Foundations of Indian Buddhism
Glossary of Some Important Names and Terms Used in this Course

Buddhism's highly detailed analyses of mind and mental states have generated an immense technical vocabulary. Notwithstanding, this glossary is limited to those names and terms that are used often in the lectures and that you may wish to remember or read more about. The definitions below are for ready reference only; they are hardly comprehensive. Fortunately, there is an abundance of literature on these and many other topics should you wish to pursue the subject further. A brief reading list is available in the repository.

In Western sources, many of the terms in Buddhist thought that date from early in the history of the religion—and thus from the Indian subcontinent—are given in either Pāli (the language of the Theravāda school) or Sanskrit, the "classical" language of India. Although translations of these terms were developed in each of the languages where Buddhism flourished, following the conventions of Western scholarship, when a name or a technical term is used throughout the Buddhist traditions of Asia, we render it here in Sanskrit. Cross-referenced terms are indicated in small capital letters.

Sections:

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

AMITĀBHA: "Buddha of Infinite Light." The BUDDHA associated with the West, wherein lies his "Pure Land," SUKHĀVATĪ, in which devotees can hear him preach the DHARMA. In this capacity, he is the central object of veneration in the PURE LAND school in China. See SUKHĀVATĪVYŪHA SŪTRAS.

AVALOKITEŚVARA: "The Lord Who Looks Down" (on the sufferings of the world). The most prominent among the BODHISATTVAS who figure in East Asian Buddhism, Avalokiteśvara is associated with compassion.

GAUTAMA: Family name of ŚĀKYAMUNI, the historical Buddha.

MAITREYA: "The Benevolent One." The next BUDDHA destined to appear in this world and thus the object of intense cultic devotion in China, where he sometimes served to focus millenarian aspirations and to inspire popular rebellion.

MAÑJUŚRĪ: "Gentle Glory." The BODHISATTVA of wisdom and, with AVALOKITEŚVARA, the most important of the *bodhisattvas* appearing in Mahāyāna scripture.

ŚĀKYAMUNI: "Sage of the Śākya Clan." The historical Buddha, born in what is now Nepal probably in the fifth century BCE.

Schools of Indian Buddhism

The tradition asserts that soon after the death of the historical Buddha, the monks assembled in a "council" and recited the monastic regulations—the Vinaya—and the discourses of the Buddha—the Sūtras—as they remembered them, so as to create a consensus as to the teachings of the departed master. But inevitably, in the years following the council disagreements arose, most significantly concerning the rules of monastic discipline, leading to sectarian fragmentation in the SAṂGHA, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns. Traditional Buddhist historiography sometimes uses the term "the Eighteen Schools" to refer to the groups that emerged from these disputes. Among them, the SARVĀSTIVĀDA ("Teaching that All Exists") was significant for its distinctive theory concerning the DHARMAS, or constituent elements of existence, which became highly influential in East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism. Others represented followers of a particular teacher or of a particular version of the monastic rules. Only one of the Eighteen Schools, the Theravāda ("School of the Elders"), survives today as a living tradition, being the Buddhism of Sri Lanka and of Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand in Southeast Asia.

It is important to note that doctrinal disputes did not play the same role in sectarian division as they did, for instance, in splits in the medieval Roman Catholic orders. Differences in interpretation of the Dharma were not nearly so important to one's sectarian identity as was the particular set of monastic rules (the Vinaya, see below) under which one was ordained. In fact, different points of view were widely tolerated within each community, and the Vinaya holds that only four things are significant enough to warrant expulsion from the *saṃgha*: sexual intercourse, stealing, killing, or lying about one's spiritual attainments. What makes a monk or nun a part of a given sect is not his or her adherence to an ortho*doxy* but rather the particular code of monastic discipline (Vinaya) one follows. In other words, ortho*praxy*.

Sometime perhaps as early as the first century BCE a species of *sūtras* began circulating that was unrecognizable to adherents of the Eighteen Schools. These new scriptures claimed to be the words of the Buddha or of other *buddhas*, but they preached, among other things, a vastly expanded notion of the nature and path to final liberation. Some of these scriptures referred to this path as the "Great Vehicle" (MAHĀYĀNA) to salvation, in opposition to what they saw as the more limited "Lesser Vehicle" (HĪNAYĀNA) of the earlier schools. Over the next few centuries this new literature, which preached sometimes contradictory messages, proliferated widely and in time became the dominant strain of Buddhism in its diaspora in Tibet and East Asia. In India itself, two broad religious traditions arose within Mahāyāna Buddhism, the MADHYAMAKA and the YOGĀCĀRA, for which see below.

It is important to understand that the Mahāyāna is not a "school" of Buddhism. It is the pursuit of a path to liberation, and the practices and doctrines associated with this path, that differs from that taught in the Eighteen Schools. But until relatively late in the history of Indian Buddhism Mahāyāna clerics lived in the same monasteries as their more conservative brethren and were ordained using the Vinaya of whichever of the schools predominated there. There is no Mahāyāna Vinaya, and thus no separate ordination for a Mahāyāna cleric. Even in China, where Mahāyāna Buddhism prevails, monks and nuns continued to be ordained using the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka school (one of the Eighteen), which otherwise had no doctrinal or practical significance for Chinese Buddhist culture.

The later development of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a separate body of texts and practices raises the question as to how to collectively characterize the non-Mahāyāna schools, which continued to flourish after the rise of the Mahāyāna. We have referred to them thus far as the Eighteen Schools, but such usage is dated and somewhat inaccurate. The non-Mahāyāna schools are sometimes referred to as *nikāyas* ("groups"), and the use of this neutral term as a collective designation at least avoids the difficulties attendant upon several other commonly used terms. Here, then, we shall refer to them as the "Nikāya schools" or as "NIKĀYA BUDDHISM," keeping in mind that the term decisively does *not* mean "early" Buddhism exclusively, much less "original" Buddhism. It simply refers to the schools of Indian Buddhism that grew up in the centuries prior to the rise of the Mahāyāna *and that coexisted with the Mahāyāna in the centuries thereafter*, both in India and, to a lesser extent, in Tibet and East Asia.

Buddhist Scripture

In the first few centuries following the death of Gautama, the Buddhist community, the *SAṂGHA*, gradually divided into schools along disciplinary and/or doctrinal grounds. Although the canonical literature of each group derived from a common source—the words of the historical Buddha–they too came to vary somewhat, reflecting the communities in which they circulated. See NIKĀYA BUDDHISM.

The Literature of Nikāya Buddhism

Of the canonical literature of Nikāya Buddhism (i.e., the pre-Mahāyāna schools), only that of the THERAVĀDA survives in its entirety in an Indic language. It is preserved in Pāli, a classical Indo-Aryan language closely related to Sanskrit, and hence it is referred to as the "Pāli Canon."[1] This canon comprises three "baskets" (*piṭaka*), from which comes the common descriptor *Tripiṭaka*:

- Vinaya Piṭaka, the collection of monastic regulations with extensive accounts of how and why each rule was formulated.

[1] Happily, the entire Pāli Canon has been translated into English, first by the Pāli Text Society, starting in the late nineteenth century, and latterly by several others, including, notably, the translations of Bhikkhu Bodhi, published by Wisdom Publications.

- Sutta Piṭaka, the discourses (Skrt. *sūtras*) of the Buddha. These are grouped in five collections (*nikāyas*):
    - Dīgha Nikāya: "Longer" *suttas*
    - Majjhima Nikāya: "Middle length" *suttas*
    - Saṃyutta Nikāya: "Collected" *suttas*, grouped according to subject matter
    - Aṅguttara Nikāya: "Numbered" *suttas*, short sermons arranged sequentially in numerical categories by topic (e.g., things there are one of, things there are two of, etc.)
    - Khuddaka Nikāya: a later addition to the canon, consisting of "Miscellaneous" *suttas*
- Abhidharma Piṭaka, a later addition to the canon, consisting of systematic exegesis of the teachings presented in the *sūtras*.

But we should note some important issues surrounding the "recovery" of the words of the Buddha.

First of all, the Buddha probably spoke a Prakrit (a form of Middle Indo-Aryan that flourished in India at the time) dialect of his home state of Magadha. Yet while the texts of the Vinaya and Sutta *piṭakas* purport to faithfully record the words of the historical Buddha, none of the surviving texts is written in the vernacular. What is more, they were not committed to writing until several centuries after the death of the Buddha and in that form are clearly the result of extensive editing, polishing, and rearranging so as to facilitate memorization and chanting.

This same editorial process took place in the literature of the schools other than the Theravāda, so that many of them had their own version of the canon. Portions of these collections are preserved in Sanskrit and in Tibetan and Chinese translation. *When all is said and done, therefore, none of the surviving literatures, the Pāli Canon among them, can claim to be the "original" words of the Buddha.*

That said, there is general agreement across all surviving Sūtra literatures with respect to "what the Buddha taught."

The same cannot be said for the surviving Vinayas. These do contain differences in the rules to be followed by ordinands. Indeed, the initial schism in the *saṃgha*, resulting in the separation of a group calling itself the Mahāsāṃghikas ("great assembly," i.e.. the majority) from the Sthaviras ("the elders"), was precisely a disagreement over ten points of monastic discipline. Six Vinayas survive to this day, three as part of current Buddhist practice: that of the Theravāda in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptaka school in East Asia, and the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school in Tibet and Mongolia.

Unlike the Sūtra or Vinaya collections, the Abhidharma literatures are later, commentarial traditions, detailed technical exegeses of the words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) that represent the particular doctrinal formulations of the groups that composed them. The Abhidharma literature of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools, in particular, are well

preserved and provide almost encyclopedic coverage of the entire range of Buddhist philosophy, psychology, cosmology, epistemology, and soteriology. Two extra-canonical works serve as authoritative overviews of their respective traditions, Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purification") for Theravāda and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* ("Treasury of the Abhidharma") for Sarvāstivāda.

Some important Mahāyāna Sūtras

Mahāyāna *sūtras* were composed over a period of several centuries, beginning as early as the first century BCE. Unlike the *sūtras* of NIKĀYA BUDDHISM, which, because they purport to record the sermons of the historical Buddha, are "closed" to further additions, Mahāyāna *sūtras* represent what in modern terms we might call "ongoing revelations" of the *buddhadharma*. Some of them also claim to have been preached by the historical Buddha but justify their sudden appearance after several hundred years as the result of their being deliberately hidden until the age was ready for them, centuries later. Others claim to be the teaching of one or another *buddha* preaching from the heavens or from his "pure land" (See BUDDHAKṢETRA). Historically, we recognize them as the product of distinct communities of practitioners and teachers representing a wide variety of doctrines and practices with respect to the nature and path to final liberation. Given the disparate circumstances of their creation, and owing to the fact that the Mahāyāna was never a "school" in the sense discussed above, these *sūtras* were not formally grouped into canonical collections such as the Pāli *tripiṭaka*. In a real sense, they are "one-offs," often intended to be understood as the complete or in some cases "final" teachings of the buddhas.

Mahāyāna literature is vast, and the importance of individual *sūtras* varies widely by cultural area. A few of the scriptures significant for the Indian tradition are noted here.

AVATAṂSAKA SŪTRA (*"*Flower Garland Scripture*"*): A massive, heterogeneous scripture preaching, inter alia, the identity and "interpenetration" of enlightenment and everyday experience. In China, the *sūtra* is the foundational scripture of the eponymous Huayan school, which views it as the ultimate expression of the Buddha's teaching inasmuch as it represents itself as the very first and most comprehensive sermon of the Buddha following his enlightenment.

LAṄKĀVATĀRA SŪTRA ("Sūtra on the Descent into Laṅka," 4th c. CE): Set as a series of exchanges between the Buddha and a *bodhisattva* representing of the king of (Sri) Laṅka, this scripture covers many of the important themes in Mahāyāna Buddhism and is particularly noted for its exposition of some cardinal points of YOGĀCĀRA thought, including the theory of ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA and the TATHĀGATAGARBHA.

PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS: The earliest among the Mahāyāna scriptures (1st c. BCE?), the *Prajñāpāramitā* ("Perfection of Wisdom") *sūtras* are a class of literature ranging in size from a single syllable (!) to 100,000 lines. Central to their teaching is the foundational Mahāyāna doctrine—that all things are "empty" (*śūnya*), devoid of "self-nature" (*svabhāva*)—as

revealed through the practice of the "perfection of wisdom" (*prajñāpāramitā*). The so-called *Heart* and *Diamond Cutter sūtras* are its best-known versions and are used and practiced throughout East Asian Buddhism, particularly in the Chan school.

SADDHARMAPUṆḌARĪKA SŪTRA ("Sūtra on the Lotus of the Good Law, " from as early as the 1st or 2d c. CE): Best known in English as the "Lotus Sutra," this scripture is one of the most popular scriptures in East Asian Buddhism, preaching that the "three vehicles" to salvation (ARHATS, *pratyeka* (self-taught) buddhas, and BODHISATTVAS) are really just provisional teachings, "expedient devices" (UPĀYA) taught by the buddhas in order to bring beings of varying degrees of understanding and spiritual maturity to enlightenment. In fact, there is only the One Vehicle, Buddhahood, for which all beings, even the lowest and most debased, are destined. In the second half of the *sūtra*, Śākyamuni reveals that he actually attained NIRVĀṆA incalculable lifetimes ago, and out of his great compassion has been working to bring enlightenment to sentient beings since that time. His birth in this world cycle and (apparent) passing from this world into final extinction (*parinirvāṇa*) are really just parts of a salvific drama, an *upāya*, played out with the goal of spurring sentient beings into practice of the DHARMA. See also UPĀYA and THREE VEHICLES.

SAṂDHINIRMOCANA SŪTRA ("Sūtra of the Explanation of the Profound Secrets," ca. 2d c. CE): the earliest surviving YOGĀCĀRA *sūtra* and its main text. As a justification of its teachings, it describes the evolution of the *buddhadharma* as three successive "turnings" of the wheel of the Dharma. The first turning consists of the sermons delivered to the immediate disciples of the Buddha and recorded in the texts of NIKĀYA BUDDHISM, the path of the ARHAT. The second turning was the teachings of PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS, the foundational doctrine of the emptiness (*ŚŪNYATĀ*) of all *DHARMAS*. The first two turnings this scripture defines as explicating merely provisional teachings (*neyārtha*), useful for increasing the understanding of those who read them but neither complete nor definitive. The third turning, the Yogācāra teachings represented in this scripture, is the complete and final truth (*nītārtha*), requiring no further explication. See ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA and THREE NATURES.

ŚRĪMĀLĀDEVĪSIṂHANĀDA SŪTRA ("Sūtra on the Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā, 3d c. CE): An early and important scripture focusing on the TATHĀGATAGARBHA, or "Buddha nature," doctrine, preaching that inasmuch as all sentient beings possess this nature, all will attain enlightenment. While adhering closely to the notion that *tathāgatagarbha* is "empty" (*śūnya*) of defilement, it then goes on to characterize it as "*non*-empty" of the virtues of the Buddha. Its use of such positive terms as "self" (ĀTMAN) for one of those virtues is echoed in the Mahāyāna version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, another expositor of *tathāgatagarbha* thought, which characterizes NIRVĀṆA as "blissful, permanent, pure, and self."

SUKHĀVATĪVYŪHA SŪTRAS: A group of scriptures describing the "Pure Land" (SUKHĀVATĪ) created by the Buddha AMITĀBHA in the West. By virtue of the vows taken by Amitābha on his path to enlightenment, all who call upon his name and devote undisturbed attention to visualizing

his Pure Land will be reborn there and hear him preach the Dharma, resulting in their enlightenment. The central scriptures of the Pure Land school. See also BUDDHAKṢETRA.

TATHĀGATAGARBHA SŪTRA ("Sūtra on the Womb of the Tathāgatas," 3d c. CE): The earliest of the scriptures devoted to the doctrine of TATHĀGATAGARBHA, or "womb (embryo) of the TATHĀGATAS," and famous for its nine similes explaining the notion. As one of them puts it, just as a honeycomb is surrounded by bees, so too is our buddha nature surrounded by impurities until the beekeeper (here, the Buddha) comes to remove the bees.

VIMALAKĪRTINIRDEŚA SŪTRA ("Sūtra on Vimalakīrti's Instructions," 2d c. CE): An enormously influential scripture, especially in East Asia, this *sūtra* is beloved for the fact that its message is delivered by a layperson. Doctrinally, its central teachings focus on nonduality, in which all apparent dichotomies are resolved in emptiness (ŚŪNYATĀ). In its most crucial passage, a series of *bodhisattvas* discourse on the meaning of nonduality, after which the layman Vimalakīrti is invited to give his own explanation. Vimalakīrti remains silent, thereby powerfully asserting that nonduality is ineffable, beyond the dichotomies of speech.

Technical Terms

ABHIDHARMA: "highest dharma." That part of the Buddhist canon devoted to technical exegesis of concepts introduced in the SŪTRAS. By extension then, the term is also used to refer to the range of topics treated in these texts and the methods of philosophical argumentation used to discuss them. The Abhidharma literature of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools, in particular, are well preserved and provide almost encyclopedic coverage of the entire range of Buddhist philosophy, psychology, cosmology, epistemology, and soteriology.

ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA: "storehouse consciousness." In an effort to identify some kind of substrate that would ensure the integrity of an individual's karmic stream from moment to moment and lifetime to lifetime—all without admitting a perduring Self (ĀTMAN)—the YOGĀCĀRA school posited a "storehouse consciousness" in which each deed leaves a karmic trace or "seed" (*bīja*) that matures over time, thus ensuring that one's actions later bear fruit in the classically defined manner. This consciousness joined the classical listing of six (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental) as the eighth consciousness, accompanied by a seventh, the "tainted mind" (*kliṣṭamanas*), which observes the *ālaya* and mistakenly takes it for a Self, thus engendering yet more illusion. In fact, the Yogacārins maintain, the *ālaya* is not a Self, not a "thing" with its own self-substance, but rather simply a repository for an every-changing stream of past events, in much the same way that a river is simply the place wherein flows an ever-changing flux of water. See also THREE NATURES.

ANĀTMAN: "no-Self." One of the central teachings of Buddhism, holding that human personality is "compounded" (*saṃskṛta*) or "conditioned," a causally produced composite (see SKANDHA) devoid of any permanent Self (ĀTMAN). Attachment to the notion of Self inevitably entails the desire (*tṛṣṇā*) to possess and retain things that are "mine" or are agreeable to "me" and

to reject things we perceive as disagreeable or harmful. This desire, fundamentally, the desire to *continue*, is the root cause of all suffering (DUḤKHA) and is the snare that captures us in a ceaseless round of birth and death. Freeing oneself of what is essentially a mistaken belief, albeit an almost genetic one, in Self is the core of enlightenment. See NIRVĀṆA.

ARHAT: "Worthy One." In the NIKĀYA schools, the highest stage of insight, enlightenment. Through their meditative practice, *arhats* have completely destroyed the causes of future rebirth and, upon death, will enter "final *nirvāṇa" (parinirvāṇa),* never to be reborn. Thus, they hold, the enlightenment of the *arhat* is essentially the same as that of the Buddha; it is only the path to enlightenment and the special role chosen by the Buddha to work for the enlightenment of others that is different. MAHĀYĀNA Buddhism, by contrast, holds that arhatship is a selfish and inferior goal; the pursuit of which removes the practitioner from the world once he or she has attained their goal and thus deprives them of the opportunity to help others. See also THREE VEHICLES.

ĀTMAN: "Self." In classical brahmanic (Hindu) thought, the *ātman* is the permanent core element of human personality, the pure, unchanging foundation—passing from lifetime to lifetime—upon which the transient elements of body and mind rest, and which thus constitutes the essential person or Self. Roughly equivalent to the "soul" in Western thought. Buddhism distinguishes itself from the brahmanic traditions by denying the existence of such an element. See ANĀTMAN.

AVIDYĀ: "ignorance." It is ignorance of the true nature of things that chains sentient beings to SAṂSĀRA. This ignorance is manifested first and foremost in a belief in the perduring Self (ĀTMAN), which in turn leads to the desire or craving (*tṛṣṇā*) to possess and retain things that are "mine" or are agreeable to "me" and to reject things we perceive as disagreeable or harmful. It causes us mistake the painful for the pleasurable and the impermanent for the permanent; thus it is the root cause of all suffering (See DUḤKHA, FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS) and the snare that captures us in a ceaseless round of birth and death. Freeing oneself of what is essentially a mistaken belief, albeit an almost genetic one, in Self is the core of enlightenment. See also ANĀTMAN, THREE MARKS.

BODIES OF THE BUDDHA (*trikāya*): Even in the early Buddhist tradition, a distinction was made between the physical body of Gautama, compounded of impermanent elements and thus subject to decay and death, and the Buddha as an *embodiment* of the truth, the Dharma, that he had discovered and taught. This early notion became elaborated in the Mahāyāna into a doctrine of three bodies or aspects of buddhahood, taking into account that the Mahāyāna allows for multiple buddhas, each with his own purified *buddhakṣetra* (Buddha field), simultaneously appearing in myriad world systems. These bodies are (1) the "emanation" or "transformation" body (*nirmāṇakāya*), the buddhas as they appear to ordinary sentient beings in the world; (2) the "enjoyment" or "reward" body (*saṃbhogakāya*), the buddhas gloriously adorned with all the rewards gained through their

long practice as they appear to advanced *bodhisattvas* dwelling in one of the Buddha fields; (3) the "truth" body (*dharmakāya*), the cosmic principle of buddhahood.

BODHISATTVA: "enlightenment being." A being destined for Buddhahood. In early Buddhism, the term denotes the historical Buddha in his previous lives, prior to becoming a buddha, and is also used in reference to MAITREYA, the next in a line of "historical" buddhas destined to appear in this world cycle. In Mahāyāna Buddhism the term is expanded to encompass *all* beings who have resolved to become a BUDDHA. Their religious path is thus called the *bodhisattvayāna* or "bodhisattva vehicle." The path of the *bodhisattva*, like that of ŚĀKYAMUNI, begins with the generation of *bodhicitta*, literally, the thought or aspiration of enlightenment, and with a vow taken out of compassion for others to achieve complete and perfect enlightenment (*anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*) in order to liberate them from the cycle of birth and death. Through an incalculably long period of time, the *bodhisattva* perfects himself in the ten (sometimes six) perfections (generosity, morality, endurance, effort, wisdom, patience, truthfulness, resolve, loving kindness, and equanimity) until finally achieving enlightenment. In the Mahāyāna tradition, numberless *bodhisattvas* tirelessly go about their salvific mission, transferring to others the vast merit they have accumulated through their practice and thus aiding them to draw nearer enlightenment. Some of these figures, very advanced in their practice, have achieved vast, even magical, powers to help others. On a popular level especially, they are regarded as savior figures and their blessings invoked by those in distress. AVALOKITEŚVARA and Mañjuśrī, skilled in compassion and wisdom respectively, are especially popular in East Asia. See also BUDDHA.

BUDDHA: "the enlightened one." The historical Buddha, ŚĀKYAMUNI, is but one in a line of buddhas (seven, in early sources) who have appeared or who are destined to appear in the world and, in the MAHĀYĀNA tradition, appear as well in "worlds of the ten directions." Buddhas are compassionate teachers who, by their long spiritual career over myriad previous lives, have cast aside ignorance and the defiling passions and now work for the enlightenment of others. The path to Buddhahood follows a set pattern. It begins with a vow to achieve enlightenment and work for the liberation of others, following which the *bodhisattva* (a "Buddha-to-be") passes through numberless lifetimes, cultivating the ten (sometimes six) perfections until finally achieving enlightenment. (See BODHISATTVA) Tales of some 547 of GAUTAMA'S previous lives are recounted in the Pāli *Jātaka Tales*. The MAHĀYĀNA tradition holds that there are numberless buddhas in numberless world systems, each simultaneously present in their own BUDDHAKṢETRAS, working for the enlightenment of suffering sentient beings. Mahāyāna Buddhists vow that—unlike their HĪNAYĀNA brethren, who (they claim) pursue only the ultimately selfish path of the ARHAT—they too will take up the arduous path toward Buddhahood and enter the long career of the *bodhisattva.* See also THREE VEHICLES and BODIES OF THE BUDDHA.

BUDDHAKṢETRA: "Buddha field." In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the religious merit a buddha has accumulated in attaining enlightenment generates around him a purified "Buddha field"

(*buddhakṣetra*) wherein beings can be reborn (or visit in meditation), hear its buddha preach the DHARMA, and be led to enlightenment. See also SUKHĀVATĪ.

DHARMA: [1] (*usually capitalized)* The truth discovered by the BUDDHA as to the cause of suffering and rebirth and how to become liberated from it. The Buddha is not a god, nor is he the Creator, and the truth he has discovered is independent of his existence: "Whether a buddha arises in the world or not, this is the unchangeable nature of Dharma." And inasmuch as the Dharma is independent of the Buddha, it can be discovered by others. It is "independent of time, verifiable, fruitful, capable of being personally discovered by the wise." [2] The term *Dharma* is therefore also used to refer to what the Buddha *taught* and, by extension, the doctrines and practices of Buddhism. [3] Separately, *dharmas* (*lower case*) are the constituent components of phenomenal existence, conceived of in Buddhism as composing a stream of transient physical and mental *events* that, acting in concert, we call a person. They are, in a sense, the "building blocks" out of which our minds construct phenomenal existence. This includes physical objects apprehended and interpreted by our sensory faculties (e.g., the visual faculty and the things seen by it) and also the components of our mental life, the entire range of emotions, judgements, wholesome and unwholesome qualities, and "forces" or "dispositions" (*saṃskāra*) that accompany our construction of experience. Dharmas are classes or categories of events; they represent the types of psychophysical events into which all experience can by analyzed. In the ABHIDHARMA literature of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which informed much of East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism, phenomenal existence is analyzed into seventy-five *dharmas.*

DHĀTU: "element" (of sensory experience). Buddhism characterizes sensory experience as the product of eighteen separate elements: the six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) coming into contact with the six types of sense objects (visible forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile objects, and mental phenomena) supported by six corresponding consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental) that arise when the organ makes contact with its object. The analysis of sensory experience as the product of these eighteen elements probably predates the further elaboration of phenomenal existence into seventy-five (in the Sarvāstivāda) or eighty-two (in the Theravāda) *dharmas*. (See *DHARMA-3).*

DHYĀNA: meditative absorption during which the mind is completely focused on an interior object of meditation rather than the external world.

DUḤKHA: "suffering," "dis-ease," the existential condition of unenlightened sentient beings. The first of the Four Noble Truths reads:

> "This, monks, is the Noble Truth of suffering (*duḥkha*): Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; grief, lamentation, pain, affliction, and despair are suffering. To be united with what is unloved, to be separated from what is loved is suffering; not to obtain what is longed

> for is suffering. In short, the Five Groups of Grasping (the SKANDHAS) are suffering."

Buddhism defines three types of *duḥkha.* The first is suffering in its literal sense: the physical pain one gets when touching a hot fire or the mental pain of witnessing the death of a loved one. The second is the suffering (sadness, unhappiness) that comes from understanding that all things must pass, that even the most pleasant of circumstances will last only awhile. The third is the most "philosophical"; it is the existential *unsatisfactoriness* (for want of a better word) that is intrinsic to the conditionality of unenlightened existence, the fact that we are composites of the five *skandhas* and subject to the vicissitudes of the karmic process, both pleasant and painful. In sum, *duḥkha* means that despite whatever temporary pleasures we experience (and we do), our lives are inherently flawed, subject to death, on account of our craving (*tṛṣṇā*)—for pleasure, for existence, and for nonexistence. See also FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS, AVIDYĀ.

FIVE AGGREGATES, alternatively, the Five Heaps of Grasping: See SKANDHA.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS: In his first sermon, the Buddha described his teachings as a "middle way," avoiding both the pursuit of sensuality and lust on the one hand and extreme asceticism and self-mortification on the other. Fundamental to this middle way are what he terms the Four Noble Truths*: DUḤKHA, samudaya, nirodha, mārga*. Employing what is essentially a medical metaphor—that of diagnosis and cure—he declared that our unenlightened existence, the cycle of birth and death, is "suffering" (*duḥkha*), the origin (*samudaya*) or cause of which is craving (*tṛṣṇā*)—craving for pleasure, for existence, and for nonexistence. The cessation (*nirodha*) of craving brings about the cessation of suffering and puts a stop to the cycle of birth and death. The cessation of craving is brought about by following the NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH, the path (*mārga*) of religious practice leading to NIRVĀṆA,.

HĪNAYĀNA: "the Lesser Vehicle." A pejorative term used in Mahāyāna Buddhism to describe the "earlier" (i.e., pre-Mahāyāna) teachings of the Buddha, focusing on a path of individual emancipation as opposed to the Mahāyāna program of universal salvation. See NIKĀYA BUDDHISM.

KARMA: "action." At its simplest, the doctrine of karma expands upon a commonly understood notion: all actions have consequences. Everything is caused. In Buddhism, it is *intentional* acts, acts of body, speech, and mind, that generate consequences—moral consequences, often referred to as the "fruits" of actions—which are manifested both physically and mentally in an unbroken chain of cause and effect that can span multiple lifetimes, just as a tiny match can set ablaze a forest fire that extends for miles. Indeed, it is actions (specifically, intentions) themselves that are responsible for the process of rebirth, which can be understood as the continuous coming to fruition of prior acts, as described in the chain of dependent origination (PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA). The goal of religious practice is to cut the chain of cause and effect that is set in motion by ignorance, specifically by attachment to

the mistaken belief in a permanent Self (ĀTMAN). Having removed this attachment by the generation of transcendental insight, the endless cycle of birth, death, rebirth, and redeath is brought to an end.

MADHYAMAKA: "Middle Way." In its specific sense, the term denotes a school of Buddhist thought based primarily on the works of the philosopher NĀGĀRJUNA (2d c. CE?). His *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* developed in rigorous detail the fundamental Mahāyāna insight of the PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS that all phenomena are "empty" (*śūnya*) of "self-nature" (*svabhāva*); that is, they do not exist in-and-of-themselves but arise only in dependence on other factors. See also ŚŪNYATĀ.

MAHĀYĀNA: "the Great Vehicle." A general movement within Buddhism that arose some four hundred years after the death of the historical BUDDHA. The movement was based on newly revealed (sic) texts purporting to be the sermons of ŚĀKYAMUNI (and other buddhas), but, unlike the sermons of the earlier period—which the Mahāyānists now described as preaching a "Lesser Vehicle" (HĪNAYĀNA) to salvation—preached new and expanded ways to emancipation, particularly through the cultivation of the "perfection of wisdom" (PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ). The self-defined goal of the Mahāyānists was not the NIRVĀṆA of the ARHAT but rather Buddhahood itself, which entails the resolve to work for the liberation of others. Mahāyāna is the dominant form of Buddhism in East Asia and Tibet. See BUDDHA and BODHISATTVA.

NIKĀYA BUDDHISM: What to call the non-Mahāyāna schools of Indian Buddhism is an unsettled issue among Buddhist scholars. Some of the terms formerly used to characterize them—THERAVĀDA and HĪNAYĀNA especially—are either too narrow (in the former case) or the result of sectarian prejudice (in the latter). The more recent term "Mainstream Buddhism" avoids those extremes but does tend to imply that MAHĀYĀNA Buddhism is somehow a marginal or fringe development, an opinion that would make no sense to East Asian or Tibetan Buddhists. Traditional Buddhist historiography sometimes uses the term "the Eighteen Schools," referring to groups that emerged from disputes, largely having to do with the rules of monastic discipline, that arose in the centuries following the death of the Buddha, but the later development of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a separate body of texts and practices raises the question as to how to collectively characterize these non-Mahāyāna schools, many of which continued to flourish after the rise of the Mahāyāna. (One of them, the THERAVĀDA, continues to this day in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.). The non-Mahāyāna schools are sometimes referred to as *nikāyas* ("groups"), and the use of this neutral term as a collective designation at least avoids the difficulties attendant upon several other commonly used terms. Here, then, we shall refer to them as the "Nikāya schools" or as "Nikāya Buddhism," keeping in mind that the term decisively does *not* mean "early" Buddhism exclusively, much less "original" Buddhism. It simply refers to the schools of Indian Buddhism that grew up in the centuries prior to the rise of the Mahāyāna *and that coexisted with the Mahāyāna in the centuries thereafter*, both in India and, to a lesser extent, in Tibet and East Asia.

NIRVĀṆA: "extinction," from the Sanskrit root *vā* meaning "to blow," prefaced by the prefix *nir* meaning "out," thus: "to blow out," "as when a flame is blown out by the wind." *Nirvāṇa* represents the goal of Buddhist religious life, the extinction of the "three poisons"—greed/sensuality, hatred/aversion, and delusion/ignorance—that bind one to the cycle of birth and death and of the suffering (DUḤKHA) that characterizes unenlightened existence. *Nirvāṇa* is thus the opposite of SAṂSĀRA. In a world where everything is conditioned—contingent, we might say—*nirvāṇa* is the "unconditioned" (*asaṃskṛta*). It is "signless," "wishless," "the unborn." NIKĀYA Buddhism typically regards *nirvāṇa* as coextensive with the enlightenment experience of the Buddha and thus, essentially, the complete "absence" of the factors of unenlightened existence. Following NĀGĀRJUNA, many MAHĀYĀNA thinkers, by contrast, portrayed *nirvāṇa* and SAṂSĀRA as, ultimately, one and the same thing, distinguished only by our inability to see them as both as "empty" of own-being.

NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH: The fourth of the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS, the eightfold path describes the path (*mārga*) to liberation (NIRVĀṆA) as described by the Buddha in his first sermon. The elements of the path are (1) right views, (2) right intentions, (3) right speech, (4) right conduct, (5) right livelihood, (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, and (8) right concentration. When juxtaposed against the "three trainings" that categorize the elements of the path, views and intentions are training in higher wisdom; speech, conduct, and livelihood correspond to training in higher morality; and effort, mindfulness, and concentration are training in higher concentration.

PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ: "wisdom that has gone beyond," "perfection of wisdom." In the MAHĀYĀNA tradition, the perfection of wisdom is a transcendental insight into the true nature of things, an awareness devoid of either subject or object. Ultimately, it is characterized by the complete cognition of ŚŪNYATĀ, "emptiness," as the lack of Self or "own-being" (*svabhāva*) in DHARMAS as well as in the empirical person. *Prajñāpāramitā* is often equated with the wisdom developed by the Buddha himself in his enlightenment. The perfection of wisdom is the central teaching of the PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS.

PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA: "dependent origination." A central teaching of the Buddhist tradition is that all things, *including the self*, arise merely in the presence of interdependent causal factors, in the absence of any one of which, the thing ceases to exist. "When this is present, that comes to be. / From the arising of this, that arises. / When this is absent, that does not come to be. / From the cessation of this, that ceases." In short, all existence is conditioned, lacking in permanence. When interpolated onto the stages of birth and rebirth, the concept is elaborated as a series of twelve interconnected links, often referred to as "twelvefold chain" or depicted as the "wheel of life." See TWELVEFOLD CHAIN OF CAUSATION.

SAṂGHA: The community of Buddhist monks and nuns.

SAṂSĀRA: "wandering." The ceaseless round of birth, death, rebirth, and redeath that characterizes unenlightened existence.

SARVĀSTIVĀDA: The Sarvāstivāda, or "Teaching that All Exists," is one of the so-called eighteen schools of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism, pejoratively (by Mahāyānists) described as a HĪNAYĀNA, or "Lesser Vehicle (Tradition)" form of Buddhist practice. The Sarvāstivāda school was one of the most geographically distributed of the eighteen schools, and because of its penetration of India's northwest and then along the Silk Road, became the most widely studied of the NIKĀYA schools in China and the philosophical base against which several of the most important Chinese Buddhist schools reacted. The school takes its name from its central doctrine, that the elements of existence, the DHARMAS, exist in all three times, past, present, and future.

SKANDHA: literally "heaps." Buddhism describes human personality as being a combination of five constituents (heaps, aggregates)—form (i.e., the physical body), sensations, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—which arise in codependence upon one another and which, by definition, are DUḤKHA, associated with suffering. Implicit in this formulation is the notion that there is no separate and distinct element that is the self (ĀTMAN). Rather, the constant arising of the SKANDHAS constitutes a "stream" that defines a nominal or empirical personality. Because in our ignorance we mistakenly attribute the permanence of "Self" to the *skandhas*, and thus engender attachment and clinging to things that are "mine," they are often referred to as the "Five Groups of Grasping."

SUKHĀVATĪ: "land of bliss." The name of the BUDDHAKṢETRA associated with the Buddha AMITĀBHA. Often referred to as the "Pure Land."

ŚŪNYATĀ: "emptiness." Early Buddhism had described the self as an aggregate of the five SKANDHAS, among which there exists no independent, eternal, and perdurable "soul" (ĀTMAN.) But the ABHIDHARMA literature of the Sarvāstivāda school did admit a substantial existence to the discrete psycho-physical elements, the DHARMAS, that account for phenomenal existence. These, they held, *are* possessed of a "self-nature" (*svabhāva*); they are real. Against this view, the MAHĀYĀNA, particularly as developed first in the PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS and later more systematically by NĀGĀRJUNA and others in the MADHYAMAKA tradition, extended the notion of the "emptiness" of the self to the *dharmas* as well. Of course, they admit, there is a contingent reality to our selves and the world (see TWO TRUTHS), but these things exist as *constructs;* nothing exists in and of itself or arises from "self-cause." Everything, even *nirvāṇa,* is dependently arisen and causally conditioned. The so-called Heart Sutra (*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*) says:

> All dharmas are empty in character;
> Neither arising nor ceasing,
> Neither impure nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing.
> Therefore, in emptiness there is no form;
> There is no feeling, no perception, no volition, no consciousness[2] . . .

[2] Referring to the five SKANDHAS

No ignorance or ending of ignorance . . .
No aging and death or ending of aging and death.[3]
There is no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path.[4]
There is no wisdom and no attainment.
There is nothing to be attained.

SŪTRA: literally, "thread." A discourse or sermon purporting to be the words of the Buddha. By extension, that part of the Buddhist canon containing the sermons preached by the Buddha. Mahāyāna Buddhism also recognizes scripture spoken by buddhas other than ŚĀKYAMUNI.

TATHĀGATA: The "Thus-gone [One]". An epithet of the buddhas, referring to their having passed beyond the cycle of life and death. Perhaps another way to think of it is as a (rough) equivalent of "I am that I am," indicating here the inadequacy of any words that might be used to describe his enlightenment. In his enlightenment experience, a buddha becomes indefinable.

TATHĀGATAGARBHA: "womb/embryo/seed/matrix of the TATHĀGATA," "containing a TATHĀGATA." Beginning in the second century of the common era, certain MAHĀYĀNA scriptures, notably the *Tathāgatagarbha sūtra*, taught that all sentient beings contain within them the capacity to become enlightened, i.e., become a BUDDHA. This capacity is often referred to as the "Buddha nature." The concept became of central importance to Chinese Buddhist thinkers, who variously accepted, refined, or rejected its central message of universal salvation. In some works, most notably the *Dasheng qixin lun* ("The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna"), the term is defined as the "Mind" of the Buddha, concealed in unenlightened beings by defilements of desire, hatred, ignorance (the THREE POISONS) and awaiting only a transformation of consciousness for us to realize that we are innately enlightened. This reading of the term supported the concept that enlightenment occurs suddenly, in a flash.

THERAVĀDA: The Theravāda, or "School of the Elders," is one of the NIKĀYA schools. The school persists to this day on Sri Lanka and parts of Southeast Asia, and because it is the sole remaining active tradition among the pre-Mahāyāna schools, its name is often used synechdochically (if inaccurately) to refer to the entirety of Nikāya Buddhism. The Theravāda canon, written in the Pāli language, survives in its entirety and has been translated into English. See BUDDHIST SCRIPTURE.

THREE MARKS (*trilakṣaṇa*): The three characteristics of all conditioned things: impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (DUḤKHA), and lack of Self (ANĀTMAN). Mistaking the impermanent for the permanent, the pleasurable for the painful, and the lack of self for a Self is caused by a fundamental ignorance (AVIDYĀ) of the true nature of reality and is the hallmark of

[3] I.e., PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA.
[4] I.e., the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS.

unenlightened existence. Overcoming this ignorance and recognizing the true nature of things as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and lacking Self is the core of enlightenment.

THREE NATURES (*trisvabhāva*): The "three natures" represent a central concept in YOGĀCĀRA thought, describing three modes or characteristics (*lakṣana*) of phenomena. Our mental life presents us with a continuous flow of perceptions (*vijñaptimātratā*). In our everyday way of viewing things, this flow gets divided into the perceiving subject and perceived objects, both of which, perceiving subject and perceived object alike, appear, erroneously, to have an objective existence. This the Yogācārins refer to as the "Imagined" (*parikalpita*) nature of things, inasmuch as it imputes reality to imagined products of the mind. To be clear, the flow itself is real enough. It exists, but it is only a flux of dependently originated (hence "empty") cognitive experiences. Because it consists of mere representations, devoid of self-nature and only dependently arisen, this second nature is called "Dependent" (*paratantra*). Put another way, the Dependent nature is *what* appears, in contrast to the Imagined nature, which is only *the way in which* it appears. The third or "Perfected" (*pariniṣpanna*) nature is the true way of things, "suchness" (*tathatā*), devoid of any duality. But in fact the Perfected nature is really nothing other than the Dependent nature when thoroughly purged of the Imagined nature through the practice of meditation. See also ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA.

THREE POISONS (*trivisa*): Three "defilements" or "afflictions" (*kleśa*) that beset the mind and prevent us from attaining enlightenment: desire/greed (*rāga*), hatred/aversion (*dveṣa*), and ignorance/delusion (*moha*).

THREE VEHICLES (*triyāna*): Buddhism proposes three paths or "vehicles" (*yāna*) to enlightenment. (1) The *Śrāvaka-yāna* is the path of the "listener" or disciple who, hearing the DHARMA, begins a regimen of practice culminating in arhatship. (See ARHAT) (2) The *pratyekabuddha-yāna* is the path of a solitary practitioner who achieves enlightenment through his or her own efforts, without benefit of hearing the Dharma, but who therefore is unable to teach it to others. (The term recognizes the potential for enlightenment of beings other than those who practice Buddhism.) (3) Finally, the *bodhisattva-yāna* is the career of an "enlightenment being," whose practice culminates in the very special state of Buddhahood. (See BODHISATTVA) In NIKĀYA BUDDHISM the "content" of the enlightenment achieved by each of these three types is notionally the same. It is only the *path* to that state and the role of the one who achieves it that differ. MAHĀYĀNA Buddhists have a very different view. For them, the enlightenment of the *arhat* is essentially a selfish one. At death, the *arhat* will pass from SAṂSĀRA into "final NIRVĀṆA" (*parinirvāṇa*) and no longer be available to help others. The enlightenment of the *arhat* is thus self-centered and narrow. The path of the *pratyekabuddha* is the same. The result of solitary practice, it too culminates in the enlightenment of the *arhat*. These two paths the Mahāyāna characterizes as "HĪNA-YĀNA," "lesser vehicles." *Bodhisattvas*, on the other hand, reject the arhat's "easy way out" (sic) and, like ŚĀKYAMUNI, deliberately elect a much longer path in which, out of his or her boundless compassion, they remain engaged in the world so as to be available to help

others. In the Mahāyāna, Buddhahood thus represents an exalted state—"complete and perfect enlightenment" (*anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*)—that is vastly superior to the limited enlightenment of the *arhat*. Some Mahāyāna scriptures, notably the *Lotus Sūtra* (See SADDHARMAPUṆḌARĪKA SŪTRA) go further. They teach that the notion of the three vehicles is no more than an "expedient device" (See UPĀYA) designed to lure beings of differing spiritual capacities to enlightenment. Ultimately, there are not three separate vehicles. There is only the One Vehicle (*ekayāna*), that of Buddhahood, to which all beings are destined.

TRIPIṬAKA: "three baskets." Refers specifically to the three division of the Pāli Canon (see above, s.v. "The Literature of Nikāya Buddhism) but is frequently, if inaccurately, used as a general term for the Buddhist canon of all schools. The canon is divided into three parts: VINAYA, SŪTRA, and ABHIDHARMA.

TWELVEFOLD CHAIN OF CAUSATION, *pratītyasamutpāda*: A fundamental Buddhist teaching is that all things are conditioned, that is, the result of causes. None has an independent existence of its own. Among the Buddha's very first insights was his analysis of the chain of causality as it pertains to the coming to be and the passing away of our lives. The chain comprises twelve links, each the *precondition* for the next. Thus, with (1) **ignorance** as a precondition (2) **volitional action** arises; with volitional action as a precondition (3) **consciousness** arises; with consciousness as a precondition (4) **name and form** (i.e., the psychophysical person) arises; as a precondition of which (5) **the six internal sense bases** arise; as a precondition of which (6) **sensory contact** arises; as a precondition of which (7) **sensation** or feeling arises; as a precondition of which (8) **attachment** arises; as a precondition of which (9) **grasping** arises; as a precondition of which (10) the process of **becoming** (*bhava*) arises; as a precondition of which (11) **birth** arises; as a precondition of which (12) **old age and death** arise. The chain can also be understood as delineating a path to liberation through the progressive *elimination* of each step as a precondition of the next. Accordingly, from the elimination of ignorance, volitional actions no longer arise, etc. *Pratītyasamutpāda* is a way to describe the continuity of experience (as cause and its effect), and thus the action of KARMA, without positing a permanent "experiencer," i.e., an ĀTMAN. See PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA.

TWO TRUTHS: Although in reality (i.e., the "ultimate truth," *paramārthasatya*) all things are "empty" of self-nature, they do have a provisional reality ("conventional truth," *saṃvṛtisatya*), the world of everyday things as they appear to unenlightened consciousness. Relying on his "skill in means" (*upāyakauśala),* a BUDDHA will sometimes employ conventional truths to lead beings toward enlightenment. See also UPĀYA.

UPĀYA: "method," "[pedagogical] device." Recognizing the difficulty of the path to enlightenment and the wide disparity in the abilities of sentient beings to practice it, the Buddha employs "skill in means" (*upāyakauśala)* to tailor his message to fit the audience. His preaching to different audiences will often yield teachings that are seemingly at odds with one another, but these are simply "devices" used to instruct beings of varying spiritual

capacities. Associated with this notion is the division of the teachings into "provisional" (*neyārtha*) and "definitive" (*nītārtha*) doctrines

VINAYA: that portion of the Buddhist canon devoted to the rules of monastic discipline.

YOGĀCĀRA: A school of thought that constitutes one of the two core philosophical traditions of the Mahāyāna (Madhyamaka being the other). Its major doctrines were formulated in India by a pair of scholastics, ASAṄGA and VASUBANDHU, writing in the fourth to fifth centuries of the Common Era. The Yogācāra tradition holds that it is mind, *citta*, alone that is responsible for the creation of objects that we (falsely) believe to be external and independent of ourselves. The world, they hold, is merely a nondual "representation" or "projection" of consciousness (*vijñaptimātratā*) arising from the maturation of seeds in the *ālayavijñāna*. See THREE NATURES and ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA.

Eminent Monks

ĀNANDA: The most beloved of the Buddha's original disciples and, paradoxically, the last of them to become enlightened. At an assembly held to codify the scriptures following the death of the Buddha, it was Ānanda who recited (from memory) the teachings he had heard preached by the Buddha, and thus it is Ānanda who is the 'I" in "Thus have I heard," the words that open all Buddhist SŪTRAS.

ASAṄGA: ca. 320–390 CE. A towering figure in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Asaṅga is the reputed founder of YOGĀCĀRA Buddhism and the older brother of VASUBANDHU. Among his many works, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya, Mahāyānasaṃgraha,* and *Yogācābhūmi śāstra* are central to the explication of such Yogācāra themes as ĀLAYAVIJÑĀNA and the THREE NATURES. Additionally, his *Ratnagotravibhāga* became a seminal work in the formation of TATHĀGATAGARBHA thought.

BUDDHAGHOSA: 5th c. CE. The foremost Pāli commentator and author of the massive *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purification"), the definitive compendium of Theravāda thought and practice. According to tradition, Buddhaghosa was from northern India and was sent to Sri Lanka, the center of Theravāda learning, to deepen his understanding of the tradition. So great was his learning that, while there, he was also responsible for translating the Sinhalese commentaries into Pāli.

NĀGĀRJUNA: 2d century CE? The first great philosopher and systematizer of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the founder of the MADHYAMAKA school. In his central work, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* ("Verses on the Middle Way"), he undertakes a sustained refutation, based on the PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS, of a central doctrine of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, that DHARMAS have a self-nature (*svabhāva*), an independent and intrinsic existence. Returning to what many see as the central message of the Buddha, he demonstrates that all *dharmas* are "empty" (*śūnya*) of self-nature, arising only as dependently originated phenomena.

Neither from itself nor from another,
Nor from both,
Nor without a cause,
Does anything whatever, anywhere arise. (1.1)

With VASUBANDHU and ASAṄGA Nāgārjuna is revered as one of the greatest of all Mahāyāna thinkers.

ŚĀRIPUTRA: An early disciple of the Buddha, known especially for his wisdom and knowledge of Dharma. In Mahāyāna scriptures, particularly the PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ SŪTRAS, he is sometimes the foil for criticism of NIKĀYA Buddhist views. In these instances, his role as a master of Nikāya teachings, juxtaposed against his unfamiliarity with those of the Mahāyāna, serves as a subtle indictment of Nikāya, particularly ABHIDHARMA, positions.

VASUBANDHU: 4th or 5th centuries CE. Perhaps the foremost of the Buddhist scholiasts, the Gandhāra (contemporary Pakistan)-born Vasubandhu was first ordained as a SARVĀSTIVĀDA monk, out of which training he wrote his enormously influential *Abhidharmakośa* and its autocommentary, the *Bhāṣya*, together a massive compendium of Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika (a school closely related to the Sarvāstivāda) thought. The work stands as a *summa* of the Abhidharma tradition of that school and is still widely studied in Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism. Later in life Vasubandhu was converted to MAHĀYĀNA Buddhism, allegedly by his half-brother ASAṄGA, and became a devotee of the YOGĀCĀRA tradition, out of which he wrote, among others, two major treatises setting forth the teachings of that school, the *Viṃśatikā* ("Twenty Verses") and the *Triṃśikā* ("Thirty Verses"). The "conversion" from master commentator on Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma to equally important figure in the formation of Yogācāra thought has led some scholars to postulate the existence of two Vasubandhus.