

Buddhology

<http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Buddhology>

Early Buddhist Schools

Buddhology is the study of the [Buddha](#) or [Buddhahood](#). The term is also used as a [synonym](#) for [Buddhist Studies](#), contemporary [academic investigation](#) of [Buddhism](#). There are varied and nuanced understandings of the precise [nature](#) of a [Buddha](#) expressed in the different [Buddhist traditions](#) and movements.



Theravada

Basic [View](#): [Buddha](#) was a Perfect [Human Being](#)

[Theravada Buddhists](#) base their [view](#) of the [Buddha](#) on the [Pali Canon](#), which appear to be the oldest surviving [Buddhist scriptures](#). From the accounts contained in the [Pali Canon](#) emerges the [view](#) that [Buddha](#) was a [human being](#) — a perfected [human being](#). [Buddha](#) was also possessed of all the various [supernatural powers](#), and mastered these to the greatest extent possible ([Digha Nikaya](#) 11: [Kevatta Sutta](#)). The [body](#) and [mind](#) of a [Buddha](#) (while alive) are [impermanent](#) and changing, just like the [body](#) and [mind](#) of [ordinary people](#). A [Buddha](#) does [recognize](#) the [unchanging nature](#) of the [Dharma](#), which is an [eternal principle](#), and an [unconditioned](#) and timeless [phenomenon](#).

When [Buddha died](#) at the age of 80, his [body](#) and [mind](#) both came to an end. After [death](#), the [state](#) of [Buddha](#) is undefinable (MN 22). A [Buddha](#) does, however, definitely not [experience rebirth](#) after [death](#), but [experiences](#) the [attainment](#) of

[Parinibbana](#) (the [ultimate Nirvana](#)). There is thus an end to the life-continuity of [rebirths](#) succeeding one another (this is one of the meanings of [samsara](#)).

In [Theravada](#), a [Buddha](#) is not regarded as a [god](#) nor as having created the [universe](#) or ruling over it.

Meaning of 'Whoever Sees the [Dharma](#) Sees Me'

[Theravada Buddhism](#) interprets the statement by [Buddha](#) that "whoever sees the [Dharma](#) sees me (that is; the [Buddha](#))" in the context of the whole [conversation](#) which the [Buddha](#) held on that occasion. The goal of this [teaching](#) was to make clear that the [physical body](#) of the [Buddha](#) is not the [essence](#) of his [being](#), and that [seeing](#) his [body](#) doesn't tell you much about him at all. Even when one is sitting next to him, if one doesn't know his [teaching](#) (or sees the [truth](#) he discovered: [Dharma](#)), one is really far from him. But when one sees the [Dharma](#), even if one is very far away, it is as if one is very close to him, because one really sees what [Buddhahood](#) is about. According to the [Theravada tradition](#), the context of the [teaching](#) thus does not support any claim for the [Buddha](#) to have meant that his [existence](#) is God-like ([permanent](#), [unchanging](#), timeless), which is how this sentence is sometimes interpreted in [Mahayana Buddhism](#).

Early Buddhist Schools

Sarvastivada

Dharmakāya

See [Dharmakaya](#)

Vipāka-kāya / Rūpa-kāya

Nirmāna-kāya

Mahāsāṅghika



According to the descriptions of [sectarian tenets](#) by [Vasumitra](#), [Bhavaviveka](#) and [Vinitadeva](#), the main [Mahāsāṅghika](#) theses, apparently also held in common by all the [Mahāsāṅghika](#) sub-groups, concerning the [nature](#) of [Buddhas](#) were:

- [Buddhas](#) are [supramundane](#).
- [Buddhas](#) are devoid of all [impurities](#) ([anāsrava](#)) and [mundane](#) qualities.
- [Buddhas](#) [preach](#) the [Dharma](#) with every [verbal](#) utterance they make.
- [Buddhas](#) can express all [elements](#) of the [Dharma](#) by uttering a single [sound](#).
- The [material body](#) ([rūpakāya](#)) of [Buddhas](#) is [unlimited](#) ([anatman](#))
- The [supernatural powers](#) ([prabhāva](#)) of [Buddhas](#) are [unlimited](#).
- The longevity of [Buddhas](#) is [unlimited](#).
- In [order](#) to convert [beings](#) and to generate [pure faith](#) within them, [Buddhas](#) have no [thought](#) of satiation
- [Buddhas](#) neither [sleep](#) nor [dream](#)
- [Buddhas](#) reply to questions without the need for [reflection](#).
- [Buddhas](#) never actually utter any words since they abide in [eternal samādhi](#) or [meditative concentration](#) [beings perceive](#) words to have been uttered.
- [Buddhas](#) understand all things with one momentary [thought](#).
- [Buddhas](#) know all things because [insight](#) or [prajñā](#) is conjoined to that one momentary [thought](#).
- The [knowledge](#) of [cessation](#) and of non-arising in the [future](#) are sustained continuously in [Buddhas](#) until they enter [parinirvāṇa](#).
- There are [Buddhas](#) dwelling in all [directions](#) of the [compass](#).

[Mahayana](#)

Mid-period [Mahayana](#)

[Eternal Buddha](#)

See also :

An important [doctrine](#) that flourished during the middle period of the unfolding of the [Mahayana](#) – and is still important today amongst certain [Mahayana](#) schools of [Buddhism](#) – is that of the [Buddha's immortality](#) and [eternity](#). The [idea](#) of an [eternal Buddha](#) is a notion popularly associated with the [Mahayana scripture](#), the [Lotus Sutra](#), which was written down about 500 years after [Shakyamuni](#)'s preaching of it.. The [Lotus Sutra](#) has the [Buddha](#) indicating that he became [awakened](#) countless, [immeasurable](#), [inconceivable](#) trillions of [aeons](#) ("[kalpas](#)") ago and that his [lifetime](#) is "forever [existing](#) and [immortal](#)". The [sutra](#) itself, however, does not directly employ the [phrase](#) "[eternal Buddha](#)"; yet similar notions are found in other [Mahayana scriptures](#), notably the [Mahaparinirvana Sutra](#), which presents the [Buddha](#) as the ultimately [real](#), [eternal](#) ("[nitya](#)" / "[śāśvata](#)"), [unchanging](#), [blissful](#), [pure Self](#) ([Atman](#)) who, as the [Dharmakaya](#), [knows](#) of no beginning or end. The notion of an [eternal Buddha](#) perhaps finds resonance with the earlier [idea](#) of [eternal Dharma/Nirvana](#), of which the [Buddha](#) is said to be [an embodiment](#).

While [Theravada Buddhism](#) holds back from stating that the [Buddha](#) is [eternal](#) and emphasises all-round [impermanence](#), some [expressions](#) of [Mahayana Buddhism](#), however, regard such an [understanding](#) as incomplete. The [Tathagatagarbha sutras](#) provide an allegedly culminational [doctrine](#) of a [pure Selfhood](#) (the [eternal](#) yet ungraspable hypostasis of the [Buddha](#)) which no longer generates [karma](#) and which subsists eternally in the [realm](#) of [Nirvana](#), from which [sphere](#) help to [suffering worldly beings](#) can be sent forth in the [forms](#) of various transitory [physical Buddhas](#) ("[nirmānakāyas](#)"). While the [bodies](#) of these corporeal [Buddhas](#) are [subject](#) to [disease](#), [decline](#) and [death](#) – like all [impermanent](#) things – the salvational [Tathagata](#) or [Dharmakaya](#) behind them is forever free from [impairment](#), [impermanence](#) and [mortality](#). It is this [transcendent](#) yet immanent [Dharmakaya-Buddha](#) which is [taught](#) in certain major [Mahayana sutras](#) to be immutable and [eternal](#) and is intimately linked with [Dharma](#) itself. According to the [Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra](#), [worldly beings](#) fail to see this eternality of the [Buddha](#) and his [Dharma](#). The [Buddha](#) declares in that [latter Mahayana sutra](#), which presents itself as the last and most definitive of all [sutras](#): "I say that those who do not know that the [Tathagata](#) ([Buddha](#)) is [eternal](#) are the foremost of the congenitally [blind](#)."



Buddha-dhatu theories

See also :

Buddha-nature (Classical Chinese: 佛性, modern pinyin fó xìng, literally corresponds to the Sanskrit, Buddha-dhatu – “Buddha Element”, “Buddha-Principle”, but seems to have been used most frequently to translate the Sanskrit Tathāgata-garbha, meaning “Buddha Matrix”, which would be more directly translated into Chinese as 如来藏) is a doctrine important for many schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha Nature or Buddha Principle (Buddha-dhatu) is taught to be a truly real, but internally hidden immortal potency or element within the purest depths of the mind, present in all sentient beings, for awakening and becoming a Buddha.

Trikaya theories

See also :

The Trikaya doctrine (Sanskrit, literally “Three bodies or personalities”; 三身 Chinese: Sānshén, Japanese: sanjin) is an important Buddhist teaching both on the nature of reality, and what a Buddha is. By the 4th century CE the trikaya doctrine had assumed its current form. Briefly the doctrine says that a Buddha has three kayas or bodies: the nirmanakaya or created body which manifests in time and space; the sambhogakaya or body of mutual enjoyment which is an archetypal manifestation; and the Dharmakaya or reality body which embodies the very principle of enlightenment and knows no limits or boundaries. In the view of Anuyoga, the ‘Mindstream’ (Sanskrit: citta santana) is the ‘continuity’

(Sanskrit: [santana](#); Wylie: [rgyud](#)) that links the [Trikaya](#). The [Trikaya](#), as a [triune](#), is symbolised by the [Gankyil](#).

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