

Glossary

Abhidharma, lit. “Special Teaching,” the third part of the Buddhist canon, the *Tripitaka*. The Abhidharma represents the earliest compilation of Buddhist philosophy and psychology. The Abhidharma of the *Theravada* school, which received its definitive form from *Buddhaghosha*, is written in Pali. The Abhidharma of the *Sarvastivada* school, written in Sanskrit, received its definitive form from *Vasubandhu*.

Abhidharmakosha, lit. “Treasure Chamber of the Abhidharma,” the most important compilation of the *Sarvastivada* teaching, was composed by *Vasubandhu* in Kashmir in the fifth century C.E. It is composed of two parts: a collection of 600 verses (Abhidharmakosha-karika) and a prose commentary on these verses (Abhidharmakosha-bhashya). The Abhidharmakosha reflects the transition from the *Hinayana* to the *Mahayana* view.

Abhidharma-pitaka, lit. “Basket of the Special Teaching,” the third part of the Buddhist canon, the *Tripitaka*, is usually known by its short name, *Abhidharma*.

Alaya-vijñana, lit. “storehouse consciousness,” a central notion of the *Yogacara* school of the *Mahayana*. It is the essence of the world out of which everything conceivable arises. It is the store of seeds (*bijas*) of all psychological phenomena. The concept of *alaya* constitutes the basis of the “mind-only” doctrine of the *Yogacara*.

Arhat, lit. “worthy one,” who has attained the highest level of the *Hinayana*, that of no-more-learning” on the supramundane path.

Asanga, lit. “untouched, unbound, unfettered.” Name of a founder of the *Yogacara* school. He lived in the fourth century C.E. He was the elder brother of *Vasubandhu*.

Ashoka, king of the Maurya kingdom of northern India, who reigned 272 –236 B.C.E. and died circa 231. He is one of the most important figures in ancient Indian history. Under his rule Buddhism gained a foothold in that part of the world.

Ayatana, the twelve sense fields, namely, the five sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body) and the objects corresponding to them (form, sound, odor, taste, bodily sensations), as well as the sixth sense organ (the thinking mind, *mano*) and its objects (ideas, or *dharmas*).

Bija, seed (see *alaya-vijñana*). *Bijas* have approximately six characteristics: 1) they are momentary. Only those *dharmas* can be *bijas* which perish immediately after birth and which possess a superior power of activity. 2) The *bijas* are simultaneous with their fruit. 3) The *bijas* form a continuous series. 4) The *bijas* must belong to a definite moral species—that is, they must have the capacity to engender actual *dharmas* that are wholesome, unwholesome, or indeterminate. 5) The *bijas* are dependent on conditions to realize their capacity to produce actual *dharmas*. 6) The *bijas* each lead to their own fruit—that is, a *bija* of mind leads to a manifestation of mind, and a *bija* of matter leads to the production of matter.

Bodhi, lit. “awakened.” It is the dissolution of ignorance through the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

Bodhichitta, lit. “awakened mind.” A central notion of *Mahayana* Buddhism.

Bodhisattva, lit. “enlightenment being.” In the *Mahayana*, a bodhisattva is a person who seeks buddhahood through the systematic practice of the *paramitas*, or perfections, but who renounces complete entry into *Nirvana* until all beings are saved.

Buddha, lit. “awakened one.”

Buddhadharma, lit. “teachings of the awakened ones.” General term for Buddhism, and originally referred to the teachings of the historical Buddha. In *Zen* the buddhadharma refers to those teachings which cannot be transmitted conceptually through writings or oral explanations, but rather as the ungraspable, immediate Reality of this moment before it is conceptualized.

Buddhaghosa, lit. “Buddha Voice.” A scholar of the *Theravada* school and author of the *Visuddhimagga*, (Path of Purity), which is a complete exposition of the *Theravada* teachings.

Buddhahood is the realization of complete, perfect enlightenment. It is the ultimate nature of all beings whether they are conscious of it or not, and cannot be “attained” since all beings are never apart from it.

Buddha-nature, according to the *Mahayana*, is the true and immutable nature of all beings. It is what allows all beings to realize *buddhahood*.

Chitta, 1) As a synonym for mind (*mano* and *vijñana*), chitta designates the totality of mental processes and manifestations. 2) In the *Abhidharma*, chitta was considered as separate from the mental factors—that is, as a mental substance—which led to a substantialistic view of phenomena. 3) In the terminology of the *Yogacara*, chitta also has the same meaning as *alaya*, the source of all mental activity. According to this view the universe is nothing but chitta.

Dharma, 1) Reality, Truth, prior to our ideas about Truth and Reality. 2) The teaching of the Buddha, or of any awakened person. 3) In the form **dharmas**, refers to the elements of experience which, according to the *Hinayana*, are the building blocks of the empirical personality and the world. 4) Dharma also has many secondary meanings such as a) law (the “great norm”); b) norms of behavior or ethical precepts; c) mental content—objects of thought, ideas—as they are reflected in the human mind. In all, there are more than a hundred definitions for this term.

Dhyana, meditation. (In Pali: *jhana*; in Chinese: *ch’an-na*, or *ch’an*; in Japanese: *zen*.)

Hinayana, lit. “Small Vehicle”; originally a derogatory term used by the *Mahayana* for early Buddhism. The Hinayana is also referred to as Southern Buddhism, since it is prevalent chiefly in countries of southern Asia. While it held a number of schools

shortly after the time of the Buddha, today the only Hinayana school is the *Theravada*.

Jñāna, from the root *jñā* “to know”; intellectual knowledge concerning phenomena and the laws governing them and concerning the right definition of all *dharma*s. Jñāna is a component of *prajñā* (wisdom). *Mahayana Buddhism* understands by jñāna the mastery of all the rational contents of the teaching as they are presented in the *Hinayana*.

Madhyamaka, the teaching of the Middle Way.

Madhyamika, representative of the school of the Middle Way; a school of *Mahayana Buddhism* founded by *Nagarjuna* and *Aryadeva* which attained great importance in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. The name of the school refers to the Middle Way in which any affirmation about the nature of things is rejected as inaccurate and illusory.

Mahasanghika, adherent of the “Great Community”; one of the two *Hinayana* schools into which the original Buddhist community split at the third Buddhist council in 250 B.C.E. The Mahasanghikas prepared the ground for the idealistic ontology of the *Mahayana*. One already finds with them the theory that everything is only a projection of mind. According to this view, everything is only name and without any real substance. This idealistic view opposes the realistic theories of the *Sthaviras* who were the forerunners of those who came to be called *Theravadin*.

Mahayana, lit. “Great Vehicle”; one of the two great schools of Buddhism, the other being the *Hinayana*, or “Small Vehicle.” The Mahayana arose in the first century C.E. The Mahayana developed from the *Hinayana* schools of the *Mahasanghikas* and *Sarvastivadins*, which formulated important aspects of its teaching. The teachings of the Mahayana are contained in the Mahayana sutras and shastras, among which are some of the most profound writings of Buddhism.

Manas-vijñāna, lit. “ego-consciousness,” or, “self-consciousness,” a central notion of the *Yogacara* school of the *Mahayana*. In the *Yogacara*, manas is the seventh of eight consciousnesses. It is considered the consciousness that cogitates or deliberates.

Mano-vijñāna, “mind” or “sixth-consciousness.” In the *Yogacara*, mano-vijñāna is considered the consciousness that discriminates. It includes psychological processes such as conceiving, judging, identifying, etc. It is the basis of the first five consciousnesses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

Nagarjuna was one of the most important philosophers of Buddhism and the founder of the *Madhyamika* school. Hardly any reliable dates for his life (2nd century C.E.) are known. Numerous works are attributed to him that were probably written by others. His most important authentic work is the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (Verses on the Middle Teaching). Nagarjuna’s major accomplishment was his systematization and deepening of the teaching presented in the wisdom literature of the *Mahayana* where

he shows that all things are only relative and without any essence—i.e., that all things are empty of their own being.

Sarvastivada, roughly, “the teaching that says everything is”; school of the *Hinayana* that split off from the *Sthaviras* after the third Buddhist council. This school constitutes a transitional stage between the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana*. The Sarvastivadins possessed their own canon, composed in Sanskrit but preserved in Chinese and Tibetan. The most important works of this school are the *Abhidharmakosha* written by *Vasubandhu* and the Mahavibhasha (Great Exegesis) which was composed under the supervision of Vasumitra (the 7th Indian patriarch of *Zen*) at the council of Kashmir and to which the school owes the name Vaibhashika, by which it is also known.

Sautrantika, a *Hinayana* school that developed out of the *Sarvastivada* around 150 C.E. The followers of this school draw their support only from the *Sutra-pitaka* and reject the *Abhidharma-pitaka* of the *Sarvastivada* as well as the “everything is” theory. The Sautrantikas posit the existence of a refined consciousness that constitutes the basis of human life and that it persists from moment to moment. The theory of the momentariness of everything existing is very pronounced in this school.

Shakyamuni, lit. “Sage of the Shakya Clan”; epithet of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, the historical Buddha, who belonged to the Shakya clan. Siddhartha received this epithet after he had separated himself from his teachers and resolved to find the way to enlightenment by himself.

Shunyata, lit. “emptiness”; a central notion in Buddhism. It is the recognition that all composite things are impermanent, devoid of any substantiality, and are characterized by *dukkha*.

Sthavira, roughly, “adherent of the elder”; one of two *Hinayana* schools into which the original Buddhist community split at the third council.

Sutra-pitaka, lit. “Basket of Writings”; a part of the Buddhist canon, the *Tripitaka*. According to tradition the Sutra-pitaka contains the discourses of the historical Buddha, *Shakyamuni*. It is preserved in a Sanskrit version composed of four collections (the Agamas). In the Pali recension, which is the only one to have been completely preserved, it is composed of five collections (the Nikayas).

Svabhava, lit. “self-nature,” or “own-being”; in the *Mahayana*, as a further development of the anatman doctrine of the *Hinayana*, all things are seen as empty of self-nature—i.e., devoid of self-sufficient independent existence or lasting substance. This is not to say that they do not exist at all but rather that they are nothing but pure appearance and do not constitute True Reality. This is a central notion of the wisdom literature of the *Mahayana*, and a basic teaching of the *Madhyamika* school.

Tathagata, lit. “the thus-gone/thus-come one”; it is the title used by the Buddha in referring to himself or to other buddhas.

Theravada, lit. “teaching of the elders of the order”; a *Hinayana* school belonging to the *Sthavira* group which developed from the Vibhajyavadin school. It was founded by Moggaliputta Tissa after the second Buddhist council.

Trikaya, lit. “three bodies”; refers to the three bodies of a buddha according to the *Mahayana*. The basis of this view is the conviction that a buddha is one with absolute Reality even while manifesting in the relative world. The three bodies are: 1) Dharmakaya (“body of the great order”), the True nature of the Buddha which is identical with ultimate Reality; 2) Sambhogakaya (“body of delight”), the body of buddhas who enjoy the Truth they embody; 3) Nirmanakaya (“body of transformation”), the earthly body in which buddhas appear.

Tripitaka, lit. “Three Baskets,” the canon of Buddhist literature which consists of three parts: 1) the *Vinaya-pitaka*; 2) the *Sutra-pitaka*; 3) the *Abhidharma-pitaka*.

Upaya, skillful means or method. 1) The ability of a *bodhisattva* to guide beings to liberation through skillful means. 2) Skill in expounding the Dharma.

Vasubandhu, an outstanding scholar of the *Sarvastivada* and *Yogacara* schools, who is also considered the 21st patriarch of the Indian lineage of *Zen*. The brother of *Asanga*, who converted him to the *Mahayana*. He is the author of the *Abhidharmakosha*, one of the most important texts of the *Sarvastivada* school, and the *Trimshika* (the Thirty Stanzas) of the *Yogacara*.

Vijñana, lit. “consciousness, knowing.” It is the fifth of the five aggregates (skandhas), and the third link in the chain of dependent arising (pratityasamutpada).

Vijñaptimatratā, the state of mere-consciousness. *Vijñapti* = concept. *Vijñaptimatratā* = the realization that all is concept or mental construction.

Vinaya-pitaka, lit. “Basket of Discipline”; third part of the *Tripitaka*, containing the rules and regulations for the communal life of monks.

Yogacara, lit., “application of yoga” (also called the *Vijñānavada*, lit. “the School That Teaches Knowing”); school of *Mahayana Buddhism* founded by Maitreyanatha, *Asanga*, and *Vasubandhu*. According to the central notion of this school, everything experiential is “mind only”; things exist only as processes of knowing, not as “objects”; outside the knowing (conscious) process they have no reality. The “external world” is thus “purely mind.” Just as there are no things qua objects, there is also no subject who experiences. Conception is a process of creative imagination that produces apparently “outer objects.” This process is explained with the help of the concept of the *alaya-vijñana*. The name of the *Yogacara* school stems from the fact that its followers placed particular importance on the practice of “yoga,” (meditation).

Zazen, lit. “sitting meditation”; the central practice taught by the *Zen* school.

Zen, Japanese for the Chinese, “ch’an,” which, in turn, is a version of the Sanskrit “dhyana,” which refers to collectedness of mind. The Zen school (*Mahayana*) teaches the practice of *zazen* as the most direct way to awakening.