

The Buddha decides to teach

PUPIL INFORMATION SHEET



In his **wisdom** 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 all things are interdependent. Everything depends on other things for its existence and changes when those conditions change or are no longer there. The Buddha said that this was true of people and of the world. It is even true of the stars. Nothing in the universe is unchanging or lasts forever.

Out of **compassion** the Buddha wanted to help others understand this, so they could free themselves from suffering, just as he had. But was it possible? Could others understand?



As he sat under the Bodhi tree, he looked out over the world. In his mind's eye he could see a pool. It was full of lotuses. Some of the lotuses were still in the mud at the bottom of the pool. Others had buds and were beginning to grow upwards through the water. A few stood clear of the water, opening in the sunlight.

“People in the world are like lotuses in different stages of development”, thought the Buddha. “Everyone has the potential to achieve Enlightenment, and those people who are like the lotuses ready to open in the sunlight will be able to hear my teaching.” So the Buddha decided to set out and teach the world about the truth he had discovered.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine you are Upaka and you've just met the Buddha. After many days of meditation he has the answers to all his questions. You have asked whether he is a human being, an angel, a spirit, or something else and he just keeps saying, “No, I'm a Buddha.”

Write about how he seems to you: what he looks like, what kind of mood he is in, how he treats you, etc. Why do you want to know what kind of being he is? What do you think of his answer? This can be a poem if you like.

2. **Group activity** Upaka really wanted to know what type of being the Buddha was. The Buddha said he did not belong to any of the groups or types that Upaka could think

of, because he had now become a Buddha; someone who is Enlightened. An Enlightened person is perfectly compassionate and wise; someone perfectly free of greed and hatred, who perfectly understands the way life is. Such a person is not like anything we can imagine.

Brainstorm all the types or groups people in your class belong to, and the labels people give themselves and other groups; eg. Punjabi, white, boys, redheads, Christians, etc. Does each person just have one label? Get people to stand in one kind of grouping, and then another. How much do people move? Does anyone not move at all? What does this tell you about people and labels?