Summary of Dhamma (Dharma)

(textbook pages 16-17)

Vocabulary

**Pali** – the original language of the earliest Buddhist scriptures (from North India)

**Sanskrit** – the original language of the later Buddhist scriptures (and the Hindu scriptures)

**Dhamma** – 1. the teachings of Buddha;

2. truth;

3. the path of training for enlightenment, including the Eightfold Path;

4. law (as in a law of nature/the way things are).

(Dhamma is the Pali version of the word. In the Sanskrit language it is **Dharma** which is also a word used in Hinduism.)

**Sangha** – the community of Buddhists including monks, nuns, ordinary people and those who have achieved enlightenment

Buddha compared his teaching to a raft that helps you get across a river. The Dhamma is a practical thing to help people 1. achieve enlightenment and 2. be free from suffering.

The Three Refuges (also called the Three Jewels):

‘To the Buddha for refuge I go.

To the Dhamma for refuge I go.

To the Sangha for refuge I go.’

(A statement recited at the start of Buddhist meetings.)

1. The Buddha;
2. The Dhamma;
3. The Sangha.

Refuge here refers to seeking shelter from suffering and seeking guidance.

Which is the most important refuge?

**The Buddha** **is important** because he discovered the Dhamma. Without him the way of enlightenment may not have been known about.

**The Dhamma is important** because it is the way to escape from suffering and achieve happiness.

**The Sangha is important** because the people provide support to one another and younger Buddhists can learn from the more experienced and knowledgeable ones. Without the Sangha Buddhists might give up.

Possible exam questions:

Explain two different meanings of the word Dhamma. (4 marks)

Explain two contrasting Buddhist beliefs about whether they should test and question Buddha’s teachings. You should refer to scripture in your answer. (5 marks)

‘The Dhamma is not the most important of the Three Refuges.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)

‘The Sangha is a completely safe refuge to go to.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)

‘The Dhamma cannot help non-religious people.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)