Beliefs, Values and Practices: Buddhism
Buddhism

What is Buddhism?

Buddhism is a philosophical understanding of life which originated over 2,500 years ago in Nepal. Worldwide, Buddhists number over 350 million. According to the 2011 Census there are around 13,000 Buddhists in Scotland.

The central teachings of Buddhism, known as the Four Noble Truths, are:

- to experience life is to experience suffering
- the cause of this suffering is our attachment (to material things, to other people, even to ideas or beliefs)
- it is possible to release oneself from suffering
- the path to achieve release from suffering is the Eightfold Path, described as a Middle Way.

What is it like to be a Buddhist?

This video shows one young Buddhist talking about what it means for her to be a Buddhist in Scotland today.

Video

Watch: Testimony – Buddhism on YouTube - https://youtu.be/Ps31mzhzBFg
Watch: Testimony – Buddhism on GlowTV (Glow login required)

Reflecting on Buddhism

- What questions might you ask this young Buddhist?
- How has this young person’s life been shaped by her beliefs?
- What beliefs and values shape your life?
- Is it important to put your beliefs and values into action?
- How might you/do you put your beliefs and values into action?
- In what ways are your beliefs and values similar to/different from those of others?
- Why is it important to understand the diversity of beliefs and values in modern Scotland?
- What skills do you think are important when exploring beliefs and values?
- Why might understanding your beliefs and values and those of others be an important skill in the workplace?
Prominent figures in Buddhism: Aung San Suu Kyi

Introduction

“We are not bystanders in our own history. Every one of us writes a story that is told”.

Aung San Suu Kyi, speech given during U2's 360 tour, 2011

Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's pro-democracy movement and a practising Buddhist, is undoubtedly one of the most famous and widely admired people in the world. Her fight for democracy in her homeland, subsequent imprisonment by the military regime, separation from her sons and husband, the tragic death of her husband and her inability to contact him, form a compelling story of love, compassion and dignity. She is the only Nobel Peace Prize winner to receive her award while in custody.

Suu Kyi's commitment to Buddhist principles have given her the strength to make immense sacrifices in her fight for justice. Buddhism has given real power to her demands for democracy for Burma, and has informed her belief in non-violent protest as a catalyst for change.

Historical background

Burma, also known as Myanmar, has had a long and colourful history. Over many hundreds of years, waves of immigration and invasion from neighbouring countries resulted in the rise and fall of many different empires, kingdoms and city states. It also created a population made up of over 100 ethnic groups, mostly practising Buddhism.

But in the 19th century invasion came from further afield. The vast British Empire already touched Burma's western borders in the form of British-controlled India, and over the course of three terrible wars Burma was also taken under British rule.

British rule

The British drew up new borders for the country, brought in immigrant workers from India and China, and began to make money from the rich natural resources of the country. Although the country prospered, none of the new wealth ended up in the hands of the native Burmese, but went instead to the new immigrant workers and the British companies who employed them.

The Burmese never became reconciled to foreign occupation and resistance continued. This was brutally put down by the British, who destroyed entire villages to root out resistance.
fighters. Christian missionaries converted some of the ethnic groups, but most of the country remained staunchly Buddhist.

At the start of the 20th century, Young Men's Buddhist Associations were established to protect Buddhism from foreign influence, and they soon became a rallying point for the independence movement. A turning point came in 1939 when World War II began. Burma sided with Japan against the Allies, and with Japanese support the British were driven out. Burma finally declared itself an independent nation.

**The fight for independence**

In fact, Burma had just exchanged one foreign occupation for another - the Japanese took over where the British had left off and treated the Burmese as a subject nation. Resistance grew again. A young Burmese general, Aung San, formed a new independence movement. As the war turned against the Japanese, British troops returned to Burma, this time fighting alongside the Burmese to defeat the Japanese. The Japanese were finally defeated in 1945 and Burma demanded complete independence.

**The road to leadership**

Aung San Suu Kyi was born in Rangoon in June 1945, the third child of General Aung San. Aung San, commander of the Burmese army fighting for independence from British colonial rule and freedom from Japanese occupation, was widely seen as the father of a free Burma, and a hero of the fight for independence.

In 1947, when Suu Kyi was only two years old and just a few months before independence was achieved, her father, along with six of his ministers, was assassinated by a political rival.

Independence, finally achieved in 1948, brought with it many problems. In-fighting between various political and ethnic groups resulted in the army becoming very powerful and Burma ended up under a military-controlled government. All opposition was violently put down and the people’s hopes for a truly free Burma were again denied.

**Life overseas**

In 1964, Suu Kyi left India, where her mother was the Burmese ambassador. She went to Oxford University to study philosophy, politics and economics. At Oxford she met another student, Michael Aris, an expert on Tibetan civilisation. They fell in love and after several years of living apart - he tutored the royal family of Bhutan while she went to New York to study and work for the UN - they married on New Year Day 1972.

Suu Kyi joined Michael and worked in Bhutan until they returned to the UK in 1974 for the birth of their son Alexander. Michael worked at Oxford University, while Suu Kyi researched and published books about her father and about Burma. Another son, Kim, was born in 1977.

Although their life in Oxford was peaceful, Suu Kyi had always known, and warned Michael, that if the people of Burma needed her she would return there to stand by them.

“She always used to say to me that if her people ever needed her, she would not fail them. Recently I read again the 187 letters she sent to me in Bhutan from New York in the eight months before we married (in 1972). Again and again she expressed her worry that her family
and people might misinterpret our marriage and see it as a lessening of devotion to them. She constantly reminded me that one day she would have to return to Burma, that she counted on my support at that time, not as her due, but as a favour”.

Michael Aris, quoted in ‘Letters from Burma’, by Aung San Suu Kyi

Return to Burma

In April 1988, Suu Kyi got word that her mother was severely ill in Burma. The next day she flew to Rangoon to nurse her, leaving Alexander and Kim in Oxford with Michael.

Over the next few months, while Suu Kyi was busy looking after her mother, events in Burma were unfolding violently as people protested against the government. Mass public demonstrations against the ruling military regime were brutally put down with thousands of people killed. Suu Kyi, as she had always promised, stepped in to support her people.

In August 1988, after more violence from the military, Suu Kyi finally took on her father’s legacy as the leader of Burma’s fight for freedom. She sent an open letter to the government asking them to hold democratic elections. A few days later she made her first public speech, watched by Michael and her sons along with an audience of over half a million, to demand democratic government.

But the ruling regime had no intention of giving up power. The army seized control of the country and declared martial law. They banned political gatherings of more than four people, and arrested and sentenced opponents without trial.

In response, Suu Kyi and other democracy activists set up a new political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). The party, with Suu Kyi as its general-secretary, aimed to establish democracy in Burma through a policy of non-violence and civil disobedience. The battle for Burma had begun.

Imprisonment, separation and struggle

After the violent events of August 1988, Suu Kyi devoted herself to the fight for democracy in Burma. Defying the ban on political gatherings, she toured the country making speeches to large audiences. After her mother’s death in December, she vowed that, just as her mother and father had served the people of Burma, so would she, until her death if required.

House arrest

By 1989, the government had had enough of Suu Kyi’s campaigning. She was prohibited from standing in the planned election. When the NLD won a landslide victory, the regime refused to recognise the results and would not hand over power. Suu Kyi fought against this injustice, and was finally put under house arrest. Over the next few years, the ruling regime severely limited Suu Kyi’s freedom. Michael and the boys were denied entry to Burma, and she was not allowed even to contact them or anyone from the outside world.

Human rights awards

In spite of her isolation, the world did not forget Suu Kyi or the brutal regime in Burma. She was awarded various human rights prizes, and in 1991 won the Nobel Peace Prize, the first

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time the prize had been given to someone in custody. The prize was accepted on her behalf by her sons, Alexander and Kim. Alexander, only 18 years old, made a moving acceptance speech. Suu Kyi gave the $1.3 million prize money to establish a health and education trust for Burmese people.

**Tragic separation**

In 1995, Suu Kyi was released from house arrest but her movements were still very restricted. She saw her family for Christmas that year, but from then on they were denied visas to visit her.

In 1997 Michael was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He appealed to be allowed to visit his wife but was denied. The government urged Suu Kyi to return to the UK to see him, but she knew that if she ever left Burma she would not be allowed to return. Michael died in 1999. From 1989, when she was placed under house arrest, till his death ten years later, Suu Kyi and Michael had seen each other a total of five times.

**Free at last**

Suu Kyi faced many more periods of house arrest, as well as times spent in prison, until the regime finally relaxed its restrictions on her in 2010. She had been detained for 15 of the previous 21 years. Her release came just six days after elections held in Burma, meaning yet again she had been unable to stand.

Following her release, she was allowed visits from her family and was able to travel abroad. In June 2012 Suu Kyi finally delivered her own acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, two decades after being awarded the prize. She made speeches to parliament in London, visited the grave of her husband Michael and met her grandchildren for the first time.

Suu Kyi was also able to restart political campaigning. In by-elections in 2012 the NLD won 43 out of 45 contested seats, and Suu Kyi became a member of parliament.

**Engaged Buddhism**

Buddhism has clearly been a driving force in Aung San Suu Kyi's commitment to non-violent protest, and her patience and tolerance when faced with real suffering and sacrifice. But more than that, it has informed her belief in democracy through the fundamental Buddhist principles of compassion and fairness.
In her 1989 essay ‘In Quest of Democracy’ Suu Kyi outlines the challenge facing those who want to introduce democracy to Burma. Opponents of democracy, according to Suu Kyi, argue that it should be resisted as it is not a native or indigenous way to rule the country. For such opponents democracy belongs to the west, to the colonialists and to Britain. Therefore, as it emanates from their historical oppressors, it must be resisted.

She argued that democratic principles such as equal treatment and respect for human rights could also be found in Buddhist philosophy. Suu Kyi sought not to persuade the people to accept a foreign form of government, but rather to recognise that democratic principles and values such as compassion already existed in Burma in the form of Buddhism.

“. . .Rulers must observe the teachings of the Buddha. Central to these teachings are the concepts of truth, righteousness and loving kindness. It is government based on these very qualities that the people of Burma are seeking in their struggle for democracy”.

In Quest of Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, 2010, pp 177-8

Suu Kyi describes her commitment to an ‘engaged Buddhism’ which rather than being a religion which is about withdrawal from the world, becomes a powerful means by which it can be transformed. She believes spiritual values, from whatever religion, are increasingly needed in a world which is becoming more and more materialistic.

Reflective Questions

- To what extent do you think Britain can be held responsible for events in Burma?
- Do you agree with Suu Kyi that too often people put profit before true progress?
- Do you agree with Suu Kyi that to be happy one must have a sense of meaning beyond materialistic satisfaction?
- In her BBC interview in June 2012 Suu Kyi was asked if sacrificing her family was worth it. Do you think Gandhi or Martin Luther King were ever asked such a question? If not, why not?
- Suu Kyi has spoken of ‘engaged Buddhism’. Is this how you perceive Buddhism?
- If, as Suu Kyi claims, ‘we are not bystanders in our history’, what are you doing that engages with the community and humanity?
- Do you think Suu Kyi and Gandhi are right in saying that truth and love will always win?
- Should religion be kept out of politics? Is this possible?
The history of Tibet

Tibet has had a turbulent history. At times the empire of Tibet encroached into what we now call China, and at others it has been subject to the powerful empires of Mongolia and China. Tibet has been at the frontiers of various empires throughout history including Chinese, British, Russian and Sikh.

The history of Tibet is contested and varies depending on your perspective. Tibet has been isolated from much of the rest of the world. This isolation has been partly due to its geographical inaccessibility but also has been self-imposed. As the Dalai Lama puts it:

“We Tibetans had chosen – mistakenly, in my view, to remain quite isolated behind the high mountain ranges which separate our country from the rest of the world”.

The Dalai Lama, Ethics for the New Millenium (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999)

The most recent episode in its history is the claim to rule Tibet by the Chinese government. In 1950 China placed thousands of troops in Tibet to reinforce its claim on the region. In 1959, after an uprising by Tibetans failed, the Dalai Lama fled to India and was allowed by the Indian government to establish a Tibetan government in exile in northern India in Dharamsala.

During the 1960s and 1970s the communist Chinese regime destroyed most of Tibet’s monasteries and reports suggest that thousands of Tibetans were killed during this time as the Chinese imposed military rule.

Many human rights groups claim that the Chinese authorities have brutally put down peaceful protests and continue to detain and torture innocent Tibetans. However, the Chinese government claims that Chinese intervention in Tibet has been positive.

Tibet therefore remains in the spotlight as a focus point for discussion of human rights. Indeed the Dalai Lama is often used as a symbol of this and western leaders often arrange meetings with the Dalai Lama as a means to table concerns about human rights abuses in China.

The geography of Tibet

The Tibetan plateau or Tibetan province is rightly called the roof of the world. The average elevation of the plateau is 4,900 metres (over three times the height of Ben Nevis). Chomolungma (Mount Everest) and many of the world’s highest mountains lie within Tibet.

The area is also known as the ‘water tower of Asia’ or the ‘third pole’ as many of the continent’s rivers, including the Ganges, Yangtze, Indus and

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Brahmaputra, originate from Tibet. The area of the Tibet is 1.2 million kilometres squared (Scotland is 78,772 km squared). Despite such size, according to the 2000 Chinese census, the population is 2.62 million (less than half the population of Scotland).

Scottish Buddhism

In Scotland today there is evidence of the growing appeal of Buddhism for many. Perhaps people are attracted to what they see as a religion which has no god, and which embodies the idea of happiness for all that can be found within ourselves rather than in possessions or external authorities. Indeed, many Scots consider that Buddhism is a philosophy rather than a religion.

The Dalai Lama is popular in Scotland, and when he visits, his talks and events are sold out, and his books sell thousands of copies.

Scotland is also home to the largest Tibetan monastery in Europe. Kagye Samye Ling was founded in the 1960s and can be found northwest of Lockerbie in Dumfriesshire. Every year thousands of visitors travel to Samye Ling in order to learn about Buddhism.

Perhaps people are attracted to the meditative aspect of Buddhism. This may also be the result from the fact that research into meditation or mindfulness is showing that these activities can have major benefits. For example mindfulness meditation is now recognised by the NHS as a form of treatment for depression. Research has also shown benefits in schools, where mindfulness has been used for children with attention deficit disorders or poor self-control.

Short biography of the 14th Dalai Lama

The predominant cultural and religious influence on Tibet is Buddhism, which arrived over 1,400 years ago. Tibetan Buddhism regards the aim of life to be the attainment of enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Tibetan Buddhists believe that certain spiritually advanced people can help others to achieve this. These 'saints' are called bodhisattvas and the Dalai lamas have been regarded as examples of such sainthood. These are people who have chosen to be reborn in order to help other beings.

In Tibetan Buddhism great emphasis is placed on the importance of the spiritual teacher and his lineage. These lines of teaching have given rise to various monastic traditions in Tibet. The Dalai Lama is head of the Gelug branch of Tibetan Buddhism. It is believed that the Dalai Lama is a reincarnation of a saint called Avalokiteśvara who, they believe is the saint of compassion. Since the 14th century there have been 14 such reincarnations.
Finding a new Dalai Lama

Upon the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933 Tibetan religious leaders sought guidance about where his successor would be re-incarnated. Delegations of monks were sent out to identify possible candidates. A group of monks were sent to the village of Takster where they found a two-year-old child named Lhamo Thondrup. After a series of tests involving possessions of the deceased Dalai Lama, the child was deemed to have passed, scoring higher than the other children tested. The boy was taken to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital and site of the Potala Palace, the residence of the Dalai Lama.

Shortly after this he was initiated as a Buddhist monk. He would wear the saffron and yellow robes and was given a new name Tenzing Gyatso. At the age of six the boy began an intensive education into all aspects of Tibetan culture, as well as philosophy, Sanskrit and Buddhism.

In 1950, the Dalai Lama, now aged 15 formally became the political leader of Tibet. Initially he was attracted to many of the ideas of equality that communism seems to embody and he travelled to China to enter talks with the Chinese leader, Chairman Mao. However, Mao’s attitude to religion (he famously declared that religion is ‘poison’), his ambitions for Tibet, and growing unrest were to force the Dalai Lama to escape from his own country in 1959. The Dalai Lama has been living in Dharamsala, northern India, to this day.

Dharamsala

The Dalai Lama sought to create a government in exile, as well as offer a sanctuary for Tibetan refugees and a community dedicated to preserving Tibetan cultural identity. In the years since 1959 he has campaigned for Tibetan autonomy and cultural identity. He has persistently sought to peacefully bring about recognition of Tibetan identity and the creation of a democratic constitution for his country.

Latterly, he has put forward the idea of devolution for Tibet and, on one of his visits to Scotland, he was very interested in the way Scotland has a devolved parliament, yet remains within the United Kingdom.

In 1989 the Dalai Lama was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize. Since his exile from Tibet he has travelled to more than 62 countries. He has met with presidents, prime ministers and crowned rulers of major nations. He has also held dialogues with the heads of different religions and many well-known scientists. He has written over 70 books about a range of topics including introductions to Buddhism and meditation, religion and science and inter-faith dialogue.

In 2008 he announced that he was stepping aside from his role as leader of the Tibetan government in exile. However, he continues to travel and to write, and visited Scotland in 2012.

Key Buddhist beliefs

Although the Dalai Lama is a Buddhist, and arguably the most famous living Buddhist, he does not see it as his role to spread Buddhism. That is, he has always remained respectful to the views (religious of otherwise) of people throughout the world without seeking to be some kind of Buddhist missionary.

Also, he is keen that other people do not worship him or promote him as some infallible source of wisdom.
"I am only an ordinary human being. The best I can do is try to help them by sharing in their suffering".

Dalai Lama, Ethics for the New Millennium (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999)

He has written that the ending of suffering is more important than religious traditions and dogma. It may seem strange for him to be saying that religion may be part of the problem and, to a certain extent, be abandoned. However, the Dalai Lama is perhaps being remarkably consistent to the Buddhist principle of avoiding attachment to "non-enduring" things, even when the 'things' happens to be religions themselves.

The Dalai Lama has famously stated that his religion is happiness; that for him, the aim of life (not just human life) is happiness or the cessation of suffering.

“We hope that through this or that action we can bring about happiness. Everything we do, not only as individuals but also at the level of society, can be seen in terms of this fundamental aspiration”

Dalai Lama, Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment (Long Beach, CA: Thubten Dhargye Ling, 2002)

In the modern world, where certain belief systems are often locked in unhelpful conflict, there is perhaps a need for a universal morality that goes 'beyond religion'.

The Dalai Lama thinks that although all beings wish to be happy, they often seek happiness in the wrong place or in the wrong things. Happiness, for him, cannot be found in material possessions or in anything outside of ourselves.

All of the Dalai Lama's views can be traced back to the Buddhist principle of impermanence and the failure of humans to grasp this. Another view on the nature of impermanence is the idea that everything is connected; that nothing is free from the influence of other phenomena. This perhaps explains the Dalai Lama's life-long interest in science. Amongst other things:

“The extraordinarily detailed picture of the behaviour of subatomic particles at the minutest levels imaginable brings home the Buddha's teaching on the dynamically transient nature of all things. The discovery of the human genome all of us share throws into sharp relief the Buddhist view of the fundamental equality of all human beings”.

Dalai Lama, The Universe in a Single Atom (London: Little Brown, 2005)

War and peace and the Tibet question

Since his exile from Tibet in 1959 the Dalai Lama has been campaigning for Tibetan independence and cultural preservation. His plans and requests have consistently been ignored. Despite this the Dalai Lama says he feels no anger or need for revenge against China. He thinks that these things will only make the problem worse. He has said he includes the Chinese in his meditations on compassion and that though they have taken his country, he refuses to let them take his peace of mind.
Throughout this time he has been a passionate advocate for non-violent means to achieve freedom for his people. In doing so he is following his Buddhist principles which centre on the alleviation of suffering and recognise that much suffering is caused and continued by greed for possessions, resources and territory. His Buddhism suggests that to use violence in an attempt to end violence is always counter-productive and leads to more suffering.

“Ours has been a long struggle. We know our cause is just. Because violence can only breed more violence and suffering, our struggle must remain non-violent and free of hatred. We are trying to end the suffering of our people, not to inflict suffering upon others”.


“Anger, hatred, jealousy – it is not possible to find peace with them. Through compassion, through love, we can solve many problems . . ”


**Materialism and economics**

The Dalai Lama has repeatedly suggested that all humanity must begin to build a way of life on inner values and mutual respect rather than the relentless collection of material goods. He has noted that it is often the case that less technologically advanced societies tend to suffer from less anxiety and depression. He has stated that one of the reasons for this may be that the reliance on technology makes people less dependent on each other. That is, in rural, undeveloped societies, there is a stronger social bond or sense of community.

The Dalai Lama has also noted with interest recent research which suggests that happiness in societies has nothing to do with the wealth of the society, but rather with the levels of equality within the society. In a country like Scotland, which is among the wealthier nations, there is a gulf between the richest and poorest. The evidence suggests that countries which do not have much wealth, but where it is more equally distributed, are happier.

**Science**

The Dalai Lama has long been interested in scientific ideas and has written about the nature of consciousness, genetics, cosmology, quantum physics and the alleged benefits of meditation. Buddhism, unlike certain other forms of religion, co-exists better with science.

Like most Buddhists, the Dalai Lama does not believe in a creator god. Buddhism is a world view concerned with the alleviation of suffering rather than establishing if such a god exists.

The concept of evolution can be seen as a process by which all life is connected, which sits neatly alongside Buddhist ideas such as the interdependence of life and Buddhist respect for all animals. The Buddhist idea of Karma can also be seen as the idea of cause and effect, which is, after all, the process that the scientific enterprise seeks to uncover.
“Just as scientific disciplines place tremendous emphasis on the need for objectivity on the part of the scientist, Buddhism also emphasises the importance of examining the nature of reality from an objective stance”.

Dalai Lama, Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment (Long Beach, CA: Thubten Dhargye Ling, 2002)

Other religions
The Dalai Lama is currently advocating the need for a secular global ethic ‘beyond religion’ and he contends that religious precepts and traditions are increasingly inadequate and parochial in the global village.

“There is a great need to promote interfaith understanding, leading to respect for one another’s faith”.


The Dalai Lama has written that there is a universal humanity which has ideas of justice and compassion in common. For him, different religious and philosophical views offer different ‘cultural flavours’ in how this is expressed. He thinks these differences enrich global society, but if taken too seriously can lead to conflict and sectarianism.

The Dalai Lama suggests we have a core shared humanity that is more important than any ‘local’ tradition. This, he believes, is what humanity needs to recognise and put at the heart of our politics and religion in order to survive.

“If we understand each other’s way of living, thinking, different philosophies, and different faiths, it can contribute to mutual understanding. By understanding each other, naturally we will develop respect for one another… I always feel that this special inner development is something very important for mankind”.

Reflective Questions

Scottish Buddhism
• Why do you think Buddhism has an appeal for many in the West and in Scotland?
• Can you think of shops and places where you have seen Buddhist images? Why might people who are not Buddhists buy such products? Should they?

Short biography of the 14th Dalai Lama
• According to Tibetan Buddhists the Dalai Lama was identified as the 14th man to hold the title in an unbroken line of rebirths. The boy Lhamo Thondrup passed a series of tests whereby he recognised the belongings of the 13th Dalai Lama. What are your views on this?
• The current Dalai Lama has hinted that he may be the last in the line. According to him the Karma he generates in his lifetime may not lead to the rebirth of a 15th Dalai Lama. How do you think Tibetans may feel about this possibility?

Key Buddhist beliefs
• What do you think of the Buddhist ‘diagnosis’ of what it is to be human?
• Buddhism has been said to be more a philosophy than a religion. Do you think this may be part of Buddhism’s apparent popularity?
• Do you agree with the Dalai Lama that we tend to give ‘too much attention to the external, material aspects of life while neglecting moral ethics and inner values’? Can you give examples of where this might be the case?
• What do you think of the Dalai Lama’s belief that morality does not need to depend on religion and that humanity needs to go ‘beyond religion’ in order to live in peace?
• The Dalai Lama believes we suffer because we compete aggressively for things which do not last. Can you think of how this might occur?
• What do you think he means when he says ‘Such processes have been going on in the human mind since time immemorial, but their execution has become more effective under modern conditions’?

Specific issues
• Do you agree that violence cannot resolve disputes?
• Are there situations where dialogue is impossible and violent action is necessary?
• Do you agree with the Buddhist view that human life is not any more valuable than other forms of life?
• Despite what we know about the impact of humanity on the environment and the extent to which all life is interconnected, do you think we are learning and acting to change things?
• Do you agree with the Dalai Lama’s view that sensory, material satisfaction is not enough?
• Do you think that, as a society, we are addicted to ‘sensory’ pleasures?
• Where can we see resource inequality in the world today,? What might be the consequences of such inequality?
• How does the Dalai Lama’s view of the relationship between religion and science match those of other religions?
• How might Buddhism be said to be similar to science?
Other religions

- Do you agree that all religions have the same aims?
- Do you think religion is an ‘obstacle to human development’?
- Is it possible to lose your ‘attachment’ to your own tradition or point of view when considering the views of others?
The Dalai Lama visited Scotland in 2012. The theme of his visit was "Compassion of the Heart: Be the Change." He spoke about the major problems facing humanity and how we can overcome them by adopting a more compassionate mindset and becoming less selfish.

**Video: Be the Change Part 1**  
Watch: Testimony – [Be the Change Part 1 on YouTube](https://youtu.be/azOD8kazROA)  
Watch: Testimony – [Be the Change Part 1 on GlowTV](https://youtu.be/Ckotcysqxos) (Glow login required)

Watch the video clip and consider the following:
- What does the Dalai Lama say we should do to achieve a happy life? Do you agree with him, or do you have a different view?
- What does the Dalai Lama think about ‘humanity’? How far would you share his view?
- The Dalai Lama talks about adopting a “culture of compassion”. What do you think this means? How could you go about practically achieving this within your own life? Come up with a personal action plan to become more compassionate – where would you start?
- Do you agree that every member of the human race has the same potential within them from birth? Explain your answer.
- Is it important to have a calm mind? Is it possible?

**Video: Be the Change Part 2**  
Watch: Testimony – [Be the Change Part 2 on YouTube](https://youtu.be/Ckotcysqxos)  
Watch: Testimony – [Be the Change Part 2 on GlowTV](https://youtu.be/Ckotcysqxos) (Glow login required)

Watch the video clip and consider the following:
- According to the Dalai Lama, what do we have to do in order to develop a calm mind?
- Do you think humans are too materialistic? What problems might being too materialistic bring? Is being materialistic part of human nature?
- What role does the Dalai Lama think ‘the younger generation’ have? Do you think this is reasonable to ask of the younger generation?
- We probably all get angry from time to time. Why is anger a bad thing in life? What are the short and long term consequences of being angry and what effects does it have on your actions? Is being angry always wrong?

**Questions and answers**
During each of his visits, the Dalai Lama took questions from young people from across Scotland. These questions and answers can be found in the following clips. Think about what the Dalai Lama is saying and think about your own responses to this.
Video 1 - Dalai Lama – Happy
Watch: Testimony – Happy on GlowTV (Glow login required)

- What do you think makes people happy?

Video 2 - Dalai Lama – Change
Watch: Testimony – Change on YouTube - https://youtu.be/DGUZpwGzWh8
Watch: Testimony – Change on GlowTV (Glow login required)

- What strengths and skills do people need to help them deal with change?

Video 3 - Dalai Lama – Forgive
Watch: Testimony – Forgive on GlowTV (Glow login required)

- Is it important to forgive those who have done wrong?

Video 4 - Dalai Lama – Influence
Watch: Testimony – Influence on YouTube - https://youtu.be/zM_r8OXchLU
Watch: Testimony – Influence on GlowTV (Glow login required)

- What advice would you give young people who may end up in positions of influence as future leaders?

How has learning about the Dalai Lama affected your own developing beliefs and values?