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1. Gautama Buddha

"Buddha" and "Gautama" redirect here. For other uses, see Buddha (disambiguation) and Gautama (disambiguation).

Born	c. 563 BCE [1] Lumbini (today in Nepal)

Died	c. 483 BCE (aged 80) or 411 and 400 BCE Kushinagar (today in Uttar Pradesh, India)
Ethnicity	Shakya
Known for	Founder of Buddhism
Predecessor	Kassapa Buddha
Successor	Maitreya Buddha

Gautama Buddha or **Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha** (Sanskrit: सिद्धार्थ गौतम बुद्ध; Pali: **Siddhattha**

Gotama) was a spiritual teacher from the Indian subcontinent, on whose teachings Buddhism was founded.[2]

The word **Buddha** is a title for the first awakened being in an era.

In most Buddhist traditions, Siddhartha Gautama is regarded as the Supreme Buddha (P. *sammāsambuddha*, S. *samyaksaṃbuddha*) of our age, "Buddha" meaning "awakened one" or "the enlightened one." [note 1]

Gautama Buddha may also be referred to as **Śākyamuni** (Sanskrit: शाक्यमुनि "Sage of the Śākyas"). The Buddha found a Middle Way that ameliorated the extreme asceticism found in the Sramana religions.[3]

The time of **Gautama's birth and death are uncertain**: most early-20th-century historians dated his lifetime as c. 563 BCE to 483 BCE,[4] but more recent opinion dates his death to between 486 and 483 BCE or, according to some, between 411 and 400 BCE.[5][6]

UNESCO lists Lumbini, Nepal, as a world heritage site and birthplace of Gautama Buddha.[1][7]

There **are also claims about** birthplace of Gautama Buddha to be Kapileswara, Orissa[8][9][10][11][12][13][14][15] or Kapilavastu at Piprahwa, Uttar Pradesh.

He later taught throughout regions of eastern India such as Magadha and Kośala.[16][17]

Gautama is the primary figure in Buddhism, and accounts of his life, discourses, and monastic rules are believed by Buddhists to have been summarized after his death and memorized by his followers. Various collections of teachings attributed to him were passed down by **oral tradition**, and **first committed to writing about 400 years later.**

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2. Traditional biographies / Primary biographical sources

The primary sources for the life of Siddhārtha **Gautama** **are in a variety of different and sometimes conflicting traditional biographies.**

These include the *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, *Mahāvastu*, and the *Nidānakathā*.[18]

Of these, the *Buddhacarita* is the earliest full biography, an epic poem written by the poet Aśvaghoṣa, and dating around the beginning of the 2nd century CE.[18]

The *Lalitavistara Sūtra* is the next oldest biography, a Mahāyāna/Sarvāstivāda biography dating to the 3rd century CE.[19]

The *Mahāvastu* from the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda sect is another major biography, composed incrementally until perhaps the 4th century CE.[19]

The Dharmaguptaka biography of the Buddha is the most exhaustive, and is entitled the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra*, and various Chinese translations of this date between the 3rd and 6th century CE. Lastly, the *Nidānakathā* is from the Theravāda sect in Sri Lanka, composed in the 5th century CE by Buddhaghoṣa.[20]

From canonical sources, the Jātaka tales, *Mahapadana Sutta* (DN 14), and the *Achariyabhuta Sutta* (MN 123) include selective accounts that may be older, but are not full biographies.

The Jātaka tales retell previous lives of Gautama as a bodhisattva, and the first collection of these can be dated among the earliest Buddhist texts.[21]

The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta* both recount miraculous events surrounding Gautama's birth, such as the bodhisattva's descent from Tuṣita Heaven into his mother's womb.

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3. Nature of traditional depictions

Queen Māyā miraculously giving birth to Prince Siddhārtha. Sanskrit manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period.

Traditional biographies of Gautama generally include numerous miracles, omens, and supernatural events.

The character of the Buddha in these traditional biographies is often that of a fully transcendent (Skt. *lokottara*) and perfected being who is unencumbered by the mundane world.

In the *Mahāvastu*, over the course of many lives, Gautama is said to have developed supramundane abilities including: a painless birth conceived without intercourse; no need for sleep, food, medicine, or bathing, although engaging in such "in conformity with the world"; omniscience, and the ability to "suppress karma".[22]

Nevertheless, some of the more ordinary details of his life have been gathered from these traditional sources.

In modern times there has been an attempt to form a secular understanding of Siddhārtha Gautama's life by omitting the traditional supernatural elements of his early biographies.

Andrew Skilton writes that the Buddha was never historically regarded by Buddhist traditions as being merely human:[23]

It is important to stress that, despite modern Theravada teachings to the contrary (often a sop to skeptical Western pupils), he was never seen as being merely human.

For instance, he is often described as having the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks or signs of a *mahāpuruṣa*, "superman"; the Buddha himself denied that he was either a man or a god; and in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* he states that he could live for an aeon were he asked to do so.

The ancient Indians were generally unconcerned with chronologies, being more focused on philosophy.

Buddhist texts reflect this tendency, providing a clearer picture of what Gautama may have taught than of the dates of the events in his life.

These texts contain descriptions of the culture and daily life of ancient India which can be corroborated from the Jain scriptures, and make the Buddha's time the earliest period in Indian history for which significant accounts exist.[24][*full citation needed*]

British author Karen Armstrong writes that although there is very little information that can be considered historically sound, we can be reasonably confident that Siddhārtha Gautama did exist as a historical figure.[25]

Michael Carrithers goes a bit further by stating that the most general outline of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death" must be true.[26]

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4. Biography Conception and birth

Exact birthplace of Gautama Buddha in Lumbini.[1]

This is a holy shrine also for Hindus, who believe Buddha is the 9th of 10 Dashavataras of Vishnu[27]

Various sites have been identified as possible places of Gautama Buddha's birth.

UNESCO lists Lumbini, Nepal as a world heritage site and birthplace of Gautama Buddha.

There **are other claims** of Buddha's birth in Piprahwa in Uttar Pradesh, India; or Kapileswara in Orissa, India.[8][9][10][12][28][13][14][15]and raised in the small kingdom or principality of Kapilavastu.[29]

According to the most traditional biography,[*which?*] the Buddha's father was King Śuddhodana, the leader of Shakya clan, whose capital was Kapilavastu, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of Kosala during the Buddha's lifetime; Gautama was the family name.

His mother, Queen Maha Maya (Māyādevī) and Suddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess.

Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant with six white tusks entered her right side,[30] and ten months later Siddhartha was born.

As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became pregnant, she left Kapilvastu for her father's kingdom to give birth.

However, her son is said to have been born on the way, at Lumbini, in a garden beneath a sal tree.

The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated in Theravada countries as Vesak.[31]

Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later.

The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhattha), meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit seer Asita journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king (chakravartin) or a great holy man.[32]

By traditional account,[*which?*] this occurred after Siddhartha placed his feet in Asita's hair and Asita examined the birthmarks.

Suddhodana held a naming ceremony on the fifth day, and invited eight brahmin scholars to read the future.

All gave a dual prediction that the baby would either become a great king or a great holy man.[32] Kaundinya (Pali: Konda꣠a), the youngest, and later to be the first arahant other than the Buddha, was reputed to be the only one who unequivocally predicted that Siddhartha would become a Buddha.[33]

While later tradition and legend characterized Śuddhodana as a hereditary monarch, the descendant of the Solar Dynasty of Ikṣvāku (Pāli: Okkāka), many scholars think that Śuddhodana was the elected chief of a tribal confederacy.

Early texts suggest that Gautama was not familiar with the dominant religious teachings of his time until he left on his religious quest, which is said to have been motivated by existential concern for the human condition.[34]

At the time, many small city-states existed in Ancient India, called Janapadas.

Republics and chiefdoms with diffused political power and limited social stratification, were not uncommon amongst them, and were referred to as gana-sanghas.[35]

The Buddha's community does not seem to have had a caste system. It was not a monarchy, and seems to have been structured either as an oligarchy, or as a form of republic.[36]

The more egalitarian gana-sangha form of government, as a political alternative to the strongly hierarchical kingdoms, may have influenced the development of the Shramana-type Jain and Buddhist sanghas, where monarchies tended toward Vedic Brahmanism.[37]

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5. Early life and marriage

Departure of Prince Siddhartha

Siddhartha was born in a royal Hindu Kshatriya family. He was brought up by his mother's younger sister, Maha Pajapati.[38]

By tradition, he is said to have been destined by birth to the life of a prince, and had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) built for him.

Although **more recent scholarship doubts this status**, his father, said to be King Śuddhodana, wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from religious teachings and from knowledge of human suffering.

When he reached the age of 16, his father reputedly arranged his marriage to a cousin of the same age named Yaśodharā (Pāli: Yasodharā).

According to the traditional account,[*which?*] she gave birth to a son, named Rāhula.

Siddhartha **is then said to** have spent 29 years as a prince in Kapilavastu.

Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures say that the future Buddha felt that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal.[38]

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6. Departure and ascetic life

This scene depicts the "Great Departure" of Siddhartha Gautama, a predestined being.

He appears here surrounded by a halo, and accompanied by numerous guards, mithuna loving couples, and devata, come to pay homage.[39]

Gandhara art, Kushan period(1st-3rd century CE)

Prince Siddhartha shaves his hair and becomes an ascetic. Borobudur, 8th century.

At the age of 29, the popular biography continues, Siddhartha left his palace to meet his subjects. Despite his father's efforts to hide from him the sick, aged and suffering, Siddhartha **was said** to have seen an old man.

When his charioteer Channa explained to him that all people grew old, the prince went on further trips beyond the palace. On these he encountered a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic. These depressed him, and he initially strove to overcome ageing, sickness, and death by living the life of an ascetic.[40]

Accompanied by Channa and aboard his horse Kanthaka, Gautama quit his palace for the life of a mendicant.

It's said that, "the horse's hooves were muffled by the gods"[41] to prevent guards from knowing of his departure.

Gautama initially went to Rajagaha and began his ascetic life by begging for alms in the street.

After King Bimbisara's men recognised Siddhartha and the king learned of his quest, Bimisara offered Siddhartha the throne.

Siddhartha rejected the offer, but promised to visit his kingdom of Magadha first, upon attaining enlightenment.

He left Rajagaha and practised under two hermit teachers.

After mastering the teachings of Alara Kalama (Skr. Ārāḍa Kālāma), he was asked by Kalama to succeed him.

However, Gautama felt unsatisfied by the practise, and moved on to become a student of Udaka Ramaputta (Skr. Udraka Rāmaputra).

With him he achieved high levels of meditative consciousness, and was again asked to succeed his teacher.

But, once more, he was not satisfied, and again moved on.[42]

Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by Kaundinya are then said to have set out to take their austerities even further. T

hey tried to find enlightenment through deprivation of worldly goods, including food, practising self-mortification.

After nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around **a leaf or nut per day**, he collapsed in a river while bathing and almost drowned.

Siddhartha began to reconsider his path.

Then, he remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season's plowing.

He attained a concentrated and focused state that was blissful and refreshing, the jhāna.

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7. Enlightenment

The Buddha sitting in meditation, surrounded by demons of Māra. Sanskrit manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period.

According to the early Buddhist texts,[43] after realizing that meditative jhana was the right path to awakening, but that extreme asceticism didn't work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way[43]—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.[43]

In a famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened, he is said to have accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata.[44]

Such was his emaciated appearance that she wrongly believed him to be a spirit that had granted her a wish.[44]

Following this incident, Gautama was famously seated under a pipal tree—now known as the Bodhi tree—in Bodh Gaya, India, when he vowed never to arise until he had found the truth.[45]

Kaundinya and four other companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, left.

After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained Enlightenment.[45][46]

According to some traditions, this occurred in approximately the fifth lunar month, while, according to others, it was in the twelfth month. From that time, Gautama was known to his followers as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One" ("Buddha" is also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One").

He is often referred to in Buddhism as Shakyamuni Buddha, or "The Awakened One of the Shakya Clan."

According to Buddhism, at the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it.

These discoveries became known as the "Four Noble Truths",[46] which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching.

Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or Nirvana, is believed to be possible for any being.

The Buddha described Nirvāna as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states,[46] or "defilements" (kilesas).

Nirvana is also regarded as the "end of the world", in that no personal identity or boundaries of the mind remain. In such a state, a being is said to possess the Ten Characteristics, belonging to every Buddha.

According to a story in the *Āyācana Sutta* (Samyutta Nikaya VI.1) — a scripture found in the Pāli and other canons — immediately after his awakening, the Buddha debated whether or not he should teach the *Dharma* to others.

He was concerned that humans were so overpowered by ignorance, greed and hatred that they could never recognise the path, which is subtle, deep and hard to grasp. However, in the story, Brahmā Sahampati convinced him, arguing that at least some will understand it.

The Buddha relented, and agreed to teach.

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8. Formation of the sangha

Dhīmek Stūpa in Sīrnīth, India, site of the first teaching of the Buddha, in which the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths to his first five disciples.

After his awakening, the Buddha met two merchants, named Tapussa and Bhallika, who became his first lay disciples.

They were apparently each given hairs from his head, which are now claimed to be enshrined as relics in the Shwe Dagon Temple in Rangoon, Burma.

The Buddha intended to visit Asita, and his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Udaka Ramaputta, to explain his findings, but they had already died.

He then travelled to the Deer Park near Vārāṇasī (Benares) in northern India, where he set in motion what Buddhists call the Wheel of Dharma by delivering his first sermon to the five companions with whom he had sought enlightenment. Together with him, they formed the first saṅgha: the company of Buddhist monks.

All five become arahants, and within the first two months, with the conversion of Yasa and fifty four of his friends, the number of such arahants is said to have grown to 60.

The conversion of three brothers named Kassapa followed, with their reputed 200, 300 and 500 disciples, respectively. This swelled the sangha to more than 1,000.

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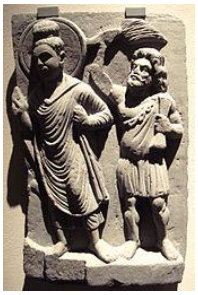
9. Travels and teaching



Buddha with his protector Vajrapani, Gandhāra, 2nd century CE, Ostasiatische Kunst Museum

For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha **is said** to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to outcaste street sweepers, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka. From the outset, Buddhism was equally open to all races and classes, and had no caste structure, as was the rule for most Hindus in the-then society.

Although the Buddha's language remains unknown, it's likely that he taught in one or more of a variety of closely related Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, of which Pali may be standardization.

The sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the dharma.

This continued throughout the year, except during the four months of the vassana rainy season when ascetics of all religions rarely traveled.

One reason was that it was more difficult to do so without causing harm to animal life.

At this time of year, the sangha would retreat to monasteries, public parks or forests, where people would come to them.

The first vassana was spent at Varanasi when the sangha was formed.

After this, the Buddha kept a promise to travel to Rajagaha, capital of Magadha, to visit King Bimbisara.

During this visit, Sariputta and Maudgalyayana were converted by Assaji, one of the first five disciples, after which they were to become the Buddha's two foremost followers.

The Buddha spent the next three seasons at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, capital of Magadha.

Upon hearing of his son's awakening, Suddhodana sent, over a period, ten delegations to ask him to return to Kapilavastu.

On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message, and instead joined the sangha to become arahants.

The tenth delegation, led by Kaludayi, a childhood friend of Gautama's (who also became an arahant), however, delivered the message.

Now two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the dharma as he went.

At his return, the royal palace prepared a midday meal, but the sangha was making an alms round in Kapilavastu.

Hearing this, Suddhodana approached his son, the Buddha, saying:

"Ours is the warrior lineage of Mahamassata, and not a single warrior has gone seeking alms"

The Buddha is said to have replied:

"That is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have gone by seeking alms"

Buddhist texts say that Suddhodana invited the sangha into the palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk.

After this he is said to have become a sotapanna.

During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the sangha.

The Buddha's cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his five chief disciples.

At the age of seven, his son Rahula also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples.

His half-brother Nanda also joined and became an arahant.

Of the Buddha's disciples, Sariputta, Maudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Ananda and Anuruddha are believed to have been the five closest to him. His ten foremost disciples were reputedly completed by the quintet of Upali, Subhoti, Rahula, Mahakaccana and Punna.

In the fifth vassana, the Buddha was staying at Mahavana near Vesali when he heard news of the impending death of his father.

He is said to have gone to Suddhodana and taught the dharma, after which his father became an arahant.

The king's death and cremation was to inspire the creation of an order of nuns.

Buddhist texts record that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women.

His foster mother Maha Pajapati, for example, approached him, asking to join the sangha, but he refused.

Maha Pajapati, however, was so intent on the path of awakening that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Koliyan ladies, which followed the sangha on a long journey to Rajagaha.

In time, after Ananda championed their cause, the Buddha is said to have reconsidered and, five years after the formation of the sangha, agreed to the ordination of women as nuns.

He reasoned that males and females had an equal capacity for awakening. But he gave women additional rules (Vinaya) to follow.

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10. Assassination attempts

According to colorful legends, even during the Buddha's life the sangha was not free of dissent and discord.

For example, Devadatta, a cousin of Gautama who became a monk but not an arahant, more than once tried to kill him.

Initially, Devadatta is alleged to have often tried to undermine the Buddha.

In one instance, according to stories, Devadatta even asked the Buddha to stand aside and let him lead the sangha.

When this failed, he is accused of having three times tried to kill his teacher.

The first attempt is said to have involved him hiring a group of archers to shoot the awakened one. But, upon meeting the Buddha, they laid down their bows and instead became followers.

A second attempt is said to have involved Devadatta rolling a boulder down a hill.

But this hit another rock and splintered, only grazing the Buddha's foot. In the third attempt, Devadatta is said to have got an elephant drunk and set it loose. This ruse also failed.

After his lack of success at homicide, Devadatta is said to have tried to create a schism in the sangha, by proposing extra restrictions on the vinaya.

When the Buddha again prevailed, Devadatta started a breakaway order.

At first, he managed to convert some of the bhikkhus, but Sariputta and Maudgalyayana are said to have expounded the dharma so effectively that they were won back.

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11. Mahaparinirvana

The Buddha's entry into Parinirvana. Sanskrit manuscript. Nālandā, Bihar, India. Pāla period.

The sharing of the relics of the Buddha, Zenyōmitsu-Temple Museum, Tokyo.

According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Pali canon, at the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which he had received as an offering from a blacksmith named Cunda.

Falling violently ill, Buddha instructed his attendant Ānanda to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his passing and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha.[47]

Mettanando and von Hin□ber argue that the Buddha died of mesenteric infarction, a symptom of old age, rather than food poisoning.[48]

The precise contents of the Buddha's final meal are not clear, **due to variant scriptural traditions** and ambiguity over the translation of certain significant terms; the Theravada tradition generally believes that the Buddha was offered some kind of pork, while the Mahayana tradition believes that the Buddha consumed some sort of truffle or other mushroom.

These may reflect the different traditional views on Buddhist vegetarianism and the precepts for monks and nuns.

Ananda protested the Buddha's decision to enter Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of Kuśināra (present-day Kushinagar, India) of the Malla kingdom.

Buddha, however, is said to have reminded Ananda how Kushinara was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king that resounded with joy: *44.*

Kusavati, Ananda, resounded unceasingly day and night with ten sounds—the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rattling of chariots, the beating of drums and tabours, music and song, cheers, the clapping of hands, and cries of "Eat, drink, and be merry!"

The Buddha then asked all the attendant Bhikkhus to clarify any doubts or questions they had.

They had none.

According to Buddhist scriptures, he then finally entered Parinirvana.

The Buddha's final words are reported to have been: "All composite things pass away.

Strive for your own liberation with diligence."

His body was cremated and the relics were placed in monuments or stupas, some of which are believed to have survived until the present.

For example, The Temple of the Tooth or "Dalada Maligawa" in Sri Lanka is the place where what some believe to be the relic of the right tooth of Buddha is kept at present.

According to the Pāli historical chronicles of Sri Lanka, the Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa, the coronation of Aśoka (Pāli: Asoka) is 218 years after the death of Buddha.

According to two textual records in Chinese (十八部論 and 部執異論), the coronation of Aśoka is 116 years after the death of Buddha.

Therefore, the time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravāda record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record.

However, the actual date traditionally accepted as the date of the Buddha's death in Theravāda countries is 544 or 543 BCE, because the reign of Aśoka was traditionally reckoned to be about 60 years earlier than current estimates.

At his death, the Buddha is famously believed to have told his disciples to follow no leader. Mahakasyapa was chosen by the sangha to be the chairman of the First Buddhist Council, with the two chief disciples Maudgalyayana and Sariputta having died before the Buddha.

While in Buddha's days he was addressed by the very respected titles Buddha, Shākyamuni, Bhante and Bho, he was known after his parinirvana as Arihant, Bhagavat, Bhagwān, Jina/Jinendra, Sāstr, Sugata, and most popularly in scriptures as Tathāgata.[*citation needed*]

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12. Physical characteristics

Main article: Physical characteristics of the Buddha

Gandhāran depiction of the Buddha from Hadda, Central Asia. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

An extensive and colorful physical description of the Buddha has been laid down in scriptures.

A kshatriya by birth, he had military training in his upbringing, and by Shakyan tradition was required to pass tests to demonstrate his worthiness as a warrior in order to marry.

He had a strong enough body to be noticed by one of the kings and was asked to join his army as a general.

He is also believed by Buddhists to have "the 32 Signs of the Great Man".

The Brahmin Sonadanda described him as "handsome, good-looking, and pleasing to the eye, with a most beautiful complexion.

He has a godlike form and countenance; he is by no means unattractive."(D,I:115).

"It is wonderful, truly marvellous, how serene is the good Gotama's appearance, how clear and radiant his complexion, just as the golden jujube in autumn is clear and radiant, just as a palm-tree fruit just loosened from the stalk is clear and radiant, just as an adornment of red gold wrought in a crucible by a skilled goldsmith, deftly beaten and laid on a yellow-cloth shines, blazes and glitters, even so, the good Gotama's senses are calmed, his complexion is clear and radiant." (A,I:181)

A disciple named Vakkali, who later became an arahant, was so obsessed by Buddha's physical presence that the Buddha is said to have felt impelled to tell him to desist, and to have reminded him that he should know the Buddha through the Dhamma and not through physical appearances.

Although there are no extant representations of the Buddha in human form until around the 1st century CE (see Buddhist art), descriptions of the physical characteristics of fully enlightened buddhas are attributed to the Buddha in the Digha Nikaya's *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (D,I:142).[49]

In addition, the Buddha's physical appearance is described by Yasodhara to their son Rahula upon the Buddha's first post-Enlightenment return to his former princely palace in the non-canonical Pali devotional hymn, *Narasīha Gāthā* ("The Lion of Men").[50]

Among the 32 main characteristics it is mentioned that Buddha has blue eyes.[51]

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13. Teachings

Main article: Buddhist philosophy

Reclining Buddha in Jade Temple, Shanghai

Some scholars believe that some portions of the Pali Canon and the Āgamas contain the actual substance of the historical teachings (and possibly even the words) of the Buddha.[52][53]

Some scholars believe the Pali Canon and the Agamas pre-date the Mahāyāna sūtras.[54]

The scriptural works of Early Buddhism precede the Mahayana works chronologically, and are treated by many Western scholars as the main credible source for information regarding the actual historical teachings of Gautama Buddha.

However, some scholars do not think that the texts report on historical events.[55][*dubious* – *discuss*][56][57]

Some of the fundamentals of the teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha are:

The Four Noble Truths:

1. That suffering is an ingrained part of existence;
2. That the origin of suffering is craving for sensuality, acquisition of identity, and annihilation;
3. That suffering can be ended; and
4. That following the Noble Eightfold Path is the means to accomplish this.

The Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right view,
2. Right intention,
3. Right speech,

4. Right action,

5. Right livelihood,

6. Right effort,

7. Right mindfulness, and

8. Right concentration.

Dependent origination: the mind creates suffering as a natural product of a complex process.

Rejection of the infallibility of accepted scripture: **Teachings should not be accepted unless they are borne out by our experience and are praised by the wise.** See the *Kalama Sutta* for details.

Anicca (Sanskrit: *anitya*): **That all things that come to be have an end.**

Dukkha (Sanskrit: *duḥkha*): **That nothing which comes to be is ultimately satisfying.**

Anattā (Sanskrit: *anātman*): **That nothing in the realm of experience can really be said to be "I" or "mine".**

Nibbāna (Sanskrit: *Nirvāna*): It is possible for sentient beings to realize a dimension of awareness which is totally unconstructed and peaceful, and end all suffering due to the mind's interaction with the conditioned world.

However, in some Mahayana schools, these points have come to be regarded as more or less subsidiary.

There is disagreement amongst various schools of Buddhism over more complex aspects of what the Buddha is believed to have taught, and also over some of the disciplinary rules for monks.

According to tradition, **the Buddha emphasized ethics and correct understanding**. He questioned everyday notions of divinity and salvation. **He stated that there is no intermediary between mankind and the divine; distant gods are subjected to karma themselves in decaying heavens; and the Buddha is only a guide and teacher** for beings who must tread the path of **Nirvāṇa** *(Pāli:* **Nibbāna)** themselves to attain the spiritual awakening called *bodhi* and understand reality. The Buddhist system of insight and meditation practice is not claimed to

have been divinely revealed, but to spring from an understanding of the true nature of the mind, which must be discovered by treading the path guided by the Buddha's teachings.

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14. Other religions

Buddha depicted as the 9th Avatar of god Vishnu in a traditional Hindu representation.

Main article: Gautama Buddha in world religions

In Hinduism, **Gautama is regarded as one of the ten** avatars of God Vishnu. Some Hindu texts say that the Buddha was an avatar of the god Vishnu.[27]

The Buddha is also regarded as a prophet by the Ahmadiyyas[58][59][60] and a Manifestation of God in the Bahá'í faith.[61] Some early Chinese Taoist-Buddhists thought the Buddha to be a reincarnation of Lao Tzu.[62]

The Christian Saint Josaphat is based on the life of the Buddha. The name comes from the Sanskrit *Bodhisatva* via Arabic *Būdhasaf* and Georgian *Iodasaph*.[63] The only story in which St. Josaphat appears, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, is based on the life of the Buddha.[64] Josaphat was included in earlier editions of the Roman Martyrology (feast day 27 November) — though not in the Roman Missal — and in the Eastern Orthodox Church liturgical calendar (26 August).

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15. Buddhism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Standing Buddha. One of the earliest known representations of the Buddha, 1st-2nd century CE, Gandhara (modern Afghanistan).

Buddhism is a religion indigenous to the Indian subcontinent that encompasses a variety of traditions, beliefs, and practices largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, who is commonly known as the Buddha (meaning "the awakened one" in Sanskrit and Pāli).

The Buddha lived and taught in the eastern part of Indian subcontinent some time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE.[1]

He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end suffering (dukkha) through eliminating ignorance (avidyā), craving (taṇhā), and hatred, by way of understanding and seeing dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) and non-self (anātman), and thus attain the highest happiness, nirvāṇa (nirvana).

Although Buddhism is known as the Buddha Dharma, the Buddha referred to his teachings as the Arya Astānga Mārga, Brahmayāna, Dhammavināya, and Jinasāsanam.[*citation needed*]

Two major branches of Buddhism are recognized: Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle").

Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, Tiantai (Tendai) and Shinnyo-en.

In some classifications, Vajrayana—practiced mainly in Tibet and Mongolia, and adjacent parts of China and Russia—is recognized as a third branch, while others classify it as a part of Mahayana.

There are other categorisations of these three Vehicles or Yanas.[2]

While Buddhism remains most popular within Asia, both branches are now found throughout the world.

Estimates of Buddhists worldwide vary significantly depending on the way Buddhist adherence is defined. Lower estimates are between 350–500 million.[3][4][5]

Higher estimates are between 1.2 - 1.6 billion followers.[6][7][8]

Buddhist schools vary on the exact nature of the path to liberation, the importance and canonicity of various teachings and scriptures, and especially their respective practices.[9]

Two of the most important teachings are dependent origination and no-self.

The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community).

Taking "refuge in the triple gem" has traditionally been a declaration and commitment to being on the Buddhist path and in general distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist.[10]

Other practices may include following ethical precepts; support of the monastic community; renouncing conventional living and becoming a monastic; the development of mindfulness and practice of meditation; cultivation of higher wisdom and discernment; study of scriptures; devotional practices; ceremonies; and in the Mahayana tradition, invocation of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

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16. Life of the Buddha

Main article: Gautama Buddha

Relic depicting Gautama leaving home. The Great Departure, c.1-2nd century. Musée Guimet

This narrative draws on the *Nidānakathā* biography of the Theravāda sect in Sri Lanka, which is ascribed to Buddhaghoṣa in the 5th century CE.[11]

Earlier biographies such as the *Buddhacarita*, the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu*, and the Mahāyāna / Sarvāstivāda *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, give different accounts.

Scholars are hesitant to make unqualified claims about the historical facts of the Buddha's life.

Most accept that he lived, taught and founded a monastic order, but do not consistently accept all of the details contained in his biographies.[12][13]

The Vajrashila, where Gautama sat under a tree and became enlightened, Bodh Gaya, India, 2011

According to author Michael Carrithers, while there are good reasons to doubt the traditional account, "the outline of the life must be true: birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death."[14]

In writing her biography of Buddha, Karen Armstrong noted, "It is obviously difficult, therefore, to write a biography of the Buddha that meets modern criteria.

Because **we have very little information that can be considered historically sound**... [but] we can be reasonably confident Siddhatta Gotama did indeed exist and that his disciples preserved the memory of his life and teachings as well as they could."[15]

The evidence of the **early texts suggests** that Siddhārtha Gautama was born in a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the northeastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE.[16]

It was either a small republic, in which case his father was an elected chieftain, or an oligarchy, in which case his father was an oligarch.[16]

According to the Theravada Tripitaka scriptures[*which?*] (from Pali, meaning "three baskets"), Gautama was born in Lumbini in modern-day Nepal, around the year 563 BCE, and raised in Kapilavastu.[17][18]

According to this narrative, shortly after the birth of young prince Gautama, an astrologer visited the young prince's father—King Śuddhodana—and prophesied that Siddhartha would either become a great king or renounce the material world to become a holy man, depending on whether he saw what life was like outside the palace walls.

Śuddhodana was determined to see his son become a king, so he prevented him from leaving the palace grounds.

But at age 29, despite his father's efforts, Gautama ventured beyond the palace several times. In a series of encounters—known in Buddhist literature as the four sights—he learned of the suffering of ordinary people, encountering an old man, a sick man, a corpse and, finally, an ascetic holy man, apparently content and at peace with the world.

These experiences prompted Gautama to abandon royal life and take up a spiritual quest.

Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India, built by King Ashoka, where Buddha gave his first sermon

Gautama first went to study with famous religious teachers of the day, and mastered the meditative attainments they taught.

But he found that they did not provide a permanent end to suffering, so he continued his quest.

He next attempted an extreme asceticism, which was a religious pursuit common among the Shramanas, a religious culture distinct from the Vedic one.

Gautama underwent prolonged fasting, breath-holding, and exposure to pain.

He almost starved himself to death in the process.

He realized that he had taken this kind of practice to its limit, and had not put an end to suffering.

So in a pivotal moment he accepted milk and rice from a village girl and changed his approach.

He devoted himself to anapanasati meditation, through which he discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way (Skt. *madhyamā-pratipad*[19]): a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.[20][21]

Buddha statue depicting Parinirvana achievement. Figure excavated at the Mahaparinirvana Temple in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

Gautama was now determined to complete his spiritual quest.

At the age of 35, he famously sat in meditation under a sacred fig tree — known as the Bodhi tree — in the town of Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise before achieving enlightenment.

After many days, he finally destroyed the fetters of his mind, thereby liberating himself from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, and arose as a fully enlightened being (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*). Soon thereafter, he attracted a band of followers and instituted a

monastic order. Now, as the Buddha, he spent the rest of his life teaching the path of awakening he had discovered, traveling throughout the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent,[22][23] and died at the age of 80 (483 BCE) in Kushinagar, India.

The south branch of the original fig tree available only in Anuradhapura Sri Lanka is known as Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi.

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17. Buddhist concepts

Main article: Buddhist terms and concepts

As writing was uncommon in India at the time Gautama lived, everything we know about him was carefully memorized and passed on orally until it was written down, probably during the first century BCE.[24]

The English word "Buddhism" is relatively new. It was first used in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1801 (spelled "Boudhism") and its spelling changed to the present one in 1816, in a comment published in the *Asiatic Journal* ("The name and peculiarities of Buddhism have a good deal fixed my attention").[25]

"The Three Jewels",

1. Buddha,
2. Dharma and
3. Sangha,[26]

as well as the concepts of

- karma,[27]
- rebirth (and reincarnation[28]) and
- the practice of yoga[29] existed before Gautama lived but they later became associated with Buddhism.

Refuge in the Three Jewels

Relic depicting footprint of the Buddha with Dharmachakra and triratna, 1st century CE, Gandhāra.

Main articles: Refuge (Buddhism) and Three Jewels

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking refuge in the Three Jewels (Sanskrit: *tri-ratna*, Pāli: *ti-ratana*)[86] as the foundation of one's religious practice.

The practice of taking refuge on behalf of young or even unborn children is mentioned[87] in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, recognized by most scholars as an early text (cf. Infant baptism).

Tibetan Buddhism sometimes adds a fourth refuge, in the *lama*.

In Mahayana, the person who chooses the *bodhisattva* path makes a vow or pledge, considered the ultimate expression of compassion.

In Mahayana, too, the Three Jewels are perceived as possessed of an eternal and unchanging essence and as having an irreversible effect: "The Three Jewels have the quality of excellence.

Just as real jewels never change their faculty and goodness, whether praised or reviled, so are the Three Jewels (Refuges), because they have an eternal and immutable essence.

These Three Jewels bring a fruition that is changeless, for once one has reached Buddhahood, there is no possibility of falling back to suffering."[88]

The Three Jewels are:

1. The Buddha. This is a title for those who have attained Nirvana. See also the Tathāgata and Gautama Buddha. The Buddha could also be represented as a concept instead of a specific person: the perfect wisdom that understands *Dharma* and sees reality in its true form. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha can be viewed as the supreme Refuge: "Buddha is the Unique Absolute Refuge. Buddha is the Imperishable, Eternal, Indestructible and Absolute Refuge."[89]

2. The *Dharma*. The teachings or law of nature as expounded by the Gautama Buddha. It can also, especially in Mahayana, connote the ultimate and sustaining Reality that is inseparable from the Buddha. Further, from some Mahayana perspectives, the Dharma embodied in the form of a great sutra (Buddhic scripture) can replace the need for a personal teacher and can be a direct and spontaneous gateway into Truth (Dharma). This is especially said to be the case with the Lotus Sutra. Dr. Hiroshi Kanno writes of this view of the *Lotus Sutra*: "it is a Dharma-gate of sudden enlightenment proper to the Great Vehicle; it is a Dharma-gate whereby one awakens spontaneously, without resorting to a teacher".[90]

3. The *Sangha*. Those who have attained to any of the Four stages of enlightenment, or simply the congregation of monastic practitioners.

According to the scriptures, Gautama Buddha presented himself as a model.

The Dharma offers a refuge by providing guidelines for the alleviation of suffering and the attainment of Nirvana.

The Sangha is considered to provide a refuge by preserving the authentic teachings of the Buddha and providing further examples that the truth of the Buddha's teachings is attainable.

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18. Life and the World

Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Thangka depicting the Wheel of Life with its six realms

Saṃsāra

Main article: Saṃsāra (Buddhism)

Samsara is "the cycle of birth and death" [30].

Sentient beings crave pleasure and are averse to pain from birth to death. In being controlled by these attitudes, they perpetuate the cycle of conditioned existence and suffering (saṃsāra), and produce the causes and conditions of the next rebirth after death.

Each rebirth repeats this process in an involuntary cycle, which Buddhists strive to end by eradicating these causes and conditions, applying the methods laid out by the Buddha and subsequent Buddhists.

Karma

Main article: Karma in Buddhism

Karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") in Buddhism is the force that drives saṃsāra—the cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skillful deeds (Pāli: "kusala") and bad, unskillful (Pāli: "akusala") actions produce "seeds" in the mind that come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth.[31]

The avoidance of unwholesome actions and the cultivation of positive actions is called śīla (from Sanskrit: "ethical conduct").

In Buddhism, karma specifically refers to those actions (of body, speech, and mind) that spring from mental intent ("cetana"),[32] and bring about a consequence or fruit, (*phala*) or result (*vipāka*).

In Theravada Buddhism there can be no divine salvation or forgiveness for one's karma, since it is a purely impersonal process that is a part of the makeup of the universe.

In Mahayana Buddhism, the texts of certain Mahayana sutras (such as the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Angulimaliya Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra*) claim that reciting or merely hearing their texts can expunge great swathes of negative karma.

Some forms of Buddhism (for example, Vajrayana) regard the recitation of mantras as a means for cutting off previous negative karma.[33]

The Japanese Pure Land teacher Genshin taught that Amida Buddha has the power to destroy the karma that would otherwise bind one in saṃsāra.[4][5]

Rebirth

Gautama's cremation site, Ramabhar Stupa in Uttar Pradesh, India

Main article: Rebirth (Buddhism)

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception[34] to death.

Buddhism rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul, as it is called in Hinduism and Christianity.

According to Buddhism there ultimately is no such thing as a self independent from the rest of the universe (the doctrine of anatta).

Rebirth in subsequent existences must be understood as the continuation of a dynamic, ever-changing process of "dependent arising" ("pratītyasamutpāda") determined by the laws of cause and effect (karma) **rather than that of one being, transmigrating or incarnating from one existence to the next.**

Each rebirth takes place within one of five realms according to Theravadins, or six according to other schools.[35][36]

These are further subdivided into 31 planes of existence:[37]

1. Naraka beings: those who live in one of many Narakas (Hells);
2. Preta: sometimes sharing some space with humans, but invisible to most people; an important variety is the hungry ghost;[38]
3. Animals: sharing space with humans, but considered another type of life;
4. Human beings: one of the realms of rebirth in which attaining Nirvana is possible;
5. Asuras: variously translated as lowly deities, demons, titans, antigods; not recognized by Theravāda (Mahavihara) tradition as a separate realm;[39]
6. Devas including Brahmas: variously translated as gods, deities, spirits, angels, or left untranslated.

Rebirths in some of the higher heavens, known as the Śuddhāvāsa Worlds (Pure Abodes), can be attained by only skilled Buddhist practitioners known as anāgāmis (non-returners).

Rebirths in the arupa-dhatu (formless realms) can be attained by only those who can meditate on the arūpajhānas, the highest object of meditation.

According to East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism, there is an intermediate state (Tibetan "Bardo") between one life and the next. The orthodox Theravada position rejects this; however there are passages in the *Samyutta Nikaya* of the Pali Canon (the collection of texts on which the Theravada tradition is based), that seem to lend support to the idea that the Buddha taught of an intermediate stage between one life and the next.[40][41]

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19. Suffering's causes and solution

The Four Noble Truths

Main article: Four Noble Truts

The teachings on the Four Noble Truths are regarded as central to the teachings of Buddhism, and are said to provide a conceptual framework for Buddhist thought. These four truths explain the nature of *dukkha* (suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction), its causes, and how it can be overcome. They can be summarized as follows:[42]

1. The truth of *dukkha* (suffering, anxiety, dissatisfaction)

2. The truth of the origin of *dukkha*

3. The truth of the cessation of *dukkha*

4. The truth of the path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*

1. The first truth explains the nature of *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is commonly translated as "suffering", "anxiety", "dissatisfaction", "unease", etc., and it is said to have the following three aspects: the obvious suffering of physical and mental illness, growing old, and dying; the anxiety or stress of trying to hold onto things that are constantly changing; and a subtle dissatisfaction pervading all forms of life, due to the fact that all forms of life are impermanent and constantly changing.[43]

2. The second truth is that the *origin* of *dukkha* can be known. Within the context of the four noble truths, the origin of *dukkha* is commonly explained as craving (Pali: *tanha*) conditioned by ignorance (Pali: *avijja*). On a deeper level, the root cause of *dukkha* is identified as ignorance (Pali: *avijja*) of the true nature of things.

3. The third noble truth is that the complete *cessation* of *dukkha* is possible, and

4. The fourth noble truth identifies a *path* to this cessation.[42]

Noble Eightfold Path

Main article: Noble Eightfold Path

The *Dharmachakra* represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path—the fourth of the Buddha's Noble Truths—is the way to the cessation of suffering (dukkha). It has eight sections, each starting with the word "samyak" (Sanskrit, meaning "correctly", "properly", or "well", frequently translated into English as "right"), and presented in three groups known as the three higher trainings. (NB: Pāli transliterations appear in brackets after Sanskrit ones):

1. **Prajo͡ā** is the wisdom that purifies the mind, allowing it to attain spiritual insight into the true nature of all things. It includes: dṛṣṭi (ditthi): viewing reality as it is, not just as it appears to be; saṃkalpa (sankappa): intention of renunciation, freedom and harmlessness.
2. **Śīla** is the ethics or morality, or abstention from unwholesome deeds. It includes:
3. vāc (vāca): speaking in a truthful and non-hurtful way;
4. karman (kammanta): acting in a non-harmful way;
5. Ājīvana (ājīva): a non-harmful livelihood.
6. **Samādhi** is the mental discipline required to develop mastery over one's own mind. This is done through the practice of various contemplative and meditative practices, and includes: yāyāma (vāyāma): making an effort to improve;
7. smṛti (sati): awareness to see things for what they are with clear consciousness, being aware of the present reality within oneself, without any craving or aversion;
8. Samādhi (samādhi): correct meditation or concentration, explained as the first four jhānas.

The practice of the Eightfold Path is understood in two ways, as requiring either simultaneous development (all eight items practiced in parallel), or as a

progressive series of stages through which the practitioner moves, the culmination of one leading to the beginning of another.

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20. The Four Immeasurables

Statue of Buddha in Puji Temple on Putuo Shan island in China

Main article: Brahmavihara

While he searched for enlightenment, Gautama combined the yoga practice of his teacher Kalama with what later became known as "the immeasurables".[44]

Gautama thus invented a new kind of human, one without egotism.[44]

What Thich Nhat Hanh calls the "Four Immeasurable Minds" of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity[45] are also known as brahmaviharas, divine abodes, or simply as four immeasurables.[46] Pema Chödrön calls them the "four limitless ones".[47]

Of the four, mettā or loving-kindness meditation is perhaps the best known.[46]

The Four Immeasurables are taught as a form of meditation that cultivates "wholesome attitudes towards all sentient beings."[48] The practitioner prays:

1. May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes,
2. May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes,
3. May all sentient beings never be separated from bliss without suffering,
4. May all sentient beings be in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.[49]

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21. Middle Way

Main article: Middle Way

An important guiding principle of Buddhist practice is the Middle Way (or Middle Path), which is said to have been discovered by Gautama Buddha prior to his enlightenment.

The Middle Way has several definitions:

The practice of non-extremism: a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification;

The middle ground between certain metaphysical views (for example, that things ultimately either do or do not exist);[50]

An explanation of Nirvana (perfect enlightenment), a state wherein it becomes clear that all dualities apparent in the world are delusory (see Seongcheol);

Another term for emptiness, the ultimate nature of all phenomena (in the Mahayana branch), a lack of inherent existence, which avoids the extremes of permanence and nihilism or inherent existence and nothingness.

22. Nature of existence

Monks debating at Sera Monastery, Tibet

Buddhist scholars have produced a remarkable quantity of intellectual theories, philosophies and world view concepts (see, for example, Abhidharma, Buddhist philosophy and Reality in Buddhism). **Some schools of Buddhism discourage doctrinal study, and some regard it as essential practice.**

In the earliest Buddhist teachings, shared to some extent by all extant schools, the concept of liberation (Nirvana)—**the goal of the Buddhist path—is closely related to the correct understanding of how the mind causes stress.**

In awakening to the true nature of clinging, one develops dispassion for the objects of clinging, and is liberated from suffering (dukkha) and the cycle of incessant rebirths (saṃsāra).

To this end, the Buddha recommended viewing things as characterized by the three marks of existence.

Three Marks of Existence

Main article: Three marks of existence

The Three Marks of Existence are

1. **impermanence,**
2. **suffering, and**
3. **not-self.**

Impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*) expresses the Buddhist notion that all compounded or conditioned phenomena (all things and experiences) are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent.

Everything we can experience through our senses is made up of parts, and its existence is dependent on external conditions.

Everything is in constant flux, and so conditions and the thing itself are constantly changing.

Things are constantly coming into being, and ceasing to be.

Since nothing lasts, there is no inherent or fixed nature to any object or experience.

According to the doctrine of impermanence, life embodies this flux in the aging process, the cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra), and in any experience of loss.

The doctrine asserts that because things are impermanent, attachment to them is futile and leads to suffering (dukkha).

Suffering (Pāli: दुक्ख *dukkha*; Sanskrit दुःख *duḥkha*) is also a central concept in Buddhism.

The word roughly corresponds to a number of terms in English including suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness, sorrow, affliction, anxiety, dissatisfaction, discomfort, anguish, stress, misery, and frustration.

Although the term is often translated as "suffering", its philosophical meaning is more analogous to "disquietude" as in the condition of being disturbed.

As such, "suffering" is too narrow a translation with "negative emotional connotations"[51] that can give the impression that the Buddhist view is pessimistic, but **Buddhism seeks to be neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic**.

In English-language Buddhist literature translated from Pāli, "dukkha" is often left untranslated, so as to encompass its full range of meaning.[52][53][54]

Not-self (Pāli: *anatta*; Sanskrit: *anātman*) is the third mark of existence.

Upon careful examination, one finds that **no phenomenon is really "I" or "mine**"; these concepts are in fact constructed by the mind.

In the *Nikayas* anatta is not meant as a metaphysical assertion, but as an approach for gaining release from suffering.

In fact, the Buddha rejected both of the metaphysical assertions "I have a Self" and "I have no Self" as ontological views that bind one to suffering.[55]

When asked if the self was identical with the body, the Buddha refused to answer.

By analyzing the constantly changing physical and mental constituents (skandhas) of a person or object, the practitioner comes to the conclusion that neither the respective parts nor the person as a whole comprise a self.

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23. Dependent arising

Main article: Pratītyasamutpāda

The doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda (Sanskrit; Pali: paticcasamuppāda; Tibetan: rten.cing.'brel.bar.'byung.ba; Chinese: 緣起) is an important part of Buddhist metaphysics.

It states that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect.

It is variously rendered into English as "dependent origination", "conditioned genesis", "dependent co-arising", "interdependent arising", or "contingency".

The best-known application of the concept of pratītyasamutpāda is the scheme of Twelve Nidānas (from Pāli "nidāna" meaning "cause, foundation, source or origin"), which explain the continuation of the cycle of suffering and rebirth (saṃsāra) in detail.[56]

Main article: Twelve Nidānas

The Twelve Nidānas describe a causal connection between the subsequent characteristics or conditions of cyclic existence, each one giving rise to the next:

1. Avidyā: ignorance, specifically spiritual ignorance of the nature of reality;[57]
2. Saṃskāras: literally formations, explained as referring to karma;
3. Vij◌ñāna: consciousness, specifically discriminative;[58]
4. Nāmarūpa: literally name and form, referring to mind and body;[59]
5. Ṣaḍāyatana: the six sense bases: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-organ;
6. Sparśa: variously translated contact, impression, stimulation (by a sense object);
7. Vedanā: usually translated feeling: this is the "hedonic tone", i.e. whether something is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral;
8. Tṛṣṇā: literally thirst, but in Buddhism nearly always used to mean craving;
9. Upādāna: clinging or grasping; the word also means fuel, which feeds the continuing cycle of rebirth;
10. Bhava: literally being (existence) or becoming. (The Theravada explains this as having two meanings: karma, which produces a new existence, and the existence itself.);[60]
11. Jāti: literally birth, but life is understood as starting at conception;[61]

12. Jarāmaraṇa: (old age and death) and also śokaparidevaduḥkhadaurmanasyopāyāsa (sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and misery).

13. Sentient beings always suffer throughout saṃsāra, until they free themselves from this suffering by attaining Nirvana. Then the absence of the first Nidāna—ignorance—leads to the absence of the others.

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24. Emptiness

Main article: Śūnyatā

Mahayana Buddhism received significant theoretical grounding from Nagarjuna (perhaps c. 150–250 CE), arguably the most influential scholar within the Mahayana tradition.

Nagarjuna's primary contribution to Buddhist philosophy was the systematic exposition of the concept of śūnyatā, or "emptiness", widely attested in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras that emerged in his era.

The concept of emptiness brings together other key Buddhist doctrines, particularly anatta and pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination), to refute the metaphysics of Sarvastivada and Sautrantika (extinct non-Mahayana schools).

For Nagarjuna, it is not merely sentient beings that are empty of ātman; all phenomena (dharmas) are without any svabhava (literally "own-nature" or "self-nature").

Thus without any underlying essence; they are "empty" of being independent; thus the heterodox theories of svabhava circulating at the time were refuted on the basis of the doctrines of early Buddhism.

Nagarjuna's school of thought is known as the Mādhyamaka.

Some of the writings attributed to Nagarjuna made explicit references to Mahayana texts, but his philosophy was argued within the parameters set out by the agamas.

He may have arrived at his positions from a desire to achieve a consistent exegesis of the Buddha's doctrine as recorded in the Canon.

In the eyes of Nagarjuna the Buddha was not merely a forerunner, but the very founder of the Mādhyamaka system.[62]

Sarvastivada teachings—which were criticized by Nāgārjuna—were reformulated by scholars such as Vasubandhu and Asanga and were adapted into the Yogacara (Sanskrit: yoga practice) school.

While the Mādhyamaka school held that asserting the existence or non-existence of any ultimately real thing was inappropriate, some exponents of Yogacara asserted that the mind and only the mind is ultimately real (a doctrine known as cittamatra).

Not all Yogacarins asserted that mind was truly existent; Vasubandhu and Asanga in particular did not.[63]

These two schools of thought, in opposition or synthesis, form the basis of subsequent Mahayana metaphysics in the Indo-Tibetan tradition.

Besides emptiness, Mahayana schools often place emphasis on the notions of perfected spiritual insight (prajo̵āpāramitā) and Buddha-nature (tathāgatagarbha).

There are conflicting interpretations of the *tathāgatagarbha* in Mahāyāna thought.

The idea may be traced to *Abhidharma*, and ultimately to statements of the Buddha in the *Nikāyas*. In Tibetan Buddhism, according to the Sakya school, tathāgatagarbha is the inseparability of the clarity and emptiness of one's mind.

In Nyingma, tathāgatagarbha also generally refers to inseparability of the clarity and emptiness of one's mind.

According to the Gelug school, it is the potential for sentient beings to awaken since they are empty (i.e. dependently originated).

According to the Jonang school, it refers to the innate qualities of the mind that expresses themselves as omniscience etc. when adventitious obscurations are removed.

The "Tathāgatagarbha Sutras" are a collection of Mahayana sutras that present a unique model of Buddha-nature.

Even though this collection was generally ignored in India,[64] East Asian Buddhism provides some significance to these texts.

25. Nirvana

Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, India, where Gautama Buddha attained Nirvana under the Bodhi Tree (left)

Main article: Nirvana (concept)

Nirvana (Sanskrit; Pali: "Nibbana") means "cessation", "extinction" (of craving and ignorance and therefore suffering and the cycle of involuntary rebirths (saṃsāra)), "extinguished", "quieted", "calmed"; it is also known as "Awakening" or "Enlightenment" in the West.

The term for anybody who has achieved *nirvana*, including the Buddha, is *arahant*.

Bodhi (Pāli and Sanskrit, in devanagari: बोधि) is a term applied to the experience of Awakening of arahants. *Bodhi* literally means "awakening", but it is more commonly translated into English as "enlightenment".

In Early Buddhism, *bodhi* carried a meaning synonymous to *nirvana*, using only some different metaphors to describe the experience, which implies the extinction of *raga* (greed, craving),[65] *dosa* (hate, aversion)[66] and *moha* (delusion).[67]

In the later school of Mahayana Buddhism, the status of *nirvana* was downgraded in some scriptures, coming refer to only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained *nirvana*, and that one needed to attain *bodhi* to eradicate delusion:

An important development in the Mahayana [was] that it came to separate nirvana from bodhi ('awakening' to the truth, Enlightenment), and to put a lower value on the former (Gombrich, 1992d).

Originally nirvana and bodhi refer to the same thing; they merely use different metaphors for the experience.

But the Mahayana tradition separated them and considered that nirvana referred only to the extinction of craving (passion and hatred), with the resultant escape from the cycle of rebirth.

This interpretation ignores the third fire, delusion: the extinction of delusion is of course in the early texts identical with what can be positively expressed as gnosis, Enlightenment.

—Richard F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*[68]

Therefore, according to Mahayana Buddhism, the *arahant* has attained only *nirvana*, thus still being subject to delusion, while the *bodhisattva* not only achieves *nirvana* but full liberation from delusion as well.

He thus attains *bodhi* and becomes a *buddha.*

In Theravada Buddhism, *bodhi* and *nirvana* carry the same meaning as in the early texts, that of being freed from greed, hate and delusion.

The term *parinirvana* is also encountered in Buddhism, and this generally refers to the complete *nirvana* attained by the *arahant* at the moment of death, when the physical body expires.

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26. Buddha eras

Buddhists believe Gautama Buddha was the first to achieve enlightenment in this Buddha era and is therefore credited with the establishment of Buddhism.

A Buddha era is the stretch of history during which people remember and practice the teachings of the earliest *known* Buddha.

This Buddha era will end when all the knowledge, evidence and teachings of Gautama Buddha have vanished.

This belief therefore maintains that many Buddha eras have started and ended throughout the course of human existence.[69][70]

The Gautama Buddha, then, is *the Buddha of this era*, who taught directly or indirectly to all other Buddhas in it (see types of Buddhas).

In addition, Mahayana Buddhists believe there are innumerable other Buddhas in other universes.[71] A Theravada commentary says that Buddhas arise one at a time in this world element, and not at all in others.[72]

The understandings of this matter reflect widely differing interpretations of basic terms, such as "world realm", between the various schools of Buddhism.

The idea of the decline and gradual disappearance of the teaching has been influential in East Asian Buddhism.

Pure Land Buddhism holds that it has declined to the point where few are capable of following the path, so it may be best to rely on the power of the Amitabha Buddha.

27. Devotion

Main article: Buddhist devotion

Devotion is an important part of the practice of most Buddhists.[73] Devotional practices include bowing, offerings, pilgrimage, and chanting. In Pure Land Buddhism, devotion to the Buddha Amitabha is the main practice.

In Nichiren Buddhism, devotion to the Lotus Sutra is the main practice.

Yoga

Statue of the Buddha in meditation position, Haw Phra Kaew, Vientiane, Laos

Buddhism traditionally incorporates states of meditative absorption (Pali: *jhāna*; Skt: *dhyāna*).[74]

The most ancient sustained expression of yogic ideas is found in the early sermons of the Buddha.[75] One key innovative teaching of the Buddha was that meditative absorption must be combined with liberating cognition.[76]

The difference between the Buddha's teaching and the yoga presented in early Brahminic texts is striking.

Meditative states alone are not an end, for according to the Buddha, even the highest meditative state is not liberating.

Instead of attaining a complete cessation of thought, some sort of mental activity must take place: **a liberating cognition, based on the practice of mindful awareness.**[77]

Meditation was an aspect of the practice of the yogis in the centuries preceding the Buddha.

The Buddha built upon the yogis' concern with introspection and developed their meditative techniques, but rejected their theories of liberation.[78]

In Buddhism, mindfulness and clear awareness are to be developed at all times; in pre-Buddhist yogic practices there is no such injunction.

A yogi in the Brahmanical tradition is not to practice while defecating, for example, while a Buddhist monastic should do so.[79]

Religious knowledge or "vision" was indicated as a result of practice both within and outside of the Buddhist fold.

According to the *Samaꙮꙮaphala Sutta*, this sort of vision arose for the Buddhist adept as a result of the perfection of "meditation" coupled with the perfection of "discipline" (Pali *sīla*; Skt. *śīla*).

Some of the Buddha's meditative techniques were shared with other traditions of his day, but the idea that ethics are causally related to the attainment of "transcendent wisdom" (Pali *paꙮꙮā*; Skt. *prajꙮā*) was original.[80]

The Buddhist texts are probably the earliest describing meditation techniques.[81]

They describe meditative practices and states that existed before the Buddha as well as those first developed within Buddhism.[82]

Two Upanishads written after the rise of Buddhism do contain full-fledged descriptions of yoga as a means to liberation.[83]

While there is no convincing evidence for meditation in pre-Buddhist early Brahminic texts, Wynne argues that formless meditation originated in the Brahminic or Shramanic tradition, based on strong parallels between Upanishadic cosmological statements and the meditative goals of the two teachers of the Buddha as recorded in the early Buddhist texts.[84]

He mentions less likely possibilities as well.[85]

Having argued that the cosmological statements in the Upanishads also reflect a contemplative tradition, he argues that the Nasadiya Sukta contains evidence for a contemplative tradition, even as early as the late Rig Vedic period.[84]

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28. Buddhist ethics

Main article: The Five Precepts

Statue of Gautama Buddha, 1st century CE, Gandhara

Śīla (Sanskrit) or *sīla* (Pāli) is usually translated into English as "virtuous behavior", "morality", "ethics" or "precept".

It is an action committed through the body, speech, or mind, and involves an intentional effort.

It is one of the *three practices* (*sila*, *samadhi*, and *panya*) and the second *pāramitā*.

It refers to moral purity of thought, word, and deed.

The four conditions of *śīla* are

1. Chastity,
2. Calmness,
3. Quiet, and
4. Extinguishment.

Śīla is the foundation of *Samadhi/Bhāvana* (Meditative cultivation) or mind cultivation.

Keeping the precepts promotes not only the peace of mind of the cultivator, which is internal, but also peace in the community, which is external.

According to the Law of Karma, keeping the precepts are meritorious and it acts as causes that would bring about peaceful and happy effects.

Keeping these precepts keeps the cultivator from rebirth in the four woeful realms of existence.

Śīla refers to overall principles of ethical behavior.

There are several levels of *sila*, which correspond to "basic morality" (five precepts),

In concise terms, the late Dharma Master Yin-Shun, listed the Five Precepts simply as (translation by Wing H. Yeung, M.D.):[19]

1. "Do not kill." (Unintentional killing is considered less offensive)
2. "Do not steal." (Including misappropriating someone's property)
3. "Do not engage in improper sexual conduct." (e.g. sexual contact not sanctioned by secular laws, the Buddhist monastic code, or by one's parents and guardians)

4. "Do not make false statements." (Also includes pretending to know something one doesn't)
5. "Do not drink alcohol."

"Basic morality with asceticism" (eight precepts),

The Buddha gave teachings on how the eight precepts are to be practiced,[20] and on the right and wrong ways of practicing the eight precepts.[21]

1. I undertake to abstain from causing harm and taking life (both human and non-human).
2. I undertake to abstain from taking what is not given (for example stealing, displacements that may cause misunderstandings).
3. I undertake to abstain from sexual activity.
4. I undertake to abstain from wrong speech: telling lies, deceiving others, manipulating others, using hurtful words.
5. I undertake to abstain from using intoxicating drinks and drugs, which lead to carelessness.
6. I undertake to abstain from eating at the wrong time (the right time is after sunrise, before noon).
7. I undertake to abstain from singing, dancing, playing music, attending entertainment performances, wearing perfume, and using cosmetics and garlands (decorative accessories).
8. I undertake to abstain from luxurious places for sitting or sleeping, and overindulging in sleep.

"novice monkhood" (ten precepts)

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29. Ten Precept

The **Ten Precepts** (Pali: dasasila or samanerasikkha) refer to the precepts (training rules) for Buddhist samaneras (novice monks) and *samaneris* (novice nuns). They are used in most Buddhist schools.

1. Refrain from killing living things.
2. Refrain from stealing.
3. Refrain from unchastity (sensuality, sexuality, lust).
4. Refrain from lying.
5. Refrain from taking intoxicants.
6. Refrain from taking food at inappropriate times (after noon).
7. Refrain from singing, dancing, playing music or attending entertainment programs (performances).
8. Refrain from wearing perfume, cosmetics and garland (decorative accessories).
9. Refrain from sitting on high chairs and sleeping on luxurious, soft beds.
10. Refrain from accepting money.

and "monkhood" (*Vinaya* or *Patimokkha*).

The four parajikas (defeats) are rules entailing expulsion from the sangha for life. If a monk breaks any one of the rules he is automatically 'defeated' in the holy life and falls from monkhood immediately. He is not allowed to become a monk again in his lifetime. Intention is necessary in all these four cases to constitute an offence. The four parajikas for bhikkus are:

1. Sexual intercourse, that is, any voluntary sexual interaction between a bhikku and a living being, except for mouth-to-mouth intercourse which falls under the Sanghadisesa.
2. Stealing, that is, the robbery of anything worth more than 1/24 troy ounce of gold (as determined by local law).
3. Intentionally bringing about the death of a human being, even if it is still an embryo — whether by killing the person, arranging for an assassin to kill the person, inciting the person to die, or describing the advantages of death. [1]
4. Deliberately lying to another person that one has attained a superior human state, such as claiming to be an arahant when one knows one is not, or claiming to have attained one of the jhanas when one knows one has not.

The parajikas are more specific definitions of the first four of the Five Precepts.

Lay people generally undertake to live by the five precepts, which are common to all Buddhist schools.

If they wish, they can choose to undertake the eight precepts, which add basic asceticism.

The five precepts are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate well:

1. To refrain from taking life (non-violence towards sentient life forms), or *ahimsā*;
2. To refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft);
3. To refrain from sensual (including sexual) misconduct;
4. To refrain from lying (speaking truth always);
5. To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (specifically, drugs and alcohol).

The precepts are not formulated as imperatives, but as training rules that laypeople undertake voluntarily to facilitate practice.[91]

In Buddhist thought, the cultivation of dana and ethical conduct themselves refine consciousness to such a level that rebirth in one of the lower heavens is likely, even if there is no further Buddhist practice.

There is nothing improper or un-Buddhist about limiting one's aims to this level of attainment.[92]

In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made more strict, and becomes a precept of celibacy.

The three additional precepts are:

1. To refrain from eating at the wrong time (eat only from sunrise to noon);
2. To refrain from dancing and playing music, wearing jewelry and cosmetics, attending shows and other performances;
3. To refrain from using high or luxurious seats and bedding.

The complete list of ten precepts may be observed by laypeople for short periods.

For the complete list, the seventh precept is partitioned into two, and a tenth added:

- To refrain from taking food at an unseasonable time, that is after the mid-day meal;
- To refrain from dancing, music, singing and unseemly shows;
- To refrain from the use of garlands, perfumes, ointments, and from things that tend to beautify and adorn (the person);
- To refrain from (using) high and luxurious seats (and beds);
- To refrain from accepting gold and silver;[93]

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30. Monastic life

Buddhist monks performing a ceremony in Hangzhou, China

Vinaya is the specific moral code for monks and nuns.

It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 rules for monks in the Theravadin recension.

The precise content of the vinayapitaka (scriptures on Vinaya) differs slightly according to different schools, and different schools or subschools set different standards for the degree of adherence to Vinaya.

Novice-monks use the ten precepts, which are the basic precepts for monastics.

Regarding the monastic rules, the Buddha constantly reminds his hearers that it is the spirit that counts.

On the other hand, the rules themselves are designed to assure a satisfying life, and provide a perfect springboard for the higher attainments.

Monastics are instructed by the Buddha to live as "islands unto themselves".

In this sense, living life as the vinaya prescribes it is, as one scholar puts it: "more than merely a means to an end: it is very nearly the end in itself."[94]

In Eastern Buddhism, there is also a distinctive Vinaya and ethics contained within the Mahayana Brahmajala Sutra (not to be confused with the Pali text of that name) for Bodhisattvas, where, for example, the eating of meat is frowned upon and vegetarianism is actively encouraged (see *vegetarianism in Buddhism*). In Japan, this has almost completely displaced the monastic vinaya, and allows clergy to marry.

Meditation

Buddhist monks praying in Thailand

Main article: Buddhist meditation

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore itself and other phenomena.[95]

According to Theravada Buddhism the Buddha taught two types of meditation, *samatha* meditation (Sanskrit: *śamatha*) and *vipassanā* meditation (Sanskrit: *vipaśyanā*).

In Chinese Buddhism, these exist (translated *chih kuan*), but Ch□n (Zen) meditation is more popular.[96]

According to Peter Harvey, whenever Buddhism has been healthy, not only monks, nuns, and married lamas, but also more committed lay people have practiced meditation.[97]

According to Routledge's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, in contrast, throughout most of Buddhist history before modern times, serious meditation by lay people has been unusual.[98]

The evidence of the early texts suggests that at the time of the Buddha, many male and female lay practitioners did practice meditation; some even to the point of proficiency in all eight jhānas (see the next section regarding these).[99]

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31. Samādhi (meditative cultivation): samatha meditation

Main articles: Samādhi (Buddhism) and Dhyāna in Buddhism

In the language of the Noble Eightfold Path, *samyaksamādhi* is "right concentration".

The primary means of cultivating *samādhi* is meditation.

Upon development of *samādhi*, one's mind becomes purified of defilement, calm, tranquil, and luminous.

Once the meditator achieves a strong and powerful concentration (*jhāna*, Sanskrit ध्यान *dhyāna*), his mind is ready to penetrate and gain insight (vipassanā) into the ultimate nature of reality, eventually obtaining release from all suffering.

The cultivation of mindfulness is essential to mental concentration, which is needed to achieve insight.

Samatha meditation starts from being mindful of an object or idea, which is expanded to one's body, mind and entire surroundings, leading to a state of total concentration and tranquility (*jhāna*)

There are many variations in the style of meditation, from sitting cross-legged or kneeling to chanting or walking.

The most common method of meditation is to concentrate on one's breath (anapanasati), because this practice can lead to both *samatha* and *vipassana'.*

In Buddhist practice, it is said that while *samatha* meditation can calm the mind, only *vipassanā* meditation can reveal how the mind was disturbed to start with, which is what leads to knowledge (*j◌ānа*; Pāli *◌āṇa*) and understanding (*praj◌ā* Pāli *pa◌◌ā*), and thus can lead to *nirvāṇa* (Pāli *nibbāna*). When one is in jhana, all defilements are suppressed temporarily.

Only understanding (*prajₒā* or *vipassana*) eradicates the defilements completely. Jhanas are also states that *Arahants* abide in order to rest.

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32. In Theravāda

Main article: Jhāna in Theravada

In Theravāda Buddhism, the cause of human existence and suffering is identified as craving, which carries with it the various defilements.

These various defilements are traditionally summed up as greed, hatred and delusion.

These are believed deeply rooted afflictions of the mind that create suffering and stress.

To be free from suffering and stress, these defilements must be permanently uprooted through internal investigation, analyzing, experiencing, and understanding of the true nature of those defilements by using *jhāna*, a technique of the Noble Eightfold Path.

It then leads the meditator to realize the Four Noble Truths, Enlightenment and *Nibbana*.

Nibbana is the ultimate goal of Theravadins.

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33. Prajₒā (Wisdom): vipassana meditation

Main articles: Prajₒā and Vipassana

Prajₒā (Sanskrit) or *paₒₒā* (Pāli) means wisdom that is based on a realization of dependent origination, The Four Noble Truths and the three marks of existence.

Prajₒā is the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about *bodhi*.

It is spoken of as the principal means of attaining *nirvāṇa*, through its revelation of the true nature of all things as *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (not-self).

Prajₒā is also listed as the sixth of the six *pāramitās* of the Mahayana.

Initially, *praj₀ā* is attained at a conceptual level by means of listening to sermons (dharma talks), reading, studying, and sometimes reciting Buddhist texts and engaging in discourse.

Once the conceptual understanding is attained, it is applied to daily life so that each Buddhist can verify the truth of the Buddha's teaching at a practical level.

Notably, one could in theory attain Nirvana at any point of practice, whether deep in meditation, listening to a sermon, conducting the business of one's daily life, or any other activity.

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34. Zen

Main article: Zen

Zen Buddhism (禅), pronounced *Chɯn* in Chinese, *seon* in Korean or *zen* in Japanese (derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, meaning "meditation") is a form of Buddhism that became popular in China, Korea and Japan and that lays special emphasis on meditation.[100]

Zen places less emphasis on scriptures than some other forms of Buddhism and prefers to focus on direct spiritual breakthroughs to truth.

Zen Buddhism is divided into two main schools: Rinzai (臨済宗) and Sōtō (曹洞宗), the former greatly favouring the use in meditation on the koan (公案, a meditative riddle or puzzle) as a device for spiritual break-through, and the latter (while certainly employing koans) focusing more on *shikantaza* or "just sitting".[101]

Zen Buddhist teaching is often full of paradox, in order to loosen the grip of the ego and to facilitate the penetration into the realm of the **True Self or Formless Self,** which is equated with the Buddha himself.[102]

According to Zen master, Kosho Uchiyama, when thoughts and fixation on the little 'I' are transcended, an Awakening to a universal, non-dual Self occurs: '

When we let go of thoughts and wake up to the reality of life that is working beyond them, we discover the Self that is living universal non-dual life (before the separation into two) that pervades all living creatures and all existence.'.[103]

Thinking and thought must therefore not be allowed to confine and bind one.[104]

Vajrayana and Tantra

Though based upon Mahayana, Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism is one of the schools that practice *Vajrayana* or "Diamond Vehicle" (also referred to as Mantrayāna, Tantrayāna, Tantric Buddhism, or esoteric Buddhism).

It accepts all the basic concepts of Mahāyāna, but also includes a vast array of spiritual and physical techniques designed to enhance Buddhist practice.

Tantric Buddhism is largely concerned with ritual and meditative practices.[105]

One component of the Vajrayāna is harnessing psycho-physical energy through ritual, visualization, physical exercises, and meditation as a means of developing the mind.

Using these techniques, it is claimed that a practitioner can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, or even as little as three years.

In the Tibetan tradition, these practices can include sexual yoga, though only for some very advanced practitioners.[106]

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35. History

Main article: History of Buddhism

Philosophical roots

The Buddhist "Carpenter's Cave" at Ellora in Maharashtra, India

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of ancient India during the second half of the first millennium BCE.[107]

That was a period of social and religious turmoil, as there was significant discontent with the sacrifices and rituals of Vedic Brahmanism.[108]

It was challenged by numerous new ascetic religious and philosophical groups and teachings that broke with the Brahmanic tradition and rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmans.[109][110] These groups, whose members were known as shramanas, were a continuation of a non-Vedic strand of Indian thought distinct from Indo-Aryan Brahmanism.[111][112]

Scholars have reasons to believe that ideas such as samsara, karma (in the sense of the influence of morality on rebirth), and moksha originated in the shramanas, and were later adopted by Brahmin orthodoxy.[113][114][115][116][117][118]

This view is supported by a study of the region where these notions originated.

Buddhism arose in Greater Magadha, which stretched from Sravasti, the capital of Kosala in the north-west, to Rajagrha in the south east.

This land, to the east of aryavarta, the land of the Aryas, was recognised as non-Vedic.[119]

Other Vedic texts reveal a dislike of the people of Magadha, in all probability because the Magadhas at this time were not Brahmanised.[120]

It was not until the 2nd or 3rd centuries BCE that the eastward spread of Brahmanism into Greater Magadha became significant.

Ideas that developed in Greater Magadha prior to this were not subject to Vedic influence.

These include rebirth and karmic retribution that appear in a number of movements in Greater Magadha, including Buddhism.

These movements inherited notions of rebirth and karmic retribution from an earlier culture.[121]

At the same time, these movements were influenced by, and in some respects continued, philosophical thought within the Vedic tradition as reflected e.g. in the Upanishads.[122]

These movements included, besides Buddhism, various skeptics (such as Sanjaya Belatthiputta), atomists (such as Pakudha Kaccayana), materialists (such as Ajita Kesakambali), antinomians (such as Purana Kassapa); the most important ones in the 5th century BCE were

the Ajivikas, who emphasized the rule of fate, the Lokayata (materialists), the Ajnanas (agnostics) and the Jains, who stressed that the soul must be freed from matter.[123]

Many of these new movements shared the same conceptual vocabulary - atman ("Self"), buddha ("awakened one"), dhamma ("rule" or "law"), karma ("action"), nirvana ("extinguishing"), samsara ("eternal recurrence") and yoga ("spiritual practice").[108]

The shramanas rejected the Veda, and the authority of the brahmans, who claimed they possessed revealed truths not knowable by any ordinary human means.

Moreover, they declared that the entire Brahmanical system was fraudulent: a conspiracy of the Brahmans to enrich themselves by charging exorbitant fees to perform bogus rites and give useless advice.[124]

A particular criticism of the Buddha's was Vedic animal sacrifice.[80]

The Buddha declared that priests reciting the Vedas were like the blind leading the blind.[125]

According to him, those priests who had memorized the Vedas really knew nothing.[126]

He also mocked the Vedic "hymn of the cosmic man".[127]

However, the Buddha was not anti-Vedic, and declared that the Veda in its true form was declared by "Kashyapa" to certain rishis, who by severe penances had acquired the power to see by divine eyes.[128]

He names the Vedic rishis, and declared that the original Veda of the rishis[129][130] was altered by a few Brahmins who introduced animal sacrifices.

Buddha says that it was on this alteration of the true Veda that he refused to pay respect to the Vedas of his time.[131]

He declared that the primary goal of Upanishadic thought, the Atman, was in fact non-existent,[132] and, having explained that Brahminical attempts to achieve liberation at death were futile, proposed his new idea of liberation in life.[133][134]

However, he did not denounce the union with Brahman[135], or the idea of the self uniting with the Self.[136]

At the same time, the traditional Brahminical religion itself gradually underwent profound changes, transforming it into what is recognized as early Hinduism.[108][109][137]

In particular, the brahmans thus developed "philosophical systems of their own, meeting the new ideas with adaptations of their doctrines".[138]

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36. Indian Buddhism, Pre-sectarian Buddhism, Early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, Late Mahayana Buddhism, Vajrayana (Esoteric Buddhism)

Main article: History of Buddhism in India

The history of Indian Buddhism may be divided into five periods:[139]

Early Buddhism (occasionally called Pre-sectarian Buddhism), Nikaya Buddhism or Sectarian Buddhism: The period of the Early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, Later Mahayana Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism (also called Vajrayana Buddhism).

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Pre-sectarian Buddhism

Main article: Pre-sectarian Buddhism

Pre-sectarian Buddhism is the earliest phase of Buddhism, recognized by nearly all scholars.

Its main scriptures are the Vinaya Pitaka and the four principal Nikayas or Agamas.

Certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout the early texts, so most scholars conclude that Gautama Buddha must have taught something similar to the Three marks of existence, the Five Aggregates, Dependent origination, Karma and Rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Nirvana.[140]

Home scholars disagree, and have proposed many other theories.[141][142]

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Early Buddhist schools

Main articles: Early Buddhist schools, Buddhist councils, and Theravada

Painting depicting Buddhaghosa offering his *Visuddhimagga* to monks in Mahavihara, the center of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka

According to the scriptures, soon after the parinirvāṇa (from Sanskrit: "highest extinguishment") of Gautama Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held.

As with any ancient Indian tradition, transmission of teaching was done orally.

The primary purpose of the assembly was to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission.

In the first council, Ānanda, a cousin of the Buddha and his personal attendant, was called upon to recite the discourses (*sūtras*, Pāli *sutta*s) of the Buddha, and, according to some sources, the abhidhamma. Upāli, another disciple, recited the monastic rules (*vinaya*).

Scholars regard the traditional accounts of the council as greatly exaggerated if not entirely fictitious.[143]

According to most scholars, at some period after the Second Council the *Sangha* began to break into separate factions.[144]

The various accounts differ as to when the actual schisms occurred.

According to the *Dipavamsa* of the Pāli tradition, they started immediately after the Second Council, the Puggalavada tradition places it in 137 AN, the Sarvastivada tradition of Vasumitra says it was in the time of Asoka and the Mahasanghika tradition places it much later, nearly 100 BCE.

The root schism was between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṅghikas.

The fortunate survival of accounts from both sides of the dispute reveals disparate traditions.

The Sthavira group offers two quite distinct reasons for the schism.

The Dipavamsa of the Theravāda says that the losing party in the Second Council dispute broke away in protest and formed the Mahasanghika.

This contradicts the Mahasanghikas' own *vinaya*, which shows them as on the same, winning side. The Mahāsāṅghikas argued that the Sthaviras were trying to expand the *vinaya* and may also have challenged what they perceived were excessive claims or inhumanly high criteria for arhatship.

Both parties, therefore, appealed to tradition.[145]

The Sthaviras gave rise to several schools, one of which was the Theravāda school.

Originally, these schisms were caused by disputes over vinaya, and monks following different schools of thought seem to have lived happily together in the same monasteries, but eventually, by about 100 CE if not earlier, schisms were being caused by doctrinal disagreements too.[146]

Following (or leading up to) the schisms, each Saṅgha started to accumulate an Abhidharma, a detailed scholastic reworking of doctrinal material appearing in the Suttas, according to schematic classifications.

These Abhidharma texts do not contain systematic philosophical treatises, but summaries or numerical lists.

Scholars generally date these texts to around the 3rd century BCE, 100 to 200 years after the death of the Buddha.

Therefore the seven Abhidharma works are generally claimed not to represent the words of the Buddha himself, but those of disciples and great scholars.[147]

Every school had its own version of the Adhidharma, with different theories and different texts.

The different Adhidharmas of the various schools did not agree with each other.

Scholars disagree on whether the Mahasanghika school had an Abhidhamma Pitaka or not.[147][148]

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Early Mahayana Buddhism

Main article: Mahāyāna

A Buddhist triad depicting, left to right, a Kushan, the future buddha Maitreya, Gautama Buddha, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and a Buddhist monk. 2nd—3rd century. Musée Guimet

The origins of Mahāyāna, which formed between 100 BCE and 100 AD,[149] are still not completely understood.[150]

The earliest views of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the West assumed that it existed as a separate school in competition with the so-called "Hīnayāna" schools.

The split was on the order of the European Protestant Reformation, which divided Christians into Catholic and Protestant.[149]

Due to the veneration of buddhas and bodhisattvas, Mahāyāna was often interpreted as a more devotional, lay-inspired form of Buddhism, with supposed origins in stūpa veneration.[151]

The old views of Mahāyāna as a lay-inspired sect are now largely considered misguided and wrong.[152]

There is no evidence that Mahāyāna ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas.[153]

Initially it was known as *Bodhisattvayāna* (the "Vehicle of the Bodhisattvas").[149]

Paul Williams has also noted that the Mahāyāna never had nor ever attempted to have a separate Vinaya or ordination lineage from the early schools of Buddhism, and therefore each bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī adhering to the Mahāyāna formally belonged to an early school.

This continues today with the Dharmaguptaka ordination lineage in East Asia, and the Mūlasarvāstivāda ordination lineage in Tibetan Buddhism.

Therefore Mahāyāna was never a separate rival sect of the early schools.[154]

From Chinese monks visiting India, we now know that both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks in India often lived in the same monasteries side by side.[155]

Buddhas of Bamiyan: Vairocana before and after destruction by the Taliban in 2001

The Chinese monk Yijing who visited India in the 7th century CE, distinguishes Mahāyāna from Hīnayāna as follows:[156]

Both adopt one and the same Vinaya, and they have in common the prohibitions of the five offences, and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths.

Those who venerate the bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna sūtras are called the Mahāyānists, while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.

Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts.

These Mahāyāna teachings were first propagated into China by Lokakṣema, the first translator of Mahāyāna sūtras into Chinese during the 2nd century CE.[157]

Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the Prajꣳāpāramitā series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya Buddha, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.[158][159][160]

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Late Mahayana Buddhism

1. During the period of Late Mahayana Buddhism, four major types of thought developed: Madhyamaka,
2. Yogacara,
3. Tathagatagarbha, and
4. Buddhist Logic

as the last and most recent.[161]

In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahayana were the Madhyamaka and the later Yogacara.[162]

According to Dan Lusthaus, Madhyamaka and Yogacara have a great deal in common, and the commonality stems from early Buddhism.[163]

There were no great Indian teachers associated with tathagatagarbha thought.[164]

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Vajrayana (Esoteric Buddhism)

Main article: Vajrayana

Scholarly research concerning Esoteric Buddhism is still in its early stages and has a number of problems that make research difficult:[165]

Vajrayana Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism, and therefore research must include explore Hinduism as well.

The scriptures of Vajrayana have not yet been put in any kind of order.

Ritual must be examined as well, not just doctrine.

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37. Development of Buddhism

Main article: Timeline of Buddhism

Buddhist proselytism at the time of emperor Ashoka (260–218 BCE).

Coin depicting Indo-Greek king Menander, who, according to Buddhist tradition records in the Milinda Panha, converted to the Buddhist faith and became an arhat in the 2nd century BCE .

Buddhism may have spread only slowly in India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who was a public supporter of the religion.

The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (Buddhist religious memorials) and to efforts to spread Buddhism throughout the enlarged Maurya empire and even into neighboring lands—particularly to the Iranian-speaking regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia, beyond the Mauryas' northwest border, and to the island of Sri Lanka south of India.

These two missions, in opposite directions, would ultimately lead, in the first case to the spread of Buddhism into China, and in the second case, to the emergence of Theravāda Buddhism and its spread from Sri Lanka to the coastal lands of Southeast Asia.

This period marks the first known spread of Buddhism beyond India.

According to the edicts of Aśoka, emissaries were sent to various countries west of India to spread Buddhism (Dharma), particularly in eastern provinces of the neighboring Seleucid Empire, and even farther to Hellenistic kingdoms of the Mediterranean.

It is a matter of disagreement among scholars whether or not these emissaries were accompanied by Buddhist missionaries.[166]

The gradual spread of Buddhism into adjacent areas meant that it came into contact with new ethnical groups.

During this period Buddhism was exposed to a variety of influences, from Persian and Greek civilization, to changing trends in non-Buddhist Indian religions—themselves influenced by Buddhism.

Striking examples of this syncretistic development can be seen in the emergence of Greek-speaking Buddhist monarchs in the Indo-Greek Kingdom, and in the development of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra.

A Greek king, Menander, has even been immortalized in the Buddhist canon.

The Theravada school spread south from India in the 3rd century BCE, to Sri Lanka and **Thailand** and Burma and later also Indonesia.

The Dharmagupta school spread (also in 3rd century BCE) north to Kashmir, Gandhara and Bactria (Afghanistan).

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to China is most commonly thought to have started in the late 2nd or the 1st century CE, though the literary sources are all open to question.[167][168]

The first documented translation efforts by foreign Buddhist monks in China were in the 2nd century CE, probably as a consequence of the expansion of the Kushan Empire into the Chinese territory of the Tarim Basin.[169]

In the 2nd century CE, Mahayana Sutras spread to China, and then to Korea and Japan, and were translated into Chinese.

During the Indian period of Esoteric Buddhism (from the 8th century onwards), Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and Mongolia.

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38. Buddhism today

Main article: Timeline of Buddhism:Common Era

Polish Buddhists

By the late Middle Ages, Buddhism had become virtually extinct in India, and although it continued to exist in surrounding countries, its influence was no longer expanding.

It is now again gaining strength in India and elsewhere.[170][171]

Estimates of the number of Buddhist followers by scholars range from 230 million to 1.691 billion. Most scholars classify similar numbers of people under a category they call "Chinese folk" or "traditional" religion, an amalgam of various traditions that includes Buddhism.

Formal membership varies between communities, but basic lay adherence is often defined in terms of a traditional formula in which the practitioner takes refuge in The Three Jewels:

1. The *Buddha*,
2. The *Dharma* (the teachings of the Buddha), and
3. The *Sangha* (the Buddhist community).

Estimates are uncertain for several reasons:

- Difficulties in defining who counts as a Buddhist; syncretism among the Eastern religions.
  - Buddhism is practiced by adherents alongside many other religious traditions- including Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, traditional religions, shamanism, and animism- throughout East and Southeast Asia.[172][173][174][175][176][177][178]

- difficulties in estimating the number of Buddhists who do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies;[179]
- official policies on religion in several historically Buddhist countries that make accurate assessments of religious adherence more difficult; most notably China, Vietnam and North Korea.[180][181][182] In many current and former Communist governments in Asia, government policies may discourage adherents from reporting their religious identity, or may encourage official counts to underestimate religious adherence.

Nava bauddha

The nava - bauddha or neo-Buddhist are the followers of Ambedkar an Indian who converted to Buddhism, in 1956 and later. [183][184]

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39. Demographics

Percentage of cultural/nominal adherents of combined Buddhism with its related religions (according to the highest estimates).[185][186][187][188][189][190][191][192]

According to one analysis, Buddhism is the fourth-largest religion in the world behind Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.[193]

The monks' order (Sangha), which began during the lifetime of the Buddha, is among the oldest organizations on earth.

Buddhism was the first world religion[194][195][196] and was the world's largest religion in the first half of the 20th century — in 1951 Buddhism was the world's largest religion with 520 million adherents.

By comparison, the second largest was Christianity with 500 million dherents.[197][198][199][200][201][202][203][204][205][206][207][208]

Theravada Buddhism, using Sanskrit and Pāli as its scriptural languages, is the dominant form of Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma. The Dalit Buddhist movement in India (inspired by B. R. Ambedkar) also practices Theravada.

Approximately 124 million adherents.[209]

East Asian forms of Mahayana Buddhism that use Chinese scriptures are dominant in most of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam as well as such communities within Indochina, Southeast Asia and the West.

Approximately 500 million to one billion.[210]

Tibetan Buddhism is found in Bhutan, Nepal, Mongolia, areas of India (it's the majority religion in Ladakh; significant population in Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim), China (particularly in Tibet and Inner Mongolia), and Russia (Kalmyk Autonomous Republic).

Approximately 20 million adherents.[209]

Most Buddhist groups in the West are at least nominally affiliated with one of these three traditions.

At the present time, the teachings of all three branches of Buddhism have spread throughout the world, and Buddhist texts are increasingly translated into local languages.

While in the West Buddhism is often seen as exotic and progressive, in the East it is regarded as familiar and traditional.

Buddhists in Asia are frequently well organized and well funded.

In a number of countries, it is recognized as an official religion and receives state support.

Modern influences increasingly lead to new forms of Buddhism that significantly depart from traditional beliefs and practices.

Overall there is an overwhelming diversity of recent forms of Buddhism.[211]

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40. Schools and traditions

Main articles: Schools of Buddhism and Buddhahood

Two of his disciples became the inspiration for two main schools of Buddhism that were developed at least 200 years after Gautama died.

Gautama praised both of them and to this day both schools are "authentic".

Sariputta inspired the Theravada school, generally known to be analytical and monastic. Maudgalyayana inspired the Mahayana school, which emphasizes compassion and tends to be democratic.[212]

A young monk

Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravada or Mahayana.[213]

This classification is also used by some scholars[214][*page needed*] and is the one ordinarily used in the English language.[215]

An alternative scheme used by some scholars[216] divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas:

- Theravada,
- East Asian Buddhism and
- Tibetan Buddhism.

Some scholars[217] use other schemes.

Buddhists themselves have a variety of other schemes.

Hinayana (literally "lesser vehicle") is used by Mahayana followers to name the family of early philosophical schools and traditions from which contemporary Theravada emerged, but as this term is rooted in the Mahayana viewpoint and can be considered derogatory, a variety of other terms are increasingly used instead, including Śrāvakayāna, Nikaya Buddhism, early Buddhist schools, sectarian Buddhism, conservative Buddhism, mainstream Buddhism and non-Mahayana Buddhism.

Not all traditions of Buddhism share the same philosophical outlook, or treat the same concepts as central.

Each tradition, however, does have its own core concepts, and some comparisons can be drawn between them.

For example, according to one Buddhist ecumenical organization,[218] several concepts common to both major Buddhist branches:

- Both accept the Buddha as their teacher.
- Both accept the Middle way, Dependent origination, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Three marks of existence.
- Both accept that members of the laity and of the sangha can pursue the path toward enlightenment (bodhi).
- Both consider buddhahood the highest attainment.

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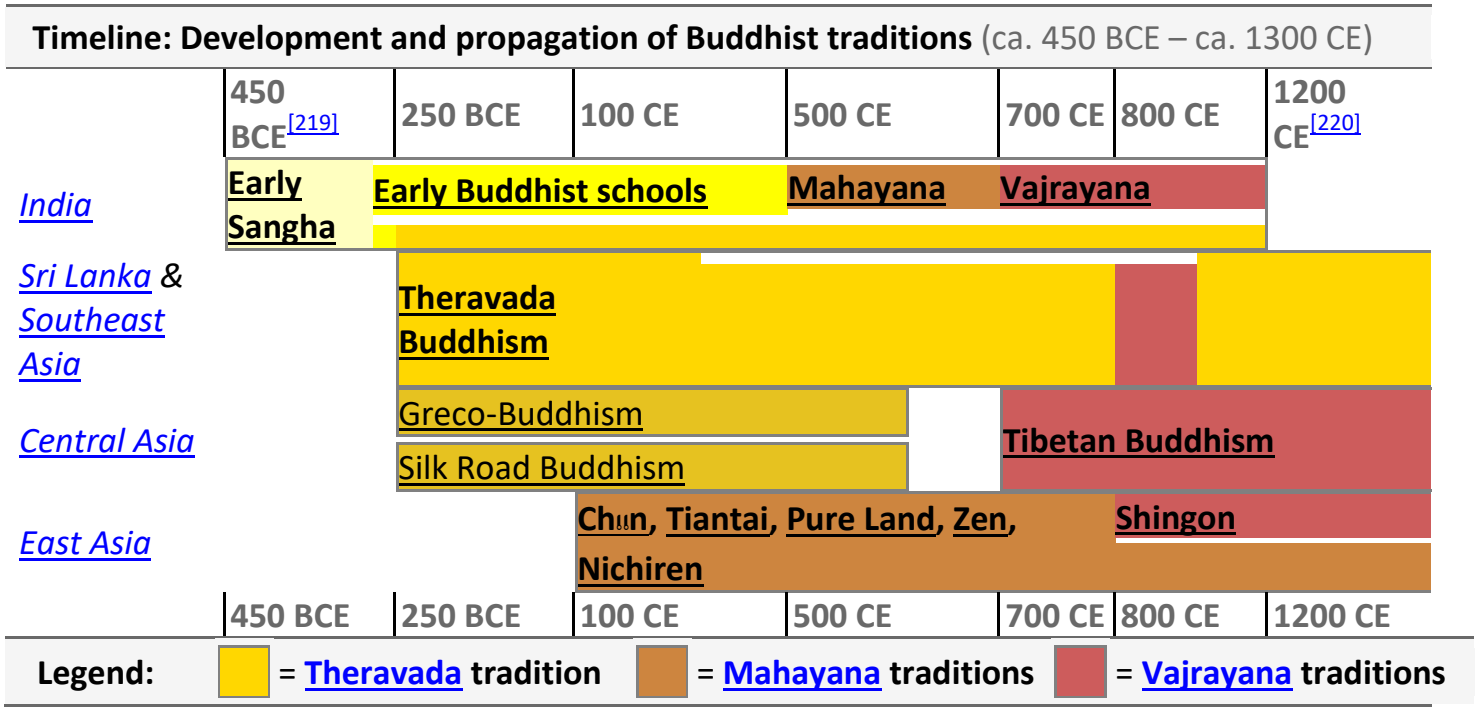
41. Timeline

This is a rough timeline of the development of the different schools/traditions:



42. Theravada school HOME

Main article: Theravada

Theravada ("Doctrine of the Elders", or "Ancient Doctrine") is the oldest surviving Buddhist school.

It is relatively conservative, and *generally* closest to early Buddhism.[221]

This school is derived from the Vibhajjavāda grouping that emerged amongst the older Sthavira group at the time of the Third Buddhist Council (c. 250 BCE).

This school gradually declined on the Indian subcontinent, but its branch in Sri Lanka and South East Asia continues to survive.

The Theravada school bases its practice and doctrine exclusively on the Pāli Canon and its commentaries.

After being orally transmitted for a few centuries, its scriptures, the Pali Canon, were finally committed to writing in the 1st century BCE, in Sri Lanka, at what the Theravada usually reckon as the fourth council.

It is also one of the first Buddhist schools to commit the complete set of its canon into writing.[*citation needed*] The Sutta collections and Vinaya texts of the Pāli Canon (and the corresponding texts in other versions of the Tripitaka), are generally considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature, and they are accepted as authentic in every branch of Buddhism.

Theravāda is primarily practiced today in Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia as well as small portions of China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Bangladesh. It has a growing presence in Europe and America.

Theravadin Buddhists think that personal effort is required to realize rebirth.

Meditation is done by forest monks for the most part, while village monks teach and serve their lay communities.

Laypersons can perform good actions, producing merit that can be traded to the gods who may reward it with material benefits.[222]

In Theravada doctrine, a person may awaken from the "sleep of ignorance" by directly realizing the true nature of reality; such people are called *arahants* and occasionally *buddhas.*

After numerous lifetimes of spiritual striving, they have reached the end of the cycle of rebirth, no longer reincarnating as human, animal, ghost, or other being.

The commentaries to the Pali Canon classify these awakened beings into three types:

- *Sammasambuddha*, usually just called Buddha, who discovers the truth by himself and teaches the path to awakening to others
- *Paccekabuddha*, who discovers the truth by himself but lacks the skill to teach others
- *Savakabuddha*, who receive the truth directly or indirectly from a Sammasambuddha

Bodhi and *nirvana* carry the same meaning, that of being freed from craving, hate, and delusion. In attaining *bodhi*, the *arahant* has overcome these obstacles.

As a further distinction, the extinction of only hatred and greed (in the sensory context) with some residue of delusion, is called *anagami*.

Theravada (Redirected from Theravadin)

Theravada, Sanskrit: स्थविरवाद *sthaviravāda*, ; literally, "the Teaching of the Elders" or "the Ancient Teaching," is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It was founded in India.

It is relatively conservative, and *generally* closer to early Buddhism than the other existing Buddhist traditions.[1]

For many centuries, it has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka (now about 70% of the population)[2] and most of continental Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand).

Theravada is also practiced by minorities in parts of southwest China (mainly by the Shan and Tai ethnic groups), Vietnam (by the Khmer Krom), Bangladesh (by the ethnic groups of Baruas, Chakma, Magh, and Tanchangya), Malaysia and Indonesia, while recently gaining popularity in Singapore and the Western world.

Today, Theravada Buddhists, otherwise known as Theravadins, number over 150 million worldwide, and during the past few decades Theravada Buddhism has begun to take root in the West[3] and in the Buddhist revival in India.[4]

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43. Mahayana traditions

Main article: Mahayana

Chinese and Central Asian monks. Bezeklik, Eastern Tarim Basin, China, 9th–10th century.

Mahayana Buddhism flourished in India from the 5th century CE onwards, during the dynasty of the Guptas.

Mahāyāna centres of learning were established, the most important one being the Nālandā University in north-eastern India.

Mahayana schools recognize all or part of the Mahayana Sutras.

Some of these sutras became for Mahayanists a manifestation of the Buddha himself, and faith in and veneration of those texts are stated in some sutras (e.g. the Lotus Sutra and the Mahaparinirvana Sutra) to lay the foundations for the later attainment of Buddhahood itself.

Native Mahayana Buddhism is practiced today in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, parts of Russia and most of Vietnam (also commonly referred to as "Eastern Buddhism").

The Buddhism practiced in Tibet, the Himalayan regions, and Mongolia is also Mahayana in origin, but is discussed below under the heading of Vajrayana (also commonly referred to as "Northern Buddhism".

There are a variety of strands in Eastern Buddhism, of which "the Pure Land school of Mahayana is the most widely practised today.".[223]

In most of this area however, they are fused into a single unified form of Buddhism. In Japan in particular, they form separate denominations with the five major ones being: Nichiren, peculiar to Japan; Pure Land; Shingon, a form of Vajrayana; Tendai, and Zen.

In Korea, nearly all Buddhists belong to the Chogye school, which is officially Son (Zen), but with substantial elements from other traditions.[224]

Japanese Mahayana Buddhist monk with alms bowl

In the Mahayana, the Buddha tends not to be viewed as merely human, but as the earthly projection of a beginningless and endless, omnipresent being (see *Dharmakaya*) beyond the range and reach of thought.

Moreover, in certain Mahayana sutras, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are viewed essentially as One: all three are seen as the eternal Buddha himself.

The Buddha's death is seen as an illusion, he is living on in other planes of existence, and monks are therefore permitted to offer "new truths" based on his input.

Mahayana also differs from Theravada in its concept of śūnyatā (that ultimately nothing has existence), and in its belief in bodhisattvas (enlightened people who vow to continue being reborn until all beings can be enlightened).[225]

Celestial Buddhas are individuals who no longer exist on the material plane of existence, but who still aid in the enlightenment of all beings.

Nirvana came to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate,[*dubious* – *discuss*] implying that delusion was still present in one who attained Nirvana.

Bodhi became a higher attainment that eradicates delusion entirely.[68]

Thus, the *Arahant* attains Nirvana but not Bodhi, thus still being subject to delusion, while the Buddha attains Bodhi.[*dubious* – *discuss*]

The method of self-exertion or "self-power"—without reliance on an external force or being—stands in contrast to another major form of Buddhism, Pure Land, which is characterised by utmost trust in the salvific "other-power" of Amitabha Buddha.

Pure Land Buddhism is a very widespread and perhaps the most faith-orientated manifestation of Buddhism and centres upon the conviction that faith in Amitabha Buddha and the chanting of homage to his name liberates one at death into the Blissful (安樂), Pure Land (淨土) of Amitabha Buddha.

This Buddhic realm is variously construed as a foretaste of Nirvana, or as essentially Nirvana itself. The great vow of Amitabha Buddha to rescue all beings from samsaric suffering is viewed within Pure Land Buddhism as universally efficacious, if only one has faith in the power of that vow or chants his name.

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44. Bodhisattvas, Vajrayana traditions

Main article: Bodhisattva

Bodhisattva means "enlightenment being", and generally refers to one who is on the path to buddhahood, typically as a fully enlightened buddha (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*).

Theravada Buddhism primarily uses the term in relation to Gautama Buddha's previous existences, but has traditionally acknowledged and respected the bodhisattva path as well.[226]

Mahāyāna Buddhism is based principally upon the path of a bodhisattva. According to Jan Nattier, the term *Mahāyāna* ("Great Vehicle") was originally even an honorary synonym for *Bodhisattvayāna*, or the "Bodhisattva Vehicle."[227] The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajo̤āpāramitā Sūtra*, an early and important Mahāyāna text, contains a simple and brief definition for the term *bodhisattva*, and this definition is the following:[228][229][230]

Because he has enlightenment as his aim, a bodhisattva-mahāsattva is so called.

Mahāyāna Buddhism encourages everyone to become bodhisattvas and to take the bodhisattva vows. With these vows, one makes the promise to work for the complete enlightenment of all beings by practicing six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*).[231] According to the Mahāyāna teachings, these perfections are: giving, discipline, forbearance, effort, meditation, and transcendent wisdom.

Vajrayana traditions

Main article: Vajrayana

Bodhnath Stupa, Kathmandu, Nepal

The Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism spread to China, Mongolia, and Tibet. In Tibet, Vajrayana has always been a main component of Tibetan Buddhism, while in China it formed a separate sect. However, Vajrayana Buddhism became extinct in China but survived in elements of Japan's Shingon and Tendai sects.

There are differing views as to just when Vajrayāna and its tantric practice started. In the Tibetan tradition, it is claimed that the historical Śākyamuni Buddha taught tantra, but as these are esoteric teachings, they were passed on orally first and only written down long after the Buddha's other teachings.

Nālandā University became a center for the development of Vajrayāna theory and continued as the source of leading-edge Vajrayāna practices up through the 11th century.

These practices, scriptures and theories were transmitted to China, Tibet, Indochina and Southeast Asia. China generally received Indian transmission up to the 11th century including tantric practice, while a vast amount of what is considered Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayāna) stems from the late (9th–12th century) Nālandā tradition.

In one of the first major contemporary academic treatises on the subject, Fairfield University professor Ronald M. Davidson argues that the rise of Vajrayana was in part a reaction to the changing political climate in India at the time.

With the fall of the Gupta dynasty, in an increasingly fractious political environment, institutional Buddhism had difficulty attracting patronage, and the folk movement led by siddhas became more prominent.

After perhaps two hundred years, it had begun to get integrated into the monastic establishment.[232][*page needed*]

Vajrayana combined and developed a variety of elements, a number of which had already existed for centuries.[233] In addition to the Mahāyāna scriptures, Vajrayāna Buddhists recognise a large body of Buddhist Tantras, some of which are also included in Chinese and Japanese collections of Buddhist literature, and versions of a few even in the Pali Canon.

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45. Buddhist texts, Pāli Tipitaka

Main article: Buddhist texts

Buddhist scriptures and other texts exist in great variety.

Different schools of Buddhism place varying levels of value on learning the various texts.

Some schools venerate certain texts as religious objects in themselves, while others take a more scholastic approach.

Buddhist scriptures are mainly written in Pāli, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese.

Some texts still exist in Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text that is universally referred to by all traditions.

However, some scholars have referred to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the common core of all Buddhist traditions.[234]

This could be considered misleading, as Mahāyāna considers these merely a preliminary, and not a core, teaching.

The Tibetan Buddhists have not even translated most of the āgamas (though theoretically they recognize them) and they play no part in the religious life of either clergy or laity in China and Japan.[235]

Other scholars say there is no universally accepted common core.[236]

The size and complexity of the Buddhist canons have been seen by some (including Buddhist social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar) as presenting barriers to the wider understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

The followers of Theravāda Buddhism take the scriptures known as the Pāli Canon as definitive and authoritative, while the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism base their faith and philosophy primarily on the Mahāyāna sūtras and their own *vinaya*.

The Pāli sutras, along with other, closely related scriptures, are known to the other schools as the *āgamas*.[237]

Over the years, various attempts have been made to synthesize a single Buddhist text that can encompass all of the major principles of Buddhism.

In the Theravada tradition, condensed 'study texts' were created that combined popular or influential scriptures into single volumes that could be studied by novice monks.

Later in Sri Lanka, the Dhammapada was championed as a unifying scripture.

Dwight Goddard collected a sample of Buddhist scriptures, with the emphasis on Zen, along with other classics of Eastern philosophy, such as the Tao Te Ching, into his 'Buddhist Bible' in the 1920s. More recently, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar attempted to create a single, combined document of Buddhist principles in "The Buddha and His Dhamma". Other such efforts have persisted to present day, but currently there is no single text that represents all Buddhist traditions.

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Pāli Tipitaka

Main article: Pāli Canon

Pali Canon

Vinaya Pitaka
Suttavibhanga
Khandhaka
Parivara
Sutta Pitaka
Digha Nikaya
Majjhima Nikaya
Samyutta Nikaya
Anguttara Nikaya
Khuddaka Nikaya
Abhidhamma Pitaka
Dhammasangani
Vibhanga
Dhatukatha and Puggalapannatti
Kathavatthu
Yamaka
Patthana

The Pāli Tipitaka, which means "three baskets", refers to the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Sutta Pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* contains disciplinary rules for the Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as explanations of why and how these rules were instituted, supporting material, and doctrinal clarification.

The *Sutta Pitaka* contains discourses ascribed to Gautama Buddha.

The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* contains material often described as systematic expositions of the Gautama Buddha's teachings.

The Pāli Tipitaka is the only early Tipitaka (Sanskrit: *Tripiṭaka*) to survive intact in its original language, but a number of early schools had their own recensions of the Tipitaka featuring much of the same material.

We have portions of the Tipitakas of the Sārvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, Sammitya, Mahāsaṅghika, Kāśyapīya, and Mahīśāsaka schools, most of which survive in Chinese translation only.

According to some sources, some early schools of Buddhism had five or seven pitakas.[238]

According to the scriptures, soon after the death of the Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held; a monk named Mahākāśyapa (Pāli: Mahākassapa) presided.

The goal of the council was to record the Buddha's teachings. Upāli recited the *vinaya*. Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, was called upon to recite the dhamma.

These became the basis of the Tripitaka.

However, this record was initially transmitted orally in form of chanting, and was committed to text in the last century BCE.

Both the sūtras and the *vinaya* of every Buddhist school contain a wide variety of elements including discourses on the Dharma, commentaries on other teachings, cosmological and cosmogonical texts, stories of the Gautama Buddha's previous lives, and various other subjects.

Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically "Theravadin", but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings.

According to Peter Harvey, it contains material at odds with later Theravadin orthodoxy.

He states: "The Theravadins, then, may have *added* texts to the Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period."[239]

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46. Mahayana sutras

Main article: Mahayana sutras

The Tripiṭaka Koreana in South Korea, an edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon carved and preserved in over 81,000 wood printing blocks.

The Mahayana sutras are a very broad genre of Buddhist scriptures that the Mahayana Buddhist tradition holds are original teachings of the Buddha.

Some adherents of Mahayana accept both the early teachings (including in this the Sarvastivada Abhidharma, which was criticized by Nagarjuna and is in fact opposed to early Buddhist thought[240]) and the Mahayana sutras as authentic teachings of Gautama Buddha, and claim they were designed for different types of persons and different levels of spiritual understanding.

The Mahayana sutras often claim to articulate the Buddha's deeper, more advanced doctrines, reserved for those who follow the bodhisattva path.

That path is explained as being built upon the motivation to liberate all living beings from unhappiness. Hence the name *Mahāyāna* (lit., *the Great Vehicle*).

According to Mahayana tradition, the Mahayana sutras were transmitted in secret, came from other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or were preserved in non-human worlds because human beings at the time could not understand them:[241]

Some of our sources maintain the authenticity of certain other texts not found in the canons of these schools (the early schools).

These texts are those held genuine by the later school, not one of the eighteen, which arrogated to itself the title of Mahayana, 'Great Vehicle'.

According to the Mahayana historians these texts were admittedly unknown to the early schools of Buddhists.

However, they had all been promulgated by the Buddha.

[The Buddha's] followers on earth, the sravakas ('pupils'), had not been sufficiently advanced to understand them, and hence were not given them to remember, but they were taught to various supernatural beings and then preserved in such places as the Dragon World.

Approximately six hundred Mahayana sutras have survived in Sanskrit or in Chinese or Tibetan translations.

In addition, East Asian Buddhism recognizes some sutras regarded by scholars as of Chinese rather than Indian origin.

Generally, scholars conclude that the Mahayana scriptures were composed from the 1st century CE onwards: "Large numbers of Mahayana sutras were being composed in the period between the beginning of the common era and the fifth century",[242] five centuries after the historical Gautama Buddha.

Some of these had their roots in other scriptures composed in the 1st century BCE.

It was not until after the 5th century CE that the Mahayana sutras started to influence the behavior of mainstream Buddhists in India: "But outside of texts, at least in India, at exactly the same period, very different—in fact seemingly older—ideas and aspirations appear to be motivating actual behavior, and old and established Hinnayana groups appear to be the only ones that are patronized and supported."[242]

These texts were apparently not universally accepted among Indian Buddhists when they appeared; the pejorative label *hinayana* was applied by Mahayana supporters to those who rejected the Mahayana sutras.

Only the Theravada school does not include the Mahayana scriptures in its canon.

As the modern Theravada school is descended from a branch of Buddhism that diverged and established itself in Sri Lanka prior to the emergence of the Mahayana texts, debate exists as to whether the Theravada were historically included in the *hinayana* designation; in the modern era, this label is seen as derogatory, and is generally avoided.

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47. Comparative studies

Buddhism provides many opportunities for comparative study with a diverse range of subjects.

For example, dependent origination can be considered one of Buddhism's contributions to metaphysics.

Additionally, Buddhism's emphasis on the Middle way not only provides a unique guideline for ethics but has also allowed Buddhism to peacefully coexist with various differing beliefs, customs and institutions in countries where it has resided throughout its history.

Also, its moral and spiritual parallels with other systems of thought—for example, with various tenets of Christianity—have been subjects of close study.

List of Buddhism related topics in comparative studies

- Buddhism and Jainism
- Buddhism and Hinduism
- Buddhism and Christianity
- God in Buddhism (Buddhism, mysticism, and monotheism)
- Buddhism and Eastern teaching (Buddhism and East Asian teaching)
- Buddhism and psychology
- Buddhism and science
- Buddhist ethics (Buddhism and ethics)
- Buddhist philosophy (Buddhism and Western philosophy)
- Buddhism and Thelema[243]

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48. History, Lineage of nuns

Origin of the school

Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, built by Indian emperor Ashoka the Great.

The location where Gautama Buddha **is said** to have attained enlightenment.

One of the most important places of Buddhist pilgrimage.

According **to its own accounts**, the Theravāda school is fundamentally derived from the Vibhajjavāda (or "doctrine of analysis") grouping[5] which was a division of the Sthavira ("Elders") stream. (The Sthavira were in turn a breakaway group from the majority Mahāsāṃghika during the Second Buddhist council.[6])

Theravadin accounts of its own origins mention that it received the teachings that were agreed upon the Third Buddhist Council, around 250 BCE, and these teachings were known as the Vibhajjavada.[7]

The Vibhajjavādins in turn split into four groups: the Mahīśāsaka, Kāśyapīya, Dharmaguptaka, and the Tāmraparnīya.

The Theravada is descended from the Tāmraparnīya, which means "the Sri Lankan lineage." In the 7th century CE, Chinese pilgrims Xuanzang and Yijing refer to the Buddhist schools in Sri Lanka as *Shıngzu൭bɛ* (Ch. 上座部), corresponding to the Sanskrit "Sthavira" and the Pali "Thera."[8][9]

The school has been using the name *Theravada* for itself **in a written form since at least the 4th century**, when the term appears in the *Dipavamsa*.[10]

According to Buddhist scholar A.K. Warder, the Theravada “spread rapidly south from Avanti into Maharastra and Andhra and down to the Chola country (Kanchi), as well as Ceylon.

For some time they maintained themselves in Avanti as well as in their new territories, but gradually they tended to regroup themselves in the south, the Great Vihara (Mahavihara) in Anuradhapura, the capital of Ceylon, becoming the main centre of their tradition, Kanchi a secondary center and the northern regions apparently relinquished to other schools."[11]

According to the Pāli chronicles of the Sinhalese tradition, Buddhism was first brought to Sri Lanka by Arahant Mahinda, who **is believed** to have been the son of the Mauryan emperor Asoka, in the third century BCE, as a part of the *dhammaduta* (missionary) activities of the Asokan era. In Sri Lanka, Arahant Mahinda established the Mahāvihāra Monastery of Anuradhapura.

Over much of the early history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, three subdivisions of Theravāda existed in Sri Lanka, consisting of the monks of the Mahāvihāra, Abhayagiri Vihāra, and the Jetavana Vihāra.[12]

According to A.K. Warder, the Indian Mahīśāsaka sect also established itself in Sri Lanka alongside the Theravāda, into which they were later absorbed.[12] Northern regions of Sri Lanka also seem to have been ceded to sects from India at certain times.[12]

Later history in Sri Lanka

Buddha painting in Dambulla cave temple in Sri Lanka.

Buddhist cave-temple complex was established as a Buddhist Monastery in the 3rd century BC. Caves were converted into a temple in the 1st century BC.[13]

When the Chinese monk Faxian visited the island in the early 5th century CE, he noted 5000 monks at Abhayagiri, 3000 monks at the Mahāvihāra, and 2000 monks at the Cetiyapabbatavihāra.[14]

Over the centuries, the Abhayagiri Theravādins maintained close relations with Indian Buddhists and adopted many new teachings from India.[15]

Including many elements from Mahāyāna teachings, while the Jetavana Theravādins adopted Mahāyāna to a lesser extent.[14][16]

Xuanzang wrote of two major divisions of Theravāda in Sri Lanka, referring to the Abhayagiri tradition as the "Mahāyāna Sthaviras," and the Mahāvihāra tradition as the "Hīnayāna Sthaviras."[17]

Akira Hirakawa notes that the surviving Pāli commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*) of the Mahāvihāra school, when examined closely, also include a number of positions that agree with Mahāyāna teachings.[18]

In the 8th century CE, it is known that both Mahāyāna and the esoteric Vajrayāna form of Buddhism were being practiced in Sri Lanka, and two Indian monks responsible for propagating Esoteric Buddhism in China, Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, visited the island during this time.[19]

Abhayagiri Vihāra appears to have been a center for Theravadin Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna teachings.[20]

Some scholars have held that the rulers of Sri Lanka ensured that Theravāda remained traditional, and that this characteristic contrasts with Indian Buddhism.[21]

However, before the 12th century CE, more rulers of Sri Lanka gave support and patronage to the Abhayagiri Theravādins, and travelers such as Faxian saw the Abhayagiri Theravādins as the main Buddhist tradition in Sri Lanka.[22][23]

This changed in the 12th century CE, when the Mahāvihāra gained the support of King Parakkamabāhu I (1153-1186 CE), and the Abhayagiri and Jetavana Theravāda traditions were completely abolished.[24][25]

The Theravāda monks of these two traditions were then defrocked and given the choice of returning to the laity permanently, or attempting re-ordination under the Mahāvihāra tradition as "novices" (*sāmaṇera*).[25][26]

Regarding the differences between the Theravāda traditions, the *Cūḷavaṁsa* laments, "Despite the vast efforts made in every way by former kings down to the present day, the [bhikkhus] turned away in their demeanor from one another and took delight in all kinds of strife."[27]

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49. Lineage of nuns

A few years after the arrival of Sthavira Mahinda, Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta, who is also believed to be the daughter of Emperor Asoka, came to Sri Lanka.

She started the first nun's order in Sri Lanka, but this order of nuns died out in Sri Lanka in the 11th century and in Burma in the 13th.

In 429 CE, by request of China's emperor, nuns from Anuradhapura were sent to China to establish the Nun's Order. The order was then spread to Korea.

In 1996, 11 selected Sri Lankan nuns were ordained fully as Bhikkhunis by a team of Theravāda monks in concert with a team of Korean Nuns in India. There is disagreement among Theravada vinaya authorities as to whether such ordinations are valid.

In the last few years the head of the Dambulla chapter of the Siyam Nikaya in Sri Lanka has carried out ordination ceremonies for hundreds of nuns.

This has been criticized by other leading figures in the Siyam Nikaya and Amarapura Nikaya, and the governing council of Burmese Buddhism has declared that there can be no valid ordination of nuns in modern times, though some Burmese monks disagree with this.[28]

Ruins of Bagan, an ancient capital of Burma.

There are more than 2,000 Buddhist temples.

During the height of Bagan's power there were some 13,000 temples.[29]

According to Mahavamsa the Sri Lanka chronicle, after the conclusion of the Third Buddhist Council, a missionary was also sent to Suvannabhumi where two monks Sona and Uttara, are said to have proceeded.[30]

Scholar opinions differ as to where exactly this land of Suvannabhumi is located, but Suvannabhumi is believed to be located somewhere in the area which now includes lower Burma, Thailand, Malay Peninsula and Sumatra Island.

Before the 12th century, the areas of Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia were dominated by various Buddhist sects from India, and included the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism.[31][32]

In the 7th century, Yijing noted in his travels that in these areas, all major sects of Indian Buddhism flourished.[31]

Though there are some early accounts that have been interpreted as Theravāda in Burma, the surviving records show that most Burmese Buddhism incorporated Mahāyāna, and used Sanskrit rather than Pali.[32][33][34]

After the decline of Buddhism in India, missions of monks from Sri Lanka gradually converted Burmese Buddhism to Theravāda, and in the next two centuries also brought Theravāda Buddhism to the areas of Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, where it supplanted previous forms of Buddhism.[35]

The Mon and Pyu were among the earliest people to inhabit Burma. Recent archaeological research at a Pyu settlement in the Samon Valley (around 100 km south-east of Bagan) has shown that they had trade links with India from 500-400 BC and with China around 200 BC.[36]

Chinese sources which have been dated to around 240 A.D. mention a Buddhist kingdom by the name of Lin-Yang, which some scholars have identified as the ancient Pyu kingdom of Beikthano[37][38] 300 km north of Yangon.

The oldest surviving Buddhist texts in the Pali language come from Pyu city of Sri Ksetra, the text which is **dated from the mid 5th A.D. to mid 6th A.D.** is written on twenty-leaf manuscript of solid gold.[39]

The Burmese slowly became Theravadan when they came into contact with the Pyu and Mon civilization.

The Thais also slowly became Theravadan as they came into contact with the Mon civilization.

Despite its success in Southeast Asia, Theravada Buddhism in China has generally been limited to areas bordering Theravada countries.

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50. Modern developments

Laykyun Setkyar in the village of Khatakan Taung, near Monywa in Burma. The second tallest statue in the world.[40]

The following modern trends or movements have been identified.[41][42]

Modernism: attempts to adapt to the modern world and adopt some of its ideas; including, among other things

- Green movement
- Syncretism with other Buddhist traditions
- Universal inclusivity
- Reformism: attempts to restore a supposed earlier, ideal state of Buddhism; includes in particular the adoption of Western scholars' theories of original Buddhism (in recent times the "Western scholarly interpretation of Buddhism" is the official Buddhism prevailing in Sri Lanka and Thailand.[43])
- Ultimatism: tendency to concentrate on advanced teachings such as the Four Noble Truths at the expense of more elementary ones
- Neotraditionalism; includes among other things
- Revival of ritualism
- Remythologization
- Insight meditation
- Social action
- Devotional religiosity
- Reaction to Buddhist nationalism
- Renewal of forest monks
- Revival of samatha meditation
- Revival of the Theravada bhikkhuni lineage (not recognized in Thailand)

Buddhist revivalism has also reacted against changes in Buddhism caused by colonialist regimes.

Western colonialists and Christian missionaries deliberately imposed a particular type of Christian monasticism on Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka and colonies in Southeast Asia, restricting monks' activities to individual purification and temple ministries.[44]

Prior to British colonial control, monks in both Sri Lanka and Burma had been responsible for the education of the children of lay people, and had produced large bodies of literature. After

the British takeover, Buddhist temples were strictly administered and were only permitted to use their funds on strictly religious activities.

Christian ministers were given control of the education system and their pay became state funding for missions.[45]

Foreign, especially British, rule had an enervating effect on the sangha.[46]

According to Walpola Rahula, Christian missionaries displaced and appropriated the educational, social, and welfare activities of the monks, and inculcated a permanent shift in views regarding the proper position of monks in society through their institutional influence upon the elite.[46]

Many monks in post-colonial times have been dedicated to undoing this paradigm shift.[47] Movements intending to restore Buddhism's place in society have developed in both Sri Lanka and Burma.[48]

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51. Overview of Philosophy

Painting of Buddha's first sermon depicted at Wat Chedi Liem in Thailand

Theravada promotes the concept of Vibhajjavada (Pali), literally "Teaching of Analysis."

This doctrine **says that insight must come from the aspirant's experience, critical investigation, and reasoning instead of by blind faith; however, the scriptures of the Theravadin tradition also emphasize heeding the advice of the wise, considering such advice**

and evaluation of one's own experiences to be the two tests by which practices should be judged.

In Theravada, the cause of human existence and suffering (*dukkha*) is identified as craving (*tanha*), which carries with it the defilements (*kilesas*).

Those defilements that bind humans to the cycle of rebirth are classified into a set of ten "Fetters," while those defilements that impede concentration (*samadhi*) are presented in a fivefold set called the "Five Hindrances."[49]

The level of defilement can be coarse, medium, and subtle.

It is a phenomenon that frequently arises, remains temporarily and then vanishes.

Theravadins believe defilements are not only harmful to oneself, but also harmful to others. They are the driving force behind all inhumanities a human being can commit.

Theravadins believe these defilements are habits born out of ignorance (*avijja*) that afflict the minds of all unenlightened beings, who cling to them and their influence in their ignorance of the truth.

But in reality, those mental defilements are nothing more than taints that have afflicted the mind, creating suffering and stress.

Unenlightened beings cling to the body, under the assumption that it represents a Self, whereas in reality the body is an impermanent phenomenon formed from the **four basic elements**.

Often characterized by earth, water, fire and air, in the early Buddhist texts these are defined to be abstractions representing the sensorial qualities solidity, fluidity, temperature, and mobility, respectively.[50]

The mental defilements' frequent instigation and manipulation of the mind is believed to have prevented the mind from seeing the true nature of reality.

Unskillful behavior in turn can strengthen the defilements, but following the Noble Eightfold Path can weaken or eradicate them.

Unenlightened beings are also believed to experience the world through their imperfect six sense doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, tactile sense, and mind) and use the mind, clouded by defilements, to form their own interpretation, perception and conclusion.[51]

In such a condition the perception or conclusion made will be based on that being's own illusion of reality.[52]

In the state of *jhana* (deep concentration), the five physical sense doors will fade, the mental defilements will be suppressed, and wholesome mental traits will become strengthened.

The mind can then be used to investigate and gain insight into the true nature of reality.

There are three stages of defilements.

During the stage of passivity the defilements lie dormant at the base of the mental continuum as latent tendencies (*anusaya*), but through the impact of sensory stimulus, they will manifest (*pariyutthana*) themselves at the surface of consciousness in the form of unwholesome thoughts, emotions, and volitions.

If they gather additional strength, the defilements will reach the dangerous stage of transgression (*vitikkama*), which will then involve physical or vocal actions.

Laotian painting depicts Ananda at the First Buddhist Council

In order to be free from suffering and stress, Theravadins believe that the defilements need to be permanently uprooted.

Initially they are restrained through mindfulness to prevent them from taking over mental and bodily action.

They are then uprooted through internal investigation, analysis, experience and understanding of their true nature by using *jhana*.

This process needs to be repeated for each and every defilement. The practice will then lead the meditator to realize the Four Noble Truths, Enlightenment, and Nirvana (Sanskrit: निर्वाण, *Nirvāṇa*; Pali: निब्बान, *Nibbāna*; Thai: นิพพาน, *N*ิ*pphaan*).

Nirvana is the ultimate goal of Theravadins, and is said to be a state of perfect bliss wherein the person is liberated from the repeated cycle of birth, illness, aging and death.

Theravadins believe that every individual is personally responsible for their own self-awakening and liberation, as they are the ones that were responsible for their own actions and consequences (Sanskrit: *karma*; Pali: *kamma*). Simply learning or believing in the true nature of reality as expounded by the Buddha is not enough, the awakening can only be achieved through direct experience and personal realization. An individual will have to follow and practice the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha to discover the reality for themselves.

In Theravada belief, Buddhas, gods or deities are incapable of giving a human being the awakening or lifting them from the state of repeated cycle of birth, illness, aging and death (*samsara*).

For Theravadins, Buddha is only a Teacher of the Noble Eightfold Path, while gods or deities are still subject to anger, jealousy, hatred, vengeance, craving, greed, delusion, and death.

It is believed that some people who practice with earnestness and zeal can attain Nirvana within a single lifetime, as did many of the first few generations of Buddha's disciples.

For others, the process may take multiple lifetimes, with the individual reaching higher and higher states of realization.

One who has attained Nirvana is called an *Arahant*.

Since Lord Buddha is believed to have possessed the ultimate knowledge on guiding a person through the process of enlightenment, Theravadins believe that disciples of a Buddha attain enlightenment the most quickly.

According to the early scriptures, the Nirvana attained by *Arahants* is identical to that attained by the Buddha himself, as there is only one type of Nirvana.[53]

Buddha was superior to *Arahants* because the Buddha had discovered the path all by himself, and has taught it to others (i,e., metaphorically turning the wheel of Dhamma). *Arahants*, on the other hand, attained Nirvana due in part to the Buddha's teachings. Theravadins revere the Buddha as a single supremely gifted person but do recognize the existence of other such Buddhas in the distant past and future.

Maitreya (Pali: Metteyya), for example, is mentioned very briefly in the Pali Canon as a Buddha who will come in the distant future.

Traditionally Theravadins can either have the conviction (or "faith") in the Buddha's teaching and practice the minor precepts in the hope of gaining some minor benefits or they can investigate and verify by direct experience the truth of the Buddha's teaching by practicing the *jhana* which is part of the Noble Eightfold Path for their own Enlightenment.

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52. Fundamentals of Theravada, Cause and Effect, The Four Noble Truths, The Three Characteristics, The Three Noble Disciplines

The Great Buddha of Thailand in the Wat Muang Monastery in Ang Thong province. The tallest statue in Thailand, and the ninth tallest in the world.

First and foremost, the Theravada philosophy is a continuous analytical process of life, not a mere set of ethics and rituals.

The ultimate theory of Theravada uses the Four Noble Truths, also known as the Four Sublime Truths.

In the simplest form these can be described as the problem, the cause, the

Cause and Effect

The Concept of Cause and Effect, or Causality, is a key concept in Theravada, and indeed, in Buddhism as a whole.

This concept is expressed in several ways, including the Four Noble Truths, and most importantly, the Paticca-Samuppāda (dependent co-arising).

Abhidhamma in Theravada canon differentiate between a root cause (Hetu) and facilitating cause (pacca).

By the combined interaction of both these, an effect is brought about.

On top of this view, a logic is built and elaborated whose most supple form can be seen in the Paticca Samuppāda.

This concept is then used to question the nature of suffering and to elucidate the way out of it, as expressed in the Four Noble Truths. It is also employed in several suttas to refute several philosophies including creationism.

The Four Noble Truths

Main article: Four Noble Truths

A formal description of the Four Noble Truths follows:

1. *Dukkha* (suffering): This can be somewhat broadly classified into three categories.

   Inherent suffering, or the suffering one undergoes in all the worldly activities,

   What one suffers in day-to-day life: birth, aging, diseases, death, sadness, etc.

   In short, all that one feels from separating from "loving" attachments and/or associating with "hating" attachments is encompassed into the term.

2. The second class of suffering, called *Suffering due to Change*, implies that things suffer due to attaching themselves to amomentary state which is held to be "good"; when that state is changed, things are subjected to suffering.

3. The third, termed *Sankhara Dukkha*, is the most subtle.

   Beings suffer simply by not realizing that they are mere aggregates with no definite, unchanging identity.

Dukkha Samudaya (cause of suffering): Craving, which leads to Attachment and Bondage, is the cause of suffering. Formally, this is termed *Tanha*.

It can be classified into three instinctive drives.

1. *Kama Tanha* is the Craving for any pleasurable sense object (which involves sight, sound, touch, taste, smell and mental perceptives).

2. *Bhava Tanha* is the Craving for attachment to an ongoing process, which appears in various forms, including the longing for existence.

3. *Vibhava Tanha* is the Craving for detachment from a process, which includes non-existence and causes the longing for self-annihilation.

Dukkha Nirodha (cessation of suffering): One cannot possibly adjust the whole world to one's taste in order to eliminate suffering and hope that it will remain so forever.

This would violate the chief principle of Change.

Instead, one adjusts one's own mind through detachment so that the Change, of whatever nature, has no effect on one's peace of mind.

Briefly stated, the third Noble Truth implies that elimination of the cause (craving) eliminates the result (suffering).

This is inferred in the scriptural quote by The Buddha, 'Whatever may result from a cause, shall be eliminated by the elimination of the cause'.

Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada (pathway to freedom from suffering): This is the Noble Eightfold Pathway towards freedom or Nirvana.

The path can roughly be rendered into English as right view, right intention, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

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The Three Characteristics

Wat Chaiwatthanaram temple in the old city of Ayutthaya in Thailand.

Main article: Three marks of existence

These are the three characteristics of all conditioned phenomena in Theravada thought.

Anicca (impermanence): All conditioned phenomena are subject to change, including physical characteristics, qualities, assumptions, theories, knowledge, etc.

Nothing is permanent, because, for something to be permanent, there has to be an unchanging cause behind it.

Since all causes are recursively bound together, there can be no ultimate unchanging cause.

Dukkha (suffering): Craving causes suffering, since what is craved is transitory, changing, and perishing.

The craving for impermanent things causes disappointment and sorrow.

There is a tendency to label practically everything in the world, as either "good," "comfortable" or "satisfying;" or "bad", "uncomfortable," and "unsatisfying."

Labeling things in terms of like and dislike creates suffering.

If one succeeds in giving up the tendency to label things and free himself from the instincts that drive him towards attaining what he himself labels collectively as "liking," he attains the ultimate freedom.

The problem, the cause, the solution and the implementation, all of these are within oneself, not outside.

Anatta (not-self): The concept of *Anatta* can be explained as the lack of a fixed, unchanging identity; there is no permanent, essential Self.

A living being is a composite of the five aggregates (*khandhas*), which is the physical forms (*rupa*), feelings or sensations (*vedana*), perception (*sanna*), mental formations (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*vinnana*), none of which can be identified as one's Self.

From the moment of conception, all entities (including all living beings) are subject to a process of continuous change.

A practitioner should, on the other hand, develop and refine his or her mind to a state so as to see through this phenomenon.

Direct realization of these three characteristics leads to freedom from worldly bonds and attachments, thus leading to the state where one is completely, ultimately free, the state which is termed Nirvana, which literally means "to glow" (as in a lamp).[54]

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The Three Noble Disciplines

The pathway towards Nirvana, or the Noble Eightfold Pathway is sometimes stated in a more concise manner, known as the Three Noble Disciplines.,[55][56]

These are known as discipline (*sīla*), training of mind (*samādhi*)[57] and wisdom (*paꙮꙮā*).

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53. Meditation

Thai monk in meditation

Theravada Buddhist meditation practices fall into two broad categories: *samatha*, and *vipassanā*.[58]

Some common terms encountered in the Theravada practice of meditation are:

- Anapanasati
- Metta
- Kammaṭṭhāna
- Samatha
- Vipassana

Meditation (Pali: *Bhavana*) means the positive reinforcement of one's mind.

Broadly categorized into Samatha and Vipassana, Meditation is the key tool implemented in attaining jhana.

Samatha literally means "to make skillful," and has other renderings also, among which are "tranquilizing, calming," "visualizing," and "achieving."

Vipassana means "insight" or "abstract understanding."

In this context, Samatha Meditation makes a person skillful in concentration of mind.

Once the mind is sufficiently concentrated, Vipassana allows one to see through the veil of ignorance.

Samatha meditation

Thai Forest Tradition meditation master, the Venerable Ajahn Chah with his resident Sangha at Wat Nong Pah Pong monastery in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

Main article: Samatha

The samatha meditation in Theravada is usually involved with the concepts of Kammaṭṭhāna which literally stands for "place of work"; in this context, it is the "place" or object of concentration (Pāli: *Ārammana*) where the mind is at work.

In samatha meditation, the mind is set at work concentrated on one particular entity.

There are forty (40) such classic objects (entities) used in samatha meditation, which are termed Kammaṭṭhāna.

By acquiring a Kammaṭṭhāna and practising samatha meditation, one would be able to attain certain elevated states of awareness and skill of the mind called Jhana.

Practising samatha has samadhi (concentration) as its ultimate goal.

It should be noted that samatha is not a method that is unique to Buddhism.

In the *sutta*s it is said to be implemented in other contemporary religions in India at the time of Buddha.

In fact, the first teachers of Siddhartha, before they attained the state of awakening (Pāli: *Bodhi*), are said to have been quite skillful in samatha (although the term had not been coined yet).

In the Pali Canon discourses, the Buddha frequently instructs his disciples to practice samadhi (concentration) in order to establish and develop jhana (full concentration).

Jhana is the instrument used by the Buddha himself to penetrate the true nature of phenomena (through investigation and direct experience) and to reach Enlightenment.[59] Right Concentration (*samma-samadhi*) is one of the elements in the Noble Eightfold Path.

Samadhi can be developed from mindfulness developed with kammaṭṭhāna such as concentration on breathing (*anapanasati*), from visual objects (*kasina*), and repetition of phrases.

The traditional list contains 40 objects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) to be used for Samatha Meditation.

Every object has a specific goal; for example, meditation on the parts of the body (*kayanupassana* or *kayagathasathi*) will result in a lessening of attachment to our own bodies and those of others, resulting in a reduction of sensual desires.

Mettā (loving kindness) generates the feelings of goodwill and happiness toward ourselves and other beings; metta practice serves as an antidote to ill-will, wrath and fear.

Vipassanā meditation

Vipassanā on the other hand, is concerned with seeing through the veil of ignorance (Pāli: *Avijjā*) and so, is unique to Buddhism. It can be aided by a practised mind (with samatha) but samatha is not necessary to practice vipassanā.

Chiefly, vipassanā is involved in breaking the ten Fetters that bind one to the ever-iterating cycle of birth and death i.e. samsara.

Some teachers do not distinguish between the two methods, rather prescribing meditation methods that develop both concentration and insight.

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Levels of attainment

Main article: Four stages of enlightenment

Through practice, (Theravadan) practitioners can achieve four stages of enlightenment:[60]

Stream-Enterers: Those who have destroyed the first three fetters (false view of *Self*, doubt, and clinging to rites and rituals);

Once-Returners: Those who have destroyed the first three fetters and have lessened the fetters of lust and hatred;

Non-Returners: Those who have destroyed the five lower fetters, which bind beings to the world of the senses;[61]

Arahants: Those who have reached Enlightenment—realized Nirvana, and have reached the quality of deathlessness—are free from all the fermentations of defilement. Their ignorance, craving and attachments have ended.[61]

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54. Scriptures

One of the stone inscriptions of the World's largest book, consisting of 729 large marble tablets with the Pali Canon inscribed on them, at Kuthodaw Pagoda in Mandalay, Burma

The Theravada school upholds the Pali Canon or Tipitaka as the most authoritative collection of texts on the teachings of Gautama Buddha.

The Sutta and Vinaya portion of the Tipitaka shows considerable overlap in content to the Agamas, the parallel collections used by non-Theravada schools in India which are preserved in Chinese and partially in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Tibetan, and the various non-Theravada Vinayas.

> **Sūtra** (Sanskrit: सूत्र, Pāli: *sutta*, Ardhamagadhi: *sūya*) is an aphorism (or line, rule, formula) or a collection of such aphorisms in the form of a manual, or, more broadly, a text in Hinduism or Buddhism. Literally it means a thread or line that holds things together and is derived from the verbal root *siv-*, meaning *to sew*[1] (these words, including Latin *suere* and English *to sew*, all ultimately deriving from PIE **siH-/syuH-* 'to sew'), as does the medical term "suture."
>
> In Hinduism, *sutra* denotes a distinct type of literary composition, based on short aphoristic statements, generally using various technical terms. This literary form was designed for concision, as the texts were intended to be memorized by students in some of the formal methods of scriptural and scientific study (Sanskrit: *svādhyāya*). Since each line is highly condensed, another literary form arose in which commentaries (Sanskrit: *bhāṣya*) on the *sutras* were added, to clarify and explain them.[2]
>
> In Brahmin lineage, each family is supposed to have one Gotra, and one Sutra, meaning that a certain Veda (Śruti) is treasured by this family in way of learning by heart.

On this basis, both these sets of texts are generally believed to be the oldest and most authoritative texts on Buddhism by scholars.

It is also believed that much of the Pali Canon, which is still used by Theravāda communities, was transmitted to Sri Lanka during the reign of Asoka.

After being orally transmitted (as was the custom in those days for religious texts) for some centuries, were finally committed to writing in the last century BC, at what the Theravada usually reckons as the fourth council, in Sri Lanka.

Theravada is one of the first Buddhist schools to commit the whole complete set of its Buddhist canon into writing.[62]

Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically "Theravadan," but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings.

According to Peter Harvey:

The Theravadans, then, may have *added* texts to the Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period.[63]

The Pali Tipitaka consists of three parts: the Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka.

Of these, the Abhidhamma Pitaka is believed to be a later addition to the first two pitakas, which, in the opinion of many scholars, were the only two pitakas at the time of the First Buddhist Council.

The Pali Abhidhamma was not recognized outside the Theravada school.

In the 4th or 5th century Buddhaghosa Thera wrote the first Pali commentaries to much of the Tipitaka (which were based on much older manuscripts, mostly in old Sinhalese), and after him many other monks wrote various commentaries, which have become part of the Theravada heritage.

These texts, however, do not enjoy the same authority as the Tipitaka does.

The Tipitaka is composed of 45 volumes in the Thai edition, 40 in the Burmese and 58 in the Sinhalese, and a full set of the Tipitaka is usually kept in its own (medium-sized) cupboard.

The commentaries, together with the Abhidhamma, define the specific Theravada heritage. Related versions of the Sutta Pitaka and Vinaya Pitaka were common to all the early Buddhist schools, and therefore do not define only Theravada, but also the other early Buddhist schools, and perhaps the teaching of Gautama Buddha himself.

Theravada Buddhists consider much of what is found in the Chinese and Tibetan scriptural collections to be apocryphal, meaning that they are not authentic words of the Buddha.[64]

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55. Lay and monastic life, Ordination, Lay devote

Young Burmese monk

Traditionally, Theravada Buddhism has observed a distinction between the practices suitable for a lay person and the practices undertaken by ordained monks (in ancient times, there was a separate body of practices for nuns).

While the possibility of significant attainment by laymen is not entirely disregarded by the Theravada, it generally occupies a position of less prominence than in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, with monastic life being hailed as a superior method of achieving Nirvana.[65]

The view that Theravada, unlike other Buddhist schools, is primarily a monastic tradition has, however, been disputed.[66]

This distinction between ordained monks and laypeople — as well as the distinction between those practices advocated by the Pali Canon, and the folk religious elements embraced by many monks — have motivated some scholars to consider Theravada Buddhism to be composed of multiple separate traditions, overlapping though still distinct. Most prominently, the anthropologist Melford Spiro in his work *Buddhism and Society* separated Burmese Theravada into three groups: *Apotropaic Buddhism* (concerned with providing protection from evil spirits), *Kammatic Buddhism* (concerned with making merit for a future birth), and *Nibbanic Buddhism* (concerned with attaining the liberation of Nirvana, as described in the Tipitaka).

He stresses that all three are firmly rooted in the Pali Canon.

These categories are not accepted by all scholars, and are usually considered non-exclusive by those who employ them.

The role of lay people has traditionally been primarily occupied with activities that are commonly termed *merit making* (falling under Spiro's category of kammatic Buddhism). Merit making activities include offering food and other basic necessities to monks, making donations to temples and monasteries, burning incense or lighting candles before images of the Buddha, and chanting protective or merit-making verses from the Pali Canon.

Some lay practitioners have always chosen to take a more active role in religious affairs, while still maintaining their lay status.

Dedicated lay men and women sometimes act as trustees or custodians for their temples, taking part in the financial planning and management of the temple.

Others may volunteer significant time in tending to the mundane needs of local monks (by cooking, cleaning, maintaining temple facilities, etc.).

Lay activities have traditionally not extended to study of the Pali scriptures, nor the practice of meditation, though in the 20th Century these areas have become more accessible to the lay community, especially in Thailand.

Thai monks on pilgrimage in their orange robes.

A number of senior monastics in the Thai Forest Tradition, including Ajahn Buddhadasa, Luang Ta Maha Bua, Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo, Ajahn Pasanno, and Ajahn Jayasaro, have begun teaching meditation retreats outside of the monastery for lay disciples.

Ajahn Chah, a disciple of Ajahn Mun, set up a monastic lineage called Cittaviveka with his disciple Ajahn Sumedho, at Chithurst in West Sussex, England.

Ajahn Sumedho later founded the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hertfordshire, which has a retreat center specifically for lay retreats.

Sumedho extended this to Harnham in Northumberland as Aruna Ratanagiri under the present guidance of Ajahn Munindo, another disciple of Ajahn Chah.

Nirvana, the highest goal of Theravada Buddhism, is attained through study and the practice of morality, meditation and wisdom (sila, samadhi, panna).

The goal of Nirvana (and its associated techniques) have traditionally been seen as the domain of the fully ordained monastic, whereas many of the same techniques can be used by laypeople to generate happiness in their lives, without focusing on Nirvana.

Monastic roles in the Theravada can be broadly described as being split between the role of the (often urban) scholar monk and the (often rural or forest) meditation monk.

Both types of monks serve their communities as spiritual teachers and officiants by presiding over spiritual ceremonies and providing instruction in basic Buddhist morality and teachings.

Scholar monks undertake the path of studying and preserving the Pali literature of the Theravada.

They may devote little time to the practice of meditation, but may attain great respect and renown by becoming masters of a particular section of the Pali Canon or its commentaries. Masters of the Abhidhamma, called Abhidhammika, are particularly respected in the scholastic tradition.

Meditation monks, often called forest monks because of their association with certain wilderness-dwelling traditions, are considered to be specialists in meditation.

While some forest monks may undertake significant study of the Pali Canon, in general meditation monks are expected to learn primarily from their meditation experiences and personal teachers, and may not know more of the Tipitaka than is necessary to participate in liturgical life and to provide a foundation for fundamental Buddhist teachings.

More so than the scholastic tradition, the meditation tradition is associated with the attainment of certain supernatural powers described in both Pali sources and folk tradition. These powers include the attainment of Nirvana, mind-reading, supernatural power over material objects and their own material bodies, seeing and conversing with gods and beings living in hell, and remembering their past lives.

These powers are called abhiꩻa. Sometimes the remain of the cremated bone fragment of an accomplished forest monk is believed able to transform itself into crystal-like relics (sārira-dhātu).

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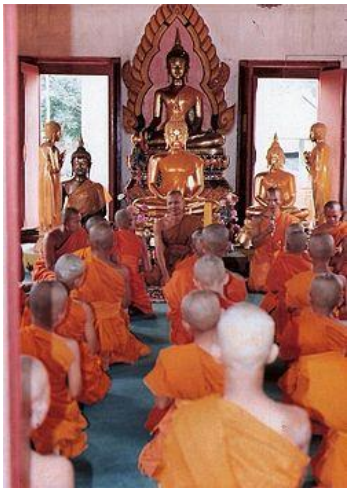
Ordination



Candidate for the Buddhist priesthood is ordaining as a monk in Thailand

The minimum age for ordaining as a Buddhist monk is 20 years, reckoned from conception. However, boys under that age are allowed to ordain as novices (samanera), performing a ceremony such as *Shinbyu* in Burma.

Novices shave their heads, wear the yellow robes, and observe ten basic precepts.

Although no specific minimum age for novices is mentioned in the scriptures, traditionally boys as young as seven are accepted.

This tradition follows the story of the Lord Buddha's son, Rahula, who was allowed to become a novice at the age of seven. Monks follow 227 rules of discipline, while nuns follow 311 rules.

In most Theravada countries, it is a common practice for young men to ordain as monks for a fixed period of time.

In Thailand and Burma, young men typically ordain for the 3 month Rain Retreat (vassa), though shorter or longer periods of ordination are not rare.

Traditionally, temporary ordination was even more flexible among Laotians.

Once they had undergone their initial ordination as young men, Laotian men were permitted to temporarily ordain again at any time, though married men were expected to seek their wife's permission.

Throughout Southeast Asia, there is little stigma attached to leaving the monastic life. Monks regularly leave the robes after acquiring an education, or when compelled by family obligations or ill health.

Ordaining as a monk, even for a short period, is seen as having many virtues.

In many Southeast Asian cultures, it is seen as a means for a young man to "repay" his parents for their work and effort in raising him, because the merit from his ordination accrues to them as well.

Thai men who have ordained as a monk may be seen as more fit husbands by Thai women, who refer to men who have served as monks with a colloquial term meaning "ripe" to indicate that they are more mature and ready for marriage.

Particularly in rural areas, temporary ordination of boys and young men traditionally gave peasant boys an opportunity to gain an education in temple schools without committing to a permanent monastic life.

In Sri Lanka, temporary ordination is not practiced, and a monk leaving the order is frowned upon.

The continuing influence of the caste system in Sri Lanka may play a role in the taboo against temporary ordination and leaving the monkhood.

Though Sri Lankan monastic nikayas are often organized along caste lines, men who ordain as monks temporarily pass outside of the conventional caste system, and as such during their time as monks may act (or be treated) in a way that would not be in line with the expected duties and privileges of their caste.

Men and women born in western countries, who become Buddhists as adults, wish to become monks or nuns.

It is possible, and one can live as a monk or nun in the country they were born in, seek monks or nuns which has gathered in a different western country or move to a monastery in countries like Sri Lanka or Thailand.

It is seen as being easier to live a life as a monk or nun in countries where people generally live by the culture of Buddhism, since it is difficult to live by the rules of a monk or a nun in a western country.

For instance; a Theravada monk or nun is not allowed to work, handle money, listen to music, cook and so on, which are extremely difficult rules to live by in cultures which do not embrace Buddhism.

The recommendation is usually that to be able to live fully as a monk or nun you should move to a monastery in a country with a culture that embraces Theravada Buddhism.

Some of the more well-known Theravadan monks are: Ajahn Mun Bhuridatta, Ajahn Chah, Ledi Sayadaw, Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo, Ajahn Sumedho, Ajahn Brahm, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Buddhadasa, Mahasi Sayadaw, Nyanaponika Thera, Preah Maha Ghosananda, Sayadaw U Pandita, Ajahn Amaro, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Walpola Rahula, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, and Bhante Yogavacara Rahula.

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Lay devote

The ceremony walks with lighted candles in hand around a temple on Vesakha Puja in Uttaradit, Thailand.

In Pali the word for a male lay devotee is Upasaka.

Upasika is its female equivalent.

One of the duties of the lay followers, as taught by the Buddha, is to look after the needs of the monk/nuns.

They are to see that the monk/nuns do not suffer from lack of the four requisites: food, clothing, shelter and medicine.

As neither monks nor nuns are allowed to have an occupation, they depend entirely on the laity for their sustenance.

In return for this charity, they are expected to lead exemplary lives.

In Burma and Thailand, the monastery was and is still regarded as a seat of learning.

In fact today about half of the primary schools in Thailand are located in monasteries. Religious rituals and ceremonies held in a monastery are always accompanied by social activities.

In times of crisis, it is to the monks that people bring their problems for counsel.

Traditionally, a ranking monk will deliver a sermon four times a month: when the moon waxes and wanes and the day before the new and full moons.

The laity also have a chance to learn meditation from the monks during these times.

It is also possible for a lay disciple to become enlightened. As Bhikkhu Bodhi notes, "The Suttas and commentaries do record a few cases of lay disciples attaining the final goal of Nirvana. However, such disciples either attain Arahantship on the brink of death or enter the monastic order soon after their attainment. They do not continue to dwell at home as Arahant householders, for dwelling at home is incompatible with the state of one who has severed all craving."[68]

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56. Monastic practices

A Buddhist Monk chants evening prayers inside a monastery located near the town of Kantharalak, Thailand.

The practices usually vary in different sub-schools and monasteries within Theravada.

But in the most orthodox forest monastery, the monk usually models his practice and lifestyle on that of the Buddha and his first generation of disciples by living close to nature in forest, mountains and caves.

Forest monasteries still keep alive the ancient traditions through following the Buddhist monastic code of discipline in all its detail and developing meditation in secluded forests.

In a typical daily routine at the monastery during the 3 month vassa period, the monk will wake up before dawn and will begin the day with group chanting and meditation.

At dawn the monks will go out to surrounding villages bare-footed on alms-round and will have the only meal of the day before noon by eating from the bowl by hand.

Most of the time is spent on Dhamma study and meditation.

Sometimes the abbot or a senior monk will give a Dhamma talk to the visitors.

Laity who stay at the monastery will have to abide by the traditional eight Buddhist precepts.

The life of the monk or nun in a community is much more complex than the life of the forest monk.

In the Buddhist society of Sri Lanka, most monks spend hours every day in taking care of the needs of lay people such as preaching *bana,*[67] accepting alms, officiating funerals, teaching *dhamma* to adults and children in addition to providing social services to the community.

After the end of the Vassa period, many of the monks will go out far away from the monastery to find a remote place (usually in the forest) where they can hang their umbrella tents and where it is suitable for the work of self-development.

When they go wandering, they walk barefoot, and go wherever they feel inclined.

Only those requisites which are necessary will be carried along.

These generally consist of the bowl, the three robes, a bathing cloth, **an umbrella** tent, a mosquito net, a kettle of water, a water filter, razor, sandals, some small candles, and a candle lantern.

The monks do not fix their times for walking and sitting meditation, for as soon as they are free they just start doing it; nor do they determine for how long they will go on to meditate. Some of them sometimes walk from dusk to dawn whereas at other times they may walk from between two to seven hours.

Some may decide to fast for days or stay at dangerous places where ferocious animals live in order to aid their meditation.

Those monks who have been able to achieve a high level of attainment will be able to guide the junior monks and lay Buddhists toward the four degrees of spiritual attainment.

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57. Influences

The Dharmacakra flag, symbol of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand.

According to the linguist Zacharias P. Thundy the word "Theravada" may have been Hellenized into "Therapeutae," to name a coenobitic order near Alexandria described around the 1st century CE.

The similarities between the Therapeutae and Buddhist monasticism, combined with Indian evidence of Buddhist missionary activity to the Mediterranean around 250 BC (the Edicts of Asoka), have been pointed out.

The Therapeutae would have been the descendants of Asoka's emissaries to the West, and would have influenced the early formation of Christianity.[69]

However, the Macmillan *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*[70] states that theories of influences of Buddhism on early Christianity are without historical foundation.

Thundy's speculation about the origin of "Therapeutae" seems improbable, as cognates of this term (i.e. "Therapeuo" and "Therapon") are used by Thucydides[71] and Homer.[72]

One must question how much Buddhist influence there might have been in the sect which Philo notes,(looked)" upon the seventh day as one of perfect holiness and a most complete festival, have thought it worthy of a most especial honour,"("De Vita Contemplativa," IV, 36). Nor did these keepers of the seventh-day Sabbath neglect Passover, "

(84) Then they sing hymns which have been composed in honour of God in many metres and tunes, at one time all singing together, and at another moving their hands and dancing in corresponding harmony, and uttering in an inspired manner songs of thanksgiving, and at another time regular odes, and performing all necessary strophes and antistrophes.

(85) Then, when each chorus of the men and each chorus of the women has feasted separately by itself, like persons in the bacchanalian revels, drinking the pure wine of the love of God, they join together, and the two become one chorus, an imitation of that one which, in old time, was established by the Red Sea, on account of the wondrous works which were displayed there;

(86) for, by the commandment of God, the sea became to one party the cause of safety, and to the other that of utter destruction; for it being burst asunder, and dragged back by a violent reflux, and being built up on each side as if there were a solid wall, the space in the midst was widened, and cut into a level and dry road, along which the people passed over to the opposite land, being conducted onwards to higher ground; then, when the sea returned and ran back to its former channel, and was poured out from both sides, on what had just before been dry ground, those of the enemy who pursued were overwhelmed and perished. (87) When the Israelites saw and experienced this great miracle, which was an event beyond all description, beyond all imagination, and beyond all hope, both men and women together, under the influence of divine inspiration, becoming all one chorus, sang hymns of thanksgiving to God the Saviour, Moses the prophet leading the men, and Miriam the prophetess leading the women." (Vita, XI 84-87).

58. Monastic orders within Theravada

Thai monks blessing the King of Thailand in Wat Nong Wong, Amphoe Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Thailand.

Theravada monks typically belong to a particular *nikaya*, variously referred to as monastic orders or fraternities.

These different orders do not typically develop separate doctrines, but may differ in the manner in which they observe monastic rules.

These monastic orders represent lineages of ordination, typically tracing their origin to a particular group of monks that established a new ordination tradition within a particular country or geographic area.

In Sri Lanka caste plays a major role in the division into nikayas.

Some Theravada Buddhist countries appoint or elect a sangharaja, or Supreme Patriarch of the Sangha, as the highest ranking or seniormost monk in a particular area, or from a particular nikaya.

The demise of monarchies has resulted in the suspension of these posts in some countries, but patriarchs have continued to be appointed in Thailand.

Burma and Cambodia ended the practice of appointing a sangharaja for some time, but the position was later restored, though in Cambodia it lapsed again.

In Brahmin lineage, each family is supposed to have one Gotra, and one Sutra, meaning that a certain Veda (Śruti) is treasured by this family in way of learning by heart.

The Pali form of the word, **sutta** is used exclusively to refer to the scriptures of the early Pali Canon, the only texts recognized by Theravada Buddhism as canonical.

In the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism, the expression *Middle Way* is used by the Buddha in his first discourse (the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) to describe the Noble Eightfold Path as a path between the extremes of austerities and sensual indulgence.
Later Pali literature has also used the phrase *Middle Way* to refer to the Buddha's teaching of dependent origination as a view between the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism.

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59. Noble Eightfold Path HOME

The term ***Middle Way*** was used in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the first teaching that the Buddha delivered after his awakening.[c] In this sutta the Buddha describes the middle way as a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. This, according to him, was the path of wisdom.

Monks, these two extremes ought not to be practiced by one who has gone forth from the household life. (What are the two? *The two are the extremes of sensual indulgence and self mortification.*) There is addiction to indulgence of sense-pleasures, which is low, coarse, the way of ordinary people, unworthy, and unprofitable; and there is addiction to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable.

Avoiding both these extremes, the Tathagata (the Perfect One) has realized the Middle Path; it gives vision, gives knowledge, and leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment and to Nibbana. And what is that Middle Path realized by the Tathagata...? **It is the Noble Eightfold path, and nothing else, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.**[3]

According to the scriptural account, when the Buddha delivered the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, he was addressing five ascetics with whom he had previously practiced severe austerities.[d] Thus, it is this personal context as well as the broader context of Indian shramanic practices that gives particular relevancy to the caveat against the extreme (Pali: *antā*) of self-mortification (Pali: *atta-kilamatha*).

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60. Dependent Origination

Dependent Origination (Pratītyasamutpāda) describes the existence of objects and phenomena as the result of causes. When one cause changes or disappears, the resulting object or phenomena will also change or disappear, as will the objects or phenomena depending on the changing object or phenomena. Thus, there is nothing with an eternal self or atman, only mutually dependent origination and existence.
But the absence of an eternal atman does not mean there is *no-thing* at all. Early Buddhism adheres to a realistic approach which does not deny existence as such, but denies the existence of eternal and independent substances. This view is the *Middle Way* between *eternalism* and *annihilationism*: The understanding that sees a 'person' as subsisting in the causal connectedness of dependent arising is often presented in Buddhist thought as 'the middle' (*madhyama/majjhima*) between the views of 'eternalism' (*śaśvata-/sassata-vāda*) and 'annihilationism' (*uccheda-vāda*).[4][e]

The Four Noble Truths

Dependent origination can also be applied to the concept of suffering, and takes the form of the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha*: There is suffering. Suffering is an intrinsic part of life prior to awakening, also experienced as dissatisfaction, discontent, unhappiness, impermanence.
2. *Samudaya*: There is a cause of suffering, which is **attachment or desire** (*tanha*).
3. *Nirodha*: There is a way out of suffering, which is to ***eliminate*** **attachment and desire**.
4. *Magga*: The path that leads out of suffering is called the Noble Eightfold Path.

Pratītyasamutpāda

The doctrine of **dependent origination** or **dependent arising** (from Sanskrit: प्रतीत्यसमुत्पाद, *pratītyasamutpāda*; Pali: *paticcasamuppāda*; Tibetan: རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ་, Wylie: *rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*; Chinese: 緣起; pinyin: *yuánqǐ*) is one of the principal teachings of the Buddha and concerns the interdependence and mutual conditioning of phenomena.
Pratītyasamutpāda is the fundamental philosophical doctrine in Buddhism which accounts for and explains other central topics of concern such as rebirth, *samsara*, suffering, liberation and emptiness.

Meaning of Pratītyasamutpāda

Pratītyasamutpāda explains the existence of objects and phenomena as being due to systems of causes and effects. It has a general and a specific application, namely the general principle of interdependent causation and its application in the twelve nidanas.

Interdependent causation

The general or universal definition of *pratityasamutpada* which is emphasised in Mahayana Buddhism (particularly the Hua Yen school) states that all phenomena are arising together in a mutually **interdependent web** of cause and effect.[a][b][c][d] When one cause changes or disappears, the resulting object or phenomenon will also change or disappear, as will the objects or phenomena depending on the changing object or phenomenon.

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61. The Twelve Nidanas

The Twelve Nidanas show the causal relations between the psychophysical phenomena that sustain dukkha, and the possibility to revert this chain, leading to liberation.[3][e]

Main article: Twelve Nidanas

This twelve-factor formula is the most familiar presentation, though a number of early sutras introduce lesser-known variants which make it clear that the sequence of factors should not be regarded as a linear causal process in which each preceding factor gives rise to its successor through a simple reaction.

The relationship among factors is always complex, involving several strands of conditioning.[11] For example, whenever there is ignorance, craving and clinging invariably follow, and craving and clinging themselves indicate ignorance.[12]

The thrust of the formula is such that when certain conditions are present, they give rise to subsequent conditions, which in turn give rise to other conditions and the cyclical nature of life in Samsara can be seen. This is graphically illustrated in the Bhavacakra (wheel of life).The Twelve-fold Chain

Cause	Effect	Comments[4]
1. ***Ignorance*** - (Avijjā)	*Fabrications (volitional tendencies)* - (Saṅkhāra)	Not knowing suffering, not knowing the origination of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering:

		This is called ignorance.
2. *Fabrications (volitional fabrications)* - (Saṅkhāra)	*Consciousness* - (Viꣳꣳāṇa)	These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.
3. *Consciousness* - (Viꣳꣳāṇa)	*Name-and-form* - (Nāmarūpa)	These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.[5] As seen earlier,[6] consciousness and the organ cannot function without each other.
4. *Name-and-form* - (Nāmarūpa)	*Six sense media* - (Salāyatana)	Feeling,[d] perception,[e] intention,[f] contact, and attention:[g] This is called name. The four great elements,[h] and the body dependent on the four great elements: This is called form.
5. *Six sense media* - (Salāyatana)	*Contact*[6] - (Phassa)	The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind are the six sense media.
6. *Contact* - (Phassa)	*Feeling* - (Vedanā)	The coming together of the object, the sense medium and the consciousness of that sense medium[i] is called *contact*.[j]
7. *Feeling (Sensation)* - (Vedanā)	*Craving* - (Taṇhā)	Feeling or sensations are of six forms: vision, hearing, olfactory sensation, gustatory sensation, tactile sensation, and intellectual sensation (thought).
8. *Craving* - (Taṇhā)	*Clinging/sustenance* - (Upādāna)	There are these six forms of cravings: cravings with respect to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch (massage, sex, pain), **and ideas**.[k]
9. *Clinging/sustenance* - (Upādāna)	*Becoming* (Bhava)	These four are clingings: *sensual clinging*,[l] *view clinging*,[m] *practice clinging*,[n] and *self clinging*[o]
10. *Becoming* - (Bhava)	*Birth* - (Jāti)	These three are becoming: sensual becoming,[p] form becoming,[q] formless becoming[r]

11. *Birth* - (Jāti)	*Aging, death, and this entire mass of* dukkha) - (Jarāmaraṇa)	Birth[s] is any coming-to-be or coming-forth. It refers not just to birth at the beginning of a lifetime, but to birth as new person, acquisition of a new status or position etc.

Reverting / Reversing the chain

Analysing the relationships between the phenomena that sustain dukkha[13] provides a conceptual framework, an understanding of which may help one to practise the path which leads to nibbana, complete freedom from samsara[14]

Phenomena are sustained only so long as their sustaining factors remain.[15] This causal relationship is expressed in its most general form as follows:[f]

When this exists, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases.

— Samyutta Nikaya 12.61

This natural law of *this/that causality* is independent of being discovered, just like the laws of physics.[g] In particular, the Buddha applied this law of causality to determine the cause of *dukkha*.[h]

The reversal of this causal chain shows the way to put an end to stress: "From the remainderless fading and cessation of *ignorance* comes the cessation of *(volitional) fabrications*" et cetera.

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62. Three lives

The nikayas themselves do not give a systematic explanation of the nidana series.[16] As an expository device, the commentarial tradition presented the factors as a linear sequence spanning over three lives; this does not mean that past, present, and future factors are mutually exclusive – in fact, many sutras contend that they are not.[12]15]

1. *Commentarial tradition*

2. Former life

3. Ignorance

4. Formations (conditioned things)

5. Current life

6. Consciousness

7. Mind and body (personality or identity)

8. The six sense bases (five physical senses and the mind)

9. Contact (between objects and the senses)

10. Feeling (registering the contact)

11. Craving (for continued contact)

12. Clinging

13. Becoming (similar to formations)

14. Future life

15. Birth

16. Old age and death

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63. Destiny after rebirth

Dependent origination also describes the process by which **sentient beings** incarnate into any given realm and pursue their various worldly projects and activities with all concomitant suffering. Among these sufferings are aging and death.

Daily life

Contemporary teachers often teach that it can also be seen as a daily cycle occurring from moment to moment throughout each day.

There is scriptural support for this as an explanation in the Abhidharmakosa of Vasubandhu, insofar as Vasubandu states that on occasion "the twelve parts are realized in one and the same moment".[17]

For example, in the case of avidyā, the first condition, it is necessary to refer to the three marks of existence for a full understanding of its relation to pratityasamutpada. It is also necessary to understand the Three Fires and how they fit into the scheme. The Three Fires sit at the very center of the schemata in the Bhavacakra and drive the whole edifice. In Himalayan iconographic representations of the Bhavacakra such as within Tibetan Buddhism, the Three Fires are known as the Three Poisons which are often represented as the Gankyil. The Gankyil is also often represented as the hub of the Dharmacakra.

Nirvana is often conceived of as stopping this cycle. By removing the causes for craving, craving ceases. So, with the ceasing of birth, death ceases. With the ceasing of becoming, birth ceases, and so on, until with the ceasing of ignorance no karma is produced, and the whole process of death and rebirth ceases.

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64. Understanding in Buddhist tradition

Theravāda

Pali Canon

In the Pali Suttapitaka (the most ancient canon of Buddhist writing preserved by Theravāda tradition) the first (partial) exposition of the twelve nidānas appears in the Dīgha Nikāya (Long Discourses), Brahmajāla Sutta, verse 3.71.[18] The reference is partial because it does not cover all twelve links:[19]" In this same Nikāya, Sutta 14 describes ten links instead of twelve, and in Sutta 15 the links are described, but without the six sense-bases (for a total of nine links in that Sutta).[20]

...they experience these feelings by repeated contact through the six sense-bases; feeling conditions craving; craving conditions clinging; clinging conditions becoming; becoming conditions birth; birth conditions aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, sadness and distress.

Descriptions of the full sequence of twelve links can be found elsewhere in the Pali canon, for instance in section 12 of the Samyutta Nikaya:[21]

Now from the remainderless fading and cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications ... From the cessation of birth, then aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress and suffering.

Theravāda commentaries

In the commentarial literature of the Theravada tradition (attributed, at least mythically, to the author Buddhaghosa, and written many centuries subsequent to the Suttapitaka passages described above) the same doctrine is instead interpreted as a sequence of three lives, thus shifting the theme from a single conception (and birth) to a sequence of "incarnations" (roughly speaking).[i]

Mahayana / Madhyamaka

Main article: Madhyamaka

In the Madhyamaka, to say that an object is "empty" is synonymous with saying that it is dependently originated. Nāgārjuna equates emptiness with dependent origination in Mūlamadhyamakakārikā 24:18.[22] In his analysis, any enduring essential nature (svabhāva) would prevent the process of dependent origination, would prevent any kind of origination at all, for things would simply always have been and will always continue to be, i.e. as existents (bhāva). Madhyamaka suggests that impermanent collections of causes and conditions are designated by mere conceptual labels, which also applies to the causes and conditions themselves and even the principle of causality itself since *everything* is dependently originated (i.e. empty).[23] If unaware of this, things may seem to arise as existents, remain for a time and then subsequently perish.

Dzogchen

In Dzogchen tradition the interdependent origination is considered illusory:[24]

[One says], "all these (configurations of events and meanings) come about and disappear according to dependent origination." But, like a burnt seed, since a nonexistent (result) does not come about from a nonexistent (cause), cause and effect do not exist.
What appears as a world of apparently external phenomena, is the play of energy of sentient beings. There is nothing external or separate from the individual. Everything that manifests in the individual's field of experience is a continuum. This is the Great Perfection that is discovered in the Dzogchen practice.

"Being obsessed with entities, one's experiencing itself [sems, citta], which discriminates each cause and effect, appears as if it were cause and condition." [25]

The Four Noble Truths

Dependent origination can also be applied to the concept of suffering, and takes the form of the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha*: There is suffering. Suffering is an intrinsic part of life prior to awakening, also experienced as dissatisfaction, discontent, unhappiness, impermanence.
2. *Samudaya*: There is a cause of suffering, which is attachment or desire (*tanha*).
3. *Nirodha*: There is a way out of suffering, which is to eliminate attachment and desire.
4. *Magga*: The path that leads out of suffering is called the Noble Eightfold Path.

Interbeing and deep ecology

The Shramanic religious traditions of India (Theravada Buddhism and Jainism) have been characterised by an unusual sensitivity to living beings. Monks of both traditions are strictly forbidden from harming any life form, including even the smallest insects and vegetation. One of the basic ideas behind the Buddha's teaching of mutual interdependence is that ultimately there is no demarcation between what appears to be an individual creature and its environment. Harming the environment (the nexus of living beings of which one forms but a part) is thus, in a nontrivial sense, harming oneself.

This philosophical position lies at the heart of modern-day deep ecology and some representatives of this movement (e.g. Joanna Macy) have shown that Buddhist philosophy provides a basis for deep ecological thinking.

Metaphysics

Some scholars believe that pratītyasamutpāda is Buddhist metaphysics,[j]. But pratītyasamutpāda has no relevance to cosmology (origin and nature of the universe), theology, or an absolutist (absolute soul, self, etc.) or relativistic philosophy.[k]

A small part of metaphysics deals with the apparent contradiction, or paradox, between free will, and the position that worldly phenomena are solely a consequence of natural causal

factors.[l] In so far as it resolves this paradox, we can perhaps call pratītyasamutpāda a *metaphysic of volitions (or karma)*.[28][m]

Skandha

This article is about a term in Buddhist phenomenology. For the bodhisattva by a similar name, see Skanda (Buddhism).

In Buddhist phenomenology and soteriology, the **skandhas** (Sanskrit) or **khandhas** (Pāli, **aggregates** in English) are the five functions or aspects that constitute the human being.[a][b] The Buddha teaches that nothing among them is really "I" or "mine".

In the Theravada tradition, suffering arises when one identifies with or clings to an aggregate. Suffering is extinguished by relinquishing attachments to aggregates.

The Mahayana tradition further puts forth that ultimate freedom is realized by deeply penetrating the nature of all aggregates as intrinsically empty of independent existence.

Etymology

Outside of Buddhist didactic contexts, "skandha" can mean mass, heap, pile, bundle or tree trunk.[3][c]

According to Thanissaro, the buddha gave a new meaning to the term "khanda":

Prior to the Buddha, the Pali word khandha had very ordinary meanings: A khandha could be a pile, a bundle, a heap, a mass. It could also be the trunk of a tree. In his first sermon, though, the Buddha gave it a new, psychological meaning, introducing the term *clinging-khandhas* to summarize his analysis of the truth of stress and suffering. Throughout the remainder of his teaching career, he referred to these psychological khandhas time and again.[4]

Description in the Sutta Pitaka

The Sutta Pitaka of the Pali Canon contains the teachings of the Buddha, as preserved by the Theravada tradition.

The five skandhas

The sutras describe five aggregates:[d]

1. **"form"** or **"matter"**[e] (Skt., Pāli *rūpa*; Tib. *gzugs*): external and internal matter. Externally, *rupa* is the physical world. Internally, *rupa* includes the material body and the physical sense organs.[f]
2. **"sensation"** or **"feeling"** (Skt., Pāli *vedanā*; Tib. *tshor-ba*): sensing an object[g] as either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral.[h][i]
3. **"perception"**, **"conception"**, **"apperception"**, **"cognition"**, or **"discrimination"** (Skt. *saṃjṅā*, Pāli *saññā*, Tib. *'du-shes*): registers whether an object is recognized or not (for instance, the sound of a bell or the shape of a tree).
4. **"mental formations"**, **"impulses"**, **"volition"**, or **"compositional factors"** (Skt. *saṃskāra*, Pāli *saṅkhāra*, Tib. *'du-byed*): **all types of mental habits, thoughts, ideas, opinions, prejudices, compulsions, and decisions triggered by an object.**[j]
5. **"consciousness"** or **"discernment"**[k] (Skt. *vijṅāna*, Pāli *viññāṇa*,[l] Tib. *rnam-par-shes-pa*):
    1. *In the Nikayas/Āgamas:* cognizance,[5][m] that which discerns[6][n]
    2. *In the Abhidhamma:* a series of rapidly changing interconnected discrete acts of cognizance.[o]
    3. *In some Mahayana sources:* the base that supports all experience.[p]

The Buddhist literature describes the aggregates as arising in a linear or progressive fashion, from form to feeling to perception to mental formations to consciousness.[q] In the early texts, the scheme of the five aggregates is not meant to be an exhaustive classification of the human being. Rather it describes various aspects of the way an individual manifests.[7]

Suffering and release

Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000b, p. 840) states that an examination of the aggregates has a "critical role" in the Buddha's teaching for multiple reasons, including:[r]

1. Understanding suffering: the five aggregates are the "ultimate referent" in the Buddha's elaboration on dukkha (suffering) in his First Noble Truth: "Since all four truths revolve around suffering, understanding the aggregates is essential for understanding the Four Noble Truths as a whole."
2. Clinging causes future suffering: the five aggregates are the substrata for clinging and thus "contribute to the causal origination of future suffering".

3. Release from samsara: clinging to the five aggregates must be removed in order to achieve release from samsara.

Understanding dukkha

In the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta the Buddha provides the classic elaboration on the first of his Four Noble Truths, "The Truth of Suffering" (Dukkhasacca):

The Noble Truth of Suffering [dukkha], monks, is this: Birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering, dissociation from the pleasant is suffering, not to receive what one desires is suffering—in brief the five aggregates subject to grasping are suffering.[9]

Clinging causes future suffering

The Samyutta Nikaya contains the *Khandhavagga* ("The Book of Aggregates"), a book compiling over a hundred suttas related to the five aggregates. The *Upadaparitassana Sutta* ("Agitation through Clinging Discourse," SN 22:7) describes how non-clinging to form prevents agitation:

...[T]he instructed noble disciple ... does not regard form [or other aggregates] as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. That form of his changes and alters. Despite the change and alteration of form, his consciousness does not become preoccupied with the change of form.... [T]hrough non-clinging he does not become agitated." (Trans. by Bodhi, 2000b, pp. 865-866.)

The most explicit denial of substantiality in the early texts is one that was quoted by later prominent Mahayana thinkers:

All form is comparable to foam; all feelings to bubbles; all sensations are mirage-like; dispositions are like the plantain trunk; consciousness is but an illusion: so did the Buddha illustrate [the nature of the aggregates].[10]

Release from samsara

In the Pāli Canon and the Āgamas, the majority of discourses focusing on the five aggregates discusses them as a basis for understanding and achieving liberation from suffering.[11]

Liberation is possible by insight into the workings of the mind. Traditional mindfulness practices can awaken this by understanding, release and wisdom.

In the classic Theravada meditation reference, the "Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta" ("The Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse," MN 10), the Buddha provides four bases for establishing mindfulness: body (kaya), sensations (vedana), mind (citta) and mental objects (dhamma).[s] When discussing mental objects as a basis for meditation, the Buddha identifies five objects, including the aggregates.

Through mindfulness contemplation, one sees an "aggregate as an aggregate" — sees it arising and dissipating. Such clear seeing creates a space between the aggregate and clinging, a space that will prevent or enervate the arising and propagation of clinging, thereby diminishing future suffering.[t] As clinging disappears, so too notions of a separate "self."

No essence

The aggregates don't constitute any 'essence'. In the Samyutta Nikaya, the Buddha explains this by using the simile of a chariot:

A 'chariot' exists on the basis of the aggregation of parts, even so the concept of 'being' exists when the five aggregates are available.[12][u]

Just as the concept of "chariot" is a reification, so too is the concept of "being". The constituents of being too are unsubstantial in that they are causally produced, just like the chariot as a whole.[13]

The chariot metaphor is not an exercise in ontology, but rather a caution against ontological theorizing and conceptual realism.[14] Part of the Buddha's general approach to language was to point towards its conventional nature, and to undermine the misleading character of nouns as substance-words.[15]

Arahants

Main articles: Arhat (Buddhism) and Tathagata

The skandha analysis of the early texts is not applicable to arahants. A tathāgata has abandoned that clinging to the personality factors that render the mind a bounded, measurable entity, and is instead "freed from being reckoned by" all or any of them, even in life. The skandhas have been seen to be a burden, and an enlightened individual is one with "burden dropped".[16]

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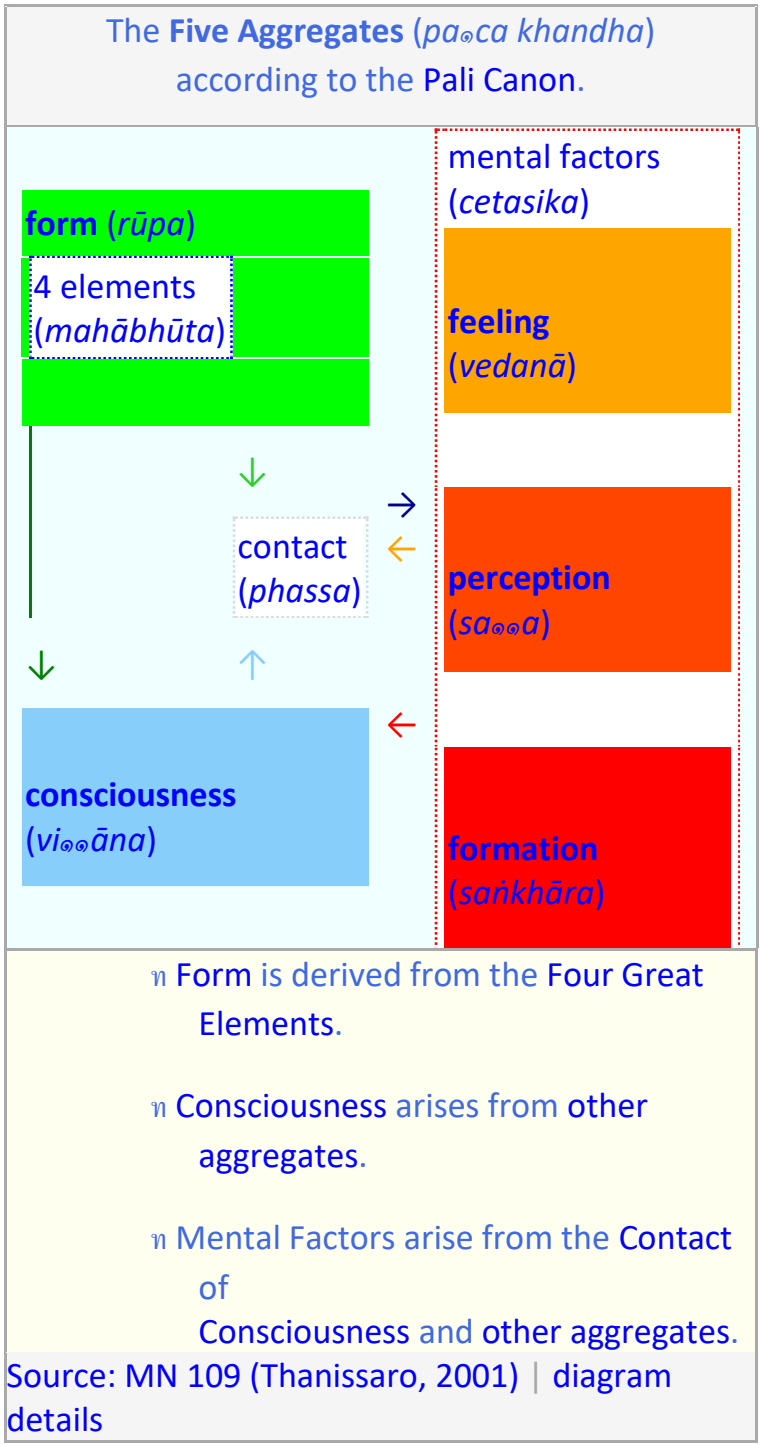
65. Understanding in Therevada Abhidhamma

Understanding in Theravada Abhidhamma



While early Buddhism reflects the teachings as found in the Pali Sutta Pitaka and the Chinese Agama, the Early Buddhist schools developed detailed analyses and overviews of the teachings found in those sutras, called Abhidharma.

Each school developed its own Abhidharma. the best known is the Theravāda Abhidhamma. The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma has been preserved partly in the Chinese Agama.

Six consciousnesses

Main articles: Ayatana and Ṣaḍāyatana

The teaching of the *six sense bases* provides an alternative to the five aggregates as an description of the workings of the mind.[17] In this teaching, the coming together of an object and a sense-organ results in the arising of the corresponding consciousness. The suttas themselves don't describe this alternative.

It is in the Abhidhamma, striving to "a single all-inclusive system"[18] that the five aggregates and the six sense bases are explicitly connected.[18]

This might be described as follows (illustrated in the figure to the right):[19]

- **Form** (*rūpa*) arises from experientially irreducible physical/physiological phenomena.[v]
- The coming together of an external object (such as a sound) and its associated internal sense organ (such as the ear) — gives rise to **consciousness** (*vi◌◌āṇa* • *vij◌āṇa*).[w]
- The concurrence of an object, its sense organ and the related consciousness (*vi◌◌āṇa* • *vij◌āṇa*) is called "contact" (*phassa* • *sparśa*).[x][y][z]
- From the contact of form and consciousness arise the three mental (*nāma*) aggregates of **feeling** (*vedanā*), **perception** (*sa◌◌ā*• *saṃj◌ā*) and **mental formation** (*saṅkhāra* • *saṃskāra*).[aa][ab]
- The mental aggregates can then in turn give rise to additional consciousness that leads to the arising of additional mental aggregates.[ac]

In this scheme, form, the mental aggregates,[ad] and consciousness are mutually dependent.[ae]

Twelve Sense Bases

There are Twelve Sense Bases:

- The first five *external* sense bases (visible form, sound, smell, taste and touch) are part of the **form** aggregate.
- The mental sense object (that is, mental objects) overlap the first four aggregates (**form**, **feeling**, **perception** and **formation**).
- The first five *internal* sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) are also part of the **form** aggregate.
- The mental sense organ (mind) is comparable to the aggregate of **consciousness**.

While the benefit of meditating on the aggregates is overcoming wrong views of the self (since the self is typically identified with one or more of the aggregates), the benefit of meditation on the six sense bases is to overcome craving (through restraint and insight into sense objects that lead to contact, feeling and subsequent craving).[20][21][22][af]

Eighteen Dhātus

The eighteen dhatus[ag] - the Six External Bases, the Six Internal Bases, and the Six Consciousnesses - function through the five aggregates. The eighteen dhatus can be arranged into six triads, where each triad is composed of a sense organ, a sense object and sense consciousness. In regards to the aggregates:[23]

- The first five sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) are derivates of **form**.
  - The sixth sense organ (mind) is part of **consciousness**.
- The first five sense objects (visible forms, sound, smell, taste, touch) are also derivatives of **form**.
  - The sixth sense object (mental object) includes **form**, **sensation**, **perception** and **mental formations**.
- The six sense consciousness are the basis for **consciousness**.

The Eighteen Dhātus		
Six External Bases (*bhāya-āyatana*)	**Six Internal Bases (*adhyātma-āyatana*)**	**Six Consciousnesses (*vij◌ָāna*)**
(1) Visual Objects (*rūpa-āyatana*)	(2) Eye Faculty (*cakṣur-indriya-āyatana*)	(3) Visual Consciousness (*cakṣur-vij◌ָāna*
(4) Auditory Objects (*◌ָabda-*	(5) Ear Faculty (*śrota-indriya-*	(6) Aural Consciousness (*śrota-*

āyatana)	*āyatana*)	*vij๏āna*)
(7) Olfactory Objects (*gandha-āyatana*)	(8) Nose Faculty (*ghrāṇa-indriya-āyatana*)	(9) Olfactory Consciousness (*ghrāṇa-vij๏āna*)
(10) Gustatory Objects (*rasa-āyatana*)	(11) Tongue Faculty (*jihvā-indriya-āyatana*)	(12) Gustatory Consciousness (*jihvā-vij๏āna*)
(13) Tactile Objects (*spraṣṭavya-āyatana*)	(14) Body Faculty (*kaya-indriya-āyatana*)	(15) Touch Consciousness (*kaya-vij๏āna*)
(16) Mental Objects (*dharma-āyatana*)	(17) Mental Faculty (*mana-indriya-āyatana*)	(18) Mental Consciousness (*mano-vij๏āna*)

Four Paramatthas

The Abhidhamma and post-canonical Pali texts create a meta-scheme for the Sutta Pitaka's conceptions of aggregates, sense bases and dhattus (elements).[24] This meta-scheme is known as the four *paramatthas* or four ultimate realities

Ultimate realities

There are four paramathas; three conditioned, one unconditioned:

- Material phenomena (rupa, form)
- Mental factors (the nama-factors sensation, perception and formation)
- Consciousness
- Nibbāna

Mapping of the paramathas

The mapping between the aggregates, the twelve sense bases, and the ultimate realities is represented in this chart:[ah]

aggregate	external sense base	internal sense base	ultimate reality

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">form</td><td>visible form, sound, smell, taste, touch</td><td rowspan="2">eye, ear, nose, tongue, body</td><td rowspan="2">28 material phenomena</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">mental objects (dhamma)</td></tr>
<tr><td>sensation</td><td rowspan="3"></td><td rowspan="3">52 mental factors</td></tr>
<tr><td>perception</td></tr>
<tr><td>formation</td></tr>
<tr><td>conscious-ness (vinnana)</td><td></td><td>mind (mana)</td><td>conscious-ness (citta)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Nibbāna</td></tr>
</table>

Twelve Nidanas

See also: Dependent Origination

The Twelve Nidanas describe twelve phenomenal links by which suffering is perpetuated between and within lives.

Inclusion of the five aggregates

Embedded within this model, four of the five aggregates are explicitly mentioned in the following sequence:

- mental formations (*saṅkhāra* • *saṃskāra*) condition consciousness (*vi൭൭āṇa* • *vij൭āna*)
- which conditions name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*)
- which conditions the precursors (*saḷāyatana*, *phassa* • *sparśa*) to sensations (*vedanā*)

- which in turn condition craving (*taṇhā* • *tṛṣṇā*) and clinging (*upādāna*)
- which ultimately lead to the "entire mass of suffering" (*kevalassa dukkhakkhandha*).[ai]

The interplay between the five-aggregates model of immediate causation and the twelve-nidana model of requisite conditioning is evident, for instance underlining the seminal role that mental formations have in both the origination and cessation of suffering.[aj][ak]

Three lives

According to Schumann the Nidanas are a later synthesis of Buddhist teachings, meant to make them more comprehensible. Comparison with the five skhandhas shows that the chain contains logical inconsistencies, which can be explained when the chain is considered to be a later elaboration.[25] This way it is explainable that nama-rupa en consciousness in the 9-fold are the beginning or start, while in the 12-fold chain they are preceded by ignorance and formations. Those can only exist when nama-rupa en consciousness are present. Schumann also propeses that the 12-fold is extended over three existences, and illustrate the succession of rebirths. while Buddhaghosa en Vasubandhu maintain a 2-8-2 schema, Schumann maintains a 3-6-3 scheme, putting the five skandhas aside the twelve nidanas.[25]

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66. Understanding in the Mahayana tradition

Understanding in the Mahayana-tradition

The Mahayana developed out of the traditional schools, introducing new texts and putting other emphasises in the teachings, especially sunyata and the Bodhisattva-ideal.

India

Prajnaparamita

The Prajnaparamita-teachings developed from the first century BCE onward. It emphasises the "emptiness" of everything that exists. This means that there are no eternally existing "essences", since everything is dependently originated. The skandhas too are dependently originated, and lack any substantial existence .[al]

This is famously stated in the Heart Sutra. The Sanskrit version[am] of the classic "Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra" ("Heart Sutra") states:

The noble Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, while practicing the deep practice of Prajnaparamita looked upon the Five Skandhas, seeing they were empty of svabhava (self-existence)[26][an][ao] when "emptiness of self" is mentioned, the English word "self" is a translation of the Pali word *"atta"* (Sanskrit, *"atman"*); in the Sanskrit-version of the Heart Sutra,[ap][aq]

In the second verse, after rising from his aggregate meditation, Avalokiteshvara declares:

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,

form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from form.

The same is true with feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.[27]

Madhyamaka

Main article: Madhyamaka

The Madhyaka-school elaborates on the notion of the middle way. Its basic text is the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, written by Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna refuted the Sarvastivada conception of reality, which reifies dhammas.[13]

The simultaneous non-reification of the self and reification of the skandhas has been viewed by some Buddhist thinkers as highly problematic.[28]

Yogacara

Main article: Yogacara

The Yogacara-school further analysed the workings of the mind, and developed the notion of the Eight consciousnesses. These are an elaboration of the concept of nama-rupa and the five skandhas, adding detailed analyses of the workings of the mind.

China

When Buddhism was introduced in China it was understood in terms of its own culture. Various sects struggled to attain an understanding of the Indian texts. The Tathāgatagarbha Sutras and the idea of the Buddha-nature were endorsed, because of the perceived similarities with the Tao, which was understood as a transcendental reality underlying the world of appearances. Sunyata at first was understood as pointing to the Taoist "wu", *nothingness*.[29][30]

Absolute and relative

In China, the relation between absolute and relative was a central topic in understanding the Buddhist teachings. The aggregates convey the relative (or conventional) experience of the world by an individual, although Absolute truth is realized through them.

Commenting on the Heart Sutra, D.T. Suzuki notes:

When the sutra says that the five Skandhas have the character of emptiness [...], the sense is: no limiting qualities are to be attributed to the Absolute; while it is immanent in all concrete and particular objects, it is not in itself definable.[31]

Tathagatagarbha

Main article: Tathagatagarbha

The Tathāgatagarbha Sutras, which developed in India, played a prominent role in China. The tathagatagarbha-sutras, on occasion, speak of the ineffable skandhas of the Buddha (beyond the nature of worldly skandhas and beyond worldly understanding). In the Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra the Buddha tells of how the Buddha's skandhas are in fact eternal and unchanging. The Buddha's skandhas are said to be incomprehensible to unawakened vision.

Tibet

The Vajrayana tradition further develops the aggregates in terms of mahamudra epistemology and tantric reifications.

Insubstantiality

Referring to mahamudra teachings, Chogyam Trungpa [32] identifies the form aggregate as the "solidification" of ignorance (Pali, *avijja*; Skt., *avidya*), allowing one to have the illusion of "possessing" ever dynamic and spacious wisdom (Pali, *vijja*; Skt. *vidya*), and thus being the basis for the creation of a dualistic relationship between "self" and "other."[ar]

According to Trungpa Rinpoche,[33] the five skandhas are "a set of Buddhist concepts which describe experience as a five-step process" and that "the whole development of the five skandhas...is an attempt on our part to shield ourselves from the truth of our insubstantiality," while "the practice of meditation is to see the transparency of this shield." [34]

Deity yoga

Trungpa Rinpoche writes (2001, p. 38):

[S]ome of the details of tantric iconography are developed from abhidharma [that is, in this context, detailed analysis of the aggregates]. Different colors and feelings of this particular consciousness, that particular emotion, are manifested in a particular deity wearing such-and-such a costume, of certain particular colors, holding certain particular sceptres in his hand. Those details are very closely connected with the individualities of particular psychological processes.

Bardo deity manifestations

The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Fremantle & Trungpa, 2003) makes the following associations between the aggregates and tantric deities during the bardo after death:

The blue light of the skandha of consciousness in its basic purity, the wisdom of the dharmadhātu, luminous, clear, sharp and brilliant, will come towards you from the heart of Vairocana and his consort, and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear it. [p. 63]

The white light of the skandha of form in its basic purity, the mirror-like wisdom, dazzling white, luminous and clear, will come towards you from the heart of Vajrasattva and his consort and pierce you so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. [p. 66]

The yellow light of the skandha of feeling in its basic purity, the wisdom of equality, brilliant yellow, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, unbearable to the eyes, will come towards you from the heart of Ratnasambhava and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. [p. 68]

The red light of the skandha of perception in its basic purity, the wisdom of discrimination, brilliant red, adorned with discs of light, luminous and clear, sharp and bright, will come from the heart of Amitābha and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it. [p. 70]

The green light of the skandha of concept [samskara] in its basic purity, the action-accomplishing wisdom, brilliant green, luminous and clear, sharp and terrifying, adorned with discs of light, will come from the heart of Amoghasiddhi and his consort and pierce your heart so that your eyes cannot bear to look at it. Do not be afraid of it. It is the spontaneous play of your own mind, so rest in the supreme state free from activity and care, in which there is no near or far, love or hate. [p. 73]

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67. God in Buddhism

Gautama Buddha explicitly denies that the universe had a start by the act of a creator deity,[1][2] refuses to endorse any views on creation[3] and states that questions on the origin of the world are worthless.[4][5] The non-adherence[6] to the notion of an omnipotent creator deity or a prime mover is seen by many as a key distinction between Buddhism and other religions.

Rather, Buddhism emphasizes the system of causal relationships underlying the universe (*pratitya samutpada*) which constitute the natural order (*dharma*). No dependence of phenomena on a supernatural reality is asserted in order to explain the behaviour of matter. **According to the doctrine of the Buddha a human being must study Nature** (*dhamma vicaya*) **in order to attain personal wisdom** (*prajna*) **regarding the nature of things (dharma). In** Buddhism **the sole aim of spiritual practice is the complete alleviation of** stress **in** samsara,[7][8] **called** *nirvana*.

Some teachers tell students beginning Buddhist meditation that the notion of divinity is not incompatible with Buddhism,[9] and at least one Buddhist scholar has indicated that describing Buddhism as 'non-theistic' may be overly simplistic;[10] but many traditional theist beliefs are considered to pose a hindrance to the attainment of *nirvana*,[11] the highest goal of Buddhist practice.[12]

Despite this apparent non-theism, Buddhists consider veneration of the Noble ones[13] very important,[14] although the two main traditions of Buddhism differ mildly in their reverential attitudes. While Theravada Buddhists view the Buddha as a human being who attained nirvana or Buddhahood, through human efforts,[15] some Mahayana Buddhists consider him an embodiment of the cosmic *Dharmakaya*, born for the benefit of others.[16] In addition, some Mahayana Buddhists worship their chief Bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara,[17] and hope to embody him.[18]

Buddhists accept the existence of beings in higher realms (see Buddhist cosmology), known as *devas*, but they, like humans, are said to be suffering in samsara,[19] and are not necessarily wiser than us. In fact the Buddha is often portrayed as a teacher of the gods,[20] and superior to them.[21] Despite this there are believed to be enlightened devas.[22]

Some variations of buddhism express a philosophical belief in an eternal Buddha: a representation of omnipresent enlightenment and a symbol of the universe.[23]

God in Early Buddhism

As scholar Richard Hayes describes, "the attitude of the Buddha as portrayed in the Nikayas is more anti-speculative than specifically atheistic", although Gautama regarded some aspects of the belief in God as unhealthy.[24]

As Hayes describes it, "In the Nikaya literature, the question of the existence of God is treated primarily from either an epistemological point of view or a moral point of view. As a problem of epistemology, the question of God's existence amounts to a discussion of whether or not a religious seeker can be certain that there is a greatest good and that therefore his efforts to realize a greatest good will not be a pointless struggle towards an unrealistic goal.

And as a problem in morality, the question amounts to a discussion of whether man himself is ultimately responsible for all the displeasure that he feels or whether there exists a superior being who inflicts displeasure upon man whether he deserves it or not... the Buddha Gotama is portrayed not as an atheist who claims to be able to prove God's nonexistence, but rather as a skeptic with respect to other teachers' claims to be able to lead their disciples to the highest good."[25]

Citing the *Devadaha Sutta* ('Majjhima Nikaya 101), Hayes remarks that "while the reader is left to conclude that it is attachment rather than God, actions in past lives, fate, type of birth or efforts in this life that is responsible for our experiences of sorrow, no systematic argument is given in an attempt to disprove the existence of God."[26]

Brahma in the Pali Canon

Brahma is among the common gods found in the Pali Canon. Brahma (in common with all other devas) is subject to change, final decline and death, just as are all other sentient beings in samsara (the plane of continual reincarnation and suffering). In fact there are several different Brahma worlds and several kinds of Brahmas in Buddhism, all of which however are just beings stuck in samsara for a long while. Sir Charles Eliot describes attitudes towards Brahma in early Buddhism as follows:

There comes a time when this world system passes away and then certain beings are reborn in the "World of Radiance" and remain there a long time. Sooner or later, the world system begins to evolve again and the palace of Brahma appears, but it is empty. Then some being whose time is up falls from the "World of Radiance" and comes to life in the palace and remains there alone. At last he wishes for company, and it so happens that other beings whose time is up fall from the "World of Radiance" and join him. And the first being thinks that he is Great Brahma, the Creator, because when he felt lonely and wished for companions other beings appeared. And the other beings accept this view. And at last one of Brahma's retinue falls from that state and is born in the human world and, if he can remember his previous birth, he reflects that he is transitory but that Brahma still remains and from this he draws the erroneous conclusion that Brahma is eternal.[27]

Other common gods referred to in the Canon

Many of the other gods in the Pali Canon find a common mythological role in Hindu literature. Some common gods and goddesses are Indra, Aapo (Varuna), Vayo (Vayu), Tejo (Agni), Surya, Pajapati (Prajapati), Soma, Yasa, Venhu (Vi??u), Mahadeva (Siva), Vijja (Saraswati), Usha, Pathavi (Prithvi) Sri (Lakshmi) Kuvera (Kubera), several yakkhas (Yakshas), gandhabbas (Gandharvas), Nāgas, garula (Garuda), sons of Bali, Veroca, etc.[28] While in Hindu texts some of these gods and goddesses are considered embodiments of the Supreme Being, the Buddhist view is that all gods and goddesses were bound to samsara. The world of gods according to the Buddha presents a being with too many pleasures and distractions.

Abhidharma and Yogacara analysis

The Theravada Abhidhamma tradition did not tend to elaborate argumentation against the existence of god, but in the *Abhidharmakośa* of the Sarvāstivāda, Vasubandhu does actively argue against the existence of a creator, stating that the universe has no beginning.[29]

The Chinese monk Xuanzang studied Buddhism in India during the 7th century CE, staying at Nālandā University. There, he studied the Consciousness Only teachings passed down from Asanga and Vasubandhu, and taught to him by the abbot Silabhadra. In his comprehensive work *Cheng Weishi Lun* (Skt. *Vij◌aptimātratāsiddhi Śastra*), Xuanzang refutes the Indian philosophical doctrine of a "Great Lord" (Ishvara) or a Great Brahma, a self-existent and omnipotent creator deity who is ruler of all existence.[30]

According to one doctrine, there is a great, self-existent deity whose substance is real and who is all-pervading, eternal, and the producer of all phenomena. This doctrine is unreasonable. If something produces something, it is not eternal, the non-eternal is not all-pervading, and what is not all-pervading is not real. If the deity's substance is all-pervading and eternal, it must contain all powers and be able to produce all phenomena everywhere, at all times, and simultaneously. If he produces phenomena when a desire arises, or according to conditions, this contradicts the doctrine of a single cause. Or else, desires and conditions would arise spontaneously since the cause is eternal. Other doctrines claim that there is a great Brahma, a Time, a Space, a Starting Point, a Nature, an Ether, a Self, etc., that is eternal and really exists, is endowed with all powers, and is able to produce all phenomena. We refute all these in the same way we did the concept of the Great Lord.

Mahayana and Vajrayana doctrines

In the pramana tradition, Dharmakīrti advances a number of arguments against the existence of a creator god in his *Pramā?avārttikakārika*, following in the footsteps of Vasubandhu.[31] Later Mahayana scholars such as Śāntarak?ita and Kamalaśīla continued this tradition.[32] Some Mahayana and Dzogchen traditions of Buddhism, however, do assert an underlying monistic

'ground of being' or tathagatagarbha, which is stated to be indestructibly present in all beings and phenomena. The Tathagatagarbha Sutras, in particular, enunciate this view.

Tathagatagarbha, Dharmakaya and God

Mahayana Buddhism, unlike Theravada, talks of the mind using terms such as "the womb of the Thus-come One" (*tathagatagarbha*). The affirmation of emptiness by positive terminology is radically different from the early Buddhist doctrines of Anatta and refusal to personify or objectify any Supreme Reality.

In the *tathagatagarbha* tradition, the Buddha is on occasion identified with the Dharmakaya, Supreme Reality, which possesses the god-like qualities of eternality, inscrutability and immutability. In his monograph on the tathagatagarbha doctrine as formulated in the only ancient Indian commentarial analysis of the doctrine extant - the *Uttaratantra* - Professor C. D. Sebastian writes of how the 'divinised' Buddha is accorded worship and is characterised by a compassionate love, which becomes manifest in the world in the form of salvific activity to liberate beings from suffering. Sebastian stress, however, that the Buddha thus conceived, although deemed worthy of worship, was never viewed as synonymous to a Creator God:

"Mahayana Buddhism is not only intellectual, but it is also devotional... in Mahayana, Buddha was taken as God, as Supreme Reality itself that descended on the earth in human form for the good of mankind. The concept of Buddha (as equal to God in theistic systems) was never as a creator but as Divine Love that out of compassion (karuna) embodied itself in human form to uplift suffering humanity. He was worshipped with fervent devotion...

He represents the Absolute (*paramartha satya*), devoid of all plurality (*sarva-prapancanta-vinirmukta*) and has no beginning, middle and end... Buddha... is eternal, immutable... As such He represents Dharmakaya."

—Professor C. D. Sebastian[33]

According to the Tathagatagarbha sutras, the Buddha taught the existence of this spiritual essence called the tathagatagarbha or Buddha-nature, which is present in all beings and phenomena. Dr. B. Alan Wallace writes of this doctrine:

"The essential nature of the whole of samsara and nirvana is the absolute space (*dhatu*) of the *tathagatagarbha*, but this space is not to be confused with a mere absence of matter. Rather, this absolute space is imbued with all the infinite knowledge, compassion, power, and enlightened activities of the Buddha. Moreover, this luminous space is that which causes the

phenomenal world to appear, and it is none other than the nature of one's own mind, which by nature is clear light."

—Dr. B. Alan Wallace[34]

Dr. Wallace further writes on how the primal Buddha, Samantabhadra, who in some scriptures is viewed as one with the *tathagatagarbha*, forms the very radiating foundation of both samsara and nirvana. Noting a progression within Buddhism from doctrines of a mind-stream (*bhavanga*) to that of the absolutised *tathagatagarbha*, Wallace comments that it may be too simple in the light of such doctrinal elements to define Buddhism unconditionally as "non-theistic":

"Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha whose nature is identical with the *tathagatagarbha* within each sentient being, is the ultimate ground of *samsara* and *nirvana*; and the entire universe consists of nothing other than displays of this infinite, radiant, empty awareness. Thus, in light of the theoretical progression from the *bhavanga* to the *tathagatagarbha* to the primordial wisdom of the absolute space of reality, Buddhism is not so simply non-theistic as it may appear at first glance."

—Dr. B. Alan Wallace[35]

Vajrayana views

In some Mahayana traditions, the Buddha is indeed worshipped as a virtual divinity who is possessed of supernatural qualities and powers. Dr. Guang Xing writes: "The Buddha worshiped by Mahayanist followers is an omnipotent divinity endowed with numerous supernatural attributes and qualities ...[He] is described almost as an omnipotent and almighty godhead.".[36]

The Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace has also indicated (as shown above) that saying that Buddhism as a whole is "non-theistic" may be an over-simplification. Wallace discerns similarities between some forms of Vajrayana Buddhism and notions of a divine "ground of being" and creation. He writes: "a careful analysis of Vajrayana Buddhist cosmogony, specifically as presented in the Atiyoga tradition of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, which presents itself as the culmination of all Buddhist teachings, reveals a theory of a transcendent ground of being and a process of creation that bear remarkable similarities with views presented in Vedanta and Neoplatonic Western Christian theories of creation."[37]

In fact, Wallace sees these views as so similar that they seem almost to be different manifestations of the same theory. He further comments: "Vajrayana Buddhism, Vedanta, and

Neoplatonic Christianity have so much in common that they could almost be regarded as varying interpretations of a single theory."[38]

The Tibetan monk-scholar Dolpopa of the Tibetan Jonang tradition speaks of a universal spiritual essence or *noumenon* (the Buddha as *Dharmakaya*) which contains all sentient beings in their totality, and quotes from the *Sutra on the Inconceivable Mysteries of the One-Gone-Thus*:

"... space dwells in all appearances of forms .. similarly, the body of the one-gone-thus [i.e. Buddha] also thoroughly dwells in all appearances of sentient beings ... For example, all appearances of forms are included inside space. Similarly, all appearances of sentient beings are included inside the body of the one-gone-thus [i.e. Buddha as *Dharmakaya*]."[39]

Dolpopa further quotes Buddhist scripture when he writes of this unified spiritual essence or noumenon as the 'supreme Over-Self of all continuums'[40] and as "Self always residing in all, as the selfhood of all."[41]

Yogacara and the Absolute

Another scholar sees a Buddhist Absolute in Consciousness. Writing on the Yogacara school of Buddhism, Dr. A. K. Chatterjee remarks: "The Absolute is a non-dual consciousness. The duality of the subject and object does not pertain to it. It is said to be void (*sunya*), devoid of duality; in itself it is perfectly real, in fact the only reality ...There is no consciousness *of* the Absolute; Consciousness *is* the Absolute."[42]

While this is a traditional Tibetan interpretation of Yogacara views, it has been rejected by modern Western scholarship, namely by Kochumuttom, Anacker, Kalupahana, Dunne, Lusthaus, Powers, and Wayman.[43][44][45] Scholar Dan Lusthaus writes: "They [Yogacarins] did not focus on consciousness to assert it as ultimately real (Yogācāra claims consciousness is only conventionally real since it arises from moment to moment due to fluctuating causes and conditions), but rather because it is the cause of the karmic problem they are seeking to eliminate."[44]

Zen and the Absolute

A further name for the irreducible, time-and-space-transcending mysterious Truth or Essence of Buddhic Reality spoken of in some Mahayana and tantric texts is the Dharmakaya (Body of Truth). Of this the Zen Buddhist master Sokei-An, says:[46]

... *dharmakaya* [is] the equivalent of God ... The Buddha also speaks of no time and no space, where if I make a sound there is in that single moment a million years. It is spaceless like radio waves, like electric space - intrinsic. The Buddha said that there is a mirror that reflects consciousness. In this electric space a million miles and a pinpoint - a million years and a moment - are exactly the same. It is pure essence ... We call it 'original consciousness' - 'original *akasha'* - perhaps God in the Christian sense. I am afraid of speaking about anything that is not familiar to me. No one can know what IT is ...

The same Zen adept, Sokei-An, further comments:[47]

The creative power of the universe is not a human being; it is Buddha. The one who sees, and the one who hears, is not this eye or ear, but the one who is *this* consciousness. *This One* is Buddha. *This One* appears in every mind. *This One* is common to all sentient beings, and is God.

The Rinzai Zen Buddhist master, Soyen Shaku, speaking to Americans at the beginning of the 20th century, discusses how in essence the idea of God is not absent from Buddhism, when understood as ultimate, true Reality:[48]

At the outset, let me state that Buddhism is not atheistic as the term is ordinarily understood. It has certainly a God, the highest reality and truth, through which and in which this universe exists. However, the followers of Buddhism usually avoid the term God, for it savors so much of Christianity, whose spirit is not always exactly in accord with the Buddhist interpretation of religious experience ... To define more exactly the Buddhist notion of the highest being, it may be convenient to borrow the term very happily coined by a modern German scholar, 'panentheism', according to which God is ... all and one and more than the totality of existence .... As I mentioned before, Buddhists do not make use of the term God, which characteristically belongs to Christian terminology. An equivalent most commonly used is Dharmakaya ... When the Dharmakaya is most concretely conceived it becomes the Buddha, or Tathagata ...

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68. Primordial Buddhas

Main article: Eternal Buddha

Theories regarding a self-existent immutable substantial "ground of being" were common in India prior to the Buddha, and were rejected by him: "The Buddha, however, refusing to admit any metaphysical principle as a common thread holding the moments of encountered phenomena together, rejects the Upanishadic notion of an immutable substance or principle

underlying the world and the person and producing phenomena out of its inherent power, be it 'being', atman, brahman, or 'god.'"[49]

In later Mahayana literature, however, the idea of an eternal, all-pervading, all-knowing, immaculate, uncreated and deathless Ground of Being (the *dharmadhatu*, inherently linked to the *sattvadhatu*, the realm of beings), which is the Awakened Mind (*bodhicitta*) or Dharmakaya ("body of Truth") of the Buddha himself, is attributed to the Buddha in a number of Mahayana sutras, and is found in various tantras as well. In some Mahayana texts, such a principle is occasionally presented as manifesting in a more personalised form as a primordial buddha, such as Samantabhadra, Vajradhara, Vairochana, and Adi-Buddha, among others.

In Buddhist tantric and Dzogchen scriptures, too, this immanent and transcendent Dharmakaya (the ultimate essence of the Buddha's being) is portrayed as the primordial Buddha, Samantabhadra, worshipped as the primordial lord. In a study of Dzogchen, Dr. Sam van Schaik mentions how Samantabhadra Buddha is indeed seen as 'the heart essence of all buddhas, the Primordial Lord, the noble Victorious One, Samantabhadra'.[50] Dr. Schaik indicates that Samantabhadra is not to be viewed as some kind of separate *mindstream*, apart from the mindstreams of sentient beings, but should be known as a universal nirvanic principle termed the Awakened Mind (*bodhi-citta*) and present in all.[51]

Dr. Schaik quotes from the tantric texts, *Experiencing the Enlightened Mind of Samantabhadra* and *The Subsequent Tantra of Great Perfection Instruction* to portray Samantabhadra as an uncreated, reflexive, radiant, pure and vital Knowing (gnosis) which is present in all things:

The essence of all phenomena is the awakened mind; the mind of all Buddhas is the awakened mind; and the life-force of all sentient beings is the awakened mind, too …

This unfabricated gnosis of the present moment is the reflexive luminosity, naked and stainless, the Primordial Lord himself.[52]

The Shingon Buddhist monk, Dohan, regarded the two great Buddhas, Amida and Vairocana, as one and the same Dharmakaya Buddha and as the true nature at the core of all beings and phenomena. There are several realisations that can accrue to the Shingon practitioner of which Dohan speaks in this connection, as Dr. James Sanford points out: there is the realisation that Amida is the Dharmakaya Buddha, Vairocana; then there is the realisation that Amida as Vairocana is eternally manifest within this universe of time and space; and finally there is the innermost realisation that Amida is the true nature, material and spiritual, of all beings, that he is 'the omnivalent wisdom-body, that he is the unborn, unmanifest, unchanging reality that rests quietly at the core of all phenomena'.[53]

Similar God-like descriptions are encountered in the *All-Creating King Tantra* (Kunjed Gyalpo Tantra), where the universal Mind of Awakening (in its mode as "Samantabhadra Buddha") declares of itself:[54]

I am the core of all that exists. I am the seed of all that exists. I am the cause of all that exists. I am the trunk of all that exists. I am the foundation of all that exists. I am the root of existence. I am "the core" because I contain all phenomena. I am "the seed" because I give birth to everything. I am "the cause" because all comes from me. I am "the trunk" because the ramifications of every event sprout from me. I am "the foundation" because all abides in me. I am called "the root" because I am everything.

The Karandavyuha Sutra presents the great bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, as a kind of supreme lord of the cosmos. A striking feature of Avalokitesvara in this sutra is his creative power, as he is said to be the progenitor of various heavenly bodies and divinities. Dr. Alexander Studholme, in his monograph on the sutra, writes:

The sun and moon are said to be born from the bodhisattva's eyes, Mahesvara [Siva] from his brow, Brahma from his shoulders, Narayana [Vishnu] from his heart, Sarasvati from his teeth, the winds from his mouth, the earth from his feet and the sky from his stomach.'[55]

Avalokitesvara himself is linked in the versified version of the sutra to the first Buddha, the Adi Buddha, who is 'svayambhu' (self-existent, not born from anything or anyone). Dr. Studholme comments: "Avalokitesvara himself, the verse sutra adds, is an emanation of the *Adibuddha*, or 'primordial Buddha', a term that is explicitly said to be synoymous with *Svayambhu* and *Adinatha*, 'primordial lord'."[56]

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69. The Eternal Buddha of Shin Buddhism

In Shin Buddhism, Amida Buddha is viewed as the eternal Buddha who manifested as Shakyamuni in India and who is the personification of Nirvana itself. The Shin Buddhist priest, John Paraskevopoulos, in his monograph on Shin Buddhism, writes:

'In Shin Buddhism, Nirvana or Ultimate Reality (also known as the "Dharma-Body" or *Dharmakaya* in the original Sanskrit) has assumed a more concrete form as (a) the Buddha of Infinite Light (*Amitabha*) and Infinite Life (*Amitayus*)and (b) the "Pure Land" or "Land of Utmost Bliss" (*Sukhavati*), the realm over which this Buddha is said to preside ... Amida is the Eternal Buddha who is said to have taken form as Shakyamuni and his teachings in order to become known to us in ways we can readily comprehend.'[57]

John Paraskevopoulos elucidates the notion of Nirvana, of which Amida is an embodiment, in the following terms:

... [Nirvana's] more positive connotation is that of a higher state of being, the dispelling of illusion and the corresponding joy of liberation. An early Buddhist scripture describes Nirvana as: ... the far shore, the subtle, the very difficult to see, the undisintegrating, the unmanifest, the peaceful, the deathless, the sublime, the auspicious, the secure, the destruction of craving, the wonderful, the amazing, the unailing, the unafflicted, dispassion, purity, freedom, the island, the shelter, the asylum, the refuge ... (*Samyutta Nikaya*)[58]

This Nirvana is seen as eternal and of one nature, indeed as the essence of all things. Paraskevopoulos tells of how the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* speaks of Nirvana as eternal, pure, blissful and true self:

In Mahayana Buddhism it is taught that there is fundamentally one reality which, in its highest and purest dimension, is experienced as Nirvana. It is also known, as we have seen, as the Dharma-Body (considered as the ultimate form of Being) or "Suchness" (*Tathata* in Sanskrit) when viewed as the essence of all things ... "The Dharma-Body is eternity, bliss, true self and purity. It is forever free of all birth, ageing, sickness and death" (*Nirvana Sutra*)[59]

To attain this Self, however, it is needful to transcend the 'small self' and its pettiness with the help of an 'external' agency, Amida Buddha. This is the view promulgated by the Jodo Shinshu founding Buddhist master, Shinran Shonin. John Paraskevopoulos comments on this:

Shinran's great insight was that we cannot conquer the self by the self. Some kind of external agency is required: (a) to help us to shed light on our ego as it really is in all its petty and baneful guises; and (b) to enable us to subdue the small 'self' with a view to realising the Great Self by awakening to Amida's light.[60]

When that Great Self of Amida's light is realised, Shin Buddhism is able to see the Infinite which transcends the care-worn mundane. John Paraskevopoulos concludes his monograph on Shin Buddhism thus:

It is time we discarded the tired view of Buddhism as a dry and forensic rationalism , lacking in warmth and devotion ...

By hearing the call of Amida Buddha we become awakened to true reality and its unfathomable working ... to live a life that dances jubilantly in the resplendent light of the Infinite.[61]

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71. Devas and the supernatural in Buddhism

While Buddhist traditions do not deny the existence of supernatural beings (e.g., the *devas*, of which many are discussed in Buddhist scripture), it does not ascribe powers, in the typical Western sense, for creation, salvation or judgement, to the "gods". They are regarded as having the power to affect worldly events in much the same way as humans and animals have the power to do so. Just as humans can affect the world more than animals, *devas* can affect the world more than humans. While gods may be more powerful than humans, Buddhists believe none of them are absolute, and like humans, are also suffering in samsara, the ongoing cycle of death and subsequent rebirth. Buddhists see gods as not having attained nirvana, and still subject to emotions, including jealousy, anger, delusion, sorrow, etc. Thus, since a Buddha is believed to show the way to nirvana, a Buddha is called "the teacher of the gods and humans" (Skrt: *śāsta deva-manu?yā?a?*). According to the Pali Canon the gods have powers to affect only so far as their realm of influence or control allows them. In this sense therefore, they are no closer to nirvana than humans and no wiser in the ultimate sense. A dialogue between the king Pasenadi Kosala, his general Vidudabha and the historical Buddha reveals a lot about the relatively weaker position of gods in Buddhism.[62]

Though not believing in a creator God, Buddhists inherited the Indian cosmology of the time which includes various types of 'god' realms such as the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, the Four Great Kings, and so on. Deva-realms are part of the various possible types of existence in the Buddhist cosmology. Rebirth as a deva is attributed to virtuous actions performed in previous lives. Beings that had meditated are thought to be reborn in more and more subtle realms with increasingly vast life spans, in accord with their meditative ability. In particular, the highest deva realms are pointed out as false paths in meditation that the meditator should be aware of. Like any existence within the cycle of rebirth (samsara), a life as a deva is only temporary. At the time of death, a large part of the former deva's good karma has been expended, leaving mostly negative karma and a likely rebirth in one of the three lower realms. Therefore, Buddhists make a special effort not to be reborn in deva realms.

It is also noteworthy that devas in Buddhism have no role to play in liberation. Sir Charles Eliot describes God in early Buddhism as follows:

The attitude of early Buddhism to the spirit world — the hosts of deities and demons who people this and other spheres. Their existence is assumed, but the truths of religion are not dependent on them, and attempts to use their influence by sacrifices and oracles are deprecated as vulgar practices similar to juggling.

The systems of philosophy then in vogue were mostly not theistic, and, strange as the words may sound, religion had little to do with the gods. If this be thought to rest on a mistranslation, it is certainly true that the dhamma had very little to do with devas.

Often as the Devas figure in early Buddhist stories, the significance of their appearance nearly always lies in their relations with the Buddha or his disciples. Of mere mythology, such as the dealings of Brahma and Indra with other gods, there is little. In fact the gods, though freely invoked as accessories, are not taken seriously, and there are some extremely curious passages in which Gotama seems to laugh at them, much as the sceptics of the 18th century laughed at Jehovah.

Thus in the [Pali Canon] Kevaddha Sutta he relates how a monk who was puzzled by a metaphysical problem applied to various gods and finally accosted Brahma himself in the presence of all his retinue. After hearing the question, which was "Where do the elements cease and leave no trace behind?" Brahma replies, "I am the Great Brahma, the Supreme, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Controller, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be." "But," said the monk, "I did not ask you, friend, whether you were indeed all you now say, but I ask you where the four elements cease and leave no trace." Then the Great Brahma took him by the arm and led him aside and said, "These gods think I know and understand everything. Therefore I gave no answer in their presence. But I do not know the answer to your question and you had better go and ask the Buddha."[27]

The Pali Canon also attributes supernatural powers to enlightened beings (Buddhas), that even gods may not have. In a dialogue between king Ajatasattu and the Buddha, enlightened beings are ascribed supranormal powers (like human flight, walking on water etc.), clairaudience, mind reading, recollection of past lives of oneself and others.[63]

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72. Attitudes towards theories of creation

Reflecting a common understanding of the Buddha's earliest teachings, Nyanaponika Thera asserts:

From a study of the discourses of the Buddha preserved in the Pali canon, it will be seen that the idea of a personal deity, a creator god conceived to be eternal and omnipotent, is incompatible with the Buddha's teachings. On the other hand, conceptions of an impersonal godhead of any description, such as world-soul, etc., are excluded by the Buddha's teachings on Anatta, non-self or unsubstantiality. ... In Buddhist literature, the belief in a creator god

(issara-nimmana-vada) is frequently mentioned and rejected, along with other causes wrongly adduced to explain the origin of the world.[64]

In addition, nowhere in the Pali Canon are Buddhas ascribed powers of creation, salvation and judgement. In fact, Buddhism is critical of all theories on the origin of the universe[65] and holds the belief in creation as a fetter binding one to samsara. However, the Aggaṅṅa Sutta does contain a detailed account of the Buddha describing the origin of human life on earth. In this text, the Buddha provides an explanation of the caste system alternate to the one contained in the Vedas, and shows why one caste is not really any better than the other.[66] According to scholar Richard Gombrich, the sutta gives strong evidence that it was conceived entirely as a satire of pre-existing beliefs,[67] and he and scholar David Kalupahana have asserted that the primary intent of this text is to satirize and debunk the brahminical claims regarding the divine nature of the caste system, showing that it is nothing but a human convention.[68][69] Strictly speaking, the sutta is not a cosmogony, as in Buddhism, an absolute beginning is inconceivable. Since the earliest times Buddhists have, however, taken it seriously as an account of the origins of society and kingship.[67] Gombrich, however, finds it to be a parody of brahminical cosmogony as presented in the Rig Vedic "Hymn of Creation" (RV X, 129) and BAU 1, 2.[70] He states: "The Buddha never intended to propound a cosmogony. If we take a close look at the Aggaṅṅa Sutta, there are considerable incoherencies if it is taken seriously as an explanatory account - though once it is perceived to be a parody these inconsistencies are of no account." In particular, he finds that it violates the basic Buddhist theory of how the law of karma operates.[67]

However, scholar Rupert Gethin strongly disagrees, stating:

While certain of the details of the Aggainia-sutta's account of the evolution of human society may be, as Gombrich has persuasively argued, satirical in intent, there is nothing in the Nikayas to suggest that these basic cosmological principles that I have identified should be so understood; there is nothing to suggest that the Aggafinia-sutta's introductory formula describing the expansion and contraction of the world is merely a joke. We should surely expect early Buddhism and indeed the Buddha to have some specific ideas about the nature of the round of rebirth, and essentially this is what the cosmological details presented in the Aggafifia-sutta and elsewhere in Nikayas constitute ... far from being out of key with what we can understand of Buddhist thought from the rest of the Nikayas, the cosmogonic views offered by the Aggaṅṅa Sutta in fact harmonize very well with it . .I would go further and say that something along the lines of the Aggaṅṅa myth is actually required by it.[71]

In Buddhism, the focus is primarily on the effect the belief in theories of creation and a creator have on the human mind. The Buddhist attitude towards every view is one of critical

examination from the perspective of what effect the belief has on the mind and whether the belief binds one to samsara or not.

The Buddha declared that "it is not possible to know or determine the first beginning of the cycle of existence of beings who wander therein deluded by ignorance and obsessed by craving."[72] Speculation about the origin and extent of the universe is generally discouraged in early Buddhism.[73]

Theravada

Huston Smith describes early Buddhism as psychological rather than metaphysical.[74] Unlike theistic religions, which are founded on notions of God and related creation myths, Buddhism begins with the human condition as enumerated in the Four Noble Truths. Thus while most other religions attempt to pass a blanket judgement on the goodness of a pre-fallen world (e.g. 'He then looked at the world and saw that it was good.' Book of Genesis, Old Testament, Christian Bible) and therefore derive the greatness of its Creator, Early Buddhism denies that the question is even worth asking to begin with.[75] Instead it places emphasis on the human condition of clinging and the insubstantial nature of the world. This approach is often even in contrast with many of the Mahayana forms of Buddhism. No being, whether a god or an enlightened being (including the historical Buddha), is ascribed powers of creation, granting salvation and judgement. According to the Pali Canon, omnipotence cannot be ascribed to any being. Further, in Theravada Buddhism, there are no lands or heavens where a being is guaranteed nirvana; instead he can attain nirvana within a very short time, though nothing conclusive could be said about the effort required for that. In this sense, therefore, there is no equivalent of the Mahayana "Pure Land" or magical abode of Buddhas where one is guaranteed to be enlightened, in Early Buddhist tradition.

However, Theravada Buddhism does mention the "Pure Abodes" (pali: Sudhavasasa) [76] in which Non-Returners (pali: Anagami) are born and there they attain Nibbana.

Vajrayana

Tibetan schools of Buddhism speak of two truths, absolute and relative.

Relative truth is regarded as the chain of ongoing causes and conditions that define experience within samsara, and ultimate truth is synonymous with emptiness. There are many philosophical viewpoints, but unique to the Vajrayana perspective is the expression (by meditators) of emptiness in experiential language, as opposed to the language of negation used by scholars to undo any conceptual fixation that would stand in the way of a correct understanding of emptiness. For example, one teacher from the Tibetan Kagyu school of

Buddhism, Kalu Rinpoche, elucidates: "...pure mind cannot be located, but it is omnipresent and all-penetrating; it embraces and pervades all things. Moreover, it is beyond change, and its open nature is indestructible and atemporal."[77]

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73. Veneration of the Buddha

Although an absolute creator god is absent in most forms of Buddhism, veneration or worship of the Buddha and other Buddhas does play a major role in all forms of Buddhism. In Buddhism all beings may strive for Buddhahood. Throughout the schools of Buddhism, it is taught that being born in the human realm is best for realizing full enlightenment, whereas being born as a god presents one with too much pleasure and too many distractions to provide any motivation for serious insight meditation. Doctrines of theosis have played an important role in Christian thought, and there are a number of theistic variations of Hinduism where a practitioner can strive to become the godhead (for example Vedanta), but from a Buddhist perspective, such attainment would be disadvantageous to the attainment of nirvana, since it may possibly be based on mental reification. Some forms of buddhist meditation, however, share more similarities with the concept of henosis.

In Buddhism, one venerates Buddhas and sages for their virtues, sacrifices, and struggles for perfect enlightenment, and as teachers who are embodiments of the Dhamma.[78]

In Buddhism, this supreme victory of the human ability for perfect gnosis is celebrated in the concept of human saints known as Arahants which literally means "worthy of offerings" or "worthy of worship" because this sage overcomes all defilements and obtains perfect gnosis to obtain Nirvana.

Professor Perry Schmidt-Leukel comments on how some portrayals of the Buddha within Western understanding deprive him of certain 'divine' features, which are in fact found in the earlier scriptures and in certain Eastern contexts. Schmidt-Leukel writes:

What a difference between the presentation of the Buddha within the genuine context of religious veneration, as in [the Doi Suthep Thai] temple, and the image of the Buddha - currently so widespread in the West - according to which the Buddha was simply a human being, free from all divine features! Indeed this modern view does not at all correspond to the description of the Buddha in the classical Buddhist scriptures.[79]

There's some uncertainty whether such worship has any effects beyond purely spiritual. East Asian doctrines, particularly the flavour of Zen popular in the West, teach that the Buddha and

other Buddhas are immutable and therefore cannot or do not intervene in human affairs; at best, prayer to them may facilitate one's own enlightenment, even that due to conscious efforts of the one who prays rather than through the intervention of the supreme being. For that and other reasons, Buddha worship is rarely, if ever, practiced in Mahayana. Buddha worship is common among laymen in Theravada countries such as Thailand, and it often assumes forms more reminiscent of prayers to gods and saints in Christianity or other religions, where worshippers may ask Buddha for help in practical matters.

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74. **NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO SAMMA SAMBUDDHASSA**

75. RADIATION OF LOVING KINDNESS

76. WORSHIP TO THE TRIPLE GEM

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79. SALUTATION TO THE BUDDHA

80. MORNING CHANTING (PALI) **PRAISE TO THE BUDDHA**

81. PRAISE TO THE DHAMMA

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85. PRAISE TO DHAMMA

86. PRAISE TO SANGHA

87. RADIATION OF LOVING KINDNESS

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74. Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa 3 x

Honour to the Blessed One, the Exalted One, the fully Enlightened One

(Araham) sammasambuddho bhagava, Buddham bhagavantam abhivademi

The Lord, the Perfectly Enlightened and Blessed One - I render homage to the Buddha.

-Bow-

(Svakhkato) bhagavata dhammo, Dhammam namassa

The Teaching so completely explained by him - I bow to the Dhamma.

-Bow-

(Supatipanno) bhagavato savakasangho, -Sangham namami

The Blessed One's disciples who have practiced well - I bow to the Sangha.

-Bow

http://www.meditationthailand.com/morningchant.htm

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75. RADIATION OF LOVING KINDNESS

(To one' own self)

Aham Sukhito homi: May I be happy.

Niddukkho homi: May I be free from suffering.

Avero homi: May I be free from enmity.

Abyapajjho homi: May I be free from hurtfulness.

Anigho homi: May I be free from troubles of body and mind.

Sukhi attanam pariharami: May I be able to protect my own happiness.

(To all beings)

Sabbe satta: Whatever beings there are,

Sukhita hontu: May they be happy.

Niddhukka hontu: May they be free from suffering.

Avera hontu: May they be free from enmity.

Abyapajjha hontu: May they be free from hurtfulness.

Anigha hontu: May they be free from troubles of body and mind.

Sukhi attanam pariharantu: May they be able to protect their own happiness.

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76. WORSHIP TO THE TRIPLE GEM

Imina Sakkarena, Tam Buddham Abhipujayami

With this offering, I worship the Buddha.

Imina Sakkarena, Tam Dhammam Abhipujayami

With this offering, I worship the Dhamma.

Imina Sakkarena, Tam Sangham Abhipujayami

With this offering, I worship the Sangha.

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77. SALUTATION TO THE TRIPLE GEM

Araham samma sambuddho bhagava, Buddham bhagavantam abhivademi.

The Buddha is the Blessed One, the all enlightened One, The Holy One, I pay homage to that Buddha.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo, Dhammam namassami.

Well-preached the teaching of the Buddha, I pay homage to that Dhamma.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Supatipanno bhagavato savakasangho, Sangham namami.

Well behaved the Noble Diseiples of the Buddha, I pay homage to that Sangha.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

SALUTATION TO THE TRIPLE GEM (TRANSLATION)

Homage to Him, the Buddha, the Blessed One, the Holy One, the all Enlightened One.
(Make a prostration to show respect)

Homage to the Dhamma, the Noble Doctrine, well-preached

by the Blessed One.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Homage to the Sangha, the Noble Bhikkhus of the Blessed One.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

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79. SALUTATION TO THE BUDDHA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam buddhassa bhagavato pubbabhaganamakaram karoma se

All: Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa.

SALUTATION TO THE BUDDHA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us pay preliminary homage to our Load, the Buddha, the Blessed One.

All: Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Holy One, the Enlightened One.

Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Holy One, the Enlightened One.

Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Holy One, the Enlightened One.

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80. MORNING CHANTING (PALI) PRAISE TO THE BUDDHA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam Buddhabhithutim Karoma Se.

All: Yo so tathagato araham sammasambuddho,

Vijjacaranasampanno Sugato Lokavidu,

Anuttaro Purisadammasarathi

Sattha Devamanussanam Buddho Bhagava,

Yo imam lokam sadevakam samarakam sabrahmakam,

Sassamanabrahmanim Pajam Sadevamanussamsayam 2

Abhinna sacchikattava pavedesi

Yo dhammam desesi adikalyanam majjhekalyanam

Pariyosanakalyanam satthamsabyanjanamkevalaparipunnam

Parisuddham drahmacariyam pakasesi,

Tamaham Bhagavantam abhipujayami

Tamaham Bhagavantam sirasa namami

(Make a prostration to show respect)

PRAISE TO THE BUDDHA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now chant our praise the the Buddha.

All: He is the Great Being, the Holy One, the All-Enlightened one, Perfect in knowledge and conduct, Well-gone, World knower, Supreme Trainer of those that can be trained, Teacher of gods and men, the Awakend One, the Blessed One.

He, having attained Enlightenment himself, has proclaimed the Path of Enlightenment of mankind, to gods, to Mara the Evil one, to the world of Brahma, (that is to say) to sentiment beings including the Samana which noble in the beginning, noble in the middle, noble in the end, with respect to the meaning and wording.

He has declared the life of chastity, which is absolutely perfect as well as purified.

Hereby I beg to worship Him the Blessed One.

With my head I bed to pay homage to Him, the Blessed One.

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81. PRAISE TO THE DHAMMA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam Dhammabhithutim karoma se.

All: Yo so Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo, sanditthiko, akaliko, ehipassiko, Opanayiko, paccattam veditabbho vinnuhiti.

Tamaham dhammam abhipujayami

Tamaham dhammam sirasa namami

(Make a prostration to show respect)

PRAISE TO THE DHAMMA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now chant our praise to the Dhamma.

All: That Doctrine, well preached by the Blessed One, giving results visible, immdediate, exemplary, and to be individually experienced by the virtuous ones. Hereby, I bed to worship the Dhamma. With my head, I bed to pay homage to the Dhamma.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

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82. PRAISE TO THE SANGHA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam sanghabhithutim karoma se.

All: Yo so Supatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Ujupatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Nayapatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Samicipatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Yadidam cattari purisayugani attha purisapuggala,

Esa bhagavato savakasanggho, ahuneyyo, pahuneyyo, takkhineyyo, uncharigarneyyo, anuttaram, poonyagkettam, roghassat

Tamaham sangkam abhipujayami

Tamaham sangkam sirasa namami

(Make a prostration to show respect)

PRAISE TO THE SANGHA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now chant our praise to the Sangha.

All: Of good conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of upright conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of noble conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of dutiful conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. This Order is thus composed of the four pairs of the Noble Disciples, constituting the eight categories of the Holy Ones. This is the Order of the Blessed One, which is worthy of offerings, worthy of welcome, worthy of obligations, worthy of respectful salutation, being like and excellent field to sow the seeds of merit on. I hereby bed to worship the Sangha. With my head I beg to pay homage to the Sangha.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

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“Ekayano ayam bhikkave sattanam visuddhiya, sokaparidevanam samatikkamaya, dukkhadomanassanam, Nanassa adhigamaya, nibbhanassa sacchikiriya yadidam cattaro satipatthana”

“Look, you who find the cycle of rebirth harmful, the foundations of

mindfulness are the only way to the purification of all beings, the extinction of all sorrows and lementation, the end of all suffering and grief, and the attainment of nibbhana”

(Mahasatipatthana Sutta)

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84. EVENING CHANTING (PALI) PRAISE TO THE BUDDHA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam Buddhanussatinayam Karoma Se

All: Itipi So Bhagava Araham Samma Sambuddho Vijjacaranasampanno Sugato Lokavidu Anuttaro Purisadammasarathi Sattha Devamanussanam Buddho Bhagavati.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Kayena vacaya va cetasa va,

Buddhe Kukammam pakatam maya yam

Buddho patigganhatu accayantam,

Kalantare samvaritum va Buddhe.

PRAISE TO THE BUDDHA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now recit the hymn of recallection of the Lord Buddha.

All: The Lord Buddha is the Holy One, the All-Enlightened One, Perfect in know-ledge and conduct, Well-fair maker, world knower, Supreme Trainer, Teacher of gods and men, the Awakened, the Blessed One. (Make a prostration to show respect)

Whatever misdeeds I have done towards the Buddha, Whether they were physical, or verbal or mental. May that offence be pardoned by the Buddha for the Sake of later restrain towards the Buddha.

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85. PRAISE TO THE DHAMMA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam Dhammanussatinayam karoma se.

All: Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo, sanditthiko, akaliko, ehipassiko, Opanayiko, paccattam veditabbho vinnuhiti. (A moment' pause for the mental recapitulation of the above mentioned points)

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Kayena vacaya va cetasa va

Dhamme kukammam pakatam maya yam.

Dhammo patigganhatu accayantam,

Kalantare samvaritum va dhamme.

PRAISE TO THE DHAMMA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now say our salutation to the Dhamma.

All: The Doctrine, well-preached by the Blessed One, giving results visible, immediate, exemplary, introspective and individually experienced by the virtuous ones.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Whatever misdeeds I have done towards the Dhamma, whether they were physical, verbal or mental, may that offence be pardoned by the Dhamma, for the sake of later restraint towards the Dhamma.

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86. PRAISE TO THE SANGHA (PALI)

Leader: Handa mayam sanghanussatinayam karoma se.

All: Supatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Ujupatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Nayapatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Samicipatipanno bhagavato savakasanggho,

Yadidam cattari purisayugani attha purisapuggala,

Esa bhagavato savakasanggho, ahuneyyo, pahuneyyo, takkhineyyo, uncharigaraneyyo, anuttaram, poonyagkettam, roghassati.

(Make a prostration to show respect)

Kayena vacaya va cetasa va

Sanghe kukammam pakatam maya yam.

Sangho patigganhatu accayantam,

Kalantare samvaritum va Sanghe.

PRAISE TO THE SANGHA (TRANSLATION)

Leader: Let us now say our salutation to the Sangha.

All: Of good conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of upright conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of virtuous conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. Of dutiful conduct is the Order of the Blessed One. This Order is thus composed of the four pairs of the Holy Disciples, constituting the eight categories of the Holy One. This is the Order of the Blessed One, which is worthy of offerings, worthy of welcome, worthy of obligations, worthy of respectful salutation, being like an excellent field to sow the seeds of merit on. (Make a prostration to show respect)

Whatever misdeeds I have done towards the Sangha, whether they were physical, verbal or mental, may that offence be pardoned by the Sangha, for the sake of later restraint towards the Sangha.

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87. RADIATION OF LOVING KINDNESS

(To one' own self)

Aham Sukhito homi: May I be happy.

Niddukkho homi: May I be free from suffering.

Avero homi: May I be free from enmity.

Abyapajjho homi: May I be free from hurtfulness.

Anigho homi: May I be free from troubles of body and mind.

Sukhi attanam pariharami: May I be able to protect my own happiness.

(To all beings)

Sabbe satta: Whatever beings there are,

Sukhita hontu: May they be happy.

Niddhukka hontu: May they be free from suffering.

Avera hontu: May they be free from enmity.

Abyapajjha hontu: May they be free from hurtfulness.

Anigha hontu: May they be free from troubles of body and mind.

Sukhi attanam pariharantu: May they be able to protect their own

happiness.

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