Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- understand the impact of the Four Sights on Siddattha
- reflect on how human beings are affected by suffering
- develop thinking skills by reflecting on the different types of suffering around you.

Starter

- What sights shock you?
- How do you respond to these things?

Despite having a beautiful wife and family, excellent job prospects and all the comfort he could want, Prince Siddattha was not satisfied. He decided to go on a journey beyond the palace walls because he was sure there was more to life than he had seen (see Unit 1.1).

Siddattha saw four things outside the palace that made a huge impact on him. Buddhists know these as the Four Sights:

The first sight was old age. In the palace, Prince Siddattha was surrounded by things that were youthful and beautiful, so this was the first time that he had really seen old age and its effects on a person’s body. The next sight was a sick man. This was something else that Siddattha had never known, and he was deeply troubled by it.

Thirdly, Siddattha saw a funeral taking place. He had never known death before and so this distressed him even more, since he had to face the finality of death and the suffering it caused to those who were left behind. Siddattha’s guide Channa explained that all these things happen to everyone eventually.

After seeing the horrifying realities of old age, sickness and death, the final sight gave Siddattha some hope. He saw a holy man who wore simple clothes and carried a begging bowl. What surprised Siddattha was that this man was happy even though he had nothing.

Together, the four sights made it clear to Siddattha that his wealth and family could not protect him from the painful realities of life. Since he knew what life was really like, there was no way he could ever return to the security of the palace. He decided that he must dedicate the rest of his life to finding a way to end samsara and suffering in the world. And so, Prince Siddattha began his spiritual journey as a holy man, which eventually led to him becoming known as the Buddha.

Make a small mind map to show what types of suffering there are around you and within your local community.
Learning Objectives
In this unit you will:
● examine the Three Signs of Being, one of the key teachings of the Buddha
● explore the meaning of anicca, dukkha and anatta
● reflect on the Buddha’s teachings about change, suffering, and the self.

Case Study
Anicca
Anicca means that everything changes and nothing lasts forever. Just as you mature and change to become an adult, so does everything else. The Buddha taught that it is important to understand this truth about the temporary world around us, because if people appreciate that nothing is permanent, then they will value life much more.

[Anicca means that] everything that comes into being also ceases (ends), whatever it is. You know, like when a flower blooms, how that ceases, but also the solar system will one day cease, so everything is going to cease.’

Dukkha
Dukkha is sometimes translated as suffering, but this does not really grasp the true meaning. Physical suffering and pain are parts of it, but it also relates to sufferings of the mind, such as anxiety, stress or general dissatisfaction with life. One way to understand dukkha is to imagine a bicycle with a seriously buckled wheel. If you ride this bicycle, you will always feel that something is unsatisfactory, not right and that it could be a lot better.

Mrs Harvey is also a Buddhist and she lives in Wales with her son Tom. She says that dukkha is all of the things that are upsetting in life, including illnesses and being uncomfortable, hungry, or simply just growing up and facing all of life’s changes. She says it is important that we are aware of dukkha and that we accept it as part of life.

Anatta
Anatta is the Buddhist belief that there is no permanent self or ‘soul’. As people grow older, their bodies, minds and personalities change. Friendships change, and families change. The Buddha taught that each person has nothing which could be described as an everlasting aspect of themselves. Many Buddhists believe that you can try to hold on to who or what you used to be, but in the end, you cannot stop changing.

Activities
1. List seven examples of things in life that Buddhists would call dukkha.
2. Do you think that the Three Signs of Being are an accurate view of how this life and the world are? Can you think of anything in life that does not change? Discuss these questions with a partner.
3. Molly’s grandmother says that everything ceases or ends eventually. Draw five things in life that have beginnings and endings (e.g. seasons, fashion styles, people).

Reflection
Mrs Harvey says that a belief in anicca helps put her mind at rest and is a comfort to her. What do you think she means? Would having such a belief help you? 

‘There remains this element, […] this certainty in things: All formations (things) are impermanent; all formations are suffering; all things are not-self.’
AN 3:134

Useful Words
Dhamma The teachings of the Buddha

Molly lives near her grandmother in North London, and they are both Buddhists.
**Objectives**

- Examine the effects of the Four Noble Truths on Buddhists’ lives.
- Interpret the Buddha’s teachings for modern life.
- Reflect on the Buddhist belief that there is a cure for the suffering in the world.

**Task**

Design and make a poster for a doctor’s surgery waiting room. In it, explain what illness the Buddha taught that people are suffering from, what their symptoms are, and what the cure is.

The poster needs to include specific religious terms, but also needs to be clear and straightforward so that it can be understood by everybody.

**A bit of guidance...**

Your aim is to explain and present the Buddha’s teachings in a clear, relevant, and thought-provoking way. You can give examples of the symptoms that the Buddha talked about, drawing inspiration from the things around you, and within your life and experience. You can also use the case studies within this chapter to show how these important teachings have already affected the lives of those who have followed them.

**Hints and tips**

To help you tackle this task, you could try to:

- explain clearly the Buddha’s teachings on the Four Noble Truths, and the effect they have on believer’s lives
- make links between the ancient teachings of the Buddha and modern situations and make this clear within your poster
- interpret the Buddha’s teachings for today
- make clear connections between dukkha and illness and apply these to your work
- examine how Buddhists believe that there is a solution to the problems and suffering in the world.

**Guidance**

What level are you aiming at? Have a look at the grid below to see what you need to do to achieve that level. What would you need to do to improve your work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can...</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
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</thead>
</table>
|         | ● give a brief description of the Four Noble Truths and make links between this and how Buddhists live  
|         | ● begin to identify the impact of Buddhism on people’s lives and the relevance of its teachings for today.  
|         | ● show a clear understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the impact they have on the lives of those who follow the Buddha’s teachings  
|         | ● respond by using clear examples about suffering in the world and suggest some answers to it.  
|         | ● describe the impact of the Four Noble Truths using religious vocabulary  
|         | ● give reasons and examples as to why these beliefs are important to Buddhists  
|         | ● use these ancient teachings and present them in a modern way  
|         | ● give clear reasons and examples of suffering in the world, as well as answers to difficult questions.  
|         | ● explain and describe the Four Noble Truths using a wide range of religious and philosophical language  
|         | ● interpret and evaluate these truths, and present them in a clear and coherent manner  
|         | ● respond creatively and persuasively by giving clear reasons and examples of suffering and pain in the world, as well as answers to difficult questions.  

When you have completed this task, you can also work on your skills for Levels 6 and 7, and perhaps even higher. This is an extension task.

To take your learning even further, you can produce a small leaflet to accompany the poster and include additional information that did not fit on the poster. The leaflet should provide more details about the Four Noble Truths. You can also do some further research and include information about the Noble Eightfold Path, which offers specific ways to deal with the problem of suffering in the world.