

4 Buddhism: practices

RECAP



4.1 Places of worship

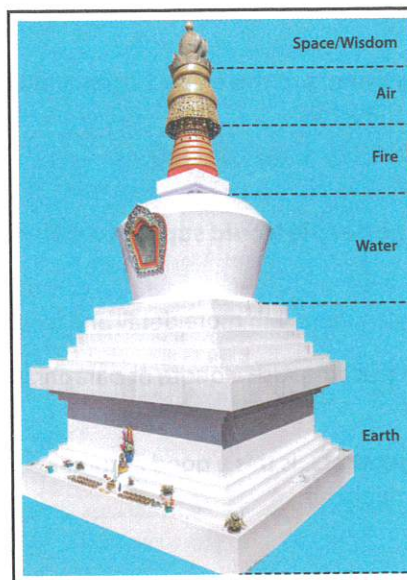
Essential information:

- A **temple** is a place where Buddhists come together to practise. It is often at the heart of a Buddhist community.
- A **shrine** is an area with a statue or image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. It provides a focal point for meditation and devotion.
- A **monastery** (**vihara**, or **gompa** in Tibet) is a place where a community of Buddhist monks or nuns lives.

Temples

A temple is an important centre of religious life where Buddhists can study, meditate and practise together. A temple may consist of just one building or several different buildings. Typically there is:

- A **main hall**, where Buddhists practise together. This usually contains a statue of the Buddha (a **Buddha rupa**). Mahayana temples may also include statues of Bodhisattvas.
- A **meditation hall**, which is a quiet space where Buddhists can meditate.
- A **study hall** for meetings and lectures.
- A **shrine** or shrines dedicated to the Buddha (or in Mahayana temples to a Bodhisattva).
- A **stupa** or pagoda, which is a tiered tower or mound-like structure that sometimes contains the remains or relics of an important Buddhist.



TIP
A stupa often functions as a type of shrine. It is common to walk in a clockwise direction around a stupa as a form of worship, often chanting a mantra (see page 69).

Stupas are usually designed to symbolise the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. Different segments of the building represent different elements, as shown here.

Shrines

- Shrines can be found in a temple, monastery or in the home.
- They provide a focal point for Buddhists to meditate and express devotion.
- Buddhists make offerings at shrines to show gratitude for the Buddha's teachings.
- Offerings can act as reminders of the Buddha's teachings, as shown in this table.

Light		Symbolises the Buddha, wisdom and enlightenment – which drive away the darkness of ignorance.
Flowers		As flowers wilt and decay, they remind Buddhists that all things are impermanent.
Incense		Symbolises purity, reminding Buddhists of the importance of practising pure thoughts, speech and behaviour.

Monasteries

- A monastery is a place where Buddhist monks or nuns live a simple, disciplined life of study, meditation, devotion and companionship.
- Some monasteries house large numbers of monks (especially in Tibet) and may be like small villages, while others consist of just one building.
- A stupa is often an important part of a monastery.

APPLY



- A** Give **two** examples of buildings or areas that you might find in a Buddhist temple, and explain what their function is.
- B** 'The best way for Buddhists to worship is in a monastery.'
Develop one argument for and one argument against this statement.

4.2 How Buddhists worship

RECAP



Essential information:

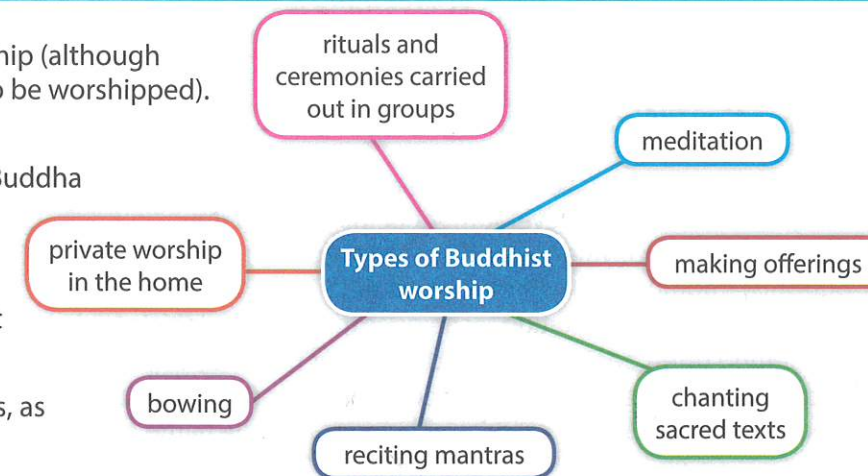
- Worship (**puja**) expresses gratitude and respect for the Buddha and his teachings.
- Chanting** is a type of worship that involves reciting from the Buddhist scriptures.
- Buddhists may chant **mantras**: short sequences of sacred syllables.

Buddhist worship

The Buddha is usually the focus of worship (although other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas may also be worshipped). Worship helps Buddhists to:

- express their gratitude towards the Buddha and acceptance of his teachings
- deepen their understanding of the Buddha's teachings
- move closer to the Buddha and what he symbolises.

Worship may involve different activities, as shown in the diagram to the right.



Chanting

- In the early days of Buddhism, sacred texts were remembered and taught orally – they were not written down. Chanting was used to **memorise and pass on teachings and texts**.
- Chanting is a **devotional practice** that is thought to increase receptivity towards the Buddha and his teachings.
- It also helps to **calm and focus the mind**, to increase concentration.
- Examples might include chanting the three refuges, the five moral precepts, or the Bodhisattva vows.

Mantras

- A mantra is a sequence of sacred syllables that is chanted out loud or silently in the mind, over and over again.
- Mantras help to **concentrate the mind** and so function as a form of meditation.
- Some Buddhists believe mantras have **magical powers**.
- They are often associated with the **spiritual qualities of a Buddha or Bodhisattva**.
- For example, *om mani padme hum* is a common mantra used by Tibetan Buddhists. It is associated with the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who represents compassion. Chanting this mantra helps Buddhists connect with the quality of compassion.



A mantra may be recited up to hundreds or thousands of times using a **mala** (a string of prayer beads) to help count the number of recitations

APPLY



- A** Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists worship.
- B** 'Worshipping the Buddha is wrong because it is treating him like a God.'

Evaluate this argument in response to the statement.

"The Buddha is not supposed to be God and so when Buddhists worship the Buddha they are treating him like God. For this reason, Buddhists should not worship the Buddha, only recognise that he is an important human being and guide towards enlightenment."

TIP
Most Buddhists do not think of the Buddha as a God. See page 58 for more on this.

4.3 Samatha meditation

RECAP



Essential information:

- Meditation** is a practice of calming and focusing the mind, and reflecting deeply on specific teachings to develop an insight into the nature of reality.
- Samatha meditation** is a type of meditation that involves calming the mind and developing deeper concentration. It is important in Theravada Buddhism as preparation for vipassana meditation.
- Mindfulness of breathing** is a popular technique in samatha meditation. It requires the meditator to become more aware of their breathing and to focus their attention on it.

The practice of meditation

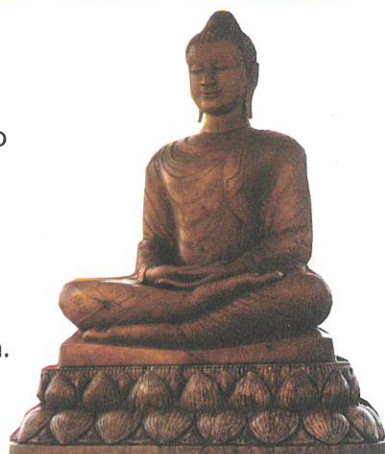
- Meditation is a spiritual exercise that calms the mind and body, and leads to the development of insight into the nature of existence. It is an important practice in most Buddhist traditions.
- There is a range of meditation techniques that help Buddhists to develop samatha (calm) and vipassana (insight).
- Meditating often begins with mindfulness of the body and breath.
- Buddhists may use a variety of objects as a focus for concentration, such as certain character traits or emotions, the breathing process, an image, a candle flame or even a Buddha.

“Even the gods envy those awakened and mindful ones who are intent on meditation.”
The Buddha in the Dhammapada, verse 181

Mindfulness of breathing

In samatha meditation, the breath can be used to become more ‘mindful’. Mindfulness is a quality of **attention and awareness**.

- The breath is used as a focus for attention, as well as how the body responds to each breath.
- The aim is to become aware of the details of breathing, and all the tiny movements it creates in the body.
- When someone finds their mind wandering as they meditate, they simply bring their attention back to their breathing.
- Little by little they become more able to concentrate and focus on their breath.
- This leads them to feel more present and aware.



Using kasinas in samatha meditation

- Instead of focusing on their breathing, a meditator could focus on other objects called kasinas.
- There are ten kasinas in total. They include elements such as earth, water and fire, and colours such as blue, red and yellow.
- For example, the meditator could focus on a bowl of water or a red circle placed in front of them.
- As with breathing, the object gives the meditator something to focus their attention on.

The purpose of samatha meditation

- Focusing on a single object helps to create a calm and tranquil mind.
- It also helps to develop concentration and focus.
- It acts as preparation for vipassana meditation (see the next page).
- Samatha meditation can help Buddhists to feel happier and more alive.

“Do not encumber your mind with useless thoughts [...] Remain in the simplicity of the present moment.”
Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

TIP

Remember that meditation is not about emptying the mind or making the mind go blank. Instead, think of it as a method of calming, settling and focusing the mind.

APPLY



- A** Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists practise samatha meditation.
- B** ‘Meditation is the most important Buddhist practice.’
Give a developed argument to support this statement. Then give a developed argument to support a different point of view.

4.4 Vipassana meditation

RECAP



Essential information:

- Vipassana meditation** is a type of meditation that involves developing understanding of the nature of reality. It is the second main type of meditation in Theravada Buddhism.
- Zazen** is a type of meditation in Zen Buddhism that involves awareness of the present moment.

What is vipassana meditation?

Vipassana meditation is often called ‘insight meditation’, as the aim is to penetrate and gain insight into the true nature of reality. This usually consists of reflecting on the three marks of existence (see pages 52–54).

Similarities and differences between vipassana and samatha meditation include the following:

Samatha meditation	Vipassana meditation
Both use the same technique of mindfulness : concentrating and focusing on specific things in a calm and detached manner.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meditator focuses on one neutral, simple object or process. • E.g. a blue triangle, a candle flame, or the process of breathing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meditator may change their focus between a range of different objects, emotions, experiences, etc., including things that are more personal to them. • E.g. a feeling of annoyance, their own body, or the sound of rain falling.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of focusing on the object is to develop concentration and calm. • E.g. the meditator focuses on their breath to become calmer and more aware. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of focusing on the object is to understand its true nature, and how it is characterised by the three marks of existence. • E.g. the meditator contemplates how their breath shows characteristics of the three marks of existence.

The main aims of vipassana meditation are to:

- understand how all things are characterised by the three marks of existence
- develop greater wisdom and awareness about the world
- ultimately achieve enlightenment.

TIP

Zazen can be understood as a form of vipassana meditation.

Zazen

- Zazen means ‘seated meditation’.
- It is practised in Zen Buddhism, which originated in Japan.
- It leads to a deeper understanding of the nature of existence.
- It generally begins with sitting, relaxing and a period of mindfulness of breathing.
- The meditator then sits with awareness of the present moment.
- Thoughts and experiences come and go, and the meditator returns again and again to the present moment.

Walking meditation

- Meditation is often practised sitting on the floor in a cross-legged posture.
- But it is also possible to meditate while walking, as part of samatha or vipassana meditation.
- This consists of walking slowly and combining the movement of the feet with the in and out of the breath.

“Your objective is to attain total alertness, heightened sensitivity and a full, unblocked experience of the motion of walking.”
Henepola Gunarantana

TIP

This quote shows how the technique of mindfulness can be applied to walking.

APPLY



- A** Two meditation practices are mindfulness of breathing and walking meditation. **Explain** how these practices could be used as part of vipassana meditation.
- B** **Prepare an essay plan** to evaluate the statement, ‘The aim of meditation is to reach enlightenment.’ In your plan include:
 - arguments to support this statement
 - arguments to support a different point of view
 - reference to Buddhist teachings
 - a justified conclusion.

TIP

Remember that a ‘justified’ conclusion means you need to give reasons in your conclusion for why you agree or disagree with the statement. You can use some of the arguments you have already written to help support your opinion.

4.5 The visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

RECAP

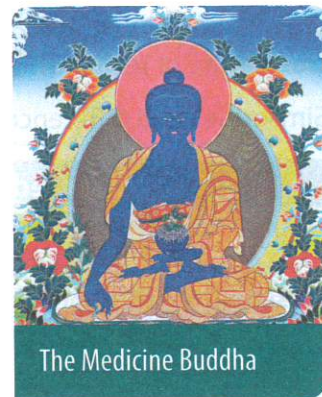


Essential information:

- Visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is used in Mahayana Buddhism as part of meditation.
- Buddhists may use thangkas or mandalas to help visualise a Buddha or Bodhisattva.
- These practices allow Buddhists to connect with the spiritual qualities of a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

What is visualisation?

- The meditator visualises (imagines) an object in their mind.
- They may first use an image for inspiration and then afterwards visualise it.
- They try to imagine the object in great detail, examining all the qualities and characteristics of it.
- The object functions as a focus of concentration – the meditator will try to hold a detailed picture of the object in their mind for as long as possible.
- The object may also connect with spiritual qualities.



The Medicine Buddha

Deity visualisation

- When they meditate, Tibetan Buddhists will often visualise a deity (an enlightened being such as a Buddha or Bodhisattva, but not a god).
- The meditator focuses not just on the visual features of the deity, but also on its spiritual qualities. They may imagine themselves as that deity in order to absorb its spiritual qualities.
- Visualising themselves as a Buddha may help Buddhists to awaken their Buddha-nature.

Examples of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas that meditators might visualise include:

The Medicine Buddha

- The Buddha of healing.
- Visualising this Buddha may reduce suffering and even promote healing powers.

Avalokiteshvara

- The Bodhisattva of compassion.
- Visualising this Bodhisattva helps Buddhists to develop a sense of compassion.

Buddha Amitabha

- Pure Land Buddhists may visualise Buddha Amitabha in the hope he will help them to be reborn in the Pure Land (see page 63).

Using thangkas or mandalas in visualisation

Some Buddhists use thangkas or mandalas to help them visualise and call to mind a deity.

- A **thangka** is a detailed painting of a Buddha or Bodhisattva.
- A **mandala** is an intricate, colourful circle-shaped pattern. It is a sacred diagram that represents Buddhist principles or teachings. It may symbolise the universe, a Buddha or Bodhisattva, or a pure land or paradise.

In Tibetan monasteries, monks make mandalas out of brightly coloured sand. These are complicated and may take weeks to create. Once finished, they are brushed away to encourage the monks to focus on impermanence (see page 53).

APPLY



A Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists practise visualisation.

B **Develop** this argument to support the statement, 'Mahayana Buddhists visualise Buddhas to become enlightened.'

"In Mahayana Buddhism, the practice of deity visualisation is common. Through visualising the deity, the meditator hopes to appreciate and absorb their spiritual qualities. For example..."

TIP

It is always helpful to add examples to back up your arguments. This is a good way to 'develop' your answers.

4.6 Ceremonies and rituals associated with death and mourning

RECAP



Essential information:

- Buddhist tradition teaches that when a Buddhist dies, their kammic energy leaves their body and is reborn in a new one.
- Death is not seen as an end but a transition between one life and the next.
- Funeral practices vary between different Buddhist traditions and countries.

Theravada funerals

- Little money is usually spent on funerals.
- Instead, family and friends may donate to a worthy cause and **transfer the merit** to the deceased. (The good kamma that is created by donating to a worthy cause is transferred to the dead person, to help them have a favourable rebirth – see page 75).
- Rituals that transfer merit to the deceased may be performed by family members or other mourners. For example, they may offer cloth to make new robes to a monastery on behalf of the dead person.



A Vietnamese Buddhist funeral procession

At the funeral itself, the following may happen:

- A shrine may display the deceased's portrait, along with an image of the Buddha and offerings to the Buddha.
- Monks often attend the funerals of lay people and perform rituals or give a sermon.
- The deceased may be cremated or buried, although cremation is traditional and more common.
- All mourners send good thoughts to the family and contemplate impermanence.

Funerals in Tibet

- Sky burial** is a traditional funeral practice in Tibet. The body is left in a high place as a gift to the vultures.
- This tradition arose due to a lack of wood for cremation and problems with frozen ground for burial.
- However, it is now more common to burn the body.
- Revered teachers have always been cremated, and their remains placed in a stupa to become a site of worship (see page 68).
- Ceremonies involving prayers and offerings of yak-butter lamps may be made every seven days for 49 days after the death.

Funerals in Japan

- In Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, the coffin may be placed with the head pointing west, towards the direction of Sukhavati. Those assembled chant Amitabha's name as they process around the coffin (see page 63).
- It is common across all Japanese traditions for relatives to gather after the cremation and pick out the bones from the ashes, using chopsticks.
- As in Tibet, these remains may be kept for 49 days and prayers offered every seventh day.

APPLY



A Explain **two** ways that Buddhist beliefs influence funeral practices.

B 'The purpose of Buddhist funerals is to prepare the deceased for their next life.'

Write three linked sentences to support this statement.

TIP

Sentences can be linked together using words like 'therefore', 'in addition', or 'however'. Linking sentences together in a logical order will help to improve the clarity of your writing.

4.7 Wesak and Parinirvana Day

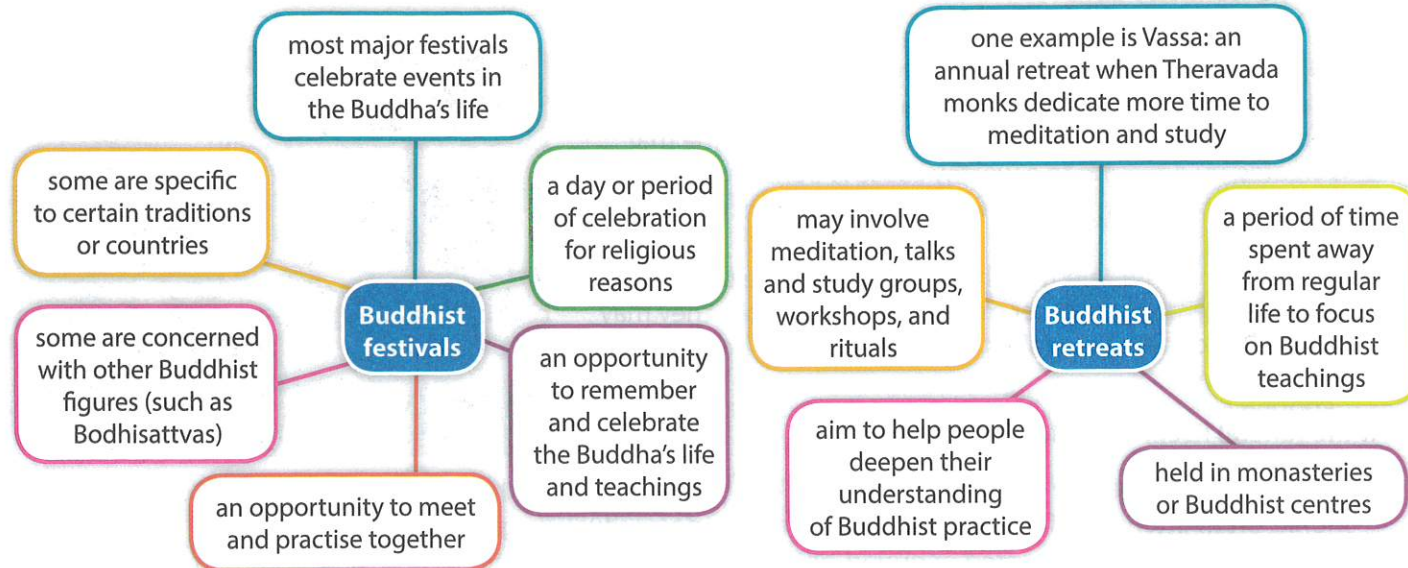
RECAP



Essential information:

- Festivals** allow Buddhists to celebrate important events in the history of Buddhism, while **retreats** provide an opportunity for intensive practice.
- Wesak** is a Theravada festival that celebrates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing away.
- Parinirvana Day** is a Mahayana festival that commemorates the Buddha's passing away.

Buddhist festivals and retreats



Wesak

Significance and meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commemorates three major events in the Buddha's life: his birth, enlightenment and passing away. An opportunity to honour and remember the Buddha and his teachings. Light is used during the festival to symbolise hope, enlightenment, and overcoming ignorance.
Celebrations	<p>Celebrations vary from one country to the next, but Buddhists may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> light up their homes with candles, lamps or lanterns make offerings to the Buddha and give gifts to the local monastery attend the local temple or monastery to take part in worship and meditation, or listen to sermons on the Buddha's teachings and life take part in ceremonies where caged animals are released as a symbol of liberation (in Singapore).

Parinirvana Day

Significance and meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrated during February to remember the Buddha's passing into parinirvana (the final state of nibbana). A solemn occasion when Buddhists reflect on their own future death, and remember friends or relatives who have recently passed away. The Buddhist teaching of impermanence (see page 53) is a focus for the day.
Celebrations	<p>Buddhists may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and study the <i>Mahaparinirvana Sutra</i> (a Buddhist scripture that describes the Buddha's last days) meditate and worship at home or with others in a temple or monastery go on retreat to reflect and meditate, or go on pilgrimage: many Buddhists visit Kushinagar in India (which is where the Buddha is believed to have passed away).

APPLY



- Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists celebrate festivals.
- 'Wesak is the celebration of the Buddhist belief in enlightenment.'
Write three linked sentences to oppose this statement.

TIP

Remember that how Buddhist festivals are observed changes from one country and tradition to the next.

4.8 Kamma (karma) and rebirth

RECAP



Essential information:

- Kamma** is an ethical principle that explains how a person's actions lead to either happiness or suffering. It teaches that it is not just the action which is important but also the motivation behind it.
- Kamma is central to Buddhist ethics, as it motivates Buddhists to behave in a way that will increase their own and others' happiness.

The concept of kamma in Buddhism

- Kamma explains how the intentions behind a person's actions lead to happiness or suffering.
- The table below shows how different motives or qualities lead to good or bad actions, which in turn results in happiness or suffering.

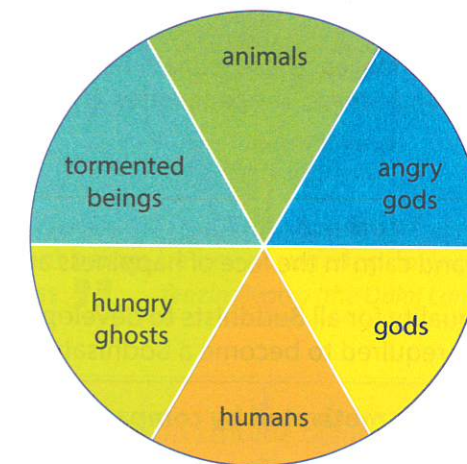
Actions and their results		
Type of action	Skilful (good, ethical actions or behaviour)	Unskilful (bad, unethical actions or behaviour)
Motivated by	Generosity, compassion, understanding	Craving, hatred, ignorance
Results in	Happiness	Suffering

Kamma and rebirth

Buddhist tradition teaches that a person's actions in this life not only affect their happiness and suffering right now, but will also **affect their future lives**.

Depending on their kamma, they will be reborn into one of the six realms shown on the right.

By developing skilful mental states and actions, Buddhists can not only live a happier life but also lay the ground for a favourable rebirth. The hope is to be reborn into the human realm, which is said to be the best realm for reaching enlightenment.



TIP

This quote shows the principle of kamma means a person cannot escape the consequences of their actions - which will affect not just their current life but also their future lives.

“Not in the sky, not in the middle of the sea, not entering an opening in the mountains is there that place on earth where standing **one might be freed from evil action.**”

Dhammapada, verse 127

Buddhist ethics

- Kamma is central to Buddhist ethics. The fact that a person's own behaviour causes their happiness or suffering is a motivation to live in a more skilful way.
- Acting skilfully (ethically) reduces suffering for oneself and others, and enables progress on the path to enlightenment.
- Examples of skilful action might include helping the poor in the local community, acting compassionately towards others, and not harming life.

APPLY



- Give **two** of the motives that Buddhists believe characterise a skilful action.
- 'The principle of kamma encourages ethical behaviour.'
Referring to Buddhist teaching, **prepare one developed argument** to support this statement.

TIP

The five moral precepts help Buddhists to behave skilfully (see page 78).

4.9 Compassion (karuna)

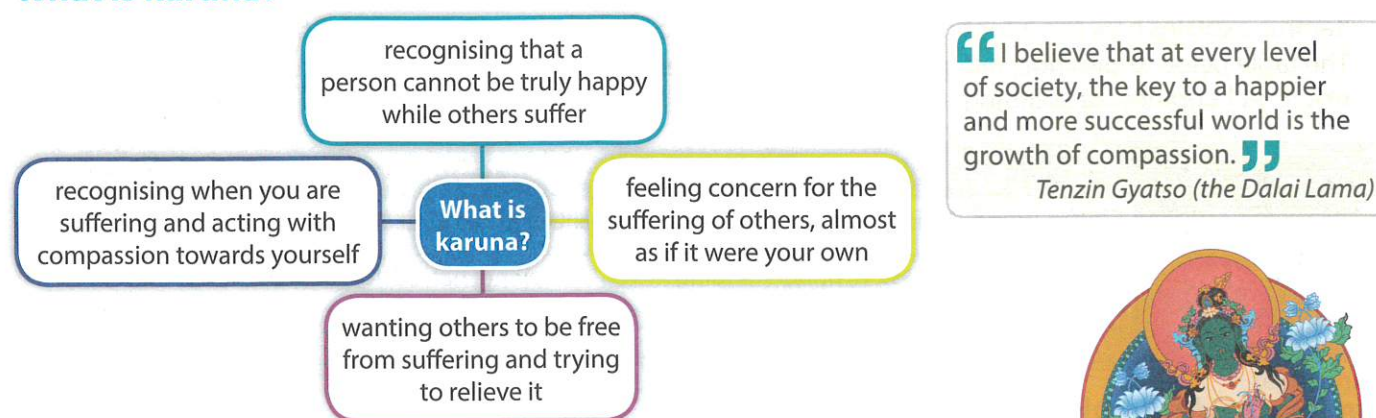
RECAP



Essential information:

- Karuna** (compassion) is feeling concerned for the suffering of other people and wanting to relieve their suffering.
- Karuna is one of **the four sublime states** (the four qualities which the Buddha taught all Buddhists should develop).
- It is particularly important to Mahayana Buddhists, who view it as an essential quality for becoming a Bodhisattva.

What is karuna?



Green Tara is a Bodhisattva who represents compassion

The importance of karuna in Buddhism

Karuna is one of **the four sublime states**. These explain how Buddhists should act towards themselves and others. The four states are:

1. loving-kindness
2. compassion
3. sympathetic joy (being happy for others)
4. equanimity (staying stable and calm in the face of happiness and suffering)

Compassion is an important quality for all Buddhists to develop. In Mahayana Buddhism it is a crucial quality required to become a Bodhisattva.

ROKPA: an example of a charity motivated by compassion

'Rokpa' is a Tibetan word meaning 'help' or 'friend'. It is also the name of a charity set up in 1980 which is motivated by acting compassionately towards others.

ROKPA is involved in projects in Zimbabwe, Nepal and Tibet. The charity helps to run schools and provide education to thousands of children each year. It aims to help families out of poverty through better education, and also to teach children about the value of compassion. ROKPA believes that helping others is the way to bring about real and lasting change.

APPLY



- A** Explain **two** ways in which beliefs about karuna influence Buddhists today.
- B** Here are some arguments that could be used to evaluate the statement, 'Wisdom is more important than compassion in Buddhism.' Sort them into arguments in support of the statement and arguments in support of different views. Use the arguments to **write a conclusion** where you explain why you agree or disagree with the statement.

1. On the night of his enlightenment, the Buddha came to understand the true nature of reality	5. Mahayana Buddhism emphasises compassion
2. The Buddha showed compassion by teaching others how to reach enlightenment	6. Enlightenment is understanding fully the three marks of existence
3. Amitabha created his pure land out of compassion for others	7. Buddhists practise the development of compassion
4. Theravada Buddhism speaks of enlightenment as a state of wisdom	8. Buddhist ethics encourages kindness to all beings and the rejection of violence

4.10 Loving-kindness (metta)

RECAP



Essential information:

- Metta** (loving-kindness) is a desire for others to be happy.
- Metta can be developed through loving-kindness meditation. The meditator aims to develop an attitude of warmth and kindness towards all people, including themselves.
- Metta leads to happiness and peace.

What is metta?

- Buddhists aim to develop loving-kindness towards themselves and others.
 - This **reduces the tendency to act out of negative emotions**, such as anger or greed.
 - It makes a person **more caring** and more likely to love unconditionally (without expecting anything in return).
 - This leads to a **feeling of peace** so there is no need for ill will or hostility.
 - It helps Buddhists to **overcome suffering** and eventually achieve enlightenment.
- Diagram: 'What is metta?' is connected to four boxes:
- Top: one of the four sublime states
 - Right: a loving, kind, friendly attitude towards oneself and all beings
 - Bottom: does not depend on the goodness of others or expect anything in return
 - Left: should be cultivated even towards people who act unskillfully

Metta and karuna are a little different from each other:

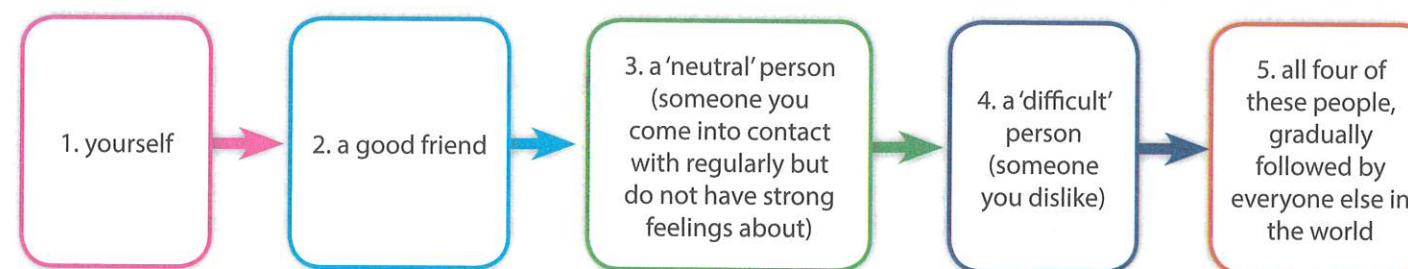
Metta	Karuna
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general desire for other people to be happy. • An attitude of warmth and kindness that Buddhists try to feel towards all people. • E.g. when someone wants their friend to be happy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arises when metta comes into contact with a specific person who is suffering. • E.g. when someone wants to help their friend after they have an accident.

"Just as compassion is the wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering, loving-kindness is the wish that all may enjoy happiness." Tenzin Gyatso (the Dalai Lama)

"[...] one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings, and **loving-kindness towards all the world.**" The Sutta Nipata, verses 149–150

Loving-kindness meditation

Loving-kindness meditation helps Buddhists to develop an attitude of metta. It often consists of five steps, which involve developing loving-kindness towards:



- The meditator might visualise or imagine one of these people looking happy.
- They might reflect on the positive qualities of the person and any acts of kindness they have done.

APPLY



- A** Give **two** ways in which metta is different from karuna.
- B** 'Metta should only be developed towards people we like.' Referring to Buddhist scripture, **write a developed argument** to oppose this statement.

TIP

To answer this question you can use the quote on this page from the Sutta Nipata.

4.11 The five moral precepts






RECAP



Essential information:

- The five moral precepts** form a Buddhist ethical code. They are five principles that Buddhists try to follow to live ethically and morally.
- The first and most important precept is not to cause harm. The other precepts stem from this one.
- Buddhists practise the precepts voluntarily to improve their behaviour and purify their mind of greed, ignorance and hatred.

What are the five moral precepts?

<p>1. To abstain from taking life</p>  <p>Buddhists aim not to harm or kill any living being. For this reason many Buddhists are vegetarian or vegan.</p>	<p>2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given</p>  <p>As well as not stealing, this means Buddhists aim to avoid manipulating or taking advantage of others.</p>	<p>3. To abstain from misuse of the senses or sexual misconduct</p>  <p>Buddhists aim not to abuse or overindulge in sensual pleasures, or to use sex harmfully.</p>	<p>4. To abstain from wrong speech</p>  <p>Buddhists aim not to lie or gossip about other people but to speak truthfully, kindly, helpfully and at the right time.</p>	<p>5. To abstain from intoxicants that cloud the mind</p>  <p>Not taking alcohol or drugs is important for Buddhists who have committed themselves to developing greater awareness.</p>
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“Whoever destroys a living creature, and speaks untruth, takes what is not given in the world, and goes to another’s wife, and whatever man applies himself to drinking liquor and intoxicants, that person digs up his own root here in this very world.”

The Buddha in the Dhammapada, verses 246–247

Following the five moral precepts

- The five precepts are principles that Buddhists **practise voluntarily**. Buddhists do not believe in a god who will punish them if they do not follow the precepts.
- The precepts should be **applied sensitively**. Sometimes Buddhists have to balance one precept against another. For example, what if being truthful may lead to harm? It may sometimes be more ethical to lie, if this is motivated by genuine kindness.
- The precepts can be **practised on ever deepening levels**, especially at the level of the mind. For example, if a person wants to hurt someone this is still considered to be unskillful, even if they don’t actually go ahead and hurt them.
- Applying the precepts **purifies the mind of greed, hatred and ignorance**, replacing these traits with wisdom and compassion.

“We just keep on working, we are patient with ourselves, and on and on it goes [...] As our minds get clearer and clearer, it’s not even a matter of breaking or maintaining the precepts; automatically they are maintained.”

Jan Chozen Bays

APPLY



- A** Explain **two** of the five moral precepts of Buddhism. **Refer to sacred writings** in your answer.
- B** Prepare an **essay plan** to evaluate the statement, ‘It is always wrong to lie.’ In your plan include:
 - arguments to support this statement
 - arguments to support a different point of view
 - reference to Buddhist teachings
 - a justified conclusion.

TIP

It would be easy to answer this question without referring to any religious teachings, but make sure you do. For example, you could refer to the fourth moral precept and discuss what it means to apply the precepts sensitively.

4.12 The six perfections







RECAP



Essential information:

- The six perfections** are six qualities or virtues that Mahayana Buddhists try to develop in order to become Bodhisattvas.
- The six perfections are generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom.

What are the six perfections?

Perfection	Explanation
<p>1. Generosity or giving</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhists should give without expecting anything in return. • It is therefore important to develop awareness of the reasons for giving, and to gradually purify these in order to give more freely. • Tibetan Buddhists talk about three main types of giving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving material goods such as food, clothes and money. These provide immediate relief for people’s suffering. 2. Giving protection from fear. This means helping someone if they are afraid or in trouble. 3. Giving the Dhamma (the Buddha’s teachings). This helps people to help themselves, so has a longer-lasting impact.
<p>2. Morality</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhists try to follow the five moral precepts (see page 78). • Mahayana Buddhists aim to follow a further five precepts. These include not talking about other people’s faults, not being stingy and angry, and not speaking badly of the three refuges. • Meditation and mindfulness help Buddhists to follow the precepts more willingly, without feeling restrained by them.
<p>3. Patience</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Bodhisattva embodies patience, which is expressed through tolerance and endurance. • Buddhists aim to practise compassion towards those who show them anger, and have patience with themselves and others. • Understanding that suffering is an inevitable part of life (the first noble truth) helps Buddhists to develop the patience needed to endure it.
<p>4. Energy</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhists should put effort and enthusiasm into their practice of the Dhamma. • They should develop the courage and energy needed to strive for enlightenment. • This may mean looking after their own health, developing their practice, or studying the Buddha’s teachings.
<p>5. Meditation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation helps to develop the concentration and awareness needed to achieve wisdom. • It is described further on pages 70–71.
<p>6. Wisdom</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first five perfections contribute to the development of the sixth one. • By meditating and studying the Buddha’s teachings, and by living ethically and morally, Buddhists aim to develop a full understanding of the nature of reality.

APPLY



- A** Which **one** of the following is **not** one of the six perfections:
A) Generosity B) Energy C) Compassion D) Wisdom
- B** Read the following argument in support of the statement, ‘The six perfections are more difficult to practise than the five precepts.’ Then **write a developed argument** to oppose it.

“The five precepts encourage Buddhists to not do quite specific actions, such as drinking alcohol or telling lies, whereas the six perfections guide Buddhists to develop more general character traits, such as ‘generosity’ and ‘patience’. I think it is easier for a person to give up doing specific bad things than it is to change their character and who they are as a person, so I agree with the statement.”

TIP

Remember you don’t always have to agree with an argument to write about it. (If this is the case, you could write ‘some Buddhists think’ or ‘some people think’ rather than ‘I think...’)



Test the 1 mark question

- 1 Which **one** of the following is a Buddhist building?
 A Church B Mosque C Synagogue D Stupa
- 2 Which **one** of the following is the best meaning for the term vipassana?
 A Calm B Compassion C Insight D Generosity

Test the 2 mark question

- 3 Give **two** ways in which Buddhists can follow the six perfections.
 1) _____
 2) _____
- 4 Give **two** different places of Buddhist worship.
 1) _____
 2) _____

Test the 4 mark question

- 5 Explain **two** contrasting Buddhist rituals associated with death and mourning.
- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Explain one ritual. | <i>In Pure Land Buddhism, the mourners chant Amitabha's name as they process around the coffin.</i> |
| ● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example/reference to a religious teaching or quotation. | <i>This is because they are hoping the deceased person will be reborn into the pure land where Amitabha lives, from where it is easier to achieve enlightenment.</i> |
| ● Explain a second ritual. | <i>In Tibet, sky burial is traditional, where the body is left in a high place as a gift to the vultures.</i> |
| ● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example/reference to a religious teaching or quotation. | <i>This tradition started because of a lack of wood for cremation and the ground being too frozen for burial. But now it is more common to cremate the body.</i> |

- 6 Explain **two** ways in which the five moral precepts influence Buddhists today. [4 marks]
- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Explain one way. | |
| ● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example/reference to a religious teaching or quotation. | |
| ● Explain a second way. | |
| ● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example/reference to a religious teaching or quotation. | |

- 7 Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists celebrate Wesak. [4 marks]

Test the 5 mark question

- 8 Explain **two** ways in which Buddhists can perform puja in the home. [1 mark]
 Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer. [5 marks]

● Explain one way.	<i>Buddhists can perform puja in the home by chanting mantras (sequences of sacred syllables).</i>
● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example.	<i>Some Buddhists believe mantras call on the spiritual qualities of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, and can help them to develop those qualities.</i>
● Explain a second way.	<i>Buddhists can also perform puja in the home by making offerings at a shrine to the Buddha.</i>
● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example.	<i>These offerings help remind Buddhists of the Buddha's teachings. The act of making offerings also helps to focus the mind.</i>
● Add a reference to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief. If you prefer, you can add this reference to your first way instead.	<i>Lama Choedak Rinpoche (a Tibetan Buddhist monk) says that, 'The time and effort required to keep the shrine clean and replenished with flowers and other offerings is considered a skilful activity to focus one's mind in the spiritual practices.'</i>

TIP
 It is acceptable to use a quote from a Buddhist leader or teacher as a 'source of Buddhist belief and teaching'. You do not have to refer to a Buddhist scripture to gain the extra mark.

- 9 Explain **two** Buddhist beliefs about metta (loving-kindness). [5 marks]
 Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.

● Explain one belief.	
● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example.	
● Explain a second belief.	
● Develop your explanation with more detail/an example.	
● Add a reference to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief. If you prefer, you can add this reference to your first belief instead.	

- 10 Explain **two** Buddhist beliefs about kamma. [5 marks]
 Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.



Test the 12 mark question

11 'Meditation is the most important practice for Buddhists.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Buddhist teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

REASONED ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE STATEMENT

- **Explain why some people would agree with the statement.**
- Develop your explanation with more detail and examples.
- Refer to religious teaching. Use a quote or paraphrase or a religious authority.
- **Evaluate the arguments.** Is this a good argument or not? Explain why you think this.

For Buddhists the ultimate goal is to achieve enlightenment, and meditation is an important practice that brings Buddhists closer to this. In fact it is so important that there is a whole section of the Eightfold Path dedicated to it. In the Dhammapada the Buddha said that 'even the gods envy those awakened and mindful ones who are intent on meditation', which shows how important the Buddha thought it was. Buddhists meditate in order to calm and focus their mind (samatha meditation) so they can then gain insight into the nature of existence (vipassana meditation). This insight is what leads to enlightenment.

REASONED ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING A DIFFERENT VIEW

- **Explain why some people would support a different view.**
- Develop your explanation with more detail and examples.
- Refer to religious teaching. Use a quote or paraphrase or a religious authority.
- **Evaluate the arguments.** Is this a good argument or not? Explain why you think this.

Although meditation is very important in Buddhism, some Buddhists might argue that other practices are equally important for achieving enlightenment. For example, ethics is another section of the Eightfold Path. Living ethically and morally (for example by following the five moral precepts) helps to reduce suffering and can lead to a favourable rebirth, which increases progress towards enlightenment. Mahayana Buddhists believe that compassion and wisdom are both important for achieving enlightenment. So they may view meditation as important for gaining wisdom, but acting kindly and ethically as important for gaining compassion.

CONCLUSION

- **Give a justified conclusion.**
- Include your own opinion together with your own reasoning.
- **Include evaluation.** Explain why you think one viewpoint is stronger than the other or why they are equally strong.
- Do not just repeat arguments you have already used without explaining how they apply to your reasoned opinion/conclusion.

I think that most Buddhists would agree meditation is very important for developing wisdom and achieving enlightenment. But I think that a lot of Buddhists would also say that acting ethically and compassionately is equally important, so for example following the five moral precepts is also an important practice. Mahayana Buddhists would say you cannot have wisdom without compassion, so meditation on its own will not achieve enlightenment.

TIP

The supporting arguments are good but they need to be fully linked to the statement. An improvement would be to add at the end of the second paragraph, 'So many Buddhists would agree that meditation is the most important practice for Buddhists.'

12 'Vipassana meditation is more important than samatha meditation.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Buddhist teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

REASONED ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE STATEMENT

- **Explain why some people would agree with the statement.**
- Develop your explanation with more detail and examples.
- Refer to religious teaching. Use a quote or paraphrase or a religious authority.
- **Evaluate the arguments.** Is this a good argument or not? Explain why you think this.

REASONED ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING A DIFFERENT VIEW

- **Explain why some people would support a different view.**
- Develop your explanation with more detail and examples.
- Refer to religious teaching. Use a quote or paraphrase or a religious authority.
- **Evaluate the arguments.** Is this a good argument or not? Explain why you think this.

CONCLUSION

- **Give a justified conclusion.**
- Include your own opinion together with your own reasoning.
- **Include evaluation.** Explain why you think one viewpoint is stronger than the other or why they are equally strong.
- Do not just repeat arguments you have already used without explaining how they apply to your reasoned opinion/conclusion.

13 'Buddhists practise the five moral precepts in order to avoid an unfavourable rebirth.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- refer to Buddhist teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

TIP

To answer this question, think about why Buddhists might feel that practising the five moral precepts will help to influence their rebirth. How is this related to the idea of kamma?



Check your answers using the mark scheme on pages 163–164. How did you do? To feel more secure in the content you need to remember, re-read pages 68–79. To remind yourself of what the examiner is looking for, go to pages 6–11.