



Note: Many Buddhist words come from the ancient Indian language Sanskrit. In these worksheets Sanskrit words have been written using the Roman alphabet. As with some other languages, Sanskrit words sometimes contain dashes, dots, or other symbols called diacritics which can change the sound, or the length, of the letter to which they are added. Sometimes, Sanskrit words are written without these marks, and the spelling may be changed to reflect the way the word is pronounced. You can see some examples of this in the glossary below. There are many different sounds in Sanskrit which are expressed by different symbols. Not all of these are explained here, but some common

examples of diacritics in Sanskrit include:

ś (as in Avalokiteśvara), or ṣ (as in Lakṣaṇa) which both change the 's' sound to 'sh'.
ā or ī (as in Hīnayāna), or ū (as in Ūṛṇā) which all double the length of the vowel.

Amitābha Buddha: a celestial Buddha who reigns over the Western Paradise (Sukhāvātī) a Pure Land (Kṣetra), into which the all may be reborn if they recite his name during their lifetimes on earth.

Ānanda: the most junior of Buddha's immediate disciples. He often appears together with Kāśyapa, the most senior.

Arhat: a Buddhist who has attained nirvana.

Avalokiteśvara: a bodhisattva known in Chinese as Guanyin and in Tibetan as Chenrezig. Avalokiteśvara is the embodiment of compassion and the principal assistant of Amitābha. In Chinese tradition, Guanyin appears as both male and female, and is often appealed to in a female role as 'the giver of children.'

Bodhi tree: the tree under which Buddha achieved enlightenment (bodhi).

Bodhisattva: 'enlightened being' — the bodhisattva is ready for enlightenment and Buddhahood, but chooses to stay in the world of suffering until all attain enlightenment. In order to achieve this end, the bodhisattva carries out unselfish acts and gives away the karmic merit which accrues from these to others. He is therefore the epitome of compassion.

Buddha: the representation of the Buddhist principle of Enlightenment. The Dharma-body (dharmakāya), not to be understood as an individual, but as an essence immanent in all things at all times. The historical

Buddha, Śākyamuni, is only one in a succession of earthly buddhas (nirmāṇakāya). There are also celestial buddhas (sambhogakāya), such as Amitābha, whose buddha realms are beyond the snares of samsāra and therefore half-way houses for believers en route to buddhahood.

Dharma: Buddhist doctrine or path.

Hīnayāna: see Mahāyāna.

Jātaka tales: the 547 stories about the previous lives of Śākyamuni Buddha, some as an animal and some as a man, but always performing good deeds and therefore accumulating merit for rebirth at a higher level.

Lakṣaṇa (Lakshana): the 32 special physical characteristics which mark Buddha out as a 'cosmic being'. The lakṣaṇa demonstrate the idea that Buddha's outer beauty is a reflection of his inner spiritual nature.

Lotus flower: a symbol of purity in Buddhism because the plant is rooted in the mud yet the flower remains unsullied, just like earthly buddhas.

Mahāyāna: Mahāyāna ('Greater Vehicle') Buddhism is a development distinguished from Hīnayāna ('Lesser Vehicle', a name given it by Mahāyāna adherents) or Theravāda (lit. 'Way of the Elders') Buddhism by its promise of complete enlightenment — buddhahood — for all. It became the prominent form of Buddhism in China.



Maitreya: the Buddha of the future. He resides in the Tuṣita Heaven which, being both spiritually and physically close to earth, means that he is able to visit earth in various forms to teach and save others.

Mañjuśrī: the bodhisattva with the greatest wisdom who symbolizes the profoundness of dharma. He is often depicted riding on a lion. His home in China is Wutai Mountain in Shaanxi Province.

Māra: the personification of evil in one's own person. Māra sought to prevent Buddha reaching enlightenment by offering many temptations, but Buddha vanquished him.

Māyā: Śākyamuni's mother. Ten months after dreaming that a snowy silvery elephant entered her womb, a child issued from her right side. Extraordinary signs accompanied his birth and he bore certain physical marks so that a seer prophesized he would become a great religious leader. Māyā departed earth seven days after his birth to live in heaven and Buddha was raised by his aunt.

Mudrā: hand gesture — the most common are:

abhaya (assurance from fear): hand in front of chest with palm facing outwards.

añjali (adoration): palms together in front of chest.

dharmacakra ('turning the wheel of the dharma', i.e. preaching): hands together in front of the chest with a finger of one hand touching the other hand, of which the thumb and another finger are joined at their tips.

dhyāna (meditation): hands with fingers extended lie together on the lap of the seated figure, palms upwards. Generally one hand rests on top of the other, but sometimes the fingers are interlocked.

varada (bestowing): hand dropped with fingers extended and palm to the front

vitarka (inquiry): hand in front of chest with palm outwards and the tips of the thumb and index or third finger touching.

Nirvāṇa: the state of peace or 'highest happiness' achieved through enlightenment, rather than the happiness derived from impermanent things.

Parinirvāṇa: The Buddha's final passing away into Nirvāṇa.

Prabhūtaratna Buddha: the 'Many Jewelled' Buddha. He had promised to be present whenever the Lotus Sūtra was preached and is often depicted with Śākyamuni.

Samsāra: the eternal cycle of birth, suffering, death and rebirth.

Śākyamuni (Shakyamuni): the historical Buddha, that is Siddārtha Gautama. Born a prince and brought up in wealth, his encounter with suffering made him decide to leave home to seek spiritual enlightenment. After several years of searching he sat down under a bodhi tree to seek the truth. He withstood the temptations of Māra and came to realisation that only the elimination of ignorance can stop the cycle of rebirth and freedom from the bonds of samsāra. He gained this enlightenment at daybreak and thus became Buddha, vowing to enlighten the world.

Sūtra: A word literally meaning a thread which holds things together, and which in Buddhism, often refers to the written records of the oral teachings of the Buddha.

Ūṛṇā (Urna): the thirty-first physical characteristic or lakshana of Buddha. A tuft of hair, or third eye above the brow which marks Buddha out as a wise and great being.

Uṣṇīṣa (Ushnisha): the fleshy protuberance on the top of the Buddha's head, one of the distinguishing marks of the Buddha.

Vairocana Buddha: the cosmic Buddha. Vairocana became the focus of tantric Buddhism and is often recognisable by the symbols of sun and moon and seated Buddhas on his body.