Your notes

GCSE Religious Studies: revision notes

Buddhism: practices

Contents

1. Worship
2. Meditation
3. Ceremonies and festivals
4. Buddhist ethics
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

Worship

- Buddhists may worship at home at a shrine, or in a temple, vihara or monastery. **Puja** (devotion) can include bowing, making offerings and chanting.
- A shrine often has a **Buddha rupa** (statue) and offerings: flowers (a reminder of impermanence), candles (the light of enlightenment) and incense.
- Some Buddhists chant mantras, such as 'Om mani padme hum' in Tibetan Buddhism, and use **malas** (prayer beads) to count.

Meditation

- **Samatha** meditation calms the mind and develops concentration, for example through mindfulness of breathing. **Vipassana** (insight) meditation develops insight into the nature of reality.
- **Metta** bhavana develops loving-kindness towards all beings. Tibetan Buddhists may use visualisation, and Zen Buddhists practise zazen (seated meditation).

Ceremonies and festivals

- Death and mourning practices vary, such as sharing merit for the dead in Theravada Buddhism, and sky burial in some Tibetan communities.
- **Wesak** celebrates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death (especially in Theravada Buddhism). Parinirvana Day, in Mahayana Buddhism, remembers the Buddha's death.

Buddhist ethics

- **Kamma** (karma): intentional actions have consequences, affecting future rebirths. Good actions create merit.
- The **Five Precepts**: to abstain from harming living beings, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants that cloud the mind.

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- The Six Perfections (Mahayana): generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom.
- The Four Sublime States: loving-kindness (**metta**), compassion (**karuna**), sympathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha).

Your notes

Key terms

Puja	Devotion or worship, such as making offerings.
Buddha rupa	A statue or image of the Buddha.
Samatha	Calming meditation that develops concentration.
Vipassana	Insight meditation into the nature of reality.
Metta	Loving-kindness.
Karuna	Compassion.
Five Precepts	The five moral guidelines Buddhists try to follow.
Kamma	Karma: the principle that intentional actions have consequences.
Mala	A string of prayer beads.
Wesak	A festival celebrating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is a Buddha rupa?
2. Why do Buddhists offer flowers at a shrine?
3. What is samatha meditation?
4. What is vipassana meditation?
5. What is metta?
6. What is karuna?
7. What is the first of the Five Precepts?
8. What does Wesak celebrate for many Buddhists?

Answers

1. A statue or image of the Buddha
2. They are a reminder of impermanence
3. Calming meditation that develops concentration
4. Insight meditation into the nature of reality
5. Loving-kindness
6. Compassion
7. To abstain from harming living beings
8. The Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death

What to do next

Practise 12 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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