

YĀNA, from *ya, stands for a “means of motion”, which in principle could be either a “way”, or else a “vehicle”. In what follows, occurrences of these two nuances of the term *yāna* in its early canonical usage will be examined, followed by considering its significance in relation to the concepts Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.

According to the definition given in the Vinaya, the term *yāna* could refer to various types of carts or chariots, as well as to a sedan chair or a palanquin (*Vin.* IV. 201). The sense of a vehicle seems to be in fact the most common nuance of *yāna* in the Pali discourses. References to such a vehicle or carriage form part of the standard description of how someone would approach the Buddha by driving in a *yāna* as far as this is possible, followed by descending and then proceeding on foot to meet the Buddha. (e.g. *D.* II, 7).

The bodhisattva Vipassi was travelling in a *yāna* when he encountered the sights of old age, disease and death, encounters that motivated him to go forth in search of awakening (*D.* II, 21). Generous King Mahāsudassana once decided to offer *yānas* to all those who might need it (*D.* II, 179). A *yāna* is in fact one of the goods that, in addition to food, drinks, clothing etc., one might offer to a recluse of Brahmin (*D.* III, 258). Those who do not own a *yāna* may need to borrow it from someone else (*M.* I, 366). To be able to avail oneself of a *yāna* appears to be characteristic of those who are wealthy and affluent (*M.* III, 177), in fact to drive a *yāna* was apparently considered a source of happiness to such an extent that the *Kathāvathu* lists the *yānasukha* as an evident example for the existence of happiness (*Kvu.* 209).

Responsible for the construction and eventually also the repair of a chariot is a cartwright, a *yānakāra*, described in a simile in the Anaṅgaṇa Sutta (*M.* I, 31). *Yāna* as a vehicle also makes its appearance in another simile, which illustrates the predicament of one who gives up the celibate life and returns to indulge in sensuality with the imagery of a vehicle that is out of control (*Sn.* 816). For those who have gone forth, to travel in *yāna* was not considered appropriate, though eventually concessions were made, such as in case of sickness (*Vin.* I, 191; *Vin.* II, 276 and *Vin.* IV, 338). As a matter of proper etiquette, it is also inappropriate for a monk or a nun to teach the *Dhamma* to someone who is riding a *yāna* (*Vin.* IV, 201). Finally *yānakathā*,

talk about vehicle, is one of the unsuitable topics of conversation that those who have left the world should better avoid (e.g. *M.* III, 113).

In the fabulous country of Northern Kuru (see also UTTARAKURU), people can avail themselves of vehicles drawn by elephants or horses, as well as of divine vehicles, *dibbayāna*, (*D.* III, 200). A *dibbayāna* also features in the Makhādeva Sutta, where it stands for the “divine vehicle” sent by Sakkha to convey King Nimi to the heavenly realm of the Thirty-three (*M.* II, 80). While these occurrences of the term *dibbayāna* have a ‘vehicle’ in mind, the similar term *devayāna* seems to rather intent a “divine way” or even a “way to heaven”. This can be deduced from the circumstances that, in a verse in the *Sutta Nipāta*, the *devayāna* is further qualified as “stainless great path”, *virajam so mahāpatham* (*Sn.* 139). The same nuance if a “way” or “path” would also underlie a passage in the *Kevaddha Sutta*, which describes how a monk visited the heavenly realms after having developed concentration to such a degree that the *devayāniyo maggo*, the way to the heavenly worlds, appeared to him (*D.* I, 215).

The use of the expression *devayāna* has its precedents in ancient Indian literature: “As early as the Ṛgveda and the Brāhmaṇas mention is frequently made of the *Devayāna*, which was originally in all probability the way by which Agni bore the sacrificial gifts to the gods, or the latter descended to the gods”.

Some instances of *yāna* could accommodate both nuances of a “way” or of “vehicle”, such as a verse in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, according to which the *yāna* to liberation can be made use of by men as well as by women, *itthiyā purisassa vā, sa ve etena yānena nibbānass'eva santike*

(*S.* I. 33). The preceding verses speak of the “straight path” *ujuko... maggo*, and the “chariot that does not creak”, *ratho akujano*, followed by describing various parts of this chariot. Though the sense of a “chariot” is clearly more prominent, the meaning of a “path” is not altogether absent from the imagery of the *yāna* to liberation that is open to men and women alike.

At times, a play on the two senses of the term *yāna* appears to be made on purpose in order to infuse a mundane statement with a deeper meaning. According to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, when on one

occasion people applauded the beautiful chariot of a particular Brahmin as a *brahmayāna*, the Buddha used the same term as a designation of the noble eightfold path, which more truly deserves to be reckoned a *brahmayāna*, or else a *dhammayāna* (S. V, 5).² Though the idea of a *dhammayāna* takes its occasion from an actual chariot, the circumstance that this *dhammayāna* represents the noble eightfold path makes it probable that the nuance of “path” was also part of the intended imagery.

Both senses of the term may still be of relevance when *yāna* is used to stand for a particular form of practice. One example is the commentarial distinction between *vipassanāyāna* and *samathayāna* (e.g. MA. I, 240), which revolves around the emphasis given to the development of insight or tranquility in one’s meditative progress to liberation (see also SAMATHA & VIPASSANA). Another distinction is that between three *yānas*, namely the *yānas* that lead to the awakening of a disciple, *sāvaka yāna*/*śrāvaka yāna*, to the awakening of a Paccekabuddha, *paccekabuddhayāna*/*pratyekabuddhayāna*. In regard to these three *yānas*, the “available scriptures of the eighteen schools allow all three options... that is, the eighteen or four schools embrace the three *yānas*”.³ Thus those who followed the *yāna* of the bodhisattva could have been members of any of the early Buddhist schools.

In fact, the bodhisattva career is a *yāna* that has been practiced and is still being practiced within the Theravāda tradition.⁴ Hence the term Mahāyāna does not represent a distinct school in ancient India, but rather refers to a particular vocation. The term Hīnayāna, then, is even less representative of the historical reality of ancient Indian Buddhist schools, wherefore “‘Hīnayāna’ is not an appropriate category of historical analysis”. From beginning to end the Hīnayānist was a person of straw, a will-o-the-wisp”, and the term “‘Hīnayāna’ was a catch-all label coined by Mahāyānists... to stigmatize a rhetorical other”.⁵ In modern scholarly writings, the term Hīnayāna is in fact usually avoided, not only because it does not refer to a clearly identifiable historical school, but also in order to avoid perpetuating what is clearly derogatory terminology, as the qualification *hīna* stands for what is low, inferior, contemptible and despicable (see also HĪNAYĀNA and MAHĀYĀNA).⁶

Though the terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna do not reflect distinct schools in the history of Indian Buddhism,⁷ they do have historical significance in so far as their coming into use corresponds to stages of development in Buddhist thought. “It seems likely that the sequence of development of this terminology began with the straightforward expression *bodhisattvayāna*, which was then qualified with the epithet ‘great’ (*mahāyāna*), and which finally lead to the creation of the term *hīnayāna* as a back-formation ... the term *bodhisattvayāna* would thus represent the emergence of the path to Buddhahood as a distinct vocational alternative, the term *mahāyāna* a mere expression of admiration for that path, and the term *hīnayāna* an expression of a derisive attitude toward non-bodhisattva practitioners”.⁸

When examined from the perspective of the term *yāna* and its two chief connotations, it seems that the expression *Mahāyāna* in its early instances was predominantly understood as a “great way”. This suggests itself from the way this expression was translated by the early Chinese translators and also from descriptions of innumerable beings embarking on the *Mahāyāna*, which would fit the idea of a ‘path’ better than the image of a ‘vehicle’.⁹ The nuance of a ‘way’ could thus be seen to continue the sense of *yāna* in early canonical expressions like *devayāna*, the path leading to heaven, and to some extent also of the *dhammayāna*, the eightfold noble path that leads to final liberation.

Analayo

References

- 1 Deussen: *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, Delhi 1979: 334-335; cf. also *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 5.3.3.
- 2 Cf. also *Thig.389:maggatthāṅgikayānayāyini*
- 3 Skilling “Mahāyāna and Bodhisattva: An essay towards historical understanding”, *Photisatava barami kap sangkhom thai nai sahatsawat mai*, Bangkok 2004: 143.
- 4 On this topic in more detail cf. Rahula: “L’ideal du Bodhisattva dans le Theravāda et le Mahāyāna”, in *Journal Asiatique* 1971:63-70; Ratnayaka: “Tahe Bodhisattva ideal of the Theravada”, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 8.2, 1985:

- 85-110; Samuels: "Tahe Baodhisattva ideal in Theravada Buddhist Theory and Practice", *Philosophy East and West*, 47.3, 1997: 399-415.
- 5 Skilling op.cit. : 142
- 6 Cf. Monier Williams: *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Delhi 1999: 1296; and Rhys Davids: *Pali-English Dictionary*, Delhi 1993:732. Kimura: *A Historical Study of the Terms Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna*, Calcutta 1927: 116, suggests that the term Hīnayāna may have come into use in retaliation for such terms as *adharmavādin*, which apparently were used by opponents of the Mahāyāna.
- 7 On this topic cf. esp. Cohen: "Discontented Categories: Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna in Indian Buddhist History", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 63.1, 1995: 1-25.
- 8 Nattier : *A Few Good Men*, Honolulu 2003:174 note 6
- 9 Vetter: "Once Again on the Origin of Mahayana Buddhism", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens*, 45, 2001: 62 ff. Har Dayal: *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi 1970: 321 note 22, suggests that though "yāna... originally denoted 'way, career'... the connotation... changed after the publication of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīkā* with its famous parable of the three *yānas* (chap. III). That play on words led to the substitution of the idea of 'vehicle' for that of 'way'.

YAÑÑA stands for "sacrifice", whose performance formed a central role in the thought world of ancient India. The present entry will briefly survey a few instances in the Pāli canon that refer to sacrifices or display knowledge of various aspects of its performance, followed by assessing the early Buddhist attitude towards *yaññā*.

A list of sacrifices, found in several discourses, includes the *assamedha*, *purisamedha*, *sammāpajāsa*¹ *vajapeyya*/*vajapeyya* and *niraggaḷa* (*S. I*, 76; *A.II*, 42; *A.IV*,151; *Sn*. 303; *Jt*. 21).²²

The same listing is also found in verse 196 of the *Gāndhāri Dharmapada*, reading a *śpa-veka Puruṣa-*

veka same-paśa vaya-veka niragaḷa, cf. Brough: The *Gāndhāri Dharmapada*, The *Ambaṭṭha Sutta* refers to offerings made by Brahmins for the departed and to the *thālipāka* offering (*D. I*, 97). The efficacy of offerings, undertaken on behalf of the departed, is the subject of a discussion between a Brahmin and the Buddha in a discourse in the *Anguttara Nikāya* (*A.V*,269). In a list of qualities that make up a worthy Brahmin, given in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta*, such a Brahmin's role as the first or second to hold the sacrificial ladle is explicitly noted (*D. I*, 120).

The *somayāga* is mentioned in a *Jātaka* verse (verse 263; *J. IV*, 365), and a discourse in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* describes a Brahmin who has just completed a fire-sacrifice, *aggihuta*, (*S. I*, 167). The *Mahāvastu Sutta* refers to spreading *kusa* grass for the performance of a fire-sacrifice (*D. II*, 244), which according to a verse found in several passages is the supreme sacrifice, just as *Sāvittī* is the supreme Vedic hymn (*Vin. I*, 246; *M. II*, 146= *Sn*. 568).³ The *Kandaraka Sutta*, as an example of someone who torments himself as well as others, depicts a king or Brahmin engaged in a sacrifice. In addition to having various animals slaughtered for sacrifice, according to its description the king undertakes the practice of living on the milk of the single teat of a cow, sleeps on the bare ground, clad in a hide and with hair and beard shaved off (*M. I*, 343). A *yaññā* that apparently involves sacrificing tetrads of living beings is mentioned in *Jātaka* tales, referred to as the *sabbacattuka yaññā* (e.g. *J. I*, 335 or *J. III*, 44).

According to the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, some of the Buddha's contemporaries completely rejected sacrifice. The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* reports that Pūraṇa Kassapa affirmed that no merits would result from sacrificing, *yajanto yajāvento n'atthi tato nidānaṃ puññam* (*D. I*, 52); and Ajiata Kesakambali denied that anything could meaningfully be sacrificed or offered, *n'atthi yiṭṭha n'atthi hutam* (*D. I*, 55; see also SĀMAÑÑAPHALA SUTTA). While early Buddhism was also critical or contemporary sacrificial practices, it did not go so far as to reject them entirely. In fact, the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*'s definition of right view, in direct contrast to the position taken by Ajiata Kesakambali, affirms that there is what is sacrificed and offered, *atthi yiṭṭham atthi hutam* (*M. III*, 72).

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BUDDHISM

Founder Editor-in Chief

G. P. MALALASEKERA, M. A., Ph. D., D. Litt., Professor Emeritus

Editor-in Chief

W. G. WEERARATNE, M. A., Ph. D.

VOLUME VIII

FASCICLE 3 : Vācā – Z hong a-han



2009