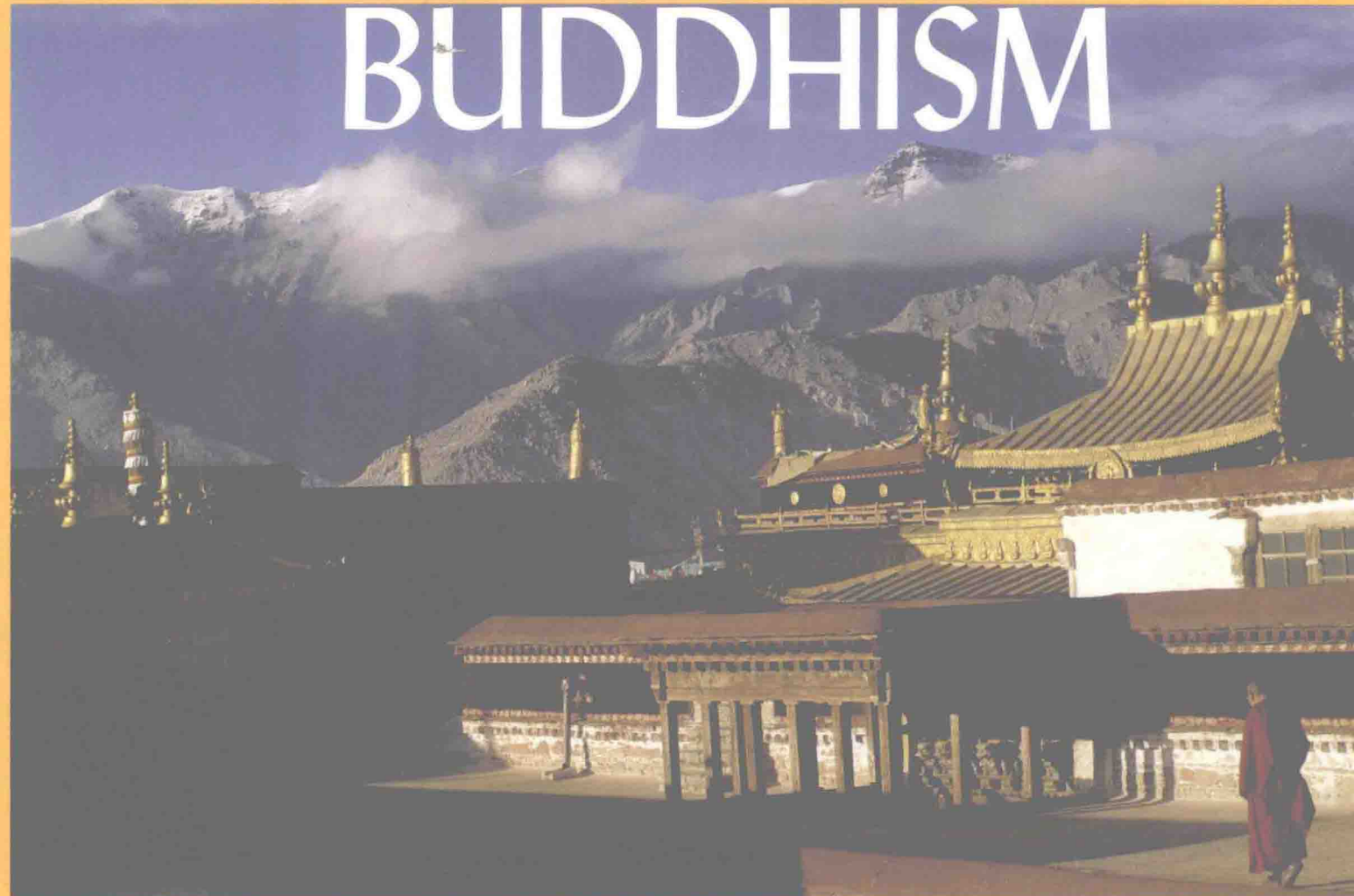


ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BUDDHISM



Volume Two

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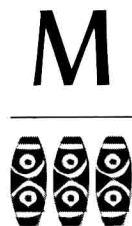
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MADHYAMAKA SCHOOL

The Madhyamaka school proclaims a middle way that rejects belief in the existence of an eternal self and inherently existent phenomena as well as the belief that such selves and phenomena do not exist at all. This school reinterprets the teaching of PRATĪTYASAMUTPĀDA (DEPENDENT ORIGINATION) to mean that because various causes and conditions produce phenomena, all are empty of any inherent existence. ŚŪNYATĀ (EMPTINESS) means that no phenomena and no persons are unoriginated and unrelated. Emptiness itself is empty. Since everything is empty, there is no real difference between good and bad, pure and impure, or SAṂSĀRA and NIRVĀṆA. These distinctions exist on the level of conventional truth and serve to introduce people to the ultimate truth that transcends dualistic language and conceptual thought. The liberating experience of meditation uncovers ultimate truth and destroys all attachment to erroneous conceptions of the self and the world.

The Madhyamaka school's influential teaching of emptiness endures in Buddhist traditions as diverse as the Tibetan DGE LUGS (GELUK) school and the East Asian CHAN SCHOOL and it continues to inspire debate among Western scholars whose interpretations of Madhyamaka's founder are equally diverse.

Early history: Nāgārjuna and his disciple Āryadeva

From the first century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., debate over the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings contributed to the writing of sūtras and scholastic ABHIDHARMA texts with new analyses of the Buddha's teachings. The authors of *abhidharma* works

believed that the world contains a finite number of mental and physical phenomena (dharma) that have an inherent existence of their own (*svabhāva*) and that Buddhist saints (ARHATS) experience nirvāṇa through their insight into the nature of these phenomena. The movement that came to be known as the MAHĀYĀNA criticized the arhats' PATH as narrowly focused on their self-centered pursuit of nirvāṇa. BODHISATTVAS, who aspire to become buddhas, begin their path with the intention of working for the enlightenment of all beings. Mahāyāna supporters claim that the bodhisattva path is superior because it balances the individual pursuit of insight with great compassion for others. Although the origins of the Mahāyāna movement remain obscure, most scholars agree that it developed in monastic circles in India. No canon of Mahāyāna sūtras existed, nor, if statements in early Mahāyāna sūtras are to be taken at face value, would there have been interest in establishing one, since each sūtra proclaimed its own unique authoritative status.

Nāgārjuna and his major works. NĀGĀRJUNA, who composed treatises that incorporated the teachings of these diverse sūtras into a philosophical system, lived in a monastic community in southern India from about 150 to 250 C.E. The Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy takes its name from Nāgārjuna's belief that śūnyatā (emptiness) is the middle way between the extreme positions of nihilism and eternalism. Nihilism rejects belief in a transmigrating self that experiences the results of actions; eternalism believes in the eternal existence of such a self. Nāgārjuna, in *Ratnāvalī* (*Jewel Garland*) 1:44–5, explains that the eternalist view, which motivates people to do good in hope of a heavenly reward, is better than the nihilist view, but better still is the liberating insight

into emptiness that repudiates both views. Nāgārjuna and his disciple, Āryadeva (ca. 170–270 C.E.), were convinced that they were preserving the true middle way of the Buddha's teachings, while other Buddhists had strayed from it and adopted extreme positions.

Nāgārjuna's writings encompass several genres: letters, philosophical works, and hymns. His *Suhṛllekha* (*Letter to a Friend*), addressed to a South Indian Śātavāhana dynasty king, advises the king that since the world from the highest heavens down to worst hells is impermanent and painful, he should follow the eightfold path. Nāgārjuna encourages the king to develop insight into dependent origination and the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS and to pursue meritorious actions with the intention of attaining buddhahood and creating his own buddha field, just as AMITĀBHĀ Buddha had. In the *Ratnāvalī*, Nāgārjuna discusses the bodhisattva's path and the goal of buddhahood in more detail. Through the cultivation of compassion and the six perfections, a bodhisattva advances on the ten stages that culminate in the inconceivable state of buddhahood. Although some people ridicule Mahāyāna beliefs, intelligent people use reason to accept the teaching of emptiness and achieve perfect enlightenment (4.67:99).

Nāgārjuna uses reason to prove that phenomena are empty of any inherent existence of their own in his most important philosophical work, the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* (*Root Verses on the Middle Way*). Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) means that nothing is created by itself or sustains itself without depending on various causes and conditions. Nāgārjuna's belief that all phenomena have arisen in dependence on causes and conditions is equivalent to saying that they are all empty of any inherent existence (24:18). He further explains this point of view in the *Śūnyatāsaptati* (*Seventy Verses on Emptiness*). While knowledge of emptiness is the proper means for relinquishing all extreme views, Nāgārjuna does not consider emptiness to be another view that somehow mediates between extreme positions. He refers to an early Mahāyāna scripture, the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* (*The Section on Kāśyapa*), in which the Buddha asks whether a patient would be cured if the medicine a doctor uses to treat his symptoms remains in the body without being expelled (13:8). Kāśyapa replies that the patient's problems would become worse. Like the Buddha, Nāgārjuna regards emptiness as a therapeutic antidote to the ill effects of attachment to views and those who retain emptiness after it has achieved its purpose as incurable. He advocates insight into the emptiness of phenomena as a means for calming the mind and controlling its tendency to develop

concepts (18:5). He describes (24:8–10) two types of truth—conventional and ultimate—and explains that without relying on conventional truth, which functions on the level of ordinary language and experience, the ultimate cannot be taught; and without understanding the ultimate, nirvāṇa is not achieved. Nirvāṇa and the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) cannot be differentiated (25:19–20) since emptiness characterizes both.

While the language and logic that Nāgārjuna uses in *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (*Warding off Arguments*) to criticize his opponents' views about the means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*) are as empty of substantive meaning as theirs, that does not impair their usefulness in exposing contradictions in their positions. Nāgārjuna has no thesis of his own to prove (vv. 29, 59), and he condemns the destructive psychological effects of attachment to views in his *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* (*Sixty Verses on Reasoning*). He warns (vv. 47–52) that engaging in divisive debates produces the afflictions of desire and anger. Intelligent people who perceive phenomena to be like illusions and reflections, whose minds remain undisturbed, achieve nirvāṇa (vv. 55–58).

Nāgārjuna's collection of hymns praise the Buddha for his compassionate action and for his liberating knowledge of a world beyond conceptual discriminations. The *Acintyastava* (*Praise for the Inconceivable Buddha*) concludes (vv. 56–58) with the remarks that the Buddha's gift of the dharma, the nectar of his teaching, is that phenomena are empty. In the *Paramārthastava* (*Praise of the Ultimate*) he praises the Buddha, whom he describes as incomparable and beyond all words and all duality, although in the concluding verses Nāgārjuna asks how praise is possible when it and its object (like all phenomena) are empty.

Āryadeva and his major work. Nāgārjuna's main disciple, Āryadeva, in his major work, the *Catuḥśataka* (*Four Hundred Verses*), presents the path to the attainment of buddhahood, structured around the accumulation of the two requisites of merit and knowledge. The first eight chapters describe meritorious practices that gradually prepare the aspiring bodhisattva to receive knowledge about the empty and insubstantial nature of persons and phenomena, which the last eight chapters discuss in greater detail. Āryadeva utilizes the metaphor of illness and treatment in speaking about the actions of bodhisattvas and buddhas. They are skilled diagnosticians who provide the proper medication based upon a diagnosis of the illnesses that afflict SENTIENT BEINGS and remain patient

when ignorant people, afflicted by illness, reject their medicine (5.11–13, 8.20). Throughout their career, but especially on the first stage of the path, bodhisattvas are encouraged to perfect the virtue of DĀNA (GIVING). The merit of donating material goods, however, is far surpassed by the gift of instruction in the dharma (5.7). The bodhisattvas' ability to discern the thoughts of others enables them to adapt the teaching to the capacities of each student. Only after the student is judged capable of understanding the most profound teachings, will these teachings be given (5.10). Āryadeva emphasizes that it is insight into the selfless and empty nature of all phenomena, rather than the performance of any meritorious action, that brings about the attainment of peace (8.11). The progressive method of instruction begins with the practices of generosity and moral conduct and culminates in peace (8.14). First, all demeritorious actions must be rejected, then the concept of a self, and finally all phenomena (8.15). There is no difference between the cycle of existence and nirvāṇa for a bodhisattva who has a powerful mind (8.22). The disciplined calming of the mind confers the power to realize nirvāṇa in the present life (8.23).

In the last eight chapters of the *Catuhśataka*, Āryadeva refutes belief in permanent phenomena (atoms, the soul, time) and criticizes various theories about sense perception and causality. People who doubt and fear the Buddha's teachings on the selflessness of persons and phenomena cling to the less subtle views of Brahmin priests and naked ascetics (12.13–17, 19–22). The final chapter, a dialogue between teacher and student, considers the logical problems raised by the critics of emptiness. Āryadeva argues against the position that the negation of one thesis implies a commitment to the establishment of the opposite thesis (16.3–4, 7–8, 14). Statements about the existence of one thing and the nonexistence of another are unacceptable both on the conventional and ultimate level (16.16–18, 24). He concludes that no refutation can succeed against an opponent who refuses to hold any thesis (16.25).

Madhyamaka in Central Asia and East Asia. Little is known about Rāhulabhadra (ca. third century C.E.), a disciple of both Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. One of his hymns, the *Prajñāpāramitāstotra* (*Praise of the Perfection of Wisdom*) is included in the Chinese text *Da zhidu lun* (*Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*). Because of the inclusion of this hymn, most scholars regard this text attributed to Nāgārjuna as a

compendium of Madhyamaka philosophy compiled by Central Asian scholars, including its translator, KUMĀRAJĪVA (350–409/413). Kumārajīva also translated the three treatises (*san lun*), on which the Chinese branch of the Madhyamaka school was based: the *Zhong lun* (*Middle Treatise*), the *Shi'er men lun* (*Twelve Gate Treatise*), and the *Bai lun* (*Hundred Verses Treatise*), the first two attributed to Nāgārjuna and the third to Āryadeva. Kumārajīva's disciple SENGZHAO (374–414) composed original works that explain how the sage's calm and empty mind apprehends ultimate truth while still living in the world. The San Lun lineage ended in 623 with the death of Jizang (549–623), renowned for his commentaries on the three basic Madhyamaka treatises. A seventh-century Korean monk, Hyegwan, who studied with Jizang, brought these teachings to Japan, where they flourished briefly in the eighth century. Modern scholars appreciate the elegance of Kumārajīva's translations, although the academic schools founded in China and Japan to study them were not influential and did not survive after the eighth century.

Development of divisions within the Madhyamaka school

The distinction—Svātantrika versus Prāsaṅgika—often used to describe the views of later Madhyamaka writers developed late in Buddhist textual history, perhaps not until the eleventh century. These two classifications refer to the Svātantrika school's acceptance of independent (*svatantra*) inferences in philosophical debate and the Prāsaṅgika school's rejection of such inferences. The Prāsaṅgika school favors a *reductio ad absurdum* method that uses the opponent's own arguments to show the undesired consequences (*prasaṅga*) to which their opponents' theses invariably lead and that does not require proof of a contrary thesis. The Svātantrika school and Prāsaṅgika schools are associated with the works of BHĀVAVIVEKA and CANDRAKĪRTI, respectively.

Bhāvaviveka and his major works. Bhāvaviveka (ca. 500–570) wrote a lengthy commentary on Nāgārjuna's verses, the *Prajñāpradīpa* (*Lamp of Insight*), in which he criticized the *prasaṅga* method used in an earlier commentary, *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti* of Buddhapaṇita (ca. 470–540 C.E.). Bhāvaviveka also wrote several original works, chief among them, the *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* (*Verses on the Heart of the Middle Way*) and his own commentary on this work, the *Tarkajvālā* (*Blaze of Reasoning*). In *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* 3:26 Bhāvaviveka uses syllogistic LOGIC to

support the Madhyamaka position. He states that earth does not have any inherent existence from the perspective of ultimate reality (*paramārthataḥ*) because it is dependent on causes and conditions, like cognition. This syllogism has three parts—his thesis, the negative statement about inherent existence, and the reason—and an example. The thesis is a nonaffirming negation (*prasajyapratishedha*) and not an affirming negation (*paryudāsapratishedha*) because it is concerned only with denying that the earth has inherent existence and not with affirming that it has some other characteristic.

Bhāvaviveka's *Tarkajvālā* provides valuable information on the development of both Buddhist and Brahmanical thought. He defends the Madhyamaka school against its detractors through the use of inferences and syllogisms developed by the YOGĀCĀRA SCHOOL logician DIGNĀGA (ca. 480–540) and by the Brahmanical Nyāya logicians. In chapters four and five Bhāvaviveka refutes the positions of his Buddhist opponents; in chapters six through nine, he refutes, respectively, the positions of the Brahmanical philosophical schools Sāṃkhya, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā.

Candrakīrti and his major works. Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650) studied the works of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva with students of Bhāvaviveka and Buddhapālita, and he supported Buddhapālita's position against Bhāvaviveka's criticism in his *Prasannapadā* (*Clear Words*) commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. He also wrote commentaries on the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, the *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, and Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka*. Candrakīrti's independent work, the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (*Introduction to the Middle Way*), presents a general introduction to the Madhyamaka school's ideas on the nature of the bodhisattva path and its goal of buddhahood. Candrakīrti is best known for his criticism of Bhāvaviveka's use of independent inferences in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6.12) and in the first chapter of the *Prasannapadā* (Pr 14–39) and for his criticism of the Yogācāra school's epistemological and logical views in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6. 34–78; Pr 58–75). He rejects as illogical the Yogācāra position that external objects are permutations of consciousness and that consciousness is reflexively aware of itself (*svasaṃvedana*). Candrakīrti knows the criteria set down by Dignāga for judging the soundness of an argument and applies them to demonstrate the flaws in his opponents' inferences and syllogisms. He is unwilling to support philosophical systems whose asser-

tions are expressed positively or in the form of affirming negations. He rejects the distinctions Bhāvaviveka makes between theses established either conventionally or ultimately (6.12).

Candrakīrti distinguishes between conventional and ultimate truth in *Madhyamakāvatāra* (6:25–26). What ordinary people perceive as the object of their undamaged sense faculties is true from the conventional point of view; everything else is false. Eyes damaged by disease may produce false sense impressions. Water, mirrors, and the sun's rays may also produce false sense perceptions. These internal and external causes of false perception disturb the mental sense. Equally disturbing to the mental sense are non-Buddhist philosophers' views, which are not even conventionally true because ordinary people do not hold them. He describes conventional truth as the means, and ultimate truth as the goal (6:80). Candrakīrti concedes there are not really two truths but only one since the Buddha has said that nirvāṇa, which is non-deceptive, is the unique ultimate truth. Because conventional truth is deceptive it is not ultimately true.

Candrakīrti organizes his commentary on the *Catuḥśataka* around a debate between Āryadeva and various opponents. In the first half, he utilizes legal and political treatises, stories from the Hindu epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and even secular love poetry in his demonstration of the superior merits of the Buddhist path. In the last half he critically examines the views of Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents that lead people astray. These philosophers, he says in commenting on 12.4, talk about renunciation but they do not follow the right path and do not use the proper method. The proper method is the understanding of ultimate truth, namely, that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. The cycle of death and rebirth ceases, he explains in his comments on 14:25, when consciousness no longer superimposes inherent existence on phenomena. What does not cease is the awakening of mind (*bodhicitta*) and the actions of a bodhisattva, which culminate in the ultimate knowledge of a buddha. The most influential work on the awakening of mind and the bodhisattva path is by ŚĀNTIDEVA.

Śāntideva and his major works. Śāntideva (ca. 685–763 C.E.) composed the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (*Collection of Teachings*), a lengthy collection of excerpts from nearly one hundred Mahāyāna sūtras. His major work, the *BODHICARYĀVATĀRA* (*Introduction to the Conduct That Leads to Enlightenment*) traces the path of the

bodhisattva from the initial resolution to become a buddha to the final dedication of merit after the completion of the six perfections. In the first chapter he distinguishes between the mind resolved upon awakening and the mind that proceeds toward awakening; the initial resolution creates merit but the merit of the bodhisattva actively proceeding toward awakening is unending (1:15–17). Chapter two and three describe the religious acts—offerings made to the Buddha, taking refuge in the Three Jewels, and the confession of faults—that the bodhisattva undertakes before setting out on the path. Chapter three describes the bodhisattva's request for buddhas in all directions to illuminate the world with their teachings (3:4–5) and the bodhisattva vows undertaken on behalf of all sentient beings (3:7–23). The fourth chapter indicates the strength of the bodhisattva's resolve to fulfill these vows. In chapter five Śāntideva begins his discussion of the six PĀRAMITĀ (PERFECTIONS). Chapter six's discussion of the perfection of patience concentrates on the avoidance of anger, the major impediment to the bodhisattva's resolution. Chapter seven focuses on the cultivation of vigor and chapter eight on meditation. In chapter eight Śāntideva explains how bodhisattvas meditate on the equality of self and others (8:89–119) and put themselves in the place of others by understanding that all suffering comes from selfish pleasures and all happiness from putting others' happiness first (8:120–131).

Śāntideva, in the lengthy ninth chapter on the perfection of wisdom, defends Madhyamaka beliefs against a multitude of objections from Buddhist and non-Buddhist opponents and refutes them. Śāntideva begins with a discussion of the two truths (9:2–8) and proceeds to refute the Yogācāra view of consciousness (11–34), *abhidharma* misconceptions about liberation and emptiness (40–56), and various wrong views about the self (57–87) and how feelings (88–101) and cognitions (102–5) arise. A detailed refutation of causality (114–37) is followed by his explanation of the emptiness of all phenomena and how insight into this teaching provides relief from the cycle of birth and death (138–167). The final chapter describes the dedication of merit derived from the bodhisattva's progress on the path to awakening.

The Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. Śāntideva and Candrakīrti, both associated with the Prāsaṅgika wing of the Madhyamaka school, vigorously criticize Yogācāra beliefs. Two later Madhyamaka writers, Śāntarakṣita

(ca. 725–790) and Kamalaśīla (ca. 740–795), found ways to incorporate some of these beliefs into their own systems. These scholars followed an example set two centuries earlier by the Yogācāra scholars Dharmapāla (ca. 530–561) and Sthiramati (ca. 510–570), who wrote commentaries on the Madhyamaka works of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. In the eighth-century monastic centers in eastern India, a synthesis of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka ideas came into prominence. The main figure associated with this movement is Śāntarakṣita. Like Bhāvaviveka, he uses logic to demonstrate the Madhyamaka position that phenomena lack inherent existence. Unlike Bhāvaviveka and his followers, Śāntarakṣita and his circle rejected the idea that external objects can be known even on the level of conventional truth. Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophers regard external objects as conceptual constructions. Śāntarakṣita (vv. 91–92 of *Madhyamakālamkāra*, *Eloquence of the Middle Way*) considers both object and subject as having the nature of consciousness, which is self-reflexive but still lacking in inherent existence. Śāntarakṣita concludes (v. 93) that Madhyamaka and Yogācāra taken together comprise the true Mahāyāna teachings. Śāntarakṣita's comprehensive *Tattvasaṃgraha* (Compendium of Truth) critically examines the beliefs of all schools of philosophy known to him: Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya, Advaita Vedānta, Jain, materialist, as well as the views of a variety of Buddhist schools.

Kamalaśīla was Śāntarakṣita's disciple. In addition to his commentaries on Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra* and *Tattvasaṃgraha*, he wrote independent works, the *Madhyamakāloka* (*Light of the Middle Way*) and the *Bhāvanākrama* (*Stages of Meditation*), a set of three works that concern the bodhisattva's practice of meditation. In the first *Bhāvanākrama* Kamalaśīla explains how the bodhisattva meditates first on compassion for all beings since compassion is the basic motivation for pursuing the path to buddhahood. The bodhisattva's practice encompasses both skillful means (the first five perfections) and wisdom, which is acquired through study, critical reflection, and meditative realization. The second and third *Bhāvanākrama* explain how the bodhisattva combines the practice of calming meditation (*śamatha*), which concentrates the mind, with insight meditation or VIPASSANĀ (SANSKRIT, VIPAŚYANĀ), which examines the meditative object and realizes the nonduality of subject and object. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were major figures in the initial introduction of Buddhism into Tibet.

Madhyamaka in Tibet. Madhyamaka teachings were well established in central Tibet by the end of the eighth century. Śāntarakṣita first came to Tibet from Nepal around 763 and taught in Lhasa for four months until the hostility of the king's ministers forced him back to Nepal. He returned in 775 and supervised the construction of the first Tibetan monastery, BSAM YAS (SAMYE), and served as its abbot until his death. Bsam yas, according to Tibetan historical texts, hosted the BSAM YAS DEBATE between Śāntarakṣita's student Kamalaśīla and the Chinese monk Heshang Moheyan over the issue of the bodhisattva's pursuit of the gradual path toward awakening versus a sudden awakening. Moheyan prescribed meditation practices characteristic of the Chan school.

At Bsam yas teams of Tibetan translators and Indian and Chinese collaborators continued to translate Buddhist texts. By the end of the ninth century, they had completed translations of the works of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, as well as works of Buddhapaṇita, Bhāvaviveka, Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla. These texts include several of the hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna, his letters and several of his philosophical treatises, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, the *Yuktiṣaṣṭika*, and the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, Buddhapaṇita's and Bhāvaviveka's commentaries on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, Candrakīrti's *Yuktiṣaṣṭikavṛtti* and *Śūnyatasaptativṛtti*, Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, and Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka* and *Bhāvanākrama*.

During the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet the views of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla's syncretistic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka school and the views of Bhāvaviveka flourished. Candrakīrti's interpretation of Madhyamaka presented a significant challenge to Bhāvaviveka's interpretation during the second dissemination of Buddhism in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Indian scholar ATISHA (982–1054) arrived in western Tibet in 1042; at Mtho ling Monastery, he wrote his best-known work, the *Bodhipathapradīpa* (*Lamp for the Path to Awakening*) and a commentary that describes the Madhyamaka school's basic doctrines (vv. 47–51). He observes that people of slight abilities perform meritorious actions in hope of better rebirth, people of middling abilities seek nirvāṇa, and people of the highest ability seek buddhahood and an end to the suffering of all beings. Atisha identifies himself as part of a Madhyamaka lineage that includes Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Candrakīrti, Bhāvaviveka, and Śāntideva.

Although the study and teaching of Madhyamaka texts has a long history in Tibet, it is not until the late eleventh or early twelfth century that a clear distinction begins to develop between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (b. 1055) translated three of Candrakīrti's major works: his early independent treatise on Madhyamaka, the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, and his commentaries on Nāgārjuna's and Āryadeva's major works. According to the Tibetan historians 'Go lo tsa ba and Gser mdog Pan chen, Spa tshab Nyi ma grags made the Prāsaṅgika viewpoint of Candrakīrti the dominant interpretation of the classical works of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva from the twelfth century onward. Until Nyi ma grags translated *Prasannapadā* and clearly differentiated Candrakīrti's interpretation of Madhyamaka from Bhāvaviveka's, there had been no solid foundation for distinguishing between the two interpretations.

From the fourteenth through sixteen centuries scholars associated with all four of the major Tibetan schools—KLONG CHEN PA (LONGCHENPA) (1308–1363) of RNYING MA (NYINGMA) school; Red mda' ba (1349–1412), Rong ston (1367–1449), and Go ram pa (1429–1489) of the SA SKYA (SAKYA) school; Mi bskyod rdo je (1507–1554) and Padma dkar po (1527–1592) of the BKA' BRGYUD (KAGYU) school; TSONG KHA PA (1357–1419), Rgyal tshab, (1364–1432), and Mkhas grub (1385–1438) of the Dge lugs (Gelug) school—wrote works defining their positions on Madhyamaka philosophy. During this period, Dol po pa (1292–1361) of the Jo nang pa school developed his position on the teaching of emptiness, which incorporated insights from Yogācāra texts, particularly those concerned with the teaching of innate Buddha nature. He differentiated between the negative descriptive of emptiness, self-emptiness (*rang stong*), which regards all phenomena as lacking inherent existence, and a more positive description of emptiness, other-emptiness (*gzhan stong*), which refers to a truly existent ultimate reality that is beyond the limits of ordinary conceptualization. These medieval debates over positive and negative descriptions of emptiness recur in the works of contemporary scholars who study Madhyamaka thought.

The terse verses of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which led to divergent interpretations among the classical schools of Madhyamaka thought, have also produced a spate of modern books and articles proposing various interpretations of his philosophy. Andrew Tuck's 1990 study, *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship: On the*

Western Interpretation of Nāgārjuna, associates the Western interpretation of Madhyamaka with whatever philosophical trends were current at the time. Nāgārjuna's nineteenth-century Western interpreters portrayed him as a nihilist. Twentieth-century interpretations, under the influence of modern analytical philosophy, focused on his use of logic and his skepticism about the use of language. Richard Hayes, in "Nāgārjuna's Appeal" (1994) concludes that twentieth-century scholarship on Madhyamaka largely corresponds to two distinct but traditional approaches: exegesis and HERMENEUTICS. The exegetical approach primarily focuses on the accumulation of philological, historical, and textual data, while the hermeneutic approach attempts to make that data relevant to the concerns of a modern audience.

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KAREN LANG

MA GCIG LAB SGRON (MACHIG LABDRÖN)

Ma gcig lab sgron (pronounced Machig Labdrön; ca. 1055–1149) was an eminent female Tibetan Buddhist teacher who codified and disseminated the ritual meditation system called severance (*gcod*, pronounced chö). Born in the southern Tibetan region of La phyi, Ma gcig lab sgron was recognized as a gifted individual even in her youth. According to her traditional biographies, she had a natural affinity for the *prajñāpāramitā* (perfection of wisdom) sūtras, spending much of her youth reading and studying their numerous texts and commentaries. For several years, she continued her education under Grwa pa mngon shes and Skyo ston Bsod nams bla ma in a monastic setting where she was eventually employed to use her skills in ritual recitation and exegesis. She then took up the lifestyle of a tantric yoginī, living as the consort of the Indian adept Thod pa Bhadra, eventually giving birth to several children, perhaps five in all. Vilified as a "nun who had repudiated her religious vows," Ma gcig lab sgron left her family and eventually met the famed Indian yogin who became her primary guru, Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas (d. 1105/1117), a contemporary of the famous Tibetan poet-saint MI LA RAS PA (1028/40–1111/23). Dam pa sangs rgyas transmitted to Ma gcig lab sgron the instructions of pacification (*zhi byed*) and the MAHĀMUDRĀ teachings. She combined these with her training in *prajñāpāramitā* and other indigenous practices, passing them on as the system of severance, principally to the Nepalese yogin Pham thing pa and her own son Thod smyon bsam grub.

The tradition of severance, like that of pacification, is commonly classified among eight important tantric traditions and transmission lineages that spread throughout Tibet—the so-called eight great chariot-like lineages of achievement (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*), a system that prefigures the development of a fourfold sectarian division often noted in writings on Tibetan Buddhism. Ma gcig lab sgron herself described severance as a practice that severs (*gcod*) attachment to one's body, dualistic thinking, and conceptions of hope and fear. Although usually practiced by solitary yogins in isolated and frightening locations, severance liturgies are also performed by monastic assemblies, both accompanied by the ritual music of hand drum and human thigh-bone trumpet. The meditation, rooted in the theory of the *prajñāpāramitā* and *mahāmudrā*, also involves the visualized offering of the adept's body—flesh, blood, bones, and organs—as food for a vast assembly of beings, including local spirits and demons.

Ma gcig lab sgron is revered in Tibet as a *ḌĀKINĪ* goddess, an emanation of the Great Mother (Yum chen mo) and the bodhisattva Tārā. Her reincarnations have also been recognized in contemporary individuals, including the former abbess of the important Shug gseb Nunnery near Lhasa, Rje btsun Rig 'dzin chos nyid zang mo (1852–1953). Ma gcig lab sgron remains a primary Tibetan example of the ideal female practitioner and her tradition of severance continues to be widely employed among Tibetan Buddhist practitioners, both lay and monastic, of all sectarian affiliations.

See also: *Prajñāpāramitā Literature; Tibet; Women*

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MAHĀBODHI TEMPLE

The history of Mahābodhi, the temple located at the site of the Buddha's enlightenment at BODH GAYĀ, is

a contested one. According to the Chinese pilgrim XUANZANG (ca. 600–664 C.E.), the imposing structure visible during his lifetime was built over a smaller temple erected by King Aśoka. A Bhārhut medallion shows a circular open structure enclosing the diamond throne and the bodhi tree above it. While the Aśokan pillar beside it suggests that it may represent the original Aśokan shrine, archaeological evidence for the latter is inconclusive. The large stone slab resembling the diamond throne of the Bhārhut relief recovered from the ruins might well be a conscious archaism.

The structural temple Xuanzang describes probably dates from the third to fifth centuries C.E. (late Kushan and Gupta dynasties). Myriads of tiered niches housing golden figures covered its soaring 170-foot high tower of whitewashed brick. Stringed pearl and celestial sages decorated its walls. A three-storied jeweled pavilion with projecting eaves abutted the east wall. Niches with ten-foot high silver figures of the bodhisattvas MAITREYA and Avalokiteśvara flanked the outside gate, while a Buddha image twice that size occupied the sanctuary's massive diamond throne. The Buddha's earth-touching gesture (*MUDRĀ*) represented the moment when the Buddha called the earth to witness his eligibility for enlightenment and MĀRA was defeated. The new structure necessitated the removal of the bodhi tree from the sanctuary to a location outside the temple, which Gupta inscriptions called a *ma-hāgandhakuṭī*, or the great fragrant chamber where the Buddha resides. Thus, in Bodh Gayā by the fifth century, the bodhi tree as the primary locus of the Buddha's living presence was replaced by his residence, throne, and image.

The present Mahābodhi temple is a late nineteenth-century restoration of dubious authenticity. It has a tall central tower with a high arch over the entrance and identical smaller towers on each of its four corners. Evidence from India, Burma, and Thailand indicates that corner towers were present before the eleventh century. This evidence consists of a small eleventh-century model of the Mahābodhi from eastern India and of its four Burmese and Thai re-creations beginning in the eleventh century. In referencing the directions and the four continents, the corner towers intensify the central tower's kinship with Mount Sumeru, thereby reinforcing the seat of enlightenment's increasing importance over the tree at Bodh Gayā. By contrast, in Sri Lanka the bodhi tree at Anurādhapura remains the prime relic of the enlightenment. No major enclosed structure has diminished or usurped its primacy as one of Sri Lanka's two ma-

for Buddha relic-shrines. Its preeminence probably derives from the belief that it is the sapling from the original bodhi tree that Aśoka's missionary son brought to the island together with Buddhism.

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LEELA ADITI WOOD

MAHĀKĀŚYAPA

Mahākāśyapa (Pāli, Mahākassapa), a disciple of the Buddha, was of Brahmin descent. According to Buddhist legend, the Buddha was aware of a karmic connection between himself and Mahākāśyapa, and waited for him as his most distinguished disciple to accept him into the order. In the MAHĀYĀNA sūtras, Mahākāśyapa readily understands the deeper meaning of the Buddha's teachings. Mahākāśyapa's supernatural powers and talents of meditation indicate his ability to penetrate to a soteriological layer of the dharma that is not accessible to the normal "hearers" (*śrāvaka*) of the Buddha or even to Buddhist saints, the ARHATS. The CHAN SCHOOL symbolized this capacity by showing Mahākāśyapa holding a lotus flower in his hand, which represents his grasp on the Buddha's teaching. Mahākāśyapa was made the first patriarch of the Chan school.

Legend holds that Mahākāśyapa became the head of the Buddhist community after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Shortly after the death of the Buddha, Mahākāśyapa convened the first Buddhist council near Rājagṛha, India, an event that is traditionally understood to have led to the codification of the Buddhist

CANON (Tripiṭaka). Mahākāśyapa also functions as the transmitter of the dharma from the Buddha to the future Buddha MAITREYA. Buddhist tradition describes Mahākāśyapa as absorbed in the "attainment of cessation" (*nirodhasamāpatti*) deep inside Cockfeet Mountain (Kukkuṭapadagiri), where he keeps the garment of the Buddha, which he received from the hand of the master and will transfer to Maitreya as a symbol of the latter's legitimate succession.

See also: Councils, Buddhist; Disciples of the Buddha

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MAX DEEG

MAHĀMAUDGALYĀYANA

Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Pāli, Mahāmoggallāna; Chinese, Mulian), a disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha, attained the enlightened status of an ARHAT, or saint. He is renowned for the magical powers he developed through MEDITATION. Mahāmaudgalyāyana uses his powers to travel to other realms of the universe where he witnesses the happiness and suffering that living beings experience as a result of their KARMA (ACTION). He also uses his magical powers to discipline monks, gods, nāgas, and other beings. Mahāmaudgalyāyana converted to Buddhism and entered the monastic order together with his childhood friend ŚĀRIPUTRA. They became the Buddha's two chief disciples in accordance with a prediction made to that effect many eons earlier by a previous buddha. Thus Mahāmaudgalyāyana and Śāriputra are sometimes depicted flanking the Buddha in Buddhist art. Mahāmaudgalyāyana predeceased the Buddha after being beaten by heretics. His violent death is attributed to bad karma; in a previous life he had killed his own parents.

Mahāmaudgalyāyana is most famous for liberating his mother from a bad rebirth as a hungry ghost. Beginning in the Tang period in China, this story became the basis for a popular annual Buddhist festival in East Asia called the GHOST FESTIVAL. During this festival, Buddhists make offerings to the monastic community,

dedicating their merit to deceased ancestors in the hopes that these attain a better rebirth or greater comfort in their current rebirth. Mahāmaudgalyāyana is venerated in East Asia for his filial piety and shamanic powers. Like other arhats, Mahāmaudgalyāyana was also the focus of worship already in ancient and medieval India. In Burma (Myanmar) he is one of a set of eight arhats propitiated in protective rituals and he is also believed to grant his worshippers magical powers.

See also: Disciples of the Buddha

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MAHĀMUDRĀ

The Sanskrit term *mahāmudrā*, which might be translated as "great seal," refers to a Buddhist doctrine describing the underlying nature of reality, the consummate practices of meditation, and the crowning realization of buddhahood. Although important for all of the later Tibetan sects, including the SA SKYA (SAKYA) and DGE LUGS (GELUK), *mahāmudrā* became principally associated with the many branches of the BKA' BRGYUD (KAGYU). The *mahāmudrā* tradition began with the Indian MAHĀSIDDHAS, or great adepts, including Tilopa (988–1069), NĀROPA (1016–1100), and Maitrīpa (ca. 1007–1085), and was disseminated in Tibet by such early Bka' brgyud masters as MAR PA (MARPA, 1002/1012–1097), MI LA RAS PA (MILAREPA, 1028/40–1111/23), and their followers.

According to the sixteenth-century Bka' brgyud exegete Bkra shis rnam rgyal (Tashi Namgyal, 1512–1587), the doctrine is called *great seal* because, "Just as a seal leaves its impression on other objects, so *mahāmudrā*, the ultimate reality, leaves its imprint upon all realities of SAṂSĀRA and NIRVĀṆA." It is a seal because it refers to "the inherent character or abiding reality of all things" (Namgyal, p. 92). The term in Ti-

betan, *phyag rgya chen po* (pronounced chagya chenpo) literally translates the Sanskrit and is traditionally explained in numerous ways. According to the *Phyag chen thig le* (Sanskrit, *Mahāmudrātilaka*; *The Seminal Point of Mahāmudrā*), *phyag* symbolizes the wisdom of emptiness and *rgya* the freedom from things of saṁsāra. *Chen po* stands for their union.

Mahāmudrā is commonly taught under the tripartite rubric of ground (in the sense of foundation), PATH, and fruition. This approach was summed up by the great nineteenth-century reformer Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, 1813–1899) in the following way: "Ground *mahāmudrā* is the view, understanding things as they are. / Path *mahāmudrā* is the experience of meditation. / Fruition *mahāmudrā* is the realization of one's mind as buddha" (Nalanda Translation Committee, p. 83). Ground *mahāmudrā* expresses the primordially pure nature of the mind that normally goes unnoticed; it is likened to a jewel buried in the ground. Path *mahāmudrā* represents a wide variety of meditation practices. These can follow a systematic approach—as exemplified in numerous texts by the ninth Karma pa, Dbang phyug rdo rje (Wangchuk Dorje, 1604–1674)—incorporating preliminary practices (*sngon'gro*) with those of *mahāmudrā* serenity (*śamatha*) to still the mind, and *mahāmudrā* insight (*vipaśyanā*) to recognize the mind's nature. The practice of path *mahāmudrā* may also incorporate seemingly simple instructions such as resting free from exertion within naked awareness itself. Fruition *mahāmudrā* is the final result, the realization of phenomenal appearances and noumenal emptiness as nondual. This is not something newly produced, but rather the recognition of what is termed *ordinary mind* (*tha mal gyi shes pa*), the mind's innate clarity, purity, and luminosity. Such recognition is often described in vivid terms as being indestructible, youthful, fresh, shining, and experienced as great bliss.

Some Bka' brgyud scholars have divided *mahāmudrā* literature into two streams: sūtra *mahāmudrā* and TANTRA *mahāmudrā*. The former, based on Indian texts such as the *Uttaratantra-śāstra* (*Treatise on the Unexcelled Continuity*), describes a system centered primarily upon the cultivation of the six PĀRAMITĀ (PERFECTIONS) without the need for specific tantric initiation or practice. This approach—exemplified in the *Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan* (*Jewel Ornament of Liberation*), a text composed by Mi la ras pa's celebrated disciple Sgam po pa (Gampopa, 1079–1153)—was

strongly criticized by Tibetan writers such as the renowned scholar SA SKYA PAṆḌITA (SAKYA PAṆḌITA, 1182–1251). Tantra *mahāmudrā* is an approach in which the practices of *anuttarayoga*, or highest yoga tantra—such as those belonging to the system known as the Six Doctrines of Nāropa (*Nā ro chos drug*)—are used as a means for realization.

See also: **Tantra; Tibet**

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MAHĀPARINIRVĀṆA-SŪTRA

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Pāli, *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*; *Great Discourse on Extinction*) recounts the final months of the Buddha's life, his last acts and sermons to his disciples, his death, and the distribution of his relics. A canonical text, it was one of the early building blocks of the Buddha's biography, and versions exist in Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese. It should not be confused with the later MAHĀYĀNA sūtra of the same name.

See also: **Buddha, Life of the; Nirvāṇa Sūtra**

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MAHĀPRAJĀPATĪ GAUTAMĪ

According to the *Gotamī-apadāna* and the *Therīgāthā*, Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī (Pāli, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī) was Siddhārtha Gautama's maternal aunt and foster mother. When Mahāprajāpatī was born, an astrologer predicted her leadership qualities and she was named Prajāpatī (Pāli, Pajāpatī), "leader of a large assembly." She and her sister Māyā were both married to Śuddhodana, the ruler of Kapilavastu. Māyā gave birth to a son who was named Siddhārtha and then died just seven days after his birth. After Māyā's death, Prajāpatī suckled the boy and raised him as her own child. Prajāpatī also gave birth to two children of her own, Nanda and Sundarīnandā.

Mahāprajāpatī is widely regarded as the first *bhikṣuṇī* and progenitor of the Buddhist order of NUNS (Bhikṣuṇī SAṄGHA). After Siddhārtha became "an awakened one" (a Buddha) and visited Kapilavastu, Mahāprajāpatī began to practice the dharma and achieved the stage of a stream enterer (*śrotāpanna*). According to tradition, she thrice requested the Buddha's permission to join the saṅgha, but was refused each time. Finally, she cut her hair, donned renunciant garb, and, accompanied by five hundred Śākyan noblewomen, walked to Vaiśālī where she once again sought admission to the order. This time, when ĀNANDA interceded on Mahāprajāpatī's behalf, the Buddha affirmed that women are indeed qualified to achieve the fruits of dharma (i.e., liberation), and granted her request.

The Buddha is said to have stipulated eight special rules (*gurudharma*) as the condition for Mahāprajāpatī's admission to the saṅgha. These rules, which later came to be applied to Buddhist nuns in general, make the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha dependent upon (and, to a certain extent, subordinate to) the Bhikṣu Saṅgha (order of monks) with regard to ordination, exhortation, admonishment, and reinstatement, thereby delimiting the nuns' independence.

In addition to being the first Buddhist nun and the leader of the Bhikṣuṇī Saṅgha from its origins, Mahāprajāpatī achieved higher spiritual attainments, including the six higher knowledges and supernormal powers. She often served as a trusted intermediary in communications between the *bhikṣuṇīs* and the Buddha. In the later part of her life, she reached the state of an ARHAT, as evidenced in her own verse, recorded in the *Therīgāthā*: "I have achieved the state where

everything stops.” Within the patriarchal social context of her time, Mahāprajāpatī became an exemplar of women’s potential for leadership and spiritual attainment, and her achievements have inspired Buddhist WOMEN ever since.

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KARMA LEKSHE TSOMO

MAHĀSĀMĠHIKA SCHOOL

The Mahāsāṃghika (or Mahāsāṅghika) school is believed to have emerged from the first major schism in the Buddhist order, at a council held in the fourth century B.C.E., more than a century after Gautama’s death. The name, from *mahāsāṃgha*, “great(er) community,” supposedly reflects the Mahāsāṃghikas’ superior numbers, the Sthaviras being the minority party to the dispute. The split may have been caused by disagreements over the VINAYA, or the famous five theses of Mahādeva concerning the ARHAT, or the introduction of MAHĀYĀNA sūtras into the canon. Traditional accounts of these issues are obscure and conflicting. What is certain is that the Mahāsāṃghikas and their many subschools (Lokottaravādins, Prajñaptivādins, Pūrvaśailas, Aparāśailas, etc.) followed a conservative form of the vinaya, yet were responsible for many doctrinal innovations, chief of which is the theory known as *lokottaravāda*. This holds that the Buddha transcends all human limitations, and is thus above (*ut-tara*) the world (*loka*), his life as Gautama being a compassionate display.

Some Mahāsāṃghika ideas later flowed into Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is, however, now thought to have drawn its inspiration from many schools. Once well represented throughout the subcontinent, especially in the northwest (including present-day Afghanistan) and the south, the Mahāsāṃghikas eventually

disappeared as a living ordination tradition. Now only parts of their canon survive, including the distinctively structured vinaya and what may be their *Ekottarikāgāma* (both in Chinese translation). Sections of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin Vinaya also survive in Sanskrit (notably the *Mahāvastu*), as do fragments of the literature of other subschools.

See also: **Mainstream Buddhist Schools**

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MAHĀSIDDHA

The Sanskrit term *mahāsiddha* (“great master of spiritual accomplishment” or “great adept”) and the simpler, near synonymous form *siddha* (adept) refer to an individual who has achieved great success in tantric meditation. Buddhist traditions mainly associate siddhas with the transmission of tantric instructions throughout South, East, and, to some degree, Southeast Asia. They are especially important for the Buddhist schools of Nepal and Tibet, which commonly enumerate eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*, many of whom are regarded as founders of tantric lineages still in existence today.

Primarily active on the Indian subcontinent during the eighth to twelfth centuries, Buddhist siddhas are chiefly characterized by their possession of *siddhi* (success), yogic accomplishments of two types: the ordinary or mundane accomplishment of magical powers, and the supreme accomplishment of perfect enlightenment. Life stories of individual siddhas abound with examples of the first type of success: mastery over the physical elements and material world, superhuman cognition, even immortality. Siddhas are commonly associated with particular displays of accomplishment; for example, Virūpa’s ability to stop the sun mid-