

Buddhist Centre in the City

A tour of the

Manchester Buddhist

Centre

INTRODUCTION

Buddhist Centre in the City is a Clear Vision video resource pack offering an insight into the life of the Manchester Buddhist Centre, one of many Buddhist places of worship in the UK today.

You can use it on its own, as a complement to a visit to a local place of worship; or to build on a visit to the Manchester Buddhist Centre.

The pack demonstrates some of the ways Buddhists express their beliefs in practice: a tour of the Centre is intercut with short interviews and footage allowing pupils to see people and special events often missed on weekday group visits to places of worship.

The teacher's notes provide background information. The photocopiable pupil information sheets, the activities and the suggested discussion points enable pupils to reflect on Buddhist ideas in the light of their own experience.

Simply play the video through, pausing briefly for class discussion of the question at the end of each section, or use the discussion points and activities in these notes to take your exploration of each section much further.

For a general introduction to Buddhism, please see the Clear Vision video pack *Living Buddhism for KS3*.

The Clear Vision Trust is a Buddhist charity working in the visual media, producing teaching resources to support the presentation of Buddhism in the classroom. The Manchester Buddhist Centre and The Clear Vision Trust are associated with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). (See p. 3.)

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The Manchester Buddhist Centre

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Manchester Buddhist Centre (MBC) is part of the western Buddhist movement known as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). Like many new places of worship it was not purpose-built, but converted. A former cloth warehouse, it is now a centre of worship, meditation, study, work and friendship for around two hundred Buddhists in and around Manchester. It attracts a much greater number of people to its beginners' meditation courses, cafe and alternative health centre. Currently around two thousand pupils and students visit in groups every year.

This video pack represents just a few of the many ways of expressing the Buddha's teaching in practice. No one Buddhist denomination or place of worship is representative of Buddhist life in general. There is no worldwide Buddhist leader or governing body; though the Dalai Lama is political head of the Tibetan government-in-exile and widely revered by adherents of many forms of Buddhism, he is a spiritual leader of just one of several Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

There are many different schools of Buddhism in the UK. (The Japanese Zen garden in the film's opening sequence is in a residential street in west London.) Emphasising different elements of Buddhist belief or practice, and appearing in sometimes confusingly different styles, they share belief in the teachings of the Buddha.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) is a new western Buddhist movement, founded in London in 1967 by the Venerable Uryen Sangharakshita, a Londoner newly returned from 20 years in India as a monk ordained in the Theravadin tradition of south Asia.

The FWBO seeks to develop new ways of practising the Buddha's teachings in a manner appropriate to life in the modern world. It has no monks or nuns; ordination into the Western Buddhist Order itself is a recognition of deep commitment to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), which does not involve the adoption of any particular lifestyle or appearance. Women and men receive identical ordination.

There are now more than 80 FWBO centres around the world and many more small groups. Twenty of these centres are in India, where at least 10 million people have converted to Buddhism since the 1950s.

Who's in charge at the MBC?

At all FWBO centres, teaching and spiritual leadership is provided by local members of the Western Buddhist Order, headed by a chairman or woman, chosen by other local Order members for a few years at a time. There is no equivalent of the vicar, rabbi or imam; Order members teach or take up other responsibilities according to their strengths and wishes.



Activities at the MBC

The Manchester Buddhist Centre's beginners' courses in meditation and Buddhism regularly attract bookings of around 50 people per course. Worship, meditation, study groups, talks, arts events, and festival celebrations are part of its regular programme.

Increasingly its members seek to help the wider community: the Breathworks project helps those with chronic illness and pain to manage their conditions using meditative techniques; in partnership with Manchester Social Services, the Centre offers relaxation and meditation courses and weekend retreats for adults and young people caring full time for relatives with physical or mental disabilities or illness.

There is no assumption that any of the users of these services will or should become Buddhist, although some have.

The Three Jewels

TEACHER'S NOTES I

QUESTIONS I

The Three Jewels, or Gems, symbolise the three most precious elements in a Buddhist life: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

The Buddha represents Enlightenment, the ultimate goal of a Buddhist life.

The Dharma is the Buddha's description of Reality, or How Things Really Are, and the path of training by which Buddhists learn gradually to understand Reality, and to live in accordance with it.

The Sangha is the community of Buddhists worldwide and throughout time; the company of fellow-travellers with whom a Buddhist treads the path of the Dharma. The term is used by some Buddhists to refer only to the monks and nuns.

Going for Refuge

The Three Jewels are also known as the Three Refuges. Buddhists believe that all human beings constantly seek safety, security and reassurance; they "go for refuge" to, or "take refuge" in, such things as physical appearance, the perfect partner, material possessions, belonging to groups, a good job etc.

This is quite natural and human; we all need to feel safe. However, since Buddhists believe all things are liable to change and ending, they remind themselves that such things are ultimately unreliable and that real safety comes only from relying on the Three Refuges.

Taking Refuge in, or Going for Refuge to, the Three Jewels is a process; Buddhists place progressively more reliance on them as their practice and experience deepen and their experience proves these Refuges more and more reliable, and worldly reliances less and less reliable.



Discuss

- What are the three most important things in *your* life? Why are they so important to you?
- Is there anything else you would like to become more important to you?
- What sorts of things make people feel more comfortable, or safe?
- Which of these "refuges" are positive (beneficial)/negative (harmful)?
- Why do people take refuge in these things?
- Do you think your school needs a place of refuge - a place of quiet?
- Would you use it? Why?

The Three Jewels

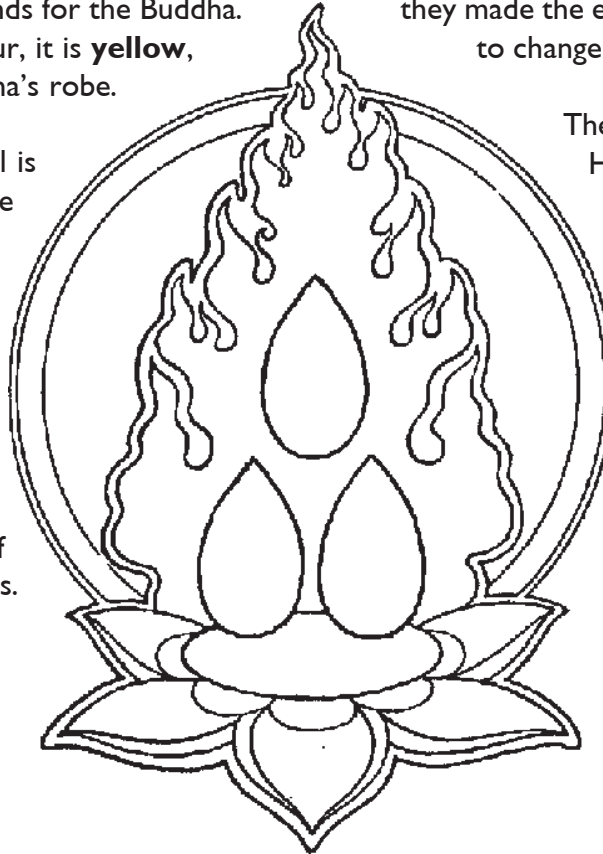
INFORMATION I

Over the front door of the Manchester Buddhist Centre is the symbol of the Three Jewels.

The top jewel stands for the Buddha. When shown in colour, it is **yellow**, like the Buddha's robe.

The left-hand jewel is **blue**, representing the vast, ocean-like freedom of the Dharma, the Buddha's teachings.

The right-hand jewel is **red** and stands for the Sangha, the community of Buddhists.



At his Enlightenment, the **Buddha** understood How Things Really Are. He also realised that anyone could reach this same understanding and become Enlightened, if they made the effort to understand and to change for the better.

The **Dharma** describes How Things Really Are, and the method by which anyone can gradually change themselves and come to understand it.

The **Sangha** is a fellowship of people learning to understand How Things Really Are, by following the Buddha's teachings and encouraging each other to change.

Activities

- Colour in the Three Jewels.
- Write down the three most important things in your life and design a symbol for the three things you have chosen.
- Design your own place of refuge; a Place of Peace.
- Write about your refuge - a place where you feel safe.
- Create a Buddhist shrine in your classroom, or an area to signify quiet or peace or reflection.

Kindness and generosity

TEACHER'S NOTES 2

QUESTIONS 2

*Searching all directions with one's awareness,
one finds no-one dearer than oneself.
In the same way, others are fiercely dear to themselves.
So one should not hurt others if one loves oneself.*
Udana 5.1

Karma

Karma means simply "action". The Buddha's teaching of the Law of Karma states that all deliberate actions of body, speech or mind have consequences, whether or not we are aware of them. Kind, generous, thoughtful actions always have enjoyable results for us and others; selfish, unkind actions always have unpleasant results.

This is like a scientific law; it does not indicate the existence of a creator God or law-giver. (Buddhism does not include belief in such a God.) In any situation, we have a choice between a kind or unkind response; the choice we make determines the outcome.

The Law of Karma does *not* say that everything that happens to us is the result of our own actions. If our house is hit by a typhoon, the typhoon may be a result of global warming caused by over-consumption of fossil fuels by people, including us. It may equally be simply a meteorological event which has nothing to do with us.

The Five Precepts

The first of the Five Precepts is to abstain from harming living things, and to cultivate an attitude of loving-kindness. This applies as much to the way one treats oneself as to the way one treats others; a kindly self-view will lead us to be kinder to others.

The rest of the Five Precepts are applications of this principle of non-harm to four other areas of life. They are listed on p.9.

The Second Precept is concerned with generosity (or *dana* in Sanskrit), a basic Buddhist principle. Buddhists believe it follows from the law of karma that when we are generous, we experience the benefits ourselves. The Buddhist Centre runs entirely on generosity: people give money and they also give time and skills.



Discuss

- What does it really mean, to love yourself? Is it a good thing?
- Think of a time when you felt someone really cared about you. How did they show it?
- How do people treat you when they are unhappy or angry about something, even if it has nothing to do with you?
- Think of a time when you noticed someone else needed your help and kindness. How did you feel? If you helped them, how did you help, and how did you feel afterwards?
- How might Buddhists be generous to the Buddhist Centre without giving any money?
- How do you welcome visitors and new pupils to your school? What small things could you do to make your school a happier place?
- What makes you enjoy and take care of certain places and not others?

Kindness and generosity

INFORMATION 2

The Buddha taught that actions have consequences, or results. Buddhists call this the teaching of *karma*: everything we do and think and say has an effect. When we act compassionately, or kindly and thoughtfully, the results are enjoyable; when we are selfish, thoughtless and unkind, the results are unpleasant, for us and others.

Although it maybe hard to spot, we always have a choice as to how to behave, in any situation. Having experienced the truth of this teaching in their own lives, Buddhists have a sense that every kindly action, however small, is worthwhile and does help to make the world a happier place.

According to the Buddha, we all know what it is like to feel frightened or lonely, so we can imagine how other people will feel if we treat them unkindly. If we use our imagination, we will be kinder to other people - and animals - and they will enjoy our company much more. Buddhists believe that this teaching is true



because they have tested it against their own experience.

What's more, Buddhists believe that when we show care and consideration by keeping our surroundings well looked-after and attractive, we and others feel happier and treat each other better. The Buddhists at the Manchester Buddhist Centre know that if they want their Centre to be clean and beautiful, they need to look after it.

Activities

- Imagine you have decided to show yourself more respect and kindness. Think of three things you would start to do and three things you would stop doing if you were going to treat yourself better. Pick one or two things from each list which you could actually try out. Try them for a few days or a week. As you go along, keep a record of how you feel, whether anybody else noticed, and if so, what they said or did.

- Think of a time when you were frightened by, or unhappy about, someone else's behaviour. Draw a cartoon to show what happened and how you felt. Now think of someone else you know who is unhappy because of other people's behaviour. Draw pictures to show what is happening to them and how you think they may feel. Compare the two cartoons. Do the two stories have anything in common?

- In pairs, walk around the school and make a note of any places everybody likes and respects, and any other places which nobody cares about at all. Notice how people behave in the places they enjoy, and how they behave in the places they don't care about. As a class or in groups, discuss whether there is anything you can do to improve the places nobody cares about.

Right livelihood

TEACHER'S NOTES 3

QUESTIONS 3

Right Livelihood is the fifth limb of the Noble Eightfold Path: a list of eight areas of life in which Buddhists train themselves to act wisely and kindly. For Buddhists, living ethically includes making sure that the means by which you earn your living is helpful to others and does as little harm as possible, in keeping with the first precept: to abstain from harming and to cultivate loving-kindness.

Many Buddhists live out the First Precept in what they choose to eat. However, Buddhist ethics is not absolute; the Five Precepts are not rules, but principles, to be applied as deeply as one feels able. Not all Buddhists choose to be vegetarian or vegan, but most committed members of the Manchester Buddhist Centre's sangha are.

The Noble Eightfold Path

- 1 Right vision
- 2 Right emotion
- 3 Right speech
- 4 Right action
- 5 **Right livelihood**
- 6 Right effort
- 7 Right mindfulness
- 8 Right meditation
or concentration

In some traditionally Buddhist countries monks and nuns do no work but rely on the laypeople for all their food and material needs. In other Buddhist traditions, work is seen as a vital opportunity for training in the Buddha's way.

Where monks and nuns do rely on laypeople, they go from house to house each day, silently requesting food, and this is a respected contract between monastic and lay sangha. In Britain, begging is illegal, and few people would understand if a Buddhist monk turned up at their door with a large bowl!

It is therefore more common for British monastic communities to rely on laypeople coming to cook for them, or to cook for themselves, financially supported by laypeople and by the proceeds from running retreats, temple bookshops or other small businesses.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order has no monks or nuns and does not think in terms of monastic or lay sanghas. Its members are simply more or less committed to following the Buddhist path, regardless of lifestyle, and all are encouraged to practise ethical livelihoods.

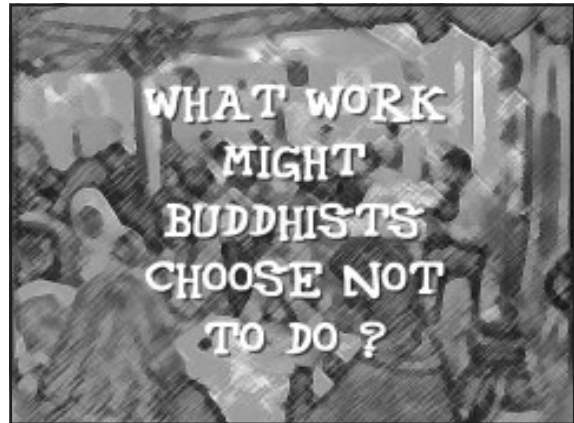
FWBO centres have set up a number of Right Livelihood businesses offering products and services. These provide an ethical livelihood for their members, enable them to spend more time practising the Dharma with other Buddhists, and raise funds for the Centres and other Buddhist projects. At Manchester Buddhist Centre, these include Bodywise Health Centre, Earth Vegetarian Cafe and the Buddhist media project The Clear Vision Trust. (Others include gardening services, wholefood shops, a stress-management consultancy and a chain of gift shops which can be seen in

the Right Livelihood section of the Clear Vision video pack *Living Buddhism for KS3*.) The intended products of such a business include profit, benefit to others and the spiritual development and general well-being of the workers.

All these Right Livelihood businesses operate the principle "Give what you can; take [ask for] what you need": staff are paid according to their needs rather than their responsibilities. Thus, someone with children might be paid more than a childless person doing the same work. People work in these businesses because they want to, not for the money.

Earth cafe

We see the cafe team starting their day in front of the cafe shrine, chanting the Refuge and Precepts - praising the Three Refuges (or Jewels) of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and undertaking to practise the Five Precepts as best they can.



Discuss

- What kinds of work do you think are harmful and of no help to the world?
- What kinds of work are helpful to the world?
- Would you like a job when you leave school?
- How will you decide what type of job to do?
- Why do people work? How do people feel about being unemployed?
- Why do some people work for very little or no money? (Some choose it; some have no alternative.)
- How would you feel if someone was paid more than you for the same work?
- How would you feel if someone was paid *less* than you for the same work?
- What is a vegetarian? What is a vegan?
- Why do some people choose not to eat meat, or not to eat or wear anything from animals?

Right livelihood

INFORMATION 3

The Buddha taught that the way Buddhists earn their living should be helpful to others and do as little harm as possible. Buddhists call this Right Livelihood. They avoid work which involves alcohol, tobacco, weapons or meat, or other things they think cause suffering.

Some of the Buddhists at Manchester Buddhist Centre have jobs in Buddhist businesses such as Earth Cafe, or Bodywise Health Centre. Other Buddhists have ordinary jobs, or may be unemployed, just like anyone else.



Buddhist businesses depends upon how much they need: someone with children might earn more money than someone who had no children, even if they did exactly the same work. People do not work in these businesses in order to make lots of money for themselves; they work here because they want to. They want to work with other Buddhists, following the Buddha's teachings, doing work which they think helps the world. The money they receive is what they need to live on, not a reward for working.

The cafe and health centre help people to be happier by offering things that are good for your body, such as healthy food and yoga classes. The Buddhist workers try to treat each other and the customers according to the Five Precepts; for example, speaking as kindly and truthfully as possible. They start their day by chanting the Precepts together, to remind themselves of the principles they want to follow.

The cafe does not serve any meat or animal products. However, most of its customers are not Buddhist, or vegetarian or vegan; they just think the food is great! They would not come at all if they could not have milk in their coffee, and if they did not come, the cafe would not make any money. So the cafe makes one exception to its vegan principle, and offers a choice of cow's milk or soya milk. The Five Precepts are not rules, but principles, or ideals. Buddhists follow them as far as they can.

The amount of money workers earn in these

Activities

- Choose one of the Five Precepts and think of any jobs which you might not want to do if you were a Buddhist trying to live by this precept.
- Look through the stories and job advertisements in a newspaper. Make a class list of 10 jobs you come across.

Get into groups and choose one of the jobs for each group. Looking at the five positive precepts in the right-hand column, make a spider chart of all the ways this job helps other living things.

Now look at the negative precepts to the left, and add to

the chart any ways in which the job might to harm, using a different colour pen. On balance, does the job do more harm or good?

Think of some ways in which people could do this job in a way that was more helpful to others: for example, being more patient and friendly with customers or colleagues.

The Five Precepts

Behaviour to avoid	Behaviour to develop
harming living beings	loving-kindness
taking the not-given	generosity
sexual misconduct	stillness and contentment
false speech	truthful speech
taking intoxicants that cloud the mind	mindfulness, or awareness

Helping each other

TEACHER'S NOTES 4

QUESTIONS 4

Traditionally, Buddhists have tended to fall broadly into two categories: monks or nuns, and “householders” - laypeople who live at home with their spouses and families. There are still monks and nuns, both in eastern Buddhist countries and in the west.

Non-monastic Buddhists in modern western society live a greater diversity of “household” lives: they may be living alone, with friends, with spouses, with unmarried partners of either sex, with or without children, or as single parents.

In the FWBO, a further option is provided by residential spiritual communities established by sangha members, where friends can live together whether ordained or not. These provide companionship and encouragement on the Buddhist path, and members share the cooking, shopping, cleaning and expenses.

For various reasons, these communities have been found to work best when they are single-sex, though some are mixed and a few have included children.

The story of Anuruddha, Kimbila and Nandiya comes from the Culagosinga Sutta, in the Majjhima Nikaya. This is one of the oldest Buddhist scriptures, from the body of texts known as the Pali Canon.



Discuss

- Do you have any responsibilities at home, or at school?
- How do you feel when people ask you for help?
- How do you feel when people leave all the clearing up to someone else?
- How do you feel after you've helped someone?

Helping each other

INFORMATION 4

The Buddhists at the Manchester Buddhist Centre (MBC) share responsibility for looking after their building. Some of them live together in a community on the top floor. They are a group of about 10 friends who share the bills and the cooking, shopping and cleaning. They take care of each other and encourage each other to keep following the Buddha's path.

Other MBC Buddhists may live in communities like this one, or with their partners, or husbands or wives, with children, with friends or alone, just like anyone else. However they live, they will try to be as kind, thoughtful, generous and truthful as possible. They try to be helpful; if someone is ill or moving house, other Buddhists often come round to help.

Some Buddhists choose to live as nuns or monks: they meditate, study and teach the Dharma full time. They have decided not to have partners, families, jobs or a house of their own and they usually live with other monks or nuns. They shave their heads and wear robes, to show that they are living this

special lifestyle. In Asia, monks and nuns traditionally walk from house to house every day, and are given food by laypeople: people who are not monks or nuns.

There are no monks or nuns at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, but the Buddhists there often think about Anuruddha and his friends, and try to follow their example of how to live well together.

Anuruddha and his friends

Two and a half thousand years ago in India, there were three monks named Anuruddha, Kimbila and Nandiya. One day their teacher, the Buddha, turned up unexpectedly to see how they were getting on. They told him that they were quite happy: they appreciated each other's good qualities, and had a kindly regard for each other. "How is it that you get on so well?" he asked them.

"Well," said Anuruddha, "I often think how lucky I am to be living a Buddhist life with such friends. I try to act kindly towards them. I try to speak kindly to them. I also try to think kindly about them. Sometimes when we disagree and want to do different things, I think, 'Why not do what he wants, instead of what I want?'"

They explained how they ran their home: "We go from house to house for our food each day. Whichever of us gets home first puts out seats, and water for drinking and washing; whoever comes home last clears away the meal, empties the bin and sweeps the floor. If any of us notices something needs doing around the place, he just does it. If he can't do it on his own, he asks us for help."

These three friends never just thought "Oh, someone else will do it."



Activity

● Make a list of things which need doing every

week, round your form's classroom. Make sure everyone gets a job, on their own or to share. During the week, do your job with as much care and pride as possible, even when you don't feel like it. As the week goes by, don't forget to show your appreciation if you notice the difference someone else's effort and care has made. Notice how you feel when you know you have done your job well, when you thank someone or when someone thanks you.

Changing the building

TEACHER'S NOTES 5

QUESTIONS 5

Over two years, 1994-6, up to 100 people helped to convert an old warehouse into the Manchester Buddhist Centre. Of these, 30-40 came regularly, including a full-time team of about 12.

Interconnectedness and conditionality

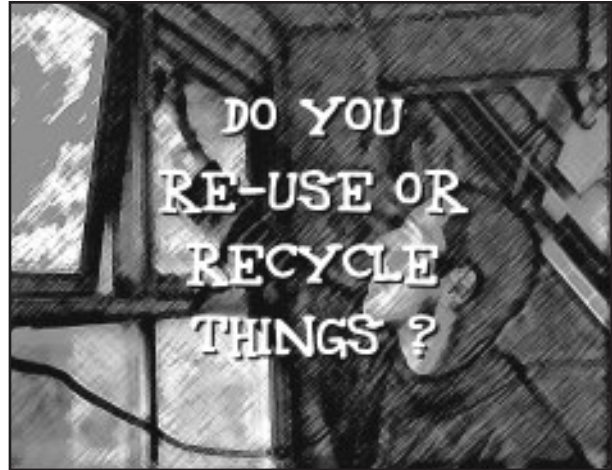
Buddhism teaches that all phenomena come into existence in dependence upon other conditions.

This is the teaching of conditionality, or *paticcasamupada* (Pali; *pratitya samutpada*, Sanskrit). For example, a seed germinates only when light, water and air are present together, in the right proportions. If any of those conditions changes, whatever they gave rise to changes too: too much light or not enough water, and the seedling dies. What's more, all these phenomena are interlinked, so one change leads to countless others.

So, Buddhism teaches that we live in a vast, cosmic web of conditions, in which everything is always changing. We can affect how some things change, though the way we choose to act. This is the law of karma again (see p. 6) - the law of conditionality as applied to deliberate human actions, speech and thought.

Change and fixed self-view

It follows from this that Buddhists believe that we can change ourselves, if we make an effort to change our conditions, mental, emotional and material. We can all gradually give up our unhelpful habits and become wiser, more confident people. One of the conditions that stops us changing is having a fixed idea about the kind of people we, or other people, are. This could include fixed ideas about what men or women, or members of any social group, are like or can do. (This is related to the teaching of *anatta* (Pali; *anatman*, Sanskrit): the Buddhist belief that there is no fixed self, unchanging essence, or soul.



Discuss

- Where does your rubbish go to after the bins are collected?
- What does "bio-degradable" mean?
- Do you buy things second-hand?
- Do you need all the things you buy?

- Are there things you do, or would like to do, that are not usually done by people of your sex/race/religion etc? What stops you?
- Is there anything you dream of doing? Do you think you will manage it one day?

- Have you had a project to organise in a group?
- What problems did you have? How did you resolve them?
- What effect did the work have on you and on others?

Changing the building

INFORMATION 5

Built by the Victorians in the mid-19th century, the Manchester Buddhist Centre was originally a cloth warehouse. After standing empty for 30 years, rotting and dirty, it took Buddhist volunteers two years to turn it into a Buddhist centre.

Some of the builders wearing hard hats and overalls on the video are women - for example, those washing the walls with high-pressure hoses. One of them was an 80-year-old great-grandmother.

The Buddhists did not have much money to spend on new things, so they were grateful to be given old building materials to re-use, such as floors, radiators and doors no longer needed in other buildings. This saved money and trees and meant the old things were not just thrown away to make a mess somewhere. Believing in the teaching of karma - that all our actions have consequences - the Buddhists cared that their building work should cause as little harm as possible to the environment and not waste valuable resources.

The Buddhists stripped thick green paint off the brickwork, beams and window frames, to reveal what was underneath. This is like a symbol for the Buddhist life; a process of removing unhelpful habits to reveal our true selves: wise, warm-hearted, generous and fearless.

The building project was difficult: people didn't always get on; things went wrong. They worked in teams and used the Five Precepts to help them get on with each other. These builders chanted the Five Precepts before they set to work, to remind themselves of their ideals, and they often held puja, or worship, on the building site. They imagined how wonderful it would look and how proud they

would feel when it was finished.

The area around the Buddhist Centre was derelict, dirty and dangerous before the Buddhist Centre opened. Since then, most of the neighbouring buildings have been turned into homes and businesses. This is partly because other people saw how beautiful the Buddhists had made their building.



Activities

- Look at your snacks, drinks and lunches. Over one day, collect all the wrappers, bottles and cans produced by your class. How much could be recycled or re-used; how much is bio-degradable? How much just goes in the bin? Could you do anything to lessen the amount of packaging your class produces every day?
- Find out from your local council where your rubbish goes to after the bin men collect it. How does it get there? Make a wall display to tell other classes about it.
- Buddhists believe that underneath their unhelpful habits, everyone has the potential to be kind, generous, wise and fearless. Think about all your positive habits and all your unhelpful habits, and anything good about you that people don't really know about. Make a list of your good qualities and the ways in which you could let them show more often.
- Look in the newspapers for stories about people who get together to organise a community project or event. Get into groups. In each group, choose a story. Get someone to play a TV reporter and others to play the parts of the project organisers and the people they have helped. In front of the class, get the reporter to interview the others about why they did it, how it felt and how it helped.

The shrine hall

TEACHER'S NOTES 6

QUESTIONS 6

Buddhist places of worship go by many different names. The term “temple” can be applied to the whole building, or the shrine room/s within a Buddhist place of worship.

“Vihara” is an Indian term for a building where monks live, which can include a public temple. The FWBO prefers to use the more Western terms “centre” and “shrine room”, or “shrine hall”. The MBC has two shrine halls, allowing for classes and activities for different levels of experience to run concurrently; we will look at the main hall only, known as the Lotus Hall.

There are FWBO centres in India, where the FWBO goes by a different name. Here, as is common in Buddhist places of worship in Asia, women and men sit on different sides of the room, but in FWBO centres in the West, they sit together. As you will see in Section 8 of the video - the festival of Dharma Day - the leader (usually a member of the Western Buddhist Order) sits in the front row, next to the shrine, behind a low-level lectern engraved with a lotus flower. She or he strikes a large bowl-shaped bell to mark the stages in meditation or worship, and generally leads the worship in call-and-response, so there is little need for service books.

Impermanence

As we saw on p. 12, Buddhists believe one of the chief characteristics of life is that all phenomena are impermanent and constantly changing. This applies as much to the Buddhist Centre stairs as to our bodies and states of mind. All phenomena come into being in dependence on the presence of certain conditions; when those conditions change, so do the phenomena they gave rise to. We don't really like all this change, but the more we accept and live in harmony with this reality, the less we will suffer over it.



Discuss

- What places are special to you and your friends or family? Why? How do you behave when you go there?
- Do you think it is true that nothing lasts for ever, and that everything is always changing?
- Do you like it when things change?
- How have you changed since yesterday?

The shrine hall

INFORMATION 6

Buddhists remove their shoes before entering the shrine hall, as a mark of respect for the Buddha and his teachings, which have changed their lives. Taking your shoes off is a physical reminder that this place is different: here the Buddha has been placed in a position of honour and beauty; here the sangha gathers to meditate, worship, study, and hear talks. All these things can be done anywhere, but the shrine hall is where members of the sangha practise together, so it is a symbol for their shared values.



At the Manchester Buddhist Centre school groups and beginners' classes sit informally facing the shrine; at events for more experienced Buddhists it is normal to sit more formally, in rows at right-angles to the shrine.

The leader sits in the front row, next to the shrine, behind a low lectern (sloping reading table) engraved with a lotus flower. She or he strikes a large bowl-shaped bell to mark the stages in meditation or worship.

Buddhist shrine halls vary: some are highly decorated, floor to ceiling, with Buddha-figures; some, like this one, are very simple. Generally, meditators sit in rows, on cushions and mats, cross-legged or kneeling astride, and the leader or teacher sits facing them, sometimes on a raised platform.

Impermanence

Buddhists believe that nothing lasts for ever. Everything is constantly changing. You can see this on the Buddhist Centre stairs, worn out by the feet of hundreds of people over 150 years.

Activities

- Write about, draw or make up a poem or song about a place that is special to you. Show how you behave when you go there, and how you dress. Tell the class about it: whether you sing, say or do anything special there, and explain why.

- On your own or in pairs, keep a note of what mood you are in at the end of each lesson throughout one day. See whether you have been the same sort of person all day, or whether you have changed at all. Note where you were, what you were doing, what was happening around you, and who you were with when your mood changed.

Changing ourselves

TEACHER'S NOTES 7

QUESTIONS 7

The Buddha-figure

A reminder of the historical Buddha, a Buddha-figure symbolises Enlightenment itself.

The Buddha-figure in the shrine hall at the Manchester Buddhist Centre was made in the mid-1990s in Britain, by a western Buddhist artist. Covered in gold leaf, it is made of resin, cast from an original in clay. (You can see his lotus pedestal arriving in Section 5 of this video, and the Buddha-figure itself is shown arriving on the Clear Vision video *Living Buddhism for KS3*.)

In keeping with the western artistic tradition, the artist has given this Buddha-figure a Caucasian face and an anatomically realistic body. However, he has finished it off in gold: the perfection of Enlightenment is a possibility for anyone, regardless of race or any other human distinction. There is no reason why an African-Caribbean Buddhist should not make a Buddha-figure in his/her own image; just as some African Christians have made images of Jesus as a Black African.

Whatever the style, the Buddha is usually shown with various characteristic marks including long ears and the *ushnisha* (pron. **oosh neesha**), a point or bump on the top of his head.

The lotus

The fully-open lotus is a symbol for Enlightenment and Buddhists' belief that all of us can gradually act more wisely and kindly and eventually gain Enlightenment: a "flowering" of perfect wisdom and compassion; the total fulfilment of human potential. The Buddhist path is about making effort to move towards Enlightenment. It is equally one of opening and unfolding: learning to be still, to observe the truth of the Buddha's teachings in everyday phenomena, to look for the wisdom and compassion Buddhists believe we all have beneath our unhelpful habits.

The sangha

"Sangha" is a term used to describe all those following the Buddha's path. At its highest, it refers to all those who have achieved Enlightenment since the Buddha; and some Buddhists use it more specifically to refer only to monks and nuns. At its best, the MBC sangha is a fellowship of friends who share a belief in the truth and effectiveness of the Buddha's teachings, and who help each other to keep making effort on the path towards Enlightenment.



Discuss

- Can people change?
- Do you know anyone who has changed a lot?
- How have you changed?
- How can other people help us to change?
- In what ways is your class like a sangha?
- In what ways is your class not like a sangha?
- Do you have pictures at home of people you love or admire? Why do you have them there?

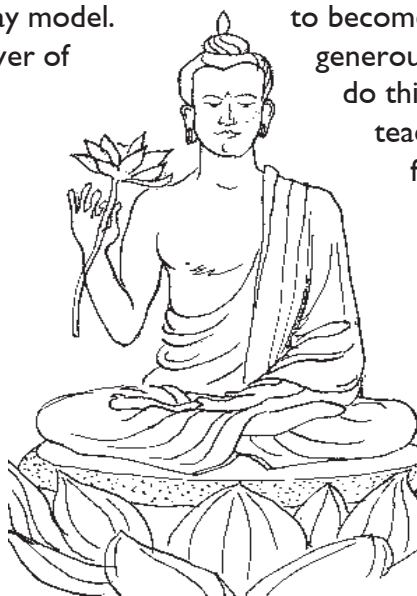
Changing ourselves

INFORMATION 7

Nobody knows what the Buddha really looked like, so a Buddha-figure is a symbol of Enlightenment and a reminder of the Buddha, but not a portrait. Looking at a Buddha-image, Buddhists remember the Buddha's life, and remember that, like the Buddha, they too are trying to change and develop kindness and wisdom.

The Buddha-figure in the shrine hall at the Manchester Buddhist Centre is made of resin, cast in a mould from a clay model. It is covered with a very thin layer of gold, to show how special the Buddha is to Buddhists.

His legs are crossed, with each foot resting on the upper part of the opposite leg. This is called the lotus position. He is shown with long ears and a point on the top of his head, known as an *ushnisha*. The ushnisha and long ears are traditional symbols showing that the Buddha is different from other people: perfectly wise, kind, generous and fearless.



The lotus

The Buddha is shown seated on a lotus, and he is also holding a lotus towards us. A fully-open lotus flower is a symbol of Enlightenment. It reminds Buddhists that all of us can make progress. Lotus flowers grow out of the darkness at the bottom of ponds, up through the water, towards sunlight. If you looked into one of these ponds, you would see that the various plants were at different stages of development: some of the plants would still be under water; some would be emerging into the sunlight; some would have buds. You would also see some fully-open flowers.

All these plants eventually flower. Buddhists believe that, in the same way, all of us are at different stages on the path towards kindness and wisdom; if we just keep trying, we can all “flower” or “blossom” and become perfectly kind and wise, one day.

Changing for the better

The sangha is a group of people who want to become kinder, wiser and more generous. They believe that the way to do this is to follow the Buddha's teachings. The MBC Buddhists are friends helping each other to change for the better: they can tell each other when they have done well, and they can encourage each other when they're sad or disappointed. They know it's hard to change, and that everyone makes mistakes.

Activities

- Make a clay model of someone you admire. How will you show their special qualities or skills?
- Compare and contrast images of the Buddha with images of Jesus. Look at paintings of Jesus from the African tradition.
- In pairs, think about two ways in which you would like to change your behaviour for the better starting this week. During the week, ask your partner how he or she is getting on with efforts to change. Make sure you say when you notice someone's done well.

The festival of Dharma Day

TEACHER'S NOTES 8

QUESTIONS 8

There are many different Buddhist festivals, some of them particular to certain countries. The most widely celebrated is Wesak, or Buddha Day, which, for many Buddhists, falls on the day of the full moon in May and marks the Buddha's Enlightenment. (Wesak is covered in the video pack *Living Buddhism for KS3*.)

Dharma Day is celebrated by many Buddhists on the full moon in July. Buddhist festivals often fall on full moon days because the early monks traditionally met then; before clocks and calendars it was easy to watch the moon's phases and know when to meet at a given place.

Dharma (Sanskrit; *Dhamma*, Pali) means the "Truth" as taught by the Buddha, and also the way that leads to the realisation of that truth; hence the decorations seen on the video, reading "freedom-way-teaching-truth". Dharma Day is a celebration of what the Buddha taught, and an expression of gratitude and appreciation for his life as a teacher. It is an affirmation of Buddhists' belief that it is possible to follow this way.

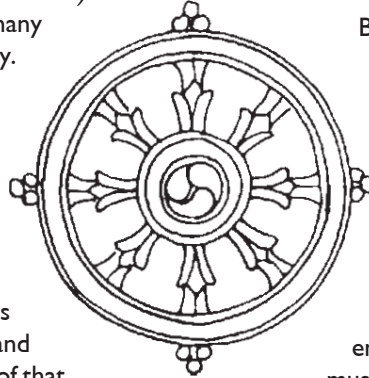
A common symbol for the Dharma is the *dharmachakra*, or Wheel of the Dharma, which represents the Noble Eightfold Path, a particular formulation of the Truth taught by the Buddha. (See p.8.) As we have seen, the colour associated with the Dharma jewel, one of the Three Jewels, is blue. So, on the particular Dharma Day shown on the video, Buddhists at the Manchester Buddhist Centre have decorated their shrine with blue paper dharmachakras.

Before gathering to worship in the evening, they brought vegetarian and vegan food for a shared meal at the Centre. Some had spent part of the day meditating and studying together also.

Worship

Worship varies amongst Buddhist traditions. Commonly it consists of the chanting or recitation of verses from the scriptures praising the Buddha's qualities, and expressing gratitude for his teachings, resolving to follow them, expressing regret for one's mistakes and undertaking to try and do better in future. Mantras -

symbolic verses of well-wishing - may also be chanted. On the video, we see the MBC Buddhists at their Dharma Day *puja*, or worship, chanting and bowing, making offerings of incense to the ideals embodied by the Buddha-figure.



Buddhism recognises that we cannot change for the better solely by an effort of will. Just as it's virtually impossible to keep to a diet or give up smoking unless one is wholehearted about it, we cannot progress towards perfect wisdom and compassion unless we engage our emotions as well as our intellect. Worship for Buddhists is one way of firing passion and enthusiasm, through aesthetic language, music, light and smell. Bowing and chanting, Buddhists engage with the puja in body, speech and mind.



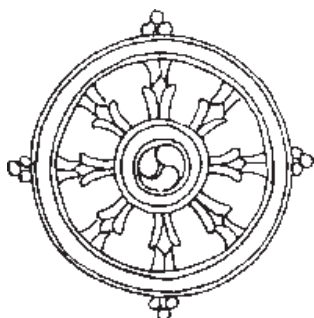
Discuss

- Why do people bow?
- How do you feel about bowing?
- Who do you admire? Why? If this person came into your classroom now, how would you show how you felt about them? Would you bow?
- What events do you celebrate with others? How and where do you celebrate?

The festival of Dharma Day

INFORMATION 8

There are many different Buddhist festivals. Dharma Day is celebrated in July. It is a celebration of what the Buddha taught, and an expression of thanks for his life as a teacher. It is a time when Buddhists remind themselves that it is possible to follow this way. At the MBC, some Buddhists spend the day meditating and studying together, and many more bring food to share in the evening. Then they do *puja*, or worship, together.



The Centre is decorated for the occasion. A symbol for the Dharma is the *dharmachakra*, or Wheel of the Dharma. In the symbol of the Three Jewels, the Dharma jewel is blue. So, on the Dharma Day shown on the video, Buddhists at the Manchester Buddhist Centre have decorated their shrine with blue dharmachakras.



Worship

On festival days, Buddhists gather with friends to eat, study sections from the scriptures, meditate, listen to talks and worship. To “worship” means to show that something is worthy, or valuable, to you. When they worship, Buddhists show their gratitude to the Buddha for his teachings and remind themselves that they want to follow them. They chant and bow and light incense at the shrine.

Bowing

Buddhists bow in front of the Buddha-figure to show their admiration for the Buddha. It’s also a sign of respect for themselves, because they

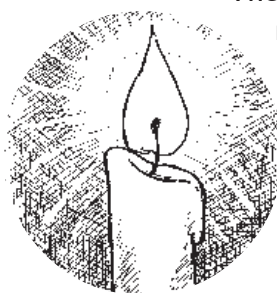
have decided to follow the Buddha’s path towards Enlightenment.

Offerings

During worship, Buddhists often light **incense**. It makes the room smell special, and it reminds Buddhists that actions have consequences: when we are kind and wise, it has an effect on us and others; a bit like a beautiful smell drifting through the world.

They also put **flowers** on the shrine. They look lovely, but they will soon wilt and die. They remind Buddhists that the world is full of lovely things but none of them will last. Everything is always changing. We don’t really like this, but that’s just how life is. Buddhists believe that we need to learn how to love things while remembering that they will all change. Sometimes change is a relief: unpleasant things do not last either.

The **candles** on the shrine remind Buddhists of the wisdom of the Buddha’s teaching.



Light is a symbol in many religions.

Activities

- Write a poem or song praising someone you love or admire; or write them a letter telling them why you appreciate them so much. You could even post it to them, and see what happens!

- Find examples of light as a symbol in other religions.

Meditation

TEACHER'S NOTES 9A

QUESTIONS 9



Meditation is very important in virtually all Buddhist traditions. As a relaxation exercise, it can benefit anyone. However, for Buddhists it has a specific purpose: coupled with the practice of ethics, they believe meditation can lead to complete freedom from suffering - the unhappiness we feel about what happens to us.

Buddhist meditation varies from tradition to tradition. Focusing on the sensations of the breath is very common; other meditations cultivate positive emotions, such as loving-kindness or involve visualisation of archetypal Enlightened figures.

Buddhist meditation is not about emptying the mind. Buddhists rest their attention on an object - such as the breath - and each time their attention wanders, bring their attention back to it. Gradually, the mind can be trained to remain more focused. In deeply concentrated states, it may happen that thought stops and is temporarily replaced by a calm, refreshing awareness.

In stiller states of mind Buddhists find themselves more receptive to the ideas taught by the Buddha. We may think that we understand, for example, the simple statement that all things are impermanent. However, this valuable intellectual acceptance is very limited compared to the total understanding, in body, heart and mind, experienced by the Buddha. He said that this experience could not be explained in words; maybe the best we can say is that with stiller and calmer states of mind, Buddhists believe that such ideas gradually permeate our very being, becoming part of our natural response to every passing event, large and small.

Stilling exercise

It is not appropriate to teach Buddhist meditation in the context of an RE lesson. However, you could lead the pupils through a "stilling exercise" such as the one on

the next page. Not a religious observance in itself, the experience will nevertheless give a good idea of the issues and pleasures Buddhists encounter when they meditate. This one deals with positive emotion and contains an element of reflection on what we have in common with others. Another exercise, involving the breath, is given in the handbook for the video *Living Buddhism for KS3*.

The stilling exercise can be done in your classroom, sitting on chairs. It is fine to meditate in an upright chair, though Buddhists traditionally use cushions, partly for stability and groundedness and partly because in Asia it is more common to sit on the floor.

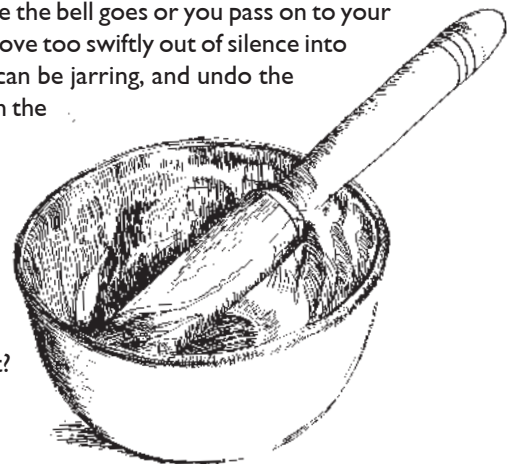
Read the exercise through to yourself before you use it in class. Lead the exercise gently in your normal speaking voice, leaving plenty of time for the pupils to sit with their responses to what is being said. It is tempting to rush, but most pupils can sit quietly for much longer than expected. If you have a "singing bowl", or other small bell, you can ring it softly at the points indicated, to help engage the pupils' attention. You may like to create a relaxing atmosphere by turning out some lights, or burning a candle, incense or some essential oil.

If pupils giggle, without changing your tone of voice say something like "If you've got the giggles, that's fine. It's quite normal. Just take a few very quiet deep breaths and they'll go away." Then go back to what you were saying.

Make sure you won't be disturbed by visitors, and that you leave enough time at the end for a quiet review of how it went, before the bell goes or you pass on to your next activity. To move too swiftly out of silence into noise and activity can be jarring, and undo the benefit gained from the activity.

Discuss

- How did you find the stilling exercise?
- What did you like best about it?
- What was most difficult?
- Did your mood change or stay the same?
- Have you tried anything like this before?
- Do you ever sit quietly, with others, or on your own?
- Why do you do this?/Why not?



Stilling exercise

TEACHER'S NOTES 9B

We are going to do a short stilling exercise. It's not a Buddhist meditation, and it isn't a religious practice. It's a relaxation exercise which will give you an idea of what Buddhists do when they meditate.

First we will get comfortable and relaxed. If you don't want to join in, that's fine; just imagine you're here to listen rather than take part, and sit quietly without disturbing the others.

Let's start by closing our eyes and feeling ourselves sitting tall and upright... both feet flat on the floor... If you don't like closing your eyes, open them slightly and look at the floor in front of you.

As you breathe in, feel your spine and your neck rising up into the air... tall and long, following their natural curves... and your head just balanced on the top... with your chin slightly tucked in.

As you breathe out, imagine your neck softening and your shoulders dropping ... your arm muscles relaxing ... your hands resting softly in your lap or on your legs. Let your stomach be soft... and let your leg muscles relax.

Notice where you feel your feet pressing against the floor... Feel the air on your skin... Notice whether it feels warm or cool... Now bring your attention to anything you can hear... Noises don't have to bother us. We can just let them be there in the back of our minds. Listen to the silence in this room...

Notice how you are feeling just at this moment... what kind of mood you're in... doesn't matter what the answer is. Just notice how you are. [Ring the bell softly.]

Now bring your attention to the area round your heart... Bring to mind something really

good about yourself, or something you did recently, that you know is something to be proud of. Maybe you won something, or got a good mark, or you were kind to someone. Maybe nobody else knows about it, but you do. If you can't think of anything, imagine how you would feel if someone told you how well you had done...

We're looking for an attitude of kindness towards ourselves, appreciating all our good qualities. So just let yourself feel proud and happy with yourself... Wish yourself happiness... Maybe you can feel a tingle, or a warm feeling around your heart. Just let that grow...

Everyone in this room has things to be proud of... All the people we know... all the people we don't know... All our friends have good qualities... and the people we don't really get on with - they also have good qualities. They are all different people, but they are all really just like us... they all have things they are frightened of... and they all want to be happy... just like us...

Imagine this warm feeling round your heart is for everyone in this room. You don't have to like all these people, but maybe you can wish them well... just because they are all quite like you... they all like it when people are kind to them, and they all want to be happy.

In a moment [I'm going to ring the bell again and] we'll bring this to a close... but just take a few last moments to notice what kind of mood you're in now... Who are you right at this moment? Are you exactly the same kind of person you were a few minutes ago?

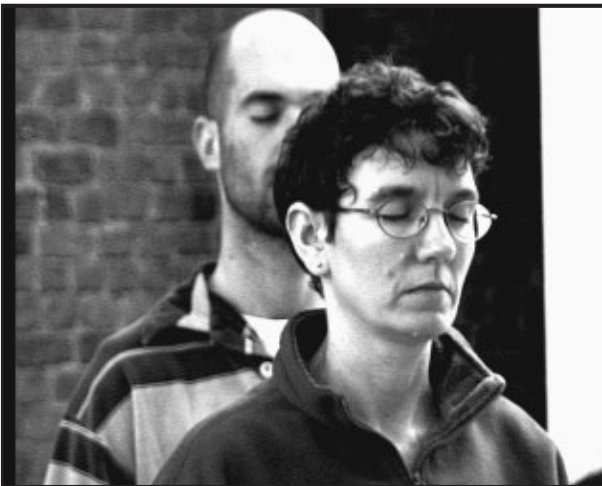
[When you can't hear the bell any more/] When you feel ready, gently open your eyes.

[Ring the bell softly.]

Meditation

INFORMATION 9

Buddhists meditate in order to become kinder and wiser. With regular meditation they can become calmer and more relaxed and more aware of themselves, other people and the world around them. They can think more clearly, concentrate for longer and understand their feelings better. Greater awareness helps them to practise the Five Precepts: they can make wiser and kinder choices about how to behave. Knowing that they have acted kindly and wisely helps them relax when they meditate.



It is traditional to sit on cushions on the floor to meditate. This is the custom in many eastern countries, and it gives a feeling of balance so that when you relax, you do not fall over! If the floor is hard, they may put a mat under them. Some meditators feel more comfortable on upright chairs.

With stiller minds, they find they understand the Buddha's teachings more, have a better effect on others and suffer less. Eventually, Buddhists hope they will have perfectly still and clear minds, like that of a Buddha.

Many of the Buddhists at the Manchester Buddhist Centre meditate every day at home. The people who live upstairs at the Buddhist Centre meditate together every morning before breakfast. Buddhists also meet regularly in the shrine hall at the Buddhist Centre to meditate together in the evenings and at weekends. It's easier to get round to meditating if you do it with friends.

Activities

- Try a relaxing stilling exercise, to give you an idea of what it's like when Buddhists meditate.
- Write about how it felt, or draw a cartoon showing how you felt at different times during the exercise. In a speech bubble, list all the things you noticed while you were sitting there.
- Think about something you did a while ago that you regretted later. Write or draw a cartoon about how you felt afterwards, and why.

The ideal Buddhist Centre?

TEACHER'S NOTES 10

QUESTIONS 10

Finance

Manchester Buddhist Centre is an independent charity. Apart from a booking fee, there is no charge for any of its meditation or Buddhism classes; instead, the Centre prefers to give these things free of charge and finance itself by other means. Visitors put money in the collection boxes, referred to as “dana [generosity] bowls”. The MBC’s boxes are shaped like a cross-section through the traditional begging bowl of a south Asian monk and painted yellow, similar to the monks’ golden yellow robes. You can see these in Section 2 of the video.

Members of the Sangha may have standing orders to the Centre, and the residents, the cafe, the health centre and Clear Vision all pay rent. There is also the bookshop and, nearby, a successful gift shop, run by Centre members. Both donate profits to the Centre.

All the areas of the Centre could be said to be about friendliness and friendship in one way or another, whether they involve work or leisure. For example, people mending things down in the workshop could remember that their work will make life easier for others. If they ask friends to help, that’s an opportunity to enjoy each other’s company.

Not the ideal Buddhist centre

The Manchester Buddhist Centre is not the ideal Buddhist Centre. (For a start, it is run by un-Enlightened human beings!) The lift isn’t quite finished yet, preventing full disabled access; and the shrine rooms are not fully soundproof, which means meditation can be disturbed.

As large as the MBC is, it’s not big enough: the shrine hall is slightly too small for the biggest sangha gatherings, such as festivals. With more small meditation rooms, more beginners could be introduced to meditation. A classroom would enable school groups to eat lunch here and investigate Buddhism in more depth.

Regular members of the sangha have very few cars between them but many of them have bicycles, for which there is not enough parking space.



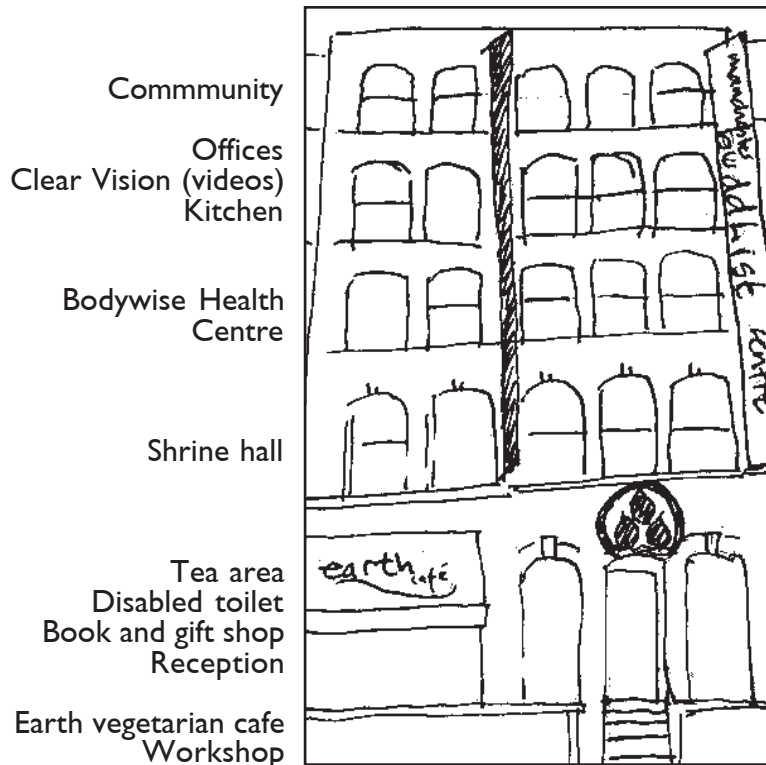
- Community
- Offices
- Clear Vision (videos)
- Kitchen and toilet
- Bodywise Health Centre
- Toilets
- Shrine hall
- Toilets
- Tea area
- Disabled toilet
- Bookshop
- Reception
- Earth vegetarian cafe
- Toilets
- Workshop

Discuss

- From the video, can you remember some of the ways the Buddhists finance their Centre?
- Apart from worship and meditation, what else does the Centre offer?
- How do you think the Buddhist Centre could be improved?
- Why do you think the Buddhists chose a building in the centre of a city?
- Can you think of some other ways the Buddhists could help people around Manchester?
- Could Buddhists help people where you live? How?
- Do you know anyone who helps people where you live?
- Nothing lasts for ever. One day the building will not be a Buddhist Centre any more. What conditions could bring this about?

The ideal Buddhist Centre?

INFORMATION 10



Activities at the Manchester Buddhist Centre

Beginners' meditation classes
 Beginners' Buddhism classes
 Worship
 Studying Buddhism
 Relaxation
 Health
 Employment
 Administration
 Maintenance
 Education
 Generosity
 Buddhist videos for schools
 Carers' events
 Pain management courses
 School visits

Activities

● Here are lists of all the rooms and the things that go on at the MBC. Make a diagram showing which things could happen in which rooms. Some might happen in several, or all, of the rooms.

● The tea area and the cafe are good places to spend time with friends, but the MBC Buddhists think everything they do is a chance to be more friendly, with each other and with visitors. Look down the lists and write down how the Buddhists could use each place or activity as an opportunity to be more friendly.

● This Buddhist place of worship wasn't purpose-built, so it's not ideal. For example, there are lots of stairs and the Buddhists cannot yet afford a lift, so elderly and disabled people find it hard to use the building. It's also sometimes quite noisy outside, and noise can disturb meditation. There is not enough room to park all the Buddhists' bicycles, either.

Imagine a new Buddhist centre and all the ways it might help people. Design the floor-plan, showing the rooms it would need for the activities you have thought of. Decide whether it would be in a town or somewhere quiet in the countryside.

Or

One day your school may no longer be a school. Imagine how you would turn it into a place of worship. Decide which religion it will be for, and make a floor-plan showing how you will use the rooms, buildings and land. Which bits might you get rid of? Draw or paint a picture showing how the most important and beautiful room would look.

Either way

Don't forget things like toilets - the MBC has one or two on each floor. What atmosphere would your place of worship have? How would you decorate it? What would you call it?

Glossary

Many Buddhist terms are commonly expressed in both Pali and Sanskrit, languages of ancient India. Where appropriate, both versions are given.

Sanskrit	Pali	
Buddha		“One who is awake to the Truth”
Dana		Generosity
Dharma	Dhamma	The Truth; the teachings of the Buddha leading to that Truth
Dharmachakra		The Wheel of the Truth; often has eight spokes representing the Noble Eightfold Path
Five Precepts		Five ethical principles common to all Buddhists (see p.9)
Karma	Kamma	The teaching that actions have consequences (see pp 6 & 7)
Maitri	Metta	Unconditional loving-kindness
Mantra		A sacred sound symbol; verse of blessing
Noble Eight-fold Path		The fourth Noble Truth: the way by which Buddhists move towards freedom from the suffering caused by craving (see p.8)
Pali Canon		The earliest body of Buddhist teachings, preserved by the Theravada tradition of south Asia in the ancient Indian language of Pali
Pratitya samutpada paticcasamupada		The teaching of conditionality or “dependent arising” (see p.12)
Sangha		The company of those who follow the Buddha’s way
Three Jewels		The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha
Vihara		Indian term for a place of worship including a dwelling for monks
Zen		Japanese Buddhist tradition emphasising meditation and ritual

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sabbe satta sukhi hontu
May all beings be happy!