A

A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics

► Dhammasaṅgaṇī

A Designation of Human Types

► Puggalapaññatti

Abassara Brahma Loka

► Heaven (Buddhism)

Abhidhamma Piṭaka

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Basket of higher expositions; Basket of transcendental doctrine

Definition

The third *piṭaka* (collection) of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*.

Introduction

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is the third *piṭaka* (collection) of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* and is much younger than the other two *piṭakas*, i.e., *Vinaya* and the *Sutta*. It is composed mainly in the form of questions and answers like a catechism, treating of the same subject as the *Sutta Piṭaka* but is different from it in being more scholastic ([4], p. 309). It consists of the following seven books: *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka*, and *Paṭṭhāna*.

Dhammasaṅgaṇi

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, the first book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, enumerates and defines from a psychological perspective a number of categories of scattered terms occurring in the *Nikāyas* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. The book begins with a *mātikā* (a table of classifications) of *dhammas* (the psychological states and phenomena) consisting of 22 threefold classifications, 100 twofold classifications according to the Abhidhamma method, and 42 classifications according to the *Sutta* method. The main body of

K.T.S. Sarao, J.D. Long (eds.), *Buddhism and Jainism*, Encyclopedia of Indian Religions,
DOI 10.1007/978-94-024-0852-2

the book consists of four sections. In the first section, states of mind and factors present in them are enumerated and defined. In the second section, material phenomena are categorized numerically. The third section uses the material of the first two sections for explaining the classifications in the *mātikā*. The fourth section omits the *Sutta* method of twofold classifications but otherwise follows the methodology employed in the third section though in a more detailed way.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* is a compilation from different sources ([3], p. 68), and it reflects the state of development of Theravāda philosophy of a period when the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* was closed ([1], p. 118). The *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* was not compiled solely for academic use and "is, in the first place, a manual or text-book, and not a treatise or disquisition, elaborated and rendered attractive and edifying after the manner of most of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. … Its subject is ethics. But the inquiry is conducted from a psychological standpoint and, indeed, is in great part an analysis of the psychological and psychophysical data of ethics" ([4], p. 310). The definition of the term *Abhidhamma* in it shows that the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* "and *a fortiori* the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* was considered as a subject of study more advanced than the other piṭakas, and intended to serve as the complement and crown of the learners' earlier courses" ([9], pp. xvi–xvii). That the technical terms used in the *nikāyas* are used in it leads one to place the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, in point of time, after the *nikāyas*, and is dated in the middle of the fourth century B.C.E. or a little earlier ([9], pp. xviii–xix). However, it should be noted that "the ideas it systematizes are, of course, older. Practically all of them go back to the time of the Buddha himself" ([9], p. xix).

Vibhaṅga

The Vibhaṅga is the second of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. It consists of 18 chapters. Each of these chapters deals with a separate topic such as *khandha* (the aggregates), *āyatana* (the sense bases), *dhātu* (the elements), *sacca* (the truths), *indriya* (the faculties), *satipaṭṭhāna* (recollection), *ñāṇa* (knowledge), etc. The *Vibhaṅga* was most probably conceived as a manual for students just like the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* ([10], p. xx). It generally deals with the various categories and formulae dealt with in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*. The subject matter of many of the chapters of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* is repeated in the *Vibhaṅga*, but the methodology employed and the matter are largely different. For instance, the *Vibhaṅga* contains some terms and definitions that are not found in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* ([4], p. 313). According to C.A.F. Rhys Davids, there is no intention in this text on the part of the compilers of setting forth their ethical philosophy or psychological ethics in any complete and systematic order. Acquaintance with the Dhamma is taken for granted. The object is not so much as to extend knowledge as to ensure mutual consistency in the intension of ethical notions and to systematize and formulate the theories and practical mechanism of intellectual and moral progress scattered throughout the *Sutta Piṭaka* ([10], p. xx). The *Vibhaṅga* is considered to be the oldest among all the texts of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* ([3], p. 69). Johannes Bronkhorst has suggested that an early form of this text was compiled during the first century after the Mahāparinibbāna, but Hinüber considers this too early a date (see [3], p. 69).

Dhātukathā

The *Dhātukathā* is a short text of 14 chapters in a question-answer form which was expounded for the purpose of dispelling wrong notions about *attā* (self) (see [6], p. 102). The central theme of this text is the mutual relation of different concepts to the *dhātus* (elements) ([1], p. 113). It begins with the *mātikā* which gives the 14 methods under which the internal and external states are given followed by the listing of the 105 internal states (the five *khandhas* (aggregates), the 12 *āyatanas* (bases), 18 *dhātus*, four *satipaṭṭhānas* (recollections), *cattāri ariyasaccāni* (the Four Noble Truths), four *jhānas* (stages of meditation), five *balas* (potentialities), seven *bhojjaṅgas* (elements of knowledge), and *Ariya aṭṭhaṅgikomaggo* (the

Noble Eightfold Path), etc.) and states that the external states are the 22 triplets and 100 couplets of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi mātikā* (see [6], p. 102). The text itself is a working out of the *mātikā*, whereby all the states are classified under the *khandhas*, *āyatanas*, and *dhātus*. The system employed in the *Dhātukathā* has been described as the most beautiful piece of work in the mathematical sense, a work of precision and analytical exactness (see [6], p. 102). B.C. Law feels that this text cannot be considered as an independent text, its purpose being to serve as a supplement to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* ([4], p. 132). According to the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, the *Dhātukathā* was not recited in any of the first three Buddhist councils (see [3], p. 69).

Puggalapaññatti

The *Puggalapaññatti*, though listed as the fourth book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, is generally considered to be the earliest of the Abhidhamma books (see [13], p. 188). The subject matter of the text is *puggala* (person), and in it the different types of *puggala* are arranged in groups from one to ten. The compiler of the *Puggalapaññatti* follows the methodology of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in grouping human types first under one term, then under two, and so on up to ten. The book is most closely allied to the texts of the *Sutta Piṭaka* not only in terms of the treatment of the subject matter but also with regard to materials. Several of its sections can be seen almost entirely in the analogous sections of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* as well as the *Saṅgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (see [3], p. 70; [4], p. 330; [6], p. 102; [14], p. 162). As pointed out by Winternitz, some of the chapters of the *Puggalapaññatti* "read exactly like *Suttas* in one of the *Nikāyas* and stand out favourably from their environment" ([14], p. 162). But Hinüber feels that the borrowing has not been done mechanically and that the "rembered orality" "prevalent in the Suttantas… has been given up in favour of the style adequate for a treatise on philosophy" ([3], p. 70). In any case, there is general agreement that despite its presence in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the *Puggalapaññatti* owes much, in both form and content, to the *Sutta Piṭaka* ([6], p. 102). Moreover, its "non-metaphysical nature… is emphasised by the fact that in it *puggala* is not used in the sense of "underlying personality" (that is almost synonymous with *attā)*, which is found in the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Milindapañha*, but simply in the sense of "person, individual" ([6], p. 102). It is difficult to date this text though it "can be said with certainty that it was written after the nikāyas" ([4], p. 328).

Kathāvatthu

The *Kathāvatthu* consists of four *Paṇṇāsaka* (groups of 50 (points)) which are further divided into 20 *vaggas* (chapters). Each *vagga* consists of 8–12 questions and answers, in which the heretical views of different sects are specified, discussed, refuted, and overruled and the Buddha's authority being accepted as final. At the end, the *Kathāvatthu* appears to have been enlarged with the addition of three extra *vaggas*. Due to this type of rather asymmetrical composition, it has been suggested that the text grew over a certain period of time resulting in the inclusion of new controversies whenever they arose ([1], p. 124; [3], p. 71; [14], p. 164). The subject matter of the *Kathāvatthu* differs significantly from that of the other texts in the Abhidhamma, and it does not list *dhammas* but aims at the refutation of heretical views ([3], p. 71). Tradition ascribes the compilation of the *Kathāvatthu* to Moggaliputta Tissa at the end of the Third Council held at Pāṭaliputta under the patronage of King Aśoka ([2], Vol. v, p. 278). Consequently, this is the only canonical text exactly dated to the year in the tradition itself and ascribed to a definite author. There is general agreement that though "there are linguistically old forms… (showing) that the beginning of the Kathāvatthu has been built from old material" ([3], p. 72) and that it is quite possible that it might have been compiled by Moggaliputta in the third century B.C.E., it "in its present form is a patch work… (and)… was augmented by additional portions every time a new heresy cropped up" (Winternitz: 164; see

also [3], p. 71). In fact, scholars such as Winternitz are inclined to think that the Kathāvatthu formed the conclusion of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* ([14], p. 165).

The inclusion of the *Kathāvatthu* in the Pāli Canon has sometimes been thought of as very unusual and was rejected by some on the ground that it was set forth more than two centuries after the Mahāparinibbāna and was hence only the utterance of a disciple. However, the *aṭṭhakathās* (commentaries) are of the opinion that as the *mātikā* (the principles taught in it) were laid down by the Buddha himself, the whole of the *Kathāvatthu* should be considered as the *buddhavacana* (word of the Buddha). Khemā, a well-known nun who was a contemporary of the Buddha, calls herself a "specialist on the *Kathāvatthu*" (*Kathāvatthuvisāradā*) in the commentary of the *Therīgāthā* ([8], p. 135), thus giving credence to the view that the *Kathāvatthu* was known already at the time of the Buddha.

Yamaka

The *Yamaka* consists of ten chapters (*yamaka*), namely, Mūla, Khandha, Āyatana, Dhātu, Sacca, Saṅkhārā, Anusaya, Citta, Dhamma, and Indriya. Each of these chapters deals with a particular topic of Buddhist doctrine. As the commentary of the *Yamaka*, the *Yamakappakarṇaṭṭhakathā* (included in the *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*), equates the word *yamaka* with *yugala* (a pair or twin), the title of the text may refer either to each of the ten categories so treated or to the entire work ([12], p. xv). According to Frauwallner, the original idea behind the title was that pairs are constituted by the origin of one thing, which conditions the origin of a second one ([1], p. 116). However, C.A.F. Rhys Davids feels that "the most impressive feature, likely to have formed the title to the work, is the dual grouping of question and converse" ([12], p. xvi).

All the *yamakas* are discussed at great length in the text, and possibly all imaginable combinations have been given which is "an excellent example of how the method of Abhidhamma can be expatiated insipidly" ([1], p. 117). B.C. Law ([4], p. 334) has summed up the subject matter of the ten chapters as follows: *The Mūla Yamaka* deals with the nature and roots of the *kusala* and *akusala dhammas. The Khandha Yamaka* deals with five *khandhas* (aggregates), e.g., *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṃkhāra*, and *viññāna. The Āyatana Yamaka* deals with the 12 *āyatanas*, e.g., *cakkhu*, *sota*, *ghāna*, *jihvā*, *kāya*, *rūpa*, etc. *The Dhātu Yamaka* deals with the 18 *dhātus* or elements. *The Sacca Yamaka* treats of four noble truths. *The Saṃkhāra Yamaka* deals with three *saṃkhāras. The Anusaya Yamaka* treats of the *anusayas* (inclinations), e.g., *kāmarāga* (passion for sensual pleasures), *paṭigha* (hatred), *diṭṭhi* (false view), *vicikicchā* (doubt), *māna* (pride), *bhavarāga* (passion for existence), and *avijjā* (ignorance). According to Hinüber, this *yamaka* is possibly a later addition (see [3], p. 74). *The Citta Yamaka* deals with mind and mental states. *The Dhamma Yamaka* deals with *kusaladhammā* and *akusaladhammā*. *The Indriya Yamaka* deals with the 22 *indriyas*. It is rather a very lengthy work, though the scheme of the work lends itself well to condensation "without sacrifice of substance or of intelligibleness" ([12], p. ix).

Paṭṭhāna

The *Paṭṭhāna* which may be described as "the book of causal relationships" deals in great detail with the 22 *tikas* (group of three's) and 100 couplets *dukas* (group of twos) with reference to the 24 *paccayas* or modes of relations which are assumed between phenomena (*dhammā*), psychological as well as material: causal relationship, relationship of the subject and object, reciprocity, dependence, co-nascence, coexistence, contiguity, antecedence, and so on. The book primarily drives the point home that with the sole exception of Nibbāna which is absolute, there is nothing which is not relative in one way or another, i.e., which is not related to another thing in 1 of the 24 modes. Each reality in one's life can only arise because of a concurrence of various conditions which operate in a very complex way. These conditions are not abstractions but are functional in one's daily life all the time. What one takes for one's mind and one's body are mere elements

which come into being because of the associated conditions. As pointed out by Hinüber, "It is easy to see that the number of possibilities that opens up here is almost limitless" ([3], p. 75).

The *Paṭṭhāna* is an enormous and by far the longest single text not only of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* but among all the texts of the *Tipiṭaka*. The title the *Paṭṭhāna* is explained in its Commentary, *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, as the basis for all the other Abhidhamma texts because the 24 *tikas* and the 100 *dukas* are considered to be the *mātikā* (tabulated summaries) for all the Abhidhamma texts ([5], pp. 9.20–22; see [3], p. 75). However, as pointed out by Hinüber, this is contrary to the historical development ([3], p. 75). Talking about the primary purpose behind the composition of the *Paṭṭhāna*, Hinüber has pointed out that it has been recognized in tradition that the *Saṅgīti Suttanta* (no. 33) and the *Dasuttara Suttanta* (no. 34) of the *Dīgha Nikāya* together with the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* form the basis of the *Paṭṭhāna*. "The text is thought to facilitate the use of the Suttantas for Abhidhamma specialists and this is the purpose usually ascribed to Paṭṭhāna by the tradition" (see [3], p. 75; [5], pp. 9.27–29). The structure of *Paṭṭhāna* is not easy to follow and has not been examined sufficiently enough till date ([3], p. 75). Its "chapters are very difficult to understand, since they consist mostly of numerals. Since the enumeration chapters of the Paṭṭhāna list arithmetically the numbers of answers to each question, the exposition of this subject is very susceptible to presentation by charts" ([6], p. 107).

Cross-References

- Aṅguttara Nikāya
- Dhammasaṅgaṇī
- Dhātukathā
- Dīgha Nikāya
- Kathāvatthu
- Khema-uyyāna
- Paṭṭhāna
- Puggalapaññatti
- Sutta Piṭaka
- Vibhaṅga
- Yamaka

References

1. Frauwallner E (1971) Abhidharma-Studien III. Der Abhidharma der anderen Schulen. Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- asiens 15:103–121; 16:95–152
2. Geiger W, Bode MH (eds) (1912) The Mahāvaṃsa or the great chronicle of Ceylon. Pali Text Society, London
3. von Hinüber O (1996) A handbook of Pāli literature. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin
4. Law BC (1983) A history of Pali literature, reprint, vol 1. Indological Book House, Delhi
5. Müller E (ed) (1979) The Atthasālinī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dhammasaṅgṇī, rev edn. Pali Text Society, London
6. Norman KR (1983) A history of Indian literature. Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden
7. Ñyāṇatiloka (1971) Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, 3rd edn. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
8. Pruitt W (1998) The commentary on the verses of the Therīs (Therīgāthā-Aṭṭhakathā Pramatthadīpanī VI by Acāriya Dhammapāla). Pali Text Society, Oxford
9. Rhys Davids CAF (ed) (1900) A Buddhist manual of psychological ethics, being a translation of Dhamma-saṅgaṇi: compendium of state or phenomena. Royal Asiatic Society, London
10. Rhys Davids CAF (ed) (1904) The Vibhaṅgha. Pali Text Society, London
11. Rhys Davids CAF (1923) The Abhidhamma Piṭaka and commentaries. J Roy Asiat Soc Great Brit Irel (New Series) 55(2):243–250
12. Rhys Davids CAF, Foly MC, Hunt M (eds) (1987) The Yamaka, 2 vols. Pali Text Society, London
13. Rhys Davids TW (1903) Buddhist India. T. Fisher Unwin, London
14. Winternitz M (1983) History of Indian literature, rev. edn, vol 2 (trans: Sarma VS). Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Abhidharma (Theravāda)

Y. Karunadasa
University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Synonyms

Buddhist philosophy; Buddhist psychology

Definition

The Theravāda Abhidhamma as a fully integrated framework of philosophy, psychology, and ethics.

Introduction

What is known as the Theravāda Abhidhamma could be understood as a systematic elaboration, from the perspectives of the Theravādins, of the original teachings of the Buddha. And it is very likely that all early Buddhist schools had their own Abhidharma treatises embodying the particular perspectives they had adopted in elaborating what the Buddha taught. Some of these treatises are now irretrievably lost. However, the Chinese Tripiṭaka has preserved to this day canonical books belonging to two other Abhidharma systems. One is the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma with its seven treatises. The other is the *Śāriputrābhidharmaśāstra* which some modern scholars attribute to the Dharmaguptaka School.

As to the Theravāda Abhidhamma, there is historical evidence to suggest that as a formal doctrinal systematization it emerged after the first division of the Buddhist Saṅgha into two Buddhist schools known as Theravāda and Mahāsaṅghika, about 100 years after the Buddha's demise. One can identify several stages in the evolution of the Theravāda Abhidhamma. Probably, the first stage was the emergence of an expository methodology that exhibits features of the Abhidhamma but precedes the body of thought formally embodied in the Abhidhamma literature. Several early Buddhist discourses – for example, the *Saṅgīti* and the *Dasuttara* of the *Dīghanikāya* – explain doctrinal terms in the framework of a catechism. Here, we find doctrinal tenets explained by an impersonal technical terminology without literary embellishments, or reliance on similes, metaphors, and stories to illustrate them. It is possible to consider such discourses as representing the earliest stage in the development of the Theravāda Abhidhamma.

Next comes the canonical Abhidhamma with its seven treatises. These are *Dhammasaṅgaṇi, Vibhaṅga, Dhātukathā, Puggalapaññatti, Kathāvatthu, Yamaka*, and *Paṭṭhāna*. The *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettippakaraṇa*, two post-canonical and pre-commentarial works, could also be included in the Abhidhamma tradition. Next in chronological order come the Pāli commentaries on the Abhidhamma. These are *Atthasālinī*, the commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Sammohavinodanī*, the commentary to the *Vibhaṅga*, the *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, the combined commentary to the other five treatises of the canonical Abhidhamma. To this same class of literature belongs the *Visuddhimagga*. For although it is not formally recognized as an Abhidhamma work, three of its chapters (XIV-XVII) can be considered a summary of the Theravāda Abhidhamma. Each of the three commentaries to the canonical Abhidhamma gave rise to its own sub-commentary (*mūla-ṭīkā*), and each sub-commentary in turn to its own sub-commentary (*anu-ṭīkā*).

The final stage of the Abhidhamma literature is represented by nine compendiums on the Abhidhamma, what the Burmese tradition calls *let-than*, or "little-finger manuals." These are *Abhidhammāvatāra*, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, *Nāmarūpapariccheda*, *Paramatthavinicchaya, Rūpārūpavibhāga, Saccasaṃkhepa*, *Mohavicchedanī, Khemappakaraṇa,* and *Nāmacāradīpaka*. These compendiums, in turn, gave rise to their own sub-commentaries, as for example, *Abhidhammatthavikāsinī*, the sub-commentary to the *Abhidhammāvatāra.*

The Ontological Foundation of the Abhidhamma Philosophy

The Abhidhamma philosophy has as its ontological foundation what is known as the *dhamma* theory. It means the analysis of the phenomenal world into a number of basic factors known as *dhammas,* together with an explanation as to their interconnection and interdependence on the basis of conditional relations. The theory is based on the philosophical principle that all phenomena of empirical existence are made up of a number of elementary constituents, the ultimate building blocks behind manifest phenomena. The *dhamma* theory is, however, not merely one principle

among others in the body of the Abhidhamma philosophy. It is the base upon which the entire system rests. It would thus be fitting to call this theory the cornerstone of the Abhidhamma.

It is true that the *dhamma* theory is an *Abhidhammic* innovation. However, the antecedent teachings that led to its formulation can be traced to the early Buddhist discourses. In these discourses the Buddha has analyzed individual existence in a number of ways. Among them the first is that into mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*). This is the most elementary analysis in the sense that it specifies the two main components that make up individual life. The second is that into the five aggregates (*khandhas*): corporeality (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṃkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The third is that into six elements: earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), temperature (*tejo*), air (*vāyo*), space (*ākāsa*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). The fourth is that into 12 sense-bases (*āyatanas*): the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind and their corresponding objects: the visible, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects. The fifth analysis is that into 18 elements of cognition (*dhātu*). This is an elaboration of the immediately preceding mode of analysis, for it is obtained by the addition of the six kinds of consciousness which arise from the contact between the sense-organs and their objects. The six additional items are the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousness.

Each of these analyses is used to explain certain features of sentient existence. It is in fact with reference to these five modes of analysis that early Buddhism presents its fundamental doctrines. The very fact that there are at least five kinds of analysis shows that none of them is taken as final or absolute.

If each analysis is examined in relation to the other four, it is found to be further analyzable. That the first, the analysis into mind and matter, is further analyzable is seen by the second, the analysis into the five aggregates. For in the second, the mind-component of the first is analyzed into feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. That the analysis into the five aggregates, too, can be further analyzed is shown by the next analysis, that into six elements. For in the latter, the corporeality component of the former is analyzed into five, namely, earth, water, fire, air, and space. That the analysis into six elements is also further analyzable is seen from the fact that consciousness, which is reckoned here as one item, is made into four in the aggregate analysis. That the same situation is true of the analysis into 12 sense bases is shown by the next analysis, that into 18 elements of cognition. For the latter is an elaboration of the former. The last analysis, too, cannot be considered final for although consciousness is here reckoned as sixfold, its concomitant mental factors such as feelings, perceptions are not separately mentioned. It is clear, therefore, that none of the five analyses can be considered exhaustive. In each case, one or more items are further analyzable.

This seems to be the reason why the Abhidhamma wanted to introduce another mode of analysis, which in its view is not further analyzable. This new development, which is more or less common to all the systems of Abhidharma, is the analysis of the world of phenomenal existence into what came to be known as *dharmas* (Skt) or *dhammas* (Pāli). The term *dhamma* of course looms large in the early Buddhist discourses where we find it in a variety of connotations which have to be determined by the specific textual or doctrinal context. In the Abhidhamma, however, the term assumes a more technical and specific meaning. For it refers to those basic factors that result when the process of analysis is taken to its ultimate limits. In the Theravāda Abhidhamma, for instance, the aggregate of corporeality of the aggregate analysis is broken down into 28 items called material factors (*rūpa-dhamma*). The next three aggregates, namely, feelings, perceptions, and mental formations, are together arranged into 52 items called mental factors (*cetasika*). The fifth aggregate is counted as one and is referred to as consciousness (*citta*). Thus, there are altogether 81 *dhammas* resulting from the analysis of empirical existence. To this list is added *Nibbāna*, which is the only unconditioned reality, and is called the unconditioned (*asṅkhata*) *dhamma*. Thus, there are in all 82 *dhammas*, 81 conditioned and 1 unconditioned.

The whole edifice of the *dhamma* theory is based both on analysis (*bheda*) and synthesis (sangaha). The method of analysis is mainly confined to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī,* the first book of the canonical Abhidhamma. For here one finds a complete enumeration of the *dhammas*, each with a short definition. The method of synthesis is mainly confined to the *Paṭṭhāna,* the last book of the canonical Abhidhamma. For here one finds a theory of conditional relations through which the Abhidhamma seeks to explain the interconnection of the *dhammas*. The combined use of these two methods shows that according to the methodological apparatus of the Abhidhamma, a correct view of the nature of actuality must be based on both analysis and synthesis.

The purpose of the two complementary methods of analysis and synthesis is to dispense with the notion of substance. Analysis is intended to show that what is taken to be one is really many, what appears to be a unity is only a union of several factors. On the other hand, the purpose of synthesis is to show that the factors into which a thing is analyzed are not discrete and independent entities. Rather they are interconnected and interdependent nodes in a complex web of relationships. Thus, both analysis and synthesis combine to demonstrate that there is no substance either in the thing (the whole) that is analyzed or in the factors (the parts) into which it is analyzed.

A given *dhamma* does not inhere in another as its quality, nor does it serve another as its substance. If the distinction between substance and quality is denied, it is because such a distinction paves the way for the emergence of the notion of a substantial self (*attavāda*). Therefore, it is with reference to conditions that the interconnection of the *dhammas* is explained. The conditions are not different from the *dhammas*. The *dhammas* themselves become the conditions. There are four postulates which the Abhidhamma doctrine of conditionality recognizes as axiomatic. The first is that nothing arises without the appropriate causes and conditions. This amounts to the rejection of the theory of fortuitous origination (*adhicca-samuppanna*). The second is that nothing arises from a single cause. This amounts to the rejection of the theory of monistic causation (*ekakaranavada*). The third is that nothing arises as a single effect (*ekassa dhammassa uppatti patisedhitā hoti*). If the Abhidhamma rejects these three views, it is in order to say that a number of things gives rise to a number of other things. When applied to the *dhamma* theory this means that a number of *dhammas* gives rise to a number of other *dhammas.*

There are two other basic principles recognized in the Abhidhamma doctrine of conditionality. The first is that no mental or material *dhamma* can come into being by its own power. By their very nature, *dhammas* are completely devoid of own-power or own-sway (*vasavattitā*). This amounts to the rejection of the principle of self-causation. The other is that no *dhamma* can be brought into being by a power external to the *dhammas* either. This amounts to the rejection of the principle of external causation. The rejection of these two theories means that *dhammas* alone help other *dhammas* to arise.

The Abhidhamma Psychology

The Abhidhamma psychology begins by analyzing the apparently continuous stream of consciousness into a number of cognitive acts. Each cognitive act is, in turn, analyzed into two component parts. One is bare consciousness (*citta*) and the other a group of mental factors (*cetasika*), which arises together with consciousness. Bare consciousness is that which constitutes the knowing or awareness of an object. It can never arise in its true separate condition. It always arises in immediate conjunction with a number of mental factors which perform more specialized tasks in the act of cognition.

In the Abhidhamma exegesis, consciousness is defined in three different ways. The first is by way of agent (*kattu-sādhana*): “Consciousness is that which cognizes an object.” The second definition is by way of instrument (*karaṇa-sādhana*): “Consciousness is that through which the concomitant mental factors cognize the object.” In this definition, while consciousness becomes the instrument, the concomitant mental factors become the

agent. The third definition is by way of activity or mode of operation (*bhāva-sādhana*): "Consciousness is the mere act of cognizing the object."

It is only the third definition that is recognized as valid from an ultimate point of view (*nippariyāyena*), because according to Abhidhamma psychology, consciousness is neither that which cognizes (agent), nor that through which cognition takes place (instrument), but is only the process of cognizing an object. As a basic factor of actuality (= *dhamma*), consciousness is the mere occurrence due to appropriate conditions. It is not an entity but an activity, an activity without an actor behind it. The point being emphasized is that there is no conscious subject behind consciousness. Therefore, the two definitions by way of agent and instrument are to be understood as provisional defining devices.

As to the mental factors that arise together with consciousness, there are in all 52. They are usually subsumed under four broad headings:

(a) Seven universals, that is, ethically variable mental factors common to all classes of consciousness
(b) Six occasionals, that is, ethically variable miscellaneous mental factors found only in certain types of consciousness
(c) Fourteen unwholesome mental factors
(d) Twenty-five beautiful mental factors

The seven universals are: sensory contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), psychic life-faculty (*arūpa-jīvitindriya*), and attention (*manasikāra*). These basic mental factors are invariably present in every type of consciousness, whether its ethical quality is wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), or indeterminate (*abyākata*). The eight occasionals are: initial application of the mind (*vitakka*), sustained application of the mind (*vicāra*), resolve (*adhimokkha*), energy (*viriya*), zest (*pīti*), and desire to act (*chanda*). The universals and the occasionals become ethically wholesome when they arise together with wholesome consciousness, and unwholesome when they arise together with unwholesome consciousness, and indeterminate when they arise together with indeterminate consciousness.

There are in all 14 unwholesome mental factors. These are: delusion (*moha*), moral shamelessness (*ahirika*), moral fearlessness (*anottapp*a), restlessness (*uddhacca*), greed (*lobha*), wrong view (*diṭṭhi*), conceit (*māna*), hatred (*dosa*), envy (*issā*), avarice (*macchariya*), worry (*kukkucca*), sloth (*thīna*), torpor (*middha*), and skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). Among them the first four occur with every type of unwholesome consciousness. The remaining ten are of occasional occurrence.

The group of beautiful (wholesome) mental factors consists of faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri)*, moral fear (*ottappa*), non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), neutrality of mind (*tatramajjhattatā*), tranquility of the mental factors (*kāya-passaddhi*), tranquility of consciousness (*citta-passaddhi*), lightness of the mental factors (*kaya-lahutā*), lightness of consciousness (*citta-lahutā*), malleability of the mental factors (*kāya-mudutā*), malleability of consciousness (*citta-mudutā*), wieldiness of the mental factors (*kāya-kammaññatā*), wieldiness of consciousness (*citta-kammaññatā*), proficiency of the mental factors (*kāya-pāguññatā*), proficiency of consciousness (*citta-pāguññatā*), rectitude of the mental factors (*kāyujjukatā*), rectitude of consciousness (*cittujjukatā*), mental factors corresponding to right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*), compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*), and non-delusion (*amoha*).

The Analysis of Matter

In the Abhidhamma, the material existence, too, is analyzed into basic factors called "material *dhammas*." Their diverse aggregations explain the variety and diversity of the physical phenomena of the world of experience. Any given instance of matter is finally resolvable into these basic material factors without leaving any remainder that could be interpreted as material substance.

There are in all 28 basic material factors (*rupa-dhammas*). However, only 18 are recognized as real, because the remaining 10 are said to represent certain modalities and characteristics of the real material factors. Of the 18 recognized as real, 4 are primary and 14 are secondary.

The four primaries are earth-element (*paṭhavī dhātu*), water-element (*āpo dhātu*), fire-element (*tejo dhātu*), and air-element (*vāyo dhātu*). Although they are called so, they are not understood in their literal sense. The earth-element represents solidity and spatial extension, the water element fluidity and cohesion, the fire-element temperature of cold and heat, and the air-element distension and mobility. These definitions show that the four primary elements are not concrete material entities, but abstract material properties. They are not separable from one another and are present in all instances of matter. It is maintained that the diversity in material phenomena is not due to a quantitative difference (*pamāṇato*) between the four primary elements but due to a difference in their intensity (*ussada-vasena*). In a comparatively hardy and solid material thing, for instance, although the four primaries are present, the earth-element is said to be characterized by a higher level of intensity.

Among the 14 real secondary elements, the first 5 represent five kinds of subtle materiality associated with the five physical sense organs, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. The next four represent the physical objects of sight, hearing, smell, and taste. The fifth, which is the tangible, consists of only three primary elements, namely, earth, fire, and air. The water-element is not mentioned here because according to the Abhidhamma it is not an object of touch. The material properties of fluidity and cohesion (= water-element), whatever be their levels of intensity are said to be known not as an object of touch, but as an object of mind-consciousness. That is to say, they are known as an object of inference. The next real secondary element is the physical seat of mental activity. In the canonical Abhidhamma, reference is made to a physical base of mental activity but therein it is not specifically identified. It is referred to as "that materiality on which mind, mind-consciousness, and the associated mental *dhammas* depend as their support." However, in the commentarial exegesis, it came to be identified as the heart-base. The heart-base is defined as a very subtle kind of materiality on which depend mind and mind-consciousness. The next in the list of real secondary material *dhammas* is the "quality" of material nutrition. It refers to the nutritive essence of all edible food which maintains the physical body. The next three items are the three faculties of femininity, masculinity, and vitality. The first two refer to two types of subtle materiality which are responsible for the physical differences between the female and the male. The third one is the factor that sustains and provides vitality to all species of organic matter in a living being. The "organic matter" includes the five physical sense organs, the seat of mental activity, and the two faculties of femininity and masculinity.

The list of nominal secondary material factors are called so because they do not have corresponding objective counterparts. It includes ten items. The first is space-element, that is, the space delimited by matter. The next two are two means of physical communication: bodily communication (*kāya-viññatti*) and vocal communication (*vacī-viññatti*). Next come three special modes of matter: lightness of matter (*rūpassa lahutā*), malleability of matter (*rūpassa mudutā*), and wieldiness of matter (*rūpassa kammaññatā*). These three represent physical health of a living being. The last four items are integration of matter (*rūpassa upacaya*), continuity of matter (*rūpassa santati*), decay of matter (*rūpassa jaratā*), and impermanence of matter (*rūpassa aniccatā*). They refer to four stages of the physical body of a living being from the time of conception until the time of death.

Momentary Being

The early Buddhist doctrine of impermanence is in the Abhidhamma presented as a theory of momentary being (*khaṇikatā*). According to this theory, the three characteristics of arising, existence, and cessation take place in three successive moments. A *dhamma* arises in the first moment, exists in the

second, and ceases in the third. Sometimes the moment is understood in a more general sense to mean the three moments taken together as one unit. Thus, the moment came to be defined in two different ways. In its more general sense it means the time taken by a *dhamma* to arise, exist, and cease. In its more specific sense it means the time taken by a *dhamma* either to arise, or to exist, or to cease. In this latter sense the moment becomes a sub-moment.

Although both mind and matter are said to be momentary the life span of a moment of matter is longer than that of a moment of mind. The ratio is 1/17.

One conclusion drawn from the momentariness of matter is the denial of motion. Since the material *dhammas* are momentary, they have no time to move from one locus in space to another. It is only in a conventional sense that the Abhidhamma speaks of the transition of a thing from one place to another (*desantara-saṅkamana*). In the ultimate sense, what really takes place is the successive arising of momentary material *dhammas* in adjacent locations (*desantaruppatti*), giving rise to the illusion of movement.

Conceptual Constructs

According to the *dhamma* theory, only the *dhammas* are real, in the sense that they alone have ontological ultimacy. Therefore, the Abhidhamma maintains that anything that cannot be subsumed under the heading "*dhamma*" is a conceptual construct, with no corresponding objective reality.

There are two kinds of conceptual construct. One is called concept-as-naming (*nāma-paññatti*) and the other concept-as-meaning (*attha-paññatti*). The first refers to names, words, signs, or symbols through which things, real or unreal, are designated. The second refers to ideas, meanings, or notions corresponding to the names, words, signs, or symbols. It is produced by the interpretative and synthesizing function of the mind. Both concept-as-naming and concept-as-meaning, thus, have a psychological dependence and as such are devoid of objective reality.

Concept-as-naming is often defined as "that which makes known" (*paññāpanato paññatti*) and concept-as-meaning as "that which is made known" (*pannāpiyattā paññatti*). What both definitions attempt to show is that the former which makes the latter known and the latter which is made known by the former are mutually interdependent and therefore logically inseparable. This explains the significance of another definition which states that concept-as-naming is the term's relationship with the ideas and that concept-as-meaning is the idea's relationship with the terms. These two pairs of definition show that the two processes of conceptualization and verbalization, through the symbolic medium of language, are but two separate aspects of the same phenomenon. It is for the convenience of definition that what really amounts to a single phenomenon is treated from two different angles, which represent two ways of looking at the same thing.

The two kinds of conceptual construct, thus, condition each other like subject and object. Since concept-as-meaning stands for the process of conceptualization, it represents more the subjective and the dynamic aspect, and since concept-as-naming stands for the process of verbalization, it represents more the objective and static aspect. For the assignment of a term to what is constructed in thought – in other words, its expression through the symbolic medium of language, – invests it with some kind of relative permanence and objectivity. It is so to say crystallized into an entity.

Time and Space as Conceptual Constructs

Two of the best examples of conceptual construct are time and space. According to the Theravāda Abhidhamma, both time and space are not absolute realities having objective existence, but conceptual constructs. The notion of time is said to be based on the continuous flow of the *dhammas.* It is the *dhammas* which arise and perish in continual succession that serve as a base for the construction of the notion of time. What is denied is not succession, but a distinct entity called time apart from the *dhammas* succeeding one another. As one

Abhidhamma commentary observes, "Chronological time denoted by reference to this or that event is only a conventional expression" (*taṃ taṃ upādāya paññatto kālo vohāramattako*).

In a similar way is explained the notion of space. For the Theravāda Abhidhamma space is not some sort of receptacle for the existence and movement of matter. The correct position is just the opposite. That is to say, one's very idea of space is dependent on matter. If there is no matter, the notion of space does not arise. Space is defined as the mere absence of matter. In a conventional sense if it is said that "matter exists in space," this has to be understood in a real sense to mean, "matter exists where there is no matter."

The Two Truths

If the *dhamma* theory led to the theory of conceptual constructs, both in turn led to another development, that is, the distinction drawn between two kinds of truth as conventional (*sammuti*) and ultimate (*paramattha*). Their difference may be stated as follows: When a particular situation is explained on the basis of terms indicative of the real existents (*dhammas*), that explanation is ultimately valid. When the selfsame situation is explained on the basis of terms indicative of conceptual constructs, that explanation is conventionally valid. The validity of the former is based on its correspondence to the ultimate data of empirical existence. The validity of the latter is based on its correspondence to things established by conventions.

According to the Theravāda Abhidhamma's theory of double truth, one truth is not considered higher or lower than the other truth. In this connection there is this simile given in the Pāli commentaries: Just as a teacher of the three Vedas who is capable of explaining their meaning in different dialects might teach his pupils adopting the particular dialect which each pupil understands, even so the Buddha preaches the doctrine adopting, according to the suitability of the occasion, either the conventional truth or the ultimate truth. Whatever the method adopted the purpose is the same, to show the way to Immortality through the analysis of mental and physical phenomena.

If parity of status is assigned to both truths, the question arises as to why one truth is called ultimate. Here, what should not be overlooked is that if one truth is called ultimate it is because this particular kind of truth has for its vocabulary the technical terms used to express what is ultimately real. Strictly speaking, the expression "ultimate" does not refer to the truth as such but to the technical terms through which it is expressed. Thus, ultimate truth means the truth expressed by using the technical terms denoting the *dhammas,* which alone exist in an ultimate sense. In like manner, conventional truth means the truth expressed by using conventional or transactional terms in common parlance.

Cross-References

- ▶ Causality (Buddhism)
- ▶ Mind (Buddhism)
- ▶ Psychology (Buddhism)
- ▶ Time (Buddhism)

References

1. Aung SZ (1910–1912) Abhidhamma literature in Burma. J Pali Text Soc 112–132, London
2. Bodhi B (tr) (1993) A comprehensive manual of Abhidhamma: the Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha of Ācariya Anuruddha. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
3. Bronkhorst J (1985) Dhamma and Abhidhamma. Bull Sch Orient Afr Stud 48:305–320, University of London
4. Dhammajoti BKL (2009) Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
5. Gethin R (1994) Bhavaṅga and rebirth according to the Abhidhamma. In: Skorupski T, Pagel U (eds) The Buddhist forum, vol III. School of Oriental and African Studies, London, pp 11–35
6. Gethin R (1998) The foundations of Buddhism. Oxford University Press, Oxford
7. Govinda LA (1969) The psychological attitude of early Buddhist philosophy and its systematic representation according to Abhidhamma tradition. Rider, London

8. Guenther HV (1976) Philosophy and psychology in the Abhidharma. Shambhala, Berkeley
9. Hirakawa A (1980) The meaning of "Dharma" and "Abhidharma". Indianisme et Bouddhisme: Melanges offerts a Mgr Etienne Lamotte. Louvain, pp 159–175
10. Jayasuriya WF (1976) The psychology and philosophy of Buddhism: an introduction to the Abhidhamma. Kuala Lumpur
11. Karunadasa Y (1989) The Buddhist analysis of matter. Singapore, reprinted
12. Karunadasa Y (2010) The Theravāda Abhidhamma: its inquiry into the nature of conditioned reality. Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
13. Kasyap J (1943) The Abhidhamma philosophy, vols I & II. Benares
14. Muller E (ed) (2001) Dhammasaṅgaṇi. Pali Text Society, London, reprinted
15. Nyanaponika T (1965, 1998) Abhidhamma studies: Buddhist explorations of consciousness and time. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy in collaboration with Wisdom Publications, Boston
16. Rhys Davids CAF (ed) (1975) Visuddhimagga, vols I & II. Pali Text Society, London, reprinted
17. Saddhatissa H (ed) (1989) Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha and Abhidhammattha-Vibhāvinī-Ṭīkā. Pali Text Society, London
18. Sarachchandra ER (1958) The Buddhist psychology of perception. Ceylon University Press, Colombo
19. von Rospatt A (1995) The Buddhist doctrine of momentariness: a survey of its origins and early phase of this doctrine up to Vasubandhu. Stuttgart

Abhiniṣkramaṇa

► Renunciation (Buddhism)

Abhiññā

Angraj Chaudhary
Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Synonyms

Iddhi; Levitation; Mind reading

Definition

Abhiññā is "Higher Powers" or "Psychic Powers" developed by practicing deep meditation.

Abhiññā is translated into English as "Higher Powers" or "Psychic Powers" [1] *and* "Supernormal Knowledges," [2] "Special Knowledge," or "Special Wisdom" [3]. They are six in number. They are called *iddhividhā* (magical powers), *dibba sota* (divine ear), *cetopariya ñāṇa* (to know or read the minds of others), *dibba cakkhu* (divine eye), *pubbenivāsānussati* (remembering former lives), and *āsavakkhaya ñāṇa* (knowledge of the extinction of all taints).

Two Types of Abhiññā

Of these six, the first five are worldly or *lokiya* and the last is supramundane or *lokuttara*. The first five can be attained by persons who have perfect mental concentration but the last can be attained only by *arahantas* who have completely destroyed their taints or *āsavas*.

Samatha Type of Meditation Helped in Attaining Concentration of Mind

Before the Buddha there were great meditators who attained deep concentration of mind. They practiced what is called the *samatha* type of meditation. Practicing this type of meditation, they stopped creating further *saṅkhāras* (formations) because they could exercise great control over their senses and did not allow them to come in contact with various objects of the world, react, and produce *saṅkhāras* or desires.

Discovery of Vipassana

But the Buddha went deep into it, did not only develop the capacity of concentrating the mind but also applied this concentrated mind to see things as they really are. He saw everything in a constant state of flux, realized their impermanent nature at

the experiential level, developed nonattachment, and ultimately attained nibbāna. Thus he developed the capacity to see the real nature of things by fine-tuning *samatha* type of meditation and practicing vipassana which he discovered.

Concentration of mind (*samatha*) enables one to develop supernormal powers, but it is only the practice of vipassana that brings about a qualitative change in one and enables him to destroy all his cravings for sensual pleasure (*kāma taṇhā*), craving for existence (*bhava taṇhā*), and craving for nonexistence (*vibhava taṇhā*).

The first five of the super knowledges mentioned above can be found in laymen with great meditative power. Devadatta had some of these powers. Once he assumed the form of a child wearing a girdle of snakes and sat in the lap of Ajātasattu to show his superpower, influence him, and bring him under his control. But the last of the six *abhiññās* can be attained by one who destroys all *āsavas* (taints or cankers). When one achieves this last power, then, with the two preceding powers such as *dibba cakkhu* and *pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa*, he becomes a *tevijja* (one having three super knowledges)

Of these six *abhiññās*, the first is *iddhividhā*. With this magical power developed, one can become many, and becoming many he can again become one. Cullapanthaka performed this miracle [4]. One can pass through walls and mountains without feeling any obstruction, as if he is passing through air, he can dive into the earth as if it is water and rise up again, he can walk on water as if on the earth. He can fly through the air. And sitting here he can touch the sun and the moon with his hand.

With the divine ear (*dibba sota*) developed, he can hear sounds of heaven as well as of the earth, sounds from far or near.

With the *cetopariyāya ñāṇa* he can know the minds of others and also can know whether one has a greedy mind or a hating mind or a deluded mind or a mind without these defilements.

With the *dibba cakkhu* (divine eye) he can see beings dying and reappearing in heaven and hell. He can also see their *kammas* responsible for their reappearance in the higher and lower worlds.

With the *abhiññā* called *pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa*, he can know and remember his former lives in great detail, remember even up to many formations and dissolutions of worlds.

When all taints or cankers (*āsavas*) are destroyed, he attains the deliverance of mind called *citta vimutti* and deliverance through wisdom called *paññā vimutti*. This is the highest spiritual stage where he becomes an arahant. He then knows all that are responsible for one's rebirth. Then all substrata of rebirth are completely destroyed.

But these super powers can be developed by one who observes morality and practices *jhāna*. When Siddhattha's mind was "thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfections, malleable, wieldy, steady and attained to imperturbability" [5], then he directed his mind to knowledge of the recollection of past lives, to knowledge of the passing away and reappearance of beings, and finally to knowledge of the destruction of taints. Then he understood suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation and also knew his mind is liberated. He directly knew: "Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being" [6].

Moggallāna and Uppalavaṇṇā, among many others, had great supernormal powers. Once Uppalavaṇṇā wished to perform miracles but the Buddha did not allow her to do so [7]. According to the Buddha performing miracles to impress upon the lay people is not proper. He did not regard this as a good means of attracting people towards Dhamma.

Cross-References

- ▶ Moggallāna
- ▶ Uppalavaṇṇā

References

1. Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary, p 2 (Printed inTaiwan)
2. Rhys Davids TW (2000) A Manual of Buddhism. Low Price Publications, Delhi, p 182
3. Rhys Davids' TW, Pali English Dictionary

4. AA. 1.168. (Unless otherwise mentioned all books referred to here are published by Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri in 1998)
5. Ñāṇamoli B, Bodhi B (trans) (1995) The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. Wisdom Publications, Boston, p 105 & M.1.27
6. Ñāṇamoli B, Bodhi B (trans) (1995) The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. Wisdom Publications, Boston, p 106; M1.29
7. Therīg A (Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri in 1998) p 221

Abhisamayālaṃkāra

James B. Apple
Department of Religious Studies,
University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada

Synonyms

Abhisamayalankara; Abhisamayālaṅkāra; Ornament of Clear Realization

Definition

Indian Buddhist commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā preserved in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("Ornament for Clear Realization") is a commentary to the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* ("25,000 verse") *Prajñāpāramitā* whose authorship is traditionally attributed to Maitreyanātha (ca. 350 C.E.). The work's full title in Sanskrit is *Abhisamayālaṃkāranāmaprajñāpāramitopadeśāstra*. The term at the beginning of the title, *abhisamaya*, signifies "comprehensive understanding" or "clear realization," referring to cognitive attainments on the path to Buddhahood. *Alaṃkāra* ("Ornament") is a literary style that provides an exposition of a topic. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is regarded as an *upadeśaśāstra* ("instructional treatise") in that it presents the hidden or concealed meaning (Tibetan *sbas don*, Sanskrit *garbhyārtha*) of the entire Large Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra corpus. Therefore, the full title may be translated as "An Instructional Treatise on Prajñāpāramitā called 'Ornament for Clear Realization'" ([1], pp. 48–49).

As a technical treatise, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* consists of an encyclopedic table of contents, communicating in an abridged form the instructions, practices, paths, and stages of realization to Buddhahood that are mentioned in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. The primary focus of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is to describe the stages of the Mahāyāna path, which are thought by Indian and Tibetan scholars to be implicitly stated in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, through outlining of realizations and practices that bodhisattvas ("Buddhas-in-training") must achieve in order to achieve Buddhahood [2].

The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* outlines a soteriological system of the entire Mahāyāna path by either explicitly expressing what is already mentioned in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras or superimposing a path schema that is foreign to the sūtras and expressed in Abhidharma and Yogācāra terminology. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* lays out its system of buddhalogical teachings through fusing together Abhidharma categories and technical terminology found in Yogācāra treatises with content from the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. Terminology such as the four types of dichotomous conceptualization (*vikalpa*) as well as conceptual schemes for multiple bodies (*kāya*) indicate Yogācāra influence on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*'s author ([3], p. 196).

In terms of general content and structure, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is comprised of 273 Sanskrit stanzas within nine chapters that present the hidden meaning of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* lays out the same subject matter numerous times, yet with each repetition of the presentation, the subject matter is covered in successively greater detail ([4], p. 142). The main subject matter of the text is presented five separate times. The (1) homage to *Prajñāpāramitā* encapsulates the main principles that flow throughout the whole text. The homage is followed by a restatement of these main principles in (2) a versified table of contents (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* 1.3-4). These main principles or topics are then slightly expanded and contained in (3) an elucidation of the "body of

the text" (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* 1.5-17). The fourth repetition is the most expansive and consists of (4) a detailed articulation (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, 1.18-penultimate) of the paths and stages. Finally, (5) summation verses (*Abhisamayālaṃkāra* 9.1-2) are given which condense the subject matter of the text into three categories – aims (*viṣaya*), practices (*prayoga*), and result (*phala*). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* presents its subject matter in terse verses that are often vague in meaning and difficult to understand without the assistance of a commentary. The text presumes that the reader has a background in Buddhist scholasticism, including a knowledge of Abhidharma path structures, categories of mental defilements, meditational attainments, analytical procedures, and cosmology, among other topics. Along these lines, the path systems presented in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are quite complex with multiple divisions and subdivisions pertaining to each aspect of the path from several different angles. In the opening verses after the homage, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (1.3-4) states that "the perfection of wisdom is proclaimed through eight subjects: (1) Total Omniscience, (2) Path Omniscience, (3) Empirical Omniscience, (4) Full Realization of All Aspects, (5) Realization that has attained the Summit, (6) Progressive realization, (7) Instantaneous Realization, and (8) the Dharma-body" ([1], p. 52). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* contains nine chapters, eight of which address each subject in turn. The eight subjects (*padārtha*) that comprise these eight chapters (*adhikāra*) of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* correspond to eight clear realizations (*abhisamaya*) that explain the soteriological purport of *Prajñāpāramitā*. Total Omniscience or the wisdom of all aspects (Sanskrit *sarvākārajñatā*, Tibetan *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid*) is regarded as the fundamental wisdom and the central concept of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*s ([5], pp. 72–74; [6], pp. 188–190). Total Omniscience for the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its commentaries is direct unmediated knowledge which understands exactly the manner of reality (Tibetan *ji lta ba bzhin yod pa*, Sanskrit *yathāvadbhāvika*) to its fullest possible extent (Tibetan *ji snyed yod pa*, Sanskrit *yāvadbhāvikatā*) in all its aspects [7]. Path Omniscience in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* correlates to three types of path systems that are mastered by bodhisattvas: the paths of *śrāvaka*s, the paths of *pratyekabuddhas*, and the paths of bodhisattvas. A *śrāvaka* (Tibetan *nyan thos pa*, "Listener") is a type of individual who has heard or studied the Buddha's teachings and who seeks the peace of *nirvāṇa* through cultivating a direct realization of the Nobles' Four Truths. A *pratyekabuddha* (Tibetan *rang sang gyas*, "Solitary Buddha") is an "individually awakened one" who cognizes the emptiness of external objects through realizing dependent arising but does not thereby attain the full omniscience of a Buddha. *Pratyekabuddhas* do not have much compassion and attain their awakening in solitude. A bodhisattva (Tibetan *byang chub sems dpa'*, "Buddha-to-be") is an individual who is intent on achieving full Buddhahood for the welfare of beings through cultivating wisdom and compassion [2]. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is primarily a technical digest for the training of bodhisattvas. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*'s third chapter describes the qualities of Empirical Omniscience (*vastujñāna*, *gzhi shes*; literally "knowledge of bases") ([8], pp. 51–67, 299–328) which is a type of knowledge that cognizes empirical objects that are to be abandoned in conditioned existence. Such realization correlates to knowledge that is comprehended by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. Empirical Omniscience is mastered by bodhisattvas as well, but bodhisattvas do not cling to the pacifying results of this realization's cognition. This knowledge leads śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, as well as bodhisattvas, to comprehend the entirety of unconditioned and conditioned things (*dharmas*) in Buddhist classification, including the five aggregates (*skandha*), the 12 sense spheres (*āyatana*), and the 18 sense objects (*dhātu*). The full realization of all aspects (*sarvākārābhisaṃbodha*, *rnam rdzogs sbyor ba*) that comprises the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*'s fourth chapter is a yogic practice which enables a bodhisattva to gain a cognition of all the aspects of the three types of omniscience the summit of full understanding (*mūrdhābhisamaya*, *rtse sbyor*) or "culminating

insight" ([5], pp. 79–80). The Ornament's chapter five pertains to the summit of full understanding (*mūrdhābhisamaya*, *rtse sbyor*) or "culminating insight" ([5], pp. 79–80). This *abhisamaya* is comprised of eight factors and refers to phases of yogic practices which reach culmination while cognizing emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The sixth chapter defines, by reference to 13 topics in one verse, the gradual full understanding (*anupūrvābhisamaya*, *mthar gyis sbyor ba*) of the three forms of omniscience ([5], p. 81). This clear realization of "gradual insight" consists of engaging in the six perfections of bodhisattva practice. The seventh *abhisamaya* clarifies the "instantaneous realization" (*ekakṣaṇābhisamaya*, *skad cig gcig pa'i mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa*) occurs at the final moment right before Buddhahood. The last subject in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the result of the path, is the realization of the Dharma-body (*dharmakāyābhisamaya*, *chos sku mngon rtogs pa*) in its four aspects. Indian and Tibetan commentators debate about what exactly is the correct interpretation of these four aspects [9]. A number of Tibetan scholars, following the Indian scholar Haribhadra, will understand these four as (1) the body of dharma (*dharmakāya*), (2) the embodiment of Buddhahood in its essence (*svābhāvikakāya*), (3) the embodiment of communal enjoyment (*saṃbhogakāya*), and (4) the limitless forms of awakened manifestation (*nairmāṇikakāya*).The eight subjects found in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* are usually understood in terms of three categories that are mentioned in the final verses of the text's ninth chapter. The first three clear realizations (1–3) are aims or objects (*viṣaya*) to be known by bodhisattvas. The next four realizations (4–7) are practices (prayoga) to be cultivated by bodhisattvas in order cognize the first three realizations. Finally, the dharma-body (*phala*) occurs as a result of the practices that actualize the clear realizations.

A long tradition of commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* developed in India and Tibet. Traditional accounts mention that the great Yogācāra scholars Asaṅga (ca. 315–390 C.E.) and his half-brother Vasubandhu (fl. Fourth century) wrote commentaries to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, but they are lost. Ārya Vimuktisena (ca. early sixth century C.E.) is the author of the earliest extant commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāravṛtti*. Ārya Vimuktisena's commentary links the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* to the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and serves as the basis for all subsequent Indian and Tibetan commentaries ([1], pp. 21–36). The next great scholar on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* is Haribhadra, who was active during the reign of Dharmapāla (rg. ca. 770–810). He composed four works related to *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* including the *Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā*, a long explanatory commentary that comments on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* in correlation with *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* [6, 8, 10], and the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra-vivṛti* [11], a short commentary that provides an exposition on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* without relying on any *prajñāpāramitā* text. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra-vivṛti* is the base text for *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentaries in the Tibetan tradition. After the works of Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra, another 16 Indian commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* were composed during the Pāla dynastic era (750–1150 C.E.) and are preserved in Tibetan translation [12].

Tibetan Buddhists have continued on with the commentarial tradition of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* up to the present day. The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* has ". . .had the most lasting impact of any sūtra commentary [in Tibet]," [13] serving as a gateway for the study of the Prajñāpāramitā by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism as well as being a fundamental text in the contemporary Tibetan Buddhist monastic curriculum [14]. Hundreds of commentaries to the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* were composed in premodern Tibet. Among the most well-known were the *Theg chen-po la'jug pa* of Gnyal-zhig-pa'jam-dpal rdo-rje (flourished twelfth century), the *Lung gi nye ma* written by Bu-ston rin-chen-grub (1290–1364), the commentary of Nya-dbon kun-dga'-dpal (1285–1379), and the *Legs bshad gser phreng* by Tsong-kha-pa blo-bzang grag-pa (1357–1419). The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its related literature has been a source in modern scholarship for the analysis of the embodied qualities of Buddhahood [9], issues in the

interpretation of *tathāgathagarbha* [15], and the elucidation of Buddhist categories of Noble Beings [1] among other topics.

Cross-References

- ▶ Abhidharma (Theravāda)
- ▶ Bodhisattva
- ▶ Mahāyāna
- ▶ Prajñāpāramitā

References

1. Apple JB (2008) Stairway to Nirvaṇa: a study of the twenty Saṃghas based on the works of Tsong Kha Pa. State University of New York Press, Albany
2. Apple JB (2013) "The Mahāyāna path of the Bodhisattva in the ornament for clear realization. Relig Compass 5(5):166–179
3. Conze E (1954) Maitreya's Abhisamayâlaṅkâra. East West 5(3):192–197
4. Sparham G (1987) Background material for the first of the seventy topics in Maitreyanātha's Abhisamayālaṃkāra. J Int Assoc Buddh Stud 10(2):139–158
5. Obermiller E (1984) The doctrine of Prajñā-Pāramitā as exposed in the Abhisamayālaṃkāra of Maitreya. Canon, Talent
6. Sparham G (2006, trans) Abhisamayālaṃkāra with Vṛtti and Ālokā. Volume one: first Abhisamaya. Jain, Fremont
7. Yeh Ah-yueh (1984) A study of the theories of yāvadbhāvikatā and yathāvadbhāvikatā in the Abhidharmasamuccaya. J Int Assoc Buddh Stud 7(2):185–207
8. Sparham G (2008,trans) Abhisamayālaṃkāra with Vṛtti and Ālokā. Volume two: second and third Abhisamaya. Jain, Fremont
9. Makransky JJ (1997) Buddhahood embodied: sources of controversy in India and Tibet. State University of New York Press, Albany
10. Sparham G (2009, trans) Abhisamayālaṃkāra with Vṛtti and Ālokā. Volume three: fourth Abhisamaya. Jain, Fremont
11. Amano K (2000) Abhisamayālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra-vivṛti: Haribhadra's commentary on the Abhisamayālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra edited for the first time from a Sanskrit manuscript. Heirakuji-Shoten, Kyōto
12. Apple JB (2009) Contributions to the development and classification of Abhisamayālaṃkāra literature in Tibet from the ninth to fourteenth century. J Int Assoc Tibetan Stud 5:1–56
13. Schoening JD (1996) Sūtra commentaries in Tibetan translation. In: Sopa L, Cabezón JI, Jackson RR (eds) Tibetan literature: studies in Genre. Snow Lion, Ithaca, pp 111–124
14. Dreyfus GBJ (2003) The sound of two hands clapping: the education of a Tibetan Buddhist monk. University of California Press, Berkeley
15. Ruegg DS (1969) La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra. Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme. École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris

Abhisamayalankara

▶ Abhisamayālaṃkāra

Abhisamayālaṅkāra

▶ Abhisamayālaṃkāra

Absolute Idealism

▶ Idealism (Buddhism)

Absorption

▶ Dhyāna/Jhāna

Ācārya Dignāga

▶ Dignāga

Acintya-dharma-vimokṣa

▶ Vimalakīrtinirdeśa

Action Dharma

▶ Engaged Buddhism

Adhi-śīla

▶ *Śīla*

Adhiśīla

▶ Ethics (Buddhism)

Adhva

▶ Time (Buddhism)

Affectionate

▶ Metta

Ages of the Dharma

▶ Eschatology (Buddhism)

Aggregates

▶ Khandha

Agnidatta

▶ Pasenadi

Ahimsa

▶ Karma (Jainism)
▶ Warfare (Buddhism)

Ahiṃsā (Buddhism)

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Avihiṃsā; Nonviolence

Definition

The principle of nonviolence included by the Buddha among his main teachings and regarded as of incomparable merit.

Introduction

The word *ahiṃsā* is a feminine noun formed by adding the negative prefix *a* to the word *hiṃsā*, derived from the root *hiṃs* meaning "to kill" or "to injure." In historic India, the concept of *ahiṃsā* was used for the first time by the authors of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* ([1], p. 17.4) in connection with the cruelty of Vedic *yajñas*. Later, it was strongly advocated by the Buddha, who included it among his main teachings, provided it a theoretical basis, and regarded it as of incomparable merit.

Rationality Behind Buddhist Position Concerning Ahiṃsā

Buddhism believes that living beings live in a world of mutual injury where life can only be sustained by marginalizing others. Thus, it is not possible to literally uphold the principle of *ahiṃsā* as life in some forms has to be unavoidably injured or destroyed in order to survive. In a situation such as this, violence in one form or the other is unavoidable. In order to live, one must eat, and for that, most of the humans acquire their food through the capture of various kinds of

animals. Some take to vegetarianism to escape such a killing. However, some believe that plants also possess life, and from their point of view, even this cannot be called a correct way of life. Moreover, when one is attacked by others, there arises the question of indulging in violence in self-defense. Then, there is the question of various kinds of insects like flies and mosquitoes being regularly eliminated in large numbers in order to minimize the risk of the harmful germs carried by them. Various kinds of drugs also kill germs in the body so that humans can recover from different ailments. As a matter of fact, germ theory which forms the very basis of modern medicine involves elimination of life in different forms. Scientists conduct experiments on animals in order to find cures for diseases that afflict humans. Therefore, if the principle of *ahiṃsā* is upheld literally, it would be difficult, to say the least, to obtain suitable food to maintain one's own life, and probably, one shall have to starve oneself to death, i.e., commit suicide. Strictly speaking, suicide is also inconsistent with the principle of *ahiṃsā*. In other words, the practice of perfect and absolute *ahiṃsā* is impossible in this sense, and thus, the inner feeling of the spirit of *ahiṃsā* and its outer expression, i.e., the act of *ahiṃsā*, become different from one another. Thus, the Buddha based his philosophy of *ahiṃsā* on this simple fact that even though the action of *ahiṃsā* is difficult to perfect, yet the perfection of the spirit of *ahiṃsā* can be perfected in the heart through learning and practice. When the inner feeling of *ahiṃsā* becomes perfect and is expressed in outward actions, it is seen as an ideal life of a Buddhist. One can practice *ahiṃsā* in the real sense only if one can appreciate the true cognition of life, the contradictions of which are hard to resolve. Recognizing that complete *ahiṃsā* is difficult to practice, the Buddha avoided making unnecessarily rigorous rules for *ahiṃsā* as action. However, the Buddha's injunction against the deliberate destruction of life was unambiguous. He severely criticized the sacrifice of animals in brāhmaṇical sacrifices ([2], p. 307ff; [3], Vol. i, p. 143).

This form of moderate and rational doctrine of *ahiṃsā* is perhaps the most important contribution of Buddhism to human civilization. In the Pāli texts, this principle is stated mainly in three terms, namely, *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*, *pāṇātipātā paṭivirati*, and *ahiṃsā*. Of these three terms, *ahiṃsā* or *avihiṃsā,* meaning "non-violence," is the most widely used in the Buddhist texts. The other two expressions indicate the same meaning of "abstaining or restraining oneself from *causing injury to living beings*" (*pāṇātipātā*/*pāṇavadha*/*pāṇaghāta*) ([2], p. 242; [3], Vol. I, p. 4, Vol. III, pp. 68, 70, 149, 182, 235; [4], Vol. I, pp. 83, 85, 193; [5], Vol. I, p. 361, Vol. III, p. 23) and are used mainly in relation to *Vinaya* rules regarding *sīla* that forbid the killing of a living being (*jīva*). Here, a special meaning in the form of precautionary endeavor and the application of will is contained in the words *veramaṇī* (abstaining) and *paṭivirati* (restraining). The endeavor of will is imperative for abstaining from evil proclivities such as destruction of life in any form. When the vow is made, "I will observe the principle not to kill living beings," *sīla* is the self-actualizing attitude that emerges when one undertakes to carry on this endeavor. A child does not commit *hiṃsā*, and yet there is no *sīla.* The reason for this is that the child is not conscious of the fact that it is not doing evil. In the same manner, it cannot be said that one abides by *sīla* just because one does not kill living creatures. *Ahiṃsā*, thus, implies *deliberate* avoidance of injury to living beings. In other words, a Buddhist is expected not only to shun killing but also avoid inciting others to kill. Further, a person who has *sīla* has *paññā* (wisdom) and vice versa. *Paññā* is purified by *sīla* and *sīla* purifies *paññā* ([3], Vol. I, p. 24). Thus, the spirit of consciousness which originates from *sīla* moves onward, ultimately culminating in the supreme wisdom of enlightenment (*bodhi*). Thus, as *ahiṃsā* is included in *sīla*, it is supported by the spiritual force of the latter and is actualized by the mental power that arises with it.

The Spirit of Compassion

In Theravāda, no separate category is made of *ahiṃsā* as a psychological process and is not included in the 52 kinds of *cetasikadhamma* of the *Abhidhammatthasaṃghaha*. In Mahāyāna, the

spirit which promotes *ahiṃsā* is, psychologically speaking, called the spirit of compassion. Sthirmati of the Mahāyāna school of Vijñānavāda (pure consciousness) says in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* that compassion (*karuṇā*) is the mental property (*caitasika*) by which *ahiṃsā* is actualized and practiced ([6], Vol. I, p. 288). He believed that when the feeling of pity arises in one's mind, one does not either harm or kill living beings, and on this basis, he proposed that *karuṇā* is *ahiṃsā* as mental power. On this basis, it was understood that compassion is the mental property on which the practice of *ahiṃsā* is based. Dharmapāla of the same school saw the mental property in the practice of *ahiṃsā* as being non-anger (*adveṣa*) ([6], Vol. I, p. 288). This implies that when mental power, as anger, awakens and stimulates someone, the object of that anger is either injured or killed. Thus, it was observed that when the mental power that extinguishes anger begins to rule the mind through the suppression of anger, the practice of *ahiṃsā* is actualized. The Sarvāstivāda school believed that *ahiṃsā* existed as an independent mental power, and when actualized, it resulted in bodily action. In other words, the mental quality from which *ahiṃsā* functioned as bodily action was not simply the feeling of pity (*karuṇā*) or the absence of anger (*adveṣa*), but an independent meritorious mental power (*kuśalacaitsikadharma*) ([6], Vol. I, p. 288).

Ahiṃsā to living beings, which is the first precept in Buddhism, is based upon the principle of mutual attraction and rightness common to all nature. To willfully take life means to disrupt and destroy the inherent wholeness and to blunt feelings of reverence and compassion that form the basis of humaneness. This precept is really a call to life and creation even as it is a condemnation of death and destruction. Deliberately to shoot, knife, strangle, drown, crush, poison, burn, or otherwise inflict pain on a living being are not the only ways to defile this precept. To cause another to kill, torture, or harm a living being likewise offends against the first precept. Though violence (*hiṃsā*) can take place in words, thoughts, and deeds, ancient Indian Buddhism was mainly concerned with violence in deeds. Sacrifices in various forms, especially the ones in which animals were deprived of life, were seen by the Buddha as not only a ridiculous absurdity but also as an unpardonable cruelty. He did not recognize the efficacy of sacrifices on the one hand and highly regarded the life of living beings on the other. According to him, "all living beings are not to be harmed" ([7], Vol. II, p. 183). "At the sort of sacrifice. . . (where). . . creatures are put an end to. . . is neither of great fruitfulness nor of great profit; nor of great renown; nor of widespread effect. It is just as if a farmer were to enter a wood taking with him plough and seed, and were there, in an untilled tract, in unfavorable soil, among uprooted stumps, to plant seeds that were broken, rotten, spoilt by wind and heat, out of season, not in good condition, and the god were not to give good rain in due season" ([8], Vol. II, p. 307f.). It has been told in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* that "the bhikkhu, putting away the killing of living beings holds aloof from the destruction of life. The cudgel and the sword he has laid aside, and ashamed of roughness, and full of mercy, he dwells compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life" ([8], Vol. I, p. 79). Similarly, in one of the verses of the *Dhammapada* it has been pointed out that one does not become noble if one hurts living beings, but because of *ahiṃsā* toward all living beings, one is called noble ([9], p. 270).

Basis of the Practice of Ahiṃsā

The basis of the practice of ahiṃsā is compassion (*dayā*), mercy (*hitānukampā*), and a feeling of shame (*lajjā*) of the cruelty of killing and injuring life. In this way, *ahiṃsā* has been amalgamated by Buddhism with compassion and a consciousness of shame. Where there is compassion in the heart, it is expressed in an outward act as *ahiṃsā*. *Ahiṃsā* is considered a noble act because it is not only the object of the act, but it also results in happiness to the one who practices it. On the other hand, those who harbor hatred not only injure others but also bring unhappiness to themselves. "Here (in this world) hatreds are indeed never appeased by hatred and are appeased by non-hatred. This is the eternal law" ([9], p. 5).

"Who kills not, nor aught causes to be killed,/Who robs not, not makes others rob, for all/Within his heart hath share, he hateth none." ([7], Vol. IV, p. 104.) The killing of living beings is a shameful act and is wrong because it opposes the spirit of compassion. Moreover, when *ahiṃsā* is practiced, one comes to know the true feeling of love and attains happiness. The attainment of this kind of happiness is said to be spiritually of a highly exalted state. "Sages who are harmless, always restrained with body, go to the eternal place where, having gone, they do not grieve" ([9], p. 225); "Gotama's disciples are always well awake;/Both day and night their minds in harmlessness delight." ([9], p. 300); "Always well awakened are disciples of Gautama whose mind by day and night is delighted in non-violence" ([10], p. 648). In this way, taking delight in *ahiṃsā* and cultivating a mind of compassion (*mettā-citta-bhāvanā*) are one and the same. Thus, to develop a compassionate heart is to desire happiness and well-being of all living beings. In Buddhism, *ahiṃsā* is taught from the standpoint that all people love their own lives and do not wish to be hurt or killed by others. This feeling of self-preservation and self-love is transferred in thought to other people, and in this way, the love for and protection of life come to be promoted. For instance, the *Dhammapada* echoes this very thought by pointing out that as all fear death, comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill ([9], p. 129).

Benefits of Ahiṃsā

The application of *ahiṃsā* makes one aware of the true feeling of love and leads to the attainment of happiness, and, further, this happiness is also said to be spiritually a highly exalted state. To develop a compassionate heart is to desire that all living beings shall reach a state of happiness, tranquility and well-being, and then to awaken in oneself the feeling of compassion toward innumerable and infinite kinds of life, and thus, encompassing all life by the thought of compassion. This is called the mind of boundless compassion (*mettā-appamaññā*). Again, the fact that *ahiṃsā* has as its basis the compassionate mind, it also merges with the principle of the emancipation of mind by the power of compassion (*mettā-cetovimutti*). This principle means that the mind achieves serenity by developing a compassionate heart and thus attains emancipation. In Buddhism, *ahiṃsā* is not just confined to the ethical rule that one should love all living beings. It goes far beyond that and recognizes in a religious sense that by practicing it the lofty heights of Buddhahood can be realized. Therefore, in Buddhism, the practice of ahiṃsā is taught in many ways. For example, right action (*sammākammanta*) in the *Noble Eightfold Path* can be explained and interpreted as *ahiṃsā* ([5], Vol. iii, p. 251). Again, in the highly regarded *dasakusala-kammapatha* (Path of Ten Kinds of Good Actions), the first step is that of not killing living beings ([3], Vol. iii, p. 269). Similarly, when the Buddha taught the correct daily conduct of a lay follower to Siṅgālika, the first principle expounded was that of non-killing of beings ([3], Vol. iii, p. 181).

Vinaya Rules and Ahiṃsā

The lay follower (*upāsaka*, *upāsikā*) is exhorted to follow the *pañcasīla* (Five Precepts) of which the first one is that of noninjury to living beings (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ*). As a result, the lay follower undertakes to abstain from injury to living beings not only as a matter of intent but also by actualizing it in action. Even despite having the intent, when one cannot practice it in real life on certain occasions, the precept is broken. This sort of breach of the precept means that while the *intent* of *ahiṃsā* is there, the selfish desires opposed to this intent are very strong. In such circumstances, the breach of the precept is regretted and, thus, confession (*paṭidesanā*) is made. However, this confession must come from the heart. The importance of the doctrine of *ahiṃsā* in Buddhism can be measured from the fact that the precept of *ahiṃsā* is included in the *Aṭṭhaṅgika-uposatha* (Eight Precepts) which are practiced by the Buddhists on the 4 days of *uposatha* (fast) of the month. It is also included

as the first of the ten precepts for the *sāmaṇera* and *sāmaṇerī*. The non-killing of life is given in great detail in the *Pātimokkha*, in the *Vinaya* of the bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. As per the third precept of the *Pārājikā* in the *Pātimokka*, a monk or a nun is expelled from the Saṃgha for committing a murder, which is the severest punishment for the members of the Saṃgha. Buddhism condemns strongly the one "who should deliberately and purposely (*iticittamano cittasaṃkappo*) in various ways praise the beauty of death or should incite (anyone) to death" ([4], Vol. iii, p. 73). The *methods* of causing death mentioned in the *Vinaya* are many and varied, including the use of weapons, devices ranging from pits and traps to more subtle psychological strategies like frightening someone to death by dressing up as a ghost, and, of course, death resulting from unsuccessful medical treatments. In terms of *intention*, the examples show that guilt is firmly tied to state of mind (*mens rea*) of the accused at the time the offense was committed. Guilt or innocence depends upon the outcome tallying with the intention with which one undertook the project in question. The concept of *agency* is important where other parties are involved as intermediaries, as when one monk instructs another to carry out a lethal plan. Generally speaking in the *Vinaya*, an action which requires intention for it to be an offense is no offense at all if there *is* no bad intention. Moreover, as emphasized in the *Kurudhamma Jātaka* ([11], Vol. iii, pp. 366–381), at least in a lay context, unintended harm to others should not be counted against one, and it is not wise to agonize over such matters (see [12], pp. 191–203). Buddhism places abortion on the same level as killing a human being. Suicide is also forbidden in Buddhism ([4], Vol. iii, pp. 73, 82).

There is a ban on injuring plant life (*Pācittiya* nos. 10 and 11), and, thus, according to the Buddha, "the perfect person abstains from injury both to seed life and plant life" (*bījagāma bhūtagāma*) ([7], Vol. ii, p. 222). He called upon all "for having compassion on creatures" ([13], Vol. v, p. 241). The Buddha felt that the humane sentiment of mankind is not to be limited merely to themselves but to be extended to all sentient beings, who should share as much kindness as mankind itself does. The Buddha taught "never to destroy the life of any living creature, however tiny it might be" ([14], Vol. xvii, p. 30; Vol. xx, p. 128). It is even forbidden to throw the remains of food on green grass or into water because the creatures living in both water and grass can be harmed ([14], Vol. xvii, p. 22). According to him "making onslaught on creatures, being cruel, bloody handed, intent on injury and killing, and without mercy on living creatures. . . is conducive to shortness of life span" ([15], Vol. iii, p. 250) and saw it as repulsive (*āmagaṅdha*) ([14], Vol. x(2), p. 39). Not even "for the sake of sustaining life would we intentionally deprive any being of life," ([7], Vol. iv, p. 129) said the Buddha. Monks are forbidden from digging soil ([4], Vol. iv, p. 33). Water must be strained before drinking because it contains living things ([11], Vol. *I,* p. 83; [16], Vol. iii, p. 3), and only that fruit which "has not yet any seed in it. . . (or). . . has no more seed in it" ([14], Vol. xx, p. 75) should be eaten.

Violent Occupations

All those following bloody and cruel occupations (*kurūrakammantā*) such as a butcher, fowler, hunter, fisherman, bandit, executioner, and jailer are seen by Buddhism with a distinct disfavor ([17], Vol. ii, p. 171; [18], Vol. iii, p. 383; [19], p. 56). Similarly, professions involving cutting, flogging, binding, highway robbery, and plundering are considered as violent and heinous ([7], Vol. ii, p. 223). A cattle butcher suffers for "many hundred thousands of years in purgatory" ([17], Vol. ii, p. 170). "One neither sees or hears of a butcher slaughtering and selling cattle rams, pigs. . . or beasts of the forest and living in the abundance of great wealth" ([7], Vol. iii, p. 273). Some of the *kammic* results, which a man brings upon himself by committing injury to a life, are "suffering in an unpleasant state for a long period, and rebirth in some lower form of being. If born again as man, he may be infirm, ugly, unpopular, cowardly, divested of compassion, subject to disease, dejected and mournful, separated from the company of loved ones, and unable to attain to

ripe age" (see [20], p. 89). In Buddhism, the circumstances under which a being is killed as well as the physical and mental development of the being decide the gravity of the moral guilt involved in killing. The *kammic* "result of killing a man and killing a child vary in proportion to the physical and mental development of the two" ([20], p. 88).

Warfare, Agriculture, and Meat Eating

It has been generally pointed out that the attitude of ancient Indian Buddhism toward "warfare, agriculture and meat-eating was more mixed than was its attitude to blood sacrifices. It made no whole-hearted condemnation of these three practices although they all entail the taking of life" ([21], p. 443). Though soldiers were not admitted into monkhood ([14], Vol. xiii, pp. 196, 230), and monks were told to stay away from watching wars or walking with the armies ([4], Vol. iv, pp. 104–108), and yet there are some similes and examples given in the *Vinaya* and *Sutta Piṭaka* in which fighting men and martial qualities are emulated. For instances, monks are often told to be steadfast as in battle and to wage spiritual *battles* like the armed ones (see, e.g., [18], Vol. ii, p. 116, Vol. iii, pp. 89, 100, 161; [11], Vol. ii, p. 276). There are certain *Jātaka* stories in which the Bodhisatta participates in a battle "to win renown. . . raising his battle cry as he dashed into the fight" ([11], Vol. i, pp. 205–206). Despite the drum of non-killing being sounded through a town ([11], Vol. iii, pp. 428, 434), its having been heard by the kings of yore ([11], Vol. iii, p. 428) and landlords laying interdiction upon the slaughter of animals ([11], Vol. iv, p. 115), killing of animals continued on a large scale at least till the days of Aśoka ([21], p. 348). Among the best known names of individuals who practiced *ahiṃsā* virtues was king Aśoka who prohibited the sacrifice of animals as offering was prohibited, restricted the eating of meat, and, even in the palace, the killing of animals in the royal kitchen was reduced to a minimum. Except perhaps bringing about a decrease in the popularity of great sacrifices, in the other fields of violence, Buddhism appears to have met with very little success, as pointed out by Horner ([21], p. 439), because the Buddha was not a temporal ruler, and hence, he had no actual power to impose a body of restrictive regulations and penalties on the laity as he had on his monastic followers.

The Buddhist concept of *ahiṃsā* has two facets. One is negative, which covers injury inspired by compassion, self-restraint, and the desire to alleviate pain. The second is positive, which covers noninjury inspired by the same motive and desire and intention. In other words, positive objective considerations justify injury as an expression of nonviolence. Thus, dual concept on nonviolence is realistic. The negative aspect is based on the recognition of the fact that the universe as such is suffused with death and destruction. No one can survive and live in the world without committing one or the other kind of violence. The positive aspect of nonviolence partakes of the nature of a moral ideal without which no social, human, or cosmic order can survive. Violence cannot be eschewed completely and is inescapable in certain critical situations. In other words, in certain situations, application of negative aspect of nonviolence is unavoidable. One can see certain examples of the application of the negative concept of nonviolence, namely, injury with a view to alleviate pain or violent defense of the honor of women. Buddhism also makes a distinction between man and animals plus plants, seeds, etc. Though destruction of or injury to both involves sin, there is a difference of degree. The sin accrued by killing a man is more than the cutting of a plant. Further, sin accrued as a result of killing a person with a developed mind is more than in the case of a man whose mind is less developed.

Animal Sacrifices and Agricultural Revolution

The Buddhist opposition to animal sacrifices has been sometimes associated with the so-called agricultural revolution that is said to have taken place on the eve of the origin of Buddhism (see,

e.g., among others, R.S. Sharma, at [22], p. 96). The idea of economic utility of animals being partly responsible for the unpopularity of sacrifices was originally propounded by Horner who had proposed that "the growing realization that large scale sacrifice was both spiritually and economically unsound will have played a decisive part in stamping it out" ([21], p. 440). The reason as to why the Buddha criticized animal sacrifices was that they were cruel, illogical, and futile. Moreover, cow (especially a milch cow) which most importantly contributed toward agriculture had been protected much earlier. In the *Sutta-Nipāta*, "brāhmaṇas of yore" are told as having regarded cows as their parents, brothers, and kin, as their best friends, and as the source of all healthful things, and hence, in gratitude, they never killed cows ([2], p. 52). Also the evidence provided by early Indian Buddhist literature for the suppression of great animal sacrifices suggests that outside the brāhmaṇical circles, this practice was not particularly cherished by the ordinary people ([21], p. 442).

Meat Eating and Tikoṭiparisuddha

If the statements of the Pāli texts, which presume to be a record of the *Buddhavacana*, are accepted at face value, it can be argued that the Buddha allowed the eating of animal flesh. But are these portions a later interpolation in the Pāli literature? The view of flesh eating is sharply criticized and contradicted by the Mahāyāna Sūtras, also purporting to be the spoken words of the Buddha, which categorically assert that flesh eating is contrary to the spirit and intent of the first precept since it makes one an accessory to the slaying of animals and therefore contravenes the compassionate concern for all life that lies at the core of Buddhism. For instance, in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, it has been pointed out that "The bodhisattvas who seek the enlightenment of the Buddha, how can they eat the flesh of various living beings?" (425). Is there reliable evidence that the Buddha sanctioned flesh eating? Unfortunately, no serious attempt has been made by scholars to resolve the glaring discrepancy between the contentions of the two branches of Buddhism on meat eating. Along with this also arises the question as to whether the Buddha died of eating a piece of pork, as claimed by some scholars, or from a poisonous mushroom, as asserted by others. If one were to go by the Pāli Tipiṭaka as it is, the Buddha did not put a ban on the eating of flesh. A monk is allowed to accept "what has been put in his alms bowl" ([14], Vol. iii, p. 155). In Theravāda, in three cases, meat may not be eaten by a monk if he has (a) seen, (b) heard, or (c) suspected that the meat has been especially acquired for him by killing an animal. In other words, at the time of accepting cooked meat, if a monk has no reason to think that the animal whose flesh he is accepting was not killed on purpose for him, then the monk can accept it ([15], Vol. ii, p. 33; [16], Vol. i, p. 298). This rule is called the *Rule of Tikoṭiparisuddha* (*Pure in Three Ways*). Pāli Buddhism did not see any sin being committed by meat-eating monks as long as they followed the *Rule of Tikoṭiparisuddha*, even if the meat that they happened to eat had been acquired by somebody by deliberately killing an animal to feed them ([11], Vol. ii, p. 182). The *Rule of Tikoṭiparisuddha*, though restrained the monks from being directly instrumental in killing animals for meat, the Theravādin attitude toward meat eating appears to be somewhat contradictory. The *Mahāyāna Sūtras* deeply deplore any kind of allowance made for the eating of meat.

Did the Buddha Die of Pork Eating?

Meat eating in Buddhism is also sometimes justified on the ground that the Buddha himself had died of pork eating (which was putrid and, thus, poisoned the Buddha) at the home of one of his followers called Cunda. They further point out that they gratefully accept whatever is put before them, without preference or aversion. Various statements and actions of the Buddha are used to justify the eating of meat, implying that if the Buddha himself ate flesh food when it was offered to him, surely, they have permission to do likewise. The last meal that the Buddha ate consisted of sweet rice and cakes, and *sūkara-maddava*"

([3], Vol. ii, pp. 126–27). *Sūkara-maddava*, though has been translated as "pork" by some scholars (see [23]: s.v. *sūkara*.), it is now generally agreed that this word does not mean "pork," but in all probability, Davids translated it as "quantity of truffles" (see T.W. Rhys Davids at [8], Vol. ii, p. 137 and [24], p. 149). The word in Pāli used for pork is *sūkaramaṃsa* ([18], Vol. iii, p. 49). There is another reason as to why *sūkara-maddava* cannot mean (pork). Cunda could not have offered pork to the Buddha as it would have meant violation of the *Tikoṭiparisuddha* (considering that the Buddha had actually made this rule) as the meal was particularly prepared for the Buddha, the latter having been invited by the former a day earlier (see [14], Vol. cvii, p. 88).

Cross-References

- Aśoka
- Buddha (Concept)
- Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra
- Mahāyāna
- Mahāyāna Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra
- Paññā
- Sutta Piṭaka
- Vegetarianism (Buddhism)

References

1. Jha G (trans) (1942) Chāndogyopanishad. Oriental Book Agency, Poona
2. Andersen D, Smith H (eds) (1984) The Sutta-Nipāta. Pali Text Society, London
3. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Oldenberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
5. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
6. Malalasekera GP (ed) (1961) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol 1. Government of Ceylon, Colombo
7. Woodward FL, Hare EM (trans) (1955–1970) The book of gradual saying, reprints, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
8. Rhys Davids TW, Rhys Davids CAF (trans) (1899, 1910, 1957) Dialogues of the Buddha, reprints, 3 vols. Sacred Books of the Buddhists, London
9. Sarao KTS (trans) (2009) The Dhammapada: a translator's guide. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
10. Norman KR (trans) (1966) The Therīgāthā, Pali Text Society, London
11. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzaco, London
12. Huxley A (1995) The Kurudhamma: from ethics to statecraft. J Buddh Ethics 2:191–203
13. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
14. Muller MF (1982) The sacred books of the East, 50 vols, reprint. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi
15. Horner IB (trans) (1954–1959) The book of middle length sayings, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
16. Horner IB (trans) (1938–1966) The book of the discipline, 6 vols. Pali Text Society, London
17. Rhys Davids CAF, Thera SS, Woodward FL (trans) (1950–1956) The Book of Kindred Saying, reprints. Pali Text Society, London
18. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya (1885–1900), 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
19. Maurice R (1983) The Puggalapaññatti. Pali Text Society, London
20. Saddhatissa H (1970) Buddhist ethics: essence of Buddhism. G. Braziller, New York
21. Horner IB (1945) Early Buddhism and taking of life. In: Bhandarkar DR, Nilakanta Sastri KA et al (eds) B. C. Law, vol I. Chukervertty & Sons, Calcutta, pp 441–463
22. Sharma RS (1983) Material culture and social formation in ancient India. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
23. Rhys Davids TW, Stede W (1921–1925) Pāli-English dictionary. Pali Text Society, London
24. Thomas E (1949) The life of the Buddha. Routledge, London
25. Norman KR (trans) (1966) The Theragāthā. Pali Text Society, London
26. Queen CS (1998) The peace wheel: nonviolent activism in the Buddhist tradition. In: Smith-Christopher DL (ed) Subverting hatred: the challenge of nonviolence in religious traditions. Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, Boston, pp 25–28
27. Rhys Davids CAF (1932) A Manual of Buddhism. Sheldon, London

Ahiṃsā (Jainism)

Matthew Zaro Fisher
Claremont Graduate University and the Center for Jain Studies at Claremont Lincoln University, Claremont, CA, USA

Synonyms

Guṇasthānas; Hiṃsā; Karma; Mokṣa; Yoga

Definition

Ahiṃsā, commonly translated into English as "nonviolence," is a metaphysical principle and an ethical orientation for spiritual development that avoids all forms of violence and encourages compassion in one's thought, word, and deed. The principle of *ahimsa* is understood in Jainism to be of fundamental and necessary importance for stopping negative karmic influx in order for the soul to achieve liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of rebirth. The philosophy of *ahimsa* is succinctly summarized in the Jain tradition by the phrase "live and let live."

Introduction

One of the central features of any philosophy of religion is the way in which its theory and praxis address the problem of evil in human experience. It has been said that *ahiṃsā* is "the Jaina solution to the problem of evil" [23]. Jainism considers the ethic of *ahiṃsā* to be an eternal truth, the disclosure of which has been handed down by the *jina*, those who have achieved sufficient spiritual development to understand this eternal teaching and so have discovered the path to liberation. Generally translated as "nonviolence" or "noninjury," the entirety of the Jain philosophical tradition can be said to center around putting this metaphysical principle into ethical praxis [8, 11, 15, 30]. The etymological history of the term extends back to both Vedic and *śramaṇic* (ascetic) origin with archeological evidence from the era of the pre-Aryan Indus Valley civilization suggesting the ascetic understanding of *ahiṃsā* antedated its Vedic counterpart [25]. Whereas the Vedic conception of *ahiṃsā* is understood in terms of nonphysical injury, where killing may be permitted in specific instances especially by the Brahmanical classes, the Jain understanding of *ahiṃsā* as nonphysical injury is extended in a technical and metaphysical sense where *ahiṃsā* is intrinsically related to the Jain understanding of the physics of karmic matter (see ▶ Karma entry) [2, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18]. Moreover, whereas the Vedic understanding of *ahiṃsā* accommodates degrees of violence or injury depending on its directed goal (e.g., for food, in battle, worship, etc.), the Jain tradition makes no theoretical exceptions to its ethics of nonviolence. Although there is a pragmatic distinction in Jain philosophy between householders and ascetics regarding the degree to which one adopts austerities to mitigate against committing unintentional violence, both ascetics and householders are related by a common understanding that all violence, intentional or not, incurs a specific karmic influx depending on the type of violence regardless of one's station in life. The philosophy of *ahiṃsā* in Jainism, therefore, offers a refutation of the Vedic accommodation to certain forms of violence. According to the anti-Brahmanical sentiments directed toward Manu and Jaimini contained in the *Yoga Śāstra* of Hemicandra, "these dulls, having given up the *dharma* based on restraint, morality and compassion meant for the welfare of the universe have declared even *hiṃsā* as a duty" [25]. Hence, in contradistinction to the Vedic tradition, Jainism makes no exception to violence: whether householder or ascetic, justified or not, violence is always a metaphysically negative principle and adverse to effecting one's spiritual purification and liberation.

Jainism looks to the story of its twenty-third *Tīrthaṅkara* (see ▶ Tīrthaṅkara (Jainism)), Pārśvanātha (see ▶ Pārśvanātha (Jainism)), for a paradigmatic example of *ahiṃsā*. The legend of Pārśvanātha's compassion for a pair of snakes trapped in a burning log in a previous life led to his enlightened ministry as a *Tīrthaṅkara* and subsequent liberation in his final incarnation. But it is in the teaching of Mahāvīra, a senior contemporary of the Buddha around 550 B.C., that Jainism adopts the more complete and extreme form of *ahiṃsā* that has been in practice for over two-thousand years. Moreover, Jains believe it was the omniscient Mahavira who disclosed a relationship between the cycle of karmic bondage and the individual's responsibility to free one's soul from the cycle of reincarnation by applying the ethic of *ahiṃsā* according to one's capacities in life as either a householder or an ascetic. The words "live and let live" are seen and heard in Jain temples and writings in the

English-speaking world, and these words are said to be indicative of a summation of Mahavira's teaching regarding the fundamental importance of *ahiṃsā* as presented in the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*.

The Nature of *Hiṃsā* (Violence)

In order to understand the nature of *ahiṃsā*, one must first correctly understand the nature of physical injury and harm (*hiṃsā*) according to Jain philosophy. Jainism emphasizes a strict dualism between matter/non-soul/nonself (*ajīva*) and soul/self (*jīva*). There are five other categories that explain the interaction between the *jīva* (soul) and *ajīva* (non-soul): influx of karmic matter into the soul (*āśrava*), the bondage of the soul to karmic matter (*bandha*), stoppage of the influx of karmic matter to the soul (*saṃvarā*), removal of bonded Karmic matter from the soul (*nirjarā*), and purification or liberation (*mokṣa*) (see ▶ Karma). In terms of these five categories governing the action of the soul with inanimate matter and other embodied souls, ahimsa is the means by which one ensures the stoppage of karmic influx to the soul, shortens the duration or removes the already bonded karmas, and ensures the purification of the soul through the shedding of all bonded karmas, thus facilitating the soul's liberation and subsequent freedom from rebirth as either a human or animal or heavenly or hellish being.

Given the nature of the natural world, it is no small wonder that Jains admit the impossibility of living a life of complete nonviolence and Jains do not deny the validity and reality of the physical universe. The world is not illusory, but it is also not what is "fundamentally" real according to Jain metaphysics. Instead, the ultimate concept or term descriptive of reality within Jain theory is that of the *jīva* or soul. The *jīvas* who live in this world are one-sensed (such as a worm) to five-sensed beings (such as a human) with four vitalities: (1) strength, (2) degree of senses, (3) life-force, and (4) respiration. *Ahiṃsā* is a proscription against not only killing but also harming or constraining any of the vitalities of a *jīva*. All such action is considered *hiṃsā*. Even the monk or nun inevitably commits some forms of violence, and so this further stresses the importance of *ahiṃsā* in the mind and spirit in order to ensure one guards against not only intentional violence but unintentionally forgetting about the microorganisms and other beings that may be present in one's surroundings. There is a significant degree of difference in the amount of negative karmic influx incurred between harming a one-sensed and five-sensed being. Although it may be inevitable that *hiṃsā* is committed even in the harvesting and eating of fruits and vegetables, the degree of Karmic influx is exponentially reduced in comparison to the consumption of an animal. Hence, there is a metaphysical foundation for the Jain vegetarian and non-root vegetable diet governed by *ahiṃsā* over and against the consumption of meat rooted in the theory of *karma*: a lifetime of vegetarianism would not incur a fraction of the amount of *karma* one would receive from the consumption of even one animal during one's life.

Contrary to its Vedic interlocutors, Jain philosophy makes no utilitarian accommodations concerning the use of violence. Whether or not for noble purposes, violence must always bear negative karmic fruits. The Jain philosophical tradition has identified around 432 types of *hiṃsā* that stem from the different combinations of factors that arise from the four main passions that increase knowledge-obscuring *karma* that in turn lead to violence [25]. According to the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, injury or violence is meant to be the hurting or severing of the vitalities of life (*prāṇa-vyaparopana*) of oneself or another living being (*jīva*) due to passion-filled action (*Tatt*. 7.13). Here the Jain scripture names four types of violence: defensive violence (*virodhi*), violence brought about by one's profession (*udhyogi*), lifestyle violence (*ārambhi*), and intentional violence (*saṃkālpi*). Defensive violence is rather straightforwardly understood, as it is any violence done for the defense of one's life or the life of another. Lifestyle violence concerns things such as injury to microorganisms in cooking and household upkeep. Hence, it is here in lifestyle violence where the divergent vows between householders

and ascetics emerge. Whereas ascetics must abstain from absolutely all types of violence, it is socially acceptable within Jainism for householders to engage in minimal forms of violence that are necessary for their station in life and in order to support the ascetics who make up the teachers and spiritual guides within the Jain religion. Likewise, violence in profession is violence committed in earning one's living. Clearly a householder is incurring more karmic influx due to violence inflicted through his or her business than would a nun who has shunned the world and spends her days meditating. Finally, intentional violence: whereas the first three describe forms of unintentional violence and so can be socially and philosophically accommodated within Jain theory in terms of the distinction between householders and ascetics, intentional violence is *always* to be avoided as it is the worst and most karmic-inducing form of violence. But no matter what type of *hiṃsā*, all forms of *hiṃsā* are committed in either thought, word, or deed by someone directly (e.g., murder), ordered by someone to be done to another (e.g., conspiracy to commit murder), or condoned by one's or another's unintentional action or inaction (e.g., negligent homicide). To participate in any of these three forms of *hiṃsā* is to incur negative karmic influx. *Ahiṃsā*, therefore, is fundamentally understood in Jainism to be a way of life and a method for individual self-betterment that avoids all forms of violence and encourages compassion in one's thought, word, and deed.

What is important to note is that *ahiṃsā*, the abstention from passion-filled action that causes another *jīva* harm, is not merely a negative prescription, contrary to many criticisms raised against it [22, 28, 29]. Many throughout the Jain tradition as well as opponents of Jain philosophy have raised the challenge that because all action incurs karmic influx, action is by its very nature synonymous with *hiṃsā*. Thus, it is argued that to live a life of *ahiṃsā* is to live a life of detachment and uninvolvement, even in the life of those who are suffering. But the Jain philosophical tradition notes that compassionate action, action done in consideration for the well-being of the *jīva*, though incurring *karma* insofar as compassionate action is indeed an *action*, nevertheless, the *karma* incurred is considered auspicious and meritorious and thus shortens the duration of previously bonded karmas that have attached to the soul. *Ahiṃsā* as an ethic of compassion is thus intrinsically related to the Jain doctrine of the law of *karma*: the type of *karma* bonded from compassionate action is that of a karma-duration-reducing nature and so actually would shorten one's previous karmic influx from another negative, or *hiṃsic*, action that caused injury to another. *Ahiṃsā* as a way of life is thus a "carrot" to counter the "stick" of the law of karma that prevents one from spiritual development and eventual liberation. Though Jain philosophy is scrupulously strict in terms of its karmic accounting given the nontheistic nature of Jain metaphysics and eschatology, the tradition has factored in a way for one's "good works" toward other ensouled beings to count toward one's spiritual advancement in this life – compassionate action incurs positive *karmas* that reduce the duration of negative *karmas*. Otherwise, if there were no means for shedding one's *karma* through one's effort, one could only accrue negative karmic influx, thus ensuring a perpetual rebirth with no chance at *mokṣa* and the almost assured neglect of the marginalized within the society.

The important take-away is that *ahiṃsā* is the ethical antidote to ensure that one's action does not cause suffering. Moreover, there is an emphasis on the internal purification of one's soul through a life lived by *ahiṃsā*. It is said in Jain teaching that attachment leads to passion-filled activity, which further reinforces ones attachment to the things of the world. Along with nonviolent action while living in the world, there is also an emphasis on the nonviolence of thought with *ahiṃsā* as the main means of internal purification leading toward *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness). For Jains, therefore, purity of the mind is the dominant characteristic of ahimsa, as all other action, whether violent or nonviolent extends from the degree of the soul's karmic bondage and passion-filled activity caused by attachment to things of this world [25].

Ahimsa for Householders and Ascetics

But this raises the question of how one is to live in the world if all living things have life vitalities and pretty much any action within the world results in infringing upon the life vitalities of another *jīva*. As was alluded to before, Jain philosophy recognizes this conundrum and makes a distinction between householders and ascetics. That is, though the degree of karmic influx for a specific action is the same for the businessman or monk, nevertheless Jainism recognizes the necessity of certain forms of violence in daily life and so has developed minor and major vows to be followed by householder and ascetic alike.

Mahavira is credited by the Jain tradition with not only emphasizing the importance of *ahiṃsā* in theory and praxis but also for creating the social division between ascetics who take the five major vows (*mahāvratas*) and householders who take the five minor vows. It is incumbent upon those taking the major vows to observe *ahiṃsā* without exception while the minor vows contain moderate and pragmatic concessions to *hiṃsā* so that one can maintain one's obligations to one's family and the society at large. As such, not everyone is able to take the major vows, and so given Jainism's lack of a central authority on interpretation, these monks and nuns who take the major vows form the core of religious authority within the Jain tradition. As the authoritative voice concerning the interpretation of Jaina scripture and tradition ascetics preserve Jain teaching and religious philosophy as it is handed down to subsequent generations.

Of the five major vows observed by monks and nuns, the first and most important is the vow of absolute ahimsa in thought, word, and deed that strictly prohibits not only intentional but unintentional harm to the vitalities of any living being. A monk must take special care so as to ensure that he does not unintentionally harm even the smallest of one-sensed living beings. Here one is reminded of the *Śvetāmbara* monk clad in white with a cloth draped in front of his mouth to ensure he does not accidentally inhale any microorganisms in the air or the naked *Digambara* monk with a peacock-feather brush to sweep away any small insects before he sits down to meditate. One interesting facet of Jain culture is that due to the increase of insect life in the evening hours, Jains usually refrain from eating after sundown so as not to accidentally ingest or disturb the surfeit of insects present in the evening air. Because Jain philosophy teaches that, in addition to one- through five-sensed *jīvas*, air, fire, water, and earth have vital forces. The ascetic is supposed to live a life that ensures that he or she does not interfere with any *jīvas* that may reside in these areas. Due to this strict observation of ahimsa by ascetics, monks have traditionally not traveled far from the communities wherein they took their vows and do not travel at all during the monsoon rains. Contrary to missionary religions like Christianity, this has virtually ensured that Jainism has remained a minority religion contained specifically to the Indian subcontinent for over two-thousand years up until the twentieth-century Diaspora of lay Jains [13]. Moreover, the adoption of this strict sense of *ahiṃsā* according to the major vows creates a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between ascetic and householder insofar as a monk or nun cannot eat or drink anything without his or her food coming from a householder who has *not* prepared the food for the ascetic. That is, because both water and vegetable food contain life, a nun can neither prepare food or water for herself nor can she accept food or water prepared specifically for her. In the former case, this would be intentional *hiṃsā* on the part of the nun, and the latter example would be the condoning of *hiṃsā* by the nun on the part of the householder in order for the nun to nourish herself. In other words, the nun would merely be "passing the buck of violence" to the householder so the nun does not have to get her hands dirty by making the food herself. Instead, the ascetic is only allowed to accept food *offered* by a householder that the householder had already prepared for his or her own household. Only then can the ascetic be assured that she did not infringe on her vow of *ahiṃsā*.

Where the householder vows to abstain from intentional violence to two-, three-, four-, and five-sensed beings, the demands of ordinary life (and the social support for the life of the ascetics

within the community) preclude the householder from vowing to abstain from lifestyle, professional, and defensive violence toward one-sensed beings (vegetables, air, and water-bodied *jīvas*). Thus, the ethics of the householder (*śrāvakācāra*) center around the minor vows or *Ahiṃsā Anuvrata*. Additionally, an understanding of this distinction between the two vows will show how Jain nonviolence is very different from modern Western notions of nonviolent passive resistance where civil disobedience adopts a quasi-ascetic understanding of nonviolence in the face of violent oppression for the sake of positive social change. After all, the Jain community would wholly support the use of violence by householders for the purpose of self-defense and the defense of members in the community. So the reader should be aware that such a strict ideological adherence to the absolute abstention of violence within the Jain community is found only within the ascetics. What this implies for the householder, however, is that though one may indeed engage in unintentional *hiṃsā* in lifestyle, profession, and defense, this therefore precludes the householder from certain activities and occupations and thus restricts the householder beyond a certain degree of spiritual development along the 14 stages of spiritual purification (see ► guṇasthānas).

Although the householder is allowed to commit violence by harvesting and preparing vegetables for food or by using nonlethal violence in his or her job by serving in the police force, for example, the householder nevertheless may not take certain occupations or engage in certain behavior. For example, a Jain could not take a job as a butcher, even if he or she never intends on eating meat. Whereas the *hiṃsā* produced in the first two examples can be explained by unintentional violence caused by lifestyle and occupation as spoken above, the third example would be an intentional contribution toward the condoning of killing an animal by another (whoever killed the animal and whoever will eat it) which would violate the minor vows. As such, especially since the twentieth century, Jains have traditionally taken occupations in trade or professional practices such as medicine and engineering wherein they believe they are contributing to less violence and helping and facilitating the well-being of other people, creatures, and the environment [13]. Moreover, even within their occupation, the lay Jain person is precluded from "overburdening" living beings in the course of his or her duties as a householder. That is, one may have a domesticated animal on his or her land for assisting in household tasks or even for providing milk (the question of whether or not a vegan diet is necessitated by Jainism is a matter of current debate within Jainism, but traditionally Jains have consumed milk), but it is incumbent upon the householder to ensure the happy life of the animal by not overburdening, overworking, or neglecting it. So by taking the minor vows, the householder is concerned with affecting as few *jīvas* as possible while executing the normal demands of life as a member of a human community. It should be noted that the householder is expected to avoid gambling, alcohol, drug use, fornication, and other "vices" since these are considered a form of intentional *hiṃsā* to oneself and often include or encourage others to commit similar violence to themselves or others.

In the end, although Jainism makes a pragmatic exception regarding certain types of violence in the lives of householders, the Jain metaphysical system dictates that the "karmic tax" must always be paid. There is no utilitarian understanding of *hiṃsā*: violence is always violence, and so *hiṃsā* committed through the observance of *Ahiṃsā Anuvrata* (minor vows) remains karmically unjustifiable. There is always an influx of karma as an effect of any action, regardless of the pragmatic necessity of the committed *hiṃsā* for the sake of the person or even the survival of the Jain community. Jainism recognizes that while all people should strive to bring the principle of *ahiṃsā* fully into practice for all people and the world, the very nature of the world ensures that even unintentional violence is unavoidable without the strict observance of severe austerities. The principle of *ahiṃsā* according to Jain philosophy, therefore, is an ethical orientation metaphysically rooted in a reciprocal relationship with the Jain understanding of *karma* that seeks to minimize one's contribution to the violence that already

permeates the reality in which all living beings struggle for life and happiness.

Intellectual Ahiṃsā: Non-absolutism and the Question of Religious Pluralism

Jainism's emphasis on *ahiṃsā* in thought, word, and deed coupled with Jain philosophy's emphasis on the metaphysical doctrine of many-sidedness and multiple points of view (see ▶ Syādvāda) have led many to assert an "intellectual *ahiṃsā*" present within what some scholars call Jainism's "Ontology of Relativity" [20]. *Anekāntavāda* is the metaphysical doctrine that holds that the world is characterized by many points of view since all points of view are singular perspectives on a dynamic reality characterized by emergence, endurance, and perishing [20]. Because everything has an infinity of attributes, Jain epistemology has developed a sevenfold method of logical predication wherein a statement can be considered correct "from a certain point of view" (see ▶ Syādvāda). Because reality is a synthesis of diverse occurrences in experience, reality is in the end a perception of the very dynamism of emergence, endurance, and perishing that is descriptive of the "nature" of the thing in question. The nature or reality of this life is by no means a permanent substance – that status is reserved as descriptive only for soul (See ▶ Jīva) according to Jainism's strict adherence to ontological dualism. Instead, Jainism emphasizes a becoming or perpetual dynamic that eschews static paradigms of being that finds a similar and parallel emphasis in the twentieth-century process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and the postmodern philosophical critique. What this implies is that one's statement or understanding about this reality can be considered correct because one's perspective is merely one of an infinity of possible perspectives present in the world. Stated another way, someone cannot be *necessarily* wrong on his or her point of view because there is no necessary position (outside the position of the omniscient *jina*) from which one can judge a statement as absolutely true or false. Instead, due to the emphasis on *anekāntavāda*, the Jain philosophical tradition holds that to assert that only the point of view that one holds is true absolutely is to commit the error of intellectual or philosophical violence.

Due to these fundamental factors at the foundation of the Jaina world view (*ahiṃsā*, *anekāntavāda*, *syādvāda*), many have argued that Jain philosophy contains within its framework the foundations to mitigate against the intellectual violence that many intentionally or unintentionally volley against another whether doing business, holding a religious debate, or discussing taste in music – just to name a few basic examples. Long understands "intellectual ahimsa" to mean "a practice of nonviolence extended to the realm of philosophical discourse, a kind of charity toward other philosophical positions and their possible insights into the character of reality" [20]. With this attitude in mind, many argue that Jainism represents a religious philosophy with an inherent, necessary, or "built-in" tolerance of other religious and philosophical point of views. It is said that intellectual ahimsa allows Jains to take a "middle path" in discourse so that, in classical religious debates, for example, "the Buddhist and the Vedāntin are both right from their respective points of view and wrong only inasmuch as they assert their positions absolutely, thus negating one another" [20]. Due to intellectual ahimsa understood in this way, many argue that Jainism is a philosophical system that can serve as a vessel for facilitating religious pluralism in the world.

But can the Jain understanding of *ahiṃsā* in the context of *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* be considered analogous to modern theories of tolerance and religious pluralism? Some scholars, such as Bimal Krishna Matilal [21], conclude that the Jain emphasis on *anekāntavāda* in thought implies an inherent tolerance within Jain philosophy that encourages harmony and support between divergent philosophical and religious points of view. But others such as Long are skeptical of this modern and secularized reading of the history of Jain philosophy: "The point. . .is not that one cannot use the Jain philosophy of relativity in the service of inter-religious harmony, but that it is not as clear that this is what the ancient Jain

thinkers who developed it had in mind" [20]. Additionally, Cort [4] argues that it is "inaccurate" to conclude that *anekāntavāda* is a logical tool developed as a direct result of the extension of *ahiṃsā* to the domain of philosophical thought. Cort understands the inaccuracy of this position to center around a narrow interpretation of historical causality. Appealing to the work of Johnson [16], Cort concludes that "the Jains developed the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* as they sought to defend their conjoined definitions of the soul, karmic bondage, and the path to liberation from the criticisms of non-Jain logicians that the Jain position was untenable. They did not develop the doctrine as an extension of the ethical injunction of *ahiṃsā*" [4]. In contradistinction to those who argue that Jain philosophy is necessarily tolerant or accommodating to divergent points of view, philosophical and historical evidence supports an alternative reading. For example, the omniscient *jina*, or liberated one, is considered to know reality completely, and it is those followers of these omniscients who consider themselves Jains. Moreover, the opening verse of the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (1.1.) states: "Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct all together constitute the path to liberation." But what exactly is the "right" position relative to the interpretation of faith, conduct, or knowledge? That is what the remainder of the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* scripture intends to disclose, and the scripture clearly points to the Jain understanding handed down by the *Tīrthaṅkaras* to be the "right" point of view. Moreover, the way Jain philosophy discusses *anekāntavāda* involves a host of metaphysical presuppositions and cultural norms considered normative within the Jain philosophical tradition that would be considered distinctly different and often contradictory to the philosophy of other faith traditions. The sevenfold predication of the *nayas* (see ▶ Syādvāda) may very well be the means by which assertions made can be considered correct or incorrect relative to one's point of view, but the entirety of the Jain philosophical tradition rests on the assumption that omniscients such as Mahavira have full, complete, and absolute knowledge of all things that extends beyond the limitations of predication contained within the logical doctrines of *syādvāda* and the metaphysics of *anekāntavāda*. Hence, according to the Jain philosophical tradition, that which is taught by the omniscients and holy ones is not considered up for interpretive debate. The internal schism within Jainism between the *Śvetāmbara* and *Digambara* sects serves as a historical example of how Jain philosophy did not exhibit intellectual ahimsa. In more recent history, Cort cites a 1927 dispute in Rajasthan between *Śvetāmbaras* and *Digambaras* over the worship of the image of *Pārśvanātha* that left 5 dead and 150 injured [4]. In light of these considerations, Cort concludes that to hold a modernist understanding of Jain *anekāntavāda* as necessitating "intellectual ahimsa" leaves the historical interaction between Jains and alternative philosophical interlocutors unconsidered and marginalizes the metaphysical and soteriological system upon which the entirety of Jain philosophy rests.

Although it may be the case that "intellectual *ahiṃsā*" in terms of modern conceptions of tolerance and pluralism is an inaccurate descriptor of Jain philosophy given the historical and philosophical considerations discussed above, nevertheless the Jain philosophical tradition does not preclude this interpretation of *ahiṃsā* as a possible way to apply its epistemological method. Given the lack of an official religious governing structure within the Jain tradition (such as the Roman Catholic *Magisterium*), contemporary Jains may very well interpret *anekāntavāda* to imply an "intellectual ahiṃsā" in terms of tolerance of another's religious point of view. For example, many Jains are proposing *ahiṃsā* as a way forward in living as a mutually subsisting global community, wherein – because of the *anekāntavāda* nature of reality – one may hold different beliefs and cultural points of view from another but nevertheless live together in harmony. Cort [4] cites evidence for this rereading of the philosophy of *anekāntavāda* from within the contemporary Jain community, especially at the biannual conference of JAINA, the Federation of Jains in North America (jaina.org). Although current scholarship sufficiently supports the position that the traditional understanding of *anekāntavāda* does not imply an *essential*

intellectual ahiṃsā present in its epistemological method, nevertheless Jains and scholars of Jainism are today extending the interpretation of *anekāntavāda* to include this understanding of tolerance for the globalize world. Historical and metaphysical reservations aside, given the lack of a centralized authority within Jainism, the possibility of "intellectual ahiṃsā" represents a reconceptualization of traditional teaching by the living Jain community that is gaining wider acceptance today.

Ahiṃsā Today: Gandhian Nonviolent Resistance and the Ecological Movement

Although certain tenets of Jain philosophy, such as *ahiṃsā* itself, are nonnegotiable foundations for Jaina theory, the way *ahiṃsā* is employed in practice has taken on a new life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, both within and outside the Jain philosophical context. Many Western scholars of Indian religious practices are considering the way *ahiṃsā* can be applied outside of its specifically religious context [1, 4, 17, 22, 27]. For example, some are applying the teachings of nonviolence contained within the doctrine of *ahiṃsā* to the education of children in the United States to teach nonviolent conflict resolution at an early age. With the rise of vegetarianism and veganism in Western diets, many non-Jains are turning to the Indian concept of *ahiṃsā* as an ethical ground for this dietary practice while ignoring the metaphysical and teleological foundations of the principle. It is apparent that among the twentieth and twenty-first centuries "*ahiṃsā* movements," there is a separation between the praxis of *ahiṃsā* as an ethical mode of nonviolence and its theoretical foundations as a metaphysical weapon for fighting the battle against karmic bondage. Whether this reinterpretation is motivated by a misunderstanding of Jain doctrine, or is merely a new way the doctrine can be applied in the human pan-cultural context, remains to be seen. But in the end, what counts as "Jain philosophy" will be fully determined by the Jain community's interpretation of its philosophy and history. But given the efforts by contemporary Jains (householders and ascetics alike) to cultivate inclusivity and global harmony within a multireligious context, specifically in the Diaspora locations of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, it appears today that the global Jain community desires to promote a common ethical foundation for the human community [13].

Perhaps the best-known application of *ahiṃsā* in contemporary studies is the nonviolent civil disobedience of Mohandas Gandhi, which by proxy can even be extended to Martin Luther King, Jr., who studied Gandhi's methods. Gujarat, the region of Gandi's birth, has one of the highest concentrations of Jains in India, and those Jains had a strong influence on the Hindu Vaiṣṇava community of which Gandhi was a member. Jain monks often visited his household as a boy, and the Jain monk Becaraji Svami administered vows to Gandhi before his first Journey to London where he studied Law [20]. Gandhi – renaissance man that he indeed was – applied the notions of *syādvāda* and *anekāntavāda* to the notion of religious pluralism and cultivated an intellectual embrace of the many truths present throughout world's religious and philosophical traditions. Gandhi believed that all these positions could be held in tandem without contradiction because he found in all of them an expression of *ahiṃsā*. Thus, it was Gandhi the Hindu who employed the Jain understanding of *ahiṃsā* (among other ethical praxis from the world's religious traditions) on a national scale in the Indian independence movement through his civil disobedience. In his essay, "Ahiṃsā or the Way of Non-violence" [9], Gandhi notes poignantly the Jain insight that nonviolence must be cultivated in one's life and that *ahiṃsā* is in fact a foreign concept to the laws of nature. Gandhi observed that by nature, man is violent and so does not need to be taught violence: violence will always be employed to protect the external things of the world. *Ahiṃsā*, on the other hand, protects the *Atma*, the soul and inward nature of the human spirit. Gandhi called nonviolence "soul-force" and used it to describe the personal courage needed to live *ahiṃsā* in the face of oppression in order to effect change in the world: "Passive

resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force .... *Ahiṃsā* is soul-force and the soul is imperishable, changeless, and eternal" [9]. One can see the Jain roots of *ahiṃsā* in Gandhi's nonviolent passive resistance as the very model and archetype for civil disobedience movements in the twentieth century.

Ecological and environmental studies represent the other arena where *ahiṃsā* is applied in contemporary scholarship [19, 24, 26]. Once again, Cort recognizes that like "intellectual ahimsa," to assert that Jainism is essentially "a philosophy of ecology" is an anachronism since ecological ethics is itself a relatively modern philosophical position [5]. Anachronistic disclaimers aside, however, like most ancient religious traditions that recognize humanity's relation to and dependence on the land, *ahiṃsā* can help facilitate a particularly effective philosophy of ecology insofar as its prohibitions against violence can be extended to one's actions within the environment. An awareness of *ahiṃsā* for ecological action may provide a means for people to better understand how they impact the world around them. For this reason, the idea of a "carbon footprint" finds a fitting parallel in relation to what one could call a "himsic footprint" in order to draw a stronger relationship between the Jain theory of *ahiṃsā* and ecological preservation. One of the images employed throughout the history of Jain culture to demonstrate *ahiṃsā* centers around five persons and a mango tree. Each of these persons is engaged with some activity in the tree in order to get the mango: the first is chopping the entire tree down to harvest the mangoes, the second is chopping off a branch, the third is up in the tree standing on a branch and picking the fruit from the top, the fourth is picking the fruit off the tree from his standing position on the ground, and the fifth is stooping to pick up the fruit the tree has already dropped. The lesson contained in this image is that while all are in the end reaching the goal of harvesting the mango fruit, each one is doing so according to differing degrees of *hiṃsā* – with the first exacting the most and cruelest form of violence and the fifth infringing on the environment to the smallest degree.

Hence, many today are applying the Jain understanding of *ahiṃsā* to ecology by recognizing that the world today is afflicted with violence in human, animal, and ecological relations. Hence, some have argued for the possibility and extension of *ahiṃsā* to ecological issues and so argue for a Jain environmental ethic [3, 5, 7]. With Jainism's emphasis on the role of violence and nonviolence in the life of human, animal, and environment alike, one can conclude that Jainism's ethic of *ahiṃsā* at a minimum forces humanity to recognize the issue of scarcity within the universe, and at a maximum, it provides a paradigm of behavior that helps living beings extend their lives as long as possible within an existence where only death is certain.

Cross-References

- ▶ Anekāntavāda
- ▶ Guṇasthānas
- ▶ Jīva
- ▶ Karma
- ▶ Mokṣa
- ▶ Pārśvanātha (Jainism)
- ▶ Śramaṇa
- ▶ Syādvāda
- ▶ Tattvārtha-Sūtra
- ▶ Tīrthaṅkara (Jainism)
- ▶ Yoga

References

1. Altman N (1980) Ahiṃsā: dynamic compassion. Quest Books, Wheaton
2. Bhandari N (2011) Jainism: the eternal and universal path for enlightenment. Research Institute of Scientific Secrets from Indian Oriental Scriptures, Ahmedabad
3. Chapple CK (2002) The living earth of Jainism and the new story: rediscovering and reclaiming a functional cosmology. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
4. Cort JE (2000) 'Intellectual *Ahiṃsā*' revisited: Jain tolerance and intolerance of others. Philos East West 50(3):324–347

5. Cort JE (2002) Green Jainism? Notes and queries toward a possible Jain environmental ethic. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
6. Cort JE (2003) Doing for others: merit transfer and Karma mobility in Jainism. In: Qvamström O (ed) Jainism and Early Buddhism: essays in honor of Pradmanabh S. Jaini. Jain Publishing, Fremont
7. Dundas P (2002) The limits of a Jain environmental ethic. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
8. Dundas P (2002) The Jains. Routledge, New York
9. Gandhi MK (2002) Ahimsa or the way of nonviolence. In: Mallick K, Hunter D (eds) An anthology of nonviolence: historical and contemporary voices. Greenwood Press, Westport
10. von Glasenapp H (1942) The doctrine of Karman in Jain philosophy. Bai Vijibai Jivanlal Panalal Charity Fund, Bombay
11. Jain JP (2010) Religion and culture of the Jains. Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi
12. Jain SC (2006) Structure and functions of the soul in Jainism. Bharatiya Jnanpith, Delhi
13. Jain PC (2011) Jains in India and abroad: a sociological introduction. International School for Jain Studies, Delhi
14. Jaini PS (1980) Karma and the problem of rebirth in Jainism. In: O'Flaherty WD (ed) Karma and rebirth in classical Indian traditions. University of California Press, Berkeley
15. Jaini PS (2000) *Ahimsa*: a Jaina way of spiritual discipline. In: Jaini PS (ed) Collected papers on Jain studies. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
16. Johnson WJ (1995) The religious function of Jaina philosophy: Anekantavada reconsidered. Religion 25:41–50
17. Koller JM (2002) Jain ecological perspectives. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
18. Krishan Y (1997) The doctrine of Karma: its origins and development in Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
19. Kumar S (2002) Jain Ecology. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
20. Long J (2009) Jainism: an introduction. I.B. Tauris, London
21. Matilal BK (1981) The central philosophy of Jainism: Anekantavada. L.D. Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
22. Sangave V (1991) The Jain path of ahiṃsā. Bhagawan Mahavir Research Center, Solapur
23. Sharma A (2001) A Jaina perspective on the philosophy of religion. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
24. Shilapi S (2002) The environmental and ecological teachings of Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
25. Tähiten U (1976) Ahimsa: non-violence in Indian tradition. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad
26. Tatia N (2002) The Jain worldview and ecology. In: Christopher KC (ed) Jainism and ecology: nonviolence in the web of life. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
27. Vajpeyi A (2012) Mohandis Gandhi: ahiṃsā, the self's orientation. In: Righteous republic: the political foundations of modern India. Harvard University Press, Cambridge
28. Wiley KL (2004) Views on ahiṃsā, compassion and Samyaktva in Jainism. In: Sethia T (ed) Ahiṃsā, Anekānta and Jainism. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 15–24
29. Wiley KL (2006) *Ahiṃsā* and compassion in Jainism. In: Flügel P (ed) Studies in Jaina history and culture. Routledge, London
30. Zydenbos RJ (1999) Jainism as the religion of nonviolence. In: Houben J, van Kooij K (eds) Violence denied: violence, non-violence and the rationalization of violence in South Asian cultural history. Brill, Leiden

Ahiṃsaka

► Aṅgulimāla

Ajanta

► Ajaṇṭā

Ajaṇṭā

Claudine Bautze-Picron
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), UMR 7528 'Mondes Iranien et Indien', Paris, France

Synonyms

Ajanta; Ajiṇṭhā leṇa

Definition

Buddhist excavated site located in Maharashtra.

The site of Ajaṇṭā (long. 75°45′E., lat. 20°32′ N.; Maharashtra) is probably ([7], pp. 280–347, [8], pp. 32–106, [9], pp. 175–178) the most well-known Indian Buddhist excavated site. It owes its fame not only to the large number of caves, 31, which were excavated in two periods, but also to the extreme richness of their carved and painted ornamentation as well as to the beautiful scenery. All caves are distributed practically at same level on a cliff on the left bank of the valley of the Waghora which turns there to form a large "U"; the site can be at best admired from the southern plateau. All caves were numbered by James Fergusson in the first part of the nineteenth century in a continuous manner which does not necessarily reflect the chronology of the monuments ([1], p. 129, [7]). Thus, the caves excavated in the second and first centuries B.C. form a cluster practically in the middle of the site; caves 8–13 and 15A mark indeed the nucleus out of which the site expanded on either side in the second half of the fifth century (Fig. 1).

The Early Period

Two sanctuaries or *caityagṛhas* ("house of the *caitya*") (monuments 9 and 10) were excavated in the early period ([6], pp. 124–126, 157–158, [10], pp. 98–105, [11], pp. 37–39) side by side, a feature rarely observed elsewhere: in sites like Bhājā or Bedsa, for instance, only one major sanctuary was dug in the mountain. The oldest one, monument 10, probably dating back to the second century B.C., is also one of the largest one ever done, measuring 29 × 12.5 m. Its façade is fully open like at Bhājā, which was probably closed by a wooden screen; the *caitya* (from *citā*, a "funeral pile"; also named *stūpa* or a relic shrine containing ashes of a holy person) sculpted in the depth of the apsidal monument is broad and shows a double *medhi* or plinth above which lies the

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 1 Ajaṇṭā caves along the Waghora (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

main part of the *stūpa*, i.e., the *aṇḍa* ("egg," alluding to the hemispheric shape of the monument); the square *harmikā* or "pavilion" tops the monument. A row of octagonal pillars runs parallel to the walls and turns behind the *caitya*, creating thus a separation between the central nave and the two aisles; it marks also a difference in the height of the monument since the vault of the aisles is clearly lower than the vault of the central nave. Wooden false beams, now lost, were attached to the vault, as was also the case in all sites of the region in the early period (Bhājā, Bedsa, Kārlī, for example). Although these beams did not have any function, their presence is important since it illustrates how excavated architecture drew its inspiration from contemporary wooden constructions.

The walls and pillars are plain but traces of the oldest surviving murals have been found on the walls, at times repainted at a later period, probably the late fifth century.

The second sanctuary (monument 9) is smaller (around 14 × 7 m), and being of a slightly later period it also has a partly closed façade. As a matter of fact, whereas the large horseshoe-shaped arch is preserved, closed in its lower part by a railing, it is supported by a wall where the entrance and two side windows have been hollowed out and are surmounted by a row of five horseshoe-shaped niches adorned with the depiction of a *toraṇa* (portico) inspired from a wooden model. Two further unusual features of this monument are the flat ceiling of the aisles and its rectangular ground plan. The architects indeed usually gave their preference to the apsidal plan which reproduces in a much more harmonious manner the rounded line of the row of pillars, this line being itself adapted to the circular shape of the *stūpa* behind which it runs. The *caitya* is the object of veneration and is an image of the Dharma at the same time that it evokes the Buddha; it has a very particular structure (see under ▶ Bhājā) showing here a very high plinth (*medhi*) supporting the globular *aṇḍa* under the *harmikā* (Figs. 2 and 3).

Damaged paintings probably of the first century B.C. are preserved in caves 9 and 10; they are narrative and illustrate the life of the Buddha as well as some of his previous lives or *jātakas* ([12], pp. 1–13, [13]). Further murals, depicting the Buddha in an iconic setting, were added to the pillars, the walls, and the entablature in the late fifth century.

The attached dwelling place of the monks (monument 12) has a square excavated courtyard

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 2 Façade of cave 9 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 3 Interior of cave 9 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 4 Architectural ornamentation in cave 12 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

with cells hollowed on the rear and side walls. Like in Bhājā and Bedsa, the ornamentation only covers the upper part of the walls and shows an architectural landscape with blind, horseshoe-shaped windows resting on a *vedikā* and with the motif of the tiny stepped pyramids running under the ceiling (Fig. 4).

The Later Period (Second Half of the Fifth Century)

The site dramatically expanded toward the end of the fifth century when nearly 20 monasteries and two large sanctuaries were excavated ([11], pp. 39–50, [18]). According to Walter Spink, this period was rather short and spread from around 460 to around 480 A.D ([5], p. 125). Whatever it might be, this period marks the transition between the "Gupta" and the "Calukya" periods in the region and reflects profound transformation of the structure of the monuments, deep modifications in iconography and probably one of the highest achievements reached by Indian sculptors and painters.

The site spread then on either side of the initial nucleus with numerous monastic dwelling places and two large *caityagṛhas* being excavated (monuments 19 and 26). Whereas Spink writes that the work started simultaneously at various caves, Stern's study of the pillars of these caves suggests a work starting around the initial nucleus and progressively expending on either side [15].

The ground plan of sanctuaries 19 and 26 is in the line of the monuments of earlier periods. However, basic changes have been added: whereas in cave 19 a small porch protects the entrance to the monument, a veranda, now destroyed through the collapse of its ceiling, used to stand all along the façade of cave 26; false wooden beams and rafters are no more introduced, but are carved out of the rock. The composition of the façade preserves, however, the model introduced at a much earlier period: it has two levels with the characteristic broad horseshoe-shaped window through which the light enters and lights up the *caitya* in the upper part, and the lower closed level with only one entrance in cave 19, and three openings in cave 26 where they correspond with the central nave and the two aisles. Both monuments open on a courtyard where other shrines or cells were excavated on both sides. The courtyard in front of cave 19 is practically square and is closed by a screen only

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 5 Façade of cave 19 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

partly preserved today where a door keeper and his attendant are still visible on one side of what was the entrance to the courtyard. The courtyard of cave 26 is rectangular and had small shrines on either side which collapsed in the course of time (Figs. 5 and 6).

A very large number of monastic dwellings were excavated during this period. Their ground plan is based on the monuments of the early phase where the cells were excavated around a square room, but also shows major modifications. Whereas in this early period the ground plans of these dwellings could show much variation within a single site, a very specific ground plan has been now conceived which is practically always repeated. The caves are square and have a large inner courtyard supported by a row of pillars; the cells are excavated on the rear and both sidewalls. Moreover, a shrine with an image of the Buddha has been hollowed out in the rear wall (see "The Image of the Buddha" below); further shrines can possibly be distributed on either side, like in cave 2 (see "Images of Richness" below). The cave is preceded by a veranda resting on pillars and having two cells at both extremities (Fig. 7).

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 6 Façade of cave 26 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 7 Façade of cave 1 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Although a monastic architecture, these habitations are characterized by an extremely rich ornamentation which is particularly obvious in the carving of the pillars inside and outside the caves. The basis can be square, polygonal or circular, of various heights, or can be altogether absent. Similarly, the circular shaft is variously adorned: it can be polygonal or covered with vertical or flutes which show great variations from one cave to the other; further horizontal bands of scrolls, pearls, beaded garlands, etc., or large circular medallions can interrupt them. The upper part of the pillars also illustrates the richness of creativity of the artists; the capitals can indeed be shaped differently and also be adorned with various types of motifs, such as fruits, monstrous face, images of couples or the Buddha, etc., ([11], pp. 51–67, [15]).

The walls of the monasteries and sanctuaries received a rich painted ornamentation [16, 17, 19]. Whereas the walls are usually covered with narrative paintings illustrating the previous and last lives of Śākyamuni [12], the pillars or the ceilings receive a coffered ornamentation with a wide number of motifs, for instance, flowers, plants, real or fantastic animals, supernatural beings which are related to fertility, to the richness bestowed by nature [20]. The pillars of the early caves 9 and 10 were also then painted with images of the Buddha (Figs. 8 and 9).

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 8 Painted pillar in cave 17 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

The Image of the Buddha

Since the early period where no physical image of the Buddha is to be seen, a radical transformation

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 9 Painted pillar in cave 10 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 10 Left wall in cave 7 showing the multiplication of images at Śrāvastī (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

went through Buddhist art with the introduction of the Buddha image. Even more radical are the modifications noted in Ajaṇṭā, reflecting how architectural spaces and surfaces have been modified through the overwhelming presence of the Buddha image ([11], p. 69). Thus earlier ornamental elements disappear, replaced by those images. The façades of caves 19 and 26 are completely covered with images of the Buddha presenting different attitudes and showing various hand gestures. Such images do not necessarily reflect specific moments of Śākyamuni's life, but rather show him as an "ideal" teacher or displaying his endless generosity, and through their mere number illustrate his universal presence. Tiny images of monks or lay people who kneel and venerate the Buddha are depicted at the feet of these images, being most probably the images of the donators who gave money for this embellishment of the monument. One moment of the Buddha's life, i.e., the Great Miracle at Śrāvastī, shows the Buddha multiplying his images, and fits thus perfectly in this tendency (Fig. 10).

Also inside the monuments, one notes how images of the Buddha cover the entablatures and, but only in cave 26, the walls where large panels illustrate the Buddha teaching and seated in the so-called *pralambapādāsana*, a large depiction of the *parinirvāṇa* or "Final Decease" and one of the enlightenment. In both caves also, the image of the Buddha is inserted in a niche which protrudes out of the *caitya*; more images of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas are carved in two superimposed rows which run around the lower part of the *caitya* in cave 26 (Figs. 11–14).

An important feature which appears in images on the façade of cave 19 or on the wall within cave 26 is the presence of a crown held by semi-divine flying figures above the Buddha's head. In cave 26, the Buddha who receives this divine crown

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 11 Cave 26, final decease (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 12 Cave 26 – the enlightenment (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 13 Interior of cave 26 with view on the *caitya* (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 14 Interior of cave 19 showing the *caitya* with the image of the Buddha within a niche (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

teaches and sits on a throne in the royal manner, i.e., *pralambapādāsana*. This very particular image will be worshipped all over the Buddhist caves of Maharashtra in the sixth century, being encountered, for instance, in Kārlī, Kuda, Kanheri, or Nasik. It most probably shows that the Buddha having gone to Mount Meru where he had occupied Indra's throne and taught the Dharma to his mother and the gods, had taken over the Indra's function as king of the gods. Hence, he sits on a throne, teaches, and is being crowned by semi-divine beings ([4], pp. 25–39) (Fig. 15).

The same tendency to cover walls with images of the Buddha is also encountered in a number of monastic dwellings with depictions of the Buddha all put side by side and containing small depictions of devotees at ground level (see upper cave 6, for instance). The Buddha was indeed also strongly present in the places of habitation of the monks since a major shift in the monastic architecture shows the inclusion of a cell reserved for the image of the Buddha in the rear wall, enhancing thus his living presence among the monks of his community. This reminds of I-tsing's words:

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 15 Cave 26, right wall, three panels showing the coronation of the Buddha (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 16 Multiple images of the Buddha, upper cave 6 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

"While the Buddha was living, His disciples lived in the same room, and an image represents the real person; we can live in the same rooms without any harm. This traditional custom has long been practiced in India." ([4], p. 35) The overwhelming presence of the Buddha is not limited to carved depictions showing him in a very iconic setting, i.e., seated or standing, facing the viewer, often flanked by attendants who can be Bodhisattvas. Such images offer a rather abstract vision of the Buddha which will find its counterpoise in the painted depictions covering the walls of monastic dwellings and illustrating the life of the Buddha as well as his *jātakas*. Such large painted surfaces have been preserved in caves 1, 2, 16, and 17 and in their verandas (Figs. 16 and 17).

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 17 Image of the Buddha in the inner shrine of cave 11 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Images of Richness

The large horseshoe-shaped window has been preserved and is protected by tall images of the *padma*-and *śaṅkhanidhis* or "treasures of the lotus and of the conch." Those of cave 19 in particular are impressive because of their mere size, while those of cave 26 sit and thus occupy less space in the overall composition. These portly images which are gorgeously adorned have been often misunderstood as being images of bodhisattvas or *yakṣas*, semi-divine beings related to nature. However, even if their general outline drew its inspiration from early *yakṣas* images, the very detailed carving of some specific jeweled ornaments allow recognizing them as the two treasures of the conch and the lotus respectively, at the proper left and right sides of the large window: as a matter of fact, the figure at the right side (thus at the viewer's left) wears a long flower garland, whereas his companion has a heavy garland made of pearls. Confirmation to this identification can be found in earlier Buddhist sites of Andhra

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 18 "Treasure of the conch" or *śaṅkhanidhi*, façade of cave 19 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 19 *Nāgarāja* in the passage to cave 16 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Pradesh and Sri Lanka where the same pair is seen [3] (Fig. 18).

There is no doubt that the function of the two *nidhis* is also to protect the monument, more particularly the large window of the first level, but they are also and first of all symbols of material richness, a function which is theirs since the very beginning of Indian art – it is sufficient to refer to the tall *kalpavṛkṣa* or "wishing tree" capital from Besnagar now kept in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, where both jewels are depicted in their "natural" form of lotus and conch. Their presence here shows how Buddhists were still, in the fifth century, taking into consideration elements drawn from the pan-Indian belief in spirits of the nature in order to integrate them within a more purely Buddhist iconography.

Before Ajaṇṭā was inhabited by the Buddha, it had been the place of residence of a *nāgarāja*, "serpent-king" as inscriptions mention, hence the representations of such a *nāgarāja* in the courtyard of cave 19 or in a special shrine on the way to cave 16. *Nāgarājas* are also regularly depicted flanking the entrance to sanctuaries and dwelling places of the monks, or they are shown in lintels surmounting niches where they are surrounded by their court (Fig. 19).

Another major character related to richness and fertility is Hārītī whose images are repeatedly seen in lintels. The goddess and her husband Pāñcika were also carved in large dimensions in a shrine hollowed in the rear wall of cave 2, whereas a second shrine symmetric to it has images of two portly *yakṣas* who are perhaps the *nidhis* seen on the façades of caves 19 and 26. All these characters, i.e., Hārītī and her numerous children, the two *nidhis*, and *nāgarājas*, accompanied by their court are carved in lintels above the chapels that are often excavated at both sides

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 20 Hārītī and Pāñcika, cave 2 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

of the verandas in front of the *vihāras* [3] (Fig. 20).

Another part of the monument which includes different motifs related to this iconography is its entrance. *Nāgarājas* and eventually also two women can stand at the bottom of the door-jambs, whereas two further women can stand under trees on either side of the door-lintel ([2], [11], pp. 67–68). The door-jambs are further adorned with small depictions of couples and more decorative motifs such as garlands, pearls, foliated scrolls, flowers, etc. Such a rich ornamentation is highly symbolical and not merely decorative: it marks the monument to which it belongs as a place of spiritual enrichment; it marks a rupture between the outer profane and the inner sacred spaces. Like the painted ornamentation of the ceilings which includes similar motifs, it also refers to the world of nature which constitutes the frame within which the Buddhist religious thought expands; it constitutes a gorgeous and lively background to the more iconographic ornamentation. Whether painted or carved, this ornamental setting is the place where artists could be highly imaginative, not bound by rules dictated by official iconography (Fig. 21).

Bodhisattvas

A major Bodhisattva to be depicted at Ajaṇṭā is Avalokiteśvara: no less than ten panels show him protecting from dangers met with while travelling. The list of dangers usually amounts to eight, much more rarely to ten situations: this explains the depiction on either side of the central image of the Bodhisattva of small scenes where devotees are in danger and seek Avalokiteśvara's help as described in the ▶ *Saddharmapuṇḍrīka Sūtra* (Chap. 24). They are for instance threatened by an elephant, a lion, a snake, fire, a shipwreck, and bandits or by being taken into jail, or put to death. This iconography illustrates, as a matter of fact, a major aspect of the Bodhisattva's personality: whoever venerates him, calls his name, will

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 21 Doorway to nave, cave 26 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 22 Avalokiteśvara, façade of cave 4 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

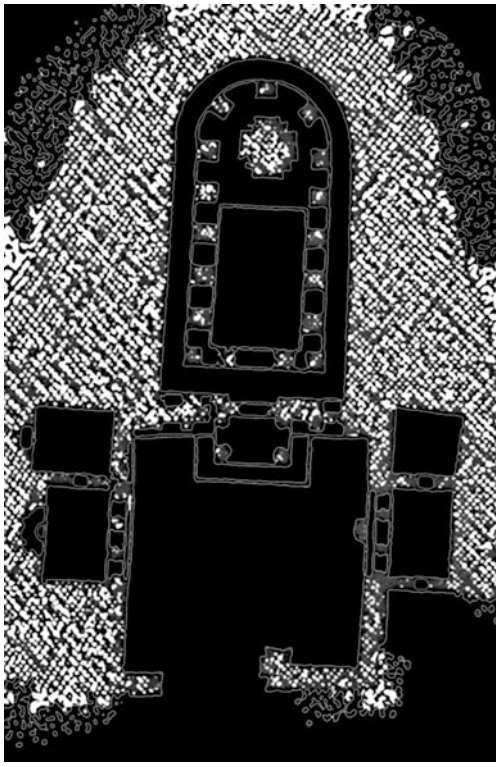
receive his immense protection. This function explains why, in particularly at Ajaṇṭā and Aurangabad, these images are carved or painted in the verandah of the monasteries or in niches hollowed in the façade of the cliff; these images basically meet the needs of monks when the latter travel, they are directed toward the outer world and, by extension, toward mundane activities of the devotees, be they monks or laypeople.

Ten such images were painted (caves 2, upper 6, 11, 17) or carved (caves 4, 10/11, 20, 26) at Ajaṇṭā, before spreading to other sites of the region, Aurangabad, Ellora, Kanheri, or even Badami.

Less known is the presence in cave 26 of two characters who became major figures in a later period, i.e., Hayagrīva, a wrathful character who attends to Avalokiteśvara and stands at his proper left in a panel of the entablature, and a female character, perhaps already the Tārā, standing close to the Buddha in a panel carved on the rear wall of the cave (Fig. 22).

Bodhisattvas attend also to the teaching Buddha present in the shrines of the monasteries: Avalokiteśvara holding a *padma* and Vajrapāṇi holding his *vajra* stand on both sides, forming thus a triad which can also be encountered in other panels carved in the verandas of the caves. Similarly, spatial compositions distributed on different walls could be created, for instance, in cave 1 where four Bodhisattvas are painted, two flanking the entrance to the antechamber and two in the antechamber flanking the passage to the shrine. Without entering into a detailed discussion of their identities, it is worth mentioning that the Bodhisattva usually identified with "Padmapāṇi" does not hold in fact a *padma* but an *utpala*, making this identification untenable. Be that as it

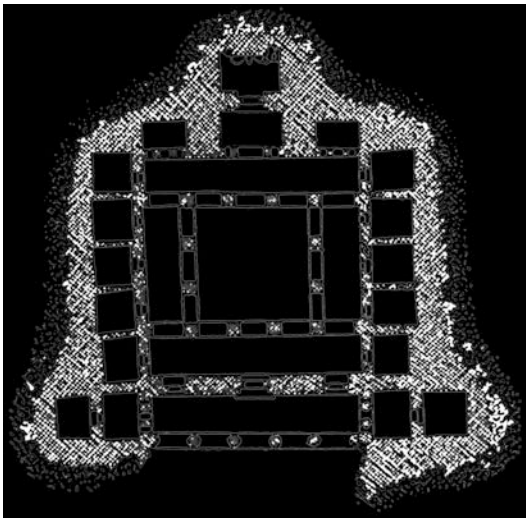
Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 23 Fifth-century mural on a pillar of cave 10 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)



Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 24 Cave 19, ground plan (After Fergusson J, Burgess J (1880) The Cave Temples of India. W.H. Allen et al., London, pl. XXXVII)

may, models emerge in Ajaṇṭā which constitute the basis for later development of Buddhist iconography: the set of four Bodhisattvas announces the later group of eight Bodhisattvas around the Buddhas who are encountered in Ellora, for instance.

Major financial contribution was involved in the making of Ajaṇṭā in its second phase, coming most probably from the court of the Vākāakas as supposed by Walter Spink [14]. This might have galvanized the Buddhist community in having new topics, such as Avalokiteśvara protecting from the dangers, sets of Bodhisattvas, or the Buddha being crowned, being actually depicted. On the other side, the iconography still preserves motifs known from an earlier period, such as the set of the Buddhas of the past combined to Maitreya, a motif which is carved or painted in different caves either on the lintel or right under



Ajaṇṭā, Fig. 25 Cave 2, ground plan (After Fergusson J, Burgess J (1880) The Cave Temples of India. W.H. Allen et al., London, pl. XLIV)

the ceiling (caves 17, 20, 22, 26), thus always keeping a higher position which it had since the first century A.D. when it was carved at the highest level of the porticoes of *stūpa* 1 at Sanchi. The site was interrelated with monasteries of the Northwest, showing elements drawn from the Buddhist iconography in Gandhara, such as the simultaneous representation of the *Dīpaṃkara-jātaka* and of Śākyamuni meeting his son Rāhula, or the presence of some details in the depiction of the Hārītī story in cave 2. Some other features related to the Northwest are of a more stylistic nature, such as the murals introduced on pillars in cave 10 and showing the heavily dressed Buddha. Ajaṇṭā is a major site of transition and of creation which deeply influenced the Buddhist artistic production of the sixth century in the region and marks a rupture with the early phase, establishing in a definitive manner the iconography of the Māhāyāna (Figs. 23–25).

Cross-References

- ▶ Aurangabad
- ▶ Avalokiteśvara
- ▶ Bedsa
- ▶ Bhājā
- ▶ Bodhisattva
- ▶ Buddha Śākyamuni
- ▶ Caitya
- ▶ Ellora
- ▶ Gandhara
- ▶ Jātaka
- ▶ Kanheri
- ▶ Kārlī
- ▶ Mahāyāna
- ▶ Parinirvāṇa
- ▶ Stūpa
- ▶ Vajrapani

References

1. Bautze JK (2009) Samuel Bourne and die ihm zugeschriebenen Fotografien zweier Heiligtümer in Ellora und Ajanta. Tribus 58:125–135
2. Bautze-Picron C (2001) Yama et Yamunā, Le vieil homme et la belle, Mort et renaissance aux portes des monuments d'Ajanta. In: Chojnacki C (ed) Les âges de la vie dans le monde indien, Actes des journées d'étude de Lyon (22–23 juin 2000), Diffusion De Boccard, Paris, pp 283–323
3. Bautze-Picron C (2002) Nidhis and other images of richness and fertility in Ajaṇṭā. East West 52:225–284
4. Bautze-Picron C (2010) The bejewelled Buddha from India to Burma, new considerations. Sanctum Books/Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training Eastern India, New Delhi/Kolkata
5. Cohen RS (1997) Problems in the writing of Ajaṇṭā's history, the epigraphic evidence. Indo-Iran J 40:125–148
6. Dehejia V (1972) Early Buddhist rock temples, a chronological study. Thames and Hudson, London
7. Fergusson J, Burgess J (1880) The cave temples of India. W.H. Allen, London
8. Gupte RS, Mahajan BD (1962) Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad caves, Bombay
9. Mitra D (1971) Buddhist monuments. Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta
10. Nagaraju S (1981) Buddhist architecture of Western India (c. 250 B.C. – c. A.D. 300). Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi
11. Plaeshke HI (1983) Indische Felsentempel und Höhlenklöster, Ajaṇṭā und Elūrā. Böhlau, Wien/Köln/Graz
12. Schlingloff D (1988) Studies in the Ajanta paintings, identifications and interpretations. Ajanta, Delhi
13. Schlingloff D (1999) Guide to the Ajanta paintings, vol 1, Narrative wall paintings. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
14. Spink WM (2005) Ajanta: history and development. Brill, Leiden/Boston
15. Stern P (1972) Colonnes indiennes d'Ajantâ et d'Ellora. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris
16. Takata O, Taeda M (1971) Ajanta. Heibonsha, Tokyo
17. Takata O, Ohmura T (2000) Ajanta paintings. NHK, Tokyo
18. Weiner SL (1977) Ajantâ, its place in Buddhist art. University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London
19. Yazdani G, Binyon L et al (1930–1955) Ajanta, the colour and monochrome reproductions of the Ajanta Frescoes based on photography. Oxford University Press, London
20. Zin M (2003) Guide to the Ajanta paintings, vol 2, Devotional and ornamental paintings. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi

Ajātaśatru

- ▶ Ajātasattu

Ajātasattu

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ajātaśatru

Definition

King of Magadha and a contemporary of the Buddha.

Ajātasattu was the king of Magadha and a contemporary of the Buddha. He was the son of King Bimbisāra, and his mother was a daughter of Mahākosala ([4], Vol. iii, p. 121). He received his name from the fact that he became his father's "enemy even before being born" (Pāli: *ajātasattu*. Sk: *ajātaśatru*) ([4], Vol. iii, p. 121). Ajātasattu ruled for 32 years out of which 8 years were during the life time of the Buddha ([7], Vol. iii, p. 60; [6], Vol. ii, p. 32). He is credited with building the fortress of Pāṭaliputta, which later became the capital of Magadha ([12], Vol. ii, p. 86ff; [14], pp. 87–90).

As a young man, Ajātasattu was greatly impressed by Devadatta's psychic powers (Pāli: *iddhi*. Sk: *ṛddhi*) and became his dedicated disciple ([11], Vol. ii, p. 185; [4]. Vol. i, p. 185–186; [10], Vol. i, p. 139). He built for him a monastery at Gayāsīsa and provided all the provisions ([5], Vol. ii, p. 242). He is also said to have helped Devadatta in many of his attempts to kill the Buddha. Devadatta incited him to seize the throne by killing his father, but when Bimbisāra learnt of this, he abdicated in his favor. But Ajātasattu rewarded Bimbisāra by imprisoning him and then causing his death ([11], Vol. ii, p. 189). Ajātasattu's crime of parricide is sometimes mentioned as the worst kind of parricide which incurs an *upacchedaka-kamma*, i.e., the destruction of the effect of meritorious deeds ([15], Vol. i, pp. 335, 369).

Bimbisāra had married a sister of Pasenadi, and when he was killed, she died of grief. The revenue of a Kāsī village had been given to her by her father, Mahākosala, as part of her dowry, but after Bimbisāra's murder, Pasenadi refused to continue it. Thereupon Ajātasattu declared war on him. He was defeated and captured by Pasenadi. However, on promising not to wage war again, he was released. To seal the friendship, Pasenadi gave him his daughter Vajirā as wife, by whom he had a son Udāyibhadda, and the revenue of the disputed village was gifted to her as bath money ([5], Vol. i, p. 68, 82–85; [4], Vol. ii, p. 403–404, Vol. iv, p. 343f). Ajātasattu evidently took his reverses very unsportingly ([4], Vol. ii, p. 237f).

Shortly before the Buddha's death, Ajātasattu sent his chief minister Vassakāra to the Buddha to know of his prediction about his wish to conquer the Vajjians. The Buddha told Vassakāra that as long as the Vajjians practiced the seven conditions of welfare taught by him, they were unvanquishable ([12], Vol. ii, p. 72f). However, the Buddha made a forecast that someday the Vajjians would relinquish their strenuous lifestyle, and that would give Ajātasattu his opportunity. This happened 3 years later when through treachery, Vassakāra sowed seeds of dissension among Vajjians and Ajātasattu completely destroyed them ([5], Vol. ii, pp. 267–268).

As the years went by, Ajātasattu developed remorse for having killed his father and went to see the Buddha. The Buddha accepted his confession and let him off almost too lightly (see [1]). But when he had left, the Buddha remarked that but for his father's murder, the eye for the truth (*sotāpattimagga*) would have opened for him after hearing the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* that the Buddha had recited on this occasion ([12], Vol. i, pp. 85–86). This visit of Ajātasattu has been preserved in stone sculpture on one of the monolithic gateway pillars of the Bhārhut stūpa ([3]: Plate XVI). Strangely, Ajātasattu never met the Buddha after this single confessional meeting. However, from now on, he became an ally of Buddhism. Thus, when he heard of Upaka having spoken rudely to the Buddha, he at once flew into a rage ([9], Vol. ii, p. 182). Further, he murdered 500 Niganṭhas when learnt that they had conspired to kill Moggallāna ([10], Vol. iii, p. 66f).

He became quite disconsolate when he heard of the Buddha's death ([13], Vol. ii, pp. 605–606). Later, he sent emissaries to claim his one-eighth share of the Buddha's relics and erected a stone stūpa over them at Rājagaha ([12], Vol. ii, pp. 164–166). Two months afterward, when the first Council took place, he became its patron as well as host ([12], Vol. i, pp. 8–9; [6], Vol. iii, pp. 19–22). He was murdered by his son Udaya or Udāyībhadda ([6], Vol. iv, p. l). We are told that Ajātasattu had dreaded that his son Udaya might kill him and had therefore secretly prayed that he would become a monk ([12], Vol. i, p. 153).

According to the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghikas, Ajātasattu was by far the most preeminent among the lay followers of the Buddha ([8], Vol. I, p. 321). Sakka said of him that among the *puthujjanas*, he was most possessed of piety ([12], Vol. ii, p. 610). Some northern sources mention that after receiving help from Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Ajātasattu purified his heavy negative karma and achieved the path of seeing. According to Tāranātha, he was reborn in hell for a short period of time and then was reborn among the gods where after having heard the teachings from Śāṇavāsika, he attained the first fruit of emancipation (*sotāpanna*) [2]. However, according to Theravāda tradition, after spending 60,000 years in Lohakumbhiya hell, he would attain nibbāna as a Paccekabuddha called Viditavisesa or Vijitāvī ([12], Vol. i, pp. 237–238).

Cross-References

- ▶ Bimbisāra
- ▶ Buddhist Councils
- ▶ Devadatta
- ▶ Iddhi
- ▶ Kāśī
- ▶ Magadha
- ▶ Mañjuśrī
- ▶ Pacceka-Buddha
- ▶ Rājagaha (Pāli)
- ▶ Sagga
- ▶ Sotāpanna
- ▶ Theravāda

References

1. Attwood JM (2008) Did king Ajātasattu confess to the Buddha, and did the Buddha forgive him? J Buddh Ethics 15:279–307
2. Chattopadhyaya A (trans) (1970) Tāranātha's history of Buddhism in India. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla
3. Cunningham A (1979) The Stūpa of Bhārhut. Trübner, London
4. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzac, London
5. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
6. Geiger W (ed) (1908) The Mahāvaṃsa. Pali Text Society, London
7. Law BC (ed & trans) (1958) The chronicle of the Island of Ceylon or the Dīpavaṃsa. Ceylon Hist J 7:1–266
8. Malalasekera GP (ed) (1961) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol 1. Government of Ceylon, Colombo
9. Morris R, Hardy E (ed) (1895–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
10. Norman HC (ed) (1906) The commentary on the Dhammapada. Pali Text Society, London
11. Oldenberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
13. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE, Stede W (eds) (1886–1932) The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
14. Steinthal P (ed) (1885) The Udāna. Pali Text Society, London
15. Walleser H, Kopp H (eds) (1924–1956) Manorathapūraṇī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Ajiṇṭhā Leṇa

- ▶ Ajaṇṭā

Ajita Keśakambali

Shanker Thapa
Faculty of Buddhist Studies, Lumbini Buddhist University, Lumbini Rupandehi, Nepal

Synonyms

Skepticism

Definition

Ajita Keśakambali was an ancient materialist who belonged to the atheistic and materialistic school of Indian philosophy. He believed in a form of philosophical skepticism and religious indifference. He denied the existence of gods, spirits, and nonmaterial realm, and believed that nothing remains after death.

Ajita Keśakambali, known as "the unconquered," was an ancient Indian materialist in the sixth century B.C. He is considered the first known philosopher of Indian materialism. He was contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. He was the main proponent of Cārvākas, a system of Indian philosophy that believes in the forms of philosophical skepticism and religious apathy, of that time. The Cārvākas believed that perception is the only means of valid knowledge. Therefore, they rejected all other means of knowledge. The Brihaspati is considered as the earliest Indian materialist, who denied orthodox views of theology, ethics, and dualism. But his time is unknown. Earliest Indian materialism is also called "Brihaspatya" because of him. Later Indian materialism is sometimes called Cārvāka after the proposed author of the *Brihaspatya Sūtras*, which are now lost. Ajita Keśakambali belonged to the atheistic and materialistic school of Indian philosophy known as Cārvāka. The views of Ajita Keśakambali were very much influenced by the Cārvāka philosophy. It had greater influence in the Indian society during the time of Ajita Keśakambali around the sixth century B.C. He has been regarded as a nihilist. He is attributed to have influence on the doctrine of the Lokāyata (materialist system of philosophy) School of Indian philosophy.

Ajita Keśakambali was the practitioner of austerities who never sought personal pleasure. He abstained from all kinds of pleasures. He denied the existence of gods, spirits, and nonmaterial realm. However, further details on his life and philosophical attributes are lacking. While turning to the main thesis, he believed that ideas like generosity are conceptualization of a stupid person. Those who favor and speak it, their words are empty, confused, and only a cry of desperation.

Ajita Keśakambali is described as a heretical teacher in the Suttapitaka, the discourses of the Buddha in Pāli. He was a teacher of large following. He was virtuous and held in high regard by people. His school of materialistic thought referred that there is neither good nor evil action. Similarly, any kind of good or evil consequences of either action does not exist. In fact, for him, everything was nothing but the four elements – earth, water, fire, and air were only the reality. He denied rebirth altogether.

Ajita Keśakambali along with other heretics is discussed in the "Sāmaññaphala Sutta" in Digha Nikāya. The earliest reference of his schools is found in this Sutta. It discusses more on his denial of the efficacy of moral discourse than on his views on materialism. King Ajātaśatru describes his visit to Ajita Keśakambali in this Sutta and also elaborates on what Ajita Keśakambali has explained him about annihilation to death. As mentioned in the Sutta, responding to the query of King Ajātaśatru, Ajita Keśakambali spoke on alms or sacrifice or offering. He insisted on the nonexistence of such things. As he believed, there was neither fruit nor result; or good or evil deeds. There are no things such as this world or the next one. Fools and wise alike were cut off, annihilated, and after death nothing remains. As a materialist, he believed neither in good nor evil. He always stood on the other extreme of theism. He said that there was nothing like good life. Pāli tradition says that the most important teacher of the materialists at the time of the Buddha was Ajita Keśakambali. The Buddha has described this extreme view as "annihilationism." Ajita Keśakambali very clearly rejected the doctrine of self-being (*Svabhāvavāda*) and also the law of causality. The annihilist ideas of Ajita Keśakambali were purely the materialistic viewpoint. He was a greatest materialist of that time. The annihilationism or non-eternalism believes that no action has its fruit. Therefore, none of the actions such as generosity, ritual of sacrifice, etc., have result. There is neither this world, nor hereafter. There is no rebirth. There are no Sramaṇa-brāhmaṇas who can view this world and the next world for emancipation. Everything ceases after death and nothing remains thereafter. He held the view that personality of man

ceases with the death of the body. Then, only the material forces could be counted as real. There was no value in the so-called good life prescribed by the religious teachers. None of his teachings survive in written evidence. Only fragmentary descriptions are available which are made by his opponents to refute his materialistic ideas.

Since Ajita Keśakambali is a materialist, he believed that there is nothing like generosity, virtue, and ritual sacrifice (*homa*), etc. There is no fruit of actions. There is no father and mother nor the supreme gods. Theism is simply a false claim. The notion of heaven and hell has no ground but is completely baseless.

Ajita Keśakambali's views – "There is nothing given, nothing offered, and nothing sacrificed. His ideas confronted with those who believed in anything other than existing matter. For him, they were existentialists. He denied all that in which the existentialists believed. He further viewed that human person consists of four elements. When he dies, they return to earth, water, fire, and air while senses vanish to space.

Ajita Keśakambali was a popular idealist of his time. However, his materialism needed further tiff to justify because his ideas were not the result of the study of laws that govern the material world. Rather, they were the outcome of his understanding of humans based on Brāhmanical thoughts.

The Buddha's ideas were opposed to the materialistic ideas of Ajita Keśakambali along with the ideas of other contemporary philosophers. Therefore, the Buddha has criticized him which is mentioned in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta. For the Buddha, Ajita Keśakambali's views were false.

Cross-References

- ▶ Annihilationism
- ▶ Atheism (Buddhism)
- ▶ Cārvāka
- ▶ Eternal Rest
- ▶ God (Buddhism)
- ▶ Lokāyata
- ▶ Materialism (Buddhism)
- ▶ Rebirth
- ▶ Skepticism
- ▶ Śramaṇa

References

1. Chattopadhyaya D (1959) Lokāyata; a study in ancient materialism. People's Publishing House, Bombay
2. Daksinaranjan S (1957) A short history of Indian materialism. The Book Company, Calcutta
3. Dasgupta S (1955) A history of Indian philosophy, vol V. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
4. *Digha Nikaya* -2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta
5. Harvey P (1990) An introduction to Buddhism: teachings, history and practices. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
6. Jayatilleke KN (2009) The contemporary relevance of Buddhist philosophy. The Wheel Publication No. 258. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
7. Kalupahana DJ (1995) Ethics in early Buddhism. University of Hawaii, Honolulu
8. Mittal KK (1974) Materialism in Indian thought. Munihiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
9. Ronkin N (1905) Early Buddhist metaphysics: the making of a philosophical tradition. Routledge and Curzon, London
10. Silacara B (1917) The fruit of homelessness of life: Sāmaññaphala Sutta. The Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London
11. Ven. Thich Chon-Thien (1995) The concept of personality revealed through the Pancanikaya. Institute of Buddhist Studies, Saigon

Ajīva

Ana Bajželj
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Polonsky Academy, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem, Israel

Abbreviations

Ns	Niyamasāra
Paks	Pañcāstikāyasāra
Ps	Pravacanasāra
Sas	Sarvārthasiddhi
Tas	Tattvārthasūtra

Synonyms

Nonliving substance; Non-sentient substance; Non-soul

Definition

Ajīva is an umbrella term for a group of eternal nonliving substances, namely, matter, medium of motion, medium of rest, space, and, as maintained by some proponents of Jain thought, time. The fact that they do not possess the attribute of consciousness distinguishes them from living substances. Nonliving substances represent one of the basic principles of Jain thought.

Jain Theory of *Ajīva*

According to the Jain doctrine, there is an infinite number of imperishable substances (Skt. *dravya*), which may be broadly classified into two main categories, namely, living (Skt. *jīva*) and nonliving (Skt. *ajīva*) (Ps II.35, see [3], p. 395). Each one of the former possesses the attribute of consciousness, which all the latter lack (Ibid.). The group of nonliving substances is further subdivided into material nonliving substances (Skt. *rūpi-ajīva*), or matter (Skt. *pudgala*), and nonmaterial nonliving substances (Skt. *arūpi-ajīva*), which are medium of motion (Skt. *dharma*), medium of rest (Skt. *adharma*), space (Skt. *ākāśa*) (Tas 5.1, see [8], p. 123), and, in accordance with some, time (Skt. *kāla*) (Sas 5.39, see [7], p. 163–164). Whereas Digambaras accept time as a separate substance, Śvetāmbaras are divided regarding the inclusion of time in the list of substances ([2], p. 100).

All substances, excluding time, are extensive substances (Skt. *asti-kāya*), meaning that they inhabit a multitude of space-points (Skt. *pradeś a*) (Ns 34, see [5], p. 41; Ps II.43, see [3], p. 396). The measure of a space-point is one indivisible material atom (Skt. *parama-aṇu*) (Ps II.45, see [3], p. 396; cf. [1], p. 94). Occupying an infinite (Skt. *ananta*) number of space-points (Tas 5.9, see [8], p. 125), space is the only infinite substance, and albeit singular, it is generally understood as being divided into two parts, that is, cosmic space (Skt. *loka-ākāśa*) and acosmic space (Skt. *aloka-ā kāśa*) (Paks 3, see [4], p. 2). Padmanabh S. Jaini terms them "space having worlds" and "space without worlds," respectively ([2], p. 98). Acosmic space is a vacuity (Skt. *kha*) since all the other substances are located within cosmic space (Paks 3, see [4], p. 2). The limit of the latter, which is frequently illustrated as a standing human being with hands on the hips and elbows bowed outward, is delineated by the dimensions of the medium of motion and the medium of rest (Paks 87, see [4], p. 74; Ps II.44, see [3], p. 396; Tas 5.13, see [8], p. 126). These two substances, which are singular like space, are unique to the Jain tradition and are said to occupy an innumerable (Skt. *asaṃkhyeya*) number of space-points (Tas 5.7, see [8], p. 125). No movement is possible beyond them, and in accordance with this, no substance, not even the living, may move beyond the border of cosmic space (cf. [1], p. 95). Cosmic space is densely packed with innumerable material atoms (Ps II.76, see [3], p. 399) and, for Digambaras and some Śvetāmbaras, innumerable and discreet atoms of time (Skt. *kāla-aṇu*). Broadly speaking, within cosmic space, one space-point correlates to one atom of matter and one atom of time. Through different combinations of joining and disjoining, material atoms come to form diverse aggregates (Skt. *skandha*) (Ns 20, see [5], p. 35; Tas 5.25, see [8], p. 133), the sizes of which vary from subtle (Skt. *sūkṣma*) to gross (Skt. *sthūla*). These occupy more than one space-point and may come to extend either over a numerable or an innumerable number of them (Tas 5.10, see [8], p. 126). Whereas material atoms are eternal, their aggregates are impermanent. Contrary to the dynamics of material substances, atoms of time do not combine into aggregates and always remain separate.

Each one of the listed substances has the same fundamental structure. As substances, they possess general characteristics, i.e., attributes (Skt. *guṇa*), and specific characteristics, i.e., modes (Skt. *paryāya*) (Tas 5.37, see [8], p. 142). Attributes are permanent and coexistent with substances themselves, whereas modes are continuously changing (Cf. Ps II.4, see [3], 392). It follows that in accordance with Jain thought, space, time, medium of motion, and medium of rest are not static substances but persistent substances which incessantly undergo modifications. These modifications are, however, said to be undefiled and innately

produced (Skt. *svabhāva-paryāya*) (Ns 33, see [5], p. 41), meaning that they do not occur due to any external factor (Ns 28, see [5], p. 38–39). In the words of Padmanabh S. Jaini: "This sort of change is totally free of contact with, hence defilement by, any other substance" ([2], p. 99).

Like nonmaterial nonliving substances, material substances are also dynamic in nature. They possess four basic attributes of color (Skt. *varṇa*), taste (Skt. *rasa*), smell (Skt. *gandha*), and palpability (Skt. *sparśa*) (Tas 5.23, see [8], 132). As noted, these general characteristics constantly undergo modal modifications. For example, the attribute of color may specifically manifest as dark green, light green, blue, etc. (cf. [2], p. 90). It is due to the varying manifestations of the attribute of palpability, namely, the degrees of moisture (Skt. *snigdhatva*) and dryness (Skt. *rūkṣatva*), that material atoms come to unite and form aggregates (Tas 5.32, see [8], p. 140). These aggregates also produce a variety of modes, namely, sound (Skt. *śabda*), darkness (Skt. *tamas*), shadow (Skt. *chāyā*), light (Skt. *uddyota*), heat (Skt. *tapa*), earth (Skt. *bhū*), water (Skt. *jala*), fire (Skt. *tejas*), air (Skt. *vāyu*), etc. They are further distinguished as those that may be karmically bound (Skt. *yogya*) and those that may not (Skt. *aprayogya*) (Ps II.76, see [3], p. 399).

Moreover, it is pointed out that material modal modifications may be instrumentally affected by modal modifications of living substances, which share the general substance-attribute-mode structure with nonliving substances but possess different attributes (Ps II.77, see [3], p. 400). Through this efficacy, certain aggregates of material atoms, which may be karmically bound, attain karmic nature and are drawn to living substances (Ibid.). The nondestructive kinds of karmic matter (Skt. *aghātiyā-karma*) form different material bodies of living substances and determine their birth state, status, longevity, and the experience of pleasure and pain ([1], p. 100; [2], pp. 124–127). The destructive kinds of karmic matter (Skt. *ghātiyā-karma*), however, affect the operation of their attributes ([1], pp. 99–100; [2], pp. 117–123). Just as the modal modifications of living substances are said to instrumentally influence the modal modifications of matter, the modal modifications of karmic matter then in turn instrumentally affect the modal manifestations of the attributes of living substances. This means that as long as the attributes of living substances, namely, consciousness (Skt. *caitanya*), bliss (Skt. *sukha*), and energy (Skt. *vīrya*), are manifested in relation to certain material modifications, which function as the external factors of their arising, they are karmically affected and therefore imperfect and impure. Only when their particular manifestations arise independently of any external material factors, are they considered to be perfect and pure. Since nondestructive karmic matter does not influence the functioning of the attributes of living substances, these may be perfectly manifested, while the living being is still embodied. In order to attain liberation (Skt. *mokṣa*), not only does all the destructive karmic matter then need to be removed, but also all the nondestructive karmic matter must run its course. This briefly described mechanism is the foundation of the complex Jain karmic theory, in which *karma* is considered to be material. Even though Jainism shares the idea of the beginningless entrapment of living beings in the cycle of rebirths (Skt. *saṃsāra*) with several other Indian traditions, its theory of *karma* as matter is unique ([6], p. 92).

Because of the dynamic relationship between material and living substances, the formation of the physical dimension of living entities is considered to be the function of material substances (Tas 5.19, see [8], p. 129). All the other nonliving substances are similarly attributed their particular functions. The specific function of the substance of space is allowing the immersion (Skt. *avagāha*) of all the other substances (Tas 5.18, see [8], p. 129). This holds true for both cosmic and acosmic space. Even though the latter is empty, the two are, as pointed above, to be understood as continuous and one. The function of the medium of motion is, as the English name implies, to provide the means of motion (Skt. *gati*, *gamana*) as water facilitates the movement of fish (Paks 85, see [4], p. 73; Tas 5.17, see [8], 128). Likewise, the medium of rest permits rest (Skt. *sthiti*) as the earth or shade of the tree enables moving entities

to pause and rest (Paks 86, see [4], p. 73–74). These two substances do not themselves undergo movement or rest but merely offer support (Skt. *upagraha*) for the other substances to do so (Paks 84, see [4], p. 72–73; Paks 88, see [4], p. 75). Time as a substance is a necessary support for continuity (Skt. *vartanā*), transformation (Skt. *pariṇāma*), motion (Skt. *kriyā*), and the sequence of before and after (Skt. *paratva-aparatva*) (Tas 5.22, see [8], p. 131–132). In performing these functions, the nonmaterial nonliving substances are defined as instrumental causes (Skt. *nimitta-kāraṇa*) of the specific effects they support ([2], pp. 99, 117). It follows that all of the nonliving substances provide the instrumental framework within which living substances may either remain in bondage or otherwise employ the knowledge of its working to break out of it. Accordingly, Jain authors listed nonliving substances as one of the basic principles (Skt. *tattva*), describing the nature of reality as well as the mechanism of the entrapment and liberation of living substances.

Cross-References

- ▶ Dharma (Jainism)
- ▶ Dravya (Jainism)
- ▶ Jainism (Yakṣa)
- ▶ Jīva (Jainism)
- ▶ Karma (Jainism)
- ▶ Philosophy
- ▶ Reality (Jainism)
- ▶ Sārnāth
- ▶ Time (Jainism)

References

1. Dundas P (2002) The Jains. Routledge, London/New York
2. Jaini PS (1998) The Jaina path of purification. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
3. Kundakunda (1984) Śrī Kundakundācārya's Pravacanasāra (Pavayaṇasāra). A pro-canonical text of the Jainas (ed and trans: Upadhye AN). Parama-Śruta-Prabhāvaka Mandal, Shrimad Rajachandra Ashrama, Agas
4. Kundakunda (2001) Pañcāstikāya-sāra (ed and trans: Chakravarti A). Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi
5. Kundakunda (2006) Niyamasāra (trans: Sain U). Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi
6. Long JD (2009) Jainism. I. B. Tauris, London/New York
7. Pūjyapāda (1960) Reality. English translation of Shri Pujyapada's Sarvarthasiddhi (trans: Jain SA). Vira Sasana Sangha, Calcutta
8. Umāsvāti (2011) Tattvārtha Sūtra. That which is (trans: Tatia N). HarperCollins, San Francisco/London

Akanittha

▶ Heaven (Buddhism)

Akusala

▶ Evil (Buddhism)

Ālaya

▶ Ālaya-vijñāna

Ālaya-vijñāna

C. D. Sebastian
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai, India

Synonyms

Ālaya; Basis consciousness; Sarvabījaka; Storehouse consciousness; Substratum consciousness

Definition

The theory of Ālayavijnāna was elaborated by the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. Ālayavijñāna ("storehouse consciousness") is a receptacle where the various dispositions of the future determinations are stored. According to the Yogācāra, the "seeds" deposited here provide

the connection between the past, present, and future of a subjective personality and its experiences.

Introduction

The word "*ālaya*" means "abode" or "house," and it implies, in the theory of ālayavijñāna, a "source" in the sense of "location" (*sthāna*). The term "*vijñāna*," as it is in the entire Buddhist corpus, means "consciousness." (In Buddhism, *vijñāna* (see ▶ Vijñāna) corresponds to the resulting activity when the mental and physical organs come into contact with external objects, and the input derived from such contact is associated, recognized, and subsequently acted upon.) Thus, *ālayavijñāna* would mean "the storehouse consciousness." It is also translated as "base consciousness," "basis consciousness," "home consciousness," and "substratum consciousnesses" [1]. In early Buddhism, a theory of six consciousnesses (of five sense organs and mind) was put forward. The Yogācāra school of Buddhism (see ▶ Yogācāra), especially in the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, added two more to the list, namely, *ālayavijñāna* and *manovijñāna* (or *kliṣṭamanas*), extending the items in the list into eight [2]. It is in *ālayavijñāna* that the fruits of actions are stored, and then matured. *Ālayavijñāna* is the substratum of all latencies. It is called storehouse (*ālaya*) as it is the repository where the kārmic impressions (*vāsanā*), good, bad, or indifferent, are contained. It is an incessantly present substratum that provides a mechanism for the conservation and creation/activation of the latencies which determine the future experiences of a sentient being. Thus, this is an *ālaya* (basis) and *bīja* or *bījaka* (seed) of all. It is in this repository the seeds of future determinations stay on; hence, it is called as "repository of impressions" [3].

Origin and Development

The origin or even the first occurrence of the term *ālayavijñāna* is unclear. "The term *ālayavijñāna* is so distinctly (of the) Yogācāra" [4] tradition of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which the later Vijñānavādins like Dignāga (see ▶ Dignāga) and Dharmakīrti (see ▶ Dharmakīrti (c. A.D. 600–660)) discarded [5]. The early development of *ālayavijñāna*, in all probability, must have been a gradual integration of *saṁsāric* facets of *vijñāna* found in the early *sūtras* of Buddhism which the Ābhidharmika (see ▶ Abhidhamma Piṭaka, ▶ Abhidharma (Theravāda)) philosophers expanded. It is only in the light of the Ābhidharmika background that one can understand the development of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*: questions about latent dispositions, the karmic residues and their potentiality, and the gradual progress to liberation. However, so far as the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda system is concerned (and it is in this system that the theory is fully developed), Asaṅga is credited to have given a methodical presentation of this conception. The beginning of *ālayavijñāna* theory, and the Yogācāra school itself as a whole, might be connected with *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* attributed to Asaṅga. Some scholars opine that, most probably, parts of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* predate the *Saṁdhinirmocana Sūtra* [6]. In the *Saptadaś abhūmika* (the main section) of *Yogācārabhūmiśā stra*, the term *ālayavijñāna* seems to have been first used. Here *ālayavijñāna* is used as a kind of basal consciousness or seed which endures successively in the sense faculties, from where the all other cognitive activities emerge which is called *pravṛtti vijñāna*.

In the initial period of the development of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*, it was intimately associated with bodily existence. This must be because there was an Ābhidharmika analysis that *vijñāna* in sentient beings appropriating the body, where the body is conceived as the carrier of the seeds. Here, *ālayavijñāna* is the receptacle of the seeds, and it is not yet a distinct *vijñāna*. The *Saṁdhinirmocanasūtra* appends drastically to *ālayavijñāna*'s physiological dimensions, mentioned just now, the psychological character, based on *vāsanā* (accumulated predispositions or impressions of karma). Here *ālayavijñāna* becomes the supporter or basis of the six cognitive awareness (of the five senses and mind). In the

fifth chapter of the *Saṁdhinirmocanasūtra, ālayavijñāna* is described as the consciousness of all seeds (*sarvabījakam cittam*). The text connects *ālayavijñāna* with karmic and other affective impressions of the previous births referred to as *bīja* and *vāsanā*. *Ālayavijñāna* finds its support in material sense faculties, and enforced by predispositions (*bīja* and *vāsanā*), and it "grows, develops, and increases." Thus, the dynamic of *ālavijñāna* is anchored on physiological and psychological dispositions (*saṁskāra*) of the past births.

The entire Buddhist tradition is committed to the theory of nonself (*anattā, anātman*, or *nairātmya*) which rejects the permanent substance (or enduring entity). The theory of nonself needed a coherent rationalization to explain the transmigration of the subjective personality. It was Asaṅga who logically proposed the conception of *ālayavijñāna*, which explained the phenomenal world and the cycle of birth and rebirth, by holding on to the *anātman* doctrine. Asaṅga expounded of the theory of *ālayavijñāna* by elaborating on the fifth *skandha*, namely, *vijñāna*. According to Asaṅga, *vijñāna* has further layers: *citta, manas*, and *vijñāna* (while these three are considered synonymous particularly by Vasubandhu in his *Trimśikā*). In his *Mahāyānasaṁgraha*, Asaṅga presented the conception of *ālayavijñāna*, which was later systematized by Vasubandhu, the greatest Yogācārin, in his *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi (*the *Vimśatikā* and the *Trimśikā*). Later, Dharmapāla in his *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* gave further elucidation of *ālayavijñāna*.

Vasubandhu's notion of *ālavijñāna* is different from that found in the *Lanāvatārasūtra*. The *Lankāvatārasūtra* assumes *ālayavijñāna* to be the eighth consciousness. According to the *Lankāvatārasūtra*, the *vijñāna* (consciousness) has eightfold facets or eight types (*aṣṭalakṣaṇa vijñāna*): they are the five sensory consciousness (of the five senses: (1) *cakṣurvijñāna* – the eye consciousness, (2) *śrotravijñāna* – the ear consciousness, (3) *ghrāṇavijñāna* – the nose consciousness, (4) *jihvāvijñāna* – the tongue consciousness, and (5) *kāyavijñāna* – the body consciousness or *sparśavijñāna* – the touch consciousness), mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*), defiled or tainted consciousness (*kliṣṭamanas*), and the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) [1]. *Ālayavijnāna* is the eighth. In that sense, it gives an impression that it appears a totally distinct category. On the other hand, Vasubandhu does not refer to *ālayavijñāna* as the eighth consciousness. Sthiramati, a commentator of Vasubandhu and some Chinese commentators constantly refer to it as the eighth consciousness [7]. Following the *Lankāvatārasūtra* and the Chinese interpretation/s, some modern western scholars consider *ālayavijñāna* as the eighth consciousness. *Ālayavijñāna* is an uninterrupted stream of consciousness which is not at all affected by egoistic emotions (as in *manovijñāna* which is the *kliṣṭamanas*) and dogmatic grasping characteristic (of *pravṛittivijñāna*), which are the next two modifications of the consciousness (*vijñāna*).

Three Stages of Vijñānas

According to the Yogācāra-Vinjñānavāda system, the only existent is *vijñāna* (consciousness). If there is only *vijñāna* that exists, then to account for empirical experience of plurality, different kinds of *vijñānas* need to be accepted. The Yogācāra, thus, accepts three kinds of *vijñānas*, though the evolutes of *vijñāna* are infinite [8]. They are *ālayavijñāna, manovijñāna*, and *pravṛttivijnāna*, which are the three stages of the evolution of the *vijñāna*. *Ālayavijñāna* is the storehouse consciousness, which is the first and most fundamental. The second stage is *manovijñāna* (also called as *kliṣṭa manas* or *kliṣṭa mano-vijñāna*) which is a defiled consciousness. According to Vasubandhu's *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, it is *kliṣta* or defiled, because there is a beginning of objectification of the consciousness here, and a false notion of an *ego* emerges. The third stage of evolution is *pravṛttivijñāna* where there is a determination or awareness of the object (objective world or phenomena). This is the consciousness which matters in empirical discourse, and that which is empirically known. These three are not distinct and static kinds, but different facets of the evolution of the same *vijñāna*. *Vijñāna* diversifies, and these three are different stages of that diversification. The

differentiation is only just that of the degree of self-determination.

Ālayavijñāna is the first stage in the evolution of the *vijñāna*. The second is *mano-vijñāna* which is also called *kliṣta manas* or *kliṣta-mano-vijñāna*. The role of this consciousness in the evolutionary process is, to a certain extent, ambiguous in the Yogācāra literature. There are different accounts of *manas* given in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, and it is referred to as *kliṣta-manas* (or defiled mind). The concept of *manas in manovijñāna* mentioned here is not the same *manas* (mind), the sixth of the sense organs. The *manas* here stands for the process of *manana* (intellection or egocentric mental operation). When this *manas functions*, there is a false notion of "ego" getting developed in the consciousness (they are four in number: *ātmadṛṣti, ātmamoha, ātmamāna*, and *ātmaprema*). *Manas* is understood here more as concerned with the projection of the "ego" which arises out of ignorance. *Manas* is not an independent consciousness, but dependent on *ālayavijñāna* which supplies the content to it, and its activity is directed toward the actualization of the latent forces embedded in *ālayavijñāna*. *Pravṛtti-vijñāna* is the third stage of evolution of the *vijñāna* and the determinate awareness of the object takes place here. This is the only consciousness which is relevant to empirical discourse, and this is phenomenally known. This *vijñāna* constitutes the phenomenal interactions, and it is not a unison, but a group, where the six consciousness or six *viṣaya vijñānas* (of the senses and the mind) are grouped together because of their common empirical nature which provide with empirical data. According to the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, all these six *viṣaya vijñānas* arise out of *ālayaviñana* due to their seeds remaining and maturing therein, so as to create the illusion of objective world. In other words, as in Vasubandhu's *Trimśikā* (*kārikā*: 2–8), *ālayavijñāna* is the storehouse from where all other *vijñānas* evolve, first *manovijñāna* (also called as *kliṣta-manas* or *kliṣta-mano-vijñāna*), and then *pravṛttivijñāna*s. All these *pravṛtti-vijñānas* appear on the basis of an *ālaya* (storehouse or basis) which is called as *vipāka* (resultant, or maturation). The conception of *ālayavijñāna* along with *manovijñāna* (whose primary task seems to be the ego function) and the six empirical consciousness made up the eightfold consciousness of the Yogācāra [9].

Ālayavijñāna

Ālayavijñāna is called the storehouse consciousness or *ālaya* because it is here all the seeds (*bīja*) of karmic impressions (*vāsanā*) are stored. *Vāsanā* is to be understood as motive forces or latencies governing the evolutionary progression of the *vijñāna* (*īśyate vāsanāvidbhiḥśaktirūpā hi vāsanā*). *Vāsanā* is not an object of knowledge, but its presupposition, and the force on the part of the consciousness to create an "other." Sthiramati explains the import of *ālaya* in three different ways [10]: firstly, *ālaya* means the place for all seeds/elements which are responsible for *kleśas* (defilements). The seeds of such *kelśas* are stored here, and when the ripe time arrives, they come out of it, taking different forms of consciousness; secondly, it is called *ālayavijñāna*, because from this storehouse the phenomenal world are produced; and thirdly, this *ālaya* is the cause of all elements, which would imply that there is the cause-effect relation between them.

The *ālaya* must be a *vijñāna* (consciousness), which is the basis for mental processes, not the corporeal body. Here the consciousness brings together the past and future, that is, from the past residues, the future is created. Hence, this *vijñāna* is *ālayavjñāna, sarvabījaka,* and *vipāka*. According to the *Mahāyāna Abhidharmasūtra* and the *Mahāyānasaṁgraha, ālayavijñāna* has two functions: firstly, it stores up the impressions of past *vijñānas*; and secondly, it gives rise to future *vijñānas* by maturing the impressions. Thus, this is the repository of all seeds (*sarvabījakam*) and also the maturing storehouse for future *vijñānas* (*vipāka*). The accumulation of the seeds in the *ālayavijñāna* is called as "causal change" (*hetupariṇāma*) and their subsequent actualization is called "effect change" (*phala-pariṇāma*). *Hetu-pariṇāma* is development and maturation, whereas *phala-pariṇāma* is the emergence of the effects.

Ālayavijñāna is called *vipāka, sarvabījaka*, or even as *bīja*: In Vasubadhu's *Trimśikā*, it is seen that the *ālayavijñāna* has the characteristics of

maturation (*vipāka*) and all-germination or source of all seeds (*sarva-bījaka*). *Ālayavijñāna* is the receptacle or repository where all the past karmic influences are deposited in forms of impressions (*vāsanā*), which become the source or seed of all future latencies or activities, and hence it is called *sarva-bījaka*. It is called *vipāka*, because this is the basis where the effects of all the past karmas are stored, and from which the future gets determined. *Ālayavijñāna* is called seed (*bīja*) of all phenomena. It is that repository in which the seed of all elements of phenomenal existence reside. All types of dualities and thought constructions are products of *ālayavijñāna*.

Vasubandhu explains the relation between *vāsanā* and *ālayavijñāna*. There are two kinds of *vāsanā: vipāka-vāsanā* and *niḥṣyanda-vāsanā. Vipākavāsanā* retains the cycle of birth and rebirth, while *niḥṣyandavāsanā* provides the content of each existence (birth). *Vipākavāsanā* keeps the continuity of subjective personality through consecutive births. When the residues of the previous birth come to an end, death occurs, and then *vipāka-vāsanā* activates the *ālayavijñāna* into a new flow which begins the next birth of the subjective personality. *Niḥṣyanda-vāsanā* is the maturing (and fructifying) of the present experiences due to which other *vijñānas* advance out of the *ālayavijñāna*, the first being the *kliṣtamanas* (*manovijñāna*) and the diverse *pravṛttivijñāna*s. *Manovijñāna* provides only *niḥṣyanda vāsanā*, while *pravṛttivijñānas* (being the conscious experiences proper) deposit both *vipāka* and *niḥṣyanda vāsanā*s [11].

The *ālayavijñāna* has a content. But the content cannot be empirical as *ālayavijñāna* is not empirical. It is an indeterminate content, but there is some sort of objectivity which is undifferentiated into exact forms. The *ālayavijñāna* is not pure in that sense, as there is already an implicit duality of subject and object, though undifferentiated. The course of divergence of consciousness into subject and object is underlying here already, as *ālayavijñāna* functions in *darśanabhāga* (*vijñāna* internally appearing as the components of a subjective personality) and *nimittabhāga* (*vijñāna* externally conscious of the undifferentiated objectivity) [5, 12].

The evolutionary process of the *vijñāna* is like this: There is only consciousness (*vijñāna*). This *vijñāna* undergoes evolution (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*) due to ignorance. In the evolution, *vijñāna* undergoes three stages of modification like: (1) the resultant or maturation (*vipāka*), (2) egocentric mental operation or intellection (*manana*), and (3) the consciousness of external objects (*viṣaya-vijñapti*). *Ālayavijñāna* (storehouse consciousness) is the first in the evolution of consciousness. As stated above, *ālayavijñāna* is called *vipāka* or resultant or maturation, because it is the resultant where the stored seeds (*bīja*) of impressions or dispositions (*vāsanā*) get matured (*paripāka*). The second modification of *vijñāna* is *manas* (mind), which is termed as *mano-vijñāna* (mind consciousness). In this stage, there is a false belief in "self" and ego. The third modification is the consciousness of the external objects, where one finds the subject-object duality. This subject-object discrimination is caused by the factors in the *ālayavijñāna*. In this stage, real external objects are falsely imagined (*parikalpita*). There is neither "self" nor the "object," but consciousness appears to be as subject and object, where their existence is mutually dependent (*paratantra*). This differentiation also vanishes when perfect knowledge is attained, where consciousness only exists as pure without any subject-object duality, which the Yogācāra calls as *pariniṣpanna*. In the *Trimśikā*, Vasubandhu says that the false belief in self (*ātman*) and real elements (*dharmāh*) is due to the evolution of consciousness [13]. Vasubandhu takes *vipāka, manana*, and *vijñapti* as three different kinds of functions, and not characteristics, of *vijñāna*. Here he considers *vijñāna* itself as a function, and by this avoids any form of substantialist position in relation to consciousness [14].

Ālayavijñāna and Āśraya

The term "*āśraya*" in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school, which could be translated as "support" or even "basis" and "substratum" has much to do with the conception of *ālayavijñāna*. The conception of *āśraya* gets an elucidation in *Mahāyānasūtralankāra*. There are different meanings in which *āśraya* is used in the

Mahāyānasūtralamkāra, and one of them, probably the most important one, is in the sense of *ālayavijñāna*, when the text speaks of *āś rayaparāvṛtti*. In Vasubandhu's *Trimśikā* as well, the term *āśraya* is used in the sense of *ālayavijñāna*, and here it has the characteristics of *vipāka* (maturation) and *sarvabījaka* (all-germination or all-seed) mentioned earlier. Here *āśraya* and *ālaya* have quite similar meaning: On the one hand it is the receptacle where all *vāsanā* (impressions/dispositions) of the past influences are stored up, and on the other, it is the source of all future determinations, or in other words, the seed of all future activities. Thus, *ālaya* is *āśraya*. Here, the corporeal body, which is perishable and unconscious, has nothing to do with *ālaya* as it is not fitted to create the basis for mental process. *Ālaya* or *āśraya* must be a *vijñāna* (consciousness). Therefore, the text refers to *āśraya* as *ālayavijñāna*.

Ālayavijñāna is the support (*āśraya*) of entire phenomenal world where the subject-object duality appears. *Āśraya* is the ultimate basis of all existences, both the inner and outer world, and it is at the deepest level of every consciousness. When this basis is obliterated, *vijñāna* becomes *amala vijñāna* (pure consciousness), and the ordinary life is transformed into *dharmadhātu*, the pure realm of dharma. This is called *āś rayaparāvṛtti* or fundamental transformation, which is a model of full enlightenment in classical Yogācāra texts. *Āśrayaparāvṛtti* is the disappearance of the unreal object, where there is no subject-object duality, and the realization of *Tathatā* which is nothing but liberation (*āśrayasya parāvṛttir mokṣo' sau kāmacārataḥ*). *Saṁsāra* is nothing but an imagination of empirical forms by forgetting the essential nature of consciousness, a subject-object-less-ness of its nature. When unreality of object is realized, the subject dimension also disappears; and consciousness remains in consciousness itself (*cittasya citte sthānāt*). Consequently, when the imaginary phenomena are ceased, and realizing that all this is only imagination, one attains *bodhi* or enlightenment (*paśyatām kalpanāmātram sarvam etad yathoditam akalpabodhisattvānām prāptā bodhir nirūpyate*). The *Mahāyānasūtralamkāra* and its commentary describe Buddhahood as *āś rayaparāvṛtti* [15].

Ālayavijñāna is one of the central doctrines of Yogācāra school of Buddhism. The doctrine is a theory which accounts for the formation of mental images without dependence on external objects. The *ālayavijñāna* is a defiled form of consciousness, and its personal, individual, ever-changing but at the same time it gives a personal identity, which will explain the karmic residues and birth [1]. In the Yogācāra view, *ālayavijñāna* is closely associated with conditions that shape our phenomenal world, and, as such, it is considered both as the root of all defilements (*samkleś amūla*) and the constituent of all karmic formations. Hence, *ālayavijñāna* which is the *āśrya* (support) of all karmic formations need to be abandoned by a gradual transformation of this support base, and this transformation is called *āś rayaparāvṛtti*. According to Paramārtha, the sixth century Indian translator in China, when *ālayavijñāna* gets eliminated in *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, what remains is an undefiled (pure) consciousness (*amalavijñāna*).

Ālayavijñāna and Tathāgatagarbha

In the works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, *ālavijñāna* is not conceived as a universal underlying entity (essence), but it is a stratum present in the individuals depending on their spiritual aptness. It is not a universal permanent consciousness, but a storehouse consciousness which is the receptacle of the karmic residuals. This storehouse can have a complete cessation of the repositories. This conception of *ālayvijñāna* is in contrast with the conception of *ālayavijñāna* in the *Lankāvatārasūtra*, where the *ālayavijñāna* has a lasting essence like that of *Tathāgatagarbha* (see ▶ Tathāgatagarbha) (*Tathāgatagarbha* is an important Mahāyāna principle or doctrine which explains that all living beings possess the essence (*garbha*) of Buddha. *Tathāgata-garbha* is translated as "Buddha-matrix," "essence of Buddha," and "Buddha-nature"). In the *Lankāvatārasūtra*, it is pure consciousness by its very nature and the abode of *Tathāgatagarbha*. The *Lankāvatārasūtra*

makes an explicit joining together of *ālayavijñāna* and *Tathāgatagarbha*. In the *Lankāvatārasūtra, Tathāgatagarbha* gets a more exact determination as the grounding principle of human consciousness through the *ālayavijñāna*. As stated above, according to the *Lankāvatārasūtra*, there are eightfold consciousness and *ālayavijñāna* is the eighth. In the recurrent image of the *Lankāvatārasūtra*, the first sevenfold modifications of *vijñāna* would get dissolved like the waves of the ocean, and what would remain only an absolute consciousness (like the peaceful ocean) which is *ālayavijñāna* [16]. This affirmation of the *ālayavijñāna* as the conscious modality of *Tathatā* (such-ness, that-ness, or thus-ness implying the real nature of things as it is), and thereby equating the *Tathāgatagarbha* with *ālavijñāna* in *Lankāvatārasūtra*, is in conformity neither with the teaching of Vasubandhu nor with *Ratnagotravbhāgo Mahāyānottratantra Śāstra* (which is the foremost treatise on *Tathāgatagarbha*) [17].

Ālayavijñāna and Ātman

The Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna* was relentlessly attacked by other Buddhist schools denouncing it, as they presumed it was something akin to the notion of *ātman*. The two preferred metaphors used in Yogācāra literature for *ālayavijñāna* to explicate its real nature are like waves in the stream (*jalānām taraṅgavat*) and seedbed or all-seeds (*sarva-bījaka*). Like a stream supports the waves, *ālavijñāna* supports the arising of all other *vijñānas*. It is also like the seedbed or storehouse of seeds. It is here that the seeds of past karmic dispositions (*vāsanās*) get germinated and matured, and from where future experiences occur. The seeds are not permanent, but they are momentary and a series within the *ālaya* until their fructification. Thus, *ālavijñāna* is neither an agent nor an "*ātman* in disguise." It is not a singular entity, but only receptacle of future determinations [18]. The *manovijñāna* and *pravṛttivijñānas* appear on the basis of, as well as due to, *ālayavijñāna*. The other terms, in order to avoid the misunderstanding of the *ālaya* as *ātman*-like substance, used for *ālayavijñāna* in the Yogācāra literature were *vijñāna-santāna* and *citta-santāna*.

Ālaya and Prakṛti

Some modern scholars of Buddhism have drawn some sort of similarity and dissimilarity between the concepts of *ālayavijñāna* and *Prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya system [19]. According to both these systems, there is an evolution taking place: for the Yogācāra it is from *ālaya* and for Sāṅkhya it is from/of *Prakṛti*. Both these systems term their source as *sarvabījaka*. The differences between them are: *ālaya* is conscious whereas *Prakṛti* is not conscious (matter); *ālaya* is conditioned and not ultimate, whereas *Prakṛti* is unconditioned and eternal. *Ālayavijñāna* is conditioned and it is incessantly refilled by recent *vāsanās*. When the *vāsanās* cease, *ālayavijñāna* will become pure consciousness (*amala vijñāna*). In his *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*, Vasubandhu speaks first about *vipāka*, then identifies this *vipāka* with *ālaya*. He does not give any metaphysical status to *ālaya*. He gives the impression that *ālaya* is an ongoing process of consciousness, which is the result of many factors which are bedded in the *ālaya* in the form of *vāsanās*. It is only a receptacle of all latencies. Thus, Vasubandhu does not even suggest any likelihood to consider the notion of *ālaya* as a primordial source like *Prakṛt* [20].

Cross-References

- ▶ Asaṅga
- ▶ Dharmakīrti (c. A.D. 600–660)
- ▶ Dignāga
- ▶ Tathāgatagarbha
- ▶ Vijñāna
- ▶ Vijñānavāda
- ▶ Yogācāra

References

1. Williams P (2009) Mahāyāna Buddhism: the doctrinal foundations, 2nd edn. Routledge, London/New York, pp 97, 98
2. Prebish CS, Keown D (2006) Introducing Buddhism. Routledge, New York/London, p 109

3. Sutton FG (1992) Existence and enlightenment in the Lankāvatāra-sūtra: a study in the ontology and epistemology of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Sri Satguru, Delhi, pp 252–254
4. Makransky JJ (1998) Buddhahood embodied: sources of controversy in India and Tibet. Sri Satguru, Delhi, p 205
5. Pande GC (1993) Studies in Mahāyāna. Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi, pp 126, 127
6. Waldron WS (2003) The Buddhist unconscious: The Ālayavijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist thought. RoutledgeCurzon, London/New York, p 92
7. Kalupahana DJ (1992) The principles of Buddhist psychology. Sri Satuguru, Delhi, p 139
8. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 87–107
9. Schmithausen L (2007) Ālayaviñāna: on the origin and the early development of a central concept of Yogācāra philosophy: reprint with Addenda and Corrigenda. International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, Tokyo
10. Sthiramati (ed) (1925) Triṁśikāvijñaptibhāṣya (1925 ed). In: Levi S (ed) Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: Deux Traités de Vasubandhu. Librarie Ancienne Honoré Champion, Paris
11. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 88, 89
12. Lusthaus D (2002) Buddhist phenomenology: a philosophical investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun. RoutledgeCurzon, London, pp 436–437
13. Kalupahana DJ (1976) Buddhist philosophy: a historical analysis. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, p 143
14. Kalupahana DJ (1992) The principles of Buddhist psychology. Sri Satuguru, Delhi, p 137
15. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 160, 165
16. Brown BE (2010) The Buddha nature: a study of the Tathāgatagarbha and Ālayavijñāna. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, p 190
17. Sebastian CD (2005) Metaphysics and mysticism in Mahāyāna Buddhism: an analytical study of Mahāyānottaratantra Śātram. Sri Satguru, Delhi
18. Waldron WS (2003) The Buddhist unconscious: the Ālayavijñāna in the context of Indian Buddhist thought. RoutledgeCurzon, London/New York
19. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 91–96
20. Vasubandhu, Katsumi M et al (1989) Three works of Vasubandhu in Sanskrit manuscript: the Trisvabhāvanirdeśa, the Vimśatikā with is Vṛtti, and the Trimśikā with Sthiramtis' commentary. Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo

Alchi

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Alchi Gompa; Alchi Monastery

Definition

It is a Buddhist monastic complex of temples in Alchi village in Leh district of Ladakh.

Alchi, a Buddhist monastic complex (*chos-'khor*), is located on the left bank of the Indus River at an altitude of 3,100 m and at a distance of 65 km to the west of Leh in Ladakh. The monastery (*gompa*) has three major shrines and two chörtens: the Dukhang (Main Temple), the Sumtsek (Three-Storey Temple), the Jampel Lhakhang (Temple of Mañjuśrī), the Great Chörten, and the Small Chörten – all belonging to the period from the middle of the twelfth century to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Other than these, the Alchi complex also has two other important temples, viz., the Lotsabha Lhakhang (the Translator's Temple) and the Lhakhang Soma (New Temple). These two temples are later additions. In addition, the towerlike structures flanking the Dukhang belong to an early phase of the *gompa*. The Alchi complex houses some of the most fascinating images and paintings of Buddhist art in the Himalayas which are considered as of "unique style and workmanship." The entire *gompa* is in a rather dilapidated condition except for the pillars and the wood carvings on the doors.

According to a local tradition, the monastic complex of Alchi was built by the great scholar-translator Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055 C.E.). Zangpo is said to have engaged Kashmiri artists

Alchi, Fig. 1 About 1,000 miniatures of Mañjuśrī

to create wall paintings and sculptures in the legendary 108 monasteries; only a few of these have survived, with the Alchi Monastery complex in Ladakh having pride of place among all monasteries that he built. However, inscriptions in the preserved monuments ascribe it to Kaldan Sherab, a Tibetan nobleman who lived in the eleventh century. Despite many inscriptions and texts displayed on the walls, it has not been possible to document the precise history of the monuments in the Alchi complex. In the absence of historical background, the only thing that can be said with some amount of certainty is that Alchi was part of a small kingdom ruled by members of the Dro-clan, a clan of Central Tibetan origin. This kingdom defined itself as part of Tibet in general and West Tibet in particular. The founders of the Dukhang and the Sumtsek, which are built in Kashmiri style, were monks of the Dro-clan who received their monastic instructions at Nyarma, a site near the Thikse Gompa which is in complete ruins now.

The Dukhang is the largest structure and is at the heart of the monastic complex. Though many additions were made to the ancient structure during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the original wooden door frame is retained. The hall can be approached through the colonnaded veranda from a front courtyard. Frescoes of one thousand buddhas are portrayed in the walkway. The Wheel of Life and Mahākala are depicted at the outer gate. The walls of the Dukhang are painted with six different *maṇḍalas* that surround the four-headed Vairocana, the main deity worshipped in the hall. Vairocana is flanked by four goddesses and a number of offering deities in clay.

The Jampel Lhakhang was a free-standing structure until the Lotsabha Lhakhang was attached to its left-hand side wall. The original shape of the temple is quite unusual in the sense

Alchi, Fig. 2 Standing Maitreya

Alchi, Fig. 3 Avalokiteśvara

that it was essentially built around the four central images of Mañjuśrī seated on a common platform. These four images of Mañjuśrī are seated back to back in an intricate common frame surrounded by animals, gods, and symbols and also topped by the embellished scrolls springing from the tails of the *makaras*. Each of the four images is single headed with four arms that are adorned with a sword, a book on top of a lotus, a bow, and an arrow (see Fig. 1 depicting about 1,000 miniatures of Mañjuśrī).

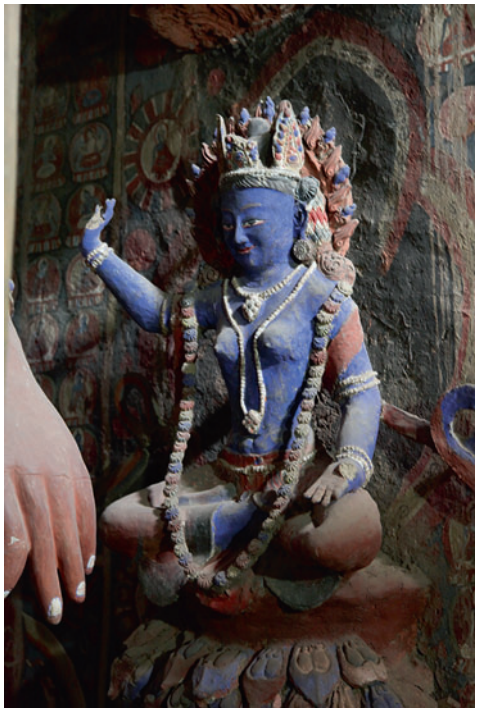
The Sumtsek, a three-storeyed building, though small, was built with loam and natural stone (reflected in the bland exterior) in the Tibetan building tradition. However, the luxuriant woodwork columns, façades, walls, clay images, and paintings in the interior of the *gompa* were made by Kashmiri artists. The Sumtsek can be dated to ca. 1200–1220 C.E. on the basis of a lineage of identified teachers on the entrance

Alchi, Fig. 4 Four-Armed Mañjuśrī

Alchi, Fig. 5 Hundreds of miniatures consisting of palaces and temples depicted on the *dhoti* of Avalokiteśvara

wall of the third floor. It is dedicated to a triad of standing bodhisattvas (Maitreya (Fig. 2) flanked by the images of Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 3) to its right and Mañjuśrī (Fig. 4) to its left) and associated deities (four in each niche) with flying goddesses (two in each niche). These three bodhisattvas represent the Buddhist concepts of compassion, hope, and wisdom. Except for the main wooden door on the top floor, which is more or less derelict, the rest of the Sumtsek is well preserved in its original form. A remarkable feature of the sophisticated drapery (*dhotis*) worn by the deities is the exhibition of various themes printed in different textile patterns. Maitreya's dhoti portrays the biography of the Buddha, Avalokiteśvara's *dhoti* (Fig. 5) displays sacred places as well as royal palaces, and Manjuśrī's *dhoti* has 84 mahāsiddhas printed on it. Each of the deities is associated with a different Buddha. For instance, Maitreya has a five-buddha crown

Alchi, Fig. 6 Red Amitābha in Samādhi Mudrā



Alchi, Fig. 7 Blue Akṣobhya

Alchi, Fig. 8 Prajñāpāramitā

Alchi, Fig. 9 Tārā

representing Vairocana. Avalokiteśvara's crown represents Amitābha (see Fig. 6: Red Amitābha in Samādhi Mudrā), and Manjuśrī's crown represents Akṣobhya (Fig. 7).

Prajñāpāramitā (Fig. 8) and Tārā (Fig. 9) are two other important deities depicted prominently at Alchi. The Great Chörten and the Small Chörten, dateable to the early thirteenth century, are the earliest recorded chörtens. When worship at Alchi *Gompa* stopped for some reason in the fifteenth century, it came under the Gelug-pa sect controlled from Likir – an arrangement that continues in the present times.

Cross-References

- ▶ Avalokiteśvara
- ▶ Bodhisattva
- ▶ Buddha (Concept)
- ▶ Mañjuśrī

References

1. Cunningham A (1854) LADĀK: physical, statistical, and historical with notices of the surrounding countries. W.H. Allen, London
2. Franke AH (1914–1926) Antiquities of Indian Tibet, 2 vols. Archaeological Survey of India, Calcutta, Monograph series, vols 38 and 50
3. Franke AH (1977) Critical introduction and annotations. In: Gergan SS, Hassnain FM (eds) A history of Ladakh. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi
4. Goepper R (1990) Clues for a dating of the three-storeyed temple (Sumtsek) in Alchi, Ladakh. Asiat Stud Z Schweiz Ges Asienkund/Études Asiat Rev Soc Suisse d'Études Asiat 44(2):159–175
5. Goepper R, Poncar J (1996) Alchi: Ladakh's hidden Buddhist sanctuary: the Sumtsek. Serindia, London
6. Goepper R (1999) Akshobhya and his paradise: murals in the Dukhang of Alchi. Orientations 30(1):16–21
7. Rizvi J (1983) Ladakh: crossroads of high Asia. Oxford University Press, Delhi
8. Kapadia H (1999) Spiti: adventures in the trans-Himalaya, 2nd edn. Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi
9. Linrothe R (2001) Group portrait: Mahāsiddhas in the Alchi Sumtsek. Embodying wisdom. In: Linrothe R, Sørensen HH (eds) Art, text and interpretation in the history of esoteric Buddhism, vol 6, SBS monographs. The Seminar for Buddhist Studies, Copenhagen, pp 185–208
10. Luczanits C (1999) The life of the Buddha in the Sumtsek. Orientations 30(1):30–39
11. Luczanits C (2004) Buddhist sculpture in clay: early western Himalayan art, late 10th to early 13th centuries. Serinda Publications, Chicago
12. Pal P, Fournier L (1982) A Buddhist paradise: the murals of Alchi: western Himalayas. Visual Dharma Publishers, Hong Kong
13. Snellgrove DL, Skorupski T (1977) The cultural heritage of Ladakh, Central Ladakh. Aris & Phillips, Warminster
14. Snellgrove DL, Skorupski T (1980) The cultural heritage of Ladakh, Zangskar and the cave temples of Ladakh. Aris & Phillips, Warminster
15. Tsering N (2009) Alchi: the living heritage of Ladakh. Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh-Ladakh
16. Tucci G (1988). Rin-chen-bzan-po and the renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet around the Millennium. English translation by Nancy Kipp Smith and edited by Lokesh Chandra. Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi

Alchi Gompa

- ▶ Alchi

Alchi Monastery

► Alchi

Alcoholic Drinks and Drinking (Buddhism)

Rolf Scheuermann
Cultural Transfers and Cross-Contacts in the Himalayan Borderlands, Institute for South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Synonyms

Liquor, spirits, intoxicant; *Surāmerayamadya* (Sanskrit); *Surāmerayamajja* (Pāli)

Definition

Drinks containing intoxicating liquids produced by fermentation or distillation and the consumption of such drinks.

Historical Background

Despite the great diversity of Buddhist traditions across various countries, Buddhism in general has restricted the consumption of alcohol since early times. The production and consumption of alcoholic drinks were already known in India before the time of the Buddha, with archeological evidence showing that alcohol was being consumed during the pre-Vedic Indus civilization (ca. 2300 B.C.E.) ([1], p. 9). Medical texts of the post-Vedic period address issues of moderate and excessive drinking which indicate that it was a widespread social phenomenon during that time ([1], p. 10). In the second half of the first millennium B.C.E., Buddhism and Jainism developed, both advocating strict alcohol abstinence.

Different Types of Alcoholic Drinks

Buddhist canonical sources often use the compound *surāmerayamajja* for alcoholic drinks ([2], p. 324, 15) It consists of three proper nouns and refers to a variety of drinks encompassing the whole range of alcoholic drinks from beer-like beverages produced by fermentation like *surā*, wine-like drinks or spirits like *majja*, and distilled drinks produced from sugar or fruit like *meraya*. Although the famous *soma* drink of the Ṛgveda, probably referred to in Buddhist texts as *amṛta*, is sometimes identified as a sort of alcoholic drink, it is possible that it referred to a psychoactive drug produced from a mushroom, like *Amanita muscaria* [3].

Origin Myth for Alcohol

A Buddhist narrative that presents an origin myth for alcohol is found in the Kumbha-Jātaka. In response to a request by his female devotee Visākhā, the Buddha in this Jātaka, or life story of his former rebirth, tells the story of the hunter Sura, who discovered the intoxicating effect of a naturally fermented alcoholic drink made of fruit, rice, and water after it had been consumed by animals. Together with his friend Varuṇa, he popularized the consumption of the drink. When the god Sakka, said to be a former reincarnation of Buddha Śākyamuni, became aware that king Sabbamitta of Sāvatthi, who is said to be a former reincarnation of Ānanda, started to indulge in drinking, he persuaded him to desist in order to prevent further harm to the country [4].

General Doctrinal Stance

In light of the Four Truths of the Noble Ones, addiction can be regarded as a "false refuge" from the suffering of *saṃsāra* because it only offers temporary relief from suffering. Another fundamental Buddhist teaching, the Eightfold Path ([5], p. 153) of the Noble Ones, advises that "right livelihood" includes refraining from five types of livelihoods, one being engaged in the

business of selling intoxicants. The general Buddhist rejection of alcohol consumption is further reflected in the way the issue is addressed in the various codes of ethics. Along with the vows of killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct, the vow to abstain from alcohol is part of the eightfold set of the 1-day fasting vows ([6], pp. 99–100), the basic fivefold set of vows for the fully ordained layperson ([6], pp. 100–101), the ten vows of the novice ([6], p. 103), as well as the vows for the fully ordained monks and nuns ([6], pp. 122–123). Still, unlike with the four basic vows of killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct, transgressing this vow does not imply an irreversible loss of the whole set of vows, but is nevertheless considered a downfall that requires confession ([6], pp. 123–124) to another vow holder. ([6], p. 143) The breach of vow occurs if any type of alcohol, ranging from light beer-like drinks or wine to strong spirits, is drunk, even if the quantity is not substantial. In general, the necessary quantity which needs to be drunk in order to be considered a transgression is described as anything beyond the amount of fluid that is present on the tip of a blade of grass ([7], pp. 385–386). Still, there exists also a minority view that considers transgression conditional upon whether consumption induces heedlessness, a perception that would allow for the intake of measured quantities of alcohol ([8], p. 188).

A non-offense of the vows is mentioned in the Vinaya in the case of drinks that look, smell, or taste like alcohol, but do not contain any, such as alcohol-free beer or certain juices. Meals containing alcohol can equally be considered permissible if the contained alcohol was cooked or fried until it evaporated. Nevertheless, when alcoholic drinks are consumed, even if one is not aware about whether the drink contained alcohol or was in doubt about it, it is still considered a transgression of vows. Consuming pharmaceutical products containing alcohol for strictly medicinal use, both external and internal, is allowed ([7], pp. 385–386).

The main reasons for shunning alcohol that are given in Buddhist literature are that it clouds the mind and causes heedlessness. Even though other drugs are not explicitly mentioned in the Vinaya, many Buddhist traditions in the course of time extended the vow also to other intoxicants that obscure the mind and cause heedlessness. Tea and coffee are accepted for their stimulating effect on the mind, which was one of the reasons why tea production and trade rapidly superseded alcohol during late medieval China ([9], p. 213). Alcohol's intoxicating property of clouding the mind is generally considered detrimental to a Buddhist practitioner's endeavors in achieving states of mental clarity and insight, and heedlessness caused by alcohol is considered to be a cause for committing negative deeds ([10], p. 43) or for breaking any of the other vows ([5], p. 154). The Sigālaka Sutta mentions heedlessness caused by intoxication from alcohol as the first among six ways of wasting wealth and goes on to list six dangers of drinking alcohol which include loss of this life's wealth, an increase of disputes, causing disease, producing disrepute, being uninhibited, and weakening intelligence. ([11], p. 462) Alcohol addiction can also be seen as severe attachment that needs to be overcome. ([8], p. 186) The intake of alcohol is considered to lead to a negative rebirth in that one is reborn either in one of the three lower realms or as a human being in a state of madness ([12], p. 169).

Tantrism

While the majority of Buddhist traditions, including those belonging to the Mahāyāna, generally advise against consuming intoxicants, alcohol can be an essential component of tantric rituals. However, Buddhist tantras do not necessarily advocate the consumption of alcohol in general and Buddhist tantric rituals utilize impure substances in order to induce particular meditative experiences. ([6], p. 247) In a *gaṇacakra*-gathering for example, alcohol may be included as one of the five essential elements. ([1], p. 10) Still, often only small quantities of ritually purified alcohol are drunk. Its usage may also fulfill the purpose of demonstrating the ability to neutralize the intoxicating effect by means of meditative powers ([13], p. 123).

Social Role

Despite the clear doctrinal stance on alcohol, Buddhist lay devotees do not necessarily take the full set of lay vows, and local drinks like Tibetan-style beer (*chang*) or sake in Japan often play an important role in celebrations, funerals, and ceremonies. However, research on adolescent alcohol use in Thailand, a Buddhist country with a high alcohol consumption rate, suggests that the percentage of drinkers was significantly lower among practicing Buddhists than among nonpracticing Buddhists ([14], pp. 1793–1794).

Cross-References

- ▶ Bhikkhunī
- ▶ Buddhist Ethics
- ▶ Pātimokkha
- ▶ Tantra
- ▶ The Medicine Buddha
- ▶ Vinaya

References

1. Sharma HK, Tripathi BM, Pertti JP (2010) The evolution of alcohol use in India. Aids Behav 14(suppl 1):8–17
2. Kāśyapa BJ (ed) (1960) Suttapiṭake Aṅguttaranikāyapāli (Chakka-Sattaka-Aṭṭhakanipātā). Nālandā-Devanāgarī-Pāli-ganthamālā. Pāli Publication Board, Bihar Government, Nālandā
3. Crowley M (1996) When the Gods Drank Urine. A Tibetan myth may help solve the riddle of soma, sacred drug of ancient India. Fortean studies, vol III. London: John Brown Publ
4. Cowell EB (1969) No. 512. Kumbha-Jātaka. In: The Jātaka or stories of the Buddha's former births. Transl. from the Pali by various hands, (Repr.). Publ. for the Pali Text Society by Luzac, London, pp 5–11
5. Woodward FL, Hare EM (1973) The book of the gradual sayings, vol III, (The Books of the Fives and Sixes). (Anguttara-Nikāya), or, More-Numbered Suttas. Pali Text Society, London/Boston
6. Jamgön KLT (2003) The treasury of knowledge. Buddhist Ethics. Snow Lion, Ithaca
7. Horner IB (1969) The Book of the discipline. (Vinaya-Piṭaka). Sacred books of the Buddhists, vol 13. Luzac, London
8. Groves P, Farmer R (1994) Buddhism and addictions. Addiction research N.Y.: Harwood Academic Publ. vol 2, No. 2, pp 183–194
9. Benn JA (2005) Buddhism, alcohol, and tea in medieval China. In: Sterckx R (ed) Of tripod and palate. Food, politics, and religion in traditional China. Palgrave Macmillan, Gordonsville, pp 213–236
10. Norman KR (1992) The group of discourses. (Sutta-Nipāta). Pali Text Society Translation series, vol 45. Pali Text Society, Oxford
11. Walshe M (1987) Thus have i heard. The long discourses of the Buddha. Dīgha Nikāya. Wisdom Publication, London
12. Woodward FL, Hare EM (1978) The Book of the Gradual Sayings, vol IV, (The Books of the Sevens, Eights and Nines). (Anguttara-Nikāya), or, More-Numbered Suttas. Pali Text Society, London/Henley/Boston
13. Ardussi JA (1977) Brewing and drinking the beer of enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism. The Dohā tradition in Tibet. J Am Orient Soc 97(2):115–124
14. Newmann IM, Duane SF, Li T, Innadda S (2006) Buddhism and adolescent alcohol use in Thailand. Subst Use Misuse 41:1789–1800

All-Embracing

- ▶ Universal

All-Inclusive

- ▶ Universal

Altruistic Joy

- ▶ Muditā

Amaravati

Anamika Roy
Department of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, India

Synonyms

Buddhist art; Dhanyakataka; Palace of Indra

Definition

Amaravati: Peak of Buddhist art

Introduction

Unseen Passage to Amaravati

The art of Amaravati has many facets: some known and some possibly yet unravelled. The relics of the *stupa* (Fig. 1) here have also yielded inscriptions which often help not only to appreciate the contexts of such works but also to trace out the generally unperceived turns the art chose to traverse as it evolved. The inscriptions eminently afford insights into different aspects of Amaravati art, especially the questions regarding its sectarian development, as raised by Sarkar [15] and Stone [22], or the power of patronage, or the role of artisans, as raised by Dehejia [3] and Miller [9]. Amaravati inscriptions, besides the masons' marks encrypted in abundance, significantly portray the relations between the monument, masses, Buddhist sects, and monarchy which together made the monument possible.

One may begin by asking whether one should continue to appreciate an art object only stylistically and aesthetically or one should try to see even beyond. Is art history complete in itself? Can one reconstruct the history of the monument by dissecting it layer by layer? These questions have been debated for long, often leading to complex answers. In doing this one proposes to complement art history with literary evidence with a view to make it more articulate. It will be conceded that an image of the Buddha will remain an object of joy and reverence even without an art historian defining its style, gestures, mood, provenance, and time. But this joy, if reinforced with those input from an art critic, may allow to see even beyond the object and bringing out its "unknown" facets in comprehension. In trying to impart meaning to the artifacts, art critics help in making a study not only significant but also exciting. A question has often been raised as to why Amaravati is important. And if it is indeed so important, then why the art historians have not paid due attention to Amaravati?

The sculptures of Amaravati (Figs. 2, 3, and 4) have always fascinated art historians for their style and bearing on South Asian art. The architectural components (Fig. 5) of the Amaravati *stupa* similarly are no less attractive, even as they are superbly distinctive in some of their features (Figs. 6 and 7).

Amaravati and its art and architecture have both a consistency and diversity marked by modifications in artistic nuances which Sarkar [15] and Stone (1988) have been particular to underscore. This entry attempts to further reinterpret some of such motifs (Figs. 2, 8, 9, 10, and 11) hitherto left unobserved, keeping the perspectives about modifications in view. Before analyzing the art of Amaravati, it should be noted that its idiom was appropriately different from that of the Satavahanas and that it developed into a school. Its novelty lies in its sculptures and reliefs as well as in the elements of its *stupa* architecture. Some

Amaravati, Fig. 1 Mound of the Stupa

Amaravati, Fig. 2 Triratna and running animals

Amaravati, Fig. 3 Stupa and the standing Buddha

Amaravati, Fig. 4

compositional elements in respect of its *stupa* architecture, particularly the motifs of *yashti*, "post," and *chatra*, "umbrella" (Fig. 12), seem baffling, and they have raised controversies on which a fitting answer is still missing. These elements are absent in other Buddhist monuments in the subcontinent, and scholars are not unanimous regarding the significance of such omissions and their implications. There is a need to examine these compositional features of *stupa* architecture in some details.

The portrayal of the Amaravati *stupa* (Figs. 5, 13, and 14) in some of its reliefs appears strikingly unique in regard to the crowded arrangement of a series of miniature *chatra*s at its summit (Fig. 12). Such a series of *chatra*s is not encountered either in the art of Kanheri or in that of Nagarjunakonda where the *stupa* is represented with only a single umbrella at the top. This unique feature embellishing the *stupa* summit in the Amaravati reliefs needs some explanation since analogues are not known. Evidence from Sri Lanka does not explain the presence of such *chatra*s in the Amaravati reliefs for there is hardly any collateral evidence there of the umbrella shaft. But one cannot dismiss the presence of such form at Amaravati lightly where its use as an element in the *stupa* architecture, even if in the form of a relief, is conspicuous in its presence. Archaeological and literary evidence seems to support this motif as a part of the accepted architectural convention. It is not unlikely that the practice of installing *chatra*s in question came down to Amaravati from Western India where there had been a long tradition of erecting wooden post. Significantly, an Amravati stone inscription refers to the "gift of an umbrella shaft" (*chata dado*) (for the stupa), indicating its acceptance as a current practice. This brief label inscription may afford epigraphical testimony to an art practice. It may, therefore, hypothetically suggest a similar arrangement for Sri Lankan *stupa*s too even as the evidence helps in explaining the multiple parasols on the *stupa* in the Amaravati relief.

Amaravati, Fig. 5 Stupa at mature stage

Amaravati, Fig. 7 Jataka scene

Amaravati, Fig. 6 Running animals

Amaravati, Fig. 8 Triratna

The representation of the *yupa yashti* (Fig. 5), besides *chatra*, at Amaravati *stupa* also needs being reconsidered here. These features distinguish the Amaravati *stupa* from those of Northern and Central India. The Sinhalese chronicles are silent regarding the term *yashti.* Though the practice of erecting columns in front of *stupa*s is known from the time of the Mauryas ([1], p. 133), the use of *yashti* or *yupa yashti* on the summit of a *stupa* has not been appropriately recorded. Epigraphical or archaeological evidence from the extant examples is missing regarding the existence of *yupa yashti* as a part of *stupa* architecture. But the combined testimony of Indian and Sri Lankan sources goes to show that this was

Amaravati, Fig. 9 Stupa with vedica and chatra

Amaravati, Fig. 10 Buddhapada

Amaravati, Fig. 11 Chatra

Amaravati, Fig. 12 Stupa and Chatravali

undoubtedly a component in *stupa* architecture, meant to be fixed in the *asthi kalasa* "relic casket," of the *harmika. Yupa yashti* was a kind of shaft in the *stupa* architecture whose placement as well as implication is quite perplexing. In the *stupa* replicas of the later period, this shaft, *yupa yashti*, in other words, is found depicted in addition to the post carrying the umbrella. The *Divyavadana* (LXV, p. 244) supports this architectural element in stating that a *yupa yashti* was sunk into the interior of the *anda* of the *stupa*.

Buddhist texts, other than *Divyavadana*, are silent about the usage of *yupa yashti* in the *stupa* architecture. This feature is found missing in the

Amaravati, Fig. 13 Stupa at mature phase

Amaravati, Fig. 14 Sketch of the Stupa

Sri Lankan *stupa*s too despite the fact that loose pillars have been reported there from the vicinity of the *stupa*s. According to Paranavitana ([11], pp. 35–36), they cannot be regarded as shafts, and they appear exactly like the pillars called *ayaka khambha*. The description of the building of a *stupa* in the *Divyavadana* (quoted above), however, comes to the aid in determining the position of these pillars and their purpose. The text says that a shaft called *yupa* was set up in the interior of the dome (Figs. 15 and 16): *tathavidham ca bhupasyandam krtam yatra sa yupa-yashtirbhyantare pralipadta*. Gail ([4], p. 261) however believes that the Buddhist scriptures do not mention the *yupa*, but they do mention *Indrakila*.

One may assume that umbrella shaft would not have been in the center; instead, it was probably planted at the side of the *yupa* top as at Amaravati. It is not possible to draw a parallel with the extant remains of the *stupa*s in Sri Lanka for their superstructures have been denuded, plundered, and destroyed. In the later *stupa*s at Sri Lanka (Polonaruva phase), this element was changed substantially as the *stupa*s came to have a conical tower instead of an umbrella. The Amaravati relief, on the other hand, tends to show the earlier practice. Unlike the Brahmanical texts where *yupa* is associated with sacrifice, the Buddhist texts give a much wider meaning to the term. The *Theragatha* (p. 106) mentions *yupa* as a palace: *panado nama so raja yassa yupo suvannay/tiryam solasapabbedho ubbnam ahu sahassadha.* The Buddhist texts were aware of the Brahmanical term *yupa*, and in the *Kutadanta Sutta*, the term is used for sacrifice. As regards the modern Sinhalese term *Indrakila*, it is used in the Buddhist texts for stability. It seems that the shaft was fastened such that it jutted out of the relic casket. It turns out to be an exclusive feature of Amaravati, which may have been adapted in Sri Lanka for a brief period of time.

Yet another unique feature of Amaravati *stupa*s is the construction in them of the *ayaka* pillars (Fig. 17). The great *stupa* of Amaravati had the characteristic *ayaka* platforms projecting from the drums at the cardinal points. Each platform originally bore five *ayaka* pillars (Figs. 12 and 17). Such pillars are conspicuously absent in the art of Central and Northern India. They are generally believed to be indicative of the four great events of the Buddha's life. Ray ([31], p. 127) believed that they served as lamp post. The idea of ayaka pillars is believed to have come from Sri Lanka, where the tall *dipa stambha*s, "lamp posts," were

Amaravati, Fig. 15 Stupa and sitting Buddha

Amaravati, Fig. 16 Worship of the bodhi tree

Amaravati, Fig. 17 Ayaka pillars

erected in front of the *stupa*s, as at Anuradhapura. But the suggestion about the pillars being the lamp posts is not warranted by other sources where such pillars are designated as *divakhabho* which are octagonal in shape. Barrett ([25], p. 35) was not sure regarding their functional utility. D. Mitra ([29], p. 26) describes them as "pillars, square below and octagonal above having affinity with the Brahmanical or sacrificial posts, e.g., the one found at Bijayagadha" (Cunningham, ASI Report VI, Calcutta, 8, 70, 59, ff. and plate VIII). These pillars were different from the *yupa* shaft which too were modelled as octagonal posts but had their place in *stupa* architecture independently.

For the similar architectural component in Sri Lanka, the modern Sinhalese term *Vahalakada* is popular. This term had not been in use in ancient tradition. Longhurst ([27], p. 15) has made a pointed reference to this particular component in describing the extant *stupa* of Anuradhapur. He says, "Facing the four cardinal points are four projections or offsets, which are a regular architectural feature of the larger *stupa*s at Anuradhapur, and are referred to as altars or frontispieces. These structures are called *vahalakada* in Sinhalese, but their purpose is yet to be explained." Silva ([19], p. 53) says that the earliest form of the *vahalakada*s was *adimukha*s, used in construction right from the first century B.C. But the term *adimukha* is mentioned only once in the *Mahavamsa* (XXXV.119) during the reign of King Gajabahu I. Silva ([19], p. 50) further says that the development of *adimukha*s into *ayaka*s took place between the reign of Gajabahu I (112–134 A.D.) and the reign of Kanittha Tissa (164–192 A.D.), and during these 50 years, the simple *adimukha*s were transformed into sophisticated *ayaka* pillars. Considering such formations, one may be tempted to suggest that *adimukha*s of Sri Lankan *stupa*s were the prototypes of the *ayaka* pillars. But this hypothesis has several drawbacks. In the first place, the term *adimukha* is not found in any of the early inscriptions. The only place where one finds a reference to it is in a verse of the *Mahavamsa* (XXXV, 19). The only affinity between *ayaka* and *adimukha* is that both were set at the entrance of the *stupa*.

As for the *ayaka*s of Amaravati (Fig. 17), none of these are found in situ; they are known primarily from the reliefs. Two drum slabs of the British Museum (B.M. nos. 81 and 112, respectively, of late first century and third century A.D.) show simple and plain *ayaka* pillars; the highly embellished *adimukha* and *vahalakada* of Sri Lanka are not seen in these reliefs. In the two *stupa* replicas from Nagarjunakonda, published by Longhurst ([28], pls. XIa and b), one is scantily decorated, while the other is sculptured and topped with the capitals. The *ayaka* pillars, not always embellished, may have been used when the *stupa* was further enlarged and augmented. The early pillars of Sri Lanka, which Paranavitana ([11], pls. IX and X) refers to as stelae of *vahalakada* and Silva ([19], p. 53) as *adimukha*, are totally different from the octagonal *ayaka* pillars of Amaravati in appearance. However, it will be hard to believe that Sri Lanka remodelled them later on the basis of their Indian counterforms. An inscription at the Kirivehera Katarargama, roughly dating back to the period of Gajabahu I, seems to offer some clues in this regard. It reads: "(Hail) The elder Nada, residing at Dakvahanak in the village Kadahavapi, enlarged the *cetiya* (and) laid the steps at four entrance, having made the chief monks at Akujuka acquiesce" (tr. by Paranavitana [30], p. 215). The inscription refers to architectural activity at the gateway, in particular to the enlargement of the *chaitya* (*stupa*), but surprisingly, the term *adimukha* is not mentioned in it. Thanks to this inscription, it is no longer in doubt that around the first century B.C., some kind of structure did exist at the entrance of the *stupa*s of Sri Lanka. However, it still does not enlighten whether the gateway of this *stupa* had any structural similarity with the *ayaka*s.

The *ayaka* pillars of Amaravati and Sri Lanka do correspond to each other in purpose in respect of their funereal association. The excavation at the southern *vahalkada*s at Ruvanvalisaya of Kanittha Tissa revealed gold reliquaries with remains of the queen. Similarly, an inscription on a *chaitya* pillar of Amaravati reads: "Success, gift of a *chaitya* pillar with a relic at the south-western gate (*ayaka*) by the merchant Kuta with

his wife, sons, daughters and grandsons." Then, both at Amaravati and Sri Lanka, the *ayaka* pillars were erected on a platform; in Sri Lanka, the platform served the purpose of depositing flowers. This gains support from a Sri Lankan testimony as Parker says (quoted in [11], p. 58) that *vahalakada*s were really protective backdrops for the flower altars in stone, placed on the pavement. According to Paranavitana ([11], p. 60), however, the *ayaka* platforms of the Amaravati *stupa* resembled the *vahalakada*s or *ayaka*s of Ceylon only in the sense that they projected upwards from the base of the monument. Otherwise, these two structures, though designated by almost identical names, had very little in common in the method of construction.

In India, *ayaka*s seem to have had certain other associations too. The practice of erecting a worship slab (*ayaka* or *ayagapatta*) on a platform was in vogue among Jainas much earlier. Shah ([18], p. 69) finds its origin in the folk tradition of *prithvi-shila-patta*, "earthen or stone plaque" under a tree on a platform. These *patta*s were considered sacred, and the flowers used to be deposited on the platforms on which they were placed. The term *ayaka* for the pillars in *stupa*s may have derived from this Jaina tradition. In this connection, Buhler's ([26], pp. 314–315) remarks are also noteworthy. He says that the term *ayaga* occurs in the *Ramayana* (1.32.12) and is explained by the commentators as "a deity to be worshipped," an object of homage, in other words. The affinity between Jaina *ayagapatta* and the Buddhist *ayaka* pillars rests mainly in their sacred implication.

Whether the Sinhalese *vahalakada*s – the latter day form of the ancient *ayaka*s – transformed from *adimukha* to the *ayaka khambha* is not certain. As regards the *ayaka* pillars of Amaravati *stupa*, they may have evolved from the folk or Jaina tradition, or they might even have had some Buddhist symbolism. It may be suggested that they could symbolically represent the five Dhyani Buddhas. Even after the images of the Buddha appeared at Amaravati, his symbolic representation was continued unabated in the art of Amaravati even down to the early second century A.D. The practice of symbolic representation accepted for the Buddha might have been extended to the representation of the five Dhyani Buddhas, and the latter came to be symbolically represented as *ayaka* pillars. Eventually, the icon of the Bodhisattvas Dipankar and Vajrapani along with the Buddha appeared in the art of Amaravati. But the five Dhyani Buddhas perhaps continued essentially in the form of *ayaka* pillars throughout the chronological span of the *Mahachaitya*.

Popular Patronage

Inscriptions indicate that in the beginning, the *stupa* at Amaravati came up as a result of the donations by the community (Anamika Roy [14]). The Amaravati inscriptions mention the reign of Yajna Satakarni but have no information about royal patronage of him. The entire *stupa* construction spread over a period of 6,000 years came up largely with the contribution of lay devotees, monks, nuns, and people from different professions like stone cutters, *gandhakara*, "perfumers," *malakara*, "florist," and leather workers. The only royal donation was by a princess Sammiliya in the second century B.C. It consisted of a plain coping stone. Dehejia ([3], p. 4), among other things, explains the involvement of royalty in patronage, including its western and Indian manifestations. However, in Indian tradition whether Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist, the construction of sacred monuments seems to have been in many cases a result of community support often with a view to acquire religious merit.

The great *caitya* at Amaravati was built during the reign of the Satavahanas, the first great dynasty of south. But, as it is said earlier, their direct involvement in its construction is not in evidence. Note that the Satavahanas were averse to support such works; in fact, at Karle, they are known to have donated a village for the maintenance of the Buddhist monks. It may be conceded their religious sympathies lay elsewhere, which might have been the reason for their indifference to Amaravati works. It may also be noted that the donors in the early Buddhist monuments often aspired to seek merit not for themselves alone but for all the living beings. Such notion must have encouraged the masses to donate.

Amaravati also witnessed the active role of the artisans who find mention in the inscription like they do at Sanchi in Central India. A Sanchi inscription refers to Ananda, an *avesanin*, "chief architect," of Satakarni, a Satavahana ruler. The term finds mention also in an Amaravati pillar inscription of the second century B.C. Inscriptions here mention Nagabuddhi whose name in shortened form appears on a number of stones. The artisans might have received royal patronage. For instance, Nagarjunakonda that marks the culmination of art activity at Amaravati *stupa* was patronized by the Ikshvaku queens and the rise of Nagarjunakonda. Besides, quite a few inscriptions are imprinted with the masons' marks.

Sectarian Development

The Mahacaitya complex at Amaravati went through periodic reconstructions. What could have been the motivating force behind such changes in a monument that witnessed art activity here for 500 years (from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D.)? There cannot be one reason for such changes. Aesthetic urge cannot explain the phenomenon. One may perhaps hazard a guess that interventions by different Buddhist schools or sects might have led to the repeated reconstructions of the great *stupa*. The epigraphical testimony points to the presence of the Cetikas ([20], no. 33) and the Mahavanaseliyas ([17], no. 85). The Mahavanaseliya and the Aparamahavanaseliya sects rose to prominence in the neighboring Western India and Nagarjunakonda. The highly embellished great railing was constructed in the second century A.D., and the supervisor of the great railing hailed from Cetika sect. During this period of great sculptural activity, plain copings were also built. The sectarian influence for which is not evident.

Andhra Pradesh has always been regarded as the original seat of Mantrayan, and the base of Tantricism was provided by the establishment of Mahayana. Tibetan evidence proved that the philosopher Nagarjuna was associated with the construction of the great railing ([7], pp. 136–140). Mahayana flourished in Dhanyakataka. The neighboring Dharanikota literally means where Dharanis were composed ([6], p. 11).

Artists, Nature, and Amaravati

Can there be a break from the traditional way of studying the art? There could be two approaches to study, if one can borrow Edward Said's words "Orientalist" and the other is "Anthropological" or western. Or there could be both approaches. They are two streams of a river to look at the nature as "divinity" or to look at nature as "nature" Coomarswamy ([2], p. 8) say that arts is being of divine origin, it has been brought down from heaven to earth.

Does the study in art become complete by classifying it and complementing it by literary sources or by dissecting the monument layers by layers.

One cannot recreate the circumstances, cannot penetrate into the mind of the artist, but can only try to read the language of tool, brush, paint, and stone. The nature is not depicted in suksma or subtle form but in sthool form. It is the exterior form of nature that is transformed in the subtle form (Fig. 18).

At Amaravati, nature is depicted differently. Here the artist did not take the support of the nature to narrate the scene; nature occurs as the part of the narrative scene. The very first depiction in stone is that of the "flora" and "fauna." There is an elephant under a palm tree. The elephant as

Amaravati, Fig. 18 Mythical animals

Amaravati,
Fig. 19 Subjugation of Nalagiri

Amaravati,
Fig. 20 Havoc created by elephant

high as palm tree may present a disproportion. One shall try to decode the sign which the artist had tried to convey centuries ago. After about 400 centuries, it was followed by the subjugation of Nalagiri (Fig. 19) and Chaddanta Jatak. Again there is an elephant (Figs. 20 and 21), but there is a difference in depiction. Now the artist knows how to imitate the nature. Imitation has not been taken in the ordinary sense; imitation is in fact divinity. It is the creation of the God that artist is reproducing. In the Aitareya Brahman VI,27: it is in the imitation (anukriti) of the angelic (deva) works of art (Silpani) that any work of art (silpa) is accomplished (adhigamyate) here; in the Rigveda, sometimes the artist is supposed to be visiting some heaven and there seeing the form of the angel or architecture to reproduce on earth ([2], p. 9).

The artist was aware of the force of the nature. The "sala" tree becomes the symbol of the

Amaravati, Fig. 21 Buddha as elephant

Amaravati, Fig. 22 Worship of symbols

nativity. The woman standing under a "Sala" tree has been taken as "Maya," Buddha's mother. It got elaboration in the art of Amaravati. It became popular in the art of Bharhut, Sanchi, and Nagarjunakonda so much so that any woman standing under the Sala tree was identified as "Maya." The sala trees are supposed to represent the tree spirit. In the Ashokavadana, Ashoka asks the tree spirits that they have seen the infant Buddha and they describe him to Ashoka:

> You saw his birth and saw his body adorned with the marks!
> You Gazed upon his large lotus like eyes!
> You heard in this wood the first delightfull
> Words of the leader of mankind|
> Tell Goddess, What it was like-the magnificent
> Moment of the blessed one's birth,

In the third chapter of the Mahavamsa, Kushinagar is described as a holy place between two Sala trees.

Another tree, which was profusely depicted, is bodhi tree (Fig. 22). Its significance is well known. At Amaravati, it is carved from the second century B.C. or even earlier at the stelea, which is described by Ghosh as the beginning of the sculptural activity. There are quite a few stories. Xuanzang describes Sakyamuni's futile attempt to attain enlightenment at nearby Pragbodhi hill (now called Dhongara hill). According to the legend that Xuanzang narrates, Sakyamuni was warned by a God that if he would try to attain meditation there, the earth would open up and the mountain will fall upon him. When he tried another site, another God told him the same thing. This is not a place for a Tathagat to perfect the wisdom. From here south most not far from the place of penance is a peepal tree under which is a diamond throne, a vajrasana. All the past Buddhas seated on this throne have obtained the enlightenment and so those yet to come will pray them.

Like Gautama each of the six prior Buddhas sat under a tree to achieve enlightenment, and the Buddhist texts assign the patali or begonia tree

to Vipassi, pundarika or white mango to Sikhi, Sal or Shorea to Vessabha, Shirisha or acarcia to Krakunada udumbara or fig to Kanakmuni, nyagrodh or banyan to Kashyap and Asvattha, or Pee pal to Sakyamuni.

There is an amalgamation of Sala tree and bodhi tree in the narration of the Mahavamsa. The Mahavamsa (XVII.16, 17) narrates that in the reign of King Dhammasoka with the offering of Kartika festival, the king honored the beautiful bodhi tree at the foot of the Sala tree. There is yet another narration (Mahavamsa, XVIII 64–65) that the king in the month of Kartika built a beautiful hall and placed the bodhi tree at the east side at the foot of Sala tree.

There are several questions that such an orthodox depiction of nature raises. This depiction is from the artist's point of view; his view may be different from pilgrim, worshipper, and donor. Secondly, was the artist aware of all these texts which the modern scholars quote to supplement these depictions? The artist may not be aware of the written texts, but the written texts compile the oral tradition, and the artist must have been aware of these traditions.

It invites one to see beyond the material object. The aesthetic instinct is attached to all the artistic expression. Why the artist took delight in expressing bodhi tree again and again? It was as the enlightenment icon the first depiction in nature.

When the tools and chisels working on the stone depict the nature, there is oneness of the outer and the inner worlds. At Amaravati, there is a balance in the depiction of nature and human beings. Nowhere the artist appears to be scared of the force of nature. In the depiction of Shuddhodhana's visit to Maya Devi in the mango grove, where she narrates her dream, the artist did not appear to be conventional enough to present the outer world predominantly. It is not that through convention only the depiction of nature could be made possible. This is the depiction of the second century A.D., even in the second century B.C. in the scene of miracle of Sravasti, where the mangoes blossom, his imagination did not yield before the power of nature.

There is not one way of presentation; there are two ways of looking at the problem, the religious and anthropological. Was the artist imitating the nature, or was he seeking an aesthetic delight in it? The artist did not see within himself. He did not seek his intuition; he rather looked at the nature for his model. The trees and flowers had occurred as the part of the story and not as the embellishment. In Chaddant Jatak, the stories of six-tusked elephant, the herd of elephants, the lotus-filled pond, and the banyan tree are well depicted. In the miracle of Savatthi, the mango grove is carved, which gets a prominent place even in the episode of dream of Maya, in the crossbar of the second century A.D. Shuddhodhana's visit to Maya in the Mango grove, where she narrates her dream, the mango grove is obvious. In the original Pali texts, where Buddha's life sketch is narrated, this incident does not occur. This incident is told at length in the Lalitvistara. Here he was not imitating the nature, rather trying to imply the significance of the text. The depiction is artist's diasporas or donor's is not clear. Similarly, Sala trees are depicted at Buddha's birth place; they are associated with Kushinagar in the Mahavamsa (third chapter).

His imagination may not be a servant of the mundane world; some times he seeks reality. It is evident in the stelea of the second century B.C., where river Krishna is carved, or the pillar of the second century A.D., where river "Niranjana" is carved. Hiuen Tsang's famous account became popular much after the stupas were erected. Presumably the depiction of nature provided a power and strength that was beyond human imagination. The artist must have felt that there are certain forces that control them and equally they needed some power to provide him protection.

At Amaravati, there is not a curiosity, as to whether man was nature worshipper or he was using nature as a tool to express his feelings. This is more evident where he depicts elephant under a palm tree. With nature and religion at work, the tree becomes the integral part of the lives of the common people.

If man is a nature worshipper, he is the creator also, then what sort of religious feelings he is expressing through nature. Is it a folk religion or popular religion or the living tradition? Coomarswamy [2] explains it differently. He

Amaravati, Fig. 23 Fourth phase of the stupa

says, However in thus drawing a distinction between symbolic and imagist art, it must be very strongly emphasized that the two kinds of art are in ser connected and related aesthetically.

The tree is not only the enlightenment icon, but it is the symbol of life itself. With the changing season, it grows, decays, and regenerates just like the miracle at Sravasti, where the Buddha makes the mango tree blossoms and flowers.

Why there is so much abundance of bodhi tree? Was it artist's, pilgrim's, worshipper's, or donor's wish? It was not depicted just for the nature. Here comes "Orientalism." In a much quoted passage from the Mahaparinibbana Sutta ([13], p. 90), Anand asks the Buddha what the monks should do after his death when they were no longer to receive his audience or wait upon him. The Buddha replied that there are four places which the believing man should visit with feelings of reverence and awe …. The place at which… the Tathagat attained the supreme and perfect insight.

Thus, the tree is depicted without any bureaucracy or dogma. According to the Mahavamsa (58–63), 32 saplings from it were taken out. These bodhi trees were given special names "Vaddhaman Bodhi" and were closely guarded. The peepal tree is worshipped as the embodiment of the God himself of the triumph, the roots being

Amaravati, Fig. 24 Jataka scene

Amaravati, Fig. 25 King Shuddhodhana and worship of symbol

Amaravati, Fig. 26 Purna Kumbha

Brahma the creator, the trunk Siva the destroyer, and the branches Vishnu the preserver. The peepal tree is also supposed to bring fertility.

At Amaravati, the artist tries to seek the beauty of the nature, whereas worshipper seeks the utility, divinity, and devotion. The nature begins with the mundane level but gradually becomes the symbol in art. Sala tree, Elephant, Bodhi are uprooted from the aesthetician job and become symbol. Nature does not remain nature; it becomes a link between artist and worshipper. Thus, at Amaravati, nature develops its own language. When the artist draws the elephant as high as the palm tree, he was neither drawing elephant nor the palm, but the Great Elephant. On the contrary, but when he draws Krishna river (Fig. 7) in the stelea, he is very accurate, and the river takes same turn even today.

It is bringing together the ancient with the modern, the folk, and classical with the secular. The manifestation shows the notion and icon of those who are at the fringes of art and who are either too unimportant or too feeble to be heard or seen in the mainstream of the artistic presentation. Thus, one cannot place the motifs only as an alamkara (Figs. 8, 15, and 23) (embellishment). They convey a much deeper message. It could be a tussle between seen and unseen. An attempt may be made to see beyond the objects. Amaravati may be known for its narrative scenes. The artist has depicted not only Jataka scenes (Figs. 7 and 24) and scenes from the life of the Buddha (Fig. 25) but some hidden meaning also. He may not be a donor, worshipper, or pilgrim, but he was carving for all of them. The sudden outburst of the Purna Kumbha (Figs. 26 and 27) motifs and finally the mithuna couple indicates a change in religious thinking.

Amaravati is undoubtedly a kaleidoscope of Indian art. It has rightly earned the name "Amaravati," i.e., capital of the gods.

Amaravati, Fig. 27 Purna Kumbha

Cross-References

- Ajanta
- Bedsa
- Bhaja
- Bodhgayā
- Kanheri
- Mathurā
- Nāgārjunakoṇḍa
- Nālandā
- Sanchi
- Sārnāth

References

1. Agrawala VS (1970) Rep., "Ancient indian folk cults". Prithvi Prakashan, Varanasi
2. Coomarswamy AK (1934) Transformation of nature in art. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
3. Dehejia V (ed) (1988) Royal patrons and great temple art. Marg, Bombay
4. Gail A (1975) Cosmic symbolism in the spire of the Ceylon Dagoba. The stupa-its religious, historical and architectural significance. Stuttgarr: Franz Steiner Verlg Weisaden, pp 260–266
5. Geiger W (ed) (1908 & 1912) The Mahavamsa. P.T.S/ Luzac & Company Ltd., London
6. Hanumantha Rao BSC (1987) Dhanyakataka in early Andhra history. R.V.V. College, Dharanikota 11–14
7. Hoffman H (1993) Buddha preaching of the Kalachakra at stupa of Dhanyakataka. Chaukhambha Sanskrit Series. Varanasi
8. Law BC. The Dipavamsa (ed. & tr. with Introduction). The chronicle of the island of Ceylon or the Dipavamsa. The Ceylon Historical Journal, Colombo
9. Miller BS (ed) (1992) Power of arts, patronage in Indian culture. Oxford University Press. Delhi
10. Nariman GK (1922) Literary history of Sanskrit Buddhism. D.B. Taraporevala. Bombay
11. Paranavitana S (1946–1947) The stupa in Ceylon. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, vol V. Colombo
12. Rhys Davids TW (1899) Dialogues of the Buddha. In: Max Muller F (ed) Sacred books of the Buddhist, vol 2. Oxford University Press. London
13. Rhys Davids TW (tr) (1881) Mahaparinibban Sutta. The Buddhist Suttas, Oxford University Press. Oxford, p 90
14. Roy A (1994) Amaravati stupa-a critical analysis epigraphical, architectural and sculptural evidence. Agam kala Prakashan. Delhi
15. Sarkar H (1960) Some aspects of the Buddhist monuments at Nagarjunakonda. Ancient India XVI:65–84
16. Sarkar H (1966) Studies in early Buddhist architecture in India. Delhi
17. Sarkar H (1980) Amaravati. Delhi
18. Shah UP (1955) Studies in Jaina art. Banaras Jain Cultural Society. Varanasi
19. Silva R (1988) Religious architecture in early & medieval Sri Lanka (a study of the Thupa, Bodhimanda, Upasthaghara Patimaghara). Krips Repro Meppel, Druk
20. Sivaramamurti C. (1956) Amaravati sculptures in the Madras Government Museum. n.s., General Section, no. 4, Madras Superintendent Government Press. Madras
21. Si-Yu-Ki (tr), Thomas W (1973) On Yuan Chwang's travels in India, 1904–05, 2nd edn. Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi
22. Stone Rosen E (1994) The Buddhist art of Nagarjunakonda. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi
23. Strong JS (1972) The legends of king Ashoka, a study and translation of Ashokavadana. Princeton Library of Asian Translation
24. Thomas EJ (1940) Lalitvistara and Sarvastivadi. Indian Hist Q, XVI
25. Barrett D (1954) Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum. London: Trustees of the British Museum
26. Buhler G (1894) The Bhattiprolu Buddhist Inscriptions, Epigraphia Indica Vol. 2.

27. Longhurst AH (1936) The Story of Stupa. Colombo. Ceylon Government Press
28. Longhurst AH (1938) The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunakonda, Madras Presidency. MASI 54. Delhi: Manager of Publication
29. Mitra D (1971) Buddhist Monuments. Calcutta: Sahitya Sansad.
30. Paranavitana S (1931) Epigraphia Zeylanica. Vol III, No. 4. Archaeology Department. Ceylon, pp 212–25
31. Ray A (1983) Life and Art of Early Andhradesha. Delhi. Agam Kala Prakashana

Ambapālī

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ambapālikā; Āmrapālī; Āmrapālikā

Definition

A courtesan of Vesāli and contemporary of the Buddha.

Ambapālī (Sk: Āmrapālī) was a royal courtesan of Vesāli and a contemporary of the Buddha. We are told in the Pāli texts that in one of her previous births, she was disgusted on seeing a natural birth and made a wish for a spontaneous (*opapātika*) birth. Hence, in her last birth, her wish was fulfilled; she was reborn spontaneously (without parents) in the king's garden at Vesālī ([14], p. 206f; [4], Vol. ii, p. 613). She got her name from the fact that she was found by Mahānāma, the gardener, at the foot of a mango tree ([14], 206f), or because she was born between the branches of a mango tree ([4], Vol. ii, p. 613). However, Sanskrit sources mention her as being born of a plantain tree in the mango grove of Mahānāma and was named Āmrapālī as she was found in a mango grove (see [5], Vol. i, p. 418). After finding her there, Mahānāma brought her to Vesālī where she grew up to be a beautiful woman. It is said that she was so much replete with beauty and grace that many influential and rich men including princes wooed her and competed with each other to marry her. Ultimately, to avoid discord, she was appointed the royal courtesan (*nagaravadhū*) of the Vajjian confederacy at Vesālī ([14], p. 206f). However, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* says that Mahānāma had to put her up as a city belle (*nagarasobhinī*) because of the wishes of the people, and Āmrapālī agreed on the condition that she shall be paid 500 *kahāpaṇas* per customer ([1], Vol. iii(i), p. 16f). The *Vinaya Piṭaka* mentions this rate as 50 *kahāpaṇas* ([8], Vol. i, p. 208).

In her later life, she became a devout follower of the Buddha. We are told that when Ambapālī heard of the Buddha's visit to Koṭigāma near Vesālī, she paid a visit to him and, after hearing a sermon, invited him to a meal the following day. The Buddha accepted her invitation and, consequently, had to decline one extended by the Licchavis of Vesāli ([8], Vol. i, pp. 231–233; [10], Vol. ii, pp. 94–98). While returning from her visit to the Buddha, Ambapālī was so ecstatic at the very thought of having the Buddha for a meal at her place that she refused to give way to the Licchavi princes who were on way to see the Buddha. The *Commentary of the Dīgha Nikāya* points out that just before Ambapālī's visit to him, the Buddha admonished the monks to be steadfast and mindful, lest they should lose control of themselves about her ([11], Vol. ii, p. 545). It was after this meal that Ambapālī made a gift of her park, the Ambapālivana, to the Buddha and the Saṃgha along with a vihāra that she had built in it. The Buddha accepted the gift and stayed there for some time ([8], Vol. i, pp. 231–233; [10], Vol. ii, pp. 95–98; [14], p. 207; [12], Vol. iii, p. 177).

We are told that she was so popular and in such demand that rich and influential people came to visit her from far and wide ([8], Vol. i, p. 208). As a result of this, Vesālī became a very prosperous city. It was this that motivated the businessmen of Rājagaha to successfully approach Bimbisāra to get a courtesan for their city as well ([8], Vol. i, p. 268). Among Ambapālī's many influential patrons was King Bimbisāra who is said to have sired Vimala-

Koṇḍañña as a result of his liaison with her ([13], Vol. i, p. 146). However, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* says that their child's name was Abhyarājakumāra ([1], Vol. iii(i), p. 20f). After having heard Vimala-Koṇḍañña, who was an eminent monk, she renounced the world, and by working through insight meditation on impermanence as exemplified by her own aging body, she accomplished arahantship ([14], pp. 206–207).

Details of some of her previous births are also available in the Buddhist texts. She was born in a khattiya family at Phussa Buddha's time and had done many good deeds in order to be beautiful in later births. She had practiced celibacy at Kassapa Buddha's time ([4], Vol. ii, p. 613ff; [7], p. 213f). For the first time, she entered the Saṃgha at Sikhī Buddha's time. While she was participating in a procession of nuns still as a novice, she stopped for *pūjā* at a shrine. At this time, an arahant *therī*, who was in a hurry, spat in the courtyard of the shrine. On seeing the spittle and not knowing who had done this, Ambapālī said reprovingly, "What trollop has been spitting here?" As a result of this, she was born in hell and later had, for ten thousand lives, been a courtesan, including the last birth ([14], pp. 206–207). There are two verses in the *Theragāthā* ([9], verses, pp. 1020–1021; [13], Vol. ii, p. 129) which, according to tradition, were spoken by Ānanda while rebuking monks who had gone berserk on seeing Ambapālī. There are nineteen verses in the *Therīgāthā* that are attributed to her ([14], pp. 252–270).

Cross-References

- ▶ Buddha (Concept)
- ▶ Saṃgha
- ▶ Thera- and Therīgāthā
- ▶ Vesālī

References

1. Dutt N (ed) (1942) Gilgit manuscripts, vol III, part 1. Calcutta Oriental Press, Calcutta
2. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzac, London
3. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Lilley ME (ed) (2000) The Apadāna, 2 vols. Pali Text Society, London
5. Malasekera GP (1937–1938) Dictionary of Pāli proper names, 2 vols. Pali Text Society, London
6. Malalasekera GP (ed) (1961) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol 1. Government of Ceylon, Colombo
7. Norman KR (trans) (1991) Elders' verses II: Therīgāthā (translated with Introduction and Notes). Pali Text Society, Oxford
8. Oldenberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
9. Oldenberg H, Pischel R (eds) (1990) Theragāthā, 2nd edn, with Appendices. K.R. Norman & L. Alsdorf, Pali Text Society, Oxford
10. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
11. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE, Stede W (eds) (1886–1932) The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. Woodward FL (ed) (1929–1937) The Sāratthappakāsinī, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Saṃyutta Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
13. Woodward FL (ed) (1940–1959) Paramattha-Dīpanī: Theragāthā-Aṭṭhakathā, the commentary of Dhammapālācariya. Pali Text Society, London
14. Woodward FL, Hardy E, Muller E, Barua DL et al (eds) (1891–1977) Paramatthadīpanī, Dhammapālācariya's commentary on the Therīgāthā. Pali Text Society, London

Ambapālikā

▶ Ambapālī

Ambedkar

Christopher S. Queen
Division of Continuing Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA

Synonyms

Babasaheb Ambedkar; Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956); Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Definition

Statesman, scholar, social and religious reformer, voice of India's untouchables, principal draftsman of the Indian constitution, leader of a mass conversion movement that attracted millions of *Dalits* (ex-untouchables) to a socially engaged Buddhism he called *navayāna*, "new vehicle," and *saddhamma*, "true teaching."

Education and Career

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow (Mahu), a military town in central India. He was the 14th child in a family of *mahārs*, untouchables traditionally restricted to menial labor. His father held the rank of Subedar Major in the British army and served as headmaster of the primary school on the base. Recognizing the intellectual promise of his youngest son, he supervised Bhimrao's early studies and enrolled him in Elphinstone High School in Bombay when he reached age 13. Completing his secondary school studies 3 years later, Ambedkar was admitted to Elphinstone College, where he earned the Bachelor of Arts in 1912 – the first such degree awarded to an Untouchable. This achievement prompted two non-brahmin princes to sponsor Ambedkar's graduate education at Columbia University in New York, the London School of Economics, Gray's Inn, and the University of Bonn. Ambedkar returned to India in 1923 having earned the degrees of M.A., Ph.D., M.Sc., D.Sc., and Bar-at-Law, and published his two doctoral dissertations: "British Provincial Finance" and "Castes in India: Their mechanism, Genesis and Development" [1, 2].

Throughout his political career, Ambedkar focused on the plight of fellow untouchables, who were denied full access to food, water, education, property ownership, and employment security, and subjected to violence and humiliation in accordance with ancient statutes of Hindu religious law and morality. Even as a university graduate and barrister, Ambedkar was denied public accommodation when he reported to work as an officer for one of his patrons. Subordinates refused to enter his office for fear of ritual pollution. In spite of these painful reminders of his caste, Ambedkar was eventually appointed professor of political economics and law, advocate before the high court, and principal of the Government Law College, Bombay.

Ambedkar was quickly recognized by British administrators as the most informed and forceful voice for low-caste communities. Indian politicians were slower to follow. This recognition followed his advocacy before influential bodies: the Southborough Committee on Franchise (1919), the All-India Conference of Depressed Classes (1920), Bombay Legislative Council (member, 1927–1937), the Simon Commission (1928), the First All-India Depressed Classes Congress (president, 1930), the Round Table Conferences on Indian Independence, held in London (delegate, 1930, 1931, 1932), the Viceroy's Council (labor member, 1942–1946), the National Constituent Assembly (representative, 1946), Cabinet of the Republic of India (first law minister, 1947–1951), and the Drafting Committee for the Indian Constitution (chairman, 1947–1950) [3].

As Ambedkar's reputation as an activist, scholar, and legislator grew, he devoted increasing energy to direct action for untouchable rights and social and religious reform. His advocacy took three forms: publication of periodicals and books on the history and consequences of social injustice in India; founding and leading political parties and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to social change; and calling for mass movements that mobilized thousands, and eventually millions, of his followers. As founding editor of the popular journals *Mūknāyak* ("Leader of the Voiceless"), *Bahiṣkṛit Bhārat* ("Excluded India"), *Samata* ("Equality"), *Janatā* ("People"), and *Prabuddha Bhārat* ("Awakened India"), Ambedkar helped to build coalitions of non-Brahmin politicians, intellectuals, and foot soldiers for the civil rights campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s. Most prominent among these was the Mahad *satyāgraha* (nonviolent civil disobedience), protesting the exclusion of untouchables from the public drinking water reservoir; and the Kalaram Temple *satyāgraha* in Nasik, protesting the exclusion of untouchables from a Hindu place

of worship. Such caste-based exclusions were practiced throughout India. During the Mahad protests, demonstrators were beaten for taking a token sip from the public water tank, and portions of the *Manusmṛti*, the ancient Hindu legal code of restrictions and penalties governing low-caste and out-caste Hindus, was publicly burned. Litigation in both cases lasted years in the Bombay courts, resulting in victory in the water case and defeat in the temple case.

At the Round Table Conferences in London, Ambedkar came into conflict with Mohandas Gandhi, head of the Congress Party and erstwhile defender of the rights of untouchables, or *Harijans*, "God's people," as he called them. Dating back to his testimony before the Southborough Committee in 1919, while still a graduate student, Ambedkar had argued for separate electorates for untouchables, recognizing that their sizeable minority voice – roughly 16% of the population – would be drowned out by majority-caste Hindu votes in most localities. Gandhi and Congress supported separate electorates for the Muslim minority, but recognized that Muslims and untouchables could muster a majority if they formed a coalition. Following clashes with Gandhi on this issue at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931, Ambedkar wrote to the Indian Franchise Committee in London to make his case once again. When the Viceroy's Council sided with Ambedkar, awarding separate electorates to Depressed Classes along with Muslims, Gandhi threatened to fast unto death if the communal award was not revoked. Calculating the harm that the suicide of the Mahatma would represent to the Untouchable's cause, Ambedkar and his supporters reluctantly agreed to a compromise, the reservation of a quota of legislative seats for Depressed Classes. Called the Poona Pact, this agreement, despised by future generations of Dalits, set the stage for a deeper clash between Ambedkar and Gandhi over the question of religious identity [4].

Annihilation of Caste

During the 1930s Ambedkar focused increasingly on the relation between the social and economic injustices suffered by low-caste Hindus, and the religious underpinnings of the caste system. The untouchables' leader met with Gandhi in 1933 to discuss the continuing opposition of Hindu clerics and politicians to the temple entry campaign. Ambedkar argued that the caste system itself would have to be dismantled for the practice of untouchability to cease. Gandhi believed that untouchability was weakening as progressive Hindus experienced a change of heart, and that the caste system, purged of untouchability, remained a viable division of labor based on the skills and abilities of specific social groups. Ambedkar publicly challenged this view, identifying *chaturvarnya*, the ancient hierarchy of descending privilege, from brahmin priests down through *kshatriya* warriors, *vaishya* merchants and *shudra* laborers, as the source of inequality and untouchability, which falls below the lowest rung. Gandhi broadened the dispute by invoking *varnashram*, the caste system plus the traditional stages of life – student, householder, retiree, renunciant – when he declared, "I am a Hindu, not merely because I am born in the Hindu fold, but I am one by conviction and choice. There is no superiority or inferiority in the Hinduism of my conception. But when Dr. Ambedkar wants to fight *Varnashram* itself, I cannot be in his camp, because I believe *Varnashram* to be an integral part of Hinduism."

Ambedkar's famous reply came 2 years later at a conference attended by 10,000 untouchable leaders in the town of Yeola. After summarizing the movement's many setbacks in the 10-year struggle for water rights and temple entry, as well as the personal attacks he continued to suffer as an untouchable and a political reformer, Ambedkar's voice rose with emotion, "It is the inequality of Hinduism that compels me to quit Hinduism. I had the misfortune of being born with the stigma of untouchability; that is not my fault! But I will not die as a Hindu; this is within my power!" After vigorous debate, a motion supporting Ambedkar's declaration was passed by the assembled delegates.

The confirmation of longstanding rumors of Ambedkar's consideration of conversion to another religion sparked immediate reaction.

Offers of welcome from leaders of Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and Buddhist communities flooded Ambedkar's mailbox, while Hindu leaders attacked his decision. Gandhi opined that Ambedkar's announcement was rash and premature, inasmuch as untouchability was disappearing under scrutiny of Hindu reformers. And, while Gandhi could understand Ambedkar's impatience, in light of recent caste-inspired atrocities reported in the press, he took strong exception to the idea that religion is "like a house or a cloak, which can be changed at will. It is a more integral part of one's own self than of one's body." Gandhi predicted that "the millions of unsophisticated, illiterate Harijans will not listen to him and those who have disowned their ancestral faith, especially when it is remembered that their lives for good or for evil are intervolved with those of caste Hindus."

Local meetings of untouchables resolved to renounce Hindu gods, scriptures, priests, pilgrimages, and the quest for temple entry. Ambedkar began the meticulous process of comparing the potential benefits and disadvantages of conversion to each of the leading religions. While his associates reported their experience as visitors or converts to other faith communities, Ambedkar met with religious leaders who were eager to convert him and his followers to their beliefs. Meetings with the Methodist Episcopal Bishop of Bombay revealed both Ambedkar's admiration for the Christian gospel of love and equality and his dismay over the enduring caste consciousness of Dalit converts to Christianity. Conversion to Islam, like that to Christianity, would represent a repudiation of traditional Indian cultural values, while conversion to native traditions like Sikhism or Jainism would commit the untouchables to a degree of religious militancy or pacifism which Ambedkar viewed as impractical in a world in need of parliamentary struggle and compromise [5].

In 1936, Ambedkar was invited to offer the keynote address and to preside over the annual meeting of the Jat Pat Todak Mandel in Lahore, a reformist Hindu association that had followed Ambedkar's career and writings with approval. The invitation resulted in outcries by orthodox Hindu leaders, and after previewing a draft of the speech, the leaders asked Ambedkar to delete his critique of Hindu scriptures and any reference to his intended conversion to another religion. When Ambedkar refused, the invitation was withdrawn and the conference canceled. Inasmuch as Ambedkar had taken this opportunity to expand his critique of the caste system to encompass a larger argument about the nature of religion and its critical function in society, he decided to publish the speech on his own, under the title, *Annihilation of Caste: An undelivered speech*. In his strongly worded essay, the author cataloged specific indignities suffered by the untouchables of India. He compared the vertical power structure of Hindu India with the religiously based class system of home-rule Ireland, where British-backed Protestants dominated Catholics, and Republican Rome, where plebian representation required assent of the Delphic Oracle, which was controlled by patrician priests. In each case, religion was manipulated by a powerful minority at the expense of a credulous majority. In each case, the author argued that religion is more fundamental than economics, politics, sociology, and biology in its capacity to shape human behavior and social policy.

Ambedkar concluded that a religion of principles, as opposed to a religion of rules, allows the application of reason and the test of experience to shape a livable society. Here, Ambedkar stressed "the principle of change" that he had learned as a Columbia University graduate student from the American philosopher, John Dewey: "Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. . . . As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society." For Ambedkar, a changing society demands "a constant revolution of old values" and standards of conduct [6].

The Buddha and His Dhamma

During the 1940s, Ambedkar continued to represent the cause of the depressed classes in

preparation for Indian independence. As influential as his political service and social activism were, Ambedkar advanced his philosophy of civil society and social justice with a string of forceful monographs: *Federation* vs. *Freedom* (1939), *Thoughts on Pakistan* (1940), *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah* (1943), *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* (1945), *Who were the Shudras? How they came to be the Fourth Varna in Indo-Aryan Society* (1946), and *The Untouchables: Who they were and Why they became Untouchables?* (1947). In the latter works, Ambedkar argued that the shudras and untouchables had been subjugated by brahmins in ancient times in the competition for power and privilege. The shudras, formerly warriors, were demoted to laborer status through the denial of the *upanayana*, coming-of-age ritual, which could only be performed by brahmin priests, while the untouchables, formerly "broken men" or nomadic herdsmen, were ritually ostracized and vilified for meat-eating and for their adherence to Buddhism. By the fourth century, according to Ambedkar, cow-slaughter was made a capital offense by the Gupta kings, and untouchables were reduced to scavenging for food by removing dead animals from streets and farms.

The appearance of Buddhism in Ambedkar's thoughts and writings was not new with the publication of *The Untouchables* in 1947. On the occasion of his passing of the university matriculation examination at age 17, Ambedkar received a Marathi-language life of the Buddha, written by his liberal Brahmin high school teacher and social activist, K. A. Keluskar. Much taken by the story and teachings of Gotama, Ambedkar would later declare that his life had been inspired by three great souls: the poet-saint Kabir, revered by his parents; the nineteenth-century anti-caste reformer, Mahatma Jotiba Phule; and "my master, the Buddha." Following the burning of the *Manusmṛti* at the Mahad water-rights campaign in 1927, Ambedkar exhorted his followers to purify themselves "in body, speech, and mind," a formulation found in Buddhist, but not Vedic, scriptures, and to honor "worth, not birth," a central theme of the Buddhist *Dhammapada*. Two days later, Ambedkar led his followers to an excavation of Buddhist ruins near Mahad and invited them to reflect on the ancient *bhikkhu-sangha*, the order of monks "who lived lives of poverty and chastity and selflessly devoted themselves to the service of the community."

In May 1936, 7 months after declaring his intention to seek another religion, Ambedkar chose the last words of the Buddha, translated into Marathi from his copy of the English edition of the *Dialogues of the Buddha* (the Rhys Davids' edition of *Digha Nikāya*, to exhort his followers: "Therefore, Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves." In the following years, Ambedkar named his new house in Bombay "Rajgriha," after the place of the first Buddhist Council, and the two colleges he founded for Dalit students, Siddharth College (Bombay), after the Buddha's given name, and Milind College (Aurangabad), after the Greek king who sought answers to life's problems from the Buddhist sage Nagasena in the second century B.C.E. [5].

When India gained independence in August 1947, Ambedkar was appointed Law Minister and chairman of the drafting committee for the Indian Constitution. Amid his increased responsibilities, Ambedkar continued to pursue his longstanding interest in Buddhism. In his preface to the reissue of P. Lakshmi Narasu's *The Essence of Buddhism* (1948), Ambedkar paid tribute to the author in terms that described his own spiritual-political quest: "Prof. Narasu was the stalwart of the 19th century who had fought European arrogance with patriotic fervor, orthodox Hinduism with iconoclastic zeal, heterodox Brahmins with nationalistic vision and aggressive Christianity with a rationalistic outlook – all under the inspiring banner of his unflagging faith in the teachings of the Great Buddha." In 1950 Ambedkar argued in *The Maha Bodhi*, India's leading Buddhist journal, that among the world's religions only Buddhism met the complex demands of morality and reason demanded by modernity. He and his wife traveled to Sri Lanka to attend the first meeting of the World Fellowship of Buddhists and to

see first-hand the life of ordained and lay citizens in a traditional Buddhist society. And while he was openly disappointed with the focus on "fellowship" rather than social welfare and reform, he announced that the time might be ripe for a revival of Buddhism in India. Upon his return to New Delhi, Ambedkar announced that he would devote the rest of his life to this task.

In his final years, Ambedkar traveled twice to Burma to speak at Buddhist conferences and meet sangha leaders. He spoke and wrote frequently on the history and promise Buddhist philosophy and morality, founded the Indian Buddhist Society, and announced that he was preparing a comprehensive work on the life and message of the Buddha. This was to be his final work, on which he was still laboring at the time of his death. Published posthumously as *The Buddha and His Dhamma* and translated into numerous Indian and foreign languages, it is revered as a Buddhist bible by the millions of new Buddhists who followed their Babasaheb Ambedkar to conversion [7].

The Buddha and his Dhamma was not the literary project of a retired politician who turned at last to religion after a life in the professional trenches. It was rather the distillation of a life of scholarly study and reflection on the meaning and function of religion in society, and of the unique place that Buddhism occupied in the pluralistic landscape of Indian spirituality. As a child, Ambedkar was trained to recite daily verses from Hindu scriptures by his father, partly as a religious practice and partly to illustrate the role that low-caste persons – such as Vālmīki, the Dalit poet-saint credited with composing the Ramayana – played in history. Since his graduate studies in New York and London, Ambedkar had amassed a library of works on Buddhism that reflected the rise of the critical literary and historical study of religion since the nineteenth century. Among these were Carus's *Gospel of Buddha*, Goddard's *Buddhist Bible*, Arnold's *Light of Asia*, Thomas's *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, and Burtt's *Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*. Critical editions of Pali and Sanskrit scriptures and commentaries, and works on Buddhist history and philosophy by such Western authorities as Beal, the two Rhys Davids, Glasenapp, Oldenberg, Pratt, Stcherbatsky, Humphries, and Conze found their places on Ambedkar's shelves alongside the works of eminent Asian scholars, Gokhale, Lakshmi Narasu, Suzuki, Takakusu, and Murti. In preparing *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, Ambedkar also consulted his extensive collection of primary texts in translation: the 40 volumes of Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East*, a complete set of the Theravada scriptures in the Pali Text Society's translation series, and bound volumes of *The Maha Bodhi* [8].

Ambedkar's outline for *The Buddha and His Dhamma* reveals his intention to provide a comprehensive introduction to the three "refuges" that define the faith and value commitments of a Buddhist – the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha – so that the book might become not only a reference book of Buddhist lore and philosophy, but also a handbook of Buddhist devotion and practice for new converts. The volume is organized into books, chapters, sections, and verses, each of which is numbered in the manner of the Christian Bible. Following Ambedkar's critical introduction and a prologue consisting of a passage from James Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics*, the books bear the titles "Siddhartha Gautama – How a Bodhisatta became the Buddha," "Campaign of Conversion," "What the Buddha Taught," "Religion and Dhamma," "The Sangh," "He and His Contemporaries," "The Wanderer's Last Journey," and "the Man who was Siddharth Gautama." Notably, the book on the sangha contains a "Vinaya for the Laity," that is, a handbook of conduct for specific categories of followers: the wealthy, householders, children, pupils, husbands and wives, masters and servants, and girls. In this way, Ambedkar hoped to define a new identity and lifestyle for his Dalit followers – one characterized by dignity, personal morality and hygiene, and charity toward others.

The introduction and prologue of *The Buddha and his Dhamma* represent bold departures from religious orthodoxy, whether of the Hindu or Buddhist varieties. The passage Ambedkar selected from Hastings' encyclopedia describes axial periods in human spirituality: "From time to time men find themselves forced to reconsider

current and inherited beliefs and ideas, to gain some harmony between present and past experience, and to reach a position which shall satisfy the demands of feeling and reflexion and give confidence for facing the future." Today, such a movement is spirited by rapid progress in science and technology, global tendencies to reform and reconstruct social thought and politics, and "deep-stirring experiences" related to issues of justice, human destiny, God, and the universe, which "in turn involve problems of the relation between 'religious' and other ideas, the validity of ordinary knowledge, and practicable conceptions of 'experience' and 'reality.'" One hears in this passage the insights of German empiricism and phenomenology (Schleiermacher, Husserl, Otto) and American pragmatism (James, Dewey), with which Ambedkar was intimately familiar and in agreement [9, 10].

In his prologue, Ambedkar raises four fundamental doubts about the Buddhist tradition, which, taken with the daring interpretations that follow, "were enough to shock a real Buddhist," according to a reviewer in *The Maha Bodhi*. These concerned the legend of Gotama's "great going forth" from the princely life to one of poverty and religious inquiry, the teachings on suffering known as the "four noble truths," the pan-Indian conceptions of karma and rebirth, and the social role of the Buddhist monks, or the *bhikkhu-sangha.* Ambedkar questions whether a man of 30 years, already a husband and father, could be sufficiently perplexed by the reality of illness and death outside the palace walls to abandon his family and his career as a *kshatriya* ruler. Likewise, he questioned the pervasive emphasis on suffering and on moral determinism implied by traditional teachings of *dukkha*, *anattā, karma*, and *samsāra*, which tend to cause confusion, pessimism, and hopelessness and constitute a "stumbling-block in the way of non-Buddhists accepting the gospel of Buddhism." As for the monks, their focus on creating "a perfect man" distorted the Buddha's challenge "to create a social servant devoting his life to service of the people." Arguing that the negativity and distortion of the tradition was introduced by scholar-monks vested with reporting the Buddha's words, Ambedkar set about to bring out the optimism and social activism he had found in the Buddha's message since first reading Keluskar's life of Buddha as a teenager.

The Buddha and His Dhamma may be likened to "a well planned, solidly built, and beautifully decorated palace, some apartments of which the architect was obliged to leave unfinished," according to Ambedkar's onetime associate and lifelong champion, the English Buddhist monk, Sangharakshita. Suffering from heart disease and diabetes in his final years, and struggling to complete his book during all-night vigils while fulfilling his public duties by day, Ambedkar was forced to abandon the meticulous argumentation and documentation that characterized his earlier works. Yet, in the end, Ambedkar took "what seemed to him the most relevant parts of several Buddhist traditions, edited them, sometimes drastically, added material of his own, and arranged them in an order. Like the Constitution, this too has become more than another document. Just as the Constitution is at the heart of the nation's political life, this canon is at the heart of the religious life of the new Buddhists" [11].

The Great Conversion of 1956

Preparations for a public *dīkṣā* or conversion ceremony commenced in 1955, a year prior to the international observance of the 2,500th Buddhist Jayanti. Deeply disturbed by the apparent failure of the *bhikkhu-sangha* in Buddhist countries to serve the educational, social, and economic needs of their followers, Dr. Ambedkar considered taking only the first two refuges in the traditional formula, pledging fealty only to the Buddha and his Dhamma. But his advisors convinced him that a partial fulfillment of the traditional formula would discredit the new Buddhists in the eyes of worldwide orthodoxy. Consequently, Ambedkar assembled the elements of what would become the largest Buddhist conversion in modern times. The central Indian city of Nagpur, associated with the preservation of Buddhism by the tribal Naga

peoples, and the full-moon observance of Dasara, the harvest festival associated with the Buddhist conversion of King Asoka and with the triumph of good over evil, falling on October 14, 1956, were chosen for their symbolic impact.

An estimated 380,000 followers of Ambedkar's political and personal odyssey, mostly Dalit and low-caste Hindus, but also Brahmin intellectuals and reformers – reminiscent of the Buddha's own following – made their way to the military parade ground that had been secured as the *diksha-bhumi* by the Ambedkarites. Attendees listened raptly as their leader and his wife took the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from India's most senior Buddhist monk, U Chandramani Bhikkhu. This was followed by the administration of the refuge and precept formulas to the throngs that spread out in all directions from the platform. An additional element of the conversion was provided by Ambedkar himself, 22 Vows enjoining a complete reorientation of identity and values: "I renounce Hinduism which is harmful to humanity and the advancement and development of humanity because it is based on inequality, and I adopt Buddhism as my religion. I firmly believe that the Dhamma of the Buddha is the only true religion. I believe that I am experiencing a rebirth. I solemnly declare and affirm that I shall hereafter lead my life according to the principles and teachings of the Buddha and his Dhamma." According to witnesses of the ceremony, Ambedkar's voice choked with emotion as he led the assembly in this recitation, anticipating that in the coming years millions of Dalit "ex-untouchables" would enter a new life founded on "liberty, equality, and fraternity," as he liked to say, investing the revolutionary slogan of the European enlightenment with meanings he gleaned from the Buddhist enlightenment traditions of India.

In 1950, prior the Ambedkar Buddhist conversions, 181,000 citizens claimed their religious identity to be "Buddhist" on the Indian census. Ten years later, following the Dhamma Diksha of 1956, this number increased by more than 1,000%, to 3,250,000 Buddhists. In the 1960s, a vibrant new literature reflecting Buddhist themes and perspectives with a social-critical edge came to be called Dalit Sahitya, "literature of the oppressed," and the 1970s saw the appearance of the Dalit Panthers, modeled on the Black Panthers, the militant African American political party committed to social justice and institutional reform.

By the 1980s and 1990s, Ambedkar's conception of "new vehicle" or Navayana Buddhism came to be associated with the worldwide rise of Buddhist liberation movements, service organizations, and activists known as *Engaged Buddhism*, or socially engaged Buddhism. This movement encompasses such well-known figures as the Nobel Peace Prize laureates The Dalai Lama of Tibet and Aung San Ssu Kyi of Myanmar, and Nobel nominees Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, and A. T. Ariyaratna of Sri Lanka. The organizations associated with these leaders, the Free Tibet Movement, the democracy movement of Burma, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, and Sarvodaya Shramadana, are joined by many more engaged Buddhist groups in East Asia and the West, including the Nichiren-inspired Japanese sects, Soka Gakkai, Rissho Koseikai, and Nipponzan Myohoji; the Taiwanese Pure Land sects Ciji Gongdehui (Buddhist Compassion Relief Foundation), Foguangshan (Buddha's Light Mountain), and Fagushan (Dharma Drum Mountain); and the American Buddhist Peace Fellowship and Zen Peacemaker Order [12, 13].

While each organization is devoted to a unique pattern of educational, developmental, and peacemaking activities, all may be said to agree on the social dimensions of human suffering and its relief, as envisioned and enacted by B. R. Ambedkar and the Dalit Buddhist liberation movement of India.

Cross-References

- ▶ Caste (Buddhism)
- ▶ Dhamma
- ▶ Engaged Buddhism
- ▶ Ethics (Buddhism)
- ▶ Politics (Buddhism)

References

1. Keer D (1987) Dr. Ambedkar: life and mission. Popular Prakashan, Bombay
2. Omvedt G (2004) Ambedkar: towards an enlightened India. Penguin Books India, New Delhi
3. Kadam K (1991) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and the significance of his movement: a chronology. Popular Prakashan, Bombay
4. Jaffrelot C (2005) Dr. Ambedkar and untouchability: analyzing and fighting caste. Permanent Black, New Delhi
5. Sangharakshita (1986) Ambedkar and Buddhism. Windhorse, Glasgow
6. Ambedkar B (1990) Annihilation of caste: an undelivered speech. Arnold, New Delhi
7. Ambedkar B (1984) The Buddha and his Dhamma, 3rd edn. Siddharth, Bombay
8. Queen C (2004) Ambedkar's Dhamma: source and method in the construction of engaged Buddhism. In: Jondhale S, Beltz J (eds) Reconstructing the world: BR Ambedkar and Buddhism in India. Oxford University Press, New Delhi
9. Hastings J (1908–1927) Encyclopedia of religion and ethics, vol X. T&T Clark, Edinburgh, p 669
10. Ambedkar B (1984) The Buddha and his Dhamma. Siddharth Publication, Bombay, p xliii
11. Taylor R (1972) The Ambedkarite Buddhists. In: Wilkinson T, Thomas M (eds) Ambedkar and the neo-Buddhist movement. The Christian Literature Society, Madras
12. Queen C, King S (1996) Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist liberation movements in Asia. State University of New York Press, Albany
13. Queen C (ed) (2000) Engaged Buddhism in the West. Wisdom, Somerville

Ambedkar Buddhism

► Engaged Buddhism

American Buddhism

► Westernization (Buddhism)

Amida (Japanese)

► Amitābha

Amitāba

► Buddha (Concept)

Amitābha

Charles Willemen
International Buddhist College, Songkhla, Thailand

Synonyms

Amida (Japanese); Amitāyus; Amituo (Chinese)

Definition

Amitābha refers to "Immeasurable Light," name of the Buddha who rules over the "Western Paradise," Sukhāvatī.

The Names Amitābha/Amitāyus

Amitābha rules over the "Western Paradise," where his believers may be reborn. This Buddha of the West is known as Amituo in China and as Amida in Japan. His cult is commonly called Amidism. In East Asia this phonetic rendering, "sound-translation," is most common. The meaning of the variant name, Amitāyus, Immeasurable Lifespan, is always given in Chinese as Wuliangshou, or Muryōju in Japanese. This "meaning-translation," never the "sound-translation," is very common in China, as if there was no Indian original to begin with. Pāli texts and the Chinese *āgamas* do not have the name of Amitābha. He is mentioned in the oldest parts of the *Lotus Sutra, Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, as one of the Buddhas of the West. But the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, his "compassion," is much more important. In the sūtra called *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra, the Sutra about the Concentration of Direct*

Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present, early first century A.D. (?), and in its Chinese version *Banzhou sanmei jing*, Taishō ed.418, also known as *Bhadrapālabodhisattvasūtra*, Amitābha is a Buddha of the present, situated in the West, but the Buddha Akṣobhya and his Paradise in the East is also there [3]. This text is attributed to Zhi Loujia Chen, or Zhi Chen, commonly called Lokakṣema, in 179 A.D. He may well have been the translator of prose portions, but the remaining part may have been revised by Zhi Qian, third century [3]. Lokakṣema seems to have introduced Gandharan Mahāsāṅghika texts to China. The Gandharan area seems to have been mainly, but certainly not exclusively, Mahāsāṅghika, just as the Bactrian area was mainly, but certainly not exclusively, Sarvāstivāda and Pudgalavāda [10]. The contents of the *Pratyutpannasamādhi* agree with Lokottaravāda, that is, Mahāsāṅghika *Buddhānusmṛti*, calling Buddha to mind, and they expound *prajñāpāramitā*, perfection of wisdom, views about emptiness. This sutra was used by Huiyuan (334–416) when he founded his White Lotus Society, *Bailian Hui*, on Mount Lu in 402, traditionally the beginning of Pure Land, *Jingtu* [1], Buddhism in China. Pure Land is the Chinese term for *Sukhāvatī, Land of Bliss*. Pure, *jing*, in this context actually means *śubha*, pleasant. This meaning is very common in ancient Chinese translations, based on Gāndhārī(s) and on Kharoṣṭhī script. The earliest Chinese texts about Amitābha, entering China via the Central Asian route, call him Amitābha. P. Harrison [3] has established that among the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* texts, texts about the *Display of the (World of) Bliss*, Taishō ed.361 is the work of Zhi Qian, and Taishō ed.362 is a revision of a text linked with Lokakṣema. Kumārajīva's version of the smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Taishō ed.366 *Amituo jing*, of 402, also uses the name Amitābha. But in southern China after Zhi Qian, Wuliangshou, Amitāyus, was almost exclusively used. Indigenous Daoism offers an explanation. Amitābha's Paradise appears to have been associated with the Daoist Paradise, the fabulous Kunlun Mountains, where Xi Wang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West, associated with longevity, ruled over the immortals [11].

During the Tang (618–907), after China's unification, both terms were used, but Amitābha was more frequent, maybe due to the influence of Kumārajīva and Xuanzang. In Japan one speaks of Amida. Tibet enters the Buddhist world during the Tang. Here representations of Amitābha slightly differ from those of Amitāyus, who is linked with longevity. Amitāyus now holds the vase of life in his lap, not an almsbowl. He wears a crown, jewelry, and garments of a bodhisattva. The Tibetan version of the *Pratyutpannasamādhi*, early ninth century, rather seems to be of Sarvāstivāda affiliation, not just Mahāsāṅghika. Most Sanskrit texts are later than the three basic Chinese texts of Pure Land Buddhism. These texts are: Kumārajīva's *Smaller Sukhāvatīvyūha* Taishō ed.366; Baoyun's *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha*, Taishō ed.360, of 421; and the *Visualization Sutra*, attributed to Kālayaśas, Taishō ed.365, between 424 and 442, the Liu Song. All three texts date from the early fifth century [2, 4].

Origin

There are numerous theories about the origin of Amitābha [5, 6, 9]. To name a few: Indian mythology; Iranian circles in Bactria; idealized personality of Śākyamuni; etc. It is clear that Amitābha cannot be separated from Avalokiteśvara. Lokeśvararāja (Shizizaiwang, King Shi Zizai) was Dharmākara's (the later Amitābha) teacher. Avalokiteśvara (Guanzizai, or rather Guan Zizai) will be Amitābha's successor. Avalokiteśvara now is Amitābha's attendant. Tradition says that in the time of the Tathāgata Lokeśvararāja there was a monk called Dharmākara (Fazang), who resolved to become a Buddha. He asked the Tathāgata to instruct him. The Tathāgata taught him about all the Buddha-countries and the Buddhas ruling there. Dharmākara describes what he wants his Buddha-country, his Paradise, to be like. He makes 48 vows (46 in Sanskrit), which constitute a prophecy of Sukhāvatī, the Pure Land. Having become a bodhisattva, an aspirant to awakening, he later becomes Amitābha, ruling over his Paradise, Sukhāvatī [2].

In the universe there are many regions, Buddha-fields. Some of them are of great beauty and spiritual bliss. Pious believers can be reborn there. Amitābha and his Buddha-field in the West initially were not singled out for special worship. Around the beginning of the common era there was the belief that the world had degenerated. Mankind could only be saved relying on faith in and devotion to a savior. This belief in the "final phase of the doctrine (Chinese *mofa*, Japanese *mappō*)" was very important in the cult of Amitābha in China and Japan. Sincere faith is most important at the moment of death. Amitābha himself will appear to the believer and transport the soul to Sukhāvatī. There, one is reborn from the bud of a lotus flower. Being born there, one is taught by Amitābha and one will stay there till one reaches *nirvāṇa* [7].

In the Chinese canon there are two commentarial texts which are well studied in Pure Land Buddhism: *Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa* (?), attributed to Vasubandhu and translated by Bodhiruci (early sixth century), Taishō ed.1524, and *Daś abhūmikavibhāṣā* (?), attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated by Kumārajīva, Taishō ed.1521. While Vasubandhu (ca. 350–430) is a known Sautrāntika Sarvāstivādin, Nāgārjuna was a Mahāsāṅghika monk. So, the belief in Sukhāvatī was not limited to one *nikāya*, school. It is a fact that the Paradise of Amitābha and the Paradise of Akṣobhya, called Abhirati, in the East occur together already in Kuṣāṇa times, first centuries A.D. See, for example, the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīkasūtra*, Taishō ed.157. But Amitābha is far more popular in East Asia, a region which has easy and frequent contacts with the Bactrian area.

Amitābha forms a triad with the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The first one is linked with Amitābha from the beginning. He is known by more than one Chinese name, for example, Guanzizai or rather Guan Zizai; Guanshiyin, or rather Guan Shiyin; and Guanyin.

Pure Land Buddhism in East Asia

In India there is not just one single *nikāya*, school, linked with Pure Land Buddhism [8]. In China, where a school is doctrinal, not defined by its *vinaya* as it is in India, Pure Land Buddhism is a phenomenon of mainly the sixth and seventh centuries. It was shaped by Tanluan (ca. 488–554) and Daochuo (562–645). Shandao (613–681) elaborated it. The belief in "the final phase of the doctrine" at the time contributed to the popularity of this devotional form of Buddhism in China. By the middle of the Tang, eighth century, Amidism was quite influential. Also in Korea in the seventh and eighth centuries Amidism was quite popular. In Japan the popularity of Amitābha rose with the activities of Genshin (942–1017) and Kūya. Both preached the principle to rely on "the strength of the other one," Amitābha, not just relying on oneself. They preached the invocation of Amida's sacred name. Hōnen (1133–1212) really established the Pure Land, Jōdo (Chinese *Jingtu*), school. Shinran (1173–1263) reformed the school to True Jōdo School, Jōdo Shinshū. According to him salvation was possible for all who sincerely believe. Not the invocation of the sacred name of Amida, but faith is the basis. Today Pure Land Buddhism is the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan. The statue of Amida in the city of Kamakura is very famous.

Cross-References

- ▶ Avalokiteśvara
- ▶ Gandhara
- ▶ Kharoṣṭhī Script
- ▶ Sautrāntika
- ▶ Sukhāvatī
- ▶ The Lotus Sūtra
- ▶ Vasubandhu

References

1. Foard J, Solomon M, Payne R (eds) (1996) The pure land tradition: history and development. Regents of the University of California, Berkeley
2. Gómez L (1996, 3rd printing 2000) The land of bliss: the paradise of the Buddha of measureless light. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
3. Harrison P (1998) The pratyutpanna samādhi sutra. Numata Center for Translation and Research, Berkeley
4. Inagaki H (2003) The three pure land sutras. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley

5. Kao Kuan-ju (1964) Amitābha-Vyūha. In: Malalasekera G (ed) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol I. Government of Ceylon, Colombo, pp 464–468
6. Malalasekera G (1964) Amita. In: Malalasekera G (ed) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism vol I. Government of Ceylon, Colombo, pp 434–440
7. Payne R, Tanaka K (eds) (2004) Approaching the land of bliss: religious praxis in the cult of amitābha. Kuroda Institute in East Asian Buddhism, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu
8. Schopen G (1987) The inscription on the Kuṣāṇa image of Amitābha and the character of the early Mahāyāna in India. Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 10:99–137
9. Tsukinowa K, Ikemoto J, Tsumoto R (1964) Amita. In: Malalasekera G (ed) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol I. Government of Ceylon, Colombo, pp 440–463
10. Willemen C (2013) Early Yogācāra and visualization (Bhāvanā). In: Volume in memory of L. Kawamura. Contemporary Issues in Buddhist Studies Series. Institute of Buddhist Studies, University of Hawaii Press, Berkeley
11. Zürcher E (2005) Amitābha. In: Jones L (ed) Encyclopedia of religion, 2nd edn. Macmillan Reference USA, Gale Virtual Reference Library, Detroit

Amitāyus

► Amitābha

Amituo (Chinese)

► Amitābha

Amity

► Metta

Āmrapālī

► Ambapālī

Āmrapālikā

► Ambapālī

Anāgāmin

Bhikkhu Anālayo
Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, Balve, Germany

Synonyms

Non-returner

Definition

The term *anāgāmin* stands for one who has reached the third of the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhism. An *anāgāmin* has thereby become a "non-returner," in the sense of being one who will not return to be reborn again in the sensual world, but will reach final liberation in a higher heaven beyond the heavens of the sensual realm.

The Non-returner

In early Buddhist thought, the scheme of four levels of awakening is defined by the stage by stage eradication of a set of ten fetters, *saṃyojana*, that are considered to be what binds unawakened worldlings to continued faring on in *saṃsāra*, the cycle of existence. A stream-enterer, who has gained the first level of awakening, has eradicated three of these ten fetters. These three are the fetter of personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, in the sense of the notion of a permanent self, the fetter of doubt, *vicikicchā*, in particular doubt regarding the nature of what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and the fetter of dogmatic clinging to rules and vows, *sīlabbataparāmāsa*, as in themselves sufficient for reaching awakening. A non-returner has eradicated two more fetters, namely, sensual lust, *kāmarāga*, and ill will, *vyāpāda*. In other words, a non-returner is beyond sensual attraction of any type and also will no longer react to anything with anger or aversion.

The task that still lies ahead for the non-returner is the eradication of the remaining five

fetters of craving for fine-material states, *rūpa-rāga*, craving for immaterial states, *arūpa-rāga*, conceit, *māna*, restlessness, *uddhacca*, and ignorance, *avijjā*. That is, a non-returner is still subject to more subtle types of attachment and has not yet completely eradicated ignorance.

Non-returners can be distinguished into five types ([1], Vol. III, p. 237):

- One who attains final Nirvāṇa in between, *antarā-parinibbāyin*
- One who attains final Nirvāṇa upon landing, *upahacca-parinibbāyin*
- One who attains final Nirvāṇa without volitional exertion, *asaṅkhāra-parinibbāyin*
- One who attains final Nirvāṇa with volitional exertion, *sasaṅkhāra -parinibbāyin*
- One who heads toward the Akaniṭṭha realm, being bound upstream, *uddhaṃsoto Akaniṭṭha-gāmin*

The implications of this presentation receives further illustration in a simile, which compares different non-returners to chips that fly off from an iron slab that is beaten, having been heated all day ([2], Vol. IV, p. 70). In the context of this simile, one who attains final Nirvāṇa in between is comparable to a chip that cools down before touching the ground. One who attains final Nirvāṇa upon landing is similar to a chip that touches the ground and then cools down.

This gives the impression that the first type refers to those who attain final Nirvāṇa in an interim stage between death and rebirth, while the second does so on being reborn. This interpretation receives further support from an indication given elsewhere that the first type, the *antarā-parinibbāyin*, has already abandoned the fetter of rebirth but not yet the fetter of existence ([2], Vol. II, p. 134). Hence, such a person is still subject to an interim existence but free from being reborn.

The Pāli commentarial tradition takes a different stance, influenced by the fact that, according to the doctrinal position adopted in the Theravāda tradition, death is immediately followed by rebirth. From this perspective, an interim existence between death and rebirth does not exist. This position, however, is clearly a later development and conflicts with several other canonical passages that do suggest the existence of an interim existence.

Regarding the remaining types of non-returners, the difference between the one who attains final Nirvāṇa without exertion and the one who does the same with exertion finds its illustration in a chip from the heated iron slab that falls on either a small or a large heap of grass or sticks and cools down after burning these up.

The last of the five non-returners, who is bound upstream, heading toward the Akaniṭṭha realm, is similar to the case of a chip that, after landing on a large heap of grass or sticks, not only burns up these but also sets fire to the neighborhood and only cools down after having burnt down the surroundings.

The Akaniṭṭha realm mentioned in relation to the fifth non-returner is one of the five Pure Abodes, *suddhāvāsā*, recognized in early Buddhism, besides the Avihā, Atappā, Sudassā, and Sudassī realms. These Pure Abodes are elevated heavenly spheres in which non-returners are reborn, being far beyond the lower heavens in which sensual pleasures are still experienced.

The realization of non-return requires the development of both insight, *vipassanā*, and tranquility, *samatha*, a meditative development that needs to be based on a firm foundation of moral conduct. Being established in faultless ethical conduct serves as the indispensable basis for being able to settle the mind and gain deeper levels of concentration by way of attaining the absorptions, *jhāna*. Attainment of absorption appears to be, at least in early Buddhist thought, a prerequisite for progress to non-return, although in later times this has been a subject of debate. The discourses indicate that a non-returner has completed the training in morality and in concentration ([2], Vol. IV, p. 380), making it quite probable that, at least from their perspective, considerable proficiency in tranquility is an essential requirement for being able to attain non-return and from there to progress to full awakening.

To proceed to any of the four stages of awakening calls for the development of insight as well, which according to one discourse can be undertaken by contemplating the five aggregates (affected by) clinging as impermanent,

unsatisfactory, and devoid of a self ([3], Vol. III, p. 168). In early Buddhist thought, these five aggregates are considered the chief constituents of an individual, comprising the aggregates of bodily form, feeling, perception, volitions, and consciousness. The above contemplation therefore implies that all aspects of subjective experience should be seen as constantly changing, therefore as unable to provide lasting satisfaction, and therewith as not fit to be considered a permanent self. If, however, one were to take anything to be permanent or satisfactory or a self, or else if one were not to look on Nirvāṇa as happiness, then one will be incapable of gaining non-return or any of the other levels of awakening ([2], Vol. III, p. 442).

The development of insight for the attainment of non-return comes into being through having associated with superior persons, having heard the Dharma, having developed wise attention, and having practiced in accordance with the Dharma ([3], Vol. V, p. 411). The most basic requirement for the gain of non-return, however, is the existence of a Buddha, since due to his teaching the path to non-return and to the other stages of awakening is revealed to humanity ([2], Vol. I, p. 23).

Although a non-returner has made substantial progress, he or she has not yet fully realized the Buddha's teaching ([1], Vol. II, p. 252). This is only accomplished by those who have gained the highest level of awakening: the arahants. An arahant has also fully developed five mental faculties, *indriya*, that are of central importance for progress along the early Buddhist path to deliverance. These are confidence or faith, *saddhā*, energy, *viriya*, mindfulness, *sati*, concentration, *samādhi*, and wisdom, *paññā*. Although a non-returner has not yet brought these five mental faculties to full maturity, he or she has already developed them to a considerable degree ([3], Vol. V, p. 202).

The gain of non-return is reckoned in early Buddhism as one of the supreme fruits of living the celibate life ([3], Vol. V, p. 26); in fact it is for the sake of such sublime attainment that a life of celibacy should be lived under the Buddha ([1], Vol. I, p. 156). A monk who gains non-return will be able to reach the other shore just like a strong adult ox will be able to cross the Ganges river ([4], Vol. I, p. 226). Non-return is, however, not a prerogative of monastics. In fact, the discourses report that substantial numbers of male and female lay disciples had become non-returners ([4], Vol. I, p. 490). Among unawakened mankind, whose predicament is comparable to being immersed in water, one who has attained non-return is comparable to someone who has come up from the water, crossed over, and has reached firm ground ([2], Vol. IV, p. 12).

Cross-References

- ▶ Antarābhava
- ▶ Arahant
- ▶ Insight
- ▶ Liberation (Buddhism)
- ▶ Sakadāgāmin
- ▶ Sotāpanna

References

1. Carpenter JE, Rhys Davids TW (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
2. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
3. Feer L (ed) (1888–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
4. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
5. Harvey P (1995) The question of an intermediary existence. In: id. The selfless mind, personality, consciousness and Nirvāṇa in early Buddhism. Curzon Press, Richmond, pp 98–102
6. Somaratne GA (1999) Intermediate existence and the higher fetters in the Pāli Nikāyas. J Pali Text Soc 25:121–154

Ānanda, Person

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Definition

One of the chief disciples of the Buddha, his first cousin, and personal attendant.

He was one of the chief disciples of the Buddha, his first cousin, and personal attendant. He was the son of Mṛgī ([4], Vol. iii, p. 172) and Amitodana the Sākiyan, brother of Suddhodana ([14], Vol. i, p. 292). He was called Ānanda because his birth brought joy to his kinsmen ([17], Vol. ii, p. 123; [14], p. 292). When he was 37, he and Devadatta along with some other Sākyan princes were ordained by the Buddha personally in the second year of his ministry ([9], Vol. ii, p. 182; [14], Vol. i, p. 191). Soon after being ordained, he heard a discourse by Puñña Mantāniputta and attained the first fruit of emancipation (*sotāpanna*) ([2], Vol. iii, p. 105). During the last 25 years of the Buddha's ministry, he worked as his personal attendant and was always by his side ([14], Vol. i, pp. 159ff, 296; [17], Vol. ii, p. 121ff). Legends from various Buddhist traditions indicate that he was one of the greatest personalities in the history of Buddhism. All accounts of his life contain high tribute, paid by no less a person than the Buddha himself, to his great wisdom, devotion, and the exemplary manner in which he performed his duties as a personal attendant of the Buddha ([16], Vol. i, p. 81).

The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* gives many examples of Ānanda's solicitude for the Buddha ([10], Vol. ii, pp. 107, 115, 147, 199). Being his equal in age (both were born on the same day), it is most touching to see this devoted attendant nursing his distinguished cousin. So much so that when the Buddha was ill, he became sympathetically sick ([10], Vol. ii, p. 99). As the Buddha lay dying under a *sāla* tree, it is very moving to read how this most dedicated disciple could no longer help crying. To console him, the Buddha had to remind him that all component things are impermanent ([10], Vol. ii, p. 143f). The words spoken by Ānanda when the Buddha's death occurred were not those of a *thera* who had risen above all worldly things ([2], Vol. i, p. 158), but that of a person who was mourning the loss of a dear friend, companion, and, above all, a beloved master.

Due to his reputation as an expert on the Dhamma, he was often approached by both monks and laity for an exposition in detail ([6], Vol. ii, p. 132f, v.225; [2], Vol. iv, p. 93). The Buddha is once reported to have said that one who wants to honor the Dhamma should honor Ānanda ([1], Vol. iv, p. 369). It is said that the Buddha would often shorten his discourses so that the monks might have them further explained by Ānanda. Later, they would report to the Buddha about Ānanda's exposition, which would give him an opportunity to praise Ānanda's scholarship ([16], Vol. i, p. 81; [6], Vol. v, p. 229). Once on a similar occasion, the Buddha called him "a man of great wisdom" (*mahāpaññ*o) ([6], Vol. v, p. 225). At the First Council, Ānanda assisted the Saṃgha under Mahākassapa's leadership to rehearse the Dhamma. At the end of this council, the doctrine was handed over to Ānanda and his disciples to preserve it for posterity. In the first four Nikāyas of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, every *sutta* begins with the words "Thus have I heard (*evaṃ me sutaṃ*)," where the "I" refers to Ānanda as he had heard every *sutta* in person from the Buddha.

Perhaps, his most important contribution in Buddhism was that he was instrumental in persuading the Buddha to let women into the Saṃgha ([9], Vol. ii, p. 253ff). This made him very popular with the nuns. Once Mahākassapa called him "boy," and when Thullānandā came to know about this, she showed great annoyance with Mahākassapa. Later, when Mahākassapa complained to Ānanda of Thullānandā's behavior, Ānanda offered an apology to him on her behalf ([2], Vol. ii, p. 215ff). Xuanzang, who visited India in 629–644 C.E., mentions that Ānanda was worshiped by nuns as their patron saint ([5], p. 217). His concern for the sick and his ability as a peacemaker among monks form the basis of many stories in Buddhist literature ([13], Vol. iii, p. 258; [2], Vol. v, p. 176ff). According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha called him a champion monk in five respects: scholarship, impeccable behavior, retentive memory, resoluteness, and personal attention ([6], Vol. i, p. 24f). Another example of the Buddha's regard for Ānanda is the incident of his asking Ānanda to prepare a blueprint of a robe for the monks which should look like a field in Magadha ([9], Vol. i, p. 287).

Despite being the Buddha's intimate disciple and a constant companion – perhaps because of this very fact – Ānanda attained Enlightenment

only after the Buddha's death. Buddhaghosa gives a long account of Ānanda's struggle for final emancipation ([11], Vol. i, p. 9 ff. see also [9], Vol. ii, p. 286). When it was decided by Mahākassapa and others that a council (*saṅgīti*) should be organized to systematize the Buddha's teachings (*buddhavacana*), 500 monks, including Ānanda, were chosen as delegates. However, he was the only non arahant (*sekha*) among them and hence was declared ineligible to participate in the council. Thus, when the delegates gathered, a seat had to be kept vacant. Only after having been enjoined by his colleagues and a supreme effort on the eve of the council that he was able to attain the goal late at night. Thus, finally he was able to participate in the proceedings of the council. In the council, Ānanda was appointed to answer Mahākassapa's questions and to coordinate with him in rehearsing the Dhamma. Ānanda became known as the "dhamma-treasurer" (*Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika*) due to his extraordinary skill in remembering the word of the Buddha in its entirety. It is said that he was able to recall everything said by the Buddha, from 1 to 60,000 words in the right order without missing even one single syllable ([14], Vol. i, p. 286ff; [17], Vol. ii, p. 134). The *Commentary of the Majjhima Nikāya* says that Ānanda could remember anything of up to 15,000 stanzas of 60,000 lines ([16], Vol. i, p. 501). Every *sutta* of the first four Nikāyas of the *Sutta Piṭaka* begins with the words "Thus have I heard," where the "I" refers to Ānanda. Ānanda had been either present at the preaching by the Buddha of every *sutta* or the Buddha had repeated a *sutta* to him afterward, in case he had missed it ([14], Vol. i, p. 292).

Despite immense popularity, Ānanda had to face recrimination at the hands of his colleagues for some of his actions which, in their eyes, constituted offences. Thus, on the eve of the First Council, he was charged with the following five offences([9], Vol. ii, pp. 288–289; also see [10], Vol. ii, pp. 115, 154):

1. Having failed to ascertain from the Buddha the lesser and minor precepts which the Saṃgha was allowed to revoke if it deemed fit
2. Having stepped on the Buddha's rainy retreat (*vassāvāsa*) garment while sewing it
3. Having allowed the Buddha's body to be first saluted by women
4. Having neglected to ask the Buddha to live on for the space of a *kappa*
5. Having secured the admission of women into the Saṃgha

The *Dulva* adds two more charges ([12], p. 161), i.e.:

1. He failed to provide drinking water to the Buddha when he asked for it before dying.
2. He showed the hidden privy parts of the Buddha to women.

Ānanda's reply was that he himself saw no fault in any of these acts but that he would confess them as faults out of faith in his colleagues. Once he was found fault with for having gone into the village to beg for alms in his loincloth and nether garment ([9], Vol. i, p. 298). On another occasion, he was censured for having worn light garments which were blown about by the wind ([9], Vol. ii, p. 136).

That the Buddha's death was a great blow to him is shown by the stanzas he uttered immediately after the event ([10], Vol. ii, p. 157). Three months earlier, he had heard for the first time that death of the Buddha was near at hand and had besought him to live longer. The reply attributed to the Buddha is a curious one, namely, that on several previous occasions, at Rājagaha and at Vesālī (see, e.g., [10], p. 102f), he had hinted to Ānanda that he could, if he so desired, live for a whole kappa and that Ānanda could, if he wished, request him to extend his life indefinitely. Ānanda, however, failed to take the hint on these occasions, and thus, the opportunity was gone ([10], Vol. ii, pp. 114–118). Ānanda appears to have spent the last years of his life in teaching and preaching besides encouraging his younger colleagues.

Ānanda is said to have lived to the age of 120 years ([7], Vol. ii, p. 99; [15], Vol. ii, p. 596, Vol. iii, p. 129). A hymn of praise sung at his death is included at the end of the stanzas attributed to him in the *Theragāthā* ([8], pp. 1047–1049). The *Dīgha Nikāya*

Commentary ([7], Vol. ii, p. 99ff) giving details of his death mentions that he passed away while seated in midair above the river Rohiṇī. When Ānanda was on his way from Magadha to Vesālī, there to die, Ajātasattu heard that he was coming and, with his retinue, followed him up to Rohiṇī. The chiefs of Vesālī also heard the news, and they too went out to meet him, and both parties reached the riverbanks. To avoid any quarrel between the two parties, he sat in midair above the river and resolved that his remains be split in two parts. Entering into a "meditation on fire" (*tejokasina*), he passed away. A fire arose from the body and split the remains into two portions, each part falling on either bank of the river. People wept and wailed, even more than on the day when the Buddha had died, for they said, "when the carrier of the Buddha's robe and bowl lived, it was as though the Buddha himself lived." It is also an indication of Ānanda's popularity among the lay people. Both the parties built stūpas to enshrine their shares of the mortal remains ([7], Vol. ii, p. 99ff). When Xuanzang visited India, he saw both these stūpas ([5], p. 214). In the Chan School, he is known as the second Indian patriarch [15].

Cross-References

- ▶ Buddhaghosa
- ▶ Buddhist Councils
- ▶ Magadha
- ▶ Mahākassapa
- ▶ Rājagaha (Pāli)
- ▶ Thera- and Therīgāthā
- ▶ Thullanandā
- ▶ Vesālī
- ▶ Xuanzang (Hieun-Tsang)

References

1. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzac, London
2. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
3. Hecker H (2006) Ananda: the guardian of the Dhamma. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
4. Jones JJ (trans) (1949–1956) The Mahāvastu, sacred books of the east, 3 vols (16, 18, 19). Luzac, London
5. Li R (trans) (1996) The great tang dynasty record of the western regions. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley
6. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya (1885–1900), 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
7. Norman HC (1906) The commentary of the Dhammapada, 4 vols. Pali Text Society, London
8. Oldenberg H, Pischel R (eds) (1990) The Thera- and Therīgāthā, 2nd edn, with Appendices. K.R. Norman & L. Alsdorf, Pali Text Society, Oxford
9. Olderberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
10. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
11. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE, Stede W (eds) (1886–1932) The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī: Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. Rockhill WW (1884) The life of the Buddha and the early history of his order. Trübner, London
13. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
14. Walleser H, Kopp H (eds) (1924–1956) Manorathapūraṇī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
15. Wang B (1997) The Indian origin of the Chinese Chan School's Patriarch tradition. In: Dhammaratana BT, Pasadika B (eds) Dharmadūta: Mélanges offerts au Vénérable Thich Huyen-Vi, éditions. You-Feng, Paris
16. Woods JH, Kosambi D, Horner IB (eds) (1922–1938) Papañcasūdanī: Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosācariya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
17. Woodward FL (ed) (1990) Paramattha-Dīpanī: Theragāthā-Aṭṭhakathā, the commentary of Dhammapālācariya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
18. Woodward FL, Hardy E, Muller E, Barua DL et al (eds) (1891–1977) Paramatthadīpanī, Dhammapālācariya's commentary on the Therīgāthā, the Vimānavatthu. Pali Text Society, London

Ānandabodhi

- ▶ *Bodhi Tree*

Ānandagarbha

- ▶ Tāranātha

Ānāpānasati

Shanker Thapa
Faculty of Buddhist Studies, Lumbini Buddhist University, Lumbini Rupandehi, Nepal

Synonyms

Dhyāna/Jhāna; Meditation; Samatha

Definition

Ānāpānasati is a Theravada practice of meditation to train the mind and develop awareness. It is the practice of mindfulness of in and out breathing. Ānāpānasati is the fundamental form of meditation taught by the Buddha. It has been considered as the gateway to enlightenment, which is contained in the Ānāpānasati Sutta.

Ānāpānasati: The Buddhist Meditation

Ānāpānasati (Skt: Ānāpānasmṛti) stands for mindfulness of breathing. Ānāpāna refers to inhalation and exhalation whereas "Sati" is mindfulness. Thus, it is the practice of in and out breathing. Ānāpānasati is a Theravāda practice of meditation for mind concentration contained in the Ānāpānasati Sutta, which is collected in the Majjhima Nikāya. It is the fundamental form of meditation taught by the Buddha. In fact, this is the first subject of meditation which the Buddha expounded in the Satipatthāna Sutta, a discourse on the four foundations of mindfulness. This original Buddhist method of meditation was delivered and elaborated in the teaching of the Ānāpānasati Sutta. It is practiced as a part of one of the components, the Samyak Samādhi, of the "Noble Eightfold Path." The practice of Ānāpānasati removes defilements and leads to attain Nibbāṇa. It can be practiced with the four tetrads such as Kāyā (contemplation of the body), Vedanā (contemplation of feeling), Citta (contemplation of mind), and dhamma (contemplation of mental objects). It can also be practiced with other traditional meditation subjects including the virtue of loving kindness (Maitri), one of the four immeasurables (Brahmavihāra).

Ānāpānasati is a popular Buddhist meditation. One simple principle behind its practice is that if awareness is taken back to the breath repeatedly, mind gradually quiets down and the practitioner feels happiness. It has been the gateway to enlightenment; therefore, Buddha has laid utmost emphasis on the practice of meditation. All the past Buddhas have endorsed and adapted meditation as the basis for the attainment of Buddhahood. The historical Buddha, when he sat under the Bodhi tree to find out the ultimate truth, practiced Ānāpānasati. Then he attained the four Jhānas, recollected his past lives (Purvānusmriti Jñāna), grasped the nature of Samsāra (*Divyacakshu Jñāna*), and liberated himself from the wheel of Samsāra (*Āśravakshyaya Jñāna*). Finally, he attained the great wisdom. The practice of Ānāpānasati involves breath as the only object of meditation. It is mentioned as Samatha meditation in the Visuddhimagga. However, it can be practiced at both the tranquility meditation (Samatha) and insight meditation (Vipassanā) levels. The former is practiced with mindfulness of breathing and development of loving kindness, whereas Vipassyanā meditation builds on calmness. The focus and positive emotion created in Samatha practice helps the practitioners to develop awareness of impermanence, interconnectedness, and the contingent nature of experience. The practice of Samatha prepares practitioners to move into the Vipassyanā practice.

Texts on Ānāpānasati

Ānāpānasati Sutta provides detailed instructions on breath as the object of meditation. It describes about 16 steps for the concentration of mind. It is practiced to bring forth insight and perceive four dimensions of mindfulness (Satipatthāna) and seven factors of awakening. As mentioned in the Sutta, repeated practice of breath is of great benefit which leads to deliverance. Generally, its

development leads to perfection of Satipatthāna thereby leading to perfection of factors of enlightenment and finally, attainment of Nibbāṇa.

Patisambhidāmagga has a section on breathing mindfulness called Ānāpānakathā. The first three sections are a kind of general analytical elaboration and introductions before embarking on the detailed analysis of the actual practice as set forth in the Suttas.

In addition, further instructions on mindfulness of breathing are also contained in various texts in Pāli canon. Vinaya Suttavibhanga, Pārājika III also discusses about mindfulness. Other Suttas in the Nikāya also mentions about mindfulness of breathing. They provide further explanations, instructions, and contexts on the practice. The Mahā Rahulovāda Sutta – Majjhima Nikāya 62, Ānāpāna-samyutta – Samyutta Nikāya 54 No. 4, Girimanaṇda Sutta – Anguttara Nikāya 10.60 discuss about mindfulness of breathing. The first tetrad is further elaborated in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta contained in the Digha Nikāya 22 and Kāyāgata Sutta in Majjhima Nikāya 119. There are some other Suttas in Samyutta Nikāya (54 No. 5–8, 10–11, and 17–20), Anguttara Nikāya (nos 16, 96–98, 115), and Itivuttaka (85) that further discuss different aspects of mindfulness of breathing.

The Practice

While practicing Ānāpānasati, a practitioner gives full attention to breathing. Sensation of breathing is used as the object in this meditation. In and out breathing is not the breathing exercise, rather a practitioner observes and sees what happens there. A practitioner does not make any conscious decision to think outside of the practice. Awareness is gained in the practice of Ānāpānasati. The practitioners recognize the difference between awareness and unawareness. As mentioned in the Ānāpānasati Sutta, it has great benefit which perfects the four foundations of mindfulness of breathing. It further perfects seven factors of enlightenment. In turn, the perfection in seven factors of enlightenment perfects in clear vision and deliverance. The practice of Ānāpānasati also helps to develop patience, kindness, and gentleness that are important when one realizes that he was unaware.

Before stepping into the 16 objects which are grouped into four tetrads, a practitioner should pay attention to place, position, and practice. A secluded place is necessary to begin with the mindfulness of breathing. The four steps of mindfulness are of greater significance in the practice. A practitioner sits down in a forest or under a tree crossing his legs. He takes the position erecting the body. Then he establishes Ānāpāna in front. After that, he starts breathing in and out. Only after that, the core instruction of four tetrads comes.

Four Tetrads of Practice

Here are four tetrads of the practice that are significant in the practice.

- Contemplation of the body (Kāyā) – discerns in and out breathing, discerns long or short breath and experiences the whole body, calming bodily formations
- Contemplation of feeling (Vedanā) – being sensitive to rapture, being sensitive to pleasure, being sensitive to mental fabrication, and calming mental fabrication
- Contemplation of feeling (Citta) – being sensitive to the mind, satisfying the mind, steadying the mind, releasing the mind
- Contemplation of the mental objects (Dhamma) – focusing on impermanence, focusing on dispassion, focusing on cessation, and focusing on relinquishment

The practice of mindfulness of breathing perfects the four foundation of mindfulness.

Seven Stages of Purification

The practitioners also perfect seven enlightenment factors after perfecting four foundations of mindfulness. On all occasions, a practitioner is also fervent and mindful having put away greed and grief regarding the world. If a person wants to attain Jhāna through the practice of mindfulness of breathing, he needs to make a balance of the seven factors of enlightenment.

- On that occasion, unremitting enlightenment factor of mindfulness (*Sati*) is established in him.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of investigation of phenomena (*dhammavicaya*) is aroused in him, and he develops it. And by development, it comes to perfection in him.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of effort (*Vīriya*) is aroused in him, and he develops it. By development, it comes to perfection in him. It is the effort to bring the enlightenment factors together to strengthen the enlightenment factor of investigation of phenomena and the enlightenment factor of effort itself.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of joy (*pīti*) is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to perfection in him. It is the gladness of the mind when experiencing mindfulness of breathing.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of tranquility (*passaddhi*) is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to perfection in him. It is the calmness of the mind and mental concomitants that have the nature of experience as their object.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of concentration (*Samādhi*) is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to perfection in him. It is the one pointedness of the mind on the experience of mindfulness of breathing.
- On that occasion, the enlightenment factor of equanimity (*Upekkhā*) is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to perfection in him. It is the evenness of mind that becomes neither excited nor withdrawn from the experience of mindfulness of breathing.

Thus, repeatedly practiced, the four foundations of mindfulness fulfill the seven enlightenment factors. In turn, the repeated practice of the seven enlightenment factors perfect clear vision and deliverance. A practitioner has to develop and balance seven enlightenment factors. If the effort is insufficient, the mind of the practitioner will fall away from the object of meditation. If such a situation persists, one should not develop enlightenment factors of tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. Instead, mind is raised up again by developing the enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, effort, and joy. Too much effort may result in agitated mind and distraction. Then the practitioner should not develop enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, effort, and joy, but instead he should develop the three enlightenment factors of tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.

The Method of Practice: Eight Steps of Absorption

After getting rid of minor impediments and dispelled drowsiness, the practitioner should sit comfortably to practice mindfulness. After reflecting on the Three Jewels to gladden the mind, he sets himself to bring breathing mindfulness as meditation subject. There are stages of practicing breathing mindfulness. Those stages include the following:

- Counting: Counting breath to give attention to the meditation subject.
- Connection: Carrying on, which is the uninterrupted following of the in breaths and out breaths with mindfulness, after giving up counting.
- Contact: Place touched by breaths; no attention is to be given to it by contact separate from fixing, as there is by counting separate from connection.
- Fixing: Absorption; after giving attention to this subject of meditation, the fixing called absorption adorned with the remaining Jhāna factors is achieved.
- Observing: Insight, the practitioner should guard the sign (with pleasant feeling) avoiding seven unsuitable things and observing seven suitable things.
- Turning away: The path, by increasing the subject of meditation, the practitioner turns away wishes to attain purification and practices the same four arūpa jhānas in the five way.
- Purification: Fruition.
- Looking back on these: Reviewing, the ending step.

The practice of Ānāpānasati includes some stages such as stage 1 – counting in each out

breath, stage 2 – to count in cycles of ten breaths, stage 3 – to drop the counting, and stage 4 – to begin to narrow the focus of awareness. The five controlling faculties – faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, are the five powers that control the mind and keep it from straying off the path of Samatha (tranquility) and Vipassanā (insight). When those faculties are sufficiently developed, concentration will go up to absorption concentration. One will reach at the state of Jhāna in this way.

Obstacles

There are certain factors that create disturbances in concentration thereby disturbing meditation practices and preventing the encounter with the truth. In this situation, one will not be able to reach at the state of access concentration (Upacāra Samādhi) and full concentration (Appanā Samādhi). These states of consciousness are essential for Samatha practitioners to experience the Jhānas and Vipassanā practitioners to obtain wisdom. There are five types of hindrances are – sensual desire (*Kāmacchanda*), anger (*Byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness and worry (*Uddhacca kukkucca*), and doubt (*Vicikicchā*). In addition, ignorance, agitation, aversion, and ill will are also considered as the obstacles of concentration. Those hindrances can be tackled down with the practice of mindfulness of breathing. On contrary to prevailing obstacles of Ānāpānasati, there are other factors that aid to the practice of breathing meditation, which includes – renunciation, non-ill will, perception of light, non-distraction, defining of states, knowledge, and joy.

Benefit

Buddha elaborated on the benefit of mindfulness of breathing practice in front of the assembly of Bhikkhus, which is contained in the Ānāpānasati Sutta. He explained that respiration mindfulness developed and repeatedly practiced is of great benefit and yields great fruits. It perfects the four foundations of mindfulness which in turn perfects the seven enlightenment factors. Then it perfects clear vision and deliverance.

The practice of Ānāpānasati has multiple benefits. It is a fool to control mind. Its major benefits are developing awareness, concentration, and calmness. The practice of breathing meditation helps to improve the skill to focus due to the practice of concentration on the subject of meditation.

Cross-References

- Bodhi
- Buddha (Concept)
- Dhamma
- Establishing of Mindfulness
- Jhāna
- Meditation
- Pāli
- Samadhi-Marana
- Samatha
- Saṃsāra
- Vipassanā

References

1. Ānāpānasati Sutta, *Majjhima Nikāya* – 118.
2. Analayo B (2007) Mindfulness of breathing in the Samyuktaagama. Buddh Stud Rev 24(2):137–150
3. Ñāṇamoli B (tr) (1998) Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpānasati): Buddhist texts from the Pāli canon and extracts from the Pāli commentaries. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
4. Ñāṇamoli B (1999) The path of purification: Visuddhimagga. BPS Pariyatti Edition, Seattle
5. Bodhipaksa (2003) Wild mind: a step-by-step guide to meditation. Windhorse, London
6. Brahm A (2006) Mindfulness, bliss and beyond. Wisdom, Boston
7. Bhikkhu B (1988) Mindfulness with breathing: a manual for serious beginners (trans: Santikaro B). Shambhala, Boston
8. Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta, *Digha Nikaya* 22.
9. Thera NA, Jayasekera UD (1995) Ānāpānasati meditation on breathing. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
10. Ven. Sayadaw, Pa-Auk (1998) Mindfulness of breathing and four elements meditation. WAVE, Kualalumpur
11. Vimalaramsi Ven U Gyi (1999) The Ānāpānasati Sutta: a practical guide to mindfulness of breathing

and tranquil wisdom meditation. Yin Shun Foundation, Lafayette
12. Vimalaramsi Ven U Gyi (2012) The breath of love. Ehipassiko Foundation, Annapolis

Anasana

▶ *Sallekhanā* (Jainism)

Anāthapiṇḍika

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Sudatta

Definition

A banker and contemporary of the Buddha.

Anāthapiṇḍika was a banker (*seṭṭhi*) of Sāvatthī (Sk: Śrāvastī) and contemporary of the Buddha. Though his personal name was Sudatta, he became known as Anāthapiṇḍika (feeder of the destitute) due to his unparalleled munificence ([14], Vol. i, p. 208; [15], Vol. i, p. 50). His father's name was either Sumana ([14], Vol. i, p. 384) or Datta ([1], Vol. iii(3), p. 133), and his wife Puññālakkhaṇā was the sister of a *seṭṭhi* from Rājagaha (Sk: Rājagṛha) ([2], Vol. ii, p. 410). According to the Pāli texts, he had a son called Kāḷa ([10], Vol. iii, p. 189) and three daughters known as Subhaddā, Culla-Subhaddhā, and Sumanā ([10], Vol. i, p. 151f) who were very dutiful and assisted Anāthapiṇḍika in taking care of the Buddha and the Saṃgha ([2], Vol. ii, p. 347). However, Sanskrit-based sources point out that he had seven sons and two daughters, Sumāgadhā and Sumanā ([7], Vol. i, p. 565).

He met the Buddha for the first time during his business trip to Rājagaha during the first year after the Enlightenment ([11], Vol. ii, p. 154ff). He converted to Buddhism immediately after the meeting and attained the first fruit of emancipation (*sotāpanna*). Thereafter, he invited the Buddha to spend the rainy season (*vassāvāsa*) at Sāvatthī and is said to have built many vihāras along the way to make the journey comfortable for the Buddha and the monks. At Sāvatthī, he bought the famous Jetavana at great expense, erected the famous Jetavanārāma inside its premises, and then presented it to the Saṃgha. This incident is recorded on one of the pillars of the Bhārhut stūpa. As a result of this and many other benefactions in the cause of the Saṃgha, Anāthapiṇḍika was recognized by the Buddha as the foremost among all almsgivers ([8], Vol. i, p. 25). We are told that on *uposatha* days, his whole household kept the fast, and they never violated the pañcasīla ([2], Vol. iii, p. 257). Besides, feeding a large number of monks in his house daily, he also provided meals to guests, village people, physically challenged, and poor people ([14], Vol. i, pp. 208–209; [10], Vol. i, p. 128; [2], Vol. iii, p. 119). He was known as an *adeyyavaco* (whose word carried weight), and he used this reputation to promote Buddhism ([2], Vol. i, p. 92).

It is said that as a result of selfless generosity, Anāthapiṇḍika was gradually reduced to poverty. The Buddha preached the *Velāma Sutta* to encourage Anāthapiṇḍika when he had been reduced to poverty and felt disappointed that he could no longer provide provisions for the monks ([8], Vol. iv, p. 392ff). According to a legend, a deity on the advice of god Sakka helped him to become rich again ([2], Vol. i, p. 227ff; [10], Vol. iii, p. 10ff).

Anāthapiṇḍika was not only a shrewd businessman but also a keen debater. The Buddha is also said to have recognized him as a keen debater and defender of the Dhamma. For instance, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* ([8], Vol. v, pp. 185–189) records a visit he paid to the Paribbājakas when he could think of nothing better to do. A lively debate ensued regarding their views and the views of the Buddha as expounded by Anāthapiṇḍika. The latter silenced his opponents. When the incident was reported to the Buddha, he

spoke in high praise of Anāthapiṇḍika and expresses his admiration of the way in which he handled the discussion.

Anāthapiṇḍika went regularly to see the Buddha, but we are told that he never asked a question of the Buddha for fear of wearying him. Moreover, he did not wish the Buddha to feel obligated to preach to him in return for his munificence ([10], Vol. i, p. 3). However, the Buddha of his own accord preached to him on various occasions (See, for instance, [8], Vol. i, p. 261f, Vol. ii, p. 64ff, Vol. iv, p. 405f, Vol. iii, pp. 45–48, 204, Vol. v, p. 177ff; [3], Vol. v, p. 387). There is, however, at least one *sutta* preached as a result of a question put by Anāthapiṇḍika himself regarding gifts and those who are worthy of receiving them ([8], Vol. i, pp. 62–63). He often consulted the Buddha regarding his personal and family matters. For instance, we also find him consulting the Buddha regarding the marriage of his daughter Cola Subhaddā ([10], Vol. iii, p. 466). Besides, whenever Anāthapiṇḍika visited the Buddha, he was in the habit of relating to the Buddha various things which had come under his notice, and the Buddha would relate to him stories from the past containing similar incidents. There are at least 15 Jātakas that have been preached this way. At least four *suttas* and one *vagga* in the Pāli Tipiṭaka bear his name ([3], Vol. 1, p. 51ff, Vol. v, pp. 380ff, 385ff, 387ff; [13], Vol. iii, pp. 258–263).

Anāthapiṇḍika died before the Buddha after having fallen grievously ill. Shortly before his death, Sāriputta went to see him along with Ānanda and preached the *Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta* to him ([13], Vol. iii, p. 258f; [3], Vol. v, pp. 380–387). After listening to Sāriputta, he died peacefully and was reborn in the Tusita heaven where he will live as long as Visākhā and Sakka ([12], Vol. iii, p. 740). The *Śarabhaṅga Jātaka* of the *Mahāvastu* identifies him as Śakra Śacīpati, the lord of the devas ([5], Vol. iii, p. 371).

Cross-References

- ▶ Dhamma
- ▶ Pañcasila
- ▶ Rājagaha (Pāli)
- ▶ Sāriputta
- ▶ Sāvatthī
- ▶ Sotāpanna
- ▶ Tipiṭaka

References

1. Dutt N (1942) Gilgit manuscripts, vol III, part 1. Calcutta Oriental Press, Calcutta
2. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzac, London
3. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Hecker H (2005) Anathapindika: the great benefactor. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
5. Jones JJ (trans) (1949–1956) The Mahāvastu, sacred books of the east, 3 vols (16, 18, 19). Luzac, London
6. Li R (trans) (1996) The great Tang Dynasty record of the western regions. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley
7. Malalasekera GP (ed) (1961) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol 1. Government of Ceylon, Colombo
8. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya (1885–1900), 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
9. Ñyānaponika T, Hecker H (2003) Great disciples of the Buddha: their lives, their works, their legacy. Wisdom, Boston
10. Norman HC (1906) The commentary on the Dhammapada, 4 vols. Pali Text Society, London
11. Olderberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE, Stede W (eds) (1886–1932) The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
13. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
14. Walleser H, Kopp H (eds) (1924–1956) Manorathapūraṇī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
15. Woods JH, Kosambi D, Horner IB (eds) (1922–1938) Papañcasūdanī: Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosācariya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Anātman

- ▶ Anattā (Buddhism)

Anattā (Buddhism)

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Anātman; No-ego; No-self; No-Soul (Buddhism); No-soul

Definition

Nonacceptance of the existence of soul/self in Buddhism.

Origin and Meaning

The term *atta/attā* (Sk: *ātman)* has been used in religious and philosophical writings in ancient India to refer to an eternal essence of man. Literally meaning "breath or spirit," this term is often translated into English as "self, soul, or ego." As compared to this, *anattā* (Sk: *anātman)*, which is the antonym of *attā*, may be translated into English as "no-self, no-soul, and no-ego." Due to its nonacceptance of the existence of *attā*, Buddhism is sometimes referred to as *anattavāda* ("the teaching of no-self").

The doctrine of the self, first formulated in the Upaniṣads, has remained fundamental to the Indian thought till date. Discussion on Buddhist perception of self, thus, can only take place with reference to the Upaniṣadic view of it. The Upaniṣads assume that there does exist an *ātman* in one's personality which is permanent (leaving the impermanent body at death), immutable, omnipotent, and free from sorrow. Thus, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* points out that the *ātman* is "free from old age, from death and grief, hunger and thirst" ([1], p. 142). Some Upaniṣads like the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* hold the view that the soul can be separated from the body like the sword from its scabbard or the stalk from the muñja grass ([1], p. 92), and it can travel at will away from the body, especially in sleep ([1], p. 30). Above all, the *Bhagavadgītā* says that the *ātman* is "eternal. . . is not born, nor does it ever die. . . unchangeable, primeval. . . all-pervading, stable, firm" ([2], Vol. ii, p. 27ff).

Buddhist View

Belief in the existence of *attā* is viewed by Buddhism as a form of delusion. As Brahman and *ātman* came to be identified with each other in the Upaniṣadic thought, Buddhist texts do not mention Brahman (neuter) as the one reality or of any identity of this with the *ātman*. The Brahmā mentioned in Buddhist texts is a personal god born and reborn as inescapably as any other being. The Buddha denied the view that a human being possesses a permanent, autonomous, and unchanging *attā* whose characteristic is bliss. Since Buddhism believes that everything is impermanent (*sabbaṃ aniccaṃ*) and transient (*vipariṇāma*), it automatically follows that the *attā* as a self-subsisting entity does not exist. Thus, Buddhism maintains that to think that anybody or anything has an unchanging and permanent self is a metaphysically incorrect or even a profane view (*viparyāsa*), for all things are always changing, and to cling to anything as if it were permanent is to misunderstand the nature of reality. To hold to a self is to hold to an artificial and ignorant construction because reality is *anattā*, i.e., "devoid of self."

Why Does Buddhism Believe That There Is No Such Thing as a Soul?

The Buddha pointed out that both animate and inanimate objects of the world are *saṃkhata* (constituted), so described on account of their being constituted of some elements, as distinguished from Nibbāna which is the *asaṃkhata* (the unconstituted). The constituted elements (*khandhas*) are divided into two distinct categories: *nāma* and *rūpa*, *nāma* denoting the nonmaterial or mental constituents of a living being and *rūpa* denoting the material only. All

inanimate objects therefore are included in the term *rūpa*. *Nāma* is analyzed into four mental states, namely, *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṃkhāra* (resultant impressions produced through kamma), and *viññāna* (cognition, i.e., knowledge derived through the organs of senses), while the *rūpakkhandha* denotes the four great elements (*mahābhūta*): earth (*paṭhavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*), and air (*vāyu*), including all that is formed out of these four. The four subdivisions of *nāma* along with the fifth, the *rūpa*, are collectively termed *pañcakkhandhas*. Every being and object is a composite of these five *khandhas*, without a sixth, the *puggala* (Sanskrit, *pudgala*) or *attā*. These five aggregates are explained in Buddhism as being appropriated (*upādinna*) by cognition (*viññāna*) in order to continue the existence to which it is bound by its previous activities ([3], Vol. ii, p. 63; [4], Vol. i, p. 176). In other words, these aggregates get compounded together in various configurations to constitute what is experienced as a person, exactly in the same manner as a chariot is constructed by putting together various parts ([5], Vol. i, pp. 134–135). But just as the chariot as an entity disappears when its constituent elements are pulled apart, so does an entity called a person with the dissolution of the *khandhas* (*yathā hi aṅgasambhārā hoti saddo ratho iti, evaṃ khandhesu santesu hoti satto'ti sammuti*) ([5], Vol. i, p. 135). Thus, one does not see anything like an *attā* as a residue here. When a person is indicated by giving him a name, it does not denote a self but is merely an appellation for the five *khandhas* which constitute the empirical individual ([6], p. 25ff). In other words, what conditions existence has no essence (*sāra*), and since a human being is the aggregate combination of various impermanent conditions, then that being has no permanent essence. What is experienced to be a person is not a thing but a process. Thus, the Buddhist analysis of the nature of the person centers on the realization that what appears to be an individual is, in fact, an ever-changing combination of five *khandhas*. There is no human being; there is only becoming (*bhava*) and no static and eternal *attā*. Thus, human life is *anattā*, like the constantly changing patterns of insubstantial bubbles on an insubstantial stream. A living being composed of five *khandhas* is beginningless and is in a continuous state of flux, each preceding group of *khandhas* giving rise to a subsequent group of *khandhas*, and this process is going on momentarily and ceaselessly in the present existence as it will go on also in the future till ignorance (*avidyā*) is got rid of and the ultimate goal of Nibbāna is accomplished. Buddhism views this process as rebirth and not transmigration and does not accept the existence of self which is supposed to pass from one existence to another like the caterpillar from one blade of grass to another ([3], Vol. ii, p. 63; [4], Vol. i, p. 176; [7], Vol. i, p. 53f).

Like the human being, Buddhism also analyzes into its component parts the external world with which the human being enters into relationship. This relationship is one of the cognition (*viññāṇa*) which is established through cognitive faculties (*indriya*) and their objects. These faculties and their objects are called *āyatana* ("sense sphere" or "sense base"), used to include both sense and sense object, the meeting of which two leads to cognition. These three factors, the sense faculty, the sense object, and the resultant consciousness that together comprise cognition, are called *dhātu* ("perceptual bases"). Thus, the human personality, along with the external world with which it enters into relationship, is divided into *khandha, āyatana*, and *dhātu*. These three generically are called *dhamma* ("element of existence"). This explains the significance of the formula put forth by the Buddha: *sabbe dhammā anattā* (All existence is no-self, i.e., without self) ([8], p. 279). Thus, when once Ānanda queried from the Buddha as to the meaning of the phrase "the world is empty," the latter replied, "That is empty Ānanda, of a self or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is that that is empty? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like" ([9], Vol. iii, p. 54). That which is wholly impermanent and subject to suffering is also inevitably *an-attā*, i.e., "without *attā*." At another place in the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, the doctrine of the permanence of self is called a foolish doctrine by the Buddha for

the simple reason that what is liable to pain and corruption cannot be the self of a thing ([7], Vol. i, p. 138).

How Is Rebirth Possible if There Is No Soul?

Birth, according to the Buddha, is the arising of the *khandhas*. Just as the arising of a physical state is conditioned by a preceding state as its cause, so the appearance of these psychophysical phenomena is conditioned by causes anterior to its birth. The present process of becoming is the result of the craving for becoming in the previous birth, and the future birth is conditioned by the present instinctive craving. As the process of one life span is possible without a permanent entity passing from one thought moment to another, so a series of life processes is possible without anything to transmigrate from one existence to another. In other words, when a person begins his present life, he brings as his inheritance the kamma of his many previous lives. During the course of his existence in this world, he is always accumulating fresh kamma through his actions, thoughts, desires, affections, and passions. The kamma affects every moment of his life, and as a consequence, his character is constantly changing. At death, when the corporeal bond, which held him together, falls apart, he undergoes only a comparatively deeper change. The unseen potencies of his kamma bring forth a new person. The new body that he gets and which is determined by his past kamma becomes fitted to the sphere in which he is born. When a new life thus gets created, its component elements are present from its very inception although in an undeveloped condition. The first moment of the new life is called *viññāna* (consciousness) which arises only by causation, and it does not arise without assignable conditions. This has been explained by the Buddha in the *Majjhima Nikāya* in connection with the story of a monk called Sāti who believed that consciousness runs on and on without any break of identity (*anañña*). When he was brought to the Buddha, he told him that this was not so and that consciousness arises only by causation and with only assignable conditions ([7], Vol. i, p. 477). The *Mahānidāna Suttanta* contains the assertion that there is a "descent" of the consciousness into the womb of the mother preparatory to rebirth ([3], Vol. ii, p. 63f). The commentaries do not have the same opinion with regard to the question whether, besides the continuity of consciousness between the old and the new lives, there is some sort of corporeal accompaniment as well, i.e., some sort of subtle matter, so to say. Buddhaghoṣa has pointed out that the consciousness is not accompanied by any physical form and that it is in process of constant change. The "descent" is only an expression to denote the simultaneousness of death and rebirth. The new person, psychologically, if not physically, is a continuation of the deceased and suffers or enjoys what his "predecessor" had prepared for him through his kamma in the last birth. The elements that constitute the empirical individual are incessantly in flux, but they will never totally disappear till the conditions and causes that hold them together and impel them to rebirth, the craving (*taṇhā*) and the grasping (*upādāna*) and the desire for separate existence, are finally extinguished.

The upshot of the above-stated argument is that the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth is different from the theory of reincarnation in which the transmigration of an *attā* and its invariable material rebirth are the mandatory conditions. In the Buddhist texts such as the *Milindapañha* and the *Visuddhimagga*, several similes have been made use of for illustrating the point of view that nothing transmigrates from one life to another. The simile of the flame is worth mentioning here. Life is compared to a flame. Rebirth is like the transmitting of the flame from one lamp to another. The flame of life is continuous, though, apparently, there appears to be a break at the so-called death. Thus, "it is not the same mind and body that is born into the next existence, but with this mind and body… one does a deed… and by reason of this deed another mind and body is born into the next existence" ([6], p. 25ff). The last thought moment of this life perishes conditioning another thought moment in a subsequent life. The new being is not absolutely the same as it has changed, but at the same time, it is not totally different as it has followed from the same stream of kamma energy.

In other words, there is merely a continuity of a particular life flux and nothing more.

How Does a Human Being Exist Without a Soul?

If Buddhism denied the existence of an ultimate and real self, then the question arises as to how does Buddhism account for the existence of human beings, their identity, continuity, and ultimate religious goal? It is never denied that at the level of the "conventional truth," in the daily transactional world, there are more or less stable persons who are nameable and humanly recognizable. At the level of the "ultimate truth," however, this unity and stability of personhood is viewed by Buddhism to be no more than just a matter of appearances ([10], Vol. ii, p. 77). In the end, there exist only collections of impersonal and impermanent elements (*dhammā*) arranged into temporary configurations by the moral force of deeds of the past (*kamma*) and by self-fulfilling but self-ruinous *taṇhā* (craving) which is both cognitive and effective. The Buddha was also opposed to annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*) and unambiguously denied that, at death, a human being is completely destroyed. Thus, there is no justification for assuming that the Buddha encouraged the annihilation of the feeling of self. "What was encouraged by him was the doing away of the belief in a permanent and eternal šghost in the machine" ([11], p. 38). As pointed out by G.P. Malalasekera, "Man, in Buddhism, is a concrete, living, striving creature and his personality is something that changes, evolves and grows, a composite, existent and changing. It is the concrete man, not the transcendental self that ultimately achieves perfection by constant effort and creative will" ([12], Vol. i, p. 569).

In the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* delivered at Isipatana (Sārnāth), the Buddha pointed out that if there were an *attā*, it should be autonomous, but no such thing is to be found. Matter (*rūpa*) is not the self. What is conditioned by not self cannot be self. The cause and condition for the arising of matter are not self, so it is asked, how could matter, which is brought into being by what is not self, be self ([5], Vol. iii, p. 24). In all the statements attributed to the Buddha regarding the doctrine of no-self, there is complete consistency. When, for instance, he is asked who, in the absence of a self, is it that has feelings or other sensations, his answer is that there is no one who feels, but there is feeling, which is a totally different proposition. Similarly, it is not correct to ask who becomes old, who dies, and who is reborn. There is old age, there is death, and there is rebirth ([5], Vol. ii, p. 62). Indeed, if any assertion can be made about a self, it would be more correct to call the body the self because, whereas the body may last as long as a 100 years, the mind in all its forms is in constant flux, like an ape in a forest which seizes one branch only to let it go and grasp another ([5], Vol. ii, p. 94f). The doctrine of no-self is a necessary corollary to the teaching of impermanence (*anicca*). Since all things are impermanent, they are fraught with sorrow, and since bliss is the characteristic of the self, they are without self. Thus, there is no-self in things. Furthermore, all things being impermanent, they are fraught with suffering because they are without self, inasmuch as they are not autonomous. Existence is nothing but dependent upon a series of conditions; hence, their existence is a conditional one, and there is nothing in the universe that is permanent, i.e., independent of conditions. All things, mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), have no abiding self-reality. What appears to be real is a temporary existence, an instant in a conditional sequence, the effect of two or more conditions combined. Since the *saṃkhāras* have nothing perdurable or stable in them and are in a state perpetual becoming (*bhava*), the phenomenal world is, therefore, a world of continuous flux or flow (*santāna*), a congeries of ever-changing elements in a process of ceaseless movement. All things, without exception, are nothing but strings or chains of momentary events, instantaneous "bits" of existence. Thus, from the Buddhist point of view, even the simple stability of empirical objects is regarded as something constituted by one's imagination. The empirical thing is a thing constructed by the synthesis of one's productive imagination on the basis of sensation. It is nothing but an imagined mental computation. Every element (*dhamma*), though appearing only for a single instant (Sanskrit, *kṣaṇa*; Pāli, *khaṇa*),

is a "dependently originating element," i.e., it depends for its origin on what had gone before it. Thus, existence becomes "dependent existence" where there is no destruction of one thing and no creation of another. There is only a constant, uninterrupted, infinitely graduated change. Thus, the personality is only a bundle of elements or forces (*saṃkhāras*) and a stream or a series of successive states. Everything is a succession; there is nothing substantial or permanent. The human individual does not remain the same for two consecutive moments. The "spiritual" part (*nāma*) of the human being and its physical "frame" (*rūpa*) are linked together by causal laws. The individual is entirely phenomenal, governed by the laws of life, without any extraphenomenal self within him.

If any of the constituents of the body was self, then the body would not be subject to misery and affliction, and one should be able to say to it, "let my body be thus, let my body be not thus." But this is not possible as the body is shifting and constantly changing and, therefore, invariably accompanied by suffering. The conclusion is, therefore, reached that all these things, whether past, future, or presently arisen, in oneself or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, are all not to be viewed thus: "This is mine (*etaṃ mama*), this is what I am (*eso'ham asmi*), this is myself (*eso me attā*)." Then, it is pointed out, when a man realizes that all these things are not the self, he turns away from them, and by the extinction of desire, he attains release ([5], Vol. iii, p. 66). Here can be found for the first time, as pointed out by Malalasekera, an indication of the Buddha's purpose in enunciating his doctrine. All misery, in his view, arises from the delusion of self which causes man not only to endeavor to profit himself but also to injure others ([13], Vol. i, p. 570).

As pointed out by Malalasekera ([13], Vol. i, p. 569), the Buddhist argument against the doctrine of *ātman* is twofold. The first argument is that the Buddha takes various aspects of the personality and contends that none of them can be identified with the *ātman* since they do not have the characteristics of the *ātman*. Thus, the question is asked ([7], Vol. i, p. 232ff): Is the body (the physical personality) permanent or impermanent? The answer is it is impermanent. Is what is impermanent sorrowful or happy? Sorrowful. Of what is impermanent, sorrowful, and liable to change, is it proper to regard it as "This is mine, this I am, this is my soul"? It is not. The *Paṭisambhiddāmagga* adds that none of the *khandhas* has a core (*sāra*), and thus, none of them can be *attā* ([14], Vol. i, p. 37). Concerning the eternality of *attā*, the Buddha gave no answer saying that it was inexpressible (*avyākata*). He felt that whether *attā* was eternal or not was a metaphysical question and had no bearing for the Holy Path nor would it lead to Nibbāna ([13], Vol. ii, p. 318). Another explanation of the Buddha's refusal to be drawn into this and similar controversies is the impossibility to provide a conclusive answer to a question which contains an intrinsic falsehood ([13], Vol. i, p. 574). The second argument of the Buddha is that belief in a permanent self would negate the usefulness of the moral life. In other words, the individual being entirely phenomenal, governed by causal laws, were there to be in him a self, which transcends these laws, then ethical life would lose its point ([13], Vol. i, p. 575). Buddhism does not set up any independent subject, as it regards every existence as dependent on causal arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), clearly expressed in the causality theory which says, "When this is, that is; when this is produced, that is produced; when this is not, that is not; when this perishes, that perishes" ([13], Vol. ii, p. 319).

It is thus evident that the Buddha explicitly denied the self in the phenomenal realm. To this extent, his views were not opposed to the Orthodox Brāhmaṇical views as expounded in the *Upaniṣads*. For what he here denies is that any of the *khandhas* may have *attā*, not the *attā* as such. But what about the transcendent-immanent self as inculcated in the *Upaniṣads*? Different scholars have answered this question differently. According to Stcherbatsky, the Buddha did not believe in the existence of self of any type and the Dhamma that he taught was thoroughly *anattavādī* ([15], p. 55). According to T.W. Rhys Davids, at the time of the Buddha, there were prevalent in northern India animistic, polytheistic, pantheistic, and dualistic views. The belief in *attā* was fundamental to all of them.

The Buddha not only ignored it but also regarded it as a hindrance in spiritual progress. The denial of self by the Buddha emanated from the fact that he found in his experience nothing that paralleled the supposed characteristics of the *attā*, namely, independence, permanence, and blissfulness ([16], pp. 210–237). According to Poussin, in the Pāli literature, there are many passages which support *anattavāda*, but there are a few which support *attavāda* ([17], pp. 821–824). In the opinion of Hegel, Buddhism was a creed of final negation ([18], pp. 167–172). However, according to Schrader, the Buddha appeared as a "soul denier" to his contemporaries only because they conceived of the soul in an extremely anthropomorphic fashion, speaking of its form, weight, color, etc. ([19], Vol. vi). C.A.F. Rhys Davids vehemently supported the view that the Buddha did not propound the "no-soul" theory. According to her, it was a later monkish development which was imposed on the original gospel under the influence of the hostility toward the brāhmaṇas. She has argued that had the Buddha opposed the Upaniṣadic theory of soul, he would have certainly brought it forward while debating with the brāhmaṇical scholars, which he did not do ([20], pp. 789–715). Similarly, she pointed out as to why, if *anattā* was such a fundamental tenet in Buddhism, when the Paribbājaka Vacchagotta asked the Buddha "Is there an *attā* or is there not," the Buddha remained silent instead of categorically stating that there was no *attā* ([21], p. 285). However, it may be pointed out here that the Buddha had indeed explained this to Ānanda later by saying that if he had replied by saying that self exists, he would have been quoted by those who believe in the existence of self (*sassatavādins*) that a permanent self exists, whereas if he had said that self does not exist, he would have sided with the *ucchedavādins* (annihilationists). But he did not agree with either of these two views ([5], Vol. iv, pp. 400–401). The Buddha's statement "seek yourself" (*attānaṃ gaveseyyatha*) in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* has been interpreted by C.A.F. Rhys Davids as "the self, the God within you" ([22], p. 147). Further, commenting on a verse of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* which she compares with a passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, she has pointed out: "I believe it is far more likely, that the original speaker of the verse used *attā* in the sense in which the original speaker of the *Upaniṣad* utterance used *atman"* ([23], p. 602). Similar views have been reiterated by Coomaraswamy ([24], pp. 680–681; [25], Vol. xxiv) and Radhakrishnan ([26], pp. 386–389) in more or less the same sense. According to Coomaraswamy, the words *attadīpa* and *attasaraṇa* are used in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* to exhort the monks to regard the *attā* as their light and refuge ([27], pp. 680–681). Similarly, in the opinion of Radhakrishnan, "It is… wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha… The *Upaniṣads* arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of this process they find the universal self, which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely" ([26], p. 388). On the basis of some references in the Buddhist texts, it has also been suggested that what survives a man's death is his *citta* or *viññāna* and that this doctrine is almost certainly pre-Buddhist which the Buddha appears to have modified rather than rejecting it. There is no doubt that *Viññāna* continues to exist after death. However, it is not an entity of a permanent nature and is extremely changeable. But in Nirvāṇa, its fluctuations stop, and it comes to its own natural infinity and luminosity. Thus, it has been pointed out that *viññāna* is similar to the *ātman* of some of the Upaniṣadic texts ([28], pp. 254–259). Sogen and Suzuki too were of the opinion that the Buddha denied the soul in the sense of a finite substantial individual but not in the sense of the absolute unity of the universe ([29], p. 18; [30], pp. 31–38).

Why Did the Buddha Refuse to Answer a Direct Question on the Soul's Existence?

When asked directly, the Buddha is reported to have refused to answer the question about the existence of the *attā* either positively or negatively. In the opinion of Keith ([12], pp. 39–46, 75–91) and Poussin ([17], pp. 821–824), it was the result of his "agnosticism," while according

to Rosenberg, the Buddha did not answer this question simply because the word *attā* was meaningless for him (see [31], p. 505). In between the *puruṣa* of the Upaniṣads and the *puggala* of the Nikāyas is the expression *purisa-puggala* which "signifies the individual acting, believing, and experiencing the results of his acts." The Buddha himself preached on different classes of *puggalas*. Normally, the usage *purisa-puggala* does not indicate a belief in self, but the well-known *Bhārahāra Sutta* is an exception as it unambiguously makes a distinction between *puggala* and *khandhas* whereby *khandhas* are described as a burden of *puggala* ([31], p. 490).

"The critical question for the Buddhists was not the survival of the individual at death, which they held and defended against the doctrine of annihilation (*ucchedavāda*), but the existence of the individual when the aggregation of the *khandhas* has finally ceased. That question depends upon the much disputed meaning of Nirvāṇa" ([32], p. 106). A closer examination of the two words leads to the unavoidable conclusion that *ātman* means the "existing ego" and *anātman* the "nonexistent ego." To put it differently, between the two extremes "is" and "is not" is a dualism which has no independent nature of its own. For this reason, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, a follower of the Buddha is taught to release his hold of not only "is" but of "is not," that is, of both *ātman* and *anātman,* in order not to be held in bondage by either of them. Thus, the Buddha points out in the *Diamond Sūtra*: "Even the Dharma should be cast aside, how much more so the Not-Dharma? Thus, we come to this: (1) The worldly man grasps *ātman*. (2) The Southern School man grasps *anātman*. (3) The Mahāyāna man grasps neither *ātman* nor *anātman"* ([33], Vol. i, p. 10).

Cross-References

- ▶ Avidyā
- ▶ Buddhaghosa
- ▶ Citta
- ▶ Kamma
- ▶ Khandha
- ▶ Mahāyāna
- ▶ Nirvāṇa
- ▶ Puḍgala (Puggala)
- ▶ Saṃkhāra
- ▶ Taṇhā
- ▶ The Diamond Sutra
- ▶ Tipiṭaka
- ▶ Viññāṇa

References

1. Easwaran E (trans) (2007) The Upanishads, 2nd edn. Nilgiri Press, Berkeley
2. Sergeant W (trans) (1984) The Bhagavad Gītā, 2nd edn. SUNY Press, New York
3. Rhys Davids TW, Carpentier JE (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya (1885–1900), 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
5. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
6. Trenckner V (trans) (1880) The Milindapañha. Williams and Norgate, London
7. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (trans) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
8. Sarao KTS (trans) (2009) The Dhammapada: a translator's guide, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
9. Horner IB (trans) (1954–1959) The book of middle length sayings, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
10. Woodward FL (ed) (1929–1937) The Sāratthappakāsinī, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Saṃyutta Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
11. Kalupahana DJ (1987) The principles of Buddhist psychology. SUNY Press, New York
12. Keith AB (1923) Buddhist philosophy in India and Ceylon. Clarendon, Oxford
13. Malalasekera GP (1961) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol 1. Government of Ceylon, Colombo
14. Taylor AC (ed) (1979) The Paṭisambhidāmagga, combined volume. Pali Text Society, London
15. Stcherbatsky T (1927) The conception of Buddhist Nirvaṇa. Publishing Office of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Leningrad
16. Rhys Davids TW (1911) Buddhist India. Fisher Unwin, London
17. de la Poussin Vallèe L (1935–1936) The Ātman in the Pāli Canon. Indian Cult II:821–824
18. Hegel GWF (1899) Philosophy of history, reprint. Colonial Press, New York
19. Schrader O (tr) (1905) Die Fragen des Königs Menadros. Berlag Paul Raatz, Berlin

20. Rhys Davids CAF (1927) Dhyāna in Early Buddhism. Indian Hist Quart 1927:689–715
21. Rhys Davids CAF (1924) Buddhist psychology, 2nd edn. Luzac, London
22. Rhys Davids CAF (1932) Manual of Buddhism. Luzac & Co, London
23. Rhys Davids CAF (1941) Wayfarer's Words, vol 2. Luzac & Co, London
24. Coomaraswamy AK (1938) J Roy Asiatic Soc, 680–681
25. Coomaraswamy AK, Horner IB (1948) Living thoughts of the Goutama the Buddha. Cassell & Co, London
26. Radhakrishnan S (1929) Indian philosophy, vol I, 2nd edn. George Allen and Unwin, London
27. Conze E (1962) Buddhist thought in India. George Allen and Unwin, London
28. Wijesekara OH, De A (1964) The concept of Viññāna in Theravāda Buddhism. J Am Orient Soc 84(3):254–259
29. Sogen Y (1912) Systems of Buddhist thought. Calcutta University Press, Calcutta
30. Suzuki DT (1963) Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Schocken, New York
31. Pande GC (1957) Studies in the origins of Buddhism. University of Allahabad, Allahabad
32. Thomas EJ (1933) The history of Buddhist thought. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London
33. Lu K'uan Yü (Charles Luk) (ed & trans) (1960) Ch'an and Zen teaching, 3 vols. Rider & Co, London
34. de Silva LA (1975) The problem of the self in Buddhism and Christianity. The Study Centre for Religion and Society, Colombo
35. Hick J (1976) Death and eternal life. Macmillan, London
36. Murti TRV (1960) The central philosophy of Buddhism, 2nd edn. George Allen and Unwin, London
37. Pèrez-Remón J (1980) Self and non-self in early Buddhism. Mouton, The Hague
38. de la Poussin Vallèe L (1908) The encyclopedia of religion and ethics, vol I, s.v. Agnosticism
39. Rahula W (1967) What the Buddha taught, rev. edn. The Gordon Fraser Gallery, Bedford

Anavatapta

► Anotatta
► Mānasarovara (Buddhism)

Anekāntavāda

► Relativity (Jainism)
► *Syādvāda* (Jainism)

Anekāntavāda (Jainism)

Wm. Andrew Schwartz
Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA, USA

Synonyms

Syādvāda; Relativity

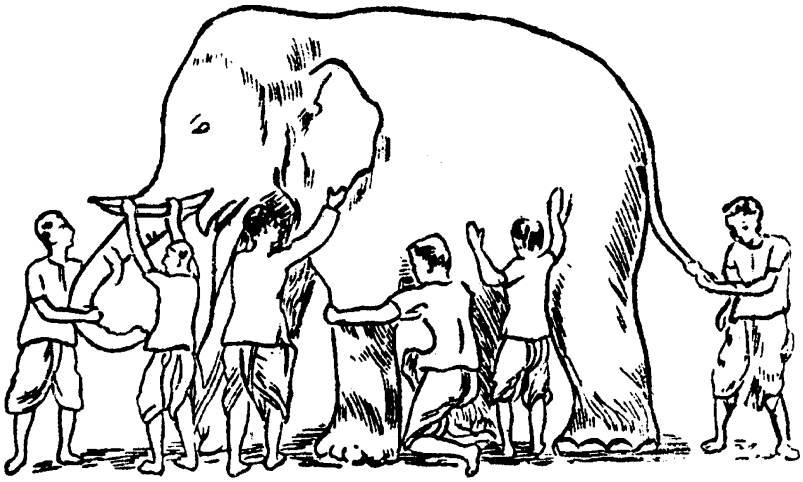
Definition

Anekāntavāda is the Jain metaphysical doctrine, which holds that reality is many-sided and that all entities are endowed with innumerable characteristics.

Introduction

It has been said that the central philosophy of Jainism is *anekāntavāda* [1]. Etymologically, *anekānta* (non-one-sidedness) is a negation of *ekānta* (one-sidedness). Philosophically, *anekāntavāda* is the Jain metaphysical doctrine that affirms the multifaceted and non-one-sided nature of reality. A common example used to explain this doctrine is the ancient Indic story of the blind men and the elephant (see Fig. 1). As the stories goes:

> There were six blind men who were brought before the king and asked to describe an elephant. One man, holding onto a leg, describes the elephant as being like a tree trunk. A second man, holding onto an ear, disagrees and suggests that the elephant is like a fan. A third man, who trips and falls into the side of the elephant, argues that the elephant is like a wall. A fourth man, holding on to the tail, retorts that the elephant is like a rope. The fifth man, grabbing a tusk, describes the elephant as similar to a spear. Finally, the sixth man, holding onto the trunk, describes the elephant like a giant snake. They continue to argue about their differing perspectives, until the king (who was watching this spectacle) interjects. He explains that each of the men was holding onto a piece of the enormous elephant and that ultimately, each of them was partially right.



***Anekāntavāda* (Jainism), Fig. 1** The elephant and the blind men

For Jains, this story is an essential example of engagement with the world. Philosophically speaking, Jains are (broadly construed) metaphysical realists. The elephant represents reality (i.e., the "way things are"). So, with respect to the story, there actually *is* an elephant; meaning, there actually is a real world that is encountered. This is an important point that distinguishes the Jain position of perspectivism from a form of idealism or relativism. There is a real world, and it really is experienced. But, as expressed by the doctrine of *anekāntavāda*, just as there are many sides to the elephant (a tail, a leg, a trunk, etc.), there are many sides to reality. Reality is many-sided. Not simply reality as a whole, but any given entity consists of innumerable attributes. And, much like the blind men who are experiencing the elephant from their limited perspective, all people encounter reality from within the confines of a limited perspective (*naya*) (see entry on ► *Nayavāda*).

Insofar as each blind man treats his limited perspective as the absolute, he commits the error of *ekāntavāda* (one-sidedness). That is, insofar as the assertion, "an elephant is like. . ." is intended as a rejection of the others perspectives, insofar as the man who describes the elephant like a wall, does so as a rejection of the man who describes the elephant like a rope, he commits the egregious error of one-sidedness. Instead, according to Jainism, each of the blind men is accurately describing reality, though only partially. So, the proper response, therefore, is to recognize the relative nature of one's own assertion and grant the validity of the perspective of others. And, when the many aspects of reality are brought together in a creative synthesis, one gets closer to describing the whole truth. *Anekāntavāda* is helpful, therefore, in extending an attitude of toleration toward those whose views are different than one's own. And, when taken seriously, it encourages the exploration of the perspectives of others as real possibilities where truth can be found. If these other perspectives are seen as having a piece of truth that is absent from one's own perspective, and it is recognized that the more perspectives one can synthesize into a single complex perspective, the closer one gets to the fullness of truth, then the perspectives of others can be seen as essential to the goal of getting closer to the full truth.

Origination, Destruction, and Permanence

In addition to simply insisting on the many-sided nature of reality, Jainism identifies existence as constitutive of three characteristics: (1) origination, (2) destruction, and (3) permanence. Nothing can be said to exist without all three characteristics. This principle is rooted deep within the Jain tradition and is even found in the most

authoritative of Jain scriptures – the *Tattvārthasūtra*. It reads as follows, "Existence is characterized by origination, disappearance (destruction) and permanence" (*Tattvārthasūtra* 5.30). But how can this be? How can reality be essentially permanent and impermanent? How can origination and destruction (i.e., impermanence) be essential characteristics of a reality that is also permanent? How can these contradictory characteristics both be true of existence? Well, the *Tattvārthasūtra* answers this question, saying "(The contradictory characteristics are established) from different points of view" (*Tattvārthasūtra* 5.32). More specifically, in the case of existence, it is a matter of distinguishing between permanent substances and impermanent modes (*Tattvārthasūtra* 5.42). From the perspective of substance, the existent object is permanent. But, from the standpoint of mode, the existent object is characterized by origination and destruction.

One story used to explain this phenomenon is that of the gold crown. As it goes, a family heirloom (a gold crown) was melted down and turned into a necklace. When this happened, one family member was distraught and mourned the destruction of the heirloom, for the crown was no more. Another family member was excited about the origination of the new necklace, which has been created, while a third family recognized the continued existence of the gold crown, insofar as the substance from which the necklace was formed is the same substance in which the crown had existed – the same gold. From three different perspectives, this act of melting down the crown and creating a necklace can be seen as either origination, destruction, or permanence. And, from the Jain perspective of *anekāntavāda*, all three are correct, albeit partially so.

Like the crown and the necklace, all existent objects can be characterized by origination, destruction, and permanence depending on the perspective one takes. And, to understand the many-sided nature of complex reality, one must acknowledge all three as representative of existing objects. In doing so, origination, destruction, and permanence are no longer seen as exclusive of each other, but mutually dependent characteristics of reality.

Knowing the Many Sides of Reality

To be clear, *anekāntavāda*, as a metaphysical doctrine, is a doctrine about the nature of reality. As such, *anekāntavāda* itself does not provide a theory of knowledge or dialectics (unfortunately, this distinction is not always clear in Jain writings). Hence, Jains conjoin the doctrine of *anekānta* with two corollaries: (1) *nayavāda* (the epistemological corollary) and (2) *syādvāda* (the corresponding dialectic of predication). If reality is truly complex and many-sided, in what sense can anyone be said to "know" reality? This is where the doctrine of *nayavāda* comes into play.

According to *nayavāda*, the knower approaches reality from a limited and particular standpoint. Since reality is many-sided, there are many ways to approach reality (via its many sides). From the metaphysical doctrine of a complex reality with innumerable attributes flows an epistemology which considers knowledge of an object incomplete insofar as it fails to account for all sides of that object. For this reason, the doctrine of *nayavāda* is described as a doctrine of standpoints. These standpoints (or perspectives) represent the many ways that one can approach reality.

Apart from omniscience, all viewpoints are non-absolute and necessarily limited. As Siddahesena (fifth-century Jain thinker) writes, "Since a thing has manifold character, it is comprehended (only) by the omniscient. But a thing becomes the subject matter of a *naya*, when it is conceived from one particular standpoint" [2]. Consider the following gross example: there is a sculpture in the middle of a room. Standing in front of the sculpture gives the viewer one perspective by which they come to know the statue. Standing behind the statue provides another perspective. Both are valid ways to perceive the statue, but both are limited. And, given one's status as non-omniscient, one can't help but approach reality from a limited perspective.

To be sure, different perspectives here are not simply a matter of different opinions or tastes. *Nayavāda* is not used as a way to discuss multiple perspectives on flavors of ice cream or favorite

sports teams. If so, it would become an "agree to disagree" sort of relativism, whereby each person is allowed to have their own opinion and all opinions are valid. Instead, *nayavāda* is more akin to acknowledging different sides of the same coin, in which there is actually a coin and that the coin is (as coins tend to be) non-one-sided (*anekānta*). *Naya* is a valid form of knowing object reality, though always in a particular sense and from a certain point of view. As such, all claims are relative to the perspective from which they are made. To help articulate this relativity, Jainism developed the doctrine of *syādvāda* (the dialectical doctrine of qualified assertion).

Describing a Many-Sided Reality

Syādvāda, as the dialectical corollary of *anekāntavāda*, is essential for talking about a reality that is many-sided and known from a limited perspective. In short, this doctrine of conditional predication insists that assertions be qualified to better represent the complex nature of reality and our limited engagement with it. By predicating a statement with the particle *syāt* (meaning, "from a certain perspective"), the relative truth of the claim can be expressed.

Without such qualification, relatively true claims will be confused for absolute claims, and the many-sided nature of reality will be lost. Consider the above example of the blind men and the elephant. The unqualified assertion, "an elephant is like a tree," is false, insofar as it excludes all contrary claims. As an unqualified assertion, the idea that an elephant is like a tree is incompatible with the notion that an elephant is like a fan, or spear, or wall, or snake, or even rope. But, reality is non-one-sided. As such, an elephant does not possess only one of those characteristics, but all of them! The many-sided nature of reality, whereby an entity (like an elephant) is endowed with infinite characteristics, is not captured by an unqualified assertion. Therefore, to capture the non-one-sided nature of reality, one must qualify all assertions as being conditioned by a certain perspective. In *syādvāda*, an assertion is qualified as to express its being conditioned by one's *naya*, as well as the many-faced nature of reality. Only by following the practice of *syādvāda* can the many-sided nature of complex reality be properly described.

Anekāntavāda as a Corrective

While Jains hold that their doctrines are eternal, and therefore not direct products of historical contexts, one can trace the application of the doctrine of *anekāntavāda* historically. The principles of *anekānta* are clearly present in many Jain scriptures, the most prominent example (discussed above) being the statement from the *Tattvārthasūtra* which says, "Existence is characterized by origination, disappearance (destruction) and permanence" (*Tattvārthasūtra* 5:30). This famous passage is used throughout Jain history as an example of *anekānta*, which overcomes the *ekānta* of both Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism.

According to Jainism, in the spirit of Sankara, the Advaitins identify permanence as the one-sided absolute of reality (Brahman). Buddhists, on the other hand, identify impermanence (origination and disappearance) as the one-sided absolute nature of reality (sunyata). The Jain perspective, however, sees both of these one-sided perspectives of Buddhism and Advaita as only partially true and from limited perspectives. According to the teachings of Jainism and *anekāntavāda*, a full understanding of reality involves both permanence and change, bringing together both parts represented by the Buddhist and Advaitin perspectives together in a synthesized whole. The Jain position is neither identity nor difference, but both identity and difference – or perhaps identity-in-difference.

In this way, *anekāntavāda* is used as a corrective. It corrects one-sided perspectives by uniting them in creative synthesis, to form a more complete truth. It allows the Jain perspective to become a sort of inclusive middle way between two or more extremes, whatever they may be. It accepts the partial and one-sided truths of others as true, though never in an ultimate sense. Naturally, such a synthesis raises questions with respect to the ability to affirm mutually contradictory perspectives into

a rational and intelligible whole. To respond to such concerns, Jainism relies on the logic of *syādvāda* and *nayavāda* to work in conjunction with *anekāntavāda*. In this way, seemingly contradictory notions are synthesized into a rational whole by qualifying previously unqualified assertions and taking into account our limited encounter with multifaceted reality. This is the corrective nature of *anekāntavāda*, turning unqualified exclusive assertions into relatively true descriptions of complex reality.

Intellectual Ahimsa

In recent years, Jain scholars have emphasized the close relationship between *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *anekāntavāda*, suggesting that *anekāntavāda* (along with *syādvāda* and *nayavāda*) is a form of "intellectual *ahimsa*." Historically, this is far from the case, as *anekāntavāda* has been used as a weapon against other rival perspectives in India – establishing the superiority of the Jain perspective. The above discussion of *anekāntavāda* as a corrective to Advaita Vedantin and Buddhist theories of permanence and impermanence is representative of this historical usage of *anekāntavāda*. This does not mean, however, that *anekāntavāda* can only be used to establish the superiority of Jainism over Buddhism, Hinduism, or any other position.

In fact, contemporary Jain scholarship has identified the notion of intellectual *ahimsa* as an important part of contemporary Jain thought. This intellectual nonviolence is rooted in the notion of respecting the views of others. It is suggested that when one rejects the perspectives of others, as is customary when treating relative perspectives as exclusive absolutes, one does violence to the views of others. Therefore, in response to such philosophical violence, intellectual *ahimsa* works as an ethic of philosophical tolerance.

As explained above, when taken seriously, *anekāntavāda* encourages everyone to explore the perspectives of others as real possibilities where truth can be found. If the disparate views of others are not seen as exclusively incompatible, but as diverse parts of the complex whole, then one can respect and appreciate those views different from one's own as being a piece of the truth that one does not possess.

Cross-References

- Ahimsa
- Jainism (Yakṣa)
- *Nayavāda*
- Reality (Jainism)
- Relativity
- *Syādvāda*
- Truth (Jainism)

References

1. Matilal BK (1981) The central philosophy of Jainism: *Anekantavada.* LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad
2. Divakara S (1909) Nyayavatara. (trans: Vidyabhusana SC). Indian Research Society, Calcutta

Further Reading

Bhattacharya KC (1953) *Anekantavada*. Jaina Atmananda Sabha, Bhavnagar

Kapadia HR (1947) Introduction to Haribhadra Suri's Anekantajayapataka with his own commentary and Municandra Suri's supercommentary. Oriental Institute, Baroda

Long JD (2009) Jainism: an introduction. IB Tauris, New York

Mahaprajna A (1996) An introduction: the axioms of non-absolutism. In: Jai Ashwini K, Dak TM, Anil Dutta M (eds) Facets of Jain philosophy, religion and culture: *Anekantavada* and *Syadvada*. Jain Vishva Bharati Institute, Ladnun, Rajasthan

Matilal BK (1981) The central philosophy of Jainism: *Anekantavada*. LD Institute of Indology, Ahmedabad

Matilal BK (2000) Anekanta: Both Yes and No. In: Shah NJ (ed) Jaina theory of multiple facets of reality and truth (*Anekantavada*). Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Mookerjee S (1978) The Jaina philosophy of non-absolutism: a critical study of *Anekantavada*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Padmarajiah YJ (1963) A comparative study of the Jaina theories of reality and knowledge. Jain Sahitya Vikas Mandal, Bombay

Sethia T (ed) (2004) Ahimsa, Anekanta and Jainism. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Shah N (2000) Jaina theory of multiple facets of reality and truth (*Anekantavada*). Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Shah N (ed) (1998) Jaina philosophy and religion. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
Sharma A (2001) A Jaina perspective on the philosophy of religion. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
Tatia N (1951) Studies in Jaina philosophy. PV Research Institute, Varanasi
Uma Swami A (2011) Jainism, key to reality (Tattvarthasutra) (trans: Jain SC). Digamar Jain Trilok Shodh Sansthan, Hastinapur

Aṅgulimāla

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ahiṃsaka; Aṅgulimālaka; Gagga Mantānīputta; Hiṃsaka

Definition

A robber who was converted by the Buddha and later became an arahant.

Aṅgulimāla is an important personality in Theravāda Buddhism. He is depicted in the texts of the Pāli Tipiṭaka as a ruthless killer who is redeemed by conversion to Buddhism. His story is viewed as a quintessential example of the redemptive powers of the Buddha's teaching and human potential for spiritual progress. He was the son of the brāhmaṇa Bhaggava and his wife Mantānī. He was born under the thieves' constellation (*cora-nakṣatra*), and on the night of his birth, all the weapons in the city shone, including the royal armor. This indicated that Aṅgulimāla would become a robber. However, as no harm came about to anyone as a result of this omen and also in order to deter the dark fate predicted at his birth, the child was named Ahiṃsaka ("Harmless") by his father. However, it has been indicated in *Paramattha-dīpanī* the commentary of the *Theragāthā*, that he was originally named Hiṃsaka ("Harmful") which was later changed to Ahiṃsaka.

When Aṅgulimāla grew up, he was sent to Takkasilā (modern Taxila) to study under a well-known Brāhmaṇa teacher. While in Takkasilā, he excelled in his studies and became his teacher's favorite student, getting special privileges in his house. But this did not go well with the other students who became jealous of Ahiṃsaka and hatched a plot to turn his guru against him. They poisoned the teacher's ears saying that Ahiṃsaka had not only seduced his wife but had also bragged that he was wiser than him. After hearing this, the teacher wanted to kill Aṅgulimāla but refrained from doing so for two reasons. One, Aṅgulimāla was as "strong as seven elephants," and two, the teacher was worried that his reputation would be damaged if he were found to have been involved in the death of a pupil. Consequently, the teacher took recourse to a traditional custom to seek his revenge. Thus, as a parting gift (*gurudakṣiṇā*), the teacher demanded 1,000 fingers, each taken from a different victim, thinking that Aṅgulimāla would get killed while pursuing his ghastly trophies.

The *Theragāthā* (verses 866–891) and the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* do not offer much either by way of background information or on Aṅgulimāla's encounter with the Buddha. Moreover, other than a vicious killer indulging in sheer sadism with inborn tendency to be violent, no specific motives are offered in the *Vinaya* and the *Sutta* texts for Aṅgulimāla's actions. However, the *sutta* commentaries, the *Papañcasūdanī* and the *Paramattha-dīpanī*, hint at the rehabilitation of the character of Aṅgulimāla by making him look originally as a good human being who had become a victim of his unfortunate circumstances. It has been suggested in these commentaries that one of the motives behind Aṅgulimāla's actions may have been his unwavering submission to the guru's command as per the higher ideals expected of a model student. As the giving of parting gifts was customary in ancient India, it was not unusual that Aṅgulimāla did his guru's terrible bidding. The *Jātakas*, which invariably report two prominent traits common to his past lives – complete absence of compassion and his superhuman strength – indicate that the reason for Aṅgulimāla's

condition was the retributive legacy of his past karma bearing fruit in his present life. For instance, in one of his past lives, he was a Yakkha (Sk: Yakṣa) – a man-eating spirit, who made use of his enormous physical strength to kill and maim people for satiating his lust for human flesh. The *Paramattha-dīpanī* points out that Aṅgulimāla was supposed to collect 1,000 fingers from right hands, apparently not aware that the goal could be met by slaughtering 200 persons. As compared to this, the *Papañcasūdanī* mentions that he was told to "cut a thousand legs" and collected fingers only for the purpose of maintaining a proper count.

Doing his guru's bidding, Ahiṃsaka ambushed people traveling on the roads passing through the Jālinī forest in Kosala kingdom, killing them and taking a finger from each. When people stopped using those roads, he began raiding villages of the kingdom to meet his goal. He never took anything from his victims other than fingers. Initially, he used to string the fingers in a thread and hung them from a tree. But as birds would eat away the flesh from the fingers, he began to wear them around his neck. The fingers (*aṅgulī*) thus worn around the neck became a necklace (*mālā*), hence the name Aṅgulimāla ("One with the finger necklace").

The people of Kosala appealed to their king Pasenadi, who left with an army to hunt down Aṅgulimāla. When Aṅgulimāla's mother came to know of this, she set out for the forest to warn her son. At about the same time, the Buddha observed through his "divine eye" that Aṅgulimāla had already murdered 999 victims and was now frantically looking for one more to make it 1,000. Despite having been warned by the people, the Buddha left for the forest to confront Aṅgulimāla. On the road through the forest, Aṅgulimāla first saw his mother and, after some pondering, chose to make her his last victim. But soon after when he saw the Buddha, he decided to murder him instead. With a drawn sword, he began running toward the Buddha. But even though he was running as fast as he could, Aṅgulimāla was not able to catch up with the Buddha who was walking serenely. It has been mentioned in the *Majjhima Nikāya* that "The Blessed One willed a feat of psychic power such that Aṅgulimāla, though running with all his might, could not catch up with the Blessed One walking at normal pace." Aṅgulimāla was baffled so much that he called to the Buddha to stop. However, the Buddha pointed out that he himself had already stopped and that it was he who needed to stop. When asked by Aṅgulimāla to explain further, the Buddha pointed out that whereas he had stopped harming living beings, Aṅgulimāla was still harming and hurting them. Upon hearing this, Aṅgulimāla decided to give up the life of an outlaw and became a monk in the Buddhist Order. Later, the Buddha presented Aṅgulimāla before King Pasenadi, who filled with wonder, offered to provide him with all the requisites of a monk. Aṅgulimāla, however, had adopted the *dhutaṅga* (austere) way of life and politely declined the king's offer.

When, as a monk, Aṅgulimāla entered Sāvatthī for alms, he was attacked by a vengeful mob. With outer robe in rags, broken begging bowl, and injuries on the head, he somehow managed to return to the monastery. However, on the admonition of the Buddha, he endured the torment with composure. The conversion of Aṅgulimāla is often mentioned as one of the most compassionate and magnificent acts of the Buddha. It was because of him that the Vinaya rule forbidding the ordination of a robber was decreed by the Buddha.

There is a story of Aṅgulimāla having alleviated a woman's labor pains by an Act of Truth (*saccakiriyā*). When he uttered the blessing (*yato ahaṃ sabbaññutabuddhassa ariyassa ariyāya jātiyā jāto*), the woman delivered to her child safely. This benediction uttered by Aṅgulimāla, known as the *Aṅgulimāla paritta*, is often recited as a blessing to pregnant women in the countries where Theravāda Buddhism is followed. Performance of this Act of Truth helped Aṅgulimāla focus his mind on his basic meditation subject. Earlier, his meditation was disrupted by appearance in his mind's eye of the spot in the forest where he had killed so many people. After performing this Act, he became known as the bringer of safety to people who not only began to approach him but also provided him with alms-

food. The water that washed the stone on which he had sat in the laboring woman's house came to be regarded as a universal remedy.

The story of Aṅgulimāla forms an important part of Indian folklore as well as societies where Theravāda Buddhism is followed. In the year 2003, a feature film on Aṅgulimāla (Ongkulimal) was made in Thailand. According to the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, Aṅgulimāla died shortly after he became a monk.

Cross-References

- ▶ Arahant
- ▶ Jātaka
- ▶ Majjhima Nikāya
- ▶ Pasenadi
- ▶ Takkasilā
- ▶ Thera- and Therīgāthā
- ▶ Theravāda
- ▶ Tipiṭaka

References

1. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, 6 vols. Luzac, London
2. Hecker H (2007) Aṅgulimāla: a murderer's road to sainthood. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
3. Norman HC (ed) (1906) The commentary on the Dhammapada, 4 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Oldenberg H, Pischel R (eds) (1990) The Thera- and Therīgāthā, 2nd edn, with Appendices. K.R. Norman & L. Alsdorf, Pali Text Society, Oxford
5. Rhys Davids CAF (trans) (1913) Psalms of the Brethren. Pali Text Society, London
6. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
7. Woods JH, Kosambi D, Horner IB (eds) (1922–1938) Papañcasūdanī: Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosācariya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
8. Woodward FL (ed) (1940–1959) Paramattha-Dīpanī: Theragāthā-Aṭṭhakathā, the commentary of Dhammapālācariya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Aṅgulimālaka

- ▶ Aṅgulimāla

Aṅguttara Nikāya

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ekottarāgama; *The book of the gradual sayings*

Definition

The fourth of the five divisions of the Pāli *Sutta Piṭaka.*

The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* is the fourth of the five *nikāyas* (divisions) of the Pāli *Sutta Piṭaka.* The English equivalent of the title is "Gradual Sayings" [1]. It has *suttas* (Sk: *sūtras*, discourses) grouped in "higher" (*uttara*) "parts" (*aṅgas*), i.e., in groups of numerical ascendency with an arithmetical progression from 1 to 11 on the basis of the number of *dhamma* (Sk: dharma) items referenced in them. Thus, the *Eka-nipāta* (the *Book of Ones*) deals with a great variety of subjects, but always from one single aspect at a time; the *Book of Twos* comprises of *suttas* concerning pairs of things (e.g., a *sutta* on two kinds of fools, another about two kinds of happiness); the *Book of Threes* contains *suttas* concerning three things (e.g., a *sutta* on three governing principles that keep one's Dhamma practice on-track, a *sutta* about the three levels on which becoming (*bhava*) operates in relation to consciousness, and so on). Each of the 11 books (*nipāta*) of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* is divided in turn into groups of *suttas*, called *vagga* or chapter, according to some similarity of subject or of treatment. The exact count of *suttas* in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* depends on the particular edition (Sri Lankan, Thai, or Burmese) as well as the way in which these *suttas* are counted. Although the text tells us that it consists of 9,557 *suttas*, most of these *suttas* are mere repetitions with a new word added here and there. Thus, the number of *suttas* distinctive in character is generally calculated between 1,000

and 2,500 ([2], p. 12; [7], p. xv; [11], p. 26). Majority of the *suttas* belonging to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* are short, some being very short, though there are some of sizeable length. However, throughout this text, the *buddhavacana* (teaching of the Buddha) has been presented in modules of judiciously organized groups.

The Sanskrit parallel of the Pāli *Aṅguttara Nikāya* is the *Ekottarāgama* of which only fragments have been found among the remains of manuscripts discovered in Xinjiang. However, a complete version of the *Ekottarāgama* survives in Chinese by the name of *Zēngyī Ahánjīng* (*Taishō Tripiṭaka* 125). This translation was prepared by Gautama Saṃghadeva in 397–398 C.E. from an oral recital by Saṃgharakṣa, both Kashmiri monks. It would seem that Saṃghadeva also made use of an earlier version by the Tukharian monk, Dharmanandin (384–391 C.E.), who also recited for him the original text which, however, has been lost.

It has been suggested that the *suttas* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* form the real historical backdrop to the contents of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* ([5], p. 193). Both the Pāli *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the Chinese *Ekottarāgama* contain the greatest number of quotations from the other three *nikāyas* (the *Dīgha*, the *Majjhima*, and the *Saṃyutta*), though these *nikāyas* are never cited as such. On this basis, M. Anesaki has suggested that the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* is later than the other three *nikāyas* ([1], p. 83). However, as there is no substantial difference among the first four *nikāyas* in terms of either their style or language, there could not have been much chronological gap between the composition of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the other three *nikāyas*. Thus, as regards the earliest accessible sources of the *buddhavacana*, there is no particular *nikāya* which could rightly lay any claim thereto as all of them contain very ancient as well as comparatively late components. That on the other hand, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* has assisted in the composition of other books of the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* can clearly be seen in some of the texts of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Many of the last portions of the Pāli *Itivuttaka* available in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* are missing from Xuanzang's Chinese translation of *Itivuttaka*. It has been, therefore, suggested that these portions were incorporated in the Pāli *Itivuttaka* after its Chinese translation in the seventh century. Similarly, the *Puggalapaññatti*, which describes human types or individuals, contains complete sections which can largely be found already existing in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.

Initially, it was proposed by some scholars that *Ekottarāgama* came from the Sarvāstivāda School. However, apart from differences in the order of the *suttas*, "there is considerable disparity between the Pāli and the Sarvāstivādin versions, with more than two thirds of the *sūtras* found in one but not the other compilation, which suggests that much of this portion of the *Sūtra Piṭaka* was not formed until a fairly late date" [3]. It has been pointed out by Étienne Lamotte, the *Ekottarāgama* was not based on the original Pāli and was translated from a manuscript that came from northwest India, and contains a great deal of Mahāyāna influence ([4], pp. 353–358). This may agree with the fifth century Dharmaguptaka monk Buddhayaśas, the translator of the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* and *Dīrgha Āgama*, who wrote that the Dharmaguptakas had assimilated the *Mahāyāna Tripiṭaka* ([9], pp. 52–53). According to A.K. Warder, the *Ekottarāgama* references 250 Prātimokṣa rules for monks, which agrees only with the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*, which is also located in the Chinese Buddhist canon. He also views some of the doctrine as contradicting tenets of the Mahāsaṃghika School and states that they agree with Dharmaguptaka views currently known. He therefore concludes that the extant *Ekottarāgama* is that of the Dharmaguptaka School ([10], p. 6).

According to *Manorathapūraṇī*, the commentary of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, when the Buddha's dharma comes to an end, the first portion of the *Sutta Piṭaka* to vanish will be the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, starting with the *Book of Elevens* and ending with the *Book of Ones* ([8], p. 881).

Cross-References

- ▶ Abhidhamma Piṭaka
- ▶ Dīgha Nikāya
- ▶ Itivuttaka

- ▶ Khuddaka Nikāya
- ▶ Majjhima Nikāya
- ▶ Saṃyutta Nikāya
- ▶ Theravāda
- ▶ Xuanzang (Hieun-Tsang)

References

1. Anesaki M (1908) Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, XXXV, Pt. II. Asiatic Society of Japan, Tokyo, pp 83–84
2. Jayawardhana S (1993) Handbook of Pāli literature. Karunaratne, Colombo
3. Keown D (2004) A dictionary of Buddhism. Oxford University Press, London
4. Lamotte É (1988) History of Indian Buddhism. Peters Press, Louvain, Paris
5. Law BC (1930) Chronology of the Pāli canon. Ann Bhandarkar Orient Res Inst (Poona) 12(Pt. 2):171–201
6. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya (1885–1900), 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
7. Nyanaponika T, Bodhi B (eds) (1999) Numerical discourses of the Buddha. AltaMira Press, Lanham
8. Walleser H, Kopp H (eds) (1924–1956) Manorathapūraṇī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
9. Walser J (2005) Nāgārjuna in context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and early Indian culture. Columbia University Press, New York
10. Warder AK (1970) Indian Buddhism. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
11. Webb R (1975) An analysis of the Pāli canon. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
12. Woodward FL, Hare EM (trans) (1932–1936) The book of the gradual sayings, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Anicca

Bhikkhu Anālayo
Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, Balve, Germany

Synonyms

Impermanence

Definition

Buddhism sees the entire range of outer reality as well as of inner experience as marked by impermanence, in the sense of being invariably bound to change and eventually disappear. Contemplation of such impermanence, then, has a key role to play in the development of liberating insight in the Buddhist scheme of the path to deliverance.

Impermanence

Impermanence (Pāli *anicca*, Sanskrit *anitya*) constitutes the first of three characteristics of reality in early Buddhist thought, the other two being unsatisfactoriness, *dukkha*, and the absence of a self, *anattā*.

From an early Buddhist perspective, all that exists is a changing process, whether this be the whole world, which according to ancient Indian cosmology will undergo periodical destruction, or the fleeting mind, which introspection shows to be changing from moment to moment. Thus, early Buddhism holds that a permanent entity cannot be found anywhere at all ([2], Vol. III, p. 144).

The notion of impermanence that pervades early Buddhist discourse is one that, besides encompassing the aspects of arising and passing away, recognizes an "otherwiseness of that which persists," *ṭhitassa aññathatta* ([3], Vol. I, p. 152). This is significant insofar as the conception of *anicca* in early Buddhism combines change with continuity.

With later developments of Buddhist philosophy, the continuity inherent in this conception of *anicca* appears at times to have been lost sight of, being replaced by the notion of momentariness, *khaṇa*. From the perspective of this theory, things disappear as soon as they have appeared. Such a radical conception of impermanence is not without difficulties, since the empirically evident fact of continuity is not easily explained.

The conception of *anicca* in early Buddhism does not face such a dilemma, since besides arising and disappearance it recognizes that phenomena do persist for some time, even though their continuity is marked by change. That is, the early

Buddhist conception of *anicca* implies that, while all aspects of experience are certainly changing, they do not necessarily disappear on the spot. Thus, in the case of the body, for example, a discourse points that, although the body is certainly subject to growth and decline, it might nevertheless last up to a hundred years ([2], Vol. II, p. 94).

The difference between these two conceptions – the notion of *anicca* in early Buddhism and the later theory of momentariness – could perhaps be illustrated with the example of the contrast between a flickering lamp and the steady flow of a river. In the first case, the light of the lamp is experienced as disappearing as soon as it appears. In the second case, however, the flowing water is experienced as a changing continuity. Another example, taken from the realm of music, would be the contrast between "staccato," unconnected notes, and "legato," when notes are connected to each other.

Another significant aspect of *anicca* in early Buddhist thought is its intrinsic relationship with conditionality. According to a succinct summary of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, the chief underlying principle of this doctrine is that "with the arising of this, that arises" and "with the cessation of this, that ceases." In short, what is conditioned is impermanent, and what is impermanent is conditioned, these two being but two sides of the same coin.

In the thought world of early Buddhism, the development of wisdom requires insight into impermanence as its central basis. Thus, according to the standard definition given in the Buddhist discourses, to be wise is to be "endowed with wisdom regarding the arising and disappearance (of phenomena), which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of *dukkha*" ([4], Vol. I, p. 356). This passage indicates that a penetrative awareness of impermanence offers the crucial foundation for the growth of wisdom that in turn manifests in a gradual "ennobling" of the practitioner – in the sense of a process of inner purification and detachment that forms the basis for true nobility in action, word, and thought – eventually culminating in total liberation.

Awareness of impermanence has to be penetrative insofar as it needs to quite literally penetrate into every aspect of personal experience. Such comprehensive seeing with insight will ensure that the entire gamut of what is usually experienced as "I" and "mine" is instead seen with insight as a product of conditions and subject to change and alteration.

Comprehensive insight into impermanence then needs to lead on to insight into unsatisfactoriness and not-self. That is, once a clear perception of impermanence, *aniccasaññā*, has been established, the progress of insight requires viewing what is impermanent as unsatisfactory, *anicce dukkhasaññā*, and that which is unsatisfactory needs in turn to be seen as devoid of a self, *dukkhe anattasaññā*.

The locative forms *anicce* and *dukkhe* in the above expressions indicate that the progression from one of these three characteristics to the next does not involve a change of object, but a change of perspective. What has been seen with insight as impermanent is now seen as unsatisfactory. In fact, it is precisely because it is impermanent that it is unsatisfactory. What is unsatisfactory is then in turn seen as not-self. Again, it is precisely because it is unsatisfactory that it fails to qualify as a self.

This dynamic is reflected in a standard teaching on the three characteristics, found often in the discourses. In this teaching, the inquiry "that which is impermanent, is it unsatisfactory or agreeable?" leads to the conclusion that it can only be unsatisfactory. The same teaching then continues by inquiring if it is appropriate to regard what is impermanent, unsatisfactory and subject to change as "this is mine, this I am, this is my self." The inevitable answer is that this would indeed be inappropriate.

Needless to say, passages like this are guided forms of meditation for the development of liberating insight. Concurrent with this progression of insight is a deepening appreciation of the conditioned nature of all aspects of subjective experience, an appreciation that from its starting point as a corollary to impermanence reaches its culmination in the direct vision of not-self with the breakthrough to stream-entry.

This process has as its foundation the practice of contemplating the arising and passing away of all aspects of experience. This mode of

contemplation is of such importance for the development of mindfulness that it marks the difference between mere *satipaṭṭhāna* and its "development," *satipaṭṭhāna-bhāvanā* ([2], Vol. V, p. 183). The same mode of contemplation is also highlighted in a passage repeated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* after each of the individual exercises which this discourse presents for the systematic cultivation of mindfulness. The passage indicates that the task of mindfulness, besides needing to be undertaken in a comprehensive manner by covering what is "inside" as well as what is "outside," is to observe the arising of the contemplated phenomena, the passing away of these phenomena, and both their arising and their passing away ([4], Vol. I, p. 56).

Such directing of mindfulness to arising and passing away reflects the importance of penetrative awareness of impermanence for the development of insight and wisdom. The same is also evident in the last instruction that, according to the traditional account, was given by the Buddha to his disciples: "conditioned phenomena are of a nature to vanish, [hence] strive on with diligence" ([1], Vol. II, p. 156). Such striving on with diligence will, according to early Buddhist meditation theory, eventually lead to the experience of Nirvāṇa, unique in Buddhist thought for not being subject to change.

Cross-References

- ▶ Bhāvanā
- ▶ Causality (Buddhism)
- ▶ Dukkha
- ▶ Insight
- ▶ Liberation (Buddhism)
- ▶ Paṭicca Samuppāda
- ▶ Satipaṭṭhāna

References

1. Carpenter JE, Rhys Davids TW (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
2. Feer L (ed) (1888–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
3. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Aniruddha

▶ Anuruddha

Annihilationism

▶ Materialism (Buddhism)

Anotatta

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Anavatapta; Manasarovar; Mānasārovara

Definition

A holy lake where the Buddha's mother is said to have taken bath before conceiving him.

Anotatta is mentioned in the Pāli texts as the first among the seven lakes (Anotatta, KaṇṇamuṇÇa, Rathakāra, Chaddanta, Kuṇāla, Mandākinī, Sīhapura) of the Himavā and the source of the five great Indian rivers Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, and Mahī ([14], Vol. ii, p. 439). The Pāli Commentaries describe it as a great natural lake, 150 *yojanas* long and with a depth and width of 50 *yojanas* each, and circled by five mountains (Kelāsa/Kailāśa being one of them), each rising to a height of 200 *yojanas*, thus hiding the lake from view. The lake, fed by rains produced by the power

of devas and nāgas, would be the last to dry up when the world ends ([9], Vol. iv, p. 101). As its waters are never directly exposed to the light of the sun or the moon, it never gets heated, hence its name ([17], Vol. iv, pp. 107–108).

Four rivers flow out of its four mouths (*cattāri mukhāni*) located on four sides: lion mouth (*sīhamukha*), elephant mouth (*hatthimukha*), horse mouth (*assamukha*), and bull mouth (*usabhamukha*) located on its four sides ([12], p. 55). Interesting, Tibetan scriptures speak of four rivers with similar names originating from Kailāśa: lion mouth (Senge Khabab), horse mouth (Dachok Khabab), peacock mouth (Mapcha Khabab), and elephant mouth (Langchen Khabab). These are the names of the four actual rivers (Indus, Brahmaputra, Karnali, and Sutlej) of the Mānasarovara-Kailāśa region (see [13], p. 37). The southward river, after following a partly terrestrial and partly aerial course, makes its way through the Vindhya mountain and divides as the great five rivers of India Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Aciravatī, Sarabhū, and Mahī ([14], Vol. ii, pp. 407, 437–439; [18], Vol. ii, p. 585f; [17], Vol. ii, pp. 759–760, Vol. iv, pp. 109–110).

The waters of Anotatta, due to their sacredness, have the power of making one divine. The Buddha's mother, for example, is said to have been taken by the consorts of the four guardian *devas* to Anotatta where they bathed her for removing her human impurities (*manussamalaharanatthāya*) before she conceived the Buddha as related in Māyā's dream ([5], p. 55; [18], Vol. ii, p. 918). King Aśoka is said to have received the holy waters of this lake daily through *devas* ([4], pp. xi.84–85). The water of Anotatta was also used in anointing kings, and Aśoka sent such water to Tissa of Sri Lanka for his second coronation ([4], p. xi.30).

It has many bathing ghats, free from fish and tortoises ([14], Vol. ii, p. 438), and with crystal clear waters, where buddhas, *paccekabuddhas*, and ascetics bathe ([14], Vol. i, p. 438) and *devas* and *yakkhas* (Sk: yakṣa) come for sport ([14], Vol. ii, p. 438). The Buddha and many other ascetics are mentioned as regularly going to Anotatta for ritual bathing, having on its banks their meals and spending the hot part of the day ([11], Vol. i, p. 28; [10], Vol. ii, p. 211, Vol. iii, p. 222; [2], Vol. i, p. 80, Vol. iv, p. 379). The Buddha is also mentioned having visited Anotatta just before or during important event in his life. For instance, he came here on the day the celebrated "twin miracle" (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*) was performed by him ([10], Vol. iii, p. 222). It was also in its neighborhood that he declared to the assembly of monks his misdeeds of many past lives and the consequent suffering ([8], Vol. i, p. 299). In the seventh week after Enlightenment, before taking his first meal in 7 weeks, the Buddha rinsed his mouth with the water of Anotatta fetched for him by Sakka, the king of *devas* ([8], Vol. i, p. 85). On another occasion, the Buddha expressed his wish to wash his feet with the holy waters of Anotatta ([10], Vol. iv, p. 134).

To offer the water of Anotatta for the personal use of some eminent person is considered one of the best ways of showing him respect ([2], Vol. iv, pp. 213, 314; [10], Vol. iv, p. 134). This water had curative powers ([10], Vol. iv, p. 129), and it was considered as a symbol of real prosperity and luxury to be able to use it ([4], Vol. v, pp. 24, 84, xi.30). Many disciples of the Buddha made the neighborhood of this lake their abode as its surroundings provided an ideal site for meditation ([1], p. 399). The *Divyāvadāna* mentions a class of *devas* called *Anavatapta-kāyikādevatā* who dwelt near here ([1], p. 153).

The importance of Anotatta in Indian Buddhism can be imagined from the fact that it was a popular subject of painting ([2], Vol. vi, p. 432) as well as similes and metaphors. For example, the *Milindapañha* using one simile states that as the water of the Anotatta, after having entered the ocean through the Gaṅgā, would never return, so would a bodhisatta, in his last birth, never turn back from his goal of becoming a buddha ([16], pp. 286–287).

Though Spence Hardy ([6], p. 54) felt that this lake was an imaginary one, some scholars have identified it either with Mānasarovar or the Rakas Tal ([7], p. 54; [15], p. 290).

Cross-References

- ▶ Bodhisatta
- ▶ Buddha (Concept)
- ▶ Divyāvadāna
- ▶ Manasarovar
- ▶ Mānasarovara (Buddhism)
- ▶ Yakṣa

References

1. Cowell ED, Neil RA (eds) (1886) The Divyāvadāna. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
2. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātakas, 7 vols. Trübner, London
3. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Geiger W (ed) (1908) The Mahāvaṃsa. Pali Text Society, London
5. Godakumbura CE (ed) (1954) Visuddhajanavilāsini nāma Apdānaṭṭhakathā. Pali Text Society, London
6. Hardy RS (1866) Legends and theories of the Buddhists. William and Norgate, London
7. Law BC (1954) Geography of early Buddhism. Sociètè Asiatique de Paris, Paris
8. Lilley ME (ed) (2000) The Apadāna, 2 vols. Pali Text Society, London
9. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
10. Norman HC (ed) (1906) The commentary on the Dhammapada, 4 vols. Pali Text Society, London
11. Oldenberg H (ed) (1979–1883) The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. Paranavitana S (1946) The Stūpa in Ceylon. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Colombo
13. Sarao KTS (2009) Pilgrimage to Kailash: the Indian route. Aryan Books International, Delhi
14. Smith H (ed) (1916–1918) Sutta-Nipāta commentary being Paramatthajotikā II, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
15. Staal F (1990) The lake of the Yaksa chief. In: Skorupski T (ed) Indo-Tibetan studies: papers in honour and appreciation of Professor David L. Snellgrove's contribution to indo-Tibetan studies. Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring, pp 275–292
16. Trenckner V (ed) (1880) The Milindapañha. Williams and Norgate, London
17. Welleser H, Kopp H (eds) (1924–1956) Manorathapūraṇī: Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
18. Woods JH, Kosambi D, Horner IB (eds) (1922–1938) Papañcasūdanī: Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosācariya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Antarābhava

Charles Willemen
International Buddhist College, Songkhla, Thailand

A

Synonyms

Intermediate existence. Chinese *zhong (antarā) you (bhava)* is a literal translation. *Zhongyin* is the ancient and old Chinese term. *Yin* actually means *andha*, dark, meaning to translate *skandha*, aggregate. The Tibetan term is *bar-do.*

Definition

The term is used for the existence after death and before rebirth. A being there is also called *antarābhava*.

Who Believes In It?

Vibhajyavāda Buddhism (Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, Theravāda) does not have this existence, and neither do Mahāsāṅghikas. The exception is the Pūrvaśaila Mahāsāṅghikas in Andhra. They are the exception which confirms the rule [1]. Sarvāstivādins and Pudgalavādins, Personalists (Vātsīputrīya/Sāṃmitīya), believe in this existence. "Later" Mahīśāsakas, that is, from the first centuries A.D. on, from Kuṣāṇa times on, who were hardly different from Sarvāstivādins in the Gandhāran cultural area, also believed in it [1]. From the Gandhāran cultural area, known as *Jibin* in Chinese, the belief spread to Central and to East Asia. From the end of the second century A.D., Kaśmīra was an important part of *Jibin* too. Sarvāstivādins and Personalists were present across northern India too. A Chinese text about the intermediate existence is Taishō ed. XII 385 *Zhongyin jing*, by Zhu Fonian (arrived in Chang'an in 365 A.D.). The text exists only in Chinese version.

Description

An intermediate existence links this present existence with the next one, assuring continuity in time and in space between death and rebirth. A being there is also called *antarābhava*, or *gandharva*, feeding on fragrance, *gandha*. Its presence is necessary at the time of conception, just as the mother's fertility and the union of the parents [2, 4]. It is possible to gain complete extinction in the intermediate existence as an *antarāparinirvāyin* (one with complete *nirvāṇa* in the intermediate existence), as an *anāgāmin* (non-returner). Someone who has committed one of the five unpardonable sins (*ānantarya*), one of the five actions with unintermitted fruition in the lowest hell, called *Avīci*, will quickly pass through an intermediate existence too. The five sins are as follows: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an *arhat* or saint, injuring a Buddha, and causing a schism [2].

Those who deny an intermediate existence say that it was never expounded by Buddha, that it is not one of the possible existences expounded by him. They say that an *antarāparinirvāyin* is an *anāgāmin* who attains complete extinction during (*antarā*) a life in Heaven. They also say that the five immediate unpardonable sins deny an intermediate existence. Some texts, such as Xuanzang's *Mahāvibhāṣā* (Taishō ed.XXVII 1545) and the Pāli *Kathāvatthu* (VIII 2), relate the discussion.

It is quite possible that the considerable number of brahmin converts, already during the Buddha's lifetime, facilitated the belief in an intermediate existence, and also in an existing *pudgala*, personality. There is an Upaniṣadic belief in the intermediate existence of the soul, ā*tman*, between death and rebirth. The notion of *gandharva* is mentioned in Vedic literature. The belief that a dead person, before rebirth as a human being or as an animal, lives on among the spirits, feeding on fragrance, is linked to the *Atharvaveda* [4]. Ancient Buddhism also believes that the virtuous dead are reborn among spirits, *gandharvas*, who dwell in the fragrance of flowers, etc. Some say this is a means used by Buddha to encourage people to lead a virtuous life.

The schools who believe in an intermediate existence had their disagreements. Non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins were very heterogeneous. Vasubandhu's (ca. 350–430 A.D.) *Kośabhāṣya* makes it clear that an intermediate existence is not a *gati*, a destination, but that it leads to a destination. An intermediate existence exists only in the realm of desire, *kāmadhātu*, and in the realm of form, *rūpadhātu*. The formless realm, ārūpyadhātu, is not a place. An intermediate being cannot change its realm or destination because karmic actions are too strong. Some Dārṣṭāntikas did not agree [2]. Some Sarvāstivādins thought that an intermediate being may be reborn among animals of a similar kind, for example, born as a horse, not as a donkey. Initially, it was thought that the intermediate existence lasts for 7 days. If by then the conditions for rebirth are not realized, the intermediate being dies and is again reborn as such. This may happen several times. Some say that the intermediate existence lasts 49 days, a belief which is widespread in East Asian Buddhism.

The intermediate being resembles the being in his next destination. One destined for rebirth in the realm of desire is like a child, 5 or 6 years old. One destined for the realm of form is like an adult. A bodhisattva is like a youthful bodhisattva, with the 32 primary and the 80 secondary marks of a great being. It may be reminded that non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins, and others too, had bodhisattvas. Furthermore, an intermediate being is said to possess all faculties because it needs them to look for the place of rebirth. Its body is extremely subtle and it can go anywhere without being hindered. On its way down to hell, an intermediate being falls head first, and on its way to Heaven it rises head upward. An intermediate being of the realm of form is born fully clothed, but one of the realms of desire is often naked. Because an intermediate being is mental, its birth is metamorphic, *aupapāduka*, such as the birth of a God [2].

Later Development

Śikṣānanda from Hotan (652–710 A.D.) brought a Chinese text about Kṣitigarbha, of Central Asian origin: Taishō ed. XIII 421 *Dizang pusa benyuan (Kṣitigarbhapraṇidhāna?) jing*. This text teaches that after death the deceased will wander for

49 days in darkness as a spirit, while the judges examine his case and decide his rebirth, based on his actions. This text looks very much influenced by Chinese beliefs.

The *Yogācārabhūmi*, Taishō ed. XXX 1579 *Yuqieshi di lun*, attributed to Asaṅga, claims that an intermediate existence exists. Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Taishō ed.XXXI 1605 *Dasheng apidamo ji lun*, also explains this existence. Both texts fit into the non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda *yogācāra* tradition. "Pure Land" Buddhism, which may have originated in the western part of *Jibin* [5], also has literature about an intermediate existence, for example, Taishō ed. XLVII 1960 *Shi Jingtu qun yi lun, Dispelling Doubts about the Pure Land*, a text by Huaigan, disciple of Shandao (613–681 A.D.).

The Tibetan rNying-ma-pa tradition is known for its tradition of the "Book of the Dead," for the belief in a bar-do, an intermediate existence. This text explains what happens in the intermediate existence. This text fits in with non-Vaibhāṣika beliefs, known as Mūlasarvāstivāda after ca. 700 A.D. Mūlasarvāstivāda Buddhism went to Tibet. The so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead is well known ever since it was first translated by W. Evans-Wentz in 1927. Many translations in different languages and commentaries have appeared ever since [3].

Cross-References

- ▶ Anāgāmin
- ▶ Asaṅga
- ▶ Kathāvatthu
- ▶ Mahāsāṅghika
- ▶ Pudgalavādins
- ▶ Sarvāstivāda
- ▶ Sautrāntika
- ▶ Sukhāvatī

References

1. Bareau A (1955) Les sectes bouddhiques du petit véhicule. École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Saigon
2. Bareau A (1979) Chūu. In: Demiéville P, May J (eds) Hōbōgirin. Fasc.5:558-563. Maison Franco-Japonaise. Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris
3. Fremantle F, Chŏgyam Trungpa (1975) The Tibetan book of the dead. The great liberation through hearing in the bardo. Shambala Publications, Berkeley/London
4. Kalupahana DJ, Tamura K (1965) Antarābhava. In: Malalasekera GP (ed) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism I, 4. Government of Ceylon, Colombo, pp 730–733
5. Willemen C (2012, forthcoming) Early yogācāra and visualization (bhāvanā). In: Volume in memory of L. Kawamura. Contemporary issues in Buddhist Studies Series. Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley. University of Hawai'i Press

Anumāna-pramāṇa

▶ Logic (Buddhism)

Anumiti

▶ Logic (Buddhism)

Anupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa

▶ Parinirvāṇa

Anuruddha

Arvind Kumar Singh
Department of Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi, Delhi, India
School of Buddhist Studies and Civilization, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

Synonyms

Aniruddha

Definition

Anuruddha was an eminent disciple and cousin of the Buddha, renowned for his magical powers (*iddhi*), divine vision (*dibbacakkhū*), and ability to forgo sleep.

Early Life

Anuruddha was one of the Buddha's eminent disciples. He was the son of Amitodana, the brother of King Suddhodana who was the father of Siddhārtha Gautama. Amitodana had five children from different wives, namely, Mahānāma, Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhāgu, and Rohiṇī. When he was young, Anuruddha lived amid luxuries [9] and had three palaces, one for each seasons, winter, summer, and rainy ([6], Vol. ii, p. 280). The *Dhammapada* commentary records that he had never even heard the phrase "there isn't any (natthi)" for whatever he might want; his desire would immediately be fulfilled [9]. Thus, Anuruddha lived his early life in wanton luxury and gave little thought to the meaning and purpose of existence.

According to Xuanzang, there is some difficulty in knowing whether Anuruddha was a cousin of the Buddha, being a son of Amitodana, or he was Anuruddha who was a personal attendant of the Buddha at the time of his death [1]. Aśvaghosa derives the name of this person from *a* + *niruddha* (not stopped), in agreement with the Tibetan *ma hgagspa* [1]. In Mahāyāna texts, Anuruddha's name appears as Aniruddha and sometimes spoken of as a son of Dronodana.

Entry into Saṃgha and His Experiences

The turning point in the life of Anuruddha came shortly after the Buddha visited Kapilavatthu (Sanskrit: Kapilavastu) and preached to the Śākyans. When members of other Śākyan families decided to join the *Saṃgha*, Mahānāma was grieved that none had done so from his own family. He, therefore, suggested to his brother, Anuruddha, that one of them should leave the household life and join the *Saṃgha*. Anuruddha was at first reluctant to agree, but when he was informed by Mahānāma of the endless round of household cares, etc., the very thought of endless cycles of rebirth into a life of never-ending toil took hold on him and this prompted him to follow the Buddha and try to break through the cycle of continuous becoming. Anuruddha was converted together with the other Śākyan princes including Devadatta, Bhaddiya, Ānanda, Bhāgu, Kimbila, and their barber, Upāli, and all of them sought ordination under the Buddha at the Anupiya Mango Grove ([6], Vol. ii, pp. 182–183). This event must have taken place in the 20th year of the Buddha's ministry, as is shown by a comparison of the *Theragāthā* 1039 with *Vinaya Piṭaka* (Vol. ii, p. 286). The latter passage gives us information that Ānanda (one of the six) attained *Arhatship* in the year of the Buddha's death; the former states that he had been 25 years in the *Saṃgha* before he did so. Twenty-five years before the Buddha's death brings us to the 20th year of his ministry [8]. Anuruddha attained it before he became an *Arahant*. Anuruddha's spiritual path was marked by two prominent features which are his mastery over divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*) and cultivation of *Satipaṭṭhāna* or four foundations of mindfulness [9]. *Dibbacakkhu,* the ability to see beyond the range of the physical eye, was acquired by Anuruddha before the rainy season (*vassāvāsa*) was over ([6], Vol. ii, pp. 180–183). As a result, he was able to call up a thousand *kappas* (Sanskrit: *kalpa*, aeon) of past and future and able to know the universe and its making. The divine eye which is of a mundane (*lokiya*) character can be obtained by one who has reached the fourth meditative absorption *jhāna* and takes this meditation as the basis for further development as described in the *Visuddhimagga*.

According to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Anuruddha received teachings from Sāriputta on the eight thoughts of a great man (*pācīnavaṃsadāya*) of which he mastered seven, but could not learn the eighth. The Buddha, being aware of this, visited him and taught it, and thereafter he developed insight and realized *Arhatship* in the highest grade [7]. It is mentioned that once

when the Buddha spending a rainy season in *Tāvatiṃsa* preached the *Abhidhamma*, it was Anuruddha who kept the people on earth informed of his doings and it is also stated that the Buddha went to *Tāvatiṃsa* at Anuruddha's request [4]. From the Pāli literature it appears that Anuruddha, in contrast to such monks as Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, and Ānanda, preferred a life of quiet seclusion to one of active involvement in the affairs of the *Saṃgha*. Thus, he did not appear as frequently as the above-named elders in the events connected with the Buddha's ministry. His verses in the *Theragāthā* also suggest that he was strongly inclined to ascetical practices. He is also known to have engaged in discussions on the *Dhamma* with other monks and with knowledgeable lay followers [7].

Depiction in Buddhist Literatures

Anuruddha is depicted in Buddhist literature as an affectionate and loyal *Bhikkhu* of the Buddhist *Saṃgha*. The Buddhist literature is full of events on which Anuruddha had discussions with the Buddha and he was consulted by disciples, both *Bhikkhus* and lay people, on the points of doctrine and practice. Evidence of this is quite clearly available in the *Anuruddha Sutta* in which he had a discussion with the king's carpenter, *Pañcakaṅga*, on the issue of *Cetovimuttī* and *Mahāggata* ([10], Vol. iii, p. 144f). On another occasion, when the Buddha was disgusted with the arguments of the *Bhikkhus* at Kośāmbi, he retreated to *Pācīnavaṃsadāya* to stay with Anuruddha and specially preached the *Upakkileś a Sutta* to him ([10], Vol. iii, p. 153f). In another incidence in the *Nalakapāna Sutta* ([10], Vol. i, p. 462ff), in the presence of a large number of distinguished *Bhikkhus*, the Buddha directly addresses his questions to Anuruddha and it is he who answers on behalf of the *Saṃgha*. Similar references are also found in *Cūla-Gosiṅga Suttas* and the *Mahā-Gosiṅga Suttas*. According to the *Theragāthā*, Anuruddha is said to have not slept for 25 years at all, and slept only during the last watch of the night during his last 30 years [7].

His Past Lives

As many as 23 *Jātakas* relate stories pertaining to Anuruddha's earlier births [4]. In these stories, Anuruddha was born 15 times as a deity, 7 times as a human being, and once as an animal in his previous births [9]. In the time of the Padumuttara Buddha, he had been a wealthy householder. Hearing one of the monks declared best among possessors of the celestial eye, he desired a similar honor. He performed acts of merit, including holding a great feast of light in front of the Buddha's tomb. In the Kassapa Buddha's era, he had reincarnated and was born in Varanasi; one day he placed bowls filled with clarified butter around the Buddha's tomb and set them alight, circumscribed the tomb throughout the night, bearing on his head a lighted bowl. All these diverse and colorful stories have a common feature which shows several characteristic qualities of Anuruddha, namely, his strong active striving for virtue, his strength of character, skill in meditation, mastery of supernormal faculties, as well as his concern for the welfare of common man [9].

Association with Women

In a number of Pāli texts, Anuruddha is mentioned as being associated with a number of women. It seems that despite his own inner purity of heart and complete detachment from sensuality, Anuruddha, endowed with the physical bearing of a noble warrior by birth, emanated a personal charisma that made him attractive for women, not only of the human world but of the celestial worlds as well. Some of these encounters also no doubt stemmed from *Kammic* relationships formed in earlier lives, which were still affecting him even though he himself had transcended them. Anuruddha's previous lives also refer to his relationship with women. According to the *Theragāthā*, Jālinī, his wife in a previous birth, sought to tempt him with the joy of heaven. Unfortunately, she was not able to tempt him and he told her that he had no lust for such things since he had attained freedom from rebirth [9].

In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya,* Anuruddha is depicted as questioning the Buddha about how women were born in happy states and woeful purgatory ([3], Vol. iv, pp. 240–245). Anuruddha had been visited by some *Manāpakāyikā devas*, who had played and sung to him and shown their power of changing their complexions at will. He came to the Buddha and asked how women could be born among these *devas* ([5], Vol. iv, p. 262ff). In Anuruddha's life as a monk, there was one incident which led to the promulgation of a disciplinary rule by the Buddha. Anuruddha and his brother Ānanda were the only ones among the close circle of the Buddha's disciples who occasioned the setting forth of a *Vinaya rule*. In both cases it concerned women.

Anuruddha had a sister, Rohiṇī, who suffered from a skin disease and, therefore, remained indoors and even refused to meet Anuruddha but he insisted on seeing her and persuaded her to sell her ornaments and build a resting hall for the Buddha and his monks. She later became a stream-enterer and was reborn as Sakka's consort [4].

Life After the Buddha

According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Anuruddha was present at the time of the death of the Buddha at Kusinārā and knew the exact time of his death, which is evident from the verse he uttered on the occasion of the Buddha's *Mahāparinibbāna*. It shows thoughtful and philosophic calm in contrast with that of Ānanda ([2], Vol. ii, pp. 156–157). He was foremost in consoling the monks and admonishing their future course of action, reminding them of the Buddha's decree to follow the dharma. As the Buddha was reclining and going through the *jhānas*, Ānanda said to Anuruddha: "The Exalted One has attained final Nibbāna, Venerable Sir." Anuruddha stated that the Buddha was absorbed in the state of "cessation," but had not yet died. The Mallas of Kusinārā consulted Anuruddha in connection with the Buddha's last rites ([2], Vol. ii, p. 160f). In the *Lalitavistāra*, it is mentioned that he was wearing the *Bodhisattva's* ornaments at the time when the latter renounced the world [4].

Later on, Anuruddha played an important role in the first Buddhist Council (*Saṅgitī*) and was entrusted with recitation of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* with his disciples. According to the *Tibetan Dulvā*, it was Anuruddha who, finding Ānanda still *asekha*, got him turned out of the First Council until he became an *arahant*. Finally, Anuruddha breathed his last at the Veluvagāma in the Vajji country, at the age of 150 years [7].

Cross-References

- ▶ Abhidhamma Piṭaka
- ▶ Kapilavatthu
- ▶ Mahākassapa
- ▶ Saṅgha

References

1. Beal S (2008) Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist records of the western world. Low Price, Delhi, Reprint
2. Fausböll V (ed) (1877) The Jātakas, vols 3. Trübner, London
3. Feer ML (ed) (1884) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, vol I. Pali Text Society, London
4. Malalasekera GP (2002) Dictionary of Pali proper names, vol 1 (A-DH). Munshiram Manoharlal Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, Reprint
5. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, vol IV. Pali Text Society, London
6. Oldenberg H (ed) (1879–1883) The Vinaya Piṭaka, 5 vols. Williams and Norgate, London
7. Rhys Davids CAF (ed) (1964) Psalms of the Brethren. Pali Text Society, London, Reprint
8. Rhys Davids TW, Rhys Davids CAF (1899–1957) The Dīgha Nikāya, vols 3. Pali Text Society, London
9. Thera N, tr. (1989) Lives of the disciples Anuruddha. The Wheel Publication No. 362. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
10. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

Anuśrava

- ▶ Oral Transmission

Anussava

► Oral Transmission

Apadāna

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Definition

The *Apadāna* is the thirteenth book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. The *Avadāna* in Buddhist Sanskrit literature is its counterpart.

The *Apadāna*, thirteenth book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, is an anthology in verse of the tales of meritorious deeds of 550 *theras* (elders) and 40 *therīs* (female elders) who were contemporaries of the Buddha. The word *apadāna* means "meritorious deed" or "pure action," and each of the *Apadānas* offers a tale both of the past and the present. However, these tales are somewhat different from the *Jātaka* tales as the latter always refers to the past lives of the Buddha himself, whereas the *Apadānas* mostly deal with the lives of the elders.

The text consists of 59 *vaggas* (chapters) and has four main sections: the *Buddhāpadāna*, the *Paccekabuddhāpadāna*, the *Therāpadāna*, and the *Therī-apadāna*. The *Buddhāpadāna* and the *Paccekabuddhāpadāna* are included in the first *vagga* and are only minor sections of the book. The *Buddhāpadāna*, consisting of 81 verses, is a glorification of the Buddha where the latter describes the various meritorious deeds and their good results in his previous births. As suggested by Heinz Bechert, the content of this section is unusual in Theravāda ([2], p. 102). The *Paccekabuddhāpadāna*, consisting of 58 verses and composed in *triṣṭubh* meter, is a glorification of *paccekabuddhas* who "lead solitary lives like the rhinoceros." Here the Buddha answers Ānanda's query about *paccekabuddhas* who attained enlightenment but did not teach. The entire *Khaggavisāna Sutta* of the *Sutta-Nipāta* has been added here. Neither the *Buddhāpadāna* nor the *Paccekabuddhāpadāna* contains any biography. The *Therāpadāna* consists of 55 *vaggas*. Each of these *vaggas* contains ten tales about *theras* and is named after the title of the first tale narrated in the *vagga*. The original number of *thera-apadānas* was 550, which has been reduced to 547 most probably after three Jātakas were lost ([1], pp. 13–15). The first *vagga* begins with the tale of Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha. This is followed by those of other famous *theras* such as Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa, Upāli, Ānanda, and Rāhula. The pattern followed in each tale is that first the tale gives details of a meritorious deed done by the concerned *thera* during the time of a former Buddha. Then are mentioned the benefits enjoyed obtained him in his subsequent existences as per the prophecy uttered by that Buddha. Finally, the attainment of the perfection of an arahant by that *thera* is mentioned. The *Therī-apadāna* consists of the last four *vaggas*. Each of these *vaggas* contains ten tales of *therīs*. These biographies of *therīs* follow the same pattern as that of the *theras*. Biographies of some of the most celebrated *therīs* in Buddhist literature, such as Mahāpajāpatīgotamī, Khemā, and Paṭācārā, are contained in this section.

The *Apadāna* is considered as one of the very latest books in the *Tipiṭaka*. One reason of such an opinion is that whereas the number of Buddhas prior to the historical Shākyamuni Buddha is given as six the *Dīgha Nikāya* and 24 in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, the *Apadāna* adds another 11 Buddha bringing the total number 35. It has been suggested that the different legends contained in this text are of different dates. It has also been pointed out that as the *Apadāna* is not included as a text of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* in the list of the *Dīghabhāṇakas*, it appears that when the *Dīghabhāṇaka* list was finalized, the *Apadāna* was not considered as a text of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. It was almost certainly the last book added to the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* and appears to be younger than the *Buddhavaṃsa* but much older than the commentaries (see [1], p. 18).

Though the *Apadāna* is as large a text as the *Jātaka*, it is considered of very low literary value. Though occasionally the narratives of the *Apadāna* give more details than the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā*, the narratives of these three texts as well as the *Vimānavatthu* are quite similar in terms of their content as well as style. Interestingly, none of the higher doctrines of Buddhism have been taught in the *Apadāna*. Its subject matter primarily focuses on the charitable and humanitarian aspects of Buddhism whereby socially engaged activities such as offering charity and prayers or building a cetiya, cleaning, repairing, and whitewashing it are much appreciated. Its geographical horizon appears to be very similar to that of the *Niddesa* ([1], p. 19). As some of the *theras* and *therīs* are known to have spoken the Thera- and Therīgāthās, *Apadāna* is considered as a kind of supplement to the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* ([4], p. 61). The legends of the *Apadāna* have inspired other compositions, such as the Sādhucarita, the Rasavāhinī, and the Pūjāvaliya. According to the *Gandhavaṃsa*, *Paramatthajotikā*, the commentary of the *Apadāna*, was written by Buddhaghosa at the request of five monks. It is possible to trace at least three recensions of the *Apadāna* as Dhammapāla in his commentary to *Thera-/Therī-apadānas* quotes in a wording that is different from the Apadāna, and a third recension was by Buddhaghosa, the author of the *Paramatthajotikā*, the commentary of the *Sutta-Nipāta* ([1], p. 18; [4], p. 61).

Cross-References

- ▶ Buddhaghosa
- ▶ Buddhavaṃsa
- ▶ Jātaka
- ▶ Khema-uyyāna
- ▶ Khuddaka Nikāya
- ▶ Mahākassapa
- ▶ Mahāmoggallāna
- ▶ Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī
- ▶ Pacceka-Buddha
- ▶ Rāhula
- ▶ Sutta Piṭaka
- ▶ Sutta-Nipāta
- ▶ The Buddha of Healing
- ▶ Thera- and Therīgāthā
- ▶ Upāli
- ▶ Vimānavatthu

References

1. Bechert H (1958) Über das Apadānabuch. Wien Z Kunde Süd- und Ost-asiens 2:1–21
2. Bechert H (1992) Buddha-field and transfer of merit in a Theravāda source. Indo-Iranian J 35:95–108
3. Godakumbura CE (ed) (1954) Visuddhajanavilāsinī nāma Apadānaṭṭhakathā. Pali Text Society, London
4. von Hinüber O (1996) A handbook of Pāli literature. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin
5. Law BC (1983) A history of Pali literature, reprint, vol 1. Indological Book House, Delhi
6. Lilley ME (ed) (2000) The Apadāna, vol 2. Pali Text Society, London
7. Winternitz M (1983) History of Indian literature (trans: Sarma VS), vol 2, rev. edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Appreciative Joy

- ▶ Muditā

Apprehension

- ▶ Knowledge (Buddhism)

Arahant

Bhikkhu Anālayo
Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, Balve, Germany

Synonyms

Arhat (Sanskrit)

Definition

An arahant, literally a "worthy one," has reached the highest of the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhism and has thereby become totally free from defilements and gone beyond rebirth in any form.

The Path to Arahantship

The realization of arahantship requires the development of insight, *vipassanā*, and tranquility, *samatha*, a meditative development of the mind that needs to be based on a firm foundation of moral conduct. Progress toward any of the four stages of awakening recognized in early Buddhism, culminating in the attainment of arahantship, comes into being through having associated with superior persons, having heard the Dharma, having attended wisely and having practiced in accordance with the Dharma ([1], Vol. V, p. 410). The most basic requirement for the gain of arahantship, however, is the existence of a Buddha, since due to his teaching the path to all of the stages of awakening is revealed to humanity ([2], Vol. I, p. 23).

The usual way of approach for the attainment of arahantship is depicted in the early discourses as a gradual path of practice. According to the standard description, this gradual path begins by going forth as a monastic, followed by keeping up a firm foundation in moral conduct and developing contentment with the minimal necessities of life. Based on this foundation, one then undertakes the practice of sense-restraint in order to avoid unwholesome reactions to whatever is experienced through any of the senses and trains oneself in clear comprehension during any bodily activity, followed by withdrawing into seclusion for intensive meditation practice.

Such meditation practice begins with overcoming the five hindrances that obstruct mental cultivation and the gaining of wisdom, which are sensual desire, ill will, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-worry, and doubt. Once these are overcome, the four absorptions, *jhāna*, can be developed, experiences of deep concentration that form the basis for the subsequent development of higher knowledge and liberating wisdom. According to the standard description, this development takes place by attaining three higher knowledges, *tevijjā*. These three higher knowledges are the ability to recollect one's own past lives, the ability to directly witness – with the "divine eye" – the passing away of beings and their being reborn in accordance with their deeds, and the destruction of the influxes or taints, *āsava*.

This standard description of the gradual path should, however, not be taken too literally, since the actual approach taken may vary in individual cases. Not everyone on the path to arahantship needs to have gone forth and not all arahants have developed the three higher knowledges, of which the first two – recollection of one's former lives and the divine eye – are not necessary requisites for the attainment of full awakening. The only higher knowledge that is indispensable in this respect is the destruction of the influxes, the third in the set of higher knowledges, since it is this which makes one an arahant.

In some cases, moreover, arahants have apparently been able to progress rather swiftly along the path. Thus the attainment of arahantship, in the case of an exceptional individual, could apparently take place already at the age of 7 ([3], 429). A remarkable example for quick realization is provided in a discourse that reports a meeting between the Buddha and a non-Buddhist ascetic. During their first meeting, after receiving an enigmatic instruction by the Buddha, this ascetic became an arahant on the spot [4, 5]. In this case, it seems that his inner degree of spiritual maturity was of such a high level that a short instruction was enough for him to cover what in the average case would take years and years of practice.

A central method for developing the type of insight that leads to awakening can be found in contemplating the five aggregates (affected by) clinging as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and devoid of a self ([1], Vol. III, p. 168). These five aggregates are, according to early Buddhism, the chief constituents of an individual, comprising the

aggregates of bodily form, feeling, perception, volitions, and consciousness. Contemplating these aggregates in the above-described manner leads to seeing all aspects of subjective experience as constantly changing, therefore as unable to provide lasting satisfaction, and therewith as not fit to be considered as a permanent self. If one takes anything to be permanent or satisfactory or a self, however, or else if one does not regard Nirvāṇa as happiness, then one will be incapable of reaching any of the levels of awakening, let alone attaining arahantship ([2], Vol. III, p. 442).

An arahant has successfully eradicated the ten fetters, *saṃyojana*, that are considered to be what binds unawakened worldlings to continued existence in the cycle of *saṃsāra.* With the first level of awakening, stream-entry, three of these fetters have been eradicated. These three are the fetter of personality view, *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, in the sense of the notion of a permanent self, the fetter of doubt, *vicikicchā*, in particular doubt regarding the nature of what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and the fetter of dogmatic clinging to rules and vows, *sīlabbataparāmāsa*, as in themselves sufficient for reaching liberation.

The next two fetters to be overcome are sensual lust, *kāmarāga*, and ill will, *vyāpāda*. In regard to their overcoming, a once-returner has already made substantial progress, since he or she has considerably weakened both by attaining the second level of awakening. Their complete eradication, however, is only accomplished with the next and third level of awakening, the attainment of nonreturn, *anāgāmin*.

An arahant has also eliminated the remaining five fetters, which are desire for fine-material states, *rūpa-rāga*, desire for immaterial states, *arūpa-rāga*, conceit, *māna*, restlessness, *uddhacca*, and ignorance, *avijjā*.

With the overcoming of all ten fetters, an arahant has also eradicated the influxes or taints, *āsava*. These influxes are often listed as three, comprising the influxes of sensuality, of (desire for continued) existence, and of ignorance, *kāmāsava, bhavāsava, avijjāsava*, with sometimes the influx of views, *diṭṭhāsava*, added as a fourth. The destruction of these influxes, *āsavakkhaya*, is an expression often used to denote the attainment of full awakening. Having destroyed the influxes and eradicated the fetters, an arahant is one who has completed the training in morality, concentration, and wisdom ([2], Vol. I, p. 232), having thoroughly penetrated the Buddha's teaching ([6], Vol. II, p. 251).

Implications of Arahantship

With the fetters destroyed and the influxes eradicated, even the subtlest trace of defilement is no longer present in the mind of an arahant and it is simply impossible for him or her to be acting under the influence of desire, hatred, delusion, or fear ([6], Vol. III, p. 133).

By dint of profound insight and inner purity, an arahant is incapable of undertaking such deeds as deliberately depriving another living being of life, appropriating what belongs to others by way of theft, or consciously speaking falsehood ([7], Vol. I, p. 523). The inner purification reached with full liberation also makes it impossible for an arahant to engage in sexual activity in any form, or else to hoard up things for the sake of sensual enjoyment.

From an early Buddhist perspective, an arahant epitomizes perfection in moral conduct. For the remainder of his or her life, an arahant will then exemplify the type of conduct observed by lay disciples on observance days, *uposatha*. Hence arahants abstain from any intoxication, from partaking of meals after noon, from going to see dancing or singing, and from using high beds and seats ([2], Vol. I, p. 212). In sum, from an early Buddhist perspective there is no scope for the idea that a fully awakened one trancends common standards of morality.

An arahant is endowed with the seven powers of one who has destroyed the influxes, *khīṇāsava-balāni* ([6], Vol. III, p. 283). The listing of these seven powers indicates that an arahant has realized the impermanence of all formations, *saṅkhāra*, and regards sensual pleasures as comparable to (being thrown into) a pit full of glowing embers. An arahant's mind, moreover, inclines to seclusion, rejoices in seclusion, and is completely beyond things that are related to the influxes. An arahant has also fully developed key aspects of the

Buddhist path to liberation, namely, the four establishments of mindfulness, *satipaṭṭhāna*, the five faculties, *indriya*, the seven factors of awakening, *bojjhaṅga*, and the noble eightfold path.

Taking anything to be permanent, enjoying sensual pleasures, and delighting in socializing are thus incompatible with the status of an arahant. Moreover, an arahant has not only practiced successfully, but still keeps practicing. He or she continues to dwell with mindfulness of the body, feelings, mental states, and phenomena, thereby being firmly established in the four establishments of mindfulness. The same holds for the five faculties of confidence or faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. An arahant has fully developed the seven factors of awakening, which are mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. Similarly, an arahant has completely brought into being each aspect of the noble eightfold path, namely, rightly directed view, intentions, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration.

Claims to Arahantship

Claims to arahantship are invested with some degree of ambivalence in the Buddhist tradition. The early texts report several instances where monastics proclaim their successful attainment of the final goal in front of the Buddha. To do the same in front of laity, however, is an offense according to the monastic rules ([8], Vol. IV, p. 25). Moreover, if a monk or a nun, out of some ulterior motive, were to make such a claim falsely, the resultant offense is considered to be of such gravity that he or she thereby would lose the status of being a fully ordained monastic ([8], Vol. III, p. 91).

False claims to arahantship, however, need not be cases of conscious misrepresentation, but could also be the result of overestimation ([7], Vol. II, p. 252). A whole discourse describes different ways in which a claimant to arahantship should be investigated in order to ascertain the truth of the matter ([7], Vol. III, p. 30). This investigation throws some light on the nature of arahants and the qualities that according to early Buddhist thought are concomitant with full awakening.

According to this discourse, an arahant will not be attracted or repelled by anything seen, heard, sensed, or cognized, but will always remain detached. In regard to the five aggregates – comprising bodily form, feeling, perception, volitions, and consciousness – an arahant will have no clinging whatsoever. Regarding any manifestation of matter or mind, an arahant will not have the slightest notion of a self, and in relation to any of the senses and their objects, an arahant will be free from craving and desire. To this a parallel version preserved in Chinese adds that an arahant will also be detached in regard to the four nutriments of edible food, contact, intention, and consciousness (Taishō 1.732b).

Besides these manifestations of detachment and freedom from defilements, the same discourse also mentions another aspect that should be investigated, namely, how an arahant has come to his or her present condition. This normally takes place by way of having practiced the gradual path, described above. The fact that the practice of the gradual path is explicitly mentioned as one of the qualities of an arahant indicates that, according to early Buddhist meditation theory, the attainment of full awakening and its concomitant inner freedom are the final result of a clear-cut method of practice.

Types of Arahants

Although the lifestyle of a monastic will greatly facilitate progress toward the final goal, the attainment of arahantship does not necessarily require becoming ordained. A case in point is the record of a young layman, who during his first encounter with the Buddha was able to progress all the way up to arahantship and only subsequent to such attainment requested ordination ([8], Vol. I, p. 17). This tale neatly exemplifies the relationship of arahantship to laity: Early Buddhism holds that it is possible to become an arahant without having been ordained. However, on becoming an arahant, one will seek ordination. That is, unless a layman or a laywoman attains arahantship on

their deathbed or passes away for some other reason, he or she will go forth, since to continue living as a householder is no longer compatible with the inner degree of purification and freedom that has been reached with full awakening.

The supposed existence of arahants that continue to live as householders in early Buddhism, suggested by some scholars, appears to be based on a slight misreading of a discourse, which lists the names of several householders who had reached some level of awakening ([2], Vol. III, p. 450). Closer inspection shows that the expression used in this discourse does not imply that these householders had reached the highest level of awakening. In fact, two of these householders are elsewhere reported to have passed away as once-returners ([2], Vol. III, p. 348), and another householder mentioned in the same listing is on record as having been reborn in a heavenly realm ([7], Vol. III, p. 262), which would be impossible for an arahant.

The ability to become an arahant is independent of caste or gender, as women are certainly capable of gaining full awakening ([2], Vol. IV, p. 276). One discourse declares that the Buddha's dispensation would have been deficient if he did not have female arahant disciples ([7], Vol. I, p. 492). The same discourse reports that more than 500 nun disciples of the Buddha had become arahants, so that there was no deficiency in this respect.

Becoming an arahant does not mean that all former character traits just disappear; in fact, the detachment of an arahant is not merely a bland neutrality or indifference. Rather, through the removal of unwholesome mental influences an arahant is capable of responding to the needs of others in a way that is without any selfishness. According to one discourse, the Buddha clarified that his being endowed with the qualities of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity was precisely the outcome of his having eradicated those mental defilements that are opposed to these divine abodes, *brahmavihāra* ([7], Vol. I, p. 370). Such eradication is a characteristic shared by a Buddha and his arahant disciples.

That arahants do retain some of their former character traits explains why some of them may opt for a more retired and secluded lifestyle, whereas others engage more in teaching activities or assist their companions in various ways. A perusal of the discourses shows that there is no stereotype behavior pattern among the arahant disciples of the Buddha.

The notion that arahants do not assist others is a later development and part of a particular polemic strand that has little to do with what the early sources convey. Chief monk disciples of the Buddha feature in the early discourses as frequently expressing their concern for others by word and deed. Symptomatic for the situation is an injunction the Buddha is recorded to have given to his first arahant disciples: "Wander forth, monks, for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world. . . let not two go the same way; teach, monks, the Dharma" ([1], Vol. I, p. 105).

Since arahants retain some of their former traits, those whose nature is to be strict could still exhibit sternness, even though irritation or anger would have disappeared once full awakening has been attained. This provides the necessary background for appreciating a few discourses that depict one particular arahant somewhat strongly rebuking another monk ([1], Vol. II, p. 214ff). The two apparently stood in a relationship of teacher and disciple ([8], Vol. I, p. 92) and by the time of these events the Buddha had already passed away. Hence, for this particular arahant, whom tradition presents as an outstanding proponent of ascetic practices and therewith an advocate of rigorous and stern behavior, to display a somewhat tough way of behavior need not be interpreted as a sign of the presence of defilement in his mind.

Arahants also differ in the degree to which they have emphasized the development of mental tranquility, *samatha*, prior to their awakening. Such difference underlies a distinction between two types of arahants, one of which is "liberated through wisdom," *paññāvimutta*, while the other is "liberated both ways," *ubhatobhāgavimutta*.

An arahant who is liberated through wisdom has not developed the ability to attain the immaterial attainments ([7], Vol. I, p. 477) that

according to early Buddhist meditation theory can be gained after the four absorptions, *jhāna*, have been developed. He or she would nevertheless be well aware of their impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory nature ([6], Vol. II, p. 70). This awareness could explain why someone liberated through wisdom may not make any further effort to gain the immaterial attainments once final liberation has been won, since clear understanding of the nature of such attainments might make any effort to attain them appear pointless.

The other type of arahant is "liberated both ways," *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. Such an arahant is able to attain the immaterial attainments and therefore is perfected also in this respect ([2], Vol. IV, p. 316). Elsewhere the same type of arahant is defined in a slightly different manner by indicating that he or she has mastery over the eight liberations, *vimokkha* ([6], Vol. II, p. 71). These eight cover temporary liberations of the mind attained through the development of deep stages of concentration, which involve visions of forms, the development of loving kindness, the four immaterial attainments, and the cessation of perception and feeling, the last of these also requiring the maturation of insight.

A complement to this description can be found in another discourse, which refers to an arahant bereft of the ability to attain the eight mental liberations ([2], Vol. II, p. 87). This discourse compares such an arahant to a colored lotus, whereas an arahant who attains the eight liberations is like a white lotus. Thus the theme of this presentation is indeed the difference between those who are liberated by wisdom and those who are liberated both ways.

The alternative definition that involves the eight liberations is noteworthy insofar as it moves closer to the notion of a dry-insight arahant that is found in later literature, an arahant who has reached final liberation without being able to attain any of the four absorptions, *jhāna*. On the definition that involves the immaterial attainments, someone liberated by wisdom would only be bereft of stages of concentration that take place based on the fourth absorption. The limit set by the definition that involves the eight liberations is lower, as the first three out of the set of eight involve forms of meditation that are related to the lower absorptions, or perhaps even to stages of meditation that precede absorption attainment. This definition does not explicitly present an arahant without absorption abilities, as it could be argued that he or she has to develop absorption with a meditation object different from those related to the first three liberations. It does, however, seem just a bit closer to the commentarial conception of a dry-insight arahant than the one that involves the attainment of the immaterial spheres.

Besides the later notion of a dry-insight arahant, another later conception is that an arahant may fall away from his or her attainment of liberation. The notion of such a *parihānadharma arhat*, mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośa* ([9], p. 372), conflicts with the indications given in the early discourses, where according to the standard description an arahant is one who has done what needs to be done and has gone once and for all beyond defilements and future rebirth. A term frequently used to refer to the arahant is *asekha*, implying that such a one is no longer in need of any training. As another discourse points out, an arahant has nothing further to be done and is in no need to do anything about what has already been done ([1], Vol. III, p. 168).

Yet another later trend was to single out certain arahants – originally a group of 16, but eventually growing via 18 to a total of 500 – that are believed to remain in the world until the appearance of the next Buddha Maitreya.

Eventually, with the coming into vogue of the bodhisattva ideal, the notion of the arahant suffered a loss of status in some Buddhist traditions. The idea became prevalent in these traditions that the liberation of an arahant, referred to as *śrāvakabodhi*, is of an inferior type and marked by selfish tendencies. Hence, the proper aim of one's aspiration should rather be the superior type of awakening to be acquired by those who are practicing the bodhisattva path.

From the perspective of the early Buddhist discourses, however, which represent the earliest strata of text and thus with high probability reflect the beginning stages in the development of Buddhist thought, an arahant has reached supreme

awakening and will not suffer a decline in his or her condition of being totally liberated from all defilements and rebirth, a condition that implies the complete eradication of any selfishness or egotism.

Cross-References

- ▶ Anāgāmin
- ▶ Buddha (Concept)
- ▶ Insight
- ▶ Liberation (Buddhism)
- ▶ Sotāpanna

References

1. Feer L (ed) (1888–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
2. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
3. Alsdorf L, Norman KR (ed) (1966) Thera- and Therīgāthā. Pali Text Society, London (references are by stanza)
4. Steinthal P (ed) (1885) The Udāna. Pali Text Society, London
5. Anālayo (2007) The arahant ideal in early Buddhism – the case of Bakkula. Indian Int J Buddh Stud 8:1–21
6. Carpenter JE, Rhys Davids TW (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
7. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
8. Oldenberg H (ed) (1879–1882) Vinayapiṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
9. Pradhan P (1967) Abhidharmakośabhāṣya. K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna
10. Anālayo (2008) The sixfold purity of an arahant, according to the Chabbisodhana-sutta and its parallel. J Buddh Ethics 15:241–277
11. Anālayo (2010) Once again on Bakkula. Indian Int J Buddh Stud 11:1–28
12. Bodhi (2007) The Susīma-sutta and the wisdom-liberated arahant. J Pali Text Soc 29:50–74
13. Bodhi (2009) Susīma's conversation with the Buddha: a second study of the Susīma-sutta. J Pali Text Soc 30:33–80
14. Bond GD (1984) The development and elaboration of the arahant ideal in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. J Am Acad Relig 52(2):227–242
15. de Silva L (1987) The Buddha and the arahant compared (a study based on the Pali canon). In: Jayasuriya MHF (ed) Pratidāna Mañjarī, Papers on Buddhism and Sri Lankan Studies in Commemoration of Gate Mudaliyar W. F. Gunawardhana. Gunawardhana Commemoration Committee, Dehiwala, pp 37–52
16. Horner IB (1936/1979) The early Buddhist theory of man perfected, a study of the Arahan concept and of the implications of the aim to perfection in religious life. Oriental Books, Delhi
17. Katz N (1982/1989) Buddhist images of human perfection, the arahant of the Sutta Piṭaka compared with the Bodhisattva and the Mahāsiddha. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
18. Lévi S (1916) Les Seize Arhat Protecteurs de la Loi. J Asiatique 11(8):5–50, 189–304
19. Tilakaratne A (2005) Personality differences of arahants and the origins of Theravāda, A study of two great elders of the Theravāda tradition: Mahā Kassapa and Ānanda. In: id. (ed) Dhamma-Vinaya, essays in honour of venerable professor Dhammavihari (Jotiya Dhirasekera). Sri Lanka Association for Buddhist Studies, Colombo, pp 229–257

Arhat (Sanskrit)

- ▶ Arahant

Arian Pâli

- ▶ Kharoṣṭhī Script

Ariya Saccāni

- ▶ Aryasacca

Army

- ▶ Warfare (Buddhism)

Ārya Lalitavistara Sūtra

- ▶ Lalitavistara

Ārya Satyāni

► Aryasacca

Ārya Tārā

► Tārā (Buddhism)

Āryadeva

Ram Kumar Rana
Department of Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Abbreviations

N	Nanjio's catalogue
T	*Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*
TM	*Tibet-Daizōkyō-So-Mokuroku*

Synonyms

Daiba; Deva; Hphags-pa-lha (Tibetan); Shengtian (Chinese); Shoten (Japanese); Tipo

Definition

A second- to third-century Mādhyamika philosopher, the foremost disciple and successor of Nāgārjuna. He successfully refuted the doctrines of his contemporary philosophers, belonging to other traditions of Indian thought, through debate and his works.

Introduction

Āryadeva (170–270 C.E.) [7] was the most eminent disciple and the younger contemporary of Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism. He is frequently known as Deva or Bodhisattva Deva. In literary works, he is also referred to with other names such as Kāṇadeva, Nīlanetra, Pingalanetra, Pingalacaksuh, and Kāṇaripa. It is also said that his real name was Candrakīrti [8]. In Chinese his name is Tipo or Shengtian, in Japanese Daiba or Shoten, and in Tibetan Hphags-pa-lha. Besides, he was also identified with siddha Kāṇa-ri-pa (Kaṇeripāda alias Āryadeva), and he attained rainbow body during Nāgārjuna's lifetime [1].

Life

Sources provide different information regarding the birthplace of Āryadeva. It is recorded that either he hailed from Sri Lanka or was a south Indian Brahman. Historical works of Taranatha and Bu-ston; Xuanzang's travel account; *Catuhś ataka-vṛitti*, commentary on *Catuhśataka* of Āryadeva by *Ācārya* candrakīrti; and the *Mañjuś rimūlakalpa* all describe him a native of the island of Ceylon (Siṃhaladvīpa). The Chinese sources, such as biography of Āryadeva (Tipopusazhuan) by Kumārajīva [12] and Fufazang yin yuanjing by Jijiaye and Tanyao [3], however describe him the son of a south Indian Brahman. Contemporary scholarship agrees with the proposition that Āryadeva was a native of Sri Lanka.

The philosophy of Nāgārjuna was consolidated with unparalleled dialectical skill by his chief disciple Āryadeva. His name figures among "the four suns which illumined the world" [5]. Like his illustrious teacher Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva's life too is full of legend and hagiography. Biographers report that Āryadeva with auspicious marks was miraculously born in the petals of a lotus flower in the pleasure garden of *Pañchashriṅga*, king of *Siṃhala*. Later, the king adopted him as his foster son [1]. Impressed by his natural grace and brilliance, his father declared him the crown prince and enthroned as his heir [9]. But, when grown up, he felt strongly inclined to accept the ordination. After learning the Theravādin Buddhist doctrines in depth, eventually he renounced the throne for the life of a monk. From Upādhyāya Hemadeva, he received *pravrajyā* and *upasampadā* [1]. Having already learned the arts and sciences in

addition to Ceylonese Buddhist thought, he sought for a teacher who could instruct him the essentials of the dharma.

The Ceylonese chronicle Mahāvaṃsa records the name of a certain Thera Deva who preached dhamma to King Vohārika Tissa, who, having heard the doctrine by this Thera of *Kappukagāma*, restored five buildings [4]. *Dīpavaṃsa* also mentions that *Thera* Deva preached *Andhakavinda sutta* to the king Saṇgha Tissa, who, after listening to his discourse, ordered the continuous distribution of the rice milk at the four gates of the town [10]. Notably both the kings lived during the third century C.E., the period attributed to Āryadeva.

After completing the study of the entire Tripitaka, Thera Deva came to *Jambudvīpa* (India) on pilgrimage to the temples and *caityas* of the different regions. He met Nāgārjuna shortly before he left for *Śriparvata* from the country of King Udayana [1]. Xuanzang records: The Bodhisattva Deva came from the land of *Siṃhala* to discuss the difficulties of the doctrine with Nāgārjuna. He asked a pupil to announce him to the master. Nāgārjuna sends his begging bowl out, filled with pure water. Deva drops a needle into it. The pupil takes the bowl back, and Nāgārjuna is much delighted at this "eloquent silence." The master explains to his astonished pupil that the bowl with the water signified his own pure knowledge; by throwing the needle in, Deva intended to say that he has fathomed this knowledge. Deva was called in and approaches the master very modestly. Nāgārjuna felt satisfied with the discussion he had with Deva, and as he himself was already old and feeble, he appointed him as his successor [1].

Thus Thera *Deva* of Ceylon came to be known as Āryadeva in India. This proposition is further strengthened by the fact in the chronicles he is not mentioned elsewhere. Further, in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit literature, he is frequently referred to merely as Deva [11]. Āryadeva in the highly intellectual Mahāyāna surroundings of south India under the guidance and tutelage of Nāgārjuna soon became proficient in all the branches of science and heterodox and orthodox philosophical systems. He soon attained eminence as a teacher and philosopher. At *Śriparvata*, he sat at the feet of the *Ācarya* and received various magical powers, like *rasāyana*, and entrusted with substantial responsibility of the law [1].

At that time, there lived a *Śaivite* called *Mātriceta* who had propitiated the god *Maheś vara* and was exceedingly powerful, so that no living being could match him in debate. This teacher, having caused great harm to the doctrine of Buddha and seduced many people to the heretical teachings, came to Nālandā. The Nālandā monks sought help from Nāgārjuna who was staying at *Śriparvata*. At that time Āryadeva was abiding with him; he offered himself to subdue the heretic and went to Nālandā. There, the heretical teacher was vanquished and converted to Buddhism, who later became a great master [9].

Different sources provide conflicting accounts of Āryadeva's gift of his one eye because of which he was later called Kāṇadeva (one eyed) in many sources.

On his way to Nālandā, there a tree goddess begged him to grant her an eye, and he accordingly presented her with one of his eyes [9]. Another account states that on his way, he met a heretic woman who needed an eye of a learned monk to complete the materials required for her siddhi. On being asked for it, he gave her one of his eyes [1]. Kumārajīva's biography, however, narrates a mysterious encounter with Shiva in his aspect as *Maheśvara*. While disputing with theistic *Śhaivites*, he argued that a golden statue of *Maheśvara* was not the god himself. To prove his point, he plucked the left eye of the image. When *Maheśvara* visited Āryadeva the next day, the monk offered his own eye to show that he was not prideful. This is how he proved his point that the statue is not the god and the body is not the perceiver within it [12]. Āryadeva's works suggest that he debated with Jain philosophers, theistic *Vaiœṇavas* and *Śhaivites*, and the followers of numerous others who hold that things are permanent, pleasant, pure, and the self.

According to Xuanzang, Āryadeva, well known for his wisdom and spiritual energy, on his visit to Pātliputra, subdued the heretics. There was hardly any Buddhism left there; with Nāgārjuna's permission as his deputy and representative, he vanquished heretics within a few

days, reestablished Buddhist faith over there, and restored the support of the king and people. A monument was also erected there to commemorate his victory [5].

After this, *Ācārya* Āryadeva stayed at Nālandā for a long time. At last he went again to the south after *Ācārya* Nāgārjuna passed away; he worked for the welfare of the living beings by studying and meditating in the adjacent lands (of *Śriparvata*) in south India. He built 24 monasteries with wealth obtained from the deities of mountains and trees, etc. He turned all these monasteries into centers of Mahayana and employed *Yakœini* Subhaga to maintain them [1].

In *Ranganatha* near Kanci, he transferred the Buddha's teachings he had received from Nāgārjuna to Rāhulabhadra and passed away [1]. On the contrary a Chinese work records that Āryadeva was murdered by a heretic. The same work records that once when in south India, Āryadeva defeated some powerful non-Buddhist masters in argument and one of the pupils of a defeated leading teacher stabbed Āryadeva to death while he was taking a stroll in a desolate area. Even after the murderous attack, Āryadeva, out of compassion, suggested the attacker a safe escape from the ire of his not-yet-enlightened disciples. Moreover, he also instructed him about the true dharma by pointing the folly of erroneous views by teaching him the doctrine of emptiness which could eradicate the delusion of dualism. Later, he gave similar instruction to his aggrieved and enraged disciples also and asked them to ponder upon the true meaning of all dharmas, i.e., nondualism [11]. Thus, the last utterances of Āryadeva were also a discourse on the *śūnayatā* doctrine.

Works

Most of Āryadeva's works are not preserved as original texts in Sanskrit, but they mainly survived in Tibetan and Chinese translation. In Tibetan canon, there is some confusion between Āryadeva and a Tantric writer having same name and also a disciple of (Tantric) Nāgārjuna as his teacher. Though, Bu-ston narrates the life story of Mādhyamika Āryadeva, but his list of works also includes that of later Āryadeva treating both as one. Either he overlooked these distinctions or some confusion prevailed at his time. It is also possible that in order to invest greater authority to the works of Tantric Āryadeva, both were mixed. In Tibetan Tripitaka (Tanjur), the works of both masters are given under the name of one Āryadeva. While in the Chinese Tripitaka, neither the name nor any work of the later Āryadeva is included. In the Chinese canon, the works attributed to Āryadeva are the authentic works of the philosopher Āryadeva. In Tibetan canon, 23 works are attributed to him of which 9 are by the name of Āryadeva and the rest by Hphags-pa-lha, the Tibetan form of his name [6].

The following works are generally ascribed in the name of Āryadeva:

1. *Catuhśataka*, *Catuhśatika*, or *Śataka* is the most notable work of Āryadeva (TM 3846). Except for some fragments, the work is lost in original Sanskrit, but complete text is preserved in its Tibetan translation along with the commentary by Chandrakīrti. In Chinese Tripitaka, there is no mention of *Catuhśataka* as a work of Āryadeva. Hence, *Catuhśataka* was translated and preserved only in Tibetan.
2. *Śataśāstra* (Bailun T 1572, N 1188). A short treatise existing only in the Chinese version with Vasu's commentary on it translated in Chinese by Kumārajīva, a summary or an introduction of *Catuhśataka*. In this work, Āryadeva severely attacked other philosophical schools. This work became one of the basic texts in the Sanlun (Sanron in Japanese) sect of Buddhism in China along with *Mādhyamikaśāstra* of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva and *Dvādaśanikāyaśāstra* of Nāgārjuna.
3. *Śataśāstravaipulya* (Guangbailun T 1570, N 1189) was translated by Xuanzang along with the commentary by Dharmapāla (T 1571). The Chinese work sometimes called *Catuhśataka* of Āryadeva is the translation of the *kārikās* of this work without commentary. Its contents are identical with the last eight chapters of *Catuhśataka* with some reshuffling.

4. *Akœaraśataka (Baizilun)*. This work is an outline of Mādhyamika doctrine translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci and available in Tibetan (T 1572, TM 3834, 3835), first in Tibetan is text and the second is commentary. The Tibetan tradition ascribes it to Nāgārjuna which appears to be incorrect.
5. *Mahāpuruœaśastra (Dazhangfulun)* (T 1577 N 1242). Chinese translation by a Buddhist scholar Daotai of Northern Liang dynasty. It extols bodhisattva ideal that is to seek salvation while in *Saṃsāra*.
6. *Dipopusalengjiejingzhongwaidaoxiaoshengsizonglun Śāstra* on refutation of four heretical Hīnayāna schools mentioned in the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci (T 1639 N 1259). Four schools referred to are *Śāṃkhya*, *Vaiśeœika*, *Nirgrantha*, and *Gñātiputra*. This work was composed around fifth century C.E. [7].
7. *Dipopusashilengjiejingzhongwaidaoxiaoshengniepanlun*. *Śāstra* on explanation of *nirvāṇa* by 20 heretical teachers mentioned in the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* translated by Bodhiruci (T 1640 N 1260).
8. *Mādhyamikaśāstra*. Coauthored by Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva (T 1564 N 1179 TM 3824), 500 verses of Nāgārjuna are commented upon by Āryadeva. This is more or less a commentary by Āryadeva on the celebrated *Mādhyamikakārikā* of Nāgārjuna commonly known as *Zhonglun* in China translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva. In Tibetan this work is ascribed to Nāgārjuna. Āryadeva's authorship of commentary depends on the correct identification of Pingala, name mentioned in Chinese. Another Chinese translation of this work is by Prabhākaramitra (T 1566, N 1185, TM 3853).
9. *Hastvālprakaraṇa* and *Vṛtti* (TM 3844, 3845). This work is attributed to Āryadeva in Tibetan tradition but ascribed to Dignāga in the Chinese tradition (T 1620, 1621, N 1255–56). T.R. V. Murti upholds it a work of Āryadeva [6]. This work, in five memorial verses, teaches that all phenomena are mere illusion, and a sixth verse explains the distinction between the two truths.

Among the writings of Āryadeva, *Catuhśataka* is the main work on which two commentaries have been written by Dharmapāla and Chandrakīrti. Of the 16 chapters of this work, the first 8 are devoted to the exposition of Mādhyamika theories, and the second 8 chapters are polemics against the rival schools of Buddhism as well as *Sāṃkhya* and *Vaiśeœika* systems.

Āryadeva was an extensively learned scholar and extraordinarily eloquent. He critically analyzed the idea of self, dogmatic opinions, the senses and their objects, doctrinal extremes (such as existence and nonexistence and identity and difference), and conditional reality. He subjected all these elements of phenomenal existence to the negation of *śūnyatā*. He concluded with a discussion of the epistemological and logical problems pertaining to the teaching of *śunyatā*. He believed that only by cultivating the virtues which attack the roots of dependent causation one can achieve freedom from an endless cycle of rebirths. Āryadeva is called a Bodhisattva of the eighth stage [9] because he fused clarity of insight with compassionate action with the firm belief that all could follow the path of emancipation. Āryadeva is regarded as the fourteenth of Śākyamuni's 23, or the fifteenth of his 24, successors.

Āryadeva doctrinally appears to be in total agreement with his teacher Nāgārjuna and complements with him utmost success. He agrees with Nāgārjuna on all essential views but goes beyond him in his style of presentation. Whereas, especially in his basic treatise, Nāgārjuna works with generalized abstract inferences, Āryadeva examines the disputed views very closely and deals with them in great detail. For this reason, he is an important source of the view of the opposing schools of his time [2].

Āryadeva II

The Tibetan tradition ascribes a large number of Tantric works in the name of earlier Āryadeva. But, judging from the varying nature of these works, they could not have been the compositions of the *Mādhyamika* teacher. The Tibetan canon and Buston give the works of both Āryadevas under one

name. It is rather easy to distinguish the works of the two Āryadevas on the basis of their contents. Moreover, the Chinese canon only mentions the works of the *Mādhyamika* teacher, not a single work of the second Āryadeva. Hence, the Tantric works were written by an author different from the *Mādhyamika* Āryadeva. But, it is quite difficult to identify this second Āryadeva as available sources do not reveal any other information about his life.

This second Āryadeva, a Tantric master, was active most probably at the beginning of the eighth century C.E. This proposition is strengthened by the fact that he cites the *Madhyamakabhṛdayakārikā* of Bhāvaviveka (500–570) and the Tarkajvālā, its auto commentary, in his *Madhyamakabhramaghāta*. Besides, verse 31 of his *Jñānasārasamuccaya* is cited in the *Tattvasaṃgra-hapañjikā* of Kamalaśīla (740–795) [13].

He studied alchemy at Nālandā under the Tantric Nāgārjuna, who was a disciple of Saraha, founder of the Phags-lugs lineage of the *Guhyasamāja* Tantra [13]. Blue Annals also record that Nāgārjuna, the disciple of Saraha, had four chief disciples known as Śākyamitra, Āryadeva, Nāgabodhi, and Candrakīrti, and Āryadeva was supposed to be the predecessor of Śākyamitra [9]. By substantiating the statement of the Blue Annals, it is generally accepted that Indrabhūti, Nāgārjuna (Saraha's disciple), and Nāgabodhi were contemporaries in about the seventh century. Hence, it becomes clear that this later Āryadeva was a disciple of the later Nāgārjuna, and they, with the other Tantric writers, were active in Bengal when the Vajrayāna was gaining ground there.

At the time when Vajrayāna was gaining foothold in Bengal, this Tantric Āryadeva, who was supposed to have been known by some other names also, composed many Tantric works, both in Sanskrit and in Bengali, on Vajrayāna. Three of the works of the Tantric Āryadeva are also cited in the Blue Annals, the *Cittaviśuddhiprakaraṇa* (*Cittāvaraṇaviśodhana*), the *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, and the *Pratipattisāraśataka* [9]. Thus, the author, named Āryadeva as referred to in the Blue Annals, is not *Mādhyamika* Āryadeva. But the Tantric works attributed to Āryadeva in the Tibetan canon are the works of this later (Tantric) Āryadeva.

Moreover, it was a common practice in many ancient literatures including Indian that the works composed by lesser-known authors were attributed in the name of well-known writers to enhance the prestige and authority of their works [6]. The *Mādhyamika* Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, the master and disciple, were established authorities of their tradition. The philosophy of Vajrayāna was also based on that of *Mādhyamika*. During the seventh to eighth century when Vajrayāna was gaining popularity in India, particularly in the Bengal region, there appeared *Nāgārjuna* a Tantric writer, following the *Mādhyamika* tradition disciple of Nāgārjuna calling himself Āryadeva and composing the treatises. Both probably assumed these names following the *Mādhyamika* tradition to enhance the credibility of their works [6]. In this endeavor, even the story of offering one eye is also related to him, but this could be an interpolation from the biography of earlier Āryadeva [13]. It is also possible that the works ascribed in the name of later Āryadeva were probably composed by miscellaneous authors and attributed to an imaginary Āryadeva. Therefore, many works composed by the later Tantric Āryadeva might have been wrongly attributed to *Mādhyamika* Āryadeva. Owing to the obscure history surrounding the later Āryadeva, Tibetan canon and Bu-ston do not distinguish the two and include the works of both teachers under one name overlooking their distinction.

Works

There are eighteen works which have been ascribed in the name of Tantric Āryadeva as given in the Tibetan collection [6] – of these works, only those titles are given here which have also been referred to as Āryadeva's works by Bu-ston in his work *History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* [9]:

1. The *Mādhyamika-catuh (ś)catikā*, demonstrating the meaning of non-substantiality in detail
2. The *Mādhyamika-hastavāla-prākaraṇa*, an abridged exposition (of the same subject)
3. *The Skhalita-pramathana-yukti-hetu-siddhi*, refuting the challenges of opponents

4. The *Jñāna-sāra-samuccaya*, demonstrating the chief characteristic points of the philosophical and the Tantric systems
5. *Ārya-prajñā-pāramitā-mahāparipṛcchā-nāma* [7]
6. *Madhyamakabhramaghāta* [7]

Of the above list, no. 3, 4, 5, and 6 exist in Tibetan collection alone. These works traditionally ascribed to Āryadeva are the works by later scholars [7].

His works are the following:

1. The *Caryā-melāyana-pradīpa*, on the foundation of the mixed Sūtra and Tantra Scripture
2. The *Citta-āvaraṇa-viśodhana*, demonstrating the same subject by logical means
3. The *Catuḥ-pīṭha-tantra-rājā-maṇḍala-upāyikā-vidhi-sāra-samuccaya*, referring to the magical rights for (attaining) the power of bringing living beings to maturity
4. The *Catuḥpīṭha-sādhana*, demonstrating the initial development
5. The *Jñāna-dākinī (sādhana)*
6. The *Eka-druma-pañjika*, demonstrating the magic rites, the offerings, the final development, etc.

And also doubtfully *Pradīpa-uddyotana-abhisaṃdhi-prakaśika-vyākhyā-tīkā* [9].

Cross-References

- ▶ Mādhyamika
- ▶ Nāgārjuna
- ▶ Nālandā
- ▶ Śūnyatā
- ▶ Vajrayāna (Buddhism)

References

1. Chimpa L (tr) (2004) Taranatha's history of Buddhism in India (Chattopadhyaya D, ed). Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
2. Frauwallner E (2010) The philosophy of Buddhism (Die Philosophie des Buddhismus) (trans: Sangpo, GelongLodro), 1st edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
3. Fufazang yin yuanjing (zhuan), Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō (trans: JiJiaye and Tanyao) (1924–32), 50, no.2058
4. Geiger W (1986) The Mahāvaṃsa or the great chronicle of Ceylon. Asian Educational Services, New Delhi
5. Li RX (tr. in English) (1996) The great Tang dynasty record of the western regions (tr. by The Tripitaka Master Xuan Zang under the imperial order. Composed by Śramaṇa Bianji of the Great Zhongchi Monastery) BDK English Tripiṭaka 79, (7.51, No. 2087). Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley. ISBN 1886439-02-8
6. Malalasekera GP (ed) Encyclopedia of Buddhism, vol II. Fascile 1. Government of Ceylon, reprint, Colombo, 1985
7. Nakamura H (1989) Indian Buddhism: a survey with bibliographical notes. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
8. Nanjio B (1883) A catalogue of the Chinese translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka. Clarendon, Oxford
9. Obermiller E (tr) (1986) The history of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston, 2nd edn. Heidelberg, Delhi
10. Oldenberg H (1982) The Dīpavaṃsa, an ancient historical record. Asian Educational Services, New Delhi
11. Sogen YK (2002) Systems of Buddhistic thought. Cosmo Publications, New Delhi. ISBN 81-775-103-5
12. Tipopusu Zhuan, Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō (trans: Kumarajiva) (1924–32), 50, no.2048
13. www.bookrags.com/research/ryadeva-eorl-01/. Accessed 25 July 2012

Aryasacca

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ariya Saccāni; Ārya Satyāni; Cattāri Ariya Saccāni; Catvāri Ārya Satyāni; Four Noble Truths; Noble truths

Definition

The fundamental truths in Buddhism of the recognition of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path that leads to the cessation of this suffering.

Introduction

The Aryasacca, also known as the *Cattāri Ariya Saccāni* (Four Noble Truths), are an expression of the fundamental philosophy of Buddhism that life which is endlessly repeated by rebirth is full of suffering (Sk: *duḥkha*; Pāli: *dukkha*) caused by craving and clinging and that this suffering can be ended by following the Buddhist path. These four truths symbolize the enlightenment (bodhi) and ultimate nirvāṇa (Sk: nibbāna) of the Buddha and are a reminder of the fact that everyone can attain enlightenment and nirvāṇa. These truths have been explained by the Buddha in the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* delivered at Sarnath. In this discourse, which was the first public discourse of the Buddha, whereby he set the wheel of the dharma in motion, he urged his companions to follow the Middle Path (Sk: *madhyamā pratipada*; Pāli: *majjhimā paṭipadā*) by avoiding the extremes of self-mortification and self-indulgence and thereafter put forward the Four Noble Truths as follows:

> "Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.
>
> Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.
>
> Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.
>
> Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration" ([2], 1844).

The Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths as explained in the above stated are:

1. Suffering (*dukkha*)
2. The origin of suffering (*dukkhasamudaya*)
3. The cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodha*)
4. The path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodhagāmini-paṭipadā*).

First Noble Truth: Suffering

All living beings are subject to birth (*jāti*) and consequently decay (*jarā*) and disease (*vyādhi*) leading finally to death (*maraṇa*). Everyone is subject to these inevitable causes of suffering. Something that one desires but does not have is suffering; getting separated from those things or persons that one cherishes is also suffering. Having something that one does not desire is also suffering. Clinging to the five aggregates (Sk: *skandhas*; Pāli: *khandhas*) that constitute a person is suffering, i.e., this composite body itself is a cause of suffering. If one clings onto any aspect of one's being, whether the physical body, perceptions, feelings, formations, or consciousness, hoping that any of these things exists on a permanent basis, one is bound to experience suffering. In other words, all conditioned things are suffering (*sabbe saṃkhārā dukkhā*). Thus,

> When one abides inflamed by lust, fettered, infatuated, and contemplating gratification, then the five aggregates affected by clinging are built up for oneself in the future; and one's craving, which brings renewal of being is accompanied by delight and lust and delights in this and that increases. One's bodily and mental troubles increase, one's bodily and mental torments increase, one's bodily and mental fevers increase, and one experiences bodily and mental suffering. ([4], 1137)

Second Noble Truth: Origin of Suffering

The second truth offers an explanation of the origin (*samudaya*) of suffering. According to it, suffering originates from *taṇhā* (craving, desire, and attachment) which in turn arises out of *avijjā* (ignorance). This *taṇhā* is a powerful mental force latent in every living thing and is the fundamental source of the problems of life. It is also this very *taṇhā* that results in incessant births in saṃsāra. As one craves to have

those things that bring happiness and avoid those that lead to unhappiness, these "cravings" form the basis of the origin of suffering. Not having these cravings results in one not experiencing suffering. One also experiences suffering by clinging to the wrong notion that the self is permanent and unchanging. The origin of suffering has been explained by the Buddha as follows: "It is… craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination" ([2], 1848).

Third Noble Truth: Cessation of Suffering

The third truth follows from the second: If the cause of suffering is desire and attachment to various things, then the way to end suffering is to eliminate craving, desire, and attachment. The third truth is called *nirodha*, which means "ending" or "cessation". To stop suffering, one must stop desiring.

Fourth Noble Truth: Path to the Cessation of Suffering

As a whole, the four truths offer a precise and rational analysis of the cause of suffering as well as a solution to this suffering. These fourth truths are the path that lead to the cessation of suffering. They consist of eight parts.

The Eightfold Path

The eightfold path (Sk: *aṣṭāṅgika mārga*; Pāli: *aṭṭhaṅgika magga*), also known as the middle path as it avoids the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, consist of *sammā diṭṭhi* (right view), *sammā saṃkappa* (right intention), *sammā vācā* (right speech), *sammā kammanta* (right action), *sammā ājīva* (right livelihood), *sammā vāyāma* (right effort), *sammā sati* (right mindfulness), and *sammā samādhi* (right concentration). These eight limbs are not sequential as each one them is dependent upon the other and all are meant to be followed and practiced together. The first step cannot be fully perfected unless and until the last one is also fully perfected. One can attain enlightenment only when all the eight organs are fully practiced and perfected. In other words, each of the eight component parts of the path needs to be followed and practiced together with the others.

The eight limbs of the path have been grouped into three different stages by Buddhaghosa: *Paññā* (Wisdom), *Sīla* (Morality), and *Samādhi* (Concentration). *Paññā* consists of *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṃkappa. Sīla* consists of *sammā vācā*, *sammā kammanta*, and *sammā ājīva. Samādhi* consists of *sammā vāyāma*, *sammā sati*, and *sammā samādhi*.

Sammā diṭṭhi may be explained as a clear understanding of the four noble truths. *Sammā saṃkappa* means directing one's efforts towards having nibbāna as one's goal through the elimination of ignorance (*avijjā*). Having abandoned wrong intentions or thoughts, one can move on the way to develop *sammā saṃkappa. Sammā saṃkappa* serves the dual purpose of the elimination malevolent thoughts and the development of pure thoughts. In the sense of Middle Path, *sammā saṃkappa* consists of *nekkhamma* (giving up selfishness and worldly pleasures), *avyāpāda* (altruism and loving kindness), and *avihiṃsā* (harmlessness). Taken together, both *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṃkappa* make up right wisdom, for one is then focused on nirvāṇa, the ultimate goal in Buddhism.

Sammā vācā means refraining from falsehood, not engaging in gossip, not slandering others, and refraining from the use of harsh words. He who wishes elimination of selfishness would neither resort to telling lies nor would slander someone. Such a person is not only truthful and trustworthy but also seeks the happiness and welfare of others by not indulging in deception, defamation, or denunciation. *Sammā kammanta* consists of abstinence from causing injury to living beings, stealing, and sexual misconduct. A person who observes *sammā ājīva* does not earn his livelihood by taking up a job or career in a field in which harm gets caused to living beings.

Through the purification of speech, deeds, and thinking, one tries to purify one's livelihood by refraining from the five types of trade which a lay disciple should not take up: trade in arms (*satthavanijjā*), human beings (*sattavanijjā*), flesh (*maṃsavanijjā*), intoxicating drinks (*majjavanijjā*), and poison (*visvanijjā*). Thus, one is specifically advised in Buddhism to avoid earning a living by engaging in business which involves sale and purchase of weapons, slaughtering of animals, slavery, alcoholic beverages or other intoxicants, and selling poisonous goods. Through the practice of *sammā vācā*, *sammā kammanta*, and *sammā ājīva*, proper ethical foundations for the remaining stages of the path can be laid down.

The third and the last group of the eightfold path, *Samādhi*, consists of *sammā vāyāma*, *sammā sati*, and *sammā samādhi*. Each of these three limbs of the path requires focus and deliberate cultivation of certain meditative practices and aim at not only knowingly avoiding undesirable mental attitudes, such as hatred, sensual desire, sloth, anxiety, and doubt, but also purposely letting go of such attitudes if already arisen. The meaning of *sammā vāyāma* is to generate in oneself and then sustain positive mental attitudes, such as the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. The meaning of *sammā sati* is the cultivation of awareness of one's body (*kāyānupassanā*), feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), mind (*dhammānupassanā*), and mental objects (*cittānupassanā*). *Sammā sati* is accompanied by meditative practices of *sammā samādhi*, enabling the practitioner to cultivate "one-pointedness of the mind." This is done through the shutting of the doors of the senses to the outside world and thereby focusing on one of an assortment of objects that are designed to enable the practitioner to accomplish specific mental states that fall outside a person's normal day-to-day consciousness.

Taken as a whole, the four noble truths and the eightfold path are illustrative of the whole of *buddhavacana* (the Buddha's teachings). As the Buddha had taught these in his first discourse, they also represent the most fundamental teachings of Buddhism.

Cross-References

- ▶ Dukkha
- ▶ Enlightenment
- ▶ Paññā
- ▶ Paṭiccasamuppāda
- ▶ Samadhi-Marana
- ▶ Saṃsāra
- ▶ Sīla
- ▶ Skandha

References

1. Bodhi B (1994) The Noble Eightfold Path: the way to the end of suffering, 2nd edn. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
2. Bodhi B (trans) (2000) The disconnected discourses of the Buddha: a new translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, 2 vols. Wisdom Publication, Boston
3. Anderson CS (2004) Four Noble Truths. In: Encyclopedia of Buddhism, vol I. Macmillan Reference USA, New York, pp 295–298
4. Ñānamoli B, Bodhi B (eds) (1995) The middle length discourses of the Buddha: a new translation of the Majjhima Nikāya. Wisdom Publications, Boston
5. Narada M (1998) The Buddha and his teachings, reprint. The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taipei
6. Norman KR (1990–2001) The Four Noble Truths. In: Collected papers, vol 2. Pali Text Society, Oxford
7. Norman KR (1990–2001) Why are the Four Noble Truths called noble? In: Collected papers, vol 4. Pali Text Society, Oxford
8. Rahula W (1974) What the Buddha taught, 2nd edn. Grove Press, New York
9. Sumedho B (1992) The Four Noble Truths. Amaravati, Hertfordshire

Āryasaddharmalaṅkāvatāra Sūtra

- ▶ Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra

Āryāsaṅga

- ▶ Asaṅga

Ārya-Śrīmālādevīsiṁhanāda-nāma-mahāyānasūtra

A. W. Barber
Department of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, Canada

Other Titles

Śrīmālāṃ devīm adhikṛtya; *Śrīmālā sūtra*

Summary of the Teachings

The *Ārya-Śrīmālādevīsiṁhanāda-nāma-mahāyānasūtra* (hereafter *Śrīmālādevī*) [1, 4, 6, 7] is a shorter Mahāyāna *sūtra* probably originating with the Mahāsāṃghika in the Krishna River area [2]. Along with the *Tathāgatagarbha sūtra* it is one of the earliest *sūtras* in the *tathāgatagarbha* genre. There were one Tibetan and three Chinese (two still extant) translations made, and fragments of it exist in Sanskrit found in quotations in other works including the *Ārya-Laṅkāvatāra-mahāyānasūtra,* the *Ratnagotravibhāga,* and the *Śikṣāsamuccaya.* It was possibly "published" in the third century C. E. In addition to being one of the main *tathāgatagarbha* texts, the *sūtra* also has teachings on the *Dharmakāya, śūnyatā*, the superiority of the Tathāgata over the arhats and pratyekabuddhas, the Four Noble Truths, Mahāyāna, vows, and one-vehicle (*ekayāna*) similar to the *Saddharma puṇḍarīka sūtra*.

The narrative of the *sūtra* is minimal with the emphasis being placed on the teachings themselves. As noted in its prologue, the teachings are given by a laywoman named Śrīmālādevī who is the queen of Ayodhyā and daughter of the king and queen of Kośala. The Buddha Śākyamuni sanctions the teachings periodically throughout the text.

Following the Buddha Śākyamuni prediction that the queen will become a Buddha 20,000 *kalpas* later and a description of some of the wonders in that Buddha's pure land, the queen makes ten great vows. Some vows relate to the śrāvakayāna and some to the Mahāyāna with overlaps. She vows (1) to not violate morality, (2) to respect teachers, (3) to not have thoughts of anger or ill will, (4) to not have thoughts of jealousy, (5) to be generous, (6) to only collect wealth to help the poor, (7) to practice giving, pleasant speech, helping, camaraderie, benefit sentient beings, not to covet, not be weary, and to be free of hindrances, (8) to not forsake the misfortunate but to give them relief, (9) to subdue those who are immoral and who break their Buddhist precepts and uphold and foster the good, and (10) to never forget her embracing of the *Dharma.* Those in attendance proclaimed they would follow the queen through multiple births and all made the same vows.

Then Queen Śrīmālādevī produced three aspirations: (1) to gain *Dharma*-wisdom in all her lives, (2) to teach in each life, and (3) to embrace and protect the *Dharma.* All the bodhisattvas' aspirations/vows come under "embracing the True *Dharma*." Embracing the True *Dharma* is perfecting all *Buddha-Dharmas*, includes all *Dharma* gates, is the maturation of merit and knowledge, is the source of the Mahāyāna, the base of the magical powers (*vikurvaṇa*), is the entrance to the light of the *Dharma* (*dharmālokamukha*), and bliss. Embracers of the True *Dharma* encourage others to achieve virtue and to follow the śrāvakayāna, the pratyekabuddhayāna, and the Mahāyāna. The True *Dharma* and the embracer of the True *Dharma* and the embracing are the same and this is the six *pāramitās.* In the *Dharma* ending age, embracers of the True *Dharma* will form bodhisattva groups. This would indicate that even in the end time, the True *Dharma* will be available to some. The *sūtra* provides a lengthy explanation delineating the superiority of the Tathāgata over the arhats and pratyekabuddhas.

The śrāvakayāna and the pratyekabuddhayāna are part of the Buddhayāna and thus one vehicle (*ekayāna*) which is the Mahāyāna and the base of which is the *tathāgatagarbha.* Realizing the one vehicle is realizing complete perfect awakening, also referred to as the *Dharmakāya,* and *nirvāṇa.*

The *Dharmakāya* and the Tathāgata are the same and beyond all limits. The Tathāgata compassion is without limit and he has an imperishable nature (*dharma*), is permanent (*nitya*), unchangeable (*dhruva*), and is the ultimate refuge. The *Dharma* and the *saṅgha* are partial refuges. There are two phases to the Four Noble Truths; mundane (*laukika*) and supramundane (*lokottara*). The use of the analytic categories mundane and supramundane is also found in the Pāli material and within the Yogācāra although their use is different than in the *Śrīmālādevī.* Only the Tathāgata realizes the supramundane phase which is alogical. The truth of suffering, cause of suffering, and the path are constructed (*saṃskṛta*) and thus untrue, impermanent, and not a refuge. The truth of cessation of suffering is unconstructed (*asaṃskṛta*), permanent, and a refuge.

The supramundane Four Noble Truths are explained on the bases of the *tathāgatagarbha.* The *tathāgatagarbha* is the realm of the Tathāgata, not the concern of worldly persons, it is wrapped in defilements, it is the *Dharmakāya* not separate from defilements, it is the Tathāgata's emptiness *(śūnyatā*) wisdom. The *tathāgatagarbha* is empty of defilements but is not empty of Buddha *dharmas. Saṃsāra* is based on *tathāgatagarbha* and it is unborn, does not die, does not become reborn, is unconstructed, permanent, steadfast, eternal, and is the support (*niś raya*), holder (*ādhāra*), and base (*pratiṣṭhā*) of the constructed. It produces the aversion to suffering and the aspiration for *nirvāṇa.* The *tathāgatagarbha* is not self, is intrinsically pure, it is the *Dharmadhātu* and the *Dharmakāyagarbha*.

The *sūtra* holds no distinction between male and female spiritual capacities. There are three types of disciples: (1) those who through introspection gain wisdom, (2) those who comply with the *Dharma*, and (3) those that rely on the Tathāgata. In general, making vows and fulfilling them, embracing the True *Dharma*, gaining the right view and having confidence in the intrinsically pure mind are the main practices put forth. These three practices are also mentioned in other *Tathāgatagarbha* literature.

There seems to be no extant Indic commentary to this *sūtra,* not even in translation. Its influence on other *sūtras* and in a few Indic treatises is limited and at times highly selective [3, 5]. Native Chinese Buddhist composed commentaries on the *sūtra* although not all have survived and there are no commentaries in the Tibetan canon. The *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāśtra*, although quoting the *Śrīmālādevī*, is a general treatise on the topic of the *tathāgatagarbha.*

Cross-References

- Bodhisattva
- *Dharma*
- *Pāramitā*
- *Saddharmapuṇḍrīka Sūtra*
- *Śrāvaka*
- *Śūnyatā*
- *Tathāgatagarbha*
- Yogācāra

References

1. Barber AW (ed) (1991) The Tibetan Tripitaka: Taipei edition. SMC, Taipei: Nos. 92 (rmldevsiṁhanda); 107 (Laṅkvatra); 113 (Saddharmapuṇḍarka); 258 (Tathgatagarbha); 5335 (ikṣsamuccayakrka); 5525 (Ratnagotravibhga Mahynottaratantrastra)
2. Barber AW (2008) Two Mahyna developments along the Krishna River. In: Padma S, Barber AW (eds) Buddhism in the Krishna River Valley of Andhra. State University of New York Press, Albany
3. Brown BE (1991) The Buddha nature a study of the Tathgatagarbha and layavijna. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
4. Chang GCC (1983) A treasury of Mahyna Stras (#19). The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park
5. Paul D (1979) The concept of Tathgatagarbha in the rmldev Stra (Sheng-Man Ching). J Am Orient Soc 99(2):191203
6. Takakusu J (ed) (19221933) Taish shinsh daizky. Daiz shuppan kai, Tokyo: Nos. 262, 263, 264 (Saddharmapuṇḍarka); 310:48, 353 (rmldevsiṁhanda); 374, 375, 390, (Mahparinirvṇa); 666 (Tathgatagarbha); 670, 671, 672 (Laṅkvatra); 1611 (Ratnagotravibhga Mahynottaratantrastra); 1636 (ikṣsamuccayakrka)
7. Wayman A, Hideko W (1974) The Lions Roar of Queen rml a Buddhist scripture on the Tathgatagarbha Theory. Columbia University Press, New York

Asaṅga

C. D. Sebastian
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, Mumbai, India

Synonyms

Āryāsaṅga; Asaṅga Vasubandhu

Definition

Asaṅga is the systematic expounder of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Introduction

Asaṅga, Asaṅga Vasubandhu, or Āryāsaṅga (c. fourth century A.D./310–390 A.D.?) is the systematic expounder of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda (see ▶ Yogācāra, ▶ Vijñānavāda) school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Paramārtha explains the meaning of the name Asaṅga in this way: Since Asaṅga understood the doctrine of *śūnyatā*, he called himself "Asaṅga" which means "without attachment" [1]. He is chiefly known for his role in establishing Yogācāra system on a philosophical footing with an emphasis on meditation and practice of yoga for the realization of *bodhi* (enlightenment).

Person

Asaṅga was born in Puruṣapura (present day Peshawar in Pakistan) which was a part of Gandhāra kingdom. According to Buddhist historian Bu-Ston, Asaṅga was the eldest of the three brothers who were born as the sons of a Brahmaṇa of the Kauśika family [2]. According to the earliest documentation of Paramārtha (499–569 A.D.), this Brāhmaṇa of Kauśika family (the father of the three Vasubandhu brothers) was a *rājapurohit* (priest of the royal court) of Puruṣapura. Asaṅga's name goes with his brother of Vasubandhu (see ▶ Vasubandhu), and they both are the greatest *ācāryas* of the Yogācāra-Vjñānavāda school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was Asaṅga who converted his younger brother Vasubandhu to Mahāyāna, though it is doubted by some modern western scholars. The youngest of these three brothers, Viriñcivatsa by name, was not that prominent in scholarship though he was a monk in Sarvāstivāda tradition [3]. These three brothers were originally followers of Sarvāstivāda [4] or Mahīśāsaka [5].

According to the Tibetan tradition, both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu had the same mother, a Brāhmaṇa woman called Prakāśaśīlā or Prasannaśīlā, but different fathers; and Asaṅga's father was a Kṣatrīya, while Vasubandhu's was a Brāhmaṇa. According to Tāranātha, the mother of Asaṅga, Prakāśaīlā/Prasannaśīlā, in her previous birth/life, was a monk with mastery over three *piṭakas* who followed dutifully Avalokiteśvara. As the result of his unkind words to one of his fellow monks, he had to be reborn as woman; and of her was born a son with all auspicious marks who became famous as Asaṅga. He received high-quality instructions from his mother, and at her advice he became a monk [6].

Little is known of the personal history of Asaṅga. There is not any ancient biography of Asaṅga to rely on. There must have been a biography of Asaṅga in Chinese. It is known about him primarily from Vasubandhu's biography written by Paramārtha. In all probability, Asaṅga became a monk at an early stage, and was known for his intelligence. He was a monk, in all probability, in a sect which later on came to be known as the Mahīśāsaka, which was famous for their blue vestments and practice of meditation. According to Paramārtha's account, he studied under a teacher named Piṇḍola, who was an *arhat*, mastering both non-Mahāyāna texts as well as Mahāyāna texts. When he was studying *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, he found it difficult to obtain clear understanding of it and begged his guru for guidance. Then he went on to study under Maitreya. Both in Chinese and Tibetan traditions,

there is a legendary account of Asaṅga's ascent into Tuṣita heaven where he was instructed by Maitreya. In all probability, he was the student of Maitreya (Maitreyanātha, who is a historical figure, and not a mythical personage as considered by some in the past), and his name became more famous than that of his teacher.

Asaṅga lived in an age when Sarvāstivāda was very influential but gradually declining, and the Mahāyāna (see ▶ Mahāyāna) movement was gathering momentum in terms of doctrinal elaboration and followers. Many new-fangled Mahāyāna sūtras and treatises came into existence through which the Maḥāyāna thinkers reinterpreted many concepts of early Buddhism and initiated novel concepts. After his conversion, Asaṅga was a staunch critic of non-Mahāyāna tradition(s) and teachings. By taking the incongruent Mahāyāna sūtras of his time, Asaṅga worked out a consistent framework, and thus, he became the systematic expounder of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda, a prominent philosophical school in Mahāyāna tradition of Buddhism. According to Tāranātha, Asaṅga propagated Mahāyāna teachings in India; and under the royal patronage, he established more than 25 monasteries in each of which there were more than 100 monks [7]. It appears that it was in one of such monasteries (*vihāra*), later known as the Dharmāṁkuravihāra (sprouting of the Dharma *vihāra*) that Asaṅga started the writing of his insightful understanding of Buddha's teaching.

Works/Texts

Asaṅga was a prolific writer who wrote in Sanskrit. He compiled enormous corpus of Buddhist thought into Mahāyāna framework. Asaṅga must have played a major role to establish the movement of using the term Mahāyāna to refer to a body of literature that emphasized the Bodhisattva (see ▶ Bodhisattva) path [8]. Nonetheless, there are disputations regarding his works. Some attribute the works of Maitreya to Asaṅga and hold the view that Maitreya was a mythical figure. Some writers attribute the works like the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga*, the *Mahāyānasūtralankāra*, and the *Ratnagotravibhāgo Mahāyanottaratantraśā stra* (*Uttaratantra*), and the *Abhisamayālankāra* to Maitreya, whereas some others to Asaṅga. However, it is most probable that they are the works of Asaṅga. The other works of Asaṅga, which could be attributed to him with certainty, could be the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, the *Mahāyānasaṁgraha* [9], and the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* [10]. Asaṅga's most important work is the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*. The *Yogācārabhūmi* has five major divisions: *Bhūmivastu* or *Bahubhūmika*, comprised of 17 *bhūmis*; *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*, the exegesis of the 17 *bhūmis*; *Vastusamgrahaṇī*, the basic Buddhist themes and topics; *Paryāyasamgrahaṇī*, synonyms and other related things; and *Vivarṇasamgrahaṇī*, assorted elucidations. The *Abhidharmasamuccaya* constructs a Mahāyāna Abhidharma, and shows that the Mahāyāna was not completely opposed to the Abhidharma, while the *Mahāyānasaṁgraha* is an important text on Yogācāra doctrine [11]. The *Mahāyānasaṁgraha*, a compact text, presents Asaṅga's Mahāyāna thought in summary form. In the *Mahāyānasaṁgraha* Asaṅga discusses the 21 qualities of the Buddha where we find the Buddhology of Mahāyāna Buddhism getting shaped. There are different opinions among the scholars with regard to the authorship of the *Ratnagotravibhāgo Mahāyanottaratantraśāstra* (*Uttaratantra*). In all probability it could be the work of Asaṅga.

Doctrine/s

Asaṅga is the systematic presenter of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This school is called either the Yogācāra or the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda, or even simply as the Vijñānavāda. Asaṅga propounded an idealism that sought to synthesize different Mahāyāna thoughts. Conceivably he must have been influenced by the Sarvāstivāda thought and Nāgārjuna's (see ▶ Nāgārjuna) dialectic. In Asaṅga's philosophy, the main doctrine is the

cittamātra ("mind-only"). According to this doctrine, human actions are nothing but the intentions to perform/act by the means of body, speech, and mind. The intention (*cetanā*) is a cognitive phenomenon, and all phenomena are the creation of mind or consciousness (*vijñāna*) (see ▶ Vijñāna).

In order to establish his philosophy on logical footing, Asaṅga speaks of a "storehouse consciousness" or "mind-basis-of-all" (*ālayavijñāna*) (see ▶ Ālaya-vijñāna), where the fruits actions are stored, and which is the basis of all phenomena. In the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda system, *ālayavijñāna* is one of the most important doctrines. *Ālayavijñāna* is the bedrock of all latencies. It is the storehouse consciousness which is momentary stream, and not a permanent entity. Though not permanent, it is an incessantly present substratum that provides a mechanism for the conservation and creation/activation of the latencies which in turn decides the future experiences of a sentient being. Thus, this is the *ālaya* (basis) and *bījaka* (seed) of all phenomenal world. The mind or consciousness has many synonyms like *citta, manas*, and *vijñāna*, but Asaṅga uses these terms with different connotations. For him, *citta* is *ālavijñāna, manas* is *kliṣṭamanas* ("defiled ego" or "afflicted mentality") and *vijñāna* is consciousness of cognitive process, where five senses play a vital role. Unlike Nāgārjuna (c. 150 A.D.) of Mādhyamika (see ▶ Mādhyamika) school of Buddhism, Asaṅga adopted a more positive conception of the reality of consciousness (*vijñāna*), and later on, taking the cue from Asaṅga, Vasubandhu expanded the doctrine of *Vijñaptimātratā*.

The Yogācāra represents the zenith of north and north-west Indian Buddhist scholarly tradition. By denying the definitively independent existence of a separate experiencing subject and experienced object, it holds on to the doctrine of only mind/consciousness (*vijñapti*). Apart from consciousness, there is no world, and there is no experience. Yogācāra is not a theory of solipsism either. Asaṅga interprets *Pratītyasamutpāda* (see ▶ Paṭicca Samuppāda) by proving the dependent unreal nature of all elements. Pratītyasamutpāda, for Asaṅga, is not a principle of temporal sequence but the principle of essential dependence of things on each other. The doctrine of Pratītyasamutpāda shows the impermanence and the conditioned nature of all phenomena. In this sense he, agrees with the Mādhyamika in interpreting Pratītyasamutpāda. The other doctrines of importance in Asaṅga are the Trikāya (see ▶ Tri-kāya) doctrine, Bodhisattva ideal and the related *bodhisattva-bhūmi*. Asaṅga could be considered as one of the initiators of Buddhist logic as well which gets a full-fledged rigor and treatment in Dignāga (see ▶ Dignāga) and Dharmakīrti (see ▶ Dharmakīrti (c. A.D. 600–660)). We find in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Asaṅga explaining *vāda*, the logic of debate, in the section on dialectics named *sāmkhathyaviniścaya*, which is elemental form of Buddhist logic. He calls it *vādaviniścaya* [12].

Though Asaṅga is regarded as the systematic expounder of Yogācāra tradition, the real founder appears to be Maitreyanātha, the teacher of Asaṅga, while Vasubandhu, the younger brother of Asaṅga, is the central figure in the Yogācāra system. It could be hypothesized that in all probability Asaṅga's Mahīśāsaka upbringing which emphasized meditation, must have led him to the practice of Yoga (see ▶ Yoga) which paved way for his Yogācāra school where consciousness (*citta* or *vijñāna*) occupies the most important place. Another important studied opinion of Indian Buddhist scholars like B. Bhattacharya [13] and A. K. Chatterjee [14] is that Asaṅga actually had something significant to do with the rise of Vajrayāna (see ▶ Vajrayāna (Buddhism)) and Tāntric (see ▶ Tantra) Buddhism.

Cross-References

- ▶ Ālaya-vijñāna
- ▶ Bodhisattva
- ▶ Mādhyamika
- ▶ Nāgārjuna
- ▶ Paṭicca Samuppāda
- ▶ Tantra
- ▶ Tri-kāya

▶ Vajrayāna (Buddhism)
▶ Vasubandhu
▶ Vijñāna
▶ Vijñānavāda
▶ Yoga
▶ Yogācāra

References

1. Paramārtha, Takakusu J (tr) (1904) The life of Vasubandhu. E. J. Brill, Leide, p 8
2. Bu-Ston, Obermiller E (tr) (1986) History of Buddhism in India and Tibet, 2nd edn. Sri Satguru, Delhi
3. Paramārtha, Takakusu J (tr) (1904) The life of Vasubandhu. E. J. Brill, Leide, p 7
4. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, pp 33, 34
5. Robinson RH et al (2005) Buddhist religions: a historical introduction, 5th edn. Thomson, Belmont, p 119
6. Tāranātha, Chimpa L, Chattopadhyaya A (tr), Chattopadhyaya D (ed) (1970) History of Buddhism in India. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, pp 155, 167
7. Tāranātha, Chimpa L, Chattopadhyaya A (tr), Chattopadhyaya D (ed) (1970) History of Buddhism in India. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, pp 161–164
8. Robinson RH et al (2005) Buddhist religions: a historical introduction, 5th edn. Thomson, Belmont, p 103
9. Kalupahana D (1976) Buddhist philosophy: a historical analysis. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, p 142
10. Shastri YS (1989) Mahāyānasūtrānkāra of Asaṅga. Sri Satguru, Delhi, p 13
11. Williams P (2009) Mahāyāna Buddhism: the doctrinal foundations, 2nd edn. Routledge, London/New York, p 87
12. Asaṅga (2001) Abhidharmasamuccaya. Boin-Webb S (tr), English version from the French translation. Asian Humanities Press, Fremont, pp 248–256
13. Bhattacharya B (1989) An introduction to Buddhist esoterism. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Reprint
14. Chatterjee AK (1999) The Yogācāra idealism, New edn. Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, p 35

Asaṅga Vasubandhu

▶ Asaṅga

Āsavas (Āśravas)

Angraj Chaudhary
Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

A

Synonyms

Āśrava; *Ogha*; *Upādāna*; *Yoga*

Definition

Āsava metaphorically means that which keeps on dripping, leaking, flowing, and streaming like pus from a wound. Its function is to taint one's mind, defile it, corrupt it, and damage it.

The Pali word "*āsava*" (Sanskrit āsrava) is used in Buddhist literature in a highly metaphorical sense. When it is said that sensual desire is like fire (*kāmāgni*), it means it burns people and robs them of their peace; when it is said that sensual desire is like a flood (*kāmogha*), it means that it is mighty like a destructive flood which does great harm all; *āsava* is used in this metaphorical sense. Just as *ejā* or *taṇhā* is called a disease, a boil, and a dart, [1] so sensuous pleasures are called "sharp blades of swords, poised heads of snakes, blazing torches, bare bones, a pestilence, a boil, and a furnace of live coals" [2] in the same way this word has been used here.

English Equivalents of Āsava

Āsava literally means influxes, cankers, taints, corruptions, intoxicants, etc. What do they do? They taint one's mind, i.e., damage or spoil it, corrupt it, and do not let it remain pure. They always try to intoxicate one's mind. As cankers they produce evil or dangerous influence that spreads and affects one's behavior.

In Sanskrit the word āsrava is derived from the root "sru" which means to flow, stream, gush

forth, and issue from. It also means to leak, to trickle, to emit and drop, to issue, to arise, and to come from [3]. Why are they called *āsavas*? Because all of them keep on polluting the mind of a person, just as the pus issuing from a wound makes one dirty.

Three or Four Kinds of *Āsavas*

There are three kinds of *āsavas* described in the Sutta Piṭaka. In the Abhidhamma piṭaka a fourth *āsava* called *diṭṭhāsava* has been included. The four *āsavas* are *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava*, *avijjāsava*, and lastly *diṭṭhāsava*.

Definition of *Kāmāsava*

What is *kāmāsava*? From all the similes given above, it becomes clear that sensual desires are *kāmāsavas*. They are dangerous like the sharp blade of a sword. They are ferocious like the heads of poisonous snakes. They keep one burning all the time like a furnace of live coals. They are like infectious disease that spreads quickly and kills not only one but many. They are also short-lived like the blazing fire of dry grass and are also without any substance like a fleshless bone.

How *kāmasava* is produced, what is its mechanism, and how does it keep on trickling or flowing like the pus from a wound and pollute one's mind?

Proliferation of Desire

When the eye comes in contact with a beautiful object in the world and if one happens to like it because of the pleasant sensations it has produced in him, he likes to continue them forever. Once one's desire arises for the beautiful object, one wants to have more and more of it. Thus desire begins to multiply, and the process goes on *ad infinitum* unless he stops the process. Desire will keep on arising, dripping, and trickling just like the pus from a wound [4].

This is known as the proliferation of desire called *papañca* in Pali and *prapañca* in Sanskrit. So long as the process is not stopped, desire will keep on flowing or issuing forth. The mind keeps on storing desires. Even when the object of desire is not there, one thinks of it and desires for it keep on arising in him. They arise so quickly that metaphorically it is said that desires are trickling, dripping, and flowing. In course of time they ferment and work like intoxicants. Such desires keep on arising in one and make him intoxicated.

The same process is repeated when the other five sense faculties such as the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind come in contact with their respective objects.

But the Buddha has proved that *vedanā* "sensation" produces *taṇhā* "desire" and *taṇhā* produces *upādāna* (clinging) which is responsible for one's coming into the cycle of birth and death and suffer more and more. Why? Because all desires cannot be satisfied and the more dissatisfied one is, the more he will suffer. In other words, desire is dangerous. The less it is, the better. If there is no desire, there is no suffering.

What does one do in the world? He keeps on multiplying desires moment after moment. Metaphorically desires continuously trickle in him. As desire is the cause of suffering, so it is something unwanted like the pus from a wound which keeps on flowing. One can stretch the simile. The beautiful object is like a wound from which the pus of desires keeps on flowing, so much so that it is called *kāmogha* (the flood of sensual desire), and they are compared with a river in flood.

In the same way one's desire to live forever in the *rūpa bhava* (fine material existence) and *arūpa bhava* (immaterial existence) is called *bhavāsava*.

Because whatever one does, he does it in ignorance, and as ignorance keeps on multiplying, it is called *avijjāsava*. What is ignorance? Sāriputta has said in the *Sammādṭṭhi Sutta* that not knowing about suffering, not knowing about the origin of suffering, not knowing about its cessation, and not knowing about the way leading to the cessation of

suffering is ignorance [5]. Holding different kind of wrong views is the cause of *diṭṭhāsava*.

All four *āsavas* keep on trickling and flowing when respective objects come at their sense doors and one reacts to them. He thus pollutes and defiles his mind, and he works under their influence as if intoxicated by them. Therefore he causes his own suffering and is unable to stop the cycle of birth and death.

All āsavas taken together are like the poison which so affect one that he cannot live a *brahmacariya* life i.e., higher life [6]. One who destroys all āsavas is called an arahant, a *khīṇāsava*.

All *āsavas* can be destroyed by walking on the eightfold path. A *sotāpanna* destroys *diṭṭhāsava* (the taint of view). An *anāgāmī* (non-returner) destroys *kāmāsava* (the taint of sensual desire), and an arahant destroys taints of existence and ignorance. When all *āsavas* are destroyed, one becomes an arahant [7].

Cross-References

- ▶ *Ogha*
- ▶ *Upādāna*
- ▶ *Yoga*

References

1. D 2.209 (Unless otherwise mentioned all books referred to here are published by Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri in 1998)
2. Therīg verses 490–494, p 351
3. Sir Monier Monier Williams, A Sanskrit English dictionary. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, p 1274, col 2
4. Dhammasaṅganī Mūla Ṭīkā, pp 14–19
5. M.1.69
6. JA4.200
7. A 1.262

Ascetic

- ▶ Śramaṇa

Asceticism (Buddhism)

Bhikkhu Anālayo
Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, Balve, Germany

Synonyms

Austerities; *Tapas*

Definition

Early Buddhism does not consider the undertaking of ascetic practices and austerities as a necessary prerequisite for liberation, which rather is seen as requiring a middle way approach that replaces self-torturing in the name of a higher goal with the mental asceticism of restraining and eventually eradicating defilements.

The Buddha's Practice of Asceticism

The early Buddhist attitude toward ascetic practice can best be illustrated with the example of the Buddha's own progress toward awakening, where according to the textual sources he experimented with various forms of asceticism that were apparently in vogue in ancient India. The early discourses indicate that he had at first been practicing under two teachers known in the Pāli tradition as Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, as a result of which he reached profound concentrative attainments referred to as the attainment of nothingness and the attainment of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. On reflection, he realized that these were not the goal he had been looking for ([11], Vol. I, p. 165). Perhaps the point behind this reflection is that the transcendence experienced during such profound experiences remains a temporary one which, while certainly affecting one's general outlook on life,

to some degree remains limited to the time of actually being in the meditative attainment.

As an alternative approach to awakening, the Buddha-to-be then is reported to have engaged in various ascetic practices. Here, it needs to be noted that the listing of his former austerities provided in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* does seem not to refer to the present juncture of events ([11], Vol. I, p. 77ff). Instead, this discourse appears to be reporting what took place in a previous life of the Buddha. According to the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka*, the Buddha had undertaken these austerities in a former life as a naked ascetic, some 91 eons ago ([5], Vol., I p. 390). In fact, several of the austerities listed in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* would not fit too well into the account of events just before the Buddha's awakening. The discourse reports that his dwelling in solitude was such that he went into hiding as soon as any human approached from afar, which does not square with the traditional account that he was in the company of the five monks who later became his first disciples. Again, the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* describes that he undertook ritual bathing three times a day, but then indicates that dust and dirt had accumulated on his body over the years to the extent that it was falling off in pieces. Another such problem would be the depiction of his practice of nakedness, which stands in contrast to a reference to his wearing different ascetic garments, reported in the same discourse. Such a variety of practices could indeed have been carried out at different times during a whole life of asceticism, whereas their undertaking does not fit too well into the few years of austerities practiced by the Buddha-to-be before his awakening.

Thus, the ascetic practices adopted by the Buddha previous to his awakening appear to be just those described in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, namely, forceful breath control and fasting ([11], Vol. I, p. 243). The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* takes its occasion from a challenge posed to the Buddha, according to which his disciples were only engaged in cultivation of the mind, *cittabhāvanā*, not in cultivation of the body, *kāyabhāvanā*. The implication of these two expressions is a not entirely clear in the Pāli version. Judging from Sanskrit fragment parallels, the development of the body stands for the ability to bear up with pain, while the development of the mind refers to the maintenance of balance with mentally unpleasant experiences. The Buddha's autobiographical report of his ascetic practices thus comes as a reply to this challenge regarding the undertaking of cultivation of the body.

The discourse accompanies the description of the Buddha's austerities with three similes that compare reaching awakening to making a fire. In case the wood to be used is immersed in water or else is no longer in the water but still wet, it will not be possible to use it to make a fire. Similarly, those who are immersed in sensuality, or at least mentally preoccupied with sensual pleasures, will not be able to reach awakening. Only one who is aloof from sensuality in deed and mind will be capable of progressing to liberation, comparable to dry wood that can be used to make a fire. Once such aloofness from sensuality has been achieved, the ability to gain deliverance is then independent of whether such a person undertakes asceticism or not.

This neatly sums up the early Buddhist attitude, which can be seen as an outcome of the Buddha's own experimenting with ascetic practice until the realization dawned on him that this approach was not going to lead him to awakening. Having thus failed to reach the goal by the two main paths to deliverance apparently recognized in the ancient Indian setting – the attainment of refined states of meditative concentration or else physical austerity – the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* reports the Buddha-to-be recalling an experience of mental absorption he had in his youth. This memory helped him realize that the type of happiness experienced during mental absorption, which by its very nature is aloof from sensuality, need not be shunned. In other words, happiness is not something that needs to be avoided at all cost. The crucial point is whether a particular type of happiness is related to sensuality, as only in this case one indeed needs to keep away from it. Following this insight, the Buddha-to-be gave up his ascetic practices and took proper nourishment.

The decisive shift of perspective that apparently occurred at this juncture is the distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, a distinction that in fact runs like a red

thread through the early Buddhist teachings. Based on this shift of perspective, the Buddha-to-be then is reported to have developed the three higher knowledges, the last of which corresponds to full awakening through the destruction of all defilements in the mind. Another discourse records how the recently awakened Buddha then congratulated himself on having left asceticism behind for good and thus gained awakening ([6], Vol. I, p. 103).

The Early Buddhist Attitude to Asceticism

The all-important distinction between the wholesome or unwholesome repercussions of any deed then informs the early Buddhist attitude to asceticism in general. Thus, a monk does not become praiseworthy – at least from an early Buddhist perspective – just because he has adopted an austere mode of life, since what is really required from him is that he purifies his mind from unwholesome states ([11], Vol. I, p. 281). Another discourse contrasts a long list of various ascetic practices to the preferable option of developing a mind full of loving kindness and then using this as a basis for eradicating the defilements in the mind ([3], Vol. I, p. 167).

Yet another discourse clarifies that the Buddha was not in principle against all forms of asceticism ([6], Vol. IV, p. 330). The question at stake is rather what are the effects and repercussions of undertaking any ascetic practice ([6], Vol. IV, p. 338). In other words, asceticism becomes successful only when this is undertaken in such a way that it leads to purification of the mind ([3], Vol. III, p. 48). An illustrative instance of misdirected asceticism can be found in a discourse where two ascetics ask about the results of their ascetic practice of imitating the behavior of a cow or a dog. The Buddha is recorded to have explained that behaving in this way will simply lead to rebirth among cows or dogs ([11], Vol. I, p. 388).

In sum, the Buddha is reported to be neither in favor of nor against asceticism, since what really matters is whether what one practices results in wholesome or unwholesome states of mind ([8], Vol. V, p. 191). Therefore, some degree of asceticism is also found in the early Buddhist tradition in the form of the *dhutaṅga*s, "ascetic practices," which comprise such activities as dwelling in the forest, wearing rags as robes, subsisting only on alms food, dwelling at the root of a tree, staying in a cemetery, or just living out in the open, not reclining (even at night), accepting any type of accommodation and taking one's meal in a single session per day ([11], Vol. III, p. 40). Later tradition adds to this list, resulting in 13 types of ascetic practices recognized in the Theravāda tradition, whereas Mahāyāna texts have a slightly different listing of 12 such practices.

The undertaking of ascetic practices was, however, left to personal choice and an attempt apparently made by a monk called Devadatta to make a set of such ascetic practices binding on every Buddhist monk was according to the traditional account refused by the Buddha ([9], Vol. II, p. 197). Notably, this request and its refusal led to the first schism in the early Buddhist monastic community. This episode suggests that the Buddha's attitude toward asceticism did not always meet with approval even among his own disciples. This would then have all the more been the case with other contemporaries; in fact a *Vinaya* text reports that an ascetic referred to the Buddha derisively as a "shaven-headed householder" on account of the abundance of food received by the Buddha's disciples ([9], Vol. IV, p. 91).

Based on his own ascetic experience, the Buddha proposed a middle path between the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. According to what tradition reckons to have been the first discourse delivered by the Buddha, the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, he presented this middle path to his five former companions who had left him, believing that, since he had given up austerities, he would no longer be able to reach liberation. This middle path is the noble eightfold path, comprising rightly directed view, intentions, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration ([6], Vol. V, p. 421). Its undertaking thus requires a balanced cooperation of various aspects of body and mind in a unified attempt to reach liberation.

A stanza in the *Dhammapada* indicates that, from an early Buddhist viewpoint, purification will not be reached merely by adopting nakedness, wearing matted hairs, covering oneself in mud, fasting, lying on the ground (presumably motionless), being covered in dirt or dust, or else by adopting the squatting posture ([12], 141). Another stanza in the *Dhammapada* then sums up the early Buddhist attitude with the succinct indication that the supreme asceticism, *tapas*, is to be found in an attitude of patience ([12], 184).

Cross-References

- ▶ Bhāvanā
- ▶ Buddha (Concept)
- ▶ Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta
- ▶ Majjhimā Paṭipadā
- ▶ Middle Way (Buddhism)
- ▶ Renunciation

References

1. Bapat PV (1923) The austerities of Gautama Buddha before his enlightenment. Ann Bhandarkar Orient Res Inst 4(2):139–143
2. Bronkhorst J (1998) The two sources of Indian asceticism. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
3. Carpenter JE, Rhys Davids TW (eds) (1890–1911) The Dīgha Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Chakraborti H (1973) Asceticism in ancient India, in Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jaina and Ajivika societies, from the earliest times to the period of Śaṅkarāchārya. Punthi Pustak, Calcutta
5. Fausboll V (ed) (1877–1896) The Jātaka together with its commentary, 6 vols. Pali Text Society, London
6. Feer L (ed) (1888–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
7. Freiberger O (2006) Early Buddhism, asceticism, and the politics of the middle way. In: Freiberger O (ed) Asceticism and its critics: historical accounts and comparative perspectives. Oxford University Press, New York, pp 235–258
8. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London
9. Oldenberg H (ed) (1897–1882) Vinayapiṭakaṃ, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
10. Shiraishi R (1996) Asceticism in Buddhism and Brahmanism. A comparative study. Institute of Buddhist Studies, Tring
11. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
12. von Hinüber O, Norman KR (eds) (1994) The Dhammapada. Pali Text Society, London, (references are by stanza)

Asoka

▶ Aśoka

Aśoka

Anita Sharma
Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Asoka; Devānaṃpiya Asoka; Devānaṃpiya Piyadasi; Dhammāsoka; Dharmāśoka

Definition

An Ancient Indian king known for his Dhamma policy and promotion of Buddhism.

Introduction

Aśoka was the grandson of Candragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty. His father, Bindusāra, reportedly had 16 wives and 101 sons. One of Bindusāra's wives, Subhadrāṅgī, was the daughter of a brāhmaṇa from Campā. Being a relatively lower-ranked queen, she was not the favorite queen of Bindusāra. Moreover, some sort of palace intrigue appears to have kept her away from her husband. Finally, when she succeeded in getting closer to Bindusāra and gave birth to a son, she is said to have exclaimed: "Now I am without sorrow (*aśoka*)." Thus, the child became known as Aśoka. However, some texts mention Aśoka's mother as Dhammā whom the child gave no pain

while being born and hence the name. As a child Aśoka was apparently very ugly looking, and his father wanted to kill him. In order to save his life, his mother Dhammā had to go away from Pāṭaliputra with him. However, because of his exemplary intellect and warrior skills, he is said to have won the affections of his father.

Rise to Power

Growing into a fearless general and a shrewd statesman, Aśoka successfully commanded several expeditions of the Mauryan army. Consequently, his growing reputation made his elder brothers wary of the likelihood of him being favored by Bindusāra to succeed him. His eldest brother, Prince Susīma, the traditional heir to the throne, conspired and influenced Bindusāra to send Aśoka to quell a rebellion in the northwestern province of Takṣaśilā, of which Prince Susīma himself was the governor. Takṣaśilā had become a highly unstable region not only due to the warlike Indo-Greek population but also mismanagement by Susīma himself. Aśoka followed with his father's orders and ended the rebellion without a fight. Aśoka's success made his stepbrothers further wary of Aśoka's chances of becoming the next emperor. Thus, Susīma further conspired, and put more pressure on Bindusāra, and succeeded in getting Aśoka exiled to Kaliṅga (Orissa). However, when two years later a rebellion occurred in Ujjain, Emperor Bindusāra called Aśoka back and ordered him to go to Ujjain. Aśoka was injured in the campaign, but his generals managed to subdue the rebellion. Aśoka was treated in hiding in order to keep him safe from the supporters of the Susīma group. When Aśoka was recuperating from his injuries, he met Vidiṣādevī, the daughter of a merchant from neighboring Vidiṣā. After recovering, he married her, and Aśoka's two children from this marriage, Mahinda (Sk: Mahendra) and Saṃghamittā (Sk: Saṃghamitrā), later became known for their missionary work in Sri Lanka. Interestingly, Vidiṣādevī continued to live at Vidiṣā even after Aśoka became the king of the Mauryan Empire at Pāṭaliputra.

As a reward for his success in subduing the Ujjain rebellion, Aśoka was appointed the governor of Ujjain province. Later, when Bindusāra died and the throne at Pāṭaliputra fell vacant, an opportunity came Aśoka's way to seize the throne. As at about the same time, a rebellion occurred in Takṣaśilā against the maladministration of Susīma; Aśoka challenged his succession and quickly captured the throne at Pāṭaliputra. According to the Sri Lankan chronicles, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Prince Aśoka attacked Pāṭaliputra and beheaded all his brothers, including Susīma, and threw their bodies in a well in Pāṭaliputra. As a result of these killings, Aśoka became infamously known as *Caṇḍāśoka* (Cruel Aśoka). As the issue of succession took some time to decide and Aśoka's capture of the throne did not go unchallenged, his coronation took place only in the fourth year of his reign. After becoming the king, Aśoka made his younger brother Tissa the vice-regent and expanded his empire significantly over the next 8 years. Both the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* mention the date of the coronation of Aśoka as being 218 years after the death of the Buddha, though Northern Buddhist sources mention this as between 90 and 110. Opinions differ regarding the exact year of Aśoka's accession which is generally placed by different scholars between c.279 B.C.E. and c.265 B.C.E., his death having taken place in c.232 B.C.E.

Historical Sources

Information on the life and reign of Emperor Aśoka comes primarily from a relatively small number of Buddhist texts and his own inscriptions. The Pāli chronicles of Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, and the *Aśokāvadāna* ("Story of Aśoka"), a first-century CE Sanskrit text that was twice translated into Chinese: the *A-yu wang chuan* (c. 300 C.E.) and the *A-yu wang ching* (c. 500 C.E.), provide most of the information about Aśoka. Aśoka's inscriptions inscribed on rocks, sandstone pillars, and cave walls have been found all over present-day India (except far south and northeast), Pakistan, and parts of the countries of Nepal, Bangladesh,

Iran, and Afghanistan. There are 14 rock edicts, some of which are preserved practically complete to this day. The second great series is that of seven pillar inscriptions, six of which exist in six copies each, engraved on monolithic sandstone pillars. The seventh, perhaps the most important edict, is found only on one pillar. These pillars range from 40 to 50 ft in height and have a diameter of about 4 ft at the base. The remaining inscriptions of Aśoka consist of two Kaliṅga edicts in two recensions, or critical revisions, three cave inscriptions, two Tarai pillar inscriptions, and several minor pillar and rock edicts in several recensions. The total number of these distinct inscriptions is perhaps 35. Considering that he placed his rock edicts and pillar inscriptions within his own kingdom, it must have been a big empire indeed. The pillars installed by Aśoka were not columns forming part of any building or arcade but placed as commemorative posts at important holy places associated with the Buddha or placed at key crossways as important proclamations generally known as *dhamma* (Sk: dharma) declarations of Aśoka. A salient feature of Mauryan art was the mirror-like polish of the monolithic sandstone pillars as a result of which they have weathered centuries of exposure to rain, wind, and sun. All the Aśokan inscriptions were written in Brāhmī script except northwestern parts of his empire where two pillars have been found written in Kharoṣṭhī (Mānsehrā and Shāhbazgharī) and one in Aramaic and Greek scripts (Kandāhar). A typical Aśokan pillar has a capital in the form of an arranged lotus with the petals turning over and down, while from the center of the lotus grows a carved abacus, which again functioned as a pedestal for an animal, ordinarily a seated lion or four lions as at Sārnāth. The Sārnāth capital with four lions seated back to back and another four animals on its abacus, viz., elephant, lion, bull, and horse with a 24-spoked *dharmacakra* has been adopted as the national emblem by the Government of India. In his inscriptions, Aśoka is often mentioned as *Devānaṃpiya Piyadasi* (dear to the gods and good looking). When James Prinsep (1799–1840), a British civil servant in India, first deciphered one of the inscriptions in 1837, he thought *Piyadasi* was some unknown king. It was not until 1915 that the identification of Devānaṃpiya with Aśoka (as suspected earlier) was established firmly when in the Maski inscription (no. IV), his name was found mentioned as *Devānaṃpiya Aśoka*.

Conversion to Buddhism

It has been pointed out in the *Mahāvaṃsa* (Chapter xv) that though initially Aśoka continued with the state charity of his father, he later became disillusioned with its beneficiaries and began contemplating changes in it. Consequently, he met Nigrodha and transferred all his patronage to Buddhism. The charity earlier extended to other religious orders was withdrawn. However, later on the advice of Buddhist monks, he restored state charity to the other religious communities as well. According to the Pāli-based legends, while the early part of Aśoka's reign was very violent, he became a Buddhist after his conquest of Kaliṅga. The whole of Kaliṅga was plundered and destroyed. Aśoka's later edicts mention that about 100,000 people were killed on the Kaliṅga side along with ten thousand from Aśoka's army; thousands of men and women were deported. One day after the Kaliṅga war was over, Aśoka went out, and all he could see was the inhumaneness and brutality of the victory. Consequently, he adopted Buddhism and came to be known as "the pious Aśoka" (Dhammāsoka).

However, the conversion details given in the *Aśokāvadāna* do not mention the war of Kaliṅga. According to this text, Aśoka became a Buddhist under the influence of a monk named Samudra. Samudra had been mistakenly put into Aśoka's dreaded prison and sentenced to be executed. But Samudra seeing horrifying executions in the prison realized the truth of the Buddha's teaching and became an arahant. As an arahant, Samudra performed a miracle and floated up in the air. When the monarch saw this, he requested to be initiated into Buddhism and became a lay devotee (*upāsaka*). Samudra also told Aśoka of the Buddha's prophesy that he would build 84,000 stūpas to contain his bodily relics. Both conversion stories record that Aśoka underwent a change of

heart that involved giving up violence and a new commitment to peace and to the teachings of the Buddha. The Sāñcī Stūpa was built by him in the third century B.C.E. Silver punch mark coins of the Mauryan empire bear Buddhist symbols such as the dharmacakra, the elephant (previous form of the Buddha), the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, and the stūpa where the Buddha died (third century B.C.E.).

There are sufficient suggestions in the sources that Aśoka had adopted Buddhism. For instance, in his Bhābru-Bairāṭ Rock Inscription, he recommended seven Buddhist texts to both monks and the laity. This undoubtedly indicates towards the personal interest that he took in Buddhism. Moreover, his pilgrimages to sacred Buddhist places such as Lumbinī, Kuśinagara, and Bodhagayā; his order of expulsion of heretical monks from the saṃgha during the Third Buddhist Council as indicated in the Kauśāmbī, Sārnāth, and Sāñcī minor inscriptions; his observance of Buddhist *uposatha* days; reference to himself as *upāsaka* in the Brahmagiri Rock Inscription VI and *buddhasāke* in the Maski Rock Inscription V; using the Buddha's clan name of Sākya as equivalent to Buddhist in the Sahsārām, Maski, and Rūpnāth inscriptions; and his enthusiasm in the propagation of Buddhism through dispatching Buddhist missionaries in different directions all indicate that Aśoka had embraced Buddhism.

It has also been suggested that at some point in his life, Aśoka may have become a Buddhist monk. In one of his inscriptions, Aśoka says that he had "approached the saṃgha with great zeal." Some scholars have interpreted this statement as nothing but the equivalent of Aśoka entering the saṃgha as a *bhikkhu*. Other scholars have proposed that Aśoka postponed this act of renunciation till the last phase of his reign. It appears highly unlikely to view Aśoka as a bhikkhu while ruling his vast empire as an absolute monarch. However, this may have been possible that in his initial zeal, Aśoka may have donned the robes of a bhikkhu for some time. Emperor Aśoka undoubtedly has to be credited with making Buddhism a pan-Indian religion and the first serious attempt to develop a Buddhist polity by putting into practice the Buddha's own advice on kingship.

Aśoka's Dhamma Policy

The Prakrit word *Dhamma* (Sk: *Dharma*) has been variously translated as law, piety, morality, righteousness, etc. Aśoka's Dhamma policy was a very carefully formulated synthesis of various norms which were current in his age. Though through this policy he made an earnest effort at solving some of the problems that the complex society of his times faced, the centralization and consolidation of the empire which consisted of a great number of different races and communities were undoubtedly the foremost aim of his policy. Aśoka's private beliefs and his own awareness of how he should respond to the problems of his empire appear to have provided the backdrop to the formulation of his policy of Dhamma.

By the time Aśoka ascended the throne, the Mauryan imperial system encompassed various cultures, beliefs, and social and political patterns. He was aware of the tensions which had arisen in the society as a result of the rise of new faiths like Buddhism, Jainism, and Ājivikaism. They were all opposed to the domination of the Brāhmaṇas in some way or the other and had a growing number of supporters. But the Brāhmaṇas continued to have a strong hold on society, and some measure of hostility was inevitable. It was essential to bring about a climate of harmony and mutual trust in a situation such as this. There were obviously many tribal areas in the empire where people were not familiar either with the Brāhmaṇical or heterodox ideas. To make the empire survive and to bring some measure of cohesion within the empire in the midst of such diversity, it was essential that there should be some common pattern of behavior and common approach to the problems of society. In the light of a situation such as this, the policy of Dhamma was formulated by Aśoka. Aśoka gives so much importance to ethical issues that it has been even doubted if Aśoka was a Buddhist or whether he was just making use of the peaceful doctrine of Buddhism to establish peace in his kingdom. In this policy, though the

teachings of the Buddha were, of course, emphasized, the centralization and consolidation of the empire, which consisted of many communities and races, was undoubtedly the principal objective. The edicts offered the opportunity to Aśoka to expand his Dhamma and use it as a social and intellectual force upon the society. Some scholars have indicated that Aśoka's Dhamma policy did not necessarily conform to the teachings of the Buddha. As pointed out by Romila Thapar, "Had the *Dhamma* conformed to any of the religions, more particularly Buddhism, the institution of the *dhamma-mahāmāttas* would have been superfluous. Each religion had either its group of devoted believers or its order of monks who could have been organized into active propagandists with greater efficiency as they would already have been ardent followers."

Tolerance was one of the most important aspects emphasized by Aśoka in his Dhamma policy. He emphasized on tolerance of people themselves and also on tolerance of their diverse beliefs and ideas. Aśoka pleaded for tolerance of different religious sects in an attempt to create a sense of harmony. Thus, in his edicts, one comes across statements like: "all sects may dwell in all places, for all seek self-control and purity of mind," "the king. . . honors all sects. . . (one should). . . not extol one's own sect or disparage another's on unsuitable occasions. . . concord is to be commended, so that men may hear one another's principles and obey them." In his Rock Edict VII, he declares that "all sects may dwell at all places." Such principles suggest a general ethic of behavior to which no religious or social group could object. Indeed, from his twelfth edict, Aśoka appears to have pioneered not only interreligious dialogue but also the concept that all religions share common truths and values.

Nonviolence was another important factor highlighted in the policy of Dhamma. Nonviolence was to be practiced by giving up war and conquests and also a restraint on the killing of animals. He banned the sacrifices of living beings and ordered that humans and animals are to be provided medical care throughout his territory. He prohibited animal sacrifices and ordered that "no sacrifice shall be performed by slaughtering a single living being." In one of his inscriptions, Aśoka declares: "Formerly in the kitchens of the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadasi, many hundreds of thousands of living animals were killed daily for meat. But now. . . only three animals are killed. . . Even these three animals will not be killed in future." He declared that conquest by the dhamma (*dhammavijaya*) is superior to conquest by force. In his Rock Edict IV, he says that "the reverberation of the war-drums (*bherighosa*) has become the reverberation of the Dhamma (*dhammaghosa*)." He was probably the first monarch to renounce violence, yet he remained a powerful and influential king, although the empire did decline after his death.

Plurality was another salient feature of Aśoka's Dhamma policy. He combined personal and state ethics and tried to bridge divides in his multicultural empire. He says in his Rock Edict III: "You are true to your own beliefs if you accord kindly treatment to adherents of other faiths. You harm your own religion by harassing followers of other creeds." He believed that his code of reverence and compassion was based on universal values. He turned away from the kingship of power, compulsion, and self-interest and dared to believe that he could construct a different kind of kingdom based on causing harm to no one. In Kaliṅga Rock Edict I, he instructed his judicial officers, warning them that they would not be promoted unless they furthered his desire.

A careful examination of his inscriptions shows that Aśoka's understanding of the deeper doctrines of Buddhism was rather superficial. Some scholars have suggested that this is an indication that Aśoka was trying to form an all-inclusive, multi-faith religious system based on the concept of dhamma as a positive moral force, but which did not embrace or advocate any particular religion. Others have pointed out that he consciously used simple language and had no interest in delineating complex Buddhist philosophy or for that matter philosophy of any other religion as the complex religious environment of the period would have required careful handling. Aśoka undertook to establish among his subjects and neighbors a universal Dhamma, which

coincided to a large extent with the advice to the laity already formulated by the Buddha. Aśoka himself established a clear distinction between his personal Dhamma, which as sovereign he intended to render triumphant "in order to discharge his debt to creatures," and the Buddhist Dhamma expounded by the Buddha and which, according to the recognized expression, he designated in his edict at Bhābrā by the name of *Sadhamma*. Therefore, it would not be worthwhile to look for the profound ideas and fundamental theories of Buddhism in his edicts. He does not anywhere refer to the *Four Noble Truths* (*Cattāriariyasaccāni*), or the *Eightfold Path* (*aṭṭhaṅgikomaggo*), or the *Doctrine of Dependent Origination* (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), or the Buddha's supernatural qualities. One does not come across either the name or *Concept of Nibbāna* anywhere in his edicts. The *Doctrine of Rebirth* is also referred to only in passing in the sense of consequences of good actions leading to happiness in this world and in the life to come. It appears that Aśoka did not want to create the impression of failing in his duties as an impartial sovereign by favoring a particular religion to the detriment of others.

Thus, the Dhamma is only an expression, in its most universal form, of the great principles of natural law; it teaches "proper conduct according to the ancient rule," a rule which kings in the past had already tried to promote. To avoid sin, practice virtue, and perform the duties of human solidarity, such is the essence of Aśoka's Dhamma. Its parallels can be found in the descriptions of lay morality scattered throughout the *Tipiṭaka*. Aśoka's Dhamma was not simply a collection of high-sounding phrases. He very conclusively tried to adopt it as a state policy for he declared that all the subjects were his children, and he worked for their welfare and happiness in order to ensure them bliss in this world but especially in the heavens of the other world. In order to achieve his ideal, Aśoka concerned himself personally with public affairs and displayed extreme zeal in doing so: "At every moment, whether I am at table, in the women's apartments, in my room, on the farmlands, in a vehicle, in the gardens, anywhere, informants must acquaint me with public affairs. The main thing is to work and to bring affairs to a successful conclusion." Not content with being kept informed, he organized Dhamma tours (*dhammayātā*) with audiences and the distribution of gold to the brāhmaṇas, samaṇas and the aged, instruction in the Dhamma and questions on the Dhamma to the people of the provinces." He expected his family, sons, grandsons and the other princes, and sons of his queens to follow his example. He was assisted in his task by officials "appointed for the welfare and happiness of the people"; envoys (*dūta*) who carried his message "throughout the empire and among the foreign kingdoms"; district officers (*yuta/yukta*), inspectors (*rājūka*), and local governors (*prādesika*) who, every five years, set out on tour with his special edict; overseers (*mahāmāttas*) in Kaliṅga, entrusted with winning the affection of the people; and superintendents of the Dhamma (*dhamma-mahāmāttas*), charged with the care of the religious, the elderly, the wretched and prisoners, and who were eventually to be concerned separately with the various sects: the Buddhist Saṃgha, the brāhmaṇas, Ājīvikas, Niggaṇṭhas, etc.

The king's zeal also found expression in the carrying out of a large number of public works: the planting of banyans, shady trees, and mango groves; the sowing of medicinal herbs; provision of medicines for animals and humans; and upkeep of the highways, with resting places, wells, and tanks. He emphasized respect for life to such a degree that he limited and then definitively forbade the slaughtering of animals for culinary use. In the field of domestic virtues, Aśoka unceasingly counseled obedience to one's father and mother; obedience to one's teachers; irreproachable courtesy towards one's friends, acquaintances, companions, and family; kindness to the poor, the old, and the weak as well as to slaves and servants; and generosity towards brāhmaṇas and samaṇas. He extolled in his subjects "the minimum of spending and the minimum of assets." If charity is worthy, "there is no gift or assistance which is equivalent to the gift of the Dhamma, the assistance of the Dhamma." In order that relations could have the opportunity to administer such a fraternal admonition, Aśoka allowed those

condemned to death an interval of three days so that their intimates could intercede for them or so that they could prepare themselves for death by means of almsgiving and fasting. He declares in Pillar Edict IV: "I even go this far, to grant a three-day stay for those in prison who have been tried and sentenced to death. During this time their relatives can make appeals to have the prisoners' lives spared. If there is none to appeal on their behalf, the prisoners can give gifts in order to make merit for the next world, or observe fasts."

Many are the vices condemned by Aśoka as well as the virtues recommended by him. He invited his subjects and, most especially, his officials to combat inwardly jealousy, irritability, cruelty, hastiness, obstinacy, idleness, and lassitude and to obviate those "accesses to faults" which consist of ill will, callousness, anger, pride, and envy. He listed the "virtues of the law" (*dhammaguṇa*) the practice of which ensures happiness in this world and in the next security; mastery over the senses; equanimity and gentleness; obedience, pity, and truthfulness; devotion to the law; vigilance, docility, circumspection, and vigor to the greatest degree; and pity, charity, truthfulness, and purity. The quality to which the emperor attached the greatest importance was exertion (*parākrama*) or fortitude (*utsāha*), a condition of spiritual progress. Among those beneficial practices, Aśoka recommended the examination of one's conscience: not to consider only the good one has done but also the evil which one has committed. Aśoka practiced peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, social welfare, ecological responsibility, education, impartial justice, and respect for all living things. He was extraordinarily creative, both in social welfare and economic development. He was also very tolerant and global minded.

In his Pillar Edict II, Aśoka points out that the meaning of Dhamma is having few faults and many good deeds like mercy, charity, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, and virtue. "The elephant trainers, clerks, fortune-tellers, and brāhmaṇas instruct their apprentices according to ancient tradition, that they should honor their masters." The policy of Dhamma also included various welfare measures. In the Pillar Edict VII, Aśoka says: "On the roads I have had banyan trees planted, which will give shade to beasts and men, I have had mango-groves planted and I have had wells dug and rest houses built at every eight *kos*. And I have had many watering places made everywhere for the use of beasts and men… But I have done these things in order that my people may conform to Dhamma." "It is good to be obedient to one's parents, friends and relatives, to be generous… not only to spend little, but to own the minimum of property." He also emphasized on "deference to those advanced in age… the poor and wretched, slaves and servants."

Aśoka's Dhamma was not merely an anthology of high-sounding clichés. He changed the whole concept of kingship. He very conclusively tried to adopt Dhamma as a state policy for he declared that "All men are my children. What I desire for my own children, and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, that I desire for all men. You do not understand to what extent I desire this, and if some of you do understand, you do not understand the full extent of my desire." Further, he said "Whatever exertion I make, I strive only to discharge the debt that I owe to all living creatures." In Rock Edict VI, Aśoka says: "At all times, whether I am in the women's apartments, or in my inner apartments, or at the cattle-shed, or in my carriage, or in my garden– wherever I may be, my informants should keep me in touch with public business." Thus, it was a totally new and inspiring ideal of kingship, so different from the king of *Arthaśāstra* who owed nothing to anyone and whose only job was to rule efficiently. However, Aśoka realized that a certain display of his political might may be necessary to keep the primitive forest tribes in check.

Anxious to spread his message across India, Aśoka sent embassies to the Middle East. His edicts mention Antiochus II, Theos of Syria, Ptolemy II, Philadelphos of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, and Alexander

of Epirus. His son Mahinda and daughter Saṃghamittā went to Sri Lanka. A mission was sent to Suvaṇṇabhūmi (Myanmar) under Soṇa and Uttara, while others went to the Himalayan region and beyond. In far southern India, he sent his views to the Coḷa, Cera, and Pāṇṭya rulers.

Aśoka's Dhamma policy has generated intense controversy among scholars. Some scholars have suggested that Aśoka was a partisan Buddhist. It has also been suggested that it was the original Buddhist thought that was being preached by Aśoka as Dhamma, and later on certain theological additions were made to Buddhism. The Buddhist chronicles like the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* also credit Aśoka with this. One cannot, however, lay the charge against Aśoka of being a bigot. As a true Buddhist, Aśoka did not favor Buddhism at the expense of other faiths. The rock edicts clearly point out that Aśoka promoted tolerance and respect for all religious sects including the brāhmaṇas and *samaṇas* (Sk: *śramaṇas*). It is a different matter, of course, if such a tolerance is seen as an intrinsic part of Buddhism, which it was. In order to implement his policy of Dhamma, Aśoka started *Dhammayātās* and established a direct contact with his subjects. In Rock Edict III, Aśoka says: "Everywhere in my empire, the *yuktās* (subordinate officers) with the *rājūkas* (rural administrators) and the *prādesikas* (heads of districts), shall go on tour every 5 years, in order to instruct people in the *Dhamma* as well as other purposes." A group of officers known as *dhamma-mahāmāttas* were instituted to implement and publicize the various aspects of Dhamma. Aśoka thrust a very heavy responsibility on them to carry his message to the various sections of the society. However, they seem gradually to have developed into a type of priesthood of Dhamma with great powers and soon began to interfere in politics. A group of officers known as Dhamma *mahāmāttas* were instituted to implement and publicize the various aspects of Dhamma. Aśoka thrust a very heavy responsibility on them to carry his message to the various sections of the society. However, they seem gradually to have developed into a type of priesthood of Dhamma with great powers and soon began to interfere in politics as well. In order to implement his policy of Dhamma, Aśoka recruited a new cadre of officials called *dhamma-mahāmāttas*. "Everywhere in my empire, the *yuktas* (subordinate officers) with the *rājūkās* (rural administrators) and the *prādeśīkas* (heads of districts), shall go on tour every 5 years, in order to instruct people in the *Dhamma* as well as other purposes." Aśoka started *dhammayātās* and established a direct contact with his subjects. "Many are concerned with this matter– the officers of the Dhamma, the women's officers, the managers of the state farms, and other classes of officers." "The sound of the drum had become the sound of *Dhamma*, showing the people displays of heavenly chariots, elephants, balls of fire, and other divine forms." Various types of incentives were also offered by Aśoka for popularizing his Dhamma policy. "This is my principle: to protect through Dhamma, to administer affairs according to Dhamma, to please the people with Dhamma, to guard the empire with Dhamma." In one of his inscriptions, he points out that "There are no more trials for men of piety. Thus the practice of Dhamma is of value to all men." In his Rock Edict IV, it has been mentioned that men who were imprisoned or sentenced to death were to be given three days' respite. To make the Dhamma acceptable, Aśoka also introduced some form of moral warning into his policy. For example, in Rock Edict V, he says that "he who neglects my reforms even in part will do wrong, for sin is easy to commit." The officers and city magistrates at Tosalī/Samāpa are instructed that by disregarding the Dhamma, they would "gain neither heaven nor the favor of the king." "The ceremony of Dhamma is effective for all time, for even if its object is not attained in this life, endless merit is produced for the life to come." He also introduced legislation in order that the Dhamma be accepted by the masses. Pillar Edict VII says that "The advancement of Dhamma amongst men has been achieved through two means, legislation and persuasion. But of these two, legislation has been less effective and persuasion more so." In

Pillar Edict I, Aśoka claims: "this is my principle: to protect through Dhamma, to administer affairs according to Dhamma, to please the people with Dhamma, to guard the empire with Dhamma."

Aśoka's Personal Life

Aśoka is mentioned in various sources as having had many wives, the prominent ones being Kāruvākī, mother of Tīvara and Asandhimittā and Padmāvatī, mother of Kuṇāla and Tissārakkhā, respectively. Asandhimittā was the chief queen and was very well disposed towards Buddhism. However, she died childless in the 29th year of Aśoka's reign. Thereafter, Tissārakkhā became the chief queen, and she was not friendly towards Buddhism at all. Once in a fit of rage she tried unsuccessfully to destroy the Bodhi-tree at Gayā. The Kaliṅga Rock Edicts I and II indicate that Aśoka had at least four sons, each of whom was the governor of one of the provinces, Ujjainī, Takṣaśilā, Suvarṇagiri, and Tosali. The *Divyāvadāna* mentions that Aśoka's son Kuṇāla was blinded as a result of the conspiracy by one of the stepmothers of the latter. According to Tāranātha, Vīrasena succeeded Aśoka as the ruler of Gandhāra, and the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* mentions Aśoka's son Jalaṅka as having succeeded him in Kashmir as an independent king.

Not much is known about Aśoka's family life. His inscriptions speak of two queens; Buddhist legends mention several. Aśoka had many children. but their names are unknown except for a small number. It is also not known how, when, and where he died. A Tibetan tradition maintains that he died at Takṣaśilā. Two grandsons, Dasaratha and Samprati, succeeded him and divided the empire. But within 50 years of Aśoka's death, a coup led by Puṣyamitra Śuṅga brought the dynasty to an end. The empire's decline is mainly attributable to the weak leadership that succeeded Aśoka's rule, but several other factors also contributed. These include the deskilling of the military, which lost their jobs under Aśoka's policy and were subsequently unable to offer adequate defense. The large administration required strong leadership, and when this was not forthcoming, provinces tended to assert independence from the center. Also, the brāhmaṇa priests had been sidelined by Aśoka's Buddhist policy but after his death worked to undermine this, which encouraged civil war.

Cross-References

- ▶ Aśokāvadāna
- ▶ Buddhist Councils
- ▶ Dhamma
- ▶ Dhammavijaya
- ▶ Dharmacakra
- ▶ Divyāvadāna

References

1. Bennett C (2001) In search of Jesus: insider and outsider images. Continuum, New York/London
2. Geiger W (ed) (1908) The Mahāvaṃsa. Pali Text Society, London
3. Gokhale BG (1966) Aśoka Maurya. Twayne Publishers, New York
4. Hazra KL (2007) Aśoka as depicted in his edicts. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
5. Law BC (ed and trans) (1958) The Dīpavaṃsa: the chronicle of the Island of Ceylon or the Dīpavaṃsa. The Ceylon Hist J (Colombo) 7: 1–266
6. Malalasekera GP (ed) (1977) Vaṃsatthappakāsinī: commentary on the Mahāvaṃsa. Pali Text Society, London
7. Mehta G (1998) Aśoka: beloved of the Gods. Tricycle Buddhist Rev Winter: 21–25
8. Przyluski J (ed) (1923) La Lègende de l'Empereur Aśoka (Aśoka-Avadāna) dans les textes Indiens et Chinois. Paul Geuthner, Paris
9. Strong JS (2002) Legend of King Aśoka, 2nd edn. Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi
10. Swearer D (1981) Buddhism and society in Southeast Asia. Anima Books, Chambersburg
11. Thapar R (1961) Aśoka and the decline of the Mauryas. Oxford University Press, Oxford

Aśokarājāvadāna

- ▶ Aśokāvadāna

Aśokāvadāna

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Aśokarājāvadāna; A-yü wang ching; A-yü wang chuan

Definition

An anthology of narratives on the contribution of King Aśoka and five teachers toward the promotion and transmission of Buddhism.

The *Aśokāvadāna* that literally means "Narrative of Aśoka" is an anthology of narratives that consist of an account of the events pertaining to the conversion of King Aśoka to Buddhism, his activities for the promotion and transmission of Buddhism, and the proselytization work of five Buddhist teachers, namely, Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Madhyantika, Śāṇavāsin, and Upagupta. The Sanskrit text in its present condition was most probably composed in the second century C.E. ([5], p. 170). It was first translated into Chinese by An-fa-Ch'in in 300 C.E. as *A-yü wang chuan* (Taishō no. 2042) and later as *A-yü wang ching* (Taishō no. 2043) by Saṃghabhadra in 512 C.E. ([5], p. 170). As the *Aśokāvadāna* lavishes liberal praises on the city of Mathurā as well as its monasteries and monks, Jean Przyluski has suggested on this basis that this text was composed by the Buddhist monks of the Mathurā region ([4], p. 8).

The contents of *A-yü wang chuan* are divided into eleven *nidānas* (subjects) ([2], pp. 198–199). Six *nidānas* (the first five and the eleventh) give an account of the events related to the life and work of King Aśoka. Each of the remaining five *nidānas* (sixth to the tenth) gives an account of the career of a Buddhist master:

Nidāna no. 1: ***On Offering a Handful of the Earth to the Buddha***: This *nidāna* begins with an incident from one of the previous lives of King Aśoka when as a child he offered to the Buddha a handful of earth. Later as a reward for this, he was born as one of the sons of King Bindusāra. On growing up, he became the governor of the province of Takṣaśilā. After this when he was put on the throne by his ministers, he put to death 500 ministers as well as his elder brother Suśīma. Due to such an evil behavior, he became known as Caṇḍāśoka (Aśoka, the Merciless). Later, on seeing the miracles being performed by a Buddhist monk, he converted to Buddhism and made a pledge not only to construct 84,000 stūpas but also to make offerings to the Bodhi tree. Consequently, he became famous as Dharmāśoka (Aśoka, the Righteous).

Nidāna no. 2: ***On the Original Events of King Aśoka*****:** This *nidāna* gives an account of the activities of King Aśoka relating to alms giving, convening of the five assemblies, and the construction of stūpas at different places connected to the life of the Buddha and various Buddhist masters.

Nidāna no. 3: ***On the Original Events of King Aśoka's Younger Brother*****:** It provides the details of Aśoka's younger brother Sudatta. Initially, Sudatta did not follow Buddhism, but as a result of the efforts of Aśoka, he became a Buddhist monk. Later, he attained arhatship.

Nidāna no. 4: ***On the Original Events of Kuṇāla*****:** This *nidāna* relates the tragic story of Aśoka's son, Kuṇāla, who was blinded at the behest of his stepmother queen Tiṣyarakṣitā. Later, Kuṇāla was able to obtain the "eye of wisdom."

Nidāna no. 5: ***On the Half Āmalaka Fruit*****:** It gives an account of the charitable activities of Aśoka, particularly stūpa building and alms giving. Consequently, he spent all the wealth that was there in the treasury and he was deposed for this. Shortly before dying, he offered the only possession that he had, an *āmalaka* fruit, to the Buddha and the saṃgha. He was succeeded by King Puṣyamitra who is accused of having razed monasteries, killed monks, and brought about the downfall of Buddhism.

Nidāna no. 6: *On Upagupta*: Here a prediction of the Buddha is told, according to which, 100 years after the nibbāna of the Buddha, a monk called Upagupta would be born who would contribute greatly to Buddhism and that after him Mahākāśyapa along with 500 arhats would convene a council to gather the Tripiṭaka.

Nidāna no. 7: *On Mahākāśyapa's Nirvāṇa*: This *nidāna* gives an account of the work done by Masters Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda. Whereas after having transmitted the Dharma to Ānanda, Mahākāśyapa left for the Kukkuṭapāda Mountain to wait for the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya, Ānanda in turn transmitted the Dharma to Śāṇavāsin and entered Nirvāṇa after going to the Gaṅgā.

Nidāna no. 8: *On Madhyantika*: Here the activities of Madhyantika in spreading Buddhism in the country of Kaśmīra are related.

Nidāna no. 9: *On Śāṇavāsin*: In this *nidāna* an account of the work done by Śāṇavāsin in spreading Buddhism in the region of Mathurā and his conversion of Upagupta to Buddhism are given.

Nidāna no. 10: *On Upagupta*: This *nidāna* gives an account of the activities of Upagupta in Mathurā as well as his Nirvāṇa after having transmitted the Dharma to Dhītika. An account of the final disappearance of Buddhism in the foreseeable future is also given here.

Nidāna no. 11: *On King Aśoka's Deeds*: Here Aśoka's work pertaining to his patronage of Buddhism and its proselytization are given.

The first ten *nidānas* of *A-yü wang chuan* have been collapsed into eight *nidānas* in the *A-yü wang ching* and the eleventh *nidāna* of *A-yü wang chuan* is missing from *A-yü wang ching* ([2], p. 200). The extant Sanskrit text corresponds to just the first, second, fifth, and tenth *nidānas* of *A-yü wang chuan* and is preserved in chapters xxvi-xxix of the *Divyāvadāna* ([1], pp. 348–434).

Cross-References

- ▶ Aśoka
- ▶ Divyāvadāna
- ▶ Kuṇāla
- ▶ Upagupta

References

1. Cowell EB, Neil RA (eds) (1886) The Divyāvadāna. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 348–434
2. Kao Kuan-ju (1966) Aśokāvadāna. Encyclopedia of Buddhism, vol II. The Cultural Publications, Colombo, pp 198–200
3. Mukhopadhyaya S (1963) The Aśokāvadāna. Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi
4. Przyluski Jean (1923) La légende de l'empereur Açoka (Açoka-Avadâna) dans les textes indiens et chinois. P. Geuthner, Paris
5. Strong JS (1983) The legend of King Aśoka: a study and translation of the Aśokāvadāna. Princeton University Press, Princeton
6. Vaidya PL (ed) (1959) Divyāvadāna, Buddhist Sanskrit texts no. 20. The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, Darbhanga

Āśrava

▶ Āsavas (Āśravas)

Assaji

Angraj Chaudhary
Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Definition

Assaji was one of the pañcavaggiya bhikkhus who were present when the Buddha first set the wheel of Dhamma in motion at Sāranātha.

Names of Pañcavaggiya Bhikkhus

Assaji was one of the pañcavaggiya bhikkhus. The names of the bhikkhus who formed a group of five (pañcavaggiya) were Koṇḍañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji. Koṇḍañña was the youngest of the eight brahmans who had gone to Suddhodana's house on the name-giving ceremony day to see the signs on the body of the child born to him and forecast his future life. Out of the eight, it was Koṇḍañña who was sure that

the child was not going to be a wheel-turning king, but he was going to become the Buddha.

Koṇḍañña followed Siddhārtha when he left home. Four others, who were the sons of four out of seven brahmans, also accompanied Koṇḍañña. They had been advised by their fathers to keep an eye on Siddhārtha Gotama's career by being in his company if he left home for a homeless life. It is clear from some of the suttas of the Majjhima Nikāya [1] that all five attended to him when he was practicing austerities at Uruvelā. When Siddhārtha gave up practicing austerities, because he found them of no use and of no help to attain the highest goal in life, all of them left him thinking that Siddhārtha had strayed from the right path as he had decided to live a luxurious life.

When Siddhārtha Gotama attained enlightenment and became the Perfectly Enlightened One, he thought of teaching Dhamma to the five of his companions. At that time they were living in Isipattana Migadāya, Sāranātha, Vārānasī.

The Buddha set the wheel of Dhamma in motion and taught Dhamma to five of his companions who had accompanied him for a long time.

Koṇḍañña Was the First to Become a Sotāpanna

Koṇḍañña was the first to become a sotāpanna (one who has entered the stream that will take him to nibbāna) and Assaji was the last. Vappa and Bhaddiya were taught Dhamma after Kondañña. Assaji and Mahānāma were the last to be taught Dhamma. All became arahants after listening to the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta [2] preached to them five days after the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. In the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the Buddha proves to them that none of the five khandhas (aggregates) is the self. Neither rūpa (material form) is self, nor vedanā (sensation), nor saññā (perception), nor saṅkhāra (formations), and nor viññāṇa (consciousness) is the self. After listening to this sutta all five became arahants.

One does not hear much of Assaji in the Tipiṭaka. There are two suttas. One describes his meeting with the Niganṭhaputta Saccaka who asks him about the teachings of the Buddha. Assaji very ably and clearly gives him the summary of the Anattalakkhana Sutta [3]. Another Sutta describes how the Buddha pays a visit to him when he was lying grievously ill in Kassapārāma near Rājagaha [4]. When the Buddha asks him to enter into jhāna, he expresses his inability because he felt difficulty in breathing and also because he found it difficult to win balance of mind. Then the Buddha reminded him that there is nothing permanent and asked him to meditate on impermanence and nonself [5].

Even if one doesn't hear much of him in the Tipiṭaka, his contribution to the spread of Buddhism is very great. It was he who converted Sāriputta and Moggallāna to Buddha Dhamma who later became the two great disciples of the Buddha.

After setting the wheel of Dhamma in motion, the Buddha came to Rajgir and was staying in Veluvana donated by king Bimbisāra. At the same time Assaji also happened to be in Rajgir. One day Sāriputta who was also called Upatissa, a disciple of wanderer Sañcaya' saw Assaji while he was begging alms. He was going in the street with downcast eyes. He was very calm and quiet and had his senses under control. His faculties were clear and the color of his skin was bright and pure. Sāriputta was so impressed by his mien and deportment that he took him to be a perfect example of an arahant or one who is on the path to become one. When asked by Sāriputta who his teacher was, under whom he had gone forth and what his teaching was, he very politely said that as he was new in Dhamma and Vinaya, he could not explain it in detail. However, he briefly described the teachings of the Buddha in the following verse, which represents the essence of the Buddha's teaching.

> Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā, tesaṃ hetu Tathāgato āha/
> Tesañca yo nirodho, evamvādī mahāsamaṇoti// [6]

The Great Samaṇa, the Tathāgata, explains the causes of those Dhammas, which have causes to arise. He also explains how those causes can cease to be.

This stanza composed or recited by Assaji became very popular as it pithily represents the

teaching of the Buddha. Later on it was inscribed on stone plaques and pillars at every important Buddhist site. Finding stone plaques bearing this verse helped many to discover and identify Buddhist sites. Mr. Buchanan found several such stone plaques at Bodh Gaya, and according to him, it was "probably a standardised Buddhist dedication" [7].

As Sāriputta was endowed with great understanding, with great wisdom he immediately understood the deeper meaning of this teaching by the Buddha and became a sotāpanna. In other words' he entered the stream that takes one to nibbāna. He was very glad to have found a state of security from where he would not come again and again in this world to suffer. What Assaji said to him opened his eyes. Since then he began to greatly venerate Assaji. Sāriputta had so much reverence for Assaji that he would extend his clasped hands in the direction Assaji was and he would sleep in such a way that his head was in that direction [8].

He spoke about Assaji and what he said about the teaching of the Buddha to Moggallāna. As soon as Moggallāna heard the verse, he also entered the stream that would take him to nibbāna.

Thus Assaji was instrumental for the conversion of these two great brahmins of Magadha who became the two great disciples of the Buddha, one renowned for his paññā and the other for his power of iddhi.

Even if Assaji is seldom mentioned in the Tipiṭaka, his great contribution to the spread of Buddha Dhamma is the conversion of these two great brahnins of Magadha.

References

1. Pāsarāsi Sutta or Ariyaparivesanā Sutta, Mahāsaccaka Sutta Bodhirājakumāra Sutta (Unless otherwise mentioned all books referred to here are published by Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri in 1998)
2. S.2.61
3. M.1.292
4. S.2. 113
5. S.2.113
6. MV, Vinaya Pitaka, p 46
7. Allen C (2002) The Buddha and the Sahibs. John Murray Publishers, London, Paperback edition, 2003, p 94
8. Therag A 1.1 141–374

Aṣṭāṅgamārga

► Ethics (Buddhism)

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā

Charles Willemen
International Buddhist College, Songkhla, Thailand

Synonyms

The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand lines

Definition

Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā is the title of the oldest systematic text about *Prajñāpāramitā*, Perfection of Wisdom.

E. Conze [1] translates *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*. A line means a *śloka* stanza, a unit of 32 syllables. The title informs us about the length of the text in prose form. The text comprises 32 chapters (*parivarta*) in its Indian version, 30 chapters in ten fascicles in its earliest Chinese translation. There is a verse form of the text known as *Prajñāpāramitāratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā, Stanzas of the Perfection of Wisdom Which Is the Storehouse of Precious Virtues.* E. Conze [1] says that chapters one and two probably constitute the original part of the text, a part which may go back to 100 B.C. The prose text grew over time, and at the time of the earliest Chinese translation, 179 A.D., it seems the text had been completed. Earlier and later portions can be distinguished in the text. Perfection (*pāramitā*) of wisdom (*prajñā*) is the subject of a whole set of texts, called *prajñāpāramitā* literature. The earliest text is generally said to be the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, 8,000 stanzas long. The subject is the explanation of emptiness, *śū*

nyatā, non-substantiality. The scene of the discussions is set on the Gṛdhrakūṭa, Vulture Peak, near Rājagṛha in Magadha. Śākyamuni himself gives explanations. Śāriputra, the ultimate authority of all Sthaviravāda schools, asks Subhūti for information. Thus begin replies and discussions. The text deals with the life of a bodhisattva, his correct practice of wisdom, *prajñā*, insight into emptiness. Eighteen aspects of emptiness are enumerated.

The origin of this kind of literature is said to be in South India, according to some Japanese scholars, for example, A. Hirakawa [2]. This assertion is based on the earliest Chinese text, chapter eight, fascicle four (Taishō ed.VIII 224: 446 a 29-b 2). The passage can also be found in chapter ten of E. Conze's translation of the Sanskrit, in the part *Prediction about Spread of Perfect Wisdom* [1]. The Chinese says that after the departure of the Tathāgata, perfection of wisdom will be in (*dang zai*) South India. Then it will be in the West and then turn to the North. The Sanskrit does not say West, but East. This part of the text is not the oldest part. It means that perfection of wisdom was very popular in the South, a Mahāsāṅghika area, certainly in the first centuries A.D. In the North one has Lokottaravāda Mahāsāṅghikas. There is an ancient manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in Gāndhārī in the Schøyen collection, dated 47–147 A.D [4]. What seems certain is that *prajñāpāramitā* developed in Mahāsāṃghika circles, opposing Sthaviravāda ideas. E. Lamotte places the origin of *prajñāpāramitā* ideas in the Gandharan cultural area, an area with a strong Sarvāstivāda (and also Vibhajyavāda) presence. In Andhra, Sthaviras (Vibhajyavādins) were a small minority. That area was the main Mahāsāṅghika area. It is quite possible that perfection of wisdom views originated in northern, in Gandharan Mahāsāṅghika circles, but were given weight and importance by the major Mahāsāṃghika area of Andhra, already ca. 100 A.D.

Some scholars have mentioned that in *prajñāpāramitā* texts high praise is given to the making of written copies. Writing down texts seems to have started earlier in the Gandharan area than in, for example, Śrī Laṅkā.

There are a number of Chinese translations of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* [5, 6]. The earliest one is Taishō ed.224: *Daoxing* (*Yogācāra*) *bore* (*prajñā*) *jing* (*sūtra*), the work of Zhi Loujia Chen, or Zhi Chen, known as Lokakṣema (Lokesh Chandra says: Laukākṣina), in 179 A.D [3]. *Bore*, a phonetic rendering of a Prākrit form of *prajñā*, is sometimes transcribed as *banruo*. The title makes it clear that this is a text about the role of *prajñā*, wisdom, in the practice of yoga, *yogācāra*. Sautrāntika Sarvāstivāda *yogācāra* develops knowledge, *jñāna*. Manuals explaining such yoga are well known in China ever since Lokakṣema's immediate precursor in Luoyang, An Shigao (ca. 148–170 A.D.). But Mahāsāṅghikas apparently also had *yogācāra*, developing the practice of wisdom, *prajñā, bore*. The Chinese title may have been given in China, explaining the contents of this new kind of yoga. A second translation is the work of Zhi Qian (active ca. 220–257 A.D.). This is a revised, new version, called *Da* (*Mahā*) *mingdu* (*prajñāpāramitā*) *jing*, Taishō ed.225. Its first chapter, called *Xing, Caryā, Practice*, is not Zhi Qian's work. Dharmapriya and Zhu Fonian brought out a text in 382 A.D., Taishō ed.226: *Mohebore* (*Mahāprajñā*) *chao* (*abstract*) *jing*. Kumārajīva brought his famous *Xiaopin* (*Lesser Version*) *Boreboluomi* (*prajñāpāramitā*) *jing* in 408 A.D., Taishō ed.227. Xuanzang brought Taishō ed.220: *Da* (*Mahā*) *boreboluomi* (*prajñāpāramitā*) *jing*, in 660–663 A.D. The fourth and the fifth assemblage (*hui*) in this text render the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā.* Finally, Dānapāla rendered the text again at the end of the tenth century, that is, Taishō ed.228.

A late Tibetan translation was made by Śākyasena, later revised a number of times, for example, by Atīśa (ca. 982–1054) [7]. Later writers attached great importance to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, as evidenced by Haribhadra's (late eighth, early ninth century) commentary, *Ālokā.* Also Kumārajīva's *Da zhidu lun* (sanskritized as *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*), Taishō ed.1509, of 406 A.D., uses the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā.*

Cross-References

- ▶ Gandhara
- ▶ Mahāsāṅghika
- ▶ Prajñāpāramitā

References

1. Conze E (1973, Indian ed. 1994) The perfection of wisdom in eight thousand lines & its verse summary. Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi
2. Hirakawa A (1990, 1st, Hawaii; Indian ed 1993) A history of Indian Buddhism (trans: Groner P). Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
3. Karashima S (2010) A glossary of Lokakṣema's translation of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā. The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology. Soka University, Tokyo
4. Karashima S (2011) A critical edition of Lokakṣema's translation of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā. The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology. Soka University, Tokyo
5. Karunatillake W (1967) Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra. In: Malalasekera G (ed) Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, vol II. Government of Ceylon, Colombo, pp 249–252
6. Lancaster L (ed) (1977) Prajñāpāramitā and related systems: studies in honor of Edward Conze. University of California Regents, Berkeley
7. Mäll L (2003) Studies in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and other essays. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi

Aśvaghoṣa

Chapla Verma
Department of Philosophy and Religion,
American Public University, Charles Town, WV, USA

Definition

A prominent Buddhist philosopher and author of well-known Buddhist literature.

Aśvaghoṣa is a well-known Buddhist philosopher and author of profound Buddhist literature written in classical Sanskrit. He is considered founder of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Despite this fame and recognition, different sources provide different information about Aśvaghoṣa about the time when he existed and who he was.

Limited information is available about his life through the Tibetan and Chinese translations of his work. Many Buddhist texts and Sanskrit works around the time period of Aśvaghoṣa, including his book Saundranand, have now provided means to examine his language and ideas [1]. By some accounts he was a Brahmin heretic living at the time of Emperor Kanikṣa during the second century. The Li tai san pao chi (fas. 1), quoting the Record of the Sarvāstivādin School, claims Aśvaghoṣa was born a Brahman in Eastern India some 300 years after the Nirvāna of Buddha. It is also believed that Aśvaghoṣa converted to Buddhism after losing in a debate and thereafter he became a well-known Buddhist scholar [2]. Aśvaghoṣa is said to be native of Sāketa in Śrāvastī.

These sources suggest Aśvaghoṣa, was defeated by Pārśva a renowned Buddhist teacher. Aśvaghoṣa became Pārśva's disciple after being defeated by Pārśva in debate. Chinese and Tibetan commentaries mentioned above provide somewhat different accounts of this episode. What remains clear is that Aśvaghoṣa had spiritual communication with both Pārśva and Puṇyayaśas, and was disciple of either one or both. Since Puṇyayaśas is considered a disciple and successor of Pārśva, it seems Aśvaghoṣa started by receiving spiritual teachings from Pārśva and later moved on to Puṇyayaśas [2].

Chinese scholars visiting India have mentioned about the fame of Aśvaghoṣa and the famous scholar Hsüen-tsang has written about four suns, placing Aśvaghoṣa as number one of those suns [3].

"Life of Vasubandhu" mentions about Katyayana who existed in fifth century after Buddha's parinirvāna. The book also mentions that Aśvaghoṣa was Katyayana's contemporary [2].

Śraddhotpāda-śāstra indicates that Aśvaghoṣa existed 500 years after Buddha's Parinirvāna. His teachings were well known in countries around India and as far as present day Indonesia [3].

Sang-ying, a famous disciple of Kumārajīva (362–439 A.D.), in the preface of Chinese translation of the Mahā-prajña-pārmitā sūtra also

corroborates this version situating Aśvaghoṣa 500 years after Buddha's Parinirvāna [2].

Mahāmaya sūtra claims a prophecy made by Buddha. After the death of Buddha, Mahāmaya asked Ānanda if Buddha had ever told him in his life anything concerning the future of Buddhism. Responding to this Ānanda said (among other things), the Buddhist teachings will gradually decline, 600 years after Buddha's death, and then a Bhikṣu, Aśvaghoṣa, will teach the essence of the Dharma. Referring to this prophecy, Nāgārjuna claims that there were six Aśvaghoṣas at different times. The author of Śraddhotpāda-śāstra, on which Nāgārjuna's commentary is written, is the one professed in the Mahāmaya sūtra. Nāgārjuna even states that he was a disciple of that Aśvaghoṣa [2].

Chinese and Tibetan translations of Aśvaghoṣa's work are different from each other, but both indicate that Aśvaghoṣa and Kaniṣka had a significant association and were contemporaries. How they got associated with each other is an interesting story which is presented by different translators with slight variation. The Tsa pao tsang ching (Samyuktaratna-pitaka-sūtra) mentions that Aśvaghoṣa had close relationship with the king of Tukhara, Candana Kanishtha. The sūtra states this king had three wise men with him and Aśvaghoṣa was one of them. The other two were Mo-cha-lo (Mathara) and a physician Che-lo-chia (Caraka) [2]. This king was most probably Kaniṣka, the famous Kushan Emperor who convened the fourth Buddhist Council in the present day Kashmir around the second century C.E.

The discussion about Aśvaghoṣa in Fu fa tsang yin yuan ch'uan leads us to understand the importance of Aśvaghoṣa. Kaniṣka was an influential and much feared Emperor in his day and time. He advanced toward Patliputra with an intention to conquer it. The Emperor demanded 900,000,000 gold pieces from the defeated king to spare his life and kingdom. The king of Patliputra did not have that kind of fortune, he offered Aśvaghoṣa, the Buddha-bowl, and a compassionate fowl, indicating that these offerings were valuable and each worth 300,000,000 gold pieces. The victorious Emperor was pleased to get Aśvaghoṣa and other offerings and he released the defeated king and went back without disturbing the peace of the kingdom.

We find a similar narrative in a brief biography of Aśvaghoṣa in "Life of Aśvaghoṣa," translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva. In this account, the Emperor Kaniṣka demanded 300,000,000 gold pieces. When the defeated king declared his inability to produce such a fortune, Kaniṣka asked for Buddha's bowl and Aśvaghoṣa in substitution. The defeated king hesitated in complying with this demand. At this point Aśvaghoṣa reasoned with his king to let him go and save the destruction of the kingdom. The defeated king had his doubts answered and he presented Buddha's bowl and Aśvaghoṣa to Kaniṣka [2].

Clearly, both narratives indicate that Aśvaghoṣa had profound spiritual influence on his contemporaries. That a powerful Emperor like Kaniṣka desired to have Aśvaghoṣa as his spiritual adviser indicates Aśvaghoṣa's fame and influence at that time. Aśvaghoṣa became a court poet and spiritual adviser to Emperor Kaniṣka.

Today, Kaniṣka is mostly remembered for convening the fourth Buddhist council in Kashmir, which systematized Mahāyāna tenets. Aśvaghoṣa was behind this convocation, which was probably presided over by the Bhikshu Pārśva. He worked on the compilation of the Abhidharmavibhāṣā-śāstra [4].

The main writings attributed to Aśvaghoṣa are:

Buddhacarita – In this text the entire life of Gautam Buddha, from birth to Parinirvāna, is described in a poetic format. This remains one of his famous texts written in Vaidharbha style that has been compared to the famous style of poet Kalidas. Aśvaghoṣa was the state poet in the council of Kanikṣa and was therefore equally familiar with royal administration, politics, and social affairs of his time. Not surprisingly, this text covers not only religious issues but provides a commentary on the prevailing social and political issues also. I-tsing's account about Aśvaghoṣa's "Buddhacarita," confirms that this text was popular all over the Indic region and was read right till the southern end of India [3].

Śraddhotpāda-śāstra (The Awakening of Faith) is another important Buddhist treatise. It is a very famous and much read text. Its original Sanskrit

version has been lost since a long time, and only the Chinese translation is available; therefore scholars doubt that this was written by Aśvaghoṣa. Among the two Chinese translations, the first translation was made by Parmartha, the second by Śikṣananda. The Sanskrit original is not available since repeated Buddhist prosecution by Chinese rulers could be responsible for its destruction. Buddhist scholar Fa tsang (643–712 A.D.) assisted Śikṣananda in preparing the second translation, Fa tsang also wrote a commentary on Parmartha's translation, which became very popular [2]. Hakeda maintains that Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita, Saudarananda, and Sāriputra-prakarana are mainly preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translation. These primarily portray elements of Hinayāna or Theravāda Buddhism. However, the Awakening of the Faith presents Mahāyāna thought. This thought developed few centuries after the time of Aśvaghoṣa. Therefore, Hakeda is skeptical about the authorship of the Awakening of the Faith as being credited to Aśvaghoṣa [5].

Saundranand– A Sanskrit text of this name was found in a Nepalese library in 1908 by H. Shastri; it has no Tibetan or Chinese translations. This text deals with Nanda's life who faces many challenges and struggles toward spiritual quest ultimately finding refuge in Buddha and Sangha [6]. Nanda is Buddha's cousin brother and his wife is Sundari that suggests the title of text may have come from the conjunction of these two names. Nanda's aspiration for spiritual quest is put to test when Buddha came to Kapilvastu after attaining enlightenment. Buddha went to his father's palace to ask for bhikṣa, a standard ritual in Eastern religions. Buddha's wife Yaśodhara gave her son Rahula in bhikṣa to Buddha, permitting him to give up his princely life and seek enlightenment. His brother Nanda also seeks a similar path but he is torn between desire for his wife and respect for Buddha. His wife Sundari cried and objected to Nanda's renunciation and these conflicting yearnings are beautifully depicted by Aśvaghoṣa using Kavya features, a refined and ornate Sanskrit literary style. The dilemma is resolved by Nanda seeking Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha to pursue his spiritual journey rather than continue with his married family life. The text has become famous for this theme of conversion moving away from condition of worldliness to the superior condition of spiritual perfection and enlightenment [6].

Sariputra prakarana – Aśvaghoṣa is also believed to have written Sariputra prakarana, which is in the form of a play set in nine parts. The story revolves around the lives of Sariputra and Maudralyaan and is considered one of the finest Sanskrit plays.

Sūtrāṅlankāra-śāstra (The book of great Glory) is another text by Aśvaghoṣa that seems to be of later origin than the Buddhacarita as the former is quoted in the latter.

In the Chinese translations in the Taishō edition of the Tripitaka, eight texts are attributed to Aśvaghoṣa's authorship. Some of these have already been discussed earlier.

1. Buddhacaritakāvya
2. Sūtrālaṅkāra-śāstra
3. Ṣaḍgatikārikā, Sūtra of the Six Ways of Transmigration
4. Daśakuśalakarmapatha, Sūtra of the Ten Evil Deeds
5. Nairātmyaparipṛcchā, Sūtra of a Nirgrantha Inquiring into the Meaning of Non-ego
6. Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra, two Chinese translations, one by Śikṣānanda and the other by Paramārtha
7. Da-zong-di-xuan-wen-ben-lun
8. Gurusevādharma-pañcāśadgāthā, Fifty Stanzas on Serving the Guru

The Buddhacaritakāvya and the Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra are perhaps the most popular [4]. Authorship of the Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra is disputed.

Aśvaghoṣa is considered a Mahāyānist Buddhist because the elements discussed in his philosophical thought were later developed by Nāgārjuna. Aśvaghoṣa retains an important place in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Cross-References

► Kaniṣka
► Kumārajīva

References

1. Johnson EH (1972) The Buddhacarita or acts of the Buddha part 1- Sanskrit text. (Reprint) Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi
2. Suzuki T (1975) Asvaghosa's discourse on the awakening of faith in the Mahayana. Open Court Publishing, Chicago (Authorized facsimile of the original book, Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor)
3. Dvārikādāsaśāstrī (Hindi-rūpāntarasahitam) sampādakaḥ, śrīkāntapāṇḍeyaḥ (2004) Aśvaghoṣa-viracitam Buddhacaritam (Hindi translation) Caukhambā, Vārāṇasī
4. Rongxi L (2002) The life of Aśvaghoṣa Bodhisattva (Translated from the Chinese of Kumārjīva-Taishō Volume 50, Number 2046). In: Kyōkai BD, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research (eds) Lives of great monks & nuns (BDK English Tripitaka Translation Series). Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley
5. Hakeda YS (1967) The awakening of faith-attributed to Asvaghosha (Translated with Commentary). Columbia University Press, New York
6. Covill L (2007) Handsome Nanda by Aśvaghoṣa (tr). New York University Press, JJC Foundation, New York

Atheism (Buddhism)

Pradeep P. Gokhale
Department of Philosophy, University of Pune, Pune, Maharashtra, India
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Chair, Central University of Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

Synonyms

Īśvarakartṛtvanirākṛti; *Nirīśvaravāda*

Definition

Buddhism in its different phases holds the view that there is no God/*Īśvara/Brahmā* who is supposed to be the creator of the world.

Atheism in Buddhism

Buddhism is known as an atheistic religion. Since its inception, it has been opposed to theism accepted by thinkers and philosophers belonging to the orthodox Vedic tradition. All the streams of the orthodox Vedic tradition were not theistic. (Here by theistic is meant the one that accepts a single conscious/intelligent cause of the universe). However, two streams are known for their theistic position:

(a) Vedas, particularly Upaniṣads, present theistic ideas mixed with idealistic metaphysics. Upaniṣadic philosophy through different interpretations developed into different schools of Vedānta, most of which identify Brahman, the ultimate reality of the Upaniṣads, with God.
(b) Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, which later on developed as a joint system called Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system, do not exhibit the explicit signs of theistic orientation in their early aphorismic texts, but they developed through commentaries and sub-commentaries as representing philosophical theism.

Apart from the above religio-philosophical streams, the popular concept of God as creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world can be found in mythological literature. Philosophers and scholars in the Buddhist tradition are seen criticizing both the popular and philosophical conceptions of God. Here, Upaniṣadic-Vedāntic conceptions of God can be combined with the popular conceptions of God. In these conceptions, God (Brahman of *Brahmā* or *Īśvara*, etc.) is either material or material-cum-efficient cause of the world – the creator of everything – having both abstract (quality-less) and concrete (quality-posse) forms – and who is the object of devotion and worship.

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system represents a different conception of God (*Īśvara*). Accordingly, God is not the creator of everything. Atoms of the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), ether, space, time, minds (*manas*), and selves, all are eternal and hence God cannot be their creator. God (*Īśvara*) according to it is the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) of the world. He combines atoms and also distributes pleasures and pains to selves according to their past deeds.

In what follows a survey will be made of (1) the Buddhist critical approaches to the popular conception of God as the creator of everything and (2) the more systematic Buddhist critical approaches to the Nyāya-Vaiśeşika conception of God.

Buddhist Criticism of the Popular Conception of God

Early Buddhism

Early Buddhism accepts different deities belonging to higher worlds. These deities are subject to birth and death and they are there as a result of their own volitional actions. Early Buddhism does not accept God, the so-called creator of the world. It talks about Brahma as a deity who primarily belongs to a world called *Ābhassara-Brahma-loka*, but it does not attach to it the status of the creator. The Buddha was in fact critical about the brahmanical view that *Brahmā* created this world.

In *Pāṭikasutta* of *Dīghanikāya*, the Buddha refers to "some ascetics and Brahmins who declare as their doctrine that all things began with the creation by a god or *Brahmā*." He regards this as a misconception. The Buddha states the root of this misconception as follows:

> . . .Beings are born in the *Ābhassara Brahmā* world and stay there a long time. When this world expands, one being falls from there and arises in an empty *Brahmā* place. He longs for company, other beings appear and he and they believe he created them. (*Pāṭikasutta*: About *Pāṭika-putta*; The charlatan, 2.15–17)

In *Tevijjasutta*, another *Sutta* of *Dīghanikāya,* the Buddha in his dialogue with Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, questions the claim of the Vedic scholars that they can offer the way to achieve union with *Brahmā.* He also questions whether those who make such claims or their teachers or the teachers of their teachers and so on have seen *Brahmā* face to face. And when the answer is in the negative, any attempt to achieve union with *Brahmā* becomes futile.

The Buddhacarita of Aśvaghoşa

The Buddha as depicted by Aśvaghoşa in his *Buddhacarita* (Book XVI verse No.23) presents a more explicit argument against the existence of God (Iśvara) conceived as the creator of the world. While turning the wheel of Dhamma for the assembly of Bhikkhus led by Maitreya, the Buddha says, "Others unwisely talk of *Īśvara* as a cause. How then is there no equality in the world? Because *Īśvara* as conceived by you is equanimous."

Criticism Attributed to Nāgārjuna

The doctrine of God as the creator of everything has been refuted in the Mahāyāna literature as well. An ancient short treatise entitled *Īśvarakartṛtva-nirākṛti* (Refutation of God as creator), which is attributed to Nāgārjuna, (but which is probably not by Nāgārjuna according to Lindtner's classification), presents a typically Mādhyamika type of dialectical argumentation against the existence of God. The author draws different alternative implications from the theistic doctrine.

1. Does God create something that is existent (*siddha*) or something that is nonexistent (*asidḍha*)?
2. Does the creator create, being Himself born or unborn?
   (a) If he creates, being Himself unborn, how can he create anything?
   (b) If he creates, being Himself born, wherefrom is he born? From Himself, from something else, or both?

The author, having raised the above alternatives, refutes them all and reaches the conclusion that there cannot be the entity called Creator of the world [1].

Bhāvaviveka's Satirical Criticism of Theism

Bhāvaviveka or Bhavya, a Mādhyamika philosopher in the ninth chapter ("*Mīmaṃsātattvanirṇayāvatāraṇ*") of his work *Madhyamakahṛdayam,* criticizes ritualistic and theological beliefs of the orthodox Hindu tradition. Regarding theological beliefs, his main object of criticism is the trio of Gods (*Brahmā, Viṣṇu*, and *Maheśa* – the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Destroyer) and also the idea of one God including all the three aspects. He mainly

criticizes and ridicules the inconsistencies between different descriptions of these deities and also of the one God [2].

Śāntideva in *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

Śāntideva, another Mādhyamika Buddhist of the ninth century, criticizes the theistic thesis in *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Chap. 9: "*Prajñāpāramitā*," verses 119–126) [3]. His arguments could be summarized as follows:

1. God cannot be identical with the four elements or *ākāśa* or *ātman*. Nor does God create their nature because it is fixed.
2. If God is eternal and independent, his creative activity will also be permanent; it will never stop.
3. If God creates depending upon the collection of other causal factors, He will not be free and hence will not be omnipotent.

Tāntrika Buddhism

Kālacakratantra, [4] a Tāntrika Buddhist text, is Buddha's word according to tradition, but it belongs to the eleventh century according to modern scholarship. It refutes the theistic doctrines of *Brahmā* and *Viṣṇu* sects by presenting the following arguments:

1. If Īśvara is the creator of everything, then he is the creator of actions (*Karma*) as well and then he has to experience the fruits of his actions; if so, then he is not Īśvara (All-mighty). If on the other hand living beings experience pleasure and pain due to their own karma and not due to Īśvara, then *Karma* is the agent and not Īśvara.
2. If the five elements are not there already, Īśvara will not create anything. So whatever happens, happens due to the efficacy of the causal factors. God's will has no role in it (Chap. 2.7, verses 168–170).

The above refutations of God generally pertain to a popular monotheistic conception of God as "Omnipotent and Omni-good creator of everything." Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of God deviates from it. Though some of the later refutations mentioned above refer to some Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika categories, they do not take up the Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika arguments directly and systematically. It is the logico-epistemological tradition of Buddhism, which starts from Diṅnāga, gets substantiated in Dharmakīrti, and continues till Ratnakīrti, which takes up Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theism more directly and systematically. That will be discussed now.

Buddhist Criticism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Conception of God

In *Nyāya-sūtra* of Akṣapāda and *Nyāya-bhāṣya* of Vāstyāyana (Chap. IV, Aphorisms 19–21) there is a discussion of the doctrine that God alone is the cause of the world (*Īśvaramātrakāraṇatāvāda*).

The contention of the Naiyāyikas there is that Īśvara does not give fruits of actions on His own; he does so in accordance with the actions performed by the *Jīvas*. Īśvara thus becomes an indirect cause (*nimittakāraṇa)* of the world, not direct one (*upādānakāraṇa*). Gautama and Vāstyāyana in this way deviate from the popular religious conception of God according to which God creates everything. They however do not give independent arguments for the existence of God. Such arguments are first found in Udyotakara's gloss, *Nyāyavārtika* (IV.19–21). Udyotakara presents there the concept of God as an efficient cause (*nimittakāraṇa*), as the maker of the world, on the analogy of a carpenter who makes a wooden product by using an adze or a weaver who produces a cloth from threads with the help of a stick (*turī*) and other tools. It is God who turns merits and demerits of living beings into their fruits, namely, pleasures and pains. Later on Aviddhakarṇa, another Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinker presented an argument from design based on the pattern or arrangement (*saṁsthāna* or *sanniveśa*) that is seen in the world. [Reference to Aviddhakarṇa is found frequently in *Tattvasaṁgrahapañjikā* of Kamalaśīla. But it is not known whether Aviddhakarṇa preceded Dharmakīrti.] In *Pramāṇavārtika* (I.12–18) refers to some of the above Nyāya arguments and gives his counter arguments. Later on Śāntarakṣīta and Kamalaśīla, who follow the epistemological

tradition of Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti, refer to theistic arguments of Udyotakava, Aviddhakarṇa, and Praśatamati in more detail and refute them. After that appears a new generation of Naiyāyikas, like Trilocana and Vācaspati, who come out with more systematic arguments for God. These arguments were subsequently criticized in detail by Ratnakīrti in his essay "*Īś varasādhanadūṣaṇam.*" After Ratnakīrti, there are no signs of Nyāya Buddhist controversy on theism. Now a brief survey of the atheism of Buddhist logician philosophers from Dharmakīrti onward will be made.

Dharmakīrti's Atheistic Arguments

Dharmakīrti's argument against the existence of God, which he presents in *Pramāṇavārtika* (I.12–18) [5] may be summarized in the light of Manorathanandin's commentary as follows:

The following theistic argument is under Dharmakīrti's consideration:

The things such as body, world, and sense organs must be preceded by a conscious agent who knows all the material and other causes, because (R1) they stay there and are active (*sthitvā pravṛtti*), (R2) they have a specific pattern or arrangement, (R3) they have causal efficacy, and (R4) they are effects like (I1) the weaver's stick, (I2) a palace, (I3) an adze, or (I4) like a pot.

Dharmakīrti's Criticism

Out of the three reason properties R1, R2, and R3 stated above the first one and the last two are defective because

(a) If the argument implies only that the variegated world is preceded by some kind of consciousness then the argument is favorable to the Buddhists. That is, it proves what Buddhists desire: *iṣṭasiddhi*, because the Buddhists too accept consciousness in the form of common and uncommon volition (*cetanā)*, that is *karma*, as the cause of the variegated world.
(b) But the conscious being that the Naiyāyika wants to prove is omniscient and singular. In that case the reason goes wrong because the target property (namely, being preceded by an omniscient and singular conscious being) is not found in the instances, because things are seen as created or put to use by many agents none of whom knows all the causal factors [*dṛṣṭānte asiddhiḥ*].
(c) Since the invariable concomitance between reason property and target property is not found in the instances, the reason property becomes inconclusive [doubtful: *saṁśayaḥ*].

About the reason property R2, Dharmakīrti raises an objection as follows: It would be proper to infer the conscious support of a thing having a specific pattern (i.e., arrangement of elements) if there is invariable concomitance of that kind of pattern with that kind of support. But if the similarity between two things that have specific pattern is only verbal or superficial the inference of conscious support will not be proper; it will be like inferring fire from "some white substance," which has only superficial similarity with smoke. Otherwise just as a pot, because it has a specific pattern, is inferred to be produced by a conscious being, namely, potter, an ant-hill will also be so inferred, because it too has a specific pattern.

[The later Buddhist logicians/philosophers accept the legacy of Dharmakīrti in their refutation of Nyāya theism. *Jñānaśrīmitra* in his essay on *Īśvaravāda* elaborates on the seven verses (I.12–18) from *Pramāṇavārtika.*]

Śāntarakṣita's Atheistic Arguments

Śāntarakṣita in the second chapter called "*Īśvaraparīkṣā*" of his *Tattvasaṇgraha* [6] refutes Nyāya arguments on the existence of God in detail. Śāntarakṣita considers six theistic arguments in the chapter (three by Udyotakara, two by Aviddhakarṇa, and one by Praśastamati). Instead of discussing each argument separately Śāntarakṣita discusses one argument of Aviddhakarṇa elaborately and then remarks that other arguments can be countered on similar lines. However, he considers some important points not covered by the earlier criticism and then criticizes the arguments for oneness and omniscience of God and ultimately gives a series of arguments against the existence of God.

Aviddhakarṇa's Argument Discussed in Detail

Śāntarakṣita discusses Aviddhakarṇa's argument elaborately which is an argument from design. Śāntarakṣita's argument will be discussed here in the light of Kamalaśīla commentary.

Aviddhakarṇa's argument:

[Property bearer:] The objects under consideration such as body organs and the world, which are either knowable by two senses or not knowable by senses [Target Property:] are caused by a conscious agent, because [Reason property:] they possess a specific arrangement of their constituents, [Positive instance:] like a pot, etc., [Negative instance] unlike atoms.

In this argument, Aviddhakarṇa by the expression "knowable by two senses" means composite material objects bigger than dyads (*dvyaṇuka)* and by the expression "not knowable by senses" he means dyads (*dvyaṇukas*). [Hereafter, the following abbreviations will be used: PB: Property bearer, TP: Target property; RP: Reason Property; PI: Positive instance NI: Negative instance]

Śāntarakṣita raises the following objections against this argument:

1. The RP here is unproved because there is no conjunction (arrangement) of parts nor is there any composite whole (*avayavī)* (according to Buddhists).
2. The so-called conjunction or arrangement of parts *(avayavā)* is not perceptible.
3. For both the above reasons the PI too does not possess the RP.
4. There cannot be common object of two sense organs (because of momentariness).
5. As Dharmakīrti points out, the specific arrangement seen in the objects like temple implies a conscious agent (or agents), but similar arrangement is not seen in the objects like body and mountain and hence they cannot be proved to be preceded by a conscious agent. Otherwise, even an ant-hill could be suspected to be a potter's creation. Hence, this is a case of dubitable nonexistence of RP in dissimilar cases; that is, a case of dubitable negative concomitance (*sandigdha-vyatireka*).
6. Śāntarakṣita claims that his is not a sophistical refutation (*jātyuttara*). It would have been so, if the Naiyāyika would have proved the invariable concomitance between RP and TP. But it is not proved by him.
7. Aviddhakarṇa's intended TP is "being preceded by a singular eternal omniscient being with eternal knowledge." But the objects like palace, staircase, temple, etc., which is a part of Aviddhakarṇa's PB, are preceded by multiple non-eternal beings with limited non-eternal knowledge. Hence, Aviddhakarṇa's RP is fallacious, being "The one which contradicts the desired object" (*iṣṭavighātakṛt*), a kind of "Contrary RP" (*viruddha*).
8. God's knowledge also cannot be proved to be eternal, because since the objects of knowledge exist sequentially, the knowledge about them also should come into existence sequentially.
9. According to Śāntarakṣita a pot is just a collection (*saṁghāta*) of atoms and not a composite whole (*avayavī*): and the atoms of which pot is a collection are also non-eternal. When the potter produces a pot, he actually produces the atoms collected in a particular way. Hence "atoms" cannot be proper NI in Aviddhakarṇa's inference.
10. If the target property is "being preceded by something conscious" then that is desired by Śāntarakṣita because variegated character of the world is caused by volition (*cetanā*/*karma*), which is conscious. (Here, Śāntarakṣita is repeating one of Dharmakīrti's arguments).

Having raised these objections Śāntarakṣita says that the above objections can be raised mutatis mutandis against other theistic arguments as well.

He, however, discusses two more theistic arguments especially because they contain some additional noteworthy points. And they are the arguments by Udyotakara and Praśastamati.

Udyotakara's Argument

[PB:] Merit, demerit, and atoms [TP:] all of them produce their effects only when supported by a conscious agent. [RP:] because they stay there

and are active (*sthitvā pravṛtti*), [PI:] Like the weaver's stick and threads.

Here, Śāntarakşita's main objection is against the RP, namely, "*sthitvā pravṛtti*." In fact, this particular expression is not found in Udyotakara's formulations in his *Nyāyavārtika.* But it is attributed to Udyotakara by the Buddhist logicians probably with the view that it is intended or implied by him. In the Nyāya-Vaiśeşika framework, things like weaver's stick and threads (in the PI above) and the objects like Merit, Demerit, and atoms (in the PB above) are all stable and yet functional or active in producing their effects. This is not acceptable to Śāntarakşita as a Buddhist because according to him activity implies momentariness and hence activity and stability cannot go together. Secondly "stability qualified by activity" (*sthitvā pravṛtti*) in the Nyāya-Vaiśeşika framework is not only the property of the objects like merit, demerit, and atoms, it is also the property of God. Hence, by applying RP to God one will have to say that God must be preceded by another conscious being and so on ad infinitum.

Praśastamati's Argument

Praśastamati's argument is based on the Nyāya-Vaiśeşika belief that after the destruction when the world is regenerated, the linguistic conventions for the persons born first are created by God and instructed to them. Śāntarakşita counters the argument by stating the Buddhist belief that the human beings born in this world first come from the *Abhāsvara-Brahma-loka* and hence they are already enlightened about the word meaning relation; they do not need God for that; Śāntarakşita also argues against the Nyāya-Vaiśeşika belief that their God being bodiless and therefore mouthless cannot give instructions to the human beings about word meaning relationship.

Ratnakīrti's Atheistic Arguments

Ratnakīrti in his essay "Refutation of the argument for God" (*Īśvarasādhanadūşaṇam*) [7] considers and refutes the Nyāya arguments for the existence of *Īśvara* [8]. Ratnakīrti begins his essay with the most common Nyāya argument which runs as follows:

Declaration of the thesis: The object under discussion, namely, the world, has been constructed by a conscious agent.
Reason: Because it is an effect.
Instance (with the statement of pervasion): Each and every effect has been constructed by an intelligent agent just like pot.
Application: And the world is an effect.
Conclusion: Therefore, it has been constructed by a conscious agent.

In the above argument, Nayāyikas have tried to prove that the world is constructed by an intelligent agent. Having proved this, Nayāyikas further argue that this intelligent agent must be a single, all-pervasive, and omniscient being, and hence the same can be called God (*Īśvara*).

While justifying the above argument Naiyāyikas try to show that the reason property (*hetu-dharma*), namely, "the property of being an effect," which is used for proving the target property (*sādhya-dharma*), namely, "the property of having an intelligent constructor" is faultless. In other words they try to prove that

(a) Each premise of the argument is in fact true and there is no doubt about it. (This excludes the fallacies called *asiddh*a (unproved reason property), *viruddha* (Reason property pervaded by negation of the target property), and *Anaikāntika* (inconclusive reason.)
(b) The conclusion is not falsified by a direct or indirect counter-evidence. (This excludes the fallacy called *Kālātyayāpadişţa* or *bādhita.* ("sublated target property".)
(c) There is no counter-inference which proves the opposite of the conclusion of this inference. (This excludes the fallacy called *prakaraṇasama_* or *satpratipakşa* ("Availability of counter-reason"). Ratnakīrti, after referring to the Nyāya defense in this way, refers to different formulations of the argument given by the Nayāyikas, namely, Śaṁkara, Narasiṁha, Trilocana, and Vācaspati.

Ratnakīrti's main objection is against (a) above. It is that the premise stating the universal relation of pervasion between "being an effect" and "being

caused by an intelligent agent" cannot be proved beyond doubt. According to him, the Nyāya argument commits the fallacy called *sandigdha-vipakṣa-vyāvṛttikatvāt anaikāntikam* ("Inconclusive due to the dubitable character of the exclusion of reason property from dissimilar cases"). The charge of this fallacy appears in the course of the detailed criticism Ratnakīrti offers in this essay.

The criticism contains three major sections:

(a) He questions the possibility of the knowledge of the universal pervasion (*vyāpti*).
(b) He criticizes the nature of the reason property (*sādhana-svarūpa*) as maintained by the Naiyāyikas.
(c) He criticizes of the nature of the target property (*sādhya-svarūpa*) as maintained by the Naiyāyikas.

They will now be considered briefly.

Can *Vyāpti* Be Known?

Ratnakīrti considers four alternative ways of knowing vyāpti.

First way of knowing *vyāpti*: *Vyāpti* is known from the evidence which negates the existence of reason property in the absence of target property (*viparyaya-bādhaka-pramāṇa-balāt*). Naiyāyikas support this way of knowing *vyāpti* mainly on two grounds:

1. Assemblage of various causal factors and their activation in the production of the concerned effect is not possible without the conscious agent.
2. Non-acceptance of intelligent agent will lead to many undesirable consequences.

Ratnakīrti answers these arguments by pointing out that

1. The assemblage and activation of causal factors follows from the very nature of these causal factors. Many times this happens without a conscious agent.
2. The undesirable consequences will apply if the cause–effect relation between every type of effect and an intelligent agent is established. But that is itself not established.

Second way of knowing *vyāpti*: *Vyāpt*i is known by the specific apprehension (of the two properties together) and non-apprehension (of the reason property without the target property).

On this, Ratnakīrti asks whether the reason property ("being an effect") has the intended *vyāpti* relation with the conscious being qualified by a perceptible body or with the one without such a qualification. If the former, then the *vyāpti* relation of this kind is not found in the things like tree and mountain. Hence, such things will prove to be counter examples. If the latter, then the *vyāpti* relation with such unqualified conscious being cannot be established on the basis of apprehension and non-apprehension.

Third way of knowing *vyāpti*: *Vyāpti* is known by identifying the natural relation (*svābhāvika sambandha*) known through repeated observation. Here, Ratnakīrti refers to the claim of Trilocana and Vācaspati that *vyāpti_* is a natural relation and that one grasps it through apprehension and non-apprehension. As against this, Ratnakīrti points out that no natural relation is possible between two objects except through causation (*tadutpatti*). No such natural relation can be established between effects is general and a conscious cause.

Fourth way of knowing *vyāpti*: *Vyāpti* is known through perception of reason property in similar cases and its non-perception in dissimilar cases.

On this, Ratnakīrti argues that simple existence of reason property in similar cases and simple nonexistence in dissimilar cases is not sufficient for *vyāpti.* The existence should be such that it implies (necessitates) the existence of target property and the nonexistence should be such that it is implied (necessitated) by the nonexistence of the target property. In other words, the positive and negative concomitance (*anvaya* and *vyatireka*) should be based on necessary relation, which is of the nature of identity or causation. In the case of "effect-hood" and "being caused by conscious being" no such necessary relation is possible.

The Nature of the Reason Property

Ratnakīrti asks, what is the reason property here: effect-hood or qualified effect-hood? Naiyāyikas

propose "effect-hood" as the reason property which according to them is common to all effects. They oppose the discrimination between two types of effect-hood, one belonging to the objects like pot, cloth, and palace (whose maker is visible) and the other belonging to the objects like trees, bodies, and mountains (who do not have visible maker). Ratnakīrti (following Dharmakīrti) is of the opinion that effect-hood is not of only two types but of many types. It differs from case to case, and therefore it is not proper to jump from one type of effect to another. If one knows the effect–cause relationship between pot and potter, then in the case of a new pot one can infer that that must be caused by a potter. But from this one cannot infer that another kind of effect – say a temple – must also be caused by a conscious agent. For inferring the latter one has to know the effect–cause relation between a temple and its causes (including its architect and builder). Now, in the case of a mountain, one has not observed such an effect–cause relation with a conscious agent. (Here, Ratnakīrti distinguishes between a natural mountain and *krīḍāparvata,* a mountain-like structure created artificially for play). So the effect-hood of mountain will not lead to the inference of its maker.

The Nature of the Target Property

The intended nature of Naiyāyika's target property in his inference for God is not just "being caused by a conscious being" but it is "being caused by a conscious being who is single, all-pervasive, omniscient, eternal, etc.," Naiyāyikas believe that these qualifications of the target property follow by force of the property bearer of which it is supposed to be the property (*pakṣadharmatābalāt)*. For instance, if the intended conscious being is the creator of the whole earth, then he must know all the relevant details necessary for creating the whole earth. The knowledge of all the relevant details amounts to omniscience. Ratnakīrti objects to this kind of reasoning by pointing out that even if a creator is granted, he need not be one. Like in the case of a bungalow there can be many makers having only partial knowledge, there could be many collaborative makers of the world, each one of them having only partial knowledge. Hence, oneness and omniscient character of the so-called maker of the world cannot be proved.

Cross-References

▶ God (Buddhism)
▶ Materialism (Buddhism)

References

1. Chattopadhyaya D (1980) Indian atheism: a marxist analysis, Chapters 10–13. People's Publishing House, New Delhi
2. Lindtner C (ed & Tr) (2001) Bhavya on Mīmaṁsā; Mīmaṁsā-Tattvaviṛṇayāvatāraḥ. The Adyar Library and Resarch Centre, Chennai
3. Tripathi S (ed) (1988) Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva with the commentary Pañjikā of Prajñākaramati. The Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, Chapter 9, "*Prajñāpāramitā*", Verses 119–126
4. Wallacy VA (Tr) The Kālacakratantra: a chapter on the individual together with the Vimalaprabhā. American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University, New York, Chapter VII, Verses 168–170
5. Pandeya RC (ed) (1989) The Pramāṇavārtikam of Ācārya Dharmakīrti. Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, Pariccheda 1, Verses, pp 12–18
6. Shastri SD (ed) (1968) Tattvasaṅgraha of Ācārya Shāntarakṣita with the commentary Pañjikā of Shri Kamalaśīla, vol I. Bauddha Bharati, Varanasi, chapter II, "Īśvaraparīkṣa"
7. Thakur A (ed) (1975) Ratnakīrti-nibandhāvaliṇ (Buddhist Nyāya works of Ratnakīrti). Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna
8. Patil PG (2009) Against a Hindu god: Buddhist philosophy of religion in India, Chapters II & III. Columbia University Press, New York

Atiśa (c. A.D. 982–1054)

Radha Madhav Bharadwaj
Department of History, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya College, University of Delhi, Karampura, New Delhi, India

Synonyms

Dipaṅkara Śrijñāna; Jo-bo-rje

Definition

Atiśa was a highly respected scholar at the famous monastic university of Vikramaśilā in Bihar who was invited by the Royal Lama Ye-shes-od and his son (king of western Tibet) during the eleventh century A.D. to help assist in the task of restoring the true observance of Buddhist monastic life there which was getting corrupted due to the influence of the esoteric tantric practices.

Life and Thought

This is the name the Tibetans respectfully gave to *Ācārya Dīpaṅkara Śrijñāna- Jo-Bo-Rje Pal Dan Atiśa* (*Swami Śri Atiśaya* or merely *Atiśa* – the "noble lord") in recognition of his contribution to the restoration of the Buddhist monastic life in Tibet, during the eleventh century A.D., which suffered a century and half of suppression and persecution from c. A.D. 836. Although, the monks returned to the monasteries but the practise of Tantrayana ("Swift path") or *Vajrayāna* (the "indestructible vehicle"- a devotional and mystical system whose subtle elements being clothed in sexual imagery lent itself to misuse by the unguided) made *Jñānaprabha*, the royal monk of western Tibet painful and restless. He sent a mission to invite the scholar saint Atisa for assisting in the task of restoring the true observance of monastic life in Tibet ([2], pp. xvii–xviii).

Atiśa was born in a royal family which was in the vicinity of the famed monastic university of Vikramasila in 982 A.D. His father's name was Kalyāṇa Śri who was a king of a nearby kingdom and mother's name was Padmāvatī. He was his parent's second son and was called by the name Chandragarbha. There has raged a futile controversy whether he was born in Bengal or Bihar but the authoritative Tibetan sources established that he was born near Bhagalpur in Bihar ([3], p. 199). By the age of 11, he had learnt grammar and once went visiting the grammarian Jitāri, who lived the life of an ascetic in a forest in the vicinity of Vikramaśilā, who advised him to go to the monastic University of Nālandā, but since he could be ordained only after 20 years of age, *Ācārya Bodhibhadra*, the head of the Nālandā University, made him a novice (*Śramaṇa*) and made him wear the clothes of the monk and called him *Dīpaṅkara Śrijñāna.* In Buddhist lore, *Dīpaṅkara* is a highly revered name because it was the name of a Buddha who came long before the historical Buddha. *Śrijñāna* was added to his name as he was expected to become a scholar ([3], pp. 200–201). *Bodhibhadra* later put him under the tutorship of his own preceptor Advayavajra, or Avdhūtipāda, where he thoroughly studied the scriptures till the age of 18 years. From here he went to study at Vikramaśilā for 11 years. He then studied *Vinaya* doctrines from Śīlarakṣita at the Vajrāsana monastery for 2 years. He also studied under Dharmapāla of Sumatra for 12 years who initiated him into the mysteries of *Tantra* and other scriptures ([3], pp. 201–203). It is also said that he visited northwest India and the valley of the Swat in quest of knowledge ([2], p. xvi).

From 1034–1038, he taught at the University of Vikramaśilā and earned great reputation as a scholar and teacher. He was made chief among the 51 scholars and was one of the eight great *Sthavirs* (the Elders). It was his popularity as a teacher that reached the ears of *Jñānaprabha* who sent an invitation to *Atiśa* to come over to Tibet but could not succeed and ultimately died searching for gold to finance the mission to bring *Atiśa* to his country. When *Atiśa* came to know about the suffering of *Jñānaprabha,* he accepted the invitation of his son *Bodhiprabha* (Byang-chub-od), the king who received him in Gu-ge (western Tibet) in 1042 A.D. According to Snellgrove, *Atiśa* came to Gu-ge during the reign of king Od-lde and he finally agreed to come to Tibet because of the self-sacrifice of his aging grandfather, the Royal Lama Ye-Shes-od (it was perhaps he who had assumed the nickname of *Jñānaprabha* – "radiance of wisdom"). His original name was Srong-nge, who had adopted the religious name of Lha-Lama (Royal Lama) and Ye-shes-od (wisdom's light), who was languishing in enemy captivity. It seems that Od-lde was only the coruler along with his father lHa-lde, who was the reigning king of western Tibet at that time ([4], pp. 471–480). *Atiśa's* coming to Tibet marked the revival of the Buddhist monastic

life in Tibet and is known as the "second spread" (*phyi-dar*) of the religion that had first come to their land during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. with the Buddhist influence that came along with the coming of the Chinese and Nepalese Buddhist wives of the great Tibetan emperor Srang-brtsan sagm-po and the Indian masters Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalśīla.

He lived in Tibet for 13 years beginning with the monastery of Tho-ling, where he stayed for 9 months and translated Sanskrit works into Tibetan and wrote his famous book, the *Bodhipatha-Pradīpa* (Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment), in 68 verses and its commentary. His devoted disciple Don-ton-pa met him at Purang (Spu-Rans) in 1044 A.D. and who also wrote his biography *Guruguṇadharmakara*. He stayed for 4 years in central Tibet and 6 years in Ne-Than. He traveled to bSam-yas Vihara, the first monastery founded by Śāntarakṣita in the eighth century A.D., and was surprised to see such books in its library which he had not seen in the monastic libraries in India also. In 1051 A.D., he wrote the commentary on the *Kālacakra* at Yer-va ([3], pp. 209–210).

He wrote some other books also like *Ratnākarandodghata* and *Mahāsūtrasamuccaya* ([5], p. 224). He also retouched the translation of *Vādanyāya* into Tibetan with the Tibetan monk Dar-ma-grags, which was earlier translated into Tibetan by *Jñāna-śrī-bhadra* and Dge-wahi-blo-gros, and he also prepared the version of the *Pramāṇa-vārttikālaṃkāra-ṭīkā*, a sub-commentary on the commentary of Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇavārttika* by Prajñākara Gupta, a professor at the famous Buddhist university of Nālandā, with the Tibetan interpreter Byan-chub-śes-rab of Shan-shun ([6], pp. 117, 137). He passed away in 1054 at Nye-Than and his relics are in a temple near the confluence of a small river and the *Brahmaputra* and have been deified under his Tibetan name there ([1], pp. 168–169). But it were his texts Lamp for the path to Enlightenment and the Twenty-five Key Texts (forming part of the Tanjur Collection called the Hundred Root Texts) that provide an insight about the uniqueness of his contribution that presented a blend of Buddhism's three systems (Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana) into one for a harmonious spiritual development. They, for the first time, presented a synthesized relationship between Buddhism's essential monastic basis and the compassionate *Bodhisattva's* (Buddha to be) high flowering in the true mystical expression of *Tantra* ([2], p. xv).

He has laid the foundation of Buddhist religious culture by making wide use of the texts (Sūtras pertaining to Mahāyāna School) with particular stress on the doctrine of emptiness by Nāgārjuna (for theory), Asaṅga (for practice of monastic life, spirit of compassion, meditation, and perfections), and Śāntideva (for combined theory and practice according to *Mādhyamika* theory of emptiness). Apart from these theorists, he has also quoted and paid respect to the past masters like *Guru Bodhibhadra and Suvarṇadvīpa, Mañjughoṣ, Vasubandhu, Jñānakīrti, Candragomin, Śāntarakṣita, Sāriputra, Maitreyanātha, Aśvaghoṣ,* and *Upāli* for authenticating and making his teaching interesting ([2], pp. 1–179).

The Lamp for the path to Enlightenment and its commentary and the Key Texts became the curriculum for training and learning in Tibet's first distinctive religious order, the Bka'-gdmas-pa, reformed to Gelug-pa, the sect to which the offices of the Dalai Lamas have belonged. They are concise and comprehensive manuals that gave birth to a new genre of Tibetan literature called the Lam-rim ("Steps of the Graded Path to Enlightenment") which organizes the path to Buddhahood for people with three kinds of motivations: the lowest grade people with the intentions of name and wealth; the middling with a desire for emancipation from life and death, and the highest who see all sufferings as their own and wish for the Mahāyāna goal of perfect Buddhahood for the benefit of all ([7], p. 268).

In brief, it can be said that *Atiśa's* 13 years of stay in Tibet provided a new lease of life and spirit in Buddhism there because of his originality in presenting an integrated and balanced view of the central teachings of various Buddhist paths, with special emphasis on the monastic rule of celibacy for the monks, which even today form the basis of Tibetan religious life and culture.

Cross-References

► Vikramaśilā

References

1. Dutt S (1987) Buddhist education. In: Bapat PV (ed) 2500 years of Buddhism. Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi
2. Richard Sherburne SJ (2003) The complete works of Atiśa Śri Dīpaṇkara Jñāna, Jo-Bo-Rje. Aditya Prakashana, New Delhi
3. Sāṅkṛtyāyana R (1987) Some great Buddhists after Aśoka: in Tibet. In: Bapat PV (ed) 2500 years of Buddhism. Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi
4. Snellgrove DL (1987) Indo-Tibetan Buddhism-Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan successors. Serindia, London
5. Takasaki JN (1987) Some great Buddhists after Aśoka. In: Bapat PV (ed) 2500 years of Buddhism. Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi
6. Vidyabhushana SC (1977) History of the medieval school of Indian logic, 2nd edn. Orient Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi
7. Williams P (1997) 'Lam-rim' in Hinnels. In: John R (ed) Dictionary of religions. Penguin Books, London

Ātmaghāta

► Suicide (Buddhism)

Ātman

► Jīva (Jainism)
► Self (Jainism)

Ātmavadha

► Suicide (Buddhism)

Attaghañña

► Suicide (Buddhism)

Attaghāta

► Suicide (Buddhism)

Attavadha

► Suicide (Buddhism)

Aṭṭhakathā Sāhitya

► Commentarial Literature

Aṭṭhaśīla

► Ethics (Buddhism)

Aurangabad

Claudine Bautze-Picron
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), UMR 7528 'Mondes Iranien et Indien', Paris, France

Synonyms

Auraṅgābād

Definition

Buddhist excavated site located in Maharashtra.

The caves located north of Aurangabad, Maharashtra (lat. 19°52′ N.; long. 75°17′ E.), form a small but important group of monuments distributed in three groups. The site was occupied in the first centuries of our era when a *caityagṛha* or sanctuary (cave 4) was excavated. The first two groups,

respectively, caves 1–5 and 6–9, have nine caves open to the East where all, apart from cave 4, were probably realized in the course of the sixth century, whereas the caves of the third group are of smaller size and remained unfinished. The second group includes, moreover, an unnumbered "Brahmanical cave" excavated near cave 6. Through its architecture, its iconography, and the style of its sculptures, the site breaks with what was hitherto observed at Ajaṇṭā ([3], [4], pp. 385–392; [5], pp. 225–236).

The Early Period, Cave 4

This only apsidal sanctuary of the site is very badly damaged; all octagonal pillars collapsed in the course of time; only fragments of two of them were still recovered and those standing today were all constructed in the twentieth century ([7], p. 180); its façade is open and was most probably closed by a wooden screen. In the absence of any inscription or any other excavated monuments, a precise dating remains impossible and the monument has been broadly dated from the beginning of our era ([2], p. 41) to the third century A.D. ([7], p. 180). False beams and rafters have been sculpted under the vault, replacing thus the wooden beams introduced in early *caityagṛhas* ("house of the *caitya*") in sites like Ajaṇṭā, Bhājā, Bedsa, or Kārlī, for instance; they rest on an entablature adorned with high blind rectangular niches which support a railing or *vedikā* above which are carved horseshoe-shaped blind windows adorned with the motif of the portico or *toraṇa*. Such an ornamentation is not encountered elsewhere but reminds of the façade of cave 9 in Ajaṇṭā. The *caitya* is also badly damaged but shows a high plinth or *medhi* supporting the bulbous hemispheric part which is surmounted by an elaborated *harmikā* or pavilion made of a square railing which supports an inverted stepped pyramid, an ornamentation practically generalized in the region in that period. The bulbous outline is also a rather typical form in Junnar. This could allow suggesting a date in the second or the third century A.D. No other monument can be ascribed to this period at Aurangabad, and the dwelling places were most probably built in wood in the vicinity of this sanctuary (Fig. 1).

Aurangabad, Fig. 1 Cave 4 (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Fifth–Sixth Centuries, Architecture

Work restarted in the sixth century, even perhaps already toward the end of the fifth century, in the wave of patronage initiated by the court of the Vākāṭakas at Ajaṇṭā ([2], p. 41). Cave 3, the main cave in the first group, preserved with some adjustments the ground plan of the dwelling places of Ajaṇṭā, that is, cells are distributed around a central square pillared hall and a shrine with the image of the Buddha preaching has been dug in the rear wall. However, no veranda stands in front of the cave.

A great change in architecture has been initiated in Aurangabad with the introduction of a new type of ground plan where the shrine is no more

Aurangabad, Fig. 2 Cave 2, courtyard and front pillars (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

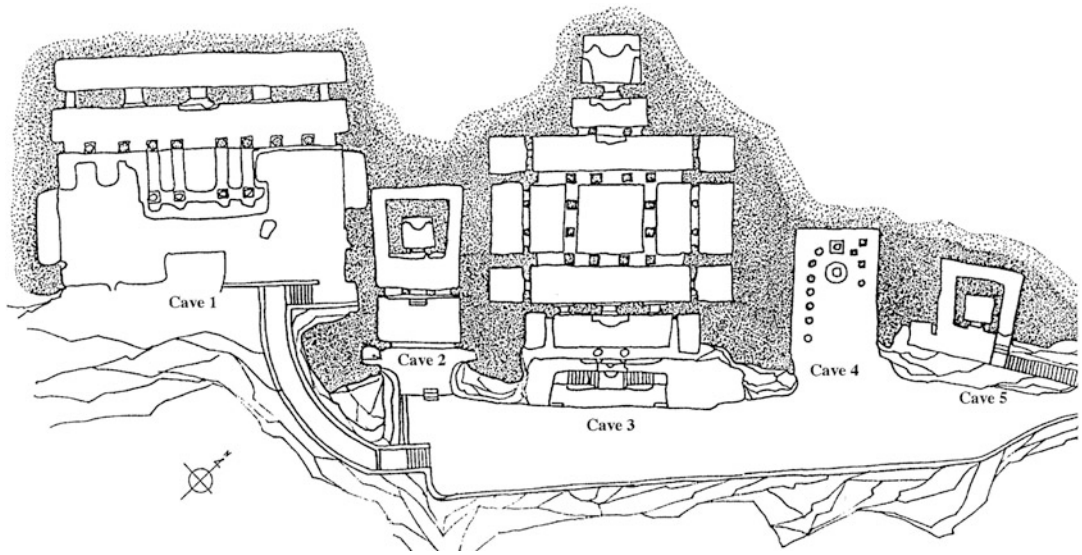
excavated in the rear wall of the monastery but is at the center of the structure with monastic cells being excavated in the sidewalls, which is also noted in cave 8 at Ellora. A simple model is illustrated in cave 2: the shrine is freestanding in the cave which is at a slightly higher level than the courtyard in front of it and with a façade supported by two square pillars and two pilasters (Fig. 2).

The ground plan is more elaborated in caves 6 and 7 where cells are distributed in the sidewalls. Both caves are larger than cave 2: four square pillars and two pilasters support a plain entablature; moreover, cave 7 has a veranda which isolates the shrine and its circumambulation path, whereas the shrine of cave 6 has an antechamber supported by two pillars and two pilasters.

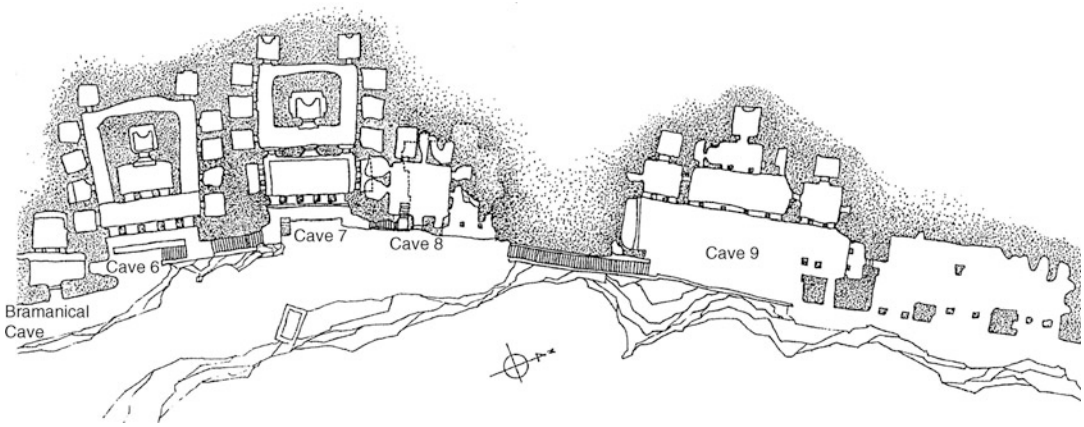
Some monuments have been excavated widthwise (caves 1 and 9), which vaguely remind of cave 8 in Ellora without, however, the monastic cells. Cave 1 was left unfinished; only the pillars of the now collapsed porch and those of the veranda were carved, beside some panels on the sidewalls and those of the veranda illustrating, for instance, the Buddhas of the past (Figs. 3 and 4).

Ornamentation

Pillars like those of cave 3 and the veranda of cave 1 are carved with extreme care and great attention paid to small details and are close to those standing in some monuments (1 or 2, for instance) at Ajaṇṭā. Those of caves 2, 6, and 7 show a more decent structure, being of a square section with a hexadecagonal tightening at mid-height or toward the top of the pillar; a very delicate ornamentation partly covers them, introducing large lotus medallions adorned with the couple, a motif already encountered at Ajaṇṭā. The frame of the entrance to the shrines is made of a series of concentric usually plain bands of progressively increasing depths without, thus, the rich and abundant ornamentation noted in Ajaṇṭā. Male doorkeepers, *nāgarājas*, or the two treasurers of the conch and the lotus (*śaṅkha*- and *padmaniddhis*), can be seen standing or seated at the bottom of the doorjambs. Lintels are usually adorned with a series of miniature temples having images of the Buddha (Figs. 5 and 6).



Aurangabad, Fig. 3 Ground plans of caves 1–5 (After: Brancaccio, Pia (2000) The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad: The Impact of the Laity. Ars Orientalis 30: Fig. 1)



Aurangabad, Fig. 4 Ground plans of caves 6–9 (After: Brancaccio, Pia (2000) The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad: The Impact of the Laity. Ars Orientalis 30: Fig. 2)

Iconography

The main image of the Buddha at Aurangabad shows him preaching and seated in the so-called European manner on a very elaborate royal throne where superimposed animals, real or fantastic, refer to the four elements (elephants = earth; lion/leogryph = fire; *makaras* or aquatic fantastic creatures = water; *haṃsas* or geese = air); such images are carved in alto-relievo in the shrines or in low relief in so-called intrusive panels introduced on the walls of some caves, for instance, cave 2. The presence of images of the Buddha shown respectively teaching and meditating in the two small shrines dug in the back wall of cave 6 introduces a new esoteric dimension to Buddhist iconography which finds its way in Ellora (cave 12) or Nasik. These images

Aurangabad, Fig. 5 Cave 3, pillared hall (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 6 Cave 7, entrance to the shrine (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

probably illustrate indeed the two aspects of Vairocana, a supreme aspect of Śākyamuni, which are located at the center of two complementary *maṇḍalas* [6].

Topics which were very much present at Ajaṇṭā can appear in a secondary position, such as the seven Buddhas of the past, seen on the left wall outside the veranda of cave 1; whereas at Ajaṇṭā they are accompanied by Maitreya, Buddha of the future, two Bodhisattvas holding a fly whisk flank here the group. Being partly damaged, these Bodhisattvas remain difficult to identify, one, at our left, being probably Avalokiteśvara who holds the stalk of a broken flower, probably the *padma*. One *jātaka*, the *Sutasoma jātaka*, has been carved on the entablature of the front row of the pillars in cave 3, reflecting thus the tradition of illustrating these previous lives of the Buddha present in Buddhist art since the earliest times and reminding of the elegantly painted depictions of *jātakas* at Ajaṇṭā (Fig. 7).

The image of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara protecting his devotees from dangers encountered while traveling and which is a common topic at Ajaṇṭā is here seen on the façade of cave 7. These dangerous situations usually amount to eight: they

Aurangabad, Fig. 7 Cave 1, façade with depiction of the Buddhas of the past on the left wall outside the monument (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

show devotees' encounters with an elephant, a lion, a snake, a fire, a shipwreck, and bandits or being threatened with jail or with death, and are depicted around the central image of the Bodhisattva, whose help is sought for. This iconography illustrates a major aspect of the Bodhisattva's personality: whoever venerates him, calls his name, will receive his immense protection (Fig. 8).

Large-size Bodhisattvas are carved in alto-relievo on the rear wall of the veranda of cave 7, flanking thus the door to the circumambulation passage; similar ones appear in caves 2 and 6 flanking the entrance to the shrine or stand on either side of the Buddha image in the shrines of caves 3, 6, or 7. Their identification is not always evident, but they appear to be in a number of cases Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya, announcing thus a triad also present at Ellora and which would let surmise the upcoming importance of Bodhgaya in the field of iconography since this pair of Bodhisattvas used to be standing in niches in front of the Bodhi Mandir, as we know from Xuanzang's testimony in the seventh century ([1], p. 77). This iconography relates also to the four tall Bodhisattvas painted in cave 1 at Ajaṇṭā on either side of the entrances to the antechamber and to the shrine (Fig. 9).

The iconography of Aurangabad reflects a radical turn in Buddhist religious thought through the overwhelming presence of female characters in cave 7: two large groups flank the entrance where one central tall figure is flanked by small attendants and male and female dwarfs. Another group of six standing women flanked by Maitreya and the Buddha is carved in the left shrine in the veranda, facing another shrine where Hārītī and Pāñcika are seen. Whereas the presence of this couple symbolizing fertility and richness constitutes a reminder of the iconography observed at Ajaṇṭā, the group in the left shrine very clearly marks a rupture in Buddhist iconography, being perhaps related to the concept of the Buddhas of the past (Figs. 10 and 11).

The presence of such groups, carved with a deep sense for the volume, with the

Aurangabad, Fig. 8 Cave 7, rear wall of the veranda showing, left to the entrance, Avalokiteśvara as protector (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 9 Cave 2, view of the shrine with the two Bodhisattvas and the sidewalls bearing intrusive panels with images of the Buddha (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 10 Cave 7, veranda, left shrine, female deities with Maitreya (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 11 Cave 7, veranda, right shrine, Hārītī and Pāñcika (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 12 Cave 7, panel at the right of the entrance to the shrine (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

characters practically freeing themselves from the plain background and a steady hand for voluptuous and curved lines, clearly reflects esoteric tendencies which were arising within Buddhism and led to the carving of a large group of female images in the antechamber of cave 12 at Ellora around 700 A.D. The shrine of cave 7 includes likewise a divine couple, perhaps Avalokiteśvara and the Tārā, facing a scene of veneration of the Buddha by a female dancer accompanied by female musicians (Figs. 12 and 13).

Aurangabad is a major site where a radical rupture took place, opening the way to esoteric Buddhism: the accent is not put anymore on the sole personality of the Buddha Śākyamuni, but rather on his supramundane nature, and the Buddhist pantheon includes female as well as male characters. It is also within this frame that one should understand the existence of the so-called Brahmanical cave near cave 6 and which includes images of Gaṇeśa, Durgā, or the Mothers, accompanied by Śiva; most gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are indeed included in the outer field of Buddhist *maṇḍalas* (Fig. 14).

Aurangabad, Fig. 13 Cave 7, scene of dance and music within the shrine (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Aurangabad, Fig. 14 View of the second group of caves (Photo © Joachim K. Bautze)

Cross-References

- ▶ Ajaṇṭā
- ▶ Avalokiteśvara
- ▶ Bedsa
- ▶ Bhājā
- ▶ Bodhgayā
- ▶ Buddha Śākyamuni
- ▶ Ellora
- ▶ Junnar
- ▶ Kārlī

References

1. Bautze-Picron C (2010) The bejewelled Buddha from India to Burma, new considerations. Sanctum Books/Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training, Eastern India, New Delhi/Kolkata
2. Brancaccio P (2000) The Buddhist caves at Aurangabad: the impact of the laity. Ars Orient 30:41–50
3. Brancaccio P (2010) The Buddhist caves at Aurangabad: transformation in art and religion. Brill, Leiden/Boston
4. Fergusson J, Burgess J (1880) The cave temples of India. W.H. Allen, London
5. Gupte RS, Mahajan BD (1962) Ajanta, Ellora and Aurangabad caves, Bombay
6. Huntington JC (1981) Cave six at Aurangabad: a Tantrayāna monument? In: Williams JG (ed) Kalādarśana, American Studies in the art of India. Oxford & IBH/American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi/Bombay/Calcutta, pp 47–55
7. Mitra D (1971) Buddhist monuments. Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta

Auraṅgābād

▶ Aurangabad

Austerities

▶ Asceticism (Buddhism)

Avalokita

► Avalokiteśvara

Avalokiteśvara

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Avalokita; Chenrezig; Guanyin; Gwaneum; Gwanseeum-bosal; Kannon; Kanzeon Bōsatsu; Kuanyin; Kuze Kannon; Lokanāt; Lokeśvara; Nāthadeva

Definition

One of the most widely revered bodhisattvas in Buddhism.

Avalokiteśvara is one of the most popular bodhisattvas in Buddhism. The word *Avalokiteśvara* is made of *ava* [verbal prefix ("down")]+*lokita* [past participle of the verb *lok* ("to notice, observe")] +*īśvara* ("lord", "master," "ruler") which means "the lord who gazes down (at the world" (see [13], pp. 52–54, 57). It has been suggested that its original form was *Avalokitaśvara* (see [3], pp. 189–190) with the ending *a-śvara* ("sound, noise"), which means "sound perceiver", literally "he who looks down upon sound" (i.e., the cries of sentient beings who need his help; *a-śvara* can be glossed as *ahr-śvara*, "sound of lamentation") (see [10], pp. 44–45; [13], pp. 52–57). The original meaning of the name fits the Buddhist understanding of the role of a bodhisattva. The reinterpretation presenting him as an *īśvara* indicates a strong influence of Brāhmaṇical-Hinduism, as the term *īśvara* was ordinarily related to the Brāhmaṇical-Hindu notion of gods such as Śiva (in Śaivism) and Kṛṣṇa (in Vaiṣṇavism) as *īśvara* being the Supreme Lord, Creator, and Ruler of the world. In the process of acculturation and assimilation, some of the attributes of such a god were transferred to the bodhisattva (see [13], pp. 30–31, 37–52). Now the name *Avalokiteśvara* is variously interpreted as "the lord who descends," "he who is enabled to reach the highest understanding," "master of (inner) light i.e., enlightenment," "the lord who looks in every direction," "the lord of what we see" (i.e., the actual, created world), "With a Pitying Look," "Lord of the World," and "He Who Looks with the Eyes."

Avalokiteśvara is depicted and portrayed in different cultures as either male or female. In Tibet, he is known as Chenrezig/ Jänräsig [*jän* (eye)+*rä* (continuity)+*sig* (to look)] which means "the one who always looks upon all beings (with the eye of compassion)" ([2], p. 15). As Chenrezig, he is the Four-Armed male Avalokiteśvara, with two hands in the praying gesture while the other two hands hold his symbols, the Crystal Rosary and the Lotus Flower. His female consort is the goddess Dolma (Tārā). In China he has been transformed into the female deity Guanyin. In Japan and Korea he is known as Kannon and Gwaneum (or Gwanseeum-bosal) respectively. He is the only Mahāyāna Buddhist deity commonly worshipped in Theravāda. Avalokiteśvara is popularly worshiped in Thailand, where he is called Lokeśvara and Myanmar, where he is called Lokanāt. Sri Lankans worship him as Nāthadeva (often mistakenly confusing with the future buddha Maitreya) (see [12], p. 151).

Avalokiteśvara is a personification of infinite compassion and mercy, key virtues of Buddhism. Avalokiteśvara's skilful means are never ending and he has the ability to assume any form to relieve the suffering of the sentient beings. He quintessentially epitomizes the bodhisattva's resolution to postpone his own buddhahood until he has facilitated liberation of each and every being in any form in any of the six realms of existence (hell beings, *pretas*, animals, humans, *asuras*, and devas). Consequently, he descends to each of these realms to help those who suffer there. Chapter 25 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* that often circulates separately as an independent

sūtra, called the *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra*, is generally accepted to be the earliest literature describing the virtues and doctrines of Avalokiteśvara. The *Avalokiteśvara Sūtra* was amalgamated into the *Saddharmapuṇnarīka Sūtra* (*Lotus Sutra*) around the third century of the Common Era ([1], p. 15; [8], p. 188).

One prominent Buddhist legend tells that once on finding out that the number of suffering beings yet to be saved is overwhelmingly enormous, his head split into eleven pieces. Amitābha Buddha, seeing his plight, caused each of these pieces to become a whole head with which to hear the cries of the suffering. Upon hearing these cries and comprehending them, Avalokiteśvara attempts to reach out to all those who needed aid, but found that his two arms shattered into pieces. Once more, Amitābha Buddha comes to his aid and invests him with a thousand arms with eyes on the palms of each hand (Thousand-Armed Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva). Consequently, the thousand eyes allowed him to see the sufferings of sentient beings, and the thousand hands allowed him to reach out to help the suffering multitudes [11].

Cross-References

- ▶ Bodhisattva
- ▶ Mahāyāna
- ▶ Saddharmapuṇḍrīka Sūtra
- ▶ Tārā (Buddhism)
- ▶ Theravāda

References

1. Baroni H (2002) The illustrated encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism. Rosen Publishing Group, New York
2. Bokar R (1991) Chenrezig Lord of love: principles and methods of deity meditation. Clearpoint Press, San Francisco
3. Chandra L (1984) The origin of Avalokiteśvara. Indologica Taurinenaia (Int Assoc Sanskrit Stud) XIII (1985–1986):189–190, Retrieved 26 July 2014
4. Chandra L (1988) The thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, vol 1. Abhinav Publications, Delhi
5. Ducor J (2010) Le regard de Kannon. Musée d'ethnographie de Genève, Genève
6. Getty A (1914) The gods of northern Buddhism: their history, iconography and progressive evolution through the northern Buddhist countries. Clarendon, Oxford
7. Holt J (1991) Buddha in the Crown: Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist traditions of Sri Lanka. Oxford University Press, New York
8. Huntington J, Bangdel D (2003) The circle of bliss: Buddhist meditational art. Serindia Publications, Chicago
9. McDermott JP (1999) Buddha in the Crown: Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist traditions of Sri Lanka. J Am Orient Soc 119(1):195
10. Pine R (ed) (2004) The heart sutra: the womb of the Buddhas. Counterpoint, Berkeley
11. Shangpa Rinpoche, Ārya Avalokiteśvara and the six syllable mantra. Dhagpo Kagyu Ling. www.dhagpo-kagyu-ling.org. Retrieved 12 Dec 2014
12. Skilton A (2004) A concise history of Buddhism, 2nd edn. Windhorse Publications, Cambridge, UK
13. Studholme A (2002) The origins of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ: a study of the Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra. University of New York Press, Albany
14. Tsugunari K, Akira Y (trans) (2007) The Lotus Sūtra, 2nd rev edn. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley
15. Yü C-f (2001) Kuan-Yin: the Chinese transformation of Avalokiteśvara. Columbia University Press, New York

Avidyā

▶ *Avijjā*

Avihiṃsā

▶ Ahiṃsā (Buddhism)

Avijjā

Bhikkhu Anālayo
Center for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, Balve, Germany

Synonyms

Avidyā (Sanskrit); Ignorance

Definition

According to the early Buddhist analysis of reality, *avijjā* or ignorance is the root cause of the human predicament. Such ignorance is defined as a lack of understanding the four noble truths, wherefore living beings continue being subject to defilements and hence to endless existence in *saṃsāra*.

Ignorance

In the context of the standard presentation of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda,* one of the core teachings of early Buddhism, *avijjā* has the dubitable honor of standing in the first place of a series of twelve links. This positioning shows up ignorance as the fundamental factor responsible for all manifestations of *dukkha* – a term whose meaning ranges from barely noticeable dissatisfaction to outright suffering as inherent features of human existence.

Iconographic presentations of the twelve links tend to depict *avijjā* as a blind person. In other words, ignorance quite literally blinds, preventing a vision of reality as it really is. Hence *avijjā* is simply a mass of darkness ([1], Vol. V, p. 226), comparable to a dense thicket ([1], Vol. III, p. 109) or to an eggshell that needs to be broken ([2], Vol. IV, p. 176).

Avijjā, standing as it does at the beginning of a conditioned chain that leads to the arising of *dukkha*, is itself without a discernable beginning. No point in the past can be discerned at which living beings were free from ignorance ([2], Vol. V, p. 113). Although no beginning can be found, an end to ignorance can be achieved. The solution lies in cultivating its opposite: *vijjā*, the type of "knowledge" that leads to liberation.

According to the standard definition provided in the early Buddhist discourses, *avijjā* is in particular a lack of insight into the four noble truths ([3], Vol. I, p. 54), a central teaching of early Buddhism, and the topic of what tradition reckons to have been the first discourse delivered by the Buddha after his awakening. These four noble truths are concerned with:

- The scope of *dukkha*
- The arising of *dukkha*
- The cessation of *dukkha*
- The path that leads to the cessation of *dukkha*

A discourse in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation indicates that this fourfold presentation parallels an ancient Indian medical scheme, according to which a capable doctor should be able to identify a disease, to diagnose its cause, to know the appropriate medicine, and to administer the actual cure until the disease is cured (Taishō 2.105a25).

Applied to the present context, according to the diagnostic scheme of the four noble truths *avijjā* manifests in the failure to see that one's own craving is the "virus" responsible for the arising of *dukkha*. This presentation shifts responsibility squarely back on the individual, in that whatever unpleasantness is experienced, it invariably builds on the subjective participation by way of craving of the one who suffers. Precisely this subjective participation is mostly ignored. Yet, it is precisely because of this element of subjective participation that something can be done about it, since eradicating craving and removing ignorance will alleviate *dukkha* in the present and forestall *dukkha* in the future.

The operating mechanism of *avijjā* responsible for such subjective participation can take various forms; hence the early Buddhist analysis of the mind includes ignorance in several listings of obstructive or detrimental states. One of these listings draws attention to the *āsava*s, the "influxes" or "taints" that exert their defiling influence on the minds of living beings. Usually occurring as a set of three, with sometimes the influx of views added as a fourth, the standard listing speaks of the influxes of sensuality, of (desire for continued) existence, and of ignorance, *kāmāsava, bhavāsava, avijjāsava*.

The relationship between the influxes and ignorance is such that ignorance arises due to the influxes and the influxes arise due to ignorance ([3], Vol. I, p. 54). As one of the influxes is the influx of ignorance, this reciprocal conditioning between the influxes and ignorance involves some degree of circularity. In other words, the influx of ignorance is responsible for ignorance and ignorance is responsible for the influx of ignorance. The point of this presentation would be to reveal

the tendency of ignorance to perpetuate itself, in the sense that the influx of ignorance represents the habitual tendency of the common worldling to ignore the true nature of reality, a habit kept alive by its own effects, ignorant thought and action.

The conditioning force of ignorance is highlighted in the standard descriptions of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, where ignorance forms the condition for volitional formations, *saṅkhārā*. In this context, *saṅkhārā* represents in particular those volitional decisions that, being under the influence of ignorance, are responsible for unwholesome words, deeds, and thoughts.

Another category in which *avijjā* makes its appearance is concerned with the *anusaya*s, the "underlying tendencies" due to which the mental reactions of unawakened beings "tend" toward what is unwholesome and defiled, or at least "tend" to have a skewed vision of reality. A standard set of seven such *anusaya*s covers sensual desire, irritation, views, doubt, conceit, lust for existence, and ignorance.

The last of these seven, the underlying tendency to ignorance, *avijjānusaya*, can manifest in relation to neutral feelings ([3], Vol. I, p. 303). When experience is neither so pleasant as to call up desire nor so unpleasant as to trigger aversion, it nevertheless "tends" to ignorance as long as the true nature of this experience is not seen with knowledge and wisdom ([3], Vol. III, p. 285). Here, it is in particular the impermanent nature of such neutral feelings that requires close attention. In fact, contemplating the changing nature of all conditioned phenomena is the way to eradicating ignorance ([4], p. 81).

Avijjā is also reckoned a hindrance, *nīvaraṇa*, in that it is due to the hindering influence of ignorance that living beings, fettered by craving and delight, continue revolving in the cycle of rebirth ([3], Vol. I, p. 294). In this way, the whole world is shrouded in ignorance ([5], 1033).

The hindrance of ignorance does not form part of the standard enumeration of the five hindrances, however, which is more specifically concerned with mental qualities that "hinder" the gaining of deeper concentration and insight. These are sensual desire, ill will, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-worry, and doubt. Nevertheless, since *avijjā* is the root of all unwholesome states ([1], Vol. II, p. 263), comparable in its function to the roof peak of a house in relation to the rafters, the five hindrances can also be considered manifestations of ignorance, being its "rafters," so to say. Elsewhere the five hindrances are reckoned as that which "nourishes" ignorance ([2], Vol. V, p. 113), a presentation that again brings up the theme of circularity mentioned above. That is, *avijjā* stands at the root of the five hindrances, and these five in turn promote the continuity of ignorance.

Ignorance is also one of the ten *saṃyojana*s, the "fetters" that bind beings to continued existence in *saṃsāra*. With progress through the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhism, these fetters are gradually overcome. Here, the fetter of ignorance belongs to a set of five fetters – together with craving for fine-material states, craving for immaterial states, conceit, and restlessness – that are only left behind with the attainment of the highest level of awakening, arahantship. In other words, although ignorance in its grosser forms needs to be overcome in order to set out on the path to liberation at all, in its finer and more subtle manifestations *avijjā* continues to make its deluding influence felt all the way up to full awakening. The eradication of ignorance thus takes place gradually.

In sum, from an early Buddhist perspective *avijjā* is the foremost stain, and one who is purified from this stain becomes stainless indeed ([6], 243).

Cross-References

- ▶ Insight
- ▶ Liberation (Buddhism)
- ▶ Paññā
- ▶ Paṭicca Samuppāda
- ▶ Wisdom

References

1. Feer L (ed) (1888–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, Oxford
2. Morris R, Hardy E (eds) (1885–1900) The Aṅguttara Nikāya, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London

3. Trenckner V, Chalmers R (eds) (1888–1896) The Majjhima Nikāya, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London
4. Windisch E (ed) (1889) Itivuttaka. Pali Text Society, London
5. Andersen D, Smith H (ed) (1913) The Sutta-nipāta. Pali Text Society, London (references are by stanza)
6. von Hinüber O, Norman KR (eds) (1994) The Dhammapada. Pali Text Society, London (references are by stanza)
7. Matilal BK (1980) Ignorance of misconception? A note on Avidyā in Buddhism. In: Balasooriya S (ed) Buddhist studies in honour of Walpola Rahula. Fraser, London, pp 154–164

Ayodhyā (Buddhism)

K. T. S. Sarao
Department of Buddhist Studies, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Synonyms

Ayojjhā; Sāketa

Definition

Ancient city and capital of King Kāḷasena.

According to the Buddhist tradition, Ayodhyā, known as Ayojjhā in the Pāli texts, was the capital (*rājadhānī*) of King Kāḷasena ([4], iv.82). Kāḷasena was taken prisoner by ten brothers called Andhakaveṇhuputtā when the latter breached fortification wall of Ayojjhā after having besieged it. Having thus subjugated the city, the conquerors went to Dvāravatī (modern Dwarka). Three of these ten bothers, called Vāsudeva, Baladeva, and Aṇjuna, were nephews of King Kaṃsa of Mathurā and earned their livelihood as highway robbers (see [6]: s.v. Andhakaveṇhuputta).

Ayojjhā is mentioned as a *nagara* (urban settlement) as well as *rājadhānī* (capital) in the Pāli Tipiṭaka and finds mention only thrice in it, i.e., twice in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and once in the *Jātakas* ([9], p. 214). The Buddha is said to have visited this place twice ([5], iii.140; iv.179). According to the *Sāratthappakāsinī*, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the people of Ayojjhā constructed a monastery (*vihāra*) at a spot close to a curve of the river that flowed by this city ([10], ii.320). Strangely, Ayojjhā is mentioned in the Pāli texts as having been situated on the bank of the Gaṅgā ([5], iii.140; iv.179) whereas the well-known Ayodhyā was situated on the Sarayū. It seems this confusion has arisen from some unintelligent tradition ([6], I.165).

Interestingly, according to the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, Lord Rāma, son of King Dasaratha, was born in Vārāṇasī (not Ayodhyā, as in many other versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and subsequently ruled from there. If the *Dasaratha Jātaka* were the oldest version of the story of Rāma, then one implication of this argument could be that when Ayodhyā came into prominence as an urban center, the story of Rāma may have been grafted on to this place. Such a thing is not entirely impossible. Moreover, Vārāṇasī is not only one of the oldest cities of historic India, but also one of the holiest centers of the Hindus. In comparison, Ayodhyā does not appear to be that old. On the basis of the archaeological information ([1], 1969–1970, 40–41; 1976–1977, 52–53; 1979–1980, 76–77) the origins of this settlement are generally dated in the year c.625 B.C.E. (this is the earliest date suggested by G.L. Possehl ([7], p. 3)). However, North Black Polished Ware (NBPW) in all its shades along with degenerate phase of Painted Gray Ware (PGW) is available in the lowest strata, the settlement may have come into existence at least by about 800 B.C.E. if not earlier.

The occupation phase of the mound appears to have continued up to the third century C.E., represented by several structural phases. In the earliest stage, the houses were made of wattle-and-daub or mud, followed by those of baked bricks. The population of the entire city in c.300 B.C.E. does not appear to have been more than 5,000 ([9], p. 224). In the *Janma-bhūmī* area, a huge brick wall was found across the sector obliquely, which was most probably a rampart wall. Directly below the massive wall, were found mud-brick structures. In the upper levels of the post-rampart phase, which extended from

about the third century B.C.E. to the first century C.E., terracotta ring-wells were found. The rampart wall was accompanied by a moat on the outside and cut into the natural clay. Shards of rouletted ware in levels dateable to the first-second centuries C.E. represent considerable portion of trade and commerce at Ayodhyā in the early centuries of the Common Era. In this trade the arterial riverine route of Sarayū on to Gaṅgā linking it with various other settlements, especially the port of Tāmralitti (Sk: Tāmralipti) in eastern India, must have played an important role. The settlement is represented very poorly in the Gupta period and then was abandoned to be reoccupied in the eleventh century C.E.

It has been suggested that Sāketa and Ayodhyā were two names of the same city. It seems that originally Ayodhyā figured as the name of a settlement in a genre of literature that is predominantly fictional (See [2], p. 116 fn3). Sāketa, on the other hand, was the name of an ancient town in North India situated on the site of the present day Ayodhyā-Faizābād. It has been suggested that along with the gradual deification of the legendary king of Ayodhyā, Rāma, the fictional city was identified with the real city of Sāketa, a reification that eventually turned this site into an important place of pilgrimage (See [3], p. 53). In a commentary we are told that Sāketa was situated on the bank of Sarabhū (Sarayū) ([11], i.110) which appears to point out that the two names, Ayojjhā and Sāketa, may have been used for the same settlement. But this fact may be accepted only tentatively, because though the two settlements may have been used interchangeably in Buddhist literature, they both are mentioned as places visited by the Buddha. Though existence of more than one name of the same statement in Buddhist literature is not unusual, e.g., Vārāṇasī is known by more than a dozen names in the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* ([9], p. 61) their mention specifically in relation to the Buddha's visit cannot be ignored out of hand.

Cross-References

- ▶ Buddhaghosa
- ▶ Jātaka
- ▶ Ramma
- ▶ Rāmāyaṇa, Indian Buddhism
- ▶ Tipiṭaka
- ▶ Vārāṇasī (Buddhism)

References

1. Archaeological survey of India. Government of India, New Delhi
2. Bakker H (1982) The rise of Magadha as a place of pilgrimage. Indo-Iran J 24(2):103–126
3. Bakker H (1986) Ayodhyā: le nom et le lieu. Rev l'Hist Relig CCIII-1:53–66
4. Fausböll V (ed) (1977–1897) The Jātaka, vol 6. Luzac, London
5. Feer ML (ed) (1884–1898) The Saṃyutta Nikāya, vol 5. Pali Text Society, London
6. Malalasekera GP (1937–1938) Dictionary of Pali proper names. Pali Text Society, London
7. Possehl GL (1987) Radiocarbon dates from South Asia. Data-list circulated by the author in Sept 1987
8. Rouse WHD (Trans) (1902) The Jātaka or the stories of the Buddha's former births, vol 4. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
9. Sarao KTS (2010) Urban centres and urbanisation as reflected in the Pāli Vinaya and Sutta Piṭakas, 3rd rev ed. Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi
10. Woodward FL (ed) (1929–1937) The Sāratthappakāsinī, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Saṃyutta Nikāya, vol 3. Pali Text Society, London
11. Woodward FL (ed) (1940–1959) Paramatthadīpanī: Theragāthā-Aṭṭhakathā, the commentary of Dhammapālācariya, vol 3. Pali Text Society, London

Ayojjhā

- ▶ Ayodhyā (Buddhism)

A-yü Wang Ching

- ▶ Aśokāvadāna

A-yü Wang Chuan

- ▶ Aśokāvadāna