

## **G. Worship, Prayer & Ritual | Sample Answer**

### **Outline the similarities and differences between Buddhist and Christian meditation using each of the following headings: (2017 Section G [a])**

#### **i. the origins of meditation as a form of prayer**

Meditation is a mental and physical course of action that a person uses to separate themselves from their thoughts and feelings in order to become fully aware. Similarities between Christian and Buddhist meditation primarily exist in the area of morality and compassion. However, they each have their own symbols, rituals and meditation practices.

Christian forms of meditation have a long history, though not all practices are accepted universally in all churches. The Desert Fathers established the basis of the Christian withdrawn life and used repeated prayer, either spoken or sung. The Eastern Orthodox traditions practice creating and using icons as a focus of meditation. The Jesuit traditions use visualization and imagination to respond to scenes from the life of Christ and internalize the lessons that can be found within them. The simplest and most universal form of Christian meditation can be found in the practice of repeating prayers, either individually or in groups.

Meditation is so central to Buddhism that many people think of meditation as a Buddhist practice. Buddhism evolved from the meditations of Siddhartha Gautama, a prince who renounced his status opting for a life of ascetic practice that led to his becoming the Buddha or enlightened one. Buddha identified eight principles that develop the fully realised state of a person; right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right effort, right awareness and right meditation. There are three major schools of Buddhism and many minor ones.

#### **ii. meditation techniques used in worship**

In Buddhism, morality is focused on interaction between humans and personal purity of thought, not on a connection with a personal god. Therefore, the focus of Buddhist meditation is on one's own efforts alone. Christian meditation, on the other hand, brings people closer to god, with the

focus of meditation being directed to God's character and actions. The Bible is concerned with one's relationship with God as well as with people and personal holiness.

Theravada Buddhist teaching encourages people to meditate on the Buddha statue for the purpose of helping people to follow buddha's example. Christians do the same with the life of Jesus. However, typical Buddhist teaching does not encourage praying to the Buddha whereas biblical mediation often leads to prayer full dependence on God for mercy and transformation.

When a Buddhist meditates, the purpose is merely to become aware of their breathing, discomfort or pleasure. They note the coming and passing of feelings and experiences and observe that nothing lasts. A Christian may observe the body and thank god for the special design and abilities that God has created. Biblical meditation looks beyond these observations to the spiritual realities revealed by God in his Word.

Buddhist meditation involves the mind and body as a single entity. It focuses on non-duality, the idea that good and evil are all part of the same reality and should be accepted. Conversely, the Bible teaches a clear distinction between good and evil and the future hope of the entire elimination of evil. Christian meditation emphasises turning from evil towards God.

The goal of meditation differs from Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhism teaches that through meditation one can gain enlightenment and thus be able to escape the cycle of suffering and enter nirvana. While Christians see meditation as a spiritual exercise that can aid them in further receiving God's blessings.

Buddhists meditation on their own or in groups. They meditative as a group in retreats (session) or in meditation rooms (zen do). Through this, they are reminded that they are the path of a larger Buddhist community.

Buddhist mantra is a principal part of Buddhist meditation. A mantra is a sacred utterance with a numinous sound. In Buddhism, mantra recitation helps to keep the mind focused and receptive to the blessing of the present moment. In Christian traditions, mantra recitation is used to focus the

mind and heart and connect with the divine, both within and without. Some Christians may recite a passage or line from the Bible.

Buddhist and biblical meditation, while similar in some basic aspects of morality, are connected to completely different goals and concepts regarding reality and salvation. Buddhism sees meditation as an essential part of the path for escaping suffering, while biblical teaching turns to God's gracious acts through Christ for salvation.

Both traditions include forms of meditation to focus on oneself and escape from life's distractions. However, the focus, goal and purpose of their practices are entirely different.