

Teachings of The Buddha (The Dharma)

These describe the Human Condition or what life is like. These outline the nature of human life.

3 Marks of Existence

Anicca
Anatta
Dukkha

These describe what we need to recognise and how we will achieve the goals.

4 Noble Truths

Dukkha
Samudaya
Nirodha/Tanha
Magga

Sometimes called "The Middle Way". This is the middle path between a life of extremes.

8 Fold Path

Wisdom (Prajna)
↓
Right Intention
Right Views

Meditation (Samadhi)
↓
Right Concentration
Right Effort
Right Mindfulness

Morality (Sila)
↓
Right Livelihood
Right Speech
Right Action

The 5 Precepts
↓
Lay Members of the Sangha

The 10 Precepts
↓
Monastic Members of the Sangha

Do not overindulge the senses
Do not use intoxicants

Do not destroy life
Do not steal
Do not lie

Introduction

Buddhism is named after the title given to its founder, **Siddhatta Gautama** – the Buddha. He was born in Kapilavastu in Northern India in about 563 BCE and died at the age of 80 in about 483 BCE. The exact dates are unknown, but perhaps all we need to know is that he lived for about eighty years sometime between the sixth and eighth centuries BCE. The religion of Buddhism was spread from India to Sri Lanka and Thailand by its early followers. The form of Buddhism which exists in these countries today is known as **Theravada** (the Teachings of the Elders) and resembles the earliest forms of the religion. Buddhism itself died out in India for many centuries, although it has now regained popularity with some groups in India.

When Theravada Buddhism was taken into Northern Asia it underwent many adaptations, as it tried to make itself relevant to the people living in these areas. Buddhism spread into China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Bhutan and Tibet. Today this Buddhism is referred to as **Mahayana** (the Greater Vehicle) and contains many different branches or schools, including Pure Land, Nichiren Shosho, Yoga Cara, Zen Tendai and Tibetan. This last school is sometimes considered to be a different form of Buddhism in its own right and is called Vajrayana.

Buddhism became more widely known in the west during the twentieth century. Members of many of the different schools of Buddhism established links with western countries and attracted new followers. Two of the best known communities in Britain are the Theravada Forest Hermitage viharas in Warwickshire, Middlesex and Hampshire and the Samye Ling Tibetan vihara in Eskdalemuir, Dumfriesshire. In addition, the formation of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) by Sangarasita – a British-born Theravada-ordained monk – has made the teachings and practices of Buddhism easier for many western people to understand and follow. FWBO communities exist throughout Britain.

Buddhism is now an international religion with over 300 million followers worldwide.

Learner Activity 1

Use the weblinks to complete a mindmap about the basics of Buddhism.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/ataglance/glance.shtml>

<http://buddhanet.net/e-learning/5minbud.htm>

Use the weblink to write an explanation of the key fundamentals of Buddhist teaching.

<http://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/about-buddhism-2/fundamental-teachings/>

Mindmap Template for Activity 1.1
You can include images



What does it mean to be human?

Religions are concerned with what it means to be human and how we answer 'The big questions' of life. For example: What should we aim for in life? What is life like? How can we live a good life? (and what does 'a good life' mean?)

Central to –perhaps- being able to answer these questions is the issue of what it means to be human. By reflecting on what human existence is like, we can see what the problems might be and how we might solve them.

In this pack we are going to look at some of the answers that Buddhists would be likely to give to some of these questions. Before we do, it will be helpful to think about your own ideas and your experiences of what it means to be a human being. We are all different in many ways – we look different, have different lives and experiences – but we all have the common experience of living a human life... or do we?

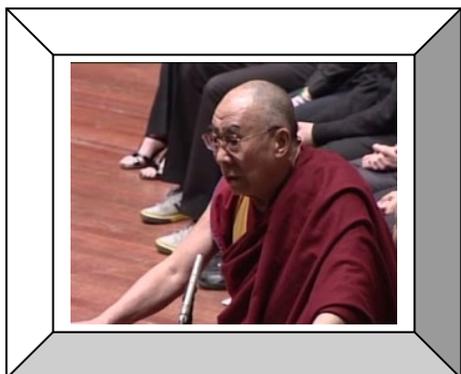
Student Activity 2

Think about, discuss and record your class's ideas and answers to these questions:

- (a) What does it mean to live a 'good life'??
- (b) What different things make a human being?
- (c) What makes human life happy and enjoyable?
- (d) What makes human life unhappy and difficult?
- (e) What do human beings need for survival?
- (f) Is happiness and/or unhappiness have the same meaning for all humans?
- (g) Do you think the 'big questions' can be answered? Should we try?

For each of the questions above, think about your own life and how the way you live it is linked to the question.

Watch the following video: Dalai Lama - [Human Being](#)



Reflective questions:

- What definition is given here of a human being??
- Do you agree with this definition? Give reasons for your answer
- In the clip it is said that humans are the same as insects and animals as we have the same desires and wants. What do you think of this? Explain your answer.
- What is said in the clip about human intelligence?
- What other information about Buddhism do you learn from this clip, and what questions does this information raise for you?

Top Tip

What does it mean to give reasons for your answer?

If you are asked to give reasons for your answer it is important to know what is expected of you. You must explain what you mean and give a reasoned justification of what you have stated. You must give further detail and additional explanation or examples.

Buddhism teaches that life is about suffering and 'unsatisfactoriness' and offers a way to overcome this in life. Buddhism is unique among world religions as there is no belief in a personal god. Buddhism is based on human experience and potential. Buddhism teaches a way of life that avoids extremes. It offers 'a Middle Way' between a life of self-indulgence and a life of self-denial. So in place of belief in a god, Buddhism concentrates on the actions of the individual human being.

Buddhists believe that all existence depends upon conditions – in other words, that nothing can exist in isolation. For example, a fish cannot survive without water and a human cannot survive without air to breathe.

In order to truly understand the nature of life we must turn to the founder of Buddhism, It is in his life that the teachings of Buddhism are reflected, and it is from his teachings that we can work out the means of achieving the goals of Buddhism

The life of the Buddha

Buddhism is named after the title given to its founder Siddhatta Gautama – the Buddha. He was born into a wealthy family in Kapilavastu in Northern India, in about 563 BCE.

Siddhatta grew up in a royal palace surrounded by luxury. He wanted for nothing. However, he was confined to a life within the palace as his father tried to shield him from the world outside.

At the age of twenty-nine, Siddhatta grew dissatisfied and began to think seriously about his life and what it meant. On excursions from the palace with his charioteer Channa, Siddhatta saw four sights which changed his life. He saw an old man, a sick person, a corpse and a holy man. These four sights led to Siddhatta's decision to leave the palace and become a wandering holy man.

There were many teachers at this time claiming to have the answers to questions in life and methods for achieving peace of mind. At first Siddhatta trained in meditation, but he became dissatisfied with this: it did not offer the complete release he was looking for. He then began to follow an extremely ascetic life. He spent long periods of time standing or sitting in the same position, in solitude, without food and without washing.

While all of these things helped him to develop greater self-control, to conquer feelings of fear, desire and disgust, and to have greater mental control, they still did not answer his questions about life. Siddhatta almost starved himself to death in this quest. But in the end he gave up this austere way of life. He rejected the idea of a strictly ascetic life just as he had rejected the rich, luxurious and indulgent one. By the age of thirty-five Siddhatta had experienced two extremes of lifestyle and had still not found satisfaction in his quest. Determined to fulfil this he sat down under a Bo tree and vowed to meditate until he achieved enlightenment.

After Buddha became enlightened he was able to help others towards enlightenment by teaching the Dharma. He decided he would do this for the five ascetics that he had lived with in the years before. His first sermon is known as the Sermon of Benares. It was given at the deer park at Sarnath by the Varanasi (once called Benares).

His first sermon is also known as the Deer Park Sermon or the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Law, in which he explained the Four Noble Truths. For the next forty-five years, or the remainder of his life, the Buddha travelled around India teaching people from all walks of life.

Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha to recognise not only that he was a historical person but also to recognise the possibility of their own enlightenment. Dharma can mean many things. It can mean the ultimate truth or reality of life. It can also mean the teachings of the Buddha. Some Buddhists talk of practising the Dharma. Some have said it is the Buddhist word for Buddhism. Buddha's teaching pointed to the

truth and it said that by practising his teaching people are living a truthful life. The Dharma is open to everyone.

The Dharma is the Fourth Noble Truth. It is not the source of enlightenment but rather indicates the way. Buddha refused to answer questions of a metaphysical nature – questions about the universe, life and life after death. He did this because he felt that there are no straightforward answers to these questions. Humans only have the capacity to ask limited questions because they have limited knowledge.

Buddha said that asking these questions and searching for answers are irrelevant in trying to overcome and remove suffering.

Dharma is the term given to Buddhist teaching. The term can refer to a particular teaching such as the Four Noble Truths, a collection of scripture like the Pali Canon, or to the whole of Buddhist teaching. Dharma is sometimes translated as 'The Way', as it shows what Buddhists should do in order to gain enlightenment.

The main purpose of Buddha's teaching was to help people overcome suffering and achieve happiness, not to teach about 'everything'. A popular image which demonstrates the practical nature of Buddha's teaching is: If a man has been shot by a poisoned arrow he does not sit around discussing the make, type and quality of the arrow he has been shot with. Nor does he then discuss who shot the arrow and why. Rather the first thing that the man does is to try to remove the arrow!

The Dharma has also been likened to a raft. A person may use a raft to cross a river. The person guides and steers the raft as best as he can to reach his chosen destination. A raft is also something that you set aside once you have reached your destination.

After Buddha's death a gathering of arhats agreed on one version of the Dharma. Ananda, as one of Buddha's closest disciples, recited every teaching the Buddha had taught. These sayings of the Buddha were eventually written down and became the Sutta Pitaka section of the Pali canon.

It is important to note that the teachings of Buddhism, the beliefs and practices are reflected in the life of the Buddha.

Activity

Write a report about the Life of the Buddha, in this report you should include:

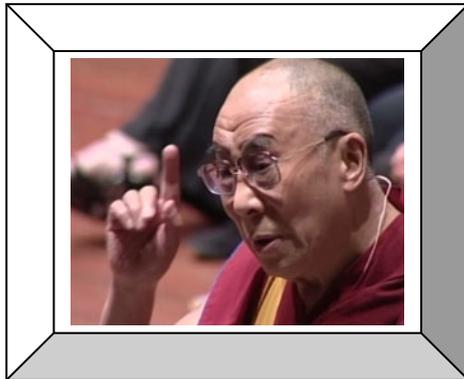
- Descriptive accounts of each aspect of the Buddha's life: His journey towards enlightenment: The consequences of his enlightenment
- Explanation about how each of the aspects of the Buddha's journey towards enlightenment contributed to his understanding of his role in life
- Consideration of questions raised by each of the aspects of the Buddha's journey towards enlightenment and raised by the consequences of his enlightenment

NB You may well have studied the details of the Buddha's life previously. At this stage of your learning, you are now using this knowledge and understanding to critically analyse these aspects of Buddhism.

The teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha taught about the nature of existence and about what it means to be human.

Watch the following video: Dalai Lama - [Major issues](#)



Reflective questions:

- In the clip, what major issues facing the world today are mentioned??
- Do you think that the ways people interact in the world today are the cause of the world's problems? Explain your answer.
- Could the world's problems be solved if humans worked together more to solve them?

What is Dukkha?

Dukkha is suffering or the unsatisfactoriness of life. Buddhists believe that it is caused by desire. If you desire something, but cannot have it, then you suffer - you experience dukkha.

Walpola Rahula in "What the Buddha Taught", describes dukkha as being a happiness of many things including renunciation, detachment, physical and mental happiness. Therefore, dukkha is not necessarily pessimistic.

At the heart of Buddhism, lies the fact that all life involves suffering.

There are many important questions in life for which people are constantly seeking answers. For the Buddha, even these questions took a back seat. His search was to find an end to suffering.

In Buddhism, suffering or 'Dukkha' is understood in a very broad sense as:

UNSATISFACTORINESS

IMPERMANENCE

IMPERFECTION

Activity

1. Discuss whether these three words accurately describe what life is like for most individuals (think of specific situations in life). .
2. Consider what, in your own life, might be described as 'unsatisfactory, impermanent and imperfect'.
3. Do you think it is ever possible that life for everyone could be satisfactory, permanent and perfect?
4. Discuss how unsatisfactoriness in life could be ended. Should it be ended?
5. Write a summary paragraph (at least 100 words) explaining the extent to which you agree/disagree with this aspect of Buddhist teaching.

A Buddhist explains the causes of Dukkha:

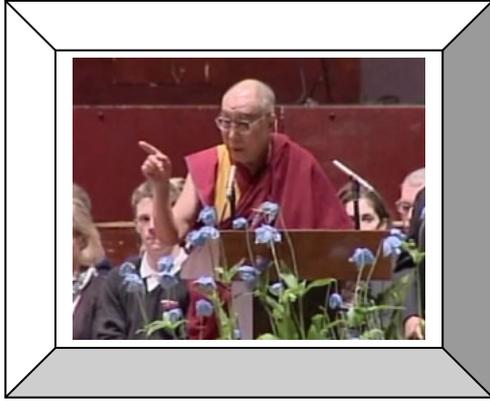
Each and every time we get cross, frustrated, embittered, and when things do not go the way 'I' want them to go, we are in Dukkha and we have allowed an infantile habit to control us. It is these automatic and generally infantile habits that are the direct cause of Dukkha, and in Buddhism they are called the 'Cankers', the addictions that stain the mind.

Activity

1. Discuss to what extent an emphasis on 'we', 'mine' and 'I' is the cause of Dukkha in your experience. (ie. Suffering caused by what you want, what makes you happy/unhappy). Are humans naturally selfish? Is selfishness always wrong?
2. Read, then cut out at least 2 examples of Dukkha from a newspaper. For each example explain what form of Dukkha it is, and what the probable cause is. (Each explanation should be completed in about 50-100 words)

3. Think again about Dukkha and how it could be ended. Using the information you have gathered so far, write a short report describing the concept of Dukkha (in its different forms – physical, mental, personal, and worldwide), and how Dukkha can cease. Your report should be at least 150 words.

Watch the following video: Dalai Lama – [‘Me’ or ‘I’](#)



Reflective questions:

- The clip here refers to effect of a focus on “Me” or “I” has on someone. What do you think about this? Should everyone stop thinking in terms of “me” or “I”?
- According to the clip, what impact does a selfish attitude have on a person?
- In the clip, “opening the inner door” is referred to. What do you think this means?

So what does the Buddha say about Dukkha?

In the Dhammapada (Sayings of the Buddha) the following is said:

If a man watches not for NIRVANA, his cravings grow like a creeper and he jumps from death to death like a monkey in the forest from one tree without fruit to another.

And when his cravings overcome him, his sorrows increase more and more, like the entangling creeper called birana.

But whoever in this world overcomes his selfish cravings, his sorrows fall away from him, like drops of water from a lotus flower.

Therefore in love I tell you, to you all who have come here: Cut off the bonds of desires, as the surface grass creeper called birana is cut for its fragrant root called usira. Be not like a reed in a stream which MARA, the devil of temptation, crushes again and again.

Just as a tree, though cut down, can grow again and again if its roots are undamaged and strong, in the same way if the roots of craving are not wholly uprooted sorrows will come again and again.

When the thirty-six streams of desire that run towards pleasures are strong, their powerful waves carry away that man without vision whose imaginings are lustful desires.

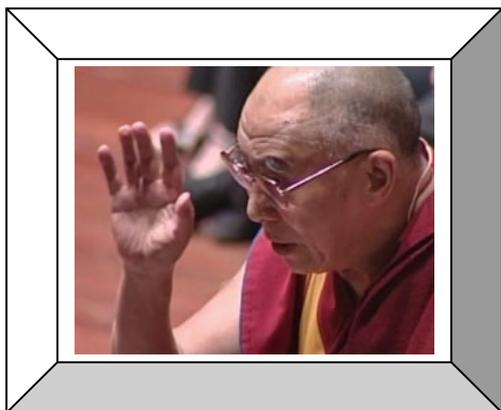
Everywhere flow the streams. The creeper of craving grows everywhere. If you see the creeper grow, cut off its roots by the power of wisdom.

The sensuous pleasures of men flow everywhere. Bound for pleasures and seeking pleasures men suffer life and old age. Men who are pursued by lust run around like hunted hares. Held in fetters and in bonds they suffer and suffer again.

Source Analysis

- 1 What do you think is meant by the statement that your “cravings grow like a creeper”?
- 2 Do you agree that getting rid of craving will lead to overcoming suffering? How might this happen?
- 3 Explain what you understand by the analogy of the roots of craving and craving coming back?
- 4 How might wisdom lead to you overcoming craving?
- 5 What do you think humans crave that might cause them to suffer?

Watch the following video: Dalai Lama -[Selfless attitude](#)



Reflective questions:

- In this section, assess the impact of a selfless attitude and a compassionate mindset might have on life.
- How easy do you think it is to become more selfless and more compassionate?

Source Work

Consider this body! A painted puppet with jointed limbs, sometimes suffering and covered with ulcers, full of imaginings, never permanent, forever changing.

This body is decaying! A nest of diseases, a heap of corruption, bound to destruction, to dissolution. All life ends in death.

Look at these grey-white dried bones, like dried empty gourds thrown away at the end of the summer. Who will feel joy in looking at them?

A house of bones is this body, bones covered with flesh and with blood. Pride and hypocrisy dwell in this house and also old age and death.

The glorious chariots of kings wear out, and the body wears out and grows old; but the virtue of the good never grows old, and thus they can teach the good to those who are good.

If a man tries not to learn he grows old just like an ox! His body indeed grows old but his wisdom does not grow.

I have gone round in vain the cycles of many lives ever striving to find the builder of the house of life and death. How great is the sorrow of life that must die! But now I have seen thee, housebuilder: never more shalt thou build this house. The rafters of sins are broken, the ridge-pole of ignorance is destroyed. The fever of craving is past: for my mortal mind is gone to the joy of the immortal NIRVANA.

Those who in their youth did not live in self-harmony, and who did not gain the true treasures of life, are later like long-legged old herons standing sad by a lake without fish.

Those who in their youth did not live in self-harmony, and who did not gain the true treasures of life, are later like broken bows, ever deploring old things past and gone.

Source: Dhammapada 147-156

Reliability of sources

What does the word 'reliable' mean? How do you know when something or someone is reliable? What makes a source a reliable source?

- When you look for information, how do you ensure that the source of the information is reliable?
- If you were to look for information about something, what would form the most reliable type of information? Choose two or three things you would like to find out about and consider where you would go for information about this – how would you make sure that the information that you found out was reliable?
- Find out about The Dhammapada. Where did it come from, who wrote it, and why was it written? Is this a reliable source? What would make this a reliable (or unreliable) source?
- How might the source above help a Buddhist to understand his/her beliefs better? How might it help that Buddhist to know how to act?
- What other types of sources could be used by Buddhists to guide their beliefs and actions??

When you are thinking about sources in relation to Buddhism you should think about the following:

1. What does the source tell us? What does it say?
2. Is it reliable? Is it an authoritative source?
3. How does the source relate to the teachings of Buddhism?
4. How does this help Buddhists to develop their own beliefs and actions?
5. In what different ways might Buddhists understand the source?