

Read the following passage before answering the questions.

Those of us who do not live according to the Buddhist program of morality and meditation have, therefore, no means of judging this claim. The Buddha was always quite clear that his Dhamma could not be understood by rational thinking alone. It only revealed its true significance when it was apprehended 'directly,' according to yogic methods, and in the right ethical context. The Four Noble Truths do make logical sense, but they do not become compelling until an aspirant has learned to identify with them at a profound level and has integrated them with his own life. Then and only then will he experience the 'exultation,' 'joy' and 'serenity' which, according to the Pāli texts, come to us when we divest ourselves of egotism, liberate ourselves from the prison of self-centeredness, and see the Truths 'as they really are.' Without the meditation and morality prescribed by the Buddha, the Truths remain as abstract as a musical score, which for most of us cannot reveal its true beauty.

(Source: extract from *Lives: Buddha*, Karen Armstrong, Phoenix Press, 2002, Edexcel Anthology)

- 3 (a) Clarify Buddhist ideas about meditation shown in this passage.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

In this passage from Armstrong, she points out that the Buddha believed "his Dhamma could not be understood by rational thinking alone." The Buddha teaches that we can only fully accept the true nature of reality through our own personal experience because the path to enlightenment is personal and unique. This is because it is best to work things out by ourselves through reason, rationality and experiences of the external world around us. This is supported by the Buddha finding and developing the Middle Way between extreme asceticism and over indulgence as that worked best for Gotama, but we will

personal experience because the path to enlightenment is personal and unique. This is because it is best to work things out by ourselves through reason, rationality and experiences of the external world around us. This is supported by the Buddha finding and developing the Middle Way between extreme asceticism and over indulgence as that worked best for Gotama, but we will each have our own preferred paths to enlightenment. Meditation is a traditional way a cleansing the mind and developing positive thoughts and letting the negative thoughts pass through the mind without acknowledgement. Meditation, such as samatha and vipassana can be used throughout our daily lives to calm and reenergise our state of mind. Therefore, the Buddha emphasises that his teachings should be used as a guide and not followed directly.

The extract further suggests experience of "exultation, joy and serenity" will "come to us when we divest ourselves of egotism." This is related to the Buddha's meditative state of mind he experienced under the Rose Apple Tree on his journey to enlightenment after he left his life of luxury behind and walked through the forest. The Buddha sat in a yogic position which is known as zazen meditation, meaning "just sitting" and having no attachment to thoughts that enter the mind. In this position, Gotami was able to be released from his ego where he experienced the feelings of joy and had his first glimpse of what enlightenment would feel like. Therefore, meditation is crucial and widely used in Buddhism as a way to speed up the process of enlightenment and develop wisdom from removing ego and ignorance to help fully understand the Dhamma.

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In this passage, it explains that "without the meditation and morality prescribed by the Buddha, the truths remain as abstract as a musical score." This implies that meditation is the most effective way to gain wisdom and compassion which are essential to the teachings of the Buddhas as they are "two hands washing each other." Therefore, meditation calms and clears the mind in order for monks and nuns to see the true nature of existence so that we can understand the Dhamma as it can only be revealed to us once we cut the ties of the 3 poisons. Meditation allows us to do this because it comes from the idea of concentration and turning negative thoughts into positive ones, such as hatred into love (Metta) which is found in Brahmacharya meditation where we give love to ourselves, then family and finally to those we dislike.