

Buddhism
In Scripture and Practice

K.R. Paramahansa



**Dedicated to the
Being of Sri Sathya Sai
TAT Embodied**

Table of Contents

	Page No
Preface	7
1. Buddhism – An Overview	9
2. Evolution of Buddhism	14
The Buddhist Canon	14
Theravaada and Sarvaastivaada Scriptures	18
The Ascendancy of the Mahayana in India	25
3. The Teachings of the Historical Buddha	28
Original Teachings	28
Philosophical Teachings	50
Moral Doctrines	71
Meditative Teachings	78
4. Schools of Buddhism	85
Role of Schools	85
The Hinayana Schools	89
The Mahayana Schools	104
5. Samskaaras	116
Samskaaras in Buddhism	116
The Doctrine of Momentariness	119
Karma	127
6. Abhidharma Philosophy	131
Distinction between Sutra and Abhidharma	131
The Inception of Abhidharma	143
Dharma - Factors	146
Matrices	179
7. Abhidharma Literature	182
The Theravaada School	182
The Sarvaastivaada School	196

8.	Epistemology	219
	General	219
	Perception – Perception of Particular	221
	Inference	229
	Verbal Knowledge	234
	Validity of Knowledge	235
	Time	238
	The Doctrine of Illusion	240
	Body is the Only Sense Organ	244
	Mind Alone is the Sense Organ	246
	Momentariness Vs Apperception and Historical Consciousness	247
	Causal Law and I-consciousness	249
	Being and Non-being are not Coordinates	251
	Knowledge of Existence	253
	Relativism –Positive and Negative Expressions	255
	Tathataa, Tathyam, Satta and Satyam	257
	Dharmadhaatu	259
9.	Life's Ideal	261
10.	The Buddhist Way to Liberation	266
	The Philosophy of Liberation	266
	Meditational Practices	280
11.	Assimilation with Vedanta	298

Preface

Buddhism arose more than 2500 years ago in India in an atmosphere of great philosophical ferment. It was the atmosphere in which the sacrificial religion was systematised in the *Mimamsa*, the philosophical ideas of the *Upanisads* were crystallized, and the ideas of independent thinkers, not owing allegiance to either, were trying to gain their foothold in the Indian thought. All these philosophies were philosophies of life according to the reality as understood by their propounders. All the philosophical sects at that time, except the Chaarvaakas, were indeed ascetic.

Buddhism arose out of the sects independent of the *Mimamsa* and the *Vedanta*. It incorporated what it considered to be the best from all, both the orthodox and the heterodox. It became one of the world's greatest religions, and contributed one of the highest of philosophies.

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama, known to the world as the Buddha, the Enlightened, participated in a critical and creative movement to synthesize ancient, traditional worldviews, which vied for the collective heart of India in his time. Interestingly, some of the most influential thinkers the world has ever known such as Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Zoroaster and Socrates in Persia and in Greece, Jeremiah and Deutero Isaiah in Israel also belonged to the same period with a variation of a few decades on either side. The Buddha was the most influential individual to emerge from the then intellectually and religiously stimulating period in India.

Buddhism, as a religious teaching, is valid independently of any special status of its founder, the Buddha. As a system of

thought, and a spiritual thought, Buddhism ever remains theoretically valid.

The Buddha evoked the admiration of even the orthodox *Mimamsakas* and *Vedantins* by the gentleness and nobility of his character, and also by the clarity and simplicity of his teachings. He was accordingly absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. His philosophy, in its latest stages, looked so similar to the *Vedanta* that it was eventually assimilated to it. As such, Buddhism gradually lost justification for separate existence and disappeared from India, except for a few border areas.

It may be more appropriate to say that Buddhism has not disappeared from India, but has formed part of the lifeblood of Indian outlook and culture. This is evident from the fact that the Buddha is venerated as an incarnation of the Supreme Godhead in its aspect as mercy and compassion, *karuna*. His philosophical and ethico-religious concepts are incorporated into all the great philosophies of spirituality. If Platonism can be said to be dead in Western culture and outlook, then only can we say that Buddhism is dead in India.

This book gives a comprehensive account of the origin and evolution of Buddhism in India and outside, the philosophies of different schools of Buddhism, the pursuit of spirituality perfected in the Mahayana schools, leading ultimately to its assimilation with the *Vedanta*.

1. Buddhism-An Overview

Buddhism is more than 2500 years old; but its ideas are still older. It arose in an atmosphere of great philosophical ferment. It was the atmosphere in which the ideas of the old sacrificial religion later expounded and systematized in the *Mimaamsa*, the *Upanisadic* ideas later expounded by Badarayana, and the ideas of independent thinkers not owning any allegiance to any part of the Veda, but relying on their own experience and logical ability, were jostling with one another. Even though logical, dialectical, and independent, their philosophies were all philosophies of life, according to the reality as understood by them. Except for the *Chaarvaakas* and perhaps a few others, all the philosophical sects at that time were more or less ascetic.

Buddhism arose out of such independent sects. It originated, however, at a time when the religious and intellectual traditions of two great civilizations were in the midst of vigorous interchange and ferment, as is evident from the speculations of the *Upanisads*. It incorporated what it considered to be the best from all, both the orthodox and the heterodox. It became one of the world's greatest religions, and contributed one of the highest of philosophies.

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama (6th century BC) evoked the admiration of even the orthodox Indians by the gentleness and nobility of his character, and also by the clarity and simplicity of his teachings. He was accordingly absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. There is, however, no indication that the Buddha (the Awakened One) was specifically acquainted with any of the *Upanisads* that have come down to us. But there is ample indication that he was familiar with such speculations.

The Buddha participated in a critical and creative movement to synthesize ancient, traditional worldviews, which vied for the collective heart of India in his time. By his time, the synthetic movement had become widespread and urgent. One is only to imagine the cultural impact of conquering or being conquered by an alien race, and then slowly integrating over the centuries to form a unitary new race and culture. In his age, several remarkable thinkers also began to attempt a coherent unity from the religious and intellectual heritages of two great peoples in the process of becoming one.

The Buddha was the most influential individual to emerge from this period of transition in ancient India. Buddhism, as a religious teaching, claims to be valid independently of any special status of its founder, the Buddha. Even if it were to be discovered that the historical Buddha never existed, Buddhism, as a system of thought and spiritual thought, would nonetheless remain theoretically valid. The Buddhist scriptures state thus. ‘Whether or not Buddhas arise, constant is the status of truth, the law of truth, the relationship of cause and effect.’

Buddhist legend asserts that, in his twenty-ninth year, the gods themselves conspired to bring the Bodhisattva (Buddha to be) in contact with four great visions, which inspired him to embark on the quest for enlightenment. While being on a pleasure outing, prince Siddhartha encountered, for the first time in his life, the sight of an old man, a diseased man, a corpse, and finally a radiantly serene mendicant holy man. The first three visions made him preoccupy with the unavoidable sufferings of mundane life. The fourth vision inspired in him the resolution to renounce material well being, and enter the austere path of spiritual enlightenment. Because of his innate spirituality, he had realized spontaneously, on the basis of these four experiences alone, that even such extravagant worldly pleasures as he had enjoyed were

doomed to pass away due to the ravages of old age, disease and death, and that in all the world only the simple contemplative life of the mendicant seeker of truth held the key to release from the ravages of these sufferings. The Pali *sutras* record the Buddha himself indicating that contemplation of universal misery of old age, disease and death inspired his search for truth.

‘Legends of the early life of the historical Buddha also reveal tellingly the religious beliefs and values of an important segment of the Indian society in his day. Saviours were expected. They might be born to mortals. They were thought to perform miracles and consort with deities. Their task was to discover and teach the path that leads beyond the relentless suffering of this and future lives. The gods would only be well-wishers and helpers in this exalted search. The final salvation of human kind would be realized not through divine intervention, but through truth, discovered and taught by extraordinary human beings. These saviours would emerge from the ranks of the homeless, mendicant ascetics who walked the land in humble attire seeking only food, clothing and shelter to sustain their strenuous meditative and ascetic practices’, in the words of Noble Ross Reat. The religious beliefs and values of the Indian society have remained the same though these centuries to date.

His philosophy, in its latest stages, looked so similar to the Vedanta that it was eventually assimilated to it. As such, Buddhism gradually lost justification for separate existence and disappeared from India, except for a few border areas.

It may be more appropriate to say that Buddhism has not disappeared from India, but has formed part of the life-blood of Indian outlook and culture. This is evident from the fact that Buddha is venerated as an incarnation of the supreme Godhead in its aspect as mercy and compassion, *karuna*. His philosophical

and ethico-religious concepts are incorporated into all the great philosophies of spiritual life. If Platonism can be said to be dead in Western culture and outlook, then only can we say that Buddhism is dead in India.

Throughout its history, Buddhism showed a great vitality and earnestness in its search for truth. Its followers ignored most of the artificially erected barriers of doctrine, creed and dogma. They developed their philosophies one after the other. The history of the Buddhist thought is thus a history of philosophy that grew out of some ethico-religious teachings of Buddha and, passing through the main pluralistic systems of the Hinayana, culminated in the grand idealistic systems of the Mahayana. The entire course is a grand philosophical development.

However, every Buddhist school refers to Buddha's original teachings as its basis. This has become possible because of the simplicity of Buddha's teachings, which can be interpreted as, and supported by, alternative doctrines. The last phases of the Mahayana philosophy have brought out the full implications of all these alternative doctrines.

Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was called Buddha, the Enlightened. He has other titles, too. He did not write any book, but taught his doctrines orally. After his death, his disciples spread over the country and propagated his ideals. Every disciple understood and elaborated them in his own way.

As a result, different interpretations began to appear. In order to unify the teachings, councils were held at different times; attempts were made to remove the diversities; and the unified doctrines were recorded. Through such recordings arose Buddhist literature, which was commented upon, elaborated and systematized.

Whenever there were differences of views, the dissidents formed new schools, each with its own literature. If we take all the Buddhist schools into account, they may number about 200. The differences among the schools are not always important philosophically. Many of them differ from one another in very minor details.

Buddhism is in the nature of a protestant movement within Hinduism, though it has not accepted a Supreme Being. But such non-acceptance of Supreme Being is found in the early *Mimamsa* and the *Sankhya*. Some sects other than Buddhism such as Jainism, the Ajivikas also rejected the *Veda*. The Charvakas also did the same thing. If the Ajivikas and the Charvakas can be Hindus, there is every justification to call Buddhism, a form of Hinduism.

The word Hinduism, as such, has no definite meaning. At least up to the 15th century, until the Vijayanagar Empire became strong in the South, the Indians were not calling themselves Hindus, but the followers of *Arya Dharma* and *Vaidika Dharma*. The differentiation was made only on the basis whether a man was following the Vedic Way, the Jaina Way or the Buddhist Way all of which were forms of the Aryan Way. At that time at least, all the three were equally Hindu for the non-Indian. All were followers of the *Arya Dharma*.

Buddhism and Jainism, like Saivism and Vaisnavism, can be rightly treated as sects of the same *Arya Dharma*. In fact, there is evidence (2500 Years of Buddhism, pp 340-82 by P.V. Bapat) to show that all these sects were mixing with one another in actual life and social relationships, and religious practices. Even among the Saivas and Vaisnavas, there are sub-sects which do not inter-dine, but there are sects among them, which even inter-marry.

2. Evolution of Buddhism

The Buddhist Canon

As the Buddha did not write out his teachings, there were made several attempts, both in India and outside, to fix his teachings. It is said that four great councils held in India for the purpose were important. Of course, some scholars doubt the authenticity of some of them. Some other scholars say that all the councils were not general councils, but that some of them were of Buddhist sects.

Anyway, the first council was held immediately after the death of the Buddha in about 543 BC, at a place called *Rajagṛha*, of which Ajatasatru was the king. The second council was held at the place called Vaisali, about one hundred years after the passing away of the Buddha. The third council was held under the aegis of Emperor Ashoka in Pataliputra (now called Patna), the capital, in the year 249 BC. It means that the third council was held about two hundred years after the second council. Emperor Kanishka held the fourth council in about 100 AD. The place is rather uncertain. Perhaps it was Peshawar, Jalandhar, or some other place in Kashmir.

It is believed that practically two-thirds of the main Buddhist canon was compiled in the first council. The canon consists of three types of literature - *The Basket of Aphorisms (Suttapitaka)*, *The Basket of Discipline (Vinayapitaka)* and *The Basket of Philosophy (Abhidharmapitaka)*. *The Basket of Aphorisms* consists of the Master's utterances. *The Basket of Discipline* consists of the rules of the order. *The Basket of Philosophy* consists of the philosophical doctrines. They were called baskets as the written manuscripts were carried in baskets.

The first two baskets were the work of the first council, and the third of the third. The second council dealt only with some new practices introduced by some monks, who were, therefore, expelled from the order. The third dealt more seriously than the second with some schisms that appeared in the order. These books, composed in Sri Lanka, depend upon the *Cullavagga* for their account in the first two councils.

The *Cullavagga* account of the First Council asserts that, at this meeting, the entire *Vinaya Pitaka* was recited from memory by the monk Upaali and the entire *Sutta Pitaka* by Ananda, the faithful attendant of the Buddha. The *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* are quite large comprising, together, thirty good-sized volumes. It may be that the two *Pitakas* were much smaller at the time of the First Council, with additions made over a period of time. All things considered, it is perhaps most likely that Ananda and Upaali, and perhaps other senior monks, presided over the recitation of the *Sutta* and *Vinaya Pitakas* by several monks. Such a cooperative recitation from memory would be possible even today in Sri Lanka, Thailand or Burma by a good number of learned monks.

One historic fact is that the *Cullavagga* account of the First Council does not refer to the *Abhidharma Pitaka*. This implies two things. The first is the lateness of the *Abhidharma* and the other is the authenticity of the *Cullavagga* narrative. Traditionally, the *Abhidharma* is supposed to be the word of the historical Buddha. This belief was in place long before any of the Buddhist scriptures were written down about the time of Christ.

At the Second Council, there was disagreement between the Theravaada and Mahayana Schools. The disagreement

between the Theravaada and the Mahayana accounts of the 'Second Council' centres even upon the circumstances, which made the convening of the Council itself necessary. According to the Theravaada version, the venerable elders called for the assembly because many monks had become lax concerning ten points of discipline. The reprehensible practices were considered as accepting money in lieu of alms-food, eating afternoon, following improper procedures at meetings, etc.

According to the Mahayana version, the liberal monk Mahaadeva initiated the Second Council with five criticisms against the conservative *arhats* who dominated the Buddhism of the time by virtue of their supposed enlightenment. The five criticisms are that those who claimed to be *arhats* had not fully conquered passion as they still had wet dreams, were not omniscient because they often had to ask for directions, etc, were still subjected to doubts, had gained their knowledge through others rather than through their own experience, and would be making verbal exclamations during meditation. The circumstances, which occasioned the Second Council, will probably remain doubtful forever, if, indeed, there was one rather than two Second Councils.

It appears that those monks expelled in the Second Council from the order formed a far larger group than those included. The larger group was called the school of the Great Assembly (*Mahasanghikas*). The smaller group was called the school of the Elders (*Sthaviras*, *Theras*, *Sthaviravaadins*, *Theravaadins*). The *Cullavagga*, ostensibly a *Staviravaadin* text, represents the Elders' point of view.

Again differences arose within each group. Attempts were made to fix what the original baskets had taught. The discussions were recorded, and heretical sects were refuted by Thera Tissa of the School of the Elders in his work, *Kathaavatthu* at the

Third Council. But, the expelled monks also were composing their work and attributing their views to the Buddha alone.

In the Fourth Council, eighteen sects were regarded as following the doctrines of the Buddha. At that council, Emperor Kanishka ordered commentaries (*vibhaasaas*) to be written on those teachings of the Buddha that were accepted as authentic.

The Mahaasaanghikas eventually became the Mahayana. The Elders - the Sthaviras or Theras - came to be called first the Sthaviravaadins and then the Theravaadins. Though Sthaviravaada and Theravaada mean exactly the same thing, 'Doctrine of the Elders', the archaic Sthaviravaada spawned seventeen different schools before emerging finally as the Theravaada, the sole surviving School of the Elders. Mahayanists refer to these seventeen schools collectively as Hinayana, meaning 'small, inferior vehicle' as opposed to Mahayana, meaning 'great, glorious vehicle'. As a collective term for non-Mahayana Buddhism, the term Hinayana may be convenient. But it is not a synonym for Theravaada, a practice, which is both offensive and inaccurate.

Theravaada and Sarvaastivaada Scriptures

The actual differences among the several Hinayana schools appear minor and, in most cases, obscure. The minor differences among the descendents of the Sthaviras are certainly insignificant compared to the major rift in Buddhism occasioned by the Mahaasaanghika schism. This initial rift widened into separate traditions of scripture and formulations of doctrines so widely divergent that the original teachings of the Buddha have become a matter of historical uncertainty. The only way of moving toward resolution of this uncertainty is comparison of the surviving scriptures of the various early schools of Buddhism. Relatively complete canons of only two early schools of Buddhism, namely the Theravaada and the Sarvaastivaada schools survive, apart from a few miscellaneous texts from other schools.

Large sections of the Sarvaastivaada canon are preserved in Chinese translations. The *Vinaya* of the Sarvaastivaada survives also in Tibetan translation. The Chinese translations of Sarvaastivaada scriptures are generally in agreement with their Theravaada counterparts. This establishes a common tradition regarding the teachings of the Buddha going back to about 250 BC when the Sarvaastivaada split from the Sthaviravaada.

The Theravaada scriptures are organized into three major collections known as *pitakas*. These three are the *Sutta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma Pitakas*. Together they comprise the *Tipitaka*, the ‘Three collections’.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* comprises the rules of monastic discipline. It is subdivided into three sections, or *vibhangas*. The most important is the *Sutta Vibhanga*, which contains the *Praatimoksa* Rules that govern the day-to-day life of the Buddhist monk. Each of these 227 rules is followed by a detailed

commentary explaining the rule, and a story, which purports to describe the circumstance, which originally made the rule necessary. These stories provide an insight into the day-to-day life in ancient India.

The second section of the *Vinaya Pitaka* is the *Khandhaka*. It contains primarily procedural rules for the conduct of the affairs of the *Sangha* as well as some miscellaneous rules of the individual discipline. The *Khandhaka* is further divided into the *Mahaavagga* and the *Cullavagga*. The *Cullavagga* contains the accounts of the First and the Second Councils. The third section of the *Vinaya* is the *Parivaara*, a supplement to the other two sections.

The *Vinaya Pitaka* of the Sarvaastivaada, preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations, is very similar to that of the Theravaada. The only difference is that it contains a different supplement in place of the *Parivaara*.

From the standpoint of early Buddhist doctrine, the most important of the *Tipitaka* is the *Sutta Pitaka*. It contains the sermons of the Buddha and a few of his foremost disciples. In the Theravaada canonical tradition, these discourses are divided into five groups known as *nikaayas*. The *Digha Nikaaya* (Long Group) contains the longest sermons. The *Majjhima Nikaaya* (Middle-length Group) contains the shorter discourses. The *Samyutta Nikaaya* (Connected Group) contains short discourses grouped according to their subject. The *Anguttara Nikaaya* (Numerical Group) contains material grouped according to the number of items discussed. The *Khuddaka Nikaaya* (Minor Group), the fifth one, comprises several miscellaneous works - some short, some long, some purporting to be the word of the Buddha, some composed by eminent disciples, some very early, and some relatively late. This group, though labelled minor,

contains some of the most revered scriptures of Theravaada Buddhism.

Each of the above Theravaada *nikaayas* corresponds to similar groupings known as *aagamas* of the Sarvaastivaada canon. The actual content of the *Digha* and *Majjhima Nikaayas* agrees relatively well with that of the corresponding *aagamas* of the Sarvaastivaada canon. The *Samyutta* and *Anguttara Nikaayas* are less similar to their Sarvaastivaada counterparts. The Sarvaastivaada canon also contains a miscellaneous section known as the *Avadaana*. But the material herein does not correspond well to the Theravaada *Khuddaka Nikaaya*.

The third section of the Theravaada canon, the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, also has a Sarvaastivaadin counterpart. But apart from a general similarity of the ideas expressed, the actual content of the two corpuses is not similar at all. Both comprise seven books each. The Theravaadins ascribe their composition to the Buddha himself. On the other hand, the Sarvaastivaadins ascribe their composition to seven different disciples of the Buddha. In both cases, it is, however, clear that the Abhidharma represents a scholastic development within Buddhism, sometime after the death of the Buddha. It represents a technical, scholastic movement to systematize the numerous philosophical, psychological and moral concepts of early Buddhism.

The Theravaada and the Sarvaastivaada works reveal distinct stages in the development of Buddhist scriptures. The *Digha Nikaaya*, for instance, contains two *sutras*, which foreshadow the mnemonic organizational structure of the *Samyutta* and *Anguttara Nikaayas*. The *Sangeetisutta* records a communal recital of essential points of the Buddhist doctrine organized in groups ranging from one to ten items, mainly for ease of memorization. The *Dasuttarasutta* records a similar ten-sectioned summary of doctrine postulated by Saariputra.

Both *sutras* prefigure the organization of the *Anguttara Nikaaya*, which also organizes the Buddhist doctrine in groups of one to ten items, followed by a section on eleven-fold grouping. In a similar vein, the *Samyutta Nikaaya* organizes scriptural material according to the subject matter addressed. Both these *Nikaayas* thus appear to be early attempts to organize doctrines in a systematic and easily remembered form. These *Nikaayas* may be an innovation involving rearrangement rather than alteration of the core teaching in the *Digha* and *Majjhima Nikaayas*. It is almost certain that parts of the Theravaada *Khuddaka Nikaaya*, the Sarvaastivaadin *Avadaana*, and the *Abhidhamma* as a whole represent doctrinal developments in Theravaada and Sarvaastivaada Buddhism beyond what the historical Buddha taught.

The next stage in this development is recorded only in the Theravaada tradition in the shape of commentaries and sub-commentaries on the texts of the *Tipitaka*. These were originally made in the Singhalese language of Sri Lanka, and translated into Pali by Buddhaghosa in the fifth century AD. These commentaries expound the texts of the *Tipitaka*. While doing so, they interpret, extrapolate, systematize and thereby modify the doctrines found in the Theravaada *sutras* and *abhidhamma*. Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* is an admirable summary of the commentarial tradition in Theravaada Buddhism. It reveals a marked development beyond the ancient doctrines expressed in the *Sutta Pitaka*.

In contrast, the earliest doctrinal developments in Mahayana Buddhism appear in the *sutras* themselves. Parts of some Mahayana *sutras* appear to be very old. But these are augmented, mixed and mingled with material, which appears to represent doctrinal development and innovation.

To sum up, the conservative Theravaadins appear to have been reasonably careful, though not absolutely scrupulous, in separating new or doubtful material from their ancient texts. This isolation appears to have occurred first in the *Khuddaka Nikaaya*, then in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* and finally in the commentarial literature. The Sarvaastivaadins, too, appear to have done similarly, though there is no commentarial literature from their school. The Mahayanists, by contrast, appear to have been content to incorporate new ideas and interpretations into the scriptures themselves.

No Buddhist scriptures of any sort were committed to writing before about the time of Christ, about five centuries after the death of the Buddha. By this time, the Mahayana had begun to develop, and based its doctrines on a scriptural corpus entirely different from the Pali canon of the Theravaada. Secondly, the earliest Mahayana literature was written down in India at about the same time as the Pali canon was committed to writing in Sri Lanka.

On the surface, the form and the content of the Mahayana literature appears to be much later in origin than the Theravaada scriptures. In form, the Pali *sutras* are repetitive and formulaic, like songs with choruses. They are relatively easy to memorize, pleasant to hear, but rather tedious to read. They appear to be the end product of a preliterate, oral tradition. On the other hand, the Mahayana scriptures are more literary in form. They appear to be the products of a literate age in which works were composed and transmitted in writing. Many Mahayana *sutras* contain complex and elaborate descriptive passages, which would be difficult to memorize in large volume.

The content of Mahayana *sutras* also suggests that they are later in origin than the Pali *sutras*. On the one hand, they

contain complex, sophisticated philosophy developed out of the ideas expressed in the Pali *sutras*. On the other hand, they carry highly fanciful mythological content. It is true that the Pali *sutras* also contain much myth and miracle. But the Mahayana *sutras* are extravagant in this regard. The process of divinising the Buddha, begun in the Pali *sutras*, is advanced dramatically in the Mahayana *sutras*. Many of them purport to have been delivered by the Buddha himself in supernatural circumstances to the deities in various heavens. Implied is the tacit admission that they do not record historical events.

Nevertheless, the Mahayanists maintain that their *sutras* do record accurately the teachings of the historical Buddha. They agree that the Buddha also taught the Theravaada *sutras*, but they are inferior teachings meant for those with inferior intelligence. On the other hand, the Mahayana teachings are meant for the spiritual elite among the Buddha's followers. But this does not seem likely. All evidence points toward a greater historical authenticity of the Pali *sutras*.

The hard fact is that we have no relevant records, which were actually committed to writing much before the time of Christ. This fact has led some modern historians of Buddhism to conclude that both the Theravaada and Mahayana scriptures are, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, divergent developments of an original pre-canonical teaching, which has been lost forever.

Edward Conze, of this line of thinking, argues that only Mahaasaanghika literature could conceivably resolve the problem of original Buddhism. According to him, if only we could locate Mahaasaanghika material, which agrees with material in the scriptures of their rivals the Theravaada, we could reasonably be certain that this material predates the Second Council.

There exists at least one *sutra*, the *Saalistamba* or ‘Stalk of Rice’, concerned with the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpaada*), an important Theravaada and Sarvaastivaada doctrine, but a doctrine of no importance in Mahayana Buddhism. The *Saalistamba sutra* does not exist in the original Sanskrit, but it does exist in Tibetan and Chinese translations. It appears to have been a very important Mahayana *sutra* in its day, as it is extensively quoted as being authoritative in several Mahayana commentarial texts that survive in original Sanskrit. By locating these quotations and matching them against the Tibetan and Chinese translations, it is possible to reconstruct the original Sanskrit text of the *sutra*.

The *Saalistamba sutra* bears considerable similarity to Theravaada *sutras*, and contains several passages parallel to the Pali texts. Though the scope of this *sutra* is limited, its general agreement with Theravaada doctrine, enhanced by many directly parallel passages, suggests that early Mahayana doctrine and literature diverged gradually from an original source very similar to the Pali *sutras*. This sheds light upon the development of Buddhist doctrine and literature from the Mahaasaanghika schism to the reign of the emperor Asoka, that is, from the middle of the fourth to the middle of the third century BC.

The Ascendancy of the Mahayana in India

Starting with the reign of Asoka in about 250 BC, the development of Buddhism becomes clearer. Only from the time of Asoka can one speak of India as a political entity, for it is he who conquered and united for the first time roughly the landmass which constitutes the present day India. Once he had become the undisputed emperor of all India, he is remembered and revered as one of the most benevolent and progressive monarchs of all time. Buddhists claim that this transformation of Asoka from ruthless warmonger to benign lover of peace was due to his conversion to Buddhism. It is true that he ruled wisely by promoting peace, harmony and justice in the name of Buddhism.

Besides political unification of India, Asoka is remembered for reintroduction of the art of writing on a wide scale after some two millennia of illiteracy in India. He left a legacy of scores of high-minded edicts carved into rocks and on great granite pillars erected throughout his empire. These edicts are the first surviving examples of writing in India after the still un-deciphered Indus valley writings. Asoka’s edicts are thus the earliest decipherable written source of Indian history.

The Asokan edicts do not mention any specific sectarian divisions within Buddhism. On the other hand, they frequently encourage the unity of the *Sangha*, and express concern over schism within the order. The Third Buddhist Council, supposed to have been convened under the auspices of Asoka, is recorded in Theravaada sources written in Sri Lanka after the death of Christ, that is, the Mahaavamsa and the Deepavamsa. The Theravaada sources regard the Third Council as validating once again the conservative teaching of the Elders. Mahayana sources do not mention the Third Council, nor the Theravaadin *Cullavagga*. This is possibly indicative that the *Cullavagga* text

was frozen before the time of Asoka, and not subject to sectarian corruption thereafter. It is quite likely, however, that Asoka would have convened some such council in order to standardize the state religion of his empire.

The Saanci Edict, in particular, appears to indicate that some action to unify the *Sangha* took place in his reign. It reads thus. ‘The *Sangha* of monks and nuns has been made united (to endure) through the generations as long as the sun and moon. That monk or nun who divides the *Sangha* shall be compelled to wear the white garments (of a layperson) and live in non-residence.’

Asoka might very well have encouraged specific actions to unify the *Sangha*. All indications are that he favoured the conservative Hinayana over the more liberal and innovative Mahayana. The Theravaada was regarded as the most authentic form of Buddhism in his time.

Nevertheless, despite his apparent Theravaadin orientation, it is he who established the environment that would result in the ascendancy of Mahayana Buddhism in India. He transformed Buddhism overnight from one of the many non-Vedic sects in India into a mass religion, the state religion of one of the greatest empires on earth. In addition, he inaugurated one of the greatest ages of religious freedom and freethinking that the world has ever known. In this atmosphere, the more liberal and innovative Mahayana proved to be more viable than the conservative Theravaada. The pressure for doctrinal development, innovation and popularisation was much greater in the cosmopolitan intellectual ferment of post Asokan India than in the relative isolation in which Theravaada Buddhism thrived in Sri Lanka. The Mahayanists tended to incorporate doctrinal development into their *sutra* literature. As a result, the Mahayana

sutras eventually came to contain an exposition of Buddhism, which is scarcely recognizable from the Theravaadin point of view.

The innovations of the Mahayana appear to fall into three major categories, namely, the introduction of new scriptures, most purporting to be the word of the Buddha; the development of new and divergent doctrines on the basis of these scriptures; and the introduction of supernatural saviour figures into the originally self-reliant religion of the historical Buddha. In spite of its innovations, the Mahayana has not denied that the Hinayana has preserved an accurate recollection of the teachings of the historical Buddha, but that the said teachings are deficient in not recording teachings found in the Mahayana scriptures.

3. The Teachings of the Historical Buddha

Original Teachings

Sutta Pitaka of the Pali canon is the earliest record of the teachings the Buddha himself was eventually to give. These *sutras*, or discourses, do not specifically seek to give a connected account of the enlightenment and the ministry of the Buddha. Nonetheless, they include a surprising amount of material that captures actual historical events and people in remarkable detail for literature of that age. The *Sutta Pitaka* makes occasional reference to the Buddha's own search for truth. The following purports to be the Buddha's own description of the rigours of the ascetic discipline he imposed upon himself.

'I was unclothed, indecent, licking my hands... I took food only once a day, or once in two or seven days. I lived under the discipline of eating rice only at fortnightly intervals... I subsisted on the roots and fruits of the forest, eating only those, which fell (of their own accord). I wore coarse hempen cloth...rags from a rubbish heap...clothes of grass and of bark... I became one who stands (always) refusing to sit... I made my bed on thorns. The dust and dirt of years accumulated on my body... I subsisted on the dung of suckling calves... So long as my own dung and urine held out, I subsisted on that... Because I ate so little, my limbs became like the knotted joints of withered creepers, my buttocks like a bullock's hoof, my protruding backbone like a string of beads, my gaunt ribs like the crazy rafters of a tumbledown shed. My eyes were sunken deep in their sockets... My scalp was shrivelled... The hair, rotted at the roots, fell out if I stroked my limbs with my hand.'

Noble Ross Reat records the manner of attainment of enlightenment by the Buddha as stated in the *Sutta Pitaka*.

'After some six years of such rigorous ascetic discipline, the Pali *sutras* record the Buddha as saying that he realized that self-mortification would not lead him to the ultimate goal of enlightenment and spiritual liberation. He is said to have recalled that while his father was ploughing, as a child he had entered spontaneously into a tranquil condition later known as the first meditative trance (*dhyaana*). He resolved at this point to pursue this more natural and wholesome means of spiritual development and to practice a moderate, middle path between self-indulgence and self-mortification. Later the term 'Middle Path' would name and epitomize the entire edifice of Buddhist doctrine and practice. As a result of this realization, the Bodhisattva Siddhartha resolved to begin taking food in moderate but adequate amounts. He had known the extremes of sensual indulgence and mortification. He now rejected both as inhibiting spiritual progress, and developed the moderate daily routine that governs the lives of Buddhist monks to the present day. His five companions regarded this change as backsliding, and abandoned him in disgust.

Siddhartha then carried on alone, going on an alms round in the morning, eating one moderate meal a day before noon, and spending the afternoon and evening in meditation, often late into the night. His progress was swift, and before long he sat before the fabled Bodhi tree (tree of enlightenment), a descendant of which still stands at Bodhi Gaya, near Patna in modern Bihar. As he sat cross-legged beneath this tree on the night of the Great Enlightenment, it is said that he resolved not to stand until he had attained final spiritual enlightenment and release. In the morning, he stood, having realized at the age of thirty-five the ultimate attainment of men and gods: Buddhahood. From this point, it is proper to speak of him as the Buddha, 'The Awakened One'.

Buddhist doctrine emphasizes that the specific content of the Buddha's experiences on the night of enlightenment can never

be expressed in words. *Sutra* accounts say that the Buddha experienced ‘three knowledges’. They are remembrance of his past rebirths in detail, knowledge of the past and future rebirths of other beings, and knowledge that he himself was free of all faults and illusions and that he would never be reborn again. The ‘third knowledge’ is synonymous with the realization of liberation (*nirvana*).

Because of the inexpressibility of enlightenment and liberation, and the difficulty of the path thereto, the Buddha is said at first to have despaired of ever being able to convey his discovery to others. Various deities are said to have intervened and encouraged him to teach the *dharma* (truth) and ‘to open the door of deathlessness’ to gods and men. The Buddha then concluded that the people best qualified to understand his profound and subtle discovery were the five ascetics with whom he had undergone austerities, on realization that his two teachers had died. He is said to have perceived them with his ‘divine eye’ as staying at Saranath. He journeyed to Saranath and won their approbation, overcoming their initial resistance. Thus he gained his first followers.

The *Sutta Pitaka* preserves what purports to be the first sermon of the Buddha after his enlightenment, the ‘Turning of the Wheel of Truth’. This *sutra* propounds the Four Noble Truths, which constitute an outline of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism.

Writing was virtually unknown in India during the time of the Buddha. His sermons could be preserved only through memorization by his followers until they were written down in the Pali language at about the time of Christ. The literary form of the Pali *sutras* suggests that they are a record of such an oral tradition. There is a great deal of repetition from one *sutra* to

another, not only in terms of the doctrines expressed, but also in terms of extensive verbatim repetition of such material. It, therefore, follows that the *Sutta Pitaka* is a sincere attempt to record memorized versions of individual sermons rather than an edited compilation of doctrine.

What are called the Buddha’s original teachings are those accepted by the School of the Elders. The main philosophical text of this school is Aniruddha’s *Abhidharmaatthasangraha*.

According to it, the Buddha taught the four Aryan Truths, also called as Noble Truths. They are the truth of suffering (*dukkhasatya*), the truth of causation (*samudavasatya*), the truth of cessation (*nirodhasatya*), and the truth of the way (*maargasatya*). These truths are interpreted thus. Everything is misery; everything is caused; if the cause is destroyed, the effect is destroyed; and there is a way to destroy the cause.

The Buddha taught the four simple truths so that common people could understand the nature and aim of a true philosophy of life, and how to follow the philosophy. Although the truths are simple, their interpretation and exposition gave rise to some of the grandest philosophies, and a large number of schools.

The first truth holds promise of a way to assessing the human predicament, a way that recognized the seriousness of the predicament while providing the possibility of a way to escape it, as the Buddha himself had done. The human predicament, in short, is that each being, having performed actions without beginning, carried residues laid down by past acts, residues which determined subsequent experiences, and thus conditioned present and future acts. As long as we remain ignorant of, and misunderstand, our *karmic* situation, we have no hope of being

able to bring an end to the frustrations of the actions that *karmic* residues influence.

The doctrine of momentariness was developed out of the first truth. There is suffering in every particle of existence. For it is born, decays, and dies. Everything that is born must decay and die. So old age, disease and death are inevitable. There is nothing in the world that is not subject to change. The world is a continual flux. It is an unceasing becoming. Becoming consists of birth and destruction. Therefore, everything contains and carries.

No one denies that such a change involves pain and suffering for all living beings. For them, flux or change does not merely mean that a thing is born at one moment, exists for some moments, and dies at another moment. In that event, the thing lasts for some moments. According to the conservative Buddhists, every bit of existence is born, stays, and dies at the same moment, giving place to another bit of existence.

According to them, existence or being is a momentary event and contains its own non-existence or non-being. There is, therefore, no being without its non-being. Everything is both positive and negative at the same place and time. This doctrine of flux is called the doctrine of momentariness (*ksanikavaada*), which, the Buddhists thought, gives the soundest basis for their doctrine that everything is suffering. To be is to suffer. Suffering pervades being, and is basic and universal. This compares to the tragic sense in Christianity.

For them, the stability of things is only an appearance. Everything that appears to stay or live for a time is really a series of exactly similar moments of existence. A pattern of events, although dying every moment, passes on its pattern to the next

group of events. We may think that the same object continues to exist. But, for them, it is really a series of aggregates of events following the same pattern. Apart from the aggregates, the thing is nothing. It is, therefore, a whole of parts. Man is nothing but the parts that constitute him. Every ultimate part of man is a momentary event.

Although the events themselves are momentary, the patterns are not momentary. They can continue for a time. Practically, they play the role of universals in Buddhist thought. But they are neither real, nor eternal. The Buddhists do not accept the reality of universals.

The second Aryan Truth relates that every event has a cause. Applied to human beings, according to the Buddha, their situation itself is causally conditioned. If it were not so, there would be no hope of gaining release from the *karmic* cycle through any activity of theirs.

If human bondage has a cause, what constitute the conditions of such bondage? The Buddha points to the inexorable production of *karmic* residues by actions, and human ignorance, that is, wrong views about the actual nature of things.

Ignorance is wrong views. What causes wrong views? If it is said that the causes of wrong views are our past actions, our *karma*, it leads us nowhere. This ends in a circle, *karma* leading to ignorance and ignorance leading to *karma*. This leads to a state of despair, which the Buddha's message was intended to alleviate. A different approach is necessary to appreciate its import.

By 'action' is meant something what one does, not just anything that happens to one. The word '*karman*' in Sanskrit is

derived from the root 'kr' meaning 'to do' and 'to make'. Therefore, *karma* refers both to what is done, our actions, and what is made, that is produced by those actions. What are produced by actions are the residues that condition future actions. As regards 'what is done', the Indian philosophy counts three kinds of deeds, namely, bodily, vocal and mental. *Karman* may, therefore, mean our bodily, vocal and mental acts and also the traces they lay down.

Is everything we make / do by our bodily, vocal and mental actions *karma*? It does not seem so. The *Yogasutras* state that there are three kinds of *karmic* results, that is, three aspects of life that are causally conditioned by *karmic* traces. These are the kind of birth one has, whether in hell, as ghost, as animal, as human or as a god; one's destined length of life in that birth; and the kinds of experience one has while living out that life. In other words, the *karma* produced by good deeds causes satisfying experiences while the *karma* produced by deeds causes frustrating, dissatisfying or even painful experiences.

This leads to the question as to what is it that causes us to do these kinds of things. In other words, what are the conditions in which one makes *karma* at all? Behaviour may not be intentional. It may not be action in every case; it may be reaction; though it is a movement.

Intention is important to relate to the motive of action. But it is a difficult concept, open to alternative interpretations. But it is clear that when we class a behaviour as intentional, we impute to its perpetrator at least an awareness of what he / she is trying to do, that is, a decision to exercise or withhold to exercise one's bodily, vocal or mental powers to some purpose or other. If such intentionality is absent, we exonerate the doer from blame for the results of his / her action.

If actions proper are intentional doings, and it is actions proper that produce *karmic* traces, then one way to escape *karmic* bondage is to stop acting including annihilation of awareness or inducement for such action. It is not easy to achieve as action includes bodily, vocal and mental doings. In this situation, what is needed appears to be not to stop action altogether, but to stop such actions that breed bondage involving intentionality and the desire to gain or avoid things.

The Buddha taught that such desires and aversions are bred by wrong views, views that lead us to act in the absence of which we would not be acting at all. If the cause of the bondage is ignorance, that is, wrong views, the wrong ones, engendering desires and aversions, are to be stamped out. They are to be replaced by right views.

The Buddha himself identified a number of wrong views. To begin with, there are the views that are eradicated by the Buddhist understanding of the fundamental doctrines that all is suffering or frustrating, that everything is momentary or fleeting and that there is no self. In line with these doctrines is avoidance of the two extremes, eternalism and nihilism, between which lies the Middle Way as preached by the Buddha.

The diversity of the Abhidharma systems can be seen as generated from differences in emphasis as to which views are the wrong ones. The doctrinal divisions among the sects that developed in Buddhist philosophy, right from the beginning, turned on differences in what kind of emphasis to place in classifying views. These differences were extrapolated several times over in the succeeding centuries. The record of who believed what provides the most confusing aspect of the records that survive from that period. On just about any point, the

Buddhist philosophers provide divergent opinions among themselves.

For example, the Buddha taught that everything is non-eternal (*anitya*). Some schools interpreted this to mean that all factors are strictly momentary; others that they last a few moments only; still others that most, but not necessarily all, factors are evanescent; and some others that factors are eternal, only their occurrences being momentary. This is only representative of the differences galore that exist on almost every issue of philosophical relevance in the Buddhist thought.

Given this diversity of opinions on the fundamental theses of the Buddha, it was apparently going to be difficult to say just which views are the wrong ones. But an important exception is found in the position taken by Nagarjuna. As he sees it, any and all opinions constitute wrong views. Any view, implicitly or explicitly, ascribes an essential, independent nature to something. According to him, the truth is that nothing has an independent nature, that everything is 'empty' (*suunya*). By *suunya*, the Buddha, according to Nagarjuna, meant that everything is dependently originated, causally conditioned. Nagarjuna, therefore, applies a negative dialectical method to each and every kind of category, showing that each one is empty in that precise sense. The argument is general in nature. It even applies against the very idea of the Buddha's liberation. Everything is empty.

A third alternative to the conception of wrong views arose in the fourth century AD at the hands of Asanga and Vasubandhu. According to this third count, there is only one basic wrong view, and that derives from our natural but mistaken temptation to assume an external reality independent of our mental ideas and impressions. It is commonsense realism that generates all mistaken ideas about persisting things, and persisting selves cognizing those

persisting things. For the Yogacaara, as the Vijaanaavaadin is called, the only existent entities are the momentary flashes of awareness that constitute the streams of experience we refer to, in confusion, as 'you' or 'I'. The Vijaanaavaadin traces all the wrong views identified in the Buddha's teachings to this wrong view.

The main Buddhist doctrine of causation arises out of this second truth. Nothing happens without a cause. The causal relation is fixed between two events. Otherwise, anything can originate out of anything. The acorn can produce only the oak, but not an apple tree. But, since everything is momentary, the cause has to die before the effect originates. The acorn has to perish before the oak can sprout. There is, therefore, no material cause continuing into the effect.

Yet, there must be a material cause. The acorn is the material cause of the oak. There have to be other causes also like water, soil, oxygen, carbon, etc. But the sprout can come out only after they are destroyed. After the sprout comes up, we no longer find the acorn. So we have to say that the effect originates, depending on the cause, but not as a new form of the cause.

From the point of view of the effect, causation is to be considered as dependent origination (*pratityasamutpaada*). From the point of the cause, it only occasions the effect through its self-destruction. In other words, it becomes a necessary occasion for the appearance of the effect. Without it, the effect cannot arise.

The above conception of causation is applied to the problem of suffering, so that it can be overcome by removing the cause. The Buddhists generally accept twelve links in the

causal process leading to suffering. The links, briefly, are as follows.

Nescience (*avidya*), ignorance, is the ultimate cause of suffering. It may be interpreted as the metaphysical Unconscious. It is not the ignorance or Unconscious of any individual. For it is the cause of the individual himself, and cannot belong to him as it is prior to him. It is not, however, clear whether there is an unconscious for every individual as his ultimate cause, or whether it is the same for all and is, therefore, cosmic. The Mahayana is however clear in this regard. It asserts that the ignorance is cosmic. In any case, the doctrine of ignorance is as important for Indian thought as that of the original sin to Christian theology.

Depending on the Unconscious, the *samskaras* (forms) originate. These forms or formative forces are not those of an individual. It may be that they are inherent in the Unconscious lying at the roots of the individual. They generate him, and are ready to work through him after he appears.

Depending on the formative forces originates the embryonic consciousness (*vijnaana*) of the individual. This is an embryonic consciousness only without individuality.

Depending on this consciousness arises name-form (*nama-ruupa*). Name-form is interpreted as the combination of the mental and physical aspects of the individual. The individual, the psychophysical person is formed at this stage.

Depending on the name-form, the senses, namely, eye, ear, nose, touch, taste and mind come into being. For the Buddhists, mind also is a sense.

Depending on the senses, sense contact with objects arises.

Depending on sense contact arises feeling or sense experience (*vedana*).

Depending on sense experience arises craving (*trnsna*) for the objects of pleasure.

Depending on craving, attachment or clinging (*upaadaana*) to objects makes its appearance.

Depending on clinging, becoming (*bhaava*) arises. This becoming is interpreted as the tendency to be born.

Depending on becoming, birth and rebirth (*jaati*) ensue.

Finally, depending on birth and rebirth, old age and death (*jaraamarana*) arise.

Of the above twelve links, every preceding one is the cause or ground of every succeeding one. Every succeeding one can be removed by removing every preceding one. Ultimately, ignorance itself has to be overcome when man becomes enlightened.

The third noble truth of the Buddha, therefore, relates that, as there is a possibility to overcome the necessary causal conditions, which bring about bondage, there must exist a sufficient condition for the annulment of the bondage, that is, for the attainment of liberation.

Just what constitutes that sufficient condition, depends on what are identified as the necessary causal conditions that can be overcome. Different Buddhist schools identify ignorance about various things as the causal conditions. Depending on what those

conditions are thought to be, there are different accounts of how one eliminates bondage and gains liberation.

The various Abhidharma schools teach that through a thorough understanding of which factors (*dharma*) constitute the universe, one would, by the same token, understand which ideas constitute right views. Having gained such clarity of understanding (the path of vision), one must still internalise it through meditative practice (the path of cultivation). It may be that one meditates first to gain that understanding. Meditation serves to train one to eschew all temptations to think, speak and act in ways that stem from wrong views.

The perfection of meditation does not often happen suddenly, or even in forty days, as it did for the Buddha. It takes several lifetimes. Different schools indicate divergent accounts of the number of lives it takes one who has 'entered the stream' to liberation to gain the final life of a perfected being, a Buddha. The most common account, however, distinguishes stream-enterers, those with only seven lives to live, those with only one more life to live, and the perfected non-returners.

The work *Abhisamayaalamkaara*, attributed to Asanga, gives a good account of the eight perfections of wisdom (*prajnaapaaramitaa*). These are not stages in a progression, but bringing together of what are presumably the most important notions involved in spelling out the path to liberation. All these notions are drawn from Abhidharma traditions testified to in the literature, although the doctrine of the three bodies of a Buddha reflects the encroachment of specifically Mahayana emphases supposed to be enshrined in the *prajnaapaaramitaa* works.

The Abhidharma approach to removing ignorance stresses the stepwise treatment of many factors in many ways. On the

other hand, Nagarjuna's *Maadhyamika* treats one thing in just one way, a dialectically based rejection of belief in the actuality of anything. This rejection is on the mundane or language-based plane. But it is accomplished in full realization that empirical beings require such worldly distinctions.

On the empirical level, the world can be accepted as it is found to be. The Abhidharma-like advice on how to improve oneself in the empirical world is by no means deprived of scope. It does not mean that because something is dependent on other things, it cannot function. On the other hand, our experience attests quite the reverse. It is precisely things born of causes and conditions that themselves occasion their own particular results. It would seem to follow that the way to escape bondage is not to dig up more causes and conditions for old or new factors, but rather to desist from digging, to stop thinking in terms of causes and conditions.

The *Yogacaara* method, in essence, combines the approach of Abhidharma and *Maadhyamika*. *Yoga* is, essentially, a system of meditative practice designed to release the soul from rebirth, rebirth being regarded as a tedious and pointless repetition of suffering, old age, illness and death. It considers release from rebirth as a cessation of mundane existence. It uses the negatively dialectical approach to refute all claims of, and beliefs in, externally real objects. What remains is the stream of consciousness. It is a perspicuous account of the flux of awareness, the different categories of mentality and their relationships.

The levels of mentality are considered to be of three types. They are the level of ordinary or constructed awareness, the level of causally dependent awareness that constitutes the stream of consciousness itself and the level of perfected construction-free awareness achieved in meditation. The way of distinguishing

the different levels of mentality is one way of classifying awareness.

Another way to distinguish the three levels of consciousness is there. The three levels are the abode-consciousness (*aalayavijnaana*) in which the *karmic* seeds are stored, the mental consciousness in which the stream constituting the abode-consciousness evolves, and the full discrimination of objects sensorily apprehended as desirable or undesirable, good or bad, black or white, etc.

When the dialectical critique of distinctions, the critique of identifications, is accomplished in meditation, all that is left is the stream of undifferentiated awareness. It is the abode-consciousness without any distractions and no seeds to nurture. Once the life of such an enlightened person ends, there is nothing left to cause classifications or discriminations in that stream. This is liberation, which, in essence, is the third noble truth of the Buddha.

So far as suffering is concerned, the twelve-linked chain of causation explains the second and third truths.

The above is only a metaphysical explanation of suffering. How are we, in practice, to effect the removal of suffering? To answer the question, the Buddha preached the eight-fold Aryan Way as the fourth truth.

The eight-fold Aryan Way consists of

Right views (*samyagdrsti*) or understanding of the nature of the world, the self, and the goal of life;

Right resolve (*samyagsankalpa*) to follow the truths;

Right speech (*samyagvak*) consisting of truthfulness, avoidance of slander, unkind words and frivolous talk;

Right action (*samyakkarma*) including non-killing, non-stealing, non-sensuality, non-lying and non-intoxication;

Right livelihood (*samyagajiva*) or following a profession that does not involve performing of prohibited actions as means of livelihood;

Right endeavour (*samyagvyayaama*) to overcome the temptations of evil;

Right mindfulness (*samyaksmrti*), which consists of constantly placing before oneself one's ideal, without forgetting it; and

Right concentration (*samyaksamaadhi*) or meditation.

When meditation becomes perfect, man attains to *nirvana*, a state of absolute non-disturbance, equanimity and peace. It is the state of liberation from the world of becoming.

The above categories are treated at length in Buddhist texts. They continue to constitute the largest part of the Buddhist corpus of literature. As for right view, the first category, there are different conceptions of, or at least different emphases on, what constitutes right view. As for the last five categories, namely, action, living, effort, mindfulness and concentration, they relate to the specifics of the path to be followed. Right resolve and right speech pertain to more theoretical aspects of Buddhist thought.

Nagarjuna repudiates all views. His pupil Aaryadeva follows suit. The views that Nagarjuna and Aaryadeva discuss

for repudiation cover the entire spectrum of Buddhist thought, the entire Abhidharmic position in the second-third century AD. The Abhidharma systems presume that the Buddha taught the following truths literally.

1. There are no persisting entities. What exist are factors (*dharma*), evanescent flashes of energy, which last only for a moment. Nothing persists, so nothing moves; nothing acts.

2. So causality has to be understood as a relation among momentary factors. When we say A causes B, what is really the case is that a momentary flash of a type we call A is followed by a flash of a type we call B, where we have experienced flashes of type A regularly accompanied or followed by those of type B.

3. Our common sense beliefs in the existence of tables and chairs, bodies, organs and objects have to be rethought to accord with (1) and (2).

4. In particular, my natural belief that I am a persistent seat of consciousness, that there is an essentially identical self that underlies my fleeting varied experiences, has to be abandoned.

5. It is belief in persisting entities, especially one's self, that breed the *karmic* traces that occasion subsequent rebirths and frustrations. Even satisfactions – such as pleasant experiences – are *karmically* conditioned. As long as we operate under such beliefs, our actions – mental as well as bodily and vocal – will lay down karmic traces that are subsequently worked off in the course of later actions.

6. The factors that actually constitute our streams can be either defiled or pure. They are defiled as long as they result from actions performed under misguided beliefs in selves,

persistence, and objects. Purified factors occur when realization has taken place, the stream of factors no longer breeding *karmic* residues that require further lives to work them off.

7. Purification is likely to be gradual. The series of truths that constitute (1) – (6) above dawn on one slowly, and full understanding and appreciation of them requires serious meditative practice. When one meditates, one gains the ability to internalise right views in a non-discursive manner, so that one learns not to be the victim of conceptual categories of the sort that pervade ordinary discourse and thought.

8. When one has corrected all wrong views and has internalised insight through meditation, one becomes a perfected being. Without karmic traces, purified and liberated, such a Buddha teaches by his very example until 'his body' drops off of natural causes, that is, his stream ceases. This is Gautama's final liberation, a goal available to all beings, though difficult to attain.

Nagarjuna produces a systematic critique of all views outlined above. What Nagarjuna criticizes is the failure of the Abhidharma schools to carry the Buddha's logic through to conclusion. Nagarjuna applies the four-fold logic to what are taken to be the Buddhist tenets.

The first thesis is the thesis of momentariness. The Buddha taught that nothing persists for more than a moment. Thus 'factors' are actually momentary flashes. Then the question arises, 'what are the flashes of?' Nagarjuna's insight is that factors are not flashes of anything. To suppose that there is something that flashes is to return precisely to the viewpoint, according to Nagarjuna, that the Buddha was trying to avoid. When the Buddha taught that there are no eternal things, he did not mean

to say that there are non-eternal things. In truth, nothing originates at all. So the question whether things that arise are really eternal, momentary, both, or neither does not arise.

As nothing is actually caused, there are no causes at all. As there are no causes, there are no effects either. It is not just that though there are not any tables or chairs, there are factors constituting a stream we call tables or chairs. There are no such factors. In particular, the same argument applies to oneself. It is not that though there is no self, there is a stream of mental factors we call our 'self'. There is no such stream either.

One's beliefs in persisting things, especially in one's self, appear to breed karmic traces that have to be worked off later. Since nothing can actually be bred, that appearance of traces cannot ultimately be defended. By the same logic, no factors can be defiled, and none pure, since nothing can cause them to be so. As such, Nagarjuna argues, the whole gradual path to purification and enlightenment, postulated by Abhidharma schools, must only be an appearance. Nothing of the sort can actually be caused to happen.

So, all views are wrong. In particular the view that we are now bound and can be freed, that the Buddha was bound and later freed, is a mistake. No one is bound; no one is liberated; no one is frustrated; and no one is satisfied. It is not even that one is in some third state, a combination of the states or something else entirely. The whole set of categories such as cause and effect, motion and rest, action and inaction, bondage and liberation, real and unreal, identity and difference, pure and defiled, self and other, frustration and satisfaction is all empty, without any actuality.

It may be argued that if all views are wrong, Nagarjuna's view itself must be wrong. It is tempting to figure him a nihilist. But Nagarjuna states, 'I have no view'. If he has no view, why does he tell us to take heed of the Buddha's ethical advice? If liberation is itself empty, does it not cut at the very root of Buddhism?

'Empty' (*suunya*) is a technical term for Nagarjuna. When he calls something empty, he is implying that it does not really exist. But he does not suggest that it does not seem to exist with its concomitant results such as misery or satisfaction, pain or pleasure. It is the seeming that is all-important. For feeling, seeming is being. So the fact that a thing is empty, that it is completely dependent on causes and conditions, does not at all render it non-functional.

On the other hand, functioning things are precisely those that are involved in causal relations. They appear to arise when and only when certain kinds of other things appear to arise. Satisfaction or frustration, pain or pleasure, etc seem to us effects of causes and conditions. That both causes and effects are empty does not lessen pain or pleasure, frustration or satisfaction, etc we experience of them.

Someone who believes that everything is empty is in a position to counsel moral behaviour. Nagarjuna's work *Vigrahavyavarthani* displays a moral seriousness and leaves his stamp of moral authenticity.

Nagarjuna's dialectic does not undermine Buddhist morality. On the other hand, we gain a renewed respect for the Buddha and his teaching by understanding what it is not. For Nagarjuna, the Buddha is not a philosopher proposing arguments, not a religionist propounding doctrines, not even a spiritual advisor

offering counsel. Instead, the Buddha is someone who managed to expunge from his mentality all contentions, all views of how things really are, serving, instead, as a sounding board from which, we, who are not yet un-contentious, can hear how we sound as we contend.

For Nagarjuna, Buddha does not teach views, but helps save those who have them. That causes and effects are empty does not lessen the pain or pleasure we experience of them. But knowing them to be empty, one does no longer strain to gain satisfaction or avoid frustration, or to gain pleasure or avoid pain, as they seem to produce. According to Nagarjuna, the equanimity that the Buddha had and taught emanated from his knowledge of emptiness.

It is, therefore, evident that nothing in Nagarjuna's position undermines the account that the Abhidharma schools give of the path to liberation. That factors are unreal, dependently co-arising, does not lessen the necessity to purify them. Purification may take time as the truth of emptiness dawns on one only gradually. That purification does not really cause liberation, does not, in any way, lessen the need to fulfil. This is for the reason that the meditation one accomplishes in purifying constitutes or leads into non-conceptual insight, the abandonment of attachment to any views, which is true liberation.

For Nagarjuna, there is no difference between *nirvana* and *samsara*, by which he means that no conceptualisation of any such difference is correct. Both are equally empty.

It is commonly believed that Nagarjuna is a Mahayanist. There is not much evidence to support that view. If the foregoing analysis of his teaching is correct, the question of his affiliation with one or another school of Buddhism becomes mute. If the

method is to abandon all views, it is not relevant to consider which views are correct.

Philosophical Teachings

The first Noble Truth relates to *dukkha*, generally translated in English as suffering. Un-satisfactoriness or frustration is a better rendition of the term in its Buddhist context. Buddhism recognizes readily that existence can sometimes seem pleasant. The apparent pleasantness of existence is considered the chief disincentive to the pursuit of a spiritual life. The First Noble Truth asserts that all mundane things, from the most trivial to the most sublime, are impermanent (*anitya*) and doomed to pass away in time. This impermanence applies to our selves as well. Consequently there is no 'self' (*atman*). All beings in the universe, without exception, are doomed to pass away utterly in time. The doctrines of impermanence and selflessness thus form the two complementary facets of the most fundamental of Buddhist doctrines, the doctrine of universal un-satisfactoriness or frustration. Further, the three characteristics *anitya*, *anaatman* and *dukkha* constitute the 'three marks' (*trilaksana*) of existence. Recognition of these three essential characteristics in all things and beings is held to be tantamount to penetration of the true nature of reality.

The Buddhist doctrine of impermanence has been acceptable to contemporary Indian religious beliefs all along. But the doctrine of 'non-self' (*anaatman*), however, set Buddhism apart from contemporary Indian religions in the age of the historical Buddha. It continues to set Buddhism apart from and at odds with all other major religious faiths.

First, belief in rebirth and in the self as the vehicle of rebirth had become practically an article of faith among Indian religions at the time of the Buddha. Denial of the self was tantamount to denial of afterlife in the ancient Indian context, though the Buddha affirmed rebirth by means of dovetailing causal

theory and morality. Second, the Buddha's denial of the self had the effect of relativising any and all deities. Though the Buddha did not deny the existence of deities, they, too, according to the non-self doctrine, are doomed eventually to pass away.

The Indians of the Buddha's time had become accustomed to cyclical theories of cosmology, whereby the universe goes through enormously long periods of evolution and revolution, alternating between chaos and cosmos. Minor deities, and, in some schools of thought, all but the Brahman, the metaphysical principle, were believed to be caught up in this cyclical universal process, coming into existence and going out of existence along with the cosmos as a whole. The Pali *sutras* emphasize that no deity and no metaphysical principle is exempt from this cyclical evolution and devolution of the universe. According to early Buddhism, there is no creator or ruler of the universe; there is no unchanging metaphysical principle like the Brahman.

Later forms of Buddhism drifted away from the radical atheism of the Pali *sutras*. But none of them has drifted as to be characterised as 'theistic'. Mahayana Buddhism typically identifies an abstract concept of the true Buddha – the *Dharmakaaya* or 'Truth-body' of the Buddha – as opposed to the *nirmaanakaaya* or 'manifest body' of the historical Buddha – with the metaphysical principle of the universe. Nonetheless, Mahayana Buddhism does not assert that this metaphysical *Dharmakaaya*-Buddha created, or governs the universe. This approach of Mahayana Buddhism can be termed 'absolutistic'. But early Buddhism avoided any such metaphysical speculation. But, like its contemporaries, early Buddhism accepted the universe as given, and cyclical, though this was not an important doctrine of the religion.

In the place of a supreme deity or metaphysical principle, the ultimate goal of early Buddhism was *nirvana*, cessation of rebirth and thereby of suffering. The term *nirvana* in Sanskrit means ‘blown out’. The term originally may have referred to connote extinction of the consuming flame of desire and ignorance that keeps one entangled in *samsara*, the mundane realm of rebirth. There is some indication, too, that the term may have referred to extinction of the ‘flame’ of consciousness, which, according to early Buddhism, is the medium in which the process of rebirth takes place.

The spiritual ambition to bring an end to rebirth and thus to mundane consciousness, as we know it, was common in both orthodox and heterodox Indian religions of the Buddha’s time. Also common was the belief that achieving an end to rebirth entailed cessation of individual consciousness. This in turn involved realisation of and participation in the ultimate nature of reality, and that both the experience of spiritual release and the ultimate reality thus encountered were beyond the scope of word or thought. The Buddha was explicit and systematic in denying that one could in anyway express or conceive of the ultimately real. In the exposition of the denial, the Buddha resorted to the ‘four-cornered negation’ (*catuskoti* or tetralemma), which is fundamental in the Maadhyamika philosophy.

According to the *catuskoti*, there are four logical possibilities given any assertion. They are 1) it is; 2) it is not; 3) it both is and is not; and 4) it neither is nor is not. As for positive assertion about *nirvana*, the Buddha held that all of the four possibilities are false. In particular, after realizing final *nirvana*, the Buddha denied that one exists, does not exist, both does and does not exist, or neither does nor does not exist.

The Pali *sutras* also record instances in which the Buddha maintained a ‘noble silence’ in response to a similar line of questioning. Mahayana Buddhism elaborated extensively upon the theme of the silence of the Buddha in the course of its development of an abstract concept of *Dharmakaaya*- Buddha and of the doctrine of illusoriness. The *Lankaavataara Sutra*, for example, proclaims that, in reality, the Buddha never uttered a single word, ‘for, not speaking, is the Buddha’s (way of) speaking’.

The *catuskoti* is the basis for the philosophical characterization of Buddhism as the ‘Middle Path’, a characterization universally accepted throughout Buddhism. First, the Middle Path characterizes a spiritual discipline between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. After the Buddha’s enlightenment, in the early stages of the formulation of his teachings, the Middle Path came to connote a philosophical position between the two extremes of nihilism and speculative metaphysical absolutism. In Pali Buddhist terminology, these two extremes connote absolute discontinuity (*ucchedavaada*) and externalism (*saasvatavaada*). These two rejected extremes refer to nihilism on the one hand, and naïve belief in everlasting soul or metaphysical principle on the other. These terms are used precisely in the same sense in the Saalistamba sutra, which states that the being that is born is not to be viewed as eternal (*saasvata*) and not to be viewed as ‘cut off’ (*uccheda*).

The underlining philosophy of the concept of *catuskoti* is conspicuous throughout the Indian thought. While the Saalistamba Sutra overtly employs the concept, the *Upanisadic* texts, roughly contemporary with the Buddha, employ similar, though less systematic, denials in the elucidation of their concepts of ultimate reality. Jainism employs prominently a more elaborate version of such reasoning in its *syaadvaada* or ‘doctrine of possibilities’.

These considerations may indicate that the concept of *catuskoti* was not an invention of the Buddha. But they make a case for including this important doctrine in an account of the teachings of the historical Buddha. The *catuskoti* and the doctrine of the ineffability of the ultimately real are an indispensable foundation for later developments in the Maadhyamika dialectic of emptiness (*suunyata*).

The concept of *catuskoti* and the philosophical doctrine of the Middle Path are integral to the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth without a soul. In conjunction with the doctrine of non-self, the Buddha taught that one is morally responsible and accountable for one's actions (karma) through the mechanism of rebirth. The apparent contradiction in asserting rebirth while denying that there is any abiding personal identity, that is, any self, which can be reborn, is not a contradiction at all from the standpoint of the concept of *catuskoti*. This is explained thus. 'There both is and is not rebirth, and there neither is nor is not something which is reborn.'

The classical Theravaadin statement on rebirth is that the being as which one is reborn is 'not oneself and not another'. This is in essence the position taken by the Buddha 'denying that one's suffering is caused by oneself, by another, by both or 'arisen by chance' (*adhiccasamupanna*)'. The *Saalistamba Sutra* employs a direct parallel to this Pali passage in the course of expounding both the growth of a sprout from a seed, and the process of rebirth. The following Pali passage is an encapsulation of the early Buddhist understanding of rebirth.

'The person who acts experiences the results': this, Kassapa, which you first called 'suffering caused by another' amounts to the eternalist theory. 'One acts and another experiences the results' occurs to the experiencer as 'suffering caused by

another' and amounts to the annihilationist theory... Avoiding both extremes, the Tathaagata (Buddha) teaches the truth (dharma) by a middle (way): ignorance conditions mental formations (etc., enumerating the formula of conditioned arising).'

Thus, in both the Theravaada *sutras* and in the *Saalistamba Sutra*, the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth certainly makes sense in the light of the Buddhist theory of causation as elucidated in the doctrine of dependent origination.

According to the Buddhist theory of causation, the laws of cause and effect operate just as inexorably in the moral realm as they do in the physical world. Like the *Saalistamba Sutra*, the Pali *sutras* employ the simile of a seed growing into a plant, to illustrate the point. If one plants a seed, and various conditions necessary for its growth are met, a plant will grow. The plant is not the seed, and yet it is not other than the seed. It is a result of the seed. Obviously, the type of seed sown determines the type of plant that will result. Similarly, in the moral realm, if one performs an action (*karman*), a result (*vipaaka*) similar in nature to the action performed will accrue to the one who performed the action.

Just as in the physical realm, a result may not be simultaneous with its cause, so in the moral realm, there may be a delay in the actualisation of the moral result of an action. During this delay, there may have been considerable change in the person who performed the initial action. The person may have aged several years. By this time, the being who suffers or enjoys the result of the previously performed action would be 'not the same, and yet not another'. Similarly, in the physical realm, an unnatural condition at the time of planting a seed may result later in its stunted growth. Both the plant and the person in question may

suffer or profit from causes and conditions which occurred and vanished long time ago.

According to the Buddhist moral and causal theory, both the plant and the person as such are, at any given time, the sum total result of varied causes and conditions, which have occurred thus far. The constant operation of cause and effect brings about constant change in both sentient beings and inanimate objects. The effect of any given cause – whether immediate or delayed, and whether occurring in the physical or moral realm – often operates upon a thing or being which has changed in a minor or major way since the occurrence of the cause in question. Whether or not the same thing or being ‘deserves’ the result that accrues at a later point of time is not in issue at all, as the laws of cause and effect are impersonal and inexorable, whether operating in the physical or the moral plane.

In the physical realm, this constant change in things is known as *anityataa*, ‘impermanence’. Similarly, the constant change in sentient beings is known as *anaatman*, ‘no self’. It is a fact of life that one may suffer as an adult for actions performed as a teenager, and that the adult who suffers is not the teenager who performed the action. Thus far, the Buddhist theory of *karma* and its results is empirical. The Buddhist moral doctrine, however, includes the concept of rebirth, whereby one may suffer or prosper in a future lifetime as a result of actions performed in a past life, which one does not remember at all.

Some may accept, and some others may not accept the doctrine of rebirth. But rebirth was axiomatic in India at the time of the historical Buddha. It was one of the commonly held, antecedent beliefs upon which all great religions have been built. In this arena, the radical contribution of the historical Buddha to the Indian moral philosophy was his insistence that the laws of

moral cause and effect are similar to the physical laws of cause and effect, and that they operate between lifetimes just as they operate within a single lifetime. This is to say that moral effects invariably operate upon a being that has changed since the performance of the action in question, whether in this or a future lifetime.

Thus, though the Buddha accepted the general theory of rebirth current in his day, his acceptance was, by no means, uncritical. The Buddha’s teaching of rebirth without a soul was an attempt to rationalize the existing concept of rebirth totally based on belief in the self or soul.

The theories of rebirth before the Buddha regarded the soul as the innermost essence of one’s identity. The *Upanisadic* sages predating the Buddha conceived of the innermost self in various ways, but typically regarded it as the eternal, sublime, unchanging essence of one’s being. As such, the soul was then regarded as sublime and unchanging.

On the other hand, the soul was universally regarded as the agent ultimately responsible for evil as well as good actions. This led to the contradiction, which the *Upanisadic* sages recognized, that such sublime and unchanging soul could conceivably be responsible for ‘good’ or ‘bad’ actions. To overcome such problem, the sages predating the Buddha recorded in the *Upanisads* that there are various hierarchies of the faculties of the soul, and that *karma* and rebirth affect only the lower, less essential aspects of the person, which were somehow shed by the essential, eternal soul at the point of release.

The available textual evidence suggests that before the historical Buddha, the *Upanisadic* sages had recognized the five empirical senses as conduits of information to the mind (*manas*),

and conceived yet deeper levels of consciousness remarkably similar, though not identical, to modern psychological concepts such as ego (*ahamkaara*), consciousness (*vijnaana*) and the super-conscious (*buddhi, prajnaa*). The Taittiriya Upanisad's doctrine of the five 'sheaths' of the soul is perhaps the best known of the layered theories of the self.

There is every indication that the historical Buddha expanded upon this existing fund of psychological observation and speculation to formulate his own systematic analysis of individual human being into the 'five aggregates' (*pancaskandha*). This doctrine is conspicuously treated in the *Saalistamba Sutra*. According to this doctrine, what we typically experience as the individual self is divisible into at least five aggregates. They are matter (*ruupa*), feeling (*vedanaa*), conceptual identification (*samjna*), conditioning factors (*samskaara*) and consciousness (*vijnaana*).

Matter means stuff, and there is no stuff in Buddhism, for nothing persists. Matter is said to be of four kinds, namely, earth, water, fire and air, and to include also those things grasping (*upaadaana*) them. Specifically so included are the parts of the body, including the sense organs, and the external material things grasped by those organs, which are not substances but rather fleeting sensations or 'sense data'.

Gethin points out, 'what is clear.... is the extent to which the early Buddhist account of *ruupa* focuses on the physical world as experienced by a sentient being – the terms of reference are decidedly body-endowed-with-consciousness (*savinnanaka kaaya*)'. Matter associated with inert stuff independent of humans does not fit in to interpret *ruupa*. In fact, it rather means 'colour or form (shape)'.

Though there are four basic sorts of *ruupa*, the Abhidharma presents the important and peculiar notion that every 'material' thing has aspects of all four elements in it. The constituents of matter referring to earth, water, air, and fire only refer to the distinguishing aspects of certain factors, the peculiar ways in which each respective element behaves along with other ways.

In the case of a factor of earth, it has, therefore, certain features which it possesses in virtue of its being an earthy factor. But it does not occur independently. Rather, it must occur in the company of the features of watery, airy and fiery factors. These aggregates, then, are not atomic entities, as in Vaisesika, but rather aspects of fleeting experiences, numbers of which flash at any moment of occurrence. For instance, 'earth *ruupa*', therefore, means the aspects of the experience, which is occasioned, or constituted, by the flashings. Such flashings occur in groups, not singly.

The aspects peculiar to earth flashings are said, in the *nikaayas*, to be hardness, rigidity, spreading out and occupying space. But these features do not occur independently. They represent the earthy aspects of any material experience, occurring with watery, airy and fiery aspects. Watery aspects are such as viscosity and cohesion, flowing in streams. Fiery aspects are especially heat, which is connected with the ripening and maturing of things. Airy aspects include inflation, fluctuation, motion, and lightness.

These four aspects of matter always arise together and disappear together. One cannot exist without the other three. And they always occur together, and in equal portion. In other words, one cannot outweigh any of the other three.

How is it, then, that we have qualitatively different experiences, in one of which the visual element is paramount, in another the tangible, and so on? The answer is that one of the four can be more intense than some or all of the others. A solid thing has earth predominant in intensity, a fiery thing water, and so on.

As for the second aggregate ‘feeling’ (*vedanaa*), the classifications are simply into satisfying (*sukha*), frustrating (*duhkha*) and neutral (*avyaakrta*). There is further division of feelings into bodily and mental.

As for the third aggregate *samjnaa* (conceptual identification), the Sanskrit term strongly suggests the presence of linguistic aspects. Paul Williams states that ‘*samjnaa*... becomes the principal element in the creation of a single term for multitude of changing factors, and thus by virtue of the requirement of a single referent, *samjnaa* creates *prajnaptisat* entities.’

Prajnaptisat or *samvrtisat* entities are those, which have no real essence. They are ‘secondary entities... elements which are common to a number of spatial and temporal points and, therefore, cannot be uniquely described; they involve universals which necessarily transcend spatio-temporal momentariness, and, therefore, cannot be ultimately real.

As for the fourth aggregate ‘conditioning factors’ (*samskaaras*), there are a large number of factors belonging to the general class of *samskaaras*. Gethin explains what *samskaaras* have in common that warrants their being so termed.

‘The *nikaayas* define *samskaara* primarily in terms of will or volition (*cetanaa*); they also describe them as putting

together (*abhisamkharanti*) each of the *khandha* in turn into something that is put together (*samkhata*). In this way, *samkhaaras* are presented as conditioning factors conceived of as active volition forces. *Cetanaa* is, of course, understood as *kamma* on the mental level, and in the early *abhidhamma* texts all those mental factors that are considered to be specifically skillful (*kusala*) or unskillful (*akusala*) fall within the domain of *samkhaara-khandha*.’

Thus these factors correspond to a number of items, which condition our doings and thinking. The term ‘conditioning factor’ suggests their involvement in the *karmic* conditioning process.

The fifth aggregate is consciousness (*vijnaana*). The very discussion of aggregates in making up a sentient being raises important questions. ‘If a person is an aggregate of aggregates, and these aggregates are themselves factors which are momentary, what happens when these streams of factors come to an end with the death of the individual person. Buddhists talk, as other Indians do, of *karma* and rebirth. But how is it possible given the over-reaching conception of momentariness of all things?’

The analysis of the person into physical (*ruupa*), emotional (*vedana*), conceptual (*samjnaa*) and conditioning (*samskaara*) elements does not help explain how a person can even seem to persist from death to rebirth. The physical body withers and dies. The emotions cease on death. Concepts and volitions also cease. In these circumstances, what is the connection between one who dies at a point of time and another who is born some time after the death of the one? Surely, the identity of the individual person needs to be included among the factors into which that person is analysed.

It is the need for an answer to this question, which leads to the aggregate of consciousness. This aggregate plays several roles. There is an important difference between the consciousness, which arises when a sense organ contacts an object, and the mere sensing or identifying an object as something. In the Buddhist lists of factors, sensory awareness finds place in addition to the sensing and identifying themselves. But, beyond this, consciousness is that type of factor the stream of which persists beyond bodily demise. It is evidently this stream that maintains individual identity through the intermediate state and on into the next life.

The term *vijnaana* is used in another connection, too. It is to explain what it is that is still there *as stream* in the higher meditative states that Buddhist meditation theory describes. The descriptive terms for these higher meditative states regularly incorporate the presence of consciousness, if nothing else, into the descriptions of these states.

Besides these five aggregates, there are three sets of classifications of factors, accepted from the outset in the Buddha's own accounts, based on these distinctions. These are *faculties*, *bases* and *elements*. These classifications take account of the ways in which factors are grasped.

There are five external faculties – the visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory and tactile. These are not to be confused with the physical organs – eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. The reference here to the external faculties is to momentary, possibly atomic-sized factors scattered over the ball of the eye and possessed of the faculty of vision, etc. There is a sixth faculty, too, the internal faculty of 'mind'. This faculty grasps factors that do not involve external sensory elements.

Each of these six faculties has a type of factor it is capable of grasping. These factors flash together with factors of the other three material kinds. Grasping of the five sensory sorts constitutes the flashing. Corresponding to the sixth internal faculty, there is a mental kind of object grasped by it.

The twelve types of factors making up the list of faculties together with the things grasped by them is called the list of bases (*aayatana*). Everything that is grasped is comprised of bases, including the faculties themselves.

A third list presents eighteen elements (*dhaatu*). These are the twelve bases plus six more factors, identified as the consciousness (*vijnaana*) of each of the five sensory kinds plus, again, a sixth called the element of mental consciousness or 'representative cognition'.

McGovern describes the function of representative cognition thus: '.... Each of six *vijnaanas* has only a momentary existence. Nevertheless, there is karmic or causal affinity between the various groups of consciousness of one moment and the next. The group of this moment inherits the tendencies, etc. of the immediately preceding group, and as the chief function of *mano-vijnaanas* is memory and reason, both separately connected with the continuity of mental process, it is said that the constantly dying away *vijnaanas* of the past moments constitutes the base or organ for the activity of the *mano-vijnaana* of the present moment. Just as activity of the *caksur* or *indriya* brings about the arising of *caksur-vijnaana* or the visual consciousness, so does the transmitted energy of all the immediately preceding *vijnaanas* bring about the arising of the *mano-vijnaanas*.'

Together these five aggregates form a constantly fluctuating conglomerate. The conglomerate only gives the appearance of abiding personal identity.

Each aggregate can be further analysed into constituent components. Body is composed of the elements earth, air, fire and water. *Aakaasa*, a fifth element recognized in the *Saalistamba Sutra*, and a common feature in the Mahayana literature, is relatively scarce in the Pali *sutras* as one of the recognised elements. Feelings, conceptual identifications and consciousness occur as results of the activity of the five senses, and the mind (*manas*). Thus there may be visual feeling, olfactory identification or tactile consciousness and so on up to eighteen types of feeling, identification and consciousness. These eighteen types are due to six senses times three aggregates.

In the Pali *sutras* themselves, each of the eighteen basic types of feeling, identification and consciousness may be yet further analysed according to the nature of the aggregate in question. Feelings, the most primitive level of experience, occur in three categories, namely, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Identifications represent the more refined experiences such as red, round, smooth, fragrant, etc. These are normally denoted with adjectives.

At this point, a specific identification regarding the object in question may be formed at the level of the 'conditioning factors' aggregate. For instance, pleasant visual, tactical and olfactory feelings with similar identifications of red, round, smooth and fragrant may give rise to the concept of an apple. Upon further experience, this concept can be revised to something like a 'pomegranate'.

In addition to conceptualisation, volition also occurs at the level of conditioning factors. In this context, volition indicates

karmic efficient reactions such as desire or aversion. Such processes occur throughout one's waking life, and possibly in sleep and dream as well. However, there is no indication of an early Buddhist doctrine regarding sleep and dreaming, though such speculations were pursued in the *Upanisads* composed about the Buddha's time.

In the Pali *sutras*, the fifth aggregate 'consciousness' is metaphysically represented as a stream. It appears to represent most often the sum total functioning of the other three nonmaterial aggregates. In some instances, however, it appears to denote a deeper, more essential level of being reminiscent of *Upanisadic* treatments of the layered self. This lack of clarity may be intentional, or may have been regarded as unavoidable, in the context of propounding a doctrine of rebirth without a soul, in a culture in which the two doctrines were so closely associated.

At any rate, consciousness occupies a unique position in early Buddhist doctrine by virtue of its crucial role in the process of rebirth and release. On the one hand, the Pali *sutras* state explicitly that consciousness does not pass from one birth to another as an entity. On the other hand, several passages imply some role for consciousness in the rebirth passage. For instance, some *sutras* indicate that upon the realisation of final liberation, consciousness 'ceases' or is not 'reinstated', or that it 'descends' at rebirth. Such phrases indicate that the consciousness aggregate represents the medium through which rebirth occurs.

However, consciousness characterised as a stream is not to be taken as an entity. A stream flows along, constantly changing, constantly modified by rocks, debris, etc. It is still recognisable as the same stream. At some point, it may plunge over a precipice, shatter into spray and then re-form at the bottom

into another stream, which is ‘neither the same stream nor a different stream’.

Similarly, early Buddhist doctrine appears to represent consciousness - whether as a separate aggregate or the sum total functioning of the other non-material aggregates - as flowing along in a continuous, though constantly changing, pattern, throughout one’s life, being radically interrupted at death, and then re-forming in rebirth in such a way as to be ‘not oneself, and yet not another’.

A systematic concept of cause and effect underlies all the foregoing psychological and philosophical material. This concept is governed by the four logical alternatives of the *catuskoti*. For example, one is not reborn as no abiding entity survives death. On the other hand, one is reborn in the sense that one’s actions and experiences in this life will affect causally a consciousness reinstated in another life. Even in a single lifetime, an infant develops into an adult, in a sense, through the mechanism of cause and effect operating both mentally and physically. In another sense, the infant’s physical body, desires, motivations, intentions, etc perish utterly through the same mechanism. The infant both does and does not survive infancy.

Both these processes of identity in difference, whether in one lifetime or across many lifetimes, are summarised in the Buddhist doctrines of dependent origination (*pratiyasamutpaada*). The *Saalistamba sutra*’s detailed treatment of the twelve-fold formula of dependent origination reinforces the view that the classical formula expounded in the Pali *sutras* goes back to at least within a hundred years of the historical Buddha himself.

It deserves notice that the Theravaada *Digha Nikaaya* nowhere contains the complete, classical twelve-fold formula. Instead, it contains only abridged or variant formulae. This suggests that the classical formula is an amalgamation of several

separate formulae, and may not have been assembled until after the death of the historical Buddha. This also suggests that the preservers and compilers of the Pali *Nikayaas* were remarkably conscientious as historians and textualists.

The classical, twelve-fold formula of dependent origination runs as follows.

1. Ignorance conditions conditioning factors.
2. Conditioning factors, in turn, condition consciousness.
3. Consciousness conditions name and form.
4. Name and form condition the six senses including mind.
5. The six senses condition sensual contact.
6. Sensual contact conditions feeling.
7. Feeling conditions craving.
8. Craving conditions grasping.
9. Grasping conditions existence.
10. Existence conditions birth.
11. & 12. Birth conditions aging and death.

According to the classical Theravaadin interpretation of the formula, life goes on in a cycle. If one dies in a state of ignorance, this will influence (condition) the final thoughts occurring in that life, which will, in turn, determine the initial state of consciousness in the next life. This initial state of consciousness conditions ‘name and form’ which is interpreted to mean the conscious and the corporeal aspects of the human being developing in the womb. There is, however, little in the Pali *sutras* themselves to suggest that ‘name and form’ refers to the consciousness and corporeal duality supposed to constitute a human being. This situation suggests similarity between the overall standpoint of the Pali *sutras* and that of Mahayana Buddhism. This similarity centres on the term *naama-ruupa*.

Literally, *naama* means name; and *ruupa* means form or appearance. There are several appropriate words in Sanskrit and Pali to denote mind and body. It is very doubtful that *naama-ruupa* originally meant 'mind and body'. In the *Upanisads*, which are roughly contemporary with the historical Buddha, the term *naama-ruupa* is a general designation for any discrete phenomenon.

According to the *Upanisads*, all phenomena are characterised by their names and forms. 'Name' is more than a verbal designation. It implies a concept, in the mind of the perceiver, which is potentially nameable. 'Form' does not necessarily imply substance. It is rather appearance or perceptibility. According to the *Upanisadic* reasoning, in order to exist in any meaningful sense of the term, a phenomenon must present a form perceivable by the senses, and must be greeted in consciousness with a concept corresponding to that form. In other words, consciousness and the objects of consciousness are interdependent. It is most likely that the term *naama-ruupa* in the Pali *sutras* must have meant a similar concept.

The Pali *sutras* repeatedly affirm the interdependence of consciousness and the objects of consciousness without asserting the priority of either. The following passage in the *sutras* is quite pertinent.

'When, sir, the internal eye is intact, external forms come within its range and there is appropriate attention, then there is appearance of the appropriate type of consciousness. Whatever is the form (*ruupa*) of what has thus come to be is called the grasping aggregate of form.'

The following passage in the *sutras* just echoes the *Upanisadic* thought.

'There is just this body and external to it, name-and-form. This is a pair. Conditioned by this pair are (sensory) contact and the six (sense) spheres.'

The term *naama-ruupa* occurring in the Pali *sutras* at several places is amenable to interpretation as concept and appearance. Only at a very few places it appears to refer to mind-and-body.

In the light of the above discussion, it is possible to construe the classical formula of dependent origination as a quasi-immaterialist treatment of the repeated arising and passing away of phenomena existing in mutual interdependence with consciousness. According to this interpretation, each new phenomenon is greeted with ignorance. This gives rise to a conditioning factor, an idea. This, in turn, influences the state of consciousness of the perceiving object. This state of consciousness influences the concept and appearance (name and form) of the object perceived. The predisposition entailed in the subjective 'concept and appearance' of the phenomenon in question conditions the nature of sensual information transmitted, and so on until the decay and demise of that particular, impermanent phenomenon occurs. Similarly, the perceiving subject is constantly modified by the nature of the objects perceived, and is also discontinuous and impermanent. Consciousness, like the phenomena to which it responds, arises and passes away repeatedly.

This interpretation makes sense in that, according to early Buddhist thought, one never experiences 'external' objects as such. One only experiences *apparent* objects with an admixture of subjective bias. On the other hand, the objects with which one comes in contact influence one's subjective consciousness.

In other words, consciousness and the objects of consciousness are interdependent and mutually determinative.

The *Mahaapadaana Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaaya* states this position succinctly. ‘When there is consciousness, there is name-and-form. Consciousness is the condition of name-and-form. When there is name-and-form, there is consciousness. Name-and-form is the condition of consciousness.’ This psychological theory provides a convincing prototype for both the Maadhyamika dialectic and Vijnaanavaada metaphysics.

The implication of the Pali *sutras* as a whole, including the formula of dependent origination, is that the mutual interdependence of consciousness and its objects precludes valid knowledge of any independent reality, whether objective or subjective. In highlighting the necessary subjective component in any experience of an object, the Pali *sutras* discard the objective referent of consciousness altogether in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy.

Incidentally, in terms of the Maadhyamika dialectic, there can be no self-existent knower, no self-existent thing known and no self-existent act of knowing. In terms of Vijnaanavaada metaphysics, though there may be objectively existing external objects, it is impossible to establish their existence, and it is possible to proceed with formal logic without reference to any objectively existing reality.

Moral Doctrines

The second Noble Truth, desire as the cause of all human suffering, may appear to be regarded in early Buddhism as a graver fault than ignorance. In fact, ignorance is regarded as the obverse of desire. The two are inseparable.

According to the Buddhist doctrine throughout, if one were truly to comprehend the impermanence of all phenomena, including oneself, one’s desire would automatically cease. Conversely, in the absence of desire that things be other than what they are, ignorance how things actually are would automatically fade.

In particular, mistaken belief in an abiding self or soul, and all of the desires that such belief spawns, are held to be responsible for all moral evil. The Buddha’s teaching is pertinent. ‘I do not see any way, monks, to embrace belief in the soul so that grief, anguish, suffering, despair and lamentation would not arise.’

The teaching of the Buddha is not, therefore, an end in itself. It is instead a means to the end of overcoming desire, and thereby bringing about an end to suffering. Desire must be attacked not only at its source, that is, ignorance of the first Noble Truth and all that it entails, but must also be attacked in its results, that is, immoral behaviour.

In addition to ignorance and desire, the third grave fault, according to the Pali *sutras*, is hatred. Desire, hatred and ignorance, considered together, are usually referred to in the Pali *sutras* as *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. In Sanskrit, they are referred to as *raaga*, *dvesa* and *moha*, a triad, which occurs in the *Saalistamba Sutra*. These three are termed in Pali the ‘roots of

unwholesomeness' (*akusalamuula*). Their opposites are the 'roots of wholesomeness' (*kusalamuula*).

Buddhist morality, in general, is based upon a distinction between the wholesome and the unwholesome, rather than between good and evil. This terminology is important because Buddhism posits no God who might decree what is good and what is evil. As such, within the realm of *karma* and rebirth, thoughts and actions truly conducive to the relief of suffering, both one's own and that of others, are wholesome. Their opposites are unwholesome.

Buddhist morality is founded upon compassion towards one's fellow beings rather than obedience to divine decree. The *Sutta Nipaata*, a very ancient Buddhist text, makes a cryptic statement of Buddhist morality.

'As I am, so are they. As they are, so am I. Comparing others with oneself, one should not harm, or cause harm.'

The mechanism of *karma* and rebirth validates the compassionate attitude underlying Buddhist morality. Literally, *karma* means action. In the Buddhist context, also in most other Indian contexts, *karma* implies 'volitional action or thought'. In other words, *karma* is not like some kind of blessing or cause. One does not have good or bad *karma*; one performs good or bad *karma*. The result of a volitional action or thought is *karmavipaaka* or *karmaphala*, meaning 'the maturing or fruit of *karma*'. If one breaks one's limb, it is not bad *karma*, but the result of bad *karma*. *Karma* is thus volitional action or thought itself, nothing more.

Moreover, volition is the essence of *karma*. Unintentional actions are not regarded as morally operative, even though they

may cause great benefit or harm. But, negligence is regarded as volitional. For example, a drunk driver is *karmically* liable for negligence, whether or not an accident occurs.

Against this background, it becomes clear that the noble eightfold path, the fourth Noble Truth, deals primarily with Buddhist morality. There is no dispute or contention among Buddhists or scholars of Buddhism concerning the basic moral teachings of the historical Buddha. Further, the eightfold path is recognised as a teaching of the historical Buddha virtually in all schools of Buddhism. It, therefore, serves as a framework within which to exhibit the Buddha's moral teachings.

The eightfold path is traditionally divided into three categories known as pillars (*skandhas*). They are wisdom (*prajnaa*), ethics (*seela*) and meditation (*samaadhi*). The Buddha himself is not recorded as dividing the path in this way. In the *Majjhima Nikaaya*, this threefold division of the path is attributed to the nun Dhammadinnaa. In the *Digha Nikaaya*, the division, with variants, is attributed to *Aananda*. In the *Anguttara Nikaaya*, the Buddha is recorded as referring to *prajnaa*, *seela* and *samaadhi* as a triad, but not specifically in relation to the eightfold path.

This situation emphasises the fact of some kind of arbitrariness in the traditional threefold categorisation of the eight 'limbs' of the path. For instance, according to the traditional order of enumeration of the limbs of the path, the twofold wisdom pillar comes first. Its components are right view and right thought. Right view (*samyagdrsti*) is consistently equated in the Pali *sutras* with acceptance of the four Noble Truths and may, therefore, be regarded as entailing understanding of and agreement with the Buddhist doctrine.

The second limb of the path, *samyaksamkalpa*, right thought or right intention, relates more to morality than to analytical ethical philosophy. It involves three things, namely, thoughts or intentions of renunciation, benevolence and non-violence (*niskaama*, *avyaapaada* and *avihimsaa*). These three ‘right thoughts’ constitute the volitional underpinnings of Buddhist morality rather than a philosophical position. This point is fundamental to a sympathetic understanding of early Buddhist morality. Otherwise, it may simply appear to be a set of rules designed to insure one’s *karmic* welfare in this and future lives.

If ethics as a code of behaviour is to be distinguished from morality as the quality of the intentions behind one’s behaviour, the second pillar of the path delineates Buddhist ethics. These three limbs of the path are right speech, right action and right livelihood. They correspond roughly to the ‘five precepts’ (*pancaseela*), traditionally enjoined upon the Theravaada doctrine.

Further, the traditional Theravaada doctrine is not strictly borne out in the early texts, for only four of the traditional ‘five precepts’ are included in *sutra* treatments of the eightfold path. It is clear that the Buddha did not approve of alcohol and drugs. But abstinence from intoxicants is not included in elucidations of right action in the Pali *sutras*. It, therefore, appears that it is not as prominent an ethical issue in early Buddhism as it came to be in later Buddhism.

The *sutras* normally mention only abstinence from violence toward living creatures (*paanaatipaata*), taking what is not given (*adinnaadaana*), and sexual misconduct (*kaamesumicchacaara*) as constituting right action. When this list is expanded upon, still abstinence from intoxicants finds no place. Rather, abstinence from harming plants, exploiting animals,

attending shows, using adornments and ostentatious seats and beds finds place.

As regards ‘sexual misconduct’, as the term *kaamesumicchacaara* is usually understood, the term actually implies immoderate behaviour motivated by sensual desire for comfort or possession. This is important to note, given that desire for sensual gratification is one of the three types of desire that constitute the second Noble Truth, desire as the cause of suffering. The threefold categorisation of desire typical of the Pali *sutras* is desire for sensual gratification (*kaamatrsnaa*), desire for existence (*bhavatrsnaa*) and desire for non-existence (*vibhaavatrsnaa*). This is to say that in addition to sensual gratification, one also desires that those things and beings one loves, including oneself, will continue to exist, and one desires that those things and beings that one despises, sometimes including oneself, will cease to exist. It is, however, to be noted that the *Saalistamba Sutra* does not mention this threefold categorisation of desire.

As regards the sexual misconduct as such, monks and nuns are forbidden any sort of sexual contact. On the other hand, the specific sexual prohibition for lay people is quite liberal. Men are consistently enjoined to refrain from having sex with women who are ‘under the protection of (*raksita*), that is, supported by, parents, relatives or a husband. Presumably, women should have sexual dealings only with men who support them. In either case, there shall be no violence or dishonesty.

Right speech is consistently defined as abstaining from falsehood, slander, verbal abuse and idle chatter. A question arises as to why right speech is given much prominence in the eightfold path rather than being considered a subdivision of right action. The answer probably lies in the Indian notion that *karma*

– volitional, morally effective actions – can be performed through mind, speech or body. The eightfold path reflects this notion in limbs, right thought, right speech and right action. The fifth limb of the path, right livelihood, is elucidated with various lists of professions which would entail wrong thought, speech or action, or would encourage them in others.

The sixth limb of the path is ‘right effort’ (*samyagvyaayaama*). With it begins the section of the path normally regarded as pertaining to meditation. Right effort is generally linked to morality as cultivation of the good (*kusala*) and rejection of the bad (*akusala*). Exerting right effort, one is enjoined to expunge existing unwholesome states of mind, insure that unwholesome states of mind do not arise, cultivate existing wholesome states of mind, and encourage the arising of other wholesome states of mind.

A discourse in the *Majjhima Nikaaya* titled ‘The Forms of Thought’ makes it clear that ‘right effort’ is as much a contemplative exercise as well as an enumeration of the moral ‘roots of wholesomeness and unwholesomeness’ as the roots of the exercise. The roots are greed, hatred, delusion and their opposites.

Thus, five limbs of the eightfold path representing wisdom, ethical behaviour and meditation all bear directly upon Buddhist morality. The verse 183 of the *Dhammapada* conveys the essence of the Buddha’s teaching.

‘Avoidance of all evil (*papa*),
Cultivation of the wholesome (*kusala*),
Purification of one’s mind:
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.’

The overlapping of morality and meditation within the eightfold path lends credence to *brahmavihaara* meditations as an original part of Buddhism. According to this contemplative practice, one is to cultivate and extend to all beings a mental attitude of benevolence (*maitri*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upaksa*).

In a similar way, the Theravaadin *Metta Sutta*, and the *Sutta Nipaata* (verse 148) repeat the essence of the Buddha’s message.

‘Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so one should cultivate a boundless heart toward all beings.’

This prominent attitude of compassion and benevolence in the Pali *sutras* is extended by the *bodhisattva* ideal of Mahayana Buddhism. According to Mahayana Buddhism, all of one’s actions are to be motivated by a sincere desire to relieve all sentient beings of their sufferings.

Meditative Teachings

There are doubts in regard to meditative teachings of the historical Buddha. The meditative practice is very prominent in the early Buddhist spiritual thought. In spite of it, *Sutta Pitaka* does not elaborate upon these practices. Whatever mention is there is only formulaic and sweeping in scope. On the other hand, the Pali *sutras* are far more informative regarding the actual practice of meditation than any other contemporary texts including the *Upanisads*. The lack of precise information on meditative practices is reflective of the fact that a meditative practice is an individual affair to be worked out between teacher and pupil.

The eightfold path, in addition to ‘right effort’, contains two further items, which relate specifically to meditation. These are right mindfulness and right concentration. Two *sutras* - the *Satipatthaana* of the *Majjhima Nikaaya* and the *Mahaasatipatthaana* of the *Digha Nikaaya* - deal specifically with mindfulness. They define it as continuous and systematic attention to the body, feelings, the mind, and certain points of doctrine (*dharma*). They indicate clearly that like ‘right effort’, mindfulness is to be observed at all times, not only during formal meditative practice.

Moreover, the practitioner is to do objective observation, not evaluation or conscious modification, of the composition, postures and activities of the body; the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral nature of the feelings; and the emotional and moral quality of the mind.

The fourth item ‘doctrine’ has four aspects. The meditator is enjoined merely to note the presence or absence of the five hindrances (*panca nivaarana*) and the seven limbs of the

enlightenment (*satta bojjhanga*), and to analyse experience with reference to the five aggregates, the six senses (including mind) and their corresponding objects, and according to the four Noble Truths. The five hindrances are sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, flurry and worry, and uncertainty. The seven limbs of enlightenment are mindfulness, investigation of *dharma*, energy, joy, serenity, concentration and equanimity.

Right concentration involves the ability to attain ‘mental one-pointed-ness’. It is defined as cultivation of the first four meditative states. There are said to be four higher states, the ‘formless’ (*aruupa*) meditations, enumerated as the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, and the sphere of neither identification-nor-non-identification. These states are often appended to the first four states, apparently as desirable, but optional, meditative accomplishments beyond what are considered minimally necessary for the realization of liberation.

A ninth state, the ‘cessation of perception and feeling’ (*sannavedayitanirodha*), also known as ‘the attainment of cessation’ (*nirodhasamaapatti*), appears to be regarded as an integral part of the realization of liberation. This meditational state involves suspension of all mental activities. *Majjhima Nikaaya* records thus.

‘The monk who has attained *sannavedayitanirodha*, his bodily activities, verbal activities and mental activities have been stopped, have subsided, but his vitality is not destroyed, his (body) heat is not allayed, and his senses are purified. This, sir, is the difference between a dead thing, passed away, and that monk.’

This concept poses a problem with regard to the concept of *nirvana* in the Pali *sutras*. On the one hand, spiritual release

appears to be regarded as the result of intellectual comprehension of true nature of reality and a consequent intuitive penetration of the reality of things as they are. On the other hand, the actual realisation of *nirvana* appears to be regarded as involving simultaneously a meditative attainment entailing the cessation of even the most rudimentary mental activity.

This apparent confusion may be due to an attempt to reconcile a conflict in the early Buddhist practice by integrating two apparently distinct meditative endeavours. One is the cultivation of concentration and tranquillity, and the other is the cultivation of intuitive wisdom.

The traditional Theravaada division of Buddhist practice into *samatha* (tranquillity) and *vipasyanaa* (insight) is foreshadowed in the Pali *sutras*. It is very clear that the *sutras* regard *samatha* (tranquillity) as roughly equivalent to *samaadhi* in the specific sense of cultivation of the meditative related distinction between ‘mind-liberation’ (*ceto-vimutti*) and ‘wisdom-liberation’ (*pannavimutti*). In most cases, the development of tranquillity and insight and the resulting mind-liberation and wisdom-liberation appear to be regarded as mutually supportive and equally essential.

There are, however, some instances in which these two aspects of meditative practices are explicitly contrasted with one another. One passage in *Anguttara* records an acrimonious debate between two factions of monks. One faction cultivated meditation and the other concentrated upon development of analytical insight. The passage attempts to quell the dispute without deciding in favour of either. Given the existence of such disputes, several passages in the Pali *sutras* appear to support one side or the other.

The *Digha Nikaaya* records that even before the Buddha, there were two types of recluse, the meditators and an inferior group incapable of the rigours of the meditative regimen. It indicates that even highly developed intuitive wisdom is not alone sufficient for release. One passage suggests that development of the ninth meditational state is itself tantamount to the realization of *nirvana*. The passage runs thus.

‘To one standing at the summit of consciousness (after realization of the eight *jhaanas*) it may occur: ‘To think at all is inferior. It would be better not to think...’ So he stops thinking or willing, and perception ceases... He touches cessation (*nirodham phussati*). Thus, Pothapaada, does the gradual and deliberate attainment (*samaapatti*) of cessation (*nirodha*) occur.’

Yet another passage does not mention specifically the ninth meditation, *nirodhasamaapatti*, but implies that destruction of the intoxicants (*aasava*) and consequently *nirvana* are to be attained primarily through cultivation of *samatha* (tranquillity) meditation and development of the meditative states.

On the other hand, the Pali *sutras* generally indicate that, if anything, insight is more essential than tranquillity. They suggest that enlightenment and release are possible without cultivation of meditative states at all. In addition, it is to be remembered that the Buddha is supposed to have rejected the cultivation of meditative states, which he practised under his two teachers, as not leading to final release from suffering. To a considerable degree, this rejection is the basis of the difference between Buddhism and other contemporary spiritual paths.

One more factor on the side of insight as opposed to tranquillity is a frequently enumerated ‘tenfold path’. This occurs over sixty times in the first four *nikaayas* in the *Sutta Pitaka*,

mostly in the *Anguttara Nikaaya*. The tenfold path consists of the standard eightfold path and two more pillars. They are 'right insight' (*samyag jnaana*) and 'right release' (*samyag vimukti*). While the eightfold path concludes with 'right concentration', that is, cultivation of the meditative states via tranquillity, this tenfold path suggests that 'insight' is the ultimate spiritual cultivation.

One passage in the *Majjhima* states specifically that this tenfold path is the path of the *arahat* and is superior to the eightfold path, which is the path of the learner. 'Right insight' and the 'three wisdoms' realised by the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment are both consistently listed in the Pali *sutras* immediately after the attainment of the four meditative states.

'Right insight' thus appears to be associated with remembrance of one's own past lives, ability to discern the past and future lives of others, and realisation of the destruction of all intoxicants. In general, it is destruction of the intoxicants of sensual desire, existence and ignorance, which the *sutras* regard as the essential factor in the realisation of liberation.

In the tenfold listing, 'right liberation' clearly indicates realisation of *nirvana*. It is held to involve both mind-liberation and wisdom-liberation. It, therefore, involves cultivation of both tranquillity and insight.

Overall, the Pali *sutras* are ambivalent with regard to the relative importance of the meditative practices of tranquillity and insight. By contrast, the Theravaada commentarial tradition decisively emphasises upon insight.

While the Theravaada tradition emphasised insightful penetration of the analytical teachings of Buddhism as the

paramount object of meditation, the early Mahayana tended to emphasise the non-conceptual, concentrative side of meditation. Starting with the *Prajnaapaaramitaa*, 'Perfection of wisdom' literature, as systematized in the Madhyamika School of Nagarjuna, Mahayana Buddhism exhibited a conspicuous mistrust of doctrine. It tended to regard enlightenment as a purely intuitive, non-conceptual, meditative attainment.

The *jhaayins* or meditators of the Pali *sutras* may be said to survive in the *Dhyana* School of Mahayana Buddhism transmitted to China as Ch'an by Bodhidharma, and thence to Japan as Zen. Even the more doctrine-oriented Vijaanaavaada or 'Consciousness School' of the Mahayana tended to emphasise the equivalent of the Pali *sutras*' *ceto-vimutti* in their conceptualisation of enlightenment as a quietistic state of '*parinispannavijnaana*' or 'perfected consciousnesses'.

By contrast, the Theravaada and most of the so-called Hinayana schools of Buddhism tended to emphasise the analytical content of the historical Buddha's teachings in their meditational as well as their intellectual endeavours. The Theravaada and the Sarvaastivaada schools developed in their respective Abhidharmas a rigorously systematic guide to the practice of meditation. Such systematisation did not, however, preclude the spontaneous and intuitive element of Buddhism, as the *Theragaatha* and *Therigaatha*, the inspirational 'songs of the Monks and Nuns' enshrined in the Pali canon, demonstrate. The Mahayana tended, on the other hand, to emphasise the intuitive element of Buddhist meditation as stated in the Pali canon. Yet it has demonstrated its talent for rigorous systematisation.

The above discussion supports the conclusion that Buddhism began and remains the spiritual path in which the analytical intellect, morality and meditation play mutually

supportive roles, and in which each is necessary and none alone sufficient for enlightenment and release from the suffering of the realm of *karma* and rebirth. The vast diversity of Buddhism appears to have resulted primarily from emphasis upon one or another of these mutually supportive aspects of the original teaching of the historical Buddha.

4. Schools of Buddhism

Role of Schools

Through the course of a few centuries, different Buddhist schools came into being and developed the doctrines attributed to the Buddha. The four *Aryan* Truths taught by the Buddha were recast and accepted in new form, though with a few modifications, by other schools.

The Truths, in the new form, are stated thus. Everything is misery, *sarvam dukkham*. Everything is momentary, *sarvam ksanikam*. Everything is selfless, *sarvam nairaatmyam* or *anaatmam*. And everything is void, *sarvam suunyam*. The first two truths represent the earlier doctrines. The third and the fourth follow from the doctrines of aggregates and momentariness.

The whole is nothing but its parts. The self, *atman*, which experiences itself as 'I am', is, according to the Buddhists, an aggregate of psychophysical aggregates. These aggregates (*skandhas*) are five in number. They are the aggregate of matter (*ruupaskandha*) forming the physical body; the aggregate of feelings and sensations (*vedanaaskandha*); the aggregate of ideas (*samjnaaskandha*); the aggregate of formative forces (*samskaaraskandha*); and the aggregate of consciousness (*vijnaanaskandha*).

The last is also an aggregate because the consciousness of 'I am' is a series of aggregates of drops of consciousness. When the personality (*pudgala*) is analysed into these aggregates, beside and beyond these aggregates, there is nothing to be found that can be called the 'pure self' (*Atman*) eternally subsisting by itself. So, according to the Buddhists, there is really no *Atman*.

One cannot say that one is different from one's body, senses and mind, and one has one's own nature (*svabhaava*) different from others. So long as this unity of the aggregates lasts, one is subject to the becoming of the aggregates and their constituents. Accordingly one experiences suffering.

But when the aggregates are discriminated and analysed, one's 'I' ceases to exist, and there is no suffering. Then one realizes that one does not have one's own nature or any nature. One thus becomes nature-less (*nihsvabhaava*), that is, void. At that stage, there is no becoming, no change and no disturbance. It is *nirvana*, liberation.

Further, the experiential being of man is divided into twelve bases or fields of experience called *aayaatanas*. They are the six senses, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin and mind and their six kinds of objects, namely, colour, sound, odour, taste, touch and the perceived object like the tree, the sun, etc. Senses give only aspects of the object. But mind gives the whole object.

The being of man is further divided into eighteen elements (*dhaatus*). They are the six senses, their six objects, and the six kinds of cognition, namely, the visual, the auditory, the olfactory, the gustatory, the tactile and the mental. The idea behind these analyses is that if we analyse our being into the bases and elements, there will be no residue. The analysis sounds like nihilism of our personality and being.

The above concept of selflessness (*anaatmataa*) and nature-less-ness (*nihsvabhaavataa*) is extended to all objects of the world. For the Buddhists, the objects do not have a self or nature of their own, except their parts, and so on *ad infinitum*. As everything is caused by certain causes, it cannot have a self or nature of its own apart from that of its causes.

Similarly, every one of the causes also cannot have a self or nature of its own apart from that of its own causes. Then nothing in the world can have a self or nature of its own. So everything is a void, *suunya*, selfless, nature-less. The highest aim of our knowledge is the realization of this truth in which selflessness has become identical with nature-less-ness and voidity.

Although the force of the above argument was driving the Buddhists to such conclusions as the above, there were other considerations that checked the drive. Such considerations made different thinkers accept different conclusions.

If, ultimately, the void is the truth, does the world exist or not? If the aim of life is to transcend the world of becoming and be free from suffering, will there be any consciousness left to experience the freedom from suffering? If there will be some consciousness, is it also momentary and subject, therefore, to suffering? What happened to the Buddha, after he entered *nirvana*?

Questions such as the above and the experience of conflict with the traditionally accepted doctrines gave rise to differences of opinion. Such differences resulted in expulsions of those men who held views different from the established orders. Such expulsions resulted in the formation of new orders or sects by the expelled members.

It is said that the Buddha refused to answer questions the meanings of which were not definite. Such questions, among others, are as follows.

Is the universe eternal or transient? Is it finite or infinite? Is the *atman* different from the body or identical with it? Does one, who enters *nirvana*, exist or not?

The early Buddhists took the Buddha's silence in answer to such questions to be his denial. But a little later, the Buddhists began to give different answers to the same questions.

To the questions about the universe, we do not find exact answers. But to the questions about the *atman* and *nirvana*, and about the existence of the world, we find many answers from different schools (sects). The theories of the important Schools are stated hereafter.

The Hinayana Schools

Sthaviravaadins

This name refers to the original group of monks from whom the Mahaasaamghikas separated in the third century BC. This group is, according to some sources such as Vasumitra, identified with the Haimavatas, though other sources disagree.

Mahaasaamghikas

This is the sect that is reputed to have been formed after Mahaadeva, who held five heterodox views, split from the Buddha's earliest group of followers. That it is an early group is attested to by references to their views on *vinaya* matters mentioned in the reports of the Councils at *Raajagrha* and *Vaisaali*. Their original centre appeared to have been in Magadha. By the second century AD, inscriptions referring to them were found at Mathura, Karli and Kabul. Information about their ethical tenets can be had from *Ekottaraagama* and *Saariputrapariprccha sutras*, possibly dating from the fourth century AD. By that time, several sub-sects such as Lokottaravaadins, etc had come into being. Mahaasaamghikas were attested to as late as the seventh century AD in Magadha and eastern India by I-tsing, and even migrated out of India.

Sarvaastivaadins

The school of Sarvaastivaadins probably separated from the Sthaviras in the reign of Asoka, around 244 BC. Though very little of their history is now known, there is a sizable literature that represents their views. In particular, the *Mahaavibhaasaa* represents their views in great detail. Their ranks grew later on.

By Hsuan-tsang's time, many thousands of adherents were attested to as living throughout India, Pakistan and central Asia.

The Sarvaastivaadins ('All-exists' theorists) maintain that everything, including past and future, exists. They are realists of an extreme type.

But the *Kassapikas*, who broke off from the Sarvaastivaadins, maintain that only a part of the past that is preserved in the present exists. They also hold that only that part of the future that is determined by the present exists. The aim of the whole School of the Sarvaastivaadins is to show that the world exists, and is real. The contention of the School of the Elders seems to be that we can neither deny nor affirm its existence.

Although the Sarvaastivaadins were refuted in the Third Council, they became the most important school during the Fourth Council under Emperor Kanishka. The main work of this school is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa*. According to him, everything is a *dharma*; and *dharma* is explained as an object, as a category. There are two kinds of objects, the un-compounded and the compounded.

The un-compounded objects are three. One is space (*aakasa*), which is an eternal, omnipresent substance. The second is the cessation of existence that is not observed by mind (*apratismkhyanirodhi*). An example is the entering of unconscious impressions into our mind, and their disappearing into the past. The third is the cessation of existence (of observed passions, etc), which is attained by the knowledge of ultimate truth (*pratisamkhyanirodha*). This kind of cessation is attained by spiritual practice like meditation.

The compounded objects are of four kinds, namely, matter (*ruupa*), mind (*citta*), the mental (*caitta*) and the non-mental (*cittavipravukta*). Matter (*ruupa*) here focuses on the physical world as experienced by a sentient being; the terms of reference are decidedly body-endowed-with-consciousness. Mind is the consciousness (*vijnaana*) of all sense perceptions, substance, quality, etc and of itself. In other words, mind is self-conscious and self-revealing. The mental are the many states of mind such as attention, inattention, conation, hate, love, etc. In short, the mental constitute all the psycho ethical qualities, which are stated to be 46.

The above classification is from the side of the object, a classification of everything that is objective. The Sarvaastivaadins give a classification from the side of the subject, too. It is a classification of the subject's being. It is the same as that of the aggregates (*skandhas*), the bases of our experience (*aayatana*s), and the elements of our being (*dhaatus*) given by the School of the Elders.

According to the Sarvaastivaadins, although the 'I' can be analysed away into the aggregates, bases and elements, and can be shown to be void (*suunya*), the aggregates, bases and elements exist and are real. They are, therefore, not void. This leads to the position that the 'I' alone becomes void, but the rest of the world exists (*asti*).

The need to assert that everything exists must have arisen because of some thinkers contending that the world does exist. If it exists, then time must exist. As time is one and includes past, present and future, then everything that belongs to the past, present or future must also exist. Such an idea seems to be at the back of the mind of the Sarvaastivaadins.

The Sarvaastivaadins were later divided into two main sub-schools called the *Vaibhaasikas* and the *Sautraanikas*. Emperor Kanishka had earlier ordered commentaries written on the original Aphorisms (*Sutras*) of the School of Sarvaastivaadins. The *Vaibhaasikas* declare that they follow the said commentaries. The *Sautraanikas* contend that the commentaries are not absolutely true to the original Aphorisms. They claim that they follow the original Aphorisms, but not the commentaries. Anyway, the difference between the two sub-schools is not much, and confined to epistemology.

Vetulyakas

The *Vetulyakas* hold that nothing has its own nature, and that, by itself, is void. They belonged to the Great Emptiness School, which seems to be a school of the Elders itself. Further they hold the doctrine of Docetism regarding the Buddha. According to their doctrine, the Buddha did not live at all in the world. He had a divine body. The Buddha that lived and taught the doctrines was only an appearance.

Lokottaravaadins

Lokottaravaadins and / or *Ekavyavahaaravaadins* seem to date from the end of the second century BC, and at the same time as the *Gokulikas*. Several scholars consider that *Lokottaravaada* and *Ekavyavahaarika* are two names for the same sect. They also consider that these sects may have constituted the original form of what became the *Mahayana*, given the supernormal properties it attributes to the Buddha.

This school of *Lokottaravaadins* is an offshoot of the *Mahaasanghikas*. They also hold the same doctrine of Docetism like the *Vetulyakas*. They maintain that the body of the Buddha

is supra- mundane (lokottara). The *Mahaasanghikas*, as a whole, maintain that the bodies of the Buddha pervade the whole universe. This view involves the idea of plurality of the Buddhas. It also involves a distinction between the mundane and the supra mundane bodies. This view later made it possible to identify the true body of the Buddha with the Ultimate Reality itself.

Gokulikas

This sect is referred to in the *Kathaavatthu* as the *Kukkutikas*. Paramaatha, in the fifth century AD, reports that this School holds the view that only the Abhidharma section of the canon is important. The other two sections of the canon relate to preparatory training with emphasis on logic, and, as such, the school states that over-attention to the *sutras* interferes with the chance of gaining liberation.

Bahusrutiyas

According to one tradition, maintained in the Northwest, this sect derived directly from the *Mahaasamghika* schism. According to the *Theravaada* tradition, they are the descendants of the *Gokulikas*. The work *Tattvasiddhi*(sashtra) of Harivarman refers to their beliefs. Some scholars believe that Bahusrutiyas represent a point midway between *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*. It is hard to say where they flourished.

Prajnaaptivaadins

This sect is said to have derived from the same sources as the Mahaasaamghikas, the Lokottaravaadins, the Gokulikas and the Bahusrutiyas. This sect is also known as Vibhajyavaada in some sources, though distinguished from it by, for example, Samghabhadra.

The Prajnaaptivaadins are said to emphasize the difference between the supreme and the mundane. Samghabhadra represents them as saying that factors are pure fictions, in contrast to what he terms the Vibhajyavaadins, who believe that present factors, as well as past factors that are still bearing fruit, really exist. But there is much disagreement among later scholars, each of whom attributes different beliefs to this sect. Nothing is known of their whereabouts.

Caitiyas or Caitasikas

Vasumitra and Paramaārtha trace the origin of this sect to a second Mahaadeva who, with his disciples, retired to a sanctuary (caitya) and re-examined the five propositions of the earlier Mahaadeva. His followers eventually divided into two or three sects called *Caityasaila* and *Uttarasaila* and / or *Aparasaila*. Inscriptions at Amaravathi in Andhra Pradesh, India show the sect's presence there in the early part of the second century AD.

Vatsiputriyas

All sources agree that this is the first (other than the Haimavatas) to separate from the Staviravaada. The sect is named after its founder, Vaatsiputras. There is, however, no evidence about its locale.

The *Vatsiputriyas* maintain that the soul (*pudgala*) is different from the five aggregates, while the Elders identify the soul with the aggregates. The *Vatsiputriyas* question and reject the identification. For them, an individual self (*pudgala*) really exists. The work *Kathaavatthu* and the Vibhaasa literature frequently refer to the stand of the Vatsiputriyas.

Sammitiyas

They are generally said to have arisen from the Vatsiputriyas, along with two or three other sects, in the second or third century BC, even though there is no evidence of it before the second century AD, when inscriptions locate them in Mathura and Saranath. Later, they become the pre-eminent branch of the Vatsiputras. The *Kathaavatthu* attributes at least thirty different beliefs to them. I-tsing claims that their Tripitika is very vast, containing two lakh *slokas*. The work *Sammitiyanikaayasaatra* stems from this school.

Bhadrayaaniyas

This is another branch of Vatsiputriyas. But there is no account of their beliefs or doctrines, or where they flourished.

Sannagarikas or Saandagriyas

This is another branch of Vatsiputriyas. But there is no account of their beliefs or doctrines, or where they flourished.

Dharmottariyas

This is another sect that is believed to have derived from the Vatsiputriyas. Inscriptions signal their presence in Karli and Junnar in the second century AD, leading them to be referred to alternatively as *Mahaagriyas*. There is no information on their doctrines

Andhakas

Buddhaghosa speaks of four sects called *Purvasaila*, *Aparasaila*, *Raajagrhya* and *Siddhaarthika*, and some seventy-two of the views discussed in the *Kathaavatthu* are ascribed to them. They seem to have flourished in the Andhra area in South India; thus they are known *Andhakas*. Some scholars consider that their theses were shared by the *Caitiyas*, which may have been the earlier name of the same sects.

The *Andhakas* are a branch of the *Mahaasanghikas*. They introduced many new and interesting ideas. They maintain that the objects of mindfulness are the same as mindfulness, thereby introducing a kind of idealism, at least so far as ethical objectives are concerned. They observe that, in meditation, we keep a single continuous state of consciousness, which is not momentary but lasts for a time. It means that consciousness is not momentary.

They maintain further that everything is immutable and has its fundamental nature, which it retains whatever be the changes it undergoes. Such view implies that everything has its own character (*laksana*) or nature (*svabhaava*). Its implication is that it goes against the accepted doctrine that nothing has its own nature (*nihsvabhaavataa*). If everything is itself, and not anything else, it must have its own character. But if it has its own character, how can it be nature-less?

The *Andhakas* also hold that *nirvana* belongs to the aggregate of formative forces (*samskaaraskandha*). If it is one of the formative forces of man's being, it is inherent in him and is waiting to be realized. If *nirvana* is spiritual peace, then peace belongs to the very essence of man. *Nirvana* is force that pulls man towards itself and creates a longing in him for peace.

The implications of the spiritual and metaphysical discoveries of the *Andhakas* had far-reaching impact. They got into great conflict with the doctrines of the Elders and other sub-sects of the *Mahaasanghikas*. It is possible to infer the influence of the *Upanisadic* ideas on the *Andhakas*. Their view that meditative consciousness is continuous and not momentary, and that *nirvana* belongs to the essence of man's innermost being must have finally led to one of the Mahayana doctrines that ultimate reality is peace (*nirvana*), void (*suunya*) and consciousness (*vijnaana*). It is believed that the *Prajnaapaaramitaa*, the main scripture of the Mahayana, was originally found among the *Andhakas*, composed in Pali. They were the first to declare that the monks could marry.

Uttaraapathakas

The *Uttaraapathakas* held that there is an immutable 'thusness' (*tathataa*, such-ness, so-ness) in all things. This view is similar to the one that everything has its own nature (*sarvam svalaksanam*). The *Andhakas* also held that all things are immutable and retain the aspect of immutability in spite of change. But this 'own nature' and immutability cannot be further explained. It is only so-and-so or thus-and-thus.

The idea of 'thus-ness' (*tathataa*) finally led to the philosophy of Thus-ness of Asvaghosa, who belonged to Mahayana.

Thus, the Hinayana schools, coming between the School of the Elders and the Mahayana, provided considerable material to the phenomenology of consciousness, with which the Mahayana schools built up their superstructure.

The Satysiddhi School

Harivarman founded the Satyasiddhi School. He called himself a Hinaayaanist. He may be considered a forerunner of Nagarjuna's philosophy leading to the doctrine of the void (*suunya*) as the ultimate reality. Some scholars estimate Harivarman's date to include 263 AD. A biography of his locates him to Central India.

Harivarman criticizes the Sarvaastivaadins for saying that only the *atman* is void but the psychophysical aggregates are real and existent. According to him, the substratum of everything is void, for every aggregate can be analyzed away. This is like personality (*pudgala*) can be analyzed away, and can be shown to be void in essence. Thus not only our personality in the form of the I-consciousness, but also the object of the world is selfless (*anaatmam*) and nature-less (*nihsvabhaava*), and is, therefore, void (*suunya*).

Throughout the philosophy of Buddhism, the two ideas that everything has its own nature, and nothing has its own nature run parallel. Sometimes they run separately, and other times mix up with each other in different ways. The idea of void is interpreted sometimes as neither what has its own nature nor what is the nature-less, and other times as only the nature-less. Strictly speaking, the Buddhists interpret the latter as nihilism. But, for some Buddhists, the former view is also nihilism in spite of the protests of those holding the view that they do not uphold the doctrine of nothingness.

Sautraanika-Yogacaara School

This school appears to have been a sect deriving, but with sharply diverging views, from the Sarvaastivaadins. The

Sautraanikas are said to recognize only the *Sutrapitaka* as authority. As such they are called the Sautraanikas.

A specific view of this school is that the five aggregates (*skandhas*) transmigrate from birth to birth without pause. They deny the existence of a *pudgala* (soul). Nothing is known of their early whereabouts or history, until Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosabhaasya*.

This school branched off from the teachings of Vasubandhu through Dinnaaga, and was developed by Saantaraksita and his commentator Kamalasila. The main work of this school is Saantaraksita's *Tattvasangraha* with Kamalasila's commentary. In its main epistemological doctrines, this school follows the *Sutrapitaka*. But in its metaphysics, it follows the *Vijnaanavaada* (*Yogacaara*).

Like the Vijnaanavaadins, this school maintains that the Pure *Vijnaana* alone is ultimate reality. Everything else is a form of *vijnaana* (consciousness). But it differs from the doctrine of Vasubandhu that ultimate consciousness is stable and permanent.

Saantaraksita thought that Vasubandhu's position was becoming identical with the Vedanta, and wanted to differentiate Buddhism by saying that this consciousness also is momentary. But to say that this consciousness (*vijnaana*), which is the same as *nirvana*, is momentary means two things. First, one who attains to *nirvana* attains it for a moment. Secondly, this pure consciousness is determinate, as momentariness is a determinant.

To overcome this difficulty, Saantaraksita holds that this moment is a timeless moment. We cannot think of the past and the present of a timeless moment. It can, therefore, have no end. Saantaraksita applies the in-determinability and

indescribability of ultimate reality to the concept of a moment for saving the absoluteness (unconditioned-ness) of *nirvana*. As it is usual with the Buddhists, all the terms denoting the highest reality in Buddhism are applied to this absolute moment – the timeless moment.

Daarstaantikas

This sect appears to hold the same views as the *Sautrantikas*. But the Vibhaasa and later Vasubandhu agree that it is a separate school.

Vibhajyavaadins

It is difficult to know whether the term Vibhajyavaadins refers to a distinct sect or a group of diverse schools. Both interpretations have their proponents. The Vibhaasa appears to view the Vibhajyavaadins as skeptics without any doctrine of their own. On the other hand, Vasubandhu in his work *Abhidharmakosa* identifies the Vibhajyavaadins as ‘those who admit the existence of the present and of part of the past, who deny the existence of the future and the other part of the past’. This is precisely the view held by the Kaasyapiyas.

However, later scholars extend the term *Vibhajyavada* to cover many more skeptical positions, without however giving any actual name of sects. Subsequently the term is used vaguely to cover a large number of schools. As a result, Vibhajyavaadins, as referred to latterly in Buddhism, include just about all the schools excepting the Sarvaastivaadins.

Mahisaasakas

If one considers Vibhajyavaadins as being that group of Staviravaadins who do not accept Sarvaastivaada, then the

Mahisaasakas are the most important sect of that group. One inscription from the third century AD at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, India makes reference to them. All other references stem from sources dating several centuries later. There is no information available which part of the sub-continent they occupied early on. Scholars differ on their later whereabouts. The literature relating to their persuasion is on *Vinaya*, available only in Chinese translation.

Dharmaguptakas

The Dharmaguptakas are the sect of the Vibhajyavaadins distinct from the Mahisaasakas. All sources cite their presence in North India around the first century BC. They have their own canon, with a *Vinaya* section divided into four parts. Their canon is different from that of the Haimavatas. Their *Vinaya* section has been preserved in Chinese translation from the first part of the fifth century AD. Probably, the first section of their *Sutrapitaka* has also been available dating from the same period.

Kaasyapiyas

The Kaasyapiyas constitute another section of the Vibhajyavaadins, and belong to about the same time of the Dharmaguptakas. The inscriptions at Taksasila dating from the third century AD, as well as others of a later date, bear evidence to this fact. One or two works, presently available only in Chinese, appear to represent their views, which bear resemblance to the views of the Haimavatas.

Theravaada

According to Singhalese tradition, Buddhism was introduced in Sri Lanka in the reign of Mahinda and Samghamitta,

the son and daughter of Asoka. But there is no evidence about Theravaada being there, before the third century AD. Tradition again has it that Theravaada was in place in Sri Lanka as a distinct sect by 109 BC under King Dutthagaamani. Eventually, the sect grew in numbers and even returned in some force to South India in the form of monks and monasteries during the time of Hsuan-tsang. It also spread into Southeast Asia as well. It has remained in force to date in both Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

The only sources available for ascertaining how Theravaada migrated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) are two chronicles of the history of Ceylon dating from the fourth to the fifth century AD. They are *Deepavamsa* and *Mahaavamsa*. These accounts review the assembling of the various councils, the schisms that occurred, etc. These chronicles appear to have been based on the *Atthakathaas*, which, they state, were brought from India to Ceylon by Mahinda in the middle of the third century BC and kept at Mahaavihaara at Anuradhapura. These early commentaries are no longer available.

Abhayagirivaasins

Abhayagirivihaara is one of the two schools of Theravaada in Sri Lanka that broke away from the major Mahaavihaara School. It was established at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, according to tradition, 217 years after the founding of the Mahaavihaara, which is traditionally dated to the year 24 AD. Since its inception, this sect seems to have bred heretics. According to tradition, it was at a council called by the King to deal with them, shortly after the sect came into being, that the (now lost) commentaries on the basic seven works of the Paali canon were written down. The monastery was razed in the fourth century AD but restored fifteen years later. By the fifth century AD, according to Fahien, 5000 Abhayagiri monks were

in Sri Lanka, outnumbering the Mahaavihaarins. There is no evidence of availability of any works stemming from this sect, although some scholars associate the work *Vimuttimagga* of *Upatissa* with it.

Jetavaniyas

This is another schismatic school of Singhalese Theravaada. The Jetavanavihaara was built in the fourth century AD. This sect that made its home there is also called the Saagalikas after its founder. Nothing is known of their doctrines and works. It is possible that the work *Vimuttimagga* could be associated with this sect.

The Mahayana Schools

Mahayana

As is evident from the philosophies of the Hinayana schools discussed earlier, differences of view were growing within the Hinayana. These differences were crystallized in the Mahayana philosophies. But, when they were crystallized and systematized, practically new systems of thought and world-outlooks appeared.

Apart from the main philosophical differences, the views that differentiate the Hinayana and the Mahayana are mainly three. First, the Hinayana maintains that every individual can have only his own salvation. He obtains it when he gets enlightenment and becomes an *arhat*, that is, a saint who has earned the description by following the way to perfection. On the other hand, the Mahayana maintains that one who has obtained enlightenment and becomes an *arhat* can work, without entering *nirvana*, for the salvation of the rest of the world. Such a person is called *bodhisattva*, one whose being itself is enlightenment or the supreme consciousness. This corresponds to the doctrine of *Sthitaprajna* in the Bhagavad-Gita.

Secondly, the Hinayana treats the Buddha as only a historical person. But the Mahayana contends that the Buddha had another body, a divine one. The historical Buddha was only the apparent Buddha. The true Buddha is identical with the Supreme Reality.

Thirdly, as a consequence of the second difference, the Mahayana maintains that every man, who strives earnestly, can become the Buddha. If the Buddha's original nature is Supreme Reality itself, and every one who obtains *nirvana* becomes one with the Supreme Reality, then it is possible for the seeker to

become the Buddha, that is, to be one with the Buddha. But the Hinayana rejects this doctrine as a sacrilege and maintains that, although everyone can obtain *nirvana*, one cannot become the Buddha.

The main text of the Mahayana is the *Prajnaapaaramita*. Several commentaries were written on this text. On the basis of such commentaries, the works of the Mahayana schools were composed. The three main schools of the Mahayana are the *Bhuutatathaataa* School, the *Maadhyamika* School and the *Vijnaanavaada* School.

It is difficult to say which of the three schools is the earliest. Asvaghosa of about the first century AD is the founder of the *Bhuutatathaataa* School; Nagarjuna of about the second century AD is the founder of the *Maadhyamika* School; and Maitreyanaatha is the founder of the *Vijnaanavaada* School. The period to which Maitreyanaatha belonged cannot be said with certainty. Some scholars believe that he was earlier than Nagarjuna, and others believe that he was later. However, the two brothers, Asanga and Vasubandhu, of about the fourth century AD, are the main exponents of this school. Tradition believes that Asanga was a pupil of Maitreyanaatha, and the teacher of his brother, Vasubandhu. If the tradition is true, then Maitreyanaatha must be later than Nagarjuna.

Bhuutatathataa

Asvaghosa's *Awakening of Faith* depicts the philosophy of this school. Asvaghosa is said to have, at first, been a *Vedantin*, but later converted to Buddhism. He might have brought the *Vedantic* ideas into Buddhism and developed its philosophy.

All the Mahayana schools distinguish between ultimate truth (*paaramaarthikasatya*) and empirical truth (*samvrtisatya*). In other words, they distinguish between the truth of Higher Reality and the truth within the world of ignorance. Asvaghosa accepts the empirical reality of the five aggregates (*skandhas*), the twelve bases (*aavatanas*) and the eighteen elements (*dhaatus*). But their reality is not ultimate.

The only ultimate reality, for him, is the Such-ness of things (*Bhuutatathataa*), their very essence. It is called such-ness because it is un-describable. Even such-ness is a descriptive word. He has to use some word to denote that there is an ultimate reality. It is to be a positive term because ultimate reality is positive, not negative. Things can be described, but not their essential nature. He, therefore, uses the word such-ness to describe the ultimate reality.

Such-ness is the same as *nirvana*, enlightenment (*bodhi*), the essential body of the Buddha (*dharmakaaya*), the *summum bonum* (the root of all that is good), the perfection of everything that is good, the womb or source of the Buddha (*tathaagatagarbha*), and the Buddha himself as the one who has become the Such (*Tathaagata*). It is the truth of our inward being, peace, equanimity. It is the Conscious Conservator (*Aalayavijnaana*). In other words, it is the conserving consciousness of everything that happens, and is its source. It is yet void (*suunya*) of all determinations and is, therefore, indescribable.

Asvaghosa is not content with saying that Such-ness is the ultimate reality. He seeks to demonstrate how it is the source of the world of plurality. In this context, he utilizes the traditional twelve-linked chain of causation.

According to him, the plurality arises conditioned by ignorance (*avidyaa*), containing the formative forces (*samskaaraas*) including those generated by our past actions (*karmas*). Then the Conserving Consciousness (*Aalayavijnaana*), which is the same as Such-ness (*Tathataa*), is disturbed. Then the original consciousness becomes the action-consciousness (*karmavijnaana*), that is, consciousness with action potencies, and next activity-consciousness (*pravrttivijnaana*). In other words, the same original consciousness first becomes the potencies and then the activities resulting from the potencies. Next is born mind (*manas*), next its particularity, next the succession of mental phenomena, the senses, objects, craving, birth, death and so forth.

Asvaghosa attempts to explain how latent stored potencies become active (activated), and become overt actions or activities or processes. This compares to the Mimamsa doctrine of ethical potencies. Asvaghosa seems implicitly to accept a kind of *vijnaanavaada*, as he speaks of the variety of *vijnaanas*.

With Asvaghosa, the Mahayana has become absolutism like the *Upanisadic* philosophy. Instead of the Hinayaanist pure *nirvana* without consciousness, the Mahayana depicts a conscious *nirvana*. The state of *nirvana* becomes the ultimate reality as Pure Consciousness. Buddhism has become idealistic, monistic and absolutistic.

Although Asvaghosa treats the Conserving Consciousness as the highest reality, he prefers to call it the Such-ness of things (*Bhuutatathataa*). Thereby, he implies that it is a positive essence of the elements of the world and also that it is the essence of things as processions of events. He does not call it That-ness, but So-ness or Such-ness, which refers to activity and change rather than to stability of the objects of the world. Although the events that constitute a process are transient, So-ness itself,

meaning a pattern, is stable. Ultimate reality is a pattern of patterns.

Maadhyamika

Nagarjuna, the founder of the Maadhyamika School, was not evidently satisfied with the conclusion reached by Asvaghosa. He is said to be the author of many works, the most important of them being his *Maadhyamikakaarikaas*.

Nagarjuna wants to show that ultimate reality cannot be described either in positive or negative terms. It cannot have any characteristics, not even that of Such-ness. According to him, not only ultimate reality, but also the phenomenal world cannot be described. It is for the reason that none of the categories we use in describing the world has its own nature.

He developed one of the most devastating dialectics ever written in the world. He attacked the view that everything has its own nature or character (*sarvam svalaksanam*), and exposed the nature-less-ness.

If everything can be shown to have only relative existence, then which thing can have its own nature? And if everything is devoid of its own characters and is, therefore, void, and there is nothing that is not void, then the absolute reality must be the Void. The void-ness of everything, both subjective and objective, was held even before Nagarjuna. But it is he who made the void-ness philosophy systematic and comprehensive, and turned the void into the Absolute itself.

If everything in the world is essentially a void, then the world itself is void. What we see then is only an appearance of the Void, the Absolute. Appearance is the empirical truth

(*samvrtisatya*), the void the Ultimate or Absolute Truth (*Paaramaarthikasatya*). So everything that belongs to this world is only an empirical truth.

Then, the Buddha, his doctrine, the aggregates, the bases, the elements, everything that the Buddhists accepted thus far are not ultimately true. Such an assertion was a very bold one on the part of Nagarjuna, the most prominent and dominating Buddhist leader of his time. He exploded dialectically not only the then Buddhist concepts but also those of the other schools known to him.

If the world is not real, it could not have been born and was, therefore, never born. This doctrine is called the doctrine of the Non-birth of the World and Man (*ajativada*), and was taken over by even the *Advaita* as expounded by Gaudapaada. If there is no world, there is no ethical action (*karma*), no ethical potency, no bondage, and so no *nirvana*. This view finds expression in Kashmir Saivism and the *Advaita*. The world is an illusion (*Maya*), is due to ignorance (*avidya*); it is like a dream (*svapnatulya*). As the void cannot be characterized, it is neither one nor many; it is non-dual (*advaya*). Dialectically, neither nothing nor what cannot be described at all can be a plurality.

Then can we say that the world is non-being? He cannot say so. Even to say that it is non-being is to assert something definite. Further, non-being has relevance only with reference to being. Ultimate Reality, which is the essence of everything, can be neither being nor non-being. It cannot be both because they are contradictories. It cannot be neither, too, as there are only two alternatives; and there is no third. All that we can say is that we cannot characterize it in any way. It is, therefore, that which is devoid (*suunya*) of all characteristics, all determinations. It is the Void (*Suunya*).

Is the world of appearance, then, different from the Ultimate Reality? We cannot say that the two are either different or identical. We cannot conceptualize the relation between the world and the Ultimate Reality. The relation also is, therefore, voidity. Thus indescribability, inexplicability, expressed as 'A is neither B, nor not-B, nor both, nor neither' is the essential meaning of the word 'void' (*suunya*). Nagarjuna gives the same meaning to the words 'illusion' and 'ignorance'. In the Nagarjuna's philosophy, the three words – *suunya*, *maya* and *avidya* are interchangeable.

A few examples of his dialectic demonstrate its devastating nature. He disproves the reality of causality thus. We say that every event has a cause. Here, are we speaking of real events or unreal events? Real events are already real and existent, and do not need a cause. Neither do unreal events need a cause. Then what is causality for? Causality is, therefore, unreal.

Similarly, he disproves the attainment of *nirvana*. If it is already there, there is no need to attain it. If it is not there, how can anyone talk of it as the goal of attainment? How can one know that there is such a thing? There is no becoming. We say that A is becoming B. But if A has not yet become B, there is no justification to say that it is becoming B. B is not there as yet; so we do not know anything to be B. But if B is already there, there need be no becoming.

There are no aggregates; they are unreal. If there are aggregates, is each element of the aggregate also an aggregate? If it is, then there will be infinite regress and each element resolves itself into the void. If it is not, how can it come into being and constitute an aggregate again? How can there be anything without an aggregate as its cause? The Buddha said that everything has a cause. If the aggregates are uncaused, they will exist forever

like space, and there will be no end to misery. Such is the general dialectical method of Nagarjuna.

Nagarjuna protests against being called a nihilist, for reality rejects even negative characterization. The Middle Path taught by the Buddha has to be applied to metaphysics also. It will be neither to affirm nor to deny, that is, it will be to deny both the positive and the negative characteristics.

Nagarjuna calls himself the follower of the Middle Path (*Maadhyamika*). Reality is neither such-ness nor consciousness (*vijnaana*). Even these two items are characterizations. It is only void. Indeed, even to call it void is to characterize it. Truly, it is neither void nor non-void. In spite of reaching such an extreme conclusion, Nagarjuna's doctrine is called the doctrine of the Void.

Vijnaanavaada

The School of Vijnaanavaada, also called *Yogacaara*, is the largest, and the most popular and important of the Mahayana schools. It has a large amount of literature and many sub-schools. Its contributions to epistemology are greater than those of any other Buddhist school.

Like the other Mahayana schools, the Vijnaanavaada accepts the categories and realities of the Hinayana an empirical validity. But it contends that the ultimate reality is Consciousness (*Vijnaana*) only, but not Such-ness or Void-ness. Ultimate reality is known in *nirvana*, which is beyond misery. But without consciousness, we cannot know that it is beyond misery. As *nirvana* must be a state of experience, it has to be consciousness. But it is pure consciousness without any determinate states. If consciousness identifies with any of the determinate states, it

will be within the world of becoming and so within the realm of misery. It has, therefore, to be devoid of all determinations. It is the highest nature or law (*dharma*), enlightenment (*bodhi*), suchness (*tathataa*), the womb of Buddha (*tathaagatagarbha*), and everything, which the Buddhists treat as the ideal.

Along with the idea of consciousness, the idea of the *atman* also entered the Vijnaanavaada School. As this School regards consciousness as the highest reality, and as the Vedanta regards the *atman* as the conscious spirit, this School identifies *vijnaana* with the *atman*. The *Vijnaanavaadins* go further and declare that this reality is the *Mahaatma* or *Mahan Atman*. One who becomes the Buddha, that is, obtains enlightenment, realizes the pure *atman*, and thereby becomes the great *Atman* (*Mahaatma*). This *Mahaatman* is the same as the *Paramaatman*. This is the womb of the *Tathagata*, the source from which objects originate.

The idea of the womb of things belongs to the *Upanisads* and also the Bhagavad-Gita. In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, the Supreme Godhead, declares thus. 'My womb is Brahma, in which I cast the seed. From that comes the origination of all beings. Whatever mortals are born in all the wombs, the main womb is the *Mahat*, Brahma, and I, the Father, giving the seed'.

The idea of the Supreme Being as the womb of the universe became the idea of the original pure consciousness in Buddhism. The rejection of the *atman* by the Hinayana Buddhists became only the rejection of the ultimate reality of the ego (*ahamkara*) for the *Vijnaanavaadins*. But the *atman* and the ego are experienced as the I-consciousness, and assert themselves as 'I am', as if they are one and the same. But the former is pure (*suddha*) and the latter impure (*asuddha*) being rooted in the

Unconscious (ignorance, *avidya*). The pure *atman* is all bright with light like the great sun, while the ego is like a shadow.

The idea of the *atman* was entering the Hinayana itself as if by the backdoor. The Vaatsiputriyas and the Sammitiyas held a doctrine similar to that of the *atman* of the *Upanisads*. The former supposes that the 'I' has to be different from the body or aggregates. The latter maintains that the reality of the soul has to be accepted. Its argument is simple. The eye does not see, but it is the 'I' that sees. Without the 'I' or the soul, the eye cannot see.

The Andhakas observed that consciousness (*vijnaana*) in meditation lasted for a time and was, therefore, not momentary. These ideas took a definite, unified shape in the *Vijnaanavaada*. For them, the ultimate pure consciousness is the *atman* itself, and is enunciated as such without hesitation.

Yet, the *Vijnaanavaadins* declare that their doctrine is different from the doctrine of the *Upanisads*. For them, the original consciousness is mutable, while the *Upanisadic atman* is immutable. But there is no real difference between the two doctrines. For both the *Upanisads* and the *Vijnaanavaadins*, the *atman* is immutable from one point of view, and mutable from another. For instance, the *Isa Upanisad* says that the *atman* both moves and does not move.

According to the *Vijnaanavaadins*, the original consciousness is the repository of past formative forces (*samskaaras*) and a depository of all the new ones, too. It changes continuously, and is expanding and creating. It is the common universal ground of everything. This compares to the idea of the Brahman that it is ever expanding.

The *Vijnaanavaadins* call such original, pure and absolute consciousness *Aalayavijnaana*. Everything in the world is a transformation (*parinaama*) of the *Aalayavijnaana* and is, therefore, a form of consciousness itself. This transformation follows the order of the twelve links with the Unconscious (*ajnaana*) coming below *Aalayavijnaana*. It assumes the form of the aggregates, bases and elements.

Indeed, the doctrine of the eternal atoms of the *Sarvaastivaadins* cannot agree with the stand of the *Vijnaanavaadins* that everything is a transformation of consciousness. However, the *Vijnaanavaadins* explain this consciousness in terms of the doctrine of dependent origination (*pratityasamutpaada*), overlooking the difficulty how dependent origination can be transformation (*parinaama*). The detailed analysis and categorization of the psychophysical world is more or less the same as in the *Bhutatahataa* and *Sarvaastivaada* Schools.

The *Vijnaanavaada* is not to be interpreted as subjective idealism, but as the objective. According to the *Vijnaanavaadins*, the ultimate consciousness is not the consciousness of any individual, but is universal. For them, *atman* is the ego; and the ultimate consciousness is the *Mahaatman*, the Great Universal Spirit. It is the ground not only of all the 'I's, but also of everything else.

Asanga and Vasubandhu, the main theoreticians of *Vijnaanavaada*, further say that that part of the *Aalayavijnaana*, which stores the impressions (*samskaaras*) for the individual and becomes the potential state of the evolution of the world for him, is *vipaakavijnaana*. *Vipaakavijnaana* is thus the consciousness that is ripe for becoming the world. It is, however, lower than the *Aalayavijnaana*, which itself is lower than pure *Vijnaana*.

Even the *Aalayavijnaana*, according to them, contains the formative forces in their potential state. In pure *Vijnaana*, the formative forces are transformed and transcended into pure, undisturbed consciousness (*nirvana*).

In fact, the *Bhutatahataa* School also postulates a consciousness (*vijnaana*) and calls it '*Aalayavijnaana*', meaning the never disappearing consciousness. It is higher than the *Aalayavijnaana* meaning repository consciousness, and is equated to Such-ness (*Tathataa*).

It is thus evident that a few Hinayana schools and all the schools of the Mahayana mark the different stages by which Buddhism approached, through independent thinking, and got assimilated to the *Vedanta*.

5. Samskaaras

Samskaaras in Buddhism

Buddhism makes profound use of the concept of *samskaara*. This is not peculiar to Buddhism. Indeed, all Indian schools use the concept. But Buddhism has made the most profound metaphysical use of the concept, which removes the mystery in the *Mimaamsa* doctrine that all actions become potencies in the form of *adrsta* (unseen) and *apurva* (extraordinary, so called because its *modus operandi* cannot be understood). The *Mimaamsa* doctrine was identified in some later *Upanisads* with Fate, Limit (*niyati*), the inexorable cosmic law.

The Buddhist concept also removes the mystery from the *Advaita* doctrine of the causal body (*kaaranasarira* or *beejaatman*), so called because it contains all the potential, dynamic forces constituting one's empirical personality and responsible for one's actions and reactions. Incidentally, this *Advaita* doctrine corresponds to the *Aalayavijnaana* (Storehouse Consciousness) of the Mahayana.

If it is storehouse, what does it store? It is to be a storehouse of *samskaaras*, both cosmic and individual. But these *samskaaras* are not static impressions like the impressions of a stamp on paper. They are dynamic forces. It is a misunderstanding if they are taken to be static impressions like those made by a seal on wax.

Some scholars translate the term *samskaaras* as traces, which is also not true. They are more akin to traumas, which do not remain as mere impresses. They are like forces, which influence our life, knowledge and action. All cognitions and

actions, both known and unknown, produce impressions on one's personality and mould it. They mould it as the goldsmith's hammer moulds the lump of gold, by beating it and making dents on it, into some shape. But neither one's personality nor the impacts of cognition and action remain static. They become forces constituting the dynamism (drive, force) of one's personality. The *samskaaras* are, therefore, creative and dynamic.

For the Buddhists, they are of two kinds, cosmic and individual, as stated in the twelve-linked chain of causation. And *samskaara* is prior to *vijnaana* in the chain. One's birth and the environment in which one is born and which is common to all individuals are due to cosmic *samskaaras*. The *samskaaras*, which are peculiar to one, are due to one's own actions in one's past births. For instance, two sons born to the same parents one may become a saint, and another a criminal, owing to each carrying his own *samskaaras*. This is what almost all Indian schools believe. Further, one may have also acquired new *samskaaras* in one's life, which may influence one's future activities in this life itself by constantly moulding one's personality, which is nothing but one's character and conduct.

According to Buddhism, the *samskaaras* become constituents of one's personality by being passed on from moment to moment of its duration. Buddhism explains how our ethical actions become seeds (*bijas*) of our future lives. In other words, it explains the doctrine that the nature of our future life is due to our action in this and past lives.

Buddhism explains that the action-*samskaaras* are transmitted from moment to moment of one's existence, stay in one after one's death and become active in producing one's next birth and so on.

The *Mimaamsa*, on the other hand, says that actions become potencies (*saktis*) of the self (*atman*) and remain in it. It does not use the word *samskaaras*, which could have been explanatory, as much as the Buddhism does. The *Mimaamsa* does not explain how action becomes a potency and creative force. But that action becomes a creative force, whether it is called *samskaara* or *adrsta*, is an idea common to both Buddhism and the *Mimaamsa*. Neither school feels the need for God as the creator of the world, apart from action-potencies.

The Doctrine of Momentariness

The *Vaatsiputriyas*, an independent school of Buddhists, have grouped all realities under two classes, namely, *ksanika* (momentary) and *aksanika* (non-momentary). The non-eternal entities are momentary, as they are perishable by their very nature and constitution. If a thing is perishable by its very nature and constitution, it will perish in the very next moment of its birth independently of the service of an external agent. If, however, it is not constitutionally perishable, it must be imperishable and no amount of external force that may be brought to bear upon it can make it cease to exist. This is for the reason that a thing cannot forfeit its own nature and assume that of another and yet continue to be the same entity as before. Further, there is no medium between momentary and non-momentary, the two classes embracing the whole universe of thought and reality. Therefore, to suppose that a thing may be perishable by its nature and constitution and yet must be dependent upon an external agent to bring about its destruction involves a contradiction.

The doctrine of momentariness rests on the fundamental principle that coexistence of two contradictory qualities is impossible in one and the same substratum, and that this fact alone constitutes the ground of difference of mutually different objects. Further, the theory of momentariness rests on the proposition that 'whatever is existent is momentary', existing only for the moment and disappearing in the next moment, in which an exact facsimile of the previous entity crops up. This process of duplication and reduplication goes on for any length of time. This is the reason why entities are *prima-facie* looked upon as continuous. All existents being momentary, they can have neither a past nor a future history and their momentary existence is interpreted as origination by a necessary fiction of understanding.

Origination means the coming into existence of one that was non-existent.

For the Buddhists, therefore, all things are empty. Nothing persists in time for more than a moment. What we call a 'thing' is actually a series of moments, and each moment comprises a vast array of factors flashing at the same moment but separately. A 'person' is a certain kind of thing, and this analysis applies to man or woman. A person is only a series of momentarily flashing factors.

The factors that flash at a moment in the life of an individual are of various sorts. What I take to be 'me' is actually one series, among others, of apparently bodily physical factors, causing me to view myself as occupying a particular place at a particular time. The factors have a certain series of repeated visual experiences related in the way that causes me to speak of 'my body', 'my sense-organs', 'my location in a world of physical objects and other bodies', etc. Anyway, we experience them as such.

In fact, there is no such spread-out physical world. The appearance of bodies, organs and objects is an interpretation, a construction made on the basis of moments of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch. Even the divisions of momentary flash-factors related to sense organs may or may not be independent of our conceptualizing ability. Madhyamikas and Yogacaaras say that they are not independent, and that they, too, are imaginary constructions.

Besides physically appearing factors, the flashes constituting our experience comprise myriad qualitative factors covering all the distinguishable data we experience in daily life such as sensations, emotions, theories, interpretations, attitudes, and ideas. There is a vast proliferation of factors that can be

distinguished as comprising each moment of one's existence. It is rather impossible to attempt to classify all the types of factors that there are.

In this background, the Buddhist philosophical texts make a series of attempts to identify those particular factors, which comprise our bondage, and which breed karma and its resultant frustrating continuance of life from birth to death, repeated time and again. These texts refer to those factors, which cause bondage and whose 'rooting out' promises liberation.

But the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness has a hitch in acceptance of the above position. Even if we accept the position of even the moderate Buddhists, who say that 'to be' has three moments, birth, stay and destruction, it is not intelligible that the same personality carries the same action-potencies or *samskaaras*, if it has only a momentary existence.

For the sake of argument, we may say that the *samskaaras* merely pass on from moment to moment of consciousness. But if the first moment is a different being (*sat*) from the second, then its suffering or enjoyment for what the first did will not be justified. The explanation of the consciousness of continuity and sameness of personality becomes untenable.

There will be a host of undesirable consequences, too. For instance, just as in double personality of abnormal psychology, each momentary personality disowns the other. On the other hand, the Buddhist theory states that every personality does the opposite of disowning the previous personality. In other words, it claims and appropriates a previous momentary personality by a kind of psychological identification, which is also a possible phenomenon accepted in abnormal psychology.

There is nothing derogatory in the reference to abnormal psychology. It is a reference to a phenomenon that requires transcending by recognizing one's identity with and immanence in the earlier moment of personality in the case of false disownment. Also, in respect of false identification, one is to differentiate oneself from moments of personality, which are not one's own past. In either case, it requires transcending by recognizing one's own continuity and self identify.

It will be futile to explain sameness in terms of similarity. A question arises. How can there be similarity, in the case of moments of one's personality, without an element of sameness? This may lead to a counter question. For instance, how can two similar red patches be the same when they are numerically different? The possible answer is that the same person who sees the first red patch gets in his mind the universal red which he recognizes in the second red patch.

Recognition involves the cognition of sameness. Further, the person, who sees the two red patches one after the other, has to be the same. If one person sees the first red patch, and another sees of the second, there can be no sense of similarity at all. But Buddhism does not admit this sameness of personality.

The material world may not object if it is treated as nothing but pure Becoming, differing completely from moment to moment. Then it cannot be called even becoming, but a succession of moments. But it is against our experience if we apply this momentariness to personality.

The Andhakas first protested against this momentariness, saying that meditation (*dhyana*), the same consciousness (or mind), has to continue with the same, focusing for sometime.

Again, personality is apperceptive. For example, in the statement 'I was a student; now I am a teacher', the student is not the teacher. But the 'I' in both the experiences is the same. Even the awareness of becoming and its assertion become impossible if the asserter, that is, the 'I' is not the same.

The view is ethically dangerous. If one I commits a crime, it will be a different I that will be punished for the said crime, according to this view. It is dangerous spiritually, too. For who will care for salvation if one's I becomes extinct the next moment? If it is said that one's *samskaaras* (action-potencies) of good and evil deeds will produce an I that obtains salvation, what guarantee is there that these blind forces will not continue producing an I and entering it even after one obtains salvation? Is there any guarantee that these forces will also become extinct?

If it is said that they become extinct when the last momentary I becomes extinct, the position still remains unintelligible. An infinite number of momentary 'I's must have become extinct before any instant of one's existence. But the action-potencies do not become extinct with the momentary I at the instant. How can one be sure that they become extinct with the last momentary I? What is the guarantee that the alleged putative last I will really be the last?

The answer may be that the 'I' works for the dissolution of the action potencies (*samskaaras*) before obtaining salvation (*nirvana*). But how can it work for their dissolution if it does not remain the same throughout its work? Just as becoming becomes impossible without a continuous self-same I, action also becomes impossible without it.

All action is motivated, and there can be no motive that can work without the self-same I. This applies particularly to

action for the dissolution of action potencies, and even in the sense of *nivṛtti* or refraining from action. Effort needs time, but there can be no time without the 'I'. Time consciousness needs the presence of the same I at the first instant of any duration and at the last. Otherwise, there will be no sense of duration. Similarly, there will be no sense of extensive space, say, from one horizon to the other.

In this context, Kashmir Saivism, which seeks to establish the necessary presence and involvement of the same I in every cognition and action, is at the opposite end of the Buddhist doctrine of absolute, all pervasive momentariness.

It may be that the above objection can be met if it is regarded that every action-potency (*samskāra*) is not a blind force, but a self-conscious or apperceptive force (*prajñapti*). But if the said action-potency is considered momentary, the objection still holds, as it is not possible to explain how the same potency is transmitted from one moment of consciousness to another.

Again, if every momentary potency is self-conscious, it will be an I-consciousness. A large number of such I-conscious potencies is transmitted from one moment of one's personality to another. In such a case, the problem arises as to how and on what basis they all submit to unification in one's integral, total personality. Another question also arises as to why a certain group of such forces should come together to constitute one's personality, but not some other group of forces, or get mixed up.

If they, from the beginning, belong to one's I, then one's I must have been there all through performing actions, and organizing and reorganizing their potencies (*samskāras*). In

such an event, we have to say that they do not generate one's I, and that they do not constitute it in its entirety.

It cannot also be maintained that as ideas (*prajñaptis*) they can together become 'I', or the 'I' is one of such ideas. We may think of the 'I' as an idea in the third person. But essentially it is the first personal experience. In that personal experience, it can never be an idea (*prajñapti*). For, the 'I' that maintains the ideas cannot be its own idea at the same time. Further, the 'I' cannot be a coherent whole of ideas. The 'I' is what asserts coherence, but is not coherence itself.

In an important sense, the 'I' is that which develops coherence, but is not merely what is constituted by coherence. Also it is not one of the constituents, which are made to cohere with one another. For, that which makes them cohere has to be distinct from them. If one says that one is coherent in thinking, it does not mean that one is the same as the coherence of one's thought. One is the observer of coherence. Coherence, as such, without the 'I', is not self-conscious, not even an apperception.

If we take momentariness in earnest, we find it difficult to explain how the same potencies (traces, *samskāras*) can be transmitted from one drop of momentary being to another. If we take the potencies as universal, it is possible to consider that they confer the sameness of form and structure on groups of momentary beings. But the Buddhists do not accept that there are universals, but only names and mental concepts, which are also momentary. Further, if the 'I's as momentary are all different, and form a continuous series of extensions, then, for their being a self-conscious I, we shall have only a series of *samskāras*, which together have to become self-conscious and an 'I'. This does not happen, and is unintelligible.

The doctrine of momentariness is the proverbial characteristic of Buddhism as the doctrine of Ideas is that of Platonism. Some schools like that of the Andhakas discovered, in their experience, that momentariness does not always hold. The Sarvaastivaadins, too, got into puzzles when they attempted to correlate the doctrine of momentariness to other doctrines like those of time and space. But the orthodox Buddhists, more or less, disowned such schools and rather excommunicated their adherents. For the early Buddhists, the doctrine of momentariness was the basis of their teaching that everything is misery. If no adjective is attached to Buddhism, we are necessarily to attribute momentariness to it.

It may be interesting to observe in this connection that Bertrand Russell arrives at the same conclusion as that of the Buddhists that there is no persistence in the world, each entity being momentary and the idea of persistence is only an illusion due to continuity in the series. He takes his cue from the cinematograph and avers that not only the cinema-man, but 'the real man too, I believe, however the police may swear to his identity, is really a series of momentary men, each different one from the other, and bound together, not by a numerical identity, but by continuity and certain intrinsic laws. And what applies to men applies equally to tables and chairs, the sun, moon and stars. Each of these is to be regarded, not as one single persistent entity, but as a series of entities, succeeding each other in time, and lasting only for a brief period, though probably not for a mere mathematical instant.

Karma

According to Buddhists, living beings occupy, at any given time, one or another of five courses (*gati*), namely, hell, the animal realm, the world of ghosts, the human realm, or heaven as a god. Which course a living being is destined to have is determined by a part of one's *karma*, part of the result of one's actions in previous existences. Further, differences among those having any one of these courses are also determined by their individual *karma*. This accounts for the differences in appearance, health, wealth, station in life, etc among various living beings in the same course of life. The Pali sutras render an elaborate account specifying which sorts of acts breed which sorts of *karma*.

But the event of acting brings with it commitment to something acting, an agent. As nothing lasts for more than a moment for the Buddhists, *karma* would seem to be impossible in the sense of something that is laid down in the agent and retained for a time, to be worked out in some subsequent action.

The Vaatsiputriyas (also called Pudgalavaadins), a sect of the Buddhists, posit a personal agent (*pudgala*) that transmigrates from existence to existence. The other Buddhist schools attack this notion as contravening the Buddha's explicit words. But, for them, the problem remains to explain how the residues produced by actions at one point in time remain available to be worked out at a subsequent point. In particular, it is not possible to explain how one's *karma* is preserved when one dies, so that it may become pertinent to the same one in the next birth.

In answer to these questions, the schools of Sarvaastivaadins, Vaatsiputriyas and Sammitiyas posit an intermediate state, *antaraabhaava* consisting of a series of five aggregates, which connects the place of death to the place of

rebirth. Vasubandhu sets forth this account at length in his *Abhidharmakosa*. But the other Buddhist schools generally reject the theory of the intermediate state.

Another way of facing the problem of the persistence of *karmic* residues is the making of a distinction between manifest (*vijnapti*) and un-manifest (*avijnapti*) *karma*. Manifest *karma* is the immediate and evident result of a bodily or vocal act such as the pain experienced when one is beaten or scolded. Un-manifest *karma*, on the other hand, is the disposition or potency laid down in the mind of someone performing a bodily or vocal action, a disposition which is not evident at that moment but will produce appropriate *karmic* results at a later time.

This leads to another question. How does un-manifest *karma* arise in the face of the Buddhist commitment to momentariness? To face this question, the Sarvaastivaadins, who maintain a theory of time on which the past, the future and the present exist, suggest a particular type of factor called *praapti* meaning 'possession'. This factor, though momentary like every other factor, engenders another of its sort constituting a following moment, and so on, until the *karmic* result of the originating act occurs.

The Sautraanikas, who deny the past or future of a moment that exists now, reject the theory of the Sarvaastivaadins. They argue, instead, that an action lays down a trace (*vaasana*) or potency (*sakti*) that conditions each moment in the series following the action. They term this trace also as a seed (*bija*). The question of where the seeds exist while they are waiting to bear fruit in the form of *karmic* maturation led to the Yogacaara postulation of 'Storehouse Consciousness' (*Aalayavijnaana*).

Vasubandhu develops in his *Abhidharmakosa* (4th chapter) an account of what a full-fledged action consists of. It has three parts. The first is the preparation (*prayoga*), the preparatory action such as collecting implements along with the intention to perform the action. The second is the action itself together with the laying down of *karma*. The third is what Vasubandhu terms the 'back' (*prstha*), the succeeding moments such as satisfaction of the actor and the string of un-manifest *karma* that follows the action itself. This last element allows, for example, for the reduction of *karmic* force of an act if the agent repents immediately after performing the action.

The theory developed by the Theravaadins gives an account of what occurs in the interval between death and rebirth. The basic concept in this account is that of a *bhavaanga*, which, according to Ratnayaka, is a momentary part of an 'unconscious continuum'. This is what we call 'self' when it is not conscious.

Let us suppose that an unconscious continuum is, as it were, disturbed by a sensory or mental stimulus. Then a series of awakening moments, vibrating and inquisitive, will occur culminating in a visual awareness. This is, in turn, followed by a receptive awareness, an investigative one, and then a series of moments of execrative (*javana*) awareness during which the response is made, that is to say, the act occurs. Each act is followed by a couple of moments of retentive awareness, after which a moment of unconscious continuum recurs, constituting the seventeenth moment in the account. The above process describes the moments in the stream that occurs during performance of an act.

The Theravaada School offers a similar analysis to explain the process of death and rebirth, that is, to specify the moments in the stream that comprise the process. According to this school,

we start with a moment of unconscious, followed by moments of vibrating, awakening and inquisitive consciousness. As the dying person's energy is weak, this consciousness is immediately followed by five moments of execrative awareness, two of retention, one of unconscious and then a second unconscious moment called the death-awareness. This is followed by an unconscious moment called the birth-awareness, which is followed by a series of moments of unconscious until the series of the first sort, of awakening moments arising from sensory or mental stimulation, occurs.

6. Abhidharma Philosophy

Distinction between Sutra and Abhidharma

The *Book of Discipline, Mahaavagga* defines the principle of *dharma* reflected by the Buddha, after his enlightenment. 'This *dharma*, won to by me, is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, intelligible to the learned.' The Buddhist religion is founded upon the complete and perfect enlightenment achieved by the Buddha through his awakening. All the Buddhist schools are devoted to the ascertainment of the definitive meaning of that *dharma* realized by the Buddha through his enlightenment.

The discourses delivered by the Buddha during his teaching career were collected by his followers as *sutras*. The term *sutras* refers both to the unique teachings of the Buddha on such matters as dependent origination or the four Noble Truths, as well as the collected preachings of the Buddha. The *sutras* are accounts of particular teachings made by the Buddha to unique audiences and in specific circumstances. As such, the teachings were adapted to the precise needs of the audience, and were presented in such a way that they would be readily accessible to their unique spiritual propensities.

It is this tendency toward adaptation that makes the content of the *sutras* intentional (*aabhipraayika*) or conventional (*aupacaarika*). In other words, one has to draw out their meaning to understand them correctly. For this reason, different *sutras* give divergent explanations on a variety of doctrinal questions. Because of the very circumscription of their scope and application, the *sutras* may not be an ideal vehicle for constructing an infeasible system of philosophy. It is to construct such a definitive system that Abhidharma was born.

Mahayanasuutraalamkaara defines Abhidharma as ‘that by which the meaning of the *sutra* is best understood’ (*abhigamyate suutraartha etenety abhidharmah*). The Pali *Atthasaalini* states that the Abhidharma surpasses the *dharma* presented in the *sutras*. The various classifications of the elements of existence are listed haphazardly in the *sutras*. But the Abhidharma gives them in their definitive forms. Thus, while the *sutras* are preached from the standpoint of conventional truth according to specific worldly circumstances, the Abhidharma deals with absolute truth, and is concerned with analysis of mind and matter (*naama-ruupaparicchada*).

Vasubandhu in his work, the *Abhidharmakosabhaasya* alludes the same sense to the term ‘*abhidharma*’. According to him, Abhidharma means that unsullied wisdom (*prajnaa, malaa*) which analyses factors (*dharmapravicaya*). As such, while the *sutras* give terms in their conventional meanings, the Abhidharma use them only in their definitive sense.

This notion of literalness suggests that the early Buddhists accepted that there were specific laws (*dharmataa*) by which the factors of existence (*dharma*) were considered to function. These laws were invariably correct as a fact of nature, and did not need to be revealed by the Buddha. A common refrain in a number of the Buddhist texts is, ‘whether or not the Tathaagatas arise (in the world), this law of the elements of existence remains fixed’.

Certain presuppositions are found in all *sutras*, whether addressed to monks or laypersons, which are not necessarily spelled out. Incidentally, all Indian philosophical schools have similar presuppositions upon which their doctrinal edifices are constructed.

For Buddhists, the laws consisted principally of the cardinal doctrines of impermanence, frustration, and lack of an eternal self. These were supplemented by such pan-Indian ideas as the continuity of moral action and result, as well as by such uniquely Buddhist concepts as dependent origination.

The varied nature of the specific teachings in the *sutras* compelled the Buddhists to look for general standards by which those teachings could be evaluated. The most important of these standards was the four references to authority, which were used to verify claims that a specific teaching was authentic. The four references were the Buddha himself; a *sangha* of elders; groups of monks who were specialists in the *sutras*, the discipline, or the doctrinal lists of matrices; and individual monks who were such experts. The manner in which such claims were proved involves three separate criteria.

The Sanskrit versions state that a doctrine that claimed to have been learned from the Buddha himself should not be praised or disparaged, but, having heard and understood its words and syllables, one should see if it comes down in the *sutras* and compare it with the *Vinaya*. If it passes these texts and does not contradict the law, then let this be said: ‘Truly, Noble one, these *dharmas* have been spoken by the Lord. Noble one, these *dharmas* have been well understood by you. Put against the *sutra*, and compared with the *Vinaya*, these *dharmas* come down in the *sutras*, and are reflected in the *Vinaya* and do not contradict the law.’

The third of these three criteria is not found in the record of this exchange in either the *Digha* or *Anguttara Nikaayas*. But it does appear in the later *Nettipakarana*, an extra-canonical Pali work ascribed by tradition to Mahaakaccaana, one of the Buddha’s immediate disciples. In this work, the author clarifies the Theravaada interpretation of the meaning of these three criteria

thus: ‘those words and syllables should be put beside the *sutras*, compared with the *Vinaya*, and tested against the law.’

Which *sutras* are they to be put beside? The four Noble Truths! With which *Vinaya* are they to be compared? With the pacification of passion, ill will and ignorance! With which law are they to be tested? With the doctrine of dependent origination!

Because of the varied nature of the teachings found in the *sutras*, the incipient Abhidharma schools sought to delineate these general rules of interpretation, so as to outline a coherent, systematic approach to Buddhist doctrine. In this context, Abhidharma claims to supersede the *sutras* by deriving its authority from its own adherence to the overriding standard of the law, thereby establishing itself as superior to the *sutras*. In its attempts to establish definitive general rules, Abhidharma ultimately becomes both an explanation of the *sutra* teachings as well as a distinct body of exegetical material in its own right.

The cornerstone of the Buddhist religion is the nature of *nirvana* and the path to it. The unanimity of opinion concerning the law is of great importance to avoid disputes, for the successful dissemination of the religion. The Buddha himself had warned in the *Saamagaamasutta* of the dangers that would result if controversies about the fundamental principles of teachings were to develop. ‘Of little concern, Ananda, are quarrels respecting the rigors of regimen or the code of discipline. It is possible quarrels in the Order about the Path or the course of training that really matter.’

Such controversies did actually result owing to the differences in the *sutra*-collections of the developing early schools, and their interpretive laws. Haribhadra records in his *Abhisamayaalamkaaraloka* thus. ‘There is no concordance

between different versions of the *Sutra* and *Vinaya Pitikas*. The *dharmataa* established in one school is not identical with that of the other schools. With eighteen different schools, each having its own separate version of *Tripitika*, it is improper to hold up the *mahaapadesas* as a standard for judging the authenticity of the words of the Buddha.’

The above passage of Haribhadra refers to the split of the early Buddhism into eighteen contending schools, which is considered to have taken place by the time of Asoka (3rd Century BC). An examination of the process by which the different sectarian schools of Abhidharma are traditionally said to have developed reveals interesting data. Considerable scholarly controversy has raged concerning the historicity of the various synods that are said to have been convened to deal with the disputes within the order. Here is an outline of the traditional accounts of both the derivation of the principal Abhidharma schools and the methods that they adapted to legitimize their treatises.

After the Buddha’s *parinirvaana* (486 BC), controversies began to develop over points of discipline and doctrine among the followers of the Buddha. The *Mahaaparinibhaanasutta* records the comments of rejoice of the elderly Subhadda on the death of the Buddha. ‘Enough, Sirs! Weep not, neither lament! We are well rid of the great Samana. We used to be annoyed by being told ‘this beseems you, this beseems you not.’ But now we shall be able to do whatever we like; and what we do not like, that we shall not have to do!’

The attempt to guard against dissension in the order by establishing a definitive collection of the discourses of the Buddha was the motivation behind the convocation of the first council, which took place in Rajagrha in the rainy season following the

Buddha's death. Mahaakaasyapa, the Buddha's senior disciple convened the council. Ananda and Upali recited the *sutra* and *Vinaya* texts respectively. The historicity of the council has been challenged virtually by all modern scholars. It is even suggested that the account of the first council was directly inspired by the history of the second, in order to justify the authenticity of the canon that was compiled at that latter convocation.

According to the tradition, even after this synod, however, there was at least one renowned elder, Punna by name, who refused to be bound by the discourses and the rules of discipline agreed upon at the council, preferring to remember the Buddha's words as he himself had heard them. Such differences in the renditions of specific *sutras* eventually led to varying recensions of the scriptures, and ultimately to distinct canonical collections.

According to the narrative included in the *Vinayas* of various schools, the second council was held at Vaisali, about one hundred years after the Buddha's *parinirvana*. It was prompted by ten lax practices of the Vajjaputtaka monks of Vaisali such as storing salt in a horn, accepting gold and silver, etc. Seven hundred elders convened to decide on the propriety of the practices, Revata presiding, and finally rejected them.

Some scholars have concluded that the refusal of the Vaisali monks to accept this judgment led to the first schism in the order. The schism was between the Sthaviras (Elders) who are alleged to have relied upon the stricter original *Vinaya* in rejecting the new practices, and the majority group, who labeled themselves the Mahaasamghikas (the Great Assembly), who were more flexible in their interpretation of the *Vinaya*. M.Hofinger debunked this theory and concluded that the Council dispersed in concord. Andre Bareau proposed a second theory concerning this second council. According to him, there was instead a

separate synod held at Pataliputra in 349 BC, 137 years after the Buddha's *parinirvana*, which resulted in the first major schism.

This council was said to have been convened because of five points of dissension raised by Mahadeva, who challenged the very foundations of Buddhism. According to Mahadeva, the perfected beings even after their enlightenment (1) remain subject to temptation, (2) may have residual ignorance, (3) may continue to entertain doubts, (4) gain knowledge through others' help, and (5) the path may be attained by an exclamation such as 'Aho!' Bareau further proposes that after an unsuccessful attempt by King Mahapadma to mediate the crisis, the Sthaviras and Mahasamghikas split into *sanghas*, and eventually compiled their own distinct canons.

Nattier and Prebish have challenged both the above theories regarding the Second Council. According to them, the schism between the Sthaviras and the Mahasamghikas at the Second Council was not caused either by the disciplinary excesses of the Vajjiputtaka monks or by the five propositions of Mahadeva. In their hypothesis, 'the sole cause of the initial schism in Buddhist history pertained to matters of *Vinaya*... it represents a reaction on the part of the future Mahasamghikas to unwarranted expansion of the root *Vinaya* text on the part of the future Sthaviras'. According to several other scholars, the Mahasamghika *Vinaya* was the most ancient and conservative of the *Vinaya* recensions, and the schism with the Sthaviravadins seems to have been prompted by attempts of the Elders to expand the *Saiksadharma* sections of the *Vinaya*.

Pali sources alone mention a putative third council, which is alleged to have taken place also at Pataliputra in 247 BC during the reign of King Asoka. The Elder Tissa-Moggaliputta presided over it. He is said to have compiled the *Kathaavattu* in order to

present the definitive Sthaviravada conclusions as to the doctrinal debates that took place during the convocation. In the *Kathaavatthu*, the Sthaviravadins target two schools. First is the Sammitiyas who, along with the Vajjiputakas, were said to have advocated that there was persisting personal entity (*pudgala*). Second is the Sarvaastivaadins who were named for their unique doctrine that *dharmas* existed throughout the past, present and future. It appears that the Sthaviravaadins and the Sarvaastivaadins shared a similar set of scriptures, but differed in their interpretation of those texts. In other words, their laws were distinct. Their differing interpretative positions eventually led to the bifurcation of the Abhidharma tradition into these two great schools.

Bareau has concluded that it was at the time of this Council that the final division of the Theravaadins and Sarvaastivaadins took place. A complete *Tripitaka* of the Sthaviravaadins was apparently compiled during this Council. Missionaries were sent out under Asoka's direction to all parts of the known world. It was at that time that Buddhism eventually made its way to Sri Lanka, which, after the demise of the Sthaviravaadins in the Indian heartland, eventually became the center of the School where it was known as Theravaada. It was principally the Sarvaastivaadins among the early Buddhist schools that survived on the Indian subcontinent and continued to exert dominant influence over the subsequent development of Buddhist and Indian philosophy.

Before the third Century BC, the term *sarvaastivaada* is not attested in the Buddhist literature. The canon of the school certainly postdates Asoka. Both the Sthaviravaadins and the Sarvaastivaadins claim the patronage of Asoka. Both claim that their most eminent representatives namely, Tissa-Moggalliputta and Upagupta, respectively, served as Asoka's personal teacher.

But the Brahmanical advisors to Asoka and followed later by the Sungas, who overthrew the Mauryan empire, worked to establish Brahmanical hegemony in Pataliputra, which had been the stronghold of Sarvaastivaadins. This apparently prompted a mass migration of followers of that school first to Mathura, and later to northwest India, from whence, the school eventually spread throughout central and east Asia. It was in Kashmir, under the sponsorship of King Kanishka, that a separate Third Council, that of the Sarvaastivaadins, was said to have been held, allegedly in the first century AD. It was at this Council that the Sarvaastivaadins' canon was codified, and their massive exegesis of Abhidharma, the *Mahaavibhaasa*, written.

At this stage, the two major schools of Abhidharma were of the Theravaada and the Sarvaastivaada. They attempted to prove that their treatises were the authentic words of the Buddha. The Abhidharma books were the first major extension of the scope of Buddhist literature to take place in India.

Three major concerns were apparent in their attempts to establish the authenticity of their new books. First was to prove that the Buddha himself had personally taught the Abhidharma. Second was that it had been formally transmitted to eminent disciples of the Buddha, by whom it was then collected. Third was that the Abhidharma works had in fact been recited and codified at the time of the putative First Council. This way, both the Theravaadins and the Sarvaastivaadins attempted to justify the inclusion of their *Abhidharmas* as part of the canon.

According to the Theravaada account in the *Atthasaalini*, the Buddha preached the Abhidharma first to his mother, Mahamaya, during a three-month sojourn in the Taavatimsa heaven. The *Divya-avadaana* relates, on the other hand, that the Buddha's mother had died soon after giving birth to the

Bodhisattva, and had never received the benefit of his teaching. The Theravaadins used this legend in accounting for the time and provenance of the preaching of their Abhidharma.

A novel explanation for the transmission of the Abhidharma is given in the *Atthasaalini*. Leaving a phantom of himself (*nimittabuddha*) in heaven, the Buddha returned to Anotatta (Anavatapta) Lake in the Himalayas near Kailasa, where he taught the Abhidharma to Saariputta. Saariputta then determined the textual order of the Abhidharma books, decided upon the numerical series in the *Patthaana*, and finally transmitted the teachings to five hundred of his own disciples. Despite this vital role played by Saariputta in the compilation of the Abhidharma, the Theravaadins continued to claim that it was the Buddha himself who had actually first understood the Abhidharma, at the time of his final enlightenment. Saariputta's role was merely to have 'laid down the numerical series in order to make it easy to learn, remember, study and teach the Law'. Finally, Ananda rehearsed the Abhidharma during the First Council, and Mahaakassapa, the head of the congregation, recited the ancient Commentary (*Atthakathaa*) thereon.

In spite of the attempt of the Theravaadins to make the Buddha the sole author of the *Abhidhammapitaka*, the commentators agree, to a large extent, that the Elders propounded the individual Abhidhamma books. They contend that the Abhidhamma of this school focused on the *Kathaavatthu* was compiled at the Third Council by Tissa-Moggaliputta, long after the demise of the Buddha.

The authority of the matrices of the doctrine was central to justifying the inclusion of the Abhidhamma in the canon. The matrices constitute the superstructure around which the complete edifice of the Abhidhamma was constructed. The creation of

these *dharma*-lists was considered to be the exclusive province of the Buddha himself, not of his disciples. Accordingly, although authorship of such Abhidhamma treatises such as the *Kathaavatthu* might be attributed to disciples, still they could be considered the word of the Buddha as these works were built on the matrices propounded by the Lord himself.

The Theravaadins were aware that several of the scriptures included in their *Suttapitaka* as the Buddha's words were actually preached by Ananda, Moggallaana, Saariputta and Mahakaccayana. For example, *Atthassalini* cites the *Madhupindikasutta* in the *Majjhimanikaaya* as an example of such a scripture. Mahakaccayana preached this scripture on the basis of a synopsis given first by the Buddha. As such, for the Theravaadins, this qualifies as the Buddha's work.

The Sarvaastivaadins, too, follow a similar approach in attempting to establish the authenticity of their own seven Abhidharma books as a separate *pitaka*. For them, the Abhidharma consists of a variety of teachings of the Buddha scattered throughout the canon. The Elders are believed to have systematized them. Yasomitra records in *Sphutaartha Vyaakhyaa* thus.

'The Vaibhasikas maintain that the *Abhidharmapitaka*, which deals with nature of the characteristics of elements and belongs to the Upadesa class, was preached by the Buddha to his disciples, and remains scattered here and there. Just as Dharmatraata compiled several *udaanas* of the Master in the work Udaanavargiya, similarly, the Elders Kaatyaaniputra and others collected the Abhidharma together in these *sastras*.'

Kaatyaaniputra, the Elder, was considered to be the author of their central Abhidharma book, the *Jnaanaprasthaana*. The

similarity between his name and that of the Buddha's disciple Mahakaatyayana, who participated in the Council at Rajagrha, allowed the Sarvaastivaadins to claim that the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, compiled from various teachings of the Buddha, was sanctioned as his own words by the Buddha himself during his own lifetime. They made a similar approach to authenticating the six-branch treatises of the Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma. The Sarvaastivaadins also claimed finally that Ananda had recited this Abhidharmapitaka during the First Council.

The main challenge to Sarvaastivaada attempts to claim that their *Abhidharmapitaka* was spoken by the Buddha came from the Soutraanikas (those who follow the *sutras*). Both Pali and Sanskrit sources consider this school to be the last of the traditional eighteen *nikaayas*, branching off from the main body of the Sarvaastivaada School. One of the primary reasons that the Soutraanikas split from the Sarvaastivaadins was their rejection of the claim that the Buddha himself had spoken the Abhidharma books.

The Soutraanikas contend that the *Abhidharma sastras* have separate authors. They accept the three-basket classification of canonical texts and contend that the *Abhidharmapitaka* is no more than specific types of *sutras* concerned with determining meanings and characteristics of *dharmas*. For them, the *Abhidharmapitaka* is a class of literature found scattered through the *Sutrapitaka*, and not separate collection. It is a subsection of the *sutras*, called variously *vyaakarana* or *upadesa*. Further, *Mahayanasutraalamkaara* defines *abhidharma* as that by which the meanings of the *sutras* are best understood. As such, the Soutraanikas radically contend that Abhidharma should be looked for in the *sutras*, and not considered as a separate section of the canon.

The Inception of Abhidharma

The beginnings of Abhidharma are found in certain fundamental listings of *dharmas* made by the Buddha, which were considered to be definitive and indisputable. The most important of these early listings was that of the thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment. The Buddha raised them to a status superior to other teachings in the *Paasaadikasuttaanta*. He called them, as recorded in the *Dighanikaaya*, 'the truths which when I had perceived, I made known to you, and which, when ye have come together and have associated yourselves, ye are to rehearse, all of you, and not quarrel over, comparing meaning with meaning and phrase with phrase'.

Here, it is not a particular *sutra* that is said to be supreme; rather, it is the sum total of all the teachings, as systematized into such a classification as the seven limbs of enlightenment. This list is the focus of a large number of *sutras* in the *Digha* and *Majjhima Nikaayas*, and constitutes one of the final teachings given by the Buddha prior to his *parinirvana*. Tabulation of seven categories of factors as a definitive listing of the path-related factors acceptable to all Buddhists is common to many *sutras* in all the five *nikaayas*. It marks the first stage in the development of the Abhidharma.

The next stage is found in a whole series of *sutras* classified as *vibhanga*, a term meaning distribution, division or expansion, which ultimately came to be used to designate a commentary of exegesis. The second book of the Pali *Abhidhammapitaka*, for example, is called *Vibhanga*. It serves as a virtual supplement to the listings of the elements of existence that appear in the preceding *Dhammasangani*. These two functions of collection and expansion characterize the *vibhanga sutras*, which constitute the second stage in the development of the Abhidharma.

Several other *sutras* in the *nikaayas* exhibit a similar tendency toward collection and classification of *dharma* lists, at times even elaborating on the advanced teachings of the Buddha. A number of *sutras* in the *Samyuttanikaaya*, for example, give long discourses on the formulae repeated throughout the *nikaayas*.

The numerical order of the *Anguttaranikaaya* is itself quite similar to the sequential lists found in many Abhidharma texts. A number of these *sutras* are not the direct words of the Buddha himself, but elaborations made by his main disciples such as Sariputra or Mahaakaccaayana, to a bare outline of doctrine (*uddesa*) made by the Buddha.

The factors that are discussed in these various expositions can be classified under such ubiquitous technical terms as *skandha*, *dhatu*, *aayatana*, *indriya*, *satya*, *prateeyasamutpaada*, *karma*, *klesa*, *maarga*, the four and five *dhyaanas*, the six *abhijnaas*, the eight *vimoksas*, the thirty-seven *bodhipaaksika dharmas*, etc. The collective name for all these *dharmas* is ‘*abhidharma*’, in that it ‘exceeds and is distinguished from the *Dhamma* (the *Suttas*)’. The contents of all the principal works on Abhidharma do not, in essence, stray from these major topics.

The *Sangeeti* and *Dasuttara suttaantas*, scriptures propounded by the Buddha’s chief disciple Sariputta, mark the beginning of Abhidharma literature proper. The *Sangeetisuttanta* begins with brief historical introduction outlining the reason for the recital of the Doctrine. Sariputta notes that, after the death of Nigantha Naataputta, the leader of the Jaina community, discord over the true nature of his teachings divided his followers into several contending factions. In order to prevent such an occurrence after the passing of the Buddha, Sariputta hastened to draw up a voluminous outline of the doctrine, covering 903

individual factors in 227 classes, presented sequentially as ones, dyads, triads, etc., up to decads.

The *Dasuttarasuttanta* follows a similar pattern, also presenting groups of from one to ten factors. The format of these two scriptures can be readily compared to the matrices of the Abhidhamma. T.W. Rhys Davids notes the *abhidharma* character of these two *sutras* thus. ‘All that we know is that each of them forms a sort of thematic index to the doctrines scattered through the Four *Nikaayas*.... In the two features they have in common, of catechism as a monologue by the catechumen, and of the absence of narrative, this further interest attaches to these last *suttantas*, that they become practically *Abhidhamma* rather than *Suttapitaka*.’

The above observation is confirmed by the fact that a *Sangeetiparyaya* is included among the seven Abhidharma works of the Sarvaastivaada School. Further, the Chinese recension of this text is attributed to Sariputra, and contains the same historical introduction that opens the *Sangeetisuttanta*. All this confirms that it was such summaries of the doctrine that eventually came to be called Abhidharma.

Dharma - Factors

General

The basic metaphysical concept in Abhidharma Buddhism is that of *dharmā*, rendered in English as ‘factor’. In Buddhism, the entities of any sort that exist are fundamentally factors.

Paul Griffiths states thus. ‘A *dharmā* is that which possesses its own unique defining characteristic (*svālakṣaṇa*) and that which exists inherently (*svabhāva*). There are, naturally, many things, which exist but which do not have their own inherent existence; for Vasubandhu, examples of such existents would be tables, chairs, persons and numbers. Such things are not factors, though they do exist in the somewhat limited sense of being possible objects of cognition and possible referents of propositions. A factor, therefore, is not the only kind of existent, simply one which possesses a special kind of existence, an existence which marks it off from all other possible existents by the possession of a unique defining characteristic which is irreducible, because inherent.’

‘Samghabhadra... made the distinction between different kinds and levels of existence very clear. *Dharmas* exist substantially or genuinely, and possess the kind of inherent irreducible existence already mentioned. They cannot be reduced by observational or logical analysis into component parts, since they possess none, and the defining characteristic of any particular *dharmā* is not shared by any other, since this defining characteristic is unique. In contrast to this substantial existence (*dravyasat*), the kind of existence properly predicated of *dharma*s, there is existence as a designation (*prajñaptisat*), the kind of existence belonging to things simply in virtue of there being linguistic conventions which refer to them. This secondary existence is

the result of linguistic convention. This belongs to complex compounded entities, composed of those entities (*dharma*s), which possess primary or substantial existence.’

It is a list of thirty-seven that ‘occurs in a number of Buddhist *Sūtras* and *Vinaya* texts’ and consists of the following.

- Four (4) applications of mindfulness (*samrtyupasthāna*)
- Four (4) right exertions (*samyakpradhāna*)
- Four (4) supernatural powers (*rddhipāda*)
- Five (5) faculties (*indriya*)
- Five (5) powers (*bala*)
- Seven (7) limbs of enlightenment (*bodhyāṅga*), and
- Eight (8) members of the noble eightfold path.

‘It seems clear that this is an early, perhaps the earliest, list of the time that came to be called *maatrkaa* and formed the basis for the later Abhidharma.... An independent development of this *maatrkaa* was used in the original *Abhidharma-Vibhāṅga*, which may date from less than fifty years after the death of the Buddha...’ in the words of Bronkhorst.

Lists of factors are the central theme of Theravaada, Sarvaastivaada and Sautraanika works. On the other hand, Maadhyamika and Yogacaara works deny independent reality of the factors that constitute the lists of the Abhidharma schools.

The important works that account for the lists of factors are *Tattvasiddhi*, *Abhidharmakosa* and the *Bhaasya* thereon, and *Nyaayaanusaara*. Vasubandhu’s list of seventy-five kinds of factors in *Abhidharmakosa* is considered to be the essential ontological account of Abhidharma Buddhism. Again it is this list, which organizes Samghabhadra’s work as well. The list of

Harivarman in *Tattvasiddhi* has innumerable factors and is not generally considered.

Vasubandhu's idea appears to be that these seventy-five are only the kinds of factors that need be admitted. They comprise all actual factors. They are the actual entities (*dravyasat*); the others are only our constructions (*samvrtisat*), the kinds of things we find expedient to talk about in everyday language.

Vasubandhu divides his list of seventy-five kinds of factors into five categories. They are physical factors, mental factors, factors related to mind, factors separated from both matter and mind, and unconditioned factors. However, most of the factors, on examination, find their place in the category related to mind.

Physical Factors

The word Vasubandhu uses to denote 'physical' is *ruupa*, which itself breeds a problem. As everything in Buddhism is momentary, it is open to doubt whether the term 'physical' or 'material' has any scope at all. If any thing is to be material or physical, it is to be 'something'. It is to persist in time, occupy space and provide resistance. But such things are ruled out under Buddhist assumptions.

An examination of the theory of atoms in Buddhism throws light in the matter. The Theravaada atomic theory is first developed in Buddhaghosha's *Visuddhimagga* and its succeeding volume. Atoms are also part of Abhidharma theories, set forth vividly in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosabhasya*.

Vaibhasikas apply the word *anu*, meaning atom, to two kinds of things. One is the unitary substantial atom (*dravyaparamaanu*) and the other is the aggregated atom or

molecule (*samghaataparamaanu*). A substantial atom is without any parts, cannot be divided, has no spatial dimensions and is imperceptible. A single atom never occurs by itself. It occurs only in combination with others to make up a molecule. Though a single atom does not resist by itself, it makes up a molecule, along with other atoms, that resists. A molecule comprises a number of atoms, at least eight, consisting of four elemental atoms, one each of earth, air, fire and water, and four qualitative atoms of colour, smell, taste and tangibility. They are not necessarily of equal intensity. This is for this reason that we perceive colour rather than smell in a molecule, as the colour atom is predominant.

Sautranikas, of whom Vasubandhu is the most important, consider that there are five kinds of atoms, namely, of colour, sound, smell, taste and touch. There are likewise five atoms constituting the stream that we think of as sense organs, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue and the bodily source of touch. An atom is impenetrable, indivisible and exercises resistance as a matter of its nature. This account, however, omits the four 'great elements' of earth, air, fire and water. The Sautranikas consider the elements as mere designations.

The question arises. If an atom has no parts, how can it combine with other atoms so as to make a molecule? Nagarjuna and Aryadeva use this argument to explode the entire notion of atoms and molecules. Vaibhasikas suggest that we are to paint a picture in our minds of a number of atoms making up a molecule by impinging on each other at a number of different points. They suggest that an atom is an entity without any parts but that part of an atom that impinges on and so coincides with a part of another atom is a smaller part of both the atoms. Both of them are not atoms after all. In this logic, either there are no atoms or they make up of larger sized molecule. The argument that there

are no atoms at all avoids infinite regress, which the Madhyamikas accept.

The Vaibhasikas hold that as an atom has no parts, there is necessarily a space between any two atoms, though it is so small that no light can enter and no other atom can occupy it. To the question whether the molecule does not fall apart if there is space between two of the atoms constituting it, they answer that air (*vaayu*) keeps the atoms together in the molecule.

Vasubandhu, as Vaibhasika, introduces another type of matter, which does not cause anyone to be aware of it. It is termed un-manifested matter (*avijnaptiruupa*). It is also classified as *karma* (*avijnaptikarma*) for the reason that it occasions a stream into the future in the way that actions do, and is laid down initially by an action.

According to Vaibhasikas, this un-manifested matter / *karma* consists of the four primary elements. The initiating act occasions the subsequent moments in the *karmic* stream. The primary elements support the subsequent un-manifested matter conditioned by the originating matter (act). Un-manifested matter / *karma* is good or bad depending on the quality of the initiating act.

The Sautranikas, on the other hand, do not accept such a kind of matter. For them, the term *avijnapti* merely connotes inaction, an absence, and so involves no *karmic* result. Further, as past factors no longer exist, there is no way such a stream can exist. Only present momentary factors exist. Finally, such a kind of *karma* cannot be termed ‘material’ (*ruupa*) as matter is destroyed the next moment, and ‘un-manifested matter’ cannot, therefore, exist.

The Vaibhasikas cite scripture to support their view that un-manifested matter refers to a type of matter that is indestructible, pure matter. According to them, the scripture states that there can be increase of merit in a virtuous person, and that it can be evident only if that person’s un-manifest good *karma* increases. The Sautranikas question the very interpretation of the scripture by the Vaibhasikas. Vasubandhu, after taking into consideration the different points of view, eventually rejects the distinction between the manifested and un-manifested matter. Nevertheless, there is clearly a need within the Abhidharma schools of Buddhism to find a place for *karma*, and un-manifested matter / *karma* comes in handy for the Vaibhasikas.

For the Sautranikas, on the other hand, *karma* is a necessary entity. Volition (*cetanaa*) is the essence of *karma*. The way it works is that the agent intentionally performing an action lays down a seed (*beeja*) which, in turn, breeds subsequent seeds until, at some later time, the appropriate occasion for the ‘growth’ of that seed into a sprout occurs. In other words, some experience takes place, which constitutes the working out of that *karmic* residue. This interpretation makes *karma*, however, less objective and more a matter of how one experiences things. This coincides with the tendency in Buddhism, as it progresses from Abhidharma to Yogacaara in response to Madhyamika, to assign fewer and fewer factors to an objective world, and more and more to internalize factors.

Mental Factors

The second category of factors relates to mind. In the Buddhist literature, it is referred to as awareness (*jnaana*), consciousness (*vijnaana*) and mind (*manas*).

The Abhidharma philosophy considers consciousness as one of the five basic aggregates, which the Buddha constantly referred to. While the first aggregate is material objects, the fifth aggregate is consciousness. These five aggregates are independent and real. For this reason, the Abhidharma philosophy is classified as a system, which promulgates epistemological realism.

Nagarjuna and Aryadeva criticize that if matter and awareness are different aggregates, there can be no awareness of material objects. The Madhyamika School concludes that awareness is empty. Our assumption that we are seats of consciousness apprehending material objects through our sense organs is mistaken. It is a mere manner of thinking and speaking. On the assumption of momentariness, awareness cannot grasp more than one object-content, and the second awareness cannot have the same content. As such even if there is matter, one cannot perceive it, as the eye is not conscious and consciousness is not sense organ. Further, awareness has no cause to arise before sense-object contact. But it cannot arise afterward, too, because it has no object to comprise the content. In this background, for the Madhyamika School, the concept of sensory awareness belongs entirely to the realm of illusion.

However, the Madhyamika School finds it hard to deny consciousness at some level. Aryadeva, at one point, identifies consciousness as the seed of the cycle of existence stating that it will cease when everyone appreciates selflessness. The Madhyamika School admits at least one basic type of existent that is consciousness. This approach seems to have helped the School lead to *Yogacaara*. This approach has also helped to distinguish between *savikalpika* (construction filled) and *nirvikalpika* (construction free) consciousness.

Charlene McDermott engagingly puts it thus: ‘The nerve of the *Yogacaara* ‘ideation only’ position seems to be the therapeutic reiteration and defense of what is scarcely more than a bare tautology, viz., ‘what we mean by phenomenal world is merely the sum total of what is intended by consciousness’. (In other words, the world is a world for consciousness. The limits of the world are precisely the limits of cognoscibility.) And, since we obviously never have access to anything but our cognitions, the existence of a trans-cognitional correlate (and cause) for a given eidetic experience is at best a gratuitous hypothesis - at worst, perhaps a self-contradictory one...

And, in support of the foregoing, the *Yogacaara* philosophers marshal the following considerations:

(a) In the experiences of dreams, reveries and hallucinations, even opponents of the *Yogacaara* concede that there are no extra-mental ‘objective’ correlates accompanying and engendering the imagery. But since there is no foolproof criterion for universally distinguishing genuine sensory phenomena from the data of dreams, hallucinations, etc., it follows that veridical experiences are also not necessarily connected with any trans-mental sources.

(b) Moreover, all perceptions can be shown to be relative to some percipient subject, whence phenomena can be seen to be un-packable as the modes of minding of some mind or other. Consciousness is thus the horizon of all things.

(c) Finally, small wonder that the ‘relation’ between the phenomenal and the trans-phenomenal (or noumenal) turns out to be unintelligible. The very validity of the notion of relation is restricted to the domain of phenomena.

What is warranted on the basis of (a), (b) and (c) is, strictly speaking, a purely agnostic attitude towards the noumenal realm. However, Asanga goes one step further and flatly rejects the existence of such a realm. To arrive at a categorical assertion that there is nothing but mind, he has recourse to the evidence from meditational experiences and the testimony of Buddhas (as recorded in, for instance, the *Samdhinirmocanasuutra*). Furthermore, there is a pragmatic justification for going on to a dogmatic idealism - it is more expedient so to believe, the better to leave off grasping.'

The works of Asanga clearly suggest an idealistic understanding. His work *Madhyaantavibhaaga* refers to the 'construction of what is not' (*abhuutaparikalpa*) as the basis for all the content filled experience we normally have. The work does not, however, specify whether this state exists or not, but insists that it is the source of our normal experience of objects and bodies, as well as colours and shapes. The work *Lankaavataarasuutra* also refers to the same concept.

One basic question arises. When the *Yogacaara* Buddhists speak of emptiness, do they mean by that term the complete absence of anything and everything, or is there something left over? Gadjin Nagao answers the question thus. 'According to the views expressed in the texts of the classical Indian *Yogacaara*, 'emptiness' (*suunyataa*) does not denote simple non-existence (*abhaava*); rather there is always something left over or remaining (*avasista*) in emptiness, something that is identified with the basis for or locus of all human activities, and that is, otherwise, called the 'dependent' (*paratantra*) aspect of experience. This remains even for Buddha. The realization of emptiness does not entail the end of the flow of experience, of what the *Yogacaara* calls *abhuutaparikalpa*, the comprehensive construction of what is

unreal. Rather this constructive activity continues, though it is now radically different, and is called 'perfected' (*parinispanna*).'

Urban and Griffiths, after survey of the occurrences and the relevant terms, sum up the concept thus. 'A strong case can be made, then, for the conclusion that phenomenally rich mental images - designated by *vijnapti*, *pratibhaasa*, *nimitta*, or *abhuutaparikalpa* - do remain in emptiness, but these cannot have been subject to the constructive activity denoted by *vikalpa*. That is, the liberated person, such as the Buddha, is not without experiences, nor even confined to 'empty', that is, countless experiences, but is aware of 'a flow of mental images (*nimitta*), appearances (*pratibhaasa*), and representations with phenomenal properties (*vijnapti*)'. It (the liberated person) would not, however, experience any sort of conceptual construction (*vikalpa*), since this necessarily involves the reification of those illusory appearances, the separation of their phenomenal properties, the formation of names and categories, and their bifurcation into subject and object. In more standard *Yogacaara* terms, Buddha would still perceive the pure flow of phenomena which constitutes the *paratantrasvabhaava*, but without the dualities and distinctions which constitute the *parikalpitasvabhaava*.'

The above clearly illustrates that a constructed awareness is only conceptual, and does not exist. It is an imaginary entity. Dependent awareness is, on the other hand, a 'flow of mental images, appearances and representations'. A Buddha has this awareness, but it is obscured for the un-liberated. The perfected awareness, finally, is the pure content-less consciousness. This is equated to 'Emptiness', 'Such-ness', and 'Reality' and is designated the 'root of factors' (*dharmadhaatu*). This perfected nature is the way things are really are, their thusness (*tathataa*). It is liberation (*nirvana*). It is also the essentiality of the path (*maarga*).

It follows that the constructed awareness, the dependent awareness and the perfected awareness are only three natures, and not different entities. Every 'dependent awareness' is a perfected awareness construed as content filled, as in the case of a Buddha. It can as well be construed as content-less, at least sometimes, in advanced stages of meditation. The Buddhist texts indicate that one is said to attain remarkable states of progressively content-less concentration in advanced stages of meditation. These states relate to meditation on infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and 'neither identification nor non-identification'. The term that signifies these states of meditation is *samaapatti*, meaning absorption or trance.

Paul Griffiths describes these four altered states as follows:

'In the first case, that of transcending the conceptualizations of physical form and attaining the sphere of infinite space, the practitioner achieves his goal, it seems, by taking the sphere of infinite space as the object of contemplative exercise. It seems that the practitioner is intended to actively think - even to verbalize - that space is infinite, and to contemplate this idea until the possibility of cognizing physical form in any way has completely vanished. The practitioner will then be established in a condition wherein the only object of cognition that occurs to him is that of featureless, formless undifferentiated space. Much of the same applies to the second and third formless spheres - those of the infinity of consciousness and of nothing at all. Here also progress is achieved by the use of active thought and verbalization - on the one hand that consciousness is infinite and, on the other, that nothing whatever exists.

It is evident that the content of consciousness becomes increasingly attenuated as the practitioner progresses through the stages of formlessness. By the third stage, the practitioner has

developed the ability to cognize nothingness or, more precisely, to empty the content of awareness of everything except the consciousness that nothing exists. But even this is not the highest state possible; in the third stage, the sphere of nothing at all, the ability to form concepts and the concomitant ability to verbalize them (if indeed the two can properly be distinguished) remain.

In the fourth state-that of 'neither of conceptualization nor of non-conceptualization' - even this vanishes, and the ability to form concepts exists in such an attenuated form that it is not thought proper to say that it exists or that it does not.'

But the mastery of meditative abilities does not end here. It goes on even to a further state, or several such states. The most important of such states is termed *nirodhasamaapatti*, meaning the attainment of cessation. Paul Griffiths adds thus: 'Finally, in the attainment of cessation, otherwise called the cessation of sensation and conceptualization, even this vanishes, and the practitioner enters a cataleptic trance.'

The ability to attain this extreme stage of meditation is said to be limited to noble ones (*aarya*) and perfected beings (*arhat*). The meditative techniques stated above 'are, therefore, essentially ecstatic. That is, they are designed initially to progressively withdraw the practitioner from all sensory contacts with the external world and then progressively bring to a halt all inner mental activity. The process culminates in the attainment of cessation, wherein there are no mental events and no contacts with the external world. Actions are not initiated and stimuli are not responded to; the continuum of mental events, which constitutes the psychological existence of the practitioner, according to Buddhist theory, runs out into silence. There is some evidence... that this kind of cessation was identified by some Buddhists, at some period, with *Nirvana*, and was thought

of as the ultimate desirable goal for all Buddhists', in the words of Paul Griffiths.

The Vaibhasika, Sautranika, Yogacaara and Theravaada Schools deal with the attainment of cessation in detail. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa* deals with the treatment of cessation by the first three schools, while Buddhaghosa deals in his work with the development of the Theravaada treatment of this concept.

The concept of cessation gives rise to the following questions.

If a meditator, in the highest trance-state of attainment of cessation, stops feeling and thinking altogether, why is it that this trance-state does not constitute liberation? Why and how can one come out of such a state and find oneself still attached to all the traces, etc. which one was attached to before such state? If consciousness ceases during this trance-state, what can cause it to start it again?

For the Vaibhasika School, the problem is this. Every event must have an immediately antecedent and similar causal condition. If there is no immediately antecedent condition prior to the awakening of the meditator from the attainment of cessation, how can it ever arise at all? The Vaibhasika School argues that an immediately antecedent condition need not occur in a moment immediately preceding the effect. There may be a period of time separating cause and effect. If the question is otherwise posed as to why one should come out of the attainment of cessation at all, the Vaibhasikas argue that the meditator explicitly decides, prior to beginning this kind of meditation, that he will terminate the trance after a specific period.

The explanation of the Vaibhasikas makes sense only if we accept time as comprising a real past, present and future. But the Sautranikas do not specifically share this understanding of time. They explicitly deny the past and the future. They, therefore, do not accept the foregoing as solution to the problem concerning the awakening from the attainment of cessation.

The Sautranika School relies on an analogy to the planting of seeds, to find a solution. Paul Griffiths states thus: 'On this view (the view of the Sautranikas)... the last moments of consciousness, before entry into the attainment of cessation, plant seeds in the continuing stream of physical events – 'the body with its senses' – and that, in due time, these seeds ripen and produce their fruit, the emergence of consciousness from the attainment of cessation... The Sautranikas also wish to preserve the necessity of an immediately antecedent and similar condition for the emergent consciousness, but by allotting that function to the 'seeded' physical body, they are forced to loosen, almost to the point of disregarding, the requirement that the relevant condition be similar.'

Paul Griffiths illustrates the dilemma faced by both the Vaibhasika and the Sautranika Schools thus.

- '1. For the occurrence of any given event, Y, there exists a necessary and sufficient condition, X.
2. For the occurrence of any given event, Y, there exists a necessary condition, X, which is temporally contiguous with, and phenomenologically similar to, Y.
3. There are two kinds of events: mental and physical.

4. Every event is located in a continuum; every continuum can be (theoretically) individuated from every other continuum.

5. It is possible that, in a given continuum, C, at a given time, T, there is complete absence of mental events while physical events continue.

6. It is possible that, in C at T plus, mental events may begin again.'

This set of assumptions involves contradiction, and is inconsistent. So, one or another of the assumptions made must be modified. Different schools attempt to solve the problem differently.

Vaibhasikas and Sautranikas seek to modify step (2), or reject step (5). The Vaibhasikas seek to relax the requirement of temporal contiguity of X and Y. The Sautranikas seek to abandon the requirement of phenomenological similarity between X and Y. The Vaibhasikas postulate the reality of the past and the future, as well as the present factors. The Sautranikas propose two alternatives. One is that there are really mental events in the attainment of cessation and hence step (5) is rejected. The other is that the re-emergence of mind referred to in step (6) is actually caused by purely physical events and thus step (2) is modified. But, neither of the solutions offered by the Vaibhasikas and the Sautranikas appears satisfactory.

The Yogacara solution, in effect, denies step (3) of the illustration. It denies outright the existence of physical events and adopts the theory of three natures, namely, constructed, dependent and perfected. It relates to the analogy of seeds and sprouts, in terms of seeds laid down by our awareness. A seed, perfumed by the trace created in the awareness that caused it,

conditions a subsequent act in the future. This is of the form of 'dependent nature' interpreted through constructions. Rightly understood, it is free of all differentiation and is to be seen as 'perfect nature' as involving no distinction between a 'real knowing object' and a 'real object as content'.

However, the Yogacara School realizes that the example of seeds and sprouts is clearly an analogy. How does this analogy work without additional assumptions? What are these metaphorically called 'seeds' in actuality? Where do they reside especially during the period of almost complete stoppage that characterizes the attainment of cessation? In what way can the continuity between the stream that apparently ends as the meditator enters trance, and the stream that seemingly begins again when the meditator leaves that state? What is it that fills the interval between the two states, in the backdrop of the Yogacara view that the world is nothing but consciousness and that attainment of cessation is stoppage of all temporal consciousness (thought)?

Naturally enough, where the seeds are stored must be consciousness. The Yogacara School has, therefore, conceived, in due course, the notion of a storehouse-consciousness (*aalayavijnaana*). The School explains that the seeds laid down by the events we construe, as actions in the lifetime of a stream of consciousness, are stored in the storehouse-consciousness. These seeds initiate their own streams until the occasion arises for the maturation of each seed in the form of an action. The storehouse-consciousness is not a substantially existing or persisting thing. It is merely a way of referring to the collection of the moments in those streams, which comprise the momentary, *karmically* occasioned results of momentary actions.

Each of the six kinds of awareness - the five kinds of sensory awareness and the mental awareness - needs a sense organ as locus, and an immediately antecedent event as causal condition. It, therefore, becomes necessary to presume a distinct kind of consciousness to account for the *karmic* acquisition of an appropriate kind of rebirth at the beginning of each lifetime. This is in terms of the kinds of the seeds slated to come to fruition during the ensuing lifetime in a certain kind of embodiment.

The assumption of storehouse-consciousness helps us to understand how two or more sense organs can function at once, how the first moment of consciousness in a given life can arise, our ability to cognize anything at all given that a content of awareness exists only for a moment and, since gone by the next, can only be remembered, how action can occur at all, how there can be experience of a manifold of things at once, what it is that separates from the body at death, and what it is that still persists during the attainment of cessation.

Concomitant Awareness

The largest group of factors in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa* constitutes the derived or concomitant types of awareness (*caitta*). But Harivarman denies the whole separate category of concomitant types of awareness. He is generally antipathetic to categories comprising large number of factors. He suggests that each aggregate comprises a variety of sorts, and that these are what others, including Vasubandhu later, classify into separate groups or categories. Harivarman says that they are all kinds of awareness, and the only relevant category is awareness itself. Further he argues that as awareness causes, for example, a feeling, the first kind of concomitant awareness

listed by Vasubandhu, the feeling cannot be a separate kind of thing, and occurs simultaneously with the awareness.

Vasubandhu, however, lists forty-six kinds of concomitant awareness. He divides them into six categories. The first category is of generally permeating (*mahaabhuumika*) factors comprising ten types. Every momentary slice of awareness includes one factor of each of these ten types. Srilata, however, opposes this view. The second category consists of ten good permeating factors (*kusalamahaabhuumika*), with one of each of these kinds accompanying every good awareness. The third category is of defiling permeating factors, which comprise eighteen kinds. They are further divided into three groups, six types of the factors arising with every defilement (*klesamahaabhuumika*). It may be that a given factor of this kind is not necessarily bad; it may be neutral. The fourth category is of two types of factors, which are always defiling and always bad (*akusalabhuumika*). The fifth category comprises ten afflicting factors (*upaklesabhuumika*), which may accompany the other defilements. The sixth category is a group of indeterminate or neutral factors, neither good nor bad (*aniyaatabhuumika*). All of them cover a large variety of kinds of mental state.

Generally Permeating Factors

If one understands meditation in a broad sense to include any level of concentration, including the minimal attention required of any intentional mental state above mere sensation, it becomes possible for one to perceive a kind of progress from the first of these generally permeating ten types to the last, as indicating states of increased concentration, as one becomes less and less distracted, and more and more focused in one's attention. The generally permeating factors are discussed hereunder.

Feeling (*vedana*): Vasubandhu classifies feelings into eighteen kinds at one point, five at another and two at two places in his work. Feelings arise as a result of *karmic* conditioning. Broadly speaking, they are satisfying, frustrating and breeding contentment or irritation, or equanimity. For Buddhists, all feelings are generally frustrating. But satisfaction still occurs from time to time, so that some feelings, while temporarily satisfying, are, in the end, frustrating. A feeling is the basic kind of mental response to a sensory stimulus.

Identification (*samjnaa*): Some scholars consider this factor as ‘recognition’. The word *samjnaa* is difficult of exact translation. Paul Williams suggests that it corresponds to one’s thinking of a thing as being, and is closely connected with giving a name to a thing. Samghabhadra calls it *naaman* and the Sarvaastivaadins describe it as ‘produced by name’. It is identification that produces the grasping of signs (*nimitta*) and the breeding of conceptual construction (*vikalpa*). It works selectively to pick out a supporting object (*aalambana*), or sign. Identification leads to a feeling and is the occasion for *karmic* maturation. When one gets to a sufficiently advanced stage of meditation, one of the states attained is classified as *asamjniisamaapatti*, meaning ‘non-recognizing’.

Volition (*cetanaa*): This factor is equated with the mind suggesting our thirst to make aggregates. Some scholars describe it as ‘will’. The Vaibhasikas hold that all thoughts are the result of *karma*. But Vasubandhu disagrees, and he denies that a separate category of ‘un-manifest *karma*’ is necessary.

Contact (*sparsa*): The Sanskrit term is ambiguous. It also denotes the sense organ of touch. For the Sarvaastivaadins and the Vaibhasikas, it is a relation between a sense organ and a content grasped. The organ does not literally touch the object, for it does not last long enough to do that. But the atoms

comprising both are in close proximity. For this reason, the Sautranikas consider this factor as not a real distinct entity. But the Sarvaastivaadins consider that it is a distinct entity. On the other hand, Srilata denies that it is necessarily accompanied by any awareness.

One is, however, to distinguish the physical object comprised of atoms from the epistemic content displayed in the cognizer’s awareness.

Interest (*chanda*): Samghabhadra states that this is not to be confused with desire or thirst (*trsnaa*). Harivarman equates it with covetousness. It is the first of a closely related series of states of mind occasioned by one’s conceiving a content on the basis of identifying a feeling occasioned in thought by the connection of the content with an appropriate sense (including mental) organ.

Intellection (*mati*): This is to having an increasingly specific conception of content as an object.

Memory or Mindfulness (*smrti*): This is to bringing to mind of content for the purpose of meditation. This involves memory, too, for the reason that to meditate on an object, requiring attention to content over a period of time, necessarily involves more than mere momentary sensory awareness.

Attention (*manaskaara*): Concentration on a meditative or supporting object is a requisite stage in meditation. This is a distinct act, thus a distinct factor, for each resulting awareness. Attention can be right or wrong. When indulged in carelessly, it results in the breeding of proclivities.

Resolve (*adhimoksa*): The seeker resolutely desirous of liberation enters into appropriate states of meditation or concentration.

Concentration (*samaadhi*) or Meditation (*dhyaana*): Meditation is of four stages leading to advanced states of meditation on space, consciousness, etc culminating in the attainment of cessation (*nirodhasamaapatti*).

Good Permeating Factors

These factors always breed good *karmic* results.

Faith (*sraddhaa*): An alternative term for this factor is confidence (*prasaada*). Harivarman defines *sraddhaa* as concentration on content. Samghabhadra defines it as affection not involving attachment, thus not defiled. Faith produces energy, the next factor in the group. The term is used in classifying stages on the path to liberation. ‘Faith-followers’ are those about to become stream enterers on the path of vision and who have ‘mild faculties’, that is, who are not of an intellectual bent. Those ‘resolved in faith’ are faith followers that have become perfected beings.

Energy (*veerya*): Produced by faith, energy is one of the four practices leading toward supernatural powers (*rddhipada*). The other three practices are taking appropriate interest in gaining such powers, mental application toward that end, and careful examination of the powers themselves.

Equanimity (*upeksaa*): It is a state of mind free from conceptual construction, devoid of any feeling of superiority or inferiority, a culminating stage in meditation.

Shame (*hree*)
Modesty (*anapatraapya*)
Absence of Greed (*alobha*)
Lack of Hatred (*advesa*)
Non-violence (*ahimsaa*)
Tranquility (*prasrabdhi*)
Heedfulness (*apramaada*)

Defiling Permeating Factors (*Klesamahaabhūmika*)

Afflicted (defiling) states are bad (ethically reprehensible), being suffering, but not necessarily unbeneficial. Several factors are categorized afflicted, but are considered ethically beneficial. Several other factors are similarly afflicted, but ethically indeterminate. For instance, attachment may sometimes be beneficial. Doubts, remorse, and aversion, though afflicted, may have good results. Similarly, any afflicted state, which has come about as a result of retribution is by necessity indeterminate. This is for the reason that anything, which is retribution itself carries no further retribution.

Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakosa* lists six types of factors.

Delusion (*moha*) or Ignorance (*avidyaa*): *Moha* is one of the three bad roots that produce filthy awareness. It is always present in defiled mind. But it can be neutral like the other five in the category when it constitutes *karmic* retribution, as well as bad. It produces doubt and error. It is a residue in every feeling. It causes what is really frustrating, to be viewed as satisfying.

Delusion or *moha* is one of the six proclivities, but it is alone listed in this group, and the other five do not find place in this classification. However, some are found in the groups of Afflicting Factors and Neutral Factors.

Heedlessness (*pramaada*): Harivarman denies that heedlessness and heedfulness are separate factors.

Sloth (*kauseelya*)
Lack of Confidence (*asrabdhi*)
Lethargy (*styaana*)
Excitedness (*auddhatya*)

Factors Always Bad

Shamelessness (*ahreekya*)
Disregard (*anapatraapya*)

Both the factors concern one's acts and the results thereof.

Afflicting Factors (Upaklesa)

Vasubandhu lists ten factors in this category, while Harivarman lists eighteen. These factors breed *karma* by conditioning actions involving conceptual constructing, in everyone, even those on the path, up to the final stage of a noble person who has realized the truth of cessation. Such a one will have destroyed all afflictions and will not breed any more. Vasubandhu's list runs thus:

Anger (*krodha*)
Hypocrisy (*mraksa*)
Selfishness (*maatsarya*)
Envy (*eersyaa*)
Spite (*pradaasa*)
Violence (*vihimsaa*)
Vengefulness (*upanaah*)
Deceit (*maayaa*)
Craftiness (*saathya*)
Arrogance (*mada*)

It does not mean that a perfected being is totally free of feelings. Neutrality (*upeksa*) is a feeling, as are compassion (*karuna*), friendship (*maitri*) and a kind of excitement (*samvega*). They are the feelings that a perfected being experiences.

Neutral Factors

Vasubandhu lists four factors in this category.

Regret (*kaukrtya*)
Sleepiness (*middha*)
Initial Thought (*vitarka*)
Sustained Thought (*vicaara*)

The tradition has it that the following are also to be considered as factors in this category.

Attachment
Repugnance
Pride, and
Perplexity

Disassociated Factors

Contents of concomitant awareness are factors, which arise at the same moment as awareness (*citta*). They constitute conditioning factors associated with awareness (*cittasamprayuktasamskaara*). Vasubandhu identifies fourteen conditioning factors disassociated from awareness (*cittaviprayuktasamskaara*), so called, as they are themselves no material factors or mental states complete with content. They are as follows.

Possession (*praapti*): Vasubandhu explains it as comprising either the occurrence (acquisition) for the first time of the experience of a factor, or the occurrence (accompaniment) of

the experience of a type of factor in subsequent moments following the initial one. There is considerable literature as to the difference between acquisition and accompaniment.

Vasubandhu interprets the difference to relate to the difference between the first moment and the subsequent moments in the experience of a thing. It is to be borne in mind that, for Vasubandhu, a thing cannot persist through the periods of past, present and future. Samghabhadra, on the other hand, suggests that a factor can persist through past, present and future. He interprets ‘acquisition’ as the first time in a person’s experience that a factor has occurred, and ‘accompaniment’ as describing the relation between that person’s life stream and subsequent moment of the same sort.

The postulation of possession is intended to answer the difficult question of how the factors or events making up ‘my’ stream are mine in distinction to those of ‘yours’. In fact, the factors related to ‘cessation’ lie outside normal causal chains. They are part of the life stream of a particular person. The problem then is to account for the relation between these factors and the factors that constitute the stream we call the person undergoing these states. Further, it is crucial to tie the *karmic* traces, that is, the streams constituting such traces to the stream corresponding to the agent of the acts that laid down those traces. The factor of possession is postulated to accomplish all these tasks.

Non-possession (*apraapti*): When liberation approaches, the stream, which we call a person, enters various states of cessation, and loses the proclivities and other factors that occasion the breeding of *karmic* traces. As stated earlier, the severance of a given type of factors from a given stream comes about through a process called ‘revolution at the base’. Thereby, one acquires,

as it were, counteragents (*praptipaksa*) to specific proclivities. The proclivities then cease to arise in that stream. In other words, they become separated from the stream of the rest of the factors comprising what we consider to be the person. Given that the ordinary causal process requires a factor to causally condition either another factor of the same, or similar sort, or, at any rate, some factor or other, why and how can it happen at all? The factor of non-possession seeks to explain that separation.

Homogeneity (*sabhaagataa*): Why and how is it that those born on this earth comprise species whose bodies, organs, etc are so similar? If *karma* determines one’s rebirth, and each person’s *karmic* store is different from the next one’s, why are not there as many different types of embodiments as there are streams of factors constituting what we take to be persons? To answer these questions, Buddhists posit the factor *sabhaagataa*, meaning ‘the character of having the same kinds of parts’, herein called ‘homogeneity’. Vasubandhu refers to two kinds of homogeneity found in humans. One relates to the general homogeneity common to all living beings including humans, and the other relates to the human beings alone, distinguishing them from other living species.

Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra, in fact, defer over whether homogeneity is a real factor, or only a conceptual construction. Samghabhadra postulates that it is a real factor. He argues that if it were not so, we would not be able to classify people in the way we do. Vasubandhu, on the other hand, argues against its being a real factor. For him, homogeneity is actually nothing but being what one is. Not only living beings have parts of the same sort as others of the same species, but so do non-living things as well. Things, in general, fall into classes by virtue of their similarities and differences. Being homogenous is a general property of everything, not a specific property of anything.

Non-ideation (*aasamjnika*)

Non-ideation Trance (*aasamjnisamaapatti*)

Cessation Trance (*nirodhasamaapatti*)

Buddhism has developed a fairly elaborate theory of advanced sorts of the cessation-trance-involved states where no ideas of any kind occur, and yet the meditator is alive and, in due course, returns from the trance to a life of sensations and thoughts. For example, in between death and beginning of the next life, there are no relevant mental and bodily factors which make thought possible. The moments in the stream corresponding to the 'person' are devoid of content, and are as good as non-existent. Still the stream continues through such moments. How does this happen? This issue is precisely dealt with in the work *Mahaavibhaasaa*. Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra derive their views from this and similar works.

Sarvaastivaadins and Vaibhasikas on one hand, and the Daarstaantikas and Sautranikas on the other hold different views on this issue. Samghabhadra is with the Sarvaastivaadins and the Vaibhasikas. Vasubandhu is with the latter schools. Samghabhadra assumes that the above three factors are real and independent. He argues that they are required to explain why awareness of any kind, or mental concomitants, does not arise at all during trance. For him, the three factors do not constitute awareness, nor are they material entities. He, therefore, classifies them among the disassociated factors.

For Vasubandhu, on the other hand, it is the thought immediately preceding the first moment of non-ideation or cessation that causes such a moment to arise, and to produce a material location in the body for the trance state. In each successive moment, another similar empty location is caused to arise as long as the trance lasts. It is, therefore, not necessary to assume the existence of the three factors as independent meditative

states. They simply are constructions, manners of speaking of the cessation of thought.

Vitality or Life-force (*jeevita*): Buddhism assumes that each 'person' is merely a series of momentary factors. 'What distinguishes a stream of factors constituting a 'person' from a stream constituting, say, a chair, and, in particular, what keeps a person 'alive' in the state of trance?' are moot questions. Even in the early Buddhist *sutras*, one finds reference to a controlling faculty made responsible for this peculiarity. Similarly, the faculties of masculinity and femininity are considered responsible for gender differentiation. In this context, the factor 'vitality' finds its place in Vasubandhu's list of disassociated factors. It is, however, surprising that the factors of masculinity and femininity do not find their place in his list.

Both Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra discuss the problem of vitality in great detail. Cox makes a detailed comment on this issue.

'There are three major issues in the later treatments of vitality; first, the possibility of states without thought - specifically, the state of non-conception and the two states of equipoise of non-conception and cessation - which would lack perceptual consciousness; second, the possibility of rebirth in the formless realm, which would lack warmth; and third, the discrimination of life from death within the stream of any given sentient being. Underlying these specific issues is a fundamental disagreement concerning the ontological status of vitality as a discrete factor. For Samghabhadra and the Sarvaastivaada-Vaibhasikas, the three factors of vitality, warmth, and perceptual consciousness are not in all cases inextricably linked; for if they were, states said to be without thought would have thought (that is, perceptual consciousness), and rebirth states in the formless realm would

have form (that is, warmth). If life were distinguished from death only by the presence of perceptual consciousness, states without thought would be tantamount to death. Further, since beings in the formless realm lack a corporeal basis, and, therefore, warmth, were it not for vitality, must be admitted to exist as a discrete and real force capable of supporting both warmth and perceptual consciousness. What then would support vitality, especially given the fact that vitality remains when either warmth or perceptual consciousness is absent? Vitality is itself supported by previous action (*karman*) and homogeneous character (*sabhaagataa*) both of which are also, like vitality, characteristic only of sentient beings.’

Samghabhadra considers the three reasons stated by Cox sufficient to warrant postulation of vitality as a distinct and real dissociated factor. On the other hand, Vasubandhu does not consider it a real factor and states that vitality is only a conceptual construction. He does not, however, advance any reasons for his postulation.

Birth (jaati)
Duration (sthiti)
Ageing (jaraa)
Termination (anityataa)

These four states characterize all conditioned factors, providing each factor the time to perform the function appropriate to it. Samghabhadra accepts these four as actual factors, while Vasubandhu disagrees.

Collection of Words (naamakaaya)
Collection of Phrases (padakaaya)
Collection of Phonemes (vyanjanakaaya)

In Abhidharma analysis, the ‘phoneme’ or syllable consists of a vowel alone, or a consonant, or a consonant-cluster plus a vowel. For example, the term ‘Abhidharma’ consists of the phonemes *a*, *bhi*, *dha* and *rma*. These phonemes then form the basis of the word *dharma* or a phrase *abhidharma*.

Further, names, phrases, and phonemes constitute separate and real factors for the Sarvaastivaadins, and are classed among the dissociated factors, as they are related to material items as well as thought. But Vasubandhu defines a word as a collection of identifications (*samjnaasamukti*).

As in other cases, Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra differ in their interpretation of the three categories. Samghabhadra considers language as involving factors of these three categories in relation to one another. On the other hand, Vasubandhu claims that the three categories are unnecessary. That what must be postulated is language alone. For him, a word is not a separate factor. Words and phrases are not collections of sounds indicating phonemes. Rather, it is speech that constitutes language. Samghabhadra disagrees and states that ‘language itself’ cannot be identified with sound alone, internal thoughts of objects alone, or with what is conveyed in communication alone. Therefore, he classifies the components of language as dissociated factors.

Unconditioned Factors

There are three unconditioned (*asamskrta*) factors in Vasubandhu’s list of seventy-five factors. They are

Empty space (aakaasa)
Calculated cessation (pratisamkhyanirodha)
Uncalculated cessation (apratisamkhyanirodha).

Vasubandhu's list of factors does not include such things as dependent origination, infinite space, consciousness, nothingness, and 'neither-consciousness (identification)-nor-non-consciousness (non-identification)'. Vasubandhu has not considered them factors themselves, but rather types or 'locales' of factors.

Unconditioned factors are eternal and non-contaminating. They do not produce *karmic* residues. According to Vasubandhu, they enter into causal series, though in a limited way. Though Vasubandhu lists the three unconditioned factors, they are, for him, actually entities of absence, and not real. Samghabhadra, however, disagrees with this postulation. He argues that calculated cessation, for instance, is an effect, though it has no effect. It can enter into meditation as a supporting object, and is acquired by practice of the noble path. Thus, it is not merely an absence.

As for the factors, empty space is a clear enough notion. One is, however, to distinguish the unconditioned space from the element space, which Samghabhadra takes to be a different actual factor.

Calculated cessation is, in fact, liberation, *nirvana*, the cessation of all factors, arrived at, through the intentional attainment of, the stage by a perfected being. Uncalculated cessation refers to the cessation of a type of factor when the necessary condition for its production is cut off, for all future. For example, if one meets premature death, those factors, which would have conditioned the remainder of one's life's experiences, are unable to arise. This inability is termed uncalculated cessation. As one proceeds along the path rooting out proclivities, the factors, which would have instantiated those proclivities in future lives, undergo this 'uncalculated cessation'.

Other Sets of Factors

There are a few sets of other factors.

Four Immaterial States (*brahmavihaara*): These are stated to be friendship, compassion, sympathy and equanimity. These are also referred to as 'boundless' states of 'unlimited scope'.

Four Knots (*grantha*) or Floods (*ogha*) or Bonds (*yoga*): In *Dhammasangani*, the same list is called by all the three names. The list includes ignorance, covetousness, malice and addiction to moral precepts and vows. However, in the *Sangeetiparyaya*, a different list appears as the four floods. The list consists of sensual pleasure, existence, wrong views and ignorance.

Four Discriminations (*pratisamvid*): In the *Vibhanga*, these comprise discrimination as to the results of one's actions, as to factors, as to the appropriate choice of words and as to one's awareness of others. But in *Sangeetiparyaya*, the four concern factors, consequence, awareness of others and convention. The *Patisambhidaamagga* has another list of four discriminations. They are things (or meanings) (*artha*), factors, language (*nirukti*) and perspicacious-ness (*pratibhaana*).

Five or six Hindrances (*neevarana*): *Dharmasamgraha* lists them as sexual interest, malice, stolidity and torpor, distraction and worry, perplexity and ignorance. There are only five of these listed in *Sangeetiparyaya* – ignorance is not counted there as a hindrance.

Fetters (*samyojana*): Different texts list different numbers of these, and one finds different numbers listed under this rubric in different places in the same text. For example, at *Dhammasangani* III.1.1.8, there are three fetters – belief that

the body is real; perplexity about the master, the *dharma*, the order; and addiction to moral precepts and vows. But at III.1.2.4, the fetters number ten, the earlier three being joined by passionate desire, repulsiveness, pride, passion to be reborn, envy, meanness, and ignorance. Subsequent lists in *Vibhanga*, *Sangeetiparyaya* and elsewhere overlap these, not always numbering ten.

The above lists are not intended as in any way definitive of anything, but merely suggest that, despite the apparent repetitiveness of these texts, the actual content is different with each new author.

Matrices

Compilation of categorized lists of *dharmas* in the nature of tabulation of matrices forms the nucleus of the formal Abhidharma. Eminent elders such as Sariputra, Maudgalyaayana and Mahakatyayana made such listings quite probably with the Buddha's approval. They were all renowned for their skill in exposition, and seem to have been well known to the early Buddhists.

For instance, the *Gulissaanisutta* of the *Majjhimanikaaya* states that a monk living in the forest should apply himself to *abhidhamma* and *abhivinaya*. The *Majjhimanikaaya-Atthakathaa* explains the two terms thus. 'He should apply himself to the study of the *Abhidhammapitaka* and the *Vinayapitaka*, together with the commentaries. As regards the *Abhidhamma*, he should at least know the *Duka* and *Tika Maatikas* together with the '*Dhammahadaya-vibhanga*' (the last chapter of the *Vibhanga*). As regards the *Vinayapitaka*, he must at least learn the two '*Paatimokkhas*'.

The correlation of Abhidhamma in this passage with the *Abhidhammapitaka* is a later commentarial extrapolation. But the emphasis on knowing the matrices suggests the significance of these lists in the early Buddhism. Indeed, in early Pali canonical literature, the term 'matrix' (*maatikaa*) may be taken as virtual synonym of *abhidhamma*. Experts in those lists are called *maatikaadhara*. The term '*maatikaadhara*' always occurs in association with both *dhammadhara* (specialist in the *sutras*) and *vinayadhara* (specialist in the *vinaya*). This suggests the existence of matrices as separate collection of the word of the Buddha. The term '*maatikaa*' is also known to the *Mula-Sarvaastivaada Vinaya* and the *Divya-avadhaana* where it is mentioned in tandem with *sutra* and *vinaya dharmas*.

The matrices form the exegetical framework of the first Pali Abhidhamma book, the *Dhammasangani*. Twenty-two triads and one hundred dyads appear in the beginning of the text supplemented by another forty-two *suttanta* dyads. The triad matrix begins with a triad of factors that are good, bad and indeterminate. Their arrangement is such that the factors are grouped in three mutually exclusive sets which, when combined, encompass all mental (*naama*) factors in some cases, and both mental and material (*naamaruupa*) factors in others. Six of these triads are only mental factors, while the remaining sixteen include both mental and material factors.

These mental and material factors cover the entire range of phenomena as well as the unconditioned realm of liberation, called the *asamskrta dhaatu*, which is included among the *naama* factors.

The dyad matrix consists of one hundred dyads in thirteen groups. Ten of these groups are called ‘clusters’ (*gocchaka*). They deal with the ten types of corruptions (*aasava*, *klesa*, etc) and their related factors. These are found only in the Pali Abhidhamma. The remaining three groups called *cuulantaraduka* (shorter intermediate set of seven dyads), *mahantaraduka* (longer intermediate set of fourteen dyads) and *pitthiduka* (supplementary set of eighteen dyads) treat various miscellaneous pairs of factors such as *hetu*, *na-hetu*, etc. Many of the dyads in the *mahantaraduka* deal with the mutual relation of awareness and mental states. These three groups seem to be older and contain several items common to the matrices of the Sarvaastivaadin Abhidharma.

The *suttanta* matrix contains forty-two dyads of miscellaneous factors. Rather than dealing with *naama* and *ruupa*, as the *Abhidhamma* matrices do, the *suttantika* matrices are

mainly concerned with factors related to moral precepts, concentration and views. Thirty-two of its forty-two pairs are identical to the pairs of factors appearing in the *Sangeetisuttanta* of the *Digha Nikaaya*. As such this listing is designated as the *suttantika* matrices.

None of the formal matrices of the Sarvaastivaada and the Yogacaara Schools are now extant.

7. Abhidharma Literature

The Theravaada School

The literature of the Theravaada School was transmitted from India to Sri Lanka at the time of the third sectarian council, that is, the third century BC. From there it was diffused throughout the countries of Southeast Asia. Virtually all of these Theravaada texts are preserved in the Pali language, which became the religious language of southern Buddhism.

The *Kathaavatthu* relates that most of the school's Abhidhamma books had almost been codified by that time, and they had already become the subjects of a developing commentarial literature. With the transmission of this school to Sri Lanka, the importance of the Sthaviravaadins on the Indian mainland began to wane, and the Indian branch of the school became obscure. In this context, after the second century BC, the Theravaada Abhidhamma literature of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia developed in virtual isolation from the rest of Indian philosophical thought. It exerted no more influence on the course of Indian Abhidharma literature.

There are three stages in the development of Theravaada Abhidhamma. They are the composition and codification of the seven canonical Abhidhamma books and other semi canonical texts; writing of commentaries, called *atthakathaas*, to those books and general manuals of Abhidhamma doctrine; and the composition of an extensive sub-commentarial literature known as *Muulatikaas* and *Anutikaas*.

According to tradition, the seven books of the Pali *Abhidhammapitaka* are *Dhammasangaani*, *Vibhanga*, *Dhaatukathaa*, *Puggalapannatti*, *Kathaavatthu*, *Yamaka* and

Patthaana. While the Buddha is considered to be their author himself, they could not have probably been compiled until two or three hundred years after the Buddha's *parinirvana*.

Text critical analysis indicates that these books were composed in three stages. The *Puggalapannatti*, and, at least, some sections of the *Dhammasangaani* and *Vibhanga* relate to the first stage. These three texts contain extensive quotations from the *sutras*. Their principal concern is to explain points of controversy in the *Nikaayas*. Their overall approach is indicative of this primitive stage of development.

The *Dhaatukathaa* and the *Kathaavatthu* relate to the middle period. A dialectical approach is common to these texts. They teach the doctrine through a complex series of questions and answers. The unique Theravaada texts, *Yamaka* and *Patthaana*, employ an extremely advanced catechetical style, and belong to the next stage. They are incomprehensible to non-Abhidhammikas, and may be considered the culmination of doctrinal tendencies exhibited in the earlier Abhidhamma books.

Dhammasangaani, the first book of the *Abhidhammapitaka*, portrays the doctrinal edifice of the Pali Abhidhamma. It presents a systematic analysis of all individual compounded elements of existence within three major categories, namely, states of consciousness (*citta*), mental consciousness (*cetasika*), and material form / corporeality (*ruupa*). It also discusses the uncompounded element, *nirvana*. The three categories of compounded elements are treated from the standpoint of moral cause and effect as being *karmically* good, bad or neutral. Because of its stress on the analysis of mind and the mental concomitants, the approach of the *Dhammasangaani* may be considered psychological in orientation.

The *Vibhanga* is a series of eighteen independent treatises (*vibhanga*) on important categories of Buddhist doctrine such as the five aggregates, twelve senses, bases and objects, etc. Each exegesis is generally divided into three parts, namely, the explanation taken from the sutra, the Abhidhamma expatiation and a catechetical series of questions and answers to elaborate on specific issues. The *Vibhanga* is cited extensively in the *Patisambhidaamagga* of the *Khuddakanikaaya*, and seems to have the inspiration of the latter text.

The *Dhaatukathaa* consists of fourteen chapters in catechetical style describing the relationship pertaining between individual factors and the classifications of aggregates, elements and senses. This relationship may be by way of fourteen categories, as to whether a factor is included or not included in any of these three groups, whether they are both included or un-included, both un-included and included, both included and included, and both un-included and un-included, etc. Its rigorous analysis of the interrelationships pertaining between factors provides more precise definitions or commonly used Buddhist technical terms. It also augurs the subsequent development of a sophisticated logical form, called the *catuskoti*, which is later found in many Buddhist texts.

The *Puggalapannatti* is the shortest book of the *Abhidhammapitaka*. It is distinct from all the other canonical works in discussing not an ultimate factor of existence, but conventional concept (*prajñapti*), that of the individual person (*pudgala*). The language of the text is in affinity with the conventional discourse of the *sutras*. Much of its comments may be traced to the *Anguttaranikaaya* and *Sangeetisuttaanta* of the *Dighanikaaya*. Because of these affinities, the *Puggalapannatti* is generally considered to belong to the first stage of the Pali Abhidhamma literature.

The matrix that opens the *Puggalapannatti* consists of aggregates, bases, elements, truths, faculties, and concepts of persons. The first five concepts are discussed in the *Vibhanga* as the commentary to the text notes. This work does not, therefore, discuss them. Instead, it discusses 386 specific types of persons in 142 different groupings. This work is notable for extensive treatments of different types of liberated beings, including Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas*, and perfected beings. This is to the extent that the term *puggala* in its title is glossed as *ariyapuggala*, or noble person. Because of this focus on noble persons, the concerns of the *Puggalapannatti* are brought within the purview of Abhidhamma. It also explains technical terms that figure in the discussion of human types and includes definitions and similes that are not found elsewhere in Pali exegetical literature.

The *Kathaavatthu* is the only work in that *pitaka* which is not explicitly ascribed to the Buddha himself, though its contents are said to have been anticipated by the Buddha. Moggaliputta Tissa is traditionally believed to be its compiler. As Nyayatiloka notes, however, ‘the whole seems rather to have grown gradually so that already for this reason one would hesitate to ascribe the entire work to one single author. But the fact that most of the heretical opinions are ascribed to schools, which have come to life several centuries later, I consider positive proof that Moggaliputta Tissa could not have been the only author of this book’.

The *Kathaavatthu*, supplemented by the clarifications appearing in its commentary, the *Kathaavathuppakarana-Atthakatha*, gives one of the earliest accounts of the eighteen schismatic schools in which the early Buddhist order was considered to have divided. As the rival views held by these various sects threatened to undermine the authority of the

Sthaviravaadin elders, these views were examined in detail in the *Kathaavatthu* and the heterodox opinions of the schismatic schools were refuted.

In the *Kathaavatthu*, a total of 219 different controversies are covered in 23 chapters, with no apparent order. The book provides no references as to which schools the various views were ascribed. These are, however, provided by its commentary. Schools whose heterodox views were recorded in the text virtually include all the known sects of early Buddhism, though the Sammitteeyas and Sarvaastivaadins are the most prominent. Some of these sects may have been predecessors of later Mahayana schools.

The *Kathaavatthu* covers a number of important doctrinal controversies that constitute the development of Indian Abhidharma. The text opens with what is perhaps the most compelling issue facing any Buddhist school: can a person (*puggala*, glossed as self) be said to exist in any real sense? This view, ascribed by the commentary to the Vajjiputtakas and Sammitteeyas, is also the subject of a detailed refutation in the Sarvaastivaadin *Vijnaanakaaya*, and later in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosabhaasya*.

The *Kathaavatthu* gives extensive treatment to several soteriological issues. Controversies concerning the enlightened status of the perfected being, for example, are quite rife. Controversy I.2 concerns theories that a perfected being is subject to regression from his state of enlightenment, a view that is attributed to the Sammitteeyas, Vajjaputtakas, Sabbatthivaadins, and some Mahaasaamghikas. Controversy II.1 suggests that perfected beings are still subject to nocturnal emissions, and thus have not totally sundered the bond of sensuality. Controversies

II.2&3 cover claims that the perfected being is still subject to ignorance, and doubts his achievement.

Controversy IV.1 covers the heterodox view held by the Uttaraapathakas that a layman can become an *arhat*, but then continues to live the household life. The Theravaadins vehemently oppose this position. Views such as this challenged the very underpinnings of Buddhist spiritual practice, and would ultimately contribute to the Mahaayaanist revision of the ideal towards which practice was directed, replacing the *arhat* with the Bodhisattva.

Controversy XIX.7 covers intimations that some ordinary men are destined never to attain enlightenment, the concern in the Sarvaastivaada School. Controversy I.4 involves the Andhaka, Sammitteeya, Sabbatthivaadi, and Bhadrayaanika claim that the defilements are abandoned gradually. The Theravaadins rely on Suttanipaata V.231 to insist that defilements are excised forever at the time of insight. Controversy II.9 involves whether there could be gradual realization of the four stages of sainthood. This controversy recurs frequently in Buddhist thought, and perhaps contributed to the schism between the Sarvaastivaadins and the Theravaadins. The Sarvaastivaadins maintain that insight is gradual, involving sixteen stages in the realization of the four Noble Truths. The Theravaadins, on the other hand, maintain that realization is immediate. This debate received perhaps its most noted coverage in the putative debate that took place at the 'Council of Lhasa' between the Chinese 'sudden' teachings of Ch'an master Mo-ho-yen and the Indian 'gradual' doctrine of Kamalaseela.

The *Kathaavatthu* also treats a number of issues of specific importance to the Sarvaastivaada School, the main rival of the Theravaadins. Controversy I.6 takes up the Sarvaastivaadin view

that factors exist in all three times. The Theravaadins refute this view stating that factors only exist in the present moment. This dispute naturally receives considerable treatment in the Abhidharma texts of other schools.

Several disputes that relate to the Sarvaastivaadin theory of disputed factors (*cittaviprayuktasamskaara*) appear in *Kathaavatthu*. Controversy XIX.4 treats the Pubbaseliya view that acquisition (*praapti*) is an un compounded factor. Rather than calling it un compounded, the Sarvaastivaadins consider acquisition a dissociated factor. Controversy III.11 discusses the Andhaka claim that the unconscious gods (*asamjnisattva*) are still able to perceive, since rebirth cannot take place without the presence of the mental faculties. The Sarvaastivaadins attempt to resolve the problem by positing a peculiar type of ‘unconscious absorption’ (*asamjnisamaapatti*) among the dissociated factors.

Controversies XV.7&8 cover the issue whether the cessation-trance is mundane or supra mundane. Both the Theravaadins and the Sarvaastivaadins claim that it is neither. But the Sarvaastivaadins attempt to resolve disputes over its peculiar nature by including this absorption in its list of dissociated factors. Controversy VII.3 covers the Raajagirika and Siddhatthika rejection of the reality of mental states. Controversy VIII.8 discusses the issue of whether a subtle form of matter still exists in the immaterial realm. This may adumbrate the Sarvaastivaada theory of un-manifest matter (*avijnaptiruupa*). Controversy II.11 concerns the Maheesaasaka, Andhaka and Sarvaastivaada view that there are two types of *nirvana*, ‘cessation through reflection’ (*pratisamkhyaanirodha*), and ‘cessation without reflection’ (*apratisamkhyaanirodha*)

The *Kathaavatthu* adumbrates a few issues that are later the concerns of the Yogacaara School of Mahayana. Controversy

IX.5 refers to the Andhaka view that the awareness achieved through insight could occur without a corresponding object. This augurs the later Yogacaara theory of *niraalambanajnaana*, in which consciousness is permitted to operate in isolation from external objects. Controversy XIX.5 refers to the view of the Uttaraapathakas that ‘suchness’ (*tathataa*) is an un compounded factor. The Yogacaara School later held that ‘suchness’ is an un compounded factor.

The *Kathaavatthu* also takes up controversies involving the processes governing the world. Controversy VII.7 covers the role of the individual in shaping the physical world in which the earth is considered to be a *karmic* maturation, opening up the debate on what exactly *karma* yields. Controversy VIII.2 covers a vitally important issue whether there is an intermediate state between rebirths, a view attributed to the Sammitteeyas, the Pubbaseliyas and the Sarvaastivaadins. Controversy XV.11 covers disputes over the nature of *karma*. The Sammitteeyas and the Andhakas consider the accumulation of *karma* operates independently of mind, and is *karmically* neutral.

The *Kathaavatthu* covers a number of controversies concerning the transcendent nature of the Buddha, the mainstay of Mahaasaanghika and later Mahayana beliefs. Controversies XVIII.1&2 discuss claims of the Vetulyakas that the Buddha sent a phantom of himself to earth to preach the doctrine while he remained in *Tusita* heaven. Controversy II.10 refers to the Andhaka view that the Buddha’s conventional speech was also supra mundane. Controversy XXI.6 refers to the Mahaasaanghika position that there are multiple Buddhas living in all the four quarters of the universe, a view that is remarkably similar to that found in many Mahayana texts.

The *Kathaavatthu* adopts the logical approach in the text – ‘while that cannot be considered syllogistic, it is nevertheless systematic’. Controversy I.1, for example, adopts the application of a five-step logical method, which, after eight separate analyses, becomes a dialectical whole. The usage of a ten-member logical formula elsewhere in the text led later Indian logicians to require concrete examples in order to clarify the alleged relationships pertaining between constituents in the formula.

The *Yamaka* is a handbook of logical analysis and examines a number of doctrinal concepts in terms of their related doctrinal classifications and range of application. Its title, *Yamaka (The Pairs)* derives from its paired grouping of a question and its converse. This way, the text attempts to clarify whether a term may be applied to all members of the class it denotes, some of them, or none. For example, the opening discussion in the book (I.1) on good faculties concerns their relationship with good *dhammas*. In other words, it deals with the issue whether good faculties encompass good factors, the converse, or neither. Various other related questions such as whether such related factors have the identical faculty, etc, then follow. The analytical approach of the *Yamaka* is the most complex of the entire *Abhidhammapitaka*. It has, therefore, kept the text away from exerting much influence over the development of Theravaada Abhidharma.

The last book of the Pali Abhidharma, the *Patthaana*, is best known for its elaboration of causation theory. This book is considered to be pure Abhidharma as it does not include the *suttanta* matrix that appears in the *Dhammasangani*.

The *Pathaana* is an exhaustive examination of one of the cornerstones of Buddhist doctrine – the conditioned nature of all compounded factors. The introduction to the text provides a

detailed list of 24 specific types of conditioned relationships (*pratyaya*) that may pertain between different factors.

The specific types are 1) root condition, 2) object – content, 3) dominant, 4) proximity, 5) contiguity, 6) co-nascence, 7) mutuality, 8) dependence, 9) strong dependence / decisive support, 10) pre-nascence, 11) post-nascence, 12) repetition, 13) act, 14) maturation, 15) nutriment, 16) faculty, 17) meditation, 18) path, 19) association, 20) dissociation, 21) presence, 22) absence, 23) disappearance and 24) non-disappearance.

These twenty-four conditions are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, the later Pali manual *Abhidhammatthaasangaha* reduces them all to four, namely, object, decisive support, act and presence. This list is quite close to the six causes and four conditions of the *Abhidharmakosabhasya*.

Following the introduction of the twenty-four specific types of conditioned relationships, there is detailed application of all the twenty-four conditions to each and every factor according to the standard matrices of the *Dhammasangani*, etc.

For example, each member and every possible combination of the first triad of the *Dhammasangani* matrix – that of good, bad, and neutral factors – are treated in terms of all twenty-four conditions, giving a grand total of 1176 investigations that take place for just this one triad. This is only to emphasize that the scope of the book is virtually overwhelming.

The *Patthaana* refers to the term *bhavaanga* (life-continuum), literally meaning ‘the limb on which existence occurs’, a term of great importance in Theravaada Abhidhamma. It is that substratum which maintains the continuity of that individual

throughout that life. It plays a vital role in the sequence of sensory perception in a number of ways, and serves many of the same purposes as the Yogacaara doctrine of the storehouse consciousness (*aalayavijnaana*).

The *Patisambhidaamagga* is perhaps the oldest of the quasi-Abhidhamma texts of the Theravaada School. All Theravaadins consider this text canonical and ascribe it to Saariputta, though with little proof. It is now included in the *Kuddakanikaaya*. The nucleus of this book appears to be a hypothetical commentary to the *Dasuttarasutta*.

The term *patisambhidaa* refers to four specific types of analytical knowledge or ‘discrimination’ – meaning (*attha*), elements of existence (*dhamma*), languages (*nirutti*), and perspicuity (*patibhaana*). This classification is virtually unknown in the Pali *sutras*. It is mentioned only in a few later Theravaada works such as *Niddesa*, *Vibhanga* and *Kathaavatthu*. Also the term *patisambhidaa* receives only nominal mention in the rival Abhidhamma texts such as the Sarvaastivaadin *Prakaranapaada* and the *Bahusrteeya Tattvasiddhisaastra*.

The *Patisambhidaamagga* does not itself define these types of understanding, and presupposes the definitions found in the *Vibhanga* (Chapter XV). Its purpose is to illustrate in great detail the ways in which comprehension takes place as an adept progresses along the path, that is, what occurs as a person comes to understand the Buddha’s teachings.

The book includes thirty separate treatises on specific types of understanding, such as the meaning of action, the enlightenment factors, insight, and liberation. Its outline of the types of ‘discrimination’ required for progress on the path will

find its greatest elaborations later in the *Visuddhimagga* and *Abhidhammaavataara*.

The book refers to the important term *sabhaava*, for the first time, meaning ‘empty by essential nature’. It is commented upon, in the commentary to the text, the *Saddhammappakaasinee* as ‘having emptiness as its own nature’. The Sarvaastivaada School has adopted this term meaning, ‘the abiding nature of factors’. The *Patisambhidaamagga* seems to anticipate a later Theravaada description of factors according to their unique characteristics (*laksana*), function (*rasa*), and essential nature (*sabhaava*).

The *Patisambhidaamagga* is apparently the source for the series of ‘insight knowledges’ that constitutes the way to liberation in later Theravaada treatises. These are knowledge of comprehension; contemplation of rise and fall; and insight, which is the contemplation of dissolution, danger, and equanimity, about compounded things. This book carries extensive discussions of the term *gotrabhuu* (change of lineage) as the final type of insight knowledge. It interprets *gotrabhuu* as the conquest of the lineage of the worldly (*puthujjanagotta*) through the realization of the *ariyagotta*.

The Theravaadins of Myanmar (Burma) consider other Pali texts relevant to Abhidhamma as canonical, while the Theravaadins of Sri Lanka and Thailand consider them semi-canonical. Two of these texts, the *Nettipakarana* and *Petakopadesa*, are both attributed to the Buddha’s eminent disciple Mahaakaccaayana. But most probably, they were written about a century after the codification of the seven official Abhidhamma books. These books are actually two different recensions of the same text, the *Nettipakarana* being somewhat

improved, and thus accepted as definitive version by the Theravaadins.

Both these texts are hermeneutical manuals guiding Theravaadin commentators and preachers in correct spiritual interpretation. The *sutra* teachings of the Buddha, which were said to be of the one taste of liberation (*vimuttirasa*), actually varied considerably in their approach. Similarly, those who heard them differed also in their capacities for spiritual understanding. Hence, the internal consistency of the *dharma* – and, by extension, its utility as a teaching tool – could only be conveyed by providing the exegete with hermeneutical principles through which the intent of the Buddha in preaching specific *sutras* was ascertainable.

These principles are broadly based on meaning (*artha*) and phrasing (*vyanjana*), two elements by which the *sutras* were differentiated by the Buddha himself. In these two texts, *artha* refers to the soteriological aim that unifies all of the Buddha's teachings: *nirvana* and the path of practice leading to that experience. *Vyanjana* suggests the diverse ways in which that *artha* has been framed in Buddhist texts. Through detailed analyses of these two elements via *naya* (five meaning guidelines that illustrate how the *dharma* is made to relate to different people) and *haara* (sixteen phrasing categories that reveal the identity of meaning of variant expressions of *dharma*), the underlying unity of the *sutras* may be restored.

Both the books provide different *sutra* typologies based on a fourfold division. The division relates to the *sutras* dealing with the defilement, moral life, penetration, and the adept. There is an explicit progression in these types, from the stage of defilement to that of final liberation. This basic listing (division) is expanded to eight in the *Nettipakarana* and sixteen in the

Petakopadesa. The later text also gives two variant typologies of thirteen and twenty-eight *sutra* types.

The Sarvaastivaada School

Outline of the Literature

Among the traditional eighteen schools of early Buddhism, it is the Sarvaastivaadins who exerted the most profound influence on the subsequent development of the religion. Based upon its teachings that factors exist in all the 'three time' periods (*sarvam (sarvadaa) asti*), its ontology and soteriology inspired the developing Mahayana Schools.

The recension of the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, the doctrinal work of the School, translated by Huan-tsang, includes a forty-two-member matrix, beginning with twenty-two faculties and ending with ninety-eight contaminants, which outlines the contents of the eight chapters of the treatise. Many of these same factor-listings reappear in later Mahayana works such as the *Mahaaprajnaapaaramitopadesa*. Sarvaastivaadin theories also served as the point of departure in the subsequent examinations of Buddhist tenets by the Madhyamika School. Their teachings occupy a prominent place in the Theravaadin *Kathaavatthu*.

The Sarvaastivaada School had the widest geographical distribution on the Indian subcontinent, of all the early schools. After migrating from Pataliputra in the second century BC, they made their home in the Mathura region. The School soon spread to Kashmir, which ultimately became its orthodox base. A major sub-sect of the School, known as the *bahirdesikas* (foreign teachers), was prominent in Gandhaara, and Bactria.

The masters of the Kashmir and the Gandhaara Schools considered their teachings to be elaborations of the doctrines found in the Abhidharma *Mahaavibhaasaa*, a massive commentary and compendium of the Sarvaastivaadin doctrine.

They, therefore, commonly referred to themselves as Vaibhasikas (those who follow the *Vibhaasa*).

Many classical sources on the lineages of the early Buddhist schools distinguish between the Sarvaastivaadins and the Muulasarvaastivaadins. The relationship between the two remains unclear. Both apparently accepted the same Abhidharma texts, but recognized minor variations in certain *Avadaana* texts, and maintained different recensions of the *Vinaya*.

In addition to its being widespread in India, the Sarvaastivaada was also the only of the early schools to achieve popularity throughout greater Asia as well. The Chinese pilgrim, I-ching (ca. AD 671-95), for example, reported finding the Sarvaastivaada School flourishing in several of the petty kingdoms of Central Asia, in Southeast Asia on the islands of Sumatra and Java, and in the southern, western and eastern provinces of China whence it spread to other regions of East Asia.

The Abhidharma canon of the Sarvaastivaada School is based on its central text, the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, and six subsidiary treatises, called the *padasastras*. A massive commentary to the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, known as the *Mahaavibhaasa*, is the basic source of information on the intra-sectarian controversies that apparently raged within the school. In addition to these canonical texts, there are several handbooks of Sarvaastivaadin Abhidharma that are still extant in Pali. Only the *Abhidharmakosabhasya* and fragments of the *Abhidharmadeepa* are extant in Sanskrit. Apart from portions of the *Prajnaptibhaasya*, which survive in Tibetan, the remainder of the canonical literature is available only in Chinese translation. This dearth of materials in the original Sanskrit has long inhibited research in the canonical literature of the Sarvaastivaadins.

Unlike the texts of the Pali Abhidhamma canon, the original outlines of which are all ascribed to the Buddha himself, the Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma books are all ascribed to human authors. But the Sarvaastivaadins themselves considered these men to be mere compilers of the Buddha's words.

The *Jnaanaprasthaana* is commonly considered to be the body of the Sarvaastivaadin *Abhidharmapitaka*, and the six supplements its limbs, literally feet (*pada*). As the *Jnaanaprasthaana* is considered to be the youngest of the canonical Abhidharma texts, this could not have been the original meaning of the term 'foot'. Ching-mai's post-face to Hsuan-tsang's translation of the *Dharmaskanda* suggests a different sense. It states that a text 'was titled *pada* because it relied on the Abhidharma'. In this context, the interpretation that these texts were subsidiary to the *Jnaanaprasthaana* is probably a later development.

The *Jnaanaprasthaana*, also known as the *Astagantha*, or the 'Eight Chapters' is attributed to Kaatyayaniputra. It is now considered to be the latest of all the canonical works of the Sarvaastivaadin *Abhidharmapitaka*. According to the Sanskrit tradition, preserved in *Sphutaartha Abhidharmakosavyaakhya*, Yasomitra's commentary to the *Abhidharmakosabhasya*, its six supplements are the following, with their authors stated in the brackets.

1. *Sangeetiparyaya* (Mahaakausthila)
2. *Dharmaskandha* (Saariputra)
3. *Prajnaptibhaasya* (Maudgalyayaana)
4. *Dhatukaaya* (Purna)
5. *Vijnaanakaaya* (Devasarman)
6. *Prakaranapaada* (Vasumitra)

Three separate Chinese recensions of a commentary to the *Jnaanaprasthaana* are still extant. They are *Vibhaasa*, *Abhidharmavibhaasa*, and *Abhidharmamahaavibhaasa*. Sarvaastivaada exegetes composed systematizations of the canonical literature quite extensively.

The following ordering of the canonical texts is considered to be the most plausible. *Sangeetiparyaya* and *Dharmaskandha* are considered to belong to be the earliest period, *Prajnaptibhaasya*, *Dhatukaaya*, *Vijnaanakaaya* and *Prakaranapaada* to the middle period, followed by the *Jnaanaprasthaana*.

Sangeetiparyaya

The matrix that opens the book includes 122 separate classifications of a total of 205 factors arranged in a sequential series of monads, dyads, triads, up to decads, in a way that is quite similar to the format of the *Ekottara-aagama*. As such, in format, its affinities are more with the various recensions of the *Sangeetisuttanta* found in the Pali *Nikaayas* and Chinese *Aagamaas* than with the Abhidharma texts of the later Sarvaastivaada School. Perhaps, its closest parallel among the Pali Abhidharma texts is the *Dharmasangaani*.

In its theory of the seven types of noble persons, the *Sangeetiparyaya* is slightly more developed than the *Dharmaskandha*. The *Dharmaskandha* refers only to two types of noble persons – faith followers and the followers of *dharma*. On the other hand, the *Sangeetiparyaya* lists seven types of noble persons – faith followers, *dharma* followers, resolved in faith, view-attainers, bodily witness, liberated by wisdom, and liberated both ways. This classification suggests that this text postdates the *Dharmaskandha*. While this listing is more

advanced than anything found in either the *Aagas* or the *Dharmaskandha*, it in no way represents any kind of revolutionary expansion of the scope of the *Aagama* presentation of the path, as found in the *Jnaanaprasthaana*.

Dharmaskandha

Its coverage closely parallels that of the Pali *Vibhanga* and the first half of the Saariputra's *Abhidharmasaastra*, its style appears to be the most primitive of the three. Its treatment of major clarifications of factors indicates its antiquity. While the later Sarvaastivaada texts always list the aggregates, bases, and elements in that order as in the case of the Theravaada tradition, the *Dharmaskandha*, instead, gives them as bases, aggregates and elements, without accounting for the discrepancy.

The individual constituent classes of the thirty-seven limbs of enlightenment cover the major portion of the text. These chapters constitute one of the first attempts in the Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma to systematize the *maarga* scheme. This book draws the distinction between the path of insight and the path of practice. This innovative division became the cornerstone of the mature soteriological scheme of the Vaibhasikas, and also exerted enormous influence on the outline of the Buddhist path found in many Mahayana texts.

The latter portion of the text treats various technical classifications such as the bases and elements. There is a synthesis of these two major divisions of the book in the sixteenth chapter, which emphasizes, in particular, the defilements and their removal.

Prajnaaptibhaasya

The *Prajnaaptibhaasya* is the only one of the canonical Abhidharma texts that is not extant in full in Chinese translation. In its Tibetan recension, all the three sections are available. The three sections are *Lokaprajnapti*, *Kaaranaprajnapti* and *Karmaprajnapti*.

Lokaprajnapti is an extension of the cosmogony speculations of the *Aagas*, such as are found in the *Aggannasutta*. The Chinese translation of the *Prajnaaptibhaasya* in the eleventh century AD, several centuries after the translation of the other canonical texts, preserves only portions of the second section on causes. This section covers material on the causes leading to the various stages in a *Bodhisattva*'s career, from entering the womb to entering *parinirvana*. This topic is conspicuously absent in the Theravaada Abhidharma.

The *Prajnaaptibhaasya* is the text most quoted in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. This suggests that though it covers most of the topics provisionally, its speculations were nevertheless of concern to the *Vibhaasaa* scholars.

Dhaatukaaya

The *Dhaatukaaya* is representative of the middle stratum of Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma texts. It is a preliminary attempt to systematize the burgeoning numbers of mental phenomena into a coherent matrix. The parallel between the *Dhaatukaaya* and the *Prakaranapaada*, both of which are ascribed to Vasumitra, has led some scholars to believe that the *Prakaranapaada* is an expansion of the abbreviated coverage of factors found in *Dhaatukaaya*. Interestingly, the *Mahaavibhaasa* does not refer to this book at all suggesting that it was of marginal concern to

Vaibhaasikas, and also because so many of the issues it raised were more extensively treated in the *Prakaranapaada*.

Vijnaanakaaya

Modern scholars consider *Vijnaanakaaya* to have been composed in the later half of the first century AD. It is divided into six sections, based on an analysis of the six types of the sensory consciousness. Its main contribution to Abhidharma philosophy is its account of the Sarvaastivaada theory that factors exist in all the three time-periods. This is the only such treatment found anywhere in the *Jnaanaprasthaana* or the *padasastras*.

Huans-tsang's disciple, P'u-kuang summarizes the reasons advanced by the Sarvaastivaadin School in support of their view that factors exist in all the three time-periods thus: '.... because it was spoken by the Buddha; because of the contact of sense-base and sense-organ (leading to the production consciousness); and because *karman* has a fruition'.

The *Vijnaanakaaya* provides extensive treatment of all these reasons. This theory seeks to prove that there was to be a distinct cause for the arising of consciousness that cognized past or future objects. If there were no such objects existing in reality, such cognition could not take place. Since they do occur, therefore, past and future objects must also be real. The *Mahaavibhaasa* very frequently cites the *Vijnaanakaaya* as the source of the three times theory.

Another important issue of the book whether a person (*pudgala*) exists is treated in the chapter following the three periods theory. The *Vijnaanakaaya* approach to this issue has a profound effect on the later development of Sarvaastivaadin doctrine.

The *Vijnaanakaaya* demonstrates that factors have a unique essential nature (*svabhaava*). This investigation is the foil against which the refutation of the reality of the person occurs. It gives the Pudgalavaada definition of *pudgala* as that which performs action, receives pleasure and pain, etc. The book cites four *sutra* passages in support of the claim of the Pudgalavaadins.

The *Vijnaanakaaya* then exposes the inherent contradictions between the *pudgala* and a variety of other basic Buddhist doctrines, and finally treats a number of ancillary issues.

For example, one issue is this. If there is no self, then how is it possible that the conception of self arises? The *Vijnaanakaaya* treats this issue in the only way of no-self theory found in the canonical literature of the Sarvaastivaadin Abhidharma. The only treatment in Sarvaastivaadin literature that compares in extent and sophistication with that of the *Vijnaanakaaya* is the Appendix to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosabhaasya*.

The *Vijnaanakaaya* also demonstrates its concern with the theory of causation. It mentions fourteen types of *hetu*. It includes a discussion on the arising of the sense-consciousness that focuses on the role of the four types of conditions in bringing about that origination. This section is important because it represents the earliest attempt of the Sarvaastivaadins to determine the functioning (*kaaritra*) of the essential nature of a factor.

It brings the causation theory to the forefront of Abhidharma concerns. Thus it plays an important role in the development of Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma, and exerts a profound influence over the later Abhidharma manuals.

Prakaranapaada

The *Prakaranapaada*, in its content and style, appears to be the latest of the six *padasastras*. Its one hundred citations in the *Mahaavibhaasa* are second in number only to those of the *Prajnapitibhaasya*.

There are two separate translations of the work in Chinese. In addition, two completely independent books, the *Abhidharmapancavastukasutra* and the *Sarvaastivaadanikaayapanjavastukavibhaasaa* appear to be early translations of the first chapter of this work.

The *Prakaranapaada* illustrates the mature synthesis of the Sarvaastivaadin doctrine and represents the point of transition between the *sastras* of the middle period of the Sarvaastivaada literature and the later commentarial works.

The *Prakaranapaada* definitively establishes the distinctive classifications of factors – materiality (*ruupa*), mind (*citta*), mental concomitants (*caitta*), factors dissociated from mind (*cittaviprayuktasamskaara*), and uncompounded elements (*asamskrtadharmas*). This fivefold grouping is not found in the Theravaada tradition, and seems to have developed in the Sarvaastivaada School.

The origin of this scheme appears to have been in the *Dharmaskandha*, which treats all factors in terms of four classes (*skandha*) - matter, feelings, identification and consciousness, and conditioning factors (*samskaara*). The conditioning factors include both associated and dissociated factors. This division of conditioning factors into two parts is a special characteristic of the *Dharmaskandha*'s treatment of factors, and is an essential step in the development of the mature fivefold scheme.

The formal division into five classes also seems adumbrated in the *Dharmaskandha*. In its treatment of the good, bad and neutral elements, the *Dharmaskandha* maintains that the latter type includes un-manifest matter, awareness, concomitant mental factors, dissociated mental factors, and various unconditioned factors - the precise standard division in the Sarvaastivaada Abhidharma. The later texts such as *Dhaatukaaya* and the *Prakaranapaada* follow the division of mental concomitants found in *Dharmaskandha*.

It, therefore, follows that the fundamental insight of the *Prakaranapaada* appears directly drawn from the *Dharmaskandha*. The *Prakaranapaada* is not, however, content to give merely a listing and definition of each individual factor within the five classes. Rather, the text expands upon these five classes in a comprehensive way, treating each of them in terms of various general characteristics such as the eight types of knowledge, 'no self', the four noble truths, frustration, and so forth.

The *Prakaranapaada*'s classification scheme secures a prominent place for the *panjavastukas* in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. The *Jnaanaprasthaana*, which is the basis of the *Mahaavibhaasa*, gives only a fourfold division of factors - awareness, mental concomitants, matter, and dissociated conditioning factors. The adoption of the *Prakaranapaada*'s classification in the *Mahaavibhaasa* assured the *Prakaranapaada*'s entry into the mainstream of the Sarvaastivaada School. This listing further influenced the treatment of factors found in the *Tattvasiddhi*, as well as in works by authors in the Sautranika, Maadhyamika and Yogacaara Schools.

Jnaanaprasthaana

All sources agree that the doctrinal edifice of the Sarvaastivaada School is built upon the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, ascribed to Kaatyayaniputra around the second half of the first century BC. The six *padasastras*, with their variant approaches to the Sarvaastivaada doctrine, were apparently in near final form by the time of Kaatyayaniputra. As such he could be considered less a philosophical innovator than a scholastic systematizer. He conceptualized the grand scale of the scholastic Sarvaastivaada system, with special attention to its outline of spiritual practice.

The fundamental outlook of the *Jnaanaprasthaana* is soteriological. The entire book is an attempt to systematize the various stages of the path of spiritual cultivation based on the overriding organizing principle of the four noble truths.

The first chapter on miscellaneous factors opens with discussion of the higher-worldly factors. It is primarily concerned with the truth of path. The second chapter on fetters treats the truth of origination. The third chapter on knowledge and the seventh on concentration deal with the truth of cessation. The chapters four, five and six deal with action, the four great elements and the faculties concerned with the truth of frustration. While the first seven chapters outline the correct outlook on the four noble truths, the final chapter deals with views devoted to rebutting the mistaken views of non-Buddhists.

The main body of the text is thus concerned with presenting a systematic outline of the process of spiritual development. Concentration, the motive force behind progress on the path, is placed in the seventh chapter, while the realities of the world and the reasons that practice needs to be undertaken are placed in the middle sections. Knowledge, the fundamental

cause of liberation, appears at the beginning of the book. The book thus suggests that, owing to the cause of knowledge and the condition of concentration, there is liberation from the fetters, entrance into the highest worldly factors, and realization of the various levels of sainthood.

The *Jnaanaprasthaana* opens with the notion of the highest worldly factor (*loukikaagraddharma*). It is, perhaps, the major conceptual innovation of the book. The opening line provides the first definition of 'highest worldly factor' thus. 'If *citta* and *caitta dharmas* become immediate, (that is, without any object interrupting their focus on the *nirvana* object) and (bring about) the entrance into the certainty of insight (*samyakvaniyaamaavakraanti*), these are called highest worldly *dharmas*'.

Hence, a higher worldly factor is the point of transition between the world-ling (*prthagjana*) and the noble person (*aarya*), and brings about the entrance into the path of insight (*darsanamaarga*). It is through this prominent focus on highest worldly factors that the *Jnaanaprasthaana* is best able to integrate the major segments of the path, namely, the mundane path of practice, the path of insight, the supra-mundane path of practice and finally the path of the realized adept.

Opening with this stage of the path, the *Jnaanaprasthaana* seeks to explain that the transmutation of the world-ling into a saint is the highest religious aspiration of the Sarvaastivaada School. This way, the book delineates the scope of the Abhidharma concern with soteriology. It is concerned with the higher reaches of the path.

The initial attempt to fix the stages of the path in the book proves to be a major influence on later Sarvaastivaada

scholars as well as on Yogacaara and other Mahayana exegetes. Incidentally, each of the principal stages of these various paths stated in the book receives full elaboration in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. The scheme of this work is fully reflected in the sixth chapter of the *Abhidharmakosabhaasya*, the *Maargapudgalanirdesa*.

The second greatest contribution of the *Jnaanaprasthaana* is its systematization of the scheme of six causes into what becomes one of the cardinal doctrines of the Sarvaastivaada. The six causes are efficient cause, simultaneous cause, connected cause, homogeneous cause, cause recurring in every instance, and retributory cause. These six causes are not found anywhere in the *Aagamas*. The earlier Abhidharma texts such as the *Vijnaanakaaya* mention only four.

Kaatyayaniputra seems to have adopted this teaching in order to account for the cause - effect relationships that pertained between the various stages of the path, which happen to be the major concern of the *Jnaanaprasthaana*. From the account in the *Abhidharmamahaavibhaasa*, there seems to have been considerable controversy among the early Vaibhasikas whether or not to accept these six causes as an authentic teaching of the Buddha. But it is Kaatyayaniputra who brought them to the forefront of the Sarvaastivaadin etiological considerations.

Abhidharmamahaavibhaasa

The *Mahaavibhaasa* is a massive sourcebook of Sarvaastivaadin doctrine, compiled according to tradition in the first half of the second century AD, at the time of the third sectarian council convened in Kashmir, sponsored by King Kanishka. The *Mahaavibhaasa* is conceived as an exposition of the *Jnaanaprasthaana*. It follows the chapters and section

divisions of the original text. But, by no means, is it a word for word commentary.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* immensely expands the coverage of doctrinal issues stated in the *Jnaanaprasthaana* and the earlier *padasaastras*. It treats the competing currents within the contemporary Sarvaastivaadin School. It mentions the theories of the four Abhidharmikas – Dharmatraata, Vasumitra, Ghosaka and Buddhadeva. Besides, it cites several other teachers of the school, now otherwise unknown, such as Buddharaksa, Ghosavarman, Vaamalabdha, Jeevala, Sanghavasva, Ksemadatta, Puurnayasa, Vaspa, Dharadatta and Dharmanandin.

The intra-sectarian debates recorded in this text are of enormous value in reconstructing the development of Sarvaastivaada philosophy. In addition, the *Mahaavibhaasa* represents the pristine Vaibhasika viewpoint, free from the Sautranika bias of the later *Abhidharmakosa*, through which most Abhidharma scholars have investigated the Sarvaastivaada School. Rival schools of Buddhism also receive extensive coverage.

Of considerable importance is the information on the proto- Mahayana movement found in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. This information illustrates the accommodations reached between the Hinayana and early Mahayana schools, as well as the means by which the Hinayana would eventually evolve into the Mahayana. This information provides much support for the thesis that it was Sarvaastivaadin ontology and soteriology, rather than the *Mahaasanghika bodhisattva* doctrine as found in the *Mahaavastu*, which served as the basis for the development of Mahayana.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* treats a variety of non-Buddhist schools such as Nirgrantha (Jaina), Saamkhya (Vaisesika),

Lokaayata (materialists), Sabdavaada (philosophers of language), and Hetuvidyaa (logicians). In addition, the text includes extensive information on other non-philosophical aspects of Indian culture including astrology, calendrics and medicine, which would be of interest to social historians. Thus, the *Mahaavibhaasa* provides a comprehensive record of Buddhist and pan-Indian philosophy in the early decades of the Common Era, as well as early information on Indian cultural life in general.

There are different traditions concerning the compilation and dating of the *Mahaavibhaasa*. The text itself opens with different views concerning its authorships. The anonymous compilers of the text, known as the *Vibhaasaasaastrins*, maintain that the Buddha himself, in fact, composed the text. Forced to explain the catechetical style of the text, the *Vibhaasaasastrins* reply that the Buddha responded to the questions of an interlocutor, who is identified variously as Saariputra, the five hundred perfected beings, the gods, or a phantom monk conjured up by the Buddha himself specifically for this task. Regardless of the circumstances in which the text was composed, its final composition and transmission is, however, attributed by the *Vibhaasaasaastrins* to Kaatyayaniputra, the author of *Jnaanaprasthaana*. It is, however, in keeping with the common Indian tradition of an author writing auto-commentaries to his own treatises. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosabhaasya* is an example.

The primary concern of the *Vibhaasaasaastrins* was to undertake an analysis of all known solutions to specific Abhidharma problems and arrive at a consensus view that would henceforth represent the orthodox Vaibhasika position. In one passage, the *Saastrins* compress all of Abhidharma into fourteen principal topics - the six causes, four conditions, summary (*samgraha* or *anugraha*, *adhikaara*, etc), connected (*samprayukta*), ordered (*samanvaagama*), and unordered

(*asamanvaagama*). Alternatively, other masters summarize these instead as seven dyads - the skillful knowledge of causes, conditions, specific characteristics, general characteristics, connection and disconnection, connected and disconnected, and finally ordered and unordered.

These topics are convenient rubrics for a number of the issues raised in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. The *Saastrins* have expanded the scope of coverage of these topics, culling information from the *Jnaanaprasthaana*, the six *padasaastras* as well as the writings of a number of Abhidharma masters.

One of the most important developments in the *Mahaavibhaasa* is its treatment of dependent origination. The text outlines four different types of dependent origination. They are momentary (*ksanika*) causation, as when all twelve moments of the chain are realized in a single moment of action; serial (*saambandhika*) causation in which dependent origination is viewed in reference to the relationship between cause and effect; static (*aavasthika*) causation in which dependent origination involves twelve distinct periods of the five aggregates; and prolonged (*praakarsika*) causation in which that sequence of causation occurs over three life times.

The *Vibhaasaasaastrins* accept only static dependent origination, reiterated later in the *Abhidharmakosa* and the *Abhidharmahrdaya*. This type of dependent origination is most involved in the interplay between the *karmic* cause and retribution, and points out the persistent soteriological import of the Sarvaastivaada doctrine of causation.

The static theory of dependent origination postulates thus. The present fruition moments of dependent origination are consciousness, name and form, six sense bases, contact, and

feeling. Through these present fruition moments, one can know the past causes such as ignorance and conditioning factors that led to that fruition. Through the present causes such as desire, grasping, being and birth, one can know the future fruition such as old age and death. This way the *Saastrins* explicitly interpreted dependent origination in terms of its role in bringing about liberation from the cycle of birth and death, rather than as an ontological principle.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* also examines cosmogony and the role of the individual in that creation. The *Saastrins* raise the premise that sentient beings bring about the diversity of the world. They undertake a corollary discussion of the reasons why an individual's final liberation and consequent disappearance from the world would not cause that diversity to be diminished.

There is controversy over whether 'world' refers to physical environment itself, or the *karmic* state of the individual being in that world. In the *Kathaavatthu*, the Theravaadins vehemently criticize the Andhaka claim that the physical world is created by the *karma* of individual beings. In both the *Abhidharmakosa* and the *Sphutaartha*, both Vasubandhu and Yasomitra respectively vacillate on which of the two kinds of world is meant. However, in the *Vibhaasa*, the *Saastrins* regard both types of world as being products of *karma*. 'The predominant force of the *karman* (*karmaadhipatya*) of classes of sentient beings causes the formation of the world.' This discussion has implications for the later Mahayana – Yogacaara teaching that the world is created by mind alone (*Dasabhūmika*, *Pancavimsati*, etc).

The *Mahaavibhaasa* undertakes the most extensive discussion on another characteristic teaching of the Sarvaastivaadin School – the intermediate state between

existences. Some means of accounting for the transfer of *karmic* effects from one lifetime to the next is essential if the fundamental principle of *karmic* cause and effect is not to be controverted. The *Saastrins* accept the fact of an intermediate state between death and rebirth in the next life. The occupant of that state is called a *gandharva*, a special type of subtle-form body that is produced by the same *karman* that produced the physical body, and which feeds on scent.

This teaching is a matter of controversy between the Buddhist schools, mainly the Sarvaastivaada supporting it on the one side, and the Theravaada vehemently opposing it on the other.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* explicitly subordinates the categorization of associated mental factors to soteriological concerns pertaining to the path. This tendency persists from the *Jnaanaprasthaana*. The *Mahaavibhaasa* lists fifty-eight mental factors in seven major groups, parallel to the grouping found in the *Dhaatukaaya* and *Prakaranapaada*.

In the *Mahaavibhaasa*, the mental factors are categorized in such a way as to allow a detached analysis of the processes by which defilements are overcome and liberation attained.

The soteriology of the Abhidharma commonly focuses on thirty-seven factors of enlightenment. Seven factors, which bear on liberation and which are not generally mentioned in that list, receive attention in the *Mahaavibhaasa*. They are pride (*maana*), sleepiness (*middha*), regret (*kaukrtya*), fear (*bhaya*), perplexity (*vicikitsaa*), aversion (*nirveda*) and delight (*praharsa*). While the latter two of these factors are solely good (*kusala*) in content, the others are twofold. For example, perplexity is both bad and neutral.

In the outline of the processes leading to liberation, the *Mahaavibhaasa* makes much of the relationship between perplexity and fear. This process begins with doubt. Doubt, in most Buddhist schools, is considered to refer to skepticism concerning the three jewels of Buddhism, the efficacy of the teaching, etc. In other words, it is a negative force that leads to wrong views. However, the *Saastrins* accept that there is a type of doubt akin to informed curiosity or the intellectual passion to know, which can lead to correct view. Owing to this kind of positive doubt about the value of one's present lot, there arises apprehension about one's state in life. This brings, in turn, a desire to leave behind the defilements (*virati*), and finally results in complete disgust with the world (*nirveda*). This ultimately leads to liberation. The *Mahaavibhaasa* discusses the precise definition of 'disgust', which, in many ways, is the essential mental factor in catalyzing the transition from ordinary person to saint.

Another distinctively Sarvaastivaadin category is the forces dissociated from awareness (*cittaviprayuktasamskaara*). In its treatment of this category, the *Mahaavibhaasa* makes singularly important contributions to Buddhist factor-theory. According to the *Kathaavatthu*, forces dissociated from mind are known in a number of early schools including Andhakas, Mahaasaanghikas, Uttarapathakas, Vaatsiputriyas. But it is for the *Mahaavibhaasa* to make detailed theoretical analyses of Abhidharma problems.

For example, acquisition-force (*praapti*) is demonstrated to be the principal agent in establishing the individual in either bondage (*samyoga*) or liberation (*visamyoga*). This focus on dissociated factors in the description of soteriological events is a peculiar characteristic of the Sarvaastivaadin treatment of the category.

In the later Vaibhaasika manuals such as the *Abhidharmakosa* and *Abhidharmadeepa*, standard lists include only thirteen such factors. The *Mahaavibhaasa* makes flexible use of this type of factor to account for complex moral and mental processes. The Vaibhaasikas resort to this peculiar type of force to explain a variety of anomalous events such as *samucchinakusalamuula* (serving the good roots), *muurdhaapatita* (backsliding from the stage of summit), *arhattvaparihaana* (regression from sainthood) and even *sanghabheda* (causing schisms in the order). In such cases, descriptive difficulties inherent in accounting for the processes underlying such events make the classification of dissociated factors a particularly attractive heuristic device for resolving such problems.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* is a major source of material on early Mahayana developments. The term 'three vehicles' (*trayaana*) meaning the vehicle of the disciples (*sravakayaana*), the vehicle of the solitary Buddhas (*pratyekabuddhayaana*), and the Bodhisattva vehicle, does not appear in any of the six *padasaastras*. But the *Mahaavibhaasa* delineates the three vehicles. It carefully distinguishes these three vehicles from the Buddhas, as the Buddhas are first enlightened, and have all-encompassing enlightenment.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* discusses extensively the relationship between different soteriological ideals and the concept of spiritual lineage (*gotra*). It outlines six different lineages. It covers the notion of 'evolution of the locus' (*aasrayaparaavartti*) to account for possible cases of a practitioner of a lower lineage evolving to the point of being able to assume a totally new lineage, such as the transformation of the *sraavakagotra* into the *pratyekabuddhagotra*. The rival schools also treat these different lineages extensively. For example, the *Saariputradharmasastra*

treats an eightfold lineage scheme, while the *Puggalapannatti* treats a fourfold lineage scheme.

The *Mahaavibhaasa* refers to several doctrinal elements that have apparent affinities with the Mahayana. The descriptions of the levels of the path in the *Mahaavibhaasa* adumbrate subsequent Mahayana developments. For example, Kaatyayaniputra outlines a scheme of spiritual development in ten stages, called *bhuumis*, in five major segments. The (*laukika*) *bhaavanaabhumi* comprises six levels of practice – restraint of the organs, care in precepts, non-regret, joy, satisfaction and concentration. *Darsanabhumi*, which is defined as knowledge and vision according to reality, follows. *Samatvabhumi*, defined as disgust (*nirveda*), *Kaamavitaraagabhumi*, defined as fading away (*viraaga*), and *asaiksabhumi*, defined as liberation (*vimoksa*) follow resulting in *nirvana*, defined as the fruit of all these *bhuumis*. This outline resonates with various rival ten-*bhumi* schemes as found in the *Mahaavastu* and the *Dasabhummikasutra*.

In the *Mahaavibhaasa*, Ghosaka also outlines a ten-stage scheme of development. The stages are analyzing the truth of suffering; analyzing origination; analyzing cessation; analyzing the path; the path of application (*prayogamaarga*) in which virtues are amassed and the four aids to penetration cultivated in order to perfect the three precepts; the non-interrupted path (*aanantaryamaarga*) in which right knowledge appears and eradicates the defilements; liberation (*vimoksa*) which is the one moment of right knowledge following the liberation path which brings about the awakening to truth; the advantageous path (*visesamaarga*) which builds the efficacy of contemplation and wisdom; (*praaptipannakamaarga*) which ‘tends towards’ the state of ultimate fruition; and finally the fruits of attainment (*praaptaphala*) which is the state of ultimate fruition.

Even the names and placement of the various stages of this scheme seem to adumbrate the five-stage Yogacara outline of the path – *sambhaaramaarga*, *prayogamaarga*, *darsanamaarga*, *bhaavanaamaarga*, and *nisthaamaarga*.

The analysis of materiality (*ruupa*) in the *Mahaavibhaasa* is the most thorough such treatment found in any of the Vaibhaasika treatises. In its system there are three different classifications of *ruupa*. First is the four great elements consisting of earth (solidity), water (cohesion or fluidity), fire (maturation), and wind (motion). The second is the derivative materiality, comprised of the five internal sense-bases and five external sense-objects. The third is a peculiar type of un-manifest materiality (*avijnaaptiruupa*), which provides for the continued efficacy of all physical acts, whether bodily or vocal, which do not have an obvious, immediate result. The Vaibhaasikas posit this later type of matter in order to account for the continuity of *karmic* cause and effect, which is a matter of considerable controversy between the Buddhist schools.

The Vaibhaasikas define materiality generally as that which has resistance. This definition raises considerable problems for them. This raises interesting questions. ‘If that which involves the characteristic of resistance (*pratigha*) is called the defining mark of matter, then past, future, subtle, and un-manifest (types of materiality) would be without resistance and thus would not involve the mark of matter. And were they not to involve the mark of matter, they would not be material.’

The *Vibhaasaasaastrins* reject this premise. ‘Although past matter now has no resistance, it previously did have resistance. Although future matter now has no resistance, it will have resistance. Although each individual subtle (matter) does not have resistance, as a mass they do have resistance. Although

the own-nature (*svabhaava*) upon manifest (matter) is free from resistance, its locus (*aasraya*) has resistance; hence (un-manifest materiality) is also said to involve resistance. What is its basis? The four elements! Because that basis has resistance, the un-manifest (matter) can also be said to involve resistance, like the shadow that moves when the tree sways.’

The *Mahaavibhaasa* relates matter and *karma* very closely. It states that the five sense bases are produced in direct association with *karma*. This notion finds place in the *Tattvasiddhi*, too.

For example, with seeing as cause, the faculty of the eye results. With hearing as cause, the faculty of the ear results. So is the case with other senses and sense organs. This kind of logic in the *Mahaavibhaasa* has enormous influence on the *Tattvasiddhi*. Similarly, the twenty implications of the meaning of *ruupa* given in the *Mahaavibhaasa* have a bearing on the parallel five implications found in the *Tattvasiddhi*.

Avijnaptiruupa is a peculiar type of matter, which, being invisible and un-manifest, is included in the *dharmayatana* along with feeling, identification, conditioning and unconditioned factors. This is most commonly associated with the Vaibhaasika School. The later Vaibhaasika works relate to it in different designations. The *Samyuktaabhidharmahrdaya* refers to it as *akriya*. The *Nyaayaanusaara* calls it *virati*. This un-manifest matter is said to involve two varieties of loci. One is *aasrayaparivrtti*, which is the power of transformation wrought by the four great elements of the present. The second is *upaadaayaparivrtti*.

8. Epistemology

General

Early Buddhism did not show much interest in epistemology. But later schools, from the time of the Sarvaastivaadins, began developing their epistemological doctrines. This became necessary under the pressure of controversies with rival schools. Though there is not much evidence about the epistemology of the Sarvaastivaadins themselves, their two sub-schools, the *Sautraanikas* and the *Vaibhaasikas*, showed fairly keen interest.

In fact, epistemological doctrines came into being only after Gautama, the founder of the *Nyaaya*, who belonged to the fifth or the fourth century BC. Buddhism could not have been interested in the subject at that time, although it was, from the beginning, rejecting the Veda as the scriptural authority, and was relying entirely on logic and experience in its controversies with rival schools.

However, we find very early attempts at using a form of argument and syllogism in the controversies among the Buddhist sects in the third century BC. The school of the Elders called itself analytic arguers (*vibhajyavaadins*). Analytic arguers divide a position into alternatives and reject everyone separately. They use the hypothetical syllogism, dilemma. In some cases, they use the syllogism in its simple moods with example (*udaaharana*). But there does not seem to be much of an attempt to formulate the forms of argument.

Although the Buddhists rejected the Veda as a scriptural authority, they accepted the Buddha’s words instead. But the Buddhists did not think of writing any book on epistemology up

to about the fifth century AD when Dinnaaga wrote the book titled *Pramaanasamucchaya* on the basis of which Dharmakriti wrote his *Pramaanaavaartika* in the sixth century AD, on which, again, Prajnaakaragupta wrote his commentary *Pramaanaavaartikaabhaasa* in the seventh century AD. All these books belong to the Vijnaanavaada School, in which references can be found to the *Sautraantika* and *Vaibhasika* views.

However, the Buddhist schools are not unanimous in their epistemologies in view of the differences among their metaphysical views.

The two forms of valid cognition accepted by the Buddhist epistemologists are perception and inference. Though they reject the Veda as a scriptural authority, they accept that language or word is a way of knowing, and that it is reliable when spoken by a reliable person, who for them is the Buddha. So we can say that the Buddhists accept the word also as a valid means, though in their own way. They treat verbal cognition or cognition through words as a form of perception.

Perception – Perception of Particular

The Vijnaanavaadins define perception as non-illusory sense-cognition devoid of determinations (*kalpana*). Determinations are the characteristics and their relations. The rival schools of Buddhism severely criticize this definition of perception. This definition is the same as the definition of indeterminate perception given by Kumaarila.

How can such cognition, which is absolutely indeterminate, be perception at all? It can only be cognition of a mere that, of mere being, without the what. It is not of the form, ‘that is a book’; for, then, the ‘that’ is characterized by the what, ‘that is book’. When thus characterized, the cognition will be a classification of the object under books.

Further, for the Buddhists, perception is not also of the form, ‘that is yellow’; for then ‘yellow’ is a characteristic characterizing the ‘that’. But if the form of perception is a mere that, what is the relevance or use of such perception? The object of every perception is a ‘that’ and there can be no difference between one ‘that’ and another.

Again, when a man perceives a snake, if he perceives only a mere that, he will neither run away from it nor attempt to kill it. But, as he does either of the two, his perception cannot be a mere that. But, if perception gives many ‘thats’, it cannot be a basis of inference, and there can be no inference.

The Buddhist doctrine of perception is based upon the view held by many of them that every object is itself and not another, and has, therefore, its own character (*svalaksana*). The object that is itself and not anything else (*svetarabhinna*) is known only in perception. It is a particular.

In inference, on the other hand, we know the object only as a member of a class, but not as this or that particular object. The Buddhists do not accept the reality either of the category of the particular (*visesa*) or of the universal (*jaati, saamaanya*). The idea of the particular is only that which is not anything else and so of that which is different from everything other than itself (*anyaapodha*).

The universal is only either a name (word) or a mental concept (*vikalpa*). We wrongly think that, corresponding to the word and concept, there is a real object called the universal. When we see several men, we use the same name for all of them, as they are similar to one another. Then in our mind, through memory, a common concept (*vikalpa*) is formed. The concept is thus a product of memory (*smrti*).

Regarding the universal, the Buddhists are not realists, but nominalists and conceptualists. What they mean by the object of perception being different from everything else is the non-carrying (*apoha*) of the past (memory) into the present cognition. The word *apoha* is *apa* plus *uha*. *Apa* means absence, and *uha* means carrying one into another. But, *apoha* is explained as 'different from everything else'. So, the rival schools ask thus. 'If, in the perception of an object, the object's difference from all other objects is also cognized, there can be no *apoha* in perception as there is reference to all the other objects, which are, therefore, carried into the present perception'. This situation makes the Buddhist position on the universal not realistic.

What the Buddhists mean by saying that all perception is indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*) is not that the object is a mere that and all perceptions give only 'thats'. When one perceives a horse, one perceives it with its form, size, colour, etc. But the form, colour, size, etc are not distinguished as characteristics of

the horse. The colour patch one sees in the space occupied by that animal is that particular patch, but not any other.

In the actual process of cognition, in the focusing of the sense, there is no conscious memory of other similar colour patches. The situation is that there is absence of any cognition of distinctions within the object, as between the substance and the attribute, between member and class, etc. There is also absence of any cognition of its positive and negative relations to other objects. But the Buddhists explain that the object of perception is cognized as different from other objects. Their language rather seems to be defective.

Another question arises. If perception is indeterminate, how are action and inference possible after perception? The Buddhists explain that the necessary factors (*saamagri*) for giving rise to both are present in mind. These factors are the analytic function of mind, memory and name. After perception, mind makes distinctions within the object, attaches names to the object and its distinctions, and, through the names and concepts so formed and related, makes a major premise and inference. And through the concepts and names associated with action, man acts. For instance, the name and idea of a snake are associated with the idea of its being poisonous. Therefore, one either runs away or attempts to kill it.

As to the relation between the perceptual consciousness and its object, the Sautranikas, the Vaibhasikas and the Vijnaanavaadins differ from one another. The Sautranikas and the Vaibhasikas, being Sarvaastivaadins, say that all objects are real and existent. They contend that, in perception, our consciousness takes on the form of the object. As such, the form of our consciousness and that of the object become identical.

But this identity is coincidence for the Sautranikas, while it is real for the Vaibhasikas. According to the former, our consciousness cognizes only the form (*aakaara*), which it assumes and which coincides with, or becomes similar to the form of the object. It does not cognize the object and its form. Thus, the Sautranikas accept the representative theory of perception. The existence of the object is only inferred as the cause of the perception. The inference is mediated by the idea in our consciousness. The object itself is never perceived.

On the other hand, the Vaibhasikas question the validity of the view of the Sautranikas. 'If no object is directly perceived, how can we know that there are real objects at all? Again, how can we know that our idea of the object is true, if we never see the object? How can we know that there is correspondence between the idea and the object?' So the Vaibhasikas maintain that there is absolute identity between the form in our consciousness and that belonging to the object. In other words, our consciousness knows the object directly. They accept the presentative theory of perception.

The Vijnaanaavaadins also accept the presentative theory. But they say that the object does not have an existence independent of our consciousness. The form which consciousness assumes in perception belongs to consciousness itself, but not to the object. This is for the reason, according to them, that there is no independent object.

The Vijnaanaavaadins are idealists and accept the reality of consciousness only. But, for them, the consciousness takes two forms. One is the form of knowledge (consciousness) and the other is the object. The Vijnaanaavaadins accept only the two-factor theory of cognition, but not the three-factor theory of Kumarila. The theory of Kumarila postulates that cognition

involves the cognizer, the cognition and the cognized. For the Vijnaanaavaadins, to think that there is an independent object that is cognized and that there is an independent subject (knower) to whom the cognition belongs is an illusion (*avidya*). What we call the 'knower' is the knowing consciousness itself. The result of cognition is the experience of consciousness of itself as asserting, 'that is a book'. The cause of this cognition is to be looked for not in an object existing independently of consciousness, but in the formative forces (*samskaaras*) within our consciousness. The causation is from within, but not from outside of consciousness.

The Maadhyamikas accept the reality of neither consciousness (*vijnana*) nor the object, but only of the void (*suunya*). According to them, the three-factor theory of the Mimamsa (Kumarila's), and also the two-factor theory of the Vijnaanaavaadins belong to the sphere of ignorance (*samvrti*). These theories can only have empirical and pragmatic validity, but not the absolute validity (*paaramaarthika satya*).

For the Buddhists, in general, perception is of four kinds, namely, sense perception, self-revealing perception, mental perception and yogic perception. Sense perception is that of colours, sounds, tastes, etc. Mental perception is that of objects as wholes, not merely as sensations or senses, and of hate, attachment, etc.

A curious question arises. How can objects belong to mental perception, if colour, etc belong to sense perception? The Vijnaanaavaadins say that the perception of the 'that' in 'That is yellow' belongs to mind, and not to the senses. Of the mental perceptions, some, like happiness, are self-revealing (*svasamvedenam manasam pratyaksam*). But the 'that' in 'That is yellow' is not self-revealing. Yogic perception belongs to the

yogis, who are free from all impurities, and who can see directly past and future, and also objects at any distance.

There is an element of unfairness in the criticism of the Buddhist doctrine of perception, which is that what we see is a particular only, not determined by any universal. When one sees a green object, what one perceives is of the form 'that is green'. The object and the green patch, which one sees, are particulars.

Supposing one sees another object, which is exactly similar to it and is within the same field of vision, one does not treat the two green patches as one identical, even though there is no idea of their difference. There are two separate objects and separate green patches, individual particulars.

A few questions arise. If one has not perceived a particular green patch, how can one bring it under the universal or class concept 'green'? If one has not seen the particular green patch, what does one bring under the universal green? Why and when does one bring that what is seen under universal green, but not under some other universal colour?

The Buddhists define that a particular is what is different from everything else. This leads to the situation that perception of a particular should involve the perception of everything else in the world. It should also involve the perception of the difference from everything else, and so include a reference to everything else. But this is an impossible situation, which does not happen at all. It looks to be a mistake that the early Buddhists did not accept the categories of the particular and the universal, and were obliged to give such a misleading definition of the particular.

This difference to 'all the rest' in their definition is not necessary for the act of perception. What happens is that when

one observes the object in green in front, there is no reference to anything else in one's perceptual experience, neither to a universal nor to any other particular or particulars. Such reference, as in 'that is green' and so 'that it is not yellow', and 'no green object is a yellow object' develops later in the morphological development of that perception. When an object is seen for the first time, it is seen as an individual, whole form, not merely as a mere something. Some universal, class concept name, etc are developed later, when the subject observes other objects of the same kind. Even Ramanuja says that indeterminate cognition is not the cognition of a mere something, which cannot be different from another something, but of a determinate individual, when seen for the first time. Determinants like universals can be found in later perceptions of the same object or objects of the same kind.

What Ramanuja says about the perception of an object for the first time in one's life holds true of every perception during the live act of perception. For instance, when one sees a horse even for the hundredth time, during the live act of one perceiving it, one does not consciously remember other horses. One is not even aware of their universal or class concept. Yet, one is conscious of the whole living horse. Such perception is called a spontaneous judgment or an unreflective one. What one observes is a particular horse, and perceptual judgment primarily comprehends what is perceived, and not what can be developed even in spontaneous reflection out of that perception.

It is, however, true that perception, at the stage that of a particular, not brought under a class concept or universal, is not what exactly is communicated and utilized in inference. Before we can communicate the perception, at least the predicate in 'that is green' has to be reflectively brought to the level of a class concept. This is for the reason that, in communication, the word

'green' stands for a class, and the hearer can next apply it to the object, and particularize it.

But it does not follow that the perceptual judgment, even at the lowest level, has explicit reference to universals or class concepts. When the subject perceives the object as green, the green is a particular. But when he conveys his knowledge to the hearer, he no longer focuses his mind and eye on the colour. He raises his cognition to the level of universality, for one's perception in live act cannot be passed on to another.

Inference

The Vijnaanaavaadins have an interesting theory of the relation between perception and inference. According to them, all perception is indeterminate in the sense that it is without any inner distinctions, and is non-relational.

But no cognition is valid unless it leads to successful activity. If the object of perception is a pen, then it is to lead to writing. If it does not write, then it is not a pen. If the object is sugar, then it must lead one to experience its sweetness. But the object as such does not lead one to action. One is led to action by the idea (*vikalpa*) and name of the object. Thus the name and idea of the object and the idea of one's future activity are related. One, therefore, infers that if one eats sugar, one will have a particular experience, the experience of sweetness. The validity of perception depends on this inference.

But inference itself depends on perceptual data for its own validity. Hence, perception and inference are mutually dependent. This dependence does not mean that perception is not valid as perception. One's cognition of the pen as such is valid as the mere perception of the pen. But simply as perception, it does not lead to action, unless the determinations arise, leading one to future action based upon the inference of the result.

The Buddhists thus divide cognition into perception and inference. For them, perception is that cognition, which is self-dependent (*svatantra*) and inference as every form of cognition that is not self-dependent, but is based on some other cognition. Here the Buddhists interpret inference (*anumaana*) as that valid cognition that follows another valid cognition, or occurs after it. The word *anumaana* is a combination of the prefix *anu*, meaning 'after', and *maana*, meaning 'measure'. All valid cognitions are

measures of reality. So *anumaana* is the measure that follows or is derived from another measure.

An absolutely self-dependent cognition cannot have even the element of memory. For example, one says, 'That is a horse'. In this, the distinction between the 'that' and the universal horse-ness and a relation between the two is cognized. One does not merely perceive, but has gone beyond perception. To know the relation is to know that the animal in front is a member of a class. But the class-concept, horse-ness, is a product of past experiences and so of memory.

But perception should not include anything except what is immediately present. It cannot then be determinate, but indeterminate. And what is not indeterminate follows upon perception, and comes under inference. Inference, for the Buddhists, thus becomes wide and comprehensive. It is more than syllogistic reasoning.

The Buddhists also speak of inference for oneself (*svaarthaanumaana*) and inference for another (*paraarthaanumaana*). Inference for oneself seems to include the whole thought process intervening between indeterminate perception and explicit syllogistic inference, as in debate. Thus, what are called recognition, cognition of negation and practical reason, in the sense of Aristotle's exposition, leading to action after perception, become inferences for oneself. Yet they are not recognized as separate and distinct means of valid cognition.

Verbal cognition or cognition of an object, after hearing a word or sentence, is perception of sound and inference of the meaning of the words. Kumarila's non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) is, for the Buddhists, only a means of inference. It is like this. 'I do not perceive the pen; therefore, there is

absence (*abhaava*) of the pen'. Comparison or perception of similarity (*upamaana*) also is a combination of perception and inference.

These forms of cognition arise after (*anu*) perception and are based on it. Indeed, in these inferences, the parts of syllogism are not explicit. But they can be made explicit, if so desired. They are all inferences for oneself. These are immediate inferences different from those of western logic, mainly of the well-known John Dewey's theory.

The Buddhists maintain that the inference for another is to have only two parts. This contrasts with the stand of the Naiyaayikas who insist on five parts and the Mimamsakas who insist on three. The two parts for the Buddhists are the major with the example, and the minor term along with the middle term in its relations to the major term. The syllogism is like the following.

Where there is smoke, there is fire, as in the kitchen;
this mountain has smoke necessarily related to fire.

The Buddhists reject the necessity of the separate mention of the thesis to be proved, reason, application of the major premise to the minor term such as pointing out the similarity of the mountain to the accepted example, and establishment of the conclusion or the thesis. Yet they divide inference into two propositions. The two propositions relate to the major premise with the example, and the minor premise including the reason or the middle term. They deny the necessity to mention separately the reason, limiting it only to two terms, mainly on epistemological considerations than on the purely logical. It is rather true that the conclusion is drawn from the total thought form.

From the angle of pure logic, if the separate mention of reason is omitted, confusion results. To avoid this situation, the Buddhists themselves give definitions and explanations of these terms.

According to Dinnaga, any true reason (middle term, *probans*) must be present in the minor in which the consequent (*probandum*, major term, the thing to be proved) is to be proved. It must also be present wherever else the *probandum* is present. And it must be absent wherever the *probandum* is absent. The three conditions are stated as *pakse sattvam*, *sapakse sattvam*, and *vipaksaa sattvam*.

Dinnaga also states that the relation between the *probans* and the *probandum* (middle and major terms) is either that of cause and effect, or natural, or inseparability. The Buddhists call natural relationship, identity (*taadaatmyataa*). For instance, one can infer from the object being an oak that it is a tree. The relation between the oak and the tree is called identity. The Nyaya calls this relation the relation of the individual and the universal. But the Buddhists do not accept the reality of the universal.

Further, natural relation can also be that of natural succession. For example, day and night follow each other naturally. If it is daytime now, we can infer that night follows. The inseparables may not have any direct or indirect causal relation. Yet we can infer one from the other.

The Buddhists say, rather curiously, that the major premise is obtained from or seen in perception. But, for them, perception is indeterminate. If so, how can we have a major premise, which is universal proposition, from perception? A

universal proposition expresses a relation between two universals or concepts and cannot, therefore, be obtained from perception.

The Vijnanavaadins admit that the objection is justified, for the concepts are the mental forms and are not true. So inference has only empirical (*samvrti*) or pragmatic (*vyaavahaarika*) truth. Only perception as indeterminate is ultimately valid (*paaramaarthikasatya*). Then too, it is ultimately valid when it presents no object, but only consciousness (*vijnaana*). In ordinary perception, the object is presented as if it has an independent existence apart from consciousness. But, in truth, only consciousness is ultimately real; and the object is false from the standpoint of ultimate reality.

The Sarvaastivaadins do not accept this stand of the Vijnanavaadins. For them, the object has its own reality apart from consciousness. They treat consciousness as having no reality, but appearing only as a kind of epi-phenomenon. Again, the Sautranika School of Sarvaastivaadins does not accept that the object is directly perceived by us, but only inferred. The school is, therefore, understood as having rejected perception as valid means of cognition to be called perception. For them, inference is the only means of cognition, as the object exists only through inference from the idea that we have of the object.

The Buddhist doctrine of inference seems vitiated by their doctrine of momentariness and their view that the relation between the middle and the major terms is perceived. If all things are momentary, it is not possible to establish any causal connection among them. Further, causal relation, being universal, cannot be obtained from indeterminate perception.

Verbal Knowledge

The Buddhists do not accept verbal knowledge as a distinct means of valid cognition. Hearing the word as a sound is perception; and knowing its meaning is inference. So, verbal knowledge is a combination of perception and inference.

They argue that the *Mimamsa* view that any person did not compose the Veda cannot be true. This is for the reason that there can be no book not composed by any person. They do not accept the *Nyaya* view, too, that God composed the Veda, for the existence of God cannot be proved.

If the authoritativeness of a book composed by a reliable person is to be accepted, there is only one reliable person, the Buddha. The Buddha's teachings (words) ought, therefore, to be accepted. According to them, a reliable person is one who has knowledge of the ultimate truth, who knows what is to be sought for and what is to be avoided, and who is infinitely compassionate. He is one who has gone the right way (*sugata*) and who knows and teaches the four Aryan Truths. Such a person is only the Buddha, and his teachings alone are reliable. More importantly, his teachings can be verified by experience and inference.

Validity of Knowledge

The Buddhists generally accept that a valid cognition and its means are one and the same. This is to say that they do not distinguish between the process of cognition and the result of cognition.

This view holds particularly true of the *Vijnaanavaadins*. According to them, the object is only the form (*aakara*), which our consciousness assumes. And there is no object independent of our consciousness. The *Maadhyamikas* do not have any objection to accept the position of the *Vijnaanavaadins* at the empirical level.

The *Vaibhasikas* say that the form, which our consciousness assumes is the same as that of the object, which has, however, an existence of its own. The validity (*praamaanya*) of our consciousness lies in this identity, which becomes the validating instrument of cognition. At the same time, it is not different from cognition. In the sense that the form of cognition and cognition are not different, the process and result are identical.

The *Sautranikas* say that the form of the object and the form, which consciousness assumes, are similar, but not identical. But the result of cognition is the form it obtains and knows (*svasamvitti*). Even then, cognition (*pramaa*) and its result (*phala*) are identical, for the result is the form of cognition itself.

As for the problem whether cognition is valid by itself or is made valid by something else, the views of the *Sautranikas* and the *Vaibhasikas* are not available. But all the Buddhist schools maintain that truth is known through action. For, every object is meant to serve some purpose, and we can know only through activity whether or not it serves that purpose. The world is

created for activity (*karma*) by ethical potency (*samskaara*) generated by activity. So the truth of our cognition, so far as empirical reality goes, can be known finally through activity. This view is also common to all the Indian schools except the Caarvaakas.

The Maadhyamikas and the Vijnaanavaadins assert that all cognition by itself is false (*svatah apraamaanyam*). For the Maadhyamikas, neither consciousness nor the object is real, but is only an appearance. Yet, in this world, we experience them. They are false. And our cognitions presenting objects are invalid by themselves. For the Vijnaanavaadins, our consciousness is real, but the object it presents is false. Cognitions are, therefore, essentially invalid. They hold that consciousness that knows itself only, but not an object, is ultimate *vijnaana*, and is the only valid one.

Some important questions arise. If all cognitions are false, why do we say that some of our cognitions are false and the others true? Why and how do we draw the distinction between truth and falsity? The Buddhists answer that those cognitions that lead to expected results in action (*arthakriyaakaaris*) are true, and those that do not are false. This distinction between truth and falsity is only an empirical distinction. This is not the one made from the absolute point of view.

The world of becoming and action consists of being and non-being. The nature of being is to serve the expected purpose. For this reason, the Vijnaanavaadins reject the reality of space, time, God, Atman, etc as they serve no purposeful activity. We are to bear in view that generally Being is not ultimate for Buddhism. The nature of non-being is to fail to serve the expected purpose.

To be is the same as to serve an expected purpose. This is the view of Prabhakara, too. This view belongs to the Vijnaanavaadins, and is acceptable to the Maadhyamikas also. The principle of non-contradiction (*avisamvaaditaa*) is reduced by the Buddhists to the pragmatic criterion (*arthakriyaakaaritaa*), which is regarded as the criterion and definition of Being (*Sat*) itself. As cognitions, which are originally false by themselves, are made valid by their purposeful serving of our actions, it is the success of such actions that makes our cognitions valid. Thus, cognitions are true because of something other than themselves (*paratah praamaanyam*).

Time

Generally, Buddhism takes it as canonical that things are fleeting, lasting for only a moment. This leads to a few questions. How long is a ‘moment’? Are there ‘things’ which occupy moments – past, present and future? Is a *dharma* confined to the present only?

The natural interpretation of ‘momentary’ suggests that things exist for only a moment; that a thing has no ‘history’. The only existents are only now. This was apparently the view of early Abhidharmists of the Sthaviravaada School, who are also termed *vibhajyavaadins* (distinctionists). They are called so as they divide factors into two kinds, those, which ‘exist’, and those, which do not. This was not the only view held in early Buddhism.

Most of the early Sarvaastivaadin texts do not treat time distinctly. The very name of the movement suggests that their view is different from that of the distinctionists. The first Abhidharma text of the Sarvaastivaadins, the *Vijnaanakaaya* criticizes Maudgalyaayana’s view that the present, but not the past or future, exists as incoherent, involving self-contradiction. While it criticizes distinctionism, it does not choose to offer a positive account of time. Indeed, a well-developed account of this theory occurred only later.

Cox summarizes the general lines of the Sarvaastivaada account of time thus:

‘The Sarvaastivaadins argue that factors exist as real entities (*dravya*) in the three time periods of past, present and future. As such, they are defined as intrinsic nature (*svabhaava*), characterized by a particular inherent characteristic (*svalaksana*). Given appropriate causes and conditions, their existent factors

manifest a particular activity (*kaaritra*), which then defines them as present. However, since factors also exist as past or future they are capable of serving as conditions in those times as well... By contrast, the Daarstaantikas equate a factor’s existence with its present activity. One cannot meaningfully distinguish a factor’s intrinsic nature from its activity, and thereby speak of its existence in the past or future. Further, they argue, factors do not exist as isolated units of intrinsic nature that manifest a particular activity through the influence of other isolated conditions. For the Daarstaantikas, the process of causal interrelation is the only fact of experience; the fragmentation of this process into discrete factors possessed of individual existence and unique efficacy is only a mental fabrication.’

The Doctrine of Illusion

There seem to be many doctrines of illusion among the main Buddhist schools, namely, the Sautraanika, the Vaibhasika, the Maadhyamika and the Vijnaanavaada. Again there are differences of opinion within every one of the four main schools. But much of the literature is lost and it is difficult to trace the views to their propounders. Further, many of these views are obtained from the works of rival schools, which are not always sympathetic. They might have been misunderstood and misinterpreted. Some of the interpretations are not clear.

According to the Sautraanikas, the form (*aakaara*) of consciousness and that of the object are only similar, but not identical. Their similarity is due to their being produced by the same causes (*tulyasaamagri*). By itself, neither consciousness nor the object has any form. The causes that produce the forms are the ethical potencies (*karmas, samskaaras*).

When perception arises, we presume that the object is the cause of our perception. But the true cause of perception is the cause of the forms of both consciousness and the object. Sometimes, the forms do not tally, and we discover their difference through the pragmatic criterion (*arthakriyaakaaritaa*).

The Sautraanika doctrine of truth is a mixture of correspondence, coherence and pragmatism. The word *samvaada* used in this connection may be translated as both coherence and correspondence. The Sautraanikas consider that the object can never be directly perceived. So the correspondence or coherence can only be between the form of our consciousness and the result expected of the activity. *Samvaada* generally means agreement. This agreement is directly experienced, according to all the Buddhist schools. For purposeful activity is conscious

activity. Conscious activity is the one in which the form of the object and the form of the result of activity become the content of the same act of consciousness. This act of consciousness can cognize the agreement.

According to this school, the existence of even the true object is only inferred, not perceived. The Sautraanika doctrine of illusion is called the cognition of a form imposed on consciousness, but not on the object. Such a form is the illusory object, from which we draw practical conclusions, and experience failures and contradictions (*visamvaadas*).

The Vaibhasika doctrine of illusion is different. According to this School, the form of the object and that of our consciousness in perception are not merely similar, but the same. Illusion arises when the form so produced is only an artifact or baseless (*kalpita*). It does not belong to any object. It is objectless and groundless.

Illusion is not the mistaking of one object for another, but perceiving a form that does not belong to any object. This form is not a universal, for universals are not accepted. It can, therefore, be a particular shape. Illusion may, therefore, be called the perception of a non-existent object.

If one mistakes a rope for a snake, then the snake one perceives has, we presume, as its basis (*aalambana*) the rope. But the Vaibhasikas say that it is not necessary for a false perception that its object must have a real object as the basis. In dreams and hallucinations, we do not mistake one object for another.

When we close our eyes and press them, we see some black, white and reddish form (*kesondraka*). But what we thus

see is not a real object. It does not have an objective basis either. What is peculiar to false perceptions is that in them we experience a form that appears as if it is related to an object. We realize the truth or falsity of cognition when we try to make the object an object of practical activity (*arthakriyaa*).

The Maadhyamika School accepts that illusion is the perception of a non-existent object (*asatkhyaati*) and that falsity need not have a real basis. Illusion is, therefore, without a ground and without an object (*niraalambana*). But the School further propounds that what thus appears as an object and the consciousness of the object is only the void (*suunya*). This aspect of their doctrine is called the doctrine of illusion as the cognition of the void as an object (*suunyakhyaati*).

Indeed, the void appears not only as the false object, but also as what we consider to be the true object. In the world of action, we draw the distinction between the true and the false. This is for the reason that the true serves, in action, the purpose for which it is meant. Empirical truth is the same as the pragmatic truth. The reality (*sat*) or being (*sattaa*) of an object is the same as the power it has to lead us to successful action. But action itself is not ultimately real. So, empirical truth (*samvrtisatya*) is not the same as absolute truth (*paaramaarthikasatya*).

The Vijnaanaavadins accept what all the Vaibhaasikas say except that, in true perception, there is a real object. Like the Maadhyamikas, they say that all cognition is inherently and by itself false (*svatahapraamaanya*). But they reject the Maadhyamika view that it is the void that appears as the true and false objects. For them, it is the original pure Consciousness (*Vijnaana*) that appears as the object. This pure Consciousness itself is what is called the *Atman*. So, all appearance is the appearance of the *Atman* (*Atmakhyaati*).

Indeed, the original Consciousness (*Vijnaana*, *Atman*) can be called Void as it is devoid of all characterizations. Like the Maadhyamikas, the Vijnaanaavadins say that being (*sat*, *sattaa*) is pragmatic. This pragmatic criterion distinguishes between empirical truth and falsity.

The Sautraanikas and the Vaibhaasikas also accept the pragmatic criterion. But both accept the independent reality of objects, which is not merely the same as pragmatic purposiveness. The independent reality includes the pragmatic criterion and confirms it. It does not, however, make the truth and falsity of the objects.

But the Maadhyamikas and the Vijnaanaavadins do not accept the external reality of objects. For them, their empirical being itself is constituted by pragmatic purposiveness and usefulness.

From the ultimate point of view, reality, whether it is the void or consciousness, is neither being nor non-being. Being and non-being are correlates and coordinates of the empirical world. They are the determinants characterizing the world of action. False cognition is, therefore, the perception by consciousness (*atman*) of its own form or a form generated in it (*atmakhyaati*) without leading successfully to the expected action and result.

Body is the Only Sense Organ

Buddhism is religion par excellence in the sense that it is concerned first and foremost with man's spiritual life, apart from his social and political life. As a result, it can fit into every society and political structure. It is great because of the freedom of thought permitted to its followers, and of the large number of schools it could accommodate and tolerate.

The grand conceptual and dialectical developments made out of the original simple truths taught by the Buddha evoke admiration. But it is open to speculation whether they can all be absolutely true. Indeed, some of the great ideas of Buddhism are impressive and trenchant. Now and then, the Buddhists appear to have overshot their mark by being too far removed from realities to serve the purpose of their philosophy.

The Buddhist doctrines developed over at least one thousand years. The centres of development belonged neither to the same place, nor the same period. As such, the terminology is not uniform. Some important words such as *manas* (mind), *citta* (mind, reason, apperception), *atman* (self, spirit, also mind) are sometimes used in the same sense, other times in different senses.

In early Buddhism, we find *manas* (mind) treated as a distinct sense. But a very interesting Buddhist tradition, preserved in some obscure schools, takes the body itself as the instrument (*indriya*) of both cognition and action. It also holds that no other instruments (*indriyas*) need be recognized. In epistemology, then, the body is the means of knowing and may be called the only means of true knowledge (*pramaana*, *pramaakarana*). In other words, the body is to be considered

the empirical or pragmatic truth. It is that which is made true or simply confirmed by action, which also belongs to body.

There are indeed sense organs like the eye and ear. But they are parts of the body and are, therefore, only subsidiary means of cognition. For instance, the eye has many parts such as the pupil, the rods, the cones, etc. They are also means of perception and so instruments of valid cognition. If we do not give them a separate place as distinct means of perception, we may not give a separate place to the eye, ear, etc, and treat the body, as a whole, alone as the one and only instrument of knowledge and action.

It is not clear what the Buddhist schools mean by saying that 'body' is the instrument of cognition. It may simply be the physical body, or it may be the psychophysical body including the sensorium, mind and consciousness. The Buddhists call the sensorium, mind and consciousness together *pudgala* (individual). In either case, much can be said in favour of this view.

But there is a lacuna in the above argument. The body may be accepted as the instrument of both cognition and action. The question arises as to whose instrument it is. It is a guided instrument, not an unguided one. One guides, directs one's body, senses and organs of action according to one's interests. Some entity utilizes and guides an instrument. The Buddhists interpret the word *indriya* as force, power. Even then, it is not an unguided power or force. This needs the 'I', which Buddhism seeks to omit. In the absence of the 'I', it does not make logical sense. Otherwise, it presents an important idea.

Mind Alone is the Sense Organ

One Buddhist school seems to have held that *manas* (mind) alone is the sense organ (*indriya*). There is a tradition that considers the five senses, namely, eye, ear, taste, smell and touch as divisions of mind, and supervised and controlled by mind. This view agrees with the Mahayana doctrine that mind alone is real (*manomaatrataavaada*).

Momentariness Vs Apperception and Historical Consciousness

If momentariness is applied to knowledge, apperception becomes impossible. Apperception is of the form, 'I know that I saw the book', while 'that is a book' is perception. The 'I' that makes the assertion 'that is a book' is the same that asserts 'I know that I saw the book'. In the absence of the sameness of I, there is no possibility of apperception. Apperception involves self-assertion and includes the consciousness of the consciousness of the object. This self-assertion in the past cannot be explained in terms of momentariness.

If perception is not possible, historical consciousness also becomes impossible. If one does not understand the past in one's experience, one does not have any idea of history.

Similarly, apperception is essential for the awareness of time. Its significance is immense. It constitutes the foundation of empirical structure of the I or the 'I am'. Because of apperception, one is a temporal being, is aware of time, one's own past, and history.

If the I and apperception have to be accepted as continuing for at least a period, and not merely momentary, then mind (*manas*) and ego (*ahamkaara*) must have a duration longer than a moment. The distinctions between the I, apperception, ego and mind are fluid in Buddhist literature.

Broadly, for the Buddhists, mind is the instrument of cognition, which presents the object as whole, that is, the book. The eye perceives only colour, the ear sound, the tongue taste, etc. But the mind gives the whole object, as a That, as having all those qualities. The general trend of Buddhism is to equate the I

to the ego, and call it a mere name for nothing. This is for the reason that the unreal ego, for them, has to be liquidated in *nirvana*, and it has no nature, by itself, of its own.

Even in this system of thought, mind and ego have to be lasting for a time. For instance, when a man wakes up after sleep or fainting, he recognizes his oneness with his past. So his mind and ego have to be the same as before. The mere continuity and sameness of the *samskaaras* cannot explain the person's awareness of his sameness. Besides, he is the same person, and hence the *samskaaras* are his, and not that of somebody else. If he is not the same person, how does he know that somebody else's *samskaaras* have not made incursion into what he calls his.

The Buddhist doctrine of momentariness creates difficulties impossible to remove only when applied to the person or the I. But it has its own utility when applied to the material world or the world of becoming as a whole. In this arena, it is in tune, in spite of major differences, with the Samkhya-Yoga doctrine that *Prakrti* undergoes constant change when animated by the I (*Purusa*).

Patanjali Yoga clearly enunciates that the categories of time, substance, quality, and state (*avasthaa*) are forms of pure change, of Becoming. The Buddhist doctrine has attempted to derive stable entities out of pure Becoming. This doctrine makes the Purusa a product, an epi-phenomenon of the momentary, unconscious elements. This leads to a situation where we cannot explain why consciousness or awareness of anything arises at all, and the appearance of the I becomes all the more inexplicable.

Causal Law and I-consciousness

The Buddhist theory of causation as independent origination or as a kind of occasionalism has both merits and demerits. In a way, it is consistent with its doctrine of momentariness. Everything is momentary; so is the cause; it dies giving rise to the effect. The cause is the material cause also. It must have perished before the effect is born. For so long as it exists, there is no effect. A good example is the acorn and the oak.

If the cause dies before the effect rises, then to what can the cause give rise? Because of the doctrine of momentariness, we may adopt the word 'occasions' for the expression 'gives rise'. Even then, what does it occasion? It can have nothing in view or in its horizon. So what effect it occasions is not certain. As a consequence, predictability is precluded.

In this scenario, can there be a causal law with uncertainty and without predictability, and without necessity? The Buddhists accept the necessity of causal law, but cannot defend it. Nagarjuna indeed explodes it. The Buddhists seem to have at the back of their minds the idea of the mystery that there have to be causal laws, and accepted them.

Let A be the cause of B, and let B arise after the extinction of A. Let us presume the causal relation between A and B. We recognize the relation after we observe B following A a number of times. But if the observer is also momentary, and exists as the observer when A exists, then the observer ceases to exist when B comes into existence because of the doctrine of momentariness. Then who will establish the causal law that is supposed to exist between A and B. The observer has to be the same of the many

instances of A and B for an inductively obtained causal law, whether it is the law of probability or necessity.

The stability and continuity of the I-consciousness is a necessary implication of any such law. The denial of this nature of the I-consciousness is a defect in the Buddhist philosophy. But its merit lies in the recognition that causation is a mystery. Why should oxygen and hydrogen, when combined, become water, while their properties independently are totally different from the properties of water? Why does the acorn be the cause of the oak tree but not of another? Or, why should it develop into a tree at all?

There is another defect in this Buddhist theory. It is said that action-potencies (*samskaaras*) come out of nescience or the Unconscious. Is the nescience destroyed when the *samskaaras* arise? So far as an individual is concerned, it is still there. Further, the *samskaaras* have not produced the individual by becoming extinct. The individual has the *samskaaras* alive and still working in him, while he is rooted in nescience, the Unconscious.

The earlier links of the chain of causation are not dead when the latter links are born. Further, unless there is a material cause that continues in some form into the material effect, there is no way to establish their causal connection. The acorn does not continue in the form of the acorn into the oak. Yet the acorn has the latent forces in it that work themselves into the huge oak and generate further forces (acorns), which generate more, and so on *ad infinitum*. If one holds the acorn in one's hand, one does not see the forces; they are latent like the power in the atom. Even then why should life come out of matter? There is no necessity and predictability in this evolution. To call it natural does not annul the mystery.

Being and Non-being are not Coordinates

The Buddhists contend that Being and Non-being are coordinates. So *Nirvana*, the state of salvation or emancipation, has to be neither Being nor Non-being. This contention does not stand critical examination.

In pure formal logic, or in pure thought above experience of objects, Being and Non-being can be treated as coordinates. Non-being is a negative concept connoting a reference to something absent. Being is that which does not depend for our grasping it on a reference to its opposites. The corresponding concepts for Non-being and Being are the 'positive' and the 'negative'.

In relation to the experience of concrete objects, not abstractions, Non-being presupposes the positive. For instance, when one says 'that is green', one does not think of any colour, which the object does not have. When one says 'that is not green', one could not have said it without seeing that it is of some colour other than green. Here the Non-being presupposes the positive, and that the Being and the Non-being are not coordinates. Where Being and Non-being alternate, as in change or flux, we have Becoming. Becoming is real; and to be real is not necessarily to be Being.

Here also arises the need to acknowledge the continuous presence of the I-am or the I-consciousness. Unless the same I-consciousness makes the two judgments 'that is green' and 'that is not yellow', there is no possibility of the negative judgment at all. If the I-consciousness is momentary and becomes extinct immediately after making the first judgment, the second I-consciousness that is born out of it cannot and will not make the second judgment, that is, the negative one. This is for the reason

that the I-consciousness has necessarily to observe the green colour for the purpose. By the time the observation is complete, it becomes extinct before making the negative judgment.

Supposing the two I-consciousnesses, one arising out of the other on the former's extinction, make the two judgments separately, it is like two different persons making two different judgments; and there can be nothing to relate them. Hence the same I must make the two judgments to make them negatively related. This obliges us to accept the stability and non-momentariness of the I-consciousness.

So far as Buddhism is concerned, it has no way of showing how we get the idea of Being at all, as it does not accept the reality of the I-consciousness. In that consciousness, there is no place for Non-being or consciousness of the negative. In other words, in the consciousness of the existence of the pure I, there is no place for the consciousness of a non-I. Then Being and Non-being cannot be coordinates. The cognition of Non-being is possible only when consciousness arises with a direction away from the I-consciousness.

Knowledge of Existence

Non-being is a referential or relative notion, and belongs to thought. Without the intervention of thought, there is no cognition of any negative idea. On the other hand, Being must have been first known before referential ideas are formed out of it.

The eye gives colours and shades, the ear sounds, the nose smells, etc, and not existence. Then what is the sense or instrument of cognition for existence? Here existence does not refer to mathematical existence at all, but to the philosopher's ontological existence. Existence cannot be an idea, universal, or class-concept like that of horse or chair. Thought may give the idea or notion of existence. But, unless existence has somehow been directly known, thought cannot form an idea, right or wrong, out of it.

Then, how and through what instrumentality does one get at direct cognition of existence? We assume that what we generally see are concrete objects like pens and roses. What is the instrumentality for the cognition of the existence in 'that is the pen' or 'that is the rose'? If the cognition of the existence of the object is made on the basis of coherence or non-contradiction, it is no different from mathematical existence.

The questions persist. How do we come upon the idea of existence at all? If non-existence is a referential idea, what is that to which it refers, and how is that to which it refers cognized first? What is meant by the non-existent pen? Does it mean that there is a pen that does not exist? And what is meant by the existent pen? If there is a pen, does it make any difference to it to say that it exists? Indeed, Being and Non-being, Existence and Non-existence cannot be coordinates.

The question 'what is existence' is not easy to answer. The analysis of experience required to answer it is also not an easy one. However, it is possible to have an indication of the directions leading to the answer.

Kant says that existence can never be a predicate. Then there can be no conceptual proof for what can never be a predicate. Before Kant, Descartes said that existence is involved in 'I think'. In other words, what guarantees existence or being is the 'I' or I-am. If existence or being is not grasped through any of the senses, mind, reason or apperception, then it can be known only through the 'I', the I-am or the I-consciousness.

The I-consciousness, ontologically, is not limited in size to one's body. It is infinite. So, in a sense, in a transcendental way, the existence, which is one's I-consciousness, involves the existence of the objects, and coincides, and has to coincide, with their existence. The I-consciousness is not subjective, but is inclusive of the existence of what we call the epistemological subject and object.

Buddhism does not accept the reality of the I-consciousness. As such it does not provide a way to know what existence ontologically is.

Relativism - Positive and Negative Expressions

The Empty, the Void (*suunyataa*), the cornerstone of the Buddhist philosophy, is considered to be of the sense 'neither true, nor false, nor both true and false, nor neither true nor false', and of the other four-cornered forms of negation. From this standpoint, Buddhism is considered as having been helpful for tolerance of all the rival views, particularly the ethical, by denying absolute truth to everyone.

On the other hand, the Jainism holds the doctrine of seven-fold assertion (*syaadvada*), which is an opposite of the four-cornered negation. The Jainas claim to show the same tolerance to all theories. It is of interest to know that metaphysical relativism is expressed in both the Buddhist and the Jaina forms. While the former denies the truth of every view, the latter concedes the truth of everyone. Relativism need not necessarily be negative.

It is easy to see that neither position is concretely helpful in critical cases of ethics. It is true that the religious wars and violent ideological conflicts can be avoided by accepting that no way of life or ethics is absolutely valid, and that every way of life or ethics may be accepted as relatively true. But it may not help when a person is confronted to choose between two solemn alternatives.

Does tolerance of all alternatives mean indifference, or even license? It cannot be as, otherwise, there will be no ethics. There has to be some great guiding principle like self-fulfillment, continuity of the identity and integrality of personality, which has to remain pure and full without the attempt to hide or repress any part of itself from itself.

For the purpose of self-fulfillment, etc, the reality of the I-consciousness is indispensable at least in its transcendental depths. The purpose of self-fulfillment needs an existential decision, the decision of the I for its fulfillment. But what kind of fulfillment has it to be? In what does it lie? No existing or positive laws are enough.

If the guidance is to be found in one self (I-am), then it has to be found in its deeper reaches, the Logos, the cosmic person and his nature (law), with which the I has to identify itself. This is the essence of the Bhagavad-Gita, the teachings of Socrates and the Stoics. The reality and necessity of the I-consciousness cannot be denied. But Buddhism denies the I-consciousness.

Tathataa, Tathyam, Satta and Satyam

When we seek to understand ultimate concepts like Truth, Reality, Existence, and Being, etymologies can be of help. In Indian philosophy, including Jainism and Buddhism, the relevant words are *sat* (existent, existence), *sattaa* (existence, being), *satyam* (truth, reality), *tathyam* (truth), and *tathataa* (truth, thusness, reality).

Both *tathyam* and *tathataa* are derived from the same word *tathaa*, meaning 'so' and 'thus', which is adverbial in its significance. *Tathyam* is not generally used in philosophical literature of even Buddhists, who alone use *tathataa* in its important metaphysical meaning. As for reality, for the Buddhists, it is that which goes 'so and so' and 'thus and thus', and which we cannot fix by definition. No school except Buddhism has an adverbial reference to reality.

The words *sattaa*, *sat*, and *satyam*, related to reality, are derived from the verb *as* (corresponding to 'is') but not from any noun. *Sat* is the present participle of *as* (is), *sattaa* is the abstract form of *sat*, and *satyam* means what is meant for, or agrees with, *sat*. What is important to note is that there is implicit reference to the verb, process and activity. This supports the view of some *Nairukta* philosophers that all nouns are derived from verbs, and support action.

Even the word *brahman* of the *Upanisads* means the ever-growing, ever-developing, ever-active, but self-active in the sense of self-producing. The nature of the Brahman is itself activity.

It is of interest to note that the parts of speech are related to the categories of the Ultimate Reality. The qualities (adverbs)

of action (verb) are considered distinct from qualities (adjectives) of substantives (nouns). It is a moot question why the classification of Being (*sattaa*) has been made only into substances (nouns), actions (verbs), and qualities (adjectives).

The Buddhists do not appear to have developed the idea of the adverb as one of the classifications. But their use of *tathataa* in the adverbial sense raises the question why it should not be so developed. Ultimately, if linguistics can be a guide in this connection, the primary categories ought to be Being and Becoming, or noun and verb. Both again become one, the verb *as* (to be), in which the distinctions of noun and verb, substantive and action, become unified and lose their difference.

In Buddhism, there appears to be an over-emphasis on becoming as the concept of *tathataa* (thusness) signifies. Nagarjuna, in his concept of *suunyataa* (which he refuses to treat as a concept), rejects Being, Becoming, and Non-being even as expressive of Reality.

The above analysis shows the difficulty into which thought is led in attempting to answer the ultimate question, and indicates that we cannot understand it except by living, or by realizing that we are living the metaphysical truth. There is no other way to understand or being aware of it. Incidentally, this finds support in the orthodox Indian contention that metaphysical truth is meant for spiritual or religious life and practice. Physical truth is corroborated by application while spiritual or metaphysical truth is corroborated by living.

Dharmadhaatu

Dharma, as an idea, has set afoot a very significant line of thought in Buddhism. In Buddhism, this word means everything. It means elements, categories, qualities, things, law, way of life, form, and even Ultimate Reality. Buddhists were untrammelled in the development of their thought by any scripture, and so could see through the significance of the concept, and reach its depths. Although they themselves did not develop a theory of the development of the meaning of the term or of the interrelations of its meaning, they used it in all its meanings as the occasion arose.

In popular usage, *Dharma* means a way of life, ethical law, positive law like criminal law and civil law, and simply religion. But, in the *Mimamsa*, the word means action according to the injunctions of the Veda, and also the merit or the ethical potency or force created by the action. As such it becomes the creative power (*sakti*) behind the world of the individual.

In the context of *Dharma* being considered all pervasive, interesting issues arise for consideration. Can pure energy, force create something without belonging to something substantive? If there is no substantive in the world to which forces belong, then a force can create only a force. In such an event, can there be creation or production of anything new?

For example, we may say that the force in A creates the force in B, which in turn creates the force in C. But if A, B and C do not exist at all, then there will be no creation, but only continuation of the original force. If there are As, Bs and Cs as substantives, then their forces or energies become adjectival to them. But are the forces mere static qualities like colours? Also, are qualities like colours merely static?

If we consider the colours as the forms of light waves starting from the object, striking our eye, and then working on our brain centres, they cannot be considered to be merely static. As long as we see the colour, a dynamic force, the light wave, sustains the product 'colour'. It is an embodiment of that force.

In this situation, the concepts of substance, action, quality and force cannot clearly be demarcated, but pass into one another.

In this context, the status of law, form or universal cannot have a separate existence from any of the above four. For instance, the law of magnetism does not exist apart from the magnet in action. The action of the magnet cannot exist apart from its law, form or essence. There cannot be any action without a pattern and so without a law.

Then we have to regard the universe as a system of forces, a plurality of patterns of activity controlled somehow by a supervising pattern of activity. This supervising pattern of activity is the *Tathataa*, the ultimate *Dharma* or *Dharmadhaatu* as the Buddhists call it.

9. Life's Ideal

For all the Indian schools of thought, except the Caarvaakas and the early *Mimaamsa*, the ideal of life is to obtain salvation. Salvation lies in transcending the world of becoming, which is the world of action (*dharma*). But becoming is a combination of being and non-being for the Buddhists.

Therefore, they say that salvation lies in a realm that is beyond being and non-being. As that realm cannot be described in terms of being and non-being, it is the void. As the state of salvation does not belong to the world of becoming, it is absolute non-disturbance (*nirvana*), absolute peace. One can have some experience of *nirvana* in perfect meditation, which is the culmination of the eight-fold Aryan Way taught by the Buddha.

The Buddha himself underwent a great deal of self-mortification and ascetic practices. He realized that the ascetic practices, by themselves, do not lead to *nirvana*, which could be obtained only by enlightenment. Enlightenment lies in understanding and realizing the true nature of the man and the world, that is, in grasping the significance of the four Aryan Truths.

The Buddha, therefore, taught what is called the Middle Way (Path), which consists neither in extreme self-mortification nor in extreme self-indulgence, for proper enlightenment. The emphasis is on enlightenment, which cuts away the original ignorance (*avidya*). It is, therefore, based on knowledge (*jnaana*). The whole Buddhist philosophy may be regarded as preaching the way of knowledge (*jnaanamaarga*). In fact, Asanga, the Vijnaanavaadin, speaks explicitly of the way of knowledge.

Although Buddhism laid emphasis on the way of knowledge from the beginning, the idea that the destination also

is knowledge (*jnaana, prajnaa*) entered a few schools of the Hinayana like the Prajnaaptivaadins, and later the Mahayana. Although the Prajnaapaaramitaas speak of the highest form of knowledge, wisdom or consciousness, it is only the Vijaanavaadins that speak of consciousness (*vijnaana*) as the ultimate reality and the goal of man.

When the destination also becomes consciousness, then there is very little difference between Buddhism and the *Upanisadic* theory of the *Atman*. In fact, Asanga uses the word *atman* in several places of his work, when he refers to the highest consciousness (*vijnaana*). This highest consciousness is not eternal, but a timeless moment, for some of the Vijaanavaadins. The difference between the two expressions, eternal and timeless, is not substantial, and only scholastic.

The Hinayana, on the whole, considers *nirvana* as individualistic. 'Every man strives for his own salvation and obtains it for himself' is the essence of its teaching. The individualistic ideal is called the *arhat* ideal.

The Mahayana introduces altruism into its spiritual ideal, and formulates its *bodhisattva* ideal. Literally, *bodhisattva* means one whose being (*sattva*) is enlightenment (*bodhi*). The *bodhisattva*, although enlightened, does not enter the state of *nirvana*, and is ready to take as many births as necessary for helping the rest of the world in obtaining the same enlightenment.

He is perfect in the practice of the six virtues (*paaramitaas*). They are charity, character, endurance, zeal, meditation and knowledge or wisdom. He may be a monk or a householder. Incidentally the Mahayana allows its monks to marry and become householders. He is all compassion (*karuna*) for the ignorant, sinful and miserable human beings. He is ready

to exchange his merits for their demerits, and suffer for them. The ideal of vicarious suffering thus replaces the original individualistic Hinayana ideal.

With the evolution of the Mahayana, particularly of the Bhutatathataa and Vijaanavaada Schools, the religious thought of Buddhism underwent a dramatic transformation. The ideal of life, which appeared in the beginning as negative or at least empty because of the idea of the voidness of *nirvana*, became gradually positive.

First, the state of *nirvana*, which was a mere void, became the enlightened consciousness (*bodhi*). Second, this enlightened consciousness became the self-conscious truth or reality beyond ignorance (*Avidyaa*). Third, it was equated to the essential conscious being of Buddha, to the supra-mundane body. Fourth, since the ultimate Reality, the source of the world, and what Buddha became when he entered *Nirvana* were considered one and the same, it was thought that what anyone would become when he entered *Nirvana* would also be the ultimate reality. Fifth, it was, therefore, announced that everyone could become Buddha, since the essential nature, source, and destiny of everyone was the same reality. Sixth, as *Nirvana* is the same as ultimate Reality, the latter is the essence not only of man but also of everything else.

In Buddhist terminology, everything in the world is *dharma*. Dharma generally means nature, law, quality, etc. According to Buddhism, everything is itself (*svalaksana, svaruupa*). It is, therefore, its own nature, law and form. It follows that it is its own *dharma*; it is a *dharma*. But the ultimate nature of everything is the ultimate Reality, which is the *Dharma* of all *dharmas*. It is the *Dharmakaaya, Dharmadhaatu*, the way, the nature, the truth of all things. It is everything; it is the

reality beyond ignorance (*avidya*). All the formative forces (*samskaaras*) are embedded in it. This ultimate *Dharma* is beyond all description.

According to *Mimaamsa*, *dharma* is the ethical force that creates the world of forms out of certain eternal elements, and that the world of forms is the field of action and enjoyment for man. Buddhism, in its Mahayana forms, retains this *dharma* as part of the formative forces (*samskaaras*), but goes beyond the *Mimaamsa*.

For *Mimaamsa*, there are eternal elements on which the ethical force works. But, for the Mahayana, the objects and their constituents also are products of the formative forces. If at all, we can seek objectivity in the formative forces, but not in the objects we perceive. Some of the formative forces are the ethical potencies engendered by past actions; but the others are universal. It is the others that are objective and work through every man, not merely through a particular individual. In their universality, they can find a place for one's ethical potencies also that relate to one.

Thus all the forces, both the universal and the individual, have a unity that has cosmic significance. All are *dharmas*. Together they constitute a unitary *Dharma*. They are rooted in ignorance (*avidya*), which also is a *dharma*. But the highest Reality is beyond ignorance and is the *Dharma* of which everything else is, somehow, a part. Thus the *Mimaamsa* concept of *dharma* becomes in Buddhism a concept of ultimate reality with dynamic, but indescribable, power or force. The aim of man's life is to realize that he is essentially one with such ultimate reality.

The Buddhist conception of Reality and life's ideal is too sublime, abstract and remote for the common man to understand.

Buddhism, therefore, introduces more positive, concrete and picturesque forms of the ideal in its important works, and devotional forms of worship like that of the god or goddess of mercy. It has even allowed itself to degenerate into some of the vulgar forms of *tantrism*. But the Buddha is never mentioned by the orthodox Hindus and philosophers as having taught any *tantric* doctrines. It may be that a few consider him to have misled people into atheism, but most Hindus say that he was an incarnation of the Supreme Being embodying infinite compassion (*karuna*).

It may be worthwhile to remember that there is a Hindu tradition according to which each of the ten incarnations of God Visnu embodies one great emotion such as compassion, anger, love, heroism, wonder, etc. The life of an incarnation is working out of the emotion and its final subsidence in the Supreme Being. The incarnation of the Buddha, according to this tradition, relates to the emotion of compassion.

10. The Buddhist Way to Liberation

The Philosophy of Liberation

The *Abhidharmakosa* of Vasubandhu helps to get an orientation to the Buddhist view of the path to liberation.

The *Abhidharmakosa* is organized into nine chapters. The first two chapters set forth the factors organized under categories such as aggregates, sense-bases and elements. The factors are distinguished as pure and impure, conditioned and unconditioned, etc. The work lists about 75 factors, which have come to be thought of as the definitive Abhidharma account relating to *dharma*.

In chapter 5, the work refers to the stages of the path to liberation. The chapter deals with the sources of bondage variously termed proclivities (*anusaya*), defilements (*klesa*), contaminants (*aasrava*), floods (*ogha*), bonds (*yoga*), afflictions (*upaklesa*) and envelopers (*paryavastaana*). These terms denote different classifications of the factors, which are to be expunged from one's stream when one is seeking liberation. Vasubandhu rather stresses that the expunging of these factors is all that it takes to insure liberation. He outlines the antidotes to these proclivities, analyses them in terms of the four meditative stages, and relates them to the various stages such as 'stream-enterer'. He indicates the way in which these proclivities are to be disconnected from the stream of factors we think of as a person.

Chapter 6 provides further details on these stages and the methods of arriving at them. It discusses the stages near to liberation that the seeker attains as he rids himself of the last of these proclivities. Chapters 7 & 8 turn to a characterization of the noble person who has attained the status of the Buddha,

reviewing a vast list of classifications inherited from earlier traditions. Chapter 9 is like an appendix in which Vasubandhu argues against the theory of a person (*pudgalavaada*) espoused by the Vaatsiputriya sect.

The attention in the entire work is thus fastened on the proclivities. The basic proclivities are considered six, namely, attachment (*raga*), aversion or repugnance (*dvesa*, *pratigha*), pride (*maana*), ignorance (*avidya*), wrong view (*drsti*) and perplexity (*vicikitsaa*). By relating these proclivities to varied defilements, contaminants, floods, bonds, afflictions and envelopers, Vasubandhu generates a highly complex analysis in chapter 5.

Collet Cox relates the problems that arise on seeking abandonment of the proclivities related to different sources of bondage such as defilements thus.

'Within post-Vibhaasaa Sarvaastivaadin abhidharma texts, categories of defilements come to be differentiated according to their functions, which in turn become the subject of heated sectarian controversy. This controversy reflects the further refinement of theories concerning the operation of thought and proclivities, as well as the methods by which proclivities are to be abandoned. It is also interconnected with the development of more sophisticated ontological theories, which inevitably affected all aspects of Abhidharma doctrine. In particular, this controversy involves the possibility of a distinction between latent and active proclivities, and the relation between these proclivities (whether latent or active) and the thought processes of the individual life-stream that they characterize.

At issue is the development of a model that could successfully explain the apparent, persistent activity of certain

proclivities, the reemergence of their activity after an interruption, and the mechanism by which they are to be abandoned. For example, can un-virtuous proclivities arise conditioned by a morally dissimilar virtuous factor? If not, then what is the causal mechanism by which defilements arise immediately after a virtuous moment of thought? Further, if defilements are associated with thought, since two associated thought-concomitants of differing moral quality cannot occur simultaneously, how can the virtuous counteragent that obstructs a particular proclivity arise simultaneously with it? If, however, proclivities are not understood to be associated with thought, their very activity of defiling thought is meaningless, and no abandonment is necessary. Finally, if proclivities are understood to exist as real entities in the past and future as well as in the present, then they can never be destroyed in the sense that they become nonexistent, so in what sense can they be said to be abandoned?

Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra attempt to deal with the problems stated above. Vasubandhu makes a distinction among the proclivities, which he considers to be latent dispositions not necessarily present to consciousness, that is, unassociated with awareness (*cittaviprayukta*), and envelopers that are, in their nature, active and present in awareness. Samghabhadra does not, however, accept this distinction.

Making this distinction, Vasubandhu interprets these proclivities unassociated with awareness as seeds (*bija*) constituting a series of dormant factors initiated by an action, a later member of which series can emerge at the proper time to fulfill its *karmic* function. Samghabhadra, a Sarvaastivaadin, instead, explains the connection between a given defilement and the subsequent moments of differing moral quality in a stream by appeal to the notion of the possession (*praapti*) of a proclivity-moment by a factor in the stream of an individual existent.

Vasubandhu, however, rejects vehemently the notion of possession. The notion of seeds naturally leads one to the conception of a place where the seeds can be stored. This appears to have helped Vasubandhu to develop his theory of Storehouse-consciousness.

As the primary task of the Buddhist seeker of liberation is to eliminate the factors that bind him, it is worth realizing what these factors are.

1. Proclivities (*anusaya*)

The six main proclivities are attachment, repugnance (or hatred), pride, ignorance, views and perplexity. If one distinguishes attachment to desire from attachment to existence, the will to live, the latter will be the seventh proclivity. Yogacaara states that these proclivities are inherited through *karma* from past actions, and are preserved sequentially as seeds in storehouse-consciousness (*aalayavijnaana*). They are in the nature of tendencies (hence proclivities) to think and act in relevant ways.

Harivarman, Dharmatraata and Vasubandhu list altogether 98 proclivities.

2. Defilements (*klesa*) or Contaminants (*aasrava*)

The thoughts and deeds that result from proclivities are considered defilements (*klesa*). They are classed under the relevant proclivity concerned. As such, these are the same in name as the main six or seven proclivities, but represent the actions actually performed as opposed to the proclivities, that is, the tendencies to act that way. Further, some defilements breed others. For example, where one has a tendency to gain an object

unlawfully, one is prone to develop hate towards another. Where one is said to abandon or root out a proclivity, one actually destroys or heads off the defilements under the said proclivity.

The defilements range from gross to subtle. The work *Tattvasiddhi* offers an example. It relates to our habit of classifying people as male and female with urge for sex, and the resulting unhappiness in the event of the urge not being satisfied. The work counsels one to meet one's urge by analyzing a member of the opposite sex into a congeries of bones, flesh, hair and other uninteresting parts. Thereby one is to meet the tendency to desire the opposite sex. This process reaches its logical conclusion when one reflects that the member of the opposite sex is but a bundle of undesirable things, and as empty as everything else.

Defilements are no more entities in the real world than are the proclivities, which engender them. As they are based on delusion, one eliminates them by eliminating ignorance. It is, therefore, possible, according to the Buddhist philosophers, that proper vision eradicates most defilements under 88 of the 98 proclivities enumerated by Harivarman and others. The Buddhist philosophers indicate that the defilements under the other proclivities are eradicated through meditation.

Realized souls such as *bodhisattvas* are said to be able to block the defilements of others by their endeavours, especially through what is called diamond-like meditation.

3. Afflictions (*upaklesa*) or Envelopers (*paryavastaana*)

Afflictions or envelopers comprise a wide variety of tendencies. They include sleepiness or lethargy, excitement, craftiness, shamelessness, heedlessness, forgetfulness, etc. They are very common among ordinary human folk. The Buddhist

philosophers consider that human beings are born with these afflictions. Indeed, one's present body is formed from previous afflictions. On the other hand, the noble person is one free of his afflictions, though he may still harbour proclivities that require further to be rooted out.

Vasubandhu traces afflictions to our insistence on holding fast to illusions about entities that are actually non-existent. They are the subtle causes of defilements. He terms some of them such as lethargy, excitement, sleepiness as neutral in the realm of desire. In higher realms, all envelopers are bad forces, and so to be reckoned.

4. Fetters (*samyojana*) or Obstructions (*aavarana*)

Fetters or obstructions seemingly cut across proclivities, defilements and afflictions. Fetters include some proclivities and some defilements. Buddhist philosophers list 9 or 10 fetters in different texts.

How are these factors that constitute proclivities, etc to be abandoned? Both Vasubandhu and Samghabhadra adopt a classification of four methods derived from Upasaanta's *Abhidharmahrdaya* and Dharmatraata's *Samyuktaabhidharmahrdayasuutra*. It is not that these four methods can be used on every proclivity. The use of any of the methods depends on whether the proclivity involves a supporting object. If it involves a supporting object, the method of abandonment includes the ascertainment (*parijnaana*) of the supporting object (first method), the destruction of those other proclivities that have that supporting object as theirs, too (second method), and the abandonment of the supporting object (third method). If no supporting object is involved, abandonment is to

be obtained through the arising of an antidote (*pratipaksa*) (fourth method).

Vasubandhu discusses the antidotes at length in the fifth chapter of the *Kosa*. He classifies them into four varieties, and explains in which order and under what circumstances (stream-enterer, etc) proclivities are separated from the factors constituting a stream and so disconnected from that stream.

The distinction between the first three methods and the fourth is considered in terms of the distinction between the path of vision and the path of cultivation or spiritual practice. But Vasubandhu treats the matter in a complicated way, and a clear division between the two paths is lost. Cox argues that the very distinction is hardly any exclusive distinction. The two paths do not, in fact, involve mutually exclusive patterns of abandonment of proclivities, but only the different kinds of proclivities and the stage of advancement in practice of the aspirant in question.

The Theravaadin account of the path to liberation takes varied forms. One account relates to purifications, which are of different types. One is moral purification, that is, observance of Buddhist ethical precepts. Second is mental purification. This involves meditation leading to eight attainments such as the four trance states and the four immaterial meditations on space, consciousness, nothingness and neither perception nor non-perception. Third is purification of views, the mastering of the bases of Abhidharma metaphysics by way of categorizing and analyzing correctly the four great elements, five aggregates and the other classifications of factors. Fourth is purification by overcoming doubts. This is the stage where the seeker considers and resolves such questions, as whether the self is persistent, whether there is God and whether there is rebirth. Fifth is knowledge of what constitutes or does not constitute the path.

This includes further consideration and rejection of wrong theory about the path. Sixth is the knowledge of the path itself. Up to this stage, the seeker is still bound by fetters and has not yet attained knowledge.

In the final stages of stage six, one may have obtained correct understanding of the four noble truths producing in him 'change of lineage' (*gotrabhumi*), which leads to the seventh stage that is purification through the vision of knowledge. The seeker that arrives at this stage is called 'noble' (*aarya*), and progresses through such stages as stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner and perfected being.

Other works refer to other accounts of the path to liberation. The work *Astasaahasrikaaprajnaapaaramitaasutra*, for instance, distinguishes world-lings (*prthagjana*), disciples (*sraavaka*), self-enlightened (*pratyekabuddha*), bodhisattvas and Buddhas. The work *Dasabhumikasutra* divides the path into ten stages. The Yogacaara School provides a five-fold division of stages on the path. The stages are of equipment (*sambhaara*), of preparation (*prayoga*), of vision (*darsana*), of practice (*bhaavana*) and of completion or beyond instruction (*nistha, asaiksa*).

As for the stages on the path to liberation, in the Buddhist literature going back to Pali canon, there is a significant distinction between the preparatory stages and the higher stages. In the preparatory stages, the aspirant is to practise Buddhist moral virtues and meditate on the factors. This distinction is sometimes identified as 'change of lineage'. After this change, that is, in the higher stages, the aspirant becomes a stream-enterer (*srotapanna*). In some accounts, the stage of stream-entry is the second of eight such stages, the first being 'stream-entry candidate' corresponding to the final stage of knowledge of the path.

The four-fold classification of stream-enterer, once-enterer, non-returner and perfected being is expanded to eight-fold classification, distinguishing candidates from achievers for each of the four stages, in some accounts.

Some texts like *Tattvasiddhi*, *Yogacaarabhumi* and *Abhidharmakosa* refer to as many as thirty-six stages on the path to liberation.

A stream-enterer is one who has overcome belief in individual self and doubts about Buddhist doctrines, through performance of rituals, and by divine will. He cannot be reborn lower than the human stage, unless he backslides. He is to be liberated by the time he lives seven more lives.

The once-returner is one who has weakened the hold of the three 'poisons' of desire, hatred and delusion. He will be reborn only once. The non-returner does no more *karma*, and is reborn only among the gods.

The 'perfected being' (*arhat*), according to the *Pali* canon, the Theravaada and the Sarvaastivaada literature, is one who has destroyed all his contaminants and who is free from all proclivities. He is, however, distinguished from a 'noble' (*aarya*) who is one that has just undergone the initial stage of lineage. A perfected being is still a disciple (*sraavaka*), given the parlance of classical Buddhism. He is the one that has attained a kind of enlightenment (*bodhi*), that is, the enlightenment of a disciple (*sraavakabodhi*). Thus he is a kind of *Buddha*. He remains in an embodied state for the reason that the *karmic* residues slated to work themselves out in his current lifetime need the remainder of time and opportunity to do so.

A perfected being may arrive at his state of perfection in more than one way and under more than one kind of circumstances. Such differences may constitute the basis to indicate degrees of perfection to individual perfected beings. A perfected being may or may not have both to master meditation and attain insight. Either or both ways may lead one to that stage.

Some perfected beings attain enlightenment on their own, and are termed *pratyekabuddhas* (self-enlightened). Such a state arises during a period or at a place where there is no Buddha to teach, or order to join, though preparation for this state takes several lives. The self-enlightened goes through the same kinds of ascetic, instructional and meditative practices as do other Buddhist disciples. He has to understand the same truths and eliminate the same kinds of proclivities. *Pali-sutras* indicate that a self-enlightened may not offer instruction to others. However, he teaches by example, and through brief and cogent remarks.

A perfected being does not backslide. He has, by definition, destroyed all the proclivities that occasion backsliding. The Buddha provides a list of questions that should be addressed to one who claims to be a perfected being. He himself, as well as others, knows whether he is a perfected being based on his answers to the questionnaire.

A perfected being is a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas are of two categories. One is the Buddha himself. The other category is that of disciple bodhisattvas. The Buddhist literature frequently refers to perfected disciple bodhisattvas such as Sariputra, Maudgalyaayana, Mahaakaasyapa, Anuruddha, etc.

A perfected disciple bodhisattva can be a Buddha. But, by his own choice, he does not become Buddha, as he chooses to remain 'in the world' to help others achieve enlightenment.

A perfected being is one that has attained *nirvana*. As liberation is defined as the termination of proclivities, and as the perfected being has attained that state, he is considered to have attained *nirvana*. As for *parinirvana*, it differs from *nirvana* in that while a perfected being attains *nirvana* (liberation) in his present lifetime, a perfected being is said to attain *parinirvana* in some future life when the *karmic* traces, still in need of expiation, will be fully lived out.

In the Mahayana Prajnaapaaramitaa literature, there has been a change in the depiction of a perfected being. There is no doubt, writes Harrison, 'that the level these venerable figures represent, that of the *arhats* and the *pratyekabuddhas*...is one that is to be transcended by the *bodhisattvas*...A hierarchy of attainments is in fact envisaged, leading from the state of an ordinary person at the bottom, through those of a 'stream-winner', a 'once-returner', a 'non-returner', an *arhat* and a *pratyekabuddha* to the state of a Buddha or a *tathaagata* at the top. In aiming for the top, *bodhisattvas*, aspirants to the full awakening of a Buddha, are warned repeatedly not to fall back to the level of the *arhats* / *sraavakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* or to join their ranks, and such a regression is represented as a fearful misfortune...The *sraavakayaana* is characterized by attachment and limitation, and those who opt for it do so primarily out of fear of *samsaara*, which renders them incapable of aspiring to buddhahood. Not only is their courage thus inferior to that of the *bodhisattvas*, but their wisdom is too.'

Thus, 'what the (*Prajnaapaaramitaasutras*) tell us is that the early adherents of the *bodhisattvayaana* - who were probably

very much in the minority - were prepared to go to great lengths to uphold their ideal against what they conceived to be the traditional goal of Buddhist practice, namely arhatship or *nirvana* for oneself alone, but they were not prepared to write off the rest of the Buddhist *sangha* or sever their own connection with it, by the wholesale use of such terms as 'Hinayana' and 'Mahayana' as sectarian categories.'

But one finds increased attention paid precisely in the works ascribed to Asanga and Vasubandhu as to how one achieves liberation, how the factors that bind can be rendered like burnt seeds, unable to generate further *karma* and so non-existent.

This new approach to liberation is often equated with the rise of the *Yogacaara* School. One of the wide-ranging and important concepts associated with *Yogacaara* is *aasrayaparaavrtti*, meaning 'revolution at the base', prominently mentioned in the work *Yogacaarabhumi* by Asanga.

The main task for a *Yogacaara* aspirant is to get rid of his proclivities. If he tries to do this sequentially, it is likely to be a never-ending thought. This is for the reason that the aspirant may breed new proclivities while attempting to rid himself of the earlier ones. Reflection on this possibility must have led the Buddhist philosophers of the period to consider not only the specific nature of seeds and what lays them down, but also on the general nature of seeds and the way of eradicating them without taking root. It is possible to presume that from this reflection arose the idea of revolution at the base, which is a transformation in approach which would render one no longer subject to the growth of seeds into actions that breed proclivities, and, therefore, more seeds.

One way of looking at this problem is to view the actions that lay down seeds as dependent on depravities (*dausthulya*). They are the kinds of physical and mental shortcomings that block the aspirant's way to his goal. For example, physical depravity is over exhaustion. Mental depravity is just being depressed. The work *Yogacaarabhumi* provides eighteen kinds of depravities.

How is the aspirant to deal with the depravity? The Buddhist literature indicates that he should replace these depravities with clean thoughts (*prasrabdhi*). In other words, the aspirant is to cleanse his mind by ridding his awareness of the factors that constitute and generate depravities. It is possible to attain to it by meditation. What one attains by thoroughly cleansing one's mind of depravities is what is called 'revolution at the base'.

The section *Sraavakabhumi* in the work *Yogacaarabhumi* distinguishes four ways of meditative attention (*manaskara*). They are the directing of one's attention first towards factors, which need attention, second towards the outflows of such factors, third towards that which generates defilement-less-ness, and fourth towards that which cleanses the vision of knowledge. The fourth attention, in other words, is to produce the higher insight achieved by the enlightened Buddha. The same section also states that through proper meditation one purifies one's body and mind of all depravities, purifies supporting objects by examining the actual nature of the objects one is aware of, purifies one's mind by eliminating all desires, and purifies one's knowledge by eliminating ignorance.

The concept of the 'revolution at the base' is applied to the six senses and put to use in addressing distinctions within the penultimate stages on the path to liberation. The question arises

whether the noble person still utilizes the six senses in the same way as before. In such a case, it is difficult to presume that there can be any 'revolution at the base' by which one terminates the proclivities. Asanga avoids the question stating that it cannot be said whether or not 'revolution at the base' applies to the senses.

There is a kind of distinction drawn between two kinds of liberation, one with residues (*sopadhisesa*) and the other without residues (*niruupadhisesa*). In respect of liberation with residues, one still has the sensory experiences requiring the six senses. In respect of liberation without residues, there arise no sensory experiences for one. In this case, it can be said that there is 'revolution at the base'.

Liberation without residues is generally explained in mystical language. It is considered to be lacking in manifoldness (*nisprapanca*), and to deal with purification of the realm of factors (*dharmadhaatuvisuddhi*), and to involve stability and blissfulness. What one knows in liberation without residues is termed Thusness (*Tathataa*).

The state of bliss resulting from the 'revolution at the base' is, according to the *Yogacaara* literature, the storehouse-consciousness (*aalayavijnaana*) itself transformed through purification of all the proclivities by meditation, into 'nothingness'. What happens at liberation is precisely that the storehouse-consciousness ceases to exist. Because of this state of no storehouse-consciousness, there is no longer any state where the *karmic* seeds can be stored. All that is left at this stage is pure-consciousness, but not consciousness of any temporal thing.

Meditational Practices

A standard list of moral practices in Buddhism is the ‘five precepts’ (*pancaseela*). The list comprises abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxicating drugs or drinks. A Buddhist layperson is to practise them during his ordinary day-to-day life.

Beyond this, Buddhist ethics generally applies to the Buddhist monk, who has left his family and home and become a member of the order (*sangha*), a monk (*bhiksu*). The requirements of everyday life of a monk regularly interfere with the meditation, the peaceful contemplation, which is central to the path of liberation. Thus moral philosophy in Buddhism tends to be addressed to one who is either a monk, or one ready to become one.

With the decision to become an adept or monk, one’s moral training becomes quite intense. One is to follow the precepts for monks set forth in the *praatimoksa*, a code of conduct and training containing the essence of the Buddha’s advice to those preparing for liberation. Further, one is to begin to practise control of one’s sense faculties, trying to become less sensitive to the attractions of the ‘signs’ (*nimitta*). The word ‘sign’ has several meanings, the general being ‘that which incorporates any indication of something else’.

One, at the beginning, tries, through practicing ‘mindfulness’ (*smrti*), to ‘ward off the spontaneous impulses to cling to the pleasant and reject the unpleasant’. On being the monk, one should plan one’s vocation carefully, making sure that it is consistent with the principles of one’s monastic life. One should do no work, which involves lying, scheming, concupiscence and other undesirable attitudes. Finally, one should

take a correct attitude toward the few things one has kept such as one’s robe, dish, body, and abode. One should bear in view that they are not possessions, but merely means to an end. The Buddha taught these four purifications, *catuhparisuddhi* at the outset.

Another decision characteristically made at this stage is to choose a mentor, a ‘good friend’ (*kalyaanamitra*), who can help indicate the path. The Buddha, according to the Pali canon, spoke often of the benefits of having such a good friend who can indicate to the adept appropriate objects on which to meditate, and who is available for consultation and advice when needed.

The monk, at the beginning, needs to choose a suitable place to live. It is to be convenient to practise meditation without distraction. The Buddha mentioned some features of appropriate dwelling places. They are to be not too far from or near to a village, quiet, protected from the weather, a place where the four purifications can be practiced, and appropriate teachers are available. The types of such places are in a forest, on a mountain, in a cemetery, etc.

It is at this point that the texts speak of commencing meditation (*dhyaana*). In Buddhism, there are said to be four (sometimes eight or nine) meditative states and each of them can be identified in two ways. One is in relation to what is to be done to shed the relevant bonds that bind the aspirant at this point. The other is in relation to what is to be done to attain what is required for entrance into the next stage of meditation. The path of meditation begins here with the shedding of the five hindrances (*neevarana*), the attitudes and thoughts, which distract one from meditative application.

The shedding of these five hindrances and the consequent attainment of the reverse qualities is critical. These hindrances are the things that preclude entrance on to the meditative path. Thus to get rid of them is a precondition for any practice designed to lead toward ultimate liberation. The terminology for this list is open to alternatives.

The first of the hindrances is sensual desire, desire for the objects of the senses and the consequent finding of such objects that are attractive and stimulating. Such attachment, greed and desire are the root causes of frustration. The second is the opposite of desire, that is, aversion, the feeling of dislike and hatred toward disagreeable things. The third is sloth and torpor, the opposite of the requisite mindfulness or alertness with which the aspirant protects his virtuous approaches to things. The fourth is the restlessness and worry, distracting responses to situations, which preclude or severely limit one's capacity to meditate. The fifth is insufficient resolve or conviction concerning the basic beliefs of Buddhism, doubt that breeds scepticism and undermine resolve.

These five hindrances are the first problem for the aspirant. The method for controlling and eventually eliminating them characterizes the first meditative stage. To make this possible, the aspirant is to be very clear as to what causes these hindrances to occur and perpetuate themselves.

The Buddha, at one point, traces the source of the hindrances through 'three types of misconduct (bodily, verbal and mental)... non-restraint of the sense faculty... lack of mindfulness and discernment... unwise consideration... lack of faith... not listening to the true *dharma*... not associating with superior men' (*Anguttara Nikaaya*).

The critical term in the above passage is 'unwise consideration' (*ayoniso manasikaara*), wrong thinking about things. In another passage in *Samyutta Nikaaya*, the Buddha associates specifically with each of the five hindrances, identifying in each case, the 'nutriments' of those hindrances. It is these mistaken ideas, attitudes and practices they germinate that have to be addressed.

At this point, the parting of the ways between the path of insight and the path of meditation arises. It is best summed up in *Gunaratna*.

'Two different approaches are offered because of the differing mental dispositions of disciples. Disciples of a contemplative bent generally incline to first attain concentration by suppressing the hindrances through *jhaana* and then move on to the development of insight. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of serenity (*samathayaanika*) who develop 'insight preceded by serenity'. Other disciples, of an intellectual bent, are generally disposed to strive immediately for insight, leaving until later the task of deepening concentration. These are called practitioners of the vehicle of insight (*vipassanaayaanika*) who develop 'serenity preceded by insight'. Both types must eventually cultivate insight by practicing the foundations of mindfulness, since insight-wisdom is needed to reach the supra-mundane path. They differ, not with respect to the inclusion of insight, but in the sequence they follow to develop it. The practitioner of serenity attains *jhaana*, then cultivates insight, and finally reaches the path. The practitioner of insight reaches the path directly by cultivating insight, without relying on a foundation of *jhaana*.'

The foundations of mindfulness are the body, feelings, states of awareness and contents of awareness, viewed as factors.

They are all required for ordinary awareness. The seeker of insight reflects that all these, especially the contents of awareness in the beginning, are shot through with the five hindrances. Contemplating each of the contents and the hindrances that accompany them, one learns the nature of each thing, realizes its momentariness, un-satisfactoriness and lack of sustainability.

The practitioner of insight does not seek the kind of concentration that the follower of meditation does. But, because of the fixity of his mind, he may attain a kind of momentary concentration, and the series of such concentrations replaces the kinds of experiences that involved the hindrances. The hindrances are thus suppressed by habit, and the practitioner is ready to become a stream enterer.

At this stage, the practitioner takes up the meditative method, which his counterpart on the path of meditation has already achieved. Thus the two ways of insight and meditation end up at the same point, though differing only in the order in which the two vehicles are taken up.

What, then, is the method followed by the seeker on the path of meditation? He takes up the first meditative stage. Instead of concentrating on the characteristics of objects, he practises the first of a series of meditations on material form. By meditating on certain things, he empties his mind of certain kinds of factors, which are part of the causal nexus leading to bondage to ordinary existence.

In particular, five crucial factors characterize the first meditative stage. They are initial thought (*vitarka*), sustained thought (*vicaara*), joy (*preeti*), satisfaction (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaagrataa*).

The first factor, initial thought, appears to mean what we call 'attending to' an object. It is the most basic aspect of thinking or awareness of objects. In itself, initial thought is neither good nor bad. What accompanies it is what makes the difference. Thoughts are bad when they are tainted by greed, hatred and delusion. They are good when they are associated with their opposites. Generally, bad thoughts are those, which are aimed at gaining pleasures of the senses, at doing mischief or harming others. There are many varieties of bad thoughts, too. As a principle, all thoughts associated with the five hindrances can be classified bad.

All bad thoughts are to cease by the time one masters the first meditative state. All thoughts after that accomplishment are good or, more appropriately, neither good nor bad. Meditation comes in, as a way of practicing, limiting one's thoughts to good ones initially and no thoughts later. One practices this by selecting something to concentrate on. One selects some visible object or objects for this purpose. This is best illustrated in *Gunaratna*.

'He takes a preliminary object such as a coloured or elemental *kasina* and concentrates on it until he is able to visualize it with his eyes closed, as clearly as when he looks at it with his eyes open... When the object comes into focus when he attends to it with eyes shut as clearly as it does when he looks at it with open eyes, the learning sign (*ugrahanimitta*) is said to have arisen. At this point, the *yogin* should leave off the physical object and focus solely on the learning sign, developing it by striking at it over and over with applied thought and sustained thought.

As he practices thus, the *jhaana* factors go in strength, each suppressing its respective hindrance.'

Initial thought counters the hindrance of sloth and torpor. The practitioner needs constant alertness to maintain his concentration. This leads to the second factor, sustained thought. The mind must not only be fixed mentally in the way just described. Further, concentration needs to be maintained. It is not to be distracted by other thoughts or emotions. So the first two factors operate together to bring about mental concentration.

The objective features of disparate objects as well as our emotional responses to objects cause distraction. Just as the first two factors direct our intellectual efforts on good features of things, so the second two factors of joy and satisfaction direct our emotional attitudes towards things. Just as initial thought leads directly to sustained thought, so joy leads directly to satisfaction.

Joy is of various grades. It ranges from initial pleasurable feeling to 'pervading rapture'. In other words, just as one seeks to extend from initial to sustained thought, one seeks to extend passing pleasure to sustained bliss. These states are, in turn, accompanied by a subsiding of attempts to resist, question and otherwise leave the meditative state. As these subside, one experiences a greater and greater satisfaction or tranquillity. This, in turn, eases the difficulties of concentration.

The fifth factor, one-pointed concentration, arises naturally when the distractions born of thoughts and emotions dwindle. In its subtle form, it is present in any awareness and feeling. But, like the two preceding pairs of factors, it is capable of more intensity. In its advanced form, it consists in the concentration from which one need not retreat. This, however, arises beyond the first meditative state.

The above explains how the adept has learned how to meditate for periods of time during which he can concentrate attentively on an object in a non-distracted pleasurable state. He can do this for a period of time. But, in due course, he loses his attention and the resulting concentration, and finds himself once again subject to desires, hindrance and the other unwanted attitudes of mind.

Thus far, the adept finds that his mastery is insufficient, and discovers that not only is his meditative state not stable, but it also deals with insufficiently satisfying objects. He encounters the problem that there are too many objects, too much objectivity. These things come to him without his asking for them. They threaten him by occasioning the types of emotional responses he is trying to avoid. He, therefore, seeks for an even purer meditative state. So he sets out toward the second meditative stage.

Advancement to the second stage implies the abandonment of language, which is the hallmark of initial and sustained thoughts. In consequence, the second stage abandons linguistic conceptualisation and classification of factors in all environments. Obviously, this presents a problem of continued description of further progress. The adept becomes silent. He is no longer distracted by objects or by the challenges of thinking or speaking about them. He will, therefore, experience even more developed states of the other three factors - joy, satisfaction and one-pointedness.

The adept attains to the higher states in tranquillity. In the first meditative state, he was not fully confident, as he was aware, even when meditating, that his meditation was trained on some object, which could be transitory. There the concentration was imperfect. In the second stage, however, there are no

conceptual ties to ideas of objects; concentration becomes more confident and less subject to disturbance by causes out of one's control. He achieves a comparatively greater degree of concentration, greater in length, purity, satisfaction and bliss.

Even after the second stage of meditation, the seeker still finds himself issuing from it from time to time, and reflecting on why he does so. The fact that he is still inclined to indulge in thoughts couched in language bothers him. Though he has supposedly abandoned thought, he still finds himself thinking, when not in the meditative situation. He realizes that his situation is unsatisfactory for the reason that he is able to contrast his experience of happiness in the state of meditation with his experience when he is out of that state. He realizes that joy is an excessive state, too attractive to be sustained without being bound to it in a way which carries with it disappointment when it leaves him. The problem is not with the experience of joy but its nature of attractiveness, which implies its impermanence. So he embarks toward a third meditative stage to overcome these subtle forms of frustration.

In the third stage, what the seeker seeks is equanimity instead of joy. He seeks to cultivate a clear, fair, unimpassioned attitude toward everything. He remains neutral all the time toward all, while in meditation or otherwise. Here equanimity is not a kind of disinterested feeling. It is a state free from all feeling. It is in the nature of complete neutrality.

'Being without feelings' does not imply unawareness. It is quite the reverse. The seeker seeks to achieve extended experience of satisfying meditative contemplation, an extended steady state of awareness. The texts use two Sanskrit words *smṛti* and *samprajnaa* to elucidate this state. *Smṛti* means 'mindfulness'. Without being bound by objects or passions, this

mindfulness is to ensure that the mind 'does not wander away' (*avilaapana*). *Samprajnaa*, discernment, is the same thing as wisdom (*prajnaa*). The seeker is to see the world, as a wise man does, in a non-falsifying way, not misled by it, seeing it as it is.

The seeker who achieves the third stage of meditation, then, is one who concentrates on his meditative object with no distortion, and with detachment. In this stage, by comparison with the past two stages, he gains superior ability to concentrate meditatively on an object.

When the seeker contemplates his mastery of contemplation when not in meditation, even after achieving the third stage, he still finds himself dissatisfied. Even though he acquires equanimity while in meditation, he finds that, out of the spells of meditation, joy is still attractive. He continues to feel that the equanimity he has gained in meditation is likely to dissipate while not in meditation. He sees the fallacy of satisfaction. This moves him into the next stage of meditation when he abandons feelings of both satisfaction and frustration, of both joy and grief. He seeks to cultivate an approach to things completely neutral. He limits mindfulness, by intent, only to equanimity.

In this stage, the seeker empties his mind of thoughts and feelings while in meditation. Mastering the path of meditation, he achieves serenity. Of course, he continues to meditate on an object. But he finds the very materiality of the object limiting. In this stage, the material object becomes subtle, rather than gross. If he feels dissatisfied that he is still bound to material form in this stage, too, he may choose to meditate on a series of immaterial objects, thus developing more subtle and peaceful types of comprehension.

One such object of meditation is space itself. It is possible that the unbounded space still comes to the seeker as an object, a content of consciousness. He may seek out another object to meditate upon which is subjective rather than objective, namely, consciousness itself. In other words, he meditates on his awareness of boundless space.

Even still this may not work. This awareness of awareness may still be viewed as a thing contrasting, however abstractly, with other possible things. The seeker may then look to a third immaterial meditation on ‘nothingness’ conceived as the absence or emptiness (*suunyataa*) of anything. He meditates on this by repeating ‘*neti neti*’ (not this, not this, or void, void) (*suunya, suunya*), and gets gradually absorbed in the consciousness, with no object at all.

Even the contemplation of nothingness may prove unsatisfactory to some seekers. Either negative or positive awareness of things suggests just its opposites. So the seeker meditates on something that is neither identification-nor-non-identification, conditioning factors and consciousness merely as peaceful but neither existent nor non-existent. So doing, he arrives at the fourth and final immaterial meditative state, which is the most serene state of concentration envisaged in Abhidharma Buddhism.

These advanced stages of meditation are only optional. They are not required of the seeker. They do not advance him any nearer to his ultimate goal of enlightenment, *nirvana*. Though he reaches this pinnacle of serene concentration, he does not eliminate all the hindrances. The Buddhist texts state that what he attains at this stage is one or another of innumerable planes of existence where he will be reborn until the merit earned by his attainments is exhausted. Eventually, he will return and be faced

with the same problem, the ultimate one of overcoming rebirth altogether.

The seeker, while in the final (fourth) meditative stage, has to combine his achievement of meditation with a parallel achievement of wisdom.

After practicing the immaterial meditations to the extent required, the seeker who has mastered the fourth meditative stage may develop certain ‘higher faculties’ (*abhijnaa*). These are variously identified in the texts numbering three, sometimes five, six or more. The lists sometimes include one item that does not fit with the others, namely, knowledge of the destruction of one’s intoxicants. Of course, the seeker may know that destruction has actually occurred, as he is in the attainment of the higher faculty available only for the *arhat*, the perfected being. The *arhat* is one who has, in fact, eliminated all the hindrances.

The other higher faculties represent what are actually supernormal types of knowledge held to be attainable by special efforts beyond those needed to gain the eight meditative states. These efforts involve a heightened practice of the meditative states, applying them to all *kasinas* (objects) one by one and in different orders. These special efforts bring the seeker special kinds of knowledge of the following types.

1. Special powers (*rddhis*): These are in the nature of such powers as the ability to appear in many forms in many places and at many times; to make oneself appear or disappear; to pass through walls, mountains, etc.; to make the soil turn into water, and vice versa; to walk on water; to fly; to touch the sun and the moon; to travel to the world of Brahma.

2. Divine hearing (*divyasrotra*): It is the ability to hear far-off sounds or those extremely close inside one.
3. Awareness of others' minds (*paracittavijnaana*): It is knowing the thoughts of others.
4. Remembrance of previous lives (*puurvanivaasaanusmrti*): It is knowing the previous lives of the seeker himself and of others.
5. Divine vision (*divyacaksus*): It is the ability to see beyond the ordinary visual limits, particularly to see the future and to know what *karmic* outcomes will arise for the seeker himself and to others.

All the above stages of meditation are available to ordinary, 'worldly (*lokiya*), mundane' people. By practicing meditation, one can purify one's awareness and achieve serenity, either before or after the development of insight. While these activities are necessary preparations, they do not, however, eliminate all the hindrances. They decrease the number and force of these intoxicants, but they are still with the seeker, if only in latent form. Then, what is the way to liberation, getting rid of all hindrances without exception?

The *Patisambhidaamagga* narrates seven purifications. They are purification of morality (*seela*) practiced at the outset; purification of awareness (*citta*), that is, practice of the several meditative states, thereby suppressing the five hindrances; purification of view (*drsti*), meaning the elimination of the view of self; purification by overcoming doubt (*kaanksaavitarana*), consisting of the understanding of the dependent origination of mental as well as material things, and the resultant conviction of

the basic truths of Buddhism; purification by knowledge and vision of the right and wrong paths (*maargaamaargajnaanaadarsana*), which involves classification of all *dharma*s as impermanent, frustrating and not self; purification by knowledge and vision of the way (*pratipadaajnaanaadarsana*), carried forward by attainment of a series of insights into the destructibility of all things; and purification by knowledge and vision (*jnaanaadarsana*), beginning with what is technically called 'change of lineage knowledge' (*gotrabhuujnaana*) and continuing on through several intermediate states to that of perfected being (*arhat*). The first six of these states collectively summarize the various steps of the two paths of insight and meditation.

Change of lineage knowledge represents entry into the supra-mundane or higher-worldly path. It marks the beginning of awareness of liberation. He who has this knowledge is said to 'enter the stream'. He is thus known a 'stream-enterer'. The difference between the seeker and the stream-enterer is that the stream-enterer's knowledge and practice function to cut off the remaining intoxicants, while the seeker is on the path of meditation. As the stream-enterer is now committed to understanding the four Noble Truths, he is also termed a noble one (*aarya*) who has entered the Noble Eightfold Path.

The stream-enterer's efforts are specifically directed toward eliminating certain hindrances arising from the three bad roots. Some of them are among the five hindrances, which were the concern of the meditations of his preparatory states. Those meditations helped the seeker to avoid those states of mind figuring the hindrances, but did not actually eliminate the source of those states of mind. They merely suppressed them during the periods of meditation. As the suppression of hindrances in meditation is temporary, what the stream-enterer attempts is their complete

eradication. They are to be ‘cut off at the root’ by the successive stages of higher worldly meditative practice.

The Buddhist texts list ten hindrances, which have to be eliminated before one is termed a perfected being, destined to be liberated at the end of one’s lifetime. These are wrong view about existence (*satkaayadrsti*), doubt (*vicikitsaa*), clinging to rites and rituals (*seelavrataparaamarsa*), sensual desire (*kaamacchanda*), ill-will (*vyaapaada*), desire for material existence (*ruuparaaga*), desire for immaterial existence (*aruuparaaga*), conceit (*maana*), restlessness (*auddhatya*), and ignorance (*avidyaa*). The first five relate to ordinary worldly existence; and the last five relate to the higher realms of meditation. They are all to be eliminated through meditation of a supra-mundane sort.

The stream-enterer’s meditation on liberation is designed to destroy the first three hindrances. He cuts off these three hindrances, and also eliminates greed for sense pleasure as well as hatred toward unpleasant things. The Buddhist texts state that these desires and aversions dictate the most unfortunate kinds of rebirth one is subject to. As the stream-enterer eliminates them altogether, it, therefore, follows that he cannot be reborn in a lower state as an animal or insect.

As the seeker enters the stream-enterer’s path, he achieves the result or ‘fruit’ of stream-entry, and enjoys more extended moments of bliss and peace. He reflects on a new understanding of things unknown in the manner of ‘I shall know the unknown’ (*anaajnaata aajnaasyaamita*). He also acquires certain states called ‘factors of the path’ (*maargaanga*) and ‘factors of enlightenment’ (*bodhyanga*). The ‘factors of the path’ comprise those states enumerated in the Noble Eightfold Path. The ‘factors of enlightenment’ are the seven states of mindfulness,

inquisitiveness, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. This is the stage where the paths of wisdom come together. The stream-enterer is also described in the texts as being destined to no more than seven more births as human or deity.

One who has successfully accomplished the results of stream-entry may proceed to the next higher-worldly meditation. He then becomes a ‘once-returner’ (*sakrdaagaamin*). This meditation weakens the hindrances of sensual desire and ill will, although it does not completely eliminate them.

He, who enjoys the fruits of higher attainment, reflects and meditates still further. He begins to master ‘the factor of final knowledge’ (*aajneendriya*). He is now called a ‘non-returner’, as even if he goes no further ‘in this life’, he will achieve perfection in the next one. The mastery of ‘the factor of final knowledge’ increases as he progresses to the next higher stage and culminates in the realization of one’s state of perfection that one now knows completely.

The final stage of meditation is that of a perfected being, *arahat*. The stream-enterer attains to this stage by meditating as before. But, with the worldly hindrances destroyed, the stream-enterer is ready to lose the second set of five hindrances. When these are lost, he becomes a perfected being. He arrives at the faculty of the completion of knowledge (*aajnaataaveendriya*).

George Bond argues that ‘the *arahat* concept seems to have developed from an ideal readily attainable in this life... into an ideal considered remote and impossible to achieve in one or even many lifetimes’. In the Pali canonical texts, there are accounts of various people attaining liberation by getting rid of their hindrances. But the account of attainment of the state of

arahat, stated above as contained in the *Dhammasangaani*, suggests a longer and more difficult path, which needs several lifetimes to perfect. In the later period, attainment of the state of the *arahat* is stated to be still more difficult. This narration of the increase in the difficulty in the attainment of the state of the *arahat* appears to be a reflection of the greater control of the monastic community over Buddhism as a religion, with an increasing emphasis on the message to ordinary Buddhists concerning everyday life.

In any case, whether the stream-enterer attains to the state of *arahat* fast or slow, the existence of the *arahat*, the perfected being, comes to an end, a flame blown out, when his present lifetime reaches its natural termination. During the remainder of the *arahat*'s existence, he is able to enter into meditative spells when he experiences only the pure bliss of consciousness. He wills entry into or exit from the spells of meditation. The perfected being also attains to the sixth higher faculty, 'knowledge of the destruction of one's own hindrances'.

There is the third attainment termed *nirodhasamaapatti*, 'the attainment of cessation'. This is the most advanced super-normal state attainable only by non-returners and perfected beings. Gunaratna makes a graphic description of this attainment: 'To attain cessation requires full possession of the two powers of serenity and insight... It cannot be reached in the immaterial realms since it must be preceded by the four immaterial *jhaanas*, which are lacking in those realms'.

This attainment involves the fifth higher faculty 'the attainment of the cessation of identification and feeling' (*samjnaavedayitanirodha*). It appears to be a state devoid of bodily, mental or verbal function. One who enters this state has only two things left, just a semblance of vitality and heat. In this

state, 'not only is there no reaction to stimuli and no initiation of action, but also no internal mental life of any kind. It is, in brief, a condition in which no mental events of any kind occur, a condition distinguishable from death only by a certain residual warmth and vitality in the unconscious practitioner's body', in the words of Paul J. Griffiths.

In the end, however, there seems still to be difference between those perfected beings that are 'liberated by wisdom' (*prajnaavimukta*) and those 'liberated both ways' (*ubhatobhaagavimukta*), that is, liberated both by wisdom and meditation. The postulation of this difference can be traced even to the *nikaayas*, repeated over and over again. The one who is liberated by wisdom alone, the 'pure insight practitioner' (*suddhavigyasyanaayanaika*), does not practise the various kinds of meditation, even though he must have attained to the right concentration, one of the eight-path factors required for liberation. Being 'liberated both ways' is no more than being liberated by wisdom.

The perfected being, the *arahat*, then, is liberated; he has attained *nirvana*. When his physical body dies, he will have attained *parinirvana*.

11. Assimilation with Vedanta

Asanga and Vasubandhu perfected *Vijnaanaavaada*. With this, the Buddhist philosophy entered the phase at which, except for a few differences, it became easy for it to enter the Vedanta, and for the Vedanta to assimilate and absorb it. In fact, even its doctrine of causation underwent serious transformation.

Taking the whole of Buddhism into account, we find four conceptions of causation in it. First is the doctrine of dependent origination. According to it, although the cause is necessary for the effect, it has to die before the effect comes into being and there can, therefore, be no material cause that can constitute the material of the effect.

Second is the concept of the Sarvaastivaadins that the effect is an aggregate of the constituents, which continue as the constituents so long as the effect lasts. Third is the concept of transformation and evolution (*parinaama*) of the Vijnaanaavaadins. Fourth is the concept, similar to that of Sankara, that the cause remains unaffected (*vivartakaarana*) in spite of giving rise to the effect.

If the highest Consciousness (*Vijnaana*) or *Nirvana* is eternally present, and if, out of it, the world comes, without at the same time affecting its purity, then this cause is the same as that which Sankara accepted and propounded.

The development of the doctrine of the Buddha's body also led Buddhism into the Vedanta. The Lokottaravaadins of the Hinayana held that the true body of the Buddha could not have been mundane. Then it must be the truth of the Buddha's being, *nirvana*, *suunya*, etc. It must be the *dharmakaya*, the

body identical with *dharma*, the Truth, the essential nature and law of the world and reality.

The concept of *dharma* in Buddhism is so comprehensive that it can mean anything and everything in the universe. Vasubandhu defines *dharma* in his *Abhidharmakosa* as anything that can be known, a thing, a category. In the Mahayaana, when the truth of all *dharmas* becomes the ultimate *Vijnaana*, *Suunya*, the body of the Buddha, *Bhutatahataa*, etc, the true *dharma* becomes all of them. For Buddhism, *dharma* also means the law, the doctrine, the truth taught by the Buddha. But what his doctrine pointed to was the ultimate reality. So *dharma* came to mean the highest reality.

In between the historical, mundane body of the Buddha and his *dharmakaya* (divine body), the Buddhists introduced other bodies, corresponding to different spiritual levels. If we ignore the many sub-divisions, we find three bodies of the Buddha. One is the *nirmanakaya* or the mundane body that taught the Hinayana doctrine. Second is the *sambhogakaya* or the body of enjoyment that enjoyed teaching the Mahayana doctrine to the highly evolved souls. Third is the *dharmakaya* or the body of ultimate reality that is the essential nature of the Buddha.

The highest of these levels is identified with ultimate reality, which can be realized inwardly by mind. Indeed, Buddhism rejects the ideas of Supreme God and the individual atman. This rejection is only in favour of ultimate *Vijnaana* (Consciousness), which is in no way different from the Brahman of the Upanisads. The whole Mahayana, except the *Maadhyamika*, denies the independent reality of the material world, which is very similar to the Upanisadic doctrine that 'All this is verily the Brahman'. The *Maadhyamika* just stops short of this conclusion.

Besides, Buddhism, from its very beginning, accepted all the gods of the orthodox, conservative religion, although rejecting the Supreme God as the creator. In spite of rejecting the Brahmanic religion of sacrifices, it accepted the *Mimamsa* doctrine of ethical potency as a creator and controller of the world for every individual, and made the potency a part of the aggregate of formative forces (*samskaaras*).

The Buddhist conception of *Maya* and *Avidya*, particularly in the *Vijnaanaavaada*, is little different from that of the *Advaita Vedanta*. The Buddhist equation of the two with the *suunya* as that which disappears like a dream at the time of enlightenment is acceptable to the *Vedanta*, according to which the world disappears when the Brahman is realized.

The *Advaita* incorporates in *toto* the Buddhist definition of every one of the three ideas – *Maya*, *Avidya* and *Suunya* – as that which neither is, nor is not, nor is both, nor is neither. The *Vedanta* schools also incorporate the idea of the Void, though in a positive way, saying that it is a state of the Supreme Godhead, in which the world is about to be created, but not yet created. In other words, the void is the indeterminate state of objectivity before it becomes the determinate state of plurality.

Thus, practically every doctrine of Buddhism, in its latest phases in India, became assimilated in one way or another to some school of orthodox tradition. When so assimilated, it ceased to appear as Buddhist.