

Candidate 5 evidence

Understanding Standards Higher RMPS

Essay 5 – Buddhism

Evaluate the significance of Buddhist beliefs about the nature of human beings. (20)

The nature of human beings is broken down into three specific aspects that all of humanity possesses to some degree. These are known in Buddhism as the 3 root poisons and include greed, hatred and ignorance. Buddhists believe that these three poisons are the reason why humans suffer and are often depicted to be in the centre of the Tibetan wheel of life, which is the Buddhist cycle of death, birth and rebirth.

One poison is greed. Throughout history human beings have been known to be very greedy. Nowadays, we all want to possess the newest iPhone or the next biggest piece of new technology. We also tend to overindulge ourselves in many ways. This could be in food, television, sex and many things that people continuously crave. This poison is the most linked to tanha, which in Buddhism it means craving. We always want more and more out of life but never appreciate what we currently have. In Buddhism, Buddhists are taught through the story of the Buddha that overindulgence is a bad way to live your life as you become blinded to reality, and as the Buddha's reactions to the four sights show, once you see reality for what it truly is after being indulged for so long, it can shock you to your core and create more suffering. However, the story of the Buddha also shows us that being ascetic is just as bad. Not giving your body enough of what it needs is unhealthy. The Buddha was very close to death living life through eating a few sesame seeds a day. This links to human nature as humans can often be extreme, living life either being overindulgent or ascetic, but the Buddha shows that the best way to live life is in the middle, not having too much or too little. I find this belief of greed being a poison to not be as significant as others though. Greed is very much present in human nature and we all can be greedy, but history and the current day and age of technology shows us that people do care about others and are often willing to offer help and aid to those who need it, for example, in the current situation between Russia and Ukraine, many people have held charity fundraisers and donated money to help the people of these countries, and even inviting these citizens into their homes to stay with them. This shows that although humanity is greedy, we can also be just as giving, making this belief to only be somewhat significant at most.

Another poison is hatred, any human who says they don't have hatred in their heart is probably lying. Buddhists believe that hatred is often the fire that burns the most in people. It is believed

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that hatred clouds one's mind and can take a toll on a Buddhist who is attempting to become enlightened as it stops one from concentration, which is needed as it is a part of the eight-fold path to become enlightened. We all grow up and learn many things from those around us and one of those can be hatred. This can take into many forms such as prejudice. If a child grows up in a house that hates gay people for example, they can learn that same trait and exhibit it all humans in existence hate something, for example, many can be righteous for their hatred, for example many hate murderers and many hate war but in Buddhism all hatred is the same and loses people's focus on enlightenment, and of course it's a part of nature as it is often past down by generations. However, Buddhism does offer guidance to extinguish the hatred in a Buddhists being through the eight-fold path. The section of the path known as ethics include the right action, right speech and right livelihood. All of these encourage Buddhists to go against their nature of hatred and abstain from exhibiting actions of hatred and live a life without it. Overall, I believe this is a very significant belief. Buddhism as a religion accepts that hatred is in our nature and doesn't shy away from it but instead guides followers in a direction where they don't have to be burdened of it anymore.

The final poison and aspect of human nature is ignorance. Buddhists believe that human beings are often ignorant to fundamental truths in life. One of the 3 marks of existence is known as annica or impermanence. The 3 marks of existence are just fundamental truths about life that no one can shy away from and impermanence is one of them. No matter what you do, we all change over time, grow old and eventually die, and Buddhists believe that humans are especially ignorant to this basic fact. They often numb themselves under this false notion that everything will stay the same forever, and then eventually come to realise that this is not true and be full of suffering because of it. In the eight-fold path that guides Buddhists to enlightenment, the first step to this is the right understanding. Buddhists are required to understand in proper detail the fundamental truths in life and not shy away from it and accepting it for what it is. It's the only way towards enlightenment. I believe this to be a very significant belief, as it doesn't just teach the monks and nuns who want to be enlightened but also gives resources for lay Buddhists who won't be enlightened but can still be comforted and hopefully not have to experience a great deal of

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suffering once they grow old or lose a loved one as they already have an understanding of how
life goes and knows not to give in to the human nature of ignorance.