HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA

The Gradual Unfolding of the Buddha's Profound Intention

SOURCEBOOK

RIME SHEDRA CHANTS

ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge
All are steps on the path of omniscience.
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

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The History of Buddhism in India
The Gradual Unfolding of the Buddha's Profound Intention

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Buddhist History for Buddhist Practitioners

Rita M. Gross, Tricylce Fall 2010

http://www.tricycle.com/feature/buddhist-history-buddhist-practitioners?page=0,0

I am convinced that an accurate, nonsectarian study of Buddhist history can be of great benefit to dharma practitioners. As a scholar and practitioner, I have for many years worked to bring the findings of historical scholarship into dharma centers in Zen, Vipassana, and Tibetan lineages. While many students deeply appreciate this opportunity, others find the approach unnerving. Modern historical studies challenge assumptions commonly held in Buddhist traditions, though those assumptions differ in the different forms of Buddhism.

Let me illustrate my point with an example. For four years, I have been teaching a multipart course in Buddhist history at an intensive study program, or shedra, at Lotus Garden, the headquarters of Her Eminence Mindrolling Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche. Several of the other senior teachers, because of their concern that the perceived conflict between history and traditional lineage stories was too difficult for many students to resolve, urged me to desist entirely with the project. One year, I received an email after shedra informing me that a senior student had indeed left the meditation center because of what I had recently taught. I was asked what I could possibly have said that would be so upsetting. I could only guess, but I assumed that this student was upset by something that had figured large in my teaching that year, namely, the origins of the Mahayana teachings. I had said that the historical Buddha had not taught the Mahayana during his lifetime on earth; rather, those scriptures had developed, because of causes and conditions, some four hundred years later. For this student, that information meant that Buddhism was no truer than Christianity, and for the same reason: some of its beloved narratives did not hold up to historical scrutiny.

Later that summer, Khandro Rinpoche addressed the issues herself, and she gave her complete support to the project of teaching history to her students. The student in question, who was experiencing personal difficulties at the time he left the center, eventually returned. The incident itself, however, indicates how important it is for Buddhist centers and groups to educate their students well and not to continue to teach legends as if they were factual accounts of history. For many, finding out that their teachers have confused legend with history and have not taught them to appreciate that legends are about meaning, not factual accuracy, can bring about a loss of confidence in dharma itself.

My sense of urgency about teaching these courses at dharma centers is fueled by two concerns. First, I am concerned about the growing tendency toward fundamentalism in North American sanghas. Fundamentalism, briefly and broadly defined, is the urge to interpret literally the words of favorite narratives—to assume that those narratives are empirically accurate descriptions of physical occurrences. Literalists dismiss the suggestion that these stories are legends that teach profound dharma that is independent of the narratives' empirical veracity. Second, I feel dismay at the sectarianism of many North American Buddhists, who eagerly praise their own lineage yet make disparaging remarks about others. Fundamentalism and sectarianism often combine in highly unpleasant ways. Some Buddhists readily dismiss other forms of Buddhism because, they claim, these other forms developed later and thus are not really the Buddha's teaching. Other Buddhists claim that the teachings followed by some are

not the Buddha's full and final teachings but were merely provisional teachings intended for those with lower potential.

Many Buddhists, including the His Holiness Dalai Lama, are keenly interested in modern science. Many claim with no small amount of pride that Buddhism is compatible with modern science and like to quote the Dalai Lama's famous statement "If scientific analysis were conclusively to demonstrate certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims." Given this high regard for squaring Buddhism with findings derived from rigorous modern scholarship, I find it curious that there have been few such comments about the immense contributions Western and Japanese historians of Buddhism have made and how little impact their work has had on Buddhist self-understanding. Why is this? I suggest that it is because the findings of modern historical studies are far more challenging to some traditional Buddhist perspectives than is modern science.

Modern historical studies show the contingency and historicity of developments in religions, something that traditional religions dislike intensely. Historical study of religion undercuts the claim that any specific form, any practice or verbal doctrine, could be unmediated, completely definitive, and one hundred percent an absolute truth. Instead, it fosters the view that all religious expressions and forms are relative, that is to say, they are partially the result of specific causes and conditions found in their specific environments. Even a religion such as Buddhism, which affirms impermanence as completely central, doesn't really like to hear that its core teachings and institutions have changed over the years. Additionally, despite their emphasis on reasoning and the importance of experience, Buddhists don't like to have valued "miracle stories" challenged. But modern historical studies of religion are based on methods that do not take stories of supernatural intervention into historical processes literally, even though they take them seriously. Thus, this project of teaching Buddhist history for Buddhist practitioners is essentially about bringing appreciation for modern historical consciousness into the Buddhist shrine room.

My attempts to convince Buddhist practitioners that historical consciousness regarding Buddhism is both helpful and necessary emphasize that there is no radical disjunction between traditional Buddhism and the results of modern scholarship. Instead, I emphasize that despite adjustments to how one interprets some central narratives of one's tradition, traditional Buddhism and the results of modern historical scholarship are deeply consonant. I delineate five aspects of historical consciousness that are crucial for understanding what modern historical studies contribute to an accurate, nonsectarian history of Buddhism. I also argue that each of these five can deepen one's dharmic understanding.

The first principle is that all relevant sources must be considered and none can be prioritized. In other words, familiar lineage stories are only part of the database that must be taken into account, and these familiar sources cannot automatically be deemed more authoritative or relevant than other sources. When studying history, it is hard to imagine a criterion by which one would exclude any source, whether near or far, familiar or unfamiliar, that would shed light on any aspect of Buddhist history. Two things should be emphasized here. First, accurate Buddhist history cannot be different for different Buddhist denominations, though different parts of the whole story of Buddhism will be highlighted by different denominations. Thus historical studies could be a gathering point for Buddhists across sectarian boundaries. Second, no living form

of Buddhism possesses all the sources needed for a full and accurate history of Buddhism. Working within a sectarian Buddhist context, one can derive only a partial history of Buddhism, a version of Buddhist history that most scholars would regard as deficient.

What traditional Buddhist values and teachings would encourage widening the canon and critically reexamining familiar sources? I locate them in right speech and right view, two elements of the Eightfold Noble Path. Basic to right speech is telling the truth, which involves including all relevant information. We can't omit material just because it is unfamiliar, nontraditional, or would upset previous conventions. The connection with right view may be less direct. Fundamentally, if we lack curiosity and are unwilling to look afresh, without preconceptions or fixed, ideological opinions, it is impossible to develop right view.

The second axiom for those who work with historical consciousness concerns change, or what Buddhists call impermanence. Both for Buddhists and for historians, change should be regarded as normative, to be expected. However, there is often a marked contrast between the attitudes of traditionally religious people, Buddhists included, and those with developed historical consciousness. Religions often present themselves as offering protection from the change and vicissitudes that are characteristic of life, and they fiercely resist any internal change, such as new wordings of familiar liturgies, new translations of authoritative texts, or the development of new movements and practices. Historical consciousness, on the other hand, regards change as inevitable and does not evaluate that reality either positively or negatively. Given the easily observable fact that living religions are always changing, it is evident that historical consciousness is more cogent and realistic on this point.

Buddhist resistance to the reality of historical change commonly emerges as the firm conviction that whatever form of Buddhism "we" practice is the best version of teachings of the (historical) Buddha. This is the basis for Mahayana and Vajrayana claims that they were actually taught by the historical Buddha during his lifetime and for Theravada rejection of those forms of Buddhism because they were not. In both cases, it is presupposed that Buddhism cannot and should not ever change from what was established by Shakyamuni Buddha in India in the fifth century B.C.E., that there should be no Buddhist history at all but only the constant presence of the same forms lasting for all time. This strongly held view seems a bit odd in a religion that also teaches that resistance to all-pervasive change is a root cause of misery.

By contrast, Buddhists thoroughly informed by historical consciousness would not use a Buddhist sect's age as the basis for accepting or rejecting it. Historical consciousness frees us from the common prejudices that whatever is newer is better or whatever is older is better. Different schools are just different, and the date of inception does not make one better or worse, higher or lower. With historical consciousness intact, Buddhists would not have to resort to ahistorical arguments that attempt to make their form of Buddhism older than it is, nor would they feel compelled to regard newer forms of Buddhism as invalid or irrelevant. Knowledge of Buddhist history can go far to counteract Buddhist sectarianism, especially the mutual misunderstandings so prevalent among both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists. An overarching Buddhist history would have to be the same for both, meaning that with such a history in place, each could understand how one came to deviate from the other without either the rancor of Mahayana supersessionism or Theravada dismissal of non-Theravada

Buddhists. If change, impermanence, is as basic as the Buddhadharma proclaims it to be, then one should expect that new movements, such as Mahayana, would develop from time to time.

Change in religious forms is so constant that I correlate this dimension of historical studies with central Buddhist teachings about all-pervasive impermanence, which some consider the lynchpin of all Buddhist teaching. Thus, regarding change and impermanence, there is not even the slightest conflict between traditional Buddhist teachings and historical consciousness. In fact, they are deeply consonant. Not accepting all-pervasive impermanence is the root cause of suffering according to all forms of Buddhism. We suffer even more when we forget to apply this core teaching of impermanence to Buddhist forms themselves. If the reality of impermanence applies to all phenomena, then it applies to Buddhism's forms—its institutions, practices, and verbal formulations of the dharma.

The third point that is affirmed by historical consciousness follows closely from the second: accepting change as inevitable and normative brings the realization that diversity is also normative and inevitable. Not only do things change, but in a large, geographically and socially varied region such as that covered by Buddhism, they change in different ways and at different rates. The internal diversity of Buddhism is therefore to be expected. Though the point may seem obvious, it has profound implications. Religions, including Buddhism, have long suffered and caused suffering because of their illusion that if people would only behave and think correctly, we'd all practice the same religion. Simple observation of phenomena should convince us that religious diversity is here to stay and that our task is to learn how to live well with it. The only other option is perpetual sectarianism— the mutual aggression, hostility, and competitiveness— that has long plagued religions. Religious diversity itself is not a problem, but sectarianism is.

At the heart of sectarianism is the tendency to regard difference as deficiency. If difference equals deficiency, then ranking will occur—some different things are better and others are worse. While discriminations are necessary and appropriate in some cases, discrimination between groups of people leads to feelings of superiority by people who regard themselves as better and denigration of those whom they regard as inferior. Conflict inevitably results.

For many Buddhists, including most Mahayanists, several deeply entrenched habits of speech must be relinquished if we are to move beyond sectarianism. Almost all Mahayana Buddhists regard themselves as practicing a superior form of Buddhism, the "large vehicle" of greater aspirations, higher view, and deeper compassion, which they contrast to a so-called "Hinayana" or smaller, inferior vehicle. Many Theravadins regard themselves as practicing a "pure" or "original" form of Buddhism, rather than degenerate Mahayana. Because the term "Hinayana" originated in Mahayana sectarian polemics and has never been a self-designation used by any Buddhist group, I make a special effort to discourage use of this term whenever I teach Buddhist history in a Mahayana or Vajrayana context. Many Westerners who practice a Tibetan-based form of Buddhism find it difficult to accept and assimilate this change into their speech habits no matter how many times the reasons for doing so are explained. Nevertheless, I continue to argue that the term "Hinayana" simply needs to be dropped from our vocabulary. In a pluralistic, diverse Buddhist world that is informed by an accurate understanding of Buddhist history, the term "Hinayana" is deeply inappropriate. I also

suggest that the idea of progressive stages of development from “lower” to “higher” may not be the best way to understand Buddhist internal diversity.

Knowing how to let things be different without needing to rank them is a highly valuable skill, given that religious diversity, both external and internal, is inevitable. Letting things be, without obsessing to change or improve them, could be seen as a highly developed form of compassion, one of the most central of all Buddhist virtues. Many wise people have commented that praising one’s own sect and disparaging that of another does nothing to improve our own denomination and may actually harm it. For those of us who have thought deeply about how to become more at ease with religious and cultural diversity, it is painful to witness the hurtful, ignorance-based sectarianism so often found in Buddhist sanghas. Accurate, nonsectarian histories of Buddhism could go far to explain how Buddhism became so diverse and also provide tools for regarding that diversity as a virtue, not a problem. The need for mutual understanding and respect in a religion that values friendliness and compassion as much as Buddhism does should be self-evident. Its connection with right speech should be so obvious as not even to need explanation or comment.

The fourth intersection between traditional Buddhism and historical consciousness also involves change. Here, the emphasis is on explaining change—specifically, to call upon the fundamental Buddhist tool of *pratityasamutpada*, or “conditioned genesis,” to explain the development of new lineages and movements within Buddhism rather than citing supernatural intervention into historical processes. That is to say, Buddhist understandings of cause and effect could be employed to explain that a movement such as Mahayana Buddhism developed because of social, cultural, and historical events. Most Mahayanists ignore such explanations, preferring a story whose empirical validity is highly questionable. According to legend, in the presence of the historical Buddha, Avalokiteshvara instructs Shariputra on emptiness. If the story is taken literally, Mahayana Buddhism originated during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha, a claim that historians find unconvincing. Furthermore, Shariputra is a historical character, but Avalokiteshvara is not, and so they did not coexist in historical time and space, that is, in India in the fifth century B.C.E.

Many students become intensely upset when the story they have usually been told about the origins of Mahayana Buddhism is critically evaluated. It is very difficult for them to understand that I am not asking them to question the validity of these stories, only their historicity. Fortunately, modern ways of discussing myth/legend and history provide tools for appreciating the vast corpus of Buddhist legend while, at the same time, recognizing that a legend is not the same thing as empirical history. For both, the overarching, major category is “story,” or narrative. History and legend/myth are different kinds of stories, but both are stories. While philosophy is important for all religions, story or narrative is also central to communicating what the religion is about. Stories are easier for most people to “get” than philosophical teachings. However, for religions, the most important thing about a story is its message, its meaning, not its empirical verifiability. Its “truth” lies in the meanings it communicates, not in the facticity of the events used to communicate those meanings. Because the story communicates profound meaning, its empirical verifiability is somewhat beside the point. Thus the same story could be empirically false, in that it did not happen that way in empirical space and time, but also true because of what it means. In addition to invoking the Buddhist notion of the two truths (absolute and relative perspectives on a

single reality), in this context one could also invoke the common Buddhist distinction between words and meaning.

One could ask why Buddhist practitioners need to assimilate this somewhat complex method of understanding the relationship between traditional legends and modern history. I would respond that all Buddhists who are deeply affected by the paradigm shift engendered by the European enlightenment need to become clear about the relationship between symbolic legends and empirical history. People educated in cultures in which this paradigm reigns become empiricists by default. As a result, they tend to assume that traditional narratives are empirically accurate descriptions of events, which explains the modern heresy of fundamentalism. For many Westerners, "truth" is highly valued but is also limited to what is empirical. But demanding that sacred narratives be literally "true" is a losing proposition. When people focus too much on the empirical truth or falsity of the story, its sacred meanings, which should be the main point of the story, are lost. The relevance of Mahayana Buddhism does not rise or fall on the empirical accuracy of the *Heart Sutra* narrative but on whether or not the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism are in accord with the foundational teachings of Buddhism.

Finally, we come to the fifth and final point, which is where traditional Buddhadharma and historical consciousness find their deepest resonance. For historians, the present consensus about historical development is a hypothesis subject to revision as new information and perspectives become available. In other words, historians are eminently flexible and willing to change their conclusions in the light of new evidence. Flexibility of mind, rather than rigidity, is also regarded as a supreme virtue for meditators. Thus, both historical consciousness and Buddhadharma stress the importance of being comfortable with an open-ended, unfinished version of how things are. Both recognize that true confidence lies in being comfortable with process rather than needing a fixed, final conclusion. Attaining this flexible, nonideological, nonfixated state of mind—what Zen practitioners might call "beginner's mind"—is the whole point of meditation practice.

Rather than being something that detracts from our commitment to Buddhadharma, to some almost a heresy, an accurate, nonsectarian history of Buddhism can enrich and improve one's dharma practice immensely. This alone is a sufficient recommendation for such study. But the study of Buddhist history brings other benefits as well, such as providing tools to appreciate Buddhist internal diversity and thus promote greater communication within the greater Buddhist community. Perhaps most important, it allows us to develop a seamless account of Buddhism and modernity. For nothing is sadder than a religion's demand that we turn off our critical intelligence when its traditions conflict with well-established results of modern science and history. The depth of Buddhadharma does not need such mindless acquiescence to convention.

Rita M. Gross is an author, dharma teacher, and professor of comparative studies in religion. Her best-known books are *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* and *A Garland of Feminist Reflections: Forty Years of Religious Exploration*. She teaches workshops on meditation and buddhadharma at many meditations centers in the United States and Canada.

The Beautiful Necklace That Illuminates the Mind:
A Brief Exposition of an Impartial History of Buddhadharma

Chapter One
The Emergence of Buddhism in India

By Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye
Translated by Yehuda Levinson

The Invocation

Homage to the Buddha!

The Buddha's Enlightenment

Our Teacher, Lord of the Shakya (lineage), is more exalted in the power of kind remembrance than even the 1,002 spiritual leaders of an auspicious kalpa. That very one, in accord with the doctrine of the common vehicle, in the beginning, after generating the thought of supreme enlightenment, analyzed phenomenal existence. In the middle, for thirty-three immeasurably great kalpas, he completed the accumulation of merit by means of the six, or ten, mundane and supra-mundane perfections, i.e. wisdom and morality. That which was in need of expansion, he expanded to the ultimate and made them steadfast. He accomplished the thirty-seven dharmas of bodhicitta and reached the end of the five paths. At the end of the tenth bhumi continuum, he conquered even the most subtle instantaneous defilements and then made manifest that the 'base' (gzhi) is whatever is the inherent nature of the sugatagargha. He was enlightened, being manifestly perfected in the essence of all dharmas.

The Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma

For the benefit of converts of inferior intellect, in the first teaching, he repeated three times the Four Truths: suffering, its origin, the path and cessation; and he taught the dharma of going around in the twelve aspects (of the chain of dependent origination).

For the benefit of those of middling intellect, in the middle teaching, he taught the dharma that established that all dharmas of samsara and nirvana, from form up to omniscience, grasped (as having) 'self-marks' (svalaksana), are without marks themselves (mtshan-nyid).

For the benefit of those of superior intellect, in the final exposition, he turned the wheel of dharma that properly and fully distinguished the dharmas (of) existence, non-existence, emptiness and non-emptiness by means of the three characteristics, namely, the imaginary, the dependent, and the completely perfected.

The Parinirvana

Even though in absolute truth the vajra body of perfect Buddha dwells eternally throughout all the three times, in the view of ordinary disciples of low intellect he passed into the realm of peace (nirvana).

The Councils and Schools

Mahakashyapa and other held three successive collections of the teachings. At the time of the final council of the teachings, the shravakas were divided into eighteen schools and two positions arose: the Vaibhashika and the Sautrantika. After that there came about five hundred acaryas such as the Venerable Avitarka (and) the mind-only school was started.

The Tradition of Profound Wisdom

After that came the great acarya Arya Nagarjuna, who had been prophesied by the Victorious One. He composed three (collections): The Collected Accounts of Commentaries on the First turning of the Wheel, The Collected Classes of Commentaries on the Middle, and The Collected Praises of Commentaries on the Last. He initiated the great tradition of the chariot of the teachings of the Mahayana.

Among his followers, Madhyamika-Prasangika was the system of Buddhapalita and Madhyamika-Svatantra was the system of Bhavaviveka. Shantarakshita and the other two Svatantrika teachers from the East developed the subsystem of the Yogacara-Madhyamika-Svatantrika. And by the Prasanga logic, Chandrakirti, Shantideva and others opened the tradition (of the) path of the Rang-stong system, which subdued all wrong views.

The Tradition of Vast Skillful Means

The second charioteer, Arya Asanga, entered the world. After going to Tushita, (he heard) from Maitreya himself the five divisions of the Mahayana: the two ornaments, the two expositions, and the Uttaratantra, which he propagated in the world.

His younger brother Vasubandhu, Candragomin, and many other very great acaryas who were learned and accomplished, established by explanation and attainment the twenty divisions of dharmas connected with Maitreya. They proclaimed the great lion’s roar of irreversible gZhan-stong, and the doctrine of absolute-truth Madhyamaka pervaded the sky.

The Vajrayana

The many countless great vajracharyas led by Sri Saraha, Luyipa, Vajraghanta, Krsnacharya, and the other eighty-four siddhacharyas who were personally favored by the herukas and vajra dakinis, they brought the many tantras of Mantrayana from the treasuries of the primordially existing great secret. As a result, an assembly of many hundreds of thousands of supremely fortunate ones attained the body of non-dual wisdom.

(Section titles in italics added)

PERFECT CONDUCT

Ascertaining the Three Vows

NGARI PANCHEN, PEMA WANGYI GYALPO

Commentary by

HIS HOLINESS DUDJOM RINPOCHE,
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nature and distinctions will be discussed. Then, the manner through which one may obtain the vow for the first time, including the ritual for bestowing the precepts, will be discussed. Next, the different enumerations of vows and the methods through which to guard them from deterioration will be presented. Finally, in the case of a downfall or damaged vow, the methods of restoration will be revealed.

5. A recapitulation of the first chapter:

> This general explanation of the stages of the main teaching completes the recapitulation of the first chapter.

This recapitulation is simply a way of reiterating the theme of the first chapter, which serves the purpose of preparing the reader for the main subject to be covered in the remaining four chapters.

II. An extensive explanation of the nature and training of each of the three vows in three divisions, which comprise the second, third, and fourth chapters:

A. Chapter Two: Prātimokṣa
B. Chapter Three: Bodhisattva
C. Chapter Four: Secret Mantra

CHAPTER TWO:
AN EXPLANATION OF THE PRĀTIMOKṢA-VINAYA

A. Chapter Two: An Explanation of the Prātimokṣa-vinaya, in three subdivisions:

1. The manner in which Lord Buddha taught the precious doctrine of the vinaya:

> In Varanasi, the Buddha primarily taught the Four Noble Truths and the practice of higher morality to the Five Excellent Ones.[22]

The basket of morality, the Vinaya Piṭaka, was the subject of the first turning of the Dharma wheel, which occurred within the context of the five fully endowed circumstances. These five are the fully endowed teacher, the unequaled Lord Buddha Śākyamuni; the fully endowed place, the central land of the *arhats*, Varanasi, India (Varanasi is a sacred land, where many realized saints have vanished without leaving ordinary human remains); the fully endowed time, seven weeks after the Buddha achieved perfect awakening, on the fourth day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar; the fully endowed Dharma, the training in extraordinary discipline and the first Dharma discourse on the Four Noble Truths; and the fully endowed assembly, the gathering of eighty thousand celestial beings and the Five Excellent Ones of the human race.

2. After the teachings were compiled, the way in which the teachings and accomplishments were upheld:

> The teachings were compiled by Kāśyapa and others. The arhats composed the *Treasury of Particular Explanations* and other texts, which were propagated by Yönten Öd (Guṇaprabha) and Shakya Öd (Śākyaprabha). The precept lineage of the earlier translations was propagated by Śāntarakṣita and, later, by Śākya Śrī.

On three great occasions the spoken teachings of Lord Buddha Śākyamuni were compiled. The first council came about when the Buddha's foremost disciples, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, along with countless arhats, passed into *parinirvāṇa* along with Lord Buddha. Many celestial beings proclaimed that since all the fully ordained disciples of Lord Buddha had passed into parinirvāṇa along with their teacher, the Dharma was like an extinguished fire, with only smoke remaining. In order to correct this view, shortly after the parinirvāṇa, in the Nyagrodha cave at Rājagṛha (in central India) and under the sponsorship of King Ajātaśatru, the great Kāśyapa along with five hundred arhats convened during the summer rainy retreat known as *yarney* (*vārṣika*).[23] It was during this gathering that Ānanda recalled from memory the entire teaching Lord Buddha had given on the Sūtra Piṭaka. Upāli recalled from memory the Vinaya Piṭaka, while the great Kāśyapa immaculately recited the Abhidharma Piṭaka. Afterwards, these three "baskets" were compiled with the assistance of the gathering of arhats.

The second council occurred some one hundred and ten years after Lord Buddha's parinirvāṇa. In Vaiśālī seven hundred arhats, under the sponsorship of the Dharma king Aśoka, gathered in the Kusmapurī monastery to clarify what had become known as the "ten prohibitions."[24] The entire Tripiṭaka was recited to clarify that these ten were indeed not permitted, and afterwards the *sojong* (*uposatha*)[25] (purification) rite was performed to create conducive, auspicious circumstances.

After the reign of King Aśoka's grandson, King Vīrasena, several bhikṣus—such as Mahādeva, Bhadra, Sthavira, Nāgasena, and others—became possessed by demonic forces. Due to this there came to be five major points of discrepancy[26] concerning the prātimokṣa training. The discrepancy originated with the bhikṣus whose minds were possessed by demonic forces so that their actions were not in accordance with the true teachings of Lord Buddha Śākyamuni. As a result of this, these wrong views became accepted as doctrine even though they were prohibited according to the Buddha's teachings. For four generations of anarchical leadership, the *saṅgha* was thrown into turmoil and conflict. Since the Buddha had never allowed the vinaya to be put into writing, the debate persisted for a very long time. Eventually there emerged four major systems that became known as the four root schools of the śrāvakas. From these four roots eighteen minor schools emerged. The four root schools are the Sarvāstivāda, the Mahāsāṅghika, the Sthavira, and the Saṃmitīya. Seven of the eighteen minor schools follow the Sarvastivāda school's principles, five follow the Mahāsāṅghika, and three each follow the final two root schools.

The Sarvāstivāda is the basis of all four schools. The philosophy of this tradition asserts that there are five knowable things: that appearances are the basis of

form; that the basis is the mind, accompanied by secondary mental events; the existence of nonassociated compositional factors; the existence of uncompounded factors (those that exist without cause or condition); and that all of these constitute substantial reality or existent things. This lineage originates with Rāhula, the Buddha's son, and the Sanskrit language is used during recitation of the vinaya. The patched saffron robe, indicating full ordination, must be made of more than nine sections and fewer than twenty-five, with the symbols of a Dharma wheel and lotus sewn on the top corner. The Sarvāstivāda school's followers assert the view that the phenomena of the three times are substantial reality, yet that all compounded phenomena are self-destructing in each moment. They also believe in the nonexistence of the "self." After three countless eons of time, according to this system, buddhahood is attained.

The second school, the Mahāsāṅghika, derives its name from the fact that originally the majority of the ordained saṅgha belonged to this school. The lineage originated with Mahā Kāśyapa. The robe of full ordination must have at least seven sections and no more than twenty-three. The symbols sewn on it are the endless knot and white conch shell. The language used to recite the vinaya is the Prākrit dialect.

The founder-abbots of the Sthavira school were Kātyāyana and the arhats. While reciting the vinaya in this school the Piśācika dialect is used. The saffron robe must have at least five and no more than twenty-one partitions. The symbol sewn upon it is the white conch shell. The philosophy maintained is that during the experience of the "absorption of cessation" there is mind but no incorrect (deluded) awareness. Through this school, buddhahood is achieved in no fewer than ten and no more than thirty eons of time.

The Saṃmitīya school derives its name from the fact that its followers displayed tremendous devotion over an extended period of time. The vinaya is recited in the Apabhraṃśa dialect, and the founding abbot was Upāli. The style and manner of preparing and wearing the saffron robe is in accordance with the Sthavira tradition. The philosophy asserted is that the "self" exists but is inexpressible. All knowable things are included in that which can and cannot be expressed.

The vinaya tradition that was propagated in Tibet is that of the Sarvāstivāda school.

After four generations of kings had come and gone, the conflict began to decrease. During the reign of King Kaniṣka, the sponsor for the third great council, there were still many differences of opinion. Then, in the Kaśmīr Temple, Kuvana Vihāra, five hundred arhats, four hundred bhikṣus, and five hundred bodhisattvas gathered. According to the prophetic dream of King Kṛkin, quoted in the sūtras, it was agreed that all eighteen schools upheld the Buddha's utterance. All volumes that comprise the Vinaya Piṭaka were written down, and all remaining volumes of the Sūtra and Abhidharma Piṭakas were put into writing.

The authorized commentaries based on the Buddha's spoken teachings originated and were maintained as follows:

In northern India, the arhat Upagupta, together with five hundred arhats, composed the extraordinary commentaries of the śrāvakas, such as the *Mahāvibhāṣa* (*Treasury of Particular Explanations*) and others. In addition, many great śrāvakas with qualities similar to those of the Buddha, such as Guru Kṛti and his assembly of arhats, composed additional commentaries. In particular the spiritual master Guṇaprabha, attainer of the third *bhūmi*, composed the *Vinayamūla-sūtra* (*Root Text on the Vinaya*) and further commentaries upon it, such as the *Twelve Thousand Verses.*

The spiritual master Śākyaprabha wrote the advice to the novice called *Śrāmaṇeratriśata-kārikā* (*Three Hundred Verses of the Novice*) and the commentary *Prabhāvatī,* further propagating the doctrine. Due to the kindness of these two spiritual masters, countless upholders of the victory banner of full ordination filled the land from the southern reaches of India to as far north as Śambhala.

Then, in accordance with the wishes of the great Dharma King Trisong Detsen, the vinaya tradition known as Sarvāstivāda was first brought into Tibet by Abbot Śāntarakṣita. This was passed down to Ba Ratna and others, becoming the only vinaya tradition to enter Tibet. Later, after the evil King Langdarma nearly destroyed the presence of the Buddhadharma in Tibet, three men called Mar, Yo, and Tsang carried the entire vinaya by mule pack to the place called Riwo Dentik. It was there that the great lama Gongpa Rabsal bestowed the vows of full ordination upon ten men from central and upper Tibet. Lume Tsultrim Sherab and others propagated this lineage, which became known as the "vinaya lineage of the lower region of Tibet." It remains undeteriorated to the present day.

When Dharmapāla, the great *paṇḍita* from eastern India, came to Ngari in Tibet, he brought with him the pure vinaya lineage, which he propagated extensively. This in turn became known as the "vinaya lineage of the upper region of Tibet." Again, at a later time, the lineage that became known as the "vinaya lineage of the central region of Tibet" was brought by Khache Panchen Śākya Śrī at the invitation of Trophu Lotsawa Champa Pal. This lineage was passed on to Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen Pal Zangpo, then to Changchub Pal and Dorje Pal, and down the line to the present day.

3. The main topic of discussion, in two subdivisions:
a. A general explanation of the nature and distinctions of vows
b. A specific explanation of the format for the vow-receiving ritual

a. A general explanation in two additional subdivisions:

1. The nature of the vows:

> The nature is to take up the thought of renunciation; the foundation is to abstain from harming others. If born from the body and speech, it is objective by belief. In addition, it is believed to be the seed of the continuum of the "abandoning mind." In our school, this is according to individual views of higher and lower traditions.

alone. The benefits of novice ordination are one hundred times greater than lay. The benefits of full ordination are one hundred times greater than novice. The first categories become common disciplines of the following categories, and so serve as steps on the path to the latter. Likewise, the prātimokṣa precepts serve as support for the bodhisattva vows. Both serve as the basis of support for secret mantra. Thus it should be clear that practitioners of secret mantra must have the foundation of having established and ascended the two preceding paths.

In the past, when the Buddha's doctrine was all-pervasive, there was time to practice pure morality and to perform all the various aspects of training. Now, at the time of the doctrine's decline, to maintain pure discipline for even one day is considered to be of even greater benefit. As is stated in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra,* "For as many grains of sand exist on the banks of the river Ganges for ten million eons of time: if you make, with a sincere heart, that many offerings of food, drink, incense, flowers, and light to the millions of buddhas who come and go, and if you compare this to the practice of pure morality during the time of the decline of the doctrine of the sugatas, the merit accumulated in one day of pure morality is far more sublime."

Having completed this subject, the conclusion of the chapter follows:

> This explanation of the stages of the prātimokṣa-vinaya completes the second chapter.

Of the five chapters of this commentary, the principal subject of the second chapter—the common training of the śrāvakas, the prātimokṣa, and the categories of vinaya training for male and female practitioners—is now complete. This is taken from the Buddha's teachings of the four great scriptures of vinaya: the *Vinayavastu, Vinayavibhāga, Vinayāgama,* and *Vinayottama.*

CHAPTER THREE: THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

B. Chapter Three: The Bodhisattva Vows, in three divisions:

1. The manner in which the Buddha taught the Pāramitā Piṭaka:

> Mahā Muni, the guide of sentient beings in this fortunate eon, at Vulture's Peak and elsewhere, boundlessly taught the extremely extensive piṭaka to those of the class of Mahāyāna.

Although Lord Buddha Śākyamuni achieved full awakening as a buddha many countless eons prior to his life as Śākyamuni, for the purpose of alleviating the suffering of cyclic confusion and guiding all beings to permanent peace, he reentered this world to demonstrate the twelve miraculous deeds[44] and, specifically,

to reveal the path to freedom from suffering. Through this intentional manifestation he was able to reveal the manner in which all beings may achieve the great, unsurpassed state of full awakening. In the previous chapter on the prātimokṣa, explanations were given on the manner in which the Buddha first introduced the Vinaya Piṭaka and how it was compiled, propagated, taught, and practiced. This chapter explains the bodhisattva vows and conduct, the principal subject of the second and third turnings of the Dharma wheel. The path of bodhisattvahood was revealed within the extraordinary context of the five states of perfect certainty. The "certainty of the teacher" was the fourth Buddha of this eon, Śākyamuni. The "certainty of the place" was Vulture's Peak, India, and elsewhere. The "certainty of the assembly" was the gathering of those of the class of Mahāyāna, including gods, *nāgas*, humans, demigods, spirits, and others of the common assembly. The uncommon assembly was composed of countless bodhisattvas. The "certainty of the Dharma" was the extremely extensive discourse focusing upon mental development within the context of the Sūtra Piṭaka, with emphasis on each of the three piṭakas respectively. The vinaya aspect of the sūtra teaching includes a description of the bodhisattva vows. The sūtra aspect reveals the extensive profundity of meditative absorption. The abhidharma aspect of sūtra reveals the divisions of the stages and paths, as well as the distinctions between *dhyāna* and *samādhi*, or mindfulness and meditative absorption.

During the third turning of the wheel, the meaning of ultimate truth was revealed so extensively that it was beyond ordinary conception. Here, the "certainty of the time" was experienced according to the aspiration of the recipients. Some understood instantaneously, while others comprehended gradually, according to their own level of understanding.

It is agreed by all Buddhist schools that the first turning of the wheel primarily revealed the teachings according to relative truth. Although the second and third turnings revealed both relative and ultimate explanations, there is much disagreement concerning this. In the Nyingma tradition, we assert that the second turning revealed the nature of both relative and ultimate truth, but with an emphasis on the temporary ultimate, whereas the third turning revealed the ultimate, absolute truth.

2. After it was compiled, the manner in which it was taught and practiced:

> The *Gambhīradarśanaparampará* (*Tradition of the Profound View*) was compiled by Mañjuśrī, elaborated upon by Nāgārjuna and others, and propagated by Śāntideva. The *Udāracaryāparampará* (*Tradition of Extremely Vast Conduct*) was compiled by Maitreya, elaborated upon by Asaṅga and his brother, and propagated by Atīśá. Our tradition of Padmasambhava follows that of Nāgārjuna.

The common teachings presented during the first turning of the wheel were compiled on three separate occasions. The teachings of the second turning were

compiled through uncommon and extraordinary means. According to the uncommon tradition of Mahāyāna, in the southern direction of Rājagṛha, India, on the peak of Bimasambhava, one million bodhisattvas gathered to receive the teachings of the Tripiṭaka, which were then compiled by Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi. These teachings are found in the two great traditions of Ārya Nāgārjuna and Ārya Asaṅga.

According to the tradition of Nāgārjuna, the teachings on the profound nature of emptiness were compiled by Ārya Mañjuśrī. Following this, and in accordance with the Buddha's prophecy, the great spiritual master Nāgārjuna composed the six categories of explanations concerning the Middle Way, based on the second turning of the wheel, which established *svaśūnyatā*, the reality that all phenomena are empty of any inherent nature.[45] Nāgārjuna then composed the *Vigrahavyāvartanīkārikā* and other texts (based upon the third turning) that serve to establish *paraśūnyatā*, the view that although all phenomena are not empty of their own nature or reality, they are asserted as being empty according to conventional reality. With this, the Tradition of the Profound View, Gambhīradarśanaparamparā, came into existence. Following Nāgārjuna, the great propagators of this tradition include such highly realized masters as Candrakīrti, Āryadeva, and others. (The great Śāntideva and Jetāri were responsible primarily for propagating the teachings on the generation of the awakened mind, bodhicitta.)

According to the tradition of Ārya Asaṅga, known as the Tradition of Great Extensive Conduct, Udāracaryāparamparā, the teachings were originally compiled by Maitreya. These teachings, which are contained in the Five Great Commentaries of Maitreya, essentially elucidate the empty nature of objective appearances.[46] Later, Ārya Asaṅga elaborated upon these works by composing his own commentaries, which were then further elaborated upon by such celebrated masters as the supreme scholar Vasubandhu, who composed the eight categories of the *Prakaraṇa*.[47] These teachings were further propagated by the great Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Candragomin, and Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (Atīśa), who was responsible for bringing this lineage of bodhisattva vows into Tibet.

In our Nyingma tradition, which follows the lineage of Ācārya Padmasambhava and the earlier translation school, the bodhisattva vows and rituals are received and practiced primarily according to the tradition of Nāgārjuna. The view, however, is maintained in accordance with both traditions.

3. The principal subject, in two subdivisions:
a. A general explanation of the nature and distinctions of the vows to be received
b. A specific explanation of how to receive the vows

a. A general explanation of the nature and distinctions of the vows to be received, in two further subdivisions:

1. The nature of the vows:

eons of time each to accomplish.

Having completed the principal subject, the chapter is complete.

> This completes the third chapter, the explanation of the bodhisattva's training in the awakened mind.

In dependence upon relative methods and indications, and in order to meet the needs of all beings, the manner of developing, maintaining, guarding, and restoring both the aspirational and practical awakened mind has been taught according to the two great traditions of practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: SECRET MANTRA

C. Chapter Four: Secret Mantra, an explanation of the third root, the vajra vehicle of secret mantra, the training of all the vidyādharas, and the progressive stages of the samaya words of honor.

The vajra vehicle is taught in three divisions.

1. An explanation of how the doctrine of the vajra vehicle originated:

> The sovereign teacher, the vajra-holder Samantabhadra, taught the ocean-like classes of tantra in the great Akaniṣṭha. Later, at Dhānyakaṭaka and elsewhere, the teachings were once again revealed...

Originally, the Buddha revealed the tantras through the mode of the five fully endowed circumstances. The fully endowed teacher, our own Lord Buddha Śākyamuni, has remained from beginningless time as the foundational, originally pure sphere of the primordial wisdom of intrinsic awareness. In this state of actual awakening, spontaneous presence and primordial wisdom are one. From within this, the one taste of the enlightened intentionality of all the buddhas of the three times remains as the appearance of the embodiment of complete enjoyment, the sambhogakāya.

All objective appearances are in actual nature the self-expression of primordial wisdom, the pure primordial buddha (Samantabhadra). The nonconceptual state, free from grasping and clinging, is the "vajra." The indivisibility of the sphere of truth and primordial wisdom is the "holder." The pure sovereign ruler of all maṇḍalas is the teacher. Thus, the fully endowed teacher is the vajra-holder, Samantabhadra.

The fully endowed place is self-awareness, exceedingly pure and understood as the Akaniṣṭha pure realm.[53] The fully endowed assembly, one's own self-projection, appears as the immeasurable maṇḍalas of peaceful and wrathful deities. The fully

endowed Dharma is the inexpressible nature of the lucid radiance of primordial wisdom's enlightened intentionality. The fully endowed time is the unchanging sphere of spontaneous, self-originating purity.

Within these five endowments, the ocean-like classes of tantra were unceasingly taught through symbolic indication in the Akaniṣṭha pure realm. Accordingly, only bodhisattvas on the eighth and ninth levels were able to hear the teaching. At this same time, for the benefit of extremely unruly beings, the Buddha manifested as the glorious Heruka (in wrathful aspect) and displayed the entire supporting maṇḍala of wrathful deities in the five pure realms of manifestation, nirmāṇakāya, and in the pure and impure ordinary worldly realms in order to tame the minds of sentient beings. Similarly, Buddha Vajradhara sent many mind-emanations to the realms of gods, nāgas, *yakṣas*, and others to reveal and propagate the tantras. Specifically in our human realm, the supreme emanation Lord Buddha Śākyamuni, while meditating for six years in austerity, sent his mind-emanations to the peak of Mount Meru and beneath the ocean in order to reveal the doctrine of secret mantra. Again returning to his body, he completed his display of the twelve miraculous deeds. In general, all of the secret mantra tantras were compiled by Vajrapāṇi and transcribed primarily into the languages of Sanskrit, Prākrit, Apabhraṃśa, Ḍākiṇī, those of barbarians, and others.

When the king of Oḍḍiyāna,[54] Indrabhūti, saw the Buddha and his assembly of śrāvakas flying in space, unsure of what he was seeing he called his ministers to observe the phenomenon and asked them if it was a flock of red-colored birds. They replied that it was the Buddha and his disciples. The king, wishing very much to see the Buddha, prayed to him to come down. The Buddha then appeared to him and asked him this question: "Can you firmly maintain the three precepts of total renunciation?" King Indrabhūti replied, "In this pleasure grove of the southern continent it is easy for me to take rebirth as a lowly fox if need be. However, to abandon desirable objects in order to achieve liberation—this, Lord Gautama, I cannot do." At these words, the assembly of śrāvakas disappeared. Then a voice was heard from space, saying, "What appeared to be śrāvakas and pratyekas was actually the great miraculous display of bodhisattvas." After this, the Buddha revealed the primordial wisdom maṇḍala and bestowed empowerment upon King Indrabhūti, who later accomplished the kāya of nonduality.

The Buddha manifested to reveal the Vajrayāna maṇḍalas at other power spots, such as in eastern China at Parvata Pakkhipāda, in central India at the Śmaśāna Śītavana charnel ground, and in Śrī Laṅkā at Ḍakpo Dradrok, and so forth. In addition, Lord Buddha taught many of the tantras in unknown places at uncertain times. At times, Lord Buddha himself manifested as the principal deity, and at other times he bestowed empowerment as the Buddha himself. After revealing all three vehicles in this world, the Buddha then manifested at Dhānyakaṭaka Caitya, where he opened the great maṇḍala of the Kālacakra and revealed the tantras to the assembly of male and female yogins and yoginīs. On other occasions, he appeared as a fully ordained monk to reveal the outer tantras,

including most of those of the kriyā and upa classes. When revealing to King Indrabhūti the *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, and to Vajragarbha the *Hevajra-tantra*, he manifested as the principal deities of those maṇḍalas surrounded by the entire assembly of deities. In this way, just as the tantras had previously been fully revealed in the great Akaniṣṭha, they were also introduced in their entirety into many other realms and world systems.

2. After the teachings were compiled, the manner in which they were practiced and upheld:

> ...and compiled by Vajrapāṇi and the retinue of recipients, and elaborated upon by the eight great mahāsiddhas and scholars of India and Tibet.

The manner in which the tantric teachings were compiled and propagated began in the celestial palace of Vajrapāṇi known as Alakāvatī. Vajrapāṇi convened with nine hundred and ninety-six million bodhisattvas to teach all the tantric classes and categories without exception. The disciple Candrabhadra compiled the root *Kālacakra-tantra*, and Vajragarbha compiled the *Diviparīkṣā*, and so forth. Although the retinue of recipients compiled various tantras that appeared to be distinct from their teacher, Vajrapāṇi, from the ultimate point of view they were nondual.

The secret Vajrayāna vehicle was not predicted to enter the world of human beings until a later time. According to prophesy, Vajrayāna entered this world in the following way. In the original translation school of the Nyingma there are two tantric distinctions, those of tantra and accomplishment. The coming of the tantra class was clearly prophesied by Lord Buddha Śākyamuni. Twenty-eight years after he passed into parinirvāṇa, five great sages—Deva Yaśasvī Varapāla of the gods' realm, Nāgarāja Takṣaka the nāga king, Yakṣa Ulkāmukha of the yakṣas, Rakṣa Matyaupāyika of the cannibals, and Vidyādhara Vimalakīrti the Licchavi of the human realm[55]—convened through their clairvoyant powers on the peak of Mount Malaya. In twenty-three verses, they made heartfelt prayers to receive the tantric transmissions. It was then that Vajrapāṇi directly appeared to them and revealed the essence of secret mantra, just as he had revealed it before in Akaniṣṭha, in Tuṣita, and in the thirty-third gods' realm. Rakṣa Matyaupāyika of the cannibals wrote the teachings down on golden parchment with lapis lazuli ink and buried them in the expanse of space.

Then, by the force of these blessings, King Ja of Sahor had seven auspicious dreams, indicating that all the scriptures of the tantric class would descend into this human world; and, in fact, shortly thereafter, all the scriptures of the tantric class of mahāyoga descended upon the roof of his palace. The kriyā class descended in Varanasi, the yogatantra class descended on the peak of Akniparvata Ujjavala mountain, and the anuyoga class descended in Śrī Laṅkā in the Singali forest.

These teachings then progressively spread into the countries of India, Nepal, and Druṣa.[56]

Later, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe accomplished these tantras under the guidance of the great paṇḍitas of these various countries and brought them into Tibet, where they were propagated. The atiyogatantra class was received in the country of Oḍḍiyāna by Garab Dorje through his direct visions of Vajrasattva. Compiling the teachings into volumes of scriptures, he then passed the lineage on to his disciple Mañjuśrīmitra. Mañjuśrīmitra passed it to Śrī Siṃha, and Śrī Siṃha passed it to the second Buddha, Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava passed the teachings to Vimalamitra, who then passed them to the translator Vairocana. Thus, the atiyogatantra was extensively propagated through this line of great realized beings.

The second category of the Vajrayāna vehicle, the accomplishment class, came into the human world in a manner similar to the way in which it was originally revealed in the Akaniṣṭha pure realm. Through the wrathful manifestation of divine presence and with the speech of the natural sound of the nature of truth, Vajra Dharma, a manifestation of Vajrapāṇi, revealed his own self-nature as nine maṇḍalas. The teachings were revealed and the scriptures were compiled. Five commentaries were then written by Vajra Dharma: *Thukje Jang Thakne Kyi Lung* (*Thugs-rJe dPyangs Thag-gNas Kyi Lung*), *Dzepa Chötrul Hlayi Lung* (*mDzad-Pa Chos 'Phrul Lha-Yi Lung*), *Trinley Tharchin Drubpai Lung* (*Phrin-Las mThar-Phyin sGrub-Pa'i Lung*), *Sang-Ngak Ngepa Döngyi Lung* (*gSang-sNags Nges-Pa Don-Gyi Lung*), and *Sangwa Goje Drönmai Lung* (*gSang-Ba sGo-'Byed sDron-Ma'i Lung*).

As it was not yet time to bring these teachings into the human world, they were given over to their caretaker, Ḍākiṇī Lekyi Wangmo (*las kyi dbangmo*; *Mahākarmendrāṇī*). The *ḍākiṇī* then placed the five general tantras of the eight herukas as one maṇḍala in a small case made of eight precious metals and jewels. She placed the ten individual tantras in ten separate little caskets, sealed them, and hid them in the stūpa called Ukhakara Ityasyastūpa in the charnel ground known as Śmaśāna Śītavana (Cool Forest). Then, at the appropriate time, through their clairvoyant powers of awareness, the eight great mahāsiddha paṇḍitas gathered together at this stūpa. By the force of their strong invocation in meditative absorption, Ḍākiṇī Lekyi Wangmo appeared directly before them. She then brought out the individually sealed cases and distributed them in the following way: The golden case containing the cycle for the accomplishment of Mahā Uttama Heruka was given to Vimalamitra; Hūṃkara received the silver case of Samyak Heruka; Mañjuśrīmitra received the iron case of Yamāntaka; Nāgārjuna received the copper case of Hayagrīva; Padmasambhava received the turquoise case of Vajrakīla; Dhana Saṃskṛta received the golden case of Saṃskṛta Preṣaka; Rambuguhya received the multicolored gem case of Lokapūja Stotra; and Śāntigarbha received the stone case of Vajra Mantrabhīru. This distribution was according to prophecy, and each went off to practice and fully realize their individual accomplishments. The small case made of eight precious jewels and metals containing the *Sugatasaṃnipāta* (*Gathering of all the Sugatas*), the combined maṇḍala of

the eight herukas, along with the secret essential instructions, was not revealed but was instead resealed and prophesied to be discovered and revealed at a later date.

Later, the great vidyādhara Padmasambhava, according to his own prophetic indication, came to the land of Tibet, where he bestowed all the empowerments and essential instructions upon his own nine heart-sons and the twenty-five disciples. They in turn were prophesied to reincarnate over the centuries to reveal the empowerments and instructions to the karmic aspirants of future times. Moreover, the tantric teachings were extensively propagated throughout India and Tibet through the kindness of many realized mahāsiddhas and scholars.

3. Establishing the main subject, in two divisions:

a. Briefly revealed:

> Although the original translation tradition is known for the lineages of kama and terma, and though the latter tradition has boundless systems, a general explanation of the samaya of the tantric classes will be explained here.

The earlier translation school is well known for its two traditions of kama and terma. The kama is the "distant" tradition, whereas the terma is "near." Both originate through the three extraordinary lineages of mind-to-mind transmission, symbolic indication transmission, and oral transmission. The terma tradition also has three additional lineages: prophetic indication, empowerment through aspiration, and the lineage sealed and entrusted to the ḍākiṇīs.

The later translation school teachings were placed into scriptures by the king of Oḍḍiyāna, Indrabhūti. By introducing these teachings to his kingdom, it came to pass that every living being within Oḍḍiyāna without exception achieved spiritual attainment and vanished in the rainbow body. Later, the country became a great lake filled with serpent beings. Vajrapāṇi traveled there, taught the doctrine, and gradually ripened the minds of the serpents. Eventually they took rebirth as human beings living around the banks of the lake and, through their efforts in practice, later achieved realization. All of them becoming *ḍākas* and ḍākiṇīs, they flew here and there throughout space so that the place became known as Oḍḍiyāna Khandro Ling, the land of space travelers. Later, when the lake evaporated, a self-originating palace of Heruka arose that was filled with the original treasury of scriptures. Later still, each of the great mahāsiddhas, such as King Bipukawa, Nāgārjuna, Ḍombī Heruka, Kukkuripā, Lalita Vajra, the mahāsiddha Tilopa, and others propagated the teachings. Other great realized beings propagated the teachings in other pure realms, such as Śambhala. In short, the eight great and eighty minor mahāsiddhas and countless other scholars and realized beings composed commentaries and extensively propagated the doctrine. The boundless descriptions of their enlightened deeds will not be presented in detail here. However, readers may refer to the many translations of

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3 BUDDHISM IN INDIA

LUIS O. GÓMEZ

A contemporary visitor to the South Asian subcontinent would find Buddhism flourishing only outside the mainland, on the island of Sri Lanka. This visitor would meet small pockets of Buddhists in Bengal and in the Himalayan regions, especially in Ladakh and Nepal, and as the dominant group in Bhutan and Sikkim. Most of the latter Buddhists belong to the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna forms of Buddhism and represent denominations and orders of Tibetan and Nepalese origin. Buddhists may also be found in the subcontinent among Tibetan refugees (mostly in Himachal Pradesh and Bangalore), among the Ambedkar Buddhists of Maharashtra, and among pilgrims and missionaries flocking to the sacred sites of India. The diversity of manifestations is not new, but the specific forms are not representative of what Indian Buddhism was in the past.

Origins

Approximately twenty-five hundred years ago the founder of the Buddhist religion was born into the Śākya tribe in a small aristocratic republic in the Himalayan foothills, in what is today the kingdom of Nepal. In his youth he descended to the Ganges River valley in search of spiritual realization. After several years of study at the feet of spiritual masters he underwent a profound religious experience that changed his life; he became a teacher himself, and lived for the rest of his adult life as a mendicant peripatetic. His worldview and personal preoccupations were shaped in the cultural milieu of India of the sixth century BCE; the religious communities that trace their origin to him developed their most distinctive doctrines and practices in Indian soil.

SOURCES AND SETTING

Unfortunately, we do not possess reliable sources for most of the history of Buddhism in its homeland; in particular, we have precious little to rely on for its early history. Textual sources are late, dating at the very least five hundred years after the death of the Buddha. The archaeological evidence, abundant as it is, is limited in the information it can give us. A few facts are nevertheless well established. The roots

of Indian Buddhism are to be found in the "shramanic" movement of the sixth century BCE, which owes the name to its model of religious perfection, the *śramaṇa,* or wandering ascetic. The *śramaṇa*s set religious goals that stood outside, and in direct opposition to, the religious and social order of the *brāhmaṇa*s (brahmans), who represented the Indo-Aryan establishment. Most of the values that would become characteristic of Indian, and therefore Hindu, religion in general were shaped by the interaction of these two groups, especially by a process of assimilation that transformed the Brahmanic order into Hindu culture. [*See* Vedism and Brahmanism.]

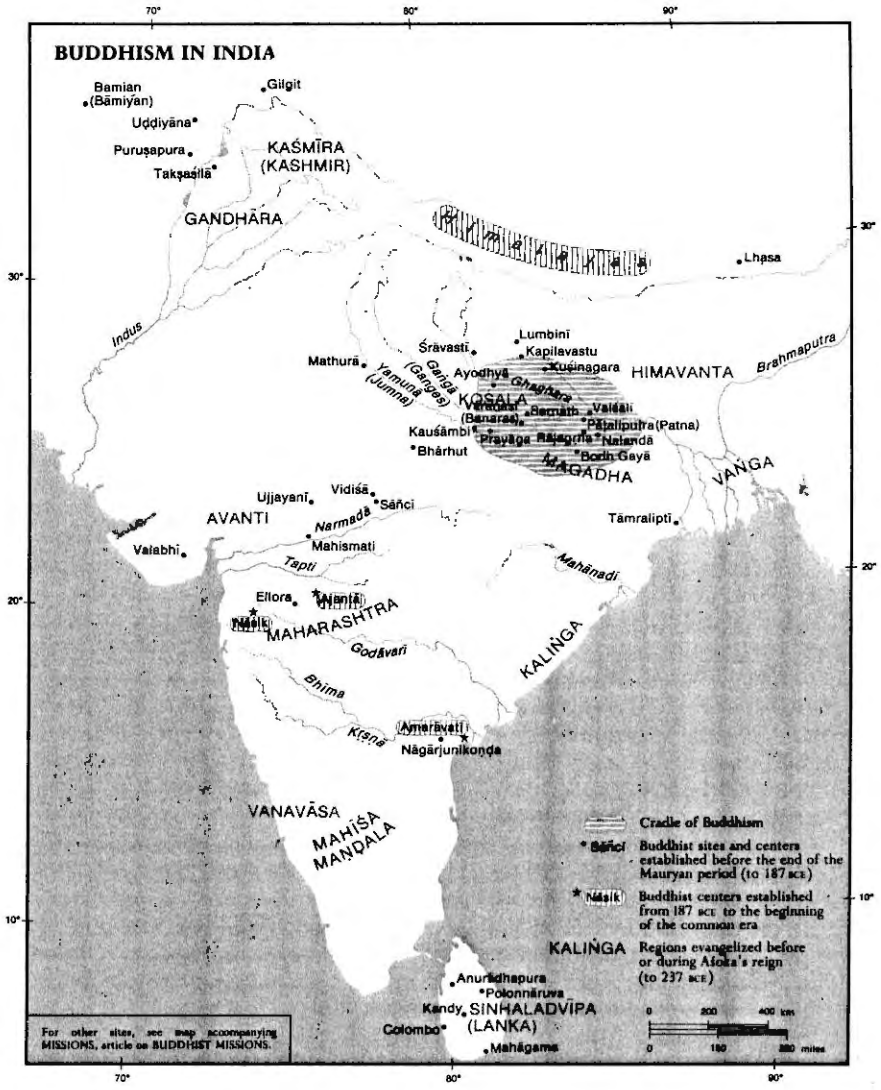
The appearance of two major shramanic religions, Buddhism and Jainism, marked the end of the Vedic-Brahmanic period and the beginning of an era of cross-fertilization between diverse strata of Indian culture. This new age, sometimes called the Indic period, was characterized by the dominant role of "heterodox" or non-Hindu religious systems, the flourishing of their ascetic and monastic orders, and the use of the vernaculars in preference to Sanskrit.

We can surmise that this new age was a time of social upheaval and political instability. The use of iron had changed radically the character of warfare and the nature of farming. The jungle was cleared, farmland could support a court bureaucracy, and palaces and city walls could be built. A surplus economy was created that made possible large state societies, with concentrated populations and resources, and consequently with heightened political ambition.

The Buddha must have been touched directly by these changes: shortly before his death the republic of the Śākyas was sacked by the powerful kingdom of Kośala, which in turn would shortly thereafter fall under the power of Magadha. At the time of the Buddha sixteen independent states existed in North Central India, a century later only one empire would rule in the region, and in another hundred years this empire, Magadha, would control all of northern India and most of the South. The unity of the empire was won at a price: political and social systems based on family or tribal order crumbled; the old gods lost their power.

As the old order crumbled, the brahmans claimed special privileges that other groups were not always willing to concede. Those who would not accept their leadership sought spiritual and moral guidance among the *śramaṇa*s. Although recent research has shown that the interaction between these two groups was more complex than we had previously imagined, it is still accepted that the shramanic movement represented some of the groups displaced by the economic and political changes of the day, and by the expansion of Brahmanic power. The *śramaṇas,* therefore, were rebels of sorts. They challenged the values of lay life in general, but especially the caste system as it existed at the time. Thus, what appeared as a lifestyle designed to lead to religious realization may have been at the same time the expression of social protest, or at least of social malaise.

The shramanic movement was fragmented: among the shramanic groups, Buddhism's main rival was Jainism, representing an ancient teaching whose origin dated to at least one or two generations before the Buddha. A community of mendicants reformed by Vardhamāṇa Mahāvīra (d. around 468 BCE) shortly before the beginning of Buddha's career, Jainism represented the extremes of world denial and asceticism that Buddhism sought to moderate with its doctrine of the Middle Way. Buddhists also criticized in Jainism what they saw as a mechanistic conception of moral responsibility and liberation. Another school criticized by early Buddhists was that of Makkhali Gosāla, founder of the Ājīvikas, who also taught an extreme form of asce-



ticism that was based, strangely, on a fatalistic doctrine. [*See* Jainism; Mahāvīra; Ājīvikas; *and the biography of Gośāla.*]

We have to understand the shramanic movements as independent systems and not as simple derivations or reforms of Brahmanic doctrine and practice. One can find, nevertheless, certain elements common to all the movements of the age: the *śramaṇa*s, called "wanderers" (*parivrājaka*s), like the forest dwellers of Brahmanism, retired from society. Some sought an enstatic experience; some believed that

particular forms of conduct led to purity and liberation from suffering; others sought power through knowledge (ritual or magical) or insight (contemplative or gnostic); but most systems contained elements of all of these tendencies.

Among the religious values formed during the earlier part of the Indic age, that is, during the shramanic period, we must include, above all, the concept of the cycle and bondage of rebirth *(saṃsāra)* and the belief in the possibility of liberation *(mokṣa)* from the cycle through ascetic discipline, world renunciation, and a moral or ritual code that gave a prominent place to abstaining from doing harm to living beings *(ahiṃsā)*. This ideal, like the quest for altered states of consciousness, was not always separable from ancient notions of ritual purity and spiritual power. But among the shramanic movements it sometimes took the form of a moral virtue. Then it appeared as opposition to organized violence—political, as embodied in war, and religious, as expressed in animal sacrifice.

The primary evil force was no longer envisioned as a spiritual personality, but as an impersonal moral law of cause and effect *(karman)* whereby human actions created a state of bondage and suffering. In their quest for a state of rest from the activities of *karman*, whether the goal was defined as enstasy or knowledge, the new religious specialists practiced a variety of techniques of self-cultivation usually known as *yoga*s. The sustained practice of this discipline was known as a "path" *(mārga)*, and the goal was a state of peace and freedom from passion and suffering called *nirvāṇa*. [*See* Karman, *article on* Hindu and Jain Concepts; Mokṣa; Yoga; Saṃsāra; Ahiṃsā; *and* Saṃnyāsa.]

As a shramanic religion, Buddhism displayed similar traits but gave to each of these its unique imprint. The conception of rebirth and its evils were not questioned, but suffering was universalized: all human conditions lead to suffering, suffering has a cause, and that cause is craving, or "thirst" *(tṛṣṇā)*. To achieve liberation from the cycle of rebirth one must follow the spiritual discipline prescribed by the Buddha, summarized in the Eightfold Path. The follower of Buddhism was expected to renounce the lay life and become a wandering ascetic, an ideal epitomized by the spiritual career of the founder.

Most shramanic groups made provisions for their lay supporters, essentially members of the community who by circumstance or choice could not follow the wanderer's path. Buddhist laymen could begin moving in the right direction—with the hope of being able to renounce the world in a future birth—by "taking refuge" *(śaraṇa-gamana)*, that is, by making a confession of faith in the Buddha, his teachings, and his monastic order, and by adopting five fundamental moral precepts *(pañcaśīla)*: not to deprive a living thing of life, not to take what is not given to you, not to engage in illicit sexual conduct, not to lie, and not to take intoxicating drinks.

THE THREE JEWELS

Perhaps all we can say with certainty about the roots of Buddhist doctrine and doctrinal continuity in Buddhism is that the figure of the Buddha and his experience dominate most of Buddhist teachings. If we wish to understand Buddhism as a doctrinal system, we can look at its oral and written ideology—including its scriptures—as the effort of diverse Buddhist communities to explore and define the general issues raised by the Buddha's career. These include questions such as the following:

Does the Buddha "exist" after liberation? Is the experience of awakening ineffable? Which of the two experiences, awakening or liberation, is the fundamental one?

On the other hand, if we wish to understand Buddhism as a religion rather than as a system of doctrines, its focus or fulcrum must be found in the religious communities and their objects of veneration. The early community was represented primarily by the gathering of mendicants or monks called the *saṃgha*, held together by ascetic or monastic codes *(prātimokṣa)* attributed to the Buddha himself, and by the objects of worship represented by (1) the founder himself as the "Awakened One" *(buddha)*; (2) his exemplary and holy life, his teachings and his experience *(dharma)*; and (3) the community *(saṃgha)* itself, sustained by the memory of his personality and teaching. These objects of veneration are known as the "Three Treasures" *(triratna)*, and the believer's trust in these ideals is expressed, doctrinally and ritually, in the "Three Refuges" (to rely on the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha). To this day, this formula serves at once as an indication of the meaning of monastic ordination and a lay confession of faith.

Buddha. No Western scholar today would claim to know the exact details of the founder's biography, or for that matter the exact content of his teachings. The above is merely an educated guess based on formulations from a time removed by several centuries from their origins. Scholars agree, nevertheless, on the historicity of the founder. That is to say, though they may doubt the accuracy of the information transmitted in traditional "biographies" (beginning with his personal name, Siddhārtha Gautama) or in legends about the Buddha's sermons, Western scholars accept the existence of an influential religious figure, called Śākyamuni ("the sage of the Śākya tribe") by his disciples, who at some point in the sixth century BCE founded in the Ganges River valley the community of wandering mendicants that would eventually grow into the world religion we now call Buddhism.

Scholars generally tend to accept the years 563 to 483 BCE as the least problematic, if not the most plausible, dating for the life of Gautama Buddha. (Other dating systems exist, however, that place his life as much as a century later.) Assuming, moreover, that the legend is reliable in some of its details, we can say that the history of the religion begins when Śākyamuni was thirty-five (therefore, in about 528), with his first sermon at Sārnāth (northeast of the city of Vārāṇasī).

Before and after his enlightenment, Śākyamuni followed the typical career of a wanderer. At twenty-nine he abandoned the household and sought a spiritual guide. An early legend claims that Śākyamuni actually studied under two teachers of the age, Āḷāra Kālāma and Udraka Rāmaputra. From such teachers the young ascetic learned techniques of meditation that he later rejected, but the imprints of which remain in Buddhist theories of meditation. Dissatisfied with what he had learned, he tried the life of the hermit. Finally, after six years of struggle, he "awakened" under a pipal tree *(Ficus religiosa)* near the border town of Uruvilvā (Bodh Gayā).

His first sermon was followed by forty-five years of wandering through the Ganges River valley, spreading his teachings. Although tradition preserves many narratives of isolated episodes of this half century of teaching, no one has been able to piece together a convincing account of this period. For the tradition this was also a time for the performance of great miracles, and historical accuracy was never an important consideration.

At the age of eighty (c. 483), Siddhārtha Gautama, the Buddha Śākyamuni, died near the city of Kuśināgara. To his immediate disciples perhaps this fading away of the Master confirmed his teachings on impermanence, but the Buddha's death would soon come to be regarded as a symbol of his perfect peace and renunciation: with death he had reached his *parinirvāṇa,* that point in his career after which he would be reborn no more. His ashes, encased in a reliquary buried in a cairn, came to stand for the highest achievement of an awakened being, confirming his status as the one who had attained to truth, the Tathāgata—an epithet that would come to denote ultimate truth itself. [*See* Buddha *and* Tathāgata.]

Dharma. The first preaching, known as the "First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma" (or, in the West, the "Sermon at Banaras" or the "Deer Park Sermon"), symbolizes the appearance in history of the Buddhist teaching, whereas Śākyamuni's enlightenment experience, or "Great Awakening" *(mahābodhi),* which occurred in the same year, represents the human experience around which the religion would develop its practices and ideals. This was the experience whereby Śākyamuni became an "Awakened One" *(buddha).* His disciples came to believe that all aspects of Buddhist doctrine and practice flow from this experience of awakening *(bodhi)* and from the resultant state of freedom from passion, suffering, and rebirth called *nirvāṇa.* The teachings found in the Buddha's sermons can be interpreted as definitions of these two experiences, the spiritual practices that lead to or flow from them, and the institutions that arose inspired by the experience and the human beings who laid claim to it. [*See* Nirvāṇa.]

However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to surmise which, if any, among the many doctrines attributed by tradition to the founder are veritably his. Different Buddhists, even when they can agree on the words, will interpret the message differently. Although most would find the nucleus of Śākyamuni's teachings in the "First Sermon," especially in the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths allegedly preached therein, a host of other doctrinal statements compete for the central position throughout the history of Buddhism in India and beyond. Moreover, a number of texts that can claim great antiquity are not only silent about the Four Noble Truths but actually do not seem to presuppose them in any way. The same can be said about other doctrines that would become central to the development of Buddhist doctrinal speculation, for instance, the principle of conditioned arising *(pratītya-samutpāda)* and the analysis of the human personality into its constituent parts (*skandhas*, etc.).

It is difficult to determine to what extent early Buddhism had an accompanying metaphysics. Some of the earliest strata of Buddhist literature suggest that the early community may have emphasized the joys of renunciation and the peace of abstention from conflict—political, social, and religious—more than a philosophical doctrine of liberation. Such are the ascetic ideals of one of the earliest texts of the tradition, the *Aṭṭhakavagga (Suttanipāta).* The mendicant abstains from participating in the religious and metaphysical debates of brahmans, *śramaṇas*, and sages. He is detached from all views, for

> Purity is not [attained] by views, or learning,
> by knowledge, or by moral rules, and rites.
> Nor is it [attained] by the absence of views,
> learning, knowledge, rules or rites.

> Abandoning all these, not grasping at them,
> he is at peace; not relying, he would not
> hanker for becoming. (*Suttanipāta* 839)

There is in this text a rejection of doctrine, rule, and rite that is a critique of the exaggerated claims of those who believed they could become pure and free through ritual, knowledge, or religious status. The lonely ascetic seeks not to become one thing or the other and avoids doctrinal disputes.

If such statements represent some of the earliest moments in the development of the doctrine, then the next stage must have brought a growing awareness of the need for ritual and creed if the community was to survive. This awareness would have been followed in a short time by the formation of a metaphysic, a theory of liberation, and a conscious system of meditation. In the next strata of early Buddhist literature these themes are only surpassed in importance by discussions of ascetic morality. The ascetic ideals of the early community were then expanded and defined by doctrine—as confession of faith, as ideology, and as a plan for religious and moral practice. The earliest formulations of this type are perhaps those of the Eightfold Path, with its triple division into wisdom, moral practice, and mental concentration. The theoretical or metaphysical underpinnings are contained in the Four Noble Truths and in the Three Marks (impermanence, sorrow, and no-self), both traditionally regarded as the subject matter of the Buddha's first sermons. [*See* Four Noble Truths; Eightfold Path; Karman, *article on* Buddhist Concepts; Soul, *article on* Buddhist Concepts; *and* Dharma, *article on* Buddhist Dharma and Dharmas.]

Saṃgha. With the first sermon the Buddha began a ministry that would last forty-five years. During this period he established a religious order—perhaps only a mendicant order in its beginnings—and trained a number of distinguished disciples who would carry on the teaching after the founder's death. Tradition preserves the names of many of his disciples and immediate heirs to his teaching: Kauṇḍinya, the first convert to be admitted into the Buddha's religious order *(saṃgha);* Yasa, the first householder to receive full lay initiation with the Three Refuges; Śāriputra, the master of wisdom; Maudgalyāyana, the great thaumaturge; Upāli, the expert in the monastic code; Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and beloved disciple; Mahāprajāpati, the first woman admitted into the monastic order; and Mahākāśyapa, who undertook to preserve the Buddha's teaching and organized the First Council. The Buddha's disciples represented a wide spectrum of social classes. Yasa was the son of a wealthy gild master; Upāli, a humble barber; Śāriputra, a brahman; Ānanda, a member of the nobility *(kṣatriya).* Among the early followers we find not only world renouncers but believers from a variety of walks of life; King Bimbisāra, the wealthy banker Anāthapiṇḍika, the respectable housewife Viśākhā, and the courtesan Amrapālī, for instance.

Although the Buddhist monastic community was an integral part of Indian society, serving as an instrument of legitimation and cohesion, it also served on occasions as a critic of society. Especially in its early development, and in particular during the period of the wandering mendicants, the *saṃgha* was a nonconformist subgroup. The variety of social classes represented by the roster of early disciples in part reflects the fluid state of Indian society at the time; but it also reflects the Buddha's open opposition to the caste system as it existed then. Although the challenge was

religious and political as well as social, the Buddha's critique of Brahmanism made his order of mendicants an alternative community, where those who did not fit in the new social order could find a sense of belonging, acceptance, and achievement. Buddhist reforms and institutions would waver in their function as rebels and supporters of social order until Buddhism ultimately became absorbed into Hinduism during the centuries following the first millennium of the common era.

We can surmise that the earliest community did not have a fixed abode. During the dry season the Buddhist *śramaṇa*s would sleep in the open and wander from village to village "begging" for their sustenance—hence their title *bhikṣu,* "mendicant" (fem., *bhikṣuṇī*). They were persons who had set forth *(pravrajyā)* from the household to lead the life of the wanderer *(parivrājaka).* Only during the rainy season would they gather in certain spots in the forest or in special groves provided by lay supporters. There they would build temporary huts that would be dismantled at the end of the rainy season, when they would set out again in their constant wandering to spread the Buddha's Dharma.

The main ideals of the mendicant life of the "wanderers" is expressed in a passage that is presented as the creed or code (the Prātimokṣa) recited by the followers of the "former Buddha" Vipaśyin when they interrupted the wandering to meet and renew their common ideals:

> Enduring patience is the highest austerity,
> *nirvāṇa* is the highest condition—say the
> Buddhas.
> For he who injures another is not a true
> renouncer,
> He who causes harm to others is not a true
> ascetic.
> Not to do any evil, to practice the good,
> to purify one's own mind:
> This is the teaching of the Buddhas.
>
> Not to speak against others, not to harm others,
> and restraint according to the rule
> *(prātimokṣa),*
> Moderation in eating, secluded dwelling,
> and the practice of mental cultivation
> *(adhicitta):*
> This is the teaching of the Buddhas.
>
> *(Mahāpadāna Suttanta)*

These verses outline important aspects of the early teaching: the centrality of *ahiṃsā,* the two aspects of morality—abstention and cultivation—and the practice of meditation, all in the context of a community of ascetics for whom a life of solitude, poverty, and moderation was more important than the development of subtle metaphysics. [*For a discussion of ascetic practices, see* Soteriology, *article on* Buddhist Soteriology.]

Probably—and the earliest scriptures suggest this—the first aspect of Buddhist teachings to be systematized was the rule, first as a confession of faith for dispersed

communities of mendicants, soon as a monastic rule for sedentary ascetics. Also at an early stage, the community sought to systematize its traditions of meditation, some of which must have been pre-Buddhistic (the Buddha himself having learned some of these from his teachers). Thus, Buddhist techniques of meditation represent a continuation of earlier processes of *yoga,* though we cannot be certain as to the exact connection, or the exact content of the early practices.

The first of these developments brought the community closer together by establishing a common ritual, the recitation of the rule *(prātimokṣa)* at a meeting held on the full and new moon and the quarter moons *(uposatha).* The second development confirmed an important but divisive trait of the early community: the primary source of authority remained with the individual monk and his experience in solimde. Thus, competing systems of meditation and doctrine probably developed more rapidly than differences in the code. [*See* Saṃgha, *especially the overview article.*]

The Cenobium

As India moved into an age of imperial unity under the Maurya (322–185) and Śuṅga dynasties (185–73), the Buddhist community reached its point of greatest unity. Although the *saṃgha* split into schools or sects perhaps as early as the fourth century BCE, differences among Buddhists were relatively minor. Transformed into a monastic brotherhood, Buddhism served a society that shared common values and customs. Unity, however, was shortlived, and Buddhism, like India, would have to adapt rapidly to new circumstances as the first invasions from Central Asia would put an end to the Śuṅga dynasty in 175. Until then, however, during the approximately three hundred years from the death of the founder to the beginning of the age of foreign invasions, Buddhist monks and laymen began the process of systematization that defined the common ground of Indian Buddhism in practice, scripture, and doctrine.

The primary element of continuity became the Prātimokṣa, the rules for the maintenance of the community and the liturgical recitation thereof; differences in this regard would be more serious than differences of doctrine. Thus the Second Council, which is supposed to have caused the most serious split in the history of the community, is said to have been called to resolve differences in the interpretation and formulation of minor details in the monastic regulations. In order to justify and clarify the rules that held the community together a detailed commentary of the Prātimokṣa rules had to be developed. The commentary, attributed to the Buddha himself, eventually grew into the Vinaya, an extensive section of the canon.

But the full development of the monastic code presupposes a sedentary *saṃgha.* We can surmise that not long after the Buddha's death the retreat for the rainy season began to extend into the dry season, perhaps at the invitation of the lay community, perhaps owing to dwindling popular support for the mendicant wanderers. Soon the temporary huts were replaced by more or less permanent structures built of wood, and the community of wanderers became a cenobium. The stone and gravel foundation of one of the earliest monasteries remains in the vicinity of Rājagṛha (Bihar). These are the ruins of the famous "Jivaka's Mango Grove" (Jivakāmravaṇa) Monastery, built on a plot of land donated to the order at the time of the Buddha. In its early history it may have been used only during the rainy season,

but it already shows the basic structure of the earliest monasteries: living quarters for the monks and a large assembly hall (perhaps for the celebration of the Uposatha).

As the community settled down, rules and rituals for regulating monastic life became a necessity. At least some of the items in the *Prātimokṣa* section of the Vinaya and some of the procedural rules discussed in the *Karmavācanā* may go back to the time of the Buddha. The rule and the procedures for governing the *Saṃgha* are clearly based on republican models, like the constitution of the Licchavis of Vaiśālī, which is praised in the canonical texts. If this admiration goes back to the founder, then we can say that the Buddha ordered his community of wandering mendicants on the political model provided by the disappearing republics of North India. Such a rule would encourage order and harmony on the one hand, and peaceful disagreement and individual effort on the other. It provided for mutual care and concern in matters of morals, but lacked a provision for a central authority in political or doctrinal matters. [*See* Vinaya *and* Monasticism, *article on* Buddhist Monasticism.]

THE COMMON DOCTRINAL GROUND

The Buddha realized the true nature of things, their "suchness" *(tathatā),* and therefore is one of those rare beings called *tathāgatas*. Yet, whether there is a *tathāgata* to preach it or not, the Dharma is always present, because it is the nature of all things *(dharmatā).* Four terms summarize this truth known by the *tathāgatas*: impermanence, sorrow, no-self, *nirvāṇa.* The first implies the second, for attachment to what must change brings sorrow. Our incapacity to control change, however, reveals the reality of no-self—nothing is "I" or "mine." The experience of no-self, on the other hand, is liberating; it releases one from craving and the causes of sorrow; it leads to peace, *nirvāṇa.*

These principles are summarized also in a doctrine recognized by all schools, that of the Four Noble Truths: sorrow, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to cessation. Buddhist tradition, therefore, will spend much of its energy in understanding the causes of suffering and the means to put an end to it, or, in doctrinal shorthand, "arising" and "cessation." Since cessation is in fact the obverse of arising, a proper understanding of arising, or causation, becomes central to Buddhist speculation in India. The most important doctrine for this aspect of the religion is the principle of dependent arising *(pratītya-samutpāda):* everything we regard as "the self" is conditioned or compounded; everything conditioned depends on causes and conditions; by understanding the causes of our idea of the self and of the sorrow that this idea brings to us we can become free of suffering. [*See* Pratītya-samutpāda.] This doctrine is summarized in a stanza that has become one of the best known Buddhist creeds throughout Asia:

> The Tathāgata has proclaimed the cause,
> as well as the cessation,
> of all things *(dharma)* arising from a cause.
> This is the Great *Śramaṇa's* teaching.
> (*Mahāvastu* 2.62; Pali *Vinaya* 1.40)

Abstract theories of causation were perceived as having an ultimately soteriological meaning or function, for they clarified both the process of bondage (rebirth forced upon us as a consequence of our actions) and the process of liberation (freedom from rebirth by overcoming our ignorance and gaining control over the causes of bondage). Liberation was possible because the analysis of causation revealed that there was no reincarnating or suffering self to begin with.

Impermanence and causation were explained by primitive theories of the composition of material reality (the four elements) and mental reality (the six senses, the six types of sense objects, etc.) and, what is more important, by the theory of the constituents *(skandhas)* of human personality. These notions would become the main focus of Buddhist philosophy, and by the beginning of the common era they were being integrated into systematic treatments of the nature of ultimately real entities *(dharma).* [*See* Dharma, *article on* Buddhist Dharma and Dharmas.]

Although the themes of impermanence and causation will remain at the heart of Buddhist philosophical speculation for several centuries, from the religious point of view the question of no-self plays a more important role. At first seen as an insightful formulation of the meaning of awakening and liberation, the doctrine of no-self raised several difficulties for Buddhist dogma. First, it was not at all obvious how moral (or karmic) responsibility could be possible if there was no continuous self. Second, some Buddhists wondered what was the meaning of liberation in the absence of a self.

Closely related to these issues was the question of the nature and status of the liberated being. In other words, what sort of living being is a *tathāgata?* Some Buddhists considered the *tathāgata* as a transcendent or eternal being, while others saw him as someone who by becoming extinct was nonexistent; still others began to redefine the concept of liberation and no-self in an attempt to solve these questions and in response to changes in the mythological or hagiographic sphere. These issues are an essential part of the changes in doctrine and practice that would take place during the age of invasions, culminating in the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

WORSHIP AND RITUAL

The most important ritual of the monastic community continued to be Upavasatha or Uposatha, a gathering of the *saṃgha* of a given locality or "parish" *(sīmā)* to recite the rules of the Prātimokṣa. These meetings were held at every change in the moon's phase. A similar ceremony, but with greater emphasis on the public confession of individual faults, was held at the end of the rainy season. At this time too was held the *kaṭhina* ceremony, in which the monks received new robes from the lay community. Other rituals, such as the ordination ceremony, had a more limited impact on the community at large, but were nevertheless important symbols of the status of the religious specialist in society at large.

Above all other rituals, one of Shramanic origin offered continued reinforcement of the ties that bound the religious order with the laity. The *bhikṣu,* as his title indicates, was expected to receive his sustenance from the charity *(dāna)* of pious laymen and laywomen. Accordingly, the monks would walk the villages every morning to collect alms. By giving the unsolicited gift the layperson was assured of the merit *(puṇya)* necessary to be reborn in a state of being more favorable for spiritual or material progress. According to some traditions, the monk received the benefits

of helping others gain merit; but some believed the monk could not gain merit except by his own virtue.

In the early stages lay followers were identified by their adherence to the fivefold moral precept *(pañcaśīla)* and the formal adoption of the Three Refuges. These practices continued throughout the history of Indian Buddhism. It is also likely that participation of lay members in Upavasatha meetings with the *saṃgha* was also an early and persistent practice.

At first the cenobitic life of the monks probably had no room for explicit acts of devotion, and the monk's religion was limited to a life of solitude and meditation. The early monastic ruins do not show evidence of any shrine room. It was essential to have the cells open onto a closed courtyard, to keep out the noise of the world; it was essential to have an assembly hall for teaching and the recitation of the Prātimokṣa; a promenade *(caṅkrama)* for walking meditation was also necessary. But there were no shrine rooms.

With the institutionalization of Buddhism, however, came new forms of lay and monastic practice. The monastic brotherhood gradually began to play a priestly role; in tandem with the lay community, they participated in nonmonastic rituals, many of which must have been of pre-Buddhist origin. [*See* Priesthood, *article on* Buddhist Priesthood.] One practice that clearly was an important, nonascetic ritual, yet characteristic of Buddhism, was the worship of the relics of the Buddha and his immediate disciples. The relics were placed in a casket, which was then deposited in a cairn or tumulus *(stūpa, caitya)*, to which the faithful would come to present their offerings. Already by the time of Aśoka (mid-third century BCE) we find evidence of a flourishing cult of the relics, often accompanied by the practice of pilgrimage to the sacred sites consecrated by their role in the life of Śākyamuni—especially the birth place, the site of the Great Awakening, the site of the First Sermon, and the spot where the Buddha was believed to have died. [*See also* Pilgrimage, *article on* Buddhist Pilgrimage in South and Southeast Asia.] Following an ancient custom, tumuli were built on these spots—perhaps at first as reliquaries, later as commemorative monuments. Monasteries near such sites assumed the role of shrine caretakers. Eventually, most monasteries became associated with stupas.

Aśoka erected columns and stupas (as many as eighty thousand, according to one tradition) marking the localities associated with the life of the Buddha as well as other ancient sacred sites, some associated with "former Buddhas," that is, mythical beings believed to have achieved Buddhahood thousands or millions of lives before the Buddha Śākyamuni. The latter practice and belief indicates the development of a new form of Buddhism, firmly based on the mythology of each locality, that expanded the concept of the Three Treasures to include a host of mythical beings who would share in the sanctity of Śākyamuni's experience and virtue and who were therefore deserving of the same veneration as he had received in the past.

The cairn or tumulus eventually became sacred in itself, whether there was a relic in it or not. Chapels were built to contain the *caitya*. The earliest surviving examples of these structures are built in stone and date from the first or second century BCE, but we can surmise that they existed in wood from an earlier date. These "*caitya* halls" became the standard shrine room of the monastery: a stylized memorial tumulus built in stone or brick, housed in an apsidal hall with a processional for the

ritual circumambulation of the tumulus. [*See* Temple, *article on* Buddhist Temple Compounds.]

Reliefs at the *caitya* hall at Bhājā in Western India (late Śuṅga, c. end of the second century BCE) suggest various aspects of the cult: the main form of worship was the ritual of circumambulation *(pradakṣiṇa)*, which could be carried out individually or in groups. The stupa represented the sacred or cosmic mountain, at whose center was found the *axis mundi* (now represented by the Buddha's royal parasol); thus the rite of circumambulation expressed veneration for the Buddha and his teaching, while at the same time it served as a symbolic walking of the sun's path around the cosmic mountain.

Stupas were often erected at ancient sacred sites, hills, trees, the confluence of streams, which in many cases were sacred by virtue of non-Buddhist belief. Thus, pre-Buddhist practice, if not belief, survived side by side, and even within, Buddhist liturgy and belief. There is ample evidence of a coexisting cult of the tree (identified with the "Tree of Awakening"), of forest spirits *(yakṣas)* and goddesses *(devatā)*, and the persistence of Vedic deities, albeit in a subordinate role, beside a more austere, and presumably monastically inspired, cult of aniconic symbolizations of Buddhahood: the tree and the throne of enlightenment standing for the Great Awakening, the stupa representing the *nirvāṇa*, the wheel representing the doctrine of the Buddha. But one must not assume that the implied categories of "high tradition" and popular cult were mutually exclusive. [*See* Stupa Worship *and* Nāgas and Yakṣas. *For a discussion of Buddhist/local syncretism, see* Folk Religion, *article on* Folk Buddhism. *See also* Worship and Cultic Life, *article on* Buddhist Cultic Life in Southeast Asia.]

THE COUNCILS AND THE BEGINNING OF SCRIPTURAL TRADITION

The First Council, or Council of Rājagṛha, if a historical fact, must have served to establish the Buddhist *saṃgha* and its doctrine for the community of the Magadhan capital. In all probability the decisions of the Council were not accepted by all Buddhists. Further evidence of disagreement, and geographical fragmentation is found in the legend of the Second Council, one hundred years after the Buddha's death.

Since the early community of wanderers, there had been ample room for disagreement and dissension. But certain forces contributed to maintaining unity: the secular powers, for instance, had much at stake in preserving harmony within the *saṃgha*, especially if they could maintain some kind of control over it. Thus, as the legends have it, each of the three major councils were sponsored by a king: Ajātaśatru, Kālāśoka, and Aśoka, respectively. Within the *saṃgha*, there must have been interests groups, mainly conservative, seeking to preserve the religion by avoiding change—two goals that are not always conciliable. There must have been, therefore, a strong pressure to recover the ideal unity of the early community (as we have seen, probably a fantasy), by legislation. These efforts took two forms: in the first place, there was the drive to establish a common monastic code, in the second place, there was the drive to fix a canon of scriptures. Both tendencies probably became stronger toward the beginning of the common era, when a number of political factors recreated a sense of urgency and a yearning for harmony and peace similar

to the one that had given rise to the religion. [*See* Councils, *article on* Buddhist Councils.]

The most important result of the new quest for harmony was the compilation and redaction of scriptures. Transmitted and edited through the oral tradition, the words of the Buddha and his immediate disciples had suffered many transformations before they came to be compiled, to say nothing of their state when they were eventually written down. We have no way of determining which, if any, of the words contained in the Buddhist scriptures are the words of the founder: in fact we have no hard evidence for the language used by the Buddha in his ministry. Scholars have suggested an early form of Māgadhī, since this was probably the lingua franca of the kingdom of Magadha, but this is at best an educated guess. If it is correct, then none of the words of the Buddha have come to us in the original language.

Although the Theravādin tradition claims that the language of its canon, Pali, is the language spoken by the Buddha, Western scholars disagree. Evidently, the Pali canon, like other Buddhist scriptures, is the creation, or at least the compilation and composition, of another age and a different linguistic milieu. As they are preserved today, the Buddhist scriptures must be a collective creation, the fruit of the effort of several generations of memorizers, redactors, and compilers. Some of the earliest Buddhist scriptures may have been translations from logia or sayings of the Buddha that were transmitted for some time in his own language. But even if this is the case, the extant versions represent at the very least redactions and reworkings, if not creations, of a later age.

Since the *saṃgha* was from the beginning a decentralized church, one can presume that the word of the Buddha took many forms. Adding to this the problem of geographical isolation and linguistic diversity, one would expect that the oral transmission would have produced a variegated textual tradition. Perhaps it is this expectation of total chaos that makes it all the more surprising that there is agreement on so many points in the scriptures preserved to this day. This is especially true of the scriptures of the Theravāda school (preserved in Pali), and fragments of the canon of the Sarvāstivāda school (in the original Sanskrit or in Chinese translation). Some scholars have been led to believe, therefore, that these two traditions represent the earliest stratum of the transmission, preserving a complex of pericopes and logia that must go back to a stage when the community was not divided: that is, before the split of the Second Council. Most scholars tend to accept this view; a significant minority, however, sees the uniformity of the texts as reflecting a late, not an early stage, in the redaction of the canon.

The early canon, transmitted orally, must have had only two major sections, Dharma and Vinaya. The first of these contained the discourses of the Buddha and his immediate disciples. The Vinaya contained the monastic rules. Most Western scholars agree that a third section, Abhidharma, found in all of the surviving canons, could not have been included in early definitions of canonicity, though eventually most schools would incorporate it in their canon with varying degrees of authority.

Each early school possessed its own set of scriptural "collections" (called metaphorically "baskets," *piṭaka*). Although eventually the preferred organization seems to have been a tripartite collection of "Three Baskets," the Tripiṭaka, divided into monastic rules, sermons, and scholastic treatises (Vinaya, Sūtra, Abhidharma), some schools adopted different orderings. Among the collections that are now lost there were fourfold and fivefold subdivisions of the scriptures. Of the main surviving

scriptural collections, only one is strictly speaking a Tripiṭaka, the Pali corpus of the Theravādins. (The much later Chinese and Tibetan collections have much more complex subdivisions and can be called Tripiṭakas only metaphorically.) [*See* Buddhist Literature, *article on* Canonization.]

The Age of Foreign Invasions

The decline and fall of the Maurya dynasty (324–187) brought an end to an age of assured support for Buddhist monastic institutions. Political circumstances unfavorable to Buddhism began with persecution under Puṣyamitra Śuṅga (r. about 187–151). The Śuṅga dynasty would see the construction of some of the most important Buddhist sites of India: Bhārhut, Sāñcī, and Amarāvatī. But it also foreshadowed the beginning of Hindu dominance. The rising cult of Viṣṇu seemed better equipped to assimilate the religion of the people and win the support of the ruling classes. Although Buddhism served better as a universal religion that could unite Indians and foreign invaders, the latter did not always choose to become Buddhists. A series of non-Indian rulers—Greek, Parthian, Scythian (Saka), Kushan—would hesitate in their religious allegiances.

Among the Greek kings, the Buddhist tradition claims Menander (Milinda, c. 150 BCE) as one of its converts. The Scythian tribe of the Sakas, who invaded Bactriana around 130 BCE, roughly contemporaneous with the Yüeh-chih conquest of the Tokharians, would become stable supporters of Buddhism in the subcontinent. [*See* Inner Asian Religions.] Their rivals in South India, the Tamil dynasty of the Śātavāhana (220 BCE–236 CE), sponsored in Andhra the construction of major centers of worship at Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa. The Yüeh-chih (Kushans) also supported Buddhism, though perhaps less consistently. The most famous of their rulers, Kaṇiṣka, is represented by the literature as a pious patron of Buddhism (his dates are uncertain; proposed accession in 78 or 125 CE). During the Kushan period (c. 50–320 CE) the great schools of Gandhāra and Mathurā revolutionized Indian, especially Buddhist, art. Both the northern styles of Gandhāra and Mathurā and the southern school of Andhra combined iconic and ani-conic symbolization of the Buddha: the first Buddha images appeared around the third century of the common era, apparently independently and simultaneously in all three schools.

THE APPEARANCE OF SCHOOLS AND DENOMINATIONS

Any understanding of the history of composition of the canons, or of their significance in the history of the religion, is dependent on our knowledge of the geographic distribution, history, and doctrine of the various sects. Unfortunately, our knowledge in this regard is also very limited. [*See* Buddhism, Schools of, *overview article*.]

Developments in Doctrine and in Scholastic Speculation. As the original community of wandering mendicants settled in monasteries, a new type of religion arose, concerned with the preservation of a tradition and the justification of its institutions. Although the "forest dweller" continued as an ideal and a practice—some were still dedicated primarily to a life of solitude and meditation—the dominant figure became that of the monk-scholar. This new type of religious specialist pur-

sued the study of the early tradition and moved its doctrinal systems in new directions. On the one hand, the old doctrines were classified, defined, and expanded. On the other hand, there was a growing awareness of the gap that separated the new developments from the transmitted creeds and codes. A set of basic or "original" teachings had to be defined, and the practice of exegesis had to be formalized. In fact, the fluidity and uncertainty of the earlier scriptural tradition may be one of the causes for the development of Buddhist scholasticism. By the time the canons were closed the degree of diversity and conflict among the schools was such, and the tradition was overall so fluid, that it was difficult to establish orthodoxy even when there was agreement on the basic content of the canons. In response to these problems Buddhists soon developed complicated scholastic studies.

At least some of the techniques and problems of this early scholasticism must go back to the early redactions of the Sūtra section of the canon, if not to a precanonical stage. The genre of the *mātṛkā*, or doctrinal "matrices," is not an uncommon form of Sūtra literature. It is suggested in the redaction of certain sections of the Pali and Sarvāstivādin canons, is found in early Chinese translations (e.g., the *Dharmaśarīraka Sūtra* and the *Daśottara Sūtra*), and continues in Mahāyāna Sūtra literature. It is a literary form tht probably represents not only an exegetic device but an early technique of doctrinal redaction—a hermeneutic that also served as the basis for the redaction of earlier strata of the oral transmission.

The Early Sects. Given the geographical and linguistic diversity of India and the lack of a central authority in the Buddhist community one can safely speculate that Buddhist sects arose early in the history of the religion. Tradition speaks of a first, but major, schism occurring at (or shortly after) the Second Council in Vaiśālī, one hundred years after the death of the founder. Whether the details are true or not, it is suggestive that this first split was between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṃghikas, the prototypes of the two major divisions of Buddhism: "Hīnayāna" and Mahāyāna.

After this schism new subdivisions arose, reaching by the beginning of the common era a total of approximately thirty different denominations or schools and subschools. Tradition refers to this state of sectarian division as the period of the "Eighteen Schools," since some of the early sources count eighteen groups. It is not clear when these arose. *Faut de mieux*, most Western scholars go along with classical Indian sources albeit with a mild skepticism, and try to sort out a consistent narrative from contradictory sources. Thus, we can only say that if we are to believe the Pali tradition, the Eighteen Schools must have been in existence already in the third century BCE, when a legendary Moggaliputtatissa compiled the *Kathāvatthu*. But such an early dating raises many problems. [*See the biography of Moggaliputtatissa.*]

In the same vein, we tend to accept the account of the Second Council that sees it as the beginning of a major split. In this version the main points of contention were monastic issues—the exact content and interpretation of the code. But doctrinal, ritual, and scholastic issues must have played a major role in the formation of separate schools. Many of the main points of controversy, for instance, centered on the question of the nature of the state of liberation and the status of the liberated person. Is the liberated human *(arhat)* free from all moral and karmic taint? Is the state of liberation *(nirvāṇa)* a condition of being or nonbeing? Can there be at the same time more than one fully awakened person *(samyaksaṃbuddha)* in one world system? Are persons already on their way to full awakening, the *bodhisattvas* or

future Buddhas, deserving of worship? Do they have the ability to descend to the hells to help other sentient beings?

Among these doctrinal disputes one emerges as emblematic of the most important fissure in the Buddhist community. This was the polemic surrounding the exalted state of the *arhat* (Pali, *arahant*). Most of the Buddhist schools believed that only a few human beings could aspire to become fully awakened beings *(samyaksaṃbuddha)*, others had to content themselves with the hope of becoming free from the burden of past *karman* and attaining liberation in *nirvāṇa*, without the extraordinary wisdom and virtue of Buddhahood. But the attainment of liberation was in itself a great achievement, and a person who was assured of an end to rebirth at the end of the present life was considered the most saintly, deserving of the highest respect, a "worthy" *(arhat)*. Some of the schools even attributed to the *arhat* omniscience and total freedom from moral taint. Objections were raised against those who believed in the faultless wisdom of the *arhat*, including obvious limitations in their knowledge of everyday, worldly affairs. Some of these objections were formalized in the "Five Points" of Mahādeva, after its purported proponent. These criticisms can be interpreted either as a challenge to the belief in the superhuman perfection of the *arhat* or as a plea for the acceptance of their humanity. Traditionally, Western scholars have opted for the first of these interpretations. [*See* Arhat.]

The controversies among the Eighteen Schools identified each group doctrinally, but it seems unlikely that in the early stages these differences lead to major rifts in the community, with the exception of the schism between the two trunk schools of the Sthavira and the Mahāsāṃghika; and even then, there is evidence that monks of both schools often lived together in a single monastic community. Among the doctrinal differences, however, we can find the seeds of future dissension, especially in the controversies relating to ritual. The Mahīśāsakas, for instance, claimed that there is more merit in worshiping and making offerings to the *saṃgha* than in worshiping a stupa, as the latter merely contains the remains of a member of the *saṃgha* who is no more. The Dharmaguptakas replied that there is more merit in worshiping a stupa, because the Buddha's path and his present state (in *nirvāṇa*) are far superior to that of any living monk. Here we have a fundamental difference with both social and religious consequences, for the choice is between two types of communal hierarchies as well as between two types of spiritual orders. [*For further discussion of sectarian splits in early Buddhism, see* Buddhism, Schools of, *article on* Hīnayāna Buddhism. *For specific* nikāyas, *see* Sarvāstivāda; Sautrāntika; Mahāsāṃghika; *and* Theravāda.]

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SCRIPTURAL TRADITION

Apart from the Theravāda recension of the Pali canon and some fragments of the Sarvāstivādin Sanskrit canon nothing survives of what must have been a vast and diverse body of literature. For most of the collections we only have the memory preserved in inscriptions referring to *piṭaka*s and *nikāya*s and an occasional reference in the extant literature.

According to the Pali tradition of Sri Lanka, the three parts of the Tripiṭaka were compiled in the language of the Buddha at the First Council. The Second Council introduced minor revisions in the Vinaya, and the Third Council added Moggaliputtatissa's *Kathāvatthu*. A few years later the canon resulting from this council, and a

number of extracanonical commentaries, were transmitted to Sri Lanka by Mahinda. The texts were transmitted orally *(mukhapāṭhena)* for the next two centuries, but after difficult years of civil war and famine, King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī of Sri Lanka ordered the texts written down. This task was carried out between 35 and 32 BCE. In this way, it is said, the canon was preserved in the original language. Although the commentaries were by that time extant only in Sinhala, they continued to be transmitted in written form until they were retranslated into Pali in the fifth century CE.

Modern scholarship, however, questions the accuracy of several points in this account. Pali appears to be a literary language originating in Avantī, western India; it seems unlikely that it could be the vernacular of a man who had lived in eastern India all his life or, for that matter, the lingua franca of the early Magadhan kingdom. The Pali texts as they are preserved today show clear signs of the work of editors and redactors. Although much in them still has the ring of oral transmission, it is a formalized or ritualized oral tradition, far from the spontaneous preaching of a living teacher. Different strata of language, history, and doctrine can be recognized easily in these texts. There is abundant evidence that already at the stage of oral transmission the tradition was fragmented, different schools of "reciters" *(bhāṇaka)* preserving not only different corpuses (the eventual main categories of the canons) but also different recensions of the same corpus of literature. Finally, we have no way of knowing if the canon written down at the time of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī was the Tripiṭaka as we know it today. There is evidence to the contrary, for we are told that the great South Indian scholar Buddhaghosa revised the canon in the fifth century when he also edited the commentaries preserved in Sinhala and translated them into Pali, which suggests that Pali literature in general had gone through a period of deterioration before his time.

Most scholars, however, accept the tradition that would have the Pali canon belong to a date earlier than the fifth century; even the commentaries must represent an earlier stratum. However late may be its final recension, the Pali canon preserves much from earlier stages in the development of the religion.

Of the Sanskrit canon of the Sarvāstivāda school we only possess a few isolated texts and fragments in the original, mostly from Central Asia. However, extensive sections survive in Chinese translation. This canon is supposed to have been written down at a "Fourth Council" held in Jālandhara, Kashmir, about 100 CE, close to the time when the same school systematized its Abhidharma in a voluminous commentary called the *Mahāvibhāṣa*. If this legend is true, two details are of historical interest. We must note first the proximity in time of this compilation to the date of the writing down of the Pali canon. This would set the parameters for the closing of the "Hīnayāna" canons between the first century BCE and the first century CE. Second, the close connection between the closing of a canon and the final formulation of a scholastic system confirms the similar socioreligious function of both activities: the establishing of orthodoxy.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PRACTICE

The cult at this stage was still dominated by the practice of pilgrimage and by the cult of the *caitya*, as described above. However, we can imagine an intensification of the devotional aspect of ritual and a greater degree of systematization as folk belief and "high tradition" continued to interact. Sectarian differences probably began to affect the nature of the liturgies, as a body of liturgical texts became part of

the common or the specific property of different groups of Buddhists. Among the earliest liturgical texts were the hymns in praise of the Buddha, especially the ones singing the many epithets of the Awakened One. Their use probably goes back to the earliest stages in the history of monastic ritual and may be closely connected with the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, or meditation on the attributes of the Buddha. [*See also* Nien-fo.]

Pilgrimage Sites and Stupas. Many Buddhist practices and institutions remain apparently stable in the subcontinent until the beginnings of the common era. The monuments of Bhārhut and Sāñcī, for example, where we find the earliest examples of aniconic symbolism, represent a conservative Buddhism. Other signs of conservatism, however, confirm a continuous nonliterary cult. The oldest section at Sāñcī, the east gateway, dating from perhaps 90 to 80 BCE, preserves, next to the illustrated Jātakas, the woman and tree motifs, *yakṣa*s and *yakṣī*s (with the implied popular cult of male and female fertility deities), and the aniconic representations of the wheel, the footprint, the throne, and the tree.

The most advanced or innovative trait is the increasing iconographic importance of the previous lives of the Buddha, represented in the reliefs of Jātakas. These indicate a developed legend of the Buddha's past lives, a feature of the period that suggests the importance of past lives in the cult and in the future development of Mahāyāna. The most important cultic development of the pre-Mahāyāna period, however, was the shift from the commemorative ritual associated with the stupa and the aniconic symbol to the ritual of worship and devotion associated with the Buddha image.

After the beginning of the Christian era major developments in practice reflect outside influence as well as new internal developments. This is the time when the sects were beginning to commit to writing their sacred literature, but it is also the time of foreign invasions. These may have played a major role in the development of the Buddha image. Modern scholarship has debated the place of origin of this important cultic element and the causal factors that brought it about. Some, following Foucher, proposed a northwestern origin, and saw the Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s created under the influence of Greco-Roman art in Gandhāra (Kushan period) as the first images. Others, following Coomaraswamy, believed the first images were created in Andhra, as part of the natural development of a South Indian cult of the *yakṣa*s, and in the north central region of Mathurā. Be that as it may, the Buddha image dominates Buddhist iconography after the second century CE; stupas and Jātaka representations remain but play a secondary role.

There seems to be, especially in Mathurā art, an association between the Buddha image and solar symbolism, which suggests Central Asian or Iranian influences on Buddhism and may be closely related to the development of the new doctrinal conceptions, such as those that regarded the Buddha as "universal monarch" *(cakravartin)* and lord of the universe, and Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s as radiant beings. [*See* Cakravartin.] The abundance of *bodhisattva* images in Gandhāra, moreover, suggests the beginning of a gradual shift towards a conception of the ideal being as layman, or at least a shift in the way the *bodhisattva* was conceived (from merely an instance of a Buddha's past to the central paradigm of Buddhahood). [*See* Iconography, *article on* Buddhist Iconography.]

As a balance to the growing importance of the past lives of the Buddha, the pro-

cess of redacting the scriptures also brought about the necessity of formulating a biography of the Buddha. The first "biographies" appear at the beginning of the common era, perhaps as late as the second century CE. Partial biographies appear in the literature of the Sarvāstivādins *(Lalitavistara)* and Lokottaravādins *(Mahāvastu)*. The first complete biography is a cultured poem in the *kāvya* style, the *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa.

This is also a time when noncanonical literature flourished. Poets wrote Buddhist dramas and poetical recastings of canonical parables and legends. Aśvaghoṣa, for instance, wrote a drama on the life of Śāriputra, and a poem narrating the conversion of Nanda *(Saundarānanda)*. Developments in the literary tradition perhaps should be seen as reflecting other strata of the living tradition. Thus, the vitality of the Jātaka tradition is seen in its appearance as a literary genre in the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra (fl. c. 150 CE). This classical poet is sometimes identified with Mātṛceṭa, who in his works (e.g., *Śatapañcaśatka*) gives us a highly cultured reflection of the hymns of praise (*stotras*) that must have been a regular part of the Buddhist cult of the day. In these hymns we already see the apotheosis of the Buddha figure, side by side with the newly redefined *bodhisattva* ideal.

Mystics and Intellectuals. The development of devotional Buddhism did not obscure the ascetic and contemplative dimensions of the religion. The system of meditation contained in the Nikāyas probably achieved its final form during this period. Diverse techniques for the development of enstasy and insight were conflated first in the canonical Sūtra literature, then in the Abhidharmic texts.

Side by side with the development of popular and monastic cults a new elite of religious specialists appeared, seeking to follow the Buddha's path through systematic study into the scriptures. They belonged to the tradition of the *mātṛkās* and composed treatises purporting to treat the "higher" Dharma *(abhidharma)*—or, what is perhaps the more correct etymology, treatises "on the Dharma." Although the analysis of meditational categories was an important aspect of these traditions, the scholar-monks were not always dedicated meditators. In fact, many of them must have made scholarship the prime objective of their religious life, leaving the practice of meditation to the forest monks. For the scholars, the goal was to account for the whole of Buddhism, in particular, the plethora of ancient doctrines and practices found in the canon. Above all, they sought to define and explain the ultimately real components of reality, the *dharmas*, into which one could analyze or explode the false conception of the self.

This critique was not without soteriological implications. The goal was conceived at times as ineffable, beyond the ken of human conception. Thus canonical literature describes the liberated person, the *arhat*, as follows:

> When bright sparks fly
> as the smith beats red-hot iron,
> and fade away,
> one cannot tell where they have gone.
>
> In the same way, there is no way of knowing
> the final destination of those who are truly free,
> who have crossed beyond the flood, bondage, and desire,
> obtaining unshakable bliss. (*Udāna*, p. 93)

But side by side with the tradition of ineffability, there was a need to define at the very least the process of liberation. For the gradual realization of selflessness was understood as personal growth. Accordingly, a set of standard definitions of liberation was accompanied by accepted descriptions of the stages on the path to liberation, or of degrees of spiritual achievement. The canonical collections already list, for instance, four types of saints *(āryapudgala)*: the one who will be reborn no more *(arhat)*; the one who will not come back to this world, the "non-returner" *(anāgamin)*; the one who will return only once more *(sakṛdāgamin)*; and the one who has entered the path to sainthood, the "stream-enterer" *(srotāpanna)*.

Canonical notions of levels or hierarchies in the path to liberation became the focus of much scholastic speculation—in fact, the presence of these categories in the canons may be a sign of scholastic influence on the redaction of the scriptures. The construction of complex systems of soteriology, conceived as maps or detailed descriptions of the path, that integrated the description and analysis of ethical and contemplative practices with philosophical argumentation, characterized the Abhidharmic schools. This activity contributed to the definition of the doctrinal parameters of the sects; but it also set the tone for much of future Buddhist dogmatics. The concerns of the Abhidharmists, ranging from the analysis of enstasy and the contemplative stages to the rational critique of philosophical views of reality, had a number of significant doctrinal consequences: (1) scholars began devising "maps of the path," or theoretical blueprints of the stages from the condition of a common human being *(pṛthag-jana)* to the exalted state of a fully awakened being *(samyaksaṃbuddha)*; (2) Buddhist scholars engaged other Indian intellectuals in the discussion of broad philosophical issues; (3) various orthodox apologetics were developed, with the consequent freezing of a technical terminology common to most Buddhists; (4) the rigidity of their systems set the stage for a reaction that would lead to the creation of new forms of Buddhism.

The Sects and the Appearance of Mahāyāna

Most of the developments mentioned above overlap with the growth of a new spirit that changed the religion and eventually created a distinct form of Buddhist belief and practice. The new movement referred to itself as the "Great Vehicle" (Mahāyāna) to distinguish itself from other styles of Buddhism that the followers of the movement considered forms of a "Lesser Vehicle" (Hīnayāna). [*See* Buddhism, Schools of, *article on* Mahāyāna Buddhism.]

THE EARLY SCHOOLS OUTSIDE INDIA

If we accept the general custom of using the reign of Aśoka as the landmark for the beginning of the missionary spread of Buddhism, we may say that Buddhism reached the frontiers of India by the middle of the second century BCE. By the beginning of the common era it had spread beyond. In the early centuries of the era Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna spread in every direction; eventually certain areas would become predominantly Mahāyāna, others, predominantly Hīnayāna. [*See* Missions, *article on* Buddhist Missions, *and the biography of Aśoka*.]

Mahāyāna came to dominate in East and Central Asia—with the exception of Turkistan, where Sarvāstivādin monasteries flourished until the Muslim invasion and con-

version of the region. Hīnayāna was slower to spread, and in some foreign lands had to displace Mahāyāna. It lives on in a school that refers to itself as the Theravāda, a Sinhala derivative of the Sthavira school. It spread throughout Southeast Asia where it continues to this day.

THE GREAT VEHICLE

The encounter of Buddhism with extra-Indian ethnic groups and the increasing influence of the laity gradually transformed the monastic child of shramanic Buddhism into a universal religion. This occurred in two ways. On the one hand, monasticism adapted to the changing circumstances, strengthened its ties to the laity and secular authorities, established a satisfactory mode of coexistence with nonliterary, regional forms of worship. Both Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna schools participated in this aspect of the process of adaptation. But Buddhism also redefined its goals and renovated its symbols to create a new synthesis that in some ways may be considered a new religion. The new style, the Mahāyāna, claimed to be a path for the many, the vehicle for the salvation of all sentient beings (hence its name, "The Great Vehicle"). Its distinctive features are: a tilt toward world affirmation, a laicized conception of the human ideal, a new ritual of devotion, and new definitions of the metaphysical and contemplative ideals.

The Origins of Mahāyāna. The followers of Mahāyāna claim the highest antiquity for its teachings. Their own myths of origin, however, belie this claim. Mahāyāna recognizes the fact that its teachings were not known in the early days of Buddhism by asserting that Śākyamuni revealed the Mahāyāna only to select *bodhisattvas* or heavenly beings who kept the texts hidden for centuries. One legend recounts that the philosopher Nāgārjuna had to descend to the underworld to obtain the Mahāyāna texts known as the "Perfection of Wisdom" (Prajñāpāramitā).

Western scholars are divided on the question of the dates and location of the origins of Mahāyāna. Some favor an early (beginning of the common era) origin among Mahāsāṃghika communities in the southeastern region of Andhra. Others propose a northwestern origin, among the Sarvāstivādins, close to the second and third centuries CE. It may be, however, that Mahāyāna arose by a gradual and complex process involving more than one region of India. It is clear that Mahāyāna was partly a reform movement, partly the natural development of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism; still in another sense, it was the result of new social forces shaping the Indian subcontinent.

The theory of a southern origin assumes that the Mahāsāṃghika monastic centers of Andhra continued to develop some of the more radical ideals of the school, until some of these communities saw themselves as a movement completely distinct from other, so-called Hīnayāna schools. This theory also recognizes external influences: the Iranian invaders as well as the non-Aryan substratum of southern India, the first affecting the mythology of the celestial *bodhisattvas*, the second incorporating non-Aryan concepts of the role of women into the mainstream of Buddhist religious ideals.

For the sake of clarity one could distinguish two types of causes in the development of Mahāyāna: social or external, and doctrinal or internal. Among the first one must include the Central Asian and Iranian influences mentioned above, the growing

importance of the role of women and the laity, especially as this affected the development of the cultus, and the impact of the pilgrimage cycles. The foreign element is supposed to have introduced elements of light symbolism and solar cults, as well as a less ascetic bent.

Doctrinal factors were primarily the development of the myth of the former lives of Śākyamuni and the cult of former Buddhas, both of which contributed to a critique of the *arhat* ideal. The mythology of the Buddha's former lives as a *bodhisattva* led to the exaltation of the *bodhisattva* ideal over that of the *arhat*. The vows of the *bodhisattva* began to take the central role, especially as they were seen as an integral part of a developing liturgy at the center of which the dedication of merit was transformed as part of the exalted *bodhisattva* ideal.

It seems likely, furthermore, that visionaries and inspired believers had continued to compose *sūtras*. Some of these, through a gradual process we can no longer retrace, began to move away from the general direction of the older scholastic traditions and canonical redactors. Thus it happened that approximately at the time when the older schools were closing their canons, the Mahāyāna was composing a set of texts that would place it in a position of disagreement with, if not frank opposition to, the older schools. At the same time, the High Tradition began to accept Mahāyāna and therefore argue for its superiority; thus, a Mahāyāna *śāstra* tradition began to develop almost at the same time as the great Sarvāstivādin synthesis was completed.

In the West, the gap between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna is sometimes exaggerated. It is customary to envision Mahāyāna as a revolutionary movement through which the aspirations of a restless laity managed to overcome an oppressive, conservative monastic establishment. Recent research suggests that the opposition between the laity and the religious specialists was not as sharp as had hitherto been proposed. Furthermore, it has become apparent that the monastic establishment continued to be a powerful force in Indian Mahāyāna. It seems more likely that Mahāyāna arose gradually and in different forms in various points of the subcontinent. A single name and a more or less unified ideology may have arisen after certain common aspirations were recognized. Be that as it may, it seems evident that the immediate causes for the arising of this new form of Buddhism were the appearance of new cultic forms and widespread dissatisfaction with the scholastic tradition.

Merit, Bodhisattvas, and the Pure Land. Inscriptional evidence shows that the doctrine of merit transference had an important role in the cultus even before the appearance of Mahāyāna. Although all Buddhists believe that virtuous thoughts and actions generate merit, which leads to a good rebirth, it appears that early Buddhists believed that individuals could generate merit only for themselves, and that merit could only lead to a better rebirth, not to liberation from the cycle of rebirth. By the beginning of the common era, however, some Buddhists had adopted a different conception of merit. They believed that merit could be shared or transferred, and that it was a factor in the attainment of liberation—so much so that they were offering their own merit for the salvation of their dead relatives.

Dedication of merit appears as one of the pivotal doctrines of the new Buddhism. Evidently, it served a social function: it made participation in Buddhist ritual a social encounter rather than a private experience. It also contributed to the development of a Buddhist high liturgy, an important factor in the survival of Buddhism and its

assimilation of foreign elements, both in and outside India. [*See* Merit, *article on* Buddhist Concepts.]

This practice and belief interacted with the cult of former Buddhas and the mythology of the former lives to create a Buddhist system of beliefs in which the primary goal was to imitate the virtue of Śākyamuni's former lives, when he was a *bodhisattva* dedicated to the liberation of others rather than himself. To achieve this goal the believer sought to imitate Śākyamuni not as he appeared in his last life or after his enlightenment, when he sought and attained *nirvāṇa,* but by adopting a vow similar to Śākyamuni's former vow to seek awakening *(bodhi)* for the sake of all sentient beings. On the one hand, this shift put the emphasis on insight into the world, rather than escape from it. On the other hand, it also created a new form of ideal being and object of worship, the *bodhisattva.* [*See* Bodhisattva Path.]

Contemporary developments in Hindu devotionalism *(bhakti)* probably played an important role in the development of Buddhist liturgies of worship *(pūjā),* but it would be a mistake to assume that the beginnings of Mahāyāna faith and ritual can be explained adequately by attributing them merely to external theistic influences. [*See* Bhakti.] For instance, the growth of a faith in rebirth in "purified Buddha fields," realms of the cosmos in which the merit and power of Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s create an environment where birth without suffering is possible, can be seen as primarily a Buddhist development. The new faith, generalized in India through the concept of the "Land of Bliss" (the "Pure Land" of East Asian Buddhism), hinged on faith in the vows of former *bodhisattva*s who chose to transfer or dedicate their merit to the purification of a special "field" or "realm." The influence of Iranian religious conceptions seems likely, however, and one may have to seek some of the roots of this belief among Central Asian converts. [*See* Pure and Impure Lands *and* Amitābha.]

Formation of a New Scriptural Tradition. With the new cult and the new ideology came a new body of scriptures. Mahāyāna *sūtra*s began to be composed probably around the beginning of the Christian era, and continued to be composed and redacted until at least the fifth or sixth century CE. Unlike the canons of the earlier schools, the Mahāyāna scriptures do not seem to have been collected into formal, closed canons in the land of their origin—even the collections edited in China and Tibet were never closed canons.

In its inception Mahāyāna literature is indistinguishable from the literature of some of the earlier schools. The *Prajñāpāramitā* text attributed to the Pūrvaśailas is probably an earlier version of one of the Mahāyāna texts of the same title; the *Ratnakūṭa* probably began as part of a Mahāsāṃghika canon; and the now lost *Dhāraṇī Piṭaka* of the Dharmaguptaka school probably contained prototypes of the *dhāraṇī-sūtra*s of the Mahāyāna tradition. The Mahāyānist monks never gave up the pre-Mahāyāna Vinaya. Many followed the Dharmaguptaka version, some the Mahāsāṃghika. Even the Vinaya of a school that fell squarely into the Hīnayāna camp, the Sarvāstivāda, was used as the basis for Mahāyāna monastic rule.

Still, the focus of much Mahāyāna rhetoric, especially in the earlier strata of the literature, is the critique of non-Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism, especially the ideal of the *arhat.* This is one of the leading themes of a work now believed to represent an early stage in the development of Mahāyāna, the *Raṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā,* a text of the *Ratnakūṭa* class. In this text, the monastic life is still exalted above all other

forms of spiritual life, but the *bodhisattva* vows are presented for the first time as superior to the mere monastic vows.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to establish with any degree of certainty the early history of Mahāyāna literature. It seems, however, that the earliest extant Mahāyāna *sūtra* is the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā,* or its verse rendering, the *Ratnaguṇa-saṃcayagāthā.* Both reflect a polemic within Buddhism, centering on a critique of the "low aspirations" of those Buddhists who chose not to take the vows of the *bodhisattva*s. The *Ratnaguṇa* defines the virtues of the *bodhisattva,* emphasizing the transcendental insight or "perfect wisdom" *(prajñāpāramitā)* that frees him from all forms of attachment and preconceived notions—including notions of purity and world renunciation. An important aspect or complement of this wisdom is skill in means *(upāya-kauśalya)*—defined here as the capacity to adapt thought, speech, and action to circumstances and to the ultimate purpose of Buddhist practice, freedom from attachment. This virtue allows the *bodhisattva* to remain in the world while being perfectly free from the world.

The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* treats these same concepts, but also expands the concept of merit in at least two directions: (1) dedication of merit to awakening means here seeing through the illusion of merit as well as applying merit to the path of liberation; and (2) dedication of merit is an act of devotion to insight (wisdom, *prajñā*). As the goal and ground of all perfections *(pāramitā),* Perfection of Wisdom is personified as the Mother of All Buddhas. She gives birth to the mind of awakening, but she is present in concrete form in the Sacred Book itself. Thus, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* is at the same time the medium expressing a sophisticated doctrine of salvation by insight and skill in means, the rationalization of a ritual system, and the object of worship. [*See* Pāramitās; Prajñā; *and* Upāya.]

Another early Mahāyāna text, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus Sutra), also attacks the *arhat* ideal. This *sūtra* is considered the paradigmatic text on the developed Buddhology of the Mahāyāna: the Buddha is presented as a supernatural being, eternal, unchanging; at the same time he is Buddha by virtue of the fact that he has become free from all conceptions of being and nonbeing. The Buddha never *attained* awakening or *nirvāṇa*—because he *is* Buddhahood, and has been in awakening and *nirvāṇa* since eternity, but also because there is no Buddhahood or *nirvāṇa* to be attained.

The widespread, but clearly not exclusively popular, belief in the Land of Bliss (Sukhāvatī) finds expression in two texts of the latter part of the early period (c. first to second century CE). The two *Sukhāvatī sūtra*s express a faith in the saving grace of the *bodhisattva* Dharmākara, who under a former Buddha made the vow to purify his own Buddha field. The vows of this *bodhisattva* guarantee rebirth in his Land of Bliss to all those who think on him with faith. Rebirth in his land, furthermore, guarantees eventual enlightenment and liberation. The Indian history of these two texts, however, remains for the most part obscure.

The attitude of early Mahāyāna *sūtra*s to laity and to women is relatively inconsistent. Thus, the *Ugradattaparipṛcchā* and the *Upāsakaśīla,* while pretending to preach a lay morality, use monastic models for the householder's life. But compared to the earlier tradition, the Mahāyāna represents a significant move in the direction of a religion that is less ascetic and monastic in tone and intent. Some Mahāyāna *sūtra*s of the early period place laypersons in a central role. The main character in the *Gaṇḍavyūha,* for instance, is a young lay pilgrim who visits a number of *bodhi-*

sattvas in search of the teaching. Among his teachers we find laymen and laywomen, as well as female night spirits and celestial *bodhisattvas*. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* is more down-to-earth in its exaltation of the lay ideal. It represents the demythologizing tendencies of Mahāyāna, which are often carried out to the extreme of affirming that the metaphoric meaning of one doctrine is exactly its opposite.

The Development of Mahāyāna

Although Buddhism flourished during the classical age of the Guptas, the cultural splendor in which it grew was also the harbinger of Hindu dominance. Sanskrit returned as the lingua franca of the subcontinent, and Hindu devotionalism began to displace the ideals of the Indic period. Mahāyāna must have been a divided movement even in its inception. Some of the divisions found in the Hīnayāna or pre-Mahāyāna schools from which Mahāyāna originated must have carried through into Mahāyāna itself. Unfortunately, we know much less of the early sectarian divisions in the movement than we know of the Eighteen Schools. It is clear, for instance, that the conception of the *bodhisattva* found among the Mahāsāṃghikas is different from that of the Sarvāstivādins. It appears also that the Prajñaptivādins conceived of the unconditioned *dharmas* in a manner different from other early schools. However, though we may speculate that some of these differences influenced the development of Mahāyāna, we have no solid evidence.

As pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism had developed a scholastic system to bolster its ideological position, Mahāyāna developed special forms of scholarly investigation. A new synthesis, in many ways far removed from the visionary faith underlying the religious aspects of Mahāyāna, grew in the established monasteries partly as a critique of earlier scholastic formulations, partly due to the need to explain and justify the new faith. Through this intellectual function the monastery reasserted its institutional position. Both monk and layman participated in giving birth to Mahāyāna and maintaining its social and liturgical life, but the intellectual leadership remained monastic and conservative. Therefore, Mahāyāna reform brought with it an element of continuity—monastic institutions and codes—that could be at the same time a cause for fossilization and stagnation. The monasteries would eventually grow to the point where they became a burden on society, at the same time that, as institutions of conservatism, they failed to adapt to a changing society.

Still, from the beginning of the Gupta dynasty to the earlier part of the Pāla dynasty the monasteries were centers of intellectual creativity. They continued to be supported under the Guptas, especially Kumāra Gupta I (414–455), who endowed a major monastery in a site in Bihar originally consecrated to Śāriputra. This monastic establishment, called Nālandā after the name of a local genie, probably had been active as a center of learning for several decades before Kumāra Gupta decided to give it special recognition. It would become the leading institution of higher learning in the Buddhist world for almost a thousand years. Together with the university of Valabhī in western India, Nālandā represents the scholastic side of Mahāyāna, which coexisted with a nonintellectual (not necessarily "popular") dimension, the outlines of which appear through archaeological remains, certain aspects of the Sūtra literature, and the accounts of Chinese pilgrims.

Some texts suggest a conflict between forest and city dwellers that may in fact reflect the expected tension between the ascetic and the intellectual, or the meditator and the religious politician. But, lest this simple schema obliterate important aspects of Buddhist religious life, one must note that there is plentiful evidence of intense and constant interaction between the philosopher, the meditator, and the devotee—often all three functions coinciding in one person. Furthermore, the writings of great philosophical minds like Asaṅga, Śāntideva, and Āryadeva suggest an active involvement of the monk-*bodhisattva* in the social life of the community. The nonintellectual dimensions of the religion, therefore, must be seen as one aspect of a dialectic that resolved itself in synthesis as much as rivalry, tension, or dissonance.

Mahāyāna faith and devotion, moreover, was in itself a complex phenomenon, incorporating a liturgy of the High Tradition (e.g., the *Hymn to the Three Bodies of the Buddha,* attributed to Aśvaghoṣa) with elements of the nonliterary and non-Buddhist religion (e.g., pilgrimage cycles and the cult of local spirits, respectively), as well as generalized beliefs such as the dedication of merit and the hope of rebirth in a purified Buddha Land.

DEVELOPMENTS IN DOCTRINE

In explaining the appearance of Mahāyāna, two extremes should be avoided carefully. On the one hand, one can exaggerate the points of continuity that link Mahāyāna with pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism; on the other, one can make a distinction so sharp that Mahāyāna appears as a radical break with the past, rather than a gradual process of growth. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes: although Mahāyāna can be understood as a logical expansion of earlier Buddhist doctrine and practice, it is difficult to see how the phenomenon could be explained without assuming major changes in the social fabric of the Indian communities that provided the base for the religion. These changes, furthermore, are suggested by historical evidence.

The key innovations in doctrine can be divided into those that are primarily critiques of early scholastic constructs and those that reflect new developments in practice. In both types, of course, one should not ignore the influence of visionary or contemplative experience; but this aspect of the religion, unfortunately, cannot always be documented adequately. The most important doctrine of practical consequence was the *bodhisattva* doctrine; the most important theoretical development was the doctrine of emptiness *(śūnyatā).* The first can be understood also as the result of a certain vision of the concrete manifestation of the sacred; the second, as the expression of a new type of mystical or contemplative experience.

The Bodhisattva. In pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism the term *bodhisattva* referred primarily to the figure of a Buddha from the time of his adoption of the vow to attain enlightenment to the point at which he attained Buddhahood. Even when used as an abstract designation of an ideal of perfection, the value of the ideal was determined by the goal: liberation from suffering. In the teachings of some of the Hīnayāna schools, however, the *bodhisattva* became an ideal with intrinsic value: to be a *bodhisattva* meant to adopt the vow *(praṇidhāna)* of seeking perfect awakening *for the sake of living beings;* that is, to follow the example set by the altruistic dedication of the Buddha in his former lives, when he was a *bodhisattva,* and not to aspire merely to individual liberation, as the *arhats* were supposed to have done. The Mahāyāna made this critique its own, and the *bodhisattva* ideal its central religious goal.

This doctrinal stance accompanied a shift in mythology that has been outlined above: the belief in multiple *bodhisattvas* and the development of a complex legend of the former lives of the Buddha. There was likewise a change in ritual centered around the cult of the *bodhisattva,* especially of mythical *bodhisattvas* who were believed to be engaged in the pursuit of awakening primarily, if not exclusively, for the sake of assisting beings in need or distress. Closely allied with this was the increasing popularity of the recitation of *bodhisattva* vows.

Whereas the *bodhisattva* of early Buddhism stood for a human being on his way to become a liberated being, the *bodhisattva* that appears in the Mahāyāna reflects the culmination of a process of change that began when some of the Hīnayāna schools extended the apotheosis of the Buddha Śākyamuni to the *bodhisattva*—that is, when they idealized both the Buddha and the spiritual career outlined by the myth of his previous lives. Mahāyāna then extended the same religious revaluation to numerous mythical beings believed to be far advanced in the path of awakening. Accordingly, in its mythology Mahāyāna has more than one object of veneration. Especially in contrast to the more conservative Hīnayāna schools (the Sarvāstivāda and the Theravāda, for instance), Mahāyāna is the Buddhism of multiple Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, residing in multiple realms, where they assist numberless beings on their way to awakening. [*See* Celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.]

Accordingly, the early ideal of the *bodhisattva* as future Buddha is not discarded; rather it is redefined and expanded. As a theory of liberation, the characteristic position of Mahāyāna can be summarized by saying that it emphasizes *bodhi* and relegates *nirvāṇa* to a secondary position. Strictly speaking, this may represent an early split within the community rather than a shift in doctrine. One could speculate that it goes back to conflicting notions of means to liberation found among the shramanic religions: the conflict between enstasy and insight as means of liberation. But this analysis must be qualified by noting that the revaluation of *bodhi* must be seen in the context of the *bodhisattva* vow. The unique aspiration of the *bodhisattva* defines awakening as "awakening for the sake of all sentient beings." This is a concept that cannot be understood properly in the context of disputes regarding the relative importance of insight.

Furthermore, one should note that the displacement of *nirvāṇa* is usually effected through its redefinition, not by means of a rejection of the basic concept of "freedom from all attachment." Although the formalized texts of the vows often speak of the *bodhisattva* "postponing" his entrance into *nirvāṇa* until all living beings are saved, and the Buddha is asked in prayer to remain in the world without entering *nirvāṇa,* the central doctrine implies that a *bodhisattva* would not even consider a *nirvāṇa* of the type sought by the *arhat*. The *bodhisattva* is defined more by his aspiration for a different type of *nirvāṇa* than by a rejection or postponement of *nirvāṇa* as such. The gist of this new doctrine of *nirvāṇa* can be summarized in a definition of liberation as a state of peace in which the liberated person is neither attached to peace not attached to the turmoil of the cycle of rebirth. It is variously named and defined: either by an identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* or by proposing a *nirvāṇa* in which one can find no support *(apratiṣṭhita-nirvāṇa)*. [*See* Soteriology, *article on* Buddhist Soteriology.]

As noted above, in the early conception a *bodhisattva* is a real human being. This aspect of the doctrine is not lost in Mahāyāna, but preserved in the belief that the aspiration to perfect awakening (the *bodhicitta*) and the *bodhisattva* vow should be

adopted by all believers. By taking up the vow—by conversion or by ritual repetition—the Mahāyāna Buddhist, monk or layperson, actualizes the *bodhicitta* and progresses toward the goal of becoming a *bodhisattva*. Also uniquely Mahāyāna is the belief that these human aspirants to awakening are not alone—they are accompanied and protected by "celestial *bodhisattvas*," powerful beings far advanced in the path, so perfect that they are free from both rebirth and liberation, and can now choose freely if, when, and where they are to be reborn. They engage freely in the process of rebirth only to save living beings.

What transforms the human and ethical ideal into a religious ideal, and into the object of religious awe, is the scale in which the *bodhisattva* path is conceived. From the first aspiration to awakening *(bodhicitta)* and the affirmation of the vow to the attainment of final enlightenment and liberation, countless lives intervene. The *bodhisattva* has to traverse ten stages *(bhūmi)*, beginning with the intense practice of the virtue of generosity (primarily a lay virtue), passing through morality in the second stage, patience in the third, then fortitude, meditation, insight, skill in means, vows, powers, and the highest knowledge of a Buddha. The stages, therefore, correspond with the ten perfections *(pāramitā)*. Although all perfections are practiced in every stage, they are mastered in the order in which they are listed in the scheme of the stages, suggesting at one end of the spectrum a simple and accessible practice for the majority of believers, the human *bodhisattva*, and at the other end a stage clearly unattainable in the realm of normal human circumstances, reserved for semidivine Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, the object of worship. Although some exceptional human beings may qualify for the status of advanced *bodhisattvas*, most of these ideal beings are the mythic objects of religious fervor and imagination.

Among the mythic or celestial *bodhisattvas* the figure of Maitreya—destined to be the next Buddha of this world system after Śākyamuni—clearly represents the earliest stage of the myth. His cult is especially important in East Asian Buddhism. Other celestial *bodhisattvas* include Mañjuśrī, the *bodhisattva* of wisdom, the patron of scripture, obviously less important in the general cultus but an important *bodhisattva* in monastic devotion. The most important liturgical role is reserved for Avalokiteśvara, the *bodhisattva* of compassion, whose central role in worship is attested by archaeology. [*See also* Maitreya; Mañjuśrī; *and* Avalokiteśvara.]

Emptiness. The doctrine of emptiness *(śūnyatā)* represents a refinement of the ancient doctrine of no-self. In some ways it is merely an extension of the earlier doctrine: the denial of the substantial reality of the self and what belongs to the self, as a means to effect a breaking of the bonds of attachment. The notion of emptiness, however, expresses a critique of our common notions of reality that is much more radical than the critique implicit in the doctrine of no-self. The Mahāyāna critique is in fact unacceptable to other Buddhists, for it is in a manner of speaking a critique of Buddhism. Emptiness of all things implies the groundlessness of all ideas and conceptions, including, ultimately, Buddhist doctrines themselves.

The doctrine of emptiness was developed by the philosophical schools, but clearly inspired by the tradition of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Thus we read: "Even *nirvāṇa* is like a magical creation, like a dream, how much more any other object or idea *(dharma)*. . . ? Even a Perfect Buddha is like a magical creation, like a dream. . ." (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, p. 40). The practical correlate of the doctrine of emptiness is the concept of "skill in means" *(upāya)*: Buddhist teachings are not absolute statements

about reality, they are means to a higher goal beyond all views. In their cultural context these two doctrines probably served as a way of making Buddhist doctrine malleable to diverse populations. By placing the truth of Buddhism beyond the specific content of its religious practices, these two doctrines justified adaptation to changing circumstances and the adoption of new religious customs.

But emptiness, like the *bodhisattva* vows, also reflects the Mahāyāna understanding of the ultimate experience of Buddhism—understood both as a dialectic and a meditational process. This experience can be described as an awareness that nothing is self-existent. Dialectically, this means that there is no way that the mind can consistently think of any thing as having an existence of its own. All concepts of substance and existence vanish when they are examined closely and rationally. As a religious experience the term *emptiness* refers to a direct perception of this absence of self-existence, a perception that is only possible through mental cultivation, and which is a liberating experience. Liberation, in fact, has been redefined in a way reminiscent of early texts such as the *Suttanipāta*. Liberation is now the freedom resulting from the negation of all assumptions about reality, even Buddhist assumptions.

> The cessation of grasping and reifying,
> calming the plural mind—this is bliss.
> The Buddha never taught any thing/doctrine [*dharma*]
> to anyone anywhere. (*Madhyamakakārikā* 25.24)

Finally, emptiness is also an affirmation of the immanence of the sacred. Applied to the turmoil of the sphere of rebirth *(saṃsāra)*, it points to the relative value and reality of the world and at the same time transforms it into the sacred, the experience of awakening. Applied to the sphere of liberation *(nirvāṇa)*, emptiness is a critique of the conception of liberation as a religious goal outside the world of impermanence and suffering. [*See* Śūnyam and Śūnyatā.]

Other Views of the Absolute. Mahāyāna developed early notions of the supernatural and the sacred that guaranteed an exalted status to the symbols of its mystical and ethical ideals. Its notion of extraordinary beings populating supernal Buddha fields and coming to the aid of suffering sentient beings necessitated a metaphysic and cosmology that could offer concrete images of a transcendent sacred. Accordingly, the abstract, apophatic concept of emptiness was often qualified by, or even rejected in favor of, positive statements and concrete images.

Pre-Mahāyāna traditions had emphasized impermanence and no-self: to imagine that there is permanence in the impermanent is the most noxious error. Mahāyāna introduced the notion of emptiness, urging us to give up the notion of permanence, but to give up the notion of impermanence as well. Within the Mahāyāna camp others proposed that there was something permanent within the impermanent. Texts like the [*Mahāyāna*] *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* asserted that the Buddha himself had taught a doctrine of permanence: the seed of Buddhahood, innate enlightenment, is permanent, blissful, pure—indeed, it is the true self, present in the impermanent mind and body of sentient beings.

The *Tathāgata* as object of worship was associated with "suchness" *(tathatā)*, his saving actions were seen as taking effect in a world formed in the image of the Dharma and its ultimate truth *(dharmadhātu)*, and his form as repository of all goodness and virtue represented his highest form. [*See* Tathatā.]

A doctrine common to all Mahāyānists sought to establish a link between the absolute and common human beings. The Tathāgata was conceived of as having several aspects to his person: the human Buddha or "Body of Magical Apparition" *(nirmāṇakāya)*, that is, the historical persons of Buddhas; the transcendent sacred, the Buddha of the paradises and Buddha fields, who is also the form that is the object of worship *(saṃbhogakāya)*; and the Buddha as Suchness, as nonduality, the *tathāgata* as embodiment of the *dharmadhātu*, called the "Dharma Body" *(dharmakāya)*.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PRACTICE

The practice of meditation was for the Mahāyānist part of a ritual process beginning with the first feelings of compassion for other sentient beings, formulating the vow, including the expression of a strong desire to save all sentient beings and share one's merit with them, followed by the cultivation of the analysis of all existents, reaching a pinnacle in the experience of emptiness but culminating in the dedication of these efforts to the salvation of others.

Worship and Ritual. The uniquely Mahāyāna aspect of the ritual is the threefold service *(triskandhaka)*. Variously defined, this bare outline of the essential Mahāyāna ritual is explained by the seventh-century poet Śāntideva as consisting of a confession of sins, formal rejoicing at the merit of others, and a request to all Buddhas that they remain in the world for the sake of suffering sentient beings. A pious Buddhist was expected to perform this threefold ritual three times in the day and three times in the night.

A text known as the *Triskandhaka,* forming part of the *Upāliparipṛcchā,* proves the central role of confession and dedication of merit. The act of confession is clearly a continuation of the ancient Prātimokṣa ritual. Other elements of continuity include a link with early nonliterary tradition (now integrated into scripture) in the role of the dedication of merit, and a link with the general Buddhist tradition of the Three Refuges.

More complicated liturgies were in use. Several versions remain in the extant literature. Although many of them are said to be "the sevenfold service" *(saptavidhānuttarapūjā)*, the number seven is to be taken as an abstract number. The most important elements of the longer liturgies are the salutation to the Buddhas and *bodhisattva*s, the act of worship, the act of contrition, delight in the merit of others, and the dedication of merit. Hsüan-tsang, the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim to India, describes, albeit cursorily, some of the liturgies in use in the Indian monasteries of his time.

Most common forms of ritual, however, must have been less formalized and less monkish. The common rite is best represented by the litany of Avalokiteśvara, preserved in the literature and the monuments. In its literary form it is a solemn statement of the *bodhisattva*'s capacity to save from peril those who call on his name. But in actual practice, one can surmise, the cult of Avalokiteśvara included then, as it does today in East Asia, prayers of petition and apotropaic invocations.

The basic liturgical order of the literary tradition was embellished with elements

from general Indian religious custom, especially from the styles of worship called *pūjā*. These included practices such as bathing the sacred image, carrying it in procession, offering cloth, perfume, and music to the icon, and so forth. [*See* Pūjā, *especially the article on* Buddhist Pūjā.]

Ritual practices were also expanded in the monastic tradition. For instance, another text also going by the title *Triskandhaka* (but preserved only in Tibetan translation) shows an intimate connection between ritual and meditation, as it integrates—like many monastic manuals of meditation—the typical daily ritual cycle with a meditation session.

Meditation. The practice of meditation was as important in the Mahāyāna tradition as it had been before. The maps of the path and the meditation manuals of Mahāyāna Buddhists give us accounts, if somewhat idealized ones, of the process of meditation. Although no systematic history of Mahāyāna meditation has been attempted yet, it is obvious that there are important synchronic and diachronic differences among Mahāyāna Buddhists in India. Considering, nevertheless, only those elements that are common to the various systems, one must note first an element of continuity with the past in the use of a terminology very similar to that of the Mahīśāsakas and the Sarvāstivāda, and in the acceptance, with little change, of traditional lists of objects and states of contemplation. [*See* Meditation, *article on* Buddhist Meditation.]

The interpretation of the process, however, and the definition of the higher stages of contemplation differed radically from that of the Hīnayāna schools. The principal shift is in the definition of the goal as a state in which the object of contemplation *(ālambana)* is no longer present to the mind *(nirālambana)*. All the mental images (or "marks," *nimitta*, *saṃjñā*) that form the basis for conceptual thought and attachment must be abandoned through a process of mental calm and analysis, until the contemplative reaches a state of peaceful concentration free of mental marks *(ānimitta)*, free of conceptualizations *(nirvikalpa-samādhi)*.

These changes in contemplative theory are closely connected to the abandonment of the *dharma* theory and the doctrine of no-self as the theoretical focus of speculative mysticism. One may say that the leading theme of Mahāyāna contemplative life is the meditation on emptiness. But one must add that the scholastic traditions are very careful to define the goal as constituted by both emptiness and compassion *(karuṇā)*. The higher state of freedom from conceptions (the "supramundane knowledge") must be followed by return to the world to fulfill the vows of the *bodhisattva*—the highest contemplative stage is, at least in theory, a preparation for the practice of compassion. [*See* Karuṇā.]

The New Ethics. The *bodhisattva* ideal also implied new ethical notions. Two themes prevail in Mahāyāna ethical speculation: the altruistic vow and life in the world. Both themes reflect changes in the social context of Buddhism: a greater concern, if not a stronger role for, lay life and its needs and aspirations and a cultural context requiring universal social values. The altruistic ideal is embodied in the *bodhisattva* vows and in the creation of a new set of ethical rules, commonly known as the "Bodhisattva Vinaya." A number of Mahāyāna texts are said to represent this new "Vinaya." Among these, the *Bodhisattvaprātimokṣa* was especially important in India. It prescribes a liturgy for the ritual adoption of the *bodhisattva* vows, which is clearly based on the earlier rites of ordination *(upasaṃpadā)*. Although the Mahāyāna Vinaya Sūtras never replaced in India the earlier monastic codes, they preserved and transmitted important, and at times obligatory, rites of monastic and lay initiation, and were considered essential supplements to traditional monastic Vinaya. [*See also* Buddhist Ethics.]

The High Tradition and the Universities

The most important element in the institutionalization of Mahāyāna was perhaps the establishment of Buddhist universities. In these centers of learning the elaboration of Buddhist doctrine became the most important goal of Buddhist monastic life. First at Nālandā and Valabhī, then, as the Pāla dynasty took control of East Central India (c. 650), at the universities of Vikramaśīla and Odantapurī, Mahāyāna scholars trained disciples from different parts of the Buddhist world and elaborated subtle systems of textual interpretation and philosophical speculation.

THE MAHĀYĀNA SYNTHESIS

Although eventually they would not be able to compete with more resilient forms of Buddhism and Hinduism, the Mahāyāna scholars played a leading role in the creation of a Mahāyāna synthesis that would satisfy both the intelligentsia and the common believers for at least five hundred years. Devotion, ritual, ethics, metaphysics, and logic formed part of this monument to Indian philosophical acumen. Even as the ruthless Mihirakula, the Ephthalite ("White") Hun, was invading India from the northwest (c. 500–528) and the Chalukya dynasty was contributing to a Hindu renaissance in the southwest (c. 550–753), India allowed for the development of great minds—such distinguished philosophical figures as Dignāga and Sthiramati, who investigated subtle philosophical issues. Persecution by Mihirakula (c. 550) was followed by the reign of one of the great patrons of Buddhism, Harṣa Vardhana (c. 605–647). Once more Buddhism was managing to survive on the seesaw of Indian politics.

SCHOOLS

The scholastic tradition of Mahāyāna can be divided into three schools: Mādhyamika (Madhyamaka), Yogācāra, and the school of Sāramati. The first two dominated the intellectual life of Mahāyāna in India. The third had a short-lived but important influence on Tibet, and indirectly may be considered an important element in the development of East Asian Buddhism.

Mādhyamika. The founder of this school can also be regarded as the father of Mahāyāna scholasticism and philosophy. Nāgārjuna (fl. c. 150 CE) came from South India, possibly from the Amarāvatī region. Said to have been the advisor to one of the Śātavāhana monarchs, he became the first major philosopher of Mahāyāna and a figure whose ideas influenced all its schools. The central theme of his philosophy is emptiness *(śūnyatā)* understood as a corollary of the pre-Mahāyāna theory of dependent origination. Emptiness is the Middle Way between affirmations of being and nonbeing. The extremes of existence and nonexistence are avoided by recognizing certain causal relations (e.g., the path and liberation) without predicating a self-existence or immutable essence *(svabhāva)* to either cause or effect. To defend his

views without establishing a metaphysical thesis, Nāgārjuna argues by reducing to the absurd all the alternative philosophical doctrines recognized in his day. For his own "system," Nāgārjuna claims to have no thesis to affirm beyond his rejection of the affirmations and negations of all metaphysical systems. Therefore, Nāgārjuna's system is "the school of the Middle" *(madhyamaka)* both as an ontology (neither being nor nonbeing) and as a logic (neither affirmation nor negation). In religious terms, Nāgārjuna's Middle Way is summarized in his famous statement that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are the same. [*See the biography of Nāgārjuna.*]

Three to four centuries after Nāgārjuna the Mādhyamika school split into two main branches, called Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika. The first of these, represented by Buddhapālita (c. 500) and Candrakīrti (c. 550–600), claimed that in order to be faithful to the teachings of Nāgārjuna, philosophers had to confine themselves to the critique of opposing views by *reductio ad absurdum*. The Svātantrikas, on the other hand, claimed that the Mādhyamika philosopher had to formulate his own thesis; in particular, he needed his own epistemology. The main exponent of this view was Buddhapālita's great critic Bhāvaviveka (c. 500–550). The debate continued for some time but was eclipsed by other philosophical issues; for the Mādhyamika school eventually assimilated elements of other Mahāyāna traditions, especially those of the logicians and the Yogācārins. [*See the biographies of Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka, and Candrakīrti.*]

Mādhyamika scholars also contributed to the development of religious literature. Several hymns *(stava)* are attributed to Nāgārjuna. His disciple Āryadeva discusses the *bodhisattva*'s career in his *Bodhisattva-yogācāra-catuḥśataka*, although the work deals mostly with philosophical issues. Two anthological works, one attributed to Nāgārjuna, the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, and the other to the seventh-century Śāntideva, the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, became guides to the ritual and ethical practices of Mahāyāna. Śāntideva also wrote a "guide" to the *bodhisattva*'s career, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, a work that gives us a sampling of the ritual and contemplative practices of Mādhyamika monks, as well as a classical survey of the philosophical issues that engaged their attention. [*See also* Mādhyamika *and the biographies of Āryadeva and Śāntideva.*]

Yogācāra. Approximately two centuries after Nāgārjuna, during the transition period from Kushan to Gupta power, a new school of Mahāyāna philosophy arose in the northwest. The founders of this school, the brothers Asaṅga (c. 310–390) and Vasubandhu (c. 320–400), had begun as scholars in the Hīnayāna schools. Asaṅga, the elder brother, was trained in the Mahīśāsaka school. Many important features of the Abhidharma theories of this school remained in Asaṅga's Mahāyāna system. Vasuhandhu, who converted to Mahāyāna after his brother had become an established scholar of the school, began as a Sautrāntika with an extraordinary command of Sarvāstivādin theories. Therefore, when he did become a Mahāyānist he too brought with him a Hīnayāna scholastic grid on which to organize and rationalize Mahāyāna teachings.

The school founded by the two brothers is known as the Yogācāra, perhaps following the title of Asaṅga's major work, the *Yogācārabhūmi* (sometimes attributed to Maitreya), but clearly expressing the centrality of the practice of self-cultivation, especially through meditation. In explaining the experiences arising during the practice of yoga, the school proposes the two doctrines that characterize it: (1) the experience of enstasy leads to the conviction that there is nothing but mind *(cittamātratā)*, or the world is nothing but a perceptual construct *(vijñaptimātratā)*; (2) the analysis of mind carried out during meditation reveals different levels of perception or awareness, and, in the depths of consciousness, the basis for rebirth and karmic determination, a storehouse consciousness *(ālaya-vijñāna)* containing the seeds of former actions. Varying emphasis on these two principles characterize different modes of the doctrine. The doctrine of mind-only dominates Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā* and *Triṃśikā*; the analysis of the *ālaya-vijñāna* is more central to Asaṅga's doctrine. Since both aspects of the doctrine can be understood as theories of consciousness *(vijñāna)*, the school is sometimes called Vijñānavāda.

One of the first important divisions within the Yogācāra camp reflected geographical as well as doctrinal differences. The school of Valabhī, following Sthiramati (c. 500–560), opposed the Yogācārins of Nālandā, led by Dharmapāla (c. 530–561). The point at issue, whether the pure mind is the same as the storehouse consciousness, illustrates the subtleties of Indian philosophical polemics but also reflects the influence of another school, the school of Sāramati, as well as the soteriological concerns underlying the psychological theories of Yogācāra. The debate on this point would continue in the Mādhyamika school, involving issues of the theory of perception as well as problems in the theory of the liberated mind. [*See also* Yogācāra; Vijñāna; Ālaya-vijñāna; *and the biographies of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, Dharmapāla, and Śīlabhadra.*]

Tathāgata-garbha Theory. Another influential school followed the tendency—already expressed in some Mahāyāna *sūtras*—toward a positive definition or description of ultimate reality. The emphasis in this school was on the ontological basis for the experience and virtues of Buddhahood. This basis was found in the underlying or innate Buddhahood of all beings. The school is known under two names; one describes its fundamental doctrine, the theory of *tathāgata-garbha* (the presence of the Tathāgata in all beings), the other refers to its purported systematizer, Sāramati (c. 350–450). The school's emphasis on a positive foundation of being associates it closely with the thought of Maitreyanātha, the teacher of Asaṅga, to whom is often attributed one of the fundamental texts of the school, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. It may be that Maitreya's thought gave rise to two lines of interpretation—*tathāgata-garbha* and *cittamātratā*.

Sāramati wrote a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in which he explains the process whereby innate Buddhahood becomes manifest Buddhahood. The work is critical of the theory of emptiness and describes the positive attributes of Buddhahood. The *bodhisattva*'s involvement in the world is seen not so much as the abandonment of the bliss of liberation as it is the manifestation of the Absolute *(dharmadhātu)* in the sphere of sentient beings, a concept that can be traced to Mahāsāṃghika doctrines. The *dharmadhātu* is a positive, metaphysical absolute, not only eternal, but pure, the locus of ethical, soteric, and epistemological value. This absolute is also the basis for the *gotra*, or spiritual lineage, which is a metaphor for the relative potential for enlightenment in living beings. [*See also* Tathāgatagarbha.]

The Logicians. An important development in Buddhist scholarship came about as a result of the concern of scholastics with the rules of debate and their engagement in philosophical controversies with Hindu logicians of the Nyāya school. Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu wrote short treatises on logic, but a creative and uniquely Buddhist

logic and epistemology did not arise until the time of Dignāga (c. 480–540), a scholar who claimed allegiance to Yogācāra but adopted a number of Sautrāntika doctrines. The crowning achievement of Buddhist logic was the work of Dharmakīrti (c. 600–650), whose *Pramāṇavārttika* and its *Vṛtti* revised critically the whole field. Although his work seems on the surface not relevant for the history of religion, it is emblematic of the direction of much of the intellectual effort of Mahāyāna scholars after the fifth century. [*See the biographies of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.*]

Yogācāra-Mādhyamika Philosophers. As India moved away from the security of the Gupta period, Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy gradually moved in the direction of eclecticism. By the time the university at Vikramaśīla was founded in the eighth century the dominant philosophy at Nālandā was a combination of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, with the latter as the qualifying term and Mādhyamika as the core of the philosophy. This movement had roots in the earlier Svātantrika Mādhyamika and like its predecessor favored the formulation of ontological and epistemological theses in defense of Nāgārjuna's fundamental doctrine of emptiness. The most distinguished exponent of this school was Śāntirakṣita (c. 680–740); but some of his theories were challenged from within the movement by his contemporary Jñānagarbha (c. 700–760). The greatest contribution to religious thought, however, came from their successors. Kamalaśīla (c. 740–790), a disciple of Śāntirakṣita who continued the latter's mission in Tibet, wrote a number of brilliant works on diverse aspects of philosophy. He traveled to Tibet, where he wrote three treatises on meditation and the *bodhisattva* path, each called *Bhāvanākrama,* which must be counted among the jewels of Indian religious thought. [*See the biographies of Śāntirakṣita and Kamalaśīla.*]

NEW SCRIPTURES

The philosophers found their main source of inspiration in the Mahāyāna *sūtras,* most of which did not advocate clearly defined philosophical theories. Some *sūtras,* however, do express positions that can be associated with the doctrines of particular schools. Although scholars agree that these compositons are later than texts without a clear doctrinal affiliation, the connection between the *sūtras* and the schools they represent is not always clear.

For instance, some of the characteristic elements of the school of Sāramati are clearly pre-Mahāyānic, and can also be found in a number of *sūtras* from the *Avataṃsaka* and *Ratnakūṭa* collections. However, Sāramati appealed to a select number of Mahāyāna *sūtras* that clustered around the basic themes of the school. Perhaps the most famous is the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda*, but equally important are the [*Mahāyāna*] *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa*, and the *Dhāraṇīrāja.*

A number of Mahāyāna *sūtras* of late composition were closely associated with the Yogācāra school. Although they were known already at the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, in their present form they reflect a polemic than presupposes some form of proto-Yogācāra theory. Among these the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Saṃdhinirmocana* are the most important from a philosophical point of view. The first contains an early form of the theory of levels of *vijñāna.*

DECLINE OF MAHĀYĀNA

It is difficult to assess the nature and causes of the decay of Mahāyāna in India. Although it is possible to argue that the early success of Mahāyāna led to a tendency to look inward, that philosophers spent their time debating subtle metaphysical, logical, or even grammatical points, the truth is that even during the period of technical scholasticism, constructive religious thought was not dormant. But it may be that as Mahāyāna became more established and conventional, the natural need for religious revival found expression in other vehicles. Most likely Mahāyāna thinkers participated in the search for new forms of expression, appealing once more to visionary, revolutionary and charismatic leaders. But the new life gradually would adopt an identity of its own, first as Tantric Buddhism, eventually as Hinduism. For, in adopting Tantric practices and symbols, Mahāyāna Buddhists appealed to a symbolic and ritual world that fit naturally with a religious substratum that was about to become the province of Hinduism. [*For Hindu Tantrism, see* Tantrism *and* Hindu Tantric Literature.]

The gradual shift from Mahāyāna to Tantra seems to have gained momentum precisely at the time when Mahāyāna philosophy was beginning to lose its creative energy. We know of Tantric practices at Nālandā in the seventh century. These practices were criticized by the Nālandā scholar Dharmakīrti but apparently were accepted by most distinguished scholars of the same institution during the following century. As Tantra gained respectability, the Pāla monarchs established new centers of learning, rivaling Nālandā. We may say that the death of its great patron, King Harṣa, in 657 signals the decline of Mahāyāna, whereas the construction of the University of Vikramaśīla under Dharmapāla about the year 800 marks the beginning of the Tantric period. [*For Buddhist Tantrism, see* Buddhism, Schools of, *article on* Esoteric Buddhism.]

Tantric Innovations

As with Mahāyāna, we must assume that Tantra reflects social as well as religious changes. Because of the uncertainties of the date of its origin, however, few scholars have ventured any explanation for the arising of Tantra. Some advocate an early origin for Tantra, suggesting that the literature existed as an esoteric practice for many centuries before it ever came to the surface. If this were the case, then Tantra must have existed as some kind of underground movement long before the sixth century. But this theory must still explain the sudden appearance of Tantrism as a mainstream religion.

In its beginnings, Buddhist Tantra may have been a minority religion, essentially a private cult incorporating elements from the substratum frowned upon by the Buddhist establishment. It echoed ancient practices such as the critical rites of the *Atharvaveda* tradition, and the initiatory ceremonies, Aryan and non-Aryan, known to us from other Brahmanic sources. Starting as a marginal phenomenon, it eventually gained momentum, assuming the same role Mahāyāna had assumed earlier; a force of innovation and a vehicle for the expression of dissatisfaction with organized religion. The followers of Tantra became the new critics of the establishment. Some asserted the superiority of techniques of ritual and meditation that would lead to a

direct, spontaneous realization of Buddhahood in this life. As wandering saints called *siddhas* ("possessed of *siddhi*," i.e., realization or magical power), they assumed the demeanor of madmen, and abandoned the rules of the monastic code. [*See* Mahāsiddhas.] Others saw Tantra as the culmination of Mahāyāna and chose to integrate it with earlier teachings, following established monastic practices even as they adopted beliefs that challenged the traditional assumptions of Buddhist monasticism.

The documented history of Tantra, naturally, reveals more about the second group. It is now impossible to establish with all certainty how the substratum affected Buddhist Tantra—whether, for instance, the metaphoric use of sexual practices preceded their explicit use, or vice versa. But is seems clear that the new wandering ascetics and their ideology submitted to the religious establishment even as they changed it. Tantra followed the pattern of cooperation with established religious institutions set by Mahāyāna in its relationship to the early scholastic establishment. Tantric monks would take the *bodhisattva* vows and receive monastic ordination under the pre-Mahāyāna code. Practitioners of Tantra would live in the same monastery with non-Tantric Mahāyāna monks. Thus Tantric Buddhism became integrated into the Buddhist high tradition even as the *siddhas* continued to challenge the values of Buddhist monasticism.

Although it seems likely that Tantric Buddhism existed as a minority, esoteric practice among Mahāyāna Buddhists before it made its appearance on the center stage of Indian religion, it is now impossible to know for how long and in what form it existed before the seventh century. The latter date alone is certain because the transmission of Tantra to China is marked by the arrival in the Chinese capitals of Tantric masters like Śubhākarasiṃha (arrives in Ch'ang-an 716) and Vajrabodhi (arrives in Lo-yang 720), and we can safely assume that the exportation of Tantra beyond the Indian border could not have been possible without a flourishing activity in India. [*See the biographies of Vajrabodhi, Śubhākarasiṃha, and Amoghavajra.*] Evidence for an earlier origin is found in the occasional reference, critical or laudatory, to *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* in the literature of the seventh century (Dharmakīrti, Śāntideva) and the presence of proto-Tantric elements in Mahāyāna *sūtras* that must date from at least the fourth century *(Gaṇḍavyūha, Vimalakīrtinirdeśa, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka)*.

Tantra in general makes use of ritual, symbolic, and doctrinal elements of earlier form of Buddhism. Especially the apotropaic and mystical formulas called *mantras* and *dhāraṇis* gain a central role in Tantrayāna. [*See* Mantra.] The *Mahāmāyūrī,* a proto-Tantric text of the third or fourth century, collects apotropaic formulas associated with local deities in different parts of India. Some of these formulas seem to go back to *parittas* similar to those in the Pali canonical text *Āṭāṇātiya Suttanta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* no. 32). Although one should not identify the relatively early, and pan-Buddhist, genre of the *dhāraṇī* and *paritta* with the Tantrayāna, the increased use of these formulas in most existing forms of Buddhism, and the appearance of *dhāraṇī-sūtras* in late Mahāyāna literature perhaps marks a shift towards greater emphasis on the magical dimension of Buddhist faith. The Mahāyāna *sūtras* also foreshadow Tantra with their doctrine of the identity of the awakened and the afflicted minds *(Dharmasaṅgīti, Vimalakīrtinirdeśa)*, and innate Buddhahood (Tathāgata-garbha *sūtras*).

VARIETIES OF TANTRA

Whatever may have been its prehistory, as esoteric or exoteric practice, the new movement—sometimes called the third *yāna*, Tantrayāna—was as complex and fragmented as earlier forms of Buddhism. A somewhat artificial, but useful classification distinguishes three main types of Tantra: Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna, and Kālacakra Tantra. The first established the symbolic terminology and the liturgy that would characterize all forms of the tradition. Many of these iconographic and ritual forms are described in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (finished in its extant form c. 750), the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra,* and the *Vajraśekhara* (or *Tattvasaṃgraha*) *Sūtra*, which some would, following East Asian traditions, classify under a different, more primitive branch of Tantra called "Mantrayāna." The Sahajayāna was dominated by long-haired, wandering *siddhas*, who openly challenged and ridiculed the Buddhist establishment. They referred to the object of their religious experience as "the whore," both as a reference to the sexual symbolism of ritual Tantra and as a challenge to monastic conceptions of spiritual purity, buth also as a metaphor for the universal accessibility of enlightenment. The Kālacakra tradition is the farthest removed from earlier Buddhist traditions, and shows a stronger influence from the substratum. It incorporates concepts of messianism and astrology not attested elsewhere in Buddhist literature.

Unfortunately, the history of all three of these movements is clouded in legend. Tibetan traditions considers the Mantrayāna a third "turning of the wheel [of the Dharma]" (with Mahāyāna as the second), taking place in Dhānyakaṭaka (Andhra) sixteen years after the enlightenment. But this is patently absurd. As a working hypothesis, we can propose that there was an early stage of Mantrayāna beginning in the fourth century. The term *Vajrayāna* could be used then to describe the early documented manifestations of Tantric practice, especially in the high tradition of the Ganges River valley after the seventh century.

Sahajayāna is supposed to have originated with the Kashmirian yogin Lūi-pa (c. 750–800). The earliest documented Sahajayānists are from Bengal, but probably from the beginning of the ninth century. Regarding the Kālacakra, Western scholarship would not accept traditional views of its ancient origins in the mythic land of Shambhala. It must be dated not earlier than the tenth century, probably to the beginning of the reign of King Mahīpāla (c. 974–1026). Its roots have been sought in the North as well as in the South.

The Vajrayāna. The Vajrayāna derives its name from the centrality of the concept of *vajra* in its symbolism. The word *vajra* means both "diamond" and "cudgel." It is therefore a metaphor for hardness and destructiveness. Spiritually, it represents the eternal, innate state of Buddhahood possessed by all beings, as well as the cutting edge of wisdom. The personification of this condition and power is Vajrasattva, a deity and an abstract principle, which is defined as follows:

> By *vajra* is meant emptiness;
> *sattva* means pure cognition.
> The identity of these two is known
> as the essence of Vajrasattva.
> (*Advayavajra Saṃgraha*, p. 24)

Behind this definition is clearly the metaphysics of Yogācāra-Mādhyamika thought. Vajrasattva stands for the nondual experience that transcends both emptiness and pure mind. In religious terms this principle represents a homology between the human person and the essence of *vajra*: in the human body, in this life, relative and absolute meet.

The innate quality of the nondual is also represented by the concept of the "thought of awakening" *(bodhicitta)*. But innate awakening in Vajrayāna becomes the goal: enlightenment is present in its totality and perfection in this human body; the thought of awakening *is* awakening:

> The Thought of Awakening is known to be
> Without beginning or end, quiescent,
> Free from being and nonbeing, powerful,
> Undivided in emptiness and compassion.
> (*Guhyasamāja* 18.37)

This identity is established symbolically and ritually by a series of homologies. For instance, the six elements of the human body are identified with different aspects of the body of Mahāvairocana, the five constituents of the human personality *(skandhas)* are identified with the five forms of Buddha knowledge.

But the most characteristic aspect of Tantric Buddhism generally is the extension of these homologies to sexual symbolism. The "thought of awakening" is identified with semen, dormant wisdom with a woman waiting to be inseminated. Therefore, wisdom *(prajñā)* is conceived as a female deity. She is a mother *(jananī)*, as in the Prajñāpāramitā literature; she is the female yogi *(yoginī)*; but she is also a low-caste whore *(ḍombī caṇḍālī)*. Skillful means *(upāya)* are visualized as her male consort. The perfect union of these two *(prajñopāya-yuganaddha)* is the union of the nondual. Behind the Buddhist interpretation, of course, one discovers the non-Aryan substrantum, with its emphasis on fertility and the symbolism of the mother goddess. [*See* Goddess Worship, *article on* The Hindu Goddess.] But one may also see this radical departure from Buddhist monkish prudery as an attempt to shock the establishment out of self-righteous complacency.

Because the sexual symbolism can be understood metaphorically, most forms of Buddhist Tantra were antinomian only in principle. Thus, Vajrayāna was not without its vows and rules. As *upāya*, the symbols of ritual had as their goal the integration of the Absolute and the relative, not the abrogation of the latter. Tantric vows included traditional monastic rules, the *bodhisattva* vows, and special Tantric rules—some of which are contained in texts such as the *Vinayasūtra* and the *Bodhicittaśīlādānakalpa*.

The practice of the higher mysteries was reserved for those who had mastered the more elementary Mahāyāna and Tantra practices. The hierarchy of practice was established in systems such as the "five steps" of the *Pañcakrama* (by the Tantric Nāgārjuna). Generally, the order of study protected the higher mysteries, establishing the dividing line between esoteric and exoteric. Another common classification of the types of Tantra distinguished external daily rituals (Kriyā Tantra), special rituals serving as preparation for meditation, (Caryā Tantra), hasic meditation practices (Yoga Tantra), and the highest, or advanced meditation Tantras (Anuttarayoga Tantra). This hermeneutic of sorts served both as an apologetic and a doctrinal classification of Tantric practice by distinguishing the audience for which each type of Tantra was best suited: respectively *śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas,* Yogācārins, and Mādhyamikas.

Elements of Tathāgata-garbha theory seem to have been combined with early totemic beliefs to establish a system to Tathāgata families or clans that also served to define the proper audience for a variety of teachings. Persons afflicted by delusion, for instance, belonged to Mahāvairocana's clan, and should cultivate the homologies and visualizations associated with this Buddha—who, not coincidentally, represents the highest awakening. This system extends the homologies of *skandhas*, levels of knowledge, and so forth, to personality types. This can be understood as a practical psychology that forms part of the Tantric quest for the immanence of the sacred.

The Sahaja (or Sahajiyā) Movement. Although traditional Sahaja master-to-disciple lineages present it as a movement of great antiquity, the languages used in extant Sahaja literature belong to an advanced stage in the development of New Indic. These works were written mostly in Apabhrāṃśa (the *Dohākośa*) and early Bengali (the *Caryāgīti*). Thus, although their dates are uncertain, they cannot go as far back as suggested by tradition. Scholars generally agree on a conjectural dating of perhaps eighth to tenth century.

Works attributed to Sahaja masters are preserved not only in New Indian languages (Saraha, c. 750–800, Kaṇha, c. 800–850, Ti-lo-pa, c. 950–1000); a few commentaries exist in Sanskrit. The latter attest to the influence of the early wandering *siddhas* on the Buddhist establishment.

The basic doctrinal stance of the Sahaja movement is no different from that of Vajrayāna: *sahaja* is the innate principle of enlightenment, the *bodhicitta*, to be realized in the union of wisdom and skillful means. The main difference between the two types of Tantra is in the life-style of the adept. The Sahajiyā was a movement that represented a clear challenge to the Buddhist establishment: the ideal person was a homeless madman wandering about with his female consort, or a householder-sorcerer—either of which would claim to practice union with his consort as the actualization of what the high tradition practiced only in symbolic or mystical form. The Vajrayāna soon became integrated into the curriculum of the universities, controlled by the Vinaya and philosophical analysis. It was incorporated into the ordered program of spiritual cultivation accepted in the monasteries, which corresponded to the desired social and political stability of the academic institutions and their sponsors. The iconoclastic staints of the Sahaja, on the other hand, sought spontaneity, and saw monastic life as an obstacle to true realization. The force of their challenge is seen in quasi-mythic form in the legend that tells of the bizarre tests to which the *siddha* Ti-lo-pa submitted the great scholar Nā-ro-pa when the latter left his post at Vikramaśīla to follow the half-naked madman Ti-lo-pa.

This particular Tantric tradition, therefore, best embodied the iconoclastic tendencies found in all of Tantra. It challenged the establishment in the social as well as the religious sphere, for it incorporated freely practices from the substratum and placed women and sexuality on the level of the sacred. In opposition to the bland and ascetic paradises of Mahāyāna—where there were no women or sexual intercourse—Tantrism identifies the bliss of enlightment with the great bliss *(mahāsukha)* of sexual union.

The Kālacakra Tantra. This text has several features that separate it from other works of the Buddhist tradition: an obvious political message, suggesting an alliance to stop the Muslim advance in India, and astrological symbolism and teachings, among the others. In this work also we meet the concept of "Ādibuddha," the primordial Buddha, whence arises everything in the universe.

The high tradition, however, sees the text as remaining within the main line of Buddhist Tantrism. Its main argument is that all phenomena, including the rituals of Tantra, are contained within the initiate's body, and all aspects of time are also contained in this body. The concept of time *(kāla)* is introduced and discussed and its symbolism explained as a means to give the devotee control over time and therefore over the impermanent world. The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā,* a commentary on part of the *Kākacakra* attributed to Nā-ro-pa (Nāḍapāda, tenth century), explains that the time *(kāla)* of the *Kālacakra* is the same as the unchanging *dharmadhātu,* whereas the wheel *(cakra)* means the manifestations of time. In *Kālacakra* the two, absolute and relative, *prajñā* and *upāya,* are united. In this sense, therefore, in spite of its concessions to the substratum and to the rising tide of Hinduism, the *Kālacakra* was also integrated with mainline Buddhism.

TANTRIC LITERATURE

The word *tantra* means "thread" or "weft" and, by extension, "text." The sacred texts produced as the new dispensation, esoteric or exoteric, were called Tantras, and formed indeed a literary thread interwoven with the secret transmission from master to disciple. Some of the most difficult and profound Tantras were produced in the early period (before the eighth century); the *Mahāvairocana, Guhyasamāja,* the earlier parts of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa,* and the *Hevajra.* By the time Tantra became the dominant system and, therefore, part of the establishment, a series of commentaries and authored works had appeared. Nāgārjuna's *Pañcakrama* is among the earliest. The Tantric Candrakīrti (ninth century) wrote a commentary on the *Guhyasamāja,* and Buddhaguhya (eighth century) discussed the *Mahāvairocana.* Sanskrit commentaries eventually were written to fossilize even the spontaneous poems of Sahaja saints.

TANTRA AND THE HIGH TRADITION

Thus, Tantra too, like its predecessors, eventually become institutionalized. What arose as an esoteric, intensely private, visionary and iconoclastic movement, became a literary tradition, ritualized, often exoteric and speculative.

We have abundant evidence of a flourishing Tantric circle at Nālandā, for instance, at least since the late seventh century. Tantric masters were by that time established members of the faculty. Especially during the Pāla dynasty, Tantric practices and speculation played a central role in Buddhist universities. This was clearly the period of institutionalization, a period when Tantra became part of the mainstream of Buddhism.

With this transformation the magical origins of Tantra were partly disguised by a high Tantric liturgy and a theory of Tantric meditation paralleling earlier, Mahāyāna theories of the path. Still, Tantric ritual and meditation retained an identity of their own. Magic formulas, gestures, and circles appeared transformed, respectively, into the mystical words of the Buddhas, the secret gestures of the Buddhas, and charts *(maṇḍalas)* of the human psyche and the path.

The mystical diagram *(maṇḍala)* illustrates the complexity of this symbolism. It is at the same time a chart of the human person as it is now, a plan for liberation, and a representation of the transfigured body, the structure of Buddhahood itself. As a magic circle it is the sphere in which spiritual forces are evoked and controlled, as religious symbol it is the sphere of religious progress, experience, and action. The primitive functions remain: the *maṇḍala* is still a circle of power, with apotropaic functions. For each divinity there is an assigned meaning, a sacred syllable, a color, and a position within the *maṇḍala.* Spiritual forces can thus be evoked without danger. The sacred syllable is still a charm. The visualization of Buddhas is often inseparable from the evocation of demos and spirits. New beings populated the Buddhist pantheon. The Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* are accompanied by female consorts—these spiritual sexual partners can be found in explicit carnal iconographic representations. [*See* Maṇḍala, *article on* Buddhist Maṇḍalas.]

Worship and Ritual. Whereas the esoteric ritual incorporated elements of the substratum into a Buddhist doctrinal base, the exoteric liturgies of the Tantric high tradition followed ritual models from the Mahāyāna tradition as well as elements that evince Brahmanic ritual and Hindu worship. The daily ritual of the Tantric Buddhist presents a number of analogies of Brahmanic *pūjā* that cannot be accidental. But the complete liturgical cycle is still Buddhist. Many examples are preserved, for instance, in the Sanskrit text *Ādikarmapradīpa.* The ritual incorporates Tantric rites (offering to a *maṇḍala,* recitation of *mantras*) into a structure composed of elements from pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism (e.g., the Refuges), and Mahāyāna ritual (confession, vows, dedication of merit).

More complex liturgies include rites of initiation or consecration *(abhiṣeka)* and empowerment *(adhiṣṭhāna),* rites that may have roots going as far back as the *Atharvaveda.* The burnt-offering rites *(homa)* also have Vedic and Brahmanic counterparts. Elements of the substratum are also evident in the frequent invocation of *yakṣas* and *devatās,* the propitiation of spirits, and the underlying sexual and alchemical symbolism.

Meditation. The practice of Tantric visualization *(sādhana)* was even more a part of ritual than the Mahāyāna meditation session. It was always set in a purely ritual frame similar to the structure of the daily ritual summarized above. A complete *sādhana* would integrate pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna liturgical and contemplative processes with Tantric visualization. The meditator would first go through a gradual process of purification (sometimes including ablutions) usually constructed on the model of the Mahāyāna "sevenfold service." He would then visualize the mystical syllable corresponding to his chosen deity. The syllable would be transformed into a series of images that would lead finally to clear visualization of the deity. Once the deity was visualized clearly, the adept would become one with it. But this oneness was interpreted as the realization of the nondual; therefore, the deity became the adept as much as the adept was turned into a deity. Thus, the transcendent could be actualized in the adept's life beyond meditation in the fulfillment of the *bodhisattva* vows.

Tantric Doctrine. Tantric symbolism was interpreted in the context of Mahāyāna orthodoxy. It is therefore possible to explain Tantric theoretical conceptions as a natural development from Mahāyāna. The immanence of Buddhahood is explicitly

connected with the Mahāyāna doctrine of the identity of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* and the teachings of those Yogācārins who believed that consciousness is inherently pure. The magical symbolism of Tantra can be traced—again through explicit references—to the doctrine of the *bodhisattva* as magician: since the world is like a dream, like a magical apparition, one can be free of it by knowing the dream as dream—knowing and controlling the magical illusion as a magician would control it. The *bodhisattva* (and therefore the *siddha*) is able to play the magical trick of the world without deceiving himself into believing it real.

One should not forget, however, that what is distinctively Tantric is not limited to the externals of ritual and symbolism. The special symbolism transforms its Mahāyāna context because of the specifically Tantric understanding of immanence. The Buddha is present in the human body innately, but the Buddha nature is manifested only when one realizes the "three mysteries," or "three secrets." It is not enough to be free from the illusion of the world; one becomes free by living *in* illusion in such a way that illusion becomes the manifestation of Buddhahood. Tantra seeks to construct an alternative reality, such that a mentally constructed world reveals the fundamental illusion of the world and manifests the mysterious power of the Buddha through illusion. The human body, the realm of the senses, is to be transformed into the body of a Buddha, the senses of a Buddha.

The body, mind, and speech of the Buddha (the Three Mysteries) have specific characteristics that must be recognized and reproduced. In ritual terms this means that the adept actualizes Buddhahood when he performs prostrations and ritual gestures (*mudrās*); he speaks with the voice of the Buddha when he utters *mantras*; his mind is the mind of the Buddha when he visualizes the deity. The magical dimension is evident: the power of the Buddha lives in the formalized "demeanor of a Buddha." But the doctrine also implies transforming the body by a mystical alchemy (rooted in substratum sexual alchemy) from which is derived the soteriological meaning of the doctrine: the ritual changes the human person into a Buddha, all his human functions become sacred. Then this person's mind is the mind of an awakened being, it knows all things; the body assumes the appearance appropriate to save any living being; the voice is able to speak in the language of any living being needing to be saved. [*See also* Soteriology, *article on* Buddhist Soteriology.]

The Decline of Buddhism in India

With Harṣa's death Indian Buddhism could depend only on the royal patronage of the Pāla dynasty of Bihar and Bengal (c. 650–950), who soon favored the institutions they had founded—Vikramaśīla (c. 800), Odantapurī (c. 760). The last shining lights of Nālandā were the Mādhyamika masters Śāntirakṣita and Kamalaśīla, both of whom participated actively in the conversion of Tibet. Then the ancient university was eclipsed by its rival Vikramaśīla, which saw its final glory in the eleventh century.

Traditionally, the end of Indian Buddhism has been identified with the sack of the two great universities by the troops of the Turk Muḥammad Ghūrī: Nālandā in 1197 and Vikramaśīla in 1203. But, although the destruction of Nālandā put an end to its former glory, Nālandā lingered on. When the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin (1197–1264) visited the site of the ancient university in 1235 he found a few monks teaching in two monasteries remaining among the ruins of eighty-two others. In this way

Buddhism would stay on in India for a brief time, but under circumstances well illustrated by the decay witnessed by Dharmasvāmin—even as he was there, the Turks mounted another raid to further ransack what was left of Nālandā.

For a long time scholars have debated the causes for the decline of Buddhism in India. Although there is little chance of agreement on a problem so complex—and on which we have precious little evidence—some of the reasons adduced early are no longer widely accepted. For instance, the notion that Tantric Buddhism was a "degenerate form" of Buddhism that contributed to or brought about the disappearance of Buddhism is no longer entertained by the scholarly community. The image of a defenseless, pacifist Buddhist community annihilated by invading hordes of Muslim warriors is perhaps also a simplification. Though the Turkish conquerors of India were far from benevolent, the Arabs who occupied Sindh in 711 seem to have accepted a state of peaceful coexistence with the local population. Furthermore, one must still understand why Jainism and Hinduism survived the Muslim invasion while Buddhism did not.

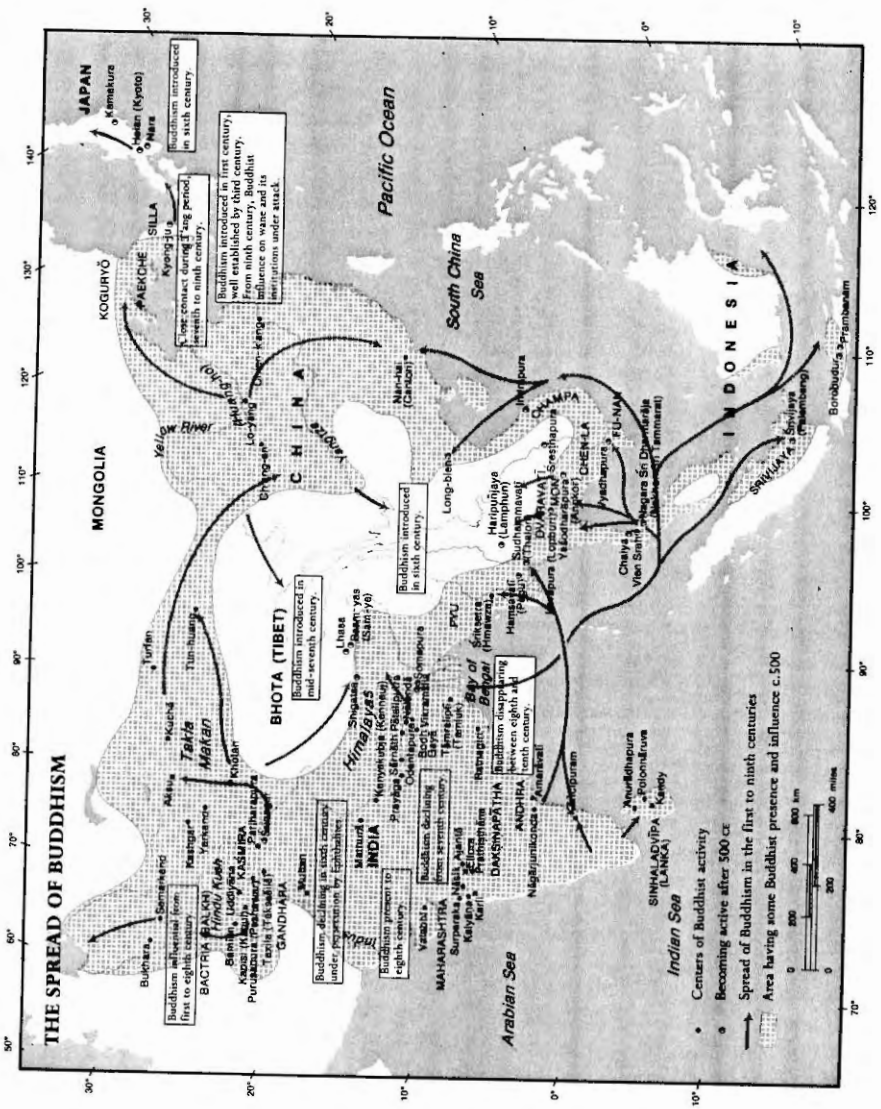
Buddhist relations with Hindu and Jain monarchs were not always peaceful—witness the conquest of Bihar by the Bengali Śaiva king Śaśiṅka (c. 618). Even without the intervention of intolerance, the growth of Hinduism, with its firm roots in Indian society and freedom from the costly institution of the monastery, offered a colossal challenge to Buddhism. The eventual triumph of Hinduism can be followed by a number of landmarks often associated with opposition to Buddhism: the spread of Vaiṣṇavism (in which the Buddha appears as a deceptive *avatāra* of Viṣṇu); the great Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva saints of the South, the Āḻvārs and Nāyaṇārs, respectively, whose Hindu patrons were openly hostile to Buddhism and Jainism; the ministry of Śaṅkara in Mysore (788–850), a critic of Buddhism who was himself accused of being a "crypto-Buddhist"; and the triumph of Śaivism in Kashmir (c. 800). [*See* Vaiṣṇavism, *overview article;* Āḻvars; Śaivism, *overview article and article on* Nāyaṇārs; Kṛṣṇaism; Avatāra; *and the biography of Śaṅkara.*]

But the causes for the disappearance of Buddhism were subtle: the assimilation of Buddhist ideas and practices into Hinduism and the inverse process of the Hinduization of Buddhism, with the advantage of Hinduism as a religion of the land and the locality. More important than these were perhaps the internal causes for the decline: dependence on monastic institutions that did not have broad popular support but relied exclusively on royal patronage; and isolation of monasteries from the life of the village community, owing to the tendency of the monasteries to look inward and to lose interest in proselytizing and serving the surrounding communities.

The disappearance of Buddhism in India may have been precipitated by the Muslim invasion, but it was caused primarily by internal factors, the most important of which seems to have been the gradual assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism. The Muslim invasion, especially the Turkish conquest of the Ganges Valley, was the *coup de grace;* we may consider it the dividing line between two eras, but it was not the primary cause for the disappearance of Buddhism from India. [*See* Islam, *articles on* Islam in Central Asia *and* Islam in South Asia.]

Buddhist Remnants and Revivals in the Subcontinent

After the last days of the great monastic institutions (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) Indian Buddhism lingered on in isolated pockets in the subcontinent. During the



period of Muslim and British conquest (thirteenth to nineteenth century) it was almost completely absorbed by Hinduism and Islam, and gave no sign of creative life until modern attempts at restoration (nineteenth and twentieth centuries). Therefore, a hiatus of roughly six hundred years separates the creative period of Indian Buddhism from its modern manifestations.

BUDDHISM OF THE FRONTIER

As the Turk occupation of India advanced, the last great scholars of India escaped from Kashmir and Bihar to Tibet and Nepal. But the flight of Buddhist talent also responded to the attraction of royal patronage and popular support in other lands. The career of Atīśa (Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, 982–1054), who emigrated to Tibet in 1042, is emblematic of the great loss incurred by Indian Buddhism in losing its monk-scholars. He combined extensive studies in Mahāyāna philosophy and Tantra in India with a sojourn in Sumatra under the tutorship of Dharmakīrti. He had studied with Bodhibhadra (the successor of Nā-ro-pa when the latter left Vikramaśīla to become a wandering ascetic), and was head master *(upādhyāya)* of Vikramaśīla and Odantapurī at the time of King Bheyapāla. He left for Tibet at the invitation of Byaṅ-chub-'od, apparently attracted by a large monetary offer. [*See the biography of Atiśa.*]

The migration of the Indian scholars, and a steady stream of Tibetan students, made possible the exportation of Buddhist academic institutions and traditions to Tibet, where they were preserved until the Chinese suppression of 1959. The most learned monks were pushed out to the Himalayan and Bengali frontiers in part because the Indian communities were no longer willing to support the monasteries. Certain forms of Tantra, dependent only on householder priests, could survive, mostly in Bengal and in the Himalayan foothills. But some Theravādin Buddhists also survived in East Bengal—most of them taking refuge in India after the partition, some remaining in Bangladesh and Assam. [*See* Bengali Religions.]

Himalayan Buddhism of direct Indian ancestry remains only in Nepal, where it can be observed even today in suspended animation, partly fused with local Hinduism, as it must have been in the Gangetic plain during the twelfth century. Nepalese Buddhists produced what may very well be considered the last major Buddhist scripture composed in the subcontinent, the *Svayaṃbhū Purāṇa* (c. fifteenth century). This text is an open window into the last days of Indian Buddhism. It reveals the close connection between Buddhist piety and non-Buddhist sacred localities, the formation of a Buddhist cosmogonic ontology (the Ādibuddha), and the role of Tantric ritual in the incorporation of religious elements from the substratum. Nepalese Buddhism survives under the tutelage of married Tantric priests, called *vajrācāryas*. It is therefore sometimes referred to as "Vajrācārya Buddhism."

Buddhism of Tibetan origin survives in the subcontinent mostly in Ladakh, Sikkim, and Bhutan, but also in Nepal. [*See* Himalayan Religions.] Perhaps the most significant presence in modern India, however, is that of the Tibetan refugee communities. The Tibetan diaspora includes about eighty thousand persons, among which are several thousand monks. Some have retained their monastic robes and have reconstructed in India their ancient Buddhist academic curricula, returning to the land of origin the disciplines of the classical universities. So far their impact on Indian society at large has been insignificant and their hope of returning to Tibet dwindles with the passing of time. But the preservation, on Indian soil, of the classical traditions of Nālandā and Vikramaśīla is hardly a trivial accomplishment.

ATTEMPTED REVIVAL: THE MAHĀBODHI SOCIETY

Attempts to revive Buddhism in the land of its origin began with the Theosophical Society, popularized in Sri Lanka in the early 1880s by the American Henry S. Olcott. Although the society eventually became the vehicle for broader and less defined speculative goals, it inspired new pride in Buddhists after years of colonial oppression. [*See* Theosophical Society.] The Sinhala monk Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933; born David Hewavitarane) set out to modernize Buddhist education. He also worked untiringly to restore the main pilgrimage sites of India, especially the temple of Bodh Gayā, which had fallen in disrepair and had been under Hindu administration for several centuries. To this end he founded in 1891 the Mahābodhi Society, still a major presence in Indian Buddhism.

AMBEDKAR AND "NEO-BUDDHISM"

The most significant Buddhist mass revival of the new age was led by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956). He saw Buddhism as the gospel for India's oppressed and read in the Buddhist scriptures ideals of equality and justice. After many years of spiritual search, he became convinced that Buddhism was the only ideology that could effect the eventual liberation of Indian outcastes. On 14 October 1956 he performed a mass "consecration" of Buddhists in Nagpur, Maharashtra. The new converts were mostly from the "scheduled caste" of the *mahārs*. Although his gospel is in some way on the fringes of Buddhist orthodoxy, Buddhist monks from other parts of Asia have ministered to the spiritual needs of his converts, and inspired Indian Buddhists refer to him as "Bodhisattva Ambedkar." [*See* Marathi Religions *and the biography of Ambedkar.*]

OTHER ASPECTS OF MODERN BUDDHISM

The most fruitful and persistent effort in the rediscovery of Indian Buddhism has been in the West, primarily among Western scholars. The achievements of European scholars include a modern critical edition of the complete Pali canon, published by the Pāli Text Society (founded in London in 1881), and the recovery of original texts of parts of the canon of the Sarvāstivāda. The combined effort of Indian, North American and European historians, archaeologists, and art historians has placed Indian Buddhism in a historical and social context, which, though still only understood in its rough outlines, allows us to see Buddhism in its historical evolution.

Japanese scholarship has also made great strides since the beginning of the twentieth century. The publication in Japan of three different editions of the Chinese canon between 1880 and 1929 may be seen as the symbolic beginning of a century of productive critical scholarship that has placed Japan at the head of modern research into Indian Buddhism. [*See* Buddhist Studies.]

Another interesting phenomenon of the contemporary world is the appearance of "neo-Buddhists" in Europe and North America. Although most of these groups have adopted extra-Indian forms of Buddhism, their interest in the scriptural traditions of India has created an audience and a demand for research into India's Buddhist past. The Buddhist Society, founded in London in 1926, and the Amis du Bouddhisme, founded in Paris in 1928, both supported scholarship and encouraged the Buddhist revival in India.

In spite of the revived interest in India of the last century, the prospects of an effective Buddhist revival in the land of Śākyamuni seem remote. It is difficult to imagine a successful living Buddhism in India today or in the near future. The possibility of the religion coming back to life may depend on the reimportation of the Dharma into India from another land. It remains to be seen if Ambedkar and Anagārika Dharmapāla had good reasons for hope in a Buddhist revival, or if in fact the necessary social conditions for the existence of Indian Buddhism disappeared with the last monarchs of the Pāla dynasty.

[*See also* Indian Religions.]

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TWO

THE PAN-ASIAN BUDDHIST WORLD

11 HINAYANA BUDDHISM

ANDRÉ BAREAU

Translated from French by David M. Weeks

The term *Hīnayāna* refers to the group of Buddhist schools or sects that appeared before the beginning of the common era and those directly derived from them. The word *Hīnayāna*, which means "small vehicle," that is, "lesser means of progress" toward liberation, is pejorative. It was applied disdainfully to these early forms of Buddhism by the followers of the great reformist movement that arose just at the beginning of the common era, which referred to itself as the Mahāyāna, or "large vehicle," that is, "greater means of progress" toward liberation. Indeed, the adherents of the Mahāyāna charged those of the Hīnayāna with selfishly pursuing only their own personal salvation, whereas they themselves claimed an interest in the liberation of all beings and vowed to postpone their own deliverance until the end of time. In other words, the ideal of the practitioners of the Hīnayāna was the *arhat* (Pali, *arahant*), the saint who has attained *nirvāṇa*, while that of the Mahāyāna was the *bodhisattva*, the all-compassionate hero who, resolving to become a Buddha in some far-distant future, dedicated the course of his innumerable lives to saving beings of all kinds. It would be more correct to give the name "early Buddhism" to what is called Hīnayāna, for the term denotes the whole collection of the most ancient forms of Buddhism: those earlier than the rise of the Mahāyāna and those that share the same inspiration as these and have the same ideal, namely the *arhat*. [*See* Arhat.]

Although it is directly descended from the earliest Buddhism—that originally preached by the Buddha himself—this early Buddhism is distinguished from it by the continual additions and reformulations of its adherents and teachers in their desire to deepen and perfect the interpretation of the ancient teaching. This constant, and quite legitimate, effort gave rise to many debates, controversies, and divisions that resulted in the appearance of a score of sects or schools. The actual, original teaching of the Buddha is accessible to us only through the canonic texts of these schools, texts that were set down in writing only about the beginning of the common era and reflect the divergences that already existed among these sects. Moreover, only a very small part of this vast canonic literature has survived, either in its original Indian language or in Chinese or Tibetan translation, and for this reason our knowledge of the doctrine taught by the Buddha himself still remains rather vague and conjectural. We do not possess all the documents necessary to

recover it with certainty: even by compiling all the doctrinal and other elements common to the canonic texts we do have, we can reach, at best, only a stage of Buddhist doctrine immediately prior to the divergence of these schools. Their texts have been preserved for us by the mere chances of history.

The Indic word, both Sanskrit and Pali, that we translate here as "school" or "sect" is *nikāya*, meaning, properly, "group." In our context, it refers to a group of initiates, most likely monks *(bhikṣus)* rather than laymen, who sincerely profess to be faithful disciples of the Buddha but are distinguishable from other similar groups in that they base their beliefs on a body of canonic texts that differs from others to a greater or lesser extent. These differences between canonic texts involve not only their wording or written form but also a certain number of doctrinal elements and rules of monastic discipline. Despite the disaggregative pressures to which they were exposed (the same pressures, indeed, that created them), despite their geographical expansion and sometimes considerable dispersion, and notwithstanding the vicissitudes of history, which often posed new problems for them, most of these groups preserved a remarkable internal cohesiveness throughout several centuries. Still, schisms did occur within many of them, leading to the formation of new schools. Moreover, to judge from the documents we have—though these are unfortunately very scarce—it seems that relations among these various groups were generally good. Their disputes remained at the level of more or less lively discussion and degenerated into more serious conflicts only when involving questions of economics or politics.

Several factors account for these divisions and for the formation of these sects or schools. First of all, the Buddhist monastic community *(saṃgha)* never knew a supreme authority, imposing its unity by powerful and diverse methods, as was long the case in Christianity with its papacy. If we believe some canonic texts that seem to faithfully reflect reality, the Buddha himself was probably faced with several instances of insubordination on the part of certain groups of his monks and was not always able to overcome them. The oldest traditions, furthermore, agree that he did not designate a successor to head the community but only counseled his followers to remain faithful to his Doctrine (Dharma). This was a fragile defense against the forces that tried to break up the community once it was "orphaned" by the death of its founder.

For at least five centuries, the Buddha's teaching was actually preserved by oral transmission alone, very probably in different, though related, dialects. This, and the absence of an authoritative ecclesiastical hierarchy in the *saṃgha*, constitute two obvious sources of progressive distortion and alteration of the message left by the Blessed One to his immediate disciples. Furthermore, this message was not entirely clear or convincing to everyone it addressed, leading Buddhist preachers to furnish explanations and interpretations of the teaching. Finally, the teaching given by the Buddha was far from a complete system containing solutions to all the problems that might occur to the minds of people as diverse as those it was destined to reach. Thus, monks and lay disciples, as well as people outside Buddhism but curious and interested in its doctrine—brahman opponents, Jains, and others—easily found numerous flaws, errors, and contradictions in the teaching. These troubled the *saṃgha* but pleased those who were determined to refute or discredit it. Although the Buddhist preachers who improvised answers to these varied questions and objections were guided by what they knew and understood of the Buddha's teaching,

their attempts expanded upon the original teaching and at the same time inevitably created new causes for differences and disputes within the heart of the community itself.

According to some eminent scholars, we must distinguish Buddhist "sects" from "schools." Sects, under this interpretation, were invariably born from serious dissent over issues of monastic discipline. Such dissent resulted in a fracturing of the community, a *saṃghabheda*, or schism, the participants in which ceased to live together or carry on a common religious life. By contrast, schools were differentiated by divergences of opinion on doctrinal points, but their dissension in these matters never gave rise to actual schisms or open hostility. This interpretation is certainly attractive, but it must be mitigated somewhat by the recognition that the actual situation prevailing between the various communities of the early church was somewhat more complex and variable than that indicated by the theory advanced here.

ORIGIN AND RELATIONSHIP OF THE SECTS AND SCHOOLS

All the documents from which we can draw information about the origin of the early Buddhist groups were written after the beginning of the common era and are therefore unreliable. Nevertheless, since the oldest of these texts generally agree on the main points, we can attempt to restore with a certain amount of confidence the common tradition from which they derive. This should provide a fairly accurate reflection of the true interrelationships among the sects and schools.

The first division of the community probably occurred toward the middle of the fourth century BCE, some time after the council of Vaiśālī but having no direct connection with this event, the claims of the Sinhala (Theravāda) tradition notwithstanding. The schism was probably caused by a number of disagreements on the nature of the *arhats*, who, according to some authorities, retained imperfections even though they had attained *nirvāṇa* in this world. Because they were more numerous, the supporters of these ideas formed a group called the Mahāsāṃghikas, "those of the larger community"; their opponents, who claimed to remain faithful to the teaching of the Buddha's first disciples and denied that the *arhat* could retain any imperfections, took the name Sthaviravādins, "those who speak as the elders" or "those who teach the doctrine of the old ones."

Each of these two groups were then, in turn, divided progressively into several sects or schools. Although we are in little doubt about their origins as Mahāsāṃghikas or Sthaviravādins, we often do not know precisely how these subsequent sects were linked with the first two groups, nor do we know the circumstances or time in which they appeared. We are particularly bereft of information about the sects and schools that arose directly or indirectly from the Mahāsāṃghika.

Among the groups that developed from the Mahāsāṃghika were the Ekavyāvahārika, then the Gokulika, and finally the Caitika schools. The Ekavyāvahārikas probably gave rise, in turn, to the Lokottaravādins, but it may be that the Lokottaravādins were simply a form taken by the Ekavyāvahārikas at a particular time because of the evolution of their doctrine. From the Gokulikas came the Bahuśrutīyas and the Prajñaptivādins. At least a part of the Caitika school settled in southern India, on the lower Krishna River, shortly before the beginning of the common era. From them two important sects soon arose: the Pūrvaśailas and the Aparaśailas, then a little later the Rājagirikas and the Siddhārthikas. Together, the four sects formed Andhraka group,

which took its name from the area (Andhra) where they thrived during the first few centuries CE.

The Sthaviravāda group seems to have remained united until about the beginning of the third century BCE, when the Vātsīputrīyas, who maintained the existence of a quasi-autonomous "person" *(pudgala)*, split off. A half century later, probably during the reign of Aśoka (consecrated c. 268 BCE), the Sarvāstivādins also separated from the non-Vātsīputrīya Sthaviravādins and settled in northwest India. This time the dispute was over the Sarvāstivādin notion that "everything exists" *(sarvam asti)*. In the beginning of the second century, the remaining Sthaviravādins, who appear to have taken at this time the name Vibhajyavādins, "those who teach discrimination," to distinguish themselves from the Sarvāstivādins, found themselves divided once again. Out of this dispute were born the Mahīśāsakas and the Dharmaguptakas, who opposed each other over whether the Buddha, properly speaking, belonged to the monastic community and over the relative value of offerings made to the Blessed One and those made to the community. At an unknown date about the beginning of the common era four new groups sprang from the Vātsīputrīyas: the Dharmottarīyas, the Bhadrayānīyas, the Ṣaṇṇagarikas, and the Sammatīyas. The Sammatīyas, who were very important in Indian Buddhism, later gave rise to the Avantaka and the Kurukulla schools. One group broke from the Sarvāstivādins: the Sautrāntikas, who can be identified with the Dārṣṭāntikas and the Saṃkrāntivādins.

Some of the Vibhajyavādins settled in southern India and Lanka in the mid-third century BCE and seem to have maintained fairly close relations for some time with the Mahīśāsakas, whose presence is attested in the same area. Adopting Pali as a canonical language and energetically claiming their teaching to be the strict orthodoxy, they took the name Theravādins, a Pali form of the Sanskrit Sthaviravādins. Like the Sthaviravādins, they suffered from internal squabbles and divisions: some years before the common era, the Abhayagirivāsins split from the Mahāvihāras, founded at the time of the arrival of Buddhism in Lanka; later, in the fourth century, the Jetavanīyas appeared.

Finally, three sects derived from the Sthaviravādins present some problems regarding their precise relationship and identity. The Kāśyapīyas, whose basic position was a compromise between those of the Sarvāstivādins and the Vibhajyavādins, apparently broke from the latter shortly after the split that created the Sarvāstivāda and Vibhajyavāda *nikāyas*. More mysterious are the Haimavatas, about whom the facts are both scarce and contradictory. As for the Mūlasarvāstivādins, or "radical Sarvāstivādins," they appeared suddenly at the end of the seventh century with a huge "basket of discipline" (Vinaya Piṭaka) in Sanskrit, much different in many respects from that of the earlier Sarvāstivādins. It is impossible to determine exactly what connection the Mūlasarvāstivādins had with the Sarvāstivādins.

Except for a few of the more important of these sects and schools—such as the Theravādins, who left us the treasure of their celebrated Sinhala chronicles—we know nothing of the history of these different groups. Their existence is nevertheless assured, thanks to the testimony of a fair number of inscriptions and other substantial documents. To judge from the information given by Hsüan-tsang and I-ching, by the time they made their long visits to India in the seventh century, most of the sects had already disappeared. Of all the many groups descended from the original Mahāsāṃghikas, only the Lokottaravādins were still numerous and thriving, but

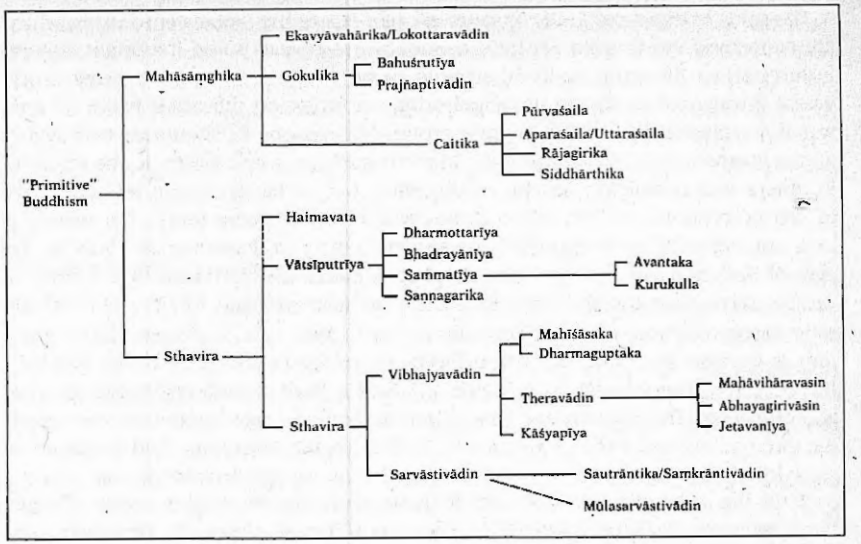

FIGURE 1: Filiation of the Hīnayāna Sects

only in a very specific location, Bamian (Bāmiyān, in present-day Afghanistan). (See figure 1.)

Here arises an important question, one whose answer is still uncertain: what connections existed between these early Buddhist sects and schools, known as Hīnayāna, and the groups formed by the followers of the Mahāyāna? Were any of them—in particular those of Mahāsāṃghika origin—converted in large numbers to the Mahāyāna, or did they perhaps give birth to it through the natural evolution of their doctrine? Should we interpret in this sense the expression Mahāyāna-Sthaviravādin, which Hsüan-tsang used to refer to numerous Buddhist communities he encountered throughout India, and deduce from it that their followers were Sthaviravādins converted to the Mahāyāna? Or did believers of both groups live together, without mingling, in the areas where they were found? This second interpretation strikes one as more satisfactory; nevertheless, the first cannot be rejected definitively.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Two types of records inform us about the geographical distribution of the sects and schools: inscriptions and the reports of a number of Chinese pilgrims who came to India. Numbering only a few tens and ranging in time between the second century BCE and the sixth century CE, the inscriptions that mention early sects give us only spotty and very insufficient data. Although they may actually attest to the presence of a given group in a specific place at a particular date, they leave us completely ignorant about the presence or absence of this sect in other places and at other times. The information supplied by the Chinese travelers, principally Hsüan-tsang and to a lesser extent I-ching, is incomparably more complete, but it is valid only for the seventh century, when their journeys took place.

The study of these two kinds of sources—like that of the Sinhala chronicles, which are concerned mostly with Sri Lankan Buddhism—reveals some important general features about the early Buddhist schools. None of the groups was present everywhere throughout India and its neighboring countries; on the other hand, no area was the exclusive domain of any one group. For reasons that unfortunately nearly always escape us, certain groups were in the majority in some places, in the minority in others, and completely absent in still others but, as far as we can tell, coexisted in varying proportions with other groups wherever they were found. For example, in a number of places—especially those that history or legend made holy in the eyes of Buddhist devotees and were important places of pilgrimage—the monks of various sects lived together in neighboring monasteries and often venerated the same sacred objects—topes (*stūpas*), Bodhi trees, and others. This was the case not only in the holy places in the Ganges Basin, where the major events in the Buddha's life occurred, but also far from there, in Sāñchī, Karlī, Amarāvatī,Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, and elsewhere. In Sri Lanka, the three great monasteries that became the centers of the three subsects of the Theravāda, the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagiri, and the Jetavana, were located on the outskirts of the island's ancient capital, Anurādhapura.

All of the sects and schools seem to have been present in the middle Ganges Basin, which is easily understandable since the principal places of pilgrimage were located there. The more important ones, which originatedin both the Mahāsāṃghika and Sthaviravāda groups, also appear to have coexisted in eastern India, Bengal, and nearby areas, at least in the seventh century, as reported by both Hsüan-tsang and I-ching.

The Theravādins always dominated most of Sri Lanka and still do today. In the eleventh century, they also largely converted the Burmese, followed a little later by the people of Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, where they continue to exercise religious dominion today. In the seventh century, the Vibhajyavāda Sthaviravādins, who were very close, if not identical, to the Theravādins, likewise controlled all the Tamil country, the part of India nearest to Sri Lanka, and were also extremely numerous in the coastal region north of Bombay and near Buddhist holy places on the Ganges from which people embarked on journeys to Lanka and southern India.

Very little is known about the location of the sects most closely related to these. The presence of the Mahīśāsakas is recorded both in the Indian northwest, on the banks of the Krishna, and in Sri Lanka; that of the Dharmaguptakas in the Indian northwest only; and that of the Kāśyapīyas mostly in the Indian northwest but also around Bombay. The Sarvāstivādins were clearly in a majority over all of northwest India, from the upper Ganges Basin to Kashmir, from the mid-third century BCE to at least the seventh century CE.

In the seventh century, the Sammatīyas formed the sect comprising the largest number of monks and generally controlled all of western India, from the middle Indus Valley to southeast of Bombay. They were also very numerous throughout the Ganges Basin and in eastern India. Several inscriptions testify to the presence, at the beginning of the common era, of Dharmottarīyas and Bhadrayānīyas in the area of Bombay.

Data concerning the Mahāsāṃghika proper, and most of the sects that developed from it, are rare and widely scattered. We know for certain that the Mahāsāṃghika existed in northwestern India, around Bombay and on the banks of the lower Krishna. Caitikas also inhabited these last two areas but primarily the second, where

Bahuśrutīyas also resided. By the seventh century, the Lokottaravādins had made Bamian, in the heart of present-day Afghanistan, one of the main centers of Buddhism in the Indo-Iranian realms and were still very numerous there, as Hsüan-tsang reports. The Pūrvaśailas, Aparaśailas, Rājagirikas, and Siddhārtikas prospered during the first centuries of the common era in the lower Krishna Valley, which they covered with magnificent monuments, but by the beginning of the seventh century they had almost disappeared.

MAJOR DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES

We are well acquainted with the principal doctrinal differences that gave rise to many of these schools, the basic ideas that distinguish them, and the reactions and rebuttals the various sects offered each other. In most cases, though, and particularly with regard to the apparently less important sects, our information is unfortunately too vague, and sometimes even contradictory or nonexistent, to tell us anything about the specifics of their doctrine.

Although many questions divided all or some of the schools, they did not provoke the formation of new sects. These debates were sometimes very important for the evolution of Buddhism as a whole. Often, various of the early sects that we might expect to hold similar views given their genesis in fact adopted doctrinal opinions at great variance with one another. Thus, there often came about, among schools with similar opinions on specific questions, entirely different regroupings from those one would expect in light of their traditional relationships. Let us first examine the fundamental ideas that appear to have brought about the formation of the principal sects.

The Mahāsāṃghikas probably separated from the Sthaviravādins over the belief that certain *arhats*, although they had attained *nirvāṇa* in this world, could be subject to nocturnal defilements as a result of erotic dreams; that they still harbored vestiges of ignorance; that they had areas of doubt on matters outside Buddhist doctrine; that they could be informed, indeed saved, by other people; and, finally, that they utter certain words when they meditated on the Path of Liberation. The Sthaviravādins denied these five possibilities, arguing that the *arhat* is completely free of all imperfections.

The Vātsīputrīyas and the schools that later developed from them, the Sammatīyas and others, believed in the existence of a "person" *(pudgala)* who is neither identical to the five aggregates (*skandhas*) that make up the living being nor different from them; neither within these five aggregates nor outside them. Although differing from the Brahmanic "soul" *(ātman)*, denied unanimously by Buddhist doctrine, this "person" lives on from one existence to the next, thus ensuring the continuing identities of the agent of an act and of the being who suffers its effects in this life or the next. All the other schools rejected this hypothesis, maintaining the logical impossibility of conceptualizing this "person" and seeing in it simply a disguised form of the *ātman*.

The Sarvāstivādins claimed that "everything exists" *(sarvam asti)*, that is, that the past and the future have real and material existence. This belief enabled them to explain several phenomena that were very important to Buddhists: the act of consciousness, which is made up of several successive, individual mental actions; memory or consciousness of the past; foresight or consciousness of the future; and the

"ripening" *(vipāka)* of "actions" *(karman),* which takes place over a longer or shorter span of time, often exceeding the length of a single life. For the other sects, however, it was perfectly clear that what is past exists no longer and that what is to come does not yet exist.

The Kāśyapīyas, also called Suvarṣakas, maintained a position between these two, namely, that a past action that has not yet borne fruit exists, but the rest of the past does not. This approach, however, satisfied neither the Sarvāstivādins nor their critics.

The Sautrāntikas distinguished themselves from the Sarvāstivādins insofar as they considered the canonic "basket of sermons" (Sūtra Piṭaka) to be the only one to contain the authentic words of the Buddha, whereas the "basket of higher teaching" (Abhidharma Piṭaka) is the work of the Blessed One's disciples. According to some of our sources, the Sautrāntikas were also called Saṃkrāntivādins because they held that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) constituting the living being "transmigrate" *(saṃkrānti)* from one existence to the next; probably this should be understood to mean that, in their view, four of these aggregates were absorbed at the moment of death into the fifth, a subtle consciousness. It also seems that the Sautrāntikas can be identified with the Dārṣṭāntikas, who were often criticized in the Sarvāstivāda writings and apparently gained their name because of their frequent use of comparisons or parables (*dṛṣṭānta*s) in their discussions.

An important disagreement separated the Mahīśāsakas from the Dharmaguptakas. For the former, the Buddha is part of the monastic community *(saṃgha);* hence a gift given to the community produces a "greatfruit" *(mahāphalam),* but one directed specifically to the Buddba does not. The Dharmaguptakas, on the other hand, held that the Buddha is separate from the community, and as he is far superior to it—since it is composed only of his followers—only the gift given to the Buddha produces a great fruit. These two opposing views had considerable influence on the religious practices of early Buddhism.

The Lokottaravādins differed from other Mahāsāṃghika schools in holding that the Buddhas are "otherworldly" *(lokottara),* a word having several very different senses but which they employed loosely to attribute an extraordinary nature to the Buddhas. According to them, the Buddhas are otherworldly not only because their thought is always perfectly pure but also because they remain outside and above the world. Thus it would seem to be among the Lokottaravādins that we should seek the origin of Buddhist docetism, that is, the distinction between the real, transcendent, and infinite Buddha, the "body of doctrine" *(dharmakāya),* and the apparent Buddha, the "body of magical creation" *(nirmāṇakāya)*—a kind of phantom emanating from the real one. To rescue beings, the *nirmāṇakāya* becomes incarnate, taking on their form and thus seeming to be born, to grow up, to discover and preach the doctrine of enlightenment, and to finally die and become completely extinguished. The Lokottaravādins must have also extolled the extraordinary character of the *bodhisattva,* undoubtedly on account of their supernatural conception of the Buddhas. These singular notions lead one to believe that this sect played an important part in the formation of the Mahāyāna, whose teaching adopted and developed similar ideas.

As their name seems to indicate, the Prajñaptivādins were probably distinguished from the other schools that arose from the Mahāsāṃghika group because they taught

that all things are mere products of linguistic convention *(prajñapti)* and, hence, are devoid of actual existence. One might see here the origin of the famous theory of the universal "void" *(śūnyatā),* which is one of the basic elements of the Mahāyāna doctrine and is the main theme, reiterated with the greatest insistence, of its oldest works, the first Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras.

Unfortunately, we do not know the basic premises of the other schools, whether they arose from the Sthaviravāda group or the Mahāsāṃghika. The data that have come down to us concerning a few of them, such as the Gokulikas (also called Kukkuṭikas), the Bahuśrutīyas, the Sammatīyas, and some others, are very doubtful, vague, or extremely obscure, even contradictory. For others, we possess no information at all.

As noted above, hundreds of controversies also set the various schools apart from one another without provoking new divisions of the community. Most of these debates apparently concerned only two or three sects and lasted for a short time—unless this impression is due solely to our lack of information. On the other hand, certain of these arguments affected, and even impassioned, a large number of schools for long periods, sometimes for centuries, as evidenced by the treatises and commentaries on canonic texts that have come down to us. In these more important controversies the distribution of the sects between the two opposing camps is often independent of their derivational connections. It may be that relations of good neighborliness and, hence, ties based on geographical distribution favored such doctrinal alliances. In any case, I will point out the most significant of these divergences of opinion, which are important features in the history of early Buddhist thought.

The Sarvāstivādins, the Sammatīyas, and the Pūrvaśailas firmly believed in an "intermediate existence" *(antarābhava)* that linked death and rebirth. This concept was rejected by the Theravādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas. The latter, along with the Andhakas and the Sarvāstivādins, maintained that the *bodhisattva* may be born in the so-called "evil existences" *(durgati),* even in the various hells, to lighten the sufferings of the beings who live in them. The Theravādins denied that this was possible because, in their view, of the automatic retribution consequent upon all actions, a retribution that completely determines the circumstances of rebirths. According to the Vātsīputrīyas, the Sammatīyas, the Sarvāstivādins, and the Pūrvaśailas, the *arhat*s could backslide in varying degrees and even lose *nirvāṇa,* but the Theravādins, Mahāsāṃghikas, and Sautrāntikas refused to accept this idea. The Theravādins, the Sarvāstivādins, and the Dharmaguptakas agreed that it was possible for the gods to practice the sexual abstinence *(brahmacarya)* of ascetics, whereas the Sammatīyas and the Mahīśāsakas judged this impossible. For the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins, there were only five fates (*gatis*), namely, those of gods, men, animals, starving ghosts (*pretas*), and the damned, but the Andhakas and the Vātsīputrīyas added another, that of the *asuras*, the superhuman beings who were adversaries of the gods (*devas*) yet were not devils in the Christian sense.

The Mahāsāṃghikas, the Theravādins, and the Mahīśāsakas taught that the clear understanding *(abhisamaya)* of the Four Noble Truths *(catvāry āryasatyāni)* was instantaneous, whereas the Andhakas, the Sarvāstivādins, and the Sammatīyas believed that it happened gradually. So important was this dispute that it was still the central theme of the council of Lhasa (held in the eighth century), where Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist teachers opposed each other in doctrinal debate. The Sarvās-

tivādins seem to have been alone in denying that "thought" *(citta)* is inherently pure and contaminated only by accidental impurities, a belief held by the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Theravādins, and the neighboring schools.

The Theravādins, the Vātsīputrīyas, and the Sammatīyas recognized only one absolute, or "unconditioned" *(asaṃskṛta) dharma,* namely, *nirvāṇa,* but the majority of schools also considered empty space *(ākāśa)* an unconditioned *dharma.* Several of them taught that "dependent origination" *(pratītya-samutpāda),* the path *(mārga)* of enlightenment, and sometimes other entities as well, in particular the "suchness" *(tathatā)* or "permanence" *(sthitatā)* of things, were equally absolute and unconditioned. Thus, the ideas of these schools were quite close to those of the Mahāyāna.

Several important debates centered on the nature of the passions, more specifically, latent passions or tendencies *(anuśaya)* and active passions or obsessions *(paryavasthāna).* The Mahāsāṃghikas, the Andhakas, and the Mahīśāsakas set up a very precise distinction between them, while the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins chose to see in them only two aspects of the same passions. For the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins, tendencies and obsessions alike were connected, or cofunctioned, with thought *(cittasaṃprayukta),* whereas for the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Vātsīputrīyas, the Sammatīyas, and the Mahīśāsakas, tendencies were unconnected, did not cofunction, with thought *(cittaviprayukta),* while obsessions were connected with it. As for the Andhakas, they held that obsessions and tendencies were equally separate from thought.

According to the Sarvāstivādins and the Vātsīputrīyas, ascetics of other, non-Buddhist beliefs *(tīrthika)* could, through their efforts, obtain the five lesser supernatural faculties *(abhijñā)* and thus work various miracles—perceiving the thoughts of others, recollecting their past lives, seeing the rebirths of creatures as conditioned by their past actions, and so forth. The Mahīśāsakas and the Dharmaguptakas, however, declared that the five supernatural faculties—like the sixth, the cleansing of impurities, that is, the attainment of *nirvāṇa*—could be acquired only by Buddhist ascetics treading the Path of Enlightenment.

The relation between "matter" *(rūpa)* and the mechanism of the ripening *(vipāka)* of actions *(karman)* also gave rise to disagreements. For the Theravādins, matter is independent of the ripening of actions, and it is not the fruit of this ripening. It is morally neither good nor bad but inherently neutral. In contrast, the Sarvāstivādins, Sammatīyas, and Mahīśāsakas taught that matter can be good or bad when it participates, through the body of man, in a good or bad act. Matter is also the fruit of ripening when it becomes the body—be it handsome or ugly, robust or sickly—received by a person at birth as a consequence of past deeds.

According to the Sarvāstivādins, the five forms of sensory perception are always associated with passionate desires (*rāgas*). The Mahāsāṃghikas and the Mahīśāsakas thought that they were sometimes associated and sometimes unassociated with them, while the Vātsīputrīyas rejected both these possibilities, declaring that the five forms of sensory perception are morally neutral by nature and thus can never be either good or bad.

LITERATURE

The literature of early Buddhism must have been very important in extent and interest because what has been preserved for us, even though it represents only a small part of the whole, is considerable. The great majority of this literature vanished with the sects that produced it; let us recall that only one, the Theravāda, still flourishes today in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Most of the schools have left us nothing, save perhaps a few fragments, isolated *sūtras*, and other brief works in the original Indian language or more often in Chinese translation. Which sects they belonged to nearly always remains undetermined.

Roughly half of what has been handed down to us is in the original Indian language, in a more or less "hybrid" Sanskrit, in various Middle Indic dialects, and above all in Pali. It is in Pali that the body of Theravāda literature, which we possess practically in its entirety, was written. The remainder, of approximately the same size, has come down to us only in Chinese or Tibetan translations. The scope of what was preserved in the Tibetan version, as far as the Hīnayāna in particular is concerned, is much more limited than that of the Chinese translation and, moreover, is confined almost solely to works of the Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins. In Mahāyāna literature, in contrast, the enormous amount of material translated into Tibetan is virtually equal to what was translated into Chinese.

Thus, it seems that a greater proportion of the canonical literature—properly speaking, that which belonged to the Tripiṭaka ("three baskets")—than of the postcanonical literature has been passed on to us. It comprises, primarily, the complete Pali Tipiṭaka, made up of its Sutta Piṭaka ("basket of sermons"), its Vinaya Piṭaka ("basket of discipline"), and its Abhidhamma Piṭaka ("basket of higher teaching").

The Sutta Piṭaka, in turn, is composed of five Nikāyas, or "groupings," bringing together the "long" *(dīgha),* "medium" *(majjhima),* and "grouped" *(saṃyutta)* sermons; those arranged according to number of categories *(aṅguttara);* and, lastly, the "minor" *(khuddaka)* sermons, the longest and most varied section of all. The *Khuddaka Nikāya* assembles the legends of the former "births" *(jātaka)* of the Buddha, legends recounting the "deeds" *(apadāna;* Skt., *avadāna)* of the great disciples, didactic stanzas *(gāthā)* attributed to them, a famous but anonymous collection of other instructional stanzas called the *Dhammapada,* and ten or so other equally varied works.

Like the other Baskets of Discipline that have survived, the Pali Vinaya Piṭaka essentially contains three parts. These provide detailed definitions and explanations of the numerous rules of discipline imposed on monks (*bhikkus*), those to be observed by nuns (*bhikkunīs*), and specific rules concerning the material life of both: the correct use of objects they were allowed to own, ceremony, sentencing of offenders, settling of disputes, and so on.

The Pali Abhidhamma Piṭaka consists of seven different works, in which the doctrine set forth in no particular order in the sermons (*suttas*) is reorganized, classified systematically, and fleshed out at numerous points. One of these seven books, the *Kathāvatthu* (Points of Controversy), refutes more than two hundred opinions held by other Buddhist schools and in the process reveals the doctrines peculiar to the Theravāda.

Sadly, we do not possess a complete Tripiṭaka from any other early sect, but more or less significant parts of several of them have been preserved. Thus, five Vinaya Piṭakas have come to us intact: those of the Mahāsāṃghikas, Mahīśāsakas, Dharmaguptakas, Sarvāstivādins, and Mūlasarvāstivādins, all in Chinese translation, plus more or less extensive fragments of the last two in the original Sanskrit. We have an entire Tibetan translation of the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya Piṭaka, which is much more voluminous and written later than the others. In addition, we have a detached portion

of the Lokottaravāda Vinaya Piṭaka under the name *Mahāvastu* (Great Tale) in Hybrid Sanskrit. This is actually a traditional and partial biography of the Buddha, heavily encrusted with legendry.

The non-Theravāda sects used the term *āgama* ("tradition") for the four or five parts that made up their Sūtra Piṭakas, which correspond to the Pali Nikāyas. Five of these Āgamas, evidently complete, have survived in Chinese translation: the *Dīrghāgama* of the Dharmaguptakas; the *Madhyamāgama* of the Sarvāstivādins; the *Saṃyuktāgamas* of the Sarvāstivādins and the Kāśyapīyas; and, finally, an *Ekottarāgama* that most probably belongs to a sect derived from the Mahāsāṃghikas but different from the Lokottaravādins. There are also more than 150 isolated *sūtras*, nearly all preserved in Chinese and a few in their original Indian language, but it is generally impossible to determine what school they come from. No collection corresponding to the Pali *Khuddaka Nikāya* survives, but we do have the Chinese translations of some seventy works similar to those that make up the Theravāda collection, as well as the Indian originals of a number of others.

Two complete Abhidharma Piṭakas have survived in Chinese translation: that of the Sarvāstivādins (one part of this also exists in Tibetan) and one entitled *Śāriputraabhidharma,* which seems to have belonged to the Dharmaguptakas but was perhaps also influenced by the Mahāsāṃghika. Like the Abhidharma Piṭaka of the Theravādins, that of the Sarvāstivādins comprises seven works, but its overall structure is very different, as is its doctrine, although there are notable similarities between some parts of the two works. The *Śāriputraabhidharma,* which is made up of four main sections, differs even more from the Theravādin text. For the most part these three collections definitely postdate the first appearance of the sects that composed them and defended their own positions in them. The teaching given by the sermons in the various Nikāyas or Āgamas of the Sūtra Piṭakas, in contrast, presents a truly remarkable consistency, whatever their school of origin, and, thus, a great fidelity to the common early Buddhist base, predating the community's division into sects. The same is true for most of the monastic rules contained in the various Vinaya Piṭakas, which are distinguished mainly by details of secondary or minor aspects of the ascetic life.

The postcanonical literature was undoubtedly very important, but even less of it remains than of the canonic material, and it is more unevenly distributed. Luckily, we possess in Pali the greater part of what was written by the Theravādins—commentaries on the canonic texts, treatises on doctrine, collections of legends, and devotional poems. We have also the principal Sarvāstivāda treatises, several commentaries on these works and on the major portion of their Abhidharma Piṭaka, as well as a few other late works. Unfortunately, the postcanonic literature available to us from all the other schools is limited to a half-dozen works.

The whole series of commentaries in Pali on the Theravāda canonic texts was composed in the fourth and fifth centuries CE by Buddhadatta, Buddhaghosa, and Dhammapāla, who made use of ancient commentaries, now lost, in Old Sinhala. We also owe to Buddhaghosa, the wisest and most renowned of all the Theravāda masters, a substantial treatise entitled *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purity), in which the Mahāvihāra school's entire doctrine is set forth. Another famous treatise is the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (Collection of Interpretations of the Higher Doctrine), written by the Sinhala monk Anuruddha about the eleventh century. Other, less important treatises of the Mahāvihāra school were composed by various authors between the

fourth and fifteenth centuries. Each of these works was the subject of one or more commentaries, most of which have not survived. Only one non-Mahāvihāra Theravāda work—strangely, in Chinese translation—is extant: a large treatise called *Vimuttimagga* (The Path of Liberation), attributed to Upatissa, who must have lived some time before Buddhaghosa and was probably a master of the Abhayagiri school.

To the treatises may be added the *Lokapaññatti* (Description of the World), a fourteenth-century adaptation by the Burmese monk Saddhammaghosa of a lost Sanskrit work, and especially the well-known *Milindapañha* (Questions of King Milinda), likewise inspired by a lost work. This seems to have been a little Buddhist propaganda manual aimed at the Greeks and Eurasians, such as King Menander (Milinda), who lived in northwestern India in the second century BCE. Besides the Pali version, there are two Chinese translations of the *Milindapañha* that rather differ from each other and even more so from the Theravāda text.

The postcanonic Theravāda literature also includes instructional poems and collections of legends in verse or prose. Among the instructional poems are the *Anāgatavaṃsa* (History of the Future), in which the monk Kassapa recounts the life of the next Buddha, named Metteyya, and the *Jinacarita* (Story of the Conqueror), Medhaṃkara's account of the miraculous life of the historical Buddha. The *Rasavāhinī* (Transportress of Flavors), translated into Pali by Vedeha from an Old Sinhala poem, is a collection of some one hundred legends meant to encourage a life of piety.

However, it is its famous chronicles, a genre almost entirely abandoned in ancient India, that make Theravāda literature stand apart from that of the other sects. The series of the *Dīpavaṃsa* (History of the Island), *Mahāvaṃsa* (Great History), and *Cūḷavaṃsa* (Lesser History) records in verse the whole history of Sri Lanka, from its beginning to the end of the eighteenth century, from the very specific point of view of the "elders" (*theras*) of the Mahāvihāra, the principal Sinhala Theravāda school. Other chronicles recount, in grandiose verse style, the stories of sacred relics: the *Bodhivaṃsa* tells the story of the Bodhi tree, the *Thūpavaṃsa* that of the principal mound of Anurādhapura, and the *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* that of the Buddha's tooth.

The main works of the Sarvāstivādin postcanonic literature have generally survived in Chinese or Tibetan translation. Complete or partial Sanskrit originals of several of them have also been found.

Only two commentaries on the postcanonic literature of the Sarvāstivādins have come down to us. One concerns the rules of monastic discipline and is entitled *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya-vibhāṣā*; the other, called *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*, comments on the *Jñānaprasthāna*, the principal work of the Abhidharma Piṭaka of this sect. This *Mahāvibhāṣā* (Great Commentary) is an immense summation of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins or, more precisely, of their most important school, known as the Vaibhāṣika, "supporter of the *(Mahā-) Vibhāṣā*." It is one of the most voluminous works in all Buddhist literature.

The Sarvāstivādins left several treatises written in Sanskrit during the first few centuries of the common era. The principal and best known is the *Abhidharmakośa* (Treasury of Higher Doctrine), written by Vasubandhu in the fifth century and the subject of numerous commentaries, many of which are extant in the Sanskrit original or in Chinese or Tibetan translation. Vasubandhu was accused of holding Sautrāntika views by his contemporary Saṃghabhadra, a strictly orthodox Sarvāstivādin. Saṃghabhadra refuted these views in a large treatise entitled *Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra*

(Consistent with the Logic of the Further Doctrine) and in a long commentary on the didactic stanzas (*kārikās*) ofthe *Abhidharmakośa*. The Sarvāstivādins also composed a *Lokaprajñapti* (Description of the World) according to Buddhist ideas, which has survived in Chinese and Tibetan translations.

The other schools have left only Chinese translations of a few treatises and commentaries, often very short and of unknown origin. Among the commentaries, which all correspond to complete or partial Vinaya Piṭakas, we may mention the *Vinayasaṃgraha* (Collection of Discipline) by the Mūlasarvāstivādin Viśeṣamitra and the *Vinayamātṛkā* (Summary of Discipline), the sectarian affinity of which is uncertain.

All that remains of the literature of the Vātsīputrīyas and related schools, which must have been considerable, are the Chinese translations, sadly inferior and obscure, of two small treatises summarizing their teaching. The most important of these is entitled *Sammatīya-nikāya-śāstra* (Treatise of the Sammatīya Sect).

Two other works of the same type have also survived in Chinese translation, but although they are better translated and are much longer, their sectarian origin presents some difficulty. One, called *Satyasiddhi* (Realization of the Truths), written by Harivarman around the third century CE, teaches and defends the doctrine of a Mahāsāṃghika-derived school, probably the Bahuśrutīyas. The other is the *Vimuttimagga*, mentioned above, whose author, Upatissa, probably belonged to the Sinhala Abhayagiri school; its Pali original was recently rediscovered.

The literary genre of devotional legends in verse or prose was also a great inspiration to authors of all sects, most of whom remained as anonymous as those of the canonic texts. Some of these works recounted the life of the historical Buddha, embellishing it with numerous miracles for the sake of greater glory. Two of the three most famous were preserved by chance in their Indian originals. These were composed in Hybrid Sanskrit, which is to say greatly influenced by the Prakrit dialects: the *Mahāvastu* (Great Tale) and the *Lalitavistara* (Account of the Sport), both important sources for the development of the Buddha legend. The first is a detached portion of the Lokottaravāda Vinaya Piṭaka, but in scope, as well as in specific subject matter, it can be considered a distinct and, moreover, rather late work. The *Lalitavistara* was first compiled by the Sarvāstivādins but later revised by followers of the Mahāyāna. In contrast with these two, the *Buddhacarita* (Story of the Buddha) was written in classical Sanskrit by one of the greatest Indian poets, Aśvaghoṣa, who lived around the second century CE; only half of the Sanskrit text has been recovered, but the Chinese translation is complete.

The collections of legendary material recounting the edifying deeds of Buddhist saints, or the previous incarnations of these or the future Buddha, are numerous, whether in Hybrid Sanskrit originals or in Chinese versions. We shall mention here only the best known, the *Avadānaśataka* (Hundred Exploits) and the *Divyāvadana* (Divine Exploits).

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Be they Buddhists, brahmans, or otherwise, the Indians of ancient times had practically no interest in history as we understand it, with its concern for the exact recording of events, dates, names, and biographies of important figures in order to preserve a precise record of them. This is especially true for the history of Indian Buddhism and the lives of its great masters. With very rare exceptions, to us the masters are only names attached to one or more literary works or, much less often, to an important item or event in the history of Buddhism—such as an idea that was declared heretical, a dispute, or a council. Nearly always, we know nothing whatever of the lives of these people, including the regions where they were born or lived and the centuries in which they were active. Moreover, the scant information that tradition has preserved about them is either vague, contradictory, or obviously distorted by legend, obliging us to make use of it with great skepticism. Even the biographies of the principal Sinhala elders (*theras*) of the Theravāda sect, whose history is told at length and in detail by the chronicles of Sri Lanka, are hardly better known to us than those of the masters of other groups and schools of early Indian Buddhism. In any case, we possess infinitely less detail about the lives of these *theras* than about those of the kings, princes, and generals who studded the history of Sri Lanka and protected the island's monastic community for two thousand years. Nonetheless, these chronicles permit us to know the names of a much larger number of these Sinhala Theravāda elders than of the masters of other sects, and thanks to them we are generally informed with some precision about the time and place in which many of them lived.

Among the most noteworthy figures of the Theravāda, we must first point out the three great scholars to whom all of the commentaries on the Pali canon and several important treatises on doctrine are attributed. The most famous is certainly Buddhaghosa, author of the *Visuddhimagga*. [*See the biography of Buddhaghosa.*] According to tradition, Buddhaghosa was an Indian brahman from Bihar who converted to Buddhism, then probably came to live in the Tamil country and afterward in the Sri Lankan capital, Anurādhapura, during the reign of Mahānāma (409–431). Buddhadatta, who was, it seems, a little older than Buddhaghosa, was probably born in the Tamil country, on the banks of the Kāverī, and spent most of his life there, but he probably sojourned in Anurādhapura as well. Finally, Dhammapāla was probably also a Tamil, born in Kāñcīpuram in the late fourth century, and most likely lived mainly in his native land but also journeyed to Lanka. Thus, it would seem that in the early fifth century, Tamil India was an important seat of Buddhist—or, more precisely, Theravāda—culture, on a par with Sri Lanka and perhaps even more active.

The reign of Parakkamabāhu (Parākramabāhu) I (1153–1186), an especially prosperous epoch for the Sinhala Theravādins, was made illustrious by a number of scholar-monks. The most famous was Sāriputta, a pupil of Kassapa of Udumbaragiri, who had played a pivotal role in the reform of the community ordered by the king and was himself a great scholar. Sāriputta turned his residence, the new monastery of Jetavana at Polonnaruwa, into the major center of knowledge and Buddhist learning of his time. Author of several authoritative subcommentaries on canonic texts, highly esteemed grammarian and poet, he was as well versed in Sanskrit as in Pali and composed his works in both languages. Several of his many students became learned monks and authors of valued literary works, notably Dhammakitti, Saṅgharakkhita, Sumaṅgala, Buddhanāga, Medaṅkara, and Vācissara.

In modern times, mention must be made of one first-rank figure whose influence on the evolution of Theravāda Buddhism was both decisive and extensive. Prince Mongkut, the youngest son of the Siamese king Rama II, became a monk and, during the quarter-century that he spent in yellow robes, undertook a great reform of the community in his country. In particular, he founded a new monastic order, the

Thammayut, which observed the rules of discipline more strictly than did its contemporaries, but he also kept abreast of the social realities of Siam and enthusiastically studied the culture and religions of the West. Becoming king on the death of his elder brother, he ruled under the name Rama IV (1851–1868), completing his work and transforming his country into a modern state largely open to trade and external influence. He is one of the principal architects of the great reform of Theravāda Buddhism that took place after the mid-nineteenth century not only in Siam but also in the neighboring kingdoms and in Sri Lanka. This movement was characterized by a return to the sources of the religion, namely the Pali Tipiṭaka, and also by a necessary and rational adaptation to modern circumstances. [*See the biography of Mongkut.*]

The best-known figure of the Sarvāstivādins is certainly Vasubandhu, the author of the *Abhidharmakośa*. Unfortunately, our information about this great master is suspect and seemingly contradictory, so that his life remains a subject of debate. Is Vasubandhu the Sarvāstivādin identical with Vasubandhu the Yogācāra, the brother of Asaṅga? Did he live in the fourth or the fifth century of our era? Was he born at Puruṣapura (present-day Peshawar) into a brahman family? Did he live in Kashmir, and then Ayodhyā (present-day Fyzabad), where he probably died? No agreement has been reached on these or other, lesser points of his biography. [*See the biography of Vasubandhu.*]

We know even less about his principal adversary, Saṃghabhadra, except that he was Vasubandhu's contemporary, a Kashmiri, and a staunch defender of Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda orthodoxy. As for other great teachers of this sect, to whom are attributed various interpretations of the notion of *sarvam asti* or the treatises that have come down to us in Chinese translation, they are hardly more than names to us: Vasumitra (one or several?), Kātyāyanīputra, Dharmaśrī, Ghoṣaka, Upaśānta, Dharmatrāta. . . . Indeed, the Sarvāstivāda's founder, Madhyāntika, who probably settled with his disciples in Kashmir during the reign of Aśoka, seems himself to belong more to legend than to history.

The founders of other schools are also nothing but names to us, and even these have been handed down: Mahādeva for the Mahāsāṃghikas, Vātsīputra for the Vātsīputrīyas, Uttara for the Sautrāntikas, and so on. We only know two or three other masters, whose names have been preserved by chance, such as Śrīlāta of the Sautrāntika and Harivarman, the author of the *Satyasiddhi*. Of Śrīlāta we know nothing more than his opinions, as these were criticized in Sarvāstivādin tracts. Harivarman was probably a brahman from the middle Ganges basin, who most likely lived around the third century CE and was converted to Buddhism as a follower of one of the Mahāsāṃghika sects, probably the Bahuśrutīya, to judge from the study of his long treatise.

EXPANSION OF THE SCHOOLS OUTSIDE OF INDIA

Owing to the pious zeal of the emperor Aśoka, from the mid-third century BCE Buddhism began to expand outside of India proper, southeastward into Sri Lanka and northwestward into what is now Afghanistan. Numerous important epigraphic and archaeological monuments show that it soon prospered in both these areas. From this evidence and from the Sinhala chronicles we know that the Theravādins very quickly became, and remained, the dominant group in Sri Lanka, but we do not know exactly which sects flourished at the same time—during the last three centuries BCE—in the mountainous areas of the northwest, then called Gandhāra and Kapiśa. It seems, however, that the Sarvāstivādins, traditionally believed to have originated in nearby Kashmir during the reign of Aśoka, began the conversion of these lands to Buddhism and were joined somewhat later by schools of the Mahāsāṃghika group.

A few very scarce inscriptions, but especially the reports of the famous Chinese pilgrims Hsüan-tsang and I-ching, as well as the numerous discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts in Central Asia, provide information on the presence of various early sects outside India. Sects were found in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Central Asia, and China in the first few centuries of the common era, especially in the seventh century.

At this same time, the Theravādins had found their way into Indonesia, where the Sarvāstivādins or Mūlasarvāstivādins were a strong majority. These two groups were extremely numerous and nearly alone in all of Central Asia, and they also flourished in southern China, where the Mahīśāsakas, Dharmaguptakas, and Kāśyapīyas prospered as well. These last three sects thrived in Indonesia, and Dharmaguptakas were also found in eastern China as well as in Shensi Province. As for the Sammatīyas, they were in the majority in Champa, in the center of present-day Vietnam. Such is the information provided by I-ching.

The Chinese translations of three different works of early Indian Buddhist sects formed the basis of an equal number of distinctively Chinese schools, which were introduced shortly afterward into Japan. The oldest is known by the name Ch'eng-shih, which is the title of Kumārajīva's Chinese translation (411–412) of Harivarman's *Satyasiddhi*. The main doctrine of this treatise, which attracted and held the attention of its Chinese followers, distinguishes two truths: a mundane or relative truth and a supreme or absolute truth. It teaches that all things are empty of substance, not only the individual person made up of the five aggregates of phenomena, but also the whole of the external world. Thus, the teaching of this work would seem to lie between those of the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna or, more precisely, the Mādhyamika. The Ch'eng-shih school was in fact founded by two direct disciples of Kumārajīva, Seng-tao and Seng-sung, who each headed a different branch, one centered in An-hui and the other in Kiangsu. These two masters and some of their disciples composed many commentaries on the *Satyasiddhi* or, more exactly, on its Chinese translation, which helped make it widely known throughout southern China. The leaders of the Chinese Mahāyānist San-lun sect, who were faithful followers of the Mādhyamikas, vigorously combatted this teaching, insisting that its concept of the void was mistaken. Their attacks resulted in the decline of the Ch'eng-shih school in the mid-seventh century and in its disappearance shortly afterward. Still, in 625, a Korean monk introduced the Chinese translation of the *Satyasiddhi* and its teaching to Japan, but the sect, which received the name Jōjitsu (after the Japanese pronunciation of Ch'eng-shih), found less success there than in China and was quickly absorbed by the rival school of Sanron, the Japanese form of San-lun.

The second sect was called Chü-she, a transliteration of the Sanskrit *kośa*, because it was based on the famous *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu, translated into Chinese by Paramārtha in 563–567 and by Hsüan-tsang in 651–654. The Sarvāstivāda realism expounded in this treatise was not very successful in China, where Mahāyāna doctrines were then dominant; consequently, the Chü-she school died out in the late eighth century, when it was absorbed by the Chinese form of Yogācāra known as Fa-

hsiang. Previously, as early as 658, two Japanese monks, Chitsu and Chitatsu, had introduced the sect to Japan, where it bacame known as the Kusha. There it had less success and longevity as an independent school than in China, for Chitsu and Chitatsu themselves were followers of Fa-hsiang, called Hossō in Japan. Hossō had already attained considerable importance, and it soon absorbed the Kusha school.

The third and final Chinese school derived from early Buddhism was quite different from the other two. Called Lü ("discipline"), it was established in the mid-seventh century by the eminent monk Tao-hsüan as a reaction against the doctrinal disputes that preoccupied Chinese Buddhists of the time. He maintained that moral uprightness and strict monastic discipline were much more necessary for the religious life than empty intellectual speculations. Consequently, he imposed on his followers the well-defined rules in the *Ssu-fen-lü*, a Chinese translation of the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Dharmaguptakas made by Buddhayaśas and Chu Fo-nien in 412. Although his school never had many adherents of its own, it had a clear and lasting influence on Chinese Buddhism. Thanks to the school's activities, the *Ssu-fen-lü* became, and remains, the sole collection of disciplinary rules to be followed by all Chinese Buddhist monks regardless of their school, including followers of the Mahāyāna. The school was introduced to Japan in 753 by the Chinese monk Chien-chen (Jpn., Ganjin), who was welcomed with open arms at the court of Nara. [*See the biography of Ganjin.*] Known by the name of Ritsu (not to be confused with a homophonous branch of the Shingon sect), it is still active in Japan today (it also existed in China early in this century) but no longer has many adherents.

However, the only early Buddhist sect to thrive after spreading outside of India is the Theravāda. Its lasting success (it still flourishes today) can be explained by the fact that it was established well before the common era in Sri Lanka, a relatively isolated region, and that it has almost always maintained a strongly preferential relationship with the island's political authorities and has known how best to profit from it. Much less certain was the extension of this phenomenon to a compact group of countries of mainland Southeast Asia from the eleventh century, a time when Buddhism, especially the early, so-called Hīnayāna Buddhism, was dying out throughout India itself. At that time, Hīnayāna Buddhism could claim only a very few followers, scattered among small and failing communities, in the whole vast territory of India. We can understand how the effect of such a happy chance could have seemed miraculous to Buddhist devotees.

This process began in Burma, in the mid-eleventh century, when Anorātha, who ruled the central and northern parts of the country, conquered the southern, maritime region, where Theravāda monks had recently converted the ruler. Anorātha, too, soon adopted the Buddhist faith of the Theravādins. Driven by religious zeal, he compelled all of his subjects to follow his example. From that time on, Theravāda has remained the religion of the majority of the Burmese people.

Two centuries later, when the Thai descended from the mountains to the north and took control of the entire country known today as Thailand, the same process took place. Their king converted to the Theravāda and exercised all his authority to promote its extension to the whole of the population.

In the following century, under circumstances that are still poorly known, neighboring Cambodia, where Mahāyāna Buddhism and Hinduism had flourished until then, became completely Theravādin in a short space of time and has remained so

to the present day. The petty kingdoms of Laos, stretched out along the middle Mekong, were not long in following suit.

In contrast to what had happened in India, this distribution of Theravāda Buddhism among a number of different countries, which were (except for Sri Lanka) in close proximity to each other, helped ensure the sect's lasting prosperity. Indeed, when a monastic community in one of these countries found itself in difficulty or in decline, which happened a number of times here and there, the pious Buddhist king would ask for and receive help from another country's ruler, who would then send him a group of knowledgeable, respected monks to resolve the problems in question and restore the Theravāda to its full value and strength. Similarly, whatever reforms and progress were made in one country quickly spread to the Theravāda communities in others. Such was the case in the last century, when the prince-monk Mongkut, who became King Rama IV of Siam, instituted great transformations that allowed the Theravāda to adapt to the modern world at the same time that he carried out a return to its distant canonic sources.

[*For treatment of particular Hīnayāna schools, see* Mahāsāṃghika; Sarvāstivāda; Sautrāntika; *and* Theravāda. *Hīnayāna thought is treated in greater detail in* Four Noble Truths; Eightfold Path; Karman, *article on* Buddhist Concepts; Dharma, *article on* Buddhist Dharma and Dharmas; Pratītya-samutpāda; Nirvāṇa; Soteriology, *article on* Buddhist Soteriology; *and* Buddhist Philosophy. *For further discussion of Hīnayāna sectarianism, see* Councils, *article on* Buddhist Councils, *and* Saṃgha, *overview article. For the geographical distribution of Hīnayāna, see* Missions, *article on* Buddhist Missions; Buddhism, *articles on* Buddhism in India *and* Buddhism in Southeast Asia; Sinhala Religion; *and* Southeast Asian Religions, *overview article. For an overview of Hīnayāna literature, see* Buddhist Literature, *article on* Survey of Texts.]

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12 MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

NAKAMURA HAJIME

The Sanskrit term *mahāyāna* literally means "the great vehicle [to enlightenment]." It refers to a form of Buddhism that developed in northern India and Central Asia from about the first century before the advent of the common era, and that is prevalent today in Nepal, Sikkhim, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Mahāyāna Buddhism was also transmitted to Sri Lanka and the Indo-Chinese peninsula, but it eventually vanished from South Asia.

The name *Mahāyāna* is rendered *theg pa chen po* in Tibetan, *ta-sheng* in Chinese, and *daijō* in Japanese. The meanings "greater, numerous," and "superior" are all reflected in the *ta* or *dai* of the Chinese and Japanese translations, for, according to Mahāyāna, its teachings are greater than those of the Hīnayāna tradition, and those delivered from suffering by Mahāyāna more numerous than those saved by the other, more conservative wing of the tradition. According to its devotees, the Mahāyāna is therefore superior to Hīnayāna. More objectively, it can be observed that when compared with Theravāda and other Hīnayāna forms, Mahāyāna is more speculatively ambitious, embraces a broader range of practices, some specifically intended to address the needs of lay practitioners, and is more frankly mythological in its conception of Buddhahood and the religious career that leads to it. Mahāyāna Buddhism also stresses altruistic attitudes and proclaims as its goal the universal enlightenment of all beings. Its scriptures were originally written in Sanskrit, but most of these have been lost; many, however, have been preserved in Tibetan and Chinese. (Works for which no attested Sanskrit title is available are identified here by the title of the translation.)

Origins

The origins of Mahāyāna are not yet entirely understood. Its first propounders seem to have been homeless ascetics who did not belong to orthodox *saṃghas* (Buddhist orders). Early Mahāyāna *sūtras* address among their audiences *kulaputras* and *kuladuhitṛs* ("good sons and daughters"), suggesting that lay men and women were also of some importance in the first Mahāyāna orders, which were probably entirely separate from the Hīnayāna orders. These Mahāyāna orders appeared in the second