

# The Buddha in the Pāli Exegetical Literature

Toshiichi Endo



# The Buddha

## in the Pāli Exegetical Literature

This book brings together several of Professor Toshiichi Endo's previously published articles on the Buddha-concept in the Pāli Commentaries. Overall, it deals with two spiritual powers of the Buddha: the knowledge power (*ñāṇa-bala*) and the physical power (*kāya-bala*). It discusses first, the knowledge power, by way of examining in-depth such topics as the Buddha's omniscience, Buddha's eye (*buddha-cakkhu*), ten powers (*tathāgata-bala*), and four kinds of self-confidence (*catu-vesārajja*), and the second, the physical power, by exploring such topics as the Buddha's eighty minor bodily marks (*asīti-anuvyañjana*), marks of hundred merits (*sata-puñña-lakkhaṇa*), and the fathom long halo (*byāma-ppabhā*). The book takes a comparative approach to the Theravāda materials on the topic to treat them within the larger Indian Buddhism. Hence it provides references to the Sanskrit and Chinese sources of other Indian Buddhist schools like Mahāsaṅghika and Sarvāstivāda. By so doing, it interprets the Theravada conception of the Buddha in the Pāli Commentaries as a theoretical response to that of other Indian Buddhist schools.

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# **The Buddha in the Pāli Exegetical Literature**

**Toshiichi Endo**

遠藤敏一

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## Foreword

More than three decades ago, Professor Toshiichi Endo, my highly esteemed colleague at the University of Kelaniya and The University of Hong Kong, and a very close *kalyāṇamitta*, completed his PhD research at the postgraduate Institute of Buddhist Studies, the University of Kelaniya, and eventually published it in 1997 under the title, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism: A Study of the Concept of Buddha in the Pāli Commentaries*. It was an important scholarly contribution to the study of the Buddhological development in the Theravāda tradition. The present volume, entitled *The Buddha in the Pāli Exegetical Literature*, is intended in part as a revision and enhancement of this previous work.

As Professor Endo explains in his preface, the section dealing with the Bodhisatta in his earlier book is not included in the present volume as he was working to offer us a separate future volume on it. As a matter of fact, I knew that he was working hard at it; for, from time to time, he discussed his findings with me, particularly relating to the Sanskrit and Chinese material in the Northern tradition. Very sadly, on account of his unexpected demise, we are now not fortunate enough to see the result of his research effort in this direction integrating valuable Sanskrit and Chinese sources with his earlier findings focussing on the Pāli material.

Professor Endo's present book is undoubtedly another valuable contribution to Buddhological research. It comprises a collection of his published essays on the topic in the past several years, incorporating considerable amount of discussion on the relevant Sanskrit and Chinese textual material. As I understand, before his departure for Sri Lanka, when he was handing over the first draft to the Centre of Buddhist Centre, The University of Hong Kong, he left words that he would like to make some revision on the draft in some places before finalizing it for the press. Unfortunately, his untimely demise had prevented him from fulfilling this wish.

May he have a spiritually successful *saṃsāric* faring and attain Nibbāna soon!

Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti  
Chair Professor, School of Philosophy,  
Renmin University of China.

## Preface

It was more than thirty years ago that I began a research on the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries for my PhD degree at the Postgraduate Institute of Pāli and Buddhist Studies (PGIPBS), University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> While my research was in progress, it transpired that the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries had to be investigated from two distinct perspectives: one is all about the Buddha and the other is pre-Buddha's time as the Bodhisatta. After its completion in 1995, a revised and slightly enlarged monograph based on my PhD thesis was published under the title *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism: A Study of the Concept of Buddha in the Pali Commentaries* in 1997. This contains comprehensive studies of both the Buddha-concept and the Bodhisatta-concept. Since its first publication, nevertheless, new researches and their results were coming out year after year. Such a development in the field of scholarship naturally necessitated a further revision of my book. I have been working on this for some years with the intention of reexamining the subject from a wider perspective, specially placing it in the context of Indian Buddhism, though the Pāli commentaries would still be the focal point in my undertaking. However, in order to revise the book I realized that the new attempt would be too wide for a monograph if I included the sections dealing with the Bodhisatta that was in my original publication. I left them this time for a future revision. The present work therefore deals only with the spiritual aspects of the Buddha known as 'ñāṇa-bala' (knowledge power) and his physical strengths called 'kāya-bala' (physical power), two categories often met within the commentaries.

Another distinguishing feature in this volume is that I tried to present as many relevant references as I could from Sanskrit and Chinese materials for comparative purposes. This comparative approach brings out an important feature for the interpretation of Theravāda Buddhism. It manifests quite clearly that the studies of Theravāda Buddhism should not be confined to its

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Kelaniya has a departmental program for graduate studies separately.

resources alone for fear of internal praise or of sectarianism. The Theravāda School too must be placed and examined in the context of Indian Buddhism. This is because Theravādin concept of the Buddha, at least some of them, could be considered to have been their theoretical responses to schools like Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsaṅghika, or the other way round, as witnessed in the *Kathāvatthu* and its commentary. The deification of the Buddha is certainly the topic every Indian Buddhist school was interested in. Consequently, concepts like the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ (*asīti-anuvyañjana*), the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ (*satapuññalakkaṇa*), the ‘five eyes’ (*pañca-cakkhu*), compassion (*karuṇā*), etc., are good examples of influence among Buddhist schools.

The present work is a collection of my articles published in different felicitation volumes and academic journals. It must be mentioned, however, that typos in the original publications (1997 / 2002) were corrected and some revisions were also made. The following are the details:

Chapter 1: “The Buddha’s Physical Strength (*Kāyabala*): Pāli Commentarial Interpretations.” In *Buddhist Thought and Application: Essays in Honour of Professor P. D. Premasiri*, 109–120. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2021.

Chapter 2: “The Buddha’s ‘Eighty Minor Bodily Marks’: (*asīti-anuvyañjana*) in Theravāda Buddhism: A Critical Survey.” *Journal of the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 7, 106–121. Colombo: Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 2016.

Chapter 3: “The Buddha’s Fathom Long Halo (*Byāmapabbhā*) and Rays (*Ramsi*): A Critical Survey in the Pāli Commentarial Literature.” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XII, 91–106. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre, 2014–2015.

Chapter 4: “The Marks of A Hundred Merits (*Satapuññalakkaṇa*) in Pāli Literature: A Critical Study.” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XV, 39–54. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2018.

Chapter 5: “The Buddha’s Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*): Pāli Commentarial Interpretations.” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XV, 55–78. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre, 2016.

Chapter 6: “The Buddha’s Eighteen Qualities (*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā*)” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XIV, 57–84. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2017.

Chapter 7: “Other Aspects of the Buddha’s Knowledge (1): The Buddha’s *Tathāgatabala* and *Catuvesāraja*.” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. XV, 77–92. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre, 2019.

Chapter 8: “Other Aspects of the Buddha’s Knowledge (2): The Buddha’s Eye (*Cakkhu/Cakṣu*).” In *Illuminating the Dharma: Buddhist Studies in Honor of Venerable Professor KL Dhammajoti*, 121–130. Toshiichi Endo. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2021.

Chapter 9: “Knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion (*Mahā-karuṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*)”.\*

Chapter 10: “Transformation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka’s Contribution to the Buddha-concept in the Pāli Commentaries.” *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. X, 33–48. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong, 2012. Hong Kong: The Buddha-Dharma Centre.

Appendix: “Buddhaghosa’s Role in Theravāda Buddhism: Some Observations.” In *Sammānanā in Honour of Venerable Professor M. Nandavamsa*, 44–57. Matara: Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, The University of Ruhuna.

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September 2021

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\* Publisher’s note: the details of this entry could not be found and has been left as provided by the author.





## Abbreviations

A	: <i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
AA	: <i>Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā</i>
AAT	: <i>Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i>
Ap	: <i>Apadāna</i>
ApA	: <i>Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā</i>
(Be)	: <i>Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana</i> edition, Burma
Bv	: <i>Buddhavaṃsa</i>
BvA	: <i>Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
CBETA	: Digital version of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, Taipei.
Cp	: <i>Cariyāpiṭaka</i>
CpA	: <i>Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
D	: <i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
DA	: <i>Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā</i>
DAT	: <i>Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i>
Dhp	: <i>Dhammapada</i>
DhpA	: <i>Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā</i>
DPPN	: <i>Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names</i> by G.P. Malalasekera
EB	: <i>Encyclopedia of Buddhism</i>
ERE	: <i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i>
It	: <i>Itivuttaka</i>
ItA	: <i>Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
J	: <i>Jātaka</i>
JA	: <i>Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
JinlkVn	: <i>Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā</i>
KhpA	: <i>Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Kv	: <i>Kathāvatthu</i>
KvA	: <i>Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
M	: <i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
MA	: <i>Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā</i>

MAT	: <i>Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i>
Miln	: <i>Milindapañha</i>
MVŚ	: [ <i>Abhidharma-</i> ] <i>Mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra</i>
Mvu	: <i>Mahāvastu</i>
Mvy	: <i>Mahāvvyutpatti</i>
NdA	: <i>Niddesa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Net	: <i>Nettippakaraṇa</i>
NetA	: <i>Nettippakarana-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Pd	: <i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>
Peṭ	: <i>Peṭakopadesa</i>
Pṭs	: <i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
PṭsA	: <i>Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Sanne	: <i>Visuddhimārga Mahāsanya</i>
SA	: <i>Samyutta-aṭṭhakathā</i>
SAT	: <i>Samyutta-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i>
Sn	: <i>Suttanipāta</i>
SnA	: <i>Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā</i>
T	: Taisho digital version of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, Tokyo
ThagA	: <i>Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>
Ṭ	: <i>Ṭīkā</i>
UdA	: <i>Udāna-aṭṭhakathā</i>
VA	: <i>Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Vibh	: <i>Vibhaṅga</i>
VibhA	: <i>Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Vin	: <i>Vinayapiṭaka</i>
Vism	: <i>Visuddhimagga</i>
VismṬ	: <i>Visuddhimagga-ṭīkā</i>
VismSn	: <i>Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya</i>
VvA	: <i>Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
望月	: 望月佛教大辞典 ( <i>Mochizuki bukkyō daijiten</i> ) ( <i>Mochizuki Buddhist Dictionary</i> )

Chapter 1

## The Buddha's Physical Strength (*Kāyabala*)

### I. Introduction

The Theravādins have two distinct approaches to the concept of the Buddha. One is the apotheosis of the historical Buddha Gotama and the other is the conceptualization of universal Buddhahood, as manifested in the generalization of Buddhas of the past and future.<sup>1</sup> Influencing each other, these approaches developed almost side by side from early in the history of Buddhism, with an increased level of apotheosis occurring, probably after the demise of the Master. It is in the canonical texts, such as the *Mahā-padāna-sutta*<sup>2</sup> and so on,<sup>3</sup> that the beginnings of generalization of Buddhas and the universalization of Buddhahood are evident. The trend continues and develops in the canonical texts and thereafter the post-canonical texts and the commentarial literature. Many references to the Buddha-concept are framed in terms of plural forms of Buddhas, particularly in the Pāli commentarial texts.

Within this framework, the Theravādins began to apotheosize the Buddha Gotama and universalize the result of their apotheosis to apply to any Buddha of the past or the future.<sup>4</sup> The Buddha Gotama thus came to be regarded as one of many Buddhas who have appeared or will appear in this world. In the process, however, it is not difficult to imagine that the Buddhists reserved a special place for the Buddha Gotama who, as the architect of the present

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hayashima, Kyōshō (早島鏡正) [1988]: 1 ff.

<sup>2</sup> D II 1 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The *Dhammapada*, considered to be one of the early canonical texts, may also be regarded as an early indication of the generalization of Buddhahood when it says: 'sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ; kusalassa upasampadā; sacittapariyodapanam; etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ'. (Dhp 183)

<sup>4</sup> The typical examples and perhaps the only ones found in the canonical and subsequent texts up to the Pāli commentaries are the future Buddha Metteyya and the six previous Buddhas (see the *Mahāpadāna-sutta*).

Buddha era, was much closer to them emotionally than any other Buddhas of the past or future. The references to lineage of the Sākya clan in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*<sup>5</sup> and the *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* (*Paramatthajotikā*),<sup>6</sup> for instance, may perhaps indicate such emotional attachment.

Furthermore, the apotheosis of Buddhas developed in two directions: the spiritual and intellectual achievements of a Buddha and the attribution of special physical endowments to him. Buddhists would initially have perceived the historical Buddha Gotama as a model for developing a universal concept of Buddhahood. Such a process was undoubtedly concerned with perpetuating the Dhamma and justifying the supremacy of the Buddha’s teachings. The emphasis placed on a Buddha’s spiritual attainments and physical attributes must therefore be understood from this viewpoint. It would have been taken for granted that the Buddha, as a spiritually and intellectually advanced person and the highest among men and gods, would necessarily be different from other beings in terms of physical strength as well. Therefore, these two areas of development must go hand in hand.

## II. The Buddha’s physical strength compared to that of elephants

The Theravādins have consistently maintained that the historical Buddha Gotama was born into this world as a human, subject to all the frailties of a mortal being. His human qualities were never overlooked, even in the commentarial literature. At the same time, his physical endowments increased over time. To Buddhists, the outward appearance of a Buddha has religious significance. In the Theravāda tradition it is thought that a Buddha’s intellectual and spiritual attainments should be reflected in his physical superiority. In his exegeses on the term *bhagavant*, for example, Buddhaghosa specifically asserts that the *rūpa-kāya* (physical body) of a Buddha generates the esteem of worldly people, and makes him worthy of such esteem by laymen.<sup>7</sup> This shows that the Buddha’s physical endowments inspire people to revere him as a great spiritual leader and guide. The *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā* (UdA) ascribed to Dhammapāla also states that the Buddha’s *rūpa-kāya*, adorned with the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a great man (*dvattimsa-*

<sup>5</sup> DA I 258–262.

<sup>6</sup> SnA I 352–356.

<sup>7</sup> Vism 211; VA I 124. Cf. KhpA 108; etc. See also Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991a]: 207; 1978: 118.

*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*), the eighty minor marks (*asīti-anubyañjana*), a fathom-long halo (*byāmapabbhā*), and so on, will generate the people’s faith.<sup>8</sup>

How the Theravādins reconciled these two apparently conflicting views — the Buddha’s human qualities and docetic traits — is a question that requires careful investigation. The Pāli sources up to the commentarial period do not address the issue directly. The *Kathāvatthu* and *Milindapañha* provide evidence of docetism around the Buddha prevalent at different times in some Buddhist groups, but the Theravādins are quite firm on the issue of the Buddha Gotama’s human qualities. However, later Pāli texts attribute various superhuman qualities to him. Perhaps such Buddhological developments reflected a shift in the Buddha-concept. They were necessitated at times by religious environments, either internally among Buddhist schools or externally between Buddhism and Indian non-Buddhist schools.

It is well known that the Buddha’s spiritual and intellectual province came to be broadened, particularly in the Pāli commentarial literature. The Buddha’s physical aspects were developed in conjunction with this. All such perceptions began within the Canon, and the thirty-two marks of a great man became a popular concept in the canonical texts, along with other physical features that are said to distinguish the Buddha from other beings.

The Tathāgata is said to possess two kinds of power (*bala*): namely, *ñāṇa-bala* (knowledge power) and *kāya-bala* (physical power). The Pāli commentaries often compare the Tathāgata’s *kāya-bala* to the strength of elephants. Many sources quote the ‘ancients’ (*porāṇā*)<sup>9</sup>, naming the families of elephants as follows:<sup>10</sup>

*Kālāvakaṇ ca Gaṅgeyyaṃ Paṇḍaraṃ Tamba-Piṅgalaṃ,  
Gandha-Maṅgala-Hemaṇ ca Uposatha Chaddant’ ime dasā ti.*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> UdA 87.

<sup>9</sup> *Porāṇā* are said to have their origins close to the time of the early *Abhidhamma* treatises during or soon after the time of King Asoka of India. See Mori, Sodō [1984]: 264 & 268.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., MA II 25; SA II 43; AA V 10; UdA 403; NdA III 55; PtSA III 625; BvA 42; VibhA 397; etc.

<sup>11</sup> The Pāli canonical texts make no reference to these breeds of elephants except the last two, *Uposatha* and *Chaddanta*. D II 174 states: ‘*puna caparaṃ, ānanda, rañño mahāsudassanassa hatthiratanam pāturahosi sabbaseto sattappatiṭṭho iddhimā vehāsaṅgamo uposatho nāma nāgarājā.*’ (See also M III 173 f: *caparaṃ, bhikkhave, rañño cakkavattissa hatthiratanam pātubhavati — sabbaseto sattappatiṭṭho iddhimā*

The texts further elaborate that *Kālāvaka* is the family of ordinary elephants. The equations go in ascending order as follows: the power of ten men equals that of one *Kālāvaka* elephant; the power of ten *Kālāvaka* elephant equals that of one *Gaṅgeyya* elephant; likewise, the equations continue, up to the power of ten *Uposatha* elephants, equivalent to that of one *Chaddanta* elephant. Ultimately, the power of ten *Chaddanta* elephants is said to be equivalent to the power of the Tathāgata. The *Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā* also mentions the last two kinds of elephants, *Uposatha* and *Chaddanta*, in connection with the elephant-treasure (*hatthi-ratana*) of a universal monarch (*cakkavatti*). It is said that the elephant is completely white (*sabbaseto*) with polished feet and a sevenfold stance (*sattapatiṭṭha*), possessing supernormal powers (*iddhimā*) and the ability to fly (*vehāsaṅgamo*), and comes either from the family of *Uposatha* or *Chaddanta*. If from the *Uposatha* family, the elephant is the most senior (*sabbajeṭṭhako*) in the herd, and if from the *Chaddanta* family, it is the youngest (*sabbakaṇiṭṭho*).<sup>12</sup>

The *Uposatha* elephant, as described in the *Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā* (Khpa) above, is already considered a legendary elephant in the canonical texts. It is the elephant-treasure (*hatthi-ratana*) of a universal monarch (*cakkavatti*), and is described in the *Majjhima-nikāya* as follows:

[... *rañño cakkavattissa hatthiratanam pātubhavati* –] *sabbaseto sattappatiṭṭho iddhimā vehāsaṅgamo uposatho nāma nāgarājā. ... Bhūtapubbam, bhikkhave, rājā cakkavattī tameva hatthiratanam vīmaṃsamāno pubbaṇhasamayam abhiruhitvā samuddapariyantam pathaviṃ anusamyāyitvā tameva rājadhāniṃ paccāgantvā pātārāsamakāsi.* (M III 173–4) (All white, with sevenfold stance, with supernormal power, flying through the air ... And it so happens that the Wheel-turning Monarch, when testing the elephant-treasure, mounts him in the morning, and after traversing the whole earth to the edge of the ocean, he returns to the royal capital to take his morning meal).<sup>13</sup>

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*vehāsaṅgamo uposatho nāma nāgarājā.*) The latter (*chaddanta*) is described as having the power to travel through the air, and is white in colour. (*Yathā ca sabbaseto sattappatiṭṭho iddhimā vehāsaṅgamo chaddanto nāgarājā nagaramajjhe nābhiramati, himavati chaddantadahagahaneyeva abhiramati, ...* — Vism 650.)

<sup>12</sup> Khpa 172.

<sup>13</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1995]: 1024.

The *Uposatha* elephant was also the elephant-treasure of King *Mahā-sudassana* (D II 174). The *Milindapañha* describes it as being eight cubits in height (*aṭṭharatanubbedho*)<sup>14</sup> and nine in length (*navaratanāyāmapariṇāho*) (... *aṭṭharatanubbedho navaratanāyāmapariṇāho pāsādiko dassanīyo uposatho nāgarājā*) (Miln 282). Moreover, the *Jātaka* (no. 514) relates the birth story of a *Chaddanta* (six-toothed) elephant. On the other hand, the names of the remaining eight breeds of elephants are not to be found in any other Pāli canonical texts, with the exception of the Pāli commentaries already referred to above. Indeed, Pāli sub-commentaries note:

*Ñāṇabalaṃ pana pāliyaṃ āgatameva, na kāyabalaṃ viya aṭṭhakathā-āruḥamevāti adhippāyo.* (MAṬ (Be) II 19; AAṬ (Be) III 313; etc.) (‘Knowledge-power’ has certainly come down in the Canon, but [something] like ‘bodily power’; the meaning is that it [physical power] has indeed been compiled in the commentaries.)

This passage clearly shows that the bodily attributes of the Buddha (*kāya-bala*) mainly arose through commentarial development.

### III. The Buddha’s physical strength described in terms of ‘*nārāyaṇa-bala*’ (power of a thunderbolt)

The Pāli commentaries additionally compare the physical strength of the Buddha to the power of the impact of a thunderbolt, which equals the power of a thousand *koṭis* of ordinary elephants (*pakatihatthī*) or ten thousand *koṭis* of men (*purisa*).<sup>15</sup> If the term *koṭi* equals to ten million (10,000,000),<sup>16</sup> then a thousand *koṭis* of ordinary elephants is equivalent to the strength of ten *Chaddanta* elephants,<sup>17</sup> as is the strength of ten thousand *koṭis* of men. However, the term occurs rarely in the Pāli tradition. Malalasekera refers to

<sup>14</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1994]: 141.

<sup>15</sup> ‘*Nārāyaṇasaṅghātābalaṃ idameva vuccati. Tadevaṃ pakatihatthigaṇaṇāya hatthīnaṃ koṭisahassānaṃ purisaṇaṇāya dasannaṃ purisaṇaṇāya balaṃ hoti. Idaṃ tva tathāgatassa kāyabalaṃ*’ (*nārāyaṇasaṅghātābala* – MA II 25; SA II 43; AA V 10; PtA 625. *nārāyaṇasaṅkhātābala* – VibhA 397). Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translates the term *nārāyaṇa* as ‘thunderbolt’. See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu 1991b: 142.

<sup>16</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1994]: 139.

<sup>17</sup> See also DAṬ II 210, where the Buddha’s physical strength is described as equivalent to 10,000 *koṭis* of ordinary elephants (*pakatihatthīnaṃ koṭisahassabalappamāṇaṃ kāyabalaṃ hoti*).

it only once in the *Cūlavam̐sa*, which is a later source than the *Aṭṭhakathā* texts. The *nārāyaṇa* in the *Cūlavam̐sa* is considered by its translator Geiger as a name of the Hindu god Viṣṇu.<sup>18</sup> In Indian mythology the term *nārāyaṇa* is often used as an epithet of Viṣṇu.<sup>19</sup> It also appears in the *Mahābhārata* to describe a god who is said to possess certain physical marks similar to some of the thirty-two marks of a great man in Buddhism.<sup>20</sup> Some Buddhist texts inherited this meaning, or at least treated *nārāyaṇa* as a powerful god. For instance, the *Foshuo sanmore jing* 『佛說三摩惹經』 of the *Dīrgha-āgama* (長阿含經), said to belong to the Dharmaguptaka school,<sup>21</sup> provides a list of gods assembled around the Buddha, as in the corresponding Pāli *Mahāsamaya-sutta* (D *sutta* no. 20). One of the gods in the list is the *nārāyaṇa* god (那羅延天) (T 1 259a). The *Zhuanji baiyuan jing* 『撰集百緣經』 (*Avdānaśataka*) also clearly indicates the *nārāyaṇa*’s status as a god in a story in which a heretic offers expensive flowers to the *nārāyaṇa* god to seek his help,<sup>22</sup> or a woman prays to this god for the safe return of her husband.<sup>23</sup>

The physical strength of the Buddha in terms of the power of a thunderbolt (*nārāyaṇabala* 那羅延力) is a popular concept in later Buddhist texts. In the Pāli tradition, the sub-commentaries to the *Papañcasūdanī* (MA) and *Sāratthappakāsinī* (SA) provide the following interpretation for the term:

*Nārāyaṇasaṅghātabalanti ettha nārā*<sup>24</sup> *vuccanti rasmiyo, tā bahū nānāvīdhā ito uppajjantīti nārāyaṇaṃ, vajiraṃ, tasmā nārāyaṇasaṅghātabalanti vajirasaṅghātabalanti attho*’ (In the context of ‘the power of the striking of a thunderbolt,’ ‘*nārā*’ is said to mean ‘rays’. They which are produced in many ways are ‘*nārāyaṇa*,’

<sup>18</sup> See Malalasekera, G. P. [1983]: 54. Also Geiger, Wilhelm [1953]: 105.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Nakamura, Hajime (中村元) [1981]: 78 & 1029; Thurman, Robert A. F. [1981]: 142; etc.

<sup>20</sup> See Seki, Minoru (関稔) [1985]: 49 f.

<sup>21</sup> See Karashima, Seishi (辛嶋靜志) [2014]: 198.

<sup>22</sup> ‘汝買此花。爲何所作。外道答言我用供養那羅延天。以求福祐。’ (T 4 206a)

<sup>23</sup> ‘憶望其夫。晝夜愁念。速得還家。即便往詣那羅延天所。而作咒言。天若有神。不違人願。使我夫主安隱速還。’ (T 4 214a)

<sup>24</sup> The etymology of *nara* in Pāli is given as follows: ‘*narati netīti nara puriso*’ (he who leads is a man, a person) (VvA 42). This is also found at SAṬ (Be) I 93. The sub-commentaries also give definitions such as the following: ‘*Sadevakam lokam saṃsārato nibbānasukham narati neti pāpetīti nara, nāyakoti attho*’ (‘The world together with gods, one who leads from the cycle of transmigration to the bliss of *nibbāna*, helps [others] to attain it, is a man, a leader’) (MAṬ (Be) II 41); etc.



[or] ‘thunderbolt’ (*vajira*). Therefore ‘the power of the striking of *nārāyana*’ (*nārāyanasaṅghātābala*) means that of a thunderbolt.) (MAṬ (Be) II 19; SAṬ (Be) II 54; AAṬ III 313)<sup>25</sup>

The *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu (4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century) also refers to the Buddha’s *nārāyaṇabala* (那羅延力) as follows:

(850) (1) *nārāyaṇaṃ balaṃ kāye*, (2) *kāye punarbuddhasya nārāyaṇaṃ balaṃ varṇayati* | (3) *sandhiṣvanye*, (4) *sandhau sandhau nārāyaṇabalamityapare*. (851) (5) *mānasavat, kāyikamapyasyānantam balamiti bhadantaḥ* (6) *anyathā hyanantajñānabalasahiṣṇurna syādi* | (7) *nāgagranti-śaṅkalā-śaṅkusandhayaśca buddha-pratyekabuddha-caktavartinaḥ* | (8) *kiṃ punarnārāyaṇasya balasya pramāṇam?*, (9) *daśādhikam* | *hastyādisaptakabalam*, (10) *yaddaśānām prākṛtahastinām balaṃ tadekasya gandhahastinaḥ* | (11) *evaṃ mahānagna-praskandivarāṅga cāñūranārāyaṇānām daśottaravṛddhirvaktavyā* | (12) *prākṛtagandhahasti-mahānagnapraskandinām daśottaravṛddhyārdha- nārāyaṇabalaṃ tad dviguṇam nārāyaṇamityapare* | (13) *yathā tu bahutaraṃ tathā yojyam* | (14) *spraśṭavyāyatanaṃ ca tat* ||31||.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991]: 214, footnote 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Abhidharmakośa*, (ed.) Fan Jingjing (范晶晶) and Zhang Xueshan (張雪杉) [2005]. The following are the translations given in the above edition: 「阿毘達磨俱舍釋論」(*Abhidharma-kośavyākhyā-sāstra*) (T 29 no. 1559) trans. 真諦 Paramārtha (546–569), abridged as 真 and 「阿毘達磨俱舍論」(*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*) (T 29 no. 1558) trans. 玄奘 Xuanzang (645–664), abridged as 玄: (850) (1) [真] 若心力如此。身力云何。偈曰。身那羅延力。[玄] 云何身力。頌曰。身那羅延力 (2) [真] 釋曰。復次有餘師說佛世尊身那羅延力。[玄] 論曰。佛生身力等那羅延。 (3) [真] 偈曰。或節節。[玄] 或節節皆然 (4) [真] 釋曰。有餘師說。於一一節中具那羅延力。[玄] 有餘師言。佛身支節一一皆具那羅延力。 (851) (5) [真] 大德說。如佛心力無邊際。佛身力亦爾。[玄] 大德法救說。諸如來身力無邊。猶如心力。 (6) [真] 何以故。若不爾。此身則不堪受無邊際智力。[玄] 若異此者則諸佛身應不能持無邊心力。 (7) [真] 何以故。一切佛世尊獨覺轉輪王。節節中有龍結鎖鉤骨故。[玄] 大覺獨覺及轉輪王支節相連如其次次第似龍蟠結連鎖鉤。故三相望力有勝劣。 (8) [真] 那羅延力其量云何。[玄] 那羅延力其量云何。 (9) [真] 偈曰。百增。象等七種力。[玄] 象等七十增 (10) [真] 釋曰。人道中百香象力敵一白象王力。[玄] – (11) [真] 百白象王力敵一摩訶諾那力。百摩訶諾那力敵一鉢婆建提力。百鉢婆建提力敵一婆郎伽力。百婆郎伽力敵一遮菟羅力。百遮[少/免]羅力敵一那羅延力。如此百百增。[玄] 十倍增象等七力。謂凡象。香象。摩訶諾健那。鉢羅塞建提。伐浪伽。遮怒羅。那羅延。後後力增前前十倍。 (12) [真] 香象白象。摩訶諾那。鉢婆建提。婆郎伽。遮菟羅力。成那羅延力。有餘師說。二倍此力名那羅延力。[玄] 有說。前六十倍增敵那羅延半身之力。此力一倍成那羅延。 (13) [真] 隨轉增為勝。何以故。佛力無量故。[玄] 於所說中唯多

This passage indicates that the Buddha’s *nārāyaṇabala* (那羅延力) is found in all joints, and compares it to the strength of different breeds of elephants and other gods. The names referred to above include two types of ordinary elephants — *prākṛtahasti* (凡象) and *gandhahasti* (香象) — as well as the names of gods - *mahānagna* (摩訶諾健那), *praskandi* (鉢羅塞建提), *varāṅga* (伐浪伽), *cāṇūra* (遮怒羅), and *nārāyaṇa* (那羅延). This is verified in the *Jushelun ji* 『俱舍論記 卷27 分別智品7』 as follows:

What is ‘leading up to *Nārāyaṇa* by multiplying ten times (each)’? The answer: Because it increases ten times each starting from the ordinary elephant (凡象). What follows is ten times that of the preceding one. First, ordinary elephant, which is the elephant generally used in the western countries; second, *gandha* elephant (香象), which in western regions is another type of good elephants called *gandha* elephant. It is used at the time of a war; third, *mahānagna* (摩訶諾健那) (this is the name of a god); fourth, *praskandi* (鉢羅塞建提) (this too is the name of a god, ...); fifth, *varāṅga* (伐浪伽) (this is also the name of a god, ...); sixth, *cāṇūra* (遮怒羅) (this too is the name of a god, ...); seventh, *nārāyaṇa* (那羅延) (as explained before) ...<sup>27</sup>

The last item, *nārāyaṇa*, though ambiguous in meaning, appears to refer to a powerful god, as in ancient Indian mythology. Our inference is verified in the \**Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra-śāstra* (阿毘達磨順正理論) which has a reference to ‘some’ who take *nārāyaṇa* as having strength equivalent to one thousand times the power of the king of *airāvaṇa* heavenly elephants.<sup>28</sup> The significant point in this connection is that the Sarvāstivādins, too, adopted the method of describing the Buddha’s physical strength in terms of the strength of elephants, though partially. It appears, however, quite evident that the Pāli list in MA and SA given as a citation from the ‘ancients’ (*porāṇā*) is different from that of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, although both traditions share the comparison between the Buddha’s physical strength and that of elephants. The Pāli tradition gives

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應理。(14) [真]偈曰。此觸入為性 [玄]此觸處為性。For the translation of Xuanzang’s above passage, see *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya of Vasubandhu* 2012: 2225–6.

<sup>27</sup> 「十十倍增至成那羅延者。答。於凡象等十十倍增故。說後後力增前前十倍。一凡象。謂西國凡受用象。二香象。西國別有一類好象名為香象。擬戰時用。三摩訶諾健那(此神名。此云大露形)。四鉢羅塞建提(亦是神名。鉢羅此云勝。塞建提此云蘊)。五伐浪伽(亦是神名。此云妙支)六遮努羅(亦是神名。此云執持)。七那羅延(如前說)。有說可知。」(CBETA, T41, no. 1821, p. 405, b5–12)

<sup>28</sup> ‘有餘師說。此量如千謁羅伐戔天象王力’ (T29 748b).

‘*Airāvaṇahastī* (*airāvaṇahastin*)’ is given as ‘大象’ in the *Mahāvīyupatti* (4770).

a straightforward list of ten breeds of elephants, while the Sarvāstivādin list is a mixture of elephants and Indian gods.

Perhaps the most comprehensive survey of the theories regarding the Bodhisattva’s (Buddha’s) physical strength prevalent prior to the lifetime of the famous 7<sup>th</sup> century Chinese translator Xuanzang (玄奘) is made in his monumental work *\*Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra* (阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論) (T27, no. 1545, abbreviated as MVS). In describing the Bodhisattva’s physical strength, it provides a good number of theories advocated by different teachers. For instance, the text endorses a theory described in a certain text that the Bodhisattva possesses a physical strength known as *nārāyaṇa-bala* (如契經說。菩薩身具那羅延力), and it goes on to explain it as follows:

有作是說。十凡牛力等一毫牛力。十毫牛力等一青牛力。十青牛力等一凡象力。十凡象力等一香象力。十香象力等一大諾健那力。十大諾健那力等一鉢羅塞建提力。十鉢羅塞建提力等半那羅延力。二半那羅延力等一那羅延力。菩薩身力與此力等。(There is a theory that [the Bodhisattva’s physical strength is] the strength of ten ordinary bulls equals that of one 毫牛; [it goes on as follows:] — the strength of ten 毫牛 is that of one 青牛, the strength of ten 青牛 is that of one 凡象, the strength of ten 凡象 is that of one 香象, the strength of ten 香象 is that of one 大諾健那, the strength of one 大諾健那 is that of one 鉢羅塞建提, the strength of ten 鉢羅塞建提 is that of a half *nārāyaṇa*, the strength of its two halves is that of one *nārāyaṇa*. The Bodhisattva’s physical strength equals this strength) (T 27 155a).

Some teachers, however, believe that the above explanation is an inadequate description of the physical strength of the Bodhisattva (有餘師說。此量極少) and add the following items, increasing tenfold each time, in ascending order:

凡牛力,毫牛力,青牛力,凡象力,野象力,羯拏魯訶象力,阿羅擇迦象力,旃耆洛迦象力,雪山象力,香山象力,青山象力,黃山象力,赤山象力,白山象力,嚙鉢羅象力,拘牟陀象力,鉢特摩象力,奔荼利迦象力,鉢特莫迦象力,大鉢特莫迦象力,大香象力,大諾健那力,鉢羅塞建提力,娑浪伽力,伐浪伽力,遮怒羅力,伐羅遮怒羅力,半那羅延力,一那羅延力。The Bodhisattava’s physical strength is the same as this (T 27 155a-b).

The items mentioned in the above list are an expansion of the list mentioned earlier and interestingly include three different types of bulls, namely, 凡牛 (ordinary bull), 毫牛 (?), and 青牛 (?), in addition to eighteen breeds

of elephants, namely 凡象 (*prākṛta-hasti*), 野象 (*aranyagaja?*), 羯拏魯訶象 (*kaṇeruka-hasti?*), 阿羅擇迦象 (?), 殍耆洛迦象 (?), 雪山象 (*haimavatā-nāga*), 香山象 (*gandha-mādana-hasti?*), 青山象 (*nīlagiri-hasti?*), 黃山象 (*pītagiri-hasti?*), 赤山象 (*lohitagiri-hasti?*), 白山象 (*pāṇḍava or dhavalagiri-hasti?*), 喙鉢羅象 (*utpala-hasti?*), 拘牟陀象 (*kumuda?-hasti*), 鉢特摩象 (*padma-hasti?*), 奔荼利迦象 (*puṇḍarīka?-hasti*), 鉢特莫迦象 (?), 大鉢特莫迦象 (?), and 大香象 (*mahā-gandha-hasti*). As these names indicate, the Sarvāstivāda tradition has an extended list with the number far exceeding that of the Theravāda tradition as found in the *Papañcasūdanī* (MA) and the *Sāratthapakāsinī* (SA). Thus, the number of different types of elephants and the introduction to the simile of bulls clearly suggest that the Sarvāstivādin notions of the Buddha’s (Bodhisattva’s) physical strength would have been expanded and formulated later than those of their Theravādin counterparts. Moreover, such an expansion appears to have derived from some of the Buddha’s epithets, such as *nāga* (elephant) and *nisabha* (bull).<sup>29</sup> Thus a marked disparity between the two traditions becomes clear — the Theravāda tradition is centered around elephants, together with the power of a thunderbolt (*nārāyaṇa*), while the Sarvāstivādin list above is based on bulls and elephants with the power of a *nārāyaṇa* god.

The *Mahāvibhāṣaśāstra* (MVŚ) continues that ‘some’ uphold that the above two theories are still insufficient to describe the Bodhisattva’s physical strength, commenting that there are eighteen great joints (*mahā-saṃdhi*) in his body, each joint having the power of a *nārāyaṇa*.<sup>30</sup> The text further elucidates different theories in ascending order, concluding with a theory by Dharmatrāta (大德), who says that the Bodhisattva’s physical strength is as immeasurable or limitless as his spiritual power.<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note that while the Sarvāstivādins maintain this view, they also believe that the Buddha reaches full physical strength at the age of twenty-five, maintains it until the age of fifty, and thereafter declines gradually.<sup>32</sup> The MVŚ also introduces a theory held by ‘some’ that the Buddha’s physical strength remains unchanged, as does his spiritual power;<sup>33</sup> and the Sarvāstivādin

<sup>29</sup> E.g., S I 28–29: ‘*nāgo vata, bho, samaṇo gotamo;*’ ‘*nisabho vata, bho, samaṇo gotamo;*’ etc.

<sup>30</sup> T 27 155b:「或有說者。此量猶少。應說菩薩身中有十八大節一一大節皆有一那羅延力。」

<sup>31</sup> T 27 155c:「大德說曰。此力猶少。應說菩薩意力無邊身力亦爾。」

<sup>32</sup> T 27 156b:「問菩薩何時身力圓滿。答年二十五。此後乃至年滿五十其力無減。過是已後世尊身力漸漸衰退。」

<sup>33</sup> T 27 156b:「有說世尊身力無減猶如意力無衰退故。」

position is that the Buddha’s ‘dharma-body’ (法身) does not decline.<sup>34</sup> The MVŚ introduces an interesting story. The Buddha is traveling to Pāvā in Kuśinagara for his passing away. Upon hearing that the Master is approaching the city, the five hundred mighty men (力士) try to prepare the road for him. However, they are unable to move a huge rock (on the road) measuring sixty fingers in length and thirty fingers in width. Seeing this, the Buddha asks them what they are doing. When they tell him, he picks up the rock with his toes, places it in his palms, tosses it up in the sky, blows it into pieces, and puts the pieces down at the side of the road. Then the Buddha says that all these are powers born of his parents (謂我父母生身之力). The ability to blow rocks into pieces with his mouth is a supernatural power. Putting them back together in the original form represents the power of firm resolve. The Buddha says, however, that all these powers will come to an end at midnight today because of the power of impermanence.<sup>35</sup> This is significant in that the Sarvāstivādins, like the Theravādins, also maintain that the Buddha’s physical body (*rūpakāya*) is subject to decay and destruction.

The Yogācāra school, as explained in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (菩薩地), also advocates a similar concept. It is nevertheless simpler and less complicated than that in the MVŚ. The relevant passage reads:

*bodhi-maṇḍe ca niṣiṇṇasya maitryā sarva-māra-bala-parājayaṃ, sarva-parvasu cai’kasmim parvaṇi nārāyaṇa-bala-samniṣṭatā* (74–75) (坐菩薩座、以慈定力、摧伏衆魔、一一支節、皆悉備足那羅延力).<sup>36</sup> ([The Bodhisattva] seated on the seat of enlightenment overpowers all the evils by the power of compassion, and all his joints are filled with the power of the *nārāyaṇa* god.)

<sup>34</sup> T 27 156b: 「評曰。如來法身雖無衰退。」

<sup>35</sup> T 27 156a-b: 「謂佛世尊化緣將盡欲入寂滅往拘尸城波波邑中。五百力士聞已為佛修治道路。當彼路上有一大石長六十肘廣三十肘。彼諸力士欲轉去之盡其身力不能令動。世尊既至見已問言。汝諸童子欲何所作。彼聞憫然竊作是念。我等勢力膽部推先如何世尊呼為童子。作是念已俱白佛言。我為世尊修治道路。共轉此石不能令動。頗能哀愍除此石耶。佛言我能。汝等遠避。便以足指挑置掌中。上擲虛空下還接取。以口吹散令如微塵。還使如本棄之路側。力士驚歎得未曾有。敬禮合掌復白佛言。此是如來何等神力。世尊告曰舉石置掌復擲虛空復還接取棄之路側皆我父母生身之力。以口吹散令如微塵是神通力。還合如本是勝解力。力士聞已歡喜踊躍復白佛言。頗有餘力能勝世尊如是力不。佛答言有。謂無常力。佛告力士。謂我父母生身之力。若神通力。及勝解力。今日中夜皆為無常力之滅壞。」

<sup>36</sup> Ui, Hakujo (宇井伯壽) [1956]: 74.

Thus, the details regarding the Buddha’s physical strength differ from source to source. Guang Xing summarizes the various theories upheld by different Indian Buddhist schools in his book.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

The concept of the Buddha’s physical strength or power (*kāyabala*) seems to have undergone several developmental stages. The Chinese translator Xuanzang (玄奘) summarizes the different theories prevalent before his time. The Sarvāstivāda school, according to the text, points to the development toward the notion of the Buddha’s physical strength being as limitless as his spiritual power. There are at least four analogies used to describe the Buddha’s physical strength, namely, mighty men (力士), bulls (牛), elephants (象), and divine beings such as *mahānagna* (摩訶諾健那), *praskandi* (鉢羅塞建提), *varāṅga* (伐浪伽), and so on. All these sources agree that the power of *nārāyaṇa* (那羅延) is the strongest. The next stage of development is centered around the notion that the joints of the Buddha’s body are all filled with the power of *nārāyaṇa* (那羅延), each with the final stage, at which the Buddha’s physical strength is immeasurable. Dharmatrāta was responsible for the development of such a theory in the Sarvāstivāda school.

The Theravāda school, on the other hand, also elaborated on the Buddha’s physical strength, but the development of this idea was limited and never included the notion of the Buddha’s physical power being limitless. The Theravādin analogies for comparison are men (*purisa*) and elephants (*hatthī*), and later the power of *nārāyaṇa*. What is lacking in the Theravāda school is the use of bulls as an analogy similar to that of the *hatthī* (elephant) as a description of the Buddha’s physical strength; however, he is often compared to a bull (*usabha*, *nisabha*, and so on — M I 386; S I 28, 48, 91; etc.) as an epithet. Further, such analogies are limited in frequency and are all citations from the same source (*porāṇā*). Although the identification of the ‘ancients’ (*porāṇā*) can be crucial in determining the origins of the analogy of elephants, it is also clearly indicated that the *kāya-bala*, as is described in the present Pāli commentaries, was a commentarial development. Even so, the Theravādins never entertained the thought that the Buddha’s physical strength could be limitless or immeasurable. Their thinking might have been influenced and restricted by a strong sense of conviction that the Buddha was born a human, attained enlightenment as a human, and died a human. This might have prevented them from developing and elaborating on the extent of the Buddha’s physical strength.

<sup>37</sup> See Xing, Guang [2005]: 35, 60, 72, 114, etc.



Chapter 2

**The Buddha's Eighty Minor Bodily Marks**  
**(*Asīti-anuvyañjana*)**

**I. Introduction**

The interaction and mutual influence between the Theravāda and other schools of Buddhist thought is now widely accepted. Within the Sri Lankan context, as we may see in the present Pāli commentaries, the Abhayagiri and Mahāvihāra fraternities also had reciprocal borrowings.

In the context of Buddhological development from early times through the late canonical and commentarial periods, several qualities — often fanciful and superhuman and, as is habitually claimed, derived from the early texts — came to be added to the person of the Buddha. The tendency intensified as time progressed. This is part of apotheosis of the Buddha. As I discussed in my earlier book, this process seems to have begun even during the Buddha's lifetime, though in a less obvious and more subdued way than in later texts.<sup>1</sup> The notion of the 'thirty-two characteristics of a great man' (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) was the mainstream description for the Buddha's physical splendor in the early canonical texts. A new list of physical attributes called the 'eighty minor bodily marks' (*asīti-anuvyañjana*) was introduced later, at an unknown time. As will be seen, an examination of the list found in Sanskrit sources, some of which were translated into Chinese, leads us to the conclusion that these physical features seem to be a subdivision of the *dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*.

This chapter examines a historical evolution of the concept of 'eighty minor bodily marks' (*asīti-anuvyañjana*) of the Buddha and attempts to contextualize it in terms of the apotheosis of the Buddha in Theravāda Buddhism.

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<sup>1</sup> Endo, T. [1997, 2002]: 1–47.

## II. Occurrences in the canonical texts

In the Pāli tradition the term *anuvyañjana* (minor or secondary bodily marks) is found in late canonical texts like the *Buddhavaṃsa* (XXI v 27: *anuvyañjanasampannaṃ dvatiṃsavaralakkaṇaṃ*) and the *Apadāna*;<sup>2</sup> the latter specifies the number ‘eighty’ (*asītiṃvyañjanā*) (eighty [physical] attributes). The question of whether the term *anuvyañjana* (minor or secondary bodily mark) or *vyañjana* (attribute) was actually found in these two places of reference from the time they were composed or was a later interpolation, requires thorough textual investigation and analysis — this will be addressed later in the chapter. It is believed that a Sanskrit *Buddhavaṃsa* existed,<sup>3</sup> which cannot definitively be said to belong to the Theravāda School. Hirakawa, too, endorses this view with a comment that the common biography of the Buddha was shared among different schools.<sup>4</sup> It seems very likely, therefore, that the common sources upon which the compilation of the Buddha’s biographical literature was based were known to the Theravādins as well.

Though the *Apadāna* seems to be the first Pāli text in the Canon to use the exact number ‘eighty’ (*asīti*), it is in the *Milindapañha* that the word *asīti-anuvyañjana* is employed in a more technical sense, the sense in which later texts often use it: ‘*Bhante Nāgasena, Buddho dvatiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇehi samannāgto asītiyā ca anubyañjanehi parirañjito suvaṇṇavaṇṇo kañcanasannibhattaco byāmapabbho*’ (Miln 75). This reference is found in the portion of the *Milindapañha* that is usually considered ‘early’, as a Chinese parallel under the name of the *Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* (那先比丘經) is available.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, another post-canonical text, the *Peṭakopadesa*,

<sup>2</sup> Ap I 156, v 3: ‘*Buddho loke samuppanno, taṃ vijānātha no bhavaṃ; asītiṃvyañjanā nassa battiṃsavaralakkaṇā; vyāmapabbhājīnavaro ādicco va viroceti.*’

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, E. J. [1953]: 172.

<sup>4</sup> Hirakawa, A., trans. Paul Groner [1993]: 263.

<sup>5</sup> T 1670A & B. (T 32 700c = T 1670A: 王復問那先。佛爲有三十二相八十種好身。皆金色有光影耶。那先言。佛審有三十二相八十種好身。皆有金色光影。; T 32 716a = T 1670B: 王復問那先。佛爲審有三十二相八十種好身皆金色有光影耶。那先言佛審有三十二相八十種好皆有金色有光影。) It is believed that this parallel portion represents the earliest portion of the *Milindapañha*; according to the PTS edition, this portion is said to be up to page 89, with the remainder (i.e., 90–420) being later additions. But since the present Pāli commentaries cite the *Milindapañha* or the names of the thera Nāgasena and the king Milinda, and also since the text itself (Miln) is believed to have been composed from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE on (see footnote 6 below), we may



belonging to almost the same period as the *Milindapañha* has the stock phrase: *asīti-anubyañjana-byāmapabhā dvattiṃsavaralakkhaṇa-samujjalāṃ sarīraṃ* (Peṭ 240). This implies that around the beginning of the Common Era,<sup>6</sup> the notion of the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ of the Buddha was already in vogue. Once this notion gained legitimacy in the Buddha’s biographical literature, it was invariably included in the list of the Buddha’s physical attributes. The only disparity between the early canonical texts and the later ones is that the term *dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇa* is common to both the Buddha and the universal monarch (*cakkavattirāja*), while the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ are the physical characteristics of the Buddha alone.<sup>7</sup>

### III. Origins of the notion of *asīti-anubyañjana*

#### III-a. Pāli sources

As observed earlier, the Pāli tradition, as in Bv, Ap, Miln or Peṭ, does not provide a detailed list of the eighty minor marks, certainly up to the time of the commentarial period. We have noted that references in the Canon to the word *asīti-anubyañjana* in its technical sense are all from texts whose dates of compilation are uncertain, or at least belong to a period later than the four major *nikāyas* and early texts of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, such as the *Dhammapada*, *Sutta-nipāta*, *Thera-therī-gāthā*, and so on. This seems to be confirmed by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE) in his *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (大智度論: T no. 1509), where he states that the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ of the Buddha are not found in the *Tripiṭaka*.<sup>8</sup> Such an observation in a literary work implies that the notion itself began unaided and cannot be traced historically to the earlier texts in the Pāli tradition.

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surmise that such citations were made after the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE through about the early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, very likely, in the literary genre known as the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. According to my investigation, by about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the so-called *aṭṭhakathā* (in the singular), often found in the present Pāli commentaries and the basic sources for their translations and editions, came to be a written manuscript, and anything that was incorporated belonged to the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. See Endo, T. [2013]: 17–45.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Mizuno, K. [1996]: 185–241.

<sup>7</sup> Unlike the *dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇa*, the physical marks that include later additions such as the *asīti-anubyañjana*, *byāmapabhā*, and *satapuññalakkhaṇa* are customarily attributed to the Buddha and never to the *cakkavatti* king.

<sup>8</sup> T 25, 255C: 如汝所信八十種好。而三藏中無。See also Kawamura, K. [1975]: 201; 望月佛教大辭典 (*Mochizuki Buddhist Dictionary*), 4213.

In the Pāli commentarial literature, the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* (BvA) — whose authorship is ascribed to Buddhaghosa, a 5<sup>th</sup> century contemporary of Buddhaghosa — enumerates the following four marks: 1) *tambanakha* (copper-colored nails), 2) *tuṅganakha* (long nails), 3) *siniddhanakha* (glossy nails), and 4) *vaṭṭaṅgulita* (rounded fingers) (BvA 247).<sup>9</sup> The *Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, a work belonging to the *Paramatthadīpanī* (Pd) of Dhammapāla, junior to Buddhaghosa by about a century or so, gives only two: 1) *tambanakha* and 2) *tuṅganakha* (ThagA III 46–47). That some of these items were known to the Theravādins is further reinforced by, for instance, Buddhaghosa’s refutation of the view that the fingers and toes of the Buddha were webbed (*jālahatthapādo ti na cammena paṭibaddha-aṅgulantaro*) (DA II 446). E. J. Thomas,<sup>10</sup> too, suggests that Buddhaghosa knew about the mark described as ‘four fingers and five toes of equal length’ (*catasso hatth’ aṅguliyo pañcapad’ aṅguliyo eka-ppamāṇā honti*) (DA II 446–7). This physical mark is very similar to the third of the eighty marks listed in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (大般若波羅蜜多經; translated by Xuanzang into Chinese between 660 and 663) (T 6 968a–969a).<sup>11</sup> Such references to some of the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ of the Buddha in the Pāli commentaries are a clear indication that the detailed items included in the list of ‘eighty’ were known to the Theravādins probably before the time of the Pāli commentarial literature. It is in the later periods that both Pāli and Sinhalese works began to include them, and as such, the list is found in works like the *Milindaṭṭhā* (MilnT 17–18) and the *Jinālaṅkāra-ṭīkā* (*Jinālaṅkāravāṇṇanā*) (JinālT 198)<sup>12</sup> in Pāli

<sup>9</sup> See Horner, I. B. [1978]: 352. The SHB edition (204) is the same as the PTS editions. However, the Burmese *Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana* edition (290) [the digital version by Vipassana Centre] gives the following: *tambanakhatuṅganāsavaṭṭaṅgulitādīhi asītiyā anubyañjanehi sampannaṃ*, i.e., *tambanakha*, *tuṅganāsa* (long or pointed nose?), and *vaṭṭaṅgulita*.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, E. J. [1993]: 222.

<sup>11</sup> See Kawamura, K. [1975]: 201. The third item reads: 世尊手足各等無差。於諸指間悉皆充密。是爲第三。(T 6 968a).

<sup>12</sup> See *Milindapañha-ṭīkā* [1961]: London: PTS, 17, footnote 1. The list in the text is said to have followed that of the *Jinālaṅkāra-ṭīkā*, as follows: ‘*Taṃ pākaṭaṃ asītyanubyañjanasurūpaṃ na pākaṭaṃ jinālaṅkāraṭīkāyamyeva āgataṃ. Tasmā taṃ dassayissāma. Katamāni asītyānubyañjananāni? Citaṅgulitā, anupubbaṅgulitā, vaṭṭaṅgulitā, tambanakhatā, tuṅganakhatā, siniddhanakhatā, nigulhagopphakatā, samapādātā, ... , sunīlakesatā, dakkhiṇāvattakesatā, susaṇṭhānakesatā, siniddhakesatā, saṇhakesatā, alulitakesatā, ketumālāratanacittatā.*’ Von Hinüber ascribes MilT to the year 1474 (15<sup>th</sup> century) and JinālT to 1156. See von Hinüber, Oskar [1997]: §180 & §407.

and the *Dharmapradīpikā* (Dhmpdp 13 f)<sup>13</sup> in Sinhalese.<sup>14</sup>

Pertinent questions to address here would be: (1) when and where did the notion of the ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ of the Buddha originate? and (2) which Buddhist school initiated the enumeration of the eighty items? It must be borne in mind that the issues concerning the times of origin of the notion itself and of the detailed list may be two different propositions.

Though the term *anuvyañjana* occurs in works like the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Apadāna*, followed by the *Milindapañha* and *Peṭakopadesa* in the Pāli tradition (all of which seem to predate most of the Sanskrit sources), this does not necessarily imply that they represent the earliest references to this concept, since the question regarding the final composition of both Bv and Ap remains unresolved.<sup>15</sup> The so-called original portions of the *Milindapañha* are said to have been composed by about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE,<sup>16</sup> and the *Peṭakopadesa* a little later.<sup>17</sup> The Pāli commentaries of BvA and ThagA are the next generation of sources to mention at least a few of the items. The next

<sup>13</sup> Godakumbura ascribes the period of Guraḷugōmī, the author of the *Dharmapradīpikā*, to a period in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century CE. See Godakumbura, C. E. [1955]: 5.

<sup>14</sup> In his dictionary, Edgerton attempts to reconstruct what may have been the original list based upon the works of the *Lalitavistara* (106.11 ff.), *Mahāvastu* (II 43.8 ff.), *Mahāvvyūppatti* (268 ff) *Dharmasaṃgraha* (84), and *Dharmapradīpikā* (13 f.), while admitting that there are variants. His list reads: (1) (*ā*)*tāmra-nakha*, (2) *snigdha-nakha*, (3) *tuṅga-nakha*. (4) *vṛttāṅguli*, ... See Edgerton, F. [1993]: 34. His reconstructed list resembles that of BvA, as shown above, except that the positions of (2) and (3) are reversed. Similarly, Yaśomitra’s *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* gives the following items in defining *anuvyañjana*: *anuvyañjana-saṃpad* iti. *vṛttāṅguli-tāmra-tuṅga-nakhatv’ādīnaṃ aśīter anuvyañjanānaṃ saṃpat*’ (Wogihara, U. [1936, 1971, 1989]: 650[?] 22–23.

<sup>15</sup> The fact that Bv and Ap belong to the *Khuddaka-nikāya* does not guarantee their antiquity — the assertion that they were earlier in composition than the old Sinhalese commentaries starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, when Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka, is likely untenable. We know that the *Dīghabhāṇakas* were not in favor of including both Bv and Ap in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, as found in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (DA I 15). We know also that the *Khuddaka-nikāya* itself as a collection of (15) texts was not in existence when the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* were compiled. This may be verified, for instance, in the sequence in which the *nikāyas* disappeared in the ‘Disappearance of the true Dhamma’ (*saddhamma-antaradhāna*) (see Endo, T. [2013]: 123–142, especially 130 f.). This uncertainty is the very reason to question whether the origins of the notion rest with the Theravāda School or with other schools of Buddhist thought.

<sup>16</sup> Mizuno, K. [1996]: 185–241 (specially 240).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mizuno, K. [1997]: 119–148 (specially 146).

question to consider is whether the references to the four items in BvA or the two in ThagA were in the old Sinhalese commentaries (*Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*), based upon which the Pāli BvA and ThagA were translated and edited by their respective commentators. If they were already in the Sinhalese commentaries, which was compiled from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE on, then the references to some of these detailed items in the list of ‘eighty’ may indicate that such a list existed around the same time. However, the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE is unlikely as the lower time limit for the compilation of Bv and Ap;<sup>18</sup> in this case, it should be inferred that even the notion of the ‘eighty minor marks’ of the Buddha would have certainly arisen after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, in other words, after King Asoka’s time. It is, however, also quite possible that the notion of the standard attributes of the Buddha, including *dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇa*, *aṣīti-anuvyañjana*, and *byāmapabbhā*, would have been well established by about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, by which time the original portions of the *Milindapañha* had been compiled. They are more or less used as a cliché.<sup>19</sup> The naming of such characteristics in widespread sources is a good indication that the notion and, perhaps later, the list were introduced at a late period in the development of Buddhology.

<sup>18</sup> It is believed that the Bv and Ap belong to a later period in the Pāli canonical chronology. For instance, based on the types of meters used in the texts of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, Warder concludes that texts like Ap and Cp belong to the period of decline of *matṭāchandas* meters and places them at about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. See Warder, A. K. [1967]: §193, 303, where a table places Ap in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and Bv in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE). See also Mayeda, Egaku [1964]: 765–770, in which he traces the history of research on Ap, Bv and Cp.

<sup>19</sup> Bv XXI vs. 24 & 27: ‘*Tassāpi byāmapabbhā kāyā diva rattimṃ nirantaram; anubyañjana-sampannam dvattiṃsavaraḷakkhaṇam; sabbam samantarahitam nanu rittā sabba-saṅkhārā...*’; Ap I 156: ‘... *aṣītimvyañjanā nassa battiṃsavara-lakkhaṇā; vyāmapabbhājīnavaro ādicco va viroceti*’; Miln 75: ‘*Buddho dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇehi samannāgto aṣītiyā ca anubyañjanehi parirañjito suvaṇṇavaṇṇo kañcanasan-nibhattaco byāmapabbho*’; Divyāvadāna: 4. *Brāhmaṇadārikāvadāna*: ‘*bhagavantaṃ dvātriṃsatā mahāpuruṣaḷakṣaṇaiḥ samalaṃkṛtamaṣītyānu-vyañjanai virājitaḡatram vyāmaprabhāḷaṃkṛtaṃ ...*’ (similar expressions are also found elsewhere in the text); *Avadānaśataka*: Ch 1: ‘*bhagavantaṃ dadarśa dvātriṃsatā mahāpuruṣaḷakṣaṇaiḥ samalaṃkṛtamaṣītyā cānuvyañjanair virājitaḡatram vyāmaprabhāḷaṃkṛtaṃ sūryasahasrāṭirekaprabhaṃ jaṅgamamiva ratnaparvataṃ samattato bhadrakam| daṣṭvā ...*’ (similar expressions are also found in the chapter called *Asokavarṇāvadāna*); *Lalitavistara* 18: ‘*dvātriṃsacca mahāpuruṣaḷakṣaṇāni aṣītiścānuvyañjanāni vyāmaprabhatā ca...*’; *Mahāvastu* I 38: ‘*evaṃ dvātriṃsatmahāpuruṣaḷakṣaṇehi samanvāgato bhavyeṃ aṣītiḥ anu vyañjanehi anuvirājitaśarīro aṣṭādaśaṇṇikehi buddhadharmehi samanvāgato daśahi tathāḡatabalehi balavāṃ caturhi vaiśāradyehi viśārado...*’ These are some sample expressions; similar expressions are recorded in many places in the Sanskrit sources. See Edgerton, F. [1993]: 34.

Nevertheless, as far as the Pāli sources are concerned, we may calculate the lower time limit for the emergence of the notion and the list of the eighty minor bodily marks of the Buddha based on the chronological and literary milieu in which the present Pāli commentaries were formed. Accordingly, it appears likely that the detailed list would have already been in existence in and around the time of King Vasabha (65–109 CE): it is believed that the major portions of the Sīhaḷa sources for the Pāli commentaries were completed around this time, with some minor additions made through about the early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, given that King Mahāseṇa (276–303 CE) is the last king to be found in the present Pāli commentaries.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, since the *Samantapāsādikā* (VA III 519) contains only one reference to King Mahāseṇa (*Mahāseṇarājā*), it is more likely that the detailed list was available by about the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

### III-b. Sanskrit sources

Given that our inference is not far from the historical truth, we now examine some of the Sanskrit sources. The earliest Sanskrit sources that refer to the idea of the Buddha’s ‘eighty minor physical marks,’ in addition to the canonical concept of his thirty-two physical characteristics, may perhaps be the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, which has some of the earliest extant Sanskrit texts. Edward Conze believes that this literature begins between 100 BCE and 100 CE.<sup>21</sup> The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* found in Chinese translation as *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經 translated by Lokakṣema of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE is one such text. This proves that the original Sanskrit *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* should belong to a period earlier than the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The text likewise makes two references to *aśīty-anuvyañjana*, along with other important physical features of the Buddha, such as *kāyasya suvarṇavarṇatā*, *dvātriṃśacca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni*, and *vyāmaprabhatā*.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 466.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, Paul [2009]: 48. Williams also cautions that ‘it is not possible at the present stage of our knowledge to make very many certain statements concerning either the origins or the development of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.’ Op. cit., 47.

<sup>22</sup> *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā* (Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon by University of the West): 30 *sadāpraruditaparivartastriṃśattamaḥ*: ‘*kāyasya suvarṇavarṇatā pratilabdā | dvātriṃśacca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni | aśītiścānuvyañjanāni | vyāmaprabhatā ca*,’ or ‘*anuttarāṃ samyakṣambodhimabhisambudhya suvarṇavarṇaṃ ca kāyaṃ pratilapsyāmahe | dvātriṃśacca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni aśītiṃ cānuvyañjanāni vyāmaprabhatāṃ ca...*’

The Chinese translation, *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經, contains a similar expression: 得佛三十二相八十種好 (T 8 471a). Nevertheless, neither the Sanskrit nor the Chinese version provides detailed items for inclusion in the list of ‘eighty’. This may suggest that the upper time limit for the occurrence of the word *aśītyanuvyañjana* in Sanskrit was not earlier than the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE or 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is generally believed to have had a close association with the Mahāsaṅghika school of Buddhism.<sup>23</sup>

Edgerton gives three Sanskrit sources containing references to this notion and the detailed list: the *Lalitavistara* (Lal 106 ff.), the *Mahāvastu* (Mtu II 43 ff.),<sup>24</sup> and the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (Mhvyut 268 ff.).<sup>25</sup> The *Lalitavistara*’s list, for instance, begins with *tuṅganakha*, *tāmranakha*, *snigdhanaka*, *ṛttāṅguli*, *anupūrva-citrāṅguli*, *gūḍhaśira*, *gūḍhagulpha*, ...<sup>26</sup> The Chinese version, *Puyao jing* 普曜經 (T no. 186), translated by 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa) in 308 CE, provides the term but not the list.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, a later translation, *Fang guang dazhuangyan jing* 方廣大莊嚴經 (T no. 187) by Dipohero (\*Divākara) 地婆訶羅 of the Tang period (618–922 CE), lists eighty minor marks of the Buddha.<sup>28</sup> It is, however, believed that this text (T no. 187) was ‘altered so much in later times.’<sup>29</sup> The *Mahā-vastu* also provides a list of eighty minor characteristics, such as: *tuṅganakha*, *tāmranakha*, *snigdhanakha*, *ṛttāṅguli*, *citrāṅguli*, *anupūrvacitrāṅguli*, *nirgranthiśira*, *gūḍhaśira*, *gūḍha-gulpha*, and so on.<sup>30</sup> The original date of composition of these Sanskrit texts is

<sup>23</sup> See Guang Xing [2005]: 66 and footnote 75 thereof.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ven. Wimalaratna, B. [1990?]: 30.

<sup>25</sup> See Edgerton, F. [1993]: 34. Cf. Ven. Wimalaratana, B., op. cit., 30.

<sup>26</sup> *Lalitavistara*: ‘*janmaparivartaḥ saptamaḥ: ‘katamāni ca mahārāja tānyaśītyanuvyañjanāni? tadyathā-tuṅganakhaśca mahārāja sarvārthasiddhaḥ kumāraḥ | tāmranakhaśca snigdhanakhaśca ṛttāṅguliśca anupūrvacitrāṅguliśca gūḍhaśiraśca gūḍhagulphaśca ghanasaṃdhiśca ...’* (Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon by University of the West (www.dsbcproject.org). Original text edited by Vaidya, P. L. [1958]).

<sup>27</sup> T 3 532b: 聞釋種王子身有奇相。三十有二八十種好。巨身丈六體紫金色。棄國捐王行作沙門。得自然佛。

<sup>28</sup> T 3 557b-c: 八十種好者。一者手足指甲皆悉高起。二者指甲如赤銅。三者指甲潤澤。四者手文潤澤。五者手文理深。六者手文分明顯著。七者手文端細。八者手足不曲。九者手指纖長。... 七十五髮不亂。七十六髮香潔。七十七髮潤澤。七十八髮有五卍字。七十九髮彩螺旋。八十者髮有難陀越多吉輪魚相。大王。此是聖子八十種好。若人成就如是八十種好。不應在家必當出家得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。

<sup>29</sup> Hirakawa, A. trans. Groner, Paul [2007]: 265.

<sup>30</sup> *Mahāvastu* II 43: ‘*buddhānām bhagavatām aśīty anuvyañjanāni āsi || buddhānām bhagavatām tuṅganakhā tāmranakhā snigdhanakhā ṛttāṅgulī ca citrāṅgulī ca*

uncertain. For instance, the *Lalitavistara*, a work belonging to the Sarvāstivāda school,<sup>31</sup> should be earlier than 308 CE. The *Mahāvastu*, a work of the Lokottaravādin sub-sect of the Mahāsaṅghika school, is more complex in its composition. It is generally thought that the text was compiled over a long period of time from about the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>32</sup> Based on these observations, it may be surmised that the list of eighty minor bodily characteristics of the Buddha was available at least before the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

#### IV. Was the notion introduced first, followed by the detailed list?

The proposition that the notion of the Buddha’s eighty minor bodily marks may have originated before the detailed list becomes more demonstrable if the mention of the term is closely examined chronologically. In the Pāli tradition, even if Bv and Ap are disregarded because of questions over the time of their composition, we have still the *Milindapañha*, whose original portions are said to go back to a period before the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. The earliest reference to the term in Sanskrit literature may be in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, as seen above. Chronologically, this may be followed by the *Avadānaśataka*, which Winternitz ascribes to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.<sup>33</sup> According to Winternitz, the *Divyāvadāna* as a whole collection belongs to a period not earlier than the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>34</sup> The *Lalitavistara* (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and the *Mahāvastu* (before the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE as the whole collection) are two of the early Sanskrit sources that mention the list of the ‘eighty minor marks.’ This again would make it possible to infer that it was the Pāli tradition which employed the notion of eighty *anuvyañjana* (minor or secondary bodily marks of the Buddha), as an extension of the *dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*. It should, however, be remembered that a common biography of the Buddha<sup>35</sup>

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*anupūrvacitrāṅgulī ca | nirgranthiśīrā ca gūḍhaśīrā ca gūḍhagulphā ghanasandhī ca aviśamasamapādā ca | buddhā bhagavanto pratipūrnavyaṃjanā ca samantaprabhā ca mṛdugātrā ca visadagātrā ca ...’* (*Mahāvastu-Avadāna* based on the ed. by Émile Senart, 3 vols., Paris 1882-1897 (gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1\_sanskr/4\_rellit/buddh/mhvastuu.htm).

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Hirakawa, A., trans. Groner, Paul [2007]: 265.

<sup>32</sup> Bhikkhu Rahula, Telwate [1978]: 16.

<sup>33</sup> Winternitz, Maurice [1983]: 268.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 274.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, Thomas states that there was a Sanskrit version of the *Buddhavaṃsa*. Thomas, E. J. [1953]: 172.



was compiled and would have been used by different Buddhist schools. If this was the case, it may be expected that the notion and references thereto in the Buddhist literature may have been concurrent in both the Pāli and Sanskrit traditions, in other words, among different Buddhist schools. It seems probable, as discussed above, that the popularity of the notion of the Buddha’s ‘eighty minor bodily marks’, in addition to the earlier concept of the thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man, was in place by about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. All the evidence previously cited therefore points to the possibility that both the notion and the word *aśīti-anuvyañjana* would have been introduced first, followed by the detailed list.

## V. Chinese *āgamas* and their relation to the origin of *aśītyanuvyañjana*

Turning our attention to Chinese *āgama* texts, three *āgama* texts — *Dirgha-āgama* (長阿含經), *Samyukta-āgama* (雜阿含經), and *Ekottarika-āgama* (增壹阿含經) — refer to the term *aśīty anuvyañjana* (八十種好). The *Dirgha-āgama* (長阿含經) includes the term in the famous *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* (遊行經), translated by 佛陀耶舍 (Buddhayaśas) of the Dharma-guptaka school and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, as follows: 三十二相八十種好莊嚴其身 (T 1 12b). Both translators belong to a period around the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, a Sanskrit version bearing the name *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, edited by Ernst Waldschmidt in 1951,<sup>36</sup> does not show any correspondence to the word *aśīty-anuvyañjana*. This may be an indication that the Chinese translators added the term in their translation. The *Samyukta-āgama* (雜阿含經) has one reference: 有三十二相八十種好。而莊嚴 (T 2 166c) and its translator Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅) also belongs to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The *Ekottarika-āgama* (增壹阿含經) has several references to the term similar to the following: 有三十二相八十種好 (T 2 599a). This text also belongs to a late period. While they are translations of the *āgama* texts, this does not prove that their Sanskrit originals contained the term; nor have any Pāli discourses corresponding to these Chinese translations been identified so far. It is therefore difficult to make use of the Chinese *āgama* texts in relation to the origins of *aśīty-anuvyañjana*.

<sup>36</sup> *Das Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, ed. Ernst Waldschmidt, Berlin: teil 1–3, 1950–1951.



## VI. Concluding remarks

Our attempt in this chapter has been to examine sources in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Chinese with the hope of arriving at a more intelligible chronological sequence in the development of the notion and the detailed list of the Buddha’s ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ (*asīti-anuvyañjana*). This concept can be said to constitute the second stage of apotheosis of the Buddha in terms of his physical attributes, with the *dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* as the earlier stage.

Bv, Ap, Miln, and Peṭ may be the earliest sources in the Pāli tradition to refer to the notion of the Buddha’s ‘eighty minor bodily marks’ without any further elaboration. It is only in the Pāli commentaries (BvA and ThagA) that ‘four’ or ‘two’ items in the list of eighty are enumerated. The Pāli commentators Buddhadatta and Dhammapāla, in their respective works, would not have been responsible for their insertion, since no evidence is available to the contrary. Our survey indicates that the notion may have emerged by about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE as in the Pāli tradition and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñā-pāramitā*, and that a detailed list was in existence before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, as in the *Lalitavistara*. Moreover, if such a list emerged or was available in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century, probably not in the Theravāda School, it is likely that those responsible for the compilation of the *Sīhaḷa* commentaries had incorporated therein some items from such a list. It is also very likely that they were made in the genre of literature called the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.<sup>37</sup> Whether there were indeed ‘eighty’ items from the very inception or the list began with a few and later expanded to ‘eighty’ is another matter to be resolved. It is, however, likely that the list would have had eighty items from the very beginning, as all the Sanskrit sources and Chinese translations that include the list give the number ‘eighty’. Why the Theravādins did not provide the full list of ‘eighty’ items as in the Sanskrit literature also remains mysterious, unless we consider that the notion, together with the eighty items themselves, might have been well known even among the Theravādins, and as such, they did not consider it necessary to list them — at least through the end of the commentarial period.

At present it is not possible to determine which school of Buddhist thought was the first to enumerate the eighty items, though some believe that the notion and the list originated with the Mahāsaṅghika School.<sup>38</sup> As shown

<sup>37</sup> Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45.

<sup>38</sup> Guang Xing [2005]: 66.

above, sources belonging to the Sarvāstivāda (*Lalitavistara*, *Avadānaśataka*, and so on), Lokottaravāda (*Mahāvastu*), and Mahāsaṅghika (*Prajñāpāramita* literature) provide clear indications that the notion was not necessarily the product of the Mahāsaṅghika School alone but was shared among the various Buddhist schools, including the Theravāda School. This would in turn lead to our further inference that there existed, as is generally accepted, a common source or sources from which different Buddhist schools derived the notion of the eighty minor physical marks of the Buddha and the details thereof.

## Chapter 3

## The Buddha's Fathom Long Halo (*Byāmapabbhā*) and Rays (*Raṃsi*)

### I. Introduction

The *byāmapabbhā* (fathom long halo) is a physical attribute of the historical Buddha Gotama. It is often discussed together with another of his physical attributes, called *raṃsi* (rays). It is believed that these concepts began to gain prominence from about the time of the post-canonical literature.<sup>1</sup> Their origins, however, can be traced to the canonical texts. In the process of the Buddha's apotheosis, his physical marks and attributes increased, beginning with the concept of *mahāpurisa* (the 'thirty-two physical marks of a great man'). Sporadic references to different parts of the Buddha's body, including his skin color or complexion, are found in the canonical texts. In one narrative, Pukkusa, once a disciple of Ālāra Kālāma, presents a pair of golden robes (*siṅgi-vaṇṇa*) to the Buddha. Ānanda exclaims that the robes given by Pukkusa lost their luster when worn by the Buddha as the Buddha's skin (*chavi-vaṇṇa*) was so exceedingly clear and bright (D II 133).<sup>2</sup> The *Therīgāthā*

<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. II. 1966: 380.

<sup>2</sup> D II 133: 'Atha kho āyasmā ānando acirapakkante pukkuse mallaputte taṃ siṅgi-vaṇṇaṃ yugamaṭṭhaṃ dhāraṇīyaṃ bhagavato kāyaṃ upanāmesī. Taṃ bhagavato kāyaṃ upanāmitaṃ hataccikaṃ viya khāyati. Atha kho āyasmā ānando bhagavantaṃ etadavoca — "acchariyaṃ, bhante, abbhutaṃ, bhante, yāva parisuddho, bhante, tathā-atassa chavi-vaṇṇo pariyodāto. Idaṃ, bhante, siṅgi-vaṇṇaṃ yugamaṭṭhaṃ dhāraṇīyaṃ bhagavato kāyaṃ upanāmitaṃ hataccikaṃ viya khāyati" 'ti.' The Chinese translation (遊行經) relevant to this reads: '阿難尋以黃疊奉上如來。如來哀愍即爲受之被於身上。爾時世尊顏貌縱容威光熾盛。諸根清淨面色和悅。阿難見已默自思念。『自我得侍二十五年。未曾見佛面色光澤發明如金』。即從座起右膝著地。叉手合掌前白佛言。『自我得侍二十五年。未曾見佛光色如金。不審何緣。願聞其意。』' (T I 19 b-c) ([ 'Ānanda thought to himself] "I have been attending on [the Master] for the last twenty-five years. I have never seen the World-honored One's complexion so bright and shining like gold."') D II 134 continues that there are two occasions on which the Buddha's skin becomes clear and exceedingly bright: 1) on the night the Buddha attains full enlightenment, and 2) on the night of the attainment of his passing away: (*Dvīsu kho Ānanda kālesu ativiya Tathāgatassa parisuddho hoti chavi-vaṇṇo pariyodāto. Katamesu dvīsu? Yaṇ ca Ānanda rattiṃ Tathāgato anuttaraṃ*

also refers to the Buddha’s golden-colored skin (*hemavaṇṇaṃ harittacaṃ*) (Thīg 333). There is also a reference to this feature in the list of ‘thirty-two bodily characteristics of a great man’ (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*), which states that skin of the ‘great man’ is ‘golden-colored and resembles the color of gold’ (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇo hoti kañcanasannibhattaco*) (D III 159).<sup>3</sup> Further, the Buddha is said to have once revealed his golden-colored body (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇaṃ kāyaṃ vivari*) before the assembly (M I 233).<sup>4</sup> These stories show that the Buddha is believed to have had special characteristics, different from others including *arahants*.<sup>5</sup> With this backdrop, it is not difficult to imagine that such references to the Buddha’s physical body in the Canon would be the precursor for the later development of the more elaborate physical attributes of the Buddha, including the idea that the Buddha had a ‘fathom long halo’ (*byāmapabbhā*) and ‘rays’ (*raṃsi*) radiating from his body.

This study attempts to critically analyze the historical evolution of the Buddha’s *byāmapabbhā* and *raṃsi* (or *rasmi*), mainly in the Pāli sources. It also examines the various aspects of these and other, related, terms in the Pāli commentaries and other sources, with a view to gaining a bird’s-eye view of the concepts and their development in the apotheosis of the Buddha.

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*sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambujjhati, yañ ca rattiṃ anupādisesāya nibbāna-dhātuyā parinibbāyati*). The Chinese text 遊行經 has the following corresponding passage: ‘佛告阿難有二因緣。如來光色有殊於常。一者佛初得道成無上正真覺時。二者臨欲滅度捨於性命般涅槃時。’ (T 1 19c).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wimalaratana, B. [1990 (?)]: 97 f. The corresponding Chinese translation reads as follows: ‘復次大人身黃金。色如紫磨金’ (‘The great man has a golden-colored body, its color like that of well-polished pure gold’) (中阿含•三十二相經: T 1 494a).

<sup>4</sup> The corresponding Chinese translation reads: 爾時世尊。於大眾中。被薙多羅僧。現胸而示。汝等試看。能動如來一毛以不。(T 2 36b) (‘At that time the Blessed One, in that great assembly, took off his upper robe and bared his chest, [saying]: “Try to see if you could stir a single hair of the Tathāgata.”’) Trans. Anālayo, Bhikkhu [2015]: 73. As the passage above shows, there is no indication of the Buddha’s golden-colored body (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇaṃ kāyaṃ*) in the Chinese translation.

<sup>5</sup> In reference to the above anecdote (D II 134), Rhys Davids states that it was the commencement of the legend which afterwards grew into an account of an actual ‘transfiguration’ of the Buddha. See T.W. & C.A.F. Rhys Davids 1984: 146, footnote 1.

## II. Canonical and post-canonical references

The supposed first reference to the ‘fathom long halo’ in the Pāli tradition is in the *Buddhavaṃsa* (Bv XXI v.24: *Tassa byāmapabbhā kāyā*) and the *Apadāna* (Ap I 156: *byāmapabbho jinavaro ādiccova virocati*) of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*. The *Milindapañha* also mentions that the Buddha possesses golden-colored skin (*suvaṇṇa-vaṇṇa*)<sup>6</sup> and a fathom long halo (Miln 75). The notion of ‘skin like gold’ is traceable to the canonical texts, but the notion of the Buddha’s fathom long halo appears to be post-canonical.<sup>7</sup> The term *pabbhā* (radiance) is used independently at A II 139, where four kinds of radiance are referred to: (1) of the moon (*candappabbhā*), (2) of the sun (*suriyappabbhā*), (3) of fire (*aggippabbhā*), and (4) of wisdom (*paññāpabbhā*). The radiance of wisdom surpasses all others (*Etadaggaṃ, bhikkhave, imāsaṃ catunnaṃ pabbhānaṃ yadidaṃ paññāpabbhā*). Interestingly, synonyms of *pabbhā* are mentioned in the same discourse, as *ābhā*, *āloka*, *obhāsa*, and *pajjota* (A II 139), classified in the same way as *pabbhā*. *Pabbhā*, in the sense of light or radiance, is also frequently found in the Canon. It is said, for instance, the light or radiance of all the stars does not equal a sixteenth of the radiance of the moon (*yā kāci tārakarūpānaṃ pabbhā, sabbā tā candimappabbhāya kalam nāgghanti soḷasiṃ*) (S III 156, V 44; A III 365, V 22; It 20). All these references imply that the early canonical texts contain no direct allusion to a ‘halo’ at the back of the Buddha’s head, as often depicted in imagery, and that such a halo was a fathom long (*byāma*).

The Buddha is also said to issue rays (*raṃsi*) from his body. The term *raṃsi* is found in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, in a description of the Buddha as possessing ‘a hundred rays’ (*sataṃraṃsi*) (Bv I v. 15, VII v. 24, VIII v. 25, XIII v. 2, XIX v. 22, XXVI v. 25). Commenting on this word, its commentary *Madhuratthavilāsini* defines it as ‘him of a thousand rays like the sun’ (*sahassaraṃsī va ādicco viya*) (BvA 36). Similar descriptions are also found in the *Vimānavatthu*, where again the Sun is qualified as having a thousand rays (*suriyo ... sahassaraṃsī*) (Vv 51: *Sesavatīvimāna* v. 2). The word is also included in the following places as well: Vv 78, v.5: *suriyassa raṃsī* (*Revatīvimāna*); 92 v. 27: *sahassaraṃsī* (*Cūlarathavimāna*); 94 v. 5: *sahassaraṃsiko* (*Mahārathavimāna*). These examples suggest that the word *raṃsi* may not be so early, but was certainly

<sup>6</sup> *Suvaṇṇavaṇṇa* is, of course, the eleventh physical characteristic of a great man (*mahāpurisa*).

<sup>7</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. II. 1966: 380. One may argue that the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Apadāna* are texts belonging to the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, but there is some doubt as to their final formation as we have today.

in use before the *Milindapañha* and is likely to have preceded the concept of the Buddha Gotama’s fathom long halo (*byāmapabbhā*).

### III. Commentarial use of the terms *byāmapabbhā* and *raṃsi*

The commentaries are usually silent on definitions and explanations of the term *byāmapabbhā*,<sup>8</sup> though the word is used almost habitually as part of the collective description of the Buddha’s physical endowments, together with the other two, namely, ‘the thirty-two bodily characteristics of a great man’ (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*) and ‘the eighty minor marks’ (*asīti-anuvyañjana*).<sup>9</sup> *Sarīrapabbhā* (bodily radiance) is likened to *byāmapabbhā* in several places in the commentaries.<sup>10</sup> However, the former term is generally used to describe ‘light or radiance emanating from the Buddha’s body,’ with differences in measurement among various past Buddhas. A well-known anecdote in this regard relates how the Buddha Maṅgala comes to possess radiance that spreads to the end of the universe. When he was the Bodhisatta in his penultimate birth, like Vessantara for the Buddha Gotama, the Bodhisatta Maṅgala gives his two children to Yakkha Kharadāthika, who devours them. When he sees the Yakkha’s mouth dripping with blood like flames of fire, he makes a firm resolve that in the future his rays will be as bright as the blood.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this resolve, the Buddha Maṅgala’s rays remained suffusing the ten-thousand world system (... *sarīrapabbhā niccakālaṃ*

<sup>8</sup> E.g., DA III 918, 972; MA II 167; SA III 48; ItA I 10; JA I 89; VvA 213, 323, BvA 41, 87; etc. Later texts, however, provide some definitions; for instance, the *Vimativinodanīṭikā* (Be) I 90 has the following: ‘yato chabbhaṇṇaraṃsiyo talākato mātikāyo viya nikkhamitvā dasasu disāsu dhāvanti, sā yasmā byāmamattā viya khāyati, tasmā ‘byāmapabbhā’ ti vuccati’ (Wherever the six colored rays ... emanating like a mass of water from the water reservoir, disseminate into ten directions, and that measures a fathom long. It is therefore said ‘fathom long halo’). This passage shows that the Buddha Gotama’s halo consists of six rays (*chabbhaṇṇaraṃsiyo*).

<sup>9</sup> AA I 91: ‘Dvattiṃsa mahāpurisalakkhaṇāni asīti anubyañjanāni byāmapabbhāti sabbaṃ paripuṇṇameva hoti’; Miln 75: ‘mahārāja, bhagavā dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇehi samannāgato asītiyā ca anubyañjanehi parirañjito suvaṇṇavaṇṇo kañcanasannibhattaco byāmapabbho’; DA III 918: ‘bhagavato asītianubyañjanāni byāmapabbhā dvattiṃsamahāpurisalakkhaṇāni’; also at DA III 972; MA V 46; BvA 41; etc.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., ApA 34: ‘Maṅgalassa pana bhagavato pubbapatthanāvasena aññesaṃ byāmapabbhā viya sarīrapabbhā niccameva dasasahassilokadhātum pharitvā aṭṭhāsi’; BvA 143; JA I 31; DhsA 32; etc.

<sup>11</sup> BvA 143.

*dasasahassī lokadhātum pharitvā aṭṭhāsi*).<sup>12</sup> The commentaries state that the extent of the rays depends on the wishes made by individual Buddhas (*yo yattakaṃ icchati, tassa tattakaṃ gacchati*).<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is recorded that a fathom long halo and the rays eighty hands (*hattha*) in length are equal to each other (*vyāmapabhā asītipabhā va sabbesaṃ samānā*). An infinite ray (*anantappabhā*) goes far (*dūraṃ gacchati*) or near (*āsannaṃ*), or the distances of one *gāvuta*, two *gāvutas*, one *yojana*, many *yojanas* (*anekayojanaṃ*), or to the end of the *Cakkavāḷa* world (*cakkavāḷapariyantaṃ*).<sup>14</sup> In another Pāli commentary, the extent of rays is mentioned as follows: The Buddha Maṅgala’s rays suffused the ten-thousand world system. The Buddha Padumuttara had rays twelve *yojanas* long. The Buddha Vipassī’s were of seven *yojanas*. The Buddha Sikkhī’s were of three *yojanas*. The Buddha Kakusandha had the rays of ten *yojanas*. The Buddha Gotama’s rays were a fathom long (*byāmapabhā*). [The rays] of the remaining Buddhas are undetermined.<sup>15</sup>

It appears that the varied extent of rays among the Buddhas was later systematized and incorporated into the concept of differences (*vemattā*) among the Buddhas. Several authorities in the Pāli commentarial literature speak of *rasmi-vemattā* as one of the five *vemattās*,<sup>16</sup> or one of the eight *vemattās*.<sup>17</sup> *Buddharaṃsi* or *byamappabhā* is also counted as one of the four aspects of the Buddhas to which no harm can be done (*antarāyikā dhammā*).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> BvA 143. See also BvA 297; SnA II 408; CpA 97.

<sup>13</sup> SnA II 408. See also BvA 297.

<sup>14</sup> SnA II 408.

<sup>15</sup> BvA 297: ‘*Rasmivemattaṃ nāma Maṅgalassa kira sammāsambuddhassa sarīrasmi dasasahassilokadhātum pharitvā aṭṭhāsi. Padumuttarabuddhassa dvādasayojanikā ahoṣi. Vipassissa bhagavato sattayojanikā ahoṣi. Sikkhissa tiyojanappamāṇā. Kakusandhassa dasayojanikā. Amhākaṃ bhagavato samantato byāmapamāṇā. Sesānaṃ aniyatā ahoṣi.*’

<sup>16</sup> DA II 424; ItA I 136.

<sup>17</sup> SnA II 407–408; BvA 296 f.

<sup>18</sup> Miln 157; BvA 299; VA I 179. The lists appearing in these places differ a little in content. The Chinese translation of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*, the *Shan-Chien-P’i-P’o-Sha* (善見毘婆沙), gives a different list from that at VA I 179. The passage reads: ‘法師曰。有四種魔不能蔽。何謂為四。一者朝中供養。二者湯藥不乏。三者如來壽命。四者如來光明。’ (T 24 706c) (‘The Dhamma-Teacher says: “There are four things that Māra cannot conceal or prevent. What are the four? First, the morning meal; second, the abundance of medical requisites; third, the life-span of the Tathāgata; and fourth, the Tathāgata’s halo of light.”’ See, Bapat, P. V. [1970]: 130–131.

The Pāli commentaries, on the other hand, provide detailed expositions on *raṃsi* or *rasmi* (rays) in relation to the light or radiance of the Buddha. They usually consist of six colors: *nīla* (blue), *pīta* (yellow or gold), *lohita* (red), *odāta* (white), *mañjeṭṭha* (crimson), and *pabhassara* (a combination of the first five colors<sup>19</sup> or opaque brilliance<sup>20</sup>).<sup>21</sup> The *Sāratthapakāsinī* and the *Papañcasūdanī* describe the bodily parts from which radiances emanate as follows:

*Athassa puratthimakāyato suvaṇṇavaṇṇā rasmi uṭṭhahitvā asītihatthaṭṭhānaṃ aggahesi pacchima-kāyato, dakkhiṇahatthato, vāmahatthato suvaṇṇavaṇṇā rasmi uṭṭhahitvā asītihatthaṭṭhānaṃ aggahesi. Upari kesantato paṭṭhāya sabbakesāvaṭṭehi moragīvavaṇṇā rasmi uṭṭhahitvā gaganatale asītihatthaṭṭhānaṃ aggahesi. Heṭṭhā pādātalehi pavālavaṇṇā rasmi uṭṭhahitvā ghanapathaviṃ asītihatthaṭṭhānaṃ aggahesi. Evaṃ samantā asītihatthaṭṭhānaṃ chabbaṇṇā buddharasmiyo vijjotamānā vipphandamānā kañcanadaṇḍadīpikāhi niccharitvā ākāsaṃ pakkhandajālā viya cātuddīpikamahāmeghato nikkhantavijjulatā viya vidhāvimsu. (SA III 47 = MA III 21–22; Cf. UdA 412; Peṭ 240)*

According to this passage, (1) from the front of the Buddha’s body (*puratthimakāyato*) emanate golden-colored rays (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇarasmi*) that are eighty hands (*asītihattha*) in length; (2) golden-colored rays (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇarasmi*) also emanate from the back (*pacchimakāyato*), from the right hand (*dakkhiṇahatthato*), and from the left hand (*vāmahatthato*); (3) from the crown of the head and from the entire head of hair emanate rays the color of *moragīvavaṇṇarasmi* (peacock-blue rays; lit., rays the color of the peacock’s neck); (4) from the sole of his foot emanate rays the color of *pavālavaṇṇa* (coral color); (5) although a reference to the Buddha’s six-colored rays (*chabbaṇṇabuddharasmiyo*) measuring exactly eighty hands (*samantā asītihatthamattaṭṭhānaṃ*) is made, the colors mentioned here (i.e., *suvaṇṇa*, *moragīva*, and *pavāla*) are different from those usually given for the ‘rays of six colors’ referred to above. ‘Golden color’ (*suvaṇṇavaṇṇa*) is without doubt the dominant color in the above citation, and is the color included in the ‘thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man.’<sup>22</sup> The colors radiating from the six bodily parts of the Buddha are designated

<sup>19</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. II. [1966]: 381 s.v. ‘aura’.

<sup>20</sup> Horner, I. B. [1978]: 46.

<sup>21</sup> UdA 105; BvA 31; DhA 13; etc.

<sup>22</sup> See Wimalaratana, Bellanwila [1990 (?): 97 f.



*chabbaṇṇa-buddha-rasmi*. However, first, the combination of six colors usually accepted in the later Pāli commentarial tradition is not followed in the above passage (SA III 47 = MA III 21–22), though the term *chabbaṇṇā buddharasmiyo* is certainly referred to; second, the list of six bodily parts of the Buddha from which the six rays radiate is totally different from the list mentioned in the *Atthasālinī* and *Saddhammappakāsinī*, as will be demonstrated shortly.

Some of the six usual colors said in later texts like the Pāli commentaries to emanate from the Buddha’s body have antecedents in canonical texts. The *Niddesa*, for instance, refers to the five colors of the Buddha’s physical eyes (*nīla*, *pītaka*, *lohitaka*, *kaṇha*, and *odāta*), along with clear vision:

*Kathaṃ bhagavā maṃsacakkhunāpi vivaṭacakkhu?*  
*Maṃsacakkhumhipi bhagavato pañca vaṇṇā saṃvijjanti —*  
*nīlo ca vaṇṇo, pītako ca vaṇṇo, lohitaṇṇo ca vaṇṇo, kaṇho ca*  
*vaṇṇo, odāto ca vaṇṇo. (Nd II 355)*

These five colors are not, however, totally identical to the usual colors mentioned in the commentaries (i.e., *nīla*, *pīta*, *lohita*, *odāta*, *mañjeṭṭha*, and *pabhassara*). It is interesting to note *kaṇha* (black) is not included in the commentarial list of six colors, and neither *mañjeṭṭha* nor *pabhassara* is included in the above list. The *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* mentions *mañjeṭṭha*, together with other colors.<sup>23</sup> As ‘visible objects’ (*rūpāyatana*) in the *Dhamma-saṅgaṇī*, they are compared to the colors of flowers and other things in the *Atthasālinī*:

*Nīlādīsu umāpupphasamānaṃ nīlaṃ, kaṇikārapupphasamānaṃ*  
*pītakaṃ, bandhujīvakaupupphasamānaṃ lohitaṃ, osadhitāraka-*  
*samānaṃ odātaṃ. Jhāmaṅgārasamānaṃ kālakaṃ, mandarattaṃ*  
*sinduvārakavāramakūlasamānaṃ mañjiṭṭhakaṃ. (DhsA 317)<sup>24</sup>*

<sup>23</sup> The color *mañjeṭṭha* (or *mañjiṭṭha*) is found in Dhs and Vibh of the *Abhidhamma*: ‘*Tattha katamaṃ rūpāyatanaṃ? Yaṃ rūpaṃ catunnaṃ mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya vaṇṇanibhā sanidassanaṃ sappatighaṃ nīlaṃ pītakaṃ lohitaṃ odātaṃ kālakaṃ mañjiṭṭhakaṃ hari harivaṇṇaṃ ambaṅkuravaṇṇaṃ ...*’ (Vibh 71–72 = Dhs 139).

<sup>24</sup> Similar comparisons are used to describe the Buddha’s *abhinīlanetta* at DA II 451: ‘*abhinīlanettoti na sakalanīlanetto, nīlayuttaṭṭhāne panassa umāpupphasadisena ativissuddhena nīlavaṇṇena samannāgatāni nettāni honti, pītayuttaṭṭhāne kaṇikārapupphasadisena pītavaṇṇena, lohityuttaṭṭhāne bandhujīvakaupupphasadisena lohityavaṇṇena, setayuttaṭṭhāne osadhitārakasadisena setavaṇṇena, kālāyuttaṭṭhāne addārīṭṭhakasadisena kālāvaṇṇena samannāgatāni. Suvāṇṇavimāne ugghāṭitamaṇi sīhapaṇjarasadisāni khāyanti.*’ According to this, *nīla* is compared to *ummāpuppha*

(Among blue-or-green things, and so on, the color of ‘blue-or-green’ (*nīla*) is like the clitoria, ‘yellow’ is like the bauhinia, ‘red’ is like the *bandhujīvaka*, ‘white’ is like the morning star, ‘black’ is like burnt coal, and ‘crimson’ is like the Sindhu-vāra, *kaṇavīra* flowers).<sup>25</sup>

Such examples suggest that though the color *pabhassara* is used in the canonical texts in the sense of ‘shining’ in one of the mansions in the *Vimānavatthu* (*Pabhassara-vimāna*: Vv 57–58), it is perhaps a later addition making up a list of six colors.

Historically, the first occurrence of these six colors can be identified in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Pṭs) of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*.<sup>26</sup> This text may be placed in the pre-Abhidhammic period.<sup>27</sup> However, assigning it to a specific period is no easy task; if, as is very likely, it belongs to a period after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, then it is also likely that Sinhalese sources, such as the *Sīhaḷa-Dhammasaṅgaṇī-aṭṭhakathā* (SDhsA) and the *Sīhaḷa-Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā* (SPṭsA) — which were the primary source materials for the *Atthasālinī* and the *Saddhammapakāsinī*, respectively — may have also contained the same list of six colors as in Pṭs. This assumption supports the assertion that the list of six colors, as found in the *Atthasālinī* and the *Saddhammapakāsinī*, is temporally a commentarial development.<sup>28</sup> The word

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(flower of flax), *pīta* to ‘*kaṇikārapuppha*’ (flower of the tree *Pterospermum acerifolium*), *lohita* to *bandhujīvaka* (flower of the plant *Pentapetes phoenicea*), *seta* to *osadhitāraka* (star of healing — white brilliance), and *kāḷa* to *addāriṭṭhaka* — this term is interpreted in the sub-commentaries as ‘fresh fruit of the soapberry tree’ (*addāriṭṭhakavaṇṇāti abhinavāriṭṭhaphalavaṇṇā*: VisṬ [Be] I 305).

<sup>25</sup> Tin, Pe Maung [1976]: 414.

<sup>26</sup> Pṭs 126: ‘*Channaṃ vaṇṇānaṃ nīlānaṃ, pītakānaṃ, lohitakānaṃ, odātānaṃ, mañjeṭṭhānaṃ pabhassarānaṃ bhagavā caṅkamati, nimmito tiṭṭhati vā nisīdati vā seyyaṃ vā kappeti.*’ Cf. Peṭ 240: ‘*Samantapāsādikō suvaṇṇavaṇṇo abhirūpo dassaṇīyo puratthimakāyato suvaṇṇavaṇṇā rasmi uṭṭhahitvā gaganatale asītihaṭṭhaṃ ṭhānaṃ gaṇhāti. Pacchimakāyato dakkhiṇaṭṭhato vāmaṭṭhato suvaṇṇavaṇṇā heṭṭhā pādālehi pavāḷavaṇṇarasmi uṭṭhahitvā ghanapathaviyaṃ asītihaṭṭhaṃ ṭhānaṃ gaṇhāti, evaṃ samantā asītihaṭṭhamattam ṭhānaṃ chabbaṇṇabuddharasmiyo vijjotamānā vitaṇḍamānā vidhāvanti, ...*’

<sup>27</sup> See Norman, K. R. [1983]: 87–89; Mizuno, Kogen [1997]: 85 ff; Von Hinüber, Oskar [1997]: 59–60. Von Hinüber speculates that Pṭs was composed too late (not clear in which century).

<sup>28</sup> The latest research has, however, suggested that no *Sīhaḷa-Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā* was available when the commentator Mahānāma wrote the *Sad-dhammapakāsinī*. Even if this finding is accepted, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* itself contains the

*chabbaṇṇa*<sup>29</sup> was used to describe the Buddha’s physical splendor, and there appears to be a trend toward increasing the physical and spiritual features of the Buddha, such as *asīti-anubyañjana*, *satapuññalakkhaṇa*, and so on, in the apotheosis of the Buddha.

The marked discrepancies observed between the reference to the six bodily parts of the Buddha at SA III 47 = MA III 21–22 and those mentioned in works like the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*, the *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā* of the *Paramatthadīpanī*, and the *Atthasālinī*, are quite remarkable. Even the colors radiating from various parts of the body are different. A typical example can be found in the *Atthasālinī* (DhsA 13), which also refers to these six colors and their points of radiance. The text relates the first appearance of such rays was during the fourth week of the enlightened Buddha’s contemplation of the *Paṭṭhāna* (*mahāpakarāṇa*) under the Bodhi tree, when the six colored rays emanated from his body (*sarīrato nīla-pīta-lohita-odāta-mañjeṭṭha-pabhassara-vasena chabbaṇṇarasmiyo nikkhamiṃsu*). The text further elaborates that *nīla* (blue) radiated from the Buddha’s hair and beard and the blue portions of his eyes (*kesamassūhi c’eva akkhīnaṇ ca nīlaṭṭhānehi nīlarasmiyo nikkhamiṃsu*). Similarly, *pīta* (yellow or golden) rays emanated from his skin and the yellow parts of his eyes (*chavito c’eva akkhīnaṇ ca pītaṭṭhānehi pītakarasmīyo nikkhamiṃsu*). *Lohita* (red) rays emitted from his flesh and blood and the red portions of his eyes (*maṃsalohite c’eva akkhīnaṇ ca rattaṭṭhānehi lohitarasmiyo nikkhamiṃsu*), and *odāta* (white) rays from his bones, teeth, and the whites of his eyes (*aṭṭhīhi c’eva dantehi ca akkhīnaṇ ca setaṭṭhānehi odātarasmiyo nikkhamiṃsu*).<sup>30</sup> *Mañjeṭṭhapabhassara* (crimson and the combination of the other colors) rays issued from different parts of his body (*mañjeṭṭhapabhassarā pana taṃha taṃha sarīrappadesā nikkhamiṃsu*).<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note here that the *Atthasālinī*, in the first place, gives a different list of bodily parts of the Buddha from the passage at SA III 47 = MA III 21–22 given above. Second, the text [DhsA] mentions that the first four colors, namely, *nīla*, *pīta*, *lohita*

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names of colors, which naturally implies that the *Saddhammapakāsinī* may simply have inherited them. See Hayashi, Takatsugu [2013]: 823 (236)–816 (243).

<sup>29</sup> The first occurrence of the word *chabbaṇṇa* in the Pāli tradition seems to be in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Pṭs I 126) of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, in connection with the Buddha’s *yamakapāṭihīra-ñāṇa*.

<sup>30</sup> See also PṭsA II 404–405, where the same passage occurs up to this point. Mentions of *mañjeṭṭha* and *pabhassara* are more detailed in PṭsA than here, as will be shown later.

<sup>31</sup> DhsA 13–14.

and *odāta*, issue from the eyes, in addition to the different parts of the body.<sup>32</sup> This shows that the Buddha’s eyes have a special role to play in the notion

<sup>32</sup> The *Mahāvastu* III 139 states: ‘... *bhagavato mukhadvārāto nānāvarṇā anekavarṇā arciṣo niścāritvā nilapītamāmjiṣṭhā raktaśvetāvadātā kanakavarṇā sarvaṃ buddhakṣetraṃ obhāsayitvā* ...’ (‘there issued from the mouth of the Exalted One rays of many different colors, blue, yellow, red, crimson, white, translucent, and golden, which lit up the whole Buddha-field ...’ Trans. Jones, J. J. [1956]: 134–135). The colors emanating from the ‘mouth of the Exalted One’ (*bhagavato mukhadvārāto*), including blue (*nīla*), yellow (*pīta*), crimson or bright red (*māmjiṣṭha*), red (*rakta*), white (*śvetāvadātā*: or should it be parsed as ‘*śveta*’ (white) and ‘*avadātā*’ (white) separately?), and gold (*kanaka*), are indeed similar to the six colors constituting the Buddha’s rays in the Pāli tradition, except that there is no mention of *pabhassara*. What is different between the Pāli tradition and the *Mahāvastu* is that the later sources describe the colors as those issuing from the Buddha’s mouth. The *Ekottara-āgama* (增一阿含經) similarly lists five colors: ‘是時。毘舍離城人民之類聞世尊今當入城。復持五百寶蓋。前迎世尊。爾時。有二千五百寶蓋懸在空中。爾時世尊見此蓋已。即時便笑。此是諸佛世尊常法。設如來笑時。口中便有五色光出。青黃白黑赤。侍者阿難見此光明...’ (T 2 726c). It is stated here that such an event is the normative occurrence for all the World-honored Ones, and that when they smile, rays of the five colors — blue, yellow, white, black, and red — issue from their mouths. Moreover, in describing the Buddha’s three kinds of miracles, the *Samyukta-āgama* (雜阿含經) gives the following explanation of the *iddhipāda* (神足): ‘神足示現者。世尊隨其所應。而示現入禪定正受。陵虛至東方。作四威儀。行住坐臥。入火三昧。出種種火光。青黃赤白紅頗梨色水火俱現。或身下出火。身上出水。身上出火。身下出水。周圍四方亦復如是。爾時。世尊作種種神變已。於眾中坐。是名神足示現。’ (T 2 50b). In this context the Buddha is said to emanate from his body both water and fire possessed of the following colors: blue (青), yellow (黃), red (赤), white (白), crimson (紅) and crystal color (頗梨色). However, the fire meditation (火光三昧 = *agni-dhātu-samādhi*) also produces similar effects. Thus it is said that Uruvelā Kaśyapa (鬱毗羅迦葉) also issued from his body flames of blue (青), yellow (黃), red (赤) and whitish water colors (白中水精色), flames from his lower body, water from his upper body; flames from the upper body and water from the lower body (又作火界三昧、火焰三昧。中阿含第六十二經頻婆娑王迎佛經 (佛光一·四一六): 「尊者鬱毗羅迦葉入火定已, 身中便出種種火焰, 青、黃、赤、白中水精色, 下身出火, 上身出水; 上身出火, 下身出水。」) (中阿含, 頻婆娑王迎佛經: T 1 497c). In connection with the Buddha’s performance of miracles, the *Buddhacarita* (佛本行集經) also relates the following: ‘如來又時。或復入於火光三昧。於諸毛孔出種種光。所謂青色光明。黃色光明。白色光明。菴草色光。頗梨色光。’ (T 3 898a). Here again, rays of blue (青色), yellow (黃色), red (赤色), white (白色), a reddish color like that of the madder plant (菴草色), and crystal color (頗梨色) are mentioned. For the term ‘crystal color’ (頗梨色), see 漢譯對照·梵和大辭典, ed. 荻原雲來 (U. Ogihara) 下, 1526 v *sphaṭika*) (T 3 898a). However, the first four Pāli *nikāyas* do not refer to these colors in the description of the Twin Miracle (*yamaka-pāṭihira*) of the Buddha. This may suggest that all the Chinese references to different colors emanating from the Buddha’s body may be later incorporations.

of *chabbaṇṇa*. Classifying and describing the elements of the eye (*cakkhu*), the *Atthasālinī* says that among other elements, there are three colors: white (*seta*), black (*kaṇha*) and red (*lohitaka*) (*yattha setam p’ atthi kaṇham pi lohitaṃ pi paṭhavī pi āpo pi tejo pi vāyo pi ...*).<sup>33</sup> According to this classification, which is a classification of the *maṃsa-cakkhu* applicable to any individual, the blue (*nīla*) eye is not specified. The element of ‘blue’ in the eye is therefore a special province of the Buddha. *Abhinīlanetta* (intense blue or black eye color) is one of the ‘thirty-two physical marks of a great man’ (*mahāpurisa*).<sup>34</sup> Likewise, the blue rays are said to issue from his hair and beard (*kesamassu*). In ancient times Bhikkhus, including the Buddha, were expected to be clean shaven.<sup>35</sup> The Pāli Canon refers to the fact that the Buddha had pitch-black hair (*susukāḷa-kesa*) when he was young.<sup>36</sup> Commenting on the Buddha’s deep and intense blue or black eyes (*abhinīlanetta*), the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* gives five colors as the constituting colors of the Buddha’s eyes; namely, *nīla* (blue), *pīta* (yellow), *lohita* (red), *seta* (white) and *kāḷa* (black).<sup>37</sup> The text further states that the Buddha’s eyes are not completely blue, but where blue is necessary, they possess a very distinguished blue color like the *umma* flower.<sup>38</sup> The same applies to other colors as well. So is the hair of the Buddha. He is endowed with bodily hair referred to as *nīla-añjana-vaṇṇa* (blue like ‘añjana’ [collyrium]). This description of the bodily hair is also used for one of the thirty-two physical characteristics of the *mahāpurisa*.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the commentaries

<sup>33</sup> DhsA 307. Cf. Vism 445. In elucidating the meaning of *rūpī* (one having material qualities), a passage at DhsA 190–191 also refers to the different colors of the pupil of the eye: *nīla*, *pīta*, *lohita*, and *odāta* (*Tattha rūpīti ajjhataṃ kesādīsu uppāditaṃ rūpajjhānaṃ rūpaṃ, tadassatthīti rūpī. Ajjhatañhi nīlaparikammaṃ karonto kese vā pitte vā akkhitārakāya vā karoti. Pītaparikammaṃ karonto mede vā chaviyā vā akkhīnaṃ pītaṭṭhāne vā karoti. Lohitaparikammaṃ karonto maṃse vā lohite vā jivhāya vā hatthatalapādātesu vā akkhīnaṃ rattaṭṭhāne vā karoti. Odātaparikammaṃ karonto aṭṭhimhi vā dante vā nakhe vā akkhīnaṃ setaṭṭhāne vā karoti.*) The translator of the *Atthasālinī* translates the word *nīla* as ‘blue-green’. See Tin, Pe Maung Tin 1976: 255.

<sup>34</sup> See Wimalaratana, Bellanwila [1990 (?): 123 f. Ven. Wimalaratana translates the term *abhinīlanetta* as ‘intensely blue’ (*op. cit.*, 123). The Chinese version of this (三十二相經) has the following: ‘復次大人眼色紺青。是謂大人大人之相’ (T 26 1 494a). The term 紺青 is usually translated as ‘dark purple,’ ‘navy blue,’ and so on.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. D I 115.

<sup>36</sup> D I 115.

<sup>37</sup> DA II 451. This list differs somewhat from that found at Nd II 355.

<sup>38</sup> DA II 451: ‘*na sakalanīlanetta, nīlayuttaṭṭhāne paṇ’ assa ummāpupphasadisena ativissuddhena nīlavāṇṇena samannāgatāni nettāni honti.*’

<sup>39</sup> See Wimalaratana, Bellanwila [1990 (?): 100 f.

followed the tradition of these physical marks included in the *dvattimsa-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa* of the canonical texts, and the six colors are enumerated in the Pāli commentarial texts based on that.

Commenting on the phrase *channam vaṇṇānaṃ* (regarding six colors), the *Saddhammappakāsinī* notes, at Pts I 126:

*Channam vaṇṇānaṃ’ ti ko sambandho? Heṭṭhā, uparimakāyato’ ti ādīhi anekehi sarīrāvayavā vuttā. Tena sarīrāvayavasambandho pavattatī’ ti vacanasambandhena ca, yamakapāṭihīrādhikārena ca channam vaṇṇānaṃ sarīrāvayavabhūtānaṃ raṇṇisiyo yamakā hutvā pavattantī’ ti vuttaṃ hoti. Sāmvacanasambandhena ca avassaṃ rasmiyo’ ti pāṭhaso icchitabbo yeva.*<sup>40</sup> (Of the six colors: What is the connection? With such expressions as, ‘from below, top most of the body, etc.,’ they are said to be from many bodily parts. Therefore, the ‘connection regarding the bodily parts’ is in terms of words and the performance of the Twin Miracle, and it is said that the six colored rays of the bodily parts become manifest in pairs. The rest of the reading should be expected that the rays in the sense of the ‘genitive’ [case] and inevitability).

The commentary further elaborates on the six colors, as in the case of other commentaries (DA, BvA, DhsA, Dhpa, etc.), but PtsA is distinct in that the last two colors, namely, *mañjeṭṭha* and *pabhassara*, are explained in a specific manner which finds no parallel in the other sources. The passage reads as follows:

The color of crimson is the color of light red. The color of opaque brilliant is the color which is very bright by nature. The color of *pabhassara* does not exist independently. Those rays shining in the [said] five colors are the *pabhassara* colors (*Mañjiṭṭhānaṃ’ ti mandarattavaṇṇānaṃ. Pabhassarānaṃ’ ti pabhassarapakatikānaṃ vaṇṇānaṃ. Pabhassaravaṇṇo visuṃ avijjamāno’ pi vuttesu pañcasu vaṇṇesu ye ye pabhāsamujjalā te te pabhassarā*).<sup>41</sup>

In addition, the *Saddhammappakāsinī* describes the bodily parts from which the above two colors emanate, as follows:

Rays of crimson emanate from the bodily parts that are of dull color, like the flat portions of hands and feet. Rays of *pabhassara* shine

<sup>40</sup> PtsA II 404.

<sup>41</sup> PtsA II 404.

forth from the bodily parts that have the color of *pabhassara*, like hair between eyebrows, teeth, nails, etc. (*Haṭṭhatalapādatalādīhi mandarattaṭṭhānehi maññiṭṭharasmiyo nikkhamanti, ... Uṇṇādāṭṭhā-nakhādīhi pabhassaraṭṭhānehi pabhassararasmiyo nikkhamanti.*)<sup>42</sup>

These descriptions in PtsA are more specific than those found in the *Atthasālinī*, which simply reads: ‘*Maññeṭṭhapabhassara pana taṃha taṃha sarīrappadesā nikkhamiṃsu.*’<sup>43</sup>

The question as to why such brilliant rays emanate from the Buddha’s body is addressed in the *Atthasālinī*. It ascribes the reason neither to success by resolve, nor to success of that which is produced by meditation (*ayaṇ ca neva buddhānaṃ adhiṭṭhāna-iddhi bhāvanāmaya iddhi*). Instead, the rays are the result of the clarity of the Buddha’s blood, material form, and his complexion (*Lokaṇāthassa lohitaṃ pasīdi, vatthurūpaṃ pasīdi, chavivaṇṇo pasīdi*).<sup>44</sup> The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*<sup>45</sup> and the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*,<sup>46</sup> on the other hand, explain this in relation to the Twin Miracle (*yamakapāṭihāriya*); in other words, that the six colors emanating from the Buddha’s body are the result of attainment of the *kaṣiṇa* meditation (*nīlarasmi-atthāya hi bhagavā nīla-kaṣiṇaṃ samāpajjati, pītarasmi-ādānaṃ atthāya pīta-kaṣiṇādāni samāpajjati*).<sup>47</sup>

The ten *kaṣiṇas* include only four of the six colors: blue (*nīla*), yellow (*pīta*), red (*lohita*) and white (*odāta*).<sup>48</sup> If the explanations in DA and BvA are accepted, a discrepancy in the number of colors is obvious. The texts (DA I 57 = BvA 31) further state:

“Among the rays, each second ray proceeded at the same moment as the first ray, as though they were pairs, yet there was no procedure of two mental acts at one moment. For, owing to the buoyancy of the sub-consciousness of Buddhas, these rays are as though they proceed in five ways at one moment from a dweller by mental acts.

<sup>42</sup> PtsA II 405.

<sup>43</sup> DhsA 14.

<sup>44</sup> DhsA 15.

<sup>45</sup> DA I 57.

<sup>46</sup> BvA 31–32.

<sup>47</sup> BvA 31–32; DA I 57.

<sup>48</sup> Vism 172–174. See Vajirañña, Paravahera [1962]: 139.



But the adverting (of the mind), the preparation, and the resolute determination for producing these rays are separate.”<sup>49</sup>

Here we find two different interpretations: one in the *Atthasālinī* and the other in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* and *Madhurattavilāsinī*. The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* also refers to the Buddha’s Twin Miracle, mentioning the six colors.<sup>50</sup> In summary, commentaries like the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* and *Madhurattavilāsinī* describe the six colors issuing from the Buddha’s body on the occasion of his performance of the Twin Miracle, which, according to DA I 57, took place in the seventh year (*sattame saṃvacchare*) after the Buddha’s enlightenment. The notion of diffusion of the six colored rays from the Buddha’s body during *yamakapāṭihīra*, is indeed in accord with the explanations given in PṭṣA.

The *Atthasālinī*, however, speaks of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* as the inducer, as it were, by means of which the rays are produced. It says that the six colors emanated in the fourth week after the enlightenment of the Buddha, when he was contemplating the *Paṭṭhāna*. The text also refers to the performance of the Twin Miracle under the Bodhi tree soon after his enlightenment.<sup>51</sup> It specifically states that the display of that miracle at that time was the same as the famous Twin Miracle performed under the tree of *Gaṇḍamba*. Strangely, however, it also asserts that the rays did not emanate even during the Twin Miracle, but only during the contemplation of the *Paṭṭhāna*.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the *Atthasālinī* gives an independent interpretation not followed by any other sources.

The diffusion of the six colored rays from the Buddha’s body is not confined to the occasions of *yamakapāṭihīra* and the contemplation of the *Paṭṭhāna*, but is also found in relation to the Buddha’s *dhātu-parinibbāna* (extinction of relics). According to the Theravāda tradition, the six colored rays are said to

<sup>49</sup> Horner, I. B. [1978]: *The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning (Madhurattavilāsinī)*, London: PTS, 46–47. The original Pāli passage reads: ‘... rasmisu pana dutiyā dutiyā rasmi purimāya purimāya yamakā viya ekakkhaṇe pavattati, dvinnāñ ca cittānaṃ ekakkhaṇe pavatti nāma n’ atthi. Buddhānaṃ pana bhavaṅgaparivāsassa lahukatāya pañcah’ākārehi cinnavasitāya etā rasmiyo ekakkhaṇe viya pavattanti. Tassā pana rasmiyā āvajjanaparikkammādhiṭṭhānāni visuṃ yeva.’ (BvA 31 = DA I 57)

<sup>50</sup> DhPA III 214–215.

<sup>51</sup> BvA 8 also refers to the fact that the Buddha displayed the Twin Miracle on the eighth day after his enlightenment in order to clear the doubt of *devatās*.

<sup>52</sup> DhSA 13.



emanate from the relics of the Buddha.<sup>53</sup> In addition, the commentarial texts record several instances where the Buddha intentionally sends rays (*rasmī*).<sup>54</sup> He is said to emit rays from his body, but not always. The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* comments that the Buddha sometimes conceals his rays with his robe, for example, when he went on a three-*yojana* journey to meet Aṅgulimāla.<sup>55</sup>

The notion of the Buddha’s rays is also expressed as *ketumālā* (garland of rays) and *raṃsijālā* (blaze of rays). These expressions originated late in the Pāli tradition and are found only in the *Apadāna* in the Canon; other scant references are found in the commentaries. In one instance, the *Apadāna* describes the Buddha Kassapa’s body as resplendent with physical marks and a blaze of rays (*raṃsijālā*).<sup>56</sup> Its commentary defines the word *raṃsijālā* as ‘a mass of rays’ (*raṃsisamūha*).<sup>57</sup> The context in which both terms are employed in the commentaries is more or less the same. For instance, the *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* uses it to describe the Buddha’s physical splendor shining with a garland of rays (*ketumālāsamujjalita*) along with other physical endowments like the thirty-two bodily marks, eighty minor marks, fathom long halo, and so on.<sup>58</sup> The *Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā* also uses it in a similar context.<sup>59</sup> The *Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā* also comments on the Buddha’s bodily brilliance as being diffused with a blaze of rays (*raṃsijālāvitato naraśīho*).<sup>60</sup> The references found in the commentaries and examined above indicate that the terms *ketumālā* and *raṃsijālā* are less popular in the commentaries than in later Sinhala works and are mainly supplementary to notions like *pabhā*, *raṃsi*, and so on, which adorn the body of the Buddha.

<sup>53</sup> DA III 899; MA IV 117; VibhA 433; etc.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., Dhpa I 22, III 102; VvA 323; etc.

<sup>55</sup> Dhpa II 41.

<sup>56</sup> Ap II 508.

<sup>57</sup> ApA 112.

<sup>58</sup> SnA I 140–141.

<sup>59</sup> VvA 323.

<sup>60</sup> JA I 89–ApA 94.

### III. Concluding remarks

The concepts of *byāmapabbhā* and *raṃsi* in the Pāli tradition apparently developed simultaneously in the apotheosis of the Buddha. Historically speaking, their origins are ambiguous; but these two notions, together with others, had a lasting impact in Buddhist imagery. Descriptions in Chinese translations reflect such importance and are often referred to even in the *āgama* literature. There seem to have been two directions of development in the Sanskrit tradition, which subsequently made their way into the Chinese translations on the sources of the colors; 1) from the mouth of the Buddha (as in the *Mahāvastu*, the *Ekottara-āgama*, and so on), and 2) from the body or pores of the Buddha (as in the *Buddhacarita*, the *Samyukta-āgama*, and so on). The second accords with general descriptions in the Pāli tradition, though the colors are somewhat different. The manner in which the concepts of *byāmapabbhā* and *raṃsi* are treated in the Pāli tradition, especially in the commentarial literature, sometimes exhibits differences among sources. This implies that different traditions existed within the Pāli commentaries, possibly due to differences in transmission by, for instance, different *bhāṇakas* within the broader context of the Theravāda tradition.

## Chapter 4

**The Marks of a Hundred Merits (*Satapuññalakkhaṇa*)****I. Introduction**

Traces of the development of the Buddha's attributes — both physical and spiritual — are discernible even within the canonical texts. In the Pāli commentaries such qualities, with a further increase over the centuries, are often classified into two broad categories: (1) knowledge-power (*ñāna-bala*) and (2) physical power (*kāya-bala*). In both categories, the commentarial literature provides and discusses multifaceted concepts associated with Buddhahood hitherto unheard of in the history of Pāli Buddhism. In an earlier publication I analyzed such attributes and qualities based on the materials found in the Pāli commentaries,<sup>1</sup> but in light of the periodic research advances being made, ongoing further investigation from different perspectives is still required.

One intriguing concept related to the Buddha's physical power (*kāya-bala*) is the notion that the Buddha is endowed with the 'marks of a hundred merits' (*satapuññalakkhaṇa*).<sup>2</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translates this term as 'a hundred characteristics of merit.'<sup>3</sup> This concept has two contrasting interpretations in the Pāli commentaries and later Buddhist texts. It also exhibits some influence from different Indian Buddhist schools. The present chapter attempts to trace probable interaction among Buddhist schools and their influence upon the concept of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in the Theravāda tradition. It also proposes to offer a critical assessment of this concept in the broader context of Indian Buddhism.

<sup>1</sup> Endo, T. [1997, 2002 (reprint)]. *Buddha in Theravāda Buddhism: A Study of the Concept of Buddha in the Pali Commentaries*, Dehiwala: Buddhist Cultural Centre.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, 156–165.

<sup>3</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991]: 207; Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1978]: 118. His translation of the term as 'a hundred characteristics of merit,' however, may imply the notion that there are only 'a hundred marks' that were produced as a result of performing meritorious deeds. This seems to be a similar idea to that rejected by the 'teachers of the commentaries' (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*) in DAT, and is a theory akin to the Sarvāstivādin concept of the 'one hundred meritorious marks adorning each of the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha,' as shall be discussed later.

## II. The canonical use of the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa*

Widespread acceptance of the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ (*satapuññalakkhaṇa*) in the Pāli tradition appears to be a late development. Its earliest use, however, is seen in the Pāli *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, the text famous for the elucidation of the thirty-two physical marks (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) of the Buddha. It is said there that only two careers are open to the one endowed with these physical marks: (1) a *cakkavatti* (wheel-turning king, or universal monarch), if he remains a householder, and (2) a human (Buddha) respected and worshipped by men, gods, and others (D III 149). In this discourse, the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* refers to the ‘second mark’ on the soles of such a great being’s feet (*pādatalacakkalakkhaṇa*);<sup>4</sup> it is important to note that there is no reference whatsoever to this *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in the context of the remaining bodily marks. (D III 147, 150, 152, etc.) This usage therefore confirms that this notion in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* is related to the ‘second mark’ only and does not apply to any other of the thirty-two physical marks of a great man.<sup>5</sup> This is a unique feature found only in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, and never found its way into later teachings on the notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa*. In the Theravāda Buddhist tradition it may be inferred that the interpretation of such marks on the soles of the Buddha’s feet was a forerunner for the later development of the concept of ‘one hundred and eight marks on the foot of the Buddha.’<sup>6</sup> The list of such marks is mentioned in later texts like the *Jinālaṅkāra-ṭīkā*,<sup>7</sup> the *Anāgatavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā*,<sup>8</sup> and a Sinhalese work of the Kandy period (1469–1815),

<sup>4</sup> D III 149: ‘*So tena kammaṇa divaṃ samakkami, Sukhaṇa khīḍḍāratiyo ca anvabhi; Tato cavitvā punarāgato idha, Cakkāni pādesu duvesu vindati. Samantanemīni saḥassarāni ca, Byākamsu veyyañjanikā samāgatā; Disvā kumāraṃ satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ.*’ It is clear that the passage discusses the mark of a wheel on the feet (*cakkāni pādesu duvesu vindati*), and that *satapuññalakkhaṇa* is related to such marks on the boy’s feet.

<sup>5</sup> There is still a possibility that the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* was a later interpolation. Future research on this is necessary to arrive at a more accurate conclusion. For the concept of a ‘great man’ (*mahāpurisa*), see Nakamura, H. [1974]: 513. See also Wimalaratana, B. [1990 (?)].

<sup>6</sup> See Endo, T. [1997, 2002]: 165.

<sup>7</sup> Malalasekera notes: “[t]he *Jinālaṅkāra*, as we have it now, was a work not earlier than the sixth or seventh century A.D. We do not know who wrote it, nor who was the author of its *ṭīkā*.” Malalasekera, G. P. [1994 (1928)]: 111.

<sup>8</sup> Malalasekera attempts to identify the author of this work with the author of the *Bodhivaṃsa*. See *ibid.*, 160. Von Hinüber states that the *Bodhivaṃsa* would have been composed perhaps in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Von Hinüber, Oskar [1997]: § 191.

named the *Magul Lakṣa* (Auspicious Marks). If the presence of ‘marks of a hundred merits’ on the foot of the Buddha represents an early notion, as found in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, and if it is tenable that this is a precursor to the notion of auspicious marks on the feet of the Buddha, then the notion of *satapuñṇalakkhaṇa* seems to have developed in a completely different direction in later Pāli texts. In this sense, the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* cannot be considered the first canonical reference to *satapuñṇalakkhaṇa* encompassing the marks on the ‘corporal body’ of the Buddha, whereas the Pāli commentarial interpretation of the term certainly revolves around the ‘corporal body’ of the Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

The *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* has its parallel in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* (T I 493a-494b), which is said to have been translated between 397 and 398 CE under the leadership of the Kashmirian monk Gautama Saṅghadeva.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese version, known by the title *Discourse on the Thirty-two Characteristics* (三十二相經), is not a full version corresponding to the Pāli *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* and is much shorter in length. The Pāli *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* is interspersed with many verses, while its Chinese version omits them. No word corresponding to the term *satapuñṇalakkhaṇa* of the Pāli *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* (D III 149) is thus found in this Chinese version.

The parallel version to the Pāli *Mahāpadāna-sutta* (D II 1–54) in Chinese translation is the *Daben Jing* 大本經 (T I 1b–11c). The text describes the life of Vipassī Buddha, which is very similar to that of Gotama Buddha. In the story of predicting the future of the Bodhisatta Vipassī, who was born with the thirty-two physical characteristics,<sup>11</sup> the Chinese version gives the following, which have no parallel in Pāli, in the form of verses uttered by the Buddha (佛時頌曰):

佛時頌曰 (Then the Buddha said in verse:)  
 百福太子生 (A prince with [the marks of] a hundred merits is born;)  
 相師之所記 (The teachers of prognostication noted;)  
 如典記所載 (As mentioned in the texts;)  
 趣二處無疑 ([Such a boy], no doubt, will have [only] two career paths;)

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See *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. III, fascicle 3, 452.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Vism 211; KhpA 108; etc.

<sup>10</sup> See Anālayo, Bhikkhu [2012]: 1.

<sup>11</sup> T I 14c: ‘諸相師即白王言。王所生子。有三十二相。當趣二處。必然無疑。在家當為轉輪聖王。若其出家。當成正覺。十號具足。’

若其樂家者 (If he remains a householder;)  
 當爲轉輪王 (He should be a wheel-turning monarch;)  
 ... (大本經: T I 5a).

A reference in the Chinese version is made to ‘a hundred merits’ (百福), a concept not even hinted at in the Pāli *Mahāpadāna-sutta*.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, a corresponding Chinese version of the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, 遊行經, also makes reference to 百福相 (characteristics of a hundred merits) in relation to the Buddha’s explanation for the causes for the trembling of the earth on eight occasions:

菩薩二足尊 (The Bodhisattva, the noblest among the two-legged;)  
 百福相已具 (Endowed with the ‘characteristics of a hundred merits’;)  
 始入母胎時 (At the time of his entry into his mother’s womb;)  
 地則爲大動 (The earth then trembles greatly because of that.)  
 ... (遊行經: T I 16a)

A marked difference, nonetheless, exists between the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* and the two Chinese versions of the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*. The former, as seen before, gives the term in relation to the feet of a boy/prince (*kumāra*), while the latter two Chinese versions give such characteristics as the ‘bodily marks.’ This interpretation of the bodily marks of a hundred merits is the mainstream of thought in late Pāli Buddhist texts, as shall be discussed in detail.

The origin of the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa*, literally corresponding to the ‘characteristics of a hundred merits’ (百福相) of the Chinese *Youxing jing* 遊行經, is rather difficult to determine. The Pāli tradition has the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, but the corresponding Chinese version, *Sanshi'er xiang jing* 三十二相經 (T I 493a–494b), does not have a parallel term. There are two possible inferences for this disparity; first, the

<sup>12</sup> The *Mahāpadāna-sutta* discusses the two possible paths for a boy with the thirty-two bodily characteristics in relation to Vipassī Buddha and, as is well known, the second bodily feature is described as follows: ‘*Yampi, imassa deva, kumārassa heṭṭhā pādātalesu cakkāni jātāni sahaṣṣārāni sanemikāni sanābhikāni sabbākāraparipūrāni, idampissa mahāpurisassa mahāpurisalakkhaṇaṃ bhavati*’ (D II 17). In this instance, the Pāli does not mention the idea of a prince born with the hundred merits as in its Chinese version. The circumstances in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* where the word *satapuññalakkhaṇa* occurs are very similar to the passage here. But the Pāli text (*Mahāpadāna-sutta*) nowhere refers to the word *satapuññalakkhaṇa*.

word *satapuññalakkhaṇa* employed in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* may have been a later interpolation (as scholars like Pande consider the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* to be of late origin);<sup>13</sup> and second, it could be, after all, the earliest reference to this word *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in Pāli literature — this inference comes from the fact that in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* explicitly refers to the marks on the soles of the Buddha's feet, which comprise the 'second mark' of a great man. This use of the term is distinctive, and the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* therefore occupies a unique place in the concept of *satapuññalakkhaṇa*. The Chinese versions of the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* are closer in their understanding of the notion to that which Pāli literature developed in later periods. Hence they appear to have a closer link with the later Pāli tradition than with the Pāli *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*.<sup>14</sup>

### III. Late canonical and post-canonical texts

The term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* is found in both late canonical and post-canonical texts, including the late canonical *Vimānavatthu*, for instance, which uses it in relation to the Buddha's qualities.<sup>15</sup> The *Buddhavaṃsa* has the following: "The superb being, unexcelled, guider away, teacher, was honored by *devas* and men; of great might, with the mark of a hundred merits, he displayed the wonderful marvel."<sup>16</sup> The *Apadāna* also uses this term as a quality of the Buddha.<sup>17</sup> The *Milindapañha*<sup>18</sup> employs the term in the same sense as the late canonical texts like the *Vimānavatthu* and the *Apadāna*. Such references in the late canonical and post-canonical texts describe these

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Pande: 'Sutta 30 [*Lakkhaṇa-sutta*] ... belongs manifestly to a very late stratum in the *Nikāyas*.' (Pande, G.C. [1999]: 112).

<sup>14</sup> The two Chinese texts cited here are from the *Dīrgha-āgama* (長阿含), supposedly belonging to the Dharmaguptaka school. It may be that the originals of these Chinese texts had already contained the word that indicated 'one hundred merits' as 'bodily characteristics' of the Buddha.

<sup>15</sup> Vv 97: '*Jitindriyaṃ buddhamanomanikkamaṃ, naruttamaṃ kassapamaggapuggalaṃ; Avāpurantaṃ amatassa dvāraṃ, devātidevaṃ satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ.*'

<sup>16</sup> Bv 2: '*Sattutamo anadhivaro vināyako, satthā ahū devamanussapūjito; Mahānubhāvo satapuññalakkhaṇo, dassesi accherakaṃ pāṭihīraṃ.*' English translation by Horner, I. B. [1978]: 47.

<sup>17</sup> Ap II 430: '*Suciraṃ satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ, patipubbena visuddhapaccayaṃ; Aham-ajjasupekkhanaṃ vata, tava passāmi nirupamaṃ viggahaṃ.*'

<sup>18</sup> Miln 111: '*Imehi aṭṭhīhi tamaggapuggalaṃ, devātidevaṃ naradammaśārathim; Samantacakkhuṃ satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ, pāṇehi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ upemī ti.*'

characteristic features exhibited on the ‘body’ of the Buddha (and the Bodhisatta). This interpretation is undeniably different from that of the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*.

#### IV. The Pāli commentarial use of the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa*

The Pāli commentaries provide more detailed explanations for the term *sata-puññalakkhaṇa* than the canonical and post-canonical texts. The *Vimāna-vatthu-aṭṭhakathā* (VvA), at Vv 97, for instance, states: ‘The “marks of a hundred merits” means the marks of a great man produced by way of many hundreds of meritorious deeds’ (*satapuññalakkhaṇan ti anekasatapuññavasena nibbatta-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇam*) (VvA 284). Interpreting a similar word, *satalakkhaṇadhārī* (the bearer of a hundred characteristics), the *Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā* says: ‘It means bearing of many characteristics’ (*satalakkhaṇa-dhārinoti anekalakkhaṇavato*) (ThagA I 226). These examples suggest that the numeral *sata* (one hundred) is used in the figurative sense to indicate ‘many’ or ‘countless.’ This figurative sense of the term continues to be one of the two prominent traditions adopted in Theravāda Buddhism even in later periods. It is, moreover, significant that the commentator Dhammapāla describes the ‘marks of merit’ (*puññalakkhaṇa*) not only as being ‘numerous,’ or ‘countless,’ but also as the ‘marks of a great man’ (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*). His interpretation in VvA represents a marked contrast with those of the other commentators, including Buddhaghosa, as shown below.

The often-cited passage in a few sources on the definition of the word *bhagavant* reads: ‘He has abolished (*bhagga*) greed and hate; Delusion too, he is canker-free; Abolished every evil state, “Blessed” his name may rightly be. And by his good fortune (*bhāgyavatā*) is indicated the excellence of his material body, which bears a hundred characteristics of merit; and by his having abolished defects (*bhaggadosatā*) is indicated the excellence of his Dhamma body. ...’<sup>19</sup> The term employed here is *satapuññajalakkhaṇadhara*

<sup>19</sup> VA I 124; Vism 211; MNdA II 265; KhpA 108; etc.: ‘*Bhaggarāgo bhaggadoso, bhaggamoho anāsavo; Bhaggāssa pāpakā dhammā, bhagavā tena vuccatī ti. Bhāgyavantatāya cassa satapuññajalakkhaṇadharassa rūpakāyasampattiḍḍhitā hoti, bhaggadosatāya dhammakāyasampatti.*’ Trans. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, in his translation of the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*), 207. The KhpA 108 uses the term *satapuññalakkhaṇadharassai*, while the MNdA II 265 employs *satapuññajalakkhaṇavarassa* instead of *satapuññalakkhaṇadharassa* of the other sources, according to the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* edition of Tipiṭaka (version 4.0).



(one who bears the mark born of a hundred meritorious deeds). Further, it is clear that these characteristics are on the ‘body’ of the Buddha (*rūpakāyasampattidīpitā hoti*). This usage of the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in reference to the bodily characteristics of the Buddha is found in other commentaries as well.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the following places also mention the term: ‘God of gods having the marks of a hundred merits’ (*devātidevo satapuññalakkhaṇo*) (MA III 25 = SA III 50 = UdA 416);<sup>21</sup> ‘The possessor of the all-seeing eye and the marks of a hundred merits’ (*samantacakkhum satapuññalakkhaṇam*) (DhpA = JA IV 158); ‘This boy with the marks of a hundred merits’ (*imaṃ kumāraṃ satapuññalakkhaṇam*) (SA I 336 = SnA I 239). These sources, it is interesting to note, explicitly or implicitly describe that the ‘marks born of a hundred merits’ is indeed related to the ‘bodily attainments’ (*rūpakāyasampatti*) with, however, no specific reference to the thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man.

Perhaps, the most detailed explanations including its interpretations for the term ‘*satapuññalakkhaṇa*’ are found at two places in the Pāli commentaries. The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, one of the two sources, has the following:

‘The marks of a hundred merits’ means each mark produced for every hundred meritorious deeds. [However] this is not [the view] approved as, if this being so, anyone would become a Buddha. In the endless *cakkavālas*, [if] all beings would each perform one meritorious action a hundred times, then the bodhisatta was born having performed each action performed by that multitude of beings, a hundred times — therefore, [people]<sup>22</sup> accepted this meaning of the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ (*Satapuñña-lakkhaṇanti satena satena puññakammānaṃ*<sup>23</sup> *nibbattaṃ ek’ ekaṃ lakkhaṇaṃ*).

<sup>20</sup> SA I 336; SnA I 239: ‘*Imaṃ kumāraṃ satapuññalakkhaṇam, sabbaṅgupetaṃ paripunṇabyañjanaṃ; Udaggaçitto sumano dadāmi te, paṭiggaha lokahitāya cakkhumā’ ti.*’

<sup>21</sup> This is a part of the verses ascribed to the ‘ancients’ (*porāṇā*); the entire verse reads: ‘*Tahiṃ nisinnō naradhammasārathī, devātidevo satapuññalakkhaṇo, Buddhāsane majjhagato virocati, suvaṇṇanekkhamaṃ viya paṇḍukambale.*’

<sup>22</sup> That is, the ‘teachers of the commentaries’ (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*), according to the *Ṭīkā* (DAT).

<sup>23</sup> SHB and the *Chatttha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka* 4.0 (Vipassanā Research Institute) of Pāli texts have *puññakammēna* instead of *puññakammānaṃ*, as seen in the PTS edition: ‘*Evam sante yo koci buddho bhavēyyāti na rocayimsu, anantesu pana cakkavālesu sabbe sattā ekekaṃ kammaṃ satakkhattuṃ kareyyuṃ, ettakehi janehi kataṃ kammaṃ bodhisatto ekova ekekaṃ sataguṇaṃ katvā nibbatta. Tasmā “satapuññalakkhaṇo” ti imammatthaṃ rocayimsu.*’

*Evaṃ sante yo koci Buddho bhaveyyāti na rocayīṃsu. Anantesu pana cakkavāḷesu sabbe sattā ek’ ekaṃ kammaṃ satakkhattuṃ kareyyuṃ, ettakehi janehi kataṃ kammaṃ bodhisatto eko va ek.’ ekaṃ sataguṇaṃ katvā nibbatto. Tasmā “satapuññalakkaṇo”ti imaṃ atthaṃ rocayīṃsu.)* (DA III 925)

Similarly, the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* (BvA) gives the following description:

*Mark of a hundred merits* means that if all beings in the unending world-spheres all beings may each one perform a deed of merit a hundred times. The Bodhisattva was reborn after he had by himself alone performed the deed a hundredfold done by all these other people. Therefore he is called one having the mark of a hundred merits. But some say that for every hundred deeds of merit the marks appear one by one. This being so ‘anyone may become a Buddha’ is rejected in the commentaries.<sup>24</sup> (*Satapuññalakkaṇo ti anantesu cakkavāḷesu sabbe sattā ekekaṃ puññakammaṃ satakkhattuṃ kareyyaṃ ettakehi janehi katakammaṃ bodhisatto sayāṃ eva ekako sataguṇaṃ katvā nibbatto ti, tasmā satapuññalakkaṇo ti vuccati. Keci pana satena satena puññakammena nibbatta-ekkalakkaṇo ti vadanti; evaṃ sante yo koci buddho bhaveyyā ti aṭṭhakathāsu pakkhittaṃ*<sup>25</sup>) (BvA 32).

The above two commentaries have similar explanations. This uniform interpretation proves that the concept of ‘*satapuññalakkaṇa*’ is the (corporal) marks accrued to the Buddha as a result of performing the virtues performed by every sentient being a hundred times a further hundredfold as the Bodhisatta, and this was the mainstream of the commentarial [Mahāvihāravāsin] interpretation. Both the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* and the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* refer, expressively, to the view that: ‘each mark is produced for every hundred meritorious deeds’ (*satena satena puññakammānaṃ nibbattaṃ ek’ eka-lakkaṇaṃ*) (DA; a similar phrase is found in BvA as well). This interpretation is rejected, because, if this is the case, anyone could become a Buddha) (*Evaṃ sante yo koci buddho bhaveyyāti na rocayīṃsu*), suggesting that ‘the marks of a hundred merits’ could not be an attribute assigned to the Buddha alone. Commenting on the phrase *na rocayīṃsu* of DA, its *Ṭīkā* specifically states that it was the *aṭṭhakathācariyā*

<sup>24</sup> The English translation is from Horner, I. B. [1978]: 49.

<sup>25</sup> The *Chatṭha Saṅgāyana Tipīṭaka* 4.0 (Vipassanā Research Institute) of Pāli texts has *paṭikkhittaṃ* (rejected).

(teachers of the commentaries) who disapproved of such a view.<sup>26</sup> It is believed that the *aṭṭhakathācariyā* (pl) were responsible for the compilation and transmission of the old commentaries — the commentaries that are usually cited throughout the present Pāli commentaries as the *aṭṭhakathā* in the singular number.<sup>27</sup> If this assumption is tenable, the commentarial interpretation of the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* would have originated with Sri Lankan monks after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. If, on the other hand, the tradition of ‘teachers of the commentaries’ (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*) could be traced to the Indian origin, then this definition would have been accepted in India even prior to the transmission of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

In the *Madhurattavilāsinī* (BvA) the same view as the above is ascribed to ‘some’ (*keci pana satena satena puññakammena nibbatta-ekekalakkhaṇo ti vadanti*) and is rejected, too (*aṭṭhakathāsu pakkhittam*). This *keci* is used without an honorific like *ācariyā* or *therā*. My investigation suggests that references in the Pāli commentaries to such words as *keci*, *apare*, *aññe*, *eke*, *ekacce*, and so on without the addition of a reverential term such as *ācariyā* or *therā* are not used for the Mahāvihāravāsins. Instead, this form is usually used as a derogatory reference to the followers of the Abhayagiri monastery and its allies.<sup>28</sup> As insignificant as this evidence may appear, it nonetheless gives rise to some intriguing questions: firstly, does this *keci* in BvA refer to the non-Mahāvihāravāsins? If so, then who are these ‘some’?; secondly, was this usage of *keci* found in the *Sīhaḷa-Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā* itself or in the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*?<sup>29</sup> If the former is the case, the reference could go back to about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE soon after the transmission of Buddhism to Sri Lanka. If the latter is so, then this rejected view may be traced only to about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, at the beginnings of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* literature

<sup>26</sup> DAṬ III 139: ‘*Na rocayiṃsūti kevalam satamattena puññakammena lakkhaṇa-nibbatim na rocayiṃsu aṭṭhakathācariyā.*’

<sup>27</sup> Mori, S. [1984]: 286–292 (especially 287).

<sup>28</sup> Endo, T. [2013]: 83–105 (especially 85–86).

<sup>29</sup> The question of whether or not the present *Madhurattavilāsinī* was the translation and edition based upon the *Sīhaḷa-Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā* has to be investigated carefully. The singular form of the term *aṭṭhakathā* is found in the *Madhurattavilāsinī* (BvA 131) only once; the same passage is repeated at JA I 44; CpA 15; and ApA 48. Until the sequence of writing of these Pāli commentaries is established beyond ambiguity, it is difficult to provide a definitive picture of the relationship that possibly existed among these sources. If there are any borrowings from one source to another, then the theory that the *Madhurattavilāsinī* had its corresponding *Sīhaḷa-Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā* becomes more difficult to establish.

in Sri Lanka.<sup>30</sup> However, it is certain that the authority that denies the view at issue is the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathāsu pakkhittam*: BvA) and their compilers (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*: DA). This may probably imply that the view was held by non-Mahāvihāravāsins.

It must be emphasized again that both DA and BvA in their detailed commentaries do not necessarily relate to the Buddha's thirty-two physical marks (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*). The DA is the commentary to the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, in which the explanation of this *mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* is found. Nevertheless, as observed before, the term *satapuññalakkhaṇa* is used only to refer to the second mark (*pādatalacakkalakkhaṇa*) in the list of the thirty-two bodily marks of the Buddha. It is the same with BvA, which has also no specific reference to the *mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* but simply to the *satapuññalakkhaṇa* of the Buddha. Both instances in DA and BvA are, therefore, a clear indication that the Theravāda tradition as found in the Pāli commentaries shows no sign of a deliberate intention to align the notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* with the concept of the 'thirty-two physical characteristics'. This ambiguous interpretation seems to have been the major position of the Mahāvihāra tradition, as represented in various Pāli commentaries including those of Buddhaghosa, at least up until the arrival of Dhammapāla, who clearly connected *satapuññalakkhaṇa* with the 'thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man' (*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*).

## V. The Sarvāstivādin concept of *Śatapuṇyalakṣaṇa* or *Śatapuṇyavicitṛita*

The view that is refuted in both commentaries (DA and BvA) is a unique one. This refuted view that 'each mark appears as a result of performing virtues a hundred times' (*satena satena puññakammena nibbatta-ekekalakkhaṇo ti*) appears to be similar to the notion of *śatapuṇyalakṣaṇa* in some of the Sarvāstivādin sources. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu (ca. 380–90), for instance, mentions that 'each [of the marks] arises from one hundred merits'.<sup>31</sup> In its discussion of the Bodhisattva's thirty-two physical marks,

<sup>30</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45.

<sup>31</sup> See *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu trans. into French by L.V. Poussin, with an annotated English translation by Gelong L. Sangpo, vol. II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012, 1464. See also the *Abhidharmakośa-Bhāṣya*, Chapter IV compiled and edited by Research Institute of Sanskrit Manuscripts and Buddhist Literature, Peking University, Sanskrit text and Chinese translations by Paramārtha and Xuanzan

the *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-śāstra* (阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論: MVŚ: T no. 1545) also notes that each mark [of the thirty-two physical marks] of the Buddha is adorned with one hundred merits. Giving an answer to the question of what the hundred merits are, this text further comments that a hundred thoughts are the same as one hundred merits.<sup>32</sup> The MVŚ, in this connection, gives divergent views on the one hundred thoughts, the measurement of one merit, and so on. (T 27, 889c-890b). The emphasis in MVŚ is clearly on the ‘one hundred thoughts’ (百思), which are divided into two groups of fifty: the first ‘fifty thoughts’ are that the Bodhisattva prepares for his physical purification, then arouses one thought each to initiate the process, and the second set is to perfect and complete one mark (the same process continues for the rest of the thirty-two marks).<sup>33</sup> Although the Sarvāstivādin notion of *śatapuṇyalakṣaṇa* (i.e., *ekaikaṃ puṇyaśatajaṃ*) appears to be similar to that which is rejected in DA and BvA, the MVŚ is clear that the marks of ‘one hundred merits’ are unmistakably related to the ‘thirty-two physical marks’ of the Buddha, while DA and BvA are uncertain on the issue.<sup>34</sup> The explanations in MVŚ are much more detailed than those in the Pāli commentaries, but the former contains no direct or indirect reference to the Theravāda notion of *satapuññalakkaṇa*. Though this is a literary feature of the two sources of both the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda schools, the denial in DA and BvA of the notion of *satapuññalakkaṇa* may have come from the Sarvāstivāda school.

## VI. The Sinhalese Buddhist literature on *satapuññalakkaṇa*

The Pāli tradition seems to have two interpretations of the term *sata* (hundred), as discussed above: one is the literal meaning of ‘a hundred’ as in both DA and BvA, and the other is figurative to suggest ‘many,’ an interpretation seen in ThagA (I 226) and VvA (284).<sup>35</sup> The *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (DAṬ III 139)

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(online edition), 581, where this sentence is given: *ekaikaṃ puṇyaśatajaṃ*: [真]偈曰。一一百福生。[玄]各百福嚴飾。

<sup>32</sup> T 27, 889c: 佛一一相百福莊嚴。何謂百福。答此中百思名為百福。See also Guang Xing [2005]: 27.

<sup>33</sup> T 27, 889c: 先起五十思。修治身器令淨調柔。次起一思正牽引彼。後復起五十思令其圓滿。

<sup>34</sup> In none of the Pāli references up to the time of the commentaries does the notion of *satapuññalakkaṇa* appear to be directly related to the concept of the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha as in the Sarvāstivāda School.

<sup>35</sup> Maurice Walshe [1995]: 444 also translates *disvā kumāraṃ satapuññalakkaṇaṃ*

provides an important comment on the numeral *sata* in reference to the passage at DA III 925: ‘*idha “sata”-saddo bahubhāva-pariyāyo, na saṅkhyā-vacanoti dasseti*’ (here, *sata* [hundred] means ‘abundant’, rather than a specific number). From these references, it is clear that the sources which take the meaning of the word *sata* to be many, numerous, and so on are traditionally ascribed to the authorship of the commentator Dhammapāla, including DAT. Does this, then, show that Dhammapāla followed a different tradition or interpretation from that of Buddhaghosa and Buddhadatta, who used the numeral *sata* in the literal sense of ‘one hundred,’ notwithstanding the possibility that the latter commentators may have faithfully followed the tradition of the *Sīhaḷa aṭṭhakathā*, the respective old sources of their commentaries? On the other hand, the Chinese parallel versions of the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and *Mahāpari nibbāna-sutta*, belonging to the Dharmaguptaka school, both evince a literal translation of 百福 (*bai fu*; a hundred merits) or 百福相 (*bai fu xiang*; characteristics of a hundred merits). The same is true for the Sarvāstivāda school.

These two interpretations appear to have continued beyond the commentarial period, at least to around the thirteenth century, in Sri Lanka. For instance, the *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya*, a Sinhalese glossary to the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* believed to have been composed in the tenth century<sup>36</sup> has the following passage:

*Satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ: Siya pin lakuṇu. ‘Sata puññato nibbatta-lakkhaṇaṃ yassa’ yana vākya. Anat aparisē sakvaḷahi hāma sathu eki eki pin sata guṇa koṭa kolō nam etek jana kaḷa etek kam sata guṇa koṭin kaḷa pinin nivat lakuṇu āti bāvin buduhu satapuññalakkhaṇa namhu yā.*<sup>37</sup>

This passage is testimony to the fact that the term *sata* had been used as a specific number, the numeral ‘one hundred’ (*siya pin lakuṇu*). This is certainly not the interpretation of DAT III 139 or of Dhammapāla.

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(D III 149) as ‘seeing these many marks of merit.’ This also shows that he took *sata* in a figurative sense.

<sup>36</sup> See Godakumbura, C. E. [1955]: 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya*, ed. Hettiaratchi D. E., Colombo: Samayawardhana Publishers, [1974, 2009], 56. This appears to be a close translation of the following Pāli passage: ‘... *anantesu cakkavāḷesu sabbe sattā ekekaṃ puññakammaṃ satakkhattuṃ kareyyaṃ ettakehi janehi katakammaṃ bodhisatto sayam eva ekako sataguṇaṃ katvā nibbatto ti, tasmā satapuññalakkhaṇo ti vuccati.* (BvA 32. Cf. DA III 925)

Another Sinhalese work attributed to the authorship of King Parakkamabāhu II (1236-1270) is the *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya*, a Sinhalese word-for-word glossary of the *Visuddhimagga*. This text also explains the word *satapuñña-lakkhaṇa* as follows:

Of one bearing the marks of a hundred merits, means the marks of a great man born of many hundreds of meritorious deeds — this is the meaning in the sub-commentaries. In the glossaries: ‘in countless world systems each being performs a meritorious deed a hundred times. Each and every mark of a [great] man appears as a result of performing each such deed of merit [done by beings a hundred times] a [further] hundred times.’” (*sata puññalakkhaṇa dharassa, anekasata puñyayen nirvartta mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa āti; me tīkārtha ya. Sanyayehi vanāhi ‘ananta cakravālayehi ananta sattvayanaṭa eki eki denā kaḷa siyak pinhi eki eki pinaṭa siyak siyak pin koṭa lada eki eki puruṣa lakṣaṇa dhārūha’ yi kīhu*).<sup>38</sup>

This glossary attests that the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ being the characteristics for a ‘great man’ born of many hundreds of merits is the interpretation of the ‘sub-commentaries’ (*me tīkārtha ya*). This meaning reminds us of the following: *satapuññalakkhaṇan ti anekasatapuññavasena nibbatta-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇaṃ* (VvA 284). It can therefore be inferred that the ‘sub-commentarial’ (*tīkārtha*) interpretation represents the continuity of meaning clearly indicated at VvA 284 and DAṬ III 139, both supposedly works of Dhammapāla. The meaning in the ‘glossaries’ (*sanyayehi vanāhi*), on the other hand, is very similar to that in the passage of the *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya* mentioned above. It appears to be a Sinhala rendition of the Pāli passage at issue in DA and BvA. The only disparity is that the *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya* specifically says that such meritorious deeds are related to each mark of the [great] man (*eki eki puruṣa lakṣaṇa*). In other words, at this point of development the two once opposing views in the commentarial literature are merged into the Theravāda tradition’s treatment of the numeral *sata* as ‘one hundred’ and the notion itself as related to the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha, the amalgamation of Buddhaghosa’s and Dhammapāla’s interpretations.

<sup>38</sup> *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya*, ed. Bentara Saddhatissa, [1949] (B. E. 2493). Vol. I, 509. Kalutara.



## VII. Concluding remarks

The notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* (marks of a hundred merits) in the Theravāda tradition underwent several developmental stages over the centuries. First, in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* its notion is implicitly assumed to be related to the ‘thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man’ (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) based on the main theme of the text. It has nevertheless transpired that the word *satapuññalakkhaṇa* is employed only for the second mark (*pādatalacakkalakkhaṇa*) of the list of thirty-two, which clearly negates the connection between this notion and the ‘thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man.’ This seemingly unique interpretation that the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ are on the corporal body of the Buddha but not necessarily part of the *mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* continued in DA and BvA. It may ultimately be that the connection between the notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* and *dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* and such commentarial texts as DA and BvA remains ambiguous.

Second, the Theravādins, meanwhile, may have encountered the Sarvāstivādin notion of *śatapuṇyalakṣaṇa*, which advocates that each mark of the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha is adorned with a hundred merits (*ekaikaṃ puṇyaśatajaṃ*). A similar theory (*satena satena puññakammena nibbatta-ekkalakkhaṇo*) was once refuted by the ‘teachers of the commentaries’ (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*) or ‘in the commentaries’ (*aṭṭhakathāsu*), in DA and BvA. What is denied in DA and BvA can certainly be considered to have been a theory advocated by a non-Theravāda school, which fact is attested by the evidence of the refuted view being ascribed in BvA to ‘some’ (*keci*). This term, implying a derogatory nuance, is never used for the Mahāvihāravāsins in the Pāli commentaries. This view, once rejected in the commentaries, eventually came to be accepted by the Theravādins of the medieval period. This may have happened under the Sarvāstivādin influence, as attested in the *Visuddhimārga-mahāsaṇya* of King Parakkamabāhu II (1236–70 CE). However, the clear connection of the Buddha’s corporal ‘marks of a hundred merits’ with the concept of *mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa* in the Theravāda tradition is also found in the following passage of the commentator Dhammapāla’s VvA: ‘*satapuññalakkhaṇan ti anekasatapuññavasena nibbatta-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇaṃ*’ (VvA 284). This may be an indication of some interaction with or influence from the Sarvāstivādin idea of *śatapuṇyalakṣaṇa*. What is different, nonetheless, between Dhammapāla’s interpretation — which represents only one of the two positions upheld by the Theravāda school — and that of the Sarvāstivāda is the definition of *śata*



(one hundred): the former uses it in the sense of ‘many’ or ‘countless,’ and so on (*anekasatapuññalakkhaṇa*), while the latter maintains the literal meaning of ‘one hundred.’

Third, the Theravāda tradition has two distinct interpretations of the numeral *sata* (one hundred). Dhammapāla in his VvA and ThagA gives the figurative meaning of ‘many,’ ‘abundant,’ and so on. He clearly defines his sense of *sata* in DAṬ III 139 (*‘sata’-saddo bahubhāvapariyāyo, na saṅkhyāvacanoti dasseti*). However, the other commentators, particularly Buddhaghosa and Buddhadatta in their works (DA and BvA, respectively) specify the number ‘one hundred.’ This interpretation is also found in the tenth century Sinhala glossary named *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya* and is also considered in another thirteenth century Sinhala work called the *Visuddhimārga-mahā-sanya* as the view of the *Sanne*. This implies that Dhammapāla’s interpretation for the notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* occupies a unique position in the Theravāda tradition.

The Theravādin notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* had a long history of development. The term is not necessarily used as part of the *mahā-purisalakkhaṇa*, but only as a qualifying characteristic for the second mark (*pādatalacakkalakkhaṇa*) as depicted in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*. Moreover, in the late canonical and post-canonical texts of Vv, Bv, Ap and Miln, the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ are implicitly described as those on the ‘corporal body’ of the Buddha. While this late canonical and post-canonical notion is retained in the Pāli commentaries, both DA and BvA refer to the view of another tradition which says that ‘each mark appears from every hundred deeds of merit’ (*satena satena puññakammena nibbatta-ekekalakkhaṇo*); both commentaries refute this view. This rejected notion appears to be similar to that of the Sarvāstivāda school, in other words, ‘each [of the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha] is born of a hundred merits’ (*ekaikaṃ punyaśatajaṃ*). Furthermore, two additional new features of development are discernible in the commentaries: one is the interpretation of the numeral *sata*, which is divided between Dhammapāla (VvA, ThagA, and DAṬ) and the other commentators including Buddhaghosa (DA) and Buddhadatta (BvA) — the former maintained the sense of many, numerous, countless, and so on, while the latter used the term with the more literal meaning of ‘a hundred’; and the other development is the commentator Dhammapāla’s explicit theory in his VvA that the ‘marks of a hundred merits’ (*satapuññalakkhaṇa*) are related to the thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man (*satapuññalakkhaṇan ti anekasatapuññavasena nibbatta-*

*mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇaṃ*). (VvA 284) This suggests that he may have had some interaction with other Buddhist schools like the Sarvāstivāda and also perhaps the Dharmaguptaka — this school, too, has the correlation between ‘a hundred merits’ (百福) and the ‘thirty-two physical characteristics of a great man.’ The only disparity between Dhammapāla and the Sarvāstivāda School is that the former takes the word *sata* in the figurative sense, while the latter is very specific about its meaning of ‘one hundred’. Finally, the thirteenth-century text the *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya* advocates the position that the notion of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* is clearly related to the concept of *mahāpurisa*, adopting Dhammapāla’s interpretation rather than that of Buddhaghosa. Two interpretational differences for the term *sata* are also noticeable here: the theory represented by Dhammapāla and the other by Buddhaghosa and Buddhaddatta. Both ideas are given as differences in interpretation. In short, this Sinhalese work summarizes all its antecedent and peripheral differences of *satapuññalakkhaṇa* in Theravāda Buddhism and describes some as the ‘sub-commentarial definition’ (*ṭīkāṛtha ya*) and the others as those of the ‘glossaries’ (*sanyayehi*).

## Chapter 5

**The Buddha's Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*)****I. Introduction**

The Knowledge of the Buddha (*Buddha-ñāṇa*) is one of the two distinct areas of expansion in Buddhology in Pāli commentarial literature — the other being physical strength (*kāya-bala*). The Buddha's 'omniscience' (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*) was one such amplification. Conceptual modifications became imperative as time progressed, probably to meet changing circumstances. Some of the interpretations offered in the present Pāli commentaries are a clear indication of the philosophical challenges posed to the Theravādins. The most compelling one seems to come from those belonging to the Mahāsaṅghika school. It reveals that the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools are in the opposite camp. The five different types of omniscience are suggested in the Pāli commentaries, and the Theravādins appear to uphold one specific type, rejecting the rest. This chapter attempts to examine the diverse sources based on two basic approaches: one is the dates of sources, which should not go beyond the periods of the Pāli commentators (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century), and the other is that our analysis in this chapter will be presented from a distinctly Theravāda viewpoint.

**II. The Theravāda Buddhist definition of *sabbaññū* / *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* and the usage of related terms**

In the first four *nikāyas*, the Buddha denies the kind of omniscience claimed by the Nigaṇṭhas: that their Master's all-pervading knowledge is ever present even while standing still, walking, asleep or awake.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha's claim is to a three-fold knowledge (*tevijjā*), which can also be developed by any other *arahant*. Further, the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* states that there is neither a recluse nor a brahmin who can know

<sup>1</sup> M I 482 (*Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*). It seems that there is no parallel to this text in the Chinese *āgamas*. See Anālayo, Bhikkhu [2011]: 389.

all and see all at once — this situation does not arise.<sup>2</sup> This, however, does not amount to the denial of omniscience itself. Buddhism admits that knowing all (*sabbaññū* or *sabbavidū*) and seeing all (*sabbadassāvī*) are possible for a Buddha. They are, in fact, terms used as the Buddha’s epithets. What Buddhism denies consistently is the all-pervading knowledge that can be present constantly and continually. This denial persists in the Pāli commentarial literature as well. Commenting on the phrase ‘*sakideva sabbañ ñassati sabbaṃ dakkhi*’ in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*, for instance, its commentary states that it is not possible to know all or see all concerning the past, present, and future with one advertence (of the mind), one thought, and one impulse (*yo ekāvajjanena ekacittena ekajavanena atītānāgata-paccuppannaṃ sabbañ ñassati vā dakkhati vā so n’ atthī ti attho*).<sup>3</sup> The expressions of *ekāvajjana* and *ekacitta* in the above passage are significant.<sup>4</sup> The commentaries often interpret the Buddha’s omniscience in the sense of ‘adverting’ (*āvajjana*) his mind to any object he wishes to know. The *Saddhammapakāsinī* (PṭsA) thus maintains that omniscience arises because of the dependence on adverting (the mind) to all the *dharmas* (*āvajjanappaṭibaddhattā sabbadhammānaṃ*).<sup>5</sup> This interpretation is directly linked to the expression found in the *Milinda-pañha* of the post-canonical literature that the Blessed One’s all-pervading knowledge is dependent on the advertence of his mind (*āvajjanapaṭibaddhaṃ Bhagavato sabbaññutā-ñāṇaṃ*).<sup>6</sup>

The act of *āvajjanapaṭibaddha* can be implicitly connected to an earlier expression found in the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* itself. The Buddha explains there that the attainment of the knowledge of former existences

<sup>2</sup> M II 127 (*Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*): ‘*N’atthi so samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā yo sakideva sabbañ ñassati sabbaṃ dakkhīti, n’ etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati*.’ The corresponding Chinese translation (一切智經) reads as follows: ‘本無，當不有，今現亦無，若有餘沙門、梵志一時知一切，一時見一切’ (T I 793c).

<sup>3</sup> MA III 357.

<sup>4</sup> MAṬ II 163 explains these terms as follows: ‘*Ekāvajjanenāti ekavīthijavanena. Tena ekacittaṃ tāva tiṭṭhatu, ekacittavīthiyāpi sabbaṃ jānituṃ na sakkāti dasseti. “Idaṃ nāma atītaṃ jāniissāmī”ti aniyametvā āvajjato yaṃ kiñci atītaṃ jānāti, niyamite pana niyamitamevāti āha. ... Tena cittenāti “atītaṃ sabbaṃ jāniissāmī”ti evaṃ pavattacittena. Itaresūti anāgatapaccuppannesu.*’ This passage shows that ‘one adverting’ is ‘one moment of thought process,’ and that it is impossible to know all with one moment of cognitive process. This suggests that the Theravāda school recognizes multiple moments in the process of knowing all [*dharmas*].

<sup>5</sup> PṭsA II 429. See also. NdA i 387, etc. Cf. PṭsA I 58–59.

<sup>6</sup> Miln 102.

(*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*) and the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) are due to his ability to remember or to see as much as he wishes (*yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi*).<sup>7</sup> Such evidence clearly demonstrates that the Buddha is capable of knowing everything if he so wishes. But he must first direct his mind to the object he wishes to know. In other words, his all-pervading knowledge is obtained according to his intention and is therefore temporary and provisional in time, thus never referred to in the sense of being present at all times. This is the fundamental disparity between the Buddha’s omniscience and that claimed by the Nigaṇṭhas as found in the Buddhist canonical texts.

The first four *nikāyas* are ambiguous about the knowledge concerning the future, though the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), one of the three-fold knowledges (*tevijjā*), may have some links to the ability to see into the future.<sup>8</sup> The *Pāsādika-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*<sup>9</sup> talks of the Tathāgata’s knowledge concerning the past, present, and future. It is said with regard to the past that the Tathāgata’s consciousness follows in the wake of his memory and he can recall as much as he wishes (*so yāvatakaṃ ākaṅkhati tāvatākaṃ anussarati*). But concerning the future, he possesses the knowledge born of enlightenment (*bodhiyaṃ*) to the effect: “This is the final birth, there is no more coming to be.” Further, one of the *dasabalas* of the Tathāgata deals with his knowledge of the future thus: “... *Tathāgato atītānāgatapaccuppannānaṃ kammamādānaṃ tñānaso hetuko vipākaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*.” (‘The Tathāgata knows, as they really are the effects according to their conditions and causes, of the performance of *kamma* in the past, present, and future’).<sup>10</sup> These references suggest that the Buddha’s knowledge concerning the future

<sup>7</sup> MI 482: ‘*Ahañhi, vaccha, yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi anekavihiṭṭaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi, seyyathidaṃ – ekampi jātiṃ dvepi jātiyo ... pe ... iti sākāraṃ sauddesaṃ anekavihiṭṭaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarāmi. Ahañhi, vaccha, yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbaṇṇe sugate duggate ... pe ... yathākammūpage satte pajānāmi*.’ The expression *yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi* (‘as much as I wish’) suggests that if the Buddha does not wish [to remember former births or to see with his divine eye], he does not remember the past lives nor see with his divine eye unconditionally. Accordingly, the first two knowledges of *tevijjā* may be conditions that are achieved only by wishing to attain them.

<sup>8</sup> *Dibba-cakkhu* (‘the divine eye’) is usually equated with *yathā-kammūpaga-ñāṇa* (knowledge of how beings vanish and reappear according to their kammic deeds). If this knowledge is understood in that extended sense, it implies that one may be able to see what happens to beings in the future according to their kammic deeds.

<sup>9</sup> D III 134.

<sup>10</sup> MI 71; Vibh 335–44. Cf. A III 417.

is conditional and is mainly focused on the moral make-up of an individual. It does not seem to go beyond that. Commenting on this passage, Jayatilleke also states: ‘This appears to be an admission that the Buddha did not claim to have (at least an unlimited) precognitive knowledge of the future.’<sup>11</sup> This can be understood, if considered in relation to determinism (*niyatīvāda*), which the Buddha vehemently opposed. If knowledge of one’s future state is accepted as a reality, it will inevitably lead to the view that one’s future is determined. Freewill is therefore denied. Hence, moral consideration may have been one of the main reasons for the ambiguous treatment of the Buddha’s omniscience concerning the future in the early canonical texts.

The late canonical texts, however, show a different picture altogether. The Buddha is now unequivocally credited with knowledge concerning the future. For example, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* says of him as follows: ‘*sabbaṃ anāgataṃ jānāti*’ (He knows everything concerning the future).<sup>12</sup> Though the implication of the expression *anāgataṃ* is not clear in this instance, the scope of the Buddha’s knowledge certainly became wider and more articulate. The Pāli commentaries emphasize this aspect further. Thus, we find expressions like ‘*atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ jānāti*’ ([‘the omniscient one’] is he who knows everything concerning the past, future and present’).<sup>13</sup> Following this definition, the *Atthasālinī* (DhsA) equates *sabbaññutañāṇa* with *pubbenivāsañāṇa* and *anāgataṃsaññāṇa*.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the Buddha’s all-pervading knowledge is described in the canonical texts by the following terms: 1. *sabbadassāvī* (one who sees all), 2. *sabbavidū* (knower of all), 3. *sabbābhibhū* (conquering all), and 4. *samanta-cakkhu* (all-seeing). *Sabbadassāvī* seems to be used together with *sabbaññū* as in *sabbaññū sabbadassāvī* ... (M I 93, 482, 519; II 31, 126, 218; A I 220; etc.). One reference to this is found at MA II 64 as follows: ‘*Sabbaññū sabbadassāvīti so amhākaṃ satthā atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ jānāti passatīti dasseti*.’ The Buddha’s omniscience is described here in terms of his knowledge concerning the past, present, and future. This definition appears from about the time of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, a text considered to immediately precede the *Abhidhamma* literature.<sup>15</sup> The difference between *sabbābhibhū* and *sabbavidū* seems discernible in the following definitions:

<sup>11</sup> Jayatilleke, K. N. [1980]: 469.

<sup>12</sup> Pts I 131.

<sup>13</sup> MA II 63–64. Cf. DhsA 354.

<sup>14</sup> DhsA 294–295. Cf. Ibid 354.

<sup>15</sup> See 水野弘元 (Mizuno, Kōgen) [1997]: 3–83 (‘Conclusion’ at 82).

‘*Sabbābhibhū* is one who stands having overcome all *dhammas* of the three planes of existence; *sabbavidū* is one who has understood all *dhammas* of the four planes of existence’ (‘*Sabbābhibhūti sabbam tebhūmakadhammam abhibhavitvā ñhito. Sabbavidūti sabbam catubhūmakadhammam avediṃ aññāsim*’).<sup>16</sup> *Samanta-cakkhu*, on the other hand, is simply defined as *sabbaññūtañña* (*samantacakkhu vuccati sabbaññūtaññaṃ*) (MNd II 360, 454; etc.) or as the Buddha’s fourteen kinds of knowledge, of which six are the special province of the Buddha not shared by the disciples. They are: 1. *indriyaparopariyatta-ñña*, 2. *sattānaṃ āsayānusaya-ññaṃ*, 3. *yamaka-pāṭihīra-ñña*, 4. *mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñña*, 5. *sabbaññūtañña*, and 6. *anāvaraṇañña*.<sup>17</sup>

### III. The interpretation of the term *sabba* in *sabbaññū*, *sabbadassāvī*, *sabbābhibhū*, and *sabbavidū*

When the Buddhists use terms like *sabbaññū*, *sabbavidū*, *sabbadassāvī*, and *sabbābhibhū* in the canonical texts, the ‘all or everything’ (*sabba*) there denotes what they term as *dvādasāyatana* (twelve bases). For example, the *Sabba-sutta*<sup>18</sup> describes *sabba* to mean the five faculties of the senses and their corresponding objects, plus the sense faculty of the mind and its corresponding mental phenomena. Here, *sabba* means the psychological make-up of a man. But its connotations in late canonical texts like the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* become far removed from the early canonical definitions. The *sabbadhammā* in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* are elucidated as ‘*pañcakkhandhā*, *dvādasāyatanāni* and *aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo*; *kusala dhammā*, *akusala dhammā* and *abyākata dhammā*; *kāmāvacarā dhammā*, *rūpāvacarā*

<sup>16</sup> MA II 189.

<sup>17</sup> Pts I 133: ‘*Samantacakkhūti kenaṭṭhena samantacakkhu? Cuddasa buddhaññāni. Dukkhe ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, dukkhasamudaye ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, dukkhanirodhe ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, atthapaṭisambhīde ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, dhammapaṭisambhīde ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, niruttapaṭisambhīde ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, paṭibhānapaṭisambhīde ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, indriyaparopariyatte ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, sattānaṃ āsayānusaye ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, yamaka-pāṭihīre ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, mahākaruṇāsamāpattiyā ññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, sabbaññūtaññaṃ buddhaññaṃ, anāvaraṇaññaṃ buddhaññaṃ — imāni cuddasa buddhaññāni. Imesaṃ cuddasannaṃ buddhaññānaṃ aṭṭha ññāni sāvakaśādharaṇāni; cha ññāni asādharaṇāni sāvakehi.*’

<sup>18</sup> S IV 15.

*dhammā*, *arūpāvacarā dhammā* and *apariyāpannā dhammā*.<sup>19</sup> They are minutely dealt with in the explanations of *sabbāññuta-ñāṇa* of the Buddha at Pts I 131–133. One striking feature of these explanations is that the Buddha is said to know everything (*sabba*) that has been seen, heard, sensed, thought, attained, sought, and searched by the minds of those who inhabit the entire world of gods and men.<sup>20</sup> This description of the Buddha’s *sabbāññuta-ñāṇa* is significant in that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* attempted to make the Buddha’s omniscience all inclusive within the sensory world. An affinity to such an idea is expressed by the term *apariyāpannā dhammā* elsewhere in the text, as shown above, whereby a further conceptual expansion regarding the Buddha’s omniscience could be made possible by later authorities. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* then summarizes all these connotations of the word *sabba* as the ‘omniscience to know everything conditioned and unconditioned without exception’ (*sabbaṃ saṅkhatāsaṅkhatam anavasesam jānātī ti sabbāññuta-ñāṇam*).<sup>21</sup> This is where changes in connotation of the Buddha’s omniscience were effected. Earlier, it meant the psychological make-up of an individual, but now it includes not only that, but also the material world which comes under the category of *dhammā* in Theravāda Buddhism.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Pts I 101.

<sup>20</sup> Pts I 133: ‘Yāvatā sadevakassa lokassa samārakassa sabrahmakassa sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiṇi pajāya sadevamanussāya dīṭṭhaṃ suttaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesiṭtaṃ anuvicariṭtaṃ manasā sabbaṃ jānāti.’

<sup>21</sup> Pts I 131.

<sup>22</sup> Incidentally, the *dhammas* are defined and classified into several categories in the Pāli commentaries. For instance, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* [DA I 99] gives four categories: *guṇa* (virtue), *desanā* (preaching) as in ‘*dhammaṃ ... desissāmi ādikalyāṇaṃ*, etc.’, *pariyatti* (scripture) as in ‘*dhammaṃ pariyāpuṇāti suttaṃ geyyaṃ*, etc.’ and *nissatta* (non-being) as in ‘*dhammā honti khandhā honti*’ and so on. On the other hand, the *Atthasālinī* [DhsA 38] says that the *dhammas* are of four categories; namely, *pariyatti*, *hetu* (cause) as in ‘*hetumhi ñāṇaṃ dhammapaṭisambhidā ti*’ and so on, *guṇa*, *nissattaniṭṭhatā* (non-being and non-life). DhsA 95, where eight kinds of non-restraint (*asaṃvara*) are said to be reducible to five in their content (*atthato*), gives another list of *dhammas*: *dussīlya* (immorality), *muṭṭhasacca* (forgetfulness), *aññāṇa* (absence of knowledge), *akkhanti* (absence of patience) and *kosajja* (laziness). The *Papañcasūdanī* [MA I 17] is another commentary that gives various kinds of *dhammas*. They include *pariyatti*, *sacca*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *pakati*, *sabhāva*, *suññatā*, *puñña*, *āpatti*, and *ñeyya*. All these categories of *dhammā* are elaborated upon with the support of passages found in the canonical texts. The above references therefore suggest that the term *dhammā* in *sabbadhammā* in relation to the Buddha’s omniscience is of vast connotation including both matter and mind.



Similarly, the Pāli commentaries provide a few definitions for the word *sabba*. The *Papañcasūdanī* gives, for instance, the meaning of *anavasesa* (without remainder).<sup>23</sup> In this instance, two quotations (probably from the Canon) are made. One is in the sense that the five *khandhas* (*rūpa*, *vedanā*, etc.) are impermanent (*anicca*) (*sabbaṃ rūpaṃ aniccaṃ, sabbā vedanā aniccā*), and the other is *sabbasakkāyapariyāpannesu dhammesu*. The latter quotation reminds us of the sense in which the term is employed in the *Sabba-sutta*, as seen before. Elucidating the meanings of *sabbābhihū*, the *Sāratthappakāsinī* states: ‘The conqueror of all means the one who stays having conquered all of [5] aggregates, [12] sense organs, [18] elements, [3 planes of] existence, [4] modes of generation, [5] courses of existence, and so on’ (*Sabbābhihū ti sabbāni khandh’ āyatana-dhātu-bhava-yoni-gatī-ādīni abhihavitvā tītho*).<sup>24</sup> These interpretations of *sabba* are apparently derived from the descriptions of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. Dhammapāla, on the other hand, appears to be more carried away, but still within the definitions seen in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* when he comments on *sabbaññū* as follows: ‘The omniscient one is he who knows everything in the three periods of time by the attainment of the knowledge of all *dhammas* in every respect without others’ advice or instruction and [by the attainment of] the unobstructed knowledge obtained due to his wishes.’<sup>25</sup>

Different definitions of *sabba* in different contexts seen in the commentaries would have eventually led to a categorization of the word *sabba* into four types: *sabba-sabba*, *padesa-sabba*, *āyatana-sabba* and *sakkāya-sabba*.<sup>26</sup> *Sabba-sabba* is said to be understood in the context of ‘*Na tassa aditṭhaṃ idh’ atthi kiñci: Atho aviññātaṃ ajānitabbam; Sabbaṃ abhiññāsi yad’ atthi ñeyyam. Tathāgato tena samanta-cakkhū’ ti*,<sup>27</sup> and so on; *āyatana-sabba* in ‘*Sabbaṃ*

<sup>23</sup> MA I 17.

<sup>24</sup> SA I 193. Cf. SA II 243, where *sabba* includes *khandha*, *āyatana*, *dhātu*, three *bhava*. MA II 189 [= VA V 964] says that *sabba* in *sabbābhihū* means *dhammas* belonging to the three planes of existence. *Sabba* in *sabbavidū* means *dhammas* belonging to the four planes of existence. MA II 63–64 states that *sabbaññū* and *sabbadassāvī* mean that our Teacher knows and sees everything concerning the past, future and present (*sabbaññū sabbadassāvī ti so amhākaṃ satthā atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ sabbaṃ jānāti passatī ti dassentī*).

<sup>25</sup> ThagA III 17: ‘*Sabbaññū ti paropadesena vinā sabba-ppakāreṇa-sabba-dhammāva-bodhana-samatthassa ākañkhāyatta-ṭṭibaddha-vuttino anāvaraṇa-ñāṇassa adhi-gamena atītādibhedam sabbaṃ jānātī ti*.’

<sup>26</sup> ItA I 52; CpA I 18; SA II 357; etc. Cf. MA I 38.

<sup>27</sup> See Nd I 360 and so on. Dhammapāla, on the other hand, quotes a different passage to explain *sabba-sabba* as follows: ‘*Sabbe dhamma sabbākārena Buddhassa bhagavato*

vo bhikkhave desissāmi. Taṃ suṇāthā’ ti,’<sup>28</sup> and so on; *Sakkāya-sabba* in ‘*Sabba-dhamma-mūla-pariyāyaṃvo bhikkhave desissāmi’ ti,*’ and so on; and *Padesa-sabba* in ‘*Sabba-dhammesu vā, gahapati, paṭhama samannāhāro uppajjati cittaṃ, mano, mānasaṃ, tajiā mano-viññāṇa-dhātū’ ti,*’ and so on.<sup>29</sup> The commentary further states that the six sense objects (*chaḷārammaṇa*) are *padesa-sabba*; things belonging to the three planes of existence (*tebhūmakadhammā*) are *sakkāya-sabba*; things belonging to the four planes of existence (*catu-bhūmakadhammā*) are *āyatana-sabba*;<sup>30</sup> and whatever is to be understood (*yaṃ kiñci ñeyyaṃ*) is *sabba-sabba*. *Padesa-sabba* does not reach *sakkāya-sabba* (*padesa-sabbaṃ sakkāya-sabbaṃ na pāpuṇāti*), nor does *sakkāya-sabba* reach *āyatana-sabba*, nor *āyatana-sabba* reach *sabba-sabba*, because there is no meaning in saying: ‘This is not a sense object of omniscience’ (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇassa ayaṃ nāma dhammo ārammaṇaṃ na hotī’ ti n’ atthitayā*).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* (*Paramattha-dīpanī*: ItA) describes *sabba-sabba* as *nippadesa-visaya* (unlimited range), while the rest are *sappadesa-visaya* (limited range).<sup>32</sup> This shows that the Buddha’s knowledge came to be regarded as unlimited or all-embracing. The category named *sabba-sabba* is certainly a later development far removed from the early canonical texts and seems to imply a sum total of the knowledge of the Buddha (*Buddha-ñāṇa*). A passage from the *Niddesa*, which is to become the standard definition of the nature of the Buddha’s *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* in the Pāli commentarial literature, is cited in this instance as follows: ‘*sabbe dhammā sabbākāreṇa Buddhassa bhagavato ñāṇamukhe āpāthaṃ āgacchanti*’ (‘All things in all manners come to the range of the Buddha’s knowledge’).<sup>33</sup> Thus, the commentaries maintain that the Buddha knows everything that comes within his purview of understanding and comprehension.

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*ñāṇamukhe āpātha āgacchanti’ ti ādīsu sabba-sabbasmiṃ āgato*” [Cf. Nd II 451]. See ItA I 52; CpA 18; etc.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. S IV 15.

<sup>29</sup> SA II 357.

<sup>30</sup> This definition seems to relate to the concept of *sabbābhibhū* and *sabbavidū*. They are defined as follows: ‘*Sabbābhibhūti sabbāni khandhāyatanadhātubhavayonigatiādīni abhibhavitvā ṭhito*’ (SA I 193); or, ‘*Sabbābhibhūti sabbaṃ tebhūmakadhammaṃ abhibhavitvā ṭhito. Sabbavidūti sabbaṃ catubhūmakadhammaṃ avedim aññāsim*’ (MA II 189).

<sup>31</sup> SA II 357.

<sup>32</sup> ItA I 52.

<sup>33</sup> Nd II 451.

The scope of the Buddha’s knowledge with a clear degree of expansion can also be seen in the interpretation of the ‘perfect enlightenment’ of the Buddha (*sammāsambodhi*). According to the Theravāda tradition, the Buddha’s knowledge is synonymous with the total of what the Buddha attained or realized at the time of his enlightenment. In other words, the attainment or realisation of that knowledge had made Siddhattha a Buddha. Early canonical texts simply describe the Buddha’s attainment as ‘what has to be known is known, what has to be developed is developed and what has to be abandoned is abandoned by me. Therefore, O brāhmaṇa, I am a Buddha.’ (*abhiññeyyaṃ abinñātam; bhāvetabbañ ca bhāvitam; pahātabbaṃ pahīnaṃ me; tasmā Buddho’smi brāhmaṇa*).<sup>34</sup> This mode of describing the Buddha’s spiritual attainments was to change subsequently. For example, the *Paṭisambhidā-magga*,<sup>35</sup> later quoted in the *Visuddhimagga*,<sup>36</sup> says:

The Buddha discovered, of the things to be directly known, they must be directly known, of the things to be fully understood that they must be fully understood, of the things to be abandoned that they must be abandoned, of the things to be realised that they must be realised, and of the things to be developed that they must be developed.<sup>37</sup>

Two additional definitions not used in the early canonical texts are discernible here. They are *pariññeyye dhamme pariññeyyato* and *sacchikātabbe dhamme sacchikātabbato*.

The *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* (*Paramatthadīpanī*: ItA), on the other hand, following the explanations found in the *Mahā-niddesa*,<sup>38</sup> describes the scope of the Buddha’s knowledge thus: ‘Whatever is to be known, to that extent knowledge goes. Whatever knowledge is, to that extent [things] are known; the limit of what is to be known is the knowledge, and the limit of knowledge is that which is to be known.’ (*Yāvatākaṃ ñeyyaṃ tāvatākaṃ ñāṇam, yāvatākaṃ ñāṇam tāvatākaṃ ñeyyaṃ; ñeyya-pariyantaṃ ñāṇam,*

<sup>34</sup> Sn 558; Thag 828. Cf. Vis 201; PtsA I 215; etc.

<sup>35</sup> Pts I 132. It counts these four things as a part of the Buddha’s omniscience (*sabbāññuta-ñāṇa*).

<sup>36</sup> Vism 201: ‘*abhiññeyye dhamme abhiññeyyato buddho, pariññeyye dhamme pariññeyyato, pahātabbe dhamme pahātabbato, sacchikātabbe dhamme sacchikātabbato, bhāvetabbe dhamme bhāvetabbato.*’

<sup>37</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu 1991: 196.

<sup>38</sup> Nd I 178–179.

*ñāṇapariyantam ñeyyam*).<sup>39</sup> A question may be raised here: Does the expression ‘*ñeyya-pariyantam ñāṇam ...*’ (the limit or end of what is to be known is the [Buddha’s] knowledge ...) suggest that the Buddha’s knowledge does not transcend time and space? In other words, is the Buddha’s knowledge limited? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, how are we to reconcile it with such expressions as ‘the Buddha’s knowledge is limitless’ (*Buddhañāṇam anantam*)?<sup>40</sup> There seem to be two levels of expression involved here. The Buddha knows everything that he can know, implying that his knowledge is conditional. In this sense it is limited; because his omniscience arises from adverting his mind to any object he wishes to know. He is therefore not omniscient all the time. But his knowledge is limitless within the range of his ability to know: he knows everything within that range. Probably due to these two levels of understanding, the commentaries have different expressions. Later Pāli authorities, beginning from the late canonical texts through the commentaries, expanded the scope of the Buddha’s knowledge as part of the Buddhological development. But it must be admitted that the *Paṭisambidāmagga* was, perhaps, the first to formulate the most comprehensive analysis of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* of the Buddha in the whole of Pāli literature. The fact that the Pāli commentarial texts closely follow the *Paṭisambidāmagga* shows that its conceptual connotations had been fully developed by the time of the *Paṭisambidāmagga*. Thus, the commentarial texts had only a few points to add. The Buddha’s omniscience is the knowledge of everything conditioned and unconditioned without remainder (*sabbaṃ saṅkhatam asaṅkhatañ anavasesaṃ jānātī ti sabbaññutañāṇam*).<sup>41</sup> This became the basis of the Buddha’s omniscience from the late canonical texts and continued in the commentaries. It must, however, be noted that the clear definition of the Buddha’s omniscience as the outcome of adverting his mind to any object he wishes to know (*āvajjanapaṭibaddha*) appears in the Pāli tradition only from the time of the *Milindapañha* [Miln 102, 106, etc.] Although the earlier expression of *yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi*<sup>42</sup> is seen in the Canon, its concept in a more systematized and concrete way is post-canonical. Thus, the commentaries inherited the concept of the Buddha’s omniscience in these two areas.

<sup>39</sup> ItA I 142.

<sup>40</sup> DhsA 160.

<sup>41</sup> Pṭs I 131; ThagA II 11. Cf. PṭsA I 58; etc.

<sup>42</sup> M I 482; etc.

On the question of the Buddha’s ability to be omniscient, King Milinda raises the objection that the Buddha could not have been omniscient if his knowledge was the result of adverting his mind to an object he wished to know. But the *thera* Nagasena reiterates that even if Buddhas are not adverting their minds to any objects they wish to know, it cannot be said that they are not omniscient (*āvajjanavekalamattakena na ettāvata buddhā asabbaññuno nāma hontī ti*).<sup>43</sup> Nagasena’s arguments are important: first, he implies here that Buddhas are omniscient because they are capable of becoming omniscient at any time they wish. Nagasena, like the canonical reference (*yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi*), thus defines the Buddha’s omniscience by his ability and potentiality to become omniscient. This contention is also seen in Vasubandhu’s response to a claim made by the Vātsīputrīya school recorded in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣa* that the Buddha’s omniscience does not arise because his knowledge concerning everything is before him, but because he has the ability/potential [to be called the omniscient one].<sup>44</sup> Second, his contention has a religious implication: Buddhas are worthy of our veneration and homage, because they are our guides and teachers.

#### IV. The mode of knowing everything

How or by what medium does the Buddha come to know any object he wishes to know by adverting or directing his mind to it? Although this aspect of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* is not directly addressed in the Pāli commentaries, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* (DA) may provide a clue. The text, while commenting on the phrase ‘... *tesaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ imaṃ saṅkhiya-dhammaṃ viditvā*,’ says that ‘having known’ (*viditvā*) means ‘having known by the omniscience’ (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇena jānitvā*) and that the Buddha, in some instances (*katthaci*), comes to know by the flesh-eye (*maṃsa-cakkhunā*), or by the

<sup>43</sup> Miln 106.

<sup>44</sup> The digital version: Vasubandhu: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* based on the editions of: (1) P. Pradhan, ed., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. (revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Center, 1975: [467]16–467[17] *naiva ca vayaṃ sarvatra jñāna-saṃmukhībhāvād buddhaṃ sarvajñam ācakṣmahe* | [467]17] *kiṃ tarhi* | *sāmarthyāt*. The corresponding Chinese version reads: 我等不言佛於一切能頓遍知故名一切智者。但約相續有堪能故。(T29.155a). *Abhidharmakośa*, Fan Jingjing (范晶晶) and Zhang Xueshan (張雪杉) eds. [2005] has the following: ‘*na va ca vayaṃ sarvatra jñānasammukhībhāvād buddhaṃ sarvajñam ācakṣmahe*’ | 【真】我等不說於一切境由智一時現前佛世尊是一切智。【玄】我等不言佛於一切能頓遍知故名一切智者。 *kiṃ tarhi?* *Sāmarthyāt* | 【真】若不爾此云何。是相續 【玄】但約相續有堪能故。

divine eye (*dibbena cakkhunā*); in other cases by the natural ear (*pakatisotena*), or by the divine ear (*dibba-sotena*).<sup>45</sup> It is therefore clear that the agent or medium by which the Buddha comes to know what he wishes to know differs according to the object he directs his mind towards. This also suggests that the process of knowing an object presupposes a time sequence, the process of cognition, and is not instantaneous.

Later philosophical debates on the question of ‘knowledge’ that can be related to the Buddha’s omniscience in the Theravāda tradition can perhaps be seen in the *Kathāvatthu*. This passage discusses question of whether the knowledge knows the present or not:

Is there a knowledge of the present? Yes. By that knowledge, is there a knowledge that knows that knowledge? No, it should not be said so. ... By that knowledge, does a knowledge know that it is a knowledge? No, it should not be said so. Does knowledge take it as an object of that knowledge? No, it should not be said so ...<sup>46</sup>

According to the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* (KvA), this view is attributed to the Andhakas, the term denoting various schools such as the Pubbaseliyas, Aparaseliyas, Rājagirikas, and Siddhatthikas,<sup>47</sup> which are all offshoots of the Mahāsaṅghika school in southern India.<sup>48</sup> KvA further states that if there is knowledge of the present, it must be there at the present instant itself, and this being so, the knowledge of the present will have to know by the same knowledge as there cannot be two knowledges present together.<sup>49</sup> This clearly shows that in the commentarial period the Theravādins maintain that knowledge cannot know itself simultaneously or within a single moment. This is also suggested in the commentary to the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> DAI 44–45.

<sup>46</sup> Kv 314: ‘*Paccupanne ñāṇaṃ atthīti? Āmantā. Tena ñāṇena taṃ ñāṇaṃ jānāti? Na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ... tena ñāṇena taṃ ñāṇaṃ jānāti? Āmantā. Tena ñāṇena taṃ ñāṇaṃ “ñāṇa”nti jānāti? Na hevaṃ vattabbe...pe... tena ñāṇena taṃ ñāṇaṃ “ñāṇa”nti jānāti? Āmantā. Taṃ ñāṇaṃ tassa ñāṇassa ārammaṇanti? Na hevaṃ vattabbe ... pe ...*’

<sup>47</sup> See Aung, She Zan and Rhys Davids [1979]: xx.

<sup>48</sup> See Dutt, Nalinaksha [2007]: 65.

<sup>49</sup> KvA 86: ‘... *Atha naṃ “yadi avisesena paccuppane ñāṇaṃ atthi, khaṇapaccuppannapi tena bhavitabbaṃ. Evaṃ sante dvinnaṃ ñāṇānaṃ ekato abhāvā teneva ñāṇena taṃ jānitabbaṃ hoti”ti ...*’

<sup>50</sup> Interpreting the passage in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta* that knowing or seeing all concerning the past, present, or future is not possible with one adverting (of the

The Sarvāstivāda School seems to have a similar view on the subject. For instance, Vasumitra’s *Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools* (*Yibu zonglun lun* 異部宗輪論) states that schools like the Mahāsaṅghika and others claim that it is possible to know all *dharma*s with a single ‘moment’ of thought (一剎那心).<sup>51</sup> The *Jñānaprasthāna-śāstra* (阿毘達磨發智論) of the Sarvāstivāda school argues that there is no single knowledge that knows all *dharma*s because such knowledge does not know its own nature (自性) and the *dharma*s ‘that are conjoined or co-existent with it’ (此相應俱有諸法).<sup>52</sup> While these views may not be philosophically identical, they essentially show common ground on which both schools, Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda, attempted to analyse the process of cognition in relation to the Buddha’s knowledge.

A new departure in the concept of *sabbaññū* in the Pāli commentarial literature is an introduction of various types of *sabbaññū* classified based on the modes of knowing everything. According to the *Saddhammapakāsinī*

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mind), one thought, or one impulse (*yo ekāvajjanena ekacittena ekajavanena atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ sabbañ ñassati vā dakkhati vā so n’ athī ti atho*) [MA III 357], the sub-commentary, ascribed generally to Dhammapāla, also shows the impossibility to know everything with a single thought process: ‘*ekāvajjanenāti ekavīthijavanena. Tena ekacittaṃ tāva tiṭṭhatu, ekacittavīthiyāpi sabbaṃ jānitum na sakkāti dasseti*’ [MAT (Be) II 163]. This seems to be an admission by the Theravādins that knowing an object takes at least more than one [moment of] advertence, one thought moment, or one impulsion.

<sup>51</sup> The Mahāsaṅghika (大眾部), Ekavyavahārika (一說部), Lokottaravāda (說出世部), and Kaukkuṭika (雞胤部) schools are said to have maintained the view that [the Blessed One] understands all things (*dharma*) with a ‘moment’s mind’ and that he knows all things with the wisdom befitting a ‘moment’s mind.’ (《異部宗輪論》卷1:「一剎那心了一切法。一剎那心相應般若知一切法。」(CBETA, T49, no. 2031, p. 15, c4–5) (See Masuda, Jiryo [1925]: 20–21.)

<sup>52</sup> See T 26 919b:「頗有一智知一切法耶。答無。若此智生一切法非我。此智何所不知。答不知自性。及此相應俱有諸法。頗有一識了一切法耶。答無。若此識生一切法非我。此識何所不了。答不了自性。及此相應俱有諸法。頗有二心展轉相因耶。答無。所以者何。無一補特伽羅。非前非後。...」Citing this passage from the *Jñānaprasthāna-śāstra* (阿毘達磨發智論 T No. 1544), Bhikkhu Dhammajoti discusses the position of the Sarvāstivādins on the issue of whether there is a single knowledge that knows all *dharma*s. They (Sarvāstivādins) maintain, unlike the Mahāsaṅghikas and others, that there is no single knowledge that knows all *dharma*s. Referring to the discussion in the *Jñānaprasthāna-śāstra*, he further states that the questions posed were those of the Vibhajyavādins and the answers were by the Yuktavādins (i.e., Sarvāstivādins). See Dhammajoti, K. L. Bhikkhu [2015]: 286–287. See also Kawasaki, Shinjō (川崎信定) [1992]: 93–94.



(PṭsA)<sup>53</sup> and the *Saddhammapajjotikā* (NdA),<sup>54</sup> five types of *sabbaññū* are enumerated as follows:

1. *kamasabbaññū* (he who knows everything gradually),
2. *sakimsabbaññū* (he who knows everything at once),
3. *satatasabbaññū* (he who knows everything continuously),
4. *sattisabbaññū* (he who knows everything energetically, ably or according to ability),
5. *ñātasabbaññū* (he who knows everything that has been realized or known).

The passages in which the above classification is found are almost identical in both sources. PṭsA is ascribed to the authorship of Mahānāma and NdA to that of Upasena.<sup>55</sup> It is certain that both commentators composed their works after Buddhaghosa. Although different views have been expressed on the dates of PṭsA and NdA,<sup>56</sup> it is likely that PṭsA (514 AC) would have copied the passage from NdA (435–436 CE), according to Mori’s study.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the question remains as to why Dhammapāla, who is said to have lived much later than any other commentators mentioned above,<sup>58</sup> is silent on the classification of *sabbaññū*. The passage [PṭsA I 58 = NdA II 386–387]<sup>59</sup> concerned, though long, is quoted below:

<sup>53</sup> PṭsA I 58.

<sup>54</sup> NdA I 386.

<sup>55</sup> Despite the general assumption that the present Pāli commentaries would have been based upon their respective *Sīhaḷa*-commentaries, Hayashi argues that the *Saddhammapakāsinī* (PṭsA) may not have had the corresponding *Sīhaḷa-Paṭisambhidā-aṭṭhakatha* (S-Paṭis-a) originally, and it is more easily understandable if we take the position that Mahānāma utilized the Pāli commentaries in popular circulation at that time. His arguments are important in that the *Saddhammapakāsinī* (PṭsA) can be considered a work of Mahānāma himself. See Hayashi, Takatsugu [2013]: 823 (236)–816 (243), specially see, 817 (242).

<sup>56</sup> Mori states that NdA was composed in 436, and PṭsA in 514. However, Von Hinüber is of the view that PṭsA was composed in 556/499 and NdA in 877/817. See Mori, Sodō [1984]: 549–558; Von Hinüber, Oskar [1997]: 142–144.

<sup>57</sup> Mori, Sodō [1984]: 549–558.

<sup>58</sup> Both texts refer to Vism several times, which shows that they were composed after Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*. See Mori, Sodō [1984]: 537–538 for a summary of studies on the date of the commentator Dhammapāla.

<sup>59</sup> There is a slight disparity between the two sources, but content wise they are almost the same.



Omniscient one is he who has known everything in five modes of what can be known. The state of being omniscient is omniscience, [and] that knowledge fit to be the knowledge of omniscience is called omniscience (that knowledge, when said ‘omniscience,’ is called omniscience). There are five modes of what can be known in respect of all the *dharmas*, conditioned and unconditioned, as follows: ‘essential condition (synergy) or conditioned things,’ ‘change or alteration,’ ‘characteristic,’ ‘*nibbāna*,’ and ‘manifestation or indication.’ Omniscient ones could be of five kinds, [namely] ‘he who knows everything gradually,’ ‘he who knows everything at once,’ ‘he who knows everything continuously,’ ‘he who knows everything ably or according to ability,’ and ‘he who knows everything that has been realized or known.’ There is no ‘gradual omniscience’ because it is not possible to have time to know everything gradually. There is no ‘sudden omniscience’ because there is no grasping of sense objects all at once. There is no ‘constant or continuous omniscience’ because eye consciousness and such [forms of consciousness] are possible according as [appropriate] objects; because it would negate [the occurrence of] ‘*bhavaṅga*’ (the life continuum thought); and because of no logical justification. As for the remaining, there could be ‘able omniscience’ because of the ability to know everything, or ‘realized or known omniscience’ because all the *dharmas* are known. [But] it is not appropriate [to say] that there is no knowing everything for an omniscient one who is capable [of becoming so].

‘There is nothing that is not seen by him,  
Nothing that is not realized, and nothing to be known,  
Everything that can be known, [he] realized,  
Therefore is Tathāgata with all-seeing eye.’<sup>60</sup>

As noted above, it is only the ‘realized or known omniscience’ that is appropriate. Being thus, omniscience is indeed [understood] in respect of [its] ‘function’, ‘non-confusion’, ‘accomplishment of reason or cause,’ and ‘dependence on adverting.’<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> This *gāthā* occurs at Pts I 133, etc.

<sup>61</sup> ‘*Sabaññutañāṇaṃ ... ’ti ettha: pañcañeyyapathappabhedaṃ sabbaṃ aññāsī ’ti sabbaññū. Sabbaññussa bhāvo sabbaññutā, sā eva ñāṇaṃ sabbaññutañāṇaṃ ’ti vattabbe sabbaññutañāṇaṃ ’ti vuttaṃ. Saṅkhatāsāṅkhatādibhedā sabbadhammā hi saṅkhāro, vikāro, lakkhaṇaṃ, nibbānaṃ, paññattī ’ti pañca ñeyyapathā honti. Sabbaññū ’ti ca kamasabbaññū, sakiṃsabbaññū, satatasabbaññū, sattisabbaññū, ñātasabbaññū ’ti pañcavidhā sabbaññuno siyumu. Kamena sabbajānanakālasambhavato kamasabbaññutā na hoti, sakiṃ sabbārammaṇagahaṇābhavato sakiṃ-*

Let us examine the above passage more closely.

(A) *Sabbaññū* is a person who knows everything concerning all the *dhammas*, conditioned and unconditioned, which are examined in five ways, known as *pañcañeyyapatha*:<sup>62</sup>

1. *saṅkhāra* (the conditioned),
2. *vikāra* (change or modification),
3. *lakkhaṇa* (characteristics),
4. *nibbāna* (the unconditioned),<sup>63</sup>
5. *paññatti* (manifestation or indication).

*Pañcañeyyapatha* is explained in the *Saddhammappakāsīnī* as ‘knowing everything through wisdom’ (*taṃ sabbaṃ pañca-ñeyyapaṭhasambhūtaṃ paññāya jānātī’ ti attho*).<sup>64</sup> This mode of investigation as a set does not seem to occur anywhere else in the commentaries apart from the above sources.

(B) The five types of *sabbaññū* mentioned are not found in any other commentaries. It must also be noted here that their introduction is made by the use of an optative form of the verbal root ‘*as*’ (to be) as follows: ‘*pañcavidhā sabbaññuno siyum*’ (There could be or might be five kinds of omniscient ones). This suggests that the five types of *sabbaññū* or *sabbaññutā* were

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*sabbaññutā na hoti, cakkhuvīññāṇādīnaṃ yathārammaṇacittasambhavato bhavaṅga-cittavirodhato yutti-abhāvato ca satatasabbaññutā na hoti; aparisesato sabbajānana-samatthattā sattisabbaññutā vā siyā, viditasabbadhammattā ñāta-sabbaññutā vā; sattisabbaññuno sabbajānanattaṃ n’atthī’ ti tam’ pi na yujjati.*

*“Na tassa aditṭhaṃ idha’ tthi kiñci,  
Atha aviññātaṃ ajānitabbaṃ,  
Sabbaṃ abhiññāsi yad atthi ñeyyaṃ,  
Tathāgato tena samantacakkhū”*

*ti vuttattā ñātasabbaññuttam eva yujjati. Evaṃ hi sati kiccato, asammohato, kāraṇasiddhito, āvajjanaapaṭibaddhato, sabbaññuttaṃ eva hotī’ ti.*

<sup>62</sup> This classification is also found at NdA III 56. Cf. PtsA III 646 where only the term occurs. Strangely, H. Nāṇāvāsa calls this *pañcavidhajñeyyamaṇḍala*, using a Sanskrit term while correctly giving the source reference. Both PTS and SHB editions of the *Saddhammappakāsīnī* give the term as *pañcañeyyapatha*. See Nāṇāvāsa, H. [1964]: 259.

<sup>63</sup> It appears from the context that the word *nibbāna* is used here not in the sense of ‘liberation’ as usually understood, but refers to the one and only unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) *dhamma* according to the Theravāda tradition.

<sup>64</sup> PtsA III 646.

not commonly accepted or established as a legitimate classification by the Theravādins at that time. Rather, the classification was made according to the imaginable ways and means of attaining omniscience.

(C) Categories like *kamasabbaññū* and *sakiṃsabbaññū* are interesting. The passage denies both and explains why. Omniscience cannot be possibly attained gradually, as it is impossible to have time to know everything gradually (*kamena sabbajānanakālasambhavato kamasabbaññūtā na hoti*), while knowing everything suddenly is also not possible, as there is no grasping of sense objects all at once (*sakiṃ sabbārammaṇagahaṇābhavato sakiṃsabbaññūtā na hoti*). These two points are also discussed in detail in the *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* (ItA),<sup>65</sup> where it is said that the understanding of all the *dharmas* is not sudden (*na sakiṃ yeva sabba-dhammāvabodhato*).<sup>66</sup> The text further discusses in detail the question of whether the Buddha’s attainment of knowledge is sudden or gradual: ‘By the attainment of able knowledge of understanding all the *dharmas*, the ability to penetrate the *dharmas* without remainder arose continuously in the Buddha’ (*sabba-dhammāvabodhana-samattha-ñāṇādhigamena hi Bhagavato santāneva anavasesa-dhamme paṭivijjhitaṃ samatthataṃ ahoṣi ti*). ‘Does this knowledge [of the Buddha], when pervading, pervade in all the spheres suddenly or gradually?’ (*Kiṃ paṇ’ idaṃ ñāṇaṃ pavattamānaṃ sakiṃ yeva sabbasmiṃ visaye pavattati udāhu kamena’ ti?*). To this the response is:

If it occurs in the entire sphere suddenly, when such differences as the past, future and present; internal and external; and conditioned, unconditioned, and general things, are present in the same place, there could not be an understanding of sphere in terms of classification or division, as if to the one who is seeing a picture from a distance. When that is the case, it is logical [to consider] all *dharmas* to be ranges of the Buddha’s knowledge in a general sense, as if seeing that all *dharmas* are non-self in terms of non-self.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> This suggests that Dhammapāla knew of such a classification of *sabbaññū* into various categories, at least into these two types.

<sup>66</sup> ItA I 140.

<sup>67</sup> ItA I 140–141: ‘*Yadi tāva sakiṃ yeva sabbasmiṃ visaye pavattati, atītānāga-tappaccuppanna-ajjhatabhiddhādibhedabhinnānaṃ saṅkhatadhammānaṃ asaṅkhatasammutidhammānaṃ ekajjhaṃ upaṭṭhāne dūrato cittapaṭaṃ pekkhantassa viya visayavibhāgenāvabodho na siyā, tathā ca sati “sabbe dhammā anattā”ti vipassantānaṃ anattākāreṇa viya sabbadhammā anirūpitarūpeṇa bhagavato ñāṇassa visayā hotīti āpajjati.*’

The argument is that if the Buddha’s knowledge is sudden, it can grasp only a general picture of the whole. In this connection the text refers to a view of ‘some’ in the following manner:

Some say that (all-knowing) knowledge of the Buddhas occurs for them all times [even] with no thinking (*vikappa*) in the field of present characteristics of all knowable *dharmas*, and as such, they are called ‘knowers of all.’ ... But, in terms of the characteristics of present (*thita*) objects, the Buddha’s knowledge may be partial because of the absence of the past, future and conventional *dharmas*, and therefore it is inappropriate [to say] that [Buddha’s] knowledge occurs suddenly.<sup>68</sup>

Further, concerning the question of the Buddha’s knowledge being gradual, the text says:

When that which should be known in various divisions like birth, location, disposition, and also direction, district and time, etc., is being gradually seized or grasped, the penetration of all [of them] does not arise in him as there is no end to what should be known.<sup>69</sup>

In this instance, the text advocates that if the process is gradual, there will be no end to it. Therefore, it cannot be gradual either. Thus, the Buddha’s knowledge is neither sudden nor gradual.<sup>70</sup> In this respect, it is interesting to note that ‘some’ maintained the view on the Buddha’s all-pervading knowledge in relation to ‘inference’ (*anumāna*). They contend that his omniscience is due to paying attention to an object partially (*ekadesaṃ paccakkhaṃ katvā*) and grasping the whole. They nevertheless claim that it is not ‘inferential knowledge but the absence of doubt’ (*tañca ñāṇaṃ*

<sup>68</sup> ItA I 141 = VisT (Be) I 231: *Yepi “sabbañeyyadhammānaṃ ñāṇalakkhaṇavisayaṃ vikapparahitaṃ sabbakālaṃ buddhānaṃ ñāṇaṃ pavattati, tena te sabbavidūti vuccanti. Evañca katvā — “Caraṃ samāhito nāgo, tiṭṭhantopi samāhito”ti. — “Idampi vacanaṃ suvuttaṃ hoti”ti vadanti, tesampi vuttadosānātivatti, ñāṇalakkhaṇārammaṇatāya ca atītānāgatasammuti-dhammānaṃ tadabhāvato, ekadesavisayameva bhagavato ñāṇaṃ siyā. Tasmā sakiṇṇeṇa ñāṇaṃ pavattatīti na yujjati.* Cf. Masefield, Peter [2008]: vol. 1, 354–355.

<sup>69</sup> ItA I 141 = VisT (Be) I 231: *‘Na hi jātibhūmisabhāvādivasena disādesakālādivasena ca anekabhedabhinne ñeyye kamena gayhamāne tassa anavasesapaṭivedho sambhavati apariyantabhāvato ñeyyassa.’*

<sup>70</sup> ItA I 141 = VisT (Be) I 231: *‘Tasmā sakim yeva ñāṇaṃ pavattatī ti na yujjati. Atha kamena sabbasmiṃ visaye ñāṇaṃ pavattatī ti evaṃ pi na yujjati.’*

*na anumānikam saṃsayābhāvato*). This theory is also rejected in ItA.<sup>71</sup> Its refutation certainly reflects the Theravādins’ position of ‘direct perception’ and not of ‘inference’.

Contradictory, as it seems, to the above arguments where both modes of the attainment of the Buddha’s knowledge — sudden and gradual — are denied, it is interesting to note that the text implicitly subscribes to the view of different modes of attaining omniscience in the following manner:

[The Buddha] is fully awakened and is called the Blessed One, because he has realized and awakened to all things in accordance with his wishes [to know them], together or separately, all at once or gradually, rightly and by himself” (... *evaṃ ekajjhaṃ viṣuṃ viṣuṃ sakīṃ kameṇa vā icchānurūpaṃ sammā sāmāṇi ca sabbadhammānaṃ buddhattā sammāsambuddho Bhagavā*, ... (ItA I 142).

This shows that different modes or methods of knowing all the *dharmas* are accepted. What is, however, emphasized here seems to be that if the Buddha so desires, he can gain the required knowledge of *dharmas* together, separately, suddenly, or gradually. In other words, it is not the mode of all-pervading knowledge that is emphasized, but the focus is on the analysis of *dharmas* that can be done collectively or individually. This underlying analysis is similar to that adopted in PtsA and NdA.

The third type, *satatasabbaññutā*, is a more immediate issue within the Theravāda context, or rather Indian context, in that it is analogous to the type of omniscience claimed by Nigaṇṭhanātha-putta and recorded in the Buddhist canonical texts (such as the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*).<sup>72</sup> The denial of this kind of omniscience in the canonical texts is derived from the Buddha’s own reference to it.<sup>73</sup> By the time of the *Milindapañha*, and more prominently in the Pāli commentaries, the attainment of the Buddha’s omniscience came to be regarded as a result of adverting his mind to any object he wished to

<sup>71</sup> ItA I 141 = VisT (Be) I 231: ‘*Ye pana “atthassa avisaṃvādanato ñeyyassa ekadesaṃ paccakkhaṃ katvā sesepi evanti adhimuccitvā vavathāpanena sabbaññū bhagavā, tañca ñāṇaṃ na anumānikam saṃsayābhāvato. Saṃsayānubaddhañhi loke anumānañāṇa” nti vadanti, tesampi na yuttaṃ.*

<sup>72</sup> M I 482.

<sup>73</sup> M II 127. See also above footnote 2. (*Kaṇṇakathala-sutta*): ‘*N’atthi so samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā yo sakideva sabbañ ñassati sabbaṃ dakkhīti, n’ etaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjati.*’

know (*āvajjanapaṭibaddha*). It implies that the state of omniscience is not continuous. *Satatasabbaññutā* cannot, therefore, be accepted as a possible mode of attaining omniscience in Theravāda Buddhism.

The fourth type, *sattisabbaññū*, has a different connotation again and rejects the first three types almost outright. The Theravādins seem to accept the position that ‘able omniscience’ (*sabbajānanasamattattā sattisabbaññutā vā siyā*) is possible. The texts (PṭsA I 58 = NdA II 387) appear to endorse this type of omniscience according to ability, in commenting that it is inappropriate [to say] that there is no knowing all for an omniscient one who is capable [of becoming so] (*sattisabbaññuno sabbajānanattam n’atthi ’ti tam ’pi na yujjati*). This is a clear admission by Mahānāma (and NdA of Upasena) that there could be a category of ‘omniscience’ in terms of ‘ability.’ This is certainly in line with the *thera* Nāgasena’s contention that the Buddha has the potential to become omniscient even when he does not advert his mind to any object he wishes to know (Miln 106). It is also a clearly extended interpretation of such expressions as *yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi* (M I 482; etc.), found in the canonical texts.

The ability of the Buddha to know constantly all that is present is also endorsed by the Sarvāstivādins. In response to the Vātsīputrīyas’ contention that omniscience belongs to a self ([若許]有我可能遍知), Vasubandhu in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣa* (阿毘達磨俱舍論「破我品」) states:

As for us, we do not say, (as the Mahāsāṃghikas do,) that the Buddha is omniscient in the sense that he knows all the factors (*dharma*) at one and the same time, but rather in the sense that the word ‘Buddha’ designates a certain stream and that to this stream belongs this unique capability so that — by merely directing his thought — there occurs immediately a non-mistaken knowledge of the object in regard to anything he wishes to know: one therefore calls this stream by the name ‘Omniscient One.’ One moment of thought is not capable of knowing everything.<sup>74</sup>

(D) Of the five types of *sabbaññutā*, two terms, namely, *anupubbasabbaññutā*, which seem to be identical with *kamasabbaññutā*, and *sakimsabbaññutā* are referred to separately at PṭsA ii 429. The treatment of

<sup>74</sup> T 29 155a: 我等不言佛於一切能頓遍知故名一切智者。但約相續有堪能故。謂得佛名諸蘊相續成就如是殊勝堪能纔作意時於所欲知境無倒智起故名一切智。非於一念能頓遍知。English translation by Sangpo, G. L. [2012]: 2543.

the two terms there is seen in connection with the view expressed by ‘some’ (*keci*) who, by implication, would have known of such a classification of *sabbaññūtā* into different categories. They (*keci*) maintain that the negation of *anupubbasabbaññūtā* is *sabbaññutañāṇa*, while the negation of *sakiṃsabbaññūtā* is *anāvaraṇañāṇa* (*anupubbasabbaññūtappaṭikkhepo sabbaññutañāṇaṃ*; *sakiṃ sabbaññūtappaṭikkhepo anāvaraṇañāṇaṃ*). Mahānāma, the author of PtsA, rejects this notion, stating that also because of the acquisition of omniscience, the Blessed One is called Omniscient One, but [he is] not the one who knows everything gradually; because of the acquisition of the unobstructed knowledge too, he is called Omniscient One, but [he is] not the one who knows everything at once.<sup>75</sup> The author of PtsA, however, does not deny the classification itself of *sabbaññū* into *anupubbasabbaññū* and *sakiṃsabbaññū* in this instance. What he says is that *sabbaññutañāṇa* and *anāvaraṇañāṇa* are employed to show different aspects of one and the same knowledge of the Buddha. His position is supported by the other commentators as well. For instance, following the explanation of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* and *anāvaraṇa-ñāṇa* in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*,<sup>76</sup> Dhammapāla explains that it (*Buddha-ñāṇa*) is called omniscience in terms of the knowledge of things conditioned, unconditioned, conventional, and true in every way without remainder, and it is [also] the unobstructed knowledge there because of the absence of obstacles and due to functioning without attachment.<sup>77</sup>

(E) *Ñātasabbaññū* seems to be the type of omniscience most favored by the commentators. The reason only the *ñātasabbaññū* is accepted in the passage cited above appears to lie in the interpretation of the phrase ‘*sabbaṃ abhiññāsi yad atthi ñeyyaṃ*’. The word *ñeyyaṃ* (that which should be known or understood) suggests that the Buddha’s knowledge is subjected to certain restrictions — the restrictions being that he knows only such things as he ought to know as a Buddha. In other words, the Buddha’s omniscience does not go beyond the confines of the *dharmas* that must be known or realized by a Buddha. And the realization or understanding of all the *dharmas* —

<sup>75</sup> PtsA II 429: ‘*Bhagavā sabbaññutañāṇappaṭilabhena ’pi sabbaññū ’ti vuccati; na ca anupubbasabbaññū. Anāvaraṇañāṇappaṭilabhena ’pi sabbaññū ’ti vuccati; na ca sakiṃsabbaññū ’ti.*’

<sup>76</sup> Pts i 131.

<sup>77</sup> UdA 144 = ItA I 130: ‘... *sabbathā anavasesa saṅkhat’ āsaṅkhata sammuti sacc’ āvabodhato sabbaññuta-ñāṇaṃ, tatth’ āvaraṇ’ ābhāvato nissāṅgappavattiṃ upādāya anāvaraṇa-ñāṇaṃ ti vuccati.*’ Cf. ThagA III 17. This point is discussed in detail by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991]: 771, footnote 7.

the *dhammas*, of course, in the Theravāda context, leads one to the state of Buddhahood — presupposes a time sequence. Therefore, the expression of *ñāta-sabbaññū* (using the past participle form of *ñā*) is appropriately used.

Moreover, the commentarial definition of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* is derived from the idea that the mind is adverted to any object the Buddha wishes to know. Dhammapāla summarizes the importance of directing the mind in the following manner: ‘All things are dependent on the Buddha’s adverting the mind, wishing [to know the object], keeping in mind and generating the mind.’<sup>78</sup> In other words, omniscience arises in the Buddha through directing his mind to any object he wishes to know. Here we notice two stances: first, the Buddha is not always omniscient, though he is said to have the ability to become so; and second, the knowledge that is perceived is objective knowledge. Knowing an object implies the cognitive process. Only when that process is over does the Buddha become a ‘knower.’ Then the object he wished to know becomes ‘known.’ It is in this sense that the commentators seem to accept *ñāta-sabbaññū* as the only legitimate description of omniscience.

(F) According to the passage, the Buddha’s omniscience is said to be associated with the following four terms:

1. *kicca* (function),
2. *asammoha* (non-confusion or instant clarity),
3. *karaṇasiddhi* (accomplishment of reason, cause, or purpose),
4. *āvajjanapaṭibaddha* (dependence on advertence).

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide any comment on this for want of further available information available. However, of the four terms mentioned, the term *karaṇasiddhi* seems to occur only in this instance in the entire Pāli commentarial literature. The other terms are often found in the commentaries. To cite a few instances, the accomplishment of the state of Buddhahood is said to be made through wisdom, while the accomplishment of its function is through compassion (*paññāya buddhabhāva-siddhi karuṇāya buddha-kiccasiddhi*). [ItA I 16; etc.] NdA (II 296) states that all *dhammas* are known in terms of clarity; therefore there is no ‘not-known’ (*asammohato sabbadhammāṇaṃ ñātattā aññātāṃ nāma natthi*). The word *āvajjanapaṭibaddha* occurs frequently in the commentaries, as noted above.

<sup>78</sup> ItA I 142: ‘*Sabbe dhammā Buddhassa Bhagavato āvajjana-paṭibaddhā, ākankha-paṭibaddhā, manasikāra-paṭibaddhā, citt’ uppāda-paṭibaddhā.*’



There is, however, no reference to all four terms in one list.

The word *sabbaññū* or *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* is employed exclusively for Buddhas. But *bodhisattas* in the commentarial literature are, notably, at times called *sabbaññu-bodhisatta*.<sup>79</sup> Another puzzling instance of its use is found in the *Madhuratthavilāsini* (BvA) where Upāli is said to have been praised by the Buddha for his dexterity in the *vinaya-piṭaka*, particularly in his decisions regarding Bhārukaccha, Ajjuka, and Kumārakassapa.<sup>80</sup> Upāli gave these three decisions, combining them together through [his] omniscience (*imāni tīni vatthūni sabbaññutañāṇena saddhiṃ saṃsanditvā kathesi*).<sup>81</sup> On this occasion Upāli was declared the highest among the Vinaya-bearers (*tasmā thero vinayadharāṇaṃ aggoti*). This instance gives rise to a question as to whether *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* is the province not only of a Buddha, but also of a disciple. The evidence cited above is, nonetheless, too isolated to make any positive observation. Future investigations will be welcome in this regard. On the other hand, another interpretation can be suggested here. That is, the *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* as used in the above passage simply means ‘the knowledge pertaining to all matters of disciplinary rules’ for which Upāli is reputed.

## V. Concluding remarks

Our investigations have revealed some new developments in the concept of omniscience in the Pāli commentarial literature. First, the introduction of a term called *sabba-sabba* expanding the scope of omniscience is noteworthy. Its notion, in summary, includes all the *dharmas* in the Theravāda context. Second, the reference to five types of omniscient ones regarding the modes of knowing everything appears to reflect the views held by different groups of Buddhists, including the Theravādins themselves or even theoretically possible ones prevalent at that time, or perhaps a summary of past and present views. The focus of controversy is on two modes of knowing; namely, *kama-* or *anupubba-sabbaññutā* and *sakiṃ-sabbaññutā*, both of which are rejected in the texts themselves and later by

<sup>79</sup> The word *sabbaññu-bodhisatta* is used in some Pāli commentaries to differentiate the *bodhisatta* (Buddha-to-be) from *pacceka-bodhisatta* and *sāvaka-bodhisatta*. See Endo, T. [1996]: 65–92.

<sup>80</sup> See Malalasekera, G. P. [1983]: vol. I, 408, s.v. Upāli for further information on these.

<sup>81</sup> BvA 51.

Dhammapāla. Although he subscribes at the same time to different modes of knowing including ‘gradual’ and ‘sudden,’ his contention appears to be based on different reasoning. It is also significant that the Theravādins accept only the category of *ñāta-sabbaññutā*. This is a logical conclusion derived from the recognition of a temporal cognitive process of objects in Theravāda Buddhism. Once that process of cognizance is over, the objects thus cognized become ‘known’ (*ñāta*). This is the basis for its acceptance. Third, the Theravādins maintain that the Buddha’s omniscience manifests itself when and as he directs his mind to any object he wishes to know. This is not tantamount to a denial of the Buddha’s omniscience itself when he does not direct his mind to an object. He can legitimately be called the omniscient one, because he possesses the ability to become so as contended by Nāgasena in the *Milindapañha* and also later in the commentarial literature. It is also interesting to observe that the discussions on the Buddha’s omniscience in Buddhaghosa’s commentaries on the four *nikāyas* and the *Visuddhimagga* appear to be traditional as no classification of *sabbaññū* or elaboration thereof is found in them. It is only in NdA, PtsA, Dhammapāla’s *Paramatthadīpanī* (for example, ItA, UdA, and so on), KvA (whose authorship is traditionally ascribed to Buddhaghosa) and the *Visuddhimagga-ṭīkā*, that detailed discussions — some of them reminding us of the debates between the Sarvāstivāda school and the Mahāsaṅghika and other schools in India — are distinctly seen.

## Chapter 6

**The Buddha's Eighteen Qualities (*Aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā*)****I. Introduction**

The inquiry into 'the Buddha's eighteen qualities or attributes' (*aṭṭhārasa-buddha-dhammā*) in the Theravāda tradition has been overlooked even by scholars of Pāli Buddhism.<sup>1</sup> The notion became somewhat widespread on the Theravāda scene from the commentarial period onward, though the term itself appears in the *Milindapañha*, one of the Pāli post-canonical texts.<sup>2</sup> Although the eighteen items are listed in different manners, in the Sarvāstivāda school and Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is regarded as one of the most distinct sets of attributes of the Buddha<sup>3</sup> and is extended to the Bodhisattva as well.<sup>4</sup> Due, perhaps, to the importance attached to it in Sanskrit Buddhism, scholars generally view this concept as primarily a Mahāyāna development. In Pāli Buddhism, however, it also later became a set of qualities of the Buddha, perhaps with the intention of elevating his spiritual greatness. This chapter will therefore examine the origin and development of the Buddha's eighteen attributes, primarily in the Theravāda tradition, with a comparison with other Buddhist schools.

<sup>1</sup> See Mizuno, Kōgen [1996]: 143–179.

<sup>2</sup> However, the places of reference to this term in Miln are all from the so-called 'added portions' or later 'recension' (page 90 to to the end of the PTS edition), which makes it difficult to determine the introduction of this concept in the Pāli tradition.

<sup>3</sup> See Dayal, Har [1978]: 23.

<sup>4</sup> For the Bodhisattva's eighteen unique Dharmas (十八不共法), see 望月 (Mochizuki Buddhist Dictionary): 2364–2366.

## II. Occurrences of the word *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* in the Pāli commentaries

The word occurs in different phraseology at the following places in Pāli literature:

- (A) Miln 105, 216, 285: *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma*
- (B) Vism 325: *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma*
- (C) DA III 875, 994 (details mentioned): *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma*
- (D) SnA I 264: *aṭṭhārasabuddhagūṇa-paricchedaka-ñāṇa*
- (E) UdA 87, 336; *aṭṭhārasa-āveṇika-buddhadhamma* [UdA 87];  
*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* [UdA 336]
- (F) ItA I 7, 13, 91: *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* [ItA I 7];  
*aṭṭhārasāveṇikabuddhadhamma* [ItA I 13, 91]
- (G) VvA 213: *aṭṭhārasāveṇikabuddhadhamma*
- (H) CpA 7, 332: *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* [CpA 7];  
*aṭṭhārasāveṇikabuddhadhamma* [CpA 332]
- (I) VibhA 1: *upeto Buddhadhammehi aṭṭhārasahi nāyako*

If the traditional chronology of the Pāli texts is followed, the first reference to the *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* (eighteen qualities or attributes of the Buddha) in Pāli is made in the *Milindapañha*. The date of its composition is, therefore, an important factor that will shed light on the date of its first appearance and concomitant concepts in the Pāli tradition.

### II-a. The *Milindapañha*: The first source to mention the term *aṭṭhārasa-buddhadhamma* in the Pāli tradition?

Among the additions and interpolations made at different times, at least two distinct strata in the date of composition of Miln are generally accepted; one stratum refers to the early period of composition, covering up to page 89 of Trenckner’s PTS edition and corresponding with the Chinese translation of the *Na-sen-bhikṣu-sūtra* (那先比丘經) (T 32 694–718),<sup>5</sup> while the new stratum extends roughly from page 90 to the end of the text. The early portion of the work is said to belong to a period between the first century BCE and

<sup>5</sup> The Chinese *Na-sen-bhikṣu-sūtra* (那先比丘經) has two versions, A and B. Version A is a shorter one with two fascicles, while version B is a longer one with three fascicles.

the first century CE and the later additions and interpolations were made after about 250 CE, but were completed before the time of Buddhaghosa, according to Nakamura.<sup>6</sup> This is the Pāli version of Miln. If, however, Nakamura’s conclusion is accepted, then the fact that references to the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* in Miln are all in the portions of the so-called ‘Pāli recension’ implies that the term does not appear in the Pāli tradition until the third century CE.

Mizuno, on the other hand, believes that the original version of Miln was composed by the first century BCE and the present form of the Pāli *Milindapañha* would have been completed before the end of the first century CE. The reason for his contention is that the Pāli commentaries refer to Miln and quote eighteen times from Book IV (pp. 90–328 of the PTS edition).<sup>7</sup> This implies that the old commentaries (*Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*) may have already contained such references. Mizuno assigns the date of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* to a period before the end of the first century CE.<sup>8</sup> Based on Mizuno’s study, Mori has conducted an extensive and comprehensive examination of the Pāli commentaries in their entirety and has formed his own view that the major portions of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* were completed by about the time of King Vasabha (65–109) with minor additions, as exceptional cases, made up to about the time of King Mahāsenā (276–303), and no further additions thereafter.<sup>9</sup> On the references to Miln in the present Pāli commentaries, Mori concludes: “It would be correct to consider that the lower limit of time of formation of Miln which is quoted or referred to in a large number of the *aṭṭhakathā* texts, was approximately at the end of the first century CE.”<sup>10</sup> Mori’s conclusion on the lower time limit seems to be in agreement with Mizuno. This conclusion certainly implies that the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* would have been in use before the end of the first century CE.

<sup>6</sup> See Nakamura, Hajime [1979]: 81–87.

<sup>7</sup> See also Mori, Sodo [1984]: 86–88.

<sup>8</sup> Mizuno, Kogen [1990]: 286.

<sup>9</sup> Mori, Sodo [1984]: 466. More specifically, such additions may have been added not in the genre of old commentaries called ‘the *aṭṭhakathā*’ in the singular, seen scattered in many places in the present Pāli commentaries, but in the class of commentaries called the *mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. This is because that the *aṭṭhakathā* in the singular would have been committed to writing during the reign of King Vātṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (103–102 BCE and 89–77 BCE), paving the way for the new genre of literature called the *mahā-aṭṭhakathā* to emerge. Therefore, such additions under review would have been added in this *mahā-aṭṭhakathā* literature. See Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45.

<sup>10</sup> Mori, Sodo [1998]: 312.

At the same time, Har Dayal observes: “As this list is not found in the Pāli Canon and the early Sanskrit treatises, it must be assigned to a comparatively late period (third century CE).”<sup>11</sup> This inference may be more improbable than probable, since six of the eighteen items are already found in canonical texts such as the *Mahāniddeśa*, *Cullāniddeśa*, and *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, such texts as the *Mahāvastu*, whose nucleus could go back to a period much earlier than the third century CE,<sup>13</sup> containing these eighteen items, would point to the greater likelihood that the concept originated much earlier and the eighteen items were already envisaged and included in the list from the very beginning.

Further supporting evidence in determining the date of the list’s first appearance in the Pāli tradition can also be sought in the *Vimuttimaggā* (解脱道論), now extant only in Chinese translation [T 32 399 ff.] The *Vimuttimaggā* mentions a list of the Buddha’s eighteen attributes, and in his study Bapat renders them into Pāli.<sup>14</sup> Of relevance here is the date of composition of the original *Vimuttimaggā* by Upatissa. Bapat concludes: “Our book therefore may be put somewhere in the first two centuries after the beginning of the Christian era.”<sup>15</sup> Nagai, on the other hand, assigns Upatissa to the first century CE.<sup>16</sup>

If Nagai’s conclusion, supplemented by Mizuno’s and Mori’s observations, is tenable, then a possible conclusion would be that not only was the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* in use, but its contents were also clearly defined,

<sup>11</sup> Dayal, Har [1978]: 23.

<sup>12</sup> Nd I 178, III 357; Pts II 195: *Sabbaṃ kāyakammaṃ buddhassa bhagavato ñāṇānuparivatti, sabbaṃ vacīkammaṃ ñāṇānuparivatti, sabbaṃ manokammaṃ ñāṇānuparivatti. Atīte buddhassa bhagavato appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ, anāgate appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ, paccuppanne appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ ...* However, a question may arise on the date of their (Nd and Pts) composition, since they are said to be close in nature to the *Abhidhamma* literature. Commenting on the date of the *Niddesa*, Norman states: ‘the beginning of the third century BCE would seem to be quite suitable as the date of its composition.’ Norman, K. R. [1983]: 86.

<sup>13</sup> Rahula states that the earliest portions of the *Mahāvastu* may go back as far as the second century BCE. See Rahula, Telwate [1978]: 16.

<sup>14</sup> Bapat, P. V. [1937].

<sup>15</sup> Bapat, P. V. [1937]: lv.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Mizuno in his book review on Bapat’s work in *Bukkyō kenkyū* (仏教研究) (*The Journal of Buddhist Studies*), vol. III, no. 2, Tokyo, [1939], 115. See also Malalasekera, G. P. [1958]: 86.

at least by the school that adopted the *Vimuttimaggā* at that time. If, on the other hand, Bapat’s argument (i.e., the first two centuries) is tenable in its upper time limit of the second century CE, his contention seems theoretically plausible regarding the end date for the compilation of the major portions of the ‘*Sīhaḷa* sources,’ which Mori traces to the time of King Vasabha.<sup>17</sup> Given that many points of controversy between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri fraternities are found in the present Pāli commentaries, it is likely that such controversies, including one specific reference to Upatissa’s *Vimuttimaggā* (VismT (Be) I, 123), were already recorded in the old ‘*Sīhaḷa* sources’. This shows that the *Vimuttimaggā* must have been available before King Vasabha of the early second century, since views of ‘some’ (*keci, eke, apare*, etc.) are identified as those of the Abhayagiri school in the sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*).<sup>18</sup> The evidence examined above strongly suggests that the notion of a list of eighteen items, though listed in a different manner, was in circulation by this time among first-century Buddhists.

Moreover, given that the inception of the Abhayagiri school may go back to the first century BCE, the formation of the old *Sīhaḷa* sources of the present Pāli commentaries can be divided into two layers: the first being those already contained in the translated portions with Sri Lankan elements incorporated, or in the original commentaries themselves brought from India (3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE), and the second those following the commitment of Buddhist texts to writing in the first century BCE. These are the portions added in the genre of literature named *mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, which extended to the time of King Vasabha and beyond, up to the time of King Mahāsena. The question, then, is who were the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* whose list of eighteen items was rejected by Dhammapāla in his DAT, as will be shown later? Were they Indian or Sri Lankan *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*? If the answer is the former, the list of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* should be placed between third and first centuries BCE, while if the latter is correct, then its origin can be traced to a period between the first century BCE and the early second century CE. Moreover, since late canonical texts like the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and *Niddesa* (both *Mahā*- and *Culla*-) do not contain these eighteen items (although their probable predecessors of six items are already seen in them), it seems too early to assign the origin to a period between the third and first centuries BCE. The only reasonable conclusion appears to be that the origin of the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* may be traced to a period after

<sup>17</sup> Mori, Sodo [1984]: 466.

<sup>18</sup> Their details are discussed in Mori’s work. See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 559–689.

the commitment of Buddhist texts to writing and the commencement of the literary genre called the *mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. This, however, does not guarantee that the term originated in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, given that Books IV-VII of Miln were added by the end of or before the first century CE, and that Miln was eventually accorded the status of a post-canonical work by the Theravādins, it seems plausible that the notion of the Buddha possessing a special group of eighteen qualities or attributes was in vogue by this time (first century CE), even among the Theravādins. That the additions were made in India, probably in the eastern region of Magadha and subsequently brought to Sri Lanka<sup>19</sup> would imply that the notion was shared among the then existing Buddhist schools in India. It is therefore uncertain which Buddhist school in India was the first to introduce the concept and list of eighteen attributes of the Buddha. We shall return to this later.

## II-b. Detailed analysis of its contents

We now examine the contexts in which the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* is mentioned in the above list of references for closer scrutiny, but not in the order specified in the list, because the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (DA) among the Pāli commentaries is the only source that gives a detailed list of eighteen.

### (A) Miln 105, 216, 285:

The word occurs in three places in Book IV and is used in respect of the spiritual attainments of the Buddha. One instance, which is more elaborate than the others, reads as follows: ‘But there is no difference between any of the Buddhas, who are alike in bodily beauty, in goodness of character, in power of contemplation and of reasoning, in emancipation, in the insight arising from the knowledge of emancipation, in the four bases of confidence (*catuvesāraja*), in the ten powers (*dasabala*) of a Tathāgata, in the six-fold special knowledge (*cha-asādhāraṇañāṇa*), in the fourteen-fold knowledge of Buddha, in the eighteen characteristics of a Buddha (*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā*) — in a word, in all the qualities of a Buddha’ (Miln 285).<sup>20</sup>

### (B) Vism 325:

The term is mentioned here in connection with the fourfold divine abiding (*brahmavihāra*). The text reads:

<sup>19</sup> See Mizuno, K. [1996]: 240.

<sup>20</sup> See Rhys Davids, T. W. [1982]: 133–135.



Having thus fulfilled [ten] perfections, these [divine abidings] then perfect all the good states classed as the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the six kinds of knowledge not shared [by disciples], and the eighteen states of the Enlightened One.<sup>21</sup> (... *evam pāramiyo pūretvā yāva dasabala catuvesarajja cha-asādhāraṇaṇā aṭṭhārasa-Buddha-dhammappabhede sabbe pi kalyāṇadhamme paripūrentī ti*).<sup>22</sup>

These qualities are the results of fulfilling *pāramitā* and the practice of four *brahmavihāra*, and they are called *kalyāṇadhamma* (good states). Dhammapāla does not provide an explanation for the word *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* in VismṬ, the text ascribed to his authorship.

(C) DA III 875, (D) SnA I 264, (E) UdA 87, 336, (F) ItA I 7, 13, 91, (H) CpA 7:

A common feature in these sources is that the term is used in the enumeration of the spiritual attainments of the Buddha. Both Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla list virtues of the Buddha (*Buddhagūṇa*) in the form of a summary. They are often referred to in numerical sequence, for instance, at DA III 874–875, ItA I –7, UdA 335–336, CpA 6–7, and so on. Thus, the term is mentioned in the list of items under the numeral ‘eighteen’ (*aṭṭhārasa*).

(G) VvA 213:

In this instance, the term is used in connection with the *dhamma-kāya* (*dhamma*-body) worthy of devotion (*pasādanīyaṃ*). Along with this is mentioned the term *pāsādikam* (increase of devotion), which people may develop after seeing the physical excellences of the Buddha. Here, the physical characteristics of the Buddha, such as the thirty-two characteristics of a great man (*dvattiṃsa-mahāpurisa-lakkhaṇa*) and eighty minor marks (*asīti-anubyañjana*), are mentioned. The spiritual qualities of the Buddha are mentioned in the category of *pasādanīya* and it is in this context that the term *aṭṭhārasāveṇikabuddhadhamma* is given, but without further elaboration.

<sup>21</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991]: 318.

<sup>22</sup> The way the items are mentioned is interesting. Unlike its rival the Sarvāstivāda School, the Theravāda School’s listing of eighteen qualities of the Buddha is more akin to the usually accepted Mahāyāna listing, as shall be discussed later.

## (H) CpA 332:

The *Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā* refers to this word in connection with the fulfilment of [ten] perfections (*pāramiyo*). The attainment of these eighteen special qualities is the result of fulfilling the perfections, which is in accord with the context in which both Vism 325 and ItA I 91 refer to them.

## (I) VibhA 1:

The phrase *upeto Buddhadhammehi aṭṭhārasahi nāyako*, a eulogistic expression for the Buddha, is mentioned in the introductory verses (*gāthā*) of the text.

Common features are discernible. UdA 338, ItA 6, VvA 213, and CpA 7 include the additional term *āveṇika* (special, or unique) in the lists of the Buddha’s virtues or etymologies of *bhagavant*. This is a mere listing, with no noticeable significant features. These works are ascribed to Dhammapāla.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that Dhammapāla had knowledge of the Buddhist Sanskrit literature, as is justified by the other evidence available.<sup>24</sup> In Buddhist Sanskrit literature, such special qualities of the Buddha are usually referred to as *āveṇika-buddhadharma*.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, the remaining references show that the term *aṭṭhārasa* (*āveṇika*) *buddhadhamma* is given as one of the spiritual attainments of the Buddha and is often found in the stock phrase ‘*dasabala-catuvesāraja-cha-asādhāraṇañāṇa-(cuddasabuddhañāṇa)-aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma-(ananta-)parimāṇaguṇasamannāgatta... dhamma-kāya sampattiya ...*’ (Miln 105, 216, 285; Vism 325; UdA 87; CpA 332). The sequence is almost the same in each of the references. This can also be seen in some of the Sanskrit texts, although not in a totally identical form. For instance, the *Lalitavistara* enumerates the following items: ‘*daśabhis-*

<sup>23</sup> The authorship of ItA, VvA and CpA is ascribed to Dhammapāla, who lived much later than Buddhaghosa. Some scholars believe that his literary activity was as late as in the sixth or seventh century CE (See Pieris, Aloysious [1978]: 74; Norman, K. R. [1983]: 137. For a summary of the history of research on Dhammapāla, see Mori, Sodo [1984]: 530–539. Another important factor that points to the likelihood of Dhammapāla being influenced by Buddhist Sanskrit literature is that, though he followed the Mahāvihāra tradition when writing his commentaries, he is believed to have written his works in South India, and not in Sri Lanka. (See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 535).

<sup>24</sup> For instance, in his CpA, Dhammapāla reduces the ten perfections (*dasa-pāramī*) of the Theravāda tradition to six, identical to the usual listing of *pāramitā* in the Sanskrit literature. See Endo, T. [1997]: 271–272.

<sup>25</sup> See Edgerton, F. [1993]: 108.

*tathāgatabalaiḥ samanvāgataṃ caturbhiḥca tathāgatavaiśāradyaiḥ samanvāgataṃ-aṣṭādaśabhiḥcāveṇikair-buddhadharmaiḥ samanvāgataṃ*’ (Lal. III; etc).<sup>26</sup>

(C) DA III 994:

It is only in this commentary that a list of eighteen *buddhadhammā* is mentioned. It is a commentary on the *Saṅgīti-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, where classifications of various topics are enumerated. The Buddha’s eighteen qualities are referred to in connection with an explanation of three things that the Buddha need not protect against (*tīṇi tathāgatassa arakkheyyāni*). The text (D III 217) further states that the Buddha is pure in conduct, be it in act, speech, or thought.<sup>27</sup> The reference in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* begins with the sentence: ‘Moreover, the absence of wrong deeds in the Blessed One should also be understood in terms of the eighteen qualities of the Buddha’ (*Api ca aṭṭhārasannaṃ Buddhadhammānaṃ vassenāpi Bhagavato duc-carita-bhāvo veditabbo*). Of interest and significance is that the enumeration of the Buddha’s eighteen qualities is intended to show the absence of wrong deeds in the Buddha. Such a statement is subject to diverse speculations, which will be discussed later. The *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* are enumerated as follows:

1. *N’atthi tathāgatassa kāya-duccaritaṃ* (The Tathāgata is free from bodily wrong deeds),
2. *N’atthi vacī-duccaritaṃ* (The Tathāgata is free from verbal wrong deeds),
3. *N’atthi mano-duccaritaṃ* (The Tathāgata is free from mental wrong deeds),
4. *Atīte Buddhassa appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ* (The Buddha has unobstructed knowledge of the past),
5. *Anāgate Buddhassa appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ* (The Buddha has unobstructed knowledge of the future),

<sup>26</sup> According to the English translation from the *Toh* 95, *Degé Kangyur*, vol. 46 (*mdo sde, kha*), folios 1b-216b, this expression is found in three places. See *The Play in Full — Lalitavistara*, translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee, published by 84000 (2013), 116 (160), 208 (275), 330 (428).

<sup>27</sup> D III 217: *Tīṇi tathāgatassa arakkheyyāni – parisuddhakāyasamācāro āvuso tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa kāyaduc-caritaṃ, yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya – ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti. Parisuddhava-cīsamācāro āvuso, tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa vacīduccaritaṃ, yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya — ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti. Parisuddhamano-samācāro, āvuso, tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa manoduc-caritaṃ yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya — ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti.*

6. *Paccuppanne Buddhassa appaṭihatam ñāṇam* (The Buddha has unobstructed knowledge of the present),
7. *Sabbaṃ kāya-kammaṃ Buddhassa Bhagavato ñāṇānuparivatti* (The Buddha’s every bodily action is preceded by knowledge),
8. *Sabbaṃ vacī-kammaṃ Buddhassa Bhagavato ñāṇānuparivatti* (The Buddha’s every verbal action is preceded by knowledge),
9. *Sabbaṃ mano-kammaṃ Buddhassa Bhagavato ñāṇānuparivatti* (The Buddha’s every mental action is preceded by knowledge),
10. *N atthi chandassa hāni* (There is no loss to his zeal),
11. *N atthi viriyassa hāni* (There is no loss to his energy),
12. *N atthi satiyā hāni* (There is no loss to his mindfulness),
13. *N atthi davā* (There is no playfulness),
14. *N atthi ravā* (There is no noise),
15. *N atthi khalitaṃ* (There is no stumbling),<sup>28</sup>
16. *N atthi sahasā* (There is no hastiness),
17. *N atthi avyāvaṭo mano* (His mind is not neglectful),
18. *N atthi akusala-cittaṃ* (He has no unwholesome mind).

A perusal of the above list reveals some peculiarities: first, the word *tathāgata* is used for the first three items, whereas the phrase *Buddhassa Bhagavato* is prominent elsewhere. Second, the opening sentence implies that the author will describe the absence of *duccarita* in the Buddha, which leads to the suspicion that the first three items in the list appear to be repetitious. Third, a comparison of the eighteen items in various sources as shown at the end of this chapter reveals that only the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* (DA) includes the three kinds of *duccarita* and the last item, *n’ atthi akusala-cittaṃ*, in the list. All these factors suggest that the DA’s list occupies a unique position in the tradition of this concept and listing of eighteen items. Some questions are addressed below.

<sup>28</sup> Be reads: *calitaṃ* (wavering, unsteady).

### III. Detailed discussion of the DA list

- (i) What is the basis for the enumeration of eighteen items?
- (ii) Are the eighteen items listed according to a specific scheme?
- (iii) Is there any literary evidence in the Pāli commentaries or the pre-commentarial literature for the notions expressed in those eighteen items?
- (iv) Did the *Sīhaḷa-Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* [SDA] actually contain the list?
- (v) Did the Theravāda School develop the concept of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* independently of other Buddhist schools? In other words, is the list of eighteen items in the Theravāda tradition an innovation of its own?
- (i) The concept of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* or *aṣṭādaśa-āveṇika-buddhadharma* is popularly used to describe the spiritual greatness of the Buddha, especially in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. The eighteen items enumerated often differ among the lists of various authorities. Two main methods of enumeration are seen: one is represented by texts like the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論) (T 27, no.1545) of the Sarvāstivāda School, where the enumeration includes *daśabala* (10) (十力), *catvāri vaiśāradya* (4) (四無所畏), *trīṇi smṛty-upasthāna* (3) (三念住), and *mahākaruṇā* (1) (大悲).<sup>29</sup> This classification is usually ascribed to the Hīnayānists. The other, an entirely different enumeration, is found in texts like the *Mahāvastu*, *Vimuttimaggā* (解脫道論), *Mahāvvyutpatti*,

<sup>29</sup> See Kawamura, Kosho [1975]: 301 ff.; 望月2361; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol. II, fascicle 3, Colombo, 450; etc. However, see also ABHIDHARMAKOŚA, ed. Fan Jingjing (范晶晶) and Zhang Xueshan (張雪杉): [2005]: 847. This reads: *daśa balāni, catvāri vaiśāradyāni, trīṇi smṛtyupasthānāni, mahākaruṇā ca* |

【真】釋曰。十力四無畏三念處大悲。是名十八。

【玄】論曰。佛十力四無畏三念住及大悲。如是合名為十八不共法。

大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāparamita-śāstra*) clarifies this by attributing this theory to Kātyāyānī-putra: 問曰。若爾者迦旃延尼子。何以言十力四無所畏大悲三不共意止名為十八不共法。若前說十八不共法是眞義者。迦旃延尼子何以故如是說。答曰。以是故名迦旃延尼子。若釋子則不作是說。釋子說者是眞不共法。(T25 255b-c) (Question: why does Kātyāyānī-putra call the ‘ten powers, four confidences, great compassion, and three distinct focusing of thought’ (三不共意止), the ‘eighteen unique dharmas?’ If the previously mentioned is the real meaning of the ‘eighteen unique dharmas,’ on what basis does Kātyāyānī-putra explicate it as such? Answer: it is because of this that he is called Kātyāyānī-putra. If he were a Śākya-putra (disciple of the Buddha), he would not make such a statement. The Śākya-putra would elucidate the real meaning of the ‘eighteen unique dharmas’). This Kātyāyānī-putra is the author of the *Jñānaprasthāna*, of the seven *Abhidharma* texts of the Sarvāstivāda School.

and so on,<sup>30</sup> and is said to be a Mahāyāna classification, though the items and their sequence differ. The list in DA follows the second category in principle.

In order to show the difference among the items included in the lists of various sources, I will first compare those in DA and Vim (Table I), which will in turn be compared with a list generally accepted in Mahāyāna Buddhism (Table II).<sup>31</sup> The numbering follows that of DA, and the Pāli renderings are taken from Bapat’s work cited above, p. 65:

Table I:

- Nos. 1–6 (Vim) = Nos. 4–9 (DA)  
 No. 7 (Vim) = No. 10 (DA)  
 No. 8 (Vim) = No. 11 (DA)  
 No. 9 (Vim) = No. 12 (DA)  
 No. 10 (Vim) [*Natthi samādhissa hāni*]  
 No. 11 (Vim) [*Natthi paññāya hāni*]  
 No. 12 (Vim) [*Natthi vimuttiyā hāni*]  
 No. 13 (Vim) [*Natthi dvedhayitattaṃ*]  
 No. 14 (Vim) = No. 14 (DA)  
 No. 15 (Vim) [*Natthi (kiñci) apphuṭaṃ (ñāṇena)*]  
 No. 16 (Vim) = No. 13 (DA)  
 No. 17 (Vim) [*Natthi byāvaṭaṃ*<sup>32</sup>] = No. 17 (DA)  
 No. 18 (Vim) [*Natthi appaṭisaṅkhānupekkhā*].<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Table III.

<sup>31</sup> See Murakami, Shinkan & Oikawa, Shinkai [1986]: 222–223. Sanskrit renderings of the Chinese words are taken from 望月2362.

<sup>32</sup> Bapat renders it thus. However, other Pāli and Sinhala sources use the term *avyāvaṭa-mano*. See Table III.

<sup>33</sup> 解脫道論 (*Vimuttimagga*) (T 32 427c) has the following: “云何世尊成就十八法。於過去佛智不障礙。未來佛智不障礙。現在佛智不障礙。隨於佛智遍起身業。隨於佛智遍起口業。隨於佛智遍起意業。以此六法世尊成就。欲無退。精進無退。念無退。定無退。慧無退。解脫無退。以此十二法。世尊成就。無可疑事。無誣師事。無不分明。無有急事。無隱覆處。無不觀捨。”

Table II:

The Māhāyāna *Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva-Mahāyāna* (菩薩摩訶薩摩訶衍) list.<sup>34</sup>

Notes:

1. Numbers within brackets do not indicate exactly corresponding terms, but those found in the lists that are closer in meaning.<sup>35</sup>
2. In the Mahāyāna lists, either number 10 or number 13 are made up of eighteen items.

		DA	Vim
1	1. 諸佛身無失 ( <i>nāsti tathāgatasya skhalitaṃ</i> )	15 (1)	(15)
2	2. 口無失 ( <i>ravitaṃ</i> )	14 (2)	14
3	3. 念無失 ( <i>muṣitasmr̥tītā</i> )	(3)	-
4	4. 無異相 ( <i>nānātva-saṃjñā</i> )	(13,16)	(13,16)
5	5. 無不定心 ( <i>asamāhita-cittaṃ</i> )	(17)	(17)
6	6. 無不知己捨心 ( <i>apratisaṃkhāya upekṣā</i> )	(18)	18
7	7. 欲無減 ( <i>nāsti chandasya hāñih</i> )	10	7
8	8. 精進無減 ( <i>vīrya -</i> )	11	8
9	9. 念無減 ( <i>smṛti -</i> )	12	9
10	- <i>samādhi -</i>	-	10
11	10. 慧無減 ( <i>prajñā -</i> )	-	11
12	11. 解脫無減 ( <i>vimukti -</i> )	-	12
13	12. 解脫知見無減 ( <i>vimukti-jñāṇa-darśana -</i> )	-	-
14	13. 一切身業隨智慧行 ( <i>sarva-kāyakarma jñāṇapūrvamgamam jñāṇānuparivartī</i> )	7	4
15	14. 一切口業隨智慧行 ( <i>vāk-karma -</i> )	8	5
16	15. 一切意業隨智慧行 ( <i>manas-karma -</i> )	9	6
17	16. 智慧知見過去世無閼無障 ( <i>atīte apratihaṭa-jñāṇam -</i> )	4	1
18	17. 智慧知見未來世無閼無障 ( <i>anāgate -</i> )	5	2
19	18. 智慧知見現在世無閼無障 ( <i>pratyutpanne -</i> )	6	3

<sup>34</sup> Cf. 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) (T8 255c–256a; 395b).

<sup>35</sup> See Murakami, Shinkan & Oikawa, Shinkai [1986]: 222–223.

The comparison in Table I shows that Vim includes six items that do not correspond exactly to DA. When the two lists are compared with other sources, Vim comes much closer to other Buddhist Sanskrit sources than to DA, though some discrepancies are obvious. On the other hand, Table II shows that DA has more items which are repetitious in meaning than Vim and has fewer similarities to the Mahāyāna list. Does this show that DA stands unique in its enumeration of eighteen qualities of the Buddha and, as such, could be considered as proof of a distinctly Theravādin (i.e., Mahāvihāra-vāsin) innovation? The *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (大智度論) states:

如是十八不共法。非三藏中說。亦諸餘經所不說。以有人求索是法故。諸聲聞論議師輩。處處撰集讚佛功德。如言無失慧無減念不失。皆於摩訶衍十八不共法中。取已作論議。雖有無見頂足下柔軟如是甚多。不應在十八不共法中。不共法皆以智慧爲義。  
(T 25 256a)

(These eighteen unique qualities [of the Buddha] are not found in the *Tripiṭaka*, nor expounded in other *sūtras*. Why? Because there are people who seek such a teaching. The *Hīnayāna-ābhidharmikas* collected the virtues of the Buddha from here and there [to make up the list of eighteen items]. Such items as ‘no verbal slip [in the Buddha],’ ‘no decrease in wisdom [in the Buddha],’ and ‘no loss of mindfulness [in the Buddha]’ are all taken from the Mahāyāna list of eighteen unique qualities. Although ‘invisible crown’ and ‘softness beneath the feet’<sup>36</sup> and such others are seen [in the list of eighteen qualities of the Buddha], they are unfit for inclusion in the list of eighteen unique qualities [of the Buddha]. [Because] the real meaning of ‘unique qualities’ [*āveṇikadharmā*] should be understood in terms of knowledge and wisdom [*prajñā*].)<sup>37</sup>

A perusal of both Tables I and II gives rise to the core questions: (1) whether the Theravādins developed their own list of eighteen items and, if this assumption is denied, then (2) whence the Theravādins borrowed the list, particularly the inclusion of the three kinds of absence of wrong deeds (*duccarita*) in the Buddha in the list. We shall return to these questions later.

<sup>36</sup> Such expressions can be found, for instance, in 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*) itself: 我等分別十八不共法不重數也。何等十八。一者知諸法實相故。名一切智。二者佛諸功德相難解故。功德無量 ... 十六者世世敬重所尊故。無能見頂。十七者修大慈悲心故。安庠下足足下柔軟。(T 25, 255c-256a)

<sup>37</sup> See also 望月2363.



(ii) Various authorities list different items in different ways. It appears that no specific scheme for listing the eighteen items was followed. The list in DA does not provide any clue in this regard, because it is the only one found in the whole of Pāli commentarial literature; hence no comparison is possible. However, the *Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (*Līnatthavaṇṇanā*) (DAṬ III 67, 257) may give us an idea as to how the eighteen items should be listed:

The Buddha’s knowledge concerning the past, future and present is unobstructed. Endowed with these three qualities (*Imehi tīhi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato ...*), the Buddha’s bodily, verbal, and mental actions are preceded by knowledge and are in accordance with it. Endowed with these six qualities (*Imehi chahi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato ...*), the Buddha has no loss to his zeal, to the preaching of Dhamma, to energy, no loss to concentration, to wisdom, or to liberation. Endowed with these twelve qualities (*Imehi dvādasahi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato*), the Buddha has no playfulness, ...<sup>38</sup>

The phrases underlined above are significant. They confirm that the listing of items should, in fact, follow a specific scheme, at least according to the author of DAṬ. It must be pointed out, however, that the DA list includes problematic items and differs from the list in DAṬ, which is more akin to those of Sanskrit sources. Such a listing with a specific sequence is also mentioned in passing in the *Vimuttimaggā* (解脱道論), with a slight difference:

<sup>38</sup> DAṬ III 67, 257: *Atūtaṃse buddhassa bhagavato appaṭihataññāṇaṃ, anāgatamse, paccuppannamse. Imehi tīhi dhammehi samannāgatassa buddhassa bhagavato sabbaṃ kāyakammaṃ ñāṇapubbaṅgamaṃ ñāṇānuparivartī, sabbaṃ vacīkammaṃ, sabbaṃ manokammaṃ. Imehi chahi dhammehi samannāgatassa buddhassa bhagavato natthi chandassa hāni, natthi dhammadesanāya, natthi vīryassa, natthi samādhissa, natthi paññāya, natthi vimuttiyā. Imehi dvādasahi dhammehi samannāgatassa buddhassa bhagavato natthi davā, natthi ravā, natthi apphutaṃ, natthi vegāyittam, natthi abyāvaṇaṃ, natthi appaṭisaṅkhānupekkhāti.* The identical phrases are found in the *Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā*, 21. The *Mahāvastu* (I 160) has the following: *aṣṭādaśāveṇikā buddhadharmāḥ* || (1) *atīte aṃśe tathāgatasya apratihatam jñānadarśanaṃ* | (2) *anāgate aṃśe apratihatam jñānadarśanaṃ* | (3) *pratyutpanne aṃśe apratihatam jñānadarśanaṃ* | (4) *sarvaṃ kāyakarma jñānapūrvamgamam jñānānuparivartī* | (5) *sarvaṃ vācākarma jñānapūrvamgamam jñānānuparivartī* | (6) *sarvaṃ manokarma jñānapūrvamgamam jñānānuparivartī* | (7) *nāsti chandasya hāniḥ* | (8) *nāsti vīryasya hāniḥ* | (9) *nāsti smṛtiye hāniḥ* | (10) *nāsti samādhīye hāniḥ* | (11) *nāsti prajñāye hāniḥ* | (12) *nāsti vimuktiye hāniḥ* | (13) *nāsti khalitām* | (14) *nāsti ravitām* | (15) *nāsti muṣitasmrītā* | (16) *nāsti asaṃhitām cittaṃ* | (17) *nāsti apratisaṃkhyāya upekṣā* | (18) *nāsti nānātvasaṃjñā* ||

云何世尊成就十八法。於過去佛智不障礙。未來佛智不障礙。  
現在佛智不障礙。隨於佛智遍起身業。隨於佛智遍起口業。  
隨於佛智遍起意業。以此六法。(endowed with or by these six  
dharma)s)世尊成就。欲無退。精進無退。念無退。定無退。慧無  
退。解脫無退。以此十二法。(endowed with or by these twelve  
dharma)s)世尊成就。無可疑事。無誣師事。無不分明。無有急事。  
無隱覆處。無不觀捨。(T 32 427c) (See the underlined.)

This also shows that the sequence was important and imbued with a specific meaning in some schools of Buddhist thought.

(iii) Some of the items included in the list in DA can be found in the canonical and commentarial texts. The *Saṅgīti-sutta* specifies that the Tathāgata is free from *duccarita* in bodily, verbal, and mental actions.<sup>39</sup> The *Dasuttara-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* refers to the Buddha’s three kinds of knowledge, namely, knowledge of the past, present, and future.<sup>40</sup> As a result of the exaltation of the Buddha, such knowledge came to be regarded as limitless. Thus, some texts in the *Khuddaka-nikāya* state that the Buddha’s knowledge concerning the past, present, and future is unobstructed (*appaṭihata*).<sup>41</sup> In addition, his bodily, verbal, and mental actions appear in accordance with knowledge (*ñāṇānuparivatti*).<sup>42</sup> These six characteristics of the Buddha’s knowledge correspond to numbers 4–9 in the list of DA and are designated as *Buddhadhammā* in those texts.

Some other items can be traced to the canonical or commentarial texts as well. For example, the recluse Gotama is said to abstain from violence, and so on (... *sahasākāra paṭivirato samaṇo Gotamo*) (D I 5) [= No. 16 (DA)]. Māra confesses that he followed the Bodhisatta for six years with the

<sup>39</sup> D III 217: *Tīṇi tathāgatassa arakkheyyāni — parisuddhakāyasamācāro āvuso tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa kāyaduccaritaṃ, yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya — ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti. Parisuddhavacīsamācāro āvuso, tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa vacīduccaritaṃ, yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya — ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti. Parisuddhamanosamācāro, āvuso, tathāgato, natthi tathāgatassa manoduccaritaṃ yaṃ tathāgato rakkheyya — ‘mā me idaṃ paro aññāsī’ ti.*

<sup>40</sup> D III 275.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. also ItA I 124; UdA 135–136; DhA II 8; etc.

<sup>42</sup> Nd I 178, III 357; Pts II 195: *Sabbaṃ kāyakammaṃ buddhassa bhagavato ñāṇānuparivatti, sabbaṃ vacīkammaṃ ñāṇānuparivatti, sabbaṃ manokammaṃ ñāṇānuparivatti. Atīte buddhassa bhagavato appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ, anāgate appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ, paccuppanne appaṭihataṃ ñāṇaṃ ...* See also Nett 17; NdA I 268; etc.

intention of harassing him if the Bodhisatta committed a fault physically or verbally (*sac’ assa kiñci kāyena vācāya vā khalitaṃ bhavissati, hehessāmi nan’ ti*) (SnA II 393) [= No. 15 (DA)]. Other items, too, may be conceptually traceable, if examined carefully.

(iv) Strictly speaking, the question of whether or not the *Sīhaḷa-dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* (SDA) actually contained the list cannot be resolved, as the text is no longer extant for comparison or scrutiny. Our arguments, therefore, must all lie within the confines of inference. Nonetheless, we are strongly inclined to believe that SDA<sup>43</sup> actually contained the list of eighteen items as found in DA. But, for a more objective view, we will first examine some circumstantial evidence. This may lead us to the question of whether or not the list in DA could be a later interpolation, followed by the supporting evidence for the contention above.

(iv-1) Interestingly, the first three items — the absence of three kinds of wrong deeds (*duccarita*) in the Tathāgata — are included in the list of *Buddha-dhammā*. Those who have attained arahantship with the eradication of the three unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*) do not have *duccarita* either. Therefore, the absence of *duccarita* is not a special characteristic of the Buddha alone.<sup>44</sup>

This is confirmed by Dhammapāla in his DAṬ, where he states that *Buddhadhammā* are indeed unique or extraordinary qualities of the Buddhas (*tathā hi te Buddhānaṃ āveṇikadhammā*). He further states that phrases such as *n’atthi tathāgatassa kāyaduccaritaṃ* constitute the praise of virtues gained through the association of knowledge of bodily actions, and so on (*kāyakamm’ ādīnaṃ ñāṇānuparivattitāya laddhaguṇakittanaṃ*), and are not unique or extraordinary qualities (*na āveṇikadhammā*). He then asks: “In all these, when there is the association of knowledge beginning with bodily actions and so on, what is the origin of wrong bodily deeds, and so on?” (*sabbasmīṃ hi kāyakamm’ ādike ñāṇānuparivattini kuto kāyaduccari’*

<sup>43</sup> It must be remembered that this SDA is used as a generic term for the primary old sources of the present *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, including the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, which came into existence only after the first century BCE. We are inclined to believe that such a list of eighteen items must have been included in this *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*. For further discussion, see Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. S V 75; etc.

*ādīnaṃ sambhavo*).<sup>45</sup> This confirms that Dhammapāla, the author of DAṬ, also denied the suitability of their inclusion in the list.<sup>46</sup>

Even the last item in the list, *n’atthi (Buddhassa Bhagavato) akusala-cittaṃ*, appears strange. *Akusala* are associated with the three unwholesome roots: greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). This is an attribute of the *arahant*. The absence of *akusala-citta* (mind free from unwholesome roots) is therefore shared by *arahants*. DAṬ in fact gives the meaning of ‘ignorant disinterestedness or indifference’ (*akusalacittanti aññāṇupekkhamāha*) (DAṬ III 257). The inclusion of all these four items in the list of DA is theoretically justifiable only on the strength that the Buddha too was an *arahant*. But this argument is obviously denied in DAṬ, when it says that because these items can be shared with other *arahants*, they are not ‘unique or special qualities’ (*na āveṇikadhammā*) of the Buddha.

These four items (absence of three kinds of *duccarita* and of *akusala-citta*) are not found in any other sources in Table III below. This characteristic alone will suffice to show that DA’s list is unique.

<sup>45</sup> DAṬ III 256: *Buddhānaṃyeva dhammā guṇā, na aññesanti buddhadhammā. Tathā hi te buddhānaṃ āveṇikadhammāti vuccanti. Tattha ‘natthi tathāgatassa kāyaduccarita’ntiādīnā kāyavacīmanoduccaritābhāvavacanaṃ yathādhikāraṃ kāyakammādīnaṃ ñāṇānuparivattitāya laddhaguṇakittanaṃ, na āveṇikadhammantara-dassanaṃ. Sabbasmiñhi kāyakammādi ke ñāṇānuparivattini kuto kāyaduccaritādīnaṃ sambhavo.*

<sup>46</sup> Commenting on these three kinds of wrong deeds, some scholars tend to equate the Chinese listing of 「一諸佛身無失。二口無失。三念無失。…」 found in the *Mahā-prajñāpāramita-sūtra* (摩訶般若波羅蜜經: T 8 255c, 395b) and the *Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (大智度論: T 25 247b, 407c, 680c) with the Pāli version of *n’atthi Tathāgatassa kāya-duccaritaṃ, ... vacī-duccaritaṃ, and mano-duccaritaṃ*, respectively. At the same time, the first item 身無失 is also given the meaning of *n’atthi khalitaṃ*, which is number 15 in the list of DA (III 994). Similarly, 口無失 is given the number 14, and 念無失, the number 13. They may be similar in meaning, but since the list of DA gives separate items altogether, and the *Mahāvīyuppati* also takes 身無失, 無失, and 念無失 to be equivalent to *nāsti tathāgatasya skhalitaṃ, nāsti ravitaṃ, and nāsti muṣitasmr̥titā (smṛtiḥ)*, respectively (see 翻譯名義大集, Dharma Drum Buddhist College, 法鼓佛教學院 <http://www.ddbc.edu.tw> Taipei 2011-03-29), the equation of 身無失, 口無失, and 念無失 with *n’atthi ... kāya-duccaritaṃ, n’atthi ... vacī-duccaritaṃ, and n’atthi ... mano-duccaritaṃ*, respectively, is not tenable. See Murakami, Shinkan & Oikawa, Shinkai [1986]: 222–225. Further, it must be pointed out that Dhammapāla, the author of DAṬ, also refuted the first three items in the list of DA as untenable, as shown elsewhere.

(iv-2) Mori points out that Buddhaghosa was critical in his writings and consulted various other sources when writing DA. He often cites views of other schools, including those of the Abhayagiri school, which are introduced in the text by terms like ‘*keci, apare, eke, aññe*’, and so on.<sup>47</sup> This shows that Buddhaghosa was not totally governed by SDA (including other old sources like the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, etc.) of the Mahāvihāra School, but was free to reconstruct the contents of the source material and even to introduce new exegeses for the sake of clarity and supplementation.<sup>48</sup> This amply demonstrates the thorough nature of Buddhaghosa, who appears to have left no stone unturned. It is therefore hard to expect that the passages containing some problematic inconsistencies, as seen above, were left without obvious comment, particularly from a commentator of Buddhaghosa’s calibre, had it been originally included in SDA or other old sources. Moreover, it is evident that he was quite aware of the existence of a list of eighteen items in Vim, which was in front of him when he was writing Vism. This also implies that Buddhaghosa had a knowledge of the eighteen items, at least according to Vim. There were therefore sufficient reasons and circumstances under which he could have taken note of the list and given satisfactory explanations, especially when the list of SDA was different from that of Vim.

(iv-3) Referring to the passage under review, the *Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (DAṬ) specifically states: *Ayaṃ ca Dīghabhāṇakānaṃ pāṭho ākulo viya*<sup>49</sup> (This reading of the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* looks somewhat confused). According to the above explanation, even the author of DAṬ found that the eighteen qualities mentioned in DA were not in accordance with the tradition with which Dhammapāla was familiar. It is well known that Buddhaghosa wrote his commentaries in accordance with the Mahāvihāra tradition, which accepted the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* as one of its representative exponents. We shall return to this later in this chapter.

(iv-4) When the contexts in which the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* occurs in the Pāli commentaries are examined, one important common feature emerges in all sources, with the exception of DA III 994 cited above: that is, the term is used to explain the spiritual attainments of the Buddhas, either with special reference to the fulfilment of *pāramī* or to his knowledge.

<sup>47</sup> See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 597 ff.

<sup>48</sup> See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 602–604, where he discusses one example in which Buddhaghosa has taken a view of the Abhayagirivāsins to supplement the view of his own school. See also Endo, T. [2013]: 181–208.

<sup>49</sup> DAṬ III 257.

DA III 993–994, on the other hand, mentions that Māra followed Siddhattha for six years and one additional year, even after Siddhattha attained Enlightenment, but could not find any fault in him (*Atha naṃ Māro Bodhisatta-kāle chabbassāni Buddha-kāle ekaṃ vassaṃ anubandhitvā kiñci vajjaṃ apassitvā idaṃ vatvā pakkāmi*).<sup>50</sup> The same verses as are seen at Sn vs 446 follow. This shows completely different circumstances under which the term *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* and its details are mentioned in DA. The *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā*, commenting on the above verses, makes no mention of it whatsoever.<sup>51</sup>

(v) The most compelling question is: Did the Theravādins develop the concept of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhamma* together with a list of eighteen items as an innovation of their own? Before dealing with this question, however, a summery table of eighteen items given by the various authorities is shown below:

Table III:

Explanatory Notes:

- \* Only those items which correspond to each other are indicated by numbers.
- \* References of Pāli texts are to those of the PTS edition unless otherwise specified.
- \* Abbreviations of the Pāli *Aṭṭhakathā* texts follow those adopted by Mori in his 〆一リ仏教註釈文献の研究 (*Pali bukkyō chūshaku-bunken no kenkyū*) (*A Study of the Pāli Commentaries*), Tokyo, 1984.

Abbreviations:

DA: *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (*Dīghaṭṭhakathā*) [DA III 994].

DAṬ: *Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* [DAṬ III 67, 257].

JinlkVn: *Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā* [JinlkVn 21].

Mvu: *Mahāvastu* [Mvu I 160].<sup>52</sup>

Mvy: *Mahāvyutpatti* [Mvy 135–153].<sup>53</sup>

Śata: *Śatasāhasrika*.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> DA III 993–994.

<sup>51</sup> SnA II 393.

<sup>52</sup> Edgerton, F. [1983]: 108.

<sup>53</sup> Edgerton, F. [1983]: 108.

<sup>54</sup> Taken from 水野弘元 (Mizuno, Kogen) [1954]: 295.

Vim: *Vimuttimaggā* [V.P. Bapat, op. cit., 65].

VismSn: *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya* [VismSn I 798].

頌揚: 頌揚聖教論 T 31 499c.

	DAṬ	DA	Jinlk	Vism Sn	Vim	Mvu	Śata	Mvy	頌揚
1	<i>Aṭṭamse Buddhassa Bhagavato appatthataññāṇaṃ</i>	4	1	1	1	1	16	16	13
2	<i>Anāgataṃse -do-</i>	5	2	2	2	2	17	17	14
3	<i>Paccuppannamse -do-</i>	6	3	3	3	3	18	18	15
4	<i>Sabbaṃ kāyakammaṃ ñāṇapubbaṅgamaṃ ñāṇanuparivattaṃ</i>	7	4	4	4	4	13	13	16
5	<i>Sabbaṃ vacīkammaṃ -do-</i>	8	5	5	5	5	14	14	17
6	<i>Sabbaṃ manokammaṃ -do-</i>	9	6	6	6	6	15	15	18
7	<i>Natthi chandassa hāni</i>	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	<i>Natthi dhammadesanāya hāni</i>	-	8	8	-	-	(8) -	-	(8) -
9	<i>Natthi viriyassa hāni</i>	11	9	10	8	8	9	8	9
10	<i>Natthi samādhissa hāni</i>	<sup>55</sup>	10	9	10	10	-	10	10
11	<i>Natthi paññāya hāni</i>	-	11	12	11	11	10	11	11
12	<i>Natthi vimuttiyā hāni</i>	-	12	11	12	12	11	12	12
13	<i>Natthi davā</i>	13	13	13	16	(13)	4	-	4
14	<i>Natthi ravā</i>	14	14	14	14	14	2	2	2
15	<i>Natthi apphūṭaṃ</i>	-	15	15	15	-	3	-	3
16	<i>Natthi vegayitattaṃ</i>	16	16	16	-	-	1	-	1
17	<i>Natthi abyāvaṭaṃmano</i>	17	17	17	17	-	(5) -	-	(5) -
18	<i>Natthi appaṭisaṅkhān- upekkhā</i>	-	18	18	18	17	6	6	6

<sup>55</sup> DA has *sati*.

From the above comparison, the following observations may be made:

- a) The Pāli tradition, perhaps the Mahāvihāra tradition (i.e., DAṬ, JinlkVn, and VismSn) excluding DA, seems to agree on the arrangement of items. This implies that the Mahāvihāra tradition is quite unique in that the details, including their sequence, are almost identical.
- b) DA has a different order within the Theravāda tradition and therefore stands out, though the items included appear to be somewhat similar to those in the other Pāli sources.
- c) The closest tradition to Theravāda among the other sources seems to be the *Mahāvastu*, particularly in the order of listing.
- d) The other sources, Śatasāhasrika and *Xianyang shengjiao lun* 顯揚聖教論, appear to belong to different traditions altogether.
- e) Though the order is different, all the classes of sources mentioned in Table III include the canonical enumeration of six characteristics of the Buddha (see above (iii)). This shows that the canonical tradition was continued into later traditions, irrespective of their classes of sources.

In his thorough comparison of the classification of ‘the Buddha’s eighteen special qualities’ in 1954, Mizuno provides three broad categories of its transmission, namely: (I) those listed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (般若經) texts; (II) those found in the Chinese translations of the Buddha’s biography, such as 修行本起經; and (III) those found in the Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* (大事), as well as in the Pāli texts. He further comments that many such lists are found in Mahāyāna texts, which is the first category. The items that are often found here may be summarized as follows:

- (1) a. 身無失, b. 口無失, c. 念無失, d. 無異相, e. 無不定心, f. 無不擇捨<sup>56</sup>
- (2) a. 欲無減, b. 精進無減, c. 念無減, d. 定無減, e. 慧無減, f. 解脫無減,  
g. 解脫知見無減
- (3) a. 身業智, b. 口業智, c. 意業智
- (4) a. 過去智, b. 未來智, c. 現在智

<sup>56</sup> 大智度論 (*Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sāstra*) (T 8 225c) has ‘無不知己捨心’ instead of ‘無不擇捨.’



Mizuno further comments that texts in category (I) list the items in the order (1), (2), (3), and (4); texts in category (II), (1), (2), (4), and (3), and texts in category (III), (4), (3), (2), (1).<sup>57</sup> The Pāli tradition basically follows category (III) above. For instance, DAṬ is in the following order: 1 (4-a), 2 (4-b), 3 (4-c), 4 (3-a), 5 (3-b), 6 (3-c), 7 (2-a), 8 (-), 9 (2-b), 10 (2-d), 11 (2-e), 12 (2-f), 13 (1-c), 14 (1-b), 15 (1-a), 16 (1-c), 17 (1-d), and 18 (1-f). Other texts like the *Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā* and the Sinhalese *Visuddhimārga-mahāsanya* also follow the same sequence, the former identical with that of DAṬ, and the latter with a slight difference in order of the items in category (2), though all items are identical. This suggests that the Pāli tradition of DAṬ and later texts has a close affinity with the *Mahāvastu*.

It is significant, as noted early, that the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (DA) appears to belong to a different tradition, even unlike the other Pāli texts. As Mizuno summarizes, the Theravāda tradition, including the *Vimuttimaggā*, is very similar to the tradition of the *Mahāvastu*, but differs from the other sources in sequence. Based on this, Mizuno conjectures that Pāli Buddhism would not have been the school that initiated the concept of the Buddha’s eighteen unique qualities or attributes.<sup>58</sup> While admitting that the presently available sources are insufficient to trace its development, he opines that the *Mahāvastu*, 修行本起經, and so on belong to the oldest stratum followed by the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (般若經) and others.<sup>59</sup> Mizuno also states that since 修行本起經 had already been translated in the second century and the *Mahāvastu* is of a similar age, the concept of the Buddha’s eighteen unique qualities would have been expounded in and around the first century CE.<sup>60</sup>

On the Theravāda scene, however, other factors should be taken into consideration too, and Mizuno’s contention that the Theravāda School was not the initiator of the concept must also be re-examined more closely.

<sup>57</sup> 水野弘元 (Mizuno Kogen) [1954]: 293.

<sup>58</sup> 水野弘元 (Mizuno Kogen) [1954]: 300.

<sup>59</sup> 水野弘元 (Mizuno Kogen) [1954]: 301.

<sup>60</sup> 水野弘元 (Mizuno Kogen) [1954]: 302, fn. 34.

#### IV. The origin of *Aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* from a Theravāda perspective

(A) What the *Dīgha-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* (DAṬ III 257) criticizes is the reading of the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*. This shows that the major deciding factor is centered on the question of whether any textual evidence can be found on the identity of these *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*. Is there any evidence to contradict that the *Dīgha-nikāya* and its commentary were the province of the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*? The function of *bhāṇakā* (reciters) changed as time progressed. In particular, after the *tipiṭaka* and their commentaries were committed to writing, they not only maintained their traditional function of memorizing and preserving respective texts and commentaries, but also attempted to give their own interpretations to certain doctrinal matters.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* contains some instances where the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* expressed different views from one of the major sources of DA called the *aṭṭhakathā*.<sup>62</sup> This raises two important points: first, different opinions of the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* came into being after the first century BCE, in other words after the *tipiṭaka* and their commentaries were written down.<sup>63</sup> Second, the author of DAṬ takes the passage under review in DA as the view of the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*. This shows that it was the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* who introduced the DA list. Further, as seen before, it is most likely that the refuted view of these *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* was found in the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, which, I strongly believe,<sup>64</sup> was introduced after the first century BCE. Whether these *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* were of Indian or Sri Lankan origin is difficult to determine,<sup>65</sup> given that we cannot rule out the possibility of monastic exchange between the two neighbouring countries, Jambudīpa and Laṅkā.

<sup>61</sup> Mori, Sodo [1984]: 280. Also see Mori, Sodo [1990]: 127; etc.

<sup>62</sup> For example, DA II 543, III 883, etc.

<sup>63</sup> This does not mean that the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* came into existence only after the first century BCE. The origins of the *bhāṇakas* may indeed go back to a much earlier period. However, it is assumed that when the oral tradition in transmitting the texts was the norm, their function was confined to the memorization and accurate transmission of their assigned texts. It is only after the texts were written down that they became free from the burden of memorizing and transmitting their texts. For discussions on this, see Mori, Sodo [1990]; Endo, T. [2013]: 47–81; and Norman, K. R. [1997]: 45; etc.

<sup>64</sup> Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45.

<sup>65</sup> If my inference is correct that the view of these *Dīgha-bhāṇakās* was found in the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, then the Sri Lankan *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* were the originators of the list in DA.

(B) The fact that DAṬ III 256 f makes some comments on *aṭṭhārasa-buddhadhammā* confirms that by the time of DAṬ, the concept, with all eighteen items, had been included in DA. Some scholars believe that Ācariya Dhammapāla, the author of DAṬ, lived sometime in the sixth or seventh century CE.<sup>66</sup> This would prove that all the items of *aṭṭhārasa-buddhadhammā* were already included in DA by that time. This points to the probability that even SDA (i.e., the old *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* together with the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*) did, in fact, contain those items. One may question, on the other hand, why Dhammapāla did not make any reference to DA in his UdA, ItA, VvA, or CpA, if the list was there, particularly when the term occurs in these texts and also when he had a knowledge of Buddhaghosa’s commentaries.<sup>67</sup> To this question, we may respond that Dhammapāla thought it appropriate to make his own comments in DAṬ, since the list was seen only in DA.<sup>68</sup>

(C) Presuming that the passage under review was a later interpolation, it would have come into being after Buddhaghosa’s time. This means that the concept of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* in Buddhist Sanskrit literature would have been known to the interpolator. At least Vim, which was close to the Mahāvihāra tradition, contained a list. The question, then, is why the interpolator did not adopt more popular items from the Buddhist Sanskrit sources, rather than making the list look complicated and problematic. This may imply that the Mahāvihāravāsins, or the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*, to be more precise, had a different objective to include the absence of *duccarita* in the Buddha. Moreover, some items in the DA list can be found in the various authorities, amounting at least to eleven (11) items (see (iii) above), with the majority coming from the canonical texts. This is the most puzzling question: why the *Sumaṅgalavāsini* included them in the list, despite obvious peculiarities and inconsistencies in the light of the standard listing that was to follow in the later Theravāda tradition.

We have discussed above some problems concerning the list in DA. The author of DAṬ denounces the list in DA and gives the following

<sup>66</sup> de Silva, Lily [1968]: lxxx; Pieris, Aloysius [1978]: 78; etc.

<sup>67</sup> See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 96–97. Cf. *ibid.* 536.

<sup>68</sup> This argument is based on the traditional view that Dhammapāla is the author of the *Paramatthadīpanī* (commentaries on the seven books of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*) and some of the sub-commentaries, including those on the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Dīgha-nikāya*. However, some scholars suggest that there were two Dhammapālas, one the commentator and the other a sub-commentator.

alternative list saying: ‘This reading is the correct one’ (*Ayam pana pāṭho anākulo*) [DAṬ III 257]:

*Atī’amse Buddhassa Bhagavato appaṭihataññam, anāgat’amse, paccuppan’amse. Imehi tīhi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato sabbaṃ kāyakammaṃ ñāṇapubbaṅgamaṃ ñāṇānuparivattati, sabbaṃ vacīkammaṃ, sabbaṃ manokammaṃ. Imehi chahi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato n’atthi chandassa hāni, n’atthi dhammadesanāya, n’atthi viriyassa, n’atthi samādhissa, n’atthi paññāya, n’atthi vimuttiyā. Imehi dvādasahi dhammehi samannāgatassa Buddhassa Bhagavato n’atthi davā, n’atthi ravā, n’atthi apphuṭam, n’atthi vegayitattam, n’atthi abyāvaṭamano, n’atthi appaṭisaṅkhā upekkhā ti.*<sup>69</sup>

This list is clearly more akin to that of Vim, or even to Mvu, than to that of DA in sequence. It is repeated at DAṬ III 67, where the author elaborates on some of the items:

*Tattha n’atthi davā ti khiḍḍadhippāyena kiriyā n’atthi. N’atthi ravā ti sahasa kiriyā n’atthi ti vadanti. Sahasā pana kiriyā davā. Aññaṃ karissāmī ti aññassa karaṇam ravā. N’atthi apphuṭan ti ñāṇena aphusitam n’atthi. N’atthi vegayitattan ti turitakiriyā n’atthi. N’atthi abyāvaṭamano ti niraṭṭhakaṃ cittasamudācāro n’atthi. N’atthi appaṭisaṅkhā-upekkhā ti aññan’upekkhā n’atthi. Keci pana ‘N’atthi dhammadesanāya hāni’ ti apaṭhitvā, ‘N’atthi chandassa hāni, n’atthi viriyassa hāni, n’atthi satiyā hāni’ ti paṭhanti.*

These explanations show that the author of DAṬ is well aware of other traditions prevalent at that time and he makes this clear by quoting the view of ‘some’ (*keci*) whose account of *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* differ from his own in some respects. It seems most likely that the ‘some’ (*keci*) which Dhammapāla refers to in the above passage are none other than the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* themselves, for their list, refuted by Dhammapāla, includes them (i.e., DA).<sup>70</sup>

The next task is to discover whether members of the Mahāvihāra School are also referred to as *keci* (‘some’) in other Pāli sources. I have pointed out that the members of the Mahāvihāra School are generally referred to as

<sup>69</sup> An identical list is also found at DAṬ III 67 as an explanation of the term *aṭṭhārasa-buddhadhammā* at DA III 875.

<sup>70</sup> See also de Silva, Lily [1968]: lix ff.

*ācariyā, keci therā / ācariyā*, and so on, and never simply as *keci*, and so on in Dhammapāla’s commentaries.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Mori demonstrates that anonymous titles like *keci* are found in Buddhaghosa’s commentaries in reference to those belonging to the Mahāvihāra School.<sup>72</sup> This demonstrates that terms like *keci* were employed even for some dissidents of the Mahāvihāra School.

The list of eighteen items in DA never became a standard list in the Theravāda tradition: even later Pāli works like the *Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā* [JinlkVn 21] (the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century CE),<sup>73</sup> and Sinhala works like the *Visuddhimārga Mahāsanya* of Parakkamabāhu II [1236–1270 CE]<sup>74</sup> (VismSn i 798)<sup>75</sup> give the same list as DAṬ. This suggests that post-Pāli commentarial texts including sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*s) and some Sinhala Buddhist works in the Theravāda tradition adopted Dhammapāla’s method of enumerating the eighteen items, and not that of DA. This may be because the Theravādins of the post-Pāli commentarial periods found inconsistencies and peculiarities in the DA list and, as such, incorporated Dhammapāla’s list as seen in DAṬ into their own tradition.

## V. Concluding remarks

Based on the obvious confusion and peculiarities of the list in DA, Mizuno has presented his suggestion that the Theravādins were not the initiators of the concept of ‘eighteen unique qualities of the Buddha.’ In fact, DA’s listing does not fall into any category Mizuno has shown. Historically speaking, there could be two sources that may determine the origin of this concept from a Theravāda perspective: the *Mahāvastu* and DA. While the date of the *Mahāvastu* is still debatable,<sup>76</sup> we can be more certain about the appearance

<sup>71</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 83–106.

<sup>72</sup> Mori, Sodo [1984]: 112–128.

<sup>73</sup> *Jinālaṅkāra-vaṇṇanā*, ed. W. Deepankara and B. Dhammapala, Bentota, Ceylon, [1913]. For the details of this text, see Malalasekera, G. P. [1958]: 109 ff. and Jayawardhana, Somapala [1994]: 33.

<sup>74</sup> See Mori, Sodo [1984]: 334.

<sup>75</sup> Bentara Saddhatissa, ed., Kalutara, Sri Lanka, 2 vols. [B. E. 2494, 1950].

<sup>76</sup> Jones, J. J. [1949]: xi writes: “... the *Mahāvastu* is not the composition of a single author written in a well-defined period of time. Rather, it is a compilation which may have been begun in the second century BCE, but which was not completed until the third or fourth century CE.”

of the DA list. As noted early, the list was provided by the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas*. It was likely included in the *Dīgha-mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, which came to be composed after the commitment of Buddhist texts to writing during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (103–102 BCE; 89–77 BCE). This indicates that the DA list would have come into being at the earliest around the beginning of the Common Era, and tallies with Mizuno’s inference. What must be re-examined is Mizuno’s argument that the difference between the DA list and those of others does not support the idea of the concept’s origin. This, however, does not explain why the Theravādins included this list in DA. Can it rather be taken that the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* were not aware of any list of eighteen items and that they provided all that is now in DA’s list of their own accord? Had the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* known of Mvu’s or even Vim’s list, they could simply have borrowed or emulated it. But the DA list is quite unique in its sequence and contents. At the very least we may conclude, based upon the discussions presented above, that Dhammapāla, in his DAṬ, may have been the first to emulate texts like the *Mahāvastu* in Theravāda Buddhism, but that there is no denial that the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* in DA had a distinct thinking in giving a unique list different from any of the mainstream. That DA’s list was the first to appear, however, is yet to be determined.

## Chapter 7

**The Buddha's *Tathāgatabala* and *Catuvesārajja*****I. Introduction**

In discussions of the Buddha's 'power' (*bala*), the commentarial texts distinguish two kinds of *bala*. One is 'knowledge power' (*ñāṇabala*) and the other is 'physical power' (*kāyabala*).<sup>1</sup> The formula most frequently met with in this connection is the 'ten powers of a Tathāgata' (*tathāgatabala*). When these two powers (*ñāṇabala* and *kāyabala*) merge together, the intellectual and physical capabilities and spiritual heights of a Buddha emerge. Since the Buddha's *kāyabala* has already been discussed separately, this chapter will be a continuation of the discussion of the Buddha's *ñāṇabala*. The commentaries include several kinds of knowledge in the classification of *ñāṇabala*, otherwise called *Buddhañāṇa*.<sup>2</sup> *Bala* (power) is considered knowledge, because it is unshakable and lends support to one who is endowed with it (*ñāṇam hi akampiyaṭṭhena upatthambhanaṭṭhena balan ti vuttam*).<sup>3</sup> The Buddha is called *balappatta* (one who has attained power).<sup>4</sup> This *balappatta* is equated with the Tathāgata's ten powers.<sup>5</sup> The Buddha's knowledge, designated as 'knowledge power' (*ñāṇa-bala*) according to the Pāli commentarial exposition, is often described as follows:

*Ñāṇabalaṃ pana pāliyaṃ tāva āgatameva. Dasabalañāṇaṃ, catu-  
vesārajjañāṇaṃ, aṭṭhasu parisāsu akampanañāṇaṃ, catuyoni-  
paricchedakañāṇaṃ, pañcagatiparicchedakañāṇaṃ. Samyuttake  
āgatāni tesattati ñāṇāni sattasattati ñāṇāni evaṃ aññānipi anekāni  
ñāṇasahassāni, etaṃ ñāṇabalaṃ nāma. (MA II 26; AA V 11; etc.)<sup>6</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> E.g., MA I 25; SA 43; AA V 25; PtsA III 624; BvA 42; VibhA 397; etc.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

<sup>3</sup> MA II 26; AA V 11; PtsA III 625; VibhA 397; etc.

<sup>4</sup> S I 110, 158; D II 157; etc.

<sup>5</sup> SA I 224: '*Balappattoti dasavidhaṃ ñāṇabalaṃ patto*,' etc.

<sup>6</sup> The sub-commentary to the *Papañcasūdanī* (MAṬ) states that the seventy-seven and forty-four kinds of knowledge are from the *Nidānavagga* (of the *Samyutta-nikāya*), while the seventy-three types are found in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and not in the

This passage includes the items described as ‘those transmitted in the [canonical] scriptures’: knowledge associated with the ten powers (*dasabala*), four kinds of self-confidence or intrepidity (*catuvesārajja*), unshakableness in the eight assemblies (*aṭṭhasu parisāsu akampana*), the division of four kinds of birth (*catuyoniparicchedaka*), and five destinies (*pañcagati-paricchedaka*). Further, it describes seventy-three types of knowledge (*tesattati ñāṇāni*), seventy-seven types of knowledge (*sattasattati ñāṇāni*), and numerous thousands of other types of knowledge (*aññānipi anekāni ñāṇasahassāni*) that are seen in the *Samyutta-nikāya* (*Ñāṇavatthu-sutta*: S II 56–60).<sup>7</sup>

## II. *Tathāgatabala* (the ‘ten powers of a Tathāgata’)

A standard exposition of *tathāgatabala* is that they are the powers only of the Tathāgata, and are not shared by others (e.g., MA II 25: *tathāgatabalānīti aññehi asādhāraṇāni tathāgatasseva balāni*). They are also the powers that have come down (*āgatabalāni*), just as [they had come down to] the previous Buddhas, through the accumulation of merit.<sup>8</sup> The expression *puññussayasampattiya* (through or by the accumulation of merit) is significant. The canonical texts are usually silent on the reasons the Buddha came to possess *tathāgatabala* (or *dasabala*).<sup>9</sup> It may simply be that the early Buddhists had a much closer experience of the Buddha and his enlightenment than the Buddhists of later times did. The Buddha was there in person, and people were able witness first-hand the highest virtues and wisdom attainable by man. He exemplified and demonstrated the possibility in this life of liberation from *saṃsāra*. They therefore felt no pressing need to conceptualize the Buddha’s identity and link his career to his past lives, unlike in later times, when their Master was long dead and gone. However, by the commentarial period, through the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpiṭaka*

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*Samyutta* (*Samyuttake āgatāni tesattati ñāṇāni sattasattati ñāṇāni*”ti vuttaṃ, tattha pana nidānavagge sattasattati āgatāni catucattārīsaṇca, tesattati pana paṭisambhidāmagge sutamayādāni āgatāni dissanti, na Samyuttake) (MAṬ (Be) II 19).

<sup>7</sup> This *sutta*, however, gives only forty-four (*catucattārīsa*) and seventy-seven (*sattasattati*) kinds of knowledge. Seventy-three (*tesattati*) kinds of knowledge can be found in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Pts I 1–3).

<sup>8</sup> MA II 25 = AA V 10 = PtsA III 624 = VibhA 397: *Tathāgatabalānīti aññehi asādhāraṇāni tathāgatass’ eva balāni. Yathā vā pubba-Buddhānaṃ balāni puññussayasampattiya āgatāni, tathā āgatabalānīti attho.*

<sup>9</sup> For example, M I 69 ff (*Mahāsihanāda-sutta*).



of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, the career of the Buddha was made more complex in line with the apotheosis of the Master, a distinct process separating the Buddha from other *arahants*. Consequently, an invention of former causes that would lead to the path of Buddhahood became a necessity. In fact, everything pertaining to the Buddha came to be viewed from a causal viewpoint. It is therefore not surprising that the attainment of *tathāgatabala* by a Buddha is now considered to be the result of merits accumulated in his previous lives. It agrees with the general trend of the Buddha-concept in the commentarial literature, where the Bodhisatta’s career is seen as primarily a testing ground for performing as many meritorious deeds as possible.

The practice of *pāramitā* (perfections) is a sum total of the requirements for the attainment of Buddhahood. The *pāramitās* are fulfilled by the Bodhisatta with two specific purposes in mind: the attainment of his own enlightenment and the mission of taking others across to the yonder shore of *saṃsāra*. To achieve the state of Buddhahood, the merits accumulated through virtuous deeds are of paramount importance. It is therefore said that the *pāramitā* are the necessary conditions for meritorious deeds (*puññasambhāra*) and for knowledge (*ñāṇasambhāra*).<sup>10</sup>

The *tathāgatabala* or *dasabala* is sometimes called *Buddhabala*. Hence, it is said that *Buddhabala* means the Buddha’s might or his ten powers (*buddha-balaṃ nāma buddhānubhāvo dasabalaññāni vā*).<sup>11</sup> The *Niddesa-aṭṭhakathā* states that they are unique or special to Buddhas alone (*tathāgatabalānan ti ādāyo āveṇikadhammavasena vuttā ti veditabbā*).<sup>12</sup> The Tathāgata’s ten powers are mentioned in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*; corresponding to this is the Chinese text *Foshuo shenmao xishu jing* 佛說身毛喜豎經 (T 17 592c–593b) translated by Weijing 惟淨 (10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century).

- (1) He knows realistically a possibility as a possibility and an impossibility as an impossibility (*thānañ ca thānato atthānañ ca atthānato yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (1. 於處非處以自智力 悉如實知 ...).
- (2) He knows realistically the causally connected results of all actions, whether they belong to the past, present, or future (*atītānāgata-paccuppannānaṃ kammamādānānaṃ thānaso hetuso vipākaṃ yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (6. 於諸有情 積集諸業 及其壽量 悉以正智稱量 如實一一了知 ...).

<sup>10</sup> ItA I 8.

<sup>11</sup> BvA 27.

<sup>12</sup> NdA I 269.

- (3) He knows realistically the courses of action leading to all states of existence (*sabbatthagāminiṃ paṭipadam yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (2. 一切所行 所至之道 悉以正智 如實了知 ...).
- (4) He knows realistically all worlds composed of various and diverse elements (*anekadhātunānādhātu-lokaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (3. 於種種界 無數世界 悉以正智 如實了知 ...).
- (5) He knows realistically the various spiritual propensities or dispositions of human beings (*sattānaṃ nānādhimuttikataṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (4. 於諸有情 所有無數種種信解 悉以正智稱量 如實一一了知 ...).
- (6) He knows realistically the maturity levels of the spiritual faculties of various human beings (*parasattānaṃ parapuggalānaṃ indriya-paropariyattaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (5. 於諸有情 差別諸根 悉以正智稱量 如實一一了知 ...).
- (7) He knows realistically the attainment of superconscious meditational levels such as *jhāna*, *vimokkha*, *samādhi* and *samāpatti* together with the defilements and purities associated with them and the means of rising from these superconscious states (*jhāna-vimokkha-samādhi-samāpattīnaṃ saṅkilesaṃ vodānaṃ vutthānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) (7. 一切禪定 解脫三摩地 三摩鉢底 染淨所起 悉以正智 如實了知 ...).
- (8) He has retro-cognitive powers extending up to several (many)<sup>13</sup> eons with the ability to recall details regarding past existences (... *aneke pi samvaṭṭavivaṭṭakappe...*, so *tato cuto idhūpapanno ti iti sākāraṃ sa-uddesaṃ anekavihiṭaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarati*) (9. 種種宿住 隨念智力 所謂能知 一生二生三四五生 ... 悉以正智 如實思念 一一了知 ...).
- (9) He has clairvoyant powers with the ability to see beings dying and being reborn subsequently in high or low states according to their own *kamma* (*dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta mānusa kenā satte passati cava māne upapajjamaṇe, hīne paṇīte ... yathākam’ mūpage satte pajānāti*) (8. 以淨天眼過於人眼 能觀世間一切有情生滅好醜 ... 即以天眼及以正智 悉見悉知...).
- (10) He has attained *cetovimutti* and *paññāvimutti*, having destroyed all mental defilements in this very life (*āsavaṇaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ*

<sup>13</sup> My translation is based on the idea expressed in the text, which reads ‘*aneke pi samvaṭṭavivaṭṭakappe...*’ Later texts are unambiguous about this time limit of the Buddha’s power of remembering former existences and that it extends to limitless numbers of former existences. See, for example, *Vism* 411, etc.

*cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭhe vā dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*)<sup>14</sup> (10. 諸漏已盡 非漏隨增 心善解脫 慧善解脫 於如是法。以自通力。成就所證 ...)。<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Lily de Silva’s translation in her article ‘The Buddha and Arahant Compared,’ 39 is adopted here, as it conveys the contents very clearly.

<sup>15</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo compares the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* with its Chinese version Foshuo shenmao xishu jing (佛說身毛喜豎經) and provides a table of corresponding points. Bhikkhu Anālayo [2011]: 109. The *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (阿毘達磨俱舍論: T 29 140b) has the following ten powers: 1) 處非處智力, 2) 業異熟智力, 3) 靜慮解脫等持等至智力, 4) 四根上下智力, 5) 種種勝解智力, 6) 種種界智力, 7) 遍趣行智力, 8) 宿住隨念智力, 9) 死生智力 and 10) 漏盡智力. See also Nakamura, Hajime 1981: 佛教語大辭典 (縮刷版) (Dictionary of Buddhist Terms, abridged version), Tokyo: Tōkyō-shoseki, 661. Cf. Poussin, Louis De La Vallee, trans. Gelong Lodro Sangpo 2012: 2223 f. Moreover, An Shigao’s 安世高 translation of 長阿含十報法經 (T 1 241b-c) also has the following: 1) 處處如有知當爾不爾處不處如有知, 2) 過去未來現在行罪處本種殃如有知, 3) 一切在處受行如有知自更慧行得知是, 4) 解定行亦定知從是縛亦知從是解亦知從是起如有知, 5) 如心願他家他人如有知, 6) 雜種無有量種天下行如有知, 7) 他家他根具不具如有知, 8) 無有量分別本上頭至更自念如有知, 9) 天眼已淨過度人間見人往來死生如有知, and 10) 已縛結盡無有使縛結。意已解脫從慧為行脫見法自慧證。更知受止盡生竟行所行已足。不復往來世間已度世如有知. On the other hand, 雜阿含經 (T 2 186c-7b), translated by Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅), has these ten powers: 1) 處非處如實知, 2) 於過去未來現在業法。受因事報如實知, 3) 禪解脫三昧正受。染惡清淨處淨如實知, 4) 知衆生種種諸根差別。如實知, 5) 悉知衆生種種意解。如實知, 6) 悉知世間衆生種種諸界。如實知, 7) 於一切至處道。如實知, 8) 於過去宿命種種事憶念。...我於彼處死此處生。彼處生此處死如是行。如是因。如是方。宿命所更悉如實知。9) 以天眼淨過於人眼。見衆生死時生時。...彼因彼緣。身壞命終。生善趣天上。悉如實知, and 10) 諸漏已盡。無漏心解脫慧解脫。現法自知身作證。我生已盡。梵行已立。所作已作。自知不受後有. The *Mahāvastu* gives the following list: 1) *sthānāsthānam*, 2) *aprimeyabuddhīnam sarvatragāminīm ca pratipadam*, 3) *nānādhātukaṃ lokam vidanti khyātam*, 4) *adhimuktinānātvam*, 5) *parapurusa-carita-kuśalāni*, 6) *karmabalam pratijānanti śubhāśubham*, 7) *kleśa-vyavadānam*, 8) *dhyāna-samāpattiṃ*, 9) *pūrvanivāsaṃ veti bahuprakāram*, and 10) *pari-suddha-divyanayanā bhavanti sarvakleśavināśaṃ prāpnonti* (Mvu I 159–160). The *Mahāvastu*’s list appears to correspond to that of 佛說身毛喜豎經 except that the *Mahāvastu*’s eighth item corresponds to the seventh and its ninth to the eighth. 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*) gives the following items: 1) 知處非處, 2) 知因緣業報, 3) 知諸禪定解脫, 4) 知衆生根善惡, 5) 知種種欲解故, 6) 知種種世間無量性, 7) 知一切至處道, 8) 先世行處憶念知, 9) 天眼分明得, and 10) 知一切漏盡 (T 25 75a). When compared with the list of the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, the following emerges: the numbers mentioned first are from 大智度論 followed by those from the Pāli: 1–1; 2–2; 3–7; 4–6; 5–(5?); 6–4; 7–3; 8–8; 9–9; 10–10. See also *The Treatise on the Great Virtue of Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)* by Étienne Lamotte, vol. I, chapters I–XV, 141.

*Dasabala* (ten powers), however, can be a designation not only for a *Tathāgata* but also for an *arahant*: ‘*Dasa bhante khīṇāsavassa bhikkhuno balāni, yehi balehi samannāgato khīṇāsavo bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayam paṭijānāti ‘khīṇā me āsavā’ ti*’ (A V 174). The canonical texts, for instance, list ten powers (*dasabala*) of an *arahant*. Similarities between the Buddha’s achievements and those of the *arahant* in early Buddhism stem from the notion that the Buddha, too, was an *arahant*. As is well known, one of the ‘nine virtues or titles’ (*navaguṇa*) of the Buddha is the epithet *arahant*. In the earliest sources, the Buddha is presented more closely to the *arahant* in terms of attainments. The sole difference between them is often said to be that the Buddha is the discoverer/shower of the ancient path (*maggakkhāyī*),<sup>16</sup> while disciples are the followers of that path. Due, perhaps, to the broad generalization of the Buddha’s attributes depicted in early canonical sources, in recent years some scholars have tried to show the so-called “indistinguishable”<sup>17</sup> natures of the Buddha and the *arahant* in their attainments through examining the language of expressions.<sup>18</sup> Katz describes his study as ‘an analysis of the language of talking about the *arahant*.’<sup>19</sup> Namikawa has shown that some of the expressions used for the Buddha are equally applicable to the *arahants*, such as *Sāriputta*, and so on, but some are not. He points out that words like *cakkkhumant*, *lokanātha*, *sugata*, *appaṭipuggala*, *ādiccabandhu*, and so on, are used only for the Buddha even in the *gāthās* of texts like the *Suttanipāta*, *Sagāthāvagga* of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, *Dhammapada*, *Theragāthā*, and *Therīgāthā* which are considered to belong to the old stratum of the Canon.<sup>20</sup> On the above grounds, however, can it be said that the Buddha and *arahants* are at the same level in their attainments? If the question pertains to what is said of an *arahant*, then both have qualities and attainments required for an *arahant*, because the Buddha was also an *arahant*. But if the question is whether any *arahant* has the same depth of knowledge of the world as the Buddha is supposed to possess, then the answer seems to be in the negative. An apt answer to such a question can be found in the *Simṣapā-sutta* (S V 437), where the Buddha shows that what he knows with higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) is much greater than what he has taught to the monks. The *arahant*’s ten powers are as follows:

<sup>16</sup> E.g., M III 6.

<sup>17</sup> Katz, N. [1982]: 146.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Namikawa, T. (並川孝儀) [1991]: 289 (492)–304 (477); Takeda, R. (武田龍) [1991]: 51–74. Takeda’s aim in his article is to see the functions of oral tradition of transmission by examining expressions (language) employed in the text, and so on.

<sup>19</sup> Katz, Nathan N. [1982]: xvii.

<sup>20</sup> Namikawa, T. (並川孝儀) [1991]: 297 (484).

- (1) An arahant sees all component things as impermanent (*aniccato sabbe saṅkhārā ... sudiṭṭhā*).
- (2) He sees all sense pleasures as a pit of burning embers (*aṅḡarakāsūpamā kāmā ... sudiṭṭhā*).
- (3) His mind is inclined towards seclusion and renunciation (*viveka-ninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti vivekaṇaṃ vivekapabbhāraṃ vivekaṭṭhaṃ nekkhamma-abhirataṃ byantībhūtaṃ sabbaso āsavaṭṭhāniyehi dhammehi*).
- (4) He has practiced the four stations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā ... subhāvitā*).
- (5) He has practiced the four-fold right exertions (*cattāro sammappadhānā*).
- (6) He has practiced the four bases of psychic powers (*cattāro iddhipādā*).
- (7) He has developed the five spiritual faculties (*pañcendriyāni*).
- (8) He has developed the five spiritual powers (*pañca balāni*).
- (9) He has developed the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅgā*).
- (10) He has cultivated the noble eight-fold path (*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*).<sup>21</sup>

A comparison between the ten powers of a Tathāgata and those of an *arahant*, including the language of expressions, reveals that the *tathāgatabala* differ somewhat from the powers of an *arahant*, though their contents appear to be similar. Of the ten powers of the *arahant* listed above, numbers (4) to (10) constitute the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*).<sup>22</sup> The canonical texts, at the same time, have various lists of such powers (*bala*), comprising seven,<sup>23</sup> five,<sup>24</sup> or even just one item.<sup>25</sup> This again suggests that such powers were collected and subsequently combined into a group of ten. After comparing the powers of the Buddha and the *arahant*, Katz comments: “there is nothing of which a Tathāgata is capable, of which an *arahant* is not capable” and concludes: “Our analysis of these canonical lists, then, supports our thesis of the significant identity of the Buddha and the *arahant*.”<sup>26</sup> Knowingly or unknowingly, he overlooks a very significant aspect in his analysis, namely the depth of their respective knowledge.

<sup>21</sup> A V 174; de Silva, L. [1987]: 42.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M II 11–12.

<sup>23</sup> D III 283: *satta-khīṇāsavabalāni*.

<sup>24</sup> S V 249.

<sup>25</sup> D III 78 (*bhikkhubala*).

<sup>26</sup> Katz, N. [1982]: 145.

Moreover, rather than relying for his conclusion on the sources that apparently incorporate doctrinal points of late development in the Canon (mainly the four *Nikāyas*, in this case), he should also have drawn from other sources, which would negate and contradict his own conclusion. According to de Silva, for instance, in comparison with the retro-cognitive and clairvoyant abilities of the *arahant* (i.e., [8] and [9] of the *tathāgatabala*), and according to the *Aggivacchagotta-sutta*,<sup>27</sup> the Buddha seems to have unlimited retro-cognitive and clairvoyant abilities: he says that he can see as far as he wishes to see (*yāvadeva ākaṅkhāmi*).<sup>28</sup> With regard to (5) and (6) in the list, she concludes that though *arahants* with *chaḷabhiññā* are said to have the power of mind-reading, nowhere in the Pāli Canon is it stated that *arahants* have the ability to read the spiritual propensities and maturity levels of other individuals’ spiritual faculties.<sup>29</sup> In this regard, several *suttas* in the Canon state that only the Buddha is capable of teaching the Dhamma for the benefit of the listener.<sup>30</sup> Finally, she observes that this special power of knowing a possibility as a possibility and an impossibility as an impossibility is never mentioned as a knowledge of the *arahant*. The Buddha’s ability, as the greatest teacher, to probe into the deepest recesses and potentialities of the human mind, as Lily de Silva puts it (regarding [5] and [6] in the above list) is a quite distinct spiritual attainment pertinent only to the Buddha. Because of this ability, he is acclaimed as the incomparable tamer of men (*anuttaro purisadammasārathī*) or the teacher of gods and men (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*). The Buddha knows that what he preaches will definitely lead one beyond the yonder shores of *saṃsāra*.

To sum up our discussions, let us refer to the *Mahāsakuludāyī-sutta*. This *sutta* gives five reasons the Buddha’s disciples revere, respect, honor, and esteem him: The Buddha is endowed with: (1) higher morality (*adhisīla*), (2) surpassing knowledge-and-vision (*ñāṇadassana*), and (3) higher wisdom (*adhipaññā*). He instructs and teaches his disciples in the (4) Four Noble Truths (*ariyasaccāni*) and (5) thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*); eight deliverances (*vimokkhā*); eight spheres of mastery

<sup>27</sup> M I 482.

<sup>28</sup> de Silva, L. [1987]: 40.

<sup>29</sup> de Silva, L. [1987]: 40.

<sup>30</sup> See de Silva, L. [1987]: 40–41. She cites several instances of this nature found in the Canon. In the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Pṭs I 133–134) this knowledge is considered as one of the six knowledges of the Buddha not shared (by others) (*asādhārana-ñāṇa*). Even in the *Aṭṭhakathā* texts the *indriyaparopariyatta-ñāṇa* is regarded as knowledge not common to the disciple. See, for example, PṭsA III 630; KvA 63; etc.



(*abhibhāyatana*); ten spheres of the devices (*kasiṇāyatana*); four trances (*jhānāni*); and six higher knowledges (*abhiññā*).<sup>31</sup> Three aspects of the Buddha’s personality emerge: first, the Buddha is a teacher who understands how to instruct disciples in what is right and what is not; second, he himself is of a high moral standard; and third, he is endowed with surpassing knowledge. Later works elaborated on these areas to a great extent.

The role or function of the Tathāgata’s ten powers is described in the canonical texts as follows: “The Tathāgata, by virtue of the possession of these powers, claims leadership over others, roars a lion’s roar in assemblies and sets in motion the Brahma-wheel.”<sup>32</sup> The identical phrase is repeated in relation to the *catuvesārajjā* in the texts. In his *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā*, Dhammapāla offers a somewhat different interpretation of the function of these two aspects of *Buddha-ñāṇa*. He states that the powers are the field of ‘wisdom,’ while the (four) confidences are the field of compassion (*tattha paññā-khettaṃ balāni, karuṇā-khettaṃ vesarajjāni*). He goes on to say that by the combination of powers, [the Buddha] is not conquered by others; by the combination of confidences, he conquers others. The successful accomplishment of a teacher comes through the powers; the successful accomplishment of a dispensation comes through the confidences; the accomplishment of the Jewel of Buddhahood comes through the powers; and the accomplishment of the Jewel of the Dhamma comes through the confidences.<sup>33</sup> This passage shows that the *tathāgatabala* is an endowment a Buddha will come to possess as a consequence of his spiritual attainments, while the four *vesārajjas* are the qualities which will provide him with the ability and confidence to teach for the benefit of others. Buddhaghosa also comments that the Buddha teaches the Dhamma by various methods, because he is endowed with the four confidences, among other things.<sup>34</sup> A similar description of the functions of *tathāgatabala* and *catu-vesārajjā* is also found in a simile of the one (i.e., a Buddha) who is possessed of the strength of a *nisabha* (bull), at VvA 83 and VibhA 398. Such a distinction, indeed, conforms to the general trend found in the commentarial literature, where *mahāpaññā* and *mahākaruṇā* are two important aspects of Buddhahood.

<sup>31</sup> M II 9–22.

<sup>32</sup> M I 70–72: ‘*idampi, sārīputta, tathāgatassa tathāgatabalaṃ hoti yaṃ balaṃ āgama tathāgato āsabhaṃ ṭhānaṃ paṭijānāti, parisāsu sīhanādaṃ nadati, brahmacakkaṃ pavattetī*,’ etc.

<sup>33</sup> ItA I 16: ‘*Tesu balasamāyogena parehi na abhibhuyyati, vesārajjasamāyogena pare abhibhavati. Balehi satthusampadāsiddhi, vesārajjeḥi sāsanasampadāsiddhi. Tathā balehi buddharatanasiddhi, vesārajjeḥi dhammaratanasiddhī*’.

<sup>34</sup> Vism 534.

Commenting on the word *cakka* in *brahamacakkaṃ pavatteti* at M I 69 and elsewhere, the *Papañcasūdanī*,<sup>35</sup> *Manorathapūraṇī*,<sup>36</sup> and *Sammohavinodanī*<sup>37</sup> also bring out two aspects of Buddhahood, namely, *paññā* and *karuṇā*. *Cakka* is *dhammacakka*, which is of two kinds; *pañvedha-ñāṇa* (penetration knowledge) and *desanā-ñāṇa* (teaching knowledge). The commentarial texts further state that the former (*pañvedha-ñāṇa*) is produced by understanding and brings his own noble fruition, whereas the latter (*desanā-ñāṇa*) is produced by compassion and brings about the noble fruition of disciples (*tattha paññāpabhāvitam attano ariyaphalāvaham pañvedaññānam, karuṇāpabhāvitam sāvakaṇam ariyaphalāvaham desanāññānam*).<sup>38</sup> After explaining both knowledges, the texts conclude that *pañvedha-ñāṇa* is supramundane (*lokuttara*) and *desanā-ñāṇa* is mundane (*lokiya*), but neither are shared by others and are the knowledge of Buddhas alone (*ubhayam pi pan’ etam aññehi asādhāraṇam, Buddhānam yeva orasaṃ ñāṇam*). Here, too, *paññā* and *karuṇā* of Buddhahood are emphasized.

The taming of others by reading their mental dispositions and propensities is also discussed as one of the ten powers. While admitting that some of the powers are common to disciples, the commentarial texts point out that the knowledge of the maturity of others’ spiritual faculties is a knowledge not shared by others (*indriyaparopariyattiññāṇam asādhāraṇam*); other knowledges (in the ten powers of the Tathāgata) are both shared and not shared (*sesaṃ sādāhāraṇaṃ ca asādhāraṇaṃ ca*). The disciples know ‘possibility and impossibility,’ and so on, in a limited sense, but the Tathāgatas know [them] comprehensively or limitlessly (*ñhāñhāñāḍḍini hi sāvakā padeseṇa jānanti, tathāgata nippadesena*).<sup>39</sup> Incidentally, the above passage of the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* is significant in that it is an answer to the thesis proposed by the school of Andhakas;<sup>40</sup> this position upheld by the Theravādins is supported by other commentarial texts as well. For example, the *Saddhammappakāsini* says that *indriyaparopariyattaññāṇa* is not shared by disciples in every way (*indriyaparopariyattaññāṇam pana sabbathā’ pi sāvakehi asādhāraṇam eva*).<sup>41</sup> The text further states that the

<sup>35</sup> MA II 28.

<sup>36</sup> AA V 12.

<sup>37</sup> VibhA 399–400.

<sup>38</sup> See also PtśA III 627.

<sup>39</sup> KvA 63; SA III 263; etc.

<sup>40</sup> This Andhaka school is almost on all occasions refuted in the Pāli commentaries. As a source, see Mori, Sodo [1984] 169–173.

<sup>41</sup> PtśA III 630.



powers of the Tathāgata are immeasurable, in the sense of excessiveness and incomparability (*adhimattaṭṭhena atuliyatṭhena appameyyāni*). The *Sammohavinodanī* states that *indriya-paropariyatta-ñāṇa* and *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* (knowledge of habitat and inherent tendency) constitute one kind of power knowledge (*bala-ñāṇa*).<sup>42</sup> The *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* specifically states that all Buddhas come to possess the *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa* by fulfilling the perfections and the attainment of omniscient knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

Discrepancies in expressions between the canonical lists of *dasabala* of the Buddha and those mentioned in the commentarial texts are also found in the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*.<sup>44</sup> The text uses *āsayānussaya-ñāṇa* as the sixth power, which, according to VibhA 461–462, is another term for *indriyaparopariyatta-ñāṇa*, while the term *cutūpapatti-ñāṇa*, used as the ninth item in the list, is identical to *dibbacakkhu*.<sup>45</sup> Although they use different terminology for some items, the commentarial texts, too, follow the canonical classification of the ten powers.

One of the areas of development of the Buddha-concept in the commentarial literature centers on the Buddha as a teacher: the Buddha is the supreme teacher, not only of men but also of divine beings (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*). He possesses the ability to tame beings. The epithet *purisadammasārathī* given to the Buddha says it all. Taming of beings begins with an investigation into their levels of spiritual maturity. The Buddha thereafter comes to know the most suitable and effective device for taming them. This is where the ability to discern the habitat and inherent tendency (*āsayānusaya*), as well as the maturity levels of others’ spiritual faculties (*indriyaparopariyatta*), plays a pivotal role. It constitutes the sixth power in the list of ten *tathāgatabalas* and is one of the six knowledges not shared by others (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*).

The intention behind these classifications is to place emphasis upon the greatness and magnitude of the Buddha as a teacher. The *Apadāna* specifically refers to these dispositions; and by its knowledge, the Buddha preaches the Dhamma.<sup>46</sup> The commentarial texts record a view of ‘dissenters’ (*paravādī*),

<sup>42</sup> VibhA 461–462.

<sup>43</sup> DhP III 426.

<sup>44</sup> BvA 27.

<sup>45</sup> See D I 82 = M I 248.

<sup>46</sup> Ap I 28.

who believe that there is no separate knowledge called ‘knowledge of the ten powers’; it is only one aspect of omniscient knowledge (*dasabalaññāṇaṃ nāma pāṭiyekkam n’ atthi; sabbaññutaññāṇass’ evāyam pabhedo ti*). As noted earlier, the Theravāda position on this is that they are separate kinds of knowledge. In this instance, the commentarial texts clearly set out the differences between them:

Each kind of knowledge of the ten powers knows only its own function, while omniscient knowledge knows both that and the rest (*dasabalaññāṇaṃ hi sakasakakiccaṃ eva jānāti. Sabbaññutaññāṇaṃ taṃ pi tato avasesaṃ pi jānāti*). Of the knowledge of the ten powers in successive order, the first knows only reasons and non-reasons (*kāraṇākāraṇaṃ*); the second, *kamma* intervals and [*kamma*]-result intervals (*kammantara-vipākantaraṃ*); the third, the delimitation of *kamma* (*kammaparicchedaṃ*); the fourth, the reason for the difference of the elements (*dhātunānattakāraṇaṃ*); the fifth, inclinations and resolves of beings (*sattānaṃ ajjhāsayādhimuttiṃ*); the sixth, the sensitiveness and dullness of the faculties (*indriyānaṃ tikkhamudu-bhāvaṃ*); the seventh, the *jhānas*, etc., together with their defilements, etc., (*jhānādīhi saddhiṃ tesam saṅkilesādiṃ*); the eighth, the continuity of aggregates formerly lived (*pubbe nivutthakhandhasantatiṃ*); the ninth, death, and rebirth-linking of beings (*sattānaṃ cutipaṭi-sandhiṃ*); and the tenth, the definition of the truths (*sacca-paricchedaṃ*). But, omniscient knowledge knows what is to be known by those and what is beyond that (*sabbaññutaññāṇaṃ pana etehi jānitabbañ ca tato uttariñ ca pajānāti*); it does not perform all their functions (*etesam pana kiccaṃ na sabbaṃ karoti*). For that cannot bring absorption by being *jhāna* (*taṃ hi jhānaṃ hutvā appetuṃ na sakkoti*); it cannot transform by miraculous power (*iddhi hutvā vikubbituṃ na sakkoti*); it cannot put down the defilements by being the path (*maggo hutvā kilese khepetuṃ na sakkoti*).<sup>47</sup>

The Theravādins further question the ‘dissenters’ (*paravādī*) on the issues of whether knowledge of the ten powers is accompanied by *vitakka* (applied thought) and *vicāra* (sustained thought), or is without *vitakka* and with *vicāra*, or without both; or whether it is of the *kāmāvacara* (sense sphere), the *rūpāvacara* (fine-material sphere), or the *arūpāvacara* (immaterial sphere); or whether it is *lokiya* (mundane) or *lokuttara* (supramundane). The ‘dissenters’ will say, if they know [rightly] (*jānanto*), that the first seven

<sup>47</sup> MA II 31–32 = AA V 16–18 = PtsA III 629–630; VibhA 464.

kinds of knowledge are accompanied by *vitakka* and *vicāra*; the next two are without *vitakka* and *vicāra*; and as for the knowledge of the destruction of cankers, it may be with *vitakka* and *vicāra*, or without *vitakka* and with *vicāra*, or without both. Moreover, the first seven are of the sense sphere, the next two are of the fine-material sphere, and the last one is supramundane. But they are of the opinion that the omniscient knowledge is only accompanied by *vitakka* and *vicāra*. It is only of the sense sphere and is mundane. Therefore, the Theravādins say that knowledge of the ten powers and omniscient knowledge are separate.<sup>48</sup> The texts finally elaborate on the ten powers one by one, and show that through these ten powers the Tathāgata knows those capable of being delivered and leads them gradually along the path of liberation.<sup>49</sup> Here emphasis is placed on the Buddha’s quality as a teacher, which is indeed in conformity with the canonical explanations found, for instance, in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*.

### III. *Catuvesārajja* (four kinds of self-confidence or intrepidity)

The *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* (M I 72) continues that the Buddha has absolute confidence and abides therein that no-human, nor deva, nor Māra, nor Brahmā, nor anyone in the world can accuse him. The Chinese passages that correspond to these are also found in the *Foshuo shenmao xishu jing* 佛說身毛喜豎經 (T 17 593b-c):

- (1) of being not fully enlightened (*sammāsambuddhassa te paṭijānato ime dhammā anabhisambuddhā*) (1. 證一切智 此法彼法 無所不知);
- (2) of not being completely free from all defilements (*khīṇāsavassa te paṭijānato ime āsava aparikkhīṇā*) (2. 諸漏已盡);
- (3) that the things declared by him as stumbling blocks or dangers do not in fact constitute stumbling blocks or dangers (*ye kho pana te antarāyikā dhammā vuttā te paṭisevato nālaṃ antarāyāya*) (3. 我說貪欲是障道法);
- (4) that the purpose for which the Dhamma is taught, i.e., the destruction of *dukkha*, is not achieved by one who follows it (*yassa kho pana te atthāya dhammo desito so na niyyāti takkarassa sammā dukkhakkhayāya*) (4. 爲諸聲聞。說正道法。而能出要 盡苦邊際).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See Nāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1987]: 212–213.

<sup>49</sup> MA II 32 = AA V 17–18 = PtsA III 629–630.

<sup>50</sup> The Chinese list is somewhat different from the Pāli one. For instance, the first item in the Chinese translation reads ‘all-knowing knowledge’ (一切智) and it further says

The text further states that because of these fourfold confidences, the Buddha approaches the eight assemblies (*aṭṭha-parisa*) comprising humans and non-humans and enters them, but no fear, nor nervousness would come upon him (*tatra vata maṃ bhayaṃ vā sārājjam vā okkamissatīti nimittam etaṃ Sāriputta na samanupassāmi*).

The commentary on this section notes that ‘four kinds of confidence or intrepidity’ means the opposite of timidity. It is the name for the knowledge of joy that has arisen in one who reflects attentively on the state of timidity in the four instances’ (*Vesārājjānīti ettha sārājjapaṭipakkho vesārājjam, catūsu thānesu sārājjābhāvaṃ paccavekkhantassa uppannasomanassam-ayaññassetam nāmaṃ*).<sup>51</sup> The Pāli commentaries do not usually associate these four kinds of intrepidity with the *tathāgatabala*, unlike MVŚ, which clearly ascribes them to some powers:

如是所說十力四無所畏。一一力攝四無畏。一一無畏攝十力故則有四十力四十無畏。然前說初無畏即初力。第二無畏即第十力。第三無畏即第二力。第四無畏即第七力者。(T 27 159a) ([The relationship] between the ten powers [of the Tathāgata] and [his] fourfold fearlessness is explained thus: each power is embodied in [each of] the fourfold fearlessness and each fearlessness is embodied in [each of] the ten powers; therefore there are forty powers and forty kinds of fearlessness. Like previously explained, the first fearlessness is the first power; the second fearlessness corresponds to the tenth power; the third fearlessness corresponds to the second power, and the fourth fearlessness equals the seventh power).<sup>52</sup>

A comparison between the Theravādin and the Sarvāstivāda School concepts of the Tathāgata’s ten powers suggests that the concept developed gradually, particularly in the enumeration of forty powers and forty types of fearlessness.

The Pāli commentaries, on the other hand, do not dwell on this aspect of the spiritual attainments of the Buddha as much as, for instance, they do on his omniscient knowledge (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*) or ten powers (*dasabala*).

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that there is ‘nothing he does not know’ (無所不知). The third item is that ‘lust and desire’ are a hindrance to the path of the Dharma (我說貪欲是障道法). The other two correspond relatively well to the Pāli list. MVŚ (阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論) has the following: 1) 正等覺無畏, 2) 漏永盡無畏, 3) 說障法無畏, 4) 說出道無畏 (T 27 158a).

<sup>51</sup> MA II 33 = AA III 7.

<sup>52</sup> See also Kawamura, K. (河村孝照) [1975]: 306–307.

The reason for the limited treatment of the subject may be that all the aspects included in the four self-confidences of the Buddha are minutely dealt with individually under different types of *Buddha-ñāṇa*.

Buddhaghosa, explaining the word *vesārajjappatta* (attainment of self-confidences), simply states that it is the attainment of the state of being self-possessed or confident (*visārada-bhāvaṃ patto*),<sup>53</sup> or that *vesārajja* is the opposite of timidity (*sārajjapaṭipakkho vesārajjaṃ*).<sup>54</sup> Dhammapāla, meanwhile, does not comment on the meanings of *vesārajja* in his *Paramatthadīpanī*, except for passing references thereto as one aspect of the Buddha’s spiritual attainments. However, he seems to have a clear understanding of the function of *catu-vesārajja* when he says that the Buddha’s self-confidences belong to the field of compassion (*karuṇā-khettaṃ vesārajjāni*).<sup>55</sup>

When the Buddha is possessed of the four kinds of intrepidity (*catu-vesārajja*), he has no fear and is confident in how to conduct himself before a crowd. The notion of the ‘knowledge of unshakable confidence before the eight assemblies’ (*aṭṭhasu parisāsu akampanaññāṇaṃ*) is thus related to the *catu-vesārajja*. As the Buddha has self-confidence, he does not fear them and is unshakable before them. These eight assemblies include those of nobles, Brahmins, householders, recluses, of gods of the heaven of the Four Great Kings, of gods of the heaven of the Thirty-three, of Māra’s retinue, and of Brahmās.<sup>56</sup>

#### IV. Concluding remarks

In the process of his deification in the commentarial literature, the Tathāgata’s powers are elevated to new heights. Classifications become segmented and detailed, especially in line with the emphasis placed on great wisdom (*mahāpaññā*) and great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). This trend developed further, going into the Sarvāstivāda School. Unlike in the Theravāda tradition, this school came to include the Tathāgata’s ten powers along with the

<sup>53</sup> DA I 278. See also Pts A III 617.

<sup>54</sup> MA II 33; SA II 45; AA III 7; etc.

<sup>55</sup> ItA I 16.

<sup>56</sup> M I 72.

eighteen special attributes of the Buddha (*aṣṭādaśa-āveṇika-buddhadharmā*) and four kinds of confidence (*catuvesārajja*), for instance. Furthermore, forty kinds of powers and forty kinds of fearlessness (四十力四十無畏) are referred to in the Sarvāstivāda literature.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda schools seem to have taken different paths, despite having their origins and roots in the same early canonical texts.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Guang Xing [2005]: 39.

## Chapter 8

The Buddha's Eye (*Cakkhu/Cakṣu*)

## I. Introduction

According to the *Niddesa*, the Buddha is said to possess ‘five kinds of eyes’ (*pañca-cakkhūni*): *maṃsa-cakkhu*, *dibba-cakkhu*, *paññā-cakkhu*, *buddha-cakkhu*, and *samanta-cakkhu*,<sup>1</sup> although emphasis on this aspect is generally over-shadowed by the Buddha's other attributes. These eyes are all referred to individually in the canonical texts. For instance, *samantacakkhu* (Vin I 5,6; D II 39; M I 168; S I 137 It 33; etc.), *buddhacakkhu* (D II 38; etc.), *paññācakkhu* (A IV 292; A II 144; etc.), *dibbacakkhu* (D II 20, 176; M III 175; S II 276; etc.), which is one aspect of the *tevijjā* (threefold knowledge), and *dharmacakkhu* (D I 86; M I 380; etc.) are found in the Canon. The concept of ‘five eyes’ is clearly evident in the *Niddesa* and texts like the *Sangīti-sutta*, where a group of three (*tīṇi cakkhūni*, *maṃsacakkhu*, *dibba-cakkhu*, *paññācakkhu*: D III 219) is found, and appears to have played an intermediary role prior to the more mature and detailed stage of development in the Theravāda tradition. Thus, while some commentaries<sup>2</sup> give an identical classification of five eyes to that given in the *Niddesa*, most of the commentarial texts, conceptually elaborating on the idea of the Buddha's five eyes, provide new classifications and descriptions not found in the Canon.

<sup>1</sup> Nd I 45: *Passāmi ti maṃsacakkhunā pi passāmi, dibbacakkhunā pi passāmi, paññā-cakkhunā pi passāmi, buddhacakkhunā pi passāmi, samantacakkhunā pi passāmi*; 354: *Vivaṭacakkhū ti Bhagavā pañcahi cakkhūhi vivaṭacakkhu, maṃsacakkhunā pi vivaṭacakkhu, dibbacakkhunā pi vivaṭacakkhu, paññācakkhunā pi vivaṭacakkhu, buddhacakkhunā pi vivaṭacakkhu, samantacakkhunā pi vivaṭacakkhu*; 448: *Bhagavā pañcahi cakkhūhi cakkhumā; maṃsacakkhunā pi cakkhumā, dibbena cakkhunā pi cakkhumā, paññācakkhunā pi cakkhumā buddhacakkhunā pi cakkhumā, samantacakkhunā pi cakkhumā*; II 235; etc. Here, the adjective *vivaṭa* (open or clear) is used to describe the Buddha's eye, in the sense of the Blessed One [having] open or clear sight because of the five eyes.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., ThagA II 177.

While the Pāli commentarial exposition on ‘eye’ (*cakkhu*) will be discussed shortly, the Sanskrit tradition, together with its Chinese translation, provides a consistent list of five eyes (*pañca-cakṣu*). For instance, the *Mahāvastu* has the following five: *katamāni pañca || māṃsacakṣuḥ divyacakṣuḥ prajñā-cakṣuḥ dharmacakṣuḥ buddhacakṣuḥ ||* (Mvu I 158). The *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā* also lists *māṃsacakṣus*, *divyacakṣus*, *prajñācakṣus*, *dharmacakṣus*, and *buddhacakṣus* (17). In the Chinese translations of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, the list is often given as follows: the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (大智度論 T 25 347a) by Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 402–405<sup>3</sup> lists: 肉眼, 天眼, 慧眼, 法眼, 佛眼 (*māṃsacakṣu*, *divyacakṣu*, *prajñācakṣu*, *dharmacakṣu*, and *buddhacakṣu*); so do the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (大般若波羅多經: T 5 15b) by Xuanzang 玄奘 659<sup>4</sup> and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (放光般若經: T 8 9a) by Mokṣala 無叉羅 or, 無羅叉 291.<sup>5</sup> A Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara* (佛說普曜經: T 3 532b) by Dharmarakṣa 法護 308<sup>6</sup> gives the same list: 肉眼, 天眼, 慧眼, 法眼, 佛眼.

As this comparison shows, both the Sanskrit and Chinese translations list the items somewhat differently from the *Niddesa*: the *Niddesa* has *samanta-cakkhu* in place of *dharmacakṣus* (法眼). This different listing seems to continue unabated in both traditions. However, this *dharmacakṣus* (*dharmacakkhu*) came to be incorporated in the list in the Pāli commentaries when a distinct separation of the *maṃsa-cakkhu* (physical eye) from the list of ‘five eyes’ became standardized. The ‘five eyes’ were used to describe the spiritual and flawless attainments of the Buddha (*ñāṇa-cakkhu* or *paññā-cakkhu*). This separation seems to be a fundamental difference between the two traditions, with the mainstream Sanskrit tradition excluding *samanta-cakkhu*.

An intriguing question arises in this context: when was the *samanta-cakkhu* of the *Niddesa* replaced by the *dharmacakkhu* of the Sanskrit tradition? In the Pāli exegetical tradition, *dharmacakkhu* came to make up the list of five after the removal and separation of *maṃsa-cakkhu* from the list. Further, when did the separation of *maṃsacakkhu* from the list occur? And why was *dharmacakkhu* chosen to replace it? It seems that though both traditions, in Sanskrit or Chinese translation and in Pāli, appear to have their origins in the older sources, they had different purposes for adopting their own line.

<sup>3</sup> See Guang Xing [2005]: 237 for Kumārajīva’s time of translation.

<sup>4</sup> Guang Xing [2005]: 237.

<sup>5</sup> Guang Xing [2005]: 238.

<sup>6</sup> Guang Xing [2005]: 238.



It is interesting to note that the word *samanta-cakṣu* is also found in the Sanskrit *Lalitavistara* of P. L. Vaidya’s edition: *samanta-cakṣu* (71 and 307) and *samantanetra* (309). They are, nonetheless, not mentioned in relation to the ‘five eyes’ of the Buddha. Similarly, we find a likely translation of *samanta-cakṣu* in Chinese as 普眼 (universal or all-round eye) in Huiyuan’s (慧遠; 523–592) *Dacheng yizhang* (大乘義章), where a list of ‘ten eyes’ (十眼) is given, perhaps as an expanded version:

十眼如彼華嚴中說。一是肉眼。見一切色。二是天眼。見諸衆生死此生彼。三是慧眼。見一切衆生諸根差別。四是法眼。見一切法真實之相。謂見諸法第一義相。五是佛眼。見佛十力。六是智眼。分別了知一切種法。七是明眼。謂見一切諸佛光明。八出生死眼。見涅槃法。九無礙眼。見一切法無有障礙。十是普眼。謂見法界平等法門。十中初一是前肉眼。亦兼天眼。見細遠色是天眼故。第二天眼是前天眼。第三慧眼第五佛眼第六智眼第七明眼第八出生死眼第九無礙眼。此之六種是前法眼。第四法眼是前慧眼。見真諦故。第十普眼是前佛眼。佛眼普見平等真法故名普眼。五眼之義辨之略爾。(T 44 855a)

If this assumption is interpreted literally, then the ‘ten eyes’ (十眼) are explicated in the 華嚴 (Huayan) tradition, including the *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經), translated by Buddhahadra (410–421). The list contains: 1) the flesh eye (肉眼), which sees all types of forms (見一切色); 2) the divine eye (天眼), which observes rise and fall of all sentient beings (見諸衆生死此生彼); 3) the wisdom-eye (慧眼), which sees the distinctive characteristics of all sentient beings (見一切衆生諸根差別); 4) the Dharma-eye (法眼) that sees the true characteristics of all things (見一切法真實之相); 5) the Buddha-eye (佛眼), which sees the ten powers of the Buddha (見佛十力); 6) the knowledge-eye (智眼), which distinguishes and perfectly comprehends all kinds of Dharmas (分別了知一切種法); 7) the eye shining with Buddha-light (明眼), which sees the radiances of all Buddhas (見一切諸佛光明); 8) the immortal eye (出生死眼), which sees Dharmas of *nirvāṇa* (見涅槃法); 9) the unhindered eye (無礙眼) which sees hindrances and non-hindrances of all Dharmas (見一切法無有障礙); and 10) the universal or all-round eye (普眼), which sees that in the Dharma-realm [all] teachings are equal (謂見法界平等法門).

In the Huayan tradition, item number 10, the universal or all-round eye (普眼), is replaced by the ‘omniscient eye’ (一切智眼).<sup>7</sup> This tradition is

<sup>7</sup> E.g., *Dafangguang fo huayan jing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔卷第二十七:言十眼者。離世間品說。謂一肉眼。二天眼。三慧眼。四法。五佛。六智。

also seen in the Yogācāra School of Buddhist thought.<sup>8</sup> This replacement is justifiable as it is also seen in the Pāli tradition: ‘*Samantacakkhu nāma sabbaññutaññāṇam*’ (Pts I 133; Nd II 359). The classification of eyes into ten categories, however, seems to be of later origin. It is certainly not seen in the Pāli tradition, or in the Sanskrit tradition and Chinese translation before this work (i.e., the sixth century). It is also important to point out that Huiyuan seems to have been quite aware of the mainstream or traditional classification of the Buddha’s five eyes (五眼). Thus, he analyzes them accordingly: Of the ten [eyes], the first is the previous flesh eye (十中初一是前肉眼); similarly, for the divine eye (亦兼天眼) — the ability to see subtle or distant forms arises from this divine eye (見細遠色是天眼故), [thus] the second divine eye is [the same as] the previous divine eye (第二天眼是前天眼); the third wisdom eye, the fifth Buddha-eye, the sixth knowledge-eye, the seventh eye shining with Buddha-light, the eighth immortal eye and the ninth unhindered eye — these six kinds of eyes were previously encompassed in the Dharma-eye (第三慧眼第五佛眼第六智眼第七明眼第八出生死眼第九無礙眼。此之六種是前法眼); the fourth Dharma-eye is [equivalent to] the previous wisdom-eye — because it sees the real truths (第四法眼是前慧眼。見真諦故); and the tenth universal or all-round eye is the previous Buddha-eye — the Buddha-eye sees the real Dharmas all round, without discrimination; therefore it is called the universal or all-round eye (第十普眼是前佛眼。佛眼普見平等真法故名普眼). The meanings of the five eyes are a summary of divisions (五眼之義辨之略爾). This suggests that a classification of eyes into five is the basic concept in Indian Buddhism of different traditions, with some deviations, upon which a later division into ten was initiated — for instance, the Theravādin tradition came to have two kinds of flesh (physical) eye, separating this from the list of five eyes, which is centered on the Buddha’s knowledge.

Historically speaking, however, tracing the origins of the concept of five eyes is complex and ambiguous. In the Pāli tradition, texts such as the *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambidāmagga* have a list of five eyes, as does the *Mahāvastu*; the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature also thrives on this. Although the Theravādins might think that this concept arose within their own tradition because of the canonicity of the *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambidāmagga*, no consensus has been reached as to these texts’ dates of composition. The only clear case is the translation of *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (放光般若經 T 8

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七光明。八出生死。九無礙。十一切智。[T 36 208c].

<sup>8</sup> E.g., *Yujialun Lüzuan* 瑜伽論略纂: T 43 89b.

9a) by Moksāla (無叉羅) in the late third century CE. In short, this concept of the Buddha’s five eyes would have become prominent at least before the late third century.<sup>9</sup> If it is possible to trace its origin, it is more likely that the Pāli tradition in the *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga* would have been the first to assemble the items found scattered in early texts into a list of five. The determination of its date of origin therefore depends upon the *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. Though fixing a reasonable date for their composition is elusive, scholars working on the Pāli textual tradition suggest various theories. K. R. Norman, for instance, states: “... the beginning of the third century BCE would seem to be quite suitable as the date of its [*Niddesa*’s] composition.”<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Oskar von Hinüber seems to endorse the view that the *Niddesa* was composed “...not later than 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.”<sup>11</sup> Kogen Mizuno believes that both the *Niddesa* and the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* can be considered the pioneering works for the early *Abhidhamma* literature and infers that they would have been composed in and around the time of King Asoka.<sup>12</sup> These arguments point to a period of composition certainly before the third century CE — or at least a later date in the same century — which appears to be a known date of translation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (放光般若經 T 8 9a) by Moksāla, as seen above.

## II. The Pāli commentarial tradition of ‘five eyes’

In the classification of the five eyes the Pāli commentarial tradition distinctly separates the Buddha’s physical eye (*maṃsa-cakkhu*) from his wisdom-eye (*paññā-cakkhu*).<sup>13</sup> This development probably resulted from a greater emphasis on the Buddha’s spiritual attainments in the process of his deification. Thus, while the classification found in the *Niddesa* includes the physical eye as one of the five eyes of other traditions (though *samanta-cakkhu* is already in

<sup>9</sup> Sanskrit texts like the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu* also mention the Buddha’s five eyes; their origins, however, are uncertain, since the composition of these texts can be estimated at before the fourth century. The fact that a Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara* (佛說普曜經: T 3 532b) by Dharmarakṣa 法護 308 is said to have been made in the early fourth century also indicates that the concept was in vogue by about the late third century.

<sup>10</sup> Norman K. R. [1983]: 86 fn.372 and 87.

<sup>11</sup> von Hinüber, O. [1996]: § 118 (p. 59).

<sup>12</sup> Mizuno, K. [1997]: 117.

<sup>13</sup> For example, DhsA 306; PṭsA I 77; ItA I 99; etc.

the list), the commentarial texts first divide *cakkhu* into two types: the *maṃsa-cakkhu* (physical eye) and *paññā-cakkhu* (wisdom-eye). Buddhaghosa appears to prefer *ñāṇa-cakkhu* over *paññā-cakkhu*;<sup>14</sup> these two terms are interchangeable,<sup>15</sup> as can be seen in the chart given below.<sup>16</sup> The *paññā-cakkhu* is further classified into five types. The list of five is found at (A) DhsA 306, (B) PtsA I 77, (C) ItA I 99, (D) SA II 354, (E) ItA I 167, (F) BvA 33, and so on.

1. *Buddha-cakkhu* (Buddha-eye) [A, B, C, D, E, F]
2. *Samanta-cakkhu* (eye of all-round knowledge) [A, B, C, D, E, F]
3. *Ñāṇa-cakkhu* (knowledge-eye) [A, B, C] or *paññā-cakkhu* [D, E, F]
4. *Dibba-cakkhu* (divine eye) [A, B, C, D, E, F]
5. *Dhamma-cakkhu* (Dhamma-eye) [A, B, C, D, E, F]

The physical eye (*maṃsa-cakkhu*) is also divided into two in the Theravāda commentarial tradition: *sasambhāra-cakkhu* (compound organ) and *pasāda-cakkhu* (sentient organ).<sup>17</sup> There is an independent reference to *pasāda-cakkhu* at DA I 183 as well. The *sasambhāra-cakkhu* is explained as comprising forty elements (*cattārīsa sambhārā honti. Idam sasambhāracakkhu nāma*) (SA II 354–5). The *pasāda-cakkhu* is defined as: *Yaṃ pana setamaṇḍala-paricchinnena kaṇhamāṇḍalena parivārite diṭṭhamaṇḍale sanniviṭṭhaṃ rūpadassanasamatthaṃ pasādamattaṃ, idam pasādacakkhu nāma* (BvA 35); or: *Yo pana ettha sito ettha paṭibaddho catunnaṃ mahābhūtānaṃ upādāya pasādo, idam pasādacakkhu nāma* (NdA I 159).

The *Dacheng yizhang* (大乘義章) also divides the flesh eye (肉眼) into two kinds:

肉眼中有其二種。一者是報。二者長養。宿業所得是名為報。或以飲食醫藥等力得勝眼根名為長養 (T 44 852b) (In the flesh eye there are two kinds: one is [due to] fruit/result and the other [to] excellent nourishment. Fruit/result gets its name from karmic actions, or by way of drinks, food, medicine, etc., strength is gained and becomes nutrients for the good eye, excellent nourishment is [so-named] because of this.)

<sup>14</sup> SA II 354.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. SA III 91.

<sup>16</sup> When one is used for the classification of two types of *cakkhu*, the other tends to be used in the classification of five types.

<sup>17</sup> DhsA 306; ItA I 99; PtsA I 77–78. See also *The Expositor* [1976]: 402–403.

Of the five eyes mentioned above, the *dhamma-cakkhu* is a new addition that emerged by the time of the commentarial literature. However, it is a familiar occurrence in the *Nikāyas*, where such expressions as ‘... *dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi*’ (the eye of the Dhamma arose), referring to one’s realization of the truth, are often encountered. Following such usages in the Canon, Buddhaghosa explains the term (*dhamma-cakkhu*) in relation to the path (*magga*) and fruit (*phala*). It is, for instance, explained as the three paths and three fruits (*tayo maggā tīni ca phalāni dhamma-cakkhu nāma hoti*);<sup>18</sup> or simply as the lower three paths (*heṭṭhimāmaggattayasāṅkhatam dhamma-cakkhu nāma*);<sup>19</sup> or as the four paths and four fruits (*cattāro maggā cattāri ca phalāni dhammacakkkhun ti*).<sup>20</sup> Buddhaghosa’s *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* also interprets it to mean insight into *dhamma* (*dhamma-cakkhun ti dhammesu vā cakkhun*) or the eye made of *dhamma* (*dhammamayaṃ vā cakkhun*).<sup>21</sup> These examples indicate that the word *dhamma-cakkhu* is given different meanings in different contexts in the commentarial texts.

The above survey also reveals that the interpretations of *dhamma-cakkhu* in the commentaries do not go beyond its canonical connotations.<sup>22</sup> One might ask why *dhamma-cakkhu* is then included in the list of five eyes of the Buddha. *Dhamma-cakkhu*, according to both the canonical and commentarial traditions, can be shared by any *arahant*, and therefore cannot be called the province of a Buddha alone. If we take *dhamma-cakkhu* as being common to or shared by any *arahant*, then it may be pointed out that *dibba-cakkhu*, which is also shared by the disciples, is also included in the list of five eyes. But its inclusion in the list is justified, because the Buddha is said to be foremost in the ability of clairvoyance,<sup>23</sup> and thus it is included in the list of *dasabala* of the Buddha. Therefore, it may be that the commentaries introduced *dhamma-cakkhu* into the list of five eyes for the following reasons: first, the commentators were aware that there was a classification of the five eyes of the Buddha or Buddhas, which they found to be of a miscellaneous nature. An attempt was made to separate the physical

<sup>18</sup> SA III 298. Cf. MA V 99; SA II 354 (*heṭṭhimā tayo maggā tīni ca phalāni*).

<sup>19</sup> DhA 306. Cf. DA I 183 (*ariyamaggattāya*), 237 (*tinnam maggānam*), II 467 (*tinnam maggañāṇānam*); MA I 179; SA I 200; UdA 207; NdA II 383; etc.

<sup>20</sup> MA V 99.

<sup>21</sup> DA I 237.

<sup>22</sup> See also *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. IV, fascicle 3, 478 ff: s.v. *dhammacakkhu* for its canonical use.

<sup>23</sup> See de Silva, L. [1987]: 40.

endowments of a Buddha from his spiritual attainments; the latter, in fact, came to be more emphasized in the commentarial literature, as can be seen throughout our present study. This trend in the commentaries gave impetus to the eventual classification of *cakkhu* of a Buddha into the physical or flesh eye (*maṃsa-cakkhu*) and wisdom-eye or knowledge-eye (*paññā-cakkhu* or *ñāṇa-cakkhu*). Once *maṃsa-cakkhu* is subtracted from the list of five eyes, the commentators are compelled to fill the vacuum in order to conform to the generally accepted number of five. Second, the term *dhamma-cakkhu* is often found in the Canon. Thus, the commentators simply included it in the list.

The *Mahāvastu* has a list of the five eyes of a Buddha and includes *dharma-cakṣu* (Mvu I 159). However, the interpretation given there identifies it with the *dasabala* of a Buddha.<sup>24</sup> The Buddha’s eighteen unique qualities/attributes are also described under *dharma-cakṣu* in Mvu (I 160). The Pāli commentaries do not subscribe to this view in any way, as seen above. It can rather be said that the commentators were not aware of such a view, which implies that it may be a later development.

*Buddha-cakkhu*, according to Buddhaghosa,<sup>25</sup> is both *indriyaparopariyatta-ñāṇa* and *āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*, which are regarded as the province of a Buddha alone (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*), as discussed in Chapter 7.<sup>26</sup> This is the knowledge the Buddha uses to determine whether beings are amenable to taming or not. Because of the nature of its function, he also uses this knowledge when he surveys the world (... *buddhacakkhunā lokaṃ volokento* ...).<sup>27</sup>

*Samanta-cakkhu* in the Pāli commentarial texts is equated with omniscient knowledge (*samanta-cakkhu nāma sabbaññuta-ñāṇaṃ*).<sup>28</sup> The *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, on the other hand, states that *samanta-cakkhu* is the fourteen kinds of the Buddha knowledge (*cuddasa-Buddhañāṇāni*).<sup>29</sup> However, a comparison between the items of *cuddasa-Buddhañāṇa* and those of *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa* reveals that they are inclusive of each other. It must be emphasized that the Pāli tradition consistently maintains the inclusion of *samanta-cakkhu* from the *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga* to the commentaries. It is also important

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. IV, fascicle 3, 481.

<sup>25</sup> DA II 467; MA II 179; SA II 354; VA V 963; Cf. BvA 33.

<sup>26</sup> See the discussion on *tathāgatabala* above.

<sup>27</sup> DhsA 309; PtsA I 77; ItA I 99; DA I 183; etc.

<sup>28</sup> SA II 354 = BvA 33. See also MA II 179; DhsA 306; PtsA I 77; ItA I 99; etc.

<sup>29</sup> Pts I 133.

to note that *samanta-cakkhu* is used to indicate the Buddha (*bodhisatta*) in some of the canonical texts — *pāsādaṃ āruyha samantacakkhu* (e.g., S I 137, etc.) showing the antiquity of its origin before the Niddesa (Nd) and the *Paṭisambidhāmagga* (Pṭs).

Buddhaghosa explains *ñāṇa-cakkhu* or *paññā-cakkhu* as the determining knowledge of the four truths (*paññācakkhu nāma catu-sacca-paricchedaka-ñāṇaṃ*).<sup>30</sup> Dhammapāla also gives the same explanation at ItA II 27. This interpretation seems to refer to the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths gained by the Buddha on the night of his Enlightenment.<sup>31</sup> In another context Buddhaghosa explicates it as the knowledge such as that of former births (*pubbenivāsādiñāṇaṃ paññā-cakkhuṃ*).<sup>32</sup> This explanation is also followed by Buddhaddatta in his *Madhuratthavilāsinī* (BvA 33).

Ambiguity in the real implications of the term *ñāṇa-cakkhu* or *paññā-cakkhu* can be cleared by the explanations found in the *Mahā-niddesa*.<sup>33</sup> The text includes such epithets denoting the Buddha’s spiritual attainments as *catuvesārajappatta*, *dasabaladhārī*, and so on, in the category of *paññā* of the Buddha.<sup>34</sup> This shows that *ñāṇa* or *paññā* of the Buddha is conceived of as the sum total of the Buddha’s spiritual achievements expressed as a classification of the Buddha’s five eyes.

*Dibba-cakkhu*, the divine eye, does not require any further explanations. It is number 9 of the *tathāgatabala*, as shown above. In passing, it also constitutes one of the ‘incomparable’ (*anuttara*) abilities of the Buddha, which Sāriputta praises in the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* (D III 108 ff.). Buddhaghosa states that there is no one more distinguished in special qualities than the Buddha himself; no one compares with him. He is therefore ‘incomparable.’ In this ‘the knowledge of divine-eye’ (*dibbacakkhu-ñāṇa*) is included.

<sup>30</sup> SA II 354.

<sup>31</sup> Vin I 11 = S V 422.

<sup>32</sup> DA I 183.

<sup>33</sup> Nd I 356 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Nd I 356.



### III. The other traditions

The *Mahāvastu*, a work generally ascribed to the Lokottaravāda of the Mahāsaṅghika group, also has some descriptions of the Buddha’s five eyes. Some passing references have already been made to the differences between Mvu and the Pāli tradition. In some contexts, Mvu has a more detailed and deified elucidation of these five eyes. On the other hand, the Sarvāstivādin *Lalitavastu* refers to ‘the Exalted One with five eyes’ (*bhagavān pañca-cakṣuḥsamanvāgataḥ*: Vidya 2). The *Prajñāpāramitā* literature also includes the concept of five eyes as in 肉眼, 天眼, 慧眼, 法眼, 佛眼. For instance, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (放光般若經 T 8 9a), one of the earliest works, has the five eyes. Kumārajīva’s (鳩摩羅什) *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* (大智度論 T25 347a) also lists: 肉眼, 天眼, 慧眼, 法眼, 佛眼. The sixth-century author Huiyuan in his *Dacheng yizhang* (大乘義章), summarizes the various ideas of the ‘Buddha’s five eyes,’ perhaps those prevalent during his time in different schools of Buddhist thought. This work, as already noted, gives a list of ‘ten eyes,’ which Huiyuan mentions as the list advocated in the Huayan (華嚴) School of Buddhism (十眼如彼華嚴中說).

### IV. Concluding remarks

The Buddha’s ‘five eyes’ as a collective concept was never in the mainstream of thought in various Buddhist traditions, even in Theravāda Buddhism. These five eyes are mentioned in the canonical texts in different categories, indicating that the Buddha has different eyes. They appear to be commonly applicable to any enlightened person, and terms like *dibbacakkhu* and *dhammacakkhu* are frequently encountered. If these five eyes are described in relation to the Buddha, they are treated as part of the Buddha’s ‘knowledge power’ (*Buddhañāṇa*). Different schools, nonetheless, inherited the notion as being among the Buddha’s attributes. In this sense, the Buddha’s ‘five eyes’ became as important as any other attributes.



## Chapter 9

## Knowledge of the Attainment of Great Compassion (*Mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*)

### I. Introduction

One of the items included in the ‘six kinds of knowledge not shared by disciples’ (*cha-ñāṇāni asādhāraṇāni sāvakehi*: Pt̥s I 3)<sup>1</sup> is the knowledge of the ‘attainment of great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*). It is also the power of the Tathāgata. In Buddhist parlance, *karuṇā* is often mentioned as one of the four subjects for meditation (*brahmavihāras*), along with *mettā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā*. The cultivation of these four *brahmavihāras* is often emphasized as the foundational support for the final attainment of liberation. Another word similar to *karuṇā* is also found in the early sources: *anukampā* (*anu* + √*kamp*). This term, unlike *karuṇā*, seems to be employed in relation to the act of preaching: ‘What should be done for his disciples by a teacher wishing for their welfare out of compassion, I have done for you through compassion.’<sup>2</sup> This is the central teaching in Buddhist ethics, emphasized time and again. The Buddha appears in this world out of compassion for the many. It is said: ‘A person (*bodhisatta*) was born for the benefit and happiness of the many out of compassion for the world ...’<sup>3</sup> This aspect of Buddhahood is significant, because it provides motivation to become a *bodhisatta* and subsequently, a Buddha.

<sup>1</sup> *Cha-asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa* (six kinds of knowledge not shared by the disciples) include: (1) *indriyaparopariyatte ñāṇa* (knowledge of the maturity levels of spiritual faculties), (2) *sattānam āsāyanusaye ñāṇa* (knowledge of the disposition of beings), (3) *yamaka-patihāre ñāṇa* (knowledge of the Twin Miracle), (4) *mahākaruṇāsamāpattiyā ñāṇa* (knowledge of the attainment of great compassion), (5) *sabbāññuta-ñāṇa* (omniscient knowledge), and (6) *anāvāraṇa-ñāṇa* (unobstructed knowledge). The idea of ‘not shared’ (*asādhāraṇa*) is seen within the canonical texts. For instance, ‘*ariyaṃ lokuttaraṃ asādhāraṇaṃ puthujjanehi*’ (This is noble super-mundane [knowledge] not shared by ordinary beings.) [M I 323–325; etc.]

<sup>2</sup> M I 118: ‘*Yaṃ, bhikkhave, satthārā karaṇīyaṃ sāvakānaṃ hitesinā anumāpakena anumāpaṃ upādāya, kataṃ vo taṃ mayā.*’

<sup>3</sup> A I 22; etc.: ‘*Eka-puggalo, bhikkhave, loke upajjamāno upajjati bahujaṇahitāya bahujaṇasukhāya lokānukampāya...*’

Another term for ‘compassion’ or ‘sympathy’ is *dayā* (M I 288; etc.), or *anuddayā* (S I 204; etc.). *Dayā* is defined as *karuṇā* in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī-mūlaṭṭhikā* (*tattha dayāti karuṇā adhippetā*) (DhsAT (Be) 5). *Anuddayā* is also given the meaning of *anukampā* (... *yānukampā anuddayā ti*).<sup>4</sup> *Anukampā*, on the other hand, is defined as *anukampāti paradukkhena cittakampanā* (trembling of the mind because of the pain of others) (VA II 288). Describing the word *anukampika*, it is explained as *anukampikāti anuggahasilā karuṇā-dhikā* (UdA 82). Compassion (*karuṇā*) of the Buddha is indeed a recurrent theme in the commentarial literature.<sup>5</sup>

The definition of *karuṇā* within the Theravāda tradition is first seen in the *Vibhaṅga* 273: ‘Whatever compassion for living beings, being compassionate, the state of being compassionate, the liberation of mind through compassion; this is called “compassion.”’<sup>6</sup> Definitions of *karuṇā* undergo further changes in the commentarial period, as will be shown later.

The *Mahāvastu* I 51 also uses the term *mahākaruṇā*: ‘*atha khalu mahā-maudgalyāyana samitāvisya samyaksambuddhasya mahatā kāruṇena samanvāgatasya satveṣu mahākāruṇaṃ okrami*.’ This phrase is preceded by a list of the Buddha’s spiritual powers, which include the ‘eighteen unique qualities of the Buddha’ (*aṣṭādaśāveṇikehi buddhadharmehi samanvāgato*) and the ‘ten powers of a Tathāgata’ (*daśahi tathāgatabalehi...*). Mvu is said to belong to the Lokottaravāda School of the Mahāsaṅghika group. The Lokottaravāda, like the Theravāda School, presents a list of the Buddha’s eighteen special qualities;<sup>7</sup> the list differs from that of the

<sup>4</sup> Net 147: ‘*Manasā ce pasannena, yadaññāmanusāsati; na tena hoti saṃyutto, yānukampā anuddayā ti*.’

<sup>5</sup> The term *mahā-karuṇā* is always associated with the Buddha. This is primarily to distinguish the Buddha from ordinary *arahant*. It is uncertain when the adjective *mahā* (>*mahantu*) came to be annexed to *karuṇā*. Guang Xing, however, asserts that: ‘The term “great compassion” (*mahākaruṇā*) was most probably first introduced by the Sarvāstivādins so that the compassion of the Buddha could be distinguished from ordinary compassion’ (Guang Xing [2005], 40). [NB this format can be used if the title is in the bibliography.] He bases his argument on Vasubandhu’s work. However, the word *mahākaruṇā* was in use among the Theravādins of the time of the *Paṭi-sambhidā-magga* (Pts I 126–31), whose date of composition is certainly pre-Vasubandhu.

<sup>6</sup> Vibh 273: ‘*yā sattesu karuṇā karuṇāyanā karuṇāyitattaṃ karuṇācetovimutti, ayaṃ vuccati karuṇā*.’

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Mvu I 150: ‘... *aṣṭādaśāveṇikehi buddhadharmehi samanvāgato daśahi tathāgatabalehi balavāṃ caturhi vaiśāradyehi suviśārado*.’ Here it should be noted that

Sarvāstivāda School, which will be shown later. Apart from the *Mahāvastu*, the *Divyāvadāna* of the second century CE also refers to *mahākaruṇā* as one of the virtues of the Buddha.<sup>8</sup>

One of the earliest *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, *Aṣṭasāharika-prajñāpāramitā*, also includes *mahākaruṇā*.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, none of these sources have definitive dates of composition, making it more difficult to fix the date of the word's introduction.

Among these schools of affiliation, two schools emerge as historical precedents: the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda. The first work that refers to *mahākaruṇā* in the Sarvāstivāda literature is said to be the *Vibhāṣā-śāstra* (鞞婆沙論) by Saṃghabhūti (僧伽跋澄) (381–385),<sup>10</sup> and in the Theravāda School, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Pṭs). The Sarvāstivāda literature mentions it in the list of the ‘eighteen special qualities of the Buddha’ (*aṣṭadaśāveṇikā buddhadharmā*), while Pṭs refers to it as one of the ‘six kinds of knowledge not shared by disciples’ (*cha-asādhāraṇa-ñāṇāni*). The origins of the term, therefore, appear ambiguous. Guang Xing suggests that the Sarvāstivādins were probably the first to introduce the term.<sup>11</sup> This, however, is not definitive, and further investigation may be needed to arrive at a more reliable and reasonable conclusion. This depends primarily on a chronological examination of the texts. In the Pāli tradition, as mentioned earlier, it is found in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* in relation to the six kinds of knowledge not shared by the disciples. In addition, Pṭs touches upon ‘the knowledge of the attainment of great compassion’ (*mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*).<sup>12</sup> The same text also mentions *karuṇā*:

What is the knowledge of the Tathāgata's attainment of great compassion? Great compassion of the Awakened and Exalted

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the Tathāgata's ten powers are not counted as constituents of the Buddha's eighteen special qualities as in the Sarvāstivāda School.

<sup>8</sup> *Divyāvadāna*, 78: ‘... *sudāntairindriyairasaṃkṣobhiteriyāpathapracāro dvātriṃsatā mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇairasītyānuvyañjanairvirājatagātro daśabhirbalaiścaturbhirvaiśāradyaistribhiḥ smṛtyupasthānairmahākaruṇayā ca evamanekaguṇagaṇa-samanvāgato buddho bhagavān ...*’

<sup>9</sup> *Aṣṭasāharika prajñāpāramitā*, Vidya 69, etc.: ‘... *yā ca hitaiṣitā, yā ca mahāmaitrī, yā ca mahākaruṇā, ye ca aprameyāsaṃkhyeyā buddhaguṇāḥ, ...*’

<sup>10</sup> See Guang Xing [2005]: 183.

<sup>11</sup> Guang Xing [2005]: 40.

<sup>12</sup> Pṭs I 126–131.

Ones who are observing [beings], descends among them in many ways. ... This is the Tathāgata's knowledge of the attainment of great compassion (*Katamaṇ tathāgatassa mahākaruṇāsamāpattiyaṃ ṇāṇaṃ? Bahukehi ākārehi passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati ... Idamaṃ tathāgatassa mahākaruṇā-samāpattiyaṃ ṇāṇaṃ*) (Pṭs I 126).

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is often cited in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and contains content which can be considered as the forerunner of the *Abhidhamma* literature.<sup>13</sup> Scholars, like the Pāli philologist and linguist K. R. Norman, believe that Pṭs may have been composed in the third century BCE,<sup>14</sup> while Oscar von Hinüber suggests that it was composed '...not later than 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.'<sup>15</sup> Kogen Mizuno, on the other hand, believes that both the *Niddesa* and the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* can be considered as the pioneering works for the early *Abhidhamma* literature and infers that they would have been composed in and around the time of King Asoka.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, K. L. Dhammajoti comments on the origin of the Sarvāstivāda School as follows:

Although it is difficult to speak of the exact date of the 'founding' of the Sarvāstivāda school, its presence, as well as that of its rival — the Vibhajyavāda lineage — in the time of Emperor Aśoka is beyond doubt. Since Aśoka's reign is around 268–232 BCE, this means that at least by the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, it had already developed into a distinct school.<sup>17</sup>

If this assumption is tenable, its origins may go back to the time of King Asoka of the third century BCE. This makes it more complicated to reach a reasonable conclusion on the date the term *mahākaruṇā* was introduced in the Theravāda or the Sarvāstivāda tradition. However, the existence of the Sarvāstivāda School in the third century BCE does not necessarily prove the antiquity of *mahākaruṇā*. Moreover, the Sarvāstivāda literature itself is ambiguous about the time of its introduction. We shall return to this point later.

<sup>13</sup> See Mizuno, K. [1997]: "On the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*", 85–117 (especially 86).

<sup>14</sup> Norman K. R. [1983]: 86 fn.372 and 87.

<sup>15</sup> Von Hinüber, O. [1996]: § 118 (p. 59).

<sup>16</sup> Mizuno, K. [1997]: 117.

<sup>17</sup> Dhammajoti, K. L. [2015]: 63.

Buddhahood entails the possession of compassion (*karuṇā*) in itself, a quality from which mankind benefits. All Buddhas have this trait in them. In fact, both canonical and commentarial texts categorically state that Buddhas appear in this world because of *karuṇā*:

There is one person whose birth into this world is for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, who is born out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Who is that one person? It is a *tathāgata*, an *arahant*, a perfectly enlightened one.<sup>18</sup>

When entering upon the path of bodhisattahood, the Buddha-aspirant is said to reflect that this great compassion of the Lord of the World is the one through which he sees the world of beings who have fallen into great suffering and thinks: “there is no one to whom they can go for refuge. I, being released from the suffering of *saṃsāra*, will too release them therefrom;” [thinking thus] the Buddha-aspirant made a great resolve with the mind urged forth (by itself).<sup>19</sup> Dhammapāla further states that the Tathāgata is so called as he has trodden the path for the benefit of the entire world through impartiality, truth, and great compassion for all beings (*sabbasattesu samānarasāya tathāya mahā-karuṇāya sakalaloka-hitāya gato paṭipanno ti tathāgato*).<sup>20</sup> These are given in the etymological exegeses of the term Tathāgata.

In the explanations of the Buddha’s epithet *vijjācaraṇasampanna*, Buddhaghosa states that the Buddha’s possession of clear vision (*vijjāsam-padā*) consists of the fulfilment of omniscience (*sabbaññutā*), while his possession of conduct (*caraṇasampadā*) consists of the fulfilment of great compassion (*vijjāsampadā Bhagavato sabbaññutaṃ pūretvā tñitā; caraṇasampadā mahākāruṇikatam*).<sup>21</sup> He further illustrates the functions of *sabbaññutā* and *karuṇā* of the Buddha thus:

<sup>18</sup> A I 22: *Ekapuggalo bhikkhave loke uppajjamāno uppajjati bahunanahitāya bahunasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ. Katamo ekapuggalo? Tathāgato araham sammā sambuddho.*

<sup>19</sup> ItA I 122: *Yāyaṃ mahākāruṇā lokanāthassa, yāya mahādukkhasambādhappaṭipannaṃ sattani kāyaṃ disvā “tassa natthañño koci paṭisaraṇaṃ, ahameva naṃ ito saṃsāradukkhato mutto mocessāmī” ti samussāhitamānaso mahābhinihāraṃ akāsi.* Cf. UdA 134.

<sup>20</sup> ItA I 123; UdA 135.

<sup>21</sup> Vism 203 = VA I 116.

The Buddha knows through omniscience what is good and harmful for all beings, and through compassion he warns them of harm and exhorts them to do good<sup>22</sup> (*So sabbaññutāya sabbasattānaṃ atthānatthaṃ ñatvā mahākāruṇikatāya anattaṃ parivajjetvā atthe niyojēti*).<sup>23</sup>

The often-cited commentarial definition of *karuṇā* is found in the *Visuddhi-magga*. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli translates the relevant passage as follows:

When there is suffering in others it causes (*karoti*) good people's hearts to be moved (*kampana*), thus it is compassion (*karuṇā*). Or alternatively, it combats (*kiṇāti*) others' suffering, attacks and demolishes it, thus it is compassion. Or alternatively, it is scattered (*kiriyaṭi*) upon those who suffer, it is extended to them by pervasion, thus it is compassion (*karuṇā*)<sup>24</sup> (*paradukkhe sati sādhuṇaṃ hadayakampanaṃ karoti ti karuṇā. Kiṇāti vā paradukkhaṃ, hiṃsati vināseti ti karuṇā. Kiriyaṭi vā dukkitesu pharaṇāvasena pasāriyaṭi karuṇā*).<sup>25</sup>

After giving the same definition as in *Vism*, the *Saddhammappakāsinī*, the commentary on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* adds that *mahākāruṇā* is so called because it is great on account of the far-reaching nature of its actions and virtues (*pharaṇakammavasena kammaguṇavasena ca mahāti karuṇā mahākāruṇā*).<sup>26</sup> The *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*,<sup>27</sup> on the other hand, closely follows the explanations given in *Pts*, where it is said that Buddhas produce compassion for beings in various ways.<sup>28</sup> The *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā* and *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* refer to the eighty-nine ways in which Buddhas show their compassion.<sup>29</sup> *Pts* likewise refers to these ways.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The translation is by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli [1991a]: 198. An alternate translation would be: '... he causes them to engage in the beneficial, leaving aside the harmful.'

<sup>23</sup> *Vism* 203 = VA I 116.

<sup>24</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991a]: 310.

<sup>25</sup> *Vism* 318. The identical passage occurs at *PtsA* I 58 = *NdA* III 56 = *DhsA* 192.

<sup>26</sup> *PtsA* I 58. See also *Cūla-niddesa-aṭṭhakathā*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> *UdA* 142–144. Cf. *ItA* I 130.

<sup>28</sup> *Pts* I 126–131.

<sup>29</sup> *ItA* I 130: 'Katamaṃ tathāgatassa mahākāruṇāsamāpattiñāṇaṃ? Bahukehi ākārehi passantānaṃ Buddhānaṃ Bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākāruṇā okkamati, āditto lokasannivāsoti passantānaṃ ... Buddhānaṃ Bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākāruṇā okkamati ti ādinā ekūnanavutiya ākārehi vibhajanaṃ katam.' See also *UdA* 144.

<sup>30</sup> *Pts* I 127 ff.

In his definition of the term *mahākāruṇika* as the one endowed with great compassion toward all beings, [although they are] divided by divisions such as inferior, and so on,<sup>31</sup> Dhammapāla appears to dwell on different aspects of *karuṇā* of the *bodhisatta* and the Buddha more than any other commentators. The following passage from the *Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā* is quoted below,<sup>32</sup> though it is only a fraction of the entire scheme of Dhammapāla's express intention to show that the importance of the career of a *bodhisatta* and that of a Buddha, as far as the Buddha-concept is concerned, lies ultimately in the dissemination of wisdom (*bodhi*) the Buddha personally attains.<sup>33</sup> What makes a Buddha still greater, according to him, is that the attainment of enlightenment is only a means to save others, and *karuṇā* is the key motivation towards this end:

Great compassion and skilful means are just like resolution. Therein, skilful means is wisdom that is the sign of accomplishment of the grounds for knowledge, such as giving. It is through virtue of skilful means and great compassion of 'great beings' (*mahāpurisā*) that they become indifferent to their own happiness; continuously engaged in the compassion for the sake of others' benefit; clearness even with the extremely difficult actions of a 'great *bodhisatta*' (*mahābodhisatta*); and being the cause of procuring benefit and happiness for beings even at the time of faith, understanding, seeing, hearing and remembering is brought about. The accomplishment of Buddhahood [is] through knowledge; the accomplishment of what is expected of a Buddha to do [is] through compassion. Through knowledge [*bodhisatta*] crosses himself; through compassion [he] crosses others. Through knowledge [the Buddha] comprehends the suffering of others; through compassion [he] begins to remove others' suffering. Through knowledge [*bodhisatta*] becomes detached from suffering; through compassion [he] accepts suffering. Likewise, through knowledge [the *bodhisatta*] comes face to face with *nibbāna*; through compassion [he] comes to the cycle of rebirths (*vattaṃ pāpuṇāti*). Likewise, through compassion [the *bodhisatta*] comes face to face with *samsāra*; through knowledge [he] does not take delight therein. Through knowledge [the

<sup>31</sup> ThagA III 17: '... hīnādivibhāgabhinne sabbasmiṃ sattanikāye adhimuttavuttitāya mahatīyā karuṇāya samannāgatattā mahākāruṇiko.'

<sup>32</sup> A similar passage is found at ItA II 15.

<sup>33</sup> See the discussion on the concept of *bodhisatta* and related subjects for an understanding of 'bodhisatta' and the 'Buddha' as conceived by Dhammapāla, Endo. T [1997, 2002]: Section on *Bodhisatta*.



*bodhisatta*] detaches [himself] everywhere. Because of being endowed with compassion, there isn't the absence of working in the assistance for all [beings]. [The *bodhisatta*] indeed shows pity on all. Because of being endowed with knowledge, there isn't the absence of dispassionate mind with regard to everything. Due to knowledge, there is the disappearance of the notion of 'I' and 'mine'. Due to compassion, there is the disappearance of indolence and meanness ...<sup>34</sup>

Some expressions for *karuṇā* in the above passage are significant and suggestive of a new dimension. First, they are not the kinds of explanations adduced by other commentators, especially Buddhaghosa, whose standard explanations of *karuṇā* are shown above. Second, Dhammapāla seems to have been influenced by some sources other than those of the Theravāda tradition. In this case, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of the Yogācāra School of Buddhist thought may be a source of influence over Dhammapāla's above presentation.<sup>35</sup> However, it must be admitted that every expression Dhammapāla employs for the exegeses of *karuṇā*, can be accepted as part of the Theravāda tradition in spirit. Nothing non-Theravādic about the explanations is seen here. Yet they come much closer to the Mahāyāna explanations of *karuṇā*.<sup>36</sup> Third, expressions like *karuṇāya dukkhaṃ sam- paṭicchati* ([the Buddha / *bodhisatta*] accepts suffering through compassion) and *karuṇāya vaṭṭaṃ pāpuṇāti* ([*bodhisatta*] attains a round of existences because of compassion) are clearly suggestive of the fact that they are to show the Buddha's (as well as the *bodhisatta*'s) willingness to come to terms with the *dukkha* of other beings. This idea can be derived even from Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, as seen above. The Buddha as *bodhisatta* is ready to undergo the various states of births, woeful or otherwise, for the sake of other beings. ItA I 15 further states that the *bodhisatta* becomes face to face with *saṃsāra* in his field through compassion, but does not rejoice therein (*karuṇāya vā bodhisatta-bhūmiyaṃ saṃsārābhimukha-bhāvo, paññāya tattha anabhirati*). What is important is a positive attitude of *bodhisatta* towards the cycle of rebirths. This is a striking contrast to the Theravāda position. Let us compare the following: Buddhaghosa denies the Andhakas' view that a *bodhisatta* is born into states of woe by his own free

<sup>34</sup> CpA 289–290.

<sup>35</sup> For Dhammapāla's commentaries influenced by the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of the Yogācāra School, see Katsumoto, K. [2006]; Bhikkhu Bodhi [1996].

<sup>36</sup> See Dayal, H. [1978]: 178 ff.



will,<sup>37</sup> and says that, if the Andhakas' proposition were accepted, the very basis of *kamma* theory would be at stake.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, Dhammapāla ventures into a new arena of interpretation, which appears to come much closer to the Mahāyāna counterpart. Similar explanations of the functions of *paññā* and *karuṇā* are also found in the *Paramatthamañjūsā* (VismṬ) of Dhammapāla, where they are discussed in relation to the Buddha's epithet *vijjācaraṇasampanna*.<sup>39</sup> The following chart provides comparison and contrast:

CpA 289–290:

*Yathā ca abhinīhāro, evaṃ mahākaruṇā upāyakosallaṇca. Tattha upāyakosallaṃ nāma dānādīnaṃ bodhisambhārabhāvassa nimittabhūtā paññā, yāhi mahākaruṇūpāyakosallatāhi mahāpurisānaṃ attasukhanirapekkhatā nirantaraṃ parahitakaraṇapasutatā sudukkarehipi mahābodhisattacaritehi visādābhāvo pasādasambuddhidassana-savanānussaraṇakālesupi sattānaṃ hitasukhappaṭilābhahetubhāvo ca sampajjati. Tathā hissa paññāya buddhabhāvasiddhi, karuṇāya buddhakammasiddhi, paññāya sayam tarati, karuṇāya pare tāreti, paññāya paradukkhaṃ parijānāti, karuṇāya paradukkhapatikāraṃ ārabhati, paññāya ca dukkhe nibbindati, karuṇāya dukkhaṃ sampañicchatī, tathā paññāya nibbānābhīmukho hoti, karuṇāya vaṭṭaṃ pāpuṇāti, tathā karuṇāya saṃsārābhīmukho hoti, paññāya tatra nābhiramati, paññāya ca sabbattha virajjati, karuṇānugatatā na ca na sabbesaṃ anuggahāya pavatto, karuṇāya sabbepi anukampati, paññānugatatā na ca na sabbattha virattacitto, paññāya ca ahaṃkāramamaṃkārahāvo, karuṇāya ālasiyadīnatābhāvo...*

<sup>37</sup> Kv XXIII 3.

<sup>38</sup> KvA 200.

<sup>39</sup> See Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu [1991a]: 773, ft.9.: Cf. VismṬ (*Paramatthamañjūsā*) 233–234. However, the wordings are sometimes different, though similar meanings can be derived. For instance, enumerating the functions of *paññā* and *karuṇā*, VismṬ has: ‘...paññāya parinibbānābhīmukhabhāvo, karuṇāya tadadhigamo. Paññāya sayam taranaṃ, karuṇāya paresaṃ tāranaṃ. Paññāya buddhabhāvasiddhi, karuṇāya buddhakiccasiddhi. Karuṇāya vā bodhisattabhūmiyaṃ saṃsārābhīmukhabhāvo, paññāya tattha anabhirati. Tathā karuṇāya paresaṃ abhiṃsāpanaṃ, paññāya sayam parehi abhāyanaṃ. ...’

Ita I 15–16:

*Tattha paññāyassa dhammarajjapatti, karuṇāya dhammasaṃvibhāgo; paññāya saṃsāradukkhaniḃbidā, karuṇāya saṃsāradukkhasaṃhanaṃ; paññāya paradukkhaparijānanaṃ, karuṇāya paradukkhappaṭikārārambho. Paññāya parinibbānābhimukhabhāvo, karuṇāya tadadhigamo; paññāya sayamaṃ tarenaṃ, karuṇāya paresamaṃ tārenaṃ; paññāya buddhabhāvasiddhi, karuṇāya buddhakkiccasiddhi. Karuṇāya vā bodhisattabhūmiyaṃ saṃsārābhimukhabhāvo, paññāya tattha anabhirati. Tathā karuṇāya paresamaṃ avihimsanaṃ, paññāya sayamaṃ parehi abhāyanaṃ; karuṇāya paraṃ rakkhanto attānaṃ rakkhati, paññāya attānaṃ rakkhanto paraṃ rakkhati. Tathā karuṇāya aparantapo, paññāya anattantapo. Tena attahitāya paṭipannādīsu catutthapuggalabhāvo siddho hoti.*

*Tathā karuṇāya lokanāthatā, paññāya attanāthatā; karuṇāya cassa ninnatābhāvo, paññāya unnatābhāvo. Tathā karuṇāya sabbasattesu janitānuggaho, paññānugatattā na ca na sabbattha virattacitto; paññāya sabbadhammesu virattacitto, karuṇānugatattā na ca na sabbasattānuggahāya pavatto. Yathā hi karuṇā tathāgatassa sinehasokavirahitā, evaṃ paññā ahaṃkāramamaṃkāravinimuttāti aññamaññaṃ visodhitā paramavisuddhāti daṭṭhabbā.*

VismṬ I 233:

*Tesu paññāya bhagavato dhammarajjapatti, karuṇāya dhammasaṃvibhāgo. Paññāya saṃsāradukkhaniḃbidā, karuṇāya saṃsāradukkhasaṃhanaṃ. Paññāya paradukkhaparijānanaṃ, karuṇāya paradukkhappaṭikārārambho. Paññāya parinibbānābhimukhabhāvo, karuṇāya tadadhigamo. Paññāya sayamaṃ tarenaṃ, karuṇāya paresamaṃ tārenaṃ. Paññāya buddhabhāvasiddhi, karuṇāya buddhakkiccasiddhi. Karuṇāya vā bodhisattabhūmiyaṃ saṃsārābhimukhabhāvo, paññāya tattha anabhirati. Tathā karuṇāya paresamaṃ abhimsāpanaṃ, paññāya sayamaṃ parehi abhāyanaṃ. karuṇāya paraṃ rakkhanto attānaṃ rakkhati, paññāya attānaṃ rakkhanto paraṃ rakkhati. Tathā karuṇāya aparantapo, paññāya anattantapo. Tena attahitāya paṭipannādīsu catūsu puggalesu catutthapuggalabhāvo siddho hoti. Tathā karuṇāya lokanāthatā, paññāya attanāthatā. Karuṇāya cassa ninnatābhāvo, paññāya unnamābhāvo. Tathā karuṇāya sabbasattesu janitānuggaho paññānugatattā na ca na sabbattha virattacitto, paññāya sabbadhammesu virattacitto karuṇānugatattā na ca na sabbasattānuggahāya pavatto.*

The above comparison reveals that the *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā* and the *Paramatthamañjūsā* (VismṬ) give similar descriptions. This also suggests that the *Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā* may have been based upon somewhat different ancient manuscript(s) (*poṭṭhaka*) from those used for ItA and VismṬ, though both are within the Mahāvihāra tradition; or VismṬ may have been indebted to ItA for borrowing, though the question of why the same Dhammapāla chose one set of sources for CpA and another for ItA and VismṬ — perhaps, this might eventually lead to the authorship of the sources.

One of the areas of comparison with the Theravāda notion of *karuṇā* is the Sarvāstivādin conception. Their concept of *mahākaruṇā* is unique since it is counted as one of the ‘eighteen unique qualities associated with the Buddha’ (*aṣṭādaśa-āveṇika-Buddhadharmā*). The eighteen qualities are the ‘ten powers’ (十力) (*daśabala*), ‘four kinds of confidence (intrepidity)’ (四無所畏) (*catu-vaiśāradya*), ‘great compassion’ (大悲) (*mahākaruṇā*), and ‘three foundations of mindfulness’ (三念住).<sup>40</sup> In Xuanzang’s *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra* (阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論), it is said: ‘What is great compassion? Answer: It is called “great compassion” through which to save sentient beings from compelling tribulation’ (大悲是何義。答拔濟有情增上苦難故名大悲) (T 27 159b<sub>17–18</sub>). The work elaborates on the meaning of ‘compelling tribulation’: ‘It means to place them [sentient beings] in the worlds of humans and gods where joy, comfort, etc., permeate, after saving them from hell, the animal kingdom, or the world of hungry ghosts’ (謂從地獄傍生鬼趣大苦難中拔濟令出安置人天喜樂等處) (T 27 159b<sub>18–20</sub>). ‘It is called “great compassion” as it pulls sentient beings out of gripping mud’ (復次拔衆生出增上淤泥故名大悲) (T 27 159b<sub>20</sub>). Similarly, the *Mahā-vibhāṣa-śāstra* explains *mahākaruṇā* in the list of ‘eighteen special qualities of the Buddha.’

In the context of the four *brahmavihāra*, the *Mahāvibhāṣa-śāstra* provides lengthy elucidation for *mahākaruṇā*: ‘[I] ask “why is it called great compassion?” Answer: It is great compassion, because it saves all classes of sentient beings from the worst sufferings, which are purgatory, animal kingdom, and hungry ghosts’ (問以何義故名爲大悲。答拔濟大苦諸有情類。故名大悲。大苦者謂地獄傍生鬼界中苦) (T 27 428b<sub>12–14</sub>). ‘Suffering’ is defined here as in the previous explanation (T 27 159b<sub>18–20</sub>), as that experienced in purgatory, the animal kingdom, and the realm of hungry ghosts. The opposite is the experience in heaven as seen before (T 27 159b<sub>18–20</sub>). In the spiritual sphere, with the attainment of enlightenment as the final goal,

<sup>40</sup> T 27 156c: 謂佛世尊成就十力四無所畏及與大悲三念住等不可思議無邊功德。

it is stated that ‘great compassion’ is that by means of which to save all drowning sentient beings in the mud of three poisons, and lead and place them on the noble path and its fruit (復次拔濟沈溺三毒淤泥諸有情類。安置聖道及聖道果。故名大悲) (T 27 428b<sub>14-15</sub>). Similarly, other characteristics associated with the Buddha’s great compassion (大悲) are also mentioned, some in terms of the Buddha’s physical endowments, such as the thirty-two bodily characteristics, eighty minor bodily characteristics, and so on, which are the result of his great physique (大身) and so on (T 27 428b<sub>15-c21</sub>).

The *Mahāvibhāṣa-sāstra* further clarifies the differences between ‘compassion’ and ‘great compassion’ and gives eight aspects for such differences (問悲與大悲有何差別 答應知略有八種差別) (T 27 160b<sub>7-8</sub>): 1. own nature (自性), 2. form (行相), 3. object of perception (所緣), 4. basis (依地), 5. support (所依), 6. gain (證得), 7. rescue (救濟), and 8. pity (哀愍) (T 27 160b<sub>7-19</sub>). These eight aspects are explained as follows:

- 1) Own nature (自性): it is non-aversion, a wholesome root, is the own nature of ‘compassion,’ whereas non-delusion, a wholesome root, is the own nature of ‘great compassion’ (謂悲無嗔善根爲自性。大悲無癡善根爲自性).
- 2) Form (行相): ‘Compassion’ is for the suffering-suffering (*duḥkha-duḥkha*) as its form while ‘great compassion’ is for the three kinds of suffering as its form (謂悲作苦苦行相。大悲作三苦行相).<sup>41</sup>
- 3) Object of perception (所緣): ‘Compassion’ is only related to the ‘realm of desire,’ while ‘great compassion’ is related to the three realms (謂悲唯緣欲界。大悲通緣三界).
- 4) Basis (依地): ‘Compassion’ — all depends on ten stages: four kinds of concentration, four accesses, intermediate concentration, and the realm of desire; ‘great compassion’ is only in the fourth kind of concentration (謂悲通依十地。即四靜慮四近分靜慮中間及欲界地。大悲唯在第四靜慮).
- 5) Support (所依): ‘Compassion’ is related to the three vehicles and the body of worldlings; ‘great compassion’ depends only on the Buddha’s body (謂悲通依三乘及異生身。大悲唯依佛身).
- 6) Gain (證得): It is ‘compassion’ whose benefit is obtained [derived] from the time of leaving the realm of desire and the time of defiled

<sup>41</sup> 三苦 (the three kinds of suffering) include 苦苦 (*dukkha-dukkha*), 壞苦 (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*), and 行苦 (*saṃkhāra-dukkha*).

concentration; ‘great compassion’ is only at the time of the highest level of defilement (謂悲離欲界乃至第三靜慮染時得。大悲唯離有頂染時得)。

- 7) Rescue (救濟): ‘Compassion’ simply yearns for rescue; ‘great compassion’ accomplishes rescue (謂悲唯希望救濟。大悲救濟事成)。
- 8) Pity (哀愍): ‘Compassion’ pities inequality; ‘great compassion’ pities equality (謂悲哀愍不平等。大悲哀愍平等)。

Other sources of the Sarvāstivāda School also explain why the Buddha’s *karuṇā* is named *mahākaruṇā*, most of which are pertinent to this school.<sup>42</sup> This may suggest that defining the term was a gradual process to both the Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda Schools. The process seems to have been more extensive in the Sarvāstivāda School than the Theravāda School, at least until the commentarial period. In addition, some of the above items resemble the contents of the Pāli sources (Pṭs, Nidd, and so on). Both schools, Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda, therefore, clearly demonstrate that the Buddha’s ‘great compassion’ is to save others in suffering (cf. 6, 7, 8 above).

The emphasis on *mahākaruṇā* in the Pāli commentarial texts must have compelled the Theravādins to seek an answer to the question of whether the Buddha could be an omnipotent saviour or not. In the commentaries, the Buddha is elevated to such a height that he is said to be able to give or bestow arahantship: ‘The Fully Enlightened One, because he is King of Ultimate Truth, within the space of a single meal, gave arahantship to him [Cūlapanthaka] together with the analytical knowledge ... .’ (*sammāsam-buddho pana attano anuttaradhammarājatāya ekasmiṃ yeva antarabhatte saha paṭisambhidāhi arahattaṃ adāsi, ...*).<sup>43</sup> The earliest canonical scriptures are certain that the Buddha is incapable of releasing others from *saṃsāra*. It is oneself who must work for one’s own salvation. The *Suttanipāta* says: ‘O Dhotaka, it is not in my practice to free anyone from confusion, said the Buddha. When you have understood the most valuable teachings, then you yourself cross this ocean’<sup>44</sup> (*Nāham gamissāmi pamocanāya, kathaṃkathim Dhotaka kañci loke, dhammañ ca seṭṭhaṃ ājānamāno evaṃ tuvaṃ oghaṃ imaṃ taresi*).<sup>45</sup> When the above two quotations are compared and assessed in light of the development of the Buddha-concept, we cannot but conclude

<sup>42</sup> See Guang Xing for a summary of definitions for *mahākaruṇā*. Guang Xing [2005]: 41–43.

<sup>43</sup> Dhpa I 249. See also JA I 119, 120; IV 224; etc.

<sup>44</sup> Saddhatissa, H. tr. *The Sutta-nipāta*, 122.

<sup>45</sup> Sn 1064.

that the Buddha seems to have become, at least emotionally, the almighty spiritual saviour to later Buddhists as time passed by.

The Buddha is thus said to have practiced compassion for the world and provided opportunities for attaining emancipation for as many people as he could. He had a habit of looking at the world at dawn, having arisen from the stage of great compassion (*paccūsa-samaye yeva mahākaruṇā-samāpattito uṭṭhāya lokam volokento ...*).<sup>46</sup> The commentarial texts give many instances in which not only people of different walks of life, but also beings of different classes benefited from the Buddha's teaching.<sup>47</sup>

## II. Concluding remarks

While the origin of the term *mahākaruṇā* is unknown — whether it was a term coined first in the Pāli or Sarvāstivāda tradition — it is crystal clear that its function is to remove the pain and suffering of sentient beings and save them. The depth and variety of interpretations is what makes one tradition different from others. The Pāli tradition emphasizes both *paññā* and *karuṇā* with distinct purposes, as the commentarial interpretation of *vijjācaraṇasampanna* and the chart given above show. The Sarvāstivāda and later Sanskrit traditions are specifically focused on the altruistic inclinations of the Buddha and bodhisattva. The bodhisattva's *mahākaruṇā* is treated as a showpiece to save sentient beings to attain his own enlightenment. In the commentarial period Theravāda Buddhism seems to have been quite receptive of other traditions that were taking shape in India. If such interactions in India reflect true historical occurrences, then what can be seen in the present Pāli commentaries may have been in the old commentaries before they were edited and translated into Pāli by the commentators.

<sup>46</sup> E.g., SA I 68. See also VA I 197, VI 1279; SA I 319; AA I 322; etc.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., AA I 100 f; etc.

## Chapter 10

## Transformation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's Contribution to the Buddha-concept in the Pāli Commentaries

### I. Introduction

Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE, according to the country's historiography. The Buddhist texts that were orally transmitted by a mission led by the *thera* Mahinda included both the *tipiṭaka* and its commentaries. There is evidence to believe that the *tipiṭaka* remained in the language in which it was transmitted from India,<sup>1</sup> while the commentaries were subsequently translated and preserved, at least partly, in the language of the *Sīhaḷadīpa*.<sup>2</sup> The Buddhist texts, especially the commentaries, gathered additions over time. The present Pāli commentaries were based on these older Sinhalese sources, known collectively as the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* (Sinhalese commentaries). The Sinhalese commentaries were, then, committed to writing during the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya of the first century BCE.<sup>3</sup> Historically speaking, the incorporation of such additions into the old

<sup>1</sup> The *Mahāvamsa* comments: '*Piṭakattayapāliṇ ca tassā aṭṭhakathāpi ca mukhapāthena ānesuṃ pubbe bhikkhu mahāmati ... potthakesu likhāpayuṃ*' [Mhv XXXIII, vv. 100–101; Dpv 20, ll. 19–22 (Oldenburg, [1982]: 103)].

<sup>2</sup> The *Papañcasūdanī*, for instance, says: '*... aṭṭhakathā ādito vasisatehi pañcahi yā saṅgītā anusāṅgītā ca pacchā pi, Sīhaḷadīpaṃ pana ābhata*' *tha vasinā Mahā-Mahindena ṭhapitā Sīhaḷabhāsāya dīpavāsīnaṃ atthāya...*' [MA I 1].

<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that the commentaries, transmitted from India and then partly preserved in the language of the *Sīhaḷadīpa*, gathered additions, which may be referred to as the 'Sri Lankan elements of the commentaries,' up to about the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (See Endo, T. [2005]: 33–53). Certain canonical texts were also meddled with, by additions probably made in Sri Lanka. One example can be seen in the last verses appended at the very end of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (see Endo, T. [2010]: 105–128). This gives rise to the question as to why the *tipiṭaka* became the indisputable repository of the *Buddhavacana*. It is this definition in the form of *pāli* that the present Pāli commentaries adopt and consider the *tipiṭaka* the most authoritative source, whereas, historically speaking, certain canonical texts were not yet in the form they are in today. The fact that additions were made to canonical texts after they were brought from India to Sri Lanka implies that the *tipiṭaka* was still in the making at the time of its introduction to Sri Lanka.



Sinhalese commentaries would have started from the very beginning of the third century BCE. Once the texts were committed to writing and preserved in the manuscripts (*poṭṭhaka*), later developments and additions were collected in newly established commentaries, such as the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, the *Mahāpaccarī*, and the *Kurundi-aṭṭhakathā*, whose compilation, according to my investigation,<sup>4</sup> began only after the first century BCE.<sup>5</sup> It is my contention that these newly written Sinhalese commentaries contained traces of developments that occurred after the first century BCE regarding doctrinal and other aspects of Buddhism, which we now see in the present Pāli commentaries. Many historical events and anecdotes of Sri Lankan origin found in the present Pāli commentaries are, in fact, from the newly written commentaries. Sodo Mori calls them the ‘Sri Lankan Elements,’ or ‘Theravādic aspects of the *Aṭṭhakathās*.’<sup>6</sup>

The present Pāli commentaries are a repository of extraneous information allowing us to examine the extent to which the Buddhist teachings were localized, transformed, or adapted in Sri Lanka. It may not be an exaggeration to state that a distinct Theravāda thought, as we know of it, now emerged in all respects during the commentarial period. Along this general trend of development, the Buddha-concept developed too. It must be admitted that the Buddha-concept in Theravāda Buddhism could not have developed in isolation from similar developments in other schools of Buddhist, or, even non-Buddhist, thought. There is ample evidence in the Pāli commentaries to indicate interaction among various Buddhist schools of India and Sri Lanka. The Buddha-concept of Theravāda Buddhism should, therefore, be viewed in relation to similar developments in other Buddhist schools of the Indian subcontinent. This aspect of development can be termed as the ‘historical evolution’ of the Buddha-concept in Theravāda Buddhism. What concerns us here is the transformation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. This Chapter will examine Sri Lanka’s contribution to the field of the Buddha-concept.

<sup>4</sup> Endo, T. [2010]: 169–182.

<sup>5</sup> There is a speculation that the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* was a commentary on both canonical and old Sinhalese commentaries. If this assumption is proven with concrete evidence, there is a possibility that the present Pāli commentaries were mainly based on this category of commentaries named *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* composed for certain commentaries separately, and not necessarily based on each of the old Sinhalese commentaries. This question will be left for future investigation.

<sup>6</sup> Sodo Mori uses this as the subtitle of his work, *A Study of the Pāli Commentaries — Theravādic Aspects of the Aṭṭhakathā*, Tokyo: Sankibo, 1984.



## II. Instances of Sri Lanka's contribution to the Buddha-concept

After the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, various areas of its teaching, including the Buddha-concept, were transformed and adapted. Essentially two areas of development are seen in this regard: 1) the Buddha-concept probably developed as a Theravāda response to the kinds of development that were taking place in Indian Buddhist circles. This includes the historical development of the Buddha-concept and the Bodhisatta Ideal based primarily on the canonical texts. Such developments can be called simply a 'historical evolution' of the Buddha-concept and the Bodhisatta Ideal; 2) the Buddha-concept with Sri Lankan elements became increasingly conspicuous. This can be termed as the 'Sri Lankan development' of the Buddha-concept. Sri Lankan elements are discernible everywhere in this regard. Our study will focus on the second category of development.

The Buddha's *parinibbāna* is classified into three kinds in the Pāli commentaries: a) *kilesa-parinibbāna*, b) *khandha-parinibbāna*, and c) *dhātu-parinibbāna*. The first two kinds, *kilesa-parinibbāna* and *khandha-parinibbāna*, are referred to in the canonical texts. The former pertains to the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment at the age of thirty-five, while the latter refers to his final attainment of what is termed as *mahāparinibbāna* at the age of eighty. Together with this concept, many aspects of the Buddha-concept came to be discussed. For instance, the disappearance of the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-antaradhāna*), the order of disappearance of the *tipiṭaka* (*Vinaya*-, *Sutta*-, and *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*), and other peripheral accounts are found.<sup>7</sup> The concept of *dhātu-parinibbāna* appears to be a commentarial development. Two sets of sources refer to this concept: 1) *Manorathapūraṇī* [AA I 91], and 2) *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* [DA III 899–900] = *Papañcasūdanī* [MA IV 116–7] = *Sammohavinodanī* [VibhA 433]. The former source (AA) does not elaborate on the theory that the Buddha's relics (*dhātu*) will completely disappear, whereas the latter provides a detailed account of where and how the disappearance of the Buddha's relics takes place. It is said in this context that all the Buddha's relics scattered around the world would gather together in the form of a human over the Mahācetiya (or Mahāthūpa) at Anurādhapura, the ancient capital of Sīhaḷadīpa (Sri Lanka), then proceed to Rājāyatana-cetiya in Nāgadīpa, and finally to the Mahābodhi of Jambudīpa, where the other relics from divine worlds, including the Brahma world, would also assemble; finally all the Buddha's

<sup>7</sup> See Endo, T. [2004]: 235–255.

relics would disappear completely, ending the Buddha Gotama's era or dispensation. Sri Lankan elements added in this regard can be easily recognized. The Mahācetiya was a pagoda built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (161–137 BCE). It is therefore certain that this narrative was added after this king's time. There are some clues to the origin of this story. First, the time of construction of the Mahācetiya (second century BCE) is beyond any dispute. Second, the story in connection with the concept of *sāsana-antarāhita* (Dispensation disappeared) in these sources cites a long passage from the *Milindapañha* [Mil 236–239]. The *Milindapañha* is believed to contain at least two strata, the strata denoting the time of its composition. Even these sections, corresponding fairly well with the Chinese version (那先比丘經), are said to have been composed around the first century BCE. The sections from page 90 onwards in the PTS edition of the text are considered to be later additions. However, since the present Pāli commentaries often cite passages of the *Milindapañha* from both layers of the text,<sup>8</sup> the work would have been completed at least before the completion of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, probably soon after the time of King Vasabha (65–109 CE), whose reign is considered to be a signpost for the determination of the completion of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*.<sup>9</sup> These factors indicate that the narrative relating to the disappearance of the Buddha's Dispensation and the assembly of his relics before their complete disappearance would have originated probably between the first century BCE and the second century CE in Sri Lanka. If that is the case, this story would have been found not in the singular number of the *Aṭṭhakathā*, supposedly the basic sources of the present Pāli commentaries, but in the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, whose upper time-limit of composition, according to my study, can be ascribed to the first century BCE, in other words after the time of King Vattagāmaṇī Abhaya.<sup>10</sup>

The Buddha is said to have predicted that the True Dhamma (*saddhamma*) would last only five hundred years because his stepmother Mahā Pajāpati Gotamī and her companions were ordained as *bhikkhunīs*.<sup>11</sup> In the same context, the Buddha stated that the True Dhamma would have endured for one thousand years had women not been admitted to the Buddhist order.

<sup>8</sup> Mori, S. [1984]: 86–88.

<sup>9</sup> The major portions of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, including the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, are said to have been completed by about the time of King Vasabha of the early second century CE. Thereafter, only a few minor additions were made up to about the time of King Mahāsena in the early fourth century. See Mori, S. [1984]: 466.

<sup>10</sup> See Endo, T. [2010]: 169–182.

<sup>11</sup> Vin II 256; A IV 278.

The canonical texts thus mention two periods (five hundred and one thousand years) in relation to the endurance of the True Dhamma. The commentarial tradition began to advocate the theory that the True Dhamma would endure for a period of five thousand years.<sup>12</sup> In this context, the True Dhamma is considered synonymous with ‘attainment or penetration’ (*paṭivedha* or *adhigama*). This is said to be a period in which people could reach the state of noble individuals (*ariya-puggala*), beginning with those described as *sotapanna* and above.<sup>13</sup> Even today, in the Theravāda tradition, five thousand years is considered the period of endurance of the Buddha’s Dispensation. This theory could be a commentarial development. Yet it is not known whether the theory was of Indian or Sri Lankan origin, since there is no clue to be found in the Pāli commentaries. We are, nonetheless, inclined to believe that Sri Lankan contributions were prominent in this theory. For instance, the relevant sources are DA I 25, SA II 173, and DhsA 27, all of which agree that it was Mahākassapa, the president of the First Buddhist Council, who was instrumental in setting the period of the Buddha’s Dispensation at five thousand years.<sup>14</sup> The *Samantapāsādikā* [VA VI 1291] discusses five stages of degeneration of the True Dhamma, in which each stage, up to the stage of *sotāpanna*, in descending order,<sup>15</sup> comprises a period of one thousand years, and asserts that the penetration (*paṭivedha*) or attainment (*adhigama*) [of the final goal in Buddhism] would remain until then. The corresponding passage in the Chinese translation of VA, *Shan-chien-lu-p’i-p’o-sha* (善見律毘婆沙), reads as follows:

於千年中得三達智，復千年中得愛盡羅漢、無三達智，復千年中得阿那含，復千年中得斯陀含，復千年中得須陀洹學法，復得五千歲。於五千歲得道，後五千年學而不得道，萬歲後經書文字滅盡，但現剃頭有袈裟法服而已。[T 24 796c] (In the [first] thousand

<sup>12</sup> SA II 173; VA I 30 = DA I 25 = DhsA 27.

<sup>13</sup> VA VI 1291.

<sup>14</sup> DA I 25: *Idaṃ Mahākassapatherena Dasabalassa sāsanaṃ pañca-vassa-sahassa-parimāṇaṃ kālaṃ pavattana-samatthaṃ kataṃ*. SA II 173: *Kassapo pana visam vassa-satāyuko: so mayi parinibbute Sattapañña-guhāyaṃ nisīditvā Dhamma-Vinaya-saṅgahaṃ katvā mama sāsanaṃ pañca-vassa-sahassa-parimāṇa-kāla-pavattanakaṃ karissati*. DhsA 27: *Idaṃ Mahākassapatherena Dasabalassa sāsanaṃ pañcavassasahassaparimāṇakālaṃ pavattanasamatthaṃ kataṃ*.

<sup>15</sup> VA here gives two types of *arahants*: 1. *arahants* who attain analytical knowledge (*vassasahassaṃ ti c’ etaṃ paṭisambhidāppabheda-pattakhīṇāsavavasen’ eva vuttaṃ*), and 2. *arahants* who are supported by bare insight (*tato pana uttarim pi sukkha-vipassakakhīṇāsavavasena vassasahassaṃ*). Thus, there will be five stages altogether, each lasting one thousand years.

years [after the Buddha's demise], there would be those who gain the three kinds of knowledge. In the next thousand years, people would attain arahantship with all cankers destroyed, but there would be nobody with the three kinds of knowledge. Further, in the next thousand years, people would attain only the stage of a non-returner. In the next thousand years, people would attain only the stage of a once-returner. In the next thousand years, people would attain only the stage of a stream-winner in the training of the Dhamma. Further, there would be another five thousand years [after that]. In the [first] period of five thousand years, people would gain the religious path. But in the next five thousand years, there would be only learning and no one would attain the religious path. After the period of ten thousand years, the [Buddhist scriptures would perish completely and there would be only those who have shaved their heads and who have simply donned themselves with yellow robes).

The Chinese *Shan-chien-lu-p'i-p'o-sha* (善見律毘婆沙) gives another set of five thousand years, for a total of 'ten thousand years.' What is conspicuous in these sources is the emphasis on the importance of *pariyatti* (scripture). Such an emphasis, we strongly believe, must have come as a result of socio-religious changes that took place at certain periods of time in ancient Sri Lanka. It is therefore likely that the Sri Lankan elements are well reflected in the notion of a five-thousand-year period of endurance of the Buddha's Dispensation.

The most important period for the transformation and adaption of Buddhism in Sri Lanka was the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya (r. 103–102, 89–77 BCE). During his reign, unprecedented socio-religious and political changes took place. As a result, many Sri Lankan elements evolved and found their ways into the Sinhalese commentaries. During King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya's reign, a Brahmin named Tissa (*Brāhmaṇatissacora* or *Brāhmaṇatissabhaya*) revolted against him. Around the same time, seven Damiḷas also arrived in Sri Lanka, demanding the island be ceded to them.<sup>16</sup> The political uprising in the capital Anurādhapura forced the king to flee. Tissa usurped him and plundered the land for twelve long years. Scarcity of food and other commodities during this period forced some monks to flee to India for the preservation of the Buddha-Dhamma. It is said that King Sakka advised monks to flee to India, where the king fed them with divine food.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Malalasekera, G. P. [1983]: vol. II, 342.

<sup>17</sup> AA I 92; etc.

This was the worst famine Sri Lanka has ever experienced in her long history. An experience of this magnitude, affecting every aspect of human existence, would have induced many changes in society and within the Buddhist order as well. First and foremost for Buddhists was the contemplation of the preservation of the Buddha-Dhamma. Witnessing many of their fellow-monks perishing during this famine, monks would have been compelled to devise ways and means of preserving the Buddhist texts. This urgency prompted the introduction of a new concept called *pariyatti* (scripture) for the preservation of the Buddhist texts. Certain commentaries record that a controversy arose over the issue of which one, *pariyatti* (scripture) or *paṭipatti* (practice), was more important;<sup>18</sup> those who supported *pariyatti* finally prevailed. This incident amply testifies that the concept of *pariyatti* was a Sri Lankan contribution to the Buddha-concept. Historically, the canonical texts emphasized ‘penetration or attainment’ (*paṭivedha* or *adhigama*) and ‘practice’ (*paṭipatti*). The term *pariyatti* is used only in late canonical texts, such as the *Niddesa*, but its meaning refers to the *navaṅga* classification of the Buddha’s Dispensation (*sāsana*) or *Buddhavacana*.<sup>19</sup>

The question of the endurance of the Buddha’s Dispensation is, in fact, discussed in the post-canonical text called the *Milindapañña*.<sup>20</sup> On this occasion Nāgasena classifies three types of disappearance of the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-antaradhāna*): (a) *adhigama-antaradhāna* (disappearance of attainment); (b) *paṭipatti-antaradhāna* (disappearance of religious practice); and (c) *liṅga-antaradhāna* (disappearance of outward form [of the Buddhist order]). This classification does not refer to *pariyatti*, but rather hints at the state of the Buddhist order, which may have degenerated in and around the first century CE, the period said to be the date of the final formation of the present Pāli *Milindapañña*.<sup>21</sup>

It is in the commentarial texts that the term *pariyatti* is frequently used in reference to the *tipiṭaka* (*pariyattī ti tīni piṭakāni*).<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the *Manorathapūraṇī* defines the definition of *pariyatti* as ‘three *piṭakas* which

<sup>18</sup> AA I 92–3.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, MNd I 143: *Mussate vāpi sāsanaṃ. Dvīhi kāraṇehi sāsanaṃ mussati – pariyattisāsanaṃpi mussati, paṭtipattisāsanaṃpi mussati. Katamaṃ pariyattisāsanaṃ? Yaṃ tassa pariyāputaṃ — suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇaṃ gāthā udānaṃ itivuttakaṃ jātakaṃ abbhutadhammaṃ vedallaṃ — idaṃ pariyattisāsanaṃ.*

<sup>20</sup> Mil 130–34.

<sup>21</sup> See Mizuno, K. [1996]: 240.

<sup>22</sup> DA II 530 = III 898 = MA IV 115 = VibhA 431.

are the *Buddhavadana* and the sacred texts, together with the commentaries’ (*pariyattī ti tepīṭakaṃ Buddhavadanaṃ sātṭhakathā pāḷi*) [AA I 88].<sup>23</sup> Unlike the *Milindapañha*, the *Sāratthappakāsinī* [SA II 202] provides a different list of three kinds of disappearance of the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-antara-dhāna*): (1) *adhigama* (attainment); (2) *paṭipatti* (practice); and (3) *pariyatti* (scripture). The *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, *Papañcasūdanī*, and *Sammohavinodanī* also discuss them with slight variations: (1) *pariyatti-antara-dhāna* (the disappearance of scriptures); (2) *paṭivedha-antaradhāna* (the disappearance of penetration); and (3) *paṭipatti-antaradhāna* (the disappearance of practice) [DA III 898; MA IV 115; VibhA 431]. These references suggest that the concept of *pariyatti* and its utmost importance were a commentarial development in Sri Lanka. The *Manorathapūraṇī* shows the latest development in the concept of *pariyatti* in commentarial literature with following five items: (a) *adhigama-antaradhāna*; (b) *paṭipatti-antaradhāna*; (c) *pariyatti antara-dhāna*; (d) *līṅga-antaradhāna* (disappearance of [outward] appearance); and (e) *dhātu-antaradhāna* (disappearance of the Buddha’s relics). For the sequence of disappearance of the *tipiṭaka* at the final stage of the Buddha’s Dispensation, the commentarial texts begin with the *Paṭṭhāna* of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, and thereafter the *Apadāna* as the first text in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, followed by the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, *Samyutta-nikāya*, *Majjhima-nikāya*, and *Dīgha-nikāya* of the *Sutta-piṭaka*. This is followed finally by the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.<sup>24</sup>

Driven by socio-political turmoil during the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya, the greatest lasting impact upon the transformation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka was undoubtedly the writing down of the Buddhist texts. This event changed Buddhism in Sri Lanka from being considered ‘once an extension of Indian Theravāda (or Sthaviravāda) Buddhism’ as contained in the old Sinhalese translations of the original Indian commentaries to ‘specifically Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhism’ through the incorporation of more local Sri Lankan elements into the newly established literary genre, the *Mahā-*

<sup>23</sup> Here a further clarification may be needed: *tepiṭaka* is one definition of *pariyatti*, but terms like *buddhavadana* and *pāḷi* require more specific definitions, though generally these three terms, *tepiṭaka*, *buddhavadana*, and *pāḷi*, are interchangeable in commentarial literature. However, the definition of *buddhavadana* further broadened as time passed. Hence the term came to include the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) as well (see, for example, *Vimativinodanī-ṭīkā* (Be) I 29: ... *sātṭhakathaṃ tipiṭakasāṅgahitaṃ buddhavadananā ti* ...).

<sup>24</sup> AA I 87 f.

*aṭṭhakathā*.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, traditional functions of certain specialists came to be changed and redefined. For instance, the writing down of the Buddhist texts paved the way toward easing the burden upon the *bhāṇakas*, whose primary function was the memorization and transmission of the texts before they were committed to writing. They began to enjoy more freedom after the event of writing down of the texts. History records the existence of famous Sri Lankan *bhāṇakas*, such as *Dīghabhāṇaka-Tiṭṭhaka-Mahā-Sivatthera* [DA II 543, III 883; SA III 281; etc.], *Dīghabhāṇaka-Abhayatthera* [Vis 36, 266; VA II 474; DA II 530; MA I 79, IV 97; DhsA 399], *Majjhima-bhāṇaka-Revatattthera* [Vis 95], *Samyuttabhāṇaka-Cūlasivatthera* [Vis 313; AA V 83; VibhA 446], *Dhammapadabhāṇaka-Mahātissatthera* [DhpA IV 51], and so on, who came to possess their own views. Mahāśivatthera is particularly well known, together with other eminent scholar-monks, such as *Ābhīdhammika-Godattatthera*, for having his own views recorded in the present Pāli commentaries.

While they discuss the same themes, the extant Pāli commentaries present diverse traditions or views. This diversity could be due to divergent *bhāṇaka* traditions. Some may, however, argue that such disparities originated with the compilers of the original Indian commentaries, such as the *aṭṭhakathā-acariyā* or *aṭṭhakathikā*, whose origin can be traced to India, and the *bhāṇakas* faithfully transmitted the texts even with such discrepancies. There was ample time in India to homogenize the content of the commentaries. The fact that disparities among the *bhāṇaka* traditions do exist suggests two probabilities: 1) *bhāṇakas* did not have any intention of homogenizing the texts they preserved and transmitted, and 2) *bhāṇakas* did not have any interaction among themselves. K. R. Norman, for example, believes that (2) above would have been the case.<sup>26</sup> The Sri Lankan elements found in the Pāli commentaries must have naturally been added and interpolated by the Sri Lankans themselves. Yet there is evidence in the concept of disappearance of the True Dhamma that the *Monorathapūraṇī* [AA I 87–93] and the rest of sources [DA III 898; MA IV 115; SA II 202; VibhA 431; etc.], differ from each other in the items provided in their lists. Only the Mahāvihāra monastery existed in Sri Lanka after the introduction of Buddhism in the third century BCE until the establishment of the Abhayagiri monastery in the first century BCE. During this period, the Sri Lankan *bhāṇakas* had opportunities to homogenize the texts if they so wished. Even at

<sup>25</sup> My investigation has revealed that the class of literature named *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* began its composition only after King Vattaḡāmaṇī Abhaya's time. See Endo, T. [2010]: 169–182.

<sup>26</sup> Norman, K. R. [1997]: 45.



the time of the so-called fourth Buddhist council at Ālokalena (Aluviḥāra, Mātale) in the first century BCE, the *bhāṇakas* could have played a role in homogenizing the texts before they were committed to writing. Nevertheless, what we find in the Pāli commentaries is contrary to our expectations, and disparities are often seen among the sources. In other words, the *bhāṇakas* did not have any intention or necessity to homogenize the texts. For instance, there are more than twenty-eight instances of citation or reference to various *bhāṇakas* in the entire Pāli commentaries. Of them, only seven cases can be traced to concrete literary sources, and five out of seven are traceable to the commentarial sources only. The remaining twenty-one cases, therefore, are those not traceable to either the canonical or commentarial texts.<sup>27</sup> This characteristic of the *bhāṇaka* tradition in the Pāli commentaries is significant, especially for the understanding of the Buddha-concept in notions like *dhātu-parinibbāna* and *saddhamma-antaradhāna*, which are certainly a Sri Lankan contribution.

The Pāli commentaries refer to the ‘eighteen qualities of the Buddha’ (*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā*). The first Pāli source that refers to it is the *Milindapañha* [Mil 105, 285]. The places of reference to this notion in this text [Miln] are all from the sections considered to be later additions. Mizuno believes that the Pāli *Milindapañha*, in its present-day form, must have been compiled at least before the first century CE.<sup>28</sup> Mori, on the other hand, suggests that the text would have been completed around the time of King Vasabha (65–109 CE).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there is a disparity in the terminology in Buddhaghosa’s and Dhammapāla’s commentaries: the former simply describes the Buddha’s eighteen qualities as *aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā* (十八佛法) [Vism 325; DA III 875, 994], while the latter employs an extra term, *āveṇika* (special or unique), and describes them as *aṭṭhārasa-āveṇika-buddhadhammā* (十八不共佛法) [UdA 87, 336; ItA I 7, 13, 91; VvA 213; CpA 332].<sup>30</sup> Of the sources that refer to this concept, DA III 994 is the only place where all eighteen items are enumerated. *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* contains a comment on this reference, denouncing the list mentioned in DA,

<sup>27</sup> Endo, T. [2003]: 1–42.

<sup>28</sup> Mizuno, K. [1996]: 240.

<sup>29</sup> See footnote 9 above.

<sup>30</sup> Dhammapāla’s additional use of *āveṇika* does not necessarily prove a Sri Lankan contribution, because it is more likely that he was aware of other traditions preserved in Sanskrit in India than that his old source-materials contained this additional term. Furthermore, there is a belief that Dhammapāla wrote his commentaries not in Sri Lanka, but in India. See Mori, S. [1984]: 537.



and supplying a new list [DAṬ III 257]: ‘this list of the *Dīghabhāṇakas* looks as if confused’ (*ayaṃ ca Dīghabhāṇakānaṃ pātho ākulo viya*). A new list supplied in DAṬ resembles that of the *Vimuttimaggā* (解脱道論) or of the *Mahāvastu*. Har Dayal believes that the concept of the eighteen (special) qualities of the Buddha began to appear in Sanskrit literature from about the third century CE.<sup>31</sup> If Dayal’s contention is accepted, the list of eighteen items, as found in DA, was certainly a product of the Sri Lankan *Dīghabhāṇakas*. This example is a good indication that the Sri Lankan *bhāṇakas* would have played a far greater role than we can imagine.

Within the classification of the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries, there are two broad categories of development: 1) a historical and philosophical development based primarily on the Indian source-materials, where there is virtually no use of Sri Lankan materials, or what can be termed as a ‘Theravādin response to the Buddha-concept’ in the Indian context; and 2) the Buddha-concept developed with truly Sri Lankan elements. Many areas of development can be found in the first category, and are, in fact, the major portions of the development of the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries. The Sri Lankan contribution to the Buddha-concept, as we have examined before, is discernible in two areas: 1) the areas we have already examined above, and 2) the area of emotional attachment to the Buddha Gotama. The latter can be seen in several places. For instance, it is said in the *Mahāvamsa* that at the time of his attainment of *Mahāparinibbāna*, the Buddha requested King Sakka to protect Prince Vijaya’s mission on the way to Laṅkā and the Island of Laṅkā itself, where Buddhism would be firmly established.<sup>32</sup> Second, we have a story of the Buddha’s three visits to the Island of Laṅkā.<sup>33</sup> On the third visit, it is believed, the Buddha predicted future places of worship in Sri Lanka.<sup>34</sup> These stories functioned to make it known that Buddhism would flourish on the Island of Laṅkā.

<sup>31</sup> Dayal, H. [1987]: 23.

<sup>32</sup> Mhv VII vv. 1–9.

<sup>33</sup> Mhv I vv. 19–30, 44–70, 71–83; Dpv I vv. 45–81, II vv. 1–51, 52–69; VA I 89.

<sup>34</sup> VA I 89.

### III. Concluding remarks

Sri Lanka's contribution to the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries can best be seen in the notions of the disappearance of the True Dhamma (*saddhamma-antaradhāna*), the attainment of the Buddha's final *parinibbāna*, called the *dhātu-parinibbāna*, the endurance of the Buddha's Dispensation (*Buddha-sāsana*) for five thousand years, and, probably, of the Sri Lankan *Dīghabhāṇakas'* contribution to the list of eighteen qualities of the Buddha (*aṭṭhārasabuddhadhammā*). In order to propagate and justify Buddhism's position as the main religion in ancient Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan *bhikkhus* responsible for compiling the historical materials utilized in Sri Lanka's chronicles, such as the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, and also in the *Nidānakathā* of the *Samantapāsādikā*, incorporated the idea that the Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times and predicted the establishment and prosperity of his dispensation. Such undertakings were necessitated and motivated with a sense of urgency and danger the Buddhist *saṅgha* faced because of a chain of political and socio-economic changes in and around the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya of the first century BCE. There is no doubt that the transformation of the Buddha-concept in the Pāli commentaries was, in a way, a necessity for the survival and perpetuation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

## Appendix

## Buddhaghosa's Role in Theravāda Buddhism: Some Observations\*

### I. Introduction

Buddhaghosa's contribution to Theravāda Buddhism has been evaluated from such perspectives as: 1) the contribution of the *Visuddhimagga* towards the consolidation of the Theravāda School in general; 2) the translation of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* into Pāli; 3) the extent of his faithfulness to the Mahāvihāra tradition; 4) the role he played in the context of a probable rivalry between the Mahāvihāra and Abhayagiri monasteries in the early fifth century; and 5) his knowledge of other Buddhist or non-Buddhist schools of thought. All these aspects subsume to the question of whether or not Buddhaghosa had his own understanding of Buddhism, the Buddhism which, he thought, represented the genuine school (Theravāda?) of Buddhist thought.<sup>1</sup>

Various Buddhist scholars have expressed their views on Buddhaghosa in different ways. For instance, discussing the impact of the *Mahāvamsa* (ch. 37. vs. 215–246) and the *Buddhaghosuppatti* on Buddhaghosa, E. W. Adikaram dismisses their usefulness: '... but considered from a historical point of view, it is unfortunately not of much value.'<sup>2</sup> Adikaram continues to comment on his role in the translation of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* thus: 'Buddhaghosa's task was not to write a series of original books on Buddhism but to put into Pāli in

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\* This is a revised and enlarged version of the paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on 'Buddhism and Current Global Challenges' organized by Sri Lanka Association of Buddhist Studies (SLABS), September 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

<sup>1</sup> It may be said with a fair amount of certainty that it was Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, a compendium of the Mahāvihāra interpretation of the Buddhist teachings, which laid the firm foundation for the Mahāvihāra tradition at the time, and after the unification of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in twelfth century Sri Lanka, this Mahāvihāra tradition became synonymous with the Theravāda School of Buddhist thought. It is in this sense that the *Visuddhimagga* can be appraised as the most important single work in the long history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

<sup>2</sup> Adikaram, E. W. [1946]: 2.

a coherent and intelligent form the matter that already existed in the various Sinhalese Commentaries.<sup>3</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli states: 'advertising his own standpoint seems likely to have been one of the things Buddhaghosa would have wished to avoid.'<sup>4</sup> Rhys Davids, referring to Buddhaghosa's talent, once asserted: 'Of his talent there can be no doubt; it was equaled only by his extraordinary industry. But of originality, of independent thought, there is at present no evidence.'<sup>5</sup> In a more positive vein, B. C. Law says:

It is difficult to find out his own personal contribution to the ancient stock of knowledge, but, whatever it is, we are grateful to the celebrated commentator whose invaluable labours have simplified much of what was complex and rendered intelligible what was abstruse and vague.<sup>6</sup>

D. J. Kalupahana expressed a somewhat different view on Buddhaghosa, particularly in his bringing about subtle philosophical points in a way unnoticed by the Mahāvihāra monks:

If the claim of the faithful followers of the Theriya tradition is that Buddhaghosa did not interpret or add anything to the Theravāda, or that he simply summarized the ideas expressed in the original Sinhalese commentaries and translated them into Pali, then these followers cannot claim to be the custodians of the original teachings of the Buddha as embodied in the discourses and in the Abhidhamma, which they themselves have preserved. The reason is that neither the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification), Buddhaghosa's most significant work, nor the commentaries he compiled on most of the canonical texts preserves the philosophical standpoint we have attributed to the Buddha, to the compilers of the Abhidhamma literature, and even to Moggaliputta-tissa.<sup>7</sup>

The reason for this comment, Kalupahana says, is that it is not impossible to trace some metaphysical speculations, such as those of the Sarvāstivādins, the Sautrāntikas, and even the Yogācārins, in the works attributed to Buddhaghosa.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Adikaram, E. W. [1946]: 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. 1991: xxxii.

<sup>5</sup> ERE, vol. II, 887.

<sup>6</sup> Law, B. C. EB: 'Buddhaghosa'.

<sup>7</sup> Kalupahana, D. J. [1994]: 206.

<sup>8</sup> Kalupahana, D. J. [1994]: 206.

These comments are indeed related to Buddhaghosa’s role in Theravāda Buddhism in one way or another. Nonetheless, since these papers were published, more studies have been produced on Buddhaghosa up to date, particularly regarding his editorial methods and old Sinhalese sources he relied upon for the translation of ancient commentaries into Pāli.<sup>9</sup> The present chapter focuses on some of the new findings, together with Buddhaghosa’s method of work and discusses his position in the Theravāda tradition deriving the materials mainly from his *Visuddhimagga*.

## II. Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*

The most significant contribution Buddhaghosa made towards the understanding of, or redefining of, fifth century Theravāda Buddhism was the writing of the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification). The work is considered a meditation manual, and many subsequent works on Theravāda meditative praxis are derived from it. As Kalupahana observes, it is almost impossible to summarize the doctrines discussed in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore my discussion will not center on the teachings embodied in the *Visuddhimagga*, but on its structural framework.

The structural framework of the *Visuddhimagga* is the ‘seven stages of purification’ (*satta-visuddhi*).<sup>11</sup> Bhikkhu Anālayo comments:

According to Puṇṇa’s explicit statement in the Chinese and Pāli versions of the *Rathavinīta Sutta*, the seventh stage of purification is still affected by clinging (*sa-upādāna*) and thus cannot be considered the final goal. If this is taken into account,

<sup>9</sup> See Mori, S. 1984; Endo, T. [2013]; Hayashi, T. [2013]: 823–816 (236–243).

<sup>10</sup> Kalupahana, D. J. [1994]: 208.

<sup>11</sup> They are: 1) *sīlavisuddhi* (purification of virtue); 2) *cittavisuddhi* (purification of mind); 3) *diṭṭhivisuddhi* (purification of view); 4) *kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhi* (purification of overcoming doubt); 5) *maggāmaggañāṇa-dassanavisuddhi* (purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path); 6) *paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi* (purification by knowledge and vision of the way); and 7) *ñāṇadassanavisuddhi* (purification by knowledge and vision). This scheme is found only in the *Rathavinīta sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (M I 145 ff.) and its parallels in Chinese translation in early Buddhism. It is also repeated in the ‘nine factors of exertion for purity’ (*pārisuddhi-padhāniyaṅga*) in the *Dasuttara-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya* (D III 288).

an interpretation of this seventh stage as including the attainment of all four levels of awakening, such as advanced by the *Visuddhimagga*, is surprising.<sup>12</sup>

Scarcity of reference to this scheme of the ‘seven stages of purification’ in early Buddhism prompted Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli to comment:

Although these seven purifications (*satta visuddhi*) are mentioned elsewhere in the Pāli Canon (D III 1213: <footnote> 288), it is curious that they are not analyzed as a set anywhere in the Nikāyas; and this becomes even more puzzling when both these great disciples seem to recognize them as a fixed group of doctrinal categories.<sup>13</sup>

This scheme is mentioned in some commentarial sources, but mainly in relation to Puṇṇa *thera*, who plays the leading role in the *Rathavinīta-sutta* (M I 145–151). What is instead often referred to in both early and late phases of Pāli literature, including the Pāli commentaries, is the ‘nine factors of exertion for purity’ (*nava-pārisuddhi-padhāniyaṅga*), denoting every stage leading up to the attainment of wisdom (*paññā*) and release (*vimutti*). They are often described as *nava bhāvetabbā dhammā* (nine things to be practiced).<sup>14</sup> With such infrequent reference to literary support from the canonical texts, the question is why did Buddhaghosa choose this scheme of the ‘seven stages of purification’ as the structural framework for his *Visuddhimagga*?

In a recent publication, I discussed the various aspects of this seemingly puzzling question. The initial inquiry centered around possible reasons the ‘sevenfold purification’ was not accepted as a positively recommended scheme that encompasses the final goal of the attainment of *nibbāna*. The answer to this is obvious: this ‘sevenfold purification’ does not include the final soteriological goal, the attainment of *nibbāna*. Rod Bucknell once summarized such schemes, which did not include the sevenfold purifications.<sup>15</sup> Although this scheme, as shown below, was an accepted

<sup>12</sup> Anālayo, Bhikkhu [2005]: 133.

<sup>13</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu and Bodhi, Bhikkhu [1995]: 1213 (footnote 288).

<sup>14</sup> They are termed as ‘nine things’ (*nava dhammā*) in D III 288 (*Dasuttara-sutta*), DA III 1062 (commentary to the *Dasuttara-sutta*), DA III 874 (*Sampasādanīyasuttavaṇṇanā*), and among the other commentaries including those of Dhammapāla, these nine factors are described as ‘things to be practiced’ (*bhāvetabbā dhammā*) at Pts I 27 and ItA I 127; Ud-a 336 (*kusala-dhammā*); ItA I 9 (definitions of *bhagavā*); CpA 7.

<sup>15</sup> Bucknell, R. [1984]: 7–49.

method of purification in different schools of Buddhist thought in India prior to Buddhaghosa’s time, the importance attached to it as a method of meditative praxis is as doubtful as in the Pāli sources. For instance, the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* of Harivarman (ca. 250–350), presently extant only in Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (344–413), refers to ‘seven purifications’ (七淨), which are almost the same as the Pāli version.<sup>16</sup> Asaṅga (ca. 300–350) in his *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (瑜伽師地論) also discusses the ‘seven kinds of purification’ (七種清淨) to be gradually practiced for ‘the procurement of the uncreated ultimate *nirvāṇa*’ (為得無造究竟涅槃).<sup>17</sup> In these sources the seventh purification is described as 行斷知 [智]見淨, literally ‘the purification of knowledge and vision for elimination or cessation’.<sup>18</sup> It may be interesting that the seventh purification of knowledge and vision is intended to indicate the ‘elimination or cessation’ (行斷), perhaps, of all forms of defilement that become hindrances for the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. This suggests that all the examples cited above have *nirvāṇa* as their goal, as in the Pāli tradition. What is, perhaps, somewhat more descriptive than the Pāli tradition is the fourth-century work *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* (成實論), which explicates the meaning of the ‘purification of knowledge and vision for elimination or cessation’ as the path of ‘no more learning’ (行斷知見淨者無學道也). This explanation seems to imply that the path of non-learning, the final goal itself, is included in the seventh purification. This interpretation seems to tally with a later interpretation of ‘knowledge and vision’ in the Theravāda commentarial tradition, particularly in the *Saddhammapakāsinī* (PṭsA I 128).

<sup>16</sup> 成實論.卷第二法聚品第十八 [T 32 252b]: 七淨戒淨者戒律儀也。心淨者得禪定也。見淨者斷身見也。度疑淨者斷疑結也。道非道知見淨者斷戒取也。行知見淨者思惟道也。行斷知見淨者無學道也。

<sup>17</sup> 瑜伽師地論.卷第九十四 [T 30 838a-b]: 又復依於七種清淨漸次修集。為得無造究竟涅槃。應知宣說隨順如是緣性緣起甚深言教。云何名為七種清淨。一戒清淨。二心清淨。三見清淨。四度疑清淨。五道非道智見清淨。六行智見清淨。七行斷智見清淨。云何名為如是清淨漸次修集。Cf. Sthiramati’s (7<sup>th</sup> century) *Mahāyānābhī-dharma-samuccaya-vyākhyā* (大乘阿毘達磨雜集論) translated by Xuanzang (玄奘: 602–664) which has the following: 清淨有七種。謂戒清淨心清淨見清淨度疑清淨道非道智見清淨行智見清淨行斷智見清淨 [T 31 769a].

<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that except for this seventh purification, the remaining six purifications correspond exactly to the Pāli tradition: 1. 戒清淨 (*sīla-visuddhi*); 2. 心清淨 (*citta-visuddhi*); 3. 見清淨 (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*); 4. 度疑清淨 (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*); 5. 道非道智見清淨 (*maggāmaggañānadassana-visuddhi*); and 6. 行智見清淨 (*paṭipadāñānadassana-visuddhi*). The question naturally arises here as to why the seventh purification (*ñānadassana-visuddhi*: 智見清淨) has the prefix 行斷.

All these instances suggest that Buddhaghosa might have followed such a trend in India to include the ‘four paths’ in the seventh purification in his *Visuddhimagga*. As stated earlier, these three Chinese sources provide the ‘sevenfold purification’ as only one of the lists of important philosophical concepts in numerical order, with no detailed explanations. This implies that the significance of the sevenfold purification for meditative praxis in the other Indian schools of Buddhist thought should not be overestimated: it is merely a list upon which other Buddhists do not place significant weight. Instead, the ninefold development (*nava-dhammā-bhāvetabbā*) was accepted in both the early and later phases of Buddhism; Buddhaghosa would have certainly been aware of this trend. This amply supports our contention that Buddhaghosa might have had the ‘ninefold development’ in mind when he wrote the *Visuddhimagga*, and his endorsement of this ‘ninefold purification’ already had strong literary evidence in the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathās* themselves, and perhaps, in the Indian Buddhist tradition as well. He thus incorporated the ‘four supermundane paths’ (*sotapanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmī*, and *arahat*) in the *ñāṇadassana-visuddhi* in the list of nine as, for instance, at D III 288. In other words, he could complete his scheme of the nine-fold purification by ensuring the final two aspects (*paññā* and *vimutti*) were absorbed into the seventh item of *ñāṇadassana*; thereby, the list of items in the *Visuddhimagga* became seven. Moreover, even though the sevenfold purification was adopted as the structural scaffolding of the *Visuddhimagga*, it may have been that the number seven had no direct influence from or connection to the ‘sevenfold purification’ of the *Rathavinīta-sutta*. If these hypotheses are tenable, then the questions raised by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Anālayo<sup>19</sup> may be resolved.

Assessing Buddhaghosa’s contribution to Theravāda Buddhism, Kalupahana says:

There seems to be no doubt that the *Visuddhimagga* and the commentaries are a testimony to the abilities of a great harmonizer who blended old and new ideas without arousing suspicion in the minds of those who were scrutinizing his work.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu and Bodhi, Bhikkhu [1995]: 1213 (footnote 288); Anālayo, Bhikkhu [2005]: 133.

<sup>20</sup> Kalupahana, D. J. [1994]: 207–208.



### B. C. Law also comments:

It was Buddhaghosa who developed and perfected the Buddhist system of thought. ... Buddhaghosa gave it a perfect and final shape through his own comments and interpretations. The philosophical ideas scattered in the Tipiṭakas are to be found in a systematic form in his works.<sup>21</sup>

Buddhaghosa is thus believed to have systematized and brought about what we now know as the ‘Theravāda Buddhist teachings.’ Nonetheless, these comments are still derived from the idea that Buddhaghosa followed the interpretations based upon earlier sources, including the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* and the commentaries (i.e., the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*), and systematized them accordingly. These great scholars do not even suggest that Buddhaghosa had his own methods of systematization that did not necessarily follow the earlier sources. Even among the commentators, though the *Visuddhimagga* appears to be the authoritative work for the Mahāvihāra tradition,<sup>22</sup> it was not always accepted as an undisputable truth. In this context, I provide below two instances of mistrust and doubt about the *Visuddhimagga* found in the *Saddhammappakāsinī* (PṭsA), since they are thus far the only occasions where the *Visuddhimagga* receives direct criticism.

### III. Criticisms of the *Visuddhimagga*

Talking of the eighteen kinds of *mahāvīpassanā* (chief insight-knowledge), the *Visuddhimagga* is quoted on some explanations of aspects of ‘insight-knowledge’ (PṭsA I 104). The sentence from the *Visuddhimagga* reads: ‘...yathābhūtañānadassanan ti sappaccayanāmarūpapariggaho’ (Vism 695), and PṭsA here states: ‘*Taṃ tāya pāḷiyā viruddhaṃ viya dissati.*’ Another passage in the *Visuddhimagga* states: ‘“*Vivaṭṭānupassanā ti saṅkhārupekkhā c’eva anulomañ cā*” (Vism 695) *ti vuttaṃ.*’ The PṭsA also rejects this Vism passage: ‘*Taṃ ca pāḷiyā viruddhaṃ viya dissati*’ (PṭsA I 105).

The second instance comes from the commentary to the ‘Talk on Magical Power’ (*iddhikathā*) at PṭsA 665–666. In its citation, Vism states that he should advert to his own appearance as a boy (*attano kumārakavaṇṇo*

<sup>21</sup> Law, B. C. (*Encyclopedia of Buddhism*) EB: 413.

<sup>22</sup> There are more than 336 references or citations of the *Visuddhimagga* with concrete passages in the entire Pāli commentaries.

*āvajjatabbo*) (Vism 406). The PṭsA makes a comment on this statement of Vism: ‘*Taṃ nāgādinimmāṇe na yujjati viya*’ (this does not seem applicable to creations such as *nāga* serpents). In the same context, Vism is quoted as saying: ‘But he shows an elephant, etc., is said here with respect to showing an elephant, etc., externally. Herein, instead of resolving: “Let me be an elephant,” he resolves: “Let there be an elephant.” The same method applies in the case of [a] horse and the rest’ (*Visuddhimagge pana “Hatthim” pi dassetī ti ādi pan’ettha bahiddhā’ pi hatthi-ādīdassanavasena vuttam; tattha hatthī homī’ ti anadhiṭṭhahitvā, hatthī hotū’ ti adhiṭṭhātabbam; assādīsu’ pi es’ eva nayo*) (Vism 406). The PṭsA, however, states: ‘this is against [the idea of] “having abandoned natural appearance” with regard to the said original principle and also the characteristics of magical power of transformation’ (*Taṃ “pakativanṇaṃ vijahitvā” ti vuttamūlapadena ca vikubbaniddhi-bhāvena ca virujjhati*) (PṭsA 666). In these instances, Vism is censured twice. Mahānāma, the author of PṭsA, seems to disagree with Buddhaghosa, at least in these two instances.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV. Other cases

In the *Sammohavinodanī* (VibhA), several passages on *āyatana*, *dhātu*, *sacca*, *indriya*, and *pañcikasamuppāda* are cited from Vism. VibhA’s explanations are much longer and more detailed than those found in Vism. As VibhA quotes from Vism, it is very clear that the author of VibhA specifically had Vism in mind when he provided detailed and somewhat different explanations from those of Vism.<sup>24</sup>

Another instance of further elaboration in VibhA when compared with Vism is seen in the definitions of *avijjā*. The *Visuddhimagga* follows in this regard both the *suttantika-pariyāya* and *abhidhamma-pariyāya* (VibhA 138) methods. However, the *Sammohavinodanī*, after explaining the above-mentioned two definitions, advises following another method called ‘the definitions by twenty-five words’ (*lakkaṇadassanatthaṃ pañcavīsati padāni kathitāni*) (VibhA 139). In this regard, Norihisa Baba says that the explanations of *avijjā* in Vism without resorting to these twenty-five additional characteristics cannot be accepted as ‘well explained’ (*sukathita*). He opines that since the author of VibhA was familiar with the explanations

<sup>23</sup> Endo, T. [2012]: 31–42.

<sup>24</sup> See for an excellent work for details by Baba, N.: [2008]: 37–46.

of *avijjā* in *Vism*, the latter would intentionally have inserted this passage (of twenty-five characteristics) as an implicit criticism of *Vism*.<sup>25</sup> Baba further comments that, for the author of *VibhA*, *Vism* is not the absolute authority to follow without criticism, but it is a prior work that can be utilized for further improvement and revision.<sup>26</sup>

Such evidence certainly gives rise to the question of the authorship of the *Sammohavinodanī*, as both works are ascribed to Buddhaghosa. In a passing reference to this question, Baba offers two possibilities: first, that someone other than Buddhaghosa wrote *VibhA*, and second, if Buddhaghosa indeed wrote the text, he edited *VibhA* after undergoing a philosophical transformation.<sup>27</sup>

The traditional view of Buddhaghosa as a faithful editor and translator of the old commentaries has been held by a good number of scholars, including such eminent Pāli scholars as Adikaram, Rhys David, and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli. Conversely, as evidenced in his own commentaries, Buddhaghosa never acted as a mere translator, but he was prudent and had his own freedom of judgment, as we may infer based upon solid literary evidence. The following examples are all from the *Visuddhimagga*:<sup>28</sup>

In a discussion of ‘fruition consciousness’ (*phalacitta*), *Vism* refers to a view of ‘some’ (*keci*) who say that there are one, two, three, four, or five fruition consciousnesses (*keci pana ekaṃ dve tīni cattāri vā phalacittāni ti vadanti*); this view is rejected by Buddhaghosa, saying ‘that should not be taken’ (*taṃ na gahetabbaṃ*) based on the fact that ‘... change-of-lineage knowledge arises at the end of conformity’s repetition, so at the minimum there must be two conformity consciousnesses, since one alone does not act as repetition condition’<sup>29</sup> (*Anulomassa hi āsevanante gotrabhūññāṇaṃ uppajjati. Tasmā sabbantimena paricchedena dvīhi anulomacittēhi bhavitabbaṃ. Na hi ekaṃ āsevana-paccayaṃ labhati*) (*Vism* 675).

<sup>25</sup> Baba, N: [2008]: 43.

<sup>26</sup> Baba, N: [2008]: 43.

<sup>27</sup> Baba, N: [2008]: 43.

<sup>28</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 181–224 for both Buddhaghosa’s and Dhammapāla’s working methods.

<sup>29</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. 1991: 699.

In continuation of the above, ‘some’ advocate that ‘that which has four formalities and change-of-lineage as fifth and path consciousness as sixth has one fruition consciousness. But that is refuted because it is the fourth or fifth [impulsion] that reaches [the path], not those after that, owing to their nearness to the life-continuum. So that cannot be accepted as correct.’<sup>30</sup> (*keci pana, yassacattāri anulomāni, tassa pañcamam gotrabhū, chaṭṭham maggacittam, ekaṃ phalacittan ti vadanti. Taṃ pana yasmā, catuttham pañcamam vā appeti, na tato param, āsannabhavaṅgattā ti paṭikkhittam, tasmā na sārato paccetabbam*) (Vism 675).

Buddhaghosa seems to have been well acquainted with the teachings of various Buddhist schools, including those in India.<sup>31</sup> For instance, Vism refers to the views of *keci* (twice) and *apare* (once) on the question of the ‘materiality aggregate.’ In a modified way, these views, according to Y. Karunadasa, are reminiscent of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory on the sense-organ and their corresponding objective field.<sup>32</sup> The first *keci* is identified as ‘some,’ specifically one Vasudhamma of the Mahāsaṅghika School (*kecīti Mahāsaṅghikesu ekacce. Tesu hi Vasudhammo evaṃ vadati...*) (VismṬ (Be) II 91) according to the *Visuddhimagga-ṭīkā*, while the next *apare* and *keci* are said to be those of the Abhayagiri School. This is confirmed not in the sub-commentary (*ṭīkā*) but in the Sinhala glossary of the *Visuddhimagga* called the *Visuddhimārga Mahāsanya*, composed in the thirteenth century by King Parakkamabāhu II (1236–1270).<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, a reference is made in the *Visuddhimagga* to the Andhakas’ view that ‘the fruit is the mere abandoning of fetters and nothing more than that’<sup>34</sup> (*Apica ye “saṃyojanapahānamattam eva phalaṃ nāma, na koci añño dhammo atthī”ti vadanti*) (Vism 699). This is, of course, rejected by Buddhaghosa (*tesaṃ anu-nayattham idaṃ suttam pi dassetabbam ...*) (ibid.). The identification of *ye* as ‘Andhakas’ is made in the sub-commentary (*Tenāha “phalaṃ nāma na koci añño dhammo atthī”ti. Ke panetaṃ vadantīti? Andhakādayo*) (VismṬ (Be) 514).

<sup>30</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. 1991: 699.

<sup>31</sup> In addition, it is well known that Buddhaghosa adopted certain grammatical explanations from Pāṇinian grammar. See, for example, Pind, O. H. [1989]: **is a page reference needed?**

<sup>32</sup> Karunadasa, Y. [1967]: 47.

<sup>33</sup> Sanne 1050: ‘*Keci*’ yannen Mahāsaṅghikayan kerehi Vasudhammācārya pakāsayehi aṭṭavun kiyat; ‘*Apare*,’ Abhayagiri væssō; ‘*Keci*,’ ovun aturehi du kisi kenek.

<sup>34</sup> Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. [1991]: 727.

Even a thesis put forward by an elder belonging to the Mahāvihāra fraternity is censured by the other members of the same school. For instance, Vism records an instance of Ābhidharmika Godattatthera (active during the reign of King Bhātika Abhaya: 19 BCE–9 CE), whose thesis was rejected based on ‘commentaries’ (*aṭṭhakathāsu*). The plural form *aṭṭhakathāsu* theoretically includes any plural number of ancient commentaries (*Sīḥaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*), including the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, which, according to my investigation, would have begun its compilation only after the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya of the first century BCE.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, since the *Visuddhimagga* was the first to be written by Buddhaghosa, the term *aṭṭhakathāsu* does not include any Pāli commentaries. This implies that such a reference was possible only by the author himself, in other words, Buddhaghosa.<sup>36</sup>

The evidence of Buddhaghosa’s own invention may be seen in the *Visuddhimagga*. The six types of disposition (*cariyā*), namely, *rāga-cariyā*, *dosa-*, *moha-*, *saddhā-*, *buddhi-*, and *vitakka-* are given at Vism 101. This list is repeated at Vism 104 under *carita* (temperament). These are, in fact, the standard items listed in the Theravāda tradition. However, the list at Vism 104 includes one extra temperament: ‘mixed temperament’ (*vomissa-carita*). Mori opines that this ‘mixed temperament’ was possibly Buddhaghosa’s own innovation.<sup>37</sup>

## V. Concluding remarks

The differences in exposition on certain doctrinal points among the Pāli commentaries suggest that Vism, though it certainly played an influential and important role within the Mahāvihāra tradition, was not necessarily accepted as the final ‘say’ in the tradition. As research on the *Visuddhimagga* from different perspectives advances, the true import of the text emerges. Historically, Vism may have been composed partly because the Mahāvihāravāsins were aware of the magnitude and popularity of the Abhayagiri monastery (five thousand monks and three thousand monks, according to Faxian’s travel records) among the fifth-century *saṅgha* in Sri Lanka and

<sup>35</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 192.

<sup>36</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 33–45 for a detailed discussion on the date of compilation of the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*.

<sup>37</sup> Mori, S. [1984]: 576.

hence made an attempt to regain the lost glory they had once held in ancient times. Buddhaghosa’s role was to help the Mahāvihāravāsins, intentionally or unintentionally, to achieve their hidden agenda of achieving this lost glory. This attempt on the part of the Mahāvihāravāsins can be detected in a few instances: the Abhayagirivāsins were never addressed as *keci therā* (some elders) and the like or *ācariyā* (teachers), the terms meant only for those belonging to the Mahāvihāra or non-Mahāvihāra fraternity and never the Abhayagirivāsins.<sup>38</sup> Whenever the residents of the Abhayagiri monastery are referred to or cited, somewhat derogatory terms like *keci*, *apare*, *aññe*, *eke*, *ekacce*, and so on are used in the Pāli commentaries, without the addition of honorific suffixes like *thera* or *ācariya* are used.

Buddhaghosa, however, was keen to present the Theravāda tradition — it was, of course, the Mahāvihāra tradition at that time — in a systematic and uncompromising manner, and perhaps he might have had an intention to establish the Theravāda Buddhist tradition as a kind of response to the philosophical debates and meditative practices that were advocated on the Indian subcontinent. All these issues, still based on inference and imagination, will have to be investigated in detail, but it seems clear that Buddhaghosa was never a mere reproducer of the contents of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* in the way our eminent predecessors perceived, but examined them prudently and thoroughly using his expertise of the Buddha-dhamma; if the views of others, even those belonging to the Mahāvihāra fraternity, were not acceptable, he never hesitated to use his own discretion and Buddhist knowledge in order to point them out and rectify them. It is in this sense that Buddhaghosa’s role in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition must be appraised.

<sup>38</sup> See Endo, T. [2013]: 84–86.

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