

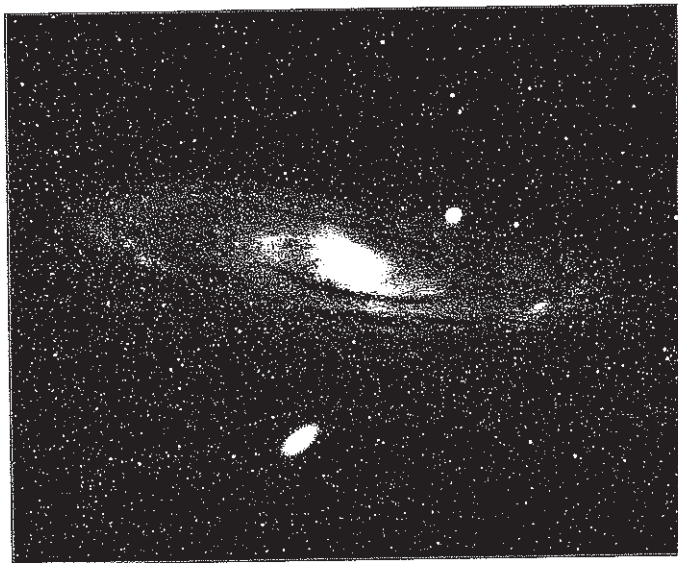
The Buddha now started on a life of teaching. He wanted to help others to achieve enlightenment, and to be freed from suffering.

Buddhist teaching is usually called 'Dharma', which is the Sanskrit word for teaching.

Here are some of his most important teachings:

● The Three Universal Truths

1 ANICCA (EVERYTHING CHANGES)



Everything in the universe depends on other things for its existence. From the smallest atom to the largest galaxy, things are always changing. If conditions are right, they come into existence; if conditions change, they cease to exist. Life on Earth depends on air, water and the heat of the sun. If any of those things changed, human life would stop. Each thing depends on everything else.

2 ANATTA (NO PERMANENT SELF)

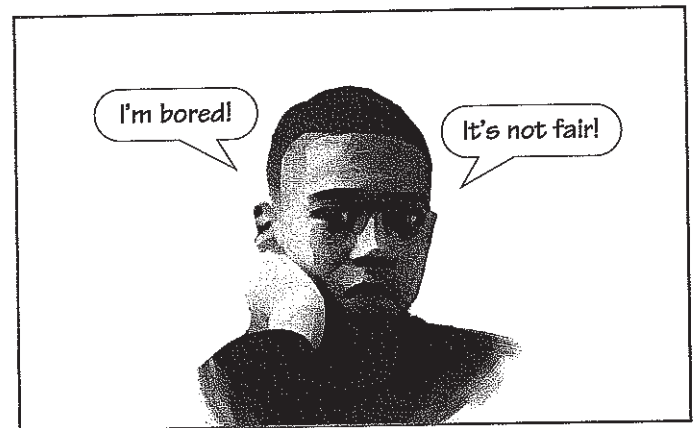
Nobody stays the same from birth to death. Your body grows older, your mind develops. Even your personality changes. Some things happen by chance, but others depend on your own choice. If you try to cling to a fixed idea of yourself, it will lead to conflict and suffering in this ever-changing world.



▲ At one time you were a baby, unable to speak. You may live to be old. Your life will change, and there is nothing you can do to stop it – that is part of what Buddhists mean by 'Anatta'

3 DUKKHA (SUFFERING)

Because everything changes and dies, the Buddha taught that life can never completely satisfy us, and that makes us suffer. Even if we had everything we wanted, there would still be part of us that wasn't really happy. This is what leads people to look for something more in life. If we feel bored or unhappy, it could be that this part of ourselves is trying to tell us something.



▲ If you've ever felt like this, you know what dukkha means

Buddhists do not see these 'Three Universal Truths' as in any way sad or depressing. By understanding them, they believe that they can achieve a new way of life that offers real happiness.

● The Four Noble Truths

If you are sick and go a doctor, you want to know:

- 1 what is wrong
- 2 what has caused your illness
- 3 what will cure it
- 4 how to get treatment.

The Buddha's teaching can be set out in the same way, as a cure for the world's illness:

1 ALL LIFE INVOLVES SUFFERING

The illness is Dukkha. Buddhist teaching aims to help people understand and overcome it.

2 THE ORIGIN OF SUFFERING IS CRAVING

The cause of the illness is an unhealthy craving for life, for pleasure, and for money. The Buddha taught that this craving makes people frustrated and unhappy.

3 IF CRAVING CEASES, SUFFERING WILL ALSO CEASE

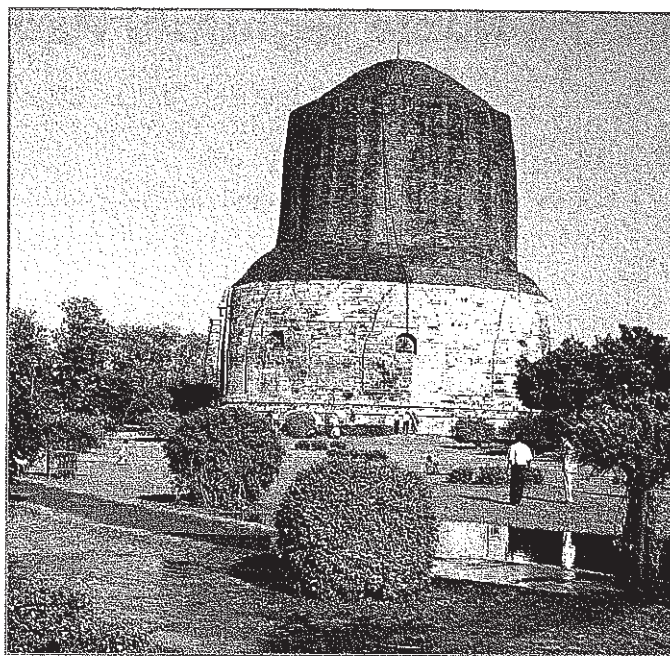
If a person can enjoy life without craving or grasping for things, he or she can avoid suffering and live happily. The cure for life's illness is to get rid of craving.

4 THE MIDDLE WAY

The Buddha had lived a life of luxury, and had also tried hardship and poverty. Neither had brought him happiness or overcome suffering. He therefore taught a 'middle way' between these extremes. Buddhists believe that, by following his teachings, they can be cured of their craving and find happiness.

Buddhism aims to increase happiness, and that means enjoying life. The secret is to enjoy things without craving them or trying to hold on to them.

- 1 a) Write down what each of these means: Anicca, Anatta, Dukkha.
b) Write about something in your own life – a feeling, perhaps, or an event – to illustrate each of these three things.
- 2 Use the Buddha's Four Noble Truths as a pattern to explain:
a) to a young child why he or she might feel sick after too much food at a party
b) to a middle-aged person who, desperate to make a



▲ The Buddha spent many years travelling around Northern India teaching all who came to him. This photo is of Sarnath, where he is said to have started his teaching

In many of the stories about his teaching, someone comes to the Buddha with a problem, he listens to what they have to say, asks questions and then gives advice that will help them to see life differently. In other words, he acts like a doctor dealing with people's religious and personal illnesses.

Some who come to him are wealthy rulers (he knew most of the ruling families in the area), others are poor. Some are ascetics, living under strict religious discipline, others are simple householders.

His teaching is full of surprises. Sometimes those who are Brahmins (the most important of the castes) are criticised, and those who are humbler, but caring for others, are praised.

fortune, has risked all his or her capital on the stock exchange and is now bankrupt, why he or she is suffering.

c) Then think up another situation of suffering and explain it in the same way.

- 3 'Don't expect anything, and you won't be disappointed!'. That is NOT what the Buddha meant by saying that suffering is caused by craving. Explain in what way his teaching is different, and why it may be quite natural and healthy to enjoy things.

● The Noble Eightfold Path

8 By training your mind, you will gradually get rid of hatred, greed and ignorance, so that you can experience joy and peace.

1 Before starting on the path, you know that life involves suffering and change. You also understand that the Dharma offers you a way to overcome suffering and live happily.

7 Become more aware of those around you, and of your own feelings – don't live in a dream world, but see things as they really are.

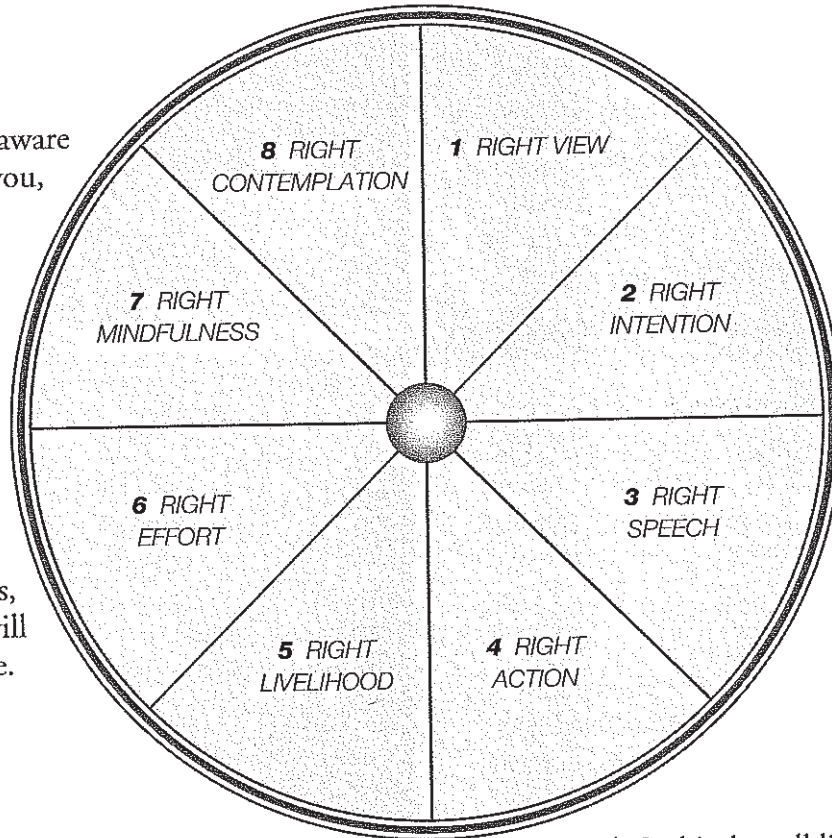
2 You need to commit yourself – just thinking about it is not enough!

6 Don't think harmful thoughts, try to feel goodwill towards everyone.

3 Speak the truth, and speak in a positive and helpful way.

5 Earn your living in a way that reflects Buddhist values – for example, don't cheat or hurt others by what you do.

4 Be kind to all living beings; be generous; be content; be truthful; keep your mind clear.



Buddhists often refer to their religion simply as 'practising the Dharma'. Buddhist teaching is like a path to be followed, leading a person towards greater contentment and happiness. It takes the 'middle way' between luxury and hardship.

The path can be set out as shown in the diagram above. Although it has eight separate 'steps', they are not taken one after the other. The Buddhist way of life involves all of them.

The first two steps are necessary for people to take the teaching seriously. They must be aware of

what the Buddhist path offers, and feel that they really want to follow it.

The next three steps give practical advice for how to speak, act and earn a living. For many people, this is the most straightforward way to start living as a Buddhist.

The last three train the mind to think and feel in a positive way. They help people to take notice of everything that happens around them, and to develop happiness and goodwill towards all creatures.

● Conditions

How does the Noble Eightfold Path work? Buddhists do not believe in a god who will reward them for following the path, so how do they know it will lead to happiness?

The Buddha taught that everything happens as a result of conditions. If you give a plant water and sunshine it will grow. Without them, it will die. So Buddhist teaching is not something that you have to believe or learn in order for it to work, it is simply advice about the sort of conditions that may benefit your life.

Buddhists believe that everyone has the ability to develop wisdom and friendliness. These come from within a person, not from outside. The Noble Eightfold Path simply offers a guide to the conditions that encourage them to grow.

People can be so different. Some people seem to be naturally happy, even when they are having difficulties in their lives. Others are always moaning, even if life seems to be treating them well.

Buddhist Dharma cannot stop people becoming ill, breaking a leg, or dying; these are all features of the sort of world we live in. What it does claim to do is to help them to develop habits of mind that enable them to enjoy the positive things that life brings without grasping or holding on to them, and to cope with life's difficulties by trying to understand them and without adding to them by becoming bitter or hateful.

● A threefold plan of action

Sometimes the Buddhist path is described as the 'Triple Way' of Morality, Meditation and Wisdom.

Morality – how you treat others, following the Buddhist guidelines for life.

Meditation – how you calm your mind, so that you can think clearly, notice what is happening around you, and be aware of your feelings.

Wisdom – how you reflect on the nature of life, how everything changes, and how everything is interconnected in a huge pattern of conditions.

Each of these is linked to the other two. For example:

- If you do something wrong, your mind might well become troubled as a result, perhaps by feeling guilty or worried about being caught. But if you have treated someone else badly, it means that you do not really understand what life is about, and what will bring happiness.
- If your mind is racing or muddled, you are unlikely to know the right thing to do.
- If you are confused about what life is about, you are unlikely to behave well towards others, or be calm and contented.



▲ *People in similar circumstances can be so different. What's the secret?*

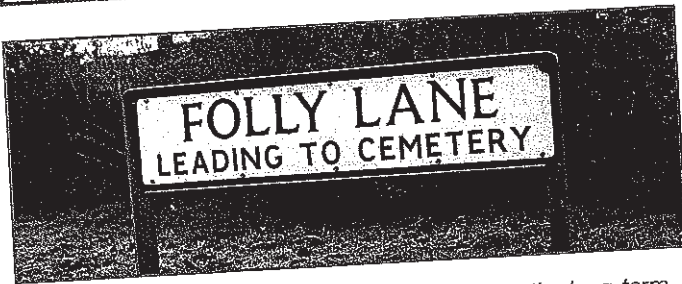
- 1 Design a poster setting out the Noble Eightfold Path. You could do it as a wheel, or as a path of steps. Do a drawing for each of the steps.
- 2 a) Write down your ambitions, and against each one say what training you would need in order to achieve it.
b) Explain in your own words the Buddhist idea that in order to grow as a person you have to create the right conditions.

● Karma

Buddhists believe that everything we do has an effect on us. Each action helps to decide whether we're happy or unhappy in the future. These actions are called **karma**. If you do a helpful or kind action, you will benefit. If you hurt others, then you have to live with the consequences.

Karma is not a system of rewards or punishments imposed on us. It's a simple fact of life. This is how one Buddhist describes it:

- I think of the Law of Karma as simply 'Actions have consequences'. If you say a friendly word to someone, or point out their good qualities, that strengthens your friendship. Later they may say something positive back to you. Although you don't do it in the hope of that, it's the natural result of your good karma.



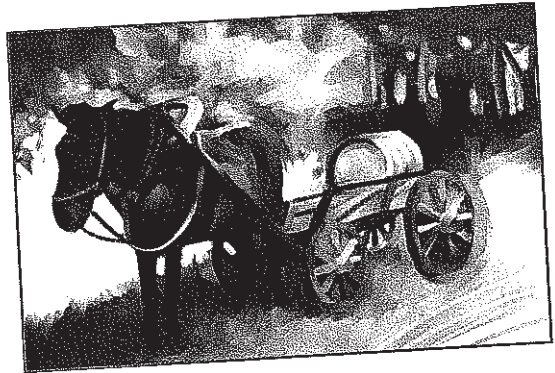
▲ It's not quite that simple! We don't always see the long-term effects of what we say or do

Look at the verses from the Dhammapada, an early Buddhist book, in the box. They suggest that whatever you think or do today will make you what you will be tomorrow. Therefore, if you hate someone and go out and injure or kill them, that other person is not the only victim of what you have done. You too will have to live with the consequences. Perhaps you will be caught and punished. But even if you escape external punishment, Buddhist teaching says that you carry around in your mind the results of what you have done. That action has made you a bit different. It is bad karma.

Of course, you always have opportunities to change, and to practise those things that are good karma, and you will then benefit as a result.

- Remember, karma is NOT a law imposed on you from outside, it is simply a matter of cause and effect.

- What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind.



... If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart.

... If a man speaks and acts with a pure mind, joy follows him as his own shadow.



The Dhammapada verses 1, 2

But what happens to all your good and bad karma when you get to the end of your life?

In India, most people believe in reincarnation; that after death a person is re-born into another life. It was the same in the Buddha's day, although the Buddha himself did not encourage people to think about such things, about which people could not know anything for certain.

Most Buddhists therefore believe that the karma which has not already had its results in this life, may have results in future lives after their present life has ended. Exactly how this might happen, of course, is something we cannot know.

● Beliefs and ceremonies

But do you have to take part in religious ceremonies in order to follow this 'middle way'?

The Buddha argued that, if someone had been shot, it was more important to pull out the arrow than argue about what kind of arrow it was, or from what kind of bow it had been shot.



In the same way, it was more important to help people to overcome suffering than to argue about religious ideas, like whether or not God exists. Therefore Buddhist teaching does not include belief in God.

The Buddha warned his followers not to rely on religious beliefs and ceremonies. They do not work automatically, as if by magic. What matters isn't the ceremony itself – it's the attitude of the people taking part.

He also taught that it was more important to follow his teachings than merely to be able to discuss religious ideas. Buddhist Dharma is something to put into practice, not just to talk about.

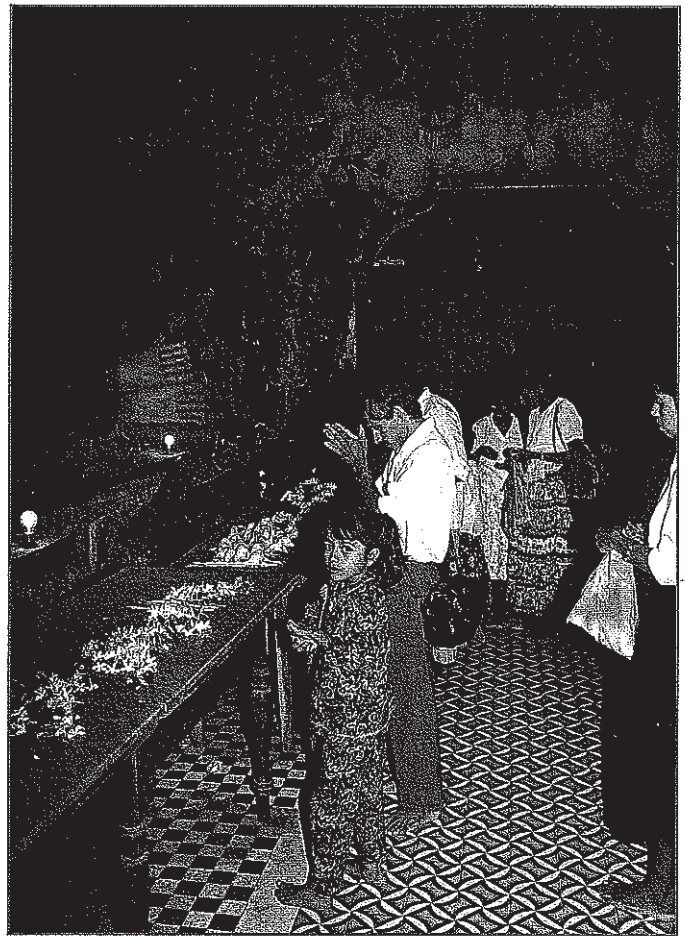
- 1 Write down two actions and their likely consequences. One should show karma producing good results, the other should lead to bad ones.
- 2 Look at the illustration of the man shot by an arrow. Can you think of any other situation where doing

This is how the Dhammapada puts it:

- If a man speaks many holy words but he speaks and does not, this thoughtless man cannot enjoy the life of holiness: he is like a cowherd who counts the cows of his master.

Whereas if a man speaks but a few holy words and yet he lives the life of those words, free from passion and hate and illusion – with right vision and a mind free, craving for nothing both here and hereafter – the life of this man is a life of holiness.

The Dhammapada verses 19, 20



▲ This photograph shows Buddhists taking part in worship by making offerings at a shrine. A Buddhist thinks that any benefit gained from this is in the mind of the person who does it

something to help is more important than discussing what is wrong? Describe (or draw) the situation, and write down the reason why practical help is most important.