



Revision Summaries for GCSE AQA Religious Studies A

Component 1: Buddhism

Update v1.1, October 2025

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Teacher's Introduction

The revision summaries in this series are designed to support your students as they study the GCSE AQA A Buddhism specification, and have been designed to cover the major themes and concepts of each topic point accordingly.

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

All students, whether they are academically strong, average or weak, can benefit from a concise and clearly explained set of notes to revise from, both as they work through the AQA course but also when preparing for their end of course exams. It is recommended, therefore, that students be given each relevant summary after learning a topic so that they can clearly understand the summaries and refer back to them when needed. However, the summaries can also function well as a pack given to students in the run-up to their exams.

Each topic follows a set structure detailed below:

- ✓ **Keywords:** A clear list of important terminology students need to know when studying the topic.
- ✓ **Overview:** A look at the major themes of the topic, with a brief introduction to the major points of discussion and disagreement.
- ✓ **Key Points:** The main body of the summaries for each topic, they are a clear and concise set of notes that help students support their own knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- ✓ **Student Checklist:** A helpful guide to what students need to know by the end of the revision summary and a way to check their understanding and progress through a particular topic.
- ✓ **Exam-style Questions:** A full set of practice questions (with extra multiple-choice questions), complete with mark schemes listing indicative content. These are useful for students wishing to improve their knowledge on a particular topic and learning how to approach their end of year exams.

This clearly ensures students have not only a grasp on the key themes of each topic, but a way to understand their place within the specification as a whole. Students who may have missed lessons or not made detailed notes may benefit greatly from these revision summaries in helping their recollection of key topics closer to their end of course exams, especially when looking over topics covered earlier in their studies.

Note: The first two sections (The Dhamma / The Buddha and the Four Noble Truths) can be taught in either order depending on preference.

December 2017

Update v1.1, October 2025

As per the exam board assessment updates, changes have been made to the practice questions:

- “contrasting” replaced with “different” in the 4 mark question
- 5-mark question replaced with a 6-mark question
- 2-mark question reduced to a 1-mark question

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Introduction to Buddhism

The History of Buddhism

Buddhism as a religion arose around 2,500 years ago. It developed from the teaching critical of the **Vedic** and **Shramana** traditions that had preceded it.

- The Vedic tradition, the precursor to modern Hinduism, believed in the caste system, having a soul and other practices such as the use of spells, omens and animal sacrifice.
- The Buddha rejected these principles. However, he still accepted these traditions and that the ultimate goal in life was to be free of suffering.
- The Buddha taught what is now known as the 'middle way' between a life of severe asceticism and a life of indulgence. It states that one should take only what one needs in order to achieve clarity of mind and understanding of the nature of existence and suffering.

The Buddha and His Influence

The Buddha is the primary source for teaching and insight within Buddhism. Many stories have become intertwined with various myths, although Buddhists argue the core teachings have been passed on accurately.

- He is believed to have taught mostly within the eastern part of ancient India, around the region of Lumbini, which is now within Nepal.
- Buddhism then spread from ancient India across to Sri Lanka, South East Asia and Tibet. In the Middle Ages, Buddhism was largely replaced in India with modern religions. A small number of Buddhists still live there.

Different Buddhist Traditions

Buddhism has not remained the same throughout its history, and many different schools and different beliefs have emerged over time. It can be divided between:

Theravada Buddhism 'the way of the elders' – practised in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma and Cambodia. This is the more orthodox form of Buddhism, it claims to closely practise the original teachings that changed least throughout the history of Buddhism.

- Theravada scriptures are written in **Pali**, and the core set of writings is called the **Pic**.
- This contains:
 - **Vinaya Pitaka** – Rules for Buddhist monks and nuns
 - **Sutta Pitaka** – Contains the teachings of the Buddha, tales about his past lives and other collections of key sayings (**Dhammapada**)
 - **Abhidhamma Pitaka** – Philosophical writings and teachings

Mahayana Buddhism – practised in China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, Mongolia, Vietnam and elsewhere. Mahayana Buddhism is less conservative, and accepts a wider variety of traditions and practices.

- Mahayana scriptures are written in **Sanskrit**. They also accept the authority of the Theravada scriptures, but recognise a greater number of writings, called **Sutras**. Two in particular are:
 - **The Heart Sutra** – This contains teachings and writings on Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.
 - **The Lotus Sutra** – This contains extra teachings from the Buddha, including the potential to become Buddhas themselves.

Note on Pali and Sanskrit

The AQA specification generally reverts to the Pali spelling of key concepts (e.g. **karma**) with the exception of a few key Mahayana concepts that may not have Theravada equivalents. These revision summaries follow all specification spellings of key concepts.

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The Dhamma



Keywords

- **Ehipassiko** – The process of using one's own experience and knowledge to develop insight.
- **The Buddha** – The main teacher/figure who founded the Buddhist religion.
- **The Dhamma** – The collected teachings of the Buddha; the laws/truths of the world.
- **The Sangha** – The monastic Buddhist order / those who have committed themselves to the Dhamma.
- **The Three Refuges** – The three main aspects to Buddhism; the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.



Overview

The Dhamma (Pali) or Dharma (Sanskrit) refers to numerous things within the Buddhist tradition. It can mean the collected teachings of the Buddha, and the middle way recommendation for enlightenment. However, it also has a broader meaning, as the ultimate truth or law of the universe. Therefore, all the Buddhist teachings, both about the world and the self, are understood as being part of the Dhamma and Buddhists believe that hearing and understanding the Dhamma and following the teachings of the Buddha can help them gain greater insight into the Dhamma as the truth about the world.



Key Points

The Dhamma

The Dhamma is the most important concept within Buddhism. Although it is commonly referred to as 'the truth' about reality, the Buddha himself stated his students should not accept his teachings without understanding them for themselves.

- Dhamma is a difficult word to translate. It encompasses the whole of Buddhist teachings and cannot be equated with a single teaching, rule or truth.
- The Buddha encouraged his followers to reflect on his teachings in light of their own experiences and their own insights to understand the Dhamma within the context of their own lives.

The Dhamma and the Three Refuges

The Dhamma is the second of the **Three Refuges** (also known as the Three Jewels), along with the **Buddha** and the **Sangha**.

- A refuge for Buddhists is a place or teaching where one can find safety from the difficulties of the outside world.
- When facing suffering in life, Buddhists are encouraged to seek relief in the Three Refuges, which provide a network of stable teaching, insight and assistance.
- **The Sangha** can mean a number of things. Most commonly it refers to the **monastic** order of Buddhism. It can also mean anyone who has reached the first stage of enlightenment (stream-enterer) or in some modern lay circles, the entire Buddhist community.
- The Three Refuges are the path to lasting release from suffering. Central to Buddhism is the belief that the Three Refuges are the path to enlightenment.

The Importance of the Dhamma to Ordinary Buddhists

It can be asked which of the Three Refuges a Buddhist might prioritise in their life.

- The Buddha is the figurehead of Buddhism, and the reason why the religion exists. It can be argued that without his insight, the Buddhist religion would have never developed. The Buddha today is an important example for Buddhists to look up to.
- It could be put forward that the Dhamma, in describing the truth of the world, is the most important for it is eternal in ways that the Buddha is not. Even with the death of the Buddha, the Dhamma continues.

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- Others might still argue that the Sangha is the most important, as it provides the Dhamma for ordinary people, and helps them develop wisdom and compassion for their own.
- Some might argue the Three Refuges have to all be accepted equally, and that one is over another. All have a part to play, which is why, when becoming a Buddhist, the Three Refuges the centre of their spiritual life.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea 	Yes
I can detail the different meanings of the Dhamma in Buddhist thought, and the role it plays in a ordinary Buddhist's life.		
I understand how the Dhamma should be measured against individual experiences, and how the translation of 'truth' or 'law' does not capture its total meaning.		
I can describe the Three Refuges and their importance in the Buddhist religion.		
I can evaluate how each of the Three Refuges might be important in a Buddhist's life, and whether it is possible to identify any as the most important.		



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The Buddhist Concept of Dependence



Keywords

- **Kamma** – A natural law of cause and effect, influenced by one's actions, that determines a person's current life and future lives.
- **Nibbana** – The ultimate spiritual aim of Buddhists; a freedom from suffering and the cycle of rebirth.
- **Nidana** – A chain or link in the Wheel of Life that represents a connection between past, present, and future existence.
- **Paticcasamuppada** – Dependent arising; the Buddhist doctrine that everything is interdependent.
- **Rebirth** – The process of a person's consciousness or energy entering a new body after death.
- **Samsara** – The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth all human beings are naturally part of.
- **Tanha** – Craving, one of the main causes of suffering for human beings.
- **Wheel of Life** – A pictorial representation of key Buddhist doctrines, including the cycle of rebirth.



Overview

The concept of dependent arising (**paticcasamuppada**) is one of the central concepts of the world. Similar to the idea of cause and effect, it says that everything is interconnected. The existence and state of anything is, therefore, dependent upon various conditions, such that if the conditions do not exist, so does the thing dependent on them. Therefore, nothing is independent or permanent as its dependent conditions change. This means that all things are intimately linked together. The Buddhist is not seen as a number of isolated objects, but a vast web of conditions connected to each other. Dependent arising is particularly important in the Four Noble Truths.



Key Points

Dependent Arising (Paticcasamuppada)

Different things in the world can be identified as contained within a web of conditions. Even the actions of people, whether they are positive or negative, cannot be understood without reference to the existence of others.

- For example, a cow cannot simply survive by itself. It requires grass, water, shelter and if all of those things disappear, the cow would also cease to exist.
- The same can be thought of human beings. A person's existence is a careful balance between the things that sustain people and the things that push them closer towards death. Life is ever-changing and dependent upon the various conditions within the world.

Samsara, Kamma and Dependent Arising

Samsara is the Buddhist doctrine that after human beings die, their energy or consciousness is **reincarnated** or **reborn** into another body. This process continually occurs in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

- Dependent on what one has done good or bad actions in one's life, one accumulates good or bad **kamma** (karma). One's kamma influences the type of world, or realm, one is born into after death. Good kamma results in rebirth into a higher realm, bad kamma into a lower realm.
- Kamma can even be understood as a form of dependent arising. One's actions in one's life set the stage for one's future life, such that the conditions of one's life can importantly be said to be dependent on one's kamma in a previous life.
- Therefore, even life itself is dependent on one's previous lives and Buddhists aim, through following the Buddha's teachings, to eventually achieve **nibbana** (nirvana); a liberation or freedom from samsara and the suffering that accompanies it.

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The Wheel of Life

The Tibetan Wheel of Life (**bhavacakka**) is a visual illustration of the process of samsara in Buddhism. It details major aspects of Buddhist cosmology, such as the six realms of existence that beings might move between them.

- The outer ring shows 12 different **nidanas** (links or chains) that trace how humans are born into the world and finally die. Each nidana causes the one after it, showing how each state is dependent on one before it.

The Twelve Nidanas

	Nidana	Symbol in the Wheel
1	Ignorance	Blind person, sometimes a blind ox
2	Formations/determinations	Potter shaping a vase
3	Consciousness	Monkey in a tree
4	Name and form (Five Aggregates of self - kandhas)	Boat with two (sometimes three) people
5	Senses / six sense bases	House with six openings
6	Contact	Man and woman embracing
7	Feeling / sensation	Man with an arrow in his back
8	Craving	Man/woman receiving a gift
9	Grasping/clinging	Man picking fruit
10	Becoming	Pregnant woman
11	Birth/rebirth	A woman giving birth
12	Suffering/death	Person carrying a corpse



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Not Sure 😐
I can describe the concept of dependent arising and how in Buddhist thought everything is interdependent and connected.		
I understand the Buddhist doctrines of samsara and kamma, and can detail how they relate to dependent arising.		
I can explain the Buddhist concept of nibbana, and why Buddhists seek release from samsara and the dependent nature of life.		
I understand how dependent arising is linked to the nidanas or the Wheel of Life, and can describe a number of them and their interconnectedness.		

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The Three Marks of Existence



Keywords

- **Anatta** – The Buddhist doctrine that there is no-self, or no permanent, lasting self.
- **Anicca** – The Buddhist doctrine that all things are impermanent and ever-changing.
- **Dukkha** – The Buddhist doctrine that suffering exists and is a natural part of life.
- **The Five Skandhas** – The five elements or parts that make up a person.



Overview

The Three Marks of Existence in Buddhism are the fundamental characteristics that define the human condition. They are anicca, dukkha, and anatta, and Buddhists believe that coming to understand these three marks is essential for achieving enlightenment. In contrast, delusion about these three marks is a primary cause of suffering. When one comes to understand oneself that there are things that are permanent, or do not change, this delusion inevitably causes suffering and disappointment. Therefore, the three marks of existence are closely linked to other Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, which outline dukkha further, and the Eightfold Path, which details how one can move towards the end of suffering.



Key Points

Dukkha

Dukkha is one of the most fundamental concepts in Buddhism. It is commonly translated as suffering, unsatisfactoriness or pain.

- Buddhists believe that suffering is a key characteristic of life and unavoidable while one is trapped within samsara.
- Through the teachings of the Buddha and practices such as meditation, Buddhists hope to reduce suffering in their lives, and eventually eliminate it by achieving nibbana.
- The Buddha after his enlightenment spoke of seven different forms of suffering, and these are: birth, old age, sickness and death.

The Three Different Forms of Dukkha

The Buddha also spoke of three other types of suffering a person can experience in their lives:

- Ordinary suffering (**dukkha-dukkhata**). This can be both mental and physical, for example breaking an arm or being upset at failing an exam.
- Change (**viparinama-dukkha**). This is the unhappiness produced by unwanted change in the world; for example, suffering from rain while one is sunbathing. It can even just be a subtle unhappiness at knowing change will come.
- Basic unsatisfactoriness (**sammasamkhara-dukkha**). This is a difficult idea to translate. It is used to refer to the general lack of satisfaction with life, particularly when one is not meeting the expectations or standards people set for it.

Dukkha and Samsara

One might understand death as a release from suffering in itself. But samsara means rebirth. One is reborn and continues to experience suffering.

- Therefore, there is no escape from suffering other than liberation from samsara. A person's present life is only a temporary cure, for they will keep suffering in their next life.

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Anicca

Anicca is most commonly translated as impermanence. Buddhists believe that everything is constantly changing, and nothing is fixed or permanent.

- For example, a plant will begin as a seed, growing bigger before finally decaying and dying. Nothing can stop this change. Even great objects such as planets or even one's own mental states are subject to change.
- The Buddha taught that accepting anicca was essential to prevent suffering. The being permanent push themselves further away from enlightenment.
- When people expect things to stay the same, they become attached to them. Ch suffering (dukkha) as people lose what they had previously attached themselves
- Buddhists, therefore, believe that accepting the truth of anicca helps ease the su

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Anatta

Anatta is the Buddhist doctrine that there is no-self or no fixed concept of identity. changes one cannot identify a permanent part of oneself.

- Believing that the ego is self produces harmful thoughts, such as craving, hatred things entirely for themselves.
- These harmful thoughts cause trouble in the world, and push a person further away enlightenment.
- Buddhists believe that people should view themselves as a collection of parts. N about one's actions or place, but in reality a person only exists in relation to the

The Self and the Five Skandhas

The Buddha taught that there are five parts or elements to a person. These are known Five Aggregates. These, further explored in the Theravada Buddhism section, are:

- Form
- Sensation
- Perception
- Mental formations
- Consciousness



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Ne (
I can describe the place the Three Marks of Existence have in Buddhist teaching and explain their significance within the Dhamma.		
I can detail the Buddhist doctrine of dukkha, and the different forms of dukkha that might be present in a person's life.		
I can describe the Buddhist doctrine of anicca and understand how change can cause suffering.		
I can describe the Buddhist doctrine of anatta, and understand how fixating on the self can lead to harmful attitudes in people's lives.		
I can list the Five Skandhas and how they relate to the Buddhist doctrine of anatta.		

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Theravada Buddhism



Keywords

- **Arhat** – A ‘perfected person’ who has reached enlightenment in the Theravada.
- **Orthodox** – The traditional form of something.
- **Stream-enterer** – A person who has freed themselves from the first three fetters and taken a significant first step on the path to enlightenment.
- **Ten Fetters** – The ten chains or bonds that keep a person trapped in samsara.



Overview

The Theravada school is one of the oldest traditions in Buddhism and means ‘doctrine practised in the South East Asia such as Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, it is some form of Buddhism with a strong emphasis on monastic community and strictly following Theravada monks therefore live very simple lives, not owning possessions or having sex, meditation, hoping to gain greater insight into key Buddhist doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths. Within the Theravada tradition that lay people, constantly distracted by the demands of the world, can reach enlightenment, and that a monastic life is essential to achieve nibbana.



Key Points

Theravada Buddhism

There is more uniformity in Theravada Buddhism and they tend to be conservative as it comes from their adherence to the core teachings of the Buddha. They believe, contrary to what many think, that at his death the Buddha ceased to play a role in the lives of humans.

- Instead it is the Buddha’s teachings and insight that persist. A strong emphasis is placed on **teaching of analysis** – that students should focus on critical application of the teachings to the world.

The Human Person in Theravada Buddhism

Theravada Buddhists emphasise in particular the doctrine of the **Five Skandhas** (Five Aggregates) and that the human personality is nothing more than a combination of these aggregates:

- **Form** – The physical dimensions of a person, e.g. their skin, bones, organs
- **Sensation** – The feelings one gets coming into contact with the world; for example, the pain on touching a hot stove
- **Perception** – One’s awareness and recognition of sensations, labelling them and leading to ideas; for example, knowing and recognising the taste of chocolate
- **Mental Formations** – A person’s attitudes, impulses, what they like and dislike, and their opinions
- **Consciousness** – A person’s general awareness of the world and themselves

Arhats and Perfection

The aim of Theravada Buddhists is to reach enlightenment and become an arhat, which is someone who has overcome the Three Poisons and Ten Fetters (chains) that keep a person trapped in samsara. Perfection, and so enlightenment is reached by following the Eightfold Path and the Dhamma.

- Theravada Buddhists also focus on refraining from earthly pleasures and living a simple life.
- The first five monks the Buddha taught, and even the Buddha’s father Siddhaththa, became arhats. Anyone who becomes an arhat is not reborn after death.

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The Stages of Spiritual Development

Theravada Buddhists believe there are multiple steps one must reach to progress towards enlightenment.

- **Stream-enterer** – A committed Buddhist who recognises there is no-self and has broken the first three fetters. They are seven rebirths away from becoming an arhat.
- **Once-returner** – A person who has substantially reduced their desires and material attachments. They have fewer than seven rebirths before becoming an arhat.
- **Never-returner** – A person who has overcome their desires and material attachments. They have a few rebirths left, always in higher realms than that of human beings.
- **Arhat** – A person who has freed themselves from all ten fetters and will not be reborn.

The Ten Fetters

1. Belief in/attachment to a self	6. Desire for material possessions
2. Doubt and scepticism	7. Desire for immortality
3. Attachment to / reliance on rituals	8. Arrogance/conceit
4. Sensual desires	9. Restlessness
5. Hatred and ill-will	10. Ignorance



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Not Sure 😐
I can describe the Theravada tradition and their perspective on the Buddha and his teachings.		
I can detail the Five Skandhas and why they are important in the Theravada tradition.		
I can describe the concept of an arhat, and how it differs from the Mahayana ideal (see Mahayana section for more information).		
I understand how there are stages of spiritual development in the Theravada tradition, and how moving up comes from breaking or freeing oneself from the Ten Fetters.		

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Mahayana Buddhism



Keywords

- **Avalokiteshvara** – A famous Mahayana bodhisattva of compassion.
- **Bodhicitta** – A person who has taken the first significant steps to becoming a Buddha.
- **Bodhisattva** – The ideal for Mahayana Buddhists; a person who has achieved enlightenment and returned to the world/samsara to help others become enlightened.
- **Buddhahood** – The state of having become a Buddha.
- **Buddha-nature** – The belief in some Mahayana traditions that every person has the potential to become a Buddha already inside of them.
- **Sunyata** – The Mahayana doctrine that nothing has a fixed independent nature.



Overview

Mahayana Buddhism is not just one tradition, but rather a collection of many different major teachings and beliefs. In particular Mahayana traditions, which include Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, etc., believe that the Buddha is still an active presence in the world, and one can communicate with him through visions. Some branches such as Zen Buddhism have so many differences that some traditions in themselves.

Mahayana Buddhism is primarily practised in East Asia, particularly in China, Japan, Korea, etc. In many regions and sub-traditions have different beliefs about how the Buddha, and various bodhisattvas, manifest themselves throughout history. For example, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is considered one of many **incarnations** of the bodhisattva of compassion **Avalokiteshvara** and such beliefs are a major difference between the Mahayana and Theravada conceptions of enlightenment.



Key Points

Sunyata

One important Buddhist doctrine in the Mahayana tradition is **sunyata**, which is often translated as 'emptiness'. It states that nothing has a fixed independent nature, and there is no particular essential 'substance'.

- It can be compared to the doctrine of anatta, but instead of just human beings, all things are empty. A table does not have a soul, or a fixed personality, for if its legs were removed it would no longer be a table.
- Similarly a car does not have a fixed 'car essence'. Rather it is simply the combination of many different parts such as the engine, wheels and seats. Its existence is dependent on numerous other objects and cannot be thought to have an unchanging nature at its core.
- Mahayana Buddhists believe understanding sunyata is an important step towards reaching enlightenment. It reveals how the world can only be understood by its connections and relationships.
- Insight into sunyata prevents people from becoming too attached to things in the world and thus prevents suffering.

Buddhahood and Buddha-natures

In some Mahayana traditions, the idea of **Buddha-nature** is very important. It puts forward that each person already has the nature or capability to become a Buddha inside of them.

- Some traditions even suggest that each person is already enlightened at their core, and they simply need to be awakened.
- What prevents a person from realising their Buddha-nature are their desires and attachment to the outside world. Once a person eliminates these obstacles, they are clear to realise and build upon their Buddha-nature.

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- The aim for Mahayana Buddhists overall is to reach **Buddhahood**, where one becomes a **Buddha**.
- The doctrine of Buddha-nature dictates that, because of everyone's capability to become a Buddha, or monastic, has the possibility of reaching enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas

The ideal of enlightenment in Mahayana Buddhism is different to that of Theravada Buddhism. Instead of escaping from samsara after death, Mahayana Buddhists seek to become bodhisattvas.

- A bodhisattva is a being who, out of compassion, chooses to remain in samsara to help others reach enlightenment.
- Mahayana Buddhists believe that the Buddha stressed the importance of helping others. They see their own path to enlightenment as being connected to everyone else's.
- This means they wish to become bodhisattvas to not only end their suffering, but also the suffering of others.
- One of the most famous bodhisattvas is **Avalokitesvara**, the 'bodhisattva of compassion'. He is depicted with one foot stepping down, representing his willingness to come down to earth to help others. He is a role-model or icon for many Mahayana Buddhists.
- Mahayana Buddhists distinguish between 'earthly' bodhisattvas, who are seen as being able to help others, and 'transcendent' bodhisattvas, who remain in a higher realm as spiritual beings.

The Path to Becoming a Bodhisattva

The bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism is a model of sacrifice, compassion and perfection. There are a number of stages to the path towards becoming one.

1. One becomes a devoted Buddhist, worshipping regularly and caring for others.
2. The **arising of bodhicitta** – a moment of clarity and understanding about the nature of suffering, and the path towards becoming a Bodhisattva.
3. The **bodhisattva vow** is taken before religious leaders. This is a mark of commitment to the path. It is a promise that an individual may have in their future lives.
4. One practises the **Six Perfections**, and works their way through the ten stages of the path until one is fully perfect and achieves enlightenment.

The Six Perfections

1. Generosity	3. Patience	5. Wisdom
2. Morality	4. Energy	6. Skillful means



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😐
I can describe the Mahayana tradition's approach to the teachings of the Buddha and detail a number of different branches of Buddhism within the Mahayana tradition.		
I understand the concept of suffering, and why Mahayana Buddhists feel understanding it is an important step on the path to enlightenment.		
I can explain the concepts of Buddha-nature and Buddhahood, and their place within Mahayana Buddhist teaching.		
I can describe the differences between the Mahayana conception of bodhisattvas and arhats (see section on Theravada Buddhism), and explain why Mahayana Buddhists focus on compassion as a key teaching of the Buddha.		
I can detail the basic path for an ordinary Buddhist to become a bodhisattva and understand the importance of the Six Perfections in achieving this goal.		

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Pure Land Buddhism



Keywords

- **Amitabha Buddha** – The figurehead of Pure Land Buddhism, who on death of Pure Land Buddhists hope to be reborn.
- **Dharmakara** – The Amitabha Buddha's human name prior to enlightenment.
- **Pure Land** – A realm without suffering where Buddhists can focus, without distraction.
- **Sukhavati** – The realm where Pure Land Buddhists hope to be reborn in order to see Amitabha Buddha.



Overview

Pure Land Buddhism is a tradition within the Mahayana tradition that today is prevalent in China and Japan. It focuses on belief and understanding of the **Amitabha Buddha**. **Dharmakara** achieved enlightenment and founded a 'pure land' called **Sukhavati**. The focus is on the worship of the Amitabha Buddha, as well as the general teachings of Buddhism in the Pure Land. Pure Land Buddhists hope to be reborn in Sukhavati, where there is supposed to be no suffering or pain, and people are able to progress towards enlightenment without any of the traditional distractions that weigh people down. They believe in this land they will be taught by the Amitabha Buddha, who created the land out of his compassion to help anyone who is reborn there achieve enlightenment.



Key Points

Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism is different to many other Buddhist traditions. It places much more emphasis on just one higher realm, Sukhavati.

- There is less emphasis on intellectual contemplation and ethics. Instead, faith in the Amitabha Buddha is of much higher priority. Pure Land Buddhists are encouraged to engage in more devotion to the Amitabha and receive his help in reaching the pure land.
- There is less focus on a monastic life and Pure Land Buddhism is often more attractive to laypeople. Masters or leaders often lead normal lives and there is overall much less emphasis on monasticism.

Practices in Amitabha Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism focuses on a number of important practices which increase a person's chance of being reborn in Sukhavati after death.

- One of the most important is chanting or reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name. This is believed to clear the mind and allows a person to bring all their attention to the Amitabha Buddha.
- Other meditation practices include visualising the Amitabha Buddha and Sukhavati. Reading Buddhist scriptures is also encouraged.
- Worshipping and making offerings to the Amitabha Buddha is often common as well as acts of kindness and goodwill. This is also seen as a way of Pure Land Buddhists focusing their energy on the pure land.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea	Not Sure
I can describe the central figures and principles of Pure Land Buddhism and detail how it differs from other Buddhist traditions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand how Pure Land Buddhism has a different perspective and focus on Buddhist teachings, and how this relates to Pure Land Buddhists' goal of being reborn in Sukhavati.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can describe a number of important practices in Pure Land Buddhism, and their role in ensuring a good rebirth for the practitioners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Practice Exam-style Questions – The Dhamma

Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be one correct answer)

1. Which of these Buddhist concepts dictates that no objects have a fixed essence, self or permanent nature?
 - A Anicca
 - B Sunyata
 - C Ehipassiko
 - D Buddha
2. Which one of these terms refers to a link or chain in the Tibetan Wheel of Life?
 - A Nidana
 - B Nibbana
 - C Dhamma
 - D Pali
3. Which of these is the standard collection of scriptures in the Theravada tradition?
 - A Heart Sutra
 - B Dhammapada
 - C Jataka Tales
 - D Pali Canon
4. Which of these refers to a 'perfected person'?
 - A Arhat
 - B Bodhisattva
 - C Bodhicitta
 - D Ascetic

5. Name **one** of the Six Perfections.
6. Explain **two** ways that the concept of dependent arising influences other areas of Buddhist teaching.
7. Explain **two** Buddhist teachings about samsara. Refer to scripture or sacred writings.
8. 'Learning about the Dhamma from experience is more important than reading scriptures.' Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - Give reference to relevant Buddhist teaching.
 - Develop well-supported arguments for and against this view.
 - Give a reasonable and justified conclusion.

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The Buddha's Life and Its Significance



Keywords

- **Ascetic** – A person who practises abstinence from worldly pleasures, and seeks spiritual insight into the outside world.
- **Enlightenment** – A state of complete knowing and understanding of the truth.
- **Four Watches of the Night** – The four stages or periods of progressive understanding during his enlightenment.
- **Mara** – The demon who tempted the Buddha during his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.
- **The Buddha** – The founder of Buddhism and the spiritual figurehead of the religion.
- **The Five Ascetics** – The individuals whom the Buddha practised with as an ascetic before he became enlightened after the Buddha's sermon at the Deer Park.
- **The Four Sights** – The four sights that the Buddha witnessed on his first journey out of his home, which inspired him to become a holy man.



Overview

The Buddha is the founder of Buddhism and the central figure that the whole religion is based on. He is believed to have lived sometime between 600 and 400 BCE in what is now considered Southern Nepal, near the border with India. It is not known exactly when or where the Buddha lived and much of the story of his life is based on tradition. He often retelling key teachings and parables with an emphasis on his special nature and his teachings.

He was born originally as Siddhartha Gautama, and only later received the title Buddha after he achieved enlightenment. While there is a general outline of the Buddha's life, there are many different versions of their own retellings and interpretations of the events leading up to his awakening, so there is no single unified story that can be said to be considered the factual account of the Buddha's life.



Key Points

The Birth of the Buddha and his Early Life

According to tradition, Buddha was born a prince (**Siddhartha Gautama**). His father was King Shuddhodana and his mother **Queen Maya**. It is said Queen Maya conceived Siddhartha after dreaming of a white elephant entering her right side into her womb.

- Tradition states that she was pregnant for ten months with Siddhartha, before giving birth in the Lumbini gardens after stopping there on a journey back to her father's kingdom. It is said that King Shuddhodana supported her as she prepared to give birth.
- After being born Siddhartha could immediately walk. He took seven steps, a lotus flower in each hand, before proclaiming: 'No further rebirths have I to endure, for this is my last body' (Parinirvana).
- These stories symbolise the importance the Buddha was to have in his later life. It was foretold he would either become a great king or a holy man. His Father Shuddhodana took great steps to shield Siddhartha from the ills and worries of normal life.

The Four Sights

Shuddhodana was so concerned that if he gave Siddhartha a life of luxury, he would not want to become a holy man. Therefore, he spoilt and cared for his son in every way, not letting him leave the palace walls.

- However Siddhartha grew curious as to what was outside the palace walls and managed to escape with him in a chariot to a nearby city. There he saw the four sights, which profoundly affected him.
 1. **Old age** – He first witnessed an old man, a shock as he had never witnessed old age before.
 2. **Illness** – He saw a sick man in pain at the side of the road and he began to realise the reality of life.
 3. **Death** – He then saw a funeral procession carrying a dead man, and at once realised the inevitability for all.
 4. **Holy man** – The last sight was a holy man, who had renounced all his belongings and was walking through the streets. This inspired Siddhartha to give up his old life of luxury and become a holy man.

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The Buddha's Ascetic Life

Siddhartha left the palace at night, leaving his newly born son Rahula and his wife Yaśodhara behind. This event is known as the **Great Renunciation** and marked the beginning of Siddhartha's life as a holy man.

- He then sought out religious teachers (e.g. Alara Kalama, Uddaka Ramaputta) to learn about the nature of suffering. He adopted extreme ascetic practices, starving himself in order to free his mind from his body and the material world.
- He did this for over six years, but one day, after no progress towards learning more, he ate a bowl of milk and rice from a girl after bathing in the river Niranjana.
- This ended his life of asceticism, and he was criticised by his fellow ascetics for a change. He realised he had to find a Middle Way between the lives of luxury and severe asceticism.

The Buddha's Enlightenment

After fully rejecting the ascetic lifestyle, it is said the Buddha sat down and meditated under a peepul tree (now known as the Bodhi tree). There he resolved to stay until he had achieved enlightenment.

- During the night on which he was meditating, the demon **Mara** attempted to seduce him with women, even attacking Siddhartha, but he held firm and resisted his meditation.
- He touched the ground with his right hand to call upon the earth to acknowledge his right to be under the tree in the face of Mara's attacks and an earthquake shook the ground, leaving Mara defeated and Siddhartha victorious.
- Siddhartha then went on to become enlightened during the night, over four watches.

The Four Watches of the Night (Jataka 075)

- In the **first** watch, Siddhartha realised the truth of samsara and gained knowledge of all his previous lives.
- In the **second** watch, he learned about kamma and realised how the conditions of people's lives depended on how they acted in previous ones.
- In the **third** watch, he realised how suffering happens and how to end the constant cycle of suffering.
- In the **fourth**, Siddhartha achieved perfect peace, becoming enlightened and unbound from the world. At this point he became simply known as 'the Buddha'.

After he left the tree, he spent some time reflecting on his experience, before resolving to teach people about difficult truths that were naturally beyond words and reason.

- His first sermon was to the five ascetics in the **Deer Park** in Benares, where he taught the Four Noble Truths. These five became the first enlightened people after himself.
- He then spent the next 45 years teaching, before his eventual death around 80 years old (from food poisoning). On his death he achieved **parinibbana**, or 'nibbana after death'.
- After his cremation, his ashes were shared among his followers and stored in stupas (see the Importance of Buddhist Worship).

The Importance of the Buddha's Enlightenment to Ordinary Buddhists

The story of the Buddha's life is very important to ordinary Buddhists. It provides an example of how the Buddha became enlightened, and shows how his experience, and the Middle Way are the basis of the Buddhist religion.

- For many ordinary Buddhists, it is their entry point to the Buddhist religion and the Buddha's teachings. The Three Refuges.
- When facing difficulties in their lives, Buddhists can look towards the Buddha as a guide and seek refuge in his teachings.

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Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹	Not Sure 😐
I can describe the details of the Buddha's birth and early life, and explain why the various myths surrounding them contribute to the image of the Buddha as a great religious figure.		
I can detail each of the four sights, and how they led to the Buddha's Great Renunciation.		
I understand why the Buddha sought an ascetic life, and how he came to believe the Middle Way was the answer to ending suffering.		
I can explain each of the four watches of the night and how they relate to overall Buddhist teachings.		
I understand why the story of the Buddha's life is important and inspiring to ordinary Buddhists.		

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The Four Noble Truths



Keywords

- **Dukkha** – The first noble truth; the existence of suffering and unsatisfactoriness.
- **Magga** – The fourth noble truth; the path towards the end of dukkha.
- **Nirodha** – The third noble truth; the truth behind the end of dukkha.
- **Panna** – Wisdom.
- **Samadhi** – Meditation.
- **Samudaya** – The second noble truth; the truth of the origins of dukkha.
- **Sila** – Ethics.
- **Tanha** – Craving/desire; one of the main reasons human beings suffer.
- **The Eightfold Path** – The eight factors the Buddha emphasised as leading to the end of suffering.
- **The Four Noble Truths** – The four main teachings at the centre of the Buddhist religion.
- **The Three Poisons** – Greed, ignorance and hatred; three states that give rise to suffering.
- **The Three Jewels** – The three broad areas of religious importance in Buddhism.



Overview

The Four Noble Truths are often regarded as the core elements of Buddhist teaching. They explain the nature of human existence but the steps and pathway towards enlightenment were discovered by the Buddha after meditating under the bodhi tree and taught first to the five ascetics. The first sermon, also known as the 'setting of the wheel of Dhamma in motion', laid the basis of his first sermon, also known as the 'setting of the wheel of Dhamma in motion', which provided a framework for understanding all of Buddhist thought, and the purpose of the religion.



Key Points

The Four Noble Truths

1. **Dukkha** – The truth of the existence and nature of suffering
2. **Samudaya** – The truth behind the origins and causes of suffering
3. **Nirodha** – The truth behind the cessation and end of suffering
4. **Magga** – The truth of the way/path towards the end of suffering

One common analogy given for the Four Noble Truths is that of a doctor/patient. There is the diagnosis of illness (suffering), the causes of the illness, the cure and finally the prescription and taking of the cure.

- For Buddhists finding the cure for suffering is the goal of life, found in the Middle Way (magga) in the form of **The Eightfold Path**.
- Study and knowledge of the Four Noble Truths is central to Buddhist thought, especially for **Theravada Buddhists**.
- A Buddhist is thought to be able to come to greater insight about the truths through reading of scripture.
- The Four Noble Truths are also important for **Mahayana Buddhists**, but they place more emphasis on the practice of compassion.

He who knows the Four Noble Truths, he goes to the end of suffering, he sees the cause of suffering, and the way to the end of suffering.

The First Noble Truth – Dukkha

Dukkha is one of the Three Marks of Existence, and for Buddhists is an essential part of life. In all circumstances one is born into, everyone will experience suffering as an unavoidable part of life. It is not just that one has witnessed it personally in **The Four Sights**.

- Some have criticised Buddhism for being a pessimistic religion. However, the Buddha taught that suffering does not exist, only that it is temporary and will eventually give way to happiness.
- Acknowledging that suffering is part of existence for Buddhists is, therefore, similar to accepting that suffering is part of life. Denying the truth of suffering prevents human beings from realising its causes and how to end it.

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The Second Noble Truth – Samudaya

Samudaya outlines the causes of suffering in people's lives. The Buddha argued that suffering occurs and take steps to reduce it. One of the main reasons in particular is craving, which means craving or desiring.

- The Buddha identified three different types of craving:
 - **Craving for sense pleasures**, e.g. the desire to eat sweets and chocolate
 - **Craving for being** something or someone that one is not, e.g. the desire to be a certain individual, or be reborn as a God in another realm
 - **Craving for non-existence**, e.g. desiring to not experience pain after having experienced it, or the loss of a loved one

The Buddha argued that human beings experience suffering from craving especially as they become attached to objects. Human beings crave the things they enjoy, and avoid the things they don't. From desiring certain things human beings seek more of them, attaching their happiness and their happiness to their continued existence.

- However, the doctrine of *Anicca* dictates that everything changes. As people desire and become attached to things, when they change they inevitably suffer. There is nothing that provides permanent happiness.

The Three Poisons

The **Three Poisons** are considered to be the central three aspects or tendencies of human nature that heighten their suffering. They are featured in the Wheel of Life at the centre as animals of another in a circle to represent how they are all connected. The poisons are:

- **Ignorance** – represented by a pig
- **Greed** – represented by a cockerel
- **Hatred** – represented by snake

These three human tendencies keep people trapped in samsara, and within lives of suffering. Through ethics, knowledge and good living, Buddhists aim to reduce these Three Poisons in their lives in order to both reduce suffering and bring themselves closer to enlightenment.

- For example, ignorance about the origins of suffering means that a person cannot recognise their attachments to material things, which causes them pain.
- Commitment to ending ignorance about the world means realising the origin of one's suffering and overcoming it.

The Third Noble Truth – Nirodha

Nirodha teaches that there is an end to dukkha, and that this is possible through human beings following the right steps can achieve enlightenment and happiness.

- Suffering, while a part of ordinary life, can be overcome and is not a complete inevitability.
- This involves letting go of one's desires and cravings (*tanha*).
- For Buddhists these are the primary cause of suffering. One should recognise the things with the recognition that any happiness gained from them will not last.
- Buddhists also focus on cultivating an inner appreciation and satisfaction with life without anything else. This means equally overcoming the Three Poisons and 'skillfully' staying on the path to enlightenment.

The Nature of Enlightenment and Nibbana

Nibbana literally means 'blowing out', 'extinguishing' or even 'quenching'. It is a concept that is impossible to define, let alone translate.

- Many have said it is only describable in negatives, what it is not, rather than what it is.
- A person who has achieved nibbana has not only extinguished the Three Poisons from their lives, but has developed full knowledge about the truth and nature of existence.
- This knowledge does not mean knowing absolutely everything, but is still an inner peace. They will not seek or achieve nibbana in their current lives, but focus on a better rebirth.
- A good rebirth may well provide better conditions, e.g. security and safety, for a Buddhist teaching and move further on the path to enlightenment.

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The Fourth Noble Truth – Magga

Magga is the last of the noble truths, and details a number of practices and standards to decrease suffering in their lives, and even reach enlightenment.

- Magga involves the **Middle Way**, outlined by the Buddha as the **Eightfold Path** between the two extremes the Buddha experienced in his life of luxury and life of poverty.
- One should, therefore, live a life of moderation, only taking what one needs, but flourish mentally and spiritually.

The Eightfold Path and the Threefold Way

The Eightfold Path is sometimes divided into three sections, called the Threefold Way, all these connected, and Buddhists focus on following all these practices in their lives from their lives, and gain real insight into the nature of existence and reality.

Ethics (Sila)	Meditation (Samadhi)
Right Speech Abstaining from lying, flattery and divisive speech. Speaking only what is true and helpful.	Right Effort Putting effort towards eliminating sense desire through meditation and positive thinking.
Right Action Abstaining from killing, stealing and indulging in sense pleasures. Behaving kindly and fairly.	Right Mindfulness Working towards clear awareness of oneself and the external world.
Right Livelihood Making a living in an ethical, non-harmful way. Avoiding work that exploits and hurts others.	Right Concentration Developing focus and concentration through meditation and avoiding scattered or purposeless thoughts.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea 	Not Sure
I understand how the Four Noble Truths form the centre of Buddhist teaching and thought.		
I can describe each of the Four Noble Truths and how Buddhists believe that although dukkha is an unavoidable part of life, it can be overcome.		
I can detail the Three Poisons and why Buddhists believe these tendencies lead to suffering.		
I can describe the place of nibbana in Buddhist thought, and how Buddhists look towards achieving it in their lifetimes.		
I can detail the Eightfold Path and Threefold Way and understand how Buddhists aim to practise each part in their own lives.		

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Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be 6)

1. Which of these is one of the Three Poisons?
 - A Joy
 - B Greed
 - C Sloth
 - D Doubt
2. Which one of these in Buddhist teaching refers to the 'Middle Way'?
 - A Dukkha
 - B Anatta
 - C Magga
 - D Kamma
3. Where did Buddha deliver his first sermon after his enlightenment?
 - A Deer Park
 - B River Niranjana
 - C Bodhi tree
 - D Sukhavati
4. Which of these means 'ethics' in Buddhist teaching?
 - A Sila
 - B Samadhi
 - C Nirodha
 - D Tanha
5. Give **one** practice in the Eightfold Path.
6. Explain **two** ways that the life of the Buddha highlights important Buddhist teachings.
7. Explain **two** Buddhist teachings about dukkha. Refer to scripture or sacred writings.
8. 'Eliminating craving is the most important step on the path towards enlightenment'. Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - Give reference to relevant Buddhist teaching.
 - Develop well-supported arguments for and against this view.
 - Give a reasonable and justified conclusion.

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The Nature and Importance of Buddhism



Keywords

- **Buddha rupa** – A small statue of the Buddha.
- **Chanting** – The rhythmic recitation of important words, syllables or phrases.
- **Gompa** – A Tibetan meditation hall, that often serves as a place of learning and teaching.
- **Mala** – A set of prayer beads Buddhists use to recite mantras.
- **Mantra** – A set phrase or set of syllables a Buddhist might recite.
- **Puja** – Buddhist worship.
- **Shrine** – A sacred or set aside place dedicated to a religious figure or deity for worship.
- **Stupa** – A Buddhist structure containing Buddhist relics that serves as a place of worship.
- **Temple** – A building or set of buildings that serves as a centre of Buddhist worship.
- **Vihara** – A Buddhist monastery.



Overview

Worship plays an important part within Buddhist practice, both as a way of expressing devotion and as a means of accumulating good kamma and cultivating positive character traits that might help someone overcome the Three Poisons in their life. To this end, many different places of Buddhist worship exist, ranging from communal, multi-purpose spaces such as temples, to more dedicated and focused spaces such as monasteries. Many of these places, however, often have significance beyond being spaces for worship, being areas where Buddhists can gather for meetings, education and other activities. They are also places for meditation away from the distractions of ordinary life.



Key Points

Temples

The temple is often the main spiritual centre of a Buddhist community. It can contain a variety of different spaces and serve different purposes. Small temples may simply be one main hall with a shrine room, while larger ones may consist of a wide variety of spaces and monuments that may also be important places of worship.

Temples may possess the following:

- Shrines dedicated to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- A main hall/building, generally containing a statue of the Buddha, where Buddhists may go to worship.
- A meditation hall. These are called **gompas** in Tibetan Buddhism.
- A **stupa**. These are hemispherical mounds containing Buddhist relics where people go to worship. In some temples, depending on the region, may have a **pagoda**, a tall tiered tower, instead of a stupa.
- A study room where Buddhists can go to read scriptures, and where meetings and teachings are held.

Monasteries

Monasteries, also known as **ghats**, are where the monastic community resides. They are places of refuge for those who have dedicated their lives to Buddhism.

- These monasteries can be in distant and difficult to reach places, away from the distractions of the world.
- They were originally built to house monks during the three months of the rainy season, but now function all year round.
- They often contain a main hall, library, study/meditation rooms and accommodation for monks (known as **bhikkhunis**). However, smaller viharas may only be one building.
- They also generally contain stupas, housing relics of important monks and Buddhas, which are often visited by the lay community.
- Young people may spend time in a monastery growing up as part of their schooling. This provides a significant interaction and communication between the lay and monastic communities.

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Shrines

Shrines are important places of worship for Buddhists. They are not only seen in temples and other communal areas. In each there is usually a statue of the Buddha (or bodhisattva) which provides a focal point for meditation and worship.

- There will often be a **lotus flower**, which is used to represent the Buddha's teaching about suffering and ignorance of the world.
- Buddhists often make offerings to shrines that symbolise various aspects of Buddhism. One common offering is that of a candle, which is used to symbolise wisdom driving away ignorance.
- Other offerings such as **incense** symbolise the importance of purity and ethical behaviour, and the compassionate in their everyday lives.
- Many Buddhists believe making an offering brings about good **kamma** for them, known as 'merit-making'.

The Purpose of Puja

Puja is a Pali term for devotion or worship. It gives the Buddhists the opportunity to express their devotion to the Buddha for helping them follow the path to the end of suffering, as well as focus their spiritual goals.

- People often bow with their hands together three times (to represent the **Buddha**, the **Dharma**, and the **Sangha**). In Tibetan Buddhism, they go further and lie down completely.
- Through performing puja, Buddhists do not worship God as in other faiths, but focus on Buddhist teachings.
- They also use puja as a way of helping their mental concentration in order to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the nature of existence.
- There are many different ways Buddhists perform puja, including chanting, reciting mantras, making offerings, praying and other more complex ceremonies.
- Some Buddhists may prefer collective puja, worshipping with others in a public temple. Others might prefer performing puja in private, at a shrine in their own home.

Chanting and Reciting

Chanting was a practice used by monks to remember important teachings before texts were written down and shared.

- Today both lay practitioners and Buddhist monks chant from scripture and teaching, one example being **The Three Refuges**.
- As part of puja, it helps Buddhists remember the teachings of the Buddha, and helps calm and focus the mind, ready for meditation or study.
- Buddhists might also recite **mantras**. These are short phrases or collections of syllables that hold symbolic meaning. Some practitioners even believe they have the power to transform one's awareness of the world. However, they are more commonly used to meditate with and concentrate the mind.
- One common mantra, used in Tibetan Buddhism is 'om mani padme hum', a difficult to pronounce phrase that recalls the precious and special lotus, which is associated with compassion, and the bodhisattva **Avalokiteshvara**.
- Some Buddhists may use **malas**, a string of (usually 108) beads, as an aid when reciting mantras. They move their hand down a bead after each mantra is spoken.

Tip: Buddhists often recite the Three Refuges.

Buddhists often recite the Three Refuges. This is a declaration of faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

Which of the following is not a part of the Three Refuges? (1 mark)

To be a Buddhist, one must follow the teachings of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

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Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😊
I understand the place and importance of worship in the Buddhist religion.		
I can describe the different buildings that may be present in a temple, and why they may be useful to Buddhists in the local community.		
I can detail the purpose and importance of shrines, and why many Buddhists choose to make offerings at them.		
I can describe the purpose of monasteries and why the monastic community requires a distinct set of buildings for their own study and development.		
I can describe different forms of Buddhist puja, and why Buddhists engage in devotional worship.		
I understand the importance of chanting and recitation, and how they play an important part in Buddhist meditation.		

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Meditation



Keywords

- **Five hindrances** – The five obstacles an ordinary Buddhist may face when trying to meditate.
- **Mandala** – Intricate circular patterns that symbolise aspects of the Dhamma and meditation.
- **Meditation** – An important Buddhist practice of calming and concentrating the mind in order to gain insight into the nature of existence and reality.
- **Mindfulness of breathing** – Controlling and focusing on one's breath to clear the mind.
- **Samatha** – A type of meditation that focuses on calming the mind, often through concentration on a single object.
- **Thangka** – A Buddhist painting depicting the Buddha or a bodhisattva that is used in meditation.
- **Vipassana** – A type of meditation that focuses on concentrating on different objects in order to gain insight into the nature of existence and reality.
- **Visualization** – A type of meditation where one forms and concentrates on a specific image or scene.
- **Zazen** – A type of meditation which focuses on sitting down and focusing on the present moment.



Overview

One of the most important practices in Buddhism is meditation. There are a number of different types of meditation, but they generally involve calming and focusing the mind in order to more clearly gain insight into the nature of existence and truths about the outside world. Before meditating, Buddhists often engage in various preparations, such as reciting particular verses about the **Three Refuges**; the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Mahayana Buddhists may recite the names of important bodhisattvas, while Theravada Buddhists might focus on the breath. During these preparations, Buddhists may focus on a particular form of meditation depending on their purpose. For example, if the purpose is the developing of more positive emotional states, or focusing on key teachings such as the Four Noble Truths.



Key Points

The Practice of Meditation

While there may be differences in meditative practice between Buddhist traditions, the basic principles are the same, whether one is engaging in samatha, vipassana or even loving-kindness meditation. The following are some key points to remember about meditation during a session.

- The aim of meditation is to develop insight into oneself and reality. The Buddha taught that there are **five hindrances** to meditation; sense desires, ill will, laziness, worry/anxiety and doubt. These hindrances are not something that should be eliminated, but rather, they are an ordinary part of meditation. The Buddha taught that one should not get over these hindrances, but rather, one should simply aim to calm the mind and start afresh.
- Meditation is usually practised sitting with the legs crossed (if possible in the lotus position) with the back straight and eyes closed. However, some Buddhists may also practise in other positions, such as walking meditation.

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Samatha Meditation

Samatha (meaning 'calming') meditation is one of the two main types of meditation in Theravada Buddhism. Many Buddhists engage with it before vipassana meditation as it focuses on developing a concentrated and tranquil state of mind.

- This is often done through 'mindfulness of breathing' – a practice which focuses on using awareness of one's breathing. Monitoring the sensation and flow allows Buddhists to focus their attention and free their mind of ordinary worries and concerns.
- However, other objects, such as kasinas, may also be used. These are basic items, such as a red circle which a person might focus on during samatha to keep other thoughts from their mind.

Dhamma
'And the
and in
living
in the

Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana meditation is the second main type of meditation used in the Theravada tradition, and it focuses on developing and gaining insight into the nature of reality and existence. Often samatha meditation is used as preparation for vipassana meditation.

- Vipassana meditation leaves the object of concentration up to the practitioner rather than focusing on breathing or a kasina.
- This object may be specific Buddhist teachings such as the **Four Noble Truths** or **Three Marks of Existence**, or it may be concerns more personal to the meditator, such as their friendships, desires and beliefs in their ordinary lives.
- A person practicing vipassana meditation might focus on numerous different things in one session, switching their attention between them while trying to remain calm, detached and focused.

Zazen Meditation

Zazen is one of the main meditative practices in Zen Buddhism, and is a Japanese word meaning 'sitting meditation'. A person will sit in the lotus position, with their eyes facing a blank wall.

- In comparison to practices such as vipassana meditation, the focus is not on teaching or meditation itself.
- A person will give attention to breathing and their mindfulness, but the focus is on the awareness of the present moment.
- There is also less emphasis on a fixed time of meditation. A person may spend a few minutes breaking sessions up with walking or another peaceful activity.

Visualisation in Meditation

Visualisation is a technique, common within **Tibetan Buddhism**, used to focus the mind. The person meditating imagines an object in their mind, focusing on it and often trying to make it as possible.

- The meditator will try to keep the object in their mind in full detail for as long as possible, and reflecting on what its characteristics might mean.
- The object can vary greatly. While for beginners it might be quite simple, such as a lotus flower, advanced practitioners might visualise very detailed patterns, designs and landscapes.
- Many Buddhists will also focus on visualising the **Buddha** or **bodhisattvas** and trying to understand them and look to their example during meditation. Mahayana Buddhists believe visualising a bodhisattva may help develop their own **Buddha-nature**.
- One common figure of attention is **Avalokiteshvara**, the bodhisattva of compassion. Pure Land Buddhists believe visualising helps bring out their own compassion. **Pure Land** Buddhists visualise the **Buddha**, hoping that bringing their attention to him might help hasten their rebirth.

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The Use of Objects in Meditation

Objects of focus are often used in meditation, and it has been noted how kasinas are used in meditation. However, Buddhists may also use more detailed designs such as thangkas and mandalas.

- **Thangkas** are Tibetan Buddhist paintings that usually depict the Buddha or a bodhisattva. They are often used as a focus for meditation, looking at these during meditation, studying their qualities and reflecting on their meaning.
- **Mandalas** are intricate circular patterns that are painted or even drawn in colour. They are used as a focus for meditation, symbolising the universe or particular teachings of the Dhamma. Skilled Buddhists use them to focus their mind, focusing on the details as a way of concentrating the mind.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😊
I can detail the purpose and importance of meditation in Buddhism, how it is commonly practised and the five hindrances people may encounter when practising it.		
I can describe the purpose and importance of samatha meditation and mindfulness of breathing in Buddhist practice.		
I can detail how vipassana meditation is used by Buddhists to gain deeper insight into the nature of reality and existence.		
I can outline the practice of zazen meditation and how it differs from vipassana meditation.		
I understand why visualisation can help Buddhists during meditation, and can list some of the objects, such as kasinas and mandalas, a Buddhist might visualise when meditating.		



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Ceremonies and Rituals Associated with Death and Mourning



Keywords

- **Bardo states** – In Tibetan Buddhism, the states in between death a person has and reborn.
- **Cremation** – The process of burning a dead person's body after death.
- **Funeral** – A ceremony held in honour of a person's death.
- **Merit-making** – An action or activity done to generate good kamma for a person.
- **Sky burial** – A Tibetan Buddhist tradition where a dead person is left in the high mountains to be eaten by birds.
- **Tibetan Book of the Dead** – A book read to dying people in Tibetan Buddhism to help them through the bardo states and have a good rebirth.
- **Transfer of merit** – A Theravada tradition where relatives and friends of a deceased person perform good actions to give the deceased the good kamma in order to help them have a good rebirth.



Overview

Buddhist traditions about death can be perceived to be quite different from other major religions such as Christianity. While Buddhists often believe in different realms of existence, they do not believe in heaven and hell. Rather samsara means everyone will continue to be reborn, eventually be reborn with their kammic energy or consciousness transferring into a new body. The type and region of Buddhist tradition, ceremonies and rituals associated with death and there are many different ways Buddhist thought seeks to honour the dead.



Key Points

The Importance of Death in Buddhism

Death is primarily seen as a transition in Buddhism rather than an end, and for many Buddhists, recalling a number of key Buddhist teachings.

- Buddhists may focus on teachings about **anicca**, as the Buddha taught that death and rebirth of life and funerals as such are a reminder that nothing is permanent.
- Some Buddhists even practise **death awareness** in their own lives. This is when one has about death and evaluates them in light of Buddhist teachings on the Four Noble Truths. The practice is done to try to cultivate a clear state of mind about death itself.

Funerals in the Theravada Tradition

In the Theravada tradition, funerals are a private affair with little fanfare given to the death of an individual. Mourners will often wear plain or white clothing and a small shrine will be set up to the deceased. Incense, flowers and small offerings will often be made.

- Monks will give a sermon on Buddhist teaching and lead a procession through the streets.
- Cremation is more common, although some people are buried.
- One important practice is the **transferring of merit**. Not only will people engage in **merit-making** activities, such as making offerings to the shrine, they will sometimes look to transfer their own kamma to the dead, in order to ensure they have a more favourable rebirth.
- This is often achieved by donating to a particular charitable cause on behalf of the deceased, transferring their kamma to them.

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Rituals Surrounding Death in Tibetan Buddhism

One well-known (Mahayana) Tibetan Buddhist tradition surrounding death is the **sky burial**, where the dead person's body is given as a gift to vultures in the mountains. In an environment that lacks resources such as firewood, this is considered a generous act.

- However, burial and cremation are increasingly more common. Significant figures are often buried in a stupa, where people might go to worship after their death.
- Tibetan Buddhism also believes there are states in between death called **bardo** states. All beings will enter these difficult and disorienting states between rebirths.
- In order to help them navigate these states and secure a good rebirth, the **Tibetan Buddhist** perform rituals for those who are dying.

Rituals Surrounding Death in Japanese Buddhism

There are a number of rituals surrounding death in the (Mahayana) **Pure Land** tradition.

- A person will often be buried facing west with people chanting 'Namo Amida Buddha' (Namu Amida Butsu) during the procession, in order to gain the attention of the Amitabha Buddha.
- There may be various readings from the **Lotus Sutra**, and prayers will often be performed at a significant time (often 49 days) after the funeral.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😐
I understand why ceremonies surrounding death are important in Buddhism and why they are significant considering Buddhist teaching on impermanence.		
I can detail the major aspects of a Theravada Buddhist funeral and why transferring of merit is seen as important.		
I can describe the practice of sky burial in Tibetan Buddhism and the concept of bardo states.		
I can detail a number of ways in which Pure Land funerals differ from Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist funerals.		

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Buddhist Festivals and Re



Keywords

- **Bathing of the Buddha** – A Buddhist ritual where water is poured over a statue of the Buddha.
- **Parinirvana Day** – A Mahayana festival celebrating the Buddha's death and parinirvana.
- **Retreat** – A set period of time spent away from one's ordinary life, often to focus on spiritual practice.
- **Wesak** – A Buddhist festival celebrating the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha.



Overview

Festivals and celebrations are important in Buddhism, and they have become important community events where Buddhists meet with one another and focus on their spiritual lives. Various Buddhist celebrations include a number of major festivals which celebrate key parts of the Buddha's life, such as his birth, enlightenment and death. Furthermore, there are a number of other important practices, such as retreats, which often form an important part of an ordinary Buddhist's life.



Key Points

Wesak

Wesak (or Vesak) is sometimes known as Buddha Day and in Theravada Buddhism celebrates the Buddha's life; his birth, enlightenment and death. In Mahayana Buddhism the focus is on his birth.

- The festival occurs on the full moon during the month of Vesak (usually May, but sometimes June), when the key events of the Buddha's life were said to have occurred during the time of a full moon.
- There are many different ways Buddhists celebrate Wesak. Many hang lanterns and light candles to symbolise the Buddha's enlightenment, and people will often decorate their homes and temples, often making offerings and giving to charity in order to gain good kamma.
- Many also visit temples to hear talks and speeches, and the monastic community often give extra sermons about key Buddhist teachings.
- One particular ritual people perform is the **bathing of the Buddha**, where water is poured over a statue of the Buddha to symbolise the cleansing of the **Three Poisons**.
- While the emphasis is on honouring and remembering the Buddha, many lay Buddhists will take the time to reflect on and develop their spiritual lives, with Theravada Buddhists adopting extra moral precepts (see Buddhist ethics) to gain good merit.

Parinirvana Day

Parinirvana is a Mahayana festival on February 15th celebrating the Buddha's death and parinirvana (parinibbana in Theravada). It is a more sombre occasion than Wesak, and many Buddhists take the time to reflect on their own impermanence and future death.

- The central teaching in focus is anicca, and many Buddhists take part in meditations and rituals to remember the deceased. Often the **Mahaparinirvana Sutra**, a collection of stories about the Buddha's death, is read. Buddhists may concentrate on following the Buddha's example during difficult times.
- Some Buddhists go on pilgrimages on this day, especially to **Kushinagar**, a location believed to have passed away.

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Retreats

Retreats are time Buddhists spend away from their ordinary homes, focusing on their spiritual lives. They are especially popular in the West, but also practised in many traditional Buddhist societies. Retreats are often held in monasteries or Buddhist centres.

- They are used by Buddhists to remove distractions normally present in their ordinary lives.
- This means they can focus on meditation and gaining deeper insight into the nature of existence.
- People might also engage in workshops, study groups and making offerings.
- In Theravada communities, **Vassa** is a retreat taking place every year where Buddhists spend as much time as possible during the rainy season. This usually lasts three months, and involves a lot of time in more meditation and study.



Student Checklist

What do you know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😊
I understand why festivals are important for ordinary Buddhists and how they are times for reflection and development of a Buddhist's spiritual life.		
I can describe the major aspects of the festival of Wesak and the ways in which ordinary Buddhists celebrate it.		
I can describe the details of the Mahayana festival of Parinirvana day, and the importance of considering and reflecting upon death during it.		
I understand why retreats are important for some Buddhists in developing and enriching their spiritual lives.		



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Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be one correct answer)

1. What festival celebrates (only) the Buddha's birth?
A Parinirvana Day
B Vassa
C Bodhi Day
D Wesak
2. Which one of these is practised at Theravada funerals?
A Puja
B Merit-making
C Bathing of the Buddha
D Zazen
3. In which Buddhist tradition might people chant 'Namo Amida Bu' at a funeral?
A Theravada
B Pure Land
C Tibetan
D Zen
4. Which of one these is one of the five hindrances that stop a Buddhist successfully practising?
A Laziness
B Anger
C Happiness
D Arrogance

5. Give **one** offering a Buddhist might make to a shrine.
6. Explain **two** ways that Buddhist ceremonies surrounding death reflect Buddhist teaching.
7. Explain **two** ways puja is important in Buddhist practice. Refer to Buddhist teaching.
8. 'Vipassana is the most important form of meditation.'
Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - Give reference to relevant Buddhist teaching.
 - Develop well-supported arguments for and against this view.
 - Give a reasonable and justified conclusion.

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Buddhist Ethics



Keywords

- **Karuna** – Compassion, an important Buddhist ethical principle.
- **Metta** – Loving-kindness, an important Buddhist ethical principle.
- **Metta Bhavana** – Loving-kindness meditation, which Buddhists practise in on themselves and in their everyday thoughts and actions.
- **Skilful action** – Actions that work towards generating positive mental states.
- **The Five Moral Precepts** – Five ethical commitments that Buddhists are required to follow.
- **The Four Sublime States** – The four most important Buddhist ethical principles in the Theravada tradition.
- **The Six Perfections** – The character traits a person should aim to develop in the Mahayana tradition.



Overview

Buddhism has a distinct and organised set of ethics, and the idea of right action is an integral part of the Buddhist right view. There could be an individual who understands the key truths behind the Buddhist teachings, but not understanding how such teachings should motivate good moral action. The Buddhist ethical principles are the characteristics necessary to move further on the path to enlightenment. However, different Buddhist traditions have different ethical principles and priorities, with strict Theravada Buddhists focusing on particular vices, whereas Mahayana Buddhists often emphasise the importance of compassion.



Key Points

Kamma

Kamma is the most important concept in Buddhist ethics. It is difficult to entirely translate, but it states that every action has consequences for the individual. Good actions will produce happiness and a better rebirth for an individual, whereas bad actions will do the opposite.

- For Buddhists it is a natural law that affects all individuals. Even if a person cannot view how their good and bad kamma is affecting them at a particular time, it is transferred between lives. Those with bad kamma will still be punished, regardless of whether they have potentially gained in the short term from their bad actions.
- The Buddha placed great importance on the intentions of moral actions, and in particular divided between skilful and unskilful actions:
 - **Skilful actions** are ones that arise out of good moral impulses, such as generosity or kindness. These will lead to happiness and generally a good rebirth for the individual.
 - **Unskilful actions** are ones that arise out of poor, often immoral impulses such as greed, hatred and ignorance. These will often lead to bad kamma for the individual.
- There can also be skilful mental states in addition to actions. A person can practice meditation to calm the mind and just the way they think in order to act consistently skilfully throughout their life.
- Buddhists avoid unskilful mental states.
- Kamma is often seen as fair and empowering. People not only help others with their actions but also their own future with a good rebirth.
- They also potentially may reach enlightenment if they can progress far enough through their Buddhist teachings.

Dharma
'Wholeness'
'Truth'
'That which is not to be destroyed'
If a person follows the Dharma, they will attain enlightenment and become a Buddha.

Many Buddhist traditions believe there are different realms a human being can be reborn into. These are shown in the Wheel of Life in the six segments outside of the Three Poisons in the centre.

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Good Realms:

- **The Gods** – who enjoy a pleasure-filled life in the heavenly realm.
- **The Demigods** – who are angry and constantly try to wage war against the Gods.
- **The Humans** – this is the best realm in which to attempt to reach enlightenment.

Bad/Evil Realms:

- **The Animals** – this is believed to be a realm of suffering, as animals prey on each other by instinct.
- **The Hungry Ghosts** – these are figures with large bellies and small mouths/noses and thirsty but can never be satisfied.
- **The Hell Beings** – this is the worst of the three evil realms, where people suffer in pain.

Compassion

Compassion (**karuna**) is one of the most important Buddhist ethical principles, especially in Mahayana Buddhism. It is one of the **four sublime states** that all Buddhists should cultivate in their lives:

- Loving-kindness (**metta**)
- Empathetic joy (**mudita**) – feeling happy for others
- Equanimity (**upekkha**) – being stable and calm in all circumstances

The Buddha taught that all these four states are important qualities, and that Buddhists should cultivate them in their lives.

Karuna indicates that Buddhists should show compassion for all living things. This means desiring that others be free of suffering in the same way one would want to be free of one's own suffering.

- This principle is especially important in Mahayana Buddhism as part of the **bodhisattva** ideal. Those who are enlightened should desire from their compassion to remain in the world until all people are enlightened.
- **The Jataka Tales** contains many different stories of the Buddha's compassion throughout his different past lives. Many Buddhists see him as the ideal of compassion, both in his desire to see people being freed from suffering but also in his **wisdom**.
- Wisdom is often stressed as being important within compassion, as a way of understanding the needs of others, being compassionate, and what the most compassionate act might be. For example, it might be pulling a tooth out, in order to prevent much greater pain at a later date.

Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness (**metta**) is another important Buddhist ethical principle that encourages a consistently positive, kind and friendly attitude towards all other beings.

- Whereas karuna focuses more on being compassionate at times of need, metta focuses on being kind and friendly towards others. This for Buddhists is also essential in helping them overcome their own negative emotions such as greed, hatred or other negative emotions present in themselves.
- Therefore, cultivating loving-kindness helps Buddhists to be kinder and more skillful in their lives, and to avoid generating bad kamma.

Some Buddhists, in order to cultivate metta in their lives, engage in loving-kindness meditation. This involves visualising a person or situation that all display loving-kindness.

- This may be towards oneself first, but progressing out to friends and even enemies.
- They may also recite certain phrases emphasising loving-kindness. The aim is to cultivate metta in the Buddhist's life, not simply towards one person or oneself, but to all people at one time.

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The Five Moral Precepts

The Five Moral Precepts are a series of five commitments all Buddhists are required to follow across many different traditions, although in monastic communities, there may be additional precepts.

- **Abstain from taking life** – This means not to cause suffering to, or kill, any living creature, including vegetarian, although lay Buddhists may often simply seek to reduce their meat intake.
- **Abstain from taking what is not given** – This means avoiding stealing from others.
- **Abstain from sexual misconduct** – This means not to engage in sexually harmful or inappropriate behaviour.
- **Abstain from false speech** – This means not to lie, spread falsehoods or gossip.
- **Abstain from intoxicants** – This means avoiding alcohol and drugs that might impair judgement. However, many lay Buddhists will still drink, simply avoiding excessive drunkenness.

How committed a person is to Buddhism influences how strictly they follow these precepts. For example, someone springing from the first precept, should always be avoided. For many lay Buddhists, drinking alcohol, as well as maybe spreading gossip and other unskillful acts.

- However, monks will strictly follow all the precepts in order to achieve maximum spiritual growth and eliminate the **Three Poisons** from their being.
- It is also important to note that the precepts interact. For example, it could be the case that a person drinking alcohol may be the case that one precept might have to be broken in order to follow another.
- In all moral decisions, the Buddha emphasised wisdom, and Buddhists believe that wisdom is key to applying the precepts effectively.

The Six Perfections

The Six Perfections in Mahayana Buddhism are the qualities that embody a bodhisattva. A person should aim to perfect in order to become enlightened.

In contrast to the five precepts, which involve abstaining from unskillful action, the six perfections develop positive aspects to one's character. These are:

- **Generosity** – Being generous, both in acts and intentions. Buddhists may aim to be generous towards others, either through charity or through offerings at temple.
- **Morality** – Following the five precepts, restraining oneself from excess, cultivating virtuous moral laws.
- **Patience** – Understanding that suffering is a part of life, being patient when one is suffering, understanding of life, and being patient with those treating one poorly.
- **Energy** – Cultivating mental strength and fortitude, as well as the energy required to practice Buddhist ethics.
- **Meditation** – Focusing on taking time to meditate, and working through the five precepts to gain understanding of one's existence, reality and Buddhist ethical principles.
- **Wisdom** – Experience and understanding of reality that informs one's decisions and leads to the right moral choice in a particular situation. The ideal of the bodhisattva is the perfect balance of wisdom and compassion.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Need more practice 😐
I understand the concept of karma and how it is central to Buddhist ethical teaching.		
I can describe the importance of compassion and loving-kindness in Buddhist ethics and the ways Buddhists seek to cultivate them in their own lives.		
I can detail the Five Moral Precepts, and their significance within Buddhist ethical teaching.		
I can describe the importance of the Six Perfections within Mahayana Buddhism and how they are thought to be the key qualities of a bodhisattva.		

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Practice Exam-style Questions – Buddhist Ethics

Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be 4)

1. What arises out of good moral intentions and states of mind?
 - A Patience
 - B Skilful actions
 - C Sensations
 - D Bad habits
2. Which one of these is one of the four Sublime States?
 - A Muditā
 - B Vipassanā
 - C Sīla
 - D Panna
3. Which one of these is one of the Six Perfections?
 - A Generosity
 - B Abstinence
 - C Empathy
 - D Insight
4. What practice do Buddhists sometimes engage in to cultivate loving-kindness in the mind?
 - A Samatha
 - B Merit-making
 - C Chanting
 - D Metta bhavana

5. Give **one** realm a Buddhist might be reborn in after death.
6. Explain **two** ways that loving-kindness is important in Buddhist ethical practice.
7. Explain **two** ways in which wisdom is central to Buddhist ethics. Refer to Buddhist teachings.
8. 'It is not necessary for a Buddhist to completely commit to the Five Moral Precepts in order to be a Buddhist.' Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - Give reference to relevant Buddhist teaching.
 - Develop well-supported arguments for and against such a view.
 - Give a reasonable and justified conclusion.

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Mark Schemes – The Dhamma

Multiple-choice: Correct answers in order: (b), (a), (d), (a)

5. 1 mark for any of the perfections given (generosity, morality, patience, etc.)

6. 2 marks per point for a total of **4 marks:**

Simple explanation = 1 mark

Detailed explanation = 2 marks

Students may include the following:

- Dependent arising helps explain the links (nidanas) between life, death and rebirth, how samsara occurs.
- Dependent arising helps explain how good actions lead to good rewards/rebirth, which gives grounds to the Buddhist doctrine of karma.
- Dependent arising helps Buddhists identify the laws of Dhamma behind the ups and downs of the world, just as they change the conditions of the world as they change.

7. Marked as a four-part question, plus 1 mark for naming a relevant reference to scripture for further support or applying this to the question, for an overall total of **6 marks:**

Students might include the points below, but any relevant points can be included:

- Samsara is the teaching that there is an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth, a natural part of the world and can only be escaped through realisation and understanding of the Four Truths, and the Dhamma as a whole.
- Where one is reborn in samsara depends upon one's accumulated kamma. One who has accumulated good kamma, whereas one is reborn in a lower realm if one has accumulated bad kamma. The realms/states are represented in the Wheel of Life.
- Samsara means for Buddhists that death is not an escape from suffering. The cycle continues unless one becomes enlightened, one will continue to suffer in future lives, and in what realm one is reborn into after death.
- Scripture / source of wisdom may be: Jataka Tales 075, Dhammapada 94–95

8. Criteria:

One argument with justification
Different arguments for and against, with justification OR Several linked, justified arguments for one position This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered, with no mention of religion
Good, well-justified arguments for and against, linked together Definite reference to religion
Very well argued. Well-justified arguments for and against, linked together and leading to a reasonable conclusion Appropriate reference to religion used to answer question

'Learning about the Dhamma from experience is more important than reading about it'
Arguments in support:

- The Buddha taught that those who follow his teachings, and the Dhamma as a way of life, are to rely on their own experience (vipassana). There is, therefore, no authoritative Buddhist person recognised, as their experience is necessary to reach enlightenment.
- A vital part of moving further towards enlightenment is giving up one's attachment to the world. This is based on one's experience and cravings (tanha) in the world and, therefore, cannot be overlooked as part of Buddhist practice.
- Wisdom is an important quality in Buddhism, in knowing how to apply Buddhist teachings to one's experience and practice in the world.
- The Buddha's own enlightenment sprung from his experience of the world (the world is suffering). Similarly, many people are inspired to become Buddhists and move further along the path through experience of suffering and hardship themselves.

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Preview of Answers Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.