**Buddhist Beliefs**

|  |
| --- |
| Explain the concept of Dhamma and dependent arising |
| Explain the three marks of existence |
| Explain how the human personality is thought to be made up of 5 aggregates |
| Explain the concept of sunyata, Buddha-nature and Buddhahood in Mahayana Buddhism |
| Explain the differences between Arhats and Bodhisattvas |
| Explain how Pure Land Buddhists believe they can attain Buddhahood and achieve enlightenment |
| Explain the circumstances of the birth and how his life of luxury growing up influenced his teachings |
| Explain the Buddha’s encounter with the 4 sights |
| Explain how the Buddha lived as an ascetic and how he achieved enlightenment |
| Explain the Buddha’s teaching about the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. |

**Key terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Buddhism | A religion founded around 2500 years ago by Siddhartha Gautama |
| Buddha | A title given to someone who has achieved enlightenment; usually used to refer to Siddhartha Gautama |
| Jataka | The Jataka tales are popular stories about the life of the Buddha. |
| Ascetic | Living a simple a strict lifestyle with few pleasures or possessions; someone who follows ascetic practice. |
| Meditation | A practise of calming and focusing the mind, and reflecting deeply on specific teaching to penetrate their true meaning. |
| Enlightenment | The gaining of true knowledge about God, self or the nature of reality, usually through mediation and self-discipline.; in Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh traditions, gaining freedom from the cycle of rebirth. |
| Mara | A demon that represents spiritual obstacles, especially temptation |
| The Three Watches of the Night | The three realisations that the night the Buddha made in order to achieve enlightenment. |
| Dhamma(Dharma) | The Buddha’s teachings |
| Pali | The language of the earliest scriptures |
| Sanskrit | The language used in the later Indian texts. |
| Dependent Arising | The idea that all things arise in dependence upon conditions. |
| Nidanas | 12 factors that illustrate the process of birth, life, death and rebirth.  Samsara |
| Dukkha | Suffering |
| Anicca | Impermanence; the idea that everything changes |
| Anatta | The idea that people do not have permanent, fixed self or soul |
| Tanha | Craving (desiring or wanting something) |
| Samsara | The repeating cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. |
| Kamma (Karma) | A person’s actions; the idea that skillful actions result in happiness and unskillful one in suffering. |
| Nibbana (Nirvana) | A state of complete enlightenment, happiness and peace. |

**BUDDHISM BY NUMBERS:**

**THE THREE FIRES:** Greed, Hatred and Desire - at the centre of the wheel of Samsara, they are the causes of all human suffering.

**THE THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE:** Anatta (No Self), Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering).

**THE THREE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT:** 1) Siddhartha gained knowledge of his previous lives, 2) He came to understand the cycle of life, death and rebirth 3) He understands why suffering happens and how to overcome it.

**THE THREE REFUGES:** Dharma, Sangha and Buddha

**THE THREE TYPES OF DUKKHA:** Dukkha-Dukkha (ordinary suffering), Viparinama-dukkha (nothing is permanent), Sankhara-dukkha (attachment)

**THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:** The truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the end of suffering, the truth of the path leading to the end of suffering.

**THE FIVE SKANDHAS :** Form, Sensation, Perception, Mental Formations, Consciousness - 5 things that interact together to make up a person's identity.

**THE SIX REALMS OF SAMSARA:** God realm, Demi-God realm, Human realm, Animal realm, Hungry ghost realm and Hell realm.

**THE SIX PERFECTIONS:** Generosity, Morality, Patience, Energy, Meditation, Wisdom.

**THE EIGHTFOLD PATH:** Right...Understanding, Thought, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Meditation, Concentration.

**THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA (SUMMARY):**

**INTRODUCTION:** Siddhartha Gautama was said to have been born approximately 2500 years ago in Northern India. After he became enlightened he was known as the **Buddha,** which is a title meaning ‘**the enlightened one’** or ‘**the awakened one.’** Siddhartha was a prince: his father was **King Suddhodana** and his mother was **Queen Maya.**

**THE BIRTH OF THE BUDDHA:** One night, Queen Maya had a dream that a white elephant came down from heaven and entered her womb. The elephant told her that she would give birth to a holy child, and that when he was born he would achieve perfect wisdom. Shortly after Siddhartha’s birth, a prophecy was made that he would become either a great king or a revered holy man.

**SIDDHARTHA’S LIFE OF LUXURY:** According to Buddhist traditions, Siddhartha grew up in a palace, surrounded in luxury. His father kept in mind the prophecy that was made, and to ensure he would follow in his footsteps and grow up to be a great king. So he decided to protect Siddhartha from any pain, sadness, disappointment or suffering that he might experience in life.

**THE FOUR SIGHTS:** Siddhartha grew curious and wanted to explore outside the palace walls and encountered **the four sights,** which had a profound effect on his life. **THE FIRST SIGHT: OLD AGE** something he had never witnessed before in his life. **THE SECOND SIGHT: ILLNESS** This disturbed him as he had never seen sickness or illness before, he began to understand that illness was a reality of life. **THE THIRD SIGHT: DEATH** he saw a dead man being carried through the streets in a funeral processions. Some say that this third sight struck Siddhartha more deeply. It was, after all, the first time he had seen death. He realised that death came to everyone. **THE FOURTH SIGHT: A HOLY MAN** Walking calmly through the city was a man dressed in rags and carrying an alms bowl. The peaceful expression on the face of this holy man impressed Siddhartha very much. He felt inspired to be like this holy man and to become and wandering truth seeker. This was perhaps the beginning of Siddhartha’s quest to search for the answer to the problem of why people suffer, and how to stop that suffering.

**LEAVING THE PLACE** Finding the answer to suffering was not possible if Siddhartha remained in the place. He took his sword and cut off his hair, swapped his clothes for that of a beggar. By giving up his possessions and the symbols of his previous life, Siddhartha was letting go of the things that he thought were keeping him ignorant and thus resulting in his suffering. Later he was to teach that renunciation, a ‘letting go’, was important to reaching enlightenment.

**LIVING AS AN ASCETIC** Siddhartha tried various methods to learn how to overcome the problem of suffering. He decided to follow ascetic practices for six years. He rejected anything that would give him pleasure and practised self-discipline. He met and studied with various holy men, in particular focusing on meditation, it said that meditation gave him a feeling of bliss but did not offer a permanent solution for suffering. Next, Siddhartha began to ignore his appetite and resided with 5 ascetics. He fasted for long periods of time, becoming increasingly hungry and weak. Stories say, that he became so thin, you could see him spin through his stomach. He looked like a living skeleton and suffered from terrible pain.

**TURNING AWAY FROM ASCETICISM** Siddhartha decided to stop his ascetic practice, because he was no closer to the truth of why people suffer and how to get rid of suffering. Neither luxury nor an ascetic lifestyle had given Siddhartha any real answers. This lead him to develop a ‘**middle way’** between two extremes that he had experienced.

**THE BUDDHA’S ENLIGHTENMENT** Siddhartha began to meditate. Stories tell how **Mara,** the evil one, appeared to try to stop him from achieving enlightenment. Mara tried a number of different tactics: i) He sent his daughters down to seduce Siddhartha ii) he sent his army to attack Siddhartha iii) he offered Siddhartha his control of his kingdom. iv) Mara himself tried to attacked Siddhartha. Throughout it all Siddhartha said focused on his meditation. Siddhartha touched the earth and called upon the earth to witness his right to sit under the tree in meditation. The earth shook in acknowledgement. **BECOMING ENLIGHTENED** during his meditation Siddhartha was said to have experienced 3 watches: 1) He gained knowledge of **a**ll his previous lives, 2) he came to understand the repeating cycle of life, death and rebirth, He understood that all beings were born depending on their Kamma, and he realised the importance of Anatta. 3) He came to understand why suffering happens and how to overcome it.

**The Dhamma**

* Dhamma refers to the truth the Buddha realised when he became enlightened, and to the path of training he recommended.
* The Dhamma is one of the 3 refuges, which are the central values in a Buddhist’s life.
* The Dhamma is important to Buddhists as they believe by following it they will reduce their own suffering and the suffering of others.

**Importance of the Dhamma**

* There are 3 refuges (jewels) in Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha (community)
* For a Buddhist, the 3 jewels are the central values in their life. A Buddhist could be defined as someone who goes for refuge to the 3 jewels. They are relief from suffering.
* In Buddhist rituals it is common to recite the 3 refuges. They are also recited in the ceremony of becoming a Buddhist.

**Dependent Arising**

* The idea that everything arises in dependence upon conditions.
* Its illustrated in the Tibetan Wheel of Life.
* It expresses the Buddhist view about the nature of reality.
* It is the idea that everything depends on supporting conditions: nothing is independent and so means everything is in a constant process of change, because everything is dependent on conditions which are themselves continually changing.

**The 3 marks of existence: Dukkha**

* Buddhism teaches that suffering is an inevitable part of life and the main reason why the Buddha left his life of luxury, so he could discover an answer to suffering.
* Buddhists try to reduce suffering through the Buddha’s teachings.
* When they achieve enlightenment they will no longer suffer.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of suffering | Meaning | Examples |
| Ordinary | Physical/mental pain | Breaking a leg or missing someone |
| Because of change | Caused by losing something good | Getting older or moving to a new city |
| Because of attachment | Dissatisfaction with life as a result of craving and attachment | Trying to hold on to things a person is attached to. |

**The 3 marks of existence: Anicca**

* This means impermanence and the idea that everything constantly changes.
* Suffering arises when people resist change because they are too attached to things.
* Awareness of anicca leads to letting go of attachment and so lessens suffering.
* The story of Kisa Gotami teaches about suffering because of anicca. The main events are as follows:
* Kisa’s child died and she went out of her mind with sorrow.
* The Buddha told her she should visit all the houses in the village and ask for a mustard seed from any house in which no one had died.
* She could not find a house where no one had died.
* Eventually she realised that death is inescapable and buried her child.
* Tip – When she realised that death (as a result of anicca) is something that everyone experiences her suffering became more bearable. You could use this story in your exam of how an awareness of impermanence helps to reduce suffering.

**The 3 marks of existence: Anatta**

* The idea that people don’t have a fixed self.
* A person is made up of 5 aspects, called the 5 aggregates. These show how there is no unchanging self. These are form, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness.
* The monk Nagasena used the analogy of the chariot:
* A chariot is made up from a number of different parts.
* ‘Chariot’ is used to refer to all these parts.
* There is no chariot independent of its parts.
* Likewise, a person exists but only because of the parts they are made up from.
* There is no separate ‘self’ that is independent to these parts.

**The Four Noble truths**

* They explain why people suffer and how they can overcome it.
* Part of the Dhamma and the Buddha’s first teaching after his enlightenment.

1. **There is suffering** and it is something that everyone experiences. Happiness and pleasures do exist but they are only temporary. Accept suffering exists.
2. **Suffering has a cause and this is craving (tanha).** There are 3 main types a. craving that pleases the senses b. craving for being e.g. to become rich c. craving for non-being e.g not wanting to feel pain. People suffer because they become attached to things they like but these things are impermanent, so will change or disappear. So attachment leads to suffering.

**Suffering and the three poisions**

* Greed or desire – cockerel
* Hatred or anger – snake
* Ignorance – pig.
* These trap people in the cycle of samsara and prevent them from achieving enlightenment. They sis in the Tibetan Wheel of Life and keep it turning.
* The Buddha taught that the 3 poisions are linked to craving as craving leads to greed and hatred and is also rooted in ignorance about the world/nature of reality. Because people do not wake up to the truth of things (3 marks of existence) they keep spinning around and continue to suffer.

1. **Suffering can come to an end by overcoming craving and ignorance**. They become enlightened and reach nibbana – a state of complete freedom, happiness and peace. People can enjoy things but recognise they can’t last and be ready to let go of them.
2. **There is a means to bring suffering to an end**. It is a series of practices to follow to overcome suffering. It is known as the **Middle Way** – a moderate life between 2 extremes of luxury and asceticism. The path consists of 8 practices (**Eightfold Path**)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Section of the 8 fold Path | Aspect | Explanation |
| Ethics  Good morals/behaviour | Right speech | Speaking truthfully, helpfully. Avoiding lying and gossiping |
| Right action | Practising the 5 Moral Precepts (not causing harm to others) |
| Right livelihood | Earning a living in a way that does not harm others |
| Meditation  This helps to develop wisdom | Right effort | Putting effort into developing skilful mental states |
| Right Mindfulness | Developing awareness of yourself and the world around you |
| Right concentration | Developing the concentration to meditate effectively |
| Wisdom  The importance of overcoming ignorance in order to gain enlightnment | Right understanding | Developing a clear understanding of the Buddha’s teachings |
| Right intention | Following the Eightfold Path with the correct intention |

**Theravada Buddhism:**

* One of the oldest schools, practised in southern Asia.
* Ordination of the monastic community is emphasised. (full ordination reserved for men)
* Buddha is the focus of worship and seen as teacher, guide but is not considered a god.
* Goal is to achieve enlightenment and reach nibbana.
* Good fortune or merit may be transferred to others when someone has died.
* Human personality is made up of 5 parts/aggregates – form, sensation, perception, mental formulations and consciousness.
* Aims to become an Arhat by following the 8-fold path.

**Mahayana Buddhism:**

* Describes a number of different Buddhist traditions that share characteristics. Pure Land, Zen and Tibetan Buddhism.
* Sunyata (emptiness): the idea that nothing has a separate, independent self. This is a restatement of anatta but applies to all things rather than just humans.
* Buddha-nature: the idea that everyone has the essence of a Buddha inside them.
* Aims to become a Bodhisattva by developing the 6 perfections – generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation, wisdom.
* Out of compassion a Bodhisattva, after they achieve enlightenment chooses to remain in the cycle of samsara to help others achieve enlightenment.

**Exam Questions:**

* Which one of the following is a Buddhist school or tradition? A. Sunyata B. Asceticism C. Theravada D. Bodhisattva (1 mark)
* Which one of the following is not one of the Four Noble Truths? A. Suffering exists B. Suffering can be overcome C. Not everyone Suffers D. Following the 8 Fold Path can end suffering (1 mark)
* Give two of the six perfections (2 marks)
* Give two reasons why Siddhartha decided to run away from ascetiscism (2 marks)
* Give two of the four sights the Buddha saw (2 marks)
* Explain two ways in which belief in the Buddha’s enlightenment influences Buddhists today. (4 marks)
* Explain tow ways in which learning about the 4 sights influences Buddhists today. (4 marks)
* Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the third noble truth. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer (5 marks)
* Explain two realisations the Buddha made during the three watches of the night, when he became enlightened. Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief. (5 marks)
* ‘The Stories of the Buddha have no relevance for Buddhists today’. Evaluate the statement. (12 marks)
* ‘For Buddhists, dukkha is the most important of the three marks of existence’ Evaluate the statement (12 marks)