

The Person in Buddhism

Freeing the body, liberating the mind: a psychosocial investigation
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1 Three modes of beings

1.1 THE THREE TRAININGS. In the essay on “The body in Buddhism” (SD 26.9a), we discuss the early Buddhist attitude to *the human body*, mostly in spiritual terms, that is, as reflected in the early Buddhist teachings for the purpose of personal development. Here, we will examine “the person in Buddhism,” where we will investigate and reflect on how early Buddhism views the conscious body, especially as a component of society.

We begin our discussion, as we have done in “The body in Buddhism,” with the model of the three trainings (*ti, sikkhā*),¹ that is, training in moral virtue, in mental concentration, and insight wisdom. Traditionally, early Buddhism sees these three trainings as follows:

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| (1) the training in moral virtue | <i>sīla, sikkhā</i> | restraint of body and speech; |
| (2) the training in concentration | <i>samādhi, sikkhā</i> | cultivation of the mind; and |
| (3) the training in wisdom | <i>paññā, sikkhā</i> | the removal of wrong views. |

1.2 THE THREE KINDS OF PERSONS. Here, our discussion will examine this teaching in a more contemporary manner, as “the three modes of being,” as follows:

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) the training in moral virtue | <i>kalyāna puthujjana</i> | the social or forensic being; |
| (2) the training in concentration | <i>sappurisa</i> | the spiritual person; |
| (3) the training in wisdom | <i>ariya, puggala</i> | the true individual. |

This discussion is especially important for our understanding of common, even global, justice. Any thinking person would be aware that *person* is a term of vital concern:

The term itself is important because the strongest claim to legitimacy for contemporary human rights movements derives from certain texts: the charter, covenants, and conventions of the United Nations. In its charter of 1945, the UN declared one of its founding purposes to be “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person.” Three years later, the UN’s historic Universal Declaration of Human Rights identified “the dignity and worth of the human person” as the foundation of universal human rights.

(William Pietz, “Person,” 2005: 189)

1.3 PERSONHOOD AND INDIVIDUALITY. By way of terminology, I am inclined to use the term *atta, bhāva* (literally “selfhood”) as referring to “**personhood**,” that is, our conscious “self” (body and mind), especially in relation to the group or society [2, 4]. I think, too, that the word *puggala* best describes the idea of “person” as discussed here. On a deeper or emotional level—how we cultivate emotions (negative or positive), how they affect us, and how we deal with them—our **personality** refers to our “mental being,” that is, the kind of rebirth realm or “personality” that habitually predominates how we think and act [3, 6].

In the suttas, we find the term *purisa, puggala* referring to saintly individuals, that is, those who are on the path to awakening (streamwinners, once-returners and non-returners) and the awakened (arhats). We can use the neologism **purisa, puggalikatā*, to describe this **individuality**, a term I used broadly to apply to a healthy “**individual**,” whether they are saints or not. However, there is an important difference to note here: while the *individuality* of a worldly (unawakened person) is “dynamic,” changing and situational, that of the saint is more stable and wholesome [5].

Hence, it is also meaningful to speak of them as “true individuals” (*sappurisa*). The purpose of Buddhist training, then, is to make true individuals of ourselves by emulating the “regular” true individuals, the saints, or on a highly level, to attain these saintly states ourselves [7]. On a simple level, we can define a “true individual” as one who is emotionally independent and is able to wholesomely inspire others to such a state by his personality (here meaning both his body and mind) [8].

¹ **The body in Buddhism** = SD 26.9a (1.4).

2 What is a “person”

2.1 LOCKE’S PERSON. In writing this essay, I am much inspired by **William Pietz’s** learned and useful essay on “Person,” in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism* (ed Donald S Lopez, Jr, 2005: 188-210). Pietz has given us an insightful analysis of a *person* as “the bearers of moral duties and human rights” (2005: 190). While I see this contribution as invaluable, my interest lies more in the *spiritual* dimensions of a person, as envisioned in early Buddhism.

In the discussion of what constitutes a person, we need to understand first of all that there has never been a unified definition of person. How someone is declared a *person*, giving him or her moral authority and legal rights, often rests in on how people view reality.² Even during the English Enlightenment period, for example, philosopher John Locke gives a rather narrow definition of person, stating that

Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another may say is the same person. It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of law, and happiness, and misery.

(John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, [1690: 2.27.28], 1959: 467)

Locke characterizes *person* as an essentially “forensic” term. **Forensics**, taken in its most general sense, notes Pietz, refers to any socially sanctioned form of reasoning that “translates” a culture’s understanding of causality—that is, of how reality works, how events and actions are made to occur—into its language of moral consequence and personal responsibility³ (Pietz 2000).

2.2 BUDDHIST FORENSICS. A person is sometimes defined as the subject of morally accountable actions within a justice system.⁴ This is done by assigning (Locke’s “appropriating”) the responsibility for consequential actions (“actions and their merit”) to agents called persons. From this, Locke concludes, “so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of law, and happiness, and misery” (1959: 467). Pietz rebuts,

But is it intelligence, the capacity for happiness and suffering, or the capacity for living under the rule of law that is the decisive factor? Or, as Locke perhaps thought, do all these necessarily go together? Ethnographic and historical studies show us that different cultures and institutions have very different ways of conceiving these notions. What is meant by the term *person* depends on prevailing conceptions of mind (or agency), happiness, suffering, and justice and the causal relationships that exist among these.

(Pietz 2005:190)

A Buddhist notion of the person, as such, must be studied in the context of “Buddhist forensics,” an idea of which has been laid out earlier, in my essay on “The Body in Buddhism” (SD 29.6a). We need to examine the person in the context of such Buddhist teachings as those on the body-mind, the five aggregates, dependent arising, karma and rebirth, non-self, the noble eightfold path and liberation.

3 The embodied “person”

3.1 AN EMBODIED BEING. Pietz first discusses *person* as a common word.⁵ Here, Pietz points out that, in contrast to such terms as *subject self*, and *soul*, the English word *person* and its cognates in other languages “convey the idea of a human as an essentially embodied being” (2005: 192). Furthermore, Pietz adds, in contrast to the word individual, *person* conveys the idea of a human being’s social identity and

² Rorty 1999: 69 f; Sen 1999: 227-248; Goldring 2003: 23; Pietz 2005: 190.

³ The Merriam-Webster 3rd New International Dictionary defines *forensic* (adj) as: (1) belonging to courts of judicature or to public discussion and debate; (2) used in legal proceedings or in public discussions. *Forensics* (n) is the art or study of argumentative discourse.

⁴ On the issue of the personhood or non-personhood of a human foetus, see eg Schroedel 2000.

⁵ Pietz discusses *person* from these 5 angles: as a common word, as a general category, as a doctrinal term, as a social fact, and as a contemporary idea (2005: 191). I have generally followed this structure.

existence within a collective order. While the word man (in a generic sense), refers to our membership in humankind or in the biological species, *homo sapiens*, person suggests *an individual's concrete bodily presence*. Indeed it is this idea of a physical being that

places us in the direct presence of others, thereby making possible our most meaningful interactions with others, thereby making possible our most meaningful interactions of “personal” intimacy, but that also renders us vulnerable to moral injury and to such punitive practices as incarceration, whipping, and execution by which we may be subjected to the police powers of the state.

(Pietz 2005: 192)

Yet, he cautions, the embodied person is not merely a physical body, viewed apart from perception, intentionality, and whatever else that make up a living being. A corpse, for example, is a body; it was a person, but no longer is:

Perhaps most important, the term *person* expresses our concrete embodiment as itself a moral condition. The agent of moral action is not the body but the embodied person. (Pietz 2005: 192)

3.2 A CONSCIOUS BODY. What do the early Buddhists mean by *person*? It is difficult to answer this question merely from philology. There is no cognate of the word *person* in the languages of the Buddha's time as preserved in the ancient Pali and Sanskrit texts. However, we do have a range of possible words for denoting the human individual (with the Sanskrit given with parentheses): *puggala* (*pudgala*), *purisa* (*puruṣa*), *puṭhujjana* (*prthagjana*), *satta* (*sattva*), *manu*, *jīva*, *atta* (*ātman*).

Translators have, depending on the word's context and their understanding of the intended meaning, often rendered all these words into English as “person.” But the consensus amongst scholars is that ***puggala*** (Skt *pudgala*) is by far the closest in meaning to the English word *person*. Sometimes, ***purisa*** (Skt *puruṣa*) is used for *person*, but more often it is translated as “man” or “male” as opposed to *itthi* (Skt *strī*), “woman, female.” However, the compound *purisa,puggala* (Skt *puruṣa,pudgala*) is interesting, as it is neutral in gender, often translated as “individual,” and used to refer to the saints.⁶ The term “noble saint” (*ariya,puggala*; Skt *ārya,pudgala*) is also common in the later works.⁷

All such word and terms, insofar as they are acceptable in early Buddhist usage, are understood in an *ontological* manner, as beings. More technically, they are each always taken as a body “with consciousness” (*sa,viññāṇaka,kāya*),⁸ which has been discussed in my essay, “The body in Buddhism.”⁹

This common but important term, “the conscious body” (*sa,viññāṇaka,kāya*), means that the person, as understood in early Buddhism, is comprised of **the five aggregates**: form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. The *physical* aspect of the person is material form (*rūpa*). Feeling (*vedanā*) is the *hedonic* tone of bodily sensations (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral). Perception (*saññā*) is what *recognizes* (apperceives) those feelings. Formations (*saṅkhāra*) constitute the *moral* tone, determined by whether we colour such experiences in a negative way (with greed, hate or delusion) or in a positive manner (with non-greed, non-hate, or non-delusion). All this occurs on the platform of consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which is both a cognitive sensor as well as an existential subject.¹⁰

The common Buddhist usage of the words *person* and *individual* have a common idea of a living being, embodying both a physical as well as a social condition. However, compounds such as *purisa,pugga-*

⁶ As in *yad idaṃ cattāri purisa,yugāni | aṭṭha,purisa,puggalā*, “these are the four pairs of persons, the eight individuals” (S 11.3.15/1:220) = SD 15.5.

⁷ V 5:117;Pug 11, 14; Pm 1:167; UA 20, 164, 178.

⁸ M 3:18, 32, 36; S 2:252 f, 3:80 f, 103, 136 f, 169 f; A 1:132-134, 4:53. The term invariably appears as *sa,viññāṇaka,kāya* in Comys (MA 4:94, 104; SA 2:214). See esp SD 29.6a (3.1). On form, see ***Rūpa*** = SD 17.2a.

⁹ SD 29.6a (3.1).

¹⁰ For a discussion, see **The Body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (3.1). On the cognitive and existential aspects of consciousness, see ***Viññāṇa*** = SD 17.8a (6); **Mine: The nature of craving** = SD 19.3 (4.2); **Self & Selves** = SD 26.9 (1.5.2).

la and *ariya.puggala* denote higher level of beings, spiritual individual, who are beyond the social context. They have been discussed elsewhere,¹¹ and to keep our discussion focussed, we will leave it at that.

4 The socially constructed person

4.1 THE SOCIALLY-CONSTRUCTED BUDDHA. The Sutta Vibhaṅga of the Vinaya (Pār 1.1.2), which deals with the rules of the Pāṭimokkha (the monastic code) in detail,¹² opens with a story of a “brahmin of Verāñjā” who visits the Buddha and complains that the Buddha goes against social decorum in neither greeting elderly brahmins, nor standing up before them, nor inviting them to sit. The Buddha’s reply is quite surprising:

Brahmin, I see no one in the world with its devas, Māras and Brahmās, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its princes and people, whom I should greet, or rise up for, or to whom I should offer a seat.

For, brahmin, whom a Tathagata were to greet, or to rise up for, or to offer a seat to, his head would split apart.¹³ (Pār 1.1.2 = V 3:1 f)

The almost disdainful tone of the reply put into the Buddha’s mouth is simply uncharacteristic of him. This is especially problematic when we have the testimony of other prominent brahmins such as Kūṭa,-danta and Soṇa,daṇḍa, both of whom declare that “the recluse Gotama is one who bids all welcome, congenial, courteous, never frowning, approachable, the first to greet others [the first to speak].”¹⁴ Furthermore, it is very likely that Sutta Vibhaṅga, or at least the opening narrative, is a late composition.¹⁵

What is of interest, however, is why such a story of the Buddha is recorded at all. Pietz, quoting the sociologist Max Weber, explains,

The Buddha’s subsequent explanation of who he is that he does not rise in acknowledgement of a social superior is the discourse of a cultural revolution, a radical revaluation of social identities that is anything but the “asocial,” “specifically unpolitical and anti-political status religion” in which “salvation is a solely personal act of the single individual” discerned by Weber [*The Religion of India*] (1958: 206). (Pietz 2005: 194)

This is as far as an academic explanation goes. A more Buddhist explanation might be that the compilers of the Vinaya, without the *living* Buddha as the supreme authority to uphold monastic discipline, resurrected the *dead* Buddha, canonized him with charisma, the Vinaya experts became heirs to that charisma, and so that the ritualistic and external Vinaya was respected.¹⁶

4.2 HOW DOES THE BUDDHA LOOK LIKE?

4.2.1 Seeing the Buddha. The Buddha is a unique being to the Buddhists, but does he look any different from other monks of his time? Internal evidence of the Suttas show that *he looks just like any other monk* to the extent that newcomers have difficulty in recognizing him! **The Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 140), for example, records how the ex-rajah of Takkasilā, Pukkusāti, meets the Buddha in a potter’s shed, but does not recognize the teacher under whom he has renounced the world!

¹¹ See **Kiṭṭa,giri S** (M 70) = SD 11.1 Intro (5); **Laymen Saints** = SD 8.6 (12).

¹² See Otto von Hinuber, *A Handbook of Pqli Literature*, §§22-27.

¹³ *Muddhāpi tassa vipateyya*, as at **Verāñja S** (A 8.11.6/4:173). On head-shattering, see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3) = SD 21.3 Intro (4).

¹⁴ **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5.7a(18)/1:132) = SD 22.8; **Soṇa,daṇḍa S** (D 4.6/1:116) = SD 30.5.

¹⁵ See KR Norman, *Pali Literature*, 1983: 18-22.

¹⁶ On how such charisma attribution led to the Buddhist notion of universal kingship, see W Pietz 2005:194 f.

“Bhikshu, on whose account have you gone forth? Who is your teacher? Whose teaching do you profess?”¹⁷

“There is, avuso, the recluse Gotama, a Sakya son, gone forth from the Sakya clan...

It is to that Blessed One that I have gone for refuge. It is that Blessed One who is my teacher. It the teaching of that Blessed One that I profess.”

“**And, bhikshu, have you seen that Blessed One before? And if you were to meet him, would you recognize him?**”

“No, indeed, avuso, I have not seen the Blessed One before. And if I were to meet him, I would not recognize him.” (M 140.5/3:238 f) = SD 4.17

Mid-way through the Buddha’s instruction, Pukkusāti becomes a non-returner, and then realizes that it is the Buddha himself who is teaching him. At the end of the teaching, he apologizes to the Buddha, and acknowledges him as his teacher.

Another famous account which show that the Buddha looks just like any other monk is found in **the Samañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), which records how the rajah Ajāta,sattu, accompanied by Jīvaka the doctor, upon arriving before the assembly with the Buddha sitting at its head, is unable to recognize the Buddha:

“Where, dear Jīvaka, is the Blessed One?”

“That is the Blessed One, maharajah. That is the Blessed One, maharajah, sitting against the middle pillar, facing the east, before the community of monks.” (D 2.11/1:50) = SD 8.10

Ajāta,sattu, who has not seen the Buddha for many years, understandably could not recognize him, especially in an assembly of 1250 monks who were shaven-headed and wore the same simple ragrobes.¹⁸

4.2.2 The patched rag-robes. The Cīvara Sutta (S 16.11) recounts how the Buddha exchanged his “worn-out hempen dust-heap-robe [rag-robe]” (*sāṇa paṃsukūla nibbasana*) for Mahā Kassapa’s “patch-cloak outer robe” (*paṭa,pilotika saṅghāṭī*).¹⁹ The Saṃyutta Commentary relates how the Buddha, on this first meeting with Mahā Kassapa, thinks, “I will make this monk a forest dweller, a rag-robe wearer and a one-meal eater from his very birth (as a monk).” After Mahā Kassapa has used his own patched cloak as a spread for the Buddha to sit on, the Buddha remarks that it is very soft, and at once Mahā Kassapa presents it to him. In exchange, the Buddha gives him his own rag-robe (SA 1:199).²⁰

The rag-robes are again mentioned in **the Anagata,bhaya Sutta 4** (A 5.80), warning of materialism that would weaken the monastic community and the teaching:

Bhikshus, on the long road to the future, there will be monks who, longing for fine robes, on account of which they will forsake rag-robes and leave the forest and solitary dwelling, and move into urban areas and metropolises, and commit numerous improper and unseemly deeds for the sake of robes.

Bhikshus, be fully awake against these things, and so should you strive to get rid of them. (A 5.80/3:108-110; cf S 2:195 f; Miln 401)

This prophetic discourse speaks similarly in terms of “longing for fine almsfood...for comfortable dwelling quarters,” and that some monks would socialize “with nuns, probationers and female novices” so that they commit foul deeds and give up their training, or socialize (have relationships) “with monastic residents and novices, will enjoy their various hoarded goods, and mark out their lands and crops” (id).

¹⁷ Comy says that the Buddha knew who Pukkusāti was, but said these words merely to start a conversation. (MA 5:49)

¹⁸ For details on Ajāta,sattu’s inability to recognize the Buddha, see SD 8.10 Intro (5).

¹⁹ S 16.11/2:221 = SD 47.16.

²⁰ See **Piya Tan**, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 6:16. On how this episode was used as a tool for legitimizing Chan lineages, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.5 (5.2.2.2).

These are warning against forgetting the potential of the human body as a vehicle for awakening. In backsliding, such monastics sink back into the rut of the very extreme of self-indulgence which the Buddha speaks against in the very first discourse.²¹ When a monastic fails to understand the weaknesses and strengths of his own body, he easily falls into a self-denial of habitual and ever-greater wrong-doings.

4.3 THE MONASTIC PERSON

4.3.1 Early monastic community. Not only do the early monks (including the Buddha) wear rag-robes, they are also wanderers who live nine months of peripatetic life of Dharma teaching and meditation, and observe three months of rains retreat (*vass'āvāsa*) in one place as a community.²² Such retreats, like the sojourns they make during the rest of the year, are generally of two kinds:

- (1) the “residence” (*āvāsa*) in the forested countryside, usually built and maintained by the monks themselves;
- (2) the “park” (*ārāma*), in or near a village or town, situated within its own private enclosure and looked after by the donor or lay supporters.²³

The early Buddhist monastics observe the rains-retreat not only because of the heavy rains (which severely hamper travel), and to avoid damaging crops and harming small life-forms,²⁴ but also to commune with fellow monastics and also instruct the laity and accept alms offerings. At the same time, the monastics must ensure that their lives are not overwhelmed or distracted by the laity in any way.

To this effect, the rule regarding monastic boundary (*sīmā*) is introduced.²⁵ This boundary is originally meant to preserve the monastic life, that is, it is apart from the world. It is not meant to be any kind of monastic real estate,²⁶ or a separation of church from state. Indeed, the Buddha has promulgated, “I allow you, bhikshus, to obey the rajah,” meaning, in essence, that monastics should uphold the law.²⁷ The boundary, as such, is to provide an ideal ambience for the monastic to keep up their practice, away from the world.

After the Buddha’s death, the wandering forest tradition of eremites continues, but is soon overshadowed by the settling of monastics or cœnobites into organized and settled monasteries (cœnobia). This was a gradual process which was accomplished perhaps as early as the 4th century BCE,²⁸ and reached their height of prosperity and unity during the Maurya (322-185 BCE) and Śuṅga periods (185-175 BCE).²⁹ The Vinaya Piṭaka, as we know it today, is a record of such an organized monastic system.

4.3.2 Monastic dressing. While the Buddha live, the early monastics live “socially deconstructed” lives as world renunciants, leading simple wandering lives, staying in a fixed locality as a community only for three months of the rains. They own no personal property at all and do not store the gifts they receive.³⁰

²¹ **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (S 56.11.2-3/5:421) = SD 1.1.

²² The rains retreat begins on Āsāḷha full-moon day, lasting for 3 lunar months (Mv 3.1.1-3 = V 1:137).

²³ See S Dutt 1962: 54-57 for details.

²⁴ Mv 3.1.3 = V 1:137.

²⁵ Mv 2.6.2 = V 1:106.

²⁶ Monastic are now allowed to own land: “He [the monastic] abstains from accepting fields and lands” (**Sāmañ-ña,phala S**, D 2.45(15)/1:64) = SD 8.10. This rule is found in the “Moralities” (*sīla*) repeated throughout the first 13 Dīgha suttas. Whatever donations of land that accepted it done in terms of a “monastic body,” is, it is the common property of the monastics “of the four quarters” (*catu-d,disa*). See Brahmavamso, “Vinaya: Ownership and administration of monasteries,” http://www.vimutti.org.nz/downloads/VINAYA_articles.pdf.

²⁷ Mv 3.4.3 = V 1:139.

²⁸ The scanty references that the ancient Greeks made to “shamans” (Buddhist monks) make no mention of any settled community, but only as homeless ascetics. Only in Bardesanes (2nd cent CE) we have the report that “they have houses and temples of a royal foundation and in them stewards who receive from the king a certain allowance of food” (McCrinkle, *Ancient India: Its invasion by Alexander the Great*, 1893: 169. See S Dutt 1924: 97; 1962: 57.

²⁹ See Luis O Gómez, “Buddhism in India” in *Ency of Religion*,_NY: Macmillan, 1987: 357.

³⁰ There is a famous conversation between Ānanda and the rajah Udena on how robes are recycled: Cv 11.1.13-14 = V 2:290 f; DhA 2.1/1:218-220; J 157/2:23 f = SD 37.14.

After the Buddha's death, a new type of monastic arose alongside the wandering ascetics. These new monastics are more settled, owned property and, as such, had to organize themselves economically, and had more direct dealings with the world. They had returned to socially-constructed lives, but their bodies still looked like monastics. They were the ancestors of the moneyed monastics we see today.

Like any socially constructed person, such monastics are better dressed than their wandering predecessors. How we dress reflects our role, work, wealth, and status in society. Where some level of power or control is desired, the persons are dressed in a uniformed manner to denote duties, rank, and power: a good example is the army; another example is the clergy.

Gone were the rag-ropes. Their robes stylized the motley rag shapes into neatly arranged patches looking like the "rice-fields of Magadha" (V 1:287). As Buddhism spread all over Asia, new and elaborate robe designs emerged. This came to a point where there were fashion shows of such robes by Shanghai Jade Buddha Temple³¹ and the "Tokyo Bouz Collection" of the Tsukiji Honganji priests.³²

Are such monastic robes uniforms? If we take a careful look at the way the monks dress themselves today, we can identify them as Theravāda, Mahayāna or Vajrayāna, which sect they belong to, even which country they come from, or whether they are monks or novices. As such, we can definitely say they are wearing uniforms to differentiate themselves.

What about in the Buddha's time: did the early monks wear uniform robes? The robes looked alike, but they were not uniform, until perhaps late in the Ministry, but more likely after the Buddha's death. In the early years of the Ministry, the Buddhist monastic robes were very rough and simple "robes" (*cīvara*) made from discarded pieces of cloth taken from the refuse heap or the charnel ground (that is, shrouds). They are known as "rag-robes" (*paṃsukūla, cīvara*), and the full defining passage (attributed to the Buddha) says:

I allow you, monks, when you are ordaining, to explain the four resources (*nissaya*), thus:

- (1) That going-forth is dependent on scrap-meals (*piṇḍiya, lopa bhojana*).
In this regard, effort is to be made by four as long as life lasts...
- (2) That going-forth is dependent on rag-robes (*paṃsukūla cīvara*).
In this regard, effort is to be made by four as long as life lasts...
- (3) That going-forth is dependent on a tree-root as dwelling-place (*rukkha, mūla sen'āsana*).
In this regard, effort is to be made by four as long as life lasts...
- (4) That going-forth is dependent on fermented cow's urine as medicine (*pūti, mutta bhesajja*).
In this regard, effort is to be made by four as long as life lasts... (Mv 1.30.4 = V 1:58)

The formula also mentions exceptions to these practices, but only as "extra (allowable) gains" (*atireka, lābha*).³³

As these robe-patches were odd pieces of plain and coloured cloth taken from the refuse heaps or the cemeteries or collected from the wayside, to give them a neater look, they were dyed (*kāsāya* or *kāsāva*) by being boiled in water with roots, stem, bark, leaves, flowers or fruits (V 1:286). There was a time when certain monks wore uncut cloth (like layman dress) and were criticized by some people. A Vinaya rule says that a monastic robe must be made of cut cloth (V 1:287). In using their robes, the monastics must remind themselves constantly, thus:

"Wisely reflecting, he uses the robe, | only for protection from the cold, | for protection from the heat | for protection against the touch of mosquitoes, flies, the wind, the sun, reptiles, | for the purpose of covering private parts."³⁴

³¹ The Temple's orchestra gave a cultural performance at the Victoria Theatre, Singapore, with a show of various ceremonial and daily robes as an "Auspicious Ode to the Jade Buddha" (*Straits Times*, 24 Nov 2007).

³² They are actually non-celibate lay priests of the Jodo Shinshu or Pure Land School school, founded by Shinran (1173-1263), in Japan: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/10/religion.japan>.

³³ See **Anubuddha S** (S 47.3) = SD 24.6a (2.3.1(2)).

4.3.3 Two types of false monastic. The monastic robes, as such, are not a mark of status or power, but a symbol of renunciation and reminder of the purpose of the spiritual life. However, in a settled and propertied monastic system, the robe covers the monastic body in a manner as to reveal the body's status.³⁵ Holiness is no more *within* the body or *in* the body's actions (that is, the person's actions), but externalized or hypostatized into the robe, which effectively becomes a fetish.³⁶

Holiness is no more what a person *is* but what a person *has*. When holiness becomes a fetish, we need not earn it, as it were; we only need to wear it, that is, make an appearance. Holiness as a fetish, as such, can be bought and sold,³⁷ even tailored to our needs, or removed to reveal our nakedness for all the wrong purposes and reasons. Above all, the robe as a fetish is an excellent *disguise*.

The robe represents holiness and spiritual power for the pious and the gullible. As a fetish, it can be worn by anyone to attract wealth, power, pleasure, in fact, whatever we desire. Those who disguise themselves for such false and evil purpose would be regarded as "false monks" or "sham recluse."³⁸ This problem of falsity is more complicated than it appears,

During the years 2007 and 2009, the newspapers of Singapore and Malaysia often reported on "false monks and nuns" masquerading in robes to collect donation from unsuspecting and gullible people.³⁹ Since these disguised conmen are not monastics in the first place, they are actually *false* "false monastics." They have been inspired by the examples of the *real* "false monastics" who have all the things that lay people have and enjoy, and much more. Except for the bona fide forest monks, it is extremely rare today to meet a "poor" monk, especially those who do not handle money.

Monastics today live in comfortable palatial mansions called "temples," "viharas," and "pagodas," complete with all the comforts of a modern home and much more. They drive around in their own cars, have large bank accounts, own property, lead expensive and quirky leisurely lives, and even have clandestine affairs and families. They have truly misplaced their almsbowl.

Fetish believers are the easy victims of such disguised monastics and religious conmen. When we externalize holiness and liberation, we are likely to look for them in external things and people. As Buddhists, we are constantly reminded that the body is the temple of wisdom and the door to spiritual freedom; that is, if we look within and understand how the mind-heart works.

4.4 HOW DOES THE BUDDHA LOOK LIKE?

4.4.1 The Buddha as an image. Another famous Buddhist fetish is the Buddha image. Of course, the Buddha image did not start off that way, and need not be regarded as a fetish. Any thinking or informed Buddhist would know that the Buddha image reminds us of a great teacher to whom we bow in respect, as we would before the statue of, say, a great national hero or a revered ancestor. The seated Buddha image is, in fact, a good model of how to properly sit in meditation.

³⁴ M 2.13-17/1:10 = SD 30.3. On the proper use of requisites, see Bodhi (tr), *The Discourse on the Fruits of Recluseship*, 1989: 134-138.

³⁵ **The Deva,datta Vatthu** (DhA 1.7) relates how Devadatta "unbecomingly" wears a perfumed robe worth a 100,000 pieces of money, a robe that suits Sāriputta (the chief disciple just below the Buddha) better (DhA 1.7/1:77-88). The first problem is the cost of the robe, and secondly the robe seems to represent status.

³⁶ The word fetish goes back to the Latin *facticius*, "artificial" and *facere*, "to make." It is an object believed to have supernatural powers, or in particular, a man-made object that has power over others. Essentially, fetishism is the attribution of inherent value or powers to an object.

³⁷ For a classic example, there was the sale of ordination certificates: see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (2.3.6), (4.3.3.5-7), (5.1.3.2).

³⁸ *Samaṇa,kuttaka*, lit "one (merely) dressed as an ascetic (*samaṇa,vesa,dhāraka*)," it is said that merely by shaving his head, putting on a single robe over one shoulder, he is dependent on the monastery (*vihāra*), living as a scrap-eater (*so kira sikhā,mattam ṭhapetvā sīsam muṇḍetvā ekam kāsāvaṃ nivāsetvā ekam amse katvā vihāram yeva upanissāya vighās'āda,bhāvena jīvati*, VA 399). See **The Body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (2.5.1).

³⁹ *Sunday Times* (Singapore), 8 July 2007 (special feature). 9 July 2007; *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), 23 Oct 2007: <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=56,5245,0,0,1,0>; *New Straits Times* 4 June 2009: <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=56,8229,0,0,1,0>.

The reality, however, is that many, especially the pious and superstitious, are likely to regard Buddha images and related iconography as *fetishes* [4.3.3], so that in Thailand, for example, Buddha images and talismans have turned into a thriving industry and Buddhist iconography has taken a life of its own.

Neither the early texts nor early commentaries make any reference to the Buddha image. The reason for this is important and clear: early Buddhism does not externalize holiness. What is sacred is always *internalized*, reflected in the mind so that we attain joy, serving as a basis for mental focus.⁴⁰

As the main Buddhist practice—meditation—is done with closed eyes (closing the eyes to see beyond the physical eyes, as it were), there is no need for images of the Buddha, especially when he is still alive.

4.4.2 Origins of the Buddha image. So how did the Buddha image arise? One very likely source of the ancient Buddha image is the Græco-Bactrian kingdom (250 BCE-130 BCE), located in modern-day Afghanistan, from which Hellenistic culture diffused into the Indian subcontinent with the establishment of the Indo-Greek kingdom (180 BCE -10 BCE).

Under the Indo-Greeks, and then the Kushans, the interaction of Greek and Buddhist culture flourished in the area of Gandhara (today's northern Pakistan), before spreading into India, influencing the art of Mathura, and then the art of the Gupta empire, which was to extend to the rest of South-East Asia. Græco-Buddhist art influences spread northward into Central Asia, shaping the art of the Tarim Basin, and then the art of East Asia.

Greek influences on Indian Buddhist art and Buddhist art in general are seen in the wavy hair, symmetrical angelic face, the gentle flowing pleated robes and Apollo-like statue. The Mathura school of Indian Buddhist art, on the other hand, produced a similar Buddha image but with a shaven head (more true to reality, but with less aesthetic appeal). The image failed to catch on, and its head was soon covered with a full crop of hair whorls, reflecting one of the lesser marks of the superman.⁴¹

When a wise Buddhist bows before a Buddha image, he recollects the Buddha's virtues that would help him collect and calm his mind. Buddha images and Buddhist images should not be treated as fetishes. They have no power of their own, except for what we attribute to them. Or better whenever we bow before one another, we should visualize the Buddha image; for, this reminds us of the potential of our bodies.

4.5 THE PRINCES OF THE ORDER. After the Buddha's passing, the urban monasteries generally became more settled, populous and affluent. Patronized by the wealthy business class and the powerful ruling class, the monks in no time became the Indian equivalent of the Roman Catholic "princes of the church." The familiarity of such monastics with the royal courts effectively made them royalties of sorts.

Indeed, the rise of Buddhism in south Asia and east Asia in pre-modern times had always been their patronage by the highest powers in the country, so that Buddhism became the national religion, or enjoyed a special status in the country.⁴²

In China, for example, we have the famous case of the monk **Huìyuǎn** 慧遠 (334-416), Dào'ān's most prominent pupil. He was classically educated, and remained a nobleman even as a monk. He is remembered as a courageous defender of the faith. Using his Confucian expertise, for example, he wrote the 5-fascicle (*juǎn*) "**Monks Do Not Bow Down Before Kings**" (*Shāmén bú jìn wáng zhě* 沙門不敬王者) (404), which was an attempt to assert the political independence of the Buddhist clergy from the royal courts. It was both a religious and political text whose purpose was to convince the rulers and Confucian-minded ministers that Buddhists were not subversive. He argued that Buddhists could be good subjects in a kingdom due to their beliefs in karma and the desire to be reborn in paradise [3.2-3.3].⁴³ Although Buddhist monastics had to renounce their families, Huìyuǎn stated that "those who rejoice in the Way of the Buddha invariably first serve their parents and obey their lords."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See **The body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (5.1).

⁴¹ See Lamotte 1988: 435-442; Donald K Swearer 2004: 24-30; **The Body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (7.2).

⁴² See Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism*, rev 2009.

⁴³ See **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (3.4.4.4).

⁴⁴ E Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 1959: 204-253, esp 238 f; see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (2.3.3.2).

As the monastics (especially in south Asia) received royal titles and became wealthy land owners and propertied agents, they were (like the mediaeval Christian churches of Europe) given whole villages or vicinity as their parish to support and serve them. Even today, wealthy monasteries employ a considerable army of workers, both menial and professionals, often paid in monetary terms. The monastics associated with such affluent monasteries establish a new identity for themselves. A new order of value arises to accommodate these new monastic royalties, whose *bodies* become respectable not because of holiness but because of charisma attributed to them on account of their wealth and power—and all this is construed as the workings of their good karma.⁴⁵

5 Self and *pudgala*

5.1 IF THERE IS NO SELF, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? One question often asked about the early Buddhist notion of person is: if there is non-self or soul, *who* then does the action, *who* is responsible for the action? An immediate answer based on the early Buddhist texts would be that such questions are wrongly put, and that the question should be rephrased as *how does an action occur?* The answer is that actions occur governed by a series of thoughts, a continuity of consciousness, and that we have memories of our past, or we are sooner or later capable of recalling our past actions.⁴⁶

A famous early attempt to solve this problem was made by **the personalist school** (*puggala, vāda*; Skt *pudgala, vāda*), or the proponents of the person. Although rejected by most of the other schools, their ideas remained influential for one and a half millennia.⁴⁷ Very little of their original texts remain, but a good idea of their doctrine could be gleaned from critiques by opponents.⁴⁸

Although most of the early schools deny an eternal soul (*attā*; Skt *ātman*), various groups in early Indian Buddhism, such as the Vātsīputrīya, felt the need to posit some kind of subsisting identity to act as the basis for karma and rebirth. The notion of *pudgala* (P *puggala*) evolved to serve this function.

In terms of the normative Buddhist theory of personal responsibility based on the model of the five aggregates, the *pudgala* is “a conventional term for a unique ‘aggregated’ individual, [an] imagined entity that consciousness projects onto the components of the aggregate person” (Pietz 2005:197). It is said to be neither identical to the aggregates nor different from them. Their relationship is like that between fire (the *pudgala*) and its fuel (the aggregates).

Although the notion of *pudgala* was eventually rejected, the question of karmic continuity and responsibility continued in the five hundred after-centuries in India. Amongst the other solutions proposed were the storehouse consciousness (*ālaya, vijñāna*) and the Buddha embryo (*tathāgata, garbha*). Amongst the other schools that accepted the *pudgala* doctrine were the Saṃmitīya, the Dharmottarīya, the Śaṅṅa-garika, and the Bhadrāyanīya.⁴⁹

William Pietz gives us a helpful gist of such a notion of self:

This self, then, derives not from one’s parents but from lifetimes, without beginning, spent in ignorance. In reality, the self never did, does not, and never will exist. Moral autonomy is located not in the imaginary self but in the total concrete person whose own conduct will lead to happy or unhappy rebirths until the absence of the self is recognized and liberation is achieved.

(Pietz 2005: 197)

5.2 IS THE BUDDHA A PERSON? On a higher non-statistical level, the notion of a person becomes inapplicable, that is, if a person is defined as the “five aggregates of clinging” (*pañc’upādāna-k, khandha*),

⁴⁵ For a critical study of karma, see **Virtue Ethics** = SD 18.11.

⁴⁶ On personal responsibility, see **Self & Selves** = SD 26.9 (1.7).

⁴⁷ Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism*, vol 1 1900:242.

⁴⁸ See eg Kvu 1.1.1-243/1-69; Kvu:SR 8-63. See also THICH Thien Chau, *The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism*, tr Sara Boin-Webb, 1996; and Pietz 2005: 195-197.

⁴⁹ Further see **Bhāra S** (S 22.22/3:25 f) = SD 17.14. See also *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, sv *pudgala-vada*, 2003: 224.

which make up all unawakened beings. The Buddha and the arhats, too, are made up of aggregates—for they have form (a body) and hence feelings, too—but they are without clinging (*upādāna*), that is, without any “volitional formations” (*saṅkhāra*).⁵⁰ Here, *upādāna* has the sense of “fuel,” that is, ignorance and craving.⁵¹ For the fully awakened, their fuel for rebirth is spent, and the journey is ended.

An individual totally without clinging is not a person; he is a *non-person*. Although he is still a “forensic person” [7.1] in the eyes of the world, in the conventional sense, he is no more subject to the vagaries of life, either walking the path to awakening or already there. In **the Alagaddûpama Sutta** (M 22), the arhat, like the Buddha, is described as a “non-person,” thus,

Bhikshus, when the gods with Indra, with Brahmā, with Pajāpati, seek a monk thus liberated in mind,⁵² they do not find⁵³ anything of which to say that “This is the support of the thus-gone one’s consciousness.”⁵⁴

Why is that? One thus gone,⁵⁵ I say, is untraceable even here and now.⁵⁶

(M 22.36/1:140) = SD 3.13

This nature of the awakened saint is expressed in poetic terms in this brief but dramatic dialogue as recorded in **the (Pāda) Doṇa Sutta** (A 4.36). The brahmin Doṇa, a cook and foot-print reader, noticing the Buddha’s footprint is fascinated. He meets the Buddha and this dialogue ensues:

⁵⁰ See **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), which states that “feeling, perception and consciousness...are conjoined, not disjoined...the it impossible to separate [them]” (M 43.9/1:293) = SD 35.1. Note that *formations* (*saṅkhāra*) are not listed. This implies that the “formations aggregate” (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) is “only involved if there is a concomitant volition concerning the feeling: if it is an agreeable feeling, a concomitant volition might be to desire it; if it is a disagreeable feeling, one might be revolted by it” (Sue Hamilton 1996a:72). An arhat is able to experience pleasant and unpleasant feelings but remains entirely detached from them. See **(Saṃyojana) Koṭṭhita S** (S 35.232.8/4:164 f) = SD 28.4 Intro (3), & **How the saints feel** = SD 55.6

⁵¹ See **Mine: The nature of craving** = SD 19.3 (4.2).

⁵² “Thus liberated in mind,” *evaṃ.vimutta,cittam*. Norman: “It is possible that there is something of a word-play in the word *evaṃvimuttacitta*. We translated *vimutta-citta* as ‘one whose mind is released,’ but it might also be interpreted as ‘one whose consciousness (ie the element leading to re-birth) is released (from *saṃsāra*),’ and who, therefore, cannot be reborn.” (1991a:6)

⁵³ *anvesaṃ nādhigacchati*. This sentence is put into the mouth of Māra, trying to look for the monk Godhika, who at the moment of suicide had attained arhathood. There the Buddha declares that Godhika “has passed utterly away with consciousness no longer established (in rebirth)” (*apatiṭṭhena viññāṇena parinibbuto*) (S 1:268).

⁵⁴ **K R Norman** makes a useful note: “It is noteworthy that the Buddha here uses the word *tathāgata* in connection with a bhikkhu ‘whose mind is released in this way’ (*evaṃvimuttacitta*). It is clear that *tathāgata* is being used here in something much nearer its original literal meaning, and we ought rather to translate [this] passage [within quotes]: ‘This is what the consciousness of one who has gone that way [or who has gone to such a state] is dependent upon.’ The use of the word in this way would explain why the commentators thought it appropriate to apply it to *attā*, as was mentioned above [Norman 1991a:2]. I would suggest that the specific usage of the word *tathāgata* to mean ‘Buddha’ [cf Buddhaghosa’s defs of *tathāgata*, DA 59-68; SA 2:287,25-32, 1:66,21-22] arose from this more general usage, just as the word *sugata* which originally must have had the general sense “one who has fared well,” just as it does in the Sanskrit [SED, sv *sugata*], is also used specifically of the Buddha. It is interesting that when the word *tathāgata* is used in a question directed to the Buddha, which he refuses to answer, the commentaries still do not take *tathāgata* in the sense of the Buddha, but explain it as *satta* ‘being’ [DA 1:118,1; SA 2:201,5, 2:311,1-3, 3:312,29-30].” (1991a:6). See n above on “thus liberated in mind”; also **Cūḷa Māluṅkyāputta S** (M 63) = SD 5.8 Intro (3).

⁵⁵ “One thus gone” (*tathāgata*), usually applied to the Buddha, but here applies also to the arhat. Comy gives two alternative explanations: (1) Even while alive the arhat is untraceable as a being or individual (ie as an abiding self) because ultimately there is no “being.” (2) The arhat is untraceable here and now because it is impossible for the gods, etc, to find the support for the insight-mind, path-mind or fruition-mind (*vipassanā,citta magga,citta phala,-citta*); since the object is nirvana, his mind cannot be known by the worldling. See Nyanaponika 1974:47 n37; KR Norman 1991a esp 5 f.

⁵⁶ *Diṭṭhe vāhaṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgatam ananuvejjo ti vadāmi*. See Norman 1991a:253 f.

“You, sir, must be a deva!”
 “No, brahmin, I won’t be a deva.”
 “You, sir, must be a gandharva [a celestial minstrel]!”
 “No, brahmin, I won’t be a gandharva.”
 “You, sir, must be a yaksha [a nature spirit]!”
 “No, brahmin, I won’t be a yaksha.”
 “You, sir, must be a human?”
 “No, brahmin, I won’t be a human.”

“When you are asked thus, ‘You, sir, must be a deva!’ you replied,
 ‘No, brahmin, I won’t be a deva.’
 When you are asked thus, ‘You, sir, must be a gandharva!’ you replied,
 ‘No, brahmin, I won’t be a gandharva.’
 When you are asked thus, ‘You, sir, must be a yaksha!’ you replied,
 ‘No, brahmin, I won’t be a yaksha.’
 When you are asked thus, ‘You, sir, must be a human!’ you replied,
 ‘No, brahmin, I won’t be a human.’
 What then, sir, might you be?

The Buddha then explains to Doṇa that, having abandoned those mental influxes⁵⁷ that make one a deva, gandharva, yaksha or human, he (the Buddha) would not be reborn as any of them. The apprehensive brahmin then asks the Buddha *what* would he become. The Buddha answers:

Brahmin, just as a blue lotus, or a red-white lotus, or a white lotus, is born in the water,
 growing in the water, rises above the water, standing unsoiled by it—
 even so, brahmin, I am born in the world, grow in the world, but I dwell having overcome the
 world, undefiled by the world.
 Therefore, brahmin, remember me as *the Buddha*.⁵⁸ (A 4.36/2:37 f) = SD 36.13

By his answer, the Buddha is declaring that since he has overcome all those conditions that would bring one back as a deva, a gandharva, a yaksha, or a human—meaning that he would not be reborn—there is class of being or person to which he belongs: he is Buddha, *sui generis*.⁵⁸

6 The free person

6.1 SOCIAL MASKS. When the Buddha declares to the brahmin Doṇa that he is “the Buddha,” all a class of his own, he is speaking in an ultimate sense, that is, he is a non-person [5.2]. But those of us who are still unawakened, living in the world of ordinary social existence are “conventionally real.” We have

⁵⁷ *Āsava*. The oldest list is perhaps the set of **3 influxes**—of sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), of existence (*bhav’āsava*), and of ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63)—which are essentially the same as the **3 grasplings** (*ti, gaha*) of **craving** (*taṇhā*), **conceit** (*māna*) and **views** (*diṭṭhi*), on account of which arise, resp. the notions “this is mine,” “this I am,” and “this is my self”: see **Vatthūpama S** (M 7.18/1:38) = SD 28.12. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards or inwards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists **4 āsavas**, which is also found in the Nikāyas: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijj’āsava*) (D 16.1.12/2:82, 16.2.4/2:91, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). See BDict: āsava.

⁵⁸ **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22) says that even the gods would not be able to trace the arhat’s consciousness, since it is without any support, and is untraceable (*ananuvejja*) (M 22.36/1:140) = SD 3.13.

parents, we have a name, belong to a certain social class; we are students, or we work, or support a family, or practise a religion. In other words, we are *socially-constructed persons*.

This would nicely accord with the Western notion of *person*, derived from the Latin, *persona*, meaning “mask,” “because the term attributes to us a public existence without asserting anything about the ultimate or essential being that might (or might not) fill the emptiness inside the mask” (Pietz 2005: 197 f). Just as an actor (when the acting is over) regards himself (“real self”) as being different from the character (“the masks”) he portrays, so that anyone could assume the roles such characters.⁵⁹

The western idea of such a generic person—the masked roles—forms the basis of fundamental human rights.⁶⁰ But such a hollow person as a “masked” role is simply foreign to Buddhism. As **Rebecca Redwood French** observes in her study of the traditional Tibetan legal system:

For a Tibetan thinking in Buddhist terms, the Western ideal of the “individual” as a hollow shell, a sort of mask equal to any other regardless of what entity occupies it, is incomprehensible. It is exactly the unique conjunction of circumstances, elements, and karmic seeds that constitutes a human individual, not its absence. (French 1995: 161)

The point here is that when we examine the nature of personhood in a culture, we should not forcibly impose any ready-made model (such as the “mask” or *persona* Western model) on it. We need to examine and evaluate the fact-making process of that society. A Buddhist definition of a person, for example, is *an individual capable of wholesome social intercourse, autonomous moral action and spiritual progress* (which is really a rephrasing of the three trainings).

6.2 THE SELF-MADE PERSON. How is it that a person is an “individual capable of wholesome social intercourse, autonomous moral action and spiritual progress”? A person, whether socially constructed or not, is made of heterogeneous components called the five aggregates, which may be understood as follows:

(1) form	<i>rūpa</i>	the physical and social body	(SD 29.6a)
(2) feeling	<i>vedanā</i>	hedonic response	(SD 17.3)
(3) perception	<i>saññā</i>	psychological evaluation	(SD 17.4)
(4) formations	<i>sankhāra</i>	karmic or moral action	(SD 17.6)
(5) consciousness	<i>viññāṇa</i>	cognitive processes	(SD 17.8a)

We have a physical body, but we are only one of many bodies, and we are human bodies. This allows us to interact and communicate with other conscious bodies, both human and non-human. But Buddhism is more than human-centred: it is **life-centred**. To be life-centred entails the awareness and valuing all that lives, as all conscious beings are capable of spiritual progress.

How are living beings capable of spiritual progress? Every human person is capable of experiencing any of the six realms—the deva, the human, asura, the preta, the animal, and the hell-being—at any moment in his conscious life. These six realms here taken as habitual psychosocial states:⁶¹ how we habitually behave shapes our minds and how we view others and interact with them, and most importantly, how we end up becoming the very things we desire or hate.

At the moment of death, our habitual karma—which type of *karmic being*—will very likely predominate our last living moments, and act as karmic momentum propelling us into a new cycle of a similar karmic being. How our minds habitually act will shape our karmic destiny. We are what we think, say and do. Our bodies are the palpable manifestation of how we think.

6.3 PERSON OR THING? Not all members of society were persons, that is, personhood is a forensic fact, not a natural one.⁶² In pre-modern times, slaves and aliens were often treated as non-persons or even

⁵⁹ Carrithers 1985: 235 f; Collins 1985: 69.

⁶⁰ Pietz 2005: 197-203.

⁶¹ I am not at all denying that the 6 realms are actual ontological states (planes of beings), but here the dynamics of these states can be experienced within a human being in this life itself.

⁶² Pietz 2005: 201-203.

as chattels (movable property). Imperial China and similar systems in Korean and Japan treated prisoners-of-war as slaves, and kidnapped victims were often sold as slaves.⁶³ Early Islam institutionalized slavery but generally treated their slaves better than in pre-Islamic times.⁶⁴

From the 13th century, Christian theology (hence European discourse) recognized that all humans were “natural persons.” In the colonial period, the notion was applied to non-Christian societies, over whom Christian powers, as such, claim the right to conquer, convert and control as subjects of their rulers. Although such subjects were legally characterized as “natural persons,” once they entered the realm of a Christian state, the personhood or non-personhood was decided by the secular legal system. In such a system, not only were aliens and slaves non-persons, but many of them (especially the latter) were legally chattels, that is, things own by a master.

6.4 SLAVERY IN ANCIENT INDIA. There was slavery in India during the Buddha’s time. If we accept the various scholarly interpretations of literary sources of ancient India, then slavery as forced appropriation of labour, skill or sexual gratification appears to have existed in various forms from before 500 BCE. Historical consensus points to an intensification of slavery in India during the Islamic period, which was also the case in other places where Islam was the dominant religion.⁶⁵

It is interesting that slavery in pre-Islamic India, such as during the Buddha’s time, appeared to have been of limited duration or temporary status, as only certain specific conditions made one a slave for life. The slave apparently retained degrees of control over money, property, right to compensation or wages for labour, and had the right of redemption, and deceiving or depriving a slave of these rights is also a punishable offence.⁶⁶ In Buddhist times, slaves, forming the bulk of public labour, were generally better treated and had more freedom than hired labour.

Slaves are not allowed to become monastics (at least in the Buddha’s time) mainly to prevent the order from becoming a refuges from fugitives and criminals, but once their slave status is removed, they are allowed to join the order. However, even slaves are allowed to attend Dharma congregations or work and live in the monasteries. Queen Sāmāvatī’s hunch-backed slave Khujj’uttarā was not only a well known Dharmas teacher, but recorded the Buddha’s teachings known as **the Iti,vuttaka**, one of the fifteen books of the Khuddaka Nikāya.⁶⁷

The elaborate Vedic sacrifices of ancient India not only entailed great costs but also needed a large labour force to execute them, mostly slave labourers (*dāsa kamma kara*), who were apparently mistreated during such high-class affairs. **The Kūṭa,danta Sutta** (D 5) records the Buddha’s speaking against the mistreatment of slaves, workers and the lower classes involved in religion:

There were slaves, messengers, and labourers, but they did all their work without being driven by the rod [by force], nor driven by fear, nor weeping, with tears on their faces. Indeed, those who wished to work, did so. Those who did not wish to work, did not. The sacrifice was accomplished with only ghee, oil, fresh butter, curds, honey and molasses. (D 5.18a/1:141) = SD 22.8

The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta (D 31) listed “slaves” (*dāsa*) together with “workers” (*kamma,kara*), and that they should be well treated, thus:

⁶³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_slavery, see under China, Korea, and Japan.

⁶⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_and_slavery.

⁶⁵ KS Lal, *Muslim Slave System in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1994), eg, discusses the import of African slaves to India by Muslims through the Middle East, a trade never undertaken by India's indigenous religions due to limited contact with Africa. For biblio, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_India.

⁶⁶ Arthasastra, (ed & tr), RD Shyamasastri, Bangalore: Government Press, Bangalore, 1915.

⁶⁷ ItA 1:29-33. See Otto von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 1996: 46 f (II.2.5.4).

32 (5) In five ways, young householder, **slaves and workers** [employees and charges] as the direction below [nadir], should be ministered to by the master, thus:⁶⁸

- (a) By allocating work according to the strength of the worker.
- (b) By providing them with food and wages.⁶⁹
- (c) By attending to their medical and health needs.⁷⁰
- (d) By sharing excellent tastes [food, etc] with them.⁷¹
- (e) By giving them timely breaks and holidays.⁷²

The slaves and workers [employees and charges], young householder, as the direction below [the nadir],⁷³ having been ministered thus by the master, show him their compassion in these five ways:

- (f) They rise before him.
- (g) They retire after him.
- (h) They take only what is given.
- (i) They do their work well.
- (j) They spread about his good name and praise.⁷⁴ (D 31.32/3:190 f) = SD 4.1

Such an ancient document as the Sigal’ovāda Sutta shows that slavery existed in Indian society of the Buddha’s time and these instructions reflect his attempt at manumission (the emancipation of slavery), or at least their humane treatment.

The Aputtaka Sutta 1 (S 3.19) gives a utilitarian view of wealth, which is to be enjoyed, and to be enjoyed benefitting as many others as possible, including slaves, labourers and servants. Such a wealth-sharing clearly suggests this is the context of an extended family:

THE TRUE PERSON’S WEALTH. But, maharajah, when **a true person** [a superior person]⁷⁵ gains abundant wealth,

he	enjoys it and is pleased with it;
his parents	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his wife and children	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his slaves, labourers and servants	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his friends and colleagues	enjoy it and are pleased with it.

He places in the recluses and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

kings	do not take it away, or
thieves	do not take it away, or
fire	does not burn it away, or

⁶⁸ “Master,” *ayyira*, an unusual form, probably “clerical contamination of *ayya*” (CPD: *ayyira-kula*). The better reading is perhaps *ayira(ka)*, from *ariya* or *ayya*, a nobleman, lord, sir, master. On the metathesis, see Müller, *Simplified Grammar of the Pali Language*, London, 1884:49.

⁶⁹ This is one of the earliest documented statement on a fair wage scheme and perks.

⁷⁰ This is one of the earliest documented statement on a medical aid scheme.

⁷¹ *Acchariyānaṃ rasānaṃ sainvibhāgena*, lit “by giving a portion of marvellous tastes.” Comy mentions “honey” as an example (DA 3:956). *Rasa* has a wide range of meanings including “juice, taste, object of enjoyment (entertainment), flavour and its substances (eg soup)” (PED). One could take all these meanings as applicable here.

⁷² Comy: Giving them enough rest so that their work is better performed without working all day, and giving special leave during festivals, etc, providing them with extra food and adornments for the occasion (DA 3:956).

⁷³ “Nadir,” ie the earth below, representing the material support and services provided by this quarter.

⁷⁴ *Kitti.vañña,harā ca*, lit “and they are bearers of fame and praise.”

⁷⁵ *Sappurisa*, a worthy person. His qualities (*sappurisa, dhamma*) are listed in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) = SD 29.6. On this true individual as a good worldling (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), see **Dhammaññū S** (A 7.64) = SD 30.10 Intro (2.3). See below here [7.2].

water does not wash it away, or
 unloving heirs do not take it away.
 Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to
 waste. (S 3.19.6/1:90 f) = SD 22.4

After the Buddha's time, as many monasteries became larger and more settled, and turned into what we would today call corporations, especially where they were managed by specialized labour, including monastic slaves (often donated by royalty and the wealthy). Such monasteries invariably were deeply involved in the money economy and have become multinational corporations.⁷⁶ [7.1]

7 The spiritual person

7.1 IS A NON-HUMAN A PERSON OR A THING? Early Buddhism is not merely interested in the liberation of human beings, but also of all sentient beings: heavenly beings, non-humans and animals.⁷⁷ For, as we have noted [6.2], our present sentient state is the result of our past karma and present conditions. What we do now, and what we have done in the past together shape our future state, whether we are reborn as a heavenly being, a human, an asura, a preta, an animal or a hell-being.

Here we will focus on the issue of person and human rights. It is interesting to note that today we are beginning to see a collapse of the modern conception of personhood. Pietz makes this instructive note:

First, the modern idea that all human beings are persons with certain fundamental rights was established only through a long struggle against class- and race-based slavery and institutionalized exploitation. Securing the principle that personhood belongs to all biological human beings was an epochal advance for the cause of justice. Yet this very triumph intensified a tendency in the Western tradition that deprives life-forms that are not humans of any rights or socially sanctioned protections whatsoever. The idea that animals are in no sense "persons" was already there present in the Christian tradition, which held that animals (and, indeed, all sentient beings other than human beings) lacked immortal souls. (Pietz 2005: 204 f)

Before Europe was Christianized, animals were known to be treated as persons, and could as such be tried in a court of law for any offence.⁷⁸ However, with the rise of Christianity in Europe, animals were officially not regarded as persons. And this non-personhood of animals was obviously intensified in reaction to the intellectual revolution of Darwin's theory of evolution, which proves that humans not only are animals but have evolved from non-human species.

7.2 LIMITS OF PERSON. On the other hand, the Wallace-Darwin evolutionary ideas contributed to the awareness that life as we know it is really interconnected: it is an *interbeing*, a network of living beings. From our discussion so far, we can see that the Buddhist definition of a person is much broader than the secular definition. Buddhist cosmology speaks of the three worlds, that is, the sense-world, the form world and the formless world.⁷⁹ *The sense-world* comprises of beings that have the five physical senses and some level of consciousness existing in a physical world of the four elements. *The form world* beings have fine-material bodies of radiance mentally supported by dhyanic bliss. And *the formless world* con-

⁷⁶ "The monastic ownership of servants and slaves: Local and legal factors in the redactional history of two Vinayas." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17.2 1994:145-173. Repr in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*, 2004:193-218 (ch 7).

⁷⁷ See eg **Animals go to heaven** = SD 55.3.

⁷⁸ In Germany, eg, roosters might be tried and convicted for "contumacious crowing." Trials and executions of various kinds of animals occurred in France as late as the mid-18th cent (EP Evans [1906], *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, Union, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 1998: 150). For a contemporary study, see eg Gary L Francione, *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation*, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008. See Pietz 2005: 204 f.

⁷⁹ See **The body in Buddhism** = SD 29.6a (5.2). For details, see *Viññāṇa-tṭhiti* = SD 23.14.

sists of beings with non-physical bodies of pure mental processes or “psychic energy.”⁸⁰ Any person of great meditative power properly developed can attain to any of such states or be reborn there.

Subhuman types of beings are not usually called *persons*, even though they each have a body and some type of consciousness. Insofar they lack moral virtue, that is, they are incapable of doing any moral act, they would not be regarded as a person. Those who are caught in the rut of living out their past karma are generically known as *beings* (which, on more positive levels, includes persons). *Being*, as such, refers to any conscious entity or living body with the capacity for consciousness.

Another interesting point worth noting is that early Buddhism does not limit persons to only this world or even this universe. The early texts, such as **the (Ānanda) Abhibhū Sutta** (A 3.80) and **the Kosala Sutta 1** (A 10.29) speak of parallel universes:

Bhikshus, as far as the sun and the moon revolve, illuminating the quarters with their light, there extends **the thousandfold world-system**.⁸¹ In that thousandfold world-system there are
 a thousand moons,
 a thousand suns,
 a thousand Sinerus, the kings of mountains,
 a thousand Jambu,dvipas [Rose-apple Continents],⁸²
 a thousand Western Goyana continents [Apara,go,yāna],
 a thousand Northern Kuru continents [Uttara,kuru],⁸³
 a thousand Eastern Videha continents [Pubba,videha],
 four thousand oceans,
 four thousand maharajahs [emperors],
 a thousand heavens of the Cātum,mahārājika [the four Great Guardian Kings],
 a thousand heavens of Tāvātimsa [the Thirty-three devas],
 a thousand heavens of Yāma [the Yāma devas],⁸⁴
 a thousand heavens of Tusita [contented devas],
 a thousand heavens of Nimmana,rati [the devas who delight in creating],⁸⁵
 a thousand heavens of Para,nimmita,vasavatti [the devas who lord over the creation of others], and a thousand Brahma worlds. (A 10.29.2/5:59) = SD 16.15⁸⁶

⁸⁰ On the nature of the bodies and minds of such beings, see *Viññāṇa-ṭṭhiti* = SD 23.14.

⁸¹ A good intro to ancient Buddhist cosmology is Gethin 1998:112-132 (ch 5).

⁸² *Jambu,dīpa* (Skt *Jambu,dvipa*) (the Rose-apple Continent) is the ancient name for the Indian sub-continent. See Intro 2.

⁸³ Uttara,kuru. According to Indian Buddhist mythology, this is a region in Central Asia, where the lifespan is 120 years. In the early canon, it is described as a continent (*mahā.dīpa*) (north of Jambu,dīpa) along with Aparā,goyāna, and Pubba,videha (A 1:227, 5:59). **The Āṭānāṭiya S** (D 32), in its detailed description, refers to Uttara,kuru (Skt *uttaraḥ Kuravaḥ*, “northern Kuru”) as a city (*pura*) (D 32.7/3:199). Along with 4 × 500 smaller “islands” (*dīpa*) surrounding them constitute a world system (*cakka,vaḷa*) (DA 2:678; SA 1:74; AA 2:34 f; KhA 176; SnA 2:443). Apparently, this is a metaphorical description in an ancient Buddhist conception of a world system. In later literature, described as a land of plenty, and it is often said that ascetics and monks would go there by their psychic power to obtain alms (SA 1:117 = AA 3:88; ThaA 1:42 ≠ AA 1:273; J 5:316, 6:100; BA 187). See DPPN sv & CPD sv for more refs. See also EW Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, Strasbourg, 1905:186; R Kloetzli, *Buddhist Cosmology*, 1983: 25 f, 52-59, 81.

⁸⁴ The term *Yāma* refers to a class of devas. Comys explain the term as “those who have attained divine bliss” (*dibbam sukham yātā payātā sampattā ti yāmā*, ThaA 169; PmA 3:613; VbA 519). In some context, *Yāma* seems to derive from Yama, the ruler of the underworld, eg *Yāmato yāva Akaniṭṭham* (“from the underworld to the highest heaven” (KhA 166 = SnA 1:278). The Buddhist Yama is clearly related, if not identical to, the Vedic Yama: see Bhattacharji 1970:48-108.

⁸⁵ Be & Ce have this line and the next, missing from Se.

⁸⁶ See also **(Ānanda) Abhibhū S** (A 3.80.3/1:227 f) = SD 54.1.

All such worlds are impermanent, and all beings who accept and understand the true nature of this impermanence are capable of spiritual cultivation and development.

7.3 THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL. According to early Buddhism, a person is a conscious being capable of healthy social interaction and personal, even spiritual, development. A person who has attained a high degree of spiritual development is called a *sappurisa* (Skt *sat, puruṣa*), which is resolved as *sat* (= *sant*) (“good”) + *purisa* (“person”); so literally, it means “good person, true man”⁸⁷ and idiomatically as “good or virtuous person, true individual.”

In the Suttas, however, the sense of *sappurisa* has to be teased out from its context. It refers to a true lay practitioner (A 8.37-38), to a true practitioner (M 110, 113), or to the saints of the path, except the arhats (S 45.26; A 4.201), or generally to all saints, including the arhats (A 4.240). In other words, *sappurisa* can refer to unawakened practitioners, or to the saints, whether they are monastics or lay, depending in the context.

First, let us look at *sappurisa* as a true lay individual. **The (Saṅkhitta) Sappurisa, dāna Sutta** (A 8.37) briefly defines the true lay follower as a true giver, that is, one who gives alms that is pure, choice, at the right time, what is allowable, repeatedly, discriminately [after careful examination]; while giving, his mind is radiant with faith, and after the giving he is happily satisfied.⁸⁸ **The (Kula) Dhammaññū Sutta** (A 8.38) declares that a true lay individual arises for the good of all beings: the family, society, religion, and even the gods.⁸⁹

Sappurisa in the sense of a true practitioner is found in the Majjhima Nikāya. **The Cūḷa Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 110) defines the *sappurisa*⁹⁰ as *one who is morally virtuous, learned, energetic, wise, and holds right view*.⁹¹ Similarly, **the Sappurisa Sutta** (M 113) says that he is one who understands the true purpose of renunciation and the holy life, so that there is nothing he would identify with.⁹² In other words, he is a good worldling (*kalyāṇa, puthujjana*),⁹³ one who is drawn to the Dharma and capable to spiritual development.

7.4 LIBERATING THE PERSON. The word *person* applies as a forensic sense, applies almost exclusively to social discourse, especially human rights. Buddhist spirituality however goes beyond social discourse and human rights. After all, social discourse applies only in the first level of the three trainings. Even more important than the masses is the developed individual. Indeed, social discourse and human rights have little or no value at all if they do not promote personal development.

Personhood is defined by society, and often deeply coloured and biased by religion, politics and culture. We need to critically reexamine Buddhist traditions where monasteries and institutions “routinely owned slaves, attached entire villages to themselves in perpetual servitude, and not infrequently justified state violence and acts of great atrocity” (Pietz 2005: 106). We need to examine these anomalies in the Mahā, vihāra system in Sri Lanka,⁹⁴ in mediaeval Chinese Buddhism,⁹⁵ in pre-modern Thailand,⁹⁶ and the

⁸⁷ The Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) form *satpuruṣa* is resolved in the same way, and translated as “(lit) worthy or true man.” In the BHS texts, the term usually refers to the bodhisattvas (*Saddharma, puṇḍarīka Ś 3.10*), but may also include monks (*Rāṣṭrapāla, pariṣecchā 2.3*).

⁸⁸ A 8.37/4:243 f.

⁸⁹ A 8.38/4:244 f = SD 30.10 (embedded).

⁹⁰ M:ÑB translates *sappurisa* here as “true man,” and *asappurisa*, as “untrue man.” These literal trs sound all right as long as we do not misconstrue them to refer to manliness or lack of it, or even a man who is faithful to his spouse as against one who is not. Some however may take this tr to be sexist.

⁹¹ M 110/2:20-24 = SD 45.4.

⁹² M 113/3:37-45 = SD 23.7.

⁹³ On *sappurisa*, see **Sappurisa S** (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (3). On *puthujjana*, see **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1) = SD 5.4 Intro (3). See also **Dhammaññū S** (A 7.64/4:113-117) = SD 30.10 Intro (2.3); **Udākūpama S** (A 7.15/4:11-13) = Intro (1.1 3). On *puthujjana*, see **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1) = SD 5.4 Intro (3).

⁹⁴ G Schopen, “The monastic ownership of servants or slaves,” *JIABS* 17,2 1994: 145-173 = 2004: 193-218.

⁹⁵ J Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, 1995.

⁹⁶ David K Wyatt, *Thailand: A short history*, 1982: 27.

Zen monasteries of Japan.⁹⁷ We need to learn from the past and avoid wrong and negative practices and attitudes.

When organized Buddhism is more concerned with worldly success, such as propagating *itself* as a group, sect, lineage, corporate body or even as a corporation, then it would definitely be swept away by the ways of the society it is embroiled in. Buddhist activists, such as Sulak Sivaraksa, have observed how “Buddhism, as practiced in most Asian countries today, serves mainly to legitimize dictatorial regimes and multinational corporations” (1992: 68). In such a situation, Buddhist doctrines might even be used to legitimize, or at least explain way, the status quo, social injustices and spiritual ignorance.

In this connection, we need to urgently reexamine the Buddhist idea of karma, especially of “karmic debt.” Pietz comments,

Historically, this idea—perhaps most powerfully institutionalized in Buddhist funeral rites—played a decisive role in establishing Buddhism in diverse societies (for example, in China through the institution of the Ghost Festival—Teiser 1988; Cole 1998). I believe that Western advocates of Buddhism would do well to examine the reasons the great Indian leader and Buddhist convert Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar rejected the doctrine of karma (Queen 1996: 47). One might regard recent reinterpretations of the concept of karmic seeds ([Thich] Nhat Hanh 1987; Sivaraksa 1992) as efforts to correct a profound problem in Buddhist tradition, a problem that must be resolved if Buddhism is to become a vital force in the twenty-first century. (Pietz 2005: 206 f)

7.4 MENTAL SLAVERY. A situation where one is deprived of personal freedom and is forced to serve another is *slavery*. But worse than bodily slavery is *mental slavery*, when we are so conditioned by a person, a group, an idea or an ideology that we are unable to think for ourselves to the extent of being unable to distinguish right from wrong, and unable to act rightly. We remain mental slaves when we are *ignorant* of the true causes of the problems and sufferings, or when we are *deluded* with persons, events and ideas in our lives.

If we are emotionally dependent, we are easily goaded by charisma⁹⁸ and nose-led by memes.⁹⁹ **Charisma** is perceiving someone we deeply admire to the extent of attributing him or her qualities such as authority, power (including magical powers), holiness (such as sainthood) and even wisdom. We are likely to think that such a person is always right, and should be obeyed without question, and that his views are the only true ones, and that his instructions are to be executed, even when they are harmful to us or to others. Or, we are simply moved to act without mindlessly, until it is too late.

We often attribute charisma to a monastic, religious leader or anyone we admire on account of their speaking ability, the way they dress (monastic robes), their titles (Ven Dr, PhD),¹⁰⁰ their looks (handsome, pretty), and other traits or features they have that we regard as desirable. Furthermore, the charisma is enhanced when such an admired person lives in a large and impressive monastery or building, or is of a certain race, or controls a lot of funds, or has great influence, and so on.

Such attractive ideas and external features are known as **memes**, which have only one purpose: to replicate themselves and overwhelm everything else. Charisma and memes combine into a very lethal weapon that overwhelms our minds, so that we become merely a cog or wheel in an alien system, and hand over our remote control to a guru or master. We have been mentally enslaved by that guru or cult!

⁹⁷ Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*, 1997.

⁹⁸ See Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism*, 1992h: http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/charisma6.pdf.

⁹⁹ See **Mememes** = SD 26.3.

¹⁰⁰ Let me stress that academic learning is a vitally useful tool in Buddhist learning. I am here merely straining the point of priority and perception. To those who charge that I am “anti-monastic,” my question is which “monastics”? I am not against any monastic “body” or “bodies,” but showing serious concern with what they *do* with their bodies, and how this affects the quality of Buddhism in our society directly and the world at large indirectly.

We are easily enslaved by others through charisma and memes.¹⁰¹ The best protection and immunization against them is *wisdom* and *emotional maturity or independence*. Wisdom arises through a deep understanding of the Buddha's true teachings (such as the Suttas), and emotional independence comes from being truly happy deep inside ourselves so that we do not need to rely on an external source of succour. This is best done through proper and good meditation.

The most important and difficult task in Buddhist work is *the mental liberation of the person*. Ideas, even Dharma teachings, are tools for liberating the mind. No matter how well we think of Buddhism at the moment, we must remind ourselves that this is only provisional knowledge, a step to even higher and clearer Dharma. As long as we keep an open mind to the Dharma, and a closed mind to evil, we will truly see the impermanence and unsatisfactory states of persons, situations and things and not be cheated by them. As we focus on such a vision, we grow closer to self-awakening in this life itself.

Part of our spiritual growth comes from seeing the suffering of others and the dangers that threaten the Dharma. We have to put in committed and consistent effort in Dharma-inspired education and social work. Such efforts towards personal liberation must be tempered by an understanding of social realities. We need to use our wisdom, skillful means, patience, wholesome networking and, above all, set a good example and inspiration of ourselves for others, as the great saints of the Buddha's time have done.

8 The liberated person

8.1 THE ARHAT IS SUI GENERIS. The greatest saints of the Buddha are known as arhats. They are the most evolved of individuals, and are the best examples of emotionally independent persons. Their minds are so free that it is impossible for us to fathom them, especially when we have not yet attained to any level of awakening. Indeed, the Buddha, too, is an arhat, and other arhats are mirror images of the Buddha.

The **(Cātu-ṭ,ṭhāna) Anurādha Sutta** (S 22.86) presents the monk Anurādha as knowing that "when a Tathagata is describing a Tathagata," that is, when a Buddha describes himself, he does so without resorting to any of the tetralemma (*catu-ṭ,ṭhāna*) of being, that is to say,¹⁰²

- "he arises" does not apply;
- "he does not arise" does not apply;
- "he both arises and does not arise" does not apply;
- "he neither arises nor not arise" does not apply.

The Buddha goes on to explain to Anurādha what this means in the following manner:

- (1) Each of the five aggregates (constituting a person) should be rightly understood as being *impermanent*.
- (2) What is impermanent is *unsatisfactory*.
- (3) What is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change is *not fit to be regarded as self*.
- (4) *Any aggregate whatsoever* "whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near," should be regarded as "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self."
- (5) The *nibbidā* formula is then given (leading to final liberation).
- (6) The Tathagata is not to be identified with any of the aggregates.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Let me relate an example of emotional immaturity, some might even call it mental slavery. Once, in one of the campus meditation classes, some Christian students conveyed their interest to attend. The class leader came to me rather excitedly and asked me if we should cancel the puja (recitation of Namō tassa, the Three Refuges, and the Five Precepts)! Rather taken aback, I asked him in return: If you attend a Christian meeting, would they cancel their prayers on your account? This is an example of the kind of psychosocial problems that Buddhist teachers and leaders must urgently and well prepare themselves to deal with, correct and prevent.

¹⁰² The teachings of **(Cātu-ṭ,ṭhāna) Anurādha S** (S 22.86) is almost identical with those of **Yamaka S** (S 22.85-3:109-111 f), except that in the latter the traditional tetralemma of "exist, not exist, both, neither" is used, while here the "four cases" of *arising, not arising, both, neither* are used.

¹⁰³ On the foll 4, cf M 1:300; S 3:3.

- (7) The Tathagata is not to be taken as being “in” (that is, dependent on) the aggregates.
- (8) The Tathagata is not to be taken as being “apart” (separate) from the aggregates.
- (9) The Tathagata is not to be taken as the aggregates altogether as a whole.
- (10) The Tathagata is not to be taken as being “without” the aggregates (that is, the Tathagata in itself).

The Buddha concludes his instruction by telling Anurādha that “when the Tathagata is not being apprehended by you as real and actual here in this very life,”¹⁰⁴ it is not fitting for anyone to describe the Tathagata in terms of any of the four cases.¹⁰⁵

8.2 THE ARHAT DOES NOT IDENTIFY WITH ANYTHING. We have already mentioned above that in the **Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22), it is said that there is no more support for consciousness in the case of a Buddha (or arhat) [5.2]. A more detailed description (or, rather non-description) of the Tathagata (the Buddha) is given in the **Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72), where since he has totally uprooted all the five aggregates (form, feeling, formations, and consciousness), such that none of the four cases or tetralemma of existence apply to him. There is nothing that we can identify an arhat with. Nor does an arhat identify with anything.¹⁰⁶

The arhat is called *atammaya* in the sense that he does not identify himself with anything: he is no longer “made of that.”¹⁰⁷ The key sentence, “**in whatever way they conceive it, it turns out to be otherwise**” (*yena yena hi maññanti, tato taṃ hoti aññathā ti*),¹⁰⁸ refers to the process of conception (*mañña-na*), explained in detail in the **Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), and which is fully understood by the arhat.¹⁰⁹ This important line recurs elsewhere,¹¹⁰ such as the **Sutta Nipāta** (which expresses the delusion of permanence):

*Yena yena hi maññanti
tato taṃ hoti aññatha
etadiso vinā,bhavo
passa lokassa pariyāya*

For, however they conceive [think] it to be,
it turns out to be otherwise;
such is the difference:
look at the way of the world! (Sn 588)

— — —

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[See also Bibliography of SD 29.6a]

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¹⁰⁴ Be Ce Ke Se: *Diṭṭh’eva dhamme saccato tathato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne*; Ee *Diṭṭheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāno*. Cf **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22): “And bhikkhus, since in truth and in fact, one can find neither self nor what belongs to a self” (*attani ca bhikkhave attaniye ca saccato thetato anupalabbhamāne*, M 22.25/1:138,5-6 = SD 3.13) & “one thus gone, I say, is untraceable even here and now” (*diṭṭh’evāhaṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgataṃ ananuvejjo ti vadāmi*, M 22.36/1:140,6-7).

¹⁰⁵ S 22.86/3:116-119 = SD 49.8.

¹⁰⁶ M 72/1:483-489 = SD 6.15.

¹⁰⁷ Ñāṇananda 2005:316 f.

¹⁰⁸ See UA 209 f = UA:M 504 f.

¹⁰⁹ M 1.51-146/1:4-6 = SD 11.8.

¹¹⁰ U 3.10/32,30; Sn 757.

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