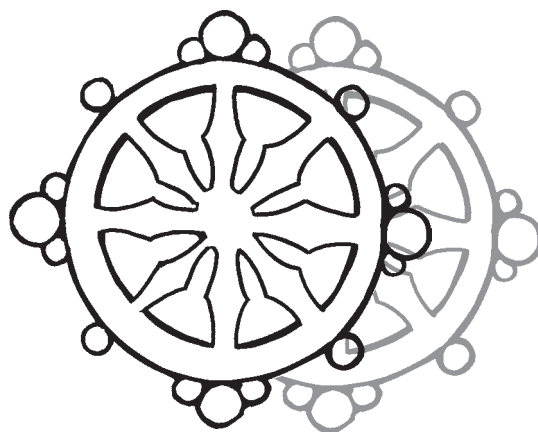


Programme 3

The Dharma II

| Contents | Page |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| <u>Teacher's Notes:</u> | |
| The Five Precepts | 26 |
| Karma | 27 |
| Bodhisattvas | 28 |
| <u>Information Sheets:</u> | |
| The Five Precepts | 29 |
| Karma | 31 |
| The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara | 33 |



The Five Precepts

TEACHER'S NOTES

The five precepts form the basis of Buddhist ethics. They are so fundamental to the practice of Buddhism that it could be said that someone is Buddhist only to the extent that he or she is living by the precepts. They are not commandments - in Buddhism there is no God to lay down commandments - but a set of training principles taken on voluntarily, the observance of which leads to more positive mental states. In the Digha Nikaya, of the Pali Canon, the Buddha lists the precepts as the spontaneous behaviour of an Enlightened one. Buddhists practise these precepts in order to become more like a Buddha.

In addition, monks and nuns follow a 'vinaya'. These additional rules are a working-out of the precepts as they apply to monks and nuns within the particular setting of a monastic way of life.

All Buddhists try to follow the precepts and chant them regularly. The chanting of the precepts in Pali frequently forms part of Buddhist ceremonies.

The precepts have two aspects which can be practised on deeper and deeper levels:-

(a) Behaviour to be avoided:

I undertake the training principle to abstain from taking life.

I undertake the training principle to abstain from taking what has not been given.

I undertake the training principle to abstain from sexual misconduct.

I undertake the training principle to abstain from falsehood.

I undertake the training principle to abstain from intoxicants.

(b) Behaviour to be cultivated:

With deeds of loving kindness I purify my body.

With open handed generosity I purify my body.

With stillness, simplicity and contentment I purify my body.

With truthful communication I purify my speech.

With mindfulness clear and radiant I purify my mind.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Does it matter?

The first and most important principle for Buddhists is that of not harming. They try to put this principle into practice in how they live their lives.

- What principles or beliefs are important to you?
- How do they affect the way you live?
- What difficulties might you meet in living by your principles?
- What helps you stay true to your beliefs?

Rules OK!

The precepts are guidelines taken on voluntarily by Buddhists.

- Why do you think that Buddhists keep the precepts despite not believing in a God who will punish or judge them?
- Do you have any guidelines by which you try to live your life?
- What are they?
- Who set them?
- What reasons do you have for trying to abide by them?
- What happens if you don't follow them?
- What is the difference between a guideline and a law?

Advice

The precepts are guidelines, or advice, on how to live a Buddhist life.

- When do you ask for advice?
- Whose advice do you listen to?
- How can you tell if advice is good or bad?
- What is the difference between taking advice and being told what to do?

Drink and Drugs

Buddhists want to avoid intoxicants in order to have a clear mind.

- Why would a Buddhist want a clear mind?
- What sort of things dull the mind?
- Why might someone deliberately want to 'dull their mind'?
- Do you think drink and drugs are always harmful? Explain your views.

Karma

TEACHER'S NOTES

DISCUSSION POINTS

The Law of Karma

The word 'karma' literally means 'action'. The Law of Karma states quite simply that **ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES**.

This is an important Buddhist teaching and although it can be difficult to grasp fully, some appreciation of this law is essential to an understanding of Buddhism.

The law of Karma springs from the Buddha's law of 'Conditioned Co-production'. The Buddha saw that everything which existed was subject to change, dependent on conditions.

The Law of Karma is the application of the Law of Conditionality to the process of life and death.

However, it **APPLIES ONLY TO DELIBERATE ACTION**.

Not everything that happens to us is the result of Karma. The Law of Karma does not attempt to explain all cause and effect processes to which we are subject.

The Law of Karma is like a scientific law; it merely explains how things happen. It does not indicate the existence of a law-giver. There is no one who rewards or punishes us.

Because of the law of Karma, we have the ability to change ourselves through our own actions.

Rebirth

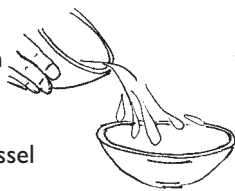
Karma continues throughout the process of death and rebirth.

According to the Law of Conditionality, all things change. However, Buddhism says there is continuity, a connecting link, not only from moment to moment but from life to life.



One traditional illustration of the death-rebirth process is of a new candle being lit just as the flame on the old one flickers and dies. The new flame is different yet it has arisen in dependence on the old one.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth is different from the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation. Hindus believe that an unchanging soul or essence (the Atman), passes from one life to the next - like water poured from one vessel into another.



Action - ourselves

The Dhammapada says that our life is shaped by our mind: we become what we think.

- Do you think this is true?
- In your experience what has shaped who you are now?
- Does what you do and say affect you?
- How does what you think affect you?
- Who is responsible for how you feel?
- How can you change the way you think and feel?
- What things might affect the sort of person you become in the future?

Action - the world

The Buddhist Law of Karma states that actions have consequences.

- Do you agree? - explain your view
- Can you think of anything that you do that does not have a consequence?
- In what way do our actions affect the environment?
- Why care for the environment?
- What can you do that will make a difference?
- In what way does the environment we create affect us?

Bodhisattvas

TEACHER'S NOTES

Mahayana and Vajrayana schools of Buddhism emphasise that the principle of Enlightenment pervades the whole of existence, that all beings have within them the potential to become Enlightened.

For Mahayana Buddhists the highest goal is to seek Enlightenment for the sake of all beings. This is known as the **Bodhisattva Ideal** - the word Bodhisattva literally means 'Enlightenment Being'. A Bodhisattva vows to free all beings from suffering and to help them gain Enlightenment for themselves.

Through the practice of the **Six Perfections** - generosity, ethics, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom - and over countless lifetimes, the Bodhisattva works to fulfil their vow to save all beings.

The Dalai Lama, Dharpo Rimpoche and Dr. Ambedkar are regarded as Bodhisattvas by many people.

In Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, there are also archetypal Bodhisattvas - embodiments of aspects of Enlightenment, such as wisdom and energy. These archetypal Bodhisattvas are traditionally shown as eternally young sixteen-year olds. They wear the crown, silks and adornments of royalty. They have long black hair, which falls in curls on their shoulders. Translucent, luminous, each archetype has a particular colour.

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (pronounced A -va-lo-ki-TESH-var-ra) is the quintessential Bodhisattva because he embodies supreme compassion for all sentient beings. He appears in many Mahayana sutras or sacred texts. The figure of Avalokiteshvara is extremely popular in Tibet, where he is known as Chenrezi. In China and Japan he is worshipped in a female form (known as Kuan Yin and Kannon respectively). On the video, we tell the story of the thousand-armed form of Avalokiteshvara.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Helping

A Bodhisattva works to help all beings.

- How important do you think it is to help others?
- Do you know of anyone who devotes time to helping other people?
- In what ways could you help other people?
- How do you decide who to help?
- What are the best ways to help people?
- How do we know what people really need?

Commitment

Avalokiteshvara vowed to work to help all living beings become free from suffering.

- What is a vow?
- Have you, or anyone you know, ever taken a vow?
- Have you ever made a strong commitment to do something?
 - what was it?
 - why did you commit yourself?
 - was it easy to keep to?

The Five Precepts

INFORMATION SHEET

The precepts are training guidelines which Buddhists follow. They are not commandments to be obeyed. On the video we hear some Western Buddhists explain how and why they follow the precepts.

1. To abstain from harming living beings

“Buddhists are vegetarian because we don’t want to harm animals. The greatest harm you can do to another living being is to kill it. Anything we do to someone without their agreement is an act of violence. The non-violent path is not a path for cowards.”



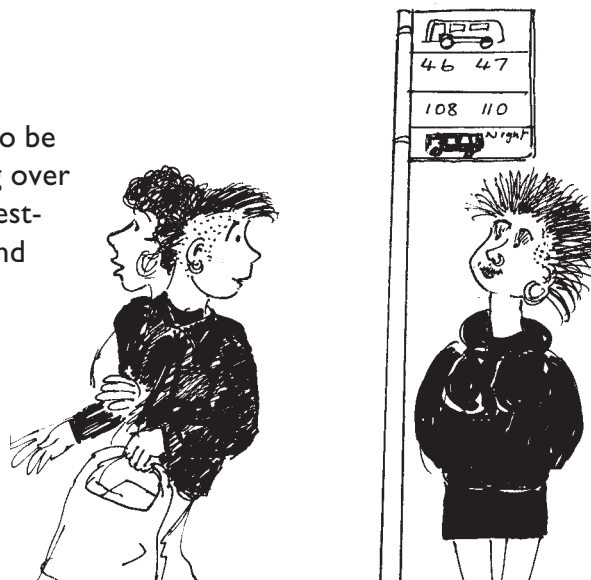
2 To abstain from taking the not given

“Pinching money will have a bad effect on me, even if no-one finds out - I’ll know that I’ve acted badly. Making an effort to give whenever I have the idea has a big effect on me, never mind the other person!”

3. To abstain from sexual misconduct

“If I’m in a relationship with someone, then I try to be happy and content with them, rather than looking over my shoulder all the time for someone more interesting. If I’m not in a relationship, I try to be happy and content with that state too.

Sex isn’t the most important thing in my life.”



4. To abstain from false speech

“Lying has a bad effect on us. We’re not able to become happier and friendlier if we lie and have secrets. Telling the truth doesn’t always mean saying just what you think.”



5. To abstain from taking intoxicants that cloud the mind.

“One of the reasons why I meditate every day is to develop a clear mind. If I was to take alcohol or drugs they’d only make my mind cloudy and dull. It’s not that anyone says to me “don’t drink” - the precepts don’t work like that. I’ve decided for myself”

ACTIVITIES

● Each precept has two parts, behaviour to avoid and behaviour to develop. Copy and complete this list of the 5 precepts, filling in the behaviour to develop.

| Behaviour to avoid | Behaviour to develop |
|--|----------------------|
| 1.To abstain from harming living beings | 1. |
| 2.To abstain from taking the not given | 2. |
| 3.To abstain from sexual misconduct | 3. |
| 4.To abstain from false speech | 4. |
| 5.To abstain from taking intoxicants that cloud the mind | 5. |

● Think of five guidelines you would like to see the people in your school or community live by. Write them out as behaviour to avoid and behaviour to develop.

● If you were a Buddhist, which precepts would you find most difficult to follow? Write a short explanation saying why.

● Write down the rules of conduct of a faith other than Buddhism. Compare and contrast them with the Buddhist precepts.

Karma

INFORMATION SHEET 1

“ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES”

Buddhism teaches that all things inevitably change. Because of this 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.

The Dhammapada, one of the best-known Buddhist texts, begins with these verses:

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.

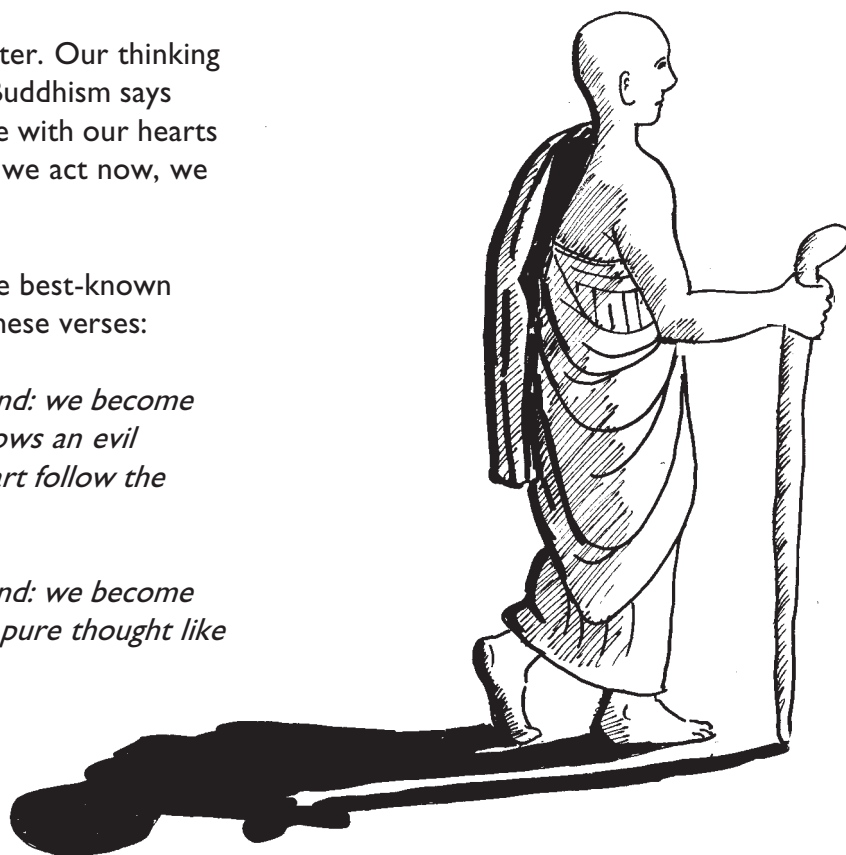
Our life is shaped by our mind: we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.

Buddhism says that such change is possible because of the ‘Law of Karma’.

The word ‘karma’ means action.

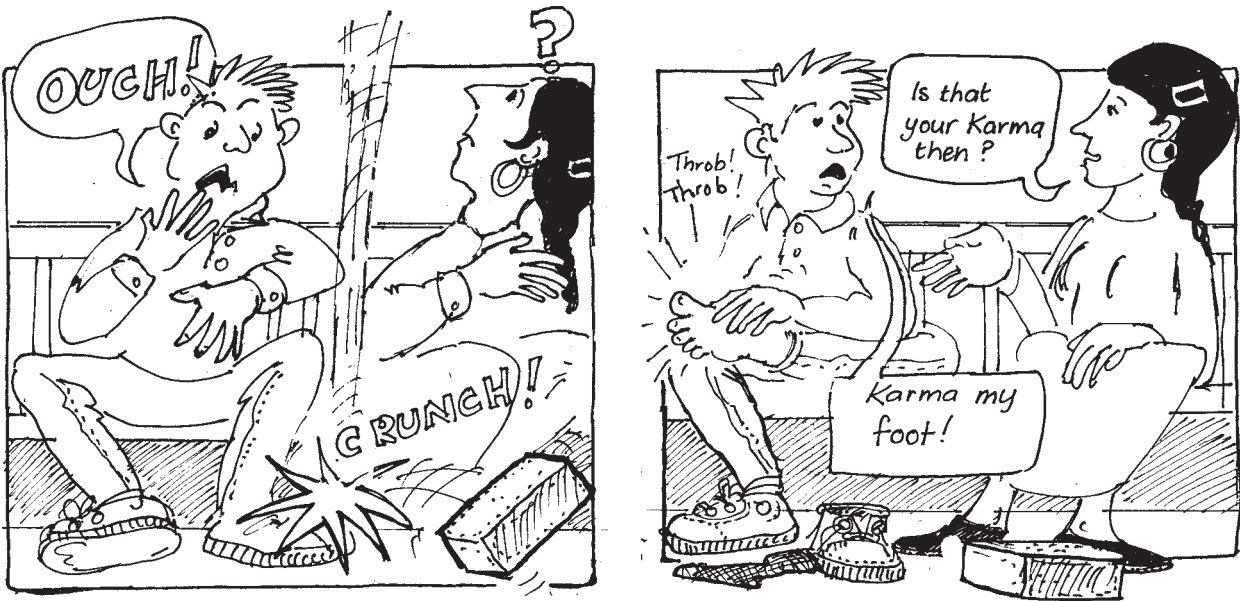
The Law of Karma states that **ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES:** positive actions have positive consequences; negative actions have negative consequences.

Everything we do, think or say has an effect on the world around us and on ourselves. Change will happen to us anyway, but it is possible to change ourselves, and the world around us, for the better.



Here are three important things to remember about the Law of Karma:

- The Law of Karma only applies to 'willed' actions, things that we intentionally do, think or say. To help them to choose which is the best way to act, Buddhists have five precepts, or training guidelines.
- The Law of Karma does not account for everything that happens. There can be many reasons why something happens.
- Instead of looking to the past, the Law of Karma focuses on how our actions can shape the future.



An Indian Buddhist, explains what karma means to him:

“When we were Untouchables, we were told that to suffer like this was part of our Karma. But now we know this is wrong. That’s not what Buddhism teaches about Karma. Everything that we do has an effect on ourselves and on the world. It can have a positive effect or a negative effect, so this means that I have the power to shape my life. I am responsible for the success of my life ... If we want to change the world we have to start with ourselves and this will have an effect on others too.”

ACTIVITIES

- Design a poster to illustrate the ‘Law of Karma’ - actions have consequences.
- Make up a short story or drama about the effect of a helpful deed, or the effect of an unkind deed.
- A friend of yours is in a lot of trouble and has written to you for help. Write a reply suggesting what he/she can do.

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

INFORMATION SHEET

Compassion is a very important quality for Buddhists to develop. The mythical figure of Avalokiteshvara represents limitless compassion. Avalokiteshvara is a Bodhisattva - a being who has dedicated his, or her, life to helping all living beings to be free from suffering. Here is one version of the story of how Avalokiteshvara came to have eleven heads and a thousand arms.

Many centuries ago there was a monk called Avalokiteshvara. For much of his life he practised meditation in a cave in the Himalayas.

After meditating for many years, he reached a point where he was just about to gain Enlightenment. But at this point he became aware of a very faint sound, coming from a long way away. He listened more closely and heard many voices crying out and weeping.

He looked down from the cave and saw millions of living beings suffering in all sorts of ways. People were dying in fires, in shipwrecks and in war. Others were suffering through illness or hunger, or through their family or friends dying.

As he saw all this suffering, Avalokiteshvara felt an enormous wave of compassion well up inside him. He no longer wanted to gain Enlightenment just for himself; instead, he wanted to help all who experienced suffering. So he made a great vow. He would work to help all living beings become free from suffering and gain Enlightenment for themselves. He wanted to succeed in this vow so much

that he wished his body to split into a thousand pieces should he ever hesitate, even for a second.

Avalokiteshvara then entered into a long and deep meditation on compassion. When he emerged from this meditation he looked around - all he could see were people still suffering. He began to doubt that he could

help. Instantly his body shattered into a thousand pieces. But from the great compassion he felt for all living beings, the small pieces of his body took a new shape. His head became eleven heads, and his body now had a thousand arms.

With eleven heads Avalokiteshvara could see in all directions. With a thousand arms

he could work even more effectively to help suffering beings.

When Buddhists think of Avalokiteshvara they are reminded of limitless compassion. This is what Avalokiteshvara means to them. They can also be reminded of compassion by chanting his mantra - which represents compassion in sound form.

The mantra is: OM MANI PADME HUM



ACTIVITIES

- Imagine you are the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Re-tell the story of why you made your great vow to help all living beings, and how you came to have a thousand arms and eleven heads.
- Make up a poem or a song which describes your response to the suffering in the world and what you might do about it.
- For Buddhists, the lotus is a symbol of growth and development. Find out about other Buddhist symbols. Use these symbols to make a design.
- A Bodhisattva takes a vow to help all beings. Investigate other vows that people might take.

