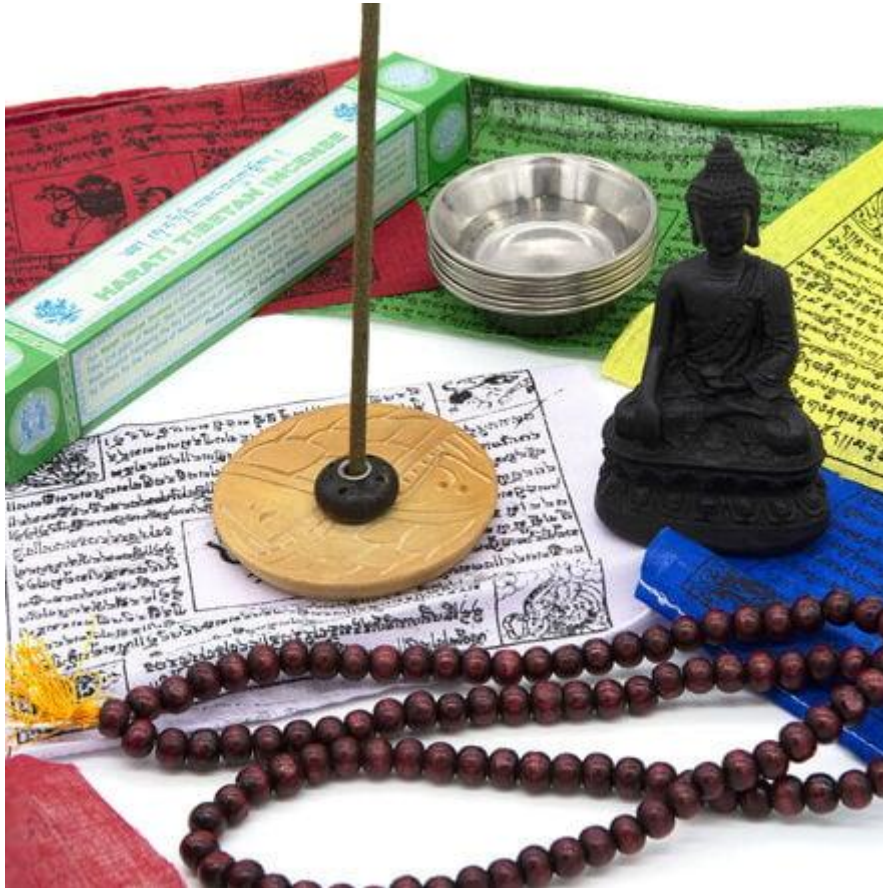


Buddhism Artefact Collection (BPACK)

This collection contains a variety of artefacts for teaching and learning about Buddhism. Using the artefacts can help bring religion to life and promote discussions.



Questions you could ask children about the artefacts

Initial Discussion

- What is this object?
- Does it resemble anything the children have seen?
- What do you think the item is used for and by whom?
- Which religious belief is it used by?
- Does anyone know what it is called? Learn how to pronounce the name.
- What does it represent?
- How might it be used?

Collect any other questions the children might have about the artefacts and display them as you try to find the answers through your learning sessions.

- **What do the objects tell us about the faith?** *This last question can be returned to at the end of the investigation.*

All About the Buddhist Artefacts

Contents: -

1. Buddha
2. Puja Bowls
3. Incense Sticks
4. Prayer Beads
5. Buddhist Prayer Flags



Please note contents may vary.

1. Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama was born to a privileged family over 2,500 years ago. For most of the early years of his life his father shielded him from the sights and stories of the poverty and suffering that went on outside the palace. Aged 29, Siddhartha left his life of luxury and comfort and went to find spiritual awareness. After six years of searching Siddhartha meditated under the Bodhi tree and thought about why suffering happened and how it could be overcome. After meditating for six days and nights he opened his eyes and realized he understood the nature of suffering. He became enlightened and from then on was known as Buddha, which means 'awakened one'.

Buddhists believe that Buddha is the wisest and most kind-hearted person in this world. Buddhists do not worship the Buddha statue, rather it is seen as a symbol that can be helpful in creating devotion, uplifting the mind, focussing attention and as a reminder of Buddha's teachings.

Look further into the story of Siddhartha Gautama. Research the different postures of Buddha statues. What are the Four Noble Truths? Introduce simple mindfulness exercises like focusing on breath and listening to sounds.

2. Puja Bowls

As part of their worship or meditation ritual, Buddhists may place offerings in small bowls which they then place in front of a shrine. The offerings may include water, flowers, fruit, money and rice. Rice and water represent the basic necessities of life. Water is also associated with cleaning and the flowers are representative of the transient nature of life. Flowers also contain the seed of new life within them. Puja bowls are used to focus worshippers' spiritual awareness. They are used to contain offerings such as food (hard and soft) water (2 types – to wash and to drink) incense, flowers and lights.

Buddhist worship is called 'puja' and offerings of water are amongst the most common forms of offering at Buddhist shrines. Puja bowls are used on a shrine and each bowl stands for a different part of the ritual:

1 – Prostrating to Buddha 2 – Offerings to Buddha 3 – Confessing wrongs 4 – Rejoicing the good qualities of oneself and others 5 – Requesting Buddha's guidance 6 – Asking Buddha to remain with you 7 – Dedication

It is important that the bowls are displayed in a straight line and an equal distance apart, preferably the length of one grain of rice or barley. Empty bowls should not be placed on the shrine, and the first full bowl should fill the following six. During worship people chant to show their love for Buddha and to give thanks for his teachings.

Make own puja bowls with clay or junk materials and decorate them. Discuss the meaning of the bowls and the importance of offerings in Buddhism. Look at images of Buddhist shrines.

3. Incense Sticks

This incense is made from various aromatic herbs found in the high-altitude regions of Tibet and Nepal. This incense is widely used by Buddhists and many others for the purposes of meditation, relaxation, purification and offerings. Tibetan incense is different from other styles because it is not composed of a mixture of essential oils but from woods mixed with other natural ingredients found in the Himalayan region. It is handmade according to the ancient monastic tradition and without a stick inside which gives the incense a deep, rich, earthy aroma.

The burning of an incense stick, resulting in fragrant smoke, is a good way to show respect, to symbolically purify your space, to soothe your mind and to aid your meditation practice.

Explore Further – In Buddhism, using incense is seen as a sacred offering; what else may be offered at a shrine?

4. Prayer Beads

Also known as – Mallah, Mala, Malla

Mala means necklace or garland. This is a set of beads which are used during devotional practices or meditation. Usually there will be 108 beads, which help to keep count of the number of mantras that are being said. 'Mantra' means 'instrument of thought' and this can be a verse, syllable or series of syllables. Buddhists believe that each manta represents a different aspect or quality of enlightenment – mainly being those of love, compassion, fearlessness or energy. Buddhists believe that mantras can develop these qualities.

The number 108 can be interpreted in many ways, but a popular interpretation is that the 1 represents the one true path, the 0 represents the circle of life and the 8 represents the infinity loop.

Thread beads or make own beads and decorate them and then use them in mindfulness activities.

5. Buddhist prayer Flags

Prayer flags have been used for centuries in Tibetan Buddhist cultures to promote peace, compassion and positive energy. These brightly coloured flags, typically adorned with sacred symbols and mantras (*including Om Mani Padme Hum*), are believed to bring good fortune to those who display them. The practice of hanging prayer flags goes back thousands of years and pre-dates Buddhism. When Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, the practice of using prayer flags was incorporated into the religion.

Each colour of the prayer flags holds a different meaning and represents a different element:

- Blue symbolises the sky and represents the space element
- White symbolises the air and represents the wind element
- Red symbolises fire and represents the fire element
- Green symbolises water and represents the water element
- Yellow symbolises earth and represents the earth element

When these elements are in balance it is said that internally, health can be achieved for the mind and body, and externally, by bringing harmony to the environment. In addition to the colours, the symbols and mantras on the flags also hold deep significance. For example, Lung-Ta, the "Wind Horse", is pictured on many prayer flags representing good fortune and the ability to rise above obstacles. It is believed that when the Lung-Ta prayer flag blows in the wind, the spiritual powers of the sacred images benefit all of those around.

Prayer flags are deliberately not hemmed and after some time will naturally fade and fray, symbolising the passing nature of all things. When that happens, the flags are traditionally burned to carry their blessings to the heavens and then replaced by new flags that contain renewed wishes. Alternatively, people may simply put new ones over the old ones.

Prayer flags can be hung both inside to increase harmony and spiritual awareness, or outside (the higher the better) to benefit the environment and all beings touched by the wind. In Tibetan culture, prayer flags are often strung along mountain trails or placed at the top of mountains, where they can spread their positive energy as far as possible. It is important to remember that prayer flags should be treated with respect as they contain sacred text and symbols. When hanging the flags, it is also important to have the correct intentions: “May all beings benefit” rather than something self-motivated such as “I will benefit.” It is traditional for new flags to be hung up during the Tibetan New Year, Losar.

Use the prayer flags as inspiration to create own set of flags, include images and personalised mantras or messages.

Read stories such as:

The Monkey King Storybook

Depicting a traditional tale from the Buddhist religion, this story follows how the king of the monkeys helps a human king learn about putting other people first. It examines the themes of greed, heroism, selflessness and change.

The Lion and the Jackal Storybook

This consists of a traditional Buddhist tale which features a community of jackals and lions that learn that friendship is built on trust and generosity.

Useful Tips

- *Be sensitive using religious and cultural artefacts and understand any special requirements in handling them.*
- *Avoid creating stereotypes and understand that not all people from the same culture may use the artefact in the same way.*
- *Use the appropriate language to talk about the artefacts.*
- *Teach the children to handle and store the artefacts with respect and sensitivity.*