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Handbook of Meditation in Society 3

Sutta Discovery Vol 60.1c
Theme: The rhetoric of Buddhist experience
A psychosocial exploration of modern Buddhism

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The rhetoric of Buddhist experience

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The essay **SD 60.1c**, *The Rhetoric of Buddhist Experience*," is part of the multi-volume **SD 60**, comprising (to date), with a related earlier essay:

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60.1c

Handbook of Meditation in Society 3
The Rhetoric of Buddhist Experience

A psychosocial exploration of modern Buddhism by Piya Tan ©Tan Beng Sin, 2022

SD 60c—*The Rhetoric of Buddhist experience*—explores how Buddhists, and in some cases non-Buddhists, view and exploit Buddhism for their own worldly purposes, the fate of Buddhism in the hands of rulers and the powerful, and some efforts to revive early Buddhism.

1 A psychosocial exploration of modern Buddhism

1.1 MODERN BUDDHIST EXPERIENCE[1]

1.1.1 Modernity and modernism

1.1.1.1 In this opening section, we will examine how the notion of **modernism** (and its related terms) are applied to the study of Buddhism as a living religion, especially how modernism occurs in tension with **ethnicism**. We will see how ethnic Buddhism, safely cocooned by the country's majority, even govern-ment support, thrives in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, but each has to respond to the challenges of modernity, the changes that our own times bring about to our country and the world.

1.1.1.2 Scholars, trying to explain the changes in Buddhism, to keep up with the times, introduced the terms **modernity** or **modernism**. These are constructed and contest terms, convenient for scholars' discussions of Buddhist developments as "impartial" observers. It is safe to say that modernity generally refers to the gradually emerging social and intellectual world rooted in the Protestant Reformation, the scientific revolution, the European Enlightenment, Romanticism, the industrial revolution, and their suc-cessors up to the present time.[2] [7.1.1]

1.1.1.3 While it is true that some aspects of Buddhist religious changes are rooted in some form of modernity, or the influence of some Buddhist writers or leaders advocating some "reforms." These mod-ernist ideas or their influence are then used by individuals or groups to present their own perceptions of Buddhism. As a rule, these "modernist" or "reformist" persons or groups do not really uphold any early Buddhist teaching nor practise them, but are simply cannibalizing Buddhism for their own agenda for, per-sonal, communal or nationalist agenda.

We have elsewhere examined a number of such cases. A well-known examples of Buddhism used for **personal** agenda is Sangharakshita's "sexualized" Buddhism of the "New Society."[3] The **communal** trans-formations of Buddhism are commonly found in the traditional ethnic Buddhisms of Sri Lanka and SE Asia, which, in turn, often spawn virulently racist forms of local Buddhisms such as those against the Tamils in Sri Lanka [15.4], against the Muslims in Myanmar [15.7.8], and against the "Communists" in Thailand [15.2.2].

In Japan, we see how Buddhism was used by Buddhist leaders and teachers—the most notorious being Shaku Sōen [10.4] and D T Suzuki [19.3.1]—to promote Japanese "culture" as the ideal, and even support the country's war efforts. On a subtler level, we see a "theologization" of Buddhism, such as the way that Goenka has presented his Vipassana as a "lifestyle," that some may perceive as being a *religion* in its own right [12.3].

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[1] Here, "experience" is used in a broad sense of "activities," verbal, bodily and mental, over time, ie, in a psycho-social manner. For a purely *psychosocial* manner. For a psychological discussion of experience, see (2.1).

[2] D L McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* Oxford, 2008:9; M Berman, *All That's Solid Melts into Air: The experience of modernity, Simon & Schuster,* 1982:16.

[3] SD 34.5 (1.2.2); SD 7.9 (4.4.3.4-4.4.3.6, 4.5.1). For other cases, see [11.3.4].

The lesson of all this is that **religious ideas** are very powerful tools. In the hands of charismatic leaders and respected teachers, they attract believers and followers like an open blaze attracting swarms of insects. Such fires usually burn only as long as their fuel, the Guru, lives: this is a classic definition of **a cult**. The fire dies, so do the insects. Fortunately, we are living in an age of open and deep scholarship that often studies and exposes religious experiences for what they are. At the same time, we have the spiritual teachings of early Buddhism. While this safe path is still open to us, why not take it before the samsaric jungle swallows it up again.

1.1.1.4 One of the aims of this study is to examine these agenda and conditions that brought about such "modern" forms of Buddhism. Although "modernity" and "modernism" are scholarly constructions, even "academic fads," they serve as a contemporary language we use to communicate ideas to help us better understand our own Buddhist situation. Some catchy new terms and ideas will replace these in the coming generation, but, as committed Buddhists, our purpose is—as has been—that of understanding, practising and realizing the Buddha's teaching: there's nothing modern about this if it is to be efficacious.

1.1.2 The 2 pairs of counter-currents

1.1.2.1 The kinds of Buddhism we are likely to see in contemporary Malaysia and Singapore,[4] especially amongst the English-speaking Buddhists in the urban areas, is characteristically what scholars called "**Buddhist modernism**." Yet, coexisting with it is **Buddhist ethnicism**, a traditional form rooted in race and culture. Hence, it is helpful, that, from the start, we understand that the 2 terms do not refer to mutually exclusive realities, but aspects of the same Buddhism in our own times. These human and historical manifestations of Buddhism are its social currents: Buddhist modernism and ethnicism
There is another duality that characterizes this Buddhism, whether it is modern (or modernist), or ethnic (traditional). Like the tension between modernism and ethnicism, this second duality refers to **monastic** or clerical Buddhism, and to **lay** Buddhism. Technically, monastic Buddhism keeps to the Vinaya and a communal life.[5] These transpersonal and religious manifestations of Buddhism are its religious currents: the clerical and the laity.

1.1.2.2 These 2 pairs of watery turbulence aptly describe the counter-currents in the floods of Buddhist living and activities in the movements, organizations, temples, centres, communities and groups, whether monastic, lay or priestly. Strictly speaking, "**monastic**" refers to the renunciants who diligently keep to the Vinaya for the practice of the Dharma, but within which may lurk the dark shadows of Tartuffes. "**Lay**" refers to those following Buddhism nominally or practising it diligently while living a family life and earning a living. "**Priestly**" is a convenient *tertium quid* for Buddhists who are "neither monastic nor lay," or who see Buddhism as a worldly economic engagement: basically, they are professional priests.
In our study, we will thus see that there are no exact definitions, but at best, loose *descriptions* of Buddhist engagements and realities. These categories often overlap, some qualities are virtual rather than real. They are all, in some way, pointers in our journey towards realizing the true nature of Buddhist life and vision, and meantime we better understand our community, our own person and faith.

1.1.2.3 In this study, we will examine the apparently discrete realities of these contrasting tensions found amongst the local Mahāyāna priests, who often rationalize that Buddhism should be "modernized," by which they mean that the monastic rules should no more apply,[6] so that they may engage with Buddh-

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[4] I was born (1949) and raised in Malacca (locally, Melaka), and moved (2001) to Singapore, where I now live with my family.

[5] For our study (or academic) purposes, we will regard even those "monastics, clerics or priests" who only appear to keep to the Vinaya, or pretend to do so, as "monastic," even when they are but a dark shadow hiding in the light of the Dharma-Vinaya.

[6] In a Buddhist bookshop in Singapore, there is a sign actually prohibiting the laity from reading the Vinaya.

ist rituals and religious activities as professional undertakings, commercial enterprises and leisure (world-ly) pursuits.

As for clerical modernism, it is characterized by **ritual Buddhism** for the simple reason that there is really nothing to *personally* practise through self-initiative for self-realization and self-freedom. We must only follow some form of *communal* activity led by the clerics: by such rituals, the self is surrendered to the other. The cleric is seen as empowering us, cleansing us, governing us: it is *a other-dependent existence*. The best known of such rituals are those pertaining to <u>death</u>, especially funerals. The great advantage of this approach is that the <u>follower</u> has a regular "higher other-power" that he may turn to, and for that priest of "higher other-power," this generates <u>a guaranteed income</u> and support for life and leisure, exist-ence and pleasure.

Buddhist modernism and Buddhist ethnicism, being currents in the religious flood, are not mutually exclusive. They are patterns of events we see in Buddhism today. The success or failure of such a Buddh-ism depends on how these twin faces of Buddhism appear in society, how such a Buddhism manages it-self as **a Janus-faced faith**. Its leaders' views and conduct would then be the fashion for their followers, enhanced by the memes[7] of material culture.

1.1.2.4 The other undercurrent directing the flow of local Buddhist activities is predominated by **lay Buddhists**, running their own network, temples, centres or groups. As a rule, the leaders of such an organ-ized Buddhism tends to present it as an up-to-date or relevant religion so as to attract members, income and prestige. Such lay-run groups are often dependent on monastic patronage or clerical support, espec-ially priests[8] from Sri Lanka, who are employed as salaried religious icons like brahmin purohits.

Often, such monks are employed as "house priests" (like the brahminical purohit in ancient India). The main reason they need such monks is because their Buddhism is deeply rooted in **rituals** that they depend on as generating "other-power" [1.2.3], especially by way of blessings and "transference" of merits for their deceased and for better rebirths. This kind of Buddhism is a <u>religion</u> [10.7].

These Sinhalese priests act as a source of "blessings" and means for transferring worldly material benefits (usually food and money) for the departed. When such priests do not keep to the Vinaya, it is just jarring to see them as even being present at such hallowed events. [8.2]

The monks or priests who perform such rituals should be morally virtuous; since they reject the Vi-naya or merely put up a front of moral virtue, such rituals have no real spiritual efficacy, and our partici-pating in them is actually abetting their immorality; thus, adding on to our bad karma. Further, if we see these acts of being "virtuous" in themselves—as *ex opera operato,* as in the ritual acts of God-believers—then, we are only adding on to our fetter of "**attachment to rituals and vows**."[9]

1.1.2.5 Buddhist "**modernism**" is so called because of its perception that Buddhism "must keep up with the times." However, due to the <u>anomie</u>[10] that is prevalent in local Buddhism—every Centre runs on its own, and according to the fiat and fancy of its leaders—this often means that their views and activities

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[7] See **Memes**, SD 26.3.

[8] The word "priests" is used mainly because, as a rule, they do not keep to the Vinaya, and do not hold any fort-nightly conclave for the Pātimokkha recitation. They are also salaried (besides getting donations from the laity), and are even given cars to drive for themselves.

[9] This is one of <u>the 3 fetters</u> (*saṁyojana*)—self-identity view, spiritual doubt, attachment to rituals and vows—which prevents us from reaching the path. Breaking these 3 fetters, we attain streamwinning. See SD 3.3 (5); **Emot-ional independence**, SD 40a.8.

[10] *Anomie* (normlessness) is a sociological term for a social condition in which there is a breakdown or disappear-ance of the norms and values that were previously common to the society. Here, it refers to a disregard (mostly unconscious or uncontrollable) for the Vinaya for the sake of worldly gains. Hence, it has an importance sense of *adhamma.*

should be "relevant" to our modern times. Very often, this means keeping up with developments in the dominant religion, usually Christianity,[11] and in contemporary western Buddhism.

In fact, "Buddhist modernism" was originally termed "**Protestant Buddhism**."[12] [7.1 f]. However, amongst the Buddhists of Malaysia and Singapore this phenomenon is also characterized by local percep-tions of class, wealth and power (often one reflects the other). Buddhist groups, as a rule, seek authentic-ation or legitimation by being affiliated to some foreign teachers, usually from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thai-land or the West.

In other words, their Buddhist activities are inspired neither by the Dharma (the Buddha's teaching) nor by one's own Dharma practice, but by association with fetishes[13] of wealth, power and status—and externalizing goodness and holiness. [1.2.2]

This means that our wealth, power and status give us the privilege for being close to the source of power, the priests (the "other"). Lack of wealth, power or status distances us accordingly from that source of power, and from others with such "good karma." This is the tacit Buddhist notion of social class and **power distance**[14] that is both traditional (ethnic) and modernist, that is, it allows us (with these "karma") to engage with foreign teachers, especially Western teachers. This is also known as the "**Pinkerton syn-drome**."[15] [7.1.2]

1.2 VARIETIES OF BUDDHIST MODERNISM

1.2.1 Before the rise of modern and modernist Buddhism (Western Buddhism and Buddhist forms arising from a reaction to modernity and Western Buddhism), there were **ethnic Buddhisms**. "Ethnic Buddhism" refers to the Buddhism that historically arose before the rise of the colonial period (that is, the 16th cent-ury) that was patronized by the country's king, and evolved into an elite religion and as a faith of the masses sharing a common culture. These are, in fact, the factors that define a culture, that delimits it as an **ethnic Buddhism**, one that exploits Buddhism, instead to looking up to it as the Dharma that is our teacher. [8.1]

Alongside this elite or upper-class Buddhism, there is the ethnic Buddhism of the masses, that is, **a popular Buddhism**, an eclectic, magical (apotropaic), often some shamanistic form that includes deva or spirit worship, widely found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Khmer, Lao and Yunnan. Apparently older than these ethnic Buddhisms are the beliefs of the numerous tribes of southern Asia (south side of the Himalayas, Bangladesh and Myanmar),[16] northern Asia (Tibet, Mongolia and Siberia) and southeast Asian mainland. This latter group makes interesting study on their own as **tribal Buddhism**, a triumphalist racist ideology that resorts to violence, intolerance, discrimination, hate and other unbuddhist ways.

1.2.2 Buddhist modernism, as a social and religious phenomenon, grew from an interconnected web of developments and scholarly collaborations since the start of the 20th century. Scholars used the term

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[11] Eg, Christians sing hymns; hence, we should have Buddhist hymns, too; Catholic priests receive some stipend; so priests should be salaried, too. Anyway, the authorities stipulate that imported priests must be salaried (have financial support) to be able to stay for an extended period in Malaysia or Singapore.

[12] "Protestant Buddhism" was introduced by Sinhala scholar Gananath Obeyesekere to refer to a situation in Sin-hala Buddhism beginning in the late 19th century, in reaction to the activities of Protestant missionaries, and the influence of modern knowledge and technologies of the West. See Oxford DB: Protestant Buddhism.

[13] A **fetish** an inanimate object or an objectification of a person worshipped for its supposed magical or special powers, or because it is perceived to personify a spirit or higher power.

[14] Amongst the Buddhists of Singapore, often one's status is defined by one's class and wealth. Amongst Malay-sian Buddhists, deference to status is the norm: in 2012 Malaysia held the *highest* power distance index (PDI) in the world! [SD 60.1b (2.5.2.1)].

[15] The Pinkerton syndrome: SD 19.2a (2.3.2); SD 7.9 (3.5.3.4).

[16] In Bangladesh, there are the Mamars and the Chakmas. For a list of ethnic groups in Myanmar, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_groups_in_Myanmar. As part of the Christian evangelization of such Buddhists, Paul Hattaway has prepared an encyclopedia of *Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary,* Carlisle (UK): Piquant Editions, 2004 (overview of Buddhist peoples: xv-xix).

"Protestant Buddhism" [1.1.2.5] to describe a transformation or devolution of Sinhala Buddhism from ritual-based, temple-run and dogma-rooted religious activities into *a person-centred engagement* with religious materialism rather than a Dharma-spirited vision.

By **person-centred** is meant that the modernist changes were not inspired by Buddhist teachings, but by individuals like Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), who was an active lay Sinhala Buddhist missionary, inspiring the rise of lay Buddhism.[17] Another modernist figure was the Sinhala priest, Walpola Rahula (1907-1997), who was a salaried academic with various universities for most of his clerical life. His book *Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1974) basically encouraged monks to be socially and politically engaged, even by setting aside the Vinaya;[18] that is, by **personal engagement**.

By **religious materialism** is meant a priest-centred Buddhism that focuses on material benefits here and now, such as blessings of buildings and vehicles, good luck, financial success, protection from evil (blessed threads), "transferring" merits to the dead and so on. Instead of looking up to monks or nuns as Dharma-Vinaya practitioners and teachers, we *fear* them as "powerful" priests who have some special powers from which we can benefit through gifts of cash and other personal services. Buddhism has degenerated into rank superstition.

1.2.3 A century before Buddhist modernism arose in Sri Lanka in the 20th century, it featured prominently in Japan. This was the emergence of **New Buddhisms** (*Shin Bukkyō* 新佛教) in Japan in the late 20th century [10]. It characteristically promoted modern views of Zen meditation as our "original face," not as a *state* to be worked for with traditional sitting, but as a status we attain simply by following Zen. Its teachings were declared to be scientific and served as the basis for all religions!

New Buddhism arose as a desperate struggle by the Japanese Buddhist elite to revive the religion in the face of draconian legislation, dwindling public interest, a loss of regular income for temples, and persecution of Buddhism in the 1870s [10.2]. Following the nation's efforts in modernization during the Meiji reign, the Buddhist elite, too, looked to the West, to modern science, learning and religion to reinvent and revitalize themselves.[19]

1.2.4 The Buddhist reform movement worked to position Buddhism as a world faith with modern teachings, to free it from the perception of being an outmoded, foreign and funerary cult. A notable figure of this modernist reform was **Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki** (1870-1966), who, for a generation, was a major influence on the interpretation and propagation of Zen Buddhism in the West.

Suzuki was himself deeply influenced by the works of Paul Carus (1852-1919), German author, editor, student of comparative religion and philosopher, and the pioneer psychologist William James (1842-1910). These works held up a modernist view of Buddhism as a religion of science, free of dogmas and superstitions, through which one can gain enlightenment purely through personal religiosity.[20]

Paul Carus, in his book, *The Gospel of Buddha* (1894), declared Zen-like, that he was "an atheist who loved God" (1894:26). He enthusiastically presented the Buddha as the first prophet of his Religion of Science.[21] Suzuki translated the book into Japanese, and it became a leading Buddhist textbook in Japan. William James, in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), states that

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[17] Educated in Christian mission schools, he later (1880) came into contact with the Theosophical Society, and led the Buddhist Theosophical Society. He left it in 1890 and travelled extensively as a Buddhist missionary in Asia and the West. In 1891, he founded the Mahā Bodhi Society in Bodhgaya, India. In 1915, he was exiled for political activities, and ended his days as a Sinhala monk.

[18] See SD 60.1b (2.1.1.2).

[19] See SD 66.13 (3.4.1).

[20] On Paul Carus, see T A Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912,* 1992:60-68, and M J Verhoeven, "Americanizing the Buddha: Paul Carus and the Transformation of Asian Thought," in *The Faces of Buddhism in America,* 1998:207-227.

[21] R Sharf, "Losing our religion," *Tricycle* interview 2007:46.

religious experience is essentially a personal experience.[22] From such a personal notion of religious experi-ence, Suzuki worked out his view of *satori* 悟 (self-knowing) or *kenshō* 見性 (seeing one's nature). [8.4, 19.3]

1.2.5 The rise of Buddhist modernism inspired the notion that **meditation** is a doctrine-free personal act, as apparently shown in such modern work on meditation as *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (1962) by the German monk, Nyanaponika Thera (1901-1994), who popularized Mahasi's Vipassana technique.[23] In this book, Nyanaponika rendered *sati* (usually translated as "mindfulness, memory") as *bare attention.* That is, "the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us." (1962:32). [7.3.3]

1.2.6 Having briefly but essentially examined the nature and presence of <u>Buddhist modernism</u> in Asia, we will now examine how it has affected Buddhist scholarship, and even Buddhist "experience" in the current time. We will broadly examine how many, if not most, Buddhists today tend to understand or see Buddhist <u>experience</u> in *modernist* terms, and how we may be able to correct this curious short-sighted-ness.

2 Two areas of modern Buddhist experience

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.0 We will here briefly examine how Buddhists generally, those of SE Asia particularly, respond to the challenges of modernity by giving greater emphasis to **education**. Besides studying the canonical script-ures, monastics are encouraged, or at least, given the opportunity, to broaden their education. We will see some of the benefits of this new approach, and the challenges that it raises.

2.1.1 Buddhist modernism tends to reduce Buddhism to a somewhat fixed set of proposals and practice that, in some way, distorts the sense of its wholeness and complexity. A proper understanding of Buddh-ism demands not only a familiarity with the contemporary Buddhist situation, but also engaging with our historical past, especially early Buddhism, and the foreign Buddhism.

In the case of foreign Buddhism, we should diligently seek to understand the history and contexts in their respective forms or groups. To benefit from this approach, we must be willing and able to see past the presuppositions of our time and place. This is not only the task of critical scholarly practice of Buddh-ism, but also of practising Buddhists themselves.

2.1.2 Buddhist studies

2.1.2.1 In this section, our study will examine 2 uneven but closely related areas: (1) Buddhist studies and (2) Buddhist scholarship. I use the term "**Buddhist studies**" in a narrow sense to include (but not ex-clusively) the study of Buddhist texts, their translations and usages; the study and practice of meditation; and the conceptions and claims of the path and enlightenment. Our study will focus on <u>early Buddhism</u> (taking this as our basis for any comparative studies), and how it is interpreted, revised and used by both the Theravāda teachers and their followers in our own times, and by non-Theravāda, even non-Buddh-ists, especially in modern psychology.

All these form the foundation for our eventual examination of a <u>psychopathology of Buddhist medita-tion</u>, where we will examine the effects of meditation on practitioners, including emotional and psycho-logical problems that arise in the process. This will be the focus of **SD 60.1e**.

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[22] "This sort of religion prompts are personal not ritual acts" (1902:28) repr London: Routledge, 2004.
[23] 1962:105; SD 60.1b (2.4.5).

2.1.2.2 In this study (as in SD 60.1c), I have consciously used the term "**enlightenment**," whereas in my other writings and works I have preferred to use **awakening** (*bodhi*). As a rule, I have used "enlighten-ment" to any idiosyncratic claims to having attained some kind of highest realization, as conceived in the personal interpretations of sects and sectarian teachers. I have reserved "awakening" as taught in the early Buddhist texts.

The reason for this will become obvious below: we are, after all, dealing with the rhetoric of Buddhist experience and meditation (which is, of course, *the theme* of this section). We will look into the fascinat-ing ways in which Buddhist teachers explain or construct their Buddhist experiences, how they teach them, and how their audience and followers construe their teachings and such experiences.

All this will be in the background, the basis, of our study, which is geared to a critical analysis of re-cent views of Buddhism as teaching, as practice and as experience. In other words, we will examine how **living Buddhism** is constructed, envisioned and practised by the Buddhists themselves. To help us do this, we will now review the vocabulary, ideas and writings of specialists in Buddhism.

2.1.3 Buddhist scholarship

2.1.3.1 Buddhist scholarship covers a systematic, extensive and growing collection of scholarly stud-ies, records and views of both academics and Buddhist practitioners regarding Buddhism, especially by way of metaethics and psychology. **Buddhist metaethics** is an analytic philosophy or investigation that explores the status, foundations and scope of moral values, properties and words by Buddhists. **Buddhist psychology** refers to a study of "how scholars think how Buddhists *think"* about Buddhism, about them-selves (as individuals) and themselves (as a group), about their teachers, their teachings and their own experiences.

2.1.3.2 In other words, we will be examining the metaethics and psychology of **Buddhist experience**. Hence, we will examine how we (our teachers and we ourselves) construct Buddhism, how we view these constructions, and how they affect us, or are seen to affect us. Our study will examine over 2 decades of scholarly studies of Buddhists and their experiences. We will investigate the veracity of such claims, and their significance for us as practising Buddhists.

2.1.3.3 "Every teacher his teaching" goes a popular Tibetan saying. We often see how Buddhism be-comes a **rhetorical device** for the Buddhist teachers, and how we ourself understand and use Buddhism in the light of this. As a (un)skilful means, "rhetoric" has 2 active aspects:
(1) as the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially by exploiting figures of speech, metaphors, cultural norms and other literary devices;
(2) as language designed to persuade or impress others, but which actually lacks sincerity, meaning, even the truth.

2.1.4 Scholars and practitioners

2.1.4.1 In the last 5 decades of my Buddhist life (1980s onwards), I have made a study of philosophy, sociology and psychology for a better understanding of my readings and experience of Buddhism in its various forms, especially the early Buddhist texts[24] (that is the Pali suttas and the Āgama texts).[25] Al-though we have no written records of the Buddha's teaching and early Buddhist history, these are the best texts we have that give us a very good idea of early Buddhism. Hence, they are called **the early Bud-dhist texts** (EBTs)**.**

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[24] Since 2002, I have been regularly translating the suttas in the Sutta Discovery (SD) series, of which this is SD 60.1c (vol 60 part 2). The SD vols (each about 200 A4 pages) now total over 80 volumes. Two copies of each vol are archived in the National Library (Reference).
[25] SD 58.1 (5.4.5).

The early Buddhist teachings and practices today lie deeply buried in the Theravāda, that is, the ethnic Buddhism of Sri Lanka and SE Asia. Much of this ethnic Buddhism is the result of centuries of cultural accretions and traditional materials which often diverge from the early teachings or even introduce new teachings and narratives.

2.1.4.2 With the help of modern disciplines, such as *archaeology, history, philology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and literary studies* [6.3.5], scholars are able to reconstruct a viable history and literature of early Buddhism so that we have a better idea of what happened with Buddhism of the Buddha, even about the Buddha himself. Basically, such scholars deal only with **the material artefacts** of early Buddhism. Hence, whatever they reconstruct from them are merely reflective of that window of fact or figure within the range of their vision and acuity.

This is like a photographer or travel writer who sees only a part of one side of a huge mountain range, taking beautiful photos and writing informative details about them. Yet, much more remain undiscovered and unknown to the tourist, even much less to the casual reader of travel guides. Moreover, scholars who are "not Buddhists" are like the photographer and travel writer—they are good at their jobs and paid for them—but they have never climbed or lived in these mountains. They only know *about* the mountains but have never really experienced them.[26]

2.1.4.3 Even the most stunning pictures of mountain ranges, or the most inspiring writings about them are *not it.* They are *about* the mountains, but not *the mountains* themselves. Now suppose these scholars *do* explore and record details about the mountains, and produce reliably informative writings and encyclopaedias on these mountains—but they neither live in the mountains nor love them.

Only those who live on the mountains, and love the mountains, will truly benefit from such a life. They are like musicians who love music: they not only talk and teach music, but they know their musical instruments, compose sweet music, and play them well. They are also very happy on that account.

2.1.4.4 The point remains that as Buddhists we should live and love the Buddha Dharma. We do not see Buddhism merely as *facts and figures*: how interesting or impressive they may be, they are not Buddha Dharma. We must experience the Dharma by keeping our body well and ready (cultivating moral virtue in our deeds and speech), training our mind to be calm and clear, and *seeing the mountains as mountains.*

Otherwise, we are like **the blind** who live in the mountains or at their foot. We keep getting lessons from other mountain-dwellers about *light and seeing*, details and stories about the mountains: we are only going by the word of others. We do not know the mountains for ourselves.

Yet the true mountain dwellers never identify with the mountains: they do not feel they *own* the mountains or that the mountains own them; they know that even the massive mountains change imperceptibly, and in time they will be gone. Then, they will all rise again in the next world-period. They see the impermanence of their frail lives, like the apparently massive mountains. Yet as humans we are born, we live, we die and are reborn in an endless cycle, reflected in the orbit of the daily sun that shines on the worlds.[27]

2.1.4.5 Both scholars and practitioners have to **earn a living** through Buddhism (loosely put). The scholars' wages come from (usually) an institutional authority (such as a university) that employs the scholars, and also regulates them. Despite academic freedom, scholars are still answerable to this institutional authority. Moreover, he has to be both diligent (eg in publishing works) and dexterous in his teaching, so that his course (Buddhist studies) will be a popular income-generating field. Even then, at the end of a scholar's career, it is rare that he would continue teaching or writing, or age simply catches up with him.

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[26] See SD 60.1d (4.4.9.2).

[27] This is a reflection on "non-identification" (*atam,mayatā*) with things, ie, of nonself: SD 19.13.

A full-time Dharma worker who studies, practises and teaches early Buddhism (perhaps translates suttas) is supported by **right livelihood** (*sammā ājiva*), which includes the support of Buddhists who have *faith* in his work, or who use his works. Due to the simple Dharma-spirited life of the Dharma worker, his daily and worldly needs are often sufficiently provided by a few regular donors or "stewards" (*upaṭṭhāka*). For special needs and projects, a Dharma worker may announce it to his supporters, who would usually respond favourably. In fact, right livelihood, properly understood and applied, is able to support married Dharma workers, meaning that both spouses are (or at least one is) engaged in full-time Dharma work.[28]

2.1.4.6 Right livelihood implies that there is **wrong livelihood**: this is simply exploiting Buddhism (especially the faith and funds of Buddhists, and their income and industry) for personal or unbuddhist gains. Wrong livelihood often involves transfer of wealth from the laity to the "priestly Buddhists" (including monastics who do not keep to the Vinaya). With the rise of secularism in modernist Buddhism, more priests are involved in shopping and investments, businesses, money-centred religious activities, even immoral activities (such as smuggling).[29] [8.2]

3 The traditional Buddhist experience

3.0 INTRODUCTION

We look deeper into what happens to Buddhism, how do we **experience** it, when we try to "modernize" it. Do we understand what we are changing or needs changing? Are we throwing out the baby with the washwater? Are we inventing a new Buddhism for ourself: is it Buddhism then? Why are we doing this?

3.1 EXPERIENCE AS CURRENCY

3.1.1 Broadly speaking, **religious experience** may be understood as narratives about religious figures, especially of saints or those whom we hold up as sacred. Such narratives—stories and talks communicated to others with faith and emotion—through active communication, gain value as a powerful form of religious currency.

This currency is then distributed whenever there is the opportunity over a wider audience. As belief amongst audiences grows, that narrative grows in value as currency: the virtuoso becomes more sacred. It also empowers the currency distributor, at least with some sense of gratification through being connected with the perceived Sacred. [9.6.7]

3.1.2 In a time when a country's currency was based on some kind of national reserve, such as gold, silver or both, the currency that valuates or legitimizes holy Buddhist individuals is rooted in **the narrative of experiences** (the stories and myths) attributed to such individuals. The value of such religious currency rises and grows as this narrative is repeated and spread over a wider area.

Very few people actually see the gold reserves, which very much depends on the faith of those using the currency (the money). No one can actually verify the narratives told and retold of those holy individuals. Their "belief value" simply grows by the publicity and popularity of these narratives through personal communication and the mass media. Hence, we may see the power of the narratives of such individuals in printed form, such as Ajahn Maha Boowa's hagiographical account, *Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera: A spiritual biography* (2003).[30]

Boowa is a good example of this: he wrote a "magical" biography of Ajahn Mun which empowered him (Boowa) with charisma. Psychologically, the book's "power" aspects (miraculous and amazing narratives) are really about Boowa himself; the simpler historical and more believable parts are probably about the saintly Mun. Then, Boowa, riding on his charisma, raised huge amounts of funds for the nation-

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[28] On right livelihood, see SD 37.8.
[29] Ananda Mangala, "Sri Lanka Monks in Malaysia and Singapore." *The Young Buddhist,* Singapore, 1977:117-124.
[30] SD 60.1b (5.11.4 f).

al treasury (attracting further charisma)[31] and also tried to topple one of the highest-ranking Thai monks, the then Abbot of Wat Srakes.[32]

3.2 THE MODERN BUDDHIST EXPERIENCE

3.2.1 In our own times, serious scholars of Buddhism, like Robert Sharf[33] and David Burton,[34] remind us of the nature of "religious <u>experience</u>" (with the emphasis on "experience"): we must carefully examine what we are really looking at, what we are looking for, when we study or practise any religion. In the case of Buddhism, **Sharf**—in his thoughtful and influential paper, "Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience" (1995:228)—explains to us that "the role of <u>experience</u> in the history of Buddh-ism has been greatly exaggerated in contemporary scholarship." (1995:228 emphasis added).

Sharf claims that <u>the significance of meditation</u>, "supposedly the quintessential Buddhist experience, has been overplayed due to romantic projections about Buddhism by Western scholars and enthusiasts." Furthermore, some popular Asian Buddhist modernist reformers, "who have influenced and been influ-enced by Western interpretations of Buddhism, construe Buddhism as fundamentally about meditation practices and the transformative personal experiences that they are said to produce" (1995:241-259).

3.2.2 Sharf contends that autobiographical writing about personal experiences is rare in pre-modern Buddhism. He points outs that when we carefully examine such abstruse philosophical manuals—such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi,magga*, Asaṅga's *Bodhisattva,bhūmi*, *Kamalaśīla*'s *Bhāvanā,kramas*, and many others[35]—that describe in detail the stages of the Buddhist path. They are *not* reports of the actual medi-tation experiences of their scholastic authors or anyone else. But actually "prescriptive systematizations of scriptural materials" (Sharf 1995:236).

In fact, they are *not* necessarily based on <u>personal experiences</u>. Such treatises may <u>explain</u> Buddhist doctrine and experiences, but it is doubtful that they were commonly used as *guidebooks* for successful meditation. Even if some (especially their followers) may claim that such writings were based on their personal experiences, it is almost impossible to find any of their followers who have actually attained all or any of those states!

Historical and ethnographic evidence, in fact, indicates that "they functioned more as sacred talismans than as practical guides. Texts on meditation were venerated as invaluable spiritual treasures to be cop-ied, memorized, chanted, and otherwise revered" rather than as practical guides of meditative or higher experiences (1995:241). In other words, such texts, in our own times, are used as tokens and totems of legitimization for the teacher as an authentic master of spiritual powers.

3.2.3 Sharf does not deny that there may have been Buddhist meditators who had transformative experi-ences and altered states of consciousness, but that "the actual practice of what we would call meditation rarely played a major role in Buddhist monastic life" (241). The proper topics for academic study or any serious examination of Buddhism, says Sharf, is <u>the social, political, and ideological effects of Buddhist reports and representations of religious experiences</u>. In his study of "**experience**," he notes that these

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[31] It is possible that many saw Boowa as a sort of Mahāyāna-like Bodhisattva who was willing to break the Vinaya rules "for the greater good"! Perhaps, it was not an easy decision for Boowa himself: in such situations, we are likely to act on "instinct" than what we had traditionally been trained for.

[32] SD 60.1b (5.11).

[33] Robert Sharf, "Buddhist meditation and the rhetoric of meditative experience," *Numen* 42,3 1995:228-283. Prof Sharf is Chair of the Berkeley Centre for Buddhist Studies, Dept of East Asian Languages and Cultures: https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/faculty/robert-sharf. https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/RobertSharf.html.

[34] Dr David Burton is senior lecturer in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, in the School of Humanities at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

[35] We may here include, eg, Pa-Auk Sayadaw's *Knowing and Seeing:* SD 60.1b (8.1.0).

states and situations can be properly scrutinized by any trained specialist or scholar, unlike the private, subjective and indeterminate mental episodes to which the reports purportedly refer.[36]

Such academic views are a useful corrective to the romantic, idealized misperceptions that Buddhists often have of teachers and teachings. Instead, we (the followers and practitioners) should devote our lives to transformative mental cultivation in the pursuit of the path and awakening. It is also a sober reminder for us not to assume that the doctrines of the various Buddhist traditions are necessarily derived from the *personal* experience of the authors of the doctrinal texts; nor that they are always definitive reports by these authors of the *experiences* of other Buddhists. (Burton 2020:189 f)

3.2.4 Both Sharf and Burton agree that the modern emphasis by both Buddhists and scholars on individual experiences has tended to produce a subjectivized[37] view of Buddhism at the expense of other features of Buddhist traditions such as the institutional and the ritual.[38] Sharf, furthermore, rightly emphasizes the political function that narratives of Buddhist religious experiences or status often have: they bestow *power and charisma* on those who claim to have them, and which may then be used to discredit or marginalize others.[39] [3.1.2]

In Sinhala Buddhism, for example, there is what is known as "**the Chief High Priest**[40] **syndrome**." Whenever such a priest of position is criticized, he would not answer the allegations, but let others speak out in his defence. The general idea is to remind the critic of his "social status" in the group, like an indirect warning that he would be ostracized for his deviance.

In a foreign-mission situation (like those in Malaysia and Singapore), **the powerful priest, teacher or leader** would simply make the criticism known, usually in an indirect, nonchalant, "I'm not this" manner, to local supporters in his temple or group to instead take that local critic[41] to task for not knowing his status and place in society.

The critic would then be reminded of the priest's position (He's a venerable, you know! The Chief, you know! And so on); otherwise, the critic would be ostracized.[42] This is also a situation where a powerful person, to consolidate his position, uses the strategy of "**divide and conquer**."[43] Local Buddhists are divided or treated according to their status or class for the benefit of foreign religious masters (who are regarded to be of the highest class, even caste).[44]

3.3 LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

3.3.1 There is a vital difference between the fact that even the greatest Buddhist teachers of our times are capable of human errors and subhuman states, and the view that they are "all" bad. Some of the

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[36] Sharf 1998:110-114; D Burton 2020:189.

[37] "Subjectivized" refers to how words or realities are based on our own ideas and views, mostly without any significant objective (true or real) sense of the situation.

[38] Very often, a religious person's status is based on his relationship with his institution (temple, centre, university, etc) or based on some form of recognition by the authorities (clerical, academic, worldly, traditional, etc).

[39] See Sharf 1995:265; Burton 2020:190.

[40] Also "Mahā Nāyaka" and so on.

[41] This may of course be me or you, since such situations will continue to arise and work nefariously in your own time. This has happened before, is happening now, and will continue to happen so long as we fail to know what is really going on.

[42] See **(Aṭṭhaka) Khaluṅka S** (A 8.14), SD 7.9 (4.4.3.2).

[43] This was a common British colonial strategy of maintaining control over subordinates or opponents (usually natives of the land) by encouraging dissent amongst themselves so that they will not join together against one. A similar saying is "divide and rule" (Lat *divide et impera*) but this can have a positive meaning to share power fairly and govern together. For a negative example, see SD 59.15 (2.1.4).

[44] On caste-consciousness amongst some Sinhala priests, see SD 7.9 (4.3.2.1); SD 60.1b (4.2.3.2).

worst things (that are in some way right and true) have been alleged against the greatest Buddhist cele-brities in our own times, especially against their eccentricities, flamboyance or wrong views.[45]

Often such remarks will simply glance off their Velcro-like robes like tiny rain-drops sliding off lotus leaves, or merely tickle the charismatic guru like water-drops onto a white-hot iron pan on a blazing flame. The painful reality is that for most Buddhists, truth and correctness are defined by the teacher (personal charisma), not the teaching (the Buddha Dharma).

We are attracted to a teacher, as a rule, because *he appears to echo or endorse our own views*. On the other hand, there are many of us who hold up a guru in high esteem because *we do not seem to under-stand a word he is saying* (after all, he is enlightened, we are not). In fact, as teacher-lovers, we are likely to be terribly disenchanted when the teacher no more mirrors our canon of views than when he is eccen-tric or wrong about deep teachings.

In 2021, a retired doctor, who had been following my sutta classes, publicly expressed his utter disap-pointment when I declared that **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65) is not a carte blanche for freely holding on to whatever views we like, but a guide to what's unwholesome, what's wholesome, and why it is best to keep to the wholesome. "I thought Buddhism teaches that we can do whatever we feel right!" he retort-ed.[46]

On the other hand, as the guru's shadow, we are likely (and rightly) to start having doubts when we begin to understand the way he thinks and the realities behind his conduct. At this stage, only when we are morally strong enough or by some serendipity that we would free ourselves from the shadows to live our own lives in the light.

3.3.2 In Buddhism, whether traditional or modern, this narrative of monks, nuns and teachers are as varied as the scholars who study them and the writers who author books about them. In our unawak-ened minds, there is much truth in the view that there are neither good nor bad monks or nuns: our views make them so. In essence, this is what is meant by "narrative" in our psychosociological study of Buddhist experiences and meditation.

When we are favourably disposed towards a teacher, especially when he sees us as useful in body or profitable in pocket, he is likely to be well disposed to us, teaching us good Dharma (as we see it). We may even reflect the teacher's amazing virtues before others.[47] This is even more spiritually amazing when we continue to grow and transform ourselves in its fertile soil, to head for the path of awakening, or simply to become better humans.

3.3.3 There are, of course, a few good teachers, may be more: we should not be so negative as to summarily view that all Buddhist teachers are ignorant. Buddhism scholar, **Janet Gyatso**, in her paper, "Healing burns with fire: The facilitations of experience in Tibetan Buddhism," rightly warns that "this important revision of western presumptions about Buddhist practice should not be taken to the extreme, to suggest that Buddhists do not also sometimes seek what they take to be religiously salvific experience through meditation and other practices." (1999:116)

She focuses on various forms of Tibetan Buddhism in which there is an indigenous tradition of interest in religious experience, prior to any Western influence. Tibetan Buddhism often emphasizes that effective teachers need to have *meditation experiences*, there are meditation retreats to enable lay and monastic practitioners to have such experiences, and a small minority of Buddhist virtuosos specialize in this pursuit (1999:116 f).

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[45] The celebrity monk Brahmavamso of Perth (Australia), eg, was of the opinion that there was *no* dhyana before the Buddha, that he discovered it! And meditation scholar Gunaratana actually stated in his writings that *thinking* occurs during deep dhyana! See **The Buddha discovered dhyana**, SD 33.1b (2.1 + 6).

[46] A 3.65/1:188-193 (SD 35.4a). My point is that we should read the Sutta as a whole, esp the sections on the courses of karma, and also the conclusion.

[47] In the evening of my life, I am inclined to say that most of us tend to become adult and dying versions of what we were as children. A psychoanalysis of the early life of some of our leaders (incl world leaders), prone to violence or vices, would reveal interesting insights into their present behaviour.

She points to pre-modern Tibetan Buddhist <u>autobiographical</u> accounts that provide first-person reports of "dreams, meditative sensations, visions, and insights" (id). Such autobiographical records of significant religious experiences also occur in various other Buddhist traditions.[48] Such writings are, of course, non-historical; they are **hagiography**, religious narratives of what holy or charismatic figures claim to have experienced. They are meant to be taken as "religious fiction" but with some educational value for the wise who understand religious language.

3.3.4 Although such Buddhist "<u>experiences</u>" have been overemphasized, their significance should not be summarily dismissed. Buddhist reports of **religious experiences** continue to be an important area of academic study and controversy; it is what makes religious studies and Buddhist studies interesting and profitable. The remainder of this chapter will examine some further important facets of such accounts of Buddhist experiences and the moral and philosophical questions that they stimulate.

4 Western Buddhist experience

4.0 INTRODUCTION
The education we have been discussing in the previous section [3] is <u>a western education</u>. We are just starting to understand its nature but yet to use it in a manner that not only "modernizes" (as if it is always a good thing) but also helps us to better understand what the Buddha's teachings are about in terms of morality, psychology, philosophy and awakening. In this brief section, we will review what happens when ancient Buddhist wisdom meets modern science. This discussion continues into the next section [5].

4.1 BUDDHISM, REVISED WESTERNIZED EDITION
We have so far briefly explored the nature of <u>the traditional Asian Buddhist experience</u> (or experiences) of holy persons which defines how they see Buddhism and use the teachings. The narratives generated, consciously or unconsciously, by the holy persons and those patronizing such holy persons (or persons perceived to be "holy"), apply not only to the Asian situation, but to **the Western Buddhist contexts**, too.
Western and westernized Buddhist teachers (often, indirectly, with the help of scholarly studies), create their own narratives of Buddhist experiences. Western Meditation teachers, such as **Jack Kornfield** (one of the senior American meditation teachers), for example, tend to de-emphasize <u>the religious elements</u> of Buddhism such as "rituals, chanting, devotional and merit-making activities, and doctrinal studies" and focus on <u>meditative practice</u>.

4.2 Gil Fronsdal, in his paper, "Insight meditation in the United States" (1998), observes that: "The first American vipassana teachers studied with Asian teachers who were part of this 20th-century modernization movement. Joseph Goldstein (b 1944) studied with Mahasi and his students Anagarika Munindra and U Pandita; Sharon Salzberg (b 1952) with Goenka, Mahasi, Munindra and U Pandita; Jack Kornfield (b 1945) with Ajahn Chah and Mahasi Sayadaw; Ruth Denison with Goenka's teacher, U Ba Khin. Focusing on soteriology and meditation, these Westerners were rarely introduced to the Buddhist world as a whole, including its complex interrelationships with Southeast Asian society.
Thus, these teachers returned to the US as importers of Vipassana meditation but imbued with very little of the traditional aspects of Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism. **Jack Kornfield** explained that the teachers of his time wanted to offer the powerful practices of insight meditation, as many of their teach-

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[48] A notorious case is that of the disgraced Thai monk, Ajahn Yantra Amaro: Piyasilo, *Charisma in Buddhism,* 1992h: 113-139 (II:6.8) (Buddhanet repr 151-186): https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Charisma-in-Buddhism.-piyasilo.pdf.

ers did, as simply as possible without the complications of rituals, robes, chanting and the whole religious tradition.[49]

The early American Vipassana teachers went even further than most of their own Asian teachers in presenting vipassana practice *independent* of the Theravada tradition. Teaching as laypeople to an almost exclusively lay audience, they were free to package vipassana practice in American cultural forms and language. (Fronsdal 1998)

5 Revival of the "old meditations"

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Here, we shall compare how two different groups of intelligent western Buddhists take up Buddhism in contrasting ways. The first group tried to <u>westernize</u> Buddhism as the foundation for their "New Society" but this failed disastrously. Picking the pieces, they emerged from their adolescence of experimental Buddhism to slowly accept early Buddhism, at least as a basis for their practice and life. The other group had from the start, patiently and carefully, learned a Thai meditation brought to them by a young adventurer, but which they found to be a part of an ancient, almost forgotten, meditation system. They happily thrived with this wonderful discovery.

5.1 CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO BUDDHISM

5.1.1 If the western Buddhists of the US tend to innovate, even invent, their Buddhisms, British Buddhists seem to seek some kind of "older version" of Buddhism, some pre-Theravada meditation or some traditional Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna Buddhism. These two aspects of British Buddhism serve well for illustrating 2 successful examples of **Buddhism in practice** rather than as an academic or a theoretical study of British Buddhism.[50]

The word "successful" is used in a broad sense to reflect the effective, even remarkable, organization and progress of the centre or movement (however each regarded itself). Our investigation here concerns the kind of narrative based on which such a group views its form of Buddhism. We will also examine the profiles of the members of such a group and how they see Buddhism.

5.1.2 We will examine only 2 contrasting British Buddhist groups: **the Western Buddhist Order** (WBO)-Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO) (now called the Triratna Buddhist Community, TBC) [5.2] and **the Samatha Trust** (ST) [5.3]. While the former may be seen as an experiment that went disastrously wrong, but was able to reinvent itself, the latter seems to be a steady avatar of British Buddhism that has withstood the test of time and continues to evolve and grow phenomenally. Historically, both groups are in the 2nd generation of their growth: the WBO/TBC, with the passing of its founder Sangharakshita[51] (1925-2018), and the ST, with the passing of one of its pioneers (the sutta/Abhidhamma specialist) L S Cousins[52] (1942-2015).[53]

I have examined both groups elsewhere in other contexts, and these should be read for a fuller understanding of the present survey.[54] While the WBO/TBC is an interesting study of <u>a cult</u> maturing into a more open eclectic Buddhist group, the ST is a study in how British Buddhist scholars have successfully grown the Bodhi tree in UK soil, providing a healthy space for the study and practice of **early Buddhism**.

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[49] Personal communication to Fronsdal, June 1995.

[50] See eg Philip Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism,*1988:54-79 (ch 5) The Buddha: from myth to history.

[51] On Sangharakshita (Philip Lingwood): SD 34.5 (1.2.2); SD 7.9 (4.4.3.4-6, 4.5.1).

[52] On L S Cousins: SD 60.1b (6.2.1.2).

[53] Cf SD 60.1d (4.3.1), esp (4.3.1.4).

[54] See 2 prec nn and their cross-refs, and (1.5.2 f) below.

5.2 BUDDHISM AS SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

5.2.1 Psychologically, we may see the English guru **Sangharakshita** (Dennis P Lingwood) as a man deeply driven by homosexual lust, and trying to reconcile his sexuality with Buddhist teachings. Rejection by mainstream Buddhists (including his inability to keep to the traditional Vinaya) drove him conveniently to be an anarchist with hubris, with a poetic, creative streak. In short, he was a sad case of a member or sympathizer of the Hippie[55] movement of the 1960s, or one whose views and conduct reflected such an attitude. Understandably, he identified with and exploited the apparently free and fuzzy aspects of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna for meaning and purpose in his wildly unsettling life.

Such teachings provided Sangharakshita with the narratives for building his charisma as a Guru who eventually sat grandly at the very front of his home-grown Refuge Tree[56] with all the other Teachers, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas at his service, authenticating him as *the* Guru who was both "above" the world, yet compassionately reaching down to the world with his body as Teaching, especially to young Bodhisattva-like boys in his Community serving as his Consorts (*yidam*) to bring forth True Individuals into the New Society, that is, the Western Buddhist Order.[57] This is sexist and sexual Theology, a very twisted virtual reality—it is nothing but a brilliant case of self-identification affirmed by attachment to rituals and vows.[58]

5.2.2 Sociologists define Sangharakshita's WBO/FWBO/TBC as a "New Religious Movement" (NRM), that is, one of the diverse range of religious groups that emerged mostly in western countries in the 1960s or later. The presence of new religious movements has, however, a much longer history than that, especially in the US [5.2.1]. In fact, the phrase may refer to any movement seen as outside of the culturally established religious traditions. [13.2.5]

Michele Dillon further notes, "As part of the broader critique and declining authority of social institutions associated with the political protest and identity movements of the 1960s, many college-age youth in particular were drawn towards participation in the alternative or countercultural norms articulated by NRMs and the alternative values and lifestyles they promoted and/or required of members."[59]

As a rule, an NRM is started by a person, whether consciously or unintentionally, who attracts a vast or growing following by his teachings and charisma. More often, his followers are drawn by the teacher's **charisma**: they look up to the Teacher, the Guru, rather than the teaching, which may even be impromptu or change over time.

Psychologically, charisma often means that there is a powerful transference by the follower onto the Guru. The Guru is often seen more than a Teacher, but as a Parent or an Authority, even a God figure. In other words, the follower sees the Guru as *empowering* him or her in some way. This is then spurred on by the Guru's **counter-transference**: he accepts the power role that he feigning or is thrown upon him.

5.2.3 The painful tragedy with being a Guru is that, one stops learning about oneself, one stops growing spiritually, buried alive in one's Godly **status** amongst equally dead dark shades, lurking with mindless minions, sucked in by the momentum of the Guru's body and speech. Yet, such a movement is sadly cyclic, spiritually static. The Guru's actions have only one purpose: to hold his followers to him like his own shadow. The shadow moves with the Guru, as distorted shapes of what blocks the light.

In the Buddha's teaching, **the true movement** is that closer to the path of awakening with which we can only make first contact by the courage to be truly alone without any Self, inner or outer, free from

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[55] Merriam-Webster (online): **a hippie** is "a usually young person who rejects the mores of established society (as by dressing unconventionally or favoring communal living) and advocates a nonviolent ethic." **An anarchist** is "a person who rebels against any authority, established order, or ruling power."

[56] Bluck *British Buddhism,* 2006:162-164.

[57] See eg R Bluck op cit 2006: ch 9.

[58] See 60.1d (7.6.4) esp (7.6.4.3).

[59] In Bryan Turned (ed), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology,* 2006:416 New Religious Movements. See also Glock & Bellah (eds), *The New Religious Consciousness,* 1976.

the fear of unknowing, humbled and freed by knowing. This is the true hero, journeying on to awakening. Yet, he is never lonely: there are others on the same path heading for nirvana.[60]

5.2.4 On the positive side, we must reflect that there is a rich, intellectual undercurrent amongst the members of the Triratna Buddhist Community.[61] The remains of the movement after the meltdown in the 1980s have mostly rejected Sangharakshita, and become more Dharma-centred. There are now accomplished Buddhist scholars amongst them who have published scholarly works on various aspects of Buddhism, including early Buddhism.

What had helped the movement survive its 1980s sex scandals was probably its strong financial structure and well managed wealth of millions of pounds.[62] "Membership" with the TBC seems less cultish (meaning less insistence on community life, and, of course, being free from sexual exploitation), and entails only commitment to personal Dharma practice and to remain in communication with other members.[63] In this new ambience, **ordination** in to TBC confers no special status, nor any specific responsibilities, although many Order Members choose to take on responsibilities for such things as teaching meditation and the Dharma. In mid-2008, the TBC has around 1,500 members of the Order in more than 20 countries.[64]

Whether the future TBC will forget its past and repeat it, remains to be seen. I prefer a vision that the future always promises Dharma success and spiritual accomplishments. A leopard may not change its spots, but it can certainly be reborn into better circumstances.

5.2.5 We see here a new religious narrative—one of **Buddhist economics** based on "right livelihood"—where the Buddhist group is independent of supporters (although welcoming donations), and its members are salaried or supported in some way, almost like a welfare state in miniature. The success of such a structure depends on its governance and wealth management. How Buddhist or Dharma-based it is will decide the quality it enriches us with.

5.3 SAMATHA KAMMAṬṬHĀNA

5.3.1 The Samatha Trust [SD 1b (6)] is a beautiful success story of the marriage between Asian Buddhist with the British public. A summary statement like this sounds grand, even dismissive of others who have failed. It helps, however, to take it as a summary of explanations that follow, and, of course, to actually practise and live in the light and joy of such a Buddhist community in the West. It shows that traditional Buddhism can happily thrive in the West, complete in moral training, mind training and joyful wisdom, that is, the 3 trainings. [11.4.10]

5.3.2 The Samatha Trust (ST) is a phenomenal success as a Western Buddhist group, considering that since its inception in 1973, it has the glamourous traditionalism of the Vipassana movement and the licentious parochialism of Sangharakshita's Western Buddhist Order [5.2]. ST serendipitously started with Boonman Poonyathiro, a young Thai ex-monk and adventurer who was drawn to England, arriving there in 1962. He was then neither a learned Dharma teacher nor a charismatic Guru: he only had his traditional Thai monastic training and practical knowledge of samatha meditation. [6.1]

Impressed by his skills in teaching Buddhism and meditation, he was invited to lead a retreat**.** Working with L S Cousins and Paul Dennison (both ex-Chairmen of the Cambridge University Buddhist Society)

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[60] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/21/sangharakshita-guru-triratna-buddhist-dark-secrets.

[61] The Western Buddhist Order and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order changed their names in the spring of 2010. For other, incl newer, developments, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triratna_Buddhist_Community.

[62] The most successful of the TBC "right livelihood" projects is Windhorse Trading—a chain of retail stores with 6 warehouses, 17 retail outlets, and an annual income of close to $15 million. (Coleman 2002:117).

[63] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triratna_Buddhist_Community - cite_note-Coleman_2001_117-22. Coleman, *The New Buddhism,* 2001:117.

[64] Partridge, *Ency of New Religions,*2004:193.

and Buddhist scholars in their own right, they started the Samatha Trust. Its success can be said to have been due to the fact that it was started by knowledgeable Buddhist scholars, who in turn attracted other birds of a scholarly feather, as the ST's core.

5.3.3 This radiant heart of love for learning in turn drew in others who loved Buddhism or were curious about it, who, having tasted the ST pudding, stayed on. The healthy spiritual diet was served in the way of the well-known breath meditation taught in the samatha tradition by Boonman, who wisely and early in ST history allowed local Buddhist themselves to teach it and run their own retreats and classes.

Boonman could have easily initiated the ST as a Thai Buddhist mission rooted in Thai culture, but he did not. In fact, once the ST started running on its own, he returned to Thailand and had to be invited back as a founder teacher. This alone is a remarkable case of great magnanimity in Buddhist mission history. In Malaysia and Singapore, for example, the Sinhala missions remain Sinhala in culture, and their members were induced to see Sri Lanka as a kind of "holy land" to go on pilgrimage there.

Through Boonman's magnanimity and the British Buddhist's industry, the Bodhi tree flourishes verdantly giving fruit and shade to the ST community to this day and the foreseeable future. We should take the ST success story as a valuable lesson in the true spirit of **Buddhism missions**.

6 How modern Buddhisms are created

6.0 INTRODUCTION

We now turn to how non-Buddhist professionals (the psychologists) discovered that the Buddha had been talking and doing **psychology** millennia before the West discovered or invented it. It is still too early to know which direction, or how well, this love affair will go. Meantime, lovers' quarrels and denunciation are already apparent.

In this same section, we also examine how other "professional" Buddhists see Buddhism and create their own versions. In most cases, these professionals prioritize fund-raising through Buddhist ways and wisdom. What can we, as Dharma-spirited Buddhists, learn from this; or even correct and better the situation?

6.1 THE 2 ROOTS OF MODERN BUDDHISM

6.1.1 Most of Buddhism today is shaped by two connected forces, one passive, the other active. The passive force that has shaped modern Buddhism is **colonialism**, or rather its effects, arising from how western Buddhists reacted to Victorian Christianity, and from how Asian Buddhists perceive Western culture and advancements especially in reaction to aggressive Christian evangelization of Buddhists.

The active force that has shaped modern Buddhism, and continues to shape it, is **Buddhist scholarship**, which includes both by scholars of Buddhism and by Buddhist scholars. Broadly, the former (scholars of Buddhism) see the study and use of Buddhism as both a fascinating field and a profitable one. The latter (Buddhist scholars) see Buddhist studies as a convenient term for a wide range of academic and scientific studies and views of Buddhism. [6.1.4, 6.3.5]

6.1.2 It is neither easy nor useful to see this dual typology—Buddhism scholars and Buddhist scholars—since a "Buddhism scholar" often has some tacit and practical interest in Buddhism and see it as a meaningful part of their life without ever acknowledging it. Often, such scholars, in the evening of their academic lives when they have reaped the bountiful harvest of Buddhist studies may each even declare that "**I'm not a Buddhist!**" They are then little more than sophisticated academic salesmen.[65]

This snub retort, I think, represents 2 interesting aspects of those scholars' perceptions of Buddhism and themselves. Firstly, like any insightful practising Buddhist, they disapprove of or are at least annoyed at the silly patronizing conduct of the Buddhists themselves, in making uncritical summary statements

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[65] See SD 60.1b (2.5.2.6 f). For an "I'm a Buddhist" anecdote, see (8.0).

about Buddhism: "Buddhism is modern; Buddhism is psychology," and so on. These "not-Buddhist" scholars simply feel that they may lose their "professionalism" by being categorized as a "practising Buddhist." Their religion is really <u>psychology</u> itself, without which they may not have been the lucratively reputable leaders that they were.

The intelligent Buddhist would probably want to know why one seems to bite the hand that feeds one. In an important sense, this study is an investigation about this nasty, if not odd, reaction by those whom we look up to as amongst the best in the profession. Or perhaps, there is surely something wrong with Buddhism itself. It should be fairer and enriching to examine both Psychology and Buddhism.

6.2 PSYCHOLOGY AND BUDDHISM

6.2.1 A relatively new field of Buddhist studies is **the psychology of Buddhism**, where the methods of psychology and its interpretive paradigms are applied to the diverse contents of Buddhist teachings, giving us a better understanding of individuals and states that are wholesome or unwholesome. One helpful way of summarizing this growing field is by means of the classic distinction between the "human-scientific" and the "natural-scientific."

Examples of these can be seen in Erik H Erikson's psychobiographies, *Young Man Luther: A study in psychoanalysis and history* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth: On the origins of militant nonviolence* (1969). My study on **the Khaluṅka Sutta** (A 8.14, SD 7.9) was inspired by Erikson, where I have tried to understand some of the key developments in my early Buddhist life through the psychodynamics of psychological defences in the light of the suttas.

Applied to Buddhism, **the human-scientific** approach examines what and how we, as humans, <u>experience</u> reality or, more narrowly, *experience Buddhism*, in an analytical, experiential and interpretive manner, the goal of which is the discerning of the <u>meaningful</u>, rather than merely debating on causal connections of the various phenomena that we do not yet understand. My approach in writing *The Miraculous Life of Gotama Buddha* (2018) may be seen as trying to apply this principle in understanding the various mythical and extraordinary aspect of Siddhattha's human life before awakening as the Buddha (52.1).

Traditionally, this approach may be seen as **the analytical** (*bheda*) aspect of early Buddhism, and developed and systematized in the Abhidhamma. This approach is notably seen in our understanding, for example, of <u>the noble eightfold path</u> (*ariy'aṭṭh'aṅgika magga*) (SD 10.16) and <u>the 5 aggregates</u> (*pañca-k,-khandha*) (SD 17). These teachings are then applied to existence and mental states, analyzing their components, including how each factor or set of factors mirror or condition other factors so that we better understand how our conscious body (*sa,viññāka kāya*) works.[66]

6.2.2 The natural-scientific approach works by means of objective, quantitative and, preferably, experimental procedures for testing hypotheses regarding the causal conditions and connections among the factors or objects of our study. This is, in fact, the traditional scientific method based on experimentation, hypothesis testing, skepticism and the scientific method as a whole.

Considering <u>the quantitative factor</u>, this is a difficult method with results limited by the contexts and constraints of the experiment itself. For example, when we run a scientific study of a batch of informants of Buddhist meditators, we need to decide the parameters of their attainment or skill of those meditators: which is itself a very great problem of subjectivity. Another issue is: what are we looking for here: how do we define mindfulness, a meditative state (like *jhāna*).

At best, we are only measuring the qualitative attributes of the mental states of these meditators, each of whom would be in a unique, unrepeatable state. We may do our best to create the same ideal conditions of the experiments, but we are always measuring a set of new processes going on in the meditators' minds. A good meditation is always immeasurable (*appamāṇa*). [6.2.3]

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[66] On *sa,viññāṇaka kāya*, see SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n. On the Buddhist analytical approach, see eg Karunadasa, *The Theravāda Abhidhamma,* 2010:15-20.

6.2.3 Theoretically, this approach may be seen as reflective of **the synthetical** (*saṅgaha*) aspect of early Buddhism, most developed as <u>the conditional relations</u> (***paṭṭhāna***), famously recorded in the 7th and last volume of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, and which is an exhaustive list of the conditional relations of mental states (*dhammā*). The modern psychologist trying to measure the mind in meditation will have to sail through the narrow passage between <u>Scylla</u> (the unlocated mind of early Buddhism) and <u>Charybdis</u>[67] (the Abhidhamma notion that the mind is located in the heart)![68]

So long as science (including psychology) is rooted in measurements and external realities, it will not be able to fathom the nature and depth of Buddhist meditation. A broad hint is provided by the visions of quantum physics, where a measurement is the testing or manipulation of a physical system to yield a numerical result. Hence, such predictions are at best *probabilistic.* The on-going debates on the meaning of the measurement concept promises a good opportunity that future science will be in a better position to explain meditation and mindfulness in a non-religious humanistic manner, as originally taught and intended by the Buddha.[69]

6.2.4 In fact, scholars who see "**psychology as religion**" (how the two work together to enhance our understanding of them and their usefulness)—such as Carl Jung (1875-1961), Erich Fromm (1900-1980), Carl Rogers (1902-1987), Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Rollo May (1909-1994)—have helped us better understand just this: how psychology and religion make *sense* and give *purpose* of one another. Many of them are familiar with Buddhism and sympathetic to it.[70]

A very fascinating aspect of <u>modern psychology</u> is where it works to restate in scientific idiom and scholarly narrative <u>what Buddhism has known since its beginning</u>, and what early Buddhism is teaching and much of which is practised even today. The world will then perhaps be free of religion, as we are today slowly but surely drawing away from the age of empire, secular and holy. God is not only dead: he neither was, never is, nor will be; theism keeps trying to resurrect the Dead. Buddhism reminds us to leave the dead where they are: buried and gone.

6.3 THE SCHOLARS' BUDDHISM

6.3.1 An average **scholar of Buddhism** spends 3-4 years to work for a Bachelor's degree; then, another 2 years for a Masters; and up to another 3-4 (full-time) or 6-7 (part-time) for a PhD. The teaching career of a Buddhist academic may last for as long as 38 years.[71] When we approach the work with joy and equanimity in the right measure, depending on circumstances, we are likely to happily work longer and live longer. Even when retired, if we continue to engage, with some relaxation, with what we have done professionally, we are now doing it out of love for learning.

6.3.2 A Buddhist scholar, on the other hand, is one who is a practising Buddhist, or who has great love or sympathy for the Dharma. Ideally, a young lay Buddhist should complete his (or her) academic career <u>as a</u>

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[67] Scylla and Charybdis were mythical sea-monsters in Homer's *Odyssey*. Greek mythology locates them on opposite sides of the Strait of Messina between Sicily and Calabria (on the Italian mainland). Scylla was a 6-headed sea-monster (rationalized as a treacherous rock shoal) and Charybdis was a whirlpool. In trying to avoid one, we are drawn closer to the other: these are the horns of the dilemma. In modern idiom, this may be equated with the saying: "between the devil and the deep blue sea" or "between a rock and a hard place," ie, caught in an impossible dilemma.

[68] On the problem of the physical base of the mind, see Karunadasa op cit 2010:184-186.

[69] On a predecessor of the "quantum state" in early Buddhism, see the quadrilemma (*Skt* catuṣ,koṭi): **(Aggi) Vac-cha,gotta S** (M 72,16) + SD 6.15 (3.1).

[70] Paul C Vitz, *Psychology as Religion,* 2nd ed, 1977.

[71] As in the case of **K R Norman** (1925-2020) of Cambridge Univ, specialist of Middle Indo-Aryan Philology. His academic career: MA (1954), Lecturer in Indian Studies (1954-78); Reader in Indian Studies (1978-90); Professor of Indian Studies (1990-92). He lived in retirement for 28 years, when he published anthologies of his life's works, most of which are related to Pali studies. He was never a Buddhist.

lay person. Clearly, a monastic who takes up an academic pursuit is effectively a *secular* person, one who has to be in psychological denial at some deep habitual (hence karmic) level to be able to live such a double life of contradicting commitment.

A workable compromise (if we are well inclined toward renunciation) is to pursue tertiary studies (in Buddhism or something related, of course) as **an anagārika**, that is, one keeping the 8 precepts,[72] which is, in fact, the life of a "bachelor" [9.7.1], a simple, celibate life dedicated to learning and service.[73] We may then ordain at a proper time after graduating. In this way, we will reap the best of both worlds (the academic and the monastic).[74]

6.3.3 There are those rare and remarkable non-Buddhist scholars—besides the British philologist, K R Norman [6.3.1]—who have dedicated all their professional lives or their expertise to the study of Buddhism and Pali, significantly benefitting other scholars of Buddhism, including Buddhist scholars and Buddhists interested in the suttas or Buddhism in general. Such scholars include: the Catholic bishop **Paul A Bigandet** (1913-1894),[75] the Belgian Thomist[76] priest **Etienne Lamotte** (1903-1983), an Indologist and the greatest authority on Mahāyāna in the West in his time,[77] the Jesuit theologian **Heinrich Dumoulin** (1905-1995),[78] the Italian Jesuit priest, **Vito Perniola** (1913-2016), who lived in Sri Lanka since 1936, and wrote *Pali Grammar* (PTS, 1997), and **Joseph S O'Leary** (1949-   ), who worked in Japan. [20.3]

Of course, it is difficult for us to know their actual intention: their superiors surely must have allowed them to pursue Buddhist studies with the notion that this was all "for the greater glory of God." So long as their dedication was sincere (even as scholars), they will somehow taste the sweet freedom of the Buddha Dhamma. Whatever they call themselves or however they dress was immaterial: their lives have been dedicated to knowing the Buddha and his teachings, which speaks for itself.[79]

6.3.4 While the Buddhist practitioner seeks to understand themselves through Buddhism, Buddhism scholars (or scholars of Buddhism) seek to understand Buddhism. Essentially, we should see the Buddhist practitioner studying the suttas, keeping the precepts and meditating, for the sake of **deconstructing** *self-views, doubts and superstition*.[80] This is not just "textual Buddhism," the teachings of the suttas, but also the teachings and practices of monastic teachers and forest monks who have been upholding the Buddha Dharma by way of the 3 trainings of keeping moral virtue, cultivating the mind, and developing their insight wisdom [11.4.10].

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[72] On the 8 precepts, see **(Tad-ah)uposatha S** (A 3.70,9-16), SD 4.18; **Vitthat'uposatha S** (A 8.42), SD 89.11; **Nav'-aṅg'uposatha S** (A 9.18), SD 59.4.

[73] At this stage, it is not advisable to undertake the 10 precepts, since it entails not handling money (*jāta,rūpa,-rajata*) [SD 4.19 (2.2; 7.1)]. Otherwise, we would only be taking the precept to break it!

[74] This suggestion would prob make little sense to those who give levity to the European (ie, mediaeval Christian) monastic academic tradition. My suggestion is for those who give priority to the Buddha Dharma (*dhamm'ādhipat-eyya*) [A 3.40, SD 27.3] and respect for it (*dhamma,gāravatā*) [SD 37.11 (1-7); SD 55.11 (3.4.3.2)].

[75] He studied Burmese sources on the Buddha's life: *The Life of Gaudama,* Rangoon, 1858; 2nd enl ed, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama,* Rangoon, 1866; 3rd ed London, 1880; 4th ed London, 1911.

[76] Named after the philosophy of Aquinas (1225-74), Italian Dominican theologian, foremost of Catholic scholastics, who tried to adapt Aristotelian philosophy to Christian teachings. His philosophy known as Thomism is based on the idea that truth should be accepted no matter where it is found. See Macmillan Ency of Rel 13:9160-9165.

[77] For details (incl his works), see Princeton Dict Bsm 2014:465.

[78] Prof of philosophy and history at Sophia Univ (founded by the Jesuits, 1913), Tokyo; founded its Institute for Oriental Religions, as the 1st director of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. He specializes in Zen Buddhism, eg, *Zen Buddhism: A history: Vol 1 India and China* (World Wisdom, 2005), *Vol 2 Japan* (2005, World Wisdom).

[79] See SD 59.6 (1.1.3.8). For lists of converts from other major religions to Buddhism, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_converts_to_Buddhism_from_Christianity.

[80] These are the 3 fetters (*saṁyojana*), overcoming which we attain streamwinning: SD 56.1 (4.4.1); also **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

6.3.5 By definition, <u>scholars of Buddhism</u> are professionals[81] working to make sense of Buddhism in ac-cordance with the discipline they are trained in—such as archaeology, history, culture, arts, philology, anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy, literature, law, comparative religion and other fields re-lated to Buddhism, and, of course, their own biases.[82] In other words, they are **constructing** and recon-structing Buddhism, in their own discipline, Buddhisms that are measurable in some way, or comparable with related or similar ideas and systems. [6.1.1]

Scholars have, however, pointed out that, for many Buddhists, especially in our own times, Buddhism is simply **a social construct** that arose from sociopolitical conditions and conditioning. Philip C Almond, in *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (1988), explains how the "modern" Buddhism that we see today—espe-cially the Theravada of Sri Lanka, as a "<u>pizza effect</u>"[83] [9.4] of Victorian Buddhism, and their "pizza crumbs" dropped into Malaysia, Singapore and elsewhere—is the result of British colonialism.

Such scholarly observations and explanations are very helpful for us, as Buddhists, to examine to what extent this is true, and how it is negatively affecting us, preventing our social development and per-sonal growth. Although Buddhists are often sensitive to "wrong views," and reject them, scholars see themselves as <u>never</u> wrong: they are merely expressing opinions.

The privilege of being a professional scholar is that he is, arguably, never wrong. He may express some of the most bizarre or irreverent notions about the Buddha or Buddhism, but these are regarded as "academic statements," which other scholars may accept or reject, either way, earning academic mileage (relevance, promotion, tenure, reputation) for the statement makers. Scholarship, then, is not about Buddhist or spiritual <u>states</u>, but about professional statements and status.

6.3.6 Understandably, scholars have to be diligent in their profession. They should not only lecture on campus and elsewhere, publish papers and books, but also present fresh and refreshing views, including correcting, even if just disagreeing with, the views of predecessors, colleagues and anyone's views about Buddhism, giving their own, perhaps better, explanations. Unlike the early Buddhist teachings, as a quest for a direct vision into true reality and self-awakening, scholars' writings and views tend to be debunked by future colleagues or become dated, irrelevant, or simply forgotten.

On the other hand, scholars also depend on the work of their predecessors for their present under-standing of Buddhism, and to better their own presentation of it. This is where scholars are vitally helpful in our historical and textual appreciation of the Buddha and his teachings. Perspicacious and diligent scholars often give us "ground-breaking" insights in our current understanding of Buddhism.

6.3.7 In our own time, various academics have made **ground-breaking research** into Buddhist studies. New insights into early Buddhist meditation have been noted by scholars such as Tilmann Vetter,[84] Rupert Gethin,[85] Johannes Bronkhorst,[86] Richard Gombrich,[87] Alexander Wynne[88] and Grzegorz Polak.[89] They all seem to agree that dhyana (*jhāna*) was clearly the core practice of early Buddhism, but one that was well-known even before the Buddha and during his time in north central India; that dhyana was not

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[81] Basically, this means they know their work (Buddhism) well and earn wages and benefits from this.

[82] See Routledge Ency of Monasticism, 2013:225-228; P D Numrich, *North American Buddhists in Social Context,* 2008:4-13; Minoru Kiyota, "Modern Japanese Buddhology," 1984:17-33.

[83] J A Silk: "In religious studies and sociology, <u>the pizza effect</u> is the phenomenon of elements of a nation's or peo-ple's culture being transformed or at least more fully embraced elsewhere, then re-exported to their culture of ori-gin, or the way in which a community's self-understanding is influenced by foreign sources." ("The Victorian crea-tion of Buddhism," rev of Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (1988), *J of Indian Philosophy* 22 1994: 189 f)

[84] Vetter, *The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism,* 1988.

[85] Gethin, *The Buddhist Path of Awakening,* 1992:162-182; "On the practice of Buddhist meditation according to the Pali Nikāyas and exegetical sources," 2004.

[86] Bronkhorst, *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India,* 1993.

[87] Gombrich, "Religious experience in early Buddhism?' *Eighth Annual British Association for the Study of Religion Lecture*, 1997.

[88] Wynne, *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation,* 2007.

[89] Polak, *Reexamining Jhāna: Towards a critical reconstruction of early Buddhist soteriology*, 2011.

merely a form of concentration, but a cumulative practice resulting in mindful awareness that allowed some subtle cognitive activity even in deep meditation.[90] Such insights should move us to rethink claims by Buddhist teachers that the Buddha "discovered" dhyana, or that thinking occurs during dhyana.[91]

Polak (2011), reflecting on Vetter (1988:xxv), notes that the onset of the 1st dhyana is described as a quite natural process, due to the preceding efforts to restrain the senses and free the mind.[92] Keren Arbel, commenting on Vetter (1988), Bronkhorst (1993) and Gethin (2004), argue that mindfulness, samatha, vipassana and dhyana work harmoniously together to bring on alert, joyful and compassionate states of mind and being (2017).[93] Polak and Arbel, following Gethin, familiarly echo the sutta teaching that there is a "definite affinity" between the 7 awakening-factors (*bojjhaṅgā*) and the 4 dhyanas, and that the former is the basis for the latter.[94]

6.3.8 Academic scholars who study Buddhism fall into 2 broad categories: (1) those who love Buddhism and (2) those who use Buddhism. There is no ideal or perfect classification for scholars. This is, at best, a convenient conventional grouping for the purpose of useful discussion in understanding what scholars do with Buddhism, what then happens to Buddhism, and what happens to the scholars.

6.3.8.1 Scholars who **love Buddhism** are those who see some aspects of the Buddha's teaching or the Buddha himself as giving them meaning and purpose in life. In other words, Buddhism as it is, makes sense to them. They toil to the best of their ability and spend much, if not most, of their professional life, often even after retirement, *making sense* of Buddhism for us in their writings, lectures and communications. In fact, we see a growing number of such scholars who are moved by **the clarity and beauty** like a musician who has great skill and love of music.

Such scholars are often careful and skillful in their study and presentation of Buddhism. Some of them have written clearly and helpfully on various profound aspects of Buddhism (such as right view,[95] the path training,[96] or experience[97]) making them simple for us to understand; some of them examined basic aspects (like moral virtue,[98] meditation,[99] or Pali[100]), and inspire us to think more deeply or broadly about them, even correcting our wrong views, and deepen our practice.

Yet others, help us see a truer history of Buddhist sectarianism,[101] and even make courageously honest and revealing exposes on the wrong views and activities in Buddhism today.[102] This is only a brief list-

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[90] Wynne 2007:106 f; 140, n58 quoting R Gombrich 1997:10.

[91] The former claim was made by Brahmavamso [SD 33.1b (2.1)]; the latter by H Gunaratana [SD 33.1b (6.1)].

[92] Analayo, in "The dynamics of Theravāda insight meditation," notes: "The key position accorded to this scheme in each of these 3 meditation traditions is reflected in the detailed treatments of the insight knowledges in Mahāsi (1994:13-32) and Pa-Auk (2003:255-277). Goenka covers the same ground in detail in his talks during long courses, which have not been published. Nevertheless, a brief survey of the insight knowledges by another student of U Ba Khin can be found in Chit Tin (1989:121 f)." (Hamburg 2011k:29 f n8)

[93] Arbel, *Early Buddhist Meditation*, 2017.

[94] Gethin op cit 2004:217 n26; Polak 2011:25; Arbel 2017.

[95] Eg, Paul Fuller, *The Notion of Diṭṭhi in Theravada Buddhism,* London, 2005.

[96] Rupert Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening,* 1992.

[97] Robert Sharf, "Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience," *Numen* 42,3 1995:228-283; "Experience" in (ed) M C Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago, 1998:94-116.

[98] Damon Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics,* Palgrave, 1992; *Buddhist Ethics: A very short introduction,* Oxford, 2005b.

[99] Alexander Wynne, *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation,* 2007.

[100] K R Norman, *Pali Literature,* PTS, 1983b; "The Pali language and scriptures," in *The Buddhist Heritage,* Tring 1989:29-53; "The origin of Pali and its position among the Indo-European languages," 1988a, repr *Collected Papers* 3 1992:225-243.

[101] On modern scholars of Chan Buddhism, see [1.8.3.2].

[102] Bernard Fauré, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy, Princeton,* 1991a; *Chan Insights and Oversights,* Princeton, 1993; *Unmasking Buddhism,* Blackwell, 2009.

ing according to what I have found interesting and useful; there are many more great scholarly contributions to Buddhist studies to help us understand Buddhism better.

6.3.8.2 A young scholar may see religious studies, especially Buddhism, as an easy field to master and make money from, especially from stories of the boundless generosities of wealthy Buddhists and rich foundations that will donate a lot of money to Buddhist projects. Indeed, we often see even monastics (who are supposed to be *renunciants*) extremely affluent from their teachings and writings, which gives us a new modernist model of the Business Monk or Money Monk. Perhaps, we may have a new lucrative field in this area of academic research, that of **religious economics**, even Buddhist economics.

We now come to our second category of scholars who specialize in Buddhism, not out of love for it, but undertake the study of Buddhism purely as an academic pursuit, almost an anthropological scrutiny by scholars for religious or colonial dominance. Thankfully, those days are over (surely). This is clearly a new challenging approach to the academic study of Buddhism that is inspired by imagination rather than insight: *the Buddha as a businessman, monks as bankers*, and so on.[103]

The scholars' academic qualifications or tenure thus empower him to speak and write ex cathedra, infallibly it seems. There would, of course, be concerned scholars who would rebut and criticize what they see as hubris or plain lack of scholarship or good karma. We must imagine that Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters as the scholars who seem to be washing her dirty linens. Surely Prince Charming knows better and stands up for her ever always.

7 Buddhist modernism

7.0 INTRODUCTION
Having thus far seen some of the effects (good and bad) of modernizing Buddhism and Buddhist modernism: we are ready to look more closely at these 2 aspects: the former conscious, the latter, almost reflexive. How did Buddhism arrive in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, and grew there to become the faith of the people. Buddhism came to Khmer and Laos, too, but has not thrived so well there: we need to study this separately at another time.

Why is it that Buddhism in Malaysia and Singapore has been present for well over a century, but we are still dependent on missionary ethnic Buddhism from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and elsewhere? There are no clear answers here (a century of Buddhism is still just a brief moment in Dharma time). However, we have found many clues which are worth pondering over.

7.1 MODERNISM AND MODERNITY

7.1.1 The current trend in Buddhist studies by Western and Western-trained scholars is to see Buddhism in terms of **modernism** and **modernity**. Most dictionaries define "modern" as "of present time or recent times." Modernism technically refers to "modern character or quality of thought, expression, style of workmanship, etc; sympathy with or affinity to what is modern" (OED).[104] Modernity simply means "the quality of being current or of the present," and is less common than "modernism." [1.1.1]

Both terms, are used interchangeably or in the same sense by scholars of Buddhist studies of this generation.[105] They concern the interpretation of the present time in the light of historical reinterpretation, and also refer to the confluence of the cultural, social and political currents in our time, suggesting a process by which society constantly changes and renews itself.[106] Hence, in this sense, we have, for exam-

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[103] Eg,G Schopen, "Doing business for the Lord," JAOS 114,4 1994; *Buddhist Monks and Business matters,* Hawaii, 2004. Also https://international.ucla.edu/asia/article/106061 19 March 2009.
[104] OED gives an interesting chronology of the use of "modernism," esp in terms of the religious history of the West.
[105] Gustavo Benavides, "Modernity and Buddhism," Macmillan Ency Bsm 2004:544-548.
[106] See (Ed) G Ritzer, *The Blackwell Ency of Sociology,* 2007:3068-71.

ple, **Buddhist modernism**,[107] **modern Buddhism**,[108] **Neo-Buddhism**,[109] **Neoyana**,[110] or simply **Buddhism**.[111] However, in Japan, terms like *gendai bukkyō* (contemporary Buddhism) and *kindai bukkyō* (modern Buddhism) have been used since the 1910s, and *shin bukkyō* (new Buddhism) goes back even earlier.[112]

   These expressions are used by scholars to refer to forms of Buddhism beginning in the 19th century that combined Buddhist ideas and practices with key discourses of Western modernity. They identify Buddhist modernism as characterized by an emphasis on rationality, scripture, meditation, egalitarianism, universalism, social reform, and increased participation of the laity, including women, along with sidelining dogma, ritual, clerical hierarchy, "superstition," traditional cosmology, and "idol" worship. [1.2.5]

7.1.2 One of the most vivid expressions for modernist Buddhism is that of **Protestant Buddhism** [1.2.4]. In essence, Protestant Buddhism is a form of Buddhist revival which rejects the notion that one should seek salvation or that it is only found through the Sangha (the Order of Buddhist Monastics). As a result, Buddhism is internalized or individualized. The layman is supposed to permeate his life with his religion and strive to make Buddhism pervade his community, even the whole society.

   Such scholars see the rise of Buddhist modernism as a reaction against the hegemony of European colonization and Christian missionization of peoples in Buddhist countries, especially Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore.[113] It emerged both as a form of *resistance* to these forces and an *appropriation* of elements of Western religion (Christianity), philosophy, social forms, and ways of life, creating a hybrid of Buddhism with revisionist features.

   It was a co-creation of educated, reform-minded Asian Buddhists, cleric and lay, Western Orientalists and their sympathizers, who presented Buddhism as being rational and compatible with modern science, while at the same time drawing from rationalism's critics, the Romantics, Transcendentalists, and Theosophists, with their emphasis on inner exploration, creativity, and an organic, interdependent cosmos.[114]

   Like Protestant Christianity, the members of such Buddhist groups were mostly from the upper and upper middle classes, who worshipped together often with a non-sectarian liturgy (chants and verses from both Theravāda and Mahāyāna), and English hymns. Also popular are Sunday schools that often use textbooks or materials from mostly Western Buddhists. Many such Buddhists would keep to their given (Christian) names, often in addition to a Buddhist name in Pali. All this suggests their colonial conditioning and lack of local roots. Any attempt at promoting a local "culture" seems to be a class consciousness of affluence and social status, highlighted by a material culture.

7.1.3 The term "Protestant Buddhism" [7.1.5] was coined by Princeton anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere and Oxford Buddhologist Richard Gombrich[115] in 1970 to refer a phenomenon in Sinhala Buddhism having its roots in the later half of the 19th century, and fed by 2 sets of historical conditions: the

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[107] H Bechert first used the term "Buddhist modernism" in his trilogy *Buddhismus, Staat, und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus* (1966-1973). See Oxford Bibliographies: David McMahan, "Buddhist modernism," 2015, 2021. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393521/obo-9780195393521-0041.xml.

[108] D Lopez, *A Modern Buddhist Bible,* 2002:10.

[109] H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* 1999:25-27.

[110] "Neoyana: the Buddhist 21st century vehicle of a New Buddhist psychology," Vienna: https://www.inst.at/irics/speakers_g_m/kwee.htm.

[111] Prebish & Baumann, *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia,* 2002. "Modernist Buddhism" (54-62, 146 f).

[112] J M Shields, "The scope and limits of secular Buddhism," in Havnevik et al (edd), *Buddhist Modernities,* 2017:15-32.

[113] "Protestant Buddhism" is not seen in Thai Buddhism since it was never colonized. Nor is it seen in the Buddhism of Cambodia and Laos, because of their respective internal political developments.

[114] D L McMahan, "Buddhist Modernism," *Oxford Bibliographies,* 2010, 2021. Accessed 16 May 2022.

[115] Gombrich & Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed,* 1988:202-240 (ch 6). McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* 2008:10 f.

activities of the Protestant missionaries and direct access to modern knowledge and technologies of the West. [7.1.5]

Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore share very similar <u>colonial history</u>, being colonized by these Western powers:

<u>the Portuguese</u>	(Sri Lanka 1505-1658; Malacca 1511-1641),
<u>the Dutch</u>	(Sri Lanka 1658-1796; Malacca 1641-1825), and then
<u>the British</u>	(Sri Lanka 1796-1948; Malaysia until 1957).

The situation was complex In Malaysia: Penang (Pulau Pinang) was founded by British explorer, Francis Light (1786). <u>Singapore</u> was founded by British colonial administrator Stamford Raffles in 1819.[116] British hegemony over <u>Malaya</u> began in 1818, soon after the Napoleonic wars in Europe (1812), and they ruled Malaya from 1824-1957. [11.2.1.3]

7.1.4 In 1815, the British became the first colonial power to occupy the whole island of Sri Lanka. The British colonialists made it a rule never to interfere with the local culture or religion. The 1815 Kandy convention declared Buddhism of the locals to be inviolable. This article was attacked by Protestant evangelicals in England, and the British government was compelled to dissociate itself from Buddhism. The traditional bond between Buddhism and the government of the Sinhala people had effectively dissolved, while colonial policy favoured the Protestant missionizing and converting locals to Christianity, especially for those who wished to join the ruling élite, such as serving in civil service.

The leading local figure of the movement against British rule and the revival of Buddhism was the lay missionary **Anagārika Dharmapāla** (1864-1933). He inspired local Sinhala to respond to, even repulse, attacks on Buddhism by foreign missionaries. In the process, they also appropriated characteristics of Protestant Christianity into Sinhala Buddhism. This was the beginning of Protestant Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

In essence, Protestant Buddhism is a form of Buddhist revival (like Protestantism) which gives greater prominence to <u>lay religiosity</u>: Buddhism becomes more internalized, and in due course, modernized. The layman is supposed to permeate his life with Buddhism, including practising meditation, and to strive to disseminate Buddhism throughout society.

Through **printing**, the Buddhist laity had, for the first time, direct access to Buddhist texts, and with the interest of the Victorian orientalists like T W Rhys Davids and the Pali Text Society,[117] these texts were translated into English, giving the public access to textual Buddhism. Lay preachers, accordingly, teach that even the laity could and should try to reach nirvana.

7.1.5 The term **Protestant Buddhism** [7.1.3] reflected the "crisis of faith" of Protestant thinkers during the early 20th century, mainly due to the rise of science. To resolve this crisis, they developed new ways of thinking about Christianity that were more compatible with the scientific-rational worldview. They claimed, for example, that "true" Christianity had little to do with rituals, doctrines or institutions. True faith, they argued, was a matter of the heart, that is, the personal and direct experience of God. Reliance on rituals, doctrines and the Church (as an institution) can stand in the way of this immediate, indisputable relationship with God, that is, faith as personal spiritual experience that does not clash with reason.

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[116] K M de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka,* Penguin Press, 1981. D G E Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* [1955], 4th ed 1981: chs 14, 19, 30. K M de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka,* Penguin Press, 1981.

[117] Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843-1922) studied Sanskrit and Pali, served in various capacities in colonial civil service in Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then known). Upon his return to Britain (1863), he took an active part in the founding of the British Academy and the London School for Oriental Studies. He was Professor Pali at London University (1882-1904) and Chair of Comparative Religion at Manchester University (1905). In his efforts to promote Theravada and Pali scholarship, he founded the Pali Text Society (1881). His wife, Caroline Augusta Foley (1857-1942) was also an accomplished scholar of Theravada and Pali. https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/faculty-library/archive/pali-text-society.

Although the term "Protestant Buddhism" described similar developments in Sri Lanka in the late 19th century, it was a "loaded" reference, one that is easily misunderstood, even derogatory. Hence, it never caught on, and scholars preferred instead the term, **Buddhist modernism**, which was more neutral.

7.2 POST-BUDDHA BUDDHISM AND PROTESTANT BUDDHISM

7.2.1 Early Buddhism refers to the teachings and practices of the Buddha and the early saints, that is, the Buddhism prior to what many historians of Buddhism consider to be cultural accretions and theological developments over the centuries. In many cases, post-Buddha Buddhisms were reformulations of Buddhist teachings, terminology and discourse by sectarians.[118] By the 19th century, "Buddhism" had become mostly modernized, that is, modelled along western culture and Christianity, or in some way deeply influenced by Western modernist ideas and ways.

Expressions of Buddhist modernism include a global lay meditation network based on Insight Meditation" (Vipassana),[119] modernist forms of Zen universalism [8.4.7], teacher-centred "socially engaged" Buddhism [11.2.1.2], and professionally modern "Buddhist" psychology.[120] Modernist Buddhists vigorously address social, political and psychological realities while liberally borrowing from Western social, political and psychological theory, including the language of rights and the feminist discourse, and the academic advocacy of social engagement.[121]

Even in the 20th century, scholars and those influenced by them looked up to this modernist Galataea[122] as the "true Buddhism." Traditional text-based monastic Buddhism was seen as outmoded, and popular lay Buddhism was regarded as decadent and irrelevant. The idea seems to be present Buddhism as a novelty that is simplistic enough for popular appeal, yet apparently unique enough reflecting the teacher's genius and goodness, wisdom and compassion. Such a system tends to be teacher-centric.

7.2.2 Since the notion of Buddhist modernism started in Sri Lanka, it mostly characterizes Theravāda. Understandably, this is the kind of Buddhism taught and practised by Buddhists in the West in the 20th-century. Since the early 20th century, modernist Buddhism was given increasing attention by scholars and intellectuals in the West. Furthermore, such Western Buddhists tend to reject the rituals (such as merit-making) and certain views (especially karma, rebirth and cosmology) of Theravada.

In fact, traditional or ethnic Buddhism was not only based on race (Sinhala, Burmese, Thai, Khmer, Lao, Vietnamese, and so on), but many of their views and practices deviated from **the Tipiṭaka** or Pali canon, the earliest and most complete records we have of the early Buddhist texts and teachings. Strictly speaking, this was what the modernist Buddhists rejected.

Western Buddhist converts from the 1880s onward adopted a Buddhism, contrived and promoted by Western orientalists and Sinhala modernists. This modernist Buddhism rejected traditional Buddhism, and instead emphasized seemingly *rational, scientific and selected scriptural elements* in Theravāda. Their general view was that traditional Buddhism was outmoded and incompatible with our times.

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[118] It is possible, too, in the early centuries, the rise of Christianity spurred Buddhist theologians to revise Buddhism in reaction to or reflecting Christian teachings.

[119] Led by Goenka and run by his followers: SD 60.1b (2.4.10 f, 2.5 f).

[120] SD 60.1b (2.5.2.6).

[121] The seminal work on Buddhism modernism is H Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda Buddhismus,* vols 1 (1966), 2 (1967), 3 (1973). Other key works incl: R Sharf, "Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience," *Numen* 42, 1995:228-283; D S Lopez, Jr (ed), *Curators of the Buddha,* 1995; J J Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment,* 1997; R King, *Orientalism and Religion,* 1999; Lopez (ed) *A Modern Buddhist Bible,* 2002; S Berkwitz, *Buddhism in World Cultures,* 2006; D L McMahan, "Modernity and the early discourse of scientific Buddhism," JAAR 72,4 2004:897-893; *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* 2008, *Buddhism and the Modern World,* 2012.

[122] Galatea is a statue of a beautiful woman sculpted by Pygmalion with which he falls in love and which came to life. Hence, the Pygmalion effect, or Rosenthal effect, ie, a psychosocial phenomenon of high expectations leads to improved performance in a given situation. See SD 17.6 (3.1.3.6); SD 51.18 (2.3.1.5); SD 56.1 (4.3.1.3).

In significant ways, Buddhist modernism was an elitist bent inspired by a handful of Western intellectual Buddhists who rejected Christianity, and saw Buddhism as agreeing with their own views and biases. Amongst these pioneers of modernist Buddhism were Paul Carus (1852-1919) in the US [1.2.1], Paul Dahlke (1865-1928) and Georg Grimm (1868-1945) in Germany, and Charles F Knight (1890-1975) and Natasha Jackson (1902-90) in Australia.[123]

The highly intellectualized and anti-ritual modernist bias continue to this day mostly amongst the educated and affluent upper and upper middle class with surplus income and leisure to successfully connect with Western or Westernized modernist Buddhists. Consequently, their numbers are small today, but they tend to be looked up to as leaders and teachers of most lay Buddhist groups in modern urban ambience. To some, they even evoke images of a "Methodist Church" Buddhism.

7.2.3 However, a related modernist Theravāda strand, one that emphasizes **meditation** (of some kind), has gained a growing popularity in the West since the end of the 20th century. Western teachers instructing Vipassana (Insight Meditation), Samatha (Concentration Meditation), or Satipatthana (Mindfulness Meditation),[124] the last of which may be seen as a combination of the first two.

Such systems of modern meditations, as a rule, contain varying degrees of unique features, the purpose clearly is that of making that system stand out against rival systems. The teacher of each system would, of course, claim that *their* system reflects "true Buddhism," or would bring enlightenment. Such systems are found both in traditional (Asian) Buddhisms as well as in Western Buddhisms.

A key difference is that Asian teachers attempt to authenticate their system by claiming some kind of "*rediscovery*" of a canonical teaching. Western teachers, on the other hand, are more likely to state the benefits of his system, especially in terms of modernist (especially *psychological*) or rationalistic terms.

Among the Western teachers of **meditation**, mostly of the modernist kind, are: Ruth Denison (1922-2015), John Coleman (1930-2012), Fred von Allmen (1943-), Christopher Titmuss (1944-), Joseph Goldstein (1944-), Jack Kornfield (1945-) and Sharon Salzberg (1952-). They all have been students of some Asian teachers, especially of Thai forest meditation teacher Ajahn Chah (1918-1992),[125] and Burmese meditation masters Sayagyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971),[126] Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982),[127] or U Ba Khin's student, Satya Narayan Goenka[128] (1924-2013). All these teachers were from the Burmese Vipassana tradition.[129] The best known among the institutions founded by these Western lay teachers is **the Insight Meditation Society** (IMS), established in 1975 in Barre, Massachusetts.[130]

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[123] On early modernist Buddhists in Germany, see M Baumann, "Culture contact and valuation: Early German Buddhists and the creation of a 'Buddhism in Protestant shape,'" *Numen* 44,3 1997:270-295. On Knight & Jackson, see P Croucher, *Buddhism in Australia: 1848-1988*, 1989:37-84, esp 54 f. See esp M Baumann, "Protective amulets and awareness techniques, or How to make sense of Buddhism in the West," in (edd) Prebish & Baumann, *Westward Dharma,* 2002:51-65 (ch 3).

[124] I have generally used initial capitals for terms that refer to traditional, innovative or Modern teachings. See SD 50.1b (3.1.3.1) n on Kammatthana.

[125] SD 60.1b (5.12).

[126] SD 60.1b (2.4.7).

[127] SD 60.1b (2.4.5).

[128] SD 60.1b (2.4.10 f).

[129] The Burmese meditation tradition is rooted in the pioneer work of Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) [SD 60.1b (2.3.3-2.4)].

[130] For these and other Asian Theravāda meditation teachers, see J Kornfield, *Living Buddhist Masters*, 1993. The Asian teachers themselves were students of Buddhist reformers, esp Ledi Sayadaw [above], Phra Mun Bhuridatta [SD 60.1b (5.2)] and U Narada [SD 60.1b (2.4.3.2)]; also Anagarika Dharmapala [1.1.2.2]. For the Western Vipassana Sangha, see A Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters,* 1997:586-596. On the Insight Meditation Soc, see SD 60.1b (2.5.2.3).

7.3 BUDDHIST MODERNISM IN ASIA

7.3.1 Scholars often remind us that the distinct emphasis on meditational practice in most Buddhist groups, *globally*, is a recent development, starting with revivalist Buddhism in Sri Lanka [1.1.2.5]. Although Buddh-ists have been practising meditation since the beginning, over 2500 years ago, "generally speaking medi-tation was not considered a practice for lay Buddhists … [but] was reserved for the ordained."[131]

In the course of the revival of Theravāda, however, meditation was taught by monks to lay Buddhists, or was taken up by lay Buddhists themselves. Often, such meditations were those described in the ancient texts or traditional meditation manuals. Such meditation methods include the Burmese Vipassana, Siam-ese Kammathana, Sri Lankan forest tradition,[132] or some "lost" ancient system.[133]

7.3.2 We see today a great and growing number of **meditation centres**, mostly Buddhist, and Buddhist Centres (especially in the cities) calling themselves "meditation centres" (but many of which have little or no meditation, or it is done merely ritually). The word "meditation" has gained great *totemic power*—people see it, at least, as some kind of empowering, even healing, ritual—and hence would attract fol-lowers, supporters and funds for the Centres.

Meditation centres are very different from monasteries and temples: they are, as a rule, owned by the monk or nun, who tacitly regard the Centre as a source of income and influence. With the rise of modernist Buddhism (Sri Lanka style, we must remember), clerics running such Centres have to present themselves as teaching some meditation that is unique (at least *appear* unique), not available elsewhere, but still a form of *Buddhist* meditation so that it is seen as being authentic.

7.3.3 In pre-modern traditionalist Buddhism, meditation centres were few and, as a rule, were monas-teries or temples where monastics taught the meditation. Since the middle of the 20th century, we see such **meditation centres** rapidly growing in numbers in various countries. The reasons for this are clear enough. "Meditation" is seen as being *non-religious*, or that we need not be "Buddhist" to do it, and yet benefit from it. Secondly, and this is very significant, such centres are led, often owned, by the laity.

A third reason for the rise of **lay** meditation centres worldwide is that they have become a common feature in western Buddhism. Since the 1960s, increasing numbers of Westerners (from America and Eu-rope), male and female, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, were learning from lay meditation teachers like U Ba Khin and Goenka[134]—that is, besides the growing number of practitioners in Asia, that is, in Burma and Thailand in SE Asia, and Sri Lanka and especially Malaysia and Singapore. By the 1970s, the Western stu-dents themselves, experienced in such modernist meditations (especially Vipassana, and to a lesser extent, Samatha), were spreading both the meditations and their related teachings, attracting an even greater number of Western converts.[135]

7.3.4 The key reasons for this phenomenal growth in the teaching and practice of modernist meditation in the West is the amenability (willingness to learn, *sovacassatā*, and quickness in learning, *ugghaṭitañ-ñū*)[136] of the Western youths (most of them turn to meditation while in college or of college age), and their enterprising initiative and ability to work together on their own. Furthermore, the centre or com-

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[131] M Baumann, in (edd) Prebish & Baumann, *Westward Dharma*, 2002:57. This is a view prevalent amongst West-ern scholars of Buddhism.

[132] W Knighton, *Forest Life in Ceylon, 1854;* M Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka,* 1983. Cf Freiburger, "As-ceticism and its critics," 2006:246-258. For summary: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Forest_Tradition.

[133] See esp the Boran Kammatthana of Thailand [SD 60.1b (4.3)].

[134] SD 60.1b (1.7.2.3).

[135] On Buddhist developments in Burma, see W L King, *A Thousand Lives Away*, 1964; for Sri Lanka: G D Bond, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka,* 1988b:130-240. An important reading: R H Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rheto-ric of Meditative Experience," 1995:228-283, esp nn 18-22 and 31-50. Of a modernist monk, see Nyanaponika (1901-94), *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation,* 1953; (ed) Bodhi, *Nyanaponika: A Farewell Tribute*, 1995.

[136] **Ugghaṭitaññū S** (A 4.143), SD 3.13(3.3).

munity teaching meditation and Buddhism run in the West by Westerners—such as the IMS (founded in 1975)[137] [7.2.3] in the US and the Samatha Trust (1973)[138] in the UK—are wholesomely successful because:
(1) they are committed to the study and practice of **early Buddhism** and its related forms;
(2) they are charitable, know how to raise **funds**, and manage their wealth well and honestly;
(3) they look up to the **teaching**, not personalities (not even a teacher);
(4) they respect **monastic members** for their virtue and learning, and with a healthy social distance.

7.3.5 Asian Buddhists, on the other hand, tend see Buddhist teachings in **a utilitarian way**: What good is this *to me*? Such benefits should be starkly *visible*: the Teacher is well dressed and respected, and is lord of his own temple: hence, his word is fiat. The Teacher should always be above the teaching: he defines what is true or false, right or wrong. His perceived better karma licences to all this and to protect him, it seems!

That traditional Asian training and schooling see more value in "practical" learning and careers (as doctors, lawyers, engineers) often deprive even the most intelligent, intuitive and creative amongst Asians to ensure none of our views, words or works will rock the family or community boat. What benefit or advantage has sutta study in such a scenario?

To the traditional Asian Buddhists, **the clergy** are a class above everyone else (in the community, any way). Hence, they are apart from us so that they function as negotiators of karma and merit for our dead (the ancestors). Their presence and rituals (even though we understand little of them) for the funeral rites, transport our deceased (their soul?) safely into the other world (whatever that may be). It is imperative that we are publicly seen as being filial in performing these final duties so that we are worthy of our inheritance, and that we can more than afford to rent such expensive virtuosi and pay for such rituals.

7.3.6 Morally, as traditional Chinese Buddhists, we are often nose-led by **Confucianist** (status and power relationship) sentiments. The truth, in this status-conscious situation, is defined in a utilitarian way rather than as a Buddhist virtue with karmic consequence. Hence, such a truth is often modified, even withheld, for the sake of harmony with others, or so that one does not lose one's "face" (self-pride and reputation) by it.[139]

Religiously, we are more likely to resort to **Daoist** learning, superstition and magic, especially in the face of personal difficulties, social crises and life transitions (such as during funeral rituals). Even as Buddhists, we are likely to tacitly accept Daoist values and actions, out of "respect" for elders and others.

Even as Asian Buddhists, we are likely to look up to **status and wealth** as "good karma" totems for our respect and support. The wealthy (persons and temples) deserve our support (especially through donations). The needy are only suffering from the fruits of their own bad karma, a debt they have to settle themselves.

By that same token, **the rich and powerful**, even when they are wrong, should not be openly criticized. Those who do criticize the mighty, even expose social wrongs, will face *shame* and *ostracism*. Furthermore, to look good in the face of society, we should be *seen* to do good. Our names should be inscribed on temple plaques and images, in Buddhist publications, and, of course, in the obituaries of the deceased.

It is clearly embarrassing and impolite (to say the least) to even say such things, much less, to write about them. All the more, this highlights the urgency that we should *right now* deal with these unhealthy and deleterious social difficulties. We must learn from our past, not ritualize it: ritualizing it will only hold us in a samsaric social loop, chains us like the 6 animals[140] leashed to a stake deeply sunk into the ground of superstition. Early Buddhism and the Western struggle against religion has much to teach us in terms

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[137] On the success of the Insight Meditation Society, see SD 60.1b (2.5.2.3-5).
[138] On the success of the Samatha Trust, see SD 60.1b (6.2).
[139] On the culture of losing face, saving face, see SD 28.9a (3.4).
[140] **Cha Pāṇā S** (S 35.205), SD 19.15.

of **social freedom**, personal growth and mental health. We must start learning and changing for the better.[141]

8 Buddhist ethnicism, Buddhist modernism: A few issues

8.0 INTRODUCTION

By now, we must have some idea of the key differences between **ethnic Buddhism** and **western Buddhism**. A simple (perhaps simplistic) difference is that the former is race-based and dogmatic, while the latter is more person-based. "Person" here is used in a nuanced way: it means that a Western Buddhist is more likely to think for himself, commits himself intelligently to his beliefs, and works effectively with others to promote his Buddhism. *Person,* in the sense of "self," entails a search for meaning and purpose behind Buddhism.

Hence, a Western Buddhist is often more keen and able to search the scriptures, while Asian Buddhists are more likely to follow the crowd or some authority-figure, or seeking the approval of some foreign teacher.[142] To start correcting this embarrassing cultural oddity, we need to state it.

Local Asians, especially English-speaking Buddhists, also tend to misperceive that Christians, including local Christians, like their Western counterparts, are better educated and wealthier than other locals. In the 1980s, a Western Buddhist friend, visiting me in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, went for a stroll in the neighbourhood. A local teenager came up to him and proudly announced, "I'm a Christian." After a moment of flabbergasted silence, my friend replied: "I'm a Buddhist!"

I would like to have included a study of a premodern history of Europe depicting **the struggle against Christianity**, how millions have needlessly been massacred in the name of God, how the West is now free from the Church, and how it (the Church) is more civilized and restrained today on this account [15.1]. We, too, have our own dark history of Buddhism in Song China, for example, and its mystique, like pheromone, still intoxicates and bedevils the masses of our own time and place.

The zeal and light of courageous scholars have justly exposed all this darkness [8.3.2]. When do we, who live in the past, truly learn from all this?

8.1 RACE, CULTURE, EMPIRE

8.1.1 When Buddhism arrived in a new country—whether it was Sri Lanka, the countries of mainland SE Asia, the ancient kingdoms of Central Asia [8.1.4], Tibet, North Asia, China, Korea, or Japan—the local **race and culture** influenced, even transformed, Buddhism in significant ways. Even today we see how Buddhism in Asia has been "naturalized" or "converted" by local culture. Hence, it is meaningful to speak of the Buddhisms in South Asia, SE Asia (including the contemporary Buddhisms in Malaysia and Singapore), Tibet, North Asia (Mongolia, Manchuria and Siberia) and East Asia (China, Korea and Japan) as **ethnic Buddhisms**, that is, race-based Buddhisms that exploit Buddhism for the protection and propagation of its own culture. [1.2.1]

Let us just ask one question here: Why is it that the Mahāyāna Buddhism of the great empires and nations such as **ancient Mongolia, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and Indonesia** all disappeared in time; yet, **the Theravāda of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand** flourished to this day, except for that of **Cambodia and Laos**? To usefully answer this question, we should start at the beginning: How Mahāyāna arose and prospered with the great pre-Islamic empires. This is, of course, a simplified approach, but it is a good place to start before we can have any deeper understanding of the significance of this development.

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[141] Further on Buddhist modernism, see SD 60.1d (3.2.1).
[142] For the historical conditions underlying this cultural oddity amongst Asian Buddhists, see (7.1).

8.1.2 After Alexander's military campaigns,[143] there arose the Indo-Greek kingdom, known historically as **the Yavana kingdom** (*yavana,rajya*),[144] called *Yona* or *Yonaka* in the suttas and commentaries.[145] This Hellenized region comprised Bactria in the north,[146] parts of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, ancient eastern Persia, and the northwestern regions of India (all of modern Pakistan, and parts of Himachal Pradesh and the Jammu). This kingdom existed from around 200-10 BCE, when it began to disintegrate following the invasions of the Indo-Scythians. The local Greeks continued to live and work under the new rulers, further contributing significantly to the civilizations in south and central Asia. Communities of Greeks probably survived for several centuries under the rule of the Indo-Parthians and the imperial Kushans.[147]

In significant ways, the Indo-Greeks who remained behind to govern the Bactrian kingdom after Alexander's campaigns, influenced post-Buddha Buddhism. The most profound of Greek influences on Buddhism was to ignore the Buddha's instruction against making or worshipping any human image of him,[148] and to create one of the most beautiful and imposing religious images in religious history: the Buddha image, and to depict various aspects of his life in sculpture and other art forms, especially in **Gandhara art**.[149] We see this anthropomorphic influence in the iconography of practically every kind of Buddhism that exists today. The Greeks turned these Buddhists into idol-worshippers.[150]

8.1.3 The Kushans, one of the 5 major tribes of the Yueh-zhi, were nomadic pastoralists inhabiting the steppes of western part of modern Gansu, China, during the 1st millennium BCE. The Kushan empire started in the Bactrian region in the early 1st century, and spread to encompass much of modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India, reaching as far as Saketa and Sarnath[151] during the time of Kanishka, its greatest ruler.[152]

The Kushan empire, as foreign rulers, adopted an open and eclectic religious tradition with a varied pantheon of deities. The Kushans, having replaced the Indo-Greek kingdom [8.1.2], inherited its Graeco-Buddhist traditions. Kushan patronage of Buddhism allowed it to grow as a great commercial power. Between the middle of the 1st century and the middle of the 3rd century, Buddhist monks and merchants spread all over Central Asia and reached China through the Silk Road.[153]

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[143] On Alexander and his campaigns in Asia, see SD 36.9 (4.2.1.1); SD 40a.2 (3.4); see also DEBN sv.

[144] John Wilson, *Indian Caste,* Times of India Office, 1877:353.

[145] As Yonaka and Kambuja (*yona,kambuja*) in **Assalāyana S** (M 93,6), SD 40a.2 (1.1 n to §5; esp 3.2, 3.4.1); Miln 1, 4, 19, passim (at least 15 refs for *yonak**).

[146] P Thonemann, *The Hellenistic World: Using coins as sources*, Cambridge Univ Press, 2016:97.

[147] A K Narain, *The Indo-Greeks,* Oxford, 1957; B R Publishing, 2003:278.

[148] See **Kalinga,bodhi J** (J 479): the Buddha, when asked about how he should be recollected, replies: "A memorial shrine is groundless and purely imaginative" (*uddesikaṁ avatthukaṁ mana,mattakena hoti,* J 4:228,21). The Buddha was represented in art aniconically, ie, not anthropomorphically but *symbolically:* by an empty throne, the Bodhi tree, the Dharma-wheel, a trident, footprints and so on. See K Karlsson, *Face to Face with the Absent Buddha,* PhD diss, Uppsala, 1999; S L Huntington, "Early Buddhist art and the theory of aniconism. See *Art Journal* 49,4 1990: 401-406; R Linrothe, "Inquiries into the Origin of the Buddha image: A review," *East and West* 43 1993:241-256; Y Krishan, *The Buddha Image: Its origin and development,* Bharatiya Bhavan, 1996. For illus: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aniconism_in_Buddhism#cite_note-2.

[149] J E Hill, *Through the Jade Gate to Rome: A Study of the Silk Routes during the Later Han Dynasty, First to Second Centuries CE*, BookSurge, 2009:29, 318-350

[150] R C Craven, *Indian Art: A concise history,* Thames & Hudson, 1987:100 f; J C Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent,* 2nd ed, Yale Univ Press, 1994:84.

[151] During Huvishka's reign, the Kushan empire was known to have extended as far as Pāṭaliputra and Bodh-gayā: Bindeshwari Prasad Sinha & Lala Aditya Lala, *Pāṭaliputra Excavations. 1955-56,* Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Bihar, 2017:202.

[152] H Falk, "The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the *Kuṣāṇas." Silk Road Art and Archaeology VII*, 2001:121-136; "The *Kaniṣka* era in Gupta records," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology X*, 2004:167-176; J E Hill, op cit, 2009:29, 33, 368-371.

[153] Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History,* NY: Oxford Inov Press, 2010:42.

From the reign of Huvishka (r 150-180 CE),[154] we have the first known epigraphic evidence of the **Amitabha Buddha**, on the bottom part of a 2nd-century statue found in Govindo-Nagar, and now housed in the Mathura Museum. The inscription on the statue reads: "the 28th year of the reign of Huvishka," and dedicated to "Amitabha Buddha" by a family of merchants. There is also evidence that Huvishka himself was a follower of Mahāyāna Buddhism. A Sanskrit manuscript fragment in the Schøyen Collection[155] describes Huvishka as one who has "set forth in the Mahāyāna."[156]

From McEvilley we learn of Greek influence on Mahāyāna, which he describes as "the form of Buddhism which (regardless of how Hinduized its later forms became) seems to have originated in the Greco-Buddhist communities of India, through a conflation of the Greek Democritean–Sophistic–Pyrrhonist[157] tradition with the rudimentary and unformalized empirical and skeptical elements already present in early Buddhism."[158]

Of course, the influences were mutual.[159] Nietzsche, for example, in his *The Will to Power* (1901) declares Pyrrho to be a "Buddhist for Greece" ("Ein Buddhist für Griechland").[160] As for us, we need to be Buddhists for here and now, wherever we are.

8.1.4 The kingdoms of **Central Asia**,[161] especially those along the Silk Road, prospered from the commerce that it brought. It also attracted the Muslim Turks who also saw their campaigns as spreading their faith. From the 7th century onwards, Central Asia became Turkified, were dominated by Muslim Turks.[162] The Islamization began in the urban areas due to the socioeconomic and political institutions that came under Muslim leadership. The rural areas tended to be religiously influenced by the "ulama" (Muslim preachers) many of whom were Sufi mystics who held sway over the regions.

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[154] Huvishka was the Kushan emperor from Kanishka's death (150 CE) until the succession of Vasudeva 1 about 30 years later. His reign was mostly peaceful, consolidating Kushan power in northern India, and the moving of its capital to the southern city of Mathura (166 km (103 mi) SE of Delhi in Uttar Pradesh). See Khodadad Rezakhani, *From the Kushans to the Western Turks*, Jordan Center for Persian Studies, 2017:202.

[155] See Richard Salomon, "Gāndhārī Manuscripts in the British Library, Schøyen and other collections. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014: https://www.austriaca.at/0xc1aa5576%200x00314c97.pdf.

[156] Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks,* Brill, 2010:141.

[157] Pyrrho (a skeptic) was originally a follower of Democritus, a contemporary of Socrates. Diogenes Laërtius' biography of Pyrrho records that Pyrrho travelled with Alexander the Great' with his army to India and met teachers there: "The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers," Peithô's Web. Democritus followed in the line that started with Heraclitus, and included Xenophanes, Parmenides and Zeno of Elea. Democritus, who taught that everything was made of atoms, was widely travelled, and visited India. See E Flintoff, "Pyrrho and India," *Phronesis* 25,2 1980: 88-108; For further refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Similarities_between_Pyrrhonism_and_Buddhism.

[158] Thomas C McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*, NY: Allworth Press, 2012:503.

[159] A Kuzminski, *Pyrrhonism: How the ancient Greeks reinvented Buddhism,* Lexington Books, 2008; C I Beckwith, *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's encounter with early Buddhism in Central Asia,* Princeton, 2015: 22 f.

[160] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* [German, *Wille fur Macht,* 1901], tr Kaufmann & Hollingdale, Vintage Books, 1968: 421 §437.

[161] Besides the Indo-Greek kingdom of Bactria (spanning modern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), the ancient Buddhist kingdoms were Khotan (southern edge of the Takla Makan desert), Shanshan (SE stretch of the Tarim Basin), Yarkand, Kashgar, Kucha, Karashahr, Turfan and Aksu. See: B N Puri, *Buddhism is Central Asia,* Delhi, 1981; H-J Klimkeit, "Buddhism in Turkish Central Asia," *Numen* 37 1990:53-69; Kogi Kudara, "A rough sketch of Central Asian Buddhism," *Pacific World* 3rd ser 4 2002:93-107; K Kudara, "The Buddhist culture of the Old Uighur peoples," *Pacific World* 3rd ser 4 2002:183-195.

[162] Heidi Roupp, *Teaching World History: A resource book,* Routledge, 2015:171; Erik Zürcher, *Buddhism: Its origin and spread in words, maps, and pictures,* St Martin's Press, 1962:45; H Kulke & D Rothermund, *A History of India,* Psychology Press, 2004:74; (edd) J Aruz & E V Fino, *Afghanistan: Forging civilizations along the Silk Road*, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, 2012:42; Jackson J Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: Vol A: To 1500,* Cengage Learning, 2016:96.

Before Central Asia was Islamized, the Buddhism there was mostly of the shamanistic kind, steeped in healing and magic, and the focus was on teachers who were perceived to have magical powers and special knowledge. In other words, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna predominated in Central Asia.

By the 11th century, Buddhism in India, too, became deeply influenced by Vajrayāna. The success of Buddhism there led to the rise of opulent monasteries and impressive universities (the first in the world) in various parts of India. Impressive as all this may sound, these centres, like modern universities, focused more on academic learning[163] than on spiritual practice, which then led to a more worldly and secularized Buddhism, much like the kind we see in urban centres. The Muslim Turk invasions in the 12th century exterminated Buddhism from India.[164]

8.1.5 The lessons behind the widespread disappearance of Buddhism or its degeneration into a mundane system of healing, magic and sophistry are well worth noting, if we are really interested in what the Buddha has taught and that we wish to practise it. The point is clear: **power and wealth** destroyed Buddhism [8.1.3 f], and power and wealth, even the mere desire for it, will always destroy Buddhism.

Almost all the ancient Buddhist leaders, especially those of the large impressive monasteries and centres that flowed with the currents of power and wealth perished in these very floods; they drowned in the tsunami of invading hordes; or, they perished with the rise of a new dynasty. When Buddhism stood on the pedestal of power, it invariably fell when that pedestal crumbled under its own weight, only to be persecuted, even exterminated, by the emergent power.

When Buddhist renunciants keep to the Dharma-Vinaya, steeped in the spirit of renunciation and peaceful contemplative life, they often gain the respect of other religions. Buddhists living in the dominantly Muslim states of northern Malaysia, such as Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis, tell us how well disposed the region's Muslim rulers are towards local Thai monks living the simple monastic life. For this reason, the Buddha unequivocally warns us to be wary of "gains and honour" (*lābha,sakkāra*).[165]

8.1.6 In most of the Asian countries mentioned (except Malaysia and Singapore) [9.0], ethnic Buddhism has been present for over a millennium, that is, well before the rise of modernist Sri Lankan Theravada, with its emphases on academic Buddhism, ritual meditation, popular psychology, wealth and status [1.2.2]. These ethnic Buddhisms then transplanted themselves into the West for the benefit of Buddhist migrants, their families and descendents.

Unlike Western Buddhism, which, as a rule, began on the initiative of some Western Buddhist practitioners [7.2.2], ethnic Buddhism (especially Thai Buddhism) have, often from the start, their own impressive Temples run by ethnic monks.[166] Even the Sinhala missions in the West have their own comfortable houses funded mostly by their countrymen. Like any ethnic Buddhist Temple, their ethnic founders and followers see it as an assuring, even triumphal, presence of their culture in a foreign land, with Buddhism in their service.

8.1.7 The first 3 Sinhala Temples[167] in **Malaya** (pre-independent Malaysia) were there to serve the religious and cultural needs of the Sinhala migrants during British rule. There were (and are) patently *ethnic*

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[163] Academic study of Buddhism will always be a vital aspect of Buddhism in society. The point here is that within Buddhism itself, the emphasis should be on the study, practice and realization of the Dharma.

[164] SD 36.2 (1.9.2).

[165] See the chapter of suttas: **Lābha,sakkāra Saṁyutta** (S 17.1-43/2:225-243).

[166] Although, as a rule, the Thai Temple system worldwide is directly linked, even governed, by the Thai Sangha in Thailand, there are important exceptions, as in the case of Mettavihari of Buddharam, Waalwijk (the Netherlands) who was exposed for molesting scores of young males. See SD 7.9 (4.3.4.1).

[167] The first Sinhala Temple in British Malaya was the Bodhi [also spelt Bodi] Langkaram Vihara in Taiping, Perak (founded 1889); the Buddhist Vihara (later self-styled Mahavihara) at Brickfields, KL, was run by high-caste Goyigama caste monks (shrine-room 1894; 1st incumbent monk 1895), well known as the "rich man's temple." The Sentul Temple (land reserved 1917; Sri Saddharma Wardhana Soc to raise funds, 1921), was run by non-Goyigama monks for mostly "middle class Buddhists" (Ananda Mangala). See J Samuels, 2011:119-121.

Sinhala temples. The position of the Nayaka (abbot) of the Brickfields Mahavihara (run by members of the affluent Goyigama [Govigama][168] caste), for example, is handed down from uncle to nephew: this is to ensure that it is not only an ethnic Sinhala Temple, but also one that belongs to the Goyigama caste. The only difference is that in Malaysia and Singapore, the family- and caste-based Temple is run by an elected board of lay members comprised strictly only high-caste Sinhalese (definitely not by even Sri Lankan Tamils).

As in Sri Lanka, the monks embody the Sinhala ideal of a traditional Buddhist life, where lay Buddhists engage themselves in lucrative "works of merits" (*puñña*), especially supporting the monks with food and funds, and attending worship services (*pūjā*) of ritualized chanting, at the end of which they are "blessed" by the monks. On special occasions, the laity receive "blessed threads" (like those of the Brahminical tradition) to wear on their wrists, and have horoscopes read for them. Peculiar to Sinhala beliefs, these merits are then "transferred" to ancestors and "stored" for them, as it were, for future benefit of the devotees for better rebirth.[169] These are clear cases of ethnic developments and revisions to Buddhism.[170]

If we are to apply the principles of Critical Buddhism, such revisions and discriminations are clearly *not* what the Buddha teaches. [18.1.2]

8.2 LIBERATION ANTHROPOLOGY, LIBERATION BUDDHISM

8.2.1 Race, culture, even **politics** are, as a rule, significant factors in the development of Buddhism in society. A scholar's insight is especially valuable and vital in highlighting Buddhism's imagination, beauty and insight that will benefit anyone who embraces it; or, in exposing its excesses and weaknesses so that the intelligent and honest amongst us will appreciate the lesson, and even assert ourselves to correct those failures. The scholar of Buddhism is at his best when his work helps Buddhists to understand Buddhism better; or when his work challenges Buddhists to see or show the true worth of their views and actions, so that Buddhists are inspired to seek and embrace the true meaning and purpose of the Buddha's teachings.

8.2.2 Scholars (anthropologists) like Gananath Obeyesekere, Stanley Tambiah and Valentine Daniel[171] have written significantly against the violence and modernism (read secularism) that have plagued Sri Lanka in the second half of the 20th century (which generally worsens to this day). No scholar before the Sinhala anthropologist **Heraliwala L Seneviratne** (1934-   ) has so convincingly argued, pointing to pertinent sources and realities that modernist developments in Sri Lanka's monkhood have directly contributed to the nation's failure to establish and enjoy prosperity and harmony.[172]

Seneviratne describes the contents of his book, *The Work of Kings*, as follows: "I content that the conception of the role of the monk as social activism, widely believed by contemporary elite monks and the Sinhala Buddhist middle class to go back to two millennia, is in fact more convincingly traceable to the written and spoken words of Anagarika Dharmapala in the early decades of the 20th century. Dharmapala's definition of the monastic role as dedication for national moral renewal during the dark era of imperial domination went through rapid goal displacement within a short period of about 3 decades. Giving birth to **a worldly individualism** in the monastery, unprecedented in the history of South and South-east Asian Buddhism." (1999:xi f; highlighted)

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[168] Although the spellings differ, the pronunciation is the same: goi-ga-ma.

[169] Interestingly, even to this day, meditation is never any part of such pujas in these Sinhala Temples. [1.8.1.3]

[170] See Jeffrey Samuels, "Forget not your old country," *in South Asian Diaspora* 3,1*,* 2011:117-132; J Cheah, "Buddhism, race and religion," in (ed) M Jerryson, *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism,* 2017:650-661. For similar developments in ethnic Buddhism in the US, see P D Numrich, *Old Wisdom in the New World,* 81 f; in the UK: D Azzopardi, *Religious belief and practice among Sri Lankans Buddhists in the UK,* PhD thesis, 2010. Further, see SD 60.1d (4.5.1).

[171] R Gombrich & G Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed,* Princeton, 1988; S J Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?,* Chicago, 1992; E V Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an anthropology of violence,* Princeton, 1996.

[172] See S C Berkwitz, review of Seneviratne's *The Work of Kings* (1999), JAOS 121,2 2001:281-283.

Seneviratne questioned the theory that Buddhist monks had political power in pre-colonial times, as generally believed and argued by Walpola Rahula in his *Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1972),[173] and implicitly in *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (1956, 1966). Rahula's views and actions twisted Dharmapala's dreams about the monk's role in the growth of a peaceful, harmonious, democratic society into a nightmare of a self-aggrandizing, vociferous and aggressive priesthood whose activities are detrimental to Sri Lanka. Dharmapala's dream was a moral regeneration of monkhood, but it became instead <u>a degeneration of the Sinhala priesthood</u>.

8.2.3 Seneviratne gives us a revealing picture of **Sinhala Buddhist missionaries**, such as those who have set up their Viharas and Centres in Malaysia and Singapore. It was Anagarika Dharmapala's [1.2.2] idea that Sri Lankan monks should spread Buddhism to the world[174] "and the first <u>missionaries</u> were monks who worked on shoestring budgets." These religious missions, as we know from their history, went out into the world for their own good: for "Gospel, glory and gold." They claimed to preach Buddhism but, in reality, they were spreading Sinhala Dharma. Their Sinhala culture came first and foremost; Buddhism was merely the wrapper. Their tacit purpose and priority were to embrace the wealthy for their patronage. The Vihara was a meme and trap for the rich. [8.2.3]

Just a generation after Dharmapala, notes Seneviratne, we come across the phenomenon of monks, many of them pupils or in some other way connected to these pioneers, going overseas and establishing themselves in foreign lands, facilitated by both philanthropists of those lands and by expatriate [Sinhala] communities of Buddhists. A few of these monks control vast revenues and live the life of busy executives, replete with symbols like Mercedes Benzes, BMWs, and cellular phones.

The role advocated by W Rahula ostensibly to benefit society, worked in the end to benefit the individual monks who, rather than doing any "social service," used their liberation from traditional duties, and the education and travel opportunities in foreign lands to engage in various employment and enterprising activities that brought them wealth, status, even power and influence. This gave rise to an elite subclass of "super rich monks," most of whom use their foreign connections to tap sources of wealth.[175] [9.2.2]

These monks have a foothold both in the country of their adoption and in Sri Lanka, and some hold immigrant status in several countries. At the lower end of this financially comfortable class are the salary-earning monks, mostly graduates, who, especially if they also have support from the laity as well as productive land, are able to invest money in businesses like repair shops, taxi services, rental properties, and tuition classes. Others amongst them resorted to astrology, medicine, and various occultisms, the "beastly arts" that are taboo for monks.[176]

Seneviratne observes, "Throughout history there were monks who practiced these, but now they do so with a new sense of legitimacy and commercialism.[177] These come from the new definition of the monk's role as *social service*. I have argued that once this definition was accepted, <u>monks were liberated from their traditional role</u>, and <u>the floodgates were opened for them to do anything they pleased</u>. Many monks who say their work is 'social service' may not be engaging in this kind of activity for lack or [sic] resources, enterprise, or any other reason. Still, at the very least, the definition of the monk's work as social service has led to <u>a greater secularization of the monks</u>." (*The Work of Kings,* 1999:335 f, emphases added)

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[173] See SD 60.1ab (2.1.1.2).

[174] For Dharmapala's works: *Return to Righteousness,* Colombo, 1965.

[175] The Mahavihara of the Siyam Nikaya (Goyigama caste) monks located in Brickfields, KL, was well known as the "rich man's temple" (J Samuels, "Forget not the old country," *South Asian Diaspora* 2012:124 +n11).

[176] The first 15 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya each contains a long stock passage on these "<u>animal arts</u>" (*tiracchāna vijjā*) that monks (and nuns) should avoid. See eg **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,43-62) + SD 25.2 (3); **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,43-63) + SD 8.10 (3); also **Tiracchāna,kathā S** (S 56.9), SD 65.13; **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9,3), SD 7.14.

[177] In advertisements in national newspapers monks offer magical help in all spheres of activity—employment, examinations, court cases, family problems, love, interviews, and so forth. See for example the advertisement of the monk Telleke Dhammapala, *Divayina,* 7 January 1996. (Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* 1999:116 n2)

8.2.4 These **foreign missions** in recent times by Sinhala monks, Seneviratne reveals to us,

> … in fact, are only the foreign arm of the same culture and subject to the same broad social
> forces. It is thus not surprising that it met with the same fate as the local project: the altruistic
> ideal was replaced by the desire of individual monks to gain status, influence, wealth, and,
> where possible, power.
>
> An interesting development is the establishment of **chiefships**[178] in various countries, paral-
> leling those of the hierarchies of Malvatta and Asgiriya. Such hierarchies and titles were not any-
> where within the scheme of planned [sic] by Dharmapala, and in fact they were mocked by him.
> Besides, these chiefships, like their prototypes in Sri Lanka, have absolutely no meaning beyond
> providing some purely vain psychological satisfaction to the bearer and to his and his [sic] dom-
> estic and local group's status pretensions at home in Sri Lanka.
>
> There are <u>chief Sanghanayakas</u> for **England, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and the USA**,
> and these are rapidly proliferating in all countries where there are missions. In this imaginary
> world conquest, there is a most peculiarly ironical consummation of Dharmapala's foreign
> missionary project."[179]   (Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* 1999:341)

Lesser monks keenly follow the ambitious dreams of their "enforeignized" (*videsagatavima*)[180] super-
iors. Many young Sinhala monks apprenticed themselves as "missionaries" in Malaysia and Singapore, fur-
tively scouting around for some wealthy pious sponsors to patronize for some university degree, or simply
to set up their own Vihara locally or in some other country.

Tales of foreign Buddhists of obsequious faith and gullible generosity of wealthy Malaysians and Singa-
poreans reached the ears of these hopeful monks in impoverished Sri Lanka. A Singaporean Buddhist visit-
ing Sri Lanka was once shocked and embarrassed when a Sinhala monk grabbed his arm and invited him to
make "**angpow**" (red packet)[181] offerings to some local monks!

8.2.5 Significantly, throughout his book, Seneviratne stresses the ethical imperative of responsible anthro-
pologists to introduce issues of value, make judgments, and contribute to the body of moral critiques re-
garding the culture that we are studying: it should contribute to the vision of a **liberation anthropology**.
Indeed, any kind of good scholarship, especially Buddhist studies in its various aspects, should inspire a
vision of **liberation studies**.[182] [8.3.1-3]

It should be noted that there is clearly some nobility in this gesture, whatever the real reason may
be, but it is hard to imagine that the anthropologist was speaking up for Buddhism, or perhaps even as a
Buddhist. Either way, this is clearly what an informed Buddhist who loves the Dharma would want to see,
even work for. After all, it is often safer not to rock the boat, and to help paddle it along, which well de-
scribes an ethnic Buddhist. Power, in fact, does not always corrupt, but it often reveals the kind of person
who exploits that power.

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[178] Esp as "chief high priest" (*mahā,nāyaka*), a neologism invented by such power-driven monks.

[179] Seneviratne's adds that the foreign trips by the high-rank Sinhala monks was a strategy in "one-upmanship":
even a short trip overseas is "prestigious and is consciously understood as potently convertible to mobility locally."
See details 1999:341 f.

[180] Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* 1999:141.

[181] "Angpow" is local Hokkien or Fujianese (a southern Chinese dialect), 红包 *hóngbāo,* ie, traditional gifts of cash
to the young and unmarried (for the latter as a hint that they should be married!), and to elders esp during Chinese
New Year, weddings, birthdays or any auspicious or judicious occasion, and often given to religious people as merit-
making or out of faith. The unwritten face-saving code is, however, simply that we should *never* ask for it.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_envelope.

[182] See Seneviratne, 1999:6.

8.3 LIBERATING ZEN

8.3.1 Both the mass media and specialist scholars (and of course the victims themselves) had, over the last century, reported how the religious elite in Buddhism have raped, plundered and devastated numerous devotees. Yet, those close to these powers, absolutely corrupt—the Guru, Shifu, Sensei, Tulku, Ajahn—feel empowered themselves by protecting the corrupters. Often that corrupter lived on laughing to his death, touched by neither law nor justice.[183] We are painfully reminded that, those who seek the light are often blinded by it, and in the blinding darkness, they are helplessly ravaged, mind and body, by the shadows of religion.

Among those who have shone the light of truth and freedom into the dark distant corners of religion are scholars specializing in the history of Buddhism. Building on the discoveries and studies of Buddhism in the last century in various countries where it has developed, they have produced some remarkable researches and writings that help to free us from being conned into looking up to sectarian Buddhism, from being blinded or intoxicated by parochialism and triumphalism, such as those in Chan and Zen.[184]

Some of these studies in **the history of Chan in China** and **of Zen in Japan** reveal fascinating cloak-and-dagger reports of how ambitious Chan masters, in their desire to win patronage from the elite, not only ethnicized Buddhism (converted it into Chinese) but wrote their own scriptures and concocted their own lineages. The Buddha taught the Dharma, but when it came to East Asia, some of them turned it into Chan lore, some made Zen jokes of it. Those who devoted themselves to such hubris continue to pay its painful and heavy price of turning the Buddha on his head, of killing him in the path.

8.3.2 In the study of **religious rhetoric** applied to Buddhist narrative, none can outshine the remarkable level it reached in the case of Chan or "Chinese Zen." We will here look at how the Buddhist experience was expertly fabricated, as revealed in glorious detail by specialists in recent times. The study of Chan/Zen Buddhism has grown phenomenally over the last century. The Chan/Zen tradition was initially imagined to be:

> … the pinnacle of Eastern transcendental spiritualism and marketed as an antidote to Western rationalism and materialism by a slew of Chan/Zen apologists fired by Orientalist fantasies and ideological agendas. Their idealized images of an iconoclastic, anti-institutional "pure" Chan/Zen Buddhism began to receive critical scrutiny at the turn of the 20th century with the important discovery of thousands of documents in the Dunhuang caves.[185]   (J Robson 2011:311 f)[186]

These ground-breaking revelations of the Chan (Chinese Zen) narratives were the culmination of a century of the field discoveries and seminal writings of various pioneer scholars like Paul Pelliot (1878-1945), Hu Shi [Hu Shih] 胡適 (1891-1962), Paul Demieville (1894-1979), Jacques Gernet (1921-2018), IRIYA Yoshitaka 入矢義高 (1910-1999), and YANAGIDA Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922-2006), especially the last.

Following them, a new generation of Chan historians, inspired by Yanagida's scholarship, emerged with new questions and historical approaches.[187] Scholars like Philip Yampolsky (1920-1996), Jeffrey

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[183] See eg Sasaki, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/us/joshu-sasaki-a-zen-master-tarnished-by-abuse-claims-dies-at-107.html; Sangharakshita, https://www.lionsroar.com/sangharakshita-founder-of-triratna-buddhism-dead-at-93/.

[184] In popular writing, even those by scholars, often use "Zen," which is technically a Japanese term, referring to a tradition rooted and raised in China. From the contexts of such books, we can and should thus discern the historical sense of the 2 terms.

[185] These are the Mògāo caves (*mògāo kū* 莫高窟) of Dūnhuáng: SD 40b.5 (5.2.5.1).

[186] James Robson, review of A Cole, *Fathering Your Father* (2009) & M Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen* (2008), *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 7,1 2011:311 f.

[187] See, eg, **Hu Shih**, "The Development of Zen Buddhism in China," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 15,4 1932:475-505, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China: Its History and Method," *Philosophy East and West* 3,1 1953:3-24, 神會和尚遺集——付胡先生最後的研究 *Shenhui heshang yiji—fu hu xiansheng zuihou de yanjiu,* Taipei: Hu Shi ji-nian guan, 1968; **P Pelliot**, "Notes sur quelques artistes des Six Dynasties et des T'ang," *Toung Pao* 22 1923:215-291;

Broughton (1944-), John R McRae (1947-2011), Dale S Wright (1948-), Bernard Fauré (1948-), Urs App (1949-), Robert Welter (1952-   ), Robert Buswell (1953-   ), T Griffith Foulk, Peter N Gregory, and Robert H Sharf, diligently and dexterously worked with the newly available Dunhuang manuscripts. "They strove to provide a historical critique of Zen origins and to rehabilitate and reposition certain significant Zen figures in a revised historical narrative."[188]

Based on the ground-breaking studies, these scholars moved from studying Zen "origins" to examining its later developments. They highlighted the vital role that Song-dynasty (960-1279) texts had biased our image of the Tang dynasty (618-907) as the golden age of Zen.[189] We now have a wealth of "detailed (and critical) historical and textual studies evincing a wide range of new theoretical and methodological approaches, translations of primary texts, and general treatments of various important texts and facets of the tradition."[190]

We now know better *who* invented Zen and understand better *how* it was done. We shall briefly examine how a famous Chan master was created [8.3.3], how another Chan master invented a Chan technique to belittle early (Indian) Buddhism and gain imperial favour [8.3.4], and how the Chan/Zen lineages themselves were invented [8.3.5].

8.3.3 One of the best-known works of Chan hagiography—or the most notorious case of religious forgery—is the Platform Sutra, traditionally titled **the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch** (六祖壇經 *Liùzǔ tán jīng*).[191] This Sutra and another Chinese Buddhist work, the Transmission of the Lamp,[192] are the key text-sources on the life of the Sixth Patriarch. Most scholars today, however, doubt the historicity of such texts, traditional biographies and Chinese works on **Huìnéng** 慧能 (638-713).[193]

Scholarly researches show the so called Sutra, an extended biography of Huineng, to be an ambitious Chinese monk's fabrication based on an obscure elder of "merely regional significance,"[194] that actually reflects historical and religious developments which took place only in the century after "Huineng's" life and death.[195] Who then forged the Platform Sutra?

P Demieville, "Le miroir spirituel," *Sinologica* 1, 1947:112-237, *Le concile de Lhasa: Une controverse sur le quietisme entres les bouddhistes de l'Inde et de la Chine au VIIIe siecle de l'ere Chretienne,* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952; **J Gernet**, *Entretiens du Maitre de Dhyāna Chen-houei du Ho-tso* (Paris: Publications de l'Ecole fran-caise d'Extreme-Orient, 1949; **Yanagida** Seizan, 初期禅宗史書の研究 *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū,* Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967. For more details: **Bernard Fauré** (ed), "Chan and Zen Studies: The State of the Field(s)," in *Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003:1-35.

[188] J Robson id. For succinct updated accounts, see: John R **McRae**, "Buddhism," *JAS* 54,2 1995:354-371; and Faure, "Chan and Zen Studies," op cit. See also: *Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie* 7, 1993-1994, dedicated to **Yanagida**'s works.

[189] See also T Griffith **Foulk**, "Myth, Ritual, and Monastic Practice in Sung Ch'an Buddhism," in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, (edd) P B Ebrey & P N Gregory, Honolulu: Univ of Hawai'i Press, 1993:147-208; Albert **Welter**, *Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism,* Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 2006; Ishii Shūdō 石井修道, 宋代禅周宗の研究 *Sōdai zenshūshi no kenkyū,* Daitō, 1987; and Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen,* Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 2008*.*

[190] J Robson id. See, eg, John **McRae**, *Seeing Through Zen,* Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2003; Wendi L **Ada-mek**, *The Mystique of Transmission: On Early Chan History and Its Contexts,* NY: Columbia Univ Press, 2007; T Griffith **Foulk** & Robert H **Sharf**, "On the Ritual Use of Ch'an Portraiture in Medieval China," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7, 1993-1994: 149-219; John A **Jorgensen**, "The 'Imperial' Lineage of Ch'an Buddhism: The Role of Confucian Ritual and Ancestor Worship in Ch'an's Search for Legitimation in the Mid-T'ang Dynasty," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 35, 1987:89-133; *Inventing Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch: Hagiography and Biography in Early Ch'an,* Leiden: Brill, 2005.

[191] On the text itself, see SD 40b (5.2.5).

[192] (Ed) 释道原. "卷五・慧能." 景德传灯录. Beijing, China: 北京国学时代文化传播有限公司.

[193] See esp J McRae, *Seeing Through Zen,* 2003; J Jorgenson, *Inventing Hui-neng, 2005.*

[194] McRae 2003:68. Yampolski & McRae "Huineng" in *MacMillan Ency of Religion,* 2005:4153 f; SD 40b (5.2.4).

[195] Technically, this reminds us of a case of *vaticinium ex eventu* ("prophecy after the event"), the nature of a "prediction" that is in fact written in the knowledge of the event having already occurred.

Most scholars today would question Huineng's hagiography. The Platform Sutra was evidently fabricated probably no earlier than 731, by a wily worldly monk called **Shénhuǐ** 神會 (688-762)[196] who brazenly proclaimed himself a "10th-stage Bodhisattva"![197] He was, supposedly, successor to Huineng,[198] and was driven to seek influence at the Imperial court.

8.3.4 In grand Machiavellian style, Shenhui created the so-called "Southern School" of Chan and falsely labelled the "East Mountain School" of Dàoxìn 道信 (580-651) the Fourth Patriarch, and Hóngrěn 弘忍 (601-674) the Fifth Patriarch as the "Northern School," contriving a <u>Northern and Southern School controversy</u>. He supposedly studied under both **Shénxiù** 神秀 (605-706) the Sixth Patriarch and <u>Huineng</u> (638-713), but later campaigned that Huineng was posthumously named as Sixth Patriarch, and he himself as Seventh Patriarch over Pǔjì 普寂 (651-739). Shenhui's rhetoric had a great impact on Chan Buddhism and the lineage of the Chan Patriarchs to this day.

The dark reality was that Shenhui feared rivalry from the "Northern School" (北宗 *běizōng*)[199] of Shenxiu and its teaching on "gradual enlightenment." To sabotage this teaching based on early Indian Buddhism, Shenhui introduced the dogma of <u>immanent enlightenment</u> (we are already enlightened but have not realized this), that is, we all have congenital "Buddha Nature" (a teaching not found in early Buddhism).[200]

8.3.5 The craftily erudite Shenhui, through his machinations and propaganda, transformed the obscure Huineng into a towering figure of Sixth Patriarch of Chan/Zen Buddhism. Shenhui, virtually canonized the then obscure Huineng with a hagiography based on the life of Confucius to gain acceptance from the Confucian court.[201] Huineng was said to have started off as an illiterate "barbarian" 獦獠 *gélǎo* temple labourer from the southwest,[202] the only one who correctly understood a Buddhist verse the abbot had posted on the wall.[203] Only later did Huineng become a monk.[204] The bottom line here is the debasing and debunking of all scholarly learning, the *state* of learning or practice for the primacy of <u>religious *status*</u>.[205]

8.3.6 Since Shenhui upheld the notion of "a special [separate] transmission outside the teachings," 教外別傳 *jiào wài bié zhuàn*[206] [19.3], he had to resort to another way of legitimizing himself both as a monk, more than that, as one *with a special transmission* directly from the Buddha himself! Hence, to boost his anomic notion of Chan, he again resorted to Confucianism—this time its tradition of ancestor veneration—and forged **a lineage** of Chan patriarchs (religious ancestors) supposedly going back to the Buddha himself. Craftily, he cannibalized Indian Buddhist tradition and Confucian ancestor worship to create his fictitious Galataea: the Huineng we know today, whom gullible believers piously accept as the first ancestor or founder of all subsequent Chan lineages.[207]

This is the gist of the rise of a dark shadow of early Chan: Schlütter and Teiser in his *Readings of the Platform Sūtra* (2012) summarize it thus: [208]

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[196] (670-762): these are **Keown**'s dates, 2003:110. **Hu Shih**'s dating is 688-762 (Hu Shih 1958:875: see **Yampolsky** 1967: 36 n124). **John R McRae** gives (684-758), see 1987:227. See Schlütter 2007:383n.

[197] M Poceski (Cheng-chien Bhikshu), "Attitudes towards canonicity and religious authority in Tang China," AAR annual meeting, Toronto, 2002:12.

[198] McRae 2003:68.

[199] See eg J McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism,* Univ of Hawaii Press, 1986.

[200] This idea is behind the contest of verses related in the Platform Sutra: SD 40b (5.2.4.4).

[201] Jorgenson 2005:71.

[202] SD 40b (5.2.3.3, 5.5.2.3); Schlütter & Teiser, *Readings of the Platform Sūtra,* 2012:vii, 27.

[203] SD 40b (5.1.4.4).

[204] SD 40b (5.2.4.5); SD 64.17 (7.4).

[205] Schlütter & Teiser, 2012:vii.

[206] SD 40b (5.1.2).

[207] For an insightful study, see John McRae, *Seeing Through Zen* (2003), which explores *the distinctive and central role of lineage* in Chán Buddhism. See also SD 40b (5.1.2.9); SD 64.17 (7.4.1).

[208] Jorgenson 2005:274-321 (ch 3).

The *Platform Sūtra* is a composite text, combining what purports to be an autobiography with sermons, interviews with students, and deathbed instructions. However, the autobiography is not actually by Huineng (638-713); rather, it should be understood as a hagiography, or biography of a saint portraying him as a hero. This pseudoautobiography was written to give authority to the teachings in the sermon, which many people in the days the *Platform Sūtra* started to circulate may have regarded as radical, and to boost claims to an exclusive and authoritative lineage for Huineng that went all the way back to the Buddha.

The first person to write about Huineng as a saint and hero in an exclusive lineage was Shenhui (684-758), and it seems likely that in composing this hagiography, one of Shenhui's heirs simply added to what Shenhui had written. As Shenhui's claims later came to be contested, various modifications were made, resulting in the *Platform Sūtra* as found at Dunhuang, the text on which this book [Schlütter & Teiser, 2012] focuses.

(J Jorgenson, "The figure of Huineng," in Schlütter & Teiser, op cit 2012:25 f)[209]

8.3.7 Another colourful Chinese Zen figure almost as shadowy as Shenhui [8.3.5] was that of the notorious Linji (Rinzai) master **Zōnggǎo** [Tsung-kao] (1089-1163). While Shenhui successfully overshadowed what he saw as rivalry of the Northern School of Shénxiù and its teaching on "gradual enlightenment" [8.3.3], to win imperial favour, Zhonggao schemed to overcome his rivals by means of <u>ritual meditation</u> to gain the patronage of the urban elite or gentry (士大夫 *shìdàfū*).

Morten Schlütter, in his *How Zen Became Zen* (2008), is a scholarly exposé of the most crucial developments in Zen Buddhism: the dispute over the nature of enlightenment that erupted within the Chinese Chan (Zen) school in the 12th century. The famous Linji (Rinzai) Chan master Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163) railed against "heretical silent illumination Chan" and strongly advocated "phrase-observing meditation," 看話禪 **kānhuà chán**.[210]

Schlütter shows that Dahui's target was the Caodong (Sōtō) Chan tradition that had been revived in the early 12th century, and that <u>silent meditation</u> was an approach to practice and enlightenment that originated within this "new" Chan tradition. The book dramatically replays Dahui and his opponents' arguments for their respective positions some 900 years ago. Schlütter carefully shows us how the doctrinal and soteriological issues behind the enlightenment dispute, have to be understood in the context of <u>government policies toward Buddhism, economic factors, and social changes</u>. With scholarly insight, he explains the remarkable ascent of Chan as the dominant monastic Buddhism of the first centuries of the Song dynasty, and how the gentry, under Zhonggao's influence, came to control the critical transmission from Chan master to Chan disciple (what Schlütter calls "procreation"). [211]

8.3.8 Western scholars are often perplexed and frustrated in trying to unravel "**Chinese truth**," that is, the ancient Chinese written records. In fact, one of the most troubling problems is "the conspicuous tension between the narrator's commentary and the description of events—such as in the Book of Documents (*Shangshu* 尚書), the Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chunqiu* 春秋), and the seminal commentary to the Annals, *Zuozhuan* 左傳—cannot be securely ascribed to a single author.[212]

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[209] For other perspectives on the text's source, see chapters by M Schlütter, "The Platform Sūtra, Buddhism and Chinese religion" (2012:1-24) and by Henrik Sørensen, "The history and practice of early Chan" (2012:53-76).

[210] Iꜱʜɪɪ Shūdō, "Kung-an Ch'an and the *Tsung-men t'ung-yao chi*" (tr A Welter), 2000; Foulk, "The form and function of koan literature," 2000: 22 f. See http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?77.xml+id('b770b-8a71-79aa'). See SD 40b (5.1.3.3, 5.5.2.3).

[211] Zen intrigues, as in any religion, is rooted in the desire for power and wealth, which means that there is no end to the intrigues. For Zen intrigues in 17th-century China, see Jiang Wu, *Enlightenment in Dispute: The reinvention of Chan Buddhism in Seventeenth-Century China,* Oxford Univ Press, 2008. For Zen scandals in our times (US), see SD 64.17 (5-7).

[212] With Zuozhuan, for example, the author(s) speak "to the reader through various characters in the narratives, explaining the causes and significance of events." See Ronald Egan, "Narratives in Tso Chuan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 37,2 1977:325.

    Consequently, as with the earlier works, the reader is often left to wonder what their authors'
intentions actually were. Such concerns touch upon not only the ideological tensions between
moral and narrative details but also numerous tensions proceeding from various internal narrative
contradictions, ironic voices, and complicated dramatic devices. Both the narrator and the histori-
cal characters at times appear to speak duplicitously, or at least disingenuously. Thus when inter-
preting the narratives, the discussions, the debates, and the references that comprise the material
of the histories, we simply cannot take the speaker, whether narrator or character, at his word.
This tendency toward vagueness and subtlety suffuses even some of the most outspokenly critical
historical characters, particularly when their words are intended for submission to the court. Early
Chinese historiography is a history frustratingly complicated by encoded speech.
            (G P S Olberding, *Dubious Facts: The evidence of early Chinese historiography,* 2012:1 f)

    Such courtly "encoded speech"—the subtle and not-so-subtle "speech management" were meant to
impress (perhaps confuse) rather than invoke truth—continued to be well used in early Chinese Buddhist
records, even Chinese Buddhism, as evident from key hagiographical texts such as the Platform Sutra
[8.3.3]. Often enough, we may even notice such *managed speech* colouring native Chinese speakers in
their daily conversations, especially when there is a need to "save face."[213]

8.4 THE ZEN OF MODERNISM: D T SUZUKI

8.4.1 The Machiavellian history of Chan/Zen spills over into the Buddhist realities of our own times, in all
its glorious jesuitry and hilarious tartuffery. This is a very ethnic, that is, Japanese form of Zen that became
so <u>modernized</u> as to assume to naturally have all that is best in both religion (that is, the major world reli-
gions) and science itself. In significant ways, <u>our perception of Zen today</u> is very much the work of the Zen
evangelist: **D T Suzuki** [1.2.4], inspired by his teacher, Shaku Sōen [8.4.3].
    For over 60 years, Suzuki wrote over 30 books in English, and even more in Japanese, with the belief
that he was presenting the epitome of Buddhism, that is, Japanese Zen, which was, indeed, the true
essence of all human religiosity and learning. Great minds of the 20th century, most of whom had never
known Buddhism, were deeply impressed by his works: historian Arnold Toynbee, psychologist Carl Gus-
tav Jung, German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Catholic priest Thomas Merton, British
writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley, German (Jew) social psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm,
and German US psychoanalyst Karen Horney just to name a few.

8.4.2 Suzuki, it may be said, prospered while most people had little direct or clear information about
Buddhism. In due course, as scholars began to show their interest to Buddhism, especially early Buddh-
ism, Suzuki was seen as peddling trinkets and baubles to simple natives unable to assess what he was
conveying to them or doing to Buddhism itself. "Suzuki's accomplishments as a scholar, popularizer, and
evangelist are remarkable, given that his philological skills were acquired largely on his own and that he
had no formal credentials as a Zen teacher."[214]
    Only in the later part of the 20th century have Western audiences begun to see through "**Suzuki Zen**,"
as his ideas and works came to be known. He was revealed as given "a particular interpretation that was
not only far from traditional Chinese Chan and classical Japanese Zen, but was also quite distinct from
other expressions of Zen within the sweeping reforms and modernization of Zen that took place during
the Meiji period (1868-1912)."[215]

8.4.3 During his university days in Japan, Suzuki practised with Zen master and Neo-Confucianist Imakita
Kosen (or Imagita Sōon, 1816-92) [10.4.1] at the Engakuji, an important Rinzai temple in Kamakura. When

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    [213] On the social psychology of "face" ("saving face," "losing face," etc): SD 28.9a (3.4).
    [214] R H Sharf, "Suzuki, D T." *Macmillan Ency of Religion* 13 2005:8884.
    [215] Daniel Millet Gil, "Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki" 'Suzuki Zen'." *Buddhistdoor Global*, 28 June 2021:
https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/daisetsu-teitaro-suzuki-zen/.

Kosen died, Suzuki continued his practice under Kosen's successor, Shaku Sōen (1859-1919) [10.4.1]. Both Kosen and Sōen were progressive and pivotal figures in the revival of Zen following the government-sanctioned persecution of Buddhism in 1870s. It was through Sōen[216] that Suzuki, who had mastered English quite well, became familiar with Western writings on Buddhism. Hence, by training and profession, Suzuki was an academic.

Suzuki arrived in the US in 1897 and spent some 11 years in La Salle, Illinois, working as translator and proof-reader at the Open Court Press, where Paul Carus (1852-1919),[217] the eccentric Theosophist was its first managing editor. Suzuki was obliged to perform domestic services for the Carus household and was paid little for the long hours he put in at the press. Understandably, Suzuki rarely mentioned Carus in his later writings. However, Carus's interest in monism,[218] his evolutionary approach to religion, and his attempt to reconcile religion and science are all evident in Suzuki's later writings on Buddhism.[219]

8.4.4 Suzuki was back in Japan in 1909, and at once held lectureships in English at the Tokyo Imperial University (1909-1914) and Gakushuin (1909-1921). In 1911, he married Beatrice Erskine Lane (1878-1939), from Newark, NJ, and a graduate of Radcliffe College and Columbia University, whom he met 4 years earlier in the US. Lane was a Theosophist and student of religious mysticism, and had studied Western philosophy with William James and Josiah Royce. In Japan, Lane made the earliest known study, by a Westerner, of Shingon, a form of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism. Suzuki himself showed interest in Theosophy,[220] Swedenborgiansm,[221] and the mediaeval Dominican mystic Meister Johannes Eckhart (c 1260-1337/8).

In 1921, Suzuki moved to Kyoto to become Professor of Buddhist Philosophy at Ōtani University, affiliated with the Shin sect of Japanese Buddhism[222] [10.6.2]. At Ōtani, Suzuki, inspired partly by his experience with *Open Court* and *The Monist* in the US, started the journal ***Eastern Buddhist,*** to serve as a "non-sectarian" media for propagating Mahāyāna Buddhism. In issue 2, Suzuki wrote:

> "Our standpoint is that the Mahāyāna ought to be considered one whole, individual thing and no sects, especially no sectarian prejudices, to be recognized in it, except as so many phases or aspects of one fundamental truth. In this respect Buddhism and Christianity and all other religious beliefs are not more than variations of one single original Faith, deeply embedded in the human soul."   (Suzuki, *Eastern Buddhist* 1,2 1921:156)

Such a statement may be construed as being naively hopeful or hopelessly triumphalist since the "one fundamental truth" or the "one single original faith" can only be Mahāyāna itself. This was perhaps one of

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[216] M Walters, "None but 'We heathens': Shaku Sōen at the World's Parliament of Religions," BA thesis, Univ of Pittsburgh (2004), 2007.

[217] Carus used to invite Buddhist visitors to stay at his home, later known as the Hegeler Carus Mansion on 1307 Seventh Street, so that La Salle became known as "Buddhism's Gateway to the West."
https://theosophy.wiki/en/Paul_Carus.

[218] Monism is basically a belief, theory or doctrine that denies the existence of a distinction or duality in a particular sphere, such as that between matter and mind, or God and the world.

[219] R H Sharf, "Suzuki, D T," op cit 2005:8885.

[220] Theosophy is an esoteric cult established in the US during the late 19th century by the Russian immigrant Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and others, and draws its teachings from Blavatsky's writings and a wide range of other, mainly esoteric literature of Neoplatonism, Hinduism and Buddhism. They believe, eg, in the Masters, a mystical brotherhood located in Tibet.

[221] Swedenborgisnsism or the New Church is any of several historically related Christian denominations that developed as new religious groups, influenced by the writings of scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Swedenborgian organisations generally believe in the universal nature of God's church: all who do good in accordance with the truth of their religion will be accepted into heaven (since God is goodness itself), and doing good joins one with God. Suzuki dubbed Swedenborg as "the Buddha of the North."

[222] Suzuki had a life-long interest in Shin Pure Land and published many works on the unity of Zen and Pure Land teachings.

Suzuki's earliest expressions of his views, underlying his **message**, for evangelizing the world to the Zen Buddhism he had envisioned. Scholars have pejoratively called it "**Suzuki Zen**."

8.4.5 Since the 1990s, scholars from various disciplines had sharply criticized Suzuki for his Zen. Amongst his strongest critics were John R McRae, Bernard Fauré, Robert Sharf and Victor Sōgen Hori, who pointed to a large gap between the Chan classics and Japanese Zen. US author and Soto Zen priest Brian Daizen Victoria wrote *Zen at War* (1997), in which he accused the Japanese Zen community of complicity with Japanese militarist imperialism from the time of the Meiji Restoration until after World War 2.

Victoria singled out Suzuki for his defense of *bushido* ("the Way of the Warrior") and his closeness with the leaders of the Imperial Japanese Army during World War 2. A Shin priest, Kemmyo Taira Satō, wrote a persuasive defence of Suzuki,[223] but it was published too late, years after the scholarly accusations had taken effect.

8.4.6 Scholars today see Suzuki's Zen "message" to the West as a "Buddhist modernism" which was not that of Chinese Chan from the Song nor the Tang dynasty, and which largely conflicted with orthodox Zen before the Meiji era, especially the 1930s. The latter was called "**new Buddhism**" (*shin bukkyo*), with which "Suzuki Zen" shared many traits: dressing Zen in Western modernity, rejecting "irrational" aspects of Buddhism, emphasizing "logical" features, and presenting Zen as a scientific philosophy rather than a religion—"free from voluble and trivial features, such as its institutional, popular, hierarchical, ritualistic, and magical aspects"[224]—indeed, as pristine, pure Zen, above and beyond all religions.

Bernard Faure, in *The Rhetoric of Immediacy* (1991), highlighted the reality that, far from being trivial or banal, the ritual and hierarchical features of Zen Buddhism, even its devotional or magical aspects, such as deities, relic-worship, patriarch-veneration, mummification of teachers, interpretation of dreams, funeral rites, have long been traditionally practised, even in China and Japan. Suzuki thus concocted a barebones Zen, extracted from its sociohistorical context, denying its past. Like the iconoclastic rhetoric and immediacy of the Zen of Shenhui [8.3.3] and of Zonggao [8.3.7], it seemed to be a ploy to attract power and wealth, to promote nationalism and triumphalism.

Sharf, in the *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, echoes Fauré's sentiments, adding that virtually all of Suzuki's later writings are attempts to project a Zen "grounded in a transcultural, transhistorical, nondual religious experience lying at the core of all the major religions. … must be understood as the result of his life-long effort to synthesize a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, Eastern and Western. If his presentation of Zen seems unremarkable to us today, it testifies to the enduring legacy of Suzuki and his intellectual heirs." (Sharf 2005:8886)

I take Sharf's closing sentence to hint that Suzuki was successful (perhaps still is) because we believed him; we know so little about what true Buddhism really is, and we are drawn to the colourful rhetoric of religion, rather than to actually work and taste the awakening and freedom exemplified by the Buddha himself.

8.4.7 "**Suzuki Zen**" [8.4] is a heavily modernized form of an ethnic faith, Zen, a traditional form of Japanese religion. In modernizing Zen, Suzuki lost not only Zen, but also Buddhism, and was burdened with a religious chimera of that is neither fish nor fowl, neither Buddhism nor Zen. But he became famous and wealthy for it, and is remembered to this day. [19.4]

Then, there was the ethnic modernism of **Sri Lanka** [8.2], beginning with Walpola Rahula who misconstrued or misused the example and visions of a Buddhist liberator, Anagarika Dharmapala. Rahula's "Bhikkhu's Legacy" enslaved almost all the monks of Sri Lanka and downgraded Buddhism into a spiritual materialism, where the Sinhala monks are no better than robed lay renegades (being Vinayaless), only wealthier or seem to have more than what the laity can ever have of this world, but with a more devastating power of destroying culture and goodness.

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[223] Sᴀᴛō Kemmyō Taira, "Brian Victoria and the Question of Scholarship." *The Eastern Buddhist* 41,2, 2010:39-66.
[224] D M Gil, "Suzuki Zen," BDG 2021:3/14 https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/daisetsu-teitaro-suzuki-zen/.

9 Modernized ethnic Buddhisms

9.0 INTRODUCTION

The common cultural denominator of the Buddhist countries of South Asia and SE Asia is that we have all painfully tasted the bitter fruits of **invasion** (the Turks in 12th century India) and **colonialism** (the Catholic Portuguese, the Protestant British and Dutch, and other powers). Our Buddhist lives have been traumatically affected by this colonial past, even though most of us seem neither to know it nor feel it (mainly due to cultural ignorance and mental slavery).

Yet, Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand have diligently, in different ways (some unwise, some wise), responded to the colonial and modern encroachments on their lands and faith. Apparently, Sri Lanka's elite monks have reacted to this worldly challenges by echoing them: they have largely rejected **the Vinaya** with disastrous effects. Burma (old Myanmar), the masters of Abhidhamma, used it to shape Vipassana, which is today sweeping the world. Thailand, still ruled by the Chakri dynasty kept their country, people and religion intact. At the same time, their forest monks have preserved an ancient meditation method from which we are now benefitting.

As these ethnic Buddhists bring their Buddhism westwards, they notice how everything, including Buddhism, can be measured, thanks to their scientific and economic advancements. Asian Buddhists are now challenged with the notion of Buddhist economics and modern education; often, the two are intimately related. There is clearly still much more to learn here.

9.1 MYANMAR AND THAILAND: SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

9.1.1 We will now briefly examine how modernism has transformed Buddhism in **SE Asian countries**, that is, Myanmar [9.1] and Thailand [9.2], and their significance. Although Myanmar and Thailand are bordering neighbours and both have Theravāda as their national religion, their political history and fates are very different. While Myanmar was occupied and ruled by the British for 125 years (1824-1949), and consequently lost her king, Thailand managed to stay free from colonial rule throughout its modern history and introduced important reforms, such as constitutionalizing their powerful monarchy.

During British rule and the following generation, **Burma** had the benefit of the English language, which many mastered, and which gave Burma economic and cultural access to the English-speaking world. Hence, Burmese scholars had a role in the translations of Pali texts into English. Also, Burma's proximity to British India meant that the modern and savvy British army occupied the country with little difficulty.

Siam (old Thailand) had 2 great kings—Mongkut (Rama IV) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V)[225]—during the modern colonial period. They not only introduced reforms to modernize Siam, but diplomatically played a neutral and open role with the Western colonial powers.[226] Siam was safely nestled in the heart of mainland SE Asia, surrounded by countries colonized by the British (to the west), the French (to the east), and the Dutch (to the south). Siam thus served as a buffer state, partly because of such an agreement between Britain and France in 1896.[227] [9.6.3]

9.1.2 Siam's **independence** during the colonial period was not without its difficulties. During Mongkut's reign, with the Bowring Treaty (1855), Siam had to open up to foreign trade and grant extraterritorial powers to the British. By Chulalongkorn's time, Siam had lost much of her territory to the British and the French. On the other hand, Siam benefitted from the regional and global economy like her colonized neighbours, with both positive and negative results.

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[225] SD 60.1b (4.5.2).

[226] `This was often done with some great difficulties. See D K Wyatt, *Thailand: A short history,* 1984:199-207.

[227] *Declaration between Great Britain and France with regard of the Kingdom of Siam and other matters,* London, 15 Jan 1896. Treaty Ser no 5.

Mongkut [9.1.1] himself showed great interest in Western science and technology, especially Astronomy. His encounter with Christian missionaries, especially Protestants, spurred him to take a hard look at the state of Siamese Buddhism at that time. Proficient in both English and Latin, Mongkut actively engaged with Catholic and Protestant missionaries of various nationalities. He cared not for Christianity but took a pragmatic interest in what he could learn from the West.

By the time Mongkut became king (1851), Burma was already lost to the British. Hence, he knew he must engage with the West on their terms. He had a number of his children educated by foreign teachers. He also introduced monastic reforms, such as starting the Dhammayut sect—which may be said to be a form of "Protestant Buddhism" even before we see it in Sri Lanka.[228]

Mongkut's successor, **Chulalongkorn** built on the former's reforms. He modernized monastic education. While his royal brother, **Wachirayanawarorot** [4.5.3.3] reformed the traditional monastic education, Chulalongkorn himself introduced an open tertiary education so that they became more amenable citizens. He continued the old practice of Ecclesiastical Peerage not only to acknowledge the most learned and most powerful monks of his time, but to ensure their loyalty to him [9.6.3].

One of Chulalongkorn's most difficult tasks was what scholars called the "**internal colonialism,**"[229] in contrast to the challenges of "external colonialism." In 19th century Siam, Chulalongkorn had to extend his direct political, economic and cultural control, beyond Bangkok, where he lacked direct control. Through the "local government" (เทศาภิบาล *thesaphiban*) system, he patiently and astutely placed one of his numerous royal brothers to the various "administrative divisions" (มณฑล *monthon* or *maṇḍala*), especially the Lao northeast and the Muslim south. By 1900, Bangkok had effectively integrated all the semi-independent outlying city-states (เมือง *meuang*) into a modern nation, Siam.[230]

9.1.3 After independence, the standard of English dropped significantly in **Burma**, and the country became more inward looking. Burma gained a settled nationhood during 1962-1988, but it was a military one-party state. Throughout the 1990s the military solidified its political and economic hold of the country. The British may be gone, but Burma was now self-occupied by its own army (that is, by a dictatorship).

Since then, Burma has had very brief exceptional spells of democratic government, with the military taking back power whenever it deemed fit. Significantly, Burma, controlled by the army became a sort of plutocracy of the powerful, preventing the country's freedom and growth. In Sri Lanka, the monks have, since Walpola Rahula's time, become a mediaeval Church-like presence that craftily pulled the puppet strings of a mostly gullible citizenry with Buddhist (read racist) rhetoric of triumphalism and violence. [8.2.2]

9.1.4 Thailand's 1000-year history was one mostly of military struggle:[231]

(1) 1238-1350   Sukhothai period
(2) 1350-1767   Ayutthaya period
     1441-1474   Ayutthaya-Lanna War
     1547-1549   Burmese-Siamese War 1
     1563-1564   Burmese-Siamese War 2
(3) 1765-1768   The Burmese overran Ayutthaya, but later withdrew with Phaya Taksin's advance
(4) 1769-1782   Taksin king of Thonburi; Thonburi conquered Lanna (1774, 1776)

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[228] SD 60.1b (4.5.1 f).

[229] This term is used in M C Rickelfs, *A Bew History of Southeast Asia,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2010:236.

[230] For details on the formation of Siam as a modern nation, see *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia vol 1, 1992:*46-53; Rickelfs op cit 2010:227-487.

[231] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Thailand; Paul Chambers, 'History of Civil-Military Relations in Thailand,' In *Unruly Boots: Military Power and Security Sector Reform Efforts in Thailand,* Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute, 2013:5-12, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14500.5; also https://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsFarEast/SouthEastThailand.htm.

(5)   1782   Ratanakosin kingdom (Chakri dynasty) begins (to present day)
(6)   1826-1827   The 1st Anglo-Burma War ends in Burma; King Anouwong of Laos rebels agains Siam
(7)   1826-1932   Siam and European military (colonial) threat
(8)   1841-1845   The Siamese-Vietnamese War in Cambodia
(9)   1932-1945   World War 2 and alliance with Japan
(10) 1945-1990   Thailand and regional Communism
(11) 1900-   Post-Communist (modern) period

The Siamese military succeeded in pushing back Burmese invasions, and fought off the Communists, but after that, as in Burma, turned on its own people, like the Roman god Saturn devouring his own infant son.[232] The country's first coup was in 1932. Since then, there were at least 18 other military coups (about a coup every 4 years), of which 12 were successful, each with their own military regime. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, but <u>the constitution</u> is changed every time there was a coup or attempted coup. It was changed 18 times!

9.1.5 In significant ways, religion—especially Hinduism (Brahmanism) and Buddhism—have mollified Thai culture of polite *mai pen rai*[233] ไม่เป็นไร (laissez faire), and ritualized social habits and hierarchy-based cultural expressions. Military coups were often taken as a "power switch" among the country's elite, with the general populace as audience. Life generally went on as usual once the bombing and shooting subsided. It was almost a political ritual in a Bangkok-centred web of power.

Soon after I arrived in Thailand for my monastic training, there was a "self-coup" by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn (1971), but which later failed. In 1976, after I had completed my monastic tutelage (*nissaya*) and was leaving for Malaysia, the exiled Thanom returned and there was another coup, a bloody one this time.

Once, I was told, there was an explosion near some busy market, and everyone at once fell flat on the ground or sought shelter. Someone shouted: "What was that?" After a few minutes, someone responded dismissively: "Oh, it's nothing![234] Just a bomb!" And everyone got up and went back to their respective businesses. [9.3]

9.1.6 Similar **camaraderie** and esprit de corp are habitually seen in traditional **Burmese** communities, especially during the current military regime and the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a natural "kampung spirit"[235] (Gemeinschaftsgeist) especially in the villages. Individual Burmese often support, even protect, one another in such difficult times. This is based on the Buddhist spirit of "consideration for others," အားနာတယ် *ah.nar.de* (verb), အားနာမှု *ah.nar.de* (noun), which is very close to the Thai sense of เกรงใจ *kreng.-jai*. Both reflect a native sense of the Buddhist teaching of "social sense" (*lok'ādhipateyya*),[236] often with a sense of <u>moral shame</u> (*hiri*).[237]

These human values work fine in a "village" (Gemeinschaft) or person-centred and people-centred situation, especially where everyone is known to everyone else. Hence, there is both a sense of care, moral shame (*hiri*) and respect (moral fear, *ottappa*) for one another. The Buddha declares that such a

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[232] It was prophesied that one of Saturn's sons would overthrow him.

[233] Loosely tr: "never mind; it's all right; don't bother!" Another close expression is "mai mee arai": see foll n.

[234] "It's nothing!" ไม่มีอะไร "mai mee arai."

[235] *Kampung* is Indonesian/Malay meaning "village." In Khmer, it is derived from កំវង់ (*kaṃvaṅ* in Old Khmer, meaning "a shoal, beach, ford, landing-place, crossing, harbour, port") to become កំពង់, "kompong." Through Portuguese *campon* and Dutch *kampoeng,* its sense of "village" was tagged to the English word, "compound" [OED]. See American Heritage Dictionary & <u>Wiktionary</u>.

[236] Lit, "world" (*loka*) + "priority, dominance" (*ādhipateyya*): **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40), SD 27.3 (2).

[237] "Moral shame" (*hiri*) is often paired with "moral fear" (*ottappa*): moral shame and moral fear (*hiri,ottappa*) are said to be the two lights (or radiances) that guard the world, the 2 world-protectors: **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:51), SD 2.5; SD 27.3 (2.2).

feeling of wholesome **familiarity** (*vissāsa*) brings one closer together than a family does (*vissāsa,paramā ñātī,* Dh 204c).[238]

9.1.7 However, when an individual, or even a small group, show such an attitude in an urbanized, atom-ized (individualistic) or corporatized ambience—a Gesellschaft situation—that person or group (even a community), is likely to be exploited by the Corporation or person with a "business" or worldly mind. Hence, a modernist monastic or priest is likely to see his community or others as a <u>market</u> for conversion, or even for profitable harvest of wealth or worldly power.

In fact, we see this happening today in how most of the English-speaking Buddhist community support and patronize foreign missionaries, especially the Sinhala priests and preachers in Malaysia and Singapore [8.1.5]. Local Buddhists tend to view such religious figures, skilled in chants, blessing and teaching, as being endowed with special powers that give them <u>a Durkheimian</u>[239] charisma of the "<u>other</u>." They are even more highly looked up to when they are titled as "Chief High Priest" [3.2.4], even when there is no Sinhala parish or sect (Nikaya) of that prelate's caste [8.2.4].

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917), a founding father of sociology, thought that each of us has a sense of the religious,[240] and when this idea, or better, feeling, is "<u>hypostasized</u>" or transferred onto another (say a Chief High Priest), he is sanctified as "the other," like a "religious Self" that we look up to. In other words, we have created our own image of authority and power (which we feel we lack), but see it in this "other," external figure.

In psychodynamics, "<u>transference</u>" is a phenomenon in which we seemingly (unconsciously) direct feelings or desires related to an important figure in our life—such as a parent—toward someone who is not that person. In the context of <u>psychoanalysis</u> and related forms of <u>therapy</u>, a patient is thought to show transference when expressing feelings toward the therapist who appear to be based on the pat-ient's past feelings about someone else.

Psychologists say such transference often happens in everyday life. For example, we could feel overly protective of a younger friend who reminds us of a baby brother or sister. A young employee might "trans-fer" the same sort of feelings he has for his own father onto his boss who resembles his father in some way. In religion, this feeling is <u>transferred</u> in a more powerful way than in our normal daily life.[241]

9.2 BURMESE BUDDHIST MODERNISM

9.2.1 There are 2 fascinating areas of **modernism** in Burmese Buddhism.[242] The first is about how **Ledi Sayadaw** (1846-1923) deliberately modernized Buddhism [9.1], and the second, how Abhidhamma is used as a modernizing agent, especially by Pa-Auk Sayadaw [9.2]. These two trends are closely related, the first being the basis for the second.

Ledi Sayadaw, like Walpola Rahula in Sri Lanka, was concerned with the onslaught of Western powers and religion on Buddhism and their respective countries: in both cases, it was British colonialism and

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[238] See SD 38.4 (4.2). On its usu <u>positive</u> sense of "trust," see SD 38.4 (4.2); SD 49.3 (1.1.5.6). On its <u>negative</u> sense of "intimacy": SD 31.7 (2.6).

[239] Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) was a founding father of sociology. His idea is that each of us has a sense of the religious, and when this idea, or better, feeling, is transferred to another (say a Chief High Priest), he is sanctified as "the other," like a "religious Self" that we look up to.

[240] See Durkheim, *The Elementary Life of the Religious Life,* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915:322. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/41360/41360-h/41360-h.htm#Page_322.

[241] See *Gale Ency of Psychology* 2001: Transference. S Freud, *The Dynamics of Transference,* London: Hogarth, SE [*The <u>standard ed</u> of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*] 12, <u>1912</u>:97-108. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* NY: W W Norton, 1933. R Almond, "Reading Freud's 'The Dynamics of Transference" one hundred years later." *Journal of the Am Psychoanalytic Assoc* 59,6 Dec 2011:1129-56. See also SD 7.9 (2.5.3.2).

[242] By "Burmese Buddhism," I conveniently mean the Buddhism that has existed in Burma and then Myanmar since the beginning, or during the times of our discussion, which goes back to just before colonial times.

evangelism that drove them to seek ways to correct the situation. However, the changes effected by these 2 persons could not be more different.

Ledi was a conscientious forest-trained scholar monk of pre-independence Burma, deeply learned in both worldly learning and in the Buddha Dhamma. Diligently and skilfully using the best of the modern West had to offer then—education, language, writing and the printing press—he encouraged Burmese monks to be educated in the Dharma-Vinaya; he simplified the Dhamma and Abhidhamma, encouraging even the lay Buddhists to practise meditation with a better understanding of it. [SD 60.1b: 2.3.3]

On account of monks like Ledi Sayadaw, Burmese Buddhism continues to this day to be steeped in Dhamma, Abhidhamma and meditation. As a rule, every Burmese monk knew at least what the Abhidhamma is about, even knowing how to recite the Paṭṭhāna [6.2.3]. Hence, today, the true challenge in Burmese Buddhism is neither the lack of moral conduct (Vinaya) nor of meditation, but of seeing Abhidhamma as a goal in itself [9.0], and the rise of "Vipassana meditation." [9.2.4]

9.2.2 Sri Lankan **W Rahula** (1907-1997), on the other hand, was a modernist clerical scholar who rejected the Vinaya and promoted his own triumphalist Buddhism (such as that in his bestseller, *What the Buddha Taught*). The book inspired many beginners to examine Buddhism closer; but when these very same Buddhists matured with a better understanding of early Buddhism, they were often shocked, at least disappointed, by Rahula's worldly and disrespectful ways, especially his throwing out of the Buddhist baby with the bath water.[243]

Indeed, leading Sinhala scholars, like H L Seneviratne (*The Work of Kings,* 1999), squarely and roundly blamed Rahula for not only the failure of modern Sri Lanka as a nation, for promoting its racist violence, but also for the secularization of the Sinhala monastic community [8.2.2]. This is a Greek tragedy of classic proportions: a Buddhist priest, who was supposed to have renounced the world actually instigated his fellow Sinhala monks to *return* to the world! *Cui bono,* for whose good?[244]

There is only one positive way to respond to the widespread bad karma resulting from Rahula's ideas and his followers' follies. We simply must give up such ideas and reverse their resultant harm. We begin by honestly admitting his errors and hubris, and seriously working to remind those worldly priests to return to the path of Dharma-Vinaya, especially the Vinaya. Otherwise, they should honourably give up the robes for the lay life, out of respect for the Buddha and the spirit of renunciation. If they wish to remain in robes, they should return to the Buddhist basics, beginning with sutta studies and Vinaya practice. Or better, re-ordain under some good teachers and build up **the Sri Lankan forest Dharma tradition**.

9.2.3 The teachings and meditation methods of **Pa-Auk Sayadaw** [SD 60.1b: 8.1] may be seen as the modernist evolution of Ledi Sayadaw's teachings [SD 60.1b: 2.4]. Of all the Burmese teachers (or any Buddhist teacher, for that matter), Pa-Auk is, at least in our times (the 21st century) the most innovative. Broadly, his teachings present a very complete theoretical vision of the essential Dharma based on early Buddhism. This last aspect is admirable in every way when they are understood in the spirit of early Buddhism.

Even the most idiosyncratic teaching of Pa-Auk—that of **the *kalāpa* observation**—is not new (though not canonical, not found in the suttas), but started with the innovative ideas of the remarkable layman Hpo Hlaing [SD 60.1b: 2.3.3.5]. It was adopted and developed by Ledi Sayadaw and the Burmese teachers after him, down to U Ba Khin [SD 60.1b: 2.4.2.3]. While it is true that **U Ba Khin** taught the observation of the *kalāpa,* Ledi Sayadaw never did. Like Ledi, most other teachers see the *kalāpa* as an interesting way of describing the nature of *impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself*, not a meditation in itself. It

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[243] On scholars' criticisms of W Rahula, see, eg, S J Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?* 1992:22-29; H L Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings,* 1999 esp 186): SD 7.9 (4.3.5.2 f). Sujato criticizes Rahula's involvements in politics: *History of Mindfulness,* 2004b:217 f. Further see SD 19.1 (6.4); SD 3.13 (1.3).

[244] The Roman statesman and philosopher, Cicero (106-43 BCE), wrote that Lucius Cassius, whom Roman people regarded as a most honest and most wise judge, habitually asked in lawsuits: "To whom might it be for a benefit? (*cui bono fuisset*)" (Cicero, *Pro Sex. Rosco Amerino* §§84, 86). These phrases mean that crimes are often committed to benefit their perpetrators, especially in a worldly manner (for wealth, power, status, pleasure).

was Pa-Auk who stressed on observing these "molecular clusters" (*kalāpa*), even seeing it as the goal of meditation.

The very idea of the *kalāpa* and of observing it can easily be explained in a practical manner by way of the nature of the mind and mind-training. Firstly, whatever that we imagine or believe is <u>conceivable</u>. Secondly, what we *conceive* becomes real for us (at least), but this is <u>a virtual reality</u> that we have *constructed.* A **virtual reality** is a self-created, mind-made reality. This is a very basic teaching even in the Vipassana tradition.

If we accept this "proviso," we may then accept that Pa-Auk's vision of the *kalāpa* is indeed a remarkable way of mentally seeing what scientists see in the electron microscope, except that we see it in the Pa-Auk manner. Even then, it is wise to understand that the scientists will, in coming generations, go on to see deeper into the atomic and sub-atomic realities of matter.

9.2.4 The manner in which **S N Goenka** (1924-2013) presented his Vipassana teachings and meditation are clearly <u>modernist</u>. He adapted them to a modern secular audience, playing down all the religious or "Buddhist" elements: his Vipassana was without any Buddhist rituals, without cosmology, without karma, without rebirth. It was simply Vipassana as "an art of living." Goenka's Vipassana, then, was a goal in itself. This modernist Vipassana, which Goenka claimed goes back to the Buddha himself, may thus be called <u>Goenkaism</u>. [SD 60.1b: 2.4.10]

The famous minimal 10-day Vipassana retreat (up to 10-days or longer for "old students") [12.3.3], introduced globally and successfully, was not without its problems. As in any long-term controlled-ambience meditation that strictly stresses on long sittings, there were often <u>breakdowns</u> amongst the unready or vulnerable meditators. Since such breakdowns can happen in any such long-term "dedicated" meditation,[245] Goenka Vipassana itself is only <u>the trigger</u>, not the *cause* of such episodes.

The Goenka Vipassana organizers now know better to interview their prospective students, and seem to know how to manage such incidents. However, the fact remains that these breakdowns do happen. Hence, we will discuss them separately in some practical detail.[246]

9.3 GOOGLE MINDFULNESS: THE ULTIMATE MODERNIST MEDITATION

9.3.1 Goenka Vipassana seems to prove one thing: meditation does not need to be "Buddhist" to work. It seems that so long as we <u>know</u> what to do—<u>say</u> the right words, give the proper <u>caveats</u>, <u>act</u> out the proper gestures, and use a well-known **brand**—we got it! This is, in fact, **Google mindfulness**, <u>the most modernist form of meditation</u>: **Google mindfulness,** as exemplified by the "Search Inside Yourself" Mindfulness courses offered since 2007. The Jolly Corporate Jester seems to jest and gets away with it: What Goenka can do, Google can do better! It's also called McMindfulness.[247]

Proponents of **McMindfulness** training, notes R E Purser,[248] in their branding efforts, legitimize it as being "Buddhist-inspired," giving it both a cachet and coolness invoking the Buddha's ancient and time-tested meditation methods. Yet, in the same breath, consultants often assure their corporate sponsors that their particular brand of mindfulness has relinquished all ties and affiliations to its Buddhist origins.

Stripping meditation (or "mindfulness" in corporate lingo) from its ethical and Buddhist context may seem to turn it into a viable product on the open market. But when we commodify and market mindfulness we are destructively reducing an ancient practice of gaining self-awakening and nirvana into a mere

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[245] Goenka Vipassana shows that when certain strict and controlled conditions are used in meditation practice, the mind undergoes some kind of internal change that is felt as calming and centering. The question now is: Are there any psychological <u>costs</u> (risks) involved here; if so, what are they? See SD 60.1e Psychopathology of mindfulness.

[246] On Goenka, see SD 60.1b (2.4.10 f, 2.5).

[247] "McMindfulness": R E Purser, *McMindfulness: How mindfulness became the new capitalist spirituality,* Repeater, 2016; (with D Loy), "Beyond McMindfulness," Huffpost Communities, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/beyond-mcmindfulness_b_3519289.

[248] R E Purser & D Loy, op cit 2013.

means of relieving a headache, reducing blood pressure, or helping executives focus better and be more productive.

9.3.2 McMindfulness, lacking <u>the Buddhist foundation in social ethics and transformative purpose</u> by which we see and reduce our *unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion*, will only reinforce them! We are discounted with mere *cents* but it is really draining our wallets of big *dollars, and much more*: a Faustian bargain![249] McMindfulness is false meditation; *wrong mindfulness;* it is radically different from the Buddha's <u>right mindfulness</u>.

    Right mindfulness works with 7 other factors of a wholesome path of *healthy social interaction* (right speech, right action, right livelihood) as the basis for *a healthy personality, a wholesome mind* (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration), with the purpose of gaining *liberating wisdom* (right view, right intention). With McMindfulness, we may at best be dealing with only the passing <u>symptoms</u> of an ongoing problem or failure, without addressing their roots, without understanding our own personal life (our mind) and our interpersonal relations (society, the corporation and the environment).

9.3.3 The dark reality is—as pointed by Carrette and King in *Selling Spirituality* (2008)—that mindfulness and Buddhism have been recruited to slave for the corporate or professional lords with an "accommodat-ionist orientation": its sweet appeal is hung as a juicy carrot on a long trendy stick for subduing employee dissatisfaction, inspiring a ready acceptance of the status quo, and keeping us happily gumped and glued to institutional goals and worldly ends.[250] It is "**cow psychology**": workers, like contented and docile cows, give more milk, better meat.[251]

9.3.4 A bigger darker picture is revealed by A Caring-Lobel, who observes that business corporations today are, with a vengeance, resurrecting **Taylorism**,[252] "scientific management" that fed humanity to big businesses at the turn of the century; and liberals today champion <u>corporate mindfulness</u> as a powerfully convenient wizard's wand for a new "Robber Baron"[253] economy. One of its broad dehumanizing effects is that of making businessmen (like Donald Trump) very powerful with massive corporations of unprece-dented size, scope and reach, threatening not only civil liberties like privacy, but even the very founda-tions of human and social freedom itself. These new Robber Barons, by their craft, cunning and connect-ions, are able to stay under the radar of public scrutiny and above the law.

    Agents and minions of these alpha-male asuras[254] see **corporate mindfulness** as a powerful and effect-ive tool for alleviating problems of labour without acknowledging, much less pursuing, questions of power, political economy or the whole human. As TAN Chade-Meng, the jesting creator of Google's "Search Inside

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[249] Faustian, relating to **Faust**, an erudite scholar (based on the historical Johann Georg Faust (c 1480-1540), high-ly successful yet dissatisfied with his life, which leads him to make a pact with the Devil at a crossroads, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures.

[250] J Carrette & R King,*Selling Spirituality: The silent takeover of Religion,* Routledge, 2008:21 f; 91.

[251] Purser & Loy 2013. The Industrial Revolution, represented by Henry Ford in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), may bring us more money and things, but (O my Ford!) at what cost?

[252] **Taylorism** is a system of <u>scientific management</u> advocated by American mechanical engineer, Fred W Taylor (1856-1915). His own terms are "shop management" and "process management." In Taylor's view, the task of fac-tory management was to determine the best way for the worker to do the job, to provide the proper tools and training, and to provide incentives for good performance. At its worst, it is an asura-like priority of work over the person. For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_management.

[253] A "Robber Baron" is a derogatory term for any of the powerful 19th-century American industrialists and finan-ciers—Henry Ford, John D Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie and J P Morgan—who made fortunes by monopolizing huge industries through the formation of trusts, engaging in unethical business practices, exploiting workers, and paying little heed to their customers or competition.

[254] On this psychosocial metaphor of violent narcissistic dehumanizing demon and its sweetly seductive and rav-enous feminine form: SD 39.2 (1.3); SD 40a.1 (11.2.2); SD 59.9a (2.2.3.1).

Yourself" (SIY) programme (SIYLI), preaches, "mindfulness can increase my happiness without changing anything else" (Tan et al 2012:134).[255]

C M Tan, Google's SIY Guru and one-time head of the SIY Leadership Institute (SIYLI), goes as far as to identify Google's program as a means to world peace, that is, from our own Mindfulness practice, "from inside out"! What about elitist classes, social injustice or a bad political system? For consultants like C M Tan, we do not have to choose between being moral and being successful.[256] "The holy grail is that every-body in the organization—especially the leaders—everybody is wise and compassionate, thereby creating the conditions for world peace" (Tan et al 2012). He jests: The corporation rules the new world order.

McMindfulness, Chade-Meng and their likes are themselves misled and misleading others, all of us some of the time, some of us all the time, but never all of us all the time. Fortunately, there are amongst us who seek and do the right thing, right mindfulness, and speaking out for the morality of meditation.[257]

9.4 THAI BUDDHISM AND MODERNISM

9.4.1 While McMindfulness is highly visible, easily identifiable, there is a form of corporate Buddhism—recruiting the Buddha and Buddhism in the business of promoting itself—that is practically invisible to us, yet can be all around us. This is **ethnic Buddhism**, which puts race and culture above even the Buddha and Buddhism. We see the imposing memes of the Buddhisms of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Khmer Republic: the grand temples, the sky-scraping stupas, the mesmerizing chants, the magical rituals, the public ceremonies, state celebrations (like Vesak), and so on. All such memes are often peculiar and unique to that country or culture.

Ethnic Buddhism is the end-product of centuries of the common cultural experience as experienced by the Buddhist elite, usually the monastics, but more often the royal powers that rule these countries. As a good example, we shall only look at **Thailand**, where, the King or those with his good offices (such as a military government) decides, to some real extent, the nature and fate of Buddhism in Thai society.

Thai society is centralized on Bangkok and the King, who is the "defender of the faiths," the patron and protector of all religions in the nation. Of course, Buddhism is the state religion, but it is an extension of the King and of kingly powers. The law, through various Sangha Acts since 1903[258] mostly, as it were, decides how the Sangharaja may be nominated [9.4.2]. Otherwise, it is a modern political instrument to disempower the Sangha.[259]

9.4.2 In modern Thai history, the fate of the Siamese Sangha was (and is) closely bound with that of the nation (the King), which can be seen from a brief history of the Sangha Acts. **The 1902 Act** highlighted the period when Siam transformed from a cluster of city-states with fluid borders into a modern king-dom, **a state** with fixed borders under a sovereign king, Chulalongkorn [SD 60.1b: 4.5.2]. In his religious reforms, he established a unified state Buddhism, which was vital in legitimizing the King's royal status

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[255] A Caring-Lobel, "Corporate mindfulness and the pathologization of workplace stress," in Purser et al (ed), *Handbook of Mindfulness,* Springer, 2016:202. C M Tan et al, *Search Inside Yourself,* HarperCollins, 2012.

[256] In July 2018, C M Tan abruptly resigned from SIYLI citing "inappropriate behavior" which investigators have uncovered. On his own blog, July 19, he states that he "spoke and acted with some people in ways … disrespectful and hurtful." Other than a hint of "the 'Me Too' movement in Popular Mindfulness," no details are known, and life for him, it seems, goes on as before. See:
  https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jun/14/the-mindfulness-conspiracy-capitalist-spirituality;
  https://archive.thinkprogress.org/googles-former-mindfulness-guru-steps-down-from-nonprofit-over-inappropriate-behavior-2e7bb2a8e6c3/;
  https://mindfulnessexercises.com/me-too-in-popular-mindfulness-communities/.

[257] David DeSteno, "The morality of meditation," NY Times 19 Jan 2013:
https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/07/opinion/sunday/the-morality-of-meditation.html. See also NY Times 5 July 2012 criticism of MC Tan: SD 60.1b (2.5.2.7 n).

[258] So far, there have been 6 Sangha Acts in Thailand: the Sangha Administration Act of RE 121 (BE 2446 or 1903); the Sangha Act of BE 2484 (1941), of BE 2505 (1962), of BE 2535 (1992), of BE 2560 (2017), and of BE 2561 (2018).

[259] On the early history of Siam, see SD 60.1b (4.2).

and reign, and the definition of nationhood, that is, Thainess. Hence, modernization in Thailand did not bring about a separation between Church and State, but just the reverse. [9.6.3]

   The 1942 Sangha Act gave members of the Sangha Council [Supreme Council of Elders] equal rights regardless of seniority, with the Sangharaja only as a figurehead (like the King). This proved unpopular with the monks. **The 1962 Act** reintroduced the centralized Sangha Council with a royally appointed Sangharaja, boosting the King's position. Surprisingly, no changes were made in **the 1992 Act**, except that the Sangharaja's position was filled according to seniority, thus separating the Sangha from the King.

   In 2013, when the Sangharaja died, Somdet Phra Maha Rajamangalacharn (Chuang) was next in line. But he was widely unpopular because of his affiliation with the infamous Wat Dhammakaya.[260] In **2017**, King Vajiralongkorn (Rama X), to break the stalemate, amended the Act reinstating royal appointment of the Sangharaja. Under the current military rule, the **2018 Sangha Act** returned almost full circle to the Sangharaja being a mere figurehead as in the 1902 Act.[261]

Siam's Sangha Acts[262] are here summarized (named after its promulgator):

1902   King Chulalongkorn. Sangharaja appointed by the King.
1942   Phibul Songkram, Sangharaja appointed by the Sangha Council.
1962   Sarit Thanarat. Restored Thammayut Nikai to favoured position.
1992   Sangharaja's position according to seniority. (Separation of power between Sangha and King,)
2017   Vajiralongkorn: The King appoints Sangharaja.+[263]
2018   Military rule: Sangha a mere figurehead (as in 1902 Act).

9.5 Caste Buddhism and sectarian modernism in Sri Lanka

9.5.1 Despite the relative inertness or ineffectiveness of the centralized Sangha administration in modern Thailand, her general monastic condition is in comparatively better condition than in the case of the Sri Lankan Sangha, where there is *no* centralized administration—and Temple Buddhism is widely anomic, caste-ridden and worldly.

   Sri Lanka Temple Buddhism has <u>3 main sects</u> (Nikāya) since the mid-18th century: the Siyam Nikāya [9.4.2], the Amarapura Nikāya [9.4.3] and the Ramañña Nikāya [9.4.4].[264] This was the situation up to 2019. [9.4.4]

9.5.2 The Siyam Nikaya was founded in 1753, on the initiative of Weliwita Sri Saranankara Thero (1698-1778), and under the preceptorship of the elder Upāli of Siam (hence their name) who visited Kandy during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinghe (1747-1782). Once again the Sangha was established in Sri Lanka. The Siyam Nikaya has two major chapters, the Malwatta and the Asgiriya, and five other divisions within

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[260] R M Scott, *Nirvana For Sale? Buddhism, wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in contemporary Thailand.* State Univ of NY Press, 2009.

[261] Khemthong Tonsakulrungurang, "Thailand's Sanghq: Turning right, coming full circle." 7 Aug 2018: https://www.newmandala.org/thailands-sangha-turning-right-coming-full-circle/.

[262] Officially known as *Phra Ratchabanyat Song* (พระราชบัญญัติคณะสงฆ์, Phra Rāja,paññatti Saṅgha), the Royal Sangha Act (followed by the Ratanakosin Year, or the traditional year, ie, commercial year + 543), eg the 1902 Act is known as "Sangha Administration Statute RS 121 [1902]," พระราชบัญญัติลักษณปกครองคณะสงฆ์ รัตนโกสินทรศก ๑๒๑, Phra Ratchabanyat Laksana Pokkhrong Khana Song Ratanakosin-sok 121).

[263] "Phraratchabanyat khanasong (chabap thī sām) phutthasakkarāt sǭng phan hārǭi hoksip" พระราชบัญญัติคณะสงฆ์ (ฉบับที่ ๓) พศ ๒๕๖๐ [Sangha Act (No. 3), 2560 BE] (PDF). *Royal Thai Government Gazette*. Bangkok: Cabinet Secretariat of Thailand. **134** (2 A): 1. 2017-01-06.

[264] For a summary, see SD 60.1b (4.2.3).

each of these. The Malwatta and the Asgiriya chapters each have their own Mahānayakas or Chief High Priest (as they are called).[265]

In 1764, hardly a decade after the re-establishment of the Sangha in Sri Lanka, the newly-created Siyam Nikaya conspired and succeeded in restricting the Nikaya's higher ordination to only the Radala (royal) and Goyigama (agricultural) castes, Sitinamaluwe Dhammajoti (Durawa) being the last non-Goyi-gama monk to receive the Nikaya ordination. [SD 60.1b: 4.2.3.2]

This was the beginning of a dark chapter in Sri Lanka Buddhism, when Siyam Nikaya priests openly and effectively abandoned the Vinaya, where some of their priests in the Kandyan Kingdom privately held land, had wives and children, resided in the private homes: they were called Ganinnanses.[266] It was a per-iod when the traditional nobility of the Kandyan Kingdom was decimated by continuous wars with the Dutch rulers of the Maritime Provinces, where a new order was beginning to replace the old. [9.5]

9.5.3 The Amarapura Nikaya, which rejected the caste-based Siyam Nikaya, was founded in 1800. A group led by Walltota Sri Gnanavimala Tissa, a monk from the Salagama caste of Balapitiya on the SW coast, decided to leave for Siam on their own (sailing in a Dutch ship there). A strange incident at sea prompted the Dutch captain to suggest that they went to Amarapura (Burma) instead.[267] The Dutch cap-tain of the ship approached the Dutch Consul at Hanthawaddy (now Bago, Burma), obtained the neces-sary introductions to the religious and administrative authorities in Amarapura (the capital of the Kon-baung dynasty). King Bodawpaya himself welcomed the Sinhala party. The first Amarapura monks were ordained by the Sangharaja of Burma. They stayed on for 2 years to study under the Sangharaja.

The mission returned to Sri Lanka in 1803. Since they did not have a consecrated convocation hall yet, they established a "water-border" (*udak'ukkhepa sima*, a platform was formed by a flotilla of boats lashed together on the Maduganga River, Balapitiya. A bowl of water was ceremonially tossed in each quarter of the flotilla to mark the monastic borders, *sīmā,* thus consecrating it for a valid sangha-act).[268] The first local Amarapura ordination was performed by the seniormost Burmese monks who accompan-ied them, on the Vesak uposatha day. Several subsequent trips to Burma were made by monks of the Katava and the Durava castes. By 1810, there was a legitimate Sangha of ordained monks to form the quorum for local ordination into Amarapura Nikaya in Sri Lanka.

9.5.4 The Rāmañña or Ramanya Nikaya was founded in 1864, when Ambagahawatte Saranankara, re-turned to Sri Lanka after being ordained at Ratnapuṇṇa Vihara in Burma.[269] It is said to have re-intro-duced the forest meditation tradition to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka **forest tradition**, however, seems to follow their own lineage though they have monks from both the Amarapura and the Ramañña Nikayas. Currently, the largest forest sect in Sri Lanka is the Sri Kalyani Yogashrama Samstha (Galduva Sect) of the Rāmañña Nikāya of Amarapura–Rāmañña Nikāya. In addition, several other sects such as Vaturuvila, Pol-gasduva continue to have several forest monasteries.[270]

On 16 August 2019, the Amarapura and the Ramañña Nikāya united to form a single Nikaya, **the Amarapura-Ramañña Sāmaggī Mahā Sangha Sabhā**, of which both the Mahanayakas of the two erst-

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[265] On how the worldly priests of the Siyam Nikaya connived to make it an exclusive Goyigama-caste Order, see SD 60.1b (4.2.3).

[266] See SD 60.1b (4.2.3.2).

[267] In 1799, Tissa, with a group of novices, departed for Siam on a Dutch ship, which mysteriously stopped moving midway. When the ship started moving again, the captain suggested that they should go instead to Amarapura, where Buddhism was flourishing better than in Siam. Tissa agreed to the proposal.

[268] On the *udak'ukkhepa sīmā,* see V 1:111,5 & CPD 2:394 sv. On a subsequent controversy relating to a technical-ity in this sangha-act, see Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka,* 1983:79 f.

[269] On the incident that led to the formation of the Ramañña Nikaya, see Carrithers op cit 1983:80   .

[270] For more details on these 3 Nikayas and the forest monks in Sri Lanka, see Carrithers, op cit, 1983.

while separate Nikayas are head. This move is natural and timely since they are both ordained in the Bur-mese order, only in different cities and times. It is now the largest of the 2 main Nikayas in Sri Lanka.[271]

9.6 "BUDDHA RELICS" POLITICS

9.6.1 Sinhala caste rivalry

The principal places of Buddhist worship in Sri Lanka—the Temple of the Tooth Relic, Adam's Peak, Kelaniya, and over 6,000 other temples were brought under the administration of the Siyam Nikaya. Moratota Dhammakkandha, Mahanayaka of Kandy, with the help of the last two Kandyan Telugu Kings victimised the low-country Mahanayaka Karatota Dhammarama by confiscating the Sri Pada [Buddha's footprint] shrine and the revenue villages from the low country fraternity and appointing a rival Maha-nayaka.[272] The sad repercussion of this discrimination compelled many considered as lower castes by the Goyigama—Karava, Salagama, Durava, Bathgama, Deva[273] and others—to become Catholics and Angli-cans.[274]

The Siyam Nikaya eventually succeeded in becoming the custodians of the Tooth Relic, with the full support and patronage of the Goyigama-dominated Sri Lankan State and its Ministers and Ministries of Buddha Sasana, Cultural Affairs and others. In fact, the "Tooth relic,"[275] a nationalist totem (like the Em-erald Buddha of Wat Phra Kaew in the royal palace in Bangkok) was monopolized by the Radala and Goyigama castes.

9.6.2 Off-note on the world's largest Buddha relic !!!

Despite Buddhism modernizing in almost every way, one of the features that seem to remain un-changed is the fetishization and totemization of **the relic**, here referring to any object, especially a bodily remains (*sarīrika dhātu*), or what is believed to be so. One of the best known, the most blatant, holy hoax of our time is the "Buddha tooth relic," the key exhibit in the Buddhist Tooth Relic Temple & Museum in Singapore's Chinatown.[276]

The "tooth relic" itself measures 7.25 cm, far too long and large to be a human tooth. Dr Pamela Craig (senior lecturer of Dental Science at the University of Melbourne, Australia), Prof David K Whittaker (forensic dental specialist at Cardiff University, Britain), amongst others (including 4 dentists), after see-

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[271] https://www.newsfirst.lk/2019/08/16/amarapura-and-ramayana-sects-unite-in-historic-move/. Note that the newspaper writer had difficulties with the spellings of *Ramañña* and *samaggi*.

[272] An exception seems to be the Rangiri Dambula sect which welcomes all other Nikaya members although it is a Siyam Nikaya subsect.

[273] The Karāvā (or Karaiyar) were traditionally lime burners (said to have migrated from the Coromandel of India, claiming ancestry with the Kaurava, the old Kuru kingdom in the west of Gangetic plains of north India); Salagama, mostly cinnamon cultivators of the south; Durava, traditionally toddy-tappers of the south; Bathgama, traditionally paddy-growers in the Kandyan Kingdom; Deva or Wahumpura, traditionally, farmers and makers of jaggery. For refs, see Wikiwand: Social class in Sri Lanka.

[274] See J Jiggins, *Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese 1947-1976,* Cambridge, 1979:27.

[275] C Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (1969) writes that the Portuguese Viceroy, Dom Con-stantino de Bragança, in Goa, refused a ransom payment by the Burmese king of Pegu, and it was "publicly pounded to smithereens with a mortar and pestle by the Archbishop of Goa (prob around 1550) (1969:74). As with all relics, it is difficult to know if this was authentic; the Sinhala custodians naturally claimed they still have the original one. In ethnic religion, truth seems to be self-defining. Moreover, relic-making is a well-known native skill. [1.9.4.4]

[276] Jack CHIA Meng-Tat, "Buddhism in Singapore: A state of the field review," *Asian Culture* 33, June 2009:90. Justin **McDaniel's** *Architects of Buddhist Leisure,* 2017 (ch 3), is a scholarly study of how modernist Buddhism today to pre-sent itself as a source of leisure and amusement for the affluent, the pious and the gullible, and those who love reli-gious opulence. McDaniel however does not discuss the Tooth Relic itself (197 n13).

ing photos of the Tooth, unanimously agreed that it is definitely not human, but clearly that of a large animal, perhaps a "cheek tooth" (a molar) of a cow or a water buffalo.[277]

The priest who owns the Temple Museum was understandably not amused by the experts' comments. He shot back zenly: "They can say all they want; I don't care what they say. If you believe it's real, then it's real." When asked about letting experts in Singapore examine the Tooth Relic more closely, he replied with zenly sharpness: "It's mine, why should I let you examine it? Why don't you go examine what's in Sri Lanka and China first?"[278]

9.6.3 Economics of ethnic Buddhism

9.6.3.1 Buddhist modernity (or modernism), scholars have noted, is not just a philosophical or psychological reality, but also occurs on an institutional level.[279] Traditionally, what defines "**sangha**," the monastic community with ecclesiastical or legal rights (such as owning a monastery, performing an ordination, adjudicating a Vinaya offence, and so on), is that its members are properly ordained and keep to the Vinaya. Without the Vinaya, there is no sangha (in the original early Buddhist sense).

Since almost all the early Buddhist schools have died out, except for **the Theravadā**—the tradition held by the traditional monks of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Khmer, Laos and other parts of mainland SE Asia), it is then the only early Vinaya that is technically valid today. However, Tibetan Buddhism, the Himalayan Buddhist communities and the Buddhism in Northern Asia (Mongolia and Siberia) traditionally follow the Mūla,sarvâstivāda Vinaya.[280] And the monastic communities of East Asia (China, Korea, Japan) and SE Asia (Vietnam and the Philippines) claim to uphold the Dharmaguptaka[281] Vinaya.

Since the predominant features of most Asian Buddhisms and their global branches are those of the management of *power, property and self-propagation*, clearly then this modernizing feature is that of **economics**. Literally and specifically, economics means "the management of one's home"; broadly, it is "the concern with the production, consumption and transfer of wealth." It is certainly true today than ever before to say that religion, without economics, will cease to exist.

9.6.3.2 During the Buddha's time and the 5 after-centuries, **the sangha** was clearly defined by the Vinaya, which empowers the sangha to act as a legal body by way of the sangha-act (*saṅgha,kamma*), also called "ecclesiastical act" or, simply, "formal act." Just like a modern parliamentary act, it is done by the proclamation of a motion, after which the matter may be debated, even rejected; usually, the motion is carried by a "resolution" (*ñatti*) by common consensus (*eka,mati*), expressed by the deliberate silence of the conclave (that is, *qui tacet consentire videtur*).[282]

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[277] Tᴀɴ Dawn Wei & Mavis Tᴏʜ, "Is Buddha tooth in Singapore the real McCoy?" 15 July 2007:2 Newspaper Article - Is Buddha tooth here the real McCoy?, The Straits Times, 15 July 2007, Page 2 (nlb.gov.sg) Microfilm Reel NL 27753. The Nation 15 July 2007, https://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=57,4484,0,0,1,0. Buddhist Channel | Singapore 20 July 2007. https://www.asiaone.com/News/The+Straits+Times/Story/Is+Buddha+tooth+here+the+real+McCoy%253F.html. Channel News Asia 22 July 2007 https://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=57,4529,0,0,1,0#.Unnm5TwK–c.

[278] "Straits Times, "The Real Tooth? Some call for proof, others say it's not necessary."22 July 2007:12. Newspaper Article - Some call for proof, others say it's not necessary, The Straits Times, 22 July 2007, Page 12 (nlb.gov.sg) Microfilm Reel NL27755. Alvin Cʜᴜᴀ, "Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum," https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1668_2010-05-25.html 25/5/2010: 32.

[279] G Benavides, "Modernity and Buddhism," (ed) R E Buswell, Jr, *Macmillan Ency of Buddhism,*2004:547 f.

[280] Other than that the Mūla,sarvâstivāda school is (or is not) descended from the Sarvâstivāda (a pre-Mahāyāna school), we know very little about it, except for scholarly conjectures: Yᴀᴍᴀɢɪᴡᴀ Nobuyuki, "Recent studies on Vinaya manuscripts." *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 52,1, 2003:339-333; Hɪʀᴀᴏᴋᴀ Satoshi, "The relation between the Divyāvadāna and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 26,5, 1998:419-434. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mulasarvastivada.

[281] The Dharmaguptaka was one of the early 18 or 20 schools. It is said to have arisen from another school, the Mahīṣāsaka. For refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharmaguptaka.

[282] On the sangha-act, see SD 45.16 (3.2).

The conclave is, as a rule, presided by the seniormost monastic member (who, understandably should be mentally lucid and personally capable of sangha leadership). The other members of the conclave are, as a rule, chosen in accordance with their seniority in the sangha, measured by the number of "rains" (*vassa*), that is, the annual rains-retreat they have observed. In special cases, on account of the modern predominance of the country's laws which bind all citizens without a Church-State separation, we rarely see the sangha-act being done today.[283]

9.6.3.3 In the Buddha's time and soon after, the early sangha existed within its own legal rights, out-side the purview of the State. This early separation of powers or realms was famously declared by none other than King Ajāta,sattu (son of King Bimbisāra) himself, who, 2 months after the Buddha's passing, when he was formally told by the monks that they would be rehearsing the Dharma-Vinaya, he famously replied: "Very well, bhante, do so with full confidence. Let mine be the 'wheel of (worldly) power' (*āṇā,-cakka*); let yours be **the 'wheel of Dharma'**! Instruct me, I will do it."[284]

In contrast, when **modern Siam** arose in the early 20th century through the skills and diligence of King Chulalongkorn, over time, unified the whole country, as Sovereign over both State and Religion. This means that there is no separation of powers. Mongkut, Chulalongkorn's father, initiated the moderniza-tion of Siam's <u>monastic education</u> through his 47th son, Wachirayanaworot.[285] Chulalongkorn continued the royal reforms by starting the monks' university, **Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalay**.[286]

While these modern monastic educational reforms reached out to the monks <u>below 40</u>,[287] Chulalong-korn's Sangha Act (1902) was introduced mainly to regulate the powers and influence of Siam's monastic elders and the charismatic forest monks. Although the latter numbered less than the former, the latter can have considerably greater influence on the public should the occasion arise.[288]

These modern reforms in monastic education primed Siam's monks from the start to understand and accept modern Siamese ideology of "king, country, religion." Although **the Siamese Revolution** of 1932[289] ended Siam's absolute monarchy which became a <u>constitutional monarchy</u>, the King continues to be deep-ly respected by the people and wields significant national influence.

The Thai authorities still uphold the practice of **Samanasak** (สมณศักดิ์, *samaṇa,śakti*) or Ecclesiastical Peerage, where titles or ranks are given to selected prominent monks by the King and the Sangharaja.[290] This peerage system was inherited from the old feudalistic Buddhism of Sri Lanka known as Laṅkāwong (ลังกาวงศ์ *laṅkāvaṁsa*) in the Sukhothai kingdom (1238-1584). Since this ancient peerage system is often effective in holding the loyalty of its recipients, it has been maintained right down to our times as a cult-ural feature of modern Thai Buddhism. [9.1.2, 9.1.4]

All this thus far shows the historical departure of "modern Buddhism" from early Buddhism where there was a clear separation of sangha and state. Considering the profound secularization of much of the

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[283] An exceptional case was perhaps that of Brahmavamso (Peter Betts), an English monk living in Perth, Australia, the abbot of Wat Bodhinyana and Jhana Grove, who, in 2009, along with his monastery are excommunicated from Ajahn Chah's global network of monasteries. His offence was basically that of ordaining nuns without the approval of the Thai Sangha: SD 1.9 (8-10).

[284] *Sadhu bhante vissatthā karotha, mayhaṁ āṇā,cakkaṁ, tumhākaṁ dhamma,cakkaṁ hotu. Āṇāpetha me bhan-te kiṁ karomī ti* (VA 1:1014 f = KhpA 95,2-4); the closing sentence means that the King will make the necessary pre-parations for the 1st monastical council. Cf the saying in connection with Sakra and Brahma (DA 1:264,23-25 = MA 2:278,6-12). See SD 36.10 (5.4.1.2); SD 59.15 (2.2.3).

[285] SD 60.1b (4.5.3.3).

[286] SD 60.1b (4.5.4.1).

[287] **40 years old** generally seen as the "cut off" age for Siamese monkhood. The reformed education system, in important ways, provided the monks with better educational qualifications should they choose to leave the order. However, monks who have passed 40 are less likely to disrobe, and are likelier to remain in the Sangha.

[288] SD 60.1b (4.6.1).

[289] This bloodless coup d'etat of 24th June 1932 was made by the Khana Ratsadorn (the People's Party), led by Pridi Panomyong (1900-83, civil faction) and Plaek Pibulsongkram (1897-1964, army section), during the reign of Prajadhipok (Rama VII, r 1925-35).

[290] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical_peerage_of_Thailand.

modern Sanghas and priests today, the nation's ruling elite see it prudent to keep the Sangha (monastics and priests as a whole) properly domesticated by various systems and policies of the State and in the name of the King. A study in the chronology of the Sangha Acts since 1902 reveals a tension between an independent Sangha Council and being mere spokesman for the State. Any apparent separation of power is not between Sangha and State, but between Sangha and the King. [9.1.2]

9.6.3.4 A defining quality of the early Buddhist sangha—true renunciants whether they have attained the path or not—is their **celibacy** (*brahma,cariya*), that is, a total abstinence from any kind of sexuality (Pārājika 1),[291] including masturbation (Saṅgh'ādisesa 1)[292] and sexually suggestive conduct, that is, to be free from the 7 bonds of sexuality.[293] Even today, a monastic—whether a male renunciant or a female renunciant—who claims to be ordained in the sangha of the Buddha is expected to be celibate.

It goes without saying that to a renunciant who is incelibate, even in the spirit of the Vinaya, breaches in practice. We know, for example, that some priests of Sri Lanka own and that they were contrive to keep the monastic property *within the family* by handing down administrative positions, such as that of Chief High Priest (*mahā,nayaka*) from uncle to nephew.[294]

The Arahatta Susima Sutta (S 12.70) teaches us that a renunciant who eats the country's almsfood without practising the Dharma-Vinaya, that is, who pretends to be celibate when he is not, is a thief (*cora*) in the teaching.[295] The idea is that there is a social contract and a spiritual connection between the renunciant and the world (the laity). The renunciant lives the holy life, practises the Dharma, and teaches them, and the laity supports and respects him on that account.

9.6.3.5 The "holy life" also refers to the proper training in moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom for attaining the path of awakening in this life itself. This entails the renunciant, one who lives the holy life, to practise **right livelihood** (*sammā ājīva*). Broadly, this means that a renunciant should neither support himself nor act in anyway that is against Vinaya. Specifically, this means not engaging in any kind of business or worldly activity, even when it appears good in public opinion.

For example, social work is clearly not part of monastic training, for the simple reason that renunciants will be engaging with the world, which is against the Vinaya. Renunciants may, of course, speak favourably of it and encourage the laity to engage in it. This also means that a renunciant will not have any dealings with money or in buying and selling.

When we speak of "**monastic economics**" or "spiritual economics," it refers to the proper management of a renunciant's "home," that is, the "home of consciousness," comprising form, feeling, perception and formations: this is a synecdoche for the 5 aggregates.[296] This is the key mental training for both the monastic and the laity: reflecting on the true nature of the self, and not identifying with any part of it, seeing it all as being *impermanent*. Such a training, properly done, leads to streamwinning in this life itself.[297]

9.6.3.6 We can speak of **the economics of modernity** as "right livelihood," one of the 8 limbs of the noble eightfold path. Technically, "the path," for monastics refers to the attaining of arhathood in this life itself; for the laity, the attaining of streamwinning in this life itself. This understanding of *Buddhist economics* as basically referring to *creating the proper conditions for mental training*. While the laity may pro-

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[291] Pārājika 1 (V 3:23,33-36).

[292] Saṅghādisesa 1 (V 3:112,17 f).

[293] **Methuna S** (A 7.47), SD 21.9.

[294] See SD 60.1b (S 22.3,4/3:9 f) + SD 10.12 (1.2(2)).

[295] S 12.70,58-63 (SD 16.8). Comys add that while *a good monk*, who eats without properly reflecting on it, is a debtor, a *saint on the path* takes his almsfood as an heir, and *an arhat* is the owner of his almsfood (MA 5:32; SA 2:199; cf SA 1:100 thieves are those who cause ruin in the world).

[296] See **Hāliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3)

[297] See eg **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

perly engage in money-based economic activity that is Dharma-spirited, the monastic must simply have nothing to do with money or commerce: this is clearly <u>wrong livelihood</u> for the monastic.

We have already discussed <u>experience as currency</u> [1.3.1]. Building on this idea, we will now look at why the Buddha strictly forbids renunciants from having anything to do with **money**. To begin with, the renunciant has freely taken the vows before the Sangha to live a money-free life dedicated to the training. Now, money has *value;* money is what money buys: wealth, pleasure, power, status; but any of these, being measurable, holds us to the world. Since these are subjective (depends on how much we value each of these), we will not only find them desirable, but will also never have enough of any of them. We have then failed as renunciants, and are no better than thieves.

The most unwholesome nature of <u>money</u> is that we can use it to displace our own efforts in truly gaining the effort, pleasure, power or state (status) that we should ourself be cultivating; hence, learning from it, and growing with it. We can use money *in exchange* for any of these things which are not really ours anyway. We <u>pay</u> ("donate") money to priests, prayers and prospects for gaining blessings and merits or to "transfer" them to the dead. Yet there is *no* such thing as the dead! We are reborn; arhats attain nirvana.

Furthermore, how can priests who do not follow the Vinaya, who are immoral, bestow "blessings" on others when they themselves neither have it nor is it? It's like trying to squeeze blood from stones.

As for <u>money</u>, its greatest danger is where it displaces our **self-effort** in doing good, avoiding evil and purifying the mind. We falsely imagine that goodness can be measured in monetary terms, and try to transact these with priests. The priests know we have this ignorance, fear, superstition (dependence on an external agency) to think that good can actually be given or taken, bought or sold. All this is wrong view: no good can come from any such wrong view.[298]

9.6.3.7 Where modernization is equated with or entails <u>measuring</u>, it also results in a **commodification** of the Dharma, of both teaching and truth, of enlightenment itself. What is truly Dharma, truth, goodness and reality, cannot be commodified, because they are <u>states</u> that we need to cultivate and attain for ourself. When Dharma (rather, what is *viewed* or *used* as Dharma) is commodified, then it is a **status** that can be passed on, in a matter of speaking.

A grave and real disadvantage of status ideology—that a religious experience or spiritual state can be transferred—is the notion of accepting wolves wearing sheepskin to be sheep! *A wolf in sheepskin is still a wolf*.

Dharma as true reality and real goodness can only be <u>self-realized</u>; what is passed on (as a thing or title) depends on an outside agency. While the former is a vision of <u>truth</u>, the latter is a play of <u>power</u>. We often see this commodification of Dharma and its "transmission" in the Chan/Zen of the Song China down to the present time. This routinization or ritualization of the Dharma is unwholesome because it is bought with <u>words</u> (the koan, the huatou, the teacher's fiat), and that rightness of these words depends on another, the giver of the "Dharma transmission."

The point is simple: Dharma (our mind, its clarity and freedom) can never be transmitted: it can only be <u>earned</u> by self-effort and **self-realization**. It is immeasurable.

9.6.3.8 On the social and historical levels, there are the issues of **caste, class and status** in Buddhism (despite the Vāseṭṭha Sutta, M 98). Sadly, Buddhism in Asia, especially <u>ethnic Buddhism</u> is mostly run like a <u>business</u>: the priests are the managers and vendors, the devotees are the market, scarce resources desirable to priests is *money* and to *clients* is merits; so, there is a calendar of profitable prayers, festivals, projects and events. Here, every religious object and event are about money!

One effective way to be free of the crafty priests is to tell them we have *no* money: they will judiciously avoid us in due course! This is a supreme blessing. But there are other religious currencies: *caste, class and status*. There are ethnic communities that admit only their own caste members. Even when we are not caste-defined, we tend to select our teachers and leaders not for their understanding of the

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[298] For a scholar's view on this, see G Benavides, "Modernity and Buddhism," op cit*,* 2004:547 f.

Dharma; in fact, we often define them by their profession or power or social status (occupation, titles, etc). This is foolish and dangerous: it seems that *status defines goodness.*[299]

It may be argued that even in the Buddha's time, one of the key social reasons for the Buddha's success is that he had the strong support of kings, the powerful and the wealthy. Many of the Buddha's leading lay disciples like Anāthapiṇḍika were finance entrepreneurs (*seṭṭhi*), village heads (*gāmaṇi*) and landed houselords (*gaha,pati*). We should carefully study their stories: they gave not because they were rich, but because they became streamwinners and so on: they gave out of faith and joy, knowing the Dharma.

9.7 MODERNIST BUDDHIST DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

9.7.1 Historically, Western education, especially the university system, is rooted in **Church training** of the mediaeval Christian church. One who has completed his training, to be capable of teaching and interpreting Christian doctrine. Both "doctrine" and "**doctor**" come from Latin *doceo,* "to teach"; a "doctor" of the Church has the "licence to teach" (*licentia docendi*). "**Master**" (one who has mastered the faith) and "**Professor**" (one who professes or believes in the religion) were then synonyms of Doctor. It was only in the modern university, where the system is more "graduated" that these terms took on their modern senses. Over time, the doctorate came to be regarded as a higher qualification than the Master's degree.[300]

The term **bachelor** originally (12th century) referred to a Knight Bachelor, where bachelor meant "a young knight, not old enough, or having too few vassals, to display his own banner, and who therefore followed the banner of another; a novice in arms" (OED).[301] Hence, he was an apprentice who, as in other trades, took 7 years. Since he was too poor and too busy to be married, we have the extended sense of a marriageable age who remains unmarried.

9.7.2 Before modern times, **Buddhist monastic education** has traditionally provided the schooling needs in Asian Buddhist countries. Buddhist education started in ancient India, where educated monastics taught younger monks and the lay people.[302] Insofar as this traditional system was seen as being part of the "3 trainings" (in moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom), "learning was an end in itself … worth a strenuous pursuit to possess it for its own sake … free to the poor and rich alike [education] and the teaching was for ends that were above mere gain."[303]

Besides their regular monastic activities and Dharma training, the ancient Buddhist monks often used their temples to provide a basic education to children in the vicinity and anyone who desired to be educated. In other words, they did not see such activities as missionary work or evangelization projects, but that education was desirable, as a start for daily life, and it certainly helped in the understanding of Buddhism.

Early Buddhist education, especially during the first 5 after-centuries, culminated with the great universities, that is, those at these places:[304]

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[299] This statement at least applies to the Buddhist situation in Malaysia and Singapore.

[300] In Europe, the scientific career is Bachelor (diploma) → Master (magister) → Doctor (doctoral thesis) → Professor (venia legendi = a university chair) [Thanks to Dr Vera Ries for this, 2022]. For easy summaries and refs, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bachelor%27s_degree; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree.

[301] Bachelor as "the first or lowest degree at a university, who is not yet a master of the Arts," was already in use in the mid-14th century (1365), but its Latin form is *baccalarius,* "subsequently altered by a pun or word-play to *baccalaureus* as if connected with *bacca lauri,* laurel berry, which has sometimes been gravely given as the 'etymology'." (OED)

[302] A Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-century Lankan Monastic Culture,* Princeton, 2001:67, 194.

[303] U Kaung, "A survey of the history of education in Burma before the British conquered and after," *Journal of the British Research* 46,2 1963:31; qu in H James, "Governance and civil society in Myanmar," RoutledgeCurzon, 2005: 78.

[304] Almost all of these sites were totally destroyed by Turkish Muslim invaders in the 11th century: SD 39.1 (7.3.3).

Nālandā (427-1197) in <u>Bihar</u>;
Vallabhī (600-1203), modern Vala, in Bhavnagar district (Saurāṣṭra), <u>Gujarat</u>;
Vickramasśilā (8th-12th century), Antichak village, Bhagalpur, in <u>Bihar</u>;
Odantapuri (8th-12th centuries, Pāla dynasty), Hiranya Prabat, Bihar Sharif, <u>Bihar</u>;
Jaggadala (late 11th-12 centuries) Varendra, N Bengal, now <u>Bangladesh</u>;
Somapura (8th-12th centuries, Pāla dynasty), Paharpur, Badalgachhi, Naogaon, <u>Bangladesh</u>;
Puṣphagiri (3rd-11th centuries), Langudi hills, Jajpur/Cuttack, <u>Odisha</u>;
Nāgārjuṇakoṇḍa (3rd cent on; several sites), near Nagarjuna Sagar, Palnadu district, <u>Andhra Pradesh</u>;
Sharda or Shardi (8th century onwards) Neelum river banks, Neelum district, Azad Kashmir, <u>Pakistan</u> (Pok);
Taksasila (5th century BCE-5th century CE), Taxila Tehsil, Rawalpindi District, <u>Afghanistan</u>.

Although such Buddhist institutions centred on Buddhist teachings, they were open to non-Buddhist learning, and they also accepted students who were non-Buddhists and those from overseas.[305]

9.7.3 Hence, the Indian Buddhist monasteries and nunneries were the early education centres giving free education to all alike who needed or wanted it. Understandably, in such an ambience, there was also the "education by association," by which these early students learn moral conduct and some mental training, depending on the ability and inclination of the individual Buddhist teachers.[306]

Monastic education in other countries that accepted Buddhism was profoundly influenced by the Indian tradition. In Sri Lanka, for example, the Siyam Nikāya's founder, Vāliviṭa Saraṇaṅkara, introduced **the *sutra sannaya***, a bilingual (Pali-Sinhala) style of presenting Buddhist teachings before the Sri Lanka king and other of the elite Goyigama caste lay Buddhists. Those who use this manner of public preaching often won the admiration and support of their audiences. This preaching method went on to become one of the literary foundations of Sinhala monastic education.[307]

Even today, amongst the ethnic Buddhists of Myanmar, Thailand, Khmer and Laos, monastic education fills a vital gap in the government education system, especially by providing members of the poorer classes to gain a basic education so that they can go on to venture in more lucrative fields to gain a profitable career for themselves. In some cases, however, large Buddhist educational institutions were nationalized as part of governmental efforts to expand higher education facilities. Some scholars criticized this, citing the destruction of traditional Buddhist education and the politicization of Buddhist monkhood.[308]

9.7.4 A salient feature of Buddhist modernism today is the high premium that is placed on education, or more exactly, the title and status that **higher education** can bless us with. Moreover, when one, because of poverty, or personal lack, ill loss or bad luck, or out of fear of being neglected in old age, becomes a monastic, taking up university education seems to be a most <u>respectable</u> choice to make. Of course, it is also possible that one had done so for the love of the Dharma, and for learning itself, and what better way to live the life of a "full-time scholar" than as <u>a monastic scholar</u>, as in ancient times in both the East and the West. [9.7.1]

9.7.5 As a young renunciant seeking higher education, we are more likely to get the funds for further studies from pious individuals or generous institutions. Even when our <u>command of English</u> is not as good as that of an average freshman, our determination and monastic status will often make up for it. The university authorities are often respectfully and generally lenient with monastic students when they view their presence as boosting the university's prestige.

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[305] Z Dukpa, "The history and development of monastic education in Bhutan," in M J Shuelka & T W Maxwell (ed), *Education in Bhutan,* Springer, 2016:40 f.

[306] R D Mookerji, *Ancient Indian Education: Brahmanical and Buddhist*. Delhi, 1947:466.

[307] A Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-century Lankan Monastic Culture,* Princeton, 2001: chs 5+6.

[308] See M Deegalle, "Contemporary Sri Lankan Buddhist traditions," in (ed) M Jerryson, *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism,* Oxford, 2017:13-35.

Indeed, a few of these scholars actually rise to be amongst the best in the fields of Pali and sutta studies. Most, however, are proudly relieved to <u>graduate</u> from their course, to feel their life punctuated with title and status. Upon taking up their roles as a Vihara Chief or employed as a waged purohit of some ethnic Temple or Centre, they only need to know what their congregation does not know: the lame leads the blind.[309]

9.7.6 The openness and <u>secularity</u> of universal education, and the <u>modernization</u> of Buddhist monastic-ism, allow and encourage them (monks and nuns) to take up **higher education** just like any other lay students. Modern education, placing learning above almost everything else, means that *lay* lecturers and professors become the teachers of these monastics. Even the 2 monastic universities of Thailand—the Mahachulalongkorn Monks' University [1.9.6.3] and the Mahamakut Monks' University[310]—have many lay teachers. The embarrassing question now is this: there are many cases where these university teach-ers are <u>not</u> Buddhist. We have cases where the lecturers even announce that they were "converting" to Christianity.[311]

9.7.7 For various reasons, <u>monastic graduate scholars</u> tend to end up living alone and independent—not as the fabled "rhinoceros" of the suttas—but rather as **lone unicorns**. One may surmise, perhaps, that they wish to be free to pursue their profession and passions ; or that they simply want to live unrestrain-ed by the Vinaya.

A vital living feature of the monastic life is the fortnightly recital of the Patimokkha. Although there are special provisions for the performance of the "observance by determination" (*adhiṭṭhāna uposatha*), this is only for exceptional cases. When a sangha can be assembled before one, or when there is a Pati-mokkha recital being performed, it is the rule that a monastic should attend it having properly performed one's Vinaya confessions. [312]

It is also possible that a lone unicorn may feel that he has been transgressing some key Vinaya rules, or is unable to keep them. Hence, he leads a unicorn life with a dark secret. Psychologically, he compen-sates his perceived failure by excelling in academic learning. This can be done with remarkable success, considering how secularism has profoundly set in with the current modernization of Buddhism.

Even as a "unicorn" monastic, we would be regarded by many others, especially the uninformed laity (and most laity are uninformed about such dark matters), as a religious virtuoso. Moreover, we probably do not have to pay income tax, go for national service, and so on. In such a case, we are, then, neither fish nor fowl. We cannot claim to go to the Buddha for refuge and yet reject the Vinaya. We cannot serve God and Mammon (money), as the Christians say [1.14.3.8]. I take this alien quote with a modernist twist.

9.7.8 Notice that we are not against academic scholarship; we are for the proper respect and practice of renunciation, especially when we have freely and openly taken the vows of seeking awakening in this life itself. Ideally then if we are keen in obtaining higher education, we should do this first as a lay person. Upon completing that education, one can then renounce as a monastic. This is especially the proper course for a young person, one who is below 40. [9.6.2 n]

There is also the possibility of finishing higher education in a monastic university, whether as a lay per-son or a renunciant. One disadvantage may be that a monastic university may not have many choices of subjects, especially the one that we are keen in pursuing. On the other hand, we have noticed that, in modern times, many monastic universities—like the 2 in Thailand [9.7.6]— have become <u>public</u> univers-

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[309] On this metaphor, see SD 18.7 (9.1.5.9), SD 59.17 (3.2.1).

[310] On both universities, see SD 60.1b (4.5.4).

[311] There is the well-known case of Paul Williams, who, after teaching Mahāyāna for 30 years, "converted," ie, returned to Catholicism. His reason, oddly, was the loaded question "Why there is something rather than nothing?": SD 17.8b (2.2.2.1 n).

[312] Mv 2.26 (V 1:124 f); Wachirayanawarorot, *Vinayamukh* vol 2, 1973: ch 17, esp p110.

ities, meaning that they are open to anyone who is qualified and offer a wider range of subjects. Most monastics universities do not seem to survive for long on their own.[313]

9.8 "UNCOMFORTABLE" ENGLISH

9.8.1 One of the most recognizable characteristics of Buddhist modernism is the use of **English** by Buddhist individuals and groups at various levels of speaking, teaching and communicating. The most obvious reason is often that it was a colonial legacy of that person or community. On the other hand, English itself has a number of advantages, especially for a world religion like Buddhism. English is the *de jure* (by law) official language or predominantly used by both government or education and main population in 82 countries.[314]

Although Chinese is the world's "most spoken" language (929 M, 11 % of the world population),[315] followed by Spanish (475 M. 6%), **English** (373 M, 5%)[316] is the foremost—by some accounts[317] the only—world language.[318] Economically, English is the best or most profitable means of communicating—through speaking, writing or the mass media—to the largest global market of prospective believers and clients.

Historically and linguistically, English has proven to be a very easy language to learn, and very efficient medium for learning even at the highest level on account of its plasticity and viability. Moreover, English is perhaps the most common language used to translate other languages, including Pali and Sanskrit, which gives us the most direct access to the early Buddhist teachings and their interpretations in translation. English, then, is a very effective medium for the mind and heart of the early Buddhists texts and teachings.

9.8.2 Before we even learn the deeper aspects of Buddhism, or as we are studying Buddhism, we should thus [9.7.1] make every effort to **master English**. Language experts speak of the 5 basic components and mastery of a language (to which I've added a 6th, aesthetics),[319] thus:

(1) **Syntax**—the rules governing word order to form clauses, phrases and sentences. In other words, we need to master the basic grammar of English, and this can be done with some diligence in routine practice, and continue monitoring of our English usage and style to correct errors and improve them.

(2) **Morphology**—the rules that govern the meanings (denotation) of a word or phrase, and changes in meaning (connotation) of words in different contexts and at different levels of expression. Technically, this entails an understanding of morphemes (the smallest unit of meaning) and how they convey or affect meaning from their roots, prefixes, affixes, and grammatical markers (basically this means how English words are formed and changed in meaning).

(3) **Phonology**—the rules that govern the structure, distribution and sequencing of speech-sound patterns. Phonology is the study of phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) in a language and the rules for their combination, for example, "t" or "s." The words "to" and "so" hold very different meanings due to the difference in the first phoneme of the word. Notice also that "o" is pronounced differently in

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[313] On the tendency of monastic universities to close down after a short while, or to become "open universities," see U Kaplan, *Monastic Education in Korea,* 2020: Intro + pp 51-54.

[314] List of countries and territories where English is an official language - Wikipedia.

[315] About 1.3 billion native speakers (or approximately 16% of the world's population of 8 billion), of which 1.1 billion speak Mandarin, and the rest, a variety of Chinese as their first language (Ethnologue 3 Oct 2018). List of languages by number of native speakers - Wikipedia.

[316] About 1.3 billion native speakers (or approximately 16% of the world's population of 8 billion), of which 1.1 billion speak Mandarin, and the rest, a variety of Chinese as their first language (Ethnologue 3 Oct 2018). List of languages by number of native speakers - Wikipedia.

[317] Such as British linguists, David Crystal and David Graddol.

[318] World language - Wikipedia.

[319] Their correlations are, of course, not an exact fit, but they serve as a start for some useful discussion.

each case. Here's another pair where the *o* sounds differently in each word: "g*o*at" [Br /gəʊt/; US /goʊt/] and "g*o*d" [Br /gɒd/; US /gɑːd/].[320] An ethnic monk once said: "May the /gəʊts/ bless you!" Fortunately, we know what he meant. Basically, we should know how words are spelt and pronounced so that others may clearly understand us as we intend it.

(4) **Semantics**—the rules that govern the meaning and context of words or grammatical units. For a deeper understanding and greater skill in English, we must increase our vocabulary, as well as learn synonyms, antonyms, multiple-meaning words, and figurative language. Semantics is also understanding the relationship between words. We should be able to interpret an entire sentence or passage, not just understand the individual word meanings. The relationships of the words work like chords in music, flowing with meaning and beauty that opens up a larger field and horizon of the Buddha's communication of his awakening experience.

(5) **Pragmatics**—the rules that govern language use across communication contexts, that is, how we understand and use the social aspects of language. This involves the social skills used in daily interactions, in both verbal and non-verbal communication, which includes body language, facial expressions, gestures, communicative intent, and topic maintenance (continuity). It means knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. Pragmatics is <u>how</u> we use English, rather than its structure.

(6) **Aesthetics**—the skill in not only using the right words and correct form, but words that <u>evoke</u> joy, sadness, approval, disapproval; highlighting what's wrong, what's right, the unwholesome, the wholesome, the true, the false. What is true is truly beautiful; what is truly beautiful is beautifully true—this should be justly and fairly brought out in our writing.

   To show that no one owns such <u>truth</u> (true freedom) that we can only realize it and share its timeless <u>beauty</u> (joy and peace), we echo the wisdom of others by quoting their timeless or timely words. Aesthetics is about perceiving truth and beauty; these uplift our feelings, expressing our positive emotions. It reflects the wholeness of our experience that refines the animal within us into the human, that is liberated as the divine, that goodness attainable by all who look within their own mind and heart.

To those of us who know the Dharma of the suttas, all this is timeless wisdom as hinted at by **the 4 analytic skills** (*paṭisambhidā*), that is (with the 6 points above categorized accordingly):[321]

(1) the analytic skill in meaning   (*attha paṭisambhidā*);   semantics
(2) the analytic skill in the word   (*dhamma paṭisambhidā*);   syntax
(3) the analytic skill in language   (*nirutte paṭisambhidā*);   morphology, phonology
(4) the analytic skill in ready wit   (*paṭibhāna paṭisambhidā*).   pragmatics, aesthetics

9.8.3 One of the benefits of Buddhist modernism is that <u>western scholars</u> of early Buddhism are broadening their understanding of **the nature and meaning of the suttas**, and <u>ethnic scholars</u> are learning how to express their vast traditional learning in modern terms for the benefit of those studying Buddhism as a living faith within a global Buddhist community. We can see a good example of this positive development within the last century in the translation and study of <u>the Yamaka</u>.

   The Yamaka ("Pairs"), the 6th book of the Abhidhamma, is the last book of the Pali Tipiṭaka to be translated by the Pali Text Society, UK. Although it appears structurally to be a very simple book, it is perhaps the most difficult Abhidhamma book to understand, partly due to its cyclically repetitive style. Mrs C A F

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[320] We should also be familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and each sound is made. This is usu found the at front or at the bottom of the Dictionary page.
   [321] SD 28.4 (4); SD 41.6 (2.2); SD 58.1 (5.4.2.13).

Rhys Davids, in the Introductory Note to her 1911 Pali edition,[322] famously referred to the Yamaka's categories as "these ten 'valleys of dry bones'" that need to be given flesh and blood, a new life, by an earnest expositor, to become a "living and breathing vehicle of doctrine."[323]

What makes Mrs Rhys Davids' Pali edition of the Yamaka <u>difficult to read</u> is that she has adopted "a policy of radical abbreviation," hoping initially to compact the 3 volumes of Burmese, Siamese and Sinhala editions into a single volume. "The result was, however, unfortunate. The text is very difficult to use, unless one is reading from cover to cover, and even then it is easy to be confused."[324] Fortunately, the new translation (*The Book of Pairs And Its Commentary,* PTS 2018) gives <u>a fuller translation</u>, abbreviating only where the repetition is obvious and easily filled in by an intelligent reader.

9.8.4 The Yamaka surveys the Dharma in 10 categories or chapters:[325]

(1)	the 3 karmic roots (*mūla*)	the wholesome, the unwholesome, the neutral
(2)	the 5 aggregates (*khandha*)	form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness
(3)	the 5 sense-bases (*āyatana*)	eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, body-base
(4)	the 4 elements (*dhātu*)	earth, water, fire, wind
(5)	the 4 truths (*sacca*)	suffering, arising, ending, the path
(6)	the 3 karmic formations (*saṅkhāra*)	mental, verbal, bodily
(7)	the 7 latent tendencies (*anusaya*)	those of sensual craving, repulsion, conceit, view, doubt, craving for existence, of ignorance
(8)	consciousness (*citta*)	arising and ceasing of consciousness
(9)	phenomena [states] (*dhamma*)	wholesome, unwholesome, neutral
(10)	the 5 faculties (*indriya*)	the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body (as faculties)

In contemporary terms, <u>the Yamaka</u> is a binary formulation of 10 doctrines of the Buddha in material, psychological and philosophical forms. Each of the 10 chapters is organized into 3 sections:

(1) <u>delimitation</u> of terminology, viz, the precise denotation of the terms of the chapter;
(2) <u>process</u>, viz, discussions of how the terms are applied in Abhidhamma analysis, and
(3) <u>penetration</u>, viz, the understanding arising from this analysis.

The "exposition section," for example, progresses through series of <u>paired exchanges</u> in opposing terms (like the on-off of the cybernetic system).

The discussion in ch 5, the "**pairs on truths**" (*sacca,yamaka*), for example, can be summarized, thus:

5.1   Delimitation [Description] section (*paññatti,vāra*)
5.1.1   Outline section (*uddesa,*vāra): [The 4 truths are first simply defined]

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[322] *The Yamaka,* 2 vols, London: Pali Text Soc, vol 1 1911, vol 2 1913; repr 1987. For Yam I, Mrs Rhys Davids was assisted by Mary C Foley & Mabel Hunt; for vol II, she was asst by Cecilia Dibben, Mary C Foley, Mabel Hunt and May Smith. Vol II also incl "A dissertation on the Yamaka" (in Pali), **Ledi Sayadaw**'s 1914 *Landana-pāḷi-devī-pucchā-vissaj-janā,* a reply to Mrs RD's question as to the traditional Burmese view on its scope and method, with discussions on some psychological and philosophical principles (220-286). In a closing note, Mrs RD writes: "I have indicated by footnotes some of the peculiarities of the Burmese traditional methods of Pali orthography; these may be compared to the table given by Rhys Davids in the preface to the *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī,* vol I, PTS ed" (286). Corrections are given in *Journal of the Pali Text Soc* 7 (1913-14); a partial tr is found in "Ledi Sayadaw (1914), 'Some points in Buddhist doctrine,'" JPTS 7, 1914:115-164. See also E Braun & W Pruitt, "Two letters from Ledi Sayadaw to Mrs Rhys Davids," London: H Frowde for JPTS 31, 2012:155-182.

[323] Yam I:xi, qu in (trs) Shaw & Cousins, *The Book of Pairs and Its Commentary,* Bristol, 2018:xi f (Preface).

[324] Yam:SC 2018:xiv.

[325] See Nyanatiloka, *Guide Through the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka,* Kandy [1938], 3rd ed. 1971:88-113. On Yamaka's significance in relation to "momentariness" (*khaṇa*) of matter and mind, see Karunadasa, *The Theravāda Abhidhamma,* HK, 2010:237-239, 245-260.

1. A. Positive   [only the questions for each of the truth: highlighted in 5.1.2a] …
    B. Negative [only the questions for each of the *not*-truth] …
2. A. Positive   [only the questions for "the truths"] …
    B. Negative [only the questions for "*not* the truths"] …

5.1.2 Exposition section (*niddesa,vāra*)

1. A. Positive
(i)   (a) **Is suffering (*dukkha*), the truth of suffering?** Yes
      (b) **Is the truth that is the suffering, suffering**? Apart from painful bodily feeling and painful mental feeling, the remaining truth that is suffering is *the truth that is the suffering* but is not painful feeling; painful bodily feeling and painful mental feeling are both suffering/painful feeling and truth that is the suffering.
(ii) (a) **Is arising, the truth that is the suffering?** Apart from the truth that is the arising, the remaining "arising" is truth that is the suffering but is not the truth that is the arising; the truth that is the arising is both arising and the truth that is the arising.
      (b) **Is the truth that is suffering, arising?** Yes.
(iii) (a) **Is cessation, the truth that is the cessation?** Apart from the truth that is the cessation, the remaining "cessation" is cessation but is not the truth that is the cessation. The truth that is the cessation is both cessation and the truth that is the cessation.
      (b) **Is the truth that is the cessation, cessation?** Yes.
(iv) (a) **Is the path, the truth of the path?** Apart from the truth that is the path, the remaining "path" is merely a path but is not the truth that is the path. The truth that is the path is both path and the truth that is the path.
      (b) **Is the truth that is the path, the path?** Yes.

For a full translation, see (trs) Shaw and Cousins, *The Book of Pairs And Its Commentary* (2018:275-358).[326]

9.8.5 C M M Shaw and L S Cousins, in the Preface to *The Book of Pairs and Its Commentary,*[327] laments that "a translation of the first volume of **the Yamaka** was published in Malaysia in 1998 by Burmese scholars, but no further volumes seem to have appeared.[328] This was not utilized in the initial production of this translation, partly to avoid being influenced by the slightly **uncomfortable English** of that translation." (2016:xiv).

This is a humorously polite way of saying that a very useful native translation by the two Burmese experts cannot be used in a scholarly translation because most of the English used in that native translation is mostly very bad. The translators' full titles and names are Aggamahāpaṇḍita U Nārada (Mūlapaṭṭhāna Sayādaw) and Aggamahāganthavācaka U Kumārābhivaṁsavaṭaṁsakā Siromaṇidhammācariya (BA) (Banmaw Sayādaw). A third translator (also editor) is Isi Nandamedhā.[329]

There is no doubt that these 3 monks are accomplished Burmese scholars. Sadly, their translations, useful as they may be, are in dire need of thorough proofing and editing. Although Malaysian and Singa-

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[326] On some cultural issues challenging the translation of Pali texts into English, see P Freeouf, "Translating Pali Buddhists texts into English: Two example texts," *Humanities Journal* 24,2 Jul-Dec 2017:161-187.

[327] An annotated tr of the Yamaka (the 6th book of the Abhidhamma) and the Yamaka-p,pakaraṇ'aṭṭhakathā (Bristol: Pali Text Soc), vol 1, 2018. PTS tr of Yamaka containing first 5 chapters: Mula-, Khanda-, Ayatana-, Dhatu- and Sacca Yamaka: File:Yamaka 1.pdf.

[328] U Nārada & U Kumārābhivaṁsa (trs), *The Book on Pairs (Yamaka)* (Penang [Malaysia]), 1998-2012. Nārada tr (1-5), Nandamedha (6-9), Kumara (10): see foll n.

[329] The parts tr are: (1-5) Yamaka (Mūla- Āyatana-, Dhātu-, Sacca Yamaka), (6) Saṅkhāra Yamaka, (7) Anusaya Yamaka, (8) Citta Yamaka, (9) Dhamma Yamaka, and (10) Indriya Yamaka. A version of these, incl the Pali, can be found at Wikipitaka: https://tipitaka.fandom.com/wiki/Yamaka. A PDF neatly done M Wierich, Hamburg, Germany, 2020: Yamaka en.pdf (abhidhamma.com). Wierich, in his Editorial Note, too, says that the script is "in some places were very difficult to decipher… . This translation clearly has room for improvement." (2020:i)

porean Buddhists have the deepest respects for Burmese monks, faith alone, even blessed with a deep veneration of the Abhidhamma texts, will not help clarify them. We need modern scholarly training and discipline. [9.7.4]

9.8.6 Another significant work that's worth our attention in our study of Buddhist modernism, how it can be positively construed, is *The Great Chronicles of Buddhas* (in Burmese) by **Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhi-vaṁsa** (Mingun Sayadaw) (1911-93),[330] the Burmese savant monk,[331] in an impressive set of translations in 6 volumes (in 8 parts), totalling over 3,700 pages.[332] It is a hagiography (sacred legends) of past buddhas and Gotama Buddha according to Commentaries and Burmese tradition.
	Vicittasāra's 6 volumes can be summarized as follows:

1,1	the bodhisattva Sumedha (JA 1): chs 1-6 (xxiv 355 pp);[333]
1,2	the 24 buddhas and the future buddha (BA); the perfections (CA): chs 7-9 (x 323);
2,1	the arising of the Buddha up to the great awakening (BA): chs 1-8 (xiv 309):
2,2	the 1st year (of the ministry) (V 1:1-44); prophecies & the great man: chs 9-15 (viii 226);
3	2nd to 9th years: chs 16-27 (xxiv 479);
4	9th to 20th years: chs 28-37 (xviii 494);
5	21st years to mahāparinirvana: chs 38-41 (xvi 503);
6,1	41 elder monks (ThaA): (xxx 393);
6,2	10 elder nuns; 4 female lay female disciples (ThīA); 4 lay male disciples (DhA); epilogue: (lx 239), ch 44; index 251-383.

	This set of 6 volumes (8 books) is clearly impressive to the pious Buddhist, and is an object of merit worthy of veneration (if this is our inclination). The serious scholar will, however, find these volumes very difficult to use since they lack proper referencing and a critical apparatus. They can, of course, be enjoyably read like a multivolume Buddhist novel on the lives of the Buddha and his disciples. The point remains that such a work will be more useful and valuable with <u>a modern critical apparatus</u> (including variant readings from other MSS), and with editors and proof-readers to produce a good annotated translation, or at least a readable work.

10 Japan: How Buddhism became a "religion"

10.0 INTRODUCTION
	We have seen, in the previous section [9] how Buddhism flourished as **the national religion** in Sri Lanka**,** Myanmar and Thailand. Since its arrival in Japan, Buddhism quickly rose over 13 centuries to be her national religion—until the Meiji Reformation, when it was violently, almost overnight, replaced by **a new religion**, Shintoism. Why and how did this happen? This human drama is so powerful, and its lesson so valuable, that we will discuss this at some length. [10.1]

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[330] This is an honorific simply meaning, "the elder from Mingun." He should not be confused with Mingun Zetawun [Jetavana] Sayadaw (1869-1954) [SD 60.1b: 2.4.3.2], Mahasi Sayadaw's teacher.
	[331] In 1985, *the Guinness Book of Records* recorded the sayadaw as a record holder in the "human memory category." The exact entry was "Human memory: Bhandanta Vicitsara (sic) recited 16,000 pages of Buddhist canonical text in Rangoon, Burma in May 1954. Rare instances of eidetic memory—the ability to project and hence 'visually' recall material—are known to science."
	[332] <u>Translators</u>: 1 (1+2), 2 (1+2), U Ko Lay & U Tin Lwin; 3, U Ko Lay; 4, U Tin Lwin; 5, U Tin Oo, ed U Ko Lay; 6 (1) U Tin Lwin & U Tin Oo; 6 (2) tr U Tin Oo, ed U Ko Lay. Rangoon: Ti Ni Publishing Centre, 6 vols. ©Ti Ni. Repr Malaysia: Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Soc, 1990.
	[333] Excluding pages for Vol indices.

10.1 THE RISE AND FALL OF BUDDHISM

10.1.1 When the Sinhala reformist lay preacher Anagarika Dharmapala [1.2.2] met the Japanese Zen priest Shaku Sōen [8.4.3], during the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (11-18 September 1893), there was no modernist Buddhism yet in Sri Lanka. Japan, however, was at the height of its Meiji Restor-ation (1868-1912), that effectively secularized Buddhism. How this happened can be understood from the nature of the Meiji Restoration and its effects on Buddhism.

Around 538, the Korean king of Paekche (SW Korea) sent a delegation to introduce Buddhism to the Japanese emperor (*mikado*)[334] of **the Asuka period** (538-710 or 592-645) (just south of Nara).[335] About 50 years later, Buddhism, seen as a talisman to protect the country, was promoted by Prince Shotoku (574-622)[336] first within his own Soga clan. Around 604, he proclaimed a Chinese-style (Confucianist) 17-article constitution that de facto inaugurated the Japanese insular empire.[337]

By the following **Nara period** (710-794),[338] monastic Buddhism has grown rich and powerful, with numerous temples dotting the country, even on the mountains. By **the Kamakura period** (1185-1333),[339] the monks were so wealthy and powerful that they had their own armies of "monk or warrior soldiers" (僧兵 *sōhei*), feared even by the Emperor himself.[340]

10.1.2 Once Buddhism was established in Japan, it began to assimilate **Shintō** (神道, the path of the gods),[341] originally a generic term for pre-Buddhist nature beliefs and cults centering around **the *kami*** (神), supernatural entities believed to inhabit and pervade all physical things.[342] The *kami* easily fitted into the ancient Buddhist cosmology as minor deities, and a few as avatars or incarnations (権現*gongen*) of Bud-dhas, Bodhisattvas and other Buddhist divinities:[343] Shintō was thus originally simply folk aspects of Japan-ese Buddhism.[344] This was known as ***shinbutsu-shūgō*** (神仏習合, "syncretism of *kami* and buddhas"), also

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[334] *Mikado* (帝/御門), well known in Eng was once common but now obsolete. In Jap, the emperor is referred to as *tennō* (天皇 Heavenly Sovereign).

[335] Rovert L Worden, "Kofun and Asuka Periods, ca. A.D. 250-710," 1994. *A Country Study: Japan*. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Archived.

[336] On Shotoku Taishi, see *Ency of World Biography* 2nd ed,1998 14:205-207. See a;sp (Ed) D M Brown, *Cambridge History of Japan* 1 Ancient Japan, Cambridge, 1999.

[337] The Jap monarchy was even older: it is, in fact, the oldest continuous hereditary monarchy in the world, total-ling, to date, 126 divine sovereigns. The 1st was the legendary Jimmu (神武天皇, *jimmu-tennō*), said to have ascended in 660 BCE. He was followed by 25 other mythical kings. There is sufficient evidence of an unbroken hereditary line since CE 500 with the early 6th-cent Emperor Kinmei. The Empire of Japan in a colonial sense was that of the Meiji era. See Timothy Hoye, *Japanese Politics: Fixed and Floating Worlds,* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999:78. For a full list of Japanese emperors: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emperors_of_Japan#Emperors_of_Japan.

[338] (Eds) Ronald E Dolan & Robert L Worden, "Nara and Heian Periods, AD 710-1185" *Japan: A Country Study*, Lib-rary of Congress, Federal Research Division, 1994.

[339] On the Kamakura period, see J P Mass, "The Kamakura bakufu," in (ed) K Yamamura, *The Cambridge History of Japan* 3 Medieval Japan, Cambridge, 1990: 46-88; Ōsumi Kazuo (tr, rev, exp James C Dobbins), "Buddhism in the Kamakura period," op cit 544-582.

[340] See **Cult Buddhism**, SD 34.5 (1.2.4).

[341] H Hardacre, *Shinto and the State 1868-1988,* Princeton, 1989b. Fabio Rambelli, "Buddhism and Shinto," 2018: https://oxfordre.com/religion/religion/abstract/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-612.

[342] Japan scholars today understand Shintō not as a "indigenous religion" of Japan, but simply native beliefs that became part of Japanese Buddhism which, over time, gave them their form and stories. In this sense, Shintō was "Buddhism's shadow," ie, until it was turned into a political tool by the Meiji reformists [1.10.6].

[343] This was called **Ryōbu Shinto** (dual aspect Shinto) or Shingon Shintō, a syncretic Japanese sect that combined Shintō with the teachings of the Shingon (Tantric) sect of Buddhism. S Murakami, *Japanese Religion in the Modern Century* (tr), 1980:22; N R Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan,* 1987:21; Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan,* 1990:9.

[344] We see similar (not identical) developments among Buddhists in Sri Lanka (deva worship), Burma (nat worship) and Thailand, Khmer and Laos (phii worship).

derisively called (by detractors) *shinbutsu-konkō* (神仏混淆, "jumbling up" or "contamination of *kami* and buddhas"). It was Japan's only organized religion up until the Meiji period (1868-1912). [10.2.1]

Around the 1830s, during **the Tokugawa Shogunate** (徳川幕府 *tokugawa bakufu,*[345] 1603-1867, also called Edō period),[346] Japan faced serious financial difficulties, foreign threats, intellectual uncertainty, and growing restiveness in the domains (藩 *han,* or fiefs).[347] The situation worsened in the 1850s, when the Americans forced Japan to end its 200-year-old closed policy and open up to the West.

10.1.3 The people reacted with growing opposition, but without any unified direction. Intellectual groups like **the National Ideology movement** (國學 *kokugaku,* "the country's learning," ie, nativism)[348] of domains like Mito (capital of Ibaraki Prefecture, N Kanto) emphasized the centrality of the Emperor system and, by implication, the "illegal" nature of Tokugawa rule. Much of the movement's passion came from the *sonna jai* ("revere the emperor, expel the barbarians") slogan of hundreds of *shishi* (anti-shogun loyalists) who carried out anti-Tokugawa, and anti-foreign acts of terrorism in the streets of Tokyo and Kyoto.

Most devastating to the Tokugawa was the spread of anti-Tokugawa sentiments to the leadership of powerful domains such as Satsuma (in southern Kyushu), Chōshū (on the western tip of Honshu) and Tosa (southern Shikoku). In November 1867, Shogun Tokugawa Keiki announced that he was returning political power to the Emperor, but his family still held on to a quarter of Japan's land. As a result, on 3 January 1868, a group from Satsuma, Chōshū and Tosa domains joined several court nobles in seizing the palace and announcing that the Tokugawa government had been abolished, and that Tokugawa power and lands had been returned to the throne. After a brief military resistance where some 13,000 were killed, Keiki surrendered, thus ushering in a relatively "bloodless" Meiji Restoration.

10.1.4 Beginning January 1868, Restoration leaders—most of them relatively young samurai from Satsuma, Chōshū and Tosa—with only a bit of vague idea of governmental reform, out of great fear of the humiliating prospects of impending Western encroachment, began proving themselves to be uncompromising **visionaries**. They concluded that Japan must modernize if she were to avoid the fate of China and other Asian countries in being occupied and humiliated by an imperialistic West. They decided to commit themselves to studying and working with the powerful Western nations and to creating a centralized, modern nation. Their goals were captured in such phrases as ***bunmei kaika*** (文明開化 civilization and enlightenment) and ***fukoku kyōhei*** (富国強兵 rich country, strong army). Their amazing determination, within a generation, turned Japan into a constitutional monarchy, with a growing economy, a spreading school system based on the idea of universal education, and a modern military establishment capable of defeating China and Russia. So remarkable were the changes that historians often refer to the restoration as the Meiji Revolution.[349]

10.2 JAPANESE NATIONALISM AND "NEW BUDDHISMS"

10.2.1 The Meiji Restoration (明治維新 *Meiji Ishin*) of 1868, which began as a coup d'etat, was named after the reign of the young emperor enthroned the previous year, marking Japan's shift from feudalism to

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[345] *Bakufu* (幕府 "an office in a tent" or "field headquarters"), ie, a battlefield general's HQ, is a term for the Shogun's government. **Shōgun** (将軍) was a military rank and the historical title of the feudal administrator who served as the Emperor's military deputy and actual ruler of Japan, 1185-1868. *Shogun* is short for *sei-i tai-shōgun* (征夷大将軍 "great general who subdues the barbarians"), a rank equivalent to "general," the highest officer in the army.

[346] On the Tokugawa shogunate, see C Totman, *Politics of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1600-1843,* Cambridge, 1967; *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868,* Honolulu, 1980. Also T Najita, "History and nature in 18th century Tokugawa thought," in *The Cambridge History of Japan* 4, Cambridge, 1990:596-659.

[347] A *han* is a Japanese historical term for the estate of a *daimyo* (feudal lords serving the shogun) in the Edō period (1603-1868) and early Meiji period (1868-1912). They are life fiefs that owed allegiance to the shogun.

[348] See (eds) Blezer & Teeuwen, iChallenging Paradigms: Buddhism and Nativism, Leiden 2013; also https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kokugaku-school/.

[349] J L Huffman, *Modern Japan: An encyclopedia of history, culture and nationalism,* 1998, 2013:150 f.

modernity. The early Meiji government, intending to establish the legitimacy of a new nation centred on the Emperor's charisma, enforced a separation of Shinto from Buddhism (神仏分離 *shinbutsu bunri*) at the expense of the latter.

Since the power of the Buddhist clergy was entrenched in the Tokugawa state machinery (*bakufu*) [10.1.2], the Meiji government worked to displace it by inventing **State Shinto** (國家神道 *sokka shintō*),[350] and so became a religion in its own right.[351] Its purpose was that of conferring **divine status** to the Emperor. Sociologically, this is a powerful means of manipulating national power by investing it in a universal symbol of sovereignty. The real power was, of course, in the hands of the kingmaker, the government. The ulterior motive of the government was to use it as tool to promote nationalism and militarism. [10.7.2]

10.2.2 In March 1868, after invoking the "ancient" Japanese tradition of "unity of rites and government" (祭政一致 *saisei-ichi*)*,* the Meiji government established the Department of Shinto Affairs (神祇官 *jingikan*), which then proclaimed **the Kami and Buddha Separation Decree** (神仏判然令 *shinbutsu hanzenrei*),[352] stating that Buddhist clerics were to relinquish their positions and that all Buddhist images were to be removed from Shintō shrines: all Shinto divinities were to be free from any Buddhist association. Its aim was part of a grand plan to introduce direct imperial rule by a Shinto-powered government. This was the ideology of Restoration Shinto advocated by its extremist Shinto theologian, Hɪʀᴀᴛᴀ **Atsutane** (1776-1843) [10.2.6], the last of the "Four Great Men" of the school of National Ideology[353] [10.1.3].

The Decree dictated the removal of all Buddhist influences and signs from Shinto shrines, with the aim of directing and focusing all institutional power upon the government. This was to deprive the Buddhist clergy and Buddhism of any privileged status which they had enjoyed under the Tokugawa regime. While trying to eliminate all Buddhist elements from Shinto shrines, the government also transformed Shinto into a religion in its own right [10.1.2].

The Separation Decree provoked waves of violent attacks upon Buddhist temples, icons, sutras and symbols throughout the country, with the slogan, ***haibutsu kishaku*** (廃仏毀釈 "abolish Buddhism, destroy Shākyamuni") [10.2.3]. The widespread anti-Buddhist violence and destruction beginning in March 1868 led to the removal and devastation of numerous ancient Buddhist temples, sacred sutras, and priceless Buddhist objects that had stood since the Nara period (8th century) [10.1.1].[354]

The government probably did not anticipate such violent reactions, or perhaps simply kept official silence over them. They did very little to stop the violence or to punish perpetrators. Moreover, the political situation of the late 1860s and early 1870s was very volatile, and the domains still had considerable autonomy, leaving the central authorities hesitant to act for fear of inciting peasant rebellions.

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[350] See S Susumu & R E Murphy, "State Shinto and live of the people: The establishment of emperor worship, modern nationalism, and Shrine Shinto in late Meiji," *Jap J of Rel Stud* 36,1 2009:93-124.

[351] In 1882, **Shrine Shinto** (focused on rituals) was declared a part of the government, but not **Sect Shinto**, a group of independent organized Shinto groups of more developed belief-systems. Under the American military occupation (1945-52), State Shinto was considered to be a propaganda tool to propel the Japanese to war. The occupation govt issued the Shinto Directive (1945) required that all state support for and involvement in any Shinto or religious institution or doctrine stop, incl funding, coverage in textbooks, and official acts and ceremonies. The new (1947) Japanese Constitution, Articles 20 and 89, protect freedom of religion, and prevent the government from compelling religious observances or using public money to benefit religious institutions. Andrew B Van Winkle, "Separation of Religion and State in Japan: A Pragmatic Interpretation of Articles 20 and 89 of the Japanese Constitution" (PDF). *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 2012; PDF of original. Separation of church and state - Wikipedia: Japan.

[352] Murakami (tr Earhart), *Japanese Religion in the Modern Century,* Tokyo, 1980:21.

[353] 國學の四大人, *kokugaku no shi-taijin* or *kokugaku no shi-ushi,* the key Edō-period Japanese scholars recognized as the most significant figures in the Kokugaku tradition of Japanese philosophy, philology and religious studies comprising Kada no Azumamaro (1669-1736), Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769), Motori Norinaga (1730=1801), and Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843). Hirata (the surname of his adopted father) coined the phrase himself.

[354] J Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History,* Columbia Univ Press, 1990:201.

10.2.2n *Haibutsu kishaku* (Encyclopedia of Shinto, 2009)[355]

1   This term signifies a particular school of thought that espoused the idea of shunning and expelling Buddhism. It also refers to the historic movement that based on this type of thought eventually destroyed Buddhist temples, halls, images, and ritual implements and forcibly laicized Buddhist monks. In its **broad definition**, the term includes the Mononobe[356] clan's rejection of Buddhism in antiquity, as well as the temple rationalization policies and defrocking of monks carried out for Confucian political and fiscal reasons by mainly the Aizu, Okayama, and Mito domains in the early modern period.

2   In its **narrow definition**, it refers to the radical anti-Buddhist movement that occurred in connection with the Satsuma domain's and Meiji government's policy to separate *kami* and buddhas (*shinbutsu bunri*). The *haibutsu kishaku* that occurred in places like the Aizu domain during the first half of the early modern period stemmed from Confucian anti-Buddhist thought.

3   However, the *haibutsu kishaku* of the *bakumatsu* (the last years of the Edo period)[357] and early Meiji eras differed from this traditional Confucian form of anti-Buddhism as it—based on the discourses of *kokugaku* and Shinto-centrism — displayed ideas of the necessity to clearly distinguish between Shinto and Buddhism. For example, in the Satsuma domain of the *bakumatsu* era, the strand of *kokugaku* based on Hirata Atsutane's ideas became influential among domainal retainers and Shinto priests.

4   This anti-Buddhist thought was adopted by the Satsuma government and, after 1865, *haibutsu* (anti-Buddhist) policies were carried out on a large scale. Political considerations of integrating temple properties into the economy in order to restore the domain's finances formed the ideological background of these policies.

5   In this way, the *haibutsu* policies of the various domains in the early modern period were not merely ideological in nature, but also had a definite economic element. The double-sided nature of anti-Buddhist policies was perpetuated in the *haibutsu kishaku* that accompanied the *shinbutsu bunri* policy of the early Meiji era.

6   After the third month of 1868, the early Meiji government promulgated a series of orders calling for the separation of *kami* and buddhas and ordered shrines nationwide to remove all Buddhist trappings. However, following the promulgation of this order, a radical *haibutsu kishaku* movement developed throughout Japan at shrines that had hitherto displayed a strong amalgamation of *kami*-beliefs and Buddhism.

7   Moreover, as happened with the Buddhist temple Kōfukuji in Nara, there occurred cases where the temple fell into ruin when the *monzeki* (members of the imperial family serving in high positions at major Buddhist temples) returned to lay life, which, in the end, comes close to direct acts of *haibutsu kishaku*.

8   The government frequently stated that the *shinbutsu bunri* policy was not intended in an anti-Buddhist way. However, local officials who intended to use the wealthy economic foundations of the temples for the economic reconstruction of government-controlled lands and for the domains, strongly promoted temple amalgamation. Some domains boldly distorted the plans of the government and enforced severe *haibutsu* policies which, as was for example the case in the Toyama domain, consolidated about 300 temples into one temple per Buddhist sect under what they called a strict execution of the government's policies.

9   The general population, which had suffered under the demands imposed on them by the temples for a long time, were inspired by the anti-Buddhist policies of the local officials, and carried out their own anti-Buddhist movement independent of the official policies, destroying temples and ritual objects. The

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[355] Sakamoto Koremaru, Encyclopedia of Shinto (Jap, Shinto Jiten, 1994): Haibutsukishaku | 國學院大學デジタルミ ュージアム (kokugakuin.ac.jp) 2009, slightly ed (highlighted, paragraphs numbered).

[356] The Mononobe aristocratic clan (*uji*) of the Kofun period (300-538) was known for its opposition to the ruling Soga clan that accepted Buddhism from Korea (6th cent CE). Like the major families of the time, it was a sort of corporation or guild (of armourers), and who were conservative Shintoists.

[357] *Bakumatsu* (幕末 "end of the Bakufu") was the final years (1853-67) of the Edo period when the Tokugawa shogunate ended, when Japan ended its isolationist foreign policy known as *sakoku,* and changed from a feudal Tokugawa shogunate to the modern Meiji imperialism.

result was that precious Buddhist artifacts were lost or sold abroad for very little. The *haibutsu kishaku*, together with the separation of <u>kami</u> and buddhas, inflicted incalculable damage on Japan's religious culture and on the faith of the Japanese people.[358]

10.2.3 In order to "re-establish" Shinto's autonomy in accordance with the religious policy of the *shinbutsu bunri,* the Meiji government persevered to remove all Buddhist elements from Shinto shrines. This policy was aimed at the elimination of Buddhism's influence on society through removing Buddhism from any public place. The severity of this strategy was due to the fact the Buddhism was deeply entrenched in the Tokugawa social fabric. Buddhism, as it were, had to be removed down to the roots, so as to establish the legitimacy of the new Shinto state with the Emperor at its head.

The order was accompanied by the following measures. First, all Buddhist clerics were ordered to relinquish their positions in Shinto shrines throughout the nation. In the past, Buddhist priests had gained administrative control of a large proportion of Shinto shrines through the so-called Dual Shinto (*Ryobu Shinto*) system [10.1.2 n]. Shinto priests took over the administrative roles of the Buddhist priests at the shrine. Often these Buddhist priests were forced to return to lay life; some joined the Shinto clergy, but this was soon disallowed.[359]

Then, the Shinto authorities ordered the removal of all Buddhist images and objects from Shinto shrines; and Buddhist names were not allowed to be given to Shinto deities. It is said that the Shinto priest, Juge Shigekuni, at the Hiyoshi Shrine, Mt Hiei, proceeded to remove every Buddhist statue, bell, sutra, tapestry, scroll, and article of clothing that could be remotely linked to Buddhism. All combustible materials were gathered together and burned; all metals were confiscated to be refashioned into cannons, weapons or coins; stone statues were decapitated and buried, or thrown into the nearby river; and wooden statues were used for target practice, or their heads for leisurely game of kickball, and then burned. Many of these desecrated objects were valuable artefacts over 10 centuries old.[360] [10.2.2]

10.2.4 Besides the rampant destruction of Buddhist symbols, there was also the government's ban on centuries-old <u>Buddhist ceremonies</u> related to the syncretic religious services of Shinto shrines. <u>Buddhist funeral rites</u>, in particular, were banned; Shinto funeral rites created and promoted. These Shinto ideologues believed that those who controlled death controlled life.[361]

The authorities then worked at weakening **the economic power** of Buddhist institutions through the abolition of the old networks of lay sponsors (*danka*).[362] Further, Buddhist temples were closed down or amalgamated by the authorities, and their taxes were reassessed and raised. The most crippling blow to the Buddhist clergy came with the confiscation of the vast temple estates—this effectively decimated most of the temple's external incomes.[363]

By 1871, the government had <u>nationalized all temple and shrine</u>[364] estates. This was devastating to all Buddhist sects; the Shingon (Tantric) sects suffered the most because of their heavy reliance on the temple estates. On the other hand, the Shin (Pure Land) sects, especially Honganji, were the least affected

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[358] C Hotta, "Japan's Modernization and the Persecution of the Buddhists," Hiroshima, 2012:62-67.

[359] J Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan,* 1990:69; Murakami op cit, 1980:22.

[360] Ketelaar 1990:9; M Collcutt, "Buddhism: The threat of eradication," 1986:152.

[361] S Ienaga, *Japan's Modernization and Buddhism,* 1965a:9; Kitagawa op cit 1990:201; Ketelaar 1990:45.

[362] On the *danka* parish system, see Duncan Williams, "Parish (*danka, terauke*) system in Japan," Macmillan Ency Bsm.

[363] Collcut 1986:152; Ketelaar 1990:69. We can imagine how much revenue the Sri Lanka government would gain by confiscating the personal estates of the old temples in the country! As we have noted much of Sri Lanka's woes today are rooted in the actions or non-actions of their wealthy landed clergy. [1.8.2.2]

[364] In this section on Meiji Japan, "**temple**" refers to those of the Buddhists, while "**shrine**" (神社 *jinja*; 神宮 *jingu***; 大社 *taisha*) is that of the Shintoists. The latter often have one or more large, vermilion *torii* (鳥居) or sacred gates as their entrance. Shinto Priests working in the shrines are called *kannushi* (神主**)** or *shinshoku* (神職), and often wear a special headdress. Japanese Buddhist **temples** are called *tera* (寺, as final, *dera*), often preceded by an honorific "o." Another term, *ji,* has the same Kanji (Chinese character); thirdly, there is the term, *in* (院). Hence, there is Yoshimine-dera (善峯寺) in Kyoto, Hozan-ji (宝山寺) in Nara, and Nanzo-in (南蔵院) in Fukuoka.

due to their lay oriented organization. The Meiji government reversed the Tokugawa practice of <u>temple registration of parishioners</u> (as a guard against Christian proselytization and infiltration), and introduced compulsory **shrine registration** (*ujiko-shirabe*). As a result, Buddhist temples lost their traditional control of land as well as parishioners.[365]

10.2.5 After the decree on the separation of Shinto from Buddhism, the Shintoist authorities launched **the *haibutsu kishaku*** [10.2.2] vendetta against the Buddhist clergy and symbols throughout the country. Shinto zealots spread the propaganda that the government intended to <u>exterminate Buddhism</u>. It was a vendetta, indeed, a volcanic eruption of vengeful destruction and persecution of Buddhism led by Shinto priests, the erstwhile oppressed underlings of the Buddhist clergy, and the result of centuries of religious, intellectual and emotional hostilities between Shinto priests and Buddhist clergy.

The epicentre of Shinto atrocities against Buddhism was clearly **Satsuma**, a town in the Province of Satsuma, Kagoshima Prefecture, on Kyushu island (at the southern tip of Japan). Firstly, there were many followers of Hirata Atsutane's [10.2.3] radical Emperor-centred National Ideology living there. Secondly, these people needed the wealth and property of the Buddhist clergy. In other words, the motive was economic.[366] The persecutions of Buddhism were similarly severe on the 4 remote islands of the Oki Province; this was probably because locals seriously took the Meiji government's call to adopt Western and modern ideas, practices and working habits in order to become "civilized."[367]

In 1869, the Satsuma domain officials not only ordered 1,066 temples to be abolished, but ordered 2,964 priests to return to lay life and become Shintoists. The domain officials, moreover, destroyed Buddhist images, sutras, accessories and symbols. The domain adopted Shinto ceremonies and restructured the local festival calendar. In some other domains, people led by the Shinto priests even destroyed the roadside stone statues of Jizo and Kannon. These domains also banned the celebration of the traditional Buddhist Bon festival.[368] By the end of 1869, Buddhism in Satsuma and the Oki Province had almost disappeared.[369]

10.2.6 Despite the sudden downturn in sociopolitical status and loss of religious freedom, Buddhist lay priests, especially those of the Jodo Shin and the Nichiren sects, maintained extensive local networks of lay believers. These were the kind of grassroots opposition, especially because of their numbers and influence, that the government feared when they implemented their policies to raise the Emperor's status and gain national power.

This seemed to be the reason for the government's direct intervention in anti-Buddhist developments as implemented by local authorities, such as when a violent protest erupted in Toyama in late 1870, an uprising in Mikawa (present-day Shizuoka) and another in Ise in 1871, and in several other places in 1872 and 1873, retaliating against the *haibutsu kishaku*. In other words, for the government, anti-Buddhist disruptions were acceptable when they did not impede its interests, and when the Buddhists suffered in silence (as they were wont to).[370]

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[365] Murakami 1980:25 f; Ketelaar 1990:69; Sharf 1993a:4 = upd 1995a:109.

[366] D Shibata, *Haibutsu kishaku,* Tokyo, 1978:75-78. Economic reasons for the persecutions of Buddhists occurred in Tokguawa era, too: M Collcutt, "Buddhism: The threat of eradication," in (eds) Jansen & Rozman, *Japan in Transition,* Princeton, 1986:144-150.

[367] Persecutions of Buddhists in Tokugawa era: M Collcutt, "Buddhism: The threat of eradication," in (eds) Jansen & Rozman, *Japan in Transition,* Princeton, 1986:144-150.

[368] The Jap Bon (盆) or fully Obon (お盆) Festival is celebrated over 3 days in honour of ancestors. It originated from the "Ghost Festival" of China, which is itself a combination of the Mahāyāna *Yúlánpén* (Chin 盂蘭盆) Festival and the Daoist *Zhongyuan* (中元) Festival. For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bon_(festival).

[369] H Kishimoto, *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Erai* (tr), 1956:114; Murakami id; Thelle op cit, 1987:22-24; Ketelaar 1990:7, 65.

[370] Such disruptions were not always straightforward, and sometimes Christians were implicated. Kishimoto 1956: 122 f, 222 f; Shibata 1978:180-182; Murakami 1980:26; Tsuji 1984:295-297; Ketelaar 1990:7.

10.3 SOME ROOTS OF ANTI-BUDDHIST SENTIMENTS

10.3.1 Early Buddhism is basically <u>monastic</u>, and even its <u>lay teachings</u> are rooted in the practice of **renunciation**: moral conduct (renouncing the wrong speech and action), mental training (renouncing unwholesome thoughts and views) and wisdom (renouncing self-views). This is the meaning of "<u>renouncing the world</u>," that is, working to minimize being swept away by worldliness, seeking inner peace, and cultivating the path of freedom. Hence, renunciants would live with senses restrained away from the madding crowd, spending time in studying Dharma and meditating, and reaching the path of awakening in this life itself.

On the other hand, Buddhist clerics who live in or work with socially engaged organizations, especially in huge temples, will very likely have dealings with worldly people, wealth, power, pleasure, and basically set aside the Vinaya. In other words, such a setup makes it difficult for them to live up to their vows and visions. The world will, in time, drain them of their will and strength, leaving them stressed and drained. Hence, such Buddhist clerics and priests are no different from the worldly laity and non-Buddhists, or perceived so.

Scholars and thinkers have noted how <u>religion or a belief system</u> is able to attribute charisma and power upon individuals and groups through ritual acts, symbols and memes.[371] An ancient and organized belief system like Buddhism often does all this. By psychological **transference**, we project the power or good that we lack or want onto the religious or authority figure, and often that figure <u>counter-transfers</u>, and we have a religious <u>co-dependence</u>, a samsaric coupling.[372]

There is also a *transfer* of wealth, resources, even our will, to that religious figure. We are but shadows of the light we look up to. As a result, we reject or lose our self-effort and self-reliance, and often become religiously lifeless, apathetic, powerless. Religion and belief have the habit of self-multiplication (creating memes). Hence, we often see a huge and growing number of religious images, buildings and objects.

In fact, one of the problems in late Tokugawa Japan was the great number of temples in a parish (with a number of villages) which were simply impoverished by having to support so many of them. In time, many such temples became undermanned, abandoned and derelict and new ones built. Many of their inhabitants were not committed to the Buddhist training, and led loose lives, anyway[373]

10.3.2 In early Buddhism, to renounce is **to eschew sex** because sexuality directs our attention to the body, that is, <u>the physical senses</u>; hence, depriving the mind from focusing on itself and freeing itself. Early Buddhist meditation, through <u>dhyana</u> (*jhāna*), brings a kind of *non-sensual orgasm*; hence, there is no more need for sensual stimulation for the sake of pleasure. This is a free choice that we can make in living the Buddhist life: <u>the dhyana-based meditative life</u> of the monastic, or the wholesome lay life of <u>enjoying sensual pleasures</u> within the spirit of the 5 precepts (which, along with proper practice, can bring us at least to streamwinning).[374]

Sexuality, since ancient times, has been intimately connected with power, wealth and lineage (family). For the powerful, especially rulers and lords, having "3 wives and 4 concubines" (a synecdoche for hundreds of wives and partners) is even hinted at in the suttas and Commentaries. Sakra, lord of the 2 lowest sense-world heavens, is said to have 4 wives, numerous celestial nymphs and 1,000 sons,[375] and the world monarch "had more than a thousand sons, brave, heroic in form, crushing alien armies."[376] Such numbers clearly have a political and strategic significance, but still we can only imagine how they are gotten.

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[371] On <u>memes</u>, see SD 26.3.

[372] On <u>psychological transference</u>, see SD 19.2a (2.5.2); SD 24.10b (2); SD 64.17 (3.1).

[373] See R Jaffe, *Neither Monk Nor Layman,* Princeton, 2001:9-31.

[374] Further, see **Sexuality**, SD 31.7; **Monastics, sex and marriage**, SD 66.13.

[375] On Sakra's wives: **Magha Vatthu**, DhA 2.7b (§§33-50), SD 54.22 (6). However, at least in one passage, it seems to be in a metaphorical sense: **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21,1.11.7), SD 54.8. On "heavenly sexuality," see SD 54.8 (6.1).

[376] **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,1.31/2:16), **Mahā,sudassana S** (D 17,1.8-11/2:172), **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,2.2/-3:59), **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3,1.5/1:88); ItA 77; SA 1:131,1.

   The early Buddhist Vinaya also forbids renunciants having anything to do with **wealth** and worldliness (politics, social engagement, etc). Simply, wealth avail us with sexual activity or sex-related activity (which is against the spirit of monastic renunciation). Hence, when monastics or priests become rich, powerful and run organized communities, they are likely to fall into the sticky web of sexuality, supporting cata-mites and lovers. This was indeed the case with Japanese Temple priests since the Nara period [10.1.1].

10.3.3 Richard M Jaffe, in his book, *Neither Monk Nor Layman* (2001), discusses the impact of the Meiji era **laicization** (肉食妻帯 *nikujiki saitai,* "meat-eating, wife-taking") laws on Japanese Buddhism. The 1872 government decriminalization of sexuality, diet, robe-wearing and monastic-related rules, was the most ironic and shrewd ploy used by the authorities to emasculate and domesticate the Buddhist clergy. It end-ed all official penalties—ranging from public exposure (晒し *sarashi*) to beheading (獄門 *gokumon*)—for clerics who violated state and clerical rules (Vinaya) by eating meat, marrying, letting their hair grow, or abandoning clerical uniform.[377] It simply meant that the state would stop policing the Buddhist clergy: they were now on their own.
   The government officially viewed this *nikujiki saitai* legislation as an important phase in their efforts to modernize Japanese society by abolishing the old Tokugawa status system. Understandably, the heads of almost every Buddhist sect saw this measure as another attempt at destroying Buddhism by undermin-ing their efforts to end the clerical laxity and corruption for which it was persecuted in the first place. Over time, as discussions grew amongst the Buddhist leaders themselves, following back-and-forth com-munications with the authorities, more leaders decided to support the law or became apathetic.
   In fact, the largest Japanese Buddhist school, the independent Pure Land sects—the Jōdo-shu, Jōdo Shinshū, Yūzu-nembutsu-shū and Ji-shū[378]—and also the traditional Sōtō Zen, had a majority of their cler-gy getting married and having families. This acceptance of **clerical marriage** only complicated the situa-tion in terms of the Vinaya, which are still unresolved to this day.[379]

10.3.4 Scholars have noted the strong historical tradition of open **bisexuality and homosexuality** among Buddhist priests in Japan.[380] A well-known Japanese literary genre was *Chigo Monogatari* (稚児物語, "aco-lyte stories") of love between priests and their *chigo*[381] (like the catamites of the Catholic clerics, especially during the Renaissance) were common, alongside sex with women.[382]
   Western Christians who travelled in Japan from the 16th century recorded the prevalence and accept-ance of forms of pederasty among Japanese Buddhist priests—something familiar with the otherwise celi-bate Catholic monks and priests to this day.[383] In 1596, for example, Jesuit priest Francis Cabral wrote that "their 'abominations of the flesh' and 'vicious habits' were 'regarded in Japan as quite honourable; men of standing entrust their sons to the bonzes to be instructed in such things, and at the same time to serve

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[377] On the variety of punishments imposed on clerics committing such offences (fornication, etc), see Keimu Kyō-kai (ed), 日本近世行刑史稿 *Nihon kinsei gyōkeishi kō*, 2 vols, Tokyo: Gyosei Kyōkai, 1943 I:594.

[378] The new schools arose during the Kamakura period (1185-1333), simplifying their faith-based practices from those of the complex rituals of the Tendai: C B Jones, *Pure Land: History, Tradition, and Practice*, Boulder, 2021:107-118. Shambhala Publications, 2021:107-118.

[379] See eg R Jaffe, "Meiji religious policy, Sōtō Zen, and the clerical marriage problem," *Japanese J or Rel Studies* 25,1/2 1998:45-85. See also SD 66.13 (1.3, 3.4.3).

[380] S O Murray, *Homosexualities,* Chicago, 2000:70-77.

[381] Traditionally, there were at least <u>4 categories of acolytes</u> in the Temples, which prob reflected their social ranks. At the top was the *kindachi* (公達), followed by the *chigo* (稚児), then the *chudouji* (中童子), and lastly the *daidouji* (大童子). The highest category was that of the children of noble families, followed by children of temple families, such as its administrators, then the children of temple labourers, and at the bottom, the children of samurai and lower rank-ing temple workers. These ranks also denoted the kind of work each was expected to do in day-to-day monastic life. According to temple records, the *chigo's* official work consisted of studying, sometimes to become a priest; the *chu-douji* served within the temple as a servant and often a food server; and the *daidouji* had a variety of tasks, most of which involved outdoor maintenance. The *kindachi* was temporary and did not have to serve the priests.

[382] G Leupp, *Male Colours: The construction of homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan,* Berkeley, 1995:31.

[383] C R Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650,* Berkeley,1951:69.

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their lust.'"[384] Such remarks are better understood, not as shocked reactions of consternation, but a self-conscious familiarity of what was (is) rampant with the power of the Church cloth.

Despite Shingon founder, **Kukai** (774-835), who was said to have been strict with the Vinaya rule of eschewing contact with women, a popular legend attributed him with the introduction of Temple homo-sexuality (*nanshoku*) from China to Japan. Apparently, this legend, or more likely, a wishful gossip by interested parties, served to "affirm same-sex relation between men and boys in 17th century Japan, both in the spiritual world of temples and monasteries and in the secular world of samurai and merchants."[385]

What should be more worrisome was the initiative of **Saichō** (767-822), the Tendai founder in Japan, in rejecting the traditional Vinaya for the Mahāyāna "Bodhisattva Precepts" in ordaining candidates into his order. This was a time when such institutional changes were not the decision of the Temple clergy, but by the sanction or the Emperor himself. Despite the protests of most of the Nara Buddhist clergy against this non-Vinaya mode "skilful means" ordination, the Court granted the innovation 7 days after Saichō's death. This may be seen as an act of amazing grace of the Great Vehicle, but it was one of the growing momentum of powerfully strong group karma that would come crashing down upon the Buddhists in the Meiji era.

10.3.5 Japanese Temple Buddhism, since its arrival in Japan [10.1.1], certainly since the Nara period, en-joyed great power, plenty and pleasure. Public criticisms of Buddhism were clearly strong in the Tokuga-wa period. Neo-Confucian thinkers such as HAYASHI Razan (林 羅山 1583-1657), Ogyū SORAI (荻生 徂徠 1660-1728), KUMAZAWA Banzan (熊沢 蕃山 1583-1657), and YAMAGATA Bantō (山片 蟠桃 1748-1825) harshly critic-ized the worldly conduct, power politics and leisurely opulence of the Buddhist clergy.[386]

Hayashi and Ogyū denounced Buddhist priests as "idle louts" (*yumin*), who lived by parasiting on others (Ketelaar 1990:19). Kumazawa charged that "They are an extravagant drain on the national trea-sury." The nationalistic Mito school, which gradually developed anti-Tokugawa thought, was especially harsh in denouncing the financial drain caused by Buddhist clergy.

As we have noted, the strongest anti-Buddhism lobby was the National Ideology school at the end of the Tokugawa period [10.1.3]. Its followers denounced Buddhism as a main agent of defiling the pure Japanese way of life. HIRATA Atsutane [10.2.2], its political ideologue, violently attacked Buddhism as a "foreign" or "barbarian" religion which polluted "pure" Japanese culture. Buddhist teachings, to him, threatened the unity of the nation; hence, it was incompatible with the policy of the Imperial Nation.

Hirata had many followers among Shinto priests, and they became the main force of anti-Buddhism in the domains as well as in the new government. In the early Meiji period, INOUE Tetsujirō (1855-1944), an influential philosopher, who opposed Christianity as incompatible with Japanese culture, also denounced Buddhist character as resigned and passive. With the rise of nativism and nationalism beginning just be-fore the Meiji era, the growing sentiment against Buddhism was that it was "a corrupt, decadent, anti-social, parasitic, and superstitious creed, inimical to Japan's need for scientific and technological advance-ment."[387]

Buddhism was thus seen as an obstacle to Japan's attaining "civilization." Such criticisms culminated in violent Buddhist persecutions. Even during the late Tokugawa period, under the influence of either the Mito school or the Hirata school, such domains as Mito, Satsuma, Tsuwano and Choshu had begun to persecute Buddhism. Their anti-Buddhist propaganda and persecutions provided the government with the precedent for its religious policy as well as a basic pattern for anti-Buddhist action.[388]

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[384] J D Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci,* London, 1985:225.

[385] P G Schalow, "Kukai and the tradition of male love in Japanese Buddhism," in (ed) J I Cabezon, *Buddhism, Sex-uality and Gender*, NY, 1992:215.

[386] W Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society,* NY, 1992:160.

[387] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese nationalism," *History of Religions* 33,1 1993b:4: updated as (ed) Lopez, *Curators of the Buddha,* Chicago, 1995a:109; J A Josephson, "When Buddhism becomes a 'religion'," *Japanese Journal of Relig-ious Studies* 33,1 2006:143-168.

[388] N Thelle 1987:20; H Kishimoto 1956:15; J E Ketelaar 1990:61, 132; W B Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society,* NY, 1992:160.

10.4 BUDDHISM: THE NEWER THE BETTER?

10.4.1 Unlike Buddhism in India that was decimated by Muslim Turkish invaders in the 12th century,[389] Buddhism in Japan in the 19th century was deeply entrenched in the culture of Japan for about just as long. The Japanese Buddhists naturally rose again like "ecological succession," as if Nature had hit the reset button on the life-cycle of the forest:[390]

> Rather than concede defeat, a vanguard of modern Buddhist leaders emerged to argue the Buddhist cause. These university-educated intellectuals readily admitted to the corruption, decay, and petty sectarian rivalries that characterized the late Tokugawa Buddhist establishment. But, at the same time, they insisted that such corruption merely indicated the degree to which Buddhism had strayed from its pure spiritual roots. Accordingly, the problem lay not in Buddhism itself, but rather in the institutional and sectarian trappings to which Buddhism had fallen prey. The solution lay not in continued persecution from without, but in reform from within.
> (Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese nationalism," 1993a:4 = 1995a:109)[391]

The revival movement they started was known as "**New Buddhism**" (新仏教 *shin bukkyo*), or rather New Buddhisms, since there were many of them. Their leaders were familiar with the historical and intel-lectual legacy of the West, especially of the Enlightenment period.[392] The new and renewed Buddhist sects and subsects, burst forth like spiderlings from the same egg-sac that is *Shin Bukkyo*. The firstborn of this New Buddhist rebirth were a few teachers of Zen, keen on reinventing itself, to be the monarch of all that it surveys.[393] Like all novelties: it is defined by the times, only to be debunked by scholars in time.

10.4.2 Scholars such as Martin Verhoeven and Robert Sharf, and Zen priest G Victor Sogen Hori, have argued that the kind of **Japanese Zen** taught by New Buddhism teachers, like **Imakita Kosen**, Soyen Shaku, (or Sōen Shaku) [8.4.3], and their protégé, D T Suzuki, was not typical of the Zen of their time nor of Japan-ese Zen today. Perhaps it is this novelty, like Prometheus' first to early humans in their clammy darkness, that Japanese Zen still attracts those who have a head for exotic status, takeaway religiosity, a profession-al priesthood to a degree.

> Zen has been touted as an iconoclastic and antinomian tradition which rejects scholastic learning and ritualism in favor of naturalness, spontaneity, and freedom. According to some enthusiasts, Zen is not, properly speaking, a religion at all, at least not in the sectarian or insti-tutional sense of the word. Nor is it a philosophy, a doctrine, or even a spiritual technique. Rather, Zen is "pure experience" itself—the ahistorical, transcultural experience of "pure subject-ivity" which utterly transcends discursive thought. The quintessential expression of Zen awaken-ing, the *köan,* is accordingly construed as an "illogical" or "nonrational" riddle designed to fore-

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[389] On the Muslim Turks' destruction of Buddhism in India in the 12th century, see SD 39.1 (7.3.3).

[390] https://www.frontlinewildfire.com/wildfire-news-and-resources/how-forest-recovers-wildfire/.

[391] Ketelaar 1990 chs 4+5 (Rev by J Stone, *Harvard J of Asiatic Studies* 53,2 Dec 1993:582-598' criticism by T Fujita-ni, *J of Jap Stud* 18,2 1992:533-538); E IKEDA, *Meiji no shinbukkyō undo* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kôbunkan, 1976); S MURA-KAMI, *Japanese Religion in the Modern Century,* tr H B Earhart, Tokyo, 1980:54-58; K M Staggs, "'Defend the Nation and Love the Truth': Inoue Enryö and the Revival of Meiji Buddhism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 38,3 1983:251-281; J Stone, "A vast and grave task: Interwar Buddhist Studies as an expression of Japan's envisioned global role," in (ed) J T Rimer, *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals during the Interwar Years,* Princeton, 1990:217-233; and W R LaFleur, "A turning in Taishō: Asia and Europe in the early writings of Watsuji Tetsurō," in (ed) Rimer 1990:234-256.

[392] **The Enlightenment**, the great "Age of Reason," is the period of <u>rigorous scientific, political and philosophical discourse and growth</u> that characterized European society during the "long" 18th century: from the late 17th cent to the ending of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 (with the defeat of Napoleon), and the rise of Protestant colonial pow-ers, a kind of globalizing force of the modern world.

[393] "I am the monarch of all I survey" (William Cowper, 1731-1800, CLX, *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*), but goes back to Lucius Seneca in his *Letters to Lucilius* (c 65 CE) wherein he writes a sentence that may be loosely tr as "It is superior to all, the lord of all it surveys."

stall intellection and bring about a realization of the "eternal present." Furthermore, Zen, as the full and unmediated experience of life itself untainted by cultural accretions, is the ultimate source of all authentic religious teaching, both Eastern and Western. Zen is no more Buddhist than it is Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, and as such it is preeminently suited to serve as the found-ation for interfaith dialogue.   (Robert Sharf, op cit 1993a:1 = 1995a:107)[394]

10.4.3 In Japan, the Zen priesthood, despite its New Buddhist style, still required of apprentice priests much time and discipline that Muggles[395] would have difficulty with. Zen priests were often expected to have spent several years in intensive doctrinal study, memorizing sutras and searching commentaries, before even entering the Temple to undergo koan practice in sanzen (private interview) with the roshi. The fact that Suzuki himself was able to do so as a layman was largely because Kosen opened Engakuji monastery to lay practitioners of New Buddhism, giving them unprecedented access to Zen training.[396]

Champions of New Buddhism—and the New Zen—like Kosen and his successor **SHAKU Sōen** [8.4.3], not only saw themselves as a defense of Buddhism against government persecution, but as a way to bring their nation into the modern world as a competitive, cultural force. Kosen himself was even employed by the Japanese government as a "national evangelist" during the 1870s.[397] The cause of Japanese national-ism and the presentation of Japan as the humanity's ideal culture to the world, above all religions, even was at the heart of the Zen evangelical movement. This was what Sōen did for Zen at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.[398] [10.1.1]

10.5 REASONS FOR THE MEIJI GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-BUDDHIST STANCE

10.5.1 Although the persecution of Buddhism, which had its roots in the Tokugawa period, had been just-ified in various ways, these arguments were ideological rather than actual justifications. As previously stated, Buddhism had been closely associated with the Tokugawa system of social control (Davis 1992: 160). People viewed Buddhism as a protégé of the Tokugawa feudal regime; therefore, anti-Bakufu [Sho-gunate] rhetoric could easily be linked with anti-Buddhist action (Collcutt 1986:130).

Scholars such as TSUJI Zennosuke justified the persecution of Buddhism on account of its decadence (1984).[399] Its inner corruption was characterized by the prevalence of drunkards, lechers, and the practice of money-lending and title-selling (Ketelaar 1990:11 f). Buddhism's privileged social position invited moral and spiritual decay, resulting in indolence and degeneration among the priests.[400]

Echoing the critique of INOUE Tetsuji, many scholars, therefore, argue that Buddhism could not com-ply with the needs of "modernization" (Ketelaar 1990:10). However, we cannot solely blame Buddhism; it was rather the historical victim than perpetrator of all that was wrong in Japan then. According to IENAGA Saburo, the Shogunate banned any discussion and advocacy of new ideas, which left most, if not all, of

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[394] Elsewhere, adds Sharf, he has argued that this popular conception of Zen is not only conceptually incoherent but also a woeful misreading of traditional Zen doctrine, altogether controverted by the lived contingencies of Zen monastic practice: see his "The idolization of Enlightenment: On the mummification of Ch'an masters in medieval China," *History of Religions* 32,1 1992:1-31; and T Griffith Foulk & Robert H Sharf, "On the ritual use of Ch'an por-traiture in medieval China," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 7 1993-94:149-219.

[395] "**Muggle**"—someone without any magical powers and not born in a magical family (from J K Rowling's 7-book fantasy novel Harry Potter series, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007), comparable to "civilian" as used by the military; broadly, one without any knowledge or skill of a certain group. OED (2003) added "muggle" as meaning a person who is lacking a skill. Cf "**squint**," a term used by Agent Seeley Booth to refer to academics who help law enforcement officers when they are "stuck" (from "Bones," the Fox crime procedural comedy-drama TV series, 2005-2017).

[396] Satō & Nishimura, *Unsui: A diary of Zen monastic life,* Honolulu, 1973

[397] Sharf 1993a:7 = upd 1995a:112 f.

[398] M Verhoeven, *Americanizing the Buddha.* In (eds) Prebish & Tanaka, *The Faces of Buddhism in America,* Berke-ley, 1998:217.

[399] Z Tsuji, *Nihon Bukkyo Kenkyu.* 6 vols. Tokyo: Inawami Shoten, 1984   .

[400] Thelle 1986:19; Ienaga 1965a:4 f.

the country in a state of social, intellectual and religious stagnation: one was not to show any over-enthu-siasm in matters of faith, too (Ienaga, 1965a:5).

Buddhism should not be persecuted for merely showing the symptoms of "decadence": the real dis-ease and decay were the Tokugawa feudalism itself. In fact, it was the Shinto authorities who portrayed Buddhism as critically decadent and inherently evil as a necessary precondition for the establishment of Shinto as the state religion (Ketelaar 1990:10-12).

10.5.2 There are several reasons why the Meiji state took an anti-Buddhism stance. First, the Meiji leaders intended to revive **imperial rule** in a modern new nation under the Emperor (Kishimoto 1956:112). With Shinto as the state religion, the Emperor was attributed the divine right of sovereignty, as a direct de-scendant of Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess and divine founder of Japan. To this end, Shinto must emerge triumphant from the centuries in the shadow of Buddhism. The emperor then shone as a living *kami,* and the people would have to worship him as *tennō,* Deity.

Before the Meiji era, Shinto had neither an autonomous existence nor a clear doctrine of its own. Shinto was a mere appendage to Temple Buddhism and its tutelary deities were merely part of the com-munity cult. Before 1868, Shinto's relations with the state were vague and insignificant. In fact, Shinto was not even Japan's "indigenous religion" as some had misconstrued.

Before the Reformation, the Japanese worshipped only their ancestors as *kami,* in keeping with Con-fucian values. Under State Shinto, they had to worship the Emperor as the highest political authority (Murakami 1980:20). By destroying the *shinbutsu bunri* [10.2.1], Buddhist influence was removed from Shinto, making it a New Religion in its own right (Hardacre 1989a:3). This is a point missed by most schol-ars of Japanese Buddhism: this rewiring of the religious consciousness of the Japanese people by the Meiji government's creation and promotion of Shinto as the state ideology.

10.6 HOW THE MEIJI REFORMATION TRANSFORMED JAPANESE BUDDHISM

10.6.1 As a result of the *haibutsu kishaku* violence [10.2.2], Buddhism suffered deep and extensive setbacks. The wise clerics humbly reflected on the failures of Buddhism in the past, and those strong in faith and vision committed themselves to revive Buddhism (Kishimoto 1956:121). As a start, the clerics made special efforts to regain their influence by affirming the state and its policies. There were, however, Buddhist leaders who tried to gain state approval and the support of the ruling class through some kind of "social engagement" (Ienaga 1965a:11).

These Buddhist leaders launched massive **initiatives against the Catholics**, who had been officially banned as "heretics" (*jashumon*) for many years on account of their colonizing tendency. Noble as this patriotic act might seem, attacking any religion, would, in the long run, be simply rejecting and denying the principle of religious freedom that was against the Buddhist spirit, and would thus only backfire (Ko-muro 1987:5).

10.6.2 On the other hand, some Buddhist leaders took a conciliatory position towards the Confucianists, the Shintoists, and other popular movements, despite rejecting their ideas (Thelle 1987:24). In the sum-mer of 1868, for example, **the Hongan-ji**[401] promoted the idea of "the inseparability of the Kingly Law and the Buddhist Law" (*buppō ōbō ichinyo*).[402] As a way of asserting the unity of Buddhism and the Imperial system, the Higashi Hongan-ji sent donations to the Imperial House when the new government got into financial trouble. The Nishi Hongan-ji, for its part, set its gold as collateral to help shore up the flagging status of the Japanese paper currency issued by the new Meiji government. (Ketelaar 1990:71-73)

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[401] **"Honganji"** (old spelling, Hongwanji), established in 1321 by Shinran (1173-1263), founder of the Jōdo Shinshu, is the collective name for the largest of its sects (which further subdivides into the Nishi and Higashi branches).

[402] This idea seemed to have originated with the Shingon sect in the mid-Heian era (9th cent): R Abe, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kukai and the construction of esoteric Discourse*, Columbia, 1999:376-379.

Moreover, Hongan-ji temples actively participated in the colonization of Hokkaido, aimed at protecting the homeland from European and Christian expansion. Other Buddhist leaders advocated the ancient theme of "Buddhism for the protection of the state" (*goho bukkyo*). Sadly, they ended up as apologists for imperialism and the war efforts (Hardacre, 1989a:216). Through such efforts, Hongan-ji and other Buddhists attempted to prove their loyalty and worth to the state. (Ketelaar 1990:96-105)

10.6.3 Structurally, we see post-Meiji Japanese Buddhism showing a similar feature as Tokugawa Buddhism of the great Temples: while the latter had the *danka* or parish system [10.2.4], the former now support their own sect or "church" of which they are members. With the demise of the old monastic Temple network, there is now a wide range of independent New Buddhist churches, so called because each sect or subsect has its own church, central building, its own hierarchy of officials or elders, its own texts, tenets, traditions and calendar of rituals.

The majority of Japanese today, even if they were sympathetic to Buddhism, are found <u>outside</u> of such organized Buddhist "churches." They are likely to be very open and inclusive. For a Japanese, it is very normal to bring a newborn baby to a Shinto shrine for a blessing, have a Christian-style wedding (say, in a church), and a Buddhist funeral.

The reason is that <u>religion</u> in Japan tends to be defined by their **practices and rituals**, not so much by their doctrines and beliefs. Therefore, if we are to ask the modern Japanese about their "religion," they may say that they do not belong to any, that they will nevertheless visit a Shinto shrine on the first day of the year, or ask a Buddhist priest to perform a memorial ceremony for their deceased parents.[403]

Most Buddhists in South and Southeast Asia follow a similar religious pattern: for some significant reason (such as seeking a job or a partner, starting a business) they may consult a fortune-teller (this may be a Thai monk or a Sinhala monk).[404] During a wedding, a Chinese Buddhist is likely to keep to Confucianist customs (such as outward display of respect to elders and seniors), and for a funeral, the family's Daoist superstitions often preponderate, even if the deceased was a Buddhist. Anyway, the final rituals will likely be professionally performed by funeral specialists (such as priest chanters), often with a cacophony of Chinese chants and music, and a Western funeral march band, all playing at the same time. The wealthy are likely to burn huge paper offerings, usually an effigy of some palatial paper house and worldly goods (such as a treasure-box, paper hand-phone, mahjong set) so that he may continue his worldly habits in the underworld.[405]

Even in Theravada temples (especially Thai ones), we are likely to see Guanyin shrines, or a Guanyin image on the Buddha shrine. The reason for this is <u>economic</u>: most of the supporters, wealthy patrons, tend to be Chinese, especially businessmen or women of leisure. Spirit beliefs and Hindu gods are often worshipped by Buddhists in Sri Lanka and mainland SE Asia. The common folks, either due to lack of education, lack of time or inclination, perhaps for personal reasons, will turn to such "private worship."

Perhaps, these are prevalent cases of **religious needs**, and Buddhism, as a rule or in its "pure" form, is <u>*not* a religion</u>, as we shall discuss [10.7]. Furthermore, most of us are more concerned with our daily and bodily needs than with the quest for awakening, or even for Buddhist training. As Paul Christensen notes in his article, "We will never get rich if we follow Buddhism" (2019).[406] In Cambodia perhaps, but

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[403] https://www.buddhanet.net/nippon/nippon_partII.html.
https://www.insidejapantours.com/blog/2020/09/16/cradle-to-the-grave-birth-marriage-and-death-in-japan/.

[404] In the case of the latter, even if the monk is not a fortune teller, he may forward the person's details to one in Sri Lanka: all for a "donation," of course.

[405] Oddly, the traditional Chinese belief, even today, seem to be that their dead all invariably go to some kind of underworld like the Greek Hades or Hell!

[406] Paul Christen, "We will never get rich if we follow Buddhism: The rise of Brahmanism in Cambodia," GISCA Occasion Paper 4, 2019. See P A Jackson, "A World Ever More Enchanted: Efflorescing Spirit Cults in Buddhist Southeast Asia," Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2020.

Buddhism in Singapore is clearly synonymous with wealth and leisure, a religion for the affluent, the lei-
surely and the credulous. This seems to be Buddhism's role or fate as a religion.[407] [17.5]

10.6.4 Then, there is the economic factor. As many Buddhist priests (many with families) struggled with
how to find the funds or means to maintain their temples, a few very resourceful ones ventured into
education, starting their own schools and universities. During the Taishō era (1912-1926), the University
Ordinance (1918) was enacted for the registration of private schools and universities officially recognized
by the Ministry of Education. From this arose the first Buddhist universities in Japan, followed by others,
thus:[408]

1872   **Hanazono University** (花園大学, *Hanazono daigaku*) Kyoto. Rinzai (specifically, the Myōshin-ji
        Temple complex, which is next to it). The university and the neighborhood are named after Emp-
        eror Hanazono (r 1308-1318), who donated part of his palace land to build Myōshin-ji.
1922   **Ōtani University** (大谷大学, *Ōtani daigaku*) Kita-ku, Kyoto. Co-educational, with emphasis on Bud-
        dhist studies. Associated: A 2-year course private junior college. Jōdo Shinshū.
1922   **Ryūkoku University** (龍谷大学 *Ryūkoku daigaku*) Kyoto. Started 1639 as a school for Nishi Hongan-
        ji priests; a secularized university in 1876. Its professors and students founded the literary maga-
        zine *Chūōkōron,* in 1887. 3 campuses: Fukakusa and Omiya in Kyoto; and Seta in Shiga prefecture.
1924   **Musashino Women's Academy** (武蔵野女子学院, *Musashino Joshi Gakuin*), founded by Junjiro
        Takakusu (1866-1945).
1924   **Risshō University** (立正大学 *Risshō daigaku*). Started as a seminary, in 1580, for priests of the
        Nichiren-Shū.
1925   **Komazawa University** (started as a seminary in 1592 to train priests of the Sōtō Zen); c 16,000
        students. [18.1.2.1]
1926   **Taishō University** (大正大学 *Taishō daigaku*) Toshima, Tokyo. Started in 1885.
1926   **Kōyasan University** (高野山大学 *Kōyasan daigaku*). Mt Kōya, Wakayama Prefecture. Founded in
        1886 as a monastic school for Shingon priests. With a satellite school for working adults, Osaka.
1949   **Bukkyo University** (佛教大学 *Bukkyō daigaku*), Kita-ku, Kyoto. Started in 1912; chartered as a
        Junior College, 1949.
1949   **Shuchiin University** (種智院大学 *Shuchiin daigaku*) Fushimi-ku, Kyoto.
1950   **Doho University** (同朋大学, *Dōhō daigaku*), Nakamura-ku, Nagoya. First founded in 1826. Includes
        the Nagoya College of Music (名古屋音楽大学, *Nagoya Ongaku Daigaku*), also known locally as
        Meion (名音). Jōdo Shinshū.
1953   **Aichi Gakuin University** (愛知学院大学 *Aichi gakuin daigaku*) Aichi prefecture. Campuses in Nis-
        shin, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya and Meijō Park, Nagoya. Started as a Sōtō Zen college in 1876; c 12,000
        students.
1971   **Soka University** (創価大学 *Sōka gaigaku*), Hachiōji, Tokyo. Soka Gakkai.
1981   **Shitennōji University** (四天王寺大学 *Shitennōji daigaku*) Habikino, Osaka. Started in 1922; charter-
        ed as a women's junior college, 1957. Became a 4-year college in 1967; co-educational in 1981
        Also known as **International Buddhist University** or **IBU**.
1994   **Minobusan University** (身延山大学, *Minobusan daigaku*) Minobu, Yamanashi. Founded in 1556.
1996   **International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies** (国際仏教学大学院大学 *Kokusai bukkyō-
        gaku daigaku-in daigaku*). Minato-ku, Tokyo. Only PhD program in Buddhism; 20 students.

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[407] See eg J T McDaniel, *Architects of Buddhist Leisure: Socially disengaged Buddhism in Asia's museums, monu-
ments and amusement parks,* Honolulu, 2017. Ch 3 is about the "Buddha's Tooth Relic" Museum in Singapore with a
7.25 cm tooth, allegedly of the Buddha himself. [1.9.5.2.n]
[408] Hayashi Makoto, "The birth of Buddhist universities," *Japanese Religions* 39,1/2 2014: 11-29.

10.7 HOW BUDDHISM BECAME A "RELIGION" IN JAPAN

10.7.1 One of the fascinating, yet frustrating, features of religion is that it can mean almost anything to anyone. What does it mean to say that Buddhism is a "religion," or is not one? We seem to get along very well with our religious activities so long as we don't ask too much about what it really is! Things don't seem to work well or at all when we think we know too much.

Indeed, the more successful religions do not allow any of their members except the elite—a Group or a Person—to define or decide what it is, what it is not. The proper word for this is actually **dogma**. Any-way, pick any Buddhist in a crowd of Asians, and he is likely to tell you that "we have *no* dogmas in Bud-dhism!" That is probably because we neither know what Buddhism really is nor what "religion" really means. This is the karma of dogmas.

One of the most fascinating statements that scholars have made here—and this is a scholar's haunt, where we delight in playing language games and stretch our minds—is regarding, for example, "when Buddhism became a 'religion'" (Jason Ānanda Josephson, 2006). Apparently, Buddhism was not a religion before the Meiji government domesticated it to obediently sit, while Shinto was groomed in trickier roles to heel and roll with Japan as she regally marched across the world's stage into the War in Asia.

10.7.2 "**Religion**," in its Western sense, was unknown in Japan before the Meiji era.[409] Some modern scholars explain it as a term encompassing various beliefs about faith and the afterlife, a hatred for the Buddhist clergy at home and a fear of Christian colonialism waiting at their doors. Keenly watching the modernizing West, especially the rising Reich in Germany, the Japanese felt that they needed to bring Japan to that same level, as a world power, an empire perhaps, so that the world could not colonize or humiliate her.[410]

To make an empire of Japan, they needed **an emperor**, and Japan's imperial line was (is) the most ancient in the world. The Buddhist clergy had for centuries usurped the power and place of the Emperor. The Meiji Restoration re-established the Emperor as a "religious" figure, a divine being, and the head of the Japanese state.[411] Here, "religion" is used in a *performative* role of a sacred figure, *set apart* in Dur-kheimian style from others in Japan, so that the "other" was one under His will (that is, the government's will).

Even in the Tokugawa era, Japan's elite was shrewd enough to understand the impact and danger of Western presence, especially through Christianity, which was seen as a foreign threat.[412] Perceptive Jap-anese elite decided to invent an almighty Religion to counter Western religion and power: they incorpor-ated Shinto into a religion [10.2.1] that legitimized the Emperor's divine lineage.[413] The Meiji government not only refashioned Shinto, but made it uniquely "**suprareligious**," that is, above all other religions; hence, it would be exempted from Meiji laws protecting freedom of religion.[414] All this worked supremely well, that is, until World War 2.[415]

10.7.3 The **Buddhism** that arrived in Japan from Paekche (one of the 3 ancient kingdoms of Korea) in the 6th century was a Korean religion, somewhat like Shinto of the Meiji era. It was used to boost the power of the Paekche rulers, and it did the same for the Japanese court of the Asuka era [10.1.1]. In other words, it was not, properly speaking, the teaching of Sakyamuni the Buddha. It was a functional system of beliefs and rituals like those in Judaism, Christianity or Islam. They served the purposes of the believers and per-

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[409] J Isomae, *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan.* Leiden, 2014:xiv-xxiv (Pref).

[410] ZHONG Yijiang, "Freedom, religion and the making of the modern state in Japan, 1868-89," *Asian Studies Review* 38,1 2014:55 f, 63.

[411] ZHONG Yijiang, op cit 2014:62 f.

[412] ZHONG Yijiang, op cit 2014:61 f.

[413] H Byron Earhart, *Religion in Japanese Experience,* 3rd ed 1974:8; Zhong op cit 2014:59.

[414] R Tsunoda et al (eds), *Sources of Japanese Tradition* 2nd ed 2006:120; H Hardacre, *Shintō and the State, 1868-1988,* Princeton, 1991:117.

[415] On the concept of "religion," see SD 60.1d (3.1.2).

formers of its rituals, in a world-affirming way: it empowered them. This, too, was the case of Shinto with the Meiji government.

The Meiji government could not use Buddhism in that way because it was already used so by the Buddhist clergy: it had made them very powerful, wealthy and established since the 6th century. In fact, the Buddhist clergy had become so powerful that even the pre-Meiji Emperor feared the Buddhist clergy. Furthermore, Shinto was known to the common people, but it was assimilated by Buddhism as a sort of religious appendage [10.1.1]. What the Meiji authorities did to turn the table in their favour was to totally weaken the Buddhist clergy, and empower the Shinto. They succeeded in doing so with flying colours.[416]

10.7.4 In what sense is Buddhism, especially _early Buddhism_, *not a religion*? The simplest answer is: When we do *not* treat it so. This may sound a bit tongue in cheek, but it cuts like Occam's razor. For most of us, Buddhism *is* a religion because we have a set of Buddhist beliefs—Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, devas and demons—and we regularly perform a ritual of chants or prayers invoking the names of these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas whom we do not see. We read some sutras or someone tells us they exist, and could do this or that. Or, that we should perform certain rituals for the dead or to gain merits. We do not know how these happen, but we do it anyway: we have **faith**. These clearly make Buddhism a _religion_.

Then, there are some of us who may explain that we attend Sunday Puja and class, and listen to well-known speakers giving Buddhist talks. We do not always accept everything that we hear or are taught (in fact, we rarely accept anything we are taught!). This may well be true: this latitude or freedom that Buddhists have makes it difficult it to be labelled a "religion." Perhaps, it is a _philosophy_, then; but this sounds so insipid and arbitrary.

10.7.5 A "_philosophy_," even a "_way of life_," grand or serious as it sounds, may work when we are enjoying leisurely moments with our surplus income. What about when we are sick, lonely, or in love, or out of it, suffering some loss, or suddenly realize we need some meaning and purpose in life. We need something more than a mere philosophy or way of life. Perhaps, then, we think that we need *religion,* whatever it is.

In fact, when we consider how **scholars** think about Buddhism or religion, we must admit that it is some kind of **philosophy**. Moreover, scholars are so serious about this, so good at it, producing interesting papers and books, writing, speaking and teaching it, it is clearly **a way of life** for them, especially when they are paid for it! This is a noble profession indeed. We may even say that they "profess" these views, these beliefs, this way of life. Doesn't this make it technically a religion?

A sharp scholar may rebut this by saying: Oh, we do think carefully about these things, after years of study, passing our exams and completing our PhDs, a few of them, in fact. We listen to these brilliant specialists during seminars and conferences, and read and review their journal papers, even sit in their lectures while they live. But our ideas and ideals rarely stand the test of time: we were young scholars once, full of faith, with faith in our own views; we debunk other scholars, especially posthumously. In time, other young scholars do the same to us. This is scholarship, of course, and how we learn and grow as a society, culture and humanity. How different is this from religion? A better question: How like religion is this?

10.8 GOOD SCHOLARS, TRUE BUDDHISTS

10.8.1 Interestingly, what **good scholars** do—master well their field subject (say, early Buddhism, Buddhist history, or Buddhist psychology), present ground-breaking (that is, closer-to-reality) ideas that give us a better understanding of it, and they are themselves good examples of a humanly engaged seekers of truth. This last point is rare, but it is what makes a scholar a true master of his field, even if he is *not* a

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[416] See eg D Burton, "Religious experience in Buddhism," 2020:187-207; J A Josephson, "When Buddhism became a 'religion': Religion and superstition in the writings of Inoue Enryō." *Japanese J of Rel Studies* 13,1 2006:143-168.

Buddhist in the *religious* sense of the word—that he *is* Buddhist in the <u>intuitive</u> sense (he knows his sub-ject very well) or in the <u>spiritual</u> sense (he is at heart a true practising Buddhist).

10.8.2 What, then, does **a true Buddhist** do? First of all, a true Buddhist knows the Vinaya well, and keeps to it (not reject or revise it) as a monk or a nun. Whether as a renunciant or a layperson, he understands the nature of moral conduct and virtue, and keeps to the 5 precepts at least. At the proper time or for the right purpose, the lay practitioner keeps to the 8 precepts[417] or the 8 right livelihood pre-cepts.[418] He sees this as **moral training**: the disciplining and refining of his bodily deeds and speech so that they are conducive to mental cultivation. Basically, this is **Buddhist ethics**, not religion, in the sense it is not a ritualistic, sectarian or worldly pursuit, but with a vision of personal growth, that is, reaching the path of awakening in this life itself.

10.8.3 Secondly, a true Buddhist understands what <u>meditation</u> is really about: theoretically, it is *mind-training,* a study and understanding of the nature of the mind; practically, it is *mental training,* medi-tation that suits his personality and needs at the moment. He may meditate on uposatha days[419] or even go for retreats (such as a 10-day Vipassana retreat). This may be said to be ***Buddhist*** **psychology** in the true sense of the term: understanding one's own mind for the sake of taming and freeing it.

10.8.4 Thirdly, he does not see any of this—whether moral conduct or mental cultivation—as a goal in itself (then, it becomes a religion). He understands both moral conduct and mental cultivation as the bases for <u>insight wisdom</u> (*paññā*). He sees that nature of *learning* and *views*—how our mind grows through knowing and expressing itself—and thus learning and views are but tools of personal growth (like moral conduct and mental cultivation). [10.7.5]

10.8.5 Hence, all learning, especially scholarly or academic achievement, are *provisional*: our views and ideas change and grow, and we, too, change and grow with them. Our learning, then, is not about some-thing *out there* but what we really are *in here*: not <u>who</u> we are (a status: birth, title, position, wealth) but rather <u>what</u> we really are and can be. With self-knowledge, we become *more* than what we are: we free ourself from our personal limitations (moral virtue), become a better person (mental development). Based on these 2 trainings, we become a *free* individual with a growing right understanding of true reality: we are heading for the path of awakening in this life itself. This is **Buddhist philosophy**, in the full good sense, not a religion.[420] [10.7.5]

Buddhism (at least early Buddhism), then, is **the 3 trainings**—in moral conduct, mental cultivation and insight wisdom—or in *metaethics, metapsychology* and *metaphilosophy*: ethics as the <u>purpose</u> of life, psy-chology as the <u>meaning</u> of life, and philosophy as <u>goal</u> of life (as stated above). These terms are used so that we do not see Buddhism merely as academic learning (merely as disengaged ethics, psychology or philosophy) or as religion (a self-centred or fixed ritual practice). It is the path of awakening: the self-effort that is <u>the middle way</u>. This is the highest of human experience, capable of giving us a transhuman or liber-ating awakening and freedom.

11 New Buddhisms: India, and the West

11.0 INTRODUCTION

New Buddhisms arose not only in Japan but also in India, but under quite different circumstances. It was used by the Dalits (untouchables) of India as a political tool. What happens to Buddhism, then? How can this be corrected and be made an even more effective tool. [11.1]

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[417] On <u>the 8 precepts</u>, see A 3.70,9-16 + SD 4.18 (2).
[418] On <u>the 7 right livelihood precepts</u> (*ājīv;aṭṭhamaka sīla*), see
[419] On the uposatha, see eg **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.60), SD 4.18.
[420] Further, on the 3 trainings or early Buddhism, see ***Sīla samādhi paññā***, SD 21.6.

We also see Western Buddhists selecting what they like from the Buddhist Buffet. Are they concocting their own Buddhisms, too? Yet, there are many wholesome possibilities open to Western Buddhists. Western civilization has seen how industrialization led to modernization that brought about underlined crowdedness in living space and mental space. It also brought wealth to anyone who is industrious or perspicacious, and opening up education to anyone who can afford it. In significant ways, this allowed greater class mobility and interaction.

The new demands on work culture (longer hours, productivity, performance management, competitiveness), brought new stress and strain on the workers and entrepreneurs. With the rising population and production, towns became cities, cities conurbia, and they grew crowded with diminished humanity, unlike the camaraderie in villages and small towns. There were also greater moral laxity and more crimes. Such a development has been dramatized and allegorized in **the Cakka,vatti Sīha.nāda Sutta** (D 26).[421]

This is where early Buddhism can teach us that the hells are a metaphor for crowdedness and crime; and how we should strive for heavenly spaciousness in body and mind. But first, let us examine how Buddhism is used in India to free those who are crowded together as "outcastes," so that they become free citizens of their own country [11.2]. This is how "New Buddhism" can bring us freedom, making heaven of earth itself [11.3].

11.1 INDIA: NEO-BUDDHISM

11.1.1 A modernist Buddhist development in India in the 1950s actually helped raise the social status of a whole oppressed community, the outcaste Mahars known as the Dalits.[422] This was the "Neo-Buddhist" movement founded by the Indian Dalit leader, **Bhim Rao Ambedkar** (1891-1956).[423] He was an Indian jurist, economist, social reformer and political leader who headed the committee drafting the Indian Constitution from the Constituent Assembly debates, served as Law and Justice minister in the first cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), and inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement after renouncing Hinduism.

Ambedkar converted to Buddhism at Nagpur (the 3rd largest city of Maharashtra state) at a press conference on 13 October 1956, witnessed by Burmese monk, U Chandiramani, followed by the mass formal rejection of Hinduism and many traditional interpretations of practices and precepts of Theravāda and Mahāyāna.[424] He proclaimed **Navayana or Neo-Buddhism**, and at once converted nearly 400,000 Dalits to it.[425] Ambedkar died some two months after this mass conversion.[426] After his cremation, at that very spot, more Mahars were converted to Buddhism.[427] Today, the Mahar community is the third most populous in Mumbai.[428]

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[421] D 26/3:58-79 (SD 36.10): see esp D 26,9-23.

[422] "Dalit" is a Marathi word meaning "oppressed," referring to "the untouchables," or traditionally, "the fifth" (*pañcama*) outcastes, since they were not included in the 4 castes (Skt *varṇa*; P *vaṇṇa*) of Brahmanism and Hinduism: the brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras: see SD 10.8 (6). As "Dalits," they are listed in India's Constitution as "scheduled classes," so that they can enjoy all the benefits of citizenship, such as education. See (ed) S Wolpert, *Gale Ency of India*, Thomson/Gale, 2006:39 f "Ambedkar, B R, and the Buddhist Dalits"; 281-295 "Dalits" (history of caste).

[423] G Tartarkov, "B R Ambedkar and the Navayana Diksha," in (edd) Robinson & Clarke, *Religious Conversion in India,* Oxford, 2003:192-215; C Queen, "Socially engaged Buddhism: Emerging patterns of theory and practice," in (ed) S M Emmanuel, *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy,* Chichester, 2015:524-535.

[424] G Tartarkov, op cit 2003:192-215; Queen op cit 2015:524-535; A Skaria, "Ambedkar, Marx and the Buddhist question," *J of South Asian Studies* 38,3 2015:450-465.

[425] Queen op cit 2015:524; Princeton EB 2013:34.

[426] C Gautam, *Life of Babasaheb Ambedkar*, London: Ambedkar Memorial Trust, 2nd ed 2000: Life of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

[427] D Kantowsky, *Buddhists in India Today: Descriptions, pictures, and documents*. Manohar, 2003.

[428] Fred W Clothey, *Religion in India: A historical introduction,* Routledge, 2006:213.

11.1.2 According to Christopher Queen and Sallie King (1996), **Ambedkar Buddhism** has all the elements of <u>religious modernism</u>. His ideology, as laid out in his *The Buddha and His Dhamma*[429] (1957), abandons the key traditional Buddhist teachings and practices, and adopts science, activism and social reforms as a form of Engaged Buddhism.[430] According to Skaria, Ambedkar's Buddhism is different from Western modernism in that the former is a synthesis of ancient teachings of the Buddha with the modern ideas of Karl Marx regarding class struggle and social justice.[431]

As a social activist, Ambedkar was inspired by Buddhism and driven to ensure that his people do not merely give lip-service to the Buddha's teaching. His statements on the core beliefs and doctrines of Buddhism, such as the 4 noble truths, karma, rebirth and nonself (*anattā*) should be carefully read—both out of respect for the Buddha and for Ambedkar's social action to uplift the Dalits from oppression. We are here discussing **social action**, not religious doctrine; nor should we, for the sake of the former, cancel out the latter. In short, we can be easy to self-righteously misquote Ambedkar, who sadly did not live long enough to give his work that final proof. He had to labour on despite his failing health before death ended his effort on 6th December 1956.[432]

11.1.3 Why did Ambedkar turn to Buddhism rather than, say Christianity, or Islam, or Jainism? Ambedkar was simply unimpressed with **Christianity**, which during the colonial period, actually allowed slavery. Even in a so-called "free" country like the US before Abraham Lincoln, Christians owned slaves from Africa to labour for them, and it took a civil war (1861-65) to emancipate the slaves.

Islam first arrived with the Muslim Turk invaders in the 11th century and went on into the 17th century,[433] resulting in the enslavement of thousands of local soldiers and civilians. Despite legislations, slavery continues in India to this day, and has (in 1841) some 8 M or 20% of the world's slaves.[434] There are some 5 M bonded workers in Pakistan.[435] Modern Indian slavery (some 15M people), however, still exists in disguised forms as bonded labour (debt slavery), child labour, forced marriage, human trafficking, forced begging and sexual slavery.[436]

Moreover, Christianity and Islam were "foreign" to India: the former saw the Indians as fishes and crops to be "netted" and "harvested"; Christianity killed millions of people in Europe in its heyday [15.2.1]. The latter invaded India and planted itself there, after exterminating Buddhism from its own home. **The Buddha**, after all, was a native of the land, who knew its people and its ways. The Buddha has spoken against the caste system and social injustice from the start, giving hope to the oppressed through self-knowledge and self-effort.

Jainism was not feasible for Ambedkar's political struggle since Jainism is religiously pacifist, and is only a minority religion in India. According to the 2011 Indian census, only 9.5 M or 0.72% of the population were Jains. Moreover, the Jains, due to their strict vegetarian lifestyle (the precept of non-killing) and moral ideals (Jain Dharma), tend to be very selective in their professions, restricting themselves, for example, to commerce, finance, education, publishing and so on.

From his studies and familiarity with Buddhism, Ambedkar declared that "the religion of the Buddha gives freedom of thought and freedom of self-development to all … I would say that the rise of Buddhism

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[429] Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma,* Bombay: Siddharth College Publications, 1957. Repr as 11th vol of his collected works, 1979. Columbia Univ online book:
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/ambedkar_buddha/.

[430] C S Queen & S B King, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist liberation movements in Asia,* NY, 1996:65 f.

[431] A Skaria, "Ambedkar, Marx and the Buddhist question," *South Asia: J of South Asian Studies* 38,3 2015:450-465.

[432] Routledge EB 24-26, "Ambedkar, B R"; E Zelliot, "Ambedkar's life and his Navayana Buddhism," in (ed) K A Jacobsen, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India,* 2015:13, 361-370.

[433] For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_conquests_in_the_Indian_subcontinent.

[434] Slavery was abolished by the Indian Slavery Act (1843) by the British colonial government. The Indian Penal Code of 1861 effectively abolished slavery in India by making it a criminal offence.

[435] For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_Asia.

[436] MODERN DAY SLAVERY IN INDIA - Jus Corpus. Modern-Day Slavery: India's Other Shame – The Diplomat.

in India was as significant as the French Revolution."[437] Moreover, it was much easier for him to select what he needed for his social reforms from the flexible and free teachings of the Buddha, and put together what he found workable for his social vision.

11.1.4 "Judging from the quality of his [Ambedkar's] earlier books … which are, for the most part, rigorously argued, carefully annotated, … one must speculate that *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was incomplete and badly rushed in the end," that is, before his premature death[438] [11.1.2]. The impression we get from skimming *The Buddha and His Dhamma* is that he also rejected the foundational precepts and practices of the Buddha: the 4 noble truths, karma, rebirth, nonself, monastic renunciation, samsara, meditation and nirvana.[439] Yet, Ambedkar turned to Buddhism, took the 3 refuges, and implored his followers to keep the Buddha's Dhamma. It sounds like political doubletalk: unless we examine the proper contexts of these "missing teachings."[440]

Ambedkar hardly mentions **the 4 noble truths** in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* for the simple reason that he was not writing a thesis or academic tome on Buddhism. The lives and realities of the Dalits are in themselves embodiments of the noble truths: apparently, what need is there for talk of *suffering* when we know the cause of *class oppression*; that we have to end class oppression; that what we need is *social justice?*

Ambedkar did not reject **karma and rebirth**: he rejected the Brahminical notions of them. To the brahmins *karma* are the acts and rituals that make them "pure" and of the "highest" class, and they invented myths that placed other classes below them. Such oppressive myths must be rejected. The upper class Hindus propagandize that the outcastes are those who had done bad karma in the past: this is a fatalistic notion which is against the Buddha's teaching. By understanding and mastering our present conditions, we will free ourselves from social oppression and uproot its causes.

Nonself is not rejected by Ambedkar; it did not serve his plans for social action. It is one of the most abstruse of the Buddha's teachings which even most of the monks themselves neither understand nor care about. It is something for the spiritually inclined wise to ponder on and teach others its significance.

Monastics, as seen in Ambedkar's times and our own times, have little to inspire us in bringing us closer to the Buddha's teachings. Many, if not most, of them neither respect nor observe the Vinaya. Or, they lead lives of worldly power, affluence and leisure. "**Renunciation**" is hardly a word that these monks, in their comfortable Viharas, mention or care about today. They have been around for centuries in India, but did nothing to free the oppressed in their own homeland.

Meditation has its place. Nowhere did Ambedkar say that no Dalit should meditate. In fact, we have many of them today who are serious meditators. His is a pragmatic social dialectic. **Samsara** is not merely a philosophy of suffering: we need social action to end, at least slow down, the cycle of suffering initiated and perpetuated by class oppression. Similarly, **nirvana** is a personal goal, certainly not any kind of earthly paradise. When we are blessed with personal freedom, social justice and sufficient means of living, we are ready to work for nirvana. How can we speak of nirvana when our fellowmen are oppressed and suffering?

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[437] Ambedkar, "My social philosophy," All India Radio speech, 1954. World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 6 June 1950.

[438] C S Queen, "Ambedkar's Dhamma: Source and method in the construction of engaged Buddhism," in (edd) Jondhale & Beltz, *Reconstructing the World: B R Ambedkar and the Buddhism in India*," New Delhi, 2004:136.

[439] "The Buddhism upon which he settled and about which he wrote in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was, in many respects, unlike any form of Buddhism that had hitherto arisen within the tradition. Gone, for instance, were the doctrines of karma and rebirth, the traditional emphasis on renunciation of the world, the practice of meditation, and the experience of enlightenment. Gone too were any teachings that implied the existence of a trans-empirical realm ... . Most jarring, perhaps, especially among more traditional Buddhists, was the absence of the Four Noble Truths, which Ambedkar regarded as the invention of wrong-headed monks." (Routledge EB 25).

[440] The foll are brief reflective summaries based on C S Queen, "op cit 2004:135-146.

11.1.5 Ambedkar, then, is not "a Buddhist" in the ritual sense; he was clearly "Buddhist" in seeking "the 3 refuges," on behalf of his oppressed Dalits. We may even think of his Buddhist ideas as some kind of "righteous revisionism" or "selective salvation" for the Dalits. When we hear these words as echoes of **the class struggle and social justice** for the Dalits, we begin to see how noble and brave his efforts are.[441]

Understandably, he called his ideology, **Navayāna**, "the new vehicle," or Neo-Buddhism.[442] His Neo-Buddhist ideology is enshrined in his key work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* [11.1.2]*,* the Navayāna Bible.[443] According to Junghare, for Navayana followers, Ambedkar has become a Deity and worshipping him is part of its practice.[444] This is understandable, considering that Indians tend to deify and worship those whom they see as having shown great beneficence and sacrifices for them: so he is worshipped like a parent, like Brahma, after his death.[445] Historically, Ambedkar is the "father of the Dalits" Buddhists.[446]

11.2 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND BUDDHISM

11.2.1 Reasons for the rise of the Industrial revolution

11.2.1.1 Since the Industrial Revolution, that is, from the 19th century, so long as a community or country is in contact with another from across the globe, that society will be challenged by new ideas which will bring on some kind of personal and social changes: human societies and individuals across the world are able to productively communicate with one another, and influence and change one another. In simple terms, this is **modernism**.

If there is a single cause, a key condition, for the rise of "modernism" in our society or the world, in the last 200 years or so, it must be **the Industrial Revolution** that started in Britain in the 1760s and spread throughout Europe and into the US, and then Canada, into the end of the 20th century, and linking us and affecting us even today. That's how you are empowered (educated), for example, to read this essay.

There are basically 4 reasons for the rise and spread of the Industrial Revolution: *capitalism, imperialism, energy and agriculture*. Let us briefly examine these conditions as related to our current study on "Buddhist experience," and so that you will be curious to read more on these subjects.[447]

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[441] See A Skaria, op cit 2015.

[442] A M Blackburn, "Religion, kinship and Buddhism: Ambedkar's vision of a moral community," *J of the International Assoc of B Studies* 16,1 1993:1-23; Routledge EB 24-26; C S Queen, *Engaged Buddhism in the West,* Wisdom Publications, 2000:23; E Zelliot, "Ambedkar's life and his Navayana Buddhism," in (ed) Jacobsen, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary India,* 2015:368-370.

[443] Queen op cit 2015:524-531.

[444] " … the new literature of the Mahars and their making of the Ambedkar deity for their new religion, Neo-Buddhism. ... Song five is clearly representative of the Mahar community's respect and devotion for Ambedkar. He has become their God and they worship him as the singer sings: 'We worship Bhima, too.' ... In the last song, Dr Ambedkar is raised from a deity to a supreme deity. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient." (I Y Junghare, "Dr Ambedkar: The hero of the Mahars, ex-Untouchables of India," *Asian Folklore Studies* 47,1 1988:93-121).

[445] This, of course, should not be done in the wrong spirit. It would be unwholesome to simply worship the powerful or charismatic, esp when they lack honesty or humanity, such as the 45th US President Trump (2017-2021). Bussa Krishna, a 33-year-old rural farmer from Konne in Telengana (south-central of the Deccan Plateau), near Hyderabad, was drawn to Trump's blunt speech and crude ways, and after a dream of Trump, built a life-size statue of him in his backyard, and worshipped it every morning. He was devastated when Trump contracted COVID-19, and so fasted for his speedy recovery. He fell into deep depression and died of cardiac arrest on 11th Oct 2020. Trump recovered. https://news.artnet.com/art-world/indian-man-worships-donald-trump-statue-1782381. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/14/world/asia/india-trump-fan-dies.html.

[446] For an overview, see L D Jenkins, *Religious Freedom and Mass Conversion in India,* Univ of Pennsylvania, ch 2: "Ambedkarite Buddhists: Religious and political mobility," 2019:62-96.

[447] https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution.

11.2.1.2 Capitalism is about money and its uses: it is a convenient means of measuring value and thus serves as a means of exchange; it is transportable or transferable; most importantly, it can be privately owned by any of us, rather than only by the state. The facility that money provides makes it convenient as wages to employ workers, who then have purchasing power to buy property, services and things.

One noteworthy change that money has brought in recent times, is that those who earn good salaries are getting younger. This means that they are independent younger, less mature as individuals, likely to have less connection with their families and social ties with seniors. Hence, they are measuring the worth of others by their salaries, wealth or status. Even now, this is affecting the quality of our lives: we measure and associate or distance ourselves from others according to how much we perceive they are worth (to us). They begin at a younger age to be more worldly or money-minded, as is often the case in Singapore and Malaysia.[448]

The wide availability and use of money have not only changed the economics of our lives, but deeply affected the lives of the Buddhist clergy who are "socially engaged." In other words, they are easily "modernized," excited by the buying and selling power they command, by how the world reward and approve of them by their **status** rather than their wholesome state of mind or spirituality. They will then have difficulty in keeping to religious vows and monastic rules. This means that religion, even Buddhism, can be measured, making it a commodity that can be bought and sold. In other words, Buddhism will spread, monastics will prosper, but it will be the death of Buddha Dharma: we are already there![449]

11.2.1.3 Imperialism is basically the idea that one country or religion—with its armies and power—has the right (usually "God-given" to the aggressor) to conquer a foreign people or territory, or put it under their control and influence. It started in 1493 with the Pope Alexander VI in Rome issuing a Papal Bull, "Inter Caetera" ("among other (works)") authorizing Spain and Portugal to colonize the Americas and its natives as subjects, and to colonize, convert and enslave Africa (mainly because of their dark skin and docility). **The Catholics** (mostly Spaniards) had the guns, germs and technology to conquer, even to annihilate, whole tribes, whole societies, as in South America.[450] Another Papal Bull, "Piis fidelium" ("To the pious believers," 1493) authorized Portugal to conquer "the Indies" (basically meaning Asia, especially South and SE Asia).

The Catholic colonizers, especially the Portuguese and the Spanish, habitually used military and naval power, and brutal violence on those they encountered or conquered or captured in South America, Asia and Africa.[451] The Portuguese enslaved many people from these countries and sent them to the New World (the Americas) to extract gold and diamonds in the dangerous mines, deep, dark and dank. Even in the 20th century, Portugal was under international pressure to free its colonies, but Portugal's dictator, Antonio Salazar (ruled 1933-1974), refused to decolonize.[452]

Reacting against Catholic imperialism in the 16th century onwards, **the Protestant powers** of Europe (especially the British and the Dutch) did their own colonizing of the world to offset Catholic world hegemony. The British colonizers—with relatively smaller armies and navies—were comparatively more tactful in their colonizing tactics.[453] Their aim was to extract our economic resources (such as rubber and tin from Malaya) for the benefit of Britain. Their policy of allying with the powerful native elites made them better colonizers, that is, until the 20th century when World War 2 reshaped the world.

11.2.2 Energy

Starting in the 16th century, deforestation in England led to a shortage of wood for lumber and fuel. The country's switch to coal as a principal energy source was about complete by the end of the 17th cent-

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[448] On power distance and "power distance index" (PDI), see (1.1.2.5).

[449] In the darkest of ages, our personal practice, self-effort, still shine like a star in the night sky. See **Dharma-ending Age**, SD 1.10.

[450] See Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The fates of human societies,* Norton, 2003.

[451] See eg S Subrahmanyam, *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama,* Cambridge, 1997.

[452] https://www.thoughtco.com/the-portuguese-empire-1435004.

[453] The Dutch colonizers were generally violent in their interactions with the natives.

ury. Coal usage was one of the conditions that led to Britain's industrialization, especially the coal-fired steam engine.

Steam power was first applied to pump water out of coal mines. For centuries, the Dutch used windmills in a similar way to drain low-lying flood plains. Wind was, and is, a readily available and renewable energy source, except for its irregularity. Water power was also commonly used for similar purposes in most of pre-industrial Europe.

By the late 18th century, thanks to the work of the Scottish engineer James Watt and his business partner Matthew Boulton, steam engines achieved a high level of efficiency and versatility in their design. They swiftly became the standard power supply for British, and, later, European industry. The steam engine turned the wheels of mechanized factory production. Manufacturers did not need to locate their factories on or near sources of water power. Large enterprises began to concentrate in rapidly growing industrial cities (which, of course, created its own problems).

All this allowed mass production of wrought iron,[454] more malleable than cast iron, for making better machines and other heavy industrial uses. Such metals made better land and water vehicles. Massive canal networks facilitated the distribution of resources and goods. High-powered steam not only drove trains, but also ships, linking far colonies before there were airplanes.

Between 1750 and 1850, production of fabric, especially cotton, was fundamental to Britain's economy. Factories used steam to run power looms. The cotton gin was invented in the US in 1793, spurring an increase in cotton cultivation and export from US slave states, a key supplier to Britain.

11.2.3 Agriculture

The British Agricultural Revolution is one of the causes of the Industrial Revolution.[455] In contrast, per-capita food supply in Europe was stagnant or declining, and did not improve in some parts until the late 18th century.[456] Industrial technology that improved farming included Jethro Tull's seed drill, Joseph Foljambe's plough (the cast iron plough combined Dutch designs of fittings and iron coulter, and the mould-board and share with iron parts), and the threshing machine. Such improvements provided ample food for the working population and their families.

11.2.4 Dickensian insights

British writer, **Charles Dickens** (1812-70), who lived at the height of the Industrial Revolution, was highly critical of its many inhuman conditions and effects. He knew them firsthand from his father's debts and imprisonment, and his early life working among child labourers. In *Hard Times* (1854), Dickens sharply criticizes the poor living conditions of the working class in a fictive industrial town, Coketown, in Northern England.

Dirty and choking with soot and ash, it is filled with exploitation, desperation and oppression. Work began before dawn, the hours were long, and wages low. Production came first without regard for the rights and sufferings of the working class. Children in school were taught the virtues of Utilitarianism: they should accept and live according to facts and facts alone, they should neither fantasize nor think for themselves. This, in some ways, reminds us of meditation teachers who preach meditation as if it were a religion.

11.2.5 Western Buddhism as Neo-Buddhism

The woes of Victorian Britain and Utilitarianism have been left far behind now. In most of Western Europe, we can see how people today live in clean, safe and peaceful places, free to discover Buddhism or create their own Buddhism, just as they had discovered the benefits of Utilitarianism and industrialism.

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[454] A soft material produced from semifused pure iron surrounded by slag, with less than 0.1% carbon. This makes it easy to be shaped into various tools and objects by skilled craftsmen.

[455] M Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The transformation of the agrarian economy, 1500-1850,* Cambridge, 1996.

[456] K Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy,* Princeton, 2000.

But what comes to the West is Westernized, just as what comes to America is Americanized; elsewhere, it is, in some way, *modernized*.

There is **Western Buddhism** and also modern or "modernized" Buddhism in places like Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Oceania and the rest of Asia (including Russia and the rest of the world). For the moment, we will discuss "Western(ized) Buddhism," since it is amongst the fastest growing of the Buddhists, and its rise is very well documented—it is also spreading to the rest of the world.

Westernized Buddhism, or "Western Buddhism," in this case, refers to a great motley of <u>modern Buddhisms</u> defined by language, race and culture. However, there are significant differences between new Western Buddhisms and the old ethnic Asian Buddhisms, differences in *language, race and culture*. Both are also deeply influenced by history and learning, but in their own ways. Moreover, the oldest organized Western Buddhist groups are at best just over a century old. For all these reasons at least, we can conveniently label them (Western Buddhisms) as **Neo-Buddhism**, too.

11.2.6 "Woke" Buddhism

11.2.6.1 Adeana McNicholl, who specializes in the social aspects of American Buddhism, in her paper, "Being Buddha, staying woke" (2018), recounts an unusual discussion in the Facebook group called "Scholars of Buddhist Studies," a closed group comprising some 900 graduate students, post-docs, and professors studying Buddhism and Asian religions. They exchanged news and views about such topics as upcoming conferences, new books, questions about primary sources, interesting news articles, and academic questions.

In late October 2016, Alan Wagner, a specialist in mediaeval Chinese Buddhism, asked whether anyone had explained the term "buddha" as "the woke," focusing on academic approaches for teaching undergraduate students. Although not entirely out of place, the topic was unfamiliar to many group members. Wagner highlighted the connection between the translation of *buddha* as "the awakened one" and the recent use of the term "woke" to refer to someone (any of us) as "awakened" in terms of racism, hetero-sexism and gendered discourse within society.

The post at once attracted some unfavourable comments regarding this contemporary rendition of a classic Buddhist term. Before the debate could begin, the word "**woke**" was defined for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the term. Its provisional definition was "being awakened to one's historical and political identity." A few commented that it was simply inappropriate to use the term to describe the Buddha. Some pointed out that "woke" was a grammatically incorrect tense of the English verb "awake" and an inappropriate translation of the Indian term.[457]

11.2.6.2 One person, clearly disapproving of such a neologism, quipped whether we would then render "The Buddha said, excellent, excellent!" as "The Woke said: Yo! Dope, man … ." Such criticisms caused Wagner to clarify the matter: "I do mean just 'explaining' here, not formal translation. Say, in speaking with Millennials, using English in fresh and immediate ways—to ask what it could mean to be woke in the deepest possible way, to be Woke, and how that compares to how we understand 'Buddha.'"

Some group members were, however, less concerned with the philological significance of translating "buddha" as "woke." The use of this term would be <u>anachronistic</u>, they argued. During the Buddha's time, there was no concept of race. Moreover, while "buddha" is often conventionally translated as one who is "awakened," this awakening refers to <u>an existential truth</u>, *not to societal struggle and inequalities*.

A few wondered whether the use of the term "woke" might amount to the cultural appropriation of African American political struggle. To represent the Buddha as a racially enlightened and radical reformer was clearly an anachronistic, romanticized caricature of Indian Buddhism—a notion rooted in Orientalist constructions of Asian religions.

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[457] On "woke" in the Oxford English Dictionary: https://public.oed.com/appeals/woke/.

11.2.6.3 Less than a fortnight later, in October 2016, Angel Kyodo Williams (spelt "angel Kyodo will-iams"), a queer black Zen Buddhist activist, in what was likely a response to the election of President Trump, posted on her Facebook a phrase and a word: "staying woke. literally." While williams's business page boasted over 3,500 followers, her personal page, on which this comment was posted, had a similar number of followers as the "Scholars of Buddhist Studies" group.

However, unlike the Buddhist Studies scholars, no one who followed williams's posts seemed con-fused by her use of the term. For those familiar with williams's writings on Buddhism, blackness, race, and embodiment, it was perfectly clear how she was playing with the word "woke" and connecting be-tween herself, Buddhism and the idea of being "awake."

Contrary to the expectations of Buddhist Studies scholars, williams was purposely playing with the relationship between the Buddhist concept of "awakening" and the modern slang "woke" to frame her awareness and disapproval of the workings of institutionalized racial, gender and sexual inequalities with-in a Buddhist worldview. The term gave salience to her vision of oppression and insight into liberation. We are speaking of "liberation Dharma."[458] [8.2]

11.2.6.4 One of the vital signs of **a living religion** (such as Buddhism) is that people engaged in some kind of social work, human vision or compassionate act would draw ideas, teachings, terminology and inspiration from Buddhism. Often, such *borrowings* are actually adapted to reflect their needs and agen-da, as we have seen in the cases of Ambedkar,[459] Goenka[460] and others. The success of such a "revision-ist" application of Buddhism shows that Buddhist teachings and practices can be socially relevant in a powerful way even in our times.

Those people mentioned above [11.2.6.2] who object to such a "revisionism" are also right in their criticisms, that is, from their own academic discipline or practice of Buddhism. Thankfully, Buddhism is not a Catholic faith with a centralized Inquisition council that decides what's orthodox, what's blasphem-ous, wielding power over others and are above others, valuing dogma above human life. Yet, Buddhism, early Buddhism to be specific, is catholic enough to accept the warm embraces of those who love it and wish to live it, despite their circumstances, or because of their circumstances.[461]

11.2.6.5 The "warm embrace" of Buddhism by such "social engagers" means that they have a pow-erful vision of Buddhism and use for it. We all fall in love with parts of the beloved, and after the wed-ding, we continue to love and learn more about that beloved, and our engagement deepens with greater joy and wisdom: so it is with Buddhism. Even as we engage with the world, we should be wise to know and see that Buddhism actually teaches us to **disengage** (not to identify) with whatever negative condi-tions that keep us in the world, drawing us away from the Buddha Dharma.

While the celebrity Gurus entertain and beguile us with clever, even convincing, wordplay (and little else), the truly great reformers of humanity have not changed *the world*: they have changed how we per-ceive the world, so that we are able to free ourselves from the world's domination, and we find strength in ourselves to live and work with the like-minded and like-hearted. "Disengagement" does not mean rejecting others: it means not identifying with what is unwholesome in our lives and in others, and build-ing the wholesome together as a community. This is called **atammayatā,** "not-that-ness."[462]

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[458] Section 11.2.6.1-3 has been adapted from the intro of Adeana McNicholl, "Being Buddha, staying woke: Racial formation in Black Buddhist writing," *J of the American Acad of Rel* 86,4, Dec 2018:883-911. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfy019U.

[459] See section 11.1 esp 11.4 f.

[460] See SD 60.1b (2.4.10 f + 2.5).

[461] For refreshing insights into "Buddhist disengagement," see Amod Lele, "Disengaged Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 26, 2019:239-289.

[462] See **Atam,mayatā**, SD 19.13.

11.3 CHALLENGES TO NEO-BUDDHISMS

11.3.1 Other forms of Neo-Buddhism are found outside Asia, particularly in European nations, such as Italy, where we see a small but significant number of Japanese Neo-Buddhists.[463] According to scholar Bernard Fauré, the Neo-Buddhist groups found in the West are a modernist spiritual response to individual anxieties and a modern world that is ungrounded in its ancient ideas, but is "a sort of impersonal flavorless or odorless spirituality." It is a local adaptation of Buddhism "a la carte" that responds to the local needs and reformulates to fill that void in the West, rather than reflecting any ancient Buddhist canon or its secondary literature.[464]

Although there is a wide range of Buddhist presence throughout Europe, from meditation groups to ethnic Buddhist centres (of the Tibetan, Thai, Sri Lankan and Burmese traditions), there are also self-initiated groups led by interested individuals. In other words, it is a great variety of mostly atomized groups, mostly spill-over from a failing Church, whether Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox.

Such a Church-notion remains *culturally entrenched* in almost every European as Church attendance keeps falling ominously low. We have a parallel development with lay Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and the rest of SE Asia, where the Buddhist commitment is very tenuous and further weakening. Asian Buddhism is today mostly a form of religious materialism and priestly business. Buddhists, in Asia, are effectively going back to the Dark Ages that Christianity in Europe had emerged from over a millennium ago.

The comparison, however, stops here, since the connection between Westerners and Buddhism seems to grow stronger with each new generation. A key reason for this apparently slow Buddhist growth is perhaps because there is no sense of urgency arising from a traditional collective consciousness like that which once drove Europeans to Churches. The Westerner's attraction to Buddhism seems to be more on an individual level: they turn to Buddhism as persons rather than as a crowd.

What attracts a European to Buddhism is probably a genuine curiosity in a tradition that is steeped in meditation or in religious freedom. It is also possible that as the individual feels *alienated* by the anomie in a modernized materialist society, he seeks some kind of new connection in a Buddhist group. As the generations of Europeans become more familiar with the Buddhist presence, more of them are likely to accept Buddhism more naturally by some kind of Buddhist osmosis.

11.3.2 In fact, some Western interpreters of Buddhism have proposed the term "**naturalized Buddhism**" for a few of these modernist Buddhist groups [8.1.1; 11.4]. It is devoid of rebirth, karma, nirvana, realms of existence, and other traditional Buddhist concepts, and with key doctrines such as the 4 noble truths and dependent arising reformulated and restated in modernistic terms.[465] This "deflated secular Buddhism" stresses compassion, impermanence, conditionality, selfless persons, but no karma, no rebirth, no nirvana—a naturalist's approach to well-being of oneself and others.[466]

Seekers are surely not drawn to "deflated secular Buddhism"; they are more likely to be drawn to friendly, chatty, charismatic Gurus, especially in a tradition that holds up the Teacher above the Teaching. Understandably, Tibetan Buddhism catches on more easily and more quickly, even in Hispanic areas of the world. As Pace has pointed out regarding the modern Italians rooted in centuries of the Roman Church, "their birth religion or prevailing religion": "the ordinary Italians consider themselves Catholic but have a variety of different ways of interpreting their practical involvement with the Catholic Church" (2007:86).

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[463] E Pace, "A peculiar pluralism," *J of Modern Italian Stud* 12,1 2007:93-95. According to Pace, there were some 90,000 "neo-Buddhists," mostly from Unione Buddista (the Buddhist Union) and the Soka Gakkai (of Japan). Pace, however, does not mention Santacittārāma, a forest monastery tradition of Ajahn Chah located outside Rieti, near Rome.

[464] B Faure, *Unmasking Buddhism*, John Wiley, 2011:139-141.

[465] C W Gowans, *Buddhist Moral Philosophy: An introduction,* Routledge, 2014:18-23, 76-94 (ch 4); S R Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*, Indiana Univ Press, 1996:128, 138 f.

[466] O Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism naturalized*, MIT Press, 2011:xl, 4.

11.3.3 At the same time, these ordinary Italians are caring less, if at all, for the Church (very much like the rest of Europe). Their collective memories, however, compels them to be attracted to similar symbols of power and charismas like in the old Church. By the process of religious transference, they easily identify with Tibetan Buddhists whose ways are very much like those of the Catholic religion.

The 17th-century Jesuit missionary, Christoforo Borri, visiting Cochin China (modern Vietnam) records his first impressions of Mahāyāna Buddhism as follows:

> [The Cochinchinese] make so many processions that they outdo the Christians in praying to their false gods. There are also among them some persons resembling abbots, bishops, and arch-bishops, and they use gilt staves, not unlike our crosiers, insomuch that if any man come newly into that country, he might easily be persuaded there had been Christians there in former times; so near had the devil endeavoured to imitate us.   (2006:70)
>
> … it looks as if the devil had endeavoured among those gentiles, to represent the beauty and variety of religious orders instituted by holy men in the catholick church, their several habits answering their several professions; for some are clad in white, others in black, others in blue, and other colours; some living in community, some like curates, chaplains, canons, and prebends; others profess poverty, living upon alms; others exercise the works of mercy, ministering to the sick, either natural physick, or magick charms, without receiving any reward … (2006:169)[467]

11.3.4 In Asia, ethnic Buddhisms like Vajrayana and Zen, have traditionally observed some kind of social distance between the priests and the laity. On the other hand, Vajrayana Tulkus (incarnate or high lamas) and Senseis (Zen masters) who live and teach in the West often enjoy a social openness with members of their congregation, even being intimate with one another, such as hugging one another. Westerners also tend to have a more open view about sexual relations that often end up in massive scandals.[468]

The most notorious sex scandals (related with other wrongdoings, like misuse of funds and child abuse) involving top Gurus (Tulkus, Senseis and Bhantes) in recent times, include the following:

Sangharakshita (1925-1918)	(Friends of) the Western Buddhist Order (WBO & FWBO), now called Triratna Buddhist Community, UK[469]
Mettavihari[470] (1942-2007)	Wat Buddharam Temple, Waalwijk, Netherlands[471]
Eido Tai Shimano (1932-2018)	Zen Studies Society, New York, USA[472]
Zentatsu Richard Baker (1939-)	San Francisco Zen Center; heir to Shunryu Suzuki[473]
Chogyam Trungpa (1939-1987)	Incarnate lama, founder of Vajradhatu & Naropa University[474]
Sogyal Lakar (1947-2019)	Dzogchen lama; wrote *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (1992)[475]

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[467] (edd & annot) O Dror & K W Taylor, *Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina & Samuel Baron on Tonkin*, Southeast Asia Program Publications, SE Asia Program. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ, 2006.

[468] Sandra Bell, "Scandals in Emerging Western Buddhism," in (edd) C S Prebish & M Baumann, *Westward Dharma: Buddhism beyond Asia*. Berkeley 2002:230-242. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520936584-016

[469] SD 34.5 (1.2.2); SD 7.9 (4.4.3.4-4.4.3.6, 4.5.1); https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/19/buddhist-sexual-abuse-triratna-dennis-lingwood.

[470] Orig name: Phra Maha Thirapan Nawang of Thailand.

[471] SD 7.9 (4.3.4.1); https://www.achtzaamheid.nl/2639-2/.

[472] SD 64.17 (7.1.3); https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-shocking-scandal-at-the-heart-of-american-zen.

[473] SD 64.17 (6-7); http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/Richard_Baker_and_the_Myth.htm.

[474] SD 64.17 (5); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ch%C3%B6gyam_Trungpa.

[475] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/jul/01/lama-sex-abuse-sogyal-rinpoche-buddhist; "In the name of Enlightenment—Sex scandal in religion" about Sogyal Rimpoche (UK Guardian): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWhIivvmMnk&feature=youtu.be. For a psychological study of sexual problems regarding Sogyal Rimpoche, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYpuYePJEZo. Sogyal denounced: https://buddhism-controversy-blog.com/2017/07/22/abuse-letter-to-sogyal-rinpoche-from-long-term-rigpa-students/; https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49505098.

Why do we willingly do what a powerful or charismatic person or cult leader tells us to do or not to do? **Cult leaders** and celebrity teachers answer a psychological need that we have: *we want to be told what to do and not to do*. It comes from a fear and insecurity. When we perceive that someone else is in control, we feel safe: we can become a child all over again and remain so. This gives a powerful sense of security in most of us.

11.3.5 Consciously or unconsciously, the Cult Guru fears losing his grip over his fold: this is, of course, **psychological insecurity**. We, the cult followers, for our part, desire to be accepted by the Guru: this is **transference** [9.1.7]. Caught in the sticky net of co-dependence [10.3.1], the Guru reacts with the grossest gesture of acceptance: he seems to share his most private or secret side. He has **sex** with us. We feel privileged and empowered. We totally lose our will (and everything else) to that body of power. Mystically, this is the heart of the God-complex: a total surrender to the Other Power, which floods our hollowness that seems forever: we lose time and all else. We are dead and are reborn, a foetus in the safety of its womb. In other words, we never grow to be our true wholesome self. We are always a <u>creature</u>, never a real *being*.[476]

These abusive individuals (and sometimes the abused, too) are basically <u>narcissists</u> (meaning they are pathologically self-centred) who hold strong views with an almighty sense of being above everyone and the law. They are accomplished Tartuffes, seductive religious actors, with only a veneer or front of goodness or holiness, a light that blinds us, so we are boldly led away. Some of them suffer from some profound sense of <u>inner emptiness</u> despite having or getting everything (hence, they turn to drugs, drunkenness, sex addiction). They are adept at reading people, and just as manipulative, which may have arisen from a sense of <u>inferiority complex</u>. Hence, they are unable to tolerate dissent. In short, despite their bloated and polished status, they profoundly lack spiritual goodness, and will hurt us without any compunction—they Morlocks, we Eloi.[477] It's best to stay away from such asura-beings. They cannot even help themselves: how can they ever help us?[478]

11.3.6 High-profile Buddhist scandals were publicized in the mass media in both the US and Europe beginning in the 1970s, marking a high point in the rise of modern Buddhism in the West. This is likely to be just the beginning of **a sexualized Buddhism** as sexual freedom, gender liberation and equality of the sexes are seen to be "good" in themselves, and moral training is seen as a *personal responsibility* without "sangha spirit," without esprit de corps, of teamwork, loyalty and mutual respect.

Buddhism will become more grossly sexualized, commercialized and psychologized as the monastics and clergy see themselves as becoming more "<u>modernized</u>," more "socially engaged," so that they water down, ignore, even reject, the Vinaya that has protected Buddhism all these millennia. Buddhism then becomes a buffet table, a convenience store, a supermarket, a fast-food chain, where we shop for what we want, or simply forage for what we desire.

For Buddhism to start to have a good lasting effect on us, to bring us to the path of awakening and freedom, we must begin by diligently and publicly reversing this trend.

11.4 "NATURALIZED" BUDDHISM

11.4.1 Considering the growing occurrences of sexual scandals and other forms of religious misdemeanours by Buddhist teachers, especially in the Zen and the Tibetan camps [11.2.5 f], wherein the teachers divest their students of their modesty, we also see Western teachers and scholars dressing down tradi-

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[476] https://nalandainstitute.org/2017/09/07/the-guru-question-crisis-western-buddhism-global-future-nalanda-tradition/.

[477] They are what humans evolve into in the distant future in H G Wells' **The Time Machine** (1895). The subterranean Morlocks provide all the needs and comfort of life to the unthinking leisurely Eloi, on whom the Morlocks feed as they will. SD 7.9 (4.5.3.2 f).

[478] <u>The asura</u> is a modern psychological type who is habitually, even violently, exploitative of others: SD 39.2 (1.3); SD 40a.1 (11.2.2); SD 59.9a (2.2.3.1).

tional teachings regarded as "**supernatural**," such as *karma, rebirth, the traditional cosmology* (devas and the realms of existence), *nonself, the 4 noble truths* and *nirvana*.

Even essential teachings, such as the 4 noble truths and nonself, are either set aside or presented in a modernist *psychological* way that focuses more on the attaining of **joy** (rather than overcoming of suffering) and the development of **the self** rather than the realization of nonself. Even nirvana is sometimes explained in a Zen-like here-and-now total experience of life rather than in apophatic terms.[479] In other words, they are "naturalized" so that they will appeal to modern Western students. [11.3.4]

11.4.2 For some Western Buddhists, the rebirth doctrine couched in the 4 noble truths seems to be a problematic notion.[480] According to **Christopher Lamb**, "Certain forms of modern western Buddhism ... see it as purely mythical and thus a dispensable notion." Like the God-idea, we cannot empirically prove it: how do we prove that rebirth actually occurs? Moreover, how relevant is the doctrine of rebirth to our modern situation in a global sense?[481]

According to **Adrian Konik**, the fundamental problems underlying early Indian Buddhism differed from those underlying contemporary western Buddhism. Hence, there was a need to examine the validity of applying the solutions that the Buddha presented for his times when it was applied to the modern Western situation. Simply put, an end to rebirth (in a philosophical sense) would not necessarily strike many Western Buddhists as a real solution.

Damien Keown observes that many Westerners found "the ideas of karma and rebirth puzzling."[482] They felt no necessity to accept "dogmas" (doctrines that could not be empirically proven) even if they are the core Buddhist doctrines accepted by Asian Buddhists, with the view for better rebirths.[483] The teachings of karma, rebirth, the realms of existence, and cyclic universe (*saṁsāra*) underpin the 4 noble truths in traditional Buddhism. Hence, suggests **Damien Keown**, it was possible to reinterpret Buddhist doctrines such as the 4 noble truths, since the solution to the problem of suffering and the goal of the 4 truths is nirvana, not rebirth.[484]

This is all very educating and interesting: indeed, this is in the spirit of Buddhism. We begin with what we can understand and accept the familiar. But then, *they are so familiar*! Two worldly habits keep us in the Buddhist spirit: be curious, keep questioning, about Buddhism, that is. Is that all there is to Buddhism? We know what the Buddha says, or is purported to have said, but what does he mean?

What is the essence of practical Buddhism as taught by the Buddha? See evil for what it is: avoid it the best we can; see good for what it is, do good the best we can; refine our thoughts, free our mind—this is truly modern Buddhism.[485]

11.4.3 **Owen Flanagan**, the Duke University (US) Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Neurobiology, was "one of very few Western philosophers to take Buddhist thought seriously and to acknowledge its achievements."[486] His book is also concerned with the interpretation of recent (early 21st century) research on Buddhist meditators, often enthusiastically reported with such headlines as "Buddhists lead scientists to the 'seat of happiness'."

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[479] On "apophasis": SD 40a.1 (6.3).

[480] C Lamb, "Cosmology, myth and symbolism," in (ed) P Harvey, *Buddhism*, Bloomsbury, 2001:258; A Konik, *Buddhism and Transgression,* Brill, 2009:9; R P Hayes, "The Internet as window onto American Buddhism," in (edd) Queen & Williams, *American Buddhism: Methods and findings in recent scholarship,* Routledge, 2013:172.

[481] C Lamb op cit 2001:258.

[482] D Keown, *Buddhism*, Sterling, 2009:60-63.

[483] D Keown, *op cit* 2009:74-95.

[484] D Keown, *op cit* 2009:185-187.

[485] A "modernized" rephrasing of the "Buddha's advice" (*buddh'ovāda*) quatrain: "Not doing any bad [evil] (*sabba,-pāpassâkaraṇaṁ*), cultivating the good (*kusalss'upasampadā*), purifying one's own mind (*sacitta,pariyodapanaṁ*), this is the teaching of the buddhas (*etam buddhāna sāsanaṁ*): **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14,3.33), SD 49.8a + SD 49.8b (2.6.1); SD 16.1 (6); SD 59.2a (1.1.3).

[486] R Gethin, review of Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Mind* (2011), *Times Higher Education,* UK, 6 Oct 2011.

There are all sorts of difficulties in correlating what shows up in brain imaging with specific mental states and specific causes. Nevertheless, Flanagan is generally positive about research in cognitive and affective neuroscience progressing so far as we can correlate "first-person" phenomenological accounts with "third-person" results from brain imaging. This is not, in any way, to prove that Buddhism will make us happy, but give us a better understanding regarding the nature of consciousness.

In this connection, as Flanagan observes, Buddhist systematic thought has unparalleled resources to offer in the form of "the best taxonomy of conscious-mental-state types ever produced." He has coined the neurophilosophical phrase, "**naturalized Buddhism**." Understandably, it is difficult for a scientist to accept karma, rebirth and Buddhist cosmology, even nirvana, on faith, that is, without empirical tests and proofs. Hence, they see a Buddhism free from "the supernatural," one that they can accept and follow.[487]

11.4.4 The Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta (D 25) records the Buddha giving this open invitation (excerpts) to Dharma training:

> I do *not* speak thus out of desire   to win pupils.
>   I do *not* speak thus out of desire   to make you fall from your rules.
>   I do *not* speak thus out of desire   to make you fall from your livelihood.
>   I do *not* speak thus out of desire   to establish you in teachings considered unwholesome.
>   I do *not* speak thus out of desire   to separate you from teachings considered wholesome.
> There are **unwholesome things** that have not been abandoned, defiled,
>   conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in the future,
>   connected with birth, decay and death.
>   It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dharma.[488]
> If you practise accordingly, **these defiled states will be abandoned**,
>   the states that purify will increase, and *by your direct knowledge*,
>   you will realize, here and now, the bounty of the accomplishment of wisdom."[489]
>
>   (D 25,23.2), SD 1.4

The Buddha's message is clear: it is *not* about conversion. On what we do not agree, we can set them aside. There are **universals and natural truths** about what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad, that we can easily work: this is where we—Buddhism and science—can work together. These are the kinds of truths that will benefit both sides, even bring us closer together for the greater good. [15.3.4.2]

11.4.5 Christopher Gowans, in his book, *Buddhist Moral Philosophy: An Introduction* (2015), shows some reservations about Flanagan's idea of "**naturalized Buddhism**" [11.4.3] when it is applied broadly, outside the non-scientific world. According to Gowans:

> "Buddhism naturalized is not an interpretation of traditional Buddhist ethics. It is a quintessential-ly modernist construction of what purports to be a plausible Buddhist outlook. … Buddhism natur-alized is, by virtually any measure, a radical revision of traditional Buddhist thought and practice.
>
> … many ordinary Buddhists past and present have lived their lives on the basis of a framework of karma and rebirth traditionally conceived. Moreover, though they may not be directly seeking enlightenment in this lifetime, it is important for these persons that liberation from the cycle of rebirth is possible …
>
> … the doctrines of karma, rebirth and nirvana respond to significant human needs for an explanation of the distribution of good and bad fortune in human life and for hope that by living morally in this life one may bring about a better future life and eventually attain ultimate libera-tion [here Gowans quotes **the Cūḷa Kamma Vibhanga Sutta** (M 3:202-206) on karma, and the

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[487] O Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism naturalized*, MIT Press, 2011:3-5.
[488] On the urgency of avoiding bad, doing good, see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65,10-12), SD 35.4a.
[489] On the significance of this whole passage, see SD 19.1 (7.3).

Sacca Saṁyutta (A 5:420-431 on the 4 truths]. These doctrines provide a framework of moral intelligibility that for many persons is deeply satisfying in responding to these needs. Buddhism naturalized does not do this.   (Gowans 2015:93 f)[490]

I have contraposed these two Western writers on modern Buddhism—scientist Owen Flanagan [11.4.3] and philosopher S W Gowans—as an example of a growing number of interesting debates and insights in the practice of Buddhism in intelligent and effective ways. These are not dissenting voices, but on-going conversations that Western and modern Buddhists have in their experience of faith and wisdom in the Buddha's teachings.

11.4.6 Traditional Buddhist teachers disagree with the modernist Western rejection of such "inconvenient" Buddhist teachings. **Bhikkhu Bodhi**, for example, states that rebirth is an integral part of the Buddhist teachings as found in the suttas.[491] **Thanissaro Bhikkhu**, too, rejects the "modernist argument" that "one can still obtain all the results of the practice without having to accept the possibility of rebirth." He asserts that "rebirth has always been a central teaching in the Buddhist tradition."[492] All this is, of course, true, but it is also helpful to be clear about how we believe that rebirth occurs.

Owen Flanagan himself [11.4.3] (the scientist) is helpful here. He is clearly supportive of the Buddhist teaching of rebirth as found in the suttas. He notes that while the Dalai Lama teaches that "Buddhists believe in rebirth," he clarifies that this is *not* the same as belief in reincarnation—meaning that an abiding soul moves on from body to body, from life after life—because rebirth in early Buddhism is seen as happening without any "atman, self, soul."[493]

Flanagan gives this candid account with which most informed Buddhists can at once relate:

One teacher and friend I have sat with at the Kadampa Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, Venerable Robina Curtin—an ordained Australian in the Gelug lineage, well known for her film *Chasing Buddha*—always says that Buddhism falls apart unless you believe that mind is immaterial and also that somewhere between five and seven weeks prior to a human impregnation event, the next "soul" in waiting is in the vicinity of where the conception event occurs!

In addition to describing such an improbable event with such precision (how is the time frame known?), she reverts to describing the rebirth in a way that more suits reincarnation. That is, she—and in my experience—many wise and learned Buddhists, have trouble describing how the continuity of anatman works without using the rejected conceptual categories appropriate to atman. It is I—Owen-the-atman—that gets reborn, perhaps in the body of a sewer rat or a bodhisattva, but it's me.   (Flanagan 2011:224; highlighted)

In such details, where the suttas are silent, it is best that we are silent, too. The suttas don't tell us everything for a very good reason. The early Buddhist texts and teachings, as we have them, is sufficient, with our self-effort, for us to attain the path in this life itself. Beyond that, we must have attained the path rightly ourself, as a streamwinner, at least. Then, we will understand it for ourselves, and be wise enough to decide how we would teach it to others.

11.4.7 While most Asian Buddhists tend to see **karma** in a consequentialist way—accumulating merit for a better rebirth—the modern Buddhist prefers to cultivate virtue ethics—like Aristotle's *eudaimonia* (a quest for human flourishing)—a happiness in goodness that keeps bettering us. Instead of a status-conscious and calculating notion of goodness, the modernist Buddhist see karma as a vital part of personal growth that brings him closer to the Buddha's path of awakening.

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[490] See also Gowans, op cit 2015:81-85, 91-94; D S Wright, "Critical questions towards a naturalized concept of karma in Buddhism," *J of Buddhist Ethics* 12 2005:78-93.

[491] Bodhi, "Does rebirth make sense?" Does Rebirth Make Sense? (accesstoinsight.org).

[492] Thanissaro, "The truth of rebirth, and why it matters for Buddhist practice." The Truth of Rebirth: And Why it Matters for Buddhist Practice (accesstoinsight.org).

[493] O Flanagan op cit 2011:222 f.

The modernist Buddhist, following Flanagan's <u>anachronistic principle</u> gingerly mines "ancient, out-of-dated" teaching for insights that may be applicable to our modern circumstances. Applying his <u>ethnocentric principle</u>, we respectfully evaluate and apply those insights according to our own culturally specific criteria. Yet, with growing confidence, we accept Buddhism with a "fusion philosophy" in a "cosmopolitan" practice.[494]

11.4.8 Early Buddhism lacks what modern scholars see as the defining qualities of <u>a religion</u>: it has neither beliefs for believers (it has no word for "believer") nor rituals that followers must perform daily or regularly ("attachment to rituals and vows" is a fetter preventing the very first step on the path). It is really <u>a practical "path" (*magga*) of moral, psychological and philosophical training</u> for self-transformation.

By **moral** here is meant knowing what's good, what's bad, and <u>living</u> accordingly; by **psychological**, what's wholesome, what's unwholesome, and <u>thinking</u> accordingly; by **philosophical**, what's false, what's true, and <u>feeling</u> accordingly. In terms of emphasis, these 3 trainings roughly cover, consecutively, the purposes of knowing, taming and freeing the mind. Since "we" are <u>our mind</u> (*mano, citta, viññāṇa*)[495] and have a "conscious" body (*sa,viññāṇaka kāya*),[496] <u>the mind</u> is regarded as "the self," in the sense of **self-reliance**, that is, self-reliance (*atta,saraṇa*),[497] which can bring liberation (*vimutti*) or awakening (*bodhi*), that is, the "quenching" of the fires of greed, hate and delusion, or nirvana.[498]

It should be understood that this "naturalizing" of Buddhism—rejecting what is unacceptable or incomprehensible—is not reflective of **the early Buddhist teachings**, but our own difficulties in seeing beyond the mere *word* of the teaching, or projecting our own views on them. Instead, it is more advantageous for us to see such teachings as being "<u>provisional</u>," that is, whose sense "needed to be drawn out" (*neyy'attha*);[499] in other words, they are metaphorical, culture-specific (ethnocentric), or simply a historical event: we omit such a teaching, or better, examine their meaning in our context.

If we are still unable to interpret such teachings in some provisionally workable way, we may then set them aside *provisionally,* temporarily, until when we are able to accept them as they are. Simply rejecting teachings out of "ethnocentricity" (ethnic bias, whose?) or as being "out of date" (how do we update it?) is like binding Buddhism up on our Procrustean bed and lobbing off what we see as inconvenient or unacceptable! We are only limiting our own opportunity for learning "something unheard before" (*ananussutesu dhammesu*):[500] we are engaging ourself in a kind of solipsism, a circular self-talk.

Being a Buddhist is about **learning**, but first we must understand what it really is. "Learning," firstly, means that we are not alone: there are other people and things (nature), and we learn to relate to them; secondly, it is our mind that helps or holds us from truly relating with "the other," because we see it only as *contra* our self; we then learn to mind this self-made gap: we see that it is *mind-made.* We bridge this gap—we identify with neither self nor with other.

As we do this, we are transforming ourselves: we have understood <u>change</u>, impermanence, because we *are* changing. In this sense, we don't have to change the Dharma; we only need to change ourselves, we rise above views of self; we see immeasurable wholeness. This is also the essence of the cultivation of lovingkindness.

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[494] Connor Wood, review of O Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain* (2011), *Sophia* 31 2012:327; Antoine Panaioti, rev of Flanagan 2011, *Mind* 121,482 Apr 2012:485-490; Matthew MacKenzie, rev of Flanagan 2011, *Phenomenology & Cognitive Science* 13,3 2013:503-506.

[495] On *mano citta viññāṇa,* see SD 17.8a (12), esp (12.5.4); SD 56.4 (3.4.2.5). On the mind's "location," SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4). No mention of "brain" in early Buddhism: SD 17.2a (9.6.2)**.**

[496] On *sa,viññāṇka,kaya*, see SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

[497] On *atta,saraṇa,* see **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 (3.2); SD 27.3 (3.1.1).

[498] On <u>nirvana</u> (*nibbāna*), see U 8.1 (SD 50.1); also L S Cousins, 'Nirvāṇa' in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998 sv.

[499] See **Neyy'attha Nīt'aṭṭha S** (A 2.3.5+6), SD 2.6b.

[500] **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11.9-12), SD 1.1.

11.4.9 "Naturalized Buddhism"—Buddhism bereft of *supernatural* accretions—surely works well for scientists [11.4.3], and the rejection of alien additions and revisions to the Buddha Word surely helps us see it more fully and clearly. On the other hand, we must surely admire the growing library of books and works on an interesting range of Buddhist topics. Many, if not most, of these works show their writers' or creators' mastery and love for Buddhism, of those who accept the Buddha and Buddhism as they are.

    Here, we will briefly survey this random but remarkable selection of Buddhist masterpieces. First are listed some useful **reference works and sources**; then follows some **helpful references** on the key "super-natural" Buddhist teachings mentioned above [11.4.1] (showing that they have been well understood, at least well researched and written, by Western Buddhists). Not mentioned are the numerous titles and sutta translations done by Western monastics.

(1) Reference works on Buddhism

Oxford Bibliographies Online - Buddhism
Combines religion, philosophy, history, art history, philology and textual studies, as well as informing a variety of comparative studies. Browsable by subject area and keyword searchable.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Excellent source of essays, articles, on Buddhist topics (often very detailed) by specialists

Routledge Encyclopedia of Buddhism
Damien Keown & Charles S Prebish. London: Routledge, 2007.
Detailed essays on history, doctrines, schools, rituals, sacred places, basic ideas and concepts.

Macmillan Encyclopedia of Buddhism (2 vols)
Robert E Buswell, Jr. New York: Macmillan Reference USA/Thomson/Gale, 2004
Nearly 500 author-signed entries (50-5000 words each) with references and supplemental bibliographies.

Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism
Damien Keown. Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 2003.
A handy volume for the student and beginner to embark on a serious study of Buddhism.

Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism
Robert E Buswell Jr & Donald S Lopez, Jr. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton Univ Press, 2014
Very useful for historical references, especially on Mahayana; not so thorough on Theravada.

(2) Sources on the "supernatural" Buddhist topics
Sources are indexed by the numbers of the titles listed:

Collins, Steven	1982	*Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism.* Cambridge.
	1998	*Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities.* Cambridge.
	2010	*Nirvana: Concept, imagery, narrative.* Cambridge.
Cousins, L S	1998	"Nirvana," in E Craig (ed), *Routledge Ency of Philosophy.* Also <u>online</u>.
Gethin , Rupert	1998	*The Foundations of Buddhism,* Oxford.
Hamilton, Sue	2000	*Early Buddhism: A new approach: The eye of the beholder.* Routledge.
Harvey, Peter	1995	*The Selfless Mind: Personality, consciousness and nirvana in Early Buddhism.* Richmond: Curzon.
	2000	*An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics,* Cambridge.
Johansson, R E A	1969	*The Psychology of Nirvana.* London.
Keown, Damien	1996	*Buddhism: A very short introduction.* Oxford.
McDermott, James P	1984b	*Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma,* Delhi.
Norman, K R	1991	"Death and the Tathāgata," *Studies in Buddhism and Culture,* Tokyo, (9-11).
	1994	"Mistaken ideas about *Nibbāna*," *The Buddhist Forum* 3:211-225.

Slater, R H L   1951   *Paradox and Nirvana.* Chicago.
Stevenson, Ian   1987   *Children Who Remember Previous lives.* Rev ed. Jefferson: McFarland.
Welbon, G R   1968   *The Buddhist Nirvāṇa and Its Western Interpreters.* Chicago.

Karma
Gethin 1998:119-127; Harvey 2000:14-27. Keown 1996:35-42. McDermott 1984b.

Rebirth
Harvey 2000:11-13, 28-30. Stevenson 1987.

Cosmology and devas
Gethin 1998:112-132. Harvey 2000:12-14. Keown 1996:28-35.

Nonself
Collins 1982. Gethin 1998:133-162. Hamilton 2000. Harvey 1995.

The 4 noble truths
Gethin 1998:59-84. Harvey 2000:31-59. Keown 1996:43-55.

Nirvana
Slater 1951. Welbon 1968. Johansson 1969. Harvey 1995. Collins 2010.

11.4.10 Buddhism, by which we mean **early Buddhism**, as we have noted [10.7], is *not* a religion. It is a package deal, as it were, to refine our <u>body and speech</u>; to know, tame and free <u>the mind</u>; and to <u>see directly</u> into ourself (self-understanding) and so free ourself from all that is negative in us (self-liberation). When this becomes stable and certain in our lives, we call that <u>nirvana</u>: it is something we can achieve while we live, but may come at the dying moment, too. In traditional Buddhism, this is called **the 3 trainings**.[501]

We have described <u>the whole journey</u>: we must now start with the first steps: **moral conduct** or simply "morality." Traditionally, we can see <u>our moral life</u> (refinement and restraint of body and speech) as hinging on the hope of well-being in this lifetime and in future lives. It is repeating the fact that our cultivated <u>body/speech</u> (*bhāvita,kāya*) facilitates an effective <u>meditation</u>, by which we calm and clear our mind to see ourself as we really are and so gain true mental freedom.

We should then be willing and able to reduce and remove *the bad* in us, start and grow *the good* in us, and go on to become **mentally cultivated** (*bhāvita,citta*). This is our present project. Traditional Buddhism tells us that we may take more than this life to free ourself from the cycle or dichotomy of life and death, that is, to attain nirvana. Since that is the next part of our journey, we will leave it where it should be. Here we are, here we walk, here we rest, then move on.

This is what we *are* doing: this is our present karma. This is <u>the best bargain</u> or self-assurance (*assāsa*) teaches the Buddha, in the closing of **the Kesa,puttiya (or Kālāma) Sutta** (A 3.65) (simplified):[502]

(1) Suppose there is rebirth, and karma is true, I shall have a good, happy rebirth.
(2) Suppose neither rebirth nor karma is true, still I will live happily here and now.
(3) Suppose bad karma visits the bad, I am free from bad: how can I be touched by suffering?
(4) Suppose bad karma does not have any effect, I am purified either way.[503]

<div align="right">(A 3.65,17) + SD 35.4a (7.2)</div>

This is Buddhism, naturally.

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[501] **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6.
[502] On these 4 self-assurances (*assāsa*), see SD 35.4a (7.2). Elaborated in **Apaṇaka S** (M 60,34.2), SD 35.5.
[503] Meaning, I have done no bad; I have done (or tried doing) only good. (A 3.65,17), SD 35.4a.

12 Buddhist unbelief

12.0 INTRODUCTION
	Having read through all this thus far, we may well be troubled by at least some of the developments described. But this is only the 1st noble truth: stating the real problem as clearly as possible. The 2nd noble truth is found here and there, too, suggesting the roots or conditions for these developments. Both give **meaning** to Buddhism today: that is what it is. The solution and its application should give us a Dharma-driven **purpose** (the reason this whole paper has been written, in the first place).
	Clearly, then, we are unlikely to (and certainly should not) blindly accept whatever we are told is "Buddhism"; for much of it is *not* what the Buddha has taught. This is where **unbelief** can be healthy to begin with. There are those who have practised Buddhism for some time, even gone for 10-day meditation retreats: then, they realize this is not what they want in life. For that very reason, they have come to *unbelieve* Buddhism. They leave Buddhism or give up Vipassana: What happens then? What does this mean? In this penultimate section of Part 1 of SD 60.1c, we will discuss the nature, even the benefits, of unbelief towards Buddhism.[504]

12.1 LEAVING BUDDHISM: UNBELIEF AND DISSIDENCE

12.1.1 Since early Buddhism is not a religion [11.4.8], there is almost no case of "**unbelief**" or even conversion (in the theistic sense): it is a path of self-realization and self-transformation. "**Self**" (*atta*) here comprises the body (our deeds and speech) and the mind (feeling, perception, and karma-formations or intentions). As practitioners, our task is to be bodily cultured or cultivated in body (*bhāvita,kāya*), being morally virtuous, and to be developed in mind (*bhāvita,citta*), being joyfully calm and insightfully clear. All this will bring us liberating wisdom (*paññā,vimutti*).
	There is only one well-known case of unbelief in the suttas [12.1.7], and a couple of cases of dissidence amongst the Buddha's followers. The way the Buddha deals with them is instructive rather than judgemental. Hence, **faith** in early Buddhism is not "cognitive," in the sense of believing in propositions and tenets, but an affective vision, direct seeing, of true reality. We do *not* "have faith" (that is, blind faith) in the Buddha, but we *have* faith in him because we have tasted the Dharma for ourself.[505]
	The faith that can be lost, turning into unbelief, is that based on our own views and biases that blind us from seeing the Buddha and the Dharma; so, we lose our way in the forest of delusion and fall into the mire of our ignorance. As soon as we know this, and acknowledge it, we begin to see the light that shines pulls us out of the mire, shows us the way out of the forest. We can see the path before us, and we only need to move towards it.
	Since wise faith [12.1.2] is not cognitive, based on some fiat of authority or agency of omniscience, but **affective**, rooted in our own direct vision and seeing, there is no way that we will lose that faith. When we know that the fire of lust is burning us, we then turn to the cool light of wisdom to guide to the path of self-reliance and freedom. We can *feel* the joy and peace that it is right and true.

12.1.2 The crusading atheist, Richard Dawkins, famously states that "Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence."[506] This understanding of **faith** clearly does not work with Buddhism [12.1.1], where, in **the Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65), the Buddha teaches us not to accept even his

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[504] "Unbelief," "apostasy," "leaving the religion," and so on comprise a new field of interdisciplinary study. See eg: Rambo & Farhadian, "Conversion," in *Macmillan Ency of Religion,* 2005: 1969-1974; Norenzayan & Gervais, "The origins of religious disbelief." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17,1 2013:20 f; (edd) Enstedt, Larsson & Mantsinen, *Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Brill, 2020; Rahmani, "Understanding unbelief in the mindfulness subculture." 2019 (forthcoming).
[505] On the 2 kinds of faith, see SD 10.4 (2.2.3).
[506] Dawkins' speech at the Edinburgh International Science Festival, 15 April 1992, qu in "Editorial: A scientist's case against God," *The Independent (London)*: 10 April 1992:17; P Gomberg, *What Should I Believe?: Philosophical Essays for Critical Thinking*. Broadview Press, 2011:146.

teachings uncritically, but to apply our own experience and reasoning to determine for ourselves what is bad or false, to reject them; and to see what is good and true, to accept them.[507] This is not <u>faith</u> as the word is commonly meant, especially in the God-religions, that is, "believe that we may understand," but **understand that we will believe**.[508]

The Buddha often warns us against **blind faith** or "rootless belief" (*amūlakā saddhā*),[509] that is, believing or accepting something,

(1) "without having seen, heard or known it" (*adiṭṭhaṁ asutaṁ amutaṁ,* Sn 1122),[510] or

(2) "without having seen, known or realized it" (*adiṭṭhaṁ aviditaṁ asacchikataṁ,* M 1:475 passim), or

(3) "without having known, seen, attained, realized or penetrated it" (*aññātaṁ adiṭṭhaṁ appattaṁ asacchikataṁ anabhisametaṁ*, A 4:384,18; + *aviditaṁ*, etc, M 1:475,29; S 5:221,4).

Phrase (1) applies generally when communicating with others or communicating in a manner commonly done. Phrase (2) usually applies to personal experiences such as feeling a sensation or some mental state. Phrase (3) applies only to spiritual experiences such as deep meditation or the attainment of the path itself, in other words, one of the levels of awakening.

The positive opposite of this is, of course, "rooted faith" (*mūlaka saddhā*), but the usual terms are either "faith with a good cause" (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing,[511] or "wise faith" (*avecca-p,pasāda*.[512] In other words, this is faith based on personal experience, on empirical evidence and direct knowledge.[513]

12.1.3 Sāriputta's faith

12.1.3.1 The Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta (S 48.44) tells us that the Buddha asks his right-hand monk, the arhat **Sāriputta**, if he has, through faith (*saddāhasi tvaṁ sāriputta*), mastered <u>the 5 spiritual faculties</u> (*indriya*) of *faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom*, mastering which leads one to nirvana, the death-free (*amata,pariyosānaṁ*). Sāriputta famously replies, "**Here, bhante, I do *not* go by faith in the Blessed One.**"[514] He explains that he has, keeping to the Buddha's teaching, experienced them for himself, using phrase (3) above.[515]

Sāriputta's great wisdom is further attested by an ancient **Dhammapada** verse, perhaps the most enigmatic in religious history, which goes thus:

Assaddho akataññū ca	Not through faith, but knowing the unmade,
sandhi-c,chedo ca yo naro	the man who has broken the connection,
hatâvakāso vantāso	eliminated the opening (for rebirth), given up desire—
sa ve uttama,poriso.	he is indeed a supreme person. (Dh 97; cf Dh 383)

12.1.3.2 This verse is composed in "**intentional language**" (Skt *sandhā,bhāṣā,* literally, "twilight language"), meaning that to those who have a narrow view of language (that each word has only *one* meaning) will be caught on a worldly level, and remain caught by the burden of language. Here are <u>the 2 possible senses</u> of **Dh 97**:

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[507] A 3.65,3 passim (SD 35.4a).

[508] 49.2 (3.5.2); SD 56.18 (1.2.1.2).

[509] See, eg, **Caṅkī S** (M 95,14/2:170), SD 21.15. On "rootless faith," see SD 10.4 (2.2.1.1).

[510] A freer version of this is "neither seen, heard nor surmised" (*adiṭṭhaṁ asutaṁ aparisaṅkitaṁ*, M 1:369,8).

[511] **Vīmaṁsaka S** (M 47,16/1:320,8), SD 35.6; **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60,4/1:401,23) SD 35.5.

[512] **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,11/2:69), SD 10.4 (2.2). See *Ency of Religion & Ethics* (ERE): Faith, & Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge,* 1963:387.

[513] On "wise faith," see SD 10.4 (2.2.1.2).

[514] *Na khvâhaṁ ettha bhante bhagavato saddhāya gacchāmi.*

[515] S 48.44/5:220-222 (SD 10.7). See also SD 40a.8 (5.6.2).

Negative literal sense	Positive Dharma sense

Negative literal sense
The man without faith,
   who knows no gratitude,
who is a house-breaker,
who has destroyed his opportunity,
he is indeed one of extreme audacity.

Positive Dharma sense
The man without desire,
   who knows the unmade [uncreated],
who has cut off the link,
who is eater of what is abandoned by others—
he is indeed the highest person.

The different layers of meanings in this verse are obvious enough to the wise. In fact, we can find similar "layered" meanings in any teaching, depending on how wise (or unwise) we are; hence, how well we have understood the teaching preserved therein. We are often prevented from seeing the wealth of the words by our ignorance. Hence, we give up the spiritual training, or fail in it, or we remain stuck in the language of **self-view** (that words are how they are spelt).[516]

However, we can also be blinded by our knowledge (without understanding), thus we fail to see the true sense of the words on account of our wrong view or unbelief. In other words, we should not only know *what* the Buddha *says* but, more so, what he means. While the former can be read in books or social media, or heard from other sources, the latter is our own self-realization through a direct experience of true reality, rooted in seeing impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and nonself.[517]

12.1.4 The houselord Citta's faith

12.1.4.1 In the Buddha's time, there are, besides renunciants like Sāriputta, many lay-disciples, like **the houselord Citta** (*citta gaha,pati*), who is wise in the letter and spirit of the Dharma. **The Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta Sutta** (S 41.8) records a meeting between the houselord Citta and Nigaṇṭha Nāta,putta (that is, Mahāvīra, the Jain founder). The latter, says the Saṁyutta Commentary, has the notion that the Buddha and his disciples are unfriendly, inhospitable to others, keeping to themselves. Hence, Citta visits the Jains for a dialogue, and also to clear up Mahāvira's wrong views about the Buddha.[518]

Mahāvīra, surprised and delighted at Citta's visit, thinks that he is there to convert. He asks Citta:

"Houselord, do you have faith in the recluse Gotama when he says, 'There is a concentration without applied thought and sustained thought, there is a cessation of applied thought and sustained thought'?"

"Here, bhante, **I do not go by faith** in the Blessed One … ." (*na khvâhaṁ ettha bhante bhagavato saddhāya gacchāmi …*).   (S 41.8,5/4:298), SD 40.7

12.1.4.2 Notice that the phrase Citta uses here is identical to the one that Sāriputta uses in his reply when the Buddha asks him if it were through faith that he has mastered the 5 spiritual faculties, as recorded in **the Pubba,koṭṭhaka Sutta** (S 48.44) [12.1.3]. However, Mahāvīra takes Citta's words *literally* to mean that "he has no faith in the Buddha"! He then proudly declares to his congregation that Citta is being very honest and open:

"One who thinks that thinking can cease would imagine that he could catch the wind in a net,
one who thinks that pondering can cease would imagine that he could stop the flow of the river Ganges with his own fist!"

Mahāvīra has the wrong view that it is impossible to stop thinking, even during dhyana—which shows that he has not been able to attain such a state. Citta, on the other hand, is simply trying to say that he has

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[516] On the nature of spiritual language, sometimes called the "Humpty Dumpty rule," see SD 17.4 (2.3) ↑SD 50.2 (1.1.1.3).
[517] For a fuller study of this remarkable verse, see **Dh 97** (SD 10.6).
[518] SA 3:100,8-12.

realized this truth—that thinking and knowing stops during dhyana—*from personal experience* and thus does not need to rely on mere faith in the Buddha's word![519]

12.1.5 In early Buddhist teachings, one of the amazing qualities of awakening, even as we approach the path to take our first step on it, is that we are able to see <u>through</u> words, free them from their senses. Hence, the Buddha's teaching is said to be taught, and should be mastered, both "in meaning and in the letter" (*sâtthaṁ sa,vyañjanaṁ*).[520] The "letter" is like the protective shell of a nutritious nut, and the "spirit" is its nutritious kernel.

To enjoy this full benefit of the Buddha's Dharma that is thus:
(1) *svâkkhāto*   "well taught," both in the spirit and the letter;
(2) *sandiṭṭhiko*   "to be seen by oneself," to be personally and directly experienced;
(3) *akāliko*   "nothing to do with time," it is eternal and frees our time beneficially;
(4) *ehi,passiko*   "invites us to come and see," it entails personal verification;
(5) *opanayiko*   "accessible," conduces to spiritual progress and growth;
(6) *paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*   "to be personally known by the wise" by freeing the sense from the words, seeing true reality within ourself.

12.1.6 Since early Buddhism is not a religion, but **a multiplex training of body, mind and spirit** that is <u>based on personal experience, empirical verification and self-awakening</u>, there is practically no place for the Buddha's **disciples** (*sāvaka*)[521]—those who have gained the path—to suffer from doubt, unbelief or apostasy, which characterize many modern religions. However, the Buddha accepts many as renunciants, so long as they express the desire to learn and practise the Dharma *without any strings attached.*

Early Buddhism has practically no term for "**conversion**," the way most modern religions refer to those who fully commit themselves as believers to the religion. However, the closest term or phrase that may be rendered as "conversion"—*sāvakattaṁ upagato,* "(who) has gone over to discipleship (with)"[522]—is found over a dozen times, all (and only) in the same text, **the Upāli (Gaha,pati) Sutta** (M 56). Even then, the phrase is used, not by the Buddha, but by the Jains, in reference to one of their leading supporters in Nāḷandā, the houselord Upāli (*upāli gaha,pati*).[523]

From the Buddha's own time until today, no one, properly speaking, has "converted" to Buddhism (early Buddhism, that is) to become awakened through mere believing faith. To be Buddhist is to train in moral conduct, mental development and cultivating wisdom: we take up Buddhist training (whatever our religion may be, or we have none).

Our commitment to the Buddhist training is formally done by repeating **the Buddha-salutation** (*namo … *)[524] thrice, **the 3-refuge formula** (*ti,sarana,gamaṇa*) thrice,[525] and **the 5 precepts** (*pañca,sīla*), thus:

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā,sambuddhassa. (Thrice)
Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi   "I take refuge in the Buddha."
Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi   "I take refuge in the Dharma/Dhamma" (the teachings and the truth).
Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi   "I take refuge in the sangha" (the community of noble disciples).[526]

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[519] S 41.8,8/4:298 f (SD 40a.7), SD 401.8 (5.6.3). See also **The layman and dhyana,** SD 8.5(8).
[520] See **(Dasaka) Upāli S** (A 10.99,5.1), SD 30.9.
[521] The term *sāvaka* or "disciple" refers to a follower, renunciant or layperson, who is already on the path at least as a streamwinner. A male lay follower is called an *upāsaka,* a female lay follower *upāsikā.*
[522] Along with the optative form, *sāvakattaṁ upagaccheyya,* "would go over to discipleship (with)."
[523] M 56, (SD 27.1).
[524] **Cūḷa Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 27,8) SD 40.5 (Jāṇussoṇi); **(Deva) Saṅgārava S** (M 100,2) + SD 10.9 (1.2); **Dhanañjanī S** (S 7.1), SD 45.5 (brahminee Dhanañjanī).
[525] On <u>the refuge-going</u>, see SD 43.4 (5.6.1).
[526] It is vital to note that we go for refuge to <u>the community of noble disciples</u> (the streamwinners, etc), as a gesture of our own aspiration to attain the path in this life itself (as far as possible).

Dutiyam pi …   "For the second time … "
Tatiyam pi …   "For the third time … "

This is followed by the recitation of <u>the 5 precepts</u>.[527]

This meaningful gesture is usually done before one or a few respected monastics, or before close lay
friends, or before a congregation as our witnesses. Conversely, there is no formality for leaving Buddhism,
since we have not taken up any membership, but simply declared our intention to commit to the Buddhist
practice. Hence, this whole formula is repeated together at the start of a Buddhist occasion.

12.1.7 Despite the fact that technically early Buddhism is *not* a religion (in the modern sense), we do
have an interesting case of what may be considered as **apostasy**, or at least <u>unbelief</u>, in the case of one of
the Buddha's followers, that is, the monk **Sunakkhatta** (who is not yet a disciple, *sāvaka*) [12.1.6]. He ap-
proaches the 80-year-old Buddha[528] and requests that he (the Buddha) perform some "miracles" to at-
tract members and supporters in the teeming city of Nāḷandā. The Buddha naturally refuses, since this is
against all that he has been teaching (especially about self-reliance).
    The Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta (M 12)[529] opens with the disappointed and disillusioned Sunakkhatta
publicly disparaging the Buddha:

        "The recluse Gotama has neither the superhuman state nor the distinction in knowledge and
    vision worthy of the noble ones!
        The recluse Gotama teaches a Dharma following an inquiry based on his own wits, fabricated
    by reasoning. The Dharma that is taught is only for some purpose, that of leading out for the
    complete destruction of suffering."   (M 12,2/1:68), SD 49.1

    Basically, Sunakkhatta is accusing the Buddha of being a "false guru," one without any spiritual powers
nor attainments, who has concocted and contrived his teachings (very much like a cult teacher today),
who only teaches the ending of suffering, because he has no more sophisticated message, lacking in any
revelation, without any prophetship.
    This part of the Sunakkhatta story is also briefly related in the opening of **the Pāṭika Sutta** (D 24).[530]
The Sutta opens with the Buddha, during the early dawn, before his morning almsround, visiting the wan-
derer Bhaggava,gotta in his hermitage at Anupiya. Bhaggava informs the Buddha that he met Sunakkhatta
the Licchavī who has declared that he has left the Buddha's order. The Buddha replies that he has spoken
to Sunakkhatta a few days ago.
    The Buddha recounts this conversation he had earlier with Sunakkhatta, which significantly shows the
nature of the Buddha's training, thus:

Sunakkhatta: "Lord, I am leaving you, I am no longer living by your teachings."
The Buddha: "Did I ever say to you: come, live by my teachings?"
Sunakkhatta: "No, Lord."
The Buddha: "Then, did you ever say to me that you wished to live by my teachings?"
Sunakkhatta: "No, Lord."
The Buddha: "That being the case, who are you and what are you giving up, you foolish man?"
                                                                     (D 24,1.3), SD 63.3

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[527] On <u>the 5 precepts</u>, see **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,3.4), SD 1.9; **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,13), SD 5.10**; Veḷu,dvār-
eyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).
[528] M 1:82 (SD 49.1).
[529] Also called **Sunakkhatta S** (M 12/1:68-83), SD 49.1.
[530] D 24,1.1-1.6/3:31-6 (SD 63.3).

The Buddha gives a similar response to the monk, Māluṅkya,putta, when he threatens to leave the order if the Buddha does not explain the "10 undetermined points."[531] The Buddha asks Māluṅkya,putta whether either of them had agreed beforehand when Māluṅkya,putta joined the order. The answer is *no,* in which case, the Buddha is not obliged to answer those questions! Māluṅkya,putta is sensible to listen to the Buddha and stay on with his training until he attains arhathood.[532]

In neither case—that of Sunakkhatta or the monk Māluṅkya,putta— does the Buddha suggest that apostates should be punished. However, in the case of Sunakkhatta, because of his malicious intentions and slander against the Buddha, a week after he leaves the order, he is said to be reborn as a preta, as a result of his own bad karma.[533]

12.1.8 Principles of interfaith dialogue

12.1.8.1 Although the Buddha is described in the early Buddhist texts as not being in the habit of con-verting those he teaches, almost all the suttas that recount his teaching depict his audience as taking up the training in some way, especially by way of renouncing the world and joining the sangha. However, there is at least one remarkable exception, where despite having given a middle-length discourse, none of his audience responds to take up the training. This is reported in **the Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25).

The Sutta records the Buddha approaching **Nigrodha**, an arrogant leader of the wanderers and his followers. The wanderer Nigrodha tells Sandhana, a lay practitioner who has visited him at dawn, that the Buddha, on account of his love for solitude, is a social misfit. It happens that, at that time, the Buddha arrives and meets Nigrodha, who then invites the Buddha to teach the Dharma.

12.1.8.2 The Buddha, surprisingly (to the delight of the assembly of wanderers), instead invites Ni-grodha to start the dialogue on his own training, that is, "ascetic abstinence" (*trapo jigucchā*). As Nigro-dha presents each stage of his own training, the Buddha shows, with a series of tree metaphors, how that stage is still not "the heartwood" (*sāra*), the core of the teaching.

Interestingly, the Buddha only stops at the stage, when having attained dhyana, we are able to culti-vate the knowledge of understanding how beings fare according to their karma. When asked by the Bud-dha, Nigrodha declares that *this* is the heartwood of the training (of the wanderers, anyway). The Sutta then closes with the Buddha declaring that his Dharma training will bring anyone, who practises for 7 years, or even trains full-time for as short as 7 days, will bring one the attainment of this knowledge. However, all the wanderers remained silent and unresponsive.

12.1.8.3 Nevertheless, this Sutta contains the Buddha's famous statement on **the 7 points of inter-faith dialogue**, or the essence of Buddhist missiology, thus:

(1) "Let whoever is your teacher (*ācariya*) remain as your teacher."
(2) "Let your training (*uddesa*) remain as your training."
(3) "Let your livelihood (*ājīva*) remain as your livelihood."
(4) "Let what you consider unwholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered."
(5) "Let what you consider wholesome (*kusala*) continue to be so considered."
(6) "There are unwholesome states not yet abandoned, that conduce to **rebirth and suffering**."
(7) "By your own insight and realization, you will attain **the fullness of wisdom**."

(D 25,23.1), SD 1.4 [1.11.4.4]

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[531] The 10 undetermined points or questions (*avyakata pañha*) are: *whether the world is eternal or not; whether it is finite or not; whether the self and the body are the same or different; whether a tathagata exists after death, does not, both, or neither*. (M 63,2-4) + SD 5.8 (2).
[532] **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 63/1:426-432), SD 5.8; **(Arahatta) Māluṅkya,putta S** (S 35.95/4:72-76), SD 5.9.
[533] SD 49.1 (5.3); cf D 24,1.6/3:6 (SD 63.3). For Stephen Batchelor's retelling of Sunakkhatta's story, see *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a secular age,* Yale, 2015:170-174.

Here again, it is clear that the Buddha does not wish to gain followers, or spread his influence, or gain economically, or influence the views of others. He warns that "there are unwholesome states not yet abandoned, defiled, that conduce to becoming again, fearful, fruiting in future suffering associated with decay, disease and death" (*santi ca kho nigrodha akusalā dhammā appahīnā saṅkilesikā ponobhavikā saddarā dukkha,vipākā āyatiṁ jāti,jarā,maraṇīyā*). The Buddha's teaching is about freedom from suffering and awakening.

12.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF LEAVING RELIGION

12.2.1 In an article, "Psychological Approaches to Leaving Religion" (Kyle Messick & Miguel Farias, 2020),[534] the writers, both research psychologists, tell us that mind scientists notice that religious belief and unbelief are correlated to parts of our brain. The prefrontal lobe, for example, processes both belief and unbelief. Such theories can be problematic; for example, do these parts of the brain actually process such states, or are they merely activated when such processes occur in the person?[535]

An interesting aspect of the nature of unbelief in Buddhism is *psychological*. Our healthy humanizing process is traditionally blessed by our mother and father, or at least one of them. However, more vital than the mere person are the roles of a healthy mother-figure and a healthy father-figure. It is possible, with some effort and ingenuity, for a single parent to play both roles, thus becoming **a parent figure**, where both *wisdom* (masculinity) and *compassion* (femininity) interface to raise the child into a wholesome adult.[536]

12.2.2 In a religious or Buddhist situation, this parent-figure role is often played by a Dharma teacher whom we look up to as an instructor as well as a role model. Often this is a distant figure with limited human interaction, unlike a parent-figure played by an adoptive parent, step-parent, elder sibling, friend or carer. When such a relationship is wholesome, that is, encompassing moral, mental and spiritual training, it is called **spiritual friendship**.[537]

The parent-figure in early Buddhism is **a spiritual friend**: ideally, like the Buddha to his personal attendant, Ānanda. On the other hand, as a Dharma teacher, the Buddha becomes a "mental teacher" for those who practise the Dharma. Such a wholesome spiritual link inspires us with control, comfort and purpose, that is, a healthy self-control (moral training), emotional comfort (mental training) and purpose of life (wisdom training), very clear and determined in reaching the path.

12.2.3 However, when there is some level of **psychological transference**,[538] we may expect to see our parent's joy, warmth and love in the parent-figure. When we imagine these desirable qualities in a teacher or leader, we may regress into a pre-personal or an infantile dependence on that parent-figure. In the case of some Christian mystics, such as St Theresa of Avila, these may be interpreted as hysterical symptoms.[539]

One great difficulty with such an experience (or idea) is that it sets the teacher "apart" from others (making him a "holy" figure, etc), and thus works best in a religion that is rooted in the notion of "other-agency," such as a God-idea. Meditative joy and peace, such as that associated with lovingkindness, on

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[534] In (edd) D Enstedt, G Larsson & T T Mantsinen, *Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Brill, 2020:307-322 (ch 25).

[535] Early Buddhism seems to see the "mind" as a general experience of the whole body; only in Abhidhamma is the "seat" of thinking located, not in the brain, but in the heart's core: SD 60.1b (11.2.1.1).

[536] On this humanizing stage or role, see SD 38.3 (2.2.3).

[537] See **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1 + SD 34.1.

[538] SD 19.2a (2.5.2); SD 24.10b (2); SD 64.17 (3.1).

[539] C Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism and Gender in European Culture,* Cornell, 1996. The def of hysteria changes over time: "A once-popular name for a mental disorder characterized by emotional outbursts, fainting, heightened suggestibility, and conversion symptoms such as paralysis, nowadays generally not viewed as a coherent syndrome but rather as aspects of conversion disorder, dissociative disorders, and histrionic personality disorder" (*Oxford Dictionary of Psychology,* 2000).

the other hand, can be cultivated by almost anyone under the proper conditions, and is regarded as a "positive emotion" that is attainable by anyone and should be attained by everyone.[540]

12.2.4 Furthermore, when we transfer certain desirable parental qualities onto an authority-figure (such as a Dharma teacher), and then, for some reason, when we perceive that figure as lacking those qualities, or failing to fulfil our expectations, we may then compulsively reject that figure, even give up Buddhism. Or worse, we move on to look for another prospective authority-figure to play the same game all over again.

When we take Buddhism as a **religion**—as a teacher-centred set of teachings with our attraction to the teacher and not the teaching—then, we have fallen victims of **the Pygmalion effect**. We have projected qualities we desire onto that authority figure, and fallen in love with that figure. Indeed, behind every celebrity monk, often stands a dominant woman who wants to own him. Such a person-centred relationship, without the Vinaya, will only court disaster in no time. Even when the monk is safely ringfenced by the Vinaya, those under his charge will, in some way, be darkened by his shadow. [12.3.9]

12.2.5 The Buddha, in an instructive teaching preserved in **the Puggala-p,pasāda Sutta** (A 5.250), warns of the 5 ways we can easily fall away from the teaching into unbelief when any of these happen to the one we are deeply devoted (*abhippasanna*) to, thus:

(1) when the sangha suspends him (or her), or
(2) when the sangha makes him sit at the end of the assembly, or
(3) when the person leaves for a distant place, or
(4) when he leaves the sangha, or
(5) when he dies.

We are then negatively affected by this change; we would be displeased with the other renunciants (monks and nuns who keep to the Dharma-Vinaya), and would not attend to them. From not attending to the renunciants, we would not hear the Dharma; not listening to the Dharma, we would fall away. These are the 5 dangers of being devoted to a particular person (instead of practising the Dharma).[541]

Such a teaching is so closely connected with the teaching that even the Buddha himself holds the Dharma above himself, as given in **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2). This Dharma-centred attitude is explained by the Buddha as being:
(1) for the fulfilment of any unfulfilled aggregate of moral virtue;
(2) for the fulfilment of any unfulfilled aggregate of concentration;
(3) for the fulfilment of any unfulfilled aggregate of wisdom;
(4) for the fulfilment of any unfulfilled aggregate of freedom;
(5) for the fulfilment of any unfulfilled aggregate of knowledge and vision of freedom;[542]

that is, for the sake of progressing on the path of awakening (the noble eightfold path), ending up with right freedom and right vision. This decad is called the 10 rightnesses (*dasa sammatta*), which summarizes the practice of the path and its fruition of arhathood and nirvana.[543]

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[540] On the 4 positive emotions (lovingkindness, compassion, joy and equanimity), see ***Brahma,vihara***, SD 38.5.
[541] **Puggala-p,pasāda S** (A 5.250/3:270), SD 3.14(9).
[542] In this early pentad, we have (4) the "aggregate of freedom," and (5) the "aggregate of knowledge and vision of freedom." In the later canonical set of 10 rightnesses (*sammatta*) [foll n], we have (9) "right knowledge" (*sammā ñāṇa*) and (10) "right freedom" (*sammā vimutti*). In terms of attainment, (9+10) are included in "wisdom" as fruition, but are here *theoretically* laid out as a decad. In the pentad, (5) is taken to be the arhat's review knowledge, while in the decad lays out the path-factors in a theoretical sequence for easy explanation.
[543] See **Asekha Ss 1 + 2** (A 10.111 + 112), **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.3.3(6)/3:271), **Das'uttara S** (D 34,2.3(10)/3:292).

In other words, the Buddha himself respects the Dharma, since it is what has awakened (*buddha*) him. Secondly, he is highlighting this point so that we, too, will follow his example by not looking up to him as a cult figure, but see the Dharma, the teaching, as the path to awakening, to awakening like hi

12.3 Is Goenka's Vipassana a New Religion?

12.3.1 One of the most successful modernist Buddhist movement today is clearly that of the internation-al Vipassana of **Satya Narayana Goenka** (1924-2013),[544] a former businessman of Indian descent, the de-signated successor to the Burmese lay teacher U Ba Khin (1899-1971), himself the successor to the lay teacher, Saya Thetgyi (1871-1945), who was himself appointed successor by the illustrious Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923).[545] Besides Goenka, U Ba Khin taught Vipassana to many lay practitioners, both Burmese and westerners.[546]

Goenka, who died in 2013 without appointing a successor, was the last in a line of renowned lay Vi-passana teachers going back to the great Burmese monk Ledi Sayadaw. In 1982, Goenka, in an attempt to standardize his teachings and prevent deviations, video-recorded all of his instructions and appointed assistant teachers to conduct courses on his behalf. All Goenka centers worldwide follow the same set of guidelines, which prohibits them from altering his teachings, instructions, recordings, and the structure of the courses.[547]

Goenka's Vipassana offers a diverse range of courses (from 3-60 days) but the most popular are the 10-day Vipassana courses [12.3.2]: these courses are conducted in practically the same way worldwide. Thus, if students return to attend a second 10-day course, they will be listening to the same instructions and following the same rules and routine. Practitioners in non-English-speaking countries are provided with a translated version of Goenka's instructions. [548]

What is the significance of this? We will return to this before we end this section on Vipassana.

12.3.2 Although well-known as the "**10-day Vipassana course**," it really runs over 12 days: we arrive on day 0. The actual course starts the following day, and we leave the course premises on the morning fol-lowing the 10th day.[549] During the 10 days, students follow a strict timetable with 10-12 hours of medita-tion from 4:30 to 21:00 each day. The course officially begins on the evening of Day 0 when all students **take the 3 Refuges** (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) [12.1.6], surrender to the teacher, and formally re-quest for instructions to do the breath meditation.[550]

Although the retreat is said to be "non-religious," even "non-Buddhist," most participants are not aware that they are undergoing the standard initiation into Buddhism. There is an obvious tension often compelling both Goenka and his followers to justify this inconsistency.[551]

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[544] Rahmani & Pagis, "Vipassana Meditation," World Religions and Spirituality Project, 2015: Vipassana Meditation – WRSP (wrldrels.org).

[545] SD 60.1b (2.4.10-2.5).

[546] U Ba Khin's students incl Sayamagyi Dyaw Ma Thwin, Ruth Denison, John Coleman and Robert Hover (Rawlin-son, *The Book of Enlightened Masters,* Open Court, 1997:593).

[547] Much of the practical info here is based on the experience of M Rahmani, "Goenka's Vipassana Movement: From conversion to disaffiliation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Meditation,* 2021:632.

[548] What to expect (Dhamma Dharā, MA, USA): https://www.dhara.dhamma.org/courses/what-to-expect/.

[549] One possible rationale for the "10 days" is that most participants will take at least 3 days to prime themselves for the actual meditation. Hence, they actually properly sit for only 7 days, which is the minimum number of days declared by the Buddha that one may attain either arhathood or at least non-returning: **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46.31), SD 13.3.

[550] N Rahmani, *Drifting Through Samsara: : Tacit conversion and disengagement in Goenka's Vipassana move-ment,* OUP, 2022:635.

[551] Rahmani op cit 2021:632; N Melnikova, *The Modern School of Vipassana—A Buddhist tradition?* Doc diss, Brno: Masaryk U, 2014:51-81.

On Day 4, the students make a formal request for instructions in Vipassana meditation. They also take the vow of "**noble silence**,"[552] which prohibits all interpersonal communication whether by speech, eye contact, gesture, sign language or writing. The rule of solitude (or what conduces to solitude, *viveka*) is also applied, including gender segregation and restrictions on contact with the world outside of the retreat; no religious rituals (other than those of the retreat) are allowed. Also not allowed are possession of religious objects, listening to music, reading, or writing. This is to prevent, or at least limit, any external stimuli during the course.[553] This is, in fact, another traditional early Buddhist teaching and practice: the value of **solitude**: physical, mental and spiritual.[554]

12.3.3 We have mentioned refuge-going (*saraṇa,gama*) in the preceding section. This is the 1st aspect of the initiation into being a Buddhist (a kind of conversion ritual). The other is that of **keeping the precepts** (*sīla,samādāya*), which is usually the 5 precepts—abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication) [12.1.6]—for the "new students" (first timers on the 10-day retreat). Those who have successfully completed the 10-day retreat are called "**old students,**" who are then eligible to attend other Vipassana courses, shorter or longer ones, and give dhamma[555] services, provided they keep to the organization's code of conduct and maintain a regular practice. They also have access to the organization's online resources (texts, audios and videos) that are inaccessible to the public.

Furthermore, all "old students," so long as they are serving the organization or a retreat, must keep to **the 8 precepts** (*aṭṭha,sīla*), that is, to abstain from: (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) all sexual activity, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) eating outside the forbidden times (between noon and sunrise), (7) worldly entertainment and bodily decorations, and (8) sleeping on high luxurious beds. These are also known as "observance precepts" (*uposatha,sīla*), since the laity would keep them on "observance days" (*uposatha*), that is, the full moon and new moon days.[556] In doing so, these participants are practising a higher level of moral restraint than the average Buddhist, a more "advanced" practice![557]

12.3.4 Each retreat day begins with 30 minutes of pre-recorded audiotapes in which Goenka chants Pali passages from the suttas for the purpose of enhancing (that is, "blessing") the ambience with "good vibrations," and ends with an hour of his evening "discourses" in which relevant Buddhist teachings are explained in a language replete with humorous analogies (especially the story of The Doctor's Prescription) [12.3.12].[558]

The teachings that Goenka offers at this course rest on a selective interpretation of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10) in light of the Abhidhamma and Buddhaghosa's **Visuddhi,magga** (the Path of Purification). While the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta comprises the 4 foundations of mindfulness—the body, feelings, the mind and dharmas (mental objects)—Goenka's teachings (following that of his teacher, U Ba Khin) focused predominantly on feelings.

Goenka's Vipassana technique is theoretically underpinned by the basic Buddhist doctrines of the 4 noble truths (suffering, its arising, its ending, the path), and his courses are meticulously structured to practise the 3 stages of the noble eightfold path: morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Goenka thus closely follows the root Buddhist teaching that all physical and mental phenomena

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[552] Properly, "noble silence" (*ariya,tuṇhī,bhāva*) refer to the Buddha's silence on the 10 questions []. ie, not dabbling in any intellectual speculations that may distract our meditation. See **Silence and the Buddha** (SD 44.1).

[553] M Pagis, "Producing intersubjectivity in silence: An ethnographic study of meditation practice." *Ethnography* 11,2 2010:309-328.

[554] On solitude (*viveka*), see **Viveka,nissita** SD 20.4 (4.2).

[555] In this section I have retained the internal usage of "dhamma" instead of the usual anglicized Dharma.

[556] On the *uposatha* precepts, see **(Tad-ah)uposatha S** (A 3.70,9-16), SD 4.18; **Vitthat'uposatha S** (A 8.42), SD 89.11; **Nav'aṅg'uposatha S** (A 9.18), SD 59.4.

[557] https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/code.

[558] Dhamma Medini (NZ): https://medini.dhamma.org/. Mattan Griffel: https://mattangriffel.medium.com/what-happens-during-a-10-day-silent-vipassana-retreat-43eded56e4e5. Ethan Maurice: https://ethanmaurice.com/blog/my-mind-blowing-inner-experience-of-a-10-day-vipassana-meditation-course.

(including our human existence) are marked by the 3 characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and nonself (*anattā*). From the Theravada perspective, awakening (*bodhi*) or nirvana (*nibbāna*) consists of realizing this reality in the fullest sense.

12.3.5 For the cultivation of **morality**, the 1st aggregate (*khandha*) of the noble eightfold path (the 1st training), all students must take a vow to keep the 5 precepts for the duration of the course [12.3.3]. The 2nd training of the path, **mental concentration**, is basically cultivated or learned from day 1 to day 3, that is, with the practice of the breath meditation, which trains the students in mental concentration. The standard practice in breath meditation amongst the Burmese teachers seems to keep our mind on the free-flowing breath's contact-point at the nose-tip or the centre of the upper lip (the philtrum).[559] This is following the Abhidhamma tradition.[560]

The 3rd and final training of the path—that of **wisdom**—is done from the 4th day onwards, when students actually learn Vipassana meditation (according to the Burmese tradition). Once again, students must officially request to be given instructions to this practice. The Vipassana instructions are given in stages by systematically extending the concentration (learned during the first 3 days) to other areas of the body.

Theoretically, Goenka's Vipassana tradition, is based on some understanding, or at least acceptance, of the 4 noble truths [12.3.4] underpinning the self (what we are) comprise **suffering** or unsatisfactori-ness conditioned by our ignorance of **the arising** of suffering. Hence, we are ignorant of **the path** to **the ending** of suffering. To start working with Vipassana, all our sufferings are now seen as the result of our own ignorance (the past) and mental conditioning (the present).

Ignorance means that we have allowed, and are allowing, suffering to take its insidious course, and we are feeding it, like a snake biting its own tail. Through Vipassana, we work with our newfound power of responsibility, that is, taking control of our actions (body, speech and mind). How well we do it and how far we can go depends on our commitment to the general markers of conversion to Buddhism.[561]

12.3.6 Goenka's Vipassana courses regularly applies "**controlled learning**" by his exhorting us to have an "experiential understanding" of the 4 noble truths (that is, as defined by Goenka).[562] He often reminds his students that a merely intellectual understanding of these concepts will not bring any "real wisdom," and therefore will not lead us to liberation from suffering. Instead, we must understand the true source of suffering at the experiential (that is, Vipassana) level. Students should thus spend time in meditation rather than reading or engaging in "useless" intellectual engagements.[563]

This learning strategy—that personal experience, not intellectual understanding, is the true source of wisdom—underpins much of Goenka's teaching, including his claim that his Vipassana is free from "reli-gion" and that its teachings are "non-sectarian." Thus, despite teaching various Buddhist doctrines (such as the 3 characteristics, karma, etc), Goenka discourages his students from accepting them "blindly": they should only accept these as "truths" by having experienced them for themselves, that is, through Vipas-sana.[564]

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[559] On the breath meditation, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,5-7 + 15-22) SD 7.13; **Mahā Rāhul'ovāda S** (M 62,24-30) SD 3.11.

[560] SD 7.13 (2.3.1).

[561] On religious conversion, see Brekke, "Conversion in Buddhism?" In (edd) R Robinson & S Clarke, *Religious Conversion in India*. Delhi: OUP, 2003:181-191; D S Yü, "Buddhist conversion in the contemporary World," in (edd) Rambo & Farhadian, *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (pp. 465-487), Oxford, 2014:465-487 (Mahāyāna perspective); M Rahmani, *Tacit Conversion and Disengagement in Goenka's Vipassana Movement in New Zealand.* Doc diss U of Otago, Dunedin (NZ), 2017.

[562] Goenka 1997:12.

[563] Goenka, 2005:99, in VRI Dhamma, 2014.

[564] Goenka 1997, in VRI Dhamma, 2014.

12.3.7 Yet, observes Rahmani, "given that course attendees are introduced to the doctrines of *dukkha*, *anicca*, *anattā*, and *saṅkhāra* on day three and prior to any Vipassana instructions, the question remains whether they are preconditioned with a series of expectations that are to be internalized and later "re-discovered."[565] For example, Goenka's constant repetition of the term impermanence (almost as a mantra: *anicca*, *anicca*, *anicca*), does not allow the student to independently develop this insight."[566]

Another element of ambiguity is Goenka's vacillation between promoting (1) Vipassana meditation as a "practical" practice attuned to the demands of the conventional life (Medini Dhamma, 2017) and (2) promoting it as a transformative path leading to *nibbāna* or enlighten-ment. While this vacillation commonly leads new students to be confused about the purpose of the technique, there is often no such ambivalence in the mind of committed meditators who unequivocally pursued the ultimate goal of awakening. As becomes clear in the following pages, these rhetorical strategies have significant implications for both conversion (ie, rendering it tacit) and disengagement (eg, instigating self-doubt).   (Rahmani 2021:634 f)

12.3.8 What makes Goenka's Vipassana very successful? To begin with, it is a respectable meditation system. But then, there are countless other meditation methods, ranging from the staidly traditional to the trendy. What is so unique or characteristic of Goenka's Vipassana that makes it stand out unlike other Vipassana methods? Vipassana scholar Rahmani attributes the success of the system to what she terms "**tacit conversion**," a kind of passive acceptance of, even reflexive turning to, his Vipassana.[567]

The term "tacit conversion," then, is meant to be oxymoronic, juxtaposing two contradictory notions: that Goenka's Vipassana is *not* a religion; yet, its committed practitioners have effectively "converted," surrendered, themselves to it as their lifestyle. This is a **modernist** conceptualization of Buddhism, which, in line with Goenka's representation of "pure Dhamma," highlights and values the "detraditionalization, demythologization and psychologization" of Vipassana:[568] it is a New Religion [12.3.10].

Thus he presented Vipassana as *tacit* or *crypto* Buddhism in these ways:

(1) Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy;   [12.3.9]
(2) as true Buddhism, it is free of dogmas and rituals;   [12.3.9]
(3) meditation is to be practised free from "Buddhism"; and   [12.1.10-11]
(4) Vipassana as Buddhism is categorically different from other religions.   [12.3.12-14]

These 4 characteristics define what scholars call "**Buddhist modernism**"[569] or "Protestant Buddhism.[570] This does not make Goenka's Vipassana unique: most modern Buddhisms today are like this [1.1.2-2.1.1]. Yet, it is what attracts non-Buddhists, and, of course, Buddhists, too; but more of the former.[571]

By using the word "Vipassana," participants (or any observer) would at once associate it with Buddh-ism. Goenka's pious propaganda probably sounds quaint, even inspiring. Since dogmatism and intoler-ance are simply uncharacteristic of Buddhism, his audience (many of them probably new to Vipassana) would imagine Goenka to be serious about his work. Vipassana is, after all, Buddhist.

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[565] F Deleanu, "Agnostic meditations on Buddhist meditation," *Zygon* 45,3, 2010:616.

[566] H Singh, *A Critique of Vipassana Meditation as Taught by Mr S N Goenka*, 2007:19. Retrieved from https://eldar.cz/kangaroo/mirror/vipassana-critique.pdf.

[567] M Rahmani, *Drifting Through Samsara,* op cit 2022:2.

[568] D L McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* OUP, 2008:42-59.

[569] McMahan, op cit 2008:139-141, 223-227, 232, 239; Sharf, "Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditative experience," *Numen* 42,3, 1995a, eg 241-243.

[570] Gombrich & Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed,* Princeton, 1988:202-240 (ch 6).

[571] B Alan Wallace, "The spectrum of Buddhist practice in the West," in (edd) Prebish & Baumann, *Westward Dhamma,* Berkeley, 2002:36-39, 46-48.

12.3.9 Is Vipassana a religion?

12.3.9.1 Goenka claims that his Vipassana is *not* **a religion** [12.3.8]. However, we, as informed Buddhists (and even as better informed scholars), can clearly see how zealously he actually promotes Vipassana as a **religion**. On Day 0, participants "go for the 3 refuges" [12.3.2] and "take the 5 precepts" [12.3.3]. These ritual acts define us as "Buddhists," and are the routine, even daily, exercises, done by traditional Buddhists and during public Buddhist events. Such acts "link" (*ligare*) us together, again and again (*re*) as Buddhists; hence, they make Vipassana a **religion** (from Latin, *re-ligare*).[572] Even as a "philosophy," it is "religious philosophy."

"**True Buddhism is free of dogmas and rituals**." "Dogma" is defined as "a tenet or doctrine authoritatively laid down by a particular church, sect, or school of thought" (OED). Hence, we may say that Buddhist dogmas (tenets we have yet to experience and understand for ourselves) are teachings given to us to be investigated, and by our own experience, know them to be true and real, or not. Informed Buddhists understand that some teachings—like those of karma, rebirth, sainthood and nirvana—cannot be proven (except from our own attainment). As unawakened practitioners, we examine carefully how such teachings "work," and investigate through practice and understanding how we can wholesomely learn from them. This is our on-going training until we reach the path ourself.

Rituals can be helpful; they are wholesome so long as they are helpful in keeping us mindful and in gaining mental concentration. They are not helpful when we are attached to them; then, it becomes the fetter of "attachment to rituals and vows." Reciting the homage, refuges and precepts are staple Buddhist rituals that remind us of our urgent tasks as Buddhists. It is when we do not act out, practise, the good to which these rituals point, then they are mere fetters.

12.3.9.2 **Meditation** is rooted in early Buddhism: it is rooted in Buddhism; it is Buddhism. This psychobabble about meditation, that "I'm *not* a Buddhist, but I'm putting my name to Meditation anyway." It is Zen doubletalk: having taken a photo of the moonlight in the water, we caption it thus: "This is *not* the moonlight; it has nothing to do with the sun; it's my photo!" Isn't it better to have seen the moonlight, bathed in it, and felt the warmth of the sunlight, smiled in it?

"**Buddhism is categorically different from other religions**." If we take that Buddhism is *not* a religion, then, this should not be an issue at all. The tension between Vipassana and Buddhism as "non-religions" (as meditation teaching and practice) and with "other religions" (belief systems) ironically betrays a proposal that we should prefer the former above the latter: this is what characterizes "tacit conversion" that Rahmani speaks of. It is a term that "describes a process whereby increased socialization into a movement and the adoption of its language paradoxically conceals conversion to the member"[573] [12.2.4].

12.3.10 Who are the tacit converts that **Rahmani**[574] speaks of? [12.3.8]. Rahmani[575] herself joined three 10-day Vipassana courses in NZ (2006, 2010, 2014).[576] The 15 male and 11 female "committed" medita-

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[572] For etym, see OED: religion.

[573] Rahmani, *Drifting Through Samsara,* op cit 2022:2.

[574] This section is based on Masoumeh Sara Rahmani, "Goenka's Vipassana movement: From conversion to disaffiliation," op cit 2021:635-641.

[575] Rahmani is a lecturer in Religious Studies at the School of Social and Cultural Studies in Victoria Univ of Wellington, NZ. She received her PhD from the Univ of Otago in 2017 and has previously held a research associate position in the Brain, Belief, and Behaviour lab at Coventry Univ. Her doctorate dissertation, "Drifting through Samsara" (2022) explores the processes of joining and leaving S N Goenka's Vipassana meditation in NZ—a global meditation movement distinguished for its rich rhetorical repertoire for repackaging Theravada teachings in pseudo-scientific and secular language. The book examines the implication of the movement's discourse on shaping unique processes/narratives of conversion and disengagement. She did a longitudinal project exploring the diversity of "unbelief" in the mindfulness subcultures of the UK and the US, and examined the influence of the practice on the worldviews of non-religious/atheist practitioners. https://people.wgtn.ac.nz/sara.rahmani.

[576] In 2014, Rahmani spent a total of 16 days in Dhamma Medini (the Vipassana retreat, in Kaukapakapa, about an hour's drive from Auckland), doing the 10-day retreat, followed by Dharma service. In 2015, she paid a day visit

tors in her field research belonged to the middle and upper-middle classes, most of whom had university education. They included postgraduate students, freelance artists, builders, and accountants. All were of European descent, aged between 24 and 76.

Some indicated an exclusive commitment to the practice, with several years or even decades of involvement, and had typically attended more than three 10-day courses, and lived near the Vipassana centre. Following Goenka's teachings, they observed the precepts (*sīla*) in their daily lives, meditated at least 2 hours a day, and participated in at least one 10-day course each year.[577]

They were "committed" Vipassana meditators who accepted and used Goenka's fourfold **rhetorical strategies** of (1) experience [12.3.11], (2) meditation as a "tool" [12.3.12], (3) the pure teachings of the Buddha [12.3.13], and (4) the "here and now" [12.3.14]. We will here briefly see their worldviews and rationale of their Vipassana or Buddhist experience: how their practice had transformed them.[578]

12.3.11 The rhetoric of meditation experience[579]

The regular Vipassana practitioners—the "tacit converts" [12.3.10] and many disaffiliates[580]—characteristically applied the "rhetoric of experience" to rationalize their commitment to Vipassana. They rejected the notion of conversion, and reasoned that their commitment to Vipassana was not out of "blind belief," but rather from their own <u>experience</u> of Vipassana: they had accepted the "Buddha's teachings" because it reflected their personal experience. Since they were able to experience these doctrines in an embodied way, they are not "beliefs" but *experiential truths*.

In Goenka's rhetoric, he uses the term "belief" in a negative sense, not only because of its association with religion, but, more importantly, because it lacks self-verification; hence, it deprives us of the truth. Hence, according to Goenka (1997, cited in VRI Dhamma, 2014): "Beliefs are always sectarian. Dhamma has no belief. In Dhamma you experience, and then you believe. There is no blind belief in Dhamma. You must experience and then only believe whatever you have experienced." (Rahmani 2022:80)

Goenka uses <u>the rhetoric of experience</u> mainly to conceal the religious elements of his teachings (which is likely to be out of hubris), or he actually thinks his students will accept this (which may be his naivete). It's well known that practically all Vipassana practitioners will, at some point, see, even accept, Vipassana teachings as <u>Buddhist</u> teachings. Logically, these teachings would be more "authentic" if they are Buddhist teachings rather than those of Goenka himself!

In fact, Goenka's explanation worked for only some, but not most, of the practitioners. Those who were sticklers to Goenka's teaching at his word (rather than the spirit) were likely to find that, despite years of intense "meditation," they were not able to have such "experiences." We are speaking of unicorns here: they may be great stories but we outgrow such tales with a smiling good memory. We don't

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there to interview its main teachers and collect information about the Centre's history. Rahmani op cit 2022:10-12. For a high point in her life: Rahmani, "Leaving Vipassana meditation," in (edd) Enstedt et al, *A Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Leiden, 2019:130-141. [1.12.4.1].

[577] M S Rahmani, *Drifting Through Samsara,* op cit 2022:16-25.

[578] Rahmani, "Goenka's Vipassana movement: From conversion to disaffiliation," in (edd) Farias, Brazier & Lalljee, *The Oxford Handbook of Meditation,* OUP, 2021:638-641.

[579] Rahmani, 2021:638; 2022:78-85. The phrase and idea, "**rhetoric of experience**" is from Robert Sharf [1.3.2.1]. Sharf follows Wayne Proudfoot (*Religious Experience,* Berkeley, 1985) to render the contemporary emphasis on experience as a strategy "motivated in large measure by an interest in freeing religious doctrine and practice from dependence on metaphysical beliefs and religious institutions" (Proudfoot 1985:xiii, in Sharf 1995:229). Sharf adds, "The central feature of private experience that allowed it to play this role is precisely its unremitting *indeterminacy*" (1995:268). Simply, our experience, when understood, frees us from dependence on the experiences of others.

[580] "**Disaffiliate**" is Rahmani's term for those who "had typically attended between a minimum of three to a maximum of ten, ten-day courses and exhibited less or no inclination to return to a Vipassana centre in the future. … it does *not* mean that the participant has entirely rejected the movement's universe of discourse, teachings, and truth claims … . Hence, what I perceive as the conceptual difference between <u>disaffiliation and deconversion</u> is the form of language and the extent to which the participants' (current) self-concept and narratives are shaped by the movement's universe of discourse. Including whether they made a strategic use of any of the four rhetorics [1.12.3.10] …." (2022:147 & n, 148 Fig 4.1)

try to go on a quest to find any of them. Thus, in reality, this very same rhetoric alone fails to sustain membership and, in fact, causes significant self-doubt in many practitioners who have no way to measure their progress towards awakening.[581]

Those who knew some Buddhism, or took the trouble to know Buddhism (which they were likely to in such a commitment), would find that their practice fit better with the Buddha's teaching than with Goenka's rhetoric—which is, in fact, the "Buddhist undercurrent" in Vipassana practice for most of the informed practitioners. The point is that most Vipassana practitioners are unlikely to distance themselves from any Theravāda teacher, and feel comfortable meeting and listening to them, even meditating with them.

12.3.12 The "here and now"[582]

This second rhetorical strategy is common to all Vipassana systems, even in those outside of Goenka's system. This is actually a vital practice skill to be developed in Vipassana so that we are able to look deeply into what is before our mind and see its impermanence and conditionality. New participants or those who are not committed Vipassana practitioners would often quote this concept when they speak about the benefit of meditation in their daily lives. Being present and aware of what goes on in the here and now is a desirable virtue and carries positive connotations, such as enjoying the moment, appreciating life and living it fully.

On the other hand, this is a common rhetorical strategy by old students [12.3.3] to avoid or end a discussion about beliefs (karma, rebirth, nirvana), Buddhist identity, and the relation between Vipassana and religion. It is a rhetorical strategy often used when a Vipassana practitioner wants to prevent or get out of a discussion on the relation of Vipassana to religion. This sort of reply is common: "My goal is not any theoretical understanding, but to work with the impurity in the present moment."

12.3.13 Vipassana as a "tool"[583]

Serious Vipassana meditators, following Goenka's instruction, often say that Vipassana meditation is simply a "tool" for personal development and transformation, to distance the movement from religious categories. This rationalization is largely influenced by secular and scientifically oriented language (eg, self-exploratory techniques, scientific laws) in which Goenka gave his teachings. When teaching, Goenka often presented Vipassana meditation alongside traditional forms of religious practices (eg, prayers, chanting, and worship); yet, he devalued them, labelling them as "empty rituals."

To explain this rhetoric, Rahmani quotes one of Goenka's well-known metaphors: the "**doctor's prescription**." This popular anecdote brought a rare laughter in the meditation hall, and was often retold by Vipassana meditators. This metaphor relates how a sick man with "great faith" in his doctor, who, instead of "taking the medicine" prescribed, sets up a shrine in his house, bows to the doctor's image, offers flowers, and recites: "Two pills in the morning! Two pills in the afternoon! Two pills in the evening!" The moral of the story is that "without actually taking the medicine, one cannot be cured of the disease."[584]

In this spirit, the rhetorical strategy—that Vipassana as "tool"—involves two intrinsically linked ideas: autonomy and practicality. On the one hand, the movement's emphasis on individual responsibility (we must take the medicine ourself) and self-exploration alludes to a sense of spiritual autonomy which is the basis upon which many meditators distinguish Vipassana from traditional religions.

On the other hand, because the pragmatic aspect of the practice is depicted in contrast to prayer and worship, it evokes an image of a rational and effective practice, and thus, marginalizes Vipassana's religious elements in the practitioners' mind (such as chanting in Pali for "good vibrations," the strict code of conduct, gender segregation, etc). The committed meditators often used this rhetorical strategy to reject religious categories, resolve their ambivalences, or to abruptly end any discussion that disconfirmed their positions (ie, their context-dependent identities).

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[581] See Rahmani 2022 ch 5.
[582] Rahmani, 640 f; 2022:85.
[583] Rahmani, 2021:638 f; 2022:85 f.
[584] Goenka, cited in Hart, 1987:68 f. Rahmani 2022:86.

12.3.14 The pure teachings of the Buddha[585]

The final rhetorical strategy used by Goenka and his followers to defend the "independent nature" of their Vipassana by: (1) declaring Goenka's teaching and lineage are authentic, by connecting them directly to the historical Buddha, and (2) emphasizing the universality of the Buddha's teaching. Goenka, in his teachings and in the information available on the movement's official website,[586] asserts that the technique of Vipassana meditation was "rediscovered" 2,500 years ago by the Buddha, and it has been handed down through an unbroken chain of teachers who managed to preserve the technique in its "pristine purity."

Goenka warns that any alterations to the movement's fixed set of instructions, teachings, and guidelines threatens the purity of the method and can lead to "sectarianism." These include (but are not restricted to) the guidelines pertaining to diet, segregation, physical contact, the handling of donations, proselytization methods, and the incorporation of other practices or rituals into Vipassana.[587]

Goenka, in his teachings, presents the Buddha's teachings as "pure Dhamma" and the "law of nature" that is universal, and hence applies to everyone regardless of one's religious background. In fact, Goenka is (consciously or unconsciously) declaring that only his teaching is "pure Dharma," thus:

> Whoever first used the word Buddhism or Buddhist, in any language, was the biggest enemy of
> Buddha's teaching. Because the teaching had been universal, and now out of ignorance, he made
> it sectarian. Buddhism is only for Buddhists but Dhamma is for all.
>
> (Goenka, 1998; cited in VRI Dhamma, 2014)

The same rationalization is often evident in the language of those old students who see Goenka's Vipassana as "pure Buddhism." Interestingly, we also see the same argument being given for "disengagers," those who leave or who disaffiliate themselves from Vipassana [12.4.6]. Those who are well informed regarding Buddhism will clearly have difficulty with this "purist" view.

Surely, there would be no Vipassana without the Buddha. If we are to go back to the "pure teaching," then, since Vipassana comes from the Buddha, we should bow to our teacher, who represents the Buddha, and turn to the Dharma itself. Yet, the Buddha's teaching is one of self-reliance. The Vipassana teacher is like a door-keeper or guide who shows us into the house of Vipassana. We need to make the effort ourself, neither relying on the teacher (not for too long) nor on the Buddha, but by our own effort in mental cultivation. Does it then really matter whether Vipassana is a religion or not?

Here's a musical metaphor. Beethoven's 6th Symphony (the Pastoral) simulates the sounds of the quail, the cuckoo and the nightingale, singing together in harmony. The music is ecstatically sweet, but it is not the natural sounds of those birds. We still need to quietly spy on them in their natural habitat to hear them sing; this is a joy rarer than hearing it from the symphony, a sweet musical meditation, but Nature is sweeter. Dharma is Nature.

12.4 LEAVING VIPASSANA

12.4.1 Drifting through samsara

Do we get "converted" to Vipassana while practising it? Why do some people **leave** the Vipassana movement? What does "leaving" Goenka's Vipassana entail? These are a few of the interesting questions that scholar Masoumeh Sara Rahmani [12.3.10] (of Persian descent) explores and tries to answer in ***Drifting Through* Samsara** (2022),[588] which is the fruit of her fieldwork study of a Vipassana group in New Zea-

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[585] Rahmani, 640; 2022:86 f.

[586] Medini Dhamma, *Vipassana Meditation Centre,* 2022 (online): http://medini.dhamma.org/centre-2/.

[587] Medini Dhamma, *Vipassana: Code of discipline,* 2022 (online): https://medini.dhamma.org/reference/code-of-discipline/.

[588] On this title, see (1.12.4.6 n).

land [12.3.10] and a revised edition of her doctorate dissertation (2017) with the University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ.

We have already mentioned that Rahmani had attended four 10-day Vipassana retreats in Kaukapa-kapa, NZ [12.3.10]. During a long vacation in 2009, she attended another 10-day Vipassana course at Dharma Dipa in Herefordshire, England. There, with exposure to the academic study of religion, she became interested in the discrepancies between the content of Goenka's teachings and his representations of it to the outside world. She then devoted her BA thesis to an analysis of this topic. At the same time, she drifted away from the movement's ideas, and "eventually disclaimed the Buddhist identity in favour of atheism." (Rahmani 2022:37 f).

By the time she started her postgraduate research, every person she knew from Goenka's Vipassana movement had effectively disengaged from Vipassana practice, with some joining other movements.

> Given that the technique of Vipassana meditation aims for "deconditioning" the participants' understanding of the conventional self and reality, I was fascinated to understand the ramification of disengagement on the practitioners' perspectives and worldview. For instance, I was interested in whether (and how) the individual reintegrates into mainstream culture and its dominant understanding of reality.
>
> However, during the early stages of data collection (and the analysis phase), it became clear that there were disconnections between the participants' self-representations and the lived experiences they narrated; I became enthralled with the role of language in this process. Consequently, the anchors of my study shifted towards exploring these disconnections and explaining their implications on disengagement trajectories.[589]
>
> (Rahmani 2022:38; highlighted)

In summary, Rahmani's work examined and analysed why practitioners leave Goenka's Vipassana; how they processed this experience, and—of special interest—how the language they used in describing or explaining their experiences actually shape their selfhood and worldview over time.

In an unexpected development in Rahmani's research, she became the subject of an initial interview: "Why are you focusing on the negative side?" "I exemplified my own previous involvement with the practice, and expressed my genuine interest in wanting to understand the effects of disengagement on participants' understanding of self and reality." The interviewee revealed that she had an interest in research itself, with *a personal interest* to learn about the findings about the cause of disengagement: this could help the movement to deliver a "better product." It was this inside interest that probably influenced her access into fieldwork.

12.4.2 Drifting Through Samsara, 2002 ch 1 The conversion career

Rahmani opens her book by applying Gooren's **conversion career model**[590] as a heuristic framework to digest and present the fieldwork participants' narratives, and study the changes in their language at different stages of religious participation and commitment so as to distinguish disengagement pathways (scrutinized in the subsequent chapters): not just what they said, but how they said that give a fuller picture of their situation.

Rahmani scrutinizes **the linguistic transformation**[591] involved in the process of conversion, analysing them in 2 gradations of conversion and commitment. We can study this transformation in 4 stages, that is:

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[589] "Thus, whereas my initial plan was to conduct interviews with disengagers as well as new students before and after a standard course, I broadened the recruitment criteria to include committed meditators including assistant teachers." (Rahmani's fn; highlighted)

[590] H Gooren, *Religious Conversion and Disaffiliation: Tracing patterns of change in faith practices,* Palgrave, 2020: 43-52. *https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304600698_The_Conversion_Career.*

[591] See Jack Whalen & Geoff Raymond, "Conversation analysis," in (edd) Borgatta & Montgomery, *Ency of Sociology* 2nd ed*,* Macmillan, 2000 1:431-441; 3:1979 content analysis. Anne W Rawls, "Conversation analysis," (ed) H Ritzer, *Ency of Social Theory,* Sage, 2005:145-149. See Rahmani 2002 index: linguistic analysis.

Disengagement

Pragmatic leavers. Exit *prior* to committing to the group's universe of discourse	Disaffiliates. Exit *after* committing to the group's universe of discourse and intense participation [1.12.4.6]

Drifter in samsara
return to traditional Buddhism

Pursuers of the Gateless Gate
open to late Buddhism

Deconverts
(deconversion)

Remain within the group's universe of discourse

Leap outside the group's universe of discourse

Table 12.4 Types of disengagement from religion (Vipassana)
(After M Rahmani, *Drifting Through Samsara,* 2022:21 Fig 1.5, 172-178 Fig 5.1)

(1) The participants' <u>preaffiliation</u> context, by looking at their biographical narratives and the practices they engaged with prior to their introduction to Vipassana meditation.

(2) The practices that mark formal <u>affiliation</u> to Goenka's movement and the significance of these for the process of conversion.

(3) The sociocultural and institutional factors that harbour participants' rejection of the category of conversion and the Buddhist identity. We then proceed with detailed exploration of the participants' language, and the linguistic patterns associated with their transition to *conversion*.

(4) <u>Commitment</u> depicts the characteristics of a core member identity based on the meditators' language, reasoning, and their self-representation or performance of the Vipassana meditator's role. Rahmani uses linguistic markers (pause, "you know," giggle, etc). In terms of conversion and commitment, she distinguishes 2 broad disengagement pathways: (1) **pragmatic leavers**, who disengaged prior to the development of commitment, and (2) **disaffiliates**, who disengaged after years of intense commitment [Table 12.4].

12.4.3 *Drifting Through Samsara*, 2002 ch 2 Tacit conversion

Rahmani introduced the insightful concept of **tacit conversion** as an analytical framework for conceptualizing the process of personal transformation and increased commitment to Goenka's Vipassana movement. Rahmani, inspired by Stromberg's[592] <u>linguistic approach to conversion narratives</u>, carefully analyses old students'[593] language and their performance of their role as Vipassana meditators.

By paying attention to the content of speech, as well as other modalities of communication, including the inflections, tonalities, and the delivery of the narrative, she illustrates that committed old students essentially perform a narrative that in many ways resemble what have been categorized as "conversion narratives" in other traditions.[594] Also integral to this analysis is the participants' experience of <u>self-transformation</u> such as self-acceptance, agency (taking charge of oneself), and the mind-body relationship.

12.4.4 *Drifting Through Samsara*, 2002 ch 3 Pragmatic leaving

Like many other religious conversion specialists, Rahmani uses the term **disengagement** [Table 1.12.4] as an umbrella term for the narratives of participants whose <u>conversion career</u> (life as a convert) did *not* involve intense levels of commitment to the Vipassana movement or complete adoption of its universe of discourse. **The pragmatic leavers**' narratives have 3 linguistic characteristics: (1) pragmatism, (2) dualistic discourse, and (3) ambivalence. Essentially, most of these participants saw themselves torn between *inescapable mundaneness* and *irresistible transcendence*: They love Vipassana, but they love the world more.

Rahmani thinks that pragmatic leavers were <u>experience seekers</u>, and "showed that their post-disengagement seekership involved orientations towards undemanding practices that provided more immediate and tangible results. I anticipate that future research can test and conceivably expand the linguistic characteristics of pragmatic leavers, particularly within New Age movements." (2022:218)

Finally, even though many scientists have turned a blind eye to the potential risks and negative effects of meditation, the current records of unfavourable meditative experiences are sufficient to warn us from any misconception that meditation is the perfect spiritual practice for everyone, the perfect Pill for all our life's ailments.[595]

12.4.5 Structural availability

According to Rahmani, <u>the pragmatic leavers'</u> linguistic strategies enable them to rationalize and negotiate disengagement so as to avoid rendering their spiritual search/growth as one that is stagnated

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[592] Stromberg, *Language and Self-transformation,* Cambridge, 1993:31-54 (ch 3).

[593] An <u>old student</u> is a Vipassana practitioner who has completed at least 1 10-day retreat [1.12.3.3].

[594] S F Harding, "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The rhetoric of fundamentalist Baptist conversion." *American Ethnologist* 14,1 1987. Popp-Baier, "Narrating embodied aims," 2001; "Conversion as social construction," 2002. Stromberg op cit, 1993.

[595] Farias & Wikholm, *The Buddha Pill,* Watkins*,* 2015 ch 6 the dark side of meditation.

or stalled. Her findings supported the concept of "**structural availability**"[596] and its relevance to the development of commitment. This means that the converts themselves must be in a position to understand how their lives and social relationships are structured that make them turn to religion or meditation.

Young people, especially students, are more likely to join New Religions because of the spare time that they have (unlike employed adults much of whose time belongs to the employer or eking out a living); their being idealistic and open-minded; being drawn to a like-minded community life; and so on. Since the Vipassana movement is done under strict silence and solitude rules, it lacks that exciting community freedom and sociability that characterize a New Religion.

Those who join Vipassana retreats and keep up the practice, on the other hand, are usually none of the above. They are likely to be working adults or those with manageable time. What draws them to Vipassana is that they see it as a well-established movement, and that Vipassana is an ancient and efficacious method of meditation. Indeed, most of those who take up Vipassana are likely to know and accept that it is Buddhist. Their structural availability is significantly different from that of a cult (New Religion) recruit.

12.4.6 *DRIFTING THROUGH SAMSARA,* 2002 ch 4 Disaffiliation

Disaffiliation is about how Vipassana practitioners give up Vipassana. Through careful analyses and comparisons of their narratives, we see the reasons or conditions for their disengaging from Vipassana after years of intense commitment. A detailed linguistic analysis of a number of participants shows that each of their Vipassana disaffiliation narratives is characterized by ambivalent language, which involves the participants' ongoing convictions about the transformative efficacy of Vipassana, and doubt about their own abilities to progress towards "enlightenment."

As we examine the participants and listen to their narratives—on how each dealt with their doubts— 2 disaffiliation trajectories become evident: (1) drifter in samsara, and (2) pursuers of the Gateless Gate. Ch 6 illustrates that a phenomenon known as **deconversion** (migration outside the movement's universe of discourse) rarely occurs in the context of tacit conversion.

About half of Rahmani's book (chapters 4, 5, and 6) examines these narratives of individuals who left Goenka's movement after years of intense participation, attesting to their significance. Accordingly, 3 trajectories were projected based on the positionality of the participants' language in relation to the movement's universe of discourse [Table 1.12.4]:

(1) drifting in samsara[597]   [2022:173-179]   narrative of the "drifters in samsara"
(2) pursuing the Gateless Gate   [2022:180 f]   narrative of the "pursuers of the Gateless Gate"
(3) deconversion[598]   [2022:193-216 ch 6]   narrative of the "deconverted"

12.4.7 *DRIFTING THROUGH SAMSARA,* 2002 ch 5 Disaffiliation trajectories

The categories "drifters in samsara" and "pursuers of the Gateless Gate" refers to those who have likewise disengaged themselves from Goenka's Vipassana movement. The narratives of "**drifters in samsara**" suggest a movement towards more traditional Theravada discourse with a conception of enlightenment as a transcendental reality and an impossibly distant ideal. They metaphorically perceive Vipas-

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[596] L Dawson, 1999:292 f, 308, cited in G D Chryssides, "Conversion," in (edd) Lewis & Tollefsen, *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* vol 2, 2016:28-31.

[597] *Drifting Through Samsara,* appears only in Rahmani's book title (2022), and has a very positive undertone: that we are "drifting *through* samsara" towards nirvana. Through the book itself and in her writings, she always used "drifter(s) *in* samsara" as a "trajectory" or category of "disengaged" Vipassana members. This phrase suggests being still caught in samsara, without any hint of heading for any "far shore."

[598] A shorter synonym is prob "deversion," a neologism used by André Godin, *The Psychological Dynamics of Religious Experience,* Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1985.

sana meditation as a "raft"[599] carrying them across the ocean of samsara[600] towards the distant shore of *nibbana*.

For many of them, the path to enlightenment was tied to the mastery of emotions and cravings (for example, sexual passion). As such, their self-doubt seemed entangled with a perceived inability to eliminate patterns of craving or "formations" (*saṅkhāra*). The anglicized "sankharas" (pl) is often used by Goenka (in the Abhidhamma sense as synonymous with karma, but more in its mental root aspect) in his instructions and writings.[601]

Conversely, "**the pursuers of the Gateless Gate**"[602] refers to those who see enlightenment as immanent in ordinary life itself. For these former Vipassana meditators, enlightenment was no longer an unattainable transcendental reality; rather something intrinsic and already existing, following the writings of modernist Zen ideologues like D T Suzuki [1.2.4], and of US West Coast or Northern Californian interpretations of Vipassana pioneered by Jack Kornfield.

The pursuers of the Gateless Gate also stressed a new approach to meditation. They saw (sitting) meditation as "counterproductive," even a barrier to living life and having a "pulsate experience" of it. Instead, they claim to take the meditation "off the cushion," to implement the insights gained from their practice or learning into every aspect of the ordinary life.

While both of these 2 categories refer to disaffiliates who remain open to some form of Buddhism, they should *not* be construed as watertight categories; "rather as a black and white reflection (sic) of the ex-members' (re)orientations towards enlightenment and the various positions they occupied along the traditional modernist spectrum after exit. Note, however, that in addition to the enduring trace of the Buddhist language, all narratives shared one underlying similarity, which involved the giving up and letting go of an obsession with enlightenment." (Rahmani 2020:134)

12.4.8 *Drifting Through Samsara*, 2002 ch 6 Deconversion

Now, we come to the term **deconversion**—migration outside the movement's universe of discourse—that is, the narrative of the "deconvert" or "devert" (to use Godin's term, *deversion*)" [12.4.6], one who "leaps outside the (Vipassana) group's universe of discourse" for a more secular, humanistic one.[603] It should be noted that deconversion rarely occurs in the context of tacit conversion; it arises on its own [12.3.8].

Unlike the other two disaffiliates—the drifter in samsara and the pursuer of the Gateless Gate—**the deconvert** is one who completely cuts himself off from the movement. He is absolutely clear that he cannot accept Goenka's teachings, and refuses to be nose-led by someone else in something as personal as spirituality. Of the 3 kinds of disaffiliates, he is the one surest of himself, that he is happy to be on his own, to take charge of his own life. Even when there is any uncertainty in this, he is certain that it has nothing to do with Goenka's Vipassana. Hence, in his own way, his self-certainty is the basis for his own self-transformation. (Stromberg, 1993)

It should further be noted that all the 3 categories of disaffiliates, even though they neither considered themselves as converts nor did they, while they were involved, see the movement as a religion, they

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[599] An important metaphor given by the Buddha in **Alaggadûpama S** (M 22,14) + SD 3.13 (3.5).

[600] Anglicized form of P *saṁsāra,* "a flow, currents" of suffering in lives and deaths, rebirths and redeaths, going through endless cycles of recurrent habitual karma, deeds fruiting and feeding similar deeds like a uroboros.

[601] Rahmani, "Leaving Vipassana meditation," in (edd) Enstedt, Larsson & Mantsinen, *The Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Brill, 2020:135 f.

[602] "Gateless gate" (or gateless barrier) is primarily known from a classic collection of Zen koans, which are paradoxical riddles or dialogues between a Zen master and disciples. They are commonly structured in the form of a question and an answer that have no clear relation to each other (McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* OUP, 2008:124); eg, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" Koans are designed to disturb the sequence of dualistic, logical thinking and enable enlightenment (the Zen way). (From Rahmani's fn.)

[603] Rahmani 2022:193-213, 2021:137-140. Her dissertation, *Drifting Through Samsara,* was done in 2017 and published in 2022 (obviously with revisions), but otherwise, the 2017 ideas preceded those of 2021.

had all *reconceptualized* the movement, and, in some cases, they even retrospectively adopted a Buddh-ist identity.

Another interesting point to consider is that, considering that most of the disaffiliates do <u>not</u> regard themselves as being "religious," they were ironically shown to have the highest level of religious commit-ment, or at least the profoundest thoughts about this movement. To that extent, this study contributes significantly to the study of the growing field of **religious unbelief**. It also provides an empirical basis for some understanding of the gray spaces in between concrete religious identities and non-religious identities, such as the "unreligious," such as New Atheism.[604]

12.4.9 The 3 kinds of **disaffiliates**—*the drifter in samsara, the pursuer of the Gateless Gate, and the de-converted*—share a vital commonality, yet makes each of them unique. Whether it is self-doubt (mostly in the case of the first two), or self-certainty (usually in the third), it is their <u>disaffiliation narrative</u> that defines each of them. This is the way that they see or imagine themself.[605]

According to Rahmani, previous disengagement literature[606] had mostly misconstrued the ex-mem-ber's "**authenticity talk**" (Rahmani's term) as a literal motive behind their exit. This omits a vital dimen-sion of the disaffiliates' personal growth. With careful language analysis of these narratives, we uncover them as useful resources for self-construction and as a linguistic device for self-validation.[607]

In Goenka's rhetoric, he uses the term "belief" in a negative sense, not only because of its association with religion, but, more importantly, because it lacks autonomy and authenticity. Rahmani takes "**authen-ticity**" as meaning "simply the ability to doubt, question, and approach the given concept with a certain scepticism—a dogmatic vacuum which Goenka's (1997, cited in VRI Dhamma, 2014) teachings delicately convey: 'Beliefs are always sectarian. Dhamma has no belief. In Dhamma you experience, and then you believe. There is no blind belief in Dhamma. You must experience and then only believe whatever you have experienced.'" (2022:80)

Rahmani draws on the definition of "**authenticity**" (2022: 213-216) primarily from Charles Taylor (*A Secular Age,* 2007:299, 475) as expressive individualism, or the understanding in which people are en-couraged to "do their own thing," find their own fulfilment, as against "surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religion, or political author-ity." Authenticity is what is "original, real, and pure."[608]

An authentic person acts in accordance with his wholesome ideals, beliefs or desires, ideals that re-flect who he really is.[609] It is integrated with questions of ethics, identity and autonomy. In the case of Vi-passana practitioners, however, it is instead used as a rhetorical device, which Rahmani calls "authenticity talk," personal justifications for substantiating and legitimizing disengagement and deconversion (Rahma-ni 2022:207-216). This is a <u>secular</u> definition. In an early Buddhist context, it means: "what the Buddha teaches" by which we progress in our practice: giving up worldliness for the death-free.

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[604] T Zenk. "New Atheism," in (edd) Bullivant & Ruse, *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism,* OUP, 2013.

[605] I have here used "**themself**" in a distributive manner, ie, each of them, one by one. Otherwise, "themself" is used when the subject of the verb is "they" used as a singular pronoun, or a single person who could be any sex, and the object is the same person (and could be of any sex), eg: "Each monastic themself should be an example of inner peace and outer radiance."

[606] Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion*, 1994; Bielo, "Belief, deconversion, and authenticity among US emerging evangelicals," *Ethos* 40,3 2012:258-276; Chalfant, *Thank God I'm an Atheist,* Wake Forest Univ, 2011; Coates, "Dis-affiliation from a New Religious Movement," *Symbolic Interaction* 36,3 2013; Fazzino, "Leaving the Church behind," *J of Contemporary Religion* 29,2 2014; Harrold, "Deconversion in the emerging Church," *International J for the Study of the Christian Church* 6,1 2006:79-90; Hornbeck, "Deconversion From Roman Catholicism*," American Catholic Studies* 122,2 2011:1-29.

[607] Rahmani 2022:41, 221.

[608] C Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity,* Blackwell, 2008:2.

[609] Varga & Guignon, "Authenticity," SEP, 2016.

13 Leaving Theravāda

13.0 In this section, we will study, in a close commentarial manner, **Niklas Foxeus**' remarkable[610] paper, "Leaving Theravāda Buddhism in Myanmar" (2020),[611] on narratives of Burmese Buddhists who have left the traditional Theravāda, into which they were born, for an alternative teacher whose teachings had been branded as "heretical" and illegal by the state. We will examine a dissident Burmese monk, **Ashin Nyana**[612] (အရှင်ဉာဏ b 1938) of the Mingun hill region, Sagaing. The Burmese legal documents refer to him as "**Shin Nyana (aka) Shin Moe Pya**" or as **Shin Ñāṇa**, and to his sect as **Mo: byā gaing: wāda[613]** (the doctrine of the sky-blue sect).[614] As a sectarian teacher, he is, however, more commonly known as **Mopya U**[615] **Nyana**.

Foxeus' paper only deals with U Nyana's dissidence, without detailing about him before that. For legal and other details, we turn to **Melissa Crouch**'s "Constructing religion by law in Myanmar,"[616] and **Nyi Nyi Kyaw**'s "Regulating Buddhism in Myanmar,"[617] which discusses a "political pact" between the Burmese secular authorities and the Sangha (the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee—called "Mahana or SSC" for short)[618] through which outlier unorthodox groups could be regulated, disciplined, and punished.

13.1 Leaving Theravāda in Myanmar

13.1.1 U Nyana[619] studied Theravāda Buddhism as a Burmese monk for some years at several prominent teaching monasteries across Myanmar. In the early 1980s, he started claiming that he had attained ariyahood, that is, the path of awakening. He even informed the one-year-old Mahana in 1981 of his ariya-hood, which they found unconvincing.

This development led to a decision by the Mahana [12.5.1] that U Nyana had violated one of the 4 "defeat" (*pārājika*) rules of the Vinaya [12.8.3]: that of falsely claiming to have attained supernatural states. Therefore, in the eyes of the Mahana, U Nyana had violated a "grave" (*garuka*) Vinaya rule.[620] Since such an offence has a natural karmic effect on the offender, the Buddha has not laid down any Vinaya procedure for adjudicating him.

U Nyana (1938-   )
Courtesy of Rev Nandacara
of Mogok, Myanmar.

It was probably for this reason that the Mahana did not make any decision against him. Unable to accept the Mahana's rejection of his claim, U Nyana renounced both monkhood and Theravāda. He ac-

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[610] Foxeus' research (2013-17) on U Nyana's sect was done covertly while U Nyana was imprisoned [1.12.5.7 f].

[611] Niklas Foxeus, "Leaving Theravāda Buddhism in Myanmar," in (edd) Enstedt, Larsson & Mintsinen, *Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Brill, 2020:116-129.

[612] "Ashin" အရှင် or အသျှင် is Burmese, meaning "lord, noble" (like *phra* ພຣະ in Thai), used by monks as a prefix to their name. His name "Nyana" is Pali, *ñāṇa,* "spiritual knowledge."

[613] In scriptural Pali, *gaing* is *gaṇa* (group), technically refers to 3-4 monks; a group of 5 monks or more constitutes a *saṅgha* (community); *vāda* means "lit 'that which is spoken,' as in *musā,vāda*; teaching, doctrine, as in *atta,vāda, thera,vāda.* In Burmese, either *gaṇa* or *vāda* can mean "sect."

[614] Janaka & Crosby, "Heresy and monastic malpractice in the Buddhist court cases (*vinicchaya*) of modern Burma (Myanmar)," *Contemporary Buddhism* 18,1, 2017:244-246.

[615] "U" (pronounced as pure or Scottish "oo") is an honorific meaning "Uncle" for men (like "Mr" in English), and "Daw" is the female equivalent, meaning "Aunt" (like "miss or Madam"); and "Maung" means Younger Brother.

[616] M Crouch, "Constructing religion by law in Myanmar," *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13,4 2015c: 1-11.

[617] **Nyi Nyi Kyaw**, "Regulating Buddhism in Myanmar," in (edd) J L Neo, A A Jamal & D P S Goh, *Regulating Religion in Asia: Norms, modes, and challenges.* Cambridge: CUP, 2019:169-186.

[618] The State Saṅghamahānāyaka Committee (နိုင်ငံတော် သံဃ့မဟာနာယကအဖွဲ့ abbreviated မဟာန Mahana or Ma Ha Na; or as SSC, as is the practice in Burmese publications, not SSMNC: Janaka & Crosby 2017:252 n3). It is a government-appointed body of 47 high-ranking monks that oversees and regulates the Sangha in Myanmar, formed in May 1980. Details: Janaka & Crosby 2017. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Sangha_Maha_Nayaka_Committee.

[619] This section is based on Nyi Nyi Kyaw 2019.

[620] On "grave or weighty offences" (*garuk'āpatti*), see SD 46.19 (3.2.3.2).

cordingly informed the state authorities and the Mahana of these renunciations, adding that he had disavowed himself from being any part of the Sangha in Myanmar. He then stopped wearing the saffron robe and started donning blue clothing. On 10 February 1983, he established a new sect (Burmese, *wada;* P *vāda*) the **Pyissoppan Kamma Wada Buddha Batha** (ပစ္စုပ္ပန် ကမ္မ ဝါဒဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ, P *paccuppanna kamma vāda buddha bhāsa*), "the present karma sect Buddhists."[621]

His teachings comprise a secular form of Buddhism that rejects most of the traditional Theravāda Buddhist practices and rituals for the laity, including meditation, merit-making rituals, giving alms to monks, and making offerings at Buddha images and Buddhist shrines. He accepts that there is only the present life, and rejects all notions of rebirth, cosmology and the metaphysical underpinnings of the teaching of karma. Hence, he also rejects the existence of gods, spirits and other supernatural beings, dismissing them as "mind-made" (*seitta-zā;* P *cittaja*). The various realms and levels of the Buddhist cosmology were, according to him, mere symbols for mental states. Most importantly, he reinterprets Buddhist doctrines and simplifies them so that they serve as a practical means for resolving everyday problems for the Buddhist laity, including marriage and business problems.

U Nyana's teachings constitute an intellectualized Buddhism informed by Western rationality and science, characterized by an individualist this-worldly orientation, and psychologization, anti-ritualism, and anti-scripturalism, with only an emphasis on doctrines and ethics. In contrast to traditional Buddhism, it does not focus on the 4 noble truths and the eightfold path.

13.1.2 Since 1980 [12.5.1], the state and monastic authorities had sought to regulate Theravāda by means of the law. Monastic courts backed by the state have scrutinized cases charged with "heresy" (P *adhamma*), that is, teachings considered to be not in accordance with the Buddhist canon, as defined by the Myanmar monastic authorities. Such unauthorized teachings were punishable with imprisonment.[622]

Heresy and apostasy tended to blend into one another, and the state might serve as an arbiter to decide the nature of the case.[623] From the state's point of view, U Nyana and his followers were Theravāda <u>apostates</u> disseminating doctrines that deviated from orthodox Theravāda and thus posed as a threat to it directly, and to the state generally.

On the other hand, in the view of U Nyana and his followers, Theravāda represented a deviation from the original teachings of the Buddha, and they had therefore abandoned it, and did not recognize any authority in its monks. In fact, they viewed Theravāda to be in the same category as Mahāyāna, both of which were later corruptions of the Buddha's early teachings. They did not see their own teachings and practices as a branch of Theravāda, and therefore could not, in their view, be regarded as a "heresy."

In scholars' terms, the state-sanctioned Buddhism represents a collectivist and anti-secularizing tendency, and likewise an enchanted[624] form of religion, with a "traditional" cosmology comprising 31 levels, with heavens, hells, and realms of ghosts and spirits, besides animals and humans. Many of the "heresies" represented

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[621] Despite this name, the sect is better known as the Mopya Gaing (the sky-blue sect). On the neologism "buddha batha," see SD 60.1b (2.4.10.4).

[622] Tin Maung Maung Than, "Sangha reforms and renewal of Sāsana in Myanmar" in (ed) T Ling, *Buddhist Trends in Southeast Asia,* Singapore: ISEAS, 1993:7-63; A Janaka & K Crosby, op cit 2017:199-261.

[623] G Larsson, "Disputed, sensitive and indispensable topics: The study of Islam and apostasy." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion,* 2018:7, 20.

[624] Weber borrowed the phrase "<u>disenchantment</u>" (German, *Entzauberung*) from Friedrich Schiller to describe the character of a modernized, bureaucratic, secularized Western society. By "disenchantment of the world" Weber meant the replacement of belief in other-worldly forces, such as the will of God that once was held to govern the world, by impersonal scientific laws and formal rationality that leave no room, at least in public life, for unfathomable forces of any kind. Disenchantment does not need to imply an end to religious faith in private life, but it does signify the end of religious faith as a basis for modern forms of jurisprudence, legitimate government, economic enterprise, and knowledge of the natural world. The accent placed on spirituality in public life in many premodern societies disappears. (B S Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology,* 2006: modernity). Foxeus' use of "enchanted" here suggests that the Burmese view of Buddhism was actually still <u>pre-modern</u>, while the activities of U Nyana and his followers were <u>modernist</u>; hence, the irreconcilable tension.

novel reinterpretations of Buddhism that had emerged on account of modernization, Western science, and "Orient-alist" views of "original" Buddhism.

The development of doctrinal lay Buddhism, according to scholars, began in the colonial period and continued into the post-independence period,[625] with Buddhist monks disseminating intellectualized forms of Buddhism to the laity, especially simplified versions of insight meditation (*vipassanā*), teachings that, in scholars' view, were previously reserved for the monks.[626]

13.1.3 U Nyana was ordained a Buddhist monk but gave up his monkhood in **1983**, and that same year set up his own sect called <u>Pyissoppan Kamma Wada Buddha Batha</u> [13.1.1] but was popularly known as ***Mo-pyā-wada*** မိုးပြာ ဝါဒ "The Doctrine of the Sky-Blue (One),"[627] and widely known as **the Mopya Gaing** or Myo-pya Sect. He is formally known as Mopya U Nyana[628] [12.5.1]. Since then, he wore a blue shirt and baggy pants, in traditional Burmese style, and kept his head clean-shaven. His followers still regarded him as a monk and looked up to his authority. [Photo @ 13.1.1]

U Nyana's new sectarian career began with his claim to have re-discovered <u>the original teachings of the Buddha</u> that preceded the emergence of the allegedly corrupt Theravāda. For teaching such a "here-tical" Buddhism, he had to serve 3 prison sentences.[629] His 3 court cases are as follows:

(*1*) In **1984**, in its 1st case against U Nyana, the Mahana invoked the newly enacted Law to Protect Solution of Cases and Conflicts in Accordance (sections 5+9) with the Rules of the Order. These laws pro-vide that a monk who starts a "new sect" or organization that is not under the supervision of the State Sangha Council (ss 8-9) is liable to be JJed from 6 months to <u>3 years</u>. U Nyana, found guilty of "pretending to be a monk," was imprisoned the maximum in 1984, and released in 1986.

(*2*) In **1991**, he was arrested the 2nd time and imprisoned for <u>10 years</u> under Section 5(e) of the Emer-gency Provisions Act (1950),[630] which criminalizes the spread of false news while knowing that it is not true. He was released from prison for the second time in 1998. U Nyana would not give up. He continued to preach his doctrines and attracted a group of followers that reportedly numbered about a thousand.

(*3*) In **2011**, he was charged with 52 counts of deviant teachings and practices: that the Buddha did <u>not</u> teach omniscience; did not teach making aspiration (*patthāna*) with merit-dedication; did not teach past or future karma, only present karma; the precept is only against killing humans, not killing animals; the precept is against stealing property of individuals, not those of society or the government. All these views were ruled "not Dharma" (*adhamma*), that is, as heresy.

U Nyana was imprisoned for the 3rd time, this time for <u>20 years and 6 months</u> in total for breaching Sections 295 and 295(a) of the Penal Code (2 years each), Section 6 of the Law Relating to Forming of

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[625] See SD 60.1b (2.3).

[626] E Braun, *The Birth of Insight,* Chicago, 2013; G Houtman, "Traditions of Buddhist practice in Burma." PhD London U, 1990. For more on Burmese Buddhism and its history, see Foxeus, "Contemporary Burmese Buddhist traditions," in (ed) Jerryson, *Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism,* NY: OUP, 2016:1-33.

[627] The 2 morphemes, *mo* + *pya,* together form a Burmese word meaning, "blue"; hence, they should be spelt as a single word, rather than separated or even hyphenated. (Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 2019:183)

[628] Nyi Nyi Kyaw, op cit 2019:170, 172 + n8. Mopya can also be spelt as Mou-pya or Moe-pya; the final -pya is sometimes spelt -pyar.

[629] Melissa Crouch, "The Common Law and The Constitutional Writs," in (ed) Crouch & Law, Society and Transition in Myanmar, Oxford, 2014b:149-151; "Constructing religion by law in Myanmar," *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13,4 winter 2015c:9.

[630] This notorious law was frequently used by the military regime in the 1990s and 2000s to uproot and punish any dissent. One of the first legal moves taken by the National League for Democracy (NLD) junta was to repeal the Act by enacting the Law Repealing the Emergency Provisions Act (2016). Many former political prisoners who were arrested and imprisoned under the Act became Members of Parliament after the Nov 2015 general elections. (Nyi Nyi Kyaw's fn)

Organizations (1988) (5 years), Section 10 of the Law to Protect Solution of Cases and Conflicts in Accord-ance with the Rules of the Order (5 years), and Sections 12 and 13 of the Law Relating to the Sangha Or-ganization (1990) (3 years each).[631]

In at least 15 of the 17 SSC cases, the accused accepted the judgements, and ceased their activities forthwith. U Nyana, however, was an unrelenting zealot who—unafraid of any worldly consequences—continued preaching as soon as he was released. His several attempts at appeal, seeking a presidential pardon, and applying for a writ of certiorari from the Supreme Court—because he was sentenced by the invocation of different laws for the same offences—all failed.[632] He was eventually released from prison in January 2016, by which time he was already 77 years old, having served a record prison sentence of 33 years and 6 months.[633]

13.1.4 The regulation and punishment of the sects and their leaders had been executed through the com-bined powers of the state and the senior monks. The state provided the <u>legal</u> authority, while the Sangha had the <u>religious</u> authority to act against the sects. While the state authorities were interested in law and order in society, the senior Sangha was determined to preserve its religious authority over all the monas-tics. Clearly, it was the "wheel of authority" (*āṇā,cakka*), the state, that empowered the Sangha: the state authorities made the laws, and these were executed by the Sangha (as the SSC).

Hence, there was no separation of <u>State and Sangha</u>.[634] The Sangha was now in the service of the State (as is the case in Thailand, too; but not in Sri Lanka). In this dichotomy of power, understandably the Burmese Sangha must ensure that its power and authority were not challenged in anyway.

Its <u>power</u> came from the state; its **moral authority** depended on its preservation of "Buddhism," that is, Burmese Theravāda, that is, the Tipiṭaka, its Commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) and Subcommentaries (*ṭīkā*).

> This definition is *wholly* textual or canonical; it effectively neglects the role of religious practices by Buddhists around the world throughout the approximately 2,500-year history of Buddhism. More specifically and importantly, this definition neglects the existence of various 'Buddhist' ideologies and practices in Myanmar for more than a millennium—at the very least, since the 11th century, which is when Theravāda Buddhism is thought to have become a mass religion after King Anawrahta (reigned 1044-77) converted to Theravāda Buddhism in Bagan. What this definitional discussion tells us is that senior Buddhist monks of Myanmar try to preserve orthodox Theravāda teachings as contained in the Tipitaka, in a manner similar to their counterparts in Sri Lanka, Thai-land, Cambodia, and Laos, albeit in differing degrees.
>
> (Nyi Nyi Lyaw, "Regulating Buddhism in Myanmar," 2019:172)

13.1.5 In **2010**, there was a sea-change in Burmese politics. In November, the main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claimed resounding victory in the first elect-ion after 20 years. The election marked the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy. A week after the election, Aung San Suu Kyi—who had been prevented from taking part—was released from house arrest. In 2015, her party won a landslide victory, and she became State Counsellor of Myanmar (equivalent to prime minister) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (2016-2021).

Since 2010, the state authorities had shown almost no interest in regulating the Sangha; hence, there were no new cases. This shows that the Sangha elite needed to be empowered by the State to act on its authority. The Sangha alone had no power: yet, it did not assert itself as the "wheel of the Dharma" (*dhamma,cakka*), its Vinaya-based authority.

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[631] Religious Affairs, Board of the State Saṅghamahānāyaka Committee. 2011a. *Shin Nyāna ū: saung thaw mo: byā gaing: thā: do. i ayū vāda apaw dhamma adhamma anyin: pwā: hmu gin: son: hpyat chet*. Yangon: Religious Affairs Press.

[632] Melissa Crouch, "The Common Law and the Constitutional Writs: Prospects for accountability in Myanmar," in (edd) M Crouch & T Lindsey, *Law, Society and Transition in Myanmar,* Oxford, 2014:141-458.

[633] For an overview of "the case of Moepyar U Nyana," see Nyi Nyi Kyaw 2019:183-186.

[634] On the separation of power in the Buddha's time and soon after, see SD 36.10 (5.4.1.2); SD 59.15 (2.2.3).

As the monastic enforcers of the state, it acted almost like the Catholic Inquisition.[635] In all of the 17 cases[636] against the sectarians, the Tribunal members were always unanimous in their sentence, which seemed to suggest that they had already made up their minds even before each Tribunal was formed, and it was a mere formality to sentence the accused. "More importantly, history tells us that once charges are levelled against a sect, the chances of being acquitted of the allegations are effectively non-existent." (Nyi Nyi Kyaw 2019:180)

We have seen how **U Nyana**, "the Sky Blue" (*mopya*) sectarian teacher, was thrice imprisoned for a total of 33 years and 6 months by the powerful State Sanghamahānāyaka Committee (SSC) [12.5.4] for rejecting Theravāda and preaching his own version of Buddhism [12.5.3]. The State-Sangha synergy unfortunately resulted in violations of the rights of Buddhist minority to freedom of religion—and the Sangha's failure to fulfil its role as the traditional upholder of the "wheel of Dharma," that is, by its own unity and harmony of its elite ensure the unity and harmony of the rest of the Sangha. Meantime, U Nyana and his Mopya Gaing continued to grow underground.

13.2 THE MOPYA GAING (THE SKY BLUE SECT)

13.2.1 U Nyana and his followers found their sect in a new political and social context in Myanmar, which was at that time administered by the democratically elected government led by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The sect did not discontinue its activities in this new environment, which brought Mahana's wrath down upon it once again. Mahana again sought to take legal action against U Nyana and his followers, and asked the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture (new name of the former Ministry of Religious Affairs after it was merged with the Ministry of Culture since 2016) to act on its decision. The President's Office accordingly issued an order to the local governments of states and regions to help the Ministry with the task, because the sect is largely based in Mandalay with followers across the country. The case was still pending as of March 2017.[637] In other words, there were no more SSC hearings since then.

13.2.2 Foxeus, based on his fieldwork in Myanmar, uses various theoretical and analytical frameworks to investigate interlinked deconversion and conversion narratives of his informants, dividing them into 3 different groups, based on their attitudes (secular, devotional and spiritual seekers) and the kind of Buddhist practice in which they were mainly engaged before converting to U Nyana's movement.

Foxeus informs us of "previous research and empirical material" into **conversion and deconversion in Myanmar**, which had mostly been concerned with developments between Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.[638] His fieldwork on intra-Buddhist heresy and unbelief (especially in Myanmar) was the first of its kind, and should thus be of great benefit and interest to us. It's basically about how the Burmese were learning to think for themselves on their cultural path of greater insight.

In religion, the words "apostasy" and "defection" often have negative connotations, implying a breach of faith, even betrayal.[639] The term "**deconversion**" (also "de-conversion," or "deversion")[640] which refers

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[635] The **Inquisition** (which started in 12th-cent France) was a group of institutions within the Catholic Church whose aim was to combat heresy, and conducting trials of suspected heretics, often using torture. Studies of the records have found that the overwhelming majority of sentences consisted of penances, but convictions of unrepentant heresy were handed over to the secular courts, which generally resulted in life imprisonment or execution.

[636] See Table 8.1, Nyi Nyi Kyaw 2019:181; for details of each of these 17 cases, see Janaka & Crosby 2017:216-246.

[637] Aung Kyaw Min, "'Moe Pyar' case proceedings delayed," *The Myanmar Times,* Yangoon, 16 March 2017.

[638] Tint Lwin "Contextualization of the Gospel: An effective strategy for evangelization of the Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar," PhD, Faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, 1997. M W Charney, *Powerful Learning,* Ann Arbor, 2006. C Ikeya, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma,* Chiangmai, 2012.

[639] Streib et al, *Deconversion: Qualitative and Quantitative Results from Cross-Cultural Research in Germany and the United States of America*, Göttingen, 2009:17 f.

[640] "Deversion" is a rare neologism used by A Godin, *The Psychological Dynamics of Religious Experience,* Birmingham, AL, 1985. Deconversion or deversion is the antonym of conversion. Broadly, it simply means "losing faith"; tech-

to a disaffiliation process, as Streib et al (2009:17) propose, is less prejudiced, and suggests that deconversion (or deversion) is just as legitimate (and useful) as an antonym of conversion.

Earlier scholarship on <u>conversion</u> was shaped and coloured by Protestant subjectivist notions as sudden and privileged interior states. In our times, however, it is mainly understood as a *gradual* process taking place over an extended time, and the subjective scope is expanded to include other themes, factors and contexts.[641]

According to J D Barbour,[642] <u>deconversion</u> has risen out of increasing individualism and religious pluralism in modernity. Although these changes have mainly been examined with regard to the West, that situation is, to some degree, comparable to Myanmar and other countries in SE Asia since World War II.

13.2.3 In 2014-2017, Foxeus covertly conducted about 65 semi-structured interviews with U Nyana's followers, mainly in Upper Burma but also in Lower Burma. Since U Nyana was arrested in 2010 and his teaching was declared to be "heretical" in 2011, the movement is formally illegal and has gone underground. Today, followers tend to keep their views to themselves and avoid discussing them in public. The movement consists of several informal social networks, many of which are unrelated to one another. Foxeus' study on heretical Buddhism in Myanmar is also the first of its kind. (2020:118)

U Nyana's followers were urban laity that included academics, teachers and other intellectuals; business people, some ex-communists, student activists, military officers and politicians; also some peasants and the poor from the lower middle-classes, the majority of whom were men. Most of them had practised "traditional" Burmese Theravāda before they converted to U Nyana's Buddhism, which they viewed as the "true" teaching of the Buddha.

The majority of Foxeus' informants had undergone socialization, in which Theravāda notions and values, including its cosmology and rituals, became an integral part of their *habitus*[643] and generally taken for granted assumptions. One man had to attend U Nyana's courses 3 times because he was so perplexed by this teaching.

Most of Foxeus' informants described their religious transformation as a *gradual* deconversion that developed over several years. Since U Nyana's teaching represents an intellectualized Buddhism, many of them pointed to cognitive discrepancy such as <u>intellectual doubt</u>[644] as their reason for leaving Burmese Theravāda. While many Burmese were already in doubt of their traditional Buddhism, U Nyana's books and sermons inspired more to doubt it—and he gave them an alternative Buddhism.

13.2.4 U Nyana's motif of "the true Buddhism" was sometimes combined with a moral criticism, implicit and explicit, of the traditional Buddhist Sangha. His criticisms invited others to vent their own dissatisfactions with traditional Buddhism. Some expressed resentment towards the monks for having "deceived" them (not keeping to the Vinaya, or teaching what is not-Dharma). One dismissed them as "rubbish" (အမှိုက် *ahmaik*); a former student activist even stated that Theravāda had "enslaved them" (*kyun-pyu*).

Such critique resembled ideology criticism with Theravāda representing a kind of Marxian "false consciousness"[645] projected and sustained by the monks.

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nically, it is the loss of faith in a religion and return to a previously held religion or non-religion (typically atheism, agnosticism or rationalism).

   [641] See Rambo & Farhadian, "Conversion," *Macmillan Ency of Religion* 2005:1969-74; T*he Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, 2014. Streib et al, op cit, 2009 ch 1.

   [642] J D Barbour, *Versions of Deconversion,* 1994. Cited in Streib et al, 2009:21.

   [643] In sociology, "habitus" <u>comprises socially ingrained habits, skills and dispositions</u>. It is the way that individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it.

   [644] See R F Paloutzian, "Religious conversion and spiritual transformation," in (edd) Paloutzian & Park, *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality,* NY, 2005:336-338.

   [645] "**False consciousness**" is a Marxist concept referring to a state in which people's beliefs, values or preferences are seen as "false," that is, artificially created by their culture or society; such as the notion that monks are to be respected because they "wear robes," or that people are poor, unhealthy, fall sick or die tragically as the result of "bad karma." Early Buddhism teaches that both karma and present conditions work together to shape or influence

Unlike most Theravāda laity, many U Nyana followers do not give almsfood to the monks; instead, they give food to the poor and the needy. In other cases, the intellectual doubt and moral criticism were combined with emotional suffering. Many of U Nyana's followers claimed that Theravāda created "expect-ations" (*ahmyaw*), for instance, for a better rebirth, and "fear" (*akyauk*), for instance, of being reborn in hell. On account of such circumstances, they decided to leave Theravāda.

These reasons for leaving Theravāda correspond to several of the motives for deconversion mention-ed in scholarly literature, such as *intellectual doubt, denial or disagreement with specific beliefs; moral criticism, and emotional suffering*.[646] As Paloutzian observes:

> A key element to any conversion or transformation process must be some element of doubt, pressure, or motivation to change: there is no reason to change one's belief system or worldview if one has no doubts whatsoever about them or if life circumstances have not confronted the person's religious beliefs or practices sufficient for them to be called into question.
> 					(Paloutzian, "Religious conversion and spiritual transformation," op cit 2005:336)

As scholarly writings on deconversion or disaffiliation[647] point out, this is only one aspect of the pro-cess. The majority of Foxeus' informants would not have left their traditional Buddhism *if they had not have found a viable alternative*. In their narratives, the deconversion process was intimately intertwined with the conversion process. Hence, the one cannot be separated from the other: people leave one reli-gion for another under the right conditions.

13.2.5 The lay Buddhists in Burma may be seen as falling into 2 types: those who practise in a **passive** manner (the traditional Theravāda devotees) and those who do so in an **active** mode (mostly the modern-ist seekers). This dichotomy was indeed reflected in many of Foxeus' informants. In the early post-inde-pendence Burma, many Buddhists discarded what is sometimes rather pejoratively called *mi-you-hpalā-bouddha-bhāthā* မိရိုးဖလာ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ, "traditional Buddhism," as a simplistic, ritualist form inherited from their

parents, centering on merit-making. Clearly, this implied a passive belief, and that it is done ritually, mech-anically, with little understanding.[648]

For many Burmese then and now, it means practising a form of Vipassana or Insight meditation that was marketed mainly by Ledi Sayadaw and other meditation monks. This is the Vipassana meditation that is widely practised by the laity [SD 60.1b (2)]. Others turned to the teachings of dissident monks like U Nyana.

This dichotomy is reminiscent of the distinction between the active convert and the passive convert in the West, with those affiliated with New Religious Movements representing an "active, meaning-mak-ing subject."[649] This is an individualistic trend in Burma emphasizing agency (self-reliance) and the con-verts as active subjects.[650]

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what we are. See (ed) D Robertson, *Routledge Dictionary of Politics,* 3rd ed, 2002 sv. Cf Snow & Machalek, "The con-vert as a social type," *Sociological Theory* 1 1983:267.

[646] Streib et al, op cit 2009:21 f.

[647] Streib et al, 2009; Bromley, "Linking social structure and the exit process in religious organizations," *J for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37,1 1998:145-160.

[648] This is sometimes called "karma Buddhism" because it is a ritualistic, devotional form of Buddhist practice that is oriented towards improving our karma through merit-making, thereby hoping to achieve a better rebirth: see M Spiro uses the label "kammatic Buddhism" (*Buddhism in Society,* 2nd ed, Berkeley, 1982:66-139); a 2nd popular trend is "apotropaic Buddhism," based on warding off or improving one's "luck," and protecting against bad luck (140-161); a 3rd trend is "esoteric Buddhism," based on beliefs and superstition rooted in magic and "world-ending" (chiliastic) beliefs (162-190).

[649] Streib et al, op cit 2009:19 f.

[650] See Staples & Mauss, "Conversion or commitment?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26,2 1987:133-147; Streib et al, 2009; Rambo & Farhadian, op cit 2014:8.

Many, if not most, of U Nyana's followers set out to find the "true" or "authentic" Buddhism that entails commitment, understanding and committed practice.[651] Foxeus divides his informants into 3 groups, depending on their pre-conversion practice:

(1) those with a more secular orientation;   [13.3.1]
(2) those practising devotional Theravāda; and   [13.3.2]
(3) those who had turned to a spiritual quest for "true" Buddhism.   [13.3.2]

All his informants represented the active mode, looking for alternatives to the passive modes of Buddhism, but *for different reasons*. Before conversion, they all (in Foxeus' present sample) self-identified as Theravāda Buddhists.

We will briefly look at some examples from these 3 groups. [13.3]

13.3 TYPES OF INFORMANTS

13.3.1 THE 1ST GROUP: those with a more secular orientation.

These secular-minded followers included people, such as communists and other sceptics. After the communist movements died out in Burma by the end of the 1980s, some communists felt disoriented and sought to restore their former Buddhist identity. Others, including farmers, also had a secular worldview, but still identified as Buddhists and seemed to look for an alternative interpretation of Buddhism that was more congruent with their worldview.

One was a **68-year-old former communist leader, political activist and military officer**. At the time of Foxeus's interview, he was retired and runs a tea shop. At 14, he became a communist and "non-religious person" (*bhāthā-me-thū*), and remained so until 1988, although he still retained some sympathy for them. As a military officer, he witnessed hundreds die. In 1988, he left the army, suffered war trauma and turned to drinking. He turned to Theravāda, began to practise Vipassana meditation, and started believing in past lives, rebirth and the Buddhist cosmology. However, he had serious doubts which troubled him.

In 2005, he heard about U Nyana and met him twice. Then, he read a book written by him about "desire" (*taṇhā*) and thus began to doubt the Theravāda teachings, which he understood as regarding all forms of desire as bad. U Nyana teaches that *taṇhā* only refers to wrongful desire, not to desire as such. He was convinced by U Nyana, and stopped giving alms to the monks, and even persuaded others not to do so. He also felt that what U Nyana taught was partly compatible with the Communism he had known. That same year, he left Theravada and became a follower of U Nyana.[652]

13.3.2 THE 2ND GROUP: those practising devotional Theravāda.[653]

13.3.2.1 Foxeus' informants here were 2 women (unrelated), both 47 years old, who started off as traditional followers of Theravāda. Hence, **the 1st woman**, a businesswoman, donated large sums of money to the monks. She gave more than she had and became poor. With what money she got, she then spent on offerings to the spirits (Nats), but without any improvement in her situation. She believed that this was due to her past bad karma, like what the monks told her.

In 2006, she met U Nyana, and through his teachings realized that her poverty was caused by her present conditions. She became interested in his explanation of the eightfold path. Previously, she had often attended sermons by monks who recited texts in Pāli which she did not understand, and they were not encouraged to practise the path.

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[651] G Houtman, *Traditions of Buddhist Practise in Burma,* PhD diss, U of London, 1990a.

[652] For details, see Foxeus, "Leaving Theravāda Buddhism in Myanmar," op cit 2020:

[653] Foxeus recounts the conversion of 2 47-year-old women, and mentions the shopkeeper first (converted in 2009); then mentioned the 2nd, a businesswoman (2006). I have mentioned them chronologically.

After leaving Theravāda, she felt liberated, with a mind of peace. She felt that Theravāda had made her *passive*. Only after she became a Nyana follower, she became an <u>active</u> agent raising herself from poverty and her business happily prospered. She was also able to practise the teaching in her daily life.

13.3.2.2 The 2ⁿᵈ woman was a store-keeper, before converting, had problems with her marriage, business and apparently everything else in her life. She was poor while her siblings were wealthy. Her parents and the monks explained that her misery was caused by bad karma from previous lives. The monks discouraged her from seeking success in her business, which meant cultivating greed (*lobha*) which would bring more bad karma. Success, the monks explained, would come by itself. If she donated to the monks, she would gain karmic merit and a better rebirth.

However, she was unable to donate much to the monks. Because of her present misery, she thought she would be reborn in hell. She gave up hope in improving her situation by her own effort. Due to her bad karma, she turned to spirits with offerings, wishing for success in business, which however, was still not forthcoming.

In 2009, she heard about U Nyana from neighbours, and read a couple of his books. Thereby, she came to realize that the Theravāda teachings were wrong—the teaching on previous and future existences, the teaching about karma, the cosmology, and so forth. Later U Nyana told her that she should make effort to be successful in business and cultivate "right greed." She became a devout follower and had, she claimed, become a successful businesswoman. She gave far less donations to the monks nowadays. Instead, she used her profits for her family and business.

13.3.3 THE 3ᴿᴰ GROUP: those who have turned to a spiritual quest for "true" Buddhism.

13.3.3.1 This group consisted of spiritual seekers looking for an alternative to traditional Theravāda, but remained in it while seeking the Buddha's "true" teachings. **The 1ˢᵗ informant** was a 41-year-old and who ran an electronic workshop. In his youth, he was ordained a Buddhist novice and later a monk for a short period of time. Since then, he had been interested in religious matters, and had practised Vipassana meditation. Before he found U Nyāna's teaching, he had also showed interest in the teachings of other dissident monks.

An avid reader of Buddhist books, he was looking for answers, for instance, to questions regarding past and future lives. He had some doubts. In 2002, a Nyana follower left a cassette player at his workshop for repairs. He listened to the cassette, which was a sermon by U Nyana on what would happen after death. This piqued his interest, and later the follower gave him U Nyāna's books. They met daily and discussed Buddhism in tea shops, often until dawn.

In 2004, he met U Nyana for the first time and listened to his sermons, but he did not immediately become a follower. He learned from U Nyana that the Buddha never taught about past and future lives. U Nyana based this view on his own interpretation of <u>the 10 undetermined questions</u> (*avyākata pañha*).[654] He was told that the rebirth teaching was taken from Hinduism and was not preached by the Buddha. He went on to accept that Theravada teachings were false. Around 6 months after his first meeting with Nyāna, he became a devout follower.

13.3.3.2 The 2ⁿᵈ informant was a 65-year-old businessman and a politician, who became a follower in his 20s. He was critical of the Burmese Theravāda Buddhists who, he claimed, tended to follow the monks' instructions without knowing why or how they should practise, and without asking critical questions.[655] As a Buddhist, he wanted to learn more about the teachings and practices by reading and studying Buddhist books, and listening to sermons delivered by Theravāda monks. He learned from them that whatever he does is "suffering" (*dukkha*), and that human existence is inherently suffering. He practised breath meditation (*ānāpāna,sati*) and Vipassana at various meditation centres for 3 years. Although he

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[654] See **Silence of the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (5).

[655] These were the passive Buddhists mentioned above.

sat cross-legged meditating for several hours a day, through which he achieved temporary inner peace, as soon as he began working with his business, the spiritual joy (*sukha*) disappeared. He began to feel dis-appointed with Theravāda meditation.

Around 1999, he heard about U Nyana and his opposing view that "human existence is the noblest one." At first, he thought this idea to be strange. Later, he met a Nyana follower who explained that his problem of the temporary inner peace, followed by worries and tensions (*soka*), was caused by the fact that he accepted it.

He was at first skeptical about it. Then, he borrowed a DVD on Nyāna's sermon where he explained the technique of being "mindful of the causes" to mental tensions. By that means, one should search for these causes in present actions, not in a previous life. Suffering, he now realised, was not inherent in the human existence, but was caused by one's actions in the here and now. In this way, he managed to gain lasting inner peace in daily life, without having to sit a cross-legged in meditation, he related. He became a Nyana follower.

13.3.4 Foxeus then gives "some tentative analyses of the interlinked <u>deconversion and conversion nar-ratives</u> of my informants" when they converted to Nyāna's teachings (2020:124). Even as these inform-ants shared their thoughts and feelings with Foxeus, they are formulating, even contriving, a "biograph-ical reconstruction,"[656] that is, "the past is reconstructed in light of the new meanings which emerge from one's present status as a convert."[657]

The pre-conversion <u>past</u> was often depicted *negatively*, erratic and obscured by false views, and <u>the present</u> as progress and discovering the truth. This reconstruction might have exaggerations, even fabri-cations.[658] Such narratives thus tended to serve as tacit justifications and support of the present. Here, both the passive and active modes [13.1.11] constituted local, cultural "genres for self-construction"—the self as <u>a cultural, discursive product</u>.[659] This dichotomy then served as a lens through which some of the informants formed their narratives and self.

What was transformed in a <u>conversion</u> was their "universe of discourse" as a "radical change" imag-ined as "the displacement of one universe of discourse by another and its attendant grammar or rules for putting things together," a kind of paradigm shift.[660] In this way, <u>deconversion</u> is biographical change, of maturing out of a state of naïveté and presupposition (what is taken for granted).[661]

Traditional Burmese Theravāda and Nyāna's teaching are diametrically opposing poles of Buddhism—the "enchanted" tradition [13.1.2] and the secular modernism, respectively. This is an epistemic shift of a "universe of discourse," one that seemed most evident among those who were previously caught in the passive devotional forms of Theravāda.

13.3.5 Religious doubt, Paloutzian explains, may arise as a result of one's crises of faith, that is, "life cir-cumstances happen that are inconsistent with deeply held beliefs, wants, expectations."[662] This was an intrinsic part of the narratives in the 2nd group [13.1.13]. Since most Buddhists in Burma are socialized in traditional Theravāda, it was part of their ingrained *habitus*. When advised by representatives from main-

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[656] Snow & Machalek 1983:266-269.

[657] Staples & Mauss 1987:135.

[658] Snow & Machalek 1983:267 f.

[659] Bruner, "A narrative model of self-construction," *Annals of the NY Academy of Sciences* 818,1 1997: 147.

[660] Snow & Machalek 1983:265 f. It could be added that this cognitive approach should be supplemented by a consideration of the impact of emotions and the body. Many of Foxeus' informants emphasized a shift in their be-haviour and emotional orientation. (Foxeus' fn)

[661] Streib et al 2009:23.

[662] Paloutzian, "Religious conversion and spiritual transformation," in (edd) Paloutzian & Parks, *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality,* NY, 2005:336; see also Higgins, "Self-discrepancy," *Psychological Review* 24,3 1987:322.

stream and state-sanctioned Buddhism, they were likelier to blame themselves, rather than Buddhism, when discrepancies occurred in their efforts, expectations and results.[663]

However, in the narratives of the 2 women [13.3.5], this discrepancy that was explained by the monks to be the result of bad karma from previous existences as bringing about frustration and emotional suffering. This then became the ground for doubt, and later deconversion and its attendant "spiritual transformation."[664]

In this way, these 2 women depicted their pre-conversion lives negatively, as being filled with suffering, and to stress how their lives had improved after they found "the truth." This fits the pattern of shifting from the *passive* mode to an active one, characterized by agency and empowerment, seeking to embody the "true teaching" of the Buddha in their lives, even in their business activities. They attributed their success to Nyāna.[665]

These cases may be seen as "biographical reconstructions," in which "previously important events may be de-emphasised and less significant ones elevated to greater prominence."[666] In other words, there was likely an over-emphasis on pre-conversion hardships. For the 1st woman, for example, her shop (where Foxeus interviewed her) did not seem to be as successful as she had depicted it. In this manner, a pre-conversion "*crisis of purpose*" was seen to be followed by a post-conversion "sense of purpose."[667]

Such a perceived improvement was an important rhetoric strategy in conversion narratives. In such cases, loss in religious experience (especially in the 1st woman), implied a moral criticism of the Buddhist monks, whose instructions brought on emotional suffering, leading to doubt. Hence, the reasons for leaving Theravāda were purely pragmatic, and their motives purely economic.

13.3.6 The cognitive[668] shift was less radical for the secular people (the 1st group) [13.3.1] who found a Buddhist interpretation that harmonized with their worldview. Their deconversion occurred faster, probably because their meaning-system changed more slowly.[669] The cognitive discrepancy between their secular worldview and Theravāda caused some strain and intellectual doubt, but they were already looking for an alternative that would enable them to overcome their "cognitive dissonance" or "belief incompatibility."[670] For instance, the former communist's down-to-earth view on desire was incompatible with the more ascetic one prescribed by Theravāda. Then, he found that Nyāna's explanation resolved his crisis.

Less discrepancy also characterized the spiritual seekers (the 3rd group). They had already worked on various epistemes, such as Vipassana that, in contrast to ritualistic Theravāda, is (like Nyāna's teaching) characterized by a high degree of rationality and emphasis on doctrines.[671] As Paloutzian explains, doubt "sets the process of questing in motion," and coping with such doubt likewise sets the stage for "spiritual transformation."[672] The two men were already in doubt regarding some teachings in Theravāda and had set out to find the truth by critically examining various teachings. As one old follower said, those who become interested in Nyāna's teaching had not received satisfying answers from Theravāda Buddhist monks.

Those from the 1st and 3rd groups, those leaving Theravāda were thus mainly motivated by intellectual doubt. In contrast to the 2nd group, their lives did not seem to have changed dramatically after con-

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[663] See Bromley 1998:147 f.

[664] See Paloutzian 2005:337.

[665] This is a modern, individualistic, secular concept of agency and of an autonomous subject/self that contrasts with agency within Burmese Theravāda Buddhism (dependence on monks and spirits). (Foxeus' fn)

[666] Staples and Mauss 1987:135.

[667] Paloutzian 2005:342.

[668] Foxeus uses "epistemic shift" (meaning "a change in the way one knows") here, which I think is an overkill. The change is, rather, in how they thought of themselves; hence, "cognitive shift" is more appropriate.

[669] Paloutzian 2005:339.

[670] See Higgins 1987:320 f.

[671] Houtman 1990. However, Vipassana or insight meditation still operates within Theravāda's "universe of discourse."

[672] Paloutzian 2005:336 f.

version, and were therefore less inclined to depict their pre-conversion past in a negative manner. The 2nd man in the 3rd group [13.2.3] experienced some frustration regarding meditation, but it did not seem to develop into a crisis, although a loss in religious experience was another motive for him to convert. Furthermore, he sought to distance himself from those characterized by the passive mode, thereby drawing on the local model for self-construction.

13.3.7 All informants in this sample, moreover, were motivated to convert on account of at least **moral criticism** to convert. Directly or indirectly, they claimed to have been previously exposed to false teachings and been deceived by the Theravāda monks and others. They were now convinced that they had found the truth and had achieved peace of mind. This was a common rhetoric in the biographical reconstruction and might serve to vindicate their real decision to leave and shift loyalties.

Some followers even resembled born-again Protestants, very eager to spread the "true" teachings of the Buddha. This intense fervour could also be explained by the radical discrepancy between Nyāna's teachings and Burmese Theravāda. Nyāna's converts were, of course, less zealous than their Christian counterparts. The former communist, for example, sought to persuade others from giving alms to the monks. Some, however, viewed the monks as an unproductive burden for society and even as "rubbish," and one man had even felt "enslaved" by Theravāda. Their reactions, however, stopped there.

Although some followers stopped giving alms to the monks, others still continued giving for social reasons, probably because they wanted to avoid being treated as social outcasts or disloyal apostates.[673] This behaviour was similar to many Muslims living in Mandalay who, for similar reasons, also gave alms to the monks. To some degree, these 2 tendencies corresponded to the exit roles in deconversion that Streib et al refer to as "oppositional exit" and "integrating exit."[674] Hence, the situation here also implied a retaining of an oppositional and accommodating attitude, respectively, after conversion.

13.3.8 In this section, we have examined the interlinking between deconversion and conversion among Buddhists in Myanmar, who had left the state-sanctioned Theravāda for a version of Buddhism that is somewhat its opposite. The reasons the 3 groups of informants gave for leaving Theravāda included loss of religious fulfilment, doubt; moral criticism; and emotional suffering,[675] as well as more pragmatic, economic reasons. They had become followers of a teacher whom they regarded as giving the "true" teachings but that was declared "heretical" by the state.

The degree to which there was a radical change of the converts' "universe of discourse," as well as the applicability of the concept of "biographical reconstruction," varied among the 3 groups: it was most applicable to those who had previously practised devotional Theravāda. All 3 groups retained a Buddhist identity, but reconstituted on the basis of a systematic alternative universe of Buddhist discourse, one that was better adapted to their lives, mainly in modernizing urban areas characterized by a growth of capitalism since the 1990s.[676]

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[673] Cf Larsson 2018.

[674] Streib et al 2009:26-28.

[675] As outlined by Streib et al, 2009.

[676] For another SSC case—that against Mogok Sayadaw (posthumously)—see SD 60.1b (2.4.3.6).

TABLE 13.4 LIST OF DEVIANT SECTS[677]

No.	Deviant Sect Name	Vinaya Tribunal	Date of Judgement
1	Kyaukthinbaw Vāda	Tribunal 1	23.2.1981
2	Luthe Luphyit U Okkatha Vāda, Sama dithi Sutesana Vāda, Shwe Abhidhamma Vāda	Tribunal 2	29.10.1981
3	Kyaungpan Tawya Vāda	Tribunal 3	26.4.1982
4	Kyaukpon Tawya Vāda	Tribunal 4	7.11.1982
5	U Marlarvara (Yaytashay) Vāda	Tribunal 5	1.4.1983
6	Dhammaniti Vāda	Tribunal 6	15.7.1983
7	Moenyo (North Okkalapa) Vāda	Tribunal 7	4.7.1983
8	Htuntone Lakkyan U Htin's Vāda	Tribunal 8	31.12.1985
9	Twante U Punnyasara's Vāda	Tribunal 9	25.2.1988
10	Mawlamyine Shwe War Myaing Kyaung Vāda	Tribunal 10	7.6.1989
11	Sankalay Vāda	Tribunal 11	16.3.1998
12	Moegok Vinissaya	Tribunal 12	28.3.2005
13	Bhikkhuni Vāda	Tribunal 13	27.5.2005
14	Two Mistakes in Ten-Day Special Course	Tribunal 14	22.6.2006
15	Moenyin U Khemeinda & U Vicittasarabivamsa's Vāda	Tribunal 15	16.10.2006
16	Myitkyina U Vicittasarabivamsa's Vāda	Tribunal 16	17.2.2009
17	Moepyar Sect Vāda	Tribunal 17	15.11.2011

Source: Nyi Nyi Kyaw, "Regulating Buddhism in Burma," 2019:181 Table 8.1

Notes

In such an ecclesiastical court case—called *vinicchaya* (Burmese *wi-neit-saya*)—there is the "accusation" (P *codanā,* B *saw:danā*) and the "defence" (P *sodhanā*; B *thaw:danā*). Then, there is the court's "verdict," also called *vinicchaya.*[678]

For **details** on these tribunal proceedings, see:
Ashin Janaka & Kate Crosby, "Heresy and monastic malpractice in the Buddhist court cases (*vinicchaya*) of modern Burma (Myanmar)." *Contemporary Buddhism* 18,1 2017:216-246.
https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/73587844/Ashin_CrosbyacceptedCBHeresyarticle.pdf.

14 Leaving Buddhism

14.1 WE CANNOT LEAVE WHEN WE HAVE NOT REACHED

14.1.1 Leaving Buddhism is a theme seldom addressed in Buddhist studies.[679] Buddhism is generally perceived as a tolerant teaching, and as Buddhists we are free to examine the teachings, accept or reject what we deem fit for our practice, or even to "leave Buddhism." "Buddhism" here usually refers to a group or sect.

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[677] From Nyi Nyi Kyaw, "Regulating Buddhism in Burma," Table 8.1, in Neo et al (edd), *Regulating Religion in Asia,* 2019:181 For a note on the "tribunals" or "court cases" (*vinicchaya*) regarding Theinngu Sayadaw and the above case, see SD 60.1d (6.2.5.5).

[678] See eg Janaka & Crosby 2017:214 f.

[679] See eg Monica Lundberg Falk, "Leaving Buddhism," in (edd) Enstedt, Larsson & Mantsinen, *Handbook of Leaving Religion,* Brill, 2020:28-42.

We may leave "Buddhism," but we may not leave Buddha Dhamma. We may, for example, say that we do not want to read a book or listen to teachings, but it would be odd to say that we do not want to develop our mind or be free from suffering. The former is Buddhism; the latter Buddha Dharma. We do not *leave* Buddha Dharma because we have not yet attained the path of awakening; we are still unawakened. In other words, a true Buddhist is not defined by what he believes, but by his *practice and spirituality*, that is, by the attaining of the path of awakening.

14.1.2 Being a Buddhist is not like joining a club, but more like training for a sport or game: we are either good at it or not. Breaking a precept is like breaking a game rule: we lose the game, but we are allowed to keep on playing.[680] Properly meditating or being mindful is like when we keep on training for our health, strength and endurance. Having insight wisdom is like being a veteran who knows everything, or almost everything, of the sport or game.

Understandably, there is *no* Buddhist canonical term for "apostate" or "apostasy." Furthermore, early Buddhism does not sanction violence against anyone leaving Buddhism. However, the Buddha would speak out when someone gives up his training for the wrong reasons and attacking Buddhism in doing so —such as that recorded in **the Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (M 12) [12.1.7].

Leaving monastic training for personal reasons, without losing faith in the Dharma, is acceptable in modern times. However, those who give up Buddhism for a negative reason, such as losing faith in it (which is closer to the notion of "apostasy") are likelier to invite negative reactions from their family, including the risk of being ignored by their family or estranged from their community. However, with the modernist influences in traditional Theravāda, such "leavers" would not be ostracized, much less punished, like apostates in a God-based faith.

14.2 "OUTSIDER"

14.2.1 Although there is no notion of "apostasy" in early Buddhism, like that in theistic religions, it does have the idea of "**outsider**" (*bāhira, bāhiraka*), one who has *not* yet reached the path of awakening at all. This term covers practically everyone who is not yet a streamwinner, a once-returner, a non-returner or an arhat, that is, the 4 kinds of "path saints" or one who "lives the path" (*magga,jīvi,* Sn 88d).

Hence, the term, "outsider" is neither negative nor loaded, but simply describing one who is not yet on the path of awakening, and needs to work to gain it. This is to understand **the true nature or meaning of life**, that is, its unsatisfactoriness (suffering, *dukkha*), which is the basis for **the true purpose of life**, that is, that of awakening (*bodhi*), through *self-knowing, self-taming and self-liberation*. These are, in fact, the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*), those in *moral virtue, mental concentration and insight wisdom*, constituting the noble eightfold path [6.1.1].

14.2.2 Furthermore, after the Buddha, Buddhism developed beyond **early Buddhism**, the ancient canonical core preserved today quite fully in the Pali canon (*tipiṭaka,* the 3 baskets),[681] into Theravāda ("southern Buddhism," mostly in Sri Lanka and mainland SE Asia) and Mahāyāna ("eastern Buddhism," centred on China and spreading to Korea, Japan and Vietnam). The latter further developed into Vajrayāna ("northern Buddhism," covering the Himalayas, Tibet, Siberia and Mongolia).

The main difference between Theravāda (which relies on the Pali canon) and the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna (which use mainly Sanskrit) is that the former basically sees the Buddha as *a historical figure*, while the latter see him as some kind of *deified being*. However, all the 3 traditions see themselves as rooted in the "early Buddhist tradition,"[682] so that it is not rare to see many Buddhists practising or accepting more than just one of these traditions. [18.6.3]

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[680] These are the 5 precepts, or rules of "natural morality." On the 4 "defeat" offences for monastics: [15.2].

[681] The Tipiṭaka comprises the Vinaya Piṭaka (the "basket" of monastic discipline), the Sutta (that of the teachings) and the Abhidhamma (later systematization of the teachings): SD 3.2 (1.6).

[682] See Sujato & Brahmali, *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts,* Perth (Aust), 2015; also JOCBS vol 5: Download here or https://ocbs.org/the-authenticity-of-the-early-buddhist-texts-2/.

14.3 KEEP GOING, WE'RE NOT THERE YET

14.3.1 Interestingly, there are 2 ways we should understand the verb "**leave**" in terms of Buddhism: the active and the passive. In the former, we may only leave Buddhism as a **religion** [10.7], that is, as a set of beliefs and rituals, or a group. On the other hand, in the latter, Buddhism as *moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom* leaves us when we do not practise it properly. For, we are not yet "truly Buddhist," *not* reached the path, *not* yet self-liberated, that is, *not* attained **streamwinning**.[683] Hence, we do not leave the Dharma (Buddhism of the path) since we're not there yet; and once we're there, we will never turn back—like fire that has completely burned itself out.

Hence, Dharma is neither a "thing" out there nor some power or authority outside of ourself that we have mentally projected. Leaving Buddhism is like leaving the light because it reveals to much; so we turn to the darkness. It is like running away from the light chasing our own shadow! In a God religion, it is as if we are totally powerless to help ourselves. There is only one way to be "saved": we must turn to the supreme, almighty Other, some God "out there."

Whoever defines or controls such an idea has full control over us: we are mere puppets whose strings "he" pulls and plays with. Dharma training teaches us to cut these puppet strings and free ourselves from such dependence through self-reliance. Since good and bad come from us, we can and must purify and save ourselves: who else can ever do this? (Dh 165; cf 276).[684]

14.3.2 In a pair of remarkable parables, the Buddha declares that the Dharma should be treated like **a venomous water-snake** which we must rightly grasp, so that it does not kill us with just a bite. The Dharma is **a raft** that we must ourself put together on the shores of dangerous waters, which we then cross with that raft, peddling our way hand and foot across the waters to reach the far shore. On reaching safe dry land, we do not need the raft any more: we discard it and move on. In this sense, we must, as it were, leave Buddhism in due course.[685]

Buddhism, then, is like **the alphabets** that we learn, like a language that we master; having mastered them, we are no more held back by words and meanings. We free the words, give them meanings, or new meanings: in doing so, we beautify our world and free it.

15 Religious intolerance

15.1 BLIND FAITH AND RELIGIOUS IMPERIALISM

Harold Coward's essay, "Intolerance in the world's religions" (1986),[686] although published some 40 years ago, is refreshingly true and must be read by every person with a religion, including the Buddhists. The basic idea behind Coward's essay is that all religions and religious philosophies, including Buddhism, breed **intolerance**. Coward lists 5 conditions—biological, psychological, philosophical, scriptural and theological —for intolerance; I've added one more condition: the historical.

When the intolerance was collective, one religious camp is likely to conflict against the other. The bloodiest example of such conflicts was that of **the European wars of religion,** beginning with the Protestant Reformation in 1517, raging for the next 300 years. These wars intensified when the Catholic Church began the Counter-Reformation in 1545 to stop the growth of Protestantism. They culminated in

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[683] Streamwinning (*sotāpatti*) arises from breaking the 3 fetters (*saṁyojana*)—self-identity view, spiritual doubt, attachment to rituals and vows—so that we reach the path and is no more a worldling (*puthujjana*). See SD 3.3 (5); **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

[684] On **Dh 165**: SD 36.1(3.4.1), SD 38.4(3.3.3.4), SD 49.10(1.2.2)]. On **Dh 276**: SD 8.9n51, SD 26.3(4.3) SD 39.5(1.3.3 n43), SD 45.8(4.3.1).

[685] The parables of the water-snake (M 22,10) and of the raft (M 22,14) are found in **Alaggadûpama S** (M 22/1:130-142), SD 3.13.

[686] Harold Coward, "Intolerance in the world's religions." *Studies in Religion* 15,4 autumn 1986:419-431. His remarks on 5 bases for intolerance have been used here and commented on.

the 30 Years' War (1618-1648), when one-third of Germany's population was decimated, a mortality rate *twice* that of World War I.[687] The Peace of Westphalia ended this War, but other smaller religious wars continued elsewhere in Europe.[688] Even today religion often causes mass violence and the deaths of the innocent and widespread destruction.

Before we can reduce, perhaps remove, intolerance, we need to know how it arises and why it is destructive. If we truly love our religion (for whatever reason), we must know and accept how intolerant we are or can be, before we can catch and see the elephant in our own sacred space.

15.2 THE BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.2.1 Christians have heard it said of them, "See how they love one another." These are compliments: a recognition by outsiders of the power and beauty of Christian love, inspired by Jesus' command "that you love one another as I have loved you."[689] However, it may not really be special at all.

As **Konrad Lorenz** has shown, in-group love and care may be nothing more than a biological trait that Christians share with jackdaws, greylag geese, rats and Borneo head-hunters.[690] To love others within our own group is the instinct that enables animals to raise and protect their young, and keeps cannibals from eating other members of their own family and tribe. In-group love is good for those within the group but bad for those outside, such when aggression is shown to *other* members of the same species *outside* the tribe or group.

"See how they love one another" can thus be the clarion call of religious intolerance, notes Coward: Belfast Catholics and Protestants (1960s-1998) pitted against each other ready to die for love of their fellows; Beirut Moslems and Christians (1975-1990) ruthlessly killing each other for the protection of their own; Sikhs and Hindus (1947) shooting each other in the Golden Temple at Amritsar (1984). In "Christian" Germany (1941-45), millions of Jews were arrested and systematically poison-gassed because they were branded as an "inferior race." During World War II, in the USA (1942-46) and Canada (1939-45), those of Japanese ancestry had their property confiscated and were placed in concentration camps via executive orders after Imperial Japan bombed Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941.

Although the remark, "See how they love one another," embraces the in-group, yet it totally lacks the virtue of tolerance for those outside the group. This natural aggression towards those outside one's group provides a biological foundation for religious intolerance.

15.2.2 Buddhists meditate on lovingkindness, and in their pujas say, "May all beings be well and happy." As for monastics, when they commit any of the 4 "defeat" rules, they automatically fall from monk-hood.[691] Yet, in **Thailand**, even before 1973, the monk Kittivuddho, a promoter of militant Buddhism, declared that killing local communists "was not evil" (ไม่เป็นบาป *mai pen baap*).[692]

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[687] David Onnekink, *War and Religion after Westphalia, 1648-1713*, Ashgate Publishing, 2013:1-8; Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why violence has declined,* NY: Penguin Book, 2011:42.

[688] The total number of military and civilian casualties in World War I, was **around 40 M**. There were 20 M deaths and 21 M wounded. The total number of deaths includes 9.7 M military personnel and about 10 M civilians. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties. For statistics on religious war casualties, see end of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_wars_of_religion; also World War 1 casualties: Reperes. World War 2 casualties: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II_casualties.

[689] John 13:34.

[690] K Lorenz, *On Aggression,* MY, 1966:65, 242.

[691] When a monastic commits any of these 4 offences entailing "defeat" (*pārājika*)—killing a human or in any way praise (encourage) death (V 3:23,33-36), stealing anything of the value of the lowest currency denomination (V4:46,-16-20), sexual intercourse even with an animal (V 3:73,10-16), falsely claiming to have spiritual powers (V 3:109,21-27)—he automatically falls from monkhood.

[692] Kittivuddho interview in *Caturat* 2,51, 29 June BE 2519 (1966). C F Keyes, "Political crisis and militant Buddhism," in (ed) B L Smith, *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma*, Chambersburg, PA: Anima, 1978.

Although Kittivuddho himself had not killed any communist, he vehemently encouraged others to do so. His justification for killing was a well-known one: Since the communists threatened the nation, the religion and the King, they were "not fully human," but "monsters/devils." Hence, they were not of their in-group; they were outsiders.[693]

Kittivuddho had stopped thinking and feeling like a monk, a renunciant: he was acting like a politician. Instead of renouncing the world, he had burdened himself with it, drawn to its people, power and plenty. He saw his community as an **in-group**, and the communists as outsiders or outcastes. He had usurped the job of the politician and the rulers: this confused the people, especially those who let the crowd think and act for them. In this sense, Kittivuddho had left Buddhism for the world, and in an intolerant way.

We have already seen a similar Buddhism-leaving role played by Maha Boowa during the 1997 Asian financial crisis when he zealously raised millions of bahts with the seemingly noble aim of preventing Thailand from a financial disaster. He saw himself like a patriotic member of the nation's in-group. If he did this *unconsciously,* then, it is probably that he identified[694] with the nation more than with the monastic sangha. Like Kittivuddho, he, too, had left Buddhism (renunciation) for the world, or rather: Buddhism had left those like Kittivuddho and Maha Boowa.[695]

15.3 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.3.1 Defence mechanism

Over a century ago, the German founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), theorized that our thoughts and reasoning are often subtly controlled or deeply influenced by our unconscious drives. Information which tends to negate our own views or directly challenge our stand is effectively explained away through *unconscious* **defence mechanisms** such as aggression, denial, rationalization, projection, and sublimation.[696]

How do the unconscious defences work? This may be easily explained by the first 2 noble truths: (1) we are all basically insecure people; (2) we have likes and dislikes. We are insecure because we love ourselves (which keeps us going in life), but we tend to think of "ourself" (body-mind) as "our self," that there is something abiding or permanent in our body (the 5 physical senses) or the mind (feeling, perception, formations, consciousness).[697]

Whenever we think of a religion (other than our own or our own beliefs), that is, we "see"—or rather, we imagine that we "see"—with the ideas of that religion. When we feel threatened by that religion, when we somehow think that it is "better" than Buddhism in some way, we will never allow ourself to be completely objective or neutral in doing so. Our first impulse is often to identify the similarities we perceive as existing between Buddhism and the other religion.

This is actually an act of defensive projection or intellectual reductionism. Instead of identifying a real similarity, we simply react defensively, saying, "Oh yes, I see what you mean; that's just what I thought, too." We project our own view onto that of the other person; then, we imagine that we have discovered that it is the same as our own.

This is, of course, very comforting for us. It suggests that there is only *one* truth after all, and that we have it (probably in fuller or fullest measure, thus implicitly claiming superiority for our own view); hence, no change is needed. When, however, we do see a real difference between the religions, or between our views and those of others, we naturally feel emotionally insecure. We will either surmise that the other person must surely be wrong or we could doubt our own position. Our conceptual limitations may then spur in us an ego-defence, which then leads to religious intolerance in us.

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[693] Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Question of violence in Thai Buddhism," in Tikhonov & Brekke (edd), *Militarism and Buddhism in Modern Asia,* Routledge, 1992:182-185.

[694] On the psychological defence mechanism of identification, see SD 7.9 (3.4.3, 3.5.3.5).

[695] On Ajahn Maha Boowa, see SD 60.1b (5.11.6).

[696] Calvin S Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology.* NY: Mentor, 1958:89-91. See **SD 7.9** Intro.

[697] These are the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*): SD 17 (the whole volume).

15.3.2 Cognitive dissonance

Further evidence that such psychological defences often arise is provided by Leon Festinger's study of **cognitive dissonance**. Festinger theorized that in a clash between two views, our own view is more resistant to change, particularly if the required change involves giving up a fundamental presupposition. Festinger's study of religious belief regarding prophecy indicated that when the prophecy fails to come true, it does not result in a rejection of the view, the expected rational result. In fact, the very opposite occurs: the belief is strengthened through reinterpreting or revising the data.[698]

Thomas Kuhn [15.5.1] reports similar situations with regard to scientific theories.[699] Conflicting evidence had not easily led to falsification of a theory, but often led to the modification of secondary assumptions, or discrepancies being set aside as anomalies. Thus, the taking up of a religious belief or scientific theory normally exerts such a strong influence on both observation and interpretation that there is no neutral position from which competing beliefs or theories can be assessed. Of course, commitment to a particular position, even in the face of conflicting data and theories, has positive as well as negative implications.

Conflicting data or views can make us elaborate, extrapolate, even change, aspects of our own position. In this way, the full interpretive power of particular beliefs or theories is brought to light. Eventually, however, extrapolations and adjustments introduced to fend off opposing positions may lead to the undermining of our own position. If the weight of conflicting evidence becomes too great, then the original position breaks down and conversion to a new position occurs.

15.3.3 Conversion

15.3.3.1 Conversion should not be mistaken for religious tolerance. The new converts are, in fact, often less tolerant and more militant in their religious practice than "old believers" are. We may well then ask: Is it possible to transcend these psychological and philosophical limitations so as to avoid falling into religious intolerance? If we accept the Buddhist doctrinal critique and the psychological analyses of Freud and of Festinger, the answer would seem to be no. On the other hand, it does seem that for the exceptional person, who is both "rationally enlightened and free from egocentric impulses," *religious tolerance may be possible*.[700]

Buddhist meditation is an effective way where both thinking and feeling—the 2 roots of religious intolerance—can be temporarily suspended, even refined and uplifted so that we are willing to listen to differing views, even accept those who hold those views (yet not being trammelled by their views). The joyful calm and radiant clarity of meditation empowers us to suspend judgement of others. Even without meditation, we are able to be open-minded when we habitually remind ourselves of its spiritual benefits. But more diligence and concerted action will be needed here.

15.3.3.2 Our psychological defences [15.3.1] occur *unconsciously*. We often commit ourselves to religious belief clearly conscious of our action. In fact, in modern society, turning to a religion (conversion) and staying in it (commitment) involve an act of the will.[701] We **choose** to become and remain a member

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[698] Leon Festinger, H W Riecken & S Schachter, *When prophecy fails*, Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 1956: 26 f. L Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance,* Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1957. See also (ed) Anson D Shupe, *Six Perspectives on New Religions: A Case Study Approach,* NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981:136 ff. J Cooper, *Cognitive Dissonance: Fifty years of a classic theory,* LA: Sage, 2007.

[699] T Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1970:177-189.

[700] Coward 1986:425.

[701] For an excellent analysis of this point, see Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance,* Toronto, 1982:41. This argument, notes Coward (1986:421), does not apply as fully to traditional societies in which there is only one religion that is completely identified with the culture (eg, Hinduism in mediaeval India, Native American religion before the coming of white Christians, etc). In such traditional monolithic societies, there is simply no choice available. Choice is available only in the sense of remaining a Hindu rather than leaving India, and becoming a European

of a particular group. Even though most of us follow the faith of our parents and ancestors, it is also true that we *choose* to accept that faith. This act of <u>choice</u> provides the psychological basis for the presence of both **pride and prejudice**: <u>pride</u> in the group or belief that we have chosen, and <u>prejudice</u> toward those who have chosen to belong to other groups with their different ways of believing and acting.

Having made a commitment, we become *ego-attached* or *self-identified* to that commitment so that it becomes very difficult to be open and objective toward someone who has chosen to make a commitment different from our own. Thus, we are led to see others, those outside our group, as bigots or heretics who have chosen to turn away from the truth or even go against it. In this respect, **religious prejudice** is different from other kinds of prejudice. A person does not choose to be black, handicapped, or a native Chinese, but those who hate or reject others do so, knowing that these people have chosen to hold on to different beliefs and behaviour.[702]

15.3.3.3 My elder brother, as far as I can recall, was a loving brother. He was, as a teenager, converted into the Brethren Church by our eldest uncle's wife (from Hongkong).[703] He went on to have his own family, and his eldest son (our nephew) followed his faith, married and had, in turn, his own family (with a daughter and a son).

Although our nephew's family was warmly hospitable to us (our family) whenever we visited Melaka (Malaysia), there was always a social and emotional distance between us. Not being Christian, we were never part of their "in-group," their tribe. Once, when I asked his wife (our niece), why her religion must create this chasm, she replied: "We made a choice." For those reborn in water, then, water is thicker than blood.

When we have pride in our religion, we are inclined to be prejudiced against non-believers. The negative result of *pride and prejudice* is a common but unnecessary outcome of religious choice and commitment. The fundamental religious imperative, such as the biblical command, "Choose you this day ... " (Joshua 24.15) does provide the psychological possibility for the growth of intolerance.

15.3.4 RELIGION AS POWER AND PREJUDICE

15.3.4.1 Gordon Allport, in his analysis of *The Nature of Prejudice*,[704] finds that the role of religion is paradoxical: it makes prejudice, it breaks prejudice. The world religions all preach <u>universal love</u>, but the practice of these creeds frequently yield *prejudice* instead. The gospel of love is often negated by the horrors of persecution in the name of these very same ideals. Allport finds some churchgoers to be more prejudiced than average, while others are less prejudiced than average.[705]

A major motivation of the "more prejudiced" churchgoers is their desire for safety, power and in-group (tribal) superiority. Allport's otherwise good study, Coward opines, is tarnished by his desire to whitewash religion. This desire for in-group safety and superiority, says Allport, is linked to ethnic rather than religious roots. It is not religion per se that sows the seeds of intolerance but secular prejudice of in-group safety-seekers. It is not so much Protestant Christianity that is intolerant as the secular concerns of its White-Anglo-Saxon members—so thinks Allport: he blames race, not religion, for intolerance.

15.3.4.2 Jay Newman [15.4.1] offers an instructive critique of Allport's analysis of prejudice (1982: 38-41). While Allport is correct in seeing in-group safety-seeking as a possible source of prejudice, he is too simplistic in his dichotomy which sees pure religion as being corrupted by ethnocentric safety-seeking

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Christian. Modem pluralistic society provides us with the opportunity of choosing between religions without, as it were, leaving home. (Coward's fn)

[702] Newman, op cit 1982:41.

[703] See "Farewell, brother" (R236 120418): see under Dharmafarers (website), "Weekly Reflections: Revisioning Buddhism": http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/RB51-Farewell-brother-120418.pdf.

[704] Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice,* Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

[705] Allport 1954:444.

attitudes. Religion, as a rule, arms itself against those outside the tribe, the out-group. The religious often criticize their ministers and fellow group members. More mature believers even find that they can learn from other religions. For them, the idea of a safe, powerful in-group is outweighed by a greater good.[706]

So long as we believe in some external agency, like God, and we see that idea as being above every-thing else, there can never be religious tolerance. When we put God *first*, when we choose God, every-thing else, especially **others**, even our own lives, must be secondary, or simply "outside" the scheme of things. "He who is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12.30). The Buddha offers a gentler, more natur-al, middle way, beyond I-thou, above self and other, a selfless boundless embrace of all beings, based on the universal value of life.[707]

15.3.5 Power, plenty, pleasure

When we see Buddhism as **a religion**—in terms of *power* (politics) and *statistics* (worldliness)—we are inclined to see ourselves, as Buddhists, in terms of what we have—power and numbers. Then, we will fear losing what we have: this is one of the most powerful psychological drives that adds momentum to intolerance. We may seem to appear successful, even progressive, but the Dharma spirit is missing from us, and ultimately, we will realize that we have been failing all the way. Sadly, this is the strange fate of most ethnic forms of Buddhism.

One of the clear signs of this "progressive failure" is when we, as Buddhists, have been following a teacher, a leader, a person, instead of **the teaching**. We are impressed with what we *have* rather than **what we *are***: we don't even know what this means! We are blinded by crowds, things and numbers, drowned in **power, plenty and pleasure**. Hence, we lack love, compassion, joy and peace: the qualities of true leadership and wholesome social progress.[708]

15.3.6 World religions

Historians of religion have noticed that **the world religions** arose in an act of refraining or renouncing from a safe, powerful in-group. The earliest Jews moved away from the security accorded by powerful civilizations: the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Romans, and finally, their own homeland. The earliest Christians were Jews who consciously gave up the security of orthodoxy. The Protestant reformers reacted against the powerful in-group of the Roman Catholic Church. Anabaptists came into existence because they were not afraid to become an out-group.

Later Buddhism in **India** sank into wealth and worldliness: they were thoroughly destroyed by the Muslim Turk invaders who came for the wealth. In **China, Korea, Japan**, and elsewhere, Buddhism served emperors, kings, the powerful and the wealthy: this worldliness eventually uprooted them from these lands. Even today, where we see Buddhism being conscripted to serve **race and culture**, it becomes the tool of empowering caste, race and the in-group, and oppressing the out-group.

We must never forget our own early Buddhist history: **the earliest Buddhists** rejected the security offered by Brahmanism: **the Buddha** famously renounced the world itself. For the Buddha, **truth and free-dom** (eg, karma as self-accountability, morality as self-betterment, wisdom as self-understanding) are more crucial than the benefits of in-group membership, of the world itself. Let us recall and heed the Bud-dha's words:

> Even if one were to conquer thousands   upon thousands of men in battle,
> but in conquering just one, one's own self,   one is indeed the greatest battle conqueror.
>
> (Dh 103)[709]

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[706] It should not be construed that merely being open to other religions is "tolerance." Very often, it is merely a "political" strategy to look good or boost our own status; or, worse, we actually lack faith and wisdom of Buddhism, and unwisely accept beliefs and practices, of whose dangers or disadvantages the Buddha has warned us.

[707] On the value of life and the values underpinning the 5 precepts, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

[708] These are the 4 divine abodes: see **Brahma,vihara**, SD 38.5.

[709] For the Pali, related verses and nn, see SD 43.5 (1.2.3).

> Better than absolute power over the earth,   or even going to heaven,
> or lordship over all the worlds,   is the blessed fruit of streamwinning.
>
> (Dh 178)[710]

15.4 THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.4.1 Newman's critique of Allport [15.3.4.1 n] is very significant. If, reasons Coward, Allport is correct in his finding that the root of religious intolerance is the secular need for in-group safety, then its cure is psychotherapy. But if the roots of intolerance were more complex, then, psychotherapy is not the solution. Understanding the psychological factor and accepting it may reduce intolerance, but there are other bases that feed it: we shall see how our view of history, philosophy and theology can each become a basis for intolerance—as can the modern fascination with moral relativism. (Coward 1986:422 f)

Before we examine the philosophical and religious bases for intolerance, we will look at how **history** can be a root of intolerance. We will briefly examine the case of the Sinhala [Sinhalese] Buddhist intolerance of the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

15.4.2 Sri Lankan Tamils (also called Ceylon Tamils or Eelam Tamils) have lived in Sri Lanka, mostly in Jaffna (the north), and the north-western and the eastern coasts, since at least the 2nd century BCE. Two Pallava kings ruled Sri Lanka in the 6th and 7th centuries. In the 7th and 11th centuries, the kingdom of Anuradhapura even relied on Tamil mercenaries in large numbers. In the 9th and 10th centuries, Pandya and Chola of south India invaded Sri Lanka, climaxing in their occupation until the 11th century, with the rise of the Sinhala kingdom of Polonnaruva. In the 12th century, however, Jaffna became an independent Tamil kingdom. Tamil migration and assimilation continued until the 18th century.[711]

The British first took over coastal Sri Lanka from the Dutch in 1796, and occupied the whole country from 1815 until 1948. During their occupation, in the 18th century, they imported Tamils as indentured labourers in the Hill Country. The present Sinhala-Tamil conflicts began after independence (1948), when the Sinhala began to exert their nationalism and cultural hegemony. The roots of these conflicts, of course, went deep in Sri Lanka's history.

15.4.3 The Sinhala **chronicles** (*vaṁsa*), such as the Mahāvaṁsa, are highly polemical works that recounted Sri Lanka history with mythical drama highlighted thoroughly in Sinhala Buddhist triumphalism. Heinz Bechert has said of the chronicle tradition that,

> The origin of historical literature in Ceylon … was an intentional act of political relevance. Its object was the propagation of a concept of national identity clearly connected with religious tradition, ie, the identity of Sinhalese Buddhists. … Without the impact of this idea, the remarkable continuity of the cultural as well as of the political traditions in spite of vicissitudes in the history of the island would be impossible.
>
> (Bechert, "The beginnings of Buddhist historiography," 1978:7)

These chronicles[712] relate the legendary glory and genealogies of Sinhalese Buddhist kings who asserted the land's Buddhist heritage as protectors and patrons of Buddhism, and fighting off the Tamils who were largely portrayed as outsiders, interlopers, invaders and usurpers. Furthermore, the chronicles are *ideological*, emphasizing, above all, the integral unity of **race, rule and religion**.

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[710] **Dh 178** is quoted at SD 3.3(7.3), SD 10.16 (1.6.6.6), SD 18.7(4.4), SD 36.10(2.1.3), SD 47.3a(4.2.2).

[711] C R de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A history.* 2nd ed. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1997.

[712] Besides the *Mahāvaṁsa,* other Pali chronicles incl the earlier (4th cent) *Dīpavaṁsa* ("Lineage of the Island") and *Cūḷavaṁsa* ("Minor Lineage") with updated additions from 12th-18th cent; the *Mahābodhivaṁsa* ("Lineage of the Great Awakening," 10th cent), the *Thūpavaṁsa* ("Lineage of the Stupa," 12th cent), and the *Dāṭhāvaṁsa* ("Lineage of the Tooth Relic," 13th cent). There are also 2 noteworthy later Sinhala language chronicles, the *Pūjavaliya* ("Lineage of Offerings," 13th cent) and the *Rājavaliya* ("Lineage of Kings," 17th cent).

It should be acknowledged at this point that the chronicles are complex texts with multiple layers of meaning. Nevertheless, while recognizing that cultural artifacts are rarely if ever single discourses, but are rather universes of discourses in which different ones contend with and play off each other,[713] there is no denying the long-lasting influence of this particular totalizing discourse of the chronicles.

(B S Clough, "A policy of intolerance: A case of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism," 2008:336)[714]

Moreover, the chronicles function to segregate Sri Lanka's Sinhalas from its Tamils, to demonize these Tamils, to assert that the land had a sacred destiny that was wholly Buddhist, and that, therefore, only Sinhala kings had the right to rule, in order to protect this holy legacy. Such myths might well have reflected or dramatized historical events. Hence, Gananath Obeyesekere has remarked that the roots of Sinhala Buddhist violence and intolerance toward others are in its historical, rather than in its doctrinal, writings.[715]

15.5 THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.5.1 The inability or the refusal to see the world as it is—impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself—but to cling on to our own conceptual constructs seen in our own lenses, to be dazzled by the stage-lights of self-view: this is the **philosophical basis for religious intolerance**. It is the philosophical <u>error</u> that works parallel to the psychological fault of *pride*.

Once we have adopted a certain view, either consciously chosen or unconsciously adopted a dominant teaching of our religion or conditioning in which we have been raised,[716] it is often very difficult for most of us to be open enough to see how another philosophical or religious perspective can make sense of the world in its own way. We are so used to seeing the mountainside from our valley that we cannot imagine there are others, perhaps more beautiful views from other sides.

Our thinking is thus limited by the conceptual framework of that dominant philosophical view, that narrow religious bias. We can only make sense, it seems, through that chosen conceptual framework that the data of experience are filtered and tinted with meaning. We are, more often than we are aware, limited by what we know, or think we know.

Kuhn [1.12.9.2], in his remarkable critique of scientific knowledge and discoveries, warns us that students tend to accept and to be limited by certain philosophical views or paradigms on the authority of the textbooks they study and the teachers to whom they listen. The process of scientific education teaches them to "see" or project the data of reality through the received viewpoint of their teachers.[717]

Scientific schooling has conditioned us to simply accept whatever view that dominates the thinking of our times, the sun's shadow cast by the dial, as the only truth without just one look. Only an exceptional thinker sees the subtle moving shadow, that moves him to challenge, to see beyond, this "received view," to examine other possible positions, to recognize the perspectives of seeing reality.

15.5.2 Similarly, in each religion, even Buddhism, a carefully guided process or carelessly devised scheme called **religious training** is at work, repeating and conditioning us with a particular concept or system as the *only* truth. As was the case in science, only the exceptional student questions seriously enough to rise beyond the day's received truth, that moment's shadow of the sundial.

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[713] G G Raheja & A Grodzins Gold, *Listen to the Heron's Word: Reimagining gender and kinship in North India,* Berkeley, 1994:3, in T Bartholomeusz, *In Defense of Dharma: Just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka,* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002:8.

[714] In J Neusner & B Chilton (edd), *Religious Tolerance in World Religions,* W Conshohocken, 2008:335.

[715] G Obeyesekere, "Buddhism, nationhood, and cultural identity: A question of fundamentals," in (edd) Marty & Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago, 1995:232.

[716] See eg Susanne K Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* NY: Mentor, 1951 eg 226-239 (the conclusion). Coward 1986:423.

[717] T Kuhn, 1970:177-189.

Indeed, the same applies to those of us growing up or schooled in views to reject religion and turn to some philosophical views (such as Humanism or Marxism). We have been conditioned into a worldview blinkered by our anti-religious views so that it is difficult for most of us to understand other positions.

Most of us have created a bubble of our own virtual reality: we have blown it so big before our noses, and that is all we see. We don't even see the moving shadow of the sun: perhaps, we catch a glimpse of it, but we think of it as fixed in the moment. Our received philosophies are like a congenital blindness: we neither know what light is, nor can we see what it reveals. It is almost impossible for us to have any aware-ness of the possibility of other conceptual systems. This is how most of us are cognitively and philosophic-ally limited by ready-made biases: this is a basis for religious intolerance; indeed, any kind of intolerance.

15.5.3 What is the most powerful basis for religious intolerance? Intolerance incapacitates us when we rely only on our *thoughts*; when we fail to **feel** what we see, hear, smell, taste and touch; when we fail to understand their true reality: their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, nonself. When we rely only on thoughts, we are limited by **conceptualizing**, our biases of likes and dislikes: our thinking limits and col-ours our vision, prodded on by our tendency to self-pride or ego-attachment. **The Kalaha Vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11) records the Buddha as instructing us:

Piyā pahūtā kalahā vivādā	From what is dear arise quarrels, disputes,
parideva,sokā saha,maccharā ca	lamentations, grief, along with avarice,
mānâtimānā saha,pesunā ca	and conceit and arrogance, along with slander.
macchariya,yuttā kalahā vivādā	Quarrels and disputes are linked to avarice,
vivāda,jātesu ca pesuṇāni	and slanders, too, arise from disputes.

(Sn 863)[718]

When we rely only on conceptualizing, we only know what we want to know; we see out there what is in our own mind. Thus, we create the in-group of those who and what are dear to us. This is how we conceptualize love as a religious tool: "Love one another as I have loved you," says the sect teacher. As we have seen, this love is for God, and for those who love God *first* [15.1.2]: this is how theology is the basis for religious intolerance.

The Buddha, on the other hand, teaches us the "golden rule": "treat others as you would have them treat us"; hence, we respect all life. Based on this value of life, we cultivate a *boundless* heart of loving-kindness for all beings. [15.3.5]

15.6 THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.6.1 At the heart of every religion is a set of **scriptures** that recounts the hagiography (sacred stories) of the founder, his teachings, and the code of conduct for disciples and followers. Early Buddhism has such a scripture, and it is the most ancient, most complete collection in Buddhism. To that extent, early Buddhism may be said to be a "religion." However, unlike any of the other 5 world religions, each with their own scripture, *only* early Buddhism does not treat scripture as divine revelation.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the Abrahamic "religions of the book." For just this reason: they not only regard their respective scripture as divine revelation, but they all have a common religious an-cestry that goes back to the prophet Abraham (c 2100-c 1900). Scholars have also noted linguistic and other similarities between Judaism and Brahmanism: both were possibly related to the ancient religions of Mesopotamia (the fertile crescent of South Asia).[719]

In early 2000 BCE, these nomadic Indo-Aryan tribes slowly migrated from the Central Asian steppes southward through the Hindu Kush into the Indus Valley, and, in due course, populated the rich Gangetic

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[718] See also SD 48.4 (5.3).

[719] Hananya Goodman, *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative studies in Judaism and Hinduism,* SUNY Press, 1994. Constantine S Rafinesque, *The American Nations, or Outlines of Their General History,* Oxford, 1836:91.

plain.[720] In ancient India, their religion became Brahmanism. In modern times, Brahmanism evolved into a popular form known as Hinduism.[721]

In Hinduism, orthodoxy is called **āstika** ("there is"), that is, that which "affirms" the Vedas as showing the way to release (Skt *mokṣa*). Without accepting the Vedas, *mokṣa* cannot be attained. This very positive function of scripture can, however, also become the basis for *religious intolerance*, for which the caste-conscious brahmins are notorious. The Religions of the Book similarly each prided itself as the custodian of the world's oldest records of God's own Words.

15.6.2 Now, if the revealed scripture of each religion is the truth, then any other Scriptures must be in error or at best, incomplete. This attitude is well illustrated in Christianity, whose followers hold that **the New Testament** is primarily authoritative, and the Hebrew "Old Testament" is seen as a secondary, preparatory revelation. For the Christians, the New Testament is the "fulfillment" of the incomplete revelation of the old Hebrew Bible.[722]

For the Jews, however, **the Torah** is the definitive commandment of God, binding upon all of his "chosen people," the Jews (Deuteronomy 7.6-8, 14.2). Judaism rejects the Christian claim that Jesus is the Messiah on the grounds that the Torah *is* the complete revelation. The Muslims, for their part, claim that **the Quran** supersedes the Torah, an idea understandably rejected by the Jews for the same reason. If one's own scripture is the full revelation, then any other scriptures must necessarily be secondary and thus inferior. Clearly, the idea that one's own scripture is superior to all others provides a fertile ground for the growth of religious intolerance.

15.6.3 Much like Islam, **Brahmanism** teaches one Divine Truth of which the Vedas are its authoritative earthly manifestation. When the universe re-arose after its cyclical destruction, the same Vedas are spoken again by rishis (Skt *ṛṣī,* "seers") for the benefit of this new world-cycle and its generations.[723] The Veda (as collective noun) is the Divine Revelation directly "heard" (*śruti*) by the Rishis with their super-human powers.[724] Other *śruti* texts are the lyrical Saṁhitas, commentarial Brahmanas, mystical Āraṇyakas and philosophical Upanisads.[725]

Other than the Vedas—texts such as the epics and Purānas—are secondary works, each with their own authors, and may often be revised or have additions.[726] The brahmins (*brāhmaṇa,* the priests), priding themselves as the highest of social classes on account of being born from the mouth of God or Primal Man, also claim to be the preservers and disseminators of the Vedas. However, they are not missionaries, but virtuosi who teach only the "high-born" (technically "twice-born," *dvīja,* once from the womb, the second from their caste) in their caste-based society, that is, to the kshatriyas (*kṣatriya,* nobles of the land), the vaiśyas (*vaisya,* the merchants) and the (*śūdra,* the artisans).[727] The dark-skinned autochthonous (native) Dravidians were regarded as "outcastes," the out-group, not a part of their socio-religious system.

Early Brahmanism arose after the Vedic period (c 500-200 BCE) during India's Iron Age, which then led to **the 2nd Urbanisation**.[728] This was also the classical period of Brahmanism, when the Epics (the

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[720] SD 10.8 (6.1.1).

[721] Historically, there was *no* Hinduism in the Buddha's time. The predominant religion then was Brahmanism or Vedic religion. Hinduism, as we know it, began in the Gupta period (200-543 CE). Even the word "Hindu" was not originally Indian. See W Doniger, "On Hinduism," Oxford, 2014:6-9.A 1.19,3 n (SD 57.8). Also A 1.19,3 n (SD 57.8).

[722] See, eg, C H Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible.* London: Fontana Books, 1929, rev 1960: ch 10.

[723] On the "world-cycle" (Skt *kalpa;* P *kappa*), see SD 2.19 (9); SD 49.8b (15.2).

[724] See, eg, a basic presentation of the distinction between *śruti* and *smṛti* in S Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sutra,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1960:19.

[725] G Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism,* Cambridge, 1996:33-40.

[726] See, eg, a basic presentation of the distinction between *śruti* and *smṛti* in S Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sutra,* London: Allen & Unwin, 1960:19.

[727] These are the 4 castes or classes (Skt *varṇa;* P *vaṇṇa,* "colour"), P: *brāhmaṇa, khattiya, vessa* and *sudda* respectively: SD 10.8 (6).

[728] India's 1st Urbanization began at the end of the last Ice Age (c 10,000 BCE) in the Indus Valley around the cities of Mohenjo-daro, Harappa and Rupar (declined 1750 BCE).

Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata) and the first Purāṇas (diverse, often inconsistent, legends of gods and traditional lore) were first composed. This climaxed during the mediaeval period (6th century CE-1526), which in turn ended in the decline of Buddhism in India (12th century),[729] followed by the rise of the Muslim Mughal empire (1526).

15.6.4 The term **Hindu** comes from the Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit root Sindhu,[730] the ancient name for the Indus River in NW India.[731] According to Parpola, the Proto-Iranian sound change *s > h* occurred between 850 and 600 BCE.[732] According to Gavin Flood, "The actual term *Hindu* first occurs as a Persian geographical term for the people who lived beyond the river Indus (Skt *sindhu*)" (1996:6), and is found in the 6th-century BCE inscription of Darius I (550-486 BCE).[733] The term *Hindu* in these ancient records was a geographical term and did not refer to a religion. (Flood 1996:6)

Before the British began to categorize Indian communities strictly by religion, Indians generally did not define themselves exclusively through their religious beliefs. They identified themselves largely on the basis of locality, language, caste, clan (*jāti*), occupation and sect.[734]

The English term "**Hinduism**" (as we use it today) to describe a collection of practices and beliefs was first used by Indian reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1816-17.[735] Around 1830, the term was used by Indians who opposed British colonialism and wanted to distinguish themselves from other religious groups.[736] It was probably around this time, too, that the colonial administrators, merchants and others began to use "Hindu" to refer the native Indians and their religions (Brahmanism and popular cults) collectively, with the two senses often overlapping.

15.6.5 Even today, a traditional Hindu will, at the mention of Buddhism, declare that the Buddha was **an avatar** (reincarnation; Skt *avatāra,* "descent") of their god Vishnu,[737] and that, as such, Buddhism is a mere subset of Hinduism. Although this may seem accommodating or tolerant, it is really an assertion of <u>the religious superiority</u> of the Hindu religion (not to mention anachronism),[738] of which the Buddha is seen as only one of their countless passing deities. In other words, to gain liberation (*mokṣa*), we have to be a Hindu, or wait to be fortunate enough to be reborn as one in a future life. Hence, Hindus may seem tolerant, but there is an unconscious sense of their being "superior" to non-Hindus. Hence, it is a very subtle kind of intolerance, but intolerance all the same. This is a subtle case of <u>religious imperialism</u> [15.1].

15.6.6 For the sake of academic argument, we may ask: Is Buddhism free from the charge of being intolerant based on its teachings. Harold Coward, in his instructive essay, "Intolerance in the world's religions" (1986b) points to **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76),[739] which reports the Buddha as saying that religions based on the authority of scripture may be <u>unsatisfactory but not necessarily false</u>. Since scripture is taught by

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[729] See G Larson, *India's Agony Over Religion,* SUNY Press, 1995:209-111.

[730] G Flood 1996:6; A Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism,* Oxford,, 2015 ch 9.

[731] Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Mediaeval India*, 2008:433.

[732] A Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism,* Oxford, 2015 ch 9.

[733] A Sharma, "On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutva," *Numen* 49,1 2002:1-36.

[734] D N Jha, *Looking for a Hindu Identity,* online 2005; New Delhi, 2017. W Doniger 2014:3.

[735] Upinder Singh 2008:433.

[736] U Singh 2008:422; W Doniger, *On Hinduism,* OUP, 2014:12 f; Parpola 2015:1.

[737] Vishnu (Skt *viṣṇu;* P *veṇhu*) is the 2nd of the Hindu Trinity (*trimūrti*): Brahmā (creator), Viṣṇu (preserver), and Śiva (destroyer); also as the hypostases of the natural cycle of <u>birth, growth and death</u> in nature and humans. Brahma, on account of his close spiritual association with the Buddha, has only a handful of temples in India, and is hardly worshipped by Hindus today: SD 49.8b (9.2.2.3).

[738] On the term "Hindu" being post-Buddha, see (15.6.4).

[739] M 76/1:513-524 (SD 35.7).

traditionalists who have not necessarily had the direct experience of the original speaker of the scripture, the scripture is something that is merely passed down as remembered.[740]

Even assuming that the original scriptural revelation is trustworthy, those transmitting it may have lapses of memory, which then makes that transmission incomplete or erroneous at least in parts. Hence, it cannot be fully reliable. On the other hand, even when the transmission is complete, trustworthy and error-free—if it is merely about the history of some ancient race and their race-based God-beliefs—it is *irrelevant* to others, especially when it is about only some in-group reality, not the true reality of all existence.

The Buddha's teachings are more reliable than any other scriptures since they relate to how we can know true reality. Such means of knowing has to be tested in our own experience and not to be taken on mere authority. A wise teacher tells us that fire burns: we know from our experience that this is true, too. Such a truth relates to **reality**.

For the sake of scholarly discussion, we may follow Coward's conclusion that, clearly the religions based on scriptural authority—namely, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism—are all inferior to the religion based on the sayings of the Buddha. The point of this analysis, explains Coward, is to show that the position each religion takes with regard to scripture opens the way for the possible development of religious intolerance.

Of course, he concedes, if such valuations of scripture are not used to "put down" another religion, but is respected as sincere differences in belief, then intolerance is avoided. Too often, however, the former has been the case in the history of religions.[741] Amongst all the religions, Coward only speaks favourably of Buddhism. Perhaps if he had read and understood **the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta** (D 25), where the Buddha actually invites other religions to share what is right and good in interfaith dialogue (apparently the earliest of such a statement in religious history), he would surely reassert his approval.[742]

15.6.7 We may agree with Coward that by the very nature of its existence, **a religion** must deny all other religions (for the very sake of its relevance), either by way of exclusivism (the God-religions) or by assimilation (such as Hinduism and Baha'ism). A religion is defined basically by its scripture, tenets and practices, and, especially in a God-religion, these scriptures, tenets and practices have intrinsic value: they are *it:* meaning that we need to accept and believe them as being true and inviolable: they are the Word of God. But then is Buddhism a religion even though the Buddha teaches salvation and awakening?

(*1*) **Early Buddhism**, too, has scriptures, teachings and practices, but we are often reminded that they should not merely be taken at the word level; that we must see (through) them on a "Dharma" level: that we should seek to understand what they connote or point to. Thus, when we take them at the "word" level, claiming them to be true and real, it is likely that we have "identified" with them, in the sense that we "own" them: "this is what I am; it applies fully to me; this is my view." This is a form of **self-identity view**, the 1st fetter preventing streamwinning, the first step on the path of awakening. We have failed to see nonself as the principle underlying these scriptures, teachings and practices.

(*2*) The early Buddhist texts, the suttas, often speak of the Buddha Dharma, teaching, as a "raft" for crossing over troubled waters to the safe far shore (nirvana) [14.3]. Nothing in Buddhism is meant to be an external object of adoration, worship or even solace: what is beautiful, good and healing is to be internalized: we need to cultivate these qualities. Our lessons and training are like good medicine: we take them when we need them, and when we are healed, we do not need them. When we are attached or addicted to the medicines and drugs, then, we have strayed from the true path. This is called the fetter of **attachment to ritual and vows**, the 2nd fetter preventing streamwinning.

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[740] K N Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963:185 f.
[741] H Coward 1986:427 f.
[742] See esp D 25,22.2-23/3:56 f: SD 1.4 (2).

(*3*) A religion often demands our total surrender to it, to have unconditional faith in it. The problem is that a religion has no consciousness: it is the prophet, preacher or poser who makes such demands of his followers. We are then deluded into believing that we are powerless, fallen short of the Guru's love or God's glory: we are sinners. True Dharma practice, on the other hand, is self-empowering; it frees us from religion, so that we can head for the path of awakening. We overcome self-doubt, that we are capable of radiant good and joyful freedom through self-reliance. This is the meaning of self-refuge, which breaks the 3rd fetter—that of **doubt**.

15.7 THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

15.7.1 The belief that our religion's scripture is the full revelation of divine truth leads naturally to theological developments like those in Judaism and Christianity. As a systematic formulation of that revealed truth, our own theology (theories and beliefs in God or Godliness) must necessarily be superior to other systems different from ours, especially those without any revelation (like Buddhism). Other theologies may be accepted, but always on a secondary level to our own theology.

We can clearly see this idea of a "supreme theology" in Advaita Vedānta Hinduism, which sees itself as the "most tolerant" religion in the world. Indeed, it rejects no other theological position, be it Saivaite or Vaishnavite, within Hinduism, or Jewish, Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist, outside of Hinduism. All are embraced as "qualified" (*saguṇa*) expressions of the one true "unqualified" (*nirguṇa*) Brahman, the Universal Soul. Other theologies are assimilated into Advaita Vedāntā by replacing the basic revelations of the other religions with that of the Vedic one as interpreted by 8th-century Vedic theologian Ādi Śaṅkara. Only after this "accommodation" of key ideas can the acclaimed Vedānta tolerance manifest itself.[743]

15.7.2 We only need to discuss theological differences with an Advaita Vedāntin Hindu to be told that Jesus, Moses, Muhammad and Buddha were indeed avatars or incarnations of the divine, and thus fully acceptable to the Hindu. Yet, we can't help feeling we have been subtly put down. Such Advaita Vedānta "tolerance" is not real tolerance at all, but is a form of "**theological imperialism**" which embraces us unwelcomely, and summarily teasing us into forsaking the heart of our own faith.

This is the myth of Hindu tolerance which, in reality, is intellectual intolerance of a very sophisticated kind.[744] On the other hand, should the Advaita Vendāntin be willing to listen and openly understand that our view is really fundamentally different, and cannot be subsumed without compromising it, then, there would be a recognition of the real difference in religious commitment, more likely to result in some kind of tolerance, at least outwardly.

15.7.3 Of course, Hinduism is not the only religion to employ such a theological imperialism. **The Baha'i Faith** is a New Religion founded by the aristocrat Baha'u'llah (1817-1892) in 19th-century Iran (a predominantly Muslim country). Hence, it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception.[745] It seems to be a reaction to Islam, seeing itself as a non-violent and more tolerant religion.

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[743] See, eg, the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and of Swami Vivekananda: (ed) W T de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol 2, NY: Columbia Univ Press, 1958:85-107. See also articles on modem Hindu movements such as Brahmo Samaj and Ramakrishna Movement, and thinkers such as Vivekananda, Gandhi, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan: (ed) R D Baird, *Religion in Modern India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1981. Also (tr) S Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sūtra*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960:19.

[744] See Robert Minor, "Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan on the nature of 'Hindu' Tolerance," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, 1982:275 ff. As Minor demonstrates Radhakrishnan became the chief spokesman of "Hindu tolerance" to the intellectual West. More than anyone else, Radhakrishnan is responsible for establishing the myth of Hindu tolerance so widely accepted in the West today. Minor concludes that Radhakrishnan's tolerance of other religious positions was limited to the way they fit into his own religious stance. "His own position alone was treated as absolute, without having its absolute status ever questioned" (276).

[745] The Trial of Mulla `Alí Bastámí (momen.org).

It teaches <u>the essential worth of all religions and the oneness of humanity under God</u>. Except for its personalities, Baha'ism—or "Baha'i Faith," as they prefer to call it—has almost neither new nor unique teachings. In fact, almost everything it teaches is found in other faiths, assimilated by it to promote itself as a faith in its own right. As we will see, this is both its strength as well as weakness.

Baha'u'llah was succeeded by his son, Abbas (1844-1921), well known as Abdu'l-Bahá (slave/servant[746] of Bahá), as leader of the faith, and was in turn succeeded by his son, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), who led the faith from 1921 until his death in 1957. Like many New Religions (in Japan especially), it is perpetuated by a family-based lineage.

15.7.4 The Baha'i teachers, without being practitioners, have assimilated the Buddha and his teachings, mainly from textual (mis)understanding and misappropriating of **Buddhism**, for the purposes of glorifying their own Faith. Both Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi referred to Buddhism, and, like the Hindu idea of avatars [15.6.5], conscripted the Buddha into their notion of the succession of <u>the manifestations of God</u>. Buddhism is seen by Baha'ism as one of <u>nine known revealed religions</u>: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, the Sabaen religion, the Bab (Bab'i) and Baha'ism. These religions are not the only "true religions" (in the Baha'i view) that have appeared in the world, but are the only ones still existing. The Baha'is believe and teach that there have always been (and will be) Divine Prophets and Messengers.[747] [15.7.6.1]

The Baha'is reinterpreted Buddhist scriptures as predictive of Bahā'u'llah, who they see as the future Buddha, "the Fifth Buddha," Maitreya. The Baha'is (followers of the Faith) are taught that much of the "original teachings" of the Buddha were lost; hence, they claim, the authenticity of the present Buddhist canon of scripture is uncertain. According to them, not all present-day Buddhist beliefs and practices are actually in keeping with the Buddha's teachings.[748] (CC 1:15-23). [15.7.6.2]

15.7.5 Interest in Buddhism amongst Bahā'is has increased in our times, with a growing number of Bahā'is coming from Buddhist background. However, given the very different nature of early Buddhism, and the God-religions (the Abrahamic faiths and Hinduism), the inclusion of Buddhism in the list of Bahā'i revealed religions poses difficult questions for Bahā'i religious scholarship. Hence, they have attempted to make further <u>theistic</u> claims of Buddhism—*theologize* Buddhism, if you like—to see and use it in the light of **a God-religion**. [15.7.6.2]

Two of their Baha'i writers have each come up with quite different ways of **theologizing** Buddhism. The controversial Baha'i, Jamshed K Fozdar (*The God of Buddha*, California 1973, Italy 1995; *Buddha Maitrya-Amitabha has Appeared,* 1976, 2nd ed 1995) Fozdar attempts to present, in what he considers as Buddhist terms, of the Buddha's "noble silence" [12.3.2, 15.7.6.4] as referring to the unknowable reality as being that of the concept of God; thus, to him, presenting the Baha'i Faith as the prophetic fulfilment in Buddhism. [15.7.6.3]

In 2007, Jamshed Fozdar, on account on his "impolite and unseemly language in addressing the Institutions of the Faith," was excommunicated from the Universal House of Justice, the highest authority of global Baha'i community located in Haifa, Israel.[749] He, however, seems to be held in good grace by the "**Free Baha'is**," which only accept Baha'u'llah and Andu'l Baha. They claim that after the demise of Abdu'l Baha, Shoghi Effendi usurped power "by forged Will and Testaments of Abdu'l Baha, his mother Munira Khanoom and Behiyeh Khanoom master-minded and made additions to the Will and Testaments by forging the handwriting (which was scientifically analyzed by renowned Dr Charles Ainsworth Mitchell)." They

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[746] Arab/Persian *abd* = Indonesian/Malay *abdi,*"slave" is cognate with Pali *dāsa,* as in "Buddhadāsa."

[747] Baha'is regard the number 9 as religiously symbolic and special: <u>The Number Nine (9) and the Baha'i Faith - Baha'i Blog (bahaiblog.net)</u>.

[748] "Extracts from the Baha'i Writings on Buddha, Krishna and related subjects," *Compilation of Compilations* CC 1:15-23. <u>https://bahai-library.com/pdf/compilations/buddha_krishna_zoroaster.pdf</u>.

[749] <u>https://freebahai19.wordpress.com/2012/11/28/the-cruel-treatment-done-to-fozdar-family-by-universal-house-of-justice/</u>.

reject the Universal House of Justice (formed by Shoghi's wife, Ruhiyeh Maxwell in 1963), and denounce its institution of paying of Huququ'llah (a kind of tithe) by the faithful.[750]

Moojan Momen (1950-   ) (*Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith,* 1994), retired physician and historian, specialist in Baha'i studies,[751] details the various similarities of ethical teachings between Theravāda and Baha'ism, and argues that metaphysical differences between the two were merely culture-bound termi-nologies. He notes also that both religions emphasize religious practice and regard many metaphysical issues as being "unknowable."[752] Since this is Baha'i teaching, clearly, it is the highest religion. [15.7.6.4]

Most modern Baha'is, especially the leaders, have learned that religious imperialism and religious piracy is a serpent biting its own tail, and thus have rejected the works of Fozdar and Momen. Modern Baha'is are generally more tolerant with other religions today. I have myself presented a total of 3 Bud-dhist papers in Baha'i interfaith events in the National University of Singapore, and at least one of these have been published in their journal (I had to pay for my copy).[753]

15.7.6 The Buddhist answers to Baha'i assimilation

15.7.6.1 THE BUDDHA IS *NO* PROPHET. The Hindus and the Baha'is both regard the Buddha as an avatar in their respective religious system. This is no religious tolerance at all, but a righteous grand show of **reli-gious imperialism** [15.7.6.5]. The Buddha and early Buddhism do not fit at all into the Baha'i God-based system. To conscript the Buddha into the service of Baha'ism reflects not only religious hubris, but also suggests intellectual poverty, poor moral standards and a profound spiritual lack. It is like Shanghaiing or enslaving the parents of another family to parent our own family, as if we lack our own parents or have no love for them.

15.7.6.2 THE BUDDHA IS *BEYOND* GOD AND HEAVEN. According to early Buddhism, all that exists, God (*mahā brahmā, pajāpati, issara,* etc),[754] and the gods and their heavens may be very long-lasting, but are nevertheless *impermanent,* and part of samsara, the cycle of rebirth and redeath.[755] Hence, the supreme-ly long-lived God or gods, all beings, will be reborn, and with the exhaustion of their good karma, they will, as a rule, fall into a lower, even the lowest, realm of existence, hell itself. The Buddha and the arhats have all attained nirvana, and are hence free from cyclic existence.

15.7.6.3 THE FUTURE BUDDHA IS NEITHER A BUDDHA YET NOR WILL HE COME ANY TIME SOON. Teaching on the future buddha, Metteyya (Skt *maitreya*) is a late one, mentioned only once in the suttas, that is, **the Cak-ka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 26).[756] The Sutta gives us a very good idea when Metteyya will arise in our world. After a very long period of time (millions of years), the human lifespan will shorten to just 10 years, when a maiden of 5 is ready for marriage (a hint of accelerated human physical maturation).

Then, there will be a terrible "7-day war" (in relative time). People will flee and hide in remote places. In due course, the feuding humans tire of war, and keep the precept of non-killing, their lifespans double. They continue keeping the 5 precepts and their relative lifespans keep increasing exponentially until it

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[750] http://freebahais.org/about/.

[751] On Momen's controversy: Dishonesty of Moojan Momen ~ Baha'i Texts (bahaitexts.blogspot.com).

[752] On scholars' responses to Momen's ideas: On apostasy, Challenging apostasy: Responses to Moojan Momen's 'Marginality and Apostasy in the Baha'i Community' | Sen McGlinn - Academia.edu. Baha'is as a "mystic commun-ity," Response to Moojan Momen: The Baha'is as a Mystic Community | Welcome to MARKINGS, the website of Jack (J.A.) McLean (jack-mclean.com).

[753] Piya Tan: "Divine qualities of spiritual dialogue," 14 Apr 2001; "Emptiness of interfaith dialogue: The relation-ship of Buddhism to other religions & the search for common ground," May 2001; "Beyond a clash of cultures: A Buddhist response," May 2002.

[754] On the early Buddhist view on God, esp as Brahmā or Prajapati, see SD 11.7 (5 + 7).

[755] See eg **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49,10-25), SD 11.7.

[756] D 26,25 f + SD 36.10 (4.2.4).

reaches 80,000 years. It is then that the future buddha, Metteyya, will arise in our world. This would be in an unimaginably long time in the future![757]

15.7.6.4 THE NOBLE SILENCE IS AGAINST ALL THEOLOGIES. The Baha'i writers had clearly not fully understood the context nor significance of the Buddha's "noble silence" that specifically relates to the "**10 points**"[758] —(1-4) whether the world is eternal or not, finite or infinite; (5-6) whether the self and the body are the same or different; (7-10) whether the tathagata (sentient being) exists after death, does not exist, both, or neither—which are actually philosophical speculation, which does not help spiritual practice at all.[759]

An even more profound silence of the Buddha is his **apophatic language**, a negating expression, in an attempt to represent or point to nirvana <u>in words</u>, thus:

> Bhikshus, there is
> the non-born, non-become, non-created, non-conditioned.[760]
> (*ajātaṁ abhūtaṁ akataṁ asaṅkhataṁ*)   (U 8.3/pp80 f), SD 50.3

The Baha'i writers [15.7.5], apparently excited with this amazingly mystical twist on the "emptiness" (*suññata*) of language reflecting nirvana, misconstrues it (the language) as referring to the "unknowing" or "unknowability" of God or the God-idea. I don't think any informed Buddhist or scholar would object to such writers claiming God to be unknowable: this is a welcome bridging idea for an interfaith dialogue between the God-religions and early Buddhism. [15.8]

15.7.7 The God-idea in Buddhism

However, it is unimaginable when nirvana is equated with the God-idea, or that the Buddha is refer-ring to any such idea. Anyone who closely and honestly studies the suttas will know there is not a hint of such a link on early Buddhism. Buddhism has even been described as "**non-theistic**" by some scholars.[761] The Buddha often speaks of Gods (*brahmā*) and the gods (*devas*), but none of them are eternal beings, though some of the Gods thought that they were [15.7.6.2].[762]

More significantly, God(s) or the gods do not play any significant role in the Buddha's teaching of awakening. One's practice needs to be mentioned and clarified though, that is, **the recollection of deities** (*devatā'nussati*). Far from being any kind of worship, this is a <u>skilful means</u> the Buddha introduced for the benefit of those who are still conditioned by some kind of theistic belief. They are to reflect on their <u>moral virtue</u> that brings them such a divine life. Once this meditation brings us joy, we switch to our main medi-tation, which is usually <u>the breath meditation</u>.[763]

Furthermore, the Buddha offers an alternative meditation (the usual one being the breath meditation) for those still with lingering theistic beliefs. This is **the cultivation of lovingkindness** (*mettā,bhavanā*), which is the basis for deeper meditations, that is, of compassion (*karuṇā,bhāvanā*), of joy (*muditā,bhava-nā*), and of equanimity (*upekkhā,bhāvanā*). These are the cultivation of **the 4 divine abodes** (*brahma,vihā-ra*), the first 3 of which can lead us up to the 3rd dhyana, and the last to the 4th dhyana. Having attained dhyana, a powerful joyful mental state, we can easily go on to other meditations and free our minds from theistic views.[764]

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[757] **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,9-24), SD 36.10.

[758] See **Silence of the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (5).

[759] On the 10 points, see **The unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10 (5.1.3).

[760] Lit, "… there is the non-born, non-become, non-created, non-conditioned … ," or "not-born … " etc.

[761] See eg H von Glasenapp. *Buddhism: A non-theistic religion,* tr I Schloegl. NY: G Braziller, 1966.

[762] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creator_in_Buddhism. *Creator in Buddhism.* Nyanaponika, "Buddhism and the God-idea," 1994: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/godidea.html.

[763] SD 15.13. On prayer that helps, see **Ādiya S** (A 5.41), SD 2.1 (4).

[764] See **Brahma,vihāra,** SD 38.5.

15.7.8 Religious imperialism

We have noted how **religious imperialism** started around the same time that Columbus "discovered" America, with the Roman Pope then dividing the world beyond Europe to be conquered, converted, and if necessary, enslaved, by the Spanish and the Portuguese. There was a total disregard for other religions, even other Christians, namely, the Protestants, who within a generation, launched their own world conquest, although with less religious fervour and violence than the Catholics. [11.2.1 (2)]

Thankfully, the Roman Church's power has effectively shrunk down to the Vatican City in Rome, but religious imperialism in other forms are now practised by not just the Christians, but by all of the world religions. Religious imperialism today is more subtle than in the past, and we often see Buddhism on the receiving end. However, when Buddhism is very powerful, such as in the Theravāda countries, it tends not to tolerate members of the minority religions, such as the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Muslims in Myanmar. Very often, such intolerance, even violence, have been encouraged by the ethnic monks themselves [15.2].

A subtler form of religious imperialism is the theological or doctrinal form, where other religions make use of Buddhist teachings for their own benefits. We have seen this manifested in the attitudes of the Hindus [15.6.5] and the Baha'is towards Buddhism [15.7.2]. It is also true that the Buddha has taken over many Brahminical ideas and terminology, and converting many prominent and intelligent brahmins in his own time. In the case of the Buddha's assimilation of brahminical ideas and terminology, the Buddha is careful to present them in a more wholesome, more tolerant and liberating form than the brahmins have done. We may say that the Buddha is recasting brahmin swords into Buddhist almsbowl.

15.7.9 God-religions and religious imperialism

15.7.9.1 When the world religions exist alongside one another, each tends to express itself in terms of the other for its own benefit: this is religious imperialism in the guise of interfaith dialogue and tolerance. This is the Church's new *kenosis,* a (forced) emptying, renunciation, of its self-imagined divinity, apologizing for its unimaginable atrocities and decimations of tribes and cultures in South America, and wherever the Church went they pronounced apologies—we apologize for killing your kings and chiefs, massacring your poorly armed tribesmen with our guns and weapons, bringing the pox that decimated your tribes, stealing all your gold, abusing your children, breaking up your families and cultures, amongst other things. Our God is forgiving.

15.7.9.2 This new **apologetic theology** is clearly better than colonialism, religious violence and wars. Surely, God blesses us more when we are kind to others; when we accept others, no matter how unworthy, we would be better accepted. The German Jesuit priest and theologian Karl Rahner (1904-84), for example, used the apt phrase, "anonymous Christians," to magnanimously refer to the unconverted. After all, historical circumstances of living before Christ prevented many from knowing him; many more remain unexposed to Christ through the missionary witness of Christians. After all, God's grace—the common spiritual horizon of all religious acts—in the other religions is surely his divine revelation leading to salvation. This is the new religious imperialism.

But since salvation, in the Christian view, can only be through Jesus Christ, if salvation is reached via another religion, it must be an experience of anonymous Christianity. In his "tolerant" embrace of others, Rahner, like the Advaita Vedānta Hindu, is careful to safeguard his own position as absolute. Again, as in the Hindu case, there is a superiority claim involved, but this time it is made explicit. The person who is exposed to God's grace through Christianity has, other things being equal, a greater chance of salvation than someone who is merely an anonymous Christian.[765]

Although Rahner's theology is a great advance over previous Roman Catholic positions that allow neither truth nor grace to other religions—or even to other theologies within Christianity (eg, Protestant theology)—it still falls under **theological imperialism** characterizing the responses of Hinduism and of

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[765] Ibid.

Baha'ism to Buddhism [15.7.8]. They each regard their own position as superior, and that of the Buddh-
ist, no matter how good, as being inferior to theirs.

15.7.9.3 We have seen how—as reported in **the Sandaka Sutta** (M 76) [16.6.6]—a theistic religion,
based on the authority of scripture, is "unsatisfactory but not necessarily false," as an academic or tech-
nical example of "religious intolerance." However, Buddhism's position on this seems acceptable because
most thinking people would agree with the Buddha's assessment.

Early Buddhism, on the other hand, would find it difficult, indeed, impossible, to accept theology, ex-
cept when functioning as a psychological tool that conduces our reaching the path of awakening. We have
mentioned the Buddha's promotion of **the recollection of deities** and **the 4 divine abodes**—both of which
seem "theological" or "god-based" in nature. They are, however, useful as a bridge for an erstwhile God-
believer who is drawn to Buddhism. [15.7.7]

15.8 RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

15.8.1 The theological basis for superiority in **Islam** arises from the assessment of the relative merits of
the various scriptures. To the Muslims, since the Qur'an is the only full and perfect revelation of the
"Mother Book" in heaven, then all other theologies which take other scriptures as their starting points
are, by definition, inferior. Other scriptures and theologies do have some value, but when placed next to
the Qur'an, the latter's superiority is self-evident.

The Qur'an's superiority is also evident in the lived goodness it produces. Thus, the Qur'an exhorts:
"Strive, then, together as if competing in good works. To God is the return of all of you, and He will then
make you understand (the truth) about what you have differed on" (5.48; cf 2.213). The positive message,
then, is that all religious differences are delusory, and calls for tolerance. It is Islam that says this; hence,
Islam is superior to all other religions.

15.8.2 At a glance, **Judaism** seems to be the one religion with a theology that does not put a demand
upon others. While understanding themselves to be unique in the sense of having a special covenant
relationship with God (Yahweh), Jews leave open the possibility that God has entered into other cove-
nants with other peoples.[766] In this sense there is no inner need for the Jews to impose the content of
their own covenant upon others: other religions have different God-willed covenant relationships. This is,
in fact, similar, in spirit, as the Muslim view of religious differences. [15.8.4]

While this may be acceptable to Islam, and also Christianity—they are all Abrahamic faiths—it cer-
tainly does not reflect the self-understanding of Hinduism, nor does this make any sense to the Buddhist.
Thus, to the degree that Judaism imposes a covenant relationship with God as the absolute essence of
religion, its theology is also imperialistic in its attitude to other religions. Judaism consistently avoids hav-
ing to respond to the non-theistic character of Buddhism and similar schools of Hinduism.

The intolerance here takes the form of Jewish believers dogmatically imposing their views on others,
without really listening to them. Otherwise, they stand away from the Gentile (non-Jew)—they even have
a term for "others"—at a palpable social distance: this is intolerance. We see a similar social distance
between the wealthy Buddhists in Asia's ethnic Buddhisms—who see themselves as natural leaders and
teachers of the masses—who stand away and above lesser Buddhists, the poor, untitled, lower in status,
and more remote in the "power distance" [1.1.4] from these elite. This, too, is intolerance, subtle and
tacit as it is.

15.8.3 This review of our biological basis along with our historical, psychological, philosophical, scriptural
and theological tendencies has laid bare the many bases for religious intolerance. It is also true that the
teachings of the great religions can give one the kind of grounding in morality and wisdom that is essen-
tial for true tolerance. The fact that the great religious teachings continue to bring us the misery of the 30

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[766] See Harold Coward, *Religious Pluralism: Challenge to world religions,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985:1-4.

Years War, and in our own time, Belfast, Beirut, Abadan and Amritsar, may speak more of <u>human failure</u> than of the weakness of the religious ideals themselves.

It is obvious then that religion is a **human enterprise**, that we not only create our own religions, but we are, it seems, compelled to take what we see as good or better in other religions for augmenting our own. We thus need to understand that religion is about the meaningful and powerful aspects of our own cultural experiences, and we need to learn to benefit from other cultural experiences: **the human ex-perience**. Intolerance, then, is not a human endeavour: it dehumanizes us. In seeing others as less worthy, we bring ourselves down under the crushing weight of our own intolerance. We learn nothing from the best of good, beauty, truth and freedom that religion is meant to teach us.

15.8.4 When we were children, we played in the sand and mud; we built sand-castles and mud-pies. We talk of tales of magical beings, demons, unicorns and great heroes; we play with sticks and cloaks fighting off bad and evil. As we age, we build and boast of bigger things, deadlier weapons, we exploit the young, even send them to fight and die for us. But we still have our fears and phantoms; our demons are those who differ from us, that we will fail.

We invent religion, create God in our own image. We tell tall tales about them; we grow beards, keep our hair long, dress like Gods, gesture like them; we cross lands, sail the seas, fly through the skies, to take what are not ours, to hold others in our shadows. Yet, we all age, sicken and die. We have never learned: we keep looking outside, up and away. If only we looked within where all the true answers lie. One man, after a long, long time, does just that: he looks within and sees all things. Having awakened, he awakens us. He is the Buddha.

16 Defending Buddhism against the Lotus Sutra

16.1 A CHRISTIANIZED SUTRA?

16.1.1 Although we usually imagine **intolerance** as occurring *between* different religions, the more insid-ious kind of intolerance is that between the Buddhists themselves. The best-known case of <u>intra-Buddhist intolerance</u>, indeed, celebrated by its proponents, is found in **the Lotus Sutra** (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra). It is a polemical work that blatantly debunks and derides much that is salient and sacred in early Buddhism in the name of Mahāyāna "skillful means" and the Bodhisattva ideal.[767]

16.1.2 The work was crafted over a few centuries, after the advent of Christianity at the other end of the Silk Road between India and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean (west Asia), where Christ lived and preached. The Lotus Sutra contains so much that is <u>apparently anti-early Buddhism, unbuddhistic</u> and biblical that it is appropriate to call a "Christian(ized) Sutra." It has, in fact, done admirably well in sowing the seeds of delusion and intolerance within Buddhism itself. Our house has been set afire and burning wildly, yet we don't seem to notice it; we seem to be used to playing with fire.

Most scholars studying Buddhism are unconcerned about the controversy and polemics posed by the Lotus Sutra. Their task is merely to study the controversy as professional onlookers, recording, analyzing and postulating on whatever happens to Buddhism. After all, as some of them claim, "there is no right or wrong Buddhism," no one really knows exactly what the Buddha taught! On the other hand, as Buddhist practitioners, especially with some direct experience and understanding of its basic teachings and prac-tices, we value <u>the experiential documentations of the Buddha's life, awakening and teachings</u>.

We have every right and duty to protect and propagate the Dharma just as any other believers pro-pagate their own beliefs, to say the least. Our house is burning, and learned neighbours are watching and video-recording it without laying a hand to help us: who is to blame when we do not ourselves stand up for the Buddha Dharma that we value?

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[767] SD 7.12 (3.4) wrong skillful means + Christian influence?

16.2 WHY WAS THE LOTUS SUTRA WRITTEN?

16.2.1 By examining the question "why the Lotus Sutra was written," we may also have an idea of the kind of people who wrote the Lotus Sutra (and the kind of people who look up to it). There are at least these 3 possible reasons for which they had written the Sutra:

(1) they were Buddhists inspired by early Christian teachings, who assimilated key Christian ideas;
(2) they were early Christian zealots who used Buddhist themes and rewrote them with a Christian spin;
(3) they were Buddhist scholars who pilfered Christian ideas and retold them in a *neyārtha* manner.

Below, we have a few interesting cases from each of these categories of people, on how they assimilate an outside religion, or how that outside religion assimilates them, in turn, in a variety of ways.

16.2.2 (*1*) In Singapore, in my own lifetime, there was a resourceful band of young Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhists who were deeply inspired by Christian teachings. The zealous leader called himself **a pastor**[768] with the title of "Reverend." One of their favourite greetings was "May the Lord bless you!" In their pray-ers, they habitually invoked the Buddha to the effect: "Oh Lord (Buddha), (or Guanyin) save us!" and so on. They celebrated Christmas, too, replete with a Christmas tree and presents. Cross-religious marriages in faith do occur.

 Most evangelical groups are, however, religiously endogamous: they see themselves as an exclusive "in-group." In China, during the late Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Catholic communities flourished alongside the Buddhists, and "formed a tangled network through continuous appropriation and competition. Their relation was vividly reflected in a contemporary collection of rules for a Christian association in which it says, 'When some outsider gets sick, he invites monks and Taoists. If he invites our members to recite scriptures, it means that he regards the Lord of Heaven no different from a bodhisattva. Surely, we should not go. Be careful! Be careful!' [769]" This is found in the Jesuit archives.[770]

16.2.3 (*2*) In Thailand, Sawai Chinnawong, a Thai artist converted to Christianity, depicts Bible stories in a Central Thai setting. He has, for example, done at least 3 "Annunciation" paintings and 4 "Madonna and Child" paintings in Thai style. Sawai writes: "My work represents influences from many styles. All of my art is Gospel-based and inspired. I believe Jesus Christ is present in every culture, and I have chosen to celebrate his presence in our lives through Thai traditional cultural forms."[771] This is a very effective way of "colonizing" locals (Thais) to Christianity, helped by the deterioration of moral conduct of Buddhist monastics and the weakening of Buddhist living and influence on the Thais themselves.

16.3 THE LOTUS SUTRA REJECTS THE PATH

16.3.1 (*3*) To legitimize its unorthodox teachings, the Lotus Sutra writers put these words into the mouth of "the Buddha":

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[768] In 2000. Tsem Rinpoche started Kechara, a progressive Tibetan Buddhist organization using "modern method" to create "an awakened community." Their preachers are known as "pastors," and are of 2 kinds: the lay pastors and the sangha-to-be. (Thanks, Goh Hian Kooi for this information.) https://www.kechara.com/pastors/.

[769] *Huigui zongyao* (Summary of Rules for Christian Societies), in (ed) Nicolas Standaert, *Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus,* Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, vol 12 2002:484 f.

[770] Qu in Gang Song, "Between Bodhisattva and Christian Deity: Guanyin and the Virgin Mary in late Ming China," in (edd) D Shimkhada & P K Herman, *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess traditions of Asia,"* Newcastle (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008:117 (ch 6).

[771] https://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/136086355015/christmas-story-art-from-thailand. Sawai Chinnawong - OMSC (ptsem.edu). https://www.evangelisch-in-thailand.church/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Thai-Style-Christmas-Mural.pdf. Chinnawong blends Thai, Christian art - Yale Daily News.

the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, by resorting to a variety of [explanations of] <u>causes and conditions, parables, words and phrases, and expedient devices</u> preach the Dharma; that all is for the purpose of anuttarasamyaksambodhi … these preachings ... convert <u>bodhisat-tvas</u> ... for they who have intelligence gain understanding through parables.
(Leon Hurvitz, *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma,* NY, 1976:58)

At least <u>2 points</u> are evident from this key passage: [17.2.4.2 f]

16.3.2 Arhathood through listening

16.3.2.1 The Lotus Sutra uses **ideas and words** in different ways, claiming that they can bring <u>enlightenment</u> itself to the listener (or reader), that is, us.[772] The suttas have a few accounts of people attaining arhathood through *merely* <u>listening</u> to the Buddha, such as <u>the 5 monks</u> in **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59);[773] the seth's son, <u>Yasa</u>; and the bark-dressed wanderer, <u>Bāhiya Dāru,ciriya</u>. These are, however, special cases of disciples who are spiritually ready on account of their past training and present readiness.
The 5 monks are clearly serious practitioners themselves, that is, meditators in their own way, meaning that they are able to attain dhyana, and thus, having heard the Buddha teaching the 1st discourse and then the 2nd discourse, experience the ripening of their past spiritual karma in the ideal present circumstances. In other words, it was not merely the <u>listening</u> that brings them arhathood, but what they were in the past and present lives as accomplished meditators.

16.3.2.2 Yasa[774] is recorded as first attaining "the Dharma-eye" (probably streamwinning) upon listening to the Buddha giving "the gradual teaching" followed by a lesson on the 4 noble truths (Mv 1.7.6 (V 1:15 f)), and while, later, his father listens to similar teachings and attains streamwinning, Yasa himself attains <u>arhathood</u> (as he listens).
Yasa's spiritual agony in his luxury mansion (Mv 1.7.1 f (V 1:15)) suggests his renunciation is like that of the young Siddhattha himself (who becomes the Buddha). In other words, we see the ripening of Yasa's past Dharma-based karma, and his present spiritual agony (*saṁvega*) and readiness (*veneyya*) that bring his arhathood. This is his mental state, but we (the unawakened) only see its result in this world.

16.3.2.3 Bāhiya's case is dramatic: he stops the Buddha on his early morning almsround and insists that he (the Buddha) teaches him Dharma: they are both probably standing by the roadside! What is ever more uncharacteristic of other arhathood accounts is that, after hearing only a brief teaching—the enigmatic <u>Bāhiya teaching</u>—he attains arhathood![775]
According to Analayo, the prose sections of the Udāna—the account of Bāhiya's arhathood is in prose—are commentarial material: they may act as a preamble to the Udāna verses, or stand as narratives in themselves. It is possible that this story of Bāhiya's arhathood was a commentarial addition to the Udāna.[776] Again, it should be recalled that Bāhiya was no ordinary wanderer but one with a deep conviction for truth: he is one moved by samvega and spiritually ready to benefit from the Buddha's teaching right before him.

16.3.3 The Lotus Sutra not only seems to disregard the significance of the attainment of arhathood mentioned above, it specifically states that "**Bodhisattvas**"—clearly, *only* Bodhisattvas—can become enlight-

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[772] I've yet to meet any reader or teacher of the Lotus Sutra who claims he is enlightened from having read it.
[773] **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S**, S 22.59/3:66-68 with a parallel, Mv 1.6.38-47 (V 1:13 f), SD 1.2.
[774] Yasa *seṭṭhi,putta* (SD 11.2): "seth" (*seṭṭhi*) is a kind of commercial entrepreneur; his father is also called a "merchant houselord" (*seṭṭhi,gahapati*), prob the leading business entrepreneur in the city.
[775] **(Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10,15-17) + SD 33.7 (1). Analayo: "This enigmatic instruction, to some extent, reminds us of one of the types of instruction given later in the Zen traditions." ("Udāna," Ency Bsm 2008 8:575)
[776] Analayo, "Udāna," Ency Bsm 2008 8:376.

ened through merely <u>listening</u> to the Buddha; the Bodhisattvas, as depicted in the Sutra, brighter than the arhats! We may add that on account of the Sutra's downgrading of "the arhat," merely *listening* actually makes one Bodhisattvas, that is, for those who firmly believe in the Mahāyāna, and only the Mahāyāna (says the Lotus Sutra).

The Lotus Sutra says that arhats and pratyeka-buddhas only appear so, but are really bodhisattvas: they will become Buddhas in due course! This is, of course, something new, neither taught by the Buddha, nor found in any suttas, nor even the Commentaries.

The Pali term **bodhi,satta,** as used in the suttas (even the Commentaries and later works), refers to Siddhattha Gotama in this last life <u>before</u> his awakening as the Buddha.[777] <u>The canonical sense</u> of *bodhi,satta* is that found, for example, in the stock phrase, "Before my self-awakening, bhikshus, when I was still unawakened, when I was still only the Bodhisattva" (*pubbe'va me bhikkhave sambodhā anabhisam-buddhassa bodhisattass'eva sato*), such as in **the Pubbe'va Sambodha Sutta** (A 3:101a).[778]

A late canonical sense of *bodhisatta*, in reference to the Buddha's life from his birth as Siddhattha to his awakening, is found in **the Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta** (M 123).[779] The late definition of <u>bodhisatta</u> (that is, Gotama) in his past lives , especially from the time of his aspiration of buddhahood before Dīpaṅkara Buddha right down to his last life on earth up to just before his awakening, is, however, found in the late canonical work, **the Buddha,vaṁsa**, the later texts and the Commentaries.

In what follows, I will briefly comment on just a few key Lotus Sutra teachings to show <u>how they significantly differ from the historical Buddha's teachings</u>. [16.4]

16.4 AN EXCEPTION IS *NOT* THE RULE

16.4.1 The burning house

16.4.1.1 In the parable of **the burning house** in the *Lotus Sutra,* the Buddha, depicted as a wealthy father, helps sentient beings, portrayed as his 30 children, to flee from the large, decrepit mansion (samsara) which is on fire. The children are too busy playing and would neither heed nor understand him. Instead of shouting, "The house is on fire!" he tells them he has some nice new toys for them: three carts, drawn by various beasts.[780]

The children understand this within "their own confined conceptions of things," and they scramble over one another to leave the house. Once outside, they find that their father has *lied* to them. The three carts are nowhere to be seen. Instead, however, there is a splendid huge chariot, decked with ornaments and drawn by strong and beautiful white oxen.[781]

16.4.1.2 Here's the rub. The father promises three exotic carts but he gives his children only one cart, which, we are told, is even more impressive than any of the three carts. The three carts represent the path of the Buddha, the pratyeka-buddha and the arhat; the One Cart is, of course, the One Way (**eka,yāna**)—which should not be mistaken for the "one going" path (*ekâyana* or *eka ayana*), that is, the satipatthana as the noble eightfold path:[782] The "one way" is a neologism for the Mahāyāna, a religious sect, not the Dharma path.

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[777] SD 52.2 (3.2) the earliest meaning of *bodhisatta.*
[778] A 3.101a/1:258 f (SD 14.6a).
[779] M 123/3:118-124 (SD 52.2).
[780] The first is drawn by a goat (*śrāvaka,yāna*), the second a deer (*pratyeka,yāna*), and the third by a great white ox (*buddha,yāna*). Some of the Chinese commentators say that the two ox-carts are the same, while some say they are different (thus totalling four kind of carts). (Hurvitz 1976:xxxii.
[781] The parable is in ch 3 of Kumarajiva's tr, Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma,* Columbia Univ Press, 1976:58-75 .
[782] On *ekâyana magga,* see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,2) + SD 13.1 (3.2).

It is painfully odd this triumphalist claim supposedly overarches the "polemic of accommodation"[783] to include *all* of Buddhism. The implication seems to be that the Mahāyāna (at least the Lotus Sutra) has all the "three vehicles"; hence, it is the most superior of all teachings and religions. The reality, however is that it is really an "in-group" that excludes even its own roots, early Buddhism: the historical Buddha and the arhat!

16.4.2 It is impossible to honestly and rightly corroborate such **an outright lie**, even when its motive seems noble (in the Mahāyāna sense). Roger Corless, in his aptly named paper, "Lying to tell the truth," has to resort to Christian theology to explain this moral anomaly in Mahāyāna. Among his numerous Christian quotes is this one from the early Christian theologian Origen of Alexandria (c 185-c 253), who says:

> Just as when we are talking with little children we do not aim to speak in the finest language possible to us, but say what is appropriate to the weakness of those whom we are addressing, and, further, do what seems to us to be of advantage for the conversion and correction of children as such, so also … "The Lord thy God bore with thy ways, as a man might bear with his son."
> (Deuteronomy 1:31)[784]

The next quote comes from another Alexandria theologian, Clement (c 150-c 215), who describes that a "gnostic" (his word for a mature Christian):

> .. not only thinks what is true, but he also speaks the truth, except it be medicinally on occasion; just as a physician, with a view to the safety of his patients, will practise deception or use deceptive language to the sick, according to the sophists.[785]

This explanation, in fact, fits very well with the parable of the physician's sons in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra.[786]

16.4.3 According to Corless, the father in the burning house did not lie since he gave his children something better. He compares Mahāyāna *upāya* to early Christian "economic method" (*oikonomia,* "law of the house"),[787] and he quotes the English theologian, John Henry Newman (1801-90), in this connection, as saying, "an economy ... always preserves substantial truth" whereas "a gross and audacious deceit" does not.[788] Corless gives many more Christian references to help us understand the Lotus Sutra and its *upāya,* but these samples should give us a good idea of its theological nature. It is not so easy to explain the Sutra from a Buddhist perspective.

J Duncan M Derrett, in his paper "*Musāvāda-virati* and 'privileged lies'" (2006), presents a very interesting notion, that of "**privileged lies**," which, he notes, is "present in Judaism, Christianity, and even more significantly in Hinduism, but totally missing from Buddhism." (2006:1). Derrett explains:

> A privileged lie cannot exist where (1) lies are totally forbidden, or (2) lying is so common that no excuse for it is expected. A lie is "privileged" where it is commonly excused, granted that lying in general is reprehended. A good illustration is to tell a terminally ill patient that there exist hopes of his recovery. In a system knowing privileged lies these are usually harmless to the

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[783] Jamie Hubbard, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 15 1995:119-136.

[784] Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum Celsum.* Cambridge, 1953:240 *Contra Celsum* 4:71. Qu in Corless, "Lying to tell the truth," in (edd) Griffiths & Keenan, *Buddha Nature,* Tokyo 1990: 31.

[785] Oulton & Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity,* Philadelphia, 1954:126 f (*Stromateis* 7.9). J H Newman's tr more clearly brings out the distinction between an economy and a deceit: "he will lie, or rather utter a lie as the Sophists say" (*The Arians of the Fourth Century,* London, 1919:74). Corless 1990:32.

[786] Hurvitz 1976:240 f (ch 16).

[787] On *oikonomia,* cf (1.14.3.1 n).

[788] R J Corless, 1990:28 f.

hearer. The answer "Not at home" is conventional, a piece of politeness. "I do not know" may
well be a lie, but may avoid much trouble. In Buddhism, where there are no privileged lies, one
may conclude that lies are so injurious that no convenience can excuse lying. …
> (Derrett, "*Musāvāda-virati* and 'privileged lies'," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 13, 2006:2)

16.4.4 The 4th of the 5 precepts is clearly against **lying**, which is karmically unwholesome, and the suttas,
often remind us of this.[789] A novice may be expelled for lying (V 1:85, 4:84)). We should not lie whether in
public or privately; we should neither lie nor make another lie, nor should we approve of lying (Sn 397).
The materialist who imagines that this is our only life is reminded that a liar is capable of any evil (Dh 176).
When we are obsessed by gain, honour and praise, we will also lie deliberately, which will clearly prevent
us from reaching the path that is the security from bondage.

   Then, there is **the Abhaya Rāja,kumara Sutta** (M 58) where the Buddha states the kind of speech
that he himself practises:

The Buddha does not speak[790]

(1)	what is untrue, not real,	not connected with the goal	that is unpleasant;
(2)	what is true, real,	not connected with the goal	that is *unpleasant*;
(4)	what is untrue, not real	not connected with the goal	that is pleasant;
(5)	what is true, real	not connected with the goal	that is *pleasant*.

He only speaks at the right time:

| (3) | what is true, real | connected with the goal | that is unpleasant; |
| (6) | what is true, real | connected with the goal | that is pleasant. |

In summary, we must conclude that the Buddha:
(a) will not speak what is true or real,   *not connected with the goal,* whether pleasant or unpleasant;
(b) will not speak what is untrue or not real, *not connected with the goal,* whether pleasant or unpleasant;

The Buddha only speaks *at the right time*:
(c) **what is true and real, *and* connected with the goal** (of awakening), whether pleasant or not.[791]

16.4.5 We may perhaps see some truth-value or usefulness of **the parable of the burning house** in that it
reflects a special case: the burning house does not occur on a daily basis, but burns only in the parable.
For the parable to make good sense, it can burn only *once.* If it catches fire even one more time, then, the
parable becomes clearly problematic: we may wonder, for example, why the children have not learned
from the previous fire or fires. Then, again, the house will not be standing after the fire, and so on. In
other words, it is a unique burning, an exception to the rule. Yet, such an exception *can never be* the rule!
Just think about this one.

   The Aṭṭhaka,nāgara Sutta (M 52 = A 11.17) records the layman, the houselord Dasama of Aṭṭhaka,-
nagara (a town in Uttar Pradesh, northern India), asking the Buddha if there is *one* practice by which a
monk is able to gain awakening. The Sutta records the Buddha's answer to this question: a monk (that is,
any meditator, monastic or lay) may, by developing *any* of the 4 form dhyanas (*rūoa,jhāna*), or the 4 im-
measurables (*appamañña*) (the 4 divine abodes), or the first 3 formless dhyanas (*arūpa,jhāna*). He should
then see these states as being "(mentally) constructed [mind-made], intentionally formed" (*abhisaṅkha-
taṁ abhisañcetayitaṁ*), and so develop insight and attain non-returning, even arhathood.

   Delighted at the Buddha's teaching, Dasama declares that "While seeking one door for the death-free,
I have come to hear all at once 11 doors to the death-free! Bhante, it is as if a man has **a house with 11**

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[789] See def of the precept against lying, eg **Visārada S** (A 10.204,1(4)), SD 57.33.
[790] The bracketed numbers reflect the sequence found in the Sutta (M 58).
[791] M 58,8/1:395 (SD 7.12).

doors, and when there were <u>a fire</u> in that house, bhante, he can flee to safety by any of these 11 doors; even so, bhante, <u>I can flee to safety by any of these 11 doors to the death-free</u>!"

16.5 THE ARHAT MAY BE DEGRADED, BUT NOT DOWNGRADED

16.5.1 The Lotus Sutra denies both <u>the pratyeka-buddha</u> (*pacceka,buddha*) (buddhas who appear in the world when the time is not right, and hence do not teach), and <u>the arhat</u>.[792] Clearly then they do not fully understand the Buddha's teaching, or they have rejected it for their own reasons (as suggested in our discussion above). Sadly, such an approach is polemic (attacking early Buddhism) and propaganda (promoting their own views to overpower the "old Indian" Buddhism), which then can be also said to be ageist and racist.

Any 1st year Philosophy student will know that we cannot define anything into existence: just because we say (or write) something, does not mean that it exists. When I declare that there are "unicorns," it does not mean that they exist, even when I carefully and beautifully define them in great detail and with colourful illustrations. We cannot define anything into existence. We may write a thick tome on the unicorn, and draw spectacular pictures of it, but it only exists in our own delusion and of those who believe in it.

16.5.2 The spiritual ideal of early Buddhism, the goal of **the 4 paths** (*magga*)—the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and arhat: <u>the noble eightfold path itself</u>—are found only in the Buddha's teaching:[793]

> "Empty of recluses [the 4 kinds of saints] are the other outside doctrines, but, Subhadda, **if these monks are to live rightly here [in this teaching], this world will not be empty of arhats**.
>
> (D 16,5.27.3), SD 9

Ironically, the Lotus Sutra is a grand declaration that its ideal is <u>neither the arhat nor the Buddha</u> (both "awakened" ones), whose awakening is actually identical.[794] The Lotus Sutra ideal is actually **the Bodhisattva**, "the enlightenment being,"[795] who are all bound for Buddhahood, or some hypostasis of the Buddha's qualities, since "there is in fact only [the] One Buddha Vehicle" (Hurvitz's translation, 1976:2, 7).

16.6 ONE BUDDHA IS SUFFICIENT IN OUR UNIVERSE

16.6.1 For the sake of focus and economy, we, as a rule, see only one teacher teaching a class, whether it is a lesson in Buddhist teachings or meditation. We also have a single parent, usually the father, as the head of the house, and only one captain of a ship. Similarly, we only need <u>one</u> Buddha in a universe. This has nothing to do with personality, but rather with <u>learning</u>, as in science and discovery: we only need fire to be discovered just once, and the wheel to be invented just once. For similar reasons, we need only *one* Buddha in the universe: his light of goodness and awakening will brighten up the whole cosmos.

Hence, **the Bahu,dhātuka Sutta** (M 115) records the Buddha as declaring of "a monk" (here referring to one with right view), that:

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[792] Hurvitz 1976:3, 31, 76, 110.

[793] For mention of <u>the 4 kinds of disciples</u> whom the Buddha teaches, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.7 f = 3.35 f), SD 9; on <u>the 4 paths</u> (D 16,5.27), SD 9.

[794] **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58/3:65 f), SD 49.10.

[795] Note that the third cart the father mentions is an ox-cart (Hurvitz 1976:2), and also the cart that he finally gives to his children (1976:3). We are not told if they are the same cart. (Hurvitz 1976:xxxii).

He understands that it is impossible, there is <u>no chance, that two fully self-awakened arhat bud-dhas</u> (*arahatā sammā,sambuddhā*) would simultaneously[796] arise in the same world system—this is not possible.   (M 115,14/3:65), SD 29.1a[797]

16.6.2 This Lotus Sutra's Buddha Vehicle is filled with countless Bodhisattvas, who, in essence, are the same as the Buddha(s) or will become so. And these Bodhisattvas and Buddhas flood the pages of the Lotus Sutra like "the sands of a hundred thousand myriads of millions of Ganges rivers."[798] This would, of course, impress the simple devotee who loves stories, but a thinking person would wonder what good is there really in such huge crowds, even of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

In dramatic contrast, the early suttas speak of **only <u>one</u> Buddha**, fully self-awakened, like the bright warm sun in our world. He stands out radiantly, a single rare beautiful gem in the vast sandy waste. In-deed, if the Buddhas were as numerous as sand, then, their value would be like sand, too! But the worth of this single gem is much more than all the sand imaginable: this gem is priceless; this gem is the histori-cal Buddha.

16.7 THE "POLEMIC OF ACCOMMODATION"[799]

16.7.1 Scholars, such as Jamie Hubbard, see the Lotus Sutra and its strategy of skillful means as the locus classicus of the **philosophy of accommodation**, explained as "doctrinally rooted both in a pragmatic or utilitarian strategy that grants doctrine validity only in terms of its efficacy in directing one toward the goal and in the unitary nature of that goal, a direct experience of things in themselves, beyond all bifurca-tions of subject and object, beyond conceptualization, and, hence, beyond all language and independent of all doctrine. The latter notion—that truth is linguistically transcendent—is seen to be internally con-sistent as well, in that Buddhism ultimately rejects even its own teachings and traditions along the path to ultimacy: 'If you meet the Buddha, kill him!'"[800]

This is, of course, an interesting and useful modern insight into an ancient **polemic of accommoda-tion** that underpins the Lotus Sutra. Whether the ancient writers of the Sutra would understand what we write today, or care about it at all, we can never say. We can only guess—according to what we hope to gain from a study or teaching of this text—why the writers wrote such a uniquely polemic Sutra?

It may be a useful tool for New Religions, their impressive buildings and global networks, and elite affluent leaders—but what does it really do for the individual who simply wants to learn what the Bud-dha teaches and awaken free from suffering?

16.7.2 The mood of the Lotus Sutra is clearly **polemic**: it attacks the "old" Buddhism, to the point of act-ually denying it had ever existed: not in the Lotus Sutra and the minds of its believers, anyway. Yet, it also employs **accommodation**: The Sutra writers try to show that it is taking in everything that we have known as historically authentic Buddhism, and in almost every chapter (the Sutra took centuries to become the kind of volume that we have today) debunks the old Buddhism and tries to impress us with the "real story."

In this sense, we can say that the Sutra is "accommodating" all of Buddhism: it claims to embrace and include <u>all</u> of Buddhism by the power of teachings, stories, figures, parables, images and, of course, words. These are, in fact, the very same tools used by the historical Buddha himself. One cannot but help feeling

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[796] *Apubbaṁ acarimaṁ,* lit "not before, not after" (D 2:225,5; A 1:28,1; Pug 13,26; Miln 40,30; DhA 1:12,17).

[797] As in **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19.13/2:224). **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28.19/3:114), **Bahu,dhātuka S** (M 115,14/3:65), **Aṭṭhāna Vagga** (A 1.15.10/1:27 f), Vbh 335. Comy says that the arising of another Buddha is impossible from the time the bodhisattva takes his final conception until his dispensation (*sāsana*) has completely disappeared (MA 4:113). For a discussion, see Miln 236-239.

[798] (Tr) Hurvitz 1976:11 (ch 11).

[799] See Jamie Hubbard, "Buddhist-Buddhist dialogue? The *Lotus Sutra* and the polemic of accommodation," *Bud-dhist-Christian Dialogue* 15 1995:119-136.

[800] J Hubbard 1995:119 f.

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that the writers (to various degrees) have such a demeaning disregard for the historical Buddha. They are using the very same tools to undermine the old teachings. Why are they going through so much trouble to turn the Buddha on his head?

In <u>accommodating</u> *all* of Buddhism (as we know it), they effectively <u>exclude</u> it from the "ultimate" Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra; hence, the Lotus Sutra is its own "exclusive" Buddhism. This is a very cunning ploy: they (the Sutra writers) could have easily started their own New Religion (as they have done in Japan) on their own and leave the historical Buddha alone. But this would not have worked so well for them. By turning the historical Buddha and his teachings on their heads, they (the Lotus Sutra writers) were able to stand taller than ancient history. This is very devious <u>polemic</u>.

I don't mind accepting the Lotus Sutra or Mahāyāna as **a New Religion** in its (or their) own right, but I can find no good reason to see it as early Buddhism, and I don't think it wants to be considered so either: according to them, ancient Buddhism is an "inferior vehicle" (*hīna,yāna*) and if they see the Buddha, they will kill him (figuratively or otherwise)! A Zen slip? Anyway, we are talking about mangos and coconuts.

16.8 The Lotus Sutra as a reaction against the Abhidharma[801]

16.8.1 John W Shroedar, in chapter 3 of his book, *Skillful Means: The heart of Buddhist compassion* (2001), explains that the Mahāyāna—including the Lotus Sutra—is <u>the vehicle of skillful means</u>; for example, it says: "By the power of expedient devices, demonstrates the teaching of the three vehicles."[802] All this is really a reaction against the Abhidharma tradition, which is in the habit of fixing, completing and numbering the teachings, such as 17 thought-moments, 89 consciousnesses, octads of molecular particles (*kalāpa*) and so on.

16.8.2 If we must number things, then, why not go all the way—the Mahāyāna seems to say—so, the Lotus Sutra mentions, for example, "many hundreds of thousands of koṭis of nayutas of Buddhas"[803] and so on. A *koṭi* is 10,000,000; a *nayuta* (P *nahuta*) 100 x 100,000 *koṭi-p,pakoṭi.* A *pakoṭi* is 100 x 100,000 *koṭi;* and so on. Since not comprehending such huge numbers does not affect our ability to strive for the path, we should not worry about this kind of ignorance. The point remains that the ancient Indians were aware of the literal power of numbers; and the Mahāyāna was very generous in their use.

Against the Hīnayāna (the Mahāyāna term for non-Mahāyāna Buddhists) claim that Abhidharma is the "highest" teaching, the Mahāyāna declare "skillful means" as their <u>highest teaching</u> of all Buddhism.[804] Counter to the Abhidharma's employment of <u>the mysticism of numbers</u>, the Mahāyāna turn to **the mythology of numbers**. In the Mahāyāna sense, then, those huge numbers are symbolic of how we think and what we are capable of thinking. Numbers are thus raised to the level of poetic function, even to the point of ceasing to mean anything to anyone, when we lack grounding in early Buddhism. Then, they are easily drawn to the charisma of the Mahāyāna Guru, especially when he is perceived to be "enlightened," and to listen to this explication of deep Mahāyāna Dharma—to gain Mahāyāna Enlightenment, not bodhi.

16.8.3 The scholars who wrote critically on the Lotus Sutra whom we have quoted above have given us some instructive insight into it. However, it seems that very few scholars are openly critical of the Lotus Sutra. The main reason for this, I think, is that most of the Lotus Sutra adherents today are affluent and influential Buddhists. It is the darling Sutra of the very well-organized "Prosperity Gospel" sects of Japan, some of which have global networks. Hence, it can be lucrative to work for these New Religious Movements, or to be at least in their favour.

Buddhism may be a Barmecide feast for bespoke plutophilic Brahmins; how many of them are even Buddhists? May they be as rich, as successful, as they ever wished to be and more. But many of us are

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[801] John W Shroeder, *Skillful Means: The heart of Buddhist compassion,* Honolulu, 2001. See also Jeff Lindstrom, "The Lotus Sutra's rehabilitation: Skillful use of *upāya* fails to convince," Univ of Toronto, 2002:19-25.

[802] Hurvitz 1976:25. "Expedient means" is Hurvitz's tr of Chin *fang pian* (<u>*upāya*</u>), "skillful means; skill in means."

[803] Hurvitz 1976: 349 passim.

[804] Shroeder 2001:63 f.

simply Buddhists who love the Buddha and live his Dharma, who see it as a field of merit, a path leading on to nirvana. Many Buddhists may neither read nor ken all this now, but the child will be man: they will in time understand things better, and then stand up on their own.[805]

17 Buddhism and affluence

17.1 AFFLUENCE AND RELIGION

17.1.1 "**Affluence**" not only means "abundant wealth" promising us comfort, leisure, even luxury, but suggests a life that seems to raise us to a status above the average person, the commoner, the "out-group"; hence, it works as a subtle intolerance in the name of Buddhism. The usual term we use in sutta-related right livelihood is "**wealth**" and its proper management, referring to *well-earned, well-used, purposeful and blameless* assets and resources (what we truly have and what we can do rightly with them),[806] in keeping with **right livelihood**.[807]

A vital early Buddhist teaching is that our wealth is only **a blessing** (*well-earned, well-used, purposeful and blameless*) when we happily and generously share it for the well-being of renunciants in giving them the proper support for living the Vinaya-minded and Dharma-spirited life aimed at attaining the path in this life itself. This wealth is also used as a means to bring true happiness (including health, living expenses, progress and dignity in life) for others, especially the needy and poor.[808]

17.1.2 It is however wrong (against the Vinaya) and unwholesome (karmically negative) for renunciants to have anything to do with money: they have taken the vow to live a money-free, simple life of spiritual training and progress; hence, it is also karmically unwholesome for the laity to give money to renunciants.[809] The laity, can, however, set up a fund or trust, properly managed, for the personal and mutual benefit of renunciants, such as when they have to travel, buying other allowable needs, and for the support of clothing, meals, lodging and healthcare (when they have difficulties finding these).

Unwise giving is not generosity but a waste of wealth that sends out the wrong message, attracting unscrupulous fortune-hunters, and encourages a life of ease and luxury for the monastic. On account of the laity's unwise giving of money to monastics, local Buddhists have been ominously labelled as "angpow givers"[810] by Sinhala priests. This unhealthy habit, that has been going on for over a generation, is one of the negative reasons for the increasing number of opportunistic and desperate people who exploit Buddhist monkhood and nunhood as a lucrative "**retirement plan**"! [17.2]

The point remains that wealth is intimately connected with religion, and today, ironically, we see Buddhist priests, especially in the Chinese Mahāyāna, as amongst the wealthiest people in the world. Scholars have studied the evolution of society, economics and religions. A number of interesting theories have been proposed, and the scholars themselves do not agree amongst themselves. Here is a brief over-

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[805] The rare critical studies of the Lotus Sutra include: Jamie Hubbard, "Buddhist-Buddhist dialogue? The 'Lotus Sutra and the polemic of accommodation." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 15 1995:119-136; Alan Cole, *Text As Father,* Berkeley, 2005: chs 1-2. There is also a thoughtful essay by Jeff Lindstrom as a Univ of Toronto student: "The Lotus Sutra's rehabilitation: Skillful use of *upaya fails to convince*" (2002): http://individual.utoronto.ca/jlindstrom/coursework/upaya_essay_2002_05_08.htm.

[806] See **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54), SD 5.10; **Ādiya S** (A 5.41), SD 2.1. On the dangers of wealth: **(Ādīnavā) Bhoga S** (A 4.61), SD 37.12.

[807] See **Right livelihood** (SD 37.8).

[808] See **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31) + SD 4.1 (4) financial management.

[809] See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

[810] "Angpow" is Fujianese for *hongbao,* "red packet" of cash-gifts during auspicious occasions, esp Chinese New Year, weddings and birthdays.

view of such findings which may help us see what economic challenges that Buddhism may have to face in our own times.[811]

17.2 THE AXIAL AGE

17.2.1 Between 800 BCE and 200 CE, the way humans thought and behaved seemed to change dramatically. Within a span of some 5 centuries, in 3 separate regions of the Old World—the eastern Mediterranean, the Gangetic plain, and NE China—local belief systems emerged that would, in due course, give rise to the world religions, teachings that combined morality, compassion, wisdom and humanity, and the vision of life divinely better than our earthly one. We know these religions today as Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.

The best known explanation of this historical development in the ancient civilizations is that of **the Axial Age** or Axis Age, from the German, *Achsenzeit,* coined by German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), and which we have briefly described here.[812] According to Jaspers, during this period, universalizing modes of thought appeared in Persia, India, China, Israel, and the Graeco-Roman world, in striking parallel developments, without any known mutual influence amongst these disparate cultures. Jaspers identified key thinkers from this age who had a profound influence on future philosophies, religions and learning, and identified characteristics common to each area from which those thinkers emerged.

> An axis of world history, if such a thing exists, … is to be found in the period around 500 BC, in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 BC. … For short we may style this the "Axial Period."
> … Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to scepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran, Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine, the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato, [the tragic poets,] Thucydides and Archimedes. …
> What is new about this age, in all three areas of the world, is that man becomes conscious of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations.
>
> (Jaspers 1949, tr M Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History,* 1953:2)

17.2.2 Jaspers' idea was not new. The simultaneous appearances of teachers and thinkers in different areas of the world had been noted by many scholars since the 18th century, notably by the first professional French Indologist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805). Jaspers explicitly cited some of these authors, including Victor von Strauß (1859) and Ernst von Lasaulx (1870).[813] In 1873, John Stuart Stuart-Glennie formulated his own theory (1873), using the term "the moral revolution." His idea was for-

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[811] Introductory reading: R Stark, "Economics of religion," in (ed) R A Segal, *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion,* 2006:47-67 (ch 3); Prayudh Payutto, *Buddhist Economics* [1992] rev 2016: *https://www.watnyanaves.net/uploads/File/books/pdf/buddhist_economics.pdf.* For refs: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_economics.

[812] Jaspers introduced the concept of an Axial Age in his book *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* [1949] tr Michael Bullock, *The Origin and Goal of History,* Yale Univ Press, 1953.

gotten by Jaspers' time.[814] Both Stuart-Glennie and Jaspers stated that the Axial Age should be viewed as an objective empirical fact of history, independent of religious considerations.[815]

Jaspers argued that during the Axial Age, "the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Judea, and Greece. And these are the foundations upon which humanity still subsists today."[816] Jaspers identified a number of key thinkers as having had a profound influence on future philosophies and religions, and identified characteristics common to each area from which those thinkers emerged. Jaspers held up this age as unique and one to which the rest of the history of human thought might be compared. Jaspers argued that the Axial Age gave birth to philosophy as a discipline.[817]

These are the type of probable ideas that scholars love to posit, which are little more than intellectual descriptions of a notion that is very difficult to prove or disprove. We are likely to accept or ignore the notion depending on whether we respect the scholar or not. It becomes even more interesting when we examine other related views.

17.2.3 A number of scholars disputed the historical validity of the "Axial Age."[818] Critics, for example, say that Jaspers' idea:

• lacks a demonstrable common denominator for the intellectual developments that are supposed to have occurred in unison across ancient Greece, Palestine, India and China;
• lack any radical discontinuity with "preaxial" and "postaxial" periods; and
• excludes pivotal figures that did not fit the definition (such as Jesus, Muhammad and Akhenaten).[819]

Despite its weak historical foundations, the idea of the Axial Age continues to be influential, with many scholars accepting that profound changes in religious and philosophical discourse did occur simultaneously in the Old World, but disagreeing as to the underlying reasons. As Robert Bellah and Hans Joas admit: "The notion that in significant parts of Eurasia the middle centuries of the first millennium BC mark a significant transition in human cultural history, and that this period can be referred to as the Axial Age, has become widely, but not universally, accepted."[820]

17.3 THE IRON AGE AND URBANIZATION

Some scholars thought that the rise of the roots of **the world religions** was due to urbanization and population growth, following the Iron Age (c 1800-200 BCE):[821] **iron** was used to make better weapons (spears, arrow-heads, etc) and wheels for chariots and other vehicles. Iron also made better ploughs and shops for agriculture and commerce, which was able to support a larger population. The availability of labour and rise of various skills encouraged division of labour, which in turn increased the wealth and leisure for more people.

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[814] D Metzler (2009). "Achsenzeit als Ereignis und Geschicht" [Axial age as happening and history], *Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie (IBAES,* German) 10, 2009:169. Archived on: metzler_ibaes10.pdf.

[815] Jaspers 1953:1. Eugene Halton, *From the Axial Age to the Moral Revolution: John Stuart-Glennie, Karl Jaspers, and a new understanding of the idea*. Palgrave Connect (online). Palgrave Macmillan, 2014:88.

[816] K Jaspers, *The Way to Wisdom: An introduction to philosophy,* Yale Univ Press, 2003:98.

[817] See R N Bellah, "What is axial about the Axial Age?" *European Journal of Sociology* 46,1 Apr 2005:69-89.

[818] L Spinney, "When did societies become modern? 'Big history' dashes popular idea of Axial Age," *Nature* 576 (7786) 2019:189-190.

[819] Iain Provan, *Convenient Myths: The Axial Age, Dark Green Religion, and the world that never was*, Baylor, 2013: 1-40.

[820] R N Bellah & H Joas (edd), *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press. 2012:1. On the Axial Age, further see SD 60.1d (3.2.3).

[821] Dilip K Chakravarti, *India: An Archaeological History*. Delhi: Oxford Univ Press, 1999. R Tewari, "The origins of iron working in India: new evidence from the Central Ganga Plain and the Eastern Vindhyas, *Antiquity* 77 (297) Sep 2003:536-544.

Such an ambience encouraged more "civilized" people to ask the fundamental questions of life that are the basis for the sciences, philosophy and religion. This was clearly the case in Northern India, which went through **the 2ⁿᵈ Urbanization** (c 500-200 BCE)[822] with the rise of the 16 great states (*mahā,janapada*).[823] Powerful kings and influential teachers encouraged moral conduct amongst the populace, which helped stabilized the expanding and volatile societies and states. Kingdoms, like Magadha and Kosala, were expanding and absorbing the republics (*gaṇa,saṅgha*), such as the Sakya, Vajjī, Mallā and Licchavī.*[824]*

17.4 WEALTH AND RENUNCIATION

17.4.1 More recently, some researchers have proposed a new possible explanation for <u>the rise of the world religions</u>: **growing affluence**. The scholars investigated variables relating to *political complexity and living standards*. Affluence emerged as a major force in the rise of moral religion, in particular, <u>access to energy</u>. Across cultures, moral religions abruptly emerged when the members of a population could reliably source 20,000 calories of energy a day, including food (for humans and livestock), fuel and raw materials.

"This number appears to correspond with a certain peace of mind," says lead research scientist, Nicolas Baumard, from the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. "Having a roof over your head, not feeling like the world is full of predators and enemies, knowing that you'll have enough to eat tomorrow."[825] As Baumard points out, psychology research shows that affluence appears to influence our motivations and reward circuitry away from short-term gain to also considering the benefits of long-term strategy.

Hence, with a steady energy supply, we had <u>more time to cooperate, cultivate skills and consider moral consequences</u>. **Affluence** also gave us more time for existential pondering: perhaps we nurtured greater moral responsibility; life may have a purpose, "distinct from material success, that lies in a moral existence and in the control of one's own material desires, through moderation (in food, sex, ambition, etc), asceticism (fasting, abstinence, detachment), and compassion (helping, suffering with others)."[826]

A clear association between affluence and the rise of moral religion was seen well before the so called Axial Age. Many successful large-scale ancient societies with priestly organized religions, such as the Mayas, Incas, Sumerians, Egyptians and Zhou in China. Yet they lacked any focus on asceticism or morality. According to Baumard, members of such societies never had access to more than 1,500 kcal per day. Religion, as cause or as effect, took such energy relying on affluence.[827]

17.4.2 Baumard acknowledges that **morality and asceticism** existed in human societies even before the world religions emphasized them. Other experts, quoted by Bret Stetka, however, believe that the paper may not consider these inherent qualities seriously enough. Barbara King, an anthropologist at the College of William & Mary (Williamsburg, VA), for example, argues that the study exaggerates the sharp transition to the moral belief-systems.[828]

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[822] The 2ⁿᵈ Urbanization: Vikas Nain, "Second Urbanization in the chronology of Indian history," *International Journal of Academic Research and Development* 3,2 Mar 2018:538-542 esp 539.

[823] The 16 great states were: Aṅga, Magadha, Kāsī, Kosala, Vajjī, Malla, Ceḍi, Vaṁsā, Kuru, Pañcāla, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avantī, Gandhārā, and Kambojā. See <u>SD 4.18</u> App 3; SD 9 (16): map (16.3); also **Mahā Assa,pura S** (M 39) @ SD 10.13 (1); **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.70,18), SD 4.18 & App; SD 57.8 (3.2.2.1); SD 6.1 (1).

[824] A 3.70/1:213, 8.42/4:252, 8.43/256, 8.45/4:261.

[825] N Baumard & P Boyer, "Explaining moral religions," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17,6 2013:272-289. N Baumard; Alexandre Hyafil, Ian Morris & Pascal Boyer, "Increased affluence explains the emergence of ascetic wisdom and moralizing religions," *Current Biology* 25,1, 5 Jan 2014:10-15. Bret Stetka, quoting Baumard et al, 1 May 2015: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/did-affluence-spur-the-rise-of-modern-religions/.

[826] Baumard & Boyer, 2013; qu in Baumard et al 2014:10.

[827] Baumard et al 2014:11.

[828] Bret Stetka, "Did affluence spur the rise of modern religions?" in *Scientific American, Mind* 26,3,18, May/June 2015.

King suggests that a more gradual transition might have taken place—one that was perhaps nudged over the line by a reliable calorie count. "Anthropologists and psychologists have found deep roots of morality and compassion in other primates," King explains. "I don't see any reason to assume that cosmological morality and compassion were not important to earlier hunter-gatherer groups."

Bernard J Crespi, an evolutionary biologist at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, also cautions against Baumard's claim: "The main idea in the article is fascinating, but the causal link between increasing affluence and religion remains to be established. Our work actually suggests that the authors might have their causality reversed—that religion itself drives increases in affluence via its effects on increased cooperation."[829]

It's a matter of time before we see another interesting scientific explanation for the rise of the world religions. It depends on where the scholars and scientists explore, and how they have been trained. There are as many lenses to examine human history as there are organized disciplines of learning. The significant difference lies between those who merely *postulate* theories and those who actually *live* these actual experiences even today.

17.5 RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT PLANS

17.5.1 Religion today is very much infested with affluent lords of leisure who neither work nor pay tax. We see monks and priests (sometimes nuns) haunting leisure places, shopping malls, casinos and other pleasure spots.[830] They often drive their own expensive vehicles and have the latest electronic gadgets; own real estate and businesses, even gold and platinum credit cards, and go for holidays (scuba diving and so on). Many temples in Singapore are "pleasure domes" with gold Buddha images, superhuman-sized tooth relics; with a sports hall and swimming pool, and so on. Many of them are run like businesses,[831] with paid workers, well-salaried clerics, often with a global network; hence, these are virtually Buddhist MNCs (multinational corporations); the clerics are often the CEOs.

Like the opulent Buddhist temples of India before the Turk invasion in the 12th century, the temples of today, as a rule, are monuments of wealth, institutions of affluence. Many of them control funds that easily rival those of a few world-class corporations. This is one human enterprise that has yet to be properly studied by scholars, that is, the field of **plutonomics**, the study of the wealth of religions, such as the wealth of Buddhist religions.[832]

17.5.2 As a result of the close association between Buddhism and wealth, today we see a rising number of people who exploit Buddhist renunciation as **a retirement plan**, or to earn leisurely wealth from the faithful with disposable income. I have myself been told by a close friend of a leading local Mahāyāna cleric confiding in him that he (the cleric) was deeply worried about lacking funds for his senior years! When these clerics have been so used to running a religious institution as a business for over a generation, such concerns become understandable, even when it is at odds with the spirit of renunciation that is at the root of Buddhism. Surely then, **plutonomic Buddhism** has nothing to do with renunciation, but more of an upper class elite playing a leading role in the business of Buddhism simply on account of their wealth.

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[829] Qu by B Stetka 2015.

[830] A number of such clerics are known to go such places in civvies (in disguise): SD 31.12 (3.5.1).

[831] In Japan today, as a result of the Meiji reforms, over 90% of clerics are married, and all family-owned Buddhist temples, most of which are located in rural areas, are run as family businesses in order to survive. (Bodiford, "Zen and the art of religious prejudice," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23,1-2, 1996:4 f)

[832] As in "economic," from Late Lat, *oeconomus*, "house-keeper, custodian, trustee, farmer"; from Gk *oikonómos* (οἰκονόμος), "who operates, manages, leads the house or household, care-taker, host." Here, it means "related to a divine dispensation," "plutonomic" (*pluto,* "the rich" + *nomos*, "manager") means " relate d to the management of wealth." Cf *oikonomia* [1.13.3.3]. (Thanks to Vera Ries of Germany for the etym.)

Buddhist clerics who live in a monastic community usually do not have to worry about retirement plans, since they would be well cared by the community. It is the "lone wolf" or "ronin" cleric, living a lone leisurely life, who would come up with some public plan to show his worth, *to bush his wine*. He would usually do this on social media, publicizing that he is doing some kind of good Buddhist work with his special or unique abilities. The idea is to attract monetary support from the laity through some kind of donation scheme, often transmitted through Paypal. In this connection, the Buddha declares in **the Dhaniya Sutta**: "No one's hireling am … There's no use of wages—Rain, therefore, rain if you wish!"[833] [17.5.3.7]

17.5.3 An ideal case?

17.5.3.1 Now, what if we are neither a community cleric nor a self-supporting priest, that is, one who fears he has no "**retirement plan**." Sadly, we may have to move to another religion that does have a retirement plan for its clerics, such as the Anglican Church. In fact, we do have an instructive case of such a resourceful person by the name of Sativihari, which was his Buddhist monastic name. A friend of mine in Canada once attended his Buddhist classes. One day, Sativihari—a charming teacher with little Dharma knowledge, but inspired by the contemplative life—simply announced that he was stopping his classes, and was leaving Buddhism. When my friend asked him why he was leaving Buddhism, he replied that it did not have a retirement plan that he was looking for. He then trained as an Anglican priest, served the Anglican Church, retired, and lived happily ever after, sort of.

17.5.3.2 Here is his own writeup about himself on LinkedIn:[834]

"I am currently a retired Anglican priest, living in Canada.

For the majority of my adult life, however, I worked as a clinical psychologist, my last position being staff psychologist at the University of Toronto's Psychiatric Service. My treatment specialty was in the area of persons with dual diagnoses (particularly depression & addiction.)

In 2000, I took a sabbatical to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka and India. This turned out to be not merely a sabbatical, but the discovery of a new vocation as a Buddhist monk. My ordination name was Rishi Sativihari, which became my legal name when I returned to Toronto in 2004. My work in Asia was primarily in the area of inter-religious dialogue, mostly with Roman Catholic priests and nuns, several of whom were engaging in inter-religious practice (Christianity and Buddhism/Hinduism).

Upon returning to Canada, I served as a monk in a Mississauga temple, primarily teaching meditation to Canadians of various faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and of no faith. This was a wonderful and very gratifying period of my life. It led, however, to my choice that, within Canada, I no longer wished to lead a monastic life. Faced with a decision to either return to Asia and continue living as a monk there, or to find a similar but different spiritual vocation within Canada, I opted for the latter.

In time, I further decided that the best 'fit' for me, given my background and interests was the 'progressive' wing of the Anglican Church [that accepted the LGBTQW+ community], where I was warmly welcomed. I completed seminary at Toronto School of Theology, and was subsequently ordained as a deacon, and then as a parish priest. After serving two congregations, where my focus was on developing a contemplative way of life and an openness to dialogue with other religions, I retired in 2020.

Also, during those "church years," I married my spouse, Shaun Eaton, whom I had known in the context of Buddhist meditation groups in Toronto. Shaun also became an Anglican priest, and we are now both retired and enjoying our life together.

At present, academic work in the areas of Indian Philosophy and Ancient Greek Philosophy take up much of my "free time." In 2010 I published my first book, a guide to Buddhist philosophy and practice for Westerners, titled *Unlearning the Basics* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010). If you would like com-

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[833] See **Dhaniya S** (Sn 26), SD 50.20. See also **Kasi Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 1.4 = S 7.1), SD 69.6.
[834] https://www.linkedin.com/in/rishi-sativihari-ph-d-4b81145/?originalSubdomain=ca/

plementary copy, let me know.[835] I am now working on a sequel to that book, which expands Buddhist Philosophy into Indian Philosophy as a whole.

I am also disabled with HIV-related illness, and write on the spiritual aspects of disability."

17.5.3.3 On the dust jacket of *Unlearning the Basics* (2010) there is this blurb on Sativihari:[836]

"Dr Rishi Sativihari was born Richard Wright and grew up in the inner city of Detroit during the 1960s and 70s. Prior to monastic life, Rishi worked as the clinical director of La Casa, a drug abuse treatment center in southwest Detroit, and as a staff psychologist for the University of Toronto, Department of Psychiatry. Rishi received his monastic training and ordination from the Venerable Wattegama Dhammawasa at the Subodharama Monastery in Sri Lanka.[837] He also trained in the Tibetan (Gelug) tradition under the Venerable Geshe Tashi Tsering at the Chenrezig Monastery in Australia, and under S N Goenka at the Dhammagiri Centre in India. In 2003, Rishi left monastic life and began training in the contemplative foundations of Judaism and Christianity at the Toronto School of Theology. He currently offers teaching on contemplative living and guidance in spiritual formation to individuals and groups in the Toronto area."

Rishi Sativihari's remarkable story of a successful quest for <u>a religious retirement plan</u> then continues with the bio-information given above [17.5.3.2]. Sativihari, by his own admission, found that the Buddhist monastic system had no retirement benefits, and was not lucrative enough. From the Anglican Church, he finally found what he needed for his retirement with his husband, "enjoying life together," with enough time to write and publish books related to Buddhism: *Unlearning the Basics* (2010) and *Aristotle's Character (ἦθος), Hinduism's Self (Ātman), and Buddhism's Not-Self (Anātman)* (project).

17.5.3.4 Sativihari wrote very well as a Christian theologian, as someone who saw the world as an *oikoumenē* ("the whole inhabited world")[838] [20.2], a universal spiritual family blessed with the practice of contemplation and non-violence, as expressed in his paper "The Catch-22 of conventional Christianity."[839] In "Oedipus the King & Christ the King: On family values,"[840] Sativihari brilliantly shows how we can all become family, a spiritual family, when we are "open to being helped to do God's will" and this is done non-violently "because the Spirit is *not violent*."

Of special interest is Sativihari's article published in The *Anglican Diocese of Huron Church News* (June 2012), entitled "The charism of the parish priest: An ordinand's view."[841] Therein, he warmly praised the Anglican Diocese of Huron (Anglican Church of Canada), "how the entire Diocese is, in a sense, being reorganized more in the shape of a spiritual order than a geographically oriented bureaucratic organization."

Some two decades before midlife, wrote Sativihari, he trained and worked as a clinical psychologist "in different settings in Canada and the United States, and for the most part I enjoyed it, although the

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[835] Online: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rishi-Sativihari/publication/355972248/Unlearning-the-Basics-A-New-Way-of-Understanding-Yourself-and-the-World.pdf.

[836] Book download: Rishi Sativihari - The Wisdom Experience.

[837] Also known as Sri Subodharama International Buddhist Centre, situated on a small hill adjoining Peradeniya, in Kandy district. Its branch in the US is the Blue Lotus Temple (Woodstock, IL). It has an active fund-raising page, with donors given titles of *Yavajivadasa* (*yāva,jīva,dāsa*, "life-long slave"), US$3,000+ monthly donation; *Buddhadasa* (the Buddha's giver; actually it is here *dāsa*, "slave"), US$1,200 pm; *Dhammadasa* (Dharma slave), US$600 pm; and *Sanghadasa* (Sangha slave), US$300 pm. Donation – Blue Lotus Buddhist Temple (bluelotustemple.org).

[838] The Bible uses *oikoumenē* to describe the place of God's reconciling mission (Matt 24.14), the unity of the Roman empire (Luke 2.1), and the world destined to be redeemed by Christ (Hebrews 2.5). For Christians, this is a vision of one Church serving God in the world to reflect a central teaching of early Christianity. In interfaith dialogue, esp for Buddhists, it serves as the common spirituality, beginning with a vision of an inherent goodness in all humans, and their ability and desire to attain a divine or transcendental state beyond human limitations.

[839] https://issuu.com/rishisativihari/docs/the_catch-22_of_conventional_christ, 31 March 2011.

[840] https://issuu.com/rishisativihari. 9 Oct 2022.

[841] https://issuu.com/rishisativihari/docs/the_charism_of_the_parish_priest, HNC, June 2012:12 f. Previously available online at www.diohuron.org/news/hcn/hcn.php, but has since been moved or archived.

work was at times very difficult and stressful. Over the years, my sense of God's call in my life had evolved and been strengthened in a variety of interesting contexts, including living as a Buddhist monk for several years in Asia. I was now in my early fourties [sic], and like many people, I began asking questions about how I wanted to spend the rest of my life."

"As soon as I allowed myself to ask the question about a possible shift in my vocation" (he was then teaching in Toronto in the garb of a Buddhist cleric), "The answer was already there. There was still nothing more than to serve God as a parish priest." He then wrote about why he chose the Diocese of Huron. "Context is so important," he mused.

17.5.3.5 From my informant and Sativihari's own writings, we can see that Sativihari (Robert Wright) was qualified professionally (a trained clinical psychologist) and a highly intelligent person who knew what he wanted in life and worked his way to get it. His life was deeply rooted in God-belief and Christianity (in the broad sense of the term). He had difficulties with Christianity and his desire to be a Christian priest due to his sexual orientation.

Just before midlife, he turned to Buddhism and joined an outgoing Sinhala Temple [17.5.3.3]. It was a socially engaged temple (rather than a Vinaya-centred order): Sativihari did not complete his 5-year basic tutelage (perhaps the Temple did not see the need for any), and was working on his own. Understandably, his knowledge of Buddhism was mainly from books and his own intellectual acumen, which is clear from his book, *Unlearning the Basics* [17.5.3.3].

17.5.3.6 In a vaguely positive sense, Sativihari was a kind of Renaissance man who saw himself as the measure of all things. Since he was raised in a God-driven ambience, and lived his formative years in it, he never gave up the God-idea. At a time when he lost faith in the institutional Church, he was deeply curious about Buddhist contemplative life; so, he became a novice monk in a temple in Sri Lanka (who, as a rule, must complete at least a 5-year monastic tutelage with his teacher).

Sometime in midlife, while in Buddhist robes, he wondered "about how to spend the rest of my life," that is, about a safe retirement plan. That was when he moved on to join the affluent Anglican Church, trained in various theologies, served the Church, then retired comfortably enough as an Anglican priest, living with his husband. Apparently, his heart, certainly his mind, is with Buddhism, and he wrote books related to it. Book royalties are a comforting light in the sunset years.

One wonders if Sativihari had been an Indian, would he have ended up as another hollow hairy Guru, a meteor in the night sky of human vanity and high hubris, to burn itself away in its own fire. Instead, he lived his twilight years in a well-earned dignified retirement in faith. We may see him as a miracle of Vatican II, into which he was born, and was a living witness of God's presence in all religions. Surely, he saw God in Buddhism, although not in the clerical order into which he ordained, and later renounced, but not for the love of Buddhism. Indeed, Rome should, in due course, beatify him as a Christian saint whose faith in God never faltered. Surely, even now, he is an inspiration for clerics worried about retirement.

17.5.3.7 It's interesting that such a well-schooled professional and deeply God-loving man as Sativihari had his Achilles' heel in the very idea of <u>early Buddhist renunciation</u>. True renunciants, first of all, will never think in terms of salaries, pension or retirement: to do so is the way of Mammon[842] [9.7.7], a money-based life and worldliness. Any monastic Buddhist contemplative, whether a coenobite (community monk) or a forest eremite (solitary dweller) does not have "retirement" in his vocabulary, since his daily life-needs—almsfood, robes, lodging and health—are all provided for by the laity. He is definitely no "wage-earner" (*bhataka*), as the Buddha famously replies to the cowherd's musing, "My own wage-earner am I, self-supported" (*atta,veṭanā,bhato'ham asmi*):

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[842] While the Buddha introduced the sangha as a money-free community, the Bible is more stern about being caught up with wealth: "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt 6.24; Luke 16.13); " … it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matt 19.24). Matt 6.24 parallels the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, Saying 47.

Nâhaṁ bhatako'smi kassaci	No one's hireling[843] am I,
(*iti bhagavā*)	(*thus said the Blessed One,*)
nibbiṭṭhena carāmi sabba,loke.	I roam all the world enjoying my reward.[844]
Attho bhatiyā na vijjati	There's no use for wages—
atha ce patthayasī pavassa deva. Sn 25	*rain, therefore, rain if you wish!*

<div align="right">(Dhaniya Sutta, Sn 25), SD 50.20</div>

The true renunciant is one "abstaining from any occupation" (-*ādīhi virahitaṁ,* AA 2:92), a generic expression precluding <u>any kind of gainful employment</u>. This spirit of renunciation is highlighted by the Buddha himself, as recorded in **the Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta** (S 7.11 = Sn 1.4), where the Buddha rejects any kind of fee for Dharma-teaching or "singing verses" (*gāthā'bhigita*) (chanting) for a living.[845] In other words, the renunciant only accepts proper offerings <u>given in faith</u>.[846]

17.6 RENUNCIATION AS SELF-RELIANCE

17.6.1 When we read Christ's Sermon on the Mount, we should be moved to reflect on **the security and joy of renunciation** inspired by the Buddha's holy life for the path of awakening: "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit[847] to his span of life? … Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. … Therefore, do not be anxious … But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow … ." (Matt 6.25-34, abridged)

It's sad and strange that Sativihari did not consider the lilies of the field of merits in Buddhist renunciation. For this, it is fair to blame his teachers who should have provided such a fine seeker with at least the 5 years of tutelage (*nissaya*),[848] but then again, perhaps they did not even think of it. And so, anxiety overwhelmed Sativihari in due course, even as a monk. Are these signs of the times?

As a forewarning, let us recall and heed the Buddha's advice on <u>self-reliance</u>, that is, our ability to gain the path in this life, and our willingness to work for this:

Attanā'va kataṁ pāpaṁ	By oneself is evil done,
attanā saṅkilissati	by oneself is one defiled.
atanā akataṁ pāpaṁ	By oneself is evil not done,
attanā'va visujjhati	by oneself is one purified.
suddhī asuddhī paccataṁ	Purity or impurity depends on oneself.
nâñño aññaṁ visodhaye.	No one purifies another. (Dh 165)[849]

17.6.2 Another vital lesson from Sativihari's story is that of the Buddha's teaching of **self-reliance** (*atta,-saraṇa*).[850] Sativihari is a personable preacher, popular with his audience, and who often answers their questions in an easy manner without any deep or dull exhortation. There was often a friendly modernist

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[843] On <u>renunciation</u>, see SD 51.2 (2.2.3.1). On the "teacher's wealth" (*ācariya,dhana*), see SD 50.35 (1.1.3.2).

[844] On "enjoying my reward" (*nibbiṭṭhena*), see comy 7-8 (4).

[845] SD S 7.11 (S 641) = Sn 1.4 (Sn 82 = 481), SD 69.6.

[846] Renunciants do not accept money, precious metal or stones, property, any kind of wealth. In later times, when money, land or buildings were donated, they are all "owned" by the sangha, and many financial transactions are managed by faithful laity: **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

[847] Or "a single cubit to his stature"; a "cubit" was about 18 in = 45 cm.

[848] On the monastic tutelage, see SD 40a.8 (4.2.2.3).

[849] See SD 60.1e (13.1.1); SD 49.10 (1.2.2).

[850] **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 (3.2); SD 27.3 (3.1.1).

touch to his wisdom, so that we can avoid stuffy or strict traditional teachings:[851] he called this *Unlearning the Basics* [17.5.3].

In fact, we often see less sophisticated versions of Sativihari in popular Buddhist leaders and teachers in Buddhist groups today. We only need to be suave with gentle Dharma to charm our audience, winning friends and influencing people. These are the "entitled elite" of modern urban Buddhism where *words, status and looks* matter more than suttas or self-betterment. The cult Guru thrives on our **fatal attraction** to him; while spiritual friendship, on the other hand, is a liberating communion of the Dharma-hearted.

Even today, especially today, the wise instructions of the arhat elder **Lakuṇṭhaka Bhaddiya** ("the dwarf"), still ring true:

469   Those who have judged [measured] me by appearance and who follow me by voice,
       overcome by desire and passion, they know me not.

470   The foolish one, surrounded by mental hindrances, neither knows the inside
       nor sees the outside—he is indeed misled by voice.

471   Who knows not the inside, but sees the outside:
       seeing only external fruits, he, too, is misled by voice.

472   Who knows the inside, and sees the outside:
       seeing without obstructions, he is not misled by voice.   (Tha 469-472 ≈ A 4.65/2:71)[852]

18 Pruning the Bodhi tree

18.1 CRITICAL BUDDHISM: ORIGIN, NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

18.1.1 Machida Muneo

18.1.1.1 During the 1979 World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, MACHIDA Muneo, then president of the Buddhist Federation of Japan and secretary general of the Sōtō Zen sect, impressed on his fellow delegates in the Conference's Human Rights Commission to remove any mention of the plight of outcastes (Burakumin) in Japan from the text of their final report. Earlier in the Conference, Machida had denied that any discrimination against members of Japanese outcaste groups still occurred in Japan and said that any suggestion otherwise would insult Japan's national honour.

Five years later, during the Fourth World Conference on Religion and Peace (1984), in Nairobi, Kenya, Machida made a startling public confession. In a carefully arranged ritual, Machida acknowledged his guilt in covering up and thereby perpetuating social discrimination against Japanese outcaste groups. Machida not only apologized and reversed his earlier stand, he also ensured that problems of social discrimination in Japan's established religions would occupy a prominent position in the world conference's agenda.[853]

18.1.1.2 Shocked by the Machida incident, many concerned Japanese Buddhists began to look at the issue more deeply, wondering if there was any historical reason why such practices could continue unquestioned for so much of Sōtō history.[854] Several Sōtō Buddhist scholars, principally HAKAMAYA Noriaki (1989, 1990, 1992) and MATSUMOTO Shirō (1989), asked themselves: Was there some fault in the tradi-

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[851] See **The teacher or the teaching?** SD 3.14.

[852] SD 3.14 (7.2, 7) = SD 19.2a (6.5).

[853] TOMONAGA Kenzō, "Gendai no buraku mondai." In *Buraku kahôshi: Netsu to hikari.* (Ed) Buraku Mondai Kenkyū-sho. Osaka: Buraku mondai kenkyûsho, 1989:214-218; (edd) John B Taylor & Günther Gebhardt, *Religions for Human Dignity and World Peace: Unabridged Proceedings of the Fourth World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP IV),* Nairobi, Kenya, 23-31 Aug 1984. Geneva: WCRP, 1986:v, 169-173, 207-212, 232

[854] For a detailed study of the "Machida incident," see Bodiford, "Zen and the art of religious prejudice," 1996.

tional Japanese understanding of Buddhism that allowed Buddhist institutions to promote social discrimination? Was there some fault that allowed social discrimination to arise in the first place?

Not surprisingly, these scholars answered in the affirmative and were determined to right the wrongs. From the late 1980s onwards, they wrote a series of articles and books arguing that Japanese Buddhism is not true Buddhism; and neither was traditional Japanese Zen. By this, they were not denying Zen's historical link with Buddhist history nor the fact that Zen followers view themselves as Buddhists. What was truly admirable was that they were speaking for themselves as Sōtō Zen Buddhists, determined to clean up their house.

The problem, as they saw it, was that Zen had failed in its responsibility to critically investigate what is and what is not true Buddhism. Instead, they glorified such hazy and high-flown notions as "direct intuition" (*chokkan* 直観), "no wish, no thought" (*munen musō* 無念無想), "no mind" (*mushin* 無心), and "non-reliance on words" (*furyō monji* 不立文字). Such Zen ideals had made them passive and submissive to authority and its ideologies by suppressing any chance of critical analyses.[855]

18.1.2 HAKAMAYA Noriaki

18.1.2.1 The Critical Buddhism movement was spearheaded by Japanese Buddhist scholars of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist studies, HAKAMAYA Noriaki 袴谷憲昭 (1943-), a Yogācāra specialist, and MATSUMOTO Shirō 松本史朗 (1950-), a Mādhyamika specialist.[856] With their disciplined learning and devout faith, they applied Buddhism itself to critique Japanese Buddhism, like using clean water to wash their own bodies and refresh themselves.

Significantly, they did not limit their critiques to merely Buddhism, but directed it to exposing Japanese class consciousness and social discrimination,[857] the emperor system, the lack of open public debate in Japanese life, nativist theories of Japanese culture, Japanese attitudes toward nature, and the animistic nature of Shinto religious practices. This is like showing them the source of clean flowing water, so that they, too, can wash and refresh themselves.

In short, they employed early Buddhism itself to expose and correct the roles played by Japanese Buddhism in their cultural experience. At first blush, Critical Buddhism seemed to have changed the rules of Japanese academic discourse: the Japanese were traditionally reticent and polite, but now can be openly critical of others. However, with the self-realization that "Zen is not Buddhism," they hoped to heal themselves and others, working with **Critical Buddhism** (批判仏教 *hihan bukkyō*) to assert their conviction not to resign to or coldly watch their samsaric devolution, but to take charge of their lives and culture for spiritual growth in Buddha Dharma.

As disciplined academics and ordained Zen clerics, affiliated with Sōtō Zen sect Komazawa University [10.6.4], their efforts were nothing short of a self-reformation by exposing Japanese Mahāyāna for what it really was: misguided since the Heian period until their downfall by the Meiji government. And now burdened by revelations of social discrimination in their own Sōtō Zen community, they simply needed to set things right by returning to the teachings of the historical Buddha, to begin with.

18.1.2.2 Hakamaya declares that "'Buddhism is criticism' or that 'only that which is critical is Buddhism.'"[858] He contrasts Critical Buddhism with what he calls *Topical Buddhism*, that is, between the concepts of critical philosophy and of topical philosophy (id). In the preface to his essay, *Hongaku shisō hihan* ("Critiques of the Doctrine of Original Enlightenment," 1989), Hakamaya clearly states that his purpose is to show that *hongaku shisō* (original enlightenment)[859] is not Buddhism. Further, he claims that Zen, the

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[855] See Bodiford, "Zen and the art of religious prejudice," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23, 1996:1-28.

[856] For a biblio of all the works of Hakamaya (up to 1993) and Matsumoto (up to 1995), see Hubbard & Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* 1997:491-495, 496 f.

[857] Buddhists in Malaysia and Singapore still badly need to do this, and may learn something wholesome here,

[858] HAKAMAYA, Noriaki, "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy," in (edd) J Hubbard & P L Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* Univ of Hawai'i Press, 1997:56-80.

[859] On difficulty of the English tr of *hongaku shisō,* see Swanson 1993:142.

Kyoto school of philosophy, even the teaching of non-duality in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra,* are not Buddhism. As a Yogācāra specialist, he hopes eventually to write an article to show that Yogācāra, too, is not Buddhism!

Hakamaya sees ***hongaku shisō*** as a notion that all things are embraced in a basic, singular, ineffable reality (a state of "original enlightenment") that functions as an authoritarian ideology that lacks validity of either words or concepts, or faith or intellect. This so called reality is constructed on a "pure" basis, object or essence, "original enlightenment," and the subject based on it, expressed as "actualized enlightenment," traces, function, phenomena: this is nothing but a *dhatu*; hence, it is not Buddhism.

18.1.2.3 Like Matsumoto, Hakamaya, lays out these 3 defining characteristics of Buddhism:

(1) The Buddha's basic teaching is **the law of causation**, that is, dependent arising (*partītya samutpāda*), formulated against the Brahmanical idea of a substantial *ātman,* which is a *dhatu,vāda.* So is the Chinese idea of "nature" (*shizen*) and the Japanese idea of "inherent enlightenment." All this goes against the teaching of causation.

(2) The Buddhist moral imperative is to **act selflessly** (*anātman*) to benefit others. The *hongaku shisō* notion that all things, sentient and non-sentient, are endowed with "the way of the Buddha," or, in Hakamaya's words, "included in the substance of Buddha," leaves no room for this moral action.

(3) Buddhism requires **faith, words and wisdom** to know how to understand and accept dependent arising. The Zen rejection of the use of words (which is actually more native Chinese or Daoist than Buddhist), and the ineffability of "thusness" *(shinnyo)* claimed in *hongaku shisō* leaves no room for words or faith. Historically, the Buddha communicates through words (his teachings), which inculcates wisdom into us, which inspires wise faith.[860] [12.1]

18.1.3 Matsumoto Shirō

18.1.3.1 Matsumoto, in a 1989 collection of essays, declares that the key teachings of early Buddhism are nonself (*muga;* Skt *anātman*) and causality, that is, the temporal (3 time-period cycle of) 12 links of dependent arising (*pratītya samutpāda*); not the non-temporal causality developed later (eg, by Hua-yen thinkers). What is denied is an eternal, substantial, underlying basis or locus from which everything else depends on or arises. This "locus" he calls *dhātu,* "element" (as in "essence," that is, essentialism); hence, this is *dhatu,vāda* (Matsumoto's neologism). Buddha-nature (*tathagata,garbha*), the notion of Buddhahood being inherent in all beings (and things), is a form of *dhatu,vāda*; hence, it is not Buddhism.[861]

18.1.3.2 According to Lin Chen-kuo, Hakamaya holds that "Critical Buddhism sees methodical, rational critique as belonging to the very foundations of Buddhism itself, while 'Topical Buddhism' emphasizes the priority of rhetoric over logical thinking, of ontology over epistemology."[862] In other words, "Topical Buddhism" is traditional Buddhism memorized, restated, sermonized and transmitted. Hence, it emphasizes rhetoric over reasoning, knowing over understanding.

Critical Buddhism became known to Western scholarship through a panel discussion held at the American Academy of Religion's 1993 meeting in Washington, DC, USA. The topic was entitled "Critical Buddhism: Issues and responses to a New Methodological Movement," which was followed up with a

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[860] Hakamaya Noriaki, *Hongaku shisō hihan* [Critique of the thought of inherent enlightenment]. Tokyo: Daizo Shuppan, 1989.

[861] Matsumoto Shirō, *Engi to kū—Nyoraizō shiaō hihan* [Causality and emptiness—A critique of *tathagata-garbha* thought], Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1989. Swanson 1993:119-126.

[862] Lin, Chen-kuo, "Metaphysics, suffering, and liberation: The debate between two Buddhisms, in (edd) Hubbard & Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* 1997:298-313.

collection of English essays.[863] The movement is seen as having peaked in 1997 and having declined by 2001.[864]

18.2 "ORIGINAL ENLIGHTENMENT"?

18.2.1 Although the arguments of the Critical Buddhism scholars sound theological and apologetic, they rely on the traditional textual and philological methods of academic scholarship. For example, Critical Buddhism asserts that **Buddha-nature** (*tathāgata,garbha*), "**original enlightenment**" (*hongaku*) and similar doctrines are not Buddhist. They are, in fact, examples of Hindu-like thinking of a substantial self (*attā;* Skt *ātman*), which Buddhism opposes with the doctrines of nonself (*anattā*) and dependent arising (*paṭicca,- samuppāda*).[865]

Hongaku—fully, *hongaku shisō* (Chin 本覺思想 *běnjué*[866] *sīxiǎng*)—is a set of related views that includes ideas such as the inherent enlightenment of all things (including non-sentient beings, such as grasses and trees, rocks and mountains); the identity of samsara and nirvana; no differentiation between the "indigen- ous" *kami* (gods) and the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas [10.1 f]; the transcendence of all dualities, including good and evil. Such ideas became entrenched in much of Japanese religious thinking and activity. Although rarely questioned, these notions and the implications were now powerfully challenged.[867]

Critical Buddhism further asserts that these monistic views of Mahāyāna deny **language and thinking** in favour of an ineffable and non-conceptual mysticism contrary to the discriminating wisdom (*paññā*) and selfless compassion (*karuṇā*) found in Buddhist awakening. Critical Buddhism is therefore *critical* in at least two senses: (1) It is critical of certain widely held "Buddhist" views, and (2) it asserts that the cri- tical discrimination of reality, and the proper use of reason and language to teach that **true reality**, are the hallmarks of Buddhahood.[868]

18.2.2 The term **hongaku** (Chin 本覺 *běn jué*) or **hongaku shisō** (Chin 本覺思想 *běnjué sīxiǎng*) has no Sanskrit equivalent: neither is it found in Indian Buddhism. The former first appeared in the *Awakening of Faith,* a text probably compiled in China,[869] and in two Chinese apocryphal Buddhist texts, the *Jen-wang ching* (T 8.825-834, 834-845)[870] and the **Vajrasamādhi Sūtra* (T 9.365-373).[871] In the *Awakening of Faith, hongaku* is used in contrast to *shigaku,* the "inception" or "actualization" of enlightenment, that is, the process by which one realizes enlightenment in his life; thus, the English rendering "original" enlighten- ment.

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[863] (Edd) J Hubbard & P L Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* Univ of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

[864] S Heine, "After the storm: Matsumoto Shirō's Transition from 'Critical Buddhism' to 'Critical theology'." *Japan- ese Journal of Religious Studies* 28,1-2 2001:133-146.

[865] MATSUMOTO Shirō, "The doctrine of 'Tathāgata-garbha' is not Buddhist." In (edd) Hubbard & Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* 1997:165-173. HAKAMAYA Noriaki, "Critical philosophy versus Topical Philosophy." In Hubbard & Swan- son, 1997:56-80.

[866] 覺 is also pronounced *jiào,* "to sleep"; hence, for "enlightenment," the pronunciation and pinyin should be *jué.*

[867] For a brief history of the development of these notions in Japanese society, see Swanson 1993:117-119.

[868] J Hubbard, "Critical Buddhism (*hihan bukkyō*), *Macmillan Ency of Buddhism*, 2004:189.

[869] See Hakeda, tr *The Awakening of Faith*, Columbia Univ Press, 1967. On the controversy over its origin*,* see "Sources" in W Grosnick (eg "The categories of *t'i, hsiang,* and *yung:* Evidence that Paramārtha composed the *Awak- ening of Faith," Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12,11 1989:65-92, and Whalen Lai: "A clue to the authorship of the *Awakening of Faith:* Śikṣānanda's redaction of the word *'nien'*," JIABS 3,1 1980:34-53; "The *Chan-ch'a ching*: Religion and magic in Medieval China," in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha,* 1990: 175- 206.

[870] For details on the Chinese apocrypha and *Jeng wang ching* see Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism,* Berkeley, 1989:41-50, and Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha,* 1990*.*

[871] For details on **Vajrasamādhi Sūtra* see Buswell, *The Formation of Chinese Ideology: The Vajrasamādhi Sutra, a Buddhist apocryphon,* Princeton, 1989*.*

This idea of original or inherent enlightenment, along with the *Awakening of Faith* in general, had a great influence on the development of East Asian Buddhism.[872] Besides influencing the Chan tradition, the idea was also promoted by Fa-tsang (643-712), the Hua-yen patriarch, who wrote an influential commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*.[873] The idea influenced the development of the concept of "the Buddha-nature in non-sentient beings" in the T'ien-t'ai tradition.

18.2.3 In Japan, the *hongaku* idea developed on its own. It influenced the Shingon school, especially through Kukai's extensive use of the *Shakumakaen-ron* [T 1668.32.591-668], an apocryphal commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* attributed to Nagarjuna. The development of *hongaku shisō was* especially prominent in the Tendai (Chinese, Tiantai) school, which, after its introduction into Japan by Saichō, went through many developments,[874] one of which was the rise of a distinctly independent branch called *Hongakumon.* Texts devoted to *hongaku shisō* also appeared in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, and some were attributed to prominent Tendai figures such as Saichō, Genshin and Ryōgen.[875]

It is no accident that these developments overlapped with the growth of the syncretistic *honji-suijaku /shinbutsu shūgō* movement, that emphasized the unity of Buddhist and Shinto deities and practices. Its influence can be seen in the development of Shugendō (the way of mountain asceticism), in Shinto, and in all of the Buddhist schools. Building on the Mahayana idea of the "identity of *saṁsāra* and nirvāṇa," *hongaku shisō* developed into an ethos of (to use Tamura Yoshiro's words) "absolute non-duality" and "total affirmation" of the mundane world.

18.3 BUDDHA-NATURE

18.3.1 The *hongaku shisō* ideal is best expressed in the phrases, *sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu* and *sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu,* "the grasses, trees, mountains and rivers all attain buddhahood," phrases that regularly appear in Japanese literature, art, theatre, and so forth.[876] This religious ethos was the pervasive belief in Japanese society for most of its history, and persists to this day despite attempts by the Meiji government to forcibly "separate" Buddhism and Shinto elements (*shinbutsu bunri*). [10.2]

18.3.2 Specialist in Japanese religions and Buddhist studies, **Paul L Swanson**, informs us that it is often assumed that these phrases—*sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu* and *sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu* [18.3.1] —are from some Mahāyāna text, but they have not been located in any of them (1993 n10).[877] There are similar phrases, such as *issai shujō shitsu'u busshō, "*all sentient beings have Buddha-nature," in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* but *no* Mahāyāna texts have gone so far as to state, in any way, that any non-sentient things have Buddha-nature. In fact, at least one passage in **the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*** says just the opposite: "That which is without Buddha-nature is the ground, the trees, gravel, and rocks. That which is other than these non-sentient things is all called Buddha Nature"[878] (T 12.581a22-23 & 828b26-27).[879]

18.4 QUESTIONING THEMSELVES

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[872] For details, see by Tamura Yoshiro, *Tendai hongakushisō gairon* [Outline of the Tendai theory of original enlightenment], in (edd) Tada Karya et al, *Tendai hongaku ron,* 1973:477-548, and his other works: Swanson 1993:148.

[873] Ta-ch'eng chi'i-hsin lun i-chi, T 1846.

[874] For details, see Swanson's intro to the special issue on Tendai Buddhism in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14,2-3, 1987, where also see Hazama Jiko's "The characteristics of Japanese Tendai," and Shirato Waka's "Inherent Enlightenment and Saichō's acceptance of the Bodhisattva Precepts."

[875] See Swanson 1993:118.

[876] See Jamie Hubbard, "Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood—The Universal Buddha of the Sanchieh-chiao," in (edd) Griffiths & Keenan, *Buddha Nature,* 1990:75-94*.*

[877] See Miyamoto Shoson, "'Sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu' no busshōronteki igi to sono sakusha," *Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyō* 19,2, 1961:672-701.

[878] *P'u fa ssu fo,* Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 205. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sutra,* T 12.581a. Cf T 12.828b.

[879] See Jamie Hubbard, "Absolute delusion, perfect buddhahood—The Universal Buddha of the Sanchieh-chiao," in (edd) Griffiths & Keenan, *Buddha Nature: A festschrift in honor of Minoru Kiyota,* 1990:75-94, esp 87*.*

A third aspect of Critical Buddhism is a fierce denunciation of Buddhist schools, thinkers, and social programmes that are based on the triumphalism inherent in a doctrine of ineffable truth, and which support the status quo and perpetuate social injustice. Hakamaya and Matsumoto are especially concerned with the role of Buddhist doctrine in various forms of Japanese nationalism and, as *ordained Zen clerics* teaching at Zen universities, they single out their own **Sōtō Zen** teachings for criticism.

For example, they questioned how the founder Dōgen (1200-1253) is looked up to within the Sōtō school and the proper role of theology within academic as well as sectarian practice. They have also written about Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1263), Myo-e (1173-1232), the Kyoto School, and others, as well as critiquing the ideal of objective academic scholarship in the study of Buddhism.[880]

18.5 BUDDHA, SECT AND SOCIETY

18.5.1 Paul Swanson

18.5.1.1 Paul Swanson, in the conclusion of his essay, "Zen is not Buddhism" (1993), distinguishes at least 3 levels of targets in the criticisms of Hakamaya and Matsumoto, that is, *buddhological, sectarian and social criticism* (about the nature of Buddhahood, about sectarian differences, and about the Buddhist effects on Japanese society). Swanson instructively summarizes these ideas as follows (1993: 143):

(1) At **the buddhological level**, Hakamaya and Matsumoto are questioning the consistency of concepts such as Buddha-nature and *hongaku shisō* with other basic Buddhist concepts such as *pratītya-sam-utpāda.* Such ideas are not-Buddhist because they are rooted in the Brahmanical idea of an abiding entity or substance (*basho*).[881] Any idea that uses or implies such an idea of an abiding entity is called ***dhātu-vāda,*** the doctrine of essentialism. Examples of these are the idea of "Soul" (*ātman*) in India, of "nature" (*shizen*) in China, and of "original (or inherent) enlightenment" (*hongaku shisō*). Such ideas run contrary to the Buddha's teaching.

"Whether or not one agrees with the specifics of their argument, the time is ripe for a buddhological re-evaluation of the Buddha-nature concept," Swanson concludes.

(2) At **a sectarian level,** they are resisting what they perceive as an incorrect understanding of Dōgen's teachings by their own Sōtō sect, and seek to reform the sect by re-evaluating Dōgen's teachings, especially regarding the idea of Buddha-nature.

(3) At the level of **social criticism,** they intend to show that the acceptance of the Buddha-nature/-*hongaku shisō* ethos in Japan has led to objectionable social conditions and attitudes, and that a recognition of the danger of this ethos is necessary to change such unfortunate social conditions. That such social criticism should arise at this time in Japanese society, and from such a source, is a matter of great significance not only to those interested in Buddhism and its development in East Asia and its potential meaning for the West, but also for those interested in the dynamics of religious ideas and their influence on society in general, both in the past and present.

18.5.1.2 Swanson summarizes the situation as follows: "It can be said that the favorable yet stereotyped description of Japanese Buddhism (even Japanese religion in general) has it emphasizing harmony with nature and a 'harmonious' society, absolute immanence, an uncritical acceptance of phenomena as they are, the interdependence or identity of kami and buddhas, love of peace, an affirming and positive attitude towards life in this world, and so on. And on the negative side, it is said to be lacking impetus for socioethical concerns; having a weak idea of justice and social injustice, and so allowing people to become easy prey to political propaganda and social pressures to conform; encouraging an irresponsible 'hands-off' disposition that contributes to pollution, reckless use of natural resources, littering, and de-

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[880] For a list and summaries of essays by Japanese scholars on Critical Buddhism, see Swanson 1993.

[881] *Basho* as *topos, "topicalism; locus, place, location* (of experience)" was an idea used by Kyoto School philosopher, Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945) in his *Zen no kenkyū* (An inquiry into good,1911): J M Shields, *Critical Buddhism: Engaging with modern Japanese Buddhist Thought,* Ashgate,2011:93, 99, 106.

struction of public property, and disregard for the interest of anyone outside of one's own 'group'; and providing no basis for making ethical judgements between right and wrong, good and bad, correct and incorrect." (1993:143 f)

Not all scholars, however, are convinced that Critical Buddhism has such a profound or national significance. They think that the meaning and significance of *hongaku shisō* should be re-examined, as reflected in such questions as: What is the true understanding of the Buddha Dharma? What are the social implications of various interpretations of the Buddha Dharma? What is the role of Buddhism in Japanese society today? How should developments in Buddhist doctrinal history be understood? What were the social, political and religious impact on Japan of uncritical acceptance of the idea of an inherent and universal Buddha-nature? Can contemporary Japanese society be critiqued from a Buddhist perspective, and, if so, how? We will now try to answer, at least analyze, these questions and related ones as space permits

18.6 HOW CRITICAL IS CRITICAL BUDDHISM?

18.6.1 Peter N Gregory, specialist in religion and East Asian Studies, wonders "Is Critical Buddhism really critical?" (1997). Speaking as a scholar, Gregory was incredulously surprised that a socioreligious critique, that is "Critical Buddhism," occurred at all.

It is simply unimaginable, for example, that this debate could ever have arisen within an American academic setting. The different institutional and social context in which Buddhist studies is done in America and in Japan should give all of us on both sides of the Pacific pause to reflect on what is now called **the sociology of knowledge**: how the institutional structures and academic culture within which we pursue our careers of scholarship shape the ways in which we delimit our fields of inquiry, the types of questions we ask, how we pursue our research, and the kinds of conclusions we draw—how, that is, the setting within which we work constitutes the very "Buddhism" that we study.   (1997:286) [18.6.4]

"As an intellectual historian of Chinese Buddhism," Gregory adds, "I am not concerned with the question of whether the development of *hongaku shisō* so radically diverged from the fundamental tenets of the Buddha's 'original' teachings that the result should no longer be considered 'Buddhism.'" (1997:288). He went on to explain how *hongaku shisō* had a different meaning in Chinese Buddhism, and showed how Tsung-mi (圭峰宗密 Guīfēng Zōngmì, 780-841), the erudite 5th patriarch of the Huayan school, understood *hongaku shisō.*

Since this is not my area of interest, nor is it related to the drift of this essay, I shall not even summarize Gregory's interesting explication of this phase in Chinese Buddhism, for which we should read his paper (1997) and book (2002).[882]

18.6.2 Gregory, in his 1997 essay, makes an interesting remark about scholars' views of Buddhism (or of religion in general):

"Doctrines have no meaning outside of the interpretive contexts in which they are embedded just as ideas have no reality independent of the minds that think them. That is why it seems meaningless to me to try to understand doctrines outside of their context because outside of their context they have no meaning." (Gregory 1997:291; emphasis added)

This statement is, of course, true of academic truths and scientific truths. Take the above remark by Gregory, for example: it's meaningful to whomever reads it (who understands English), but it does not make sense to one who does not read English, or whose understanding lacks much depth (like most primary schoolchildren). They are unlikely to understand this passage.

Even when we say something like "the sun rises in the east," it makes sense to one who has seen the sun and who knows where "east" is. On the other hand, we can still know where east is, when we see the sun in the early morning low in the horizon. This is a **natural truth** we have learned over some time. Sen-

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[882] Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism.* Princeton, 2002.

tences like "I love you" or "God saves the world," however, are not natural truths: they only make sense to certain kinds of people. These are **conventional truths**; we can also call these "contextual" truths.

Not all academic statements, however, are natural truths; nor are all philosophical or religious statements. Even a seemingly clever statement like "the eye does not see itself" is open to interpretation. We know, for example, that (under normal circumstances) we all have eyes: I *can* see *your* eyes. Yet, it's only partly true that "I cannot see my own eyes." Most mornings when we get up and wash our face, we do see our own eyes: we see the eye! Not only is this a contextual truth, but such truths are also not very useful truths, even if they can be entertaining or humorous; or, to show how clever we are, until we think a little deeper about it.

18.6.3 The Buddha, on the other hand, only speaks what is true and useful, whether they are pleasant or not. More exactly, as stated in **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58), the Buddha declares that he only speaks "what is true and real, and connected with the goal (of awakening), pleasant or unpleasant."[883] [16.4.4].

Buddhism (early Buddhism, to be precise), as we know, is a record of the Buddha's statements that we can agree on (especially as scholars or truth-seekers)[884] that everything *in the world* changes and does not always *satisfy* us (that everything in the world is impermanent, unsatisfactory, nonself). The phrase "in the world" means that the context is *everything*. [14.2.2]

"Context" simply means "situation." As Gregory has pointed out, things only make sense in their respective context. Since the context here is "everything," we can safely say that the one thing—the Buddha Dharma—is always true and real: everything is impermanent and unsatisfactory. This, then, is a natural truth: it is true in any context whether we see it or not.

Basically, the key ideas of Japanese Buddhism, such as *hongaku shisō* (original awakening), *busshō* (Buddha-nature) [18.3] and other patently Mahāyāna ideas, as a rule, arose in China (some of which could had come from Central Asia or had roots in post-Buddha India).

Almost all such non-buddhist ideas are rooted in or influenced by Daoism, Confucianism and Chinese culture that does not reflect the liberative and non-self teachings of early Buddhism.[885] They have been imported into Buddhism, infecting us like a virus of delusion. Now let us start healing and immunizing ourself by putting into practice what we have learned here of the principles and spirit of Critical Buddhism, and show our gratitude to Hakamaya and Matsumoto.

18.6.4 Let me reflect briefly on the Buddhist **sociology of knowledge** [18.6.1], and simplify this academic construction for a better understanding of Critical Buddhism specifically, and the "Buddhist experience" generally (the theme of this SD volume). For our purposes, we can see sociology of knowledge as:
(1) how we, as a Buddhist community, know things, especially *how we see Buddhism*; and
(2) how we can know Buddhism, what it is before us, and how this knowledge can better our situation.

Without getting too academic, we may begin by seeing (1) how "sense-based" experiences construct what we know and take Buddhism to be our daily experience, and eventually, as our cultural experience. (2) refers to *how* we think, including how our sense-based experiences mould and affect us as members of Japanese society, or, in general, as Buddhists. This latter idea, when properly defined and developed, especially with the help of disciplined and open scholarship, can help us identify unwholesome traits in our culture, and to correct those traits, or begin to do so, so that posterity will carry on this wholesome trend. This is, in fact, the purpose of my writing this paper and the whole of the SD sutta translation work.

Hence, our sociology of knowledge—or the Buddhist sociology of knowledge—should be a study of how our knowledge or views affect our actions and speech, and we need to focus and refine this for the sake of **social development**, that is, living as a wholesome community. With this wholesome social found-

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[883] Abridged, M 58,8/1:395 (SD 7.12).

[884] Sujato & Brahmali, *The Authenticity of the Early Buddhist Texts.* Perth, Australia, 2015. https://ocbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/authenticity.pdf.

[885] For examples of Sinicization of Buddhism in the 7th + 8th cent, see Gregory, "Is Critical Buddhism really critical?" 1997 & Lusthaus, "Critical Buddhism and returning to the sources," 1997.

ation, we have an ambience that is conducive to **personal development**, that is to say, we are able to cultivate a stable mind of calm and clarity, for tapping into our innate talents and develop qualities, such as proactively interacting with others. This common knowledge and personal qualities form the bases of our **spirituality** as Buddhists: we know and see (study and practise) Buddhism as the means for present wellbeing, and to inspire us to work and live closer to the path of awakening.

19 When Zen is not Buddhism

19.1 The Zen sociology of knowledge [5.3.1] is a world in itself. The ancient Chinese Chan masters, for some odd reasons, seemed to reject the suttas, claiming that Zen is "**a special [separate] transmission outside the teachings** (教外別傳 *jiào wài bié chuán;* Jap *kyōge betsuden*); **not dependent on words** (不立文字 *bù lì wén zī;* Jap *furyū monji*)."[886] [8.3.6]. The very first point to note here is that Zen, ironically, is using a lot of words!

By "A special or separate transmission outside the teaching" Zen means that it is "profoundly different from, and fundamentally better than, all other schools." "Not dependent on words," Zen means that it is neither the explicit teaching nor the implicit teaching of Shakyamuni: Zen is *it*, the pure experience, the word *is* the thing; the finger pointing to the moon *is* the moon (don't believe what else you've heard).[887]

We simply cannot and should not tell children playing an imaginative game of "dungeons and dragons" that there are neither dungeons nor dragons. We will not enjoy watching the game then. Outside of Zen earshot, we may then say, in our profoundly non-Zen way, that they neither needed nor wanted the suttas: they certified the enlightenment status of their followers. Hence, while Zen philosophy and theology are Daoist-spirited, its history and social construct are Confucianist.

The Zhuāngzi (莊子) or *Chuang-tzu,*[888] the eponymous masterpiece by the great Daoist sage—who with his spiritual father, Lao-tzu, belonged as much among the Zen forefathers as did the early Indian patriarchs (*soshigata*)—has Lao-tzu's saying often quoted by Zen masters in connection with "the ineffable" (不可説 *bùkě shuō;l* Jap *fukasetsu,* "the unsayable"):[889]

"If the Dao (*dō*) were something that could be presented, each man would present it to his lord.
If the Dao were something that could be handed to somebody, each man would give it to his parents.
If the Dao were something that could be told to others, everybody would tell it to his brothers."[890]

We are fortunate that the Buddha speaks (*vadati*) the Dharma, and is the shower, /ʃəʊə(r)/, of the way (*akkhātā,* Dh 276). We can already see here the seeds of the modern Critical Buddhism, declaring that "Zen is not Buddhism."

19.2 In important ways, Zen is the most Chinese and Japanese of Buddhism, the most sinicized, the most nipponized. When the Daoist clouds cleared up from the Zen mountain, they found themselves left high and dry, without a Buddhist history or presence: without the suttas, they were bereft of any Buddhist authority or legitimacy. If Daoism gave Zen enlightenment, it was Neo-Confucianism that provided Zen with the tradition of the funerary tradition of ancestry as their tool for legitimizing their lineage.[891]

Since the 7th century in China, Zen masters put together an impressive lineage of bearers of homemade Dharma-lamp that their transmission went back through 28 Patriarchs to the Buddha himself. Ap-

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[886] H Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History* vol 1: India and China, 2005:85; Albert Welter, "The disputed place of 'a special transmission outside the scriptures' in Ch'an," 1996, "Mahākāśyapa's smile" 2000; J McRae, *Seeing Through Zen*, 2003:1-21 (ch 1). See SD 44.1 (1.1.1.2).

[887] See McRae 2003:5.

[888] A good study of the Zhuangzi is A C Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The inner chapters.* London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986; also his *Disputers of the Tao,* Philosophical arguments in Ancient China, Open Court, 1989.

[889] Cp the Buddha's 10 "undetermined" theses (1.12.1.7).

[890] *The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen,* 1991:73 (fukasetsu).

[891] J McRae 2003:48. See SD 40b.5 (5.1.2.9).

parently, 24 different Chan lineages were recorded to have been transmitted to Japan, but only 2 sur-
vived to this day: Dōgen's Sōtō Zen (from Caodong zong 曹洞宗 *cáodòngzōng*, Jap *sōtō shū*), and Linchi's
Rinzai (from Linchi 臨濟宗 *línjì zōng; Jap Rinzai shū*). Or, we could say they were the 2 Gladiators who
emerged as Champions in the fierce Zen competition of the Japanese Buddhist arena.

19.3 SUZUKI ZEN AND AFTER

19.3.1 After the draconian Meiji reformation and its devastating effects on Japanese Buddhism, it took
some decades before concerned Japanese Buddhists could work on reviving Buddhism, or at least, for the
survival of their temples [10.2]. Like a final solar flare from a dying sun, **D T Suzuki** [1.2.4] burst into the
world stage to promote his own triumphalist vision of Zen for a Japan that was rapidly westernizing and
rising as a world power ready for its own role in World War 2. In the final analysis, we can see that Suzuki
was not promoting Buddhism: he was using Buddhism to promote his vision of Japanese culture and
nationalism.

If anyone had succeeded in selling Zen and Japanese culture (or Zen *as* Japanese culture) to the West-
ern audience by his zealous writings, speeches and meetings—downplaying, even degrading, early Bud-
dhism, and promoting Mahāyāna, especially Zen in a triumphalist manner, it is D T Suzuki**,** whose lone
crusade came to be titled by scholars as **Suzuki Zen** [8.4.7]. Impressive as Suzuki Zen was, it launched a
meteor shower of Zen centres in the US (and elsewhere to a lesser extent); it might even have impressed
a few scholars. But the new generation of perspicacious scholars after him, saw through Zen; his karma
had caught up with him.

19.3.2 Suzuki had no sympathy whatsoever for early Buddhism: either he knew nothing about the 3 train-
ings [11.4.10] or he had no place for them in his vision. He was fired up by the notion of Buddhism as a
handmaid of a modernist triumphal Zen, a "creative" Japanese culture, even if an amoral one:

> The doctrine of ascetic aestheticism is not so fundamental as that of Zen aestheticism. Art
> impulses are more primitive or more innate than those of morality. The appeal of art goes more
> directly into human nature. Morality is regulative, art is creative. One is an imposition from with-
> out, the other is an irrepressible expression from within. Zen finds its inevitable association with
> art not with morality.   (Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 1970:27) [19.6.7]

This is a profoundly ominous statement coming from a religious writer. A religion without morality (in
the Buddhist sense of a diligent refining of action and speech that conduces to mental development) is like
a city with neither law nor law enforcers. Thieves and predators will then prey on the weak and wealthy,
and the city will be unsafe to live in.

19.3.3 In the 1990s, US Buddhism was shaken by the colourful sexual exploits and abuses of the Vajra-
guru, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987) and his Vajra Regent, Osel Tendzin (1943-1990),[892] amongst
Vajrayana Buddhists, and the sexual and financial abuses of Sensei Richard Baker (1936-1971) of the San
Francisco Zen Center, and the Rinzai roshi Eido Shimano (1932-2018) and others. So many devout and
innocent followers were hurt and suffered. It all took at least a generation to heal.[893] We must prevent any
more such massive tragedies with the Buddha's Dharma![894]

According to **the Cora Rāja Sutta** (A 2.39), the discourse on thieves and kings, this is like when thieves
or bandits (*cora*) are plenty and powerful, and the king (*rāja*) is weak. The Buddha is referring to a situa-

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[892] While Trungpa died from a cardiac arrest due to his alcoholism, Osel Tendzin (Thomas Frederick Rich, Jr), after
infecting a number of his partners with HIV/AIDS, himself died of it.

[893] On the cases of Trungpa and his Regent, see SD 64.17 (5); on Baker, Shimano and others, see (7)

[894] Stuart Lachs specializes in the study of Zen abuse cases both in the US and Japan: "Coming Down from the Zen
Clouds: A Critique of the Current State of American Zen," online,
www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/CriticalZen/ComingDownfromtheZenClouds.htm, 1994:5.

tion where bad monks are powerful, and good monks weak, when the well-behaved monks sit in silence (do not speak out) in the midst of the sangha, or resort to the outlying countryside. This is not for the good or happiness of the many, but the suffering of devas and humans.

On the other hand, when <u>the king</u> is powerful (when the Dharma-Vinaya is well taught and well practised), then, its people live, work and travel at ease. The good monastics are strong, the bad ones weak. The bad monastics are silent in the sangha. This is for the good of the many, the happiness of devas and humans.[895]

19.3.4 Suzuki not only promoted Zen zealously, but imaginatively presented it to the world in his writings and teachings not only as the "original" Buddhism, but also as the very apex and essence of culture, Japanese culture, to be exact. Since Zen was part of Mahāyāna, he was driven to present the greatest Buddhist masters to be Mahāyāna, too. Here is an interesting description of Suzuki's attitude as observed by Dan Lusthaus (summarized):

When Suzuki published his first solo English work (1900), a translation of the Śikṣānanda version of the *Awakening [Arising] of Faith in the Mahāyāna* 大乘起信論 *dàshéng qǐxìn lùn*,[896] he not only proudly titled it as *Aśvaghosha's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, but devoted much of his introduction to passionately defending the traditional East Asian belief that it was an authentic Indian text authored by Aśvaghoṣa, and "spared no sarcasm and scorn for those who might question that attribution."[897]

The *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* had long been suspected by scholars to this day, to be a Chinese apocryphal text, appearing in China in the 6th century. Its Chinese title, 大乘起信論, in fact, says it all: the term *Mahāyāna* is not found in the early Buddhist texts, and it is not a sutra, but a 論 *lùn, śāstra,* a term usually used for a Sanskrit Abhidharma work.

By the early 1930s, Suzuki had studied Sanskrit and Tibetan sources for his *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (1930, repr 1981) and his English translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (1932; repr 1978).[898] In his *Studies*, he initially referred to the *Awakening of Faith* as Aśvaghoṣa's work (1930:182, 282), but later hedges with the phrase "usually ascribed to Aśvaghoṣa."[899] Two years later, in the introduction to *The Laṅkāvatāra Sutra*, he conceded that it "is generally ascribed to Aśvaghoṣa. While *he may not have been the author* of this most important treatise, … . Some scholars contend that *The Awakening* is a Chinese work, but this is not well grounded." (1932:xxxix; emphasis added)[900]

Suzuki, in the 30 years between his first work and this revised opinion, concludes Lusthaus (1997:33), must have learned about Aśvaghoṣa, who was not a Mahāyāna Buddhist,[901] and whose extant Sanskrit works, such as *Buddhacarita*, bear no resemblance whatsoever to the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahā-*

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[895] A 2.39/1:68 f (SD 47/7).

[896] Aśvaghoṣa*'s Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, tr D T Suzuki (Chicago: Open Court, 1900). Earliest Eng Tr was prob: T Richard (1894), *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana Doctrine, the New Buddhism, by the Patriarch Ashvaghosha,* Shanghai: Christian Literature Soc*, 1907.* Lusthaus refers to it as "The Awakening of the Mahāyāna Faith" throughout. See also (edd & trs) J Jorgensen, D Lusthaus, J Makeham, M Strange, *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith.* NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2019.

[897] Suzuki 1900:xx-xiv; Lusthaus 1997:33.

[898] D T Suzuki, *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra,* Boulder, CO: Prajñā Press, 1978; *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra,* Boulder: Prajñā Press, 1981.

[899] See Suzuki 1930:335, where he refers only to "the author of the *Awakening of Faith*" without naming him. Note how each of the 3 mentions becomes increasingly more reticent, with growing uncertainty, about identifying Aṣvaghoṣa as the author. (Lusthaus 1997:33).

[900] Its best known and most popular "translation" by the Yogācāra scholar Paramārtha; some scholars even take him to have written it in Skt upon arrival in China, and then tr it into Chin. It seeks to reconcile the *tathāgarbha* view with that of *ālaya,vijñāṇa* (store-house consciousness theory). See Princeton Dict Bsm: Dasheng qizin lun (221); apocrypha (58).

[901] Lusthaus comments: One frequently finds Indian scholars in the 20th century, influenced by Suzuki and other East Asian scholars, attributing the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (often "Sanskritized" as *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda-śāstra*) to Aśvaghoṣa. The more perspicacious Indian scholars have, however, remained skeptical. (1997:412 n13)

yāna's ideology. Suzuki, to his credit, clearly, albeit reluctantly, stopped stating that the work was Indian or composed by Aśvaghoṣa.[902]

Suzuki's zealous championing of East Asian assumptions and Japanese cultural superiority changed little despite his growing familiarity with the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, as evident throughout his *Laṅkāvatāra* works. Lusthaus observes that "His attempt in *Studies* to sharply distinguish between the 'Zen' ideology of the *Laṅkāvatāra* on the one hand, and Yogacara on the other (oddly enough, on the grounds that Zen and *Laṅkāvatāra* are forms of 'Transcendental Idealism,' whereas Yogacara is not), is embarrassing and naive, and driven by his conviction that the *Laṅkāvatāra* lay at the core of Zen, a conviction that the Zen tradition has insisted upon for over a thousand years. The Ch'an opinion of Yogacara (or the Zen opinion of Hossō) has always been derogatory." (1997:32s)

19.3.5 Suzuki Zen was a flash in the pan that burned for a generation; in the end, it burnt the food it was cooking to cinders. For decades in the late 20th century, Japanese scholars concerned with Buddhism's downfall in Japan earnestly kept up their re-examinations of historical origins of Japanese Buddhism. The works of Yanagida Seizan (1922-2006)[903] and others on Zen lineages and history were the best-known examples. These re-examinations determined that many, possibly most, of the presumed connections between Indian Buddhism and the Ch'an schools—such as the transmission to China by Bodhidharma—are largely later East Asian constructions, as are many of the early Ch'an lineages, and for that matter, the patriarchal lineages of Tendai (T'ien-t'ai), Hossō (Hua-yen), and Jōdo (Pure Land).[904]

The East Asian traditions had always emphasized their perceived continuities with their Indian ancestors, rather than discontinuities or disparities, but **the rediscovery of Indian Buddhism**—based on both careful examination of a fuller range of Indian materials than had previously been available in Chinese translations as well as a re-evaluation of the events and factors in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese history that had shaped East Asian Buddhism's self-image—had highlighted the disparities.

These included elements of Indian Buddhism that were never adequately conveyed to China as well as elements with Indian precedents that, for various reasons, the Chinese and other East Asians had sinicised and nipponized into theories and practices significantly removed from, even at odds with, their Indian roots. The humbling and embarrassing awareness of this disparity with Indian Buddhism was one of the main roots of Critical Buddhism. [5.1]

19.4 RETURNING TO EARLY BUDDHISM

19.4.1 By surveying the accomplishments of Buddhist studies in the 19th and 20th centuries, we will notice the increasing accuracy and sophistication with which Japanese and international scholars were rediscovering the Indian context. Lusthaus quotes two important examples, both bibliographical works by Japanese scholars in English, for those unfamiliar with Japanese scholarship.

The first example is NANJŌ Bun'yō's 1883 English translation of a Ming dynasty catalogue of Chinese translations of Indian materials.[905] This was a great boon to Buddhist scholars of the day unfamiliar with East Asian languages, even if the reconstructed Sanskrit titles for the works listed were more often fanciful than correct.

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[902] Aśvaghoṣa (c 80-c 150) lived several centuries before either the Yogācāra, or *tathāgatagarbha* models and vocabulary employed by *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* were developed. See Lusthaus 412 n14.

[903] See eg https://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/YanagidaSeizan.html.

[904] That activity itself is the inevitable result of the historico-philological methods developed in the West for Biblical scholarship in the 19th century, methods that have similarly problematized the historical origins of Christianity in terms of the problem of the "historical Jesus," Gospel redaction, and early Church history. (Lusthaus 1997:413 n15)

[905] Nanjō Bun'yō (anglicized as Bunyiu Nanjio) 南条文雄 (1849-1927), *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka* (A translation of 大明三藏聖教目錄 *Ta-ming san-tsang sheng-chiao mu-lu*), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883.

19.4.2 A century later, NAKAMURA Hajime published his *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (1980).[906] Although it contains fanciful title reconstructions and East Asian presuppositions,[907] the work shows how far Japanese scholarship had come. Nakamura's critical appraisal of the Indian texts reflects his command of Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan materials, solid Japanese scholarship, and a familiarity with Western scholarship.

Nakamura systematically compares the Chinese Buddhist text with their extant versions or related texts in Sanskrit and Tibetan. His descriptions of the East Asian works are frequently supplemented by analyses of Indian and Tibetan texts unavailable in Chinese; and bad, incomplete, and problematic translations are identified as such.[908]

Much of the materials he discusses had never been translated into Chinese and were thus unknown, unappreciated and unaccounted for during the development and consolidation of East Asian Buddhism. Hence, in important ways, he presents a fuller reconstruction of the Indian Buddhist textual tradition that East Asia had ever seen.

According to Lusthaus, Nakamura's masterly work is itself a testimony to and the fruit of the labors of fellow scholars who have perused, catalogued, and studied the widest range of Buddhist texts, from more cultures, more periods, and in more languages than has ever been possible in history. In short, his survey shows a vastly superior familiarity with and command of the non-Chinese materials than did Nanjō's *Catalogue*.

19.4.3 Yet Nakamura's critical appraisal of these materials is still tinged with a *dhātu-vāda* outlook, that is to say, he still interprets Buddhist literature through East Asian models and assumptions.[909] This is not as bad as Nanjō's *Catalogue,* which gives erroneous "facts" or details, and merely lists texts with very little information, and even less interpretation, if any.

Nakamura "corrected" many such errors, but, as Lusthaus notes, "the full import of the material he surveys *and interprets* for and from the East Asian vantage point has not yet become apparent." (1997:33) His work attests to the progress that Japanese scholarship has made, and is becoming more sophisticated, revealing subtle but palpable shifts in attitudes about Indian sources.

In 1968, Nakamura wrote his Japanese version of what was later published as *Gotama Buddha, A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts*.[910] This title itself is very telling: it reveals Nakamura's concern in presenting **the historical Buddha** against centuries of Mahāyāna constructions and reconstructions of strange new Eternal Buddhas and exotic Cosmic Bodhisattvas. It was no less than an admirable and unparalleled quest for the historical Buddha and a deep respect for early Buddhism.

19.5 THE INEVITABILITY OF CRITICAL BUDDHISM

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[906] H Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism.* Osaka: KUFS Publications, 1980.

[907] The general structure of Nakamura's book follows the order of texts in the Taishō Tripiṭaka, and might be considered an abridged summary of its contents. As for East Asian presuppositions, Lusthaus (1997:412 n6) cited this example: "The term *cittamātra* originally meant that Citta (Mind) is the basis of all phenomena, but in later days it was equated with the concept of *vijñaptimātratā*" (1980:363). Nakamura's historical sequence, Lusthaus noted, is backwards, but this reversal was the assumption of *dhātu-vāda* ideologues since the mid-Tang dynasty.

[908] Nakamura (1980:346 @ 34) cites, eg, WANG Pachow's strong criticism of early Chin trs of the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta,* in his contemporary Chinese tr, 南伝大般涅槃経 *nán yún dà nièpán jīng,* The Southern School Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (台北慧炬出版社，中華民国六十一年元旦刊行, Taipei: Huiju Publishing, New Year's Day, 61st year of the ROC = 1983): 所以初期的漢記經典頗不易誌，若無注疏則了解実難。其最劣者是有失原意，不為無益，反而有害 ("Hence, the early classical Chinese translations are not easy to understand, and where there is no commentary, it will be difficult to understand. Worst of all is that it loses the (text's) original intention: it is not only useless, but it is harmful.") See also Lusthaus 1997:32 n9, see 412 n8.

[909] This is most evident in his treatment of Yogācāra materials (chs 17.B and C) and *tathāgata-garbha* texts (ch 16.M), but this bias intrudes throughout his text. (Lusthaus 1997:33 n9, see 412 n9)

[910] Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha, A biography based on the most reliable texts* [1968, Jap; 2nd ed 1991. Eng tr G Sekimori, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing: vol 1 2000, vol 2 2005.]

19.5.1 Dan Lusthaus, a Buddhist studies scholar specializing in Yogācāra, in his essay, "Critical Buddhism and returning to the sources" (1997), zestfully asserted that Critical Buddhism was <u>inevitable</u>. He explains: "*Inevitable* means that the causes and conditions that gave rise to Critical Buddhism can be analyzed and understood to show that it has a context, a history, and a necessity. Critical Buddhism is necessary. Thinking about what arises through causes and conditions, especially in terms of how that impacts on cultural and social realities, is a principal component of both Critical Buddhism and Buddhism properly practiced."[911]

Critical Buddhism, notes Lusthaus, arose from a convergence of **two inevitabilities**. The first is the prevailing sentiment over the last few decades that Buddhism, particularly East Asian Buddhism, and especially Japanese Zen, had become <u>deficient in the area of ethics</u>: they had become worldly and immoral in many ways.[912] Conferences were held and papers written decrying this deficiency, and various proposals were made for its remedy. In Japan, Buddhist insensitivity to the plight of minorities and the oppressed, and other lapses of strong ethical leadership, had raised questions in the public mind regarding the ethical backbone and vision of some Buddhist sects.[913]

19.5.2 The 2nd inevitability, according to Lusthaus [19.5.1], more far-reaching in terms of general Buddhist history, came from the growing attention Japanese Buddhist scholars paid to Sanskrit and Tibetan materials in the 19th century. Such studies forced a re-evaluation of the East Asian sources and traditions. East Asian scholars, most especially Japanese scholars, had <u>re-discovered India and the Indian materials</u>, albeit sometimes in their extant Tibetan versions.[914]

At the very least, these discoveries had dramatically recontextualized the East Asian understanding of India, leading to a questioning of age-old traditional East Asian assumptions about, first, what was happening in India before and during the transmission of Buddhism to China. Until the 20th century, there had been virtually no interest whatsoever on the part of Korean or Japanese Buddhists concerning Indian or non-East Asian Buddhist developments subsequent to the Song dynasty (960-1279) in China. A second result of these discoveries was that there is a questioning of the traditional ways in which the East Asian traditions had anchored themselves to Indian Buddhism.

All this prepared the fertile ground from which Critical Buddhism arose and flourished. It was like a newborn nebula exploding, showing that Japanese Buddhism is struggling to evolve with renewed spirit that is authentically the Buddha's teaching, not merely Buddhisms imagined or dictated by sophists and scholars. As flies were we to them, who, like gods, sport with us for their profit—no more.

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[911] Lusthaus 1997:30.

[912] Ethical issues with Japanese Buddhism prob were already present from the Heian period, when it rose in power [1.15.1.2]. For an important example of Chinese Buddhist ethical acuity from as late as the Yüan dynasty, see Sechin Jagchid, "The Mongol Khans and Chinese Buddhism and Taoism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2 1979:7-28.

[913] As an example, Lusthaus points out that in Kamakura-Edo eras, certain temples, called *enkiri-dera*, acted as sanctuaries for abused women, and offered the only means by which women could divorce their husbands, ie, by serving as nuns for 3 years. The most famous of these temples was Tōkei-ji in Kamakura. The *enkiri-dera* institution was abolished in the Meiji period. In contrast, in the mid-1980s a substantial number of women from Thailand and the Philippines were brought to Japan, under false pretexts, to serve as prostitutes. Some Thai women sought sanctuary in a Buddhist temple, but they were refused refuge or assistance. Some of the Philippine women, who were Christian, sought assistance from a Christian organization, which actively took up their cause. This eventually led to a number of Thai as well as Philippine women being returned to their homelands. The Japanese public is aware of these events. (1997:411 n2, slightly abridged).

[914] Lusthaus noted that many Western scholars and their Japanese counterparts (incl Hakamaya) had spent time in each others' country and exchanged ideas. While Western scholarship played a role in Japanese study and deepening appreciation of Indian and Tibetan sources, Japanese scholarship had dominated the field. It is not uncommon for Western scholars of East Asian Buddhism to have learned and relied on Japanese scholarship for their own understanding of Indian precedents to East Asian developments, and these were presented to their Western students; thus, in effect, transmitting the traditional "misinformation" presupposed in East Asia. Nonetheless, Buddhist studies became increasingly an international effort. (1997:411 n3).

19.6 JAPANESE BUDDHIST AESTHETICS CONTRA SUZUKI

19.6.1 D T Suzuki makes an interesting distinction between "ascetic aestheticism" and "Zen aestheticism" [19.3.2]. By "ascetic aestheticism" Suzuki surely means **early Buddhist aesthetics**; at least, that is the sense, we shall work with. In characteristic triumphalist tone, Suzuki claims that it's nothing like "Zen aestheticism." Many of us would at once think of a "Zen garden," an open space meant for peaceful contemplation. More correctly, it is *karesansui,* 枯山水, **a Japanese dry garden**, first created in the temples of Kyoto during the Muromachi period (1336-1573). It is usually meant to be seen while seated from a single viewpoint outside the garden, such as the porch of the *hojo,* the abbot's residence. Dark sand or plain gravel is used, instead of sand, for a practical reason: rain is less likely to mess up the gravel.

   Then, there is **the Japanese tea ceremony** (茶道, *sadō* or *chadō,* "the way of tea" or, more fully, 茶の 湯, *cha no yu*). It is a ceremonial, time-consuming (lasting up to 4 hours), way of preparing and drinking green tea, typically in a traditional tearoom with tatami[915] floor. Beyond just serving and receiving tea, one of the main purposes of the tea ceremony is for the guests to enjoy the hospitality of the host in an atmosphere of relaxed calm and cheerfulness. The process can be formal (properly done in polite attentive silence and no smart phones), consuming much more time than a chat over a usual cup of tea. It arose during the Muromachi era, a time of widespread unrest to provide a brief break from the incessant fighting. Hence, we can see it as a kind of class ritual, although it is often performed for the benefit of tourists.

19.6.2 In early Buddhism, **a garden** (*uyyāna*), **park** (*ārāma*) and **grove** (*vana*) are terms for a monastic dwelling, for peaceful solitary living and practice, with space for communal gatherings for Dharma instructions and sangha acts (like the Pātimokkha recital and the admission of renunciants). The Japanese dry garden is basically a space of ascetic beauty, as well as a showpiece of status for the temple's abbot.

   Tea was probably known to the Indians of the Buddha's time, and its consumption was well documented in China. Tea-planting probably originated in the hilly regions of southwest of China (Yunnan) and the northern parts of Thailand, Myanmar and Assam.[916] The early Chinese Buddhists drank tea to warm and refresh themselves.

   In 754, a Chinese monk named *Jiàn zhēn* (鑑真 *ganjin,* 688-673) arrived in Japan, bringing with him a variety of medicines which included turmeric, cloves, fennel, sandalwood, sugar, and tea seeds. The tea was planted in the Tōshīdai-ji in Nara, where he founded the Ritsu (Vinaya school).

Some 5 centuries later, Eisai (1141-1215), the founder of Rinzai Zen, brought tea seeds from China and planted them in Kozanji temple at Togano, near Kyoto. The tea plants that flourished there became known as *hon-cha* 本茶 "true or original tea." He wrote a book on tea, 喫茶養生記 *kissa yōjōki* (*Drinking tea for health*) and is regarded as the father of Japanese tea culture.[917] The small tea plantation which resulted from his gift was managed by the Imperial officer in charge of medicines. In those days, tea was strictly limited to the ceremonial and medicinal use of the elite.

19.6.3 On a deeper cultural level, then, Japanese aesthetics comprises of the 3 classical arts of refinement, that is, *kadō* (華道 the way of flowers), *chadō* (茶道 the way of tea) and *kōdō* (香道 the way of fragrance or incense). **Flowers** and **incense**, as we know, are the most common offerings at a Buddhist shrine, not only because of their beauty and fragrance, but also because they reflect the natural truth of impermanence and moral virtue.

   Japanese flower arrangement, also called *ikebana* (生け花 or 活け花 "bringing flowers to life"). The roots of *ikebana* go back to the Heian period (794-1185), when the aristocracy was in the habit of viewing and appreciating flowers during the 4 seasons. Flower arrangement was a refined art amongst the Bud-

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[915] Tatami flooring is traditionally woven with rush grass and rice straw, but modern materials used incl wood chips and polystyrene foam.

[916] V Mair & E Hoh, *The True History of Tea,* Thames & Hudson, 2012:21.

[917] H Dumoulin, *History of Zen Buddhism* [1959], Random House, 1963:141.

dhist monks of ancient China. Japanese monks brought its crude elements into Japan, where it grew into an important pillar of Japanese aesthetics.

The principles of **Japanese aesthetics** comprise a set of ancient ideals that include *wabi* 侘 (transient and stark beauty), *sabi* (寂 the beauty of aging and natural patina), and *yugen* (profound grace and subtle-ty).[918] ***Wabi*** refers to the beauty in *things whose beauty emerges from age*. It refers to the patina of decay, and the concept that changes due to use may make an object more beautiful and valuable. This also incorporates an appreciation of the cycles of life, as well as careful, artful mending of damage.

More commonly, in traditional Japanese aesthetics, we see the dvandva, **wabi-sabi** (侘寂), that is, *a world view centred on the acceptance of transience and imperfection*. Basically, this is a kind of equanimity towards life that appreciates beauty not only in what is *impermanent,* but what appears *imperfect*, *incomplete,* or even *broken*. This last aspect is expressed in ***kintsugi*** 金継ぎ (golden joinery) the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold. It reflects patience with lack, learning from failure, and creating from these a piece of beautiful work reflecting strength and value.

19.6.4 These threefold aspects of Japanese aesthetics are concepts derived from the Buddhist teaching of **the 3 universal characteristics** (三法印, *sanbōin;* P *ti,lakkhaṇa*), that is, impermanence (無常, *mujō*), suffering (苦 *ku*), and emptiness or absence of self-nature (空 *kū*), that is, nonself in early Buddhism.[919] It is from these 3 characteristics that **the values** of life and living arise, from which we derive "the golden rule" as the foundation for Buddhist morality.

We can thus see how Japanese aesthetics—like early Buddhist aesthetics—is rooted in **the value of life** reflected in the 3 universal characteristics: all things are *impermanent, unsatisfactory and nonself*. Life is precious because it is very brief. During our brief window of life, we should be diligent in worthily living **happily** here and now. Just as we do not want or like to be hurt, others feel the same way; thus, we should not take any **liberty** with them. There is nothing abiding in life, not even our mind: it is a sensing process that keeps us in a loop of beastly habits. On the other hand, the discerning mind can know and see **truth** and reality, which **frees** us from that endless loop, breaking away into spiritual freedom.

Hence, in early Buddhist aesthetics, it (aesthetics) goes intimately with moral virtue (*sīla*). There is no aesthetics without morality, no beauty without truth. Buddhist aesthetics is the harmony of beauty with truth[920] in our Dharma practice and experience, reflected in our daily lives. **Aesthetics** is the joy of truth and beauty of life wholesomely well lived. [19.3.2]

19.7 AFTER THE STORM

19.7.1 The excitement of Critical Buddhism may seem to be over, but its significance remains with us. The seeds of Buddhist reforms in Japan, or worldwide—like Luther's reforms against the Roman Church—remain to be seen. Such an event usually takes a longer time for Buddhism, but it will happen. Buddhism must reform itself, or it will die a slow and silent death, from a cancer, where a cult or culture saps our resources and goodness. This reform starts with us, at the individual.

What is the meaning and purpose of Critical Buddhism? By **meaning** here is meant why Critical Buddhism arose: Lusthaus noticed that it was "inevitable" [19.5.1]. Like water, finding its own level, the thinking and concerned Buddhist elite of Japan were certain as to the disadvantages that Buddhism faced after the Meiji reforms. **Purpose** refers to how Hakamaya, Matsumoto and others worked with Critical Buddhism to counter the condition for those disadvantages.

19.7.2 Just as in the 12th century, when the Muslim Turks invaded India and exterminated Buddhism for their wealth and false teachings, in Japan, the powerful Mahāyāna elites since the Heian period, had built up their unwholesome worldly karma that fruited in their devastating persecution during the Meiji era. In

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[918] https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/japanese-aesthetics/.
[919] On the 3 characteristics, see SD 1.2 (2); SD 18.2 (2.2).
[920] On beauty and truth, see SD 40a.1 (8.1.2); SD 46.5 (2.4.2).

the past, much of the Mahāyāna elite were against the "inferior vehicle" (*hīna,yāna*), and with Critical Buddhism, the tables were turned against them. Their bad karma had come home to roost, as it were.

This is a Buddhist way of seeing Buddhist developments in Japan. It would be profitless for scholars to see the situation this way, unless they really cared about Buddhism (like Hakamaya and Matsumoto). Most scholars would not really care about what happens to Buddhism, even early Buddhism. They were more interested in theories, controversies, even corruptions in Buddhism rather than what is right and noble in it. To use a bizarre comparison, we may imagine such scholars to be like scientists who were only interested in the disease and how germs were infecting and killing a village of people, instead of giving them the medicine or care to cure themselves, and preventing a reoccurrence of the outbreak.

19.7.3 Dōgen specialist **Carl Bielefeldt**, despite his lack of interest in Critical Buddhism, makes an interesting observation regarding how Critical Buddhism tended to reject most texts of Buddhist traditions that rejected early Buddhism, and to label those who accepted such texts as being "non-Buddhist." He speaks of this as "the 'Protestantization' of the dharma that weeds out the rich overgrowth of art and literature, myth and ritual, and in the process cuts off most possibilities for being Buddhist."[921]

Bielefeldt makes a good point here, which I have elaborated on below under "Ecumenism" [20.2]. Scholars tend to use long difficult terms for things they disagree on, or which is not in their interest (or not professionally profitable). The veridicality or usefulness of a term like Protestantization [1.1.4] depend on how we use it and its contexts. They also tend to be "fashionable": they would often be forgotten or rejected by new generations of scholars. With this understanding, we use them while they are current or help us to consolidate a point.

The term "**Protestant Buddhism**" [7.1. f] was first used in the sense of "modernization" by scholars to refer to innovations and revisions made by some elite monks in Sri Lanka, who, having pushed aside the Vinaya, became so secularized that they realized (like the Zen masters who pushed aside the suttas) [19], that they now needed to find some other ways of legitimizing themselves. They resorted to academic qualifications to gain a respectable status and steady wages, and to attract the support and patronage of affluent Buddhists. Some became political, even promoting political violence.[922]

Another strategy (used by the more traditionally inclined monks) was to promote the apotropaic (protective) or magical aspects of Buddhism, such as "blessings," "blessed threads," "transference of merits," and so on. This strategy is not "Protestant," but the explanations or excuses for these lucrative rituals tend to be modernist, especially that of "faith" (as found in Protestant Christianity).

Critical Buddhism, however, is "Protestant" in the sense that their reformers were visionary and courageous in standing up against the huge majority of Mahāyāna Buddhists of Japan and learned scholars (especially from the West)—just as German priest Martin Luther (1483-1586), a former Augustinian friar, stood up against the powerful, ruthless Roman Church, and inspired a great reform in Christianity. This is the vision and courage of those who love their religion, who want to return to the spirituality of the founder of their faith.

19.7.4 Scholars like Hakamaya and Matsumoto saw themselves as being <u>more than scholars</u>: they were Buddhists; they wished to see Buddhism rightly prosper, at least not misrepresented. More than that, they were dedicated, generous and courageous enough to stand up for Buddhism in a way most scholars would not even dare to think about. These scholars of Critical Buddhism showed both love for Buddhism and for society. Hence, Critical Buddhism, embarrassing as it might be for those who only watched and studied for professional profit, is about Buddhism everywhere, both ethnic Buddhists and convert Buddhists, in Asia and outside of Asia.

In the final analysis, Critical Buddhism is about scholars who care about Buddhism, who live Buddhism, rather than being merely scholars who care only for their profession and paycheck, to whom Buddh-

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[921] Bielefeldt, "Buddha nature, Buddha practice: Reflections on Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō,*" 1998 [SD Guide sv]. https://www.upaya.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Buddha-Nature-Buddha-Practice-Bielefeldt.pdf.
[922] See eg The darker side of Buddhism - BBC News.

ism is just a cash cow or some specimen for study, some "other" whose vicissitudes do not concern them: after all, it is their neighbour's house that is on fire, and they are merely observers watching from a safe distance.

We deeply respect those scholars who study Buddhism and love it, too. Then, there are those who study, explain and write about Buddhism but don't really care about it otherwise. They are scholars who behave like royalty, seeing us as plebs, although most of them are not even Buddhist. There are scholars who are humble and friendly in learning who become a beautiful part of our lives forever.

Critical Buddhism basically asks us: do you love Buddhism or not? We *cannot* not love music and call ourselves musicians.

20 Vital conclusions (thus far)

20.1 MYTHOLOGY

20.1.1 Before we close this chapter on Buddhism and modernism, we should spend some time reflecting on a few key lessons we can and should learn from Critical Buddhism and its critics. I shall only make a few concluding remarks on **mythology** here; then, on Buddhist ecumenism [20.2], and on "spiritual scholarship" [20.5]. I have written quite a bit on Buddhist mythology, and it's best (for a bigger picture) that these are read first before going further.[923]

Psychologically, we should see that whatever is taught by the Buddha in a conventional way, using worldly conventions (human, deva, animals, beings who are named, cultural and social objects and ways, stories, literary tropes, and so on) as "**mythical**." They are implicit teachings (*neyy'attha*) whose sense and import must be unravelled and connected with other teachings, especially the explicit teachings (*nīt'-attha*), for a bigger and clearer picture of the Buddha's teaching.

Psychologically, this is what happens when we "**demythologize**" conventional (literary, social and cultural) teachings and ideas. "What do I *think* of this?" we must ask ourself. What comes to mind are likely to be assumptions, even projections; but we must move on from there. These are merely our views; they are all *provisional.* We apply them to other teachings of the Buddha, both implicit and explicit, and carefully study what we see before us.

Every time we make a connection, as it were, a mental synapse sparks: let them keep on sparking and light up our mind; we will then see the bigger and clearer picture. There is no place for religious dogma or scholarly hubris here: this is the heart of wisdom. With every beat, it pumps and drives the living blood of knowledge and insight into true reality. What we see often leaves us speechless (since it is a personal experience), and humbly joyful at seeing a universally bigger truth and reality than ourself.

20.1.2 A **myth**, then, is what we can imagine but have not personally experienced; it is a vision of bigger things, the bigger picture. A myth helps our imagination grow; it must grow beyond the horizon of present knowing. This imagination is that hill we climb to see the other side, a tool we use to know and see better, bigger, farther, clearer. To imagine, then, is to free our mind to think beyond the self, to imagine possibilities, to feel our whole being. Since these are mostly speculative, we must not hold on to any of them, lest we lose this freedom to see beyond our present limitations.

So long as we have not personally experienced something—be it heaven, or Pure Land, or nirvana—it is just a **belief**. Insofar as such a belief moves us to act wholesomely in body, speech and mind, it is to that extent wholesome, good karma, but our delusion and ignorance of what that end-state really is remains (since we have yet to attain it). As our understanding of this wholesomeness that we generate and enjoy gives us a bigger and clearer picture, as our self-made clouds of ignorance and mists of delusions clear up, we begin to better understand *why* we believe in such a heaven, Pure Land or nirvana.

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[923] On Buddhist mythology, see **Myth in Buddhism**, esp SD 36.1 (1.0). On a psychology of mythology; **The miraculous Life of Gotama Buddha**, SD 52.1; SD 2.19 (1); SD 51.11)3.1.1); SD 57.10 (5.4.1.1). For further readings, see DEB: mythology, Buddhist.

For a seed to grow, the shoot must break through the seed-coat, the soil and the ground above it. For the plant to grow and flower, it must be grounded and accept the light. For the flower to seed, it must wither away. Every growing stage is a renunciation of what it was. This is how we grow spiritually by re-nouncing each and every view for a better one, until we gain clear sight, which brighten into insight into true reality.

This is also a helpful hint on how we can understand our beliefs and the views of others; this is the spirit of **intra-Buddhist dialogue**. This is family members speaking to one another in a loving and whole-some manner. This may be harder than it seems: we may often find it easier to chat with friends than with relatives: this is **interfaith dialogue**. Then, we should imagine how open and joyful we were with others, and now let us be open and joyful with our own relatives.

20.2 DIALOGUE AND ECUMENISM

20.2.1 Roman Catholic cleric and theologian, **Joseph S O'Leary**, in closing his paper, "The hermeneutics of Critical Buddhism," writes magnanimously in the spirit of interfaith ecumenism:

Rather than insist on orthodoxy in a condemnatory style, or dismiss it as an irrelevance (Grego-ry),[924] what is needed is **a Buddhist ecumenism**, in which critical debate between the various styles of the religion is reopened, allowing the Indian sources to challenge anew the Sinitic tradi-tions, but also allowing these traditions a critical voice, so that no tradition is allowed to bask complacently in its own truth but is consigned instead to constant dialogal [sic] give and take with the others. Such a hermeneutic will expect to find within Zen and within Tathāgatagarbha thought a recurrence of the constant battle between enlightened insight into dependent co-arising and the temptation of substantialism (which includes the hardening of Buddhist wisdom into a view). The critical vision will ramify as it lodges intimately in the traditions it engages. The bodhi tree, instead of being lopped, will be rerooted in truly open dialogue between the mutually interdependent and dependently co-arisen traditions, which have served over centuries as effective channels of bodhi.

(O'Leary 1998:293; highlighted)

20.2.2 When the Roman Church was at the height of its power, and even today, it sees itself as God's representative on earth: this is a licence to do whatever it pleases. Since the purpose of religious power is to dominate, the Church tried to dominate the world: this was the colonial period in our world history [1.2.1]. When most of northern Europe turned away from the corrupt Roman Church in the 16th century, it realized that war and domination only made Europe—from the dawn of the Renaissance and rise of modern learning—turn away from Rome.

The Catholic Church, having lost much of its power and influence in Europe, wherein it arose, was long infected with the growing cancer of human frailties, even devouring its own offspring, like the old gods of Greek mythology.[925] It is now desperately working for the "reunion" of all Christians, but the exu-berant spirit following Vatican II has been tempered, even dampened. Sober minds realize that the road to full unity will be long and arduous. One of the principal ecclesiological tasks is to discern the relation-ship between the Churches, and even non-Christian religious groups such as Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. In important ways, this sentiment also reflects the concern of every world religion.

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[924] Peter N Gregory, "Is Critical Buddhism really critical?" in (edd) Hubbard & Swanson, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree,* 1997:286-297.

[925] Hesiod's *Theogony* (c 730-700 BCE) records an ancient Greek myth about how Cronus envied the power of his own father, Uranus, the ruler of the universe. Cronus overthrew his father and became King, he learned from Gaia and Uranus (his parents) that he would himself be overthrown by his own children. As a result, although he sired the gods Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades and Poseidon, by Rhea, he devoured them all as soon as they were born to prevent the prophecy. When the 6th child, Zeus, was born, Rhea sought Gaia to devise a plan to save them and to punish Cronus for his acts against his father and children. In due course, Zeus deposed Cronus and the reign of the new gods started.

20.2.3 To Christians, especially the Catholics, **the ultimate goal** of ecumenism (traditionally spelled oecumenism), is "the recognition of sacramental validity, eucharistic sharing, and the reaching of full communion between different Christian denominations."[926] In simple terms, this means that the worship rituals they perform and participate in are commonly accepted; that they stand in worship before the same God; and that they are socially and spiritually unified as One Church. [20.4.2]

First of all, it should be understood that ecumenism is not a noble vision that all religious people, or even those with the same religion or "confession," share. In fact, most traditional Catholics—such as the Society of Saint Pius X, the Society of Saint Pius V, the Congregation of Mary Immaculate, the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and so on—are almost universally opposed to ecumenism with other faith groups.

Critics in the Catholic church are often critical of Vatican II (1962-65) documents that promote ecumenism, such as *Nostra aetate* ("in our time"; which reveres the work of God in all the major faith traditions")[927] and *Unitatis redintegratio* ("restoration of unity"),[928] that is, the reunification of the Christian Church(es). Catholic opponents to ecumenism often cite preceding papal documents such as Pope Pius XI's *Mortalium Animos* (1928; upholding traditional Catholic Doctrine of an already unified Church), that the Unity of the Church has not been achieved as a false opinion.

"[T]he Apostolic See," pontificates Pius, "cannot on any terms take part in [non-Catholic] assemblies, nor is it anyway lawful for Catholics either to support or to work for such enterprises; for if they do so they will be giving countenance to a false Christianity, quite alien to the one Church of Christ. Shall we suffer, what would indeed be iniquitous, the truth, and a truth divinely revealed, to be made a subject for compromise? For here there is the question of defending revealed truth."[929] Then, there is the exclusivist Church teaching of *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* ("outside the Church there is no salvation"), or that salvation can only be found in the church.[930]

In short, the obstacles to ecumenism are not so much the differences of the Church with other religions, as it is more amongst the Church leaders, theologians and the Pope themselves who are grandly creating their profoundly divisive statements in their God's name. They are increasingly burdened by failures, clutching at the straws of apologetics and apologies. The point is clear: institutional religion cannot even help itself; how can it help others?[931]

20.2.4 A third aspect of Critical Buddhism is a fierce denunciation of Buddhist schools, thinkers, and social programmes that are based on the triumphalism inherent in a doctrine of ineffable truth, and which support the status quo and perpetuate social injustice. Hakamaya and Matsumoto are especially concerned with the role of Buddhist doctrine in various forms of Japanese nationalism and, as *ordained Zen clerics* teaching at Zen universities, they single out their own **Sōtō Zen** teachings for particular criticism.

For example, they questioned how the founder Dōgen (1200-1253) has been interpreted within the Sōtō school and about the proper role of theology within academic as well as sectarian practice. They

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[926] W A Norgren & William G Rusch, *"Toward Full Communion" and "Concordat of Agreement": Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue, Series III*, Wipf & Stock Publishers, 10 Sep 2001:14.

[927] Cyndi Nienhaus, Cyndi, <u>*ERIC EJ1016112: Nostra Aetate and the Religious Literacy of Catholic Students*</u>, 2013: 67, 73.

[928] Walter Kaspar, 11 Nov 2004, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/card-kasper-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20041111_kasper-ecumenism_en.html.

[929] http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius11/p11morta.htm.

[930] (Edd) O O Espin & J B Nickoloff, <u>*An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies*</u>, Liturgical Press, 2007:439. J Pohle, "Religious Toleration." T*he Catholic Encyclopedia* vol 14, 1912.

[931] If not for the Church at cross-purposes, involving Matteo Ricci, the Catholic orders and the Pope himself, much of China would today have been Catholic: Reflection R670 (2020: Revisioning Buddhism 265), http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/R670-200819-Free-Buddhism-RB-265.pdf.

have also written about Hōnen (1133-1212), Shinran (1173-1263), Myo-e (1173-1232), the Kyoto School, and others, as well as critiquing the ideal of objective academic scholarship in the study of Buddhism.[932]

20.3 DIALOGUE: INTERFAITH, INTRAFAITH

20.3.1 Interfaith dialogue, then, is a necessary straw-clutch friendliness towards other religions (or none) because we see our own faith failing miserably or significantly weakened, and that there is goodness in other faiths that could benefit ours. On a grander human scale, we should see interfaith dialogue as inviting and inspiring those of other faiths to taste living goodness of our own faith [12.1.8.3]. Many religionists, despite their faith (perhaps even because of it), have been attracted to some aspect of Buddhism, to which they dedicate their minds and hearts.

20.3.2 In Sri Lanka, British administrator and orientalist George Turnour (1799-1843) edited the Mahā-vaṁsa (vol 1, 1836). Methodist missionaries Daniel John Gogerly (1792-1862) and Robert Spence Hardy (1803-1868)[933] represented "a turning-point in the British study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka because they went beyond oral sources and secondary accounts to a systematic and sustained study of the Pali and Sinhala texts. The work that resulted, although led by a proselytizing agenda, provided the first comprehensive translations of Buddhist texts into English. To this extent, they went beyond their missionary remit."[934]

Catholics who have contributed excellent pioneering studies in Buddhist history, literature and philosophy include Bigandet, Lamotte, Dumoulin and Perniola.[935] Joseph O'Leary's magnanimously experienced remarks, in his *Reality Itself* (2019), a comparative study of Christianity and Buddhism, in the spirit of religion as reality, is worth contemplating on:

> Buddhism stands before the Western philosophical tradition as a powerful challenger, and that what Buddhism means in philosophical terms has not yet been deciphered. The Buddha does not confront philosophers [and one might add, scholars] directly, and indeed turns his back on them, for their concern is not a single-minded quest for salvation but a disinterested and pluralistic searching after truth practiced for its own sake, and not massive cosmic truth either, but more often local micro-truths established by arguments of limited scope.
>
> Clarifying the philosophical presuppositions and implications of Buddhism, its understanding of being, knowledge, mind, consciousness, and truth, may be a prerequisite of any lucid Christian-Buddhist dialogue and could give new animation and purpose to an interreligious venture that currently seems to be floundering or to be running out of steam. But the challenge of Buddhism to philosophy is far more varied than this concern. It is the challenge to open up our traditional styles of philosophical thought to the unfamiliar Buddhist styles, looking for points of pregnant affinity or subversive contrast that can launch an adventure of thought across cultures, which would be a truly philosophical experience and not merely a clumsy diplomatic embrace.
>
> (J S O'Leary, *Reality Itself*, Nagoya, 2019:7 f)

20.3.3 Most Buddhist groups, especially the affluent New Religions of Japan and the USA (including the Zen groups) often have friendly dialogues in forums, even in social work programmes with members of <u>other religions</u>. Spiritual dialogue must go beyond the promoting of Buddhism in some borrowed light of renowned scholars and clumsy diplomatic hugs. As the Buddhist faith, we must grow beyond what wealth and power ever gave: we must bow together before the Buddha as a Buddhist family. [20.4]

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[932] For a list and summaries of essays by Japanese scholars on Critical Buddhism, see Swanson 1993.

[933] The Wesleyan missionary R Spence Hardy (1803-1868) wrote on Sinhala Buddhism: *Eastern Monachism,* London, 1850; *Manual of Buddhism in its Modern Development,* London, 1853; *The Legends and Theories of the Buddhists,* London, 1866. See also P Hedges, "Towards an Anglican theology of Buddhism," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 26,2, 2016: 37-56.

[934] E J Harris, *Theravāda Buddhist and the British Encounter,* Routledge, 2006:62-75 (ch 6).

[935] Paul A Bigandet, Etienne Lamotte, Heinrich Dumoulin, Vito Perniola, J O'Leary: [1.6.3.3].

What we need today is **intra-Buddhist dialogue**, where Buddhists from different denominations would converse to build bridges over the troubled waters of sectarian teachings. Such intra-Buddhist dialogues should build a sense of **Buddhist ecumenism**, a universal Buddhist community, a spiritual family rooted in the same ancestry that goes back to the historical Buddha himself. The Buddha has, in **the Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25) laid down the principles of such a dialogue: our purpose should be:
• not to win pupils;
• not to make anyone fall from their rules;
• not to make anyone lose their livelihood;
• not convert anyone to the unwholesome;
• not to separate anyone from the wholesome.

Our common purpose as Buddhists should be that of the abandoning of unwholesome states that are "conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in the future, connected with birth, decay and death." By abandoning the defiled states and purifying the mind by our direct knowledge, we "will realize, here and now, the bounty of the accomplishment of wisdom."[936] [11.4.4]

Technically, what divides the different Buddhist sects is communion: their ordination differs from that of the Theravāda, that is, the Pali tradition.[937] The spirit of the Buddha's proclamation in the Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta is that even with our different communions, we should work with the common or overlapping Buddhist teachings that is the spiritual blood that runs in all of us as Buddhists, as **a family**. [20.4.3]

20.4 COMMUNION AND ECUMENISM

20.4.1 Definition of ecumenism

20.4.1.1 Communion is a vitally important term in both Christianity and Buddhism. In Christianity, as Holy Communion, it is the Eucharist ("thanksgiving"), commemorating Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. It is the central act of Christian faith and worship, and is practised in some form by most Christians. Broadly, communion refers to a body of Christians having a common faith and discipline (such as the Anglican communion); in terms of spiritual practice, this means "discipleship." In this sense, all believers are "members" of the Church or Christ's Body.

In early Buddhism, communion (*saṁvāsa*) is a central monastic term referring to properly ordained renunciants (monks and nuns) who observe the Vinaya and practise the Dharma. The ritual of ordination does not confer "communion" upon the renunciant, but is a public testimony, with the monks (and nuns) as witnesses of the sincere aspiration of the candidate to renounce for the sake of "driving out" (*nissaraṇa*) suffering by attaining the path (at least as a streamwinner) in this life itself. A renunciant who does not keep to the Vinaya (such as breaking any of the 4 "defeat" or *pārājika* rules) [15.2.2], or exploits sangha life as a "retirement plan" [4.1.2], which renders such a renunciation as wrong livelihood [2.1.4.5 f], automatically (karmically) deprives that monk or nun of *communion* (not to mention creating bad karma)*.*

20.4.1.2 In a practical sense, so long as a renunciant upholds the Dharma-Vinaya, he or she is in communion, a living part of the monastic sangha, also known as the "**conventional sangha**" (*sammuti saṅgha*), since it comprises both those on the path of awakening and "outsiders" (those not on the path). In contrast, according to **the Dve,māṭikā.pāḷi**,[938] there is the "sangha worthy of the teacher's gifts" (*dakkhiṇeyya saṅgha*), that is, the sangha of noble disciples (*ariya,puggala*).

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[936] D 25,23.2 (SD 1.4).

[937] Theravāda, as a school, is itself late, with its ethnic versions burdened with revisions and additions. Its Pali *kamma,vācā*, the ordination text, is the oldest valid ordination procedure there is.

[938] A late Pali composition, made in Burma, from the Pali texts, containing both the Bhikkhu Pātimokkha and the Bhikkhuṇī Pātimokkha, and extracts from the Parivāra (Vinaya vol 6) and other Vinaya texts. It is incl in the Burmese

The **spiritual sangha** of noble disciples comprises the streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats. They are those who are on the path of awakening, and those who have attained nirvana; hence, we can rightly call them *magga saṅgha*, the community of those on the path of awakening. These saints of the path comprise both the monastic renunciants and the laity, male and female. Theirs is **the true communion** (*ariya saṁvāsa*) in the Dharma.

20.4.2 Ecumenism: 3 levels

20.4.2.1 Ecumenism, as religious cooperation in the broadest sense [20.2], can occur on at least 3 levels: intrafaith ecumenism, interdenominational ecumenism and interfaith ecumenism.[939] **Intrafaith ecumenisn** refers to initiatives aimed at greater religious cooperation within the same faith, Church or sect. A good local example is that of the Theravada Buddhist Council of Malaysia (TBCM), representing 23 Theravada organizations (Thai, Burmese, Sinhalese and Malaysian) from 9 Malaysian states.[940]

Although there are Theravada temples in Singapore, these are all foreign ethnic missions, basically promoting their own cultural Buddhisms. The only truly local Buddhist organization is that of the Singapore Buddhist Federation (SBF), but it is dominated by the Chinese Mahāyāna clergy who understandably see themselves as the country's highest and only Buddhist authority, whose avowed aim is "to unify all Buddhist institutions and Buddhists in Singapore," that is, be the spokesman for all Singapore Buddhists.[941] Technically, the SBF is an example of **interdenominational ecumenism**, since they encompass both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna traditions. [2.0.1.2]

20.4.2.2 Ecumenism, historically started with the Christian communities, referring to initiatives aimed at greater religious co-operation, among different groups, especially and primarily within the Christian faith. The "Ecumenical Movement" came to prominence in the 20th century as a coalition of like-minded groups seeking to restore religious fellowship that had been lost with the fragmentation of the Church into different groups.

Historically, the term "**ecumenical**" was originally used in the context of large ecumenical councils that were organized under the auspices of Roman Emperors to clarify matters of Christian theology and doctrine. These "Ecumenical Councils" brought together bishops from around the inhabited world (οἰκουμένη) as they knew it at the time. Thus, the modern meaning of the world "ecumenical" and "ecumenism" derives from this pre-modern sense of Christian unity, and the impulse to recreate this unity again.

The largest and most successful of the Christian ecumenical efforts is **the World Council of Churches** (WCC), which was formed with its 1st Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, with 147 member churches. Its membership now (2022 stands at 352 member churches, representing over 580 million Christians. Predominantly Protestant and Western in its earliest years, the WCC's profile and identity evolved during the 1960s with the influx of many Orthodox churches from the East and newly autonomous churches from formerly colonial regions in the South. The 2nd Vatican Council greatly improved relations with the WCC and Roman Catholics. The WCC holds its assemblies every 6-8 years.[942]

20.4.2.3 Christian **interdenominational ecumenism** is growing in SE Asia. In **Malaysia** (and SE Asia), the Catholic Church is the oldest and largest Christian church. Protestant missions arrived in the 19th century. The Anglicans, which are part of the Province of South East Asia, are the largest Protestant Church, followed by the Methodist Church of Malaysia. There are several active Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. The Council of Churches is the ecumenical body.

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ed of **Kaṅkhā,vitarṇī Pātimokkha,vaṇṇana** (Pātimokkha comy), 1968:1-36 (Pātimokkha,sutta). See M Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma,* London: Royal Asiatic Soc, 1909:6 n2.

[939] Peter C Phan, *Christianity and the Wider Ecumenism,* NY: Paragon House, 1990. Also https://www.scu.edu/media/ignatian-center/santa-clara-lecture/scl-1002-phan.pdf.

[940] Founded 2011, officially registered 2012. https://www.tbcm.org.my/.

[941] Founded 1949, registered 1964. https://www.buddhist.org.sg/about/.

[942] https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/history.

The National Evangelical Christian Fellowship, established in 1983, is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) (formerly, World Evangelical Fellowship).[943] These two bodies, and the Catholic Church, together form the broad-based **Christian Federation of Malaysia**. The Orthodox Syrian Church in Malaysia is part of the WCC through the Orthodox Syrian Church in India, to which it belongs.[944]

Singapore, according to the WCC website,[945] has a very diverse population and a centrally regulated society, in which the freedom of individuals and groups is conditioned by the objective of stability and harmonious relationships between the different ethnic and religious groups. In 1987, the Christian Conference of Asia's (CCA) headquarters in Singapore were closed by the government and it was expelled, accused of supporting "subversive movements."[946]

In 1991, Singapore introduced the "**Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act**," to regulate religions and religious activities. The Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches were established in Singapore during the colonial period. With the exception of the Catholics, they are together in the National Council of Churches. The Assemblies of God (Pentecostal) and other Charismatic and Evangelical Churches came in the 20th century. The Mar Thoma and Orthodox Syrian churches are also present, among the Indian community. Singapore is a stronghold of the evangelical movement, also in the Protestant and Anglican Churches. The Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore is affiliated with the WEA (which had its offices in Singapore at one time).[947]

20.4.2.4 The Congress on Evangelism for Malaysia and Singapore (COEMAS)[948] was an interdenominational Christian gathering held in Singapore in 1978. Conference papers described detailed strategies for in-depth understanding of the major local religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Daoism—their religious beliefs, cultural habits, and social status to prepare Christian workers to effectively convert members of these communities to Christianity. Although the Conference papers are dated, they make good reading for followers of the target religions (including Buddhists) to better understand their vulnerabilities and strengths.

Another strategic book the concerned Buddhists should read and keep for reference is Paul Hattaway's **Peoples of the Buddhist World**: **A Christian Prayer Diary** (Carlisle, CA: Piquant, 2004). The book lists, in full colour one-page profile of 238 distinct ethnolinguistic Buddhist people groups, from the Aiton of NE India to the Zhaba of W China. Each page has a map with a statistical box, the type of Buddhism they follow; their linguistic affiliations; statistics on those professing Buddhism and practising it; and their access to Christianity, including a status of evangelization graph.[949]

In contrast to this head-on initiative to convert Buddhists to Christianity, there are also scholars who argue for a more open and humane Christian view of other religions, that is, to accept others as a global family of religions, without trying to convert anyone. **Paul M Hedges**, for example, questions: "Is Christianity the only true religion?" and proposes "a theology of radical openness to religious others."[950] He was Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Winchester, UK. Since 2015, he has been Associate Professor in Interreligious Studies, Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies, at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

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[943] https://www.britannica.com/topic/World-Evangelical-Alliance.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Evangelical_Alliance.

[944] https://www.oikoumene.org/countries/malaysia.

[945] https://www.oikoumene.org/countries/singapore.

[946] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Conference_of_Asia.

[947] For information on WCC developments in Asia, see https://www.oikoumene.org/regions/asia.

[948] https://archives.wheaton.edu/repositories/4/archival_objects/250894.

[949] Book preview Peoples of the Buddhist World: A Christian Prayer Diary - Paul Hattaway - Google Books.

[950] Paul Hedges, "Is Christianity the only true religion? A theology of radical openness to religious others."
https://www.academia.edu/25474444/Is_Christianity_the_Only_True_Religion_A_Theology_of_Radical_Openness_to_Religious_Others.

20.4.2.5 A good example of **interfaith ecumenism** is <u>the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddh-ism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism</u> (MCCBCHST) which is formed in 1983 as the MCCBCHS, with the Taoism becoming a member only in 2006. Religions represented in the Council are as follows:

Buddhism   the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA), Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM) and the Sasana Wardhana Society (SAWS).
Christianity   the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), incorporating the Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia (CBCM), Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) and National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF)
Hinduism   the Malaysia Hindu Sangam (MHS)
Sikhism   the Malaysian Gurdwaras Council (MGC), Khalsa Diwan Malaysia (KDM), and Sikh Naujawan Sabha Malaysia (SNSM)
Taoism   the Federation of Taoist Associations MALAYSIA (FTAM)

The MCCBCHST works as a powerful bulwark protecting the rights and freedom of the non-Muslim faiths against unjust legislations and initiatives by the Muslim politicians. Since 2011, for example, it has rejected the inclusion of Hudud laws (Islamic penal code) in the Malaysian federal legal system.[951] The argument is clear: Malaysia is a secular state as defined in her Constitution.

In 2001, then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, remarked that Malaysia was "already a Muslim state." This was strongly objected by the MCCBCHST and reminded him that the 1957 (independence) "social contract" embodied in the Federal Constitution specifying that Malaysia is a secular state with Islam as the official religion and that Malaysia is not an Islamic state. Any change to the Constitution must have the consent of all the communities that make up Malaysia.[952]

Two points should be noted and corrected. The Buddhist members of the MCCBCHST are represented by those of the Chinese Mahāyāna (MBA), the Sinhalese (SAWS) and local followers of Sinhalese Buddhism (BMSM). It may be argued that we do not yet really have "local" Buddhists (those not affiliated with any foreign missions) represented on the Council. Also unrepresented are the largest local Buddhist community, the local Thai Buddhists, who are mostly cloistered to the rural north and east of peninsular Malaysia.

20.4.2.6 Ideally, there should be **universal ecumenism**, which means every faith should accept the members of other faiths as equal members of the one and same family. How we, from the different religions and sects, can be a <u>family</u> depends upon our theological wordsmiths to imagine or craft without weakening their own beliefs. This vision of <u>a universal family</u>, despite the differences amongst the faiths, means that we have hands to warmly grasp other hands in friendship and peace, and arms to hug one another, even awkwardly at first.

Ideally, for a <u>global ecumenism</u> that works for us, we must first be ourselves the Buddhist **oikoumene** (universal family). This is, in fact, a very ancient teaching: in the Buddha's time, monastics of <u>the 4 quarters</u> form one and the same Buddhist sangha. Even if we are scattered and divided in the 10 directions (north, east, south, west, the quarters in between, the nadir, and the zenith), we must gather peacefully and wisely together as we have done in the early days.

We, as Buddhists today, are **a large global family**, and every family has its difficulties. Many of our family members have, as it were, married into other religions or gone native in the countries to which we have migrated. Some of us, it seems, are having affairs outside our own marriages, spawning numerous love-children. Our ancient ancestors were noble ascetics, but included wealthy worldly grand cousins.

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[951] Hudud laws (applicable to only Muslims) levy punishments such as stoning for adultery, whipping for abortion and amputation for theft. Other crimes include apostasy, revolt against the ruler, theft, highway robbery, slander, and drinking alcohol. https://m.malaysiakini.com/letters/178459.

[952] Malaysian Consultative Council Of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism And Taoism (MCCBCHST) - Hati | Serving The Community | Hati | Serving the community. See also Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism - Wikipedia.

The point remains that we must all go back to our common historical *first* ancestor—**Gotama Buddha**. He has left us a living legacy of light and freedom, and we are his Dharma-heirs. Our task is to protect our heirloom, and live joyfully and kindly with our families and relatives, so that we become truly familiar (*vissāsa*) with one another and become the best of relatives (Dh 204c).[953]

20.5 SPIRITUAL SCHOLARSHIP

20.5.1 The world would be terribly backward and dull if not for **scholars**. But then scholars would be caught in routine cycles of theories and received wisdom if not for **thinkers**. And thinkers would not have much to think about if not for seeing unsatisfactoriness in life, and imagining how things could be better.

Many scholars, however, from necessity, think and write for the sake of their meals and sunset years. They tend to evaluate others either as useful specimens for study, a source of wealth, or as mere nuisance. In this sense, such scholars sell their time and smile for profession and profit.

If there is a good reason for meditation teachers and sutta instructors to discourage their students from reading "academic books" (some of them regard the SD sutta series as falling into this category), it is because—to rehash a quote from O'Leary—"their [the scholars'] concern is not a single-minded quest for salvation but a disinterested and pluralistic searching after truth practiced for its own sake, and not massive cosmic truth either, but more often local micro-truths established by arguments of limited scope." [20.3.2]

On the other hand, it is that handful of remarkable scholars who are not only thinkers and workers but also visionaries and, we should add, artists, who actually work to make this world a better place with *truth, beauty and freedom*. Besides, their writings are simply enjoyable and instructive to read.

20.5.2 While reading a book as an enjoyable experience is a reward in itself, we are left wondering if there is *more* of it where it comes from. It's hard today to see how reading makes one a full person. Yet, more than enjoying a good book, we are uplifted with a brighter vision of life, or at least, freeing us, for the moment, from some pettiness: we become more open-minded true individuals.

Hence, any kind of academic learning, properly used with acuity, courage and honesty will help liberate Buddhists socially, even psychologically, from mental narrowness. Sociology, anthropology and psychology, for example, can help to free our minds to better understand the nature of Buddhist experience. In important ways, this may be called our **social liberation**.

20.5.3 On an individual level, we need to cultivate our own mind through moral virtue and mental concentration to be able to understand our own self. While disciplines such as psychology and philosophy may help us understand how our mind works and use it creatively, only our spiritual training through the Buddha's teaching can *free* us from being caught up with learning itself.

Spiritual training frees our mind for a deeper level of joyful beauty and truth (aesthetics) [19.6], which helps us, with our diligence, to progress on to liberating wisdom. We then understand the mind behind our actions, noticing how they are rooted in greed, hate and delusion, and how we can free it from these unwholesome roots. We are then moved by charity, love and wisdom. The Buddhist life, then, is one of immeasurable joy and a healing acceptance of others, seeing others as we see ourself, and seeing ourself in others. In other words, this is our **spiritual freedom**.

This will be the subject of our next investigation [SD 60.1d].

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[953] On *vissāsā paramā ñātī,* see SD 38.4 (4.2).

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(2) Brief history of the Sutta Discovery

The Sutta Discovery series started with the NUS Buddhist Society weekly Sutta Study Group (SSG) classes in February 2002 and the Buddhist Fellowship in February 2003. A new volume of translations and essays (A4 size, averaging 180 pages) was released every 3 months. These new books were studied at Poh Ming Tse (every 2nd & 4th Sundays), Singapore Buddhist Mission (every 3rd Sunday) and The Minding Centre (every Wednesday, since 2006). By 2022—20 years later—Piya had completed over 80 SD volumes.