

Enlightenment



PUPIL INFORMATION SHEET

Siddhartha sat down under a tree to meditate, vowing that he would not rise again until he had found the truth.

One morning, as the sun rose, a great change came over him. He knew he had achieved his goal. Through his own efforts he had seen the truth of How Things Really Are. He was no longer an ordinary human being. He felt totally free, peaceful,



happy and kind. He was Enlightened. He had become a **Buddha**, “one who understands” the way life really is.

When gained Enlightenment, the Buddha understood that everything constantly changes; nothing stays the same or lasts for ever. Just as a plant needs soil, air, water and sunshine in order to exist, he saw that everything depends on other things and changes when those conditions change or are no longer there. The Buddha said that this was true of people, the world; even the stars. Nothing in the universe is unchanging or lasts forever.

Because everything changes, it is possible to change things for the better. We can see evidence of this all around us: a seed changes to become a flower; if we exercise we become fitter; our thinking can improve through study. Buddhism says that we can even do the same with our hearts and minds. By choosing how we act now, we create our future happiness.

Buddhism says that such change is possible because of the Law of Karma. (The word *karma* means “action”.)

The Buddha’s Law of Karma states that our **actions have consequences**, for us and for others. Positive actions have positive consequences; negative actions have negative consequences.

So, everything we do, think or say has an effect on us and on the world around us. Change will happen to us anyway, but through the choices we make about how to behave, we can change ourselves for the better. As each person changes, they change the world.

The *Dhammapada*, one of the best-known Buddhist texts, was written down many centuries after the time of the Buddha, as a record of what he taught. It begins:

Our life is shaped by our mind: we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it.

Our life is shaped by our mind: we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.

