

Information for pupils

Manchester Buddhist Centre



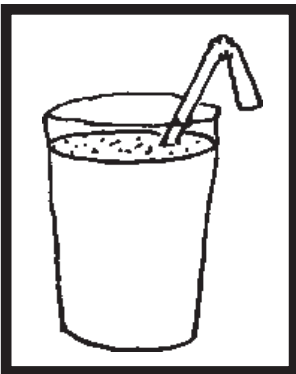
A special place for Buddhists

Manchester Buddhist Centre is one of many Buddhist special places all over the world. Sometimes they are called temples or monasteries. Buddhists also meet in places where the Buddha lived and taught and died, 2,500 years ago, in northern India.

What happens in the Centre?

In the Centre there are shrine rooms, offices and a flat where several Buddhists live together. People come here to worship the Buddha, to learn more about him and what he taught, and to meditate. They also visit our health centre, cafe and bookshop. Everybody is welcome, whether or not they are Buddhist.

When you come in, notice what the building feels like. A lot of women and men volunteered as builders for two years to turn this ruined Victorian warehouse into the building you see. We try to keep it simple and yet beautiful, because we believe people feel happier when their surroundings are well looked-after.



- What kinds of places make you feel happy, safe and relaxed?
- What kinds of places make you feel unhappy, sad or uncomfortable?
- Why might people give so much of their free time to do a long, dirty building job, for no money?
- Have you ever given your time to do something to help others?
Why did you do it?
How did it make you feel?



How do people behave at the Buddhist Centre?

When you arrive, remember that people may be studying, working or meditating in the building, so please try keep your voice down. However, we also like to relax and have fun, and we want you to enjoy yourself while you're here, so you don't have to be completely silent!

You'll be going upstairs to our shrine room, the most special room in our Centre. Here we will ask you to take off your shoes and behave sensibly, without running. Buddhists behave like this because they love the Buddha and they want to show respect for the Buddha and what he taught them. We ask our non-Buddhist visitors to do the same thing, to show respect for the feelings and beliefs of the Buddhists.



Who can be a Buddhist?

Anybody can be a Buddhist. There are many different kinds of Buddhist all over the world. Some live alone, some with families or friends. Many have ordinary jobs; some are nuns or monks: women and men who have decided to live a very simple life, studying, teaching and meditating. They don't have jobs or partners and they live with other Buddhists. They wear robes and shave their heads to show that they are living this special life.

Manchester Buddhist Centre is run by the Western Buddhist Order. Members of the Order are not monks or nuns. They wear ordinary clothes but when they are teaching, they wear a piece of white cloth called a *kesa* round their necks, to show that they are members of the Order. Many have ordinary jobs, some are full-time teachers of Buddhism; some work for Buddhist charities or businesses. They may be married or single, and live alone, with a partner or friends. They are committed to following the Buddha's teachings, but they don't have to live in any particular way.

- How might you guess someone was a Buddhist, if they weren't wearing special robes?
- How can you tell what a person is like?

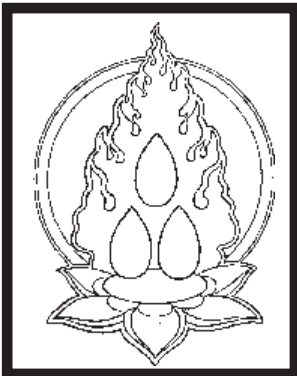


Symbols

The Three Jewels

Outside, there's a sculpture over our front door. It's made out of metal, by a Buddhist artist. This is the symbol of the Three Jewels, the three things which are most precious to a Buddhist. These are:

- the Buddha
- the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha) and
- the Sangha (the community of Buddhists)



Inside, see if you can find another sculpture by him. It's made out of bits of old cars and machinery.

The Buddha-figure

Upstairs in the shine room, the large Buddha-figure shows the Buddha seated on a lotus flower and holding another lotus flower. The lotus is a symbol. The Buddha figure is made of resin and covered with a very thin layer of gold.

- What is a symbol?
- Can you find out what the lotus symbolises?
- As you go round the Centre, count how many Buddha-figures or pictures you see.



We look forward to seeing you!