

Original versions of entries by Peter Harvey for *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Damien Keown and Charles S. Prebish, London and New York, Routledge, 2007

The above Encyclopedia contains eighteen articles by Peter Harvey under the general heading 'The Buddha'. In the published version, unknown to the author, most of the non-scriptural references and many bibliographical entries had been removed. An omission and some infelicities were also introduced. The following are the original articles submitted by the author to the editors. They are here arranged in a logical, rather than alphabetic order, and a few minor adjustments have been made.

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DATES OF THE BUDDHA

Indian culture has not been as concerned with recording precise dates as have Chinese or Greco-Roman culture, so datings can not always be arrived at with accuracy. A key reference point for dating the Buddha is the inauguration of the reign of the Buddhist emperor Aśoka (Pali Asoka). From references in Aśokan edicts to certain Hellenistic kings to which he sent ambassadors, this has been generally dated by scholars at c. 268 BCE. The Pali sources of Theravāda Buddhism say that the Buddha died 218 years before this: the ‘long chronology’. As all sources agree that Gautama was eighty when he died (e.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.100), this would make his dates c. 566–486 BCE. An alternative ‘short chronology’ is recorded in Sanskrit sources of north Indian Buddhism preserved in East Asia, according to which he died 100 years (or something more) before Aśoka’s inauguration, which would make his dates 448–368 BCE – though in East Asia, the traditional date of the Buddha’s death was actually 949 or 878, and in Tibet, 881 BCE. In the past, modern scholars have generally accepted 486 or 483 BCE for this, but the consensus is now that they rest on evidence which is too flimsy.

Carbon dating indicates that certain sites associated with the Buddha in the Pali Canon were not settled prior to 500 BCE (+ or – 100 years), which make the Buddha’s death unlikely to have been as early as 486 BCE (Härtel 1991–2). Moreover, a consideration of Jain historical data suggests that both the Buddha and Mahāvira, the Jain leader, who died a little before the Buddha, died between 410 and 390 BCE (Norman, 1991–2).

Richard Gombrich (1991–2) has argued that, due to recent research of Hellenistic historians, Aśoka’s consecration may be dated anywhere between 267 and 280 BCE. Moreover, 100 and 218 (cf. our ‘two centuries and a score years’) are best seen as ideal round numbers (Obeyesekere, 1991–2). Gombrich has calculated a figure *between* 218 and 100 – 136 – from figures associated with a lineage of teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, a chronicle of Sri Lanka. This ends with the death of a king that occurred in 303 CE, though earlier parts of the text and certainly its sources could be rather earlier. The figure of 218 years itself comes from the *Dīpavaṃsa* (6.1), though Gombrich holds that it is based on a misunderstanding of figures in an earlier part of the text. The focus of the early chapters of the *Dīpavaṃsa* is on monastic matters, and especially the authentic transmission of the *vinaya* or monastic code of discipline. By collating various figures in the text, supplemented by some from the later *Mahāvāṃsa* chronicle, and reinterpreting what some of them refer to, thus removing internal inconsistencies, he derives the following information (2000):

- 16 years A.B. (after the death of the Buddha), the *vinaya* expert Upāli (aged 60) ordains Dāsaka, who is likely to have been 20, minimum age for ordination as a monk.
- 33 A.B., Dāsaka (aged 37) admits Soṇaka (aged 15) as a novice.
- 41 A.B., Dāsaka (aged 45) ordains Soṇaka (aged 23) as a monk.
- 58 A.B., Soṇaka (aged 40) ordains Siggava (probably aged 20).

- 102 A.B., Siggava (aged 64) ordains Tissa (probably aged 20).
- 136 A.B., Tissa is aged 54 at the inauguration of Aśoka; Mahinda is 14.
- 142 A.B., Tissa (aged 60) ordains Mahinda, aged 20.

Gombrich explains that, due to the numbers being given in round years, thus discounting part years, there is a margin of error for the figure of 136, so that the correct figure could be between 132 and 142. Given the additional uncertainty of the date of Aśoka's inauguration, this gives the date of the Buddha's death as between 422 and 399 BCE, with a greater likelihood for a date in the middle of this range.

Why the discrepancy with the *Dīpavaṃsa's* own assertion that Aśoka was inaugurated as emperor 218 years A.B.? Gombrich argues that: a) the text is more approximate on dates relating to kings than to monks; b) 218 is the sum of conventional numbers 100 + 100 + 18, noting that while the second council is said to have been 100 A.B., evidence indicates it was 60 A.B.; c) in a damaged part of the text (*Dīpavaṃsa* 5.95), a list of ages at death for a lineage of monks adds to 219 if taken as years lived after ordination (giving an implausible average age of 92), and it was mistakenly read this way by the monk who continued the text from chapter 6; d) a list of years for a line of monks (*Dīpavaṃsa* 5.96) is not the age at which they became 'patriarchs' (there was no such role then), but is the length of time they knew the *vinaya* by heart, between learning it as novices and dying; such a reading removes discrepancies in the *Dīpavaṃsa* figures that arise from other interpretations.

There exists no final scholarly consensus as yet for the Buddha's dates – Cousins finishes his review of the evidence by talking of a "reasonable probability" of a date around 400 BCE for the Buddha's death (1996: 63) – though if one sets aside the margins of error that Gombrich acknowledges, his research indicates 484–404 BCE.

Bringing the date of the Buddha forward, note, does not necessarily place him in a later phase of the development of Indian religion. This is because the Hindu *Upaniṣads* are themselves generally dated relative to the Buddha's dates.

In Theravāda countries, the traditional dating – of uncertain antiquity – place the Buddha's death in 544/3 BCE, based on the 'long chronology' and a mis-dating of Aśoka's inauguration. On this basis, Theravādins celebrated 1956 as 'Buddha Jayanti' year, the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's final *nirvāṇa*. This was regarded as a time of resurgence in Buddhism. The new dating of the Buddha's death as c. 404 BCE would make 1997 the 2400th anniversary of the Buddha's final *nirvāṇa*, 2097 as the 2500th anniversary of this, and 2017 the 2500th anniversary of his birth. As Buddhism is seen to decline over the ages (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.24) a later date for the Buddha is, from a Buddhist perspective, good news!

THE BUDDHA'S HISTORICAL CONTEXT

SOCIAL AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DAY

The Buddha taught in the region of the Ganges basin in north-east India, at a time of changing social conditions, where the traditions of small kin-based communities were being undermined as these were swallowed up by expanding kingdoms, such as those of Magadha and Kośala (Pali Kosala; Gombrich, 1988: 49–59). A number of cities had developed which were the centres of administration and of developing organized trade, based on a money economy. These included Śrāvastī, Rājagṛha and Vaiśālī (Pali Sāvattthī, Rājagaha and Vesālī), in all of which the Buddha was to spend much time, though he came from one of the smaller kin-based republics: Śākya (Pali Sakka, Sakyā, Sākiyā).

THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

While the Buddha was innovative, he needed to express himself using categories and concepts that were comprehensible to his culture, and addressing their concerns. How did this colour the Buddha's message, and does it mean, as some claim, that Buddhism carries 'unnecessary cultural baggage' from its early period? To address such questions, it is necessary to understand that period, how the Buddha related to its ideas and practices, and the similarities and differences between his teachings and those of his contemporaries. It should be noted that the period had its own diversity, and some 'modern' ideas (e.g. materialism and skepticism) are not new ideas that Buddhism now has to relate to for the first time: it already responded to ancient versions of these in India.

In the Buddhist *suttas*, the religious teachers/practitioners of the day are usually summed up as '*brāhmaṇas* and *śramaṇas*'. The first were the priests of the still dominant sacrificial Vedic religion, also known as Brahmanism; scholars generally use the modernized form 'brahmins' (occasionally 'brahmans') to refer to them. The second were various renunciants who rejected the authority of the Vedic texts and, while sharing certain concerns of later Vedic religion, sought their own solutions to the problems of life. Buddhism itself originated as a *śramaṇa* (Pali *samaṇa*) tradition.

VEDIC CULTURE AND BRAHMANISM

Brahmanism, which around 200 BCE, began to develop into the religion now known as Hinduism, had entered the north-west of the Indian sub-continent by around 1500 BCE, brought by a nomadic people who seem to have come from an area now in eastern Turkey, southern Russia and northern Iran. In this area, people spoke a postulated Aryan (Skt. *Ārya*) language, the basis of a number of 'Indo-European' languages spread by migration from there to India, Iran, Greece, Italy and other parts of Western Europe. The form of the language spoken in India was Sanskrit (from which Pali is derived). The influx of the Aryans brought to an end the declining Indus Valley Civilization, a sophisticated city-based culture which had existed in the region of Pakistan since around 2500 BCE. The religion of the Aryans was based on the *Veda*, orally transmitted teachings and hymns seen as revealed by the gods: the *Ṛg Veda Saṃhitā* (c. 1500–1200 BCE), three other *Veda*

Samhitās, and later compositions known as *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. The Aryans worshipped thirty-three gods known as *devas*, anthropomorphized principles seen as active in nature, the cosmos, and human life. The central rite of the religion was one in which the priests sang the praises of a particular *deva* and offered him sacrifices by placing them in a sacrificial fire. In return, they hoped for such boons as health, increase in cattle, and immortality in the afterlife with the *devas*. In the *Brāhmaṇas* (c. 1000–800 BCE), animal sacrifices came to be added to the earlier offerings, such as grain and milk. The enunciation of the sacred sacrificial verses, known as *mantras*, was also seen as manipulating a sacred power called *Brahman*, so that the ritual was regarded as actually coercing the *devas* into sustaining the order of the cosmos and giving what was wanted.

Brahman and *Brahmā*

In the early *Upaniṣads*, *Brahman* came to be seen as the substance underlying the whole cosmos, and as identical with the *ātman*, the universal Self which the yogic element of the Indian tradition had sought deep within the mind. By true knowledge of this identity, it was held that a person could attain liberation from reincarnation after death, and merge back into *Brahman*.

Richard Gombrich argues that Buddhist commentators who wrote centuries after the Buddha no longer recognized allusions to Brahmanical ideas in the *suttas* (1996:12) and that, in particular, “The central teachings of the Buddha came as a response to the central teachings of the old *Upaniṣads*, notably the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka...*” (p.31), this being the only clearly pre-Buddhist *Upaniṣad* other than the *Chāndogya*.

In the Buddhist *suttas*, there is no unambiguous reference to the neuter *Brahman*, in the sense of an impersonal ground-of-being or divine force, but many references to the male deity *Brahmā* – indeed more than one of these – the personal embodiment of *Brahman* in Brahmanism. Nevertheless, in the *Upaniṣads*, *Brahmā* is only referred to a few times. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, he is referred to at 3.11.4 as he who teaches a sacred formulation of truth (*brahman*) to Prajāpati – the main creator god referred to in the *Upaniṣads*, with whom *Brahmā* is sometimes identified, who then teaches it to Manu, a key human ancestor. Again at 8.15.1, he teaches Prajāpati, who teaches Manu, about a certain way of living leading to the world of *Brahman*, beyond rebirth. The post-Buddhist *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* begins “*Brahmā* arose as the first among gods, as the creator of all... he disclosed the knowledge of *Brahman*”. In later Hinduism, *Brahmā* comes to be seen as creating the world on behalf of the highest deity, seen as either Viṣṇu or Śiva.

Within Buddhism, several terms contain the term *brahma-*, which could mean either *Brahmā* or *Brahman*, but in either case reflect the influence of Brahmanical terminology: the term *brahmacariya*, literally ‘*brahma*-conduct’, is used to refer to celibacy and the religious ‘holy life’ that it is a key ingredient of; the qualities of lovingkindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity, which are said to lead to rebirth in the world of a *brahmā* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.235–52), are described as *brahma-vihāras*, usually translated as ‘divine abidings’; the Buddha is said to be *brahma-bhūta*: to have ‘become *brahmā/an*’ (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.84);, perhaps simply meaning ‘become the supreme’, for *brahmā* could also mean ‘the best’, as at

Samyutta Nikāya 5.4–6, where people refer to a fine chariot as “the *brahmā* of chariots”; the *arhat*, or Buddhist saint, is also sometimes seen as the true brahmin, as in *Dhammapada* verses 383–423.

In the *Tevijja Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.237–9), the Buddha ridicules brahmins for claiming to know the way to union with *Brahmā/Brahman* when none of them has actually experienced this. In the *Kūṭadanta Sutta*, it is claimed that the Buddha was asked by a brahmin on the best way to conduct the (Brahmanical) sacrifice. He replies with a story about a past king who asked the same, and was advised first to prevent poverty in his land, then to conduct a completely non-violent sacrifice (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.134–41). This is a good example of Buddhism replacing ritual sacrifice with ethical action.

Moreover, while fire had a positive valence in Brahmanism as the medium of communication with the gods, in Buddhism it was used as a symbol of the ‘burning’ quality of such things as greed, hatred and delusion, and the whole process of grasping at life. Again, while thinking of the problems of human nature as due to desire and spiritual ignorance is found in both the *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism, the understanding of these is different. Seeing the spiritual quest as relating to ideas of Self is found in both, though in different ways.

Varṇa

The great responsibility of the brahmin priests in their ritual support for cosmic order was reflected in them placing themselves at the head of what was regarded as a divinely-ordained hierarchy of four social classes, the others being those of the *kṣatriyas* or warrior-leaders of society in peace or war, the *vaiśyas*, or cattle-rearers and cultivators, and the *śūdras*, or servants. A person’s membership of one of these four *varṇas*, or ‘complexions’ of humanity, was seen as determined by birth; in later Hinduism the system incorporated thousands of lesser social groupings and became known as the caste, or *jāti*, system.

At the time of the Buddha, most brahmins practised priestly duties of either sacrifice or austerities, plus things such as truthfulness and study of the Vedic teachings. Some were saintly, but others seem to have been haughty and wealthy, supporting themselves by putting on large, expensive and bloody sacrifices, often paid for by kings. At its popular level, Brahmanism incorporated practices based on protective magic spells, and pre-Brahmanical spirit-worship no doubt continued.

The Buddhist critique of Brahmanical thinking on the four *varṇas* can be seen at *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.81–84. Here brahmins claim to belong to the only pure class, being “the true children of *Brahmā/an*, born from his/its mouth, *Brahma*-born, *Brahma*-created, *Brahma*-heirs”; while this might be seen as a reference to the neuter *Brahman*, there is here a clear allusion to the *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, a *Ṛg Veda* hymn on the sacrifice of the primal man, with brahmins being said to come from the mouth of the primal man, i.e. the part which utters sacred speech. The Buddha’s response to this claim, though, is to point out that brahmins are actually born of brahmin women. Moreover, people of any of the classes can act well or badly: behaviour not birth is what is important, as also emphasized by *Suttanipāta* verse 136:

Not by birth does one become an outcaste, not by birth does one become a brahmin. By (one's) action does one become an outcaste, by (one's) action does one become a brahmin.

Elsewhere, the Buddha gets a brahmin to examine the traditional qualities of a brahmin, which refer to family lineage, knowledge of the Vedic *mantras*, good appearance, virtue and wisdom, and strip away the first three, leaving virtue and wisdom as the only things that really matter (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.9–24). It is, though, not appropriate to see the Buddha as arguing like a modern egalitarian against any notion of social class. He simply argues against ideas of superiority based on birth. Elsewhere, he argues that the particular social stratification of his day in India is not a universal sacred norm, as different stratifications are found elsewhere.

As regards the social background of the Buddha's disciples, we have some information. The commentary to the *Theraḡāthā* and *Therīḡāthā* describes the background of 328 monks and nuns and indicates that over two-thirds came from urban areas. It also indicates that: 41 per cent were brahmin, 23 per cent *kṣatriya*, 30 per cent *vaiśya*, 3 per cent *sūdra* (servants), and 3 per cent 'outcaste' (below the *sūdras* in the Brahmanical hierarchy). Of these, the brahmins do not generally appear to have been traditional village priests, but urban dwellers perhaps employed as state officials. State officials and merchants were the dominant groups in urban society, but neither had an established niche in the *varṇa* system (though merchants later came to be seen as *vaiśyas*). These groups seem to have been particularly attracted to the Buddha's message, which addressed people as individuals in charge of their own moral and spiritual destiny, rather than as members of the *varṇa* system (Gombrich 1988: 77–81). Respect should be based on moral and spiritual worth, not birth: it had to be earned. Indeed, in urban society, people's worldly attainments increasingly depended on personal effort, rather than on traditionally ascribed social position. The Buddhist emphasis on karmic results as depending on adhering to universal, rather than *varṇa*-bound, moral norms was thus congenial. The Buddha taught all who came to him without distinction, and urged his disciples to teach in the local languages or dialects of their hearers (*Vinaya* 2.139). In contrast, the brahmins taught in Sanskrit, which had by now become almost unintelligible to those who had not studied it, and only made the Vedic teachings available to males of the top three *varṇas*.

Karma and rebirth

The idea of reincarnation is first clearly stated in the *Upaniṣads*, seeming to have developed as an extension of the idea, found in the *Brāhmaṇas*, that the power of a person's sacrificial action might be insufficient to lead to an afterlife that did not end in another death. The *Upaniṣads*, perhaps due to some non-Aryan influence, saw such a death as being followed by reincarnation as a human or animal. Non-Aryan influence was probably more certain in developing the idea that it was the quality of a person's *karma*, or 'action', that determines the nature of their reincarnation in an insecure earthly form; previously, '*karma*' had only referred to sacrificial action. Nevertheless, Brahmanism continued to see karma in largely ritual terms, and actions were judged relative to a person's *varṇa*.

While the *Upaniṣads* were starting to move away from the sacrificial ways of thinking which permeated early Brahmanism, they were still affected by it. In Buddhism we see a decoupling of karma from its link to ritual by identifying it with the mental impulse behind an act; the ethical quality of this was the key to an action's being good or bad, not its conformity with ritual norms (Gombrich 1988: 65–9). Even in Buddhist ritual, which is mild by comparison with brahmin ritual, this still holds good.

Dharma

A key term of Brahmanical thought was *Dharma*, seen as the divinely ordained order of the universe, an order which also includes the order of human society, as seen in the *varṇa* system and in the four stages of life that a male of the top three classes should go through: student, married householder, semi-retired forest-dweller, and ascetic renunciant (*saṃnyāsin*). All of these classes and stages entailed particular duties, also known as *dharma*s. The concept of *Dharma* thus includes both how things are and how they should be. An analogy to this in Western thought is the concept of 'law', which as a 'law of nature' is how things are, and as a legal 'law' is how things should be. Likewise, a standard such as the metre rule in Paris is both something that exists and something that determines what things of that type *should be*.

In Buddhism, *Dharma* (Pali *Dhamma*) is also a central term. Here, the emphasis is not on fixed social duties, but primarily on the nature of reality, practices aiding understanding of this and practises informed by an understanding of this, all aiding a person to live a happier life and to move closer to liberation.

Concern for connection and enumeration

On the meaning of *Upaniṣad*, Patrick Olivelle states:

The earliest usage of the important term *upaniṣad* indicates that it [means] ... 'connection' or 'equivalence'. In addition, the term implies hierarchy; the *Upaniṣadic* connections are hierarchically arranged, and the quest is to discover the reality that stands at the summit of this hierarchically interconnected universe (1996, p.lii–liii).

While this relates to the *Upaniṣads*' probing of secret inner relationships between the microcosm and macrocosm, ultimately between *ātman* and *Brahman*, Buddhism too contains much on the connections between things, though here expressed in terms of causal connections rather than mystical correspondences (though a concern with these returns in tantric Buddhism). Buddhism likewise contains the idea of a hierarchy of worlds which can be experienced in meditation or entered on being reborn after death.

Just as Buddhism has a concern for (causal) connections, so it has a concern for analysis, often into lists of items, e.g. the four Ennobling Truths/Realities, the five components of personality, the six elements (*dhātus*): earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness. This accords with a concern, in brahmin as well as in

various *śramaṇa* teachings, to enumerate the various elements of a person and the cosmos. This is all part of seeing the *Dharma* of things: their basic order or pattern.

In Hinduism, this approach in time crystallized into the Sāṃkhya, or 'Enumeration', school. While this was not founded as a separate school until around 400 CE, early forms of the ideas which it systematizes are found in texts such as the *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads* (c. 300–100 BCE?). In the story of the Buddha's life, one of the teachers he goes to is Ārāḍa Kālāma (Pali Āḷāra Kālāma). In the *Buddhacārīta* of Aśvaghōṣa (second century CE), Ārāḍa is attributed with teachings that are in certain respects similar to those of early Sāṃkhya (XII.17–42), concerning how components of personality evolve and in which the *ātman* is the inner knower (XII.20) who is not the agent of action (XII.26).

Yoga

Brahmins learnt of yogic techniques of meditation, physical isolation, fasting, celibacy and asceticism from ascetics whose traditions may have gone back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Such techniques were found to be useful as spiritual preparations for performing the sacrifice. Some brahmins then retired to the forest and used them as a way of actually carrying out the sacrifice in an internalized, visualized form. Out of the teachings of the more orthodox of these forest dwellers were composed the *Upaniṣads*.

The Buddha can clearly be seen as part of the broad yogic tradition of India. Gavin Flood describes yoga as a practice shared by many of the brahmin and *śramaṇa* renouncers from the period which includes the origin of Buddhism:

The term *yoga*, derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, 'to control', 'to yoke' or 'to unite', refers to those technologies or disciplines of asceticism and meditation which are thought to lead to spiritual experiences of profound understanding or insight into the nature of existence... The concept of yoga as a spiritual discipline not confined to any particular sectarian affiliation or social form, contains the following important features:

- consciousness can be transformed through focusing attention on a single point;
- the transformation of consciousness eradicates limiting mental constraints or impurities such as greed and hate;
- yoga is a discipline, or range of disciplines, constructed to facilitate the transformation of consciousness (Flood, 1996: 94).

'Yoga', as a term, is more used in Hinduism than in Buddhism, and indeed Hinduism contains a school based on a particular systematization of yoga practices and ideas known as the Yoga school, which shares many theoretical ideas with the Sāṃkhya school. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 6.10–11 talks of yoga as the steady control of the senses which, along with the cessation of thinking, leads to the highest state. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 2.8–14 says that the yogin should hold the

body erect, calm the breathing till it stops, and restrain the mind, so as to know the true *ātman*.

Forms of Buddhist meditation which emphasize concentration, generally known as *śamatha* (Pali *samatha*), are akin to yogic meditative discipline. They certainly aim at single-pointed concentration in which the mind seems to unite with its object, which has a transformative effect on consciousness, and which undermine qualities such as greed and hatred (though insight is needed to completely eradicate these). In the higher states attained by *śamatha*, normal thought is transcended, and in the highest, all mental activity is transcended. For the Buddhist goal, though, *śamatha*, or calm, has to be complemented by *vipāśyanā* (Pali *vipassanā*), or insight, and the very *deepest* levels of *śamatha* are not pre-requisites for enlightenment.

THE ŚRAMAÑAS

By the time of the Buddha, the ideas expressed in the *Upaniṣads* were starting to filter out into the wider intellectual community and were being hotly debated, both by brahmins and *śramaṇas*, who were somewhat akin to the early Greek philosophers and mystics. The *śramaṇas* rejected the Vedic tradition and wandered free of family ties, living by alms, in order to think, debate and investigate altered states of consciousness through meditative practices and austerities.

While *śramaṇa* literally means ‘one who strives’, it is variously translated. Common translations are: i) ‘recluse’, but while some *śramaṇas* were loners, and most may have spent periods of solitary meditation, they also depended on contact with the laity for alms, and many also taught the lay people; ii) ‘ascetic’ but while practices such as fasting and going naked in all weathers were common among *śramaṇas*, Buddhist *śramaṇas* avoided all but mild asceticism. More satisfactory translations are ‘renunciant’ or ‘renunciate’. A term which also included those from the Brahmanical tradition that abandoned normal worldly life was *parivrājaka* (Pali *paribbājaka*), or ‘wanderer’, though the term later used specifically in Brahmanism was *saṃnyāsīn*. Another common term, and that preferred in Buddhism, was *bhikṣu* (Pali *bhikkhu*), ‘almsman’.

Many *śramaṇas* came from the new urban centres, where old certainties were being questioned, and increasing disease from population-concentration may have posed the universal problem of human suffering in a relatively stark form. They therefore sought to find a basis of true and lasting happiness in a changing and insecure world.

The Jains

One of the major *śramaṇa* groups was that of the Jains. Jainism was founded, or at least led in the Buddha’s day, by Vardhamāna the Mahāvīra, or ‘Great Hero’. Buddhists *suttas* referred to them as Nigraṇthas (Without Bonds), and to Vardhamāna as Nigraṇtha Jñātaputra (Pali Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta). The latter appears in the *suttas* as a contemporary of the Buddha who died before him.

Buddhism and Jainism emerged from a similar strand of Indian culture, and have many similarities. Both Gautama Buddha and Vardhamāna are seen as coming from the *kṣatriya* class, and both were born in the north-east of the Indian sub-continent (Vardhamāna in Patna). Both lived a renunciant life from a similar age (Gautama, 29; Vardhamāna 30) and spent a number of years of strict ascetic practice – up to six in the case of Gautama, at the end of which he rejected extreme asceticism, twelve in the case of Vardhamāna, who continued to advocate such practices. Both then attained some form of enlightenment and went on to teach others and led monastic and lay followers. Unlike Gautama, Vardhamāna died, aged 72, after a period of voluntary starvation.

Doctrinally, Buddhism and Jainism have much in common. Both postulate countless past rebirths, with no creator of either the world or the round of rebirths. The human world goes through vast cycles of improvement and decline (the details differ), and is currently in a period of decline. Rebirths exist at many levels (again, details differ) and a being's karma (action) determines how it is reborn. Liberation is by the self-effort of the individual, under the guidance of their tradition. Beings have freedom of action, and are not puppets of fate. Both traditions rejected the efficacy of the Vedic fire sacrifice and emphasize, in their different ways, non-violence to all forms of life. Both seek liberation from the round of rebirths, which is seen as entailing repeated suffering.

It is clear that Buddhists and Jains were taking part in a similar quest, and language used by each may have been alluded to, commented on, critiqued and re-interpreted by the other. Ex-Jain Buddhists would also have brought some Jain modes of expression with them.

The terms *Tathāgata* and *arhat* (Pali *arahat*) are used in both religions, applied to their founders and both use the term *nirvāṇa* for their highest goal, though they understand it differently. Both founders were seen to have been endowed with the 'thirty-two characteristics of a great man' (see main survey entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha), the concept also existed in Brahmanism, and this is reflected in the fact that when each tradition started to portray their founders, they look very similar: a meditating Buddha and Mahāvīra are hard to tell apart (though the Jain images lack a dot on the forehead, may be totally naked, and have a diamond-shaped symbol on the chest). Both traditions see their founders as one in a line of similar figures: Buddhism has its past Buddhas (see entry on Past and Future Buddhas) and Jainism sees Vardhamāna as twenty-fourth of a line of *Jinas*, 'Conquerors' (of bondage) or *Tīrthaṅkaras*, 'Ford-makers' (those who show a way beyond for others). The one before him is called Pārśva, who lived perhaps only 250 years earlier, suggesting that *śramaṇa* traditions were well established by the time of the Buddha.

That said, Jainism has a number of key teachings which Buddhism is critical of. A key focus is on the *jīva* – life-principle, sentient essence or soul –, an unchanging, eternal substance, but with changing attributes; Buddhism emphasizes that no permanent Self/soul can be found to exist. The *jīva* is seen as an individual self, unlike the universal Upaniṣadic *ātman*, which Jainism rejects. There are an infinite number of *jīvas*, just as the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools of Hinduism accept an infinite number of *Puruṣas*, inner 'persons'. Each *jīva* is directly knowable, the 'I'

of 'I did', 'I do', 'I shall do': the agent of action, as well as the subject of knowledge, consciousness, the enjoyer/eater of experiences including karmic fruits. In this, it is much more like the Western concept of self or soul than either the universal *ātman* or the *puruṣa*, with the latter being beyond both body and mind, a passive observer, rather than an agent. The *jīva* is seen to expand or contract to fill the body it dwells in (it has a size and weight), and to have a very close relationship to its body: it is neither identical with nor different from it. It is by nature different from what is *ajīva*, non-sentient: matter, space and time. *Jīvas* exist in all living things, including plants and even stones, earth, rivers, raindrops, flames, fires, gases and winds. Life is prolific but is imprisoned in many forms, subject to suffering: the pains of an animal, of a tree being cut down, or even iron being beaten. This range of sentient things is much greater than is acknowledged in Buddhism, which certainly does not include things such as iron, and is ambivalent on plant life: one cannot be reborn as a plant, but plants *may* have a kind of rudimentary sentience (Harvey, 2000: 174–6).

The *jīva* is seen as by nature bright, omniscient, immortal and blissful, but is obscured by karmic 'matter': here, there are some similarities with early Buddhist ideas on the basic nature mind (*citta*) as being radiant (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.10), and related later ideas on the Buddha-nature as present in all beings.

The aim of Jainism is to liberate the *jīva* from the round of rebirths, so that it will float to the 'top' of the universe, to exist in blissful, omniscient isolation from the world and its problems. This notion of liberation is again reminiscent of those in the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools of Hinduism. The notion of the universe as definitely spatially limited is not shared with Buddhism.

Liberation is seen to come by freeing the *jīva* from bondage by removing its encrustation of karma, seen as a kind of subtle matter. The methods of doing so are two-fold:

1. wearing out the results of previous karma by austerities (*tapas*) such as fasting, pulling out the hair (at ordination) and going unwashed (washing also harms vermin and even water); penances are done for bad actions, and some monks and even very pious laity practise *sallekhana*: fasting to death when old;
2. to avoid the generation of new karmic matter, self-restraint, total non-violence to any form of life, and vegetarianism. Such good conduct generates some karmic results, but unlike bad karma, these spontaneously destroy themselves.

The Buddha saw the Jain theory of karma as somewhat mechanical and inflexible. Buddhist texts attribute to Jainism a kind of karmic fatalism: "Whatever this individual experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, all this is due to previous action. Thus, by burning up, making an end to ancient actions, by non-doing of new actions, there is no overflowing into the future" (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.214). Buddhism, on the other hand, sees past karma as only one of several causes of present pleasure or pain (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* 4.230–1). The austerities Jainism advocates are seen in Buddhism as ineffective and extreme.

Buddhist and Jain ethics share an emphasis on avoiding the killing of any living being, though in Jainism, while intentional harm is worse, even unintentional harm is to be constantly guarded against, so as to avoid accumulating the karma of killing. Just as Buddhism recruited well amongst merchants, so did Jainism, particularly because trading had a lower likelihood of causing death to any kind of *jīva* than many other modes of livelihood.

Jain monks, like Buddhist ones, live by alms, but the Jain ones have preserved a basically wandering life, also found in early Buddhism, except during the Indian rainy season. In developing a more settled renunciant life-style, ordered by rules of community, the Buddhists can be seen to have invented monastic life. Buddhism and Jainism both emphasize constant awareness and equanimity. They share meditations on the impurity of the body and the impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of the world, though Jainism emphasizes these more. A common Jain meditation is ‘abandoning the body’, a form of standing meditation.

Both Buddhism and Jainism are critical of dogmatic or one-sided views, both comparing these to the views of blind men quarrelling over the nature of an elephant after only ever having felt a small part of it, then over-generalising from this. The Buddhist use of this simile is at *Udāna* 67–9; the Jain use is discussed on the Jain World website: <http://www.jainworld.com/phil/anekant.htm>. In time, the Jains developed a theory of knowledge including *anekānta-vāda*: the doctrine of many-sidedness, and *syād-vāda*: the doctrine that all knowledge is relative. Knowledge is relative, partial and limited for the unliberated *jīva*, whose natural omniscience is still obscured. This limits the perceptions and perspectives of the unliberated, so that what they say will only ever be partially true: any statement about an object will always be relative to a particular context. Jainism thus advocates meditation on the different aspects of things. For example, free-will and determinism both have aspects of truth to them, and the *jīva* is both unchanging (in its inner nature) and changing (in its qualities). Here, there are some similarities with the Buddhist idea that the truth is often a ‘middle way’ between extreme opposing views. The Jain idea that existence is a complex organic whole with many inter-related, inter-dependent factors can also be related to Buddhist ideas.

The Ājīvikas

The Ājīvikas (Pali and Sanskrit, though the spelling Ājīvaka is also found in Pali), were an ascetic *śramaṇa* group that were important rivals to the Buddhists and Jains in their early days. They survived in India to around the fourteenth century CE, but then died out. Consequently, all we know of them now is through depictions of them in the literature of competing religions. The best study of them is by A.L.Basham (1981).

The Ājīvikas (literally, ‘Those who make a living’) originated when certain ascetics were united under the leadership of the determinist Maskarin Gośāla (Pali Makkhali Gośāla). Gośāla spent six years in shared asceticism with the Jain leader Vardhamāna before the two quarrelled and went their own ways. Their followers, however, were often in contact, and had a mutual respect for each other. In Jain texts Gośāla claimed to be the twenty-fourth *Tīrthaṅkara*, as did Vardhamāna.

The Ājīvikas, like the Buddhists and Jains, saw the world as working according to natural law rather than the will of a divine being, but differed from both in denying the efficacy of karma; rather, the destiny of beings was rigidly determined by *niyati*: ‘destiny’ itself. Ājīvika belief focused on the *jīva*, though this seems to have been understood as material in nature. ‘Destiny’ was seen to drive it through a fixed progression of types of rebirths, over vast cycles of time, from a low form of animal to an advanced human who becomes an Ājīvika ascetic. Near the end of this process, it would pass seven times from one human body to another without dying, by a process of reanimation, before leaving the round of rebirths. Here, the notion of past ages is similar to Jain and Buddhist beliefs, and the figure of seven is reminiscent of the Buddhist belief that a ‘streamenterer’, one who had glimpsed *nirvāṇa*, would have at most seven more rebirths before fully attaining it.

Both Vardhamāna and the Buddha criticized Ājīvika fatalism as a pernicious denial of human potential and responsibility: Gośāla’s teachings are described as being more harmful than those of any other teacher (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.33).

The Ājīvikas, like the Jains, seem to have practised non-injury and vegetarianism, and had female as well as male ascetics. Their practices also included not accepting food specially prepared for them, from a pregnant women, or from where there was a dog which might also want to eat, and rigorous asceticism such as fasting, nakedness, and perhaps disfiguring initiations. They aimed to die by self-starvation (as Vardhamāna in fact did), as a fitting way to end their last rebirth. Amongst the various ascetics referred to in the *suttas*, it is possible that some otherwise unassigned ones were Ājīvikas, due to their nakedness and extreme asceticism. In the *Pāṭika Sutta*, for example, there is reference to a naked ascetic whose practice was to move and eat like a dog (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.6–7).

The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* includes teachings attributed to a number of *śramaṇa* groups (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.52–59). In many of these is a concern for enumeration of types of things, as referred to above. The *sutta* includes teachings not only of Gośāla but also of Pūraṇa Kassapa (Skt. Purṇa Kāśyapa) and Pakuddha Kaccāyana (Skt. Kakuda Kātyāyana). Their teachings seem also to have had an influence on the Ājīvikas, and other Pali texts attribute some of Purṇa’s and Gośāla’s views to each other (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 3.383–4, *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.69).

The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* says that Purṇa taught that by one who kills, robs, commits adultery and lies, no evil (*pāpa*) is done, and by one who gives, no good karma accrues (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.52). That is, he seemed to deny the reality of good and evil. The *sutta*’s characterization may be more a *reductio ad absurdum* than a straight description, though. It may be that Purṇa taught that the *jīva* was a passive, non-involved observer of the actions of the body, which were then seen as determined by *niyati*, as Gośāla taught. Such a notion of a passive on-looking Self beyond morality is found elsewhere in early Indian thought. In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.22, it is said of the *ātman* that, “He does not become more good by good actions or in any way less by bad actions” (Olivelle, 1996: 67). In the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools, the *Puruṣa* is an uninvolved spectator of the actions carried out by body and mind.

Kakuda's views are characterized as concerning seven unchanging, eternal elemental bodies (*kāyas*): earth, water, fire, air, pleasure, pain and the *jīva*. These do not affect each other, such that "there is neither slain nor slayer...whoever cuts off a man's head with a sharp sword does not deprive anyone of life, he just inserts the blade in the intervening space between these seven bodies" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.56). The first four of these elementals are found in Buddhism, though not as eternal, as the four primary elements of the material world. Again, the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* may be trying to reduce the view to absurdity by seeing it as denying that any life is destroyed when someone is decapitated. Yet there is an echo, here, of a passage in the post-Buddhist *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.19; cf. *Bhagavad Gītā* 2.19) when, speaking of the eternal, indestructible *ātman*, it says: "If the killer thinks that he kills; if the killed thinks that he is killed; both of them fail to understand. He neither kills, nor is he killed" (Olivelle, 1996: 237).

The materialists

A small group of *śramaṇas* referred to in Buddhist texts are said to hold to 'annihilationism' (*ucchedavāda*), on account of them saying that a person is completely destroyed at death, thus denying rebirth. The Buddha saw most other views of the day as some form of the opposite extreme, 'eternalism' (Skt. *śāśvata-vāda*, Pali *sassata-vāda*), which says that what survives death is some eternal Self, soul or life-principle. Buddhism taught that a person continues as an ongoing flow of changing conditions according to the doctrine of Dependent Origination Arising, this being a 'middle' teaching that avoids both annihilationism and eternalism (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.20–21).

The annihilationists denied any kind of self other than one which could be directly perceived, and held that this was annihilated at death. Characterisation of them in Buddhist texts varies between seeing them as accepting an unchanging Self which is then destroyed at death (which is seen as odd: if an unchanging Self exists, it would not be destroyed by death), and denying any Self or surviving self (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.400–01). The *Brahmajāla Sutta* says they believed in up to seven kinds of Self (*attā*), the first of which consists of gross matter, two consist of subtle matter, and four are completely formless, mental; but they are all seen to be entirely destroyed at death (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.34–6). Here, the first kind were materialists, and these seem to have been the most typical of the 'annihilationists', akin to the Cārvāka or Lokāyata, a mainly materialist school of later Indian thought.

The aim of these renunciants was to lead an abstemious, balanced life which enjoyed simple pleasures and the satisfaction of human relationships. They denied the idea of rebirth, and also those of karma and *niyati*. Each act was seen as a spontaneous event without karmic effects, and spiritual progression was not seen as possible. According to the Pali tradition, in the Buddha's day their main spokesman was Ajita Kesakambalī (also referred to as Ajita Kesakambala; Skt. Ajita Keśakambalin). In the *Pāyāsi Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya*, *Sutta* 23), we also find the materialist prince Pāyāsi, who denies rebirth on what he takes as empirical grounds. Once he had conducted a gruesome experiment on a condemned criminal: sealing him in a jar, so that he suffocated, he failed to see any *jīva* escaping when the seal was broken (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.332–3).

As described in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, Ajita's views are that a human being is composed of earth, water, fire and wind, which disperse at death, with the sense-faculties dispersing to space, and both fools and the wise are equally destroyed at death. Moreover,

there is no (worth in) what is given...there is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds, there is no this world or other world, there is no mother or father (as beings to be respected)... no renunciants or brahmins ... who proclaim this world and the next, having realized them by their own higher knowledge (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.55).

This latter passage is found elsewhere in the *suttas* (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 3.71–2) as the content of 'wrong view', with Buddhist 'right view' as the precise opposite, so as to assert the value of giving, self-sacrifice, respect for parents, the efficacy of karma, the reality of various types of rebirth worlds and of spiritual progress. Philosophical materialism is of course more common in the modern world than in ancient India, but it was not absent there. The Buddha was aware of this kind of position and clearly rejected it.

The skeptics

The final group of *śramaṇas* were the skeptics, seen the Pali tradition as led by Sañjaya Belaṭṭhaputta (Skt. Sañjayī Vairatīputra or Sañjayī Vairatīputra). They responded to the welter of conflicting theories on religious and philosophical issues, and the consequent arguments, by avoiding commitment to *any* point of view, so as to preserve peace of mind (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.58–9). They avoided any commitment on the matters of rebirth, karma, and the destiny of an enlightened person after death. On the first two issues, the Buddha gave definite, positive teachings, while on the third, he also preserved a silence, though probably for different reasons (see entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha). The skeptics held that knowledge was impossible, and would not even commit themselves to saying that other people's views were wrong. In the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, the (wrong) views of four kinds of prevaricating 'eel-wrigglers' are given (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.25–8). The first three views are due to the wish to avoid speaking falsely on what is wholesome or unwholesome, getting attached to one's view, or being cross-examined by others. Sañjayī's view is given last, and attributed to his dullness. Yet given that the Buddha's two chief disciples, Śāriputta and Maudgalyāyana (Pali Śāriputta and Moggallāna), started as disciples of Sañjayī (*Vinaya* 1.39), it is unlikely that he was simply a dullard. The Buddha shared his wish to step aside from the 'jungle' of conflicting views, and avoid dogmatic assertions built in flimsy grounds.

OVERVIEW

With the materialists, the Buddha shared an emphasis on experience as the source of knowledge, and with the skeptics he shared a critical evaluation of current beliefs on rebirth, karma and self. He saw the materialists and skeptics as going too far, however, in denying or doubting the principles of karma and rebirth, which he held were shown to be true by (meditative) experience (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.402). Buddhism, then, did not uncritically absorb belief in karma and rebirth

from existing Indian culture, as is sometimes held. These ideas were very much up for debate at the time.

Tabulating some of the views of the various groups in ancient India on certain philosophical issues of the day:

	<i>Rebirth exists</i>	<i>A peson's own karma determines how he or she is reborn</i>	<i>A permanent Self exists</i>	<i>Spiritual salvation is possible</i>
Brahmins	Yes	Yes (ritual karma being the most important)	Yes	Yes
Jains	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Buddhists	Yes	Yes	No evidence for this	Yes
Ājīvikas	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, but not by personal effort
materialists	No	No	Self exists, but is destroyed at death	No
skeptics	?	?	?	?

THE STORY OF THE BUDDHA

As the first of the ‘three refuges’, the Buddha is a source of inspiration to Buddhists, and the events of his life are seen to illustrate points of teachings. This entry covers the figure of the historical Siddhārtha Gautama (Pali Siddhattha Gotama) and the account of him as a ‘Buddha’ as preserved in the Buddhist tradition. To understand the role of the Buddha within Buddhism, one needs to see how events in his life are seen to connect with central Buddhist concerns. The events have a connection to history, and scholars have a duty to understand history; but history is not just the critical quest of what ‘actually happened’, it is also the study of how traditions have understood such events and set them within a broader mythic framework.

This entry looks both at the ‘story’ of the Buddha and characterizations of his qualities and character. A full discussion of early concepts of his nature is dealt with in the main survey entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF HIS LIFE

Gautama was born in the small republic of the Śākya (Pali Sakka, Sakyā, Sākiyā) people, which straddles the present Indian-Nepalese border and had Kapilavastu (Pali Kapilavatthu) as its capital. From his birth among these people, Gautama is known in Mahāyāna tradition as Śākyamuni, “the Śākyan sage”. The republic was not Brahmanised, and rule was probably by a council of household-heads, perhaps qualified by age or social standing. Gautama was born to one of these rulers, so that he described himself as a *kṣatriya* (member of the warrior-noble class) when talking to brahmins, and later tradition saw him as the son of a king. Gautama was thus no ‘prince’, but a person of aristocratic background who took to the life of a renunciant (Skt. *śramaṇa*, Pali *samaṇa*) in response to reflection on the common problems of human frailty and suffering. After a period of religious searching, he had a key religious experience at the age of 35, after which he was known as a *buddha*, or ‘awakened one’. He attracted a range of disciples in North-East India, some of which he ordained as monks or nuns, and lived to the age of 80.

SACRED BIOGRAPHIES

In the early Buddhist texts, there is no continuous life of the Buddha, as these concentrated on his teachings. Only later did a growing interest in the Buddha’s person lead to various schools producing continuous ‘biographies’, which drew on scattered accounts in the existing *Sutta* and *Vinaya* textual collections, and floating oral traditions. These ‘biographies’ include the Mahāyānised Sarvāstivādin *Lalitavistara* (first century CE), the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu* (first century CE – which also includes a range of other material), Aśvaghōṣa’s poem, the *Buddhacarita* (second century CE), and the Theravādin’s *Nidānakathā* (second or third century CE). There are also sculptural reliefs that pre-date such developed biographies of the Buddha. The details in all these are in general agreement, but while they must clearly be based around historical facts, they also contain legendary and mythological embellishments, and it is often not possible to sort out one from the other. While the bare historical basis of the traditional biography will never be known, as it stands it gives a great insight into Buddhism by enabling us to see

what the meaning of the Buddha's life is to Buddhists: what archetypal lessons it is held to contain.

In the Tibetan tradition, the story is structured around twelve deeds said to be done by all Buddhas: descending from the Tuṣita heavenly rebirth realm; conception; birth; education as a youth; marriage and birth of a son (for Gautama: Rāhula); renunciation; period of asceticism, which is then abandoned; sitting down to meditate to attain Buddhahood; conquest of the evil tempter-deity Māra; attainment of Buddhahood; teaching the *Dharma*; death. The Theravādin tradition talks of thirty features that are the rule (*dhammatā*) in the life of any Buddha.

The developed 'biographies' are best seen as hagiographies, belonging to a genre of literature which is mythic in format and aiming to exemplify certain key truths in an archetypal saintly life. In modern usage, to say something is 'mythic' is sometimes seen as equivalent to saying that it is 'false'. Yet in its original meaning 'myth' means a (meaningful) 'story'. If one thinks that the meanings conveyed by mythic material are false, then one might say that the myth conveys a falsehood; but it is not false simply in being mythic. One pervasive modern 'myth' is the idea of 'progress': an account of human history which highlights certain features as significant as part of an overall direction in history.

THE BUDDHA'S EARLY CAREER

The Buddha's life-story is set as the culmination of a broader story relating to Gautama's past lives. Like all other beings, he is seen to have had countless past lives, but at a certain point he met a past Buddha and resolved to work over many lives to build up the perfections needed to become a Buddha himself. On this, see entries on The *Bodhisattva* Career in Theravāda Buddhism, and The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha.

In his penultimate life, it is said that Gautama was born in the Tuṣita (Pali Tusita) heaven, the realm of the 'delighted' gods. This is said to be the realm where the *bodhisattva* Maitreya (Pali Metteyya) now lives, ready for a future period in human history when Buddhism will have become extinct, and he can become the next Buddha (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.76). The *Lalitavistara* tells that Gautama chose the time in human history in which to be reborn for the last time.

The early texts clearly see the conception and the other key events of Gautama's life, such as his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death, as events of cosmic importance; for at all of them they say that light spread throughout the world and the earth shook. The *Nidānakathā* relates that at the time of the conception, Mahāmāyā, his mother, dreamt that she was transported to the Himālayas where a being with the appearance of an auspicious white elephant entered her right side (see entry on The Buddha's Family). On recounting this dream to her husband, Śuddhodana (Pali Suddhodana), he had it interpreted by sixty-four brahmins. They explained that it indicated that his wife had conceived a son with a great destiny ahead of him. Either he would stay at home with his father and go on to become a *cakravartin* (Pali *cakkavatti*) ruler, a universal emperor – which the *suttas* say that he had been many times in previous lives (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 4.89) –

or he would become a wandering renunciant and then a great religious teacher, a Buddha.

The *Accariyabbhūṭadhamma Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.11–28) is a short discourse which starts with monks remarking on the Buddha's ability to remember past Buddhas, and then has Ānanda recite a number of "wonderful and marvellous qualities" of the Buddha that he has heard from him, the first of which are:

- the *bodhisattva* was "mindful and fully aware" when he appeared in the Tuṣita heaven, remained there, and left there to enter his mother's womb;
- when he appeared in his mother's womb, a great light spread out, even to spaces between worlds where there was no sunlight, and "this ten-thousandfold world system shook" (as also at his birth);
- moreover, four gods (*devas*) came to guard him and his mother;
- once in the womb, his mother was virtuous, celibate, happy and healthy.

While the above *Sutta* simply talks of birth from the womb, the *Mahāvastu* (2.20) and the *Lalitavistara* and *Buddhacarita* (I.9–11) say that the birth was from the uninjured right side. John Strong (2001:38) says that the idea that he was born without passing through the birth canal may be connected with the Indian idea that the trauma of this blots out memory of past lives. However, Buddhist texts refer to many *arhats* as having this ability, though not as born in an out of the ordinary way. More relevant is the idea that while spiritually advanced beings can have clear awareness at conception, and some during gestation, only a perfect Buddha can retain this at birth (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.103, 231, and its commentary 885–6, and *Abhidharmakośābhāṣya* 3.16–17). It may have been thought by some that this required a non-vaginal birth.

The *Nidānakathā* account relates that Gautama was born in the pleasant Lumbinī grove, where his mother had stopped off on a trip to give birth in her parent's home. It is said that she gave birth standing, holding onto a tree. The *sutta* accounts say that the baby was set down on the ground by four gods (*devas*), and that a warm and cool stream of water appeared from the sky as a water-libation for mother and child. He immediately stood, walked seven paces, scanned in all directions, and said in a noble voice that he was the foremost being in the world, and that this would be his last rebirth (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.123).

Gautama's birth under a tree fits the pattern of the other key events in his life: attaining enlightenment under another tree, giving his first sermon in an animal park, and dying between two trees. This suggests his liking for simple natural environments where he could be in harmony with all forms of life.

As his mother had died a week after giving birth (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.122), Gautama was brought up by his father's second wife, his mother's sister, Mahā-prajāpatī (Pali Mahā-pajāpatī). The early texts say little on his early life, except that it was one of lily pools, fine clothes and fragrances, with female musicians as attendants in his three palaces (or, at least, buildings on high platforms: Pali *pāsādas*; *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.145). The later biographies portray him as having been an eager, intelligent, and compassionate youth. They relate that his father was keen that he should stay at home to become a great king, and so surrounded him with

luxuries to ensure that he remained attached to the worldly life. At sixteen, he was married to Yaśodharā (Pali Yasodharā), and at twenty-nine they had a son named Rāhula (see entry on The Buddha's Family).

RENUNCIATION

In the Pali Canon, a text covering the period from the Buddha's renunciation to his first disciples becoming *arhats* is the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.160–75). It was from a wealthy background that Gautama renounced the worldly life of pleasure and set out on his religious quest. The lead-up to this crucial transition is described in different ways in the early and later texts. The *suttas* portray it as the result of a long consideration. Even from his sheltered existence, he became aware of the facts of ageing, sickness and death. Realizing that even he was not immune from these, the “vanities” of youth, health, and life left him (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.145–6). He therefore set out to find the “unborn, unageing, undecaying, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled, uttermost security from bondage – *nirvāṇa*” (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.163). He realized, though, that:

House life is crowded and dusty; going forth [into the life of a wandering renunciant] is wide open. It is not easy, living life in a household, to lead a holy-life as utterly perfect as a polished shell. Suppose I were to shave off my hair and beard, put on saffron garments, and go forth from home into homelessness? (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.240).

The *Dīgha Nikāya* (2.151) says that the transition occurred at the age of twenty-nine, the *Nidānakatha* (pp.60–2) seeing this as just after the birth of his son. Such later texts portray the renunciation as arising from a sudden realization rather than from a gradual reflection. In this, they follow the model of a *sutta* story of a previous Buddha, Vipassī (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.22–9), which sees the lives of all Buddhas as following a recurring pattern. The *Nidānakathā* relates that, on three consecutive days, Gautama visited one of his parks in his chariot. His father had the streets cleared of unpleasant sights, but the gods ensured that he saw a worn-out, grey-haired old man, a sick man and a corpse. Amazed at these new sights, his charioteer explained to him that ageing, sickness and death came to all people, thus putting him in a state of agitation at the nature of life. In this way, the texts portray an example of the human confrontation with frailty and mortality, for while these facts are ‘known’ to us all, a clear realization and acceptance of them often does come as a novel and disturbing insight. On a fourth trip to his park, Gautama saw a saffron-robed renunciant with a shaven head and a calm demeanour, the sight of whom inspired him to adopt such a life-style. This account of seeing four signs is a good example of a mythic form of truth-telling. That night, he left his palace, taking a long last look at his son, who lay in his sleeping wife's arms, knowing it would be difficult for him to leave if she awoke. The Buddhist tradition sees his leaving of his family as done for the benefit of all beings; moreover, after he became a Buddha, he is said to have returned to his home town and taught his family, with his son ordaining under him as a monk. His renunciation of family life stands as a symbolic precedent for the monastic life of Buddhist monks and nuns. Indeed, the term for the Buddha's renunciation is the ‘great going forth’ (Skt. *mahā-pravrajya*, Pali *mahā-pabbajjā*), *pravajya* being the term for ordaining as a novice monk.

SPIRITUAL QUEST

After Gautama's renunciation, the tradition allots a six year span to his spiritual quest. The *suttas* tell that he first sought out teachers from whom he could learn spiritual techniques, going first to Ārāḍa Kālāma (Pali Āḷāra Kālāma; *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.163–7). He soon mastered his teachings and then enquired after the meditational state on which they were based. This was the “sphere of nothingness”, a mystical trance attained by yogic concentration, in which the mind goes beyond any apparent object and dwells on the thought of nothingness. After Gautama quickly learned to enter this state, Ārāḍa offered him joint leadership of his group of disciples, but he turned down the offer as he felt that, while he had attained a refined inner calmness, he had not yet attained enlightenment and the end of suffering. He then went to another yoga teacher, Udraka Rāmaputra (Pali Uddaka Rāmaputta), and again quickly grasped his doctrine and entered the meditational state on which it was based, the “sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception”. This went beyond the previous state to a level of mental stilling where consciousness is so attenuated as to hardly exist. In response, Udraka acknowledged him as even his own teacher, for only his dead father (Rāma) had previously attained this state. Again Gautama passed up a chance of leadership and influence on the grounds that he had not yet reached his goal. Nevertheless, he later incorporated both the mystical states that he had attained into his own meditation system, as possible ways to calm and purify the mind in preparation for developing liberating insight. He in fact taught a great variety of meditative methods, adapting some from the existing yogic tradition, and can be seen as having been one of India's greatest practitioners of meditation.

Having experimented with one of the methods of religious practice current in his day, he next tried ascetic self-mortification as a possible route to his goal. The *suttas* tell that he settled in a woodland grove at Uruvilvā (Pali Uruvelā) and resolved to strive earnestly to overcome attachment to sensual pleasures by intense effort, trying to dominate such tendencies by force of will (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.77–81; 1.240–46). He practised non-breathing meditations, though they produced fierce headaches, stomach pains, and burning heat all over his body. He reduced his food intake to a few drops of bean soup a day, till he became so emaciated that he could hardly stand and his body hair fell out. At this point, he felt that it was not possible for anyone to go further on the path of asceticism and still live. Nevertheless, though he had developed clarity of mind and energy, his body and mind were pained and untroubled, so that he could not carry on with his quest. He therefore abandoned his practice of harsh asceticism.

At this point, he might have abandoned his quest as hopeless, but he thought “might there be another path to awakening?” (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.246). He then remembered a meditative state that he had once spontaneously entered while concentrating on the earth being cut by a plough. He recollected that this state, technically known as the “first *dhyāna*” (Pali *jhāna*), was beyond involvement in sense-pleasures, which he had been attempting to conquer by painful asceticism, but was accompanied by deep calm, blissful joy, and tranquil happiness. He wondered whether it was a path to awakening, and, seeing that it was, he resolved to use it. On his taking sustaining food to prepare himself for this meditation, his

five companions in asceticism shunned him in disgust, seeing him as having abandoned their shared quest and taken to luxurious living.

One of the points implicit in the account of the Buddha under the two yoga teachers is that, though he attained refined and subtle states, these were not acceptable as the end-point of his quest, as he had not yet attained its true goal. He was also clearly not interested in leading disciples unless he had something truly worthwhile to teach. In the spiritual quest of the Buddha, it is also interesting to note that: (1) with the two yoga teachers, he attains two mystical states which are among four ‘formless’ (Skt. *ārūpya*, Pali *arūpa*) states: ones which *leave behind* perception of anything whatsoever material – but this does not lead to his goal; (2) in his ascetic phase, he tries to go for *mastery over* the body and its desires by force of will, but this exhausts him and drives him to a painful dead end; (3) he then turns to a path which requires him to build up a healthy body and attain inner states of happiness, not pain. This path of *dhyāna* is, in effect, one of *mindful awareness* of the body, rather than ignoring it (in formless states) or trying to forcefully repress it. This approach of awareness rather than ignoring or forcefulness is found in many other aspects of Buddhist practice.

TEMPTATION BY MĀRA

One *sutta* (*Suttanipāta* vv.425–49) outlines a temptation sequence which the later texts put at this juncture. It refers to a Satan-like figure known as Māra, ‘Death-bringer’, also commonly called “the Bad One” (Skt. *pāpīyāms*, Pali *pāpimant*): a deity who has won his place by previous good works, but who uses his power to entrap people in sensual desire and attachment, so as to stay within his realm of influence. This is the round of rebirth and repeated death, so that Māra is seen as the embodiment of both sensual desire and death. Māra came to the emaciated ascetic with honeyed words. He urged him to abandon his quest and take up a more conventional religious life of sacrifice and good works, so as to generate good karma (karmic fruitfulness or ‘merit’). In response, Gautama replied that he had no need of more good karma, and scorned the ‘squadrons’ of Māra: sense-desire, jealousy, hunger and thirst, craving, dullness and drowsiness, cowardice, fear of commitment, belittling others, obstinate insensitivity, and self-praise. Māra then retreated in defeat.

This account, clearly portraying the final inner struggle of Gautama, gains dramatic colour in the later texts, where Māra’s ‘army’ of spiritual faults bore witness to the fact that he had done many charitable acts in previous lives. Taunting Gautama that he had no-one to bear witness to *his* good deeds, Māra tried to use the power of his own good karma to throw Gautama off the spot where he was sitting. Gautama did not move, however, but meditated on the spiritual perfections that he had developed over many previous lives, knowing that he had a right to the spot where he sat. He then touched the earth for it to bear witness to his store of karmic fruitfulness. The earth quaked, and the earth goddess (known variously as Sthāvarā, Dharaṇī, Bhūmidevī, Bhū Devī, Pṛthivī, Kṣiti, Vasundharā) appeared, wringing from her hair a flood of water, accumulated in the past when Gautama had formalized good deeds by a simple ritual of water-pouring. At the quaking and flood, Māra and his army fled. This is commemorated as a victory over evil by countless images and paintings. These show Gautama

seated cross-legged in meditation with his right hand touching the earth: the “earth-touching” (Skt. *bhūmi-sparśa*) or “conquest of Māra” (Pali *māra-vijaya*) gesture.

Māra’s location in the scheme of worlds is not specified in the *suttas*. It is certainly not hell, which is presided over by the god Yama. The Theravāda commentary to the *Majjhima Nikāya* (1.28) says that Māra dwells in the heaven of the Masters of the Creations of Others, the highest of the six heavens of the realm of sense-desire, a realm which also includes all beings except the higher gods. As with the Christian Satan, a ‘fallen angel’, Māra is seen as having had a good past, but as using his power to a perverted end. He goes for power over beings of the sense-desire realm rather than seeking to attain a higher rebirth or an end to rebirth. The next higher heaven is the beginning of the realm of pure or elemental form, where the *brahmā* gods dwell: beings who perceive the world in a purer, more direct way, untainted by sense-desire (though still with other limitations). Māra is thus seen to exist at a transition point in the process of spiritual development. The *brahmā* levels correspond to the *dhyānas*, meditative trances free of sense-desire, ill-will and certain other spiritual hindrances. Māra is seen as being unwilling to make the step to this state. Instead of developing the power to *transcend* the realm of sense desire, he goes for *power over* it. This is always a possibility. In human terms, it parallels the situation of a spiritual teacher who uses his or her influence over others to manipulate them for his own ends.

However, a Māra is not stuck forever in this state. Maudgalyāyana (Pali Moggallāna), one of the Buddha’s two chief disciples – an enlightened *arhat* –, says that long ago, at the time of the previous Buddha Kakusandha (Pali), he had been a Māra named Dūsin (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.333).

The scope of Māra’s influence is sometimes seen as both the realm of the five senses (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.148–9) and the (unenlightened) mind (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1.115). At a philosophical level, Māra is a term for all that is *duḥkha*, all the limited, conditioned processes that make up the world and living beings. Here it is equivalent to ‘subject to death’.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT/AWAKENING (*BODHI*)

Free of the spiritual hindrances represented by Māra, Gautama then developed deep meditations as a prelude to his awakening, seated under a species of tree which later became known as the *bodhi*, or ‘Awakening’ tree. The *sutta* account (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.247–9) describes how he entered the first *dhyāna*, and then gradually deepened his state of concentrated calm till he reached the fourth *dhyāna*, a state of great equanimity, mental brightness and purity. Based on this state, he went on to develop, in the course of the three watches of the moon-lit night, the “threefold knowledge” (Skt. *trai-vidyā*, Pali *te-vijjā*):

- memory of up to a hundred thousand previous lives (and of past universes);
- seeing the rebirth of others according to their karma;
- insight into the Four Ennobling Truths on life’s pains (Skt. *duḥkha*, Pali *dukkha*), their origin, cessation, and Path to this, and of the same fourfold

scheme applied to the “taints” (Skt. *āśravas*, Pali *āsavas*): sense-desire, (attachment to) becoming, ignorance and views – seen as spiritual faults which fester in the mind and keep it unenlightened.

On the phrase “threefold knowledge” Richard Gombrich comments, “There is no reason why this particular set of attainments – of which the last one is indeed composite – should be called ‘three knowledges’ if they were not intended to parallel and trump the ‘three knowledges’ of brahmins” (1996: 29), i.e. knowledge of the contents of their three main *Veda-saṃhitā* texts.

The third knowledge, completed at dawn, brought the perfect awakening Gautama had been seeking, so that he was now, at the age of thirty-five, a Buddha. *Dhammapada* verses 153–4 are said to record his words of joyful exultation at this achievement of the end of craving and spiritual ignorance, and attaining the unconditioned *nirvāṇa*, beyond ageing, sickness and death.

The Canonical account (*Vinaya* 1.1–7, *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.167–70) then says that the new Buddha stayed under or near the *bodhi* tree for four weeks, at the place now called Bodh-Gayā. After meditatively reflecting on his awakening, he pondered the possibility of teaching others, but thought that the *Dharma* he had experienced was so profound, subtle, and “beyond the sphere of reason”, that others would be too subject to attachment to be able to understand it. At this, the compassionate Great *Brahmā* deity Sahampati became alarmed at the thought that a fully awakened person had arisen in the world, but that he might not share his rare and precious wisdom with others. He therefore appeared before the Buddha and respectfully asked him to teach, for “there are beings with little dust in their eyes who, not hearing the *Dharma*, are decaying...”. The Buddha then used his mind-reading powers to survey the world and determine that some people were spiritually mature enough to understand his message. On deciding to teach, he declared, “Opened for those who wish to hear are the doors of the Deathless”. The entreaty of the compassionate *Brahmā* is seen by Buddhists as the stimulus for the unfolding of the Buddha’s compassion, the necessary complement to his enlightened wisdom for his role as a perfect Buddha, a “teacher of gods and humans”.

Gautama wished to teach his two yoga teachers first of all, but gods informed him that they were now dead, a fact which he then confirmed by his meditative knowledge. He therefore decided to teach his former companions in asceticism. Intuiting that they were currently in the animal park at Ṛṣivadana (Pali *Isipatana*; now called *Sārnāth*) near Benares, he set out to walk there, a journey of about one hundred miles.

THE FIRST SERMON

The Canonical account (*Vinaya* 1.10–12; *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 5.420–4) relates that, on arriving at the animal park, Gautama’s five former companions saw him in the distance, and resolved to snub him as a spiritual failure. As he approached, however, they saw that a great change had come over him and, in spite of themselves, respectfully greeted him and washed his feet. At first they addressed him as an equal, but the Buddha insisted that he was a *Tathāgata*, a ‘Thus-gone’ or

‘Truth-attained One’, who had found the Deathless and could therefore be their teacher. After he twice repeated his affirmation, to overcome their hesitation, the ascetics acknowledged that he had a new-found assurance and were willing to be taught by him.

Gautama then gave his first sermon. This commences with the idea that there is a “middle way” (Skt. *madhyama-pratipad*, Pali *majjhima-paṭipadā*) for those who have gone forth from the home life, a way which avoids both the extremes of devotion to mere sense-pleasures and devotion to ascetic self-torment. Gautama had himself previously experienced both of these spiritual dead-ends. The middle way which he had found to lead to enlightenment was the *ārya* (Pali *ariya*), or Noble, Eightfold Path (Skt. *mārga* Pali *magga*). The idea of a middle way runs through much of Buddhism. The term is applied both to a middle way of practice, for which the first sermon is the *locus classicus*, but also, even in the early texts, to a middle way of understanding, avoiding extreme views.

Gautama then continued with the kernel of his message, the Four Ennobling Truths/Realities (see entries on these). He then emphasized the liberating effect on him of his full insight into these truths, such that he was now a Buddha. As a result of this instruction, one member of Gautama’s audience, Kauṇḍinya (Pali Koṇḍañña), gained transformative experiential insight into the truths taught, so that Gautama joyfully affirmed his understanding. This insight is described as the gaining of the stainless “*Dharma-eye*”, by which Kauṇḍinya “sees” “attains” and “plunges into” the *Dharma*, free from all doubt in the Buddha’s teachings. This experience is technically known as ‘stream-entry’, a crucial spiritual transition brought about by the first glimpse of *nirvāṇa* (though it may also refer to a person’s going straight to a higher level of insight). Kauṇḍinya’s gaining of the *Dharma-eye* is clearly seen as the climax of the first sermon, for as soon as it occurs, the exultant message is rapidly transmitted up through various levels of gods that “the supreme *Dharma-wheel*” had been set in motion by the “Lord”, and could not be stopped by any power. The “Setting in motion of the *Dharma-wheel*” (Skt. *Dharma-cakra-pavartana*, Pali *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana*) thus became the title of the *sutta* of the first sermon (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.420–4). The image of setting a wheel in motion is intended to symbolize the first transmission of experiential *Dharma*-understanding from the Buddha to a disciple, inaugurating an era of the spiritual influence of the *Dharma*.

After Kauṇḍinya was ordained, thus becoming the first member of the monastic *saṅgha*, the Buddha gave more extensive explanations of his teachings to the other four ascetics, so that, one by one, they attained the *Dharma-eye* and were then ordained. Later the Buddha gave his ‘second’ sermon, on the factors of personality being ‘not-Self’, at which his disciples all attained the full experience of *nirvāṇa* – as he himself had done at his awakening – so as to become *arhats* (Pali *arahats*).

Other disciples, monastic and lay, followed, so that soon there were sixty-one *arhats*, including the Buddha. Having such a body of enlightened monk-disciples, the Buddha sent them out on a mission to spread the *Dharma*: “Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the manyfolk, for the happiness of the manyfolk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of gods and humans”(Vinaya 1.21). As the teaching spread, Gautama in time gained his two

chief disciples, Śāriputra (Pali Sāriputta), famed for his wisdom and ability to teach, and Maugalyāyana (Pali Moggallāna), famed for his psychic powers developed by meditation. Five years after first ordaining monks, Gautama initiated an order of nuns, in response to the repeated requests of his foster-mother Mahāprajāpatī (Pali Mahāpajāpatī), and the suggestion of his faithful attendant monk Ānanda (see entry on The Buddha's Family).

THE MIDDLE YEARS

The Canon gives only incidental reference to events between the sending out of the sixty *arhats* and the last year of the Buddha's life. The general picture conveyed is that he spent his long teaching career wandering on foot, with few possessions, around the Ganges basin region. Though he was of a contemplative nature, loving the solitude of natural surroundings, he was generally accompanied by many disciples and spent much of his time in or near the new towns and cities, especially Śrāvastī, Rājagṛha and Vaiśālī (Pali Sāvattihī, Rājagaha and Vesālī).

THE BUDDHA'S CONTRIBUTION TO A DISCIPLE'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

In the Pali Canon, much emphasis is placed on a disciple's own effort: "By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone; by oneself is one made pure. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another" (*Dhammapada* verse 165). Also: "You yourself must make the effort; Buddhas only point the way" (*Dhammapada* verse 276).

Nevertheless, the role of the Buddha in 'pointing the way' is by no means neglected: the individual must tread the path him/herself, but the Buddha is seen, so to speak, as a wise map-maker to guide the journey. This is also acknowledged in a passage at *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.100, where the Buddha is old and ill and explains that he has made his teachings explicit, so that a disciple should "live with himself as an island, with himself as a refuge... with *Dharma* as an island, with *Dharma* as refuge...", by developing careful mindfulness of body and mind. This not only counsels self-reliance, but also reliance on *Dharma* – which other passages emphasize as being discovered, taught and embodied by the Buddha.

His role as a way-discoverer is seen in a passage (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.105–7) where he gives a simile of a man who, while wandering in a forest, discovers an ancient path to a once populated city. Likewise he himself discovered the Noble Eightfold Path to *nirvāṇa*, the end of suffering, the 'ancient' path travelled by past Buddhas, and made it known (see also entry on The Buddha's Style of Teaching).

THE BUDDHA'S APPEARANCE, VOICE, MODE OF CONDUCT AND PRESENCE

At one point, an admiring brahmin says of the Buddha:

Sirs, the renunciant Gautama is handsome, comely, and graceful, possessing supreme beauty of complexion, with sublime beauty and sublime presence, remarkable to behold. [He] ... is a good speaker with a good delivery; he speaks words that are courteous, distinct, flawless, and communicate the meaning (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.166–7).

Amongst the ‘thirty-two marks’ of a Buddha (see entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha) are that he had “the voice of a *brahmā*” (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.173), which is explained thus of a *brahmā* deity:

his voice had eight qualities: it was distinct, intelligible, pleasant, attractive, compact, concise, deep and resonant. And when he spoke in that voice to the assembly, its sound did not carry outside. Whoever has such a voice as that is said to have the voice of a *brahmā* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.212).

One *sutta* describes a young brahmin visiting the Buddha to see if his reputation as a Buddha and *arhat* is deserved. After seeing that he is endowed with the thirty-two marks, he stays with him for seven months, closely observing his every move (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.135). His consequent description of him includes:

He walks neither too quickly nor too slowly. ... He does not walk looking about. ...When seated indoors, he does not fidget with his hands. He does not fidget with his feet. He does not sit with his knees crossed. He does not sit with his ankles crossed. He does not sit with his hands holding his chin. When seated indoors, he is not afraid, he does not shiver and tremble, he is not nervous... and he is intent on seclusion.... He washes his bowl without making a splashing noise. ... (When eating) he turns the mouthful over two or three times in his mouth and then swallows it. ... He takes his food experiencing the taste, though not experiencing greed for the taste. ... (After he has washed his bowl) he is neither careless of his bowl nor over-solicitous about it. ... When he has eaten, he sits in silence for a while, but he does not let the time for blessing go by. ... (After taking leave from a donor’s house) he walks neither too fast nor too slow, and he does not go on as one who wants to get away (pp.137–9).

This portrays the Buddha as one whose movements and actions are measured and balanced, expressing absolutely no hint of greed, restlessness, fear, indifference, over-concern, or aversion. Was his manner to have expressed any hint of these, the implication is that this would have shown that he was not enlightened.

The early texts portray the Buddha as a charismatic, humanitarian teacher who inspired many people. He even elicited a response from animals; for it is said that an elephant once looked after him by bringing water when he was spending a period alone in the forest (*Vinaya* 1.352). A person who bore enmity towards him, however, was his cousin Devadatta, one of his monks. Jealous of his influence, Devadatta once suggested that the ageing Buddha should let him lead the monastic *saṅgha*, and then plotted to kill him when the request was turned down (*Vinaya* 2.191–5). In one attempt on his life, Devadatta asked his friend, prince Ajātasātru (Pali Ajātasattu), to send soldiers to waylay and assassinate the Buddha. Sixteen soldiers in turn went to do this, but all were too afraid to do so, and became the Buddha’s disciples instead. In another attempt, the fierce man-killing elephant Nālāgiri was let loose on the road on which the Buddha was travelling. As the elephant charged, the Buddha calmly stood his ground and suffused the elephant with the power of his lovingkindness, so that it stopped and bowed its head, letting the Buddha stroke and tame it.

THE BUDDHA'S COMPASSION

The Buddha's friendly disposition is shown in how he greeted people. It is stated,

Now it is the custom for Buddhas, for lords to exchange friendly greetings with incoming monks. So the Lord spoke thus to the monk Kassapagotta: "I hope, monk, that things went well with you, I hope you had enough to support life, I hope you have come on the journey with but little fatigue...?" (*Vinaya* 1.313).

Once, the Buddha is said to have found a monk with dysentery, smeared with his own excrement, that the other monks were not tending to. He therefore washed him himself and lay him on a comfortable couch. After this, he tells the other monks:

Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend to one another, then who is there who will tend you? Whosoever, monks, would tend me, he should tend the sick (*Vinaya* 1.302).

After the Buddha eats a meal offered by Cunda which helps to trigger his final illness, he is concerned lest Cunda might feel remorse and blame himself; thus the Buddha says that his offering is to be seen as karmically very uplifting (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.135–6).

In general, the Buddha's most dominant expression of compassion is his careful teaching of others so as to aid their movement to enlightenment. This is particularly seen when the Buddha agrees to the request of Brahmā Sahampati for him to teach after his enlightenment, when it is said that he, "out of compassion for beings" surveyed the world, saw that there were some who were ready to understand his profound teaching, and decided to teach (*Vinaya* 1.6–7).

THE PASSING AWAY OF THE BUDDHA

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.72–167) deals with the last year of the Buddha's life. During this period, Ānanda asked about the fate of the *saṅgha* after his death, clearly wondering who would lead it. In reply, the Buddha said that he had taught the *Dharma* without holding anything back, and that the *saṅgha* depended on the *Dharma*, not on any leader, even himself. Members of the *saṅgha* should look to their own self-reliant practice, with the clearly taught *Dharma* as guide: with themselves and the *Dharma* as "island" and "refuge" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.100). Later the Buddha specified that, after his death, the *saṅgha* should take both the *Dharma* and monastic discipline (*vinaya*) as their "teacher" (2.154).

Though unwell for the last three months of his life, the Buddha continued to wander on foot. Finally, he could only continue by overcoming his pain through the power of meditation. His journey ended at the small village of Kuśinagarī (Pali Kusinārā), where he lay down on a couch between two trees, in bloom out of season. The text says that gods from ten regions of the universe assembled to

witness the great event of a Buddha's death: his "great passing into *nirvāṇa*" (Skt. *mahā-parinirvāṇa*, Pali *mahā-parinibbāna*; 2.138–9).

When asked what should be done about his funeral arrangements, the Buddha remarked that this was the concern of the laity, not the *saṅgha*, but that his body should be treated like that of a *cakravartin* (Pali *cakkavatti*) ruler (see entry on The Buddha and *Cakravartins*). After his cremation, the Buddha's relics were placed in eight *stūpas*, with the bowl used to collect the relics and the ashes of the funeral fire in two more (see entry on Relics of the Buddha).

Even on his death-bed, the Buddha continued to teach. A wanderer asked whether other *śramaṇa* leaders had attained true knowledge. Rather than say that their religious systems were wrong and his right, the Buddha simply indicated that the crucial ingredient of any such system was the Noble Eightfold Path: only then could it lead to full arhatship. He saw such a Path as absent from other teachings that he knew of.

Not long after this, the Buddha asked his monks if any had final questions that they wanted answering before he died. When they were silent, he sensitively said that, if they were silent simply out of reverence for him, they should have a friend ask their question. They remained silent. Seeing that they all had a good understanding of his teachings, he therefore gave his final words. According to the Pali tradition, these were: "Conditioned things (Pali *saṅkhāras*) are subject to decay. Attain perfection through heedful attentiveness (*appamādena*)!" (2.156). In a Sanskrit version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, though, his last words were:

Monks, gaze upon the body of the *Tathāgata*! Examine the body of the *Tathāgata*! For the sight of a completely enlightened Buddha is as rare an event as the blossoming of the uduṃbara tree. And, monks, do not break into lamentation after I am gone, for all karmically constituted things [better: conditioned things] are subject to passing away (Strong, 2002: 37).

He then made his exit from the world, in the fearless, calm and self-controlled state of meditation. He passed into the first *dhyāna*, and then by degrees through the three other *dhyānas*, four 'formless' mystical states, and then the 'cessation of perception and feeling'. He then gradually descended back to the first *dhyāna*, moved back up to the fourth *dhyāna*, and died from here (2.156). Buddhists see this event not so much as a 'death' as a passing into the deathless (Skt. *amṛta* Pali *amata*), *nirvāṇa*.

THE BUDDHA'S FAMILY

The historical person known as 'the Buddha' was born into the Gautama (Pali Gotama) clan and was given the name Siddhārtha (Pali Siddhattha). He was born in the republic of Śākya (Pali Sakka, Sakyā, Sākiyā), for which reason he is generally known in the Mahāyāna tradition as Śākyamuni (Pali Sakyamuni) Buddha, 'Śākyan Sage' Buddha, though in Theravāda Buddhism, he is usually referred to as Gotama Buddha. The Śākyan capital was Kapilavastu (Pali Kapilavatthu).

His father was Śuddhodana (Pali Suddhodana) and mother (Mahā)-Māyā (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.52), though as she died seven days after his birth, he was brought up by his mother's sister, Mahā-Prajāpatī (Pali Mahā-Pajāpatī), who was also married to his father. He had no brothers or sisters but had a half-brother in (Sundara-) Nanda, son of Mahā-Prajāpatī. The Theravāda tradition says he also had a half sister, Sundarī-Nandā (*Therīgāthā* commentary 83 and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* commentary 1.363). Both later ordained and became *arhats*.

It is said (*Mahāvastu* 1.355) that his father had three brothers Dhautodana (Pali Dhotodana), Śuklodana and Amṛtodana (Pali Amitodana), and a sister Amṛtikā (Pali Amitā). The Theravāda tradition gives him *four* brothers, including both a Sukkodana, and Sukkhodana, and adds another sister, Pamitā (*Suttanipāta* commentary 1.357, *Mahāvamsa* II.18–22). The *Mūlasarvastivāda Vinaya* names the sisters as Śuddhā, Droṇā, Śuklā and Amṛtikā, thus paralleling their brothers' names, as it lists a brother Droṇodana instead of Dhautodana (Strong, 2001: 38).

The *Mahāvastu* (1.355–7) names his mother and Mahā-Prajāpatī's siblings, all sisters, as Mahāmāyā, Atimāyā, Anantamāyā, Cūlīyā, and Kolīsovā, and says that these were married to Śuddhodana's five (above, three!) brothers. The Theravāda tradition just refers to their siblings as two brothers, Suppabuddha and Daṇḍapāṇi.

The Buddha had cousins in: (1) Ānanda, seen in the Theravāda tradition as son of Amitodana; seen in the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu* (3.176–7) as son of Śuklodana and a Mṛigī. (2) Devadatta, seen in the Theravāda tradition as son of his maternal uncle Suppabuddha and paternal aunt Amitā (though at *Vinaya* 2.189, Devadatta is called Godhiputta, Godhi's son). *Mahāvastu* 3.176–7 sees him as son of Śuklodana, and brother of Ānanda and a Upadhāna. Both Ānanda and Devadatta ordain as monks. (3) *Mahāvastu* 3.176–7 adds Aniruddha (Pali Anuruddha), Mahānāma and Bhaṭṭika as sons of Amṛtodana, and Nandana and Nandika as sons of Śukrodana, with the first and last two of these becoming monks. Aniruddha becomes a notable *arhat*, and remains calm when the Buddha dies (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.156–7). He emphasised the four applications of mindfulness (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.294) and was described as the monk who was foremost in the 'divine eye' (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.23).

The identity of the Gautama's wife is somewhat unclear. In the Theravada tradition, the *Buddhavaṃsa* (XXVI. 15) calls his wife and mother of Rāhula (Rāhulamātā) Bhaddakaccā, Bhaddakaccānā in its Burmese edition; the *Mahāvamsa* (II.21–4) and the commentary to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (1.204–5) calls her Bhaddakaccānā,

and the former sees her as his cousin, sister of Devadatta. The *Mahāvastu* (2.69), however, implies that Gautama's wife, which it calls Yaśodharā, was not Devadatta's sister, as he woos her. The *Buddhavaṃsa* commentary (p.245) also calls Gautama's wife Yasodharā (Sanskrit Yaśodharā), which is the more common name used in North-Indian Sanskrit texts such as *Divyāvadāna* (p.253). The Mahāyānised Sarvāstivādin *Lalitavistara* calls her Gopā, daughter of maternal uncle Daṇḍapāṇi, and some texts give him three wives: Yaśodharā, Gopikā and Mṛgajā (Strong, 2001: 46). The *Mahāvastu* (2.73) sees Yaśodharā as daughter of Śāykan Mahānāma. It also refers (3.177) to a Mahānāma as son of Gautama's maternal uncle Amṛtodana, as does the Theravāda tradition, but if Gautama married Amṛtodana's granddaughter, there would have been a notable age difference.

ŚUDDHODANA

While later tradition portrays him as a *rājā* in the sense of a king, the Śākyan land was an oligarchic republic, and Śuddhodana was probably chosen by fellow nobles. When it was predicted that his son would be either a great ruler or a Buddha, it is said that he sought to protect him from the unpleasant side of life that might prompt him to renounce worldly life and seek enlightenment.

Most traditions agree that the Buddha returns to Kapilavastu in response to a request from his father (Strong 2001: 91–9). During this time, the Buddha gradually brings his father round to accepting his teachings and, though he never became a monk, he attains the different levels of sanctity, becoming a streamenterer, once-returner, then non-returner and is an *arhat* at the time of his death (*Therīgāthā* commentary 141). While in Kapilavastu, many relatives of the Buddha become monks. Śuddhodana gets the Buddha to agree that no one could be ordained without the permission of their parents (*Vinaya* 1.82–3). The *Mahāvastu* (3.176) also says that he got the Buddha to agree that no more than one son from each family could ordain, and none if he were an only son.

(MAHĀ)-MĀYĀ

The Theravādin *Nidānakathā* relates that at the time of Gautama's conception, Mahāmāyā dreamt that she was transported to the Himālayas where a being in the form of an auspicious white elephant entered her right side. Near the end of her pregnancy, she journeyed from Kapilavastu to the home of her relatives to give birth, as was the custom. On the way, she and her party passed the pleasant Lumbinī grove, where she stopped to enjoy the flowers and birdsong. Here she went into labour, holding onto a tree. The *sutta* account (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.122–3) say that Māyā had a pregnancy of ten lunar months, then gave birth standing up, with the baby, unsmearred by blood or fluids, set down on the ground by four *devas*, and a warm and cool stream of water appearing from the sky as a water-libation for mother and child.

The *sutta* says that Māyā died seven days after giving birth, with a later text saying that she was then in her forties (*Vibhaṅga* commentary 278). The *sutta* says she was reborn in the Tuṣita (Pali Tusita) heaven (in some traditions, the Trāyastriṃśā, Pali Tāvatiṃsa, heaven). Later texts say that the Buddha spent one

rainy season visiting the Trāyastrimśa heaven to teach her the *Abhidharma*, which led to her becoming a streamenterer (*Dhammapada* commentary 3.216–7).

MAHĀPRAJĀPATĪ

Five year's after his enlightenment, Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī is said to have gone to the Buddha with 500 other Śākya women, whose husbands had recently ordained, to seek ordination, even though a nun's order did not yet exist (*Vinaya* 2.253–5). The *Therīgāthā* commentary (141) says that her husband had recently died. At first the Buddha refuses to accede to her request, though he accepts after Ānanda asks on her behalf and has the Buddha agree that women are capable of the various grades of enlightenment, up to arhatship. The *Dhammapada* commentary (1.115) says that Mahāprajāpatī was herself already a streamenterer, and she soon becomes an *arhat* after her ordination as the first nun. However, in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.253–7), she is portrayed as still a layperson at a time when the nun's order already exists.

Verses 157–62 of the *Therīgāthā* are attributed to her, and her death at the age of 120 is described in 189 verses in the *Therī-apadāna* (Walters, 1995). Here, as Gotamī, she is portrayed as paralleling the Buddha, Gotama, both having a 'final great *nirvāṇa*' (*mahā-parinirvāṇa*; v.75). She says that she has the six 'higher knowledges', as had the Buddha and certain other *arhats* (v.78), then showed the first of these by rising into the air and multiplying her form, etc. (vv.80–90). She then goes through the same series of meditative states that the Buddha was to go through at his death, before passing into final *nirvāṇa*, at which there is an earthquake and flowers fall from the sky, as at the Buddha's death (vv.145–9). The Buddha then praises her as 'with wisdom vast and wide' (v.183). It is interesting that in this text, Mahāprajāpatī addresses Ānanda as her 'son'(vv.63–5), and that Ānanda collects her bones after her cremation (v.178).

ĀNANDA

For the last 25 years of the Buddha's life, Ānanda was his faithful personal attendant and, in effect, secretary. He accepted this position on the conditions that he did not get any special food or robes but that he could ask the Buddha whatever he wished, and that the Buddha would repeat to him any teachings he had given when he was absent. He was very helpful to enquirers, by answering questions himself or arranging for them to discuss matters with the Buddha – unless the Buddha was ill or very tired. When the Buddha was old and approaching death, he said to Ānanda, "For a long time, Ānanda, you have been in the *Tathāgata*'s presence, showing lovingkindness in act of body, speech and mind, beneficially, blessedly, wholeheartedly, and unstintingly" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.144). Ānanda had a very enquiring mind and if the Buddha just smiled, he would ask the reason.

Even prior to his enlightenment (though he was then a streamenterer), the Buddha said of him, "Monks, Ānanda is a learner. Yet it would not be easy to find his equal in wisdom" (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.225). The Buddha described him as his foremost monk of those "who have learned much, ... are of good memory

(*satimant*)... of good behaviour... resolute... personal attendants” (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.24–25).

Ānanda was the most popular teacher of the nuns; he often taught them and was also in charge of arrangements for regularly sending teachers to them. He was also a popular teacher among laywomen. His services were often sought for consoling the sick, advising, for example, practice of the four applications of mindfulness (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5. 176–8).

At the first council, Ānanda was asked to be present to recount what he had heard of the Buddha’s teachings. So as to ensure he was enlightened, like all the others at the first council, he put in a special effort on the night before and so became an *arhat* (*Vinaya* 2.284–6). The initial words of most discourses, “Thus have I heard” are said to have been Ānanda’s words at the first council.

NANDA

Nanda is said to have been reluctantly persuaded by his half brother, the Buddha, to ordain, even though he had just married. He pined for his wife and wished to disrobe, but the Buddha persuaded him to stay by showing him the more beautiful goddesses that his meditations might give him access to. Later he realised the base level of this motivation for staying a monk, and went on to become an *arhat* (*Udāna* 22–3). He is later praised as chief of monks who guard the sense-doors (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.25).

DEVADATTA

Devadatta is portrayed as someone oriented to gain and fame (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 4.160). In his youth he is seen as a jealous rival of his cousin the Buddha, and in many *Jātaka* stories, on past lives of the Buddha, he also appears as a problematic character, though one who also did good deeds. He is said to have ordained in the Buddha’s *saṅgha*, attained worldly psychic powers (*Vinaya* 2.183) and was originally well thought of as a monk (*Vinaya* 2.189). When the Buddha was in his seventies, though, his jealousy led him to attempt to take over as head of the *saṅgha* (*Vinaya* 2.188), and he conspired with prince Ajātasatru (Pali Ajātasatta) in this (*Vinaya* 2.184–203). While the latter succeeded in his plot to kill his father, Bimbisāra, Devadatta tried three times to kill the Buddha without success. In two of these, his attempt is via soldiers of Ajātasatru and a drunk elephant (see entry on The Story of the Buddha), in the other, he himself rolled a large rock down a hill at the Buddha; while the rock broke into pieces, a fragment cut the Buddha’s foot.

Devadatta then sought to improve his reputation by trying to persuade the Buddha to make vegetarianism and certain voluntary ascetic practices, e.g. living only at the root of a tree, compulsory; the Buddha refused (*Vinaya* 3.171–2). Criticizing the Buddha, Devadatta then tried to cause a schism in the *saṅgha* (*Vinaya* 3.174–5, *Udāna* 60–1), but those who initially supported him were persuaded otherwise by the Buddha’s two chief disciples, Śāriputra (Pali Sāriputta) and Maudgalyāyana (Pali Moggallāna). Devadatta then became ill and is said to have died when the earth swallowed him up. It is said he would be reborn in hell

for many ages (*Vinaya* 2.200, *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3.402), but the *Milindapañha* (pp.108–13) says that he would eventually become a *pratyeka-buddha*.

RĀHULA

In the Theravāda tradition, Gautama’s renunciation is a week after his son Rāhula’s birth, and he takes a last fond look at him and his wife, but does not wake them, lest his renunciation becomes impossible (*Nidānakatha* 62). In the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinaya*, however, his son is conceived on the night of his renunciation, so that Gautama fulfills his duty as a husband, and Rāhula is not born till not long before Gautama’s enlightenment (Strong 2001:55–6; Strong, 2002: 18).

When the Buddha went back to Kapilavastu, the boy Rāhula was sent by his mother Rāhulamātā (Mother-of-Rāhula) to ask for his (royal) inheritance; so the Buddha had Śāriputra ordain him as a novice (*Vinaya* 1.82). The Buddha taught him constantly for some time after his ordination, later describing him as “Chief among my monk disciples who desire training” (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.24). In time, he becomes an *arhat* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.280). In verses attributed to him in the *Theragāthā* (v.295), he says “They know me as ‘lucky’ Rāhula, fortunate for two reasons; one that I am the Buddha’s son, and the other that I am one with vision into the truths”.

GAUTAMA’S WIFE

The *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, while giving the names of the mothers and fathers of various Buddhas, mentions no wives, though it mentions many female musicians that surrounded the past Buddha Vipassī in his youth (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.21). The *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta* makes no mention of Gotama having had a wife and son, but says “while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I... went forth” (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.163). This perhaps suggests the ‘going forth’ might have been in the late teens, and prior to marriage – though it is said in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* that Gotama was 29 at his renunciation (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.151). In the *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*, the Buddha refers in general terms to “wife and son” as amongst various things which are subject to birth, ageing, sickness and death (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.162), with a wise person “having understood the danger in what is subject to birth... to ageing...”.

All traditions agree, though, that the Buddha had a son called Rāhula. As seen above, the Theravādin *Buddhavaṃsa* calls Rāhula’s mother Bhaddakaccā or Bhaddakaccānā. The latter is described at *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.25 as chief of the Buddha’s nuns who have great “higher knowledges” (such as memory of past lives); the commentary affirms that she was an *arhat*. In the *Jātaka* commentary, it is said that Rāhulamātā ordained so as to be near her son and the Buddha, her ex-husband, being known as the nun Bimbā-devī (*Jātaka* 2.392–3). In the Thai tradition is a late text known as ‘Bimbā’s Lament’ (Strong 2001: 96–7) in which Gautama’s wife laments having been left and that Gautama did not immediately come to see her when he returned to Kapilavastu.

The Buddha's wife is identified as having previously been a key character in many *Jātaka* stories, on past lives of the Buddha. The best known example is as Maddī, wife of prince Vessantara (Sanskrit Viśvantara), whose perfect generosity even entails him giving her away when asked (*Jātaka* VI.479–593; Collins, 1998: 497–62). The tradition indicates, though, that she and many of the Buddha's relatives had the great benefit of becoming *arhats* due to his teachings.

THE EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF THE BUDDHA

This entry focuses on how the nature of a Buddha was understood in the early texts of Buddhism, typified by the Pali Canon, rather than on the story of the historical Buddha, or on developed idea on the nature of Buddhas in the Mahāyāna.

The term 'Buddha' is not a proper name, but a descriptive title meaning 'Awakened One' or 'Enlightened One'. This implies that most people are seen, in a spiritual sense, as being asleep – unaware of how things really are. As 'Buddha' is a title, it should not be used as a name, as in, for example, "Buddha taught that...". In many contexts, 'the Buddha' is specific enough, meaning the Buddha known to history, Gautama (Pali Gotama). From its earliest times, though, the Buddhist tradition has postulated other Buddhas who have lived on earth in distant past ages, or who will do so in the future (see entry on Past and Future Buddhas). The Mahāyāna tradition also postulated the existence of many Buddhas currently existing in other parts of the universe. All such Buddhas, known as *samyak-sambuddhas* (Pali *sammā-sambuddhas*), or 'perfect fully Awakened Ones', are nevertheless seen as occurring only rarely within the vast and ancient cosmos. More common are those who are 'buddhas' in a lesser sense, who have awakened to the truth by practising in accordance with the guidance of a perfect Buddha such as Gautama: *arhats* (Pali *arahats*). There are also said to be *pratyeka-buddhas* (Pali *pacceka-buddhas*), 'individual Buddhas' who attain enlightenment without the benefit of a perfect Buddha's teaching, and who give no systematic teachings themselves (see entry on *Pratyeka-buddhas*).

As 'Buddha' does not refer to a unique individual, Buddhism is less focussed on the person of its founder than is, for example, Christianity. The emphasis in Buddhism is on the *teachings* of the Buddha(s), and the 'awakening' of human personality that these are seen to lead to. Nevertheless, Buddhists do show great reverence to Gautama as a supreme teacher and an exemplar of the ultimate goal that all strive for, so that probably more images of him exist than of any other historical figure.

The key role of a perfect Buddha is, by his own efforts, to rediscover the timeless truths and practices of *Dharma* (Pali *Dhamma*) at a time when they have been lost to society (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.286–7). Having discovered it for himself, he skilfully makes it known to others so that they can fully practise it for themselves and so become *arhats* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.8). Teaching *Dharma*, he initiates a spiritual community of those committed to *Dharma*: the four assemblies (Skt. *pariṣats*, Pali *parisās*) consisting of the monastic community (*saṅgha*) of monks and nuns, and laymen and laywomen followers. Any of these who gains true insight into *Dharma* becomes a member of the Noble *Saṅgha* (stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners and *arhats*). As founder of a monastic *saṅgha*, and propounder of the rules of conduct binding on its members, a Buddha also fulfils a role akin to that of 'law-giver'.

As to gender, the early texts say that while a woman can be an *arhat*, it is impossible for her to be an *arhat* who is also a perfect Buddha (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.65–6, *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.28), just as a female cannot be a *cakravartin* ruler, a Śakra (Pali Sakka) – chief of the 33 gods of the Vedic pantheon, a great Brahmā deity, or

a Māra, an evil tempter-deity. Gender is something that can change between rebirths, however. The Theravādin tradition also saw it necessary for a person to be male to be a *bodhisattva*, one heroically aiming at perfect Buddhahood. The Mahāyāna thought otherwise, though it had different views on the level of advanced *bodhisattva*-hood that could be attained while in a female body, and sometimes held that a woman could be a perfect Buddha (Harvey 2000: 371–76).

The process of becoming a Buddha is seen to take many lives of dedicated practice. It is held that “a hundred thousand eons and four incalculable periods ago”, in one of his past lives, Gautama was an ascetic named Sumedha (in some Skt. texts, Megha or Sumati) who met and was inspired by a previous Buddha, Dīpaṃkara (Pali Dīpaṅkara). He therefore resolved to strive for Buddhahood, by becoming a *bodhisattva* (Pali *bodhisatta*), a being (*sattva*) who is dedicated to attaining perfect enlightenment (*bodhi*) (*Buddhavaṃsa* ch. 2). He knew that, while he could soon become an enlightened disciple of Dīpaṃkara, an *arhat*, the path he had chosen instead would take many lives to complete (see entry on The *Bodhisattva* Career in the Theravāda). It would, however, culminate in his becoming a perfect Buddha, one who would bring benefit to countless beings by rediscovering and teaching the timeless truths of *Dharma* in a period when they had been forgotten by the human race. He then spent many lives, as a human, animal and god, building up the moral and spiritual perfections necessary for Buddhahood. Some of these lives are described in what are known as *Jātaka* stories, of which there are 537 in the Theravādin collection (canonical verses plus commentarial prose expansion). Over the ages, he also met other past Buddhas. In his penultimate life he was born in the Tuṣita (Pali Tusita) heaven, the realm of the ‘delighted’ gods. This is said to be the realm where the *bodhisattva* Maitreya/Maitrī (Pali Metteyya) now lives, ready for a future period in human history long after Buddhism has become extinct, when he will become the next Buddha (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.76).

EPITHETS OF THE BUDDHA

In the *suttas* (Skt. *sūtras*) of the Pali Canon, the most common way of referring to the Buddha is as *Bhagavat* (stem form) or *Bhagavā* (nominative form); the *suttas* frequently say, near their start, “At one time the *Bhagavā* was staying at...”. The term *Bhagavā* is variously translated as: ‘Blessed One’, ‘Exalted One’, ‘Fortunate One’, ‘Lord’. It implies one who is full of good qualities. A common refrain on the qualities of the Buddha (e.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.93), now often chanted in a devotional context is:

Thus he is the *Bhagavā*, because he is an *arhat*, perfectly and completely awakened (*sammā-sambuddho*), endowed with knowledge and (good) conduct, Well-gone (*sugato*), knower of worlds, an incomparable charioteer for the training of persons, teacher of gods and humans, Buddha, *Bhagavā*.

The term *Tathāgata* is used by the Buddha to refer to himself in his nature as an enlightened being, e.g. ‘A *Tathāgata* knows....’. It is not used when he is giving details of his life as the individual Gautama. *Tathāgata* literally means either ‘Thus-gone’ or ‘Thus-come’. The ‘thus’ alludes to the true nature of reality, truth. *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.135 explains that he is called a *Tathāgata* as: he speaks factually and at a suitable time; he is fully awakened to all that any being experiences; from the time

of his awakening, all he says is “exactly so” (*tath’eva* - ‘just thus’); “as he speaks, so he does (*tathā-kārī*), as he does, so he speaks (*tathā-vādī*)’.

BUDDHA: HUMAN, GOD, OR....?

While modern Theravādins sometimes say that the Buddha was ‘just a human’, such remarks have to be taken in context. They are usually intended to contrast the Buddha with Jesus, seen as the ‘Son of God’, and to counter the Mahāyāna view of the Buddha’s nature, which sees it as far above the human. These remarks may also be due to a somewhat demythologized view of the Buddha. In the Pali Canon, Gautama was seen as *born* a human, though one with extraordinary abilities due to the perfections built up in his long *bodhisattva* career. Once he had attained enlightenment, though, he could no longer be called a ‘human’, as he had perfected and transcended his humanness. This idea is reflected in a *sutta* passage where the Buddha was asked whether he was a god (*deva*) or a human (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.37–9). In reply, he said that he had gone beyond the deep-rooted unconscious taints (Skt. *aśravas*, Pali *āsavas*) that would make him a god or human – a god being merely a being in one of the higher realms of rebirth – , and was therefore to be seen as a *Buddha*, one who had grown up in the world but who had now gone beyond it, as a lotus grows from the water but blossoms above it unsoiled.

The *suttas* do contain some very ‘human’ information on the Buddha, though. It is said that he was once teaching a group of lay-people “till far into the night”. After they retire, he asks Śāriputra (Pali Sāriputta) to teach the monks, as “My back aches, I want to stretch it”, and then retires to sleep (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.209). In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya*, *Sutta* 16), we find the 80 year old Buddha: (1) expressing ‘weariness’ at the prospect of being asked about the rebirth-destiny of each and every person who has died in a locality (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.93); (2) saying,

I am old, worn out ... Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the *Tathāgata*’s body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the *Tathāgata*... enters into the signless meditative concentration that his body knows comfort” (2.100);

(3) in his final illness, he is extremely thirsty, insisting that there be no delay in his being given water to drink (2.128–9; though the stream he asks for it from is found to be clear even though recently churned up by many passing carts).

Elsewhere in the same text, though: (1) the Buddha crosses the Ganges by his psychic power (2.89); (2) he says that, if he had been asked, he would have had the power to live on “for a *kalpa* (Pali *kappa*), or the remainder of one” (2.103), with *kalpa* generally meaning ‘eon’, but possibly here meaning the maximum human lifespan at that time, of around 100 years; (3) the causes of earthquakes include key events in the Buddha’s life: his conception; birth; enlightenment; first sermon; giving up any remaining will to live, in his final illness; and his passing into final *nirvāṇa* at death (2.108–9); (4) on the nights of his enlightenment and final *nirvāṇa*, he has very clear and bright skin, whose shining nature made golden robes look dull in comparison (2.133–4); (5) when he lies down between two *sāl*-trees, where he will die, these burst into unseasonal blossom in homage to him, and divine

music is heard in the sky (2.137–8); (6) gods prevent his funeral pyre from igniting until the senior disciple Mahā-kāśyapa (Pali Mahā-kassapa) arrives at the site (2.163).

The above material suggests a transcendence which emerges *from* and yet goes *beyond* the human condition. This is perhaps another case of a Buddhist ‘middle way’ avoiding two extremes: neither simply a human nor solely transcendent. That said, one of the early schools, the Lokottaravādins, or ‘Transcendentalists’, had a different view. One of their surviving texts is the *Mahāvastu*, which grew over a number of centuries, perhaps beginning in the late second century BCE. While its outlook has often been seen as foreshadowing certain Mahāyāna ideas, it has itself been shown to incorporate whole passages from early Mahāyāna scriptures, and may have been influenced by Mahāyāna concepts up to as late as the fifth century CE. It sees Gautama as ‘transcendental’ even before his Buddhahood. He leaves the Tuṣita heaven in a mind-made body to bestow his blessings on the world, and though highly spiritually developed, he pretends to start from the beginning, making ‘mistakes’ such as asceticism (*Mahāvastu* 1.169–70). As a Buddha, he is an omniscient being who is ever in meditation. No dust sticks to his feet, and he is never tired. He eats out of mere conformity with the world, and so as to give others a chance to make much good karma by giving him alms food. For such a world-transcending being, it was felt that all incidents in his life must have occurred for a special reason. The *Mahāvastu* thus gives much attention to the Buddha’s biography, and also includes many *Jātaka* tales on his past lives. In examining his development to Buddhahood, a series of ten stages of the *bodhisattva* career were outlined. This idea was also important in the Mahāyāna, though the details are different. Unlike the Mahāyāna, the Transcendentalists still saw the goal for most people as arhatship, the way of the *bodhisattva* being only for extraordinary individuals.

THE BUDDHA’S PSYCHIC POWERS AND EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION

While Jesus is more often associated with so-called ‘miraculous’ wonders than the Buddha, these are also attributed to him. In gaining hearers for his message, the Buddha did not always rely on his charisma, reputation and powers of persuasion. Psychic powers are not seen as supernatural miracles, but as the supernormal products of the great inner power of certain meditations. A late canonical passage (*Paṭisambhidāmagga* 1.125) describes his ‘marvel of the pairs’, which later legendary material ascribes to the Buddha while staying at Śrāvastī (Pali Sāvattihī; *Dhammapada commentary* 3.204–16). This describes a public challenge in which the Buddha was asked to display his psychic powers in the hope that he would abstain and thus appear to lack such abilities. He therefore agreed to meet the challenge at a later date, when he rose into the air and produced both fire and water from different parts of his body. Occasionally, the Buddha is said to have used his powers for physically healing a devout supporter, such as bringing a long and very painful childbirth to an end (*Udāna* 15–16), or curing a wound without leaving even a scar (*Vinaya* 1.216–18). However, he made it an offence for monks to display psychic powers to lay people (*Vinaya* 2.112), and saw teaching as a much better way to influence others than such a means (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.211–14). He generally regarded psychic powers as dangerous, as they could encourage attachment and self-glorification. In a strange parallel to the temptation of Jesus

in the desert, it is said that he rebuffed Māra's temptation to turn the Himālayas into gold (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1.116).

The *suttas* not infrequently refer to a set list of psychic powers (Skt. *ṛddhis*, Pali *iddhis*), including walking on water, flying, and multiplication of one's bodily form (e.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 1.77–8), which may be developed on the basis of attainment of meditative *dhyāna* (Pali *jhāna*). Maudgalyāyana (Pali Moggallāna), one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, was famed for such powers. *Dīgha Nikāya* 1.77 describes a related power of generating a mind-made body (*manomaya-kāya*). Not surprisingly, the Buddha is attributed with all these powers, and in one passage he says that he could carry out all the forms of psychic power either with his mind-made body or his normal body composed of the physical elements (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.282–3).

Dīgha Nikāya 1. 79–80 also describes two forms of extra-sensory perception: hearing sounds at great distances – whether human or divine –, and reading the minds of others. Such powers are often described as being used by the Buddha, as when reporting what a god says, or reporting what 'someone might think' when a person in his audience had just thought this, before going on to carefully respond to such a line of thinking. It is said that mind-reading is carried out by one of four ways: by noting visible signs; by noting sounds, human or divine; by noting something implied by sound; or by probing someone's mind, to see what thought (Skt. *vitarka*, Pali *vitakka*) they will have next, while one is oneself in second *dhyāna* (a state free of *vitarka*) (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.103–4).

Overall, the attitude to such wonders in the Pali Canon is: they are real possibilities for human beings to develop; they may be spiritually useful in aiding others; but they should not be sought for their own sake, and a person may become attached to them if they are not careful.

DID THE BUDDHA CLAIM TO BE OMNISCIENT? (SKT. SARVA-JÑĀ, PALI SABBA-ÑÑŪ)?

In one passage, the Buddha *denies* that he teaches, "There is no renunciant or brahmin who is omniscient (*sabba-ññū*) and all-seeing (*sabba-dassāvī*), who can have complete knowledge and vision; that is not possible" (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.126–7). Rather, he teaches, "There is no renunciant or brahmin who knows all, who sees all, *simultaneously*; that is not possible". Accordingly, in another *sutta*, the Buddha does *not* accept that, "The renunciant Gautama claims to be omniscient and all-seeing, to have complete knowledge and vision thus: 'Whether I am walking or standing or sleeping or awake, knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present to me'". Rather, what he *does* claim is the 'threefold knowledge' (Skt. *traividya*, Pali *tevijjā*) – as experienced on the night of his enlightenment – that he could: "in so far as I wish", remember his past lives; "in so far as I wish", see beings being reborn according to their karma, and directly know his state of liberation (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.482).

The *suttas* attribute the claim to *continuous* omniscience (as expressed above) to Mahāvira, the Jain leader, though they also say that he prevaricated when actually asked a question (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.31). Ānanda also jokes that some teachers make this claim yet have to ask people's names, fail to get alms food and get bitten

by dogs –so that they then cover themselves by saying that they knew these events were destined, so did not avoid them (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.519).

At *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 2.25, the Buddha says:

Monks, in the world with its gods, *māras*, and *brahmās*, in this generation with its renunciants and brahmins, gods and humans, whatever is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, attained, searched into, pondered over by the mind- all that do I know. ... I fully understand.

Admittedly, the terms ‘omniscient’ or ‘all-seeing’ are not included in the list of a hundred or so epithets of the Buddha uttered ecstatically by the householder Upāli (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1. 386–7). Nevertheless, within certain late texts of the Pali Canon, the Buddha is referred to as omniscient and/or all-seeing (*Paṭisambhidāmagga* 1.131, 133, 174, *Buddhavaṃsa* IIA.57, *Kathāvatthu* III.1), and in line with such passages, the postcanonical Theravādin *Milindapañha* (p.102) (which the Burmese include in the Pali Canon) says:

the Lord was omniscient, but knowledge-and-vision was not constantly and continuously present to the Lord. The Lord’s omniscient knowledge was dependent on the adverting (of his mind); when he adverted to it he knew whatever it pleased (him) to know, being able to do this quicker than someone opening or closing their eyes (p.106).

The Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (ch. 9) says much the same, though it refers to the Mahāsaṃghikas as holding that a Buddha *can* know all *dharma*s in one instant.

That said, the above claims relate to the Buddha once he was actually a Buddha, not before this, during his spiritual quest. Moreover, the ‘threefold knowledge’, as the key example of the Buddha’s knowledge, says little about the future other than knowledge of how particular beings will be reborn. At *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.134, when the issue of whether the Buddha’s great knowledge extends to the future is raised, he claims that it does; but the example of such knowledge that is given is that he knows that he will have no further rebirths. In other contexts, though, the Buddha claims to know things in the distant future, such as that the next Buddha, in a golden age in the distant future, will be Metteyya (Sanskrit Maitreya; *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.76). This, though, could be construed as based on knowledge of the current spiritual maturity of Maitreya, and of the long time between any two Buddhas in the past.

The Buddha being seen as having a kind of omniscience is of course a ground for Buddhists trusting his teaching.

BUDDHA-FIELDS

Early Buddhism contained the idea that there are countless worlds spread out through space (e.g. *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.227). The Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa refers (*Visuddhimagga* 414) to these in its idea of different kinds of ‘Buddha-fields’ (Skt. *Buddha-kṣetras*, Pali *Buddha-khettas*): the field of birth,

consisting of the ten thousand worlds that quaked at the Buddha's birth; the field of his authority, consisting of many hundreds of thousands of worlds where various *parittas*, or protective chants of his, have power, and the field of his range of knowledge, which is immeasurable. In the Mahāyāna, there developed the idea that heavenly Buddhas create their own Buddha-fields as ideal realms in which to attain awakening.

THE BUDDHA AND OTHER ARHATS

In the early Buddhist texts, the Buddha is himself said to be an *arhat* (Pali *arahat*) and to be in most respects like any other *arhat* ('worthy one'): one who has destroyed attachment, hatred and delusion and the rebirth they lead to, and fully experienced *nirvāṇa* in life. Any *arhat*'s experience of *nirvāṇa* is the same; however, a perfect Buddha is seen as having more extensive knowledge than other *arhats*. For example, he can remember as far back into previous lives as he wants, while other *arhats* have limitations on such a power, or may not even have developed it. What he teaches is just a small portion of his huge knowledge (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.438), for he only teaches what is both true and spiritually useful (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.395). Moreover, a perfect Buddha is someone who, by his own efforts, rediscovers the *Dharma* and teaches it anew when it has previously been lost to society. Other *arhats* can then teach based on their own experiential understanding, but this is gained from practising under the guidance of a perfect Buddha (see entry on The *Bodhisattva* Career in the Theravāda, and the start of that on *Pratyeka-buddhas*).

THE BUDDHA AND DHARMA

Of the three refuges, Buddha, *Dharma* and *Saṅgha*, the first two are particularly closely related (Ñāṇamoli, 1972: 182–204). The Buddha chides a monk who had too much uncritical faith in him, so as to be always following him round: "Hush, Vakkali! What is there for you in seeking this vile visible body? Vakkali, whoever sees *Dharma*, sees me; whoever sees me, sees *Dharma*" (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.120). This close link between the Buddha and *Dharma* is reinforced by another *sutta* passage, which says that a *Tathāgata* can be designated as "one who has *Dharma* as body" (*Dhamma-kāya*) and as "*Dharma*-become" (*Dhamma-bhūta*) (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.84). These terms indicate that a Buddha has fully exemplified the *Dharma*, in the sense of the Path, in his personality or 'body': he embodies it. Moreover, he has fully realized *Dharma* in the supreme sense by his experience of *nirvāṇa*, the equivalent of the supreme *Dharma*: *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.156 and 158 have parallel passages on the *Dharma* refuge and *nirvāṇa*, as "visible here and now, timeless, inviting investigation, leading onward, to be experienced individually by the wise". The *arhat* is no different in these respects, for he is described as "become the supreme" (*brahma-bhūta*) (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.83), a term which is used as an equivalent to "*Dharma*-become" in the above passage. Any enlightened person, Buddha or *arhat*, is one who is "deep, immeasurable, hard-to-fathom as is the great ocean" (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.487). Having "become *Dharma*", their enlightened nature can only really be fathomed by one who has 'seen' *Dharma* with the '*Dharma*-eye' of stream-entry. While Christians see Jesus as God-become-human, then, Buddhists see the Buddha (and *arhats*) as human-become-*Dharma*.

The commentary (2.314) on the above *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.120 says:

Here the Blessed One shows *Dharma*-body-ness, as stated in the passage, “The *Tathāgata*, great king, has *Dharma* as body”. For the ninefold supramundane *Dharma* is called the *Tathāgata*’s body.

Here, the supramundane *Dharma* refers to *nirvāṇa* along with the four ‘path’ and four ‘fruit’ experiences that know it in the eight kinds of Noble persons.

In the *Milindapañha*, it is explained (p.73), that while it is not possible to point out where the Buddha is after his death, “it is possible... to point to the Lord by means of the *Dharma*-body; for *Dharma*... was taught by the Lord”. Buddhaghosa also says of the Buddha, “whose *Dharma*-body brought to perfection the treasured qualities of the aggregates of virtue etc. [concentration, wisdom, freedom and knowledge and understanding]” (*Visuddhimagga* 234).

Thus the Buddha is seen as very closely related to the *Dharma* that he taught and practised, and which in the highest sense is *nirvāṇa*, the unconditioned.

THE THIRTY-TWO MARKS OF A GREAT MAN

The *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya*, *sutta* 30; 3.142–79) describes “thirty-two marks/characteristics (Skt. *lakṣaṇas*, Pali *lakkhaṇas*) of a great man (Skt. *mahā-puruṣa*, Pali *mahā-purisa*)” that the Gautama was seen as born with. These were seen to indicate a future as either a Buddha or a *cakravartin* (Pali *cakkavatti*), a compassionate emperor, ruling the world according to the ethical values of the *Dharma* (see entry on The Buddha and *Cakravartins*). The concept of such marks is said to have been referred to in the Brahmanic tradition (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.88, 2.16, *Majjhima Nikāya*.2.134, *Suttanipāta* vv.999–1003 and p.106), and Jain texts see Mahāvīra, the founder/reformer of Jainism, as having had them. One might see the ‘marks’ as intended as either as physical in the normal sense, or as aspects of a ‘spiritual’ body which only sensitive people could sense. Each mark is said to be due to a particular excellence in a past life, and to be indicative of a particular quality of the life of a Buddha or *cakravartin*. The essentials of the *sutta* are as follows.

Mark/characteristic (quote).	Past karmic cause of the mark and what it portends in the present life (précis)
1. Well planted are his feet, evenly he lowers his foot to the ground, evenly he lifts it, evenly he touches the ground with the sole of his foot.	<i>Past deeds</i> : unwavering good conduct in body, speech and mind, in generosity, self-discipline, observance of holy days, in honoring parents. <i>In the present</i> : he cannot be impeded by any enemy, whether external or from within the mind.
2. On the soles of his feet and on the palms of his hands wheels arise - with a thousand spokes, with rim and hub, adorned in every way and well-defined within.	<i>Past deeds</i> : protected and helped others. <i>In the present</i> : he has a great retinue of followers.
3. He possesses extended heels.	<i>Past deeds</i> : non-violence, and compassion. <i>In the present</i> : he is long-lived.
4. Long are his fingers and long are his toes	As for 3.
5. Soft and tender are his hands and	<i>Past deeds</i> : became loved through the four bases of

feet.	sympathy: generosity, pleasing speech, beneficial conduct and impartiality. <i>In the present:</i> followers are well disposed to him.
6. Net-like are his hands and feet.	As for 5.
7. His feet have raised ankles like conch shells.	<i>Past deeds:</i> an explainer of true welfare and of <i>Dharma</i> . <i>In the present:</i> becomes the foremost person among laypeople (as a <i>cakravartin</i>) or renunciators (as a Buddha).
8. His lower leg is like the antelope's, well shaped and pleasing.	<i>Past deeds:</i> quickly became skilled in crafts and sciences. <i>In the present:</i> quickly learns those things beneficial to a <i>cakravartin</i> or a Buddha.
9. While standing and without bending, he touches and rubs all over his knees with both palms.	<i>Past deeds:</i> knew the nature of individuals and what they needed. <i>In the present:</i> rich in material or spiritual possessions.
10. Covered in a bag is that which garments must conceal.	<i>Past deeds:</i> reunited long-lost friends and relatives. <i>In the present:</i> many physical, or spiritual, sons.
11. Golden is his colour and his skin shines as gold - like the most splendid lord of the gods.	<i>Past deeds:</i> never angered, however provoked, and gave away soft fabrics. <i>In the present:</i> will receive fine fabrics.
12. Subtle is his skin; due to the subtlety of his skin, neither dust nor stain sticks to his body.	<i>Past deeds:</i> keen to enquire of the wise about good and bad actions. <i>In the present:</i> great wisdom.
13. He has separate hairs on his body; the hairs arise singly, one to each pore.	<i>Past deeds:</i> did not lie, a truth-speaker, reliable, non-deceiving. <i>In the present:</i> will be obeyed by citizens, or monks and nuns.
14. He has hairs on his body which turn upwards. Dark up-turned hairs, black in color curling in rings and turning auspiciously to the right.	As for 7.
15. His frame is straight like a <i>brahmā's</i>	As for 3 and 4.
16. Seven outflowing places has he: on both hands there are outflows, on both feet there are outflows, on both shoulder-tips there are outflows, at the top of the back there is an outflow.	<i>Past deeds:</i> gave good food to others. <i>In the present:</i> he receives good food.
17. Lion-like is the upper part of his body.	<i>Past deeds:</i> worked to benefit others in faith, morality, learning, renunciation, <i>Dharma</i> , wisdom, and material possessions. <i>In the present:</i> cannot lose anything, material or spiritual.
18. Filled is the hollow between his shoulders.	As for 17.
19. He is proportioned like the sphere of the Banyan tree. As is his body, so is the span of his arms. As is the span of his arms, so is his body.	As for 9.
20. Smoothly rounded are his shoulders.	As for 17 and 18.
21. He releases the highest of tastes. Taste-bearing flows that arise in the neck when in happiness he turns upwards are carried all round.	<i>Past deeds:</i> avoided physically harming others. <i>In the present:</i> little illness, good digestion, also equable and tolerant of exertion.
22. Lion-like is his jaw.	<i>Past deeds:</i> avoided idle chatter, but spoke on <i>Dharma</i> and discipline. <i>In the present:</i> cannot be overcome by any opponent, external or internal
23. Forty are his teeth.	<i>Past deeds:</i> avoided slander, but delighted in harmony. <i>In the present:</i> his citizens or monks and nuns will not be divided.
24. Level are his teeth.	<i>Past deeds:</i> avoided wrong livelihood, i.e. by means

	of cheating, bribery, deception, killing, theft. <i>In the present:</i> citizens or monks and nuns will be pure.
25. Undivided are his teeth.	As for 23.
26. Utterly white are his teeth.	As for 24.
27. Mighty is his tongue.	<i>Past deeds:</i> avoided harsh speech, but spoke in an agreeable way. <i>In the present:</i> will have a persuasive voice.
28. He has the voice of a <i>brahmā</i> , soft as the Indian songbird.	As for 27.
29. Very blue are his eyes.	<i>Past deeds:</i> looked at others in a straightforward, open, direct and kindly way, not furtively. <i>In the present:</i> will be popular and loved by all types of people.
30. His eye-lashes are like those of a young calf.	As for 29.
31. The filament that arises between his eyes is white like soft cotton.	As for 13.
32. Turban-crowned is his head.	<i>Past deeds:</i> foremost in wholesome behaviour, leader in right actions of body, speech and mind, in generosity, virtuous conduct, observance of holy days, honouring parents. <i>In the present:</i> will receive loyalty of citizens (<i>cakravartin</i>) or monks and nuns (Buddha).

The above, therefore, elaborates on the parallels between a Buddha and a *cakravartin*, it gives a detailed expression of a notion of a Buddha's spiritual body, and links this to past karma in a very detailed way. In this respect, it accords with the general idea that "This body... is not yours, it is not another's: it is to be seen as old karma which is constructed, thought out, felt" (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.64–5).

The above marks were later used as a basis for visualizing the Buddha and the qualities he embodied, and then for the form of Buddha-images when these developed (no.32, coming to be shown as a protuberance on the head, called the *uṣṇīṣa*, Pali *uṇhīsa*, or turban). Meditators may have also mindfully thought of the marks in relation to their own bodies so as to help arouse the related qualities.

BODIES OF THE BUDDHA

From the above, we thus see various concepts of Buddha-bodies. A Buddha: embodies *Dharma*, or perhaps has 'a *Dharma*-body' consisting of Path qualities; can meditatively generate a mind-made body; has a body, perhaps in the sense of a spiritual body, endowed with the 32 marks; as well as a normal physical body.

After his death, Buddhists have particularly looked to his two-fold heritage: the *Dharma*-body of his teachings and his physical remains. While the Theravāda tradition emphasizes that the Buddha, since his death, is beyond contact with the world and cannot respond to prayer or worship (cf. *Milindapañha* 95–101), something of his *power* is still seen to remain in the world, to be drawn on through the practice of his teachings, the chanting of portions of them in protective blessing chants (Pali *parittas*) and the bodily relics which remained after his cremation (see entry on Relics of the Buddha).

As seen from the entry on the third Ennobling Truth/Reality, in its discussion of *nirvāṇa* beyond death, the Buddha did not accept any of four views on an

enlightened person after death: that he 'is', 'is not', 'both is and is not' and 'neither is nor is not'. In practice, this is taken to mean that he is not non-existent, but that his state cannot be expressed in words. What seems fairly clear from the early texts is that, as one can only be individualised by the conditioned aggregates of body and mind, that state cannot be one in which he exists as an individual being.

THE BUDDHA AND CAKRAVARTINS

While Gautama renounced the option of political power in becoming a Buddha, he did give teachings on how best to govern a realm. Moreover, Buddhism became a force for shaping civilization in this world, not just a means for transcending it. The Buddha is seen as linked to, though surpassing, one who is able to compassionately rule the human world, the *cakravartin* (Pali *cakkavatti*), a ‘wheel-turning’ *rājā*, or ‘universal monarch’. The term may have originally meant an all-powerful monarch ‘whose chariot wheels turn freely’, i.e. ‘whose travels are unobstructed’, expressing the aspiration for world-wide rule, though India had known no large empires by the time of the Buddha. The term occurs in pre-Buddhist Brahmanical and Jain texts.

The paralleling of a *cakravartin* and a Buddha is seen in the following ideas:

- Both a Buddha and a *cakravartin* are born with a body endowed with the ‘thirty-two characteristics of a great man’ (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.142–79; see entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha).
- Both a Buddha and a *cakravartin* are *Dharma-rājās*, as they each honour, revere and are dependent on *Dharma*. The one rolls the wheel of sovereignty, the other the *Dharma-wheel* (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.109–10).
- The seven treasures of a *cakravartin* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.172–77) are paralleled by the seven awakening factors of a Buddha (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.99): mindfulness (paralleling a divine wheel that appears in the sky), *dharma*-investigation (a flying noble white elephant), energy (a flying noble white horse), joy (a radiant eight-faced jewel), tranquillity (a beautiful and gentle woman as wife), meditative concentration (a wise treasurer-steward), and equanimity (a wise counsellor).
- A Buddha and a *cakravartin* are the two persons who bring happiness to the world (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.76).
- There cannot be two of either of them in the same world-system at the same time (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.65).
- The small town where the Buddha died, Kuśinagarī (Pali Kusinārā), was once the wondrous capital, with a dazzling *Dharma*-palace, of a *cakravartin*, Mahāsudarśana (Pali Mahāsudassana) and the Buddha had been him in a past life (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.169–99).
- The Buddha says that, due to his past cultivation of lovingkindness, he had many good rebirths, including many times seven as a *cakravartin* (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 4.89).
- The Buddha instructed that after his death, his body should be dealt with as should that of a *cakravartin* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.142).

These parallels indicate the idea of a Buddha having universal spiritual ‘sovereignty’ – i.e. influence – over humans and gods. The title of the Buddha’s first sermon, the *Dharmacakraparvatana Sūtra* (Pali *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*), the ‘Setting in Motion of the Wheel of *Dharma*’, suggests the idea that that this sermon inaugurated the period of the Buddha’s spiritual influence in the world. Such an influence is of course seen as superior to that of a *cakravartin*.

THE NATURE OF A CAKRAVARTIN

It is said that a person who is to be a *cakravartin* is a moral and compassionate ruler (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.172–77). On a full-moon day dedicated to religious observance, he goes to an upper room of his palace and a beautiful thousand-spoked divine wheel appears in the sky to him (see entry on Early Symbols of the Buddha, under *Dharma*-wheel). A fourteenth century Thai text sees it as like a second full moon (Reynolds and Reynolds, 1982: 140), and it is clear from the canonical texts that others can see it. It is anointed by the *cakravartin* and it goes to each of the four directions, to the ends of the earth, followed by the *cakravartin* and his army. Other kings welcome him, and he teaches them to keep the five moral precepts. He thus conquers the earth, but without violence. Of the *cakravartin* Mahāsudarśana, that the Buddha had once been, it is said that he practised the four meditative *dhyānas* (Pali *jhānas*) and radiated to the four directions lovingkindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.186). The *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.58–79) refers to a *cakravartin* as ruling the four continents and living for many hundreds of thousands of years, but as renouncing the world when the divine wheel slips from its place, indicating that he did not have long to live, with the wheel then disappearing after his renunciation (pp.59–60). The wheel reappears for his son when he fulfils the duties of a *cakravartin*: honouring and depending on *Dharma*, protecting all the people of his realm as well as animals and birds, preventing both crime and poverty, and periodically going to brahmins and renunciants to ask for advice on what is wholesome and unwholesome (pp.60–1; cf. Collins, 1998: 484). There is then a line of seven more *cakravartins*, but the eighth one did not prevent poverty (p.65), which sets in train a long moral decline in society, starting with theft, then violence. As morality declines, human life-span declines from its prior 80,000 years, till it is only 10 years, in a ‘sword-period’ of mutual violence (p.73). Those who survive this from having hidden in the forest are then so pleased to see others alive that they pledge to live morally again, and as they do so, human life-span starts to increase, till it gradually climbs back to 80,000 years, in a prosperous period when greed, fasting and old age are the only diseases (pp.74–5). Then a new *cakravartin*, called Saṃkha, will arise, and also the next Buddha, Maitreya (Pali Metteyya), under whom the *cakravartin* will become a monk and then an *arhat* (pp.75–6). But of course this golden age will not last forever, and it is pointed out that even those who live for 80,000 years still die (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 4.136–9). Moreover, it is said that the happiness of a heaven is greater than that of a *cakravartin* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.173–8).

Steven Collins both re-translates (1998: 602–15) and discusses the *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta* at length (1998: 470–96). For him, it is:

a story of decline and revival ... an elaborate way of giving narrative form to a ... sense of the futility of temporal goods... [It] depicts life in time, however good or bad, as slightly absurd; and thereby its opposite, timeless nirvana, as the only serious thing in the long run (p.481).

It is a “parable” whose aim is to “induce in its audiences ... a sense of detachment from, or at least a (briefly) non-involved perspective on, the passage of time” (p.481).

It is said that *cakravartins* rule over one to four continents, and only exist when human lifespan is not less than 80,000 years (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* III.95–6). While perfect Buddhas have clear awareness in the womb from conception to birth, and *pratyeka-buddhas* have this at conception and some time after, *cakravartins* have clear awareness simply at conception, unlike other beings who lack this quality at any time in the womb (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* III.17). This places *cakravartins* at a high grade of spiritual development, but below that of a *pratyeka-buddha* (see entry on this figure). However, while they are reborn in a heaven, they are not free of the possibility future bad rebirths (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.342).

The *cakravartin* is in many ways the ideal lay-person, and the ideal’s emphasis on compassionately bringing benefit to the whole world in some way foreshadows ideas later attached to the *bodhisattva* ideal in the Mahāyāna. It is also notable that in Mahāyāna art, advanced *bodhisattvas* are often portrayed wearing the decorations of royalty in a way that is reminiscent of the early idea that a *cakravartin* monarch is one role fulfilled by a *bodhisattva* on his way to perfect Buddhahood.

In Buddhist history, emperor Aśoka (Pali Asoka; 268–239 BCE) is seen to have in effect embodied the *cakravartin* ideal, though he did not explicitly claim to have been a *cakravartin*. Later kings have made this claim, such as the founder of the Chinese Sui dynasty (585–618) and, in Burma, kings Kyanzittha (1040–1113) and Alaungpaya (1752–60), who saw themselves as both *bodhsattvas* and *cakravartins*.

PAST AND FUTURE BUDDHAS

While Gautama (Pali Gotama) Buddha was not seen as the continuer of an historical tradition, his authenticity was backed up through the idea that he was one of a long line of Buddhas spread through cosmic time. This paralleled the established Jain tradition that Mahāvīra, a contemporary of the Buddha, was the twenty-fourth Tīrthamkara or ‘Ford-maker’ (guide to liberation). The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.1–54) has the Buddha referring to himself and a number of past Buddhas, with basic details of their lives:

Name	Lived	Social class	Life-span	Number of assemblies of Arahāt monks	Number in each
Vipassī (Skt. Vipāśin) (Insightful)	91 eons ago	warrior-noble	80,000 years	3	6,800,000 100,000 80,000
Sikkhī (Skt. Śikhin) (Crested)	31 eons ago	warrior-noble	70,000 years	3	100,000 80,000 70,000
Vessabhū (Skt. Viśvabhū) (Bull-like (?))	31 eons ago	warrior-noble	60,000 years	3	80,000 70,000 60,000
Kakusandha (Skt. Krakucchanda or Krakutsanda)	present eon	brahmin	40,000 years	1	40,000
Koṇāgamana (Skt. Konakamuni) (Shower of Gold)	present eon	brahmin	30,000 years	1	30,000
Kassapa (Skt. Kāśyapa)	present eon	brahmin	20,000 years	1	20,000
Gotama (Skt. Gautama)	present eon	warrior-noble	100 years	1	1,250

Additionally, for each of the above Buddhas, there is given: his clan, the type of tree under which he attained enlightenment, names of two chief disciples, name of attendant monk, and names of parents. It is elsewhere said that Gotama, as the brahmin Jotipāla became a monk under Kassapa Buddha (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.45–54).

The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* goes on to describe key events of the life of Vipassī Buddha. Of all these, it is said, “This, monks, is the rule (*dharmatā*; literally *dharm*-ness)”. That is, the lives of all Buddhas follow the same basic pattern; they are not accidental, except in minor details. Accordingly, Vipassī’s story gives the basis for later retellings of Gotama Buddha’s life, and can be seen as the earliest Buddha-legend (the story of seeing an ill person, an aged person, a corpse, and a calm

renunciant come from the account of Vipassī's life). The Buddha ends the *sutta* by saying, "And so it is, monks, that by his penetration of the principle of *Dharma* (*dhamma-dhātu*), the *Tathāgata* remembers the past Buddhas' (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.53).

The above shows that the early Buddhist tradition did not see the *Dharma* as discovered and taught by a unique individual, but rather by a unique *type* of individual, who emerges in widely separated periods of human history, yet according to a given pattern that itself relates to *Dharma*, the basic pattern of things, in which the basic parameters are set and only the particular details are left to fill in. In the *Dīgha Nikāya* (3.114), the Buddha affirms that both in the past and in the future, there will be Buddhas equal to him.

COSMIC CYCLES OF EONS

The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* sees the present eon (Skt. *kalpa*, Pali *kappa*) as 'fortunate' in containing several Buddhas. Its length is suggested by saying that at the time of its Buddha Kakusandha, there was a mountain that took four days to climb or descend; now it takes only an hour to do so (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.191-2).

Regarding the nature of an 'eon', there are said to be:

these four incalculables (*asaṅkeyyas*) of an eon. What four? When the eon rolls up (*saṃvaṭṭati*), it is no easy thing to reckon: so many years... so many hundreds of thousands of years. When the eon being rolled up stands still, it is no easy thing to reckon... When the eon rolls out (*vivaṭṭati*) ... When the eon being rolled out stands still... (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 2.142)

These four phases, in which a world-system comes to be destroyed, remains destroyed, develops, and remains before being destroyed again, came to be known as a 'great eon' (*mahā-kalpa*), the usual referent when 'an eon' is referred to. Once, the Buddha is asked the length of an eon (commentary: a great eon). He says that if there were a solid stone mountain a league (*yojana* - perhaps seven miles) high, and it was stroked once a century with a piece of fine cloth, it would wear away before an eon came to an end - though the cycle of rebirth goes back many hundreds of thousands of eons, without discernible beginning (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.181-2).

During the time that a world remains, the maximum life-span of humans is seen to vary from 80,000 years to 10 years (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.68-75), being lower when morality is poorer. Nevertheless, however long it is, people still die: at *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 4.136-9 is the story of a teacher (Gautama in a past life) at a time when people lived for 80,000 years, who taught that life was short. In the Sarvāstivādin tradition, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (III.90-92) holds that in the period when a world remains 'rolled out', there are 20 intermediary (*antara*) eons: in the first, lifespan descends from an unlimited period to 10 years, then 18 in which it goes from 10 to 80,000 years and back, and in the last it goes from 10 to 80,000. Then there are 20 intermediary eons for the world to be destroyed, 20 in which it is quiescent, and 20 in which it develops again: thus 80 in all to a great eon. The Theravāda tradition talks of 64 intermediary eons to a great eon (*Dīgha Nikāya* commentary, p.162), presumably 16 per world phase.

Somewhat confusingly, the term *asaṃkheyya* (Pali *asaṅkeyya*), ‘an incalculable’, is also used for a unit which is a huge number of ‘great eons’. This is seen when the *Visuddhimagga* (p.411) says that the great disciples can recollect 100,000 past eons, the two chief disciples an incalculable and 100,000 eons, a *pratyeka-buddhas* two incalculables and 100,000 eons, and a perfect Buddha has no limits. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (III.93d–94a) explains that it takes a *bodhisattva* three *asaṃkheyyas* to become a perfect Buddha, and that each of these consists of one thousand million million great eons.

THE TWENTY-EIGHT BUDDHAS OF THE *BUDDHAVAMSA*

In the *Buddhavamsa*, a relatively late text of the fifth *Nikāya* of the Pali Canon (perhaps third to second century BCE), accounts are given of twenty-four Buddhas prior to Gotama, adding *Dīpaṅkara* (Skt. *Dīpaṅkara*: “Light-maker”) then seventeen others before *Vipassī* (Strong, 2001, 19–27). In the *Buddhavamsa*, *Dīpaṅkara* is said to have lived “a hundred thousand eons and four incalculables ago” (IIA.1), when the present Buddha, as the ascetic *Sumedha*, first made his aspiration for Buddhahood. The text also names three Buddhas prior to *Dīpaṅkara*, such that the Theravāda school has a list of 28 Buddhas of the past and present. In the later Theravāda tradition, there are around twenty five works on such past Buddhas. As assigned to eons by the *Dīgha Nikāya* commentary (pp.410–11):

- in one eon: *Taṇhaṅkara*, *Medhaṅkara*, *Saraṇaṅkara*, *Dīpaṅkara* (these names seem to echo the Jain ‘*Tīrthaṅkara*’ as a general term for past Jain enlightened ones);
- an incalculable eon (*asaṅkheyya-kappa*) without Buddhas, except that in its final (great) eon: *Koṇḍañña*;
- an incalculable without Buddhas, except that in its final eon: *Maṅgala* (Blessing), *Sumana* (Uplifted Mind), *Revata*, *Sobhita* (Radiant One);
- an incalculable without Buddhas, except that in its final eon: *Anumodassin* (Unexcelled Insight), *Paduma* (Lotus), *Nārada*;
- an incalculable without Buddhas, except that in its final eon (100,000 eons ago): *Padumuttara* (Supreme Lotus);
- 70,000 eons later (= 30,000 eons ago): *Sumedha* (Very Wise), *Sujāta* (Well Born);
- 18,000 eons ago: *Piyadassin* (Pleasing to See), *Atthadassin* (Seer of the Goal), *Dhammadassin* (Seer of *Dharma*);
- 94 eons ago: *Siddhattha* (Attained to his Goal);
- 92 eons ago: *Tissa*, *Phussa* (Excellent);
- 91 eons ago: *Vipassī*;
- 31 eons ago: *Sikhī*, *Vessabhū*;
- in this fortunate eon: *Kakusandha*, *Koṇāgamana*, *Kassapa*, *Gotama*, and the next Buddha, *Metteyya*.

In the above, ‘an incalculable eon’ must be that which is many great eons; if it meant the ‘incalculable of an eon’, of which there are four in a great eon, there would be Buddhas appearing in each of these, though *one* is when the physical world is non-existent.

The intervening eons empty of Buddhas are also said to contain no *cakravartin* emperors or solitary Buddhas (Skt. *pratyeka-buddhas*, Pali *pacceka-buddhas*; see entry on these). All these Buddhas are seen to attain enlightenment at the same firm spot on earth (*Dīgha Nikāya* commentary 424), as only it can support the weight of such an attainment (*Jātaka* 4.229). The above list includes only 27 past Buddhas, but the *Buddhavaṃsa* says that there have been countless others (XXVII.20). Indeed, this is implied by the idea that *each* past Buddha must, as a *bodhisattva*, have met *earlier* Buddhas. In the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu*, the Buddha says that he knew, in the past, 800 Buddhas called Dīpaṃkara, and for example 90,000 named Kāśyapa (1.57–8), There are is also a list of the names of past Buddhas that runs to four pages in translation (1.136–41).

Past Buddhas were venerated in emperor Aśoka's time (mid-third century BCE), as one of his pillar inscription says he enlarged the *stūpa* of Konākamana (as he called him). In stone reliefs at Bhārhut, in the second century BCE, the seven Buddhas of the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* are represented by their seven *bodhi* trees. In Sri Lanka, a periodic fundraising event for temples, that runs for three to six nights, uses dancing, drumming and lay chanting on the lives of the twenty-four Buddhas before Gotama (Gombrich 1971: 127–30), and past Buddhas are sometimes represented by a row of Buddha images at temples.

FUTURE BUDDHAS

In the *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta*, it is said that the next Buddha will be Metteyya (Sanskrit Maitreya and Maitrī), 'The Kindly One', who will come later in the present eon after human life-span has dipped to ten years then again climbed back to 80,000 years, and at a time of a future *cakravartin* emperor (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.75).

All Buddhist traditions agree that Maitreya is currently in the Tuṣita (Pali Tusita) heaven, awaiting his future time as the next Buddha on earth. He was the focus of a considerable cult in central Asia, China, Korea and Japan, and messianic cults focused on him have existed in both Burma and Korea (Sponberg and Hardacre, 1988). In China, as his popularity came to be eclipsed by that of Amitābha Buddha, as in Japan, he often came to be represented by the fat and jolly Budai, a tenth century Ch'an monk who had come to be seen as an incarnation of him. His cult has remained strong in Korea, though.

In Sri Lanka, many people aspire to be reborn as a human at the time Maitreya is a Buddha, and attain enlightenment as one of his disciples. At the end of blessings (*anumodanā*) on receiving a donation, Sri Lankan monks may say "With the aid of these acts of karmic fruitfulness, may you see Maitreya and attain *nirvāṇa*". Even the great Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa aspires, at the end of his *Visuddhimagga* (pp.837–8), that by the power of his good karma, he be reborn in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven of the streamenterer god Sakra (Pali Sakka), there to become a streamenterer himself, and then to be a human at the time of Metteyya and become an *arhat*. Most temples in Sri Lanka have an image of Metteyya, who is always shown as a *bodhisattva* decorated with divine ornaments, never as a Buddha. In low country temples, his iconography seems to have been influenced

by portrayals of the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara, as he has a Buddha in his crown and sometimes holds a lotus (Gombrich 1971: 92–3; Holt, 1991).

While the Mahāyāna tradition is rich in the idea of many *bodhisattvas* who will be Buddhas in the future, this idea is not absent in the Theravāda. There is, for example, the *Dasabodhisattuppattikathā* or “Account of the Arising of Ten *Bodhisattvas*”, which talks of Metteyya and nine following *bodhisattvas* (see entry on the *Bodhisattva* Career in the Theravāda). In the Theravādin tradition, the *Anāgatavaṃsa*, or “Chronicle of the Future” also has much to say on Metteyya (see Collins, 1998: 357–75), as does the *Māleyyadevatheravatthu* (Collins 1998: 616–26). In the Sanskrit tradition, the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* describes his coming as a Buddha (Conze, 1959: 238–42).

In the contemporary world, an important Buddhist project is the building of a 152 metre (500 foot) bronze statue of Maitreya Buddha at Kuśinagarī, where the Buddha passed away. This project is headed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, who is collecting relics from various Buddhist countries to place in the image (<http://www.maitreyaproject.org/en/index.html>).

THE ISSUE OF MULTIPLE BUDDHAS

While the Mahāyāna came to postulate many Buddhas in the universe at the same time, the position of the Pali Canon and similar early text collections is that, “It is impossible, it cannot come to pass that two *arhat* perfectly enlightened Buddhas should arise simultaneously in a single world-system. This is not possible” (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.114; *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.225) – which would, of course, imply that Mahāvīra, the Jain leader, though sometimes called a Buddha, was not really one. In the *Milindapañha*, this is explained by saying that this “ten-thousand world-system” (cf. galaxy) can only sustain the special qualities of one Buddha at once, otherwise it will tremble and come to an end, like a one-person boat sinking if two people embark on it: dispute might arise among some of their followers, and neither would be supreme, unrivalled in the world (p.236–9). This still left open the question of whether Buddhas might simultaneously exist in *different* ‘world-systems’: a possibility that the Mahāyāna later made use of, postulating countless Buddhas spread throughout the vastness of the universe.

THE BODHISATTVA CAREER IN THE THERAVĀDA

ARHATS, BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS

In the early schools, such as the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda, Buddhas were seen as very rare in human history, and to differ from (other) *arhats* (Pali *arahats*) mainly in that they rediscovered the liberating truth when it had been lost to human society, and had a more extensive knowledge than (other) *arhats*. Dedicated followers of the early schools generally aimed to use the Buddha's teachings to help liberate themselves from *saṃsāra*, the round of rebirths, as quickly as possible, by becoming *arhats*.

Mahāyānists, however, saw the *arhat* ideal as having insufficient compassion, for it involved leaving other beings to their fate within *saṃsāra*. As the status of a Buddha was elevated, and the gap between the state of an *arhat* and a Buddha increased, Buddhahood came to be seen as the goal that all should strive for in the Mahāyāna. The *mahāyāna* or 'great (spiritual) vehicle' came to be seen as superior to the *hīnayāna*, or 'lesser vehicle', which was a term often applied to followers of the pre-Mahāyāna schools, though in Tibet the two terms are still sometimes used simply as terms for people of different levels of motivation. The Mahāyāna saw itself as the *bodhisattva-yāna*, or 'vehicle of the *bodhisattvas*', i.e. for those aiming at full Buddhahood. The *hīnayāna* was seen to comprise: i) the *śrāvaka-yāna*, or 'vehicle of the disciples', which concerned those whose aim was to become an *arhat*, and ii) the *pratyeka-buddha-yāna*, or 'vehicle of the individual Buddhas', for those aiming to be non-teaching Buddhas (see entry on *Pratyeka-buddhas*).

That *arhats* came to be seen as somewhat selfish by the Mahāyāna may be partly a product of certain people claiming to be *arhats* who were not yet perfect. For a Theravādin, the notion that an *arhat* is selfish is absurd. Such a person is, by definition, one who has destroyed the 'I am' conceit, the very root of selfishness; they are also characterized as being compassionate (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.211). The best type of person is one who both works for his or her own spiritual welfare and is a good teacher of others in this (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.95).

That said, the Mahāyāna does put compassionate concern for others in a more central place on the path than does the Theravāda and other early schools. Moreover, Theravādins acknowledge that Buddhahood is a higher goal than arhatship. The Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa says, of moral virtue: "that motivated by craving, the purpose of which is to enjoy continued existence is inferior; that practised for one's own deliverance is medium; the virtue of the perfections practised for the deliverance of all beings is superior" (*Visuddhimagga* 13).

Theravādins agree that the path to Buddhahood is a longer one than that to arhatship. As this world still has the Buddha's teachings to guide it, though, it is seen as appropriate for most to use these and take arhatship as their highest goal, whether this be attained in the present or a later life. Thus most Theravādins can be seen to be *śrāvaka-yāna* in their level of motivation. Nevertheless the tradition also holds out the possibility, for a heroic few, of taking the long path of the *bodhisattva* so as to become a perfect Buddha. Thus while the *bodhisattva-yāna* is

the normative path in the Mahāyāna, it is an optional path in the Theravāda. Theravādins may can select which one of three kinds of *buddhas*, or awakened ones, they aspire to become: a disciple(*sāvaka*)-*buddha* or *arhat*, an individual *buddha* (*pratyeka-buddha*) or a *sammā-sambuddha*, a perfect Buddha who rediscovers the *Dharma* and teaches it to others. In the *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary, one dedicated to the first of these goals is referred to as a *sāvaka-bodhisatta*, and one dedicated to the last as a great(*mahā*)-*bodhisatta* (Ratnayaka, 1985: 100). In most contexts, though, the term *bodhisatta* refers to the latter. This term, note, was originally equivalent to Sanskrit *bodhisakta*, meaning ‘one bound for awakening’ or ‘one seeking awakening’, though in time it came to be Sanskritised as *bodhisattva*, a ‘being (for) awakening’.

GAUTAMA BUDDHA’S *BODHISATTVA* CAREER: A MODEL FOR OTHER *BODHISATTVAS*

In the Pali Canon, the Buddha refers to himself as a *bodhisattva* in his life as Gautama prior to his becoming a Buddha (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.17) and in his immediately prior life (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.119–20, *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.108). Yet his role as a *bodhisattva* is seen to have started long before this. It is held that a “hundred thousand eons and four incalculable periods ago”, in one of his past lives, Gautama was an ascetic named Sumedha (Megha in the Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* 1.193–248, Sumati in the *Divyavādāna*) who met and was inspired by a previous Buddha, Dīpaṃkara (Pali Dīpaṃkara: “Light-maker”). As Rupert Gethin puts it, “What impressed Sumedha was Dīpaṃkara’s very presence and his infinite wisdom and compassion, such that he resolved that he would do whatever was necessary to cultivate and perfect these qualities in himself” (1998: 18). He is said to have thrown himself down in the mud so that Dīpaṃkara would not need to walk in it (Conze et al, 1964: 82–4, from *Nidānakathā*, 12–14) and resolved to strive for Buddhahood. He knew that, while he could become an *arhat* disciple of Dīpaṃkara, the path he had chosen instead would take many many lives to complete:

54. While I was lying on the earth it was thus in my mind: If I so wished, I could burn up my defilements [become an *arhat*] today.

55. What is the use, while I (remain) unknown, of realizing *Dharma* here? Having reached omniscience (*sabbaññuta*), I will become a Buddha in the world with its gods.

56. What is the use of my crossing over alone, being a man aware of my strength? Having reached omniscience, I will cause the world together with the gods to cross over.

57. By this my act of service (*adhikāra*) towards the supreme among men, I will reach omniscience, I will cause many people to cross over (*Buddhavaṃsa* IIA.54–7),

In the *Buddhavaṃsa*, to be a *bodhisattva*, one must once make a mental resolve (*mano-pañidhāna*), then make aspirations (*abhinīhāras*) in the presence of a succession of Buddhas, perform an act of service (*adhikāra*) for each Buddha as a guarantee of one’s deep seriousness of purpose, and each Buddha must make a declaration (*vyākaraṇa*) that one’s aspiration will succeed. For it to do so, a person

must (IIA.59): be human, a male, with a root motivation, see a Buddha, be a renunciant, have special qualities, do an act of service (*adhikāra*), and have will-power (*chandatā*). On the matter of gender, it is notable that in the Mahāyāna, where the *bodhisattva* role is not just for a heroic few, it is not restricted to males, though it is still generally said that a perfect Buddha will be male. In the Theravāda, the goal for most, arhatship, can be attained by a man or woman.

JĀTAKA STORIES AND DEVELOPING THE PERFECTIONS

The ascetic Sumedha is seen to have gone on to develop his moral and spiritual qualities in many lives, in which he meets various past Buddhas (see entry on Past and Future Buddhas). From the *Buddhavaṃsa* and other such works, at these meetings he is variously: a brahmin (six times), a warrior-noble (five times), a matted hair ascetic (three times, including as Sumedha), a *cakravartin* emperor (twice), a serpent-deity (*nāga*)-king (twice), and once each a seer, a brahmin who becomes an ascetic, a warrior-noble who becomes a seer, a district governor, a god, a nature-spirit-general, and a lion. In his last human life, he was prince Vessantara, who is banished due giving away the state's auspicious white elephant, and then even gives away his children then wife, all to bring his generosity to perfection. His life between this and his life as Gautama was in the Tusita (Skt. Tuṣita) heaven, the realm of the 'delighted' gods, said to be the realm where the *bodhisattva* Metteyya (Skt Maitreya and Maitrī) now lives, ready for a far-distant period in human history after Buddhism has become extinct, and he can become the next Buddha (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.76).

A rich kind of literature dealing with the lives of the *bodhisattva* who became Gautama Buddha consists of the *Jātaka* stories. The Pali canon *Jātaka* section contains 547 of these in verse form, and the commentarial prose expands these into a range of morality tales, which no doubt partly drew on and adapted Indian folk tales. There are also a number of post-canonical *Jātaka* tales. In such stories, the *bodhisattva* is seen as a moral hero (and sometimes a more fallible being), whether as a human, animal or god. The fact that there are 547 *Jātaka* stories is not seen to imply that the Buddha had only 547 past lives – these are seen as without number – or even 547 lives since resolving to become a Buddha.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka*, or 'Basket of Conduct', is a short text (37 pages) of the Pali Canon, one of the last to be included. This focuses on certain *Jātaka* stories (and some not traceable there) to exemplify the *bodhisattva*'s ten 'perfections' (Pali *pāramīs*, Skt *pāramitās*) inasmuch as they were developed in the current world eon: generosity (*dāna*), moral discipline (*sīla*, Skt. *śīla*), desirelessness (*nekkhamma*, Skt. *naiṣkāmya* or *naiṣkramya*, 'renunciation'), wisdom (*paññā*, Skt. *prajñā*), energy (*virīya*, Skt. *vīrya*) patience (*khanti*, Skt. *kṣānti*), truthfulness (*sacca*, Skt. *satya*), resolute determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*, Skt. *adhiṣṭhāna*), lovingkindness (*mettā*, Skt. *maitrī*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*, Skt. *upekṣā*). In the Pali Canon, this list is only found in this text and the *Buddhavaṃsa* (IIA,117–66), though its individual items are valued elsewhere in it. Each quality is said to exist as a perfection, then as a 'higher perfection' (*upapāramī*), then as an 'ultimate perfection' (*paramattha-pāramī*; *Buddhavaṃsa* I.77). According to the *Apadāna*, one of the latest texts of the Pali Canon, for the first perfection, ordinary giving of things is the first of these levels, the gift of body parts, such as an eye (as in the *Sivi Jātaka*, no.499) is the

second, and the highest kind is the giving of wife and children (as in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, no.547). The *Dīgha Nikāya* commentary (p.427), though, sees the giving of one's life as the highest level.

Shanta Ratnayake (1985: 90) reports that the *Cariyāpiṭaka* commentary holds that, for the *bodhisattva*, “Due to his wisdom, he becomes disentangled from *samsāra*, but due to his compassion he remains in it”, that wisdom acts as the purifier of all the perfections, compassion is the cause, root and ground of them, and that skilful means (Pali *upāya-kosalla*) is needed in developing them. This all of course parallels ideas in Mahāyāna texts.

BODHISATTVAS OTHER THAN SUMEDHA/GAUTAMA

In the Theravāda tradition, the only well-known *bodhisattva* apart from Gautama prior to his Buddhahood is Metteyya/Maitreya. In time, however, texts developed that referred to other *bodhisattvas* (see entry on Past and Future Buddhas). The late fourteen century *Dasabodhisattuppattikathā*, or ‘Account of the Arising of Ten *Bodhisattvas*’, talks of in glowing terms of Metteyya and nine following *bodhisattvas*. H.Saddhatissa, who edited and translated this, sees it as very devotional in spirit and influenced by “popular Hindu and Mahāyāna practices” (p.19 of introduction). Much of its content is on past lives of the ten *bodhisattvas*, which are mainly on them under Buddhas before Gautama. The names of the Buddhas that they will in future become are given as: Metteyya (“The Kindly One”), Rāma, Dhammarājā (“King of *Dharma*”), Dhammasāmi (“Lord of *Dharma*”), Nārada, Raṃsimuni (“Ray-sage”), Devadeva (“God of Gods”), Narasīha (“Lion Among Men”), Tissa, Sumaṅgala (Good Blessing). Of these, seven are identified as having been characters mentioned in the Pali Canon as meeting Gautama Buddha: king Pasenadi, three brahmins (Caṅkī, Subha, Todeyya), the *asura* (jealous god) Rāhu, and two elephants, Nālāgiri who the Buddha tamed, and Pārileyya, who the Buddha spent some time alone with in a forest. Metteyya is said to have been a monk named Ajita at the time of Gautama, though the *Anāgatavaṃsa*, or ‘Chronicle of the Future’ (see Collins, 1998: 361–73), says this will be the lay name of Metteyya in the life when he becomes a Buddha. In the Pali Canon and its commentaries, there is actually no mention of Gautama making a ‘declaration’ of the future Buddhahood of the person who will be the next Buddha. Such a declaration, though, is referred to in the Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu* (3.240, 245), though without naming the person.

Other than Maitreya, of the *bodhisattvas* named in Mahāyāna texts, Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha, ‘Lord of the World’, was also known in Sri Lanka, though he has now evolved into the minor *deva* Nātha, whose consort is Tārā (see Holt, 1991). In Thailand, which has a Chinese minority, statues of Guanyin, the Chinese form of Avalokiteśvara, are sometimes found within the precincts of Theravādin temples. The deity Viṣṇu, who in Hinduism is seen as sustainer of the universe, and as including the Buddha as one of his incarnations (*avatāras*), is seen by Buddhists in Sri Lanka as a *bodhisattva*.

As regards humans seen as *bodhisattvas*, in the late fourth century in Sri Lanka, king Buddhadāsa, who was very active in providing medical services for his people, “lived openly before the people the life of that *bodhisattvas* lead and had

pity for (all) beings as a father (has pity for) his children” (*Cūlavamsa* XXXVII.108–09), and later king Upatissa is said to have fulfilled the ten perfections (*Cūlavamsa* XXXVII.180). A tenth century inscription of king Mahinda IV says that only *bodhisattvas* could be kings of the island (Gombrich, 1988: 161). Various Burmese kings, such as Kyanzittha (1040–1113), declared themselves *bodhisattvas*, and in Thailand, king Lu T’ai (fourteenth century), author of the *Traibhūmikathā*, on Buddhist cosmology, aspired to be a Buddha. In twentieth century Sri Lanka, 1950s prime ministers S.W.R.D.Bandaranayake and Dudley Senanayake were seen by some followers as having been *bodhisattvas* (Ratnayaka, 1985: 94). The association between kings and *bodhisattvas* relates to their role in pursuing public welfare, the link between Buddhas and *cakravartin* emperors, both being seen to be born with the “thirty-two marks of a great person” (see entries on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha and The Buddha and *Cakravartins* entry), and the fact that the last human life of Gautama prior to his Buddhahood was seen to have been as prince Vessantara.

Some Theravādin monks have also been seen or seen themselves as *bodhisattvas*. The monks of the Anurādhapura monastery at least likened the great fifth century commentator Buddhaghosa to the *bodhisattva* Metteyya (*Cūlavamsa* XXXVII.242–3), and the author of the commentary on the *Jātakas* ended his work with a vow to develop the ten perfections so as to become a Buddha. In twentieth century Sri Lanka, venerable Doratiyāwe (c. 1900) refused to use certain esoteric meditation methods as they would make him a streamenterer or an *arhat*, whereas he had vowed to become a Buddha in the future. Also the lay revivalist and reformer Anagārika Dharmapāla saw himself as a *bodhisattva*.

PRATYEKA-BUDDHAS

The *pratyeka-buddha* is said to be one of the kinds of people worthy of a *stūpa* (relic mound), along with a perfect Buddha, a (Noble) disciple of a Buddha, and a *cakravartin* emperor (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.142–3), and in contemporary Theravāda practice, a verse commonly chanted as a blessing, from the *Mahā Jayamaṅgala Gāthā*, is: “By the power obtained by all Buddhas and of *pratyeka-buddhas*, and by the glory of *arhats*, I secure a protection in all ways”.

Buddhism postulates three kinds of *buddhas* or ‘awakened ones’. The first are *samyak-sambuddhas* (Pali *sammā-sambuddhas*), perfectly and completely awakened ones: usually referred to simply as Buddhas or perfect Buddhas. These are beings, such as Gautama (Pali Gotama) Buddha who are seen to find the path to the end of pain and teach it to others (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.8). They rediscover the timeless *Dharma* at a time when it has been lost to human society:

Whether or not there is the arising of *Tathāgatas*, this principle (*dhātu*) stands this *Dharma*-stability, this *Dharma*-orderliness. The *Tathāgata* directly awakens to that, breaks through to that... he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, and makes it plain (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.286–7).

The second kind of *buddhas* are *śrāvaka-buddhas* (Pali *sāvaka-buddhas*), “awakened as disciples” or *arhats* (Pali *arahats*): people who practise the teachings of a perfect Buddha so as to themselves destroy attachment, hatred and delusion and fully realize *nirvāṇa*. They awaken to the same Ennobling Truths/Realities known by a perfect Buddha, and usually teach others, but lack additional knowledges that a perfect Buddha has, such as an unlimited ability to remember past lives (*Visuddhimagga* 411). A perfect Buddha is himself described as an *arhat*, but is more than this alone.

In between these two types of *buddhas* are *pratyeka-buddhas* (Pali *pacceka-buddha*). These came to be seen as people who awaken without the guidance of a perfect Buddha or the tradition established by one, and do not systematically teach others so as to re-establish Buddhism when it has disappeared (e.g. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* III.94c). While they cannot live at a time of a perfect Buddha and his influence, in the Theravāda tradition they are said to arise only in cosmic eons during which a perfect Buddha arises at some time (Sri Lankan commentary on the *Buddhavaṃsa* p.191). The Lokottaravādin *Mahāvastu* (1.197 and 357) says that when *pratyeka-buddhas* are informed that a *bodhisattva* will soon start the life in which he will become a perfect Buddha, they choose to pass away by rising into the air and burning up. This seems to harden the idea of ‘is not taught by a perfect Buddha’ into a ‘has to get out of the way in case they are taught by one’!

The *Mahāvastu* (1.47) says that *pratyeka-buddhas* have “won the highest good, but not yet do they turn their thoughts to a knowledge of the whole *dharma*”. Like *arhats*, it is said that they do not know the qualities particular to a perfect Buddha or objects very distant in space or time (*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* I.1); a perfect Buddha can see an unlimited number of world-systems (galaxies), but a *pratyeka-buddha* can see only a million (VII.55a-b). Their qualities are much greater than

those of *arhats*, but a world full of *pratyeka-buddhas* would not have the qualities of a perfect Buddha (*Khuddakapāṭha* commentary 178). To be able to become a *pratyeka-buddha* needs much past good karma.

The term *pratyeka-buddha* is variously translated as ‘solitary awakened one’, ‘individual *buddha*’, ‘one enlightened by himself’, ‘one awakened for himself’, and ‘hermit *buddha*’. However, K.R.Norman points out that Jainism has a similar concept, which in their Prakrit texts is written *patteya-buddha*, and that the term may well have been borrowed into both Buddhism and Jainism, having previously referred to a kind of enlightened renunciant in some earlier tradition. He sees the term ‘*pratyeka-buddha*’ as probably deriving from the Pali form *pacceka-buddha*, which may originally have been *pacceya-buddha*, *pacceya* being related to Sanskrit *pratyaya*, ‘cause’, not *pratyeka*, i.e. *prati-eka*, ‘individually’. Indeed some Sanskrit texts write the term as *pratyaya-buddha* and the Chinese translation means ‘awakened by conditions’ (Norman 1983: 96–99). Norman thus holds that the original meaning of the term may have been “one who is awakened by a specific cause, a specific occurrence (not by a Buddha’s teaching)” (1997: 104). He suggests that the Tibetan explanation of *pratyeka-buddha* as meaning “one who meditates upon conditioned arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*)” is based on a misunderstanding of this (1983: 99–100).

HOW A PERSON BECOMES A PRATYEKA-BUDDHA

In the *Jātaka* commentary, a person becomes a *pratyeka-buddha* by insight into the three marks (impermanence, *duḥkha*, not-Self) on the occasions such as seeing a withered leaf falling, a mango tree ruined by greedy people, bracelets making a noise when placed together on a wrist, birds fighting over a piece of meat, and bulls fighting over a cow (*Jātaka* 3.239, 3.377, 5.248). It is also said that, “wise men of old, seeing even a very slight ground (*ārammaṇa*), restrained an arisen defilement and so brought about *pacceka-bodhi* (individual awakening, perhaps originally awakening from a cause)” (*Jātaka* 3.376). One story tells of a man who, having stolen a drink from a workmate’s supply, regretted it, and thinking such acts would lead to a bad rebirth, resolved to remove this defilement, “So, having taken as his object (*ārammaṇa*) the state of having drunk the stolen water, he increased his insight (*vipassanā*), and attained the knowledge of *pacceka-bodhi* ” (*Jātaka* 4.114). The story continues by referring to four more people in the same locality who likewise become *pratyeka-buddhas* after contemplating some specific regretted deed.

CHARACTERISATION OF PRATYEKA-BUDDHAS

Stories often refer to a person, on becoming a *pratyeka-buddha*, as spontaneously losing their lay appearance, and taking on one which parallels that of a Buddhist monk, as to hair length, robe and bowl, and then flying through the air to a cave in the Himalayas (*Jātaka* 4.114–17). *Pratyeka-buddhas* are typically seen as living in such mountain areas. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* (3.68–71), the Buddha refers to 500 *pratyeka-buddhas* as having lived on mount Isigili, “Gullet of the Seers”, at various times in the past, and names 88 of them, including Tagarasikhī. They are described as “without longing, who individually have come to right enlightenment” and as

“great seers (*mahesī*) who have attained final *nirvāṇa*”. The *Mahāvastu* (3.182), says of a typical *pratyeka-buddha*,

He was graceful of deportment ... he had accomplished his task. His faculties and mind were turned inwards. He was steadfast as one who had achieved harmony with *Dharma*. He was mindful, self-possessed, composed and tranquil of heart; his faculties were under control and his gaze firm.

Pratyeka-buddhas often appear in the context of being recipient of either alms or disrespectful behaviour, either of which are said to have strong karmic effects for the people concerned. It is said that a man who spat on the *pratyeka-buddha* Tagarasikhī in a past life was born in a hell, and then in his present life as a leper (*Udāna* 50), while someone who gave him alms and then regretted it was reborn in a heaven, and then as a rich man who was a miser (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1.92).

Pratyeka-buddhas are often said to live a solitary life. The *Mahāvastu* (1.301, 3.27) says they: “splendid in their silence and of great power, living solitary like a rhinoceros-horn (*khadga-visaṇa-kalpa*), they train each his own self”. *Khadga-visaṇa-kalpa* (Pali *khagga-visāṇa-kappa*) is part of their stock description (e.g. *Visuddhimagga* 234, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* III.94c), an Indian rhinoceros having only a single horn. In the *Suttanipāta* (vv.35–75) is the *Khaggavisāṇa*, or “Rhinoceros-horn” *Sutta*. This is seen by the *Niddesa*, a canonical commentary on very early parts of the *Suttanipāta*, to consist of verses of *pratyeka-buddhas*, a view also found in the *Mahāvastu* (1.357). The first of the verses is: “Laying aside violence in respect of all beings, not harming even one of them, one should not wish for a son, let alone a companion. One should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn” (v.35). The last sentence, here, ends all the verses, except one: “If one can find a zealous companion, an associate of good disposition, (who is) resolute, overcoming all dangers, one would wander with him, with elated mind, mindful” (v.45). In fact, there are references to groups of *pratyeka-buddhas*: four going for alms together (*Jātaka* 3.407), and 500 living together in a Himalayan cave (*Jātaka* 4.368). The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (III.94c) says that *pratyeka-buddhas* live either alone or in groups.

The latter passage says that the reason *pratyeka-buddhas* do not (systematically) teach is that they have a habit of solitude and wish to avoid the problems that might arise in teaching many people. However, various passages (e.g. *Jātaka* 4.114–17) do have them giving give short teachings as the occasion arises. They are sometimes also said to interact with the *bodhisattva* who becomes Gautama Buddha. A *pratyeka-buddha* helps the *bodhisattva* overcome pride in his birth, for he knows he will in future be a perfect Buddha (*Jātaka* 4.328), and the *bodhisattva* teaches someone whose insight was on the point of ripening, who thus becomes a *pratyeka-buddha* (*Jātaka* 4.340).

EARLY SYMBOLS OF THE BUDDHA

A notable feature of early Buddhist art is that it did not depict Gautama, or any previous Buddha, in a human form; even before his enlightenment, Gautama is only shown by symbols. This must have been due to the feeling that the profound nature of one nearing or attained to Buddhahood could not be adequately represented by a human form. Even contemporary Brahmanism only portrayed minor deities such as *yakṣas* (Pali *yakkhas*) in non-symbolic ways; the major gods were represented only by symbols. Early Buddhism used a range of symbols to represent the Buddha and his nature, and these have continued in use even after portrayals of him in human form developed from the second century CE.

BODHI TREES

The most important focus of devotion in early Buddhism would have been the Buddha's bodily relics within the ten original *stūpas* (see entry on Relics of the Buddha). More numerous than these, and second in importance, were trees grown from the cuttings or seeds of the three under which Gautama attained Buddhahood, and the original tree itself: *bodhi*, 'awakening', or 'enlightenment', trees. These were greatly revered as tangible links with the Buddha's great spiritual powers, like bodily relics. They were accordingly seen as having wondrous powers, as seen in the *Mahāvamsa* chronicle (XVIII.38-44), which says that when emperor Aśoka (Pali Asoka, c.268-239 BCE) wished to take a cutting of the original tree to send to Sri Lanka, a branch severed itself from the tree, floating in the air while it grew roots, and later emitted rays of light in six colours. *Bodhi* trees were also reminders and symbols of Gautama's attainment of awakening and the awakened state itself, which role could also be fulfilled by any species of the same tree (*aśvattha* (Pali *assattha*), *pīpal* or *ficus religiosa*) or depictions of such a tree.

In pre-Buddhist India, there was already a cult of sacred trees such as the *aśvattha*. They were often surrounded by a railing and had a mud platform at the base as a place to put offerings to the tree or to the minor deity seen as inhabiting it. When worshipped, they were seen as fulfilling wishes and granting fertility. The Buddha frequently recommended the roots of trees as places for his monks to meditate, and he meditated beneath one on the night of his enlightenment. According to *Vinaya* 1.1-4, the Buddha stayed near the *bodhi* tree for four weeks after his enlightenment. The *Nidānakathā* (p.77) says that, for the second of these, the Buddha continually contemplated the tree with feelings of deep gratitude for its having sheltered him at his most important time.

As in pre-Buddhist worship of trees, devotion to *bodhi*-trees was expressed by watering them, attaching flags to their branches and placing offerings such as flowers on the platform at their base. Devotees would also perform the act of clockwise circumambulation or *pradakṣiṇā* (Pali *padakkhiṇā*), literally 'keeping to the right'. This action is a common one in the Buddhist tradition; it is also performed round a *stūpa* and, especially in Tibet, round any sacred object, building or person. Keeping one's right side towards someone is a way of showing respect to them: in the *suttas*, people are often said to have departed from the Buddha keeping their right side towards him. The precedent for actual circumambulation

may have been the Brahmanic practice of the priest walking around the fire-sacrifice offerings or of a bride walking around the domestic hearth at her marriage. All such practices demonstrate that what one walks around is, or should be, the 'centre' of one's life.

Originally Buddhist tree-shrines were, like their predecessors, simply surrounded by a wooden railing (*vedikā*). During Aśoka's time the increasing popularity of the religion led to the development of more elaborate enclosures known as 'bodhi-houses' (*bodhi-gharas*). From their gallery devotees could circumambulate and water the trees without churning up a sea of mud.

On stone reliefs that embellished *stūpas*, the Buddha could also be symbolized by a *bodhi*-tree, or his life could be symbolically depicted by a *bodhi* tree (awakening), *Dharma*-wheel (first sermon) and *stūpa* (*parinirvāṇa* at death). In a wider sense, these three symbols represent the Buddha's nature as an Awakened One, as the teacher of a universal message and as passed into *nirvāṇa*. Past Buddhas could also be symbolized by their *bodhi*-trees, said to be of a range of species (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.2–8). Buddhists also prize the heart-shaped leaves of *bodhi*-trees, especially of descendants of the original tree, an aged revered specimen of which grows on the putative spot where this grew, in Bodh-Gayā.

THE LOTUS

One of the most common and important early Buddhist symbols is the lotus. In India this has always been looked upon as the most beautiful of flowers. Its bursting into blossom above the water made it a symbol for the birth of gods and birth of the world. In the Brahmanical *Ṛg Veda*, the fire god Agni is said to have been born from a lotus; in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*, the lotus was the seat of the creator Prajāpati or the base on which he placed the earth after he had dredged it up from the cosmic ocean. The lotus was particularly associated with the goddess Śrī or Śrī-Lakṣmī, described in a late portion of the *Ṛg Veda* as 'lotus-born' and holding a lotus in her hand. According to Coomaraswamy (1935: 22 and 18), she and the lotus represented the earth, the waters (of life) and all the potential and creative energy latent in the waters: "that wherein/whereon there is or can be manifestation".

In early art, medallions depicting a circle of open lotus petals were particularly common (Fig. 1), but motifs involving lotuses and Śrī-Lakṣmī were also used to depict the birth of Gautama. Yet the lotus did not just symbolize physical birth:

Just as, monks, a lotus, blue, red or white, though born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface stands there unsoiled by the water; just so, monks, though born in the world, grown up in the world, having overcome the world, a *Tathāgata* abides unsoiled by the world (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.140, cf. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.169).

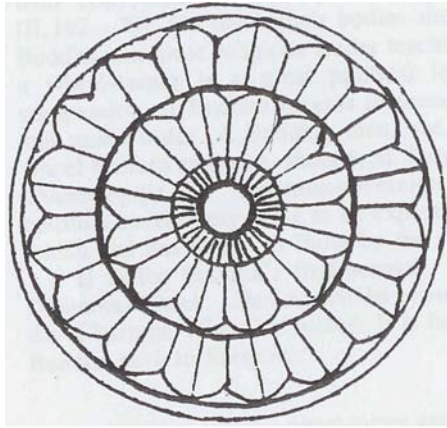


Fig 1. Lotus medallion design from the railing on the Bhārhut *stūpa* (2nd century BCE; in the Indian Museum Calcutta).

Just as the lotus blossom grows up from the mud and water, so one with an enlightened mind develops out of the ranks of ordinary beings, by maturing the spiritual potential latent in all. Like the *bodhi* tree, the lotus is a symbol drawn from the vegetable kingdom. While both suggest spiritual *growth*, the lotus emphasizes the *potential* for growth, whereas the *bodhi* tree indicates the *culmination* of this growth: awakening.

The fact that drops of water roll off a lotus (cf. ‘like water off a duck’s back’) gives this unsoiled flower an added symbolic meaning in Buddhism, as a simile for non-attachment. As Maudgalyayāna (Pali Moggallāna) says of himself, “he is not soiled by conditioned phenomena as a lotus is not soiled by water” (*Theragāthā* 1180). *Nirvāṇa* is also likened to a lotus in being “unsoiled by defilements” (*Milindapañha* 318), since it is beyond attachment, hatred and delusion that worldly beings are involved in. *Milindapañha* 375 also shows other aspects of lotus symbolism: the “earnest student of yoga” must be like the lotus above water, for “having overcome and risen above the world, he must stand firm in the supramundane state”; like a lotus trembling in the slightest breeze, he or she must also “exercise restraint among even the slightest defilements; he should abide seeing the peril (in them)”.

THE DHARMA-WHEEL

The *Dharma*-wheel (*dharma-cakra*, Pali *dhamma-cakka*) has been one of the major Buddhist symbols since early times. A crucial key to the understanding of its meaning are the canonical stories of just and compassionate emperors of the past known as *cakravartins* or ‘wheel-turners’, for whom a glowing thousand-spoked “divine wheel” appears on a full moon night (see entry on The Buddha and *Cakravartins*). The king anoints the wheel with water, setting it spinning. He then urges it to roll forth and accompany him in the peaceful conquest of the four directions of the whole world. The wheel is the first of the *cakravartin*’s seven ‘treasures’, and such a list, also beginning with the wheel, occurs in the Brahmanical *Ṛg veda* as pertaining to Agni or Soma-Rudra; the *Mahābhārata* 1.18 also lists seven ‘treasures’ which appear at the churning of the cosmic ocean, starting with the “mild moon of 1000 rays”; five of the seven ‘treasures’ are the same in all three lists if the moon disc is seen as a kind of wheel.

In Buddhist stories on the *cakravartin*, the wheel's continuing presence is a sign that a compassionate ruler is still on his throne. The key aspect of its meaning is that it symbolizes the emperor's just rule radiating outwards to all the lands of the earth. The commentator Buddhaghosa explains that on the exterior of the wheel's rim are 100 parasols, each accompanied by two spear-heads. The latter symbolize the emperor's power of peaceful conquest, while the parasols as emblems of royalty represent all the kings of the earth who come willingly to accept the righteous rule of the emperor (*Dīgha Nikāya* commentary 2.617–19).

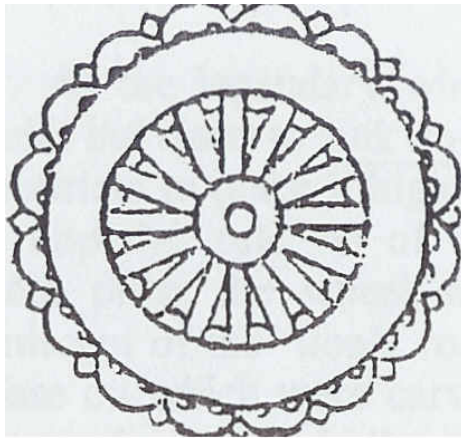


Fig. 2



Fig.3

Fig.2. Wheel design from Sāñcī, first century CE. See T.B. Karunaratne, *The Buddhist Wheel Symbol*, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1969, Fig. 3.

Fig 3. Symbolic portrayal of the Buddha giving his first sermon. The design is from a relief from a *stūpa* at Nāgārjunakonda, 3rd century CE. (Nāgārjunakonda Archaeological Museum).

The ‘treasure-wheel’ and the *Dharma*-wheel are said, not surprisingly, to look exactly alike. For practical purposes each is depicted with less than 1000 spokes and 100 parasols (Fig. 2). In time the spear-heads disappeared and the parasols degenerated into residual bumps. While the parasols on the *cakravartin*'s wheel stand for kings who come to accept his rule, on the *Dharma*-wheel they can be seen to represent the great beings who come to follow the teachings of the *Dharma*. These include kings, spiritually advanced teachers of other sects and also gods. The Buddha taught for the benefit of “gods and humans” and Śakra (Pali Sakka), i.e. Indra, the ruler of the Vedic gods, is said to have become a stream-enterer (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.288), while a Great Brahmā deity, seen by brahmins as the overlord or ‘creator’ of the world, is said to have requested the Buddha to teach the world (*Vinaya* 1.5–7). The protective parasols and sharp spears also suggest, respectively, the Buddha's compassion and wisdom.

It is in the Buddha's first sermon, ‘The Setting in Motion of the *Dharma*-wheel’, that the notion of the ‘*Dharma*-wheel’ is rooted. In this, the wheel does not roll until the first member of the Buddha's audience gains insight into his teachings, so attaining the ‘*Dharma*-eye’ (Skt. *dharma-cakṣu*, Pali *dhamma-cakkhu*), thus becoming a stream-enterer. At this the gods are said to have cried out, “The

supreme *Dharma*-wheel rolled thus by the Lord in the deer park at Sārnāth cannot be rolled back by . . . anyone in the world”. By his act of teaching, so that there was the first experiential realization based on it, the Buddha inaugurated the ‘rule’ or influence of *Dharma* in the world, paralleling how a *cakravartin* inaugurates his rule. This link is explicitly made when the Buddha says to Śāriputra (Pali Sāriputta), “Just as the eldest son of a *cakravartin* ruler rolls on aright the wheel set rolling by his father, even so do you, Śāriputra, roll on aright the supreme *Dharma*-wheel set rolling by me” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1.191).

In its simplest sense, then, the *Dharma*-wheel represents the transmission of *Dharma* in the first sermon. From this it naturally came to symbolize the Buddha as teacher, the *Dharma* as teaching, and the power of both to transform people’s lives. The two are, of course, intimately related, with the Buddha embodying the *Dharma* (see entry on the Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha). As with most symbols, the meaning of the *Dharma*-wheel is multivalent. In *Rg Veda* 1.164, the sun is likened to a revolving wheel, “the immortal wheel which nothing stops, on which all existence depends”. Buddhaghosa likens the spokes of the *Dharma*-wheel to the sun’s rays and the hub to a full moon. It seems appropriate, then, to see the radiating spokes of the *Dharma*-wheel as suggesting that, like the sun, the Buddha shed the ‘warmth’ of his compassion and the light of his wisdom on all who came to him.

In the *Rg Veda*, the solar deity Mitra is said to be the “eye of the world”; that is, the sun both illuminates and watches over the world. Certain *Dharma*-wheels (Fig. 3) are certainly reminiscent of an eye in their appearance, and can thus be seen as symbolizing the spiritual vision of the Buddha at whose death certain followers said, “the eye has disappeared in the world!” (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.158). The eye-like nature of the *Dharma*-wheel also links to its first ‘turning’ when a disciple of the Buddha first gained the ‘*Dharma*-eye’. In all this there may well be a pun on *cakra*, wheel, and *caṅṣu*, eye (Pali *cakka* and *cakkhu*).

In the *Rg Veda*, the wheel is a possession of the god Varuṇa, the ‘universal monarch’ (*sam-rāj*) and lord of *ṛta*, cosmic order. The wheel is also a symbol of the regular course of things, and thus of cosmic order, in that the one wheel of the sun’s chariot is said to have twelve, five or 360 spokes, corresponding to the number of months, seasons or days in the year (Coomaraswamy, 1935: 25). In Buddhism, the *cakravartin*’s rule according to *Dharma* leads to peace and order in his realm. It thus seems appropriate to take the regularly spaced spokes of the *Dharma*-wheel as symbolizing the spiritual harmony and mental integration produced in one who practises the *Dharma*.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (2.5.15), all gods, worlds and beings are said to be held together in the *ātman* (Self) like spokes in the hub and felly of a wheel; in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.15.1) all is said to be fastened on *prāṇa*, the vital breath, like spokes in a hub. In the Buddhist ‘wheel-turner’ legend, the state of the empire depends on the emperor. The *Dharma*-wheel, then, with its spokes firmly planted in the hub can be seen to symbolize that the Buddha, by discovering and teaching *Dharma*, firmly established its practice in the world. The radiating spokes can be seen as representing the many aspects of the path taught by the Buddha, though it should be noted that they do not just have eight spokes representing the factors of

the Eightfold Path, the overall path consisting of many inter-related skilful qualities.

The spokes of the *Dharma*-wheel are not only fixed in, but also converge on, the hub. This can be taken to symbolize that the factors of the *Dharma* in the sense of path lead to *Dharma* in the sense of *nirvāṇa*. In this respect it is worth noting that the Buddha said that his “setting in motion of the *Dharma*-wheel” was the “opening of the doors” to the “deathless” (*amata*), i.e. *nirvāṇa* (*Vinaya* 1.6). When *Dharma*-wheels were placed above the gateways to *stūpas*, it may have been to symbolize that the *Dharma* offers an entrance to deathlessness.

As the centre of a spinning wheel is still, so the Buddha’s mind was seen as ever still, even when he was busy teaching. In line with this, the hubs of some *Dharma*-wheels are in the form of open lotuses, suggesting the non-attachment of the Buddha’s mind. As the centre of a wheel is an empty hole, so the Buddha’s mind was empty of any idea of an unchanging ‘I’, the root of all suffering.

In early Buddhist art, *Dharma*-wheels often appear atop pillars, the most famous example being that at Sārnāth erected by Aśoka. It probably symbolized the power of both the Buddha and Aśoka, who may well have been inspired by the *cakravartin* ideal. As the legendary wheel remains aloft near the ruler’s palace while he rules but starts to *sink down* when he is near death (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.59), it appears most appropriate to place it high up on a pillar, to symbolize the health of imperial rule or of the sovereignty of the *Dharma*.

THE ‘VASE OF PLENTY’

An early Buddhist symbol of some importance which became one of the eight auspicious symbols in the Sinhalese and Tibetan traditions is the *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (Pali *puṇṇa-ghaṭa*) or *pūrṇa-kumbha*, the ‘vase of plenty’. It is also an auspicious symbol in Hinduism, probably equivalent to the golden *kumbha* containing *amṛta*, the gods’ nectar of immortality, which is seen to emerged at the churning of the cosmic ocean by the gods.

In Buddhism, water pouring out from an upturned *kumbha* is likened to a noble disciple getting rid of unskilful states (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.48 and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.337), and a *kumbha* being gradually filled by drops of water is likened to a person gradually filling himself with evil or karmically fruitful qualities (*Dhammapada* 121–2). In this way the *kumbha* is generally likened to the personality as a container of bad or good states. Quite often, though, a full *kumbha* is used as a simile for a specifically *positive* state of being: a person who truly understands the four Ennobling Truths is like a full *kumbha* (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.104); a person of wide wisdom (*puthu-pañño*), who bears in mind the *Dharma* he has heard, is like an upright *kumbha* which accumulates the water poured into it (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.131).

The implication of these passages is that the full *kumbha* would be a natural symbol for the personality of someone who is ‘full’ of *Dharma*: a Buddha or *arhat*. While the Hindu *pūrṇa-ghaṭa* contains *amṛta*, the Buddhist one contains *Dharma*,

that which makes life fruitful and brings a person to the Buddhist *amṛta* (Pali *amata*), the ‘deathless’: *nirvāṇa*.

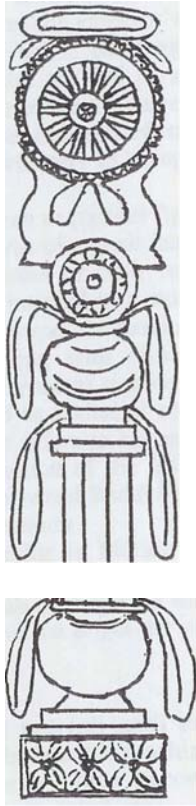


Fig. 4. Composite symbol design from the railing of the *stūpa* at Sārṇāth, early centuries CE; from a post-card of the Archaeological Survey of India.

In early Buddhist art, the ‘vase of plenty’ was often shown with a lotus or *bodhi* tree sprouting from it, so suggesting spiritual growth from the reservoir of *Dharma* which it symbolized. Fig. 4 shows two vases as part of a composite symbol. The upper vase has the disc of an open lotus shown at its lip. Above the lotus is a *triśūla* (Pali *tisūla*) or trident which represents the three Buddhist ‘treasures’ (*tri-ratnas*, Pali *ti-ratanas*): the Buddha, *Dharma* and *Saṅgha*.

BUDDHA FOOTPRINTS AND FEET

Like relics and *bodhi*-trees, footprints of the Buddha (*Buddha-padas*), in the form of depressions in rocks, are seen as tangible links with him that also act as reminders that he actually walked on earth and left a spiritual ‘path’ for others to follow. Whether they were part of the earliest Buddhist cult is unclear, but they were used in symbolic representations of his presence in scenes from his life (Fig. 5).

One of the most famous ‘footprints’ is the depression measuring 1.7 by 0.85 metres in the rock on top of Mount Siripāda (Adam’s Peak) in Sri Lanka. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-xian records having seen it in 412 CE. The sixth century *Mahāvamsa* (I.77–8), based on earlier chronicles, refers to the ‘footprint’ as having been made by the Buddha when he once flew to Sri Lanka by means of his meditation-based psychic power.

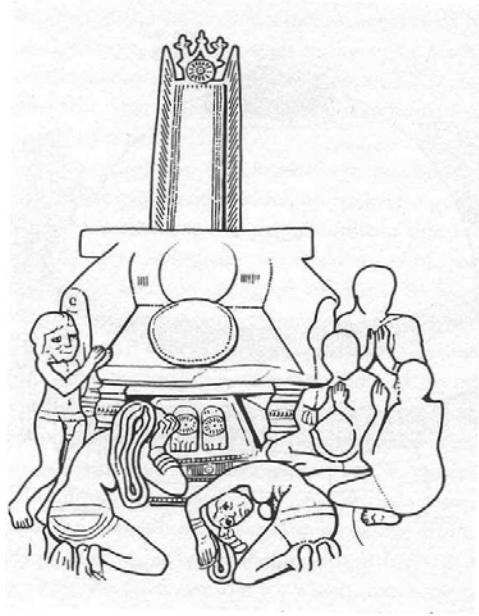


Fig. 5. Rāhula being presented to his father, the Buddha. Drawing according to a relief from a second century CE *stūpa* railing at Amarāvātī, from a photograph in D. L. Snellgrove (ed.). *The Image of the Buddha*, London: Serindia, Paris: UNESCO, 1978, pl. 19. p. 38. From Harvey, 1990a: 80.

Other than putative ‘real’ Buddha-footprints, large depictions of the Buddha’s feet also became important. By at least the second century CE, these were used as cult objects in the art of Amarāvātī and Gandhāra. On them were various symbols such as wheels (cf. Fig. 5), a type of mark of a great man said to have been on the body of Gautama from his birth (see entry on The Early Buddhist Concept of the Buddha), lotuses, and *svastikas*, an ancient Indian auspicious sign, also used in Jainism and Hinduism, whose name derives from *su + asti*, well + be; its form was originally to suggest the rotation of the sun in the sky. Later art embellished such feet or footprints with up to 108 ($=2^2 \times 3^3$) auspicious signs such as the sun, moon and Mount Meru – a huge mountain said to be the centre of the world (seen as a flat disc): all marvellous things of importance, though shown as ‘lower’ than the Buddha. Such symbols also sometimes adorn the feet of images of the Buddha reclining, while *svastikas* sometimes appear on the chests of Buddhas in East Asia.

ANICONIC ‘BODIES’ OF THE BUDDHA

In early Buddhist art, symbols were often combined to form aniconic ‘bodies’ of the Buddha, so paving the way for the development of images of him in human form, as in Fig. 3, where a *Dharma*-wheel stands for the Buddha’s head, a short pillar or column for his body and a throne, again suggestive of the Buddha’s sovereignty, for his legs. In Fig. 5, a column fringed by flames represents the body of the Buddha. Such flaming columns were no doubt intended to recall the story of the Buddha’s conversion of three fire-worshipping ascetics by overcoming, with his meditative psychic power, two venomous snakes by returning their heat and flames with his own (*Vinaya* 1.24–5). Flaming columns may also recall the ‘wonder of the pairs’ at Śrāvastī (Pali Sāvattihī) where the Buddha is said to have risen into the air with a mass of fire coming from the upper part of his body and a mass of water from the lower part (*Dhammapada* commentary 3.204–5 and

Paṭisambhidāmagga 1.125). Again, flaming columns may symbolize the spiritual energy of the Buddha, later symbolized by flames arising from the crown of the head of Thai and some Sri Lankan Buddha images. As expressed at *Dhammapada* v.387, “all day and night the Buddha shines in glory”.

STŪPAS

The final and perhaps most important symbol of early Buddhism is the *stūpa* (Pali *thūpa*) or ‘(relic) mound’. These are known in Sri Lanka as a *dhātu-gabbha* (Pali), ‘womb/container for (relic)-elements’, which in Sinhala is *dāgoba*. The mispronunciation of this by Portuguese colonialists may be the origin of the word ‘pagoda’, now mainly used for the multi-roofed East Asian form of the *stūpa*. In Thai, the term used for a *stūpa* is *cedi* (from Pali *cetiya*, Skt. *caitya*: a shrine), and in Tibetan *mchod rten* (pronounced *chorten*).

Stūpas became important in Buddhism due to the holy relics they contained (see entry on Relics of the Buddha), their symbolizing the Buddha and his *parinirvāṇa* (entry into *nirvāṇa* at death), and in some cases their location at significant sites. Relics placed in *stūpas* are said to have been those of Gautama, *arhats*, and even of past Buddhas. Where funerary relics could not be found, hair or possessions of holy beings, copies of bodily relics or possessions, or Buddhist texts came to be used in their place. The *stūpa* is more than a symbol of the *parinirvāṇa*. It is a complete symbol-system incorporating many of the other symbols discussed above, representing the Buddha and the *Dharma* he embodied.

Though the development of the Buddha image provided another focus for devotion to the Buddha, *stūpas* remain popular to this day, especially in Theravāda countries. They have gone through a long development in form and symbolism, but this entry concentrates on their early significance (Harvey 1990b).

The best-preserved ancient Buddhist *stūpa*, dating from the first century CE in its present form, is at Sāñcī in central India. It was built over one dating from the third century BCE, which may have been built or embellished by Aśoka. Its diagrammatic representation in Fig. 6 gives a clear indication of the various parts of an early *stūpa*.

The four gateways (*torānas*) of this *stūpa* put it, symbolically, at the place where four roads meet, as specified in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.142). This is probably to indicate the openness and universality of the Buddhist teaching, which invites all to come and try its path, and also to radiate loving-kindness to beings in all four directions. In a later development of the *stūpa* in North India, the orientation to the four directions was often expressed by means of a square, terraced base, sometimes with staircases on each side in place of the early gateways. At Sāñcī, these gateways are covered with carved reliefs of *Jātaka* stories on the career of Gautama as *bodhisattva* and also, using symbols, of his final life as a Buddha. Symbols also represent previous Buddhas.

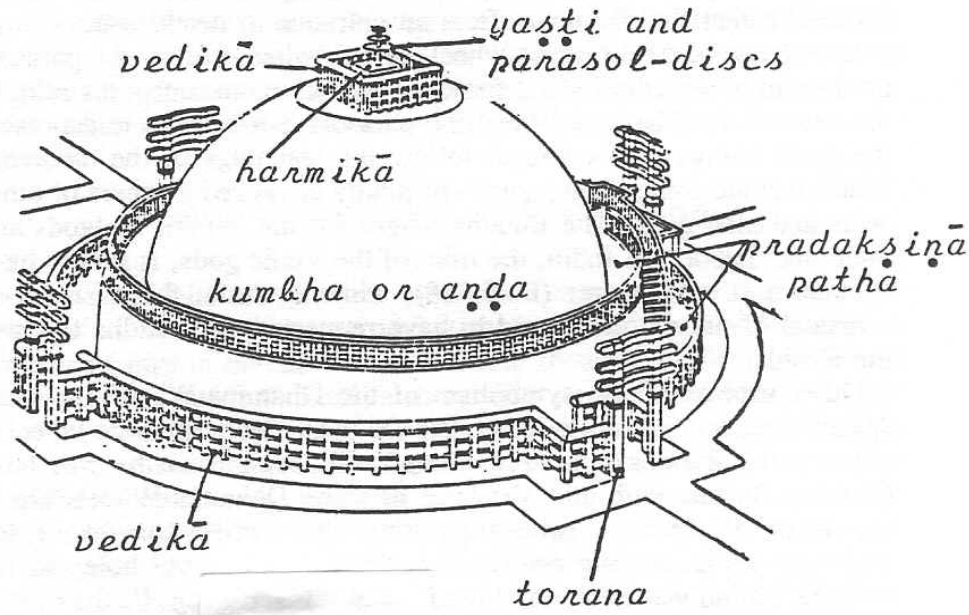


Fig. 6. The great *stūpa* at Sāñcī. Adapted from A. Volwahren, *Living Architecture - India*. London, Macdonald, 1969, p. 91.

Encircling the Sāñcī *stūpa*, connecting its gateways, is a stone railing (*vedikā*), originally made of wood. This marks off the site dedicated to the *stūpa*, and encloses the first of two paths for circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā-pathas*). The *stūpa* dome, referred to in Sri Lanka and certain early texts as the *kumbha* or 'vase', is the outermost container of the relics, which are housed in an inaccessible chamber near the dome centre in a series of containers, the innermost one often of gold. The dome is thus associated with the 'vase of plenty', and symbolically acts as a reminder of an enlightened being as 'full' of uplifting *Dharma*. In the third century CE *Divyāvadāna*, the dome is also called the *aṇḍa* or 'egg'. As the relics within are sometimes called *bījas*, 'seeds', this is all suggestive of *stūpa*-devotion as leading to a fruitful spiritual life, and to the production of new enlightened ones in the future. From above, the circle of the *stūpa* dome is also suggestive of a *Dharma*-wheel or an open lotus medallion, and inner radial walls in some *stūpas* enhance this imagery. In Burma, the tapering shape of their *stūpas* is also likened to that of a lotus bud.

On top of the Sāñcī *stūpa* is a pole (*yaṣṭi*, Pali *yaṭṭhi*) and discs, which represent ceremonial parasols. As parasols were used as insignia of royalty in India, their inclusion on *stūpas* can be seen as a way of symbolizing the spiritual sovereignty of the Buddha. The kingly connection probably derives from the ancient custom of rulers sitting under a sacred tree at the centre of a community to administer justice, with mobile parasols later replacing such shading trees. The parasol-structure on *stūpas* also seems to have symbolized the Buddhist sacred tree, which in turn symbolized enlightenment. This is suggested by a second century BCE stone relief of a *stūpa* which shows it surmounted by a tree with parasol-shaped leaves. The structure at the base of the pole and discs (the *harmikā*, 'top enclosure') has also been found, on a number of *stūpas*, to have resembled the design of *bodhi*-tree enclosures.

The parasol pole was often mounted on top of an eight-sided axial pole inside the *stūpa*, sometimes called a *yūpa*. This was originally the term for a Vedic post where animals were tethered prior to being sacrificed. Some early Buddhist *stūpas* had wooden axis, and these may have originally been Brahmanical sacrificial posts on a sacred site taken over by Buddhists. For Buddhism, the idea of ‘sacrifice’ suggested the self-sacrifices of the path: in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.144–47), the best ‘sacrifice’ is explained in terms of the path, and at *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.76, a *yūpa* is where a future *cakravartin* ruler distributes goods to all and then becomes a monk. In the *Milindapañha* (21–2), the monk Nāgasena is described as:

bearing aloft the *yūpa* of *Dharma*... thundering out the thunder of Indra (the Vedic rain god) and thoroughly satisfying the whole world by thundering out sweet utterances and wrapping them round with the lightening flashes of superb knowledge, filling them with the waters of compassion and the great cloud of the deathlessness of *Dharma*...

That is, Vedic symbolism is effectively put to Buddhist use.

Another term for the *stūpa* axial pillar is *indra-kīla* (Pali *inda-khīla*), or ‘Indra’s stake’. This was a term for the huge stone pillars used to secure open the gates of cities in India and Sri Lanka. The term derived from Vedic mythology, in which the god Indra was seen to stabilize the earth by staking it down. In early Buddhist texts, the term is used as an image for the unshakeability of the mind of an *arhat* or streamenterer (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.444, *Suttanipāta* 229, *Dhammapada* 95, *Theragāthā* 663). The *stūpa* axis representing their unshakeable mind fits in well with the idea of the dome, as a *kumbha*, symbolizing the enlightened person as full of *Dharma*-related qualities.

The axial pillar is also linked to mount Meru, home of many of the gods, with the base of the circular dome as like the circle of the earth, home to humans. Here, the *stūpa* superstructure, linked to the *bodhi* tree, is suggestive of the Buddha, who stands above both humans as gods as their teacher.

In later *stūpas*, the top part fused into a spire, and several platforms were often added under the dome to elevate it in an honorific way. It then became possible to see each layer of the structure as symbolizing a particular set of spiritual qualities. In the *Caityavibhāgavinayabhāva Sūtra* and the *Stūpalakṣaṇakārikāvivecana*, respectively from the first and second centuries CE, a *stūpa*’s seven layers from the bottom up to the *harmikā* are seen to symbolize the seven sets of qualities making up the ‘thirty-seven factors conducive to awakening’: the four applications of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of success, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of awakening (the dome), and the factors of the Eightfold Path (*harmikā*); the spire of the *stūpa* symbolizes the thirteen powers and ten knowledges of a Buddha. At *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.120, the Buddha, not long before his death, taught the seven sets as to be practised to prolong the holy life. They can be seen to summarise the *Dharma* that he embodied.

Overall, the *stūpa* can be seen to symbolize the Buddha and *Dharma*. Indeed, in some early *Vinayas* where a *stūpa* is seen as having its own property (land and offerings), it is sometimes seen as “the property of the *stūpa*” and sometimes as

the “property of the Buddha”. That the *stūpa*’s basic configuration symbolizes the Buddha’s enlightened person is suggested by a simile at *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.194–5. This likens the body (*kāya*) to a city with six gates (the senses, including the mind), at the centre of which sits the “lord of the city” (consciousness), who receives a message (*nirvāṇa*), from messengers (calm and insight) from the four directions. He sits in the middle of the city, where four roads meet, representing the four great elements (*mahā-bhūtas*) that are the basis of the body. As a *stūpa* is also ideally at a cross-roads, and the relics at its centre are also termed *dhātus*, another term for elements, it is akin to the ‘city’ of the Buddha’s personality, centred on a consciousness that has experienced *nirvāṇa*.



A *stūpa* in Sri Lanka



A *stūpa* in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

RELICS OF THE BUDDHA

In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, not long before the Buddha's death, Ānanda asked him what was to be done with his *śarīra* (Pali *sarīra*), his mortal body. He responded that the funeral arrangements were not for monks such as he to concern themselves with, but for wise laypeople. When Ānanda nevertheless asked how the body should be treated, the Buddha said that it should be treated like that of a *cakravartin* monarch (see entry on The Buddha and *Cakravartins*): wrapped in 500 alternating layers of new linen cloth and carded cotton wool, placed in an oiled iron coffin, and then cremated. A *stūpa* (Pali *thūpa*) or funerary mound should then be erected, by implication for the remains, at a place where four roads meet, "And whoever lays wreaths or puts sweet perfumes and colours there with a devout heart, will reap benefit and happiness for a long time" (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.141–2). That is, the veneration of a *stūpa* and its content is seen to arouse positive mental states, which have a karmically beneficial effect. It is said that a *stūpa* is also appropriate for a *cakravartin* ruler, a *pratyeka-buddha*, and a (Noble) disciple of the Buddha.

The cremation was done by local Malla leaders, and "what had been skin, under-skin, flesh, sinew, or joint-fluid, all that vanished and not even ashes or dust remained, only the *śarīras* remained". The Mallas then honoured the *śarīras* for a week. However, as seven other peoples were keen to ask for a share of them, to avoid conflict the brahmin Droṇa (Pali Doṇa) divided them into eight, to be placed in eight *stūpas*. Droṇa was granted the urn that they were gathered in, and another people got the funeral pyre embers, and these two items were also placed in *stūpas*, making a total of ten original *stūpas* (2. 164–7).

THE NATURE OF RELICS

As suggested above, the main term translated as 'relics' is the plural of *śarīra*. In the singular, the term is used for a corpse in a cemetery (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 3.91, *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 3.58), though it also used of a living body as that which wears out with old age (*Dhammapada* 151), or which becomes lean and pale with grief (*Suttanipāta* 584), and a repeated passage is "Willingly, let only my skin, sinews and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up in/on my *śarīra*, but my energy shall not be relaxed so long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength" (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.481). Overall, the *śarīra* is best seen as the 'mortal body'; indeed it is the term for the body used in questions on whether the *jīva*, the life-principle, is identical with the body or not: questions that the Buddha set aside, unanswered (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.157).

In the *suttas*, the term is only seems to be used in the plural in relation to a single corpse in the case of the Buddha or an *arhat*: at *Samyutta Nikāya* 2.83, the *arhat* knows that when he dies, "here itself, all that is experienced, with no delight for him, will become cool, and *śarīras* will be left over". Here the term can be seen to mean something like 'remains', though rather special remains. Bones and teeth are included, indeed the Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* refers to *asthis*, bones, rather than *śarīras*, as being left after the Buddha's cremation, and bones and teeth are amongst famous Buddha-relics. Nevertheless, in the *Dīgha Nikāya* commentary (2.603–4), Buddhaghosa reports that the *śarīras* of the Buddha were of three types,

“like jasmine buds, like washed pearls, and like (nuggets) of gold” and in three sizes, as big as mustard seeds, broken grains of rice, or split green peas. John Strong refers to these as “transmogrified somatic substances ... the result of a process of metamorphosis brought on not only by the fire of cremation but also by the perfections of the saint ... whose body they re-present” (2004: 10 and 12) and that “There is nothing surprising in this, Buddhist relics the world over appear more as jewel-like beads than as burnt bones” (2001: 145).



Relics from Kuśināra, where the Buddha passed away, given by India to Thailand and then divided up. These are one of the portions given to two British Buddhist centres.

In Korea, when monks are cremated, only such items are treated as relics, not bones, and also in Thailand, except that there the bones are preserved in case they *become* relics (Strong, 2004, 11). In the Tibetan tradition, the website of the Gelugpa Kopan monastery in Nepal, says that the kind of relics

like pearls, jewels or crystalline deposits... may manifest within the ashes of the great master’s body when it is cremated. They appear due to the purity of the spiritual master’s mind and may spontaneously multiply over a period of time. (<http://kopan-monastery.com.tour/lamakonchogrelic.html>)

Of the relics of Geshe Lama Konchog, it says that six weeks after his cremation, “One set of two relics had multiplied to become thirty-seven relics, and another had multiplied into twenty-eight. The bones are constantly producing pearl-like and golden-type relics; and from the ashes relics are manifesting as well”. Lama Zopa Rinpoche says on the website:

One has to make very strong and extensive prayers and preserve pure morality for many lifetimes in order to create the causes that produce relics. ... Relics are manifested and remains are left behind due to the kindness of holy beings in order for us sentient beings to collect merit and purify obscurations.

As well as the above, nails cuttings and hair of enlightened persons came to be treated as relics, and sometimes copies of relics were enshrined as if they were relics. The *Nidānakatha* (p.81) refers to the newly awakened Buddha as giving a few of his hairs to his first (lay) disciples, for them to revere. The hairs are here referred to as *dhātus*, ‘elements’, and any kind of relic is sometimes referred to in Pali as a *sarīra-dhātu*, ‘element of the mortal body’ (*Vimānavatthu* commentary

165), with a shrine (*cetiya*) for it being a *dhātu-cetiya* (*Dhammapada* commentary 3.29).

THE CULT OF RELICS

In the past in the West, perhaps due to Protestant aversion to Catholic relic-veneration, it was thought that Buddhist relic veneration was only a concern of the laity, but the textual, archaeological and contemporary evidence does not support this.

Richard Gombrich holds that the cult of relics was probably invented by Buddhists, as in Brahmanism a corpse was seen as very impure, and should be deposited outside of a settlement, not at a cross-roads in it (1988: 123). However, as in other parts of the world, there may well have been a warrior-noble tradition of revering the relics of dead kings and heroes, interred in burial mounds (*tumuli*), out of both respect for and fear of the dead. The Buddha said that his corpse should be treated like that of a *cakravartin* monarch, and in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, when the wife of a *rājā* Muṇḍa dies, he tells his treasurer to place the body (*sarīra*), in an oiled iron coffin (3.58– as with the Buddha), and after the cremation of the *sarīra*, he has a *stūpa* built for it (3.62). Moreover, in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the demand for the Buddha’s relics by various leaders and peoples arises without any prompting. In any case, even in Brahmanism/Hinduism, the tombs of *renunciants* receive some devotion (Strong, 2004: 16).

Physical relics are seen as the most powerful focus for Buddhist devotion, and hence they are usually contained in the key Buddhist symbol, the *stūpa* (see entry on Early Symbols of the Buddha). The Sri Lankan chronicle the *Mahāvamsa* (XXX 100) says that there is equal karmic fruitfulness in devotion to the Buddha’s relics as there was in devotion to him when he was alive. It is likewise said that “when the relics are seen, the Buddha is seen” (XVII.3) and the *Vibhaṅga* commentary (431) says “while the relics endure, the enlightened ones endure”. At *Milindapañha* 341, it is said that through Buddhist practice one can “buy” various things – e.g. a long life, heavenly rebirth, *nirvāṇa* – from the Buddha’s “bazaar”, which consists of his teachings, shrines (Pali *cetiyas*) for his *sarīras* and things used (*pāribhogikas*), and the *Saṅgha*-jewel. Here, these seem to stand respectively for the *Dharma*, Buddha and *Saṅgha*. *Jātaka* 4.228 sees the above two shrines as the first two of three kinds, clearly in descending order of importance: *sarīrika-cetiya*, *pāribhogika-cetiya* and *uddesika-cetiya*. The last of these refers to a shrine ‘indicating’ the nature of a Buddha, which at first were symbols of the Buddha, and then images. The second kind of shrine is for things used by a Buddha, including his alms bowl and robe, and sites of key events in his life, which became important places of pilgrimage. The most important ‘used’ item, though, is the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, its saplings and in later tradition even any member of the species *aśvattha* (*ficus religiosa*) which became known to Buddhists as the *bodhi* or Enlightenment tree (see entry on Early Symbols of the Buddha).

The *Buddhavaṃsa* (ch.XXVIII) refers to a range of relics: those in the original ten *stūpas*, a tooth in the heaven of the thirty-three gods headed by Śakra (Pali Sakka), one in the realm of the *nāgas* (serpent-deities), one each in the Gandhāra and Kāliṅga regions, teeth and hair taken by gods of other world-systems, and a range

of possessions such as bowl, staff and robe in various parts of India or heavens, hence (v.13) “The ancients say that the dispersal of the relics of Gautama, the great seer, was out of compassion for living beings”.

The heritage of the Buddha included not only his bodily relics and things used by him, but also his teachings, the *Dharma*. Consequently, the idea of *Dharma*-relics developed, to be installed in *stūpas* or images as physical relics were. *Dharma*-relics could be whole *sūtras*, short formulae known as *dhāraṇīs*, or key verses written on gold plates, such as those from *Vinaya* 1.40 that mean: “Those *dharmas* which proceed from a cause, of these the *Tathāgata* has told the cause, and that which is their stopping; the great renunciant has such a teaching” (Strong 2004: 8).

In their role as reminders of a Buddha or *arhat*, physical relics point to their spiritual qualities, their teachings and the fact that they have actually lived on earth. This in turn shows that it is possible for a human being to become a Buddha or *arhat*. Yet relics are also tangible links with awakened ones and their spiritual powers, and are thought to contain something of the spiritual force and purity of the person they once formed part of. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*, while a copy of the *sūtra* is seen as more venerable than a world full of physical relics, these are still to be revered as “they have come forth from this perfection of wisdom, and are pervaded by it” (p.95). As an awakened person was free of spiritual faults and possessed great energy for good, it is believed that his or her relics were somehow affected by this. They are therefore seen as radiating a kind of beneficial power.

Miraculous powers are hence attributed to relics, as seen in a story related in the *Mahāvamsa* (XXXI. 97–100). When king Duṭṭhagāmaṇi (161–137 BCE) was enshrining some relics of Gautama in the great *stūpa* at Anurādhapura, Sri Lanka, they rose into the air in their casket and then emerged to form the shape of the Buddha. In a similar vein, the *Vibhaṅga* commentary (p. 433) and the *Anāgatavaṃsa* (‘Chronicle of the Future’, in Conze et al, 1964, 49–50) says that at the end of the 5000 year period of the Buddhist era, when all practice and understanding of Buddhism has disappeared from the world, all the relics in Sri Lanka will assemble, travel through the air to the foot of the *bodhi* tree in India, where the Buddha attained awakening, there to be joined by all other relics, and will form the shape of the Buddha, emit rays of light and then burn up in a flash of light (cf. Strong 2001, 148). This is referred to as the *parinirvāṇa* (complete extinction) of the *dhātus*.

Buddha-relics can be seen to remind devotees both of the impermanence of the Buddha and his entry to the deathless (*nirvāṇa*); they are a presence that reminds them of the absent Buddha; while from a body that generally putrefies, they are from a person purified of defilements and long outlast the putrefying aspects of the body. In these respects, they have a liminal nature, conditioned traces of one awakened to the unconditioned, to which they are a tantalising doorway. John Strong also sees them as expressions of the Buddha’s biography, “they sum up a biographical narrative; they embody the whole of the Buddha’s coming and going, his life-and-death story; they reiterate both his provenance and his impermanence”; they are also extensions of the biography, as they have travels and adventures of their own, after his death (2004: 7).

It is said that in the third century BCE, the devout Buddhist emperor Aśoka (Pali Asoka) opened most of the original ten *stūpas* and redistributed their relics around his empire to be installed in '84,000' *stūpas* as focuses of devotion. When Buddhism spread to other countries, relics were sought. Thus, in the reign of Aśoka, after Mahinda, the emperor's son, took the religion to Sri Lanka, relics were obtained from India and, it is said, the Buddha's right collar-bone and right eye-tooth were obtained from the heaven of Śakra (*Mahāvamsa* XVII. 11–15), to be enshrined in a *stūpa* in the capital Anurādhapura. A tooth-relic was later enshrined in the Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, where there is an annual festival in honour of it, and possession of it came to be seen as a requirement of the king of Sri Lanka; in Southeast Asia, too, the possession of relics was seen to confer legitimacy on a king. In Burma, in the ancient capital Pagan, the Shwe-zigon *stūpa* is said to contain a collarbone, frontlet bone and tooth of Gautama (Swearer, 1995: 83). In Yangon (Rangoon), until recently the country's capital, the 112-metre high gold-covered Shwe-dāgon *stūpa* is said to contain some hairs of Gautama Buddha and belongings of three previous Buddhas. In seventh century China, a finger bone of the Buddha was presented to an emperor, and in the T'ang dynasty (618–907) capital, there were festivals honouring this and several tooth-relics. In the Unified Silla period in Korea (668–918), temples were built for Buddha-relics such as small skull fragments, teeth and clothing. In China, the complete body of Hui-neng, the sixth Chan patriarch (638–713), is honoured: having not decayed after death, its lacquered form, sitting in the meditation posture, has been revered in a grotto. Moreover, in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna lands, temple images to be used for devotion are consecrated in a ceremony which may include the placing of some kind of relics in them.

One way in which diplomatic links have been made between countries is for them to either share a portion of the relics that they have, or loan them. Even Communist China has done this to build links with Buddhist countries. A modern manifestation of Buddhist cooperation is the pooling of relics from various countries to place in a 152 metre bronze statue of Maitreya Buddha that is due to be built in 2008 in the place where the Buddha passed away in India (<http://www.maitreyaproject.org/en/index.html>).

THE BUDDHA'S STYLE OF TEACHING

The Buddha's style of teaching is generally portrayed as one of skilful adaptation to the language, mood and concerns of his hearers, responding to the questions and even the non-verbalized thoughts of his audience and taking cues from events. By means of a dialogue with his questioners, he gradually moved them towards sharing his own vision of truth. When brahmins asked him about how to attain union with the deity Great *Brahmā* after death, he did not say that this was impossible, but that it could be attained by meditative development of deep lovingkindness and compassion, rather than by bloody Vedic sacrifices (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.235–52). He often gave old terms new meanings, for example calling the *arhat* the 'true brahmin', and using the term *ārya* (Pali *ariya*), the Sanskrit term for the 'noble' Āryan people who brought the Vedic religion to India, in the sense of spiritually noble.

A key Mahāyāna doctrine is that that the Buddha taught with 'skilful means' (*upāya-kausālya*), not only in the sense of appropriately selecting for a particular audience from what he knew to be true, but also in the sense of teaching things which were not fully true but which would help motivate certain people's level of practice. In earlier text collections such as the Pali Canon, only the first kind of skilful means is found. An example is at *Udāna* 22–3. Here, the monk Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother, says that he wishes to disrobe to return to a beautiful girl he had married soon before ordaining. To dissuade him, the Buddha enabled him to see the goddesses of the heaven of the Thirty-three, which Nanda admitted were far more beautiful. While this motivated him to remain a monk, as practice would enable rebirth in such a realm, other monks were critical of the basis of this motivation. Ashamed, he thus meditated intently until he became an *arhat*.

The Buddha's skill in teaching is suggested by his saying:

I recall teaching *Dharma* to an assembly of many hundreds. Perhaps each person thinks: 'The renunciant Gautama is teaching *Dharma* especially for me'. But it should not be so regarded; the *Tathāgata* teaches *Dharma* to others only to give them knowledge (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.249).

The Buddha also says that he had attended many hundreds of each of the eight kinds of assemblies: of warrior-nobles, brahmins, householders, renunciants, gods of the realm of Four Great Kings, the Thirty-three gods, *māras* (tempter-deities) and *brahmā* gods. In each case, "before I sat down with them, spoke to them or joined in their conversation, I adopted their appearance and speech, whatever it might be", such that after he had taught them, they did not know whether he was a god (*deva*) or a human (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.109).

The Buddha showed even-mindedness when gaining disciples. A general *Siṃha* (Pali *Sīha*), who was a great supporter of Jain monks, once decided to become a lay disciple, but the Buddha advised him that such a prominent person as himself should carefully consider before changing his religious allegiances (*Vinaya* 1.236). Already impressed by the Buddha's teaching, *Siṃha*, was even more impressed by the fact that he did not jump at the chance of gaining an influential disciple. On affirming that he still wished to be a disciple, the Buddha advised him that he

should not deprive Jain monks by withdrawing his generous support, but continue this while also supporting Buddhist monks, as he now wished to do.

The Buddha treated questions in a careful, analytic way, and divided these into four types (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.46): (1) those that can be answered categorically, straightforwardly; (2) those that can be answered in a qualified way in accordance with a careful analysis of the question; (3) those to be answered by a counter-question, to clarify what is being asked, reveal presuppositions, or draw attention to a parallel situation so as to draw conclusions from it; (4) those not to be answered, but set aside, as question-begging and fraught with misconceptions.

THE ROLES OF INVESTIGATION AND FAITH

The Buddha did not mind if others disagreed with him, but censured misinterpretations of what he taught. He emphasized self-reliance and the experiential testing-out of all teachings, including his own. He was well aware of the many conflicting doctrines of his day, a time of intellectual ferment. Rejecting teachings based on authoritative tradition, or mere rational speculation, he emphasized the careful examination and analysis of experience, as seen in the famous *Kālāma Sutta*. Here he spoke to the Kālāma people, who had had a string of teachers visiting them, speaking in praise of their own teachings and disparaging those of others (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.189; see Bodhi 1988 and Nagapriya, no date). In response to their perplexity over which teacher to believe, the Buddha said that they were right to feel uncertain:

Do not accept anything on the grounds of report, or a handed-down tradition or hearsay, or because it is in conformity with a collection (of teachings) (*piṭaka-sampadānena*), or because it is the product of (mere) reasoning (*takka-hetu*), or because of inference (*naya-hetu*), or because of reflection on appearances (*ākāra-parivitakkena*), or because of reflection on and approval of a view (*ditṭhi-nijjhāna-kkhantiyā*), or because it has the appearance of what ought to be (*bhavya-rūpatāya*), or because (you think) ‘this renunciant is our revered teacher’. When you, O Kālāmas, know for yourselves: ‘these *dharmas* are unwholesome and blameworthy, they are condemned by the wise (*viññu-garahitā*); these *dharmas*, when accomplished and undertaken, conduce to harm and suffering’, then indeed you should reject them.

Accordingly, he gets them to reject the *dharmas* (which must here mean mental states as much as teachings conducive to these) of greed, hatred and delusion, as leading to behaviour which breaks the moral precepts, and to take up non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion, as seen in someone who mindfully radiates lovingkindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity in all directions.

Given what the above criticises as sole sources of knowledge, what is left is one’s own direct experience, checked in relation to the views of “the wise” presumably to get one to critically assess one’s experience and ensure that one is not jumping to unwarranted conclusions from it. The ‘wise’ are the *viññū*, or the ‘discerning’, as referred to in a common chant on the *Dharma* refuge (e.g. S.IV.41), which says that the *Dharma* is “to be personally experienced by the wise (*paccataṃ veditabbo*

viññūhi)”. In the later Sanskrit works the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Jñānasamuccayasāra*, a verse attributed to the Buddha says, “Just as the experts test gold by burning it, cutting it and applying it on a touchstone, my statements should be accepted only after critical examination and not out of respect for me”.

Only occasionally, for example before his first sermon, did the Buddha use his authority, but this was not to force people to agree with him, but to get them to listen so that they could then gain understanding. He also advised his disciples not to react emotionally when they heard people speaking in blame or praise of him, but to assess calmly the degree to which what was said was true or false (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.3).

The Buddha emphasized that his teachings had a practical purpose, and should not be blindly clung to. He likened the *Dharma* to a raft made by a man seeking to cross from the dangerous near shore of a river, representing the conditioned world, to the peaceful other shore, representing *nirvāṇa* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.134–5). He then rhetorically asked whether such a man, on reaching the other shore, should lift up the raft and carry it around with him there. He therefore said, “*Dharma* is for crossing over, not for holding on to”. That is, a follower should not grasp at Buddhist teachings and practices (*dharmas*), but use them for their intended purpose, and be free of any attachment to them when they had fully accomplished their goal. The *Dharma* is seen to point out truths about reality that, when fully understood, are liberating. But one of the truths about reality is that attachment brings suffering, so one should not be attached even to *Dharma*. Indeed, to do so entails that one has probably misunderstood it in some way. Note, though, that the man in the parable does not separate himself from the raft before he has reached the ‘other shore’. This would be rather unwise! Moreover, many ordinary Buddhists do have a strong attachment to Buddhism.

While the Buddha was critical of blind faith, he did not deny a role for soundly based faith or ‘trustful confidence’ (Skt. *śraddhā*, Pali *saddhā*); for to test out his teachings, a person had to have at least some initial trust in them. Indeed, an important set of path qualities is the five faculties: *śraddhā*, energy, mindfulness, meditative concentration, and wisdom. Even in Theravāda Buddhism, which often has a rather rational, unemotional image, a very deep faith in the Buddha, *Dharma* and *Saṅgha* is common. Ideally, this is based on the fact that some part of the Buddha’s path has been found to be uplifting, thus inspiring confidence in the rest. Many people, though, simply have a calm and joyful faith (Skt. *prasāda*, Pali *pasāda*) inspired by the example of those who are well established on the path.

The *Caṅkī Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 2.171–6) discusses how there can be a reliable “awakening to truth (*saccānubodham*)”. It describes how a lay-person assesses a monk as to the presence of states of greed, hatred or delusion, such that these might cause the monk to lie or give bad spiritual advice. If he sees that the monk’s mind is purified of these, he reposes *saddhā* in him. Consequent to this, a series of activities follows, each being “of service” to the next: “approaching”, “drawing close”, “lending ear”, “hearing *Dharma*”, “remembering *Dharma*”, “testing the meaning”, “reflection on and approval of *Dharma*”, “desire-to-do”, “making an effort”, “weighing up”, “striving”, and finally, “he realizes with his person (*kāyena*) the highest truth itself; and penetrating it by wisdom, he sees”. Here, “reflection

on and approval of *Dharma* (*dhamma-nijjhāna-kkhantiyā*)” is similar to “reflection on and approval of a view”, as mentioned in the *Kālāma Sutta* as an unreliable source of certainty. Here something very close to it (though it concerns *Dharma*, not a ‘view’) plays a part in a sequence of events culminating in knowledge. It can be seen as helping to prepare the right conditions for the arising of knowledge, as does *śraddhā*, but it is not itself *the same* as knowledge, nor is it directly productive of it. The quality of *śraddhā*, though, can still exist once true knowledge arises, in the form of joyful appreciation for what has become directly known.

THE BUDDHA’S SELECTION OF WHAT TO TEACH

The Buddha is seen as saying, “I have taught *Dharma*, Ānanda, making no ‘inner’ and ‘outer’: the *Tathāgata* has no (closed) ‘teacher’s fist’ in respect of teachings” (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.101). That is, he has no secret inner teaching, but has been explicit with all that pertains to enlightenment. In the *Abhayarājākumāra Sutta*, he says that he teaches, from what he knows to be true, what is connected to goal of the spiritual life, whether or not others find it agreeable to hear, and at the appropriate time (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.395; see Harvey 1995b). What he taught, compared to what he directly knew, was like a few *śimsāpa* leaves in his hand compared to the numerous leaves in a grove of *śimsāpa* trees. He had not taught that which did not aid progress to *nirvāṇa*, but taught that which did: the Four Ennobling Truths (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.438–9).

When Mahāyāna texts came to be composed, they claimed that the Ennobling Truths were only the Buddha’s preliminary teachings, with higher ones held back for those who could understand them. How, then might a Mahāyānist take the above statements? There seem to be different possibilities, including: (1) the *Dīgha Nikāya* 2.101 statement might itself be seen as a provisional teaching; (2) one might accept the Mahāyāna claim that the Mahāyāna teachings *were* taught by the historical Buddha, but that some refused to listen to them, or pass them on.; (3) one might say that the *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.438–9 passage might allow that teachings that did not ‘aid progress’ early in Buddhist history could have come to do so by the time of the Mahāyāna, and perhaps that that the Buddha foresaw this.

THE ENNOBLING TRUTHS/REALITIES AS A WHOLE

What are generally known as the four ‘Noble Truths’ (Skt. *ārya-satyas*, Pali *ariya-saccas*) are the focus of what is seen as the first sermon of the Buddha (Skt. *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra*, Pali *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*; *Vinaya* 1.10–12; *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.420–4), and form the framework for many key teachings of the Buddha. As found in the early *sutta/sūtra* collections known as the *Nikāyas* or *Āgamas*, they are an advanced teaching intended for those who have been spiritually prepared to hear them. When teaching lay persons, the Buddha frequently began with a “step-by-step discourse” (Skt. *anupūrvikā kathā*, Pali *anupubbi-kathā*), on giving and moral observance as leading to a heavenly rebirth, and then on the advantages of renouncing sense-pleasures (by meditative calming of the mind). Such teachings were used to inspire his hearers and help them gain a state of mind which was calm, joyful and open. In this state of readiness, they would then be taught the four Ennobling Truths (e.g. *Vinaya* 1.15–16), a *Dharma-teaching* “particular” or “special” (Skt. *sāmutkarṣikī*, Pali *sāmukkaṃsikā*) to Buddhas, or their “elevated” teaching. If the mind is not calm and receptive, talk of *duḥkha* (Pali *dukkha*) – suffering/pain/unsatisfactoriness/stress/anxiety/ angst – may be too disturbing, leading to states such as depression, denial, and self-distracting tactics. The Buddha’s own discovery of the four Truths was from the fourth *dhyāna* (Pali *jhāna*), a state of profound meditative calm, “When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, and attained to imperturbability” (*Majjhima Nikāya* I.249). The Mahāyāna later came to see the teaching on the four Truths as themselves preliminary to higher teachings- but there is none of this in the *Nikāyas* or *Āgamas*. In these, they are not teachings to go beyond or unproblematic simple teachings, but deep realities to explore.

The Ennobling Truths concern i) *duḥkha*, ii) the origination (*samudaya*, i.e. cause) of *duḥkha*, namely craving (Skt. *trṣṇā*, Pali *taṇhā*), iii) the cessation (*nirodha*) of *duḥkha* by the cessation of craving (this cessation being equivalent to *nirvāṇa*), and iv) the path (Skt. *mārga*, Pali *magga*) that leads to this cessation. The same fourfold structure of ideas (x, origination of x, its cessation, path to its cessation) is also applied to a range of other phenomena, such as the experienced world (*loka*; *Samyutta Nikāya* 1.62) and to each of the twelve links of Dependent Arising (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 2.43). The reality described by the twelve links is actually seen to lie behind the four Ennobling Truths. The links go into detail on the origination (second Truth) of *duḥkha* (first Truth). The cessation/stopping of all the links is equivalent to the third Truth, and the fourth Truth, the path, is what leads to this, itself being a series of positive conditions.

If *duḥkha* is perceived in the right way, it is said to lead to ‘faith’ or ‘trustful confidence’ (Skt. *śraddhā*, Pali *saddhā*) in the Buddha’s teachings. From faith, other states successively arise: gladness, joy, happiness, meditative concentration, and deepening states of insight and detachment, culminating in destroying the causes of *duḥkha* (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.30). This suggests that some initial understanding of *duḥkha* supports spiritual practice which leads to greater insight into it and ultimately liberation from it.

In Brahmanism, the term *ārya* (Pali *ariya*) referred to the “noble” people who migrated into India, while in Buddhism it is used in a spiritual sense. In the first sermon, each of the Truths is called an *ārya-satya*, a noble-truth. The standard translation “noble truth” is a possible meaning, though the least likely one (Norman, 1997:16). The commentators interpret it as: “truth of the noble one(s)”, “truth for a noble one”, i.e. “truth that will make one a noble”, or, sometimes, “noble truth”. Here, ‘noble ones’ are those who are partially or fully enlightened: stream-enterers, once-returners, non-returners and *arhats*, along with Buddhas. It actually sounds a little odd to call a truth ‘noble’, and the reason the ‘noble ones’ are as they are is precisely because they have had insight into the Truths. While Norman prefers “truth of the noble one (the Buddha)”, he acknowledges that the term may be deliberately multivalent. In line with “truth for a noble”, an apposite rendering is ‘Ennobling Truth’.

Note also that, “The word *satya* (Pali *sacca*) can certainly mean truth, but it might equally be rendered as ‘real’ or ‘actual thing’”, hence we have “four ‘true things’, or ‘realities’” (Gethin, 1998: 60). The first sermon says of these: the first is “to be understood”; the second is to be “to be abandoned”; the third is “to be realized”, literally, “to be seen with one’s own eyes”; the fourth is “to be developed/cultivated”. As the second of these is a reality to abandon, not a truth to abandon, it makes most sense if the *satyas* are four ‘Ennobling Realities’. However, if it seems odd to describe craving as ‘Ennobling’, one might equally well see the *ārya-satyas* as ‘Realities for the Noble One(s)’.

It is also apparent that these Ennobling Realities are not something that Buddhists should respond to with ‘belief’. To ‘believe’ them is to mishandle them, rather than to treat them appropriately by respectively understanding, abandoning, realizing and developing them.

THE FIRST ENNOBLING TRUTH/REALITY

On the first Reality (Skt. *satya*, Pali *sacca*), the first sermon states (*Vinaya* 1.10, *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.421):

This, monks, is the Ennobling Reality that is *duḥkha* (Pali *dukkha*):

- i) birth is *duḥkha*, ageing is *duḥkha*, sickness is *duḥkha*, death is *duḥkha*;
- ii) sorrow, grief, pain, unhappiness and unease are *duḥkha* (omitted at *Vinaya* 1.10);
- iii) association with what one dislikes is *duḥkha* separation from what one likes is *duḥkha*, not to get what one wants is *duḥkha*;
- iv) in short, the five groups (as objects) of grasping are *duḥkha* (numbers added).

The word *duḥkha* refers to all those things which are unpleasant, imperfect, and which we would like to be otherwise, “Rich in meaning and nuance ... Literally ‘pain’ or ‘anguish’, in its religious and philosophical contexts, *duḥkha* is, however, suggestive of an underlying ‘unsatisfactoriness’ or ‘unease’ that must ultimately mar even our experience of happiness” (Gethin, 1998: 61). *Duḥkha* has been translated in many ways, e.g. ‘suffering’, ‘pain’, ‘unsatisfactoriness’, ‘anguish’, ‘unease’, ‘stress’, ‘ill’. Of these, the first is the most common, though it is only appropriate in a general, inexact sense. The English word ‘suffering’ is either a present participle (as e.g. in ‘he is suffering from malaria’) or a noun (e.g. ‘his suffering is intense’). In the common translation “birth is suffering”, it does not make sense to take ‘suffering’ as a present participle – it is not something that birth is *doing*. If ‘suffering’ is intended as a noun, though, it is not the case that birth or ageing are themselves *forms of* suffering – they can only be occasions for or causes of suffering, which is an experience, a mental state.

In actual fact, in the first Ennobling Reality, *duḥkha* in “birth is *duḥkha*...” is an adjective, not a noun. The Pali for the first Ennobling Reality moves from *duḥkha* as a neuter noun, in “This ... is the Ennobling Reality which is *duḥkha*”, to *duḥkha* as an adjective. This is seen by the fact that its gender (shown by the word ending) changes in accord with that of the word it qualifies, e.g. feminine “birth”. This should be reflected in the translation, which it is not in “This is the Noble Truth of suffering: birth is suffering ...”. Indeed, in English there is no adjective from ‘suffering’. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu translates the first sermon: “Now this, monks, is the noble truth of stress: Birth is stressful, aging is stressful...”. This has a shift from noun to adjective and captures many of the connotations of *duḥkha*. Nevertheless ‘stress/stressful’ is somewhat distant from the basic everyday meaning of the word *duḥkha*, which is ‘pain’ as opposed to ‘pleasure’ (*sukha*). These, with neither-*duḥkha*-nor-*sukha*, are the three kinds of feeling (*vedanā*) (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.232). *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.209–10 explains the first of these as the ‘faculties’ of pain (*duḥkha*) and of sadness/unhappiness (*domanassa*), i.e. bodily and mental *duḥkha*. This shows that the primary sense of *duḥkha* is physical ‘pain’, but that it also refers to mental pain, unhappiness (and then, in Buddhism, beyond this). The same spread of meaning is seen in the English word ‘pain’, for example in the phrase, ‘the pleasures and pains of life’.

Yet while one could translate, “...ageing is painful...”, ‘painful’ is perhaps too associated with physical pain to English speakers to suggest the depth and spread of the meaning of *duḥkha*. There is, though, the slightly colloquial expression in which it is said that something or other ‘is a pain’, e.g. a traffic jam, getting old, a hard task. This usage is what amounts to an adjectival phrase, saying that whatever it is applied to – whether a bodily sensation, a state of mind, an external thing or a situation – is unpleasant, unwanted, troublesome, stressful. That this captures the tone of the *Nikāyas*’ talk of *duḥkha* can be seen from a passage saying that the five aggregates are to be seen “as a pain (*dukkha*), as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as a misfortune, as a sickness” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.167). Indeed the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (2.241–2), a canonical Theravādin interpretative text, says that in contemplating something as *duḥkha*, one should see it:

as *duḥkha*, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as a misfortune, as a sickness, as a plague, as a distress, as a danger, as a menace, as not a protection, as not a cave of shelter, as not a refuge, as devoid, as a disadvantage, as the root of misfortune, as murderous, as with-taints, as prey to Māra (meaning the evil, tempter deity, or simply death), as of the nature of birth, ageing, grief, lamentation, despair and defilement.

One can thus translate the first Ennobling Reality: “This is the Ennobling Reality that is pain: birth is a pain, ageing is a pain ...”.

PHENOMENA LISTED AS *DUḤKHA*

Of the kinds of *duḥkha* outlined in the first sermon, it can be seen that: types i) and ii) (see numbering above) occur occasionally; type iii) are frequent, daily occurrences; and type iv) “in short, the five groups (as objects) of grasping (*upādāna-skandhas*) are a pain” is pervasive in its extent.

In the term *upādāna-skandha*, *skandha* (Pali *khandha*) means ‘mass’ ‘group’, ‘aggregate’ or perhaps ‘bundle’. The *skandhas* are the five kinds of processes making up a person, body and mind: material form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), labeling/cognition/perception (Skt. *saṃjñā*, Pali *saññā*), constructing activities (Skt. *saṃskāras*, Pali *saṅkhāras*) and consciousness/discernment (Skt. *vijñāna*, Pali *viññāṇa*).

Now it very is common to see the *upādāna-skandhas* translated as “groups of grasping” or “aggregates of grasping”, but this can be misleading. Grasping, *upādāna*, is a specific mental state which would best be classified as an aspect of the fourth *skandha*, “constructing activities”; so there cannot be five groups that are types of grasping. Thus “groups (as objects) of grasping”, or “grasped at groups”, is better.

Nevertheless, there are hidden nuances in the word *upādāna*. Its root meaning is ‘taking up’, so while its abstract meaning is ‘grasping’ or ‘clinging’, its concrete meaning is ‘fuel’: the ‘taking up’ of which sustains a process such as fire. Richard Gombrich comments that the *Nikāyas* are rich in fire-related metaphors due to the importance of fire in Brahmanism, and then argues that the term *upādāna-skandha* is also part of this fire imagery (1996: 66–8): they can each be seen as a

‘bundle of fuel’ (p.67) which ‘burn’ with the ‘fires’ of *duḥkha* and its causes. They may not each be forms of grasping or clinging, but are each sustaining objects of, or fuel for, these (cf. Ṭhānissaro, 1993: ch.2). Thus the first Ennobling Reality can also be seen to end: “in short, the five bundles of grasping-fuel are a pain”.

In the Fire sermon (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.19–20), the six senses and their objects, along with the sensory stimulation and feeling that these lead to, are seen as metaphorically ‘on fire’ with attachment, hatred and delusion – key causes of *duḥkha* (pain) – and the ageing and death etc. that are themselves *duḥkha* (‘a pain’). The pervasiveness of *duḥkha* in its most subtle sense can be seen in a parallel passage where a very similar range of phenomena are together said to be tantamount to *duḥkha*, and also to ‘a being’ (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.39). However, *nirvāṇa* is the ‘extinction’ of these ‘fires’.

ASPECTS OF DUḤKHA

The pervasive nature of *duḥkha*, of all that is ‘a pain’, can be seen at *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.259, where Śāriputra (Pali Sāriputta) is asked “What, now, is *duḥkha*?”. He replies: “There are, friend, three kinds of painfulness (Pali *dukkhatā*): the painfulness of pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*); the painfulness of conditioned things (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*); and the painfulness of change (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*)”. The first of these is physical and mental pain. The second is ‘a pain’, painful, due to being a limited, conditioned state, imperfect. The third is pleasant while it lasts but is associated with the pain of loss.

Duḥkha is indeed one of the three characteristics (Skt. *lakṣaṇas*, Pali *lakkhaṇas*) of conditioned existence, “all conditioned things (Skt. *saṃskāras*, Pali *saṅkhāras*) are impermanent (Skt. *anitya*, Pali *anicca*); all conditioned things are *duḥkha*; all states (Skt. *dharmas*, Pali *dharmas*, which includes *nirvāṇa*, the unconditioned *dharma*) are not-Self (Skt. *anātman*, Pali *anattā*)” (e.g. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.286–7). It is frequently said that what is impermanent is *duḥkha*, and what is *duḥkha* cannot be rightly taken “this is mine, I am this, this is my Self” – it is not-Self (e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.138–9). This clearly sees impermanence as a key reason for something being *duḥkha*, and something’s being ‘a pain’ as reason not to take it as a permanent Self. Moreover, taking an impermanent thing as such a Self is a cause of more *duḥkha* (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.19).

WHAT IS DUḤKHA IS NOT ONLY DUḤKHA

The quality of *duḥkha* pervades all conditioned states, yet does not exhaust them. It is said of each *skandha* that is steeped in both *duḥkha* and pleasure (*sukha*). It is by being enamoured with or attached to the pleasant aspects that people become ‘captivated’ and ‘defiled’. Wise attention to their *duḥkha* aspects leads to them turning away or letting go (Pali *nibbindanti*) and experiencing non-attachment (*virāga*), purification (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.68–70). Thus the Buddha says in respect of each of the *skandhas*:

The pleasure and gladness that arise in dependence on it: this is its attraction (Pali *assādo*). That it is impermanent, a pain, and subject to change; this is its danger (*ādīnavo*). The removal and abandonment of desire

and attachment (*chanda-rāga*) for it: this is the escape (*nissaraṇam*) from it (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.27–8).

Buddhism, then, does not say that “life is suffering”, as the first Ennobling Reality is sometimes glossed, but that pain and suffering are an endemic part of life that must be calmly and fully acknowledged in one’s response to the nature of conditioned existence. It is also worth bearing in mind that the Buddhist path itself can generate considerable joy (Skt. *prīti*, Pali *pīti*) and happiness, even if this is imperfect and conditioned.

WHAT KIND OF STATEMENT IS “THIS IS *DUḤKHA*”?

To what extent is it a description, and to what extent is it a judgement? Many words have aspects of both, e.g. ‘liar’ is a description which also contains an implicit judgement. When something is said to be ‘*duḥkha*’ in the sense of physical or mental pain, the descriptive aspect is predominant, though there is an implied “this is unfortunate”. When something is said to be ‘*duḥkha*’ in the sense of being ‘a pain’ due to being conditioned, limited and imperfect, the judgmental aspect is to the fore, for that which is *duḥkha* is here clearly being unfavorably compared with what is unconditioned and unlimited, namely *nirvāṇa*. The clear message is: if something is *duḥkha*, do not be attached to it. At this level, *duḥkha* is whatever is not *nirvāṇa*, and *nirvāṇa* is that which is not *duḥkha*. This does not lead to a useless circular definition of the two terms, though, for *duḥkha* is that which is conditioned, arising from other changing factors in the flow of time, and *nirvāṇa* is that which is unconditioned.

Does saying that something is *duḥkha* mean that it: i) is ‘a pain’ only *when grasped at* or ii) is by *its very nature* ‘a pain’? Both seem to be implied in the Theravādin *Nikāya* collection:

- grasping at anything leads to psychological pain (due to the fact that all conditioned things are subject to impermanence) – even physical pain is worse when one craves for its ending;
- but also conditioned things are to be seen, in themselves, as *duḥkha* in the sense of being limited and imperfect, and thus incapable of offering lasting satisfaction. Indeed, it is said that the death of a liberated person (*arhat*) only brings the *duḥkha skandhas* to an end (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.109–12), so a living *arhat*’s *skandhas* are still *duḥkha* in *some* sense. Conditioned things may also, in a straightforward sense, be forms of physical or mental pain.

Yet to see the many things described as ‘*duḥkha*’ as being so in an adjectival sense – ‘painful’, ‘a pain’, ‘stressful’ – rather than as a noun – suffering, unsatisfactoriness – suggests that they are not entities whose very nature is a thing which is *duḥkha*. Their being *duḥkha* is a *quality* that they have. Is such a quality to be seen as a) like being ‘red’, which depend on a perceiving observer, or ‘heavy’, which depends on being on a massive planet, or b) is it like the quality of reflecting light waves of a certain wave-length, or having a certain mass (which, unlike ‘weight’ is seen as constant wherever a body is placed in space)? Is *duḥkha* a) a *relational* quality or b) an *absolute* quality of conditioned process-events?

On the 'absolute' view, process-events need to completely stop, be transcended, for *duḥkha* to be *fully* absent: in *nirvāṇa* beyond death, or as a timeless experience during life. Theravādins tend to this view. On the 'relational' view, all that is needed for a complete absence of *duḥkha* is for craving to stop; there is no '*duḥkha*' or 'being a pain' apart from those who crave for or against what is experienced as 'a pain'. This kind of perspective is taken up in the Mahāyāna, in which the conditioned, *duḥkha* factors which make up *samsāra*, the world of rebirth, when seen with the eye of wisdom, are no different from *nirvāṇa*, in which there is nothing of *duḥkha*. That is, when what is experienced as painful is fully understood, there is an experience beyond any pain, as wisdom transforms how this is perceived.

THE SECOND ENNOBLING TRUTH/REALITY

If the Buddha focussed on *duḥkha* (Pali *dukkha*) in the first Ennobling Truth/Reality, the second picks out a key cause for its arising: “It is this craving (Skt. *trṣṇā*, Pali *taṇhā*), giving rise to rebirth, accompanied by delight and attachment, finding delight now here, now there...” (*Vinaya* 1. 10, *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.421).

Trṣṇā is not just ‘desire’ – for desire can be for good things. Indeed *chanda*, desire-to-act, can be very positive, even though it can *also* be directed in unwholesome ways. Amongst the sets of positive spiritual qualities in the *Nikāyas* are the four ‘bases of success’ (in meditative development), and one of these is ‘the basis of success that is furnished both with concentration gained by means of desire-to-act (*chanda*) and with the activities of endeavour’ (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.213). So Buddhism does not see all ‘desire’ as problematic. This can be seen in some of the early *arhat*’s non-attached appreciation of natural beauty: ‘With clear water and wide crags, haunted by monkeys and deer, covered with oozing moss, those rocks delight me’ (*Theraḡāthā* vv.1070).

Trṣṇā contains an element of psychological compulsion. It can be seen as a driven, restless will, ever on the look-out for new objects to focus on. It is clinging desires, mental thirst, and drives directed at aspects of the changing, unreliable world, demanding that things be like this... and not like that.... This propels people into situation after situation which are open to pain, disquiet and upset. The stronger a person craves, the greater the frustration if what is craved for is not attained. Also, the more things a person craves for, the more opportunities for painful frustration, *duḥkha*.

The first and second Ennobling Realities are intimately connected: the more that a person ignores the *duḥkha* aspects of what he/she craves, the more likely craving will continue, and thus more *duḥkha*. The more the *duḥkha* aspects are contemplated, the weaker craving will be, and thus the less *duḥkha* will arise.

Craving is analyzed in various ways. One way is to describe it as craving for visual objects, for sounds, tastes, smells, touchables and mind objects (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.51). That is, it is a reaching out towards these, construing them as able to offer lasting satisfaction. It can be experienced in the mind’s unwillingness to settle into calm stillness: in its need to turn towards things to think and ‘chew’ on. It can also be experienced in attachment to such stillness, once it is experienced.

The first sermon identifies three types of craving: “... craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for non-existence”, that is, sensual-craving, craving for continuance, craving for ending, or the urges ‘want pleasure’, ‘want more’, ‘don’t want’/‘want different’.

Sensual craving is the most obvious form, focussed on sex, sexual fantasies or on other sensual pleasures such as those from food or what one wears. It is the mind’s erratic energy moving towards these in the spirit of ‘must have’. Craving for continuance is the urge to keep pleasant sensations and situations going, and the related view that they can carry on unchanged. It is also the drive for self-

protection, for ego-enhancement, and for eternal life after death as ‘me’. Craving for ending is the urge to get rid of unpleasant sensations, situations or people. In intense form, it can be an impulse to suicide.

All of these reactions lead to pain when they are frustrated. When fulfilled, they offer fleeting satisfaction only – to be followed by a search for more. That is, they cannot really be fulfilled, any more than a colander can be filled with water. Just as it is filled with holes, so craving has a ‘hole’ in it that can never actually be ‘filled’ by the things it chases. However much such wanting is fed, it is never satisfied. A sigh of relief is sooner or later followed by the restless hunt for something else to chase after or latch hold of. Buddhism suggests that peace lies in stepping aside from this driven-state; in calmly working with how things are, not reacting for or against. Even, in time, for or against craving: let it be, and it will go. Latch onto it and it will flare up.

Note that, as regards rebirth, while some form of craving is seen to determine *that* a being is reborn, *how* they are reborn is seen as due to their karma. An enlightened person is not reborn, as they lack craving, though they may have generated good and bad karma in their final life, prior to their enlightenment. This is the position in early and Theravāda Buddhism, at least. In Mahāyāna Buddhism is the idea that an advanced *bodhisattva* can *choose* to remain in the round of rebirths for longer than would otherwise be necessary, so as to build up further perfections towards perfect Buddhahood. However, this remaining is sometimes seen to need a small remnant of attachment.

CRAVING FOR AN END TO CRAVING

While craving is to be abandoned for *duḥkha* to be transcended, craving for an end to craving may play a part in the path to the end of *duḥkha*, as well as *chanda* directed to this goal. In one passage, it is said that a monk, hearing of another monk who has attained enlightenment, may aspire that he too may one day attain this, hence, “This body comes into being through craving (i.e. craving causes rebirth); and yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned” (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.146). Here, spiritual craving spurs on someone’s spiritual practice which then brings all craving to an end. Can such spiritual craving be skilful, like *chanda*? A post-Canonical Theravādin text, the *Nettipakaraṇa* (p. 87), says, “There are two types of craving, skilful and unskilful. Unskilful craving leads to *saṃsāra*, skilful craving is abandonment, it leads to diminution”.

Yet spiritual craving can, like any other craving, bring some *duḥkha*, and indeed it is said that ‘grief based on renunciation’ occurs when someone has ‘longing’ for the goal of the path (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.218; 1.303–4). Indeed it is said that one may desire to go beyond all that is *duḥkha*, but this ‘is not to be got by wishing’ (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.307). Moreover, near the end of the path, spiritual desire may be what holds a person back from the highest attainment. Thus it is said that a monk becomes an *arhat* (Pali *arahat*) when he realizes the impermanent, conditioned nature of a certain meditative state that he is in; though if he has attachment to *Dharma* and delight in it, he becomes a non-returner, the spiritual attainment just *short* of arhatship (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.350).

OTHER CAUSES OF *DUḤKHA*

While the first sermon picks out craving as the key condition for the arising of *duḥkha*, other passages set this in a context of a range of contributory conditions. In the twelve links of Dependent Arising, the first is spiritual ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*, Pali *avijjā*), ingrained misperception of the nature of reality, so that the four Ennobling Truths/Realities are not directly seen. Such ignorance – and ignore-ance – feeds into and sustains other conditions, that lead on to pleasant and unpleasant feelings, that often elicit craving in response, and this in turn is seen to feed grasping (*upādāna*): for sensual pleasures, for fixed ways of doing things, for fixed and limiting views, and to the idea of Self. Behind the latter lies the deep-seated “I am” conceit’, the gut feeling of an ‘I’ who is seen as either superior to, inferior to, or as good as other people. The causes of *duḥkha* are sometimes also summarized as attachment (*rāga*), hatred (Skt. *dveṣa*, Pali *dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). Such causes include both cognitive faults – ignorance, mis-seeing, delusion – and affective ones – craving, attachment, hatred – and mixed ones, such as conceit and grasping at views. These feed into and support each other: negative emotion clouds the mind and distorts perception, and misperception sustains negative emotion.

THE THIRD ENNOBLING TRUTH/REALITY: NIRVĀṆA

As expressed in the Buddha's first sermon, this says:

This is the Ennobling Reality that is the cessation (*nirodha*) of pain (Skt. *duḥkha*, Pali *dukkha*): it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that very craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it (*Vinaya* 1.10; *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.421).

That is, when craving is ended, the true end of *duḥkha* is experienced: *nirvāṇa* (Pali *nibbāna*). *Nirvāṇa* literally means 'extinction', here meaning the going out of the 'fires' of attachment (*rāga*), hatred (Skt. *dveṣa*, Pali *dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) and the *duḥkha* they bring. The first full experience of *nirvāṇa* is had when a person becomes an *arhat* (Pali *arahat*), one who has reached the goal of the Noble Eightfold Path and thus brought rebirth, even in the subtlest of heavens, to an end. The "destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion" is how both *nirvāṇa* and arhatship are explained at *Samyutta Nikāya* 4. 252. The path is not seen to cause *nirvāṇa*, but is just the path to it, just as a mountain is not caused by the path to it (*Milindapañha* 269). The path simply causes the destruction of the craving etc. that stops *nirvāṇa* being experienced.

THE TWO DOMAINS OF NIRVĀṆA

Nirvāṇa is first attained during life by an *arhat* and then finally at death. The *Itivuttaka* (38–9) explains that there are two "domains (*dhātus*) of *nirvāṇa*": i) that "with remainder of the grasped-at" (Skt. *sopadhi-śeṣa*; Pali *sa-upādi-sesa*), i.e. with the five aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*, Pali *khandhas*) of the living *arhat* still remaining, and ii) that "without remainder of the grasped-at" (Skt. *nir-upadhi-śeṣa*; Pali *an-upādi-sesa*). The first is described as the destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion in a living *arhat* who still has the five senses through which pleasure and pain are experienced. The second is what happens at the end of an *arhat*'s life, when all such experiences "become cool", like a fire gone out. The Theravādin commentaries explain the first as *kilesa-parinibbāna*, or "extinguishing of the defilements", and the second as *khandha-parinibbāna*, or "extinguishing of the aggregates".

CHARACTERIZATIONS OF NIRVĀṆA

Whether in life or beyond death, *nirvāṇa* is seen as very hard to describe. The Buddha says:

This *Dharma* won by me is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, sublime, not within the scope of reason, subtle, to be experienced by the learned ... that is to say Dependent Arising. This too were a matter difficult to see, that is to say the tranquilizing of all constructing activities (Pali *saṅkhāra-samatha*) the renunciation of all clinging (*upadhi*), the destruction of craving, non-attachment (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), *nirvāṇa* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.167).

The term ‘*nirvāṇa*’ is only one of many used for the goal of the Noble Eightfold Path. A section in the *Samyutta Nikāya* (4.360–73) first expresses this goal as the “unconditioned” or “unconstructed” (Pali *asaṅkhata*; Skt. *asamskṛta*) that which has not been subject to the *saṅkhāras* (Skt. *samskāras*), the “constructing activities” (fourth aggregate), or any other conditioning factors: *Dīgha Nikāya* 3.275 explains the goal as a cessation that is the leaving behind of the “constructed, dependently arisen (*paṭicca-samuppanna*)” . The “unconstructed” is then replaced successively with a list of terms in this Pali text: the uninclined, the taintless (*anāsava*), truth/reality (*sacca*), the beyond (*pāra*), the subtle, the very-hard-to-see, the undecaying, the constant (*dhuva*), the undisintegrating, the non-manifestive (*anidassana*), the unelaborated (*nippapañca*, Skt. *niṣ-prapañca*), peace (*santa*), the deathless (*amata*), the sublime (*paṇīta*), the auspicious (*siva*), the secure (*khema*), the destruction of craving, the marvellous, the amazing, the unailing, the unailing state, *nirvāṇa*, the unafflicted, non-attachment, purity (*suddhi*), freedom (*mutti*), the unclinging (*anālaya*), the island (amidst the flood), the shelter, the place of safety, the refuge (*saraṇa*), the destination (*parāyana*). This list mixes negative terms (e.g. the unconditioned, the deathless, non-attachment), positive images (e.g. the sublime, the peaceful), and poetic imagery (e.g. the island). Elsewhere, the goal of the path is the “cessation of the world” (*loka-nirodha*, e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 1.62), that is, an experience in which the normal world of lived experience stops, drops away. In some passages (e.g. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 1.91–2), it is seen as: the “signless” (*animitta*), beyond all perceptual cues; the “undirected” (*appaṇihita*, Skt. *apraṇihita*), beyond all goal-directedness; and “emptiness” (*suññatā*, Skt. *śūnyatā*), empty of attachment, hatred and delusion, and realized through recognizing everything, including itself, as empty of Self.

Perhaps the most famous passages on *nirvāṇa* are in the *Udāna*. *Udāna* p.80–1 says:

Monks, there exists (*atthi*) the unborn (*ajāta*), unbecome, unmade, unconstructed (*asaṅkhata*). Monks, if that unborn ... were not, there would not be apparent the leaving behind (*nissaraṇa*), here, of the born, made, constructed.

Itivuttaka pp.37–8 in turn explains this “leaving behind” as “peace... unarisen (*asamuppana*)... the cessation of *duḥkha*-states, the tranquilizing of constructing activities, bliss (*sukho*)”. *Udāna* pp.80 says on such a state:

There exists (*atthi*), monks, that sphere (*āyatanam*) where there is: (i) neither solidity, cohesion, heat, nor motion; (ii) nor the spheres of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, or neither-perception-nor-non-perception; (iii) neither this world, nor a world beyond, nor both, nor sun-and-moon; (iv) there, monks, I say there is no coming, nor going, nor maintenance, nor falling away, nor arising; (v) that, surely, is without support (*appatitṭha*), non-functioning (*appavatta*), objectless (*anārammaṇa*) - (vi) just this is the end of *duḥkha*.

Here: (i) are the four physical elements, literally ‘earth’, ‘water’, ‘fire’ and ‘wind’, which are the primary components of material form (*rūpa*) and common objects of meditation to attain the *dhyānas* (Pali *jhānas*), meditative states, of the level of elemental form (*rūpa*); (ii) are the four formless states which are both further

levels of meditative experience and corresponding levels of rebirth; (iii) is a way of referring to any rebirth and the realm of space; (iv) uses terms usually used when talking of the process of moving from one rebirth to another; (v) will be discussed below; and (vi) shows that the passage is on *nirvāṇa*.

NIRVĀṆA'S RELATION TO THE ELEMENTS OF THE CONDITIONED WORLD

Nirvāṇa exists, then, yet is beyond even subtle meditative states and levels of rebirth and is hard to discern and pin down. The above enigmatic passage, while the most well known of its type, is complemented by others, especially at *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (5.318–26; Harvey, 1995a: 193–7), which help to illuminate it. At 5.318–19, Ānanda asks the Buddha whether there is a meditative state in which a person does not perceive solidity in solidity (the same for cohesion, heat and motion), does not perceive the sphere of infinite space in this sphere (the same for the other three formless spheres), does not perceive this world in this world (or the world beyond in it), yet he still perceives something. The Buddha says 'yes', and that what is then perceived is *nirvāṇa*.

Here, *nirvāṇa* is perceived not by looking away from the items of the world, such as solidity, but by looking 'through' them, so to speak. Even when applying the mind to various items, they are not perceived, as such: in solidity, no solidity is recognized. Solidity is perceived, as it were, as empty of "solidity": *saṃjñā* (Pali *saññā*) – 'perception' or 'interpretation', that which classifies or labels experience – does not latch onto a perceptual "sign" (*nimitta*) as a basis for seeing solidity as solidity. Rather, the mind perceives *nirvāṇa*. In a parallel passage at 5.324–6, the Buddha describes a monk who meditates in such a way that that "in solidity, the perception of solidity is *vibhūta*". "*Vibhūta*" can mean "made clear" or "destroyed", again suggesting that an insight arises which renders solidity 'transparent', so to speak, enabling the vision of *nirvāṇa*.

Such passages raise interesting questions about the nature of the relationship between *nirvāṇa*, the unconditioned, and the conditioned factors which make up normal experience, the world of *saṃsāra*. The Mahāyāna later comes to say that *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* are not ultimately different, cannot be differentiated, both being 'empty' of inherent existence. The above passages hint in this direction, but no more than this. In any case, the above passages are probably on the knowing of *nirvāṇa* as an object of insight, but not the full experience of it.

IS NIRVĀṆA EXPERIENCED ALL THE TIME BY THE ARHAT?

Another issue on the nature of *nirvāṇa* is whether the form of it during life is something that the *arhat* experiences all the time. The Theravāda tradition sees *nirvāṇa* as the experience which destroys a person's defilements and hence makes them an *arhat*, but also says that the *arhat* can enter a special state, the "fruit" (*phala*) of arhatship, which takes the timeless realm of *nirvāṇa* as its object.

The *suttas* preserved by the Theravādins not only suggest that *nirvāṇa* in life is an episodic experience, but that it is actually a state in which all conditioned states of body and mind stop (Harvey 1995a: 180–97). This is indicated by a number of passages which see the goal of the path as the stopping/cessation (*nirodha*) of all

the links of Dependent Arising, a state known during life (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.58–61; *Suttanipāta* 726–39). If all the links stop, then all a person’s normal functioning, including the sentient body (*nāma-rūpa*), the six senses, and feeling must be suspended. This suggests that the full experience of *nirvāṇa* in life is a timeless, transcendent experience. This cannot be the same as an *arhat*’s normal state of consciousness, in which he or she is not free from the *duḥkha* of physical pain, though they are not mentally perturbed by this (*Milindapañha* 44–5).

NIRVĀṆA AS A RADICALLY TRANSFORMED CONSCIOUSNESS?

Suttas in the Theravādin collection suggest something even more radical. This is that, when fully experienced, *nirvāṇa* is a timeless state of objectless consciousness (Harvey, 1995a: 198–226). Certain passages indicate that the state in which all the links of Dependent Arising stop is one in which consciousness (Skt. *vijñāna*, Pali *viññāṇa*) remains in a certain ‘stopped’ form. Normally, consciousness is “supported” (Pali *patiṭṭhita*) on some or other “object” (*ārammaṇa*) and hence conditions the arising and continuance of the sentient body (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.66). However, in a passage on the cessation/stopping (*nirodha*) of the links of Dependent Arising (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.54–5), it is said that when attachment (*rāga*) for any of the five aggregates is abandoned, consciousness is without either object or support (*patiṭṭhā*), so as to be “unsupported” (*apatiṭṭhita*), “without constructing activities” (*anabhisaṅkhāra*), “released” (*vimutta*), so that there is attainment of *nirvāṇa*. This description of an “unsupported” consciousness that lacks an object very closely matches part v) of the above *Udāna* 80 description of *nirvāṇa*: “that, surely, is without support (*appatiṭṭha*), non-functioning (*appavatta*), objectless (*anārammaṇa*)”. Such a consciousness is the only thing that matches this description of *nirvāṇa*.

There are also two parallel passages which seem to equate *nirvāṇa* with a form of consciousness. At *Dīgha Nikāya* 1.221–23, the question is raised:

Where do solidity, cohesion, heat and motion have no footing?
Where do long and short, course and fine, foul and lovely (have no footing)?
Where are sentiency (*nāma*) and body (*rūpa*) stopped without remainder?

The Buddha replies:

Consciousness, non-manifestive (*anidassana*), infinite, accessible from all round (*sabbato paha*). Here it is that solidity ... (as above). With the stopping of consciousness, here, this is stopped.

The Theravādin commentary sees this as on *nirvāṇa* (note that, above, *anidassana* is one of the synonyms for *nirvāṇa*), but tries to make the word *viññāṇa* mean “is to be known by consciousness” rather than “consciousness”, which is implausible. It also sees the last line as about the complete cessation of consciousness at an *arhat*’s death, yet the last line seems to be about the same situation as is the first line, on a consciousness which has not simply ended. At *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.329–30, the Buddha also speaks of a “Consciousness, non-manifestive, infinite, shining in every respect (*sabbato-pabha*), that is not reached by the solidness of solidity ... by the allness of the all”. Elsewhere the ‘all’ (*sabba*) is equated with the six senses and

their objects (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.16–17), that are in turn equated with *duḥkha* (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.38–9). This suggests that a nirvanic form of consciousness untouched by *duḥkha* is meant at *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.329–30.

NIRVĀṆA BEYOND DEATH

What can one say on *nirvāṇa* beyond death? The Buddha was repeatedly asked what happened to an enlightened person after death (Harvey, 1990a, 65–8; 1995a: 208–10, 239–45). Could it be said that he i) “is” (*hoti*), ii) “is not”, iii) “both is and is not” or iv) “neither is nor is not”? He did not agree with any of these statements, and the second, equivalent to complete annihilation at death, is particularly criticised (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.109–12). While his reasons for leaving these questions undetermined was partly because they were a time-wasting distraction from the path to enlightenment (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.426–31), he also saw them as based on a misconception, being asked by people who viewed the five aggregates as somehow related to a permanent Self (*Samyutta Nikāya* 4.395). That is, they were asking about what happens to an enlightened *Self* after death. As the Buddha saw ‘Self’ as a baseless idea, he therefore answered no questions that presumed its existence.

It is interesting that the above questions are framed using the Pali word *hoti*, usually used for saying that something *is something else*, e.g. ‘the brahmin is a minister’, and not *atthi* (Skt. *asti*), ‘exists’. Beyond death, one cannot say *what an arhat is*:

There exists no measuring of one who has gone out (like a flame). That by which he could be referred to no longer exists for him. When all phenomena (*dharmas*) are removed, then all ways of describing have also been removed (*Suttanipāta* v.1076).

At *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.486–7, *hoti* is replaced by *upapajjati*, “arises” in rebirth, and the death of an enlightened person is again likened to a fire going out – though in Indian thought of the day, an extinct fire was simply seen as going into another, undifferentiated state, as the potential for fire was seen as in all material things. The indescribable state of an enlightened person after death is in fact linked in some passages to a transformed form of consciousness. At *Samyutta Nikāya* 1.121–2, a monk attains *nirvāṇa* at the very time of death: his consciousness is not “supported” in any rebirth, and “with an unsupported (*appatiṭṭhitena*) consciousness, the clansman Godhika attained *nirvāṇa*”.

There are thus suggestions that *nirvāṇa*, whether in life or beyond death, is an ‘unsupported’, ‘objectless’, ‘stopped’ form of consciousness, which is radically different from the form of conditioned consciousness that normally occurs within the five aggregates, including all the subtle transformations of this in meditative states. Such suggestions are not taken up in the Theravāda school, though, which rests content with silence on the state of an enlightened person after death, and sees *nirvāṇa* as a timeless, transcendental realm that can be fully known as an object by the *arhat*, the first experience of which makes him or her an *arhat*. However *nirvāṇa* is seen, it is also clear that it is also something that a stream-

enterer, one who gains the first level of experiential knowledge of the four Ennobling Truths, also gains a distant glimpse of.

NIRVĀṆA IN THE MAHĀYĀNA

In the Mahāyāna, the goal of becoming an *arhat* was seen as insufficiently compassionate, as it entailed leaving the round of rebirths at death, not staying in it to develop additional qualities needed to become a full Buddha, who could bring countless benefits to the world. Hence the true path, trodden by the *bodhisattva*, is that which goes to full Buddhahood. At stage six of the ten stage *bodhisattva*-path, wisdom equivalent to that of an *arhat* is attained, but the advanced *bodhisattvas* do not pass into ‘*nirvāṇa* without remainder of the grasped-at’ at death, but voluntarily remain in the round of rebirths to work further towards Buddhahood, and continue to aid beings. They are no longer attached to *saṃsāra*, aimlessly wandering on in rebirths, but nor are they attached to post-mortem *nirvāṇa* beyond rebirths. Moreover, in their wisdom they know that *saṃsāra* is not ultimately different from *nirvāṇa*, for both are empty of a separate essence. They are thus seen to experience a *nirvāṇa* that is *apraṭiṣṭhita*: “unsupported” or “non-abiding” in either *saṃsāra* or *nirvāṇa* (Williams, 1989: 52–4, 181–4; Harvey, 1995a: 217–22). It is intriguing that the term *apraṭiṣṭhita* is used, for this is the equivalent of Pali *appaṭiṭṭhita*, used in the early texts of nirvanic consciousness. For the Mahāyāna, a being can still operate in the world in such an ‘unsupported’ state, this being one of *non-attachment* to *saṃsāra* or *nirvāṇa*; in the Pali *suttas*, it seems to indicate a state where the conditioned world has dropped away, and consciousness is without *any object*, even ‘*nirvāṇa*’.

THE FOURTH ENNOBLING TRUTH/REALITY: THE ENNOBLING EIGHTFOLD PATH

The fourth of the four Ennobling Truths/Realities is the Noble Eightfold Path (Skt. *āriya aṣṭaṅgika-mārga*, Pali *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*). This is seen in the first sermon as the “middle way” of practice (Skt. *madhyama-pratipad*, Pali *majjhima-paṭipadā*): “That middle way awakened to by the *Tathāgata* (Thus-gone/Truth-attained One), which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to *nirvāṇa*” and the “way leading the cessation of pain (Skt. *duḥkha*, Pali *dukkha*)”. The first sermon says that the Noble Eightfold Path is “to be developed/cultivated (*bhāvetabban*)” (*Vinaya* 1.11; *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 5.422) and it is elsewhere said to be “the best of conditioned states” (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 2.34). The Path has eight factors (*aṅgas*) each described as right or perfect (Skt. *samyak*, Pali *sammā*): (1) right view, seeing or understanding, (2) right resolve, (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration. The path-factors are not ‘steps’ on the path but more like qualities that are needed to effectively travel to *nirvāṇa*, the end of *duḥkha*.

The path-factors are grouped into three sections (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.301). Factors 3–5 pertain to *śīla* (Pali *sīla*), moral discipline; factors 6–8 pertain to *samādhi*, meditative unification of the heart/mind (*citta*); factors 1–2 pertain to *prajñā* (Pali *paññā*), or wisdom; *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* are always given in this order. Accordingly, the path essentially comprises cultivation of three aspects of a person’s character:

- *moral discipline* addresses bodily and verbal conduct, so as to act in a more morally wholesome, virtuous way, restraining overt expressions of greed, hatred and delusion;
- *meditative unification* addresses the inner expressions of greed, hatred and delusion in the emotions, calming these by refining the quality of attention;
- *wisdom* addresses aspirations and understanding of the nature of reality, which is seen to improve as progress in meditation develops, and insights based on this can arise. Wisdom challenges misperceptions of reality, in order ultimately to remove even latent, underlying forms of greed, hatred and delusion that are not always apparent in conscious thought.

Moral discipline is seen as a good foundation of the other two, though it is also strengthened and deepened by them. This is because unwholesome actions – counteracted by moral discipline – strengthen the hindrances to meditative success. Meditation helps weaken these, and so aids virtuous behaviour, as does wisdom: moral discipline and wisdom are said to be like two hands that wash each other (*Dīgha Nikāya* 1.124).

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH AND THE ORDINARY EIGHTFOLD PATH

The eight factors (*aṅgas*) of the path exist at two basic levels, the ordinary (Skt. *laukika*, Pali *lokiya*), and the transcendent (Skt. *lokottara*, Pali *lokuttara*) or Noble (Skt. *ārya*, Pali *ariya*), so that there is both an ordinary and an Noble Eightfold Path

(*Mahācattārīsaka Sutta: Majjhima Nikāya* 3.71–8). Most Buddhists seek to practise the ordinary Path, which is perfected only in those who are approaching the lead up to stream-entry. At stream-entry, a person gains a first glimpse of *nirvāṇa* and the ‘stream’ which leads there, and enters this, the *Noble Eightfold Path*. This form of the Path, then, has first to be found before it can be practised. One might perhaps think of attaining the Noble path as like reaching a key base camp for the ascent of a mountain.

Each Path-factor is a state which is skilful or wholesome (Skt. *kuśala*, Pali *kusala*), and progressively wears away its opposite ‘wrong’ factor, until all unskilful states are destroyed. The form of the Path which immediately leads up to becoming an *arhat* (Pali *arahat*) has two extra factors, right knowledge (Skt. *samyag-jñāna*, Pali *sammā-ñāṇa*), and right freedom (Skt. *samyag-vimukti*, Pali *sammā-vimutti*), making it tenfold. The *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* gives a clear analysis of the path. The details are as follows, with some information added from other texts.

RIGHT VIEW (SKT. *SAMYAG-DRṢṬI*, PALI *SAMMĀ-DITṬHI*)

At the ‘ordinary’ level, right view is in the form of correct belief:

there is gift, there is offering, there is (self-)sacrifice [these are worthwhile]; there is fruit and ripening of deeds well done or ill done [what one does *matters* and has an effect on one’s future]; there is this world, there is a world beyond [this world is not unreal, and the unenlightened are reborn in another world after death]; there is mother and father [it is good to respect parents, who establish one in this world]; there are spontaneously arising beings [some of the worlds one can be reborn in, for example some heavens, are populated by beings that come into being without parents]; there are in this world renunciants and brahmins who are faring rightly, and who proclaim this world and the world beyond having realized them by their own super-knowledge [spiritual development is a real possibility, actualized by some people, and it can lead, in the profound calm of deep meditation, to memory of past rebirths in a variety of worlds, and awareness of how others are reborn in such worlds according to their karma].

This helps make a person take full responsibility for their actions. It can also be implicitly seen to cover intellectual, and partial experiential, understanding of the Four Ennobling Truths/Realities. The concerns of ordinary right view are also the focus of the three ‘bases for effecting karmic fruitfulness’ (Skt. *puṇya-kriyā-vastus*, Pali *puñña-kiriya-vatthus*): giving (*dāna*), moral discipline (Skt. *śīla*, Pali *sīla*), and meditative cultivation (*bhāvanā*) (*Dīgha Nikāya* 3.218).

At the Noble or ‘transcendent’ level, right view is in the form of right seeing: flashes of transformative direct insight into the Ennobling Realities in the form of the faculty of wisdom: knowledge which penetrates into the nature of reality. It is not based on the concepts of ultimate ‘existence’ or ultimate ‘non-existence’, as are speculative view-points, but on insight into the middle way of Dependent Origination. It sees: (i) how the world arises according to conditions, so that ‘non-existence’ does not apply to it – it is not a pure illusion; and (ii), how the world ceases from the cessation of conditions, so that it does not have substantial,

eternal ‘existence’ either (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.16–17). Noble right view, then, directly knows the world as an ongoing flux of conditioned phenomena.

RIGHT RESOLVE (SKT. SAMYAK-SAMKALPA, PALI SAMMĀ-SANĀKAPPA)

A ‘*saṃkalpa*’ is seen as springing from what one focuses perception on, and to potentially lead on to desire-to-do, yearning and seeking something out (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2.143), reminiscent of the *saṃkalpa* /resolve that the brahmins made before carrying out a sacrificial ritual. At the ‘ordinary’ level, *samyak-saṃkalpa* is resolve for: a) peaceful ‘desirelessness’ or renunciation’ (Skt. *naiṣkāmya* or *naiśkramya*, Pali *nekkhamma*), and away from sense-pleasures (*kāmas*); b) non-ill-will (Skt. *avyābādha*, Pali *avyāpāda*), equivalent to lovingkindness, and away from ill-will; c) non-injury (Skt. *ahiṃsā*, Pali *avihiṃsā*), equivalent to compassion, and away from any desire to injure. At the Noble level, it is focussed mental application (Skt. *vitarka*, Pali *vitakka*) in accord with right seeing. One of great wisdom is said to be able to apply himself or herself to whatever *vitarka* or *saṃkalpa* he or she pleases: “Thus he is master of the mind in the ways of *vitarka*, also he is one who attains at will, without difficulty and without trouble, the four *dhyānas*” (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.36). It is seen to both spring from and aid right view, both being part of wisdom. It aids right view as it is a repeated application of the mind to an object of contemplation, so that this can be rightly seen and understood to be impermanent, *duḥkha*, not-Self – just as a money changer assesses a coin as genuine or false by eye, but in doing so needs the help of his hands in turning the coin over and tapping it (*Visuddhimagga* 515). That is, carefully applying the mind to something helps one understand it in a deep and discerning way.

RIGHT SPEECH, ACTION AND LIVELIHOOD

For each of the three path factors that come under moral discipline, these are well established at the ordinary level of the path, and become natural at the Noble level. Right speech (Skt. *samyag-vācā*, Pali *sammā-vācā*) is: a) “abstaining from false speech”: truthful speech (equivalent to the fourth of the five lay ethical precepts); b) “abstaining from divisive speech”: speech focussed on absent people’s good points rather than on real or imagined bad points; c) “abstaining from harsh speech”: speech which is kindly and not angry or abrasive; d) “abstaining from frivolous speech”: speech which does not involve wasted words, or speaking just for the sake of speaking.

Right action (Skt. *samyak-karmanta*, Pali *sammā-kammanta*) is equivalent to the first three of the five lay precepts: a) “abstaining from onslaught on living beings”: avoiding intentional killing of, or injury to, any living being; b) “abstaining from taking what is not given”: avoiding theft and cheating; c) “abstaining from wrong conduct in regard to sense-pleasure”: avoiding causing suffering to others or oneself by inconsiderate or greedy sensual activity.

Right livelihood (Skt. *samyag-ājīva*, Pali *sammā-ājīva*) is making one’s living, lay or monastic, in such a way as to avoid causing suffering to others (human or animal) through cheating them (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.75) or physically harming or killing them by: “trade in weapons, living beings, meat, alcoholic drink, or poison” (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 3.208).

RIGHT EFFORT, MINDFULNESS AND CONCENTRATION/UNIFICATION

For the path factors that come under meditative unification, they are at the Noble level once Noble right view guides them. Right effort (Skt. *samyag-vyāyāma*, Pali *sammā-vāyāma*) is endeavour directed at developing the mind in a wholesome way: a) avoiding the arising of unwholesome states (e.g. greed, hatred or delusion); b) undermining unwholesome states which have arisen; c) developing wholesome states, as in meditation practice; d) maintaining wholesome states which have arisen.

Right mindfulness (Skt. *samyak-smṛti*, Pali *sammā-sati*) is a crucial aspect of any Buddhist meditation, and is a state of keen awareness of mental and physical phenomena as they arise within and around one. It is explained as practising the four applications or presencings of mindfulness (Skt. *smṛty-upasthānas*, Pali *sati-paṭṭhānas*) – mindful observation, within oneself and others, of the qualities and changing nature of: a) body (*kāya*) (including breathing, bodily postures, movements, parts, elements and stages of decomposition after death); b) feeling (*vedanā*) whether pleasant unpleasant or neutral; c) states of mind (*citta*); d) *dharmas* (Pali *dhammas*): basic patterns in the flow of experience, such as the five *skandhas* (Pali *khandhas*) comprising body and mind, the five hindrances (desire for sense-pleasures, ill-will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and vacillation), the four Ennobling Realities, and the seven factors of awakening (mindfulness, discrimination of *dharmas*, energy, joy, tranquillity, meditative unification, and equanimity).

Right concentration/unification (Skt. *samyak-samādhi*, Pali *sammā-samādhi*) refers to states of inner collectedness, peace and mental clarity arising from attention closely focused on a meditation object. Attained by unification of the mind's energies, these are the four *dhyānas* (Pali *jhānas*), meditative (lucid) trances. As described at *Dīgha Nikāya* 1.73–6: a) first *dhyāna*, which is “endowed with mental application (Skt. *vitarka*, Pali *vitakka*) and examination (*vicāra*), born of detachment (from sense-desires and unwholesome states), filled with (uplifting) joy (Skt. *prīti*, Pali *pīti*) and (contented) happiness (*sukha*)”, with the joy and happiness suffusing the entire body; b) second *dhyāna*, in which there is no longer mental application and examination, and whose joy and happiness are “born of concentration”; c) third *dhyāna*, endowed with equanimity and (strong) mindfulness, but without joy; d) fourth *dhyāna*, also endowed with equanimity and strong mindfulness, but without happiness, a state in which the mind is “serene, purified, cleansed, without blemish, with defilements gone, become pliable, workable, firm and imperturbable”, ready for deep insight. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.235 describes the *dhyānas* as what “training in higher mind (*adhi-citta-*)” involves. The Theravādin *Abhidharma* (*Vibhaṅga* 263–4) specifies the key *dhyāna* factors as: mental application, examination, joy, happiness and one-pointedness of mind (Skt. *cittāikagratā*, Pali *cittass'ekaggatā*) in the first; joy, happiness and one-pointedness of mind in the second; happiness and one-pointedness of mind in the third; and equanimity and one-pointedness of mind in the fourth. Details of these factors are given in the *Visuddhimagga* (142–7).

THE UNFOLDING OF THE PATH-FACTORS

The order of the eight path-factors is seen as that of a natural progression, with one factor following on from the one before it. Right view comes first because it knows the right and wrong form of each of the eight factors; it also counteracts spiritual ignorance, the first factor in Dependent Origination. From the cool believing or knowing of right view blossoms a right resolve, which has a balancing warmth. From this, a person's speech becomes improved, and thus his or her action. Once he is working on right action, it becomes natural to incline towards a virtuous livelihood. With this as basis, there can be progress in right effort. This facilitates the development of right mindfulness, whose clarity then allows the development of the calm of meditative concentration. Neither the ordinary nor the Noble Path is to be understood as a single progression from the first to eighth factor, however. Right effort and mindfulness work with right view to support the development of all the path-factors: the path-factors mutually support each other to allow a gradual deepening of the way in which the Path is trodden. In terms of the division of the Path into moral discipline, meditation and wisdom, the Path can be seen to develop as follows. Influenced by good examples, a person's first commitment will be to develop moral discipline, a generous and self-controlled way of life for the benefit of self and others. To motivate this, he or she will have some degree of preliminary wisdom, in the form of appropriate belief, outlook and an aspiration, expressed as *śraddhā* (Pali *saddhā*), trustful confidence or faith in the wholesome qualities of the Path and those rich in these. With moral discipline as the indispensable basis for further progress, some meditation may be attempted, perhaps starting with chanting Buddhist formulas and short texts. With appropriate application, meditation will lead to the mind becoming calmer, stronger and clearer. This will allow experiential understanding of the *Dharma* to develop, so that deeper wisdom arises. From this, moral discipline is strengthened, becoming a basis for further progress in meditation and wisdom. With each more refined development of the moral discipline–meditation–wisdom sequence, the Path spirals up to a higher level, until the crucial transition of stream-entry is reached. The *Noble* Path then spirals up to arhatship.

THE NOBLE PERSONS

Any person not yet on the Noble Path is known as a *prthagjana* (Pali *puthujjana*), an “ordinary person”. Such people are seen as, so to speak, “deranged” (*Vibhaṅga* commentary 186), as they lack the mental balance of those on the Noble Path, the eight kinds of ‘Noble (Skt. *ārya*, Pali *ariya*) persons’. These comprise the Noble *Śaṅgha*, which with the Buddha and *Dharma* are ‘three refuges’ of a Buddhist.

The first Noble person is someone who, by strong insight into the ‘three marks’ of conditioned phenomena (as impermanent, *duḥkha* and not-Self), is one ‘practising for the realization of the fruit which is stream-entry’ (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 4.293). He or she goes on to become a stream-enterer (Skt. *srotāpanna*, Pali *sotāpanna*), the second kind of Noble person, who is sure to become an *arhat* within seven lives (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.235). He or she is free from rebirths as a hell-being, animal, ghost or jealous god (*asura*), as he has completely destroyed the first three of ten spiritual ‘fetters’ (*saṃyojanas*; *Samyutta Nikāya* 5.357). The first fetter is ‘views on the existing group’ (Skt. *satkāya-dṛṣṭi*, Pali *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) i.e. taking any of the five

aggregates as ‘Self’ or somehow related to a ‘Self’ (see entry on Not-Self). This is destroyed by deep insight into the four Ennobling Realities and Dependent Origination. The second fetter is vacillation in commitment to the three refuges and the worth of morality. The stream-enterer thus has unwavering confidence in the refuges and unblemished morality (*Samyutta Nikāya* 2. 9–70). This is because he has ‘seen’ and ‘plunged into’ the *Dharma* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.380), giving him trust in *Dharma* and in the ‘*Dharma-become*’ Buddha, and is himself now a member of the Noble *Saṅgha*, whether or not he or she is a monastic. The third fetter destroyed is ‘clinging to disciplines and observances’, for although his morality is naturally pure, he or she knows that this alone is insufficient to attain *nirvāṇa*. The common ‘rites and rituals’ instead of ‘disciplines and observances’ (Skt. *śīla-vrata*, Pali *sīla-bbata*) is a mistranslation, though no doubt the fetter does refer to attachment to various fixed ways of doing things.

The Theravādin *Abhidharma* denies that one practising for stream-entry has yet got rid of any fetters: he may no longer overtly express “views on the existing group” or experience vacillation, but he or she still possesses the underlying tendencies for these. On these grounds, those who disagreed with the Theravādins on this issue (identified by the commentary as those of the Andhaka and Sammitiya schools) held them to have already overcome these two fetters, though still having that of clinging to disciplines and observances (*Kathāvatthu* III.5). The person practising for stream-entry is explained by the *Puggala-paññatti*, a text of the Theravādin canonical *Abhidharma*, as equivalent to the faith-follower (*saddhānusārī*) and *Dharma*-follower (*dhammānusārī*). These are referred to at *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.477–9 as part of list of seven types of Noble persons, differentiated by the spiritual qualities prevalent in them. Neither person has yet destroyed any spiritual taints (Skt. *āśravas*, Pali *āsavas*), but both have the faculties of faith, mental strength, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, though to different degrees. The former “has sufficient faith in and love for the *Tathāgata*” and the latter “with wisdom he has gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings proclaimed by the *Tathāgata*”. One can see them as representing spiritually developed Buddhist followers who emphasize, respectively, faith and wisdom. In one passage (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 4.75–6), the faith-follower is replaced by the “dweller in signless (*animitta*-)”, which *Visuddhimagga* 659–60 explains in relation to deep understanding of impermanence.

By deepening his insight, a stream-enterer may become one practising for the realization of once-returning, and then a once-returner (Skt. *sakṛdāgāmin*, Pali *sakadāgāmin*). A once-returner can only be reborn once in the sense-desire world, as a human or lower god. Any other rebirths will be in the higher heavens. This is because he or she has destroyed the gross forms of the next two fetters, sensual desire and ill-will. The next Noble persons are the one practising for the realization of non-returning, and the non-returner (*anāgāmin*). The non-returner has destroyed even subtle sensuous desire and ill-will, so that great equanimity is the tone of his or her experience, and he cannot be reborn in the sense-desire world. His insight is not quite sufficient for him to become an *arhat*, and if he does not manage to become one later in life, he is reborn in one or more of the five ‘pure abodes’ (Skt. *śuddhāvāsas*, Pali *suddhāvāsas*) the most refined heavens in the pure form world, where only non-returners can be reborn. In these he matures his insight till he becomes a long-lived *arhat*-god. The highest pure abode is the

'supreme' (Skt. *akaniṣṭha*, Pali *akaniṭṭha*) heaven, which the Mahāyāna *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (p.361) sees as where *bodhisattvas* finally attain perfect Buddhahood. There is, though, the suggestion that the quickest kind of non-returner experiences *nirvāṇa* in a between-lives state (later called the *antarā-bhava*), and is not reborn in any state (*Samyutta Nikāya* 5.69–70; Harvey, 1995a: 98–102).

The final two Noble persons are the one practising for the realization of arhatness, and the *arhat* himself. The *arhat* destroys all the five remaining fetters: attachment to the pure form or formless worlds, the 'I am' conceit (perhaps now in the form of lingering spiritual pride), restlessness, and spiritual ignorance. These are destroyed by the Tenfold Path, which brings *duḥkha* and all rebirths to an end in the blissful experience of *nirvāṇa*.

In one explanation of path-progress, *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.233–4 explains that stream-enterers and once-returners have fully developed moral discipline and have a modicum of meditation and wisdom; non-returners have also fully developed their meditation, and *arhats* have fully developed all three qualities.

NOT-SELF (ANĀTMAN)

In the Buddha's day, the spiritual quest was largely seen as the search for identifying and liberating a person's true Self (Skt. *ātman*, Pali *attā*). Such an entity was postulated as a person's permanent inner nature, the source of true happiness and the autonomous 'inner controller' of action. In Brahmanism, this *ātman* was seen as the ungraspable inner subject, the unseen seer, and as a universal Self, identical with *Brahman*, the divine source and substance of the universe; in Jainism, for example, it was seen as the individual "life principle" (*jīva*).

THE FIVE SKANDHA ANALYSIS

One of the most common analyses of the component processes of a person in Buddhism is in terms of the five *skandhas* (Pali *khandhas*): 'aggregates' or 'groups' (see entry on The First Ennobling Truth/Reality). The first is *rūpa*, 'material form' – the material aspect of existence, whether in the outer world or in the body of a living being. It is said to be comprised of four basic elements or forces, and forms of subtle, sensitive matter derived from these. The four basics are solidity (literally 'earth'), cohesion ('water'), energy ('fire') and motion ('wind'). From the interaction of these, the body of flesh, blood, bones, etc. is composed. The remaining four aggregates are all mental in nature; for they lack any physical 'form'. The second aggregate is *vedanā*, or 'feeling'. This is the hedonic tone or 'taste' of any experience: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. It includes both sensations arising from the body and mental feelings of happiness, unhappiness or indifference. The third aggregate is *saṃjñā* (Pali *saññā*), which processes sensory and mental objects, so as to classify and label them, for example as 'yellow', 'a man', or 'fear'. It is 'perception', labelling, recognition and interpretation – including mis-interpretation – of objects. Without it, a person might be conscious but would be unable to know *what* he was conscious of. The fourth aggregate is the *saṃskāras* (Pali *saṅkhāras*), 'constructing activities' or 'volitional activities'. These comprise a number of states which initiate action or direct, mould and give shape to character (*Visuddhimagga* 462–72). These are mainly active states such as greed, hatred, energy, joy and attention, but also sensory stimulation, an automatically arising state. While some are ethically neutral, many are ethically 'skilful' (Skt. *kuśāla*, Pali *kusala*) or 'unskilful'. The most characteristic 'constructing activity' is *cetanā*, 'will' or 'volition', which is identified with karma (*Āṅguttara Nikāya* 3.415). The fifth and final aggregate is *vijñāna* (Pali *viññāna*), '(discriminative) consciousness' or '(perceptual) discernment'. This includes both the basic awareness of a sensory or mental object, and the discrimination of its basic aspects or parts, which are actually recognized by *saṃjñā*. It is of six types according to whether it is conditioned by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind-organ (Skt. *manas*, Pali *mano*). It is also known as *citta*, the central focus of personality which can be seen as 'mind', 'heart' or 'thought'. It can also be seen as a 'mind set' or 'mentality'; some aspects of which alter from moment to moment, but others recur and are equivalent to a person's character. Its form at any moment is set up by the other mental *skandhas*, but in turn it goes on to determine their pattern of arising, in a process of constant interaction.

Much Buddhist practice is concerned with the purification, development and harmonious integration of these five factors of personality, through the

cultivation of moral discipline and meditation. In time, however, the five-fold analysis is used to enable a meditator to gradually transcend the naive perception – with respect to ‘himself’ or ‘another’ – of a unitary ‘person’ or ‘self’. In place of this, there is set up the contemplation of a person as a cluster of changing physical and mental processes, or *dharmas* (Pali *dhammas*), thus undermining grasping and attachment, which are key causes of suffering.

THE ANATTALAKKHAṆA SUTTA

The teaching on not-Self (Skt. *anātman*, Pali *anattā*) is directly addresses in the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (*Vinaya* 1.13–14, *Samyutta Nikāya* 3. 66–8), the ‘Discourse on the characteristic of *anattā*’, seen as the Buddha’s second sermon. Here he explains, with respect to each of the five *skandhas*, that if it were truly Self, it would not “tend to sickness”, and it would be totally controllable at will, which it is not. This must allude to such facts as that the body gets tired, ill and old, we do not feel pleasure all the time, as we might wish, and our awareness often wanders, being pulled this way and that by external events or inner emotions.

The *sutta* then continues by saying that each *skandha* is impermanent (Skt. *anitya*, Pali *anicca*), and hence a pain (Skt. *duḥkha*, Pali *dukkha*), and that it is not “fit to consider that which is impermanent, a pain, of a nature to change, as: ‘This is mine (*etam mama*), this I am (*eso ham asmi*), this is my Self (*eso me attā*)’”. When each and every example of each of the five *skandhas* is truly recognized as “This is not mine (*n’etam mama*), this I am not (*n’eso ham asmi*), this is not my Self (*na me so attā*)”, a person “finds estrangement in/turns away from/feels revulsion for” (*nibbindati*) them, so as to experience dispassion/non-attachment (*virāga*). He or she thus attains liberation and the end of grasping.

Elsewhere the negative aspects of *skandhas* are highlighted by saying that they are to be seen “as impermanent, as a pain (*dukkha*), as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as a misfortune, as a sickness, as other, as disintegrating, as empty (*suñña-*), as not-Self” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 3.167). The tone here is quite clear: what is recognized as being impermanent, a pain and not-Self should be *let go* of. While people long for what is permanent, lasting, reliable, pleasant, controllable and a reliable possession, this is not how things are. To ignore this and still grasp at things as if they are like this is to continually open oneself to disappointment and frustration.

THE MEANING OF NOT-SELF

The Pali word *anattā* is a compound, *an-attā*. *An* is the negative prefix and *attā* is a noun meaning self/Self. In most contexts, it is a *kammadhāraya* compound, like *akāla-megha-* ‘an untimely (*akāla*) cloud (*megha*)’. On this model, *anattā* technically functions as a noun, and it is generally used as a complement to another noun, just as one says in English ‘consciousness is *a mystery*’ or ‘John is *a non-smoker*’. When it is said ‘*x is anattā*’, this means: *x* is a non-Self, is no Self, is not a Self. In the Pali commentaries it is sometimes seen as a *bahubbīhi* compound like *sa-dhañña-*, ‘possessing (*sa*) grain (*dhañña*)’, i.e. an adjective meaning ‘grain-bearing’. On this model, *anattā* would function as an adjective, meaning that what it is applied to is ‘without Self’. In canonical texts, it behaves a *kammadhāraya* compound, as the word ending of *anattā* does not change to agree with the gender what it is applied

to, e.g. neuter *viññāṇam* (consciousness), as it would if it were being used as *bahubbīhi* adjectival compound. Its use as a *kammadhāraya* compound, however, is still tantamount to an adjectival use: ‘x is *anattā*’ is most elegantly rendered ‘x is not-Self’, though ‘x is a non-Self’ would be most technically correct and ‘x is no Self’ is also possible.

When something is said to be *anātman/anattā*, not-Self, the kind of ‘self’ it is seen *not* to be is clearly one that would be permanent and free from all pain, however subtle. Such a ‘Self’ is the kind of metaphysical entity that the *Upaniṣads* and Jains postulated, in their different ways. While Pali and Sanskrit do not have capital letters, in English it is useful to signal such a concept with a capital: Self.

The emphasis on non-controllability in the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* relates the Upaniṣadic idea that the Self is the ‘inner controller’ (*antaryamin*). *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.7.3 sees the immortal Self as controlling the elements and faculties within a person (and the realms of the world). While the *Upaniṣads* recognized many things as being not-Self, they felt that a real, true Self could be found. When it was found, and known to be identical to *Brahman*, the basis of everything, this would bring liberation. In the Buddhist *suttas*, though, literally *everything* is seen as not-Self.

While *nirvāṇa* is beyond impermanence and *duḥkha*, it is still not-Self. This is made clear in a recurring passage (e.g. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.286–7), which says that all *saṃskāras* (Pali *saṅkhāras*), or conditioned phenomena, are impermanent and *duḥkha*, but that “all *dharmas* are not-Self”. ‘*Dharma*’ (Pali *dhamma*) is a word with many meanings in Buddhism, but here it refers to any basic component of reality. Most are conditioned, but *nirvāṇa* is the unconditioned (Skt. *asaṃskṛta*, Pali *asaṅkhata*) *dharma* (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 2.34–5); both conditioned and unconditioned *dharmas* are not-Self. While *nirvāṇa* is beyond change and suffering, it has nothing in it which could support the feeling of I-ness; for this can only arise with respect to the *skandhas*, and it is not even a truly valid feeling here (*Dīgha Nikāya* 2.66–8).

THE NON-DENIAL OF s/SELF

At *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.400–01, the wandering ascetic Vacchagotta directly asks the Buddha “Is there a s/Self?” The Buddha remains silent, as he does when he is then asked “Is there not a s/Self?”. After Vacchagotta goes away, Ānanda asks the Buddha why he had remained silent. He replies that to say there is a s/Self would be to be associated with “eternalists” – i.e. those who believe in an eternal Self –, and be in contradiction with the knowledge that “all *dharmas* are not-Self” (i.e. “no *dharma* is a Self”). To say that there is not a s/Self would be to be associated with “annihilationists” – i.e. those who believe only in a this-life self which is totally destroyed at death, such that there is no changing empirical self-process flowing on to a new rebirth –, and would be confusing to Vacchagotta as he would think he had lost a s/Self that he formerly had. It is thus clear that while a Self is not directly *denied*, it is also clear that it is not accepted either (Harvey 1995a: 38–40).

In fact, seeing things as not-Self is a tool to cut off identifying with and clinging to things, including views. It should not itself generate a view ‘there is no Self’.

Seeing things as not-Self is a constructed process, and is itself not-Self: it should not be clung to.

THE NATURE AND BENEFIT OF SEEING THINGS AS NOT-SELF

While the *suttas* have no place for a metaphysical Self, seeing things as *not-Self* was clearly regarded as playing a vital soteriological role (Harvey 1995a: 43–53). Given that a Self is not asserted, nor explicitly denied, and that seeing things as not-Self is so important, it becomes apparent that the concept of ‘Self’, and the associated deep-rooted feeling of ‘I am’, are being utilized for a spiritual end. The not-Self teaching can in fact be seen as a brilliant device which uses a deep-seated human aspiration, ultimately *illusory*, to overcome the negative products of such an illusion. Identification, whether conscious or unconscious, with something as ‘what I truly and permanently am’ is a source of attachment; such attachment leads to frustration and a sense of loss when what one identifies with changes and becomes other than one desires. The deep-rooted idea of ‘Self’, though, is not to be directly attacked, but used as a measuring-rod against which all phenomena should be compared: so as to see them as falling short of the perfections implied in the idea of Self. This is to be done through a rigorous experiential examination: as each possible candidate for being ‘Self’ is examined, but is seen to be not-Self, falling short of the ideal. The intended result is that one should let go of any attachment to such a thing. The aim of seeing things as not-Self, then, is to make one see that this, this, this... *everything* one grasps at, due to identifying it as ‘Self’ or ‘I’, is *not* Self and must be *let go* of. This brings *nirvāṇa*. Contemplation of phenomena as impermanent, *duḥkha* and not-Self is a way of undermining craving for and clinging to such phenomena. By seeing things ‘as they really are’, attachment and its attendant suffering will be undermined.

One can perhaps see the Self idea as fulfilling a role akin to a rocket which boosts a payload into space, against the force of gravity. It provides the force to drive the mind out of the ‘gravity field’ of attachment to the *skandhas*. Having done so, it then ‘falls away and is burnt up’, as itself an empty concept, part of the unsatisfactory *skandhas*.

The *suttas*, then, use ‘not-Self’ as a reason to let go of things, not to ‘prove’ that there is no Self. There is no need to give some philosophical denial of ‘Self’; the idea simply withers away, or evaporates in the light of knowledge, when it is seen to be empty of content, or, as the *suttas* put it, when it is seen that all things are ‘empty’ of Self. A philosophical denial is just a view, a theory, which may be agreed with or not. It does not get one to actually examine all the things that one actually *does* identify with, consciously or unconsciously, as Self or I. This examination, in a calm, meditative context, is what the ‘not-Self’ teaching aims at. It is not so much a thing to be thought about as to be *done*, applied to actual experience, so that the meditator actually *sees* that “*all dharmas* are not-Self”: no *dharma* can be rightly taken as a Self. A mere philosophical denial does not encourage this, and may actually mean that a person sees no need for it.

That the *anātman* teaching is no bald denial of Self is seen at *Majjhima Nikāya* 1.8, where the ignorant ordinary person unwisely reflects on such matters as: whether ‘I’ existed in the past or not, and in what form and manner; whether or not ‘I’ will

exist in the future, and in what form and manner; whether 'I' exist now or not, and in what form and manner; and from where this being has come from and will go to. This leads on to a variety of views, including "I have a Self" and "I do not have a Self" Here, egocentric preoccupation leads to doubts and speculations on 'I' and Self, producing a "jungle of views". Buddhist ideas on not-Self are not intended to feed such doubt, but to lead to a different perspective on what it is to exist.

Nevertheless, Buddhism sees no need to postulate a permanent Self, and accounts for the functioning of personality, in life and from life to life, in terms of a stream of changing, conditioned processes. Rebirth is not seen to require a permanent Self or substantial 'I', but *belief* in such a thing is one of the things seen to cause rebirth.

MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE NOT-SELF TEACHING AS A DENIAL OF 'SOUL' OR ANY KIND OF 'SELF'

On its own, the word *anātman/anattā* should not be treated as if it were a whole doctrine: 'no-self' or 'no-soul'. While the meaning of 'soul' in Christianity varies somewhat, it is primarily that which gives life to the body. As Paul Williams emphasises (2000: 56–7), the *anātman* teaching was not 'concerned to deny whatever gave life to the body, whatever that is'. Moreover, just because the Buddha did not accept anything as an unchanging Self, I or essence does not mean that all talk of 'soul' needs to be banished from English language discussion of Buddhism. For example, in the meaning of 'soul' as the moral and emotional aspect of a person, the Buddhist term *citta* (heart/mind) seems close in meaning. It is simply that any 'soul' must be recognized as not being a fixed, permanent, unitary entity, which at least rules out any idea of an immortal 'soul'. Overall, though, Buddhism does not 'lack soul'!

The Buddha also accepted many conventional usages of the word 'self' (also '*ātman*' or '*attā*'), as in 'yourself' and 'myself'. These he saw as simply a convenient way of referring to a particular inter-related stream of mental and physical states. But within such a conventional, empirical self, he taught that no permanent, substantial, independent, metaphysical Self could be found. This is well explained by an early nun, Vajirā. Just as the word 'chariot' is used to denote a collection of items in functional relationship, but not a special part of a chariot, so the conventional term 'a being', is properly used to refer to the five *skandhas* relating together (*Samyutta Nikāya* 1.135, cf. *Milindapañha* 25–8). None of the *skandhas* is an essential 'Being' or 'Self', but these are simply conventional terms used to denote the collection of functioning *skandhas*.

Sensitivity to the above variation in self-language should help to avoid such incoherent student statements as: 'Buddhism teaches that there is no self. ... The self is the five *skandhas*... but these are to be seen as not-self'.

Again, *anātman/anattā* does not mean 'egoless', as it sometimes rendered. The term 'ego' has a range of meanings in English. The Freudian 'ego' is not the same as the Indian *ātman/attā* or permanent Self. In more ordinary English, 'ego' just

means the feeling or sense of being or having an ‘I’- this feeling is not denied in Buddhism, though it is seen as based on a misperception of reality.

Moreover, the not-Self teaching does not deny that there is continuity of character in life, and to some extent from life to life. But persistent character-traits are merely due to the repeated occurrence of certain *cittas*, or ‘mind-sets’. The *citta* as a whole is sometimes talked of as an (empirical) ‘self’ (e.g. *Dhammapada* 160 with 35), but while such character traits may be long-lasting, they can and do change, and are thus impermanent, and so ‘not-Self’, insubstantial. A ‘person’ is a collection of rapidly changing and interacting mental and physical processes, with character-patterns re-occurring over some time. Only partial control can be exercised over these processes; so they often change in undesired ways, leading to suffering. Impermanent, they cannot be a permanent Self. Stressful, they cannot be an autonomous true ‘I’, which would contain nothing that was out of harmony with itself.

‘VIEWS ON THE EXISTING GROUP’ AND THE ‘I AM’ CONCEIT

The *suttas* often ascribe to those who are spiritually immature – who are not yet stream-enterers – a set of views known as the ‘views on the existing group’ (Skt. *satkāya-dṛṣṭis*, Pali *sakkāya-diṭṭhis*); the spiritually mature lack such views (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.114–15). *Satkāya* refers to the five *skandhas* (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.299), the ‘group’ or ‘body’ (*kāya*) that ‘exists’ or is seen as one’s ‘own’. *Satkāya-dṛṣṭi* is sometimes rendered ‘personality view’, which is odd, as the *suttas* do not say that there is no such thing as ‘personality’- only that ‘it’ is a changing collection of conditioned processes. There are twenty ‘views on the existing group’, which all, in one way or another, relate the *skandhas* to a Self, taking any of the five *skandhas* as: i) Self, ii) a possession of Self, iii) in Self, or iv) containing Self. One can thus see these as ‘Self-identity views’. The non-acceptance of these views means, for example, that with regard to material form, the body, it is not truly appropriate to say that ‘I am body’, ‘the body is mine’, ‘body is part of my Self’, ‘I am in the body’. Indeed *Samyutta Nikāya* 2.64–5 says that the body does not ‘belong’ to anyone: it simply arises due to past karma (albeit inter-related with certain mental states, but these do not ‘own’ it).

At *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.127–32, the monk Khemaka first gets rid of any ‘view on the existing groups’, in the form “*this* I am”. He still has a lingering feeling of “I am”, though, as a vague attitude rather than a specific conceptualized view. Once he overcomes this, he attains arhatship. *Asmi-māna*, the ‘I am conceit’, is any form of self-importance, self-preoccupation or self-centredness, expressed in an I-centred self-image which sees oneself as superior, inferior or (competitively or complacently) equal to others (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.88).

The teaching on phenomena as not-Self, then, is not only intended to undermine the Brahmanical or Jain concepts of Self, but also much more commonly held conceptions and deep-rooted feelings of I-ness. To act as if only *other* people die, and to ignore the inevitability of one’s own death, is to act as if one had a permanent Self. To relate changing mental phenomena to a substantial self which ‘owns’ them: “I am worried ... happy ... angry”, is to have such a self-concept. To identify with one’s body, ideas, or actions, etc. is to take them as part of an ‘I’.

THE INTERPLAY OF SEEING THINGS AS NOT-SELF WITH DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPIRICAL SELF

While no permanent Self can be found in the changing, empirical self, one of the constructing activities is the “‘I am’ conceit’. As a person develops spiritually, their empirical self becomes stronger as they become more focused, calm, aware and open (Harvey 1995a: 54–63). The monk should seek to “live with himself as an island, with himself as a refuge, with no other (person) as a refuge, (he lives) with *Dharma* as an island, with *Dharma* as refuge, with no other (Teaching/Path) as refuge”(Dīgha Nikāya 3.58). This is done by mindful alertness, so as not to be pulled hither and thither by chasing desirable sense-objects. As a calm centre is better established and grows stronger, one can ‘expand’ as a person. At *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.249, the Buddha refers to two kinds of person. The first is “of undeveloped body (of qualities), undeveloped moral discipline, undeveloped *citta* (heart/mind), undeveloped wisdom, he is limited, he has an insignificant self, he dwells insignificant and miserable”. The second is “of developed body, developed moral discipline, developed *citta*, developed wisdom, he is not limited, he has a great self (Pali *mahattā*, Skt. *mahātma*), he dwells immeasurable”. Both mindfulness (*Majjhima Nikāya* 1.270) and open-hearted lovingkindness (Skt *maitrī*; Pali *mettā*; *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.299) are seen to help to make the *citta* “immeasurable, well-developed”. The Path is the way by which “those with great selves travel” (*Itivuttaka* 28–29) and the *arhat* is “one of developed self” (Pali *bhāvit-atto*; *Itivuttaka* 79–80). As the fully integrated, liberated person, he or she has a very self-controlled, self-contained empirical self. He has an unshakeable “mind like a diamond” (Pali *vajir-ūpama-citto*; *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.124), and, as water runs off a lotus without sticking, sense-objects do not ‘stick’ to him (*Theraḡāthā* v.1180). The liberated person has a “boundariless” *citta* because he/she is “escaped from, unfettered by, released from” the five *skandhas* (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.152) and is one who is “independent”, not attracted or repelled by sense-objects (*Majjhima Nikāya* 3.30). That is, being non-attached and self-contained is what, paradoxically, allows the *arhat* to have a boundariless mind. When a person lets go of everything, such that ‘his’ identity sinks to zero, then the mind expands to infinity. Each identification with something as ‘Self’ is a limitation, which restricts one and makes one ‘smaller’.

The *arhat* knows that nothing within or beyond his or her empirical self is a substantial Self: so nothing is worth grasping at. This enables his empirical self to be calm, strong and well integrated, and the ‘boundary’ between ‘self’ and ‘other’ is seen as not of ultimate importance. The ‘I am’ conceit is seen as based on an illusion, and leads to both a lack of inner harmony and integration and also a lack of sympathy for others. Once ‘I am’ is seen as an empty mirage, there can be both a profound, imperturbable inner calm and unlimited horizons of awareness and sympathy for others. Insight into all as not-Self leads to a strong and open self that is both Selfless (as everything is Selfless) and without the ‘I am’ attitude: a self which is recognized as a conditioned construct of now only wholesome, still but impermanent states. From the alert openness of such a way-of-being, though, the unconditioned timeless Beyond which is *nirvāṇa* can be experienced.

THE PERSONALISTS

While the Sarvāstivāda school in time came to include an explicit denial of Self (*Abhidharmakośa* III.18a), a group of schools dubbed the Pudgalavādins, or ‘Personalists’, came to postulate a Self-like *pudgala* or ‘person’ that was neither the same as nor different from the *skandhas*, neither the same nor different over time, and neither conditioned nor unconditioned (Williams 2000, 124–8). They seem to have conceived of it as a kind of organic whole which could not be reduced to its component processes. While they were careful to avoid their ‘person’ being in obvious tension with the agreed teachings of the Buddha, all other schools criticised their ideas.

MAHĀYĀNA EXTENSIONS OF THE IDEA OF NOT-SELF

In the *suttas* of the Pali Canon, the primary sense of something’s being ‘not-Self’ is that it is impermanent, a pain, and not controllable at will, due to being conditioned by other factors. In the Mahāyāna it often comes to mean something like ‘not a separate self’, due to the emphasis on the inter-relation of everything.

In the Pali *suttas*, something’s being not-Self is often expressed by saying that it is ‘empty’ (*suñña*, Skt *śūnya*) of Self or what pertains to Self (e.g. *Samyutta Nikāya* 4.54). In the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (2.58), moreover, deep insight into phenomena as not-Self (as compared with their being impermanent or *duḥkha*) leads to an experience of *nirvāṇa* as ‘emptiness’ (Pali *suññatā*, Skt. *śūnyatā*). In the Mahāyāna, it is emphasized that not only are all components of a person or any other *dharmas* not-Self, but also the *dharmas* themselves are empty of any *svabhāva*: own-nature, own-being, inherent nature, essence. The concept of *svabhāva* had developed in some *Abhidharma* systems, especially the Sarvāstivādin one, to refer to the individual nature of any *dharma*, such *dharmas* being seen as irreducible real, mental or physical process-events which make up the fabric of reality, onto which ideas of ‘persons’ and commonsense ‘things’ are projected. In the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* and the Madhyamaka school, it was emphasized that as *dharmas* are conditioned in their very nature, they are empty of any separate nature. In their quality of emptiness, moreover, they cannot ultimately be differentiated from nirvanic ‘emptiness’.

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Reference is generally to volume and page number in original text; but for the *Dhammapada*, *Suttanipāta*, *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, it is to verse number. For the *Kathāvatthu*, reference is either to the page number or the number of the 'book' and the discussion point within it.

The page numbers of the relevant edition of an original text are generally given in brackets in its translation, or at the top of the page. In translations of the Pali Canon, the volume number of the translation generally corresponds to the volume of the Pali Text Society edition of the texts, except that *Vinaya* 3, 4 and 5 are translated in *Book of the Discipline*, vols. I, II and III, and *Vinaya* 1 and 2 are translated as *Book of the Discipline*, vols. IV and V. Moreover, *Book of the Discipline* is peculiar in that bracketed page numbers are where the relevant Pali page number ends, rather than begins.

Many translations from the Pali Canon are also available on the Access to Insight website: <http://www.accesstoinight.org/canon/index.html> Commentaries to many of the above texts are published in Pali by the Pali Text Society. These are gradually being translated.