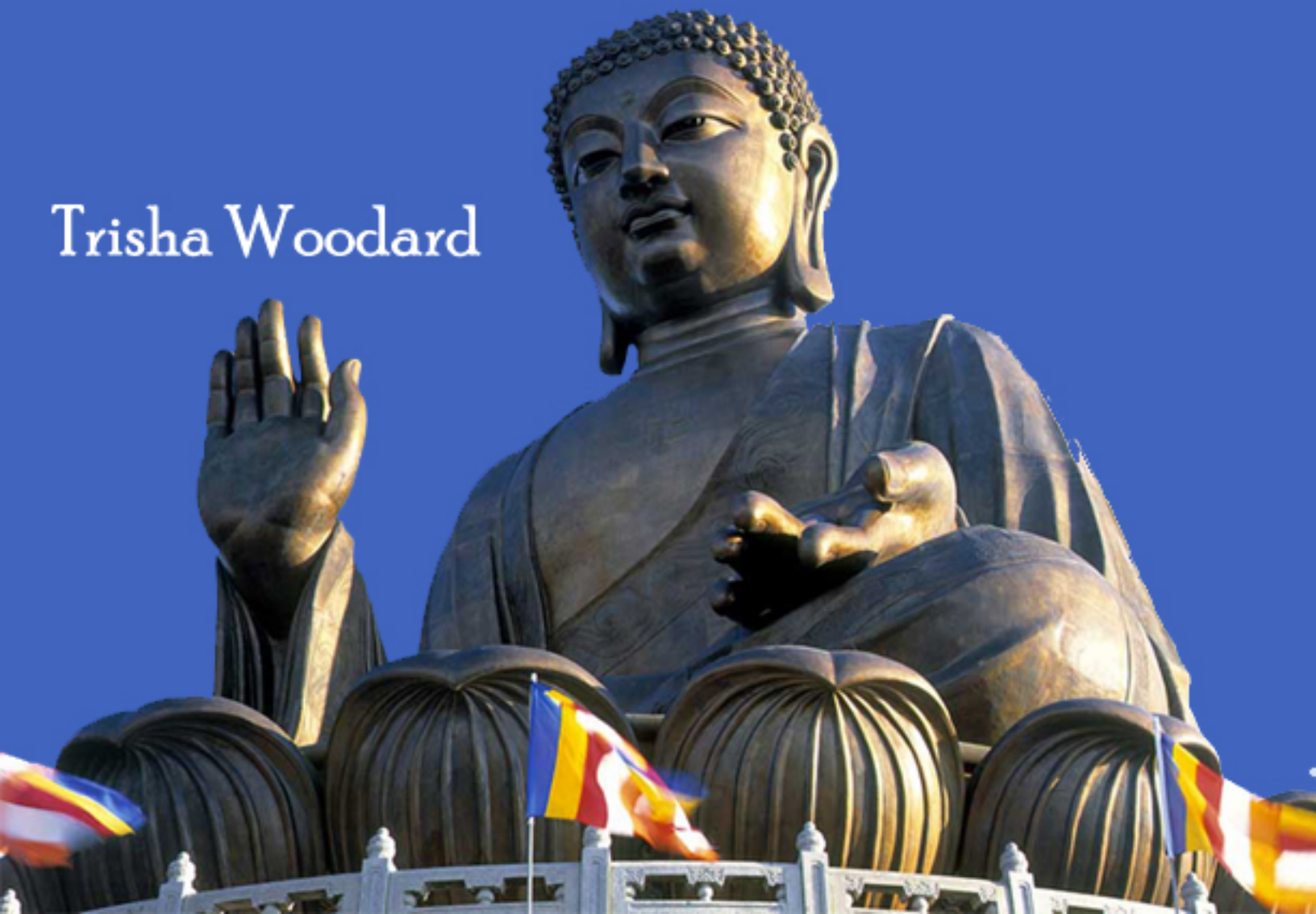


All About Buddhism

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Chapter- 1

Introduction to Buddhism



A statue of Gautama Buddha in Bodhgaya, India. Bodhgaya is traditionally considered the place of his awakening

Buddhism (Pali/Sanskrit: *Buddha Dharma*) is a religion and philosophy encompassing a variety of traditions, beliefs and practices, largely based on teachings attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha (Pāli/Sanskrit "the awakened one"). The Buddha lived and taught in the northeastern Indian subcontinent some time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. He is recognized by Buddhists as an awakened or enlightened teacher who shared his insights to help sentient beings end suffering (or dukkha), achieve nirvana, and escape what is seen as a cycle of suffering and rebirth.

Two major branches of Buddhism are recognized: Theravada ("The School of the Elders") and Mahayana ("The Great Vehicle"). Theravada—the oldest surviving branch—has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and Mahayana is found throughout East Asia and includes the traditions of Pure Land, Zen, Nichiren Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Shingon, Tendai and Shinnyo-en. In some classifications Vajrayana—a subcategory of Mahayana practiced in Tibet and Mongolia—is recognized as a third branch. While Buddhism remains most popular within Asia, both branches are now found throughout the world. Estimates of Buddhists worldwide vary significantly depending on the way Buddhist adherence is defined. Lower estimates are between 350-500 million. However, when including Chinese religion which has traditionally consisted of forms of Mahayana Buddhism alongside Chinese folk religion the number would range from 1—1.6 billion.

Buddhist schools vary on the exact nature of the path to liberation, the importance and canonicity of various teachings and scriptures, and especially their respective practices. The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community). Taking "refuge in the triple gem" has traditionally been a declaration and commitment to being on the Buddhist path and in general distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist. Other practices may include following ethical precepts, support of the monastic community, renouncing conventional living and becoming a monastic, the development of mindfulness and practice of meditation, cultivation of higher wisdom and discernment, study of scriptures, devotional practices, ceremonies, and in the Mahayana tradition, invocation of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Life of the Buddha



Ascetic Gautama with his five companions, who later comprised the first Sangha. Wall painting in a Laotian temple

The evidence of the early texts suggests that the Buddha was born in a community that was on the periphery, both geographically and culturally, of the northeastern Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BCE. It was either a small republic, in which case his father was an elected chieftain, or an oligarchy, in which case his father was an oligarch.

This community was not yet likely to have been absorbed into Brahmanical culture (the tradition that would evolve into Hinduism), and it is even possible that the Buddha's mother tongue was not Indo-Aryan.

According to the Theravada Tipitaka scriptures (from Pali, meaning "three baskets"), the Buddha was born in Lumbini, around the year 563 BCE, and raised in Kapilavastu, both in modern-day Nepal.

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

Śuddhodana was determined to see his son become a king so he prevented him from leaving the palace grounds. But at age 29, despite his father's efforts, Siddhartha ventured beyond the palace several times. In a series of encounters—known in Buddhist literature

as the four sights he learned of the suffering of ordinary people, encountering an old man, a sick man, a corpse and, finally, an ascetic holy man, apparently content and at peace with the world. These experiences prompted Gautama to abandon royal life and take up a spiritual quest.

Gautama first went to study with famous religious teachers of the day, and mastered the meditative attainments they taught. But he found that they did not provide a permanent end to suffering, so he continued his quest. He next attempted an extreme asceticism, which was a religious pursuit common among the Shramanas, a religious culture distinct from the Vedic one. Gautama underwent prolonged fasting, breath-holding, and exposure to pain. He almost starved himself to death in the process. He realized that he had taken this kind of practice to its limit, and had not put an end to suffering. So in a pivotal moment he accepted milk and rice from a village girl and changed his approach. He devoted himself to anapanasati meditation, through which he discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way (Skt. *madhyamā-pratipad*): a path of moderation between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

Gautama was now determined to complete his spiritual quest. At the age of 35, he famously sat in meditation under a sacred fig tree — known as the Bodhi tree — in the town of Bodh Gaya, India, and vowed not to rise before achieving enlightenment. After many days, he finally destroyed the fetters of his mind, thereby liberating himself from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, and arose as a fully enlightened being (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*). Soon thereafter, he attracted a band of followers and instituted a monastic order. Now, as the Buddha, he spent the rest of his life teaching the path of awakening he discovered, traveling throughout the northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent, and died at the age of 80 (483 BCE) in Kushinagar, India.

The above narrative draws on the early scriptures. However, later texts, such as the Mahayana *Lalitavistara Sutra*, give different accounts.

Scholars are hesitant to make unqualified claims about the historical facts of the Buddha's life. Most accept that he lived, taught and founded a monastic order but do not consistently accept all of the details contained in his biographies. According to author Michael Carrithers, while there are good reasons to doubt the traditional account, "the outline of the life must be true: birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death."

In writing her biography of Buddha, Karen Armstrong noted, "It is obviously difficult, therefore, to write a biography of the Buddha that will meet modern criteria, because we have very little information that can be considered historically sound... [but] we can be reasonably confident Siddhatta Gotama did indeed exist and that his disciples preserved the memory of his life and teachings as well as they could."

Buddhist concepts

Life and the world



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

Karma

Karma (from Sanskrit: "action, work") in Buddhism is the force that drives saṃsāra—the cycle of suffering and rebirth for each being. Good, skillful deeds (Pāli: "kusala") and bad, unskillful (Pāli: "akusala") actions produce "seeds" in the mind which come to fruition either in this life or in a subsequent rebirth. The avoidance of unwholesome actions and the cultivation of positive actions is called śīla (from Sanskrit: "ethical conduct").

In Buddhism, karma specifically refers to those actions (of body, speech, and mind) that spring from mental intent ("cetana"), and which bring about a consequence (or fruit, "phala") or result ("vipāka"). Every time a person acts there is some quality of intention at the base of the mind and it is that quality rather than the outward appearance of the action that determines its effect.

In Theravada Buddhism there can be no divine salvation or forgiveness for one's karma, since it is a purely impersonal process that is a part of the makeup of the universe. Some Mahayana traditions hold different views. For example, the texts of certain Mahayana sutras (such as the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Angulimaliya Sutra* and the *Nirvana Sutra*) claim that reciting or merely hearing their texts can expunge great swathes of negative karma. Some forms of Buddhism (for example, Vajrayana) regard the recitation of mantras as a means for cutting off previous negative karma. The Japanese Pure Land teacher Genshin taught that Amida Buddha has the power to destroy the karma that would otherwise bind one in saṃsāra.

Rebirth



Two Tibetan Buddhist monks in traditional clothing.

Rebirth refers to a process whereby beings go through a succession of lifetimes as one of many possible forms of sentient life, each running from conception to death. Buddhism rejects the concepts of a permanent self or an unchanging, eternal soul, as it is called in Hinduism and Christianity. According to Buddhism there ultimately is no such thing as a self independent from the rest of the universe (the doctrine of anatta). Rebirth in subsequent existences must be understood as the continuation of a dynamic, ever-changing process of "dependent arising" ("pratītyasamutpāda") determined by the laws of

cause and effect (karma) rather than that of one being, transmigrating or incarnating from one existence to the next.

Each rebirth takes place within one of five realms according to Theravadins, or six according to other schools. These are further subdivided into 31 planes of existence:

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

Rebirths in some of the higher heavens, known as the Śuddhāvāsa Worlds (Pure Abodes), can be attained only by skilled Buddhist practitioners known as anāgāmis (non-returns). Rebirths in the arupa-dhatu (formless realms) can be attained only by those who can meditate on the arūpajhānas, the highest object of meditation.

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

Sam̐sāra

Sentient beings crave pleasure and are averse to pain from birth to death. In being controlled by these attitudes, they perpetuate the cycle of conditioned existence and suffering (sam̐sāra), and produce the causes and conditions of the next rebirth after death. Each rebirth repeats this process in an involuntary cycle, which Buddhists strive to end by eradicating these causes and conditions, applying the methods laid out by the Buddha and subsequent Buddhists.

Suffering's causes and solution

The Four Noble Truths



Polish Buddhists

According to the Pali Tipitaka and the Āgamas of other early Buddhist schools, the Four Noble Truths were the first teaching of Gautama Buddha after attaining Nirvana. They are sometimes considered to contain the essence of the Buddha's teachings:

1. Life as we know it ultimately is or leads to suffering/uneasiness (dukkha) in one way or another.

2. Suffering is caused by craving. This is often expressed as a deluded clinging to a certain sense of existence, to selfhood, or to the things or phenomena that we consider the cause of happiness or unhappiness. Craving also has its negative aspect, i.e. one craves that a certain state of affairs not exist.
3. Suffering ends when craving ends. This is achieved by eliminating delusion, thereby reaching a liberated state of Enlightenment (bodhi);
4. Reaching this liberated state is achieved by following the path laid out by the Buddha.

This method is described by early Western scholars, and taught as an introduction to Buddhism by some contemporary Mahayana teachers (for example, the Dalai Lama).

According to other interpretations by Buddhist teachers and scholars, lately recognized by some Western non-Buddhist scholars, the "truths" do not represent mere statements, but are categories or aspects that most worldly phenomena fall into, grouped in two:

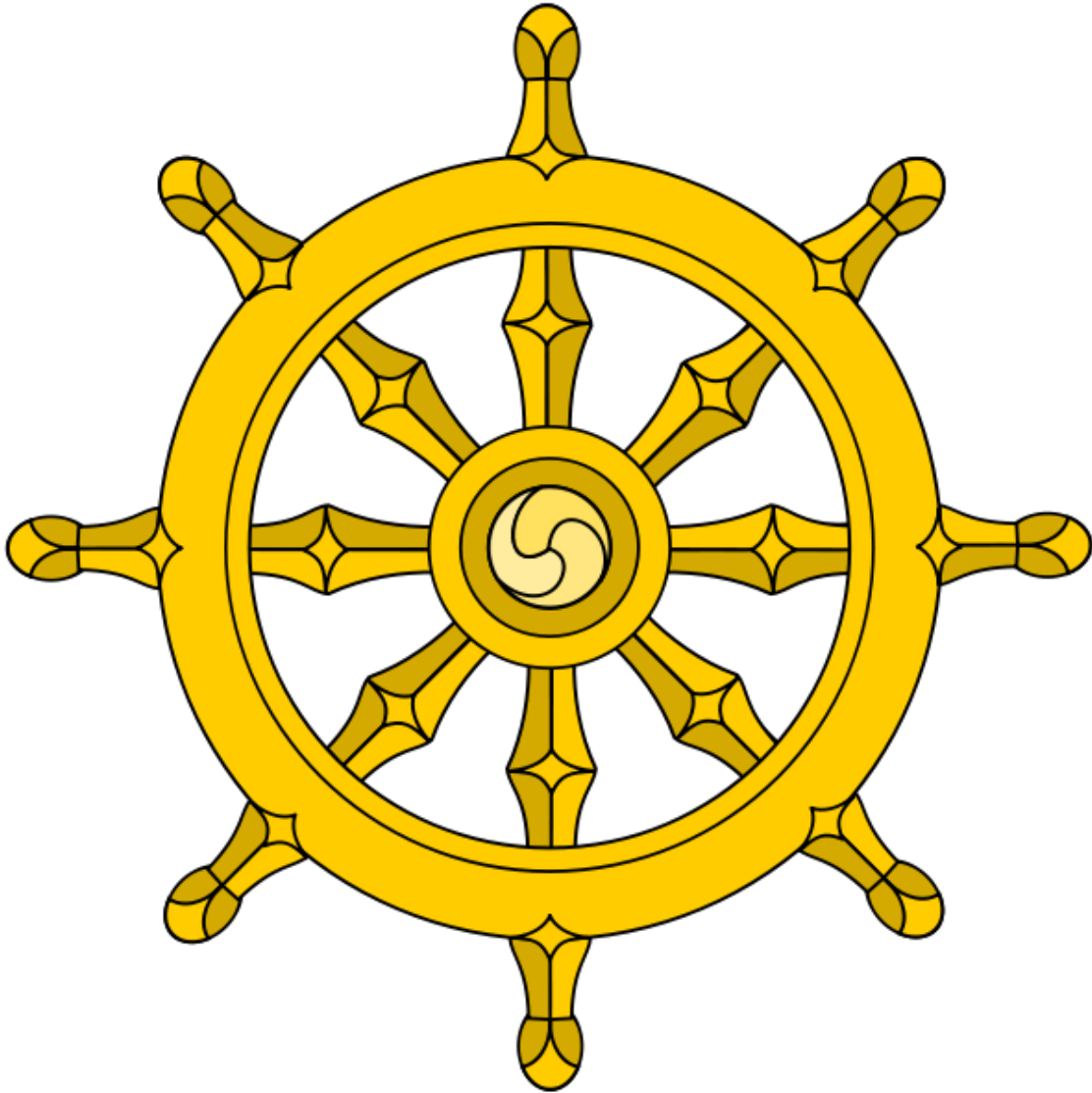
1. Suffering and causes of suffering
2. Cessation and the paths towards liberation from suffering.

Thus, according to the Macmillan *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* they are

1. "The noble truth that is suffering"
2. "The noble truth that is the arising of suffering"
3. "The noble truth that is the end of suffering"
4. "The noble truth that is the way leading to the end of suffering"

The traditional Theravada understanding is that the Four Noble Truths are an advanced teaching for those who are ready for them. The East Asian Mahayana position is that they are a preliminary teaching for people not yet ready for the higher and more expansive Mahayana teachings.

The Noble Eightfold Path



The *Dharmachakra* represents the Noble Eightfold Path.

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

- **Prajñā** is the wisdom that purifies the mind, allowing it to attain spiritual insight into the true nature of all things. It includes:
 1. *dr̥ṣṭi* (*ditthi*): viewing reality as it is, not just as it appears to be.
 2. *saṃkalpa* (*sankappa*): intention of renunciation, freedom and harmlessness.

- **Śīla** is the ethics or morality, or abstention from unwholesome deeds. It includes:
 3. vāc (vāca): speaking in a truthful and non-hurtful way
 4. karman (kammanta): acting in a non-harmful way
 5. ājīvana (ājīva): a non-harmful livelihood
- **Samādhi** is the mental discipline required to develop mastery over one's own mind. This is done through the practice of various contemplative and meditative practices, and includes:
 6. vyāyāma (vāyāma): making an effort to improve
 7. smṛti (sati): awareness to see things for what they are with clear consciousness, being aware of the present reality within oneself, without any craving or aversion
 8. samādhi (samādhi): correct meditation or concentration, explained as the first four jhānas

The practice of the Eightfold Path is understood in two ways, as requiring either simultaneous development (all eight items practiced in parallel), or as a progressive series of stages through which the practitioner moves, the culmination of one leading to the beginning of another.

The Middle Way

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

1. The practice of non-extremism: a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification
2. The middle ground between certain metaphysical views (for example, that things ultimately either do or do not exist)
3. An explanation of Nirvana (perfect enlightenment), a state wherein it becomes clear that all dualities apparent in the world are delusory
4. Another term for emptiness, the ultimate nature of all phenomena (in the Mahayana branch), a lack of inherent existence, which avoids the extremes of permanence and nihilism or inherent existence and nothingness

Nature of existence



Debating monks at Sera Monastery, Tibet

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

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

clinging, one develops dispassion for the objects of clinging, and is liberated from suffering (*dukkha*) and the cycle of incessant rebirths (*saṃsāra*). To this end, the Buddha recommended viewing things as characterized by the three marks of existence.

Three Marks of Existence

The Three Marks of Existence are impermanence, suffering, and not-self.

Impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*) expresses the Buddhist notion that all compounded or conditioned phenomena (all things and experiences) are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent. Everything we can experience through our senses is made up of parts, and its existence is dependent on external conditions. Everything is in constant flux, and so conditions and the thing itself are constantly changing. Things are constantly coming into being, and ceasing to be. Since nothing lasts, there is no inherent or fixed nature to any object or experience. According to the doctrine of impermanence, life embodies this flux in the aging process, the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), and in any experience of loss. The doctrine asserts that because things are impermanent, attachment to them is futile and leads to suffering (*dukkha*).

Suffering is also a central concept in Buddhism. The word roughly corresponds to a number of terms in English including suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness, sorrow, affliction, anxiety, dissatisfaction, discomfort, anguish, stress, misery, and frustration. Although the term is often translated as "suffering", its philosophical meaning is more analogous to "disquietude" as in the condition of being disturbed. As such, "suffering" is too narrow a translation with "negative emotional connotations" which can give the impression that the Buddhist view is one of pessimism, but Buddhism seeks to be neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic. In English-language Buddhist literature translated from Pāli, "*dukkha*" is often left untranslated, so as to encompass its full range of meaning.

Not-self (Pāli: *anatta*; Sanskrit: *anātman*) is the third mark of existence. Upon careful examination, one finds that no phenomenon is really "I" or "mine"; these concepts are in fact constructed by the mind. In the *Nikayas* *anatta* is not meant as a metaphysical assertion, but as an approach for gaining release from suffering. In fact, the Buddha rejected both of the metaphysical assertions "I have a Self" and "I have no Self" as ontological views that bind one to suffering. When asked if the self was identical with the body, the Buddha refused to answer. By analyzing the constantly changing physical and mental constituents (*skandhas*) of a person or object, the practitioner comes to the conclusion that neither the respective parts nor the person as a whole comprise a self.

Dependent arising

The doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* (Sanskrit; Pali: *paticca-samuppāda*; Tibetan: rten.cing.'brel.bar.'byung.ba; Chinese: 缘起) is an important part of Buddhist metaphysics. It states that phenomena arise together in a mutually interdependent web of cause and effect. It is variously rendered into English as "dependent origination",

"conditioned genesis", "dependent co-arising", "interdependent arising", or "contingency".

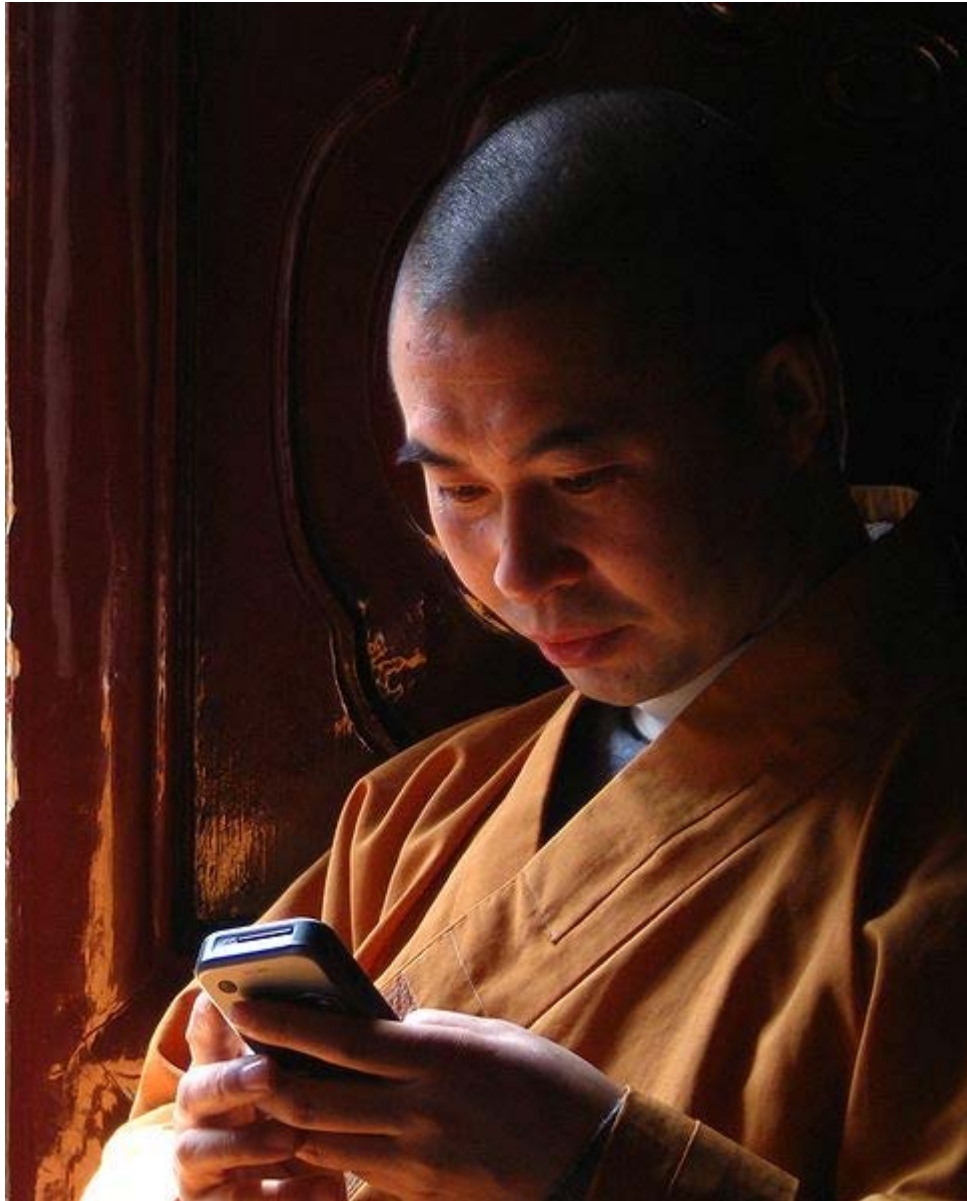
The best-known application of the concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* is the scheme of Twelve Nidānas (from Pāli "nidāna" meaning "cause, foundation, source or origin"), which explain the continuation of the cycle of suffering and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) in detail.

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

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

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

Emptiness



A monk in the Jade Buddha Temple, Shanghai, China.

Mahayana Buddhism received significant theoretical grounding from Nagarjuna (perhaps c. 150–250 CE), arguably the most influential scholar within the Mahayana tradition. Nagarjuna's primary contribution to Buddhist philosophy was the systematic exposition of the concept of *śūnyatā*, or "emptiness", widely attested in the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras which were emergent in his era. The concept of emptiness brings together other key Buddhist doctrines, particularly *anatta* and *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), to refute the metaphysics of Sarvastivada and Sautrantika (extinct non-Mahayana schools). For Nagarjuna, it is not merely sentient beings that are empty of *ātman*; all phenomena (*dharma*s) are without any *svabhava* (literally "own-nature" or "self-nature"), and thus

without any underlying essence; they are "empty" of being independent; thus the heterodox theories of *svabhava* circulating at the time were refuted on the basis of the doctrines of early Buddhism. Nagarjuna's school of thought is known as the *Mādhyamaka*. Some of the writings attributed to Nagarjuna made explicit references to Mahayana texts, but his philosophy was argued within the parameters set out by the *agamas*. He may have arrived at his positions from a desire to achieve a consistent exegesis of the Buddha's doctrine as recorded in the Canon. In the eyes of Nagarjuna the Buddha was not merely a forerunner, but the very founder of the *Mādhyamaka* system.

Sarvastivada teachings—which were criticized by Nāgārjuna—were reformulated by scholars such as Vasubandhu and Asanga and were adapted into the Yogacara (Sanskrit: yoga practice) school. While the *Mādhyamaka* school held that asserting the existence or non-existence of any ultimately real thing was inappropriate, some exponents of Yogacara asserted that the mind and only the mind is ultimately real (a doctrine known as *cittamatra*). Not all Yogacarins asserted that mind was truly existent; Vasubandhu and Asanga in particular did not. These two schools of thought, in opposition or synthesis, form the basis of subsequent Mahayana metaphysics in the Indo-Tibetan tradition.

Besides emptiness, Mahayana schools often place emphasis on the notions of perfected spiritual insight (*prajñāpāramitā*) and Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*, meaning "Buddha embryo" or "Buddha-matrix"). According to the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras*, the Buddha revealed the reality of the deathless Buddha-nature, which is said to be inherent in all sentient beings and enables them all eventually to reach complete enlightenment, i.e. Buddhahood. Buddha-nature is stated in the Mahayana *Angulimaliya Sūtra* and *Mahaparinirvana Sūtra* to not be *śūnya*, but to be replete with eternal Buddhist virtues. In the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras* the Buddha is portrayed proclaiming that the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* constitutes the "absolutely final culmination" of his Dharma—the highest presentation of truth (other *sūtras* make similar statements about other teachings) and it has traditionally been regarded as the highest teaching in East Asian Buddhism. However, in modern China all doctrines are regarded as equally valid. The Mahayana can also on occasion communicate a vision of the Buddha or Dharma which amounts to mysticism and gives expression to a form of mentalist panentheism.

Liberation



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

Nirvana

Nirvana (Sanskrit; Pali: "Nibbana") means "cessation", "extinction" (of craving and ignorance and therefore suffering and the cycle of involuntary rebirths (*saṃsāra*), "extinguished", "quieted", "calmed"; it is also known as "Awakening" or "Enlightenment" in the West. The term for anybody who has achieved *nirvana*, including the Buddha, is *arahant*.

Bodhi is a term applied to the experience of Awakening of arahants. *Bodhi* literally means "awakening", but it is more commonly translated into English as "enlightenment". In Early Buddhism, *bodhi* carried a meaning synonymous to *nirvana*, using only some different metaphors to describe the experience, which implies the extinction of *raga* (greed, craving), *dosa* (hate, aversion) and *moha* (delusion). In the later school of Mahayana Buddhism, the status of *nirvana* was downgraded in some scriptures, coming to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained *nirvana*, and that one needed to attain *bodhi* to eradicate delusion:

An important development in the Mahayana [was] that it came to separate nirvana from bodhi ('awakening' to the truth, Enlightenment), and to put a lower value on the former (Gombrich, 1992d). Originally nirvana and bodhi refer to the same thing; they merely use different metaphors for the experience. But the Mahayana tradition separated them and considered that nirvana referred only to the extinction of craving (passion and hatred), with the resultant escape from the cycle of rebirth. This interpretation ignores the third fire, delusion: the extinction of delusion is of course in the early texts identical with what can be positively expressed as gnosis, Enlightenment.

—Richard F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began*

Therefore, according to Mahayana Buddhism, the *arahant* has attained only *nirvana*, thus still being subject to delusion, while the *bodhisattva* not only achieves *nirvana* but full liberation from delusion as well. He thus attains *bodhi* and becomes a *buddha*. In Theravada Buddhism, *bodhi* and *nirvana* carry the same meaning as in the early texts, that of being freed from greed, hate and delusion.

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

Buddhas



Gautama Buddha, 1st century CE, Gandhara

Theravada

In Theravada doctrine, a person may awaken from the "sleep of ignorance" by directly realizing the true nature of reality; such people are called *arahants* and occasionally *buddhas*. After numerous lifetimes of spiritual striving, they have reached the end of the cycle of rebirth, no longer reincarnating as human, animal, ghost, or other being. The commentaries to the Pali Canon classify these awakened beings into three types:

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

Bodhi and *nirvana* carry the same meaning, that of being freed from craving, hate, and delusion. In attaining *bodhi*, the *arahant* has overcome these obstacles. As a further distinction, the extinction of only hatred and greed (in the sensory context) with some residue of delusion, is called *anagami*.

Mahayana



The Great Statue of Buddha Amitabha in Kamakura, Japan

In the Mahayana, the Buddha tends not to be viewed as merely human, but as the earthly projection of a beginningless and endless, omnipresent being beyond the range and reach of thought. Moreover, in certain Mahayana sutras, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are viewed essentially as One: all three are seen as the eternal Buddha himself.

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

Nirvana came to refer only to the extinction of greed and hate, implying that delusion was still present in one who attained Nirvana. Bodhi became a higher attainment that eradicates delusion entirely. Thus, the *Arahant* attains Nirvana but not Bodhi, thus still being subject to delusion, while the Buddha attains Bodhi.

The method of self-exertion or "self-power"—without reliance on an external force or being—stands in contrast to another major form of Buddhism, Pure Land, which is characterised by utmost trust in the salvific "other-power" of Amitabha Buddha. Pure Land Buddhism is a very widespread and perhaps the most faith-orientated manifestation of Buddhism and centres upon the conviction that faith in Amitabha Buddha and the chanting of homage to his name will liberate one at death into the "happy land" (安樂) or

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

Buddha eras

Buddhists believe Gautama Buddha was the first to achieve enlightenment in this Buddha era and is therefore credited with the establishment of Buddhism. A Buddha era is the stretch of history during which people remember and practice the teachings of the earliest *known* Buddha. This Buddha era will end when all the knowledge, evidence and teachings of Gautama Buddha have vanished. This belief therefore maintains that many Buddha eras have started and ended throughout the course of human existence. The Gautama Buddha, then, is *the Buddha of this era*, who taught directly or indirectly to all other Buddhas in it.

In addition, Mahayana Buddhists believe there are innumerable other Buddhas in other universes. A Theravada commentary says that Buddhas arise one at a time in this world element, and not at all in others. The understandings of this matter reflect widely differing interpretations of basic terms, such as "world realm", between the various schools of Buddhism.

The idea of the decline and gradual disappearance of the teaching has been influential in East Asian Buddhism. Pure Land Buddhism holds that it has declined to the point where few are capable of following the path, so it may be best to rely on the power of the Amitabha Buddha.

Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattva means "enlightenment being", and generally refers to one who is on the path to buddhahood, typically as a fully enlightened buddha (Skt. *samyaksaṃbuddha*). Theravada Buddhism primarily uses the term in relation to Gautama Buddha's previous existences, but has traditionally acknowledged and respected the bodhisattva path as well.

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

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

Mahāyāna Buddhism encourages everyone to become bodhisattvas and to take the bodhisattva vows. With these vows, one makes the promise to work for the complete enlightenment of all beings by practicing six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*). According to

the Mahāyāna teachings, these perfections are: giving, discipline, forbearance, effort, meditation, and transcendent wisdom.

Practice

Devotion

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

Yoga



Amitābha Buddha meditating, sitting in the lotus position. Borobodur, Java, Indonesia.

Buddhism traditionally incorporates states of meditative absorption (Pali: *jhāna*; Skt: *dhyāna*). The most ancient sustained expression of yogic ideas is found in the early sermons of the Buddha. One key innovative teaching of the Buddha was that meditative absorption must be combined with liberating cognition. The difference between the Buddha's teaching and the yoga presented in early Brahminic texts is striking. Meditative states alone are not an end, for according to the Buddha, even the highest meditative state is not liberating. Instead of attaining a complete cessation of thought, some sort of mental activity must take place: a liberating cognition, based on the practice of mindful awareness.

Meditation was an aspect of the practice of the yogis in the centuries preceding the Buddha. The Buddha built upon the yogis' concern with introspection and developed their meditative techniques, but rejected their theories of liberation. In Buddhism, mindfulness and clear awareness are to be developed at all times, in pre-Buddhist yogic practices there is no such injunction. A yogi in the Brahmanical tradition is not to practice while defecating, for example, while a Buddhist monastic should do so.

Another new teaching of the Buddha was that meditative absorption must be combined with a liberating cognition.

Religious knowledge or "vision" was indicated as a result of practice both within and outside of the Buddhist fold. According to the *Samaññaphala Sutta* this sort of vision arose for the Buddhist adept as a result of the perfection of "meditation" (Skt. *dhyāna*) coupled with the perfection of "discipline" (Skt. *śīla*). Some of the Buddha's meditative techniques were shared with other traditions of his day, but the idea that ethics are causally related to the attainment of "transcendent wisdom" (Skt. *prajñā*) was original.

The Buddhist texts are probably the earliest describing meditation techniques. They describe meditative practices and states which had existed before the Buddha as well as those which were first developed within Buddhism. Two Upanishads written after the rise of Buddhism do contain full-fledged descriptions of yoga as a means to liberation.

While there is no convincing evidence for meditation in pre-Buddhist early Brahminic texts, Wynne argues that formless meditation originated in the Brahminic or Shramanic tradition, based on strong parallels between Upanishadic cosmological statements and the meditative goals of the two teachers of the Buddha as recorded in the early Buddhist texts. He mentions less likely possibilities as well. Having argued that the cosmological statements in the Upanishads also reflect a contemplative tradition, he argues that the Nasadiya Sukta contains evidence for a contemplative tradition, even as early as the late Rg Vedic period.

Refuge in the Three Jewels



Footprint of the Buddha with Dharmachakra and triratna, 1st century CE, Gandhāra.

Traditionally, the first step in most Buddhist schools requires taking refuge in the Three Jewels (Sanskrit: *tri-ratna*, Pāli: *ti-ratana*) as the foundation of one's religious practice. The practice of taking refuge on behalf of young or even unborn children is mentioned in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, recognized by most scholars as an early text (cf. Infant baptism). Tibetan Buddhism sometimes adds a fourth refuge, in the *lama*. In Mahayana, the person who chooses the *bodhisattva* path makes a vow or pledge, considered the ultimate expression of compassion. In Mahayana, too, the Three Jewels are perceived as possessed of an eternal and unchanging essence and as having an irreversible effect: "The Three Jewels have the quality of excellence. Just as real jewels never change their faculty and

goodness, whether praised or reviled, so are the Three Jewels (Refuges), because they have an eternal and immutable essence. These Three Jewels bring a fruition that is changeless, for once one has reached Buddhahood, there is no possibility of falling back to suffering."

The Three Jewels are:

- The Buddha. This is a title for those who have attained Nirvana. The Buddha could also be represented as a concept instead of a specific person: the perfect wisdom that understands *Dharma* and sees reality in its true form. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Buddha can be viewed as the supreme Refuge: "Buddha is the Unique Absolute Refuge. Buddha is the Imperishable, Eternal, Indestructible and Absolute Refuge."
- The *Dharma*. The teachings or law of nature as expounded by the Gautama Buddha. It can also, especially in Mahayana, connote the ultimate and sustaining Reality which is inseparable from the Buddha. Further, from some Mahayana perspectives, the Dharma embodied in the form of a great sutra (Buddhic scripture) can replace the need for a personal teacher and can be a direct and spontaneous gateway into Truth (Dharma). This is especially said to be the case with the Lotus Sutra. Dr. Hiroshi Kanno writes of this view of the *Lotus Sutra*: "it is a Dharma-gate of sudden enlightenment proper to the Great Vehicle; it is a Dharma-gate whereby one awakens spontaneously, without resorting to a teacher".
- The *Sangha*. Those who have attained to any of the Four stages of enlightenment, or simply the congregation of monastic practitioners.

According to the scriptures, Gautama Buddha presented himself as a model. The Dharma offers a refuge by providing guidelines for the alleviation of suffering and the attainment of Nirvana. The Sangha is considered to provide a refuge by preserving the authentic teachings of the Buddha and providing further examples that the truth of the Buddha's teachings is attainable.

Buddhist ethics



Japanese Mahayana Buddhist monk

Śīla (Sanskrit) or *sīla* (Pāli) is usually translated into English as "virtuous behavior", "morality", "ethics" or "precept". It is an action committed through the body, speech, or mind, and involves an intentional effort. It is one of the *three practices* (*śīla*, *śamādhi*, and *pañña*) and the second *pāramitā*. It refers to moral purity of thought, word, and deed. The four conditions of *śīla* are chastity, calmness, quiet, and extinguishment.

Śīla is the foundation of *Samādhi/Bhāvana* (Meditative cultivation) or mind cultivation. Keeping the precepts promotes not only the peace of mind of the cultivator, which is internal, but also peace in the community, which is external. According to the Law of

Karma, keeping the precepts are meritorious and it acts as causes which would bring about peaceful and happy effects. Keeping these precepts keeps the cultivator from rebirth in the four woeful realms of existence.

Śīla refers to overall principles of ethical behavior. There are several levels of *sīla*, which correspond to "basic morality" (five precepts), "basic morality with asceticism" (eight precepts), "novice monkhood" (ten precepts) and "monkhood" (*Vinaya* or *Patimokkha*). Lay people generally undertake to live by the five precepts, which are common to all Buddhist schools. If they wish, they can choose to undertake the eight precepts, which add basic asceticism.

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

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

The precepts are not formulated as imperatives, but as training rules that laypeople undertake voluntarily to facilitate practice. In Buddhist thought, the cultivation of *dāna* and ethical conduct will themselves refine consciousness to such a level that rebirth in one of the lower heavens is likely, even if there is no further Buddhist practice. There is nothing improper or un-Buddhist about limiting one's aims to this level of attainment.

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

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

The complete list of ten precepts may be observed by laypeople for short periods. For the complete list, the seventh precept is partitioned into two, and a tenth added:

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

Monastic life

Vinaya is the specific moral code for monks and nuns. It includes the Patimokkha, a set of 227 rules for monks in the Theravadin recension. The precise content of the vinayapitaka (scriptures on Vinaya) differ slightly according to different schools, and different schools or subschools set different standards for the degree of adherence to Vinaya. Novice-monks use the ten precepts, which are the basic precepts for monastics.

Regarding the monastic rules, the Buddha constantly reminds his hearers that it is the spirit that counts. On the other hand, the rules themselves are designed to assure a satisfying life, and provide a perfect springboard for the higher attainments. Monastics are instructed by the Buddha to live as "islands unto themselves". In this sense, living life as the vinaya prescribes it is, as one scholar puts it: "more than merely a means to an end: it is very nearly the end in itself."

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

Meditation



Buddhist monks praying in Thailand

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind and using it to explore itself and other phenomena. According to Theravada Buddhism the Buddha taught two types of meditation, *samatha* meditation (Sanskrit: *śamatha*) and *vipassanā* meditation (Sanskrit: *vipaśyanā*). In Chinese Buddhism, these exist (translated *chih kuan*), but Chan (Zen) meditation is more popular. According to Peter Harvey, whenever Buddhism has been healthy, not only monks, nuns, and married lamas, but also more committed lay people have practiced meditation. According to Routledge's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, in contrast, throughout most of Buddhist history before modern times, serious meditation by lay people has been unusual. The evidence of the early texts suggests that at the time of the Buddha, many male and female lay practitioners did practice meditation, some even to the point of proficiency in all eight jhānas.

Samādhi (meditative cultivation): samatha meditation

In the language of the Noble Eightfold Path, *samyaksamādhi* is "right concentration". The primary means of cultivating *samādhi* is meditation. Upon development of *samādhi*, one's mind becomes purified of defilement, calm, tranquil, and luminous.

Once the meditator achieves a strong and powerful concentration, his mind is ready to penetrate and gain insight (*vipassanā*) into the ultimate nature of reality, eventually obtaining release from all suffering. The cultivation of mindfulness is essential to mental concentration, which is needed to achieve insight.

Samatha meditation starts from being mindful of an object or idea, which is expanded to one's body, mind and entire surroundings, leading to a state of total concentration and tranquility (*jhāna*). There are many variations in the style of meditation, from sitting cross-legged or kneeling to chanting or walking. The most common method of meditation is to concentrate on one's breath (*anapanasati*), because this practice can lead to both *samatha* and *vipassana*'.

In Buddhist practice, it is said that while *samatha* meditation can calm the mind, only *vipassanā* meditation can reveal how the mind was disturbed to start with, which is what leads to knowledge (*jñāna*; Pāli *ñāṇa*) and understanding (*prajñā* Pāli *paññā*), and thus can lead to *nirvāṇa* (Pāli *nibbāna*). When one is in *jhana*, all defilements are suppressed temporarily. Only understanding (*prajñā* or *vipassana*) eradicates the defilements completely. *Jhanas* are also states which *Arahants* abide in order to rest.

In Theravāda

In Theravāda Buddhism, the cause of human existence and suffering is identified as craving, which carries with it the various defilements. These various defilements are traditionally summed up as greed, hatred and delusion. These are believed to be deeply rooted afflictions of the mind that create suffering and stress. In order to be free from suffering and stress, these defilements need to be permanently uprooted through internal investigation, analyzing, experiencing, and understanding of the true nature of those defilements by using *jhāna*, a technique which is part of the Noble Eightfold Path. It will then lead the meditator to realize the Four Noble Truths, Enlightenment and *Nibbana*. *Nibbana* is the ultimate goal of Theravadins.

Prajñā (Wisdom): vipassana meditation

Prajñā (Sanskrit) or *paññā* (Pāli) means wisdom that is based on a realization of dependent origination, The Four Noble Truths and the three marks of existence. *Prajñā* is the wisdom that is able to extinguish afflictions and bring about *bodhi*. It is spoken of as the principal means of attaining *nirvāṇa*, through its revelation of the true nature of all things as *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence) and *anatta* (not-self). *Prajñā* is also listed as the sixth of the six *pāramitās* of the Mahayana.

Initially, *prajñā* is attained at a conceptual level by means of listening to sermons (dharma talks), reading, studying, and sometimes reciting Buddhist texts and engaging in discourse. Once the conceptual understanding is attained, it is applied to daily life so that each Buddhist can verify the truth of the Buddha's teaching at a practical level. Notably, one could in theory attain Nirvana at any point of practice, whether deep in meditation, listening to a sermon, conducting the business of one's daily life, or any other activity.

Zen

Zen Buddhism (禪), pronounced *chán* in Chinese, *seon* in Korean or *zen* in Japanese (derived from the Sanskrit term *dhyāna*, meaning "meditation") is a form of Buddhism that became popular in China, Korea and Japan and that lays special emphasis on meditation. Zen places less emphasis on scriptures than some other forms of Buddhism and prefers to focus on direct spiritual breakthroughs to truth.

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

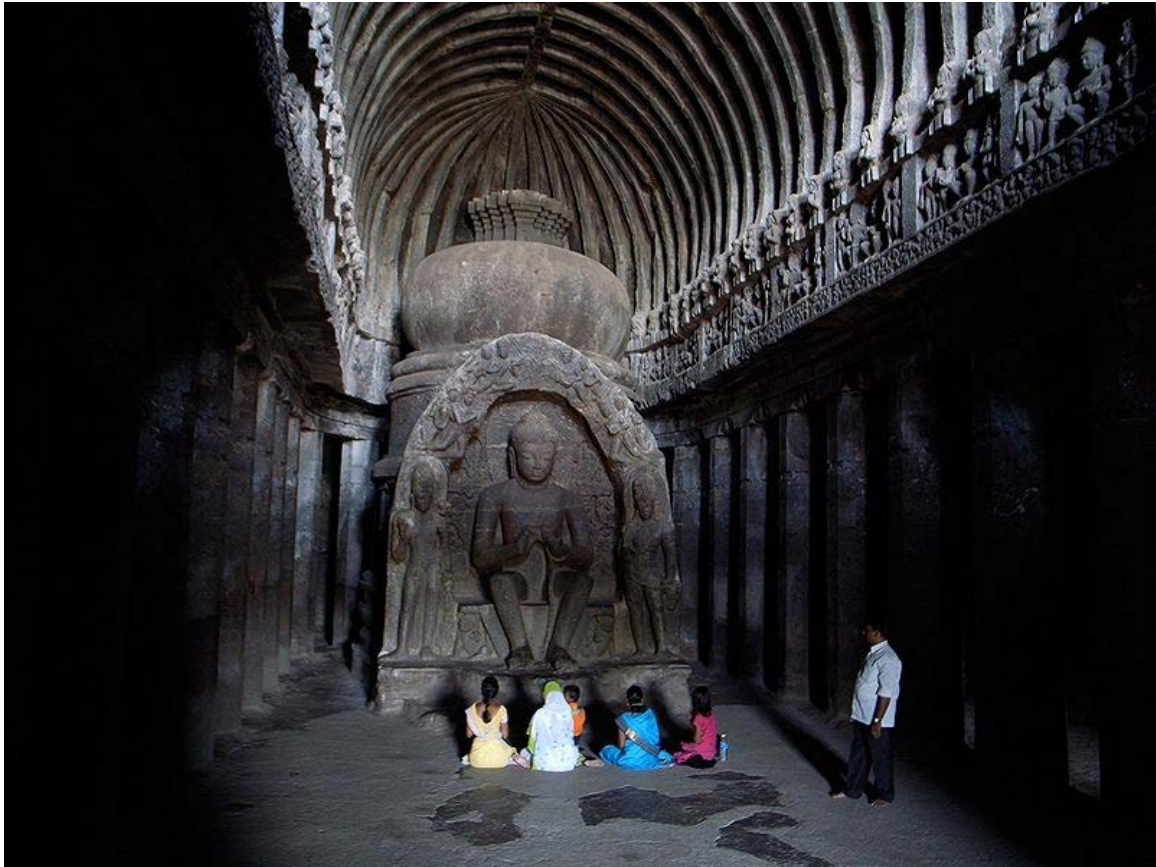
Zen Buddhist teaching is often full of paradox, in order to loosen the grip of the ego and to facilitate the penetration into the realm of the True Self or Formless Self, which is equated with the Buddha himself. According to Zen master, Kosho Uchiyama, when thoughts and fixation on the little 'I' are transcended, an Awakening to a universal, non-dual Self occurs: 'When we let go of thoughts and wake up to the reality of life that is working beyond them, we discover the Self that is living universal non-dual life (before the separation into two) that pervades all living creatures and all existence.'. Thinking and thought must therefore not be allowed to confine and bind one. Nevertheless, Zen does not neglect the scriptures.

Vajrayana and Tantra

Though based upon Mahayana, Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism is one of the schools that practice *Vajrayāna* or "Diamond Vehicle" (also referred to as Mantrayāna, Tantrayāna, Tantric Buddhism, or esoteric Buddhism). It accepts all the basic concepts of Mahāyāna, but also includes a vast array of spiritual and physical techniques designed to enhance Buddhist practice. Tantric Buddhism is largely concerned with ritual and meditative practices. One component of the Vajrayāna is harnessing psycho-physical energy through ritual, visualization, physical exercises, and meditation as a means of developing the mind. Using these techniques, it is claimed that a practitioner can achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime, or even as little as three years. In the Tibetan tradition, these practices can include sexual yoga, though only for some very advanced practitioners.

History

Philosophical roots



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

Historically, the roots of Buddhism lie in the religious thought of Ancient India during the second half of the first millennium BC. That was a period of social and religious turmoil, as there was significant discontent with the sacrifices and rituals of Vedic Brahmanism. It was challenged by numerous new ascetic religious and philosophical groups and teachings that broke with the Brahmanic tradition and rejected the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmins. These groups, whose members were known as shramanas, were a continuation of a non-Vedic strand of Indian thought distinct from Indo-Aryan Brahmanism. Scholars have reasons to believe that ideas such as samsara, karma (in the sense of the influence of morality on rebirth), and moksha originated in the shramanas, and were later adopted by Brahmin orthodoxy. At the same time, they were influenced by, and in some respects continued, earlier philosophical thought within the Vedic tradition as reflected e.g. in the Upanishads. These movements included, besides Buddhism, various skeptics (such as Sanjaya Belatthiputta), atomists (such as Pakudha Kaccayana), materialists (such as Ajita Kesakambali), antinomians (such as Purana Kassapa); the most important ones in the 5th century BC were the Ajivikas, who

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

Many of these new movements shared the same conceptual vocabulary - atman ("Self"), buddha ("awakened one"), dhamma ("rule" or "law"), karma ("action"), nirvana ("extinguishing"), samsara ("eternal recurrence") and yoga ("spiritual practice"). The shramanas rejected the Veda, and the authority of the brahmins, who claimed to be in possession of revealed truths not knowable by any ordinary human means; moreover, they declared that the entire Brahmanical system was fraudulent: a conspiracy of the brahmins to enrich themselves by charging exorbitant fees for the performance of bogus rites and the giving of futile advice. A particular criticism of the Buddha's was Vedic animal sacrifice. Their leaders, including Buddha, were often known as śramaṇas. The Buddha declared that priests reciting the Vedas were like the blind leading the blind. According to him, those priests who had memorized the Vedas really knew nothing. He also mocked the Vedic "hymn of the cosmic man". He declared that the primary goal of Upanishadic thought, the Atman, was in fact non-existent, and, having explained that Brahminical attempts to achieve liberation at death were futile, proposed his new idea of liberation in life. At the same time, the traditional Brahminical religion itself gradually underwent profound changes, transforming it into what is recognized as early Hinduism. In particular, the brahmins thus developed "philosophical systems of their own, meeting the new ideas with adaptations of their doctrines".

Indian Buddhism

The history of Indian Buddhism may be divided into five periods: Early Buddhism (occasionally called Pre-sectarian Buddhism), Nikaya Buddhism or Sectarian Buddhism: The period of the Early Buddhist schools, Early Mahayana Buddhism, Later Mahayana Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism (also called Vajrayana Buddhism).

Pre-sectarian Buddhism

Pre-sectarian Buddhism is the earliest phase of Buddhism, recognized by nearly all scholars. Its main scriptures are the Vinaya Pitaka and the four principal Nikayas or Agamas. Certain basic teachings appear in many places throughout the early texts, so most scholars conclude that Gautama Buddha must have taught something similar to the Three marks of existence, the Five aggregates, Dependent origination, Karma and Rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Nirvana. Some scholars disagree, and have proposed many other theories.

Early Buddhist schools

According to the scriptures, soon after the parinirvāṇa (from Sanskrit: "highest extinguishment") of Gautama Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held. As with any ancient Indian tradition, transmission of teaching was done orally. The primary purpose of the assembly was to collectively recite the teachings to ensure that no errors occurred in oral transmission. In the first council, Ānanda, a cousin of the Buddha and his personal

attendant, was called upon to recite the discourses (*sūtras*, Pāli *suttas*) of the Buddha, and, according to some sources, the abhidhamma. Upāli, another disciple, recited the monastic rules (*vinaya*). Scholars regard the traditional accounts of the council as greatly exaggerated if not entirely fictitious.

According to most scholars, at some period after the Second Council the *Saṅgha* began to break into separate factions. The various accounts differ as to when the actual schisms occurred. According to the *Dipavamsa* of the Pāli tradition, they started immediately after the Second Council, the Puggalavada tradition places it in 137 AN, the Sarvastivada tradition of Vasumitra says it was in the time of Asoka and the Mahasanghika tradition places it much later, nearly 100 BCE.

The root schism was between the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṅghikas. The fortunate survival of accounts from both sides of the dispute reveals disparate traditions. The Sthavira group offers two quite distinct reasons for the schism. The *Dipavamsa* of the Theravāda says that the losing party in the Second Council dispute broke away in protest and formed the Mahasanghika. This contradicts the Mahasanghikas' own *vinaya*, which shows them as on the same, winning side. The Mahāsāṅghikas argued that the Sthaviras were trying to expand the *vinaya* and may also have challenged what they perceived to be excessive claims or inhumanly high criteria for arhatship. Both parties, therefore, appealed to tradition.

The Sthaviras gave rise to several schools, one of which was the Theravāda school. Originally, these schisms were caused by disputes over *vinaya*, and monks following different schools of thought seem to have lived happily together in the same monasteries, but eventually, by about 100 CE if not earlier, schisms were being caused by doctrinal disagreements too.

Following (or leading up to) the schisms, each Saṅgha started to accumulate an Abhidharma, a detailed scholastic reworking of doctrinal material appearing in the Suttas, according to schematic classifications. These Abhidharma texts do not contain systematic philosophical treatises, but summaries or numerical lists. Scholars generally date these texts to around the 3rd century BCE, 100 to 200 years after the death of the Buddha. Therefore the seven Abhidharma works are generally claimed not to represent the words of the Buddha himself, but those of disciples and great scholars. Every school had its own version of the Abhidharma, with different theories and different texts. The different Abhidharmas of the various schools did not agree with each other. Scholars disagree on whether the Mahasanghika school had an Abhidhamma Pitaka or not.

Early Mahayana Buddhism



Statue of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, with Sanskrit in the Siddham script. Singapore.

The origins of Mahāyāna are still not completely understood. The earliest views of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the West assumed that it existed as a separate school in competition with the so-called "Hīnayāna" schools. Due to the veneration of buddhas and bodhisattvas, Mahāyāna was often interpreted as a more devotional, lay-inspired form of Buddhism, with supposed origins in stūpa veneration, or by making parallels with the history of the European Protestant Reformation. These views have been largely dismissed in modern times in light of a much broader range of early texts that are now available. The old views of Mahāyāna as a separate lay-inspired and devotional sect are now largely dismissed as misguided and wrong on all counts.

There is no evidence that Mahāyāna ever referred to a separate formal school or sect of Buddhism, but rather that it existed as a certain set of ideals, and later doctrines, for bodhisattvas. Paul Williams has also noted that the Mahāyāna never had nor ever attempted to have a separate Vinaya or ordination lineage from the early schools of Buddhism, and therefore each bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī adhering to the Mahāyāna formally belonged to an early school. This continues today with the Dharmaguptaka ordination lineage in East Asia, and the Mūlasarvāstivāda ordination lineage in Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore Mahāyāna was never a separate rival sect of the early schools. From Chinese monks visiting India, we now know that both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks in India often lived in the same monasteries side by side.

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

Both adopt one and the same Vinaya, and they have in common the prohibitions of the five offences, and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths. Those who venerate the bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna sūtras are called the Mahāyānists, while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.

Much of the early extant evidence for the origins of Mahāyāna comes from early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts. These Mahāyāna teachings were first propagated into China by Lokakṣema, the first translator of Mahāyāna sūtras into Chinese during the 2nd century CE. Some scholars have traditionally considered the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras to include the very first versions of the Prajñāpāramitā series, along with texts concerning Akṣobhya Buddha, which were probably composed in the 1st century BCE in the south of India.

Late Mahayana Buddhism

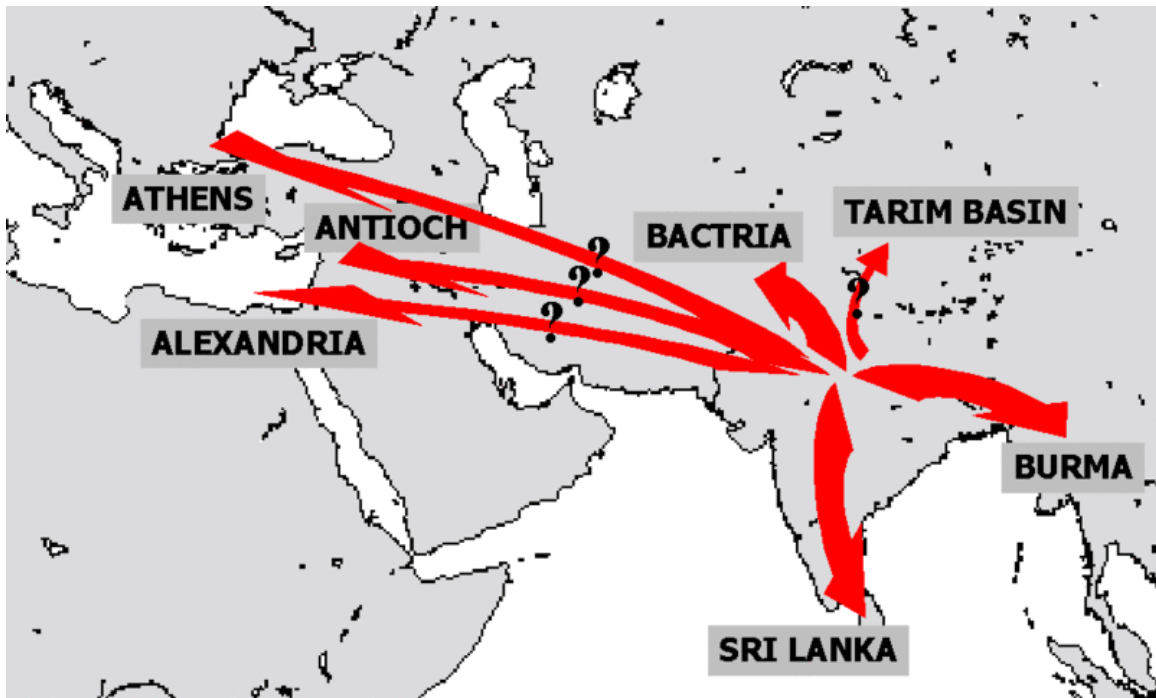
During the period of Late Mahayana Buddhism, four major types of thought developed: Madhyamaka, Yogacara, Tathagatagarbha, and Buddhist Logic as the last and most recent. In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahayana were the Madhyamaka and the later Yogacara. According to Dan Lusthaus, Madhyamaka and Yogacara have a great deal in common, and the commonality stems from early Buddhism. There were no great Indian teachers associated with tathagatagarbha thought.

Vajrayana (Esoteric Buddhism)

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

1. Vajrayana Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism, and therefore the research has to include research on Hinduism as well.
2. The scriptures of Vajrayana have not yet been put in any kind of order.
3. Ritual has to be examined as well, not just doctrine.

The early development of Buddhism



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



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

Buddhism may have spread only slowly in India until the time of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, who was a public supporter of the religion. The support of Aśoka and his descendants led to the construction of more stūpas (Buddhist religious memorials) and to efforts to spread Buddhism throughout the enlarged Maurya empire and even into neighboring lands—particularly to the Iranian-speaking regions of Afghanistan and Central Asia, beyond the Mauryas' northwest border, and to the island of Sri Lanka south of India. These two missions, in opposite directions, would ultimately lead, in the first case to the spread of Buddhism into China, and in the second case, to the emergence of Theravāda Buddhism and its spread from Sri Lanka to the coastal lands of Southeast Asia.

This period marks the first known spread of Buddhism beyond India. According to the edicts of Aśoka, emissaries were sent to various countries west of India in order to spread Buddhism (Dharma), particularly in eastern provinces of the neighboring Seleucid Empire, and even farther to Hellenistic kingdoms of the Mediterranean. This led, a century later, to the emergence of Greek-speaking Buddhist monarchs in the Indo-Greek Kingdom, and to the development of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra. During this period Buddhism was exposed to a variety of influences, from Persian and Greek civilization, and from changing trends in non-Buddhist Indian religions—themselves influenced by Buddhism. It is a matter of disagreement among scholars whether or not these emissaries were accompanied by Buddhist missionaries.

The Theravada school spread south from India in the 3rd century BC, to Sri Lanka and Thailand and Burma and later also Indonesia. The Dharmagupta school spread (also in 3rd century BC) north to Kashmir, Gandhara and Bactria (Afghanistan). In the 2nd century AD, Mahayana Sutras spread from that general area to China, and then to Korea and Japan, and were translated into Chinese. During the Indian period of Esoteric Buddhism (from the 8th century onwards), Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and Mongolia.

Buddhism today

By the late Middle Ages, Buddhism had become virtually extinct in India, and although it continued to exist in surrounding countries, its influence was no longer expanding. It is now again gaining strength in India and elsewhere. Estimates of the number of Buddhist followers by scholars range from 230 million to 500 million, with most around 350 million. Most scholars classify similar numbers of people under a category they call "Chinese folk" or "traditional" religion, an amalgam of various traditions that includes Buddhism.



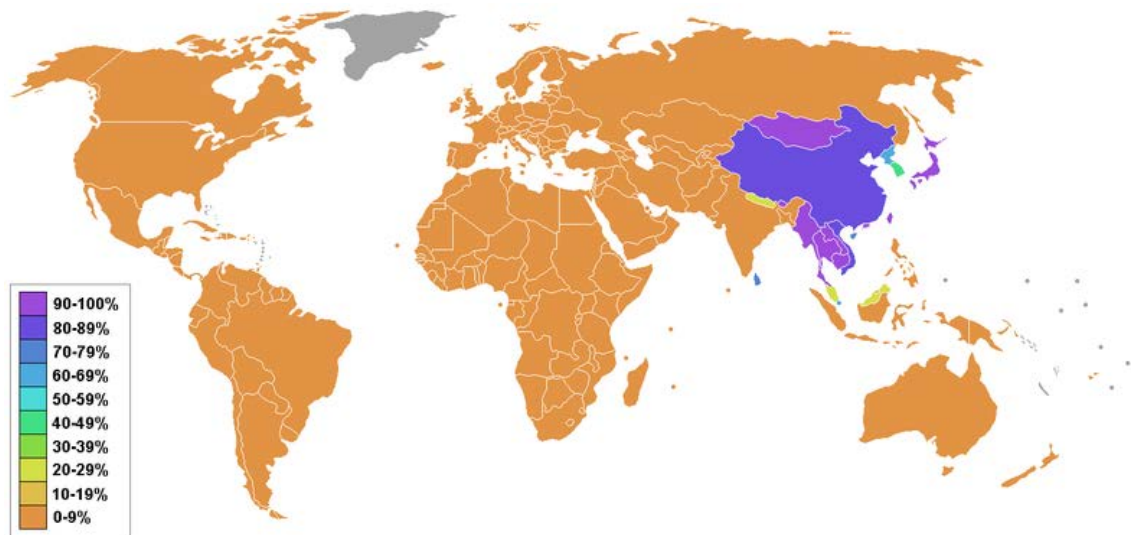
Typical interior of a temple in Korea

Formal membership varies between communities, but basic lay adherence is often defined in terms of a traditional formula in which the practitioner takes refuge in The Three Jewels: the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* (the teachings of the Buddha), and the *Sangha* (the Buddhist community).

Estimates are uncertain for several reasons:

- difficulties in defining who counts as a Buddhist;
- syncretism among the Eastern religions. Buddhism is practiced by adherents alongside many other religious traditions- including Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, traditional religions, shamanism, and animism- throughout East and Southeast Asia.
- difficulties in estimating the number of Buddhists who do not have congregational memberships and often do not participate in public ceremonies;
- official policies on religion in several historically Buddhist countries that make accurate assessments of religious adherence more difficult; most notably China, Vietnam and North Korea. In many current and former Communist governments in Asia, government policies may discourage adherents from reporting their religious identity, or may encourage official counts to underestimate religious adherence.

Demographics



Buddhism is most prevalent in the Far East.

According to one analysis, Buddhism is the fourth-largest religion in the world behind Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The monks' order (Sangha), which began during the lifetime of the Buddha, is among the oldest organizations on earth.

- Theravāda Buddhism, using Pāli as its scriptural language, is the dominant form of Buddhism in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma. The Dalit Buddhist movement in India (inspired by B. R. Ambedkar) also practices Theravada. Approximately 124 million adherents.
- East Asian forms of Mahayana Buddhism that use Chinese scriptures are dominant in most of China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam as well as such communities within Indochina, Southeast Asia and the West. Approximately 185 million adherents.
- Tibetan Buddhism is found in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, surrounding areas in India, China, Nepal, and the Russian Federation. Approximately 20 million adherents.

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

At the present time, the teachings of all three branches of Buddhism have spread throughout the world, and Buddhist texts are increasingly translated into local languages. While in the West Buddhism is often seen as exotic and progressive, in the East it is regarded as familiar and traditional. Buddhists in Asia are frequently well organized and well funded. In a number of countries, it is recognized as an official religion and receives state support. Modern influences increasingly lead to new forms of Buddhism that significantly depart from traditional beliefs and practices.

Overall there is an overwhelming diversity of recent forms of Buddhism.

Schools and traditions

Buddhists generally classify themselves as either Theravada or Mahayana. This classification is also used by some scholars and is the one ordinarily used in the English language. An alternative scheme used by some scholars divides Buddhism into the following three traditions or geographical or cultural areas: Theravada, East Asian Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism.

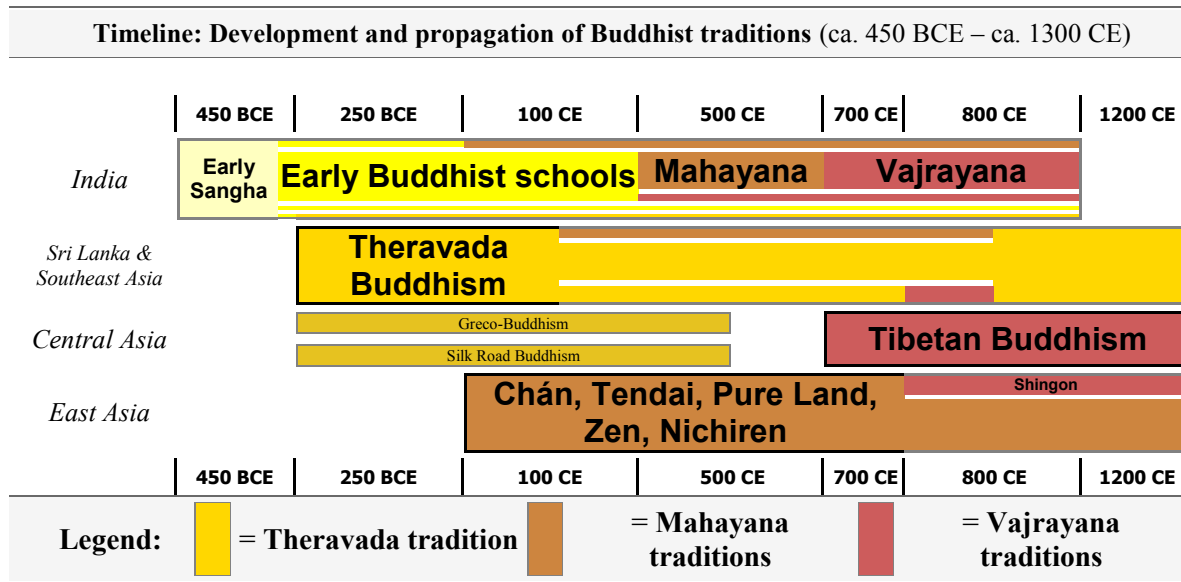
Some scholars use other schemes. Buddhists themselves have a variety of other schemes. Hinayana (literally "lesser vehicle") is used by Mahayana followers to name the family of early philosophical schools and traditions from which contemporary Theravada emerged, but as this term is rooted in the Mahayana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

Not all traditions of Buddhism share the same philosophical outlook, or treat the same concepts as central. Each tradition, however, does have its own core concepts, and some comparisons can be drawn between them. For example, according to one Buddhist ecumenical organization, several concepts common to both major Buddhist branches:

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

Timeline

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



Theravada school

Theravāda ("Doctrine of the Elders", or "Ancient Doctrine") is the oldest surviving Buddhist school. It is relatively conservative, and *generally* closest to early Buddhism. This school is derived from the Vibhajjavāda grouping which emerged amongst the older Sthavira group at the time of the Third Buddhist Council (c. 250 BCE). This school gradually declined on the Indian subcontinent, but its branch in Sri Lanka and South East Asia continues to survive.

The Theravada school bases its practice and doctrine exclusively on the Pāli Canon and its commentaries. After being orally transmitted for a few centuries, its scriptures, the Pali Canon, were finally committed to writing in the 1st century BCE, in Sri Lanka, at what the Theravada usually reckon as the fourth council. It is also one of the first Buddhist schools to commit the complete set of its canon into writing. The Sutta collections and Vinaya texts of the Pāli Canon (and the corresponding texts in other versions of the Tripitaka), are generally considered by modern scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature, and they are accepted as authentic in every branch of Buddhism.

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

Mahayana traditions



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

Mahayana Buddhism flourished in India from the 5th century CE onwards, during the dynasty of the Guptas. Mahāyāna centres of learning were established, the most important one being the Nālandā University in north-eastern India.

Mahayana schools recognize all or part of the Mahayana Sutras. Some of these sutras became for Mahayanists a manifestation of the Buddha himself, and faith in and veneration of those texts are stated in some sutras (e.g. the Lotus Sutra and the

Mahaparinirvana Sutra) to lay the foundations for the later attainment of Buddhahood itself.

Native Mahayana Buddhism is practiced today in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, parts of Russia and most of Vietnam (also commonly referred to as "Eastern Buddhism"). The Buddhism practiced in Tibet, the Himalayan regions, and Mongolia is also Mahayana in origin, but will be discussed below under the heading of Vajrayana (also commonly referred to as "Northern Buddhism". There are a variety of strands in Eastern Buddhism, of which "the Pure Land school of Mahayana is the most widely practised today.". In most of this area however, they are fused into a single unified form of Buddhism. In Japan in particular, they form separate denominations with the five major ones being: Nichiren, peculiar to Japan; Pure Land; Shingon, a form of Vajrayana; Tendai; and Chan/Zen. In Korea, nearly all Buddhists belong to the Chogye school, which is officially Son (Zen), but with substantial elements from other traditions.

Vajrayana traditions



Bodhnath Stupa, Kathmandu, Nepal

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

There are differing views as to just when Vajrayāna and its tantric practice started. In the Tibetan tradition, it is claimed that the historical Śākyamuni Buddha taught tantra, but as these are esoteric teachings, they were passed on orally first and only written down long after the Buddha's other teachings. Nālandā University became a center for the development of Vajrayāna theory and continued as the source of leading-edge Vajrayāna practices up through the 11th century. These practices, scriptures and theories were transmitted to China, Tibet, Indochina and Southeast Asia. China generally received Indian transmission up to the 11th century including tantric practice, while a vast amount of what is considered to be Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayāna) stems from the late (9th–12th century) Nālandā tradition.

In one of the first major contemporary academic treatises on the subject, Fairfield University professor Ronald M. Davidson argues that the rise of Vajrayana was in part a reaction to the changing political climate in India at the time. With the fall of the Gupta dynasty, in an increasingly fractious political environment, institutional Buddhism had difficulty attracting patronage, and the folk movement led by siddhas became more prominent. After perhaps two hundred years, it had begun to get integrated into the monastic establishment.

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

Buddhist texts

Buddhist scriptures and other texts exist in great variety. Different schools of Buddhism place varying levels of value on learning the various texts. Some schools venerate certain texts as religious objects in themselves, while others take a more scholastic approach. Buddhist scriptures are written in these languages: Pāli, Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese, along with some texts that still exist in Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Unlike many religions, Buddhism has no single central text that is universally referred to by all traditions. However, some scholars have referred to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the common core of all Buddhist traditions. This could be considered misleading, as Mahāyāna considers these merely a preliminary, and not a core, teaching. The Tibetan Buddhists have not even translated most of the āgamas (though theoretically they recognize them) and they play no part in the religious life of either clergy or laity in China and Japan. Other scholars say there is no universally accepted common core. The size and complexity of the Buddhist canons have been seen by some (including Buddhist social reformer Babasaheb Ambedkar) as presenting barriers to the wider understanding of Buddhist philosophy.

The followers of Theravāda Buddhism take the scriptures known as the Pāli Canon as definitive and authoritative, while the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism base their faith

and philosophy primarily on the Mahāyāna sūtras and their own *vinaya*. The Pāli sutras, along with other, closely related scriptures, are known to the other schools as the *āgamas*.

Over the years, various attempts have been made to synthesize a single Buddhist text that can encompass all of the major principles of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, condensed 'study texts' were created that combined popular or influential scriptures into single volumes that could be studied by novice monks. Later in Sri Lanka, the Dhammapada was championed as a unifying scripture.

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

Pāli Tipitaka

The Pāli Tipitaka, which means "three baskets", refers to the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the *Sutta Pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The *Vinaya Pitaka* contains disciplinary rules for the Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as explanations of why and how these rules were instituted, supporting material, and doctrinal clarification. The *Sutta Pitaka* contains discourses ascribed to Gautama Buddha. The *Abhidhamma Pitaka* contains material often described as systematic expositions of the Gautama Buddha's teachings.

The Pāli Tipitaka is the only early Tipitaka (Sanskrit: *Tripiṭaka*) to survive intact in its original language, but a number of early schools had their own recensions of the Tipitaka featuring much of the same material. We have portions of the Tipitakas of the Sārvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, Sammitiya, Mahāsaṅghika, Kāśyapīya, and Mahīśāsaka schools, most of which survive in Chinese translation only. According to some sources, some early schools of Buddhism had five or seven pitakas.

According to the scriptures, soon after the death of the Buddha, the first Buddhist council was held; a monk named Mahākāśyapa (Pāli: Mahākassapa) presided. The goal of the council was to record the Buddha's teachings. Upāli recited the *vinaya*. Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant, was called upon to recite the dhamma. These became the basis of the Tripitaka. However, this record was initially transmitted orally in form of chanting, and was committed to text in the last century BCE. Both the sūtras and the *vinaya* of every Buddhist school contain a wide variety of elements including discourses on the Dharma, commentaries on other teachings, cosmological and cosmogonical texts, stories of the Gautama Buddha's previous lives, and various other subjects.

Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically "Theravadin", but is instead the collection of teachings that this school preserved from the early, non-sectarian body of teachings. According to Peter Harvey, it contains material which is at odds with later Theravadin orthodoxy. He states: "The Theravadins, then, may have *added* texts to the

Canon for some time, but they do not appear to have tampered with what they already had from an earlier period."

Mahayana sutras



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

The Mahayana sutras are a very broad genre of Buddhist scriptures that the Mahayana Buddhist tradition holds are original teachings of the Buddha. The adherents of Mahayana accept both the early teachings (including in this the Sarvastivada Abhidharma, which was criticized by Nagarjuna and is in fact opposed to early Buddhist thought) and the Mahayana sutras as authentic teachings of Gautama Buddha, and claim they were designed for different types of persons and different levels of spiritual understanding.

The Mahayana sutras often claim to articulate the Buddha's deeper, more advanced doctrines, reserved for those who follow the bodhisattva path. That path is explained as being built upon the motivation to liberate all living beings from unhappiness. Hence the name *Mahāyāna* (lit., *the Great Vehicle*).

According to Mahayana tradition, the Mahayana sutras were transmitted in secret, came from other Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, or were preserved in non-human worlds because human beings at the time couldn't understand them:

Some of our sources maintain the authenticity of certain other texts not found in the canons of these schools (the early schools). These texts are those held genuine by the later school, not one of the eighteen, which arrogated to itself the title of Mahayana, 'Great Vehicle'. According to the Mahayana historians these texts were admittedly unknown to the early schools of Buddhists. However, they had all been promulgated by the Buddha. [The Buddha's] followers on earth, the *sravakas* ('pupils'), had not been sufficiently advanced to understand them, and hence were not given them to remember, but they were taught to various supernatural beings and then preserved in such places as the Dragon World.

Approximately six hundred Mahayana sutras have survived in Sanskrit or in Chinese or Tibetan translations. In addition, East Asian Buddhism recognizes some sutras regarded by scholars to be of Chinese rather than Indian origin.

Generally, scholars conclude that the Mahayana scriptures were composed from the 1st century CE onwards: "Large numbers of Mahayana sutras were being composed in the period between the beginning of the common era and the fifth century", five centuries after the historical Gautama Buddha. Some of these had their roots in other scriptures composed in the 1st century BCE. It was not until after the 5th century CE that the Mahayana sutras started to influence the behavior of mainstream Buddhists in India: "But outside of texts, at least in India, at exactly the same period, very different—in fact seemingly older—ideas and aspirations appear to be motivating actual behavior, and old and established Hinnayana groups appear to be the only ones that are patronized and supported." These texts were apparently not universally accepted among Indian Buddhists when they appeared; the pejorative label *hinayana* was applied by Mahayana supporters to those who rejected the Mahayana sutras.

Only the Theravada school does not include the Mahayana scriptures in its canon. As the modern Theravada school is descended from a branch of Buddhism that diverged and established itself in Sri Lanka prior to the emergence of the Mahayana texts, debate exists as to whether the Theravada were historically included in the *hinayana* designation; in the modern era, this label is seen as derogatory, and is generally avoided.

Comparative studies

Buddhism provides many opportunities for comparative study with a diverse range of subjects. For example, dependent origination can be considered one of Buddhism's contributions to metaphysics. Additionally, Buddhism's emphasis on the Middle way not only provides a unique guideline for ethics but has also allowed Buddhism to peacefully coexist with various differing beliefs, customs and institutions in countries in which it has resided throughout its history. Also, Its moral and spiritual parallels with other systems of

thought—for example, with various tenets of Christianity—have been subjects of close study.

List of Buddhism related topics in comparative studies

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

Chapter- 2

Gautama Buddha

Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha



A statue of the Buddha from Sarnath, 4th century CE

Born	c. 563 BCE or 623 BCE Lumbini, today in Nepal
Died	c. 483 BCE or 543 BCE (aged 80) Kushinagar, today in India
Ethnicity	Shakya
Known for	Founder of Buddhism
Predecessor	Kassapa Buddha
Successor	Maitreya Buddha

Siddhārtha Gautama (Sanskrit: Pali: **Siddhattha Gotama**) was a spiritual teacher from ancient India who founded Buddhism. In most Buddhist traditions, he is regarded as the Supreme **Buddha** (P. *sammāsambuddha*, S. *samyaksaṃbuddha*) of our age, "Buddha" meaning "awakened one" or "the enlightened one." The time of his birth and death are uncertain: most early 20th-century historians dated his lifetime as c. 563 BCE to 483 BCE, but more recent opinion dates his death to between 486 and 483 BCE or, according to some, between 411 and 400 BCE.

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

He is also regarded as a god or prophet in other religions such as Hinduism, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the Bahá'í faith.

Life

Traditional biographies

The primary sources for the life of Siddhārtha Gautama are in a variety of different and sometimes conflicting traditional biographies. These include the *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, *Mahāvastu*, and the *Nidānakathā*. Of these, the *Buddhacarita* is the earliest full biography, an epic poem written by the poet Aśvaghoṣa, and dating around the beginning of the 2nd century CE. The *Lalitavistara Sūtra* is the next oldest biography, a Mahāyāna/Sarvāstivāda biography dating to the 3rd century CE. The *Mahāvastu* from the Mahāsāṃghika Lokottaravāda sect is another major biography, composed incrementally until perhaps the 4th century CE. Lastly, the *Nidānakathā* is from the Theravāda sect in Sri Lanka, composed in the 5th century CE by Buddhaghoṣa.

From canonical sources, the Jātaka tales, *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (DN 14), and the *Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta* (MN 123) include selective accounts that may be older, but are not full biographies. The Jātaka tales retell previous lives of Gautama as a bodhisattva, and the first collection of these can be dated among the earliest Buddhist texts. The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Acchariyaabbhuta Sutta* both recount miraculous events surrounding Gautama's birth, such as the bodhisattva's descent from Tuṣita Heaven into his mother's womb.

Traditional biographies of Gautama generally include numerous miracles, omens, and supernatural events. The character of the Buddha in these traditional biographies is often that of a fully transcendent (Skt. *lokottara*) and perfected being who is unencumbered by the mundane world; this is not the picture painted by the earliest canonical sources. In the *Mahāvastu*, over the course of many lives, Gautama is said to have developed supra-mundane abilities including: a painless birth conceived without intercourse; no need for sleep, food, medicine, or bathing, although engaging in such "in conformity with the world"; omniscience, and the ability to "suppress karma." Nevertheless, some of the more ordinary details of his life have been gathered from these traditional sources. In modern times there has been an attempt to form a secular understanding of Siddhārtha Gautama's life by omitting the traditional supernatural elements of his early biographies.

The ancient Indians were generally unconcerned with chronologies, being more focused on philosophy. Buddhist texts reflect this tendency, providing a clearer picture of what Gautama may have taught than of the dates of the events in his life. These texts contain descriptions of the culture and daily life of ancient India which can be corroborated from the Jain scriptures, and make the Buddha's time the earliest period in Indian history for which significant accounts exist. Karen Armstrong writes that although there is very little information that can be considered historically sound, we can be reasonably confident that Siddhārtha Gautama did exist as a historical figure. Michael Carrithers goes a bit further by stating that the most general outline of "birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death" must be true.

Conception and birth



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

Gautama is thought to have been born in Lumbini and raised in the small kingdom or principality of Kapilvastu, both of which are in modern day Nepal. At the time of his birth, the area was at, or beyond, the boundary of Vedic civilization, the dominant culture of northern India at the time. It is possible that his mother tongue was not an Indo-Aryan language.

Early texts suggest that Gautama was not familiar with the dominant religious teachings of his time until he left on his religious quest, which is said to have been motivated by existential concern for the human condition. At the time, many small city-states existed in Ancient India, called Janapadas. Republics and chiefdoms with diffused political power and limited social stratification, were not uncommon amongst them, and were referred to as gana-sanghas. The Buddha's community does not seem to have had a caste system. It was not a monarchy, and seems to have been structured either as an oligarchy, or as a form of republic. The more egalitarian gana-sangha form of government, as a political alternative to the strongly hierarchical kingdoms, may have influenced the development of the Shramana type Jain and Buddhist sanghas, where monarchies tended toward Vedic Brahmanism.

According to the most traditional biography, the Buddha's father was King Suddhodana, the leader of Shakya clan, whose capital was Kapilavastu, and who were later annexed by the growing Kingdom of Kosala during the Buddha's lifetime; Gautama was the family name. His mother, Queen Maha Maya (Māyādevī) and Suddhodana's wife, was a Koliyan princess. Legend has it that, on the night Siddhartha was conceived, Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant with six white tusks entered her right side, and ten months later Siddhartha was born. As was the Shakya tradition, when his mother Queen Maya became

pregnant, she left Kapilvastu for her father's kingdom to give birth. However, her son is said to have been born on the way, at Lumbini, in a garden beneath a sal tree.

The day of the Buddha's birth is widely celebrated in Theravada countries as Vesak. Various sources hold that the Buddha's mother died at his birth, a few days or seven days later. The infant was given the name Siddhartha (Pāli: Siddhatta), meaning "he who achieves his aim". During the birth celebrations, the hermit seer Asita journeyed from his mountain abode and announced that the child would either become a great king (chakravartin) or a great holy man. By traditional account, this occurred after Siddhartha placed his feet in Asita's hair and Asita examined the birthmarks. Suddhodana held a naming ceremony on the fifth day, and invited eight brahmin scholars to read the future. All gave a dual prediction that the baby would either become a great king or a great holy man. Kaundinya (Pali: Kondanna), the youngest, and later to be the first arahant other than the Buddha, was reputed to be the only one who unequivocally predicted that Siddhartha would become a Buddha.

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

Early life and marriage

Siddhartha was brought up by his mother's younger sister, Maha Pajapati. By tradition, he is said to have been destined by birth to the life of a prince, and had three palaces (for seasonal occupation) built for him. Although more recent scholarship doubts this status, his father, said to be King Śuddhodana, wishing for his son to be a great king, is said to have shielded him from religious teachings and from knowledge of human suffering.

When he reached the age of 16, his father reputedly arranged his marriage to a cousin of the same age named Yaśodharā (Pāli: Yasodharā). According to the traditional account,[[] she gave birth to a son, named Rahula. Siddhartha is then said to have spent 29 years as a prince in Kapilavastu. Although his father ensured that Siddhartha was provided with everything he could want or need, Buddhist scriptures say that the future Buddha felt that material wealth was not life's ultimate goal.

Departure and ascetic life



This scene depicts the "Great Departure" of Sidhartha Gautama, a predestined being. He appears here surrounded by a halo, and accompanied by numerous guards, mithuna loving couples, and devata, come to pay homage. Gandhara art, Kushan period(1st-3rd century CE)



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

At the age of 29, the popular biography continues, Siddhartha left his palace to meet his subjects. Despite his father's efforts to hide from him the sick, aged and suffering, Siddhartha was said to have seen an old man. When his charioteer Channa explained to him that all people grew old, the prince went on further trips beyond the palace. On these he encountered a diseased man, a decaying corpse, and an ascetic. These depressed him, and he initially strived to overcome ageing, sickness, and death by living the life of an ascetic.

Accompanied by Channa and aboard his horse Kanthaka, Guatama quit his palace for the life of a mendicant. It's said that, "the horse's hooves were muffled by the gods" to prevent guards from knowing of the new bodhisattva's departure. This event is traditionally known as "the great departure".

Guatama initially went to Rajagaha and began his ascetic life by begging for alms in the street. Having been recognised by the men of King Bimbisara, Bimbisara offered him the throne after hearing of Siddhartha's quest. Siddhartha rejected the offer, but promised to visit his kingdom of Magadha first, upon attaining enlightenment.

He left Rajagaha and practised under two hermit teachers. After mastering the teachings of Alara Kalama (Skr. Ārāḍa Kālāma), he was asked by Kalama to succeed him. However, Guatama felt unsatisfied by the practise, and moved on to become a student of Udraka Ramaputta (Skr. Udraka Rāmaputra). With him he achieved high levels of

meditative consciousness, and was again asked to succeed his teacher. But, once more, he was not satisfied, and again moved on.

Siddhartha and a group of five companions led by Kaundinya are then said to have set out to take their austerities even further. They tried to find enlightenment through deprivation of worldly goods, including food, practising self-mortification. After nearly starving himself to death by restricting his food intake to around a leaf or nut per day, he collapsed in a river while bathing and almost drowned. Siddhartha began to reconsider his path. Then, he remembered a moment in childhood in which he had been watching his father start the season's plowing. He attained a concentrated and focused state that was blissful and refreshing, the *jhāna*.

Enlightenment



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

According to the early Buddhist texts, after realizing that meditative *jhana* was the right path to awakening, but that extreme asceticism didn't work, Gautama discovered what Buddhists call the Middle Way—a path of moderation away from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. In a famous incident, after becoming starved and weakened, he is said to have accepted milk and rice pudding from a village girl named Sujata. Such was his emaciated appearance that she wrongly believed him to be a spirit that had granted her a wish.

Following this incident, Gautama was famously seated under a pipal tree - now known as the Bodhi tree - in Bodh Gaya, India, when he vowed never to arise until he had found the truth. Kaundinya and four other companions, believing that he had abandoned his search and become undisciplined, left. After a reputed 49 days of meditation, at the age of 35, he is said to have attained Enlightenment. According to some traditions, this occurred

in approximately the fifth lunar month, while, according to others, it was in the twelfth month. From that time, Gautama was known to his followers as the *Buddha* or "Awakened One." ("Buddha" is also sometimes translated as "The Enlightened One.") He is often referred to in Buddhism as Shakyamuni Buddha, or "The Awakened One of the Shakya Clan."

According to Buddhism, at the time of his awakening he realized complete insight into the cause of suffering, and the steps necessary to eliminate it. These discoveries became known as the "Four Noble Truths", which are at the heart of Buddhist teaching. Through mastery of these truths, a state of supreme liberation, or Nirvana, is believed to be possible for any being. The Buddha described Nirvāna as the perfect peace of a mind that's free from ignorance, greed, hatred and other afflictive states, or "defilements" (kilesas). Nirvana is also regarded as the "end of the world", in that no personal identity or boundaries of the mind remain. In such a state, a being is said to possess the Ten Characteristics, belonging to every Buddha.

According to a story in the *Āyācana Sutta* (Samyutta Nikaya VI.1) - a scripture found in the Pāli and other canons - immediately after his awakening, the Buddha debated whether or not he should teach the *Dharma* to others. He was concerned that humans were so overpowered by ignorance, greed and hatred that they could never recognise the path, which is subtle, deep and hard to grasp. However, in the story, Brahmā Sahampati convinced him, arguing that at least some will understand it. The Buddha relented, and agreed to teach.

Formation of the sangha



Painting of the first sermon depicted at Wat Chedi Liem in Thailand.

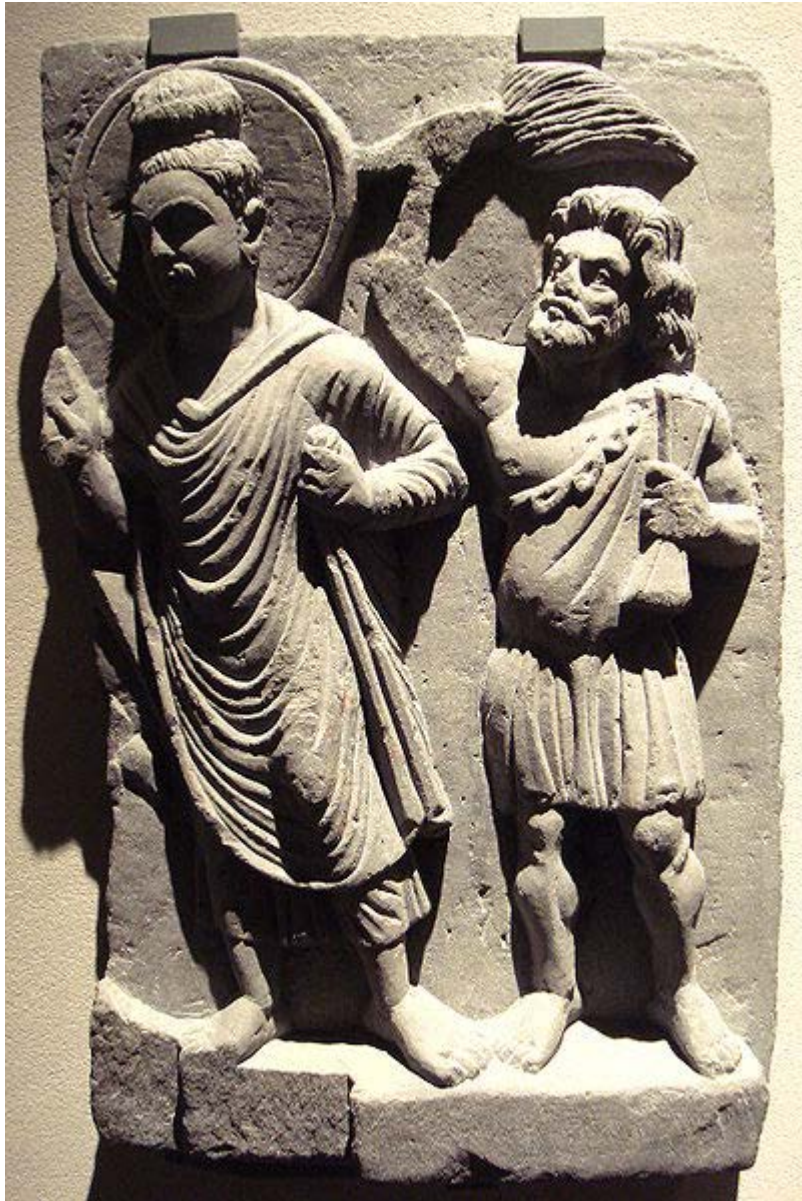
After his awakening, the Buddha met two merchants, named Tapussa and Bhallika, who became his first lay disciples. They were apparently each given hairs from his head, which are now claimed to be enshrined as relics in the Shwe Dagon Temple in Rangoon, Burma. The Buddha intended to visit Asita, and his former teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, to explain his findings, but they had already died.

He then travelled to the Deer Park near Vārāṇasī (Benares) in northern India, where he set in motion what Buddhists call the Wheel of Dharma by delivering his first sermon to

the five companions with whom he had sought enlightenment. Together with him, they formed the first saṅgha: the company of Buddhist monks.

All five become arahants, and within the first two months, with the conversion of Yasa and fifty four of his friends, the number of such arahants is said to have grown to 60. The conversion of three brothers named Kassapa followed, with their reputed 200, 300 and 500 disciples, respectively. This swelled the sangha to more than 1000.

Travels and teaching



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

For the remaining 45 years of his life, the Buddha is said to have traveled in the Gangetic Plain, in what is now Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and southern Nepal, teaching a diverse range of people: from nobles to outcaste street sweepers, murderers such as Angulimala, and cannibals such as Alavaka. From the outset, Buddhism was equally open to all races and classes, and had no caste structure, as was the rule in Hinduism. Although the Buddha's language remains unknown, it's likely that he taught in one or more of a variety of closely related Middle Indo-Aryan dialects, of which Pali may be a standardization.

The sangha traveled through the subcontinent, expounding the dharma. This continued throughout the year, except during the four months of the vassana rainy season when ascetics of all religions rarely traveled. One reason was that it was more difficult to do so without causing harm to animal life. At this time of year, the sangha would retreat to monasteries, public parks or forests, where people would come to them.

The first vassana was spent at Varanasi when the sangha was formed. After this, the Buddha kept a promise to travel to Rajagaha, capital of Magadha, to visit King Bimbisara. During this visit, Sariputta and Mahamoggallana were converted by Assaji, one of the first five disciples, after which they were to become the Buddha's two foremost followers. The Buddha spent the next three seasons at Veluvana Bamboo Grove monastery in Rajagaha, capital of Magadha.

Upon hearing of his son's awakening, Suddhodana sent, over a period, ten delegations to ask him to return to Kapilavastu. On the first nine occasions, the delegates failed to deliver the message, and instead joined the sangha to become arahants. The tenth delegation, led by Kaludayi, a childhood friend of Gautama's (who also became an arahant), however, delivered the message.

Now two years after his awakening, the Buddha agreed to return, and made a two-month journey by foot to Kapilavastu, teaching the dharma as he went. At his return, the royal palace prepared a midday meal, but the sangha was making an alms round in Kapilavastu. Hearing this, Suddhodana approached his son, the Buddha, saying:

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

The Buddha is said to have replied:

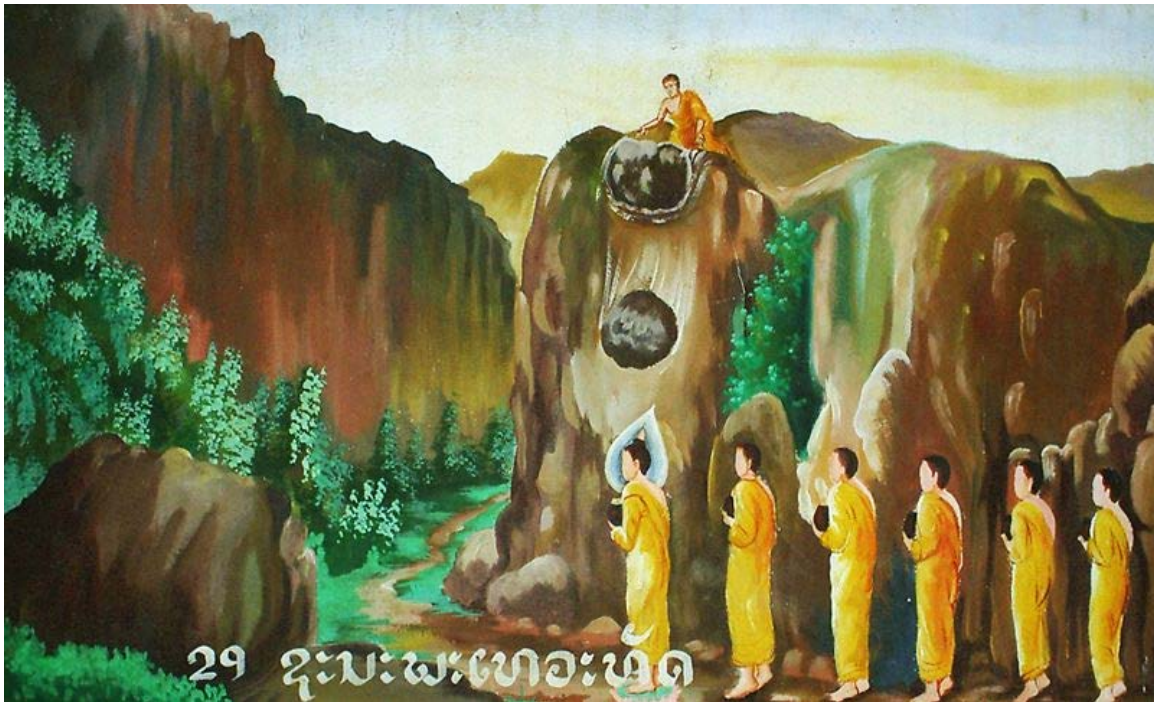
"That is not the custom of your royal lineage. But it is the custom of my Buddha lineage. Several thousands of Buddhas have gone by seeking alms"

Buddhist texts say that Suddhodana invited the sangha into the palace for the meal, followed by a dharma talk. After this he is said to have become a sotapanna. During the visit, many members of the royal family joined the sangha. The Buddha's cousins Ananda and Anuruddha became two of his five chief disciples. At the age of seven, his son Rahula also joined, and became one of his ten chief disciples. His half-brother Nanda also joined and became an arahant.

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

In the fifth vassana, the Buddha was staying at Mahavana near Vesali when he heard news of the impending death of his father. He is said to have gone to Suddhodana and taught the dharma, after which his father became an arahant.

The king's death and cremation was to inspire the creation of an order of nuns. Buddhist texts record that the Buddha was reluctant to ordain women. His foster mother Maha Pajapati, for example, approached him, asking to join the sangha, but he refused. Maha Pajapati, however, was so intent on the path of awakening that she led a group of royal Sakyan and Koliyan ladies, which followed the sangha on a long journey to Rajagaha. In time, after Ananda championed their cause, the Buddha is said to have reconsidered and, five years after the formation of the sangha, agreed to the ordination of women as nuns. He reasoned that males and females had an equal capacity for awakening. But he gave women additional rules (Vinaya) to follow.



Devadatta tries to attack the Buddha. Picture of a wallpainting in a Laotian monastery.

Assassination attempts

According to colorful legends, even during the Buddha's life the sangha was not free of dissent and discord. For example, Devadatta, a cousin of Gautama who became a monk but not an arahant, more than once tried to kill him.

Initially, Devadatta is alleged to have often tried to undermine the Buddha. In one instance, according to stories, Devadatta even asked the Buddha to stand aside and let him lead the sangha. When this failed, he is accused of having three times tried to kill his teacher. The first attempt is said to have involved him hiring a group of archers to shoot the awakened one. But, upon meeting the Buddha, they laid down their bows and instead became followers. A second attempt is said to have involved Devadatta rolling a boulder down a hill. But this hit another rock and splintered, only grazing the Buddha's foot. In the third attempt, Devadatta is said to have got an elephant drunk and set it loose. This ruse also failed.

After his lack of success at homicide, Devadatta is said to have tried to create a schism in the sangha, by proposing extra restrictions on the vinaya. When the Buddha again prevailed, Devadatta started a breakaway order. At first, he managed to convert some of the bhikkhus, but Sariputta and Mahamoggallana are said to have expounded the dharma so effectively that they were won back.

Mahaparinirvana



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



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

According to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Pali canon, at the age of 80, the Buddha announced that he would soon reach Parinirvana, or the final deathless state, and abandon his earthly body. After this, the Buddha ate his last meal, which he had received as an offering from a blacksmith named Cunda. Falling violently ill, Buddha instructed his attendant Ānanda to convince Cunda that the meal eaten at his place had nothing to do with his passing and that his meal would be a source of the greatest merit as it provided the last meal for a Buddha. Mettanando and von Hinüber argue that the Buddha died of mesenteric infarction, a symptom of old age, rather than food poisoning. The precise contents of the Buddha's final meal are not clear, due to variant scriptural traditions and ambiguity over the translation of certain significant terms; the Theravada tradition generally believes that the Buddha was offered some kind of pork, while the Mahayana tradition believes that the Buddha consumed some sort of truffle or other mushroom. These may reflect the different traditional views on Buddhist vegetarianism and the precepts for monks and nuns.

Ananda protested the Buddha's decision to enter Parinirvana in the abandoned jungles of Kuśināra (present-day Kushinagar, India) of the Malla kingdom. Buddha, however, is said to have reminded Ananda how Kushinara was a land once ruled by a righteous wheel-turning king that resounded with joy:

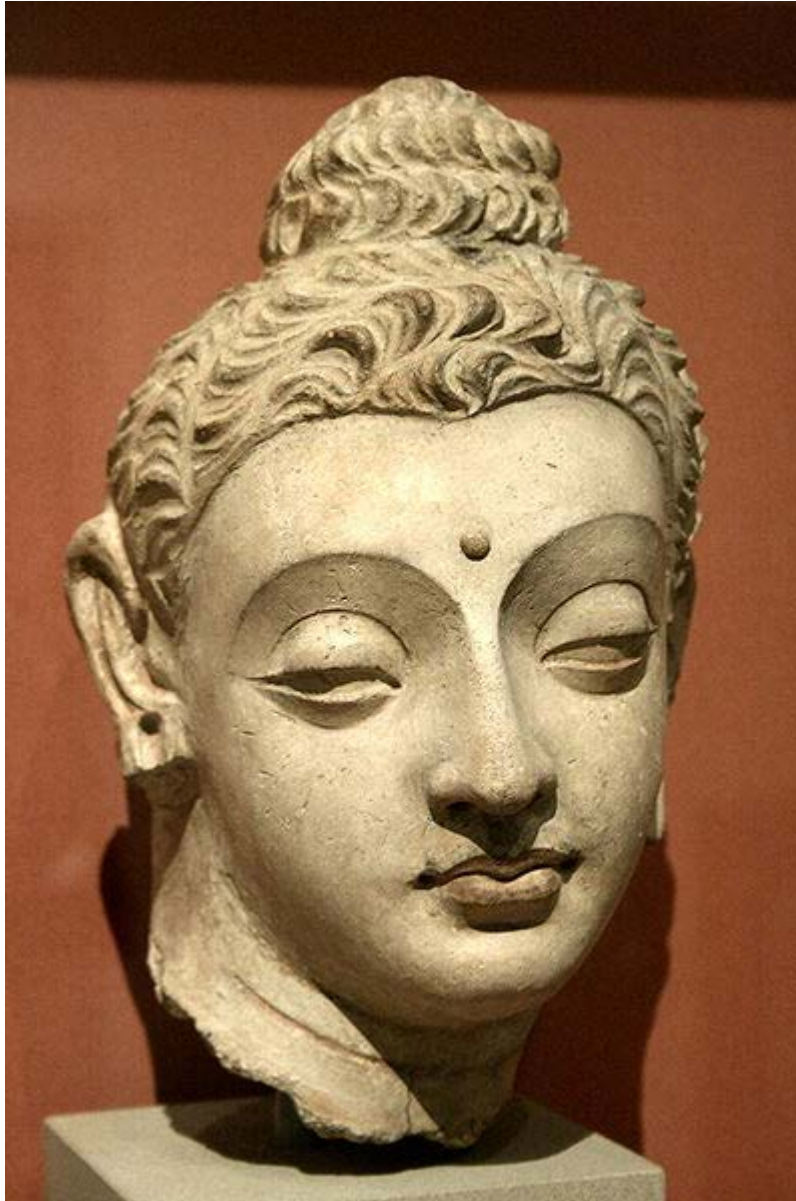
44. Kusavati, Ananda, resounded unceasingly day and night with ten sounds—the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rattling of chariots, the beating of drums and tabours, music and song, cheers, the clapping of hands, and cries of "Eat, drink, and be merry!"

The Buddha then asked all the attendant Bhikshus to clarify any doubts or questions they had. They had none. According to Buddhist scriptures, he then finally entered Parinirvana. The Buddha's final words are reported to have been: "All composite things pass away. Strive for your own liberation with diligence." His body was cremated and the relics were placed in monuments or stupas, some of which are believed to have survived until the present. For example, The Temple of the Tooth or "Dalada Maligawa" in Sri Lanka is the place where what some believe to be the relic of the right tooth of Buddha is kept at present.

According to the Pāli historical chronicles of Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvamsa*, the coronation of Aśoka (Pāli: Asoka) is 218 years after the death of Buddha. According to two textual records in Chinese (十八部論 and 部執異論), the coronation of Aśoka is 116 years after the death of Buddha. Therefore, the time of Buddha's passing is either 486 BCE according to Theravāda record or 383 BCE according to Mahayana record. However, the actual date traditionally accepted as the date of the Buddha's death in Theravāda countries is 544 or 543 BCE, because the reign of Aśoka was traditionally reckoned to be about 60 years earlier than current estimates.

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

Physical characteristics



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

An extensive and colorful physical description of the Buddha has been laid down in scriptures. A kshatriya by birth, he had military training in his upbringing, and by Shakyan tradition was required to pass tests to demonstrate his worthiness as a warrior in order to marry. He had a strong enough body to be noticed by one of the kings and was asked to join his army as a general. He is also believed by Buddhists to have "the 32 Signs of the Great Man".

The Brahmin Sonadanda described him as "handsome, good-looking, and pleasing to the eye, with a most beautiful complexion. He has a godlike form and countenance, he is by no means unattractive."(D,I:115).

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

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

Although there are no extant representations of the Buddha in human form until around the 1st century CE, descriptions of the physical characteristics of fully enlightened buddhas are attributed to the Buddha in the Digha Nikaya's *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (D,I:142). In addition, the Buddha's physical appearance is described by Yasodhara to their son Rahula upon the Buddha's first post-Enlightenment return to his former princely palace in the non-canonical Pali devotional hymn, *Narasīha Gāthā* ("The Lion of Men").

Teachings



Seated Buddha, Gandhāra, 2nd century CE.

Some scholars believe that some portions of the Pali Canon and the Āgamas contain the actual substance of the historical teachings (and possibly even the words) of the Buddha. This is not the case for the later Mahāyāna sūtras. The scriptural works of Early Buddhism precede the Mahayana works chronologically, and are treated by many Western scholars as the main credible source for information regarding the actual historical teachings of Gautama Buddha. However, some scholars do not think that the texts report on historical events.

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

- The Four Noble Truths: that suffering is an ingrained part of existence; that the origin of suffering is craving for sensuality, acquisition of identity, and annihilation; that suffering can be ended; and that following the Noble Eightfold Path is the means to accomplish this.
- The Noble Eightfold Path: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- Dependent origination: the mind creates suffering as a natural product of a complex process.
- Rejection of the infallibility of accepted scripture: Teachings should not be accepted unless they are borne out by our experience and are praised by the wise.
- *Anicca* (Sanskrit: *anitya*): That all things that come to be have an end.
- *Dukkha* (Sanskrit: *duḥkha*): That nothing which comes to be is ultimately satisfying.
- *Anattā* (Sanskrit: *anātman*): That nothing in the realm of experience can really be said to be "I" or "mine".
- *Nibbāna* (Sanskrit: *Nirvāṇa*): It is possible for sentient beings to realize a dimension of awareness which is totally unconstructed and peaceful, and end all suffering due to the mind's interaction with the conditioned world.

However, in some Mahayana schools, these points have come to be regarded as more or less subsidiary. There is disagreement amongst various schools of Buddhism over more complex aspects of what the Buddha is believed to have taught, and also over some of the disciplinary rules for monks.

According to tradition, the Buddha emphasized ethics and correct understanding. He questioned everyday notions of divinity and salvation. He stated that there is no intermediary between mankind and the divine; distant gods are subjected to karma themselves in decaying heavens; and the Buddha is only a guide and teacher for beings who must tread the path of *Nirvāṇa* (Pāli: *Nibbāna*) themselves to attain the spiritual awakening called *bodhi* and understand reality. The Buddhist system of insight and meditation practice is not claimed to have been divinely revealed, but to spring from an understanding of the true nature of the mind, which must be discovered by treading the path guided by the Buddha's teachings.

Beyond Buddhism



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

Gautama Buddha is also described as a god or Prophet in other Religions. Some Hindu texts say that the Buddha was an avatar of the god Vishnu, who came to Earth to delude beings away from the Vedic religion. The Buddha is also regarded as a prophet by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and a Manifestation of God in the Bahá'í faith.

Some early Chinese Taoist-Buddhists thought the Buddha to be a reincarnation of Lao Tzu.

Chapter- 3

Karma in Buddhism

Karma means "action" or "doing"; whatever one does, says, or thinks is a **karma**. In Buddhism, the term **karma** is used specifically for those actions which spring from the intention (Pali: *cetana*) of an unenlightened being.

These bring about a fruit (Sanskrit, Pali: *phala*) or result (S., P.: *vipāka*; the two are often used together as *vipākaphala*), either within the present life, or in the context of a future rebirth. Other Indian religions have different views on karma. Karma is the engine which drives the wheel of the cycle of uncontrolled rebirth (S., P. *saṃsāra*) for each being. In the early texts it is not, however, the only causal mechanism influencing the lives of sentient beings.

As one scholar states, "the Buddhist theory of action and result (*karmaphala*) is fundamental to much of Buddhist doctrine, because it provides a coherent model of the functioning of the world and its beings, which in turn forms the doctrinal basis for the Buddhist explanations of the path of liberation from the world and its result, *nirvāṇa*."

Karma in the early sutras

In the early sutras, as found in the Pali Canon and the Agamas preserved in Chinese translation, "there is no single major systematic exposition" on the subject of karma and "an account has to be put together from the dozens of places where karma is mentioned in the texts." Nevertheless, the Buddha emphasized his doctrine of karma to the extent that he was sometimes referred to as *kammavada* (the holder of the view of karma) or *kiriyaavada* (the promulgator of the consequence of karma).

In the *Nibbedhika Sutta* (Anguttara Nikaya 3.415) the Buddha said:

"Intention (P. *cetana*, S. *cetanā*), monks, is karma, I say. Having willed, one acts through body, speech and mind."

In the *Upajjhathana Sutta* (AN 5.57), the Buddha states:

"I am the owner of my karma. I inherit my karma. I am born of my karma. I am related to my karma. I live supported by my karma. Whatever karma I create, whether good or evil, that I shall inherit."

Intention and the moral quality of actions

According to Buddhist theory, every time a person acts there is some quality of intention at the base of the mind and it is that quality rather than the outward appearance of the action that determines the effect. If one appears to be benevolent but acts with greed, anger or hatred, then the fruit of those actions will bear testimony to the fundamental intention that lay behind them and will be a cause for future unhappiness. The Buddha spoke of wholesome actions (P. *kusala-kamma*, S. *kuśala-karma*) that result in happiness, and unwholesome actions (P. *akusala-kamma*, S. *akuśala-karma*) that result in unhappiness. The Buddha also elaborated that it was impossible for virtuous action to produce unfavorable results, and for nonvirtuous action to produce favorable results. However, although a good deed may produce merit which ripens into wealth, if that deed was done too casually or the intention behind it was not quite pure, that wealth so obtained sometimes cannot be enjoyed (AN.4.392-393). There are two classes of determined deeds which always produce good or bad results (fixed results, P. *niyata-rasi*) respectively, and a class of deeds which may produce either good or bad results (non-fixed results, P. *aniyata-rasi*) presumably depending on the context, although the Buddha does not elaborate (DN 3.217). Good karma is described as generating merit (P. *puñña*, S. *puñya*), whereas bad karma is described as demerit (*apuñña/apuñya* or *pāpa*).

Karmic results

The Buddha most often spoke of karma as the determining factor of the realm of one's subsequent rebirth--for this reason karma is often explained in tandem with rebirth and cosmology. The *Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta* ("The Shorter Exposition of Action," Majjhima Nikaya 3.203) is devoted to describing the various rebirths that various kinds of actions produce; negative actions such as killing lead to rebirths in the lower realms such as hell, and virtuous action such as gracious behavior under duress leads to rebirth in the human or other higher realms. Further, within human rebirths in particular, virtuous actions produce desirable qualities and good fortune such as physical beauty, influence, and so forth, whereas nonvirtuous actions lead to ugliness, poverty, and other misfortunes. The *Mahākammavibhanga Sutta* ("The Greater Exposition of Action," MN.3.208) is a similar exposition, with the additional stipulation that other rebirths may intervene between the time of the virtuous or nonvirtuous actions and the rebirth that they impel.

The Buddha denied one could avoid experiencing the result of a karmic deed once it's been committed (AN 5.292). In the Anguttara Nikaya, it is stated that karmic results are experienced either in this life (P. *diṭṭadhammika*) or in a future lives (P. *samparāyika*). The former may involve a readily observable connection between action and karmic consequence, as when a thief is captured and tortured by the authorities, but the connection need not necessarily be that obvious and in fact usually is not observable. Among the results which manifest in future lives, five heinous actions (P. *ānantarika-kamma*) provoke a rebirth in hell immediately subsequent to death, according to the *Vinaya*: matricide, patricide, killing an arhat, intentional shedding of a Buddha's blood, and causing a schism in the sangha (Vinaya 5.128).

Karmic action & karmic results vs. general causes & general results

The Buddha makes a basic distinction between past karma (P. *purāṇakamma*) which has already been incurred, and karma being created in the present (P. *navakamma*). Therefore in the present one both creates new karma (P. *navakamma*) and encounters the result of past karma (P. *kammavipāka*). Karma in the early canon is also threefold: Mental action (S. *manasikarman*), bodily action (S. *kāyakarman*) and vocal action (S. *vākkarman*).

The Buddha's theory of karmic action and effect did not encompass all causes (S. *hetu*) and results (S. *vipāka*). Any given action may cause all sorts of results, but the *karmic results* are only that subset of results which impinge upon the *doer* of the action as a consequence of both the moral quality of the action and the intention behind the action. In the Abhidharma they are referred to by specific names for the sake of clarity, karmic causes being the "cause of results" (S. *vipāka-hetu*) and the karmic results being the "resultant fruit" (S. *vipāka-phala*). As one scholar outlines, "the consequences envisioned by the law of karma encompass more (as well as less) than the observed natural or physical results which follow upon the performance of an action." The law of karma also applies "specifically to the moral sphere not concerned with the *general* relation between actions and their consequences, but rather with the moral quality of actions and their consequences, such as the pain and pleasure and good or bad experiences for the doer of the act." The theory of karma is not deterministic, in part because past karma is not viewed as the only causal mechanism causing the present. In the case of diseases, for instance, he gives a list of other causes which may result in disease in addition to karma (AN.5.110).

The Buddha's theory of moral behavior was not strictly deterministic; it was conditional. His description of the workings of karma is not an all-inclusive one, unlike that of the Jains. The Buddha instead gave answers to various questions to specific people in specific contexts, and it is possible to find several causal explanations of behavior in the early Buddhist texts.

In the Buddhist theory of karma, the karmic effect of a deed is not determined solely by the deed itself, but also by the nature of the person who commits the deed and by the circumstances in which it is committed.

A discourse in the Anguttara Nikaya (AN.1.249) indicates this conditionality:

A certain person has not properly cultivated his body, behavior, thought and intelligence, is inferior and insignificant and his life is short and miserable; of such a person ... even a trifling evil action done leads him to hell. In the case of a person who has proper culture of the body, behavior, thought and intelligence, who is superior and not insignificant, and who is endowed with long life, the consequences of a similar evil action are to be experienced in this very life, and sometimes may not appear at all.

The Buddha declared that the precise working of how karma comes to fruition was one of the four incomprehensibles (P. *acinteyya* or *acinnateyyāni*) for anyone without the insight

of a Buddha (AN.2.80). The Buddha sees the workings of karma with his "superhuman eye." Contemporary scholar Bruce Matthews asserts that the *Cūlakammavibhanga Sutta* (M.3.203) indicates that karma provokes "tendencies or conditions rather than consequences as such;" presumably he counts the rebirths resulting from karma described in the sutta as "tendencies or conditions" rather than "consequences," although he does not elaborate the point.

In the *Lakkhana Sutta* (Digha Nikaya 30), the Buddha explains that his thirty-two special physical characteristics are the fruition of past karma.

Karma & Nirvana

There is a further distinction between worldly, wholesome karma that leads to samsāric happiness (like birth in higher realms), and path-consciousness which leads to enlightenment and nirvana. Therefore, there is samsāric good karma, which leads to worldly happiness, and there is liberating karma—which is supremely good, as it ends suffering forever. Once one has attained liberation one does not generate any further karma, and the corresponding states of mind are called in Pali *Kiriya*. Nonetheless, the Buddha advocated the practice of wholesome actions: "Refrain from unwholesome actions/Perform only wholesome ones/Purify the mind/This is the teaching of the Enlightened Ones" (Dhp v.183).

In Buddhism, the term *karma* refers only to samsāric actions, the workings of which are modeled by the twelve nidanas of dependent origination, not actions committed by Arhats and Buddhas.

Incorrect understandings of karma in the early sutras

In Buddhism, karma is not pre-determinism, fatalism or accidentalism, as all these ideas lead to inaction and destroy motivation and human effort. These ideas undermine the important concept that a human being can change for the better no matter what his or her past was, and they are designated as "wrong views" in Buddhism. The Buddha identified three:

1. **Pubbekatahetuvada:** The belief that all happiness and suffering, including all future happiness and suffering, arise from previous karma, and human beings can exercise no volition to affect future results (Past-action determinism).
2. **Issaranimmanahetuvada:** The belief that all happiness and suffering are caused by the directives of a Supreme Being (Theistic determinism).
3. **Ahetu-appaccaya-vaada:** The belief that all happiness and suffering are random, having no cause (Indeterminism or Accidentalism).

Karma is continually ripening, but it is also continually being generated by present actions, therefore it is possible to exercise free will to shape future karma. P.A. Payutto writes, "the Buddha asserts effort and motivation as the crucial factors in deciding the ethical value of these various teachings on kamma."

Systematization of karma theory in the early schools

As the earliest Buddhist philosophical schools developed with the rise of Abhidharma Buddhism, various interpretations developed regarding more refined points of karma. All were confronted with a central issue, as one scholar summarizes:

When [the Buddhist] understanding of karma is correlated to the Buddhist doctrine of universal impermanence and No-Self, a serious problem arises as to where this trace is stored and what the trace left is. The problem is aggravated when the trace remains latent over a long period, perhaps over a period of many existences. The crucial problem presented to all schools of Buddhist philosophy was where the trace is stored and how it can remain in the ever-changing stream of phenomena which build up the individual and what the nature of this trace is.

As the Buddha had not offered elaboration in the early sutras that addresses this, the various schools proposed various similar yet distinct solutions. As one scholar writes, "In certain cases it is apparent that concern with karma doctrine or vocabulary explanatory thereof played a distinctly causal role in sectarian evolution. In other cases it is safer to say that the concern for an intelligible karma vocabulary was one among many complex factors that helped give decisive shape and substance to already distinct or emerging sectarian positions."

One scholar summarizes the various orientations as follows:

Different sects gave different names to their theoretical candidates for the "carrier of the Karma". The following schools are associated with the following entities: Sammitīya—the *avipranāśa* or 'indestructible', a dharma of the *citta-viprayukta* class. Sarvāstivādin/Vaibhāṣika tradition—*prāpti* and *aprāpti* or adhesion and non-adhesion, and the *avijñapti-rūpa* or form that does not indicate. Sautrāntika tradition—the *bīja* or seed, the *ekarasa-skandha* or aggregate of unique essence, the *mulāntika-skandha* or proximate root aggregate and the *paramārtha-pudgala*. Yogācāra/Vijñānavādin tradition—the *ālaya-vijñāna* or 'store house' consciousness. Again, the central question that these entities seem to have been constructed to answer is that of how the karmic force inheres in the psychophysical stream without thereby coloring or pervading each discrete moment of that stream. What accounts for the "idling" or non-active aspect of defilement when a given thought is of a virtuous or morally indeterminate nature?

The Theravādin commentarial tradition

In the Theravāda Abhidhamma and commentarial traditions, karma is taken up at length. The *Abhidhamma Sangaha* of Anuruddhācariya offers a treatment of the topic, with an exhaustive treatment in book five (5.3.7).

Of particular interest is the *Kathāvatthu*, which "alone of the works of the Pali canon is directly concerned with conflicting views within the Buddhist community. . . A number of the controverted points discussed in the *Kathāvatthu* relate either directly or indirectly

to the notion of kamma." This involved debate with the Pudgalavādin school, which postulated the provisional existence of the person (S. *pudgala*, P. *puggala*) to account for the ripening of karmic effects over time. The Kathāvatthu also records debate by the Theravādins with the Andhakas (who may have been Mahāsāṃghikas) regarding whether or not old age and death are the result (*vipāka*) of karma. The Theravāda maintained that they are not—not, apparently because there is no causal relation between the two, but because they wished to reserve the term *vipāka* strictly for mental results—"subjective phenomena arising through the effects of kamma."

The Visuddhimagga states that "the kamma that is the condition for the fruit does not pass on there (to where the fruit is)."

In the canonical Theravāda view of kamma, "the belief that deeds done or ideas seized at the moment of death are particularly significant."

As scholar Peter Harvey notes, "one curious feature of the Abhidhamma view of the perceptual process is that the discernments related to the five physical sense organs are always said to be fruitions of karma." However, in agreement with scholar L.S. Cousins he agrees that the most "plausible" explanation "is that karma affects discernment by determining which of the many phenomena in a person's sensory range are actually *noticed* in the same room, for example, one person naturally tends to notice certain things which give rise to pleasure, while another tends to notice things which give rise to some displeasure."

As karma is not the only causal agent, the Theravādin commentarial tradition classified causal mechanisms taught in the early texts in five categories, known as Niyama Dhammas:

- Kamma Niyama — Consequences of one's actions
- Utu Niyama — Seasonal changes and climate
- Bija Niyama — Laws of heredity
- Citta Niyama — Will of mind
- Dhamma Niyama — Nature's tendency to produce a perfect type

The Theravāda Abhidhamma also categorizes karma in other ways:

With regard to function

- Reproductive karma (*janaka-kamma*) - karma which produces the mental and material aggregates at the moment of conception, conditioning the rebirth-consciousness (*patisandhi vinnana*).
- Supportive karma (*upatthambhaka kamma*) - karma ripening in one's lifetime which is of the same favorable or unfavorable quality as the reproductive karma which impelled the rebirth in question. That is to say, in the case of an animal with an unpleasant life, the karma creating unpleasant conditions would be

considered supportive of the reproductive karma which impelled what is considered an unfavorable rebirth.

- Obstructive or counteractive karma (*upapiḍḍaka kamma*) - the reverse of the former. In the example of the animal, an animal with a pleasant life would be said to have obstructive rather than supportive karma in relation to his reproductive karma.
- Destructive karma (*upaghātaka kamma*) - karma powerful enough to counteract the reproductive karma entirely, by ending the life in question.

With regard to potency

- Weighty karma (*garuka kamma*) — that which produces its results in this life or in the next for certain, namely, the five heinous crimes (*ānantarika-kamma*)
- Proximate karma (*āsanna kamma*) — that which one does or remembers immediately before the dying moment
- Habitual karma (*āciṇṇa kamma*) — that which one habitually performs and recollects and for which one has a great liking
- Reserve karma (*kaṭattā kamma*) — refers to all actions that are done once and soon forgotten

With regard to temporal precedence

- Immediately effective karma (*diṭṭhadhammavedaniya kamma*) - in the present lifetime
- Subsequently effective karma (*upapajjavedaniya kamma*) - in the immediately following lifetime
- Indefinitely effective karma (*apṇarāpariyavedaniya kamma*) - in lifetimes two or more in the future
- Defunct karma (*ahosi kamma*) - karma whose effects have ripened already

With regard to the realm-setting of the effect

- Unwholesome (*akusala*) karma pertaining to the desire realm (*kamavacara*)
- Wholesome (*kusala*) karma pertaining to the desire realm (*kamavacara*)
- Wholesome karma pertaining to the form realm (*rupavacara*)
- Wholesome karma pertaining to the formless realm (*arupavacara*)

The Milindapañha and Petavatthu

The *Milindapañha*, a paracanonical Theravāda text, offers some interpretations of karma theory at variance with the orthodox position. In particular, Nāgasena allows for the possibility of the transfer of merit to humans and one of the four classes of petas, perhaps in deference to folk belief. Nāgasena makes it clear that demerit cannot be transferred. One asserts that the sharing of merit "can be linked to the Vedic *śrāddha*, for it was Buddhist practice not to upset existing traditions when well-established custom was not antithetic to Buddhist teaching."

The Petavatthu, which is fully canonical, endorses the transfer of merit even more widely, including the possibility of sharing merit with all petas.

The Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivādin school and the Abhidharma-kośa

The Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivāda, which had by far the most "comprehensive edifice of doctrinal systematics" of the nikaya schools, was widely influential in India and beyond--"the understanding of karma in the Sarvāstivāda in turn became normative not only for Buddhism in India but also for it in other countries."

The *Abhidharmahrdaya* by Dharmaśrī was the first systematic exposition of Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivāda doctrine, and the third chapter, the *Karma-varga*, deals with the concept of karma systematically.

Another important exposition, the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, gives three definitions of karma: 1) action, 2) formal vinaya conduct, and 3) human action as the agent of various effects. For the first usage, karma is supplanted in the text by the synonyms *kriya* or *karitra*, both of which mean "activity." The third usage, karma as that which links certain actions with certain effects, is the primary concern of the exposition.

The 4th century philosopher Vasubandhu compiled the *Abhidharma-kośa*, an extensive compendium which elaborated the positions of the Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivādin school on a wide range of issues raised by the early sutras. Chapter four the Kośa is devoted to a study of karma, and chapters two and five contain formulation as to the mechanism of fruition and retribution. This became the main source of understanding of the perspective of early Buddhism for later Mahāyāna philosophers.

The notion of *avijñapti*—an unseen latent power that is nonetheless momentary—is significant to the Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivādin accounting of how karmic action precipitates karmic results.

Vasubandhu elaborates on the causes (S. *hetu*, Tib. *rgyu*) and conditions (S. *pratyaya*, Tib. *rkyen*, Pāli: *paccaya*) involved in the production of results (S. *vipākaphalam*, Tib. *rnam-smin-gyi 'bras-bu*), karma being one source of causes and results, the "ripening cause" and "ripened result."} Generally speaking, the conditions can be thought of as auxiliary causes. Vasubandhu draws from the earlier Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma treatises to establish an elaborate Buddhist etiology with the following primary components:

Six Causes:

- **Acting causes** (S. *kāraṇahetu*, T. *byed-rgyu*) – all phenomena, other than the result itself, which do not impede the production of the result. This includes (a) potent acting causes, such as a seed for a sprout, and (b) impotent acting causes, such as the space that allows a sprout to grow and the mother or the clothes of the farmer who planted the seed.

- **Simultaneously arising causes** (S. *sahabhuhetu*, T. *lhan-cig 'byung-ba'i rgyu*) – causes that arise simultaneously with their results. This would include, for instance, characteristics together with whatever it is that possesses the characteristics.
- **Congruent causes** (Skt. *saṃprayuktahetu*, T. *mtshungs-ldan-gyi rgyu*) – a subcategory of simultaneously arising causes, it includes causes share the same focal object, mental aspect, cognitive sensor, time, and slant with their causes—primarily referring to the primary consciousness and its congruent mental factors.
- **Equal status cause** (S. *sabhagahetu*, T. *skal-mnyam-gyi rgyu*) – causes for which the results are later moments in the same category of phenomena. For example, one moment of patience can be considered the cause of the next moment of patience.
- **Driving causes** (S. *sarvatragohetu*, T. *kun groi rgyu*) – disturbing emotions and attitudes that generate other subsequent disturbing emotions and attitudes in the same plane of existence, though the two need not be of the same ethical status.
- **Ripening cause** (Skt. *vipākahetu*, T. *rnam-smin-gyi rgyu*) - the karmic cause or efficacy.

Four Conditions:

- **Causal conditions** (S. *hetupratyaya*, T. *rgyu-rkyen*) - corresponds to five of the six causes, excepting the *kāraṇahetu*, which corresponds to the three conditions below
- **Immediately preceding conditions** (S. *samanantarapratyaya*, T. *dema thag rkyen*) - a consciousness which precedes a sense or mental consciousness without any intervening consciousness and which produces the subsequent consciousness into an experience-ready entity
- **Focal condition** (S. *alambanapratyaya*, T. *dmigs-rkyen*) - or "object condition" - an object which directly generates the consciousness apprehending it into having its aspect, e.g. the object blue causes an eye consciousness to be generated into having the aspect of blue
- **Dominating condition** (S. *adhipatipratyaya*, T. *bdag-rkyen*) -

Five Types of Results:

- **Ripened results** (S. *vipakaphalam*, T. *rnam smin gyi 'bras-bu*) - karmic results.
- **Results that correspond to their cause** (S. *niṣyandaphalam*, T. *rgyu-mthun gyi 'bras-bu*) - causally concordant effects
- **Dominating results** (S. *adhipatiphalam*, *bdag poi bras bu*) - the result of predominance. All conditioned dharmas are the adhipatiphala of other conditioned dharmas.

- **Man-made results** (S. *puruṣakāraphalam*, T. *skyes bu byed-pa'i 'bras-bu*) - a result due to the activity of another dharma
- **Results that are states of being parted** (S. *visamyogaphalam*, T. *bral 'bras*) - not actually a result at all, but refers to the cessation that arises from insight.

The Dārṣṭāntika-Sautrāntika view

The Dārṣṭāntika-Sautrāntika school pioneered the idea of karmic seeds (S. *bija*) and "the special modification of the psycho-physical series" (S. *saṃtatipaṇāmaviśeṣa*) to explain the workings of karma.

The Pudgalavāda view

Although the views of the Pudgalavāda were considered somewhat heretical by other Indian Buddhist schools, they were in all likelihood the most populous non-Mahayanist sect in India, estimated at between a quarter of all non-Mahayana monks up to double the number of the next largest sect. According to scholar Joseph Walser,

The Pudgalavādins argued that karma was a composite entity consisting of several temporal components and one atemporal one. Following the Buddhists *sūtras*, they claimed that mental *saṃskāras* (mental formations corresponding to karma) were of the nature of volition. Vocal and bodily karma, however, consisted only of the motion (*gati*) that could be observed. The motion itself is conditioned and therefore impermanent. The Pudgalavādins were, however, aware that the Buddha also taught the persistence of karma. In this the Pudgalavādins appealed to a text that was also considered authoritative by the Sarvāstivādins: “[Karma] does not perish, even after hundreds of millions of cosmic eras. When the complex [of conditions] and [favorable] times come together, they ripen for their author.” One particular subsect of Pudgalavādins—the Saṃtiīyas—took the imperishability of karma to be one thing and the causes and conditions of karma to be another. They posited the existence of an entity called, appropriately enough, the “indestructible” (*avipraṇāśa*), separate from the karma itself. This “indestructible” acts like a blank sheet of paper on which the actions (karma) are written.

. . . The Pudgalavādin Abhidharma puts a definite spin on the sūtra tradition in their claims that karma persisted because of *avipraṇāśa* (in the case of the Saṃtiīyas) and in claiming that pudgala was neither *saṃsr̥kta* nor *asaṃsr̥kta* (in the case of all Pudgalavādins). Yet the payoff for these maneuvers was sufficient to warrant such a move. . . in positing an *avipraṇāśa*, the Saṃtiīyas could appeal to the words of the Buddha saying that karma was indestructible. By claiming that the *pudgala* was existent, they could meaningfully talk about the owner of karma while at the same time be able to explain how this owner could move from *saṃsāra* to *nirvaṇā*."

Karma theory in Mahāyāna schools

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, a Theravādin monk, speculates that the development of the karma doctrine in the direction of determinism necessitated the development of the Mahāyāna concepts of Buddha-nature and savior Buddhas:

[I]n later centuries, when the principle of freedom was forgotten ... Past bad kamma was seen as so totally deterministic that there seemed no way around it unless you assumed either an innate Buddha in the mind that could overpower it, or an external Buddha who would save you from it.

The transfer or dedication of merit

The Mahāyāna evolved a theory that one being may "dedicate his merit" and thereby share it with others, which was arguably somewhat discordant with prior understandings of karma theory. Scholar Heinz Bechert dates the Buddhist doctrine of transfer of merit (Sanskrit: *puṇyapariṇāmanā*) in its fully developed form to the period between the 5th and 7th centuries CE.

As scholar D. Seyfort Ruegg notes,

An idea that has posed a number of thorny questions and conceptual difficulties for Buddhist thought and the history of the Mahāyāna is that often referred to as 'transfer of merit' (*puṇyapariṇāmanā*). The process of *pariṇāmanā* (Tib. *yons su bsno ba*) in fact constitutes a most important feature in Mahāyāna, where it denotes what might perhaps best be termed the dedication of good (*puṇya*, *śubha*, *kuśala[mula]*; Tib. *bsod nams*, *dge ba*['i *rtsa ba*]) by an exercitant in view of the attainment by another karmically related person (such as a deceased parent or teacher) of a higher end. Yet such dedication appears, *prima facie*, to run counter to the karmic principle of the fruition or retribution of deeds (*karmavipāka*). Generally accepted in Buddhism, both Mahāyānist and non-Mahāyānist, this principle stipulates that a karmic fruit or result (*karmaphala*) is 'reaped', i.e. experienced, solely by the person - or more precisely by the conscious series (*saṃmāna*) - that has sown the seed of future karmic fruition when deliberately (*cetayitva*) accomplishing an action (*karman*).

The related idea of acquisition/possession (of 'merit', Pali *patti*, Skt. *prāpti*), of assenting to and rejoicing in it (*pattānumodanā*), and even of its gift (*pattidāna*) are known to sections of the Theravāda tradition; and this concept - absent in the oldest canonical texts in Pali, but found in later Pali tradition (*Petavatthu*, *Buddhāpadāna*) - has been explained by some writers as being due to Mahāyānist influence, and by reference to Nalinaksha Dutt's category of 'semi-Mahāyāna.'

Scholar Tommi Lehtonen notes that (fellow scholar) "Wolfgang Schumann says that that 'the Mahāyāna teaching of the transfer of merit 'breaks the strict causality of the Hinayānic law of *karman* (P. *kamma*) according to which everybody wanting better rebirth can reach it solely by his own efforts'. Yet, Schumann claims that on this point

Mahāyāna and Hinayāna differ only in the texts, for the religious practice in South East Asia acknowledges the transference of karmic merit (P. *pattidāna*) in Theravāda as well."

Karma theory in Indian Yogācāra philosophy

In the Yogācāra philosophical tradition, one of the two principal Mahāyāna schools, the principle of karma was extended considerably. In the Yogācāra formulation, all experience without exception is said to result from the ripening of karma. Karmic seeds (S. *bija*) are said to be stored in the "storehouse consciousness" (S. *ālayavijñāna*) until such time as they ripen into experience. The term *vāsāna* ("perfuming") is also used, and Yogācārins debated whether *vāsāna* and *bija* were essentially the same, the seeds were the effect of the perfuming, or whether the perfuming simply affected the seeds. The seemingly external world is merely a "by-product" (*adhipati-phala*) of karma. The conditioning of the mind resulting from karma is called *saṃskāra*.

The *Treatise on Action* (*Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*), also by Vasubandhu, treats the subject of karma in detail from the Yogācāra perspective. According to scholar Dan Lusthaus, "Vasubandhu's *Viṃśatikā* (*Twenty Verses*) repeatedly emphasizes in a variety of ways that karma is intersubjective and that the course of each and every stream of consciousness (*vijñāna-santāna*, i.e., the changing individual) is profoundly influenced by its relations with other consciousness streams."

As one scholar argues, whereas in earlier systems it "was not clear how a series of completely mental events (the deed and its traces) could give rise to non-mental, material effects," with the (purported) idealism of the Yogācāra system this is not an issue.

The Mahayana Diamond Sutra (*Vajracchedika-sutra*) also is perhaps suggestive of the Mahāyāna tendency to attribute all happiness and suffering to karmic ripening:

*The happiness and suffering of all beings,
are due to karma, the Sage taught;
Karma arises from diverse acts,
which in turn create the diverse classes of beings*

In Mahāyāna traditions, karma is not the sole basis of rebirth. The rebirths of bodhisattvas after the seventh stage (S. *bhūmi*) are said to be consciously directed for the benefit of others still trapped in *saṃsāra*. Thus, theirs are not uncontrolled rebirths.

Karma theory in Indo-Tibetan Mādhyamaka philosophy

Nāgārjuna articulated the difficulty in forming a karma theory in his most prominent work, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way): *If (the act) lasted till the time of ripening, (the act) would be eternal. If (the act) were terminated, how could the terminated produce a fruit?* The *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti-Akutobhayā*, also generally attributed to Nāgārjuna, concludes that it is impossible both for the act to

persist somehow and also for it to perish immediately and still have efficacy at a later time.

Mādhyaṃaka schools deriving from Nāgārjuna subsequently took one of two approaches to the problem. The Svātantrika-Mādhyaṃaka generally borrowed the philosophy of karma from the Yogācāra. The Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyaṃaka refuted every concept of a support for ongoing karmic efficacy, while nevertheless postulating that a potential (*T. nus pa*) is formed which substantiates whenever the situation is ripe. Candrakīrti, the definitive exponent of Prāsaṅgika, argued that because this potential is not a thing, that is, not an "inherently real phenomenon," it does not need to be supported in any way. One scholar argues that "in India, the Prāsaṅgikas' various viewpoints of karma were never organized into a coherent and convincing system."

In Tibet

Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, argued that the Prāsaṅgika position allowed for the postulation of something called an "act's cessation" (*las zhig pal*) which persists and is in fact a substance (*rdzas* or *dngos po*, S. *vastu*), and which explains the connection between cause and result. Gorampa, an important philosopher of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, accused Tsongkhapa of a doctrinal innovation not legitimately grounded in Candrakīrti's work, and one which amounted to little more than a revival of the Vaibhāṣika concept of *avijñapti* with an intentionally misleading new name. Gelugpa scholars offered defenses of the idea.

Karma theory in East Asian Buddhism

Zen and karma

Dōgen Kigen argued in his *Shobogenzo* that karmic latencies are emphatically not empty, going so far as to claim that belief in the emptiness of karma should be characterized as "non-Buddhist," although he also states that the "law of karman has no concrete existence."

Tendai

The Japanese Tendai/Pure Land teacher Genshin taught that Amida Buddha has the power to destroy the karma that would otherwise bind one in saṃsāra.

Karma in Vajrayana

In the Vajrayana tradition, it is believed that the effects of negative past karma can be "purified" through such practices as meditation on Vajrasattva. The performer of the action, after having purified the karma, does not experience the negative results he or she otherwise would have.

The Karma Buddha family in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism

The dhyani Buddhas, also called Five Wisdom Buddhas, are built on five Buddha families (Kullas, Buddhakula). One of them is named the Karma family presided by Buddha Amoghasiddhi. The symbol/emblem of that family is the double vajra.

Modern interpretations and controversies

Karma theory & social justice

Since the exposure of the West to Buddhism, some western commentators and Buddhists have taken exception to aspects of karma theory, and have proposed revisions of various kinds. These proposals fall under the rubric of Buddhist modernism. As one scholar writes, "Some modern Buddhist thinkers appear largely to have abandoned traditional views of karma and rebirth in light of the contemporary transformation of the conception of interdependence," preferring instead to align karma purely with contemporary ideas of causality. One scholar writes, "it is perhaps possible to say that both Buddhism and Buddhist ethics may be better off without the karmic-rebirth factor to deal with." Often these critical writers have backgrounds in Zen and/or Engaged Buddhism.

The "primary critique" of the Buddhist doctrine of karma is that some feel "karma may be socially and politically disempowering in its cultural effect, that without intending to do this, karma may in fact support social passivity or acquiescence in the face of oppression of various kinds." Dale S. Wright, a scholar specializing in Zen Buddhism, has proposed that the doctrine be reformulated for modern people, "separated from elements of supernatural thinking," so that karma is asserted to condition only personal qualities and dispositions rather than rebirth and external occurrences.

One scholar and Zen practitioner, David Loy, echoes these remarks. He writes, "what are we going to do about karma? There's no point in pretending that karma hasn't become a problem for contemporary Buddhism. Buddhism can fit quite nicely into modern ways of understanding. But not traditional views of karma." Loy argues that the traditional view of karma is "fundamentalism" which Buddhism must "outgrow."

Loy argues that the idea of accumulating merit too easily becomes "spiritual materialism," a view echoed by other Buddhist modernists, and further that

Karma has been used to rationalize racism, caste, economic oppression, birth handicaps and everything else. Taken literally, karma justifies the authority of political elites, who therefore must deserve their wealth and power, and the subordination of those who have neither. It provides the perfect theodicy: if there is an infallible cause-and-effect relationship between one's actions and one's fate, there is no need to work toward social justice, because it's already built into the moral fabric of the universe. In fact, if there is no undeserved suffering, there is really no evil that we need to struggle against. It will all balance out in the end.

While some strands of later Buddhist thought did attribute all experience to past karma, the early texts explicitly did not, and in particular state that caste is not determined by karma.

Loy goes on to argue that the view that suffering such as that undergone by Holocaust victims could be attributed in part to the karmic ripenings of those victims is "fundamentalism, which blames the victims and rationalizes their horrific fate," and that this is "something no longer to be tolerated quietly. It is time for modern Buddhists and modern Buddhism to outgrow it" by revising or discarding the teachings on karma.

The question of the Holocaust also occurs in the *Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Re-Discovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India*, which describes a group of Jewish religious leaders who meet with the Dalai Lama. They ask one of the Dalai Lama's party, a Buddhist scholar named Geshe Sonam Rinchen, if the Holocaust would be attributed to past karma in the traditional Buddhist view, and he affirms that it would. The author is "shocked and a little outraged," because, like Loy, he felt it "sounded like blaming the victim."

Many modern Buddhists such as Thich Naht Hanh prefer to suggest the "dispersion of karmic responsibility into the social system," such that "moral responsibility is decentered from the solitary individual and spread throughout the entire social system," reflecting the left-wing politics of Engaged Buddhism.

Is there collective or national karma?

Other modern Buddhists have sought to formulate theories of group, collective and national karma which are not found in traditional Buddhist thinking. The earliest recorded instance of this occurred in 1925, when a member of the Maha Bodhi named Sheo Narain published an article entitled "Karmic Law" in which he invited Buddhist scholars to explore the question of whether an individual is "responsible not only for his individual actions in his past life but also for past communal deeds."

As one scholar writes, "a systematic concept of group karma was in no sense operative in early Theravada" or other schools based on the early sutras. "Instead," he writes, "the repeated emphasis in the canonical discussions of karma is on the individual as heir to his own deeds. It is only in this century, then, that one finds a conscious effort to split with this tradition."

Buddhism does not deny that the actions taken by one generation of the citizens of a given country will have effects on later generations, for example. However, as noted above, all effects of actions are not karmic effects. Karmic effects impinge only on the mindstreams of those sentient beings who perform the actions. As Nyanatiloka Mahathera writes, individuals

should be responsible for the deeds formerly done by this so-called 'same' people. In reality, however, this present people may not consist at all of the karmic heirs of the same individuals who did these bad deeds. According to Buddhism it is of course quite true

that anybody who suffers bodily, suffers for his past or present bad deeds. Thus also each of those individuals born within that suffering nation, must, if actually suffering bodily, have done evil somewhere, here or in one of the innumerable spheres of existence; but he may not have had anything to do with the bad deeds of the so-called nation. We might say that through his evil Karma he was attracted to the miserable condition befitting to him. In short, the term Karma applies, in each instance, only to wholesome and unwholesome volitional activity of the single individual.

Thus, in the traditional view the effects of the actions of other beings—such as the leader of one's country, or prior generations of its citizens—might well serve as causes of suffering for an individual on one level, but not they would not be the *karmic* causes of the suffering of that individual—those causes would function in *congruence* with the karmic causes. There is, therefore, no "national karma" in traditional Buddhism. One "scholar of engaged Buddhism" wrote an article asserting that the "collective karma" of the United States deriving from the Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse would potentially "play out for generations," a view that is not supported by traditional Buddhist views of karma. The effects may well be felt by Americans for generations, but they would not constitute "collective karma."

"Collective karma" could be spoken of only in certain limited senses in the canonical tradition. In Vasubandu's *Karmasiddhiprakarana*, among other places, it is asserted that a group of individuals who collaborate and share the same intention for a planned action will all incur karmic merit or demerit based on that action, regardless of which individual actually carries out the action. The fruition of their merit or demerit, however, will not necessarily be experienced by each of the individuals together, and/or at the same time. Likewise, "family karma" is possible only when it refers to karmic dispositions which are similar in each individual family member. One scholar points out, "statements concerning group karma . . . are subject to conceptual confusion. It is important to distinguish group karma from what might be termed conjunctive karma, that is, the karmic residues which we experience as a result of the actions of everyone or everything operating casually in the situation, but which are justified by our own accumulated karma. . . the actions of many persons . . . mediate our karma to us. But this is not group karma, for the effect which we experience is justified by our own particular acts or pool of karma, and not by the karmic acts or pool of the group, even though it is mediated by the actions of others."

Is karma just "social conditioning?"

Buddhist modernists also often prefer to equate karma with social conditioning, in contradistinction with, as one scholar puts it, "early texts [which] give us little reason to interpret 'conditioning' as the infusion into the psyche of external social norms, or of awakening as simply transcending all psychological conditioning and social roles. Karmic conditioning drifts semantically toward 'cultural conditioning' under the influence of western discourses that elevate the individual over the social, cultural, and institutional. The traditional import of the karmic conditioning process, however, is primarily ethical and soteriological—actions condition circumstances in this and future lives."

Essentially, this understanding limits the scope of the traditional understanding of karmic effects so that it encompasses only *saṃskāras*—habits, dispositions and tendencies—and not external effects, while at the same time expanding the scope to include social conditioning that does not particularly involve volitional action.

Chapter- 4

Rebirth

Rebirth in Buddhism is the doctrine that the evolving consciousness (Pali: *samvattanika-viññāna*) or stream of consciousness (Pali: *viññāna-sotam*, Sanskrit: *viññāna-srotām*, *viññāna-santāna*, or *citta-santāna*) upon death (or "the dissolution of the aggregates" (P. *khandhas*, S. *skandhas*)), becomes one of the contributing causes for the arising of a new aggregation. The consciousness in the new person is neither identical to nor entirely different from that in the deceased but the two form a causal continuum or stream.

In traditional Buddhist cosmology these lives can be in any of a large number of states of being including the human, any kind of animal and several types of supernatural being. Rebirth is conditioned by the karmas (actions of body, speech and mind) of previous lives; good karmas will yield a happier rebirth, bad karmas will produce one which is more unhappy. The basic cause for this is the abiding of consciousness in ignorance (Pali: *avijja*, Sanskrit: *avidya*): when ignorance is uprooted, rebirth ceases. One of the analogies used to describe what happens then is that of a ray of light that never lands.

Buddhist terminology and doctrine

There is no word corresponding exactly to the English terms "rebirth", "metempsychosis", "transmigration" or "reincarnation" in the traditional Buddhist languages of Pāli and Sanskrit: the entire process of change from one life to the next is called *punarbhava* (Sanskrit) or *punabbhava* (Pāli), literally "becoming again", or more briefly *bhava*, "becoming", while the state one is born into, the individual process of being born or coming into the world in any way, is referred to simply as "birth" (*jāti*). The entire universal process that gives rise to this is called *saṃsāra*.

Within one life and across multiple lives, the empirical, changing self not only objectively affects its surrounding external world, but also generates (consciously and unconsciously) its own subjective image of this world, which it then lives in as 'reality'. It lives in a world of its own making in various ways. It "tunes in" to a particular level of consciousness (by meditation or the rebirth it attains through its karma) which has a particular range of objects - a world - available to it. It furthermore selectively notices from among such objects, and then processes what has been sensed to form a distorted interpretive model of reality: a model in which the 'I am' conceit is a crucial reference point. When nibbana is experienced, though, all such models are transcended: the world stops 'in this fathom-long carcase'.

Historical context

The Buddha lived at a time of great philosophical creativity in India when many conceptions of the nature of life and death were proposed. Some were materialist, holding that there was no existence that the self is annihilated upon death. Others believed in a form of cyclic existence, where a being is born, lives, dies and then is re-born, but in the context of a type of determinism or fatalism in which karma played no role. Others were "eternalists", postulating an eternally existent self or soul comparable to that in Christianity: the ātman survives death and reincarnates as another living being, based on its karmic inheritance. This is the idea that has become dominant (with certain modifications) in modern Hinduism.

The Buddha's concept was distinct, consistent with the common notion of a sequence of lives over a very long time but constrained by two core concepts: that there is no irreducible self tying these lives together (*anattā*) and that all compounded things are subject to dissolution, including all the components of the human person and personality (*anicca*). The story of the Buddha's life presented in the early texts does not allude to the idea of rebirth prior to his enlightenment, leading some to suggest that he discovered it for himself. The Buddha's detailed conception of the connections between action (karma), rebirth and causality is set out in the twelve links of dependent origination.

Ideas of rebirth

Supra-mundane stages, fetters and rebirths

(according to the Sutta Piṭaka)

stage's "fruit"	abandoned fetters	rebirth(s) until suffering's end
stream-enterer	1. identity view 2. doubt	up to seven more times as a human or in a heaven
once-returner	3. ritual attachment	once more as a human
non-returner	4. sensual desire 5. ill will	once more in a pure abode
arahant	6. material-rebirth lust 7. immaterial-rebirth lust 8. conceit 9. restlessness 10. ignorance	none

There are many references to rebirth in the early Buddhist scriptures. These are some of the more important; Mahakammavibhanga Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 136); Upali Sutta

(Majjhima Nikaya 56); Kukkuravatika Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 57); Moliyasivaka Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 36.21); Sankha Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 42.8).

Some English-speaking Buddhists prefer the term "rebirth" or "re-becoming" (Sanskrit: *punarbhava*; Pali: *punabbhava*) to "reincarnation" as they take the latter to imply a fixed entity that is reborn. It is said to be the "evolving consciousness" (Pali: *samvattanika viññāna*, M.1.256) or "stream of consciousness" (Pali: *viññāna sotam*, D.3.105). that reincarnates. The early Buddhist texts make it clear that there is no permanent consciousness that moves from life to life. The lack of a fixed self does not mean lack of continuity. In the same way that a flame is transferred from one candle to another, there is a conditioned relationship between one life and the next: they are neither identical nor completely distinct.

While all Buddhist traditions seem to accept some notion of rebirth, there is no unified view about precisely how events unfold after the moment of death. The medieval Pali scholar Buddhaghosa labeled the consciousness that constitutes the condition for a new birth as described in the early texts "rebirth-linking consciousness" (*patisandhi*). Some schools conclude that karma continued to exist and adhere to the person until it had worked out its consequences. For the Sautrantika school each act "perfumed" the individual and led to the planting of a "seed" that would later germinate as a good or bad karmic result. Theravada Buddhism generally asserts that rebirth is immediate while the Tibetan schools hold to the notion of a bardo (intermediate state) that can last up to forty-nine days. This has led to the development of a unique 'science' of death and rebirth, a good deal of which is set down in what is popularly known as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Theravada Buddhism generally denies there is an intermediate state, though some early Buddhist texts seem to support it. One school that adopted this view was the Sarvastivada, who believed that between death and rebirth there is a sort of limbo in which beings do not yet reap the consequences of their previous actions but may still influence their rebirth. The death process and this intermediate state were believed to offer a uniquely favourable opportunity for spiritual awakening.

Rebirth as cycle of consciousness

Another view of rebirth describes the cycle of death and birth in the context of consciousness rather than the birth and death of the body. In this view, remaining impure aggregates, skandhas, reform consciousness.

Buddhist meditation teachers suggest that observation reveals consciousness as a sequence of conscious moments rather than a continuum of awareness. Each moment is an experience of an individual mind-state such as a thought, a memory, a feeling or a perception. A mind-state arises, exists and, being impermanent, ceases, following which the next mind-state arises. Thus the consciousness of a sentient being can be seen as a continuous series of birth and death of these mind-states. Rebirth is the persistence of this process.

In the practice of Vipassana meditation, the meditator uses "bare attention" to observe the endless round of mind-states without interfering, owning or judging. This limits the power of desire which, according to the second noble truth of Buddhism, is the cause of suffering (*dukkha*) and leads to *Nirvana* (*nibbana*, vanishing (of the self-idea)).

Chapter- 5

Saṃsāra

Translations of saṃsāra	
English:	continuous movement
Pali:	saṃsāra
Sanskrit:	संसार (sangsara)
Chinese:	生死, 輪迴, 流轉 (pinyin: shēngsǐ, lúnhuí, liúzhuan)
Japanese:	輪廻
Thai:	วัฏสงสาร
Vietnamese:	Luân hồi

Saṃsāra or Sangsara, a Sanskrit and Pāli term which translates as "continuous movement" or "continuous flowing", which, in Buddhism, refers to the concept of a cycle of birth (jāti), and consequent decay and death (jarāmaraṇa), in which all beings in the universe participate, and which can only be escaped through enlightenment. Saṃsāra is associated with suffering (or dukkha) and is generally considered the antithesis of Nirvāṇa (Sanskrit) or nibbāna (Pali). Mongolian: orchilong.

Buddha's view of Saṃsāra

According to the Buddha, the beginning point of Saṃsāra is not evident, just as there is no beginning point to a circle. All beings have been suffering in Saṃsāra for an unimaginable period, and they continue to do so until the attainment of Nirvana. The Assu Sutta of the Pali Canon provides an explanation of our existence in Saṃsāra:

At Savatthi. There the buddha said: "From an inconstruable (sic) beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks: Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long,

long time — crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — or the water in the four great oceans?"

"As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time — crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — not the water in the four great oceans."

"Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me."

"This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time — crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — not the water in the four great oceans."

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time — crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — are greater than the water in the four great oceans."

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time — crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — are greater than the water in the four great oceans. "Why is that? From an inconstruable beginning. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries — enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."

Saṃsāra in Nikāya Buddhism

Whereas in other Indian philosophies, some being (ātman, jīva, etc.) is regarded as being subject to Saṃsāra, in Buddhism the rejection of such metaphysical theories is fundamental. Buddhism accounts for the process of rebirth/reincarnation by appeal to phenomenological or psychological constituents. The basic idea that there is a cycle of birth and rebirth is, however, not questioned in early Buddhism and its successors, and neither is, generally, the concept that saṃsāra is a negative condition to be abated through religious practice concluding in the achievement of final nirvāṇa.

Saṃsāra in Mahāyāna Buddhism

The elimination of saṃsāra is the main goal of Buddhism. The Buddha himself was concerned with saṃsāra and the nature of suffering. He offered an understanding of the

cyclic nature of suffering. "Ignorance (avijja) is defined in terms of the four Noble Truths, as 'ignorance concerning suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering'" (Waldron, quoting the Nidāna-Samyutta. 2003:14). Ignorance leads to suffering and forms Karma (saṅskāra). Kārma creates formations, which condition the arising of consciousness or cognitive awareness, the so called viññāna (Waldron. 2003:14). Viññāna is also considered to be a rebirth consciousness. This appears to be a direct explanation of how Kārma is transferred from one life to another. Waldron describes viññāna as a rebirth consciousness which descends into, "takes up," and thereafter animates the newly forming fetus (Waldron. 2003:14). He quotes the following dialogue with the Buddha: 'I have said that consciousness conditions name-and-form. ... Were, Ananda, consciousness not to descend into the mother's womb, would name and form coagulate there?' 'No, Lord.' 'Were consciousness, having descended into the mother's womb, to depart, would name-and-form come to birth in this life?' 'No, Lord.' (Waldron. 2003:14) It appears that the Buddha is emphasising the point that consciousness descending and remaining in the mother's womb is crucial for the rebirth of samsāra into a new life. Therefore, it would be natural to say that viññāna occurs throughout one's life. Waldron says: "It occurs uninterruptedly throughout all of one's worldly lifetimes. It 'descends' into the mother's womb at the beginning of each life and 'departs' at its end. And it only comes to a complete cessation with the end of samsaric existence itself, that is, with Nirvana" (Waldron. 2003:21). Interestingly, viññāna is not only linked to the growth of kārmic formations: it is also connected to the „four sustenances". As Waldron explains: "First, as one of the four sustenances – along with edible food, sensation, and mental intention – consciousness "sustains" each single life as well as one's stream of lives" (Waldron. 2003:21). Viññāna thus can be viewed as one of the four sustenances of life. It appears that the cycle of samsāra is hard to break and needs a concerted effort. The destruction of viññāna is essential for this path to liberation. Waldron explains: "While the process of vinnana grow and increase, thereby sustaining samsaric life, they can also be calmed, pacified, and brought to an end, marking the end of the cycle of birth and death. Indeed, the destruction of vinnana (along with the other four aggregates) is virtually equated with liberation" (Waldron. 2003:22). The end of suffering can be attained by Buddhist practice. To put this into simpler terms: through various practices Buddhists attempt to counteract grasping and begin to reverse the samsāric cycle. As Waldron describes it: "As a result of such practice, vinnana is no longer increased by grasping; on the contrary, a monk 'who is without grasping (or appropriation, anupadana) attains Nibbana'" (Waldron. 2003:22). It would appear that with insight into the nature of suffering Buddhists have found a way to end it. Samsāra, or suffering, which may have lasted countless lifetimes, can end or be radically changed. As Waldron describes it: "Upon realising Nirvana at the end of the process of karmacally driven rebirth, vinnana, the stream of worldly consciousness which persists throughout one's countless lifetimes, also comes to an end, or at least is radically transformed" (Waldron. 2003:22). How do these processes encourage the growth of consciousness, and perpetuate the cycle of rebirth? According to Waldron, the Buddha used a series of simple vegetative metaphors to describe this. He quotes the following dialogue: 'If these five kinds of seeds are unbroken, unspoiled, undamaged by wind and sun, fertile, securely planted, and there is earth and water, would the five kinds of seeds come to growth, increase, and expansion?'

'Yes, venerable sir.' 'Monks, four stations (thitiya) of consciousness should be seen as like the earth element. Delight and lust should be seen as like the water element. Consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen as like the five kinds of seeds' (Waldron. 2003:26). These metaphors demonstrate the interconnectedness between consciousness, Kármic deeds, desire and craving, in the cycle of Kárma. Viññāna appears to be the only quality which leaves one's body at death and enters another at conception. Viññāna therefore can be seen as a link between one life and the next - collecting Kárma and then transmitting it over many lifetimes.

Reference: Waldron. S. William. 2003. *The Buddhist Unconscious. The ālaya-viñjāna in the context of Indian Buddhist thought*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

According to several strands of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, the division of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is attacked using an argument that extends some of the basic premises of anātman and of Buddha's attack on contemporary orthodox accounts of existence. This is found poetically in the "Perfection of Wisdom" literature, and more analytically in the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and later writers. It is not entirely clear which aspects of this theoretical move were developed first in the sutras, and which in the philosophical tradition.

Saṃsāra in Tibetan Buddhism

Saṃsāra is uncontrollably recurring rebirth, filled with suffering and problems (according to Kālacakra tantra as explained by Dr. A. Berzin). In this sense, Samsara may be translated "Wheel of Suffering."

The term Samsara has been translated many ways which include but are not limited to endless suffering, cyclic existence, perpetual wandering, and transmigration. There are six realms that one can go to through this cycle of Samsara. Many believe that when one goes through the process of rebirth that they are the exact same person when they are reborn. This however, is not true. They bear many similarities with their former selves but they are not the same person. This is why many use the term reborn instead of reincarnation. The term reincarnation implies that there is a transfer of conscience or one's soul to the new life and this is not the case in Samsara. buddha101.com gives a good example that shows an easy way to better understand the transfer of consciousness "Like a billiard ball hitting another billiard ball. While nothing physical transfers, the speed and direction of the second ball relate directly to the first." This means the previous life has just as much impact on the new life.

There are also some who believe that Samsara is not the question but the answer to what we are doing here. They consider it to be a process to why we are here. They believe that one creates their own worlds on their way to enlightenment. Meaning when their world is starting to collapse due to their death they will create a new world and move into it. Some also believe that while they are continuing to go from world to world they encounter others who are on the same path that they are on. It is also believed that all of these

different worlds impact the worlds of those who are in a similar place/path that you are on.

Buddha was the first person to grasp the belief of Samsara and figure out how to end it. He taught that the only way for one to end their journey through Samsara was enlightenment. The only person who could stop one's cycle of Samsara was the one who was traveling through their path. Some thought that Samsara is a place and thought that it was selfish for them to be able to stop it and leave the others behind. Most believe that Samsara is a process. In this process people are being born into new lives and since it happens to everyone and everyone has the ability to escape it, it is not selfish. Being said the process of Samsara may take a long time to complete and even with no time limit there may be some who can never actually escape this endless suffering.

Chapter- 6

Four Noble Truth & Noble Eightfold Path

Four Noble Truths

Translations of Four Noble Truths	
Pali:	cattāri ariyasaccāni
Sanskrit:	चत्वारि आर्यसत्यानि (catvāri āryasatyāni)
Chinese:	四聖諦(T) / 四圣谛(S) (pinyin: sìshèngdì)
Japanese:	四諦 (rōmaji: shitai)
Korean:	사성제 (sa-seong-je)
Thai:	อริยสัจสี่ (ariyasaj sii)
Vietnamese:	Tứ Diệu Đế

The **Four Noble Truths** (Sanskrit: *catvāri āryasatyāni*) are an important principle in Buddhism, and were classically taught by the Buddha in the *Dharmacakra Pravartana Sūtra*. These four truths are best understood, not as beliefs, but as categories of experience.

Basic teaching

According to the Saṃyukta Āgama of the Sarvāstivāda school, the basic teaching of the Four Noble Truths is:

1. Thus is the Noble Truth of Suffering
2. Thus is the Noble Truth of the Accumulation of Suffering
3. Thus is the Noble Truth of the Elimination of Suffering

4. Thus is the Noble Truth of the Path that Leads Away from Suffering

The Sanskrit and Pali words *satya* and *sacca*, respectively, mean both "truth" and "real" or "actual thing." With that in mind, one scholar argues that the four noble truths are not asserted as propositional truths or creeds, but as "true things" or "realities" that the Buddha experienced. The original Tibetan Lotsawas (Sanskrit: *locchāwa*; Tibetan: *lo ts'a ba*), who studied Sanskrit grammar thoroughly, used the Tibetan term *bden pa*, which reflects this understanding.

Four Noble Truth definitions

Some versions of the Dharmacakra Pravartana Sutra contain definitions of the Four Noble Truths while others do not. For example, the Sarvastivadin versions portrays the truths as principles to be contemplated in various methods, and no definitions are given. In the Theravada version and the version translated by An Shigao, the Four Noble Truths are given definitions:

1. The Nature of Suffering (or *Dukkha*):
"This is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are 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."
2. Suffering's Origin (*Dukkha Samudaya*):
"This 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."
3. Suffering's Cessation (*Dukkha Nirodha*):
"This 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."
4. The Path (*Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada Magga*) Leading to the Cessation of Suffering:
"This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is the Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration."

Relation to the Eightfold Noble Path

In the version of the *Dharmacakra Pravartana Sūtra* contained in the extant *Samyukta Āgama*, there is no mention of the Noble Eightfold Path. Instead, contemplation of the Four Noble Truths is taken to be the path itself.

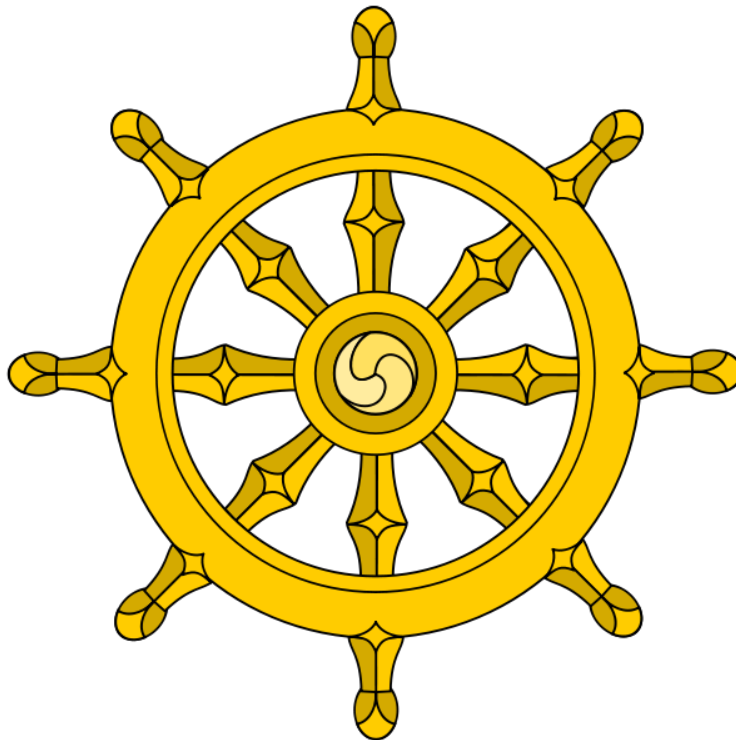
The Four Noble Truths and the Lotus Sutra

The Lotus Sutra's text views the Four Noble Truths as the first teaching of the Buddha, but not the final teaching. In Chapter 3, Similes and Parables, the Sutra introduces what it calls "the most wonderful / the unsurpassed great Law":

In the past at Varanasi/ you turned the wheel of the Law of the Four Noble Truths/, making distinctions/ preaching that all things are born and become extinct,/ being made up of the five components/ Now you turn the wheel of the most wonderful/ the unsurpassed great Law/. This Law is very profound and abstruse;/ there are few who can believe it/ Since times past often we have heard/ the World-Honored One's preaching,/ but we have never heard/ this kind of profound, wonderful and superior Law./ Since the World-Honored One preaches this Law,/ we all welcome it with joy.

Nichiren, whose teachings were based on the Lotus Sutra, stated in his letter "Comparison of the Lotus and Other Sutras" that the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths was expounded especially for the Voice-Hearers or Sravaka disciples, while the Lotus Sūtra was taught equally for all.

Noble Eightfold Path



The Dharma wheel, often used to represent the Noble Eightfold Path

Translations of Noble Eightfold Path	
Pali:	ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo
Sanskrit:	āryāṣṭāṅgamārga
Chinese:	八正道 (pinyin: Bāzhèngdào)
Japanese:	八正道 (rōmaji: Hasshōdō)
Korean:	팔정도 (RR: Paljeongdo)
Mongolian:	qutuytan-u naiman gesigün-ü mör
Thai:	อริยมรรคแปด

The **Noble Eightfold Path** (Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*), is one of the principal teachings of the Buddha, who described it as the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha*) and the achievement of self-awakening. It is used to develop insight into the true nature of phenomena (or reality) and to eradicate greed, hatred, and delusion. The Noble Eightfold Path is the fourth of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths; the first element of the Noble Eightfold Path is, in turn, an understanding of the Four Noble Truths. It is also known as the *Middle Path* or *Middle Way*.

All eight elements of the Path begin with the word "right", which translates the word *samyāñc* (in Sanskrit) or *sammā* (in Pāli). These denote completion, togetherness, and coherence, and can also suggest the senses of "perfect" or "ideal".

In Buddhist symbolism, the Noble Eightfold Path is often represented by means of the dharma wheel (dharmacakra), whose eight spokes represent the eight elements of the path.

Origin

According to discourses found in both the Theravada school's Pali canon, and some of the Āgamas in the Chinese Buddhist canon, the Noble Eightfold Path was rediscovered by Gautama Buddha during his quest for enlightenment. The scriptures describe an ancient path which has been followed and practiced by all the previous Buddhas. The Noble Eightfold Path is a practice said to lead its practitioner toward self-awakening and liberation. The path was taught by the Buddha to his disciples so that they, too, could follow it.

In the same way I saw an ancient path, an ancient road, traveled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. And what is that ancient path, that ancient road, traveled

by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times? Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration...I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging & death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging & death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging & death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging & death...Knowing that directly, I have revealed it to monks, nuns, male lay followers & female lay followers...

—Nagara Sutta

The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path varies from one Buddhist school to another. Depending on the school, it may be practiced as a whole, only in part, or it may have been modified. Each Buddhist lineage claims the ability to implement the path in the manner most conducive to the development of its students.

Additionally, some sources give alternate definitions for the Noble Eightfold Path. The Ekottara Āgama in particular contains variant teachings of basic doctrines such as the Noble Eightfold Path, which are different from those found in the Pali Canon.

The threefold division of the path

The Noble Eightfold Path is sometimes divided into three basic divisions, as follows:

<i>Division</i>	<i>Eightfold Path factors</i>	<i>Acquired factors</i>
Wisdom (Sanskrit: <i>prajñā</i> , Pāli: <i>paññā</i>)	1. Right view	9. Superior right knowledge
	2. Right intention	10. Superior right liberation
Ethical conduct (Sanskrit: <i>śīla</i> , Pāli: <i>sīla</i>)	3. Right speech	
	4. Right action	
	5. Right livelihood	
Concentration (Sanskrit and Pāli: <i>samādhi</i>)	6. Right effort	
	7. Right mindfulness	
	8. Right concentration	

This presentation is called the "Three Higher Trainings" in Mahāyāna Buddhism: higher moral discipline, higher concentration and higher wisdom. "Higher" here refers to the fact that these trainings that lead to liberation and enlightenment are engaged in with the motivation of renunciation or bodhicitta.

The practice

According to the *bhikkhu* (monk) and scholar Walpola Rahula, the divisions of the noble eightfold path "are to be developed more or less simultaneously, as far as possible according to the capacity of each individual. They are all linked together and each helps the cultivation of the others." Bhikkhu Bodhi explains that "with a certain degree of progress all eight factors can be present simultaneously, each supporting the others. However, until that point is reached, some sequence in the unfolding of the path is inevitable".

According to the discourses in the Pali and Chinese canons, right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness are used as the support and requisite conditions for the practice of right concentration. Understanding of the right view is the preliminary role, and is also the forerunner of the entire Noble Eightfold Path. The practitioner should first try to understand the concepts of right view. Once right view has been understood, it will inspire and encourage the arising of right intention within the practitioner. Right intention will lead to the arising of right speech. Right speech will lead to the arising of right action. Right action will lead to the arising of right livelihood. Right livelihood will lead to the arising of right effort. Right effort will lead to the arising of right mindfulness. The practitioner must make the right effort to abandon the wrong view and to enter into the right view. Right mindfulness is used to constantly remain in the right view. This will help the practitioner restrain greed, hatred and delusion.

Once these support and requisite conditions have been established, a practitioner can then practice right concentration more easily. During the practice of right concentration, one will need to use right effort and right mindfulness to aid concentration practice. In the state of concentration, one will need to investigate and verify his or her understanding of right view. This will then result in the arising of right knowledge, which will eliminate greed, hatred and delusion. The last and final factor to arise is right liberation.

Wisdom (Prajñā • Paññā)

"Wisdom", sometimes translated as "discernment" at its preparatory role, provides the sense of direction with its conceptual understanding of reality. It is designed to awaken the faculty of penetrative understanding to see things as they really are. At a later stage, when the mind has been refined by training in moral discipline and concentration, and with the gradual arising of right knowledge, it will arrive at a superior right view and right intention.

Right view

Right view (*samyag-dṛṣṭi* • *sammā-diṭṭhi*) can also be translated as "right perspectiveness", "right vision" or "right understanding". It is the right way of looking at life, nature, and the world as they really are. It is to understand how reality works. It acts as the reasoning for someone to start practicing the path. It explains the reasons for human

existence, suffering, sickness, aging, death, the existence of greed, hatred, and delusion. It gives direction and efficacy to the other seven path factors. Right view begins with concepts and propositional knowledge, but through the practice of right concentration, it gradually becomes transmuted into wisdom, which can eradicate the fetters of the mind. Understanding of right view will inspire the person to lead a virtuous life in line with right view. In the Pali and Chinese canons, it is explained thus:

And what is right view? Knowledge with reference to suffering, knowledge with reference to the origination of suffering, knowledge with reference to the cessation of suffering, knowledge with reference to the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering: This is called right view.

There are two types of right view:

1. **View with taints:** this view is mundane. Having this type of view will bring merit and will support the favourable existence of the sentient being in the realm of samsara.
2. **View without taints:** this view is supramundane. It is a factor of the path and will lead the holder of this view toward self-awakening and liberation from the realm of samsara.

Right view has many facets; its elementary form is suitable for lay followers, while the other form, which requires deeper understanding, is suitable for monastics. Usually, it involves understanding the following reality:

1. **Moral law of karma:** Every action (by way of body, speech, and mind) will have karmic results (a.k.a. reaction). Wholesome and unwholesome actions will produce results and effects that correspond with the nature of that action. It is the right view about the moral process of the world.
2. **The three characteristics:** everything that arises will cease (impermanence). Mental and body phenomena are impermanent, source of suffering and not-self.
3. **Suffering:** Birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, distress, and despair are suffering. Not being able to obtain what one wants is also suffering. The arising of craving is the proximate cause of the arising of suffering and the cessation of craving is the proximate cause of the cessation of the suffering. The quality of ignorance is the root cause of the arising of suffering, and the elimination of this quality is the root cause of the cessation of suffering. The way leading to the cessation of suffering is the noble eightfold path. This type of right view is explained in terms of Four Noble Truths.

Right view for monastics is explained in detail in the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta* ("Right View Discourse"), in which Ven. Sariputta instructs that right view can alternately be attained by the thorough understanding of the unwholesome and the wholesome, the four nutriments, the twelve *nīdanas* or the three taints. "Wrong view" arising from ignorance (*avijjā*), is the precondition for wrong intention, wrong speech, wrong action, wrong livelihood, wrong effort, wrong mindfulness and wrong concentration. The practitioner

should use right effort to abandon the wrong view and to enter into right view. Right mindfulness is used to constantly remain in right view.

The purpose of right view is to clear one's path of the majority of confusion, misunderstanding, and deluded thinking. It is a means to gain right understanding of reality. Right view should be held with a flexible, open mind, without clinging to that view as a dogmatic position. In this way, right view becomes a route to liberation rather than an obstacle.

Right intention

Right intention (*samyak-saṃkalpa* • *sammā sankappa*) can also be known as "right thought", "right resolve", "right conception", "right aspiration" or "the exertion of our own will to change". In this factor, the practitioner should constantly aspire to rid themselves of whatever qualities they know to be wrong and immoral. Correct understanding of right view will help the practitioner to discern the differences between right intention and wrong intention. In the Chinese and Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve.

It means the renunciation of the worldly things and an accordant greater commitment to the spiritual path; good will; and a commitment to non-violence, or harmlessness, towards other living beings.

Ethical conduct (Śīla • Sīla)

For the mind to be unified in concentration, it is necessary to refrain from unwholesome deeds of body and speech to prevent the faculties of bodily action and speech from becoming tools of the defilements. Ethical conduct is used primarily to facilitate mental purification.

Right speech

Right speech (*samyag-vāc* • *sammā-vācā*), deals with the way in which a Buddhist practitioner would best make use of their words. In the Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what is right speech? Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from abusive speech, and from idle chatter: This is called right speech.

The *Samaññaphala Sutta*, *Kevatta Sutta* and *Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta* elaborate:

Abandoning false speech...He speaks the truth, holds to the truth, is firm, reliable, no deceiver of the world...

Abandoning divisive speech...What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here...Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or cementing those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks things that create concord...

Abandoning abusive speech...He speaks words that are soothing to the ear, that are affectionate, that go to the heart, that are polite, appealing and pleasing to people at large...

Abandoning idle chatter...He speaks in season, speaks what is factual, what is in accordance with the goal, the Dhamma, and the Vinaya. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, reasonable, circumscribed, connected with the goal...

The *Abhaya Sutta* elaborates:

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial (or: not connected with the goal), unendearing and disagreeable to others, he does not say them.

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, unendearing and disagreeable to others, he does not say them.

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing and disagreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, but endearing and agreeable to others, he does not say them.

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing and agreeable to others, he does not say them.

In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing and agreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathagata has sympathy for living beings.

Right action

Right action (*samyak-karmānta* • *sammā-kammanta*) can also be translated as "right conduct". As such, the practitioner should train oneself to be morally upright in one's activities, not acting in ways that would be corrupt or bring harm to oneself or to others. In the Chinese and Pali Canon, it is explained as:

And what is right action? Abstaining from taking life, from stealing, and from illicit sex [or sexual misconduct]. This is called right action.

—Saccavibhanga Sutta

And what, monks, is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from unchastity: This, monks, is called right action.

—Magga-vibhanga Sutta

For the lay follower, the *Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta* elaborates:

And how is one made pure in three ways by bodily action? There is the case where a certain person, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from the taking of life. He dwells with his...knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings. Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he abstains from taking what is not given. He does not take, in the manner of a thief, things in a village or a wilderness that belong to others and have not been given by them. Abandoning sensual misconduct, he abstains from sensual misconduct. He does not get sexually involved with those who are protected by their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their relatives, or their Dhamma; those with husbands, those who entail punishments, or even those crowned with flowers by another man. This is how one is made pure in three ways by bodily action.

For the monastic, the *Samaññaphala Sutta* adds:

Abandoning uncelibacy, he lives a celibate life, aloof, refraining from the sexual act that is the villager's way.

Right livelihood

Right livelihood (*samyag-ājīva* • *sammā-ājīva*). This means that practitioners ought not to engage in trades or occupations which, either directly or indirectly, result in harm for other living beings. In the Chinese and Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This is called right livelihood.

The five types of businesses that are harmful to undertake are:

1. **Business in weapons:** trading in all kinds of weapons and instruments for killing.
2. **Business in human beings:** slave trading, prostitution, or the buying and selling of children or adults.
3. **Business in meat:** "meat" refers to the bodies of beings after they are killed. This includes breeding animals for slaughter.
4. **Business in intoxicants:** manufacturing or selling intoxicating drinks or addictive drugs.
5. **Business in poison:** producing or trading in any kind of toxic product designed to kill.

Samādhi: mental discipline, concentration, meditation

Samadhi is literally translated as "concentration", it is achieved through training in the higher consciousness, which brings the calm and collectedness needed to develop true wisdom by direct experience.

Right effort

Right effort (*samyag-vyāyāma* • *sammā-vāyāma*) can also be translated as "right endeavor". In this factor, the practitioners should make a persisting effort to abandon all the wrong and harmful thoughts, words, and deeds. The practitioner should instead be persisting in giving rise to what would be good and useful to themselves and others in their thoughts, words, and deeds, without a thought for the difficulty or weariness involved. In the Chinese and Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what, monks, is right effort?

(i) There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds and exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

(ii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds and exerts his intent for the sake of the abandonment of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen.

(iii) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds and exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen.

(iv) He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds and exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, and culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen:

This, monks, is called right effort.

Although the above instruction is given to the male monastic order, it is also meant for the female monastic order and can be practiced by lay followers of both genders.

The above four phases of right effort mean to:

1. Prevent the unwholesome that has not yet arisen in oneself.
2. Let go of the unwholesome that has arisen in oneself.
3. Bring up the wholesome that has not yet arisen in oneself.
4. Maintain the wholesome that has arisen in oneself.

Right mindfulness

Right mindfulness (*samyak-smṛti* • *sammā-sati*), also translated as "right memory", "right awareness" or "right attention". Here, practitioners should constantly keep their minds alert to phenomena that affect the body and mind. They should be mindful and deliberate, making sure not to act or speak due to inattention or forgetfulness. In the Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what, monks, is right mindfulness?

- (i) There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in and of itself—ardent, aware, and mindful—putting away greed and distress with reference to the world.
- (ii) He remains focused on feelings in and of themselves—ardent, aware, and mindful—putting away greed and distress with reference to the world.
- (iii) He remains focused on the mind in and of itself—ardent, aware, and mindful—putting away greed and distress with reference to the world.
- (iv) He remains focused on mental qualities in and of themselves—ardent, aware, and mindful—putting away greed and distress with reference to the world.

This, monks, is called right mindfulness.

Although the above instruction is given to the male monastic order, it is also meant for the female monastic order and can be practiced by lay followers from both genders.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, a monk of the Theravada tradition, further explains the concept of mindfulness as follows:

The mind is deliberately kept at the level of *bare attention*, a detached observation of what is happening within us and around us in the present moment. In the practice of right mindfulness the mind is trained to remain in the present, open, quiet, and alert, contemplating the present event. All judgments and interpretations have to be suspended, or if they occur, just registered and dropped.

The Maha Satipatthana Sutta also teaches that by mindfully observing these phenomena, we begin to discern its arising and subsiding and the Three Characteristics of Dharma in direct experience, which leads to the arising of insight and the qualities of dispassion, non-clinging, and release

Right concentration

Right concentration (*samyak-samādhi* • *sammā-samādhi*), as its Pali and Sanskrit names indicate, is the practice of concentration (*samādhi*). As such, the practitioner concentrates on an object of attention until reaching full concentration and a state of meditative

absorption (*jhana*). Traditionally, the practice of samadhi can be developed through mindfulness of breathing (*anapanasati*), through visual objects (*kasina*), and through repetition of phrases (*mantra*). Samadhi is used to suppress the five hindrances in order to enter into jhana. Jhana is an instrument used for developing wisdom by cultivating insight and using it to examine true nature of phenomena with direct cognition. This leads to cutting off the defilements, realizing the dhamma and, finally, self-awakening. During the practice of right concentration, the practitioner will need to investigate and verify their right view. In the process right knowledge will arise, followed by right liberation. In the Pali Canon, it is explained thus:

And what is right concentration?

(i) Herein a monk aloof from sense desires, aloof from unwholesome thoughts, attains to and abides in the first meditative absorption [jhana], which is detachment-born and accompanied by applied thought, sustained thought, joy, and bliss.

(ii) By allaying applied and sustained thought he attains to, and abides in the second jhana, which is inner tranquillity, which is unification (of the mind), devoid of applied and sustained thought, and which has joy and bliss.

(iii) By detachment from joy he dwells in equanimity, mindful, and with clear comprehension and enjoys bliss in body, and attains to and abides in the third jhana, which the noble ones [ariyas] call "dwelling in equanimity, mindfulness, and bliss".

(iv) By giving up of bliss and suffering, by the disappearance already of joy and sorrow, he attains to, and abides in the fourth jhana, which is neither suffering nor bliss, and which is the purity of equanimity — mindfulness.

This is called right concentration.

Although this instruction is given to the male monastic order, it is also meant for the female monastic order and can be practiced by lay followers from both genders.

According to the Pali and Chinese canon, right concentration is dependent on the development of preceding path factors:

The Blessed One said: "Now what, monks, is noble right concentration with its supports and requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness — is called noble right concentration with its supports and requisite conditions.

—Maha-cattarisaka Sutta

The acquired factors

In the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* which appears in the Chinese and Pali canons, the Buddha explains that cultivation of the noble eightfold path leads to the development of two further factors, which are right knowledge, or insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*), and right liberation, or release (*sammā-vimutti*). These two factors fall under the category of wisdom (*paññā*).

Right knowledge and right liberation

Right knowledge is seeing things as they really are by direct experience, not as they appear to be, nor as the practitioner wants them to be, but as they truly are. A result of Right Knowledge is the tenth factor - Right liberation

These two factors are the end result of correctly practicing the noble eightfold path, which arise during the practice of right concentration. The first to arise is right knowledge: this is where deep insight into the ultimate reality arises. The last to arise is right liberation: this is where self-awakening occurs and the practitioner has reached the pinnacle of their practice.

The noble eightfold path and cognitive psychology

In the essay "Buddhism Meets Western Science", Gay Watson explains:

Buddhism has always been concerned with feelings, emotions, sensations, and cognition. The Buddha points both to cognitive and emotional causes of suffering. The emotional cause is desire and its negative opposite, aversion. The cognitive cause is ignorance of the way things truly occur, or of three marks of existence: that all things are unsatisfactory, impermanent, and without essential self.

The noble eightfold path is, from this psychological viewpoint, an attempt to change patterns of thought and behavior. It is for this reason that the first element of the path is right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), which is how one's mind views the world. Under the wisdom (*paññā*) subdivision of the noble eightfold path, this worldview is intimately connected with the second element, right thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*), which concerns the patterns of thought and intention that controls one's actions. These elements can be seen at work, for example, in the opening verses of the *Dhammapada*: The noble eightfold path is also the fourth noble truth.

All experience is preceded by mind,
Led by mind,
Made by mind.
Speak or act with a corrupted mind,
And suffering follows
As the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox.

All experience is preceded by mind,
Led by mind,
Made by mind.
Speak or act with a peaceful mind,
And happiness follows
Like a never-departing shadow.

Audio / Audio Source

Thus, by altering one's distorted worldview, bringing out "tranquil perception" in the place of "perception polluted", one is able to ease suffering. Watson points this out from a psychological standpoint:

Research has shown that repeated action, learning, and memory can actually change the nervous system physically, altering both synaptic strength and connections. Such changes may be brought about by cultivated change in emotion and action; they will, in turn, change subsequent experience.

Chapter- 7

Three Marks of Existence

The **Three marks of existence**, within Buddhism, are *three characteristics* (Pali: tilakkhaṇa; Sanskrit: **trilakṣaṇa**) shared by all conditioned things, namely: **impermanence** (anicca, 無常); **suffering** or **unsatisfactoriness** (dukkhā, 苦); **not-self** (anattā, 空).

According to Buddhist tradition, a full understanding of these three can bring an end to suffering (dukkha nirodha, 苦滅). The Buddha taught that all things conditioned by causes (saṅkhāra) are impermanent (anicca) and suffering (dukkhā) while he said not-self (anattā) characterises all dhammas meaning there is no "I" or "mine" in the conditioned as well as the unconditioned (i.e. Nibbāna).

The founder and central figure of Buddhism, Siddhartha achieved Nirvana and awakening after much meditation, thus becoming the Buddha Shakyamuni. With the faculty of wisdom the Buddha directly perceived that everything in the physical world (and everything in the phenomenology of psychology) is marked by these three characteristics:

- *Anicca* (Sanskrit *anitya*) "inconstancy" or "impermanence". This refers to the fact that all conditioned things (sankhara) are in a constant state of flux. In reality there is no thing that ultimately ceases to exist; only the appearance of a thing ceases as it changes from one form to another. Imagine a leaf that falls to the ground and decomposes. While the appearance and relative existence of the leaf ceases, the components that formed the leaf become particulate material that may go on to form new plants. Buddhism teaches a middle way, avoiding the extreme views of eternalism and nihilism.
- *Dukkha* (Sanskrit *duhkha*) or dissatisfaction (or "dis-ease"; also often translated "suffering", though this is somewhat misleading). Nothing found in the physical world or even the psychological realm can bring lasting deep satisfaction.
- *Anatta* (Sanskrit *anatman*) or "non-Self" is used in the suttas both as a noun and as a predicative adjective to denote that phenomena are not, or are without, a permanent self, to describe any and all composite, consubstantial, phenomenal and temporal things, from the macrocosmic to microcosmic, be it matter pertaining to the physical body or the cosmos at large, as well as any and all mental machinations, which are impermanent.

There is often a fourth Dharma Seal mentioned:

- Nirvana is peace. Nirvana is the "other shore" from samsara.

Together the three characteristics of existence are called *ti-lakkhana* in Pali or *tri-laksana* in Sanskrit.

By bringing the three (or four) seals into moment-to-moment experience through concentrated awareness, we are said to achieve wisdom – the third of the three higher trainings – the way out of samsara. Thus the method for leaving samsara involves a deep-rooted change in world view.

Anicca

All compounded phenomena (things and experiences) are inconstant, unsteady, and impermanent. Everything we can experience through our senses is made up of parts, and its existence is dependent on external conditions. Everything is in constant flux, and so conditions and the thing itself is constantly changing. Things are constantly coming into being, and ceasing to be. Nothing lasts.

The important point here is that phenomena arise and cease according to (complex) conditions. In Mahayana Buddhism, a caveat is added: one should indeed always meditate on the impermanence and transitory nature of compound structures and phenomena, but one must guard against extending this to the realm of Nirvana, where impermanence holds no sway. In this view, the ultimate nature of reality is free from the stains of dualistic thought, and should therefore not be labeled as 'one' or the 'other' (i.e. 'permanent' or 'impermanent').

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche states that in the four seals of the Mahayana, Nirvana should be viewed as "beyond extremes". Furthermore, he states that "In many philosophies or religions, the final goal is something that you can hold on to and keep. The final goal is the only thing that truly exists. But nirvana is not fabricated, so it is not something to be held on to. It is referred to as 'beyond extremes.'"

"We somehow think that we can go somewhere where we'll have a better sofa seat, a better shower system, a better sewer system, a nirvana where you don't even have to have a remote control, where everything is there the moment you think of it. But as I said earlier, it's not that we are adding something new that was not there before. Nirvana is achieved when you remove everything that was artificial and obscuring."

Dukkha

Whatever is impermanent is subject to change. Whatever is subject to change is subject to suffering.

—The Buddha

Anatta

In Indian philosophy, the concept of a self is called ātman (that is, "soul" or metaphysical self), which refers to an unchanging, permanent essence conceived by virtue of existence. This concept and the related concept of Brahman, the Vedantic monistic ideal, which was regarded as an ultimate ātman for all beings, were indispensable for mainstream Indian metaphysics, logic, and science; for all apparent things there had to be an underlying and persistent reality, akin to a Platonic form. The Buddha rejected all concepts of ātman, emphasizing changeability not permanence. He taught that all concepts of a substantial personal self were incorrect, and formed in the realm of ignorance. The Buddha criticized conceiving theories even of a unitary soul or identity immanent in all things as unskillful in the Great Discourse on Causation. In fact, according to the Buddha's statement in Khandha Samyutta 47, all thoughts about self are necessarily, whether the thinker is aware of it or not, thoughts about the five aggregates or one of them.

In a number of major Mahayana sutras (e.g. the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Tathagatagarbha Sutra, the Srimala Sutra, among others), the Buddha is presented as clarifying this teaching by saying that, while the skandhas (constituents of the ordinary body and mind) are not the self, there does truly exist an eternal, unchanging, blissful Buddha-essence in all sentient beings, which is the uncreated and deathless Buddha-nature ("Buddha-dhatu") or "True Self" of the Buddha himself. The "tathagatagarbha" /Buddha nature does not represent a substantial self; rather, it is a positive language expression of "sunyata" (emptiness) and represents the potentiality to realize Buddhahood through Buddhist practices; the intention of the teaching of *tathagatagarbha* (Buddha nature) is soteriological rather than theoretical.

This immaculate Buddhist Self (atman) is in no way to be construed as a mundane, impermanent, suffering "ego", of which it is the diametrical opposite. On the other hand, this Buddha-essence or Buddha-nature is also often explained as the *potential* for achieving Buddhahood, rather than an existing phenomenon one can grasp onto as being *me* or *self*.

Anatta is discussed in the *Questions of King Milinda*, composed during the period of the Hellenistic Indo-Greek kingdom of the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. In this text, the monk Nagasena demonstrates the concept of absolute "non-Self" by likening human beings to a chariot and challenges the Greek king "Milinda" (Menander) to find the essence of the chariot. Nagasena states that just as a chariot is made up of a number of things, none of which are the essence of the chariot in isolation, without the other pieces, similarly no one part of a person is a permanent entity; we can be broken up into five constituents – body, sensations, ideation, mental formations and consciousness – the consciousness being closest to the permanent idea of "Self", but is ever-changing with each new thought according to this viewpoint.

According to some thinkers both in the East and the West, the doctrine of "non-Self", may imply that Buddhism is a form of nihilism or something similar. However, as thinkers like Nagarjuna have clearly pointed out, Buddhism is not simply a rejection of

the concept of existence or meaning, but of the hard and fast distinction between existence and non-existence, or rather between *being* and *no-thingness*. Phenomena are not independent from causes and conditions and do not exist as isolated things as we perceive them to be. The lack of a permanent, unchanging, substantial Self in beings and things does not mean that they do not experience growth and decay on the relative level. But on the ultimate level of analysis, one cannot distinguish an object from its causes and conditions or even distinguish between object and subject (an idea appearing relatively recently in Western science). Buddhism thus has much more in common with Western empiricism, pragmatism, anti-foundationalism, and even poststructuralism than with nihilism.

In the Nikāyas, the Buddha and his disciples commonly question or declare "Is that which is impermanent, subject to change, subject to suffering fit to be considered thus: 'This I am, this is mine, this is my self'?" The question which the Buddha poses to his audience is whether compounded phenomena are fit to be considered as self, to which the audience agrees that it is unworthy to be considered so. And in relinquishing such an attachment to compounded phenomena, such a person gives up delight, desire and craving for compounded phenomena and is unbounded by its change. When completely free from attachments, craving or desire to the five aggregates, such a person experiences then transcends the very causes of suffering.

In this way, the insight wisdom or prajñā of non-Self gives rise to cessation of suffering, and not an intellectual debate over whether a self exists or not.

It is by realizing (not merely understanding intellectually, but making real in one's experience) the three marks of conditioned existence that one develops prajñā, which is the antidote to the ignorance that lies at the root of all suffering.

Interpretations of the three marks by various schools

Some Buddhist traditions assert that Anatta pervades everything, and is not limited to personality, or soul. These traditions assert that Nirvana also has the quality of Anatta, but that Nirvana (by definition) is the cessation of Dukkha and Anicca.

In his Mulamadhyamakakarika (XXV:19), Nagarjuna says:

There is not the slightest difference Between Samsara and Nirvana

This verse points us to an interesting stress between dukkha and nirvana, through an argument based in anatta. This specific stress can be seen to be the key to (and possibly source for the development of) the deity yogas of vajrayana.

The sutra path enjoins us to identify the entire world (internally and externally) as samsara – a continual churning of suffering that nobody wants to be part of. Our practice is that of *leaving* the shores of samsara.

On the other hand, we are told that unconditioned, enlightened activity is not actually different from samsara.

Whereas the deity yoga of vajrayana enjoins us to identify the entire world as nirvana – a continual play of enlightening activity that everyone wishes to be a part of. Our practice here is that of *arriving* at the shores of nirvana.

At this level, the distinction between Sutra and Vajrayana remain that of view (*departing* vs. *arriving*), but basically the practitioner remains involved in undergoing a transformative development to his or her Weltanschauung, and in this context, these practices remain rooted in psychological change, grounded in the development of Samatha, or training in concentration.

However, there are certain practices in Tantra which are not solely concerned with psychological change; these revolve around the basic idea that it is possible to induce deep levels of concentration through psycho-physical methods as a result of special exercises. The purpose remains the same (to achieve liberating view), but the method involves a 'short cut' for the training in Samatha.

Chapter- 8

Pratītyasamutpāda

The doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* (Sanskrit: प्रतीत्यसमुत्पाद; Pali: *paticcasamuppāda*; Tibetan: rten.cing.'brel.bar.'byung.ba; Chinese: 起), often translated as "**dependent arising**", is a cardinal doctrine in Buddhism, that refers to the causal relations between the psychophysical phenomena that sustain dukkha (dissatisfaction) in worldly experience. It is variously rendered into English as "dependent arising", "conditioned genesis", "dependent co-arising", and "interdependent arising" and is an elaboration of the second Noble Truth.

Overview

The Buddha begins his teaching by specifying the spiritual problem that he has considered, namely dukkha, loosely translated as suffering, stress or unsatisfactoriness. He pointed out that life is unsatisfactory, consisting of a continuous pursuit of happiness that does not last, and is always just out of reach. "Sometimes this dissatisfaction manifests in the form of grief, despair and disappointment, but usually it hovers at the edge of our awareness as a vague unlocalized sense that things are never quite perfect, never fully adequate to our expectations of what they should be." Life follows a trajectory quite independent of our dreams and desires.

Beings pursue happiness at every stage in life: pursuit of food to satisfy hunger, a partner to satisfy carnal desires, offspring, profession and ambition to satisfy the urge for achievement, words and ideas to satisfy intellectual hunger, all of which are never quite completely satisfactory. In the end these beings have to die, leaving all that they toiled hard to accumulate (possessions, relations and so on), still harboring unsatisfied dreams. But this process of continuous pursuit and vain effort does not stop on death, since life takes root beyond death in another organism. This was the only spiritual problem the Buddha considered worth solving.

The Buddha did not describe samsara as a physical place or realm where we live, or the universe (as it is understood in modern parlance), but as a process of generating and consuming pleasures and passions. The Buddha's purpose was to provide a solution to this perpetual problem of human condition, of seemingly inescapable unsatisfactoriness. The Pali Canon liken him to a skilled doctor who diagnoses a disease, its root cause and prescribes a solution, assuring the patient that a definite cure surely exists. The Buddha stated the spiritual problem that he has considered, (*dukkha*) and how it is sustained (The

first two Noble truths). He then assured his listeners that there is a definite solution to dukkha that brings about a *complete* and *final* cessation of *dukkha* (The third Noble truth). Finally, he prescribes the path to be followed to attain this freedom, the Noble eightfold path (The fourth Noble truth).

In general, pratītyasamutpāda is the detailed exposition of the second Noble truth, which states that dukkha has a cause. It is due to ignorance of these causal factors that we roam about in samsara deluded, confused, dissatisfied and anxious. By developing factors completely contrary to those that sustain *dukkha*, and with the complete fading of the causes, one can attain complete liberation from suffering (nibbana).

Some scholars believe that pratītyasamutpāda is Buddhist metaphysics, but it has no relevance to cosmology (origin and nature of the universe), theology, or an absolutist (absolute soul, self, etc.) or relativistic philosophy. However, a small part of metaphysics deals with the apparent contradiction, or paradox, between free will and the position that worldly phenomena are solely a consequence of natural causal factors. In so far as it resolves this paradox, we can perhaps call pratītyasamutpāda a *metaphysic of volitions (or karma)*. Understanding the relationships between the phenomena that sustain dukkha is said to lead to complete freedom from samsara, (nibbana).

Pratītyasamutpāda in the Nikayas

Causality in Early Buddhism

To understand the root cause of dukkha, the Buddha analyzed the causality of experience in a manner that broke from the dominant world view of his time. Unlike Aristotle or the dominant Samkhya view of causality, his perspective as recorded in the Pali Nikayas is that every phenomenon has a *sustaining* cause. Since the cause itself is another phenomenon it should also have something else for its sustenance.

This view of causality stands in stark contrast to the notion of a single primordial cause, for everything in the universe (the prime mover), or a creator God. Instead of questioning the cause of existence, the Buddha looked for the cause of experience—dissatisfaction, fear, and insubstantial happiness. Instead of looking for an escape (more material pleasures), or deluded self-assurance (images of good fortune such as God), or relaxing into the prospect of suffering (pessimism, lack of hope), he taught a way to find the nutriment that dukkha sustains on, and put an end to it. *"The dangers of life are real. Our weaknesses are real. If we don't see them clearly, don't take them to heart, and don't try to find a way out, there's no way we can put an end to the causes of our fears."*

The causality of dukkha

Phenomena are sustained only so long as their sustaining factors (nutriments) remain. This causal relationship is expressed in its most general form as follows:

When this exists, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases.
— Samyutta Nikaya 12.61

This natural law of *this/that causality* is independent of being discovered, just like the laws of physics. In particular, the Buddha applied this law of causality to determine the cause of *dukkha*.

Cause	Effect	Comments
<i>Birth</i>	Aging and death (and this entire mass of <i>dukkha</i>)	Birth is any coming-to-be or coming-forth. It refers not just to birth at the beginning of a lifetime, but to birth as new person, acquisition of a new status or position etc.
<i>Becoming</i>	<i>Birth</i>	These three are becoming: sensual becoming, form becoming, formless becoming
<i>Clinging/sustenance</i>	<i>Becoming</i>	These four are clingings: <i>sensual clinging</i> , <i>view clinging</i> , <i>practice clinging</i> , and <i>self clinging</i>
<i>Craving</i>	<i>Clinging/sustenance</i>	There are these six forms of cravings: cravings with respect to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch (massage, sex, pain), and ideas.
<i>Feeling (Sensation)</i>	<i>Craving</i>	Feeling or sensations are of six forms: vision, hearing, olfactory sensation, gustatory sensation, tactile sensation, and intellectual sensation (thought).
<i>Contact</i>	<i>Feeling</i>	The coming together of the object, the sense medium and the consciousness of that sense medium is called <i>contact</i> .
<i>Six sense media</i>	<i>Contact</i>	The eye, ear nose, tongue, the body and the mind are the six sense media.
<i>Name-and-form</i>	<i>Six sense media</i>	Feeling, perception, intention, contact, and attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the body dependent on the four great elements: This is called form.

<i>Consciousness</i>	<i>Name-and-form</i>	These six are classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness. As seen earlier, consciousness and the organ cannot function without each other.
<i>Fabrications (volitional fabrications)</i>	<i>Consciousness</i>	These three are fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.
<i>Ignorance</i>	<i>Fabrications (volitional tendencies)</i>	Not knowing suffering, not knowing the origination of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, not knowing the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering: This is called ignorance.

So working backwards gives us the way to put an end to stress:

From the remainderless fading and cessation of *ignorance* comes the cessation of *(volitional) fabrications*. From the cessation of *(volitional) fabrications* comes the cessation of *consciousness*. From the cessation of *consciousness* comes the cessation of *name-and-form*. From the cessation of *name-and-form* comes the cessation of the *six sense media*. From the cessation of the *six sense media* comes the cessation of *contact*. From the cessation of *contact* comes the cessation of *feeling*. From the cessation of *feeling* comes the cessation of *craving*. From the cessation of *craving* comes the cessation of *clinging/sustenance*. From the cessation of *clinging/sustenance* comes the cessation of *becoming*. From the cessation of *becoming* comes the cessation of *birth*. From the cessation of *birth*, then aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair all cease. Such is the cessation of *this entire mass of stress and suffering*.

Applications

The Buddha's enlightenment simultaneously comprised his liberation from suffering (Pāli: *dukkha*; Sanskrit: *duhkha*) and his insight into the nature of reality (nature of experience). The general formulation has two well-known applications. One applies dependent origination to the concept of suffering, and takes the form of the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha*: There is suffering. Suffering is an intrinsic part of life prior to awakening, also experienced as dissatisfaction, discontent, unhappiness, impermanence.

2. *Samudaya*: There is a cause of suffering, which is attachment or desire (*tanha*).
3. *Nirodha*: There is a way out of suffering, which is to eliminate attachment and desire.
4. *Magga*: The path that leads out of suffering is called the Noble Eightfold Path.

The other applies dependent origination to the process of rebirth, and is known as the Twelve Nidanas. The nikayas themselves do not give a systematic explanation of the nidana series. As an expository device, the commentarial tradition presented the factors as a linear sequence spanning over three lives; this does not mean that past, present, and future factors are mutually exclusive – in fact, many sutras contend that they are not. The twelve nidanas categorized in this way are:

Former life

- ignorance
- formations (conditioned things)

Current life

- consciousness
- mind and body (personality or identity)
- the six sense bases (five physical senses and the mind)
- contact (between objects and the senses)
- feeling (registering the contact)
- craving (for continued contact)
- clinging
- becoming (similar to formations)

Future life

- birth
- old age and death

This twelve-factor formula is the most familiar presentation, though a number of early sutras introduce lesser-known variants which make it clear that the sequence of factors should not be regarded as a linear causal process in which each preceding factor gives rise to its successor through a simple reaction. The relationship among factors is always complex, involving several strands of conditioning. For example, whenever there is ignorance, craving and clinging invariably follow, and craving and clinging themselves indicate ignorance.

With respect to the destinies of human beings and animals, dependent origination has a more specific meaning, as it describes the process by which sentient beings incarnate into any given realm and pursue their various worldly projects and activities with all concomitant suffering. Among these sufferings are aging and death. Aging and death are experienced by us because birth and youth have been experienced. Without birth there is

no death. One conditions the other in a mutually dependent relationship. Our becoming in the world, the process of what we call "life", is conditioned by the attachment and clinging to ideas and projects. This attachment and clinging in turn cannot exist without craving as its condition. The Buddha understood that craving comes into being because there is sensation in the body which we experience as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. When we crave something, it is the sensation induced by contact with the desired object that we crave rather than the object itself. Sensation is caused by contact with such objects of the senses. The contact or impression made upon the senses (manifesting as sensation) is itself dependent upon the six sense organs which themselves are dependent upon the psychophysical entity that a human being is. The whole process is summarized by the Buddha as follows:

English Terms	Sanskrit Terms
With Ignorance as condition, Mental Formations arise	With Avidyā as condition, Saṃskāra arises
With Mental Formations as condition, Consciousness arises	With Saṃskāra as condition, Vijñāna arises
With Consciousness as condition, Name and Form arise	With Vijñāna as condition, Nāmarūpa arises
With Name & Form as condition, Sense Gates arise	With Nāmarūpa as condition, Ṣaḍāyatana arises
With Sense Gates as condition, Contact arises	With Ṣaḍāyatana as condition, Sparśa arises
With Contact as condition, Feeling arises	With Sparśa as condition, Vedanā arises
With Feeling as condition, Craving arises	With Vedanā as condition, Trṣṇā arises
With Craving as condition, Clinging arises	With Trṣṇā as condition, Upādāna arises
With Clinging as condition, Becoming arises	With Upādāna as condition, Bhava arises
With Becoming as a condition, Birth arises	With Bhava as condition, Jāti arises
With Birth as condition, Aging and Dying arise	With Jāti as condition, Jarāmaraṇa arises

The thrust of the formula is such that when certain conditions are present, they give rise to subsequent conditions, which in turn give rise to other conditions and the cyclical nature of life in Samsara can be seen. This is graphically illustrated in the Bhavacakra (wheel of life).

Contemporary teachers often teach that it can also be seen as a daily cycle occurring from moment to moment throughout each day. There is scriptural support for this as an

explanation in the Abhidharmakosa of Vasubandhu, insofar as Vasubandhu states that on occasion "the twelve parts are realized in one and the same moment".

For example, in the case of avidyā, the first condition, it is necessary to refer to the three marks of existence for a full understanding of its relation to pratītyasamutpāda. It is also necessary to understand the Three Fires and how they fit into the scheme. The Three Fires sit at the very center of the schemata in the Bhavacakra and drive the whole edifice. In Himalayan iconographic representations of the Bhavacakra such as within Tibetan Buddhism, the Three Fires are known as the Three Poisons which are often represented as the Gankyil. The Gankyil is also often represented as the hub of the Dharmacakra.

Nirvana is often conceived of as stopping this cycle. By removing the causes for craving, craving ceases. So, with the ceasing of birth, death ceases. With the ceasing of becoming, birth ceases, and so on, until with the ceasing of ignorance no karma is produced, and the whole process of death and rebirth ceases.

Madhyamaka and Pratītyasamutpāda

Though the formulations above appear might seem to imply that pratītyasamutpāda is a straightforward causal model, in the hands of the Madhyamaka school, pratītyasamutpāda is used to demonstrate the very lack of inherent causality, in a manner that appears somewhat similar to the ideas of David Hume. Many scholars have agreed that the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā is one of the earliest interpretations of Buddha's teaching on paramārtha originated from Pratītyasamutpāda.

The conclusion of the Madhyamikas is that causation, like being, must be regarded as a merely conventional truth (saṃvṛti), and that to take it as *really* (or essentially) existing would be both a logical error and a perceptual one, arising from ignorance and a lack of spiritual insight.

This is best illustrated with the wheel of life (Sanskrit: *bhavacakra*). Depicting the cycle of rebirth, the wheel of life illustrates the fact that nothing in our conventional reality "is brought about ... by any single cause alone, but by concomitance of a number of conditioning factors arising in discernibly repeated patterns." Thus, everything is dependent on and relates to something (and, ultimately, everything) else. "As far as one analyzes, one finds only dependence, relativity, and emptiness, and their dependence, relativity and emptiness" ad infinitum.

According to the analysis of Nāgārjuna, the most prominent Madhyamika, true causality depends upon the intrinsic existence of the elements of the causal process (causes and effects), which would violate the principle of anatman, but pratītyasamutpāda does not imply that the apparent participants in arising are essentially real.

Because of the interdependence of causes and effects (because a cause depends on its effect to be a cause, as effect depends on cause to be an effect), it is quite meaningless to talk about them as existing separately. However, the strict *identity* of cause and effect is

also refuted, since if the effect *were* the cause, the process of origination could not have occurred. Thus both monistic and dualistic accounts of causation are rejected.

Therefore Nāgārjuna explains that the *sūnyatā* (or emptiness) of causality is demonstrated by the interdependence of cause and effect, and likewise that the interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*) of causality itself is demonstrated by its *anatta*.

In his *Entry to the middle way*, Candrakīrti asserts, "If a cause produces its requisite effect, then, on that very account, it is a cause. If no effect is produced, then, in the absence of that, the cause does not exist."

Pratītyasamutpāda in Dzogchen

In Dzogchen tradition the interdependent origination is considered illusory:

[One says], "all these (configurations of events and meanings) come about and disappear according to dependent origination." But, like a burnt seed, since a nonexistent (result) does not come about from a nonexistent (cause), cause and effect do not exist.

What appears as a world of apparently external phenomena, is the play of energy of sentient beings. There is nothing external or separate from the individual. Everything that manifests in the individual's field of experience is a continuum. This is the Great Perfection that is discovered in the Dzogchen practice.

"Being obsessed with entities, one's experiencing itself [*sems*, *citta*], which discriminates each cause and effect, appears as if it were cause and condition."

Dependent arising of enlightenment

Pratītyasamutpāda is most commonly used to explain how suffering arises depending on certain conditions, the implication being that if one or more of the conditions are removed (if the "chain" is broken), suffering will cease. There is also a text, the *Upanisa Sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, in which a discussion of the conditions not for suffering but for enlightenment are given. This application of the principle of dependent arising is referred to in Theravada exegetical literature as "transcendental dependent arising". The chain in this case is:

1. suffering (*dukkha*)
2. faith (*saddhā*)
3. joy (*pāmojja*, *pāmuja*)
4. rapture (*pīti*)
5. tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
6. happiness (*sukha*)
7. concentration (*samādhi*)
8. knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathābhūta-ñāna-dassana*)
9. disenchantment with worldly life (*nibbidā*)

10. dispassion (*virāga*)
11. freedom, release, emancipation (*vimutti*, a synonym for *nibbana*)
12. knowledge of destruction of the cankers (*āsava-khaye-ñāna*)

Interbeing and Deep Ecology

Nobel Peace Prize nominee Thich Nhat Hanh, a follower of the Vietnamese Zen tradition, has coined the term *Interbeing* as a synonym of *pratityasamutpada*. This phrase expresses the reality of mutual interdependence in human relationship both in the sense of relating one to another and in the wider sense of humanity's relationship to the natural world as a whole. Hanh's presentation of "interbeing" has doctrinal antecedents in the Huayan school of thought, which "is often said to provide a philosophical foundation" for Zen.

The Sramanic religious traditions of India (Theravada Buddhism and Jainism) have been characterised by an unusual sensitivity to living beings. Monks of both traditions are strictly forbidden from harming any life form, including even the smallest insects and vegetation. One of the basic ideas behind the Buddha's teaching of mutual interdependence is that ultimately there is no demarcation between what appears to be an individual creature and its environment. Harming the environment (the nexus of living beings of which one forms but a part) is thus, in a nontrivial sense, harming oneself. This philosophical position lies at the heart of modern-day deep ecology and some representatives of this movement (e.g. Joanna Macy) have shown that Buddhist philosophy provides a rational basis for deep ecological thinking.

Chapter- 9

Twelve Nidānas

Translations of Nāmarūpa	
Pali:	Nāmarūpa
Sanskrit:	Nāmarūpa
Chinese:	十二因緣 (pinyin: shíèryīnyuán)
Japanese:	jūni innen
Tibetan:	Wylie: <i>Rten-'brel-yan-lag-bcu-gnyis</i> THDL: tendrel yenlak chungyi
Vietnamese:	thập nhị nhân duyên

The **Twelve Nidānas** (Pali/Sanskrit **nidāna** "cause, foundation, source or origin") are the best-known application of the Buddhist concept of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination), identifying the origins of suffering to be in craving and ignorance. The Twelve Nidānas are employed in the analysis of phenomena according to the principle of Pratītyasamutpāda. The Twelve Nidānas reveal the origins of phenomena, and the feedback loop of conditioning and causation that leads to suffering in current and future lives.

Summary

The basic principle of pratītyasamutpāda and the Twelve Nidānas is to see the conditioned causal connection of each state that supports the next in the cycle of our lives as we suffer in Samsara. It is explained in detail in the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa, the central text of the Mahāvihāra commentarial tradition.

The causal chain of analysis employed in this type of analysis appears to operate from the position that individual phenomena are caused or conditioned by only a single cause. This reflects not a blanket declaration by the Buddha Śākyamuni or the Theravāda commentators that individual phenomena can have only a single cause, but rather a

simplifying assumption employed to make the analytical technique more useful to the practitioner.

Like many of the techniques and theories contained in the Visuddhimagga and other commentarial works, the Twelve Nidāna analysis was intended to be used as one of many techniques available to a student of meditation, and its form reflects both the needs and experiences of Buddhist meditation practitioners.

The chain of twelve phenomena leading to future births and suffering was variously presented by the Buddha; Buddhaghosa recounts four methods- working from 'bottom to top', working from the 'middle to the top', working from 'top to bottom', and working from the 'middle to the source' (Buddhaghosa compares the teaching of the Twelve Nidānas to a creeper vine that is seized and removed in one of four different ways). The first method begins with ignorance and proceeds to sickness, old age, and death. The second method begins with attachment and proceeds to birth. The third method begins with birth and proceeds back to ignorance. The fourth method begins with attachment and proceeds to ignorance.

The Twelve Nidānas

- **Avidyā** (Sanskrit) or **Avijjā** (Pāli); Tibetan (Wylie transliteration) *ma.rig.pa* (marikpa), Eng. "ignorance".

Ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, the Three marks of existence, the Five Skandhas, Karma, and Pratītyasamutpāda results in a wrong assessment of reality. This narrowness of experience is the primary cause of duḥkha (suffering dissatisfaction, pain, unease, etc.)

Avidyā may be understood as "a continuous gradient characterizing not so much a particular state of being, but the quality or direction of situational patterning, experienced as a 'falling away from' the modality of pristine awareness."

- **Samṣkāra** (Sanskrit) or **Saṅkhāra** (Pāli); Tibetan *du.byed* (duche), Eng. "(mental) formations"

The impulse accumulations of samṣkāra are characterized by the energetic direction of the first motif, manifesting through body, speech, and mind as structuring forces of our being. This relationship forms the basis of our character and our personal karmic patterning.

- **Vijñāna** (Sanskrit) or **Viññāna** (Pāli); Tibetan *rnam.par.shes.pa* or *rnam.shes* (namshe), Eng. "consciousness"

Vijñāna represents the partially structured consciousness that results from the action of samṣkāra and the shaping of that energetic activity into a less flexible and more stagnant form.

"It is pictured as having a two-fold function: the cognition of objects that arise in our field of awareness and a structured stream that is being continually fed from the reservoir of energetic activity. The interplay between saṃskāra and vijñāna is seen as accounting for all the experiential data associated with the psychological notion of the unconscious, including memory, dreams, and the eruption of emotive complexes."

- **Nāmarūpa** (Sanskrit and Pāli); Tibetan *ming.gzugs* (mingzuk), Eng. "name and form"

Vijñāna has a quick grasping tendency, moving from sensory objects to objects of imagination rapidly. This energy may therefore crystallize and take shape into mental functions, called *Nāma*, or it may be represented as material forms, called *Rūpa*.

As a collective idea, the Nāmarūpa motif models the reciprocal relationship of bodily and mental functioning. *Nāma* is the naming activity of the discursive mind. *Rūpa* develops an internal representation of external objects, without which mind and body cannot exist.

"*Nāma* refers to three components of mental functioning. There is the sensation or tone-awareness of a mental situation. There is also an ideational or labeling function. And finally there is the component of dispositional orientation, the 'mood-energy' we bring to a situation."

"*Rūpa* refers to the four dynamic structuring operations of solidity, cohesion, heat, and motility. They are represented by the elemental symbols of earth, water, fire, and air. The operation of these elemental modes goes to make up what we experience as our physical world, including our body. *Rūpa* embraces the static aspects of embodiment such as cellular, tissue, and organ structures, as well as the dynamic aspect of body metabolism--electro-physiological pathways, membrane transport, etc."

- **Ṣaḍāyatana** (Sanskrit) or **Salāyatana** (Pāli); Tibetan *skye.mched* (kyemche), Eng. "six sense gates"

The close relationship of bodily and mental functioning is differentiated into the six-fold bases of awareness, which contribute to the arising of all sensory experiences that make up our interpretation of reality. The six-fold bases are divided into an internal grouping (*ādhyātmika*) with corollary external (*bāhya*) supports.

"The internal grouping refers to the integration of five sensory capabilities (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) and a sixth capability, termed non-sensuous or mental, which refers to the capability of all acts of memory, imagination, visualization, etc. These internal bases are not to be confused with the corresponding physical organs ... They are simply loci of sensitivity structured such that there arises the experience of seeing, hearing, etc."

"The six external bases, which always work in conjunction with the corresponding internal base, refer to the six types of possible object awareness. These bases are the means by which the differentiated aspects, which are fleeting stabilizations in the field

character of our awareness, stand out long enough to be appropriated as this-or-that specific object. The external and internal bases should be pictured as working together in pairs. In any given moment there is the two-fold working of a particular modality of awareness (eye-sensitivity and color-forms, ear-sensitivity and sounds, etc.)."

- **Sparsā** (Sanskrit) or **Phassa** (Pāli); Tibetan *reg.pa* (rekpa), Eng. "contact"

The sparśa motif refers to the relationship or rapport between the internal and external āyatana. Impressions of tone arise in conjunction with the specific modality of awareness that is operating.

- **Vedanā** (Sanskrit and Pāli); Tibetan *tshor.ba* (tsorwa), Eng. "sensation"

There are six types of feeling tone awareness that arise from contact of the āyatana. The feeling tone or sensation of each of the six āyatana is uniquely different. For example, the feeling tone and felt experience of sensations in the body are distinct from the feeling tones generated from experiencing sight or sound.

"Each modality is experientially separable on the basis of (a) the *place* of sensitivity (internal base), (b) the corresponding *structure* of its field (external base), (c) the manner of articulation or relatedness between (a) and (b), termed rapport, and (d) the resulting distinctive tone."

- **Trṣṇā** (Sanskrit) or **Taṇhā** (Pāli); Tibetan *sred.pa* (sepa), Eng. "craving" or "desire" or "thirst":

Following the arising of tone-awareness is an unconditioned or habitually patterned experience of craving or attachment. The type of craving or attachment that follows depends upon which of the six āyatanas is involved, and which of the following three "motivations" is present.

"The motivation of sensual gratification (kāma-trṣṇā) is perhaps the most common. It results in simple attachment to whatever arises in one's field of awareness. It is not an overt appropriation, one that we consciously activate. It refers rather to the habitual structuring of experience such that one is compulsively caught up in one situation after another through a process of identification and clinging.

"One can also be motivated with regard to the desire for 'eternals' (bhava-trṣṇā). It is the habitual structuring of any sensory impression, any momentary awareness, such that it might be the occasion for securing an eternal realm of peace and contentment.

"Finally there is the annihilatory motivation (vibhava-trṣṇā). It is the automatic structuring of experience such that any sensory activation might be the cause of a compulsive thirst to annihilate and destroy. What is commonly regarded as psychopathic behavior might be linked particularly with this type of motivation."

- **Upādāna** (Sanskrit and Pāli); Tibetan *len.pa* (lenpa), Eng. "attachment"

If the object of one's desires comes to fruition, then these craving desires of *trṣṇā* may solidify and manifest as the quality of attachment, or *upādāna*. This condition of fulfilled desires and attachment is always fleeting and momentary, as new cravings arise once old cravings are satisfied.

Attachment may take many forms, for example, emotional attachment to persons, to life, material comfort, routines, pleasant or unpleasant sensations, beliefs, thoughts, judgements, etc. We may not have attachment to things like wealth or success in society, but we are typically very strongly attached to our feelings and constructed identity of the self.

One may become fixated on a mental "story" or representation of reality, or a mental version of an object or event, preferring and craving for an unrealized internal version of external reality. Once this fixation shapes behavior in a way that internal desires are satiated, then the craving of *trṣṇā* may be said to have shifted to the attachment of *upādāna*.

- **Bhava** (Sanskrit and Pāli), Tibetan *srid.pa* (sipa), Eng. "becoming"

"Once the direction of situational patterning has proceeded to the point of overt clinging, a process of becoming, termed *bhava*, is initiated. It refers to the new formation of karmic tendencies."

This creation of new habits and karmic tendencies, called *bhava*, will come to fruition through future experiences. *Bhava*, therefore, differs from *Samskāra* in temporal nature. "*Samskāra* refers to tendencies from past situational patternings (lives) which act on the present situation."

- **Jāti** (Sanskrit and Pāli); Tibetan *skyed.ba* (kye wa), Eng. "birth":

The *jāti* motif refers to the process of karmic tendencies of *bhava* coming to fruition, through the birth of new patternings. That which was desired and conditioned now comes to be.

"In a psycho-biological model, *jāti* refers to the birth or emergence of a newborn being, appearing, according to the specific history of patterning, in one of six 'lifestyles'. These lifestyles indicate the general character of experience. They are symbolized by the terms gods, titans, hungry ghosts, animals, denizens of hell, and human. These embrace all the general ways of being-in-a-situation."

- **Jarā-maraṇa** (Sanskrit and Pāli); Tibetan *rgas.shi* (geshi), Eng. "aging (old age), decay and death"

"Once a new situation or a new being has emerged, it is inevitable that the conditions which brought about its appearance will change. This, the last of the twelve motifs, points to the inevitability of decay and death. Decay affects all structures, which are but fleeting stabilizations fed by the energy flow of habitual patterning. When the cessation of the continuity of experience occurs, we speak of death. It is the total breakdown and dissolution of experience and experiencer.

"The process of disintegration, destructuring, and entropic scattering yields a nexus of vibratory murkiness which is the condition of avidyā, the first motif. Thus the entire structure of patterning feeds back on itself, and is often pictured as a circle of twelve sections, called the Wheel of Life (bhavacakra, srid-pa'i-'khor-lo)."

Notes

Traditionally, the twelve nidānas describe a process that unfolds over at least three consecutive lifetimes. Contemporary teachers often teach that it can also be seen as a daily cycle occurring from moment to moment throughout each day. There is scriptural support for this as a tertiary explanation in the Abhidharmakosa of Vasubandhu.

Twenty four types of conditions

Conditions, reason, source, are described by the Visuddhimagga as the same. Conditioning an agent means to cause it, being taken as an object by it, to occur in the same time. The full list helps to consider many sorts of conditions as the causal condition is only one of them. Examples are explained to understand these conditions, but they are included in the next section in order not to repeat them.

Causal

Both a condition and a cause. Each condition responds to this principle to be both a condition and something else. Note that a cause does not transmit any "substance" - see Three marks of existence.

Object

An agent that helps another one by being its object. All that can be known can be an object condition.

Predominance

An agent that helps another one by mastering it.

Immediacy

An agent that helps another one considering its immediacy.

Full immediacy

Same meaning as the immediacy condition.

Simultaneity

An agent that helps another one by appearing on the same time "as the lamp for the light".

Reciprocity

Agents that help themselves and consolidate themselves are one for the others "reciprocity condition".

Support

An agent that helps another one by being a basement for it.

Strong support

A strong basement.

Anteriority

An agent that helps another one by appearing before it.

Posteriority

A psychic agent that helps an older and physical one reinforcing it.

Repetition

A state of mind that conditions a following and similar state of mind.

Karma

An action that is an intentional effort.

Result

A serene state of mind helping another one to be serene.

Intake

The four "foods": the food helps the body, but "psychic foods" helps associated factors.

Faculty

For example, the ocular faculty helps the ocular conscience.

Jhāna

The jhānas are said to be associated with some characteristics: vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha or on the contrary upekkhā and ekaggatā. Jhānas are conditioning these.

Way

The way to leave the saṃsāra. Some factors are associated with this way.

Association

The four non-physical skandhas help themselves by being associated to the same object.

Dissociation

Physical and non-physical agents helping themselves by not being associated to the same object. For example, a calm state of mind helping some physical aspects to be - but not always to *appear*, as the dissociation condition can be anterior, posterior or simultaneous...

Existence

An agent helping another, similar one by making it strong.

Inexistence

Non-physical agents, ceasing, help another one to appear.

Disparition

Same as the inexistence condition.

Non-disparition

Same as the existence condition.

The whole description

This section considers which conditions apply to which part of the dependent origination.

Ignorance conditions creations, activities

Activities condition consciousness

Consciousness conditions body and mind

Body and mind condition the twelve domains

During rebirth, the four psychic aggregates condition the sixth domain as **simultaneity, reciprocity, support, association, result, existence and non-disparition.**

Twelve domains condition contact

The five physical domains condition the five physical contacts as **support, anteriority, faculty, dissociation, existence and non-disparition.** The mental domain conditions the mental contact as **simultaneity, reciprocity, support, result, intake, faculty, association, existence and non-disparition.** The visible domain conditions contact with the eye as **object, anteriority, existence and non-disparition.** The other exterior domains represent the same conditions: for example sound for the contact with the ear.

Contact conditions sensation

This description considers only the 32 sensations associated to resulting states. Contact with the eye, the nose, the ear, the mouth or the body conditions the sensations which are supported by the associated sensibilities as **simultaneity, reciprocity, support, result, intake, association, existence and non-disparition.** Contact with the eye, nose, ear, mouth and body also conditions the other sensations as **strong support.**

Sensation conditions lust

The only case is the resulting and nice-to-have sensation conditioning craving as a **strong support.**

Desire conditions attachment

Sensorial lust conditions as **strong support** sensorial attachment. Sensorial lust conditions other attachments as **simultaneity, reciprocity, support, association, existence, non-disparition and causal** conditions.

Attachment condition becoming

Every attachment conditions every becoming. The four attachments condition pure physical becoming and non-physical becoming as **strong support.** Attachment conditions beneficial physical becoming as **strong support.** Attachment conditions pernicious becomings as **simultaneity, reciprocity, support, association, existence, non-disparition and causal** conditions.

Becoming conditions birth

Becoming conditions the birth as a **karma** and **strong support** condition.

And birth conditions sickness, old age and death

Birth conditions both old age, sickness, death, sorrow as an *extreme* **strong support** condition.