

Dalai Lama: Soul of Tibet (A&E Biography: 1997)

Early Life of the Dalai Lama (1935-1949)

- *Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, born July 6th, 1935
- *Dalai Lamas ruled Tibet until 1959
- *Religious leader of Tibetans exiled in India since 1959
- *Search for reincarnation of Dalai Lama: monks discovered him in 1937 at age 2½
- *Traveled from eastern Tibet, reached Lhasa, capitol of Tibet, in 1939
- *Dalai Lama took monastic vows, enthroned at Potala February 22, 1940
- *Potala: 1000 room castle, seat of Tibetan government and religious center
- *Dalai Lama grew up in Potala in strict educational system
- *Watched documentary on life of Gandhi, very influential

Chinese Takeover of Tibet (1949-1959)

- *People's Republic of China founded 1949
- *Communist China begins to take over Tibet 1950
- *Chinese army marches into Lhasa on September 19th, 1951
- *Dalai Lama must stand between Chinese and his Tibetan followers
- *Dalai Lama visits China in 1954, hoping to prevent Chairman Mao Zedong's takeover of Tibet
- *Mao's response: "But of course, religion is poison"
- *Dalai Lama decides only way to fight Chinese is through non-violence
- *Dalai Lama, age 21, visits India 1956, seeks asylum or assistance against Chinese
- *Age 24 takes difficult final monastic exams 1959 in the midst of political turmoil
- *March 1959 decides to leave Tibet, 800-mile trek to India

Dalai Lama in Exile (1959-1979)

- *Young Dalai Lama, 23 years old, leader of 100,000 refugees
- *Seeks international assistance from U.S., Europe, India
- **Back in Tibet*: monks killed, put on work crews, monasteries destroyed by Chinese government
- *1960 moves to Himalayan town of Dharamsala, begins to remake Tibetan "nation" in exile
- *Befriended by Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru, who instructs him to focus on preservation of Tibetan culture
- *Composes new democratic Tibetan constitution, including right to impeach Dalai Lama
- **Back in Tibet*: 1966-1976 Chinese Cultural Revolution destroys religious life in Tibet
- *Begins to become a world political figure, late 1960s begins to travel outside India
- *As a man in his 30s, tires of leadership position, wishes to retire to meditation retreat, but continues to work on behalf of Tibetan people

Dalai Lama as World Political Figure (1989-1997)

- *1979 visits U.S. on mission to gain international support for Tibet
- *Creates policy of International pressure against Chinese
- **Back in Tibet*: 5000 Buddhist monasteries destroyed in India, books burned, way of life broken
- *Politics of compassion and "universal responsibility," non-violence, and
- *1987 5-point peace plan for limited autonomy of Tibet
- *Back in Tibet: Tibetans fight Chinese governmental control, leads to violent conflict
- *1989 Dalai Lama awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- *Becomes international celebrity: seeks support in Hollywood

Dalai Lama as "Simple Buddhist Monk:" Daily Life

- *Each day practices meditation 4-5 hours, performs rituals
- *Greeted newly arrived Tibetan refugees in India
- *Gives Buddhist teachings abroad 6-9 months each year

Questions to Ponder:

- *How does the Dalai Lama's policy of non-violence relate to early Buddhist doctrine such as the four noble truths, or the idea of the Bodhisattva?
- *The Dalai Lama always says he is just a "simple Buddhist monk." What aspects of his life do you think he is referring to?
- *The Dalai Lama is often compared to Gandhi or M. L. King: what specific comparisons would you draw between these figures?
- *What specific reasons do you think have made the Dalai Lama been popular outside of Tibet?
- *How can a culture be preserved in exile, away from its country of origin?