

RELIGION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

AQA GCSE THEME F – CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM



THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UNDHR)

- ✓ In 1948 the United Nations created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR).
- ✓ It was created after World War 2, when the truth of the Nazi treatment of Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and the disabled was revealed.
- ✓ The UNDHR sets out the rights to every human should have, no matter where they live, includes these rights:
 - ✓ Article 1 - the right to equality; Article 2 - freedom from discrimination.
 - ✓ Article 16 - the right to marriage and family; Article 18 - freedom of belief and religion.
 - ✓ Other rights include a fair trial, education, life, and privacy.
- ✓ The UK government has a duty to provide these rights to people living in the UK, and there are laws in the UK which protect human rights, such as the 1998 Human Rights Act.
- ✓ People can only have human rights if they accept the responsibility to make sure these rights are available. This includes the responsibility to respect other people's rights, and the responsibility to create access to those rights. For example:
 - ✓ People have the right to freedom of speech, but the responsibility to not to use hate speech
 - ✓ People have the right to protection from cruelty, but the responsibility not to bully or harm each other.

Religious views on Equality and Human Rights

Christian views:

- ✓ The Lord's Prayer starts with 'Our Father'. This means that all humans are part of one family under God. Scientifically we are all one species.
- ✓ In Genesis we are told that God created humans "in his own image". This means all humans are like God, we share God's nature so are all equally important.
- ✓ In the parable of the Good Samaritan the Samaritan (enemy of the Jews) helps an injured Jew. Jesus tells us to 'love our neighbour as yourself.' This means treat others how you would like to be treated, no matter what their race, religion or gender.
- ✓ The Bible teaches: "In everything, do unto others as you would have them do to you. This means help anyone in need the way you would want to be helped if you were them. It doesn't matter what their race, religion or gender.
- ✓ St Paul taught, "There is neither slave nor free, male nor female, Jew or gentile. All are one." This means Christians should view all people as equal, no matter what race, gender or religion.

Buddhist views:

- ✓ The first precept in Buddhism is "not to harm or kill any living being.". This is known as ahimsa. This means don't harm anyone. Any form of discrimination is harm.
- ✓ Buddhists believe all living beings share 'Buddha-nature'. This means that all humans share the ability to become enlightened, so everyone is equally important, no matter what race, gender or religion.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination means to give advantage to those groups in society that are often treated unfairly, e.g., requiring a certain percentage of jobs to go to women, or requiring a certain number of university places to go to non-whites.

Arguments for positive discrimination:

- ✓ It balances past injustices. Positive discrimination is a way to help compensate for the discrimination that minorities experienced in the past, when they were denied an equal chance.
- ✓ Without positive discrimination, things will never really change. It is only through making sure enough minorities get into university or politics that we can begin making society more equal and fairer. It won't happen otherwise, and rich white men will remain in power.
- ✓ Martin Luther King Jr. supported it. He said: "It is important to understand that giving a man his due may often mean giving him special treatment... A society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years must now do something special for him, in order to equip him to compete on a just and equal basis."

Arguments against positive discrimination:

- ✓ Any type of discrimination is wrong. Discrimination means to treat people differently. Even if you are doing it for good reasons, it is still wrong, as all people are equal.
- ✓ Can lead to resentment (feelings of being unfairly treated). Positive discrimination could lead to those not from a minority (especially white males) feeling over-looked and resentful.
- ✓ People should get ahead based on merit (how good they are) not what group they belong to. Some people think that people from minorities might get a job or university place not on merit (how good you are), but simply because they are a minority.

RELIGION, RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

AQA GCSE THEME F – CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM



Racism

- ✓ One example of social injustice is racism.
- ✓ Racism is prejudice (thoughts) and discrimination (actions) based on someone's race.
- ✓ The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that racism is wrong – the 1st article of the declaration is the 'right to equality', the 2nd article is 'freedom from discrimination'.

Christian views on racism:

- ✓ Racism is always wrong, because the Bible teaches that all humans are equal
- ✓ All humans are made in the 'image of God' and are therefore equal.
- ✓ The Lord's Prayer begins with the words 'Our Father', so we are all part of one family and should be treated equally.
- ✓ The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches Christians to 'love your neighbour as yourself', no matter what race, religion or gender. In Jesus' time the Samaritans were the enemies of the Jews and some Jews treated them as an inferior race. But Jesus made the Samaritan the hero of the story to show that we should help anyone in need, no matter what race or religion they are.
- ✓ One well-known Christian who campaigned against racism was Martin Luther King Jr. King led the Civil Rights Movement – the campaign to end the racist system of segregation in the USA. King used non-violent methods of protest including the bus boycott, sit-ins and peaceful marches. King believed all people, no matter what race, were equal because they were created in the 'image of God'. He also followed Jesus' teaching of 'love your enemies' and refused to hate or use violence against white racists.

Buddhist views on racism:

- ✓ Buddhist believe in ahimsa (non-harm), so racism is wrong as it harms others.
- ✓ Racism is caused by hatred (one of the 3 Poisons) and Buddhists try to overcome the poisons to reach enlightenment.
- ✓ Racism causes bad karma
- ✓ One of the 8-fold path is 'right action' – racism breaks this.
- ✓ One Buddhist organisation which uses Buddha's teachings to challenge unfairness in society is called Engaged Buddhism.

Gender

- ✓ One example of social injustice is gender inequality.
- ✓ The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that gender discrimination is wrong – the 1st article of the declaration is the 'right to equality', the 2nd article is 'freedom from discrimination'.

Christian views on gender:

- ✓ In the Catholic church women cannot become priests, bishops or Pope because Jesus was male and all of his disciples were male.
- ✓ Eve was the first to sin and disobey God.
- ✓ Eve was made as a helper to Adam.
- ✓ St Paul said: "I do not permit women to teach or have authority over men...it is disgraceful for women to speak in church."
- ✓ The Church of England has allowed female vicars since 1994 and female bishops since 2010.
- ✓ Quakers have respected female equality for centuries as the bible states that all humans are made 'in the image of God.'
- ✓ "Love your neighbour." "Our Father". "There is no male or female, all are one in Jesus."

Buddhists views on gender:

- ✓ Modern Buddhists believe that all humans should be treated equally as everyone has 'Buddha-nature' and the potential to reach enlightenment.
- ✓ The Buddha ordained nuns, showing that women are equal in religion.
- ✓ The Dalai Lama said that there is no reason why a future Dalai Lama could not be a woman.
- ✓ Monks are given more respect than nuns in Theravada Buddhism.
- ✓ The Buddha was initially reluctant to ordain nuns.

Freedom of Religion and Religious expression

- ✓ Freedom of religion is the right to choose your religion.
- ✓ Freedom of religious expression is the freedom to practice your religion.
- ✓ There have been many times in history when people have been persecuted (treated unfairly) because of their religion – such as Hitler's treatment of the Jews.

Sexuality

- ✓ Homophobia is another example of social injustice. This is prejudice and discrimination based on someone's sexual preferences.
- ✓ The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states that gender discrimination is wrong – the 1st article of the declaration is the 'right to equality', the 2nd article is 'freedom from discrimination'.

Christian views on homosexuality:

- ✓ Some Christians believe the purposes of sex is reproduction and any sex that can't make children is wrong.
- ✓ Some parts of the Old Testament say homosexuality is an 'abomination' and deserves the death penalty.
- ✓ All humans are made in the 'Image of God' and so we are all equal.
- ✓ The Old Testament also says that working on Sundays or worshipping other religions also deserves the death penalty and people no longer follow these teachings.
- ✓ "Love your neighbour." "Our Father". "There is no male or female, all are one in Jesus."

Buddhist views on homosexuality:

- ✓ Nowhere does Buddhism say that homosexuality is wrong, in fact Buddhist writings do not comment on homosexuality at all.
- ✓ The third of the five precepts 'To abstain from sexual misconduct' can be seen by some Buddhists as applying to homosexual relationships.

Christian Views:

- ✓ Jesus told his followers to convert other to Christianity: "make disciples of all nations."
- ✓ You have to believe in Jesus to be 'saved': "no one comes to the Father except through me."
- ✓ "Love your neighbour". All religions are important.
- ✓ "Image of God". We are all equal.

Buddhist views

- ✓ Buddhists are taught to listen to people from other religions.
- ✓ The first precept, ahimsa, means do no harm. Treating someone unfairly because of their religion causes harm.
- ✓ The Buddha himself said that, whilst he believed his teachings to be 'truth' he encouraged others to test them for themselves.

RELIGION - POVERTY

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Poverty

- ✓ To be poor, to be without money, food or other basic resources.
- ✓ Poverty is one example of social injustice – where people are denied their human rights.
- ✓ 4 of the main causes of poverty are (draw a simple picture for each one):
 - War. War leads to great devastation and suffering
 - Unemployment. Not everyone is able to find work or is healthy enough to work.
 - Debt. Some people get themselves into debt, because their wages are too low or through unwise spending.
 - Environment. Some countries are vulnerable to natural disasters such as droughts and floods that can cause crop failure.

Christian views:

- ✓ **“If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”** Jesus said this in response to a man who had asked him how to gain eternal life.
- ✓ **“I tell you that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven.”** Jesus said this after seeing the sorrow on the wealthy man's face when Jesus asked him to sell everything he had.
- ✓ **“No one can serve two masters...you cannot serve God and money.”** This tells us that we have to choose what is important to us, money and wealth, or God and helping others. We cannot do both.
- ✓ **“Love your neighbour as yourself.” The Parable of the Good Samaritan.** Jesus was asked what are the most important of God's commandments, and this is how he replied.
- ✓ **“Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do the same.”** This is a simple teaching that suggests that we should share any basic necessities we have with those who don't have any.
- ✓ **“I was hungry and you fed me...whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do for me also.” The Parable of the Sheep and Goats.**
- ✓ **“The love of money is the root of all evil.”** This means that craving for wealth and possessions only leads to suffering.

Buddhist views

- ✓ The second noble truth is that craving is the cause of suffering. This means that craving or desire for wealth and possessions only leads to suffering for ourselves and others.
- ✓ The Buddha left the palace and gave away all his wealth. Today monks and nuns follow his example. This shows that wealth and power are not the path to happiness.

- ✓ These teachings all share the same messages:
- ✓ The right use of money and wealth is to help the poor, not to buy luxuries for yourself

Because of these teachings many Christians may give regularly to charities such as Christian Aid or CAFOD. Both these charities help the poor around the world by providing emergency relief after a natural disaster or by providing long-term help.

Responsibilities of those living in poverty

- ✓ Even though the Bible says 'the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat', Christians believe it is important to help those in need
- ✓ Christians also encourage the poor to help themselves by finding work, but realise some are unable to do so
- ✓ Buddhism teaches that all poverty deserve compassion (karuna) but that people also have a responsibility to themselves to create the conditions needed for a healthy life

Exploiting the poor

- ✓ To exploit means to use something unfairly.
- ✓ There are three main ways the poor are exploited:
 - ✓ Debt. Some companies charge excessive rates of interest on debts that keep people trapped in poverty. Poor people may have little choice but to borrow money from them, and if they cannot pay the loans back their debts become huge.
 - ✓ Human trafficking. The illegal movement of people, typically for the purposes of forced work or exploitation. People who are desperate for a better way of life may pay smugglers to get them into a wealthier country, but once there some are forced to work against their will.
 - ✓ Unfair trade. Where the poor are not paid a fair wage for their work. The fair-trade campaign tried to end this. In the UK the National Minimum Wage sets the lowest amount an employer can pay their workers, but many poorer countries do not have this.

Christians views:

- ✓ Christians think that exploiting the poor is always wrong, because of the teachings in the table above such as 'love your neighbour as yourself' and 'whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do for me also'.
- ✓ They may support charities that try to end the exploitation of the poor, such as Christian Aid or C.A.F.O.D.

Buddhist views:

- ✓ Buddhists believe that they should treat others with compassion, karuna, and this suggests that they should help the poor and not exploit them. They also try to reduce everyone's suffering and so this is another reason why they wouldn't exploit the poor.
- ✓ Buddhists also believe everyone has the potential to become enlightened so everyone should be treated equally.
- ✓ Buddhists may put these beliefs into action by supporting charities like the Karuna Trust.