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BODHI LIGHT INTERNATIONAL PLANS PERMANENT DISPLAY

OF RELICS OF THE BUDDHA

Since 2013 Bodhi Light International (BLI) has exhibited *The 10,000 Buddhas Relics Collection* to thousands of visitors. The majority of the relics in the collection come from Shakyamuni Buddha himself, the historical founder of Buddhism. With well over 10,000 pieces, this is the largest collection of the Buddha's relics in the United States.

The highlight of the collection are the teeth and finger bone relics of Shakyamuni Buddha, which are among the most sacred relics in Buddhism. These are believed to be the only such relics existing in the United States. In addition, *The 10,000 Relics Collection* features thousands of crystal relics, known by the Sanskrit word shariras, of different colors and textures. These shariras come from the cremated remains of the Buddha, as well as some from the Buddha's closest disciples and family members. These relics are believed to arise in response to the purity of the sages' lifestyles.

Bodhi Light International intends this collection to benefit all. BLI's long range plan, known as The MahaStupa Project, is to establish a giant stupa to eventually house the entire collection, somewhere in Southern California, which will be known as The MahaStupa. In the past 5 years since the relics have been donated, BLI has been holding biannual showings. The next step of The MahaStupa Project will be to make a small permanent relics display, where visitors can view highlights from the collection at any time, at BLI's newly established Wei Mountain Temple, in Rosemead, CA.

Buddhist sutras recount that after the Buddha's cremation, thousands and thousands of shariras remained, and were initially divided into eight groups. A few hundred years later, King Ashoka, the great Buddhist patron, gathered most of these relics together and enshrined them in stupas throughout South and Central Asia. Over the centuries, the Buddha's shariras, as well as those of his disciples, spread all across East Asia as well, where they were protected and worshiped in various temples. In recent years, Buddhist relics have also become a topic of fascination in the United States, and have been exhibited in the US by groups such as the Maitreya Heart Shrine Relic Tour.

Many stories of the sublime ambiance and sense of wonder that people experience upon viewing shariras can be found in the archives of major American newspapers. Since the relics were donated in February of 2013, the members of Lu Mountain Temple have noticed an increasingly peaceful atmosphere at the temple, and a deepening of their meditation practice. Some have already experienced healings, which they attribute to the relics.

The majority of the relics in *The 10,000 Relics Collection* were donated to BLI by several Vietnamese and Chinese Buddhist disciples. When the initial donor, Tam Huynh, gave his vast collection of relics to BLI in early 2013, his act of generosity inspired many other donors to contribute additional relics to BLI, including the very rare teeth and finger bone of the Buddha. And in July of 2013, Huynh made yet another significant donation, this time a donation of his time and energy, as he became a monk at Bodhi Light International, and began training under the guidance of Dharma Master YongHua.

The mission of Bodhi Light International is to present Mahayana Buddhism to an international audience. BLI's two locations are Lu Mountain Temple, located at 7509 Mooney Drive, Rosemead, CA 91770, and Wei Mountain Temple, located at 7732 Emerson Place, Rosemead, CA. For more information, please visit www.ChanPureland.org, email info@ChanPureland.org, or call (626) 766-1009. To learn more about The MahaStupa Project, please go to: www.MahaStupa.org.