**Religious Studies**

**Buddhism**

**Buddhism's Social and Religious Background (1)**

**Bullets**

* The story goes that Siddhartha Gautama was born in Northern India, in Nepal about 2,500 years ago.
* It was an exciting time for religion as there were numerous different doctrines and ideas, and many were reinterpreting religious doctrines.

**Text**

RELIGION IN INDIA IN THE TIME OF THE BUDDHA  
In order to understand Buddhism, it is necessary to understand the historical development of the religion. As John Snelling says, 'Buddhism is a child of India - a uniquely spiritual country.' We have to look to India to learn more about the origin of Buddhism. The story goes that Siddhartha Gautama was born in Northern India, in Nepal about 2,500 years ago.  
  
According to Cush, 'The period within which the Buddha lived seems to have been a time of religious upheaval and innovation.' It was an exciting time for religion as there were numerous different doctrines and ideas, and many were reinterpreting religious doctrines. Some rejected the old ideas and were searching for the meaning of life themselves. This coincided with the social changes - a number of nomadic groups moved to live in the city because society there was more stable, and allowed them to learn more about philosophical and religious subjects. It is true to say that the main religion practised in India in the Buddha's time was 'Hinduism' as it is known today.

**Questions**

* 1. To what religion did the Buddha originally belong?
* 2. What is the meaning of Denise Cush's quote - 'The period within which the Buddha lived seems to have been a time of religious upheaval and innovation'?

**Keywords**

1. Hinduism - The original meaning of the word Hindu was someone who lived by the river Indus, and most people who follow this religion live in India.

**Hindu Ideas (1)**

**Bullets**

* The atman is the Hindu idea of the eternal soul whose source is Brahman.
* When the body dies, the atman departs the body and enters another body.
* Every atman goes through a series of lives until it is released from the samsara cycle, when it unites with Brahman.

**Text**

ATMAN  
  
The atman is the Hindu idea of the eternal soul whose source is Brahman. The religion recognizes this truth. When the body dies, the atman departs the body and enters another body. The atman is described in many ways in the Upanishads and the Bhagvad Gita. The Upanishads describe a series of layers that cover the atman, concealing the true nature. The layers must be lifted by the process of vision and self-foresight. This process leads to a realisation that the true self is synonymous with realizing that the atman is God. This process means that the person enters a state of wisdom, and of oneness with the world.  
  
A school named Advaita Vedanta claimed that every person's inner 'self' shared the same energy that gave life to the world. Every atman goes through a series of lives until it is released from the samsara cycle, when it unites with Brahman.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the atman?
* 2. What is the 'self' in your opinion?
* 3. Do you believe that the belief about the atman affects the way the Hindu views life?
* 4. Is the Hindu idea of the atman similar to the ideas contained in other religions?
* 5. What was the Buddha's response to the Hindu idea of the atman?

**Keywords**

1. Atman - the eternal soul whose source is Brahman.
2. Brahman - God in the Hindu religion. Some believe that the atman and Brahman are essentially the same.
3. Upanishads - Hindu scriptures that refer to the atman and Brahman.
4. Advaita Vedanta - A school of thought in India which means 'non-dualism'.
5. Samsara - An existence cycle of birth, death and rebirth based on the individual's karma.

**Hindu Ideas (2)**

**Bullets**

* An idea accepted in all religions in India was reincarnation, the idea that people die, and are continually reborn.
* Samsara refers to the life cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
* The atman keeps being reborn thousands of times until it escapes from the samsara cycle.
* The purpose of life is to improve and perfect wisdom in order to attain the final goal, namely moksha.
* The power of karma from the previous life carries over into the next life. Bad actions will mean a life of suffering, while good actions and true aims will lead to a happy and better life.

**Text**

REINCARNATION / KARMA / SAMSARA  
Reincarnation, the idea that people die, and are continually reincarnated in a new physical body, human or animal, is an idea that is acceptable to all religions in India. The word 'incarnation' means 'in the flesh'.  
The literal meaning of the word 'samsara' is wandering, which corresponds to the idea of the soul wandering from body to body, from one life to the next. Samsara refers to the life cycle of birth, death and reincarnation.  
  
Hindus believe that the whole world is part of this cycle. The atman keeps being reincarnated thousands of times until it escapes from the samsara cycle. The purpose of life is to improve and perfect wisdom in order to attain the final goal, namely moksha. The reason people and creatures are reincarnated is due to the belief in karma. Karma means 'action'.  
  
Hindus believe that the power of karma from the previous life carries over into the next life. Bad actions will mean a life of suffering, while good actions and true aims will lead to a happy and better life. Every occurrence in life is the consequence of some action in the past. Hindus believe that they will pay the price one day. This belief can motivate people to live a moral life, to carry out the duties of their dharma, and take responsibility for their own fate. In India, the caste system can be linked to karma because being born into a low caste can be the consequence of past actions.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the term 'reincarnation'?
* 2. How do the creeds of karma and samsara affect the way Hindus view life?
* 3. Is the Hindu idea of reincarnation similar to the ideas found in other religions?
* 4. What was the Buddha's response to the Hindu idea of reincarnation?
* 5. Are the Hindu and Buddhist ideas of karma and samsara similar?

**Keywords**

1. Samsara - An existence cycle of birth, death and rebirth based on the individual's karma.
2. Atman - the eternal soul whose source is Brahman.
3. Moksha - 'Freedom'. Becoming free of the samsara cycle.
4. Karma - A power that drives towards the rebirth of the individual.
5. Caste system - 'Varna'. The four classes in Hindu society.

**Hindu Ideas (3)**

**Bullets**

* In India, in the Buddha's time, there were four groups (castes) of people.
* Each caste had a particular duty to perform within society.
* The consequences of karma from a past life decided what caste a person was born into.

**Text**

THE CASTE SYSTEM  
  
In India, in the Buddha's time, there were four groups (castes) of people. Each caste had a particular duty to perform within society, and in a later period, as the system became more rigid, it was not possible to marry, eat or mix with individuals from another caste. The consequences of karma from a past life decided what caste a person was born into. In time, another group was formed. These were the five groups:  
  
1. The Brahmins - Priests. Influential, wise and learned people who were responsible for performing sacrificial rituals. The Brahmin was the link between the gods and the people. He had responsibility for keeping the Hindu traditions and rituals by teaching the scriptures, and setting a good moral example.  
2. Kshatriyas - Soldiers and rulers. They were responsible for controlling and leading specific regions.  
3. Vaishyas - Merchants and farmers. They had responsibility for providing materials for others.  
4. Shudras - Labourers and servants. Physical and manual work.  
5. Harijans / Dalitias - Untouchables. The dregs of society who were considered the lowest group within Hindu society. No-one would mix with this group in the Buddha's period. Their work involved suffering, and impure actions such as butchery, incinerating dead bodies.  
Gandhi called these people 'children of God'. It is now unlawful and immoral in India to discriminate against people.

**Questions**

* 1. Why was the Brahmin an influential person?
* 2. To what class did the Buddha belong?
* 3. Is the caste system fair?
* 4. What would the Buddha's reaction be to the caste system?

**Keywords**

1. Caste system - 'Varna'. The four classes in Hindu society.
2. Karma - A power that drives towards the rebirth of the individual.
3. Brahmin - Priests. Influential, wise and learned people who were responsible for performing sacrificial rituals. The highest caste.

**Hindu Ideas (4)**

**Bullets**

* Hindus believe that it is important to follow the dharma as they are moral principles that would ensure a stable and harmonious community.
* According to Hindus, every person has a role to play in the world.

**Text**

DHARMA  
  
Within Hinduism, the meaning of the word dharma is law, morality or truth involving personal and social duties. Hindus believe that it is important to follow the dharma as they are moral principles that would ensure a stable and harmonious community. These principles are expressed in two ways, namely Sanatana Dharma, the eternal law that refers to principles of non-violence, avoiding stealing, and purity; and Varnashrama Dharma, laws for every person and what it means to be a Hindu.  
  
According to Hindus, every person has a role to play in the world. That role is to fulfil the dharma in accordance with their status within the caste system.

**Questions**

* 1. Is the Hindu idea in the dharma a realistic one in our present age?

**Keywords**

1. Dharma - a law, morality or truth involving personal and social duties.
2. Caste system - 'Varna'. The four classes in Hindu society.

**The Buddha's Life (1)**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha's importance could be foreseen before he was born!
* His birth was very different to a normal birth = walking immediately, leaping in 4 directions, angels singing, talking!

**Text**

The Buddha was born in 563 B.C. in the garden of Lumbini in north India (Nepal today). There are many different accounts of how he was born, which reflect the importance of Siddharta.  
  
Maya, Siddharta's mother, dreamt in the months before his birth that a white elephant had come to her holding a lotus flower and had danced three times before her as she stood at the foot of the Himalayas. (An elephant is a sign of good luck, and some believe that this indicated that Siddharta was going to be a significant person). His unique destiny was prophesied by the wise men of the period, such as Asita, who believed that Siddharta would either be a king, be extremely successful or that he would rule the world! He said:  
  
"...the dream is a sign of the birth of a son by divine intervention. He will be a great ruler."  
  
It is said that after this interpretation an earthquake took place where many blind, deaf and lame invalids were healed.  
  
The Buddha was born in an unnatural way and very differently to usual babies. Lights shone in the heavens and a choir of angels sang of the birth of the "Exhaulted son". He started walking immediately, and wherever he set foot, a lotus flower bloomed. He leapt seven times in each direction; north, south, east and west. This was a sign that he would inherit the earth, and he said:  
  
"I am the head of the world. This is my last birth".

**Questions**

* 1. Where was the Buddha born?
* 2. What is the Buddha's full name?
* 3. What was the meaning of the dream of Maya, the Buddha's mother?

**Keywords**

1. Siddharta Gautama = The Buddha.
2. Maya = the Buddha's mother.
3. Asita = a wise man in the age of the Buddha's birth.

**The Buddha's Life (2) - Other Happenings**

**Bullets**

* More special features of the day of his birth - the girl he would later marry, his best friend Ananda, and his horse were all born on the very same day.
* The Buddha's father tried to save his son from any suffering.

**Text**

There are more special happenings linked with the day of Siddharta's birth. It is said that a girl named Yasodhara or Gopa was born on the same day, and that after sixteen years they were married. Furthermore, Ananda was born on this wonderful day, who was a lifelong friend of his. Channa was born on this day and he accompanied the Buddha on his missionary travels. It is also believed that a horse was born on this day; a horse that Siddharta rode through the forest on his journey to seek deliverance.  
  
Siddharta's father was a wealthy and influential man who owned many palaces. He was an eminent nobleman, belonging to the Kshatriyan class, so Siddharta was expected to follow in his footsteps. He took action to ensure that his son, Siddharta, would not go in any other direction. He did not want Siddharta to see any kind of suffering around him, especially having lost his mother at such an early age.

**Questions**

* 1. What sort of man was the Buddha's father?
* 2. Why didn't the Buddha's father want him to witness suffering?
* 3. Do some personal research to find out what sort of class the Kshatriyas were.

**Keywords**

1. Kshatriyas - a class of soldiers and rulers.
2. Deliverance - redemption / rescue.

**The Buddha's Life (3) - 4 Sights**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha had not experienced any suffering in the palace.
* The Buddha saw 4 scenes that affected him profoundly - old age, a sick man, a funeral, an ascetic.
* As a result he was inspired to find out the truths of life.
* He left the palace in an attempt to find out the truths.

**Text**

The Buddha had lived in the palace with his father (Suddhodana) all his life so far, and was now married. A son was born to him named Rahula (Rahula means chain!) He had not experienced any kind of suffering but he knew that he had not experienced real life. Siddharta would not be satisfied until he had discovered the truths of life. He decided to travel outside the palace with a friend.  
  
He experienced many incidents that had a profound effect on him. He first came face to face with a crippled old man, who showed evident traits of old age.  
  
In the next incident he saw a sick man who was obviously suffering. His servant Channa taught him that everyone suffered from old age and illness during their lives.  
  
Another occasion that had a profound effect on Siddharta was seeing a funeral, where the corpse was on its way to the Ghat, or crematorium. Before this incident, Siddharta had not realised that life came to an end for every living person and thing, including his family. This knowledge disturbed Siddharta, and he took pity.  
  
Finally, he met a nomadic man, content with his lot. He was an ascetic, having totally foresaken all property and pleasures. His life was simple with very little food, and was a life of focusing, of discipline, of peace and stillness. This experience was inspirational to Siddharta; he knew that he had to find the answers to the great questions of life and find inner peace. As a result, he decided to leave his family and the palace.

**Questions**

* 1. Why was the Buddha dissatisfied with his life in the palace in your opinion?
* 2. Explain the 4 scenes that the Buddha saw.
* 3. How important is it to acknowledge that old age will affect all of us?
* 4. In your opinion, why was the Buddha disturbed after learning that all living things die?
* 5. What can we learn from an old story like this?

**Keywords**

1. Ascetic - A person who renounces / leaves his family in the attempt to find freedom.
2. Channa - The Buddha's servant who drove his vehicle. He was with the Buddha when he witnessed the 4 scenes.
3. Suddhodana - The Buddha's father.

**The Buddha's Life (4) - Leaving the Palace, and Enlightenment**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha left the palace to seek answers to life's great questions.
* He spent 6 years as a hermit with very little food.
* He found enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, despite being tempted by Mara.
* He spent the rest of his life until his death at 80 years old teaching others.
* The Buddha was not reborn - pariNirvana.

**Text**

The news that Siddharta wanted to leave the palace was a matter of great sorrow for his father and family. It must be remembered that there were great expectations upon him to carry out the responsibilities of his father, family and tribe. Nevertheless, Siddharta was not going to let anything stop him finding the truths of life.  
  
He spent 6 years as a hermit, having shaved his head and eating next to nothing. He had a company of men experimenting in the same way and yearning for a vision. Their attempt ended in disappointment, and a terrible deterioration in their health. As a result, he realised that this was not the way to find the truths of life. Extremes are not the way, be they of self-denial or indulgence. He was ready to battle on and he sat under a fig-tree known as the Bodhi tree.  
  
He sat there meditating, determined not to move until he experienced a great vision. This time, he was not disappointed; indeed he gained enlightenment despite the efforts of Mara the devil who was trying to confuse him. He found himself above this world, above pain and suffering. The Buddha as a result became "The Enlightened One".  
  
He spent the rest of his life educating others, travelling from place to place. He taught what he knew, what he had experienced and the middle way to attain enlightenment. The Buddha died peacefully at 80 years of age, and he urged his followers to spread his message, to enable as many as possible to achieve freedom from Samsara, and to achieve the goal of attaining Nirvana, the state of inner peace. When the Buddha died, nevertheless, he was not reborn.  
This moment is called PariNirvana.

**Questions**

* 1. In your opinion, was the Buddha selfish in leaving his family?
* 2. What did the Buddha realise after leaving the palace? Describe his life after leaving the palace.
* 3. Where did the Buddha attain enlightenment?
* 4. Who was Mara?
* 5. What is so important about the Buddha teaching others until his death?
* 6. What is the meaning of the word PariNirvana?

**Keywords**

1. Hermit - one who lives alone.
2. Self-denial - doing without.
3. Bodhi Tree - the Buddha found enlightenment under this tree.
4. Mara - The devil who tried to seduce / distract / confuse the Buddha in his search for enlightenment.
5. Samsara - an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
6. Nirvana - The end of dukkha, a mental state rather than a place.
7. PariNirvana - Final Nirvana (see the death of the Buddha).

**The Relevance of the Buddha**

**Bullets**

* Different groups within Buddhism think of the Buddha in different ways.
* According to Theravada Buddhists, Siddhartha Gautama was a man who gained enlightenment. He taught others what he had discovered and then he died. He is the founder of the religion, and therefore, he is a perfect example to follow.
* According to Mahayana Buddhists, he is not unique at all - Siddhartha Gautama was one Buddha amongst others - there were other Buddhas before him, and there is one to come.
* Pure Land Buddhists refer to another Buddha, namely Amida who is in the Pure Land.
* Nichiren Buddhists refer to the 'eternal Sakyamuni', the idea that the Buddha's nature is in all people, and that Buddha-existence is possible for everyone.

**Text**

THE ROLE OF THE BUDDHA WITHIN BUDDHISM  
  
Different groups within Buddhism think of the Buddha in different ways. To a historian, the founder of Buddhism was a man named Siddhartha Gautama. To Buddhists, he discovered the dharma.  
  
According to Theravada Buddhists, Siddhartha Gautama was a man who gained enlightenment. He taught others what he had discovered and then he died. He is beyond Nirvana and can not be contacted. He helps us by giving us the dharma, so the Buddha is portrayed as a teacher, and an example to others. Theravada Buddhists have great faith in him as a man. There are statues of him in sanctuaries. To them, the Buddha is unique. He is the founder of the religion, and therefore, he is a perfect example to follow for those who are on the path to enlightenment.  
  
According to Mahayana Buddhists, he is not unique at all - Siddhartha Gautama was one Buddha amongst others - there were other Buddhas before him, and there is one to come. To others, he revealed a path that was already there. Pure Land Buddhists do not refer much to Siddtartha Gautama, but refer to another Buddha, namely Amida who is in the Pure Land. Nichiren Buddhists, on the other hand, refer to the 'eternal Sakyamuni', the idea that the Buddha's nature is in all people, and that Buddha-existence is possible for everyone.  
  
THE RELEVANCE OF THE BUDDHA  
\* He showed an example that everyone should care for each other.  
\* One of the three refuges.  
\* He taught the importance of discipline in his teaching.  
\* He taught the importance of morality.  
\* He taught the middle way to others.  
\* He gave people an example of how to follow his teachings.  
\* He taught through parables in order to make his point understandable to all, e.g. the story of Kisagotami.  
\* He established the Sangha.  
\* The founder of Buddhism according to some, e.g. Theravada.  
\* Some say that he found an already existing path, e.g. Mahayana.  
\* He was a perfect example along the path to attain enlightenment.  
\* To some, e.g. Mahayana, the historical Buddha was one Buddha amongst other enlightened ones and bodhisattvas.  
\* The historical Buddha was a symbol of enlightenment that was on the verge of revealing itself to the world.  
\* There are other Buddhas, e.g. Amida according to Pure Land Buddhism.  
\* Theravada - the Buddha was an ordinary man.  
\* Hero.  
\* One who could be identified with.  
\* He encouraged people not to hide the truth / their faith.  
\* Leader.  
\* Teacher.  
\* No Buddha = no dharma, no sangha.  
\* Klostermaier - 'The Buddha compared his activity with the clearing of a jungle path that had been overgrown … he discovered the path.'  
\* Cush - 'This was no ordinary man, but one unique in our world.'  
\* Chryssides - 'The Buddha was a man, not a god or a divine messenger or Saviour. The Buddha was not unique, but is an example for others to follow.'

**Questions**

* 1. What is the attitude of the various groups to the Buddha?
* 2. Why is the Buddha important within the religion?
* 3. Is the Buddha more important than the other two refuges?

**Keywords**

1. Siddhartha Gautama - the name of the historical Buddha.
2. Amida - the Pure Land Buddha.
3. Sakyamuni - Another name for the historical Buddha.
4. Theravada - The way of the elders. One branch within Buddhism.
5. Mahayana - 'The Great Vehicle'. One branch within Buddhism.

**The three marks of existence**

**Bullets**

* The name given to the teachings of the Buddha is dharma.
* The efficacy of the Buddha's words should be tested by finding out the truth for oneself.
* According to the Buddha, man's life has three characteristics. The basis of human existence in his opinion was anicca - change / impermanence, dukkha - dissatisfaction, and anatta - non-self.

**Text**

THE DHARMA  
  
Dharma is the name given to the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha emphasized to his followers that they should test the efficacy of his words by seeking the truth for themselves rather than accepting his words. They should study and try and test his words in everyday life. The Buddha went around the country preaching and teaching, emphasizing that everyone should live a moral, responsible, generous life, showing love towards others. The goal is enlightenment and the attainment of Nirvana.  
  
THE THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE/ THE THREE UNIVERSAL TRUTHS  
These are three major themes in the teaching of the Buddha. In the course of his enlightenment, the Buddha found answers to his question 'Why is there suffering in the world?' He spent time teaching others about the human condition. Man's life has three characteristics.  
  
The basis of human existence in his opinion was:  
\* Anicca - change / impermanence  
\* Dukkha - dissatisfaction  
\* Anatta - no-self

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word dharma?
* 2. What is the meaning of the terms anicca, anatta, dukkha?
* 3. Can you think of modern examples of the three marks of existence?

**Keywords**

1. Dharma - The literal meaning of the term is 'teachings' or the way of truth. One of the three refuges/jewels.
2. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment; the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.
3. Anicca - change / impermanence. One of the three marks of existence.
4. Dukkha - dissatisfaction. One of the three marks of existence and the first of the Four Noble Truths.
5. Anatta - non-self. One of the three marks of existence.

**Anicca**

**Bullets**

* The word means change, without duration, or impermanence.
* It is futile to adhere to anything in life, good or bad, as everything is in constant flux.
* The change in circumstances and situations can therefore cause one to become dissatisfied and unhappy.

**Text**

The word anicca means change, without duration, or impermanence. Everything is always changing, and nothing lasts for ever, e.g. people, nature, feelings, technology, circumstances, animals, incidents, the mind. Everything depends on causes and conditions which are constantly changing. This is a reality of life. Anicca causes dukkha. People are forever striving hard to create something, or trying to keep hold of things, but unfortunately, these things don't last. It is futile to adhere to anything in life, good or bad, as everything is in constant flux.  
  
There are many happy and pleasant elements in life, but these cause dissatisfaction and suffering as they don't last. If we fall in love with someone, we are very happy, but the happiness is shortlived because the relationship will end one day, e.g. one partner may die, one may change as a character and cause constant quarrelling, one may fall in love with someone else, one may fall ill. The change in circumstances and situations can therefore cause one to become dissatisfied and unhappy.  
  
On a Buddhist shrine, three flowers are often seen - one unopened, one in bloom and the other dead - this depicts the obvious changes that occur in everyone's lives. According to Buddhists, if the individual recognizes and accepts anicca, he is on the right path. There is no rest except in Nirvana.  
  
THE IMPORTANCE OF ANICCA:  
\* Encourages people to change for the better;  
\* Shows the reality of life;  
\* Acceptance of change = contentment;  
\* Change means that we have a choice in life;  
\* Seeks to improve life;  
\* Some reject change - this makes them more dissatisfied.  
\* Shows that change is not always a bad/negative/fearful thing.  
\* Accepts the order and pattern of life.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word anicca?
* 2. Can you think of examples of anicca?
* 3. Does the teaching of anicca make sense?
* 4. Is the teaching of anicca relevant to today?

**Keywords**

1. Anicca - change / impermanence. One of the three marks of existence.
2. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.

**Dukkha**

**Bullets**

* The word has many meanings, such as dissatisfaction, suffering, imperfection.
* Obvious suffering which is caused by people, or is a part of life.
* Suffering within pleasant experiences caused by changes in life.
* Suffering involving a general dissatisfaction with life.
* According to the Buddha, dukkha is caused by the three fires.
* As everything changes and dies, the Buddha taught that life cannot give people perfect satisfaction, and so the result of this is dukkha.
* The Buddha said that dukkha touches everyone and everything - it is a reality of life, and, as such, it must be accepted.

**Text**

Scholars disagree on the meaning of the word dukkha. It is a difficult word to translate as the word has many meanings, such as dissatisfaction, suffering, imperfection, discontent, inadequacy.  
  
The Buddhist believes that there are different kinds of dukkha:  
  
1. Obvious suffering which is caused by people, or is a part of life - illness, pain, old age, war, famine, poverty, death.  
2. Suffering within pleasant experiences caused by changes in life - anicca - people suffer due to the impermanence of things, e.g. relationships, life cycles, things we like and then tire of.  
3. Suffering involving a general dissatisfaction with life rather than a specific problem, e.g. a lack of knowledge. The end is death, so what is the point?  
  
According to the Buddha, dukkha is caused by the three fires, namely greed, ignorance and hate. If people accepted and avoided the three fires, they would be happier. As everything changes and dies, the Buddha taught that life cannot give people perfect satisfaction, and so the result of this is dukkha. If a person got what they wanted, that person would want more and more, causing unhappiness should they fail to get those things. Dukkha is central to Buddhism - this is what the Buddha faced when he was a prince in the palace (although he was happy during his time living in the palace). Because there was an element of dissatisfaction in his life, he decided to leave the palace in order to find inner satisfaction. The Buddha said that dukkha touches everyone and everything - it is a reality of life, and, as such, it must be accepted.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word dukkha?
* 2. Can you think of examples of dukkha?
* 3. What makes you happy?
* 4. Does the teaching of dukkha make sense?
* 5. Is the teaching of dukkha relevant to today?
* 6. Is the teaching of dukkha pessimistic?

**Keywords**

1. Dukkha - dissatisfaction. One of the three marks of existence and the first of the Four Noble Truths.
2. The three fires - The three, namely greed, ignorance and hate, cause dukkha and, therefore, are an obstacle on the path to enlightenment.

**Dukkha (2)**

**Bullets**

* The purpose of the parable of Kisagotami is to emphasize that you should get to the root of the problem of suffering, and accept suffering in life.
* Dukkha is a reality of life.
* Attachment causes dukkha.

**Text**

THE PARABLE OF KISAGOTAMI  
  
The purpose of the story is to emphasize that you should get to the root of the problem of suffering, and accept suffering in life. Kisagotami was a poor girl. She got married and gave birth to a son. In a few years, her son fell ill and died. Kisagotami was sad - she had lost a beloved son. She went around neighbouring houses asking if they had medicine for her son. Everyone laughed at her, and were shocked that she should make such a request. One day, she saw a wise man, who told her that the Buddha was staying in a nearby village, and that she should ask him for medicine. She went to look for the Buddha, and presently she found him and asked him to help her. He told her to go to the next city and ask at every house for a grain of mustard seed if no-one had died there. She went on her journey, asking at every home. In time, Kisagotami realized that every home had experienced illness, old age and death, and that her experience was an experience common to everyone. She realized that death was part of life, and that nothing lasts forever in life. In time, she took her son's body to the crematorium. She told the Buddha what she had learnt about life, and asked him to accept her as one of his followers so that she could learn more about the experiences and reality of life.  
  
THE IMPORTANCE OF DUKKHA:  
  
\* Dukkha is a reality of life;  
\* Suffering exists everywhere in the world;  
\* Attachment causes dukkha;  
\* Meditation can help someone to realize what causes dukkha, and so to change the way they behave;  
\* Our bodies and minds are constantly changing and making us unhappy. We have to accept these changes.  
\* Differentiation in the world causes dukkha.

**Questions**

* 1. What happened in the parable of Kisagotami?
* 2. What is the purpose of the parable?
* 3. Is the teaching of dukkha apt and significant to people?

**Keywords**

1. Dukkha - dissatisfaction. One of the three marks of existence and the first of the Four Noble Truths.

**Anatta**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha rejected the concept of the soul and a permanent identity after the death of the body.
* A person is made of a combination of powers/energies - the five skandhas.
* The five skandhas are body, feelings, perception, will/intention, consciousness.
* The five skandhas are dukkha because they cause clinging and attachment to other things.

**Text**

ANATTA - NO-SELF / NO-SOUL  
  
This is the content of the Buddha's second sermon, his teaching about the individual. The Buddha rejected the concept of the soul and a permanent identity after the death of the body. This is one of the differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. Hindus believe that the soul or atman exists after death, and is reincarnated as a new body. The Buddha taught that this belief was dangerous as it could lead to such consequences as disturbance and selfishness. In his second sermon, he asked the five ascetics to analyse the human being.  
  
What is a person? The individual can be compared to a bicycle. A bicycle has various parts - the frame, wheels, seat, brake. If one part breaks, a replacement can be bought. In time, each part can be replaced. It is the same bicycle, with different parts. People also have various parts/characteristics. When certain parts such as cells weaken or expire, they can be replaced.  
The Buddha taught that there is no such thing as a soul. Instead, a person is made of a combination of powers/energies called the five skandhas. They are all dukkha because they cause clinging and attachment to other things.  
  
1. Body - the only material, physical part.  
2. Feelings - the five senses - sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste. Buddhists include one additional sense, namely the mind. We are able to decide immediately if something is good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant.  
3. Perception - Recognizing something and the ability to decide if a feeling is pleasant or not. According to Buddhists, it is our perception that helps us to differentiate between sounds, e.g. is that the sound of a piano or a dog barking in the distance. Our perception decides.  
4. Will/intention - A mental action based on karma. The part that makes us do something, say something or think something. Thoughts derive from past incidents.  
5. Consciousness - For the Buddhist, there are six kinds of consciousness - one for each sense.

**Questions**

* 1. What is a person/what makes a person?
* 2. What is the soul?
* 3. What is the atman?
* 4. What is the meaning of the word anatta?
* 5. What are the five skandhas?
* 6. How does the Buddhist concept for anatta compare with the Hindu regarding the soul?

**Keywords**

1. Anatta - no-self. One of the three marks of existence.
2. Atman - the Hindu's belief in an eternal soul.
3. Five Skandhas - A person is made of a combination of powers/energies. Five things make up a person.
4. Karma - The term literally means 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.

**Anatta (2)**

**Bullets**

* What connects the two lives is the 'consciousness' - the last action in the old life and the first action in the new life are linked.
* Life, according to Buddhists, changes from one moment to the next.
* The Buddha believes that what is common between one existence and the next is the power of karma.

**Text**

The Buddha said that the five skandhas are not the essence of personality, and that therefore, none of them can be called a 'soul'. According to Buddhists, the five skandhas are what make a person, and nothing else. The five skandhas work together and change from one period to another, e.g. in time, an adult can compare himself with himself as a young child in photographs. He is the same person, but elements of that person have developed between the two periods. What connects the two lives is the 'consciousness' - the last action in the old life and the first action in the new life are linked. The end of life is the end of consciousness. What lives now has not lived up to now, and will not live in the future. It is not right to think of a soul incarnated in a new existence after death. Think of a row of candles - one is lit, then the next, and so on. The flame of the last candle is dependent on the flame of the previous candle and belongs to it. Similarly, life, according to Buddhists, changes from one moment to the next, in spite of its appearance.  
  
The Buddha believes that what is common between one existence and the next is the power of karma. The power of karma is reborn into a new body. It is not the same person, but a development. He has changed as a consequence of the external influences and internal decisions that have taken place during his life.

**Questions**

* 1. What are the 5 skandhas?
* 2. What connects the two lives?
* 3. Do you agree with the concept of the five skandhas?

**Keywords**

1. Anatta - non-self. One of the three marks of existence.
2. Atman - the Hindu's belief in an eternal soul.
3. Five Skandhas - A person is made of a combination of powers/energies. Five things that make up a person.
4. Karma - The term literally means 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.

**Anatta (3)**

**Bullets**

* The 'self' is merely a label which comprises a collection of atoms and mental actions that are impermanent, changing, and dependent on particular circumstances.
* A person in the next life is connected to his previous life as both are linked to the karma.
* A person consists of many circumstances - each succeeding each other.

**Text**

DIALOGUE BETWEEN NAGASENA AND KING MILINDA  
  
Milinda asked for the name of the monk Nagasena. Nagasena replied that the 'name' given to a person is only a label. Nagasena rejected the concept of the atman (soul). According to Nagasena, people consist of a collection of 'changing' parts. King Milinda identified 32 physical parts of the body, e.g. bones, heart. Nagasena said that these parts could not be called a person or the five skandhas as they were ever-changing. The individual is powerless to control the changes. Nagasena compared the 'self' to a chariot. Everyone knows what a chariot is, but the chariot consists of many parts such as wheels, chariot-body. The word 'chariot' is merely a 'label' to describe the various parts assembled together.  
  
Similarly, the 'self' is merely a label which comprises a collection of atoms and mental actions that are impermanent, changing, and dependent on particular circumstances. King Milinda asked if the person in one life is the same person in the next life, or are they two totally different persons? Nagasena's answer was that the two are not exactly the same, nor are they different. A person in the next life is connected to his previous life as both are linked to the karma. A person consists of many circumstances - each succeeding each other. The flame that flickers at the end of the night is not the same as the flame at the beginning of the night - but the flame is a result of the lighting.  
  
Damien Keown - 'The Buddha said he could find no evidence for the existence of the soul.'  
Michael Pye - 'The Buddha taught that there is no such thing as a soul.'

**Questions**

* 1. What are the contents, message and purpose of the dialogue between Milinda and Nagasena?
* 2. How does the concept of anatta differ with other religions?
* 3. What are the problems that arise with the concept of anatta?
* 4. Does the concept of anatta make sense?

**Keywords**

1. Anatta - non-self. One of the three marks of existence.
2. Atman - the Hindu's belief in an eternal soul.
3. Five Skandhas - A person is made of a combination of powers/energies. Five things that make up a person.
4. Karma - The term literally means 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.

**Karma and Samsara**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha rejected the concept that the soul could move on to another life.
* Buddhists believe that one life is caused by another.
* What is transferred from birth to birth are the 'effects of actions' of the previous life, namely the power of karma.
* The name given to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth is samsara.

**Text**

One thing that is taught within Buddhism is that everything changes. Because of this, things can be changed for the better. There is evidence of this all around us, e.g. in nature a seed changes as it grows into a flower. We can improve the way we behave and think. By acting righteously now, we create our own happiness for the future. Things can change because of the law of 'karma'.  
  
Like the Hindu religion, Buddhism teaches that individuals go through many lives. The Buddha rejected the concept that the soul could move on to another life, but, rather, that a person's actions - karma - affect the next life. According to the Hindu, the soul (atman) is sent by the law of karma to the next life. Hindus believe in reincarnation (becoming flesh), i.e., after death, the individual is born again in another body.  
  
Buddhists believe that one life is caused by another. Imagine two candles - the flame of one candle can light the flame of the other candle. There are two different flames, but the flame of the second candle exists because of the first flame. The Buddha taught that the cycle of rebirth worked in the same way - one life leads into the next. In the Jataka tales (fables in the Pali Canon scripture), the rebirths of the Buddha are described - he was reborn as a bird, a monkey, an elephant and other things. What is transferred from birth to birth are the 'effects of actions' of the previous life, namely the power of karma. The name given to the cycle of birth, death and rebirth is samsara. The samsara cycle is a continuous process.  
  
Klostermaier - 'Samsara, the endless cycle of birth, old age and death is a necessity; a fact which no one can change.'

**Questions**

* 1. What are the different concepts of life after death?
* 2. What is the meaning of the term karma?
* 3. Does every action have a consequence?
* 4. Why is it important to understand karma and samsara within Buddhism?
* 5. How does the Buddhist explain the relationship between one life and the next?

**Keywords**

1. Karma - The term literally means 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.
2. Samsara - The cycle of existence; birth, death and rebirth.

**Karma and Samsara (2)**

**Bullets**

* Buddhists believe that every action decides what kind of life will be had in the future - a better life or a worse life.
* Positive actions have positive consequences, and negative actions have negative consequences.
* Every life has a cause and effect.

**Text**

Remember, Buddhists do not believe that the soul lives on. Buddhists believe that every action decides what kind of life will be had in the future - a better life or a worse life. The name given to these actions is karma. According to the law of karma, actions have consequences. Living a good life means a better life in the next one. Living a bad life leads to a worse life in the next one. In choosing how we act now, we are creating our own future happiness. Positive actions have positive consequences, and negative actions have negative consequences.  
  
Every life has a cause and effect, which is the meaning of the teaching of pratitya samutpada (the Tibetan Wheel of Life). The purpose of the wheel is to show how things exist, and connect with each other. Everything we do, say or think can affect others around us. It is possible to change things due to the law of karma, and, certainly, it is possible to change ourselves, and the world around us, for the better.

**Questions**

* 1. Does every action have a consequence?
* 2. Why is it important to understand karma and samsara within Buddhism?
* 3. How does the Buddhist explain the relationship between one life and the next?

**Keywords**

1. Karma - The term literally means 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.
2. Samsara - The cycle of existence; birth, death and rebirth.

**Pratitya samutpada**

**Bullets**

* The term pratitya samutpada means interdependent origination.
* Every life has a cause and effect.
* The wheel shows the reality of life in the world of samsara.
* It explains the origin of pain and evil.

**Text**

THE TEACHING OF PRATITYA SAMUTPADA - THE CYCLE OF CAUSATION  
  
The term pratitya samutpada means interdependent origination. Every life has a cause and effect, and this is the meaning of the teaching of pratitya samutpada (the Tibetan Wheel of Life). The purpose of the wheel is to show how things exist, and connect with each other. Everything we do, say or think can affect others around us. It is possible to change things due to the law of karma, and, certainly, it is possible to change ourselves, and the world around us, for the better. The Buddha said that one of the things that cause suffering is craving. People craving because of their ignorance of the reality of life. This causes people to look for happiness in the wrong places, and as a result, leads them to suffer.  
  
A Wheel of Life diagram is very familiar within Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism. The wheel shows the reality of life in the world of samsara. The wheel is held by a three-eyed master, namely Yama, the Lord of Death. Yama has control over those who live within the samsara cycle. He is the Lord of Death as we all face death. The wheel could be considered as a mirror. Yama holds up the mirror to each one of us, and in it, we recognize and understand our own reflection. Only by understanding the Dharma can we turn our misconceptions into knowledge.  
This is the teaching that states that the cycle of twelve stages creates the cycle of existence.  
  
It seeks to explain the origin of pain and evil. The last stage leads naturally to the first stage. It is not easy to understand the teaching as Ananda, one of the Buddha's favourite disciples, realised.  
  
The twelve stages are displayed in the outer wheel, by a series of illustrations. These scenes show how human beings move from one kingdom to the next. They also show how ignorance leads to suffering.  
  
The twelve scenes are:  
  
1. Blind man - ignorance.  
2. Potter - action (karma) or formation.  
3. Monkey gathering fruit - consciousness.  
4. Moving boat - body and mind.  
5. Six-windowed house - the six senses.  
6. Two lovers - contact.  
7. Man with an arrow in his eye - feeling.  
8. Man drinking - thirst / craving.  
9. Man gathering fruit - attachment.  
10. Pregnant woman - becoming.  
11. Woman giving birth - rebirth.  
12. Man carrying a dead person to be cremated - old age and death.

**Questions**

* 1. What is pratitya samutpada?
* 2. Who is Yama?
* 3. What are the twelve stages and their symbolism?

**Keywords**

1. Pratitya samutpada - interdependent origination.
2. Yama, the Lord of Death. Yama has control over those who live within the samsara cycle. He is the Lord of Death as we all face death.
3. Dharma - The literal meaning is 'teaching' or the way of truth. One of the three refuges.

**Pratitya samutpada (2)**

**Bullets**

* There are six realms of rebirth, seen in the wheel of life.
* The six realms are gods/heaven, jealous gods, animals, hell, hungry ghosts, and humans.
* No realm is permanent - Nirvana is the only permanent state.
* The six realms represent past and future rebirth as well as the state of mind that decides from one life to the next.

**Text**

THE SIX REALMS  
  
The next cycle shows the six realms of rebirth. The three realms in the bottom half were considered unlucky. The system is similar to the Christian concept of hell, purgatory, earth and heaven. The Buddhist 'heaven' is divided into 26 levels. These levels, together with the 5 other realms, make up a total of 31 levels. Think of an office block comprising 31 floors. At the bottom is hell. No realm is permanent - Nirvana is the only permanent state.  
  
THE GODS / HEAVEN  
This realm means that one will not return to the cycle - being close to attaining enlightenment. The samsara cycle has come to an end. A place of pleasure and luxury.  
  
JEALOUS GODS  
A realm of warlike demons who are intent on conquering others and conflict, fighting to get what they want. They are never complete as they lust for entrance to the highest realm.  
  
BEASTS  
No-one wants to be reborn as animal - animals are eaten by others. No consciousness, only ignorance. The animals' aim is to search for food and kill other animals.  
  
HELL  
People suffer due to the evil, negative actions perpetrated in a previous life. This is a temporary state, full of pain and fear.  
  
HUNGRY GHOSTS  
These are unhappy ghosts - former human beings who have developed attachment. The hungry ghosts continually want something. The ghosts are portrayed with big bellies, thin necks and small mouths to symbolize appetite. They are never satisfied or fulfilled. They lust for entrance to the highest realm.  
  
HUMANS  
This is the goal, but one that is difficult to reach. Human existence reminds one of the reality of life as in the four signs seen by the Buddha - old age, illness, death and the answer to life's problems. Here, people drink and eat, give birth and grow old.  
  
The six realms represent past and future rebirth as well as the state of mind that decides from one life to the next. No realm is permanent. Nirvana is the only permanent state.

**Questions**

* 1. What are the six realms?
* 2. What is the symbolism of the six realms?

**Keywords**

1. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment; the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.

**Pratitya samutpada (3)**

**Bullets**

* The good acts are sure to bear fruit, while bad acts will cause bad effects.
* The cockerel represents greed, the snake represents hate, and the pig represents ignorance. These three are called the three fires or poisons.

**Text**

The next cycle shows a black and white section. The white side portrays good karma, that is, good acts, and the black side portrays bad karma. The good acts are sure to bear fruit, while bad acts will cause bad effects.  
  
THE THREE FIRES  
  
In the centre of the wheel are three animals. The cockerel represents greed, the snake represents hate, and the pig represents ignorance. These three are called the three fires or poisons. These three keep the samsara cycle turning.  
  
THE IMPORTANCE OF PATICCA SAMUPPADA  
  
\* The cycle of causation - how effects derive/follow from causes.  
\* According to the Buddha, everything derives as a result of something that has happened previously.  
\* Material and mental happenings have causes.  
\* The cycle of causation teaches how the eightfold path offers a way to attain relief from suffering.  
\* The five skandhas are always changing.  
\* People's thoughts and actions create results. These results cause people to be reborn in another body.  
\* People and objects are dependent on each other.  
\* The source of evil is explained.  
\* It shows the stages in life in order to attain Nirvana.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word karma?
* 2. What do the three fires represent?
* 3. What is the purpose of the wheel?
* 4. Is the wheel a useful diagram to represent Paticca samuppada?

**Keywords**

1. Pratitya samutpada - codependent arising.
2. Karma - The literal meaning of the term is 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.
3. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.
4. The three fires - The three, namely desire, ignorance and hate, cause dukkha and therefore are obstacles on the path to enlightenment.

**The Four Noble Truths**

**Bullets**

* The Four Noble Truths may be compared to a disease.
* The only life that gave the Buddha peace and enlightenment was a life of moderation - the middle path.

**Text**

This is the basis of all the Buddha's teachings. This was the content of his first sermon in the Deer Park. Some believe that the doctrine is a pessimistic one because it states that life equals suffering. The Buddha's main theme was to talk of morality, of giving and of life. The Buddha taught of karma and rebirth, and how one could prepare for a better rebirth by living a moral and responsible life, by not seeking happiness in material things that do not last, but, rather, by being kind to others always.  
  
The Four Noble Truths may be compared to a disease.  
  
1. The doctor diagnoses the disease - explains the ailment;  
2. The doctor identifies the cause of the disease;  
3. Gives the good news that something can be done about it;  
4. Gives the patient medication to recover and get rid of the disease.  
  
The Buddha started his sermon by recounting his experience of living a hedonistic life (living as he pleased in the palace - satisfying every desire); and of living a life of total self-denial. Both ways of life were unsatisfactory - the only life that afforded him peace and enlightenment was a life of moderation - the middle path.

**Questions**

* 1. Why do some believe that the four noble truths are a pessimistic doctrine?
* 2. In what way can the four noble truths be compared to a disease?

**Keywords**

1. Karma - The literal meaning of the term is 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.

**The First Truth - Dukkha**

**Bullets**

* Truth one - dukkha - dissatisfaction.
* Dukkha - Obvious suffering; suffering in unhappy situations due to change - anicca; general dissatisfaction with life.
* Life is nothing but suffering.
* The Buddhist's only hope of becoming free of the captivity of karma is to recognize that dukkha is a part of every person's life.

**Text**

This states that something is wrong with life. Dukkha is the word for dissatisfaction.  
  
According to Buddhists, there are different kinds of dukkha, namely:  
  
\* Obvious suffering - illness, pain, war, hunger.  
\* Suffering in unhappy situations due to change - anicca. Although life contains happy elements, these cause suffering because they do not last. Pleasant experiences come to an end, and there is suffering. For example, if Mary and John are in a relationship, but John changes as he grows older, one of them may feel discontented in the relationship.  
\* General dissatisfaction with life rather than any specific problem.  
Life is nothing but suffering. Life is dukkha throughout. Birth is pain, old age is pain, and death is pain. If the Buddhist is to have any hope of becoming free of the captivity of karma, he has to recognize that dukkha is a part of every person's life.  
Central to understanding this truth is the realisation that a person consists of nothing more than the five skandhas, and that these five are constantly changing.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word dukkha?
* 2. Can you think of examples of dukkha?
* 3. Is the doctrine of dukkha too extreme?
* 4. How can dukkha help people to feel less attachment?

**Keywords**

1. Dukkha - Dissatisfaction. One of the three marks of existence and the first of the Four Noble Truths.
2. Anicca - change / impermanence. One of the three marks of existence.
3. Five Skandhas - A person is made of a combination of powers/energies. Five things make up a person.
4. Karma - The literal meaning of the term is 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.

**The Second Truth - Samudaya (The Cause of Dukkha)**

**Bullets**

* Truth 2 - Discovery of what causes dukkha.
* The Buddha's answer is that suffering is caused by craving (tanha).
* Craving keeps a person locked in the grip of karma.
* The causes of suffering are seen clearly in the Tibetan Wheel of Life - Pratitya Samutpada.

**Text**

The discovery of what causes dukkha. The Buddha's answer is that suffering is caused by craving (tanha). The Buddha maintains that our existence on earth derives from selfish lust. For example, drug addiction brings suffering; the individual can never be sated or satisfied, but still, he craves for more. He must break free of the chain of craving drugs in order to be released from the dependency.  
  
This shows the effect of karma. Craving keeps a person locked in the grip of karma. The recognition of a cause for suffering is important in the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha was unequivocal, when all factors that cause suffering are removed, suffering will cease. The causes of suffering are seen clearly in the Tibetan Wheel of Life - Pratitya Samutpada. The twelve factors in the wheel's outer circle show clearly the cause of suffering.

**Questions**

* 1. What causes dukkha according to the Buddha?
* 2. What is the meaning of the word tanha?
* 3. Can you think of examples of craving in the world today?
* 4. Why does craving cause dukkha?

**Keywords**

1. Tanha - Craving, clinging, thirst.
2. Karma - The literal meaning of the term is 'action'.
3. Karma is what forms the personality.
4. Pratitya samuppada - codependent arising.

**The Third Truth - Nirodha (The Cessation of Dukkha)**

**Bullets**

* The third noble truth is nirodha, namely the cessation of dukkha.
* Dukkha ceases when people no longer crave.
* Nirodha extinguishes craving (tanha), which represents the eradication of attachment.

**Text**

Having understood what causes dukkha, we have to try and eradicate the cause. What the Buddha says is that there is a way for everyone to do this because he himself has done it. Nirodha means control. Dukkha ceases when people no longer crave. So, people have to keep control of their craving. Nirodha extinguishes craving (tanha), which represents the eradication of attachment. This means a life without craving or suffering, and ultimately, freedom from the cycle of samsara, and attainment of Nirvana. Every man must do this for himself.

**Questions**

* 1. What causes dukkha?
* 2. When does dukkha cease?

**Keywords**

1. Nirodha - Control.
2. Dukkha - Dissatisfaction. One of the three marks of existence and the first of the Four Noble Truths.
3. Tanha - Craving, clinging, thirst.
4. Samsara - The cycle of existence; birth, death and rebirth.
5. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.

**The Fourth Truth - Magga (The Eightfold Path)**

**Bullets**

* The fourth noble truth is magga, namely the eightfold / middle path.
* Man's only hope of final salvation is to follow the middle path.

**Text**

The final part is to apply the medication in order to be cured. After experiencing a life of luxury and greed, as well as life as an ascetic, the Buddha realized that neither way was satisfactory. So he set about laying another path - the middle path between the two lives he had sought. By living according to the middle path, one can keep away from desire, and live a balanced life between self-gratification (e.g. the Buddha's life in the palace) and self-denial (e.g. the Buddha's life as an ascetic). Man's only hope of final salvation is to follow the middle path. This includes the eightfold path. This is the core of the Buddha's teachings. In order to explain the dharma - what he had discovered - the Buddha drew a picture of a wheel on the floor. Onto the wheel, he added eight spokes.  
  
The purpose of the eight spokes was that each had to work together in order for the wheel to turn effectively. The Buddhist cannot pick and choose; all eight must be practised together.  
  
The eight aspects of the path are:  
  
Right effort  
Right mindfulness  
Right meditation  
Right behaviour  
Right livelihood  
Right speech  
Right understanding  
Right thoughts

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the Middle Path?
* 2. What are the eight aspects of the Eightfold Path?

**Keywords**

1. Magga - The path.

**The Eightfold Path - Meditation / Samadhi**

**Bullets**

* Right effort - To encourage good thoughts and get rid of bad thoughts.
* Right mindfulness - To foster self-awareness.
* Right meditation - Right contemplation and discipline of the mind.

**Text**

Right effort - To encourage good thoughts and get rid of bad thoughts. To attain Nirvana, we have to depend on our personal efforts. We must strive continually in life and follow a correct example.  
  
Right mindfulness - To foster self-awareness. Correct care means awareness of four areas - the actions of the body, the actions of the mind, feelings/thoughts, and the awakening and control of ideas and feelings. To improve our mental development, we can meditate. Buddhists also bear in mind the rules.  
  
Right meditation - Right contemplation and discipline of the mind to shut out all outside interference. Fostering the art of meditation. Correct concentration is vital in meditation as a means of mental discipline and control.  
  
Meditation is of assistance to the Buddhist on his path to Nirvana. The meaning of Nirvana is 'blowing out' - blowing out hate, ignorance and selfishness, thus bringing an end to suffering.

**Questions**

* 1. What is meditation?
* 2. What aspects of the Path show meditation?

**Keywords**

1. Samadhi - Meditation.
2. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.

**The Eightfold Path - Morality / Sila**

**Bullets**

* Right behaviour - Adherence to the precepts of Buddhism.
* Right livelihood - Suitable work.
* Right speech - Speak carefully and with purity in order to show control and discipline.

**Text**

Right behaviour - Avoid murder, theft and sexual misconduct. Show respect to others, including animals. Many Buddhists are vegetarians. This way shows correct moral behaviour. The karma (actions) must be correct ones in order to develop and generate better karma. The Buddha said clearly that the intention behind an action is what is important.  
  
Right livelihood - Suitable work. Any job that causes harm to others is incorrect because suffering thrives, e.g. do not become a soldier, butcher, deal in arms, tobacco, alcohol, hunting; nothing that will prevent correct behaviour.  
  
Right speech - Consider the feelings of others, do not lie, do not swear, do not speak harshly to others, talk constructively with others, avoid telling tales about others. People should choose their words carefully in order to show control and discipline.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word morality?
* 2. What aspects of the Path display morality?

**Keywords**

1. Sila - Morality.

**The Eightfold Path - Wisdom / Panna**

**Bullets**

* Right understanding - A correct understanding of life, awareness of the three marks of existence.
* Right thoughts - Thinking good not bad things - being thoughtful.

**Text**

Right understanding - A correct understanding of life, awareness of the three marks of existence. Having the right attitude, being positive about oneself and others. Viewing the world without prejudice. The outside world is worthless because everything changes.  
  
Right thoughts - Thinking good not bad things. According to the Dhammapada (a collection of the Buddha's teachings), people are the result of their thoughts. Consequently, only by changing our thoughts can we change ourselves. Correct thinking, or view, suggests improving your life. We must care for others and follow the dharma.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word wisdom?
* 2. What aspects of the path display wisdom?
* 3. What is the role and importance of the Eightfold Path within Buddhism?
* 4. Is the Eightfold Path suitable in order to live a good life today?

**Keywords**

1. Panna - Wisdom.
2. Dhammapada - a collection of the Buddha's teachings.
3. Dharma - The literal meaning of the term is 'teachings' or the way of truth. One of the three refuges/jewels.

**Nirvana**

**Bullets**

* A state of mind where there is no discontent - no hate, ignorance, selfishness or suffering.
* Buddhists do not believe that it is possible to describe Nirvana - it is beyond language, it is like describing colours to a blind person.
* Nirvana is something to be experienced by the individual.
* It means that a person is released from the samsara cycle.
* If a Buddhist achieves perfect enlightenment, that is tantamount to attaining Nirvana.

**Text**

A state of mind where there is no discontent - no hate, ignorance, selfishness or suffering. It can be attained by following the dharma.  
  
There are two phases of Nirvana:  
  
1. When the mind and heart have attained Nirvana but the body still exists;  
2. After death.  
  
Nirvana is difficult to define and describe, as people cannot convey the experience of being in Nirvana. Indeed, Buddhists do not believe that it is possible to describe Nirvana - it is beyond language, it is like describing colours to a blind person.  
Nirvana is something to be experienced by the individual.  
  
Nirvana can mean 'extinguishing / going out', as in extinguishing the flames of hate, ignorance and selfishness. Similarly, the flame of a candle goes out when there is no more wax in it. This means that a person is released from the samsara cycle. If a Buddhist achieves perfect enlightenment, that is tantamount to attaining Nirvana. When the Buddha went to Bodhgaya and attained his enlightenment, he also went to Nirvana - a place of freedom and peace. Every Buddhist's aim is to reach Nirvana. Neither the Buddha nor his followers said what happens thereafter.  
  
Keown - ' Nirvana is a fusion of virtue and wisdom.'

**Questions**

* 1. What is Nirvana?
* 2. What release does Nirvana offer from the three fires?
* 3. What happens to suffering in Nirvana?
* 4. How important is the Buddhist belief in Nirvana in order to live a life of goodness in this world?

**Keywords**

1. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.
2. Dharma - The term's literal meaning is 'teaching' or the way of truth. One of the three refuges / jewels.
3. Samsara - The cycle of existence; birth, death and rebirth.

**Sangha (1)**

**Bullets**

* The word Sangha = assembly or association.
* Sangha = monks + nuns or monks + nuns + lay persons.
* Traced back to the period of the Buddha.
* Desire to share experiences and for followers to understand the Dharma.
* Responsible for spreading the Buddha's message and teachings.

**Text**

The word Sangha derives from Pali or Sanskrit and means assembly or community. Use of the word Sangha refers to one of two things. First, it can refer to the Monastic Sangha of ordained monks (bhikkhu) and nuns (bhikkhuni), and second, it can refer to the whole Buddhist community including the lay persons who have adopted the 5 precepts.  
  
The Sangha can be traced back to the time of the Buddha in a way. He had attracted many followers after his enlightenment and he busily preached and shared his teaching. One thing that is certain is that the Buddha's enlightenment was not something for himself only; he wanted to share his experiences and he believed that if no-one understood the Dharma after him, his enlightenment would have had no purpose. So, through the establishment of the Sangha, his followers, others were able to benefit in all parts of the world.  
  
Sangha members were responsible not only for disseminating the Buddha's message but also for safeguarding that message during his lifetime, and for a long time after his death. Through the Sangha it is possible to attain the dharma and to receive support on their path towards Nirvana.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word Sangha?
* 2. What is the derivation of the Sangha?
* 3. Who is part of the Sangha?
* 4. Identify 2 main purposes of the Sangha (so far).

**Keywords**

1. Sangha - community / assembly.
2. Pali / Sanskrit - Ancient languages of India.
3. Bhikkhu - Ordained monk.
4. Bhikkhuni - Ordained nun.
5. Lay persons - people who have accepted the first 5 precepts, without being ordained.
6. Dharma - the teaching of the Buddha.
7. Nirvana - the end of dukkha... a state of mind.

**Sangha (2) - 3 Jewels/3 Refuges**

**Bullets**

* 3 Jewels - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
* Cannot exist without each other
* Buddha = no religion without him
* Dharma = guidelines on how to gain enlightenment including the Buddha's teachings
* Sangha = responsible for looking after and spreading the teachings. An example to others.

**Text**

Every religion contains elements that are essential to it, acting as an anchor or pillar. Similarly, Buddhism has 3 Jewels or Refuges which are each equally important. Without one, the others would not exist and so all three can be seen to be totally codependent.  
  
Buddhists turn to the 3 Jewels for Refuge: a safe place, somewhere to receive support and guidelines. Taking Refuge is a way of recognizing that individuals need help and direction and is a recognition of a commitment to follow the Buddhist way.  
  
The 3 Jewels are:-   
1. Buddha  
2. Dharma  
3. Sangha  
  
Obviously the Buddha is important: the enlightened one. Without him, Buddhism would not exist, and neither would the Dharma. Without the Dharma, we would not know the truth. The Dharma offers guidelines on how to achieve enlightenment, outlines the truths, educates and is a means of directly contacting the Buddha himself. As the Buddha said:  
  
"He who sees the dharma sees me, he who sees me sees the dharma."  
  
The Sangha is just as important as the Buddha and the dharma. After the Buddha's death, there was no specific successor, and therefore the responsibility of keeping, looking after and spreading the teachings fell upon the Sangha's shoulders. The Sangha contributes to the practice of the teachings, and being an example to others.  
  
When Buddhists refer to "taking refuge", we gain an understanding of the relevance of the Buddha, dharma and Sangha to them. The 3 Jewels are chanted three times as a way of emphasizing the importance of a clear mind, and rejecting the world's luxuries and material things.

**Questions**

* 1. What are the 3 Jewels / Refuges?
* 2. What is the meaning of the term refuge?
* 3. Which of the 3 is the most important in your opinion? Explain your choice.
* 4. Which is the least important in your opinion? Explain your choice.
* 5. What is the role of each of the 3 Jewels / Refuges?

**Keywords**

1. Refuge - a safe place, like a shelter.
2. Dharma - the teaching of the Buddha.
3. Sangha - community or assembly.

**Sangha (3) - The Rules of the Sangha**

**Bullets**

* Rules / precepts - 227 of the Vinaya Pitaka
* Precepts involving behaviour towards others.
* Lay people follow 5 precepts.
* Sangha members follow the 10 Precepts.
* The Precepts are a way of trying to improve as an individual... good karma ... Nirvana.

**Text**

The characteristic feature within a monastic Sangha is adherence to the Vinaya (pitaka) which is a lengthy series of rules of conduct and a code of discipline. There are about 227 rules that they try to follow covering not only their personal behaviour but also their treatment of others.  
  
Members of the Sangha, whether they be monks, nuns or lay people, follow 5 precepts on how to live, which are firm guidelines on behaviour.  
  
The five Precepts are:  
  
1) To abstain from doing harm - not to kill, cause bodily harm or cause emotional / mental harm. Right living.  
  
2) To abstain from taking what has not been given - not to steal.  
  
3) To abstain from abusing sexual senses - not to be tempted to enter a forbidden relationship, not to sexually abuse someone.  
  
4) To abstain from misusing words - not to tell untruths, not to mislead, not to intentionally misinterpret.  
  
5) To abstain from taking any substance that clouds the mind - not to take alcohol or drugs. A person must have a clear mind to be able to see the truths of life.  
  
Monks and nuns follow 5 additional Precepts, namely:-  
  
6) To abstain from eating after midday.  
  
7) To abstain from recreation such as dancing or singing.  
  
8) To abstain from using fragrances or decorations.  
  
9) To abstain from sleeping in a comfortable or luxurious bed.  
  
10) To abstain from receiving or dealing in gold or silver.

**Questions**

* 1. How many Vinaya rules do the Sangha adhere to?
* 2. What are the 5 Precepts that lay people follow?
* 3. What are the 10 Precepts that Sangha members follow?
* 4. What is the purpose of the precepts ?
* 5. Are these precepts good and relevant ones for individuals today? Explain your answer.

**Keywords**

1. Vinaya - part of the Pali scripture. Includes the codes of discipline for Sangha members.
2. monk - an ordained member of the Sangha.
3. nun - an ordained female member of the Sangha.
4. Lay people - unordained Buddhists.
5. stealing - theft.
6. precept - a code / rule that Buddhists try to adhere to. 5 for lay people, 10 for monks and nuns.
7. fragrances - Perfume.

**Sangha (4) - Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis**

**Bullets**

* The monks are called Bhikkhus and the nuns Bhikkhunis.
* The literal meaning of these terms is "Mendicant".
* The monks and nuns rely on the lay community for food, clothes and medicine.
* The Buddha himself created an order for nuns, but they were to obey 8 additional rules.
* They would not refuse meat if it is given them in their bowl.

**Text**

Both males and females can be part of the Sangha, although some traditions find it difficult to accept women as equal to men within the Sangha. It must be borne in mind that the Buddha himself created an order for nuns, but that they were to obey 8 additional rules. These additional rules evidently underlined women's subservience to the monastic order.  
  
The monks are called Bhikkhus and the nuns Bhikkhunis within the Theravada tradition. The literal meaning of these terms is "Mendicant", and the monks / nuns rely on the lay community for food, clothes and medicine. They are not allowed to beg for food, but to accept what is given to them without complaint or thanks. Usually, this is done as a group, walking quietly in the community with their dana bowls. Although they do not agree with eating meat, they would not refuse meat if it is given them in their bowls.

**Questions**

* 1. Are women equal to men within the Sangha?
* 2. What is the role of lay people within a society where a Sangha exists?
* 3. Can you think of contemporary examples where women are discriminated against or are obliged to do more than men within the same institution?

**Keywords**

1. Sangha - a community or assembly of Buddhists.
2. Bhikkhus - Ordained monks.
3. Bhikkhunis - Ordained nuns.
4. Lay persons - Unordained Buddhists.
5. Dana - means "giving". One of the 6 paramitas: positive virtues that they try to nurture = giving, morality, energy, contemplation, wisdom, patience.

**Sangha (5) - Ordination**

**Bullets**

* The Buddha ordained a monk to establish the system.
* 2 possible ceremonies - (1) Ordination of a person as a Samanera (2) Senior ordination to Bhikkhus / Bhikkhunis as full members of the Sangha.
* The individual recites the 3 Jewels and accepts the 10 Precepts.
* 5 members of the Sangha who have been members for more than 10 years have to support the application of the individual seeking ordination.
* During the ordination ceremony, forgiveness is beseeched for all one's sins.
* The 3 Jewels are repeated three times.
* Shaven heads - a sign of departure from the old life, the start of a new life, indicating a change in status.
* Answering 4 questions.
* Receiving a dana bowl, 3 robes, a razor to shave, needle and thread, Umbrella, Light/soft sandals.
* These items are given to them by lay people.
* In Thailand, the ceremony lasts for 2 days rather than 1.
* There is no shame attached to any individual who decides to leave the Sangha.
* Some Theravada communities like to spend time in the Sangha, for self-contemplation, concentration on the Dharma and meditation.
* Monk for 10 years = Thera.
* Monk for 20 years = Mahathera.

**Text**

To be a full monk of the Sangha, an ordination ceremony is necessary, because the Buddha ordained a monk to establish the system.  
  
Nowadays there are 2 possible ceremonies.  
  
(1) Ordination of a person as a Samanera (one who is taught between 8 and 19 years old)  
(2) Senior ordination for Bhikkhus / Bhikkhunis as full members of the Sangha (at least 20 years old).  
  
For the first, the individual has to recite the 3 Jewels and accept the 10 Precepts. As a rule, the one who requests ordination has to have a teacher who is ready to teach and advise him. In addition, 5 members of the Sangha who have been members for more than 10 years would have to support the application of the individual seeking ordination.  
  
The ceremony is held openly within the monastery and there is an opportunity to voice any objection there and then.  
  
During the ordination ceremony, forgiveness is beseeched for all one's sins before the 3 Jewels are repeated three times. Also the applicant must recite the ten Precepts after his tutor / teacher.  
  
To receive full ordination, the process is extended. If the ceremony is a full ordination, there are further features. The individual receives the dana bowl, and his name is revealed to him.  
  
\*Characteristics of full ordination\*  
  
\*Shaven heads - This is a sign of departure from the old life, indicating a change in status. The Buddha cut his hair when he left the Palace in an attempt to start a new life, leaving the old life behind and in preparation for the new life.  
  
\*Answering 4 questions - Are you free of disease?  
- Do you have your parents' consent?  
- Are you free of debt?  
- Are you free of commitment?  
\*Receiving a dana bowl (alms bowl)  
\*Receiving 3 robes  
\*Receiving a razor to shave  
\*Needle and thread to repair robes if necessary  
\*Umbrella  
\*Light/soft sandals  
  
It must be noted that they are not allowed to own more than eight items, and that only some Buddhists receive the last 2 examples. Usually, these items are given to them by lay people.  
  
The robe will be yellow or saffron in colour, representing immortality. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the colour of the robe varies from one tradition to another:  
Tibetan monks = Maroon robes  
Zen monks (Japan) = Black robes  
Theravada monks = Saffron robes.  
  
In Thailand, the ceremony lasts for 2 days rather than 1, and they tended to last for a week in the monasteries.  
  
What is interesting is that there is no shame attached to any individual who decides to leave the Sangha. Some Theravada communities like to spend time in the Sangha, where they can have a period of self-contemplation, concentration on the Dharma and meditation, as well as following the monks' example. Some tend to do this as a way of escaping the modern world, to remind themselves of life's priorities and to put things in perspective.  
  
If an individual has been a monk for 10 years, the name used is Thera, and for a monk of 20 years' standing, the name is Mahathera.

**Questions**

* 1. Explain the meaning of the monastic precepts.
* 2. Explain the ordination ceremony for full membership of the Sangha.
* 3. How does renouncing material things help Buddhists attain Nirvana?
* 4. "Monastic life shuns the reality of the world". Assess this opinion.
* 5. Explain the different kinds of ordination ceremonies.
* 6. What is the purpose of shaving their heads?
* 7. Why are the 4 questions asked before a Buddhist is allowed to join the Sangha?
* 8. Why do some Theravada Buddhists like to attend a Sangha for short periods of time?

**Keywords**

1. Sangha - a community / assembly of Buddhists.
2. Ordination - a ceremony to join the Sangha.
3. 3 Refuges - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.
4. precept - a code / rule that Buddhists try to adhere to. 5 for lay people, 10 for monks and nuns.
5. Dana - means "giving". One of the 6 paramitas: positive virtues that they try to nurture = giving, morality, energy, contemplation, wisdom, patience.
6. Robe - the special, extremely simple dress worn by members of the Sangha
7. Thera - Monk for 10 years
8. Mahathera - Monk for 20 years

**Sangha (6) - The Monk's Daily Routine**

**Bullets**

* Early awakening - 3/4:00a.m.
* Puja and meditation before breakfast at 7a.m.
* The last meal of the day to be eaten before midday.
* A long period in the afternoon of studying the Dharma.
* An exceedingly long day!

**Text**

The daily routine varies from one tradition to another but there are certain similarities.  
  
\*\*Here is an example of the daily routine for Sri Lankan Monks (Based on a Theravada community in Hertfordshire)\*\*  
  
4:00a.m. - Wake up / get up  
5:00a.m. - Puja and meditation  
7:00a.m. - breakfast and morning meeting  
8:00a.m. - Work and chanting  
10.30a.m. - Receiving and eating the day's main meal. Either go and collect the food, or the lay people bring food to them.  
1:00p.m. - Work (learn and study the Dharma)  
5:00p.m. - Relaxation and conversation  
7.30p.m. - Puja and meditation - A senior member speaks  
10-11.00p.m. - Bed  
  
\* Note that they may not eat after midday. \*

**Questions**

* 1. How does a Monk / nun spend the hours of the day in general?
* 2. Why is emphasis placed on studying the Dharma during the day?
* 3. How do they receive their food?

**Keywords**

1. Puja - "worship" is the literal meaning - showing respect to the Buddha, not a supernatural being!
2. Meditation - one of the Buddhist's main customs - the Buddha achieved enlightenment when he was meditating.
3. Peace and quiet.
4. Chanting - sections of the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings.
5. lay people - Unordained Buddhists.

**Sangha (7) - Expulsion from the Sangha**

**Bullets**

* Monks / nuns can be thrown out of the Sangha if they do not adhere to what has been accepted = Precepts.
* This demonstrates the kind of standards expected of Sangha members, as an example for others to follow.
* They are not to take the precepts lightly if they wish to be members of the Sangha.

**Text**

Monks can be expelled from the Sangha for a number of serious reasons, where they have not adhered to the Precepts they accepted during ordination.  
  
Examples of actions that can lead to expulsion are:-  
  
1. Theft  
2. Lying  
3. Attacking living creatures  
4. Drinking alcohol  
5. Speaking badly of the Buddha / Sangha

**Questions**

* 1. What kind of actions can lead to expulsion?
* 2. Is this fair?
* 3. Is life easy, knowing that mistakes will not be tolerated?

**Keywords**

1. Expulsion - rejection, throwing out.

**Sangha (8) - Festival - 'Sangha Day'**

**Bullets**

* "Sangha Day" is a festival.
* An opportunity for members to confirm their commitment to the traditions, truths and practices.
* It commemorates how approximately 1,250 enlightened monks met in Vihara Veluvana to listen to the Buddha speak.
* They celebrate by chanting, meditating and lighting an oil lamp.

**Text**

"Sangha Day" is a festival that is a celebration of the Sangha as an institution and the community and its members. It provides an opportunity for members to confirm their commitment to the traditions, truths and practices.  
  
It is a day to commemorate how approximately 1,250 enlightened monks met in Vihara Veluvana to listen to the Buddha speak.  
  
They take the opportunity to celebrate the Sangha as a spiritual community, which is usually done by chanting, meditating and lighting an oil lamp. "Sangha Day" is more prevalent amongst Western Buddhists.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the importance of this festival for Buddhists?

**Keywords**

1. Meditation - one of the Buddhist's main customs -the Buddha achieved enlightenment when he was meditating.
2. Peace and quiet.
3. Chanting - sections of the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings.

**Sangha (9) - The Importance of the Sangha**

**Bullets**

* Sangha is important for a number of reasons.
* Disseminating the Buddha's message.
* One of the 3 Jewels/Refuges.
* Teaching the Dharma.
* A moral life.
* Self-discipline.
* Instruction to Buddhists.
* Assistance to lay persons.
* Spiritual guidance.
* An example to others.
* Traceable to the Buddha's time.
* A number exist in the UK and also in Wales, e.g. Powys and Cardiff.

**Text**

The Sangha is considered to be important for a number of reasons:  
  
\* Disseminating the Buddha's message  
\* One of the 3 Jewels/Refuges  
\* Teaching the Dharma  
\* Living a moral life  
\* Practising self-discipline  
\* Being loving and generous towards everyone and everything  
\* Offering instruction to Buddhists  
\* Offering assistance to the lay person  
\* Spiritual guidance  
\* An example to others  
\* Self-denial of material things  
\* A spiritual path  
\* Traceable to the Buddha's time.  
  
As a result, we can appreciate the work and contribution of the Sangha to Buddhism which has survived, developed and strengthened over the centuries. This can be seen today as a number exist in the UK and also in Wales, in Powys and Cardiff.

**Questions**

* 1. Why is the Sangha important within the religion?
* 2. Is the Sangha more important than the other two jewels/refuges? Explain your answer.
* 3. Assess the significance of the Sangha today.

**Keywords**

1. Sangha - Buddhist "Assembly / community". Contains ordained members and lay members.
2. Disseminate - to spread and proclaim.
3. 3 Jewels/Refuges - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.
4. Dharma - the Buddha's teachings.
5. lay people - Unordained Buddhists.
6. Self-denial - doing without, abstaining.

**The 3 Jewels / The 3 Refuges**

**Bullets**

* A 'Jewel' is something incredibly valuable.
* A 'refuge' means somewhere safe, a place to develop, a place to receive guidance and support, something in which you can trust.
* Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.
* Taking refuge means understanding more about the truths of life.
* Some Buddhists such as the Friends of the British Buddhist Order describe the three refuges as three jewels.

**Text**

The word 'refuge' means somewhere safe, a place to develop, a place to receive guidance and support, something in which you can trust. People take refuge in their search for happiness, e.g. in a best friend, in work, in their interests, in money. When with the Refuge, one feels secure. According to Buddhists, taking refuge in some of these is a bad thing because these things change, or can let you down. It is not possible for any of them to save you from suffering.  
  
Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings), and his followers, the Sangha. Taking refuge in these things does not mean escaping from life's problems, but rather, taking refuge in life, by trying to understand more about the truths of life.  
  
Buddhists practise the Buddha's teachings by adhering to the three refuges and the commandments. They recite these before a monk. The three refuges are recited three times every day. A Buddhist must be aware of the doctrine of Buddhism before deciding to take refuge. Taking refuge means that one has chosen to live in accordance with the Buddhist path. When a person takes the three refuges and the precepts at the shrine - they offer three things - a candle, flowers and incense. When the person promises these three things, they promise to follow the Buddha's example, to follow and improve their understanding of the dharma, to practise meditation and to support others following the same path. Some Buddhists such as the Friends of the British Buddhist Order describe the Three Refuges as three jewels. This term suggests that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are very valuable objects for Buddhists. Reciting the three jewels is described as taking refuge. It is Theravada Buddhists who adhere to the Three Refuges although some Mahayana Buddhists adhere to them too.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the meaning of the word 'refuge'?
* 2. What are the Three Refuges?
* 3. What is the meaning of the phrase 'three jewels'?

**Keywords**

1. The Three Refuges - the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.
2. The three jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

**Puja (1) - Introduction**

**Bullets**

* The literal meaning of Puja is "worship".
* A way of showing respect to the Buddha.
* Siddharta Gautama is the focus of worship/puja.
* There are no rules regarding worship.
* There are differences between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism.
* It is an entirely natural expression of respect and of thanksgiving.
* A way to celebrate the Buddha's life, give thanks for his teachings, have the opportunity to confess and to wish others well.
* Some Buddhists use a shrine in the home and others attend the temple.

**Text**

The literal meaning of Puja is "worship" and for the Buddhist that means showing respect to the Buddha, the founder of the religion. Buddhists, of course, do not believe in God or any other form of supernatural being. Siddharta Gautama is the focus of any worship as he is the founder of the religion and it is his teachings that are followed to this day.  
  
There are no rules regarding how to worship or how frequently. That depends entirely on the individual and on what sect of Buddhism he belongs to. Certainly there are differences, as might be expected, between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism, but the reasons for worshipping are the same. Puja is a way of including the emotions when following the Buddhist path, and is thus an entirely natural expression of respect and of thanksgiving. Emotions are important because, through puja, the individual can celebrate the Buddha's life, give thanks for his teachings, have the opportunity to confess and to wish others well. Very simply, puja provides the opportunity to show a recognition of value by means of devotion and worship. Some Buddhists use a shrine in the home and others attend the temple; they may worship every day or during special festivals only.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the literal meaning of the word Puja?
* 2. What is puja within Buddhism?
* 3. Where do Buddhists worship?

**Keywords**

1. Puja - Buddhist worship.
2. Siddharta Gautama - the historical Buddha.
3. Supernatural - beyond the laws of nature.
4. Founder - the person who started something.
5. Theravada Buddhism - "The way of the Fathers", the traditional sect of Buddhism.
6. Mahayana - "The Great Vehicle". A sect of Buddhism.
7. Confession - Admitting or recognizing.
8. Shrine - holy / sacred place.

**Puja (2) - Theravada Puja**

**Bullets**

* There is a shrine in the Vihara.
* Monks live in the Vihara.
* Puja involves making an offering at a shrine, which includes the following:

(a) Chanting  
(b) Making an offering before the Buddha's statue  
(c) Reciting pieces of scripture  
(d) Listening to readings from the scriptures.

* There is an image or statue of the Buddha in the shrine - there may be numerous different images.
* Images placed above everything else - respect and authority.
* Copies of Sutras near the shrine.
* Flowers, candles and incense are presented as offerings.
* Uposatha = to go and stay in a monastery.
* Bow before the likeness of the Buddha three times.

**Text**

Theravada Buddhists can worship at home or in the temple (Vihara). There is a shrine in the Vihara but some Buddhists have a shrine at home too. It is a matter of personal choice.  
  
Buddhists make offerings at the shrine, be it at home or in the Vihara. Monks live in the Vihara, and lay people can join them from time to time.  
  
Puja involves making an offering at a shrine, which usually includes the following:  
  
(1) Chanting  
(2) Making an offering before the Buddha's statue  
(3) Reciting pieces of scripture  
(4) Listening to readings from the scriptures.  
  
\*What exactly does a shrine contain?\*  
A shrine contains an image or statue of the Buddha (Rupas), which varies from one shrine to the next. There may be numerous different images representing the Buddha at various stages of his life. Theravada statues tend to be of Siddharta Gautama himself. The images are placed above everything else in the room as a sign of respect and of his authority.  
  
Copies of Sutras, parts of the Buddha's teachings, are found near the shrine. These parts were reportedly adopted during the first council after the Buddha's death, and they begin with the sentence "Thus have I heard at one time".  
  
There is also an offering dish, which is used to make offerings as if the Buddha himself were present. Flowers, candles and incense are presented as offerings. Some interpret the flowers as a way of remembering that nothing ever remains the same, that everything changes and that nothing lasts (anicca). The candles are used to remind Buddhists that the Buddha is the light of the world and to represent the hope of attaining enlightenment. Furthermore, incense at the shrine is a means of awakening the mind and senses and reminding them of the importance of the dharma and the need to spread it around the world.  
  
A popular idea is to have a bell at the shrine to let people know that it is time to start meditating.  
  
\*Puja in Theravada countries\*  
  
In traditional Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand, Buddhists go to the Vihara on Uposatha days. The meaning of Uposatha is to go and stay in a monastery. Everyone tries to attend Vihara during the festivals such as "Wesak". Before entering, the shoes must be taken off as a mark of respect, and then they must bow before the likeness of the Buddha three times to remember the 3 Refuges - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

**Questions**

* 1. Explain puja within the Theravada tradition.
* 2. What are Sutras?
* 3. Explain the symbolic meaning of the flowers, candles and incense.
* 4. What is the purpose of the bell at the shrine?
* 5. What are Uposatha and Wesak?

**Keywords**

1. Theravada Buddhists - "The Way of the Fathers", the traditional branch of Buddhism.
2. Vihara - a Monastery (Theravada)
3. make an offering - offer something, e.g. food / water.
4. lay people - Unordained Buddhists.
5. puja - Worship.
6. scriptures - Holy Books.
7. Rupas - A statue of the Buddha.
8. Shakyamuni - another name for the Buddha, wise man.
9. Sutras - parts of the Buddha's teachings that were adopted after the first council following the death of the Buddha.
10. anicca - Nothing is permanent. One of the 3 marks of existence.
11. Uposatha - to go and stay in a monastery.
12. Wesak - a Buddhist Festival.

**Puja (3) - Mahayana Puja**

**Bullets**

* Mahayana Puja is more personal = no congregational worship.
* There are statues of any Buddha or Bodhisattva such as Avolokitesvara or Amida.
* Mahayana Buddhists refer to a multifaceted worship that consists of 7 parts = Bowing / gestures, 7 Offerings, Confession, Feeling of happiness, Questioning, Asking, Sharing good actions.
* Another feature = repetition of precepts.
* Another feature = chanting, e.g. "Om Mani Padme Hum".

**Text**

Mahayana Puja tends to be more personal as they do not usually worship in congregations. Nevertheless, they do have opportunities to get together from time to time.  
  
One of the main differences of a Mahayana shrine as compared to a Theravada shrine is that there are statues of any Buddha or Bodhisattva such as Avolokitesvara or Amida. There will be one Buddha among many because they believe that everyone has the Buddha's nature in them. That is how this group has received the name "great/greatest vehicle", because they believe that a great number can achieve enlightenment as the Buddha's nature is in every one of us.  
  
Mahayana Buddhists refer to a multifaceted worship that consists of 7 parts:-  
  
(1) Bowing / gestures  
These gestures are an act of respect and honour towards the Buddha / Bodhisattvas that are present.  
(2) The 7 Offerings  
The 7 offerings are 2 bowls of water, flowers, perfume, food, candles and incense. These offerings represent the items necessary to sustain life, namely water, food, light, warmth and shelter.  
(3) Confession  
They have the opportunity to confess any action and to ask for assistance and guidance from the Buddha / Bodhisattvas on how to act better and proliferate their good actions.  
(4) Feeling of happiness and joy  
These feelings emerge after confession where there is a strong awareness of the inspiration and example of the Buddha / Bodhisattvas.  
(5) Questioning  
Here, Buddhists ask the Buddha / Bodhisattvas to turn the Dharma wheel, that is, the teachings of the Buddha. This shows their willingness and commitment to learn and to try and follow the way of the Buddha to achieve enlightenment.  
(6) Asking  
The Buddhists ask the Buddha / Bodhisattvas to continue being of assistance to others, demonstrating their unselfishness. They are asked to continue being active and operant in the world.  
(7) Sharing good actions  
Any good action created during puja is transmitted to the good of all humanity. This is an example of the practice of good actions that fulfil the requirement not to be selfish. It is also a way of promoting the precepts they have accepted.  
  
Another feature seen while Buddhists are at the shrine is repetition of the precepts as a means of reminding the individual of the expectations regarding how they should behave and how they should treat others. In addition, Buddhists bow before the various statues, which is a mark of respect. This is seen frequently in Japan where children bow before teachers and parents, once again as a mark of respect.  
  
Finally, Buddhists chant various different things. It may be a part of the Sutras, namely parts of the Buddha's teachings, or parts of the Dharma or a Mantra such as:  
"Om Mani Padme Hum" which is "Hail the Jewel in the Lotus".

**Questions**

* 1. Explain the main features of Mahayana puja.
* 2. Why is the Mahayana section referred to as "The Great/Greatest Vehicle"?
* 3. What do the flowers, candles and incense represent?
* 4. How does Mahayana Puja help Buddhists achieve good karma?
* 5. What is the purpose of Mantra in your opinion?

**Keywords**

1. Mahayana Puja - Buddhist worship within this sect of Buddhism.
2. Bodhisattva - "Enlightened Being" who has postponed entry to Nirvana in order to help others.
3. Avalokitesvara - one of the principal. Bodhisattvas within Mayahana Buddhism - the Bodhisattva of compassion.
4. Amida - a Buddha within "Pure Land" Buddhism.
5. Confession - Admitting or recognizing
6. precepts - codes / rules that Buddhists try to adhere to - 5 for lay people, 10 for monks and nuns.
7. Mantra - A prayer, syllable or phrase

**Puja (4) - Puja in Mahayana countries**

**Bullets**

Japan

* Pure Land - devotion to Buddha Amida - release from the tribulations of life to the "pure land" of the Buddha.
* Zen - Meditation is the principal form of puja.

Tibet

* puja in Tibet - very colourful.
* main focus is the Dalai Lama.
* Tibetan Buddhists refer to the 4 Refuges - The Buddha, The dharma, The Sangha, The Dalai Lama.

**Text**

Japan  
  
Puja is conducted in different ways in the various countries. In Japan, where there are more than 100 different forms of Buddhism, there are quite significant differences.  
  
(1) Pure Land - Pure Land Buddhism is based on devotion to Buddha Amida, where they believe that they will be released from the tribulations of life to the "pure land" of the Buddha.  
(2) Zen - Meditation is the principal form of puja for Zen Buddhists. The mind is trained to concentrate and focus, and to be aware of everything around you and everything they do.  
  
Tibet  
  
Worship (puja) in Tibet is very colourful, where the main focus may be the Dalai Lama.  
  
The Dalai Lama is the leader of the Gelugpa School and members of other schools would not take refuge in him (even though they may regard him as their political leader) - the refuge is on one's own Lama. The belief is that the Dalai Lama, as a senior teacher, will help his followers to achieve enlightenment, as he is a perfect example of spiritual life.  
  
\*Other features of Mahayana puja (Tibet specifically) such as Juzu, mantra, will appear on the next screen.\*

**Questions**

* 1. Explain the features of puja in Japan and Tibet.
* 2. How does Tibetan Puja differ from Japanese Puja?
* 3. "Who is the Dalai Lama?" Do some personal research - 10 bullet points about the Dalai Lama.

**Keywords**

1. Puja - Buddhist worship.
2. Pure land - a sect of Buddhism in Japan.
3. Buddha Amida - the "Pure Land" Buddha in Japan.
4. Zen - a sect of Buddhism in Japan.
5. Dalai Lama - A higher spiritual teacher; one of the 4 Refuges for Tibetan Buddhists.

**Puja (5) - Puja Rituals - Part 1**

**Bullets**

* JUZU - a string of prayer beads, Japan. Aids concentration in worship.
* MANTRAS - prayer, syllable or phrase. Help the mind to concentrate + to show compassion + to show friendship. Inside prayer wheels + on walls + prayer banners/flags.
* PRAYER WHEEL - contains a prayer, pieces of the dharma or a phrase. When the wheel is spun = represents love, kindness and generosity sent out to all corners of the world.
* THANKAS - Pictures of the Buddha - placed on walls = constant reminder to Buddhists of the founder of the religion.
* VAJRAS - Diamond or thunderbolt = representing a flash of enlightenment + wisdom.

**Text**

A number of additional methods not mentioned so far exist within Buddhism. Not everyone uses them but they are used by many Buddhists within Mahayana Buddhism.  
  
(1) JUZU  
The Juzu is a string of prayer beads, used most commonly in Japan. It aids concentration in worship, and some use it to count how many times they have chanted a Mantra.  
  
(2) MANTRAS  
Mantra is a word from the Pali language which means a prayer, syllable or phrase. Their purpose is to help the mind to concentrate by repetition, and they vary from one Buddhist sect to the next. They usually contain the name of an enlightened being, thus reminding the Buddhist of the virtues of an enlightened being constantly by repetition. Some Mantras also help the Buddhist to show compassion, and others to show friendship to everyone. Mantras are written inside prayer wheels, set on walls as a decoration and on prayer banners/flags.  
  
(3) PRAYER WHEEL  
A prayer wheel contains a prayer, pieces of the dharma or a phrase that is written on the inside or sometimes the outside. When the wheel is spun, it represents love, kindness and generosity sent out to all corners of the world. In addition, Buddhists hope that the dharma will spread and be passed from generation to generation. Most of these forms are to be seen in use in Tibet.  
  
(4) THANKAS  
Thankas are pictures of the Buddha that are placed on walls as decoration in Tibet usually. The Thankas are visual, of course, and thus are a constant reminder to Buddhists of the founder of the religion and his teachings, which helps them to learn, concentrate and focus the mind.  
  
(5) VAJRAS AND BELL (GONG)  
The literal meaning of the word Vajra is diamond or thunderbolt. The vajra is like a thunderbolt, representing a flash of enlightenment. The Vajra and bell (gong) together represent wisdom and "Skilful means" that are extremely powerful. Once again, Mahayana Buddhists are the users of these methods of Puja, and specifically so in Tibet.

**Questions**

* 1. What is a Juzu?
* 2. What is the link between mantras, prayer banners and prayer wheels?
* 3. What is the purpose of mantras?

**Keywords**

1. Juzu - prayer beads (Japan).
2. Mantra - prayer, syllable or phrase.
3. Pali - one of the ancient languages of India.
4. Thankas - Pictures of the Buddha.
5. Vajras - Diamond or thunderbolt = representing a flash of enlightenment + wisdom.

**Puja (6) - Puja Rituals - Part 2**

**Bullets**

* MUDRAS - hand gestures (Tibet) representing elements of the Buddha's teachings.
* STUPAS - a monument - houses a relic or remains of a former teacher / the Buddha. 5 sections which represent various elements: earth, water, fire, air, spirit.
* 4 sides of the Stupa

Birth = East  
Enlightenment = South  
Teaching = West  
Death = north

* MANDALA - meaning = "circle". A sacred place, e.g. the place under the Bodhi tree, circular diagrams, colourful patterns that assist meditation.
* PRAYER FLAGS - Mantra written on them. Colourful to behold, used to concentrate and to learn specific sections of the dharma.

**Text**

(6) MUDRAS  
Mudras are hand gestures associated with Mahayana puja. There are very many different gestures representing elements of Buddhist teachings such as teaching, meditating, giving and greeting. These are most evident in Tibet as part of Mahayana puja.  
  
(7) STUPAS  
A Stupa is a monument that usually houses a relic or remains of a former teacher, or even sacred objects. The first Stupa was a structure built specifically to house the remains of Shakyamuni Buddha. In Tibet, the Stupa is used as the shrine room. The Stupa is made up of 5 sections which represent various elements:  
earth - the reality of life  
water - the need for feelings  
fire - heart = happiness and sadness  
air - throat = speech  
spirit - ideas of enlightenment  
  
The Stupa has 4 sides, each representing a period in the Buddha's life:  
  
Birth = East  
Enlightenment = South  
Teaching = West  
Death = north  
  
The custom with the Stupa is to walk around it clockwise, and the term for this in the Pali language is pradaksina.  
  
(8) MANDALA  
The literal meaning of this word is "circle". A mandala can be one of two things. First, it refers to a sacred place like the place under the Bodhi tree where Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment. More obviously, Mandala refers to circular diagrams, colourful patterns that assist meditation.  
  
(9) PRAYER FLAGS  
Prayer flags are used mainly in Tibet, with a Mantra written on them. They are colourful to behold and are used to concentrate and to learn specific sections of the dharma. They are often raised on roadsides or even on mountain sides as decoration.

**Questions**

* 1. What are mudras/stupas/mandala/prayer flags?
* 2. What is the purpose of the different methods of puja?
* 3. Explain some Buddhist ways of worship.
* 4. Can hand gestures affect anything for a Buddhist?

**Keywords**

1. Mudras - hand gestures.
2. Stupa - monument - houses a relic or remains of a former teacher / the Buddha.
3. Shakyamuni Bwdha - another name for the Buddha - Wise Man.
4. pradaksina - the practice of walking around the Stupa.
5. Mandala - sacred place, e.g. the place under the Bodhi tree, circular diagrams, colourful patterns that assist meditation.
6. Bodhi tree - the place where Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment.
7. Prayer flags - Mantra written on them. Decoration

**Puja (7) - The Importance of Puja**

**Bullets**

* Good Karma can be achieved.
* It provides a purpose in life.
* Remember the goal = to achieve enlightenment and attain Nirvana.
* Remember the 3 Jewels/Refuges.
* Concentrate and reflect on life.
* Helps the individual and helps others.
* Emphasis on the spiritual rather than material requirements.
* Creates unity = community, lay people and Sangha get together.
* Remember the teachings = 3 Marks of Existence + 4 Noble Truths.
* Stimulates the senses.

**Text**

Puja is very important within Buddhism and varies widely from country to country and from one tradition to the next. It gives the individual the opportunity to decide how to conduct puja, and how frequently, as there are no rules or expectations. Practising puja is a way of gaining good Karma through the examples already mentioned, such as during Mahayana offerings to share good actions. It offers a purpose in life as the ultimate goal is to achieve enlightenment and attain Nirvana.  
  
Furthermore, puja is important as a remembrance of the 3 Jewels / Refuges, namely the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Puja can help the individual and also help others as they concentrate and reflect on life, which is a way of reminding them of their goal. In the kind of world we inhabit today, puja is important as it emphasizes the spiritual requirements rather than the material requirements. Puja provides opportunities for the community, lay people and Sangha to get together to take pride in and offer thanks for the Buddha and Dharma.  
  
Without a doubt, this creates unity between them and is a unique and effective way of remembering such teachings as the 3 Marks of Existence and the 4 Noble Truths. Many believe that puja stimulates the senses, which is an important element within Buddhism as a part of self-awareness.

**Questions**

* 1. What is the attitude of the various groups towards puja?
* 2. Why is puja important within the religion?

**Keywords**

1. Puja - Buddhist worship.
2. Karma - The literal meaning of the term is 'action'. Karma is what forms the personality.
3. 3 Jewels / Refuges - Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.
4. Dharma - Buddhist Teachings. 1 of the 3 Jewels/Refuges.
5. 3 Marks of existence - dukkha, anicca, anatta.
6. 4 Noble Truths - Dukkha, cause of Dukkha, Cessation of Dukkha, Eightfold Path.

**Meditation (1) - introduction**

**Bullets**

* Bhavana = Pali word for meditation.
* Buddhist meditation uses a number of different techniques as ways of meditation.
* Meditation = develops mindfulness, awareness, concentration, tranquillity and insight and mental discipline.
* Meditation = a vehicle to get rid of craving, ignorance and hatred.
* Meditation represents one of the three divisions of the Eightfold Path, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.
* The Buddha achieved enlightenment whilst meditating, continued meditating after his enlightenment and died in deep meditation.
* Meditation = a necessary element in order to gain enlightenment and attain Nirvana.
* Meditation = something personal and practical to the individual.

**Text**

Bhavana is the Pali word for meditation, a way of cultivating and disciplining the mind. Buddhist meditation encompasses a number of techniques that develop mindfulness, awareness, concentration, tranquillity and insight. Meditation is a means of aiding mental discipline, and a vehicle to get rid of craving, ignorance and hatred. Meditation is considered significant within Buddhism as meditation represents one of the three divisions of the Eightfold Path, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The Eightfold Path offers a person guidance on how to live a good life. The first step is to develop inner discipline and morality, and the second step is meditation. They are developed together.  
  
Another worthy reason in favour of the importance of meditation is the fact that the Buddha achieved enlightenment whilst meditating, he continued meditating after his enlightenment and died in deep meditation. Consequently, meditation is strongly believed to be a necessary element in order to gain enlightenment and attain Nirvana.  
  
You have to experience meditation yourself as it is something personal and practical to the individual. Ideally, every Buddhist should receive guidance from an experienced teacher. Meditation should be practised in a suitable atmosphere in a quiet place. The Buddha's early followers visited a tranquil forest to meditate, but a quiet room is the norm today. It has been suggested that individuals should meditate at the same time every day when they are not hungry, too full or too sleepy. These conditions will be ideal to create a constant mood and atmosphere for meditation, and to transform it as a ritual.  
  
One monk from the 5th century suggested that Buddhists should meditate on different things. If the Buddhist placed too much emphasis on material things, he should meditate on 10 different kinds of dead bodies. To relax and eliminate hatred, the individual should meditate on colours such as red, yellow or white.

**Questions**

* 1. What is Meditation?
* 2. What is the purpose of meditation?
* 3. What is the connection / relationship between meditation and the Eightfold Path?
* 4. What does meditation develop within individuals?
* 5. How did meditation play a role in the life of the Buddha?

**Keywords**

1. Bhavana - a term from the Pali language for meditation.
2. Pali - One of the ancient languages of India
3. craving - wanting, wishing, lusting.
4. Nirvana - 'Extinguishing' or 'blowing out'. The goal of every Buddhist is to attain Nirvana. It can mean enlightenment, the end of hatred, selfishness and ignorance.

**Meditation (2) - different types of meditation**

**Bullets**

* There are many methods of meditation in the Buddhist traditions.
* The 3 most popular techniques within Buddhism = Samatha, Vipassana and Zazen.
* SAMATHA - concentrates on awareness of the body, feelings, the mind and different mental levels (Jhanas). Buddhist can experience physical and mental tranquillity.
* Jhanas - 4 higher states where the spiritual and material do not connect or exist together.
* Samatha meditation leads to peace. Meditation on the 4 foundations:- Metta, Karuna, Mudita, Upekkha.
* VIPASSANA - A specialist technique. Suited to intelligent Buddhists. Tries to concentrate and realize truths such as the 3 Marks of Existence.
* ZAZEN - based on the concept that all beings are already Buddhas, and that Nirvana is present now. Buddhists do not concentrate on the 3 Marks of Existence = do not put emphasis on the Buddha's teachings.

**Text**

There are many methods of meditation in the Buddhist traditions, but we will look for 3 different techniques. It is believed that these 3 techniques are the most popular within Buddhism, namely Samatha, Vipassana and Zazen.  
  
SAMATHA  
  
This technique concentrates on awareness of the body, feelings, the mind and different mental levels (Jhanas). By being aware of the present state of the 5 Skandhas, the Buddhist can experience physical and mental tranquillity. Samatha meditation is usually started by concentrating on breathing (or sometimes on walking). By concentrating entirely on the breathing, the individual trains the mind to ignore anything that comes to confuse it.  
  
The Jhanas are different levels of trance. The goal is to be able to attain the highest level of pure consciousness and then to reach 4 higher states where the spiritual and material do not connect or exist together. That is, the Buddhist is able to recognize and realize such concepts as unlimited awareness. Samatha meditation leads to peace and the emphasis is on meditation on the 4 foundations that are said to lead to rebirth in the Brahma heaven.  
  
1) Metta - Love or goodwill towards enemies  
2) Karuna - Tolerance and compassion towards those who suffer.  
3) Mudita - Joy for others.  
4) Upekkha - The state of peace, and of loving and respecting all living things equally.  
  
VIPASSANA  
  
Vipassana is a specialist technique that is important in order to achieve enlightenment. It tends to be a process most suited to intelligent Buddhists. This type of meditation requires the practitioner to try to concentrate and realize truths such as the 3 Marks of Existence, namely dukkha, anicca and anatta. If successful the Buddhist will stop thinking in terms of "me"; in other words, recognize the nonexistence of the self.  
  
ZAZEN  
  
The word Zazen means "sitting in meditation", and this is the main type of practice within the Zen tradition. This practice is based on the concept that all beings are already Buddhas, and that Nirvana is present now. Buddhists who practise Zazen do not concentrate on the 3 Marks of Existence (dukkha, anicca, anatta) because the mind should be freed of any thoughts, rejecting anything that seeks to confuse the mind. They do not believe, therefore, that too much emphasis should be placed on the Buddha's teachings during meditation as that would lead to mental confusion rather than a clear mind.

**Questions**

* 1. What are the 3 main meditation techniques?
* 2. What are the features of these 3 techniques?
* 3. What technique would appeal to most Buddhists in your opinion? Explain your answer.
* 4. What relevance does meditation have to our world today?
* 5. Explain the Jhanas.
* 6. What is the relevance of the four foundations of Samatha meditation today?
* 7. Explain how Buddhists meditate.

**Keywords**

1. Samatha - A meditation technique. Concentrates on breathing or walking. Not as complex as Vipassana meditation.
2. Jhanas - different levels of trance / mental state.
3. Skandhas - The 5 parts (psychological + physical) that make up human beings, and the factors which human beings blame for the idea of "self" (atman).
4. Metta - Love or goodwill towards enemies.
5. Karuna - Tolerance and compassion towards those who suffer.
6. Mudita - Joy for others.
7. Upekkha - The state of peace, and of loving and respecting all living things equally.
8. 3 Marks of existence - dukkha, anicca,anatta
9. Vipassana - Suited to more intelligent Buddhists. Not too much emphasis on teachings.
10. Zazen - A meditation technique - within the Zen tradition. Means "sitting in meditation". Based on the idea that everyone is already a Buddha.

**Meditation (3) - The Importance of Meditation**

**Bullets**

* One of the three divisions of the Eightfold Path.
* A practice that supports the Golden Rule.
* Breeds understanding of the 3 Marks of Existence and the 4 Noble Truths.
* Buddha himself achieved enlightenment while meditating.

**Text**

There is no doubt over the importance of meditation because it is an essential element of the dharma. Meditation is one of the three divisions of the Eightfold Path, namely right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. These elements work together with the elements within Wisdom (panna) and morality (sila). Consequently, meditation is considered an integral part of the practice of the Eightfold Path. Some believe that meditation is a practice that supports the Golden Rule whereby Buddhists treat others as they would wish to be treated. Certainly this is very important, especially in view of the kind of world we live in today.  
  
Meditation breeds understanding of the 3 Marks of Existence and the 4 Noble Truths. These concepts are considered essential to the practice of the religion on the journey to achieve enlightenment and attain Nirvana. Consequently, wisdom comes in the wake of meditation. It must be remembered that the Buddha himself achieved enlightenment while meditating and continued to meditate after this turning point in his life which without any doubt emphasizes the importance of meditation.  
  
"The importance of meditation in Buddhism can be appreciated by recalling that it was while meditating that the Buddha gained enlightenment." Damien Keown  
  
"All schools of Buddhism see meditation as the high road to enlightenment." Damien Keown  
  
"Meditation is one of the three divisions of the eightfold path, and thus occupies a central place in Buddhist practice." Damien Keown

**Questions**

* 1. What is the significance of meditation?
* 2. Why is meditation important to individuals?
* 3. Is meditation more important than the other elements of the Eightfold Path?
* 4. What is the relevance of meditation to our world today?

**Keywords**

1. Dharma - 1 of the 3 Refuges - teachings.
2. Eightfold Path - "magga" = the way, divided into 3 divisions: Wisdom (panna), Morality (Sila), Meditation (Bhavana).
3. 3 Universal Truths - 3 Marks of Existence - dukkha, anicca, anatta.
4. 4 Noble Truths - dukkha, cause of dukkha, cessation of dukkha, Eightfold Path.