



University Learning in Schools

RE

Buddhists in the World

Exam



Exam: Buddhists in the World

- a) How would you define: **Siddhartha Gotama**? (2)
- b) Describe three ways in which the eight-fold path supports (and is key to) the Four Noble Truths? (6) – 3 points
- c) Explain four different reasons why Buddhists may meditate? (8) – Please explain in detail.
- d) Read the passages below. From the passages below, what evidence is there that Buddhists on the death of their loved ones must feel unusually lonely; and on the other hand that Buddhists are strongly supported by their beliefs and their community. (6) – 3 developed ideas on each side.

The Death of the Buddha

When he was close to death the Buddha identified four places of future pilgrimage: the sites of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death. He went on to say "But don't hinder yourself by honouring my remains".

His last words were; "Listen, Bhikkhus, I say this: all conditioned things are subject to decay; strive with diligence for your liberation".

The Buddha was cremated and his ashes were eventually spread across Asia. Stupas (mounds that are marked with buildings) are used to mark the sites of the Buddha's remains. These are sites of meditation and remembrance of the Buddha.

Theravadan Buddhism

Buddhists are encouraged to think about, and reflect upon, their future death. They usually do this as part of their meditation. As they are dying, many Buddhists will be supported by their community or leaders to accept their death and to approach it calmly and understand that life is impermanent and that death is inevitable and part of the cycle of samsara. This might involve talking about their death, meditating together, chanting, or discussing plans for their funeral.

In India the early Buddhists followed the customs of the people around them and usually cremated their dead. The Buddha himself was cremated, and this has gone on to influence Buddhists today: many are still cremated. Although as more Buddhists live in countries where burial is more common they are also adopting this practice.

Tibetan Buddhism (Mahayana)

In Tibet the ground was not always suitable for burial, and there was little firewood, so 'sky burial' became common. Monks conduct these sky burials. The dead body is chopped into pieces and given to the vultures. The monks chant while this is happening. Usually family members (also non-Tibetans are banned) do not attend the ceremony and the taking of photos is forbidden. For poorer Tibetan Buddhists who can't afford to pay the monks to conduct the ceremonies, the bodies of the dead are simply left out for the vultures. The Chinese occupying Tibet tried to outlaw sky burials, but they have recently returned.

The sky burial acts as final act of generosity to the vultures. The Tibetan name is 'jhator' and means giving to the birds. It is also a reminder about the importance of non-attachment (to their own body) and the impermanence of everything (including life).

In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, it is believed that between death and rebirth there is an intermediate period – called Antarabhava (in Sanskrit), or the Bardo in Tibetan. It is an important period which has an influence on the form that the rebirth shall take. If the family ensures that proper assistance in the form of prayer and remembrance ceremonies is given, the departed is better able to take a favourable rebirth. For Tibetan Buddhists these ceremonies and prayers are contained in the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead'. These are read to the dying person and are useful for both the dying person and those close to them.

e) 'Being a member of the Sangha is important to Buddhists.' (Remember there is the lay Sangha, and the monastic Sangha.)

Do you agree? Give two reasons for your point of view, and two reasons why someone may disagree with you. (8) Max 4 marks for one sided; Max 6 with no conclusion; 2 points on each side + conclusion = 8

Agree	Disagree
1.	1.
2.	2.
In conclusion I think...	