
The Fasting Siddhartha

1. Observe the statue or picture at this station.
2. Notice that it is probably different from almost any other image of the Buddha that you have seen.
3. Look closely and write down what you observe. How does this Buddha image differ from others you have seen?
4. What do you think the artist was trying to express about the Buddha?
5. It is said that while Siddhartha was seeking enlightenment, he practiced extreme asceticism. He used his enormous willpower to try to attain wisdom. "He ate so little that when he thought he would touch the skin of his stomach he actually took hold of his spine" (adapted from Clarence H. Hamilton, *Buddhism: A Religion of Infinite Compassion* [1952; reprint, New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1954], pages 14–15). He learned from this experiment that if you damage the body, your spiritual progress is impeded. He knew that between overindulgence and extreme asceticism lies the Middle Way of reason and simplicity, which is best for the spiritual path.