural society of Canada with a sense of peaceful pride.

We give a particular focus to our young, teaching them ethics and self-reliance. We do this through our Buddhist School, Khmer language classes, insight meditation, access to internet-computer resources and other youth services and programs.

Other activities taking place in our Centre are religious ceremonies, spiritual guidance, ethical observation, bhavana meditation and dana offering.

## ***Cambodian History and Culture***

Cambodia is like most other Asian countries were influenced by the Indian culture. It was Buddhism and Hinduism which played the important role in developing and integrating Cambodia into a civilized country. Cambodian ancient scholars had gradually khmerized those influences into unique Khmerness. It has a long journey combining with the glory and collapsing.

Starting her ancient state that was called Funan(AD.100-600), Chenla(AD.600-800) and Angkorian Empire(AD.802-1431), During Angkorian Empire, Cambodia was expanded her territory widely from the China Sea to the Gulf of Bengal in the west.

### ***Masterpiece on Castles Construction***

It is common for each Cambodian king that when they ascend to the throne, they have to build castles or temples to identify his/her glory and to remain as the legacy for their young generations. Starting from the Funan era till the Post-Angkorian, the researchers and historians have said that there are more than 1,000 castles was erected throughout Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Vietnamese.

Angkor Wat known as the largest monument for human kind. It was built by King Suriyavarman II(AD.1113-1150). It is very beautiful and incomparable by its size, bas-relief, sculptures and decoration. In the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1992, the UNESCO World Heritage Committees declared the monument, and the whole city of Angkor, a World Heritage Site.

*One of these temples- a rival to that of Solomon, and erected by some ancient Michael Angelo - might take an honorable place beside our most beautiful buildings. It is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome, and presents a sad contrast to the state of barbarism in which the nation is now plunged (By Henry Mouhot, a French naturalist who visited Angkor in the year of 1858 - 60).*

*To Khmer People, Angkor Wat is more than just an ancient pile of stones, it is more than just the remains of a highly advanced kingdom, it is more than just a tourist attraction - to the Khmers it is a symbol of hope.*

Angkor Thom or Bayon has the Compassionate Smiles to every one and creatures symbolizing the greatness of Cambodian greatest final King; Emperor Jayavarman VII (AD.1181-1215).

### ***Art Styles***

*The best of this (Angkor) art combines a sensuous sweetness with luxuriant magnificence, blending joy with delight with intense intellectual and imaginative strength!*

*No film, no photograph, nothing can prepare one for Angkor and its impact. It is even difficult to speak of it in other than superlative terms. For it is colossal, enormous, prodigious, startling, awesome...., (By Philip Rawson.),*

### ***Language***

Khmer language or Cambodian is one of the main Austroasiatic languages, and has had considerable influence from Sanskrit, Pali. Some of these influences, such as Sanskrit and Pali, come from the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism on Khmer culture; the latter two are the result of linguistic contact and geographic proximity.

The Cambodian language is somewhat unusual among its neighboring countries' languages of Thai, Laotian and Vietnamese in that it is not a tonal language.

Dialects are sometimes quite marked; notable variations are found in speakers from Phnom Penh (the capital city) and Battambang.

(This analysis comes from my observation as a conversant speaker of Cambodian without any background in linguistics).

A notable characteristic of the Phnom Penh accent is a tendency toward slang and laziness in pronunciation, much like American urban slang. For instance, "Phnom Penh" will sometimes be shortened to "m'Penh". Another characteristic of the Phnom Penh accent is observed in words with an "r" sub consonant in the first syllable (that is, where r is the second consonant, as in the English word "bread"). The r is not pronounced, the first consonant is pronounced harder than usual, and the syllable is spoken with a dipping tone much like the "hoi" tone in the Vietnamese language. For example, I have heard the word "dre" (meaning "fish") pronounced "te"; the "d" becomes a "t", and the vowel (long A) begins low and rises in tone.

Written Cambodian is alphabetic like English (and unlike Chinese). Its alphabet consists of two separate categories -- consonants and vowels. Pronunciation is given here in the traditional form (you will need a computer with Khmer fonts to see the letters below). It is also notable that the Cambodian script has fewer vowel symbols than the language has vowel phonemes. Instead, each consonant symbol has two digraphs, each with its own inherent vowel (incidentally making Khmer script an abugida rather than a true alphabet. The actual vowel sound represented is therefore indicated by the combination of the vowel symbol plus the inherent vowel of its associated consonant.

### ***Way of life***

By the influences of Buddhism, Cambodian people are full of kindness and hospitality to all visitors. They are quiet, gentle and polite.

There are many occasions that they always reunite together such as: religious ceremonies like Bon Choul Chnam(New Year), Bon Pachum Ben(Feast Festival for Ancestors), Bon Visakh Day(Birth, Enlightenment and Parinibbana of Lord Buddha), Bon Magha Bochea(the birth of Sangha community and the codes of recluses), Bon Kathin(Saffron robe offering ceremony), Bon Kan Ben(alms-food offering practice), Bon Choul Vassa(Buddhist Lent or Rain Retreat) and Bon Cheng Vassa(Buddhist out of Lent)...etc. These religious ceremonies are also regarded as the Traditional Ceremonies.

## **Buddhism: General Perspectives**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The name Buddhism comes from the word 'budhi' which means 'to wake up' and thus Buddhism is the philosophy of awakening. This philosophy has its origins in the experience of the man Siddhartha Gotama, known as the Buddha, who was himself awakened at the age of 35. Buddhism is now 2,548 years old and has about 400 million followers worldwide. Until a hundred years ago Buddhism was mainly an Asian philosophy but increasingly it is gaining adherents in Europe, Australia and America.

### ***BUDDHA***

#### **Who was the Buddha?**

Before he became a Buddha, Siddhartha was a prince. But he wasn't just any old prince, his mother had prophetic dreams before he was born and wise men made great predictions about his destiny.

#### **Leaving the Palace**

During an excursion outside the palace walls, Prince Siddhartha was so deeply affected when he saw a sick man, an old man and a corpse, he decided to leave the palace and become a monk.

#### **Under the Bodhi Tree**

Nibbana or Enlightenment is the goal of all Buddhists. This means putting an end to the suffering we experience in life. The Buddha endured six years of physical hardship as a monk before he attained Enlightenment whilst meditating under the Bodhi tree.

#### **What the Buddha Taught**

The most important Buddhist Teaching is the Four Noble Truths. This explains why we suffer and what we can do to eliminate suffering from our life. After the

Buddha attained Enlightenment, this was his first Teaching. His first lucky students were five monks he knew.

### **The Buddha's Disciples**

Sangha - the Buddha's male and female disciples, during his lifetime and right up to the present day. Although Sangha traditionally refers to monks and nuns, these days it also refers to lay followers of Buddhism.

### **Loving-Kindness**

The Buddha taught that positive qualities such as loving-kindness should replace negative ones such as selfishness. One way of doing this is through meditation. Without developing a good heart, it's impossible to achieve lasting happiness.

### **The Buddha's Last Days**

The Buddha on the last stage of his journey. Even great teachers must die, and the Buddha was no exception. However, his death was by no means the end of the story. Today his Teachings are still very much alive.

### **Who is a Buddhist?**

This unit defines a Buddhist as one who takes refuge in the Triple Gem (the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), and willingly follows the Five Precepts. These are rules for living a moral life, and include not killing, stealing and lying.

### ***Four Noble Truth***

1. The truth of suffering such as birth, aged, sick, death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, grief, despair, association with hateful ones, separation from loved one, not getting what one wants and the five groups of grasping(clinging).
2. The truths of the cause of sufferings are defilements, ignorance and craving or greed, hatred and delusion.
3. The truth of the cessation of sufferings is Enlightenment or Nibbana.
4. The truth of the ways leading to the cessation of sufferings: Eightfold Path.

### ***Five Precepts***

*I undertake to:*

1. Abstain from killing living beings;
2. Abstain from taking that which not given;
3. Abstain from sexual misconduct;

4. Abstain from false speech;
5. Abstain from distilled substances that confuse the mind. (Alcohol and Drugs)

### ***The Five Precepts in positive terms***

I undertake the training precept to:

1. Act with Loving-kindness;
2. Be open hearted and generous;
3. Practice stillness, simplicity and contentment;
4. Speak with truth, clarity and peace;
5. Live with mindfulness.

### ***The Three Signs of Existence or Universal Properties***

1. Anicca — Impermanent;
2. Dukkha — Unsatisfactory, stress inducing;
3. Anatta — Insubstantial or Not-self.

### ***The Four Sublime or Uplifted States***

1. Metta — Friendliness, Loving-kindness;
2. Karuna — Compassion;
3. Mudita — Joy, Gladness. Appreciation of good qualities in people;
4. Upekkha — Equanimity, the peaceful unshaken mind.

### ***The Eight Fold-Path***

*Right, Integral, Complete, Perfected.*

1. Right View, Understanding;
2. Right Attitude, Thought or Emotion;
3. Right Speech;
4. Right Action;
5. Right livelihood;
6. Right Effort, Energy, and Vitality;
7. Right Mindfulness or Awareness;
8. Right Samadhi "concentration", one-pointedness. Integration of, or establishment in, various levels of consciousness.

- *Alternate meanings are given as the original Pali has shades of meaning not available in one English word.*

### ***Creation of Sangha(monk) community***

A few months after his enlightenment the [Buddha](#) founded an order or [Sangha](#) of monks. The purpose of this order was twofold. Its primary purpose was to provide a community that would give the optimum opportunity for its members to practice the [Dhamma](#) and attain [Nibbana](#). Its secondary purpose was to transmit the Dhamma and be a witness to its transforming power.

### ***Becoming a Monk***

- To become a novice (*samanera*) all that is needed is to approach a monk of at least 10 years standing and ask to be accepted. After undertaking several years training and being at least 20 years old the novice is qualified to be a fully ordained monk. To do this he must approach an assembly of 10 monks each of at least 10 years standing who are respected for their virtue and learning. The candidate is then asked 11 questions to determine his suitability. (1) Are you free from disease? (2) Are you a human? (3) Are you a male? (4) Are you a free man? (5) Are you free from debt? (6) Do you have any obligations to the state? (7) Do you have your parent's permission? (8) Are you at least 20 years of age (9) Do you have your robe and towel? (10) What is your name? (11) What is your teacher's name? If the candidate answers these questions satisfactorily and if no objections are raised by the assembly, he is considered to be a fully ordained monk (Bhikku). A monk can use property belonging jointly to the *sangha* but he himself is supposed to own only eight things - three robes, an alms bowl, a razor, needle and thread, belt, and a strainer to purify drinking water. He is also obliged to abide by the 227 rules contained in the Vinaya Pitaka.

### ***Meditation***

- There are two kinds of meditation: Concentration Meditation (*Samatha*) and Insight Meditation (*Vipassana*)
  1. Concentration Meditation means you control your mind to be a pointedness mind.
  2. Insight Meditation means you are aware or noting every movement of thought.

### ***Seven Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation***

1. **Purification**: this mindfulness meditation must be practiced for purification of beings. This is the first benefit. If you are mindful of any mental or physical process, if your concentration is good enough, at the moment of deep concentration on this mental or physical process your mind is purified. It's free from all kinds of mental defilements, all kinds of hindrances.

2. **Overcoming sorrow:** then the second benefit is overcoming worry, sorrow and lamentation. The second benefit is sorrow and worry. You overcome sorrow and worry even though you failed in your business. You don't worry about it; you don't feel sorry.
3. **Overcoming lamentation:** When you have completely realized the mental and physical processes and their true nature by means of mindfulness meditation, even though your relative dies, or even though your sons or parents die you won't cry over it. You have exterminated this lamentation for the dead.
4. **Overcoming grief:** Then, the fourth benefit is the overcoming of grief. In the full retreat you can do away with grief, when your mindfulness meditation is fully practiced. Here grief means mental suffering. Mental suffering is exterminated, done away with, by this mindfulness meditation.
5. **Overcoming physical suffering:** And also pain here means physical suffering. All kinds of physical suffering are destroyed through mindfulness meditation. There are some who cured illness by means of mindfulness meditation. The fifth benefit is overcoming physical suffering, dukkha. Mental suffering is known as *domanassa* in Pali. Physical suffering is known as *dukkha*. Domanassa is mental suffering, mental dukkha. Physical suffering is dukkha itself. These two aspects of suffering are removed by means of mindfulness meditation.
6. **Enlightenment:** Then the sixth benefit is attainment of path knowledge. That's one of enlightenment. In Buddhism there are four stages of enlightenment a meditator has to attain through his mindfulness meditation, after he has completed all thirteen stages of insight knowledge. The first stage is known as *sotapanna-magga* . The second stage is known as *sakadagami-magga*. Third stage is known as *anagami-magga*. The fourth stage is known as *arahatta-magga*. All these four stages of enlightenment can be attained when you have thoroughly realized *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta* of bodily and mental processes. When impermanence, suffering, the impersonal nature of body-mind processes are thoroughly realized then you can attain all these four stages of enlightenment.
7. **Nibbana:**Then finally you attain to Nibbana by mindfulness meditation. What do you mean by Nibbana? Where do you see Nibbana, on earth or underground or in heaven or in the sky? Ah, but the Buddha said Nibbana is in you. The place where you attain to Nibbana is yours, your body and mind. Unless you have realized your body-mind processes you cannot attain Nibbana. Only when you have fully realized your body-mind processes and two levels of understanding, then you are sure to attain Nibbana. So Nibbana is with you, not very far, very close.