

BUDDHIST PRACTICES

Temple – Main place of worship for a Buddhist

Stupa – representing this Buddha's mind this building houses the relics of great practitioners of Buddhism

Gompa – Tibetan Temple

Vihara – The name of a Buddhist monastery where monks or nuns live.

Shrine – Place where representations of Buddha's body, speech and mind are venerated

Offerings – In order to receive blessings Buddhists place offerings on the shrine to the Buddha.

Puja – Buddhist prayers, chanted in the morning and the evening.

Meditation – a mental practice aimed at developing the mind in a positive way.

Samatha – calm meditation. Buddhists learn to focus their attention on their breath or another object as a way of attaining a state of deep calm.

Vipassana – Insight or clear seeing. In meditation a Buddhist learns to see the world as it really is once illusions have been calmed.

Visualisation – Tibetan Buddhists use the powers of the imagination to attain enlightenment. By imagine they become Buddha they being to take on the Buddha's qualities.

Wesak – Buddhist festival celebrating the three important events in Buddha's life: Birth, nirvana, parinirvana.

Parinirvana Day – Buddhist festival celebrating Buddha's passing into final nirvana.

Sky burial – the ritual in Tibet where the body of the deceased is dismembered and fed to vultures.

Tibetan Book of the Dead – Guidelines for the state between two lives read to the dead shortly after death in Tibet.

Pure Land – Buddhists of this school point the coffins of the dead in a western direction where Sukhavati is.

Metta - Loving kindness. Buddhists cultivate a desire for all sentient beings to achieve permanent happiness.

Karuna – Compassion, Buddhists strive to free all other sentient beings from suffering..

Five Precepts – guidelines on living ethically followed by all Buddhists to support meditation and improve karma

Six Perfections – six key mental attainments which all Mahayana Buddhists attempt to embody

Karma - Means literally action. Suggests that all actions have a mirror like effect in future lives. So if you kill in this life you will be killed in a future life

Key Quotations:

And all beings who are born here are fixed on the right method of meditation, until they have won nirvana. (Sukhavata)

I offer without any sense of loss the objects that give rise to my attachment, hatred and ignorance. (from Buddhist puja)

May everyone be happy. May everyone be free from suffering. May no one be separated from their happiness. May everyone have equanimity (**the Four Immeasurables** practised by all Buddhists.)

Stay calm, do not worry, know that everything is an appearance of your own mind (from **The Tibetan Book of the Dead**)

I go for refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. (refuge prayer from puja)

'Your objective is to attain total alertness heightened sensitivity and a full unblocked experience of the motion of walking. (**Henepola Gunasrathana**)

Not in the sky not in the middle of the sea nor entering an opening in the mountains is there a place on earth where standing one might be freed from evil actions. Dhammapada verse 127

Framework for Evaluation questions:

- a. State your opinion
- b. Explain two or more arguments counter to your own.
- c. Explain your view countering these arguments
- d. Conclusion: brief summing up.

Criteria for questions 3 and 4

2 marks for detailed explanation of each point

1 mark for reference to scripture (Q4 only)

1. Which is a monastery (1)
2. Give two perfections (2)
3. Give two contrasting Buddhist meditation practices (4)
4. Explain two reasons why Wesak is important to Buddhists (5)
5. It is impossible for a Buddhist always to act with compassion (12)
6. Which of the following means compassion? (1)
7. Give two religious practices performed at a Buddhist Temple (2)
8. Explain two contrasting ways Buddhist mourn the dead in Japan and Tibet. (4)
9. Explain two reasons why meditation is important in Buddhism (5)
10. 'For Buddhists worship in a Temple is more important than worship at home.'
11. Which one of the following means 'loving kindness?' (1)
12. Give two aims of meditation (2)
13. Give two contrasting ways Buddhists can develop the six perfections within themselves. (4)
14. Give two reasons why Parinirvana Day is important for Buddhists. (5)
15. 'For Buddhists it is easy to follow the Five Precepts.' (12)
16. Which one of the following is a Buddhist festival? (1)
17. Give two of the Five moral precepts. (2)
18. Explain two contrasting rituals associated with death and mourning. (4)
19. Explain two ways in which shrines are important in Buddhist worship. (5)
20. 'The best way to understand the Buddhist teaching about the three marks of existence is by meditating.'
21. Which one of the following is a Buddhist festival? (1)
22. Give two forms of Buddhist meditation (2)
23. Explain two contrasting aims of Buddhist meditation (4)
24. Explain two ways in which death ceremonies are important to Buddhists in Tibet. (5)
25. 'The Five Precepts are impossible to live by.' (12)
26. Which of the following is insight meditation? (1)
27. Give two different items that might be seen on a Buddhist Shrine. (2)
28. Explain two contrasting ways Buddhist might show compassion (4)
29. Explain two reasons why believing in kamma is important for a Buddhist. (5)
30. 'Rituals associated with death have little importance for a Buddhist.' (12)

'Rituals associated with death have little importance for a Buddhist.'

I agree with this statement to a small extent as other Buddhist practices such as worship are much more important.

Others might disagree however. They argue that in Theravada Buddhism the Last Rites read by monks is very important to guide the dead person to the next life and the good karma created on behalf of the deceased by family and friend will help ensure they will be reborn in a better realm where it is easier to reach perfection and have his last body (Dhammapada) to escape the carving/suffering of samsara. Similarly the Tibetan Book of the dead in Tibetan rituals achieves the same purpose of the Last Rites and the leaving of the body on the mountain can be seen as generating good karma for the deceased as the action helps other sentient beings. In Pure Land Burials the chanting of the nembutsu and the placing of the coffin in the direction of the west can be seen as helping the deceased gain entry into Sukhavati where it is easier to gain enlightenment and enjoy the 'bliss of nirvana'. These rituals also help comfort family and friends.

However, I agree with this statement as it is a lot more important for a Buddhist to focus on following the teachings of the Buddha such as the Dhammapada 'He who has gone for refuge in the Buddha the Eightfold Noble Path leading to the end of suffering. You will generate more good karma by being compassionate and following the precepts than will come from death rituals especially as many cannot leave a body on a mountain in Tibet any long due to pollution. Furthermore, as Buddhists believe in an endless cycle of rebirth, they might not find it as necessary to mourn as much knowing they will meet their loved one in another life.

Overall, I agree with the statement to a small extent, as following the teachings of the Buddha such as the eightfold noble path, is significantly more important than rituals associated with death and dying. However, the rituals can bring peace and comfort to families of the deceased as they know they have tried to help the deceased in their next life.

