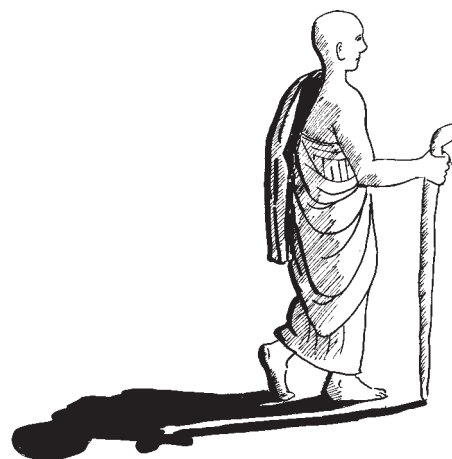


Programme 4

The Sangha

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The Spread of Buddhism

TEACHER'S NOTES

DISCUSSION POINTS

Over the centuries, as Buddhism spread, many different schools or traditions were established, creating a richness and diversity of Buddhist practice. New schools tended to form for different reasons:-

Difference of vinaya

Some schools split off on the basis of the vinaya - the detailed set of codes of conduct governing monastic life. Monks or nuns following the same vinaya would live together.

Doctrinal and philosophical differences

Doctrinal and philosophical differences did not prevent monks living in the same monastery if they shared the same vinaya. The Theravada school of South East Asia is the only non-Mahayana school surviving from the early split in the Sangha, which occurred about 60 years after the Buddha's Parinirvana.

Buddhism in the West

The Theravada School of South East Asia was the first school of Buddhism to have an impact on the West. The Theravada scriptures, the Pali Canon, was translated and studied by Western scholars towards the end of the nineteenth century.

World War 2 brought American servicemen into contact with Japanese Zen Buddhists. During the 1950's, Zen Roshis, or teachers, began to establish Centres in the United States of America.

Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950, many of the teachers, or Rimpoches, of the various Tibetan schools of Buddhism fled to the West, establishing centres in Europe and the U.S.A.

During the 1960's, new Western movements, such as the F.W.B.O. emerged. They sought to apply Buddhist principles in a Western context.

As Western scholars continue to discover and study the Buddhist scriptures, a clearer picture of the complex development of Buddhist doctrine is emerging. For the first time, it has become possible to gain an over-view of the whole Buddhist tradition, with its variety of schools, practices and doctrines.

Friendship

Ananda and the Buddha were lifelong friends.

- Why is it good to have friends?
- What sort of person makes a good friend?
- How can you be a good friend?
- Have you ever been lonely?
- What causes people to be lonely?
- What effect does being lonely have on people?
- What can be done about loneliness?

Groups

Since the time of the Buddha, groups of his followers have chosen to live together.

- How might living together help Buddhists?
- Do you belong to any group, club or community?
- Why do you belong to the club or group?
- How does being with others who have the same interests help you?
- Are there any disadvantages to being a member of a group?

Change and Tradition

As Buddhism spread, it developed different traditions.

- What do you understand by the word 'tradition'?
- Can you think of a tradition that you follow?
 - in your family
 - in your school
 - in your community?
- Why do you follow it?
- What might cause it to change?
- Is change always for the better?
- Are there some things that should not be changed?
- How can you have change without losing what was good about the traditional way of doing something?

Worship

TEACHER'S NOTES

Ritual and devotion play an important part in Buddhism, although the particular form of worship varies from one tradition to another. In theistic religions, God is the focus of worship. But Buddhists do not believe in God; so what, and why, do Buddhists worship?

Buddhists worship in order to give expression to their gratitude to the Buddha for his teaching (the Dharma) and in appreciation of his life and example. By worshipping, Buddhists also acknowledge their own potential for unlimited growth and development towards the ideal of Enlightenment, which the Buddha represents.

Through worship, Buddhists express, nourish and encourage positive emotions such as well-wishing, confidence, appreciation, determination, aspiration, inspiration and joy - all states of mind which help them in their practice of the Dharma.

The word **Puja** simply means worship. On the video, after a Tibetan puja, we move to Manchester. This puja, performed by Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, is mostly spoken in English, but some sections, notably the 'Going for Refuge' verses and the precepts, are chanted in Pali, the ancient Indian language. Chanting the Refuges and Precepts in this traditional way connects the worshippers with Buddhists all over the world and down the ages. Mantras, which frequently form part of devotional practices, are also chanted in the traditional manner.

The Shrine

The shrine is the focus of worship. Although it may vary in style from one tradition to another, a shrine is usually composed of a raised platform or stand on which a Buddha-image, or 'rupa' is placed. The stand may be quite plain or covered with richly coloured cloths or hangings. The shrine is not the same thing as an altar because there is no element of sacrifice in Buddhist worship. It is usually situated in a shrine-room: a quiet and peaceful place, set aside for the practice of meditation and worship.

Offerings

The three traditional offerings are flowers, incense and candles, or light. (see information sheet)

Frequently, seven bowls filled with water are also placed on the shrine. These seven bowls symbolise the seven things traditionally offered to an honoured guest in ancient India. In offering them to the Buddha, Buddhists are treating him as an honoured guest. The seven traditional offerings are: water for washing, water to drink, flowers, incense, lamps or light, perfume and food.

Other gifts and ritual objects may also be offered in the course of a puja.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Refuges

For Buddhists, the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, are refuges. Buddhists believe that taking refuge in them brings about happiness.

- What things in your life can you trust?
- What things can you not rely on?
- What makes you happy?
- Who can you turn to for support?

Worship

Buddhists worship the Three Jewels as the three most precious things.

- What are the three most precious, or important, things in your life?
- Do you worship them?
- How do you worship them?

Offerings

During a puja, Buddhists make offerings of flowers, candles and incense - representing beauty, wisdom and the ethical life.

- What things do you find beautiful?
- What effect does beauty have on you?
- Do you think it is important that there is beauty in people's lives?
- Why?
- In what ways can people cause harm to themselves, or others, through ignorance?
- Does knowledge help people to be happy and lead better lives?
- What things do you think it is essential for people to know in order to lead a happy and meaningful life?
- Does everything we do have an effect on ourselves or others?
- Can you give examples?
- Can you think of anything that does not have an effect?

Meditation

TEACHER'S NOTES

Buddhist meditation is a graded system for training the mind and developing both wisdom and compassion. It is an indispensable practice for Buddhists.

Stilling exercises in the classroom

On the next page is a simple 'stilling exercise'. It takes about 10 minutes to lead through, although it can be lengthened slightly if this is appropriate for the pupils. It focuses on awareness of the body as a way of developing concentration.

While it is not appropriate to teach meditation to pupils in the context of an R.E. lesson, much benefit can be obtained from doing simple 'stilling exercises'. This exercise can give pupils a sense of some of the difficulties we are likely to encounter when we try to quieten our minds, as well as a hint of the pleasure and benefits to be gained. It can be done in the classroom using normal classroom furniture. It does not need special equipment, such as meditation cushions or stools.

It can easily be led by a teacher with no experience of meditation.

It is recommended that you read the exercise through several times and, if possible, try it yourself, before using it with the pupils. Use a quiet yet natural voice and adopt an unhurried and even pace. Pause for a few moments after each instruction to allow pupils time to follow the suggestions. Do not rush. Make sure you leave enough time to complete the exercise. It can be jarring to be suddenly halted by the school bell, and the benefits could be lost through a hurried conclusion to the lesson.

Pupils will get most out of the exercise if there is enough time at the end for them to talk about how they found it.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Questions to think about after
_____ the exercise.

- How did you find it?
- Had you ever done anything like this before?
- Was there anything you found difficult about the exercise?
- Was there anything you found easy, or particularly enjoyed?
- How easy did you find it to concentrate on what you were trying to do?
- If you found yourself distracted, what sort of things distracted you?
- Can you remember how you felt before the exercise?
- How do you feel now?
- When you were invited to look at your 'internal landscape', what was it like?
- Had anything changed when you returned to this at the end of the exercise?
- What did you learn from trying to do this exercise?
- How do you think that this sort of exercise might help people?

Stilling Exercise

We are going to do a short 'stilling' exercise. It is the sort of exercise you might do if you were learning to relax and let go of stress. It will give you some idea of what it might be like to learn to meditate. It is not meditation in the proper sense, nor is it a religious practice. We are not trying to 'empty our minds' but simply to begin to quieten them for a short while and let go of stress and tension.

If you do not want to take part in the stilling exercise, you can simply sit quietly, making sure that you don't disturb those people who *do* want to give it a try.

If at any point you want to stop, just open your eyes and sit quietly until we have finished.

To get the most from this exercise, we need to be able to sit in a position that is comfortable but which allows us to feel bright and alert and lets our energy flow rather than sending us to sleep.

You could try sitting on a chair, with both your feet on the floor, so that you feel grounded and stable. Try not to collapse into the back of the chair or lean too far forward. Let the chair support you and feel it taking your weight. Feel your weight flowing down through your seat and legs.

Find a position for your hands where they will be still and relaxed. You could let them rest on your thighs, or hold them together in your lap.

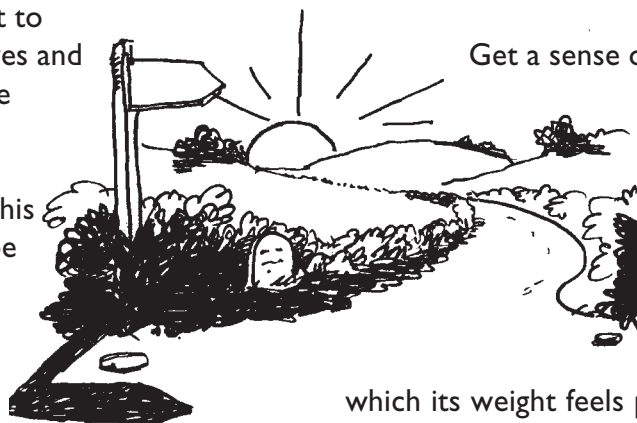
Get a sense of the lower part of your body being firm and grounded, like the base of a

great mountain, or the roots of a tall tree. Allow your upper body to rise up from this stable base with a sense of lightness and dignity.

Let your spine follow its natural curve. Soften and broaden the skin on your back.

Allow your shoulders to drop back and down, melting away any tightness or tension you may have there. Feel how your arms drop away from your shoulders.

Sense the position of your hands; let them be soft and relaxed.



Get a sense of the back of your neck being long; tuck in your chin slightly and soften the throat area.

Move your head backwards and forwards gently until you find the point at

which its weight feels perfectly balanced on the top of your spinal column.

Soften the skin on the face. Feel your forehead to be broad and smooth.

Relax the jaw.

Keep the tongue soft in the mouth.

If you are happy to do so, gently close your eyes, alternatively, keeping your gaze soft, look down at the ground a little in front of you. We are trying to turn our attention inwards and don't want to be distracted by the things around us.

If there are noises, try not to follow them with your mind - just let them be there.

STILLING EXERCISE CONTINUED

Now gently try to turn your attention inwards.

Be curious about yourself.

Can you get a sense of what your 'internal landscape' is like?

Is it bright or dull - clear or foggy?

Is there a colour, or a shape, or an image associated with it?

Are you happy or sad, bored or interested, sleepy or speedy?

How do you feel right now?

Do you know how you feel?

Maybe you are a mixture of things - that's fine. Maybe you can't tell how you feel - that's fine too.

Whatever you find when you look inwards - just note it in an interested and friendly way.

Now turn your attention to your chest area. Can you get a sense of your breath coming in and going out?

Don't try to change or force your breath in any way - just become aware of the breathing process.

Notice any changes or movement caused by the breathing process:

the rise and fall of the chest area;

the rise and fall of the abdomen;

the movement of the lower ribs;

the stretch of the skin across the back;

any movement in the shoulders.

Can you feel the slight brushing of your clothing against your skin as you breathe?

We have been breathing since the moment we were born, but most of the time we are completely unaware of it.

Now, for a few moments, see if you can follow a single breath:

Follow its journey from the first touch of the air against your nostrils; through your nasal passages; down the back of your wind-pipe and into your lungs; feel your chest and lungs gently expand with the breath; then watch the breath turn and begin its outward journey.

If your mind wanders off and you find yourself thinking of other things, just gently bring yourself back to your breath.

Allow yourself to enjoy breathing - to enjoy sitting there.

(Pupils may continue to gently follow the breath in this way for as long as it is appropriate.)

What is your 'internal landscape' like now? Has it changed at all?

In what ways has it changed?

Now very gently broaden your awareness again: get a sense of yourself sitting here in the classroom; feel your feet on the floor and your contact with the chair; become aware of any noises around you; and of the people around you; and, when you are ready, gently open your eyes and change your position.

The Spread of Buddhism

INFORMATION SHEET

Buddhism originated in Northern India around the year 560 BCE. About 250 years later, during the reign of the Emperor Ashoka, (289-232 BCE) Buddhism began to spread throughout India. Asoka also asked monks to take the Dharma to other countries: South-East to Sri Lanka, north towards Nepal and Tibet and west towards the kingdoms of the Greek Empire.

Over the centuries, the practice of Buddhism gradually spread, until at one time a third of the population of the world was Buddhist. As it took root in different countries, Buddhism adapted to different cultures without sacrificing its basic principles. This resulted in the development of several different forms, or schools of Buddhism. Many of these schools have now spread to the West.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM

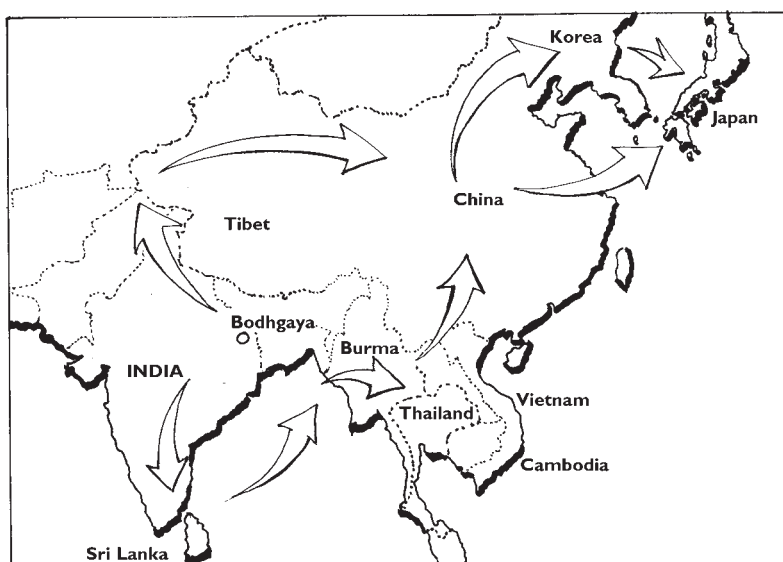
In the countries to the South and South-East of India people practise a form of Buddhism known as Theravada. The yellow-robed monks of this school study and teach the Dharma. They regard the monastic life as very important and stress that living by the vinaya, or the monastic rule, is the best way to become Enlightened. Many boys follow the monastic life for a time as part of their upbringing. The lay people follow the Buddha's teaching and help the monks by giving them money, food and robes.

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

Mahayana literally means the 'Great Way'. The people in the countries to the North and North-East of India follow this form of Buddhism. There are many different 'schools' of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhism emphasises the importance of compassion. It has as its ideal the Bodhisattva - someone who strives to help all beings to gain Enlightenment for themselves.

Buddhism spread to China at the beginning of the Christian era and to Japan about 500 years later. The Pure Land schools are based on devotion to the Buddha Amitabha. The Zen school of Buddhism lays stress on meditation as the way to gain Enlightenment.



VAJRAYANA BUDDHISM

Vajrayana literally means the 'Diamond Way'. This form of Buddhism spread from India to Tibet around 700 CE. Ritual and worship plays a particularly important role. Many Tibetans chant mantras or special sacred phrases as they go about their daily lives. Tibetan monks and nuns wear maroon robes.

BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

Buddhism began to become well known in the West from about 1950 CE. Most of the major Buddhist traditions are now being practised by westerners.

There are also specifically western movements. One such movement is the **FWBO** (the **F**riends of the **W**estern **B**uddhist **O**rders)

The FWBO is founded on the basic Buddhist principles. It tries to find ways to practise them in today's world. People in the FWBO strive to make the Three Jewels of Buddhism (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha) more and more central to their lives.

Members of the Western Buddhist Order itself are not monks or nuns; neither are they lay people. Some choose to live a celibate

life (without sexual activity); some have sexual partners or are married with children. For them, the commitment of trying to live by the Buddha's teachings is more important than a particular lifestyle.

Members of the Western Buddhist Order wear a kesa (a small white or golden-coloured stole) around their neck when teaching the Dharma, meditating or performing puja. They do not wear robes.

Every year there is a conference for all the main Buddhist schools in Europe.

ACTIVITIES

● Re-tell the story of the last days of the Buddha's life as if you were his good friend Ananda.

● In the early Buddhist sangha there were three main types of life style:-

Forest dwellers, who lived a very simple life in seclusion in the forest, devoting most of their time to meditation.

Monastic communities - monks, or nuns, usually lived on the outskirts of a village, supported by the local people. They remembered and recorded the Buddha's teachings, and spent their time teaching the dharma and meditating.

Lay followers -who lived at home with their families while practising the Buddha's teaching.

Make a list of the things you think that these three kinds of followers would have in common. Make a list of the things that would be different about their lifestyles.

● Choose one of the schools of Buddhism that interests you. Find out more about it and prepare a short presentation.

Worship

INFORMATION SHEET

“ **Buddham saranam gachami** *to the Buddha for refuge I go*
Dharmam saranam gachami *to the Dharma for refuge I go*
Sangham saranam gachami *to the Sangha for refuge I go* ”

Worship

Although there is no God in Buddhism, worship is an important Buddhist practice. For Buddhists, the Buddha stands for the highest ideal to which human beings can aspire. For a Buddhist, trying to gain Enlightenment is the most worthwhile aim in the world.

Buddhists worship in order to express their appreciation of the life and teachings of the Buddha. When they worship, they also acknowledge their own potential.

Puja

Buddhist worship is called ‘**Puja**’. Different Buddhist traditions have developed their own forms of worship. Within some traditions, pujas can be very colourful and complex.

On the video, we see the Tibetan monks at Zhekar Choede monastery, as well as members of the Buddhist sangha in Manchester, performing a puja. The two pujas look very different, but their purpose is the same - to help members of each sangha develop and express positive feelings for the path that they have chosen to follow.

The puja performed by members of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is mostly spoken in English, but the Going for Refuge verses, and the Precepts are chanted in Pali, the ancient Indian language. Chanting the Refuges and Precepts in this traditional way connects the worshippers with Buddhists all over the world and down the ages.

Offerings

Offerings are usually made during a puja. The three traditional offerings are flowers, candles and incense. People come up to the shrine to make their offerings. As an additional mark of respect and devotion they may also bow or prostrate.

Flowers

Flowers open from buds into full bloom, but then soon fade, wither and die. In turn, new flowers will grow. One of the Buddha’s most important teachings is that of impermanence. The offering of flowers remind Buddhists both of beauty and impermanence.

Light/Candles

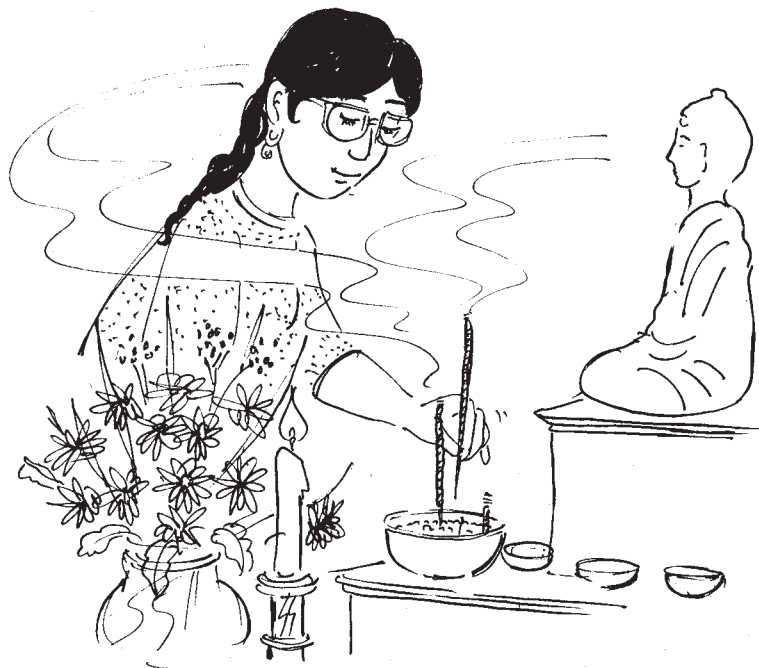
This offering is made with lamps or candles. The light of a candle flame reminds Buddhists of the wisdom of the Buddha, which helped to banish the darkness in people’s minds. Buddhists believe that this same wisdom can be kindled in our own hearts and minds.

Incense

This offering is made with sticks of incense. The fragrance of the incense spreads into every corner of the room. It reminds Buddhists that if we act in a kind and wise manner, the positive effects of our actions will be felt all around, even spreading throughout the world.

ACTIVITIES

- Draw the three traditional offerings and write about what they mean to Buddhists.
- Write a short poem, song or prayer, expressing a desire for the welfare of the world.
- Design a place of worship.
- Compare and contrast Buddhist worship with that of other religions.



Meditation

INFORMATION SHEET 1

Buddhists meditate in order to develop calmer and more positive states of mind. Eventually, they hope to achieve the mind of a Buddha - a mind that is perfectly clear and still, like the water of a great lake.

When the Buddha taught meditation he said that, to begin with, our mind often isn't clear. He compared the mind to water in different states:-

"...when we are **restless and anxious**, our mind is like the water of a rough and choppy lake."

"....if we are tormented by **anger**, our mind is like boiling water, hissing and steaming."

".....when all we can think of is what we **want**, our mind is like water clouded by different coloured dyes."

".....sometimes our mind seems like a pond full of weeds that are so thick we can't even see the water - this is how it is when we're **sleepy** and full of **laziness**."

".....even worse is when our mind is like a stagnant pond, full of evil-smelling mud and slime. Then we have **no confidence** in ourselves, we can't even be bothered to try; we have given up."

Buddhists believe that through meditation and the practice of the precepts they can change themselves for the better.



ACTIVITIES

- Draw a picture to illustrate each of these states of mind and label each one.
- Draw two more pictures to illustrate positive states of mind and say what they are.
- Write a short stilling exercise and make a tape of it.