

CONCEPT OF GREAT MAN

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(Mahāpurisa)

In Buddhist Literature and
Iconography



Bellanwilla Wimalaratana

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BELLANWILLA WIMALARATANA

Ph. D. (Lancaster);
Lecturer, University of Sri Jayawardhanapura,
Sri Lanka

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ABBREVIATIONS

A	Anguttara Nikāya.
AA	Anguttara Nikāya Commentary.
Ap	Apadāna.
ApA	Apadāna Commentrary.
AV	Atharvaveda.
AVS	Arthaviniścaya Sūtra.
BHSD	Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary.
BV	Buddhavansa.
BVA	Buddhavamsa Commentary.
Dh	Dhammapada.
DhA	Dhammapada Commentary.
D	Dīgha Nikāya.
DA	Dīgha Nikāya Commentary.
Dial.	Dialogues of the Buddha.
DPPN	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names.
EB	Encyclopaedia of Buddhism.
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethios.
GV	Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra.
It	Itivuttka.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly.
J	Jātaka.
JA	Jātaka Commentary.
JDLCU	Journal of the Depart. Letters, Calcutta University.
JOIB	Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda.
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society.
Kh	Khuddakapāṭha.
Kvu	Kathāvatthu.
KvuA	Kathāvatthu Commentary.
Lotus	Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi.
LV	Lalitavistara.
M	Majjhima Nikāya.
MA	Majjhima Nikāya Commentary.
Mhvs	Mahāvaṅsa.
MB	Mahābhārata.
Mand.	Up. Mandūkya Upaniṣad.
Manu	Manusmṛuti.
Mil	Milindapañha.
MV	Mahāvastu.
Nd1	Mahāniddeśa.
Nd2	Cullaniddeśa.
OZ	Ostasiatische Zeitschrift.
PTSD	Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary.
Rv	Ṛgveda.
S	Samyutta Nikāya.
SA	Samyutta Nikāya Commentary.
Smp	Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra.
SB	Satapata Brāhmaṇa.
Sn	Suttanipāta.
Ud	Udāna.
Vin	Vinaya Piṭaka.
Vism	Visuddhimagga.
Vv	Vimānavattu.
VvA	Vimānavatthu Commentary.

This work being essentially a study of the origin and development of the *Mahāpurisa* (Great Man) concept in Buddhism consists of seven chapters entitled (i) "Aspects of the *Mahāpurisa* Concept", (ii) "Later development of the concept and 'Trikāya' (three body) theory in Mahāyāna Buddhism", (iii) "*Mahāpurisa* as Buddha and *Cakkavatti*", (iv) "Study of the thirty-two characteristics", (v) "Iconographical representation of the thirty-two marks", (vi) "Ethical foundation of the *Mahāpurisa* concept", and (vii) "Conclusion".

The first chapter presents the references which deal with the subject of the *Mahāpurisa* in the Pali Canon and Discusses some views regarding its origin in the light of Brahaminical and Jaina sources. The two different types of interpretations of the *Mahāpurisa* concept are distinguished - one identifies the Great Man by spiritual progress, the other by physical accomplishment. Early reference to the practice of prognostications, such as physiognomy and palmistry are dealt with; the probable influence upon Buddhism in spite of its condemnation of this low form of arts (*tiracchānavijjā*) is shown.

The second chapter attempts to elucidate the changing attitude towards the person of the Buddha and its relation to the *Mahāpurisa* concept. After the emergence of different schools of Buddhism there appeared various theories regarding the nature of the Buddha, and the Buddha was transformed into a divine state. In the light of Buddhist Sanskrit texts, the nature and the significance of the marks with reference to the Body of the Buddha are made clear, as reflected in this new approach. Both Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions maintain that the *Mahāpurisa* who possesses the thirty-two marks, becomes either a Buddha or a *Cakkavatti* (universal monarch).

The third chapter discusses several views put forward by scholars on the origin of the ideal king or *Cakkavatti*, and his attributes. Furthermore an attempt is made to draw out the comparison of the Buddha and the *Cakkavatti* by the *Mahāpurisa* theory.

The fourth chapter deals with the comparative study of the thirty-two characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa*. The Pali texts as the primary source are used and the Chinese and Tibetan translations of *Madhyamāgama* (an early canonical text which existed in Sanskrit before the division of Mahāyāna schools) are consulted. Buddhist Sanskrit texts of *Sarvāstivāda*, *Mādhyamika* and *Prajñā-pāramitā* schools are also referred to. The intention is to make clear each characteristic, what it originally meant in relation to the physical

appearance of the Buddha as well as his great personality. Moreover the evidence which relates the ideas of some *lakṣhanas* to non-Buddhist sources and their influence on the development of interpretations in the Pali Commentaries and later works are examined.

Some of the marks of the *Mahāpurisa* have been depicted in the Buddha image since its inception in India. The fifth chapter examines how far the concept of *Mahāpurisa* directed the artist in his attempt to form the image of the Buddha in early Buddhist iconography. However, various artists have understood these marks differently, and their way of depicting *lakṣhanas* differed. In this chapter the method of depicting *Mahāpurisa lakṣhanas*, the Gandhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvati schools of art are discussed and it is attempted to show the possible reasons for these variations in the light of historical and textual evidence.

The sixth chapter deals with the ethical foundation of the *Mahāpurisa* concept. The physical characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* are generally looked upon as physiognomical beliefs, and are considered less important in regard to the Buddha's doctrine. We attempt to establish the fact that the concept of *Mahāpurisa* in Buddhist literature mainly emphasises the social ethics of Buddhists. The physical features and other attributes of the *Mahāpurisa* were taken into account as one of the methods of assimilating prevailing concepts in order to endorse ethical teaching in early Buddhism.

It is more often remarked that the Buddhist concept of *Mahāpurisa* is of pre-Buddhistic mythology and references to the physical characteristics are condemned as absurd and ridiculous. No serious attempt has so far been made to throw light on the early Buddhist definition of *Mahāpurisa* regardless of the physiognomical aspect. In the seventh chapter, on the basis of discussions in preceding chapters, we make it clear that the Buddhist concept of *Mahāpurisa* is not essentially the *Puruṣa Nārāyana* of Vedic mythology. It prevailed in the society at the time of the Buddha, and has come through a common source of the occult science of physiognomical belief. Early Buddhist texts assimilated this concept not to endorse the physiognomical beliefs but to emphasise social ethics more. In the conclusion of our study of the *Mahāpurisa* concept we have traced the socio-ethical aspect of *Mahāpurisa* to the earliest stage of the development of the Bodhisatva ideal within the Pāli Canon.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. C. Wiekramagamage, Professor, Sri Jayawardhanapura University, Sri Lanka, who first suggested this topic for study and encouraged me in many ways. I acknowledge with much gratitude the kindness of Professor Ninian Smart for his invaluable guidance as supervisor throughout the course of my research study. I profited immensely from his erudition and gained so much from his understanding attitude towards my effort.

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B. Wimalaratana

Sri Jayawardhanapura University
Gangodawila
Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

It is well known in Buddhist literature that the Buddha is called *Mahāpurisa* (Great Man) as he possessed thirty-two auspicious marks (*lakkhana*) on his body. Further it is stated that these marks are possessed only by a Buddha or a *Cakkavatti* (universal monarch), whose appearance is a very rare event in this world. It is interesting to note that this concept is an important aspect of Buddhology not only in the Theravada tradition but also in all other schools of Buddhism. Later, in the course of the development of this concept, the characteristic signs of the *Mahāpurisa* were regarded as not only representing physical excellence, but also conceived in Mahāyāna Buddhism as distinctive features of the supernormal body of the Buddha.

Moreover, with the evolution of the Buddha concept and the growth of the devotional aspect in the Buddhist tradition, the *Mahāpurisa* concept underwent various changes. Controversial views arose regarding the thirty-two marks of the Buddha. It seems that the manifestation of multiple bodies of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna schools made it uncertain as to which form of the Buddha these marks could be attributed. However, it is evident that the idea of *Mahāpurisa-lakkhana* became far more important as the Buddha became an object of veneration after his demise, especially in the attempt to portray the Buddha in visual form.

On the other hand a completely different definition of the concept of *Mahāpurisa* is found in the Pali Canon itself; the *Mahāpurisa* or the Great Man could be recognized mainly by his internal qualities. As such this may lead one to argue that these two definitions seem to disagree with each other. On this point scholars have remarked that the *Mahāpurisa* idea relating to the physical marks of the Buddha and *Cakkhavatti* is a later addition. There has not been a proper attempt to throw light on this important subject by a careful study of relevant material in the Pali Canon and in other Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources. Rhys Davids in his translation of the *Ambattha-sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* adds a note on the importance of the study of the *Mahāpurisa* theory which had been attributed to the Brahmin tradition. He says:

"The knowledge of these thirty-two marks of a Great Being (*Mahāpurisa*) is one of the details in the often recurring paragraph giving points of Brāhmaṇa wisdom. No such list has been found, so far as I know, in those portions of the pre-Buddhistic priestly literature that have survived. And the inference from both our passages is that the knowledge is scattered through the Brāhmaṇa texts. Many of the details of the Buddhist list are very obscure; and a collection of the older Brāhmaṇa passages would probably throw a light upon them and upon a curious chapter in mythological superstition. Who will write us a monograph on the *Mahāpurisa* theory as held in early times among the Aryans in India?"¹

E. Burnouf and E. Senart who were among the pioneers of Indological studies in the West in the early 19th century, came across this idea of the *Mahāpurisa* and the *Cakkavatti* in Buddhist texts. While the former attributes the origin of the *Mahāpurisa* concept to the idea of cosmic man in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* of the *Rgveda*,² the latter relates it to the epithet of *Visnu*.³ A. Waddell attempts to establish that some of the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* exhibit the divine nature of the Buddha by equating them to that of the *Viśnu-Nārāyana*.⁴ These views, we find, are erroneous as they have reached these opinions relying mainly on Mahāyāna sources.

But if one examines the Pāli Canon one may see that there is no similarity of primeval "Purusa" or "Visnu" with the *Mahapurisa* concept. Although Rhys Davids refers to the Pāli account he was not definite about his view, and traced back the origin of the concept to Vedic *Puruṣa* or mystical Man who is identified with *Brahman*.⁵

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1. Rhys Davids, T.W., Dialogues of the Buddha, Part I, London 1889, P110
 2. Burnouf, E., Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi, Vol. II, Paris 1852 p 553f
 3. Senart, E., Essai Sur la Legende du Buddha, Paris 1882, p 122f
 4. Wadell, L.A. Buddha's Diadem or Usnisa, Ostasiatische Zeitschrift Vol. III, 1914, p 131f
 5. Rhys Davids, Dial. Part III, p 31

Contrary to the above assumptions, Har Dayal says that:

"the theory of the bodily marks of the *Mahāpurisa* has very little in common with the idea of primeval mystical *Puruśa*, which appears in Rgveda."¹

His own opinion is that the *Mahāpurisa* theory in Buddhism arose from the epithets applied to the heroes of the great epics of India.

In considering these views put forward by the scholars it is worthwhile examining all the possible references which appear in the Pāli Canon and early *Mahāyāna* texts on this subject that may help us to postulate the real significance of the *Mahāpurisa* idea in a Buddhist perspective and its probable origin and later developments. Further, according to some scholars, most of the bodily signs of the *Mahāpurisa* are probably mythological in their origin and some seem to be solar². In addition to the above remarks some hold the view that these marks are not properties of the historical human Buddha, and are mainly signs of the supernormal nature of the transcendental body of the *Tathāgata*.³ However, attempts have been made by some scholars to interpret these *lakṣhaṇas* in their own way and further investigation is still required of students of this subject.

It is an obvious fact that it is extremely difficult to endorse that the Buddha actually possessed those thirty-two marks on his body, without having the exact meaning of the *lakṣhaṇas* and what was meant by reference to the physical body of the Buddha - in their original terms. Even the commentators of the Pāli Canon had this problem and it seems that they were also not certain about the meaning of some of the marks⁴. Different forms of terminology and interpretations of certain marks in the Buddhist Sanskrit texts also indicate the obscurity of the *lakṣhaṇas*. Yet, a comparative study of the characteristic marks of the Great Man is of great importance. It enables us to investigate how far these marks could be interpreted with reference to the person of the Buddha, depicted in early Buddhism, and of their later developments. The evaluation of the Buddha image also gives a clear example of the

1. Har Dayal, *Bodhisatva Doctrine*, London, 1932, p 304

2. *Ibid.* p 304

3. Alex Wayman, "Contributions Regarding the Thirty-two Characteristics of the Great Person", *Sino Indian Studies*, Vol.V. 1957, p 246

4. DA.II p 452

uncertainty of the real form of several of the marks as they are depicted in various forms in different schools of early Indian sculpture.

On the other hand there is another important aspect of the *Mahāpurisa* in Buddhist literature, which certainly needs to be elaborated. It ought to be made clear that the Buddhist concept of *Mahāpurisa* is not limited to the physical excellence of the Buddha. It also presents a new concept of the social and political character of the idea of kingship. The correlation of the Buddha and the *Cakkavatti* by the *Mahāpurisa* concept is not a mere belief in the importance of physical features, but an attempt to demonstrate the ethical teaching of the Buddha. A comprehensive study of the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* is very useful as the *sutta* provides a detailed account of the ethical aspect of the *Mahāpurisa*, and none has ever attempted to study the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* in this light.

Hence the present study is an attempt to examine the different views relating to the origin of the *Mahāpurisa* concept, which is not exclusively a Buddhist notion, and the way it has been assimilated in early Buddhism. Furthermore this study investigates the stages of the development of the concept and its influence over literature and iconography.

Chapter I

The concept of Mahāpurisa

The primary and literal meaning of the word *Mahāpurisa* (Sanskrit -*Mahapurusa*) is the "Great Man", but during the development of the concept of the Buddha, it underwent connotational changes. This term has been translated by many scholars as "superman". However, we cannot translate this term by confining it to the idea of "superman" since this gives rise to a number of misleading implications. It may suggest the philosophical and ethical view of Nietzsche¹: it gives the sense of being able to override the laws of the processes of our nature (which does not apply in this context).

According to Vedic mythology, "puru" was the first man on earth². The word derived from *pur* (to precede), which is related to the vedic *puru* is *puruṣa*, which means male or man. The prefix "mahā" denotes different meanings according to the word to which it is attached, such as big, enormous, large, great, noble, supreme, etc³. When it is combined with the word "puruṣa", the most appropriate meaning is "Great". If we take the term *Mahāpurusa* (Pāli: *Mahāpurisa*) without any association with its mythological or mystic sense, it generally means a great, noble or excellent man.

The concept of ideal man or great man is a very old notion which goes back to the ancient civilizations of the world. The characteristics of an ideal man can have been formed according to the values of any particular culture or civilization. It is quite evident that the recognition of the ideal man is also one of the speculations among Indian philosophers and religious leaders, even before the Buddha. A discourse (*Mahāpurisa Sutta*) in *Samyutta Nikāya*⁴, which takes the form of a question from Sariputta expecting an answer from the Buddha, probably suggests the increasing importance of such a notion at the time of the Buddha, in the contemporary society.

When the idea of *Mahāpurisa* was put forward to the Buddha, he did not reject it as not relevant to his teaching. According to a number of *suttas*

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1. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy - ed Paul Edward, Vol 5 p 511
 2. Sanskrit-English Dictionary - McDonnell A.A., London, 1924, p 165
 3. Pali-English Dictionary, Rhys Davids & W. Stede (P.T.S.) England, 1925
s.v. maha
 4. S.V. p 158

dealing with the question of *Mahāpurisa*, it appears that the Buddha seems to have accepted this notion, giving it his own interpretation, as was customary with him to give new values to prevailing concepts, conventions or technical terms, in order to explain his new teaching. Rhys Davids describes this as a method, so often followed, of "pouring new wine into old bottles"¹.

Briefly speaking, there are three kinds of terms that we come across in Buddhist literature: (a) terms which are common to both Brahmanical and Buddhist literature, having the same nomenclature and meaning, (b) terms having the same nomenclature, but giving a different meaning in Buddhist literature, (c) terms which are of peculiarly Buddhist usage².

According to this classification, the term *Mahāpurisa* belongs to the second category of words. Although the term *Mahāpurisa* itself is not to be found in any one of the pre-Buddhistic Brahmanical or Jaina works, according to its usage in Pali literature, we are inclined to believe that the idea of *Mahāpurisa* seems to have been known during the time of the Buddha among contemporary religious thinkers, and that the term *Mahāpurisa* is not an exclusively Buddhist coinage. Pāli texts very often mention it in a stereotyped formula, which when referring to the learned Brahmana gives the *Mahāpurisa lakkhana* (theory of the characteristics of the Great Man) as one of the branches of the Brahmana's hereditary knowledge³. There is no other evidence to prove that Brahmans advocated such a theory, which enabled them to recognise the character of the Great Man. However, there are some hymns of the *Veda* which give support to the view stated above by showing belief in the auspicious and inauspicious significance of physical marks, and what they specifically predict, in early Brahminic society⁴.

Apart from the Vedic sources, both Jaina and Buddhist canons condemned the Samanas and Brahmanas who practised prognostication and prediction from bodily marks for a living⁵. There is some evidence that different types of predictions prevailed among Ājīvaka communities⁶. This evidence confirms the existence of various types of prognostication from various sources and, also we can assume that there might have appeared

1. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (P.T.S.) III p 132

2. Samtani, N.H. "On some Buddhist Terms" - *Bharati, Agravala Felicitation* Volume 1975 p 136

3. D.I. p 88, 114, 130, M.II p 135 Sn vs 101 etc

4. *Satapata Brāhmana*, Atharvaveda VIII. 115, 1

5. *Sthānanga. su.* III 6, 78, *Uttaradhyāna, su.* VIII. 13

6. Basham A.L. *History and Doctrines of Ajivakas*, London 1951. p. 213

different forms of predictions about the distinguishing marks of the Great Man (*Mahāpurisa*), developing from antiquity up to the emergence of the Buddhist concept of *Mahāpurisa*.

As one of his special methods of presenting a new idea, the Buddha sometimes neither rejected nor accepted prevailing concepts, but gave his own interpretation of them in order to develop an exposition of a specific subject drawn from his own teachings which he wished to be considered at that time. Once a Brāhmaṇa minister called Vassakāra came to the Buddha and presented an idea about *Mahāpurisa* for the consideration of the Buddha¹. As it contained so much social significance for ordinary society, the Buddha did not reject it: he did not accept it because it did not lead to further spiritual advancement. He explained what the qualities of *Mahāpurisa* are, but purely in accordance with his own view.

Buddhist definition of the Mahāpurisa

The earliest idea of Mahāpurisa in the Pali Canon can be traced to the Pārāyanavagga of Suttanipāta, which comprises some of the oldest constituent parts of the Pali Canon.

The question has been put forward by a young Brahmin called Tissametteyya to the Buddha²:

“Who is content here in the world?” asked Reverend Tissametteyya, “In whom turmoils never rise, who understands both ends does not stick in the middle? Whom dost thou call a Great Man (*Mahāpurisa*) who has overcome desire in this world?”

In this question Brahmin Tissametteyya is seen enquiring what sort of achievements can be regarded as the qualities of *Mahāpurisa*, and it is remarkable here that there is no mention of any form of bodily marks of the *Mahāpurisa*. This may show that there were some ideas of a *Mahāpurisa* without any reference to bodily marks among different religious sects.

1. A. II, p. 35

2. Ko, dha santusito loke - kassa no santi iñjitā
ko ubantam abhiññāya - majjhe mantā na lippati
kam brūsi *mahāpurisoti* - kodha sibbanim accagā Sn. vs. 1040

The answer the Buddha gave to Metteyya indicates that the *Mahāpurisa*, Great or Ideal Man, according to the Buddha's own opinion is a "worthy one" (*Arahant*)¹.

"The man who abstains from sensual pleasures, who is free from desire, always mindful, happy by reflection, he is without turmoil, he, often knowing both ends, does not stick in the middle as far as his understanding is concerned, him I call a Great Man (*Māhapurisa*). He has overcome craving in the world." Here it is clear that the Buddha, answering the question, defines the great man reckoning the spiritual qualifications that such a person possesses.

Again, this stanza appears in *the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, which makes reference to *Pārāyanavagga*, indicating its antiquity². A group of monks were discussing their views, and commenting on the idea that the answer given by the Buddha to Metteyya in *Pārāyanavagga* does not explain itself. There each one of them makes an attempt to comment and define some of the terms in that discourse, such as 'two ends' (*ubho anta*) and middle (*majjha*) according to their understanding. Here the *sutta* shows that it was acceptable for the monks to engage in further speculation on the concept of the great man, even without any idea of the physical marks of the *Mahāpurisa*, but with an intellectual curiosity creating a conceptual basis for further speculations.

They went then to the Buddha and gave their interpretation to him of the "two ends", and "the middle". The Buddha added a further conclusion to their views, explaining "Verily, sensory contact, monks, is the first end, its arising is the second, its ceasing is in the middle, and craving is the seamstress, for craving sews a man just to this ever becoming birth. Verily, monks, it is to this extent that a monk knows the knowable, comprehends the comprehensible, and knowing the knowable, comprehending the comprehensible, he makes an end of Ill, here and now".³

*Niddesa*⁴, which is a late addition to the Pāli Canon, consisting of an exposition of the *Atthaka* and *Pārāyanavaggas* and *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*, quotes the passage to explain "the two extremes" and "the middle".

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1. *Kāmesu brahmacariyavā - vitatanho sadā sato*
Sankhāya nibbuto bhaikkhu - tassa no santi injtā - So ubhantam abhiññaya
- majjhe manta nt-lippiati tam brūmi mahāpuriso ti so dha sibbanimaccagā
 2. A. III pp 399ff
 3. Ibid p 401
 4. Nd. II p 112

This explanation confirms the fact that for the Buddha the person who was the *Mahāpurisa* was he, who had eradicated all the defilements. Here, there is no identification of the Great Man or *Mahāpurisa* with any individual as the Buddha, *Arahant* or Bodhisatta. Hence it is clear that among the immediate followers of the Buddha the idea of *Mahāpurisa* denoted nothing other than an *arahant* as a term of common use to designate anyone who had destroyed the inflexes of defilements (*khīṇāsava*).

There is another instance when the Buddha defines *Mahāpurisa* in a different manner, but again refers to the *arahant* who has attained perfect happiness.

Reference was briefly made above to a passage in which the Buddha answered Sariputta's question about *Mahāpurisa*. He spoke as follows:

"It is on account of the emancipation of the mind that I call a man "Great man". Without that emancipation there is no Great Man. And how is one thus emancipated? With regard to his body, his sensations, his mind and ideas, he continues to be so master of them by insight that ardent self-possessed and mindful, he overcomes both the dejection and the hankering common in the world. So doing, his mind is purified, emancipated, free from mental intoxication"¹.

In this passage, Buddha explained emancipation of the mind through the "four Foundations of Mindfulness" (*satipaṭṭhāna*) as the path directed to realisation which is the final goal of a man, and a person who has achieved such a state is called *Mahāpurisa*. Although it has no direct reference to the concept of *Mahāpurisa*, the explanation given in many of the discourses seems to have some bearing on the person who has attained Nibbāna².

There is another verse in the *Dhammapada* which gives a similar description of the characteristics of *Mahāpurisa*: "He who has overcome craving (*vītataṇho*) and devoid of grasping (*anādāno*), who is skilled in etymology (*niruttipadakovidō*) of terms, who knows the grouping of letters and their sequence (*akkharānam sannipātam*) it is he who is called the bearer of the final body, one of profound wisdom (*mahāpañño*), a great man (*Mahāpuriso*)"³.

According to the commentary the term *anādāno* (without grasping) means that there is no attachment whatsoever, towards mind and matter etc,

1. S.V. p 158

2. D. II. p 134 f

3. Dh 352

and 'skilled in etymology' means clever in analytical knowledge (*patisambhidā*): Analytical knowledge of discrimination is of four kinds: Analytical of the true meaning (*attha*), of the Law (*dhamma*), of language (*nirutti*), of ready wit (*patibhāna*)¹. On the whole, the person who knows what should be known, whose knowledge is perfect, is of emancipated of mind, is called Great Man.²

It is clear that although the Buddha has used different words to define the Great Man, the reference is always to the worthy one (*Arahant*) who has attained the final goal, the enlightenment. All those qualities which are mentioned in these passages can be applied to both the Buddha and the Arahant.

It is worthwhile to examine here the terms and definitions used to identify the Buddha and an Arahant, so that it would help us to differentiate the characteristic attributes of a *Mahāpurisa* in so far they can be predicted of a Buddha and an Arahant respectively, as in the early canonical texts.

It is held according to the Pāli Canon that the Buddha possessed various qualities by virtue of his enlightenment which were not possessed by *Arahant*. However, although the *Theravāda* tradition tried to prove that the Buddha is a rare being and superior to men and gods, they mention that there is hardly any distinction between an *Arahant* and the Buddha. If Buddhahood consists in the attainment of *Nibbāna*, how does the Buddha differ from those of his followers who had also attained *Nibbāna*? In other words: What is a Buddha and how does he differ from an *Arahant*? To this question the Pāli *Suttas* suggest a number of possible answers.

According to the Theravada tradition the Buddha in attaining the enlightenment became the first Arahant. His whole life was devoted to making his followers understand what he understood, to directing them to the same path of realisation or *Nibbāna* which he himself had attained³. After the conversion of the group of five monks, the first converts to the teaching, the Buddha declared that there were six Arahants in the world at that time⁴. There,

1. Vibh XV p 293 ff

2. DA IV p 70

3. M. III p 8

4. "*Imasmiñ ca pana veyyākaranasmim bhaññamāne pañcavaggiyānam bhikkhunam anupādāya āsavehi chittani vimuccimsu. tena kho pana samayena cha loke arahanto honti*" Vin I p 14

the Buddha himself was reckoned as one of them. Again in one place the Buddha mentioned that as far as attainment of *Nibbāna* is concerned, the Tathagata and the Arahants are the same but the Tathagata makes manifest the unmanifested path, he recognised the unrecognised path¹. However, this statement does not contradict the other statements which describe the Buddha as being distinguished from the other Arahants, not only by virtue of his primacy as the discoverer and teacher of long forgotten truth, but also by his heroic achievement in attaining his goal unaided², his range of knowledge and to a lesser extent his skill in supernormal powers³ and his compassion and competence in teaching⁴.

According to these accounts the definitions in the above passages of both the Buddha and an Arahant are more or less equal and the *Mahāpurisa* according to the Buddha's own view is a worthy one (*araham*). However, we shall see that the Buddha's definition of *Mahāpurisa* to Brahmin Vassakara is another step in the development of the Buddhist concept of *Mahapurisa*. Here also, the qualities of a *Mahāpurisa* can be applied to both the Buddha and the Arahant.

The text proceeds⁵: Once a brahmana called Vassakāra who was the Chief Minister of Magadha called on the Buddha and explained that a person endowed with four qualities can be regarded as a very wise and as a great man (*Mahāpurisa*).

1. that he is learned (*bahussuta*)
2. that he comprehends the meaning of what has been said to him (*bhāsitassa attham jānāti*)
3. that he has a good memory (*satimā kho pana hoti cirakatampi cirabhāsitampi*)
4. that he is expert and untiring in everything that a layman has to do and can search out expedients for earning through anything that has to be done (*gahaṭṭhakaraniyesu dakkho hoti analaso*)

The four qualities indicate that Vassakāra put forward a secular concept of the Great man, which had been identified by contemporary society. We

1. S. III p 6

2. M.I. p 171

3. D. III p 100, S.V. p 437

4. M.I p 169

5. A. II p 35 - 37

can assume that Vassakāra, who was a Minister of the Magadha State, saw the concept of *Mahāpurisa* from political and social points of view. With regard to the secular aspects of life, his definition is applicable to the success of a layman in any society. As any of the four qualities of Vassakāra's idea of the Great man does not concern the spiritual advancement of the individual, it differs from Brahmanic and Buddhist ideals of the perfect man.

The fact that the Buddha neither accepted nor rejected Vassakara's definition shows that He wanted to attach some value to this idea of great man. Buddhagosa comments in this connection that the Buddha did not accept this definition because it is based purely on the secular aspect of life. He neither rejected it because he believed that it included a beneficial value for the secular society¹. The Buddha characterised a Great man or *Mahāpurisa* thus: "I also call a man of four qualities very wise, a great man, and what are those qualities?"

1. He concerns himself with the advantage of folk he has established in the Aryan system (*ariye ñāye*), that is in the beauty of righteousness as set forth in the Aryan path - (*Bahujanahitāya patipanno hoti bahujanasukhāya bahussa jānatā, ariye ñāye patiṭṭhāpitā*)
2. He can think about a thing or not, just as he wishes; he is master of his mind in the trends of thought - (*yam vitakkam ākaṅkhati vitakketum, taṃ vitakkaṃ vitakketi, yam vitakkaṃ nakankhati vitakketum na taṃ vitakkaṃ vitakketi. yam sankappam...*)
3. He can enter at his pleasure without toil or trouble into the four ecstasies beyond thought and yet pertain to this life - (*catunnam jhānānaṃ ābhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihārānaṃ nikāmalābhī hoti akicchālābhī, akasiralābhī*).
4. He has put away the intoxications arising from lust and becoming from speculation and ignorance. Thus does he gain and abide in that same emancipation of heart and mind that he knows and realises even in this present life - (*āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayam abhiññāya sacchikatvā upasampajja viharatī*).

1. AA III p 74 f

This definition proves that the early conception of *Mahāpurisa* in the Pāli Canon refers to an Arahant (Worthy one) with his spiritual achievements. But it is clear in this discourse how Buddha defines the concept of *Mahāpurisa*, giving it a wider meaning than the earlier one. He includes some of the social qualities apart from the spiritual advancement of *Mahāpurisa*, giving a wider connotation to the earlier concept. For example, the idea of the welfare of the common man is lacking in earlier definitions but here is a gradual development and a complete or overall development of the individual has been suggested. The classification of the stage of the development of the individual into four in this definition shows a clear correspondence to the social, intellectual and spiritual advancement of the individual who is designated as *Mahāpurisa*. Although the Buddha accepted in this *sutta* that he himself possessed all the four qualities of a *Mahāpurisa*, the same can be applied to the Arahants also. This is substantiated by many other discourses of the Canon in which these four qualities have been ascribed to Arahants very often.

This social aspect of a great man seems to be elaborated in great detail in the *Lakkhana-sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, when it enumerates various qualities of the *Mahāpurisa* in the Theravada tradition, forming a link between early and later strata of the Pali Canon.

The second quality which may be termed as intellectual is that the great man is able to keep his mind under perfect control. The third quality denotes his psychic condition according to which he is able to train his mind systematically and attain permanent concentration of his psychic phenomena. The fourth attribute of the *Mahāpurisa*, describes how he attains his final goal in the very life independent of intervention by any supernatural authority. It is noteworthy in the earlier definitions of *Mahapurisa*, that the Buddha seems to have more or less emphasised this fourth quality.

The Popular Conception of the Mahapurisa

The second aspect of the Buddhist concept of *Mahāpurisa* is based on the physical characteristics of the Great Man. Apart from the ways of judging a Great Man from his mental and spiritual qualities, there is a detailed theory of the physical characteristics of a *Mahāpurisa*. According to the Pāli Canon characteristics of a person who is possessed of those marks of a *Mahāpurisa* either becomes a Buddha or a *Cakkavatti*, a universal monarch.

The Brahmin Pokkhrasādi told his pupil Ambatṭha: "There have been handed down, in our mystic verses, thirty-two bodily signs of a Great man, - signs which, if a man has, he will become one of two things, and no other. If he dwells at home he will become a sovereign of the world, a righteous king ... but if he goes forth from the household life into the houseless state, then he will become a Buddha who removes the veil of ignorance from the eyes of the world"¹.

In this description *Mahāpurisa* is not only specified as a *Cakkavatti* or a Buddha, and the recognition of such a person is through the worldly practices of prognostication. The practice of foretelling of a person's character from his physical marks is of pre-Buddhistic origin and its history is not easily traceable, because it goes into far distant antiquity. As no two human beings are alike in appearance man seems to have an innate desire to know if physical characteristics reveal psychological traits and even probable future events as destiny. Perhaps this human desire paved the way for subsequent development of the art of divining, fortune-telling, through astrology, palmistry, physiognomy etc.

There is no doubt that the art of prognostication must have flourished in ancient but surviving references to occult sciences are meagre and scrappy. Belief in lucky and unlucky marks of the body which is clearly a rudimentary form of prognostication, is not unknown in early Brahmanical society. A passage from the Satapatha Brahmana describes lucky and unlucky marks of the body as follows:-

"Some again lay them down on the right side saying 'we thus place these signs of good fortune (*punya lakṣmī*) on the right side' whence he who has a mark (*lakṣana*) on his right side is said to have good luck (*punya lakṣmika*) and on the left side in the case of a woman, for the woman has her position on the left side (of man), therefore it is done thus. But let him place them in front for where the head is there and the tongue and thus he places the signs

1. *Āgatāni kho pana asmākam mantesu dvattimsa mahāpurisa lakkhanāni, yehi samannāgatassa mahāpurisassa dve gatiyo bhavanti anaññā: sace agāram ajjhāvasati rājā hoti cakkavatti ... sace kho pana agārasmā anagāriyam pabbajati araham hoti sammāsambuddho. M. II p 133 S. I p 89, 114, 120, AI p 163, SN p 102*

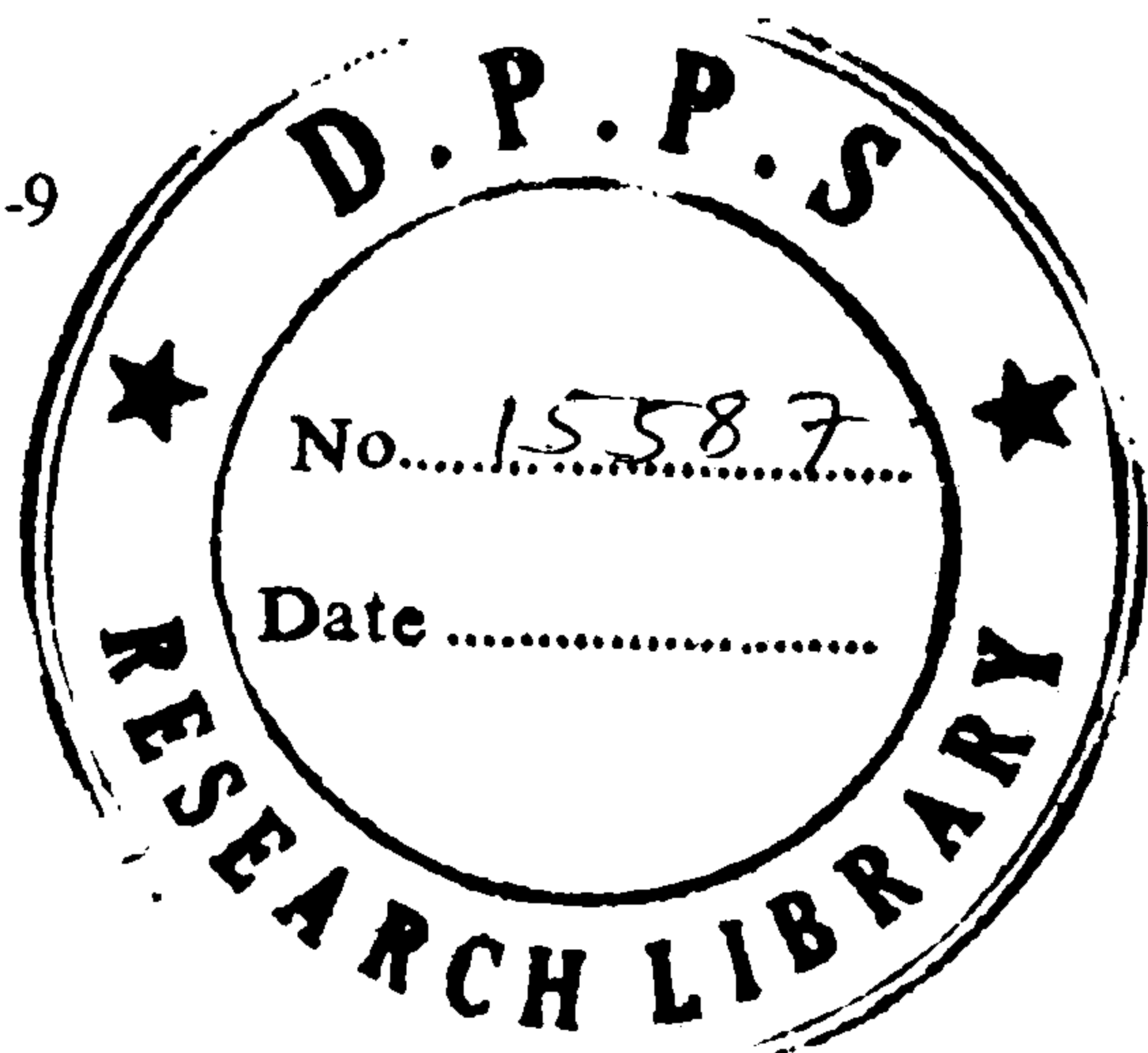
of good fortune at the head (or in the mouth - *Mukha*) whence they say that he who has a (peculiar) mark in his face has good luck¹.

The *Atharva Veda* contains a charm to remove undesirable marks from a woman's body². These marks are regarded as inauspicious and are named; another charm³ is designated to remove unlucky marks from one's own body. *Lakṣaṇa*, or the interpretation of the characteristic marks of the body, was referred in the Jaina canon as one of the eight method of prognostication known to contemporary society. This is clear in the *Bhagavati Sūtra*⁴, a Jaina work about the origin of the texts of the *Ājīvaka* school. There it is said that the six *disacaras* "extracted the eightfold *Māhānimittas* in the *Puvvas* (Purvas) with the (two) *Maggas*, making the total up to ten, after examining hundreds of opinions" and that this was approved after brief consideration⁵ by Makkhali Gosala, the leader of the *Ājīvaka* school, a contemporary of the Buddha. The names of the eight *angas* of the *Mahanimitta* are given by *Abdhayadeva*⁶, the commentator, as follows:

1. *Divyam*, "of the Divine",
2. *Autpātām*, "of portents"
3. *Antarīkṣam*, "of the sky"
4. *Bhahumam* "of the earth"
5. *Āngam*, "of the body"
6. *Svaram*, "of sound"
7. *Laksanam*, "of characteristics"
8. *Vyañjanam*, "of indications"

Eight *Māhānimittas* are listed in the *Sthānāṅga Sūtra*⁷, another *Divyam*; here the commentator *Abhayadeva* makes it clear that there are systems of prognostication. Another Jaina canonical text, *Uttaradhyāna Sūtra*⁸ also gives a similar list. The *Ājīvaka* system has now completely disappeared from

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1. S.B.E Vol 43 p 81
 2. AV I 18
 3. AV VIII 115
 4. *Bhagavati Sūtra* XV, SU. 539, foll. 658-9
 5. Bashim A.L. *Ajivakas* p 213
 6. Loc. cit
 7. *Sthānāṅga Su.* VIII 608
 8. *Uttaradhyāna Su.* XV. 7



our midst and their scriptures are lost to us. Very likely these eight *Mahānimittas* denoted only some of those recognised branches of prognostication, known to ancient India.

The *Uttaradhyāna Sūtra* states that Jaina ascetics should not practice the following arts: *Laksana* (interpreting the marks of the body), *Supina* (interpreting the dreams), *Angavijjā* (predicting foreboding changes of the body, but the Jaina Saint Kālāraka is said to have learned the eightfold *Mahānimittas* from the Ajivakas¹.

A similar list has been mentioned in *Brahmajāla*² and *Sāmaññaphala*³ *Suttas of Dīgha Nikaya*, as *tiracchānavijjā* 'beastly arts' practiced by some *Samanas* and *Brahmanas* for their living. The term *Samana* (recluse) might have been used to refer to *Ajivakas* as mentioned in Jaina texts. Among those practices, *aṅgam* (Palmistry), *nimittam* (divining by means of omens and signs), *lakkhaṇam* (fortune telling from marks on the body), *aṅgavijjā* (predictions by means of the figure of a man), possibly denote different forms of prognostication based on human physical features.

The commentary explains *aṅgam* as an art involving the examination of marks on the arms, feet etc. of a person, on the basis of which the length of his life and potential prestige were predicted⁴. As the word *anga* does not occur elsewhere in the Pali Canon in this sense, it is difficult to be sure of its exact meaning. We depend only on the commentarial explanation. Prof. Rhys Davids translates *angam* as palmistry but according to the commentary it is not clear whether it was based on an examination of the lines of the palm, birth marks or shapes of the hands. Since the feet are mentioned, it is evident that palmistry was not meant.

Buddhaghosa's explanatory lines do not mention a reading of the character but rather a prophesying of the future. *Anga*, therefore, was probably a kind of chiromancy and not chirognomy⁵.

Angavijjā, another form of prognostication, mentioned in the canon, is explained by Buddhaghosa as 'looking at knuckles etc. and, after muttering a charm, divining whether a man is well-born or lucky or not⁶. Rhys Davids

1. Pañcakalpa cumi teste Jain, Life in Ancient India p 208

2. D.I., p 8 f

3. D.I. p 92

4. Dial. I. p 16

5. Encyclopaedia of Buddhism - Malalasekara, G.P. Colombo, I.4 p 619

6. DA. I, p 93

notes that Buddhaghosa separates it from *aṅga*, but the word *aṅga*, literally meaning "limb" seems to be the significant and as also in the case of *angavijjā*, it is interpreted here by Buddhaghosa to mean the marks on the hands and feet¹. However, according to the commentary on the *Samyutta Nikāya* this *angavijjā* is a form of fortune-telling from bodily signs, and *lakkhaṇa* or *lakkhaṇa sattha* is also a similar kind of prognostication. *Angavijja* is a science which tells that the possessor of such and such characteristics receives such and such things, by examining men's and women's bodies.²

Here *Angavijjā* is explained as the art of predicting one's future prestige by looking at the characteristics of the body. This is confirmed by the commentary on *Apadāna*, which defines *lakkhaṇa* as the science of examining physical signs. Books dealing with such a science explain the good and bad effects of the characteristics seen on the bodies of men and women³. Although prognostication from characteristic marks (*lakkhaṇa*) has generally dealt with human beings, the word *lakkhaṇa* had a wider connotation, as a science of foretelling a number of other things, from their characteristics. The *Brahmajāla sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya* gives a long list of practices regarding fortune-telling forbidden to monks, such as reading auspicious and inauspicious marks of gems, staves, garments, swords, arrows, bows, other weapons, women, men, boys, girls, slaves, elephants, horses, buffaloes, oxen, goats, sheep, fowls, quails, iguana, earrings, tortoises denoting the health or luck of their owners⁴.

The prevalence of various branches of knowledge of prognostication which we attempted to list above is corroborated by the fact that large numbers of *Jātaka* stories mention persons who were well versed in the science of interpreting these special marks or characteristics of human beings as well as other things pertaining to human life⁵.

1. Dial. I., p 18

2. SA. II p 348

3. APA A, p 220

4. D.I p. 11

5. JA I, p. 455 II, p 194 V, p 211

Even in Jaina texts, the term *lakkhaṇa* has been used in the same sense as "the art of knowing the auspicious or otherwise, and marks of men, animals etc¹., so also in *Brahmanic* literature, *lakkhanapāṭhaka* denotes the person who interprets good and bad signs, and marks of human beings, animals, articles, dreams, omens etc".²

However, in Buddhist sources *lakkhaṇa-sattha* very often refers only to prognostications from physical characteristics of a child³. References can be found in the *Jātakas* that the science of judging one's character and prophesying the future by bodily signs has been practised in early India as a part of their social customs⁴. Moreover words such as *lakkhana-pāṭhaka*⁵, *angavij-jāya cheko*⁶, *lakkhaṇakusala*⁷ and *nemittaka*⁸ have been used for soothsayers without any distinction.

According to the Pali Canon, early Buddhist attitudes towards practising prognostication are quite clear; Buddha classified them into different categories of low arts (*tiracchānavijjā*) and expressed his condemnation of their being practised by recluses (*samana*) and *brāhmaṇas* who have left the household life⁹. Although the Buddha theoretically did not accept these forms of low arts, he was well aware that he was living in a milieu where these forms of low arts were popular, both among the laymen as well as some sects of recluses. In Pali texts there are several accounts of the physical appearance of many people, including that of the Buddha, in relation to contemporary mythical concepts. It is noteworthy that all the references to the knowledge of physical marks are attributed to Brahmana tradition¹⁰.

However, some of these arts regardless of their origin were taken over and developed by the Buddhists.

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1. Samavāyaṅga Su 26 Aupapātika Su 44
 2. Sanskrit-English Dictionary - Monier Williams, Oxford 1899, p 892
 3. JA. I. p 272 VvA p 138
 4. JA. I, p 290 V, p 209
 5. JA. I, p 455 II, p 194, V, p 211
 6. JA. I, p 290
 7. M. I p 220 JA. I p 272
 8. D. II p 16, A III, p 11, JA. V, p 24
 9. D.I. p 9,67
 10. Sn vs. 548 - 522

The second aspect of the *Mahāpurisa* concept which enumerates the physical characteristics of a Great Man is also one of these notions which shows its relation to the science of prognostication, which we have discussed earlier. The Pali canon introduces this concept as one branch of the hereditary knowledge of Brahman tradition. In the *suttas* of the Pāli Canon, knowledge of the theory of the Great Man (*Mahāpurisa*) is alluded to in the list of the important subjects of study by a learned Brahmin, as a stereotyped formula¹:

"He had mastered the three Vedas with the indices, the ritual, the phonology and exegesis and the legends as fifth, learned in the idioms and the grammar, versed in *lokāyata* sophistry, and in the theory of the Great man".

Although these subjects have been referred to as some practices of Brahmans, the term "*Mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*" in the *sutta* was replaced by the word *lakkhaṇa* without it being qualified by the epithet *Mahāpurisa* and is mentioned along with the other subjects, in the *Apadana*;

*Lakkhane itihāse ca - sanighandhu sakeṭubhe
padako veyyākarano sadhamme parāmiṅgato*²

In this stanza, the term *lakkhaṇa* is not confined to the characteristics of a Great Man but is extended to mean all *lakkhaṇas* in general. The commentary explains this term as predictions based on distinct marks of men and women.³

Hence we can assume that the distinguishing marks of the Great Man is a part of the study of "*lakkhaṇasattha*". It always stated that the knowledge of the distinguishing marks of a *Mahāpurisa* belongs to Brahmanical wisdom and the Canon states that it has been enumerated in the *mantras* (of the Veda) of Brahmans.

"There have been handed down in our mystic verses thirty-two bodily signs of a Great man"⁴.

1. *Tinnam vedānam pārāgū, sanighandhu keṭubhesu, sākkharappabhedesu
itihāsa pañcomesu, padako veyyakarano lokāyata, mahāpurisalakkhanesu
anavayo D.I p 68*

2. Ap vs 175

3. ApA. p 219

4. *Āgātni kho tatā ambatṭha, amhākam mantesu dvattimsa
Mahāpurisalakkhanāni D.I p 89*

Here the *sutta* puts the statement into the mouths of highly respected and educated brahman teachers, in the form that they explained to their pupils.

As the commentary explains, the literature dealing with the concept of *Mahāpurisa* contained twelve thousand books which described the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* and the Buddha. There were about eighteen thousand lines of stanzas which describe the Buddha, and stanzas which explain distinguishing marks of the Buddha, the *pacceka* - Buddha¹, the two chief disciples (*dve aggasāvaka*), eighty leading disciples, the mother and father of the Buddha, chief attendant (*aggupaṭṭhāka*) and the universal monarch (*cakkavatti*)².

It has been already stated that, although Buddhists attribute the knowledge of the theory of *Mahāpurisa* to Brahmanas, there is no direct evidence regarding the existence of such a concept in any of the existing four *Vedas*, or in any other literature. However, to avoid the contradiction, Buddhaghosa says that "when the time comes for the birth of a Buddha, the *Suddhāvāsa* Brahmas³ visit the earth in the guise of Brahmanas and teach men about their bodily signs as forming a part of the Vedic teaching, so that thereby wise men may recognise the Buddha. On his death, this knowledge generally vanishes. That is why it does not exist in the *Veda*⁴.

This seems to show that commentators were not quite certain about the origin of the theory of the physical signs of a *Mahāpurisa*. Although the Pāli Canon accepted the tradition of the *Mahāpurisa*, it shows some reluctance to accept the lore and methods of distinguishing the Great Man. Hence, Buddhaghosa's account is rather inconsistent in this respect.

This *Brahmanic* theory of *Mahāpurisa* appears in the Canon as one of the worldly methods of prognostication which was practised to recognise the bodily marks, both of the Buddha and of the Universal Monarch. In other words, according to this theory, the person who was supposed to become the Buddha or *cakkavatti* should have possessed these characteristics in his physical body. These physical characteristics could be revealed at the birth of the child and through them one can predict his destiny.

1. Pacceka-buddha "individual Buddha", one whose enlightenment is for himself alone and others cannot benefit from his enlightenment.

2. DA. I., p 248; MA. III p 363

3. *Suddhāvāsa*: a name given to a group of Brahma worlds, the five highest *Rūpa* realms. For details see Sr. Suddhavasa DPPN, Vol. II p 1199

4. MA. II, p 761

Although there is not much evidence about the childhood of Siddhattha Gotama, there is a detailed account in the *Mahāpadāna sutta*¹ of *Dīgha Nikāya* of biographical events of six previous Buddhas who preceded Gotama. In this sutta the story of Vipassi Buddha is taken as the model on which the stories of the seven Buddhas including that of the Buddha Gotama are based. According to the sutta, when Prince Vipassi was born, soothsayers were called to the palace.

"When the Brahmana soothsayers had seen the child, they said to Bandhuman, the raja: Rejoice, Lord, ... for this babe, my Lord, is endowed with thirty-two marks of a Great Man ... And what, my Lord, are the thirty-two marks?"

This seems to suggest that with the evolution and the institutionalisation of the concept of Buddha, the theory of the Great man emphasising his thirty-two bodily marks appears to have been arrived at even before the compilation of the *Mahāpadāna sutta*.

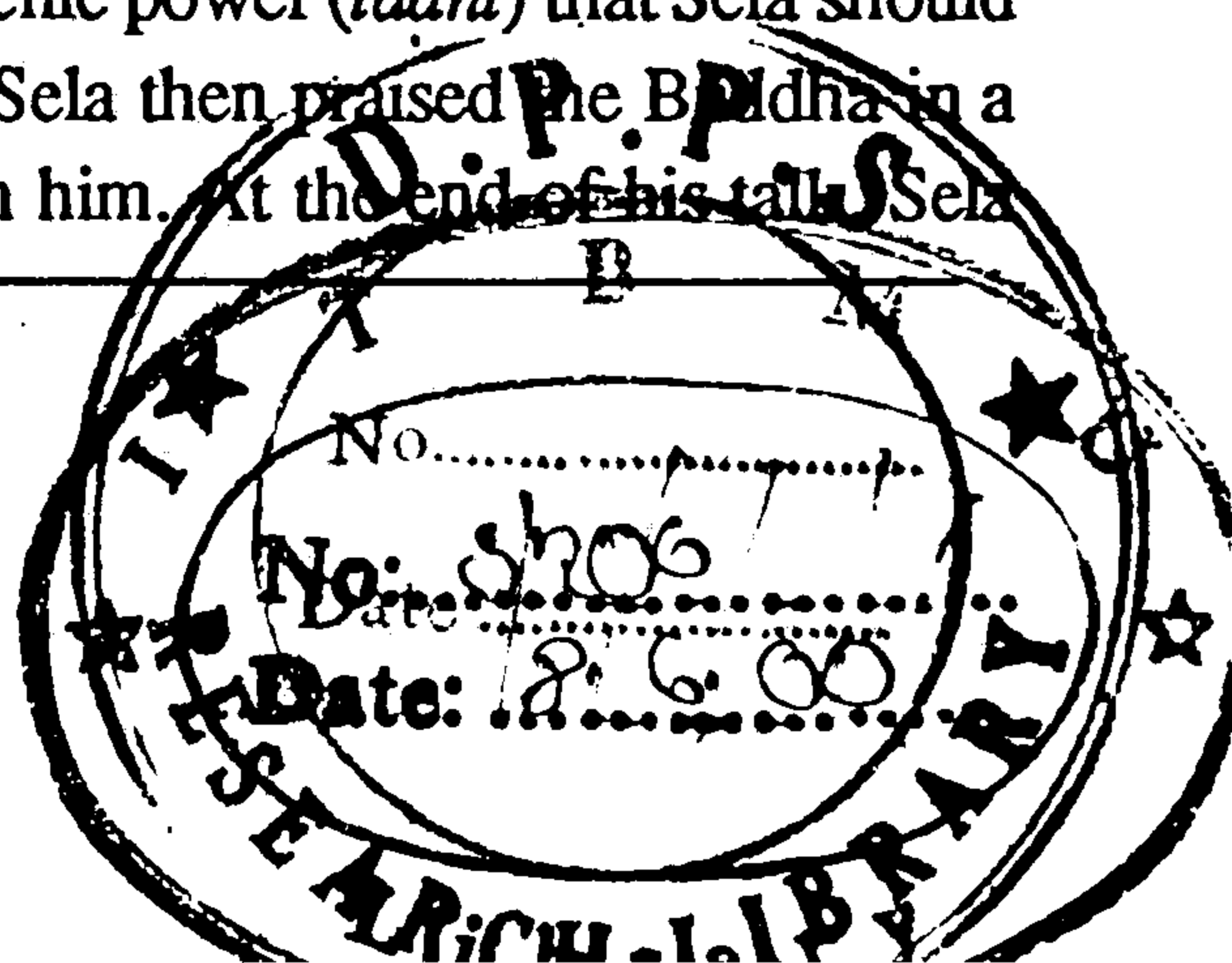
Jātakanidāna, the introductory biography of the Buddha prefixed to the commentary on *Jātakapāli*, describes the event of Prince Siddhattha's birth and mentions the names of seven soothsayers².

After the enlightenment, too, there are several occasions when the thirty-two marks of the *Mahāpurisa* on the Buddha's body came up for investigation. These incidents describe how by examining the thirty-two marks of the Great Man on Gotama's body, some Brahmanas wanted to make sure whether he surely had attained Buddhahood.

One of the incidents which is recorded in similar words, in the two canonical texts *Majjhima Nikāya* and *Suttanipāta* is explained thus: "A Brahmana called Sela of Anuttarāpa was a great friend of Kēniya, the matted haired ascetic and visited him when Kēniya was making preparations to entertain the Buddha. Having heard the word Buddha from Keniya, Sela was filled with joy and fortitude, and went with two hundred and fifty pupils to visit the Buddha in the woodland near Āpana. There he observed on the person of the Buddha the thirty-two marks of a Great Being, all except two - viz. the male organ encased in a sheath and his broad tongue. The Buddha read his thoughts and contrived by his psychic power (*iddhi*) that Sela should be satisfied on these two points as well. Sela then praised the Buddha in a series of verses and asked questions from him. At the end of his talk Sela

1. D.II, p 1 f

2. JA I, p 55 f



entered the Order with his pupils and at the end of the week he attained Arahantship".¹

The similar stories also appear in *Majjhima Nikāya*² and *Pārāyanavagga* of *Suttanipata*³. These reports suggest how this physical aspect of the *Mahāpurisa* concept can be reconciled with the occasion.

Although the Buddha did not define a *Mahāpurisa* by virtue of his physical excellence, nor praise it, it can be seen that he had not rejected the theory of *Mahāpurisa* which was advocated by the Brahmanas on the above mentioned occasions⁴. As a theory it is clear that the Buddha never accepted divining, fortune-telling, prognostication etc. but in the case of *Mahāpurisa lakḥaṇa* he is depicted as showing a different attitude. When Brahmana Sela Brahmayu, and pupils of Bavari were not certain of two of the thirty-two marks, Buddha contrived by *iddhi* power to make them satisfied. This indicates that Buddha confirmed that he possessed the thirty-two marks of the Great man. Evidently this shows a stage of the development of the *Mahāpurisa* concept in the Canon itself.

In the *Lakkhaṇa sutta* the Buddha introduces the theory of the physical characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* to the monks without specific reference to his possession of the thirty-two marks on himself. It is noticeable that in this *sutta* when the Buddha explains the physical characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa*, he refers to the *Tathāgata* (Buddha) in general. Also throughout the *sutta* only the third person singular form has been used in referring to the *Tathāgata*.

"Whereas in whatever former birth, former states of becoming... the *Tathāgata*... Deceasing thence, and born in a life in this condition, he acquires this mark of Great Man"⁵.

This *sutta* shows the most developed stage of the *Mahapurisa* concept within the Pāli texts, as it enumerates not only thirty-two marks of the *Mahāpurisa* but also the cause and effect of these marks, and mentions that they were due entirely to merit acquired in former births.

1. Sn p 104 - M. II, p 146

2. M. II, p 133ff

3. Sn. vs 976 ff

4. D. III, p 46

5. *Yam pi bhikkhave Tathāgato purimam jātim puimam bhavam . . . So tato cuto itthattam āgato samāno imam mahāpurisa lakḥhanam paṭilabhati. D. III. p146*

It is remarkable that even in this *sutta*, the Buddha attributes the knowledge of the theory of *Mahāpurisa* to certain sages of the past but the Buddha says that they did not know the cause - that good deeds - which were responsible for the appearance of these marks.

"And seers not of our communion, brethren, are acquainted with their marks but they know not for what deed done any one of the marks acquired"¹.

This confirms that the Pali Canon not only adopted the theory of the *Mahāpurisa* from non-Buddhistic sources but also went further and made use of it for the advancement of ethical conduct. The importance of the *Lakkhana sutta* lies in the fact that it combines the concept of the Great Man with some of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism such as the doctrine of *kamma*, rebirth, the law of causation, and giving more emphasis to the social ethics of Buddhism.

As the *Lakkhana sutta* does not give enough reasons for the utterance of this discourse, Buddhaghosa² describes the background story which correlates the influence of some popular aspects of the *kamma* theory in Buddha's teaching with the concept of *Mahāpurisa* in the course of the development of Canonical literature. He says that the Buddha preached this discourse on the characteristic marks of *Mahāpurisa*, because there was a great curiosity to know which past good action led to his possessing these marks.

Although the *sutta* introduces the past good actions with reference to the *Tathāgata*, physical signs and their present effects have been referred to of both the Buddha and the *cakkavatti*, the two possible careers of the *Mahāpurisa*. Each *lakkhana* reveals two different effects relating to the Buddha and *cakkavatti* respectively.

This makes it clear that in the early stage of the development of the *Mahāpurisa* concept the thirty-two physical characteristics are the only physically distinguishing signs of a *Mahāpurisa* who could become either a Buddha or a *cakkavatti*. But *Buddhavaṃsa*, a minor anthology of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, mentions that the Buddha as a *Mahāpurisa* possesses not only thirty-two marks but also eighty minor or secondary physical characteristics (*aṣīti anuvyañjana*)³. The word *anuvyañjana* has not appeared in this sense in any of the four *Nikāyas*, but in the commentaries 'eighty secondary marks'

1. D. III, p 145

2. DA. III p 918

3. *Anuvyañjanasampannam-dvattimsavaralakkhanam*

sabbam samantara hitam-nanu vitta sabbasañikhara BV p 55

have been mentioned as complementary to the thirty-two characteristics of a *Mahāpurisa*¹. It is noteworthy that these eighty secondary marks do not belong to a *cakkavatti*, and it shows another stage of the development of the *Mahāpurisa* concept in the Pali Canon.

Although the commentaries² mention some of the eighty secondary signs on the Buddha's body, the full list of *anuvyanjanas* primarily appears in *Lalitavistara*³, a text of the *Sarvāstivāda school*⁴ and also in some other *Mahāyāna* texts⁵, while in Pali literature the *Jiñalankāra vannaṇā*, a post-commentarial work of *Theravada* tradition in Sri Lanka, deals with them comprehensively⁶. As far as the concept of *Mahāpurisa* is concerned, the existence of thirty-two physical marks and *anuvyanjanas*, in the Buddha's body assumed equal importance, both in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions, at this stage of development.

Thus, when we have carefully examined all the primary sources for the origin and development of the concept of *Mahāpurisa*, it becomes evident that nowhere in any of the discourse does the Buddha say that he possesses thirty-two extraordinary bodily marks and secondary marks. At the same time, the Buddha seems never to have attempted to speak against those who believed in this particular concept.

Finally, we have seen the different stages of development of the *Mahāpurisa* concept in the Pāli Canon and its commentaries, as a result of the development of the Buddha concept. The remarkable feature of the *Mahāpurisa* theory in the *Theravāda* tradition is that though the Buddha possesses thirty-two signs of perfection, and eighty secondary characteristics, his physical body is like that of ordinary people which is subject to mortality. It is, however, the *Mahāyāna* idea that these thirty-two physical marks and eighty secondary signs of the *Mahāpurisa* in the body of the Buddha are supernormal characteristics of the cosmic body of the Buddha, as we shall see in the following chapter.

1. DA. III p.918

2. BVA. p 204 (Hevavitarana Bequest) Colombo 1922

3. KV. p 106 ff

4. Thomas, E.J. Life of the Buddha p 106

5. Mahāvastu. ii. 43 ff. Mahāvvyutpatiti p 268 ff

6. See Appendix II

Development of the Mahapurisa Concept and the Mahayana Theory of Trikāya (triple body)

As we have examined in the previous chapter, the Pāli Canon presents two aspects of the concept of *Mahapurisa*: i.e. a great man or ideal man who is to be distinguished by his internal qualities, and the Great Man who is identified by his physical characteristics. Neither idea is exclusively of Buddhist origin, and they appear to be Buddhist interpretations of contemporary concepts. However, the second aspect had been subjected to development and became popular among all the Buddhist schools throughout the history of Buddhism, while the first aspect remained as a spiritual explanation of the idea of the worthy one or an *Arahant*.

The popular aspect of *Mahāpurisa* which we have discussed above, was based on the physical characteristics of the Buddha and *Cakkavatti*. Although this theory propounds these two possible careers of the *Mahāpurisa*, a great deal of literature had been developed on the thirty-two characteristics of the Great Man with regard to the Buddha's physical appearance rather than that of the *Cakkavatti*.

In this chapter we shall examine the different aspects of the concept of *Buddha-Kāya* (body of the Buddha) in Mahāyāna Buddhism and their approaches to the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa*. As Dutt observes "the Hīnayāna schools (*Sthaviravādins*) had very little to do with the Kāya concept as Buddha was to them an actual man, historical person living in this world like any other human being and subject to all the frailties of a mortal body"¹.

Although the Pāli Canon represents the Buddha as a human being extraordinary qualities have been attributed to him to demonstrate his greatness as the Buddha. The greatest quality attributed to him is wisdom - a quality from which he is always considered in terms of a person even when the idea of the Buddha developed into a cosmic principle in later schools of Buddhism. The personality of the Buddha, therefore, is to be considered in that light.

The Pāli canon has uniquely depicted the Buddha as a human being who achieved the perfect state of spiritual attainment and as one possessing physical excellence. Physical excellence has been attributed to the Buddha

1. N. Dutt, Mahayana Buddhism, New Edition Delhi 1977, p 141

because of his accomplishment of supreme spiritual attainment. In the Pali Canon the concept of *Mahāpurisa* was the most important exposition of the Buddha's physical excellence. Besides the thirty two characteristics of the Great Man, there were other special features on the physical body of the Buddha. *Brahmāyu sutta*¹ which gives various other particulars about the Buddha, describes some special features and their functions. "Thus in walking he always treads with right foot; his steps are neither too long nor too short; only his lower limbs move; when he looks back, he has to turn right round to do so like an elephant. When entering a house he never bend his body; when sitting down, accepting water to wash his bowl, eating, washing his hands after eating, or returning thanks, he sits with the greatest propriety, dignity and rectitude".

Brāhmaṇa Sonadaṇḍa, a well respected teacher at the time of the Buddha, remarked that the Buddha's physical excellence was one of his greatnesses to be honoured.²

"Truly sir, the samana Gotama is handsome pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in complexion, fine in presence, stately to behold..."³

Similarly it was described that the Buddha's complexion was fair in colour (*singhī nikkasavaṇṇo*)⁴ and clean (*pariyodāta*) and his voice had eight qualities.⁵

In spite of the descriptions given above, however, Pāli canonical works retained the human qualities of the Buddha by depicting him as a man abounding in wisdom and supernormal attributes⁶. It has been confirmed by the *Kathāvatthu* (a later addition to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* of the Pāli Canon, compiled at the third council)⁷ which shows that the Theravāda tradition has been maintaining this view, even after several centuries of the Buddha's demise.

1. M.I. p 137

2. D.I. p 113

3. Dial. I. p 146

4. Vin. I. p 38

5. M. II. p 140

6. H. Ganāvāsa, The Development of the Concept of the Buddha in Pali Literature, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Sri Lanka, 1964, p 235

7. *Yathā te dhammasangītim-tissattheropitam tathā-Kathāvatthuppakaranam-paravādappamaddanam*. Mahavansa, ch.v.vs.279

"Moreover was it not said by the Exalted One: "Bhikkus, I was once staying at Ukkattha in the Subhaga woods by the Kings - Sal Tree... I was once staying at Uruvela by Goatsherds' Banyan before I was super enlightened... I was once staying at the Gable House Hall."

Surely then the exalted One lived among men. But did not the Exalted One say: "Born in the world, enlightened in the world, having overcome the world, undefiled by the world"¹.

As the Theravada tradition has preserved the above view that the Buddha was a human being, it is clear that the concept of *Mahāpurisa* and the thirty-two marks of the Great Man have been attributed to him in order to show that he was a perfect human being even in his physical form. The following passage from *Milindapañha* may perhaps add more light to the above view explaining that the Buddha possessed thirty-two marks of the Great Man along with some other physical characteristics while maintaining his human and historical nature.

"The king said: 'Is it true, Nagasena, that the Buddha was endowed with thirty-two bodily marks of a great man...'"²

Yes, Sir, Buddha was endowed with thirty-two bodily marks of a great man..."

Although the Buddha possessed all the physical characteristics of the Great Man, his body was subject to natural phenomena common to any ordinary human being.

"Revered Sir, did painful feelings ever arise in the *Tathāgata's* body? Yes, Sir, when at Rajagaha, the Lord's foot was grazed by a splinter, when he was ill with dysentery, when he was disturbed by rumours and purging was given to him by Jivaka, when he was troubled by rheumatism, and the Elder who was his attendant looked for hot water."³

The above discussion clearly reveals that the thirty-two marks of the Great Man which appear in his body do not invalidate Buddha's humanity in any way.

Although the *Theravāda* tradition maintains a definite idea about the Buddha's body, some other references in the Pali Canon itself indicate probably the docetic nature of the Buddha's person even during his life time⁴.

1. Kv. XV.III.I p 559

2. *Milindapañha*, p. 175.; Transl. I.B. Horner, p 102

3. Ibid. p 135, Transl. p 187

4. E.B. III. 4, p 424

As Anesaki points out: "Whatever his merits and powers, his earthly life was believed to have been as real as that of any other human being. But as soon as pious thoughts of believers began to place him side by side with a mythical *Cakravarti* or to make him far superior to the highest deity, *Brahma*, whether in his life time or after his death, his personality became more mythical and less human"¹.

The analogy of similar records in the case of other religious founders would lead us to expect that the followers of the great Indian teacher would not be satisfied by looking upon their master as a mere ordinary man; and this expectation is abundantly fulfilled. They endeavoured to give expression to their deep sense of inferiority and to the deep impression made upon them by the personal power of a character quite unequalled among all the men they knew or heard of, by describing the glory and the grandeur of their Buddha in poetical and figurative language always liable to be misunderstood and hardening too soon into erroneous beliefs.²

In view of the qualities attributed to the person of the Buddha, this super-normalisation seems to have originated in the Pali Canon itself and developed through the Pali commentaries in *Theravāda* Buddhism. It became fully developed in *Mahāvastu* and was established in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Divyāvadana*. Thus the Buddha was idealised long before Mahayana became a separate school of Buddhism.

The Theravada tradition has a humanistic concept of the Buddha, who was living as a human being in this world. Although the Pali Canon and commentaries attribute extraordinary qualities to the Buddha by means of super-normalisation, there were no transcendental elements in him. It is interesting to note here that the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* which had been attributed to the body of the human Buddha in the Theravada tradition, had also played an important role as distinguishing signs of different forms of the Buddha's body in different Buddhist schools, and later in Mahayana Buddhism.

*Kathāvatthu*³ reports one of the earliest views, which is different from the Theravada tradition regarding the body of the Buddha, arisen after his demise. Its commentary adumbrates the view that the Buddhas are superhuman, their

1. E.R.E. Vol Sv *Cakravarti*

2. Rhys Davids, Hibbert Lectures, 1981, p 128

3. Kv. II. 10 p 221

bodies have majestic powers, and their lives are limitless, had been held by the *Lokuttaravādins* and the *Vaitulyakas*.

According to Vasumitra, the first division of Buddhism, referred to above took place about one hundred years after the death of the Buddha¹. It was from the Theravadins that the *Mahāsaṅghikas* emerged and the *Lokuttaravāda* sect was a subdivision of the *Mahāsaṅghikas* which came into being in the third century B.C.

The *Mahāsaṅghikas* and their offshoots so universalised the Buddha as almost to eclipse his historical personality. They identified him in this essential essence with the universal Buddhahood which in time became identified with the universe².

Similarly, the *Lokuttaravādins* believe that the Buddha's body was transcendental and self-born³. This theory was developed by the *Mahāsaṅghika* school of Buddhist thought⁴ in the *Mahāvastu*, the book of Great Events, where the Buddha was represented as a divine creation. The *Lalitavistara* of the *Sarvastivāda* school also presents in the Buddha legend from its earliest beginnings the Buddha as a semi-divine character.

Unlike the Pali Canon the fundamental difference of enumerating the thirty-two marks of the Great Man in these two texts is that it was an attribution to a superhuman or semi-divine body of the Buddha. They are not the possessions of a human body, and the appearance of the thirty-two marks of the Great Man is an essential characteristic of the Buddha's superhuman nature. In the Pali texts, these marks were seen after the birth of the *Bodhisattva* in his final existence, but according to the *Lalitavistara* his body was formed endowed with the thirty-two marks and eighty secondary marks when he was about to descend from the *Tusita* heaven, and he entered the mother's womb with fully developed marks.

"In the mother's womb *Bodhisattva* enjoyed in a gold pavilion of jewelled mansion (*Ratnavyūha*). Nor is the *Bodhisattva* born as foetus made of consolidated bubbles and fleshy fibres. He appears with all his body and its members fully developed and marked with all auspicious signs and in a sealed position."⁵

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1. *Bhinna Nikāya Dharmacakraśāstra* - Taistro 49. p 15-16
 2. C.H.S. Ward, *Buddhism* Vol. II, p 153
 3. *Mahāvastu*, Text ed. E. Senart, ii p 3
 4. *Ibid.* ii. p 2
 5. *Lalitavistara* Text ed. by Leffmann, 1902, p 103

In the Pali Canon the thirty-two marks of the Great Man have been regarded as one of the physical excellences of the body of the *Mahāpurisa* and, apart from the fact that this had been attributed by Brahmanas, these marks were not distinguished as signs of assurance of the fulfilment of Buddhahood. It is noteworthy, as they are closely connected with the idea of the superhuman Buddha, *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* continuously mention that these marks have been regarded as essential characteristics to identify the Buddha and his superhuman nature.

1. The *Bodhisattva* entered the mother's womb endowed with thirty-two major and eighty minor signs.¹
2. Diviners of dreams declared that he who bears the thirty-two marks, has come to the womb of Māyā.²
3. He displayed the marks to *Devas* while he was in the womb³.
4. *Mahesvaras* (*Devas* of the realm of *Suddhāvāsa*) examined the thirty-two marks.⁴
5. Asita, the sage, examined the marks.⁵
6. At the time when the ascetic Gotama approached the Bodhi-Tree, Kāla and Nāga described his excellence, enumerating thirty-two marks⁶, and in several other places it indicates the Buddha's divine nature.

One of the major developments of the *Mahāpurisa* concept at this stage is the enumeration of the eighty secondary marks as subsidiary to the thirty-two characteristics⁷. Apart from the *Buddhavamsa*, a later compilation of the Canon (which mentions only the word *Anuvyañjana*)⁸, the Pali texts do not mention even the eighty signs of the body of the *Mahāpurisa*. This later addition indicates that the concept of *Mahāpurisa* has been taken on by later schools with greater emphasis than the early Theravada tradition does.

At this stage we can assume that the Buddha was highly deified and the

1. Ibid. p 13

2. Ibid. p 20

3. Ibid. p 25

4. Ibid p 29

5. Ibid p 29

6. Ibid p 30

7. LV p 142

8. Bv p 55

thirty-two characteristics become inadequate for the glorification of the Buddha's physical excellence which is the outward accomplishment of his omniscience. The invention of these eighty secondary marks, therefore, can be regarded as an outcome of a later attempt to provide a detailed description of each major characteristic.

Lalitavistara mentions an interesting quality of the *Mahāpurisa*, called *Nārāyana-Bala*, which does not appear in any of the Pali texts. When the sage Asita came to examine the Prince Siddhartha, he declared that the baby was endowed with the power of *Nārāyana* apart from thirty two major and eighty minor marks of excellence.

It occurs in the traditional narrative of the birth of the sage, when *Brāhmana* astrologers saw in the house of Suddhodana in the noble city of Kapila "the mighty *Nārāyan* was born upheld by all the auspicious signs, merits and glory"¹. Again in the astrologers' announcement to the father: "A son of great beauty has been born unto thee... he is endowed with thirty-two marks and power of *Nārāyana*"². Again when the prince renounces the world to become an ascetic it is acclaimed that his body has the strength of *Nārāyana* himself, hard as the thunderbolt.³

As it has been explained in the text; thus endowed with power of *Nārāyana* is called *Mahānārāyana*⁴, it makes clear that the term *Nārāyanabala* denotes a certain measure of physical strength, which has not been indicated in the Pāli Canon, in relation to the concept of *Mahāpurisa*. However, the commentaries have taken this term and explained that *Nārāyanasanghātābala* was the equivalent of the strength of ten *Chaddanta* elephants which equals in strength to that of the Buddha.⁵

L.A. Waddell⁶ points out that this is not a mere rhetorical allusion, but a deliberate and very detailed ascription to the Buddha of most of the divine and supernatural marks and attributes of that god.

It would seem to be more consistent with all the evidence to suppose that *Nārāyana* was an independent conception and the evidence does not exist to

1. "*Jāto laksāna punyateja bharito nārāyanasthāmavān*". LV 109

2. "*putraste...dvātrimsavara lakṣanaih kavacito nārāyanasthāmavān*" Ibid 110

3. "*vajradrudha abhedyanārāyano ātmabhāvaguru vīryabalaupetu...*" Ibid 202

4. "*Mahānārāyanabalopetotvan mahānārāyana ityucyate*" Ibid 433

5. SA.II. 43, AA.V.10, SnA.II.404.

6. Buddha's Diadem or Usnisa - L.A. Wadell - Ostasiatische Zertschrift - 1914

enable us to decide the question of its origin. It was applied now to one, now to another divine being even in the very early times; yet at an early date it unquestionably became associated with 'Puruṣa'.¹

The word *Nārāyana* first appears in *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, in three passages, and there is a clear reference in each case to *Puruṣa Sūkta*, where Puruṣa is conceived as the supreme being of the universe, the anthropomorphic Brahminical god.²

Nārāyana was applied as an epithet of *Vishnu* and of the other divinities.³ In the great Brahminical epic *Mahābhārata*⁴, the word *Mahāpurusa* is exclusively a title of the supreme god *Nārāyana*, who is there defined as universal soul. The One External Being, the Infinite Lord of the Universe⁵. Again post-vedic Vedānta literature uses *Nārāyana* as an equivalent for the Brahman who became the impersonal supreme godhead behind all phenomena and all gods⁶.

It is evident that the divinity and the great powers of *Nārāyana* were so well established at the time of the compilation of the *Lalitavistara* and other *Sarvāstivāda* literary works. There the Buddha was looked upon not just as a human teacher who attained the highest wisdom by insight, but as a great hero who conquered the whole world. Its power is above all human beings. According to this evidence it can be stated that in order to illuminate this superhuman nature of the Buddha, they accorded the highest comparison that was available to him, which is the epithet of *Nārāyana*. The concept of *Mahāpurisa* which has been applied to indicate Buddha's greatness, has been taken to imply the heroic nature of the Buddha, and in addition to thirty-two marks the ascription of *Nārāyana-bala* (Power of Supreme God) shows the later attempt of promoting the Buddha to the position of the supreme god; similar to Brahman (*Nārāyana*) in Hinduism.

We made clear that the Pāli Canon presents the thirty-two marks of the *Mahāpurisa* as a theory which has been advocated by Brahmanas. It enunciates that the Buddha's attitude towards the concept was, that he did not

1. E.R.E. (J.N. Farquhar) Vol. 9. Sv *Nārāyana*

2. *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, X11.III.41, X11.IV.1.1, 2.12.

3. *Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhita* II.Ix.I

4. E.W Hopkins suggests 300-100 B.C. as the most probable dates of compilation of the *Mahābhārata*, P 1. Strassburg 1915.

5. *Mahābhārata* Text, ed Calcutta, XII Santi Parva I. 12701, 12864

6. *Bhāṣya* to the *Vedāntasūtra* - S.B.E. XXXIV

reject it and gave it an ethical and social value and outlook to the thirty-two characteristics. On the contrary, in *Mahāvastu* and *Lalitavistara*, the Buddha initiates the concept and claimed that he himself possesses those marks in his body.

"The Bodhisatva (Siddhārta) anticipates that thus may I become, a Great Man (*Mahāpurisa*) endowed with his thirty-two marks of my body, adorned with the eighty minor characteristics, and..."¹

In addition to this, there are other references with regard to the signs of the *Mahāpurisa* as a fundamental fulfilment of the Bodhisatva, without any reference to Brahminic origin. Finally, both the *Mahāvastu* and the *Lalitavistara* describe that, although the Buddha was born on earth as a human being he was not an ordinary man; because he was the *Mahāpurisa*, the Great Man. These two works are invaluable as a key source to the development of the concept of the Buddha, from its earliest phase, explaining clearly how the Buddha began his career as a human ascetic and ended as a god above all gods, and also how the concept of the Great Man was finally formulated into the divine ideal.

The next important development of the Buddha concept was the elevation of Gotama Buddha from the semi-divine state to an everlasting entity. The *Saddharmapundarīka sūtra* (The Lotus of the true Law) believed to have been compiled towards the end of the first or the beginning of the second century A.D.², has made an attempt to remove from the minds of the people the lingering impression of the historical existence of Sakyamuni³. In this *sūtra*, Gotama Buddha is represented practically as an eternal God who controls the universe and all its creatures. He himself dwells continually in infinite glory. As stated in the *sūtra*, the Buddha is made to say that his human life was a mere appearance of a sort of magic show; he never was really eternal and had always been in the world. He would continue his career as a Buddha for many ten millions of myriads of hundreds of thousands of cycles before attaining final *Nirvāna*.

In reality his being is not subject to complete *Nirvāna*; it is only by a skillful device (*upāya kauṣalya*) that he makes a show of it, and repeatedly he appears in the world of the living though his abode is on the summit of the *Gredharakūta*.

1. MV, I. p 38 f

2. A. Rawlinson. Studies in the Lotus Sutra, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Lancaster, 1974 p 28

3. S.B.E XXI, IV, p 154

In this description relating to the Buddha's appearance, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* insisted on a dual nature of Buddhahood and distinguished the earthly Sakyamuni as only a manifestation of the real and eternal Buddha. It is clearly indicated that the Buddha has two bodies, i.e. the *Rupakāya* or *Nirmānakāya*, and the *Dharmakāya*. The concept of *Mahāpurisa* has reached towards the direction of its development to meet the change of attitude towards the body of the Buddha (*Buddhakāya*). It is interesting to note here that although the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* mentions thirty-two major and eighty secondary marks as endowed in the Buddha's body, it does not make clear whether they are applied to his *rūpakāya* or *dharmakāya*. However, the appearance of thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics has been described as possessions of the person who has become the Buddha. On the contrary, the Pali texts relate these marks only to the physical figure of the *Mahāpurisa* who possess them at birth, but *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* gives the impression that they appear in one's body as a result of the attainment of Buddhahood. This is clear in the passage where Sariputta states, if he fails to become a Buddha, he would lose all the characteristic signs of the *Mahāpurisa*.

"When Sariputra had been told by Sakyamuni that he would become the Buddha in future, he expressed his joy and explained how unhappy he was when Buddha declared that there is only one vehicle. The thirty-two characteristics have failed me, golden colour of skin failed me..."¹

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* has attributed thirty-two marks of the Great Man to the Body of Sakyamuni Buddha, who was only a replica of the real Buddha, "When splendidly marked with the thirty two characteristics, I am illuminating this whole world, and worshipped by many hundreds of beings, I show the (unmistakable) stamp of the nature of the law".

This is quite different from that of the Theravada tradition, where it is said that the real Buddha lived in human form. On the contrary, N. Dutt points out that the idea of the created body of the Buddha also appeared in Theravāda commentaries "as a form of religious bias of attributing superhuman powers to the Buddha"². In the *Atthasālini* Buddhaghosa says that during the three months of his absence from the world while Buddha was engaged in preaching the *Abhidhamma* to his mother in the *Tusita* heaven, he created some Nirmana-Buddhas as exact replicas of himself. These Nimmita-Buddhas

1. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, ed. by U. Vogihara & C.T. Suchida, Tokyo, 1958, p 60 Transl. S.B.E. XXI. III. p 5f

2. N. Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p 147

could not be distinguished from the real Buddha in voice, words, and even the rays of light that issued forth from his body. The created Buddha could be detected only by the gods of the higher classes and not by ordinary gods or men of the world. Although this created Buddha-idea emerged in *Theravāda* commentaries, they still retain the concept of the real Buddha who was human. The created Buddha-body in *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra* was also seen in human form, but the actual Buddha was not human and cannot be seen by ordinary human beings. Therefore, the attribution of thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics to a created body in *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra* shows another stage of development of the *Mahāpurisa* concept towards a more superhuman ideal.

The Pāli Canon categorically mentions that "one who is endowed with the thirty-two marks of the body either becomes the Buddha or Cakkavatti, none other". It is interesting to note that *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* mentions that these thirty-two marks of the Great Man are possessed not only by the Buddhas but also by Bodhisattvas.

"No sooner had the Lord uttered these words, then the *Saha* world burst open on every side and from within the clefts arose many hundred thousand myriads of Kotis of *Bodhisattvas* with gold coloured bodies and the thirty-two characteristic signs of a Great Man who had been dwelling in the' element of space underneath the great earth close by *Saha*-world".¹

It makes clear, when the Bodhisattva-ideal became a much more significant concept in Māhāyana than in the *Theravāda* tradition, thirty-two marks of the Great Man were also taken over by the Mahayana teaching in order to give a greater value to this new concept. *Srāvakayāna* or *arahantship* and *pacceka-Buddha-yāna* are strongly rejected in *Saddhammapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, and it states that there is only one *yāna* (vehicle) which is *sammā-sambuddha*, the fully enlightened one. "Know then, Tishya, that there is no second vehicle in this world anywhere to be found, in whatever direction thou shalt search, apart from the device (shown) by the most high among men. And I am teaching blessed rest (*Nirvāna*) in so far as though you have not yet reached (final) rest, you are delivered from the trouble of the mundane whirl provided you seek the vehicle of Buddhas".

The teaching of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* establishes the theory that in order to attain the blessed rest or *Nirvāna* everyone should become a Buddha. *Arahants* who have attained final *Nibbāna* in Theravada are regarded as

1. S.B.E. XXI. p 297

having reached only the state of escape from their suffering. They have to be bodhisattvas again and they will finally become Buddhas.

It was the spontaneous result that this *Bodhisattva-theory* led to the idea of the plurality of the Buddha concept, or many thousands of Buddhas. Although the Pali texts mention about six former Buddhas who preceded the Gotama Sakyamuni¹, according to the *Theravāda* tradition the appearance of a Buddha in this world is a rare event² and it is impossible to have two Buddhas at the same time.

"Nowhere, gentlemen, and at no time is it possible that in one and the same world system two Arahanta Buddhas supreme should arise together, neither before nor after the other. This can in no way be."³

It is evident that a Buddha is born in the world after innumerable *kalpas* and Buddhahood can only be achieved one among many millions. Similarly, the Pāli Canon represents this rare being as only one of that kind⁴ by attributing characteristics which are only peculiar to such a being.

It is noteworthy that the concept of many Buddhas in the Lotus *Sūtra*, applied to the idea of *Mahāpurisa*, is quite different from that of the Pali Canon, according to which the *Mahāpurisa lakkaṇa* appear only in the body of the Buddha and the *Cakkavatti*. Either of them appear very rarely in the world, only one at the time; but in the Lotus *Sūtra* all the Buddhas can appear at the same time and possess thirty-two marks of the Great Man. However, all these Buddhas who appear in human form (*rūpakāya*) are not their real bodies and are not in true forms. *Rūpakaya* is the Buddha seen in the human form, while his true body is regarded as *Dharmakāya*. Therefore, we can assume, that at this stage of the development of the Buddha concept that the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs have been taken as the most accepted characteristics representing Buddhas in their physical form.

1. D.II p 2

2. A.I. p 22

3. *Atthānam kho etam anavakāso yam ekissā lokadhātuyā dve araham sammāsambuddho apubbam acarimam uppajjeyyum, netam thānam vijjati,* D. II p 225

4. *ekapuggalo loke uppajjamāno uppajjati, adutiyo, asahayo, appatimo ... katamo ekapuggalo, tathāgato araham sammāsambuddho* A.I. p 22

Trikāya (Triple Body) and characteristics of the Mahāpurisa

Until the time of Nagarjuna (2 cen. A.D.) who developed the *Mādhyamika* philosophy, there was a twofold body¹, which was conceived as a theory of the Buddha body. It was in the philosophy of the *Yogācāra* school (*Vijñānavāda*), represented by Asanga and Vasubandhu, that the two-body theory was developed until it was consummated into the three body theory.²

The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* which is known as an early Mahāyāna text does not mention three bodies of the Buddha. Instead the *sūtra* presents different Buddha-personalities. It is done so in terms of *Kāya: Dharmatā Buddha, Vipāka Buddha, Nirmitā Buddha* (the Buddha that flows only out of the absolute Dharma and the Buddha of transformation.³ The Buddhas are different as Buddhas and not as belonging to any of the trinity (Trikāya).⁴

However, the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* explains the form of the body as one of the four samenesses of all Buddhas, and that body is always endowed with thirty-two major and minor characteristics.

"Said the Blessed One: There are according to the deeper sense, four kinds of sameness distinguished. These are: (1) sameness of letters, (2) sameness of words, (3) sameness of teachings, (4) sameness of body.... Now, Mahamati, what is the sameness of the body? It is said that I and other *Tathāgatas* and Arahants, and Fully Enlightened Ones are the same as regards our *Dharmakāya* and the thirty-two signs and eighty minor excellences of bodily perfections. No distinction exists among us except the *Tathāgata* manifests varieties of forms according to the different dispositions of beings who are to be disciplined by various means."⁵

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1. Mūla Mādhyamika Kārika XXII, Ratnavali III. 13, Prajñāpāramitopadesa, Taisho, Vol. 25, p 121c etc. refers to only Dharma body and Physical body
 2. Chizen Akanuma, "The triple body of the Buddha"-Eastern Buddhist 1922, Vol.II, p 18
 3. Lankāvatāra sūtra, Transl. by D.T. Suzuki, p 51
 4. D.T. Suzuki, Studies in Lankāvatāra Sūtra, p 319
 5. Ibid. p 123

This makes clear that even at the time of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* the *Trikāya* theory was not properly formed but the explanation of different forms of Buddhas paved the way for the development of the *Trikāya* concept. However, this *sūtra* of the Yogācāra school has uniquely accepted the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of the body as the distinguishing features of the forms of all Buddhas.

The next step towards the development of the concept of Buddha-kaya is the theory of the three bodies of the Buddha. Among all the different theories of the Buddha's body, finally this doctrine of *Trikāya* had become the most standard form of concept in Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana texts such as *Pañcavimsatisāhasrikā*¹, *Daśasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā*², and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*³ *Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra*⁴ *Gandavyūha Sūtra*⁵, explain that Buddha possesses not only two but three bodies: *Dharmakāya* (body of form) *Sambhogakāya* (body of bliss or enjoyment) and *Nirmānakāya* (body of transformation).

A passage from the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* on the doctrine of the *Trikāya* gives some idea of the nature and the formation of these three bodies. "The Tathagata when he was yet at the stage of discipline, practised diverse deeds of morality for the sake of sentient beings. Through this practice he finally attained perfection, reached maturity and by virtue of its merits he acquired a wonderful spiritual power. He revealed himself in the right place, assuming various bodily forms. These bodily forms are called *Nirmānakāya* of the *Tathāgata*.

"But when the *Tathāgatas*, in order to make the *Bodhisattvas* thoroughly conversant with the Dhamma...manifest themselves to the *Bodhisattvas* in a form which is perfect with the thirty two major and eighty minor features of excellence, and shining with the halo around the head and back, the *Tathāgatas* are said to have assumed the body of Bliss or *Sambhogakāya*."

"When all possible obstacles arising from sin are perfectly removed and when all possible good *dhamas* are preserved, there would remain nothing but suchness: this is the *Dharmakāya*. The first two forms of the *Tathāgata*

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1. N. Dutt, *Pañcavimsasataśahaśrikā Prajñāpāramitā*
 2. Sten Konow, *Daśasāhasrikā Pajñāpāramitā*, Oslo, 1941
 3. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, ed by U. Vogihara, Tokyo 1938
 4. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sutra*, ed by B. Nanjiyo, Kyoto 1931
 5. *Gandavyūha Sūtra*, D.T. Suzuki & H. Idzumi, Kyoto 1935

are provisional (and temporal) existence; but the last one is a reality wherein the former two find the reason of their existence."¹

According to this explanation, *Tathāgatas* have only one real body, i.e. *Dharmakāya*, which is universal and eternal. *Sambhogakāya* and *Nirmanakāya* are only manifestations of the reality. On the other hand it is clear that according to *śūnyatā*-philosophy of the *Prajñāparamitā* school, in reality the Buddha has no form.

"All Buddhas in the ten quarters and all *dhammas* of the past, present and future are forms of no form".²

Although the *Trikāya* doctrine defines the Buddha nature as without form, it speaks a great deal of the thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of the Great Man, especially in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. There are some notable differences of the approach regarding *Mahāpurusa lakṣaṇas* in these Mahāyāna texts.

Firstly, these characteristics of the Great Man have been attributed to the *Sambhogakāya*, glorified body, which is visible to the eyes of faith, and manifests itself to the community of *Bodhisattvas*. This glorified body is restricted to *Akaniṣṭha* Heaven and the *Tathāgata* is said to have preached the ultimate truth to the *Bodhisattvas* in this form of body.³

Mahāpurisa lakṣaṇas in the Pāli canon have been attributed to the Buddha who appeared on earth and lived eighty years as a human being. In *Sarvāstivāda* and *Mahāsāṅghika* texts the thirty-two marks are a possession of *Nirmānakāya*, that appeared on earth as Buddha Gotama. The principal difference of this *Mahāpurisa* concept in the Mahāyāna texts is that these characteristic marks of physical excellence have been possessed by the glorified body of the Buddha which has not appeared on earth and cannot be seen by human beings. Here the Mahayanists transferred the thirty-two major and eighty minor physical marks through the doctrine of *Trikāya* to the characterisation of the *Sambhogakāya* of the Buddha.

Secondly, as seen in *Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra*, characteristics of the Great Man have been attributed not only to the Buddha but also to the *Bodhisattvas* who are in heavenly worlds. This idea has been further developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the physical appearance of the *Bodhisattvas* have been formulated similar to that of the Buddha in relation to the thirty-two marks.

1. Transl. by D.T. Suzuki in *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p 265

2. *Vajraccedika Prajñāpāmitā*, ed. by Muller p 21

3. D.T. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*, p 257

"There are *Bodhisattvas* who are coursing in the six perfections, their bodies adorned with thirty-two marks of the Great Man, become endowed with the most excellent pure organs and who, therefore, become dear and pleasant to the many folk".¹

On the other hand it shows that there are many similarities in the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts with those of the Pali Canon regarding the subject of the *Mahāpurisa* idea and its characteristics. The attitude towards the physical body and its marks of excellence in the Pali Canon is that they are not to be considered as objects of veneration.

Samyutta Nikāya says: "No one can see the real qualities of the Buddha by seeing his physical marks. One who practises the Dhamma sees the Buddha."²

Apparently, *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* state very often that no one can see the Buddha by his thirty-two major and eighty minor signs of his body.

A passage from *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* discusses the subject as follows: "The Buddha: what do you think, Subhuti, can the *Tathāgata* be seen by the possession of his marks? Subhuti: No, indeed Sir, for what has been taught by the *Tathāgata* as the possession of marks, that is truly a no possession of no marks. The Buddha: Wherever there is a possession of marks, there is fraud, wherever there is possession of no marks, there is no fraud. Hence the *Tathāgata* is to be seen from no marks as marks."³

"The Buddha: What do you think, Subhuti, should the *Tathāgata* be seen by means of the thirty-two marks of the Great Man? Subhuti: No, indeed, Sir, because those thirty-two marks of the Great Man which were taught by the *Tathāgata* as no marks, have they been taught by the *Tathāgata*? Therefore, are they called the thirty- two marks of the Great Man?"⁴

As does the *Lakkhana Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the aspect of *Kar-masādrusatā*, the Doctrine of similarity between cause and effect, in relation to the possession of the marks of the Great Man has been taken into consideration by the Mahayana schools as well. The *Abhisamayāṅkārā* enumerates the thirty-two *lakṣhanas* and explains them and outlines both their cause and consequence. Conze points out: "it is of special interest as this section of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is probably the only surviving Sanskrit docu-

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1. Pancavinstisahasrika Prajñāpāramitā, Transl. by E. Conze, p 40
 2. *yo dhammam passati so mam passati* - S III p 120, M I. p 190
 3. Vajracchedikā, ta p 5
 4. Ibid p.5

ment which deals with this aspect of doctrine in some detail. It shows many similarities with the *Lakkhana Sutta*, and traditions on these matters must go back rather far because they seem to some extent also to have been shared by the Sarvastivadins".¹

It seems that the ethical aspect of the concept of the *Mahāpurisa* has gained similar interest in *Theravāda* and *Prajñāparamitā* literature; these texts proceed further, introduce the method of explaining cause and effect of each corresponding physical mark in the *Lakkhana sutta*, not only for thirty-two major signs, but also for each eighty minor characteristics.

If we examine the above references which clarify the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa*, there is general agreement in the different schools of Buddhism as to the concept and the attendant characteristics. But the controversy lies in the matter of their attribution to the body of the Buddha.

For Theravadins, Buddha was a man who possessed a human body. Although the nature of some marks are somewhat different to the ordinary human body, they are only extraordinary qualities of the physical body of the Buddha who is also called *Mahāpurisa*. However, these marks had been a matter for dispute even in the *Theravāda* tradition in later periods, yet it has retained its original concept.

In Mahayana Buddhism as a result of the development of the idea of *Buddhakāya* this concept of the *Mahāpurisa* is applied to different forms of bodies of the Buddha. As D.T. Suzuki points out, the development of the *Trikāya* concept distinguished by separating the human form of the Buddha from these physical marks and attributed them to the glorified body alone with all the other superhuman qualities.

Suzuki says: A process of mystifying or deifying the person of the Buddha seems to have been going on immediately after the death of the Master; and the Mahayanistic conception of *Nirmanakāya* and *Sambhogakāya* is merely the consummation of this process. Southern Buddhists who are sometimes supposed to represent a more "primitive" form of Buddhism describe just as much as Mahayanists the thirty-two major and minor physical marks of a Great Man as having been possessed by the Sakyammuni². But the remarkable difference in these two traditions is that the thirty-two marks of the Buddha in Mahayana works are the signs of his 'divine nature' and in the *Theravāda* tradition they are still extraordinary physical qualities of an excellent human body. Since the *lakkhanas* became superhuman signs of the

1. Journal of Oriental Institute of Barado, Vol. 14, p 64-65

2. Suzuki, D.T. Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism p 272

body of the Buddha. Mahāyanists seem to have abandoned the traditional way of portraying the human Buddha with those 'divine' signs. They transferred them through the doctrine of the *Trikaya* to characterize the *Sambhogakāya* Buddha, that is the Buddha enjoying a celestial abode, the fruit of his virtuous earthly life.

The above discussion brings one to the conclusion that the Buddha was a human being, living on earth as the Theravada tradition clearly reveals. As a result of the intensive elaboration and ramification of the concept of the Buddha, by neglecting the mortal aspect, it underwent a great change in the course of the development of Mahayana thought, probably owing to the impact of contemporary religio-philosophical thought in India. Now it is quite reasonable to believe that the attribution of the *Mahāpurisa lakṣhanas* in Theravada tradition to the body of the Buddha was neither to deify him nor to make him a supernatural person but to emphasise morality and the uniqueness of the attainment of Buddhahood.

The Mahāpurisa as Buddha and Cakkavatti

The secular counterpart of the Mahapurisa concept in Buddhist literature is *Cakkavatti*, (Sanskrit, *Cakravartin*) or Universal Monarch. The word itself means 'turner of the wheel'¹. According to Rhys Davids 'he who sets the rolling wheel is called *Cakkavatti*'². Taking the Sanskrit term '*Cakravartin*', Monier Williams explains it as a ruler, the wheel (*cakra*) of whose chariot rolls everywhere without obstruction; emperor; sovereign rule of a *cakra*, i.e. a country extending from sea to sea³. It is also explained in another way; 'a disc (*Cakra*) - the sign of the god Visnu - is to be found among the marks of all *Cakravartins*; and such a ruler is one whose powers cannot be withstood even by gods'⁴.

The original meaning of the term *cakra* is wheel or circle⁵. It has been used in the Vedic literature in the sense of the wheel of the chariot of the sun, which is the visible representation of the year and the time in general⁶. Sometimes the word *cakra* is used to denote the whole world including all living beings in it. The *Rgveda*, for example, compares the two worlds with two wheels⁷. All worlds and all beings, according to the *Atharva Veda*, are called wheels⁸. Again the *Rgveda* mentions a wheel of dominion, the controller of which is said to be *Indra*, the popular god of the Vedic Aryans⁹. Thus it seems that in the *Samhitā* literature the word *cakra* bears two important meanings, one is mythological and the other is socio-political. But it is interesting to note that until the *Maitrayani Upanisad*¹⁰, which is supposed to be post-Buddhistic, the word *Cakravartin* does not occur in the Vedic literature.

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1. DPPN, Vol II, p 1343
 2. PTSD, p 89
 3. Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dictionary-Cakra
 4. H.H. Wilson, translation of Visnu-Purana, I.p. 189
 5. ERE. III. p 336
 6. Rg. 1, 121, 13; 130, 9; 175, 4; 174, 5; 4, 28,2,5,291,10
 7. Ibid. 6,24,3
 8. AV. 19, 53,1
 9. Rg, 10, 93, 9; 8,63,8
 10. Maitrāyani Upanisad, 1.4.

Origin of the Cakkavatti Concept

Several attempts have been made by scholars to explain the origin of this important concept of *Cakkavatti*, but no agreement has been reached as to the nature of the *Cakkavatti*'s character or to the symbolism of the *cakra* which is the most significant emblem of his seven precious possessions or *Satta-ratana*.

H.H. Wilson has explained this term as "he who abides in (*vrtate*) or rules over an extensive territory called *cakra*¹. Jacobi agreeing with Wilson's view regarding the interpretation of the term *vartin*, points out that the meaning which Wilson gives to *cakra* is not found in ancient Sanskrit literature, though it is mentioned in Indian lexicography.² He takes *cakra* in its original sense to mean a circle and equates it with political mandala, as found in *Manu*³ and the *Kamandaki-Nītisāstra*⁴. But Wijesekera points out that this notion of *cakra* is post-Buddhistic and therefore cannot have been the basis of the symbolism of the *Cakravartin*⁵. Moreover, H.C. Kern explains *vartin* as *vartayat* - he who rules⁶. Dealing with the same subject in his 'Essai sur le legend du Buddha' E. Senart suggests a completely different interpretation. According to him *Cakravartin* means one who owns a *Cakravala*, a term which he derives from *Cakravāta*⁷. But it should be noted that the term *Cakravṛta* occurs neither in Sanskrit nor in Prakrit literature. However at the end of his study he changes his view, supporting the theory put forward by Lassen, that the *Cakravartin* is the Sun-god who sets the adorable wheel in motion across space.⁸ T.W. Rhys Davids also seems to have supported this

1. Op. cit. p 189

2. Op. cit. p 189

3. Manu. VII. 156 ff

4. Ibid VII 156ff

5. Prof. O.H. DE A. Wijesekera, Belvalker Felicitation Volume ed. R. Radhakrisnan, 1957, p 264f

6. H.C. Kern, Der Buddhism I. p 27

7. Op. cit. p 6, 17

8. Op. cit. p 190

view by translating the term *Cakkavatti* as 'a king of the rolling wheel to be a disc of the sun'¹. Wijesekara takes 'vartin' to be the strengthened (*guna*) from *vrt* with primary agent suffix *in* added. He concludes, that this term originally meant to be 'one who turns or rolls' and translates the compound (*cakra-vrt-in*) as turner of the *cakra* or wielder of the *cakra*. Further he compares this with a parallel Pali form *vasavatti* meaning wielder of powers². This last-mentioned interpretation seems to be the most appropriate one when considering the real significance of the *cakkavatti* concept, in Buddhist tradition. Buddhaghosa defines the term *cakkavatti* as the wielder of the wheel who turns the wheel for the happiness of others and whose actions and behaviour are directed for the benefit of others³.

However, several views have been adduced, regarding the origin of the concept of the *Cakkavatti*. In spite of the usage of the term in Buddhist texts it is difficult to state with certainty when this term was first used to designate Universal Monarch. Apart from the *Maitrāyani Upaniśad*⁴, the term has been employed in Indian literature from ancient times. The *Mahābhārata* gives a list of the sixteen great kings (*Cakravartins*) as *soḍasa rājas*, in Drona and Santi Parvas⁵. Many of the *Puranas* speak of a number of *Cakkavattins*. The *Vishnu-Purāna*⁶ says that Brahma saw in the *Cakravarti* Prthu Vainyu's hand, the *cakra* sign of Visnu as found in every *Cakravartin*. As stated in the *Bhagavata-Purāna*⁷ it is *Vishnu* who presents him with the *sudarśanacakra* at his coronation. While describing a *Cakkavatti* emperor the *Matsya-Purāna*⁸ and the *Vayu-Purāna*⁹ supply a detailed description of *Cakravartins*.

It is interesting to note that the legendary account of the birth of *Parśvanāta* in the Jaina *Kalpasūtra*, which is one of the important texts in

1. Dial. II p 202

2. Op. cit. p 263f

3. *Cakkaratanam vatteti catuhi sampatti cakkehi vattati tehi ca parivattenti parahitāyaca iriyāpatha cakkam vatto etasnim atthihi ca cakkavatti. DAll p635*

4. Maitrayani-Upanisad, p 1.4

5. Mahābhārata, ed. P.L. Vaidya. Poona 1968, 13.14.133

6. Visnu-Purāna I, p 183

7. Bhagavata-Purāna, Book IV Ch XV, XVI

8. Matsya-Purana Ch. 57

9. Vayu-Purāna Ch. 57

the Jaina canon, describes the appearance of a Universal Monarch. This makes it clear that the idea of the Universal Ruler or *Cakkavatti*, is not unknown even to the Jains.

However, this concept of *Cakkavatti* could not have sprung all at once in Indian thought. There is no consensus of opinion regarding the chronology of the Pali *suttas* which deal with the idea of *Cakkavatti* in Buddhist literature. Rhys Davids believes that the *Mahāsudassana* and the *Cakkavattisihanāda suttas*, which provide detailed characteristics and possessions of the universal monarch, belong to a period in which "most ancient Buddhist documents"² were compiled. But most of the scholars who have made some observations on the idea of *cakravartin* hold that the history of the *Cakravartin* does not go beyond the time of the Mauryan kings, especially that of Asoka. Kern says 'that the concept of *Cakravartin* is unknown during the time of Asoka or prior to it and that it has been created by the Buddhist monk who based it on his life in order to flatter him'³. W. Hopkin also holds the same view and says that the concept of an universal monarch is post-Asokan.⁴ Basham also is of the opinion that the Buddha's idea of the *Cakravartin* is post-Asokan and that it was not the *Cakkavattisihanāda sutta*, "probably the oldest occurrence of the cakkavatti concept" which influenced Asoka to shape his political ideology, but it was Asoka who gave rise to the idea of *Cakravartin* in Buddhism. The *Cakkavattisihanāda sutta* as he views "it is of late origin"⁵. It is true that Asoka was the first king who not only attempted to bring the ideal kingship described in Buddhist literature into reality, but also to glorify this idea. But it is quite difficult to accept the view put forward by scholars, that the Buddhist *Cakkavatti* ideas is an Asokan concept, because the idea of the universal monarch runs far back into antiquity⁶. Zimmer says "this conception of *Mahāpurisa cakravartin*", the superman turning the wheel", goes back

1. Kalpasutra, SBE, Vol. XXII, p 246, 47

2. ERE. XII p 736

3. Kern, J.H.C. Asoka, Bern, 1956. p 34

4. Hopkin, W. Great Epic of India, New York, 1901 p 396

5. Basham A.L. The Wonder that was India, London 1954 - p 84

6. Dialogues of the Buddha, Vol. III, p 132T

not only to the earliest vedic, but also to pre-vedic, pre Aryan traditions of India, being reflected in various Buddhist and Jaina writings as well as the Hindu *Purānas*¹. Although the *Cakravartin* is not found in pre-Buddhistic literature one can trace similar epithets even in the political ideas of Babylonia or Persia. Benjamin Walker is much more explicit on this point when he says "with the coming of Persians, Greeks, Sakas and Kusanas², the notion of the divinity of kings received further emphasis. The *Rajā* 'ruler' or '*Nrpati* 'men-lord' of ancient times became the *Mahārāja* 'great ruler'. *Bhūpati* 'earth ruler', or *Bhūpāla* 'earth guardian'. On the Persian model he began by calling himself *Rājādhirāja* 'king of kings', *Mahārājādhirāja* 'great king of kings' or Supreme Lord. Exalted titles were bestowed on him after solemn rites, likening his status to the shape of heaven. After the *Vājapeyya* sacrifice he was hailed as *Sāmrāj* (or *Sāmarāt*), universal monarch and after the *Aśvamedha*, he was given the title of *Cakravartin* (wheel moving) ruler over all the territories which his chariot wheels had traversed. The king ruled by the right of *Digvijayin* or was sovereign of the four quaters. Sometimes titular legality was added to such conquests by referring to him as a *Dhammavijayin* 'moral conqueror'³.

Now, if the idea of *Cakravartin* is connected somehow or other with the political ideas of the early Persians, then there is no point in arguing that the concept of the *Cakravartin* is borrowed by the Buddhists from the reign of Asoka. However, there seems to be another possible factor accounting for the origin of the concept of the *Cakravartin* or Universal ruler, far back to the early Vedic period. Apte points out that "In Rg. Veda we meet the expression *Sāmrāj* (*Samrat*) which would mean an emperor in later periods denoting the idea of Universal Monarch (*Viśvaśya bhuvanaśyarājā*)"⁴ Origin of this term (*sāmrāt*) has been applied to Indra and to Varuna who have both played an important role in Vedic mythology. It appears that the idea of the universal ruler was in vogue even during the Vedic age, and its

1. Zimmer H. *Philosophies of India*, New York, 1951, p 129

2. The writer does not agree with this account in so far as the names of the Saka and Kusāna kings are added to the list of the Persian and the Greek kings, because during the time of the Sakas and the Kusanas the idea of the *Cakravartin* in India was a historical fact supported by the reign of Asoka

3. *Hindu World*, Vol. I p 550f.

4. Apte, V.M., *Vedic Age*, ed. R.C. Majumdar, London 1951 p 359

origin could be traced back to some of the most important atmospheric gods such as Aditya, Indra and Varuna.

It has been accepted by many scholars that the *Cakkavatti* concept is based on the early sun myth. E. Senart in his 'Essai sur le legend du Buddha' puts forward this view that "the origin of Cakkavatti can be traced back to the sun god"¹ T.W. Rhys Davids in his translation of the *Mahāsusdassana sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya* endorsing Senart's view² adds as follows: "distinguishing marks of a king of kings (*Cakkavattī*) are particularly interesting as being compounded of the ancient and half forgotten poetry of the sun-myth and of the new and powerful ethic of Buddhism"³. However Mrs. Rhys Davids does not seem to be fully in agreement with the idea that *Cakkavatti* is the sun god who sets his adorable wheel in motion across space. On the subject of the origin of this concept, she says "we must by no means give all the credit to the sun as suggesting a wheel"⁴ and further adds that the *cakra* here implies "the progressive discus, rolling on as well as round, symbols of the procession of cosmic force or the advance of an aggressive conqueror"⁵. Referring to this view Wijesekara writes "by cosmic force she presumably refers to the cyclic movement of nature, such as those of the year, seasons, and months, and by advance of an aggressive conqueror, she obviously alludes to the war-chariot of a victorious monarch in its militaristic progress."⁶ Considering all the above views put forward by other scholars, Wijesekara concludes that the *Cakkavatti* of Buddhist literature can be traced back to the Rgvedic god Indra, who is often referred to as the wielder of the *cakra*. It is clear that Wijesekara has come to this conclusion, mainly because of the function of the *cakra* of Indra, which is one of the major symbols of the *Cakkavatti*. But when one examines the overall characteristics of the *Cakkavatti* one can argue that the attributes of the *Cakkavatti* can be traced not only to Indra but also to some other important Vedic gods. On the other hand Nanayakkara states that the concept of the *Cakkavatti* can be assigned to Varuna, where the main characteristics are more akin to that of the Buddhist *Cakkavatti*⁷. "Indra falls into the category of a conquering type and he attains Universal sovereignty not by

1. Op. cit. p 11

2. Dial. II, p 202, n. 3 & 4

3. Hibbbbert Lectures p.131

4. Mrs Rhys Davids - Wayfarer's words. London, 1917, II, p 549

5. Ibid. p 540

6. Op. cit p 263

7. EB, III 4, p 593

right but by might and power subduing his force by fierce means. Thus it is very difficult to see a similarity between this concept and that of the Buddhist *Cakkavatti*. At the outset it should be noted that the *cakra* of Indra is a dreadful weapon, whereas that of the *Cakkavattis* mentioned in Buddhist literature is the wheel of righteousness. However one can assume that the conquering character of Indra had been adjusted to suit Buddhist ethics, some other pre-Buddhistic concepts had been adapted in Buddhist literature.

On the other hand the connection between Varuna and the *Cakkavati* can be noticed as being closer than that with Indra. Varuna is upholder of the physical and moral order, and is the king of both men and gods¹. The title *Sāmrāj* is applied to him more often than to Indra². The most prominent feature of the *Cakkavatti* as mentioned in Buddhist literature is his righteousness³. Varuna as the Lord of the world is said to have placed the sun in the sky and also said to have prepared a path for it to roll on (*cakkam vatteti*). These and many other similarities can be taken into consideration to relate Varuna to the Buddhist concept of the *Cakkavatti* rather than Indra. In the light of the above discussion, we may assume that it is difficult to assign the origin of the Buddhist concept of the *Cakkavatti* to any one Vedic God and that it lies in several mythical concepts in pre-Buddhistic literature. However, the Buddhist *Cakkavatti* idea is a combination of symbolical, ethical, political and physiognomical features, which had been attributed to an ideal ruler in ancient Indian culture and society. Such interaction of ideas took place in the process of its cultural evolution. The warlike Indra of the *Rgveda* has undergone a transformation, in Pali texts, into a pious and forbearing follower of the Buddha⁴. Similarly the characteristic of the original frightening character was transformed into a king of righteousness in the Pali *suttas*. At first *cakra* symbolised the war chariot, and later was recognised as a weapon of war⁵. It ultimately became a divine symbol of victory of a righteous and pious king who observed the eight precepts of the *Uposatha*⁶.

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1. Vedic age, p 365
 2. Rgveda, XI L32.4, II.27.10
 3. A.I. p 109
 4. A.I. p 143
 5. Rgveda, II, 11.20
 6. D.II, p 172

Characteristic features of the Cakkavatti

In Buddhist texts, particularly in early *Nikāyas* and the *Lalitavistara* and *Mahāvastu* the legend of the *Cakkavatti* and his characteristic features and possessions are described in great detail. There are certain stock epithets used to describe the special qualities of the *Cakkavatti* in the Pali Canon.

"*Dhammiko dhammarājā* (king of righteousness), *cāturanto vijitāvī* (conqueror of the four quarters of the world), *jaññapaḍaḥhāvāriyappatto* (has given stability of his domains), *sattaratana-samannāgato* (possessor of seven treasures), *parosahassam puttā sūrā vīraṅgarūpa parasenappamaddanā* (has a thousand sons, clever, energetic and able to destroy hostile armies), *so imaṃ paṭhavim sāgarapariyantān adandena asatthena dhammena abhivijīya ajjhāvasati* (the ruler of dominions surrounded by oceans without recourse to punishments and weapons of war, makes conquest and rules justly)".¹

Dhammiko dhammarājā

Among those qualities righteousness is the foundation of the rule of the *Cakkavatti*. Once the Buddha explained to the monks, how it came to be that a *Cakkavatti* was called *Dhammarājā* - the king of righteousness.²

"Bhikkus, a king who is a world monarch, a just and righteous ruler, in dependence on Dhamma, as his standard, with Dhamma as his overlord keeps constant watch and ward amongst the warriors, amongst Brahmanas, and householders, dwellers in outlying parts, amongst recluses, beasts, and birds alike"³. Buddhaghosa comments on the term '*Dhammiko dhammarājā*'; *dhammo assa atthi dhammiko, dasavidha-cakkavatti vattivattena rājā jāto dhammarājā* - he who inherits the righteousness and rules according to the tenfold principles of the *Cakkavatti*⁴. The commentary does not explain what those tenfold *Cakkavatti* duties are. *Dharmapradīpikā* which is a Sinhalese glossary based on Pāli and early Sanskrit sources (12th A.D.), enumerates

1. D.II, p 16, III, p 142, M.II, p 124

2. A.I. p 109

3. Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikaya translation) I. P 94

4. AA. I, p 78 MA III p 635

ten Cakkavatti duties.

- (I) Provide right watch, ward and protection for thy own folk
 (II) " " " " " " " " " army
 (III) " " " " " " " " " nobles
 (IV) " " " " " " " " vassals
 (V) " " " " " " " " Brahmins and
 householders
 (VI) " " " " " " " " town and country
 folk
 (VII) " " " " " " " " recluse and
 Brahmin priests
 (VIII) " " " " " " " " beasts and birds
 (IX) Throughout thy kingdom let no wrong-doing prevail
 (X) Whosoever in thy kingdom is poor, to him let wealth be given

It is noteworthy that the idea of the tenfold duties of the *Cakkavatti* king (*dasa Cakkavatti vattāni*) really originated in the above mentioned *sutta* in *Anguttara Nikāya*. As the notion of the Universal Kingship developed in later times, these duties were clarified under ten headings - ten being one of the most popular classificatory figures in the religious thoughts of the past.

The Aryan duty of a *Cakkavatti* (*ariyam cakkavatti vattam*) is mentioned in the *CakkavattiSīhanada Sutta*² as *Dhamma*, the law of righteousness. Further the *Mahāsudassana sutta* also points out how he should rule the kingdom in accordance with the law by his superior righteousness³. Trevor Ling rightly elucidates this term "*dhammiko dhammarājā*" as "It is this which gives his rule a unique quality in so far as he rules in accordance with the universal dhamma; his rule itself has a quality of universalism⁴."

1. Dharmapradipikā, ed by Sri Dharmarama Thero, 1951, Sri Lanka, p 302

2. D. III p 61

3. D. III, p 57

4. Trevor Ling - The Buddha - (Pelican) 1976, p 178

Caturanto vijitāvi. This characteristic feature implies the conquering nature of the *Cakkavatti*. It is noteworthy that the Buddhist *Cakkavatti* conquers the world not by the sword but by righteousness¹. Buddhaghosa defines the word *vijitāvi* as "won the battle"² but does not explain the nature of the battle. However, the *Mahāsudassana* and the *Cakkavattisīhanāda suttas* describe how the 'king of the rolling wheel' conquers all four quarters of the world³. Buddhaghosa's commentary takes, the four quarters as four continents of the world: i.e. *Pubbavideha*, *Jambudīpa*, *Aparagoyāna*, and *Uttarakuru*.⁴ These are often mentioned in the passages on cosmology in the Buddhist texts.⁵

Janapadathāvariyaappatto

Rhys Davids translates this term as the guardian of the people's good. The word *thāvariya* means stability⁶. Therefore, the more appropriate meaning is guardian or protector of law and order in the domain. The commentary explains that he is neither too strong nor too soft but very firm in his administration.⁷

Sattaratanasamannagato

"Proseessor of the seven treasures" is also another important epithet of the *Cakkavatti*. Buddhist tradition is unique and coherent as regards the seven precious (*ratana*) objects that are possessed by a *Cakravartin*. Pali texts list them as follows:

- I. *Cakkaratana* (the wheel)
- II. *Hatthiratana* (elephant)

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1. *Adandena asatthena*
 2. AA. IV p 45
 3. D. III, p 163
 4. BVA. p 113
 5. DPPN Vol. I. p 117, 355, 941, Vol. II, p 236
 6. DI p 89
 7. AA, IV P 46

- III. *Assaratana* (horse)
- IV. *Maniratana* (jewel)
- V. *Itthiratana* (the queen)
- VI. *Gahapatiratana* (the chamberlain)
- VII. *Parināyakarātana* (the counsellor)¹

Although it appears in Pāli literature, the tradition relating to the list of seven precious objects (*ratna*), is perhaps older². The word *ratna* has several meanings, such as jewel, gift, treasure, precious stone, etc³. McDonell and Keith point out that *ratna* in the *Rgveda*⁴ and later denotes a precious object, not specifically a jewel, as in post-Vedic literature⁵. According to McDonell, the idea of *Saptaratana* goes back to great antiquity. He quotes a hymn from the *Rgveda* (*dhamme, dhame sapta ratna dadhāna*⁶) and relates a stanza (sloka) from Brhaddevatā (c. 400B.C.) which enumerates seven jewels, as the earliest Brahminical reference to them as those of a *Cakravartin*⁷. Whether it means the same or not, it is quite clear that the expression of *saptaratana* is Vedic. Although there is no clear evidence that these seven treasures have been attributed to any divine or human character in the *Rgveda*, the origins of the seven treasures in the Buddhist texts might have come from an early Indian tradition.

The *Cakka* (wheel) undoubtedly is the most important object of all the seven treasures, because the emergence of this is the first and foremost indication that a king has become a universal monarch. According to the Pāli expositions, the wheel makes its glorious and graceful appearance on the pleasant evening of a full moon day, as the king's merit reaches its zenith. On the command of the monarch, the great wheel starts on its mission and the conquest of the world begins. From the time the *Cakkarātana* appears,

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- 1. D. II p 16. III p 143
 - 2. Nilakanthasastri - New Indian Antiquary 3, 1940-41 p 309
 - 3. Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dict. *ratna*
 - 4. *Rgveda* - 1, 20, 7; 35,8; 14,6; *Atharvaveda*: v. 17 Satapata- Brahmana V. 31
 - 5. Vedic Index. II 199 Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dict. *ratna*
 - 6. *Rgveda* - VI 74.1
 - 7. Brhaddevatā trans. by McDonnell p 198

the monarch concerned is entitled to be designated - the sovereign mover of the wheel, and along with his retinue he follows it through the sky. Wherever the wheel goes, the kings of those regions pay homage to it and accept the suzerainty of the Universal Monarch. Having thus travelled the four quarters of the earth, it returns to the *Cakkavatti's* capital and remains fixed as an ornament on the open terrace in front of his inner apartments.¹

The *Bālapandita sutta* depicts a *cakka* as a symbol of the divine authority and power of the *cakkavatti* king where the *cakka* was anointed by him with the hope that it would win for him by its power all the regions surrounded by the ocean². The *Mahāvastu*³ and the *Lalitavistara*⁴ giving a more mythical colouring to the appearance of the wheel, describes it as a "miraculous, circular object shining like the orb of the newly risen sun".

The form of the *Cakkaratana* is characterised in the *Mahasudassana sutta* as follows:

*Dibbam cakka-ratanam pātubhavati saḥassarānam sanemikāṃ sanābhikam sabbākaraparipunnam*⁵.

"Divine wheel of the universal monarch, bears a nave of one thousand spokes and a felly. It is perfect in every respect."

The commentaries contain lengthy descriptions of the *cakkaratana*: it is shaped like a wheel, its nave is of sapphire, the centre of which shines like the orb of the moon and round it is a band of silver. It has one thousand spokes, each ornamented with various decorations; its tyre is of bright coral; within every tenth spoke is a coral staff, hollow inside; it produces the sound of the fivefold musical instruments when blown upon by the wind. On the staff is a white parasol, on either side of which are festoons of flowers. When the wheel moves, it appears like three wheels, moving one within the other⁶.

The *Bālapandita sutta* has personified the *cakkaratana*⁷. It is said that on the arrival of the *cakka* the king approaches it with a ceremonial vessel, *bhinkāra*, and anoints it, saying "O honourable treasure of the wheel, may

1. D.II p 173f, M.III p 173f

2. M.III p 172

3. MV. I. p 108, 9f

4. LV. p 105

5. D.II p 173

6. DA. II p 617ff, MA II p 942 ff

7. M.III p 172

your Honour excel in conquest". In doing so, the king treated the *cakka* as a divinity. In support of the above account, the *Madhuratthavilāsinī* mentions that when the *cakka* of the universal king Sunanda descended to earth at the appearance of the Mangala Buddha the king bowed before it in veneration and entreated it not to disappear as if he had paid his respects to the new Buddha¹. The *cakka* is said to have remained on earth accordingly. Although the above anecdote confirms that the *cakka* was a personified divinity, the story of Dalhameni² shows its relation to the Buddhist ethical approach to the universal monarchy. This *sutta* emphasises that the appearance or disappearance of the *cakka* depends upon the fulfilment of the duties of the *cakkavatti*. When Dalhameni left the throne to his eldest son and retired to a hermitage, the divine wheel disappeared from view. Consoling the new king for his loss, a hermit observed that the celestial wheel was not his paternal heritage (*pettikam dayajjam*), but that it might manifest itself to him if he observed the Aryan duty of a *Cakkavatti*³. When he followed the line of conduct explained by the hermit, the *cakkaratana* reappeared.

As we examined the significance of the wheel, as one of the seven treasures of the *Cakkavatti*, we can assume that, while the *cakka* was originally only a symbol of victory, the Buddhists gave it an ethical colouring. Therefore, the *cakka* mentioned in the *suttas* was a symbol of righteousness rather than of war.

Next to the *cakka* comes the elephant as the object of the seven treasures. The *Mahāsudassana sutta* gives an account of an elephant all in white (*sabbeseta*), sevenfold firm (*sattapatiṭṭhā*), wonderful in power⁴. Its commentary adds that it is either the youngest of the *chaddhanta kula* or the eldest of the *uposatha kula*⁵. In the *Mahāvastu*, *hatthiratana* is described as one of the glorious possessions of the *Cakkavartin* and is obtained by him in consequence of his altruistic activities in former existences⁶. When the king mounted it in the early morning, it passed over the broad earth to its very

1. BVA. p 146f

2. D. III p 60

3. D. III p 59f

4. D. II. p 174

5. DA II. p 625

6. MV. I p 108

ocean boundary and then returned again in time for the morning meal to the mansion.¹

The third treasure is represented by the miraculous horse. The horse, like the elephant of the *Cakkavatti*, can fly through the air. It is all white with a crow black head and a dark mane, and comes from the *Valāhaka kula*². The *Cakkavatti* possesses *assaratana* as the good result of waiting upon his parents and teachers in the past.³

The fourth in the list is the jewel which denotes a marvellous precious stone belonging to the kind of *veluriya* (cat's eye gem). It is bright, of the finest species with eight facets, excellently wrought, clear, transparent, perfect in every way⁴. It is said that the bright effluence of the *Cakkavatti's maniratana* shines like the day-time in the dark,⁵ but according to the *Milindapañha*, the *Cakkavatti* possesses different kinds of precious jewels. In addition to the traditional account of the *maniratana*, the *Milindapañha* describes that the *Cakkavatti* has a water clearing gem. When he cast it into the water, the various water plants would disappear, the mud subside, and the water become clear, pure and serene⁶. It is not certain that the above account refers to a different jewel or the same *maniratana*.

The fifth treasure is the consort who is won by him as a token of his having been temperate in the past.⁷ The treasure of the consort is elucidated in various Buddhist works of ancient tradition by presenting a unique description of an ideal woman; graceful in figure, beautiful in appearance, charming in manner, and of the most fine complexion; neither very tall, nor very short, neither very stout, nor very slim; neither very dark, nor very fair; of surpassing beauty she had attained unto the beauty of the god⁸.

The sixth jewel, the minister or treasurer (*gahapati*), signifies the great inexhaustive merit earned by the *Cakkavatti* through generosity in his former lives. He represents an actual treasure, of course, as his eyes are capable of

1. D. II. p 174

2. D. II p 175

3. MV. I p 109

4. D. II p 174

5. DA. II p 626

6. Mil. p 36

7. MV. I. p 109

8. D. II p 175

penetrating into hidden treasure of the earth and thus he reveals them to the king¹.

As he has helped the helpless, the *Cakkavatti* gets the counsellor (*parināyaka*) a wise statesman, as the final treasure. He is prudent and circumspect and helps the *Cakkavatti* in matters of administration². The *Milindapañha* provides more details on his career as the counsellor.

"The adviser-treasure of a wheel-turning king shows what is beneficial and what is detrimental for the king and thinks: these are beneficial for the king and these detrimental, these are helpful and these are unhelpful, and then removes what is detrimental and takes up what is beneficial, removes what is unhelpful and takes up what is helpful"³.

The commentaries and later Buddhist works ascribe this post to the *Cakkavatti's* eldest son⁴, who has been destined to succeed the king and has possessed some of the qualities in common with the *Cakkavatti*⁵.

Of these seven treasures (*sattaratana*) three *ratanas* can be regarded as emphasising the warlike nature of the *Cakkavatti*, i.e. treasures of the wheel (*cakkaratana*), elephant (*hatthiratana*), and horse (*assaratana*). The army consisted of four groups: chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry, corresponding to each one of these is a treasure belonging to the invincible aspect of the *Cakkavatti* in its original form. The four *ratanas* are, in fact, symbolic of the fourfold division. Heinrich Zimmer⁶ was of the opinion that "the elephant symbolised the white elephant of the pre-Aryan invaders." He says further with reference to the Asvamedha: "When a king, in those remote times wishes to declare himself a paramount sovereign, he would do so by letting loose a perfect specimen of a horse - one fit to be offered in the most solemn rite of the horse sacrifice Asvamedha". According to Zimmer, the horse symbolised not only the war-like nature but the unquestionable supremacy of sovereignty⁷. But unlike the wheel, the elephant and the horse, the gem (*maniratana*) the fourth treasure of the *Cakkavatti*, has no significance of

1. D. II p 176

2. D. II p 17

3. Mil. p 38

4. DA. II p 628

5. A. III p 114

6. H. Zimmer - Philosophies of India, p 130f

7. Ibid. p 134

military importance. However, it may, perhaps, represent the ability to overcome enemies and acquire wealth through conquest, which seems to be more logical to attribute such possession to a world-conquering *Cakkavatti*. This gives a clue with regard to the affinities of the two main types of *manis*, namely *maniratana* and *cintāmani*¹. It says that the king kept the *maniratana* at the top of his standard (*dhajagga*) when he paraded with his army. The *Dhajagga sutta*², which was used by Buddhists as a protective formula (*Paritta*) against evil, elaborates on the magical power of the *dhajagga*. Sakka is said to have advised his army, whenever they were frightened or dismayed in battle, to keep their eyes on the top of the standard for inspiration. The *Bālapandita sutta* also says that the *mani* was placed on the standard. "Mani is likened in the Rgveda (1.33.8) and later works to a 'jewel' which has been used as an amulet against all kinds of evil", say Keith and MacDonnel³. The *mani* mentioned in the *sutta* was also a magical one and it was kept on the top of the standard, *Dhajagga*, in order to ward off enemies in battle.

The *Mahāvamsa*, the chronicle of Sri Lanka, mentions that King Dutthagamini placed relics of the Buddha in a mace (*Kunta*) which was carried at the head of his army⁴. All this shows that it was customary to carry secret talismans when marching into battle as a means of imparting magical and supernormal power over the enemy and to give the army courage. Belief in such aids was common in ancient India. In the *Raghuvamsa*, Kalidasa says that the magic of *Vasistha* prevented his enemies from coming before King Dilipa. Here, too, it is reasonable to infer that the *mani* was a talisman that was carried at the top of the *Cakkavatti's* standard as a means of protection from the enemy. The original purpose which the *mani* served, seems to be forgotten by the compiler of the *sutta*. Its use in leading the army strengthens the war-like nature of the pre-Buddhist-Aryan *Cakkavatti*.

The *Papañcasūdanī*⁵ interprets the seven treasures as being symbolic of:

- (i) energy (*ussāha*)
- (ii) suzerainty (*pabhā*)
- (iii) wisdom (*manta*)

1. Mil. p 36

2. S.I. p 218

3. Bloomfield, Verdic Concordance Sv. *Mani*

4. Mahavansa Ch. XXVI

5. MA. III p 366

It explains that the *cakka* symbolised the power of vigour - *ussaha-satti*; *hatthi*, *assa* and *gahapati* symbolised the power of suzerainty - *pabha-satti*; *parināyaka* shows the power of wisdom - *manta-satti*; and together with *itthi* and *mani* represent the three powers. The commentary further describes the *kammas* by which they were produced. The *ratanas* referred to above have no ethical value as far as their historical development is concerned. The first four *ratanas* symbolise the conquering power of the *Cakkavatti*, while the others represent wealth, happiness and wisdom. It may, therefore, be assumed that the idea of *ratanas* originated and developed in socio-political atmosphere. The list of *ratanas* changed and their number increased later on in non-Buddhistic literary works such as *Brhad-devata*¹ (c. 400 B.C.), *Markandeyapurāna*² and *Trisāstīśataka puruṣa carita*³. Their developments also reveal the socio-political origin of the *ratanas*.

Four gifts of the Cakkavatti:

The *Cakkavatti* has also four other gifts (*iddhi*) which are not common to other men⁴. Firstly, he is graceful in figure, pleasing in manner and most beautiful in complexion. Secondly, he has a life longer than that of the others. Thirdly, he is free from disease and physical suffering, his internal gastric which was neither too hot nor too cold promoted digestion. The fourth one is his immense popularity among all classes of his subjects.

Regarding the administration of the *Cakkavatti*, the Buddhist texts provide us with sufficient evidence. He is said to have ruled the empire not with the help of the weapons and penalties, but with eternal universal laws (*Dhamma*). Thus a *Cakkavatti* had to provide the right watch and ward and

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1. The Brhad-devatā gives seven ratanas: (i) wheel, (ii) cart, (iii) jewel, (iv) consort (v) treasure (bhūmi), (vi) horse, (vii) elephant.
 2. The Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna gives fourteen ratanas: (i) elephant, (ii) horse, (iii) cart, (iv) wife, (v) arrow, (vi) treasure, (vii) wealth, (viii) garment (ix) tree, (x) javelin, (xi) noose, (xii) gem, (xiii) parasol, (xiv) vimāna.
 3. The Trisāstīśatakapurūṣacarita (Jains) gives fourteen ratanas: (i) cakra, (ii) parasol, (iii) sword, (iv) rod, (v) cowrie (vi) piece of leather, (vii) gem, (viii) nine ratnas, (ix) general, (x) steward, (xi) purohito, (xii) architect, (xiii) elephant, (xiv) horse.
 4. D.II. p 177

protection (*dhammikam rakkhāvaranaguttim*) for all, and prevent wrongdoing (*adhamma*). He has to advise his subjects regarding right and wrong, what is to be done and what is to be left undone, thus deterring them from evil.

The original idea of the kingdom of the *Cakkavatti* is that he rules the dominions surrounded by oceans, which means he is the ruler of the world. In later literature, different kinds of *Cakkavattin* are mentioned. They are *Cakkavata* or *Caturanta*, *Cakkavatti* (ruling over the four continents), *Dīpa-Cakkavatti* (ruling over one continent) and *Padesa Cakkavatti* (ruling over part of one continent)¹.

Cakkavatti and Buddha

Every epithet used for a *Cakkavatti* can also be applied to the Buddha. The Brahman Sela² who examined the bodily marks of the Buddha said: "O Gotama, thou hast the markings of a *Cakkavatti* king who would "roll and wheel" in conquest of the four quarters of the earth and rule justly".³

The Buddha replied: "Truly, Sela, I am a king, but my realm is the Dhamma which has no peer. I roll a wheel of the Dhamma, the wheel that cannot roll backwards"⁴. The Buddha acknowledged to Sela that he was a *Cakkavatti* of the *Dhamma*.

There are several other instances where the Buddha and the *Cakkavatti* appear to be one and the same in different roles. "Monks, these two persons born into the world are born to the profit and happiness of many, to the profit, happiness and welfare of many folk. What two? A tathagata and arahant who is fully enlightened (*Buddha*) and world-ruling monarch..."

"...Monks, these two persons born into the world are born as extraordinary men. What two? A *tathāgata*... and a world-ruling monarch... Monks, the death of two persons is regretted by many folks. Of which two? A *tathāgata*... and a world-ruling monarch".⁵

1. D.II p 177

2. M.II. p 146 Sn. d 552/558

3. Sn. d 552/553

4. Sñ. d 554

5. A.I p 76

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* the Buddha is described as a *Cakkavatti* rolling the *Cakka* through righteousness, according to the *Dhamma* by paying it due honour and using it as his guide and standard (flag) for the benefit of others.¹

Further, the Pāli texts compare almost all the characteristic features of the *Cakkavatti* to the Buddha. Seven treasures of the *Cakkavatti* are analogous to the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta bojjhaṅga*)²:

- (i) wheel (*cakka*) - mindfulness (*sati*)
- (ii) the elephant (*hatthi*) - investigation (*dhammavicaya*)
- (iii) the horse - (*assa*) - effort (*virīya*)
- (iv) the jewel (*mani*) - joy (*pīti*)
- (v) the chamberlain (*gahapati*) - calmness (*passadhi*)
- (vi) the queen (*itthi*) - concentration (*samādhi*)
- (vii) the counsellor (*parināyaka*) - equanimity (*upekkhā*)

The seven gems of a *Cakkavatti* and the *bojjhanga ratanas* of a Buddha have been compared at length in the *Sāratthappakāsinī*:³

- (i) The *cakka* of a *Cakkavatti* rolls ahead of its army on the march; similarly, the constituents of enlightenment consisting of mindfulness - (*satisambojjhaṅga*) are the forerunners of the *Dhamma* that belongs to the four spheres (*Catubhūmika*). Hence, *sati* is compared to the treasure of the wheel (*Cakka*).
- (ii) The elephant with its huge body (*mahākāya*) is compared to the greatness of the doctrine (*dhammakāya*).
- (iii) The horse, being fleet of foot, is analogous to the effort (*virīya*) of the Buddha.
- (iv) The treasure (*maniratana*) which dispels darkness and spreads light, is compared to the constituent of satisfaction (*pīti-sambojjhanga*) of the Buddha which destroys the blot of corruption (*kilesandhakāra*).
- (v) The queen (*itthiratana*) who controls the inactive nature of the body of a *Cakkavatti*, is likened to the Buddha's tranquility (*passadhisambojjhanga*).
- (vi) The chamberlain (*gahapati*), who provides revenue for the king's needs is compared to the faculty of concentration (*samādhi*) of the

1. A. III p 149

2. SV. p 99

3. SA. p 154

Buddha.

(vii) The counsellor (*parināyaka*) who settles all the affairs of the state and eases the king's mind is likened to the power of equanimity (*upekkhā*) of the Buddha. Thus, the commentator has linked the seven treasures of a *Cakkavatti* to the attributes of the Buddha.

The text describes the *Cakkavatti* king as possessing fine qualities as the ruler who rolls the wheel of state. "He knows what is good (*atthaññu*); he knows the Dhamma (*dhammaññu*); he knows timeliness (*kālaññu*); he understands assemblies (*parisaññu*); he knows the measure (*mattaññu*). The Buddha who rolls on the wheel of the *Dhamma*, possesses the five qualities but in a different manner. The commentary classifies them as follows:¹

A sutta of the *Anguttara Nikaya*² says that the eldest son of a *Cakkavatti* will continue to roll the *Cakka* after his father's death and will be endowed with his qualities. The Buddha compared the Elder Sariputta to a son who would succeed him and who possessed particular qualities in common with the Buddha. On the other hand it is evident that Sariputta passed away before the Buddha³ and that no disciple can succeed the Buddha. In the

1. AA. I p 619

2. A. III p 149

3. S.V. p 161

	Cakkavatti	Buddha
atthaññu	<i>hetum jānāti</i> : he knows the causes	<i>panca atthe jānāti</i> : he knows fivefold causes
dhammaññu	<i>pavenidhammam jānāti</i> : Knows hereditary traditions and customs	<i>cattaro dhammā jānāti</i> : he knows fourfold truth
Kalaññu	<i>rājasukhānubhavana kālam vinicchayakarana kālam janapadacārika kālam jānāti</i> : he knows time for pleasure, court work, touring the country etc.	<i>ayam kālo paṭisallānāya, dhammadesanāya, samāpattiyā janapadacārikāyāti</i> : he knows time for going apart, attainment (in musing), teaching etc.
parisaññu	<i>ayam khattiyabrāhmaṇavessa - suddasamanaparisāti jānāti</i> : he knows whether there be nobles, brahmins, etc.	<i>ayam khattiyabrāhmaṇāti ..</i> he knows whether there be nobles, brahmins, monks etc.
mattaññu	<i>dandevā balimhivā pamānm jānāti</i> : he knows the measure in punishment and impositions	<i>catusu paccayesu pariggahana paribhojana mattam</i> : he knows the time and limits of receiving and using fourfold requisites

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the Buddha designated the *Dhamma* as his successor. In the *Sela sutta*, *Sariputta* is likened to a *senāpati* (general) of a *Cakkavatti*¹. The Elder Vangisa has pronounced that the Buddha was like a *Cakkavatti* king, attended by a thousand monks (the son of a *Cakkavatti*) and his retinue (the ministers).

Just as the *Cakkavatti* king rules without inflicting punishment on his people (*adandena*) and without use of weapons of war (*asatthena*), the Buddha also controls his disciples without corporal punishment and torture. The Elder Angulimala praised the Buddha, saying that he was converted without chastisement.²

Both, the *Cakkavatti* and the Buddha were considered fit to be remembered by having *thūpas* erected in commemoration of them³. In the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, when the disciples asked the Buddha how they should treat his body after his *parinibbāna*, he told them that it should be honoured in the same way as the body of a *Cakkavatti* king⁴. The *Bahudhātuka sutta* says that it was impossible for a Buddha and a *Cakkavatti* to appear in the world at the same time. Some commentaries and later works disregard the implication of such a view and speak of the *cakkavattins* who existed simultaneously with the Buddha⁵.

The idea of making a Buddha equivalent to a *Cakkavatti* can be seen in its most developed form in *Milindapañha*, where Nagasena compares the Buddha to a king in various different ways.

As the foregoing shows there was a bold attempt to make the Buddha's position supreme by equating his role as a spiritual leader with that of a *Cakkavatti*. The idea of a *Cakkavatti* was only a mythical concept, as a secular leader. Ghoshal interprets the parallel drawn in Buddhist canonical texts between the Buddha and the world ruler as meaning that the world ruler is the temporal counterpart of the spiritual world teacher, resembling him not only in his outward bodily form (thirty-two bodily marks of the Great Man) and the extraordinary incidents of his birth, death, cremation and commemoration, but also in the jointly unique role as universal benefactor.

From the above discussion it is clear that the concept of *Cakkavatti* is connected with the world man, *Mahāpurisa*. It appears that this concept goes

1. Sn. Vs. 557

2. M.II p 102f, 122

3. A.I. p 76

4. D.II p 142

5. APA p 28 MV.I. p 49

back as early as to the age of the Rgveda, perhaps earlier. We have traced above how this *Mahāpurisa* concept was absorbed into the person of the *Cakkavatti* - world man. This seems to be an attempt by society to make its leader an extraordinary person by conferring on him all the best qualities and attributing to him all that is best in the world in order to display his superiority amongst others.

In this account his attributes as well as qualities were explained. These attributes were particularly chosen because of their might and power which conferred on a world leader an all conquering nature. Moreover, in order to attribute divinity to the king, objects were given to him as *sattaratana*, perhaps to make a person powerful and great. Buddhist literature portrays the *Cakkavatti* as the secular counterpart of the Buddha, the spiritual conqueror, whose realm was the *Dhamma*. Pali texts compare attributes called *satta bojjhanga* with those of *sattaratana* allotted to a *Cakkavatti*. In the course of the above account study, the seven objects of the *Cakkavatti* were related to those qualities of the Buddha. Moreover it was shown how these two were made great and incomparable by the ancient compilers of the Buddhist canon. According to the Buddhist tradition, these two great personalities are miraculously born, and are commemorated by the people after death. Therefore, the comparison of the two personalities, one in the physical body, the other in the spiritual realm, has been accepted by the Buddhist tradition.

In the Buddhist tradition, thirty-two marks have been described as bodily marks of the *Mahāpurisa* - either it be the *Cakkavatti* or the Buddha. It appears as though the colourful idea of the seven jewels preoccupied the writers' mind, and the aspect of physical beauty regarding the *Mahāpurisa* became part and parcel of the descriptions of the Buddha. When the legendary imagination of the world's supreme power became a reality of dogmatic significance, it was the Buddha whom our expounders invariably preferred to a Universal Monarch as the proper object of exaltation. Hence are the direct attempts to equate the Buddha with the *Cakkavatti*.

The Thirty-two Characteristics

In Buddhist texts the *Mahāpurisa*, in the form of a *Cakkavatti*, has been represented with power and external possessions, such as the *Sattaratana* (seven treasures), *Cāturanta* (four quarters of the world), while in the form of the Buddha, it has been represented with greater emphasis on internal achievements such as *Sattabojjhaṅga* (seven factors of enlightenment) and *Catusacca* (four noble truths). In spite of this distinction the most prominent feature unifying these two concepts (i.e. Buddha and Cakkavatti) is that both of them are said to have acquired the thirty-two characteristic marks of the *Mahāpurisa* as physical features.

In the Pāli texts, the term *dvattinsa-mahāpurisalakkhaṇa* - thirty-two characteristic marks of the Great Man - appears in several places, and some of the marks are mentioned in the *Sela-Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*¹, and the *Suttanipāta*², and in the *Vatthugāthā* of the *Suttanipāta*³. The full list of thirty-two marks has been enumerated in three different *Suttas*, i.e. *Mahāpadāna*⁴, and *Lakkhana Suttas*⁵ of the *Dīgha Nikāya* and in the *Brahmāyū Sutta*⁶ of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. In addition to this list the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* supplies further details of some of the *Lakkhaṇas* and describes the past

1. M. II, p 134

2. Su. p 102 ff

3. Su. p 1939

4. D. II p 17f

5. D. III p 143f

6. M. II. p 134

deeds which caused the manifestation of those bodily marks together with their corresponding fortunes for the *Buddha* and the *Cakkavatti*.

Besides the Pali list the *Mahāvastu*¹ (2 - 4 century B.C.) makes a brief reference to these marks, but the *Lalitavistara*² (1st century B.C. - 2nd century A.D.) lists them fully and deals with the eighty minor marks. It is important that in another chapter the *Lalitavistara* enumerates thirty-two characteristics, describing past good actions done by the *bodhisatva* in his previous births³, this may be the first of its kind in Sanskrit Buddhist literature. Further the *Madhyamāgama* of the Chinese canon also enumerates the thirty-two marks of the *Mahāpurisa*⁴.

Max Muller has made a collection of these marks in his edition of the *Dharmasangraha*⁵. There he has consulted five original sources such as the Pali canon (*Lakkhana*, *Mahāpadāna suttas*) the *Lalitavistara*, the Chinese translation of the Canon, the *Mahāvvyutpatti* and the *Dharmapradīpikā* (a Sinhalese work, 1187 - 1225 A.D.) and has collected thirty-seven marks from different sources. Burnouf has recorded in his "Lotus de la Bonne Loi"⁶ correlations of various Pāli and Sanskrit lists and has thrown light on the interpretation of the different characteristics. Franklin Edgerton further refers to the *Gandavyuha*⁷ Sutra and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*⁸. Besides the texts

1. MV. 2.52

2. LV. p 105f

3. LV. p 429

4. The term *Āgama* was used as an equivalent to the Pāli *Nikāya* in the Sanskrit Tripitaka. *Āgamas* probably appeared before the third council in the 3rd century B.C. There are now no complete original Sanskrit *Āgama* texts; they exist in the form of Chinese translations. *Āgamas* were translated into Chinese during the 4th century A.D. See E.B. *Āgama*

5. Max Muller and Kasawara, K., *Dharmasangraha*, Oxford 1

6. Brnouf, E., *Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, p 858 ff

7. *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* ed. Suzuki and Izumi Kyoto, 1930, p 399f

8. *Bodhisattvabhūmi* - Vogihara U. Tokyo, 1930, p 375f

referred to by Edgerton in his monumental work¹, the list can be found in many other important *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* works together with interesting explanations².

The marks are standardly thirty-two although the *Gandavyuha Sūtra* anomalously mentions twenty-eight - *aṣṭaviṃsatibhir mahāpuruṣa lakṣananupeto*³. It is noteworthy that although the text mentions the term *aṣṭaviṃsati*, it enumerates in another place thirty-three marks in its list.⁴ All the lists, however, in the various texts of the different schools and traditions referred to above differ in their order, and sometimes the phraseology is also different. Some lists simply enumerate the Lakkhanas Pāli, some explain them. Although Burnouf and Max Muller take three Pāli lists in their comparative study, the Pali Canon has only one list. All the three places which enumerate the list of the lakṣhanas in the Pali Canon are similar in their order except where there is a detailed account of each characteristic in the *Lakkhana Sutta*. There it has been arranged in a different order, only because of the convenience of grouping the characteristics which have similar karmas with their commensurate results.

The significant difference of the list in Pali from that in the *Lalitavistara* is that while the Pali list enumerates from foot to head, the *Lalitavistara* does it from head to foot. Yet it is noteworthy that where in another place the *Lalitavistara* explains the past good actions, relating to each sign, it enumerates the list more or less similarly to the *Lakkhana Sutta*. Although some of the Sanskrit lists follow the method of the *Lalitavistara*, most of the *Mahayana* texts enumerate the list from foot to head. This suggests that they follow the sources dealing with the thirty-two marks of the Great Man in the Pali, as an older tradition.

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1. Edgerton, F. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. New Haven, 1953, Vol. II 458 f
 2. i. *Daśasāhasika Prajñāpāramita* ed. Sten Konow, Oslo, 1941, p 108 f
ii. *Abhisamayālaṅkāraloka* - Haribhadra, ed. Tucci in *Graekwad Oriental Series*, p 526.
iii. *Abhidharmadīpa* with *Vibhāsā* ed. Jaini P.S., Patna 1959, p 187 ff
iv. *Ratnagotravibhaga* ed. Johnston E. H. in the *Journal of Bihar Reserach Society*, Vol. XXVI (1-2) p 94 f
v. *Arthaviniścaya Sūtra and Commentary* ed. Samtani, N.H., Patna, 1971. p 121 ff
 3. GV. p 399
 4. GV. p 400

The general meaning of the thirty-two characteristics which are enumerated in the *Lakkhana Sutta* is as follows:

- (1) He has feet with a level tread.
- (2) On the soles of his feet wheels appear with a thousand spokes, with rims and hubs, in every way complete.
- (3) He has projecting heels.
- (4) He has long fingers.
- (5) He has soft and tender hands and feet.
- (6) He has fingers and toes evenly spaced.
- (7) His ankles are over the exact middle of the tread.
- (8) His legs are shapely like those of antelopes.
- (9) While standing without stooping, he can touch and rub his knees with both hands at once.
- (10) His privities are within a sheath.
- (11) He has a golden complexion.
- (12) The texture of his skin is that no dust or dirt can lodge on it.
- (13) His body hair grows singly, one only in each pore.
- (14) Each hair is straight, blue-black and curling to the right at its tip.
- (15) His body frame is straight.
- (16) His body has seven convex surfaces.
- (17) The upper part of his body is well built like that of a lion.
- (18) He has no hollow between his shoulder blades.
- (19) He has the symmetrical proportions of a banyan tree, his stretch being the same as his height.
- (20) The curve of his shoulders is symmetrical.
- (21) He has an exquisite, acutely sensitive sense of taste.
- (22) His jaws are like those of a lion.
- (23) He has forty teeth.
- (24) He has even teeth.
- (25) There are no interstices between his teeth.
- (26) His teeth are sparkling white.
- (27) His tongue is long and flexible.
- (28) His voice is like that of the Brahma and is melliflous like the *Karavīka* bird's.
- (29) His eyes are intensely blue.
- (30) His eyelashes are long and shapely like those of a cow.

(31) Between his eyebrows grows soft white hair like cotton-down.

(32) His head is shaped like a royal turban.

These thirty-two characteristics are further explained and developed in the Pali Commentaries and the *Mahāyāna* texts. Due to the obscurity of their interpretations some of the *lakṣhanas* have been the subject of much controversy and discussion among Indologists. As such, it is worthwhile to examine the meaning of the terms used by different sources for the thirty-two characteristics and their explanations in order to have a clear idea of each *lakṣhana*.

Besides the Pali texts and Commentaries which are our main sources, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, the *Gandavyūha Sūtra*¹, Chinese and Tibetan texts², the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*³ and the *Arthaviniscaya Sūtra*⁴ are specially referred to in this comparative study of the *lakṣhanas*. The *Mahāvastu* and the *Lalitavistara*, which are ascribed to the *Sarvāstivāda* School, represent the traditional period from *Theravāda* to *Mahāyāna* and provide detailed accounts on this subject. The *Gandavyūha Sūtra*, which is one of the nine important *Mahāyāna Sūtras*, and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, which belongs to the *Prajñāparamitā* school are referred to here as they are more valuable in

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1. *Gandavyūha Sūtra* is a Buddhist Sanskrit text regarded as an important *Mahāyāna Sūtra* and belongs to one of the nine Dharmas in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. It has been used for the purpose of worship in all countries of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism ever since the 4th century A.D. See Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p 325
 2. Chinese and Tibetan terms of *lakṣhanas* have been translated into English by A. Scoma in *Mahavyūtpatti*, ed by Ross, E.D., Part I,
 3. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. A detailed commentary to the verses of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra nama prajñāpāramitopadesa*, belongs to the School of *Yogācāra-Mādhyamika* by Haribhadra (circa 750 A.D.) See Conze, E., EB I.1.sv *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*
 4. *Arthaviniscaya Sūtra* - A Buddhist Sanskrit text dealing with the essential categories of Dhammas as in the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* and it is more likely that it belongs to the *Sautrāntika* school. There are two Chinese and one Tibetan versions of the Sutra. As it has been mentioned in many other later works, the original work may probably been compiled before the first century BC, but the present form consists of later additions. See Samtani N.H. *The Arthaviniscaya Sūtra and its Commentary* critically edited with Introduction, Patna 1971 p 17 ff (*Sūtra*) p 38 ff (*Commentary*)

examining the later development of the *lakṣhanas* in *Mahāyāna* literature. The *Arthaviṅśaya Sūtra* and its commentary which belong to the Sautrāntika school, is a glossary of Buddhist terms and has made a definitive contribution to the advancement of the knowledge of these *lakṣhanas*.

I. Suppatitthitapāda

The literal meaning of this term is (su + patitthita + pāda) well planted feet. The actual shape of the undersurface of the feet is even. As is explained in the *sutta*, the Buddha places each foot on the ground evenly, lifts it up evenly and touches the ground with the entire surface of the foot. The *Lalitavistara*¹ agrees with the Pali explanation and so do most of the other *Mahāyāna* texts, but the Tibetan texts have explained this as "he is standing perfectly straight on his feet which are equally alike"².

Buddhaghosa tries to explain the traditional meaning of *Suppatitthitapāda* by citing the features of ordinary human beings:

"The soles of the Buddha's feet are fully fleshed and perfectly flat like unto golden sandals. When walking they do not move like the feet of ordinary man but the whole undersurface of the foot (toes and heel) touches the ground at the same time and leaves it at the same time. Nor does one end of the foot touch the ground before the other, but the entire sole touches the ground at once."³

It suggests that the sole of his foot is full, by which it is meant that there is no curve under the sole. When one considers that as a physical peculiarity, one cannot say that it is too unnatural to have such a characteristic feature, because it is frequently seen that some peoples' feet are very flat when compared with others. It is possible to think that the possession of flat-soles was regarded as a mark of distinction according to prevailing physiognomical beliefs.

1. LV p 106

2. Mahavutpatti, p 93

3. DA. II, p 435

However, the *Papañcasūdanī*¹ explains this physical feature as an asset to the performance of miraculous deeds. This seems to be a later attempt to associate superhuman elements with physical features. The same epithet has been elucidated in the *Jināṅkāravaṇṇanā*² and the *Dharmapradīpikā*³ as follows:

"Wherever the conqueror of the world (Buddha) proceeds, low land rises up and high land becomes even, just as level earth. The stones, the gravel, the sand, the slope, and the uneven ground all smooth out wherever the Conqueror of the world treads. When the most perfect Buddha walks, the soles of his feet which are tender at all places are equally in contact with the ground and are sullied by the dust. With the steadiness of an elephant, the Buddha shines by his stately bearing."

The above extracts taken from different literary traditions show that the simple form of the original *lakkhana* has undergone much change. It appears that immense faith and devotion of later believers have invested the body of the Buddha with several superhuman elements which seem quite alien to the spirit and attitude of the early Pāli *Nikāyas*.

II. Hetthāpadatalēsu Cakkāni Jātāni

It is quite clear that this *lakkhana* indicates the appearance of a wheel mark on the soles. In the Pāli *Suttas* such as the *Lakkhana*, the *Mahāpadāna* and the *Brahmāyu*, the wheel (*cakka*) is the only distinguishing sign which is marked on the soles. At the same time texts describe some of the features of the form of the *cakka*:

"*Sahassarāni sanemikāni sanābhikāni sabbākāraparipuṇṇāni suvibhattarāni*" - underneath the soles of his feet the wheel appears with a thousand spokes, with a tyre and a hub well defined in every way.

1. MA. II, p 378

2. *Jināṅkāravaṇṇanā* by Buddhārakkhita Thera, p 154

3. *Dharmapradīpikā* ed. by Sri Dharmarama Thero, Ceylon, 1951, p 4

The *Lalitavistara* and the *Mahāvastu*¹ describe the *lakkhana* in the same way and the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* further adds that the wheel is elegant. The Tibetan list agrees with the Pali texts, but does not describe the wheel as in Pali and in Sanskrit.

Of the thirty-two *lakkhana*s of *Mahapurisa*, the *cakka* is the most developed major mark. It can be seen in post-canonical literature and iconography that the symbols on the feet of the Buddha have been increased, together with a number of items of the *cakka*. The *Lalitavistara* introduces *Srivatsa*, *Muktaka*, *Nandyāvarta* and the palm has been included with the sole as “*Cakrānkita pānipādātala*”. This shows that the original symbol of *cakka* developed *parivāras* (accompaniments).

The Pāli commentaries have amplified greatly the concept of *parivāras* of the *cakka* when they added other symbols to the representations of the soles of the Buddha’s feet. *Sumangala Vilāsinī* describes the term *Sabbākāraparipuṇṇāni*, as follows:

"In the center of the wheel, which is in the middle of the sole, there is a nave; surrounding the nave there are the circular lines, at the opening of the nave there is the encircling sheath; the hole of the nave is seen; also there are the spokes; the felly is seen; the bowl-shaped gems on the nave are seen."

Further Buddhaghosa says that all these are mentioned in canonical texts, and no more details are found there. Then he produces additional symbols; attending on the wheel there are the spear (*satti*), *sirivatsa* (*Siri-vaccha*), conch (*nandi*), *svastika* (*sovatthi*), ear rings (*vaṭanasaka*), power box (*vaddhamānaka*), pair of fish (*maccha yugala*), auspicious seat (*bhaddhapīṭha*), triumphal arch (*tōrana*), white umbrella (*sētacchatta*), sword (*khagga*), palm leaf fan (*tāla vanthaka*), fly whisk (*vālavījanī*), diadem (*unhīsa*), cluster of gems (*manipaṭṭa*), garland of flowers (*sumana dāma*), blue water lilies (*nīluppala*), red water lilies (*rattuppala*), white water lilies (*setuppala*), red lotus (*paduma*), white lotus (*puṇḍarika*), filled vessel (*puṇṇaghāṭa*), filled bowl (*puṇṇapāli*), ocean (*samudda*), the universe (*cakkavāla*), Himalaya forest (*himavā*), Mount Meru (*sinēru*), moon (*canda*), sun (*suriya*), stars (*nakkhatta*), four great continents (*cattāro mahādīpā*), two thousand islands that surrounded them (*dve paritta dīpa sahaṣṣāni*), and Universal Monarch

1. MV p 226

together with his retinue (*rājā cakkavatti sasenō*). All these are inscribed on the wheel.

Among the signs which were added by the Commentarial Tradition fourteen were considered auspicious by Hindus, Jains and Buddhists alike. Most of these are found among auspicious symbols of "*Aṣṭamanagala*" which appear in very early Jaina sculptures¹. The last seven were rarely used as they represented the universe in Buddhist cosmology. They were probably included in the list to symbolise the Buddha as a universal personage. The commentator, however, provided room for further addition in a new manner by introducing these cosmic symbols to the existing ones, the influence of which will be seen in the next stage of the development of the symbols on the sole. This is seen in the Sinhalese work. *Dharmapradīpikā*, which has a list of sixty-five sole symbols². These consisted of thirty-three new ones which were added to those found in the commentary. The majority of the new ones were based on the cosmic aspects, introduced by the commentator. There were also some mythical symbols as well: *suparṇarāja*, *vāsukā nāgarajā*, *valāhaka aśvarājā* and others; also a few auspicious ones like *dakḥhināvatta sankha*, *dhvaja patāka* and *svastika*. Others based on Buddhist cosmology consisted of the six heavens (*sadvidha divyalōka*) and sixteen Brahma heavens (*solasa Brahmaloaka*). The Pali commentaries and the *Dharmapradīpikā* do not state that these symbols were auspicious ones; *mangala* or *mangalya*. The original auspicious character of *aṣṭamangala* was not forgotten by Buddhists who believed in them. The list in the *Jināḷankāratikā*³ and *Anāgatavansa aṭṭhakathā*⁴ on the subject are more lengthy, and according to them there are eighty auspicious marks in all. A Sinhalese work called "Magul Lakuna" of the Kandy period (17th - 18th century) has tabulated as many as 108 marks under the heading of *Mangala Laksana*⁵. With regard to the Indian belief in auspicious numbers, 108 is popular amongst Hindus as

1. Aupapatika Su. 31

2. Dharmapradīpikā ed. by Dharmārāma, Thero R., Colombo, 1951, p 3.T

3. Jināḷankāratika, Sudhammavati Pitaka Press, Rangoon, 1940, p 198

4. See E.B. Vol . III p 452

5. 108 auspicious marks and their English equivalents, where possible, are given in the annual report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1930-4, p 324-6, and the Encyclopedia of Buddhism - Sri Lanka Vol. III, 5 sv
Buddhapada

well as in later Buddhist traditions. It might have been that this number has special significance according to its mechanical importance. Although these later works have given 108 symbols on each sole and 216 on both, the actual number of items given is only sixty-eight. Spence Hardy who collected these symbols from all available sources was also only able to obtain sixty-eight¹.

An illustration of a foot print of the Buddha from Amaravati sculpture and from Thailand (published in Royal Asiatic Society - G.B. 1835 Plate 3) demonstrates the development of the wheel symbol with 108 auspicious marks as an object of veneration² in popular Buddhism.

It is also a common custom among the Hindus to mark their forehead every morning with the symbol of Visnu's foot. Jains also worshipped the footprint of the 24 Tirthankaras, especially that of Pārsvanātha³. Thus it will be not wrong to think that the veneration of footprints is generally accepted by later Buddhists too who were influenced by the general Indian religious tradition.

Apart from the traditional descriptions of the wheel as a *mahāpurisalakhana* there are several early accounts relating to the existence of the wheel on the sole of the Buddha:

"On a certain occasion Buddha was journeying along the high road between Ukkatthā and Setabbya, and a Brahmana named Dona, who also happened to be going along the same road, saw, on the footprints of the Buddha, the wheel marks with their thousand spokes, with their rims and hubs, and all their attributes complete."⁴

Similarly on another occasion, Buddha was said to have left his footprints to be seen by Brahmana Magandiya purposely. It was visible with the wheel mark and its original attribution and Māgandiā's wife, who was skilled in such matters, said that the owner of such a footprint must be free from passion⁵. This is an early reference to a wheel of the footprint left by the Buddha, not as an object of veneration but for the observation of the attainment of Buddhahood.

The commentary adds that the soles of the feet of the Buddha are soft, and when he treads, it is as if a piece of cotton falls to the ground:

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1. Hardy, R.S., Manual of Buddhism, London 1880, p 381
 2. Monier Williams - Buddhism p 512
 3. Ibid
 4. A. II p 37
 5. DhA. III p 193 ff

"Just as the foot-print of a swift *Sindhava* horse does not stay on a lotus leaf, likewise the Buddha's foot-print is not visible. Further, if the foot-print of the Buddha becomes visible, the multitudes which follow, will not be able to tread on them and, therefore, even when they become visible, they soon disappear. In this particular instance the Buddha wished that the brahmana Dona should see them as in the case of Magandiya."¹

This interpretation of the commentary seems to be an attempt to confirm the superhuman ideas regarding the Buddha while giving reasonable explanation to the problems which might arise in relation to the appearance of the physical marks. Although the commentaries provide an answer to the question of the nature of the appearance of the wheel and its impression by suggesting that the impression arose only at the wish (*adhiṭṭhānavasena*) of the Buddha, later works describe that the wheel marks appear on feet like an engraving on bone or ivory.²

In time, the footprints of the Buddha became an important object of veneration; later works continue to maintain this idea and added more colourful accounts about the wheel sign of the sole in order to illustrate the Buddha's superhuman nature. The *Arthaviniscaya Sūtra* which provides a detailed explanation of the thirty-two *lakṣhanas* further comments on the wheel sign, that it is like an ivory wheel prepared by an expert artisan. When Buddha's foot touches the ground, a wheel-like impression (*tatprati-bimbakam cakrakaram*) is left on the ground but others say that the Buddha walks above the ground, measuring a length of *vilasti* (distance between the extended thumb and little finger). The impression of the foot is fixed (on the ground) by his conscious determination (*adhithāna*). At the end of this comment a remark is made further that although wheels are found on the Buddha's hands too, since they manifest themselves (*prakatatvām*) no mention of them has been made³. All these show how far the wheel sign took a greater importance in the concept of the Buddha.

1. AA I. p 235 f

2. *Abhisamayāṅkarāloka* - "*Tadyathā astimayam vā dantamayam vā bimbam utkananamsyt*" - Extracts from the *Abhisamayāṅkarāloka*, produced by E. Conze - The Buddha's Lakṣanas in the Prajñāparamita - Journal of the Oriental Institute of Borado, Vol 14, p 226

3. AVS p123

III. Āyatapanhi

The literal meaning of Āyata is explained as 'extended in length, stretched out, across' - "*dīghatō āyatam tiriyaṃ ca vitthatam*" - meaning long and broad¹. *Paṇhi* is the technical word for the heel of the foot. Thus *āyatapanhi* implies that the Buddha has long and broad heels. Rhys Davids translates this sign as projecting heels while Har Dayal used the word "long". The *Lalitavistara* and Tibetan texts describe this in the same way as the Pali texts. However, Remusat translates the Chinese version of this term as "soles of his feet are adequately full"², but this is not correct, because the word *panhi* specially means the heel, not the whole undersurface of the feet and the fullness of feet has been described by the first characteristic sign.

The *Gandavyūha Sūtra* reads this term as '*āyatapādaparsnitā*' - this feature of having long heels - and adds 'highly beautiful and good looking'. The *Abhisamayālaṅkāraṭōka* clearly explains the term '*āyataprisṇi*' as "because his heels are extensive and he has broad heels".

Although the term indicates longness of heels in general, there may have been different views on the exact nature of this characteristic sign. Therefore the Pali commentaries have made a clear attempt to explain it in greater detail.

According to Buddhaghosa, *Āyatapanhi* means 'long and complete heels'. He explains further "the Buddha's heels are not like that of others. If the foot of the Great Man be measured in four parts, two are taken up by the sole and toes, the third is under the leg and the fourth is the heel, projecting backwards. It is smooth and round as a ball of cotton thread and excels in beauty"³. Here we see an attempt made by the commentator to give a clear cut idea of the structure (form) of the heel of the Buddha.

IV. Dīhangulī

This characteristic feature defines the shape of the fingers of the *Mahāpurisa*. Rhys Davids⁴ translates it as long fingers and toes, while Har

1. M.I p 176

2. A. Remusat, *Melanges Asiat.*, t. I p 170

3. DA II p 446

4. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. II, p 14

Dayal¹ and some other scholars have taken it as only the fingers. Literally, *dīghā-angulī* means long fingers. As the Pali word *angulī* does not distinguish between fingers and toes, it is a common term to designate both fingers and toes. When specific reference is made to fingers the term *hatthangulī* is used, while *pādangulī* specifies toes. There is another reason to believe that this characteristic includes both fingers and toes: the order of the list of marks according to Pali texts is from foot to head, whereas in some Sanskrit texts, such as the *Lalitavistara*, it is from head to foot. In all lists *dīghangulī* falls among the features of the lower part of the body. Thus it is more reasonable to believe that at the time of listing, the thirty-two physical marks had been arranged according to a systematic and methodical order, toes were classified together with fingers, and *angulī* would have referred to both toes and fingers.

Tibetan sources and the *Lalitavistara* also use the term *dīghāngulī*, but without specifically mentioning either fingers or toes. The Pali Commentator provides more details on the subject, taking the fingers in general as follows:

"His fingers are not like those of others of whom some are long, some are short. The great Man's fingers are long, they are wide and the roots taper gradually towards the tips, like those of a monkey (*Makkata*)"²

Some scholars have translated this word "*Makkata*" as spider but the proper Pali word for spider is *Makkataka*. It is quite clear that this simile has been given only to illustrate the long and tapering nature of the fingers and toes, therefore the translation of *makkata* as monkey is more appropriate than spider. It is also obvious that the commentator does not compare the entire hand of the Buddha with that of the monkey.

The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* in describing this characteristic, adds that the fingers are long and round, with joints well-fixed. This interpretation of the characteristic mark of *Dīghāngulī* seems to be an attempt to convince that the Buddha's fingers are perfect and faultless.

V. Mudotalunahatthapāda

This characteristic too follows the same method of description as of the previous feature emphasising the softness of the hands and feet of the Great

1. Bodhisattva Doctrine - p 302

2. DA. II p 446

Man. The Sanskrit equivalent 'Mrdutarunahastapāda' is invariably similar in most of the texts.

Rhys Davids¹ translates this Pali term as soft and tender hands and feet. Har Dayal² gives 'delicate' instead of 'tender'. The commentary exaggerates the nature of the softness of the Buddha's hands and feet, giving the softest known object as a simile:

"*Sappi mande ośādetvā ṭhapitam satavāravihata kappāsapaṭalam viya mudu* - palms of his hands and soles of his feet are softer than cotton kept soaked in ghee and carded one hundred times."

Further, it adds regarding the term 'taluna':-

"*idani jātamattassa evam vuddhakalepi talunayeva bhavisati* - Even in old age they are as soft as those of a new-born baby."³

The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* too compares the softness of palms and soles to a kind of very soft textile (Kācilindika)⁴ and defines the softness in a different manner. It says that the tenderness of his hands are such that whomsoever he touches, a man, a woman, boy or girl, all would be delighted and filled with extreme happiness and cheerfulness⁵. The explanation in *Abhisamayālaṅkāralōkā* also endorses the same idea that his soles and palms are very soft like a ball of cotton wool, exceedingly tender and delicate⁶.

Definition of the Pāli commentaries seems to be more symbolic of Buddha's spiritual attainments. The Buddha was regarded as The Compassionate One who appears in the world for the happiness of others⁷. It can be assumed that the Pali commentators maintained the idea that the Buddha's hands and feet were undoubtedly soft and tender as he practiced boundless love and compassion throughout the Bodhisattva stage.

The simile of soft cotton carded one hundred times is common in almost all the texts and it might have been taken from a common source. Further details connected with this characteristic sign had been developed in another

1. Dial Vol. II p 14

2. DA II p 446

3. DA II p 446

4. BHSD p 175

5. JOIB Vol. 14 p 226

6. Dh, A. I. p 5

7. A. I p.22

stage and the *Arthavinīscaya Sūtra* commentary says that the hands and feet of the Buddha are free from weakness and hardness¹. This denotes that the later works tried to show that the Buddha's hands and feet are not only soft but also strong and healthy as he was depicted as an extraordinary being.

VI. Jālāhatthapāda

Jāla, literally means a net but the word has been used for different types of nets both in the general and metaphorical sense: "*dakkhō kevaṭṭo jālena udakadaham otthareyya* - a skilful fisherman would spread a net in a pool of water."²

"*sabbe te imeheva dvasatṭhiyā vatthuhi anto jālikatā* - all of them are entrapped in the net of these sixty-two topics."³

"*chetvā maccuno jālam* - having destroyed the net of Mara."⁴

As a material object it is probable that the word *jāla* means in this context a net in its ordinary sense. Hence the term "*jāla hatthapāda*" gives the meaning as Rhys Davids translates - hands and feet like a net.⁵

This characteristic feature is one of the controversial *lakṣhanas* of the Great Man since early Buddhist literature, and also in the field of Buddhist iconography from its inception. It is clear that in early Buddhist texts the term *jālāhatthapāda* reads differently and might have been understood in a different manner. In the *Lalitavistara* it reads as "*jalāṅguliḥastapāda*" which refers to the nature of the fingers. Scholars seem to differ in translating this interesting term in relation to the Buddha's body.

Burnouf says that "the fingers and toes are bounded together as a network".⁶ Foucher translates it as "his fingers and his toes are joined together

1. AVS p 289

2. D.L. p 45

3. S.V. p 298

4. S.I p 48

5. Dial II p 14

6. Burnouf Lotus p 573

by a membrane"¹. Keith also takes the same idea and says that the hands have the fingers united by a membrane². Har Dayal in his thesis on the Bodhisattva doctrine translates it as "his hands and feet are webbed or netted"³. However, the Pali texts refer to the hand and feet in general and do not specify the fingers. It shows the way compilers of the *Lalitavistara* understood the term by the addition of the word *aṅguli* (finger).

The *Mahāvastu*⁴ and the *Divyāvadāna*⁵ add the word 'avanaddha' - *jālāvanadha hastapāda*, which is not given in Pali. Later in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, taking all into account, it reads: *jālāvanadha aṅguli pānipāda* - fingers of his hands and toes on his feet are joined by webs. With regard to these various readings of the same characteristic mark, Har Dayal points out that "perhaps the Pali and Sanskrit terms do not mean the same thing." Sanskritists may have altered the phrase in order to explain the webbed fingers in the Gandhāra statues⁶, and this device led to later misunderstanding of the *jāla lakṣhaṇa*.

Stutterheim⁷ does not accept this view and seeks to prove that the 'jāla lakṣhaṇa' means 'the thin lines of rosy light which may be seen between the fingers when they are in contact and when the hands held up against the light'. He refers to Kālidāsa's *Sākuntala* in order to establish his point of view:

"When King Dusyanta see Bharata extending his hand to seize what one of the female ascetics offers him to play with, the king notices on his hand the mark of a future emperor (*cakravartin*)"⁸

"Hands stretch forth through longing for the object of attraction (the plaything) with its fingers connected like a web, appears like a solitary lotus, tinged (or opened by the early dawn with its glow enkindled and having the intervals between the fingers when they are held together up against the light."

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1. LV. translated by Foucher, p 96
 2. A.B Keith - Indian Mythology, p 195
 3. Har Dayal - Bodhisattva Doctrine, p 302
 4. MV II p 304
 5. Divyāvadāna p 56.21
 6. Ibid p 303
 7. Acta Orientalia, Vol 7, 1925, p 237
 8. Sākuntāla Ch. VII vs 16

Stutterheim thinks that there is here an unmistakable reference to the rosy light seen between the fingers when they are held together up against the sun.

This subject has been dealt with by J.N. Banerjea¹ and A.K. Coomaraswamy², at length. The former accepts Buddhaghosa's explanation on this *lakkhana* and says that it is quite correct and more akin with Foucher's view. He further adds that the commentator begins with the statement that this *lakkhana* does not mean that the fingers were joined by a web and that this kind of webbing between the fingers will define a peculiar kind of inauspicious hand, in shape like that of the hood of a snake (*phanahatthaka*) which will be a fault in the figure of the man (*purisadosa*). Then he refers to the four fingers of the hand (not five, evidently leaving out the thumb which being in a much lower plane than the other four fingers cannot have its lines touching those of the others), and five toes of the feet which are uniform or regular in size (*ekappamāna*), their uniformity or regularity being indicated by the auspicious sign of the *jālas* which remain touching each other (*aññamaññam pativihitvā titthanti*). Buddhaghosa lastly used the simile of the lattice of a window. All this, if it means anything, can only mean "the fingers and toes are marked with *jālas* or uniform and parallel lines, as are to be found in the lattice of a window".³

Coomaraswamy does not fully agree with Banerjea's view and favours the view of Stutterheim who says that it means the thin lines of rosy light between the fingers. He suggests that Buddhaghosa's explanation is also quite correct in this connection, *ekappamāna vaddhakinā yojita jāla vātapāna*⁴ - fingers were of one measure like the latticed window made by a carpenter. Coomaraswamy points out that *jāla* does not imply webbing or any abnormality, clearly mentioned by Buddhaghosa as "whose fingers are grown together" is one of those who are unfit even to be admitted to the Sangha⁵. Finally, he concludes, "simply a perfection of form demonstrated by appearance by the reddish lines of light that may be seen between the parallel fingers when the hand is held up to the light."⁶

1. IHQ VI p 717, VII. p 654

2. IHQ VII p 365

3. IHQ VII p 654 - 55

4. DA. II p 446

5. "na bhikkhave phanahatthako pabbājetabbo" - the exact meaning of phanahattha is, with hands like a snake's hood: Vin. I. p 91

6. IHQ VII p 365

Analysing various views by scholars on this topic, Sten Konow¹ finally thinks that it has some base in ancient folklore in which it is believed that some people who are born for future greatness bear a mark of webbed fingers, and suggests that all the fingers are connected together by some sort of membrane as it is seen in aquatic birds.

Although Sten Konow suggests a modified view, it is much more similar to later interpretations as far as the original meaning is concerned. It is common in most Sanskrit texts that *jāla-lakkhaṇa* is described as that of a goose. For example, the *Gandavyūha Sūtra* describes that "his two palms and soles were webbed ... without gaps (between fingers, and not filter-like), even as those of Dhrtarastra, the king of swans². The *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* also defines the *jāla-lakkhaṇa* giving the same simile of swan³. In the *Arthavinīś-caya Sūtra* commentary, it says that the side of each finger of the Buddha is covered with a beautiful and very delicate skin and lies on (united with) the other fingers at the time of closing the hand. At the time of opening, they (fingers) are expanded just as in the case of that of a swan (*hansarājā*) or like the drawing (*upasanhāra*) also to be understood in the case of feet.⁴

It is evident that this idea of membrane or webbed fingers has prevailed even at the time of Buddhaghosa because he has clearly rejected both these views⁵. This means that the early Buddhist tradition did not accept this as the original and actual meaning of the term of *jāla-lakkhaṇa*. However, it is doubtful that the meaning proposed by the commentary represents the original nature of the *lakkana*.

The commentary says that the four fingers and five toes were equal in length and like a latticed window made by a carpenter⁶. As Thomas points out it could be said that Buddhaghosa no doubt saw them in statues and this is not likely to be a primitive idea⁷.

Considering all these views it could be finally added that being more practical and natural, if the fingers of the hands and feet are equal in length and size it is evident that the lines running across the fingers must be parallel

1. Acta Orientalia - Vol 10, 1931 - 32, p 229

2. GV p 400

3. JOIB, Vol. 14, p 226

4. AVS Commentary, p 289

5. DA II p 446

6. DA II p 446

7. E.J. Thomas - Life of the Buddha as Legend and History, 3rd Re
London, 1960.

and methodically impressed. Hence it is quite unreasonable to think that these terms meant that the fingers were webbed by a net or by a membrane. The clear cut parallel lines running on the palms and toes would have shown as if the fingers were connected to each other. In later days the followers of the Buddha might have given more weight to this mark to emphasize the greatness of the Buddha as a *Mahāpurisa*. However, it can be further assumed that it may have been a metaphorical expression as 'green fingers' to show that his grasp of anything was complete and that nothing escapes. *Brahmajāla Sutta* also was so-called because all philosophical views were "caught in his net".

VII. Ussaṅkapāda

This characteristic defines that the *Mahāpurisa* has prominent ankles. This term is rendered in different readings and translations which led to the understanding of the *lakkhana* in different ways among different schools. Rhys Davids translates the Pali term "*ussaṅkapāda*" as "his ankles are like rounded shells"¹ and Lord Chalmers suggests that "his ankles are over the exact middle of the tread"². Csoma reads "*ucchaṅkapāda*" and translates it as "the joints of the ankles do not appear outwardly"³. The Tibetan equivalent of the term means "the ankle-bone of the foot is not conspicuous"⁴. The *Abhisamayālaṅkāraloka* in agreeing with Tibetan reading, adds that "because his knees and ankles are well concealed above - his feet have inconspicuous ankles". It seems to be that the Tibetan interpretation is quite opposite to the meaning of the Pāli term and it shows the process of change in the *lakkhana*s of their meaning.

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word "*ussagga*" is the hip and the ascent or descent of a mountain⁵, and the word "*ucchanka*" means the bone of the forehead jutting out. One can see the definition of the above characteristic in Mahāyāna texts with which we are dealing, has been used to describe *ussaṅhapāda*, although these two words have been applied as non-technical terms, to denote entirely different parts of the body. This proves that these terms should be understood etymologically and with a certain flexibility of application. Thus, if one prefers the reading "*utsagga*" - ascent of a mountain - one would naturally interpret this *lakkhana* as "his foot had inclined upward", i.e. his foot has an elevated spot where it slopes downwards, in other words, he has a high instep. On the other hand if one chooses *ucchanka* and interprets it as follows, "his foot has a bone which juts out like the bone of the forehead", which appears to lead us more directly to ankle rather than to any other part of the foot.

According to the definition in the commentary it is clear that the Pali tradition refers to the appearance and function of the ankle joint. It details as follows:

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1. Dial. of the Buddha, Vol. II, p 14
 2. Further Dialogues of the Buddha, Part II, p 72
 3. Csoma, Mahāyupatti, ed by E.D. Ross, Part I, p 93
 4. A. Remusat, Melanges Asiatiques, t. I. p 170
 5. Sanskrit Dictionary, Monier Williams, Vs. utsagga

"*Ussankapāda* means ankles are midway in the length of the foot. Of others ankle's bone is jutting out above the instep. Therefore it is tight and hard; thus it is not easily amenable and the sole cannot be seen. When the Buddha walks his upper part of the body does not move; it keeps unmoved as a golden statue; when he walks his lower portion of the body only moves, because his ankle joints are so flexible. Anyone who witnesses either from behind or in front or from a side could see the entire sole of the feet. They are not like the feet of an elephant which can be seen only from behind."¹

In this manner the *Dharmapradīpikā* adds that "because he has easily amenable and prominent ankles, the Buddha possesses *ussankapāda*."² Hence, according to the Pali tradition and the etymological meaning of the word '*ussanka*' it can be assumed that originally it must have referred to the prominence of the ankle joint and not to the instep.

VIII. Enijaṅghā

This characteristic means his legs are like an antelope's. The *Lalitavistara* and some later works read this as *aineyamṛgarājajaṅghāh*. There it extends the meaning that he has the legs like those of the king of gazelles or of the female antelope. Burnouf³ refers here that the word *mṛgarāja* more often occurs to mean the Lion - king of the beasts, than any other wild animal, so in that case this can be interpreted as meaning "he has the legs of a lion". But if one takes the whole term *aineyamṛgarāja*, it is totally irrelevant to talk about a lion, as there are no *aineya* lions. The Sanskrit should mean the leader of a herd of antelopes, leader because of its better build.

Buddhaghosa explains the simile as he has legs like an antelope's - meaning fullness of muscles of the leg, protuberant, well- modelled joints like an ear of rice or barley⁴.

This characteristic sign implies a feature of a perfect human figure, and later descriptions show it was a sign of beauty and strength.

1. DA. II, p 446

2. Dharmapradīpikā, p 9

3. Lotus, p 579

4. DA. II, p 447

The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* gives an additional description on this *lakkhana* which is more akin to the expositions of heroic characters in early epics, and poetic works in later ages. It says that his two legs were of gradual ascent, well formed, rounded, and pleasant even as those of the black antelope, the deer king, and no one was capable of chasing after him or overturning him; nor did he become tired while walking¹. The *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* notices the Buddha's legs in the same manner and says that they are safe and sound, regularly built up and rounded². The *Arthavinīśaya Sūtra* commentary defines that the Buddha's legs are tapering³.

However, by all those descriptions one could very easily understand that the term *enijaṅghā* has been used to denote that the calves of the Buddha's legs are fully rounded and beautifully shaped with smooth flesh such as no ordinary human being can possess.

IX. Thtakova anonamanto ubhohi hattehi jaṇṇukāni parimasati

The presentation of this characteristic is rather different from those of the other signs. The literal meaning of this phrase is "he touches his knees, standing and without stooping", but the actual characteristic feature which signifies this action is that the Great Man has long arms. The *Lalitavistara*⁴ reads this as *sthitānavanatapralambhabāhu* - when he stands erect his hands reach down to his knees. The Tibetan and Chinese versions are more or less similar to the Pali version.

The Pali commentary defining the word *anonamanta* (without stooping) gives a detailed account of the entire characteristic feature. *Anonamanta* implies that the Buddha is neither humpbacked nor dwarfish where others are either humpbacked or dwarfish. Humpbackedness is where the upper half of the body is not perfect and dwarfish is where the lower part of the body is not perfect. Both halves of the body of a Great Man are perfect in proportion and he can touch or rub his knees with his hands without stooping⁵.

According to the commentary this characteristic implies that not only the great man possesses long arms but also a perfectly proportioned body. But it

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1. GV. p 400
 2. JOIB Vol. 14, p 227
 3. AVS and commentary p 291
 4. LV. p 104
 5. DA. II, p 447

is noteworthy that there are two other characteristics which define the perfection and proportion of the body, i.e. 15th *Brahmujjagatta* and 19th *Nigrodhaparimaṇḍala lakṣhaṇas*. On the other hand Buddhaghosa's interpretation seems to be somewhat out of place as the textual phrase clearly refers, particularly to the length of the arms.

It is interesting to note that this characteristic is one of the most significant physical signs among Brahminical writers when they describe heroes of the past¹. The origin of this idea can be traced back to very early history of civilization. Long arms or *pralambabāhu* is a sign of noble birth in Hindu and Persian literature Persian *Darghabāzu*, Indian *Dīrghabāhu*, and the Persian name translated by the Greeks *Megabazas* - Indian *Mahābāhu*².

An early reference to this sign can be seen in the great Brahaminical epics, *Rāmāyana*³ and *Mahābhārata*⁴. In Sundarakānda of the *Rāmāyana*, wherein Hanuman after seeing the sorrow-stricken Sita in the *Asokavana* and before revealing himself to her is made to describe and extol the physical beauty of Rāma in six verses. In the first verse it says Rama possesses *dīrghabāhu* - long arms⁵. In the Purānas, *Mahābāhu* has been adduced as an epithet of Viṣṇu⁶. Later in Kāvya literature, *Dīrghabāhu*, *Mahābāhu*, or *Parākrāmabāhu* have been used indescriptive poetic narratives as a significant feature of male beauty⁷.

In Brahaminical literature long arms and strong arms are not only the signs of physical beauty but also of noble birth. Especially long arms signify heroism, warlike nature and leadership in the possessor. The *Vṛhatsanhitā*⁸ and the *Sāmudrikāsāstra*⁹ recognize long arms as a bodily sign which indicates one's leadership and kingship.

It can be assumed that the warlike nature of ancient society motivated the origin of this notion. In order to become a king or leader of a society or a nation in the ancient world, it was a quite essential feature to possess strong

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1. Burnouf, Lotus, p 578
 2. Grunwedel - Buddhist Art, p 162
 3. Rāmāyana - II 42.18
 4. Mahābhārata - III.2454
 5. Rāmāyana - II 42.18
 6. Bhagavatapurāna
 7. Harivansa - *Dīrghabahu Dilīpaśya Raghurnaminabhavatsutoh*
 8. Vṛhatsanhitā - ch. 68, v. 35
 9. Samudrika sūtra p 8

arms which provided the ability to extinguish enemies. It is possible that the words *dīrgabāhu* and *mahābāhu* were adduced to give them symbolical meaning. For instance, names like *Sinhabāhu*, *Vikramabāhu*, *Parākrāmabāhu*, which were given to kings of eastern countries¹, show that the word *bāhu* had even been symbolised to give the meaning of kingship or leadership. In these circumstances, this feature had been attributed, with a view not only to showing his bodily accomplishment but also to giving a symbolical meaning denoting the greatness of the *Mahāpurisa* who is considered to be the leader of either the spiritual or the material world. Thus endowing this feature to the Buddha, it may mean symbolically that He is the Great Man of the spiritual world.

X. Kosohitavatthaguyha

This characteristic feature generally means "the male organ concealed in a sheath". Although it refers to the same subject, the nomenclature differs from one text to another, i.e. the *Lalitavistara - Kōsōpagata vastiguhya*, Tibetan texts - *Kōsagatavastiguhyo*, the *Gandavyūha Sutra - Guptamasy kōsavastiguhya*, *Abhisamayāṅkārāloka - kōsa avahita vastiguyho*, etc. Despite these different terms as far as this feature is concerned, the word 'vasti' uniformly occurs in most of the Sanskrit works. 'Vasti' there means the lower part of the abdomen, the hypogastric region and *guhya* signifies "that which is hidden". However, in Pali texts the phrase comes not as *vastiguhya*, but as *vattha-guhya*. The word *vattha* generally means cloth or dress². Hence the literal meaning of *vattha-guhya* is an organ which should be covered by clothing. Edgerton³ thinks *vattha* in Pali is a mistake for 'vatthi' and he quotes the compound word 'vatthikōsa' where it is used to mean the male organ⁴. But the explanation given in the Pali commentary for the same feature shows that *vattha* is the correct form. There it defines as *vatthaguyhanti vatthena guhitabbam añgajātam vuccati*⁵ - that should be concealed by a cloth is called *vatthaguyha*. *Vatthikōsa* generally means a

1. Mahāvamsa, ch. VI.11f, 57.49, 59.32, ch.62.67T

2. PTSD, vs. Vatta

3. DBHS - Vol. II p 459

4. DA I p 275

5. DA. II p 447

membranous sheath enveloping the organ and not the actual male organ. Both these terms have been occasionally used together in one phrase as 'vatthikosena paṭicchanna vatthaguyha'¹ - that which should be hidden by cloth (male organ) is concealed in a sheath. Hence in the Pali list as the word *Kosohita* denotes a membranous sheath the 'vatthaguyha (that should be covered by a cloth) is used as a compound word² to mean the private organ of the Buddha.

Several words occur in Pali literature to mean the male organ, such as *purisavyañjana*, *angajāta*, *linga*, etc. The word *vatthaguyha*, which denotes the same idea in metaphorical form, had been used for the private organ only in the case of the Buddha.

Buddhaghosa gives two possible similes in order to illustrate the characteristic of this *lakkhana*. He says it is concealed in a sheath like that of an elephant or a bull, and like a pericarp of the golden lotus³. The *Gandavyūha Sūtra* further elaborates this characteristic feature as follows:

"His privities in a sheath were well hidden, sunk deep and fully covered even as of a thoroughbred elephant or of a thoroughbred horse. Even when he was without clothes, any woman, man, boy, girl, old person, middle aged, young person, the lustful or potentially lustful would not look at him even with a hint of desire."⁴

This colourful description shows the signs of later development of some characteristics of *Mahāpurisa* together in a super-normal direction.

It is noteworthy that this sign was one of the two marks which aroused the suspicion of those who looked for the thirty-two marks of the Great Man on the Buddha's body. The Buddha is said to have shown his private part

1. VvA. p 252

2. The Bahubbīhi class of compounds consists of those whose meanings are subordinate to the meanings of words other than the members of the compounds themselves (cf. in English "whitewashed") See - Warder, A.K., Introduction to Pali (PTS), London 1974, p 137 f

3. DA. II p 447

4. Gandavyūha, p 400

hidden, with the help or the contrivance of psychic power¹. This contrivance of the Buddha has been debated in the *Milindapañha*. Nagasena has answered that, for the sake of awakening those who have doubt about *Tathāgata*, the Buddha has shown the relevant part of his body by means of his psychic power².

It is interesting to note that all the thirty-two marks are said to have been possessed only by the Buddha and *Cakkavattins*³, but some of the marks may adorn bodies of some eminent persons. Some of those men and women are known to the Pali canon, for example, the Brāhmaṇ Bāvāri had three marks, of which one was the sheathed male organ⁴.

In the *Mahāvamsa* it has been noticed that Nandimitta, one of the ten warriors of King Dutthagamini is said to have possessed this characteristic⁵.

It seems that it was believed in the early days that this sign indicated the extent of the physical strength of a man. Varahamihira who discusses the physiognomical importance of the bodily marks in the Brahminical tradition, confirms this idea predicting that the sheathed privities indicate kingship and power⁶. Thus it can be assumed that this characteristic has been in vogue in the Indian tradition since the remote past. On the other hand, the attainment of *Arahantship* denotes transcending and going beyond sexuality altogether; i.e. beyond masculinity and femininity. Therefore in the case of the Buddha this feature could symbolise or foretell the possibility of such transcendence.

XI. Suvaṇṇavaṇṇa

This characteristic means his complexion is golden in colour. The *Lakkhana Sutta* further adds: "*Kāñcaṇa-sannibhattaca*" which also means that his skin resembles the colour of gold. The *Lalitavistara* takes the two terms *Suvaṇṇaavaṇṇa* and *Sukhumachavi* to mean that his skin is as fine and golden in colour, but the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Abhisamayāṅkāra* read it in a similar manner as the Pali version.

1. M.II. P 135, Sn. p 105

2. Mil. p 167

3. SnA. II. p 457

4. Sn. vs 1022

5. Mahāvamsa, Ch. 23.5

6. Vṛuhatsanhitā, Ch. 68, vs. 8

The *lakkhana* does not refer particularly to the colour of the skin but to its gloss. Buddhaghosa explains, "*Suvaṇṇavaṇṇu* implies that the complexion of the skin of the Buddha is like that of a golden statue which is well polished and shining"¹. The simile of golden colour is quite a common epithet in Indian aesthetic thought for the pleasant complexion of both the male and the female, as the golden colour signifies the fair and pleasant complexion of an ideal figure. It was quite possible that this would have been attributed to the Buddha who was said to have possessed a fine complexion. On several occasions it had been said that his actual colour of skin was fair and gifted with great beauty of complexion². Further, the Pali Canon reports that on some special occasions the colour of the Buddha's skin shone brightly. In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* Buddha addressed Ananda:

"There are two occasions on which the colour of the skin of the *Tathāgata* becomes clear and exceedingly bright, what are the two; on the night, Ananda, on which *Tathāgata* attains the supreme and perfect insight and on the night in which he passes finally away ... on these two occasions the colour of the skin of the *Tathāgata* becomes clear and exceedingly bright."³

This explanation was later developed to a great extent and it adduced more miraculous ideas to the complexion of the Buddha.

According to later texts the skin of the *Tathāgata* is not only ever shining but also emits golden rays. The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* provides enough evidence of this later stage of development. It says that "he was of golden complexion, shining like *Jāmbunda* gold, having a halo extending a fathom all round, adorned with a circle of rays like a golden blaze, and having the body ornament of the sweet rays emitting from all pores of the skin and removing darkness."⁴

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1. DA II p 447
 2. D.I. p 120
 3. D. II p 135
 4. GV. p 400

XII. Sukhumachavi

Another extraordinary quality of the skin of the Buddha is given by this *lakkhana*: "His skin is delicate and smooth". The text itself explains the nature of this sign as *Sukhumattā Chaviyā rajojallam kāye na upalippati*¹ - because of the smoothness of the skin, no dust cleaves to his body. The *Lalitavistara* not taking this quality as an independent sign explains it together with the term *Suvaṇṇavaṇṇa*. The *Gaṇḍayūha* reads it as *Sūksmachavi* and in the *abhisamayāṅkārā* as *Slaksanacchavi*.

By defining the delicateness of the skin this characteristic refers to refinement of the body of the Buddha. Buddhaghosa explains that as neither the dust nor dirt gathers or lodges in the body of the Buddha. It slips away as a drop of water on a lotus leaf. By attributing superhuman qualities Buddhaghosa gives a mythical colouring to this characteristic sign and says that the Buddha's body is ever refined. He washes his hands, etc., to make his body to become agreeable to seasons of the year and to give the devotees opportunities to acquire merits.²

Although the possession of a delicate and fine complexion is not an unnatural feature in a man, the definition and demonstration of *sukhumachavi* here shows the gradual development of the attribution of extraordinary elements to the body of the Buddha by means of elaborating the *Lakkhana*.

Though the Canon reports that the Buddha cleansed and washed his body as any other human being would have done³, the followers regarded the Buddha's body to be ever refined in the spiritual doctrine, the Mahāyāna texts also explain that the Buddha's physical actions were performed only for the sake of conformity to worldly life (*lokānuvartana*)⁴.

XIII. Ekekalomā

This characteristic deals with the hair (of the body) of the Great Man. It says in the texts - *ekekalomā hoti, ekekāni lomakūpesu jatāni*⁵ - "the down

1. D. II p 17

2. DA. II. p 447

3. M.I. p 160

4. LV p 238 MV p 168

5. D. II p 17

on it grows in single hairs, one to each pore". The *Lalitavistara*¹ gives the same definition as in the Pali texts, but some other Sanskrit lists² expand the meaning and say that his hair grows one in each pore and turns towards the right (*Pradakṣiṇāvarta*). It seems that they have taken the two characteristics (*ekekaloma* and *uddhaggaloma*) together, as one.

This *lakkhana* does not lead to any compilation, as such Buddhaghosa too does not make any comment in this connection. However, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* presenting a poetic description adds that his hair having the colour of blue sapphires, curls to the right, is well-concentrated, properly rooted and well-established.³

Apparently, this characteristic is of little importance when one considers the special features of a human figure. Burnouf points out that "we can better understand the value of it if we consider that we are here dealing with a man born in the Indian climate. There the heat energetically stimulates the action of tissues placed on the surface of the body, and which can give place to the exaggerated development of the hairs"⁴.

However, in Brahminical tradition, this has been regarded as a sign of a king⁵, and it can be assumed that the idea of a single hair on each pore (*ekekaloma*) might have had a common origin in early Indian literature.

XIV. Uddhaggaloma

Unlike about some other *lakghanas*, the Pali texts provide an adequate description of this characteristic together with its enumeration.

"*Uddhaggāni lōmāni jātāni nilāni añjanavaṇṇāni kuṇḍalavattāni padakkhināvattaka jātan*"⁶ - or down on his body turns upward every hair of it blue black in colour like eye paint in little curling rings, curling to the right.

1. LV. p 104

2. MV. I p 227, Daśasahaśrika Prajñapāramitā - Sten Konow, p 609

3. GV. p 400

4. Burnouf. Lotus, p 571

5. Vṛhatsanhitā - romekaikam kūpake paṛthivanam - ch. 68.v.

6. D. II p 17

In this description it can be noted that this characteristic bears four qualities:

- i. *Uddhaggāni* - turns upward or points upward;
- ii. *Nīlānījanavaṇṇāni* - blue black in colour similar to the colour of collyrium;
- iii. *Kuṇḍalāvattāni* - turning or twisting round (curled);
- iv. *Padakkhināvatta* - turns towards the right.

The Sanskrit texts differ from each other in defining these four qualities: the *Lalitavistara* - *Ūrdvagrāhbipradakśinavārtaroma*¹ (his hair points upward and turns towards the right at the upper end). The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* - he had dark blue hair shining like the blue colour of the *Vairocana* jewel, smooth, soft and well-curved with tips turning to the right, having noble roots not lifted up, compressed, not disordered, and fixed in proper place.

The *abhisamayālaṅkāra* - *Ūrdvāgra - roma, ūrdvapradakśināvar-takuṇḍala roma*² - the hair of his body points upward turning to the right, curling in rings.

These variegated explanations evidently show that the primary quality of the *lakkhana*, that of "hairs pointing upwards", is uniformly present in all the sources, while additional comments differ. In the commentary Buddhaghosa does not give a proper definition of the four divisions of the mark, and uses a poetical phrase to explain the primary quality of this mark - *Uddhaggaloma*. He assumes that the hairs of the Body of the Buddha point upward at the edge of curls, "as they are gazing at splendour of his face"³. However, at the time of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, this *lakkhana* had been developed into an ideal sign of a female beauty in Indian language.

1. LV p 104

2. JOIB. Vol 14, p 227

3. DA. II p 447

XV. Brahmujjuggatta

This characteristic has been translated by many scholars as 'he has a frame divinely straight'¹. But the literal meaning of the term *Brahma + ujjuggatta* is having "a straight body like that of Brahma."

The word *Brahma* (neuter) is met with as early as the time of *Rgveda*, but it was employed there to mean all-pervading, self existing power². Although the masculine form of the term *Brahma*, denoting a priest, occurs in the *Rgveda*³, neither the neuter form nor masculine form, of *Brahma*, appears in the sense of the God, Creator.⁴

Brahma (masculine) as a God appears later. It is mentioned in the *Upanisads*, chiefly with the intention of denoting the neuter *Brahma*. It is in the *Satapata Brāhmaṇa* that one comes across the first identification of *Brahaspati* with *Brahma* and in the *Sūtras* it is identified as *Prajāpati*, Vedic creator-god with *Brahma*.⁵

In the early *Upanisads* the expression *Brahman* is regarded as an impersonal, eternal, self-existent, unifying principle⁶. This notion is later supported by such comprehensive expressions as "*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*" (or all this really is Brahma). *Brahma* is the invisible source of all things⁷. The notion of neuter *Brahma* of the *Upanisads* has not been found in Buddhist texts, although Brahma as the creator of the universe has been referred to 'ditṭhi' (wrong views) in *Brahmajāla Sutta* of *Dīgha Nikāya*.⁸

In early Buddhist texts the word *Brahma* is used to denote a member of a species of deities inhabiting one of the sixteen high heavens (*Brahmaloka*) of the *Rūpa*-world, of Buddhist cosmology.⁹ A.B. Keith is of the opinion that

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1. Rhys Davids - Dial. Vol. II, p 15
 2. Dictionary of Hinduism, p 49
 3. Vedic Index, Vol. II, p 77
 4. Dictionary of Hinduism, p 49
 5. Satapata Brahmana, (SBE) II, p 23, 59
 6. Vedic Index, Vol. II, p 79
 7. Mand. up. 1.1.6 - 7
 8. D.I. p 18
 9. DPPN, Vol. II, p 336

the Buddhists improve the idea of union with the absolute Brahma and adopt it to the schemes of meditation (viz. Brahmachariya) which they take over from Brahminism¹. This opinion is not quite acceptable, because in Buddhism there is no such notion of reunion with either the Brahman or any other form of absolute. To be born in a *Brahma* world is regarded as only an existence in one of the sixteen divine realms and the life of Brahmaloaka is also subject to change and impermanence². Buddha completely rejected the idea of the creator god Brahman and, gave a rational and ethical explanation to the concept of *Brahma* in accordance with his own interpretation of the universe³. E.J. Thomas observes

"What is expounded here is not the Brahmin theory at all, but the possibility of attaining to the *Brahma* world as Buddhists conceived it to exist that is by the practice of *Brahmavihāra*. But all this whether understood according to Brahmin or Buddhist theories, has nothing to do with *Upanisadic* teaching about union with *Brahma*."⁴

Hence in Buddhist literature Brahmas are generally the deities of the *Brahma* realm, and particularly the chief of them is called Great Brahma (*Mahābrahma*).

However, the word *Brahma* has played a more important place as an adjective rather than as a noun in Pali literature. Etymologically it derived from *brh* (to increase). By expanding the meaning of the word *Brahma*, it came to include in itself several meanings like great, best, excellent and highest. It has been further expanded to mean holy, pious, divine and celestial⁵. This word has also been used in several places in the texts

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1. Keith, A.B., Buddhist Philosophy of India & Ceylon, p 71
 2. *Brahmalokopi kho avuso anicco addhuvo sakkāya pariyāpanno sādāyasma brahmaloka cittam vytṭhapetva sakkāya nirodham cittam upasmhari S.V. p 410*
 3. D.II, p 82; D.I p 235 f
 4. History of Buddhist Thought - p 87
 5. PTSD, p 492 f

synonymously with the word 'Dhamma', such as *Dhammakāya - Brahmakāya*¹, *Dhammabhūta - Brahmabhūta*², *Dhammacakka - Brahmacakka*³, *Dhammayāna - Brahmayāna*⁴, etc. In all these compounds it emphasises the meaning of the excellence, greatness, perfectness, not *Brahma* (person). Similarly the compound word *Brahmujjuggatta* means ("erect and perfect body)" - with the assumption that *Brahma* has a perfect body. Buddhaghosa illustrates this on the basis of the above explanation. Further he says:

"Buddha has a straight body like that of *Brahma*. He does not stoop nor lean backwards, as if catching at the stars, nor has a crooked spine, but towers up symmetrically like a golden tower gate in a city of the gods."⁵

However, this *lakkhana* is not mentioned in the *Lalitavistara*, whereas the *Gandavyūha Sūtra* and some other Sanskrit texts mention it as under *vrahatṛājūgātratā*⁶. Moreover, the next stage of the development of this characteristic indicates not only the straight body but also its height. The *Abhisamyālankāra* says the Buddha's body is seven cubits tall and upright⁷. Further the *Abhidhamadīpa* adds that being unbent and well built up (*upacita*) and tall like ten *tāla* trees he possessed a big and straight body like that of the *Brahma*.⁸

In this connection it is important to note here that some scholars have taken the word *Brahma* to mean the quality of divinity. But the above discussion has shown that it is not quite correct. The word *Brahma* had been the highest "Reality" that was respected and venerated by the Brahmanical tradition. When Buddhism appeared in India in this atmosphere the word *Brahma* was adapted to the Buddhist terminology in connection with greatness and perfectness, etc. Thus the term *Brahmujjuggatta* in Pali texts gives the meaning that the Buddha has an erect and perfect body.

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1. D.III, p 84
 2. D.III, p 84, M.I., p 111, III, p 195 S. III, p 83
 3. M.I, p 69, A. II, p 9, III, p 417, V. p 33
 4. S.V., p 5
 5. DA. II, p 448
 6. GV. p 400
 7. JOIB. Vol. 14, p 227
 8. Abhidhamadīpa, p 191

XVI. Sattussada

The word *ussada* has many meanings: prominence, protuberance, fullness and arrogance. *Satta* also has two meanings: seven (Sans. *sapta*) and being (Sans. *satva*). As Rhys Davids examines,

"The phrase *satta-ussada* is applied to all the meanings above mentioned; evidently this has resulted in obliterating the original application and meaning of the word."¹

In the context of *Mahāpurisa Lakkhana*, *Sattussada* denotes fullness of seven places of the Body. Rhys Davids translates this *lakkhana* as "possessing seven 'convexes'"². The *Lakkhana sutta* further enumerates the seven convexes, on both hands, on both feet, on both shoulders, and on the trunk³. Burnouf translates this as having seven protuberances⁴. Further scholars have rendered this term variously as: seven full places⁵, seven spaces in statures⁶, and seven prominences⁷.

According to the commentary this characteristic does not expose any abnormality for a human being and it is interpreted as the accomplishment of a perfect human figure.

"Fullness of muscles of above seven places is called *sattussada*. Generally, in some human beings' veins are seen outwardly on their hands and feet, bones emerge on two shoulders and trunk and they look hideous like human ghosts. Unlike such ill-shaped persons the Great Man possesses seven 'convexes' which give his body proper shape and beauty."⁸

Hence *sattussada* is used for the Buddha's body to indicate that he had a well-framed body which is perfectly shaped and indicates an appearance pleasant to look at.

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1. PTSD. vs Satta-ussada, and ussada
 2. Dial. II, p 15
 3. D. III, p 146
 4. Lotus, p 568
 5. Remusat - Melanges Asiatiques, I p 169
 6. Csoma - Mahāvvyutpatti, p 93
 7. Thomas, E.J., Life of the Buddha, p 220
 8. DA. II, p 447

XVII. Sīhapubbaddhakāya

The literal meaning of this characteristic is: "the front half of the body is like that of a lion". Burnouf translates the word *sīhapurvardhakāya* of *Lalitavistara* as the "anterior part of his body having a similar form to that of a lion" and states that this is exactly what the Tibetan interpretation means.¹

Sinha (Pāli - *Sīha*) denotes the lion, and the king of beasts since the time of *Rgveda*. The roaring of the lion was often alluded to and is called thundering. The comparison of the nature of the lion with human or divine personalities goes back into antiquity. In the *Rgveda*, *Rudra* and *Angi* are compared to a lion.²

Although the lion is a beast, in later times its qualities and physical features have been taken into account in order to illustrate the noble characters of human beings on spheres social, ethical and political. The word lion has been used in the sense of noble, chief, beast, etc³, and played an important role in early Indian literature. In Buddhist texts this simile appears in many places and is more often used as an epithet of the Buddha. It is said that the Buddha was called a lion. "*Sīhoti kho bhikkhave tathagatassa adhivacanam*" - "a lion, monks, is the name for the tathāgata⁴." A *sutta* in *Anguttara Nikāya* compares the lion's roar to the *Tathāgata's* teaching of the *Dhamma* in assembly and the lion's dignified approach towards the elephants, buffaloes, etc., to the Buddha's method of presenting his teaching to monks, nuns, male and female lay disciples⁵. Furthermore, some of the Buddha's daily habits are also compared to that of the lion in the Canon. The Buddha's way of lying down, or sleeping is called *Sihaseyya*, and it is described in the *Mahāpārīnibbāna sutta*: "*Atha khō bhagavā dakkhinena passena sīhaseyyāṃ kappesi, pāde pādāṃ acchādāya sato sampajāno utthānasaññiṃ manasikaritva*" - "then the exalted one laid himself down on his right side, with one foot resting on the other, calm and self possessed he meditated, intending to rise up again in due time."⁶ Among the various postures of sleeping, *sīhaseyya* is the best

1. Lotus, p 567

2. Vedic Index, Vol. II, p 448

3. PTSD, Sv Siha

4. A.III, p 122; A. II, p 24; S.I, p 28

5. A. III, p 122

6. D. II p 134

way of lying down¹. *Sīhanāda* or *sīhassara* is also described as a great and heroic voice. "*Sīhanādam nadatīti seṭṭha nādam nadati, yathā sīho sīhabalena samnnāgatō sabbattha visāradō vigata lomahansō sīhanādam nadati evam tathāgata sīhopi*" - "the lion's roar means the unique voice; the lion who is vigorous, wakeful and fearless makes the undaunted roar; such is the voice of the Buddha."²

"*Sīhanadanti paravāda chindana sakavāda samussāpanaṅca abhīta nādam naditvā*" - "here the lion's roar means the utterance which vanquishes the arguments of opponents and establishes one's own views."³ According to the above evidence it can be seen that the word *sīha* is used in the sense of superiority by ascribing certain features, which are peculiar to lions only. Similarly, the characteristics of *sīhapubbaddhakāya* denotes the fullness of the chest or upper half of the Great Man. Buddhaghosa takes it differently as: "*Sīhassa pubbaddham viya kāyo assāti sīhapubbaddhakāya*" - "because his body is like the upper half of the lion, it is called *Sīhapubbaddhakāya*."⁴ Furthermore, he continues to explain his view that the lion's upper body is well built and the lower part is incomplete, but the Great Man's entire body is complete like that of the upper part of a lion. Again Buddhaghosa gives the following passage in order to support his interpretation, indicating that the passage has been quoted from a text, but it is most unlikely that it is not found in the Canon. It says:

"Buddha uttered: 'When fruits of the wholesome action ripen, one receives a body of which, the features have been formed long, because they look beautifully long; short, as they look beautifully short, and features that have been formed abundant, slim, full and round, as they look beautifully abundant, slim, full and round.'⁵

Although this description presents a colourful idea of the proportions of the entire body, it does not directly support Buddhaghosa's view on *Sīhapubbaddhakāya*. The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* too, seems to understand this characteristic as it refers to the upper half of the body. It states that the upper part

1. DA. II p 618

2. AA. (heva) p 823

3. DA. II, p 574

4. DA. II p 448

5. DA. II, p 448

of his body is like that of a lion, with a body rising upward in proper arrangement, having an extended and concealed chest and an elevation far better shaped than that of a noble king of beasts.¹

However, it is more factual to assume that this characteristic refers to the upper part of the body, and implies its perfect shape as the word 'Siha' has been used as an epithet to the Buddha to express his greatness.

XVIII. Citantaramsa

This characteristic means that there is no furrow in the inter- scapular region. Some scholars seem to be not quite certain about the meaning of this term. Csoma translates the Tibetan word as 'of a fine complexion'² and, Remusat takes it as 'his shoulders are rounded and full'³. Both these meanings seem to be incorrect, because the word *antaramsa* does not refer to the shoulders, but to the part in between them⁴. Therefore the term *Cita + Antara + amsa* literally means that 'he has a shoulder interval filled up'. The commentary explains clearly "*antaramsam vuccati dvinnam koṭṭhāsānamantaram. tam citam paripuṇṇam antaramsam assāti citantaranso.*"⁵ - *Antarāsa* means the space between two shoulder blades. Complete and full shoulder blade intervals are called *citantaramsa*.

Further the *commentary* describes the characteristic as "the two sides of the shoulder blades have no depression in the middle, nor do they look separated, a flesh membrane expands from the hip upwards covering the whole back and appears as an erected golden slab."⁶

Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra and *Abhisamayālankārālōka* agree with the *commentary's* explanation. *Arthaviniscayasūtra* follows the same interpretation-and further comments: "the space between the Buddha's shoulders is well filled in. It is not uneven, like others."⁷

1. GV. p 400

2. Cs. Mahāvvyutpatti, p 93

3. Remusat - Melanges Asiatique, Vol. I, p 169

4. PTSD, p 47

5. DA. II p 449

6. DA. II, p 449

7. GV. p 400

XIX. Nigrodhaparimaṇḍala

The term *Nigrodhaparimaṇḍala* means the circumference of the Banyan tree, which has been applied to compare the body to the body of the Great Man. This is also one of the major marks that has been defined in the Pali texts. It reads as follows: "*Nigrodha parimaṇḍalō hōti yāvatakvasakāyō, tāvatakvasavyāmō, yāvatakvasavyāmō tāvatakvasakāyo*" - "the proportion of his body has the symmetry of the banyan tree; the length of his arms is equal to his height."¹

Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Tripitaka*, the *Lalitavistara*, and the *Gandavyūha Sūtra*, the *Abhisamayāḷāṅkāralōka*, and many other texts give almost similar descriptions of this important characteristic. This proves that the idea of the well proportioned body of the Buddha was quite an old one and common to all sects

The word *Nyagrodha* means both "Indian fig tree" (*Ficus Indica*) and a fathom (measured by the arms extended)², and *parimaṇḍala* denotes round or circular.³ Burnouf says that "as the Sanskrit *Nyagrodha*, means both span and fig-tree, one does not notice at first glance what the Buddhist wished to express by the characteristic."⁴

Tibetan translators who apply this to the height of the Great Man, see in it the name of the Indian fig tree and translate it as "he has a rounded body like the trunk of the *Nyagrodha* tree."

1. D. II, p 18; D. II, p 143; M. II

2. Apte-Sanskrit English Dictionary, Vol. II, p 442

3. Lotus. p 567

4. Ibid.

Remusat translates it as "full and sufficient majesty"¹, but this idea reappeared in Mongolian and Manchou versions as the *Nyagroda* tree². This shows that the meaning of the word *Nyagroda* is the tree, which is found in India and is called *ficus Indica*³. Burnouf has taken into account the nyagrodha tree and translates the term *Nyagroda parimaṇḍala* as: "his stature is like that of the trunk of the *Nyagroda*."⁴ It seems that he has understood this term, forgetting its real significance as a characteristic of the Mahāpurisa. It is noteworthy that this feature can be conceived not only in the terms of the ordinary human body, but in terms of the Indian concept of the ideal human figure and the great personality of the Buddha.

The *Nyagroda parimaṇḍala* sign; the proportions of beauty in a male figure is common to Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists.⁵ The textual explanation is quite sufficient to understand the Buddhist view of this sign, that it refers not only to stature but to the whole proportions of the body. Further the commentary evidently proves that the Buddhist tradition clearly understood the word *Nyagroda* as fig tree and took as a simile its circumference to the ideal proportion. Buddhaghosa illustrates the simile: "whether there are fifty or a hundred branches, the banyan tree is equal in its height and width. As such, the Great Man's stature and compass are of equal height and width."⁶

In Brahaminical literature this characteristic sign appears from the times of early Indian epics. *Sīta* when describing her husband *Rāma* before *Rāvana*, while the latter abducted her to the forest of Pancavati, says:

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1. A. Remusat - Melanges Asiatiques, Vol. I. p 169
 2. Lotus. p 567
 3. Apte - Sanskrit Dictionary, Vol. II p 942
 4. Lotus. p 571
 5. C. Wickramagamage, Principles of Buddhist Iconography and Iconometry with special reference to the Buddha Image (Unpub. thesis Ph D. Lancaster) 1975, p 127
 6. DA. II p 449

"*Sarvalakṣaṇa sampannāṃ nyagrodha parimandalam
Satyasanvam sahābhāga maham rāmanubrtā*"

"I am a dependent of that great and truthful Rama, who is gifted with auspicious marks, and like unto a fig tree."¹

The *Matsya Purāna*, chapter 118, as quoted in the *Sabdakalpadruma* explains *nyagrodhaparimandala laksana* similar to the Pali text². Varahamihira who deals with the category of five great men according to the physiognomy of Brahaminical tradition, notices this sign as a mark of kingship³. It is interesting to note that this characteristic sign has been referred to even in its application to the beauty of the female figure in later works⁴.

These late Brahaminical works show that the idea of a symmetrical proportion of the human figure is not exclusive to the Buddhistic or Brahaminical traditions, but a property of common Indian aesthetic tradition and denoted the noble character of the possessor.

XX. Samavattakkhandha

This means that the Buddha has evenly rounded shoulders. Generally in the crude sense *khandha* denotes, bulk, but specially in referring to an animal it means the bulk of the body, viz. *Hatthikkhandha varagato* - on the back of the state elephant⁵. When *khandha* refers to a person it implies the shoulder or back, viz. *Nangalam khandhe karitvā* - having placed the plough on the shoulders⁶. Rhys Davids translates *khandha* as bust and stresses that "accorō-

1. Rāmāyana - Āranykanda 47.33

2. "Nyagrōdhau tu smṛtau bāhū vyāmo nyagrodha ucyaṭe vyāmena uccharayo yasya adha urdhvam ca dehinah Samocchrayo parināho nyagrodhaparimandalah. " *Matsya Purāna*, ch. 118

3. " Ucchrayah parināhastu yasyatulyam'sa rīrinah anatah parthiva jñeyo nyagrodhaparimandalah" *Vrhatsanhita* Ch. 67, v.7

4. "Stanau sukattḥinau yasyā nitambe ca visālatā madhye kshīnā bhavedha sa nyagrodhaparimandala" *Sabdakalpadruma*

5. J.I. p 325; PvA, p 75

6. S. I. p 115

ing to the commentary the exterior of the whole vocal apparatus is here meant rather than the trunk or shoulders only."¹ Burnouf and Remusat take the word *skhandha* as arms, but it is not found thus in Sanskrit literature. Only the upper part of the arm has been called *skhandha*².

However, as Rhys Davids thinks, the *Commentary* has not understood *skhandha* as bust. Buddhaghosa takes it as the trunk and contrasts the trunk of the Great Man to that of the ordinary man: necks of others are long like a crane's or crooked like a trumpet or flat like a boar's. Unlike others the Great Man's neck looks gilded in gold. No veins jut out when he speaks. His voice sounds like thunder. In this description it is clearly seen that Buddhaghosa only refers to the neck. In Pali texts *khandha* has not been used for the neck and it implied only the shoulder or the back in the case of the human figure.³ In this connection Buddhaghosa's explanation seems to be out of place.

The term used in Sanskrit texts is *susanvṛtta skandha* and the word *vṛtta* (Pali *vatta*) indicates curved or round shape. Thus the Sanskrit expression 'well rounded or perfectly curved' is more applicable to the entire neck rather than to the shoulders. By agreeing with Buddhaghosa's view the *Abhisamyānkāra* suggests '*Susliṣṭa parimandalāgrivātd susamvṛttaskhandha*' - "because the shape of his neck is well rounded and lightly knit, his shoulders are gently curved.

Buddhaghosa's interpretation is more likely dependent upon by his acceptance of *samavattita-susanvṛtta* for *samavatta*. *Vatta* in this context means grown or luxurious, and not the curve. Therefore the original meaning of this characteristic *samavattakkhandha* might have suggested perfectly and equally shaped, well-grown shoulders. The *commentary* and the Sanskrit texts' reference to the neck was due to the idea of roundness, as it is easily applied to the neck.

XXI. Rasagghasaggi

This characteristic feature focuses on the Great Man's organ of sense of taste. Literally the term *rasaggasaggi* means 'prominent sensory taste recep-

1. Dial. II, p 15

2. Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dictionary Sv. Skhandha

3. PTSD Sv. Khandha

tors.' The text itself provides an explanatory note as: "*Rasaggasaggi hōti uddhaggassa rasaharaniyō gīvāya jātā honti samabhivāhiniyo*"¹. Rhys Davids translates this as follows: "his taste is supremely acute: of anything on the tip (of the tongue) sensations of taste are produced in the throat and carrying equally well."²

The Sanskrit versions of the characteristic vary slightly from each other, such as *rasarasāgravat*³, *rasarasāgratā*⁴, *rasagnātā*⁵, and *kambugrīvātā*⁶. Burnouf translates the term in the *Lalitavistara* as he has an excellent taste, and says: "literally it means that he has a superiority of taste for flavour."⁷ Remusat gives a strange meaning as "saliva of superior taste"⁸.

It seems that the above translations and most translations of later scholars who rendered this term, have not clearly understood the actual formation of this interesting characteristic, and only explained its function. The Pali term *rasaggasaggi* is a combination of *rasa* + *ghas* + *aggita*, which gives the meaning of sensory taste receptors. Moreover, *rasamgasanfīti - rasaggasā*, enjoying of taste is *rasaggasā tā aggā assāti rasaggasaggi*, one who possesses such nerves of taste is called *rasaggasaggi*. Furthermore, he explains that the Buddha possesses seven-hundred delicate and keen sensory receptors which are concentrated in the throat, so that even a quantity of food the size of a sesame seed benefits the whole body.⁹

The Sanskrit terms such as *rasa* + *rasāgravat*, and *rasāgra sagri*, also can be understood in the same manner. The *Gandavyuha sūtra* defines the term *kambugrīvātā* as taste receptors in the vicinity of his throat and mouth were equal and entirely filled in"¹⁰ where the physical aspect of the organ is emphasised. Hence, *aggi (agri)* retains its physical form and the entire characteristic means that the Great Man has the sensory taste receptors which

1. D. II p 143

2. Dial. III p 15

3. LV p 104

4. MV, p 227

5. Abhisamayāṅkārā JOIB. Vol. 14, p 266

6. GV p 404

7. Lotus. p 566

8. Remusat - Melanges Asiatiques, Vil. I, p 170

9. DA. II, p 449

10. GV. p 401

register the flavours beyond the point at which the sense of taste operate for other men.

The *Majjhima Nikāya commentary*¹ further explains that it was this feature that aided the ascetic Gotama to remain alive during his practice of austerities, and he could exist even with the smallest fraction of food. Moreover, it states that this feature leads to the protection of one's physical health, as it provides the ability to judge the digestibility of any food. Furthermore, it could be added that the Great Man is supposed to have had supreme sensitivity in all five sense organs of which the sense of taste is but one.

XXII. Sīhahanu

This is the second characteristic which has a feature relating to the lion. It says that the Buddha's jaws are like a lion's. Tibetan and Chinese sources, the *Mahāvastu*, the *Lalitavistara* and many other Sanskrit texts agree with the Pali term *Sīhahanu*.

As in the 17th *Lakkhana, sīhapubbadhakāya*, this characteristic does not copy the simile in every detail, but only follows one apparent feature which is peculiar to the lion. Buddhaghosa explains, "a lion's upper jaw is perfect and full, but not the lower". Both jaws of the Great Man are as perfect in shape as the upper jaw of a lion. Further the Commentator adds that it is also like the moon of the twelfth day of the first half of the (lunar) month.²

Although the term *sīhahanu* refers to jaws, according to commentarial literature and some other Sanskrit texts³, this characteristic sign denotes fullness of the face.

The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* defines it as follows: "his jaws being well pressed against each other, his face perfectly shaped, noble and clean, and his mouth well stretched". This idea has been further developed in the *Abhisamyālakāra*, which states "because his jaw is like a circular mirror, well finished, powerful, pleasant to behold and fascinating; he has jaws like a lion."⁴

1. MA. III, p 381

2. DA. II, p 450

3. LV P 104; GV p 410

4. JOIB, Vol. 14 p 226

XXIII. Cattāṛisadanta

This character means that the Great Man possesses forty teeth. Pali and Sanskrit traditions differ in enumerating *lakṣhanas* which refer to teeth, and some of the separate marks have become united into one single characteristic in Sanskrit texts. In the *Lalitavistara*, *cattāṛisadanta* is shown together with 'samadanta', as one *lakṣhana*, which is called *catvārisamadanta* - he has forty teeth which are even¹. The Tibetan list agrees with the *Lalitavistara*. The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* follows the same tradition and explains the position of forty even teeth:² "The Great Man possesses the sign of having exactly forty teeth, that means he has a complete set of teeth. When he chews a mouthful of food even once, all that food becomes properly masticated even to the last grain of rice."

Although the *Abhisamyālakāra* enumerates 'Samadanta as a separate *lakṣhana*, it names this characteristic as *samacatvāṛisadanta*. However, it gives two different meanings to the word 'sama' in these two different places. Here it explains they are exactly forty, neither bent nor crooked, he has a total of forty even teeth³. It has been stated in the Pali Canon that this characteristic sign has been attributed to the Great Man even at his infancy.⁴ Rhys Davids points out that this characteristic indicates that the Great Man as an adult possessed eight more teeth than the normal number. Neither the text nor the commentary have explained how the learned Brahmanas saw these signs in the babe as stated in the story of Prince Vipassi in *Mahāpadāna sutta*.⁵

It is interesting, however, to note how in ancient India the possession of more than the common number of teeth was regarded as an auspicious characteristics of the Great Man, as seen in the description of the divine dwellers of the *Svetadvīpa* who possessed forty-eight teeth as *śāsta Catvāṛīsa dantavyuktāḥ*⁶. It seems that this characteristic of *cattāṛisadanta* (forty teeth) was a common trend of Indian thought to increase qualities or characteristics numerically to denote the superiority of a person.

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1. LV p 104
 2. CV. p 401
 3. JOIB, Vol. 14, p 228
 4. D. II, p 16
 5. Dial. Vol. II, p 15
 6. Mahābhārata XII, p 135 II

XXIV. Samadanta

This characteristic feature establishes that the Great Man possesses regular and even teeth. Tibetan and Nepali sources and the *Lalitavistara* do not take this as a separate *lakkhana*, and describe it together with *cat-tārisadanta*. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Abhisamyālanakara* recognize it is similar to the Pali *lakkhana* as *samadanta*.

The Commentary describes this *lakkhana* in comparison with other's teeth of which some are long, some short, and some in different sizes, with the Buddha's teeth which are even and regular. The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* further clarifies that his teeth are even, not curved nor interrupted and all are equal in size, not split asunder and not overfull.¹

XXV. Avivaradanta

Avivaradanta means that there are no gaps or interstices between one tooth and another. The word *avirala* in Pali generally means 'not sparse', 'common' or 'not rare'.² But the Sanskrit word *avirala* means continuous, close, compact, dense or thick'.³ The *Lalitavistara* and most of the Mahayana texts state the term as *avirala danta*, which means he has teeth without any spaces between them. The Tibetan texts interpret it as "he has solid teeth"⁴. This Translation is a precise one for '*avirala*', since it reflects several meanings such as 'thick', 'large', or 'solid', but according to Pali and Sanskrit explanations it is more certain that the correct meaning of *avirala* in this context is without any space or gaps.

Buddhaghosa correctly understood this and explains as follows:

"Others have gaps between their teeth, and another like those of a crocodile; when eating fish or meat the interstices are filled, but

1. GV p 401

2. PTSD, Vs Virala

3. Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dictionary p 109

4. Mahāvvyutpatti p 93

the Great Man's teeth are close together like a set of diamonds fixed in a golden setting."¹

The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* interprets this characteristic as 'aviralāvi-samadanta', adding that they are very regular.²

It is important to note that even and regular teeth are regarded as auspicious and a mark of beauty in the Brahminical tradition. In the science of physiognomy, the *Sāmudrikāśāstra* says that uniform and evenly set teeth without gaps indicate vast riches and beauty, and such a person, whether man or woman will enjoy royal pleasure³. It seems that the attribution of this feature to *Mahāpurisa* is comparable with common aesthetic outlook.

XXVI. Susukkadāṭha

This can be understood in two different ways. The word *dāṭhā* (*Sanskrit - danṣṭrā*) generally means a large tooth, fang or tusk⁴, but it has been understood as teeth in a general sense also. While most other scholars translate this term *susukkadāṭha* as: "he has very white teeth"⁵, Rhys Davids takes it as "his eye-teeth are very lustrous"⁶. Sanskrit sources are distinct in naming this characteristic while some lists enumerate as '*susukla danṣṭra*'⁷: others prefer *susukla danta*⁸. In examining what was originally meant by this characteristic, one has to take note of some important facts. If the term *susukladanta* was commonly used to denote white teeth, it is difficult to comprehend why the word 'danta' has not been used for this, as in the case of *cattārisadanta*, *samadanta*, and *aviraladanta*, as have been listed earlier. On the other hand if *dāṭhā* was used to mean 'canine teeth' which have been described as white in colour, then the question arises as to why the white in

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1. DA. II, p 450
 2. GV. p 401
 3. Samudrika sastra, p 6, p 46
 4. PTSD, v.s. dāṭhā
 5. Har Dayal - Bodhisatva Doctrine p 301
 6. Dial Vol II p 15
 7. GV P 401; MV. II, p 306
 8. LV. p 104

colour only refers to these four, as the colour of all teeth should naturally be white.

In certain Pali texts the term 'dāṭhā' has been used to denote teeth, not specifically canine teeth only. Even the commentary does not particularly define this term as denoting canine teeth, and uses *danta* and *dāṭhā* for teeth in general alternately. In the commentary it says: "*aññesam ca pūti dantā utthahanti, tena kācidāṭhā kālā pi vivaṇṇā pi honti, ayam pana susukkadāṭho ...*"¹ - "Others have rotten teeth, which make them very dark and brown in colour. The Great Man's teeth are brilliantly white, and shine like the star of fortune". From this it is clear that the commentary means not only the four canine teeth, but all the teeth of the Buddha are shining white. The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* expanding the meaning of this *lakkhana*, says that the Great Man's teeth are not only white in colour, but pleasant, clean and bright.²

However, *dāṭhā* has been used to specify the four canine teeth, when it refers to the tooth-relic of the Buddha. There is an interesting story on the tooth relic of the Buddha, in the final episode of the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya*, in which there are two different stories on the veneration of tooth relics. In the first it says:

*"ekāhi dāṭhā tidivehi pūjitā ekāpana Gandhāra pure mahīyati
Kālingarañño vijite punēkaṃ ekaṃ puna nāgarājāmahenti."*³

"One eye tooth was venerated in heaven, and others were in the city of Gandhara, Kingdom of Kalinga and Nagaloka (the Naga race)."

In the second verse it refers to the remaining hair and teeth of the Buddha after the cremation, it says:

*"Cattalīsa samādantā kesālōmāca sabbasō
Devāharinsu ekekam cakkavāla paramparāti."*⁴

"All the forty teeth and hair were taken for veneration by the deities of *Cakkavālas*."

1. DA. II P 405

2. GV. P 401

3. D. II. P 167

4. D. II p168

These two accounts seem to be quite contradictory and, as many scholars point out with reference to different strata of the *sutta*, these two stanzas have been composed in different periods and may have been added to the *sutta*.

The evidence shows us that the cult of the tooth relic was a later development in Buddhism. The worship of the relic of the Buddha appears to have been immediately after his demise. But in this case, worship was performed in the form of "*Stūpas*" in which the relics were deposited. The devotees had no chance of seeing the relics of the Buddha as an object of worship. They were always deposited in monuments for various reasons of which the most important was their safety and protection. But with the development of the tooth relic cult, the devotees could worship the tooth of Buddha, physically seeing it. All the forty teeth of the Buddha have not become objects of veneration. It was only the four eye-teeth that were worshipped by the people. Moreover, Buddhist literature points out that the four eye-teeth were worshipped in four different places, and it seems that they were never deposited in *Stūpas*. They were honoured in temples called "Tooth Relic Temples" and were exhibited to the followers. Huien Tsang says that he saw a tooth relic temple built by Kanishka at Peshawar. The Archaeological evidence has shown the remains of such a building, that agrees with Huien Tsang's description. This is corroborated by the fact that at a place called *Shah-ji-fi-ki-Dheri* ruins of what may probably have been the temple of the tooth that was worshipped at Ganhara, were unearthed. The tooth which was supposed to have been in Kalinga is now an object of national importance. The *Mahāvāṅsa*, the great chronicle of Sri Lanka, says that the tooth was brought from Kalinga¹ during the reign of Sri Meghavanna for safety and protection; and the ownership gave the right to sovereignty to the ancient Sinhalese kings. However, it appears that at the beginning of the Christian era, with the emergence of the Buddha image the devotees favoured more the worship of relics which were not enshrined. The most suitable and durable portion of relics for this purpose was the Tooth. Out of forty teeth the followers selected only the four eye-teeth. With the development of the popularity of the tooth relic cult, it would have become quite essential to differentiate the four eye-teeth from the rest. Hence the term *dāṭhā* might have been used for the four eye-teeth, as the term *danta* was commonly used to denote teeth.

1. Mahāvāṅsa ch. 37, vs. 93 - 08

On these grounds it could be added that the term *dāṭhā* may have come into vogue as a later development, as a result of the emergence of the tooth relic cult, which featured prominently in later Buddhism.

Hence, the original form of this characteristic could be identified as *susukka danta* (white teeth) and the compilers of the Pali Canon might have combined the term *dāṭhā* in order to identify the four eye-teeth amongst the thirty-two *Mahāpurisa lakkhanas*.

XVII. Pahūta-jivhā

This characteristic refers to the Great Man's tongue, which is one of the two *lakkhanas* which caused some doubt amongst several Brāhamaṇās, who attempted to investigate the Buddha's thirty-two physical marks.¹ The word 'pahūta' (*Sanskrit - prabhūta*) means 'abundant', 'much', 'large', 'considerable', 'long', and 'sufficient', according to the context or corresponding noun or verb². As it refers to a part of a physical body it can be understood to mean either that his tongue is large or long.

The *Lalitavistara* enumerates this characteristic as "*prabhūta tanu jihvā*" - which means his tongue is large and slender. The Tibetan list corresponds with the same explanation³. The Pali Commentary illustrates a peculiarity of the Great Man's tongue by using the term "*pahūta*", as meaning up to its maximum flexibility, and defines it by referring to the textual accounts. It says that:

"Other tongues are either fat, thin, short, or very hard. The Great Man's tongue is soft, long, and wide and also pleasant in colour. Because it is soft, he can extend the tongue and touch and stroke both ears by it; because it is long, he can touch and stroke both nostrils; because it is wide he can cover his own forehead."

The Buddha has exposed on a couple of occasions these features of the tongue in order to eliminate suspicion of those who were in doubt about the Buddhahood. The tongue which is endowed with these qualities is called

1. M.II, p 135; Sn p 105

2. PTSD, vs. pahūta

3. Mahāvyutpatti - p 93

*pahūtajivhā*¹. A long and slender tongue could as well be symbolic of the Buddha's tongue's flexibility for clear accurate enunciation.

The *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* endorses the above view in the Pali tradition, and adds further that it is beautifully easy to move, comes into contact with the abode of true and wholesome meanings, syllables, words and explanations². This indicates the later attempt to try to assign a practical value to it, despite the traditional interpretation.

At the time of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, another stage of development of this *lakkhana* can be seen. It describes, in addition to the primary qualities, that his tongue has the colour of the petals of the red *utpala* flower³. This illustrates the influence of Indian poetic thought towards the development of the characteristic of *Mahāpurisa* in its later stages. The *Arthavinīścaya sūtra* commentary says that the Buddha's long tongue measures a hand in length and breadth. It is tender like a leaf of a red lotus. When the Buddha's tongue comes out of his mouth, it may cover his whole face at his will; in reply to the query as to how such a large tongue could remain in the mouth, it says that although it is large, since it is tender, delicate and soft, it does not obstruct the mouth.⁴

XXVIII. Brahmasvara

This is another interesting characteristic, beginning with the word *Brahma*. The literal meaning of this term *Brahmasvara* is that the sound of his voice is like that of Brahma. Pali texts enumerates this *lakkhana* as *Brahmas-sarōhōti karavīka bhāni*⁵. Rhys Davids takes the word *Brahma* to mean divine, as it does in *Brahmujugatta*, and translates it as, "he has a divine voice like the Karavika bird"⁶. It has been rendered by Lord Chalmers as both excellent and beautiful.⁷

1. DA. II, p 450

2. GV. p 401

3. JOIB, Vol. 14, p 227

4. Arthavinīścaya Sūtra and commentary, p 297

5. D. III p 144

6. Dial Vol. III p 138

7. Lord Chalmers, Further Dialogues of the Buddha, p 71

The *Lalitavistara* presents this *lakkhana* as *Brahmasvara*, without *Karavīkabhāni*. Burnouf points out that the *Lalitavistara* also has formerly mentioned it in two other places, the "*Karavīka ghōsa svarah*" - "the sound of *Karavīka*".¹ All the other sources agree with the Pali on this term, but differ slightly from the way in which they illustrate the nature of the characteristic.

There is no doubt that this *lakkhana* denotes that the Great Man possessed an excellent voice, but the importance of this characteristic lies in the way in which *Brahmā's* voice is designated with extraordinary qualities and their comparison to the voice of the Buddha. The Pali text itself defines *Brahmasvara* - *Brahmā's* voice, as the voice of *Karavīka* birds. *Sumangalavilāsinī*² describes some of the distinguishing features of the voice of *Brahmā* and the *Karavīka* bird:

"Others have a feeble voice, a broken voice, a voice resembling a crow's, but the *Tathagata* possesses a voice resembling *Mahābrahma's*."

The voice of *Mahābrahma* is faultless (lit. pure) because it is not obstructed by bile and phlegm. *Karavīka Bhāni*, means he speaks like a *Karavīka* bird, whose voice is delightful. Further the commentary says that like *Mahābrahma's*, the Buddha's voice has eight special qualities, but does not enumerate these. It has been classified in *Niddesa* as follows:

"*Aṭṭhangasamannāgatō khopana tassa bhagavatō mukhato ghōso niccharati, vissatṭho ca, viññeyyo ca mañjū ca savanīyo ca binduca avisāri ca gambhīro ca ninnādi ca.*"³

"The Buddha's voice has the following qualities: fair preaching, recognisable, mellifluous, pleasant to hear, coherent, not scattering, profound, resounding."

1. Lotus p 565

2. Nd. I, p 446

3. Nd. I, p 446

In relation to the voice of *Karavīka*, Burnouf¹ points out that it is difficult to decide whether *Karavīka* and *Kuravīka* which are found in the texts have the same meaning. Whatever it might be, the *Lalitavistara* points out in a different context that the characteristic of these two sounds of the Buddha's voice as that of Brahma's and *Karavīka*; the voice of Brahma is thus emphasised because it is supreme to all other voices; and "*Karavinka Kāyacittaudittya karanatāya*" - "voice of Kalovinka because it stimulates both body and mind with satisfaction"². Wilson gives to *Karavika* the meaning of "sparrow"³. Apte takes it as similar to *kokila*, and translates it as an Indian or black cuckoo⁴. It is quite clear, according to Pali Commentaries, that the word *karavīka* had been rendered not as a sparrow, but as an Indian cuckoo, which has a melodious voice. The *Papañcasūdanī* gives a long explanation of *karavīkaruta*, the sound of the *karavīka* bird, with a story of how Asoka's Chief Queen fulfilled her desire of experiencing the Buddha's voice by hearing a *Karavīka* bird⁵. The story goes that she heard from the monks that the voice of the *Karavīka* bird was like that of the Buddha. She therefore had a *Karavīka* bird which was from the Himalayas given to her by the King, brought in so that she could listen to its song. Thrilled with joy as the thought of the sweetness of the Buddha's voice, she entered the first stage of the Path (*Sōtapatti*). According to the legend hearing the song of a *karavīka* bird is a very rare event and several miracles have occurred on such occasions. This shows that the legendary stories of religious origin played an important role in order to emphasise the miraculous and superhuman nature of *Mahāpurisa Leakkahanas*. However, in considering all the qualities and stories attributed to the voice of the Buddha, Brahmasvara signifies that the Buddha possessed a deep and unique voice.

XXIX. Abhinīlanetta

This means that the Great Man's eyes are intensely blue. In early Indian aesthetic thought blue represents very dark blue, or a blackish colour. *Netta*

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1. Lotus p 565
 2. LV. p 429
 3. Wilson, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Sv karavika
 4. Apte, Sanskrit Dictionary, Sv. karavika
 5. MA, III, p 382

(Sanskrit - *Netra*) means eye, but it does not denote that Buddha's whole eye is coloured blue. The commentary clearly stating this expands the term *abhinīla netta*, to signify that in his eye the right colour appears in the appropriate place. "His eyes are not completely blue, but where blue is necessary remains blue like that of a flower of flax. The same is true of the other colours, yellow, red, white and black."¹

All the Sanskrit texts agree with the Pali, but the Tibetan sources exaggerate this *lakkhana* by stating that he has a large eye which is black and white. Remusat translates this as his eyes are blackish and metallic blue in colour². Further the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* has developed this idea by assigning seven qualities to the Great Man's eye. It says that his eyes are deep blue, beautiful, clear shining, unblemished, very charming, good looking and attractive.³

According to the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, both the black and white parts of his eyes are unstained and quite pure in their colour and they never become bloodshot⁴. However, this later development shows that it was a clear attempt of assigning the features of a good looking eye, which is an important spot of beauty in Indian aesthetic thought where blue eyes played an interesting role in both male and female figures. On the other hand this may be an attempt to show the immaculate spiritual development, as changes in the colour of the eyes indicate psychological and physiological disturbances. Bloodshot eyes are an indication of anger (*dosa*).

XXX. Gopakhuma

Pakhuma (= *pamma*) (in Sanskrit - *Pakṣma*) means, eyelash, and *go* is the common word for cow. The literal meaning of *gopakhuma* is "he who has eyelashes like a cow's". All the other sources are in agreement with the Pali term. Burnouf translates the Sanskrit term *gopakṣma* as "he who has eyelashes like those of the heifer"⁵. This idea is in agreement with

1. DA. II, p 451

2. Remusat - *Melanges Asiatiques*, p 169

3. GV. p 401

4. JOiB. p 401

5. Lotus. p 564

Buddhaghosa's definition of this characteristic in *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. He uses the word *taruna vacchaka* - young female cow.¹

As in the previous characteristic, Buddhaghosa refers to the term *gopak-huma* not especially to mean the eyelashes but the entire eye-ball - "*ettha pakhumanti sakala cakkhugandam adhippetam*" - "here *pakhuma* is the complete eye-ball".² Further, his traditional explanation runs as follows: "unlike others the Great Man's eye-ball is thick like a black cow's, bright and soft like a new born red calf."³ Here the shining beauty of the Buddha's eye is emphasised. If the rendition in the commentary is that this *lakkhana* conveys brightness and softness, these characteristics could symbolise the Buddha's wisdom and compassion respectively.

XXXI. Uṇṇā

This is another interesting characteristic sign which provides different forms of readings in different texts. Pali texts enumerate this *lakkhana* with its location and brief definition as follows:

"*Uṇṇā bhamukantare jātā odātā mudutaluna sannibhā*"

- "between the eyebrows appears a hairy mole, white and soft like a cotton-down."⁴

The *Lalitavistara* reads it as:

"*Uṇṇā brvōrmadhye jātā himarajataparakāśah*" -

"between the eyebrows there is a white hair which has the lustre of snow and silver."⁵

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1. DA. II, p 451
 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid
 4. D. II, p 19
 5. LV. p 104

The Tibetan version and the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* read more or less similarly to the *Lalitavistara* and only vary in some interpretations. But the *Abhisamayāṅkārāloka* introduces this characteristic in a different form as *urnānkita mukhatā* - his face is adorned with a hair tuft.¹

However, these different readings and their explanations lead us to investigate the original meaning of the *lakkhana*, and its development in connection with the body of the Buddha.

The word *ūrṇā* is very frequently mentioned from the *Rgveda* onwards, and the simile "soft as wool" (*ūrṇā mṛadas*) is not a rare epithet². The word *ūrṇā* was not restricted to the sense of sheep's wool but might denote goat's hair too.³ However, it had not been used for human hair in Vedic literature, and in Pali texts too the word *uṇṇā* is used for hair between the eyebrows. Originally it might have been used as a simile for the softness of the hair which commonly appears in the *Rgveda*⁴, but in the later time it appears that the word represented especially the hair of the Buddha, between the eyebrows. In Buddhist texts this term underwent a change taking new meanings during the period of its evolution acquiring magical and supernatural connotations.

The *Brahmāyu sutta* states basically that this hair existed between the two eyebrows and is white and soft.⁵ Commenting on its location on the body of the Buddha, Buddhaghosa says, "it appears above the nose in the centre of the forehead."⁶

The Mahayana texts also agree with this view of the commentary. Kramrisch points out that in the *Bhagavadgītā* this particular spot is called *Avimuktaka*.⁷ According to the *Jābāla Upaniṣad*⁸ "the *Avimuktaka* lies where the eyebrows are united with the organ of smell". Here lies the union

1. JOIB., p 226

2. Vedic Index I p 106

3. Satapata Brahmana, II, 5, 2, 15

4. A. Rv. V. 5, 4; X. 18, 10; etc.

5. M.. II p 134

6. "Bhamukantareti dvinnam bhamukānam vemajjhe nāsikamatthake yeva jātā uggantvā pana nalatamajjhe jātā" DA. II p 451

7. Bhagavadgita, VIII. 10

8. Senart, E. Essai sur la Legend du Buddha p 115

of the celestial world and the higher world.¹ Furthermore the important significance of this spot is borne out by the conception according to Epic and Puranic literature that it is where the third Eye(Lalataksi) of *Siva* is located.²

Referring to its colour, Buddhaghosa likens it to the whiteness of the star of healing (*osadhī tārakā*)³. The *Lalitavistara* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* compare this to snow or silver, and the *Abhisamayāṅkārāloka* says it is white in colour like a jasmine flower, the moon or cow's milk.

It is noteworthy that the white hair on the breast is attributed to Visnu and Krisna⁴. As such it is not unknown even to Hindus.

In addition to its softness, Buddhaghosa further illustrates that "the length of the *uṇṇā* is equal to that of the half of the arm. When released, it remains twisted towards the right and pointed upwards. It shines like a silver bubble on a golden slab and radiates with brightness comparable to that of the *osadhī* star"⁵ This extraordinary nature has been developed in the *Mahāyāna* texts to a great extent and they state that the brightness of the *ūrnā* is a hundred times more brilliant than the moon and the sun.⁶

This characteristic sign has played an important role in Buddhist literature, especially in *Mahāyāna* texts. Theravada tradition believes that this is the sign which helped the soothsayers to confirm definitely the Great Man's future destiny, i.e. whether he becomes a *Cakkavatti* or a *Buddha*. It is said that *Brāhmaṇa Kondañña*, who was one of the seven soothsayers of the palace, foretold that Prince Siddharta will definitely leave the palace and become a Buddha.⁷

In *Mahāyāna* texts especially *Vaipulya sūtra*, *urna* is one of the most important characteristic features which produces miraculous and magical effects. As has been shown in the third chapter above, it is mentioned in all the *Vaipulya sūtra* that the Buddha flashes a beam of light from his *urnā* and illuminates all the worlds.⁸ Similarly in Hindu Epics it is described that fire issues forth from *Siva's* third eye, luminous and brilliant as the sun. Epithets

1. Kramrisch, S. JOAS, Vol. p 157

2. Mahabharata, XII. 13205

3. DA. II. p 450

4. Senart - op cit p 128

5. DA. II p 451

6. JOIB, Vol. 14 p 266

7. JA. I p 56

8. Supra

regarding the *ūrṇā* in Buddhist Sanskrit texts seem to have been influenced by such accounts of the third eye of Siva. But the noteworthy difference in these two descriptions are that while Siva emits fire from his third eye, especially destroy enemies, the Buddha transmits beams of light from his *ūrṇā* to attract attention, in order to reveal the doctrine (*dhamma*). This latter view of Mahayana writers, may be further elaborated as symbolizing the Buddha's action in dispelling the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*) by illuminating instead with the light of wisdom (*āloko udapādi*).¹

In most places the term appears as *urnā-kosa* (halo or sheath) which Māhayāna writers might have preferred as this term is more appropriate in accordance with its functional character which they have adduced.

"*Bhagvāns ... ūrnākōsad rasmin pramuncat.*"²

Further, they say, that when the Buddha was absorbed in deep meditation in the middle watch of the night, this ray of light springs from his forehead and illuminates the worlds. When this happens, gods appear before him to salute him and implore him to reveal the *Dhamma*.³

On the other hand, the Pali Commentaries give a different description with regard to these rays of the Buddha. They say that the rays of six different colours issue forth from the Buddha's body and they are not restricted as issuing from the *ūrṇā* only, but extending in a halo from all parts, a fathom in length. If he wishes, he can hide them with his robe and go about like an ordinary monk.⁴ In one case, however, the Commentary points out that he emitted a dark ray from the *ūrṇā* which plunged everything into a deep darkness, and then again another ray of light which was likened to the brightness of the rising of a thousand moons.⁵

These and the other accounts show that the attribution of the beam of light which springs from *ūrṇā* of the Buddha is common to both Theravada and Mahayana traditions. Moreover, *ūrṇā* has played an important role in elucidating the Buddha's superhuman qualities, especially in relation to the Mahāyāna theory of the Buddha's body.

1. Vin. I.

2. LV. p 393

3. Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra p 243

4. DA. II p 41

5. JA. I. p 444; DA. III, p 102; VvA p 323

XXXII. Unhīsasīsa

Unhīsa is the most controversial characteristic of the thirty-two marks of the *Mahāpurisa*. Several scholars have dealt with this subject in detail and have suggested different explanations regarding the significance of this characteristic feature.

In its etymological sense, the word *unhīsa* (Sanskrit *Uṣnīṣa*) means a protection from the sun¹. Historically, this word denotes the turban worn by Vedic Indian men and women alike.² The Vrātya's turban is expressly referred to in the *Athava Veda*³ and the *Pañcavinsa Brāhmaṇa*.⁴ A turban was also worn at the *Vājapeya* and *Rājasūya* ceremonies by kings as a token of his regal position.⁵ This ancient idea of *usnīsa* is not unknown to the Buddhist tradition. King Milinda named it as one of the seven royal insignia.⁶ The head-dress of *bramacārin* is also referred to as *uṣnīṣa*.⁷

However, the term *uṣnīṣa śirṣa* or *unhīsasīsa*, as a characteristic of the *Mahāpurisa*, occurring in the Buddhist texts have been translated by scholars quite differently from that etymological meaning of *uṣnīṣa*. Remusat translates the Tibetan version as "the hair gathered together into a knot as on a fleshy tubercle placed on the top of the head".⁸ Burnouf, partly agreeing with Remusat, says that "*uṣnīṣa* signifies protuberance of the cranium".⁹

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1. PTSD. s.v unhisa
 2. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VI. I; Satapata Brahmana III. 3, 2, 3. IV 5,2, 7
 3. Atharvaveda XV.2.
 4. Paneavumsa Brahmana XVII.I.14
 5. Vedic Index p 104
 6. Milinda Pañha p 330
 7. Agni Purāna ch. 90, vs. 10-11
 8. Melanges Asiatiques, I. p 168
 9. Lotus de la Bonne Loi, p 560

E. Senart suggests that the *uṣṇīṣa* is a kind of head-dress by which the hair is brought together in a knot on the top of the head and it is peculiar to the Buddha only.¹ Coomaraswamy, disagreeing with Senart, thinks that it originally meant "destined to wear a royal turban". And in the case of the Buddha the remaining hair of the head is smooth and it does not mean it is shaved, but simply that all the long hair was drawn up close and tight over the scalp into a single tress.²

A.L. Waddle takes this characteristic as an emblem of the divinity of the Buddha, borrowed from Brahmanical epithets. He says that the *uṣṇīṣ* etymologically is "a protective against the harm and spiritual fire of evil spirits."³ R.P. Canda explains the *uṣṇīṣasīrṣa* as a turban-like head. To make the head look like a turban-head, Canda suggests that the addition of a crest was necessary and this was provided by the addition of a bump or fleshy protuberance ... the addition of a bump or fleshy protuberance on the top was evidently thought necessary to turn the head of a *Mahāpurisa* into a perfect turban-head. The so-called *uṣṇīṣa* on the Buddha's head is the crest of the following tresses and was quite natural.⁴

Despite the different views adduced by the scholars, it is interesting to note here that Buddhaghosa, who represents an early Theravada view on this important *lakkhana* of the *Mahapurisa*, does not provide a quite straightforward single definition but gives two possible versions prevailing in the tradition at the time. He explains as follows:

"There are two meanings, such as well-developed forehead and well-developed head; the mass of flesh which rises from the root of the right ear, extends over and thus covers the whole of the forehead, and ends near the root of the left ear, resembling the tied turban folds of kings; this fleshy growth is uniformly distributed over the whole of the forehead and shines forth like the front plait of the royal turban. Kings modelled the folds of their turbans (*unhūsapatta*) on this characteristic of the Great Man. As regards the second meaning, there are various kinds of undeveloped heads resembling those of a monkey, in shape like a fruit and extremely

1. OP cit p 125

2. JRAS 1928 P 817; HIA p 56 - 57

3. Ostasiatische Zeitschrift 1914, p 131 - 168

4. IHQ VII 1931 p 671

bony or pitcher-like in appearance, or the rapidly sloping type; whereas the Great Man's head is fully developed and rounded, everywhere like a water bubble."¹

Rhys Davids remarks on Buddhaghosa's twofold explanation, i.e. well-developed forehead (*paripuṇṇa-nalāta*), well developed head (*paripuṇṇasīsa*):

"In either case the rounded, highly developed appearance is meant giving to the unadorned head the decorative dignified effect of a crested turban and the symmetry of a water bubble. The two different explanations seem to be comprised under the term from the context in his commentary."²

J.N. Banerjea points out that from Buddhaghosa's explanation of the *unhisasīsa* "the bony protuberance on the top of the Buddha's skull is not referred to in Pali literature of this period."³ He further discusses that Buddhaghosa's twofold explanation of this *lakkhana* can be better understood if we refer to the *Sirolakṣaṇa* and *nalāta lakṣaṇa* of great men in Brahminical literature such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Brhatsanhitā* and *Sāmudrikaśāstra*.

In *Mahābhārata*, great gods, such as *Nara* and *Nārāyana* visited by *Nārada* in the *Vadasikāśrama* are characterised by heads like umbrellas, the sign of which is described as a *Mahāpurisa laksana*.⁴

"*Ātapatrēna śāttrus sīrasodevayostayoh
ēvam lakṣāna sampūrnu mahāpuruṣa sanhitau.*"

Varahamihira describes the head of a Cakravartin as resembling the shape of an umbrella:⁵

"*Parimandalyrgvdyās Chatrākāreh sirobhiravanīsāh
Ciptayah pitrumlagnah Karotiśīrasānciranmrutyuh*"

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1. DA II p 452
 2. Dial Vol. II p 16, n4
 3. IHQ. 1931, Vol. VII, No 3, p 504 f
 4. Mahābhārata - XII. 343.38
 5. Vrhatsanhitā, ch. 67, Ve 75

The *Sāmudrikāśāstra* tells us that he whose head resembles an open umbrella or the breast of a young lady is destined to be a universal (*sarvabahuma*) monarch.¹

Buddhaghosa's other explanation of the characteristic as referring to a high and broad expanse of forehead can be understood by similar passages in Brahminical literature referring to the *lalāṭa lakṣanas* of kings and great men.

Varahamihira says that the rich (great) men are characterised by foreheads like a half moon in appearance; men with broad *suktis* (portion of skull-bone) are instructors of persons.² The *Sāmudrikāśāstra* also tells us the same thing in this couplet.³

On the other hand, early Buddhist texts do not report any sort of physical abnormality of the Buddha's head such as a bony protuberance or fleshy tubercle as some scholars suggest.⁴ It should be noted that according to the texts, *lakṣhanas* were not manifested or visible to everyone at the birth of the Buddha. They were only perceived by soothsayers after examining the infant and could be recognized only by *Brāhmanas* and those who were skilled in the science of signs.⁵ Hence, if *unhīṣa lakṣhana* is a bony protuberance at birth anybody could have easily recognized him as the Buddha by this physical sign. On the contrary, there were several occasions where the Buddha had not been differentiated from his disciple.⁶

A careful reading of the different accounts of the Canon relating to the Buddha's hair also indicates that there was no sign for us to assume *unhīṣa* as the head-dress or hair gathered together into a knot. In several discourses of the *Majjhima Nikāya* it has been stated that the Buddha cut off his hair and beard and donned the saffron robe.⁷

1. *Samudrikāśāstra*, Venkoteśvara Press, Bombay p 78

2. *Vrhat Sanhitā*, ch. 67. Ve. 30-32

3. *Sāmudrikāśāstra*, p 74

4. *Lotus*. p 56

5. *DI*, P 87, 114; *DII*, p 16; *M.II* p 134

6. *M.II*. p 128; *Vin. Mahavagga* Kh. 10

7. *Kesamassum oḥaretvā kāsāyānivathāni accādetva agārasma anāgariyam pubbji*. *M.I* P 163, 240; *II* p 93, 211

The accounts of the Great Renunciation in the *Mahāvastu*,¹ the *Lalitavistara*², and the life of the Buddha contained in Tibetan works,³ do not make any mention of cropped hair remaining on the Buddha's head as in the *Nidānakathā*⁴ which is entirely a later work.

There is a clear reference to the Buddha's hair when he had once been abused as "*muṇḍaka*" which means "shaven headed man".⁵ The incident is reported as follows:

"Once a Brahman when performing fire-rights on the bank of the River Sundarika, looked round to see if there were anyone to whom he could give what was left over from the oblations. He saw the Buddha seated under a tree with his head covered (to rouse the Brahmana's curiosity and to prevent him from being repelled by the sight of a shaven head, says the Commentary), the Brahman approached with the oblation and a water pitcher and addressed him. Then the Buddha uncovered his head. The sight of the shaven head made *Sundarika* to draw back and he abused the Buddha uttering, "What! it's only a shaveling, a wretched shaveling".

Again in the *Cullavagga* they had laid down that the monks should grow their hair not more than two inches (*angula*) in length or should not allow it to grow for more than two months.⁶ The origin of the Vinaya rules describe that at the beginning, the Master had not enjoined the rules, but the disciples only followed his example.⁷ Accordingly, it could be concluded that at the

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1. MV. II p 141f
 2. LV. p 136, 14
 3. W.W. Rockhill - The Life of the Buddha, p 25
 4. JA. I
 5. S. I, P 167f; Sn p 79f
 6. Vin. II p 79
 7. Vin. II p 107

beginning the monks followed the Buddha's way of having a shaven head which in later times became an established rule to be followed. Further it is important to clarify here that this rule does not mean that the Buddha and the monks grew their hair two inches long all the time, as some scholars understood it,¹ but it clearly reveals that it was the maximum length that a monk could let his hair grow. It seems that the Buddha had a head completely shaven.

On the other hand, description given in the Theravada texts make no reference to any abnormality regarding the Buddha's head. The development of the *Trikāya* concept in Mahāyanism in later times paved the way to change the earlier notion of the *uṣṇīṣa*, giving it a completely different meaning. The Mahayanists have successfully attributed all the miracles performed by the Buddha to his *Sambhogakāya* in which *Uṣṇīṣa* has played a very important role.² Similar to the concept of *Ūrnā* in Mahāyana literature, *Uṣṇīṣa* is said to have issued thousands of rays illuminating worlds during the Buddha's miraculous performance. No doubt this was an effort to demonstrate the Buddha's extraordinary wisdom. In this connection it is important to note the following account given in the Tibetan *Abhiṣkramana sūtra*, according to which the *uṣṇīṣa* was a sign which was not only a fleshy top-knot projecting upwards from the head but also an object which issues thousands of rays.

"The Buddha caused to proceed from the top of his head every kind of glorious light which spread itself from the world through all space. Then this light again returned to the presence of the Buddha and having revolved around him three times enlarged through his mouth."³

It seems that later developed concepts immensely influenced the artists in making the Buddha images. Later, writers of the commentaries, perhaps including Buddhaghosa, possibly had the influence of these images in compiling the commentaries. As such artists who had made Buddha statues would have been influenced by the literature while writers would have been likewise

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1. Seckell, D., *The Art of Buddhism* p 154; Krishnan. Y., *The Hair on the Buddha's Head and Usnisa*, *East and West* (New Series) Vol. 16, No 3-4 (Sept - Dec 1966) p 280
 2. *Supra* See Chapter II
 3. *Indian Antiquary* IX 1880, p 195 - S. Beal, "Buddhist Inscriptions at Keu Yong Kwan'

influenced by the artists. In other words art and literature grew and developed influencing each other.

Hence in comparing both these types of evidence in the descriptions as to the nature of the Buddha's head given in Pali texts and Brahaminical works such as the *Vṛhathsanhitā* and the *Sāmudrikāsāstra* it is possible to conclude that there was nothing abnormal in the Buddha's head as it had a top-knot and what all these works implied was to express that it was a well-built and pleasantly shaped head, which indicated the Buddha's wisdom.

From the above discussion based mainly on literary evidence about the thirty-two characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa*, it is possible for us to arrive at the following conclusions. As shown earlier, some of the marks are quite obvious in their meaning, such as soft and tender hands, straight body frame, even teeth, white teeth, blue eyes. On the other hand, some are obscure and difficult to account for as physical attributes. However, as discussed in the study of the several marks, if we understand the original meaning of *lak-khanas* one would rather be inclined to believe that they are found in some Great persons exceptionally. It is shown from the literary evidence that due to the development of the Buddha concept, the obscurity of the nature and the form of these characteristics, became more complex. The attempt to attribute superhuman and extraordinary features in their definitions of some *lak-khanas* in Mahāyana works and the Pali Commentaries provides a clear example of this process.

However, there are some textual accounts that there had been certain instances of noticing the appearance of some characteristics in the body of the Buddha. On the other hand there is enough evidence to prove that the physical quality and nature of his life is quite similar to that of an ordinary human being. But at the same time the Pali Canon describes that the Buddha's outward appearance is perfect and pleasing to look at. Although the Commentaries and later tradition try to maintain that the marks are normally to be seen in the body of the Buddha according to their interpretation, it is certain that all these marks could not possibly appear in a visible form. Even the traditional accounts of the Pali texts state that they were only 'seen' by learned Brahmins who are capable of perceiving such physical signs of Great Men. Yet this and other evidence advanced in our discussion, make clear that most of these marks are meant to emphasise their symbolic nature in relation to the Buddha's character, than their physical importance. This assumption is also supported by the definition in the *Lakkhana-sutta* which explains that the fortunes of the same *lak-khanas* are different in relation to the Buddha and to

the *Cakkavatti*; in other words the meaning of the marks only is significant, which is one for the spiritual leader and another for the secular leader. Hence, most of these *Mahāpurisa lakkhanas* in their functions and locations which were attributed to the Buddha can be seen to be not only pure physical marks but also signs that portray outwardly the inner spiritual qualities of the Buddha.

Iconographical Representation of the Thirty-two Characteristics

The concept of *Mahāpurisa* has played an important role not only in literature but also in iconography. Although the thirty-two characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* have been enumerated as auspicious marks on the body of the Buddha, some of them are invariably found in the iconic representations since the early history of Indian culture. As discussed in the previous chapter, although the *lakṣhanas* are associated with the concept of *Mahāpurisa*, some of them however have been commonly ascribed to the features of perfect human figures in Indian literature.¹ Further these ideas of human proportions and beauty have been transformed into iconic figures in a visual form.

Nigrodhaparimandala lakṣhana or the sign of the equal length of one's body and compass of arms' length cannot be said to have necessarily originated either with the Buddhists or the Indians, because its application to the symmetrical proportion of the human figure is evident even in Egyptian, Greek and Roman iconometry.² This feature is quite prominent in Brahminical and Jaina icons,³ not only in the male figures but also in female icons. The very early free standing statues like the Besnagar and Didarganj *yakṣinīs* or such relief figures as those of *Sirimā devatā* and other *yakṣinīs* and *devatās* of *Bhārhut* and *Vidūśikas* of *Sañci* and female figures of *Amarāvati* can be regarded as representing this idea of the symmetrical proportion of the female body.⁴

Long arms, a level back showing no dip between the shoulders and broad shoulders are also commonly regarded as attributes of the perfect human figure and are easily noticed in the *yakṣa* figures.⁵ Moreover, some of the signs which comprise the thirty-two marks of the Great Man are quite like the symbols of early Indian theistic ideals in the anthropomorphic repre-

1. Supra. p 97, 103, 114

2. Erik Iversen, *Canon and Proportions of Egyptian Art*, Denmark 1955 p 22

3. *Vrhatsanhita*, ch. 68, p 7

4. Benerjia, J. N., *Pratimalaksanam*, Journal of the Dept. Letters, Calcutta University, 1933, p 38

5. See Plate 5, 6

sentations of the Hindu pantheon. *Ca'ra* which symbolises the sun and the divine power is marked on the hand of Visnu figures, although the wheel symbol appears in both hands and foot of the Buddha statues as a *Mahāpurisa lakkhana*. It will be of interest to remark in this connection that the place where *ūrṇā* is shown on the Buddha statues, is occupied by the *tilaka*, in medieval *Viṣṇu* images; in *Śiva* figures, the god's third eye is placed on the identical spot.¹

As referred to in the previous chapter, the similarity of the physical descriptions of the Buddha and Jaina *Tirthankaras* have evidently been reflected in the iconography of both Buddhism and Jainism. Among the *mahāpurisa lakkhanas*, *usnīsa*, *ūrṇā*, *nigrodhaparimaṇḍala*, *samavattak-khanda*, *citantaransa* and long arms are prominently seen in Jaina statues.² U.P. Shah states that all the *Tirthaṅkara* or Buddha images are based on the fundamental concept of *Mahāpurisa lakkhanas* ... Hardly half a dozen *Tirthankara* images so far known or published would show the *ūrṇā*. The *uṣṇīṣa* is almost invariably seen, but images without it are also known from Mathura and other sites.³

As the idea of *lakkhanas* is seen to be evident in Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist iconography, it is important to examine how far the concept of *Mahapurisa* influenced the early stage of the evolution of the Buddha image in the early history of Buddhist Art. Particularly a study is to be made of the different ways in which different schools of art had produced images bearing the *lakkhanas* in various ways, each having a significance of its own. In this process the origin and growth of the Buddha image in art will be briefly traced and an attempt made to illustrate how the different marks on various statues indicate the influence of different ideas and interpretations given to these marks at various points of time.

For about five centuries after the demise of the Buddha, his image in human form was not produced due to various reasons. As both Ganguly and Coomaraswamy have pointed out, it was neither due to the incapacity of the Indian artists, nor due to some canonical interdiction, but it was a conception of "an entirely different character".⁴ It is significant to note here the words

1. Benerjia, J.N., JDLC, 1933, p 38

2. See Plate 6, 7, 8

3. Shah, U.P., Jaina Art & Architecture ed A.Chosh New Delhi

4. Ganguly O.C., The Antiquity of the Buddha Image - The Cult of the Buddha Image, Ostasiatischce Zeilsehrift, 1938

of the Buddha himself, recorded in the *Brahmajāla sutta*, in which it is stated that:

"The outward form, brethren of Him who has won the truth (*tathāgata*) stands before you, but that which binds it to rebirth is cut in twain. So long as his body shall last, so long do gods and men beyond him. On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither god nor men shall see him."¹

The ancient artists who understood these religious and philosophical aspects of the creation of the Buddha image may not have attempted to form it. According to the early Buddhist scriptures, *Sākyamuni* was a human teacher and in every sense a man of flesh and blood, but at the achievement of enlightenment (*bhodi*) the physical elements of the body disintegrated into the transcendental state - '*parinirvāna*' - the ultimate extinction, defined as the final extinction of all worldly aspirations and cravings. Thus his personality becomes identified with his teachings as its living representative. The following passage from *Samyutta Nikāya* illustrates the position more clearly:

"Since the *tathāgata*, even when actually present is incomprehensible - it is inept to say of him, of the Uttermost person, the Supernal person, the Attainer of the supernal - that after dying the *tathāgata* is or is not, both is and is not, or neither is or not."²

In the circumstances, the Buddha image was not formed in the early stages, due to the special problem that at the death of the Buddha, he attained complete extinction in *Nirvāna* and it could not be brought down to the level of human vision. Seckell has shown this very effectively in the following passage:

"To suggest the transcendental nature of the Buddha, a form had to be evolved that was visually impressive, yet spiritualised to an extreme, which in itself transcended the limits of the finite world and passed into the realms of the "Without Shape"."³

1. D.I p 73

2. S. III p 118

3. Seckel, D., *The Art of Buddhism*, Methuen London, 1964, p 152

Thus the formation of the Buddha image in anthropomorphic form was beyond the capacity of the artist and that incapacity was of an entirely different character to artistic incapacity. The traditional belief in all Vedic and post-Vedic thought was that, the "Immeasurable One" could not be brought within the measured lineaments. As such, some other device has to be sought for. Thus the early artists resorted to the non-personal, aniconic representation of the Buddha in early illustrations visualising the *tathāgata* in a purely spiritual way without involving him in the sphere of *Sam̐sāra*, and degrading him to the same level of existence as that of all other beings. On the story-telling reliefs at Bharut and Sanchi, the presence of the Buddha is designated by symbols and emblems. In these narrative scenes, full of human, vegetal and animal figures, the dominating central symbol suggests the presence of the Buddha and it depicts it more convincingly than any human figure among a multitude of other human figures could have done. Undoubtedly this device had been adopted by the artists and their patrons fully realising the fundamental conceptions of Buddhist doctrines laid down in the Canon.

Sanchi and Bharut reliefs provide us with clear evidence to show that the artists who were quite skilled in carving the human figure never attempted to render the figure of the Buddha in visible human form. Thus the early Buddhist art depicts the ineffable and indescribable nature of the Buddhahood as it possessed no physical form which might be appropriately portrayed. Moreover, the artists have realised that all the elements, physical or mental, of which all phenomenal manifestations were assumed to be components, were at rest, when Buddha achieved *Nirvāna* and was in non-existence. In *Suttanipāta* the Buddha explains in a discussion with Upasiva that when all the elements of existence through which a human being assumes name and form are extinguished and effaced, he comes to a state of nothingness (*akiñcana*).¹ Thus the avoidance of the Buddha figure in human form in early art is not due to the fact that the aniconism was the universally accepted mode in depicting sages and gods, or there was a law forbidding image-making, but it was the canonical explanation concerning the Buddhahood - the inconceivable state in visual form and human shape.

1. *Suttanipāta*. trans Anderson & Smith, London, 1965, p 205 ff

However, by about a century later, due to various factors, both internal and external, the Buddha image was formulated in human form. The canonical literature clearly shows that during the life-time of the Buddha his supporters offered him monasteries to be used as living abodes. With the growth of the dispensation of the *Sangha* such monasteries grew in number. *Jetavanārāma*, *Jīvakārāma* and *Ghosītārāma* were a few of them. In later times these monasteries became not only the residence of the *Sangha*, but also the centres of worship and rallying grounds of the lay - devotees. Buddhist culture began to develop centering on the monastery. Thus it became the cultural centre - a centre for all the three gems - *Triatana* - of the Buddha, for the veneration and worship of the devotees.

At first the *Stūpa* - the repository of the Buddha's corporeal relics and the Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment - were considered as the objects of worship and almost every monastery possessed them. But later factors, such as *Bhakti*, growth of Mahayanism, and the impact of Hellenic culture resulted in changing the Buddhist concept and attitude which paved the way for the development of a different outlook in methods of adoration and veneration. The devotees, being dissatisfied with the worship of only the relic *Stūpa* and the *Bodhi* tree wanted to have the representation of the Buddha in human form. Moreover, in an age longing for visible forms of their gods and sages, the tendency to produce their faithful worldly saviour naturally resulted in suppressing their earlier inhibitions that prevented them from creating their religious teachers in human form. It appears that the Indian religions while taking a different turn towards popular forms of worship, tended to swing from the devotion to a transcendental ideal of a more personal kind of devotion, thereby emerging a personality cult. In the circumstances the manifestation of the Buddha image in visible form was inevitable to satisfy the religious needs of the supporters. In addition to this, the Buddhist concepts were changed due to the Mahayanistic teachings as a result of which the devotees considered the Buddha not only as a preacher of Dhamma, but also as a lord or a redeemer. The impact of Hellenistic culture which favoured the image worship, became a motivating force and accelerated the situation persuading the artists to make the Buddha image in human form. As Coomaraswamy points out the making of the Buddha image must have occurred simultaneously, probably in the middle or near the beginning of the 1st century AD, in Gandhara as well as in Mathura.¹

1. Coomaraswamy, A.K., Hist. of Ind. and INdo. Art., London 1972 p 60

In Gandhara, the making of the Buddha image was highly influenced by Hellenistic traditions. As Foucher¹ observes, the Hellenising master craftsman carving the Buddha image from a block of blueschist represented a figure of a young prince in a garb of a monk filled with loathing for the world, and compassion for living creatures, and had become, by the power of his intellect a kind of saviour god. Thus naturally, it was the figure of the Greek divinity Apollo that occurred in the mind of the Greek artist as the prototype. Almost all the basic characteristics of the human figure of the Greek god, such as the fully developed youthful body, muscles and swelled veins were transferred onto the figure of the Buddha. But the problems arose as to how the physical postures and hand gestures were to be made. These were quite unknown in the West. Sitting and standing images of the Buddha were formulated as a short, rather stocky figure, with hair arranged in waves, gathered together as a top knot to represent *usnīsa*, and a little circle between the eyebrows to represent the *ūrṇā*. Having eyes fully open, and sometimes wearing a moustache, the body of the figure was covered with a heavy monastic cloak with deep folds which was familiar to them in the West. Hand gestures were portrayed as they understood them. The way they depicted the *Dhamma-cakka-pavattana mudrā* clearly shows that they have not understood it properly. As Foucher² remarks, they have conceived the Buddha image as nothing but the image of Prince *Siddhārtha*, deprived of lay indications of temporal power and wealth such as the turban rings and the necklaces. However, it could be said that the Gandara artists have conceived the Buddha as a Great Man - *Mahāpurisa* - and invested with all the possible marks on his figure. The depiction of these marks will be examined in detail in the sequence.

In the workshops of Mathura the Buddha image was produced contemporaneously with that of the Gandhara. It appears that the artisans of Mathura followed the local Indian tradition. The artists who fashioned the *Yaksa*, *Yakshinī* and *Nāginī* figures were the people who were commissioned to turn out the Buddha image. For them the Buddha was considered as the lord or *Bhagavān*, or the king - *cakkavatti*; the Mathura artists naturally and deliberately adopted the same pattern of image making as they had done for their previous lords. Hence the prototype that struck their minds was the *yaksa* figure,³ with stout, earth-bound qualities, with fully opened eyes. Other

1. Foucher, A., L'Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhara Vol. II. p 283

2. A. Foucher, L'Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhara, Vol. II, p 283

3. L'Art Greco-Bouddhique du Gandhara, Vol. II p 302

physionomical features found in the *yakṣa* figures were naturally transferred into the figure of the Buddha. But one fact remains clear in the art of Mathura. The awareness of the Buddhist thought and the traditions prevented them from fashioning the Buddha image all at once as it appears to have been done at Gandhara. Thus it seems that the task of fashioning the Buddha image has taken place in two stages. First the figure of the *Bodhisattva* had been produced as is evidenced by early images of Bodhisattva discovered at Baranas and Sarnath, and they clearly indicate that they were Bodhisattva figures dedicated by a monk called Bala.¹ It seems that when once they felt that the fashioning of the *Bodhisattva* images would not bring them any worldly harm, they formed the Buddha image. Some point out that the term *Bodhisattva* in this context may indicate the existence of a lingering suspicion that it was somehow more suitable to portray him in human form as Bodhisattva than as Buddha². But in our opinion it is possibly due to the fact that the local artists, who, quite aware of the Buddhist traditions and conventions, never attempted to carve out the Buddha image at the first instance, but they formed the *Bodhisattva* image as a test and having felt that there were no unwholesome repercussions for the part of the artist, then they went on to make the Buddha image. As Van Lohuizen de Leewe³ has observed correctly, it could be said that the Mathura artist in conceiving the figure of the Buddha in human form reproduced the *yakṣa* figures, or rather a monarch without regalia. Moreover, being quite familiar with the oral and literary traditions, he had no problem in portraying a religious leader, with a religious garb and in *mudrās* and in *āsanas*. But it appears that the Mathura artist too could not suddenly visualise spontaneously in artistic form the concepts of enlightenment (*bodhi*), transcendent wisdom (*pragñā*) and compassion (*karunā*) even if they were quite aware of these concepts at the time they produced the images. In the images *uṣṇīṣa* is represented as a top-knot and the *ūṛṇā* as a small circular mark between the eyebrows. However, it is important to note here that the Buddha is nowhere conceived as a simple mortal, but as a 'Great Man' - *Mahāpurisa* - and as a religious leader he was deprived of all the lay accoutrements.

In the early Christian centuries, the formation of the Buddha figure was carried out in Andhra Pradesh too. The figures found at Amaravati bear a close affinity with those of Mathura, with some influence of Gandharan types. With

1. Plate 9

2. The Image of the Buddha, p 52

3. Lohuizen, Van de l., The Scythian Period, Leiden 1949, p 166

regard to the depiction of the great characteristic marks they have followed what is depicted in Mathura. But when it comes to the Gupta period in India, the formation of the Buddha figure developed to its full maturity, epitomising all the earliest attempts at Mathura, Gandhāra and Amaravati. Coomaraswamy¹ observes that:

"the technique of the Buddha image is perfected and used as a language without conscious effort, it becomes a medium of conscious and explicit statement of spiritual conceptions. With a new beauty of expression it establishes the classical phrase of Indian art, at once serene, energetic, spiritual and voluptuous."

However, the general appearance of the figure of the Buddha when perfected characterised partly as a noble human being and ideal ruler (*Cakkavattī*) and partly as a super-human. All the physical features of the body are well-built, fully rounded, smooth, well-proportioned and symmetrical. The face is fully rounded or of oval shape with full cheeks, half closed eyes gazing at the tip of the nose and the distended earlobes. The hair is arranged in small, short locks, curling towards the right with an *uṣṇīṣha* on top. Between the eyebrows is an *ūrṇā* as a golden dot. In these images the artists have attempted to depict the thirty-two characteristic marks as described in the Buddhist scriptures. But all these marks could not be depicted in the works of art. Hence they have shown as many marks as possible. Out of the thirty-two marks, the following characteristics could be recognised:

1. The feet with the level tread;
2. On the soles of the feet, wheels appear with a thousand spokes;
3. Long fingers;
4. Soft and tender hands and feet;
5. Fingers and toes evenly spaced;
6. The ankles are over the exact middle of the tread;
7. Legs like those of antelopes;
8. Skin the colour of gold;
9. Fine skin texture;
10. Hair curls turning to the right;
11. The frame is straight;
12. Upper part of the body is like that of a lion;

1. Coomaraswamy, *Hist. of Ind. & Indo. Art.*, p 71 ff

13. No hollow between the shoulders;
14. Symmetrical proportion of the banyan tree - the stretch being the same as his height;
15. Curve of the shoulders is symmetrical;
16. *Ūrnā* between the eyebrows;
17. *Uṣṇīṣa* on the head.

The prominent mark depicted in all the Buddha statues was the *uṣṇīṣa* - the hemispherical elevation symbolising enlightenment and wisdom. The symbol of *uṣṇīṣa* has been a controversial subject among scholars, whether this was a representation of a head-dress worn under the turban by ancient Indian princes, as a sign of princely status, or whether it was derived from the Krobylos of antiquity such as Apollo.¹ Van Lohuizen de Leeuw observes that:

When the figure of the Buddha had to be presented in human form the sculptors met with the difficulty that it was explicitly known of the master, that he leaving became a mendicant friar had laid aside all his regalia. Consequently all those royal characteristics of the Yakṣa images, like ornaments and turban could not be produced, so the Buddha figure is, as it were a Yakṣa, or rather a monarch without regalia. The bracelets, necklaces and other ornaments were simply omitted, and the head, now uncovered, was given the hair dressing occasionally shown by the *Yakṣas* or king as well, when not wearing a turban; that is to say the Buddha was represented with a top-knot of hair, the so called *Kaparda*.²

However, in agreeing with the observation of the *Leeuw*, it is more important to note here that in conceiving the *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha it is more reasonable to assume that the imagination of the artists were more guided by the Buddhist scriptures than by the earlier tradition. In the Buddhist scriptures it is said that the *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha is not characterised as a mere human head-dress. The *Dīgha Nikāya* says the Brahman astrologer who examined the body of the aspirant Buddha at his birth, declared that the baby prince has

1. See supra. Chapter on Thirty-two Marks.
 2. The Scythian Period, p 166

on his head *usnisa* (*Ayam hi deva kumāro unhīsa sīso*)¹. But as to the structure, form or shape of the *uṣṇīṣa*, the texts were not certain. In the commentaries Buddhaghosa² gives two forms, a turban fold of kings and a water bubble. Hence the artists had to be very careful in transferring the textual description into visible form. On the one hand the visible form had to be in agreement with the natural human body, and on the other it had to convey symbolically the qualities of enlightenment and wisdom. Moreover the artist had no sculptural prototype to look at. The only equivalent form was the head dress of the *yaksa* figure of the king. As such, following the traditional patterns and adhering to the textual description the artist had to use his intuitive power to evolve a form that is visually impressive and spiritualised. In Mahayana works the *usnisa* of the Buddha is invested with the function of emitting light and glory as the outward emblem of his enlightenment. Pali canonical texts contain many references to the light which issues from the Buddha's body.³ But the commentaries and later works say that the light issues chiefly from the *uṣṇīṣa*⁴. The Buddha images issuing flames from the *uṣṇīṣa* is common in countries like Burma, Siam and Sri Lanka⁵.

Now let us examine how the ancient artists have depicted the great characteristics on the Buddha images. The earliest images so far discovered are from Gandhara and Mathura. The ideal Buddha head from Gandhara invests Buddha with a head-dress. It is shown as wavy tresses gathered on the crown into a massive top-knot or a ball. This ball of hair is sometimes encircled by a transverse fillet resembling the royal diadem. Waddell⁶ suggests that this type of diadem-coiffure figures on the nearly contemporary coins of the Scythian King Maus and further he says:

The style of this thus would appear to have been the local royal fashion prevalent at the time when the Buddha type was created, and it was stereotyped as the fashion for the *Bodhisattva* - gods who are represented in the form of earthly kings, with the addition of a halo. But Buddha is very seldom if at all in the earlier images,

1. D. II, p 19

2. The god "Puruṣa" of the Mahābhārata displays a "Glory halo", XII - 13, 806

3. D. I, p 220, Vm.I. p 27 f; DA. II. p 41

4. For further details see Waddell, L.A., Buddha's diadem or Unisha, its Origin, Nature and Functions, a Study of Buddhist Origins

5. See plate 19

6. Wadell, L.A., OZ, p 151 - 152

allotted any fillet, and such a high arrangement of his hair on the crown without any retaining band whatever becomes inexplicable except on the supposition that it was an artistic device of the Grecian sculptors to mask the unsightly disfigurement of the usnisa bump which tradition placed there."

But apart from this supposition it could be supplemented here that the Grecian sculptors who handled the formation of the Buddha image were not thoroughly conversant with the description of the Buddha figure given in the Buddhist scriptures. Their attempt was to fulfill the urgent requirement of the newly converted devotees who were impatiently awaiting to see their lord in human form. Moreover, being perhaps unaware of the Indian traditional concepts with regard to the features like *uṣṇīṣa* which is unheard of in the West, they were in a state of confusion as to its structure and form. More evidence could be gathered to support this assumption when we examine carefully the various features of the Gandhara images. Its sitting posture, hand gestures, etc., show clearly that the Grecian sculptors have not understood them in their proper perspective. For instance *Padmāsana* which is known in Indian tradition as seated in *yogi* posture with both feet turning upwards, has not been depicted in some of the early images; instead they have covered the whole feet with the robe. In some other cases, the image was made to be seated on a lotus flower.

Although Waddell attempts to point out that the Grecian artist's conception of the Buddha head with longish wavy hair is in strict keeping with the early tradition expressed in the scriptures which state that the hair was not closely tonsured, it is significant to note that the appearance of the hair on the head of the Gandhara image does not show that it is a local arrangement. Buddhist textual evidence says that the maximum length of the Buddha's hair is two inches, curled towards the right¹. But the hair on the head of the Gandhara Buddha in most cases is not curled towards the right.² The Grecian artists depicted the hair styles known to them in the West. The long wavy hair was arranged in the form of a ball at the top, tied up with a fillet or a ribbon. This type is not familiar to Indian traditions. This reveals us clearly that the imagination of the Grecian artists in forming the *uṣṇīṣa* was more guided by the Western traditions than by the Indian Buddhist thought. Greek God Belvedere Apollo bears a top-knot above the forehead. As the Gandhara

1. See supra p 119

2. Wadell, OZ, p 152

Buddha image was based on the model of Apollo, the Greek artist had no difficulty in conceiving a head-dress. The only difference was that the top-knot on the forehead of the Apollo was placed on the top of the Buddha's head. Alfred Foucher remarks that in carving the Buddha image, the Hellenising master-craftsman needed to represent someone like a prince who was filled with loathing for the world, full of compassion for living creatures, had assumed a garb of a monk and had become by the power of his intellect a kind of saviour god.

"Saviour God, God of mysteries so learned, God of life and God of all, salutary plants Divine conqueror of Python God, triumphant and youthful."

Remembering these verses of Andre Chenier (*Bucoli quesvi*) our artist would have thought at once of using as his model in such circumstances the best of his own youthful Olympian gods¹. As such it is not unreasonable to assume that in conceiving the *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha it would have been the head-dress of Apollo that struck the mind of the artist.

The germ of the ideal type of *uṣṇīṣa* as described and conceived by Buddhist thought and philosophy was first created at Mathura. The well-preserved black sandstone image from Katra belonging to about the first or second century AD (now in the Archaeological Museum, Mathura) displays the earliest type of *uṣṇīṣa* which represents the traditional type. In this example no actual hair is shown on the head, except for a hair line that coils on the top of the head as a snailshell (*kaparda*).² It seems that the ancient artists of Mathura too had faced the problem of conceiving the form and shape of the *uṣṇīṣa* of the Buddha as they had no prototype to look at. No authentic likeness of Buddha was known. No ancient sculptures, either Brahamanic or otherwise helped the artist to form an idea about the *uṣṇīṣa* in art. As shown earlier Mathura artists formed the Buddha figure modelling on the lines of the *yaksa* figures, but even these figures did not help them to form an idea about the *uṣṇīṣa*, for they possessed no such characteristic mark, except the turban on the head. As such the artist had to evolve one which would fit the transcendent nature of the Buddha, as well as portray outwardly the qualities of enlightenment and wisdom. It would neither be a turban nor a crown, nor a diadem like a dress worn by the Indian princes, nor a bony or a fleshy bump

1. L'Art Greco- Bouddique du Gandhara, Vol. II, p 283

2. See plate 10

on the head, but it was a special feature shared only by the Buddha and the Supreme God of the Universe. The early artists at Mathurā solved this problem by forming a cap like head-dress, with one hairline curling upwards and turning towards the right like a snail-shell and leaving the rest of the head without hair.¹ However it seems that, unlike the artists of Gandhāra, the Mathurā artists were guided by Buddhist thought and conventions. Bennarjea² points out that the hair treatment of the *yaksa* figures would have helped these artists in conceiving this form. Though the hair is not visible, on the cranium of the Buddha figure a set of seven layers could be noticed on the head, perhaps denoting the compact mass of the hair.

However, the attempt of the Mathurā artists in forming the *uṣṇīṣa* in a more natural way could be traced. The Buddha image from Ahichchatra also belonging to the same period, portrays very prominently the *uṣṇīṣa* formed in a similar manner as that of the Katrā image. The only difference shown in this *uṣṇīṣa* is that it has achieved more height than that of the Katra image and the top appearance of the hair coil is not made visible.³ Another Buddha image, made of red sandstone (now in the Archaeological museum of Mathura) displays the *uṣṇīṣa* in a very interesting way. This appears like a cap without any hair on the head. It is depicted as a conical bump with a fillet. Hairy nature is completely absent⁴. But in this example it is evident that the two styles, Gandhāra and Mathurā are mixed together, for the robe depicted here belongs to the Gandhāran style. Not before long it seems that the Mathurā artists's attempt to formulate the *uṣṇīṣa* in a more natural way, more in agreement with the Buddhist thought, has been successful. This is evident from the image discovered from Bodhgaya (now in the Indian museum, Calcutta - some think this is to be a *Bodhisatva* image) in which *uṣṇīṣa* is depicted with small coils of hair scattered all over the head, and with a proportionally elevated portion on the top of the head which is also covered with locks of snail-shell curls.⁵ The Buddha images found from Andhra Pradesh seems to have continued this pattern without any change in form. Fully developed forms of this type come out in the Gupta images of the fifth century. The Buddha image made of red sandstone found in Mathurā (now

1. See plate 10

2. IHQ. 1931, Vol. VII, No. 3, p 504

3. See plate 11

4. See plate 12

5. See plate 13

in the Archaeological Museum, Mathura) is a fine example.¹ The snail-shell curls are more naturally evolved and very elegantly chiselled. The skillfully modelled, fully rounded form of the head and the symmetrically elevated portion on top of the head with sharply chiselled snail curls, give a pleasant and impressive appearance.

This type of *uṣṇīṣa* reaches its climax during the Gupta age. The standing Buddha image from Jamalpur, made of sandstone, belonging to the fifth century, (now in the Archaeological Museum, Mathura) the standing Buddha image from Mathurā, made of red sandstone (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), seated Buddha image from Sarnath, made of Chunar sandstone (now in the Sārnāth Museum) portray the fully developed *uṣṇīṣa* types². Thence onwards, this type of *uṣṇīṣa* becomes the ideal type. However, in later times, extra features were added to it. A stylised flame or a *siraspoṭa* as it is called in Sri Lanka, is surmounted on the *uṣṇīṣa*.³ Another Buddha image from Dong-Dong (Vietnam) depicts another variant type of attribution on the *uṣṇīṣa*. Here the curls are not sharply depicted and on the top a half-blown lotus is in place.⁴

The next characteristic feature out of the thirty-two marks which is prominently depicted on the Buddha image is the *ūrṇā* - a small circular mark between the eyebrows. In early images of Gandhāra, this feature is shown very prominently as an elevated round dot between the eyebrows. In some examples it is placed on the lower part of the forehead, whereas in some other cases, just above the root of the nose. However, it appears that the Gandhāra artists were not quite certain as to its actual place. However the real nature of this mark according to the Buddhist scriptures is that it is a hairline coiling towards the right.⁵

But in the Gandhāran images this feature of coiling towards the right is omitted. This shows that they had no proper understanding as to its nature and character. But in later times, it seems that the Gandhāra artists have adopted different ways of depicting the mark of *ūrṇā*. They have depicted not only by engraving it on the forehead, but also by placing a pearl or a precious stone. For example, in the seated Buddha figure (NS3936) in the Gandharan room in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, there is a slight depression

1. See plate 14

2. See plate 15, 16, 17

3. See plate 18, 19

4. See plate 20

5. See supra, Ch 3

in the place where the *ūrnā* should have been. This clearly shows that it was adorned by a pearl or a precious stone, now not in its position. Another seated image (NS4820) in the same museum depicts a hole 1/10 of an inch deep and half an inch in diameter just above the bridge of the nose, which proves that originally there was a precious stone inserted in the hollow. Furthermore, the former image shows some traces of paint, which proves that the *ūrnā* must have been painted in colour.

In the early images of the Mathurā the mark of *ūrnā* has been depicted. In them it seems that the artists have attempted to depict this mark in accordance with the textual injunction. They have not placed it on the lower part of the forehead, marking it as a beauty spot as has been done in some of the Gandhāra figures, but were quite certain as to its place. They have followed a uniform pattern in placing it between the eyebrows at the root of the nose. Here they have not marked it as a raised protuberance, but as a circle with a dot inside it.¹ But in some other images, belonging to the same age, they have conceived it in the proper manner. In the Ahichchatra image it is marked as a curled tuft of hair turning towards the right.² Almost all the Buddha images produced during the Gupta period do not bear the mark of *ūrnā* on the forehead. It is not quite certain as to why this change had occurred. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the growth of the *Trikāya* concept in the Mahāyāna philosophy changed the concept of the *Nirmānakāya* of the Buddha. Mahāyanistic views made the followers believe that the Buddha's *Nirmānakāya* was quite similar to that of a human being and it was the *Sambhogakāya* that carried all the characteristic features of the Buddha, and such features cannot be visualised by men. Not only the *ūrnā*, but also some other marks were absent in the Gupta images. The auspicious signs such as the wheels, to be depicted on the palms and the soles are absent too in Gupta images.

The *Nyagrodhaparimaṇḍalakāya* - i.e. the body is in symmetrical proportions of a banyan tree - the height being the same as the length of the arms is the next important mark shown in the Buddha images. Most of the early Gandhāran Buddha statues, both sitting and standing, bear the features of rather short, stocky figures. The Buddha figure on the Shah-ji-ki-dheri (Deshwar) relic casket is not proportionally made. Its height and its width

1. See plate 10

2. See plate 11

is not well balanced.¹ Even the standing image on the relic casket found in Bimran (now in the British Museum, London) lacks the symmetrical proportion of the body.² These examples reveal that the Gandhara artist, being influenced by the realistic traditions of the West, made no attempts to adhere to the bodily characteristics of the Buddha figure, as given in the Buddhist texts. However, it appears that in later times the Gandhara artists, having been acquainted with the norms and the conceptions of the Buddhist thought, attempted to carve out the images in accordance with the symmetrical proportions portraying the supra-human nature of the Buddha. The famous example of the Buddha figure made of black calcareous marble (now in the Museum of India, New Delhi)³ possesses this characteristic to a great extent. The other factor that could possibly be adduced with regard to the asymmetrical nature of the Buddha image produced by the Gandhāra artist, may be that they were in a hurry to carve out these images with a sort of mechanical device to satisfy the growing demand for the images by the new converts to the religion. Their main considerations in producing the Buddha images seem to be to portray them with the human qualities of strength, vigour and vitality.

Even the early Mathurā artists who were commissioned to carve out the Buddha images do not seem to have drawn much attention to the characteristic. As they modelled the Buddha images on the likeness of the *yaksa* figures almost all the bodily characteristics of these figures were imbued in the Buddha figures. The earliest figure like the Katrā Buddha image, or the Ahichchakra figure clearly manifest the qualities of earthboundness, stoutness, and clumsiness. Perhaps the non-existence of accepted traditional iconometrical measurements, too, might have debarred the artist from forming the Buddha figure. Early Buddha figures of Mathurā were nothing but the replicas of *yaksa* figures garbed with a robe of a monk, instead of the Indian *Dothi* dress. The bodily features were not conceived to suit the transcendental nature of the Buddha. Fully opened eyes, the stout torso and the strong and full-blown limbs and features are directly taken from the *Yakṣa* figures. The earthly bound and stout qualities of these figures naturally wane away when it comes to the Andra figures. However, when it comes to the Gupta period in India, the images assume symmetrical proportions. The

1. See plate 21

2. See plate 22

3. See plate 23

standing Buddha figure from Jamalpur¹ (now in the Archaeological Museum, Mathura), and the seated Buddha image from Sarnath² (now in the Sārnāth Museum) are good examples.

It appears that the development of the Buddhist philosophical schools in India during this age influenced the artist in making the Buddha image, which resulted in refinement and perfect harmony thereby assuming symmetrical proportions. Here in the above figures, the trunk of the body depicts the type of a hero with a broad chest, tapering to a narrow waist like that of a lion. Moreover, the qualities of heaviness in proportion, clumsy and expansive frame have disappeared. The physical form is more elongated and is more harmonious with the face and the other parts of the body, thus resulting in manifesting a radiant beauty, soft lines and graceful majesty in the figure in which the half closed eyes suggest that it is experiencing a vision by deep meditation.

The other characteristic features that can be discerned in the Buddha images are the ninth, fifteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and the twentieth *lakṣhanas* given in the list of the *Mahāpurisa lakṣhanas*. The early image makers have fashioned the Buddha manifesting the days of his prime youth, except in one or two instance, carved out by the Gandhāra artists, where they have attempted to depict the Buddha practising austerities when he was a Bodhisattva. Hence it seems that the Gandhāra artists were desirous of depicting the Buddha image in a variety of forms produced in the manner. Apart from these instances, almost all ancient Buddha images have been made with a straight frame. But in some of the narrative scenes in Gandhara sculptures, e.g. the gift of Jetavana (now in the Archaeological Museum, Peshawar) the Buddha figure is not in conformity with this rule. It is perhaps due to the fact that in narrative scenes the formation of the various attitudes and gestures renders it difficult for the artist to adhere to such principles. In all the schools of art in India especially the standing images confirm to this rule, but some of the early seated images of Mathurā this straight frame feature is not prominent. This seems to be due to the earthbound and stout nature of the figure. But during the Gupta age both seated and standing images prominently manifest this feature. In *Gupta* images, the trunk of the body

1. See plate 15

2. See plate 17

suggests the type of hero with a broad chest, tapering to a narrow waist, the type of a lion of a man (*purusha sinha*)¹. For example, the seated Buddha from Mankuwar, (now in the State Museum, Lucknow)² manifests this feature, which has reached its climax at Sarnath.³ As to the eighteenth *lakkhana* it could be stated that almost all the Buddha images produced in India and in the rest of the Buddhist world, except in one or two instances and Gandhāra portray the Buddha figure in his prime youth. Hence no hollow would be seen between the shoulders. The fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth *lakkhanas* in the list of the *Mahāpurisa lakkhanas* describe that the Buddha had a perfect body, all the parts of the body are symmetrically proportionate and well balanced, he is pleasantly shaped and possessed a full- fledged physical frame. All these features are manifest in the images produced during the classical period of the Gupta age. The norms and measurements of making Buddha images were fixed and documented in this age, thus providing the iconometric standards to all the images produced during later ages. The classical, fully perfected images thus spread into Southeast Asian countries whereby the Javanese artists created the best specimen. In this connection it is important to note that by about the tenth century A.D. the straight form of the Buddha figure had been changed into the *tribhanga* (three bends) pose, in which the figure is made with three bends, i.e. at the neck, waist and the knees. It appears that this change is partly due to the intermixture of the religion with other creeds and partly to aesthetic reasons. A fine example of this type of image is seen at Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka and it is called the 'Tivanka' image.

Jālahathhapāda is the next important characteristic of the Buddha. This has become one of the controversial subjects regarding the proper meaning of the term, among the scholars. Generally the meaning of this has been rendered as the "webbed fingers".⁴ According to the Pali sources it is shown by the parallel lines running across the fingers and the toes, showing on the surface that the fingers and toes are joined to each other by a net, but nothing exists between the fingers or toes to connect each other. With regard to the portrayal of this feature in early Buddhist images, scholars have forwarded different views. Coomaraswamy⁵ has pointed out that the webbed fingers, as

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1. Image of the Buddha p 91
 2. See plate 24
 3. See plate 17
 4. See supra, p 125f
 5. Hist. of Ind. & Indo Art p 74

he has referred to it, is one of the characteristic features shown in the Buddha images of the Gupta period. He refers to the Mankuwar image as an example. J.N. Bannerje in discussing what Coomaraswamy had stated with regard to the Mankuwar image says that it is not a case of webbed fingers, but a master-of-craftsman's device to safeguard the splitting of the fingers in the right hand of the image.¹ Buddha images had been discovered with six types of hand poses and three types of attitudes.² In most of the early Gandharan Buddha images which show the right hand in *Abhaya mudrā* are not preserved, thus making it difficult for us to ascertain this *lakkhana* on the palm. Spooner has recorded that one of the hands of a broken image discovered from Sahri Bahlol is remarkable for the well-defined webbing between the fingers.³ But Bannerjea has shown that it was an artist's device for the durability of the separated fingers.⁴ But if the term *jālahattha* is to be taken as meaning the parallel lines running across the fingers, some of the early Buddha images clearly show this feature. For instance in the Katra Buddha image the hand in *abhaya mudrā* is well preserved and a close observation of this palm will show that this hand has parallel lines running across the fingers showing that it looks like a net. Most of the Mathura images showing *abhaya mudrā* possess this feature. The Buddha image from Ahichchatra⁵, Mathurā image⁶ (now in the Museum Fur Volkerkunde, Munich) are good examples. In some of the images cited above, this feature can be seen on the toes too. As such it seems clear that the Mathura artists have attempted to depict this feature as they have understood it. In the Buddha images made during the Gupta period this feature is clearly seen. The Buddha image from Mankuwar depicts this feature. Our assumption that the *jalanguli* means the parallel lines and not webbed fingers becomes more clear when examples of *Dharmachakra mudrā* does not show us that its fingers are webbed with each other.

The next important characteristic feature of the Buddha deals with his feet. The list gives the description as follows:

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1. IHQ. Vol. VII p 654
 2. Abhaya Varada, Vitarka, Dhyāna, Dharmacakra and Bhūmisparsa, standing sitting and recumbent images.
 3. ASIAR, 1906-7, Pl XXXV Fig 9
 4. IHQ. Vol. VII, pl XXXV Fig 9
 5. See plate 11
 6. See plate 13

1. The feet with a level tread;
2. On the soles of the feet wheels appear;
3. Projecting heels and long fingers;
4. Soft and tender feet;
5. Toes evenly spaced;
6. The legs like those of antelopes.

Out of these marks the first appears to be generally shown by the artists. No image, either standing, sitting or recumbent can be traced without this figure. The second characteristic, i.e. the appearance of the wheels on the soles, appears to be in vogue even during the age prior to the making of the Buddha image in human form. Among the sculptures of Bārhut, Sānchi and Amaravati (early part) where the Buddha figure was presented in symbols and emblems, portrayals of the feet only of the Buddha had been found. One such relief from Amaravati (now in the Government Museum of Madras)¹ provides us with clear evidence of how the wheel marks were depicted. Here the feet are carved flatly on a stone slab and in the centre of each foot a big wheel is marked with numerous spokes, denoting the thousand in number, and a lotus flower is marked as its hub. On the heels and toes *trisūla* signs are depicted - in the former flanked by two swastikas. From this it is evident that this great characteristic feature was quite common and widely accepted by the populace.

In the early Gandhāran Buddha the wheel marks on the palms are very occasionally present. This leads us to conclude that the early sculptors of Gandhāra have either not followed the Buddhist scriptures or were not fully aware of the early Indian traditions. Moreover, in most of the early Gandharan images the hands of *abhaya mudrā* are lost and in most cases the feet of the Buddha are covered with a robe. But in later Gandhāran images, wheel marks are shown on the upturned palms and toes of the Buddha figures.² Perhaps with the increase of awareness of Buddhist thought and traditions they must have adjusted themselves to depict these signs accordingly to local traditions.

However, in the images of Mathurā, wheel marks appear on the palms and soles of the Buddha figures. For instance in Katra and Ahichchatra images these marks can clearly be seen. In some cases *cakra* is accompanied by a *Nandipāda* symbol. In the images of the Gupta period during which the Buddha image achieved its full perfection, these signs are absent. Perhaps

1. See plate 1
2. See plate 25

this is due to the fact that with the growth of the *Trikāya* concept in Mahayana philosophy, as such it seems that the artists have made no attempt to depict these marks. Moreover, in the midst of an age of complexity of various forces such as the competition of making images in different religions and contributing a sense of aesthetic beauty that attracts the devotees, perhaps the artists' main considerations were directed more to a sublime and impressive shape and form of the figure, rather than to the depiction of minor marks. Hence it is possible that they might have attempted to depict the inward qualities of the Buddha, rather than the outwardly visible signs. Again in the medieval age, it could be noticed that these signs appear again. Not only the symbol of *cakra*, but also the symbols like *dvaja*, *mina*, and *nandipāda* are shown. This is due to the influence of different faiths on each other. The artists have manifested these signs irrespective of the basic significance bestowed in each religion to individual symbols. Alabaster has shown that in the famous footprint of the Buddha in Phra Bat, Siam, besides the *cakra*, numerous other symbols like the lotus, conch-shell, royal chowrie, royal elephant goad, two fishes, etc., are shown.¹

Finally with regard to that characteristic feature of the legs and feet of the Buddha enumerated above, except the one just described in the preceding pages, all lead to the fact that they are fully developed, well shaped and symmetrical limbs of the body. The earliest images produced in Gandhara and Mathurā lack some of these qualities. They were mainly guided and highly influenced by the prototypes. Gandharā artists who were bent towards the realistic view in art, attempted to form the limbs of the human body following the principles of what really existed among human forms, while the Mathura artist followed the earthbound, clumsy and stout nature of the *yaksa* figures. Thus both seem not to have been visualised at first in art the super-human nature of the Buddha form with his great marks as described in Buddhist scriptures. But during the Gupta age, the artists formed the Buddha image epitomising all the visualised forms that existed in India. Thus the limbs of the Buddha figure were brought to a state of near perfection in which some of these features were achieved. The features like soft and tender hands and feet, fingers and toes evenly spaced, legs like those of the antelope could be noted. The famous seated Buddha image from Sarnath and the standing image from Mathurā depict these features.

1. Alabaster, Wheel of Law, p 286 and plate

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to examine the depiction of the great characteristic marks of the Buddha as given in the Buddhist scriptures. However, the artists have attempted to manifest some of the marks in visible form. It seems that the early stage of the evolution of the Buddha image had to consider the abstract qualities of the Buddhahood, such as (*bodhi*) enlightenment, *pañña* (wisdom) *karunā* (compassion) and *mettā* (love) and also the outward appearance of the Buddha as a perfect human figure, although he was an ascetic. In the attempt to transform these ideas into an image (we made it clear) the concept of the *Mahāpurisa* had greatly influenced the artists' hand. The idea of the *Mahāpurisa* could be reflected in the origin of the Buddha image, because several of the thirty two *lakṣhanas* of the *Mahāpurisa* could be visually depicted and iconographically translated. However these marks were not construed to be mere physical descriptions but also they could be depicted as symbols of the abstract qualities of the Buddhahood.

It was not our intention to establish that these manifestations on the part of the artists were correct and true to the forms ascribed in the literature, because even in the literature there were different interpretations regarding the form and shape of some marks. In fact, as the Buddha was a supernal being the manifested marks in art may be incorrect for no such marks existed in visible form. Anyway, since the artist's aim was the depiction of Buddhahood, these marks may be regarded to be indicative of what were held to be the great characteristics of the supreme human forms prevalent in the society at the time.

Ethical Foundation of the Mahāpurisa Concept

The evidence adduced in previous chapters makes it clear that the concept of *Mahāpurisa* and the theory of thirty-two characteristic marks are not exclusive Buddhist notions. Prototypes of the Great personalities and belief in prognostications were known to all the religious systems of early India. However, Buddhism differs from other contemporary systems in referring to physiognomical characteristics. Hence the peculiar feature of the *Mahāpurisa* concept in Buddhist literature is its emphasis on the ethical teachings of the Buddha. This is the unique contribution of Buddhism to the *Mahāpurisa* theory.

It is recognised by many scholars that Buddhism can claim to be one of the most ethical of religio-philosophical systems of the world. T.W. Rhys Davids in his American Lectures says:

"I cannot be wrong in maintaining that the study of Buddhism should be considered a necessary part of any ethical cause and should not be dismissed in a page or two, but receive its due proportion in historical perspective of ethical evolution."¹

Ethical and moral teaching of Buddhism differs from contemporary religio-ethical systems, as it is free from ritual acts (*karma-yajña*) and mystical belief and emphasis on human effort. Giving up the practice of propitiation of powers that surround man, using various forms of worship such as supplication, sacrifice, ceremonial rite and magical cult, as accepted in the Brahminical religion, Buddhism emphasized the need for self-culture or moral rectitude to gain freedom from the trammels of existence. However, it is interesting to note that religio-philosophical terms which have been used in Brahmanism in relation to the above ideas and concepts, also appear in Buddhist terminology. But Buddhism does not accept their traditional meaning given by the Brahmanical system, and gives them a new connotation. One of the main characteristics of this practice was the substitution of an ethical connotation to some prevailing concepts and customs, hereby displacing their mythical and theological meaning. This way of assimilation

1. Rhys Davids, T.W., Buddhism, London, 1896, p 185

in Buddhism may be appropriately termed as "ethicalisation" of concepts. This can be seen quite clearly in every aspect of Buddhism, if we examine some of the early terms of Indian culture such as *Brāhmaṇa*, *Indra*, *yajña* and *uposatha*, with their Buddhist connotations.

In the Vedic tradition the origin of the Brahmana caste was identified with the mouth of the cosmic man (*purusa*).¹ The Brahmana was given the highest position in the social hierarchy and endowed with magical powers as mediator between gods and human beings.²

All these powers and privileges of the Brahmanical caste individually and collectively depended on "birth". But for the Buddha the term *Brāhmaṇa* denoted "the person who discarded all unwholesome deeds", unlike in Brahminism.³ After the Buddha's enlightenment a *Brāhmaṇa* who approached him questioned the Buddha:

"In what aspect, Oh Venerable *Gotama*, does one become a Brahmana, and what are the conditions that make a *Brāhmaṇa*?"

The Buddha answered:

"That Brahmin who has discarded evil without conceit, free from defilements, self-controlled, well versed in knowledge and who had led the holy life rightly, could call himself a Brahmana, for him there is no elation anywhere in the world."⁴

Here the Buddha rejected the traditional idea of Brahmana and substituted individual action as the criterion of genuine Brahmanahood.

In the same way the Vedic notion of *Indra* was changed by removing almost all the immoral actions attributed to his character in Vedic mythology.⁵ M.M.J. Marasingha points out:

"Instead of the war-hungry *sōma* drinking Indra, there was born a more humane and kindhearted overlord of the lower heavens, who not only respected and looked after the interests of the Buddha and

1. Rgveda - Purusa Sūkta

2. A Brahmana be he ignorant or learned is a great divinity - Manu I p 31

3. Brahitapapoti brahamo - one who is left undone evil is called Brahmana

4. Udāna p 4

5. Rgeveda, VI 27.5

his disciples - who are the most perfect examples of living beings according to the new teaching - but also looked after the interests of all good and virtuous human beings without the least requirement of prayer or offerings."¹

Thus *Indra* became an ideal *upasāka*, a lay Buddhist devotee, who observed the Eight Precepts.²

Sacrifice, the foremost religious institution of the *Brahmanas* was also criticized and given a new meaning in Buddhist texts, according to the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, real sacrifice is promotion of human welfare in the gradual advancement in the path of spiritual development.³

Upavasatha, the most common institution of the Brahmana tradition was intimately connected with sacrifice and other magical beliefs. But the Buddha removed all magical and theological ideals, and adopted it under the name of *uposatha* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and used the most important monastic institution as a way of promoting individual purity and communal harmony among the members of the *Sangha*.⁴

The above examples of the ethical approach of Buddhism to the cultural traits in ancient India, shows that it embraces not only the general human conduct, but also the religious, theological, magical and other aspects of the Indian cultural milieu. This principle of ethicalisation of popular concepts

1. Marasinghe M.M.J., *Gods in Early Buddhism*, Sri Lanka 1974 p 38

2. A.I. p 143

3. D.I. p 144

4. Vin. I. (*Uposathakkhandhaka*) p 137 - 156

seems to have been applied to the elucidation of the idea of the *Mahāpurisa* in Buddhist literature.

As the *Lakkhana Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* forms the primary source of our study (of the ethical foundation of the *Mahāpurisa* concept), the *Sutta* needs a brief introduction. In the structure the *Sutta* can be divided into two sections, (prose and verse), while the contents of the two sections are more or less similar. On the question of the chronology of the two sections of the *Sutta*, the commentator Buddhaghosa says that these verses were left to Ananda by the *Porānakatheras*.¹

The most significant difference between the prose and verse sections is that at the end of each prose passage it is said that: "This was uttered by the Exalted One - *idam avoca bhagavā*." Here the source of the passage is precise, because it is attributed to the Buddha himself, but at the introduction of the verse section, the source of the utterance is not stated. It merely says that: "Here it has been said - *tatha etam vuccati*" without attributing the authorship of the verses to anyone. Probably this may suggest that the verses belong to an ancient tradition, the source of which is not known.

Commenting on the different phraseology between the prose and verse sections Gñanavasa says:

"Why the prose alone pertains to the Buddha, and the others to an unknown authority, is a pertinent question. It seems that the compilers of the *Sutta* had introduced these *gāthās* (verses) from a familiar authority as they wanted to distinguish between Buddhist

1. *Tattha etam vuccatīti, tattha vutti kammādi bhede aparampi idam vuccati. gāthā bandhanam sandhāya vuttam. eta pana gāthā poranaka therā Ānandattherena thapitā, vaṇṇagathāti vattuagātha. aparabhāge therā ekapadiko atthuddhāroti āhamsu* - Here Buddhaghosa does not come to any conclusion on this point. He says that these stanzas which are explanatory in character, are attributed to Ananda by *Porānaka* theras and he adds that later elders said that this is a synopsis of a single line. However, it is noteworthy that the commentator (in 5thC. AD) does not express his own opinion on the question. Explaining the position of the *Porānakathera*, Adikaram says: "In one instance the opinion of *Porānakatheras* is definitely set aside and another interpretation advanced by the original commentator...The general tendency is not to take their views as authority." Adikaram, E.W., *Early History of Buddhism*, Colombo, 1946, P 21

and non-Buddhist statements. If these belong to a proper Buddhist tradition, there was no need to use different phraseology, for the prose and verse."¹

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the verse sections of the *Sutta* belonged to another source, and early Buddhists utilised the ideas appearing in the verses to promote moral consciousness by giving an ethical foundation to the *Mahāpurisa* concept which may probably belong to an early Indian tradition.

Before we discuss the contents of the *Lakkhana Sutta*, we produce here a general pattern and the main themes of the sutta as briefly as possible.²

Unlike most of the other discourses, the introduction to the *Sutta* does not provide any specific cause (*nidāna*) for its deliverance by the Buddha. It begins with the enumerations of the thirty-two marks of the Great Man by the Buddha with the stereotype description of the powers and functions of the Universal Monarch in detail, and with only a brief statement on the Buddha. At this stage the *Sutta* does not say anything about *Kamma*, and immediately after this the Buddha says that, "Seers of other communities are also acquainted with these marks, but they know not for what deeds done any one of the marks is required." It is clear that at this point the *Sutta* makes an attempt to interpret the marks on the basis of the doctrine of *Kamma*, giving it an ethical foundation by explaining each mark in detail. The theoretical basis of the explanations of the thirty-two marks in the *Sutta*, can be divided into three aspects:

1. Doctrine of *Kamma*;
2. Theory of rebirth;
3. Buddhist ethical Norms.

According to the *Sutta*, "*Mahāpurisa* in his previous births performs good actions as a human being and after the expirations of his life he is reborn in a heavenly realm and enjoys there divine pleasure, superior to that of other heavenly beings. After departing from the heavenly realm he comes to this world and acquires all the thirty-two physical marks of the Great Man." Here it seems that the above three aspects, i.e. *Kamma*, rebirth and ethics, have been made use of, to induce the common man to moral behaviour by

1. Gñānāvāsa, H., The Development of the Concept of Buddha, p 182
2. See appendix I

glorification of the notion of the thirty-two marks of the Great Man. Further, the commentator observes these aspects of the characteristics within a framework of four categories, namely as follows:

1. *Kamma*, (previous good action);
2. *Kammasarikkhatā* (commensurateness of the result of *Kamma*);
3. *Lakkhana* (physical mark);
4. *Lakkanānisansa* (merits of the mark).

Of these four categories, the second is more important than the others because it denotes expansion of meaning of the doctrine of *Kamma* in Buddhist literature. The term *kammasarikkhatā* is not found in the Pali Canon. But it appears in the commentarial literature to illustrate an apparent or symbolical similarity between *Kamma* (action) and *Vipāka* (result) denoting a popular phase of the development of the doctrine of *kamma*. This is evident from the fact that early discourses on the concept of *kamma* do not try to trace the acute and precise similarity between *kamma* and *vipāka*, apart from general statements indicating the relationship between the two.

The commentary on the *Lakkhana Sutta* in the *Sumangalavilāsinī*, carries out this four-fold categorisation of the subject matter of the *Sutta* from its very beginning to the end with an elaborate interpretation of the relationship between *Kamma* and *Vipāka*. The peculiar character of this process is that the commentary selects one result of *Kamma* out of a number of results and names it as *Kammasarikkhatā*. For example on the first *lakkhana*, *Suppatitthitapāda* (he hath feet of level tread) the *Lakkhanasutta* says that the past *Kamma* which resulted in this physical mark was the firm observance of good actions, such as generosity, right conduct, religious duties, etc. According to the commentary, the *Kammasarikkhatā* is *Suppatitthitapāda* (feet with level tread), representing firm observance.¹ Here it is apparent that the symbolical similarity between action (*kamma*) and result (*vipāka*) is the firmness 'dalha'. The level tread of the feet symbolises the firmness of the fact. *Dīgha NikāyaTika* explaining further the concept of *Kammasarikkhatā*, says, "*Kammasarikkhatā nāma ... dalhāvatthitabhāvassa anucchavika Nāpakanimittabhāvo*"²; three words used here give the common link which combines *Kamma* and *Kammavipāka*. 'dalhādītthitabhāvo' means 'firmness', and *anucchaviko* and *nāpakanimitta* suggest 'compatibility'. The

1. DA. III

2. *Dīgha Nikāya Tika* ed. by Lily de Silva (PTS)

Mahāpurisa in his previous lives observes moral principles very firmly and as a result he is endowed with "level tread of the feet" which supports him in firm standing. The symbolical compatibility of both the previous actions (*Kamma*) and its result (*Vipāka*) is designated as *kamma* - 'likeness' or "*Kammasarikkhatā*". Thus the commentary on the *Lakkhanasutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* follows from the beginning up to its end, the method of putting thirty-two marks to the four-fold categories, mentioned above. This way of explaining the doctrine of *Kamma* seems to have been accepted by the later commentators too¹, as evidenced by the *Vimānavatthu* and the *Petavattu* commentaries which belong to a more popular stage in the development of Buddhist tradition.

Here the *Lakkhana Sutta* provides twenty sets of good actions, done by the Buddha in his previous births. It states that the continual practice of certain actions resulted in the acquisition of certain marks. However, this explanation does not mean that the performance of these *Kammas* are the only cause giving rise to those *lakkhanas*. The correlation between action (*Kamma*) and result (*vipāka* or *phala*) which constitutes the Buddhist doctrine of *Kamma*, has been misunderstood by many scholars, as an absolute determinism. But it is quite evident that the Buddha rejected the determinist theory that everything happens is "due to what one did in the past" (*pubbekatahetu*). In Buddhism, although the *Kamma* is the chief cause of the inequalities in the world, yet it is only one among many other reasons for the processes of physical and mental phenomena.²

Kamma is classified into four kinds according to the time at which results are produced. There is *Kamma* that ripens in the same lifetime, *Kamma* that ripens in the next life, and *Kamma* that ripens in successive births. These three types of *Kamma* are bound to produce results as a seed is to sprout. But for a seed to sprout, certain auxiliary causes such as soil, rain, etc., are required. In the same way for a *Kamma* to produce an effect, several auxiliary causes such as circumstances, surroundings, etc., are required. It sometimes happens that for want of such auxiliary causes *Kamma* does not produce any result. Such *Kamma* is called "*ahosi-Kamma* or "*Kamma* that is ineffective".

1. "*Tassakira divā sunakehi migānam khādāpitattā Kammasarikkhatam Kammaphalam hoti*" - PvA, p 206, 284

"*Tamhi suvannavannāhi nattham attarivā dinnattā kammasarikkhatam Vibhāvenatam suvannamayam ahosi*" - VvA p 6

2. Compedium of Philosophy, Anuruddha, Tr Shwe Zen Aung, London, 1910 p p 191

However, it is a prominent feature of Buddhism that it expounds its ethical teaching in close association with the theory of *Kamma* and the theory of rebirth or survival. The *Cullakammavibhanga Sutta* maintains that a person who kills living creatures, and has no compassion for them would on account of that behaviour be reborn in an evil state after death. If he were reborn as a human he would not live long. On the other hand, a person who totally refrained from killing living creatures and has compassion for them, would on account of that behaviour be reborn in a happy state after death. If he were reborn as a human he would have a long life. Similarly the *Lakkhana Sutta* is also a clear example of this approach. For it correlates Buddhist ethical norms with the *Kamma* theory and the *Mahāpurisa* concept.

It is important to note here that the correlation of ethical norms and *Kamma* theory in Buddhism does not mean that the criteria for evaluating an action whether good or bad depends purely on its *Kammic* result. The Buddhist way of looking at human behaviour is in accord with common sense, and it adapts two criteria in deciding whether an action is good or bad:

1. The intention which drives one to act;
2. The results which the action produces.

The former criterion is clearly expressed in one of the famous statements of the Buddha; viz.: "Oh monks, I do proclaim that *Cetana* (intention, volition or will) is *Kamma*".¹ It is on the strength of this criterion that the Buddha decides the case brought against Cakkhupala.²

The *Ambalatthika Rāhulovāda Sutta*³ of the *Majjhima Nikāya* provides us with a standing example for the elucidation of the second criterion, according to which the goodness or badness of any kind of action depends, whether it is harmful or beneficial to the doer himself, or to the others or to both, in other words, an action harmful to the doer, to the others or to both is regarded in this *sutta* as bad (*akusala*) and an action beneficial to the doer, to others or to both is correspondingly regarded as good.

The ethical teaching of Buddhism, according to its character can be found in two planes, i.e. morality or ethics which are necessary fulfillments of the path of freedom or the highest goal, (Nibbana), and ethics for ordinary people which lead to the moral development of both individual and society. Although

1. A.II p 334

2. DhA. I. p 20f

3. M.I. p 414ff

the teaching of the Buddha is entirely directed to the achievement of perfect wisdom, and, thereby freedom (*vimutti*) from (*samsāra*), there are numerous references in Buddhist discourses to the happiness and progress of the individual and society. These basic ethics in one way or another, are intended to bring about not only the happiness and progress of the individual, but also social, economic and political improvements, and harmony in society. It is noteworthy here that Buddhism explains the ethical duties of the individual by looking at the man as one who belongs to different social contexts according to his position, i.e. parents, children, husband, wife, employer, employee, ruler, subjects, etc. Moral behaviour is valued according to the performance of duties and responsibilities in each social context. Therefore Buddhism regards the practice of both negative and positive moral virtues, not only as the right way of progress and happiness, but also considers it as the fulfillment of duties for the good of society.

Ethical norms which are listed in the *Lakkhana Sutta*, as past good actions which resulted in the acquisition of the thirty-two *lakkhanas* of the Buddha, can also be regarded as the moral virtues of the individual which lead to the social uplift we have referred to. Although these good actions are classified under different groups as separate sets of wholesome deeds, corresponding to each physical characteristic, the *Sutta* as a whole seems to be a manual of ethical norms which should be practised for numerous existences, in order to become a *Mahāpurisa*, i.e. the Buddha or *Cakkavatti*. Most of the good actions listed in the *Lakkhana Sutta* are mainly concerned with the welfare of others. Even the Pali phrases: "*Bahujanahitāya, bahujanasukhāya, bahujanassa sukhāvaho, bahujanassa atthūpasamhitam,*" etc. emphasises the social value of the action, on many occasions throughout the *Sutta*. This approach of the *Sutta* is quite consistent with the concept of Buddha and *Cakkavatti*, in that it emphasises that these two were born into the world for the benefit of others.

"Monks, these two persons born into the world who are born to the profit and happiness of many, to the profit and happiness and welfare of many folk. Which two? A *Talhāgata* and an Arahant, who is the Fully Enlightened One and a world ruling monarch. These are the two so born."

Therefore, we conclude the *Kusala Kamma* which results in the excellent physical appearance of the Buddha and of the *Cakkavatti* - who hold the

highest position in the spiritual and secular world respectively - accrued from doing good to others as much as from the pursuit of individual liberation.

In Buddhist texts the moral virtues are grouped into various categories. The most elementary are those comprising the group of five virtues (*pañcasīla*). They are abstinence:

1. from taking life;
2. from taking what is not given;
3. from wrong indulgence in sense pleasures;
4. from falsehood;
5. from indulgence consequent on the use of intoxicants.¹

Then there are the ten moral virtues (*dasakusala*). These are the first five just mentioned, together with abstinence:

6. from slandering;
7. from harsh or rough speech;
8. from frivolous chatter;
9. from covetousness;
10. from malevolence;
11. from false or heretical views².

Among the past good actions which are listed in the *sutta* there are many items which can be directly related to these basic moral virtues of Buddhist ethics, *pañcasīla* or *dasakusala*. It is remarkable that, in expounding these moral virtues, the *sutta* elaborates each precept or action by emphasising its social value. Although the *pañcasīlas* are self-imposed observances of the individual they provide the basis for the Buddhist social ethics."³

Gokhale says,

"For the layman namely, abstinence from violence, stealing, falsehood, immorality and drinking intoxicating liquors, were a simple formalisation of the four pillars of society and became the basis of

1. S. II p 69

2. S.IV. p 342

3. According to Buddhism, these are not Commandments, they are rules for training, voluntarily undertaken

Buddhist social ethics. Killing of living beings, stealing of others' property, etc., are all called bad in Buddhism, not merely because they are done under the spell of bad intention and they bring evil consequences to the doer, but also because they have bad effects on society at large, and disrupt the lives of the members of the society."¹

In the *Lakkhanasutta* this emphasis on socio-ethical behaviour has been clearly illustrated in the descriptions of the first and fourth precepts. For instance, according to the sutta, to refrain from taking life means that one abstains from taking life, "lays the scourge and sword aside, dwells gently and compassionately, with sympathy and friendship to all living creatures." There is no doubt that Buddhism highly regards the life of any living being, and the above description makes it clear that the emphasizes not only abstaining from taking life, but also non-violence and kindness towards all living beings. On the subject of *pañcasīla* Tachibana takes only the first two precepts as "Guarantees for the safeguard of life and property".² It is quite true that in these two precepts, the safeguarding of life and property are explicitly mentioned. But this does not necessarily mean that the remaining three precepts have nothing to do with safeguarding the life and property of others. They also contain, even if only in a latent form, the same idea, viz. that life and property of the individual should by all means be protected as a basic requirement for keeping society in order. For example, if we take the fourth precept (*musāvāda*) our *sutta* says, "By putting away lying, one should become a truthspeaker, should be bound to the truth, trustworthy, consistent, not deceive others by breaking one's word". This clearly indicates the importance of truthspeaking in order to maintain the peace and harmony in society. The Buddha said that "There is no unwholesome deed whatsoever in this world that cannot be done by one who speaks untruth³ because he is the one whose mind is empty and barren of good qualities."⁴

The *Aggaññasutta* as well as the *Cakkavattisīhanādasutta* attests to the relationship of *musāvādā* to both *pānātipātā* and *adinnādānā*. The

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1. The Buddhist Social Ideals, Mahabodhi Journal, 1961 (March-April) p 62
 2. Tachibana, The Ethics of Buddhism, p 59
 3. *ekam dhammam afūtassa musavadissa jantuno-vitinna paralokassa-natthi pāpam akāriyam* - Dh. Vs. 176, It p 18
 4. M.I., p 41

Aggaññasutta indicates their causal sequence as follows: "Thenceforward *Vasettha* came into existence theft, reproof, lying and violence"¹. Hence all the five unwholesome deeds are regarded in Buddhism as equally bad, because they all contribute to fear (*bhaya*) and hatred (*vera*) in society. Each of them condemns one socially. The Buddha says that one who violates the principle of *pañcasīla* will be censured by society² and will not be courageous enough to face any civilised society.³

Four types of good speech which come into the category of *dasakusala* have been expounded at length in the *Lakkhanasutta* as some of the good actions practised by the *Mahāpurisa* in his previous births. It is quite clear that speech is an important faculty, through which we are able to communicate with others. Speech is thus indispensable to human beings and proper use of this faculty may lead to maintaining friendship and close relations within a peaceful environment in the society. At the same time, when it is abused or misused, it can bring great harm in destroying the peace and happiness in the society. Hence abstinence from lying, slandering, abuse and idle talk are considered to be very important practices of Buddhist social ethics.

In the *Lakkhanasutta* the main concern underlying the practice of these actions is to maintain social harmony. The *sutta* defines the other three vocal actions in addition to *musāvāda* as follows:

"*Tathāgata* in his former existence being human, put away abusive speech, revolted against abusive speech, what he heard here, not repeating elsewhere, to raise a quarrel against people and what he heard elsewhere, not repeating here, to raise a quarrel against people there; thus becoming a binder together of those who are divided, of fostering those who are friends, a peacemaker, a lover of concord, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace."

"... he gave up using harsh language, revolted from rough language and became an habitual speaker of whatsoever words are harmless, pleasant to the ear, lovely, reaching to the heart, urbane, pleasing the multitude, being loved by the multitude."

1. D.III. p 92

2. D.III. p 85

3. Ibid

"... he gave up idle talk, revolted from idle talk and became one who spoke in due time, in accordance with the facts, words full of meaning in accordance with truth and discipline, words worthy to be stored up in the heart, fittingly illustrated, clearly divided and to the point."

Among the last three wholesome deeds, which belong to the mental actions, non-maligning and non-malevolent, have been reported the longstanding practice of the Great Man. It is quite obvious that hatred, malice or enmity make people irritate themselves and lead to disagreements, quarrels, divisions and violence among the multitude.

The Buddha, who always advised a peaceful atmosphere in the society at each level, i.e. individual, family, tribes, etc., precisely mentions that hatred will never be appeased by hatred.¹ In relation to the freedom from *samsāra*, malice is one of the three roots of moral evil. However, the *Lakkhanasutta* specially illustrates the practice of non-malignance as social ethics. It says, "Tathāgata, then being human, lived without wrath, full of serenity, and even when such had been said, fell not foul of anyone, was neither angry nor malignant, nor enraged, manifesting neither anger, nor hate, nor melancholy."

More of these ethical norms are generally stated in negative form². But it does not necessarily mean as W.L. King says that "In a Buddhist context almost all value statement is in negative form". It also emphasises the practical necessity for the cultivation of such positive morality as loving kindness (*mettā*), sympathy (*karunā*) liberality (*dāna*) and so on. King believes that the assumption of Buddhism that if evil in human nature is done away with (i.e. hatred rooted out) then goodness will appear (i.e. loving kindness comes into action).³ This is an erroneous view. Buddhism does not believe that mere negation of evil qualities presupposes the emergence of good qualities. On the contrary it says that evil qualities should be done away with through the practice of good qualities. In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha says: "Anger should be overcome by good; greed should be overcome by liberality, the liar by truth".⁴

1. Dh. Vs. 5

2. King, W.L., "In the Hope of Nibbāna: An essay on Theravada Buddhist Ethics", Open Court, Illinois 1964, p 144

3. Ibid p 44

4. Dh. vs. 223

We find many examples of the moral ethics which related to the characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* in the *Lakkhanasutta* where negative moral statements were often coupled with the assertion of positive morality. In those statements both negative and positive ethics are given an equal emphasis and stated side by side. While the terms *pānātipātā paṭivirato* and *micchā ājīvam pahāya* are being used in the negative moral sense, the words such as *lajjī*, *dayāpanno*, *sabbapāna hitānukampī saccavādī samaggakaranim vācām*, *bahujanakanta vācā*, *sammā ājīvam* and so on, are used in the positive sense.

Further, mere abstention from wrong-doing is not reckoned in Buddhism as the highest ideal of life. As Pratt rightly states, "The Buddha's positive and constructive teachings are really more fundamental than are its negations and prohibitions."¹ The Buddha rejected the idea of mere negation of evil deeds as sufficient to achieve the highest ideal of life and commented as follows:

"If this is the case, then a small baby would become the one who has attained the highest ideal of life. A small baby does not even know what body is, so how can he do evil deeds with his body? He does nothing but throb (*phantamatta*). A small baby does not even know what words mean. So how can he speak evil words? His are nothing but crying (*roditamatta*). A small baby does not even know what concept means, so how can he think of evil in terms of evil concepts? He is nothing but excitements (*vikujjita*). A small baby does not even know what living means, so how can he lead an evil life? His is nothing but his mother's breast (*mātuthanna*)."²

It is quite clear from this argument that the ideal life depends not only the negation of evil qualities but on the cultivation of good qualities. Buddhism believes that no one can be morally or ethically perfect, unless and until he practises and cultivates good qualities as well.

Apart from the negative aspects and positive aspects of *pañcasīla* and *dasakusala* the *Lakkhana Sutta* provides quite a comprehensive list of positive ethics which have been related to the characteristics of the Mahapurisa. Among the positive elements in Buddhist ethics, *mettā* (loving kindness) and *karunā* (compassion), occupy a prominent position. Although the practices of *mettā* and *karunā* are primarily aimed at removing a major evil root, malice, which obstructs the attainment of *nibbāna*, their scope is so

1. Pratt, J.B., Pilgrimage of Buddhism, London 1928, p 34

2. M.II p 24f

wide that they direct one's behaviour towards bringing about the well-being and happiness of others.

The social aspect of *mettā* is described as a friendly attitude which makes one soft¹ in one's behaviour by driving away hatred², the root cause of all social evils such as killing, stealing, etc.³, and renders human association possible and desirable. In the *Lakkhanasutta* this aspect of developing loving-kindness is very prominent. In several places the *sutta* says: "*bahujanassa sukkhāvaho, pānīnam hitasukkhāvaho*" - "In previous existences *Mahāpurisa* practised, concern for the well-being and happiness of great multitudes."

The *sutta* states:

"... Tathāgāta, then being human reunited long lost with long bereaved relatives, friends and comrades, reunited mother with child and child with father, brother with brother, brother with sister, sister with sister, making them as one, causing them to rejoice."

This may suggest to what extent one ought to develop love, or *mettā* in order to practice such socio-ethical behaviour.

Karunā (compassion) is an attitude in which one extends one's sympathy towards others, undergoing sufferings of any kind. Buddhaghosa says:

"*Karunā* is that which creates a tremor of feelings in the hearts of the good people when they see others in distress."⁴

The terms *dayāpanna* (sympathy) and *sabbapānahitānukampī* (compassion towards all living beings) in the *sutta* imply the idea of *karunā* and the *sutta* states that Buddha possessed the wheel sign on his soles, because he was a dispeller of dread and panic, protector of the just and wardenship in his previous existences.

1. *Mejjhati mettā, Siniyhatīti attho*, Vsm. I p 317

Mittassabhāvo metta, KhpA p 248

2. *Nissaranam hetam avuso byāpādassa, yadidam mettācetovimutti*, D.III p 248

3. Vsm. I p 295

4. *Paradukkhe sati sādhanam hadaye kampanam karofīti karunā* - Vsm I p 318

Both *mettā* and *karunā* are regarded as sublime states of mind (*brah-mavihāra*)¹ in Buddhist texts, and are given an equal importance as social values. Tachibana writes:

"If every person in human society is benevolent and grateful, or ready to be benevolent to others and to return grateful feelings or kindness shown to him, society will be a very pleasant place to live in. If in the private and public life of human beings mutual love is a predominant element in everything, there will be no friction whatsoever among them."²

Hence in the *Lakkhanasutta* although all ethical norms are prescribed, however the two virtues of *karunā* and *mettā* keep running through the fabric of this *sutta*, as the twin basic threads which are fundamentally necessary for practising and holding together the other moral ethics.

The next distinguishing feature of the ethical norms of the *Lakkhana_sutta* is that most of the remaining good deeds which we have not discussed as yet, can be traced to the moral duties of different social groups described in Buddhist literature. Buddhism stresses good social relations between social units for achieving moral and economic improvement. They are often referred to as relations between parents and children, teacher and pupil, the laity and the monks, ruler and subjects, also the relationship between friends and kinsmen (*nāti*). Reference to various aspects of this topic are found scattered in many Pali *suttas*, discourses that took place between the laymen of different status. The *Sigālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Mangala_sutta*, the *Parābhavasutta* and the *Vasalasutta* of the *Suttanipāta* are entirely devoted to discussion of social relations and duties and obligations of individuals towards society. The ethical practices of each individual, according to his standing in society, laid out in the *Lakkhanasutta* are quite consistent with the above discourses in the Canon. However, it is not our attempt to discuss this in detail as the subject has already been dealt with by many scholars³. The *sutta* correlates ethical practices, such as fulfilling duties towards parents, elders, relatives, teachers, friends, religious people, etc., as

1. D. II p 196; III p 220

2. Ethics of Buddhism, p 190

3. See : Rhys Davids, Buddhism, London, 1910, p 143 f

Saddhatissa, H., Buddhist Ethics, London, 1970, p 131f

Anuruddha, K., Studies in Buddhist Social Thought - unpublished Ph.D.

Thesis Lancaster, 1972, p 395

precious good actions (*kammās*) which cause one to possess some of the characteristics of the Great Man. But the particular character of the *Lakkhanasutta* is that it has been "re-socialised" in the above socio-ethical teachings. It says that not only should one fulfill those social duties, but also take the initiative in leading and encouraging others on to such practices. The *sutta* explains that:

"The *Tathāgata* then being human, became a leader among men in practising good conduct foremost in virtuous deeds ... in fulfilling duties towards parents, departed ones, in honouring religious people in deferring to the head of the family and in other such duties."

Besides the moral virtues of an ordinary person it is interesting to note that the *Lakkhanasutta* describes the social ethics of rulers and kings. Buddhism believes that the prime duty of the king is to improve, not only the economic and social conditions of the country, but also the standard of moral and ethical advancement of the people¹. Therefore the king or the ruler is expected not only to be man of power and wisdom,² but also to be a man of good conduct. The fact that the king must be a moral man is very important, because from the Buddhist point of view the real success of a king rests not on his military achievements, or his political gains, but on his moral strength. Ghosal thinks:

"The Buddhist *dhamma* in its relation to the king involves the application of the universal ethics of Buddhism to the administration."³

However the ideal king in Buddhism means the one who rules the country by promoting economic advancement as well as improving the ethical values of the people. Our *sutta* contains some ethical norms, which can be directly traced to this idea of the social ethics of the king in Buddhism. It says that:

"one may serve others by inducing them to improve in morality, education, charity, righteousness, wisdom, money and corn, land and shelter, animals and wife and children and servants, kinsfolk

1. J.IV. p 269

2. Anuruddha, K., Studies in Buddhist Social Thought, p 419

3. Ghoshal, U.N., A History of Indian Political Ideas, Oxford, 1959 p 73

and friends, for the good of the many, for their welfare, their comfort and safety."

This and other similar accounts of past good actions, relating to the physical marks, evidence that the *Lakkhanasutta* comprises not only the social ethics of an ordinary man, but also those of rulers and kings.

The foregoing analysis of the ethical norms in the study of the *Lakkhana sutta* attempted to demonstrate the Buddhist way of interpreting the reasons for possessing the characteristic marks of the *Mahāpurisa*. In spite of their pre-Buddhist origin, we find that Buddhists provided an ethical interpretation of the *Lakkhanas correlation to the Buddhist doctrine of kamma*. Concerning this ethical foundation of the *Mahāpurisa* concept, we have tried to make clear that its particular interest was drawn especially towards social ethics, rather than ethics in general.

Furthermore, to strengthen this assumption, one can comprehend and postulate the ethical foundation of the *Mahāpurisa* concept in the *Lakkhanasutta*, to the concept of the Bodhisattva which became a prominent ideal in later Buddhist works, especially in Mahayana texts. A *Bodhisattva* as Rahula defines as:

"A person (monk or layman) who is in a position to attain *nirvāna* as a *srāvaka* or as a *pratyekabuddha*, but out of great compassion (*mahākarunā*) for the world, he renounces it and goes on suffering in *Samsāra* for the sake of others; perfects himself during an incalculable period of time and finally realises *nirvāna* and becomes an *arhant Samyaksambuddha*. He discovers the Truth and declares it to the world. His capacity for service to others is unlimited."¹

However in the earliest sections of the discourses (*suttas*) the term "*bodhisatta*" was used to denote the career of Siddhatta Gotama from birth to enlightenment,² but its meaning was extended to refer to the time when he remained in the Tusita heaven before entering into his mother's womb.³ This idea was again extended by applying the doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth (in an attempt to inculcate the idea of fulfilling perfections (*pāramitā*)). These

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1. Walpola Rahula "Bodhisattava ideal" - Zen and the Taming of the Bull, London, 1979, p 72
 2. M.I. p 17, 167, 240; S. II. P 5; III, p 27; A.III. p 240
 3. A.II p 130

were now shown as being developed throughout all the previous lives during several aeons up to the time he made the decision (*manopranidāna*) to become a fully Enlightened One. This later development can be seen clearly in the *Buddhavamsa* and the *Cariyapitaka* of *Khuddhakanikaya*, and the Pali commentaries and Mahayana literature. However, the word *pāramitā*, or the idea of fulfilling particular principal virtues of perfection were unknown to early *nikayas* of the Pali Canon. Although the word *paramippatta* is found in the *Majjhimanikāya*, it has been used in the sense of perfection, but not in the technical sense of six or ten *Pāramitās*.¹ It is significant that even the *Sangiti*² and *Dasuttara*³ *suttas* which classify moral virtues in Buddhism under the numerical system, do not enumerate *pāramitās*. The Buddha referred to his previous existence in his discourses to the people, in order to elucidate a particular doctrinal point, such as *Mahāgovindasutta*⁴ and *Mak-hādevasutta*⁵ and so forth. Besides these there seems not to be a developed concept of the *Bodhisattva* practising *pāramitas* until a much later period.

As we mentioned earlier in the *Buddhavamsa* which belongs to the *Kuddhakanikāya* of the Pali Canon, are found the life stories of twenty-five Buddhas of whom Gotama was the last. The names of which Gotama was known during his "apprenticeship" as *bodhisatta* under each of the twenty-four Buddhas are also given. The *Buddhavamsa*⁶, together with the *Cariyāpitaka*⁷ (which also belongs to *Kuddhakanikāya*) give the earliest enumeration of ten *Pāramitās* in Theravada Buddhism.

It is reasonable to believe that this later extended ideal of the *Bodhisattva* and his fulfillment of *pāramitās* was admitted into the *Theravāda* tradition as a result of the *Mahāsaṅghika* and *Sarvāstivāda* schools which were the precursors of Mahayana Buddhism,⁸ where the practice of *pāramitās* played an unique role in the career of the *Bodhisattva*.

However, in Mahayana Buddhism the *Bodhisattva* ideal became one of the most important concepts and is explained somewhat differently from the Pali Canon. Theravada Buddhism does not persuade its adherents to become

1. Dutt.N., Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, London, 1930, p 11

2. D.III. p 207

3. D. III p 272 f

4. D. II p 169 f

5. M. II p 74 ff

6. Bv. p 13 f

7. Cp. p 1 ff

8. Dutt. N., Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, p 13

Buddhas in order to attain *nibbāna*, but advocates the destruction of the cankers (*āsava*) for this purpose. In fact even in Theravada Buddhism reference is made to three types of enlightened persons viz. Buddhas, *pacceka-buddhas* and *arahants*. But they were not put forward as three different ideals to be pursued by adherents according to their potentiality. However, later with the development of Mahayana Buddhism, together with the *Bodhisattva* concept, these were explicitly declared to be three different stages of spiritual advancement leading to three different types of Enlightenment, called *Samyak Sambodhi* (fully Enlightened One), *pratyeka bodhi* (individual Buddha) and *Srāvaka bodhi* (*arhat*) and in accordance with these they formed three vehicles - *bodhisattva-yāna*, *prtyeka-Buddha-yāna* and *srāvaka-yāna*. Of these the latter two were considered inferior to the *Bodhisattva-yāna*. The Mahayanists accused the *arhant* of selfishness and egotism because he strives and struggles only for his own liberation from sorrow, instead of working for the liberation and happiness of all beings.¹ The *Bodhisattva* renounces the attainment of arhantship, makes the four great vows² and practises the six perfections (*pāramitā*) for the benefit of all beings. Here we find that a *Bodhisattva* helps all beings not only to attain the spiritual goal of *nirvāna* but also to obtain the more material advantages of happiness and welfare in the world (*sukha*).³

However, it was not a new idea to the Pali Canon, since the Buddha has clearly shown, both by example and precept, the value of working for the welfare of others. In the *Anguttaranikāya*⁴ we find the Buddha listing four kinds of persons and in the next *sutta* they are explained. They are: one who benefits neither himself nor another; one who benefits another, but not himself; one who benefits himself but not another; and one who benefits himself and another. Of these four the Buddha praises the last as, "Chief and best, foremost, highest and supreme"⁵. The spirit of his teaching is that one

1. Har Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine*, p 16

2. The four great vows of the *Bodhisattva*: (i). to serve all living beings; (ii). to destroy all passions; (iii) to know the truth and teach it to others; (iv) to lead others on the path of Buddhahood. McGovern, *An Introduction to Mahayana Buddhism*, p 100

3. Har Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine*, p 17

4. A. II. p 94

5. Quoted from the Introduction to the *Dasabodhisattuppattikathā* by H. Saddhatissa Thera P.T.S. edition

should enlighten oneself first, and then try to help those that can be helped, as clearly expressed in the well-known words of the Buddha, when he addressed the first sixty *arhants* to devote themselves to the service of others.¹ So the practice of neglecting *srāvakayāna*, in *Mahāyāna* may probably have arisen owing to the monks who neglected helping others in the pursuit of their own spiritual progress at that time, and it was however, not against the original arhant idea.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Pali Canon shows little interest in the *Bodhisattva*, as against the sense in which it is illustrated in the Mahayana works, with its emphasis on the practice of *pāramitās*. As mentioned earlier, these perfections were later enumerated and there are slight differences between the Pali and Sanskrit lists. However, their theme is the same, which is ethical perfection. Originally, there seem to have been only six *pāramitās*, which were later made into a group of ten. The earlier six are given in Buddhist Sanskrit texts as follows:

Dāna (liberality)
Viriya (energy)
Sīla (morality)
Dhyāna (concentration)
Khanti (patience)
Prajña (wisdom)

In the Pali lists there is *nekkhamma* (renunciation), instead of *dhyāna*, while *upāya*, *bala* and *jhāna* are replaced by *sacca* (truthfulness) *mettā* (loving kindness) and *upekkhā* (equanimity).²

In relation to the six or ten *pāramitās* Har Dayal states that

"The early Mahayanists were perhaps proud of having combined the social virtues of a righteous layman - householder - with the ascetic ideal of a meditative monk in this formula of the paramitas".

This may lead to a misunderstanding that the Theravada Canon only says very little in favour of the social ethics of ordinary people. However, if one relates *pāramitās* as they are more inclined towards the welfare and happiness

1. Vm. I p 20 f

2. Har Dayal, *Bodhisattva Doctrine*, p 168

of others, one can say that they are only a reformulation of the original concept in early Buddhism. Saddhatissa points out that:

"The lack of emphasis upon a list of *pāramī* in the original Pali scriptures has contributed perhaps to the view that Theravada Buddhism is practised for one's self and not for other's benefit. But when one has a good knowledge of the Pali Canon, and has seen for oneself how Dhamma is rightly practised, this view becomes untenable."¹

In the Pali Canon, therefore, one finds that all the perfections are commended by the Buddha for one who follows this way of practice. Even though, since we pointed out earlier, there was no reference to the career of the Bodhisattva and its fulfillments as formulated in later works, one can assume that the origin of the Bodhisattva ideal can be seen in the *Lakkhanasutta* itself. Although the *sutta* does not mention the terms Bodhisattva or *pāramī*, the reference to the Buddha's previous existence and many of the ethical norms are quite similar to the Bodhisattva's practice of *pāramitās*, as revealed in later Pali and Sanskrit works.

In the *Lakkhanasutta*, we see that acquisition of the thirty-two physical marks in the body of the Buddha is the consequence of the vast accumulation of merit in the course of his previous existence. As such it is described in later Buddhist literature in order to obtain *bodhi*, or perfect enlightenment a *Bodhisattva* had to accumulate a large amount of merit by fulfilling *pāramitās*. Although the *Lakkhanasutta* treats this process with reference to the acquisition of excellent physical marks of the Great Man, one can notice that the virtues which the *Bodhisattva* practices during his innumerable existences are quite similar to this process. For, the *Mahāpurisa* who possesses thirty-two marks and the Buddha who is the final product of the *Bodhisattva* career, are one and the same. Moreover, for further clarification of this assumption, we can compare some of the ethical norms in the *Lakkhanasutta* with the ten *Pāramitās* in the Theravada tradition:

Pāramitā

Ethical Norms in the *Lakkhanasutta*

1. *Dāna-pāramitā*

- *dāna samvibhāge*: practising generosity

1. Saddhatissa, H., *Dasabodhisattvauppattikatha*, London (PTS) 1975

- (liberality)
- *dātā ahōsi panītānaṃ rasitānaṃ bhojanīyānaṃ lehanīyānaṃ pānānaṃ*
: giver of well-flavoured, tasty dentate food, both hard and soft, and drinks.
 - *dātā ahosi sukhumānaṃ attarānānaṃ pāpuraṇānaṃ*: giver of the fine and soft coverlets and cloaks.
 - *bahujanapubbangamo ahosi dānasamvibhāge*: leader among men in practising generosity.
2. *Sīla-pāramitā*
(morality)
- *sīlasamādāne*: observance of moral precepts.
 - *kāyavacisucarite*: good conduct in deeds and words.
 - *bahujanapubbangamo ahosi sīlasamādāne*: leader among men in practising moral precepts.
3. *Nekkhamma-pāramitā*
(renunciation)
- No Pali term in the sutta directly corresponds to this.
4. *Paññā-pāramitā*
(wisdom)
- *paripucchitā ahosi kim kusalam kim akusalam*: questioning form recluses or brahmins as to what is good and what is bad.
5. *Viriya-pāramitā*
(energy)
- *bahujanapubbangamo ahosi kusalesu dhammesu bahujanapāmokkho*: foremost among men in doing good and becoming a leader.
6. *Khanti-pāramitā*
(patience)
- *bahumpi vattasamāno nābhisajji na kuppi na byāpajji na patitthayi*: even when one abuses, not ill-disposed, nor angry, nor malignant.
7. *Sacca-pāramitā*
(truth speaking)
- *musavādā pativirato, saccavādi*: abstain from lying and devoted to the truth.
8. *Adhiṭṭhāna-pāramitā*
(resolution)
- *dhammacariyā abhirato*: resolution in treading the path of righteousness.
9. *Mettā-pāramitā*
(loving kindness)
- *akkodhano*: non-hatred.
 - *piyacakkhunā bahujanam udikkhitā*: regarding people with affectionate

eyes.

- *dayāpanno*: compassion.

10. *Upekkhā-pāramitā*

- *samānattatā*: equanimity.

Although there is not term corresponding to *nekkhamma* in the *sutta* one can see that this idea is not excluded from it. The most effective way of practising liberality and providing for others' needs is non-attachment to material comforts. The idea of renunciation is therefore emphasized in many of the moral virtues which are implied in the practice of liberality. Hence in providing an ethical foundation for the *Mahāpurisa lakkhanas*, the *Lakkhanasutta* does take account of the concept of *pāramitās* with its emphasis on the altruistic aspect of the *Bodhisattva*.

Finally, we may conclude that the *Lakkhanasutta* is a clear attempt to interpret a pre-Buddhist concept of physical characteristics which had been attributed to great personalities, in the light of Buddhist ethical theory which believes that the *karmic* tendencies could influence our physical organism. Therefore Buddhism finds its own definition of the *Mahāpurisa* theory and correlates the physical characteristics of the Great Man with his past good actions. Further, we have shown that the moral virtues illustrated in the *Lakkhanasutta* are basically social ethics and that they can be traced back to the early theory of the Theravada view of the ethical practices of a *Bodhisattva* which were later known as *pāramitās*. Thus it is quite clear that the theory of the thirty-two characteristics of the *Mahāpurisa* had been assimilated, into Buddhism by giving it an ethical value in order to emphasize the importance of the aspect of social ethics in the perspective of Buddhism.

From the foregoing study of the *Lakkhanasutta*, it is obvious that the acquisition or the possession of the physical characteristics of the Great Man in itself is not the sole end. Buddhism has used the significance of the physical marks mainly to emphasize that they are symbolic and indicative of moral values and virtues which would ultimately lead to the attainment of the goal of the *Bodhisattva*.

Conclusion

Buddhist texts have assimilated the concept of the Ideal Man or the Great Man (*Mahāpurisa*) from two different aspects. The first aspect relates to one's spiritual or internal achievements and is exclusively a Buddhist one. The other identifies the Great Man by his physical perfection. Although physical marks play a part as the criterion for predicting or identifying the Great Man from his outward appearance, the actual figure portrayed by this theory of the Great Man is the one who succeeded in conquering the world. That is, the Buddha in the spiritual realm and the *Cakkavatti* in the physical realm, both of them upholding and adhering to *dhamma* (righteousness).

With regard to the origin of the Buddhist *Mahāpurisa* concept, the evidence we have adduced shows that neither of those aspects referred to above exhibits a direct relation to the primeval mystical man in the *Puruṣa sūkta*. *Puruṣa* is depicted in the *Rgveda* as a cosmogonic figure, a creative source, the primeval male who envelops the whole earth and who represents totality. The *Sūkta* does not contain any idea of the prediction of personality or future from physiognomical characteristics. On the other hand, the term *Mahāpurisa* is not used in Pali texts in the same sense as it was used in the *Puruṣasūkta*. It simply means "great" or "noble" man. There are several other terms referring to the Buddha which are synonyms of the term *mahāpurisa*, such as *mahāsatta* (great being) *settha purisa* (noble man), *acchariya manussa* (remarkable man) in the ordinary sense.¹ It is clear at any rate that these characteristics are meant to indicate a perfection of physical form which symbolises moral, spiritual and intellectual perfection, and they always arouse a mixture of awe and curiosity. As Pali texts expound, as has been shown above, the marks belong neither to *Visnu*, *Nārāyana*, or *Śiva* in their origin, nor are they signs of deification. Possession of these attributes does not invalidate the Buddha's humanity in any way. Yet it indicates that in him humanity has become perfected. There is no process of deification here.

As modern scholarship has established, the Buddha *Sakyamuni* was an historical person. Enough historical and epigraphical evidence testify to his birth, his life and his passing away. The authenticity of his teaching as well

1. p 268 of the MSS omitted.

has been borne out by incontrovertible proof which has stood the test of historical scrutiny. Early Theravada texts ascribed to him, as a being, all human qualities. Even after he became the Buddha, although the texts record some miraculous incidents covering several important events of his life, the fact of his being a human figure is never lost sight of. However, with regard to his pre-eminent spiritual attainment, he is considered an extraordinary being to whom no other human being is comparable (*asamasama*). This idea is furthermore strengthened by placing the Buddha above the level of *Devas* and *Brahmas* (*devātideva brahmātibrahma*), not as a God, but as the perfect human being. Consequently, it is clear that the Buddha's singular superiority arose from his spiritual pre- eminent attainment. He is still throughout a human being - he is born, lives, and passes away like all human beings. In other words, his physical being is subjected to all the natural processes which any other living being undergoes. His outward appearance too conformed to the normal human type.

But as the Pali Canon says, even as a human being he is distinctive and predominant, because he possesses a striking and charming appearance. People who came to see him on some occasions, have described his immensely pleasing and commanding appearance. This shows that although human, the Buddha Sakyamuni bore excellent and unimpaired physical features which bore no blemish whatever. This distinctive perfect appearance of the Buddha is also used to depict his noble and spiritual character.

Although the distinctive physical appearance of the *Sakyamuni* is referred to, this did not seem to be so pronounced or prominently indicated in such a manner as to show that he was the Buddha merely because of his external appearance. No doubt this was why there were various occasions when the *Sakyamuni* could not be distinguished as the Buddha solely from his outward form by his own disciples.

Even though the Buddha looked like any other being, the descriptions of his especially striking features were gradually elaborated within the Pali Canon, owing to the devoted efforts of his faithful followers. In this process the ascription of the thirty-two marks could also be considered to be one of the attempts to distinguish the Buddha's appearance from that of others.

Nevertheless, it is clear that even though the Pali texts at times speak of these thirty-two marks in connection with the special distinguishing features of the Buddha, they could not have been so prominently visible or easily recognizable to one and all alike: Whenever references are made to the appearance of such marks being noticed on the *Sakyamuni's* body, it is

noteworthy that in those instances the people who recognized the physical marks did so either because of their special knowledge of the prevalent beliefs about the physiognomical characteristics or because of their implicit faith. From the Pali texts it is quite evident that these distinctive physical features in a human being could be visible only to those who had either a particular form of expertise or to those whose faith was so great that they could see such marks peculiar to a Great Man. To those who had faith, no wonder, no proof was necessary: to them the Buddha was the one with the marks of the Great Man on his body.

But in general, it transpired that the Buddha did not usually appear in any way outwardly different from a normal human figure, although he possessed the thirty-two marks of the Great Man. As we have observed, in the early parts of the Pali Canon it is repeatedly emphasized that he was a human being in spite of all his internal and external accomplishments. However, there emerges another strand of thinking, probably at a later stage of the compilation, when extraordinary or superhuman qualities, attributed to the Buddha, received more stress than his human qualities. In this context the Buddha's eminence becomes accepted not only because of his all-encompassing wisdom, but also because of his extraordinary physical characteristics. Even then the notion that the Buddha was an essentially human being remains predominant. Hence, within this subsequent stage of the development of the Pali Canon and even in the commentaries, the Buddha continues to be regarded primarily and basically as the perfect human being despite the possession of extraordinary physical qualities. As a man the Buddha possessed such physical and spiritual qualities because of his paramount virtue and supreme wisdom, and not because he was transcendental. Thus he never rose above his human state to become divine as far as the Pali tradition goes.

However, as seen in the Buddhist texts of the *Mahāyāna* tradition, there emerges a different form of the concept of the Buddha. In that tradition, the Buddha was said to be no more than a human being in reality. The *Trikāya* concept of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism advances the view that the historical *Sakyamuni* who lived on earth was the "created body" of the 'real' Buddha, or *Dharmakāya* which cannot be seen in its physical form. With the development of this new interpretation of the physical form or of the body of the Buddha, all his extraordinary physical features and other qualities became the possessions of the non-human form of the Buddha - in other words the *Sambhogakāya*. It is noteworthy that in this view the thirty-two characteristics of the *Sambhogakāya* also acquire a different meaning and orienta-

tion. Not only are these marks the possessions belonging to the celestial or divine form of the Buddha, but they are also important in a different way in relation to the Buddha's body. While in the Theravada tradition these marks signified only physical excellence, in *Mahāyāna* texts the marks themselves are associated with the capacity to perform miracles. Apart from these new theories of the Buddha concept, this definition of marks in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism was greatly influenced by the solar myth and other epithets of the Hindu Gods.

From the above review of the concept of the *Mahāpurisa*, certain conclusions appear to follow. The idea of *Mahāpurisa* was pre-Buddhistic. It was prevalent in the society of that time. But there also appear to have prevailed different ways of identifying or discerning an Ideal Man. One way was through a study of the physical characteristics possessed by a person. Although the Buddha himself rejected this type of practice this pre-Buddhistic and Brahminic notion had also somehow been assimilated by the Buddhist texts. However the Buddhist texts have attributed all these thirty-two marks only to the figure of the Buddha and *Cakkavatti* alone, the former in the spiritual realm, the latter in the worldly realm. Thus they have limited the application of this pre-Buddhist concept. Since the Buddha and the *Cakkavatti* are unique no-one else could possess these characteristics.

More importantly, however, the Buddhists have given to an old popular concept a reinterpretation. The marks are endowed with ethical and spiritual meaning. Each of the distinctive physical characteristics of the Great Man assumes a symbolic significance. Marks in themselves are not as important as what they signify. Thus Buddhism gives a new definition to an old concept by relating to it the teachings basic to Buddhism, which are *kamma*, rebirth and the ethical codes. Here we find by giving ethical significance to the possession of the physical marks of the *Mahāpurisa*. The Pali Canon provides the earliest reference to the *Bodhisattva* idea and *pāramitā* (perfections). It is said that the Buddha was able to acquire these unique marks by the practice of certain ethical qualities, and the *Lakkhanasutta* shows how each distinctive mark was acquired by the practice of a particular virtue. Further, each individual mark portrays a symbolic meaning of the Buddha's character. The fingers of equal length indicate the absence of grasping, for unequal fingers form an uneasy grip; flat feet indicate the manner of walking, the footprints of a lustful person is divided in the middle - a person with a sluggish mind will walk dragging his feet. The Buddha's freedom from the roots of all evil is symbolised by the flat feet. The delicately smooth skin, on which no dust

cleaves to the body, indicates eradication of all defilements and non-attachment to worldly possessions and *unhīsa* which is located on the top of the head symbolises perfect wisdom. Similarly the other marks are symbolic. These interpretations were expressed symbolically by artists in later times so as to indicate the inner qualities of the Buddha in Buddha images.

However, on this point we reiterate the view that both aspects of the Buddhist interpretation given to the *Mahāpurisa* concept; viz. (1) internal qualities and (2) physical accomplishments, are one and the same in their aims, and emphasize social, intellectual and spiritual achievement. The idea of the physical perfection of the Great Man was assimilated to impress social ethics upon ordinary people, but later the physical marks of the *Mahāpurisa* became significant in the development of the Buddha concept while their symbolic nature became less and less important in relation to the great personality of the Buddha.

But clearly the Buddha was a historical person, no doubt possessing a distinctive appearance. This unique appearance of His may have led to the concept of ascribing to Him the *Lakkhanas* or the marks of the Great Man, and the qualities associated with such marks. Yet firmly and clearly it was His superior knowledge, understanding, compassion and other virtues that were more significant in Him as the Buddha. No wonder then that the chief significance of the thirty-two marks came to be that they symbolised His ethical and spiritual uniqueness.

A Summary of the Ethical Teachings of The Lakkhanasutta

The sutta defines the two courses of life which lie open for the Mahapurisa. If he lives the Household life, he becomes a Universal Monarch; Turner of the Wheel, he lives and rules according to Dhamma in peace. If, however, he leaves the Household life and becomes a recluse, he will become Arahant, Buddha.

Then follow the 32 marks. The Sutta declares "And seers not of our community, monks, know these Marks, but not for what deeds any one of the Marks is acquired."

Each of the Marks is then associated with specific good actions in the past, which then result in a benefit peculiar to the Buddha and one peculiar to the Monarch. Each such statement is followed by Gathas (verse) where the causes and consequences are not always stated in the same way as in the prose.

A tabulation of these follows.

1. Feet with level tread

PROSE

Past Deed: the moral life in word, deed and thought - generosity; right conduct, religious observances; duties to mother and father, monks, elders and others.

Benefits: to Monarch - he rules over the whole world; it is fertile, prosperous, secure and without blemish. No enemy seeks to obstruct him.

: to Buddha - he gets no challenge from any enemy, whether internal, as lust, hatred or illusion, or external, as samanas, brahmins, devas, Maras, Brahmas.

VERSE

Deed: truthfulness, righteous self-restraint, non-harming.

Benefits: to Monarch - he defeats all human foes.

: to Buddha - he is never reborn.

2. Wheels on soles of feet

PROSE

Past Deed: he acted for the benefit of the masses, dispelling fear by protecting them and supporting them with supplies.

Benefits: to Monarch - many people support him.

: Buddha - surrounded by monks and nuns, lay supporters, spiritual beings.

VERSE - as above.

3. Projecting heels, long fingers and toes, straight limbs.

PROSE

Deed: non-harming, gentle and compassionate, merciful and friendly

Benefit: to Monarch and to Buddha - long life.

VERSE - as above.

4. Seven Convexes

PROSE

Deed: he gives food and drink.

Benefit: to Monarch and Buddha - he gets food and drink.

VERSE - as above.

5. Soft hands and feet, which are nice nets

PROSE

Deed: he becomes popular by practising the four Sangaha vattha (bases or characteristics of sympathy).

Benefits: as king and Buddha - many loyal people serve him.

VERSE

Deed: as above.

Benefits: as king, he has kindness and good speech for his subjects.

: as Buddha, he speaks of dhamma, rejoicing their hearts.

6. Ankles like rounded shells and down on the body turning upwards

PROSE

Deeds: speaks good words, celebrating righteousness.

Benefits: as Monarch becomes supreme in wealth.

: as Buddha he becomes supreme, over all beings.

VERSE - as above.

7. Legs like antelopes

PROSE

Deed: Quick and eager to learn skills and crafts.

Benefits: as Monarch - whatever a ruler needs, he gets.

: as Buddha - he gets the requisites of a monk.

VERSE - as above.

8. Skin delicately smooth

PROSE

Deed: he questions religious men to know what is true, and what is good.

Benefits: as King - he has wisdom superior to any of his lay subjects.

: as Buddha - he gains the highest wisdom of Enlightenment.

VERSE - as above.

9. Complexion like gold, the texture of skin that no dust or dirt can lie on it.

PROSE

Deed: he practices abstinence from anger, and gives soft fabrics.

Benefit: as Monarch and Buddha, he receives fine fabrics.

VERSE - as above.

10. Privities sheathed

PROSE

Deed: unites those who have been separated.

Benefits: to Monarch - many children.

: to Buddha - many disciples.

VERSE - as above.

11. Height is proportional to span of arms, and arms touch knee without the body's bending.

PROSE

Deed: he recognised the character and worth of men.

Benefits: as King - he gets wealth and grain.

: as Buddha - he gets the seven treasures of confidence, morality, shame, fear of blame, learning, renunciation and wisdom.

VERSE

Deed: as above

Benefits: as Monarch - he gets all that a layman needs even when young.
: as Buddha - he gets the crown of all riches.

12. Body like a lion's, no furrow between shoulder blades, and rounded, symmetrical bust.

PROSE

Deed: he looks after the interests of other people.

Benefits: as Monarch - he has no worldly losses or economic failure.
: as Buddha - he cannot fail in confidence, morality, learning, renunciation or wisdom.

VERSE

Deed: as above.

Benefits: as Monarch - as above.
: as Buddha - he wins supreme enlightenment.

13. Supremely acute sense of taste

PROSE

Deed: injures none.

Benefits: as Monarch and Buddha - very seldom ill.

VERSE

Benefits: much happiness in both cases.

14. Eyes intensely blue, and eyelashes like a cow's

PROSE

Deed: he looks openly at people with nothing to hide.

Benefits: as Buddha and Monarch, people love to see him.

VERSE

Benefits: as Monarch - he is beloved and dear to the eyes of many folk.
: as Buddha - loved as the healer of their griefs.

15. Head shaped like a turban

Deed: supremely virtuous, practising generosity and devotions, filial.

Benefits: as Monarch and Buddha, enjoys the loyalty of followers.

VERSE - as above.

16. Down growing in separate hairs all over his body, and a hairy mole, soft and white, between the eyebrows

PROSE

Deed: speaks truthfully.

Benefits: as Monarch and Buddha, he gets obedience.

VERSE - as above.

17. Forty teeth, in unbroken rows

PROSE

Deed: he abjures harsh or slanderous speech, and is a peacemaker.

Benefits: as Monarch and as Buddha he gets unity among his people.

VERSE

Benefits: as Monarch, a gentle peaceful folk.

: as Buddha an ordered and unshakable following.

18. Tongue very long, and voice like that of the Karavika bird

PROSE

Deed: he avoided harsh speech, and practices soft and sweet words.

Benefits: as Monarch and Buddha - he gets a commanding voice and all take his words to heart.

VERSE - as above.

19. Jaw as a lion's

PROSE

Deed: he avoids meaningless talk and speaks meaningfully, appropriately and in line with the facts, speaking of religion with eloquence.

Benefits: as Monarch - he cannot be overthrown by any human foe.

: as Buddha - he cannot be defeated by inner or outer foes.

VERSE -as above except that there is no mention of benefit to a Buddha.

20. Even and very lustrous teeth

PROSE

Deed: he does no dishonest or criminal action.

Benefits: as Monarch and as Buddha, he gets pure-hearted followers.

VERSE

Benefits : as Monarch - the people will be pure, and seek the general good

: as Buddha - the people will put aside impure ways and eradicate the defilements.

Asītyanubyañjana (the eighty minor marks or characteristics):

1. Prominent nails (*tunganakhā*)
2. Copper-coloured nails (*tāmaranakhā*)
3. Glossy nails (*snigdhanakhā*)
4. Rounded fingers (*vṛttāngulī*)
5. Beautiful fingers (*citrāngulī*)
6. Regular fingers (*anupūrva-citrāngulī*)
7. Knotless veins (*nirgranthisirā*)
8. Concealed veins (*gūḍhasirā*)
9. Concealed ankles (*gūḍhagulphā*)
10. Solid joints (*ghanasandhi*)
11. Even and level feet (*avisamasamapādā*)
12. Perfect sex organs (*paripūrna-vyañjanah*)
13. Pervading radiance in all directions (*samantaprabhā*)
14. Soft limbs (*mṛdugātrā*)
15. Clear limbs (*visadagātrā*)
16. Super limbs (*adīnagātrā*)
17. Well-shaped limbs (*anusandhigātrā*)
18. Well-knit limbs (*susamhatagātrā*)
19. Well-proportioned limbs (*suvibhaktāṅgapratyaṅgā*)
20. Unimpaired and unmarred bodies (*nikhilādusta-śarirā*)
21. Unfreckled limbs (*vyapagatatilakālakagātrā*)
22. Palms soft as cotton (*tūlamṛdupānayah*)
23. Deep lines on the palms (*gambhīrapānilekhā*)
24. Unbroken lines on the palms (*abhagnapānilekhā*)
25. Uninterrupted lines on the palms (*acchinnapānilekhā*)
26. Regular lines on the palms (*anupūrvapānilekhā*)
27. Red lips like ripe fruits of *Momordica monadepha* (*bimbosṭhā*)
28. Precise articulation (*nābhyāyatanavacanā*)
29. Soft, slender and red tongue (*mrdutanukarakatjihvā*)
30. Voice like the trumpeting of an elephant (*gajagarjitastaniṭasvarā*)

31. Articulate words (*susvaravaragirā*)
32. Pleasant utterance (*mañjughosā*)
33. Gait like the movement of an elephant (*nāgavikrāntagāmī*)
34. Gait like the movement of a bull (*rsabhavikrāntagāmī*)
35. Gait like the movement of a goose (*hamsavikrāntagāmī*)
36. Gait like the movement of a lion (*simhavikrāntagāmī*)
37. Bearing to the right (*abhidakśinagāmī*)
38. Equal protuberance (*utsadasamā*)
39. Lovely in all parts (*samantaprāsādikā*)
40. Unaffected behaviour (*sucisamācārā*)
41. Perfectly clean and pure hair of the bod (*paramasucivisuddhalomā*)
42. Undimmed radiance in every direction (*vīṭmīrasamatnaprabhā*)
43. Straight body (*ṛjugātrā*)
44. Soft body (*mṛdugātrā*)
45. Regular body (*anupūrvagātrā*)
46. Belly like a bow (*cāpodarā*)
47. Lovely, large and regular belly (*cārūksāchagnodarā*)
48. Deep navel (*gambhīranābhī*)
49. Regular navel (*abhagnanābhī*)
50. Unimpaired navel (*acchinnanābhī*)
51. Navel turned to right (*abhidakśināvartanābhī*)
52. Curved knee caps (*parinatajānumaṇḍalā*)
53. Round teeth (*vattitadāṭhā*)
54. Sharp teeth (*tīkṣnadāṭhā*)
55. Unbroken teeth (*abhagnadāṭhā*)
56. Unimpaired teeth (*acchinnadāṭhā*)
57. Even teeth (*avisamadāṭhā*)
58. High nose (*tunganāsā*)
59. Undiminutive nose (*natyayatanāsā*)
60. Blue-black eyes (*asitanayanā*)
61. Eyes like blue-white lotus in shape (*asita-sita-kamala-sadrsanayanā*)
62. Dark eyebrows (*asitabhramū*)
63. Glossy eyebrows (*snigdhalomabhramū*)
64. Large ears (*aparittakarnā*)
65. Even ears (*avisamakarnā*)
66. Ears devoid of defect (*vyapagatakarnadosā*)

67. Unimpaired, unmarred and well-controlled faculties (*anupahatā anupaklistā sāntendriyā*)
68. Excellently proportioned forehead(*uttamaśrestha-sammitamukhalalātā*)
69. Black hair (*asitakesā*)
70. Unscattered hair (*sahitakesā*)
71. Shiny hair (*citrakesā*)
72. Unmatted hair (*vivrttakesā*)
73. Unbroken hair (*abhagnakesā*)
74. Unimpaired hair (*acchinnakesā*)
75. Soft hair (*aparusakesā*)
76. Glossy hair (*snigdakesā*)
77. Fragrant hair (*surabhikesā*)
78. Hair with its lips curled (*vallifāgrakesā*)
79. Well-shaped head (*susiraso*)
80. Hair bearing the figures of *Svastika*, *Nandyāvarta* and *muktika* signs (*svastika-nandyāvarta-muktikaśrestha-sannikāsa kesā*)

(Mahavastu II, 43f. Translated by H. Saddhatissa Thera, Dasabodhisattuppattikatha, (PTS), London, 1975).

A Description of Mahavīra's Physical Marks from Jaina Texts

According to the *aupatika* description of Mahavīra's body¹, Mahavira's height was seven cubits, and the frame of his body as strong as the *vajra*, his breath fragrant like the lotus and he was handsome to look at. The Body was free from sweating and such other defects. The front of his head (*agrasiras*) was strong and high like the peak (*kūtākara*), the hair on the head being dark and of thick growth lying in schematic furl (*pradakṣināvartta*). The scalp for the Lord, resembling a bunch of pomegrante flowers, was pure and smooth like gold; his head was shaped like an umbrella (*cakrākāra*); his unsullied forehead (*lalāṭa*) possessed the lustre of the new moon, being clear and even; the face was perfect and shining like the moon, ears lovely proportionate and good, the cheeks healthy and full. His eye-lashes thin, dark and smooth, looked beautiful like a bent bow, the wide eyes resembled the full-bloom white lotus, each eye-lash having a white hair; his nose was long, straight and uplifted like that of an eagle; his lower lip looked lovely and red like the coral, the cherry or the *bimba*-fruit; the rows of teeth, lustrous like the white moon, conch, milk, etc., were complete, unbroken, indistinct and smooth; his palate and tongue shone like red-hot gold; his beard and moustache were well-dressed and grown in proportion to his age. His chin was well-set and well-developed like that of a lion; his neck, four *angulas* in length, looked like the conch (*kambu-grīva*). His shoulder was broad and rounded (*pratipūrna*) like that of the buffalo, the bull, the lion, the boar and the elephant; his round, well-developed muscular arms with steady joints, were long like the latch of a city-gate; his hands, big and strong, looked like a cobra with expanded hood; his palms were soft and muscular, red and endowed with auspicious marks and had webbed fingers with no intervening space in between (*acchira-jāla-pānī*), a typical trait found on Buddha images of the Gupta period, not yet available on any image of the Kushan age; the fingers again were both thick and soft with nails red and shining like copper. His palms showed marks of the moon, the sun, the conch, the *cakra* and the

1. Aupapātika-sūtra, sutra 10, and commentary of Abhayadeva, p 26 - 42

svastika, etc. He had a broad chest well-developed and even, shining like a bar of gold, and having the mark of the *srīvatsa*; his back was strong with bones invisible under the muscles. He had a beautiful healthy body shining like gold.

His sides were well-developed, beautiful and symmetrical; the hair on his body was pure, soft, slight, oily, delicate and charming. His abdomen was strong and well-developed (*pīna*) like that of the fish and the bird, his belly like that of the fish, all the organs of his body pure and defectless; his navel, deep and developed like the newly blossomed lotus, was spiral (*pradakṣiṇavaratta*) inside like the whirling wave of the Ganga. The torso or the middle of his body was like the tripod, the pestle, the mirror or the thunderbolt, broad at ends and narrow in the middle; his hips were like those of the best horse or the lion, his privies like those of a horse, clean and well-formed. He had the gait of the best of elephants; his thighs were shaped like the trunk of an elephant; his knee-joints were invisible as if under the lid of a spherical box; his shanks were like those of a deer; his ankles were well-set and invisible under muscles; his feet, beautiful and well-built like those of tortoise, looked beautiful with close-set fingers having copper-red nails. The soles of his feet, soft and red like the lotus-leaf, showed marks of a mountain, a city, crocodile, ocean, disc, etc. Brilliant like a glowing fire, the lightning-flash or the rising sun, Mahavira possessed all the one thousand and eight marks of the best of human beings.

(Translated by U.P. Shah in Jain Art and Architecture, Vol. III,
Ed. A. Ghosh, New Delhi, 1959, p 475f)

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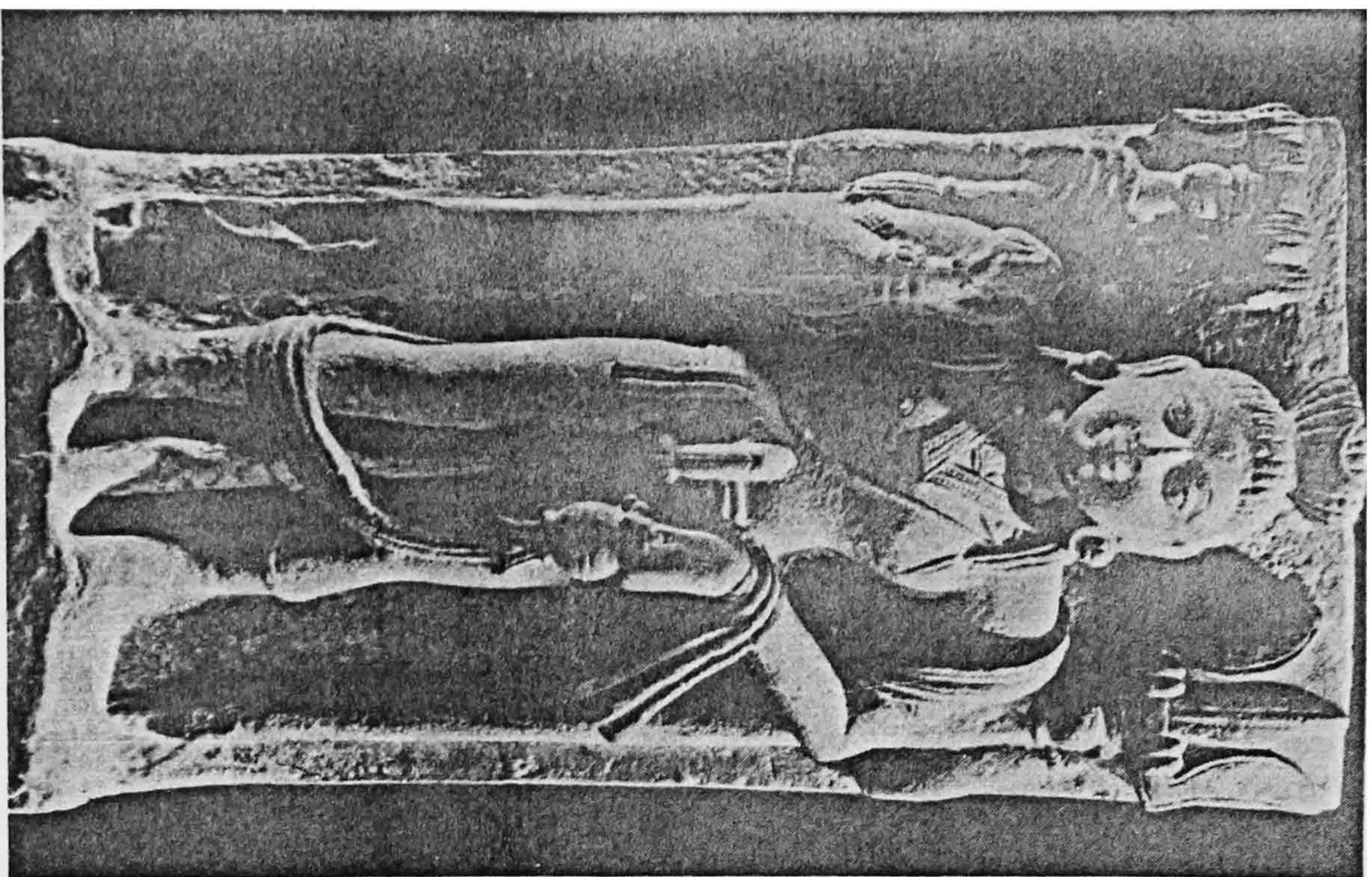


Plate 3



Plate 2



Plate 4

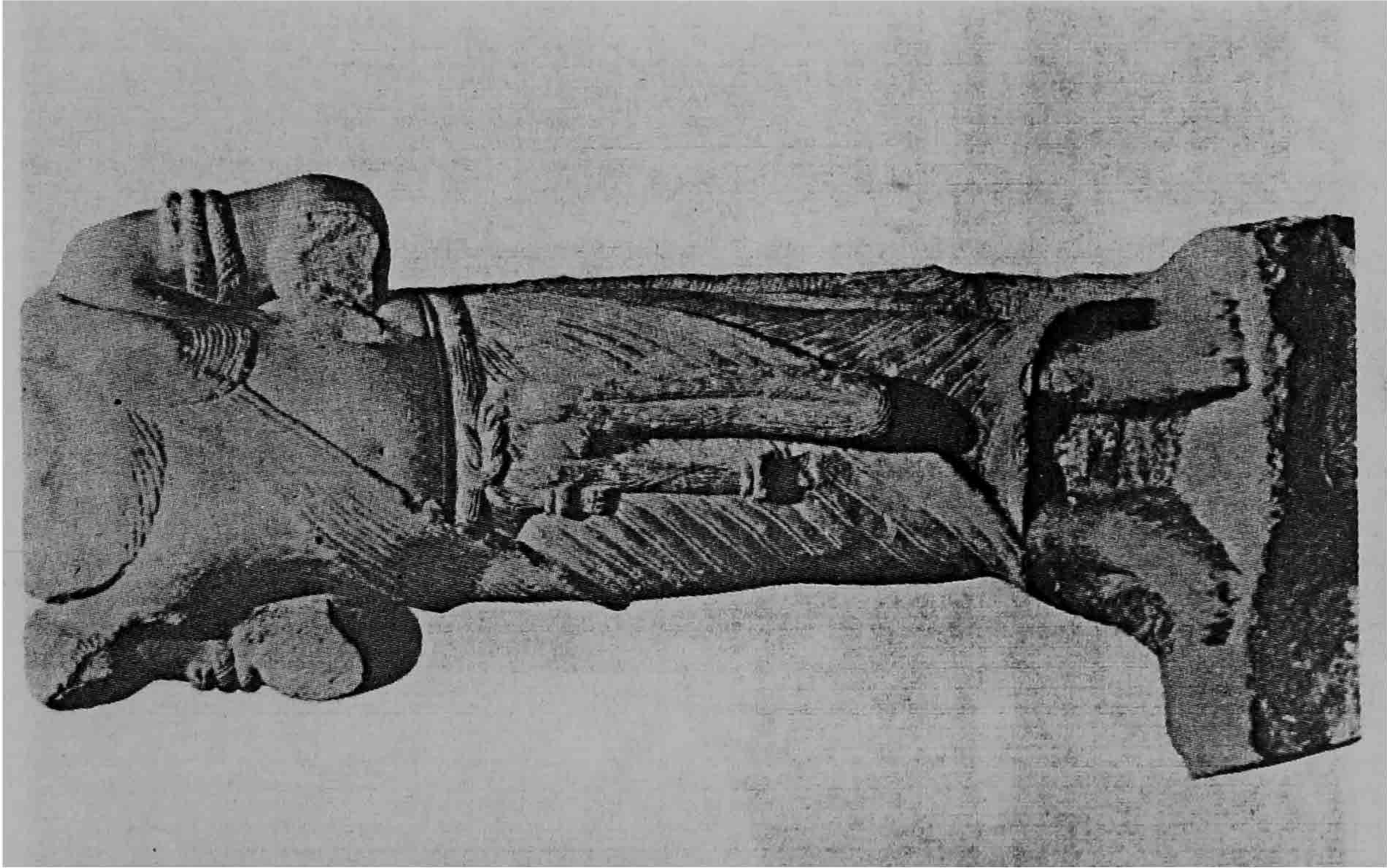


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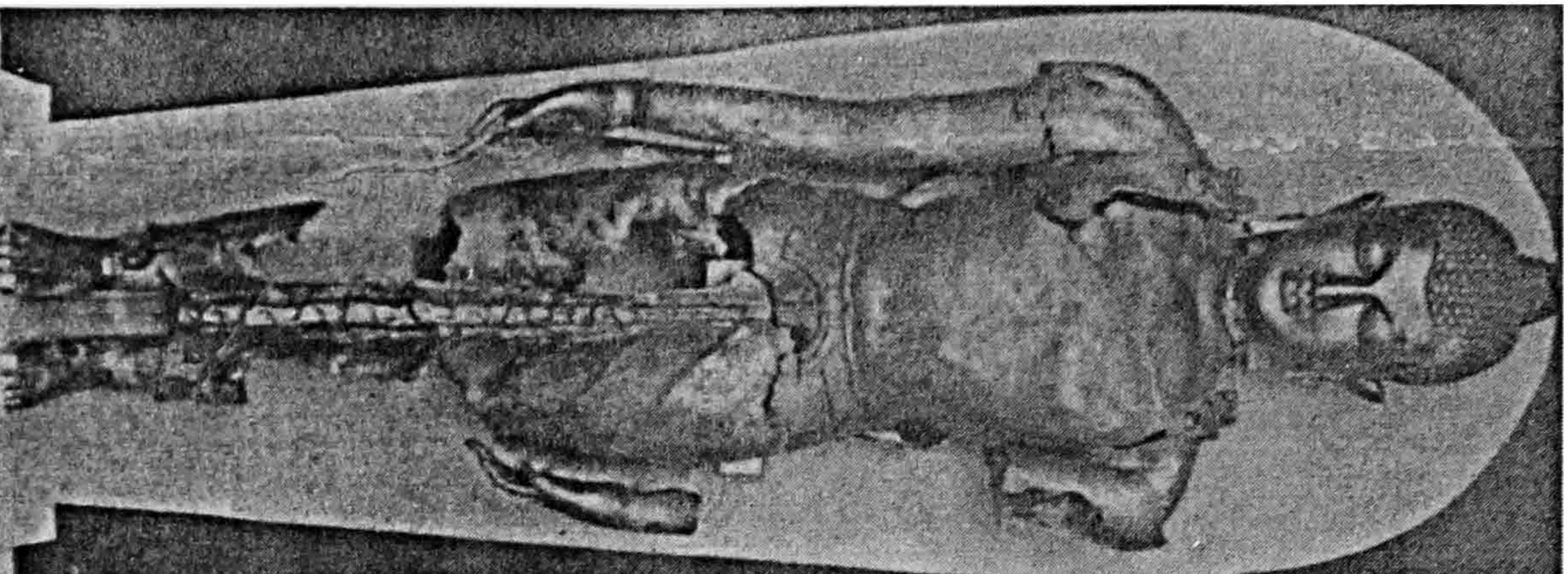


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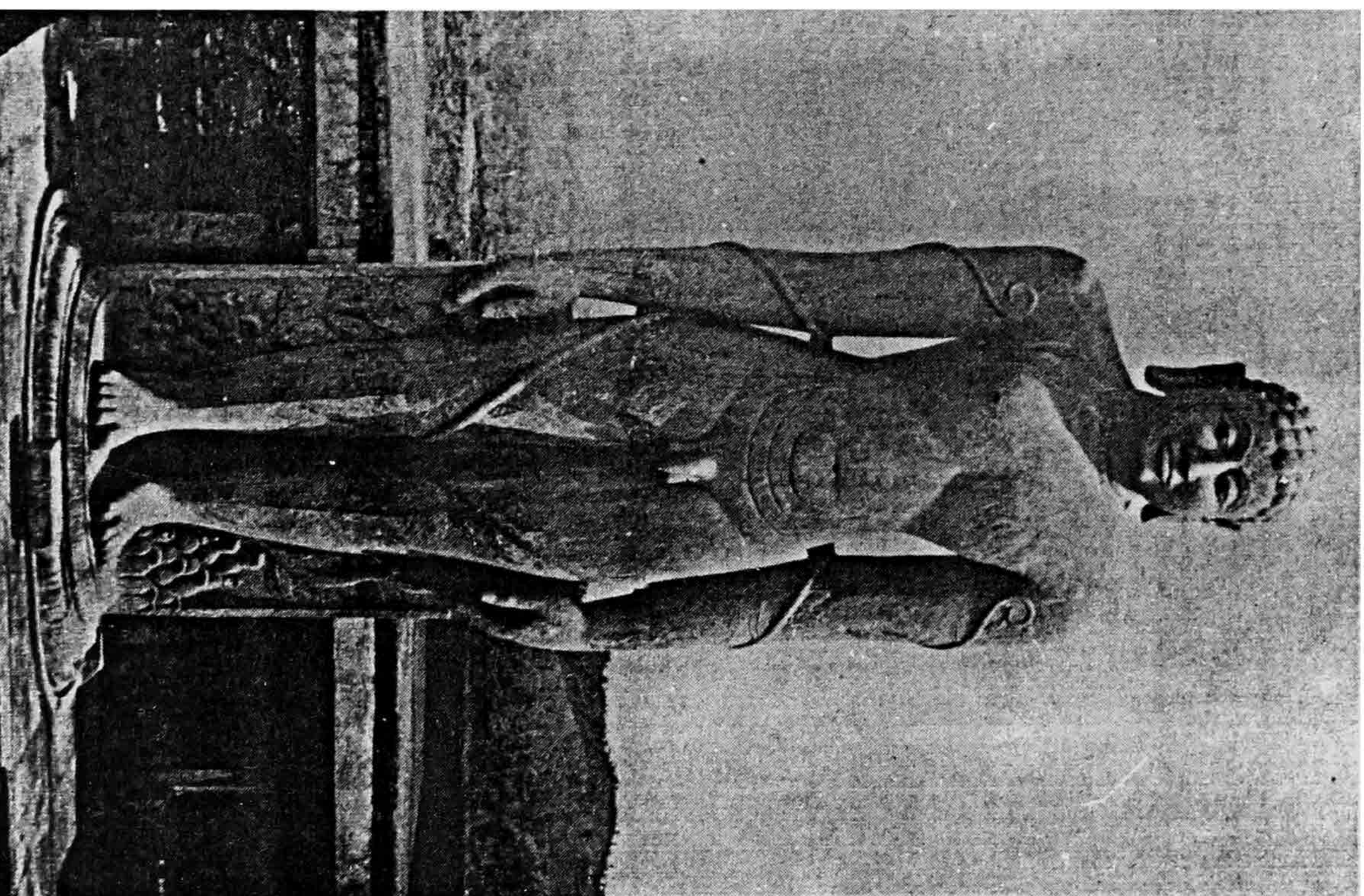


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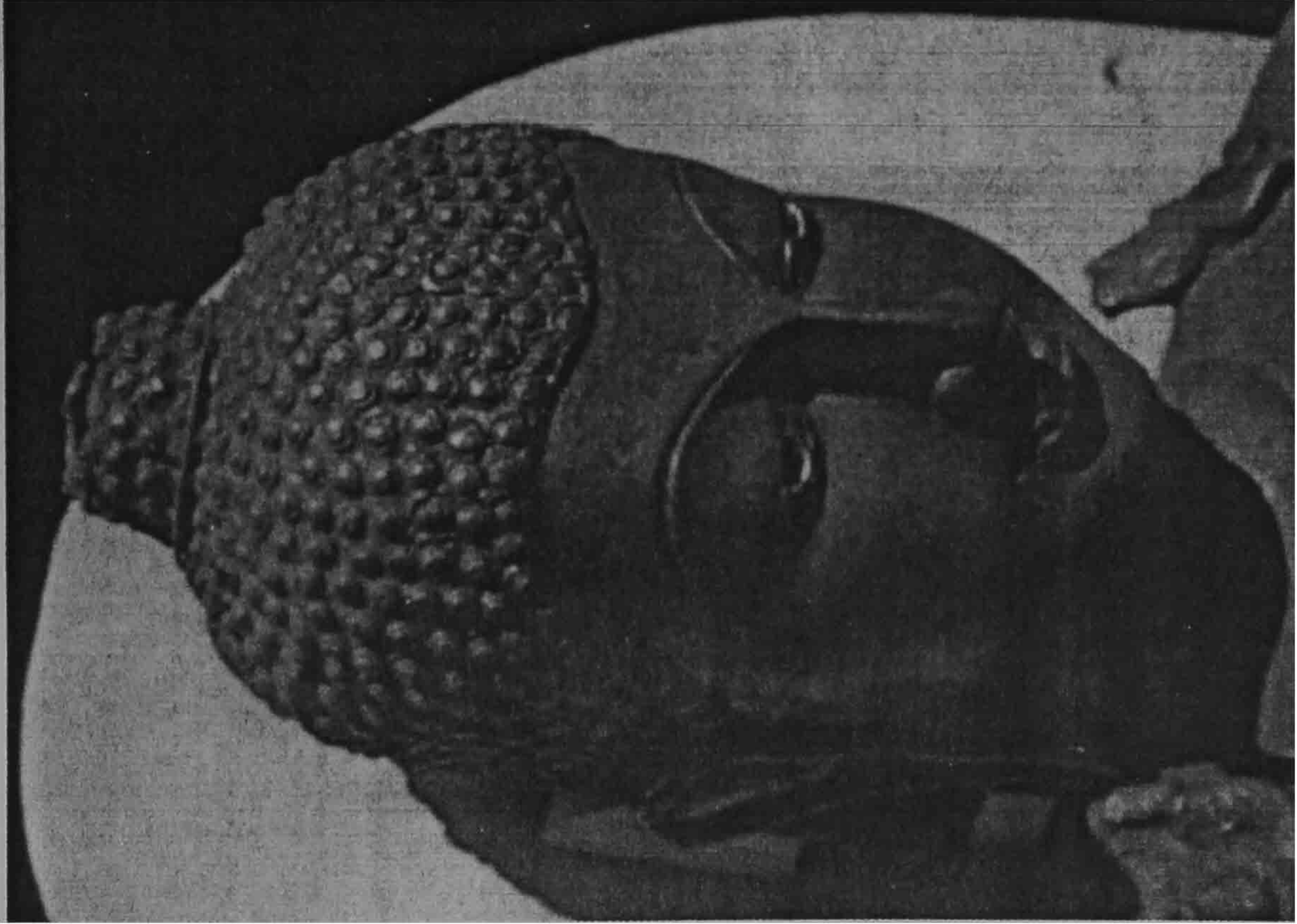


Plate 8



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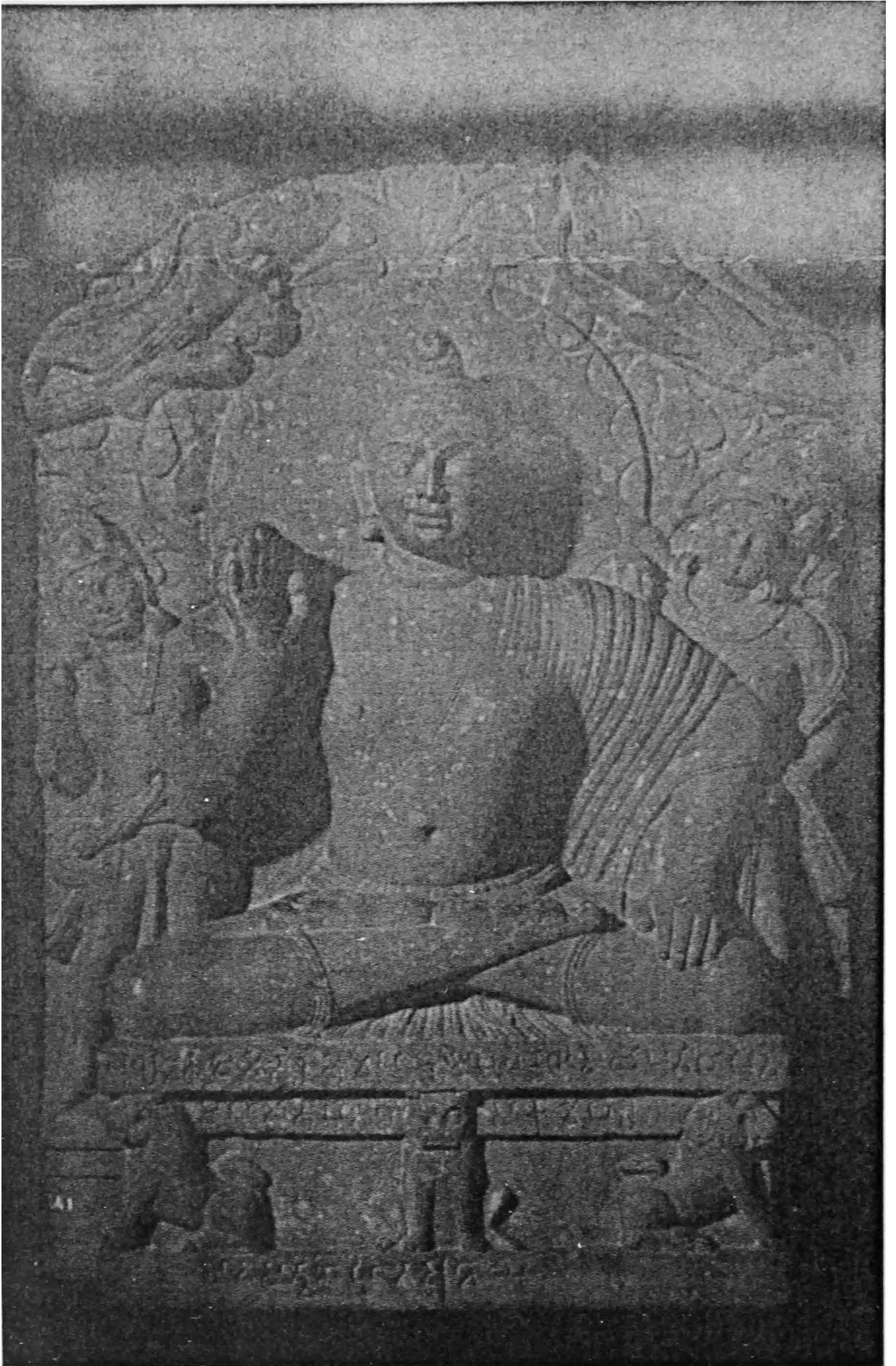


Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 13

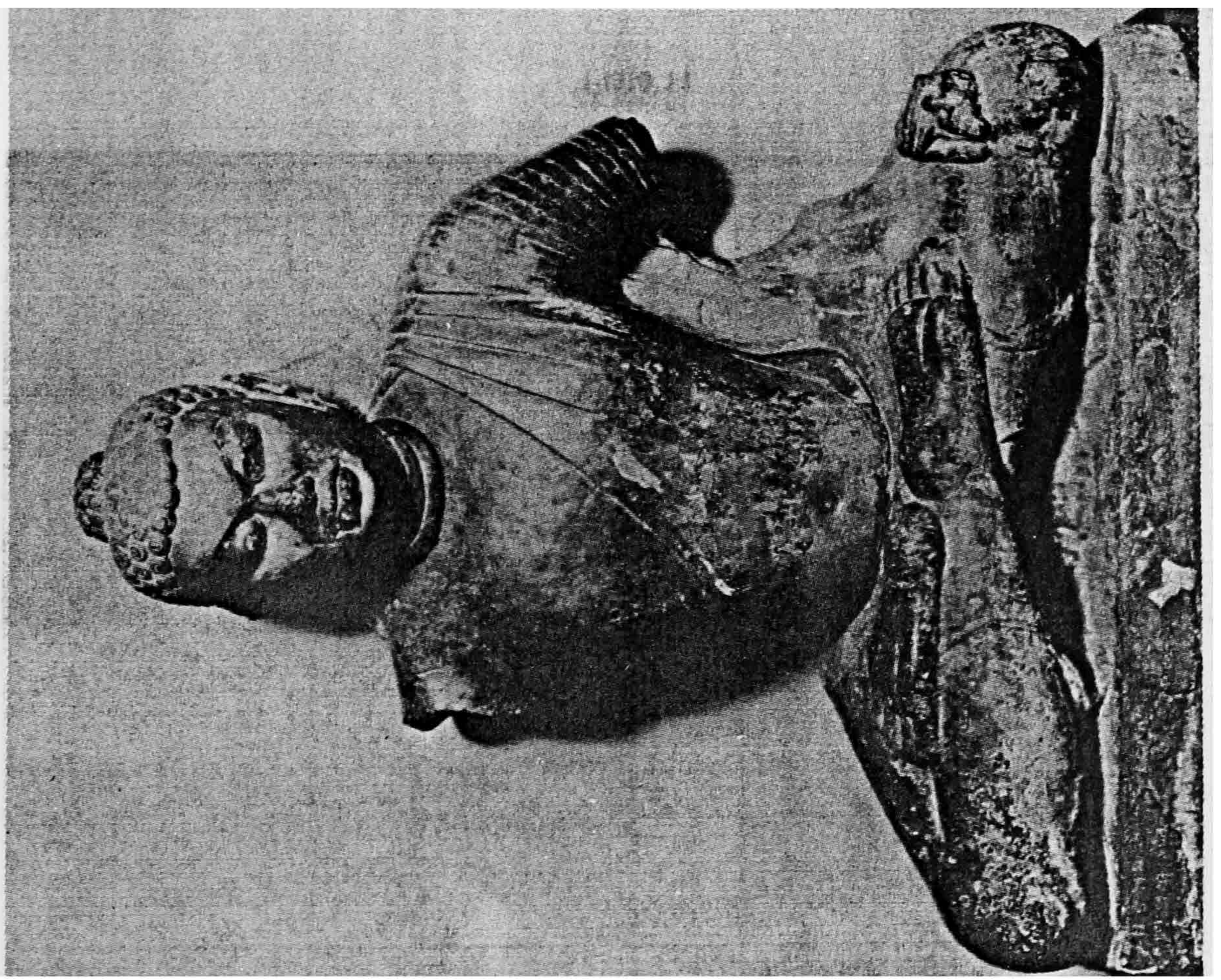


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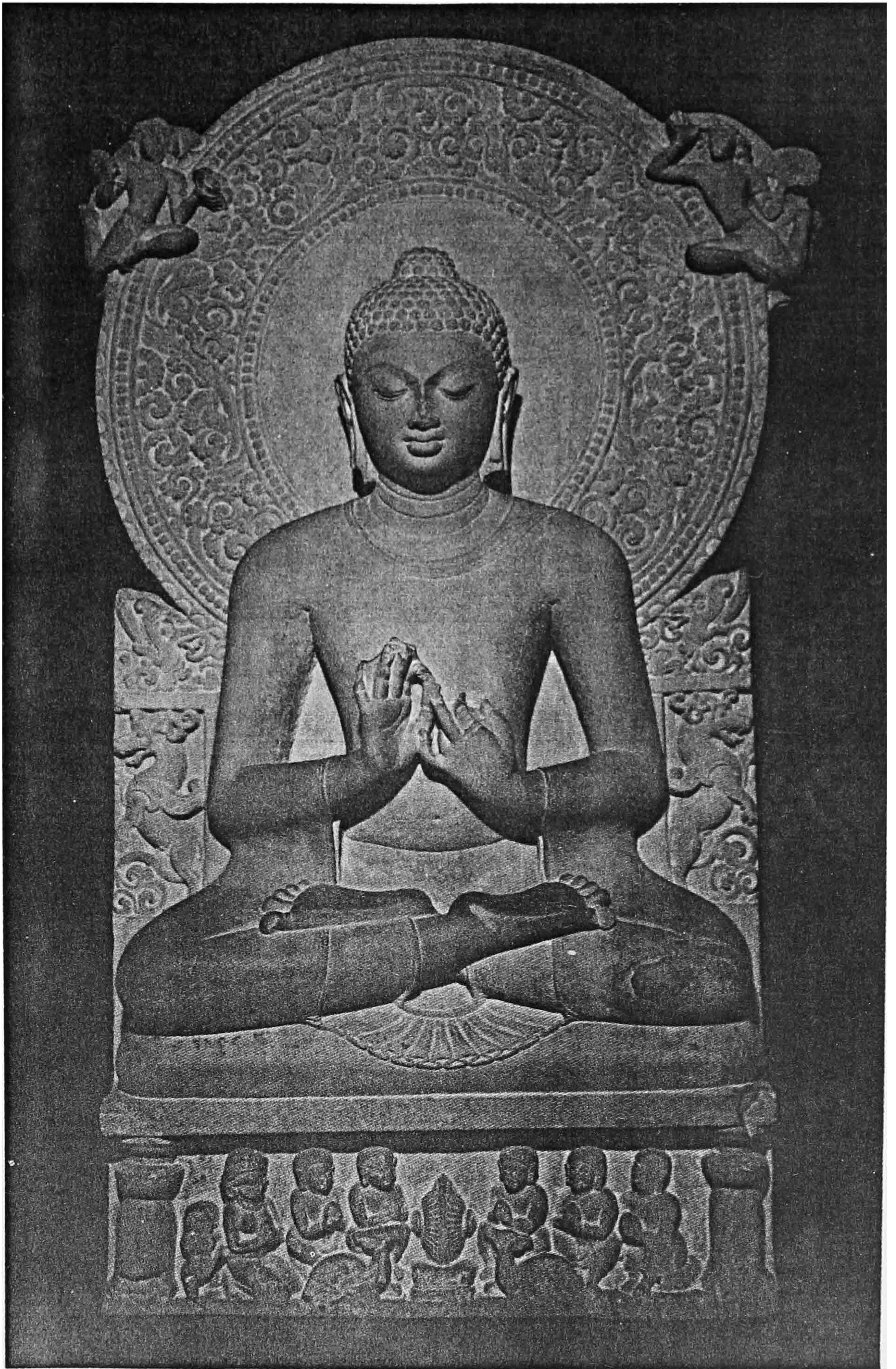


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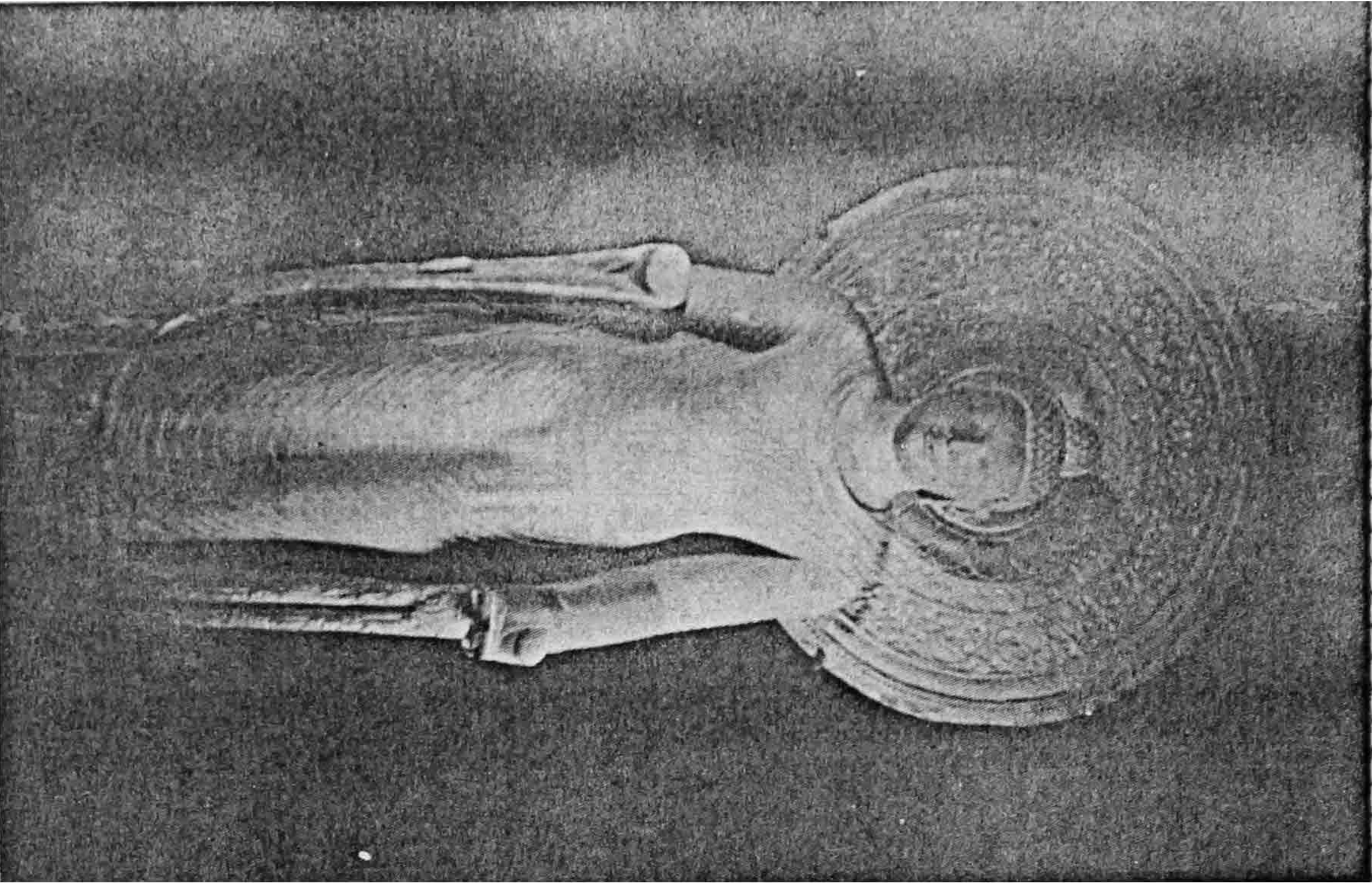


Plate 16



Plate 15

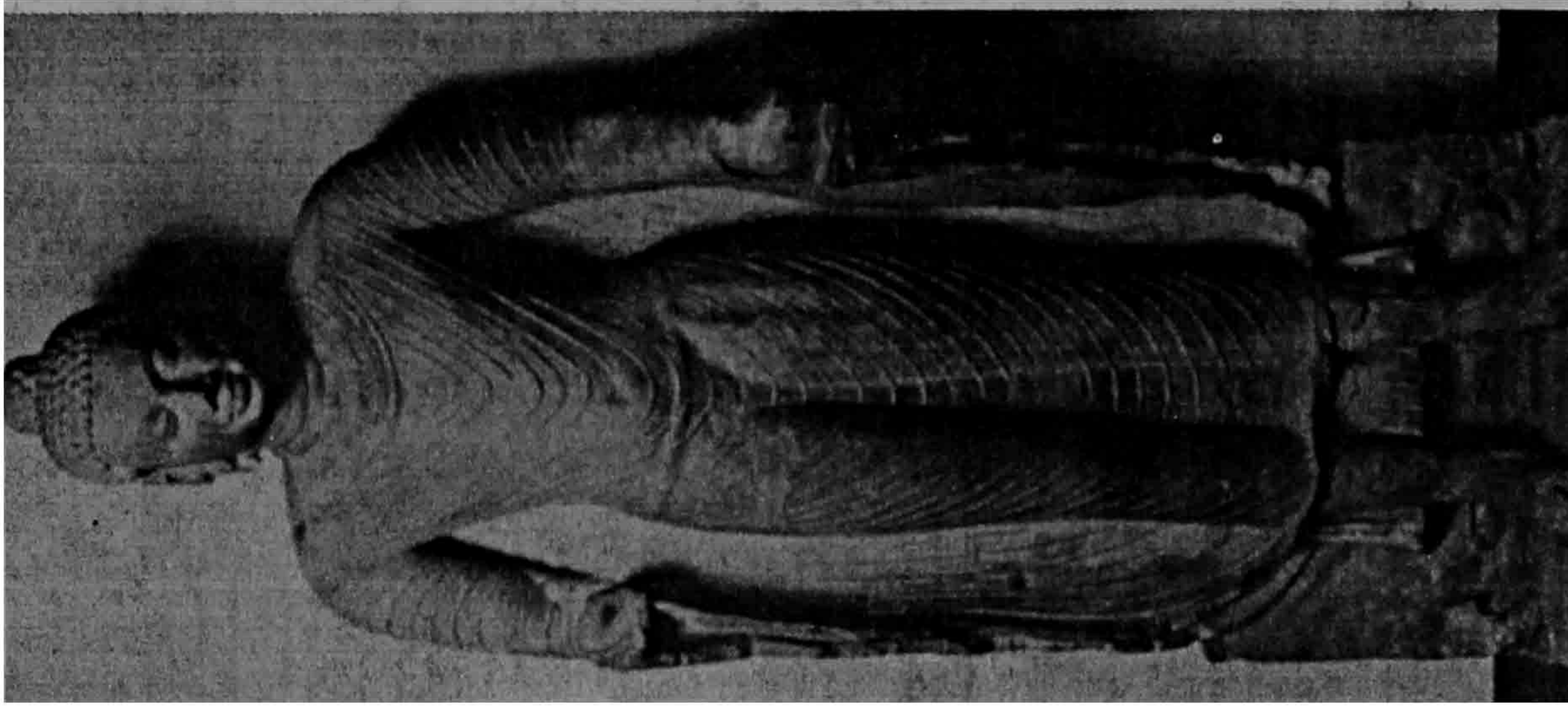


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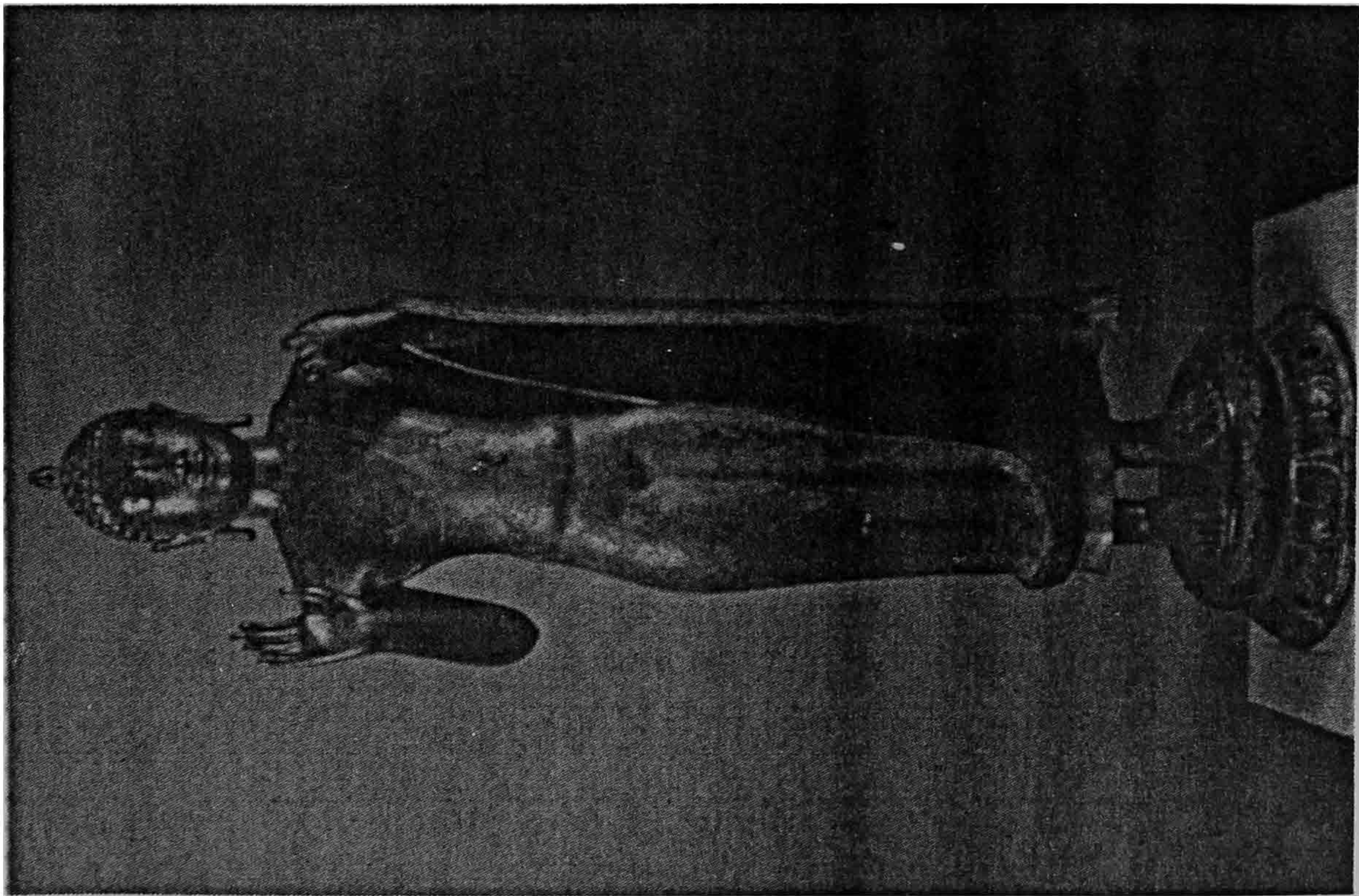


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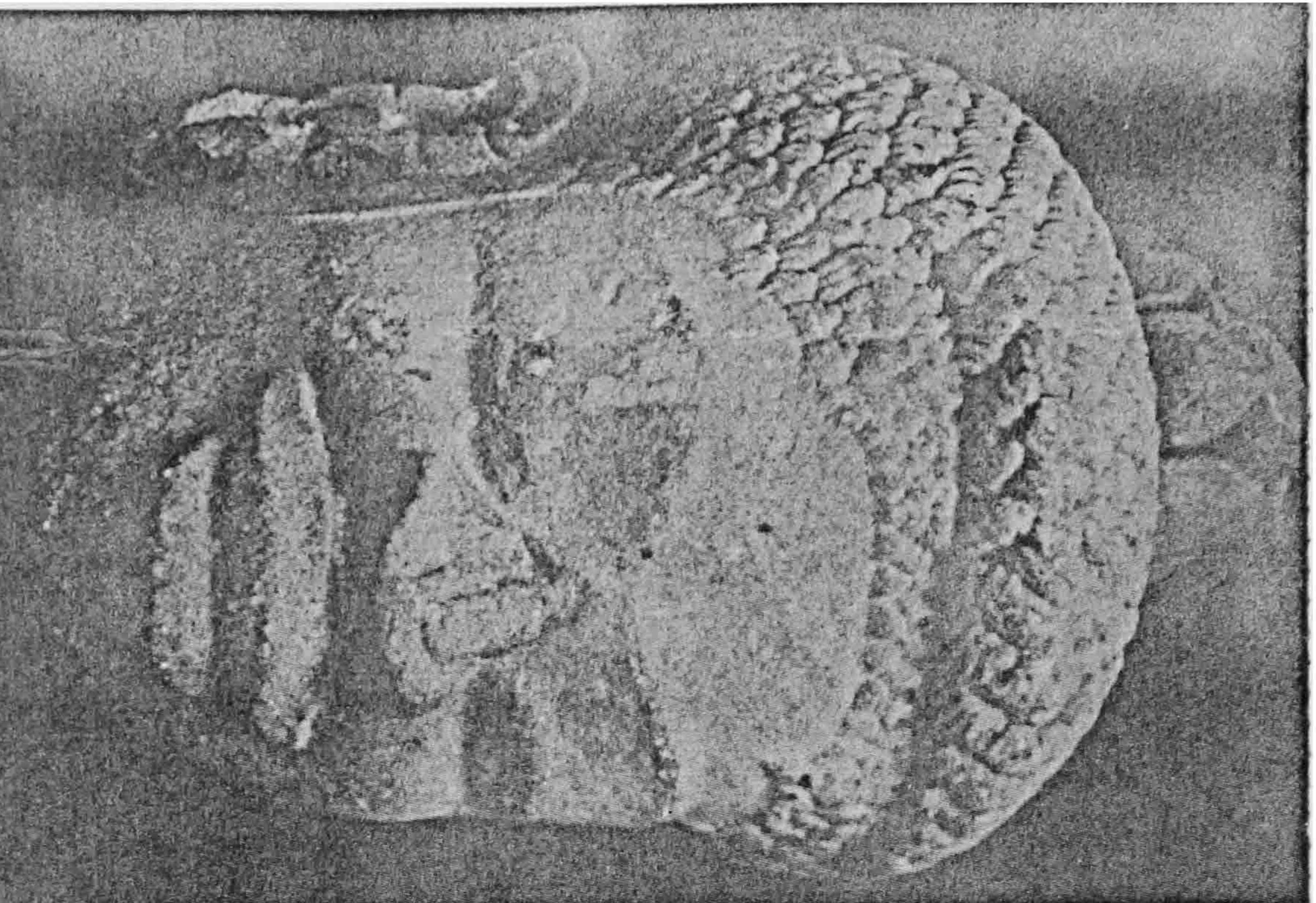


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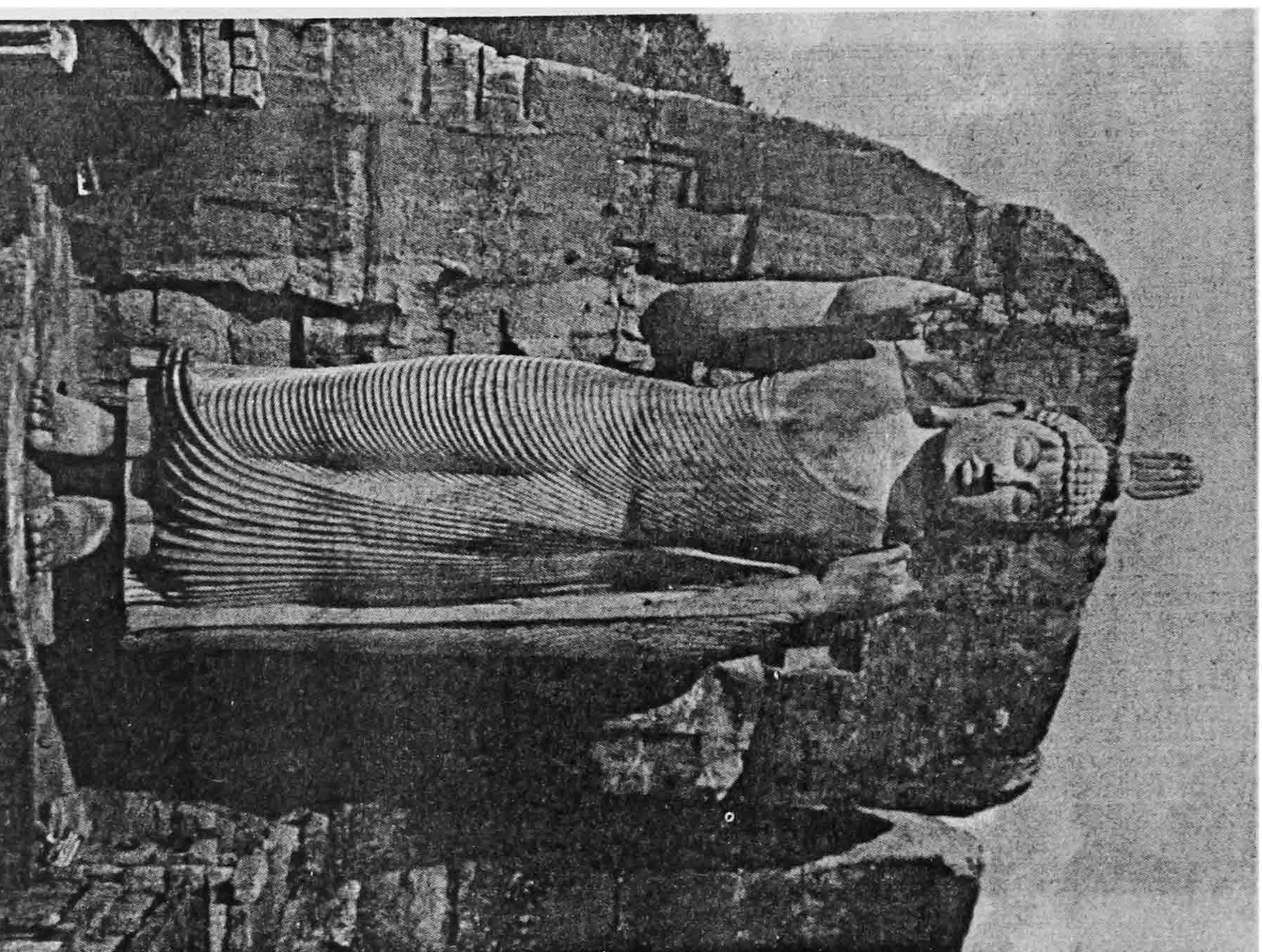


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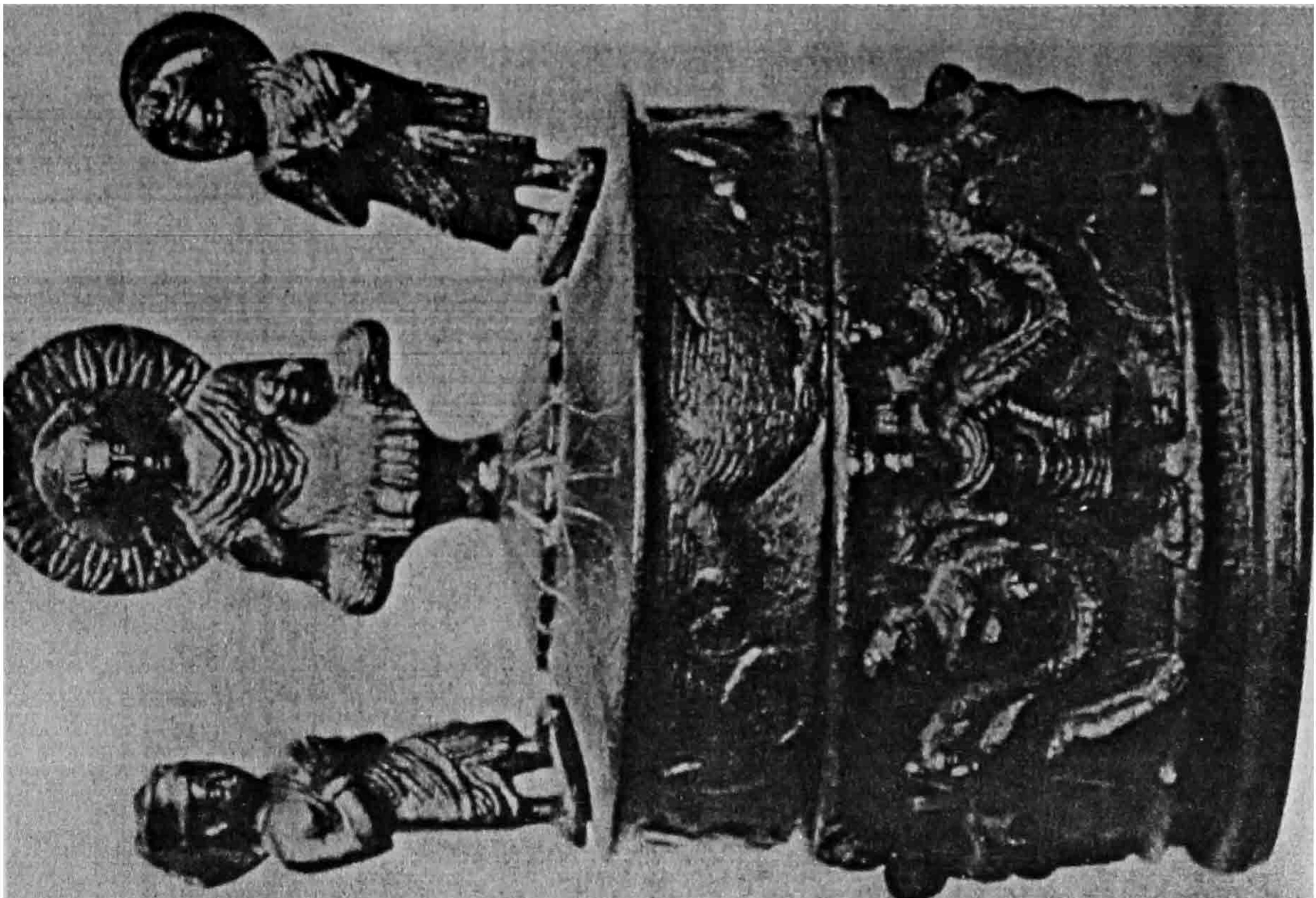


Plate 21



Plate 22



Plate 24

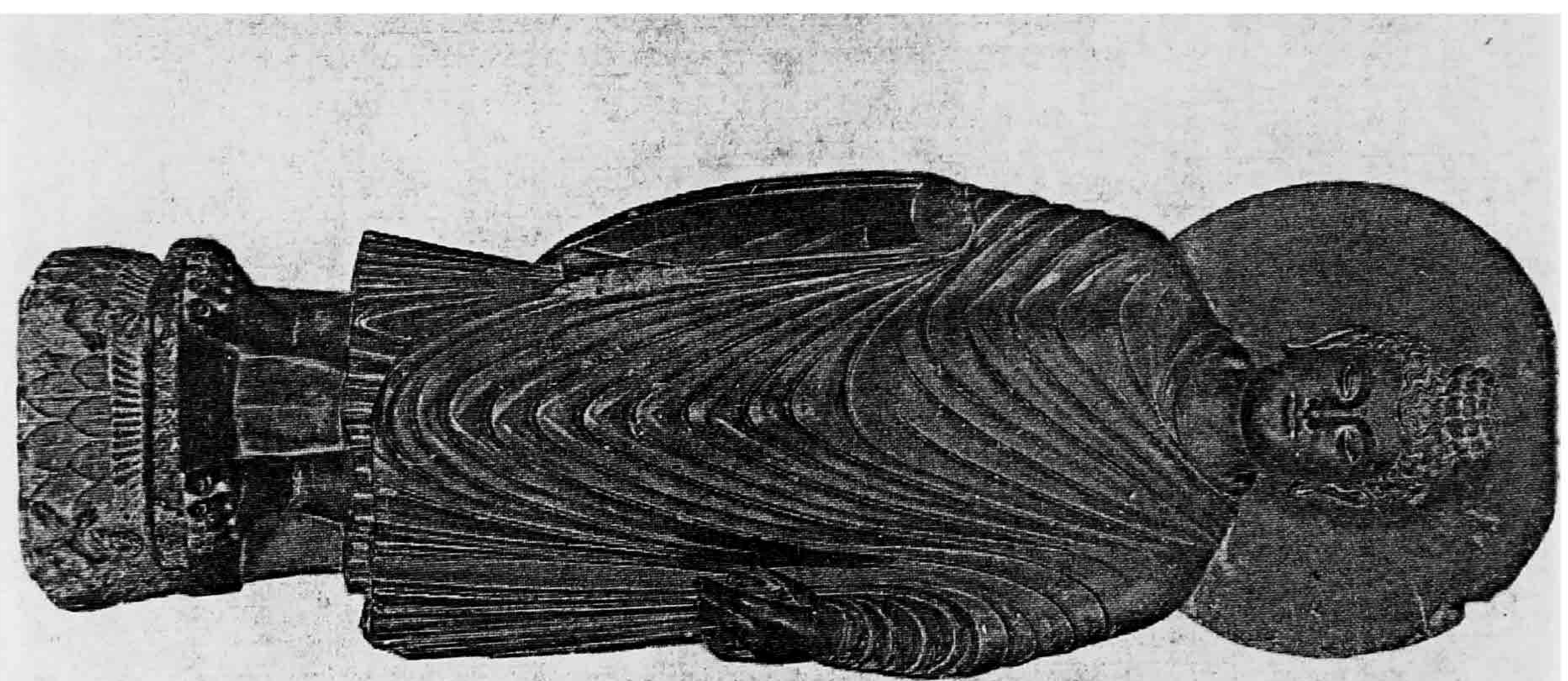


Plate 23



Plate 25

