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EDUQAS GCSE (9–1) **Religious Studies** **ROUTE A**

Religious, philosophical and ethical studies and Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism

Covering:

- **Component 1:** Religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world
- **Component 2:** Study of Christianity
- **Component 3:** Study of a World Faith:
 - Buddhism
 - Hinduism
 - Sikhism

Steve Clarke
Joy White
Amanda Ridley
Ed Pawson
Chris Owens



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1

Issues of relationships

Key Concepts



Adultery Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.



Divorce To legally end a marriage.



Cohabitation To live together in a sexual relationship without being married or in a civil partnership.



Commitment A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.



Contraception Methods used to prevent a woman from becoming pregnant following sexual intercourse.



Gender equality People of all genders enjoying the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives.



Responsibilities Actions/duties a person is expected to carry out.



Roles Position, status or function of a person in society, as well as the characteristics and social behaviour expected of them.

Core Questions



Is there such a thing as a typical family?

Are women and men equal?

Should divorced individuals be allowed to remarry in places of worship?

Is cohabitation more popular than marriage?

Should same-sex marriages be allowed to take place in a place of worship?

Do men and women have equal roles in leading worship?

Overview

Human relationships are at the heart of human existence. Many human beings are born into families and the family is the basic building block of society. Because relationships are so important to many aspects of human life, all religions have attitudes to, and beliefs about, the importance and nature of human relationships.

Theistic Involving belief in God.

In this theme, you will have the opportunity to consider the attitudes towards and teachings about relationships of the three **theistic** religions of Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism, and also those of Buddhism, which does not teach about a creator God.

You will consider a number of the most important issues regarding relationships. These include:

- ▶ The changing nature and role of family life in Britain. Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism certainly regard marriage as the basis for family life.
- ▶ Changing attitudes to marriage, as people are increasingly choosing to cohabit or marry in non-religious ceremonies. These changing attitudes raise issues about topics such as adultery, separation, divorce and remarriage.
- ▶ Different attitudes to sexual relationships. All four religions have specific teachings about the nature and purpose of sex, and the conditions under which contraception may be used. In 21st-century Britain, there have been significant changes in attitudes to same-sex relationships.
- ▶ Attitudes towards men and women and issues of gender equality.

Relationships

What is a family?

The family is the foundation of human societies. It is where all human relationships begin and are developed. Within each family the norms and values of society are lived out in practice and a new generation of children is brought up into adulthood. The importance of the family for society may be summed up in the following quotation:

'The family is important, and it is necessary for the survival of humanity. Without the family, the cultural survival of the human race would be at risk. The family, whether we like it or not, is the foundation.'

Pope Francis

Tasks

- 1 Look at Pope Francis' statement about the family. What do you think he means by 'the cultural survival of the human race'?
- 2 Do you agree that the family is necessary for human survival?





A nuclear family.



Extended families consist of different relatives all living together.

Task

Look at each type of family discussed on this page. In pairs, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each family type.

Types of family

There are different types of family. In the UK, the traditional form of the family, the extended family, has been replaced by a variety of family forms.

The most common types of family are:

Nuclear family

Two parents and one or more child(ren), all living in the same house. This is the traditional family unit of Western cultures.

Extended family

A number of adults and children who are related, living in the same home. Eastern cultures tend to adopt the extended family model.

Reconstituted family

Divorced adults living together with children from previous marriages.

Single-parent family

One parent raising one or more child(ren) alone.

Childless family

A couple who are either unable to have children naturally or decide not to have children.



Single-parent families are becoming more common in Britain.



Some couples decide not to have children.

Christian beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the family



Christians believe that the family is a vital unit. It should be based on the marriage of a man and a woman, and usually include children. Children have the right to be brought up by two parents in a loving environment. Parents should be role models for their children. They should teach by example how to be a good parent, a good husband or wife, a good citizen and a good Christian.

St Paul, in the Bible, sets out the relationship between parents and children:

‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honour your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – “so that it may go well with you

and that you may enjoy long life on the earth”. Fathers [or parents], do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.’

Ephesians 6:1–4

Children have a duty to obey their parents. Parents should be patient with their children. They should also bring them up as Christians. They can do this by praying with their children, teaching them about Jesus, sending them to Sunday school, encouraging them to be baptised or confirmed and modelling the Christian life.

Buddhist beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the family



There is no single comprehensive view on the family in Buddhism. During the Buddha's lifetime, and to an extent in Theravada Buddhism today, monastic life is the ideal. Monks give up the household life and practise **celibacy**. Before his Enlightenment, Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha-to-be, left his wife and young son to seek enlightenment. This was not uncommon in those days. Later, both his son and wife became his followers and were ordained. The Buddha taught that family relationships and the duties of the household life are not the ideal way to develop towards the goal of enlightenment.

On the other hand, the Buddhist monastic order (the sangha) could not survive without the support of the lay Buddhists, who can gain merit by providing food and necessities for the monks and nuns. The Buddha also taught that with the right effort, people living as a family can also attain enlightenment.

In some forms of Mahayana Buddhism, such as in Japan, monks and priests can marry and have children.

Far Eastern cultures place high value on the love of a mother and the duties of children towards parents.

Buddhist teachings from these countries emphasise maternal love as an example of compassion and selflessness.

The Sigalovada Sutta text sets out the duties that parents have to their children, to:

- keep them away from evil
- encourage them to do good
- provide them with a good education
- make suitable marriage arrangements for them
- give them their inheritance when they need it.

It also outlines the duties of children towards their parents, to:

- support them in their old age
- obey them
- keep family traditions
- deserve their inheritance
- honour them after they have died.

Celibacy To be unmarried and not involved in any sexual relationship.



Hindu beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the family

Hindus believe that there is a natural order to the universe; there is a way it ought to be. This means that each person has a duty to maintain that order. Their duty is called **dharma**.

A person's dharma includes getting married and having children. For Hindus, a person's life is divided into four stages (ashramas; see page 294). Marriage is essential to move from the first ashrama (the student stage) to the second (the householder stage), which includes continuing the family line by having children and exercising clear responsibilities towards them. The family, therefore, has spiritual significance as well as social importance. Most Hindu homes have a shrine at which the family worships daily.

Parents and children have duties towards each other. Good parents will:

- provide for their children
- perform puja
- teach their children about Hinduism and right and wrong

- ensure boys have the sacred thread ceremony at which they take on religious responsibility
- encourage their children to attend the temple.

Children should:

- follow the guidance of their parents
- respect their parents
- care for their parents when they are old (especially boys).

Traditionally, Hindus live in extended families of three or four generations, though this is becoming less the case in the West. In this way, they are able to support each other in the fulfilment of their dharma. Some Hindus, especially in India, choose to leave family life to concentrate on spiritual development as a sannyasin, the fourth ashrama.

Dharma The religious and moral duty in relation to a person's status in Hindu society, considered by many, but not all, to be linked to caste.



Sikh beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the family

In Sikhism, the family is considered to be the core of the social system. It is recommended as the ideal environment in which human beings can flourish. All of the Gurus lived in families, and all were married, except Guru Har Krishan, who was a child.

Bringing up children to be good citizens is an important function of the family. Sikh parents bring their children up to know the difference between right and wrong, and to learn about sewa (service to others) and charity.

Children begin their education at an early age in typical Sikh families, and schooling is an important consideration for Sikh parents. As a result, literacy (being able to read and write) among Sikhs in India is significantly higher than the national average. Sikh parents intend that their children should grow up to be contributing members of society.

This concentration on family life and playing a positive role in society means that Sikhs have to balance worldly life with their spiritual life. Following worldly desires is the life of a **manmukh**, a selfish person who creates karma to remain in the world; whereas Sikhs strive to be **gurmukhs**, following the way of the Gurus with a view to attaining mukti. Yet the Gurus were clear that family life was far preferable to the spiritual life of a person who rejects the world (sanyasin).

Manmukh Self-centred; 'following one's desires'.

Gurmukh God-centred; 'coming from the qualities of the Guru'.

► Roles of women and men

Key Concepts



Roles Position, status or function of a person in society, as well as the characteristics and social behaviour expected of them.



Responsibilities Actions/duties a person is expected to carry out.

Patriarchal A family or society controlled by men.

Matriarchal A family or society controlled by women.

Family members have different **roles** and **responsibilities**. These include:

- caring for children
- caring for other family members, for example, looking after elderly relatives
- maintaining the family home
- earning money to support the family.

Both women and men aim to provide love, comfort, protection and support for each other and for any children. Both have a role to play in the education of children to become responsible adults and future parents. They should show mutual support for each other. Men and women are both important role models for children.

Task

Look at the different roles of family members. Which do you think were traditionally carried out by:

- women
- men
- both men and women?

Do you think this has now changed in society? Discuss as a class.

Traditional views

In the past, Christianity held a very traditional view of the roles of women and men. The man was expected to be responsible for providing for the family through work and the mother was expected to be responsible for domestic life. This view is '**patriarchal**' (the opposite of **matriarchal**) in the sense that the man is seen as the leader of the family.

Ancient Hindu texts, too, take it for granted that husbands have superiority over wives; both have different, but complementary roles. In Sikhism, men and women are equal in every respect, though traditionally women's responsibilities are based in the home, in particular caring for their children. The family, and relationships within it, are less defined in Buddhism.

Changing views

These traditional views are changing, however, and in the West women and men are now often regarded as forming much more of a partnership in family life, with shared responsibilities.

In the UK, it is now much more common for women to go on working when they get married and have a family, and increasing numbers of men are taking on the role of 'house-husband' while their wives or partners go out to work. In 2014, the Office for National Statistics reported that the number of 'stay at home' dads has doubled since 1993, with over 229,000 fathers staying at home to look after their children.



Jo Swinson was the first Member of Parliament to bring her baby into the House of Commons. She also took him on the campaign trail.

The law is also changing to reflect this. In 2015, it became possible for men and women to share parental leave from work. Parents can decide who takes leave to care for the baby, rather than it automatically being the mother.

Christian beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the roles of women and men



In the time of Jesus, men played a very dominant role in society. Some may say that Jesus himself would not have attracted a following of disciples if he had been female. It is certainly true that his disciples were male. There is also evidence, however, that Jesus broke some gender norms, by treating women with respect, as equals.

Christianity teaches that all people, as God's creations, are equal:

'There is neither Jew nor Gentile [non-Jew], neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

Galatians 3:28

Some Christians interpret this statement in a traditional way, believing that, although men and women are equal, they are different and have different roles. In the Bible, St Paul refers to the relationship between men and women:

'Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man.'

1 Corinthians 11:1

The role of women in the home and family, and even at work, is therefore open to interpretation among Christians. The traditionalist view is that, because Adam was created before Eve (who was made to be his companion), according to St Paul women are subject to the authority of men. Some would go further and say that Eve's role in the Fall (see page 169) portrays the woman as weak-willed (to be seduced by the serpent) and as a deceiver (by tempting Adam). Therefore, men should be leaders in their own homes, and women subordinate. For these Christians, the man is the head of the household, and the woman is responsible for housekeeping and childcare.

However, more liberal Christians recognise that, as times change, so too do the dynamics of social interaction. They would say that indications of gender inequality in the Bible reflect a society of days gone by. Therefore, liberal Christians would argue that men and women today should have equal opportunities in all areas of life, including family life and life at work.

Buddhist beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the roles of women and men



The Buddha lived 2500 years ago. It seems that in those days, women were considered to be subservient to men. The Buddha himself, giving advice to girls about to be married, said:

'For him [the husband], rise up early, be the last to retire, be willing workers, order all things sweetly and be gentle voiced.'

Anguttara Nikaya 5:33

He goes on to say that a wife should serve her husband's friends, make and mend his clothes, manage the household, and look after the money.

At the same time, the Buddha taught that the status of women was at least equal to that of men. He told stories of his previous lives in which he was a woman. Tibetan Buddhists teach that, since the number of a person's

previous lifetimes is almost infinite, everyone has been everyone else's mother at some time.

The fact is, however, that, for Buddhists, the family has very little religious significance, so there are few teachings about it. The Buddha's statements about women and men in the home probably reflected the social situation of his time.

Today, gender roles are likely to be influenced by the culture of the country in which they exist. In Asian countries, responsibilities and relationships in Buddhist families tend to follow traditional patterns, with the male being the principal breadwinner and the woman being the homemaker and caregiver. In the West, Buddhist families are more likely to stress the equality of their members and to share responsibilities.

Hindu beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the roles of women and men



The sacred thread ceremony (upanayana) is a rite of passage (samskara) that a child goes through around the age of eight. It gives the wearer of the sacred thread authority to study Hindu scriptures. Originally it was open to both boys and girls, but over time became almost exclusively a male ritual for the top three varnas (castes; see page 294). Girls would grow up to marry and run families, so would not be able to fulfil the spiritual responsibilities associated with the sacred thread. Indeed, some scriptures say that marriage replaces the sacred thread ceremony for a woman; her relationship with her husband replaces that between Hindu student

and teacher; and her household duties replace the religious rituals (Manusmriti 2:67–68). A wife should devote herself to her husband in the way a student should be devoted to his spiritual teacher (Manusmriti 5:148–155).

However, the same text suggests that the relationship between a husband and wife is an equal one. Either one of them can leave an abusive relationship, and a woman whose husband has left her can remarry (Manusmriti 9:72–81). The text also provides women with property rights, including rights to gifts from her husband (Manusmriti 9:192–194).

Sikh beliefs, attitudes and teachings about the roles of women and men



Sikhism sees men and women as being absolutely equal in every respect. It recognises, however, their differences, and this is reflected in their roles. In a traditional Sikh family, it is the woman who has the primary responsibility of bringing up children. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

'From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. So why call her bad? From her, kings are born.'

Guru Granth Sahib 473

This shows the debt men owe women as wives and mothers. Women are the source of men's very existence.

It also points out the Guru's opposition to the low status women had in medieval India.

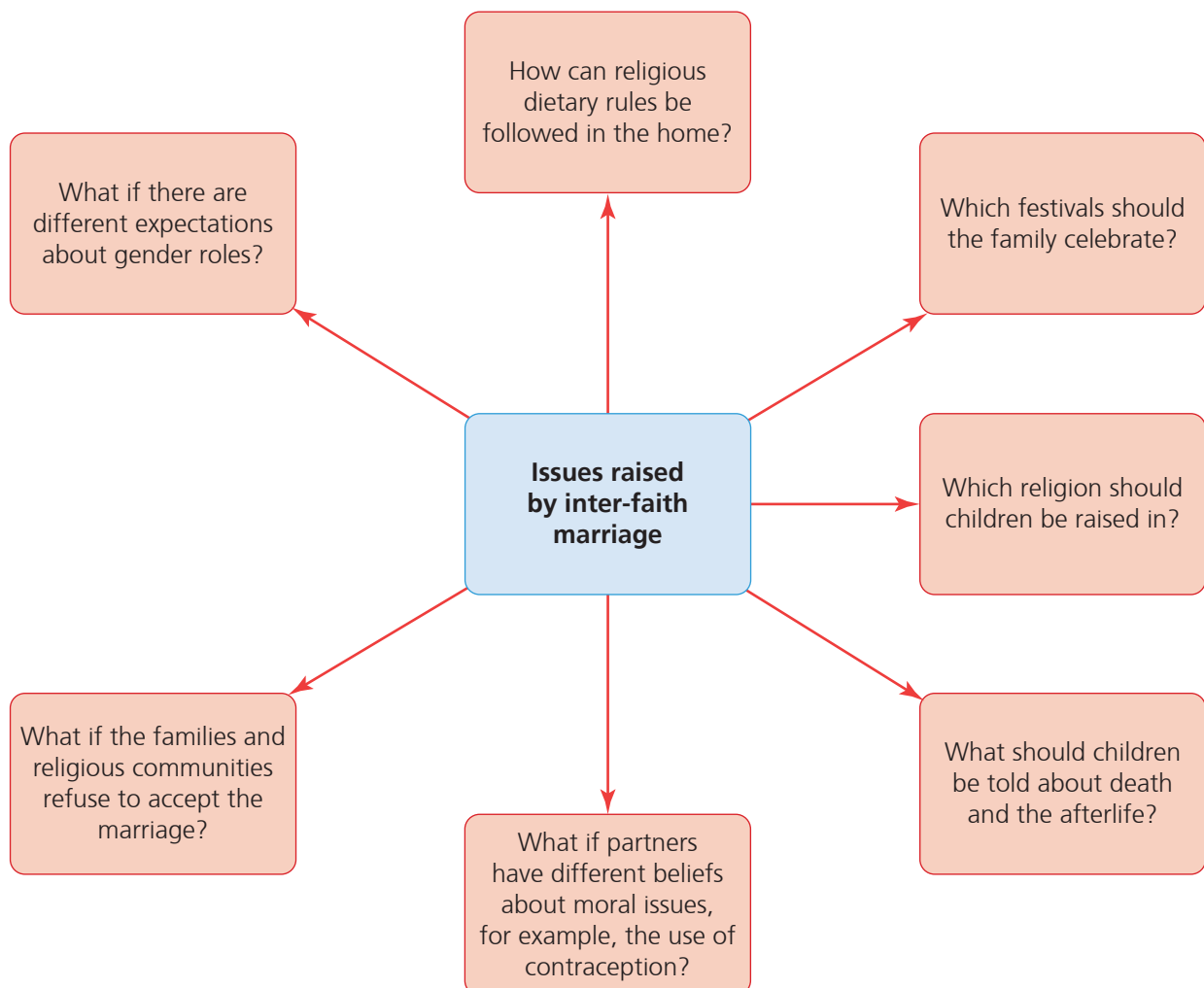
All principles, guidelines and rules in Sikhism apply to men and women equally. For example, women who are Khalsa Sikhs are expected to wear the Five Ks just like male Khalsa Sikhs (see page 346). And while only men are required to wear a turban, women are free to do so, and increasingly large numbers do.

Sikh women, like men, are given their own surname. The name 'Kaur' means 'princess', and indicates that women should be treated with respect and honour. It means that women have their own name and are not adopting the names of their fathers and husbands.

► Marriage outside religious traditions

In a pluralist society, inter-faith marriage – where two people of different faiths marry – is an issue that religions have to respond to. Some of the issues raised by inter-faith marriage are outlined below. There may also be an issue about where an inter-faith wedding ceremony can take place. For example:

- In the Christian Orthodox tradition a marriage in church only takes place if an Orthodox Christian is marrying a baptised Christian.
- In the Catholic tradition the partner who is not Catholic must agree to any children of the marriage being allowed to follow the Catholic faith.
- Traditionally, Hindus marry Hindus from the same caste.
- Sikhs are encouraged to marry Sikhs, and non-Sikhs may not take part in an Anand Karaj (Sikh wedding – see page 16). However, a Sikh may marry a non-Sikh in a civil ceremony and have a religious blessing in a gurdwara later.
- Buddhists are free to marry a partner from any faith or none.



► Cohabitation

Key Concept



Cohabitation To live together in a sexual relationship without being married or in a civil partnership.

Cohabitation is where two people who are not married live in a romantic partnership, which may involve an intimate and sexual relationship. Some couples choose to cohabit and never marry, while some couples will marry after a period of cohabitation.

In 2019, there were 3.4 million couples cohabiting in the UK, and it was the fastest growing family type.

Number of families	2009 (Estimate, thousands)	2014 (Estimate, thousands)	2019 (Estimate, thousands)
Married couples	12,267	12,498	12,740
Civil partnership couple family	41	61	46
Opposite sex cohabiting couple family	2,689	2,971	3,406
Same sex cohabiting couple family	54	84	109
Lone parent family	2,889	3,007	2,852
All families	17,940	18,621	19,153

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Christian beliefs, teachings and attitudes about cohabitation

Although Christian teachings have traditionally prohibited cohabitation, there has been an increasingly more tolerant line taken in some denominations towards couples who cohabit. Liberal Anglicans, for example, accept cohabitation where it is part of a committed relationship, although they still believe that marriage would be the ideal.

However, some denominations disagree with cohabitation as they believe it devalues the special and sacred nature of sex, which should only take place within marriage.

God's laws are good for individuals and society; society works best when couples marry. In any case, many would say, a sexual relationship outside marriage is a contradiction: as it unifies two bodies it is denying the life-to-life commitment of marriage.

The Catholic Church and more conservative Anglicans do not accept cohabitation and expect a couple not to have sex before marriage. Some Baptist churches may refuse to marry a couple who are cohabiting.



Buddhist beliefs, teachings and attitudes about cohabitation

Because Buddhism does not recognise marriage as a religious institution, it accepts that couples may live together without being married. Just as marriage is not encouraged for religious reasons, so cohabitation is not forbidden.

As far as Buddhists are concerned, it is important that believers follow the third of the Five Precepts, to refrain from

causing harm in a relationship. At the very least, this means being faithful to one's partner, whether married or not.

In practice, however, some countries where Buddhism is the religion of the majority of the population tend to be quite conservative. For cultural rather than religious reasons, they may believe that cohabitation is wrong and therefore promote marriage.



Hindu beliefs, teachings and attitudes about cohabitation

Historically, cohabitation was very rare among Hindus. Hindu society frowned on people living together as husband and wife without being married. Indeed, cohabitation is considered paapa, an act of bad or negative karma that will bring about negative results. In the Ramayana, Rama and Sita are seen as the perfect couple, partly because they married and did not cohabit. And since nearly all marriages were arranged, there was little opportunity for young people to find their own partners; a couple who cohabited risked being disowned by their families.

However, as social attitudes have changed, an increasing number of Hindus cohabit today. This is especially the case in Indian cities and in the West. When the Indian Supreme Court declared cohabitation to be lawful in India in 2010, the Court noted that there were examples of Hindu gods and goddesses living together as unmarried lovers.



Sikh beliefs, teachings and attitudes about cohabitation

Sikhism teaches that the relationship between a married couple mirrors the bond between the human soul and God. When two people marry, they become one soul. Therefore, Sikhs are generally against cohabitation because it does not contain the spiritual element of marriage.

In modern times, Sikhism has fallen under the influence of some Western social customs. In the West, including the UK, cohabitation is accepted, and some Sikhs will live together without being married. This is more likely to be tolerated in a Sikh community if the couple intend to marry at some point. This is especially important if they have children, as Sikhs believe that children should be brought up by married parents in an extended family.

All of the Gurus except one (who was too young) were married and had children, and most Sikhs would see this as a model for their own lives.

► The nature and purpose of marriage

Key Concept



Commitment A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.

Neither marriage nor the family has great religious significance in Buddhism. However, the traditional teachings of Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism have been that marriage is the basis of family life. Marriage is regarded as:

- a divine or sacred bond
- the best basis for creating an environment into which children should be born
- a lifelong **commitment**.

A wedding ceremony is an important rite of passage in many religious traditions. It is a celebration that recognises the importance of marriage and it includes ritual and symbolism, which often reflect the purpose of marriage. However, the number of couples choosing a religious wedding ceremony has halved over the last 20 years. In Britain in 2016, only 24 per cent of marriage ceremonies were religious.



A non-religious wedding service in the UK.

Christian views on the nature and purpose of marriage

The Christian Churches teach that marriage is a 'gift of God in creation' to human beings. This means that, for Christians, marriage is not just a legal contract that binds two people together, but is part of the way that God made human beings. For Christians, marriage mirrors the relationship between Jesus and his Church. The Church cannot exist without Jesus; the two are one. Human marriage reflects this pattern.

In the Gospels, Jesus teaches about the importance of marriage. He refers to the idea in Genesis that, as part of God's creation, God made man and woman. Jesus uses powerful language to convey the message that marriage is the complete joining together of two people in a very special way. It is implied that the relationship becomes the most important human relationship.

'But at the beginning of creation, God "made them male and female". "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united

to his wife, and the two will become one flesh". So they are no longer two, but one flesh.'

Mark 10:6–8

The Faith and Order Commission, which advises the Church of England Synod (council) on Christian teachings, says that marriage provides a model for other relationships. Through marriage, people learn how to be good friends and neighbours. Because of this, marriage 'strengthens community'.

Marriage also provides an example for children:

'... in the way they [the married couple] live out before the children the strength of a shared life in coping with disagreements and disappointments.'

Men and Women in Marriage

The nature and purpose of marriage as expressed through Christian marriage ceremonies

Because Christians believe that marriage is a gift from God, Christian marriage ceremonies take place in a chapel or church. Nevertheless, the Church of England recognises all marriages, even if the ceremony is not conducted in a Christian place of worship.

The Bible says,

'It is not good that the man should be alone.'

Genesis 2:18

The Catholic Church, therefore, teaches that marriage is for the good of both the man and the woman. The Church says that the other purpose of marriage is to have children. Not to have children goes against the nature and purpose of marriage.

The Church of England marriage service expresses the Church's teaching that the nature of marriage is permanent in all circumstances, and that the couple should be faithful to each other during the whole of their life together. The purpose of marriage is for husband and wife to support each other through life's ups and downs; to strengthen their love for each other through the intimacy of a sexual relationship; and to have children, so they may live as a family.

During the ceremony, the couple exchange vows that reflect the commitment Christians make when they get married:

*'To have and to hold
From this day forward
For better for worse
For richer for poorer
In sickness and in health
To love and to cherish
Till death do us part
According to God's holy law
And this is my solemn vow.'*

The phrase from the marriage service 'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder' means that marriage should be a lifelong union that should not be undone. Christians believe that human marriage mirrors Jesus' relationship with the Church: you can't have one partner without the other. Indeed, the Church is sometimes referred to as the Bride of Christ.



■ In an Orthodox wedding ceremony, the bride and groom are 'crowned'. The placing of crowns on the heads of the couple represents the power of the Holy Spirit.



■ In an Anglican church, the couple marry in front of an altar or table.



■ In a Protestant church or chapel, there is more of an emphasis on Bible readings and hymn singing.

Tasks

- 1 The Church of England wedding vows reflect the main Christian teachings about marriage. Can you match the vows to their meanings?

Vows	Meaning
(a) To have and to hold	(i) To be physically together in a sexual relationship
(b) From this day forward	(ii) That the marriage is ordained by God
(c) For better for worse	(iii) That the marriage should last whether the couple are wealthy or poor
(d) For richer for poorer	(iv) That the marriage is expected to be a lifelong commitment
(e) In sickness and in health	(v) This day marks the beginning of the marriage
(f) To love and to cherish	(vi) That the vows are a serious commitment taken by the couple
(g) Till death do us part	(vii) That the marriage should last through both good times and times when life is more difficult
(h) According to God's holy law	(viii) The couple should support and care for each other
(i) And this is my solemn vow	(ix) And in spite of mental or physical illness

- 2 Look at the three photos of different Christian wedding ceremonies on the previous page. Choose one or two symbols that show that each one is a Christian wedding ceremony. Explain what the symbol means and how it is related to Christian views on the nature and purpose of marriage.

Buddhist views on the nature and purpose of marriage

Buddhism has very liberal attitudes to marriage. It does not consider it to have religious significance and regards it as a **secular**, social institution. For Buddhists, marriage is a legal contract that binds two people together, not a spiritual or divine bond.

Buddhist monks (bhikkhus) do not marry, and they take a vow of celibacy – they undertake not to have sexual relationships. This is because love is an attachment and a distraction from the path to enlightenment. This does not mean that they think relationships are wrong, but that the decision of whether or not to marry is a personal one.

So, lay Buddhists may marry if they wish, but there is no obligation for them to do so; nor is there an obligation to have children. A Buddhist who marries may choose their partner freely: they don't have to marry a Buddhist.

The nature and purpose of marriage as expressed through Buddhist marriage ceremonies

Because marriage is not thought of as having religious significance, there is no established form of marriage service in Buddhism. People usually follow the traditions and customs of the country in which they live.



■ A Buddhist wedding in Thailand.

Nevertheless, it is usual for a Buddhist couple about to be married to kneel before a shrine, with families and friends behind them. A bhikkhu, or priest, might lead them in prayers and chanting, and the couple may offer flowers, candles or incense at the shrine.

Secular Non-religious.

In the Sigalovada Sutta, the Buddha gives advice to Sigala, the son of a Buddhist, though not one himself. He teaches him about the nature and purpose of marriage by listing the five duties lay people have to each other, including husbands and wives. During their marriage service, a couple may recite the Buddha's advice as vows:

Groom to bride: 'Towards my wife I undertake to love and respect her, be kind and considerate, be faithful, delegate domestic management, and provide gifts to please her.'

Bride to groom: 'Towards my husband I undertake to perform my household duties

efficiently, be hospitable to my in-laws and friends of my husband, be faithful, protect and invest our earnings, and discharge my responsibilities lovingly and conscientiously.'

Tasks

- 1 Using the vows recited at some Buddhist weddings, list the five duties a husband has towards his wife and the five duties of a wife to her husband.
- 2 Explain, in about three sentences, why marriage is not important in Buddhism.



Hindu views on the nature and purpose of marriage

The Hindu scriptures divide a human lifetime into four stages, or ashrama. The first of these is that of being a student and the second is being a householder. Marriage marks the boundary between student and householder, and prepares a person for the rest of their life.

Hindus mark important events in life with ceremonies called sanskaras. There are 16 of them, of which marriage is one. It is called Vivaha Sanskara. Through the marriage ceremony, according to Hindu teaching, two people merge into one soul. In this way, the couple develop spiritually for the rest of their lives. Together, they can work for the benefit of their extended family and for society as a whole. It is said that the spiritual union of a married couple extends beyond this life and can last for up to seven lifetimes.

The ideal married couple for Hindus are the hero and heroine of the ancient text the Ramayana. They are called Rama and Sita. On the face of it, their life together was not perfect. Rama was banished from his homeland for 14 years. Sita was kidnapped by a demon. When she was rescued, Rama suspected (wrongly) that she had been unfaithful. However, Hindus see them as role models for married couples. They were devoted to each other and had unqualified respect for each other. They shared a spiritual union even when they were apart. They overcame their problems together. However, their love was not selfish. They sacrificed their happiness and freedom for others.

The nature and purpose of marriage as expressed through Hindu marriage ceremonies

Hindu weddings tend to be very elaborate and colourful events that may last for several days. The ceremony itself

reminds Hindus of the nature and purpose of marriage. It takes place under a four-pillared structure called a mandap. The pillars represent the parents of the couple who will support them through their marriage. Before the ceremony, the bride's sister escorts the groom to the bride's house from where they all process to the wedding venue. This is called Swagatam – the Welcome. The wedding consists of three rituals.

- **Kanyadaan (giving away the bride):** The bride's father gives her to the bridegroom. He takes her hand and puts it in the hand of the groom. The groom promises that he will not let her down and will care for her. He also promises to enable his bride to achieve the four aims of Hinduism (see page 293).
- **Panigrahana (holding hands):** The groom lights a fire to symbolise the presence of God in the couple's marriage. They hold hands, and the groom asks the bride to be his wife. The bride and the groom together go around the fire, usually four times in a ritual called mangal fera. These are seen as representing the four aims of life.
- **Saptapadi (seven steps):** This is the ritual of 'seven steps'. They represent important aspects of a marriage: food, health, wealth, good fortune, children, seasons and harvests, and friendship. Each 'step' is a circuit around the sacred fire. Each circuit is accompanied by vows the couple make to each other. The vows show that the married relationship is an equal one, but that husband and wife have different, but complementary, roles. For example, the groom says:

'I promise to devote myself to earning a livelihood by fair means, to discuss, and let you manage and preserve our wealth.'





■ As the Hindu couple walk around the sacred fire, their clothes are tied together.

During the seven steps, the couple may have their clothes tied together to show their spiritual union. After the seventh circuit, the couple are officially married. The ceremony includes agni puja – offerings made to the fire god. In particular, rice is offered to dispel evil. The mother of the groom gives the bride a necklace (mangalsutra) to symbolise that the couple are together in the union of love. Finally, the groom marks his wife's forehead with a tilak – a spot of red kumkum powder – to show that she is now a married woman.

Task

Explain why many Hindu couples consider Rama and Sita to be the ideal married couple.



Sikh views on the nature and purpose of marriage



The Sikh marriage ceremony is called Anand Karaj, which means 'joyful event'. It joins together a man and a woman so that the two become one, spiritually. As a single spiritual unit, a couple grow through marriage, ultimately to merge with the infinite God. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

'They are not said to be husband and wife who merely sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies.'

Guru Granth Sahib 788

Sikh marriage also joins the couple's respective families into one large extended family, within which the couple nurture their own nuclear family. This is seen as the basis of a stable society.

The nature and purpose of marriage as expressed through Sikh marriage ceremonies

The regulations for Sikh weddings are contained in the Rehat Maryada, Chapter 11, Article 18. The Anand Karaj takes place in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib – in a gurdwara, never in a hotel or other public venue. This shows that the teachings of the Gurus should be at the centre of the couple's life. The ceremony is, as its name suggests, a lively and happy occasion, in which family and friends are all involved. It usually lasts for over an hour, but the celebrations will continue throughout the day.



■ In a Sikh wedding ceremony, the bride and groom sit side by side, facing the Guru Granth Sahib.

Any initiated Sikh can take the service. It starts with hymns. The bride and groom sit side by side, he on the right, facing the Guru Granth Sahib. The groom wears a sash, and the bride's father takes one end of it and places it in her hands, so the two are joined together.

The main part of the ceremony is the recitation of four lavan (hymns) from the Guru Granth Sahib (788). These hymns were written by the fourth Guru, Guru Ram Das. They explain the nature and purpose of marriage, that the love between a husband and wife is modelled on the relationship between the human soul and the soul of God. They also explain the development of the soul



in its journey to become one with God. The four lavan encourage the couple to:

- 1 be righteous and honest by worshipping God
- 2 become closer to God by becoming selfless
- 3 remember and sing God's name with the Sikh community
- 4 ultimately, merge with the Supreme Soul – God – and find happiness.

As the hymns are sung, the couple walk together around the Guru Granth Sahib, reminding them that it should always be at the centre of their lives.

The ceremony ends with a prayer of completion, a reading from the Guru Granth Sahib, and the distribution of karah parshad.

Task

Explain why the four lavan of Guru Ram Das are recited during a Sikh wedding.



Adultery

Task

Acrostics (where the first letters of each line of text form a word) are a good way of remembering key information. Can you think of one for adultery? The first letter has been done for you:

Against the Ten Commandments

D
U
L
T
E
R
Y



Key Concept



Adultery Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.



Extra-marital sex or **adultery** is when a married person has a sexual relationship with someone other than their husband or wife. In Britain, the vast majority of people disapprove of adultery on moral and social grounds, and the law recognises adultery as a justifiable reason for the granting of a divorce.

All religions disapprove of adultery.

Christian attitudes to adultery



Christianity teaches that adultery is wrong for the following reasons:

- Marriage is sexually exclusive and should not be shared with anyone else.
- The Ten Commandments forbid adultery:

'You shall not commit adultery.'

Exodus 20:14

- Marriage is a sacrament in the Catholic Church and a gift from God in all Churches, and adultery goes against this.
- Committing adultery destroys the special relationship between a husband and wife.
- Adultery breaks the marriage vow of faithfulness.
- Adultery does not model the faithfulness Christ has for his Church.
- Committing adultery can harm the family unit and cause the partner to feel cheated and betrayed.
- Adultery is not good for people or for society in general.

Even though adultery is a sin as far as Christians are concerned, Jesus recognised that all people sin and should be forgiven. So, when an adulterous woman was brought to Jesus, he refused to condemn her, but encouraged her not to continue sinning (John 8:2–11).

Buddhist attitudes to adultery



Buddhism teaches that adultery is unskillful. This means that it can cause harm to others and, consequently, harm oneself. This is because of the principle of karma: actions have proportionate effects. Adultery is unskillful for the following reasons:

- It breaks the third Precept, which warns against sexual misconduct.
- It is likely to involve breaches of other Precepts: lying, deceit, humiliation, cruelty and possibly intoxication.
- It can lead to the development of negative emotions, such as anger, hatred and selfishness.
- It destroys the trust that should exist between a married couple.
- It disregards the responsibilities that married couples have towards each other according to the Sigalovada Sutta: love, respect, kindness, consideration and faithfulness.
- It is motivated by the Three Poisons: selfishness, hatred and ignorance.
- It is a form of attachment that will cause suffering.

Hindu attitudes to adultery



Hinduism teaches that marriage is a holy relationship, and the duties that husband and wife have towards each other are religious duties (dharma). Therefore, adultery is considered to be a serious breach of dharma. According to Hinduism, adultery is wrong for the following reasons:

- It breaks the sacred vows made when a couple get married.
- It results in social disgrace.
- It undermines the natural order of the universe.
- Breaking the sacred vows, made before the gods, creates bad karma.
- It is paapa – an act of bad karma that will bring about negative consequences in this or a future

lifetime. Hindu mythology describes the dreadful consequences of committing adultery. For example, Ahalya was imprisoned inside a stone for centuries for her adulterous relationship with Indra.

'A man should not think lustfully of another's wife, much less act on his thoughts; for such a man will be reborn in a future life as a creeping insect. He who commits adultery is punished both here and hereafter; for his days in this world are cut short, and when dead he falls into hell.'

Vishnu Purana 3:11

Sikh attitudes to adultery



Sikhism teaches that adultery shows lack of self-control. It is immoral, and there is no justification for it. Sikhs should train themselves to control their sexual urges. The Guru Granth Sahib praises those:

'... whose eyes do not gaze upon the beauty of others' wives ... who banishes the mind's evil desires from his mind, who conquers his sexual instincts.'

Guru Granth Sahib 274

One of the Five Ks (see page 347) is kachera: cotton underwear. It shows the need for the Sikh to exercise self-control and symbolises chastity. Adultery is forbidden by the Khalsa.

Sikhs would say that adultery is wrong because:

- It goes against social decency.
- The suffering it causes is greater than the pleasure it may give.
- It is selfish.
- It ignores the will of God.
- It will bring about shame and dishonour.
- It will bring one's family into disgrace.
- It is never a secret. God sees everything.
- It is kam (uncontrolled desire and passion), one of the Five Thieves or Evils.
- Sikhs should strive to be gurmukh (basing their lives on the teachings of the Guru). Adultery is manmukh (self-centred and lacking self-control).

▶ Divorce and separation

Key Concept



Divorce To legally end a marriage.

When a couple's married relationship breaks down, they are likely to separate and decide to live apart. Separation may only be for a short period until they can get a **divorce**, or some couples may not get a divorce and just remain separated.

If one of the partners wants to remarry, they need to have a divorce first; marriage to someone else while a person is still married is known as **bigamy** and is illegal.

Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage and couples need to apply via the court system.

Bigamy Entering into a marriage with someone while still being legally married to another person.

Christian attitudes to divorce, annulment and separation

There are significant differences between the different Christian denominations when it comes to attitudes towards divorce.

The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce and regards marriage as a lifelong commitment. In the situation where a marriage breaks down and there is no chance of reconciliation (getting back together), the two options for a Catholic are either an annulment or separation.

Annulment (or 'nullity of marriage' or 'nullity of domestic partnership') is when a court decrees a marriage or domestic partnership is not legally valid. The Catholic Church teaches that annulment is the only acceptable way a marriage can be dissolved. An annulment may be granted for the non-consummation of marriage, which means a married couple have not had sex, or where it is proved the marriage should not have taken place, for example, because one or both partners are too young.

Catholics base their beliefs on the teachings of the Bible, for example:

'Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

Mark 10:9

Mark goes on to quote Jesus as saying,

'And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'

Mark 10:12

However, Matthew's Gospel, reporting the same event, has Jesus saying,

'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.'

Matthew 19:8–9

This seems to suggest that adultery may be grounds for divorce.

Catholics who are separated are expected not to cohabit with anyone else, and if they do, they are not allowed to receive Holy Communion during Mass. Of course, some Catholics do get divorced, but this is not recognised by the Catholic Church.

In other Christian traditions, there is a diversity of viewpoints. Because divorce is the legal ending of a marriage by the state, all other Christian denominations accept it, but the issue becomes complicated if a divorced Christian wants to remarry.



Anglicans:

- accept divorce, as the UK law allows it
- discourage remarriage (but if chosen, a non-church wedding is preferred)
- accept that some vicars will agree to marry divorcees, but they don't have to. Others prefer to hold a service of prayer and dedication.

Non-conformists (e.g. Methodist/United Reformed):

- agree that divorce is best avoided
- accept that remarriage is permitted if it seems suitable or acceptable to all concerned
- agree that no minister can be forced to conduct a remarriage ceremony against their will.

Catholics:

- do not recognise divorce
- believe that marriage is a sacrament that cannot be dissolved except through annulment
- believe some marriages can be annulled when there are good reasons (such as the marriage never having been consummated).

Buddhist attitudes to divorce and separation



It is inevitable that some married relationships deteriorate, often through no one's fault, and suffering (dukkha) results. Such a situation may bring about feelings of anger, jealousy or hatred; actions (karma) based on these emotions will cause further suffering.

A fundamental principle of Buddhism is to overcome suffering and be happy, so Buddhists are unlikely to expect a couple to live together unhappily. Instead, they should be free to separate and live independent lives. However, they should still show kindness and consideration to each other in the process. It is particularly important they ensure the welfare of any children they may have.

On the other hand, some Buddhists may feel that the relationship between a husband and wife is a deep karmic connection. Therefore, the commitment they made to each other when they married should be kept to.

Since there is no such thing as a Buddhist marriage, there is no Buddhist divorce or annulment. These are considered to be legal matters. After a legal divorce, the couple are free to remarry, if they wish to.

Task

Why is it important for Buddhist couples going through divorce to show kindness and consideration to each other?



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