



### Public Lecture Offerings

#### **How the Buddha Became a Christian Saint**

One of the most famous of the saints' tales of medieval Europe was Barlaam and Josaphat, the story of a pagan prince who is converted to the true faith by a Christian monk. Only in the nineteenth century was it discovered that the story was a retelling of the life of the Buddha. This lecture will trace the route that the story traveled from ancient India to medieval Europe and the detective work that revealed its origins.

#### **The Dalai Lama: Past, Present, and Future**

The institution of the Dalai Lama dates back to the fifteenth century; according to Tibetan mythology, it dates back to prehistoric times. This lecture will recount its origins and trace its history, from the first Dalai Lama to the fourteenth (and present) Dalai Lama, focusing on the challenges that the institution faces, both on the present world stage and in the years ahead.

#### **Tibet's First Modern Artist**

Among the most fascinating figures in modern Tibetan history is Gendun Chopel (1903–1951). Ordained as Buddhist monk at a young age, he would eventually give up his monastic vows and travel to India, before returning to Tibet where he was arrested on charges of treason. This lecture will explore the life and work of this tragic figure, regarded by many as the greatest Tibetan poet, painter, and philosopher of the twentieth century.

#### **Buddhism and Science**

One often hears that Buddhism is the religion most compatible with modern science, whether it be quantum physics or neuroscience. In fact, such claims have been made

for more than a century, during which time what is meant by “Buddhism” and what is meant by “Science” have changed considerably. This lecture will explore these claims and what they mean for our understanding of Buddhism.

### **Strange Tales of an Oriental Idol**

Today, the Buddha is a widely respected figure, quoted (and misquoted) by people around the world, whether they be Buddhists, followers of other religions, or atheists. The world’s love affair with the Buddha, however, is of rather recent vintage. This lecture will trace the history of the European and American encounter with the Buddha, describing his transformation from a stone idol to the human embodiment of enlightenment.

### **Hyecho’s Journey**

Sometime in the early years of the eighth century, a young Korean monk named Hyecho set out by sea from China on a pilgrimage to India, the Buddhist holy land. His would be one of the most remarkable journeys in the history of Buddhism; he traveled throughout India, west to Arabia, and back to China in only three years. We know of his travels because fragments of his travel journal were discovered in a cave in China in 1908. This lecture will trace his route, imagining his experiences through the poems he left behind.

## **Classroom Discussion Topics**

For lecture classes and seminars, I am happy to talk about any aspect of the Buddhist tradition, including history, doctrine, philosophy, practice, and art.