CHAPTER I
HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

This introductory chapter is an attempt to explain the history of the Buddha and the history of Buddhism after the death of the Buddha. This chapter also dealt with the development of the later school of Buddhism, namely the Mahayana. The similarities and the differences between those two main schools of Buddhism are discussed in this chapter as well.

BACKGROUND OF BUDDHISM

The term ‘Buddhism’ is generally used to signify the teachings of the Buddha. It also holds many different aspects of its system. It is possible to view the same Truth from different perspectives, and our ideas about the Truth may vary according to how we look at it. The Buddha’s teachings have been explained by many as a religion, a philosophy, a psychological system, literature, culture and so on. So much so that it looks like a mountain when viewed from different directions. No doubt, all these aspects could be discerned in different parts of the Buddha’s teachings, but, in fact, the Buddha’s doctrine have something more than all these put together. If asked whether the Buddhism is a religion or a philosophy, it does not matter what one calls it. The reality is what it is. As W. Rahula observes, “Buddhism remains what it is whatever label you
may put on it. The label is immaterial. Even the label ‘Buddhism’ which we give to the teaching of the Buddha is of little importance”. As P.A. Payutto, a Thai contemporary scholar said that,

“There is, however, one restriction: if the principles or teachings related to a quest for truth and wisdom do not reveal ethics and a method of practice that can be applied in daily life, then such principles cannot be considered Buddhism”.

From this text on above we only concluded that the real Buddhists should pay more attention to “Buddhism as a religion”. Buddhism is essentially concerned with all the human problems and their solutions. It is a religion of right life, both theoretically and practically. The Buddha purposely avoided discussions on the immortality of soul, eternality of the universe, because, as far as he was concerned, they did not have any practical value, as state in this text, that;

“...as inessential and beside the point as it would be unimportant for a wounded person to inquire about the caste, creed and complexion of the man who wounded him, before allowing the surgeon to remove the arrow from his body”.

As the Buddhadasa observes,

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3 W. Rahula, What the Buddha Taught, p. 5.
4 P.A. Payutto, Buddhadauma: Natural Laws and Values for Life, Grant A. Olson (tr.), p. 37.
5 I.C. Sharma, Ethical Philosophies of India, p. 150.
“Buddhism is a religion based on intelligence, science, and knowledge, whose purpose is the destruction of suffering and the source of suffering”.

And Luang Suriyabongs writes,

\[\ldots\] actually, in Buddhism there is no mention of the word ‘religion’; Buddhists speak of the ‘Buddha Sasana’ or ‘Buddha Dhamma’ which means the ‘Teaching of the Buddha’. Nevertheless, by common usage of language we speak of Buddhist Religion, because Buddhists do believe in a universal justice, that is the inexorable, all-embracing moral law of karma.

As we have seen that all thing as we known that by the Buddha himself, which He did not refer to his teachings as Buddhism in those days, but he used the term ‘Dhamma-Vinaya’ (doctrine and discipline) in proclaiming his teachings.

**The Life of the Buddha**

Siddhartha Gautama, the prince of the Sakya clan, originated a religion that is in such the ways the most unusual of those living in the world today. He claimed access to no divine perception, no exclusive intuition, no worldly or spiritual authority, and no super-human status of

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any kind. The philosophy he taught challenges common-sense concepts about what the nature of the world is and displaces the very beliefs that people incline to relish the most: the existence of God, the reality of the self, the promise of an afterlife, and the availability of happiness. In their place he taught dependence on personal understanding and the practical hopelessness of mere belief. He taught that all occurrences are impermanent and nothing can be counted on to endure; that there is no soul to be found at any time, in anything, anywhere; and that the essential quality of life, even when it seems pleasurable, is intensely disappointing. And yet, the religion that has grown out of Siddhartha’s insights has become a major world religion known for its serenity, its empathy, and its bliss.

Gautama was born in northeastern India in what is modern day Nepal in either 566 or 448 BE, and died eighty years later. Gautama’s father Suddhodana was a minor king, the head of the Sakyas. Legend holds that Gautama was so remarkable as a child that soothsayers predicted that he would one day become either a universal monarch or an “awakened one,” a “Buddha.”

Legend relates that one day, shortly after the birth of Rahula, Gautama requested to see the city that he had never before seen. Unable

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8 Ramakrishna Puligandla. Fundamental of Indian Philosophy, p 40.
to dissuade him, his father had runners clear the streets of all unpleasant sights and then allowed Gautama to be taken out in a chariot. Serendipitously, or, as some legends hold, at the will of the far-seeing God, the young prince was exposed to four shocking sights which the runners had missed. First, Gautama saw a decrepit man, gray-haired, broken-toothed, and bent with age, by the side of the road. Since he had seen few humans other than his family, he asked his charioteer in astonishment what sort of creature the man was. That is what happens when people get old, explained the driver. The next day, the prince asked to go out again. Though his father doubled his efforts to clear the streets of all unpleasant sights, a sick person was missed. On seeing the person lying by the side of the road, racked with disease, Gautama again turned to his charioteer in surprise. That is illness, he was told. The following day he embarked on another tour on which he was exposed to the sight of a human corpse, and thus learned of the fact of death. Legend or not, this story_portrays an important element of the Buddha’s later teachings: while the facts of age, sickness, and death are known to us, it is still easy to forget them, and a direct confrontation with their reality is often a novel and disturbing insight. Unless one is aware of suffering, one will never seek to improve one’s condition, a fact of which the Buddha was to make much use.

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The prince made one more excursion into the city the next day, and again, he was exposed to something he had never before seen—a saffron-robed renunciation with a shaven head, a begging bowl, and, most importantly, a tranquil and serene demeanor. That night, after returning to his palace, he realized that all of his previous pleasures were now but hollow delights. He waited until Yasodhara and Rahula were asleep, and then he left. Such an exit was seen by some of the later writings as setting a precedent for the renouncing monastic disciplines the Buddha later organized, and the seeming callousness of it is mitigated by the claim that he had to leave his family for the future benefit of all beings, that is, so that he could attain his enlightenment and then teach it to others.\(^{10}\) It is also pointed out that he was clearly not abandoning his family, for his son later became one of his greatest disciples. However, the sense of solitude, spiritual desperation, and determination portrayed by this episode is not lessened.

It was with such a sense of determination that Gautama embarked on the next stage of his life. He had seen the suffering from which he had been sheltered for so long, and then he had seen proof in the form of the renouncing that such suffering can be conquered. He now set himself the goal of learning how to conquer it. He saw that his many years of living

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 18
in opulence had not taught him the way to enlightenment, so he now tried
the opposite path. For six years he practiced renunciation and asceticism.
He first practiced Raja yoga in an attempt to conquer suffering through
meditation and the control of consciousness. Gautama soon surpassed his
teachers by attaining states of elevated awareness higher than the ones of
which they were capable, but did not feel that he had reached his goal yet.
He left his yoga teachers and joined a group of ascetics to practice
rigorous physical austerities. His strong sense of determination led him to
practice self-mortifications so severe that he nearly died.¹¹

By the time he could barely stand up and all of his hair had fallen
out, Gautama realized that asceticism was not going to bring him to his
goal, either. He recollected that he had once spontaneously experienced a
certain meditative state that could provide a path to awakening, and
decided to give it one last try. He took food, left the group of ascetics, and
sat under a tree, determined to gain enlightenment or die. As he began to
meditate, the legendary demon tempter, Mara, assailed him first with
visions of beautiful women and then with violent storms in an attempt to
prevent Gautama’s immanent enlightenment. Gautama ignored Mara and
entered deeper into meditation. He passed through state after state of
consciousness until he achieved the enlightenment he had so long sought,

¹¹ Ibid., 21
nirvana. He was now a “Buddha,” an “awakened” one. Reflecting on what he had found, he saw himself as presented with a difficult choice, he could either selfishly enter Parinirvana, the state of “non-returning” liberation, or he could postpone the final, ultimate freedom and return to the world to teach. The latter option seemed pointless, for the awakening that he had experienced was so profound, so subtle, and so “beyond the sphere of reason” that he feared it would be pointless to try to teach it to anyone else. The deciding factor was the Buddha’s enlightened insight into the oneness of all beings, which led him to sympathize with the suffering of others. He felt compassion and realized that he must return, even if for the sake of only one person’s understanding. Thus began the ministry of the Buddha.

The biographies in the canonical texts, the sutras, give only sparse information of the Buddha’s life following his nirvana. A likely explanation for the greater emphasis on his earlier life than on his later is that the core teaching of the Buddha is the “path” to follow, the process one must go through to realize nirvana for oneself. Thus, the Buddha’s personal search for awakening is more important than he did after he had found his goal. The general picture conveyed by the few details available is that he spent the rest of his life wandering around the Ganges basin area on foot, with few possessions, teaching his ever-growing group of
disciples. Much of his teaching method would have been seen as subversive by the society around him. He taught in the local languages and dialects, spurning the Sanskrit which by this time was already associated exclusively with the educated, elite priestly caste of Hinduism.¹² He taught with no distinction associating with all classes and castes of men and women. He also shunned both the isolation of the forest and the community of the cities, preferring to reside and teach in the outskirts of the urban areas. After wandering and teaching for forty-five years, the Buddha prepared for his death. He asked his followers if they had any last questions. When no one spoke, he told them “All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence”¹³ and attained the Parinirvana, the final liberation.

**History of Buddhism after the Death of the Buddha**

Everything in Buddhism including teaching and discipline revolves around the law of impermanence (*anicca*). There is nothing but perpetual flux. Edward J. Thomas refers to Kern in the memorable words,  

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“It is by no means incredible that the Disciples after the death of the founder of their sect came together to come to an agreement concerning the principal points of the creed and of the discipline”.

The First Council

All the different schools of Buddhism hold that the first Council (Sangiti, literary meaning: ‘chanting’ or ‘reciting together’) was held at Sattapanni Cave on the side of the Mount Vehbara near the city of Rajagaha three months after Mahaparinibbana (the death) of the Buddha (1 B.E. or 543 B.C.). A detailed account of this historic meeting can be found in the ‘Cullavagga’ of the VinayaPitaka. Venerable Mahakassapa decided to hold the First Council on hearing the insulting words of Subhadra who became a monk in his old age, that “Enough your Reverences, do not grieve, do not lament, we are well rid of this great recluse (the Buddha) we were tormented when he said, ‘this is allowable to you, this is not allowable to you’ but now we will be able to do as we like and we will not have to do what we do not like”. Five hundred bhikkhus (monks) who all had attained Arhathood, including Venerable Upali and Venerable Ananda, were selected for the Council. The First Council settled the Dhamma and the Vinaya and there is no ground for the view held in

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14 Edward J. Thomas, The History of Buddhist Thought, p. 29.
15 B.E. = Buddhist Era.
some quarters that the *Abhidhamma*\(^{16}\) formed a part of the canon adopted at the First Council.\(^{17}\)

Venerable Mahakassapa asked questions on *Vinaya* of the Venerable Upali. He gave knowledgeable and adequate answers and his remarks met with the unanimous approval of the presiding *Sangha*. The recitation of the *Vinaya* by Venerable Upali was accepted as *VinayaPitaka* later. Venerable Ananda, who was the closest, constant companion and disciple of the Buddha for 25 years, was able to recite what was spoken by the Buddha. So the recitation of the *Dhamma* by Ananda became established as the *SuttaPitaka*.

There were no differences of opinion on the *Dhamma*, though there was some discussion on the *Vinaya* rules. The Buddha, before the *Mahaparinibbana*, had told Venerable Ananda “if the Sangha wished to amend or modify some minor rules, they could do so”.\(^{18}\) But on that occasion Venerable Ananda did not ask the Master what the minor rules were. As the members of the Council were unable to agree as to what constituted the minor rules, Venerable Mahakassapa finally ruled that no disciplinary rule laid down by the Buddha should be changed, and no new ones should be introduced. Venerable Mahakassapa did say one thing: “*If*

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\(^{16}\) Abhidhammist denotes that *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* imply three *Pitakas*: *Vinaya* implies to *Vinaya Pitakas*, and *Dhamma* includes both *Suttanta Pitakas* and *Abhidhamma Pitakas*.

\(^{17}\) P. V. Bapat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*, pp. 31-35.

we changed the rules, people will say that Ven. Gotama’s disciples changed the rules even before his funeral fire has ceased burning”.

The First Council took the monks seven months to recite the whole of the Vinaya and the Dhamma and those monks sufficiently endowed with good memories retained all that had been recited. “Historians agree that the oral tradition is more reliable than a report written by one person from his memory several years after the event”. King Ajatasattu of Magadha and his people supported this Council.

The Second Council

A hundred years (443 B.C.) after Parinibbana of the Buddha the Second Council was held at Valikarama monastery, near the city of Vesali to discuss the different Vinaya rules. W. Rahul says,

“There was no need to change the rules three months after the parinibbana of the Buddha because little or no political, economic or social changes took place during that short interval. But 100 years later, some monks saw the need to change certain minor rules.”

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19 Ibid., p. 455.
20 Ibid., p. 457.
21 Ibid., p. 458.
The bhikkus of Vajji preached and practiced ten points (*dasavatthuni*) which were different from the established rules. The Ten points or Indulgences described in the *Cullavagga* are as follows:

1. *Singilonakappa*, or the practice of carrying salt in a horn.
2. *Dvangulakappa*, or the practice of taking meals when the shadow is two fingers broad.
3. *Gamantarakappa*, or the practice of going to another village and taking a second meal there on the same day.
4. *Avasakappa*, or the observance of the *Uposatha* ceremonies in various places in the same parish.
5. *Anumatikappa*, or obtaining sanction for a deed after it is done.
6. *Acinnakappa*, or using customary practices as precedents.
7. *Amathitakappa*, or the drinking of buttermilk after meals.
8. *Jalogim-patum*, or the drinking of toddy.
9. *Adasakam-nisidanam*, or using a rug which has no fringe.
10. *Jataruparajatam*, or the acceptance of gold and silver which is forbidden by rule 18 of the *Nissaggiya-pacittiya.*

The Venerable Yasa openly declared these practices to be unlawful. He invited eight heads of monks from Western Country and Southern Country to assemble and decide the questions of the *Vinaya.*

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The seven hundred *Arahants* led by Venerable Yasa and Venerable Sabbakami were given necessary support by King Kalasoka of Vesali and his people.

Venerable Revata asked the most senior monk Venerable Sabbakami questions on the ten offences. Once his opinion was given it was to be heard by a committee of eight monks who were called to judge the matter, and its validity was decided by vote. They thoroughly debated the matter with Venerable Revata, the questioner, and Venerable Sabbakami answered his questions. After the debate was heard, the eight monks decided against the Vajjian monks and their verdict was announced to the assembly. Afterwards seven hundred monks recited the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. Thus no doctrinal issues were at stake in the Second Council and the Canon of the First Council was again recited to reiterate its validity.

Before the meeting of the *Theras* (Elders) took place, Vajjian monks tried to invite Venerable Revata to their meeting, but he refused. They, therefore, held another Council which was bigger. It was called the Great Council (*Mahasangiti*).

The second council drew its materials mainly from *Cullavagga*, *Mahavagga Dipavamsa* and the *Samanta-pasadik* – all are Theravadins texts. On the other hand the Mahayanist texts talk about the differences in
matters discussed at the council. In the Tibetan and Chinese translations of Vasumitra and others quite a different account appears.

Vasumitra, in his account of the first schism, gives an entirely different reason for the origin of *Mahasanghikas*. It was due, he says, to five points of doctrine about the nature and attainments of the *arahat*, which were brought forward by a certain Mahadeva. These five points need not be inventions any more than the ten points, as they appear again later, but they show that one party or other (or both) knew nothing of what took place at the second Council.\(^{23}\)

The Mahadeva’s five points were:

1. An Arhat may commit a sin by unconscious temptation.
2. One may be an Arhat and not know it.
3. An Arhat may have doubts on matters of doctrine.
4. One cannot attain Arhatship without a teacher.
5. The noble ways may begin by a shout, that is, one meditating seriously on religion may make such an exclamation as ‘How sad! How sad!’ and by so doing attain progress towards perfection – the path is attained by an exclamation of astonishment.\(^{24}\)


The schism took place about a century after the death of the Buddha due to the efforts made by some monks for the relaxation of the stringent rules observed by the orthodox monks. The monks who deviated from the rules were later called the *Mahasanghikas*, while the orthodox monks were distinguished as the *Theravadins (Sthaviravadins)*. It was rather a division between the conservative and the liberal, the hierarchic and the democratic. There is no room for doubt that the Council marked the evolution of new schools of thought.\textsuperscript{25}

**The Third Council**

The Third Council was held in 326 B.C. at Asokaram in Pataliputa (present day: Patna) of King Asoka, to discuss the differences of opinion among the *Bhikkhus* of different sects. At this Council the differences were not confined to the *Vinaya*; they were also extended to the *Dhamma*. Most of the legends say that sixty thousand ascetics infiltrated into the Sangha Order, polluted the Sasana by their corrupt lives and heretical views. This caused extreme distress to *Thera Moggaliputta Tissa* who retired to a secluded retreat on the Ahoganga Mountain up the Ganges and stayed there for seven years. He headed the proceedings and chose one thousand monks from the sixty thousand participants for the traditional recitation of the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*, which went on for nine months. The occasion

for the Third Council was supplied by the need to establish the purity of the Canon which was in peril due to the rise of different sects and their rival claims, teachings and practices.

This council achieved a number of other important things as well:

1. The Elder Moggaliputta Tissa selected one thousand monks in order to refute a number of heresies and ensure the *Dhamma* was kept pure.

2. The members of this Council also gave a royal seal of approval to the doctrine of the Buddha, naming it the *Vibhajjavada*: the Doctrine of Analysis. It is identical with the approved *Theravada* doctrine.

3. The Elder Moggaliputta Tissa compiled a book called *Kathavatthu* during the council. This book consists of twenty-three chapters, and is a collection of discussions (*gatha*) and refutations of the heretical views held by various sects on matters philosophical.

4. One of the most significant achievements of this Buddhist assembly and one which was to bear fruit for centuries to come, was the Emperor’s sending forth of monks, who being well versed in the Buddha’s *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*, could recite all of it by heart, to teach it in nine different countries.
After the Third Council, Asoka’s son, Venerable Mahinda, brought the Tripitaka to Sri Lanka, along with the commentaries that were recited at the Third Council.

THE SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

After the Buddha’s death, or after “the lamp of wisdom had been blown out by the wind of impermanence”, his original teachings spread to various places. The transformations differed according to the varying backgrounds, knowledge, education, training, and intelligence of the people who passed the teachings on. Because of different background of personal interests, biases and skillfulness of the people who maintained the teachings, some parts of the teachings became prominent while others tended to fade into the background. Therefore, Buddhism consists of various sects. Most scholars classify Buddhist schools into two main sects such as Theravada and Mahayana. P. V. Bapat says,

“In the history of the succession of schools, it is found that the first schism in the Sanghawas followed by a series of schisms leading to the formation of different sub-sects, and in the course of time eleven such sub-sects arose out of the Theravada while seven issued from the Mahasanghikas. Later, there appeared other sub-sects also. All these

branches appeared one after another in close succession within three or four hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvana.\textsuperscript{28}

All the scholars agree and count first three Councils. In the book 2500 Years of Buddhism it is said that, “According to Pali tradition recorded in canonical and non-canonical literature three Sangitis (recitals) or Councils were held to draw up the canonical texts and the creed in their pure form”.\textsuperscript{29}

**The Religious Schools of Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana**

From the religious standpoint Buddhism is divided into two main schools, namely, the Theravada and the Mahayana. Theravada is a Pali word which is made up of two words: *thera* and *vada*, *thera* means ‘elders’, and *vada* for ‘word or doctrine’, so Theravada is defined as ‘Doctrine of the Elders’, it is the name for the school of Buddhism that draws its scriptural inspiration from the *Pali* Canon or *Tipitaka* which scholars generally accept as the oldest record of the Buddha’s teachings. For many centuries Theravada has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Another sect is called Acariyavada, the Doctrine of teachers (Acariyas) or Mahasangkikas as has already been noted.

\textsuperscript{28}P.V. Bapat (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 31.
Mahayana literally means ‘great vehicle’ (of liberation from samsara). Hinayana is a derogatory term meaning ‘small vehicle’ or ‘inferior vehicle’, it is used by people who claim to follow the Mahayana, to refer to the followers of the Theravada school. So Theravada is often equated with ‘Hinayana’, in contrast to ‘Mahayana’. Mahayana is a synonym for Tibetan Buddhism, Zen, and other expressions of Northern Buddhism. The use of ‘Hinayana’ as a pejorative has its origins in the early schisms within the monastic community that ultimately led to the emergence of what would later become Mahayana. As James Paul McDermott writes: “Followers of Mahayana refer to Theravada using the derogatory term Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle”.30

Today scholars of many persuasions use the term ‘Hinayana’ without the pejorative intent. According to W. Rahula, Hinayana differs from Theravada because the terms are not synonymous as following:

Theravada Buddhism went to Sri Lanka during the 3rd Century B.C. when there was no Mahayana at all. Hinayana sects developed in India and had an existence independent from the form of Buddhism existing in Sri Lanka. Today there is no Hinayana sect in existence anywhere in the world. Therefore, in 1950 the World Fellowship of Buddhists inaugurated in Colombo unanimously decided that the term

Hinayana should be dropped when referring to Buddhism existing today in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, etc.\textsuperscript{31}

Owing to its historical dominance in southern Asia (Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos), Theravada is also identified as ‘Southern Buddhism’. In contrast, Buddhism which migrated northwards from India into China, Tibet, Japan, and Korea is called ‘Northern Buddhism’.

The Mahayana School adopted Sanskrit language for the canonical texts. Buddhism was propagated in China by missionaries from India. Missionaries such as Kumarajiva, Fa-Hsien, and Hsuan-tsang, all brought Buddhist texts from India to China and translated them. The Buddhist canon that went to China was in Sanskrit, and it included many special Mahayana Sutras that were not in the Pali Canon (though many are now suspected of being Chinese forgeries).

The language of the Theravada canonical texts is Pali, a relative of Magadhi, a language probably spoken in central India during the Buddha’s time. The teachings were passed down within the monastic community following a well-established oral tradition. After the Third Council, Asoka’s son, Venerable Mahinda, brought the Tipitaka to Sri Lanka, along with the commentaries that were recited at the Third Council.

Council. For a long time the Buddha’s teachings – *Tipitaka* along with commentaries were not fixed in writing. However, they got fixed in writing on palm leaves during 80 B.C., in the reign of King Vattagamani in Sri Lanka. V.A. Gunasekara says, “The term Theravada is sometimes used to denote the Canon as it emerged in the Third Council, while the Canons of the First and Second Canon are sometimes referred to as original (or primitive) Buddhism”.

**The Similarities**

The World Buddhist *Sangha* Council was first convened by Theravadins in Sri Lanka in 1966, with the hope of bridging differences and working together. The first convention was attended by leading monks from many countries and sects, *Mahayana* as well as *Theravada*. We find the following points which were approved unanimously.

Basic points unifying the *Theravada* and the *Mahayana* are:

1. The Buddha is our only Master.
2. We take refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*.
3. We do not believe that this world is created and ruled by a God.

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4. Following the example of the Buddha, who is the embodiment of Great Compassion (Mahakaruna) and Great Wisdom (Mahapannya), we consider that the purpose of life is to develop compassion for all living beings without discrimination and to work for their good, happiness, and peace; and to develop wisdom leading to the realization of Ultimate Truth.

5. We accept the Four Noble Truths, namely, Dukkha, the Arising of Dukkha, the Cessation of Dukkha, and the Path leading to the Cessation of Dukkha; and the universal law of cause and effect as taught in the Paticcasamuppada (Conditioned Genesis or Dependent Origination).

6. We understand, according to the teaching of the Buddha, that all conditioned things (sankhara) are impermanent (anicca) and dukkha, and that all conditioned and unconditioned things (dhamma) are without self (anatta).

7. We accept the Thirty-seven Qualities conducive to Enlightenment (bodhipakkhiyadhamma) as different aspects of the Path taught by the Buddha leading to Enlightenment.

8. There are three ways of attaining bodhi or Enlightenment, according to the ability and capacity of each individual: as a disciple (savaka), as a Pacceka-Buddha and as a
Sammasambuddha (perfectly and fully Enlightened Buddha). We accept it as the highest, noblest, and most heroic to follow the career of a Bodhisattva and to become a Sammasambuddha in order to save others.

9. We admit that in different countries there are differences with regard to the life of Buddhist monks, popular Buddhist beliefs and practices, rites and ceremonies, customs and habits. These external forms and expressions should not be confused with the essential teachings of the Buddha. \(^{33}\)

The Differences

i) The Idea of Buddha and Bodhisattva

The Buddha is gone to Parinibbana. There is no one who equals the Buddha in capacity to help mankind. After the Parinibbana of the Buddha, nothing remains of his body, his ability or his power to help man to achieve the goal of liberation, Nibbana. Only his teaching which disciples study and practice will help man. The individual practitioners must work out their salvation on their own, and not from outside. The

Buddha himself says: “You yourselves must make the effort for your liberation, for the Tathagata only points out the way”\(^\text{34}\).

According to Theravadins there is only one Buddha. The individual practitioners can become Buddha, if they have the ability to attain Buddhahood. According to them, no one can attain Buddhahood without devoting many lifetimes practising the ten perfections \((\text{paramitas})\). Because of this, a Supreme Buddha \((\text{Sammasambuddha})\) appears only at long intervals of time. It is not necessary for each and every person to wait until practitioners gain Buddhahood. Aspirants can also find their salvation by becoming Paccekabuddha (Silent Buddha) or Arahants.

\textbf{ii) Three types of Bodhi (Buddhahood)}

1. \textit{Sammasambodhi} (Supreme Buddha) is the supreme enlightenment. He gains full Enlightenment by his own efforts and wisdom. And he can expound the doctrine to seekers of Truth to purify and save them from \textit{samsara} (cycle of birth and death).

2. \textit{Paccekabodhi} (Private or Silent Buddha) is the independent enlightenment of a highly evolved person who purifies himself by his own efforts without external aid. But he cannot

\(^{34}\text{Dhp. 276.}\)
serve others by teaching or preaching morality. *Pacceka* means ‘private’.

3. *Savakabodhi* is the enlightenment of a disciple, who can become an *arahan*. *Savaka* literally means hearer. So he needs the guidance: the Buddha to teach him for enlightenment.\(^{35}\)

Venerable W. Rahula gives the conclusion that, “The attainment of *Nibbana* between the three types of Buddhahood is exactly the same. The only difference is that the *SammaSambuddha* has many more qualities and capacities than the other two”.\(^{36}\)

On the other hand, Mahayanists hold that, “the Gautama Buddha is not gone, and individual practitioners are not on their own. Instead, the Buddha taught the dharma out of compassion, and his compassion would prevent him from being unavailable to practitioners now”.\(^{37}\) For them the practitioners now can become *bodhisattvas*, who vow to carry all beings with them into salvation. Bodhisattva literally means one who is devoted to, or intent on, wisdom or enlightenment, but the popular meaning is ‘wisdom being’ or ‘becoming Buddha’.

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Mahayanists again believe that the Buddha was not unique, and individual practitioners who have become bodhisattvas can become Buddhas. Bodhisattvas are also approachable, like the Buddha. There are numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas somewhere in the sky for worship and prayer. Maitreya is presently a Bodhisattva. The most important bodhisattva is Avalokiteshvara or Kuan-yin\textsuperscript{38} (in Chinese), who became identified with the Mahayanists’ Goddess of Mercy.

*Mahayana*is for the Bodhisattvahood which leads to Buddhahood, but *Theravada* is for Arahantship; *Theravada* may appear to be ‘selfish’ because *Theravadin* teaches that the practitioners should seek their own salvation only, not of others. On this point W. Rahula says that “But how can a selfish person gain Enlightenment? Both schools accept the three Yanas or Bodhis but consider the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest”.\textsuperscript{39} The three Yanas are: Bodhisattvayana, PratekaBuddhayana, and Sravakayana. In the *Theravada* tradition these three are called Bodhis or three types of Buddhahood which is discussed above.

\textsuperscript{38} Bodhisattva manifests himself in the form of female. Mahāyānists were taken an affirmative position of female (Kwan Yin as Bodhisattva or Goddess) but some Theravādins have claimed that the Buddhas have to be males only.

ii) The Idea of Nibbana and Samsara

According to Theravadins, Nibbana and Samsara are different. L. Kelley writes, “Nirvana (liberation) and Samsara (the place of death and rebirth) are definitely different. Samsara is a place of suffering to be left behind. Nirvanna is a liberation that is free of death and rebirth but is beyond description and rational understanding”. But for Mahayana, they are identified as not totally different nor the same. About this point also L. Kelley states,

Nirvana and Samsara are no longer definitely different. The ‘Fourfold Negation’ is applied to the relationship between the two. Samsara and nirvana are thus neither the same, nor different, nor both the same and different, nor neither the same nor different. This allows some room for manoeuvre, which may have made Buddhism more palatable in China, where Confucianism never did approve either of the world-denying metaphysics or the monasticism of Buddhism.

According to Sangharakshita, the concepts of Nirvana and Samsara are different. He says, “Ontologically, it is for the Hinayana the eternal, unchanging, extra-mental spiritual entity wholly unconnected

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with the cosmic process, and for the *Mahayana* the Absolute Reality transcending all oppositions including that between itself and *Samsara*”\(^{41}\).