Language and Discourse

A brief survey of Buddhist philosophy of language, epistemology and logic

Freeing the mind from noise

by Piya Tan ©2006, 2008

To LORENZ DEUTSCHENBAUR of Bavaria, Germany,
Ludwig Maxilian Universität, Munich, & the NUSBS Discovering Buddhism,
May your inward journey bring you light and peace, and for others, too, 2008.

1 What are language and discourse?

1.1 LANGUAGE, DISCOURSE AND MEANING. Without language, there will be no religion; no True Teaching could be communicated. And yet, language can hide or distort the message just as well. As such, some understanding of the nature of language helps us understand the problems involved in learning and teaching the Dharma, overcome such problems, rightly understand the Dharma, and effectively convey the means of spiritual liberation to others.

Language is a means of expression and communication learned and used at the interface of our minds and the external world. Discourse is how we present our ideas and feelings through language to communicate with others—it is how we use language to record our thoughts, and to inform or influence others. Discourse is also about *how* the Buddha teaches the Dharma.[1]

Language significantly shapes discourse: *language* gives palpable form to what is in our minds that we wish to express; *discourse* gives meaning to what is communicated in language. *Meaning* is how we or our audience value or relate to what is expressed in language. Often, the term *language* is used to denote both itself and discourse, and *meaning* has a broad sense in terms of how we evaluate thought, word and action.

In other words, language should not only help us in perceiving the world and our minds more clearly, but also to make right sense of them, that is, whether virtual reality or true reality. In fact, misusing or misunderstanding language often has dire consequences, as the alternative to nirvana (the death-free), so to speak, is samsara (the endless cycle of rebirth and redeath), as clearly stated by the Buddha in **the (Devatā) Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.20):

Akkheyya,saññino sattā	Beings who perceive the expressible [the designated]	
akkheyyasmiṃ patiṭṭhitā,	Are established in the expressible.	
akkheyye apariññāya	Not fully understanding the expressible,	
yogam āyanti maccuno	They go under the yoke of death.[2]	(S 46)
Akkheyyañ ca pariññāya	But having fully understood the expressible [the designated],	
akkhātāraṁ na maññati	one does not conceive of "an expresser."[3]	
tañ hi tassa na hotî ti	For, there is nothing about him	
yena naṃ vajjā na tassa atthi	with which there is to speak of.	(S 47)

(S 46-47/1.20/1:12) = SD 21.4

In this essay, we will mainly focus on how Buddhist philosophers and scholastics view language and discourse in the millennium following the Buddha. I believe this will help us have a better understanding of early Buddhism, to live it profitably, and to propagate it effectively. This essay will be in two main

[1] On discourse, see **The Gradual Way** = SD 56.1 (1).
[2] This verse (S 46) as at It 3.2.4/54. See SD 21.4 Intro (3.1).
[3] S 47ab as at It 3.2.4/54. See SD 21.4 Intro (3.2).

parts, the first will deal with the languages used in Buddhism, its scriptures, scriptural translations and teachings; and the second part is a brief survey of the post-Buddha epistemology, semantics and logic.

1.2 TWO KINDS OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE. From the very first Buddha word, when the timeless truth is first put into human language, the main concern of the Buddha, the saints and Dharma-inspired teachers have been *the proper use of speech*. In **the Neyy'attha Nīt'attha Sutta** (A 2.3.4-5), for example, the Buddha explicitly declares that he should not be misrepresented regarding how he teaches. We should not confuse *the two kinds of language*—the explicit (*nīta*) and the implicit (*neyya*)—as used in the early Buddhist discourse, thus

> Those who explain the Sutta teaching whose sense is explicit (*nīta*) as explicit [whose sense has been drawn out].
> Those who explain the Sutta teaching whose sense is implicit (*neyya*) as implicit [whose sense is to be drawn out].
> These, bhikshus, are the two who do not misrepresent the Tathagata.
> (A 2.3.4-5/1:60) = SD 2.6b

Language, especially religious language, is such that it can be direct or indirect, that is, religious teachings and truths may be expressed *explicitly* as "ultimate truth" (*param'attha sacca*),[4] or *implicitly* as "conventional truth" (*sammuti sacca*).[5] Although the terms *sammuti sacca* and *param'attha sacca* only appear in the Commentaries, the term *sammuti* is very ancient, found, for example, in **the Sutta Nipāta**:

Yā kāc'imā sammutiyo puthujjā	Whatever opinions are commonplace	
sabbā va etā na upeti vidvā	The wise associate with none of them	
anūpayo so upayaṁ kim eyya	Why should the uninvolved be involved	
diṭṭhe sute khanti akubbamāno	When in the seen or heard he prefers none?	(Sn 897)
Sakaṁ hi dhammaṁ paripuṇṇam āhu	Their own doctrine is perfect, they say,	
aññassa dhammaṁ pana hīnam āhu	But others' doctrine are inferior, they say,	
evam pi viggayha vivādiyanti	Contending thus, they quarrel—	
sakaṁ sakaṁ sammutim āhu saccaṁ	Each says the convention is the truth!	(Sn 904)

1.3 THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE. The language of the Buddha's teaching—whether that of the Buddha himself or of the early saints—employ two levels of truth or meaning: the conventional (*sammutti,-sacca*) and the ultimate level (*param'attha,sacca*) [1.2]. The Buddha, the saints and Dharma teachers speak on these two levels, namely, the worldly or layman level, using stories, images (comparisons, metaphors, etc), dealing with causes and conditions, and with conventional reality, and the Dharma or spiritual level, using technical terms (impermanence, suffering, not-self), directly dealing with the path and liberation, that is, ultimate reality.

In conventional (or worldly) terms, we say that someone is "born of a mother." But in Dharma (or ultimate) language, *birth* is really the arising of the notion of the ego, the "I" resulting from ignorance, craving, clinging, etc. This is clearly explained by the Buddha in the teaching of dependent arising.[6] Often enough, we can easily know that the teaching is given on a conventional level. For example, the phrase "regarded as, reckoned by (in terms of)" (*saṅkhaṁ gacchati*) is used, as in the following cases:

"And it is regarded as 'sugar'"	*so ca guḷo tv-eva saṅkhaṁ gacchati* (Mv 6.16.1 = V 1:210)
"it is reckoned as a 'house,'…	*agāraṁ tv-eva saṅkhaṁ gacchati…*
it is reckoned as 'form'"	*rūpaṁ tv-eva saṅkhaṁ gacchati* (M 28.26/1:190) = SD 6.16

[4] Sometimes, this ultimate language is called "Dharma language," so it may be *reference* to the ultimate truth or the ultimate truth *itself*. In the Mahāyāna, *pāramârtha,sacca* refers only to the ineffable "ultimate truth." See **Levels of Learning** = SD 40a.4 (2-4).

[5] DA 2:383; AA 2:118.

[6] See **Titth'āyatana S** (A 3.61/1:173-177) = SD 6.8; also *The Buddha's Teaching,* ch 22; also Bucknell & Stuart-Fox, *The Twilight Language*, London: Curzon, 1986: 82 f.

"if one has a latent tendency,"	*yaṁ kho…anuseti*
one is reckoned by it"	*tena saṅkhaṁ gacchati* (S 22.35/3:35) = SD 31.4

There are two rules of thumb for detecting whether the language used is conventional or ultimate. The first rule of thumb is that the conventional language consists of *referents* (the finger pointing to the moon), while the ultimate language speak directly of *realities* (the moon).[7] Secondly, it is not too difficult to detect a passage using the Dharma language: they directly refer to the reality of the three universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self, or any of them.

LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES OF BUDDHISM

2 Noble silence and right speech

2.1 THE SILENT SAGE. There is an important reason why "the highest truth" (*param'attha*) is rarely mentioned in the Canon. It refers to nirvana, and is as such best *experienced* rather than talked about—merely referring to it without actually attaining it is like poring over a map or travel brochure and talking about a faraway place without ever being there. In the early years of the Buddha's ministry, most of the monks were wanderers and meditators who delighted in the inner silence of the awakened mind, as reflected in the terms *muni* ("the silent sage")[8] and *moneyya* ("the silence of the true sage").[9]

The inner silence of the sage is celebrated in such ancient discourses as **the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3) and **the Muni Sutta** (Sn 1.12). Discourses such as **the Kalaha,vivāda Sutta** (Sn 4.11) and **the Cūḷa Viyūha Sutta** (Sn 4.12) exhort us against falling into loquacious debates. **The Nānā,titthiyā Sutta 1** (U 6.4), which contains the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant, closes with this verse:

Imesu kira sajjanti	They are attached to these (views), it is said,
eke samaṇa,brāhmaṇā	some of these recluses and brahmins,
viggayha naṃ vivadanti	they quarrel over it divisively,
janā ek'aṅga,dassino	people who see only one side of things!

(U 6.4/69) = SD 40a.14

For this reason, the Buddha, as recorded in **the Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), exhorts the monks, "When you gather together, bhikshus, you should either discuss the Dharma or keep noble silence." **The Kolita Sutta** (S 2:273) explains that the "noble silence" (*ariya,tuṇhī,bhāva*) refers to the second dhyana,

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[7] RH Robinson uses the word "actuals": see *Early Madhyamika in India and China,* 1967: 50.

[8] Refs incl the foll: **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16/2:106*, 157*), **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21/2:267* ×2); **Brahmâyu S** (M 91/2:144* ×2, 146*), **Isi,gili S** (M 116/3:70*), **Deva,dūta S** (M 130/3:187*), **Bhadd'eka,ratta S** (Buddha: M 131/187*, 189), (Ānanda: M 132/3:191*, 192*) (Mahā Kaccāna: M 133/3:193*, 195*, 198*) (Lomasakaṅgiya: M 134/3:200*, 201*), **Dhātu,vibhaṅga S** (M 140/3:239, 346 ×4); **Sappa S** (S 4.6/1:106*), **Aggika S** (S 7.8/1:167*, 168*), **Deva,hita S** (**S** 7.13/1:175* ×2), **Kaṭṭha,hāra S** (S 7.18/1:181*), **Arati S** (S 8.2/1:187*), **Gaggarā S** (S 8.11-/1:196*), **Hxaliddikani S 1** (S 22.3/3:9*), **Cetiya S** (S 51.10/5:263*); **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40/1:150*), **Ti,kaṇṇa S** (A 3.58/1:165*), **Jāṇussoṇi S** (A 3.59/1:167*), **Anusota S** (A 4.5/2:6* *sa ve muni,* vl *sa vedagū*), **Bhūmi,cāla S** (A 8.70/4:312*); **Dh** 225a, 269bd; **Bāhiya S** (U 1.10/9*), **Āyu,saṅkhār'osajjana S** (U 6.1/64*); **Dhamma Te,vijja S** (It 99/3.5.10/100*); **Muni S** (Sn 1.12/211-221* ×10), **Pabbajjā S** (Sn 3.1/414b*), **Māgha S** (Sn 3.5/508c*), **Sabhiya S** (Sn 3.6/523c*, 540c*, 545b*), **Sela S** (Sn 3.7/571b*), **Nālaka S** (Sn 3.11/700cd*, 708d*), **Guhaṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.2/779b*), **Duṭṭhaṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.3/780c*), **Jarā S** (Sn 809c, 4.7/812c*), **Tissa Metteyya S** (Sn 4.7/821b*), **Māgandiya S** (**Sn 4.9**/844b*), **Purābheda S** (Sn 4.10/850d*, 860b*), **Mahā Viyūha S** (Sn 4.13/914c*), **Atta,daṇḍa S** (Sn 4.15/941d, 946a, 954b), **Mettagū Māṇava S** (Sn 5.5/1052e, 1058b), **Nanda Māṇava S** (Sn 5.8/1077a), **Hemaka Māṇava S** (Sn 5.9/1085c), **Pārāyana S** (Sn 5.18/1127d); **Tha** 137a; **Thī** 205a. (More refs at Vv, Pv, Tha, Thī, Ap, B, J, Nm, Nc.) Six kinds of *muni*: **Nm 1**:58 (Comy on Guhaṭṭhaka S, Sn 4.2/772-779), **2**:355 (Comy on Mahā Viyūha S, Sn 4.13/895-914). Note that most of the refs are marked with an asterisk (*), ie they are verses, which in such cases, are ancient.

[9] Refs incl the foll: **Nālaka S** (**Sn 3.11**/700d, 701a, 716a). Three kinds of *moneyya*: **(Vitthāra) Moneyya S** (A 3.120/1:273); **(Saṅkhitta) Moneyya S** (It 67/3.2.8/56); **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.10(53)/3:220); **Nm** 1:57, 129, **2**:335.

because within it, initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*) (or, thinking and pondering) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur. The Commentary on the Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta says that those who cannot attain dhyana are advised to maintain "noble silence" by attending to their basic meditation subject (MA 2:169).[10]

In **the Kāmabhū Sutta 2** (S 4:293), *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called "verbal formations" (*vacī,saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech.[11] Speech, in other words, is the expression of our thoughts. It is interesting that such thoughts need not always be *conscious*, that is, they are often *habitual* processes, initiated and controlled by our latent tendencies.[12] For that reason, we often chatter faster than we think! [5.3]

Meditation is a training in the taming and silencing of the mind, to clear it of words and noise, so that we can directly *feel* our present-moment experiences, understand their true nature, and go on to realize the liberating wisdom. Only in such inner stillness can we truly see our minds and to express the Dharma clearly and effectively to others.[13]

2.2 SPEAKING FROM THE SILENCE. Once followers and the public begin to approach the Buddha and the early saints, they, out of compassion, counsel or teach them the Dharma. Occasionally, non-Buddhists would engage the Buddha or his disciples in debate. An important part of the disciple's training concerns right speech (*sammā vācā*), which is defined in the following pericope, as found in t**he Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1):[14]

> Having abandoned false speech, he abstains from false speech. He speaks the truth, holds to the truth as his bond, trustworthy, reliable, no deceiver of the world.
>
> Having abandoned divisive speech, he abstains from divisive speech. What he has heard here he does not tell there to break those people apart from these people here. What he has heard there he does not tell here to break these people apart from those people there.
>
> Thus reconciling those who have broken apart or consolidating those who are united, he loves concord, delights in concord, enjoys concord, speaks words of concord.
>
> Having abandoned abusive speech, he abstains from abusive speech. He speaks words that are humane, soothing, loving, touching, urbane, and delightful and pleasant to the multitude.
>
> Having abandoned idle chatter, he abstains from idle chatter. He speaks in season, speaks what is true, what is in accordance with the goal [or, what is beneficial][15]. He speaks on the Doctrine and the Discipline. He speaks words worth treasuring, seasonable, backed by reason, measured, connected with the goal.[16] (D 1.9/1:4 f) = SD 25.2

The dynamics of right speech is further explained in **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58), where the Buddha gives an exhaustive list of types of speech according to their *truth-value, utility (or disutility) and pleasantness (or unpleasantness)*. A statement could be true (*bhūta, taccha*) or false (*abhūta, atacchа*), useful (connected with the goal, *attha,saṁhita*) or useless (not connected with the goal, *anattha,-*

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[10] M 26.4/1:161 n = SD 1.11.

[11] See also **Nandaka S** (A 9.4/4:359).

[12] Latent tendencies (***anusayā***)—lust (*rāgânusaya*), aversion (*paṭighânusaya*), and ignorance (*avijjâ'nusaya*)—are deeply embedded in our mind through our habitual acts and can only be uprooted on attaining the path. They are defilements which "lie along with" (*anuseti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18) = SD 6.14(5) & **Sall'atthena S** (S 36.6) = SD 5.5 Intro. On the unconscious, see **The Unconscious** = SD 17.8b.

[13] **Visākha S** (A 4.48) speaks of 6 kinds of oratorical excellences: (1) refined speech (*poriyā vācāya*), (2) clear voice (*vissaṭṭhāya*), (3) distinct enunciation (*anelagalāya*), (4) clarity in meaning (*atthassa viññāpaniyā*), (5) well-rounded knowledge (*pariyāpaṇṇāya*), (6) independence of thought (*anissitāya*) (A 4.4.8/2:51).

[14] Also as at **Cūla Hatthipadopama S** (M 27.11-13/1:179 f = SD 40a.5) = **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya S** (M 38.31-33/1:267 = SD 17.10).

[15] *attha,vādī.*

[16] *attha,saṃhitaṃ.*

saṁhita), pleasant (*paresaṁ piyā manāpā*) or unpleasant (*paresaṁ appiyā amanāpā*). From these we get eight possible propositions:[17]

(1)	**True**	**useful**	**pleasant**	He would assert such a statement at a proper time.
(2)	**"**	**"**	**unpleasant**	He would assert such a statement at a proper time.
(3)	"	useless	pleasant	He would not assert such a statement.
(4)	"	"	unpleasant	He would not assert such a statement.
(5)	False	useful	pleasant	[Not applicable]
(6)	"	"	unpleasant	[Not applicable]
(7)	"	useless	pleasant	He would not assert such a statement.
(8)	"	"	unpleasant.	He would not assert such a statement

Statement 2, however, seems to contradict a statement in **the Subhāsita Sutta** (Sn 3.3), where it is stated "One should speak only what is pleasant" (*piya,vācam eva bhāseyya,* Sn 452a). KN Jayatilleke suggests that "this apparent exception holds good only in the case of the Tathāgata" (1963: 352). I think there is a better explanation. We see, in the second half of the stanza, *piya* is being broadly defined: "What one speaks without bringing evil to others is pleasant" (*yaṁ anādāya pāpāni | paresaṁ bhāsate piyaṁ*, Sn 452cd). The point is that the Buddha is not a sweet-talker, and we do have numerous occasions when he would rightly reprimand a foolish monk.[18]

It can be argued that the Subhāsita Sutta (Sn 3.3) records the situation in the early years of the ministry (probably during the first 20 years) when only those who have attained the Dharma-eye or who have become arhats are admitted into the order. In other words, outside of formal meditation practice, our actions, especially our speech, should become bridges for ourselves and others to cross over into greater self-understanding and active compassion for others.

3 Languages that communicate

3.1 No church language.

3.1.1 Reasons for not using Vedic Sanskrit. For any religion or teaching to reach its audience and the masses, they must understand the language used. Ever since the Buddha begins to teach the Dharma, he makes use of the dialect of his audience. We know this for a fact from the various unequivocal statements the Buddha makes, such as a Vinaya rule forbidding monastics from using the sophisticated Sanskrit of the priest class, and the admonition that they are to use the language of the locals.

The Vinaya relates an incident where two monks (*Yameḷutekula*, ie "Yameḷu and Tekula," or "Yameḷa and Utekula") complain to the Buddha that other monks of various origins are distorting the Buddha's Teaching in using their own dialect (*sakāya niruttiyā buddha,vacanaṁ dūsenti*) and propose that the Teaching be transmitted in Vedic verse (*chandaso āropetabbaṁ*). The Buddha refuses and declares: 'I allow you, bhikshus, to learn the Buddha Word in your own dialect' (*anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya nirut-*

[17] See Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge,* 1963: 351 f.

[18] Monks who show any serious psychosocial weakness (esp wrong view and wrong conduct) are reprimanded as *mogha,purisa,* lit "empty person," usu tr as "misguided one." See esp **Alagaddûpama S** (M 22.6/1:132) = SD 3.13. See **Pāthika S** (**D 24**): **3**:3 (×3), 4 (×3), 6, 7 (×2), 9 (×2), 10 (×2), 11, 12 (×2), 28 (×2); **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (**M 12**): **1**:68, 69; **Alagaddûpama S** (**M 22**): 132 (×5), 258 (×5); **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhāya S** (**M 38**): 258 (×2); **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (**M 63**): **1**:428; **Mahā Kamma,vibhaṅga S** (**M 136**): **3**:208 (×3), 209; **Mīḷhaka S** (**S 17.5**): **2**:229; **Sīha,nāda S** (**A 9**.11): **4**:378; **Vinaya: V 1**:32, 58 (×2), 59 (×4), 154 (×3), 193 (×4), 216, 218 (×3), 250 (×3), 301 (×3), 305 (x3), 306 (×6); **2**:7, 18 (×3), 26 (×5), 118, 119 (×2), 165 (×2), 168 (×4), 193. On *mogha,purisa* as a syn of *asappurisa,*see **Sappurisa S** (M 113) = SD 23.7 Intro (3.2).

tiyā Buddha,vacanaṁ pariyāpuṇituṁ, V 2:139).[19] Numerous Chinese translations, too, especially the Vinayas of the various ancient schools, support this interpretation.[20]

The significance of this passage has eluded most modern scholars, especially the traditional Theravāda scholastics. The Buddha firmly rejects the use of Vedic or Sanskrit versification (*chandaso*) for at least two important reasons:

(1) Vedic Sanskrit was a priestly elitist language which would prevent most people, especially the common masses, from understanding the Dharma;

(2) The brahminical teachings were very much against most of what the Buddha and his teachings stand for, such as self-reliance, personal awakening, and most importantly not-self,

The Vedas, compiled by the brahmins through the ages, were *the bible* of the brahmins, and Sanskrit was their *church language*, and with both they determined to politically dominate, religiously control, and lucratively gain from the lives of the ancient caste Indians (the outcastes were not allowed to participate in any such rituals although they toil at the menial tasks associated with such activities).[21]

3.1.2 No holy scripture. Early Buddhism is unique amongst religions in not having any holy scripture, such as a Torah, or a Bible, or a Quran. From what has been mentioned [3.1.1], it is understandable that there was no Urkanon in the Buddha's time nor in Indian Buddhism as a whole. In early Buddhism, there was no ruling on the purity of "the Word" (*logos*) in a particular holy language (as for example, the ancient Jews used Hebrew, the mediaeval Christians used Latin, and the modern Muslims use Arabic). The closest we have to some sense of orthodoxy is found, for example, in the instructions of **the Sugata Vinaya Sutta** (A 4.160), which exhorts the following measures to prevent confusion over the teaching:

> Bhikshus, there are these four things that conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction
>
> (1) Here, bhikshus, the monks grasp the Suttas in the wrong way, with the sentences and words in the wrong order. Bhikshus, for one who wrongly grasps the Suttas, with their sentences and words in their wrong order, draws out the wrong sense, too.
>
> (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, the monks are difficult to speak to; possessed of qualities that make them difficult to speak to;[22] impatient; when taught, they learn without respect [for the teaching and the teacher].[23]
>
> (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, the monks who are very learned, masters of the sacred texts, Dharma experts, Vinaya experts, experts in the Code of Disciplines,[24] do not speak the Suttas to

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[19] See Geiger, *Pali Language and Literature*, 1968: 6 f; Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism,* 1997: 59-76 (ch 4).

[20] JI Xiang-lin, 原始佛教的语言问题 "The problem of the language of the earliest Buddhism," 1956; 再论原-始佛教的语言问题 "Second essay on the problem of the language of the earliest Buddhism" 1958; 三论 原始佛教-的语言问题 ("Third essay on the problem of the language of the earliest Buddhism," 1984. These 3 essays repr in his *Collected Essays* 季羡林學術论著自选集, Beijing: Beijing Normal College, 1991. HUANG Pochi, "The problem of Pāli as the canonical language of Buddhism," 2008: 4-7.

[21] On the Buddha's ethicization of the Vedic sacrifice, see eg **Kūṭa,danta S** (D 5.13-21/1:137-143) & SD 22.8 Intro (3.3).

[22] "Possessed of qualities that make them difficult to speak to." **The Anumāna S** (M 15) gives a list of such qualities: (1) one has evil desires and is overcome by it; (2) one lauds oneself and disparages others; (3) one is angry and overcome by it; (4) one is angry, and resentful as a result; (5) one is angry, and stubborn as a result; (6) one is angry and utters words bordering on anger; (7) one is reproved, but resists the reprover; (8) one is reproved, but denigrates the reprover; (9) one is reproved, but counter-reproves the reprover; (10) one is reproved, but beats about the bush; (11) one is reproved, but fails to account for one's conduct; (12) one is contemptuous and insolent; (13) one is envious and avaricious; (14) one is fraudulent and deceitful; (15) one is obstinate and arrogant; (16) one stick stubbornly to one's views (M 15/1:95).

[23] As at **Ovāda S 1** (S 16.6/2:204) where the same complaint is made by Mahā Kassapa to the Buddha..

[24] "Doctrinal summaries," *māṭikā,* also tr "matrix, matrices, summaries." Winternitz: "The Māṭikās are the 'lists' or 'tabulated summaries' of those ideas which are of importance in the doctrine and the monastic order. These Māṭikās were subsequently worked into the texts of the Abhidhammapiṭaka." (HIL 1, 1933:11). In Thailand, the

> others with respect, and after their passing, the others do not recall the Suttas, cutting them off at the root.
>
> (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, many elder monks who, being luxurious, lax, backsliders, shirking the task of spiritual solitude, do not put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.
>
> And the generations that come after them, too, following them, being luxurious, lax, backsliders, shirking the task of spiritual solitude, do not put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.
>
> Bhikshus, these are the four things that conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction. (A 4.160/2:147-149)

It is obvious from the tone of the Sugata Vinaya Sutta, that the Dharma should be clearly expounded, so that it is properly understood resulting in effective practice for the sake of "realizing the unrealized." This is how the True Teaching (*saddhamma*), is not a holy book, but *a holy life*.

3.1.3 The churching of Buddhism. We might be able to pinpoint the beginnings of the churching[25] of Buddhism, when *Pāli* (which originally simply means "text," in the sense of authentic teachings) became *Pāli,bhāsā,* "the Pali language." **Buddhaghosa,** in his Vinaya commentary on the key phrase *sakāya niruttiyā* [3.1.1], interprets it as follows: "Here, the phrase *'his own dialect'* means the Māgadhī language as spoken by the fully self-awakened one" (*ettha* ***sakā niruttiyā*** *nāma sammā,sambuddhena vutta-p,pakāro māgadhika,vohāro*, VA 1214).

Not only did Buddhaghosa interpreted Pāli as the language spoken by the Buddha, but he also declared it to be the "root language of all beings" (*sabba,sattānaṁ mūla,bhāsā*),[26] as it were to raise Pali to the status of the sole sacred language just as Vedic Sanskrit—the "language of the gods" [3.1.4]—was to the ancient Vedic brahmins! We know that Māgadhī was the language of Asoka's empire. Understandably, Buddhaghosa and the Mahāvihāra thought it would be expedient to identify the language of their canon with the official language of Asoka's empire [3.2.2]. The German scholar, **Heinz Bechert,** adds:

> [I]t remains almost certain that here was no single "language of the earliest tradition," and that linguistic diversity of the Buddhist tradition is as ancient as Buddhism itself. This tradition of linguistic diversity is not only extremely ancient in Buddhism, but…highly persistent…. In this way, some branches of the Buddhist tradition remained aware of this fact for a long time, though Buddhaghosa and the Theravāda tradition have handed down a different story which must be regarded as an innovation…in ancient Lanka where the Tripiṭaka was not transposed into the local Old Sinhala Prakrit, but was handed down in the dialect of the missionaries from mainland India, most probably from the dialect of Vidiśa. (Bechert, 1980: 15 f)

There is clear evidence of how this new development arose in Buddhaghosa's works. In his magnum opus, **the Visuddhi,magga**, for example, Buddhaghosa still uses the word *pāli* to mean "line, row, limit" (Vism 107, 450), and in his Vinaya Commentary, **the Samanta,pāsādikā**, we see *pāli* simply meaning "text," as contrasted with "commentary" (*aṭṭhakathā*) (VA 2:300).[27] Following Buddhaghosa and the

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ancient tradition of reciting the Māṭikā during last rites is still practised today, but this text is includes the summary of the Kathā.vatthu, a post-Buddha work. In the Mahāyāna, the term *mātṛkā* is used syn with their Abhidharma Piṭaka.

[25] By "churching," I mean a centralizing of authority of a religion or religious group upon a single institution and set of dogmas. This easily happens when say Buddhism becomes a state religion and is patronized by the powerful. See **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (5). See also W Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* 1956: 62-77 (ch 5).

[26] Glossing on *nirutti,patisambhidā*: Vism 14.25/441; UA 138; ItA 1:126; PmA 1:5. Cf VbhA 387 & DhsA 391 f, where *nirutti,paṭisambhidā* is explained without any mention of Pāli.

[27] *So ca aṭṭhakathācariyānam eva vidito, tasmā yathā gharupacāre ṭhitassā ti gharūpacāralakkhaṇaṁ pāliyam avuttam pi atthakathāya vuttavasena gahitaṁ, evaṁ sesam pi gahetabbaṁ*, "It is just as understood by the Commentary teachers. Therefore, in "staying within the vicinity of a house," the characteristic of "in the vicinity of a house"

Mahāvihāra, the cosmopolitan Theravāda took Pāli to be a *language,* rather than "text." The British professor of Sanskrit, **John Brough,** concludes that if "Buddhaghosa's sectarian comment"—that Pali was "the Buddha's language"—had not survived, the problem of *sakāya niruttiyā* would never have arisen! (1980: 36).[28]

The next level of the churching of Buddhism under the Mahāvihāra was the *writing down* of the Pali canon during the 1st century BCE. It was not really a planned project, but was expedient for the Mahāvihāra for a number of reasons, which briefly stated are as follows:

(1) Political unrest. The Tamils from south India made frequent and destructive raids on the island. Local unrest and political strife further worsened the conditions. Such conditions often compelled students to be separated from their teachers who knew the Tipiṭaka, causing serious interruptions in the students' training.

(2) Famine. The Brāhmaṇatissa famine caused widespread difficulties and dangers, seriously limiting the number of monks whose health was badly threatened. Lay support was difficult to obtain during such times.

(3) Schism. The Mahāvihāra's own hagio-history (*vaṁsa*), the Mahāvaṁsa, record that the Mahāvihāra expelled the elder Mahā Tissa on his receiving the Abhayagiri Vihāra, thus causing a schism. (Mahv 33.101)[29]

(4) Sectarian rivalry. The Abhayagiri, under the royal patronage of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya, became a serious threat to the Mahāvihāra.

The Mahāvihāra monks retreated to the Āloka,vihāra (or Alu,vihāra), near Matale, in the Central Province, far away from Anurādhapura, and with the support of a local chieftain, went about recording their Buddhist texts, according to tradition, on gold sheets which were then hidden away under a rock at the Āloka,vihāra. Traditionally, such texts were written on ola palm-leaves.[30]

The written texts were in Pāli, and one great expedient was that this would serve as the Mahāvihāra canon. After all, Sinhala could not be the church language as it is a living language and, as such, would evolve over time. Texts recorded in Pali give it a sort of permanence and orthodoxy, which furthermore legitimizes the party that is its putative guardian or promoter.[31] Sadly, its cost is that it led to the rise of a

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is not mentioned in the text. In the commentary, this is understood on account what has been said. The rest, too, should be understood in this way." (VA 2:300). See HUANG Pochi 2008: 10-12.

[28] Cf Steven Collins 1990: 91; Hinüber 1993. The churching of Buddhism began with the scholastically inclined **Mahā,vihāra** ("the Great Monastery") of Sri Lanka, where Buddhaghosa worked. The Mahāvihāra, founded by king Devanampiya Tissa (247-207 BCE) in his capital, Anuradhapura, was given to the missioners from Asoka's court. It was for several centuries the centre of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Its orthodoxy and prestige grew esp with the hermeneutical works of such monks such as Buddhaghosa. During the 4th century, the Mahāvihāra. King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (29-17 BCE), on regaining the kingdom from the Tamils, built the **Abhaya,giri**, a more liberal monastery, their residents known as the Dhamma,ruci Nikāya. Soon the two monasteries for centuries disputed over the control of the Buddhist tradition on the island. The Mahāvihāra, due to lack of royal patronage, resorted to clandestinely writing down their canon. The real motive understandably was political: this is to ensure that the scripture as they had canonized would survive. The 1165 Council reconciled the two parties, but around 1300 when Anurādhapura was abandoned (due to Tamil attacks), the Abhayagiri monastery, too, ceased to exist. The Mahāvihāra, too, soon disappeared.

[29] Mahv 33.96-105 (typos corrected): "A thera known by the name Mahātissa, who had frequented the families of laymen, was expelled by the brotherhood from our monastery for this fault, the frequenting of lay-families. His disciple, the thera who was known as Bahalamassutissa, went in anger to the Abhayagiri (vihāra) and abode there, forming a (separate) faction. And thenceforward these bhikkhus came no more to the Mahāvihāra: thus did the bhikkhus of the Abhayagiri (vihāra) secede from the Theravāda. From the monks of the Abhayagiri-vihāra those of the Dakkhiṇa-vihāra separated (afterwards); in this wise those bhikkhus (who had seceded) from the adherents of the Theravāda were divided into two (groups)." (Geiger/Bode tr). For Pali, see http://www.tipitaka.org/romn/; for tr, see http://lakdiva.org/mahavamsa/chap033.html (many typos!).

[30] See EW Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* 1946: 78 f.

[31] A similar process was found in the rise of Chan Buddhism in China: see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (5).

predominantly scholastic Buddhism, where the memorization and theoretical study of the texts superseded the spirit (*attha*) and true practice (*paṭipatti*) of the Dharma, a scholasticism and materialism which characterizes much of Sinhala monastic Buddhism today.[32]

3.1.4 The language of the people. Brahmanism, the established priestly religion of India of the Buddha's time used Sanskrit,[33] the "language of the gods," to which these priests claimed exclusive licence. With this language, they "constructed" (*saṁskṛta*) their gods, dogmas and rituals to church the *classed* masses and exclude the *outcastes*. During the 6th-5th centuries BCE, the Buddha and other reform movement teachers began to reject such exploitative systems and turn to the use of "natural" (*prākṛta*) vernaculars so that anyone with the desire to learn and be free have access to spirituality.

This is another important reason why the Buddha forbids the use of Vedic versification (*chandaso*) [3.1.1]. Even in the oldest Buddhist texts (such as those recorded in **the Sutta Nipāta**),[34] we find the Buddha declaring to us that

> the Vedas had been composed by unscrupulous brahmin priests who were intent on duping people into hiring them to perform expensive religious rituals. In defending the authority of the Vedas against Buddhists and other critics, scholastics within the Brahmanical tradition devised two different and mutually incompatible strategies. The first strategy consisted in attributing the Vedic texts to God. The argument was that God, being omniscient and benevolent, could neither deceive nor be deceived and therefore every text composed by him is necessarily reliable. The second strategy consisted in claiming that the Vedic texts had never been composed by anyone and were therefore eternal. The argument here was that errors occur in texts only because of the limited knowledge and integrity of imperfect authors. But if a text has no author at all, then it has no author whose limitations are liable to introduce errors into the text. An authorless text is therefore error-free and hence perfectly reliable. Both of these Brahmanical strategies involved claiming that the language of the Vedic texts was different fro ordinary human language.
>
> (Richard P Hayes, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism,* 2003: 451)

In **the Araṇa,vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139), a discourse on skillful speech, especially in terms of teaching the Dharma, the Buddha exhorts the monks to make use of the local dialects wherever they teach:

> "You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject **common usage**." So it is said. In what connection is this said?
>
> How, bhikshus, is there clinging to a regional language and rejection of common usage?
>
> Here, bhikshus, in different regions, they call a 'bowl' *pāti, patta, vittha, serāva, dhāropa, poṇa* or *pisīla.* So whatever they call it in such and such a region, they speak accordingly, firmly adhering (to the words) and insisting, 'Only this is right; everything else is wrong.'
>
> This is how, bhikshus, there is clinging to a regional language and rejection of common usage.

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[32] See KM de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka,* 1981: 57 f; RF Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism,* 1988b: 154 f; HIRAKAWA Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism* (tr P Groner), 1990: 124-126; Noble Ross Reat, *Buddhism: A history,* 1994: 87-90; KR Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*, 1997: 77-94 (ch 5).

[33] **Sanskrit** (संस्कृतम् *saṁskṛtam*) is a historical Indo-Aryan language, a liturgical language of Brahmanism, and later, Hinduism and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and is today one of the 22 official languages of India. **Vedic Sanskrit** (or pre-Classical Sanskrit), was the language of the Rigveda, the oldest core dating back to around 1500 BCE, making it one of the oldest of the Indo-European languages. **Classical Sanskrit** evolved, mainly due to the grammar of Pāṇini (c 4th cen BCE), to be the linguistic standard for the more developed cultures of South and Southeast Asia, much as the role of Latin and Greek in Western Europe.

[34] See **Vasala S** (Sn 1.7/116-142), **Brāhmaṇa,dhammika S** (Sn 2.7/284-315), **Sundarika Bhāra,dvāja S** (Sn 3.4/455-486), **Vāseṭṭha S** (Sn 3.9/594-656), **Guh'aṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.2/772-779), **Duṭṭh'aṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.3/780-787), **Suddh'aṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.4/788-795), **Param'aṭṭhaka S** (Sn 4.5/796-802), **Māgandiya S** (Sn 4.9/835-847), **Cūḷa,-viyūha S** (Sn 4.12/878-894), **Mahā,viyūha S** (Sn 4.13/895-915), **Puṇṇaka Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.4/1043-1048), **Nanda Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.8/1077-1083).

And how, bhikshus, is there *no* clinging to a regional language and no rejection of common usage?

Here, bhikshus, in different regions, they call a 'bowl' *pāti, patta, vittha, serāva, dhāropa, poṇa* or *pisīla.* So whatever they call it in such and such a region, without adhering (to the words), one speaks accordingly.

This is how, bhikshus, there is no clinging to a regional language and no rejection of common usage.

So it is with reference to this that it is said, "You should not cling to a regional language; you should not reject common usage." (M 139.12/3:235 f) = SD 7.8

The ancient brahmins further claimed that the sacred textual language they used, namely, Sanskrit, was created by God himself, and as such, was eternal, fixed and the ultimate source of all human languages. Other languages, as such, were seen as corrupted versions of pristine Sanskrit. The Sanskrit name for an object, they claimed, was its true name, and its name in any other language was merely a human convention and convenience. One of the earliest and most famous of Buddhist scholastics, as we shall see, who successfully argued against the brahmanical tradition on the issue of language was **Dignāga** (480-540). [9]

3.2 LANGUAGES OF TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS.

3.2.1 Indian Buddhist languages. The Buddha wrote neither scripture nor books; all his teachings and those of the early arhats were given orally and face-to-face. And it is very unlikely that any of his immediate disciples wrote any of his teachings down. For many centuries, the early teachings were handed down orally by groups of reciters (*bhāṇaka*), who specialized in memorizing and reciting various sections of the teachings, especially of the Long Discourses (*dīgha bhāṇaka*), of the Middle Length Discourses (*majjhima bhāṇaka*), of the Connected Discourses (*saṁyutta bhāṇaka*), and of the Numerical Discourses (*aṅguttara bhāṇaka*).[35]

The question now is *whether there was an Urkanon (original scripture)* in early Buddhism? The Sutta Vibhaṅga of the Vinaya, dealing with the formulation of monastic rules and case studies, early on records the Buddha's remark that those past Buddhas who have systematized their teachings and promulgated the monastic code, have the Teaching last well after them. The systematized teaching is technically known as "the nine-factored teaching of the Teacher" (*navaṅga satthu,sāsana*).[36] There however appears to be mention of three of the factors—*sutta, geyya* and *veyyākaraṇa*—in **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122).[37]

However, we do find *the set of nine factors* listed, often enough, in the Canon itself, in the following texts:

Alagaddûpama Sutta	(M 22.10-11/1:133 f);
Appassuta Sutta	(A 1.4/2:7 ×4),
Dutiya Valāhaka Sutta	(A 4.102.3/2:103 ×4),
Mūsika Sutta	(A 4.107/2:108 ×4),
Ummagga Sutta	(A 4.186.2/2:178),
Sotânugata Sutta	(A 4.191/2:185-187 ×7);
Paṭhama Dhamma,vihārī Sutta	(A 5.73/3:86 f ×2),

[35] See KR Norman, *Pali Literature,* 1983b: 8 f & index sv; Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism,* 1997: 41-58 (ch 3). See also RP Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism,* 1998: 35-58 (ch 3).

[36] The term *nav'aṅga satthu,sāsana* is of course late, often mentioned (without the details) in **Buddha,vaṁsa** (B 4.23*/20, 4.16*/22, 6.2/23, 13.6*/37, 14.18*/40, 20.12*/50, 26.15*/62), **Apadāna** (Ap 6.97*/1:44, 6.107*/1:45) and Comys (Miln 21; MA 2:252; AA 1:115, 3:28, 170; KhpA 11*, 14, 132 = SnA 1:300; ThaA 2:101* ×2, Nm 1:10 etc).

[37] M 122.20/3:115 = SD 11.4. It is however unlikely that this passage refers to the listing of the canonical texts, "but," says Analayo, it "simply spoke of following the teacher for the sake of getting further 'explanations' of a 'discourse'," conjecturing that the original reading might have been *suta,veyyākaraṇassa hetu* or *suta,veyyākaraṇassa sotuṁ.*" (*A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (MS), 2008 ad M 3:115 n).

Dutiya Dhamma,vihārī Sutta	(A 5.74/3:88 ×2),
Dutiya Saddhamma Sammosa Sutta	(A 5.155/3:177 ×2),
Ānanda Sutta	(A 6.51/3:361 f ×2),
Dhammaññū Sutta	(A 7.64/4:113 ×3);
Mahā Niddesa	(Nm 1:143, 188, 234);
Vibhaṅga	(Vbh 294);
Puggala,paññatti	(Pug 4.9/43).

Interestingly, the list is mentioned only once in the Majjhima Nikāya, once in a Sutta commentarial work, the Mahā Niddesa, twice in the Abhidhamma (Vbh & Pug), and *almost all the other references (the majority) are in the Aṅguttara Nikāya*. What does this mean? The Aṅguttara Nikāya, or the numerical discourses, comprises mostly teachings for the laity, the group that the Buddha gives priority to after the monastics.[38] Understandably, the laity, being more worldly and busy than the more spiritually committed monastics, would need a more varied syllabus and sustained effort in their spiritual training. Their numbers only grew after the monastic community was established that is, after the first twenty years of the Buddha's ministry.

What do each of the nine factors consist of? The nine factors of the Teacher's teaching are defined as follows:[39]

(1) *sutta*	discourses, Sutta Nipāta prose section, Niddesa, Vinaya, Vibhaṅga, and texts with "Sutta" in their titles;
(2) *geyyā*	discourses with prose and stanzas (eg Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta, Sn 1.4/12-16);
(3) *veyya,karaṇa*	prose-exposition (probably prophetic suttas such as Cakka.vatti Sīha,-nāda Sutta, D 26), sometimes refers to the Abhidhamma;
(4) *gāthā*	stanzas, such as the Dhammapada, Thera,gāthā, Therī,gāthā, Sutta Nipāta stanzas;
(5) *udāna*	inspired utterances, ie Udāna;
(6) *iti,vuttaka*	Thus-said discourses, ie Iti,vuttaka;
(7) *jātaka*	birth-stories, ie the Jātaka verses;
(8) *abbhūta,dhamma*	marvellous accounts, eg Acchariya,abbhūta Sutta (M 123);
(9) *vedalla*	catechetical suttas, such as Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21), Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43), Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44), Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9), Saṅkhāra,bhājanīya Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta (M 109).

We now return to the question: Are these nine factors the Urkanon (true original scripture), then? We should here apply the early Buddhist spirit towards language. Just as learning, language and speech should facilitate and expedite our understanding and realization of true reality, even so, the Suttas and the Dharma (as teachings) should help us towards spiritual liberation.

If we have enough spiritual training and maturity, we would be able to understand that *what is well spoken is the Buddha Word*.[40] These ancient texts and the teachings of the living masters which still the minds are our best tools for self-awakening. But these tools are mere *signs* directing the way and *notices* against lurking dangers: we must make the journey ourselves. Often enough, the signs become covered with dirt, or some persons may mischievously or foolishly turn them away from the right path, or some notices are hidden away by those who prey on travellers. So we must check and re-check the signs and

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[38] See the parable of the three fields: **(Khetta) Desanā S** (S 42.7/4:315 f) = SD 12.2(3.2).

[39] See eg DA 1:23; MA 1:133 f, 5:109; UA 4; ItA 1:2; VvA 4; PvA 2; ThaA 1:2; ApA 103; CA 2; NmA 1:10; PmA 1:4, 9; DhsA 26; Miln 263.

[40] See **Uttara S** (A 8.8/4:162-166). Asoka's Bairāṭ (Bhabra) inscription, transliterated in *The Moral Edict of King Asoka,* by PHL Eggermont & J Hoftizer (eds), Leiden: EJ Brill, 1962: 38. Cf "The good say that the well spoken is supreme" (*subhāsitaṁ uttamam āhu santo,* Sn 450), "having heard the Buddha's well-spoken word" (*sutvāna Buddhassa subhāsitaṁ padaṁ,* Sn 252). See George Bond, *The Word of the Buddha*, Columbo: MD Gunasena, 1982: 30-33.

notices carefully, and read our maps properly. He may ask for directions, but we have to make sure we are on the right track.

As we reach the various check-points in our journey, we have to leave behind the signs and notices. Carrying them with us does not help in any way, but we need the map with us all the way until the journey's end. When the journey is over, we have no need of the map any more. This is the spirit of *the parable of the raft*.[41] As **Damien Keown** succinctly puts it:

> To sum up: the theme of the Discourse of the Parable of the Water Snake and of the Raft Parable is not transcendence but a warning that even good things can be misused. The teachings are good but Ariṭṭha distorts them. The scriptures are good but some people twist them to their own ends. The raft is good but becomes a handicap of misused by being carried around. Calming and insight meditation are good but can be a hindrance if an attachment for them is allowed to develop. From a Buddhist perspective, those who do not follow the Way have little hope of salvation. The Parable of the Water Snake warns that even those who *do* follow the Way can find themselves, if they are not careful, in a spiritual dead-end. (Keown 1992:105)

3.2.2 Early Indian Buddhist languages. Let us recapitulate the three key ideas regarding early Buddhism again:

(1) Sanskrit is not used in teaching the Dharma, instead vernaculars (*prākṛit*) areused so that the Dharma reaches out to the public. As such, early Buddhism does not have any church language. [3.1.4]

(2) *Pāli* originally means "text," and does not refer to a language. Although today Pali refers to the language of the Theravāda canon, it is not regarded as a church language like Sanskrit was to the ancient brahmins. The early Buddhist canon is not a bible of religious dogmas, but more like an instruction manual. [3.1.3]

(3) *Language* is merely a skillful means for teaching and learning the Dharma, since it facilitates *listening* as the basis for wisdom (*suta,mayā paññā*), so that initial doubts about the Dharma are cleared, giving rise to the still mind as a basis for further wisdom (*cinta,mayā paññā*), and finally the clear mind, with cultivation-based wisdom, penetrates into true reality (*bhāvanā,mayā paññā*).[42] [3.1.2]

When the Buddha's teaching spread beyond the central Ganges plain (the Buddhist "homeland"), it was taught in the local languages, that is, in one of the Middle Indian dialects of that greater region. To date, we only know two such dialects, Pāli and Gāndhārī.[43]

As we have noted, beginning with Buddhaghosa [3.1.3], Theravāda scholastics generally regarded **Pāli** to be *Māgadhī* (an eastern dialect). This is problematic because the later form of Māgadhī of Asoka's inscriptions (3rd century BCE) is an eastern Indian language whereas Pāli most closely resembles Western Indian inscriptions. It is however possible that Magadha might have been in the west of ancient India.[44] From our present knowledge, we cannot say what language the Buddha used. However, from the ancient texts we can surmise that he spoke a number of vernaculars depending where he is teaching.

Gāndhārī was a vernacular widely used in the northwest of India and, with the growth of the Kushan empire, it spread to Bactria and Central Asia. Gāndhārī has been found in the Kharoṣṭhī script (written from right to left), and is related to the Dardic and East-Iranian languages. Until recent times, the only Gāndhārī manuscript available to the scholars was a birch-bark scroll of the Dharmapada, discovered at Kohmāri Mazār, near Khotan in Xinjiang, China, in 1893. Recently, a large number of fragmentary manu-

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[41] **Alagadddûpama S** (M 22.13-14/1:135) & SD 3.13 Intro (3).

[42] D 33.1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh 324: see **Levels of Learning** = SD 40a.4 (5).

[43] The rest of this section is based mainly on Hartmann 2003: 452 f.

[44] **The Māgadhī language** (also known as Magahi) is a language spoken by some 18 million people in India today. The ancestor of Māgadhīi, that is, Māgadhī Prākṛit, was the language of the ancient kingdom of Magadha. Māgadhī is closely related to Bhojpuri and Maithili, and these languages are sometimes commonly referred to as Bihari. These languages, together with several other related languages, are known as the Bihari languages, which form a sub-group of the Eastern Zone group of Indo-Aryan languages.

scripts of Buddhist texts (such as the Khargaviṣāṇa Sūtra, Saṅgīti Sūtra and a collection of Ekottara sūtras) were discovered in eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.[45]

While Pāli became the canonical language of the Theravāda, Gāndhārī became that of the Dharma,-guptaka school. Later sources mention other vernaculars, such as Paiśācī, Apabhraṁśa (the Sthaviras or Saṁmitīya) and Maddhyoddeśika (the Sthaviras or the Mahā,saṅghika).

After the Buddha's time, with the renaissance of Sanskrit, the Indian Buddhist schools *sanskritized* their received texts. Mūla,sarvāstivāda literature, for example, is today found only in **Buddhist Sanskrit**, but its older layers show many traces of Prākṛit. Surviving fragments of the Dharma,guptaka literature suggest that it was also sanskritized at least in Central Asia. From the numerous fragments found in Afghanistan since 1994 support the view that the Mahāsaṅghika, especially the Lokottara,vāda sect, used a mix of Prākṛit and Sanskrit, so that it has been called **Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit**, which was probably Maddhyoddeśika.

3.2.3 South and Southeast Asia. One unique feature of the Buddhism of South and Southeast Asia is that its canon was Indian, that is, in Pāli with translations in their respective languages. The ancillary literature is also predominantly Pāli with some Sanskrit. Their tradition is predominantly Theravāda, whose Pāli canon made use of many local scripts, such as Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Khmer and Lao. Pāli was and is the liturgical and scholarly language, although in modern times, native vernacular and English are also used in rituals (such as puja) and Buddhist studies.

Selected Pāli texts have been translated into various vernaculars, that is, Sinhalese, Burmese, Mon, Arakanese, Shan, Tai Khun, Tai Lue, Thai, Khmer, Lao, Lanna and Thai, with a rich indigenous Buddhist literature in these languages. Interestingly, although Theravāda, mostly of the Thai tradition and hybrid forms, is growing in Indonesia in recent times, ancient Indonesian Buddhism was predominantly of the Sanskrit Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna, especially in Sumatra, Java and Bali. The remaining parts of South-east Asia, especially Malaysia and Singapore, have a wide variety of Buddhism of all traditions, where living Buddhisms tend to be linguistically categorized, with the Chinese-speaking mostly patronizing Chinese Mahayana, and the English-speaking mostly adhering to Pali Buddhism and modern Buddhisms (especially those of Japan).

3.2.4 Central Asia. During the second half of the first millennium, various forms of Buddhism thrived in Central Asia. There are (or were) four main regional groups. The first is **Bactrian**, a Middle Iranian language,[46] in which a recently discovered text was written. However, it is uncertain whether it is a translation or a ritual text written in the vernacular for a specific purpose. Otherwise, as noted by Jan Nattier, most Buddhist literature west of Kashgar (the westernmost town of the Tarim basin), nearly all their texts were in Indian languages, and no vernacular translations (except Bactrian) have been found.

Secondly, Buddhist texts have been found in various ethnic dialects, notably of the following:

- the two dialects of **Tocharian** (the easternmost form of the western Indo-European), that is, Tocharian A (Turfanian, Arsi, or East Tocharian) and Tocharian B (Kuchean or West Tocharian) (they are sometimes identified with the Yuezhi and the Kushans);
- the two **Śaka** dialects, Tumshuq and Khotanese (Middle Iranian); and
- **Uighur** (a Turkish language).

They continued to use Sanskrit as their church language, but also translated scriptures into their vernacular and composed their own Buddhist texts. Often such Sanskrit texts were found in *bilingual format*, that is, alternating word by word or sentence by sentence (or interlinear) of Sanskrit and the local language. Sometimes, glosses in the local dialect were added to a Sanskrit text between the lines or in the text itself (especially in the Tocharian and the Uighur manuscripts).

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[45] Richard Saloman, "Recent discoveries of early Buddhist manuscripts," in *Between the Empires, Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[46] Bactria is a historical region in northwest of Greater India, between the Hindu Kush and the Amu Darya (Oxus), known to the Indo-Greeks as Bactriana, and known in later times as Tokharistan. Today it is a region bound by northern Afghanistan (Balkh), Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. See http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/-Geography/balkh.htm.

Thirdly, we find the Chinese and the Tibetans, both of whom translated Buddhist literature into their own languages from the early centuries of their reception of Buddhism. The Tibetans made significant translations of the Chinese texts, incorporating them into their own canon. [3.2.6]

Finally, there is the special case of the **Sogdians,** speakers of another Middle Iranian language, whose merchants were instrumental in bringing Indian Buddhism and its literature from the Kushan empire (northwest of India) to China in the early centuries of the first millennium. During the second half of that period, when they first translated Buddhist texts into Sogdian, they made use of the Chinese translations of Indian originals. Evidence of this can he found in the Central Asian manuscript finds, and especially from the library cache in Dunhuang, where the texts of these different languages were found together.[47]

3.2.5 China and East Asia. The Chinese language is radically different from Sanskrit and other Indian languages. Sanskrit, Pali and other Indic languages belong to the Indo-Aryan family, while the Chinese language is part of the Sino-Tibetan family. Chinese is monosyllabic while the Indic languages are alphabetic.[48] There is a vast difference between Chinese and Indian *cultures and philosophies*. Not only did translators discover it was nearly impossible to find synonyms or near-synonyms, or equivalent concepts for the scriptures in the Chinese language, but they also found a very basic difference between *the ways of thinking and of expressing thoughts* in the two languages. Furthermore, there was a strong xenophobic reaction against Buddhism regarding it as a "foreign religion."[49]

Despite such great differences and difficulties, the early missionaries and Chinese Buddhists spent nearly half a millennium translating the Buddhist texts into Chinese. As the work progressed, different models of translation techniques were used. The second-century translator, **Ān Shìgāo** 安世高 (?-170), for example, made an extensive use of the more colloquial style.[50] This tendency to incorporate vernacular elements was followed by a period of *géyì* 格義, concept- or meaning-matching of Daoist vocabulary to express Buddhist terms and ideas, and to write in a more literary style.[51]

During the fifth century, the great translator, **Kumāra,jīva** (350-409) set new standards by using the *translation bureau*, a state-sponsored team of foreign and Chinese specialists, who jointly oversaw the various stages of the translation process.[52] Kumārajīva's translations were very polished and, as such, were very popular. Some two centuries later, **Xuánzàng** 玄奘 (602?-664)[53] returned from his India pilgrimage with numerous texts, and set a new and higher standard of translation. His works were technically more accurate and often retained some traditional features, like repetitive passages, and, as such, were not as polished as those of Kumārajīva, whose translations were not as technically accurate as Xuánzàng's. The Chinese translations soon became the standard for East Asian Buddhism, enriching the cultures and languages of Korea, Japan and Vietnam. Classical Chinese became the church language of East Asian Buddhism, together with the advantage of a common printed canon.

Similar translation bureaus and projects were set up several times in China, Central Asia and Tibet, translating the Tripiṭaka into such languages as Manchu and Mongol. In Central Asia, Chinese translations served as the basis for all translations into Sogdian, and to a lesser extent into Uighur and some into Tibetan. Between the 11th and 13th centuries, a number of translations—first of the Chinese, then also of Tibetan translations of the texts—were further translated into Tangut or Xixia, the language of an empire northwest of China, before it was destroyed by Genghis Khan.

3.2.6 Tibet and Mongolia. Tibet was the last of the great ancient nations to accept Buddhism in an official manner. Ever since the time when Buddhism first reached Tibet in the 7th century, its texts were translated into the vernacular. In Tibet, however, the translation process did not encounter the difficulties

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[47] On the Dunhuang discovery, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2(5.2.5.1).

[48] Linguistically, Chinese is said to be an **analytic, isolating,** or **root** language, that is, one in which the words are invariable, and syntactic relationships are shown by word order. Indic languages, on the other hand, are said to be **synthetic, fusional,** or **inflecting** (also inflected or inflectional).

[49] On translation problems, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2 (2.6.1).

[50] On translation problems, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2 (2.2.1).

[51] On *géyì*, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2 (2.6.2).

[52] On Kumārajīva, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2 (2.6.1).

[53] On Xuánzàng, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b.2 (2.6.1.2).

it did in China. For one, there was no indigenous literary heritage. Indeed, Tibetan historical writings inform us that *the Tibetan script was created specifically to translate the Buddhist texts*. From the few early Tibetan translations still extant, we can see that the grammar is often awkward, if not contrary to Tibetan usage. This is because they attempted to reproduce the word order of the Indian original, and different Tibetan words were employed to express the same Buddhist term.

Another difference from the Chinese situation was *the role of Buddhism in Tibet*. Apparently, from the start, Buddhism served domestic political purposes and received much support from the royal court. This close connection with the ruler and ruling class led, in the 9th century, to the rise of a singularly remarkable event in the history of Buddhist translation. To set common standards for translation methods for the purpose of producing translations that were commonly intelligible, the king introduced compulsory rules for translators. *A royal translation bureau* published a list of some 9,500 Sanskrit technical terms and their standard Tibetan equivalents, together with a treatise explaining the translations of some 400 Buddhist terms.

This was followed by new translations of texts and the older translations were revised according to the new rules. These rules continued to be observed even after the fall of the royal dynasty in the mid-9th century until the end of the translation period in the 15th century. All this led to a unique phenomenon in the history of religion and language. The language of nearly all Tibetan translations is extremely standardized, rarely diverting from the rules of Tibetan grammar, and are faithful to the Sanskrit originals to a degree never again attained in another other language used to translate Buddhist texts. A great advantage of this phenomenon is that a lost Sanskrit text could be almost faithfully reconstructed from its extant Tibetan translation.

While classical Chinese was the Buddhist church language for East Asia, classical Tibetan became the church language of much of Central Asia. As for the Uighurs, in their final Buddhist period, they translated several Tibetans works. With the arrival of the Mongols in the 16th century, Tibetan texts were continuously rendered into Mongolian. During the 18th century, Chinese emperors even supported complete Mongolian translations of the Kanjur and Tanjur, the texts and commentaries of the Tibetan canon.[54]

Although the Mongolian lamas wrote in Mongolian, it never succeeded in replacing Tibetan as the church language for ritual and literature. From Inner Mongolia in the east to Buryatia and the Kalmyk steppe in the west, Mongols studied Buddhism in Tibetan. In 18th-century China, the Manchu emperor Qianlong, sponsored the translation of the canon into Manchu. These translations were made from the Chinese recensions, but called Kanjur after the Tibetan model. This huge effort was primarily a political gesture but, unlike the Mongolian case, did not lead to Buddhist literary activity in Manchu.

3.2.7 A global Buddhism: Text or translation? Buddhist studies has radically changed since the beginning of the 20th century, starting with western (mostly European) interests and now a global affair. In the West, academic studies began around the middle of the 19th century, when parts of canonical texts (mostly Sanskrit) were translated into western languages. In the wake of such efforts, scholars in South and Southeast Asia started systematically to translate their canonical texts from Pāli into their modern vernaculars, and in East Asia, from classical Chinese into modern Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

With a growing global interest in Buddhist studies, the Internet, and better international academic cooperation, English has overtaken Chinese as the most commonly used medium for the spread of Buddhist literature and ideas. Serious Buddhist researches, however, continue to be conducted in various modern languages, especially German and Japanese.

The Internet plays a major role in allowing almost anyone with even a basic hands-on ability to use the Internet to set up their own website or digital space dedicated to the Buddhist canons, translation sites and Buddhist forums. Many such efforts, although done by amateurs[55] and volunteers,[56] are of a high

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[54] **Kanjur** (*bka' 'gyur*, from *bka'* sacred word + *'gyur* translation), comprises the sutras or texts called the Buddha Word (Skt *buddha,vacana*). The Kanjur consists almost entirely of works translated from Sanskrit or other Indian languages. It was compiled in Tibet, and its structure differs greatly from the old Indian Tripitakas, and is in 3 sections: Vinaya (monastic discipline), Sutra (discourses), and Tantra (esoteric and ritual texts). **Tanjur** (*bstan 'gyur,* from *bstan* texts + '*gyur* translation) contains *śāstras* or scholastic commentaries, and other works.

[55] On Pali, see eg http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pali.

standard, and those done by scholarly specialists provide researchers and teachers with excellent resources (canons, texts, dictionaries, etc).[57]

The Buddhist presence is now global and immanent, filling up cyberspace. It has neither church language nor an authoritative centre. We are all like the young seeker, Sudhana,[58] open to wide array of teachers, teachings and texts. All this, over the second half of the 20th century, is interfacing with the growing dialogues between the new post-Cartesian and post-Freudian mind science and traditional Buddhism. Such common efforts promise greater things to come in our growing understanding of the human mind and true reality.

BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND LOGIC

4 Early Buddhism on language, epistemology and logic

4.1 EPISTEMOLOGY. From the start Buddhism has to do with wisdom and compassion, the heart and the head. Wisdom may be taken to be *self-understanding*, while compassion is *other-understanding*. We only begin to know our true nature when we begin to understand that other humans feel like us, too, and that all living beings value life. Life basically is continually evolving in a biological and species sense, but biological evolution only involve our physical being, that is, our bodies and actions.

Although all sentient beings have the possibility of spiritual evolution, human beings, because of our common experience of pleasure and pain, and our ability to think and grow, are in the best position to evolve spiritually. The spiritual evolution begins with the conscious control or disciplining of bodily actions and speech.

The Buddha is one who, through his sustained and keen observation of life and existence is able to notice the universal patterns of reality and understand their significance. This *wisdom* liberates him from being caught up in such unthinking painful cycles. Being liberated himself, the Buddha, out of *compassion*, conveys this wisdom to us so that we too will be liberated, but without the necessity of going through all the difficult and self-mortifying quests the Buddha himself has undertaken.[59]

A disciplined body and speech conduce to mental development, which basically has to do with how we know things. We need to understand, at least to a certain effective level, the liberating knowledge of the Buddha, and we should, like the Buddha, convey this knowledge to others for their own liberation. A proper understanding of the nature of knowledge is called **epistemology**, sometimes called "theory of knowledge." It answers questions like: What is knowledge? How do we know things? It also deals with belief, opinion, doubt, certainty and so on.[60]

4.2 LOGIC. In simple terms, **logic** teaches us the principles of clear thinking and reasoning. Technically, logic has especially to do with *argument,* and the relations of support between *premises* and *conclusions*.[61] Logical thinking is important in Buddhism as a *teaching*. We need to have a logical mind to be able to understand the reasoning and conditionality behind statements made by the Buddha, and for us to be able to clearly and effectively disseminate them to others.

In Buddhism, we do not use logic purely in a philosophical sense, that is, merely as a means for clear reasoning. *Clear reasoning* is an important basis for clear understanding and intelligence, which are themselves the bases for *mental cultivation* or meditation. Proper mental cultivation in turn leads to clear knowledge or liberating wisdom. An understanding of *epistemology* facilitates us to word and teach this

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[56] See eg the Pali Canon website from Thailand, "World Tipitaka" http://tipitakastudies.net/?q=node/9.

[57] Eg the Chinese Tripiṭaka, http://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/index_en.html; AC Muller's scholarly resources, http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/.

[58] Sudhana is a young pilgrim, the hero of the penultimate and longest chapter (the Gaṇḍa,vyūha) of the Avatamśaka Sūtra, who journeys to separately meet 53 teachers and learn the Dharma from them.

[59] See **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35.26/1:235) = SD 26.5.

[60] See AW Sparkes, *Talking Philosophy: A wordbook,* 1991: 209 (§7.24)

[61] See Sparkes, *Talking Philosophy,* 1991: 168 (§6.26).

personal experience in a manner that can be understood so as to inspire and motivate others to go on a similar quest for spiritual liberation.

Understandably, after the Buddha's passing, great Buddhist thinkers like Nāgārjuna (c150-250) [7] and Dignāga (5th century) [9] contributed to Buddhist epistemology and logic. Such great contributions not only facilitated Buddhist knowledge, practice and dissemination, but also enriched Indian culture and the human race.

Indian logic began in the early centuries BCE, and seems to have developed independently from Greek logic although there are similarities and parallels. Ancient Indian logic arose in connection with debate on religious and philosophical matters. During the mediaeval period, from about the 4th century on, logic evolved in regards with problems of valid knowledge, that is, perception and inference. Toward the end of the 5th century, Dignāga, a Buddhist logician, wrote the Pramāṇa Samuccaya ("Compendium of the Means of True Knowledge"), a work that laid the foundations of Buddhist logic.

4.3 LANGUAGE. Buddhism could not have arisen without the evolution of human language. Indeed, Buddhism arose in India at a time when human language has evolved to a level sufficient for the expression and making of a good society, a clear mind and true liberation from problems *that language itself has created* through the ages of human evolution.

Like bad politics, bad religion continues to plague us from the dawn of our evolution till this day. It began with the fear of the elements, the wild, and the unknown, of life and death; then there was the fear of alien tribes, of us against them, out of which grew the idea of the one God for the one tribe. This tribalism continues to dominate our politics, goaded on by ancient superstitious notions of that one God, the God of the tribe.[62]

All this is possible and becoming more subtle, but more deadly today, on account of our language. Never before are we taking our *words* more seriously than we are wakened by our *understanding* of how words function. Our language, for example, *fail* to show us that the "self" is merely a designation for interactive processes rather than an autonomous or abiding entity, or that our cognition arises simply as a result of the conscious contact between sense and sensum, subject and object, which inseparably and interactively co-arise. As pointed out by scientific theorist and nun, **Christine Skarda,** "What is objective acquires its objective status only in relation to what is subjective" (1999: 90).

Our language began neither from Zeus' head nor from building the Babel tower to reach the heavens. Useful as these myths may be in pointing to interesting aspects of language (such as to its being a mental process or its diversity), language is much more complicated. Like our consciousness, language evolved, as neurophysiologist **Terrence Deacon** notes, "neither inside nor outside brains, but at the interface where cultural evolutionary processes affect biological evolutionary processes." (1997: 409f). As we interact with our environment and evolve as a biological species, our mental and spiritual evolution is completely influenced by the language we create.

For this reason, the gods and ghosts of a particular tribe do not bless or haunt other tribes. But underlying these phantasms are the common fear of death and the unknown, and the inner cry for security from life's uncertainty. The physical universe might have arisen billions of years ago, but we all live in our virtual worlds. These are not flat worlds with the sun revolving around us,[63] as we now know, nor are they static worlds limited by our immediate experiences through our sense-faculties. As Terrence Deacon insightfully observes:

> It is a final irony that it is the virtual, not actual, reference that symbols provide, which gives rise to this experience of self. The most undeniably real experience is a *virtual* reality.... its virtual nature notwithstanding, it is the symbolic realm of consciousness that we most identify with and from which our sense of agency and self-control originate. (1997: 452)

There is a mind that manages what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think. This mind decides what to make of these sense-data, but it wears the coloured lenses of past memories and self-centred bias-

[62] For a discussion, see **Self and Selves** = SD 26.9.

[63] See eg the significance of Galileo in this connection: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_affair.

es, driven by lust for likes, aversion to dislikes, and ignorance of their true nature. Instead of investigating and understand what these *latent tendencies* are and how they work, it reifies our *likes* into God, gods and fairies, it transmogrifies our *dislikes* into the devil and demons, and it transmutes our *ignorance* into blind faith and fear. Gods and demons that grow from bubbles may colourfully play on faithful eyes, but they are always burst by the sharp vision of true reality. Our minds have played cosmic tricks on us, and only in understanding how our minds work can we begin to liberate ourselves.[64]

5 The Buddha

5.1 MIND-READING. If we had the power of mind-reading (*ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*), we would surely directly and truthfully communicate with one another. Indeed, since we can read one another's minds, there is no change for falsehood to arise, except in the case of ignorance or delusion. The Suttas inform us that the Buddha has the power of mind-reading, and would often use it to scan the minds of his audience so that he could give them a suitable teaching.[65] But mind-reading, as a rule, comes from a focussed mind, which is rare in those unawakened.

Since mind-reading is rare amongst the unawakened, and not a skill that could be readily cultivated, we have to rely on some less effective means of communicating teachings and insights. To effectively use a tool (here, the mind), we first need to understand how it functions. First, the mind reifies, superimposing its data onto the sense, stimulated by external sense-objects. Then, in the unawakened mind, it bursts into a thousand voices all speaking at once. We would be considered normal if we could focus on just one voice at a time. The problem is that we often listen to the *wrong* voice, or we simply do not know *how* to listen to the right voice, even though we have lent our ear to it.

Other voices have crowded our minds, and their noises are drowning the messages. How does this happen? Let us examine this now.

5.2 MENTAL PROLIFERATION. Our minds not only reify words into things, but do so in great speed and number. Our minds simply proliferates thoughts at the slightest provocation. Mental proliferation (*papañca*) arises, provoked by our *latent tendencies* of lust, aversion and ignorance, which incessantly feed our self-notion. We identify with what we like, seeking ever more of it; we reject—regard as "other" —what we do not like; and we ignore what does not fit into our idea of things, and so our ignorance is sumptuously fed. **WS Waldron,** a Buddhist psychology specialist, notes that

> The sense 'I am' is closely connected with the reflexivity with of mental cognitive awareness (*mano-viññāṇa*), the only cognitive modality not directly based upon one of the sense faculties but upon the faculty of mind or mentation (*mano*)."[66] (2003:37)

Waldron's statement relates to the fact that there are essentially <u>two kinds of mental processes</u>: *the five-door cognitive process* (the mind processing physical sense-data) and *the mind-door cognitive process* (the mind processing mental data).[67]

After a physical sense-door process (say, an act of seeing), many *bhavaṅga* (life-continuum) moments arise, followed by a mind-door cognitive process that takes the same sense-object (that is, the visible object), *but that has already ceased,* that is, a past object. In other words, we are attending to merely a memory!

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[64] See further WS Waldron, "The co-arising of self and object, world, and society," 2004, esp 11-14.

[65] Besides the power of mind-reading (eg **Kevaḍḍha S,** D 11.6/1:213 f = SD 1:7), the Buddha (and he alone) is said to have the knowledge of the maturity levels of others' spiritual faculties (*indriya,paropariyatta ñāṇa* or *āsayânusaya ñāṇa*): see eg SnA 1:15, 331; J 1:504. At DhA 3:245 ff; J 1:182, the term *Buddha,veneyya* ("receptive of the Buddha") is used.

[66] On *mano,* see ***Viññāṇa*** = SD 17.81(12).

[67] The ensuing discussion assumes you know the basic difference between the mind-door and the five-door cognitive processes: otherwise, now turn to ***Nimitta & Anuvyañjana*** = SD 19.14(3), and then return here to continue reading.

5.3 HOW LANGUAGE ARISES. In due course, long after the actual events are over, the mind continues to recall its past images, re-projecting them into a growing virtual reality. This is the mind's "own" object (*dhamma*), associated with thinking and pondering (*vitakka,vicāra*). They are both speech-formations (*vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhārā*),[68] and arise in connection with *mano* (mentation)[69] [2.1]. As such, **Waldron** further notes:

> The reflexivity that mental cognitive awareness provides, based on such mentation (*mano*), is thus bound up with our capacities for language, which was considered in early Indian thinking, as elsewhere, as the very medium of thought and ideas.[70]
>
> Like language itself, however, the awareness invites endless rounds of recursivity, of *papañca,* mental or conceptual proliferation—even in regards to objects of sensory awareness:
>
> [Waldron goes on to quote **Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta:**
>
> Avuso, dependent on the eye and form, eye-consciousness arises. **The meeting of the three is contact.**[71] With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about.[72] What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.[73] What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which apperceptual proliferation[74] impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.[75]
>
> Avuso, dependent on the ear and sound, ear-consciousness arises….
>
> Avuso, dependent on the nose and smell, nose-consciousness arises….
>
> Avuso, dependent on the tongue and taste, tongue-consciousness arises….
>
> Avuso, dependent on the body and touch, body-consciousness arises….
>
> Avuso, dependent on the mind[76] and mind-object, mind-consciousness[77] arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which apperceptual proliferation impacts one regarding past, future and present mind-objects cognizable through the mind.
>
> (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14]
>
> … Cognitive awareness, language, and thought are thus so inseparable that they give rise to a runaway recursivity in their own right. Indeed, conceptual proliferation itself is so multiply entangled in its own reciprocal relationship—

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[68] **Cūḷa,vedalla S** (M 44.15/1:301).

[69] **Pasūra S** (Sn 4.8) eg speaks of "thinking over views in the mind" (*manasā diṭṭhi,gatāni cintayanto*, Sn 834) & **Sūci,loma S** (S 808*) mentions "the mind's thoughts" (*mano,vitakkā*) (S 10.3/1:207). See REA Johansson, "*Citta, mano, viññāṇa*—a psychosemantic investigation," *University of Ceylon Review* 23,1-2 1965:183, 186.

[70] N Ross Reat: "Language was thought of as a discovery of the inherent conceptual relationships among things, so that from a very early period in Indian thought, conceptualization was regarded primarily as verbal phenomena" (1990:305). [Waldron's fn]

[71] *Tiṇṇaṁ saṅgati phasso.* In **Cha Chakka S** (M 148), this phrase is part of the sequences on sense-based reflections (M 148.7-9/3:281 f & 148.28-39/3:284 f) = SD 26.6. For a discussion on this phrase and passage, see Bucknell 1999: 318 ff. See prec n.

[72] "One thinks about," *vitakketi.* On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.2/2:277).

[73] This verse up to here is also found in **(Samuday'atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 = SD 7.5) and **(Sabb'upādāna) Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f = SD 6.17) in different contexts.

[74] *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā,* see Intro (3).

[75] This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See Intro (4).

[76] "The mind," *mana.* Here Comy glosses as *bhavaṅga,citta* (MA 2:79), the life-continuum, sometimes called the unconscious or sub-conscious.

[77] "Mind-consciousness," *mano,viññāṇa.* Here Comy glosses as "advertence" (*āvajjana*) and impulsion (*javana*) (MA 2:77).

(1) with contact (which sometimes conditions the arising of cognitive awareness;[78]
(2) with apperception (which always accompanies it);[79] and
(3) with thought itself[80]

—that it is often a synonym for phenomenal, cyclic existence as a whole.[81] (Waldron 2003:37 f)

5.4 WORDS AND MEANINGS. Language comprises verbal expression (*vacī,viññatti*)—that is, words and sounds—and bodily expression or body language (*kāya,viññatti*).[82] Language, in other words, consists not only of words, but also expression (that is, the feeling behind the words, or how we intend the audience to understand them). In simple terms, words can be said to have two kinds of **meaning**, the referential and the intentional.

The referential meaning is the lexical or dictionary sense, which we use simply to *refer* to things. More common is the intentional meaning, which depends on the context and situation, and how the speaker intends it, and how the audience take it. The more skillful the speaker or teacher, the less *noise* and *dropout* occur in transmission: "noise" meaning mental distraction and misinterpretations; "dropout" means what fails to be conveyed (from speaking too softly or other external distraction).

There is another complication. Most words have multiple meanings: they are polysemic or ambivalent.[83] Furthermore, over time, words change in meaning, some take on new senses, some turn bad, some fall into disuse. Some languages, like English, distinguish between common nouns (buddha, man, tree, table) and proper nouns (Gotama, Guanyin, Gayā). There is no such distinction in Pāli or Sanskrit, where there is no capitalization of letters.

Next we must understand signs. A *sign* is usually a meaningful word, a significant notation. A sign functions to refer to an object or idea other than itself. So, when I say the word "cat," you not only hear the sound of the word, but it brings into your mind a furry four-legged animal. But not all signs work this way, especially signs that are *not* words. We see dark clouds (*liṅga,* probans) and say that it is a sign (*liṇgī,* probandum) of rain; that smoke signifies fire; that a sullen face means that the person is unhappy; that one speaking fiercely is angry. Thus, we use words as *referents* or designators, referring to the objects they name, and as *signals*, signifying something other than itself.[84]

Thus, to effectively listen to a person, we need to understand the following:

- *what is said:* listen to both verbal language and body language;
- *how it is said:* distinguish between referents and signs, and understand their significance;
- *what is not said:* investigate significant episodes of silence.

Let us now investigate further to see what we can learn from other ancient masters and experts regarding language and communication.

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[78] **(Cha Phass'āyatana) Koṭṭhita S** (A 4.174): "Whatever is the range of the six spheres of contact, that itself is the range of mental proliferation. And whatever is the range of mental proliferation, that itself is the range of the six spheres of contact." (A 4.174/2:161). See Ñāṇananda 1976:21. [This & foll 3 nn are Waldron's but are here revised.]

[79] **Kalaha,vivāda S** (S 4.11): "what is reckoned as 'proliferation' has perception as its source" (*saññā,nidānā hi papañca,saṅkhā*): see SD 6.14 Intro (3); **Saṅgayha S** (S 35.94): "People here and there of proliferated perception, | when perceiving, go on to become the tools of proliferation" (S 35.94/4:71). See Johnson 1979:192 f.

[80] **Ñāṇananda**: "The word or concept grasped as an object of ratiocination, is itself a product of *papañca.* This, in its turn breeds more of its kind when one proceeds to indulge in conceptual proliferation (*papañca*). Concept characterised by the proliferating tendency (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) constitute the raw-material for the process and the end product is much the same in kind though with this difference that its has greater potency to obsess, bewilder and overwhelm the world. Thus there is a curious reciprocity between *vitakka* [thought] and *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*—a kind of vicious circle, as it were. Given *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*, there comes to be *vitakka* and given *vitakka* there arise more *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*.. [M 1:145]." (1971:23 = 1976:25).

[81] For a lengthy discussion, see Schmithausen 1987:509 ff, n1405, 522 ff, n1425. [Waldron's fn]

[82] These 2 terms prob first appears in Dhs §§655, 718, see ***Rūpa*** = SD 17.2a (10) & Table 10.

[83] For some examples, see **Dh 97** = SD 10.6.

[84] For a helpful reading, see MJ Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes,* 1985: 54-62.

6 Nāgârjuna

6.1 THE SCHOLASTIC TRADITION. Buddhism began as a pragmatic system of moral ethics and mental training for the sake of spiritual liberation. As already stated [5], the Buddha eschews philosophical debates and intellectual discussions, unless they are useful in straightening wrong views, and helping to clear the mind of doubts, so that it is conducive for mental cultivation, leading to spiritual liberation.

After the Buddha's passing and as Buddhism became more systematized, it saw the rise of *the scholastic tradition*, that is, an intensively philosophical and theoretical study of Buddhism that tries to interpret or re-interpret Buddhism in the broader world. Often the scholastic tradition would identify or define some issues not fully explicated in the early teachings, and try to explain them in a more satisfactory manner. In other words, the scholastic tradition has a hermeneutical tendency, dwelling, for example, on the topics of epistemology, language, and logic.

One of the most famous scholastics who arose in the post-Buddha centuries was **Nāgārjuna** (c 150-250), an Indian Buddhist philosopher from near Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (in present-day Nagarjuna Sagar in the Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh, South India). Closely associated with the Nālandā University, he is noted as the founder of the Mādhyamaka school of Mahāyāna philosophy,[85] and credited with the development of the philosophy of the Prajñā,pāramita Sūtras.

Nāgārjuna was a Mahāyāna monk, but we do not which order he belonged to. It should be noted that his Madhyamika teaching was *not* a school but a philosophical tradition, which members of any Buddhist order could freely choose to accept, reject or ignore. His importance lies in that he gave Mahāyāna a *philosophical* basis.

6.2 ALL THINGS ARE EMPTY. According to Nāgārjuna, not only is the individual empty of an abiding self, but all existents or *dharma*s also are empty (*śūnya*). He extends the concept of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) to cover all concepts and all situations. "Emptiness" thus means the subjection to the law of conditionality or "dependent arising" (*pratitya samutpāda*),[86] and the lack of an immutable essence or inherent mark (*niḥsvabhāvatā*).[87] As such, Mādhyamika is also known as Śūnyavāda (the doctrine of emptiness).

Nāgajuna's philosophy further entails *a repudiation of dualities* between the conditioned and the unconditioned, between subject and object, between relative and absolute, and between samsara and nirvana. Nāgārjuna, however, readily points out that we should not misinterpret emptiness itself to be the view that "nothing exists": for, then it would be tantamount to the extreme of *annihilationism*. It is not that nothing exists, but that nothing exists *in itself*, that is, as an abiding entity.[88]

Although Nāgārjuna teaches that reality is an ontological monism (oneness of being), his philosophical method is that of *an epistemological dualism*, that is, a theory of knowledge based on two sets of criteria, between two orders of truth—the conventional (*samvṛtti*) and the ultimate (*paramârtha*) [1.2]. The one and only true reality, nirvana, however, is ineffable; the highest truth is beyond words.

Nāgārjuna's argumentation method is very thorough. In his **Vigraha,vyāvartanī** (On Averting Disputes), he critically examines all the major categories used by us to understand reality and shows them all to be somehow self-contradicting. We view the world as a network of relations which are really unintelligible. To say that A is related to B means that A is either identical with or different from B. If they are identical, they cannot be related; if they are different, they have no common ground!

Using this argument, Nāgārjuna goes on to dismantle other opinions, whether they are an appeal to experience, or to forms of reasoning, or to traditional authority, or any means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), popular with the non-Buddhist thinkers of his times. If, as some claim, that an opinion is self-warranting (reasonable in itself) why not regard *all* opinions as self-warranting. On the other hand, if an opinion needs to be substantiated, then there will be an infinite regress! Thus, he concludes, no opinion is feasible.

6.3 THE MIDDLE PATH. Since we cannot arrive at any certainty about true reality, Nāgārjuna argues that the most reliable way of freeing ourselves from any delusion that plague the world, is to discover the

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[85] On the origins of the Mahāyāna, see **How Buddhism Became Chinese** = SD 40b (2.8.4).
[86] P *paṭicca samuppāda:* see **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16.
[87] On not-self, see **Self and Selves** = SD 26.9.
[88] See Gethin, 1998: 237-244.

truth, which begins with understanding that *opinions are not really knowledge at all*. Nāgārjuna's philosophy is called **Mādhyamika** because it claims to tread the middle path, which consists not in synthesizing opposing views such as "The real is permanent" and "The real is changing," but in showing the falsity of both claims. To say that reality is both permanent and changing is to make another metaphysical or speculative assertion, another viewpoint, whose opposite is that "reality is neither permanent nor changing." Although this is a higher truth than the former, it is still a view (*dṛṣṭi;* P *diṭṭhi*). All metaphysical statements, says Nāgārjuna, are false.

Nāgārjuna uses reason to debunk itself. Those of his disciples who continue to limit the use of logic to this negative and indirect method, known as *prasaṅga*, are called the ***Prāsaṅgikas***, of which, Āryadeva (3rd cent), Buddhapālita (470-550), and Candrakīrti (600-c 650) are the most important. The other method, that of direct reasoning, is known the *svatantra* (independent) school of Mādhyamika philosophy, was founded by Bhāvaviveka (c 500-c 578). With him Buddhist logic comes to its own, and during his time the Yogācāra split away from the Mādhyamika.

Nāgārjuna, through his skepticism, reflects the spirit of early Buddhism, where the Buddha questions the dogmatism and authoritarianism of the Vedic brahmins and other teachers. However, successful as Nāgārjuna is in dismantling opinions, he does not provide methods for distinguishing truth from error. As such, most philosophers after him stressed on both clearing up error and gaining positive knowledge. These are the philosophers we will now turn to.

7 Vasubandhu and Asaṅga

7.1 UTERINE BROTHERS. Asaṅga (c 310-390),[89] born around 300 CE, together with Maitreyanātha (270-350), founded the Yogācāra school, and was brother or half-brother of **Vasubandhu** (c 320-400), one of the most influential figures of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Vasubandhu was from Puruṣapura (modern Peshawar, capital of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan) in the state of Gandhara. According to some accounts, Asaṅga's father was a kshatriya, and Vasubandhu's father a brahmin, but they had the same mother; in other words, they were half brothers.

According to the Tibetan Buddhist historian, Tāranātha (1575-1634), Vasubandhu was born a year after Asaṅga became a Buddhist monk. Vasubandhu's father was a court priest and an authority on the Vedas. It is likely that he worked in the court of the Śaka princes of the Śilada clan, who at that time ruled from Puruṣapura. During his formative years, Vasubandhu might have been introduced by his father not only to Brahmanism but also to the classical Nyaya and Vaiṣeśika schools, both of which influenced his logical thought.[90]

Asaṅga began his Buddhist life as a follower of the Mahīśāsaka schoo, but was later converted to the Mahāyāna. After years of intense meditation, he went on to write many of the key Yogācāra treatises, such as the Yogācāra,bhūmi Śāstra, the Mahāyāna Saṅgraha and Abhidharma Samuccaya.[91] Vasubandhu, on the other hand, initially studied the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, as presented in the Mahāvibhāsa. Dissatified with those teachings, he wrote the **Abhidharma,kośa** in verse and its autocommentary, the Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya, an important summary and critique of the Mahāvibhāsa from the Sautrāntrika viewpoint.

7.2 YOGĀCĀRA YEARS. After **c**onverting to Yogācāra on account of his brother Asaṅga, Vasubandhu wrote the **Vijñapti,mātratā,siddhi** ("Establishment of Mere Representation"), in which he defends the thesis that supposedly external objects are merely mental conceptions. Yogācāra idealism is a logical development of Sautrāntika representationism. If consciousness is self-intimating (*svaprakāśa*) and if consciousness can assume forms (*sâkāra,vijñāna*), it seems more logical to hold that the forms ascribed to allegedly external objects are really forms of consciousness. We only need another conception: a begin-

[89] On the dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, see Nakamura 1980: 264 n1, 268 n1.

[90] See http://www.iep.utm.edu/v/vasubandhu.htm.

[91] There are however discrepancies between the Chinses and Tibetan traditions regarding which treatises are attr to him and which to Maitreyanātha.

ningless "power" that would account for this tendency of consciousness to take up forms and to externalize them. This is the power of imagination (*kalpanā*).

Yogācāra adds two other modes of consciousness to the traditional six (of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind), namely, the ego consciousness (*mano,vijñāna*) and the storehouse consciousness (*ālaya,vijñāna*). The storehouse consciousness contains "stored" traces of past experiences as pure and as defiled "seeds." This is the Buddhist conception of *the unconscious*, where the store consciousness is cognate with the early Buddhist teaching of latent tendencies (*anusaya*). Where the store consciousness or latent tendencies serve as rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi,citta*) or the life continuum (*bhavaṅga*), it is regarded in modern terminology as *the subconscious.* These are theoretical constructs useful in discussing and explaining the nature of individual experience.[92]

The journey to nirvana begins when the store (*ālaya*) of seeds experience a "reversal" or withering away (*ālaya,parāvṛtti*). According to the Mahāyāna, though these ideas are ultimately mere imaginations, consciousness, in its essential nature, is without distinctions of subject and object. This ineffable consciousness is the "suchness" (*tathatā*) underlying all things. Neither the store (*ālaya*) nor the suchness (*tathatā*), however, is to be construed as being substantial or abiding entities. They are all dynamic processes.

7.3 LOGIC. Vasubandhu and Asaṅga were also responsible for the growth of Buddhist logic. Vasubandhu defined "perception" as the knowledge that is caused by the object, but this was rejected by Dignāga [8] as a definition belonging to his earlier realistic phase. Vasubandhu defined "inference" as a knowledge of an object through its mark, but **Dharmottara**, an 8th-century commentator pointed out that this is not a definition of the essence of inference but only of its origin.

The earliest records of a Buddhist response to conception of ***pramāṇa,*** the Indian science concerned with epistemology and logic, and debating methods, are found in sections of Asaṅga's Yogācāra.,bhūmi Śāstra, and a work extant only in Chinese attributed to Vasubandhu. These seminal works were followed by Dignāga's **Pramāṇa Samuccaya**, and Dharmakīrti's **Pramāṇa,varttika.**

8 Dignāga

8.1 LANGUAGE AND EXPERIENCE. The Indian Buddhist philosopher and logician **Dignaga** (c 480-540), a disciple of Vasubandhu, laid the foundations for the Buddhist epistemology, cognition theory and logic. He was born into a brahmin family in Siṁhavakta near Kāñcī (Kanchipuram). Very little is known of his early years, except that the monk Nāgadatta of the Vatsiputriya school was his preceptor. This school—also known as the Pudgalavāda—held the view that there is a kind of personality (albeit constructed) independent of the elements or aggregates composing it.[93]

Dignaga's **Pramāṇa Samuccaya** (Compendium of the Means of True Knowledge) is one of the greatest works on Buddhist logic. Dignāga's principal claim is that all language is nothing more than *a system of signs governed by conventional rules that are established by common consensus*. Since language consists of signs, the interpretation of language is nothing but a special application of *inference*. For example, when we notice a column of smoke, it could be taken as a sign that a fire is burning below it. The word *fire*, whether spoken or written can be seen as a sign that the person who uses it is thinking something about fire.

8.2 THE TWO VALID SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE. Dignāga challenged the brahmanical theories of knowledge of his times, and argued that **there are only two types of knowledge**, each having its own special subject-matter unavailable to the other. Through the physical senses, we obtain knowledge of *particulars* that are present to the physical senses (*svalakṣaṇa*),[94] while through the intellect we form *concepts* that relate to past and future experiences.[95]

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[92] See **The Unconscious** = SD 17.8b esp (6).

[93] On Dignāga's works, see Nakamura 1980: 298-300.

[94] Meaning "that which has its own characteristics": Pramāṇa Samuccaya Vṛtti *ad* 1.2.

[95] For the roots of this idea, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15) = SD 7.1 & **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 15.19-20/2:62) = SD 5.17 Intro (5) on "sense-impression" (*paṭigha,samphassa*) and "conceptual impression" (*adhivacana,samphassa*).

According to Dignāga, once we begin to synthesize or construct these particulars into multi-propertied "objects" or to identify those particulars as individual instances of some class, we are engaging in a cognitive action of a different sort: we are now *thinking, or reasoning, or judging*.[96]

In other words, Dignāga recognizes only two valid and authoritative means of veridical cognition: *perception* and *inference*. He gives a new definition of **perception** (*pratyakṣa*), that is, knowledge arising through direct physical sensing (of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body), that is free from all conceptual constructions, including name and class concepts. In other words, he regards only pure *sensation* as perception.[97]

When *the mind* has assigned a percept a name or class-property, then it is no longer dealing with what is physically present, but with a shared something. Most of such shared things are past memories, or future anticipations, or objects not present to the senses. And so on the grounds that thinking or judging (*anumāna*) is a complex cognitive act having, as its contents, this shared or generalized aspect or "universals" (*sāmānya,lakṣaṇa*), but which are absent from the senses. These universals are part of a cognitive process that is essentially different from perception (or sensation), which is a simple cognitive act dealing with what is present to the senses.[98]

Dignāga apparently sees an important distinction between perception and judgement: it would make no sense to speak of perception as being true or false, accurate or inaccurate; for, it is only when we analyze, classify, name and assign properties to things that the question arises as to whether we have analyzed properly, classified correctly, named suitably, or assigned the right properties.[99]

Inference (*anumāṇa*) is based on reason and logic. Dignāga, in his theory of *inference*, distinguishes between inference for oneself (*svârtha anumāṇa*), ie, acquiring new knowledge, and inference for the other (*parârtha anumāṇa*), ie, presenting new knowledge to others,[100] and laid down three criteria of a valid middle term (*hetu*), namely, that it should "cover" the minor premise (*pakṣa*), be present in the similar instances (*sapakṣa*), and be absent in dissimilar instances (*vipakṣa*). In his **Hetu,cakra** ("The Wheel of Evidence"), probably his earliest work,[101] Dignāga sets up a matrix of nine types of middle terms, of which two yield valid conclusions, two contradictory, and the rest uncertain conclusions.[102]

8.3 WE CANNOT EXPERIENCE EXTERNAL REALITY. In his **Ālambana Parīkṣa** ("Examination of Sense-objects"), Dignāga develops an argument of his predecessor, Vasubandhu. Here Dignāga argues that a **cognition** is accurate only if the object of the cognition is identical with that which causes the awareness to arise. For example, if we see a dead tree in the dark and mistake it for a man, then the object of cognition is *a man*, which is not identical to the dead tree that is causing the cognition—the cognition is therefore inaccurate. It is a false view.

Given this principle, argues Dignāga, it follows that none of our sensory cognition is accurate, because each of them is really caused by atoms massing together. Nevertheless, we are never aware of anything as a mass of atoms. Instead, we are aware of such things as human beings, elephants, and trees—which are purely conceptual in nature and do not accord with external reality. As such, he concludes that *the only objects of our awareness are concepts*—we are never directly aware of realities as they occur outside of the mind. In other words, we cannot, through perception and inference, really experience external reality. We merely construct our impressions of them in our minds.

8.4 HOW WE CAN REALLY KNOW REALITY: DIRECT KNOWLEDGE. It is in this context [8.2] that we should understand *the third source of knowledge*, that of "direct knowledge" (*abhijñā*; P *abhiññā*). In the

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[96] See Hayes 1980: 223 f (§1.31) & esp n15.

[97] Dignāga discusses perception in ch 1 of Pramāṇa Samuccaya: see Hayes 1980: 221 (§1.2 (1)). As in early Buddhist *saññā*, percepts (for Dignāga) also include, besides those of the five physical senses, all mental events (even those that are not perceptions), ie the contents of the sixth sense, mind (*manas*): see Hayes 1980: 224 (§1.31), 227 (§1.331).

[98] See Hayes 1980: 223 f (§1.31).

[99] See Hayes 1980: 224 (§1.31).

[100] See Hayes 1980: 223 (§1.2 (6)).

[101] See Hayes 1980: 230 (§1.3331) & n31.

[102] See Hayes 1980: 230-237 (§1.3331).

context of what we have discussed—that we are not really able to know the external world through our six senses alone—we can say that this third type of knowledge is *extrasensory*. This direct knowledge of true reality is fully developed by the Buddha and the arhat.

Since the Buddha is the fully self-awakened one, he has the direct knowledge of true reality. As such, the Buddha is our highest source of truth, especially when he is still living and could be personally consulted. In his absence, we only have two sources of Buddhist teachings: the teachings as preserved in the early canon, and the living teachers. They may not be as efficacious as the personal face-to-face instructions of the Buddha himself, but they are the best sources of the Dharma we have after the Buddha. When properly used, with mental cultivation, *the living teachers* are like experienced driving instructors, and *the canonical teachings* are like a manual in the hands of an experienced user.

The Dharma as Buddha Word contains records of the awakened experience of the Buddha and the early saints, and how they have or can benefit the world. These teachings are like descriptions and stories of a new world still distant for most of us, and yet accessible to the trained and liberated mind. Our spiritual education begins with the understanding why we are *not* cognizing and perceiving the real world. Then we strive to understand how we tend to construct virtual realities of our experiences. The Buddha's teachings provide us with the images and archetypes of reality. As our mental cultivation allows us to see more clearly beyond what the six senses filter and distort, we touch more and more of true reality.

It should be clear by now, I hope, that my purpose here is *not* to give an academic exposition of Buddhist philosophy or epistemology, but to propose, possibly even work out, a working insight into how all such teachings can effectively practise the Buddha's teachings for the sake of personal realization.

8.5 SENTENCE MEANING, WORD MEANING, AND *APOHA*. Dignāga states in the **Pramāṇa Samuccaya** that his main purpose of writing it is to remove the misunderstanding about how knowledge arises. The main object behind writing this chapter is to understand the idea that apart from perception and reasoning, all other means of acquiring knowledge, such as through words, are really *forms of reasoning*, that is, mentation (working of the mind) based, rightly or wrongly, on causes and effects.

Dignāga further rejects *authority* (especially religious authority) as a separate valid means of knowledge, taking it is only a kind of inference. Authority is acceptable as validating knowledge only if it does not contradict our own perception and inference. Further, Dignāga states that conceptual knowledge derives from words, but asks *what do words mean?* He proposes that words express their meaning *by exclusion of opposite meanings*. Words do not denote real universals, as there is no necessary connection between words and universals. Instead, words only express imaginary concepts.

Chapter 5 of the Pramāṇa Samuccaya contains one of his unique contributions to the Indian theory of language and logic, that is, his "exclusion theory" (*apoha*). Dignāga starts off by saying that "a word" (***śabda***), that is, a verbal cognition, is merely inference (*anumāṇa*) because both of them function on the principle of the "exclusion of the other" (*anyâpoha*). Dignāga declares that a word can express its own meaning only by repudiating opposite meanings, eg a cow is qualified by the deniability of a class of non-cows. That is, the word "cow" has its own meaning only by excluding all that are non-cows.[103]

In Dignāga's view, words do not produce knowledge by referring to particular objects, but only delimits X from non-X. For example, the word "white" does not bring about knowledge of all white objects, but only delimits white from non-white. In this way, some form of classification is possible in the mind through this process of distinctions. This is done by the internal application of agreement and difference, so he maintains that *speech derives from inference*. However, he adds the proviso that this process is aided by direct perception which helps prevent fallacies. Thus, the *imagined* world of universals can be made to concur with the *real* world by correcting contradictions in the light of direct perception.[104]

Dignāga is well aware that the *apoha* principle is not universally applicable and has its limits, namely, that synonyms (*paryāya,śabda*), such as *vṛkṣa* and *taru* (both meaning "tree"), do not exclude each other. The exclusion only works in two cases, that is, (1) there is *direct exclusion* when A and B share the same

[103] This concept of Dignāga is similar to that of the German philosopher, Hegel (1770-1831), who also thinks that the universality of a concept is posited through its negativity.

[104] See SHŌRYŪ Katsura, The *apoha* theory of Dignāga," 1979.

universal, eg "a tree is *not* non-trees," and (2) there is *indirect exclusion* when A ("simsapa tree") excludes B ("pot") when A and B share the same universal with C ("tree," which is the same class as A, ie "earthiness"), so that B is indirectly excluded on account of C (eg, "a simsapa, being a tree, is a non-pot").[105] [10.2]

Dignāga's works are often collections of pithy aphorisms. His main purpose is apparently to criticize, debunk or rebut non-Buddhist theories of knowledge, such as the Vaiśeṣika theory of perception. Although by later standards, his works are crudely formulated, he provides the groundwork for many of the later developments in the Indian Buddhist schools of logic. In fact, his influence can be said to be found in Indian logic until at least the beginning of the 14th century. Dignāga's teachings are further developed in the 7th century by Dharmakīrti [9], to whom we now turn.

9 Dharmakirti

Dignāga's ideas were further developed in the 7th century by **Dharmakīrti** (c 600-660), a South Indian brahmin and scholar of Nālandā University, who modified his definition of perception.[106] Dharma,-kīrti, in his **Nyāya,bindu,** distinguishes four kinds of perception: that of the five senses, that of the mind, self-consciousness, and perception of the yogis or meditators. He also introduces a threefold distinction of valid middle terms: *the middle* (*hetu*) must be related to the major premises either by identity ("This is a tree because it is a bodhi"), or as cause and effect ("This is fiery because it is smoky"), or the middle is a non-perception from which the absence of the major could be inferred.[107]

Dharmakīrti consolidated the central epistemological thesis of the Buddhists that perception and inference have their own exclusive objects. The object of perception is the pure *particular* (*svalakṣaṇa*), and the object of inference is the *universal* (*sāmānya,lakṣaṇa*). In their metaphysical positions, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti represent a moderate form of idealism.

Dharmakirti was famed for his theory of the identity between valid knowledge (*prama*) and its means (*pramāṇa*). Knowing is nothing but feeling an object-shape stamped upon the mind. This cognitive object-stamp is the immediate means to knowledge, being the direct measure of its object and as such is not really different from the structure of knowledge itself. As such, the difference is only an analytical abstraction having no causal significance.[108]

Dharmakīrti is also well known for his differences with some of Dignaāga's ideas. For example, while Dignāga's logical system, is, in modern term, said to be *inductive* (where the premises support a conclusion, a process also known as "inference"), Dharmakīrti's system is *deductive* (the premises imply the conclusion)[109] [8.1]. While Dignāga was more interested in the *theory* of knowledge, Dharmakīrti investigated further to understand *why we acted* in accordance with such knowing.[110]

One important idea that Dharmakīrti and other Buddhist scholars who followed Dignāga agreed on is that the Buddhist canon is valuable because it contains advice that, when followed properly, would reduce our suffering or free us from it. Buddhist teachings, in other words, are regarded by them as valuable not

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[105] For the technicalities, see SHŌRYŪ Katsura, The *apoha* theory of Dignāga," 1979, & "Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on *apoha*," 1989: 131.

[106] On Dharmakīrti's works, see Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, 1980: 301-308.

[107] Examples: There is no elephant in my closet, because if there were, I would be able to see it. (This illustrates the most basic form of *anupalabdhi*, namely, that the failure to observe something that would be observed if present indicates that the thing in question is absent.) And "There is no feeling of cold in that heretic who is burning at the stake, because fire is incompatible with cold. (This illustrates the principle that if one observes something that is incompatible with another thing, then the second thing cannot be present where the thing incompatible with it is observed.) (From Richard Hayes via email on the Buddha-L forum, 28 Nov 2008)

[108] See Nandita Bandyopadhyay, "The Buddhist theory of relation between Prama and Pramana," 1979.

[109] For examples of inductive and deductive reasonings, see **Kesa,puttiya S** (A 3.65) = SD 35.4a Comy 3a(6); also **Anubaddha Bhikkhu S** (S 47.3) = SD 24.6a Intro (2.5.5). See SHŌRYŪ Katsura, "Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on *apoha*," 1989: 141 f.

[110] See SHŌRYŪ Katsura, "Dignāga and Dharmakīrti on *apoha*," 1989: 142 f.

because they tell the truth, as the brahmins claimed the Vedas did, but because the teachings provide methods by which we may discover the truth for ourselves.

10 Śāntarakṣita & Kamalaśīla

10.1 BUILDING ON DIGNĀGA'S WORK. The ideas of Dignāga on epistemology and logic were further developed by Dharmakīrti, both of whom provided the foundation for later famous Indian philosophers, like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. **Śāntarakṣita** (8th cent) was a famous Indian Buddhist scholastic and abbot of Nālandā University, who founded the philosophical school known as Yogācāra-Svatantrika-Mādhyamaka, which unified the Mādhyamaka tradition of Nāgārjuna, the Yogācāra of Asaṅga, and the epistemology of Dharmakīrti. He was instrumental in the introduction of Buddhism and the Sarvāstivādin monastic lineage into Tibet, and founded her first Tibetan monastery, the Samye Ling.

Kamalaśīla (8th cent) was an Indian scholastic and pupil of Śāntarakśita, whose work in Tibet he continued during the period known as "the first diffusion" (*snga dar*). According to popular Tibetan tradition, Kamalaśīla represented the Indian school at the famous Samye debate (792-794), where he defeated the influential Chan master Heshang Mohoyan, establishing once and for all the continued influence of Indian Buddhism in Tibet.

It was **Dignāga** [8.5] who formulated the basic framework of Buddhist semantics with his *apoha* or exclusion theory of word meaning. He also accepted some sort of "pure sentence theory" of the grammarian Bhartṛhari (c 5th cent), but was criticized by various non-Buddhist scholars. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla defended Dignāga by introducing a number of elaborations and modifications regarding his word meaning and sentence meaning.[111]

10.2 MAKING SENSE OF SENTENCES. While Dignāga asserts that the meaning of a sentence comes from the *meanings* of its component words (ie "word-meaning"), Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla claim that it comes from the *function* of the meanings of the words. This latter assertion is the same as the claim that while a word has no independent meaning, the meaning of a sentence is a function of the *related* meanings of the words. As such, while Dignāga's approach is called "the pure sentence theory," the Śāntarakṣita/Kamalaśīla claim is known as "the related designation theory" of meaning.[112]

Dignāga's *apoha*-based pure sentence theory faces a problem of circularity. The exclusionist statement, "The meaning of 'cow' is not non-cow," for instance, seems to no more than tautologously say, "The meaning of 'cow' is cow or cowness." We are not sure how Digṇāga would respond to this problem. However, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were aware of it and responded to it.

To solve the *apoha* circularity problem, we should begin by asking a related and important question: where does the meaning of a word come from, and how do we make sense of a sentence? First, we should note that a word has no useful meaning apart from its context (except, of course, where the word is related to a sentence, as when someone asks "How are you?" and you answer "Fine!"). When we encounter a word in isolation, we would often put into some sort of context.

Once a word is used in a sentence, it first acts to exclude those images in its exclusion class (eg when we hear "cow," we would not think of non-cows). The word-function is further restricted or modified by other words in the sentence, and by the listener's dispositions. Suppose I am told, "Bring me some water." Suppose that I am disposed to bring the water, I would envision several ways that this could be done: I could bring it in my hands, in a cup, in a pot, or with a hose. Then I am told, "Bring it in a pot." Here the word "pot" excludes all the other words (or ways) I have envisioned.

However, alternatively, suppose I am disposed to help, and wondering what I could do—sweeping the pens, giving grass to the cow, fetching the cow, or bringing water. Then I am told, "Bring water in a pot." Here I will have no thought of various kinds of water vessels (or my hands) as before. The words "bring" and "water" have together excluded all of them except for my disposition to bring water. The two words have functioned only to exclude the images of all those things which are not pots, known to me to be at hand. Here the sense consists of the words in the sentence that are of related meanings, and they are relat-

[111] See Siderits, "Word meaning, sentence meaning, and *apoha*," 1985: 139.
[112] See Siderits, "Word meaning, sentence meaning, and *apoha*," 1985: 143-147.

ed in a interdependent causal manner. Thus working in concert, the words function to exclude all but the intended sense, and then I grasp the meaning, that is, I know what to do.

In the above case, *sentence meaning* is fixed by the collective causal capacities of the words, and *word meaning* is fixed by sentence meaning. The circle is broken when we see that we are not required consciously to determine related word meaning in order to understand the sentence, which is effectively already done at the causal level. This is clearly an improvement on the problems posed by Dignāga's formative ideas.

10 Conclusion

The first Buddhist millennium was characterized by the rise of Buddhist philosophy and scholasticism. It was a time when much effort was spent in exploring *the word* of the teaching, defending is against external attacks, and explaining it so that it reflects the *spirit* of the Buddha Word as closely as possible. On the other hand, there is a tendency in religion, after its founder's death, for its some of its followers to fall into extremes (both in doctrine or in practice), so that people like Nāgārjuna used their genius to bring us back to the middle of the Middle Way.

Beginning with Dignāga, serious attention was made in understanding how language works and how logic can help in thinking, debating and expression of the truth against the rise of non-Buddhist teachings and their reactions to Buddhism. Dharmakīrti and the great Indian Buddhist scholars after him worked at perfecting Dignāga's ideas. Together they developed an epistemology that presented the Middle Way as comprising the Buddha's teachings that can be distinguished from falsehood and proven to be true and effective means of spiritual liberation. This focus on philosophical issues concerning language, knowledge and logic allows those ancient scholastics and debaters to set aside their sectarian disputes and work at better understanding the Buddha Word.

The idea of understanding the nature of language is so that we can use it to properly understand the Buddha Word and to effectively propagate it. Language is so closely interconnected with experiences that we are often fooled into thinking there is an "I" or abiding entity behind these dynamic processes. There is only the interconnectedness of sounds and senses to which each of us privately give meanings according to our dispositions and wisdom (or lack of it).

To understand language is to be able to let go of it, like reading a signboard and moving on in our journey towards growing stillness. For, there comes a time when we need to be truly silent so that we can free our minds from the rush of thoughts and distractions. When we come to the end of the journey, we would enjoy a good rest.

Buddhism, like other world religions, Buddhism has an ancient set of scriptures, but it stands unique in *not* having any sacred or church language. Buddhism views *language* as being merely a skillful means (*upāya*) to prepare the mind for inner stillness and clarity. More importantly, while the book religions, which are invariably also God-religions, use their sacred language or languages to mold and hold their followers' minds, Buddhism uses language only insofar as it would free the mind so that we directly experience true reality and spiritual liberation. In short, while the other religions use language to *hold* their followers, Buddhism uses it to *free* ourselves, even from Buddhism itself.

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