

KEY TERMS (Sanskrit)

बोधिसत्त्व

bodhisattva

Bodhisattva

Awakened Being

*one whose being (*sattva*) is awakened (*bodhi*)

*one whose essence is perfect knowledge

*a Buddhist saint who has only one birth to go before attaining final *nirvāṇa*.

*one who seeks enlightenment in order to save all sentient beings

बोधिचित्त

bodhicitta

bodhicitta

Thought of Awakening

*the thought or aspiration to attain

enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings

प्रज्ञापारमिता

prajñāpāramitā

Prajnaparamita

Perfection of Wisdom

*highest or transcendental wisdom

*name for the early *Mahāyāna Sūtras*

शून्यता

śūnyatā

Shunyata

Emptiness

**Mahāyāna* notion of ultimate reality which is empty of substantial, independent existence

उपाय

upāya

Upaya

Skillful Means

*a way or strategy of accomplishing one's aim

*key *Mahāyāna* notion referring to the way the bodhisattva helps all sentient beings

तथता

tathatā

Tathata

Suchness

*literally "thus so", *Mahāyāna* notion referring to true reality—such as things truly are

मन्त्र

mantra

Mantra

Sacred Speech, Text

*ritual formula

*sacred verse

*sound used for focus in meditation

आलयविज्ञान

ālaya-vijñāna
Alaya-vijnana

Storehouse Consciousness

*key concept of Yogācāra school, referring to the depths of consciousness which contains both impure karmic seeds as well as the pure seeds of awakening

त्रिकाय

trikāya
Trikaya

Three Bodies (of the Buddha)

*key *Mahāyāna* notion referring to different conceptions of Buddha

निर्माणकाय

nirmāṇakāya
Nirmanakaya

Manifestation Body

*1st of the trikāya, the Buddha manifested in human form to help sentient beings

संभोगकाय

saṃbhogakāya
Sambhogakaya

Enjoyment Body

*2nd of the trikāya, the Celestial Buddhas which become the object of devotion in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism

धर्मकाय

dharmakāya
Dharmakaya

Body of Dharma

*3rd of the trikāya, the nirvanic essence of the Buddha nature in everything

The Mahāyāna Sūtras

Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras (“The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras”)

These are the earliest and most important of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. They are purported to be a series of discourses between Buddha and certain of his disciples. The *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* are a vast collection, numbering 30 separate *sūtras*, containing more than 100,000 verses in total. The oldest and most important part is known simply as “The *Prajñāpāramitā* in 8000 Verses.” Their principle subject matter is *śūnyatā*. They were particularly important for the Mādhyamika School. The two most important are: *Vajraccedikā Sūtra* (“The Diamond Sūtra”) and *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra* (“The Great Perfection of Wisdom Heart Sūtra”).

Avataṃsaka Sūtras (“The Flower Garland Sūtras”)

This group of *sūtras* consists of three enormous collections and includes:

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra (“World-Array Sūtra”), describes the spiritual pilgrimage of a youth who visits more than fifty different teachers in his search for enlightenment. The main theme is the mutual interpenetration of all phenomena.

Daśabhūmika Sūtra (“The Ten Stages Sūtra”) deals with the ten stages of a Bodhisattva’s career. These *sūtras* were emphasized by the Yogācāra School.

Ratnakūṭa Sūtras (“The Highest Jewel Sūtras”)

A shorter collection most known for:

Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra (*Exposition of Vimalakīrti Sūtra*), a *sūtra* which deals with a layperson, Vimalakīrti, and his devotion to following the path of the Buddha. *Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtra* (*Array of the Happy Land Sūtra*) also deals with the way a layperson can achieve enlightenment.

Parinirvāṇa Sūtras (“The Final Nirvana Sūtras”)

Deals with the Buddha’s last days and final admonitions to his disciples.

Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtras (“The Great Descent [Death?] Sūtras”)

The Miscellaneous Collection

This group includes some of the most important of all the Mahāyāna *sūtras*:

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra—most famous for the view that the Buddha-nature dwells in all sentient beings.

Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra (“Sūtra of the Lotus of the Good Dharma,” or simply, “The Lotus Sūtra”)—a summary of the essential Mahāyāna teachings.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the four characteristic notions associated with Mahāyāna Buddhism discussed in Mitchell's text?
2. What is a *bodhisattva* and why does this ideal take precedence over the Theravadin goal of the *arhat* in the Mahāyāna? What are the Six Perfections and the Ten Stages of the *bodhisattva* path?
3. What three celestial *bodhisattvas* have been especially important in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, becoming the objects of much veneration and worship?
4. How did the notion of the Buddha change from the early Theravāda view to the later Mahāyāna view? What is the *Trīkāya* doctrine that became the standard Mahāyāna view of the Buddha?
5. What is the "Perfection of Wisdom" taught in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*?
6. What is the point of the story in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* of the wisdom of Vimalakīrti? What is the central teaching of this sūtra?
7. What is meant by the "storehouse consciousness" (*ālaya-vijñāna*) that is introduced in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*? Why is this "storehouse consciousness" referred to by the name "*Tathāgata-garbha*"?
8. What are some of the teachings brought forth in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (*The Lotus Sūtra*)? What is the point of the story of the burning house in the *Lotus Sūtra*?
9. What is the central teaching of the *Sukhāvātī-vyūha Sūtra* (*Land of Bliss Sūtra*) and how did this teaching lead to the development of the devotional side of Mahāyāna Buddhism?