INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL I

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

1. explain where Buddhism has its historical origin.
2. explain how and in which countries it spread and disappeared until today.
3. understand the connection between religious freedom in free democratic countries and the interest in Buddha's teachings.

INTRODUCTION

Buddhist symbols can be found almost everywhere in our country, e.g. in advertising, movies and idols. Where is it visible today in the modern world? Where do you hear or see something "Buddhist"?

The pupils collect experiences of their contact in the class discussion. The following list gives a possible selection: small and clearly formatted

- Buddha statues can be found in hardware stores, wellness hotels, shopping stores, hair salons, etc...
- In many places there are martial arts schools and Buddhist centers.
- The destruction of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan in 2001, which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, triggered worldwide protests.
- Travel to Asian countries influenced by Buddhism are among the most popular destinations. Tour operators and travel magazines in the media highlight sights of Buddhist culture(s) in addition to the dream booths.
- The oppression of Tibet by the Chinese occupiers often finds the interest of the media.
- Businesses advertise using Buddhist symbols and themes.
- Movies such as "Seven Years in Tibet," "Enlightenment Guaranteed," "Little Buddha," "Kundun," "World Tour with Buddha," and "Wheel of Time" have become box office successes, and prominent actors have declared in public that they are Buddhists.
- Buddha bracelets, emblems and necklaces are widely distributed as costume jewelry, there are bestsellers such as "Bad Karma".

EXERCISE 1

The introduction to the topic takes place via the guiding question: "Where does Buddhism come from and how has it spread around the world?

The students bring in their previous knowledge. The teacher shows **Material 1** (Origin of Buddhism) with a map of India and pictures of Bodhgaya, the place of Buddha's enlightenment and a core statement of Buddha.

EXERCISE 2

The students are given **Material 2** with a timeline and work out the content with the help of the world map and the tasks on **Worksheet 1** in partner work. It is a good idea to copy the world map onto (A3 format) paper. This will give the students an overview of the historical and current spread of Buddhism.

Task 4 can be given as homework. Or the research can be done at the end of the lesson, depending on the time the teacher wants to devote to this topic.

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE

To give the pupils a visual impression of the variety of manifestations of Buddhist schools, **Material 3** is presented to them with a small selection of typical pictures. The differences in the manifestations are identified in discussions in plenary.

EXERCISE 3

Here, the prerequisites for the spread of Buddhism in Western democracies and its attractiveness in more recent times are addressed. The students read **Material 4** and work in small groups on the tasks on **Worksheet 2**. **Answers to WS 2** are presented in plenary.

Finally, the students reflect on the connection between the spread of Buddhism in the West and the message of the historical Buddha (**Exercise 4 and 5**). The offer to apply the methods and to "recognize the clear light of the mind" (cf. **Material 1**) is used by people with an interest in inner development on their own initiative. In recent times, Buddhism has spread mainly in democratic countries. The basic values of freedom of expression and free practice of religion on the basis of a good general education provide the space for integrating the teachings of the Buddha into one's own life.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH, OPTIONAL

This research assignment can also be given as a one to two-week homework. In doing so, the students deepen the impression they had already gained through **Material 3**, and they should now be able to make an assignment more easily.

The students research in groups or in individual work, where today mainly Theravada (behavior, cause and effect), Great Way (attitude, compassion and wisdom), Zen and Diamond Way (identification with the intrinsic Buddha qualities) are taught. They collect typical images related to the manifestations. (See **Exercise 4 from Worksheet 1**)

The pupils find out what the respective content focus is, which forms of expression have developed and where the respective school can be found today (cf. basic text on "Buddha's teachings)". It is a good idea to search for Buddhist teachers and lay Buddhism, for stupas, temples and monasteries. The main point here is that the pupils get an impression of the abundance. A plenary discussion in a follow-up lesson is appropriate.