

**Knowledge Guide**

**Paper 1: A Study of Buddhist Belief & Practice**

**GCSE Religious Studies**

**THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN MADE BY THE RS DEPARTMENT. IT IS TO AID CONSOLIDATION AND MEMORY RECALL. IT IS A NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR NOTES, LESSON WORK AND TEACHER’S GUIDANCE. YOU MUST STILL USE THESE IN YOUR EXAM PREPARATION. YOU HAVE BEEN PROVIDED TWO TEACHING FOR EACH POINT, YOU ARE ONLY REQUIRED TO LEARN ONE FOR THE 5 MARK QUESTION.**

**Paper Overview**

**Examination Board:** AQA

**Length:** 1hr 45mins (105mins)

**Religions:** Christianity and Buddhism

**Date (Provisional):** Monday 14th May (PM)

**Examination Layout**

**Beliefs**

***Q1.*** *“****Which one of the following.”*** *(1 mark)*

***Q2.*** *“****Give two.”*** *(2 marks)*

***Q3.******“Explain two ways which ‘X’ influences ‘X’ today.”*** (4 marks)

***Q4. “Explain two beliefs OR teachings about ‘X.’ Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian/Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.*** (5 marks)

***Q5.*** **“[…]. Evaluate this claim.”** (12 marks)

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**Practices**

***Q6.*** *“****Which one of the following.”*** *(1 mark)*

***Q7.*** *“****Give two.”*** *(2 marks)*

***Q8.******“Explain two contrasting.”*** (4 marks)

***Q9. “Explain two reasons OR important OR ways ‘X.’ Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian/Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.*** (5 marks)

***Q10.*** **“[…]. Evaluate this claim.”** (12 marks)

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**Suggested Timings**

1mark: 1min

2marks: 2mins

4marks: 5mins

5marks: 6mins

12marks: 15/16mins

Christian Beliefs: 25mins

Buddhist Beliefs: 25mins

Christian Practices: 25mins

Buddhist Practices: 25mins

Checking: 5min

**Revising for Religious Studies**

Sadly many methods students use to revise have been shown to be **ineffective.** This means all the hard work you are doing, will not lead to exam success. Researchers have found the following methods to be ineffective:

* Highlighting notes.
* Simple re-reading of notes.
* Producing written summaries of text.

For further information on this, read this article <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-22565912>

**INSTEAD, try the following…**

**Retrieval Practice**

Select a topic you wish to revise.

Get a piece of paper and write/sketch everything you remember. Try really hard to remember. You may wish to focus this on the demands of the exam, for example, for GCSE think about the 5 questions, what information is needed for each? Definitions, scriptural references, challenges, scholars?

Once you have done this, grab your notes and fill in any gaps, it may be helpful to use another colour, this will help the gaps in your knowledge standout. Repeat this (overtime) until all the gaps are filled!

Practice answering examination style questions. Full answers are not necessary, detailed plans will do. Try them without your notes, then use your notes to fill in the gaps. You can use the AQA website, question lists provided or create your own. Remember the exam structure!

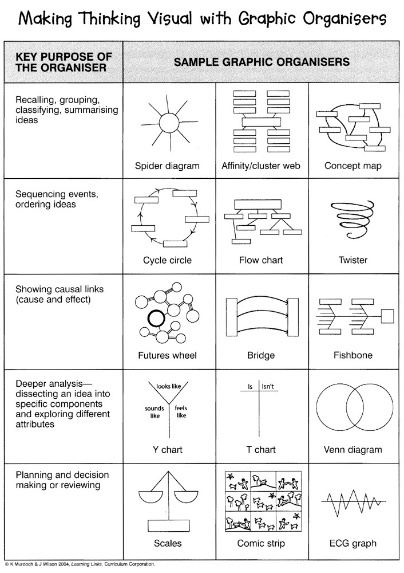


Make flashcards. Use for definitions, key pieces of scripture/church/religious teachings/key concepts, strengths, weaknesses. Get friends/parents/careers to test you. If you don’t want to use physical cards, there are lots of good Apps available such as Quizlet, Brainscape, Memrise etc.

A slight adaption of flashcards could be to make ‘’Match Cards’, for example, one piece of card has a term e.g. omnipotence, another card has the definition, e.g. the attribute of God suggesting He is all powerful. You could also do this for Bible verses e.g. Genesis 1 ---- ‘the world was void and formless’. Even scholars and key quotations e.g. Richard Dawkins --- ‘scripture is based on ill-founded evidence.’ Want to try another flashcard method? Research the **Leitner System**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C20EvKtdJwQ&feature=youtu.be>

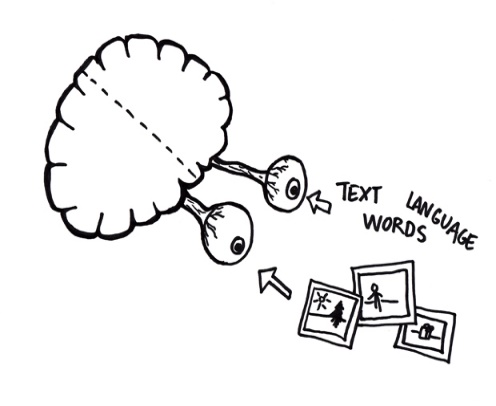
You could create quizzes for yourself/peers. These quizzes should be true/false or multiple choice.

**Organise It/Dual-Code**



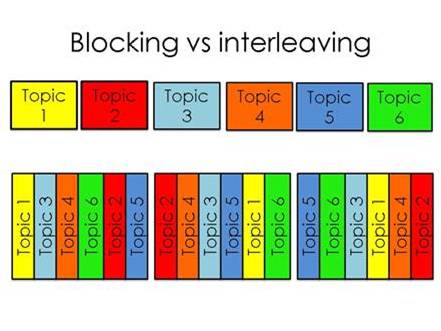
Select an area of study and transform your notes into graphic organisers. This could be as simple as breaking down your notes into different topics on a mind-map, again consider your exam structure, what do you need to know? Definitions, examples, influences, contrasting/similar ideas, teachings, scholars, concepts and challenges. Each branch could be linked to a different aspect.

You could also explore other ways to organise your notes visually. Lots of methods explained and discussed here: <http://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/GraphicOrganiserFinal.pdf>

Another visual approach you could take to revision is to ‘dual-code’ your notes.

Look at the text included in your notes, can you transform/change this into pictures. Does it work the other way? Can you translate an image into words? For example, look at an image of a Buddhist Shrine? Can you identify and explain the items? How might you depict the different means a Christian has to salvation?

Could you create a comic strip to explain the 4 sights of the Buddha and how they influence Buddhists today? What about the act and influence of creation in Christianity?

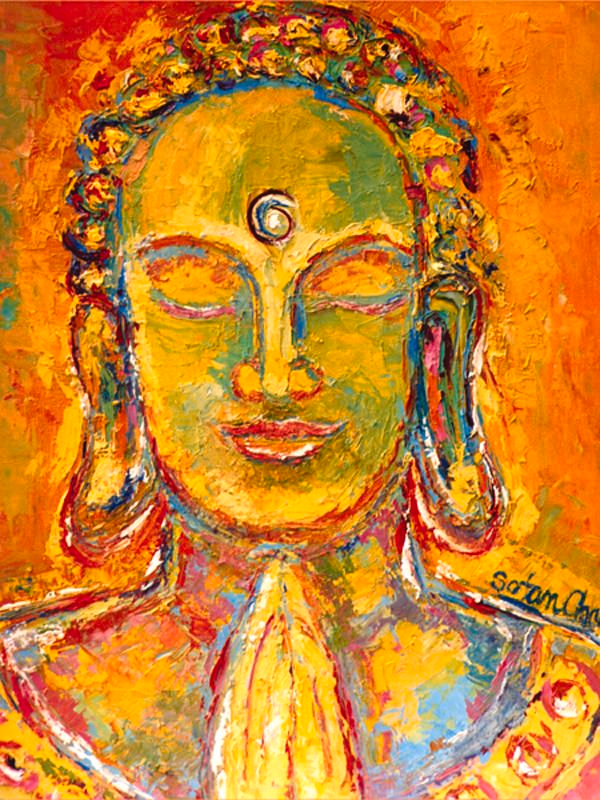
**Interleaving**

Rather than revise one unit in one chunk, separate your revision so you are mixing and matching different topics and units. For example, try spending 15 minutes on Attributes of God, followed by 15 minutes on the 3 Marks of Existence, followed by 15 minutes on Creation. Can you see any links between the topics? Ensure you regularly change the order of recall.

It may be a good idea to group your units together, one way to do this could be: A: Christian Beliefs B. Christian Practices, C. Buddhist Beliefs, D. Buddhist Practices. During a revision period, for example, an hour period (with breaks), you switch between A and B, C and D, A and C and B and D. This may help make links between Belief and Practices and your two religions. Leave Themes for another session. When interleaving, make use of the methods above, during your session.

More Information: <http://www.learningscientists.org/>

**Buddhist Beliefs**



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| **Paper 1: The Study of Buddhism: Beliefs and Teachings: What I Need to Know** | | | | | |
| **Topic** | **Notes** | | **Assessed** | **Revised** | **R.A.G** |
| **The Buddha and Four Noble Truths** | | | | | |
| **The Life of the Buddha and its Significance**   * The Birth of the Buddha |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Buddha’s Life of Luxury |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Four Sights (Jataka 75) * Illness * Old Age * Death * Holy Man |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Buddha’s Ascetic Life |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Buddha’s Enlightenment |  | |  |  |  |
| **The Buddha and the Four Noble Truths**   * Suffering (Dukkha) * The Different Types of Suffering |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Causes of Suffering (Samudaya) * The Three Poisons: Ignorance, Greed & Hate |  | |  |  |  |
| * The End of Craving (Tanha) * Interpretations of Nibbana (Nirvana) * Interpretations of Enlightenment |  | |  |  |  |
| * The Eightfold Path (Magga) to Nibbana * The Threefold Way:  1. Ethics (sila) 2. Meditation (Samadhi) 3. Wisdom (panna)  * Dhammapada 190-191 |  | |  |  |  |
| **The Dhamma (Dharma)** | | | | | |
| * **The Concept of Dhamma/Dharma** | |  |  |  |  |
| * **The Concept of Dependent Arising (paticcasamupada)** | |  |  |  |  |
| * **The Three Marks of Existence**  1. Anicca (Impermanence) 2. Anatta (No Fixed-Self) 3. Dukkha (Unsatisfactoriness/Suffering) | |  |  |  |  |
| * **The Human Personality** * Theravada: Five Aggregates (Skandhas)  1. Form 2. Sensation 3. Perception 4. Mental Formations 5. Consciousness  * Mahayana: Sunyata * The Possibility of Attaining Buddhahood and Buddha-Nature. | |  |  |  |  |
| * **Human Destiny** * Theravada: Arhat (a perfected person) * Mahayana: Bodhisattva Ideals | |  |  |  |  |
| * **Buddhahood and Pure Land Buddhism** | |  |  |  |  |

**Topic 1: The Buddha and the Four Noble Truths**

**The Buddha’s Life and its Significance**

There are **FIVE** key areas of the Buddha’s life you need to know: **birth, life of luxury, the Four Sights, asceticism and the Enlightenment.**

**Harvey (1990):** The Buddha (Siddhārtha Gautama) was born on the Indian/Nepalese boarder. He was born into a warrior/ruler family, growing up on what today is considered the Indian/Nepalese boarder. There **is no continuous text which details the life of the Buddha**; it has been pieced together from a range of sources, some written at the time of the Buddha, others written hundred years later.

**The Buddha’s Birth: Influences**

The Buddha’s birth may **instil authority and reverence into Him/His teachings.** Today, this means that many Buddhists will see the Buddha as a figure of wisdom and authority due to the remarkable events surrounding his birth e.g. the ability to walk and talk, this highlights His extraordinary nature and may encourage many Buddhists to accept/follow His Dhamma.

The Buddha’s birth may **encourage Buddhists to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that many Buddhists will celebrate the Buddha’s birth (e.g. Wesak) and may perform pilgrimage to the site/place of His birth, Nepal, Lumbinib (Mayadevi Temple).

**The Buddha’s Birth: Teachings**

One teaching about the Buddha’s birth is that **he was born for a specific purpose.** This is supported by the Buddhacarita, which states, ‘***‘I [the Buddha] am born for supreme knowledge, for the welfare of the world.’***  This means from the outset it was clear that the Buddha knew He was to end suffering and teach the Dhamma.

One teaching about the Buddha’s birth is that he **was born out of his mother’s side and with no pain.** This is supported by the Buddhacarita, which states *‘****and from the side of the queen, her son was born without pain and without illness.’***  This highlights the extraordinary nature of His birth, it is a unique experience, highlighting His nature.

**Interpreting the Buddha’s Birth**

Stephen Batchelor, a **Secular Buddhist,** suggests the accounts of the Buddha’s birth within the Buddhist scripture has **too much myth/legend surrounding it, it is too** **hagiographical.** Yet, despite the myth, the account does have **great meaning.** Batchelor suggests the story highlights the potentiality of hum nature, everybody has the same potential as the Buddha, to awaken and reduce suffering.

Harvey, a Buddhist and Buddhist Scholar, suggests that many modern Theravadins say the Buddha was ‘just a human’ – if this is the case, was he really born in such an extraordinary way?

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Why may the writers of early Buddhist texts wish to make the Buddha’s birth sound remarkable/extraordinary?
* What other questions can you raise about the Buddha’s birth? Why might it not be literally true? What merits might it have symbolically?



**The Buddha’s Life of Luxury: Influences**

The Buddha’s life of luxury may **encourage Buddhists to follow the Buddha’s example.** Today, this means that many Buddhists will live the ‘Middle Way’, ensuring their lives are not filled with luxury as this is not Right Action/Right Mind, rather they will live the ‘Middle Way’ to ensure one is not distracted from the Buddha’s Dhamma.

The Buddha’s life of luxury may **encourage Buddhists to see things as they really are.** Today, this means that rather than hiding/sheltering themselves from the world/Dukkha they may go and experience it first-hand/attempt to overcome/help.

**The Buddha’s Life of Luxury: Teachings**

One teaching about the Buddha’s life of luxury is **that he was sheltered from everything but His father’s palace.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘***‘I was delicately nurtured… At my father’s residence.’***  This means the Buddha never saw any suffering/hardship.

One teaching about the Buddha’s life of luxury is **he was married at the age of 16 to his cousin**. This means that the Buddha followed the customs of the time and married, He is also believed to have had a child, Rahula.

**Interpreting the Buddha’s Life of Luxury**

**Williams (2000):** never to see old age, sickness or death is of course impossible, the fact we are told that his father kept these facts of life from Gautama until adulthood shows the absurdity of reading accounts of the Buddha’s life as historical fact.

However, the story has a powerful hagiographical message, highlighting how individuals are brought up to misperceive things, only seeing things one way (i.e. sheltered) when they really are another way. His early life portrays the situation that all unenlightened people are in, whether they realise it or not; unaware of how things really are.

There are inconsistencies within the Buddhist accounts. The story of the ‘Ploughing Festival’ suggests that the Buddha saw the suffering and death of animals, upon his father finding him in a meditative state, it was this what promoted his exclusion from ordinary life. This was to stop the predication of the Holy Man becoming true, the Buddha’s father wished for the Buddha to become a great King, not a religious teacher/leader.

**The Four Sights**

The Four Sights: ***Gautama’s four encounters with illness, old age, death and a holy man.***

The Buddha’s encountering of the Four Sights are found in the **Jātaka Tales,** a section/division of the Pali Canon.

**The Four Sights: Influences**

The Four Sights **may encourage Buddhists to act in the world.** Today, this means, due to the contemporary presence of these sights e.g. the suffering of illness, death and old age, Buddhists may be encouraged/motived to help fight the inequality and injustice caused by them. For example, helping to fight poverty, caused by death and illness etc. Supporting the Karuna Trust.

The Four Sights may **help a Buddhist make sense of the Buddha’s later doctrinal teachings**. Today, this means that later Buddhist teachings e.g. the Three Marks of Existence, may become more meaningful due to their exemplification in the Four Sights. For example, dukkha and death, anicca and old age.

**The Four Sights: Teachings**

One teaching about the Four Sights is that **people become old.** This is supported by the Jataka Tales, which states ‘***on the way he encountered an old man.’***  This made the Buddha realise than nobody can escape old age, it is the reality of life.

One teaching about the Four Sights is that **people die.** This is supported by the Jataka Tales, which states ‘***he saw a corpse.’*** This made the Buddha realise that nobody can escape death, all life is bound to crumble, even monarchs.

**The Buddha’s Ascetic Life**

Ascetic: ***A life free from worldly pleasures (especially sexual activity and consumption of alcohol), often with the aim of pursuing religious and spiritual goals.***

**The Buddha’s Ascetic Life: Influences**

The Buddha’s ascetic life may **encourage Buddhists to follow the Buddha’s Dhamma.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may follow the ‘Middle Way’, as exemplified by the Eightfold Path. This is because following the experiences of the Buddha, they know too little/too much of something will not lead to Enlightenment, one must strive for the ‘Right’/’Middle’ path/way.

The Buddha’s ascetic life may **encourage Buddhists to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may engage in meditation, following the example of the Buddha from this period. This is because meditation allowed the Buddha to experience bliss/insight. Buddhists may choose either Samatha or Vipassana.

**The Buddha’s Ascetic Life: Teachings**

One teaching about the Buddha’s ascetic life is **it was filled with extremes.** This is supported by the Jataka Tales, which states, ‘***[He] was determined to practice austerities in their most extreme.’*** This means that during this life stage the Buddha had little/if any food and spent much of His time in meditation.

One teaching about the Buddha’s ascetic life is **during this time He discovered the Middle Way.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged… that which is devoted to sensual pleasure and that which is devoted to self-affliction… avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way is realised.’*** This means that during this period, the Buddha became aware of one of His central teachings, He used this to form the concept of the Eightfold Path.

**The Buddha’s Enlightenment**

Enlightenment: ***Wisdom or understanding enabling clarity of perception; this allows a Buddhist to be freed from the cycle of rebirth.***

**The Buddha’s Enlightenment: Influences**

The Buddha’s Enlightenment may encourage Buddhists **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may engage in meditation, following the example of the Buddha from this period. This is because meditation allowed the Buddha to become enlightened, Buddhists may hope by following His example, they too can be awakened.

The Buddha’s Enlightenment may encourage Buddhists **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may perform a pilgrimage to the site of the Buddha’s Enlightenment, Bodh Gaya. Here they may visit the Mahabodhi Temple and/or the Bodhi Tree.

**The Buddha’s Enlightenment: Teachings**

One teaching about the Buddha’s Enlightenment is **it was attained whilst in a state of mediation.** This is supported by the Jataka Tales, which states, ***‘Not until I attain the supreme Enlightenment will I give up this seat of mediation.’*** This highlights the centrality of meditation for Buddhists, as many Buddhists, like the Buddha, may hope to achieve Enlightenment too.

One teaching about the Buddha’s Enlightenment is **temptation can be overcome.** This is supported by the Jataka Tales, which states, ***‘Mara is defeated! Prince Siddhartha has conquered!’*** This means that discipline must be used if Buddhists are to avoid and overcome temptation; regardless of Mara’s power, if one remains focused on meditation even the vices of lust, doubt and fear can be defeated.

**The Buddha’s Enlightenment: Interpretations**

The Secular Buddhist **Stephen Batchelor,** rejections traditional interpretations/understandings of Enlightenment, rather he suggests it is merely a **metaphor,** not an event. Enlightenment isn’t an insight/awakening to an absolute reality/truth/nature of mind/God. There is no privileged access to a higher truth. This truth doesn’t transcend the world; Enlightenment means ‘waking up.’ No longer asleep, back in the world of the senses/empirical world. Awakening to the complexity and unpredictability of the world.

**The Buddha’s Death (Non-Examined)**

After approximately 45 years of travelling and teaching, believed to be aged 80, the Buddha achieved Parinirvana (i.e. death) reportedly caused by food poisoning. He died in North India, Kushinara, and although cremated, legend suggests His bones remained unburnt. These were distributed among various leaders and today places where His bones are believed to be held are marked with monuments – stupas.

At death, the Buddha is believed to have restated his teaching of Anicca and told his followers to strive for their own liberation.

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| **Birth** | **Life of Luxury** | **Four Sights** | **Asceticism** | **Enlightenment** |
| **Cush (1994):** stories associated the Buddha’s birth indicate that the Buddha was unique. Therefore for Buddhists today, His birth narratives highlight His nature and give Him authority. For example, Maya’s dream/His standing up and taking 7 strides.  His birth encourage Buddhist practice e.g. Yatra (pilgrimage) Lumbini, believed birth place.  Is historical accuracy an issue? Do the hagiographical stories offer more meaning? | The Buddha’s sheltered life of luxury highlights to the Buddha an extreme. This has doctrinal implications later in the Buddha’s life e.g. Middle Way.  The shelter encourages the Buddha to go in search of the open i.e. outside of the palace – this encourages later teachings the Four Sights.  **Williams (2000):** is it possible to shelter somebody from these facts of life? | Four Sights and their witnessing are key to later teachings e.g. the 3 Marks of Existence. Anicca and Dukkha linked to old age, illness, death.  For contemporary Buddhists, the ongoing presence of these may act as a motivational force for Buddhists today e.g. charity/ injustice. Socially Engaged Buddhism. | The Buddha found the Middle Way by experiencing this extreme. This lead to the development of the EFP, important moral guide/conduct for Buddhists today.  Highlights the centrality of meditation. This is how the Buddha discovered insight i.e. living a life of extremes isn’t ‘Right.’ | Where Siddhartha becomes the ‘Buddha.’ Gives authority to him.  Gives Buddha key ideas found in contemporary Buddhism e.g. Dukkha, Samsara, Rebirth, Anatta, Craving.  His Enlightenment encourage Buddhist practice e.g. Yatra (pilgrimage) Bodh Gaya – place of Enlightenment. |
| **Lopez:** very little can be known about Siddhartha Gautama historically i.e. outside of Buddhist Scripture. | | | | |

**Assessing the Life of the Buddha: what’s the Most Important Event?**

**The Four Noble Truths**

The Four Noble Truths: ***The Four Truths the Buddha taught about suffering.* *Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, Magga (suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, the path to the end of suffering).***

Dukkha: ***Suffering; ill; everything leads to suffering; unsatisfactoriness.***

Samudaya: **The causes of suffering. *Often considered to be one of the three poisons: ignorance, greed and hate.***

Tanha: ***Craving/desire, which causes suffering. The attempt to grasp at the things we enjoy.***

Nirodha: ***Suffering can be stopped.***

Magga: ***The Eightfold Path. 'The Middle Way' which leads to freedom from suffering.***

The Four Noble Truths were the subject of the Buddha’s **first sermon**, this was given at a Deer Park, to 5 of His earliest followers. This teaching is known as ‘setting in motion the Wheel of Dhamma’. It is recorded in the Pali Canon (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta). They centre on the issue of suffering and how suffering can be reduced/eliminated.

1. *There is suffering (dukkha). This takes a variety of forms.*
2. *There is a cause of suffering, craving/desire (tanha). Suffering is deepened by the presence of the three poisons – ignorance, greed and hatred.*
3. *There is a way to end suffering (nirodha). The ultimate end to suffering is reached by attaining peace (Nirvana).*
4. *The way to end suffering is to follow the Eightfold Path (magga). This comprises three folds: wisdom; mental training and morality – a Buddhist should aim to practise these simultaneously.*

**The Dalia Lama states:** “*The Four Noble Truths are the very foundation of Buddhist teaching, and that is why they are so important. In fact, if you don’t understand the Four Noble Truths, and if you have not experienced the truths personally, it is impossible to practise Buddha Dharma”.*

The Buddha summarises the Four Noble Truths, when He says: *“what I teach is the suffering and cessation of suffering.“ (Pali Canon).*

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**The Four Noble Truths: Influences**

The Four Noble Truths may encourage a Buddhist **to examine why they are suffering.** Today, this means a Buddhist may consider the samudaya in their lives and try to overcome it. For example, desire less material possessions (overcoming greed), be less envious of others (overcoming jealousy).

The Four Noble Truths may encourage a Buddhist to **follow the Eightfold Path.** Today, this means that a Buddhist will be able to overcome the suffering in their lives by putting into action the Buddha’s Dhamma e.g. Right Livelihood, Right Speech etc.

**The Four Noble Truths: Teachings**

One teaching about the Four Noble Truths is **that suffering exists.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘Now this monks is the noble truth of suffering.’ This means that for Buddhists suffering is a fundamental part of life/existence deriving from fundamental and inescapable aspects of life such as, birth, sickness, death etc.

One teaching about the Four Noble Truths is **that suffering can be overcome.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ***‘the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering.’*** This means that if Buddhists put into practise the Buddha’s Dhamma they can overcome the dukkha they encounter e.g. Right Livelihood, Right Intention, putting them on the path to Nibbana.

**The First Noble Truth: Dukkha (Suffering)**

For Buddhists there are different types of suffering:

* **Dukkha-Dukkha: Ordinary Suffering:** This type of suffering cover everything negative in our sense experience, it includes all physical, mental and emotional pain.
* **Viparinama-Dukkha: Suffering Through Change:** This type of suffering results from change, the experiences of the persistently unstable ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ of life. This links to the Buddha’s teaching of impermanence (anicca), suffering occurs when things change and a sense of happiness is lost as a result. It is a similar feeling to sorrow/ unhappiness experienced when something good is lost.
* **Samkhara-Dukkha: Suffering Through Dissatisfaction/Attachment:** This type of suffering results from the attachment towards other people, objects and activities and the subtle dissatisfaction with life, a sense of frustration/anguish with life. Sometimes called 'existential dukkha', when life as a whole seems meaningless.

**The First Noble Truth: Suffering: Influences**

Suffering may encourage a Buddhist **to examine why they are suffering.** Today, this means a Buddhist may consider the samudaya in their lives and try to overcome it. For example, desire less material possessions (overcoming greed), be less envious of others (overcoming jealousy).

Suffering may encourage a Buddhist to **overcome its roots/effects.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may not only try to overcome suffering through spiritual practice, for example, following/putting into action the Eightfold Path, but may also respond practically, for example, donating/volunteering with charity (Karuna Trust).

**The First Noble Truth: Suffering: Teachings**

One teaching about suffering is **that suffering exists/is evitable.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘Now this monks is the noble truth of suffering.’*** This means that for Buddhists suffering is a fundamental part of life/existence deriving from fundamental and inescapable aspects of life such as, birth, sickness, death etc.

One teachings about suffering is **there are three different types.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘Monks, there are these three kinds of suffering.’*** This means that a Buddhist can understand the root of their suffering: through pain, change and existence. A Buddhist may put into action the Eightfold Path to overcome these.

**The Second Noble Truth: Tanha: Causes of Suffering**

The Buddha taught that one of the primary causes of suffering is **‘craving’** (tanha) – this refers to a wanting/desire. Life is so full of suffering according to the Buddha because people become attached, however, everything is impermanent, thus those objects, people, wishes, desires, etc. people become attached too eventually disappear/change; when this occurs individuals experience suffering.

The Buddha teaches that there are three types of craving:

1. **Pleasing the Senses:** this means that individuals desire sense pleasures e.g. beautiful sights, eating due to greed not necessity etc.
2. **Something You are Not:** this means that individuals crave to be something they are not e.g. rich, famous, etc.
3. **Not-To-Be:** this means that individuals crave want to get rid of something or stop something from happening anymore.



Deepening the desire for craving are **the three poisons: ignorance, greed and hatred**. The Buddha says that individuals are ignorant due to their lack of knowledge/understanding concerning their craving and that craving leads to greed and hatred. Individuals crave the things they don’t have e.g. objects/qualities/traits. It is the presence of ignorance, greed and hate which the Buddha suggests **traps people in the cycle of samsara** as until these poisons can be overcome, an individual will be reborn and is prevented from reaching Nibbana.

**The Second Noble Truth: Craving: Influences**

Craving may encourage a Buddhist **to desire things they cannot have/attain.** Today, this means a Buddhist may yearn for objects, people, traits they cannot have, this is because they are filled with the poison greed and are not yet awakened to its effects/presence.

Craving may encourage a Buddhist to **follow the Buddha’s Dhamma.** Today, this means a Buddhist may follow the Dhamma of the Buddha set out in His teaching of the Eightfold Path, by following this ‘Middle Way’ it is hoped the Buddhist will overcome they excessive desires i.e. greed. For example, Right Livelihood will encourage a Buddhist to seek employment which does not promote excessive salaries or the exploitation of others.

**The Second Noble Truth: Craving: Teachings**

One teaching about craving is **that craving is the cause of suffering.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘the origin of suffering… it is craving.’*** This means that Buddhists are given an answer to the question what causes them to suffer: pleasing the senses, wanting to become something you are not and craving for something not to be.

One teachings about craving is **craving is a barrier to Nibbana.** This means that when a Buddhist overcomes the Three Poisons, it may be possible for them to achieve Nibbana. This can be achieved by following the Buddha’s Dhamma in the Pali Canon e.g. the Eightfold Path.

**The Three Poisons: Influences**

The Three Poisons may encourage a Buddhist **to reflect/examine their life and consider how they are poisoned.** Today, this means that Buddhist may consider all their feelings of ignorance, greed and hatred and try to overcome them to reduce the suffering in their life. For example, give (dana) rather than want, love (metta) rather than hate.

The Three Poisons may encourage a Buddhist **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may engage with the Buddha’s Dhamma to overcome their ignorance concerning their suffering/craving and/or engage in metta meditation to show/be filled with love rather than hate.

**The Three Poisons: Teachings**

One teaching about the Three Poisons is that they are **comprised of three emotions/feelings.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘All is burning… Burning with the fire of ignorance, greed and hatred.’*** This means that all Buddhists must work to overcome these three desires which are responsible for turning the wheel of samsara.

One teachings about the Three Poisons is that **they are a barrier to Nibbana.** This means that in order to escape the cycle of samsara a Buddhist must overcome the three desires of ignorance, hatred and greed. This can be achieved by following the Buddha’s Dhamma in the Pali Canon e.g. the Eightfold Path.

**The Third Noble Truth: Nirodha: The Realisation Suffering Can Be Overcome**

Nibbana: ***Literally ‘blowing’ out. To reach a state of perfect peace where the individual experiences liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.***

Enlightenment: ***Wisdom or understanding enabling clarity of perception; this allows a Buddhist to be freed from the cycle of rebirth.***

The third Noble Truth teaches that there is an end to suffering. The Buddha taught that this could be achieved through **one’s own actions and efforts.**

The key concept aligned to the Third Noble Truth is **Nibbana.** The concept is incredibly difficult to describe. **Cush (1993)** suggests the notion of Nibbana has to be experienced, not talked about – it is like describing colours to a blind person and/or dry land to a fish.

The Buddha taught that there are **two different types of Nibbana:**

**Nibbana with Remainder:** this is when a Buddhist realises Nibbana during this life, both the mind and heart have achieved Nibbana, whilst the physical body remains. The three poisons have been destroyed/extinguished and although the Buddhist is still alive and will continue to feel pain/suffering physically; mentally, they will be unaffected, they have reached a different stage of consciousness.

**Nibbana without Remainder:** this is when a Buddhist experiences what is typically known as death – the mind, hear and body have achieved Nibbana; they escape the cycle of rebirth. What form this takes, the Buddha refused to answer – avyākata.

**The Third Noble Truth: Nibbana: Influences**

Nibbana may encourage a Buddhist **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may follow the eight practices set out in the Buddha’s Dhamma to overcome/escape suffering. This involves following the ‘Middle Way’ and a number of ‘Right’ actions/thoughts e.g. livelihood/mindfulness.

Nibbana may encourage a Buddhist **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may engage in Vipassana Meditation. This is because it will allow a Buddhist to gain a clear insight into the true nature of reality, enabling them to be aware of their craving and thus giving them insight allowing them to take steps to reduce it.

**The Third Noble Truth: Nibbana: Teachings**

One teaching about Nibbana is it is the **ending of craving, greed, hate and ignorance.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘Nibbana… the cessation of suffering… the cessation of craving…. the freedom from it.’*** For Buddhists this is the ultimate goal of their faith, it is the ending of rebirth and escape from samsara.

One teaching about Nibbana is that that there are two types. In the **Pali Canon**, the Buddha taught that an individual can achieve Nibbana in this life (with reminder) and/or after death (without reminder).

**The Fourth Noble Truth: Magga: The Path to Overcome Suffering: the Eightfold Path**

The Eightfold Path: ***The fourth Noble Truth. Magga. The Middle Way. The way to wisdom; mental training and the way of morality. Eight stages to be practised simultaneously.***

Magga: ***The Eightfold Path. 'The Middle Way' which leads to freedom from suffering (The Fourth Noble Truth).***

Ethics: ***Sila. Moral conduct.***

Meditation: ***Samadhi. Meditation, the spiritual experience leading to the highest form of consciousness.***

Wisdom: ***Panna. Insight into the true nature of reality.***

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Buddha’s ‘cure’ to suffering. He prescribes 8 practices that a Buddhist can follow to help them overcome suffering and thus achieve Nibbana. Despite being known as a ‘path’ the teaching is often depicted as a wheel, this is to emphasise that each of the practices can be followed at the same time.

The path is often split into three, to offer a three-fold-way: Ethics (Sila); Meditation (Samadhi) and Wisdom (Panna).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ethics (Sila) | Meditation (Samadhi) | Wisdom (Panna) |
| Right Speech | Right Effort | Right Understanding |
| Right Action | Right Mindfulness | Right Intention |
| Right Livelihood | Right Concentration |  |
| ***This section is concerned with having good morals and behaviour. It requires Buddhists to act in ways that helps rather than harms themselves and/or others.*** | ***This section is concerned with how to meditate effectively, meditation is essential for achieving wisdom and enlightenment.*** | ***This section is concerned with overcoming ignorance and achieving wisdom – wisdom enables a Buddhist to truly understand the Buddha’s teaching and thus the nature of reality.*** |

***Right Livelihood:*** *Earning a living without causing harm and contradicting Buddhist teaching.*

***Right Speech:*** *Speaking truthfully, in a positive way, avoiding lies, gossip, idle-chatter.*

***Right Action:*** *Behaving in a peaceful, ethical way, for example, following the Five Precepts (guidelines).*

***Right Effort:*** *Putting effort into meditation, in particular thinking positively and freeing yourself from negative emotions and thoughts.*

***Right Mindfulness:*** *Becoming fully aware of yourself and the world around you; having a clear sense of your own feelings and thoughts.*

***Right Concentration:*** *The development of the mental concentration and focus that is required to meditate.*

***Right Understanding:*** *An understanding/awareness of the Buddhist teachings, especially the Four Noble Truths.*

***Right Intention:*** *Having the right approach and outlook to following the Eightfold Path; being determined to follow the Buddhist path with a sincere attitude.*

**The Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path: Influences**

The Eightfold Path may encourage a Buddhist to **have the Right Livelihood.** Today, this means a Buddhist will choose a career which upholds the principle of ahimsa (non-harm) and doesn’t contradict Buddhist teaching.

The Eightfold Path may encourage a Buddhist to **have Right Concentration.** Today, this means a Buddhist display/develop mental concentration and focus when performing meditation.

**The Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path: Teachings**

One teaching concerning the Eightfold Path is that **it is comprised of eight ‘Right’ actions/practices.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘***just this noble eightfold path: right view, right speech, right action, right effort, right livelihood…’***

One teaching about the Eightfold Path is that **if followed it will allow a Buddhist to escape suffering.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, **‘*the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering.’*** This means that if a Buddhist puts into practice these 8 actions, they will be on the path to achieve Nibbana.

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| **Which of the Four Noble Truths is the Most Important?** | | | |
| **First Noble Truth** | **Second Noble Truth** | **Third Noble Truth** | **Fourth Noble Truth** |
| Provides the understanding/motivation for the Buddhist path. Teaches Buddhists that suffering is a normal/inevitable part of life – supported by the Parable of the Mustard Seed. May provide reassurance and comfort to Buddhists. | It gives an explanation for the concept of suffering. Without knowing the cause, the problem cannot be fixed. Gives Buddhists the reason behind the problem. | Provides hope/’cure’ that things can be different and therefore a reason for following the path. | Offers a solution/way out of the problem of suffering. |
| It offers structure and a purpose in life for Buddhists – gives them something to aim for – Nibbana. |
| Knowing that dukkha can be stopped might directly affect a Buddhist behaviour. It may cause them search for, and follow, a path to Nibbana. | Has direct/practical impact on behaviour since it provides specific moral guidelines e.g. ‘Right Actions.’ |
| However, all four of the Noble Truths work together and as such none can be more important than the other. | | | |

**Evaluating the Four Noble Truths: The Relative Importance**

**Topic 2: The Dhamma**

**The Dhamma**

Dhamma: ***Universal law; ultimate truth; the teachings of Buddha.***

**The Dhamma: Influences**

Dhamma may encourage a Buddhist to **follow the Eightfold Path.** Today, this means a Buddhist will follow the 8 practices taught by the Buddha to allow them to gain/seek lasting safety from dukkha and ultimately achieve Nibbana. For example, Right Action, Right Livelihood.

Dhamma may encourage a Buddhist to **engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may engage in meditation. For example, a Buddhist may engage in Vipassana Meditation to gain a deeper/true insight the nature of reality – this is following the example of the Buddha.

**The Dhamma: Teachings**

One teaching about Dhamma is **it should be put into practice.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which in the Raft Simile states, ‘***I have taught the Dhamma for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto…’*** This means that Buddhists are encourage to use the Buddha’s Dhamma in their daily lives to overcome problems they face e.g. following the Eightfold Path to overcome extremes of behaviour.

One teaching about Dhamma **is it can be used to overcome suffering.** This is supported by the Three Refugees of Buddhism, which state, ‘***to the Dhamma for refuge I go…’*** This means that the Buddha’s teaching can be used by Buddhists to overcome/understand suffering. For example, the Four Noble Truths.

**TAKING IT FURTHER**

The Dhamma is part of what are known as the **Three Refuges**: ***the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.*** Buddhists use these three principles of Buddhism to seek safety (i.e. refuge), this is refuge from suffering. For Buddhists the Three Refuges are a lasting source of safety.

Within Buddhism it is common for Buddhists to recite/chant the three refuge: “*To the Buddha for refuge I go, To the Dhamma for refuge I go, To the Sangha for refuge I go.”*

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Which of the Three Refuges may be considered the most important for a Buddhist today? Why? What arguments can you use in support of your idea? How can they be challenged?



**The Three Marks of Existence**

The Three Marks of Existence: ***Sometimes known as the Three Universal Truths: dukkha, anicca, anatta (unsatisfactoriness, impermanence, no self).***

Dukkha: ***Suffering; ill; everything leads to suffering; unsatisfactoriness.***

Anicca: ***Impermanence, instability, not permanent.***

Anatta: ***No fixed self, no soul; the Universal Truth that the soul is insubstantial; that people change in the course of their lives; denial of a real or permanent self.***

**Dukkha**

[See the First Noble Truth, content is transferable.]

**Anicca: Influences**

Anicca may encourage a Buddhist **to be more resilient.** Today, this means a Buddhist may be more accepting of death/suffering due to their insight of the Buddha’s Dhamma; being taught that everything changes and everybody experiences this pain e.g. the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Anicca may encourage a Buddhist **to use specific aids to worship.** Today, this means that when a Buddhist is performing puja/meditation they may use a flower/a rupa of the Buddha during Parinibbana. This is because it will help them reflect/remind them that everything changes/is impermanent.

**Anicca: Teachings**

One teaching about anicca is that **everything changes.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’*** This means for Buddhists that all living things, non-living things and our minds are subject to change.

One teaching about anicca is **there are two different forms.** This is supported by Buddhist Teacher Gyatso, who states, ‘***there are two types of anicca: gross (blatant) and subtle (momentary).’***  This means that change is obvious and slow. For example, death and an iron nail rusting.

**Anatta: Influences**

Anatta may encourage Buddhists to **adopt the distinctive belief of rebirth.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may believe that when they die, it is not their soul which is reborn but an element of consciousness/karmic energy. This they believe is continually reborn entering new bodies in new realms, until eventually achieving Nibbana.

Anatta may encourage Buddhists to **perform death rites.** Today, this means that some Buddhists (Tibetan) perform ‘sky burials’ where they offer an individual’s physical body, highlighting how the body is nothing but an empty vessel, it is merely an individual’s form, not the house of a soul/divine spark.

**Anatta: Teachings**

One teaching about anatta is that **there is no fixed self.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***all phenomenon are without self.’*** This means for many Buddhists they adopt the belief that there is no fixed, individual self, rather the individual is always changing.

One teaching about anatta is **it must be adopted to achieve Nibbana.** This is supported by the Buddhist Teacher Nagarjuna, *who states,* ***‘when the notion of self-ceases…one becomes free.’*** This means that for a Buddhist to free themselves from the cycle of samsara they must come to believe/accept they have no permanent, fixed self.

**Evaluating the Three Marks of Existence: The Relative Importance**

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| **Which of the Three Marks of Existence is the Most Important?** | | |
| **Dukkha** | **Anicca** | **Anatta** |
| This was the Buddha’s key message/teaching: what I teach is the suffering and cessation of suffering.” The notion of suffering is what prompted the Buddha to begin His quest e.g. the Four Sights.  If Buddhists acknowledge this, all other teaching are easier to accept. | Offers a reason to explain WHY people suffer, goes beyond merely stating the fact. For example, gross/subtle. Do we need somebody to state that life is full of suffering, isn’t this self-evident? | For the monastic community an understanding of anatta leads to Nibbana because it removes the obstacles of attachment and pride and it is taught until this is grasped, Buddhists are stuck in the cycle of samsara. |
| Unless people understand that life is unsatisfactory/suffering, they are not likely to search for a solution i.e. follow the path of the Buddha. | If the concept is fully understood it may motivate Buddhists to do something, not only for themselves, but others too. For example, the impermanence of life may encourage a Buddhist to live a full/happy life and/or support those coming to terms with a loss (metta). | However, most lay Buddhists are more concerned with the practicalities of life rather than speculations on the nature of existence. This doctrine is theoretical and not rarely experienced as a reality in daily life. It too difficult and complex for most Buddhists to understand. |
| All three are equally important because they are parts of a whole view of the meaning of life and without any one of these, the underlying principles which Buddhism addresses are incomplete. | | |

**Dependent Arising (Paticcasamupada)**

Dependent Arising: ***Paticcasamupada. The belief that everything in existence is because other things are. The idea that everything is interconnected and that everyone affects everyone else.***

The concept states the **principle of conditionality**. All things, mental and physical, arise and exist due to the presence of certain conditions, and cease once their conditions are removed: nothing (except Nibbana) is independent.

**Dependent Arising (Paticcasamupada): Influences**

Dependent Arising may impact a Buddhist’s **ethical conduct.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may be more aware of the impact/result of their action. For example, they may treat others with metta (loving-kindness) because this will produce positive karmic consequences, ultimately impacting upon one’s rebirth.

Dependent Arising may **aid a Buddhist’s understanding the Buddha’s Dhamma.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may gain a deeper understanding of concepts such as karma because karma is a specific example of dependent arising, a person’s actions create conditions for future actions.

**Dependent Arising (Paticcasamupada): Teachings**

One teaching about dependent arising is **it is essential for a full understanding of the Buddha’s Dhamma.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘***whoever sees Dependent Arising, he sees Dhamma; Whoever sees Dhamma, he sees Dependent Arising.’***  This means for a full understanding of the Buddha’s Dhamma, Buddhists must grasp the concept that all things arise and depend from/upon certain conditions.

One teaching about dependent arising is that in the **Pali Canon** Buddhists are taught that things come/arise from something and cease because of something. The concept highlights the interconnectedness of the world and how everything is conditional i.e. depended upon something else for its existence.

**Taking it Further**

The concept of Dependent Arising is perhaps one of the most complex of the Buddha’s teaching, this is even acknowledged by the Buddha Himself: “***the Dhamma I have discovered is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand.”***

However, for many Buddhists the concept of Dependent Arising has a profound impact on their practice/understanding of Buddhism, this is because through the concept’s expression in the **Tibetan Wheel of Life** it helps Buddhist to understand human suffering and the beliefs of samsara and karma, for example, it highlights to Buddhists the consequences of their action and the effect this will have on their rebirth e.g. realms.

However, it is acknowledged that for some Buddhists the concept is too difficult to understand, it is too abstract to have any impact upon daily life. Other teachings such as metta, the perfections and kamma can aid a Buddhist’s understanding just as well.

**Human Personality: Theravada and Mahayana Traditions: What is a Person According to Buddhism?**

Theravada: ***The kind of Buddhism found in Sri Lanka and Thailand. It came before Mahayana.***

Mahayana: ***A form of Buddhism which includes both the lay and monastic communities. Literally “Greater Vehicle”, it focuses on achieving enlightenment for the sake of all beings. It is the Buddhism of China, Tibet and Japan.***

**Theravada Buddhism**

Many Theravada Buddhists believe that a human is comprised of **five aggregates (skandhas),** they suggest that these five parts interact and make up a person’s identity and personality.

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| **Aggregate** | **Explanation** |
| Form | It refers to matter/material, to the sense organs and the objects of their experience. |
| Sensation | The feelings that arise from our sense organs making contact with their objects. For example, emotion/pain. |
| Perception | The ability to distinguish between different objects that we experience through our senses. It enables memory.  Allows people to recognise what things are, this is often based on previous experience. For example you might recognise happiness because you have felt it before. |
| Mental Formation | The mental activities (thoughts and opinions) which direct a person to good, bad or morally neutral actions. They produce good or bad kamma. |
| Consciousness | Awareness of something without or before recognition (perception).  General Awareness of the world around you. |

**Human Personality: Theravada Buddhism: The Five Aggregates: Influences**

The Five Aggregates may **encourage a Buddhist to adopt a belief in anatta.** Today, this means that a Buddhist will adopt the Buddha’s teaching of ‘no fixed self’. This because the Five Aggregates negates the existence of a soul, thus, when a Buddhist dies they may believe it is their karmic energy, not a soul which is reborn.

The Five Aggregates may **encourage a Buddhist to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that Buddhist may engage in metta-mediation to ensure their mental formations are positive, producing good karmic consequences/energy.

**Human Personality: Theravada Buddhism: The Five Aggregates: Teachings**

One teaching about the Five Aggregates is **people are made of five parts.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘***the five khandhas are bundles or piles of… form feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness.’***  This means that some Buddhists believe that through these 5 parts interacting a person’s identity and personality is made.

One teaching about the Five Aggregates is they **deepen one’s experience of suffering.** In the Pali Canon, the Buddha states that individuals “cling” to the positive feelings the aggregates produce, this He argues perpetuates one’s suffering, as one constantly craves these positive feelings. For example, an individual craves/craves to see beautiful forms.

**Human Personality: Mahayana Buddhism: Sunyata**

Sunyata: ***Literally ‘emptiness’. In Mahayana Buddhism, it refers to the absence of an intrinsic nature (or identity) in all phenomena.***

***\*\**** A very (very) similar idea to Dependent Arising, however, for some Buddhists it means that NOTHITNG, not just humans, have a fixed, independent, unchanging nature. \*\*

To understand this idea you need alter your understanding of ‘emptiness’ and be accepting of the idea that Sunyata could/can be merely understood as a restatement of anatta. When developing this concept Nāgārjuna was trying to explain **how nothing has its own self nature, everything is devoid of its own inherent existence, to exist phenomena are dependent upon something else.**

For example, if you consider a bowl…. If you were to look inside the bowl and see it had nothing inside of it, you may consider it empty… However, the bowl is full, as it contains air, thus the bowl is always physically full and never empty…. Yet, Sunyata understands emptiness as the idea that the bowl is always empty… This is because the bowl doesn’t have anything specific/inherent about it e.g. there are other things, which have bowl like features/characteristics – a vase is hollow and spherical… Therefore, certain conditions come together to form a bowl, if these conditions do not, the mind does not perceive a bowl… This is true of many things/phenomenon, a certain set of conditions must come together for something to be recognised as it is, nothing exists in isolation, everything is empty!

**Human Personality: Mahayana Buddhism: Sunyata: Influences**

Sunyata may impact a Buddhist’s **ethical conduct.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may be more aware of the impact/result of their action. For example, they may become more ecologically aware/ecological activists, as they are taught that nothing exists independently but only in relation to and because of other things. Thus the damage to the environment they may cause, will be felt/impacted by others around them/away from them.

Sunyata may impact a Buddhist’s **practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may engage in Vipassana Mediation to gain a deeper insight/reflect on the concept of Sunyata. Furthermore, they may engage in reading the Heart Sutra where the concept is discussed/formulated.

**Human Personality: Mahayana Buddhism: Sunyata: Teachings**

One teaching about Sunyata is that **it teaches an intrinsic emptiness of all phenomena.** This is supported by the Heart Sutra, which states, ‘***Form is emptiness and emptiness is form.’***  This means for many Mahayana Buddhists, nothing exists independently, but only in relation to and because of, other things.

One teaching about Sunyata, taught by Nagarjuna, is that a correct understanding of its meanings will enable a Buddhist to reduce suffering and achieve enlightenment.

**Human Personality: Mahayana Buddhism: Buddhahood and Buddha-Nature**

Buddhahood: ***Enlightenment. The process whereby somebody achieves enlightenment and becomes a Buddha.***

Buddha-nature: ***In Mahayana Buddhism this refers to the fundamental nature of all beings, which means that all beings can attain Buddhahood.***

For many Mahayana Buddhists the human personality includes the notion of **Buddha-nature**, at its most basic level, this means that everybody has the seed/essence of a Buddha already inside of them. Taking it further, for some Buddhists, they suggest that everybody is already enlightened but is unaware of the fact due to their desires, attachments, ignorance and negative thoughts. Individuals only experience/realise their Buddha-nature once they have truly/firmly grasped the Buddha’s Dhamma, detailing the true nature of reality and themselves.

Due to this notion, some Mahayana Buddhists have the goal of **Buddhahood,** this is to become a Buddha, an enlightened being.

**Human Personality: Buddha-Nature/Buddhahood: Influences**

Buddha-nature may encourage a Buddhist to **engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may meditate. This is because meditation is one of the six perfections and through its practice a Buddhist may remove the distractions preventing them seeing/awakening to their true nature, Buddhahood.

Buddha-nature may encourage a Buddhist to **act with generosity.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may give time, money, food, clothing and/or gifts to help others. This is because generosity is one of the six perfections, being generous helps to reduce/remove suffering, if one is free/lessened of their suffering they may be able to realise/awaken to their true nature, Buddhahood.

**Human Personality: Buddha-Nature/Buddhahood: Teachings**

One teaching about Buddha Nature is it **applies to everybody.** This is supported by the Nirvana Sutra, which states, ‘***all sentient beings have Buddha nature.’***  This means that some Buddhists suggest that everybody is has the potential to become a Buddha (Buddhahood).

One teaching about Buddha Nature is it **is hidden from understanding.** This is supported by the Zen Master Huineng, who states, ‘***like the moon is obscured by clouds, Buddhahood is obscured by ignorance, when this cloud drops away, the moon (Buddhahood) is revealed.’***

**Human Destiny: What is the Purpose for a Buddhist? Theravada, and Mahayana Buddhism**

Arhat: ***A perfected person. In Theravada Buddhism this is a term for a person who has attained nibbana.***

Bodhisattva: ***A concept in Mahayana Buddhism. A being destined for enlightenment, who postpones final attainment of Buddhahood in order to help living beings.***

Pure Land: ***This is the dominant form of Buddhism in Japan and focuses on chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha.***

**Theravada: Arhat: Influences**

Arhatship may **encourage a Buddhist to follow the Buddha’s Dhamma.** Today, this means a Buddhist may follow the Buddha’s teachings of the Eightfold Path, this is because the three-folds of the path (wisdom, morality and meditation) aids them in overcoming the three poisons, thus permitting them to attain their human destiny, Nibbana.

Arhatship may **encourage a Buddhist to join a sangha community.** Today, this means that a Buddhist may remove themselves from mainstream society and join a monastic community to allow them focus on the Buddha’s Dhamma/engage in meditation.

**Theravada: Arhat: Teachings**

One teaching about arhatship is **that arhats no longer have a worldly existence, instead they have achieved Nibbana.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ‘***there is no more worldly existence for the arhat… who is wholly free.’***  This means arhats have overcome the three poisons and attained their ultimate destiny, Nibbana.

One teaching about arhatship is **arhatship is gained via following the Eightfold Path.** This means this means that by following the three-folds (meditation, wisdom and morality) a Buddhist may be able to achieve their destiny of becoming an arhat. This is because the 8 actions ascribed by the Buddha, help an individual overcome the Three Poisons.

**Mahayana: Bodhisattva: Influences**

The Bodhisattva Path may encourage a Buddhist to **reflect/consider the suffering in the world.** Today, this means that a Buddhist entering the path of the Bodhisattva may consider the suffering to ignite their feelings of compassion (karuna) they may then show generosity and help others overcome their suffering e.g. charity work.

The Bodhisattva Path may encourage a Buddhist **to engage in Buddhist practice.** Today, this means a Buddhist may perform meditation to develop concentration and awareness to help them along the path. Moreover, they may visualise Bodhisattva for help in their own journey. For example, Avalokitesvara.

**Mahayana: Bodhisattva: Teachings**

One teaching about the Bodhisattva Path is **Bodhisattva’s aim to delay their own enlightenment, to help others.** This is supported by the Bodhisattva Vows, Zen Vows state, ‘***beings are numberless; I vow to free them.’***  This means Bodhisattva’s show compassion in aiding the welfare of other beings.

One teaching about the Bodhisattva Path is a **Bodhisattva must perfect the six qualities/perfections (paramitas).** This is supported by the Buddhist Teacher Trungpa, who states, ‘***a Bodhisattva is simply a person who perfects the 6 qualities… generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom.’***  This means, a Buddhist on the Bodhisattva Path may be charitable to show their karuna towards others.

**Pure Land Buddhism: Influences**

Pure Land Buddhism may impact a **Buddhist’s practice.** Today, this means a Pure Land Buddhist may recite/chat the name of Amitabha Buddha. This is because this believed to aid their rebirth into Pure Land (Sukhavati).

Pure Land Buddhism may impact a **Buddhist’s eschatological beliefs.** Today, this means that a Pure Land Buddhist may believe they are destined for Amitabha’s Pure Land to attain their goal of Buddhahood.

**Pure Land Buddhism: Teachings**

One teaching about Pure Land is **if followers have faith in Amitabha Buddha they will attain enlightenment/Buddhahood.** This is supported by Amitabha’s Vows (Dharmakara), which state, ‘***those who have faith and recite my name will achieve enlightenment.’***  This means that Pure Land Buddhists will engage in the practice of chanting and reciting Pure Land’s scriptures.

One teaching about Pure Land is **once followers achieve enlightenment they will turn gold.** This is supported by Amitabha’s Vows (Dharmakara), which state, ‘***in the country of mine beings will be the colour of genuine gold.’***

**Key Facts about Pure Land Buddhism**

Pure Land Buddhism is part of the **Mahayana** tradition of Buddhism.

It began in China and spread into Japan. It is the **principle form** of Buddhist in contemporary Japan.

It is based on faith in **Amitabha Buddha.** He was a king, who renounced his kingdom & achieved enlightenment.

When Amitabha became enlightened he created a Pure Land called **Sukhavati.** It is a land free of dukkha.

Pure Land Buddhists are encouraged to follow **5** types of practice: reciting scripture, meditating on Amitabha, worshipping Amitabha, chanting Amitabha and making offerings to Amitabha. If followed Pure Land Buddhists believe they will be reborn into Sukhavati.

Having faith & belief in Amitabha is seen as more important than one’s actions & behaviours. **It is thought faith in Amitabha enlightenment is achieved.**

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| **Evaluating Human Destiny: Which Path is the Best?** | |
| **Arhat** | **Bodhisattva** |
| Many Theravada Buddhists see the Arhat Path as the best as they suggest it follows more closely to the teachings/example of The Buddha as recorded in the Pali Canon, for these Buddhists this has supreme authority/wisdom. | Many Mahayana Buddhists see the Bodhisattva Path as the greatest (the greater vehicle) this is because it aims to bring all beings into Nibbana, not just the individual arhat. |
| It is seen by some e.g. Mahayana Buddhists as a selfish pursuit. | This path has a greater positive impact on society at large, this is because whilst on the Bodhisattva Path, Buddhists are encourage to cultivate/practice the 6 perfections. One of these is compassion, this may encourage a Buddhist to help those who are suffering. |
| It is seen as a selfless pursuit. Not only do those on the ‘path’ help others, it is believed that through visualisation/meditation those who have become Bodhisattvas will help those currently on the path. |
|  | Some suggest Pure Land offers a much easier way in which to attain one’s destiny e.g. chanting/reciting the name of Amitabha. Thus the Bodhisattva Path may be considered the best as it allows Buddhists help and support rather one of individual and profound effort (arhatship). |
| Can either of these be considered the best? Aren’t both labels just encouraging another of craving/clinging? If one lives their live following the Buddha’s Dhamma, does it matter what their ultimate destiny maybe? | |

**Buddhist Practices**



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| **Paper 1: The Study of Buddhism: Practice: What I Need to Know** | | | | |
| **Topic** | **Notes** | **Assessed** | **Revised** | **R.A.G** |
| **Worship and Festivals** | | | | |
| **Buddhist Places of Worship: Nature, Use & Importance:**   * Temples * Shrines * Monasteries (Viharas) * Halls for Mediation/Learning (Gompas) |  |  |  |  |
| **Key Features of Buddhist Places of Worship**   * Buddha Rupa * Artefacts * Offerings |  |  |  |  |
| **Puja**   * The Significance of Puja * The Role of Puja in the Home * The Role of Puja in the Temple * Chanting (Devotional Practice) * Chanting (Aid to Mental Concentration) * Mantra Recitation * Use of Malas |  |  |  |  |
| **Mediation**   * Samatha Meditation (concentration/tranquillity) * The Aims of Samatha Meditation * The Significance of Samatha Meditation * The Methods of Samatha Meditation * Mindfulness of Breathing |  |  |  |  |
| **Mediation**   * Vipassana Meditation (insight) * The Aims of Vipassana Meditation * The Significance of Vipassana Meditation * The Methods of Vipassana Meditation * Zazen |  |  |  |  |
| **The Visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas** |  |  |  |  |
| **Death Ceremonies**   * The practice & significance of ceremonies/rituals associated with death and mourning in Japanese Buddhist communities * The practice & significance of ceremonies/rituals associated with death and mourning in Tibetan Buddhist communities * The practice & significance of ceremonies/rituals associated with death and mourning in Theravada Buddhist communities |  |  |  |  |

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| **Paper 1: The Study of Buddhism: Practice: What I Need to Know** | | | | |
| **Topic** | **Notes** | **Assessed** | **Revised** | **R.A.G** |
| **Worship and Festivals *(continued…)*** | | | | |
| **Festivals:**   * Wesak: Origins, Celebrations and Significance for Buddhists in GB today      * Parinirvana Day: Origins, Celebrations and Significance for Buddhists in GB today |  |  |  |  |
| **Retreats: Origins, Places and Significance for Buddhists in GB today** |  |  |  |  |
| Buddhist Ethics | | | | |
| **Ethical Teaching:**   * Kamma (Karma) |  |  |  |  |
| **Ethical Teaching:**   * Rebirth |  |  |  |  |
| **Ethical Teaching:**   * Compassion (Karuna) |  |  |  |  |
| **Ethical Teaching:**   * Loving Kindness (Metta) |  |  |  |  |
| **The Five Moral Precepts:**   1. Do Not Take Life 2. Do Not Take What is Not Given 3. Do Not Misuse the Senses 4. Do Not Speak Falsehoods 5. Do Not Take Intoxicants That Cloud the Mind |  |  |  |  |
| **The Six Mahayanan Perfections & How These Are Perfected Within Oneself:**   1. Generosity 2. Morality 3. Patience 4. Energy 5. Meditation 6. Wisdom |  |  |  |  |

**Topic 1: Worship and Festivals**

**The Nature, Use and Importance of Buddhist Places of Worship**

Temple: ***A structure reserved for religious or spiritual activities, such as prayer.***

Shrine: **A room or part of a room which contains a statue of the Buddha (or Bodhissatva in Mahayana Buddhism), candles and an incense burner.**

Monastery (Vihara): ***Viharas. Buildings that house monks and nuns.***

Halls for Meditation: ***A quiet space where Buddhists can meditate.***

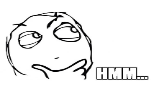
Halls for Learning (Gompa): ***Tibetan monasteries associated with learning.***

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| **Buddhist Places of Worship** | | | | |
| **Temple** | **Shrine** | **Monasteries (Viharas)** | **Halls for Meditation** | **Halls for Learning (Gompas)** |
| **What is the Nature of Buddhist Places of Worship? What Are these Places Like?** | | | | |
| Temples vary in their shape and size but are often at the heart of the Buddhist community. Some may just have building, others maybe a complex of different buildings. Typically, you will find: **a main hall,** where Buddhists come together, this will usually house a statue of Buddha/ Bodhisattvas; **meditation hall,** where it is quiet and Buddhists can meditate; **shrine,** a focal area, usually housing/dedicated to a statue of a Buddha/Bodhisattva; **a stupa,** a tiered tower containing holy relics. | A focal area of a temple/room in a house which houses a **Buddha rupa** (statue) and/or Bodhisattva. They will make **offerings** as a way of showing respect and gratitude to the Buddha for His teachings. These can also symbolise Buddhist teachings e.g. offering flowers will remind Buddhists of Anicca. | These house a community of Buddhist monks/nuns (sangha). They have chosen to withdraw themselves from mainstream society, thus a monastery must cater for all their needs: eating, sleeping, studying and spiritual practice. They also allow the lay community contact with monks/nuns. Some will also house a **stupa.** | These provide a quiet space where Buddhists can meditate. Typically they may house a **Buddha Rupa and Shrines.** | Typically only found in **Tibetan Buddhism.** Gompas are often remote and places where Buddhists learn, seek guidance and perform/engage in spiritual practice e.g. chanting. |

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| **Buddhist Places of Worship** | | | | |
| **Temple** | **Shrine** | **Monasteries (Viharas)** | **Halls for Meditation** | **Halls for Learning (Gompas)** |
| **Why Are These Places of Worship Important for Buddhists?** | | | | |
| Temples are important for Buddhists **as they allow the Buddhist community to join together.** This means Buddhists may develop a sense belonging and deepen and inspire faith. | Shrines are important as **they remind Buddhists of key teachings/ concepts.** For example, by using an offering of flowers, Buddhists are reminded of Anicca (impermanence). In the Dhammapada, it states, ***‘all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’*** | Monasteriesare important as they allow the **laity to develop positive kamma.** This is because monasteries are founded on the principle of giving (dana). The laity can support the monks/nuns by providing them with things such as: food, material for robes, time to help maintain the monastery. | Meditation halls are important because **they** **give Buddhists a designated and quiet space to meditate.** This is important as meditation is one of the ‘Right’ acts the Buddha taught lead to Nibbana. In the Pali Canon, it states, **those who meditate will be released from Mara’s fetter (temptation/ craving).** | Gompas are important **as they allow Buddhists to engage in study of the Buddhist Dhamma.** For example, at the Gompa in Ladakh, important stories are retold through dances and masked performances. |
| Temples are important **as they allow for acts of devotion/reverence.** For example, offerings and/or pilgrimage. A temple marks the spot of the Buddha’s death. The Pali Canon states, **Buddhists should visit Kushinagar, the place of the Buddha’s passing in Nibbana without remainder.** | Shrines are important as **their upkeep** **is considered skilful activity.** Rinpoche teaches that skilful activities allow the mind to focus on spiritual practices and accumulate positive kamma. | Monasteriesare important as they **allow Buddhists contact with monks/nuns.** As these individuals make up one of the Three Jewels, the Sangha, lay Buddhists can seek their refuge in time of need/suffering. The Buddha teaches, **to the Sangha for refuge I go.** | Meditation halls are important because **they** **give Buddhists aids for/to meditation.** For example, if a Buddhist was to engage in visualisation they may visualise artwork (thangka) within the meditation hall. For example, Amitabha Buddha. | Gompas are important **as they are places of academic study.** For example, the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Ladakh. |

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Which of these places of worship is the most important? Why?
* Do Buddhists need places of worship at all to carry out their spiritual practices? What are their advantages? What are their disadvantages?



**Puja: its Role and Significance in the Home and Temple**

Puja: ***The name given to ceremonies that involve meditation, prayer and offerings. Also known as Devotional ritual.***

Chanting: ***Singing or intoning.***

Mantra Recitation: ***A short sequence of words or syllables chanted repetitively as a form of meditation.***

Malas: ***Strings of beads, used as a prayer aid.***

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| **Aspect of Worship** | **Explanation** | **Example** |
| Mantra | A short sequence of words or syllables chanted repetitively as a form of meditation. | Tibetan Buddhism, Om Mani Padme Hum. |
| Chanting | Singing or intoning, often the Buddhist scriptures. | Pure Land Buddhists, chanting  “Amitabha Buddha.” |
| Mala | Strings of beads, used as a prayer aid. |  |
| Meditation | A spiritual experience that opens a person up to the highest state of  consciousness. | Samatha  Vipassana  Visualisation |
| Bowing | The act of lowering the torso and head as a sign of respect – prominent in Mahayana Buddhist worship. |  |
| Offering | A giving of something as a sign of respect and reverence. Sometimes a practical gift. | Flowers – Anicca  Candle – Light |

**Puja: Contrasting Ways of Performance**

**Puja: Importance**

One importance of puja is it **allows Buddhists to express their gratitude and respect for the Buddha and His teachings.**

One importance of puja is it allows Buddhists to **overcome suffering in their life.** This is supported by the Three Jewels, which teach, ‘***to the Buddha for refuge I go’.*** This means that during puja Buddhists gain knowledge/clarity on how it is possible to overcome the suffering they are experiencing, this could be achieved through reading/chanting the Buddha’s Dhamma e.g. Heart Sutra.

**Meditation: its Aims, Methods and Significance**

Meditation: ***A spiritual experience that opens a person up to the highest state of consciousness. One of the six perfections.***

Samatha Meditation: ***Concentration and tranquility. A method of meditation; a state of calmness.***

Vipassana Meditation: ***Insight into the true nature of things; meditation.***

Zazen: ***This is the main form of meditation in Zen Buddhism and is practised while sitting cross-legged.***

Visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: ***In Mahayana Buddhism, imagining an image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, focusing on it, on the qualities of a Buddha and with the aim of becoming one to help others.***

**Samatha Meditation**

**Aim:** this is known as **calming meditation;** Buddhists believe it leads to a more tranquil, settled and restful mind thus enabling deeper concentration.

**Methods:** one popular method of performing Samatha is via the technique of **mindfulness of breathing.** This is where the practitioner pays close attention to the sensation of their breathing. Additionally, a Buddhist may use **a variety of objects**, **kasinas,** on which they may focus their attention to enable the calming of the mind. Objects may include: water, fire, red and yellow.

**Importance:**

One reason Samatha Meditation is important is because **it allows a Buddhist to let go of craving.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***those on the meditative path, will be released from Mara’s fetter’.*** This means that by practicing Samatha a Buddhist can overcome their attachment/craving and be put on the path to Nibbana.

One reason Samatha Meditation is important is because **it calms the mind.** This means by concentrating on one object, they can free themselves from distraction and prepare for a true understanding on the nature of reality.

**Vipassana Meditation**

**Aim:** this is known as **insight meditation;** Buddhists believe it allows them to penetrate and gain an insight into the true nature of reality – to see things as they really are. It aids Buddhists in their understanding of how nature is characterised by the three marks of existence.

**Methods:** many similar ways to Samatha e.g. concentration, however, in Vipassana Meditation everything can be explored, rather than one object. During the meditation a practitioner may change their focus, from their body to the sound of rain etc. Whilst many Buddhists perform this sitting down, some Buddhists may perform Vipassana Meditation whilst walking.

It is a popular method of meditation in Zen Buddhism. Many Zen Buddhists will practice **zazen.** This meditation method is hoped to lead to a deeper understanding of the nature of existence.

**Importance:**

One reason Vipassana Meditation is important is because it gives **clarity and possible realisation.** This is supported by Basho, who states, ‘***when your consciousness has become ripe… pure like clear water… realisation is possible.*** This means that by practicing Vipassana Meditation a Buddhist can attain the goal of Nibbana, realising the true impermanent nature of reality.

One reason why Vipassana Meditation is important is because **it** **allows Buddhists to accumulate good merit, this leads to positive kamma.** This means that as meditation is deemed an act of punna, merit, it affords the practitioner the opportunity to accumulate positive kamma, this will help them achieve a fortunate rebirth.

**Evaluating Samatha and Vipassana Meditation: Which is Best?**

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| **Samatha vs Vipassana** | |
| **Samatha** | **Vipassana** |
| Many Buddhists argue that Samatha is possibly the easiest form of meditation to undertake. This means that its practice is open to a wider array of people. Its methods and aims are very simple and although it may be useful, it doesn’t require an extensive understanding of Buddhist teaching/practice. It can be performed by simply focusing on water/white space.  ***However…. some commentators have argued that meditation may lead to the development of the Rattling Hypothesis. This is when an individual engages in meditation for a long period of time, without the correct supervision/guidance it could lead them to remembering trauma.*** | The goal for most Buddhists is to attain Nibbana. The Buddha taught that this wasn’t possible until the true nature of reality had been understood, for many Buddhists this means overcoming craving and ignorance. The Buddha taught: ***‘Nibbana… the cessation of suffering… the cessation of craving…. the freedom from it.’***  Although Samatha Meditation may aid this process, it is **only** through Vipassana, an insight into reality can be gained.  ***However….******the methods involved in Vipassana are difficult to practice. Moreover, for a Buddhist to fully engage in this method of meditation, an understanding of key Buddhist doctrine is essential e.g. Three Marks of Existence, Four Noble Truths etc. without guidance, this are difficult to comprehend.*** |
| The methods of this meditation have been proven to have positive effects for mental health/ well-being and are the foundation of many ‘Mindfulness’ programmes in schools, prisons and hospitals. They have been recognised as a way to help overcome stress, depression and anxiety. This is useful for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.  ***However… for Buddhists there are also two other folds to follow besides meditation: ethics and wisdom.*** |
| * Both are just as important as each other. All forms of meditation complement and aid one’s spiritual progress. Therefore both are important as one another. * During his life, the Buddha practiced both methods. Therefore both are important as one another. * The Buddha taught the notion of ‘skilful means’ which can be interpreted as everybody is different and each individual must select the method of meditation most suited to their needs. Therefore both are important as one another. | |

**Visualisation**

**Aim:** this requires the meditator to **imagine** an object in their mind; Buddhists will look at the object/image and then visualise it in their mind in as much detail as possible.

**Methods:** this practice is used by many **Tibetan Buddhists.** During meditation, they will often visualise a deity – this is being who has become fully enlightened. Not only will they focus on their appearance, they will also focus on their nature (i.e. qualities/characteristics), imagining themselves like that deity – they hope that by imagining them, they become like them. Popular visualisations include: the Medicine Buddha, Avalokiteshvara and Amitabha.

To aid this process a Buddhist may use a **thangka –** a detailed painting/image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. Or a **mandala –** an intricate, colourful, circle shaped pattern to symbolise different things e.g. the Buddha, Pure Land, teachings.

**Importance:**

One reason why Visualisation is important is **it can aid understanding of Buddhist concepts/teachings.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’*** By using mandalas during the process of Visualisation a Buddhist can understand the concept of anicca, by the brushing away of sand after it is complete, Buddhists are reminded that everything is impermanent.

One reason why Visualisation is important is it **allows Buddhists to develop desirable character traits.** This means via the visualisation of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara, Buddhists can grow in compassion (karuna), this is one of the four sublime states which the Buddha taught all Buddhists should cultivate. However, it is particularly important for those on the Bodhisattva Path.

**Death Ceremonies: Practice and Significance if Japanese, Tibetan and Theravada Buddhist Communities**

Buddhist beliefs concerning death are rooted in the principle of **rebirth.** This is the belief that when a person dies they are reborn, this means their kammic energy leaves their current body is transferred/reborn into a new one. This is a cyclical process continues until Nibbana is attained. Thus for Buddhists death is not seen as the end, it is merely a period of transition, these beliefs have a significant impact on the rituals/practices associated with death and mourning in Buddhist communities.

**Death Ceremonies: Contrasting Ways**

In some Buddhist traditions (e.g. Tibetan) they may hold a **sky burial.** This means they place the deceased’s body in a high place as a gift to the vultures, this is because many Tibetan Buddhists believe that vultures aid the eschatological process of rebirth.

In other Buddhists traditions (e.g. Pure Land, Japan) they may hold a **funeral service.** This means that the body will be placed in the coffin, pointing west, whilst those in attendance chant ‘Namo Amida Bu’. Those attending may also read from the Lotus Sutra.

Theravada Buddhist communities may **focus on the transfer of merit.** This means that rather than spending money on an elaborate funeral, funds may be donated/used for worthy causes. As this generates positive kamma, the karmic merit is transferred and the deceased will hopefully have a more favourable rebirth. The deceased is most likely to be **cremated.**

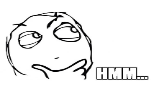
**Death Ceremonies: Importance**

One reason death ceremonies are important is because **they provide comfort**. This is supported by the ***Parable of the Mustard Seed*** which teaches anicca (expressed through death) happens to everybody and is an inevitable part of life. Through the death ceremony mourners can come together to accept and acknowledge death and begin their grieving process.

One reason death ceremonies are important is because **they allow for positive kamma to be gained.** This means that through acts of generosity by the mourners, the deceased can accumulate positive kamma, aiding their rebirth process, possibly allowing them rebirth into a higher realm.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Do these beliefs have any meaning today? They may provide hope and comfort to mourners, but how may Freud challenge this? What logic of Dawkins could you apply to belief concerning rebirth? What statement of Russell may challenge these ideas? Does the possibility of anicca having an empirical foundation, strengthen the concept at all?



**Festivals and Retreats: Origins, Celebrations and Importance**

Wesak: ***A Buddhist festival celebrating the Buddha's birth. For some Buddhists it also celebrates his enlightenment and death. It is most often celebrated in May.***

Parinirvana Day: ***A festival in Mahayana Buddhism that celebrates the death of the Buddha and his attainment of final nibbana. It is most often celebrated on 15th February.***

Retreat: ***Temporarily leaving one’s everyday life and going to special places to aid spiritual development.***

**Festivals: Contrasting Celebrations**

Some Buddhists (e.g. Theravada) use the festival of Wesak to commemorate/celebrate three major events in the Buddha’s life: birth, enlightenment and death (parinirvana).

Other Buddhists (e.g. Mahayana) use the festival of Parinirvana Day to celebrate the Buddha’s passing into parinirvana (death).

**Festivals: Ways of Celebrating: Wesak**

Some Theravada Buddhists in Singapore celebrate Wesak by freeing animals e.g. birds from cages. This is to symbolise liberation and remember the Buddha’s release from the cycle of samsara.

Other Theravada Buddhists in Indonesia celebrate Wesak by lighting and releasing paper lanterns. This is to symbolise how the Buddha’s Dhamma can be used to overcome the darkness of ignorance and light the path to Enlightenment.

**Festivals: Ways of Celebrating: Parinirvana Day**

Some Mahayana Buddhists will treat Parinirvana Day as a solemn occasion, this means they will reflect upon their own immorality/death and remember those who have recently died. They may do this by going on a retreat and meditating.

Other Mahayana Buddhists will use the day to perform pilgrimage (yatra), this means they will visit the believed site of the Buddha’s death, Kushinagar. Here, they may visit the temple complex and perform puja to give thanks/remember the Buddha and His death.

**Festivals: Importance: Wesak**

One reason Wesak is important is **because if affords Buddhists the opportunity to remember the Buddha.** For some Buddhists, this means remembering His birth, enlightenment and passing into parinirvana (death).

One reason why Wesak is important is because it **reminds/teaches Buddhists key aspects of the Buddha’s Dhamma.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’*** By engaging in some celebration practices, for example, releasing caged animals, Buddhists remember Anicca – every state, feeling, life is impermanent.

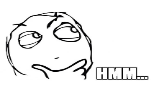
**Festivals: Importance: Parinirvana Day**

One reason Parinirvana Day is important is **because if affords Buddhists the opportunity to remember the Buddha.** For some Buddhists, this means remembering His passing into parinirvana – death.

One reason why Parinirvana Day is important is because it **reminds/teaches Buddhists key aspects of the Buddha’s Dhamma.** This is supported by the Dhammapada, which states, ‘***all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.’*** By engaging in some celebration practices, for example, meditating on an offering of a flower, Buddhists remember Anicca – every state, feeling, life is impermanent.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Why/how may a Buddhist find it difficult to practice these festivals in the Great Britain today?



**Retreats**

**Examples of Retreats**

* Tara Buddhist Meditation Centre (UK)
* The Samatha Centre (UK)
* Bodh Gaya (India, Place of Buddha’s Enlightenment)
* Kushinagar (India, Death of Buddha)

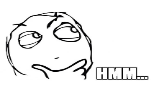
**Retreats: Importance**

One reason retreats are important is **because they may affords Buddhists the opportunity to remember the Buddha’s life.** For example, if a Buddhist retreated to Kushinagar, they may reflect upon the Buddha’s death and how if the Buddha escaped the suffering of samsara, they may too.

One reason retreats are important is because **they allow Buddhists to engage in Buddhist practice.** For example, if a Buddhist were to retreat to a meditation centre they could engage in Samatha, Metta and/or Vipassana Meditation. In the Dhammapada, the Buddha says, ***‘those on the meditative path will be released from Mara’s fetter.’*** Freedom from craving is a goal for many Buddhists.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Which may be the best way to remember/celebrate the life of the Buddha? Festivals? Retreats? Other ways, pilgrimage? Scripture?
* Which is the most important festival? Wesak? Parinirvana Day? Why?



**Topic 2: Buddhist Ethics**

**Ethical Teachings**

Kamma: ***Literally 'action'. Deliberate actions that affect the believer's circumstances in this and future lives; cause and effect.***

Compassion: ***Karuna; pity; part of the spiritual path.***

Loving Kindness: ***Metta. A pure love which is not possessive and which does not seek to gain.***

Rebirth: ***This refers to the belief that when a person dies he / she is reborn and that this process of death and rebirth continues until nibbana is attained.***

**Kamma**

According to Buddhist tradition, an individual’s action in this life will not only impact their happiness and suffering in the present, but also in their future. The concept of kamma suggests that people are rewarded/punished **BY** their action not **FOR** their action. For Buddhists the concept of kamma is **empowering**, this is because it means they can change their future **through their own actions**. By cultivating skilful actions/states, they can live a happier life now and in their future rebirth thus

kamma is essential to Buddhist Ethics. Kamma benefits both the individual and wider society; as not only will the individual be happier, but they will also act in a more generous, kind and compassionate way towards others.

**Kamma: Importance**

One reason kamma is important is because **it impacts/directs a Buddhist’s present life.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘ if one speaks or acts with a wicked mind, because of that, pain follows one. If one speaks or acts with a good mind, because of that, happiness follows one.’*** This means a Buddhist will try to live their life performing skilful actions e.g. generosity, loving-kindness to accumulate positive karmic merit.

One reason kamma is important is because it **impacts a Buddhist’s rebirth.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘beings who were endowed with bad conduct have re-appeared in a bad destination…But beings who were endowed with good conduct have re-appeared in a good destination’.*** Therefore a Buddhist will live their life in accordance with the Eightfold Path, ensuring their conduct/action is ‘Right’ to ensure rebirth in a favourable/higher realm.

**Rebirth**

The notion of rebirth is complex, remember that Buddhists believe in the concept of anatta, no fixed-self, therefore what is reborn? The concept of rebirth should be understood as a notion of ‘rebecoming’. Buddhist’s believe it is the collection/sum total of their karmic energy which is reborn, not a self/soul.

**Rebirth: Importance**

One reason rebirth is important is because it may give **hope.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘beings who were endowed with good conduct have re-appeared in a good destination’.*** This means that a Buddhist may hope if their present life is full of dukkha, their next life will be less so.

One reason rebirth is important is because it may give **comfort.** This means that those mourning the deceased may find believing that their loved one is has not gone forever, but is continuing their journey in another body/form

**Compassion (Karuna)**

This refers to the compassion that Buddhists show for the suffering of everybody in the world. It means feeling concerned for those who are suffering and wanting the suffering of others to be removed, Buddhists will do what they can to remove this suffering. Not only does this concept take into account the suffering of others, but it also teaches that a Buddhist should care and show compassion for themselves.

**Compassion: Importance**

One reason compassion is important is because **it is one of the four sublime states the Buddha taught that all Buddhists should develop.** These states explain how a Buddhist should act towards others and themselves, by acting in this way, it is considered skilful and will reduce the suffering (dukkha) in the world.

One reason compassion is important is because **it can have a positive effect on society.** This is supported by the Dalai Lama, who states ***‘the key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion’.*** This means that if everybody acted in this way, suffering would be reduced in the world. For example, supporting the work of Rokpa, a Buddhist charity founded on compassion.

**Loving-Kindness (Metta)**

This is an attitude/quality that Buddhists develop, it is the idea that a Buddhist should show a loving, kind, friendly attitude towards themselves and all other beings. It is an expression of the wish that all beings are happy and free from suffering. This is a selfless attitude, when showing metta, a Buddhist doesn’t/shouldn’t expect anything in return.

This attitude can also form the basis of a meditation practice, metta meditation. It aims to help the meditator develop an attitude of metta towards themselves and others. It is a five-step process and may involve the visualisation of people being happy and/or people/Buddha’s/Bodhisattvas who poses the quality of metta.

**Metta: Importance**

One reason loving-kindness is important is because **it is one of the four sublime states the Buddha taught that all Buddhists should develop.** These states explain how a Buddhist should act towards others and themselves, by acting in this way, it is considered skilful and will reduce the suffering (dukkha) in the world.

One reason metta is important is because **it can have a positive effect on society.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘one should cultivate towards all beings and all the world loving-kindness’.*** This means if cultivated metta helps rid the world of the three poisons: ignorance, greed and hatred thus helps reducing the causes and acts of suffering.

**Metta and Karuna: What’s the Difference?**

Whilst metta is a **general desire** for all being to be happy, karuna arises when metta comes into contact with another being e.g. an act to help reduce suffering.

**The Five Moral Precepts (Pancasilani)**

Five Moral Precepts: ***five principles that Buddhists try to follow to live ethically and morally.***

1. To abstain from taking life i.e. don’t harm or kill any living being.
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given i.e. stealing.
3. To abstain from misuse of the senses or sexual misconduct i.e. overindulgence and sexual promiscuity or harmful sexual acts e.g. rape, adultery.
4. To abstain from wrong speech i.e. lying or gossiping.
5. To abstain from intoxicants that cloud the mind i.e. drugs and alcohol.

Unlike in the Abrahamic Traditions there is no divine being to judge a Buddhist’s actions, this means there is external punishment or reward. It is considered unskilful (hiri) to break a precept, but a Buddhist should reflect, not dwell on their action. They should learn from their mistake a move on.

It could be argued that the **precepts are a relative form of morality** i.e. they are not absolute guidelines which always must be followed (especially for lay Buddhists), more good may come from breaking a precept than keeping it. Buddhist ethics is rooted in in intention, a Buddhist must WANT to do the act, rather than just blindly following/performing them because the Buddha says so!

**The Five Moral Precepts: Importance**

One reason the F.M.P are important is because **they offer guidelines and suggested ways of living.** This is supported by Buddhist Monastics (e.g. Thanissaro) who states, ***‘the five precepts are formulated in such a way that they provide a practice, clear-cut set of standards’.*** This means that for a Buddhist the Five Precepts offer a structure for their lives, encouraging them to preform moral/skilful actions e.g. refrain from harming living beings.

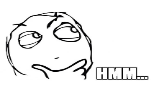
The Five Precepts are important as they help Buddhists overcome the Three Positions: ignorance, greed and hatred. This means that they are viewed as a prescription for treating the human condition, they are seen as a self-healing medicine. For example, refraining from misusing speech, may reduce hate speech in the world.

**Are the Five Precepts Possible to Live by in the Contemporary World?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Is it Possible to Live by the Five Precepts Today?** | |
| **Yes** | **No** |
| They are not an absolute guide to Buddhist morality. Therefore they can adapted and broken if the situation/setting allows. For example, today it is very difficult to lie. If lying may reduce suffering this would be permissible. | The culture of contemporary society both in Buddhist countries and in the West can be perceived as materialistic, hedonistic and individualistic, therefore these Buddhist values are out-of-date with modern attitudes. For example, with the rise of liberal attitudes towards sex and sexual activity, along as no harm is caused, many cultures/societies see no problem with sexual promiscuity and see it as one feature of an acceptable lifestyle choice. |
| These precepts are quite reasonable and undemanding for most people as they are common sense. They also are the basis of many laws within society e.g. avoiding killing, rape, taking illegal drugs etc. | Does the outcome of breaking the precept seem more appealing then following it? To some, a life full of pleasure, gossip and theft is more exciting than refraining from these acts. There have even be cases of prominent monks not abiding by these guidelines e.g. Luang Pu Nenkham. |
| Most people want a harmonious and happy lifestyle – these precepts allow for society to be built on solid foundations. |  |

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Which of the Precepts may be the most important? Which of the precepts maybe the most difficult to follow in the world today? Why?



**The Six Perfections**

The Six Perfections: ***Guides in Mahayana Buddhism to lead one to enlightenment.***

1. Generosity/Giving: The sincere and selfless desire to benefit others with no expectation of reward. This includes giving material goods, protection and the Dhamma.

2. Morality: It entails following the five moral precepts. For many Mahayana Buddhists a further 5 precepts are also followed: not to talk about an individual’s errors/faults; not to praise one’s self and speak badly of others; not be stingy; not be angry and not to speak badly of the Three Refgues (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha).

3. Patience: Tolerance, forbearance, endurance. This also involves the ability to tolerate and endure, both personal hardship and suffering and in the face of those who show you anger.

4. Energy: Making a courageous effort to attain enlightenment. This may involve depending their practice or engaging in study of the Buddha’s Dhamma.

5. Meditation: A spiritual experience that opens a person up to the highest state of consciousness. This will allow them to develop concentration (Samatha) and awareness (Vipassana).

6. Wisdom: Insight into the true nature of reality. It is the realisation of sunyata, the ‘emptiness’ of all phenomena.

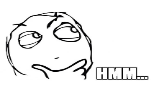
**The Six Perfections: Importance**

One reason the six perfections are important is because they **offer a Buddhist a means to follow the Buddha’s Dhamma and ultimately attain Enlightenment.** This is supported by the Pali Canon, which states, ***‘how many bases for training are there for those seeking enlightenment?" The Buddha replied, "there are six: generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation, and wisdom.’***  This means Buddhists have a clear, set path to attain Enlightenment.

The Six Perfections are important **as they give guidelines**. This means that for some Buddhists the Six Perfections offer a structure for their lives, encouraging them to preform moral/skilful actions e.g. be generous, teach others, avoid anger etc.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

* Which of the Perfections may be the most difficult to cultivate? Why?



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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Writing Prompts** | | |
| **Adding**  **Detail** | **Supporting Arguments** | **Contrasting**  **Arguments** |
| * Because * This means that * Furthermore * In addition * This shows/highlights * Supporting that idea * For example * ‘X’ proposes * This is important because * Also * Moreover * As well * Moreover * And * Subsequently * Thus * According to * This suggests * Nevertheless * This demonstrates * ‘X’ asserts | * In support * Similarly * Likewise * That is a strong argument * In agreement with * For example * This strengthens * Also * Like ‘X’ * Others may agree because * This leads to the conclusion * Compared with * Arguably | * In contrast * Contrastingly * Opposing * Challenging * That is a weak argument * However * Yet * A weakness with * A criticism of * An issue arising * Others may disagree * ‘X’ is ultimately unsuccessful * ‘X’ conclusions are unreliable * Contrary to ‘X’ * Despite this * This argument is flawed * Yet the assertion is invalid because * This can be challenged |