1. CONTRASTS BETWEEN THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND MAH_Y_NA BUDDHISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theravada</th>
<th>Mah_y_na</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style: Conservative, traditional</td>
<td>Style: Liberal, adaptive, constantly changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path of the _r_vaka (&quot;disciple&quot;)</td>
<td>Path of the bodhisattva (&quot;Buddha-to-be&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration: the teachings of Gautama</td>
<td>Inspiration: the &quot;career&quot; of the bodhisattva who became Gautama the Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: the suttas of the Pali canon</td>
<td>Source: the Pali J_takas and Sanskrit sutras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis: monastic self-discipline</td>
<td>Emphasis: liberating Wisdom (Prajñ_); devotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal: nirv_na</td>
<td>Goal: bodhi (&quot;enlightenment&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhas: only one in each age</td>
<td>Buddhas: innumerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom: understanding reality</td>
<td>Wisdom: experiencing <em>unyat</em> (&quot;emptiness&quot;); possible only for a Buddha, but Buddhahood now becomes a goal for the practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in terms of anicca, anatta; possible for any _r_vaka</td>
<td>Meditation: many forms, including visualization and devotional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation: vipassana (&quot;insight&quot;) and sati (&quot;mindfulness&quot;)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangha: required for serious practice</td>
<td>Sangha: still central, but laity can also achieve goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social ethic: mett_ (&quot;lovingkindness&quot;)</td>
<td>Social ethic: karun_ (&quot;compassion&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. MAH_Y_NA CONCEPTS OF BUDDHAHOOD

The Buddha was not just a man who had a special experience during meditation: he was a being who had labored for many lifetimes as a bodhisattva, as seen in the J_taka tales (part of the Pali canon). Having thus perfected himself by countless acts of selfless compassion, he entered this world to complete his path by attaining "complete perfect enlightenment." There are numerous beings who have attained Buddhahood in such a way. Among them, the most important Buddhas are:

- _akyamuni: "our Buddha," Gautama; preacher of all the Mah_y_na sutras
- Maitreya: the Buddha-to-come for this world, in both Theravada and Mah_y_na
- Amit_bha: the provider of "salvation" in Pure Land Buddhism
- Vairocana: central in Vajray_na Buddhism (mostly in Tibet and Japanese Shingon)

There are also great bodhisattvas, of whom the most important are:

- Avalokitesvara: = Chinese Kuan-yin, Japanese Kannon; consort T_r_ important in Tibet
- Mañju_r_: the bodhisattva of Wisdom (Prajñ_)
Pali); some exist today only in Chinese or Tibetan translations. Composed ("revealed") from ca. 1st c. BCE to ca. 6th c. CE. Every sutra is a sermon preached by "our" Buddha, _akṣamuni, usually in one of the "Buddha-realms" (not on earth); the sermons are generally preached to a glorious audience of gods, buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as famous disciples.

In one Japanese sect (Nichiren Buddhism), one Mahāyāna scripture — the _Lotus Sutra_ — came to be regarded as salvific (i.e., the immediate source of salvation).

### 4. THE PRAJÑ_-P_RAMIT_ LITERATURE

The earliest Mahāyāna scriptures (in fact, the earliest of all Mahāyāna literature) were the Prajñā-pāramitā scriptures. The PP sutras stress the realization of "emptiness" ( _unyat_) — ineffable reality (which = tathat, "thussness," and buddhat, usually translated "Buddha-nature"). Doctrine: ultimately, there is no essential distinction between _samsara_ and _nirvana_. Why? Philosophically, _nirvana_ can be characterized as "empty" (_unya)._ But all the constituents of existence ( _dharmas_ ) are also "empty." So, ultimately there is no distinction between the tathat of sentient beings and the tathat of a Buddha. This concept had a profound effect on Mahāyāna thought and religion, especially East Asian forms such as Ch'an ("Zen"). Two PP sutras (the Diamond Sutra and Heart Sutra) became fundamental for Zen.

Major Prajñā-pāramitā Scriptures:
1. _Ashtasahasrikā PP Sutra_  "The Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines"
2. _Vajracchedika PP Sutra_  "The Diamond Sutra"
3. _Mahā PP-hridaya Sutra_  "The Heart Sutra"

Important Writings related to the Prajñā-pāramitā Scriptures:
1. _Samādhi-raja Sutra_  "The Sutra of the King of Concentration"
2. _Vimalakirti-nirdeśa Sutra_  "The Sutra of the Teachings of Vimalakirti"

### 5. OTHER MAJOR MAH_Y_NA SCRIPTURES

The Pure Land Scriptures:
1. _The Larger Sukhāvatī-vyāha Sutra_  "The Sutra of Contemplation on Amitabha"
2. _The Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyāha Sutra_  "The Sutra of Contemplation on Amitabha"
3. _The Amitāyurdhyāna Sutra_  "The Sutra of Contemplation on Amitabha"

Other Major Scriptures:
1. _Saddharma-pundarīka Sutra_  "The Lotus Sutra"
2. _Avatamsaka Sutra_  "The Flower-Garland Sutra"
3. _r_m_l_-dev Sutra_  "The Sutra of Princess _r_m_l_"

### 6. MAH_Y_NA PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS IN INDIA

_**Mādhyamika:**_ Founded by Nāgārjuna (2nd c.). All phenomena are "empty" of any "self-nature" ( _sva bhava_).

"2 levels of truth": "relatively," all phenomena are distinct; "ultimately," all is _unyat_.

_**Yog_c_ra:**_ Founded by Asanga and Vasubandhu (4th c.). All phenomena are just processes in the mind, so only mind is truly real.

Both Mādhyamika and Yog_c_ra were taught at N_l_nda, a Buddhist "university" (destroyed ca. 1200). Both were transmitted to East Asia, but became eclipsed by various new schools of Buddhist thought.