

unconditioned and unlimited, namely *Nirvāṇa*. The clear message is: if something is *dukkha*, do not be attached to it. At this level, *dukkha* is whatever is not *Nirvāṇa*, and *Nirvāṇa* is that which is not *dukkha*. This does not lead to a useless circular definition of the two terms, for *dukkha* is that which is conditioned, arising from other changing factors in the flow of time, and *Nirvāṇa* is that which is unconditioned.

Does saying that something is *dukkha* mean that it is: (i) *by its very nature* 'painful', or (ii) 'painful' when reacted to with greed or aversion? Both seem to be implied in the Pali *Suttas*: grasping at anything leads to psychological pain (due to the fact that all conditioned things are subject to impermanence), and aversion makes pain worse, but also conditioned things are to be seen, in themselves, as *dukkha* in the sense of being limited and imperfect. They may also, in a straightforward sense, be forms of physical or mental pain. The Buddhist path aims initially at lessening the mental pain that the vicissitudes and stresses of life can produce, then at ending this mental pain, but ultimately at ending the round of rebirths, conditioned existence, and both its physical pains and more subtly painful nature.

The five bundles of grasping-fuel: the factors of personality

When the first sermon summarizes its outline of *dukkha* by saying, (iv) 'in brief, the five bundles of grasping-fuel are painful', it is referring to what is *dukkha* in the subtlest sense. The five 'bundles of grasping-fuel' (*upādāna-kkhandha*, Skt *upādāna-skandha*) are the five factors which go to make up a 'person'. Buddhism holds, then, that none of the phenomena which make up personality is free from some kind of painfulness. Each factor is a 'group', 'aggregate' or 'bundle' (*-(k)khandha*), of related states, and each is an object of 'grasping' (*upādāna*) so as to be identified as 'me', 'I', 'myself'. They are also just referred to as the *khandhas*.

The translation of *upādāna-kkhandha* as 'groups of grasping' is often found, but can be misleading. Grasping, *upādāna*, is a specific mental state which would best be classified as an aspect of the fourth *khandha*; so there are not five groups that are each *types* of grasping. Thus 'groups (as objects) of grasping' is better. Nevertheless, there are hidden nuances in the word *upādāna*. Its derivation indicates that its root meaning is 'taking up'. While it often has the abstract meaning of 'grasping', it also has a concrete meaning as 'fuel': the 'taking up' of which sustains a process such as fire. Richard Gombrich comments that the *Suttas* are rich in fire-related metaphors due to the importance of fire in Brahmanism, and then argues that the term

upādāna-kkhandha is also part of this fire imagery (1996: 66–8; 2009: III–28). The *upādāna-kkhandhas*, then, can each be seen as a ‘bundle of fuel’ (1996: 67) which ‘burns’ with the ‘fires’ of *dukkha* and its causes (S.II.19–20). They are each sustaining objects of, or fuel *for*, grasping (cf. Ṭhānissaro, 1999a: ch. 2). The translation ‘bundles of grasping-fuel’ captures these nuances.

That the spiritually ennobled see even the factors making up a person as *dukkha* shows that their understanding of reality is rather different from that of ordinary people (who are also unlikely to see being born as *dukkha*). Hence it is said that while the world sees the flow of agreeable sense-objects as pleasurable, and the ending of this as *dukkha*, the spiritually ennobled see the transcending of the *khandhas* and sense-objects as what is truly pleasurable (Sn.759–62 and S.IV.127): *Nirvāṇa* as the blissful state beyond all conditioned phenomena of the round of rebirths.

To aid understanding of *dukkha*, Buddhism gives details of each of the five factors into which it analyses personality. All but the first of these ‘bundles’ are mental in nature; for they lack any physical ‘form’:

1. *Rūpa* ‘(material) form’. This refers to the material aspect of existence, whether in the outer world or in the body of a living being. It is said to be comprised of four basic elements or forces, and forms of subtle, sensitive matter derived from these. The four basics are solidity (literally ‘earth’), cohesion (‘water’), heat (‘fire’) and motion (‘wind’). From the interaction of these, the body of flesh, blood, bones, etc. is composed.
2. *Vedanā* or ‘feeling’. This is the hedonic tone or ‘taste’ of any experience: pleasant, painful (*dukkha*) or neutral. It includes both sensations arising from the body and mental feelings of happiness, unhappiness or indifference.
3. *Saññā* (Skt *saṃjñā*), which processes sensory and mental objects, so as to classify and label them, for example as ‘yellow’, ‘a man’ or ‘fear’. It is ‘perception’, ‘cognition’, mental labelling, recognition and interpretation – including misinterpretation – of objects. Without it, a person might be conscious but would be unable to know *what* he was conscious of.
4. The *saṅkhāras* (Skt *saṃskāra*), or ‘constructing activities’ (also rendered as ‘volitional activities’, ‘mental formations’ and ‘karmic activities’). These comprise a number of processes which initiate action or direct, mould and give shape to character. The most characteristic one is *cetanā*, ‘will’ or ‘volition’, which is identified with karma (see p. 40). There are processes which are ingredients of all mind-states, such as sensory stimulation and attention, ones which intensify such states, such as energy, joy or desire-to-do, ones which are ethically ‘skilful’, such as

mindfulness and a sense of moral integrity, and 'unskilful' ones, such as greed, hatred and delusion.

5. *Viññāṇa* (Skt *viññāna*), '(discriminative) consciousness'. This includes both the basic awareness of a sensory or mental object, and the discrimination of its aspects or parts, which are actually recognized by *saññā*. One might thus also see it as perceptual 'discernment'. It is of six types according to whether it is conditioned by eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or mind-organ. It is also known as *citta*, the central focus of personality, which can be seen as 'mind', 'heart' or 'thought'. This is essentially a 'mind-set' or 'mentality'; some aspects of which alter from moment to moment, but others recur and are equivalent to a person's character. Its form at any moment is set up by the other mental *khandhas*, but in turn it goes on to determine their pattern of arising, in a process of constant interaction.

Much Buddhist practice is concerned with the purification, development and harmonious integration of the five 'bundles' that make up personality, through the cultivation of virtue and meditation. In time, however, the fivefold analysis is used to enable a meditator to gradually transcend the naïve perception – with respect to 'himself' or 'another' – of a unitary 'person' or 'self'. In place of this, there is set up the contemplation of a person as a cluster of changing physical and mental processes, or *dhammas* (Skt *dharma*), thus undermining grasping and attachment, which are key causes of suffering.

Phenomena as impermanent and non-Self²

Though the first sermon emphasizes *dukkha*, this is in fact only one of three related characteristics or 'marks' of the five *khandhas*. These fundamental 'three marks' (*ti-lakkhaṇa*, Skt *tri-lakṣaṇa*) of all conditioned phenomena are that they are impermanent (*anicca*, Skt *anitya*), painful (*dukkha*, Skt *duḥkha*), and non-Self (*anattā*, Skt *anātman*).³ Buddhism emphasizes that change and impermanence are fundamental features of *everything*, bar *Nirvāṇa*. Mountains wear down, material goods wear out or are lost or stolen, and all beings, even gods, age and die (*M.ii.65–82* (*BW.207–13*); *EB.3.2.1*). The gross form of the body changes relatively slowly, but the matter which composes it is replaced as one eats, excretes and sheds skin cells. As regards the mind, character patterns may be relatively persistent,

² See Collins, 1982; Harvey, 1995a: 17–108, and 2009b: 265–74.

³ E.g. *S.iii.44–5* (*BW.342–3*), *S.iv.46–7* (*SB.224–5*), *S.iv.133–5* (*BW.346–7*).

but feelings, moods, ideas, etc. can be observed to constantly change. The ephemeral and deceptive nature of the *khandhas* is expressed in a passage which says that they are 'devoid, hollow' as: 'Material form is like a lump of foam, and feeling is like a bubble; perception is like a mirage, and the constructing activities are like a banana tree [lacking a core, like an onion]; consciousness is like a [magician's] illusion' (S.III.142 (BW.343-5); SB.220-2).

It is because of the fact that things are impermanent that they are also *dukkha*. Because they are impermanent and in some sense painful, moreover, they are to be seen as *anattā*, non-Self. When something is said to be *anattā*, the kind of 'self' it is seen not to be is clearly one that would be permanent and free from all pain, however subtle – so as to be happy, self-secure, independent. While Pali and Sanskrit do not have capital letters, in English it is useful to signal such a concept with a capital: Self.

The term *anattā* is nearly always a noun,⁴ in the form of the word for Self, *attā* (Skt *ātman*), prefaced by the negative prefix *an*, meaning that what is *anattā* is nothing to do with 'self' in a certain sense: it is not a Self – it is not-Self – nor what pertains or belongs to such a thing (*attaniya*, S.III.33-4; S.IV.54), as 'mine', or what contains Self or is contained in it (M.I.300; S.III.127-32). It is 'empty (*suñña*, Skt *śūnya*) of Self or what pertains to Self' (S.IV.54 (BT.81; BW.347)). While *anattā* is often rendered simply as 'not-Self', this translation captures only part of its meaning, as it misses out the aspect of not being anything that pertains to a Self, which 'non-Self' includes.

The important teaching on this was introduced by the Buddha in his second sermon, the *Anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta* (Vin.I.13-14; S.III.66-8 (BS.118; BW.341-2)). Here he explained, with respect to each of the five *khandhas*, that if it were truly Self, it would not 'tend to sickness', and it would be totally controllable at will, which it is not. Moreover, as each *khandha* is impermanent, *dukkha* and of a nature to change, it is inappropriate to consider it as 'This is mine, this am I, this is my Self'.

In the Buddha's day, the spiritual quest was largely seen as the search for identifying and liberating a person's true Self. Such an entity was postulated as a person's permanent inner nature, the source of true happiness and the autonomous 'inner controller' (Skt *antaryamin*) of a person's actions, inner elements and faculties. It would also need to be in full control of itself. In Brahmanism, this *ātman* was seen as a universal Self identical with *Brahman*, while in Jainism, for example, it was seen as the individual 'Life-principle' (*jīva*). The Buddha argued that anything subject to change,

⁴ Occasionally, *anattā* it is an adjective meaning 'without Self'.

anything involved with the disharmony of mental pain, anything not autonomous and totally controllable by its own or an owner's wishes, could not be such a perfect true Self or what in any way pertained or belonged to it. Moreover, to take anything as being such is to lay the basis for much suffering; for what one fondly takes as one's permanent, essential Self, or its secure possession, all actually changes in undesired ways. While the *Upaniṣads* recognized many things as being not-Self, they felt that a real, true Self could be found. They held that when it was found, and known to be identical to *Brahman*, the basis of everything, this would bring liberation. In the Buddhist *Suttas*, though, literally everything is seen as non-Self, even *Nirvāṇa*. When this is known, then liberation – *Nirvāṇa* – is attained by total non-attachment. Thus both the *Upaniṣads* and the Buddhist *Suttas* see many things as not-Self, but the *Suttas* apply it, indeed non-Self, to *everything*.

The teaching on phenomena as non-Self is not only intended to undermine the Brahmanical or Jain concepts of Self, but also much more commonly held conceptions and deep-rooted feelings of I-ness. To feel that, however much one changes in life from childhood onwards, some essential part remains constant and unchanged as the 'real me', is to have a belief in a permanent Self. To act as if only *other* people die, and to ignore the inevitability of one's own death, is to act as if one had a permanent Self. To relate changing mental phenomena to a substantial self which 'owns' them – 'I am worried . . . happy . . . angry' – is to have such a Self-concept. To build an identity based on one's bodily appearance or abilities, or on one's sensitivities, ideas and beliefs, actions or intelligence etc. is to take them as part of an 'I'.

The non-Self teaching can easily be misunderstood and misdescribed; so it is important to see what it is saying. The Buddha accepted many conventional usages of the word 'self' (also *attā*), as in 'yourself' and 'myself'. These he saw as simply convenient ways of referring to a particular collection of mental and physical states. But within such a conventional, empirical self, he taught that no permanent, substantial, independent, metaphysical Self could be found. This is well explained by an early nun, Vajirā:⁵ just as the word 'chariot' is used to denote a collection of items in functional relationship, but not a special part of a chariot, so the conventional term 'a being' is properly used to refer to the five *khandhas* relating together. None of the *khandhas* is a 'being' or 'Self', but these are simply conventional labels used to denote the collection of functioning *khandhas*.

⁵ S.I.135 (EB.3.2.3), cf. Miln.25–8 (BSI.147–9; EB.3.2.2).

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

While *Nirvāṇa* is beyond impermanence and *dukkha*, it is still non-Self. This is made clear in a recurring passage (e.g. at *A*.1.286–7), which says that all *sankhāras*, here meaning conditioned phenomena, are impermanent and *dukkha*, but that 'all *dhammas*' are non-Self. '*Dhamma*' (Skt *dharma*) is a word with many meanings in Buddhism, but here it refers to any basic component of reality. Most are conditioned, but *Nirvāṇa* is the unconditioned *dhamma* (*A*.11.34); both conditioned and unconditioned *dhammas* are non-Self. While *Nirvāṇa* is beyond change and suffering, it has nothing in it which could support the feeling of I-ness; for this can only arise with respect to the *khandhas*, and it is not even a truly valid feeling here (*D*.11.66–8; Harvey, 1995a: 31–3).

That said, it should be noted that, while 'all *dhammas* are *anattā*' – 'everything is non-Self' – clearly implies that there is no Self, the word *anattā* does not *itself* mean 'no-Self', that is, does not itself mean 'there is no Self'. It simply means that what it is applied to is not a Self or what pertains to it. Moreover, the non-Self teaching is not in *itself* a denial of the existence of a permanent self; it is primarily a practical teaching aimed at the overcoming of attachment. Indeed, when directly asked if 'self' (in an unspecified sense) exists or not, the Buddha was silent, as he did not want either to affirm a permanent Self, or confuse his questioner by not accepting self in any sense (*S*.1V.400–1 (*EB*.3.2.4)). A philosophical denial of 'Self' is just a view, a theory, which may be agreed with or not. It does not necessarily get one to examine all the things that one actually *does* identify with, consciously or unconsciously, as Self or essentially 'mine'. This examination, in a calm, meditative context, is what the 'non-Self' teaching aims at. It is not so much a conceptual idea as something to be *done*, applied to actual experience, so that the meditator actually *sees* that '*all dhammas* are non-Self'. A mere philosophical denial does not encourage this, and may actually mean that a person sees no need for it.

nuns transmit something of the tranquillity of their way of life by chanting for the laity, this is a kind of broadcast meditation. All monks know the basic meaning of the chants, and can explain them to the laity. A full understanding depends on knowledge of the relevant language, which most monks train in to some extent. Vernacular chants also exist.

In all traditions, the most common chants are short verbal formulas, which may be strung together or repeated to form longer continuous chants. A very common Southern Buddhist chant, honouring Gotama Buddha, is: *Namo tassa bhagavato, arahato, sammā-sambuddhassa*, 'Honour to the Blessed One, Arahāt, perfectly and completely Awakened One'. This is repeated three times and is usually followed by a chanted avowal of commitment to the 'three refuges' and five moral precepts.

In all traditions, rosaries can be used to count off repeated chants. In Southern Buddhism, a *mantra* may be used such as 'du sa ni ma; sa ni ma du; ni ma du sa; ma du sa ni'. This is based on the initial letters of the words for the four True Realities for the Spiritually Ennobled: *dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, magga*. It concentrates the mind, keeps it alert and opens it to understanding. A devotional rosary-chant used in Southern Buddhism is 'Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha', and a popular Tibetan one is 'oṃ maṇi padme huṃ' (see p. 181).

THE REFUGES

The key expression of commitment to Buddhism is 'taking the refuges'.⁴ The ancient formula for this, in its Pali form, begins: '*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi, Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*'. This affirms that 'I go to the Buddha as refuge, I go to the *Dhamma* as refuge, I go to the *Saṅgha* as refuge'. Each affirmation is then repeated 'for the second time . . .' (*dutiyam pi . . .*) and 'for the third time . . .' (*tatiyam pi . . .*). The threefold repetition marks off the recitation from ordinary uses of speech, and ensures that the mind dwells on the meaning of each affirmation at least once. The notion of a 'refuge', here, is not that of a place to hide, but of something the thought of which purifies, uplifts and strengthens the heart. Orientation towards these three guides to a better way of living is experienced as a joyful haven of calm, a firm 'island amidst a flood', in contrast to the troubles of life. The 'refuges' remind the Buddhist of calm, wise, spiritual people and states of mind, and so help engender these states. The value of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha* is denoted by the fact that they

⁴ *BSI*. 182–3; *BS2*.13 (*Khp*-a.21–2); Bodhi, 1981; Carter, 1982; Nyanaponika, 1983.

are also known as the *Tiratana* (Skt *Triratna*) or 'three jewels': spiritual treasures of supreme worth.

The meaning of each refuge varies somewhat between different traditions. The Theravāda understanding is expressed in a frequently used chant drawn from the Pali Canon (e.g. S.v.343). On the Buddha, it affirms: 'Thus he is the Blessed One: because he is an *Arahat*, perfectly and completely Awakened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of worlds, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, Buddha, Blessed One'. The 'Buddha' referred to here is primarily Gotama, who is regarded with reverence and gratitude as the rediscoverer and exemplifier of *Dhamma*, who also showed others how to live by and experience it. These feelings naturally develop greater depth as benefits of living by *Dhamma* are experienced. One recently popularized Sinhalese liturgy, the *Buddha Pūjā* or *Bōdhi Pūjā*, states, 'Thus infinite, possessing measureless qualities, unequalled, equal to the unequalled, god to the gods, to me the Blessed One, my own Buddha mother, my own Buddha father, the orb of dawn to the darkness of delusion . . .' (Gombrich, 1981: 67). The Buddha refuge not only refers to Gotama, but also to previous and future Buddhas, and to the principle of awakening as supremely worthy of attainment. In this respect, the first refuge can also be taken as a pointer to the various spiritual qualities developing within the practitioner.

The Pali chant on *Dhamma* is: 'Well-expounded by the Blessed One is *Dhamma*, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise'. This emphasizes *Dhamma* as ever available, open to experiential investigation, practical and transformative. As refuge, *Dhamma* is explained as the Noble Eight-factored Path (*Khp-a.19*). More generally, as explained in the Pali commentaries, it refers to: (a) *pariyatti*, or the body of teachings, (b) *paṭipatti* or the 'practice' of the way, and (c) *paṭivedha*, or 'realization' of the stages of sanctity – in the highest sense, *Nirvāṇa* itself. *Dhamma*, then, is to be heard/read and understood, practised and realized. It is also the 'law-orderliness' inherent in nature, the 'Basic Pattern' in which phenomena occur according to the Conditioned Arising principle, from appropriate conditions.

The Pali chant on the *Śaṅgha*, or Community is: 'The Community of the Blessed One's disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals; this Community . . . is worthy of gifts, hospitality, offerings, and reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of karmic fruitfulness for the world'. Here, the 'four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals' are the stream-enterer, once-returner,

non-returner, *Arahat*, and those well established on the paths to these spiritual 'fruits' (see pp. 85–7); that is, all who have attained *Nirvāṇa*, glimpsed it, or are on the brink of glimpsing it. This is the precious *ariya-Saṅgha* (*Vism.*218), the Community of 'Noble' persons, who may be found mainly within the monastic *Saṅgha*, its symbolic representative, but also among spiritually advanced laypeople or even gods. Being of exemplary conduct, its members are worthy of gifts and respect; the monastic *Saṅgha* seeks to emulate them in this. The concept of a 'field of karmic fruitfulness' (see p. 44) is that, just as a seed planted in better ground yields better fruit, so a gift given to a more virtuous person generates more karmic fruitfulness (*M.*III.255–7). This idea is partly based on the fact that, if one gives to someone of suspect character, one may regret the act somewhat; whereas in giving to a virtuous or holy person, one puts all one's heart into the act and can rejoice at it. Giving also sets up a bond of association (a *nidāna*; see p. 237). The Noble *Saṅgha* therefore benefits the world with the opportunity for generating abundant auspicious, purifying karmic fruitfulness.

In the Mahāyāna, the 'Three-body' doctrine means that the Buddha refuge refers not only to Gotama and other Transformation-body Buddhas, but also, and more importantly, to the heavenly Enjoyment-body Buddhas. In the Pure Land schools, emphasis is primarily or exclusively on Amitābha. In Chan/Zen, the emphasis is on the historical Buddha as a heroic, stirring example, but more particularly on the idea of the Buddha-nature within: 'take refuge in the three treasures in your own natures. The Buddha is enlightenment, the *Dharma* is truth, the *Saṅgha* is purity . . . take refuge in the Buddha within yourselves . . . If you do not rely upon your own natures, there is nothing else on which to rely' (*Plat.* sec. 23). Transformation-body Buddhas are also figuratively seen as good and wise thoughts within one's mind, and refuge is taken in 'the future perfect Enjoyment-body in my own physical body' (*Plat.* sec. 20). In the Mahāyāna, the *Dharma* refuge, in its highest sense, refers to the *Dharma*-body. Noble *Bodhisattvas* are included in the *Saṅgha* refuge, and taking refuge in them is allied to taking vows, often repeated on a daily basis, to become like them.

In the Mantranaya of Northern Buddhism, extra refuges are taken. Prior to the three usual ones, a person takes refuge in his *Lama/Guru*, the source of his deepening knowledge of the other refuges and regarded as an embodiment of their virtues (*EB.*5.5.5). After the usual refuges, an individual may then take refuge in his *yidam*, a holy being which is his tutelary deity (see p. 349). An adept preparing for training in meditative visualizations must also complete preliminary practices of a devotional and purificatory nature. Five or six such practices are generally given, each of which must be done

100,000 times. One is the 'grand prostration', which is done while holding wooden blocks, to prevent the hands being blistered by repeatedly sliding along the floor (or a special wooden board) to the fully prostrate position, while dedicating oneself to one's *Guru* (Blofeld, 1987: 151). After a period of struggle and pain, the practice is said to induce great joy. It also conduces to a balance of 'self-power' and 'other-power': relying on oneself and on the power of holy beings.

A related foundational practice is that of *Guru-yoga*, in which a practitioner visualizes, either in front of him or above his head, the *yidam* and the lineage of *Gurus/Lamas*, including the practitioner's own *Lama*, who have passed on teachings on these. These are all asked for inspiration and blessings, and are seen to merge and flow as light through the crown of the practitioner's head into his or her heart. As the Gelugpa Lama Yeshe puts it:

We then meditate upon the feeling that our guru, who in essence is identical with the deity, and our own subtle consciousness have become indistinguishably one. The essence of the guru is wisdom, the perfectly clear and radiant state of mind in which bliss and the realization of emptiness are inseparably unified . . . By visualizing in this way and thinking of the personal kindness shown to you by your guru, a powerful connection is established . . . The purpose of seeing the guru in an exalted aspect . . . is solely to speed your own spiritual evolution. (MW.188–9)

As expressed by Sarah Harding, 'All buddha qualities are projected and identified with the guru' (Kongtrul, 2002: 11–12). Yet while one looks on one's *Guru as if* he were perfect, there should not be blind faith or taking a *Guru's* quirks and faults as if they were virtues (Kongtrul, 2002: 92). The point is to focus on the deeper and exemplary aspects of one's *Guru*, and the *Dharma* he teaches.

ATTITUDES TO IMAGES

Images always function as reminders of the spiritual qualities of holy beings, if in no other way. When a Theravādin, for example, expresses devotion before an image of Gotama Buddha, he is reminded of his struggle for awakening, his perfections, his teachings and the ideal he represents. He joyfully recollects the Buddha, developing a warm heart and a pure mind. The spiritual qualities expressed by the form of a good image also help to stimulate the arising of such qualities in one who contemplates it.

In Northern and Eastern Buddhism, except perhaps in Chan/Zen, images function as more than reminders. Especially in Mantranaya schools, they are seen as infused with the spirit and power of the being they

herds and seed-grain, but most capital was received and administered at the level of the 'college', a sub-division of the monastery which inherited the possessions of its members (EB.7.8.2). Its superintendent, monastic or lay, ensured its support by getting a good return from land worked by leaseholders or peasants attached to the monastery, from grazing, forest and water rights, college herds, trade with China and India, bartering with herdsmen, and from loans and investments.

STUDY AND MEDITATION

Monastic life can be broadly divided into personal, communal and pastoral activities. The first includes observing the monastic code, meditation and study, all as means to spiritual development and the preservation of the *Dhamma* for the benefit of all. In practice, monks and nuns have tended to emphasize either study or meditation. Such specialization seems to have existed to some extent even in early Buddhism (A.III.355–6 (SB.260–I)).

In Southern Buddhism, a distinction developed, early in the Christian era, between 'book-duty' (*gantha-dhura*) monks, with the duty of study and teaching, and 'insight-duty' (*vipassanā-dhura*) ones, with the duty of meditation.²⁰ The former tend to dwell in villages, towns and cities, studying and ministering to the laity, while the latter tend to live a more secluded, ascetic life-style in the forest. Some 'forest-dwelling' monks, however, simply belong to a section of the *Saṅgha* that once lived in the forest. When the teachings were first written down in first-century BCE Laṅkā, it was decided that learning was more important than meditation, which would not be possible if the teachings were lost. In Laṅkā, therefore, many more monks have specialized in study than in meditation, a situation strengthened in recent centuries by the common belief that it is no longer possible to attain Arahātship. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, reform movements revived the forest meditation tradition, so that now, at least 3 per cent of the island's monks are genuine forest dwellers, and in 1968 a new *nikāya* for them was recognized (Carrithers, 1983). In South-east Asia, a larger proportion, though still a minority, of monks have specialized in meditation. Theravāda nuns generally practise meditation (often, but not always, of a devotional nature) more than monks, though they study less. Specialization is not always a permanent thing, for a monk might study and then turn to meditation to experientially explore what he has learnt, or return from a forest monastery to a busier town monastery. In any case, a

²⁰ EB.6.3.1; Gombrich, 1971: 270, 2006: 152.

'study' monk meditating for an hour a day may have fewer expectations and not try to force results, and thus achieve better meditation levels than many forest monks. Quality, not quantity, counts. Some monks meditate or study little, though, and are more involved in running a monastery or pastoral activities. All monks chant, however, and this has a meditative quality, sometimes powerfully so.

In Northern Buddhism, the Gelugpa school is noted for its emphasis on study, while others such as the Kagyüdpä emphasize meditation more. Full monks (*gelong*) of all schools, though, usually start by spending five years in study. This is followed by further study, by learning meditation and practising it in a hermitage, or simply by helping around the monastery. The majority of monastics, who follow only thirty-six precepts, study much less than the *gelongs*.

In Eastern Buddhism, Huayan/Kegon has a scholarly emphasis, Tiantai emphasizes both study and meditation (BS2.40), Pure Land emphasizes devotion, and Chan/Zen emphasizes meditation. Relative specialization of focuses of study or practice meant that Chinese monks sometimes developed different aspects of their personal cultivation by moving between different schools. Few have been proficient scholars, though, due to the difficulty of mastering written Chinese. Scholar-monks tended to reside in larger monasteries, from which they would go on lecture-tours, while the majority were semi-literate and lived in small temples ministering to the laity. In Korea, a novice monk or nun chooses to study (for about six years) or train in meditation. In recent times, the trend has been to study then meditate.

Study

The extensive scriptures have been lovingly studied by generations of monks and nuns, who have produced many commentaries and treatises based on them (Pagel, 2001). The need to preserve and disseminate the teachings has spread literate culture to many lands, ensured a generally high degree of literacy among Buddhists, and been responsible for the invention of printing and several written scripts. Buddhist monks and nuns have often been among the intellectual, cultural and artistic elite of their societies.

In Southern Buddhism, monks and novices begin by studying *Vinaya*, basic doctrines, *Jātaka* tales for use in sermons and common chants. Some go further at monastic schools, colleges and universities. The basis of study beyond the preliminary level is a knowledge of Pali. Some Sanskrit may also be studied, as a key to knowledge of certain non-Theravādin texts. National

languages have been used for many treatises and translations of key texts. Traditionally, the texts were inscribed on collections of oblong strips of dried palm-leaves, which are more long-lasting than paper in tropical climates. The first complete *printing* of the Pali Canon was in 1893, under King Chulalongkorn of Thailand, though the version printed in Roman characters by the Pali Text Society of London, since 1881, has become a widely used printed version. The 'Sixth Council', held in Burma from 1954 to 1956, cross-checked and revised the manuscript tradition and produced a printed Canon known as the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* (Sixth Council) version, now available on a CD-ROM from the Vipassana Research Institute (www.vridhamma.org). Monks also keep alive the oral tradition, with some memorizing large sections of texts – a few even know the whole Canon. In Thailand, the institution of graded examination systems in Pali, Buddhism and some secular subjects has both improved the general level of monastic education and produced a tendency to a stereotyped interpretation of scriptures. The study of subjects such as psychology, philosophy and basic science is seen by traditionalists as leading monks to be worldly and more prone to disrobe, while modernists hold that monks need knowledge of them to be efficient communicators of Buddhism to an increasingly well-educated laity.

In China, Buddhism met a well-developed literate culture, so the entire corpus of available texts in Sanskrit and other Indian and Central Asian languages was gradually translated: a vast task which is probably the greatest translation-project the world has seen. The Chinese Canon was also used in Korea, Vietnam and Japan, and was only translated into Japanese early in the twentieth century. Besides translating genuine *Sūtras* from their Sanskrit originals, the Chinese also composed many themselves, listed as 'spurious *Sūtras*' in their *Sūtra* catalogues. These included texts arising from creative inspiration, but also simplified abbreviations of *Sūtras*, and attempts to palm off folk beliefs as Buddhism, or to take advantage of it for some purpose. The value attached to the *Platform Sūtra* (see p. 219), however, meant that this Chinese text was counted as a 'genuine' *Sūtra* (*Jing*). The Chinese invented printing in the seventh century, using carved wooden blocks to reproduce Buddhist images and short *dhāraṇī* chants; one of the latter survives from around 660 CE. Soon after, texts were printed. The world's oldest extant printed book is in fact a copy of the 'Diamond-cutter' Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*, printed in 868 CE. The entire Canon was printed from 972 to 983, while the eleventh century saw the invention of movable wooden type. The largest and most definitive edition of the Chinese Canon is now the *Taishō Daizōkyō*, produced from 1924 to 1934 in Japan.

In Northern Buddhism, texts are collections of oblong strips of paper printed by wood-blocks. Traditional study was based on daily lectures on selected texts, followed by memorization and study of them. After the minimum five years, some monks would then spend at least seven years in a Tantric college in which mystical tantric texts would be studied and then used as a basis for meditations. The Gelugpas have emphasized logic as a basic formative discipline, a student's doctrinal understanding being tested by public dialectical debates. Their full course of study could last up to twenty-five years, leading to the title of first or second class *geshé* (*dge bshes*), a kind of Doctor of Buddhology. Traditional study also included medicine, astrology, astronomy, grammar, calligraphy and religious painting. Since the destruction of many monasteries in Tibet by the Communist Chinese, traditional monastic learning has been continued by refugee monks in India and elsewhere.

The meditative life

In Southern Buddhism, a forest monastery usually consists of a simple wooden meeting-hall/shrine-room and *kutis* (huts) or even caves as dwellings. It is usual for monks specializing in meditation to adhere to *Vinaya* more strictly, and they may also undertake, at least temporarily, some of the thirteen *dhutaṅgas*, or 'austere practices', intended to cultivate non-attachment and vigour.²¹ Those more commonly practised include: living only off alms-food; eating only one meal a day, at around 10 a.m.; eating food only from the alms-bowl; and living at least half a mile from a village. The more hardy might undertake to live at the foot of a tree, or sleep in the sitting position. In Thailand, the *dhutaṅgas* are often practised by monks walking on pilgrimage, sleeping under large umbrellas equipped with mosquito-nets. Paradoxically, while such wandering monks are conventionally admired, as approximating to the wandering life of the early *Saṅgha*, Thais have an ambivalent attitude towards them, as they are not properly integrated within the institutionalized monastic community.²² That said, the most respected monks in the country have included forest monks, such as the reputed *Arhat* Ajahn Mun Buridatta (1870–1949) and some of his disciples, such as Ajahn Chah (1918–92).²³

²¹ *Vin.* III.171–2; *Vism.* II; Khantipālo, 1979: 110–13; Ray, 1994: 293–323; Tambiah, 1984: 137, 175–6.

²² Ray, 1994 traces a line of forest ascetics and saints from early Buddhism through to the Mahāyāna, arguing that they represented a persistent model of *Saṅgha* life that contrasted with that of institutionalized monasticism, with its emphasis on study and group living.

²³ Mahā Boowa, 2005; Tambiah, 1984: 81–110; Ṭhāṇissaro, 1999b.

In Northern Buddhism, many monasteries have caves or huts for intensive meditation or scholarship. Seclusion in such hermitages might be for a short period or, in the Kagyüdpā and Nyingmapa schools, for perhaps three years, three months and three days. During this time the meditator is alone, with food and water being silently passed in through a small opening. Such seclusion is, of course, voluntary, and is only entered after an exhaustive preparation. It is used as a time to wholeheartedly develop meditation by drawing on both previous practice and innate mental resources.

In Eastern Buddhism, isolated retreats have also been practised, but the Chan/Zen school developed the institution of the 'meditation-hall' (Jap. *zendō*) as the focus of life in larger, well-run monasteries, with the *sesshin* as a period of intense meditation practice in this.²⁴ On a raised platform at the edge of the hall, the monks and nuns or trainees meditate, sleep and (in Japan) eat, with their few possessions neatly packed in a small box above or behind them. During meditation periods, a wakefulness-aider (*jikodō*) patrols with a flat stick with which to compassionately rouse any who are sleepy by hitting them on the shoulder. Energy is also roused by alternating periods of sitting and walking meditation, done in a circle in a slow, dignified yet powerful way, sometimes said to be like the majestic advance of a tiger; this suddenly stops when a signal is given. In Chinese tradition, monks sign up for six-month periods in the meditation-hall, while others perform devotions, study, run the monastery and come to the hall for evening meditation. In Japan, a trainee's day includes both meditation and manual labour.

A striking form of ascetic practice is found in the Japanese Tendai school: the *sennichi kaihōgyō*, or mountain-circumambulating austerity, done around the Tendai head temple on Mount Hiei. Each year, several priests perform the 100-day version of this, so as to be able to become head priests in the temple-complex. Once a decade, on average, a priest performs the awesome 1,000-day version. For the latter, he must be single, have the permission of the Tendai authorities, and have completed the twelve-year training period on the mountain. The 1,000 days are spread over seven years. They involve quickly walking a 22-mile route round the mountain, in socks and straw sandals, starting at midnight after around three hours' sleep, standing under freezing waterfalls, living on a meagre amount of food, and, at the 700-day mark, going without food, water, sleep or lying down for nine days, while continuing to walk. The person doing this, once he has started, should be prepared to kill himself rather than give up. Completing

²⁴ Maczumi and Glassman, 2002: 43–51; Suzuki, 1970a: 314–62.

the 1,000 days is seen to lead to buddhahood. The context for this practice is that Japan has a tradition of mountain ascetics, whose fasting etc. is seen to reverse normal human activities and so acquire power, which is then used for the benefit of the community. The chanting of *mantras*, texts such as the *Heart Sūtra* and invocations from the *Lotus Sūtra* accompany such austerities, which

have a strongly purificatory and exorcistic dimension: the crushing or punishing of the body . . . works to drive or wash out the impurities of the mind, removing . . . all the barriers, physical or mental, that might prevent the practitioner from achieving higher consciousness and powers. (Reader, 1991: 121)

While the Buddha had a strongly ascetic phase prior to his enlightenment (see p. 19), he then saw this as an extreme to be avoided. The above kind of practice, though, seems to express the view that his asceticism was a necessary preparation for his Buddhahood.

COMMUNAL LIFE

While monks and nuns may spend some time in solitary meditation, the monastic life is nurtured and supported by a communal life-style. In having shared values and ideals, the *Saṅgha* supports the spiritual development of its members by solidarity, example, teaching, mutual acknowledgement of digressions, an ordered life-style, communal discipline and minimal privacy. The ideal is that possessions should be shared, even down to the contents of an alms-bowl (*M.11.251*). Dōgen, the founder of Sōtō Zen, held that most actions of monks should be done in an identical manner, the correct ordering of daily life being the heart of Buddhism.

The section of *Vinaya* called the *Khandhaka* (see p. 289) can be seen as the *Saṅgha*'s constitution. It regulates communal life according to the legal devices set out in the *kamma-vācanās*, or 'announcements of action', which are dealt with by a quorum of monks democratically reaching a consensus on a proposal. This then becomes a valid 'action of the *Saṅgha*'. The *Khandhaka* deals with both procedures and rules. The procedures regulate such matters as the *Vassa* rains retreat, ordination, the *pāṭimokkha* ceremony, disciplinary issues, disputes and schisms. The specific discipline of *Vassa* is generally observed quite well in Southern Buddhism, less so in Northern Buddhism, and not much in Eastern Buddhism, where it is known as the 'Summer Retreat'. The *Khandhaka* rules regulate, for example, the use of leather objects, the size and type of robes, and foods, drinks and medicines allowable to monks, especially after the last meal at noon.

Canons of Scriptures¹

The scriptural canon of Southern Buddhism is generally known as the Pali Canon or, traditionally, as the *Tipiṭaka*, the 'Three Baskets/Collections' (see pp. xxi–xxviii for abbreviations). It consists of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, or 'Basket of Monastic Discipline', the *Sutta-piṭaka*, or 'Basket of Discourses', and the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, or 'Basket of Further Teachings'. The contents of the *Vinaya* (six vols.) and *Abhidhamma* (seven texts in thirteen vols., in one edition) are discussed on pp. 249 and 90–2 respectively. The contents of the *Sutta-piṭaka* is as follows (the numbers of volumes are those of the PTS edition – www.palitext.com):

- (i) *Dīgha Nikāya*, or 'Long Collection' of thirty-four discourses (three vols.).
- (ii) *Majjhima Nikāya*, or 'Middle Length Collection' of 152 discourses (three vols.).
- (iii) *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, or 'Connected Collection' of 7,762 discourses, grouped in fifty-six sections (*saṃyuttas*) according to subject matter (five vols.).
- (iv) *Anguttara Nikāya*, or 'Incremental Collection' of 9,550 discourses, grouped according to the number of items occurring in lists (from one to eleven) which the discourses deal with (five vols.).
- (v) *Khuddaka Nikāya*, or 'Small Collection' of 15 miscellaneous texts in 20 volumes, many in verse form, which contain both some of the earliest and some of the latest material in the Canon:
 - (a) *Khuddaka-pāṭha*, a short collection of 'Little Readings' for recitation.
 - (b) *Dhammapada*, or 'Verses on Dhamma', a popular collection of 423 pithy verses of a largely ethical nature. Its popularity is

¹ On these, see Ch'en, 1964: 365–78; Gethin, 1998: 39–45; Keown and Prebish, 2007: 195–205; Lancaster, 1979: 215–29; Pagel, 2001.

reflected in the many times it has been translated into Western languages.

- (c) *Udāna*, eighty short *Suttas* based on inspired 'Verses of Uplift'.
- (d) *Itivuttaka*, or 'As It Was Said': 112 short *Suttas*.
- (e) *Sutta-nipāta*, the 'Group of Discourses', a collection of seventy-one verse *Suttas*, including some possibly very early material such as the *Aṭṭhakavagga*.
- (f) *Vimāna-vatthu*, 'Stories of the Mansions', on heavenly rebirths.
- (g) *Peta-vatthu*, 'Stories of the Departed', on ghostly rebirths.
- (h) *Thera-gāthā*, 'Elders' Verses', telling how a number of early monks attained Arahatsip.
- (i) *Therī-gāthā*, the same as (h), for nuns.
- (j) *Jātaka*, a collection of 547 'Birth Stories' of previous lives of the Buddha, with the aim of illustrating ethical points. The full stories are told in the commentary, based on verses, which are canonical; together they comprise six volumes. While this is a relatively late portion of the Canon, probably incorporating many Indian folk tales, it is extremely popular and is often used in sermons.
- (k) *Niddesa*, an 'Exposition' on part of (e).
- (l) *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, an *Abhidhamma*-style analysis of certain points of doctrine (two vols.).
- (m) *Apadāna*, 'Stories of Actions and Their Results' on past lives of monks and nuns in (h) and (i).
- (n) *Buddha-vamsa*, 'Chronicle of the Buddhas', on twenty-four previous Buddhas.
- (o) *Cariyā-piṭaka*, 'Basket of Conduct', on the conduct of Gotama in previous lives, building up the 'perfections' of a *Bodhisattva*.

The Burmese tradition also includes in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*:

- (p) *Suttasaṃgaha*, 'Compendium of Discourses'.
- (q) and (r) *Peṭakopadesa*, 'Piṭaka Disclosure', and *Nettipakaraṇa*, 'The Guide', both attributed to Kaccāna Thera and aimed at commentary writers.
- (s) *Milindapañha*, 'Milinda's Questions': discussions between King Milinda and Nāgasena Thera.

The Chinese Canon is known as the *Dazangjing* (*Ta-tsang-ching*) or 'Great Scripture Store'. The standard modern edition, following a non-traditional order based on systematization by scholars, is the *Taishō Daizōkyō*, published in Japan from 1924 to 1929. It consists of fifty-five vols. containing 2,184 texts:

- (i) Translations of the *Āgamas* (equivalent to the first four Pali *Nikāyas*, and part of the fifth) and the *Jātakas* (219 texts in four vols.).
- (ii) Translations of Mahāyāna *Sūtras*, sometimes including several translations of the same text. These are grouped into sections on: the Perfection of Wisdom (see pp. 114–18), the *Lotus Sūtra* (see pp. 163–4), the *Avatamsaka*, the *Ratnakūṭa* (a group of texts, some very early, such as the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*), the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* (on the last days of the Buddha, and the ‘Buddha-nature’), the *Mahā-saṃnipāta* (‘Great Assembly’) and general ‘*Sūtras*’ (mostly Mahāyāna) (627 texts in thirteen vols.).
- (iii) Translations of *Tantras* (see p. 182; 572 texts in four vols.).
- (iv) Translations of various early *Vinayas* (on monastic discipline) and some texts outlining ‘discipline’ for *Bodhisattvas* (eighty-six texts in three vols.).
- (v) Translations of commentaries on the *Āgamas* and Mahāyāna *Sūtras* (thirty-one texts in three vols.).
- (vi) Translations of various early *Abhidharmas* (see p. 94) (twenty-eight texts in four vols.).
- (vii) Translations of Mādhyamika, Yogācāra and other *Śāstras*, or ‘Treatises’ (129 texts in three vols.).
- (viii) Chinese commentaries on the *Sūtras*, *Vinaya* and *Śāstras* (twelve vols.).
- (ix) Chinese sectarian writings (five vols.).
- (x) Histories and biographies (95 texts in four vols.).
- (xi) Encyclopaedias, dictionaries, non-Buddhist doctrines (Hindu, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity), and catalogues of various Chinese Canons (sixty-four texts in three vols.).

As can be seen, the Chinese Canon includes types of material (such as commentaries, treatises and histories) which are treated as extra-canonical in the Southern, Pali tradition. By 1934, there was also a *Taishō Daizōkyō* supplement of forty-five volumes containing 736 further texts: Japanese texts, recently discovered Dunhuang texts, apocryphal texts composed in China, iconographies and bibliographical information.

The Tibetan Canon consists of the *Kangyur* (*bK'-gyur*) and *Tengyur* (*bsTan-'gyur*). The former is the ‘Translation of the Word of the Buddha’, and consists in its Narthang (sNar thang) edition of ninety-eight volumes containing over 600 translated texts, grouped as follows:

- (i) *Vinaya* (monastic discipline) (thirteen vols.).
- (ii) Perfection of Wisdom (twenty-one vols.).
- (iii) *Avatamsaka* (six vols.).

- (iv) *Ratnakūṭa* (forty-nine *Sūtras* in six vols.).
- (v) *Sūtra* (three-quarters of which are Mahāyāna; 270 texts in thirty vols.).
- (vi) *Tantra* (more than 300 texts in twenty-two vols.).

The *Tengyur* is the 'Translation of Treatises', consisting in its Peking edition of 3,626 texts in 224 volumes. These are grouped as follows:

- (i) *Stotras*, or hymns of praise (sixty-four texts in one vol.).
- (ii) Commentaries on the *Tantras* (3,055 texts in eighty-six vols.).
- (iii) Other commentaries and treatises: commentaries on the Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras* and the *Vinaya*; Mādhyamika and Yogācāra treatises, *Abhidharma* works, tales and dramas, treatises on such topics as logic, medicine, grammar and chemistry, and other miscellaneous works (567 texts in 137 vols.).

The *Tengyur* mainly consists of Indian works, but outside the above twofold Canon, there is an enormous literature written by Tibetans.