INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL II

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to ...

1. understand what conditions have led to Buddhism gaining a foothold in the West.
2. explain what makes Buddhism attractive to people in Western cultures.
3. relate scientific statements to Buddhist statements.

NOTES

This lesson will focus on the 20th century. If the students do not have any prior knowledge about the origin of Buddhism and its general spread, it is advisable to use the corresponding materials from Secondary Level I **(Materials 1 and 2)**

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In Secondary Level 2 it should become comprehensible why Buddhism began to spread in the West at the end of the 1960s. The teacher decides on the extent and detail of the treatment in class.

Phase 1 highlights the historical events and socio-political tensions that caused the desire for a new direction:

- Cold War, Vietnam War, and student movements.
- Chinese invasion of Tibet, Cultural Revolution, Tibetan refugees and spiritual search among masters of Eastern wisdom
- Hippie movement and search for new ways of life (flower power, fashion, music), for expansion of consciousness (drugs)

Phase 2 gives a brief insight into scientific approaches that touch on Buddhism.

In the present time it becomes clearer and clearer that Buddha in his teachings had already expressed many realizations, which were observed and also formulated today by scientists in quantum physics, neurology and psychology similarly. **(cf. also Buddha's teachings, Sec. Level II, Material 3).**

INTRODUCTION

The teacher gives the following impulse based on **Material 1**: Buddhism has now arrived in the West. In stores, hardware stores, restaurants, saunas, wellness hotels, etc. you can find Buddha statues or heads and other Buddhist decorative objects.

Why do Buddhist symbols appear in our everyday life? What makes them so attractive? How did they find their way here? The students give answers from their previous knowledge. Buddhist images are associated with serenity and peace of mind, peace and happiness.

EXERCISE 1

The students work in pairs on **Worksheet 1**, under which circumstances Buddhism came to the West and why it became attractive for many. The teacher presents possible **Answers to WS 1.** The results are discussed in the plenary.

The visuals on **Material 2** give an impression of the spirit of optimism in the 1960s and help to illustrate the zeitgeist.

EXPLORATION, OPTIONAL

The links lead to films or film clips that reflect the attitude towards life in the 60s and can be shown as supplementary material:

- The Impact of the 1960s Counterculture Movement https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GGH570Igep0
- The Hippie Movement – 1960s Counterculture https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf52i-45Bi8E
- Hannah – Buddhism's Untold Journey https://www.wfilm.de/en/hannah/inhalt/

NOTES

The zeitgeist of the sixties tried to set an idealistic, humanistic and emancipatory alternative to materialism. Around the same time, the "real"-existing communism of the Eastern Bloc began to crumble, it could only be maintained by the state organs with iron harshness. The people there longed for freedom and the need for their own experiences was huge.

The young generation, especially the students, but also many intellectuals became more and more political. Since conservative thinking of the ruling war and post-war generation still prevailed, the change happened much too slowly for those interested in politics: The consequences were, among others, the founding of the "Extra-Parliamentary Opposition" (= APO), a radicalization that often ended in street fights.

The slogans of that time give an idea of this zeitgeist: "Break what breaks you!", "You only want our best, but you won't get that!" "Capitalism leads to fascism. Capitalism must go!", "If you sleep with the same person twice, you already belong to the establishment!", "Enough of the pettiness".

Those who were not attracted by this aggressive attitude took refuge in flower power, hippie and drug culture. Any kind of resistance, related to traditional values of the "old", was lived and also shown outwardly.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

With the political, societal, economic, and social upheavals of the 1960s that allowed for a new freedom, including of the mind, the findings of the natural sciences proved to be catalysts for the spread of Buddhism in the Western world. Buddha's central teachings about the world of phenomena and the sciences explain the same phenomena in a comparable way. A comparable approach applies to spiritual advancement, namely to be courageous, to trust oneself, and to recognize that beyond all standardization there is still room for newness.

Buddha said, "I teach how things are - how to experience happiness and avoid suffering!" Buddha knew no mission: "Trust your own critical reason and your own clear light!" He wanted to show ways to become fundamentally permanently happy.

Buddhism is an experiential religion and encourages questioning and examination of knowledge. Students are given **Material 3** with quotes from Buddhist teachers and scholars and discuss the questions on **Worksheet 2**, **A** as a group. The assignments in **Worksheet 2**, **B** guide the students to work out the information, to present it in a creative form and to make the attractiveness of Buddhism comprehensible.

In the plenum all results are reflected and the students explain the concordant scientific and Buddhist statements about consciousness / mind, reality and matter. The students recognize that the critical thinking approach and examination of findings are similar. The **Answers to WS 2** provide suggestions.

ANCHORING, OPTIONAL

Students can research on the Internet and create a **collage** or **poster** in group work.

This should illustrate the circumstances under which Buddhism was able to spread in the West. Essentially, it should become clear that the desire for freedom and for new forms of life and the findings of quantum physics promoted an openness to Buddhism. **Material 2** can be provided.

The students present their results in an exhibition and discuss the impressiveness of the different posters.