

AQA A Religious Studies Paper 2: Religion, human rights and social justice

Social justice and human rights



Human rights- basic rights and freedoms to which all human beings should be entitled e.g. life, liberty, marriage, education, privacy.

Social justice- ensuring society treats people fairly whether they are poor or wealthy. It involves protecting everyone's human rights.

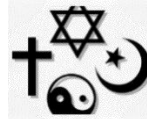
Human rights and responsibilities

- 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. It sets out the rights that every person should be entitled to.
- UK government is obliged to give these rights to people living in the UK. People can only have these rights if they acknowledge the responsibility to respect and help provide for the rights of others.

Social justice

Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching in the Bible about importance of social justice e.g. 'love your neighbour' (Mark 12:31) Old Testament prophets were quick to condemn injustice e.g. Amos: 'let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream' (Amos 5:24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha taught that whilst suffering is inevitable, at the same time people should try to relieve the suffering of others. Buddhists do this through social justice projects as it expresses compassion. Engaged Buddhism is a movement to tackle social issues like injustice.

Religious freedom



Freedom of religion- right to practice whatever religion one chooses.

Freedom of religious expression- to worship, preach and practice one's faith however they wish.

In Britain, Christianity is the main religion, but no-one is forced to be Christian because the government protect members of any faith.

Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachings encourage tolerance and harmony. Different groups of Christians fighting each other, or other religions, doesn't follow Bible teachings. 'If it is possible [...] live at peace with everyone' (Romans 12:18) 'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love' (Ephesians 4:2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha encouraged people to listen to the teachers of other religions with respect. Few Buddhist traditions try to persuade others to become Buddhists. In Buddhist countries, people are free to practice it as much or little as they wish. 'I always say that every person on this earth has the freedom to practice or not practice religion. It is all right to do either' (Dalai Lama).

Gender prejudice and discrimination



Equality- having equal rights, status and opportunities.

Prejudice- having biased (usually negative) opinions about an individual or group of people. Usually, they're based on ignorance and stereotypes.

Discrimination- actions or behaviour that arises from holding prejudiced views.

Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Christianity- women not allowed to be Church leaders: 'women should remain silent in the churches [...] for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church' (Corinthians 14:34-35). Catholic and Orthodox Churches still don't allow women to be priests (they argue men and women are equal but have different roles). Others are happy to ordain women and feel the Church should adapt to reflect importance of equality in modern society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha ordained <u>nuns</u>, but was reluctant at first. Today, some Buddhist traditions ordain men and women equally e.g. Triratna Buddhist Order. 2015- Dalai Lama said there was no reason why a future Dalai Lama couldn't be a woman. Some traditional Buddhist schools don't allow women to be fully ordained. Theravada Buddhism- nuns not given same respect and recognition as monks.

Sexual prejudice and discrimination



Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some think heterosexual relationships that lead to procreation are what God intended e.g. 'be fruitful and increase in number' (Genesis 1:28) and 'a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). Homosexual relationships are sinful (e.g. Catholicism and Orthodox). Others e.g. Church of England think homosexual relationships are morally acceptable and it is not loving ('love your neighbour') to condemn people for their sexual orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scriptures say little about homosexuality and no Buddhist teaching says that homosexual relationships are wrong. Many Buddhists think moral precepts apply to any couple, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Prejudice and discrimination- disability



Disabilities- people with mental or physical impairments that affect day-to-day activities.

Positive discrimination- treating people more favourably because they have been discriminated against in the past/ have disabilities.

- Over 500 million people with disabilities worldwide- some show prejudice or discrimination towards those with disabilities.
- Others show positive discrimination e.g. giving wheelchair users front-row seats so they can see.

Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most oppose discrimination against disabled people- doesn't show equality or love. • 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:31)- help the disabled by healing them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No explicit Buddhist teachings on disability but general Buddhist attitude of karuna (compassion) applies to all those suffering in any way, including disabled people.

Racial prejudice and discrimination



Racism- to consider people of different races as inferior and to treat these people badly as a result. Racism is often triggered by skin colour.

- Since 1976, various Acts have passed that make racism illegal in the UK, however, it does still occur.
- 'Show Racism the Red Card' is an example of a campaign against racism.

Christian views	Buddhist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Christians oppose racism as they believe all people are equal: 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). • In the 20th century, races were kept apart e.g. USA, and South Africa. • Actions of Christians like MLK (USA) and Archbishop Desmond Tutu (South Africa) and others persuaded governments that racist policies needed to be changed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of metta (loving-kindness) means racism isn't acceptable to most Buddhists. • Metta should be developed towards all people without discrimination.

Religious teachings about wealth



Attitudes towards wealth

- Christianity: Bible teaches that wealth is a blessing from God: 'wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things' (1 Chronicles 29:12). The Bible also teaches that wealth is associated with dangers like greed and selfishness: 'for the root of money is a root of all sorts of evil' (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus didn't teach it was wrong to be wealthy, but focusing on it brings the danger of ignoring God: 'you cannot serve both God and money' (Matthew 6:24).
- Buddhism: What matters is not how much wealth someone has, but how they got their money, their attitude towards it and what they do with it. Buddha had a luxurious life but later renounced it to live a simple life. Monks and nuns also live simple lives. Letting go of wealth is a way of overcoming attachment (a spiritual obstacle to enlightenment). Buddha taught that happiness isn't achieved through craving but enlightenment: 'by action, knowledge and Dhamma, by virtue and noble way of life- By these are mortals purified, not by lineage or wealth' (Buddha in Majjhima Nikaya, vol. 3, p. 262).

Attitudes towards using wealth

- Christianity: Those with excess money should give it to the Church for its upkeep and mission (including providing for the poor) e.g. the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, where the rich man ends up in hell for not sharing his wealth (Luke 16:19-31). Parable of Sheep and Goats also says those who help the poor are rewarded with a place in heaven (Matthew 25:31-46).
- Buddhism: Adhiya Sutta says someone can use their wealth for 3 purposes: to provide pleasure and satisfaction for themselves, family and friends; to keep themselves safe, and to give offerings to monks, nuns or the poor. Lots of emphasis on using wealth to help others. Give freely without expecting anything in return.

Poverty and its causes



Poverty- living without money, food or basic necessities e.g. clothing, shelter.



Causes of poverty: debt, unemployment, natural disasters.

Responsibilities of those living in poverty: the Bible says 'the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat' (2 Thessalonians 3:10) but Christians believe they should help others ('love your neighbour'- Mark 12:31). Buddhism teaches that all poverty deserves compassion but people have a responsibility to create the conditions needed for a healthy life.

Exploitation of the poor and giving money to the poor



Exploitation- misuse of power/money to get others to do things for little or unfair reward.

- Not paying them fairly- 'Do not exploit the poor because they are poor' (Proverbs 22:22). Buddhists place importance on balancing profit with ethics.
- Excessive interest on loans- Buddhists see this as greed- one of the 3 poisons.
- People-trafficking- 'love your neighbour'. Buddhism- Buddha disliked castes.

Short-term aid e.g. during disasters, supplying food, water etc but doesn't solve issues.

Long-term aid e.g. providing education so people are self-reliant. May take time.