

# Still Learning

Bringing Buddhism to life for your school

## Teachers' Notes

### The Three Lakshanas (marks of conditioned existence)

#### 1. All things are impermanent.

This is the truth that all things are always changing—there is nothing in the world that stays the same. We can all see this when we look at the world—people grow old and die, things break, plants spring up and then wither away. Even things that look like they've been the same forever are always changing—the mountains used to be at the bottom of the sea!

Even though we know this in our heads, we don't live as if it is true. We behave as if people and things should last forever and get upset when they break or wear out or die. By behaving like this we cause ourselves a lot of suffering.

The positive thing about impermanence is that nobody is fixed as they are, and everyone has the ability to change and grow.

#### 2. Worldly things cannot give us lasting satisfaction.

This doesn't mean that all things are horrible and can't give us any pleasure. It means that normally we expect things to give us what they can't really give us. We think we'll be happy when we get the best games console or coolest trainers, but even if we are happy for a little while when we get them, eventually they will break or wear out and we will need more things to make us happy.

If we behave like this then our happiness will be very fragile because we are depending on outside things to make us happy. The Buddha taught that we'll only be really and truly happy if we understand that happiness comes from inside us, from how we feel—not from what we own. This truth is very positive, as it means that we don't have to rely on things outside of us to make us happy—real happiness comes from within us, and it is a lot easier to change ourselves than to change the world. This is why Buddhists think that changing themselves is so important.

## Food for thought...

### Impermanence:

Can I think of anything that never changes at all?

### Satisfaction:

Can I think of a time when I thought something would make me happier than it actually did when I got it?

### 3. 'Things' don't have a fixed and separate nature

This is the truth that nothing is completely separate from everything else. For example, a tree depends on the soil, the sun, the rain, and lots of other things to exist, and those things themselves depend on other things to exist. So nothing can survive separately from anything else, and everything influences everything else.

This is true for us too. We are who we are because of our genetics, our up-bringing, the influence of our culture, our friends, our teachers, and everything else we've experienced—there is no one thing that makes us 'us'. In the same way, everything we do has an effect on others—if we are kind, that will make someone happy, and vice versa. And because the things that condition us are constantly changing, we are constantly changing too. All phenomena appear to be fixed and separate 'things' (including ourselves), but ultimately this is not the case.

This truth is very positive, as it means that we are all interconnected. When we start to see the world like this we can understand why behaving ethically is so important and also makes us happier.

## Food for thought...

### Fixed and Separate Nature:

Can I think of all the things I depend on to be able to go to school?

How have all the different people in my life influenced me?

What did I have for breakfast?

How many different people did it take to get that food to my table? How does it make me feel to think about that?