CHAPTER XIII

THE CANON

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There are extant in several languages large collections of Buddhist scriptures described by some European writers as the Canon. The name is convenient and not incorrect, but the various canons are not altogether similar and the standard for the inclusion or exclusion of particular works is not always clear. We know something of four or five canons.

(1) The Pali Canon, accepted by the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma and Siam, and rendered accessible to European students by the Pali Text Society. It professes to contain the works recognized as canonical by the Council of Asoka and it is reasonably homogeneous, that is to say, although some ingenuity may be needed to harmonize the different strata of which it consists, it does not include works composed by several schools.

(2) The Sanskrit Canon or Canons.

(a) Nepalese scriptures. These do not correspond with any Pali texts and all belong to the Mahayana. There appears to be no standard for fixing the canonical character of Mahayanist works. Like the Upanishads they are held to be revealed from time to time.

(b) Buddhist texts discovered in Central Asia. Hitherto these have been merely fragments, but the number of manuscripts found and not yet published permits the hope that longer texts may be forthcoming. Those already made known are partly Mahayanist and partly similar to the Pali Canon though not a literal translation of it. It is not clear to what extent the Buddhists of Central Asia regarded the Hina and Mahayanist scriptures as separate and distinct. Probably each school selected for itself a small collection of texts as authoritative¹.

(3) The Chinese Canon. This is a gigantic collection of Buddhist works made and revised by order of various Emperors.

¹ See for instance the Life of Hsüan Chuang; Beal, p. 39; Julien, p. 50.
The imperial imprimatur is the only standard of canonicity. The contents include translations of works belonging to all schools made from the first to the thirteenth century A.D. The originals were apparently all in Sanskrit and were probably the texts of which fragments have been found in Central Asia. This canon also includes some original Chinese works.

(4) There is a somewhat similar collection of translations into Tibetan. But whereas the Chinese Canon contains translations dated from 67 A.D. onwards, the Tibetan translations were made mainly in the ninth and eleventh centuries and represent the literature esteemed by the mediæval Buddhism of Bengal. Part at least of this Tibetan Canon has been translated into Mongol.

Renderings of various books into Uigur, Sogdian, Kuchanese, "Nordarisch" and other languages of Central Asia have been discovered by recent explorers. It is probable that they are all derived from the Sanskrit Canon and do not represent any independent tradition. The scriptures used in Japan and Korea are simply special editions of the Chinese Canon, not translations.

In the following pages I propose to consider the Pali Canon, postponing until later an account of the others. It will be necessary, however, to touch on the relations of Pali and Sanskrit texts.

The scriptures published by the Pali Text Society represent the canon of the ancient sect called Vibhajjavâdins and the particular recension of it used at the monastery in Anuradhapura called Mahâvihâra. It is therefore not incorrect to apply to this recension such epithets as southern or Sinhalese, provided we remember that in its origin it was neither one nor the other, for the major part of it was certainly composed in India. It was probably introduced into Ceylon in the third century B.C. and it is also accepted in Burma, Siam and Camboja. Thus in a considerable area it is the sole and undisputed version of the scriptures.

1 I consider it possible, though by no means proved, that the Abhidhamma was put together in Ceylon.

2 For the Burmese Canon see chap. xxvi. Even if the Burmese had Pali scriptures which did not come from Ceylon, they sought to harmonize them with the texts known there.
The canon is often known by the name of Tripiṭaka\(^1\) or Three Baskets. When an excavation was made in ancient India it was the custom to pass up the earth in baskets along a line of workmen\(^2\) and the metaphorical use of the word seems to be taken from this practice and to signify transmission by tradition.

The three Pitakas are known as Vinaya, Sutta, and Abhidhamma. Vinaya means discipline and the works included in this division treat chiefly of the rules to be observed by the members of the Sangha. The basis of these rules is the Pātimokkha, the ancient confessional formula enumerating the offences which a monk can commit. It was read periodically to a congregation of the order and those guilty of any sin had to confess it. The text of the Pātimokkha is in the Vinaya combined with a very ancient commentary called the Sutta-vibhanga. The Vinaya also contains two treatises known collectively as the Khandakas but more frequently cited by their separate names as Mahāvagga and Cullavagga. The first deals with such topics as the rules for admission to the order, and observance of fast days, and in treating of each rule it describes the occasion on which the Buddha made it and to some extent follows the order of chronology. For some parts of the master’s life it is almost a biography. The Cullavagga is similar in construction but less connected in style\(^3\).

\(^1\) Pali Tipiṭaka.
\(^2\) So in Maj. Nik. xx. a man who proposes to excavate comes Kuddalapiṭakam ādāya, “With spade and basket.”
\(^3\) The list of the Vinaya books is:

- Pārājikam
- Pacittiyaṃ
- Mahāvagga
- Cullavagga

Parivāra-pātha: a supplement and index. This book was rejected by some schools.

Something is known of the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādins existing in a Chinese translation and in fragments of the Sanskrit original found in Central Asia. It also consists of the Pātimokkha embedded in a commentary called Vibhāga and of two treatises describing the foundation of the order and its statutes. They are called Kshudrakavastu and Vinayavastu. In these works the narrative and anecdotal element is larger than in the Pali Vinaya. See also my remarks on the Mahāvastu under the Mahayanist Canon. For some details about the Dharmagupta Vinaya, see J.A. 1916, ii. p. 20: for a longish extract from the Mūlasarv. Vinaya, J.A. 1914, ii. pp. 493–522.
The Vinaya contains several important and curious narratives and is a mine of information about the social conditions of ancient India, but much of it has the same literary value as the book of Leviticus. Of greater general interest is the Sutta Pitaka, in which the sermons and discourses of the Buddha are collected. Sutta is equivalent to the Sanskrit word Sûtra, literally a thread, which signifies among the Brahmans a brief rule or aphorism but in Pali a relatively short poem or narrative dealing with a single object. This Sutta Pitaka is divided into five collections called Nikâyas. The first four are mainly in prose and contain discourses attributed to Gotama or his disciples. The fifth is mostly in verse and more miscellaneous.

The four collections of discourses bear the names of Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta and Anguttara. The first, meaning long, consists of thirty-four narratives. They are not all sermons and are of varying character, antiquity and interest, the reason why they are grouped together being simply their length\(^{1}\). In some of them we may fancy that we catch an echo of Gotama's own words, but in others the legendary character is very marked. Thus the Mahâsamaya and Atânâtiya suttas are epitomes of popular mythology tacked on to the history of the Buddha. But for all that they are interesting and ancient.

Many of the suttas, especially the first thirteen, are rearrangements of old materials put together by a considerable literary artist who lived many generations after the Buddha. The account of the Buddha's last days is an example of such a compilation which attains the proportions of a Gospel and shows some dramatic power though it is marred by the juxtaposition of passages composed in very different styles.

The Majjhima-Nikâya is a collection of 152 discourses of moderate (majjhima) length. Taken as a whole it is perhaps the most profound and impassioned of all the Nikâyas and also the oldest. The sermons which it contains, if not verbatim reports of Gotama's eloquence, have caught the spirit of one who urged with insistent earnestness the importance of certain difficult truths and the tremendous issues dependent on right conduct and right knowledge. The remaining collections, the

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\(^{1}\) I find it hard to accept Francke's view that the Digha should be regarded as the Book of the Tathâgata, deliberately composed to expound the doctrine of Buddhahood. Many of the suttas do not deal with the Tathâgata.
Samyutta and Anguttara, classify the Buddha's utterances under various headings and presuppose older documents which they sometimes quote\(^1\). The Samyutta consists of a great number of suttas, mostly short, combined in groups treating of a single subject which may be either a person or a topic. The Anguttara, which is a still longer collection, is arranged in numerical groups, a method of classification dear to the Hindus who delight in such computations as the four meditations, the eightfold path, the ten fetters. It takes such religious topics as can be counted in this way and arranges them under the numbers from one to eleven. Thus under three, it treats of thought, word and deed and the applications of this division to morality; of the three messengers of the gods, old-age, sickness and death; of the three great evils, lust, ill-will and stupidity and so on.

The fifth or Khuddaka-Nikāya is perhaps the portion of the Pali scriptures which has found most favour with Europeans, for the treatises composing it are short and some of them of remarkable beauty. They are in great part composed of verses, sometimes disconnected couplets, sometimes short poems. The stanzas are only imperfectly intelligible without an explanation of the occasion to which they refer. This is generally forthcoming, but is sometimes a part of the accepted text and sometimes regarded as merely a commentary. To this division of the Pitaka belong the Dhammapada, a justly celebrated anthology of devotional verses, and the Sutta-Nipāta, a very ancient collection of suttas chiefly in metre. Other important works included in it are the Thera and Therī-gāthā or poems written by monks and nuns respectively, and the Jātaka or stories about the Buddha's previous births\(^2\). Some of the rather miscellaneous contents of this Nikāya are late and do not belong to the same epoch of thought as the discourses

\(^1\) The Samyutta quotes by name a passage from the Ṣūṭhā as "spoken by the Lord": compare Sam. Nik. x. 11. 4 with Dig. Nik. 21. Both the Anguttara and Samyutta quote the last two cantos of the Sutta-Nipāta.

\(^2\) It appears that the canonical book of the Jātaka consists only of verses and does not include explanatory prose matter. Something similar to these collections of verses which are not fully intelligible without a commentary explaining the occasions on which they were uttered may be seen in Chāndogya Up. vi. The father's answers are given but the son's questions which render them intelligible are not found in the text but are supplied in the commentary.
attributed to Gotama. Such are the Buddha-vamsa, or lives of Gotama and his twenty-four predecessors, the Cariyā-Piṭaka, a selection of Jātaka stories about Gotama’s previous births and the Vimāna and Peta-vatthu, accounts of celestial mansions and of the distressful existence led by those who are condemned to be ghosts.

Though some works comprised in this Nikāya (e.g. the Suttanipāta) are very ancient, the collection, as it stands, is late and probably known only to the southern Church. The contents of it are not quite the same in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, and only a small portion of them has been identified in the Chinese Tripitaka. Nevertheless the word pañcanekāyika, one who knows the five Nikāyas, is found in the inscriptions of Sanchi and five Nikāyas are mentioned in the last books of the Cullavagga. Thus a fifth Nikāya of some kind must have been known fairly early.

The third Pitaka is known by the name of Abhidhamma.

1 The following is a table of the Sutta Pitaka:

I. Diṭṭha-Nikāya
II. Majjhima-Nikāya Collections of discourses mostly attributed to the Buddha.
III. Samyutta-Nikāya
IV. Anguttara-Nikāya
V. Khuddaka-Nikāya: a collection of comparatively short treatises, mostly in poetry, namely:

1. Dhammapada.
8. Niddesa: an old commentary on the latter half of the Sutta-nipāta, ascribed to Sāriputta.


The works marked * are not found in the Siamese edition of the Tripitaka but the Burmese editions include four other texts, the Milinda-pañha, Petakopadesa, Suttasananīgha, and Nettipakaraṇa. The Khuddaka-Nikāya seems to have been wanting in the Pitaka of the Sarvāstivādin or whatever sect supplied the originals from which the Chinese Canon was translated, for this Canon classifies the Dhammapada as a miscellaneous work outside the Sutta Pitaka. Fragments of the Sutta-nipāta have been found in Turkestan but it is not clear to what Pitaka it was considered to belong. For mentions of the Khuddaka-Nikāya in Chinese see J.A. 1918, pp. 32-3.
Dhamma is the usual designation for the doctrine of the Buddha and Buddhaghosa\textsuperscript{1} explains the prefix abhi as signifying excess and distinction, so that this Pitaka is considered pre-eminent because it surpasses the others. This pre-eminence consists solely in method and scope, not in novelty of matter or charm of diction. The point of view of the Abhidhamma is certainly later than that of the Sutta Pitaka and in some ways marks an advance, for instead of professing to report the discourses of Gotama it takes the various topics on which he touched, especially psychological ethics, and treats them in a connected and systematic manner. The style shows some resemblance to Sanskrit sūtras for it is so technical both in vocabulary and arrangement that it can hardly be understood without a commentary\textsuperscript{2}. According to tradition the Buddha recited the Abhidhamma when he went to heaven to preach to the gods, and this seems a polite way of hinting that it was more than any human congregation could tolerate or understand. Still throughout the long history of Buddhism it has always been respected as the most profound portion of the scriptures and has not failed to find students. This Pitaka includes the Kathā-vatthu, attributed to Tissa Moggaliputta who is said to have composed it about 250 B.C. in Asoka’s reign\textsuperscript{3}.


\textsuperscript{3} Mrs Rhys Davids’ Translations of the Dhamma-sangāni give a good idea of these books.

The works comprised in this Pitaka are:

1. Dhamma-sangāni.
2. Vibhanga.
5. Dhātu-kathā.
6. Yamaka.
7. Paṭṭhāna. The Abhidhamma of the Sarvāstivādins was entirely different. It seems probable that the Abhidhamma books of all schools consisted almost entirely of explanatory matter and added very little to the doctrine laid down in the suttas. It would appear that the only new topic introduced in the Pali Abhidhamma is the theory of relations (paccaya).
and answers. This enumeration is not to be understood as a statement of the sections into which the whole body of scripture was divided but as a description of the various styles of composition recognized as being religious, just as the Old Testament might be said to contain historical books, prophecies, canticles and so on. Compositions in these various styles must have been current before the work of collection began, as is proved by the fact that all the angas are enumerated in the Majjhima-Nikāya.

This Tripitaka is written in Pali which is regarded by Buddhist tradition as the language spoken by the Master. In the time of Asoka the dialect of Magadha must have been understood over the greater part of India, like Hindustani in modern times, but in some details of grammar and phonetics Pali differs from Māgadhī Prakrit and seems to have been influenced by Sanskrit and by western dialects. Being a literary rather than a popular language it was probably a mixed form of speech and it has been conjectured that it was elaborated in Avanti or in Gândhâra where was the great Buddhist University of Takshaśilâ. Subsequently it died out as a literary language in India but in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Camboja it became the vehicle of a considerable religious and scholastic literature. The language of Asoka’s inscriptions in the third century b.c. is a parallel dialect, but only half stereotyped. The language of the Mahâvastu and some Mahayanist texts, often called the language of the Gâthâs, seems to be another vernacular brought more or less into conformity with Sanskrit. It is probable that

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2 Pali means primarily a line or row and then a text as distinguished from the commentary. Thus Pâlimattam means the text without the commentary and Palîbhâsā is the language of the text or what we call Pali. See Pali and Sanskrit, R. O. Franke, 1902. Windisch, “Über den sprachlichen Character des Pali,” in Actes du XIVme Congrès des Orientalistes, 1905. Grierson, “Home of Pali” in Bhandarkar Commemorative Essays, 1917.

3 It is not easy to say how late or to what extent Pali was used in India. The Milinda-Paṇha (or at least books II. and III.) was probably composed in North Western India about the time of our era. Dharmapala wrote his commentaries (c. 500 A.D.) in the extreme south, probably at Conjeevaram. Pali inscriptions of the second or third century A.D. have been discovered at Sarnath but contain mistakes which show that the engraver did not understand the language (Epig. Ind. 1908, p. 391). Bendall found Pali mss. in Nepal, J.R.A.S. 1899, p. 422.
in preaching the Buddha used not Pali in the strict sense but the spoken dialect of Magadha\(^1\), and that this dialect did not differ from Pali more than Scotch or Yorkshire from standard English, and if for other reasons we are satisfied that some of the suttas have preserved the phrases which he employed, we may consider that apart from possible deviations in pronunciation or inflexion they are his *ipsissima verba*. Even as we have it, the text of the canon contains some anomalous forms which are generally considered to be Magadhisms\(^2\).

The Cullavagga relates how two monks who were Brahmins represented to the Buddha that “monks of different lineage... corrupt the word of the Buddha by repeating it in their own dialect. Let us put the word of the Buddhas into *chandas*.” No doubt Sanskrit verse is meant, *chandas* being a name applied to the language of the Vedic verses. Gotama refused: “You are not to put the word of the Buddhas into *chandas*. Whoever does so shall be guilty of an offence. I allow you to learn the word of the Buddhas each in his own dialect.” Subsequent generations forgot this prohibition, but it probably has a historical basis and it indicates the Buddha’s desire to make his teaching popular. It is not likely that he contemplated the composition of a body of scriptures. He would have been afraid that it might resemble the hymns of the Brahmins which he valued so little and he wished all men to hear his teaching in the language they understood best. But when after his death his disciples collected his sayings it was natural that they should make at least one version of them in the dialect most widely spoken and that this version should be gradually elaborated in what was considered the best literary form of that dialect\(^4\). It is probable that the text underwent several linguistic revisions before it reached its present state.

Pali is a sonorous and harmonious language which avoids

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\(^1\) Magadha of course was not his birth-place and the dialect of Kosala must have been his native language. But it is not hinted that he had any difficulty in making himself understood in Magadha and elsewhere.

\(^2\) *E.g.* nominatives singular in *e*. For the possible existence of scriptures anterior to the Pali version and in another dialect, see S. Lévi, *J.A.* 1912, ii. p. 495.

\(^3\) Cullavag. v. 33, chandaso kropema.

\(^4\) Although Pali became a sacred language in the South, yet in China, Tibet and Central Asia the scriptures were translated into the idioms of the various countries which accepted Buddhism.
combinations of consonants and several difficult sounds found in Sanskrit. Its excellence lies chiefly in its vocabulary and its weakness in its syntax. Its inflexions are heavy and monotonous and the sentences lack concentration and variety. Compound words do not assume such monstrous proportions as in later Sanskrit, but there is the same tendency to make the process of composition do duty for syntax. These faults have been intensified by the fact that the language has been used chiefly for theological discussion. The vocabulary on the other hand is copious and for special purposes admirable. The translator has to struggle continually with the difficulty of finding equivalents for words which, though apparently synonymous, really involve nice distinctions and much misunderstanding has arisen from the impossibility of adequately rendering philosophical terms, which, though their European equivalents sound vague, have themselves a precise significance. On the other hand some words (e.g. dhamma and attho) show an inconveniently wide range of meaning. But the force of the language is best seen in its power of gathering up in a single word, generally a short compound, an idea which though possessing a real unity requires in European languages a whole phrase for its expression. Thus the Buddha bids his disciples be attadipa atta-saraṇa, anañña-saraṇa: dhammadipa dhammasaraṇa.1 "Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast to the truth as a refuge." This is Rhys Davids' translation and excellent both as English and as giving the meaning. But the five Pali words compel attention and inscribe themselves on the memory in virtue of a monumental simplicity which the five English sentences do not possess.

But the feature in the Pali scriptures which is most prominent and most tiresome to the unsympathetic reader is the repetition of words, sentences and whole paragraphs. This is partly the result of grammar or at least of style. The simplicity of Pali syntax and the small use made of dependent sentences, lead to the regular alignment of similar phrases side by side

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1 Mahāparinibbāna-sutta, ii. 26. Another expressive compound is Dhūmakālikam (Cullav. xi. 1. 9) literally smoke-timed. The disciples were afraid that the discipline of the Buddha might last only as long as the smoke of his funeral pyre.
like boards in a floor. When anything is predicated of several subjects, for instance the five Skandhas, it is rare to find a single sentence containing a combined statement. As a rule what has to be said is predicated first of the first Skandha and then repeated *totidem verbis* of the others. But there is another cause for this tedious peculiarity, namely that for a long period the Pitakas were handed down by oral tradition only. They were first reduced to writing in Ceylon about 20 B.C. in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmani, more than a century and a half after their first importation in an oral form. This circumstance need not throw doubt on the authenticity of the text, for the whole ancient literature of India, prose as well as verse, was handed down by word of mouth and even in the present day most of it could be recovered if all manuscripts and books were lost. The Buddhists did not, like the Brahmans, make minute regulations for preserving and memorizing their sacred texts, and in the early ages of the faith were impressed with the idea that their teaching was not a charm to be learnt by heart but something to be understood and practised. They nevertheless endeavoured, and probably with success, to learn by heart the words of the Buddha, converting them into the dialect most widely understood. It was then a common thing (and the phenomenon may still be seen in India) for a man of learning to commit to memory a whole Veda together with subsidiary treatises on ritual, metre, grammar and genealogy. For such memories it was not difficult to retain the principal points in a series of sermons. The Buddha had preached day by day for about forty-five years. Though he sometimes spoke with reference to special events he no doubt had a set of discourses which he regularly repeated. There was the less objection to such repetition because he was continually moving about and addressing new audiences. There were trained Brahman students among his disciples, and at his death many persons, probably hundreds, must have had by heart summaries of his principal sermons.

But a sermon is less easy to remember than a poem or matter arranged by some method of *memoria technica*. An obvious aid to recollection is to divide the discourse into numbered heads and attach to each certain striking phrases. If the phrases can be made to recur, so much the better, for
there is a guarantee of correctness when an expected formula appears at appropriate points.

It may be too that the wearisome and mechanical iteration of the Pali Canon is partly due to the desire of the Sinhalese to lose nothing of the sacred word imparted to them by missionaries from a foreign country, for repetition to this extent is not characteristic of Indian compositions. It is less noticeable in Sanskrit Buddhist sūtras than in the Pali but is very marked in Jain literature. A moderate use of it is a feature of the Upanishads. In these we find recurring formulæ and also successive phrases constructed on one plan and varying only in a few words. But still I suspect that repetition characterized not only the reports of the discourses but the discourses themselves. No doubt the versions which we have are the result of compressing a free discourse into numbered paragraphs and repetitions: the living word of the Buddha was surely more vivacious and plastic than these stiff tabulations. But the peculiarities of scholars can often be traced to the master and the Buddha had much the same need of mnemonics as his hearers. For he had excogitated complicated doctrines and he imparted them without the aid of notes and though his natural wit enabled him to adapt his words to the capacity of his hearers and to meet argument, still his wish was to formulate a consistent statement of his thoughts. In the earliest discourse ascribed to him, the sermon at Benares, we see these habits of numbering and repetition already fully developed. The next discourse, on the absence of a soul, consists in enumerating the five words, form, sensation, perception, sankhāras, and consciousness three times, and applying to each of them consecutively three statements or arguments, the whole concluding with a phrase which is used as a finale in many other places. Artificial as this arrangement sounds when analyzed, it is a natural procedure for one who wished to impress on his hearers a series of philosophic propositions without the aid of writing, and I can imagine that these

1 Winternitz has acutely remarked that the Pali Pitaka resembles the Upanishads in style. See also Keith, Ait. Ar. p. 55. For repetitions in the Upanishads, see Chāṇḍ. v. 3. 4 ff., v. 12 ff. and much in vii. and viii., Brihad. Ar. iii. ix. 9 ff., vi. iii. 2, etc. This Upanishad relates the incident of Yājñavalkya and Maitreyi twice. So far as style goes, I see no reason why the earliest parts of the Vinaya and Sutta Pitaka should not have been composed immediately after the Buddha’s death.
rhythmical formulae uttered in that grave and pleasant voice which the Buddha is said to have possessed, seemed to the leisurely yet eager groups who sat round him under some wayside banyan or in the monastery park, to be not tedious iteration but a gradual revelation of truth growing clearer with each repetition.

We gather from the Pitakas that writing was well known in the Buddha’s time. But though it was used for inscriptions, accounts and even letters, it was not used for books, partly because the Brahmans were prejudiced against it, and partly because no suitable material for inditing long compositions had been discovered. There were religious objections to parchment and leaves were not employed till later. The minute account of monastic life given in the Vinaya makes it certain that the monks did not use writing for religious purposes. Equally conclusive, though also negative, is the fact that in the accounts of the assemblies at Rājagaha and Vesāli when there is a dispute as to the correct ruling on a point, there is no appeal to writing but merely to the memory of the oldest and most authoritative monks. In the Vinaya we hear of people who know special books: of monks who are preachers of the Dhamma and others who know the Sutta; of laymen who have learnt a particular suttanta and are afraid it will fall into oblivion unless others learn it from them. Apprehensions are expressed that suttas will be lost if monks neglect to learn them by heart. From inscriptions of the third century B.C. are quoted words like Petaki, a reciter of the Pitakas or perhaps of one Pitaka: Suttāntika and Suttāntakini, a man or woman who recites the suttantas: Pancanekāyika, one who recites the five Nikāyas. All this shows that from the early days of Buddhism onwards a succession of persons made it their business to learn and recite the doctrine and disciplinary rules and, considering the retentiveness of trained memories, we have no reason to doubt that the doctrine and rules have been preserved without much loss.

2 Cullav. iv. 15. 4.
3 Ang. Nik. iv. 100. 5, ib. v. lxxiv. 5.
4 See Bühler in Epigraphia Indica, vol. ii. p. 93.
5 Even at the time of Fa Hsien’s visit to India (c. 400 A.D.) the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin school was preserved orally and not written. See Legge’s trans. p. 99.
Not, however, without additions. The disadvantage of oral tradition is not that it forgets but that it proceeds snowball fashion, adding with every generation new edifying matter. The text of the Vedic hymns was preserved with such jealous care that every verse and syllable was counted. But in works of lesser sanctity interpolations and additions were made according to the reciters' taste. We cannot assign to the Mahābhārata one date or author, and the title of Upanishad is no guarantee for the age or authenticity of the treatises that bear it. Already in the Anguttara-Nikāya¹, we hear of tables of contents and the expression is important, for though we cannot give any more precise explanation of it, it shows that care was taken to check the contents of the works accepted as scripture. But still there is little doubt that during the two or three centuries following the Buddha's death, there went on a process not only of collection and recension but also of composition.

An account of the formation of the canon is given in the last two chapters of the Cullavagga². After the death of the Buddha his disciples met to decide what should be regarded as the correct doctrine and discipline. The only way to do that was to agree what had been the utterances of the master and this, in a country where the oral transmission of teaching was so well understood, amounted to laying the foundations of a canon. Kassapa cross-examined experts as to the Buddha's precepts. For the rules of discipline Upāli was the chief authority and we read how he was asked where such and such a rule—for instance, the commandment against stealing—was promulgated.

"At Rājagaha, sir."
"Concerning whom was it spoken?"
"Dhaniya, the potter's son."
"In regard to what matter?"
"The taking of that which had not been given."

For collecting the suttas they relied on the testimony of Ānanda and asked him where the Brahmajāla³ was spoken. He replied "between Rājagaha and Nālanda at the royal resthouse at Ambalatthika." "Concerning whom was it spoken?"

¹ Ang. Nik. iv. 160. 5, Bhikkhā bahussutā......mātikādharā monks who carry in memory the indices.
² Cullavag. xii., xii.
³ Dig. Nik. 1.
"Suppiya, the wandering ascetic and Brahmadatta the young Brahman."

Then follows a similar account of the Sāmaññaphala sutta and we are told that Ānanda was "questioned through the five Nikāyas." That is no doubt an exaggeration as applied to the time immediately after the Buddha's death, but it is evidence that five Nikāyas were in existence when this chapter was written.

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Lines of growth are clearly discernible in the Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas. As already mentioned, the Khuddaka-Nikāya is, as a collection, later than the others although separate books of it, such as the Sutta-nipāta (especially the fourth and fifth books), are among the earliest documents which we possess. But other books such as the Peta and Vīmāna-vatthu show a distinct difference in tone and are probably separated from the Buddha by several centuries. Of the other four Nikāyas the Samyutta and Anguttara are the more modern and the Anguttara mentions Munda, King of Magadha who began to reign about forty years after the Buddha's death. But even in the two older collections, the Dīgha and the Majjhima, we have not reached the lowest stratum. The first thirteen suttantas of the Dīgha all contain a very ancient tractate on morality, and the Sāmaññaphala and following sections of the Dīgha and also some suttas of the Majjhima contain either in whole or in part a treatise on progress in the holy life. These treatises were probably current as separate portions for recitation before the suttas in which they are now set were composed.

Similarly, the Vinaya clearly presupposes an old code in the form of a list of offences called the Pātimokkha. The Mahāvagga contains a portion of an ancient word-for-word explanation of this code and most of the Sutta-vibhanga is an amplification and exposition of it. The Pātimokkha was already in existence when these books were composed, for we hear that if in a

1 It is remarkable that this account contemplates five Nikāyas (of which the fifth is believed to be late) but only two Pitakas, the Abhidhamma not being mentioned.

2 It refers to a king Pingalaka, said to have reigned two hundred years after the Buddha's time.

3 Mahāv. XI. 3.

4 Mahāv. II. 17.
company of Bhikkhus no one knows the Pātimokkha, one of the younger brethren should be sent to some better instructed monastery to learn it. And further we hear\(^1\) that a learned Bhikkhu was expected to know not merely the precepts of the Pātimokkha but also the occasion when each was formulated. The place, the circumstances and the people concerned had been in each case handed down. There is here all the material for a narrative. The reciter of a sutta simply adopts the style of a village story-teller. “Thus have I heard. Once upon a time the Lord was dwelling at Rājagaha,” or wherever it was, and such and such people came to see him. And then, after a more or less dramatic introduction, comes the Lord’s discourse and at the end an epilogue saying how the hearers were edified and, if previously unconverted, took refuge in the true doctrine.

The Cullavagga states that the Vinaya (but not the other Pitakas) was recited and verified at the Council of Vesālī. As I have mentioned elsewhere, Sinhalese and Chinese accounts speak of another Council, the Mahāsangha or Mahāsangiti. Though its date is uncertain, there is a consensus of tradition to the effect that it recognized a canon of its own, different from our Pali Canon and containing a larger amount of popular matter.

Sinhalese tradition states that the canon as we now have it was fixed at the third Council held at Pataliputra in the reign of Asoka (about 272–232 B.C.). The most precise statements about this Council are those of Buddhaghosa who says that an assembly of monks who knew the three Pitakas by heart recited the Vinaya and the Dhamma.

But the most important and interesting evidence as to the existence of Buddhist scriptures in the third century B.C. is afforded by the Bhābrū (or Bhābrā) edict of Asoka. He recommends the clergy to study seven passages, of which nearly all can be identified in our present edition of the Pitakas\(^2\). This edict

\(^1\) Cullav. ix. 5.

\(^2\) The passages are:


3. The Anāgata-bhayāni = Anguttara-Nikāya, v. 77–80, or part of it.
does not prove that Asoka had before him in the form which we
know the Dīgha and other works cited. But the most cautious
logic must admit that there was a collection of the Buddha's
sayings to which he could appeal and that if most of his refer-
ences to this collection can be identified in our Pitakas, then
the major part of these Pitakas is probably identical in sub-
stance (not necessarily verbally) with the collection of sayings
known to Asoka.

Neither Asoka nor the author of the Kathā-vatthu cites
books by name. The latter for instance quotes the well-known
lines "anupubbenā medhavi" not as coming from the Dham-
mapada but as "spoken by the Lord." But the author of the
Questions of Milinda, who knew the canonical books by the
names they bear now, also often adopts a similar method of
citation. Although this author's probable date is not earlier
than our era his evidence is important. He mentions all five
 Nikāyas by name, the titles of many suttas and also the
Vibhanga, Dhātu-kathā, Puggala-Paññatti, Kathā-vatthu,
Yamaka and Paṭṭhāna.

Everything indicates and nothing discredits the conclusion
that this canon of the Vibhajjavādins was substantially fixed
in the time of Asoka, so far as the Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas
are concerned. Some works of minor importance may have had
an uncertain position and subsequent revisions may have been
made but the principal scriptures were already recognized and
contained passages which occur in our versions. On the other
hand this recension of the scriptures was not the only one in
existence. If the patronage of Asoka gave it a special prestige
in his lifetime, it may have lost it in India after his death and
for many centuries the Buddhist Canon, like the list of the
Upanishads, must have been susceptible of alteration. The
Sarvāstivādins compiled an Abhidhamma Pitaka of their own,
apparently in the time of Kanishka, and the Dharmagupta
school also seems to have had its own version of this Pitaka1.

5. The Moneyasute = Moneyya-sutta in the Itivuttakam, 67: see also Ang.
   Nik. iii. 120.
6. The Upatissapāsine. The question of Upatissa: not identified.
7. The Lāghulovāde musāvādam adhigicya. The addresses to Rāhula be-
   ginning with subject of lying = Maj. Nik. 61.

1 See J.A. 1916, ii. pp. 20, 38.
The date of the Pali Abhidhamma is very doubtful and I do not reject the hypothesis that it was composed in Ceylon, for the Sinhalese seem to have a special taste for such literature. But there is no proof of this Sinhalese origin.

According to Sinhalese tradition all three Pitakas were introduced into Ceylon by Mahinda in the reign of Asoka, but only as oral tradition and not in a written form. They received this latter about 20 B.C., as the result of a dispute between two monasteries. The controversy is obscure but it appears that the ancient foundation called Mahâvihâra accepted as canonical the fifth book of the Vinaya called Parivâra, whereas it was rejected by the new monastery called Abhayagiri. The Sinhalese chronicle (Mahâvamsa xxxiii. 100–104) says somewhat abruptly "The wise monks had hitherto handed down the text of the three Pitakas (Piṭakattayaśālī) as well as the commentary by word of mouth. But seeing that mankind was becoming lost, they assembled together and wrote them in books in order that the faith might long endure." This brief account seems to mean that a council was held not by the whole clergy of Ceylon but by the monks of the Mahâvihâra at which they committed to writing their own version of the canon including the Parivâra. This book forms an appendix to the Vinaya Pitaka and in some verses printed at the conclusion is said to be the work of one Dipa. It is generally accepted as a relatively late production, composed in Ceylon. If such a work was included in the canon of the Mahâvihâra, we must admit the possibility that other portions of it may be Sinhalese and not Indian.

But still the onus probandi lies with those who maintain the Sinhalese origin of any part of the Pali Canon and two strong arguments support the Indian origin of the major part. First, many suttas not only show an intimate knowledge of ancient Indian customs but discuss topics such as caste, sacrifice, ancient heresies, and the value of the Veda which would be of no interest to Sinhalese. Secondly, there is no Sinhalese local colour and no Sinhalese legends have been introduced. Contrast with this the Dipa- and Mahâ-vamsa both of which open with accounts of mythical visits paid by the Buddha to Ceylon.

1 For the date see the chapter on Ceylon.
2 S. Lévi gives reasons for thinking that the prohibitions against singing sacred texts (ayatika gitassara, Cullavag. v. 3) go back to the period when the Vedic accent was a living reality. See J.A. 1915, i. pp. 401 ff.
THE CANON

In Ceylon versions of the scriptures other than that of the Mahâvihâra were current until the twelfth century when uniformity was enforced by Parâkrama Bâhu. Some of these, for instance the Pitaka of the Vetulyakas, were decidedly heretical according to the standard of local orthodoxy but others probably presented variations of reading and arrangement rather than of doctrine. Anesaki\(^1\) has compared with the received Pali text a portion of the Samyuktâgama translated by Guṇabhadra into Chinese. He thinks that the original was the text used by the Abhayagiri monastery and brought to China by Fa Hsien.

The Sinhalese ecclesiastical history, Nikâya-Sangrahawâ, relates\(^2\) that 235 years after the Buddha’s death nine heretical fraternities were formed who proceeded to compose scriptures of their own such as the Varṇapiṭaka and Angulimâla-Piṭaka. Though this treatise is late (c. 1400 A.D.) its statements merit attention as showing that even in orthodox Ceylon tradition regarded the authorized Pitaka as one of several versions. But many of the works mentioned sound like late tantric texts rather than compositions of the early heretics to whom they are attributed.

Ecclesiastical opinion in Ceylon after centuries of discussion ended by accepting the edition of the Mahâvihâra as the best, and we have no grounds for rejecting or suspecting this opinion. According to tradition Buddhaghosa was well versed in Sanskrit but deliberately preferred the southern canon. The Mahayanist doctor Asanga cites texts found in the Pali version, but not in the Sanskrit\(^3\). The monks of the Mahâvihâra were probably too indulgent in admitting late scholastic treatises, such as the Parivâra. On the other hand they often showed a critical instinct in rejecting legendary matter. Thus the Sanskrit Vinayas contain many more miraculous narratives than the Pali Vinaya.

\(^1\) *Musidom*, 1905, p. 23. Anesaki thinks the text used by Guṇabhadra was in Pali but the Abhayagiri, which had Mahayanist proclivities, may have used Sanskrit texts.


\(^3\) See Mahâyâna-sûtrâlankâra, xvi. 22 and 75, with Lövi’s notes.
European critics have rarely occasion to discuss the credibility of Sanskrit literature, for most of it is so poetic or so speculative that no such question arises. But the Pitakas raise this question as directly as the Gospels, for they give the portrait of a man and the story of a life, in which an overgrowth of the miraculous has not hidden or destroyed the human substratum. How far can we accept them as a true picture of what Gotama was and taught?

Their credibility must be judged by the standard of Indian oral tradition. Its greatest fault comes from that deficiency in historic sense which we have repeatedly noticed. Hindu chroniclers ignore important events and what they record drifts by in a haze in which proportion, connection, and dates are lost. They frequently raise a structure of fiction on a slight basis of fact or on no basis at all. But the fiction is generally so obvious that the danger of historians in the past has been not to be misled by it but to ignore the elements of truth which it may contain. For the Hindus have a good verbal memory; their genealogies, lists of kings and places generally prove to be correct and they have a passion for catalogues of names. Also they take a real interest in describing doctrine. If the Buddha has been misrepresented, it is not for want of acumen or power of transmitting abstruse ideas. The danger rather is that he who takes an interest in theology is prone to interpret a master's teaching in the light of his own pet views.

The Pitakas illustrate the strong and weak points of Hindu tradition. The feebleness of the historical sense may be seen in the account of Devadatta's doings in the Cullavagga\(^1\) where the compiler seems unable to give a clear account of what he must have regarded as momentous incidents. Yet the same treatise is copious and lucid in dealing with monastic rules, and the sayings recorded have an air of authenticity. In the suttas the strong side of Hindu memory is brought into play. Of consecutive history there is no question. We have only an introduction giving the names of some characters and localities followed by a discourse. We know from the Vinaya that the monks were expected to exercise themselves in remembering

\(^1\) Cullav. vii. 3.
these things, and they are precisely the things that they would get rightly by heart. I see no reason to doubt that such discourses as the sermon preached at Benares\(^1\) and the recurring passages in the first book of the Digha-Nikāya are a Pali version of what was accepted as the words of the Buddha soon after his death. And the change of dialect is not of great importance. Asoka's Bhābrū Edict contains the saying: *Thus the good law shall long endure*, which is believed to be a quotation and certainly corresponds pretty closely with a passage in the Anguttara-Nikāya\(^2\). The King's version is *Saddhamma cilathitike hasati*: the Pali is *Saddhammo cilatthitiko hoti*. Somewhat similar may have been the differences between the Buddha's speech and the text which we possess. The importance of the change in language is diminished and the facility of transmission is increased by the fact that in Pali, Sanskrit and kindred Indian languages ideas are concentrated in single words rather than spread over sentences. Thus the principal words of the sermon at Benares give its purport with perfect clearness, if they are taken as a mere list without grammatical connection. Similarly I should imagine that the recurring paragraphs about progress in the holy life found in the early Suttas of the Digha-Nikāya are an echo of the Buddha's own words, for they bear an impress not only of antiquity but of eloquence and elevation. This does not mean that we have any sermon in the exact form in which Gotama uttered it. Such documents as the Sāmaññaphala-sutta and Ambaṭṭha-sutta probably give a good idea of his method and style in consecutive discourse and argument. But it would not be safe to regard them as more than the work of compilers who were acquainted with the surroundings in which he lived, the phrases he used, and the names and business of those who conversed with him. With these they made a picture of a day in his life, culminating in a sermon\(^3\).

Like the historical value of the Pitakas, their literary value can be justly estimated only if we remember that they are not books in our sense but treatises handed down by memory and

\(^1\) In the first book of the Mahāvagga.

\(^2\) Ang. Nik. v. 201 and vi. 40.

\(^3\) It may be objected that some Suttas are put into the mouths of the Buddha's disciples and that their words are very like those of the Master. But as a rule they spoke on behalf of him and the object was to make their language as much like his as possible.
that their form is determined primarily by the convenience of the memory. We must not compare them with Plato and find them wanting, for often, especially in the Abhidhamma, there is no intention of producing a work of art, but merely of subdividing a subject and supplying explanations. Frequently the exposition is thrown into the form of a catechism with questions and answers arranged so as to correspond to numbered categories. Thus a topic may be divided into twenty heads and six propositions may be applied to each with positive or negative results. The strong point of these Abhidhamma works—and of Buddhist philosophy generally—lies in careful division and acute analysis but the power of definition is weak. Rarely is a definition more than a collection of synonyms and very often the word to be defined is repeated in the definition. Thus in the Dhamma-sangani the questions, what are good or bad states of mind? receive answers cast in the form: when a good or bad thought has arisen with certain accompaniments enumerated at length, then these are the states that are good or bad. No definition of good is given.

This mnemonic literature attains its highest excellence in poetry. The art of composing short poems in which a thought, emotion or spiritual experience is expressed with a few simple but pregnant words in the compass of a single couplet or short hymn, was carried by the early Buddhists to a perfection which has never been excelled. The Dhammapada¹ is the best known specimen of this literature. Being an anthology it is naturally more suited for quotation or recitation in sections than for continuous reading. But its twenty-five chapters are consecrated each to some special topic which receives fairly consecutive treatment, though each chapter is a mosaic of short poems consisting of one or more verses supposed to have been uttered by the Buddha or by arhats on various occasions. The whole work combines literary beauty, depth of thought and human feeling in a rare degree. Not only is it irradiated with the calm light of peace, faith and happiness but it glows with sympathy, with the desire to do good and help those who are struggling in the mire of passion and delusion. For this reason it has found more favour with European readers than the detached and

¹ The Pali anthology known by this name was only one of several called Dhammapada or Udāna which are preserved in the Chinese and Tibetan Canons.
philosophic texts which simply preach self-conquest and aloofness. Inferior in beauty but probably older is the Sutta-nipāta, a collection of short discourses or conversations with the Buddha mostly in verse. The rugged and popular language of these stanzas which reject speculation as much as luxury, takes us back to the life of the wanderers who followed the Buddha on his tours and we may imagine that poems like the Dhamiya sutta would be recited when they met together in a rest-house or grove set apart for their use on the outskirts of a village.

The Buddhist suttas are interesting as being a special result of Gotama's activity; they are not analogous to the Brahmanic works called sūtras, and they have no close parallel in later Indian literature. There is little personal background in the Upanishads, none at all in the Sānkhya and Vedānta sūtras. But the Sutta Pitaka is an attempt to delineate a personality as well as to record a doctrine. Though the idea of writing biography has not yet been clearly conceived, yet almost every discourse brings before us the figure of the Lord: though the doctrine can be detached from the preacher, yet one feels that the hearers of the Pitaka hungered not merely for a knowledge of the four truths but for the very words of the great voice: did he really say this, and if so when, where and why? Most suttas begin by answering these questions. They describe a scene and report a discourse and in so doing they create a type of literature with an interest and individuality of its own. It is no exaggeration to say that the Buddha is the most living figure in Hindu literature. He stands before us more distinctly not only than Yājñavalkya and Śankara, but than modern teachers like Nanak and Rāmānuja and the reason of this distinctness can I think be nothing but the personal impression which he made on his age. The later Buddhists compose nothing in the style of the Nikāyas: they write about Gotama in new and fanciful ways, but no Acts of the Apostles succeed the Gospels.

Though the Buddhist suttas are sui generis and mark a new epoch in Indian literature, yet in style they are a natural development of the Upanishads. The Upanishads are less dogmatic and show much less interest in the personality of their sages, but they contain dialogues closely analogous to suttas.
Thus about half of the Brhad-Āranyaka is a philosophic treatise unconnected with any particular name, but in this are set five dialogues in which Yājñavalkya appears and two others in which Ajātasatru and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali are the protagonists.

Though many suttas are little more than an exposition of some doctrine arranged in mnemonic form, others show eloquence and dramatic skill. Thus the Sāmaññaphala-sutta opens with a vivid description of the visit paid one night by Ajātasatru to the Buddha. We see the royal procession of elephants and share the alarm of the suspicious king at the unearthly stillness of the monastery park, until he saw the Buddha sitting in a lighted pavilion surrounded by an assembly of twelve hundred and fifty brethren, calm and silent as a clear lake. The king’s long account of his fruitless quest for truth would be tiresome if it were not of such great historic interest and the same may be said of the Buddha’s enumeration of superstitious and reprehensible practices, but from this point onwards his discourse is a magnificent crescendo of thought and language, never halting and illustrated by metaphors of great effect and beauty. Equally forcible and surely resting on some tradition of the Buddha’s own words is the solemn fervour which often marks the suttas of the Majjhima such as the descriptions of his struggle for truth, the admonitions to Rāhula and the reproof administered to Sāti.

As mentioned above, our Pali Canon is the recension of the Vibhajjavādins. We know from the records of the Chinese pilgrims that other schools also had recensions of their own, and several of these recensions—such as those of the Sarvāsti-vādins, Mahāsanghkās, Mahisāsakas, Dhammaguttikas, and Sammitiyas—are still partly extant in Chinese and Tibetan translations. These appear to have been made from the Sanskrit and fragments of what was probably the original have been preserved in Central Asia. A recension of the text in Sanskrit probably implies less than what we understand by a translation. It may mean that texts handed down in some Indian dialect

1 The work might also be analyzed as consisting of three old documents (the tract on morality, an account of ancient heresies, and a discourse on spiritual progress) put together with a little connecting matter, and provided with a prologue and epilogue.
which was neither Sanskrit nor Pali were rewritten with Sanskrit orthography and inflexions while preserving much of the original vocabulary. The Buddha allowed all men to learn his teaching in their own language, and different schools are said to have written the scriptures in different dialects, e.g. the Mahāsanghikas in a kind of Prakrit not further specified and the Mahāsammatīyas in Abhidhamsa. When Sanskrit became the recognized vehicle for literary composition there would naturally be in India (though not in Ceylon) a tendency to rewrite books composed in other dialects. The idea that when any important matter is committed to writing it should be expressed in a literary dialect not too intelligible to the vulgar is prevalent from Morocco to China. The language of Bengal illustrates what may have happened to the Buddhist scriptures. It is said that at the beginning of the nineteenth century ninety per cent. of the vocabulary of Bengali was Sanskrit, and the grammatical construction sanskritized as well. Though the literary language now-a-days is less artificial, it still differs widely from the vernacular. Similarly the spoken word of the Buddha was forced into conformity with one literary standard or another and ecclesiastical Pali became as artificial as Sanskrit. The same incidents may be found worked up in both languages. Thus the Sanskrit version of the story of Pūrnā in the Divyāvadāna repeats what is found in Pali in the Śamyutta-Nikāya and reappears in Sanskrit in the Vinaya of the Mulasarvastivādin school.

The Chinese Tripitaka has been catalogued and we possess some information respecting the books which it contains, though none of them have been edited in Europe. Thus we know something of the Sarvastivadin recension of the Abhidhamma. Like the Pali version it consists of seven books of which one, the Jñāna-prasthāna by Kātyāyanīputra, is regarded as the principal, the rest being supplementary. All the books are attributed to human authors, and though some of these bear the names of the Buddha’s immediate disciples, tradition connects Kātyāyanīputra with Kanishka’s council. This is not

1 But in Ceylon there was a decided tendency to rewrite Sinhalese treatises in Pali.


3 See Takakusu on the Abhidharma literature of the Sarvastivādins in the Journ. of the Pali Text Society, 1905, pp. 87-147.
a very certain date, but still the inference is that about the time of the Christian era the contents of the Abhidhamma-Pitaka were not rigidly defined and a new recension was possible.

The Sanskrit manuscripts discovered in Central Asia include Sūtras from the Samyukt and Ekottara Āgamas (equivalent to the Samyutta and Anguttara Nikāyas), a considerable part of the Dharmapada, fragments of the Sutta-Nipāta and the Prātimoksha of the Sarvāstivādin school. These correspond fairly well with the Pali text but represent another recension and a somewhat different arrangement. We have therefore here fragments of a Sanskrit version which must have been imported to Central Asia from northern India and covers, so far as the fragments permit us to judge, the same ground as the Vinaya and Suttas of the Pali Canon. Far from displaying the diffuse and inflated style which characterizes the Mahāyāna texts it is sometimes shorter and simpler than our Pali version1.

When was this version composed and what is its relation to the Pali? A definite reply would be premature, for other Sanskrit texts may be discovered in Central Asia, but two circumstances connect this early Buddhist literature in Sanskrit with the epoch of Kanishka. Firstly the Sanskrit Abhidharma of the Sarvāstivādins seems to date from his council and secondly a Buddhist drama by Aśvaghosha2 of about the same time represents the Buddha as speaking in Sanskrit whereas the inferior characters speak Prakrit. But these facts do not prove that Sanskrit was not the language of the canon at an earlier date3 and it is not safe to conclude that because Asoka did not employ it for writing edicts it was not the sacred language of any section of Indian Buddhists. On the other hand some of the Sanskrit texts contain indications that they are a translation from Pali or some vernacular4. In others are found historical allusions which suggest that they must have received additions after our era5.

1 But not always. See S. Lévi, J.A. 1910, p. 430.
2 See Lüders, Bruchstücke Buddhistscher Dramen, 1911 and ib. Das Śāri putra-prakaraṇa, 1911.
3 Inscriptions from Swat written in an alphabet supposed to date from 50 B.C. to 50 A.D. contain Sanskrit verses from the Dharmapada and Mahāparinirvānasūtra. See Epig. Indica, vol. iv. p. 133.
I have already raised the question of the relative value attaching to Pali and Sanskrit texts as authorities for early history. Two instances will perhaps illustrate this better than a general discussion. As already mentioned, the Vinaya of the Mulasarvastivadins makes the Buddha visit north-western India and Kashmir, whereas the Pali texts do not represent him as travelling further west than the country of the Kurus. The Sanskrit account is not known to be confirmed by more ancient evidence, but there is nothing impossible in it, particularly as there are periods in the Buddha’s long life filled by no incidents. The narrative however contains a prediction about Kanishka and therefore cannot be earlier than his reign. Now there is no reason why the Pali texts should be silent about this journey, if the Buddha really made it, but one can easily imagine reasons for inventing it in the period of the Kushan kings. North-western India was then full of monasteries and sacred sites and the same spirit which makes uncritical Buddhists in Ceylon and Siam assert to-day that the master visited their country impelled the monks of Peshawar and Kashmir to imagine a not improbable extension of his wanderings.

On the other hand this same Vinaya of the Mulasarvastivadins probably gives us a fragment of history when it tells us that the Buddha had three wives, perhaps too when it relates how Râhula’s paternity was called in question and how Devadatta wanted to marry Yasodharâ after the Buddha had abandoned worldly life. The Pali Vinaya and also some Sanskrit Vinyayas mention only one wife or none at all. They do not attempt to describe Gotama’s domestic life and if they make no allusion to it except to mention the mother of Râhula, this is not equivalent to an assertion that he had no other wife. But when one Vinaya composed in the north of India essays to give a biography of the Buddha and states that he had three wives, there is no reason for doubting that the compiler was in touch with good local tradition.

1 In the same spirit, the Chinese version of the Ekottara (sec. 42) makes the dying Buddha order his bed to be made with the head to the north, because northern India will be the home of the Law. See J.A. Nov., Dec. 1918, p. 435.
2 See for the whole question, Péri, Les Femmes de Çâkyâ Muni, B.E.F.E.O. 1918, No. 2.
3 Those of the Dharmaguptas, Mahásânghikas and Mahiśásakas.
CHAPTER XIV

MEDITATION

Indian religions lay stress on meditation. It is not merely commended as a useful exercise but by common consent it takes rank with sacrifice and prayer, or above them, as one of the great activities of the religious life, or even as its only true activity. It has the full approval of philosophy as well as of theology. In early Buddhism it takes the place of prayer and worship and though in later times ceremonies multiply, it still remains the main occupation of a monk. The Jains differ from the Buddhists chiefly in emphasizing the importance of self-mortification, which is put on a par with meditation. In Hinduism, as might be expected in a fluctuating compound of superstition and philosophy, the schools differ as to the relative efficacy of meditation and ceremonial, but there is a strong tendency to give meditation the higher place. In all ages a common characteristic appears in the most divergent Indian creeds—the belief that by a course of mental and physical training the soul can attain to a state of bliss which is the prelude to the final deliverance attained after death.

1

We may begin by examining Brahmanic ideas as to meditation. Many of them are connected with the word Yoga, which has become familiar to Europe. It has two meanings. It is applied first to a definite form of Indian philosophy which is a theistic modification of the Sânkhyâ and secondly to much older practices sanctioned by that philosophy but anterior to it.

The idea which inspires these theories and practices is that the immaterial soul can by various exercises free itself from the fetters of matter. The soul is distinguished from the mind which, though composed of the subtlest matter, is still material. This presupposes the duality of matter and spirit taught by Jainism and the Sânkhyâ philosophy, but it does not necessarily presuppose the special doctrines of either nor do Vedântists
object to the practice of the Yoga. The systematic prosecution of mental concentration and the idea that supernatural powers can be acquired thereby are very old—certainly older than Buddhism. Such methods had at first only a slight philosophic substratum and were independent of Sāṅkhya doctrines, though these, being a speculative elaboration of the same fundamental principles, naturally commended themselves to those who practised Yoga. The two teachers of the Buddha, Ālāra and Uddaka, were Yogis, and held that beatitude or emancipation consisted in the attainment of certain trances. Gotama, while regarding their doctrine as insufficient, did not reject their practices.

Our present Yoga Sūtras are certainly much later than this date. They are ascribed to one Patañjali identified by Hindu tradition with the author of the Mahābhāshya who lived about 150 B.C. Jacobi\(^1\) however is of opinion that they are the work of an entirely different person who lived after the rise of the philosophy ascribed to Asanga sometimes called Yogācāra. Jacobi’s arguments seem to me suggestive rather than conclusive but, if they are confirmed, they lead to an interesting deduction. There is some reason for thinking that Śankara’s doctrine of illusion was derived from the Buddhist Śūnyavāda. If Patañjali’s sūtras are posterior to Asanga, it also seems probable that the codification of the Yoga by the Brahmans was connected with the rise of the Yogācāra among the Buddhists\(^2\).

The Sūtras describe themselves as an exposition of Yoga, which has here the meaning not of union with God, but rather of effort. The opening aphorisms state that “Yoga is the suppression of the activities of the mind, for then the spectator abides in his own form: at other times there is identity of form with the activities.” This dark language means that the soul in its true nature is merely the spectator of the mind’s activity, consciousness being due, as in the Sāṅkhya, to the union of the soul with the mind\(^3\) which is its organ. When the mind is active,

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\(^2\) Jacobi considers the Yoga Sūtras later than 450 A.D. but if we adopt Péri’s view that Vasubandhu, Asanga’s brother, lived from about 280–360, the fact that they imply a knowledge of the Vijnānavāda need not make them much later than 300 A.D. It is noticeable that both Asanga and the Yoga Sūtras employ the word dharma-megha.

\(^3\) Called Citta in the Yoga philosophy.
the soul appears to experience various emotions, and it is only when the mind ceases to feel emotions and becomes calm in meditation, that the soul abides in its own true form. The object of the Yoga, as of the Sânkhya, is Kaivalya or isolation, in which the soul ceases to be united with the mind and is dissociated from all qualities (guṇas) so that the shadow of the thinking principle no longer falls upon it. This isolation is produced by performing certain exercises, physical as well as mental, and, as a prelude to final and complete emancipation, superhuman powers are acquired. These two ideas, the efficacy of physical discipline and the acquisition of superhuman powers, have powerfully affected all schools of religious thought in India, including Buddhism. They are not peculiar to the Yoga, but still it is in the Yoga Sūtras that they find their most authoritative and methodical exposition.

The practice of Yoga has its roots in the fact that fasting and other physical mortifications induce a mental state in which the subject thinks that he has supernatural experiences. Among many savage tribes, especially in America, such fasts are practised by those who desire communication with spirits. In the Yoga philosophy these ideas appear in a refined form and offer many parallels to European mysticism. The ultimate object is to dissociate the soul from its material envelopes but in the means prescribed we can trace two orders of ideas. One is to mortify the body and suppress not only appetite and passion but also discursive thought: the other is to keep the body in perfect health and ease, so that the intelligence and ultimately the soul may be untroubled by physical influences. These two ideas are less incongruous than they seem. Many examples show that extreme forms of asceticism are not unhealthy but rather conducive to long life and the Yoga in endeavouring to secure physical well-being does not aim at pleasure but at such a purification of the physical part of man that it shall be the obedient and unnoticed servant of the other parts. The branch of the system which deals with method and discipline is called Kriyā-yoga and in later works we also find the expression Haṭha-yoga, which is specially used to designate

1 See Tylor, Primitive Culture, vol. ii. pp. 410 ff. Savages often supplement fasting by the use of drugs and the Yoga Śūtras (rv. 1) mention that supernatural powers can be obtained by the use of herbs.
ME D I TA T I O N

mechanical means (such as postures, purification, etc.) pre-
scribed for the attainment of various mental states. In contrast
to it is Rāja-yoga, which signifies ecstasy and the method of
obtaining it by mental processes. The immediate object of the
Kriya-yoga is to destroy the five evils1, namely ignorance,
egoism, desire, aversion and love of life: it consists of asceticism,
recitations and resignation to God, explained as meaning that
the devotee fasts, repeats mantras and surrenders to God the
fruit of all his works and, feeling no more concern for them, is
at peace. Though the Yoga Sūtras are theistic, theism is accessory
rather than essential to their teaching. They are not a theo-
logical treatise but the manual of an ancient discipline which
recognizes devotional feelings as one means to its end. The
method would remain almost intact if the part relating to the
deity were omitted, as in the Sāṅkhya. God is not for the Yoga
Sūtras, as he is for many Indian and European mystics, the
one reality, the whence and whither of the soul and world.

Eight branches of practice2 are enumerated, namely:—

1. Yama or restraint, that is abstinence from killing, lying,
stealing, incontinence, and from receiving gifts. It is almost
equivalent to the five great precepts of Buddhism.

2. Niyama or observance, defined as purification, content-
ment, mortification, recitation and devotion to the Lord.

Purification is treated at great length in the later treatises
on Haṭha-yoga under the name of Shaṭ-karma or sixfold work.
It comprises not only ordinary ablutions but cleansing of the
internal organs by such methods as taking in water by the
nostrils and discharging it by the mouth. The object of these
practices which, though they assume queer forms, rest on sound
therapeutic principles, is to remove adventitious matter from
the system and to reduce the gross elements of the body3.

3. Āsana or posture is defined as a continuous and
pleasant attitude. It is difficult to see how the latter adjective

1 Kleśa: Kīlāsa in Pali.
2 The practices systematized in the Yoga Sūtras are mentioned even in the
older Upanishads such as the Maitrāyana, Śvetāūvatara and Chāndogya.
3 An extreme development of the idea that physical processes can produce
spiritual results is found in Raseśvara Dārāna or the Mercurial System described
366, 369) had also heard of it.
applies to many of the postures recommended, for considerable training is necessary to make them even tolerable. But the object clearly is to prescribe an attitude which can be maintained continuously without creating the distracting feeling of physical discomfort and in this matter European and oriental limbs feel differently. All the postures contemplated are different ways of sitting cross-legged. Later works revel in enumerations of them and also recognize others called Mudrā. This word is specially applied to a gesture of the hand but is sometimes used in a less restricted sense. Thus there is a celebrated Mudrā called Khecharī, in which the tongue is reversed and pressed into the throat while the sight is directed to a point between the eyebrows. This is said to induce the cataleptic trance in which Yogis can be buried alive.

4. Prāṇayāma or regulation of the breath. When the Yogi has learnt to assume a permanent posture, he accustoms himself to regulate the acts of inspiration and expiration so as to prolong the period of quiescence between the two. He will thus remove the veils which cover the light within him. This practice probably depends on the idea which constantly crops up in the Upanishads that the breath is the life and the soul. Consequently he who can control and hold his breath keeps his soul at home, and is better able to concentrate his mind. Apart from such ideas, the fixing of the attention on the rhythmical succession of inspirations and expirations conduces to that peaceful and detached frame of mind on which most Indian sects set great store. The practice was greatly esteemed by the Brahmans, and is also enjoined among the Taoists in China and among Buddhists in all countries, but I have found no mention of its use among European mystics.

5. Pratyāhāra, the retraction or withdrawing of the senses. They are naturally directed outwards towards their objects. The Yogi endeavours to bring them into quiescence by diverting them from those objects and directing them inwards. From this, say the Sūtras, comes complete subjugation of the senses.

6–8. The five kinds of discipline hitherto mentioned constitute the physical preparation for meditation comprising in

1 It seems to me analogous to the introversion of European mystics. See Underhill, Mysticism, chaps. vi. and vii.
succession (a) a morality of renunciation, (b) mortification and purification, (c) suitable postures, (d) regulation of the breathing, (e) diversion of the senses from their external objects. Now comes the intellectual part of the process, consisting of three stages called Dhāranā, Dhyāna and Samādhi. Dhāranā means fixing the mind on a particular object, either a part of the body such as the crown of the head or something external such as the sky. Dhyāna is the continuous intellectual state arising out of this concentration. It is defined as an even current of thought undisturbed by other thoughts. Samādhi is a further stage of Dhyāna in which the mind becomes so identified with the thing thought of that consciousness of its separate existence ceases. The thinking power is merged in the single thought and ultimately a state of trance is induced. Several stages are distinguished in this Samādhi. It is divided into conscious and unconscious and of the conscious kind there are four grades, analogous, though not entirely corresponding to the four Jhānas of Buddhism. When the feeling of joy passes away and is lost in a higher sense of equanimity, there comes the state known by the remarkable name of Dharma-megha in which the isolation of the soul and its absolute distinctness from matter (which includes what we call mind) is realized, and Karma is no more. After the state of Dharma-megha comes that of unconscious Samādhi, in which the Yogi falls into a trance and attains emancipation which is made permanent by death.

The methods of the Kriyā-yoga can be employed for the attainment not only of salvation but of miraculous powers. This subject is discussed in the third book of the Yoga Sūtras

1 Jhāna in Pali.
2 Samprajñāta and Asamprajñāta, called also sa- and nirbija, with and without seed.
3 Savitarka and Savicāra, in which there is investigation concerned with gross and subtle objects respectively: Sānanda, in which there is a feeling of joy: Sammita, in which there is only self-consciousness. The corresponding stages in Buddhism are described as phases of Jhāna not of Samādhi.
4 It is not easy to translate. Megha is cloud and dharma may be rendered by righteousness but has many other meanings. For the metaphor of the cloud compare the title of the English mystical treatise The Cloud of Unknowing.
5 Siddhi, vibhūti, aśvarya. A belief in these powers is found even in the Rig Veda where it is said (x. 136) that munis can fly through the air and associate with gods.
where it is said that such powers are obstructions in the contemplative and spiritual life, though they may lead to success in waking or worldly life. This is the same point of view as we meet in Buddhism, viz. that though the miraculous powers resulting from meditation are real, they are not essential to salvation and may become dangerous hindrances.

They are attained according to the Yoga Sūtras by the exercise of samyama which is the name given conjointly to the three states of dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi when they are applied simultaneously or in immediate succession to one object of thought. The reader will remember that this state of contemplation is to be preceded by pratyāhāra, or direction of the senses inwards, in which ordinary external stimuli are not felt. It is analogous to the hypnotic state in which suggestions made by the hypnotizer have for the subject the character of reality although he is not conscious of his surroundings, and auto-suggestions—that is the expectations with which the Yogi begins his meditation—apparently have the same effect. The trained Yogi is able to exercise samyama with regard to any idea—that is to say his mind becomes identified with that idea to the exclusion of all others. Sometimes this samyama implies simply a thorough comprehension of the object of meditation. Thus by making samyama on the samskāras or predispositions existing in the mind, a knowledge of one’s previous births is obtained; by making samyama on sound, the language of animals is understood. But in other cases a result is considered to be obtained because the Yogi in his trance thinks it is obtained. Thus if samyama is made on the throat, hunger and thirst are subdued; if on the strength of an elephant, that strength is obtained: if on the sun, the knowledge of all worlds.

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1 So too European mystics “are all but unanimous in their refusal to attribute importance to any kind of visionary experience” (Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 335). St John of the Cross, Madame Guyon and Walter Hilton are cited as severe critics of such experience.

2 Cf. Underhill’s remarks about contemplation (*Mysticism*, p. 394). “Its results feed every aspect of the personality: minister to its instinct for the Good, the Beautiful and the True. Psychologically it is an induced state in which the field of consciousness is greatly contracted: the whole of the self, its conative power, being sharply focussed, concentrated upon one thing. We pour ourselves out or, as it sometimes seems to us, in towards this overpowering interest: seem to ourselves to reach it and be merged with it. Whatever the thing may be, in this act we know it, as we cannot know it by any ordinary devices of thought.”
is acquired. Other miraculous attainments are such that they should be visible to others, but are probably explicable as subjective fancies. Such are the powers of becoming heavy or light, infinitely large or infinitely small and of emitting flames. This last phenomenon is perhaps akin to the luminous visions, called photisms by psychologists, which not infrequently accompany conversion and other religious experiences and take the form of flashes or rays proceeding from material objects. The Yogi can even become many persons instead of one by calling into existence other bodies by an effort of his will and animating them all by his own mind.

Europeans are unfavourably impressed by the fact that the Yoga devotes much time to the cultivation of hypnotic states of doubtful value both for morality and sanity. But the meditation which it teaches is also akin to aesthetic contemplation, when the mind forgets itself and is conscious only of the beauty of what is contemplated. Schopenhauer has well expressed the Indian idea in European language: "When some sudden cause or inward disposition lifts us out of the endless stream of willing, the attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing but comprehends things free from their relation to the will and thus observes them without subjectivity purely objectively, gives itself entirely up to them so far as they are ideas, but not in so far as they are motives. Then all at once the peace which we were always seeking, but which always fled from us on the former path of the desires, comes to us of its own accord and it is well with us." And though the Yoga Sūtras represent superhuman faculties as depending chiefly on the hypnotic condition of samyama, they also say that they are obtainable—at any rate such of them as consist in superhuman knowledge—by pratibhā or illumination. By this term is meant a state of enlightenment which suddenly floods the mind prepared by the Yoga discipline. It precedes emancipation as the morning star precedes the dawn. When

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1 See instances quoted in W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 251-3.
2 This curious idea is also countenanced, though not much emphasized, by the Brahma Sūtras, iv. 4. 15. The object of producing such bodies is to work off Karma. The Yogi acquires no new Karma but he may have to get rid of accumulated Karma inherited from previous births, which must bear fruit. By "making himself many" he can work it off in one lifetime.
3 *World as Will and Idea*, Book III, p. 254 (Haldane and Kemp's translation).
this light has once come, the Yogi possesses all knowledge without the process of samyama. It may be compared to the Dibba-cakkhu or divine eye and the knowledge of the truths which according to the Pitakas\(^1\) precede arhatship. Similar instances of sudden intellectual enlightenment are recorded in the experiences of mystics in other countries. We may compare the haplosis or ekstasis of Plotinus and the visions of St Theresa or St Ignatius in which such mysteries as the Trinity became clear, as well as the raptures in which various Christian mystics\(^2\) experienced the feeling of levitation and thought that they were being literally carried off their feet.

The practices and theories which are systematized in the Yoga Sūtras are known to the Upanishads, particularly those of the Atharva Veda. But even the earlier Upanishads allude to the special physical and mental discipline necessary to produce concentration of mind. The Māitrāyana Upanishad says that the sixfold Yoga consists of restraint of the breath, restraint of the senses, meditation, fixed attention, investigation, absorption. The Śvetāsvatara Upanishad speaks of the proper places and postures for meditation, and the Chāndogya\(^3\) of concentrating all the senses on the self, a process which is much the same as the pratyāhāra of the Yoga.

A later and mysterious but most important method of Yoga is known to the Tantras\(^4\) as Śaṭcakrābheda or piercing of the six cakras. These are dynamic or nervous centres distributed through the human body from the base of the spinal cord to the eyebrows. In the lowest of them resides the Devī Kūṇḍalini, a force identical with Śakti, who is the motive power of the universe. In ordinary conditions this Kūṇḍalini is pictured as lying asleep and coiled like a serpent. But appropriate exercises cause her to awake and ascend until she reaches the highest cakra when she unites with Śiva and ineffable bliss.

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\(^1\) E.g. Dig. Nik. ii. 95, etc

\(^2\) St Theresa, St Catharine of Siena and Rudman Merswin. Cf. 1 John ii. 20, 27.

\(^3\) ‘Ye know all things.’

\(^4\) Chāndog. Up. viii. 15.

As also to the Samplītās of the Vaishnavas and the Āgamic literature of the Śaivas.

The six cakras are: (1) Mūladhāra at the base of the spinal cord, (2) Svādhiṣṭhāna below the navel, (3) Manipūra near the navel, (4) Anāhata in the heart, (5) Viśuddha at the lower end of the throat, (6) Ajāta between the eyebrows. See Avalon, Tantric Texts, ii. Śaṭcakranirūpana. Ib. Tantra of Great Liberation, pp. lvii ff. cxxii ff.


See also “Manual of a Mystic” (Pali Text Soc.) for something apparently similar, though not very intelligible, in Hinayanist Buddhism.
and emancipation are attained. The process, which is said to be painful and even dangerous to health, is admittedly unintelligible without oral instruction from a Guru and, as I have not had this advantage, I will say no more on the topic except this, that strange and fanciful as the descriptions of Shāṭāckrabbheda may seem, they can hardly be pure inventions but must have a real counterpart in nervous phenomena which apparently have not been studied by European physiologists or psychologists.

2

When we turn to the treatment of meditation and ecstasy in the earlier Buddhist writings we are struck by its general resemblance to the programme laid down in the Yoga Sūtras, and by many coincidences of detail. The exercises, rules of conduct, and the powers to be incidentally obtained are all similar. The final goal of both systems also seems similar to the outsider, although a Buddhist and a Yogi might have much to say about the differences, for the Yoga wishes to isolate a soul which is complete and happy in its own nature if it can be disentangled from its trammels, whereas Buddhism teaches that there is no such soul awaiting release and that religious discipline should create and foster good mental states. Just as the atmosphere of the Pitakas is not that of the Brāhmaṇas or Sūtras, so are their ideas about Jhāna and Samādhi somewhat different. Though hypnotic and even cataleptic phases are not wanting, the journey of the religious life, as described in the Pitakas, is a progress of increasing peace, but also of increasing intellectual power and activity. Gotama did not hold Jhāna or regulated meditation to be essential to nirvāna or arhatship, for that state was attainable by laymen and apparently through sudden illumination. But such cases were the exception. His own mental evolution which culminated in enlightenment comprised the four Jhānas. Also in the eightfold path which is essential to arhatship and nirvāna the last and highest stage is sammāsamādhi, right rapture or ecstasy.

1 For the later Yoga see further Book v. I have recently received A. Avalon, The Serpent Power, from which it appears that the danger of the process lies in the fact that as Kūṇḍalinī ascends, the lower parts of the body which she leaves become cold. The preliminary note on Yoga in Grierson and Barnett’s Lallā-Vākyāṇī (Anat. Soc.’s Monographs, vol. xvii. 1920) contains much valuable information, but both works arrived too late for me to make use of them.

2 Maj. Nik. 36 and 86, but not in 26.
Jhâna is difficult for laymen, but it was the rule of the order to devote at least the afternoon to it. We might compare this with the solitary prayer of Christians, and there is real similarity in the process and the result. It brought peace and strength to the mind and we hear of the bright clear faces and the radiantly happy expression of those who returned to their duties after such contemplation. But Christian prayer involves the idea of self-surrender and throwing open the doors and windows of the soul to an influence which streams into it. Buddhist meditation is rather the upsoaring of the mind which rises from ecstasy to ecstasy until it attains not some sphere where it can live in bliss but a state which is in itself satisfying and all-comprising.

All mental states to which such names as ecstasy, trance, and vision can be applied involve a dangerous element which, if not actually pathological, can easily become so. But the account of meditation put in the Buddha's own mouth does not suggest either morbid dejection or hysterical excitement and it is stated expressly that the exercise should be begun after the midday meal so that any visions which may come cannot be laid to the charge of an empty stomach. Jhâna is not the same as Samâdhi or concentration, though the Jhânas may be an instance of Samâdhi. This latter is capable of marvellous extension and development, but essentially it is a mental quality like Sammâsati or right mindfulness, whereas Jhâna is a mental exercise or progressive rapture passing through defined stages.

Any system which analyzes and tabulates stages of contemplation and ecstasy may be suspected of being late and of having lost something of the glow and impetus which its cold formulae try to explain. But the impulse to catalogue is old in Buddhism and one important distinction in the various mental states lumped together under the name of meditation deserves attention, namely that according to the oldest documents some of them are indispensable preliminaries to nirvana and some are not. Buddhaghosa reviewing the whole matter in scholastic

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1 Dig. Nik. 2. For the methods of Buddhist meditation, the reader may consult the "Manual of a Mystic," edited (1896) and translated (1916) by the Pali Text Society. But he will not find it easy reading.

2 See Ang. Nik. 1. 20 for a long list of the various kinds of meditation. A conspectus of the system of meditation is given in Seidenstucker, Pali-Buddhismus, pp. 344–356.
fashion in his Way of Purity divides the higher life into three sections, firstly conduct or morality as necessary foundation, secondly adhicitta, higher consciousness or concentration which leads to samatho or peace and thirdly adhipaññā or the higher wisdom which leads to vipassanā or insight. Of these adhipaññā and vipassanā are superior inasmuch as nirvana cannot be obtained without them but the methods of adhicitta, though admirable and followed by the Buddha himself, are not equally indispensable: they lead to peace and happiness but not necessarily to nirvana. It is probably unwise (at any rate for Europeans) to make too precise statements, for we do not really know the nature of the psychical states discussed. Adhipaññā assuredly includes the eightfold path ensuing with samādhi which is defined by the Buddha himself in this connection in terms of the four Jhānas. On the other hand the doctrine that nirvana is attainable merely by practising the Jhānas is expressly reprobated as a heresy. The teaching of the Pitakas seems to be that nirvana is attainable by living the higher life in which meditation and insight both have a place. In normal saints both sides are developed: raptures and trances are their delight and luxury. But in some cases nirvana may be attained by insight only: in others meditation may lead to ecstasy and more than human powers of mind but yet stop short of nirvana. The distinction is not without importance for it means that knowledge and insight are indispensable for nirvana: it cannot be obtained by hypnotic trances or magical powers.

The Buddha is represented as saying that in his boyhood when sitting under a tree he once fell into a state of contemplation which he calls the first Jhāna. It is akin to a sensation which comes to Europeans most frequently in childhood, but sometimes persists in mature life, when the mind, usually under the influence of pleasant summer scenery, seems to identify itself with nature, and on returning to its normal state asks with surprise, can it be that what seems a small distant personality is really I? The usual form of Jhāna comprises four stages. The first is a state of joy and ease born of detachment, which

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1 Dig. Nik. xxii. ad. in.
2 Dig. Nik. 1. 21-26.
3 See, for instance, Dig. Nik. ii. 75. Sometimes five Jhānas are enumerated. This means that reasoning and investigation are eliminated successively and not simultaneously, so that an additional stage is created.
means physical calm as well as the absence of worldly desires and irrelevant thoughts. It is distinguished from the subsequent stages by the existence of reasoning and investigation, and while it lasts the mind is compared to water agitated by waves. In the second Jhāna reasoning and investigation cease: the water becomes still and the mind set free rises slowly above the thoughts which had encumbered it and grows calm and sure, dwelling on high\(^1\). In this Jhāna the sense of joy and ease remains, but in the third stage joy disappears, though ease remains. This ease (sukham) is the opposite of dukkham, the discomfort which characterizes all ordinary states of existence. It is in part a physical feeling, for the text says that he who meditates has this sense of ease in his body. But this feeling passes away in the fourth Jhāna, in which there is only a sense of equanimity. This word, though perhaps the best rendering which can be found for the Pali upekkhā, is inadequate for it suggests merely the absence of inclination, whereas upekkhā represents a state of mind which, though rising above hedonistic views, is yet positive and not merely the negation of interest and desire.

In the passage quoted the Buddha speaks as if only an effort of will were needed to enter into the first Jhāna, but tradition, supported by the Pitakas\(^2\), sanctions the use of expedients to facilitate the process. Some are topics on which attention should be concentrated, others are external objects known as Kasina. This word (equivalent to the Sanskrit kṛṣṇa) means entire or total, and hence something which engrosses the attention. Thus in the procedure known as the earth Kasina\(^3\) the Bhikkhu who wishes to enter into the Jhāna makes a small circle of reddish clay, and then gazes at it fixedly. After a time he can see it as plainly when his eyes are closed as when they are open\(^4\). This is followed by entry into Jhāna and he should not continue looking at the circle. There are ten kinds of Kasina differing from that described merely in substituting for the earthen circle

\(^1\) See Dhama-Sangāni; Mrs Rhys Davids' translation, pp. 45–6 and notes. Also Journal of Pali Text Society, 1885, p. 32, for meaning of the difficult word Ekodibhāva.

\(^2\) E.g. Maj. Nik. 77; Ang. Nik. 1. xx. 63.

\(^3\) Hardy, Eastern Monachism, pp. 252 ff.

\(^4\) But also without shape, colour or outward appearance, so this statement must not be taken too literally.
some other object, such as water, light, gold or silver. The whole procedure is clearly a means of inducing a hypnotic trance.\(^1\)

The practice of tranquilising the mind by regulating the breathing is recommended repeatedly in Suttas which seem ancient and authentic; for instance, in the instruction given by the Buddha to his son Rāhula.\(^2\) On the other hand, his account of his fruitless self-mortification shows that the exercise even in its extreme forms is not sufficient to secure enlightenment. It appears to be a method of collecting and concentrating the mind, not necessarily hypnotic. All Indian precepts and directions for mental training attach far more importance to concentration of thought and the power of applying the mind at will to one subject exclusively than is usual in Europe.

Buddhaghosa at the beginning of his discussion of adhivocita enumerates forty subjects of meditation namely, “the ten Kasinas, ten impurities, ten reflections, four sublime states (Brahmā-vihāra), the four formless states, one perception and one analysis.”\(^3\) The Kasinas have been already described. The ten impurities are a similar means of inducing meditation. The monk fixes his attention on a corpse in some horrible stage of decay and thus concentrates his mind on the impermanence of all things. The ten recollections are a less gloomy exercise but similar in principle, as the attention is fixed on some religious subject such as the Buddha, his law, his order, etc.

The Brahmā-vihāras\(^4\) are states of emotional meditation which lead to rebirth in the heavens of Brahmā. They are attained by letting love or some other good emotion dominate the mind, and by “pervading the whole world” with it. This language about pervading the world with kindly emotion is common in Buddhist books though alien to European idiom. The mind must harbour no uncharitable thought and then its

\(^1\) Such procedure has not received much countenance in Christian mysticism but the contemplation of a burnished pewter dish and of running water induced ecstasy in Jacob Boehme and Ignatius Loyola respectively. See Underhill, Mysticism, p. 69.
\(^2\) Maj. Nik. 62 end.
\(^3\) The analysis means to analyze all things as consisting alike of the four elements. The one perception is the perception that all nourishment is impure.
\(^4\) See Dig. Nik. 13 and Rhys Davids' introduction to it. In spite of their name, they seem to be purely Buddhist and have not been found in Brahmanic literature. The four states are characterized respectively by love, sympathy with sorrow, sympathy with joy, and equanimity.
benevolence becomes a psychic force which spreads in all directions, just as the sound of a trumpet can be heard in all four quarters.

These Brahmā-vihāras are sometimes represented as coming after the four Jhānas\(^1\), sometimes as replacing them\(^2\). But the object of the two exercises is not the same, for the Brahmā-vihāras aim at rebirth in a better world. They are based on the theory common to Buddhism and Hinduism that the predominant thoughts of a man's life, and especially his thoughts when near death, determine the character of his next existence.

The trances known as the four formless states are analogous to the Brahmā-vihāras, their object being to ensure rebirth not in the heaven of Brahmā but in one of the heavens known as Formless Worlds where the inhabitants have no material form\(^3\). They are sometimes combined with other states into a series of eight, known as the eight deliverances\(^4\). The more advanced of these stages seem to be hypnotic and even cataleptic. In the first formless state the monk who is meditating rises above all idea of form and multiplicity and reaches the sphere in which the infinity of space is the only idea present to his mind. He then passes to the sphere where the infinity of thought only is present and thence to the sphere in which he thinks "nothing at all exists\(^5\)," though it would seem that the consciousness of his own mental processes is undiminished. The teaching of Alāra Kālāma, the Buddha's first teacher, made the attainment of this state its goal. It is succeeded by the state in which neither any idea nor the absence of any idea is specially present to the mind\(^6\). This was the goal of Uddaka Rāmaputta, his second teacher, and is illustrated by the simile of a bowl which has been smeared with oil inside. That is to say, consciousness is reduced to a minimum. Beyond these four stages is yet another\(^7\), in which a complete cessation of perception and feeling is

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\(^1\) Dig. Nik. xiii. 76.

\(^2\) Dig. Nik. xvii. 2-4.

\(^3\) Christian mystics also, such as St. Angela and St. Theresa, had "formless visions." See Underhill, Myst. pp. 338 ff.

\(^4\) Attha vimokkhā. See Mahāparinibb. sut. in Rhys Davids' *Dialogues of the Buddha*, ii. 119.

\(^5\) Akiñcānaññāyatanam.

\(^6\) Nevasaññānaññāññāyatanam.

\(^7\) Saññavedāyita nirodhamāpatti. The Buddha when dying (Dig. xvi. v. 8, 9) passes through this state, but does not go from it to Parinibbāna. This perhaps means that it was regarded as a purification of the mind, but not on the direct road to the final goal.
attained\textsuperscript{1}. This state differs from death only in the fact that heat and physical life are not extinct and while it lasts there is no consciousness. It is stated that it could continue during seven days but not longer. Such hypnotic trances have always inspired respect in India but the Buddha rejected as unsatisfying the teaching of his masters which made them the final goal.

But let us return to his account of Jhâna and its results. The first of these is a correct knowledge of the body and of the connection of consciousness with the body. Next comes the power to call up out of the body a mental image which is apparently the earliest form of what has become known in later times as the astral body. In the account of the conversion of Angulimâla the brigand\textsuperscript{2} it is related that the Buddha caused to appear an image of himself which Angulimâla could not overtake although he ran with all his might and the Buddha was walking quietly.

The five states or faculties which follow in the enumeration are often called (though not in the earliest texts) abhiññâ, or transcendental knowledge. They are iddhi, or the wondrous gift: the heavenly ear which hears heavenly music\textsuperscript{3}: the knowledge of others’ thoughts: the power of remembering one’s own previous births: the divine eye, which sees the previous births of others\textsuperscript{4}. It would appear that the order of these states is not important and that they do not depend on one another. Iddhi, like the power of evoking a mental image, seems to be connected with hypnotic phenomena. It means literally power, but is used in the special sense of magical or supernatural gifts such as

\textsuperscript{1} See Maj. Nik. 43. But the point of the discussion seems to be not so much special commendation of this form of trance as an explanation of its origin, namely that it, like other mental states, is bound to ensue when certain preliminary conditions both moral and intellectual have been realized. See also Sam. Nik. xxxvi. ii. 5. See for examples of this cataleptic form of Samâdhi Max Muller’s Life of Ramakrishna, pp. 49, 59, etc. Christian mystics (e.g. St Catharine of Siena and St Theresa) were also subject to deathlike trances lasting for hours and St Theresa is said once to have been in this condition for some days.

\textsuperscript{2} Maj. Nik. 86.

\textsuperscript{3} This is known to European mystics, particularly Suso. St Francis of Assisi, St Catharine of Siena and Richard Rolle are also cited. See Underhill. Mysticism, p. 332.

\textsuperscript{4} Christian visions of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise are another instance of the divine eye, which thinks it can see the whole scheme of things.
ability to walk on water, fly in the air, or pass through a wall. Some of these sensations are familiar in dreams and are probably easily attainable as subjective results in trances. I am inclined to attribute accounts implying their objective reality to the practice of hypnotism and to suppose that a disciple in a hypnotic state would on the assurance of his teacher believe that he saw the teacher himself, or some person pointed out by the teacher, actually performing such feats. Of iddhi we are told that a monk can practise it, just as a potter can make anything he likes out of prepared clay, which is a way of saying that he who has his mind perfectly controlled can treat himself to any mental pleasure he chooses. Although the Buddha and others are represented as performing such feats as floating in the air whenever it suits them, yet the instruction given as to how the powers may be acquired starts by bidding the neophyte pass through the four stages of Jhâna or meditation in which ordinary external perception ceases. Then he will be able to have the experiences described. And it is probable that the description gives a correct account of the sensations which arise in the course of a trance, particularly if the trance has been entered upon with the object of experiencing them. In other words they are hypnotic states and often the result of suggestion, since he who meditates knows what the result of his meditation should be. Sometimes, as mentioned, Jhâna is induced by methods familiar to mesmerists, such as gazing at a circle or some bright object but such expedients are not essential and with this European authorities agree. Thus Bernheim states that even when a subject is hypnotized for the first time, no gestures or passes are necessary, provided he is calm. It suffices to bid him look at the operator and go to sleep. He adds that those who are most susceptible to the hypnotic influence are not nervous and hysterical subjects but docile and receptive natures who can concentrate their attention. Now it is hardly possible to imagine better hypnotic

1 Tales about such powers are still very common in the East, for instance the Chinese story (in the Liao Chai) of the man who learnt from a Taoist how to walk through a wall but failed ignominiously when he tried to give an exhibition to his family. Educated Chinese seem to think there is something in the story and say that he failed because his motives were bad.

2 Bernheim, La Suggestion, chap. i. Quand j'ai éloigné de son esprit la pré-occupation que fait naître l'idée de magnétisme... je lui dis "Regardez-moi bien
subjects than the pupils of an Indian religious teacher. They are taught to regard him with deep respect and complete confidence: they are continually in a state of expectant receptivity, assimilating not only the texts and doctrines which he imparts, but his way of life: their training leads them to believe in the reality of mental and physical powers exceeding those of ordinary mankind and indeed to think that if they do not have such experiences it is through some fault of their own. The teachers, though ignorant of hypnotism as such, would not hesitate to use any procedure which seemed to favour progress in meditation and the acquisition of supernatural powers. Now a large number of Indian marvels fall under two heads. In the first case Buddha, Krishna, or any personage raised above the ordinary human level points out to his disciples that wonders are occurring or will occur: he causes people to appear or disappear: he appears himself in an amazing form which he explains. In the other case the possessor of marvellous powers has experience which he subsequently relates: he goes up to heaven or flies to the uttermost parts of the earth and returns. Both of these cases are covered by the phenomena of hypnotism. I do not mean to say that any given Indian legend can be explained by analyzing it as if it were a report of a hypnotic operation, but merely that the general character of these legends is largely due to the prevalence of hypnotic experiences among their composers and hearers¹. Two obscure branches of hypnotism are probably of great importance in the religious history of the human race, namely self-hypnotization without external suggestion and the hypnotization of crowds. India affords plentiful materials for the study of both.

There is no reason to doubt that the Buddha believed in the existence of these powers and countenanced the practices supposed to lead to them. Thus Moggallāna, second only to

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1. Thus in the drama Ratnāvall a magician makes the characters see an imaginary conflagration of the palace and also a vision of heaven. His performance seems to be accepted as merely a remarkable piece of conjuring.
Sāriputta among his disciples, was called the master of iddhi\(^1\), and it is mentioned as a creditable and enjoyable accomplishment\(^2\). But it is made equally plain that such magical or hypnotic practices are not essential to the attainment of the Buddha's ideal. When lists of attainments are given, iddhi does not receive the first place and it may be possessed by bad men: Devadatta for instance was proficient in it. It is even denounced in the story of Pindola Bhāradvāja\(^3\) and in the Kevaddha sutta\(^4\). In this curious dialogue the Buddha is asked to authorize the performance of miracles as an advertisement of the true faith. He refuses categorically, saying there are three sorts of wonders namely iddhi, that is flying through the air, etc.: the wonder of manifestation which is thought-reading: and the wonder of education. Of the first two he says "I see danger in their practice and therefore I loathe, abhor and am ashamed of them." Then by one of those characteristic turns of language by which he uses old words in new senses he adds that the true miracle is the education of the heart.

Neither are the other transcendental powers necessary for emancipation. Sāriputta had not the heavenly eye, yet he was the chief disciple and an eminent arhat. This heavenly eye (dība-caikkhu) is not the same as the eye of truth (dhamma-caikkhu). It means perfect knowledge of the operation of Karma and hence a panoramic view of the universe, whereas the eye of truth is a technical phrase for the opening of the eyes, the mental revolution which accompanies conversion. But though transcendental knowledge is not indispensable for attaining nirvana, it is an attribute of the Buddha and in most of its forms amounts to an exceptional insight into human nature and the laws of the universe, which, though after the Indian manner exaggerated and pedantically defined, does not differ essentially from what we call genius.

The power of recollecting one's previous births, often mentioned in the Pitakas, has been described in detail by Buddhist writers and Buddhaghosa\(^5\) distinguishes between the

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1 Ang. Nik. xvi. 1. In spite of his magic power he could not prevent himself being murdered. The Milinda-Pañha explains this as the result of Karma, which is stronger than magic and everything else.

2 E.g. Maj. Nik. 77.

3 Cullavag. v. 8.

4 Dig. Nik. xi.

5 Visuddhi Magga, xiii. in Warren, Buddhism in Translation, pp. 315 ff.
powers possessed by various persons. The lowest form of recollection merely passes from one mental state to a previous mental state and so on backwards through successive lives, not however understanding each life as a whole. But even ordinary disciples can not only recollect previous mental states but can also travel backwards along the sequence of births and deaths and bring up before their minds the succession of existences. A Buddha’s intelligence dispenses with the necessity of moving backwards from birth to birth but can select any point of time and see at once the whole series of births extending from it in both directions, backwards and forwards. Buddhaghosa then goes on to prescribe the method to be followed by a monk who tries for the first time to recollect previous births. After taking his midday meal he should choose a quiet place and sitting down pass through the four Jhānas in succession. On rising from the fourth trance he should consider the event which last took place, namely his sitting down; and then in retrograde order all that he did the day and night before and so backwards month after month and year after year. A clever monk (so says Buddhaghosa) is able at the first trial to pass beyond the moment of his conception in the present existence and to take as the object of his thought his individuality at the moment of his last death. But since the individuality of the previous existence ceased and another one came into being, therefore that point of time is like thick darkness. Buddhaghosa goes on to explain, if I apprehend his meaning rightly, that the proper recollection of previous births involves the element of form and the mind sharpened by the practice of the four trances does not merely reproduce feelings and impressions but knows the name and events of the previous existence, whereas ordinary persons are apt to reproduce feelings and impressions without having any clear idea of the past existence as a whole. This, I believe, corresponds with the experience of modern Buddhists. It is beyond doubt that those who attempt to carry their memory back in the way described are convinced that they remember existences before the present life. As a rule it takes from a fortnight to a month to obtain such a remembrance clearly, and every day the aspirant to a knowledge of previous births must carry his memory further and further back, dwelling less and less on the details of recent events. When he reaches
the time of his birth, he feels as if there were a curtain of black
darkness before him, but if the attention is concentrated, this
curtain is rent and the end of the previous life is recovered
behind it. The process is painful for it involves the recollection
of death and the even greater pains of birth and many have
not courage to go beyond this point. It is not uncommon in
Ceylon, Burma, Siam and probably in all parts of the Far East,
to find people who are persuaded they can remember previous
births in this way, but I have never met anyone who professed
to recall more than two or three. There is no room in these
modest modern visions for the long vistas of previous lives seen
by the earlier Buddhists.

Meditation also plays a considerable part in the Buddhism
of the Far East under the name of Ch’an or Zen of which we
shall have something to say when we treat of China and Japan.

As already indicated the methods and results of meditation
as practised by Brahmanic Hindus and by Buddhists show
considerable resemblance to the experiences of Christian
mystics. The coincidences do not concern mere matters of
detail, although theology has done its best to make the content
and explanation of the experiences as divergent as possible.
But the essential similarity of form remains and there is clearly
no question of borrowing or direct influence. It is certain that
what is sometimes called the Mystic Way is not only true as a
succession of psychic states but is, for those who can walk in it,
the road to a happiness which in reality and power to satisfy
exceeds all pleasures of the senses and intellect, so that when
once known it makes all other joys and pains seem negligible.
Yet despite the intense reality of this happy state, despite the
illumination which floods the soul and the wide visions of a
universal plan, there is no agreement as to the cause of the
experience nor, strange to say, as to its meaning as opposed to
its form. For many both in the east and west the one essential
and indubitable fact throughout the experience is God, yet
Buddhists are equally decided in holding that the experience
has nothing to do with any deity. This is not a mere question
of interpretation. It means that views as to theism and pan-
theism are indifferent for the attainment of this happy state.

The mystics of India are sometimes contrasted with their
fellows in Europe as being more passive and more self-centred:
they are supposed to desire self-annihilation and to have no thought for others. But I doubt if the contrast is just. If Indian mysticism sometimes appears at a disadvantage, I think it is because it is popular and in danger of being stereotyped and sometimes vulgarized. Nowadays in Europe we have students of mysticism rather than mystics, and the mystics of the Christian Church were independent and distinguished spirits who, instead of following the signposts of the beaten track, found out a path for themselves. But in India mysticism was and is as common as prayer and as popular as science. It was taught in manuals and parodied by charlatans. When mysticism is the staple crop of a religion and not a rare wild flower, the percentage of imperfect specimens is bound to be high. The Buddha, Śankara and a host of less well-known teachers were as strenuous and influential as Francis of Assisi or Ignatius Loyola. Neither in Europe nor in Asia has mysticism contributed much directly to political and social reform. That is not its sphere, but within the religious sphere, in preaching, teaching and organization, the mystic is intensely practical and the number of successes (as of failures) is greater in Asia than in Europe. Even in theory Indian mysticism does not repudiate energy. No one enjoyed more than the Buddha himself what Ruysbroeck calls “the mysterious peace dwelling in activity,” for before he began his mission he had attained nirvana and such of his disciples as were arhats were in the same case. Later Buddhism recognizes a special form of nirvana called apratishtṭhita: those who attain it see that there is no real difference between mundane existence and nirvana and therefore devote themselves to a life of beneficent activity.

The period of transition and trial known to European mystics as the Dark Night of the Soul, is not mentioned in Indian manuals as an episode of the spiritual life, for such an interruption would hardly harmonize with their curriculum of regular progress towards enlightenment. But mystic poetry testifies that in Asia as in Europe this feeling of desertion and loneliness is a frequent experience in the struggles and adventures of the soul. It is apparently not necessary, just as the incidental joys and triumphs of the soul—strains of heavenly music, aerial flights, and visions of the universal scheme—are also not essential. The essential features of the mystic way, as well as
its usual incidents, are common to Asia and Europe, and in both continents are expressed in two forms. One view contrasts the surface life and a deeper life: when the intellect ceases to plague and puzzle, something else arises from the depth and makes its unity with some greater Force to be felt as a reality. This idea finds ample expression in the many Brahmanic systems which regarded the centre and core of the human being as an ātman or purusha, happy when in the undisturbed peace of its own nature but distracted by the senses and intellect. The other view of mystic experiences regards them as a remaking of character, the evolution of a new personality and in fact a new birth. This of course need not be a denial of the other view: the emergence of the latent self may effect a transformation of the whole being. But Buddhism, at any rate early Buddhism, formulates its theory in a polemical form. There is no ready-made latent self, awaiting manifestation when its fetters and veils are removed: man's inner life is capable of superhuman extension but the extension is the result of enlargement and training, not of self-revelation.
CHAPTER XV
MYTHOLOGY IN HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

The later phases of Buddhism, described as Mahāyāna, show this feature among many others, that the supernatural and mythological side of religion becomes prominent. Gods or angels play an increasingly important part, the Buddha himself becomes a being superior to all gods, and Buddhas, gods and saints perform at every turn feats for which miracle seems too modest a name. The object of the present chapter is to trace the early stages of these beliefs, for they are found in the Pali Canon, although it is not until later that they overgrow and hide the temple in whose walls they are rooted.

It may be fairly said that Buddhism is not a miraculous religion in the sense that none of its essential doctrines depend on miracles. It would seem that such a religion as Mormonism must collapse if it were admitted that the Book of Mormon is not a revelation delivered to Joseph Smith. But the content of the Buddha's teaching is not miraculous and, though he is alleged to have possessed insight exceeding ordinary human knowledge, yet this is not exactly a miracle and it is a question whether an unusual intelligence disciplined by meditation might not attain to such knowledge. Still, though the essence of the doctrine may be detachable from miracles and even be scientific, one cannot read very far in the Vinaya or the Sutta Pitaka without coming upon unearthly beings or supernatural occurrences.

The credibility of miracles is to my mind simply a question of evidence. Any extraordinary event, such as a person doing a thing totally foreign to his character, is improbable a priori. But the law does not allow that the best of men is incapable of committing the worst of crimes, if the evidence proves he did. Nor can the most extraordinary violation of nature's laws be pronounced impossible if supported by sufficient evidence, only the evidence must be strong in proportion to the strange-
ness of the circumstances. But I cannot see that the uniformity of nature is any objection to the occurrence of miracles, for as a rule a miracle is regarded not as an event without a cause, but as due to a new cause, namely the intervention of a superhuman person. Many of the best known miracles are such that one may imagine this person to effect them by understanding and controlling some unknown natural force, just as we control electricity. Only evidence is required to show that he can do so. But on the other hand the weakness of every religion which depends on miracles is that their truth is contested and not unreasonably. If they are true, why are they not certain? Of all the phenomena described as miracles, ghosts, fortune telling, magic, clairvoyance, prophesying, and so on, none command unchallenged acceptance. In every age miracles, portents and apparitions have been recorded, yet none of them with a certainty that carries universal conviction and in many ages contemporary scepticism was possible. Even in Vedic times there were people who did not believe in the existence of Indra.

It is clear that some miracles require more evidence than others and many old stories are so fantastic that they may justly be put aside because those who reported them did not see, as we can, what difficulties they involve and hence felt no need for caution in belief. Among ancient Indians or Hebrews tales of seven headed snakes or of stopping the sun did not arouse the critical spirit, for the phenomena did not seem much more extraordinary than centipedes or eclipses. Only those who understand that such stories upset all we know of anatomy and astronomy can realize their improbability and the weight of evidence necessary to make them credible. The most important distinction in miracles (I use the word as a popular description of extraordinary events which is readily understood though hard to define) is whether they are in any way subjective, that is to say that they depend in the last resort on an impression produced in certain, but not all, human minds or whether they are objective, that is to say that all witnesses would have seen them like any other event. A man rising into the air would be an objective miracle if it were admitted that this levitation was as real as the flight of a bird, and very strong evidence would be necessary to make us believe that such a movement had really

1 R.V. ii. 12. 5.
been executed. But the case is different if we are dealing with
the conviction of an enthusiast that he rose aloft or even with
the conviction of his disciples, that they, being in an ecstasy,
saw him do so. There is no reason to doubt the subjective reality
of well-authenticated visions and as motives and stimuli to
action they may have real objective importance. Miracles of
healing are not dissimilar. A man’s mind can affect his body,
either directly through his conviction that certain physical
changes are about to take place or indirectly as conveying the
influence of some powerful external mind which may be either
calming or stimulating. That some persons have a special power
of healing nervous or mental diseases can hardly be doubted
and I am not disposed to reject any well-authenticated miracu-
losous cure, believing that sudden mental relief or acute joy can
so affect the whole frame that in the improved physical con-
ditions thus caused even diseases not usually considered as
nervous may pass away. But though there is no reason to
discredit miracles of healing, it is clear that they are not only
exaggerated but also distorted by reporters who do not under-
stand their nature. Those who chronicle the cures supposed to
be effected at Lourdes at the present day keep within the
bounds of what is explicable, but a Hindu who had seen a
cripple recover some power of movement might be equally
ready to believe that when a man’s leg had been cut off the
stump could grow into a complete limb.

The miraculous events recorded in the Pitakas differ from
those of later works, whether Mahayanist literature or the Hindu
Puranas and Epics, chiefly in their moderation. They may be
classified under several heads. Many of them are mere em-
broidery or embellishment due to poetical exuberance, esteemed
appropriate in those generous climates though repugnant to our
chilly tastes. In every country poetry is allowed to overstep
the prosaic borders of fact without criticism. When an English
poet says that—

The red rose cries She is near, she is near:
And the white rose weeps She is late:
The larkspur listens, I hear, I hear:
And the lily whispers, I wait—

no one thinks of criticizing the lines as absurd because flowers

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cannot talk or of trying to prove that they can. Poetry can take liberties with facts provided it follows the lines of metaphors which the reader finds natural. The same latitude cannot be allowed in unfamiliar directions. Thus though a shower of flowers from heaven is not more extraordinary than talking flowers and is quite natural in Indian poetry, it would probably disconcert the English reader.

An Indian poet would not represent flowers as talking, but would give the same idea by saying that the spirits inhabiting trees and plants recited stanzas. Similarly when a painter draws a picture of an angel with wings rising from the shoulder blades, even the very scientific do not think it needful to point out that no such anatomical arrangement is known or probable, nor do the very pious maintain that such creatures exist. The whole question is allowed to rest happily in some realm of acquiescence untroubled by discussions. And it is in this spirit that Indian books relate how when the Buddha went abroad showers of flowers fell from the sky and the air resounded with heavenly music, or diversify their theological discussions with interludes of demons, nymphs and magic serpents. And although this riot of the imagination offends our ideas of good sense and proportion, the Buddhists do not often lose the distinction between what Matthew Arnold called Literature and Dogma. The Buddha's visits to various heavens are not presented as articles of faith: they are simply a pleasant setting for his discourses.

Some miracles of course have a more serious character and can be less easily separated from the essentials of the faith. Thus the Pitakas represent the Buddha as able to see all that happens in the world and to transport himself anywhere at will. But even in such cases we may remember that when we say of a well-informed and active person that he is omniscient and ubiquitous, we are not misunderstood. The hyperbole of Indian legends finds its compensation in the small importance attached to them. No miraculous circumstance recorded of the Buddha has anything like the significance attributed by Christians to the virgin birth or the resurrection of Christ. His superhuman powers are in keeping with the picture drawn of his character. They are mostly the result of an attempt to

1 Yet Tennyson can say "And at their feet the crocus brake like fire," but in a mythological poem.
describe a mind and will of more than human strength, but the
superman thus idealized rarely works miracles of healing. He
saves mankind by teaching the way of salvation, not by al-
leviating a few chance cases of physical distress. In later works
he is represented as performing plentiful and extraordinary
miracles, but these are just the instances in which we can most
clearly trace the addition of embellishments.

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The elaboration of marvellous episodes is regarded in India
as a legitimate form of literary art, no more blameable than
dramatization, and in sacred writings it flourishes unchecked.
In Hinduism, as in Buddhism, there is not wanting a feeling
that the soul is weary of the crowd of deities who demand
sacrifices and promise happiness, and on the serener heights of
philosophy gods have little place. Still most forms of Hinduism
cannot like Buddhism be detached from the gods, and no
extravagance is too improbable to be included in the legends
about them. The extravagance is the more startling because
their exploits form part of quasi-historical narratives. Râma
and Krishna seem to be idealized and deified portraits of
ancient heroes, who came to be regarded as incarnations of the
Almighty. This is understood by Indians to mean not that the
Almighty submitted consistently to human limitations, but that
he, though incarnate, exercised whenever it pleased him and
often most capriciously his full divine force. With this idea
before them and no historical scruples to restrain them, Indian
writers tell how Krishna held up a mountain on his finger, Indian
readers accept the statement, and crowds of pilgrims visit the
scene of the exploit.

The later Buddhist writings are perhaps not less extravagant
than the Puranas, but the Pitakas are relatively sober, though
not quite consistent in their account of the Buddha’s attitude
to the miraculous. Thus he encourages Sâgata\(^1\) to give a display
of miracles, such as walking in the air, in order to prepare the
mind of a congregation to whom he is going to preach, but in
other narratives\(^2\) which seem ancient and authentic, he ex-
presses his disapproval of such performances (just as Christ

\(^1\) Mahâv. v. i. \(^2\) E.g. Dig. Nik. xii. and Cullavag. v. 8.
refused to give signs), and says that they do not "conduce to
the conversion of the unconverted or to the increase of the
converted." Those who know India will easily call up a picture
of how the Bhikkhus strove to impress the crowd by exhibitions
not unlike a modern juggler's tricks and how the master stopped
them. His motives are clear: these performances had nothing
to do with the essence of his teaching. If it be true that he ever
countenanced them, he soon saw his error. He did not want
people to say that he was a conjurer who knew the Gândhâra
charm or any other trick. And though we have no warrant for
doubting that he believed in the reality of the powers known as
iddhi, it is equally certain that he did not consider them essential
or even important for religion.

Somewhat similar is the attitude of early Buddhism to the
spirit world—the hosts of deities and demons who people this
and other spheres. Their existence is assumed, but the truths of
religion are not dependent on them, and attempts to use their
influence by sacrifices and oracles are deprecated as vulgar
practices similar to juggling. Later Buddhism became infected
with mythology and the critical change occurs when deities,
instead of being merely protectors of the church, take an active
part in the work of salvation. When the Hindu gods developed
into personalities who could appeal to religious and philosophic
minds as cosmic forces, as revealers of the truth and guides to
bliss, the example was too attractive to be neglected and a
pantheon of Bodhisattvas arose. But it is clear that when the
Buddha preached in Kosala and Magadha, the local deities had
not attained any such position. The systems of philosophy then
in vogue were mostly not theistic, and, strange as the words
may sound, religion had little to do with the gods. If this be
thought to rest on a mistranslation, it is certainly true that the
dhamma had very little to do with devas. The example of Rome
under the Empire or of modern China makes the position clearer.
In neither would a serious enquirer turn to the ancient national
gods for spiritual help.

Often as the Devas figure in early Buddhist stories, the
significance of their appearance nearly always lies in their
relations with the Buddha or his disciples. Of mere mythology,
such as the dealings of Brahmâ and Indra with other gods,
there is little. In fact the gods, though freely invoked as
accessories, are not taken seriously\(^1\), and there are some extremely curious passages in which Gotama seems to laugh at them, much as the sceptics of the eighteenth century laughed at Jehovah. Thus in the Kevaddha sutta\(^2\) he relates how a monk who was puzzled by a metaphysical problem applied to various gods and finally accosted Brahma himself in the presence of all his retinue. After hearing the question, which was Where do the elements cease and leave no trace behind? Brahma replies, “I am the Great Brahma, the Supreme, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Controller, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be.” “But,” said the monk, “I did not ask you, friend, whether you were indeed all you now say, but I ask you where the four elements cease and leave no trace.” Then the Great Brahma took him by the arm and led him aside and said, “These gods think I know and understand everything. Therefore I gave no answer in their presence. But I do not know the answer to your question and you had better go and ask the Buddha.” Even more curiously ironical is the account given of the origin of Brahma\(^3\). There comes a time when this world system passes away and then certain beings are reborn in the World of Radiance and remain there a long time. Sooner or later, the world system begins to evolve again and the palace of Brahma appears, but it is empty. Then some being whose time is up falls from the World of Radiance and comes to life in the palace and remains there alone. At last he wishes for company, and it so happens that other beings whose time is up fall from the World of Radiance and join him. And the first being thinks that he is Great Brahma, the Creator, because when he felt lonely and wished for companions other beings appeared. And the other beings accept this view. And at last one of Brahma’s retinue falls from that state and is born in the human world and, if he can remember his previous birth, he reflects that he is transitory but that Brahma still remains and from this he draws the erroneous conclusion that Brahma is eternal.

\(^1\) Even in the Upanishads the gods are not given a very high position. They are powerless against Brahman (e.g. Kena Up. 14–28) and are not naturally in possession of true knowledge, though they may acquire it (e.g. Chând. Up. viii. 7).

\(^2\) Dig. Nik. xi.

\(^3\) Dig. Nik. i. chap. 2, 1–6. The radiant gods are the Abhassara, cf. Dhammap 200.
He who dared to represent Brahmā (for which name we might substitute Allah or Jehovah) as a pompous deluded individual worried by the difficulty of keeping up his position had more than the usual share of scepticism and irony. The compilers of such discourses regarded the gods as mere embellishments, as gargoyles and quaint figures in the cathedral porch, not as saints above the altar. The mythology and cosmology associated with early Buddhism are really extraneous. The Buddha’s teaching is simply the four truths and some kindred ethical and psychological matter. It grew up in an atmosphere of animism which peopled the trees and streams and mountains with spirits. It accepted and played with the idea, just as it might have accepted and played with the idea of radio-activity. But such notions do not affect the essence of the Dharma and it might be preached in severe isolation. Yet in Asia it hardly ever has been so isolated. It is true that Indian mythology has not always accompanied the spread of Buddhism. There is much of it in Tibet and Mongolia but less in China and Japan and still less in Burma. But probably in every part of Asia the Buddhist missionaries found existing a worship of nature spirits and accepted it, sometimes even augmenting and modifying it. In every age the elect may have risen superior to all ideas of gods and heavens and hells, but for any just historical perspective, for any sympathetic understanding of the faith as it exists as a living force to-day, it is essential to remember this background and frame of fantastic but graceful mythology.

Many later Mahayanist books are full of dhāraṇīs or spells. Dhāraṇīs are not essentially different from mantras, especially tantric mantras containing magical syllables, but whereas mantras are more or less connected with worship, dhāraṇīs are rather for personal use, spells to ward off evil and bring good luck. The Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Chuang\(^1\) states that the sect of the Mahāsanghikas, which in his opinion arose in connection with the first council, compiled a Pitaka of dhāraṇīs. The tradition cannot be dismissed as incredible for even the Dīgha-Nikāya relates how a host of spirits visited the Buddha in order to impart a formula which would keep his disciples safe from harm. Buddhist and Brahmanic mythology represent two methods of working up popular legends. The Mahābhārata and

\(^1\) Watters, II. p. 180.
Puranas introduce us to a moderately harmonious if miscel-
naneous society of supernatural personages decently affiliated
to one another and to Brahmanic teaching. The same personages
reappear in Buddhism but are analogous to Christian angels or
to fairies rather than to minor deities. They are not so much
the heroes of legends, as protectors: they are interesting not for
their past exploits but for their readiness to help believers or
to testify to the true doctrine. Still there was a great body of
Buddhist and Jain legend in ancient India which handled the
same stories as Brahmanic legend—e.g. the tale of Krishna—
but in a slightly different manner. The characteristic form of
Buddhist legend is the Játaka, or birth story. Folk-lore and
sagas, ancient jokes and tragedies, the whole stock in trade of
rhapsodists and minstrels are made an edifying and interesting
branch of scripture by simply identifying the principal characters
with the Buddha, his friends and his enemies in their previous
births. But in Hinayanist Buddhism legend and mythology
are ornamental, and edifying, nothing more. Spirits may set
a good example or send good luck: they have nothing to do
with emancipation or nirvana. The same distinction of spheres
is not wholly lost in Hinduism, for though the great philosophic
works treat of God under various names they mostly ignore
minor deities, and though the language of the Bhagavad-gitā
is exuberant and mythological, yet only Krishna is God: all
other spirits are part of him.

The deities most frequently mentioned in Buddhist works
are Indra, generally under the name of Sakka (Śakra) and
Brahmā. The former is no longer the demon-slaying soma-
drinking deity of the Vedas, but the heavenly counterpart of
a pious Buddhist king. He frequently appears in the Játaka
stories as the protector of true religion and virtue, and when
a good man is in trouble, his throne grows hot and attracts his
attention. His transformation is analogous to the process by
which heathen deities, especially in the Eastern Church, have
been accepted as Christian saints. Brahmā rules in a much
higher heaven than Sakka. His appearances on earth are rarer
and more weighty, and sometimes he seems to be a personifica-

1 The legends of both Ráma and Krishna occur in the Book of Játakas in a
somewhat altered form, nos. 641 and 454.

2 Thus Helios the Sun passes into St Elias.
tion of whatever intelligence and desire for good there is in the world. But in no case do the Pitakas concede to him the position of supreme ruler of the Universe. In one singular narrative the Buddha tells his disciples how he once ascertained that Brahmā Baka was under the delusion that his heaven was eternal and cured him of it.

3

All Indian religions have a passion for describing in bold imaginative outline the history and geography of the universe. Their ideas are juster than those of Europeans and Semites in so far as they imply a sense of the distribution of life throughout immensities of time and space. The Hindu perceived more clearly than the Jew and Greek that his own age and country were merely parts of a much longer series and of a far larger structure or growth. He wished to keep this whole continually before the mind, but in attempting to describe it he fell into that besetting intellectual sin of India, the systematizing of the imaginary. Ages, continents and worlds are described in detailed statements which bear no relation to facts. Thus, Brahmanic cosmogony usually deals with a period of time called Kalpa. This is a day in the life of Brahmā, who lives one hundred years of such days, and it marks the duration of a world which comes into being at its commencement and is annihilated at its end. It consists of 4320 times a million years and is divided into fourteen smaller periods called manvantaras each presided over by a superhuman being called Manu. A manvantara contains about seventy-one mahāyugas and each mahāyuga is what men call the four ages

1 He is often called Brahmā Sahampati, a title of doubtful meaning and not found in Brahmanic writings. The Pitakas often speak of Brahmās and worlds of Brahmā in the plural, as if there were a whole class of Brahmās. See especially the Suttas collected in book i, chap. vi. of the Samyutta-Nikāya where we even hear of Pacceka Brahmās, apparently corresponding in some way to Pacceka Buddhās.

2 Maj. Nik. 49. The meaning of the title Baka is not clear and may be ironical. Another ironical name is manopadositā (debauched in mind) invented as the title of a class of gods in Dīg. Nik. 1. and xx. The idea that sages can instruct the gods is anterior to Buddhism. See e.g. Brihad-Ār. Up. ii. 5. 17, and ib. iv. 3. 33, and the parallel passage in the Tait. Chānd. Kaush. Upanishads and Śat. Brāhmaṇa for the idea that a Śrautiya is equal to the highest deities.

3 Six Manvantaras of the present Kalpa have elapsed and we are in the seventh.
of the world\(^1\). Geography and astronomy show similar precision. The Earth is the lowest of seven spheres or worlds, and beneath it are a series of hells\(^2\). The three upper spheres last for a hundred Kalpas but are still material, though less gross than those below. The whole system of worlds is encompassed above and below by the shell of the egg of Brahmā. Round this again are envelopes of water, fire, air, ether, mind and finally the infinite Pradhāna or cause of all existing things. The earth consists of seven land-masses, divided and surrounded by seven seas. In the centre of the central land-mass rises Mount Meru, nearly a million miles high and bearing on its peaks the cities of Brahmā and other gods.

The cosmography of the Buddhists is even more luxuriant, for it regards the universe as consisting of innumerable spheres (cakkavālas), each of which might seem to a narrower imagination a universe in itself, since it has its own earth, heavenly bodies, paradises and hells. A sphere is divided into three regions, the lowest of which is the region of desire. This consists of eleven divisions which, beginning from the lowest, are the hells, and the worlds of animals, Pretas (hungry ghosts), Asuras (Titans)\(^3\) and men. This last, which we inhabit, consists of a vast circular plain largely covered with water. In the centre of it is Mount Meru, and it is surrounded by a wall. Above it rise six devalokas, or heavens of the inferior gods. Above the realms of desire there follow sixteen worlds in which there is form but no desire. All are states of bliss one higher than the other and all are attained by the exercise of meditation. Above these again come four formless worlds, in which there is neither desire nor form. They correspond to the four stages of Arūpa trances and in them the gross and evil elements of existence are reduced to a minimum, but still they are not permanent and cannot be

\(^1\) We are in the Kali or worst age of the present mahāyuga. The Kali lasts 432,000 years and began 3102 B.c.

\(^2\) In their number and in many other points of cosmography the various accounts differ greatly. The account given above is taken from the Vaiśṇava Purāṇa, book II, but the details in it are not entirely consistent.

\(^3\) The detailed formulation of this cosmography was naturally gradual but its chief features are known to the Nikāyas. Dig. Nik. xiv. 17 and 30 seem to imply the theory of spheres. For Heavens, see Maj. Nik. 49, Dig. Nik. xi. 68–70 and for Hells Sut. Nip. iii. 10, Maj. Nik. 129. See too De la Vallée Poussin's article, Cosmology Buddhist, in E.R.E.

\(^*\) See for the Asuras Sam. Nik. i. xi. 1.
regarded as final salvation. We naturally think of this series of worlds as so many storeys rising one above the other and they are so depicted\(^1\) but it will be observed that the animal kingdom is placed between the hells and humanity, obviously not as having its local habitation there but as better off than the one, though inferior to the other, and perhaps if we pointed this out to the Hindu artist he would smile and say that his many storeyed picture must not be taken so literally: all states of being are merely states of mind, hellish, brutish, human and divine.

Grotesque as Hindu notions of the world may seem, they include two great ideas of modern science. The universe is infinite or at least immeasurable\(^2\). The vision of the astronomer who sees a solar system in every star of the milky way is not wider than the thought that devised these Cakkavālas or spheres, each with a vista of heavens and a procession of Buddhas, to look after its salvation. Yet compared with the sum of being a sphere is an atom. Space is filled by aggregates of them, considered by some as groups of three, by others as clusters of a thousand. And secondly these world systems, with the living beings and plants in them, are regarded as growing and developing by natural processes, and, equally in virtue of natural processes, as decaying and disintegrating when the time comes. In the Aggañña-Sutta\(^3\) we have a curious account of the evolution of man which, though not the same as Darwin’s, shows the same idea of development or perhaps degeneration and differentiation. Human beings were originally immaterial, aerial and self-luminous, but as the world gradually assumed its present form they took to eating first of all a fragrant kind of earth and then plants with the result that their bodies became gross and differences of sex and colour were produced.

No sect of Hinduism personifies the powers of evil in one figure corresponding to Satan, or the Ahriman of Persia. In proportion as a nation thinks pantheistically it is disinclined to regard the world as being mainly a contest between good and evil. It is true there are innumerable demons and innumerable good spirits who withstand them. But just as there is no

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\(^1\) See a Tibetan representation in Waddell’s *Buddhism of Tibet*, p. 79.

\(^2\) The question of whether the universe is infinite in space or not is according to the Pitakas one of those problems which cannot be answered.

\(^3\) Dig. Nik. xxvii.
finality in the exploits of Rāma and Krishna, so Rāvana and other monsters do not attain to the dignity of the Devil. In a sense the destructive forces are evil, but when they destroy the world at the end of a Kalpa the result is not the triumph of evil. It is simply winter after autumn, leading to spring and another summer.

Buddhism having a stronger ethical bias than Hinduism was more conscious of the existence of a Tempter, or a power that makes men sin. This power is personified, but somewhat indistinctly, as Māra, originally and etymologically a god of death. He is commonly called Māra the Evil One, which corresponds to the Mrityuh pāpīnā of the Vedas, but as a personality he seems to have developed entirely within the Buddhist circle and to be unknown to general Indian mythology. In the thought of the Pitakas the connection between death and desire is clear. The great evils and great characteristics of the world are that everything in it decays and dies and that existence depends on desire. Therefore the ruler of the world may be represented as the god of desire and death. Buddha and his saints struggle with evil and overcome it by overcoming desire and this triumphant struggle is regarded as a duel with Māra, who is driven off and defeated.

Even in his most mythological aspects, Māra is not a deity of Hell. He presides over desire and temptation, not over judgment and punishment. This is the function of Yama, the god of the dead, and one of the Brahmanic deities who have migrated to the Far East. He has been adopted by Buddhism, though no explanation is given of his status. But he is introduced as a vague but effective figure—and yet hardly more than a metaphor— whenever it is desired to personify the inflexible powers that summon the living to the other world and there make them undergo, with awful accuracy, the retribution due

1 Māra pāpīnā. See especially Windisch, Māra and Buddha, 1895, and Sam. Nik. I. iv.
2 We sometimes hear of Máras in the plural. Like Brahmā he is sometimes a personality, sometimes the type of a class of gods. We also hear that he has obtained his present exalted though not virtuous post by his liberality in former births. Thus, like Sakka and other Buddhist Devas, Māra is really an office held by successive occupants. He is said to be worshipped by some Tibetan sects. It is possible that the legends about Māra and his daughters and about Krishna and the Gopis may have a common origin for Māra is called Kapha (the Prakrit equivalent of Krishna) in Sutta-Nipāta, 439.
for their deeds. In a remarkable passage\(^1\) called Death's Messengers, it is related that when a sinner dies he is led before King Yama who asks him if he never saw the three messengers of the gods sent as warnings to mortals, namely an old man, a sick man and a corpse. The sinner under judgment admits that he saw but did not reflect and Yama sentences him to punishment, until suffering commensurate to his sins has been inflicted.

Buddhism tells of many hells, of which Avīci is the most terrible. They are of course all temporary and therefore purgatories rather than places of eternal punishment, and the beings who inhabit them have the power of struggling upwards and acquiring merit\(^2\), but the task is difficult and one may be born repeatedly in hell. The phraseology of Buddhism calls existences in heavens and hells new births. To us it seems more natural to say that certain people are born again as men and that others go to heaven or hell. But the three destinies are really parallel\(^3\).

The desire to accommodate influential ideas, though they might be incompatible with the strict teaching of the Buddha, is well seen in the position accorded to spirits of the dead. The Buddha was untiring in his denunciation of every idea which implied that some kind of soul or double escapes from the body at death and continues to exist. But the belief in the existence of departed ancestors and the presentation of offerings to them have always formed a part of Hindu domestic religion. To gratify this persistent belief, Buddhism recognized the world of Petas, that is ghosts or spirits. Many varieties of these are described in later literature. Some are as thin as withered leaves and suffer from continual hunger, for their mouths are so small that they can take no solid food. According to strict theology, the Petas are a category of beings just above animals and certain forms of bad conduct entail birth among them. But in popular estimation, they are merely the spirits of the

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\(^1\) Ang. Nik. iii. 35.

\(^2\) This seems to be the correct doctrine, though it is hard to understand how the popular idea of continual torture is compatible with the performance of good deeds. The Kathā-vatthu, xiii. 2, states that a man in purgatory can do good. See too Ang. Nik. 1. 19.

\(^3\) But even the language of the Pitakas is not always quite correct on this point, for it represents evil-doers as falling down straight into hell.
dead who can receive nourishment and other benefits from the living. The veneration of the dead and the offering of sacrifices to or for them, which form a conspicuous feature in Far Eastern Buddhism, are often regarded as a perversion of the older faith, and so, indeed, they are. Yet in the Khuddaka-pāṭha¹, which if not a very early work is still part of the Sutta Pitaka, are found some curious and pathetic verses describing how the spirits of the departed wait by walls and crossways and at the doors, hoping to receive offerings of food. When they receive it their hearts are gladdened and they wish their relatives prosperity. As many streams fill the ocean, so does what is given here help the dead. Above all, gifts given to monks will redound to the good of the dead for a long time. This last point is totally opposed to the spirit of Gotama’s doctrine, but it contains the germ of the elaborate system of funeral masses which has assumed vast proportions in the Far East.

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What then is the position of the Buddha himself in this universe of many worlds and multitudinous deities? European writers sometimes fail to understand how the popular thought of India combines the human and superhuman: they divorce the two aspects and unduly emphasize one or the other. If they are impressed by the historical character of Gotama, they conclude that all legends with a supernatural tinge must be late and adventitious. If, on the other hand, they feel that the extent and importance of the legendary element entitles it to consideration, they minimize the historical kernel. But in India, reality and fancy, prosaic fact and extravagant imagination are found not as successive stages in the development of religious ideas, but simultaneously and side by side. Keshub Chunder Sen was a Babu of liberal views who probably looked as prosaic a product of the nineteenth century as any radical politician.

¹ Khud. Path. 7. In this poem, the word Peta (Sk. Preta) seems to be used as equivalent to departed spirits, not necessarily implying that they are undergoing punishment. In the Questions of Milinda (iv. 8. 29) the practice of making offerings on behalf of the dead is countenanced, and it is explained exactly what classes of dead profit by them. On the other hand the Kathā-vatthu states that the dead do not benefit by gifts given in this world, but two sects, the Rājagirika and Siddhātthika, are said by the commentary to hold the contrary view.
Yet his followers were said to regard him as a God, and whether this is a correct statement or not, it is certain that he was credited with superhuman power and received a homage which seemed even to Indians excessive\(^1\). It is in the light of such incidents and such temperaments that we should read the story of the Buddha. Could we be transported to India in the days of his preaching, we should probably see a figure very like the portrait given in the more sober parts of the Pitakas, a teacher of great intelligence and personal charm, yet distinctly human. But had we talked about him in the villages which lay along his route, or even in the circle of his disciples, I think we should have heard tales of how Devas visited him and how he was wont to vanish and betake himself to some heaven. The Hindu attributes such feats to a religious leader, as naturally as Europeans would ascribe to him a magnetic personality and a flashing eye.

The Pitakas emphasize the omniscience and sinlessness of the Buddha but contain no trace of the idea that he is God in the Christian or Mahommedan sense. They are consistently non-theistic and it is only later that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become transformed into beings about whom theistic language can be used. But in those parts of the Pitakas which may be reasonably supposed to contain the ideas of the first century after the Buddha's death, he is constantly represented as instructing Devas and receiving their homage\(^2\). In the Khuddaka-pâtha the spirits are invited to come and do him reverence. He is described as the Chief of the World with all its gods\(^3\), and is made to deny that he is a man. If a Buddha cannot be called a Deva rather than a man, it is only because he is higher than both. It is this train of thought which leads later Buddhists\(^4\) to call him Devâtideva, or the Deva who is above all other Devas, and thus make him ultimately a being comparable with Siva or Vishnu.

The idea that great teachers of mankind appear in a regular series and at stated intervals is certainly older than Gotama,

\(^1\) See Max Müller's *Ramakrishna*, p. 40, for another instance.

\(^2\) In a passage of the Mahâparinib. Sut. (III. 22) which is probably not very early the Buddha says that when he mixes with gods or men he takes the shape of his auditors, so that they do not know him.

\(^3\) *Sam. Nik.* ii. 3. 10. Sadevaka sa lokassa aggo.

\(^4\) *E.g.* in the Lotus Sutra.
but it is hard to say how far it was systematized before his time. The greatness of the position which he won and the importance of the institutions which he founded naturally caused his disciples to formulate the vague traditions about his predecessors. They were called indifferently Buddha, Jina, Arhat, etc., and it was only after the constitution of the Buddhist church that these titles received fixed meanings.

Closely connected with the idea of the Buddha or Jina is that of the Mahāpurusha or great man. It was supposed that there are born from time to time supermen distinguished by physical marks who become either universal monarchs (cakrawartin) or teachers of the truth. Such a prediction is said to have been made respecting the infant Gotama and all previous Buddhas. The marks are duly catalogued, as thirty-two greater and eighty\(^1\) smaller signs. Many of them are very curious. The hair is glossy black: the tongue is so long that it can lick the ears: the arms reach to the knees in an ordinary upright position: the skin has a golden tinge: there is a protuberance on the skull and a smaller one, like a ball, between the eyebrows. The long arms may be compared with the Persian title rendered in Latin by Longimanus\(^2\) and it is conceivable that the protuberances on the head may have been personal peculiarities of Gotama. For though the thirty-two marks are mentioned in the Pitakas as well-known signs establishing his claims to eminence, no description of them has been found in any pre-Buddhist work\(^3\), and they may have been modified to suit his personal appearance. At any rate it is clear that the early generations of Buddhists considered that the Master conformed to the type of the Mahāpurusha and attached importance to the fact\(^4\). The Pitakas repeatedly allude to the knowledge of

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\(^1\) One hundred and eight marks on the sole of each foot are also enumerated in later writings.


\(^3\) Though Brahmins are represented as experts in these marks, it seems likely that the idea of the Mahāpurusha was popular chiefly among the Kshatriyas, for in one form, at any rate, it teaches that a child of the warrior caste born with certain marks will become either a universal monarch or a great teacher of the truth. This notion must have been most distasteful to the priestly caste.

\(^4\) See Dig. Nik. 3. The Lakkhana Suttanta (Dug. Nik. 30) contains a discussion of the marks.
these marks as forming a part of Brahmanic training and in the account of the previous Buddha Vipassi they are duly enumerated. These ideas about a Great Man and his characteristics were probably current among the people at the time of the Buddha's birth. They do not harmonize completely with later definitions of a Buddha's nature, but they show how Gotama's contemporaries may have regarded his career.

In the older books of the Pitakas six Buddhas are mentioned as preceding Gotama, namely Vipassi, Sikhi, Vessabhû, Kakusandha, Konâgamana and Kassapa. The last three at least may have some historical character. The Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsiien, who visited India from 405 to 411 A.D., saw their reputed birthplaces and says that there still existed followers of Devadatta (apparently in Kosala) who recognized these three Buddhas but not Gotama. Asoka erected a monument in honour of Konâgamana in Nepal with a dedicatory inscription which has been preserved. In the Majjhima-Nikâya we find a story about Kakusandha and his disciples and Gotama once gave an extended account of Vipassi, whose teaching and career are represented as almost identical with his own. Different explanations have been given of this common element. There is clearly a wish to emphasize the continuity of the Dhamma and the similarity of its exponents in all ages. But are we to believe that the stories, true or romantic, originally told of Gotama were transferred to his mythical forerunners or that before his birth there was a Buddha legend to which the account of his career was accommodated? Probably both processes went on simultaneously. The notices of the Jain saints show that there must have been such legends and traditions independent of Gotama. To them we may refer things like the miracles attending birth. But the general outline of the Buddha's career, the departure from home, struggle for enlightenment and hesitation before preaching, seem to be a reminiscence of Gotama's actual life rather than an earlier legend.

There is an interesting discourse describing the wonders that attend the birth of a Buddha, such as that he passes from the Tusita heaven to his mother's womb; that she must die seven

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1 See Dik. Nig. 14, Mahâpadânasutta: Therag. 490; Sam. Nik. xii. 4–10.
2 Maj. Nik. 60, Mâratajjaniyasutta.
3 Dig. Nik. 14.
4 Maj. Nik. 123. See also Dig. Nik. 14.
days after his birth: that she stands when he is born: and so on. We may imagine that the death of the mother is due to the historical fact that Gotama's mother did so die, while the other circumstances are embellishments of the old Buddha and Mahāpurusha legend. But the construction of this sūtra is curious. The monks in the Jetavana are talking of the wondrous powers possessed by Buddhas. Gotama enters and asks what is the subject of their discourse. They tell him and he bids Ānanda describe more fully the wondrous attributes of a Buddha. Ānanda gives a long list of marvels and at the end Gotama observes, "Take note of this too as one of the wondrous attributes of a Buddha, that he has his feelings, perceptions and thoughts under complete control."

No passage has yet been adduced from the sūtas mentioning more than seven Buddhas but later books, such as the Buddha-vamsa and the introduction to the Jātaka, describe twenty-five. There are twenty-four Jain Tirthankaras and according to some accounts twenty-four incarnations of Vishnu. Probably all these lists are based on some calculation as to the proper allowance of saints for an aeon. The biographies of these Buddhas are brief and monotonous. For each sage they record the number of his followers, the name of his city, parents, and chief disciples, the tree under which he attained enlightenment, his height and his age, both in extravagant figures. They also record how each met Gotama in one of his previous births and prophesied his future glory. The object of these biographies is less to give information about previous Buddhas than to trace the career of Gotama as a Bodhisattva. This career began in the time of Dipankara, the first of the twenty-five Buddhas, incalculable ages ago, when Gotama was a hermit called Sumedha. Seeing that the road over which Dipankara had to pass was dirty, he threw himself down in the mire in order that the Buddha might tread on him and not soil his feet. At the same time he made a resolution to become a Buddha and received from Dipankara the assurance that ages afterwards his

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1 More literally that he knows exactly how his feelings, etc., arise, continue and pass away and is not swayed by wandering thoughts and desires.

2 Three extra Buddhas are sometimes mentioned but are usually ignored because they did not, like the others, come into contact with Gotama in his previous births.
wish would be fulfilled. This incident, called prāṇidhāna or the vow to become a Buddha, is frequently represented in the frescoes found in Central Asia.

The history of this career is given in the introduction to the Jātaka and in the late Pali work called the Cariyā-piṭaka, but the suttas make little reference to the topic. They refer incidentally to Gotama’s previous births\(^1\) but their interest clearly centres in his last existence. They not infrequently use the word Bodhisattva to describe the youthful Gotama or some other Buddha before the attainment of Buddhahood, but in later literature it commonly designates a being now existing who will be a Buddha in the future. In the older phase of Buddhism attention is concentrated on a human figure which fills the stage, but before the canon closes we are conscious of a change which paves the way for the Mahāyāna. Our sympathetic respect is invited not only for Gotama the Buddha, but for the struggling Bodhisattva who, battling towards the goal with incredible endurance and self-sacrifice through lives innumerable, at last became Gotama.

It is only natural that the line of Buddhas should extend after as well as before Gotama. In the Pitakas there are allusions to such a posterior series, as when for instance we hear\(^2\) that all Buddhas past and to come have had and will have attendants like Ānanda, but Metteya the Buddha of the future has not yet become an important figure. He is just mentioned in the Dīgha Nikāya and Buddha-Vaṃsa and the Milinda Pañha quotes an utterance of Gotama to the effect that “He will be the leader of thousands as I am of hundreds,” but the quotation has not been identified.

The Buddhas enumerated are supreme Buddhas (Sammā-sam-buddha) but there is another order called Pacceka (Sanskrit Pratyeka) or private Buddhas. Both classes attain by their own exertions to a knowledge of the four truths but the Pacceka Buddhas are not, like the supreme Buddhas, teachers of mankind and omniscient\(^3\). Their knowledge is confined to what is necessary for their own salvation and perfection. They are

\(^1\) E.g. Ang. Nik. iii. 15 and the Mahā-Sudassana Sutta (Dig. Nik. x.) in which the Buddha says he has been buried at Kusināra no less than six times.

\(^2\) Dig. Nik. xvi. v. 15.

\(^3\) The two kinds of Buddhas are defined in the Puggala-Paññatti, ix. 1. For details about Pratyeka-Buddhas see De La Vallée Poussin’s article in *F.R.E.*
mentioned in the Nikāyas as worthy of all respect\(^1\) but are not prominent in either the earlier or later works, which is only natural, seeing that by their very definition they are self-centred and of little importance for mankind. The idea of the private Buddha however is interesting, inasmuch as it implies that even when the four truths are not preached they still exist and can be discovered by anyone who makes the necessary mental and moral effort. It is also noticeable that the superiority of a supreme Buddha lie in his power to teach and help others. A passionless and self-centred sage falls short of the ideal.

\(^1\) Thus in Dig. Nik. xvi. 5. 12 they are declared worthy of a Dāgaba or funeral monument and Sam. Nik. iii. 2. 10 declares the efficacy of alms given to them.
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