

## 6

## Religion, peace and conflict

## 6.1

## Peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation

Right from the beginnings of humanity, people have attempted to gain territory or settle disputes through fighting. Even today, somewhere in the world, it is likely that people will be injured, killed or displaced as a result of **war**. While all countries have laws against murder, the rules of war are different – in war, killing is generally considered to be acceptable.

Buddhism is very much a religion that promotes peace. Buddhist teachings say there are no justifiable reasons for war. War is wrong because it expresses and encourages hateful and greedy attitudes and behaviour, which result in suffering. Buddhism teaches that people cannot relieve their own suffering through making others suffer.

### ■ Peace

One definition of **peace** is the absence of war. The intention of those fighting in a war is to create peace once the war is over. But this is often difficult to achieve, because the instability and resentment left after a war often leads to fighting breaking out again.

The Buddha also taught that peace comes from within, and that it is important for Buddhists to try to develop a sense of peace. The Buddha said that violence comes from people's minds, so to stop violence people must begin by developing a sense of peace within themselves. This idea is echoed in the constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which states that:

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”



▲ Buddhist monks leading a peace rally in Katmandu, Nepal

### Objectives

- Understand war as a way of resolving differences.
- Explain the concepts of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation.

### Key terms

- **war**: fighting between nations to resolve issues between them
- **peace**: an absence of conflict, which leads to happiness and harmony
- **justice**: bringing about what is right and fair, according to the law, or making up for a wrong that has been committed
- **forgiveness**: showing compassion, and pardoning someone for what they have done wrong
- **reconciliation**: when individuals or groups restore friendly relations after conflict or disagreement; also a sacrament in the Catholic Church

### Discussion activity

Is the best way to achieve peace to encourage everyone to develop a peaceful state of mind? Discuss with a partner.

### ★ Study tip

Remember that the four concepts of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are linked. When writing about one of them, it is likely that you will need to refer to at least one other.



Buddhist teachings agree with this statement. The Buddha taught that if people have peaceful minds, this will lead to peaceful speech and peaceful actions. If people's minds are at peace then the world will be at peace. Many Buddhists therefore focus on developing this sense of peace within themselves. Some Buddhists also take part in campaigns that further global peace, because creating peace through non-violent means is an important goal in Buddhism.

## ■ Justice

**Justice** is often linked with equality. If people are not given the same opportunities, this may be seen as unfair and could create resentment. This could lead to conflict, especially if more privileged parts of the world are seen to be the cause of inequality. Many wars are fought to try to create justice.

Buddhism teaches that inflicting suffering on people through war is not the way to create a just world, because it simply causes more suffering. Most Buddhists think it is better to use non-violent means to accomplish this goal, while practising generosity and letting go (non-attachment).

## ■ Forgiveness

Buddhism teaches that **forgiveness** is important, both to prevent war in the first place and to establish peace after a war has ended. Forgiveness is also important in reducing suffering, because it allows people to let go of the hatred and anger that they feel.

Buddhists believe that forgiveness can be developed through meditation. It is often a part of loving-kindness meditation, where a Buddhist might think forgiving thoughts towards themselves as well as other people. For Buddhists, people who have wronged them provide them with the opportunity to develop patience and forgiveness. Buddhism teaches that all beings want to be happy, but if someone has done something wrong, they will suffer as a consequence. It is therefore better to develop compassion for them rather than hatred or resentment.

## ■ Reconciliation

**Reconciliation** follows conflict. It is when two people or groups who have disagreed or fought with each other make up. This requires more than just words. It involves a conscious effort to rebuild a relationship, and to work to ensure there is no more conflict. Both sides have to play an active part in this.

In order to bring about reconciliation, Buddhist teachings stress the importance of letting go of blame and resentment, because these attitudes prevent a person from developing a more harmonious relationship with others. They also contribute to the person's own suffering.

Once forgiveness and reconciliation have taken place, a relationship is much stronger, because the two parties have learned to appreciate and accept each other for what they are. Forgiveness and reconciliation do not mean denying the difficulties of the past, but learning from the past to build a better, more peaceful future.

## Activities

- 1 Explain how the four concepts of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation link together in the context of a war and what happens after a war.
- 2 Imagine that you have been ordered by your government to take part in a war. Write a letter to the government explaining why you do not want to take part, referring to Buddhist teachings and beliefs.

“ ‘He abused me, he struck me, he overcame me, he robbed me.’ Of those who wrap themselves up in it hatred is not quenched. ”

The Buddha in the *Dhammapada*, verse 3

## Links

Read more about loving-kindness meditation on pages 68–69, and more about forgiveness on pages 150–151.

## Summary

You should now understand how the concepts of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are linked to each other, particularly in the context of war. You should also be able to explain Buddhist attitudes towards these concepts.



## 6.2

# Violence, violent protest and terrorism

### ■ Buddhism and violence

Buddhist teachings are generally against **violence** because it contradicts the most basic ethical precept, which is not to cause harm. However, there may be circumstances where a Buddhist might view violence as justifiable. For instance, when answering a question about the possibility of someone entering a school and shooting people, the Dalai Lama responded: 'If someone has a gun and is trying to kill you, it would be reasonable to shoot back with your own gun.' This suggests that, for some Buddhists, violence and even killing could be justified in self-defence.

In contrast, Thich Nhat Hanh (a well-known Buddhist teacher) has maintained a firm commitment to non-violence. When asked what he would do if he were the last monk in the world and someone were about to kill him and thus wipe out Buddhism, he answered that it would be better to let himself be killed than betray his Buddhist principles.

Some Buddhists might justify a violent action if it could save a life, but others think that this would be to abandon Buddhism.

### ■ Violent protest

The right to **protest** is considered to be a fundamental democratic freedom. The law in the UK allows individuals and groups to protest in public to demonstrate their point of view. If the protest involves a procession or march, the law says that the police must be informed at least six days before it takes place. The police can request alterations to the route of a march, and can also apply to a court for an order banning the march. They may do this if they feel that the march may intimidate other people or if they predict that violence will be involved.



▲ An anti-austerity protest in London becomes violent as protesters clash with the police

#### Objective

- Examine Buddhist attitudes towards violence, violent protest and terrorism.

#### Key terms

- **violence:** using actions that threaten or harm others
- **protest:** an expression of disapproval, often in a public group
- **terrorism:** the unlawful use of violence, usually against innocent civilians, to achieve a political goal

“Whoever injures with violence creatures desiring happiness, seeking his own happiness he does not gain happiness when he has passed away.”

The Buddha in the *Dhammapada*, verse 131

#### Extension activity

Find out more about the Cambodian monk Ghosananda, and his work for peace.

#### Activities

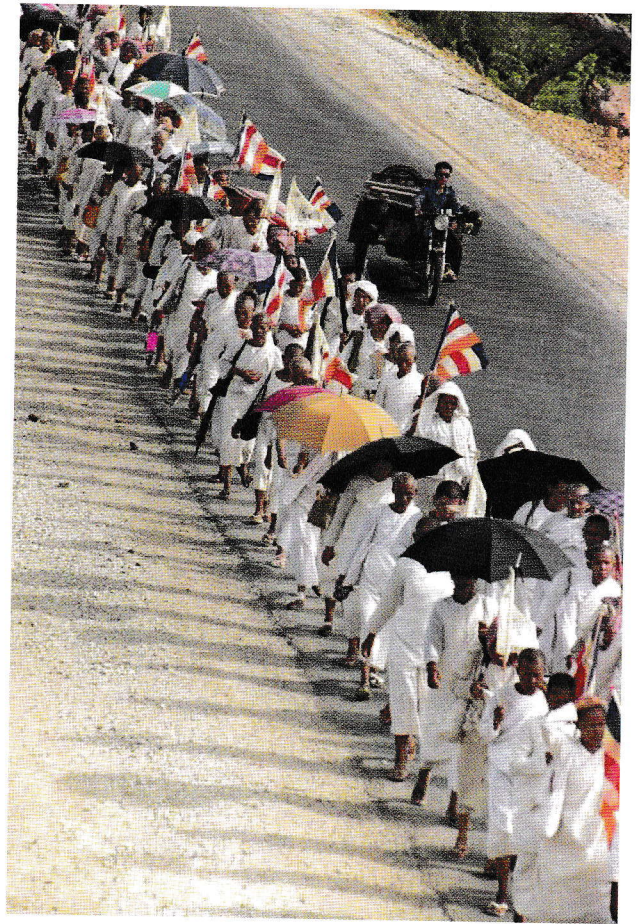
- 1 Do you think violent protest is ever justified? Explain why.
- 2 'Buddhists should never act violently.' Evaluate this statement. Include more than one point of view, and refer to Buddhist teachings and beliefs in your answer.



Generally, Buddhism advocates non-violent forms of protest. The Cambodian monk Ghosananda provides a good example of this. In the 1990s, he led a series of non-violent marches through his country in order to encourage reconciliation and peace after decades of civil conflict, even defying the army of the Khmer Rouge (a cruel and repressive government in Cambodia). He once said, 'If I am good to someone, he or she will learn goodness and, in turn, will be good to others.' He believed that violent acts should be condemned, but that hatred should not be shown towards the person who commits them.

Some Buddhist monks have committed suicide to draw attention to the repression of Buddhist teachings. For instance, in 1963 a Vietnamese monk, Thich Quang Duc, set himself alight on a busy street in protest against repressive government policies. Some Buddhists see this as a breach of the first moral precept, while others think it is heroic.

Despite the general Buddhist commitment to non-violence, in recent decades some monks in Myanmar have supported violent protests against Muslims whom they believe to be the source of their problems. This has resulted in many deaths. In contrast, the Buddhist politician Aung San Suu Kyi, who is also from Myanmar, is famous for her non-violent opposition to a repressive government, which resulted in her imprisonment for many years.



▲ A peace march in Cambodia led by Ghosananda

## ■ Terrorism

A much more serious form of violent protest is **terrorism**. This is where an individual, or a group who share certain beliefs, use terror as part of their campaign to further their cause. Their violence usually deliberately targets civilians and takes place in public. Suicide bombers, car bombs, and gunmen shooting into crowds of people are all tactics of terrorism. Terrorists believe that by killing people in this way, the rest of society will become more aware of their cause, will be scared of them, and will push the authorities into giving way to their demands.

While a terrorist may associate their cause with a religion, no religion promotes terrorism.

Terrorism is a violent expression of hatred, and often leads to the harm of many people. Many Buddhists believe it is important to condemn terrorism and imprison terrorists (so that they do not harm more people), but it is also important to try to understand the root causes that provoke someone to act in such a violent way. The underlying causes are often complex and not easily understood, but a Buddhist response to terrorism involves recognising that terrorists sometimes act in extremely violent ways because they are suffering. Buddhism teaches that acts of terrorism should be countered with acts of love and compassion, rather than retaliation and more violence. Revenge solves nothing.

### Research activity

Use the internet to find out more about the violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar, and the reasons behind it. Why are some Buddhists in Myanmar encouraging violence towards Muslims?

### ★ Study tip

When writing about a topic you feel strongly about, try to stick to the facts and do not let your emotions affect what you write or the language that you use.

### Summary

You should now understand Buddhist attitudes towards violence, violent protest and terrorism.



## 6.3

# Reasons for war

There is rarely a single, clear cause for any war. Most wars are fought for a number of reasons, some more obvious than others, which are linked together in complex ways. However, it is fair to say that most if not all wars are caused to some extent by greed, self-defence or retaliation.

### Greed

Throughout history, war has been used as a way to gain more land or territory, or to regain land lost in a previous war. **Greed** can also lead countries to invade others in order to control important resources, such as oil. Buddhism teaches that greed is one of **the three poisons**, and one of the main causes of suffering. There are always unhealthy consequences from actions based on greed.

### Self-defence

Whenever one country attacks another, it expects to meet some resistance from the invaded country. Most people consider fighting in **self-defence** to be morally acceptable, and believe they have a right to defend the values, beliefs and ways of life that their country lives by.

The most fundamental ethical principle in Buddhism is not to take life. While it might be acceptable to resist violence with some force, the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh, himself a refugee of war, has emphasised that killing is never justified, and that people should instead develop compassion for those who wish to harm them. Not all Buddhists agree, and some might even feel justified in taking a life if this would save the life of a loved one.

### Retaliation

Wars are sometimes fought against a country that is seen to have done something very wrong. From a Buddhist point of view, **retaliation** is just another word for vengeance, and is an expression of hatred (one of the three poisons). Actions based on hatred are not ethical, and so do not lead to healthy consequences. Responding to hatred with hatred only increases suffering; it does not relieve it. To break the cycle of violence, a different kind of response is needed, based on compassion.

### ■ The just war theory

St Augustine was one of the first Christians to write about the morality of war, in the fourth century. His thoughts were developed into a distinct set of criteria by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Further adaptations have been made to the **just war theory** up until the present day. It aims to lay out the conditions under which fighting a war is justifiable. The war must have a just cause, it must be lawfully declared by the correct authority, its intention must be to promote good, and it should be a last resort. There must be a reasonable chance of success, and the methods used should be proportional. Civilians must not be harmed.

### Objectives

- Understand why wars are fought.
- Examine Buddhist attitudes towards the reasons for war.
- Consider Buddhist attitudes towards the just war theory.

### Key terms

- **greed**: selfish desire for something
- **the three poisons**: greed, hatred and ignorance; the main causes of suffering
- **self-defence**: acting to prevent harm to yourself or others
- **retaliation**: deliberately harming someone as a response to them harming you
- **just war theory**: a set of criteria that a war needs to meet before it can be justified

### Activities

- 1 Can you think of any reasons that justify fighting a war?
- 2 Why do you think the Dalai Lama does not want Tibetans to retaliate against the Chinese?

### Discussion activity

The Dhammapada, a Buddhist scripture, contains the following quote: 'For not by hatred are hatreds ever quenched here, but they are quenched by non-hatred. This is the ancient rule.' Discuss with a partner what you think this means, and how it reflects Buddhist teachings.



## China and Tibet

In 1950, the Chinese army entered Tibet. At the time, Tibet considered itself to be an independent state, while China argued that it was simply consolidating its rule over a region that was already a part of China. Either way, the Communist Party of China wished to incorporate Tibet into the new People's Republic of China.

Tibetan forces were greatly outnumbered and they could put up little resistance. The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, tried to negotiate peace with the Chinese. Fears for his safety grew, and in March 1959, rumours that he was going to be arrested by Chinese forces prompted thousands of Tibetans to surround his palace to prevent him from being removed. This led to a violent uprising during which it is estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 Tibetans were killed. The Dalai Lama fled the palace and has been living in exile since. Many Tibetans have been persecuted as a result of the Chinese invasion, and many monasteries and temples have been looted or destroyed.

The Dalai Lama has only ever encouraged a peaceful response to the Chinese occupation,



▲ Buddhist prayer flags in Tibet are hung up outside as a symbol of peace, compassion and wisdom. They have been strongly discouraged by the Chinese.

reflecting Buddhist teachings that retaliation is not the answer. Tibetans themselves have mostly shown resistance through non-violent means, following the teachings of the Dalai Lama. Such means include protesting peacefully, trying to alert the rest of the world to the situation in Tibet, and openly expressing Tibetan identity despite Chinese oppression.

According to Buddhist ethics, all violence should be abandoned, and people should instead cultivate compassion for all beings. Consequently, there can be no such thing as a just war, even in self-defence. The general Buddhist view is that to respond to violence with more violence only adds to the problem. Buddhism teaches that people should conquer the violent tendencies within themselves, and have confidence that this will have a positive impact on the world. Most Buddhists question whether it would really be possible to fight in a war and maintain a compassionate attitude.

Some Japanese Buddhist priests justified Japanese military aggression in World War II on the grounds that it was defending the nation and enabling Buddhism to survive, but many Buddhists disagree with this attitude.

### Contrasting beliefs

Christianity also strongly promotes peace. However, Christians hold different views about whether war can be justified.

Find out more about Christian teachings on violence. Do Christian beliefs agree or contrast with Buddhist beliefs on this issue?

### ★ Study tip

Remember that Buddhists do not all necessarily think the same. While there is a general principle of non-violence in Buddhism, this may be interpreted in different ways.

### Summary

You should now understand three different causes of war and Buddhist attitudes towards them. You should be able to explain what Buddhists think about the just war theory.



### ■ Holy war

In the past, some wars have been fought on behalf of a religious belief. The purpose of a **holy war** is usually to defend the faith from attack. It has to be declared by a religious leader, and those who take part in it believe they will gain spiritual rewards by fighting for God. The Crusades are the best-known examples of a holy war. These were fought between Christians and Muslims in the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. Various popes (heads of the Christian Church) called on Christians to try to regain control of the Holy Land and Jerusalem.

The idea of a holy war does not make much sense for Buddhists because there is a basic commitment to non-violence in Buddhism. As we saw on the previous page, Buddhism teaches that no war can be justified, even in self-defence. This includes holy war to defend or spread the faith.

### ■ Japanese Buddhism and war

While most Buddhists are against war and violence, there are also examples of some Buddhists who have supported war. For example, in the twentieth century, Japanese Buddhist monks supported aggression towards China and Korea. This included providing army chaplains and conducting rituals in the belief that they would help to ensure victory. Moreover, after Japan had taken control of parts of mainland Asia, Japanese priests were sent to spread Buddhist teachings there. They acted in the belief that Japanese culture was superior, and so would benefit the occupied territories and people. In supporting the war, some monks believed that they were helping to ensure the survival and spread of the Buddha's teachings.

One Zen master, Soen Shaku, went to the battlefield during the Russo–Japanese War because he 'wished to inspire our valiant soldiers with the ennobling thoughts of the Buddha, so as to enable them to die on the battlefield with confidence that the task in which they are engaged is great and noble'.

### ■ Religion and belief as a reason for war and violence

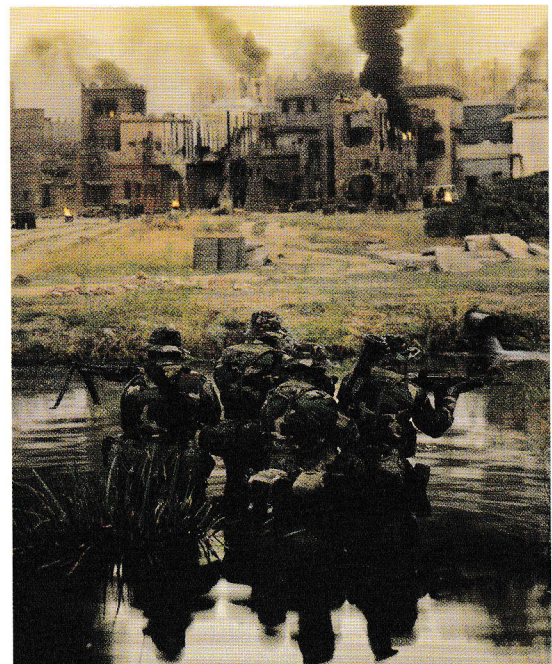
Buddhism teaches that all things come into being because they are dependent on certain conditions, and often those conditions are complex. To reduce the reasons for starting a war to just 'religion' is probably simplifying what is a complicated matter. Most wars are caused by a number of interrelated factors – politics, economics, self-defence, retaliation, even the desire to gain territory or resources, may all play a part. While religion may divide the two sides, it is rarely the sole or main reason for the conflict.

#### Objectives

- Consider religion as a cause of violence.
- Understand Buddhist attitudes towards religion as a cause of violence.

#### Key term

- **holy war:** fighting for a religious cause or God, often inspired by a religious leader



▲ Religion is rarely the main or sole reason for a war



However, there are examples in the contemporary world of religious believers who have acted violently to defend what they perceive to be attacks on their faith, or to advance a specific vision of the world. Buddhism is no exception here.

### Anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar

Buddhists and Muslims have largely lived in peace for centuries in Myanmar, but attacks against the Muslim community have increased in recent years. For example, in 2013, there were riots and clashes in several cities that led to a number of deaths. Muslim-owned businesses and mosques were destroyed or set alight. In July 2016, two mosques were burnt and there were mass protests. Muslims are frequently discriminated against.

Muslims in Myanmar form a small and mainly peaceful minority – about 90 per cent of the country is Buddhist. However, some Buddhists in Myanmar feel threatened by their presence. They see Muslims (particularly Rohingya Muslims living in Rakhine State) as being foreigners who have no right to exist in their country, and worry that Islam will spread in Myanmar. Their hatred for Muslims is fuelled primarily by nationalism rather than Buddhist teachings.

Many Buddhists around the world, including many in Myanmar, have condemned the violence. A number of monks in Myanmar have helped to shelter Muslims during riots. Those who have spoken out against the violence include nearly 300 Buddhist teachers and leaders who signed 'An open letter from the Buddhist community on Islamophobia', which included the following plea:



▲ Buddhist monks and nuns in Indonesia campaigning for the rights of Rohingya Muslims

'In the wider Buddhist community, we ask our fellow Buddhists to refrain from using the Dharma to support nationalism, ethnic conflict, and Islamophobia. We believe that these values are antithetical to the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

The vast majority of Muslims the world over are peaceful, law-abiding people who share much the same dreams, hopes, and aspirations as their non-Muslim neighbours ... they are our fellow sentient beings, all of whom, the Buddha taught, have loved and cared for us in the past.'

#### Discussion activity

With a partner, think of some of the ways that Buddhists could defend their faith without resorting to violence.

#### Activities

- 1 'People should never use violence to defend their religion.' Evaluate this statement. Include more than one point of view, and refer to Buddhist teachings and beliefs in your answer.
- 2 Why do you think some people try to impose their religious beliefs on others by using force?

#### ★ Study tip

Remember that even 'religious' wars might be fought for a number of complex reasons that are not all to do with religion.

#### Summary

You should now be able to give examples of religion and belief being used as a cause of violence and war. You should also be able to explain Buddhist attitudes towards this issue.



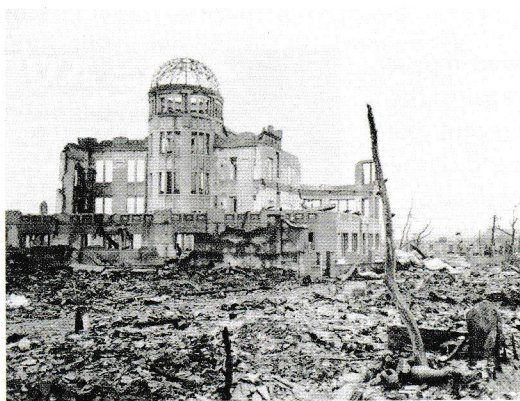
## 6.5

# Nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction

### ■ The use of nuclear weapons

The first nuclear bomb to be used in warfare was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima by American forces during the Second World War. Around 80,000 people in Hiroshima died as a result of the explosion. The death toll rose to around 140,000 as many more people died from radiation poisoning.

Three days later the Japanese city of Nagasaki was destroyed by a second nuclear bomb. Five days after that, Japan surrendered and stopped fighting against the Allied forces. This marked the end of the Second World War which, for some people, justified the use of such weapons.



▲ The city of Hiroshima shortly after the bomb was dropped

Since the end of the Second World War, many of the wealthier countries in the world, including the UK, have researched and developed considerably more powerful **nuclear weapons**. Despite some countries agreeing to reduce the number of nuclear weapons they possess, there are now sufficient weapons to completely destroy the world we live in several times over.

The countries that possess nuclear weapons argue that they are an important deterrent. This means that the threat that a country could retaliate with nuclear weapons prevents countries from attacking it in the first place. So far, the threat of full-scale nuclear war – which could potentially lead to human extinction – has deterred any countries from using nuclear weapons in warfare since the Second World War ended.

Most Buddhists believe that nuclear weapons should be abolished. They believe that as long as nuclear weapons exist, there is the risk that they will be used – perhaps through mechanical failure, human error, or because someone in power chooses to ignore the potential consequences. This means there is always the risk of full-scale nuclear war.

But the situation is really more complicated than this. Thich Nhat Hanh once said:

“For peace, the basic thing to do is not to remove nuclear weapons but to remove the fear, anger and suspicion in us. If we reduce them, reconciliation is easy.”

This indicates that the real problem is not the weapons themselves but rather human attitudes, including the belief that we might solve our

### Objectives

- Know about different weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.
- Examine Buddhist attitudes towards the use of weapons of mass destruction.

### Key terms

- **nuclear weapons:** weapons that work by a nuclear reaction, devastate huge areas, and kill large numbers of people
- **weapons of mass destruction:** weapons that can kill large numbers of people and/or cause great damage
- **chemical weapons:** weapons that use chemicals to harm humans and destroy the natural environment
- **biological weapons:** weapons that use living organisms to cause disease or death

### Contrasting beliefs

Christianity is another religion that does not promote the use of weapons of mass destruction. Reasons for this include the fact that their use would go against the teachings of Jesus, and the Christian belief that only God has the authority to end life.

Find out more about Christian teachings on weapons of mass destruction. Do Christian beliefs agree or contrast with Buddhist beliefs on this issue?



problems by using a weapon that would kill huge numbers of people. In a similar way, Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Buddhist and anti-nuclear activist, has said:

“ The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realisation of our objectives. ”

## ■ Weapons of mass destruction

In addition to nuclear weapons, there are other **weapons of mass destruction**:

**Chemical weapons** contain lethal chemicals that, when released, can damage the environment and cause many deaths. In 1993, the Chemical Weapons Convention made the production, stockpiling and use of these chemicals illegal worldwide. However, since then they are believed to have been used in countries such as Iraq and Syria.

**Biological weapons** introduce harmful bacteria and viruses into the atmosphere. When they enter the food chain or water supplies, they can cause illness and death on a massive scale. As with chemical weapons, they are illegal but there have been instances of their use, and many countries still possess them.

Weapons of mass destruction make it easy to kill large numbers of people based on a single decision. This is why they are particularly dangerous from a Buddhist point of view, because just a single moment of rage could lead to harming many beings. Many Buddhists think that better safeguards are needed against the power of people's aggressive, even hateful impulses, and the availability of weapons of mass destruction offers a potentially catastrophic outlet for them. Moreover, the people who suffer as a consequence of such weapons are not usually the ones responsible for conflict. Weapons of mass destruction kill indiscriminately and so their use cannot be defended.



▲ *Buddhists taking part in an anti-nuclear weapons march in New York*

### Discussion activity

Should the UK keep its nuclear weapons or get rid of all its nuclear weapons? Consider this question with a partner. Try to think of arguments both for and against stockpiling nuclear weapons.

### Research activity

Daisaku Ikeda is one Buddhist who has been very vocal in his support for nuclear disarmament. Find out what some of his arguments are for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

### Activities

- 1 Do you think the use of weapons of mass destruction can ever be justified? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 'Countries with nuclear weapons are no safer than countries without them.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

### ★ Study tip

Learn some of the arguments for and against the stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

### Summary

You should now be able to describe the effects of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. You should understand some of the arguments for and against the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, including Buddhist views on this issue.



### ■ What is pacifism?

**Pacifism** is the belief that violence and war can never be justified, and that peaceful means should always be used to resolve disputes. Pacifists strongly believe that it is best to work at preventing war from becoming a possibility. Promoting justice and human rights is an important part of this. If people are not denied basic freedoms and rights, they are less likely to engage in conflict.

Pacifists usually refuse to fight in wars, but sometimes help in wars by tending to the sick and wounded. In the past, pacifists have been punished for their beliefs. For example, the boxer Muhammad Ali, a Muslim, was fined and sentenced to five years in prison for refusing to join the US army when it was fighting in Vietnam in the 1960s.

### ■ Buddhism and pacifism

Buddhist teachings strongly promote pacifism. The first moral precept teaches that Buddhists should not harm or kill any living beings. The Buddha taught that Buddhists should try instead to develop compassion for all beings and that violence should be avoided. However, this does not mean that Buddhists cannot show non-violent resistance. For Buddhists, it is important to resist oppression and intolerance, since such behaviour causes suffering for many beings. A compassionate response to the world is active but not violent.

For Buddhists, non-violence is something that emerges from inner practice and transformation; it comes from inside each person. In principle, someone could be committed to the theory of pacifism but act in a violent way, especially in their speech and their thoughts. Buddhism recognises that true peace starts from within each person.

At the same time, structures of power and institutions can breed and support violence, so in order to become peaceful and to live in peace with others, it is also necessary to create conditions that encourage skilful attitudes and behaviour. This involves active involvement in social issues to create a world that favours more peaceful states of mind.

### ■ The Parable of the Saw

In one Buddhist scripture, the Buddha recommends that people should respond to violence not with violence but with patience and love.

He uses a rather gruesome example to illustrate his point. 'Suppose,' says the Buddha, 'that bandits were to tear you limb from limb with a monstrous saw.' Even if in a circumstance such as this, people give way to hatred, then they cannot say they are Buddhists. Instead the Buddha talked of how someone should ideally react in this type of situation. He said that, 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil

#### Objectives

- Examine Buddhist teachings and attitudes to pacifism.
- Know about the work of a Buddhist peacemaker.

#### Key terms

- **pacifism:** the belief of people who refuse to take part in war and any other form of violence
- **peacemaker:** a person who works to establish peace in the world or in a certain part of it
- **Engaged Buddhism:** a movement in Buddhism that is particularly concerned with applying the Buddha's teachings to matters of social and environmental injustice
- **peacemaking:** the action of trying to establish peace

#### Links

Read more about skilful attitudes and behaviour on pages 140–141.

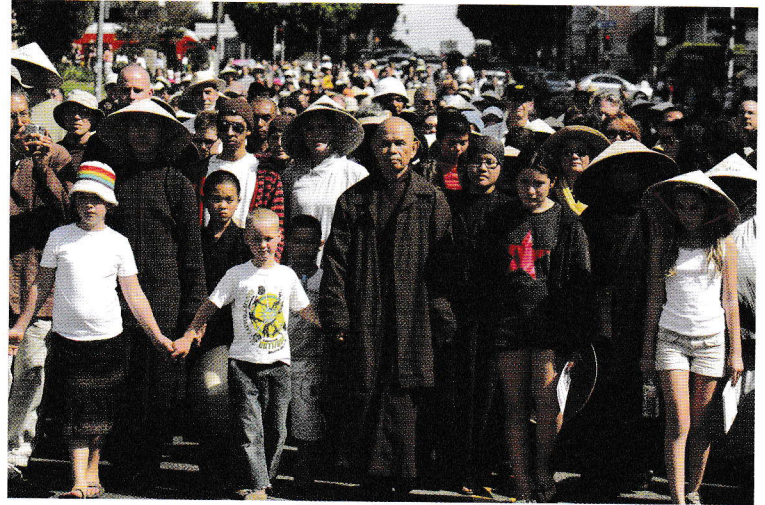


words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate.'

The parable emphasises the importance of having the right attitude, since people's attitudes guide their behaviour. It does not necessarily mean that people should not act, but that they should not act from hatred.

## ■ A Buddhist peacemaker

Born in Vietnam in 1926, Thich Nhat Hanh has been a **peacemaker** since his ordination as a Buddhist monk at the age of 16. During the Vietnam War, he helped villagers who were suffering as a result of bombing. He opposed his government's policies and as a consequence was exiled from his country. He later settled in France. He is a pioneer of **Engaged Buddhism**, which argues that if Buddhists are to achieve true inner peace, they must work on changing the structures of society that influence people's mental states and behaviour. Inner and outer change go hand in hand.



▲ Thich Nhat Hanh leading a peace walk in Los Angeles

Thich Nhat Hanh has combined traditional meditative practices with non-violent protest, emphasising how meditation can help to dissolve anger, which is a primary cause of conflict. On one occasion, he was organising the rescue of hundreds of Vietnamese refugees using boats from Singapore. When the police found out his plan they ordered him out of the country and did not permit the boats to leave. He wrote, 'What could we do in such a situation? We had to breathe deeply and consciously. Otherwise we might panic, or fight with the police, or do something to express our anger at their lack of humanity.'

### Activities

- 1 What is a pacifist?
- 2 How does the Parable of the Saw imply that Buddhism supports pacifism?
- 3 What does Buddhism say about how to create peace?

### Contrasting beliefs

Christian pacifists take inspiration from the teachings of Jesus, who strongly encouraged **peacemaking**. However, not all Christians are pacifists. Many Christians believe there are circumstances when war may be justified (see the just war theory on pages 128–129).

Find out more about Christian teachings on pacifism. Do Christian beliefs agree or contrast with Buddhist beliefs on this issue?

### Extension activity



Research the life of Nichidatsu Fujii, a Japanese Buddhist who helped to build peace pagodas around the world. Make notes on how he campaigned for peace.

### Links

Read more about Engaged Buddhism on page 155.

### Research activity



Find out more about the work that Thich Nhat Hanh has done to promote peace.

### ★ Study tip

While the general principle of non-violence in Buddhism is very clear, Buddhists have varying views on pacifism. For example, there are hundreds of Buddhists in the British Army.

### Summary

You should now be able to discuss Buddhist attitudes towards pacifism. You should also be able to describe the work of a Buddhist peacemaker.



### ■ Providing help to victims of war

Casualties are an unavoidable part of war. In addition to the harm that is caused to those directly involved in the fighting, harm is also caused to their families and friends. For example, if the main wage earner dies in a war, their family may struggle financially without them. If a place of work is destroyed in a war, nobody can earn a wage there. If crops are destroyed or water supplies polluted, starvation could follow for those who live in the surrounding area.

In the UK if a member of the military is killed or injured, financial systems are in place to look after those left behind. Injured military personnel receive free health care, with some specialised care being provided by charities such as Help for Heroes. However, injury or death still has devastating effects on friends and families and can cause long-term emotional wounds.

There are many organisations that offer help and care for victims of war, wherever they live and whichever side of the conflict they fought on. These organisations believe that the life and welfare of human beings is what matters.

Buddhists believe that all suffering should be stopped, whatever its origin. This means that Buddhists want to help victims of war, as well as victims of natural disasters, or victims of poverty or violence. In addition to this, Buddhists believe that the perpetrators of war and violence also need people's compassion because they too suffer.



▲ Victims of war whose homes have been destroyed may have to live in refugee camps, where conditions are often very poor

#### Objectives

- Understand what can be done to help victims of war.
- Know about the work of a present-day Buddhist organisation that helps victims of war.

#### ★ Study tip

Remember that someone who has experienced the trauma of war is not only likely to have material needs, like food and shelter, but also psychological and perhaps spiritual needs.

#### Research activity



Use the internet to find out about other religious organisations that offer help to victims of war. Write down some examples of the work that they do.

#### Activities

- 1 'People who fight in wars don't deserve our compassion.' Evaluate this statement. Include more than one point of view, and refer to Buddhist teachings and beliefs in your answer.
- 2 If you were in charge of an organisation to help victims of war, what would your organisation do? What sort of help do you think it would be most important to provide?



## Tzu Chi Foundation

One example of the many Buddhist organisations that help victims of war is the Tzu Chi Foundation, founded in Taiwan by the Buddhist nun Cheng Yen. Tzu Chi has projects in many countries with the aim of alleviating suffering in all its forms. Its work is inspired by the Bodhisattva goal to help all beings become free of suffering and ultimately to reach enlightenment. Its mission is 'expressing great kindness to all sentient beings, and taking their suffering as our own'.

Tzu Chi runs projects to address many kinds of suffering: educational projects, welfare projects, health projects and cultural projects. Among these, the organisation has opened a clinic in Istanbul, Turkey, to respond to the needs of the many Syrian refugees who have fled their country because of civil war. The clinic responds to all kinds of medical and health needs, and received more than 10,000 patients in its first three months. The Istanbul clinic has incorporated refugee Syrian doctors into its work to reduce language barriers, and to enable those doctors to make meaningful use of their skills. All treatment is free and the clinic is funded by charitable donations.

Tzu Chi also has a programme to distribute food and other basic necessities to refugees in several Turkish



▲ A Tzu Chi Foundation volunteer helping to give out rice to Syrian refugees in Jordan

cities. In addition, it has been providing food to Syrian refugees stranded in Serbia.

Cheng Yen believes that suffering is caused not by material deprivation alone but also by spiritual poverty. She maintains that a lack of compassion for others is at the root of many of the world's problems. Consequently, a motto of Tzu Chi is to 'help the poor and educate the rich'.

Many Buddhists believe that victims of war need psychological and spiritual help, in addition to the basic necessities required for survival. Refugees have often witnessed horrible events, been displaced from their homes, and lost most or all of their possessions. They must live with the memories of what they have passed through, and this may mean that they need psychological support to adjust to all of the changes they have experienced. One aspect of this is their attitude towards their oppressors. A refugee can be left not only with psychological trauma but with anger, bitterness and even hatred towards the aggressors. Buddhism teaches that these attitudes are self-destructive and victims of war are likely to need help to let go of them. Cultivating compassion towards the aggressors not only helps the victims but also enables the aggressors to change. The aggressors too want to be happy but are going about it in the wrong way.

Thich Nhat Hanh confirms that it is not only the victims that need help but also the aggressors. He argues, 'When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That's the message he is sending.'

### Extension activity

Search online to find out more about the life and work of Cheng Yen, the founder of the Tzu Chi Foundation. Explain how her work has been influenced by Buddhist beliefs.

### Summary

You should now know about and understand support given to victims of war, including the work of the Tzu Chi Foundation.



### Religion, violence, terrorism and war – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about the meaning and significance of peace, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about violence, including violent protest
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about holy war and terrorism
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about reasons for war, including greed, self-defence and retaliation
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about the just war theory, including the criteria for a just war
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about pacifism.

### Religion and belief in twenty-first century conflict – summary

You should now be able to:

- ✓ explain attitudes to the use of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, including Buddhist beliefs
- ✓ consider religion and belief as a cause of war and violence in the contemporary world
- ✓ explain beliefs and teachings about pacifism and peacemaking
- ✓ explain Buddhist responses to the victims of war
- ✓ explain similar and contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society to all of the above issues
- ✓ explain similar and contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society to the three issues of violence, weapons of mass destruction and pacifism, with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions.

### Sample student answer – the 12-mark question

1. Write an answer to the following practice question:

‘The best way to bring about world peace is for more individuals to become pacifists.’

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you:

- should give reasoned arguments in support of this statement
- should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- should refer to religious arguments
- may refer to non-religious arguments
- should reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

*“I disagree with this statement because if people become pacifists, they will make themselves easy targets for their enemies. If you are fighting for a cause or for your country, it is safest to attack the easiest targets. This will achieve nothing. The best way to bring about world peace is to take on those who threaten peace and defeat them. Peace will follow once those who threaten war are removed from the scene. Some Buddhists might support this view, particularly from the past when some monks have stood against a government who is oppressing them and their right to follow Buddhism.*

*Having said this, being violent or showing some sort of violent protest could work in some situations, but in some others it could end badly. Most Buddhists are actually pacifists and they would tend to trust that if you do not pose a threat to people, they will leave you alone. This may work but people like Hitler would probably just see it as a sign of weakness and take advantage.*



*Real pacifism is more than refusing to fight though. True pacifists love their neighbour and work hard at making sure they live in peace and don't upset people or make them feel the need to retaliate. They actually work at establishing peace by getting on with everybody. If this is what a pacifist really does then maybe the statement could be true, although it will have to be worked at.*

*Some Buddhists are involved in what is called 'engaged Buddhism' and they work actively to ensure that people do not retaliate. Buddhists would always be first at the negotiating table and the Buddha would favour dialogue as opposed to fighting, which he would have argued only brings about more dukkha. The whole emphasis in the Buddhist faith is to get rid of dukkha or suffering. The first precept asks Buddhists not to harm any living thing, so if Buddhists were not pacifists they would end up harming living beings and breaking the first precept. Certainly the more pacifists there are, the fewer people there are left to fight, so maybe it is true."*

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Is the focus of the answer correct? Is anything missing from the answer? How do you think it could be improved?
4. What mark (out of 12) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO2). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?
5. Swap your answer with your partner's and mark each other's responses. What mark (out of 12) would you give? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

### Practice questions

- 1 Which one of the following most accurately means a violent protest?  
A) Demonstration    B) Riot    C) Campaign    D) March [1 mark]
- 2 Give two reasons for war. [2 marks]
- 3 Explain two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about whether countries should possess nuclear weapons.  
  
In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and one or more other religious traditions. [4 marks]
- 4 Explain two reasons why religious believers should help victims of war.  
  
Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. [5 marks]
- 5 'Pacifism is the approach that religious believers should take when discussing whether it is right to fight.'  
  
Evaluate this statement. In your answer you:
  - should give reasoned arguments in support of this statement
  - should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
  - should refer to religious arguments
  - may refer to non-religious arguments
  - should reach a justified conclusion.[12 marks]