**Buddhism exam questions**

**Please Note**: Often questions may draw upon knowledge from different areas even though I have placed the questions under specific headings.

**The Buddha’s life and intellectual development**

‘The Buddha’s enlightenment was the most significant part of his life.’ Discuss.

To what extent was the Buddha’s teaching a product of its time?

To what extent is the life of the Buddha important to Buddhists?

**The 3 Refuges**

The Buddha is the most important refuge.’ Discuss.

To what extent is the Buddha less important than his teachings?

Assess the claim that the sangha/samgha is the most important part of modern Buddhism. [

**3 Marks of Existence**

‘Anicca/anitya (impermanence) is the most important of the three marks of existence.’ Discuss

Critically assess the view that Buddhism is only concerned with suffering (dukkha/duhkha).

To what extent is dukkha/duhkha (suffering) the most important concept in Buddhism?

Discuss the view that anatta/anatman (no self) is the most important of the Three Marks of Existence

**Samsara**

Evaluate the importance of the three fires/poisons to Buddhists.

To what extent is punabbhava/punarbhava (rebirth) unavoidable?

To escape samsara a Buddhist should focus on karmic seeds rather than karmic fruits.’ Discuss.

‘Nibbana cannot be explained.’ Discuss

Evaluate the role of the three poisons (three fires) in preventing a person from escaping samsara

**The 4 noble Truths**

Assess the view that the Second Noble Truth is the most important of the Four Noble Truths.

Critically compare the different stages of the Eightfold Path.

To what extent are the Four Noble Truths essential for all Buddhists?

‘When following the Eightfold Path, meditation is more important than ethics.’ Discuss

Assess the view that the noble eightfold path is the foundation of Buddhist ethics

**Meditation**

Vipassana meditation is more likely to lead to nibbana/nirvana than samatha meditation.’ Discuss

Critically discuss the view that Buddhist meditation is pointless without mindfulness.

Evaluate the view that, for all Buddhists, the only goal of meditation is to achieve nibbana/nirvana.

**Development of Mahayana Buddhism**

Assess the claim that there are more similarities than differences between the arhat/arahant and bodhisattva paths.

**Buddhism in the Far East**

‘Pure Land Buddhism does not follow the teachings of the historical Buddha.’ Discuss

‘Zen Buddhism frees the mind from the limitations of words.’ Discuss.

‘There are no significant differences between Soto and Rinzai Zen Buddhism.’ Discuss.

Pure Land Buddhism is not an easy path.’ Discuss.

**Engaged Budhhism**

Engaged Buddhism challenges traditional Buddhist views.’ Discuss.

Critically assess the view that social activism is an important part of Buddhist practice.

To what extent could a Buddhist ever accept the need for war?

**Madhyamaka school of Budddhism**

‘The idea of sunyata suggests that words are merely conventions and therefore have no value.’ Discuss.

‘Nagarjuna is only interested in sunyata (emptiness).’ Discuss

To what extent is emptiness (sunyata/sunnata) the most important concept in Mahayana Buddhism?

‘The Buddha would not agree with the teachings of Nagarjuna’s Madhyamaka (middle way) philosophy.’ Discuss.

**Gender**

Assess the view that all female Buddhists ought to undergo a period of ordained life.

Critically discuss the role of women in the monastic sangha.

**Buddhism in the West**

Assess the significance of the Dalai Lama for Buddhists today.

‘Westernised Buddhism has distorted the Buddha’s teachings.’ Discuss