

The 4 Noble Truths: An Explanation

Jay Pratt

|University Institute educational edit by Thom Wolf|

Many western cross-cultural workers have speculated that the reason why Theravada Buddhists have been so unresponsive to Christ is because of their lack of a pre-Buddhist term for the Most High God. It is my understanding that the crucial issue is not the doctrine of God or a pre-Buddhism word for the Most High God, such as the Chinese, *Shang di* or the Korean *Hana-nim* terms, but something else that mission workers have been overlooking or misunderstanding.¹ Surprisingly, there is something even greater than Buddha in the Theravada worldview that must be addressed in order for Buddhists to understand the gospel.

There seems to be a black hole in Theravada Buddhism. This hole is none other than the Christian doctrine of heaven.

According to the Buddhist background leadership that I work with, this is key in unlocking the Theravada Buddhist worldview and calling Buddhists to repent, believe the Good News of Christ, salvation, and then calling them to become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The stated goal of Buddhism is to enter into the cessation of suffering, which is *Nibbana*. The Buddhist Background Church has decided to use the term "*Nibbana*" for heaven.

My Buddhist Background friends in Myanmar speak with one voice, concerning the use of this term when evangelizing Buddhist peoples. This term was entirely *their* choosing and not an outsider's attempt to contextualize the gospel.

I did not even realize how they were winning their Buddhist friends until one year after their movement started. Again this was entirely indigenous decision. I only suggested adding the term "Golden City" or "Golden Shore" after discussing this issue with Dr. Phil Parshall, a recognized contextualization advisor. He showed me the importance of attaching "qualifiers" to old terms to give them new meaning.

For example, attaching the term *Isa* (Jesus) to the Muslim term *jamat* (religious study group) creates a new meaning for the old term. An *Isa Jamat* is a "house church" in the Muslim context. Muslim Background Believers in South Asia are using this term in the largest movement of Muslims turning to Christ in the history of Christianity.

One way of getting to the heart and core of the Theravada Buddhist worldview is to ask the following question: "What is the Ultimate Reality to a Buddhist?"² Followers of Christ, of course, would answer the Ultimate Reality is the Creator and Sustainer of the

¹ Richardson, 65-69: and see Thom Wolf, *The Most High God: An Anthropological Reader*. San Francisco: University Institute, 2001.

² James W. Sire. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*. 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 17.

Universe, whom we call, *God*. In Theravada Buddhism, *Nibbana*, is defined as The Only Absolute Truth. ³ Melford Spiro wrote several books on his anthropological studies of Burmese Buddhist worldview. Spiro says,

The Contemporary Burmese Buddhist exhibits three points of view concerning the meaning of Nirvana (Nibbana)... A small group says that short of experiencing nirvana, nothing can be said about it (other than that it entails that absence of suffering).

A second group says that although we cannot say what nirvana is, it is not extinction or annihilation. Some members of this group argue that although nirvana means complete extinction of the physical aspect of life, its spiritual aspect of the mind remains. Others insist that although mind, too, is destroyed, there remains a special kind of awareness.

The third group—those who believe that nirvana means total extinction—is the largest.” He quotes a Burmese (from the third group) as saying that in nirvana “nothing exists”—there is no mind, no soul, no body, no feeling of any kind.”⁴

The Buddhist background church leaders do not agree with Spiro, that most Burmese Buddhist believe that Nibbana means annihilation of self. Since there is so much confusion over the correct meaning of *Nibbana* within Theravada Buddhism, it is understandable why this Church Planting Movement’s leaders have taken advantage of the weakness in the crumbling wall of Buddhism.

The goal of both Hinduism and Buddhism is to be set free from the endless cycles of reincarnation. Both religions use the term *Samsara* to describe the endless cycle of re-birth. Buddhism calls the release from *Samsara*, *Nibbana*. Hindus call this liberation, “*Moksha*.” *Nibanna* literally means “no burning.”

Burmese and other Theravada Buddhists add an attachment onto the term Nibbana that means “Golden City, Golden Land,” or the “Golden Shore.” This ancient word shows that the modern interpretation of *Nibbana* has been changed to mean annihilation. These place name attachments contradict the annihilation definition, and can be translated as, “a place of no more suffering.” It is only in *Nibbana* that evil craving (sin) ceases, and the soul has reached it *nicca* (peace or stability).

Sri Lankan Buddhist scholar, Walpola Rahula, seems to agree with the second definition of Nibbana when he says,

Because Nirvana is this expressed in negative terms, there are many who have got a wrong notion that it is negative, and expresses self-annihilation. Nirvana is definitely no annihilation of self, because there is no self to annihilate.⁵

Buddha’s Third Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering or *Nibbana*

(No Burning) is directly related to the Second Noble Truth of *Samodea*. The second truth is described by Burmese Buddhists as a black fire burning inside of all people. The extinguishment that Buddha described is not concerning the *Atta* (Self), but the extinguishment of this black fire of sinful craving. Buddhist World missiologists, John R. Davis and Alex Smith, both define *nibbana* as, “extinguishment of self.”

³ Sri Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: The Gordon Fraser Gallery Limited Bedford First Publish revised edition, 1967). 35.

⁴ David Noss. *History of the World’s Religions*. (9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Publisher Prentice Hall, 1996), 182-183.

⁵ Walpola. 37.

The Judson term for heaven *kaungkin* has come into question by the Buddhist background circle of believers because Judson does not seem to recognize the Theravada worldview of thirty-one levels of existence (see Appendix 2). Judson even seemed to ignore the Buddhist understanding of the cosmos. It was Judson's wife, Ann, who was the first to translate the Bible into the Thai script, and there seems to be a connection in that translation's key terms with the Burmese.

In the midst of doing evangelism among their own people, these Buddhist background leaders realized that Judson's term for Heaven is a barrier to clearly communicating the gospel to Theravadans. All Buddhists long to be set free from the cycle of rebirths and achieve cessation of suffering. This is the stated goal of true Buddhist teachings.

Traditional Christians often ask Buddhist seekers, "don't you want eternal life in *kaung kin* (sky)?" Buddhist reply, "absolutely not!"⁶ Buddhists desire to escape the endless cycle of suffering; however, they cannot do this as long as they have sinful cravings. Buddhists simply need to understand that heaven is a wonderful place where there is no more sin and suffering.

The Judson term for *heaven* can be described as a literal translation and is not a meaning based (dynamic) translation. The Buddhist background church leaders of the Thai Covenant Church agree with using the term *Nibbana* when sharing with Buddhists about salvation. Although many members use the Buddhist term, *sawaan* in combination with "Nibban" to describe salvation to Theravada Buddhists in the Laotian and Thai languages, this is not an acceptable translation according to the Buddhists Background leaders in Myanmar.

According to Thai Buddhist scholar Boonchuay Doojai, the Thai Christian term for heaven, "*sawaan*," refers to the six celestial abodes of the thirty-one levels of existence that are just above the abode of mankind, (*Manussa Bhumi*). Altogether, these abodes are commonly called the "Seven Sawaans" in Thai. He also says that *sawaan* is still caught up in the endless cycle of Samsara.⁷ Christians do not seem to understand that there are twenty-six "heavens" above earth and the four hells in the Theravada view of the cosmos.

There are in fact thirty-one levels of existence in the Theravada worldview. It can be said that the Theravada *stupa* or *chedi* sometimes called *pagoda* is a map of the cosmos. The king of the demons, *Man Nat* (Satan), lives above the abode of humans. When a Burmese Christian proclaims Jesus to be the way to *kaung kin*, Buddhist understand *kaung kin* to be under the rule of the Evil One. (see Appendix 1)

A third possible option to communicate the concept of salvation and Heaven would be to simply use the attachments, "Golden City, Golden Land, or Golden Shore" rather than using the controversial term, *Nibbana*. Judson used these terms as attachment in several songs that he wrote describing our final destination.

Clarification from the Hindu context

Indian church multiplication coach and cancer surgeon, Victor Choudhrie, said the 100,000 house churches in the Agape Network that he leads, use the term *Moksha* to help Hindus understand that Jesus is the way to (liberation) salvation. He says, "*Moksha* or *Nirvana* means release from the bondage of the cycle of rebirths. These are acceptable

⁶ U Tint Lwin, "Contextualization of the Gospel for Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar." (PhD. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), p. 108.

⁷ Email discussion with Theravada scholar Doojai. August 2006.

terms and can be used for “the release” from the bondage of sin. It is a better word than the Christian term *Uddhar* which is more accurate (to the original Greek term) but less understood by a Hindu. ⁸

In Hinduism and Jainism *Moksha* is understood by devotees to be liberation from the Cycle of Reincarnation. When Choudhrie says that *Uddhar* is more accurate,” he means that it is more of a literal translation of “Heaven” instead of a dynamic translation just as with the Judson term for heaven *kaung kin*.

The Myanmar movement have had pictures drawn of a Golden City floating on clouds. This is a common picture in Buddhist cartoon books for Nibbana and counters the Buddhists’ weak argument that Nibbana means annihilation of the self. The Buddhist background leaders have incorporated these pictures into evangelistic tracts for distribution.

Sin

The Buddhist background leaders argue that the Judson term for sin, *aphyit*, does not communicate effectively to Theravada Buddhists the concept of missing the mark. *Aphyit* is understood as *crime*, and thus the majority of Buddhists do not consider themselves *criminals*. The concept of being a criminal before the Righteous Judge has much more acceptance in guilt based cultures as in Anglo-America. However in shame based communities, the idea that we have “lost face” is understood better in order to receive the gospel.

Burmese Buddhists understand the term *kilesa*, which means “inward craving” or “inward evil desire.” Buddhist background believers are calling heads of households to repent of their inward unintentional sin, *kilesa*, as well as any outward law breaking actions, *aphyit*, that they may have knowingly committed. Theravada Buddhists understand original sin.

A Lawyer’s Method

Sharing Christ with Sincere Buddhists

This method is still in development but comes from one of the most successful evangelist/church planter trainers in Southeast Asia. He is a lawyer and this document tries to show his argument from Buddhism that no one can obey the law completely.

Through this method Buddhist are shown that complete perfection is what true Buddhism demands. We have seen over one thousand Buddhists come to Christ since Feb 2004 and have seen 70% of those baptized by using this method. There have been 180 tiny underground house churches started up until this time.

Most of these churches are the third or fourth generation. Counting beyond the fourth generation is proving to be a daunting task. The Lawyer’s method is easily reproducible and understandable by villagers as well as educated urban people.

Some have objected that many Buddhist people have little knowledge of Buddhism therefore we should avoid talking about it. This is logical if we are trying to reach younger people who can leave their families and join westernized churches, but the Lawyer’s Method is meant to be shared with respectable village and family leaders who are often the guardians of religion for their people.

⁸ Email discussion with Indian church multiplication coach Victor Choudhrie. Sept. 2006.

The person known as “The Buddha” taught “The Four Noble Truths” that all Buddhists are to believe. You can find these in any book on world religions or Buddhism. However, very few Buddhists can tell you about each of these four points because the monks cannot attain Nibanna by this way.

**The First Noble Truth is
Suffering (*Dukkha*—*Suffering*)**

The First Noble Truth is that all of life is caught up in a constant cycle of suffering called *dukkha*. Humans are born, we get old, we get sick and we die. After death the cycle starts all over again. We return either as a human, a low spirit (*Nat*), or a high spirit (Brahmin), an animal, or as demon.

All these beings live in the 31 Levels of Existence. See the map of the Theravada Buddhist World on Appendix A.

**The Second Noble Truth is
Evil Craving (*Samudaya*—*Attachment*)**

The *Abidamma Pitaka* scripture describes this evil craving as a black fire burning inside of all mankind that must be extinguished. Buddhism teaches that people are born with original sin. Contrary to popular belief, Buddhism teaches that Nibanna cannot be attained by making merit. It is only attained by extinguishing the ten evil cravings (*The Ten Fires of Kilesa*). This is illustrated by the fact that Monks do not practice merit making. Merit making is practiced by the laity. They do this in order to get to a higher plane of existence in the 26 realms of the spirits. The six levels of lower spirits and 20 levels of higher spirits.

All mankind are born with 10 *Kilesa*. *Kilesa* is defined as *defilement of the mind and heart*. Buddhists are trying to extinguish this fire. The 10 Ducarita-evil deeds are:

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. killing | 6. greed |
| 2. stealing | 7. planning to destroy others by trickery |
| 3. committing adultery | 8. verbal abuse |
| 4. lies | 9. wrong doctrine |
| 5. dissension | 10. idleness. |

Buddhism teaches that people can go to the spirit realms by avoiding these Ten Evil Deeds but no one can avoid doing these practically, because we have committed oral and mental sins. Buddhists are well aware that they have broken all of these laws, daily.

**The Third Noble Truth is
There is a place of no more sin no more suffering—*nirvana*.**

Most Buddhists would agree with Jesus teaching, “No one is good, only God” and Romans 3:23 “For all have sin and fallen of short of the glory of God.” Buddha taught that the origin of suffering is sin and we can show our Buddhists friends that the oldest story in God’s word clarifies this Noble Truth. God told the first man and woman, “If you eat this fruit, you will die.” The Third Noble Truth is that there is a place of no more sin and no more suffering. There is a debate within Buddhism about the exact nature of

Nibanna (Nirvana), but the basic meaning is no more sin, no more death, and no more reincarnation.

Buddhism teaches that The Fourth Noble Truth is the key to being set free from the sins that keep Buddhists attached to the 31 Levels of existence, which are part of the impermanent cycle of reincarnation.

This key is known as *The Eightfold Path*. These eight are: perfect (righteous) effort; perfect mindfulness; perfect concentration; perfect action; perfect livelihood; perfect effort; perfect mindfulness; perfect concentration

Buddha is basically teaching us that we must be 100% perfect in order to be set free from the cycle of sin and suffering. This is very bad news to Buddhists but is the heart of the teachings of the Buddha. According to Buddhist tradition only a few people have ever attained enlightenment and those were during the time of Gotama Buddha in India.

There are ways to bring Jesus up as equal to Buddha in the minds of Buddhists. A common frustration that many believers experience when their Buddhist friend says "Oh, Jesus is just like Buddha."

When a Buddhist Person of Peace says this, it is a good sign that the Holy Spirit is working in them and has elevated Jesus to the status of the Buddha in their mind. We should trust that the Holy Spirit is elevating Jesus higher and higher in the mind of your Buddhist friend. Do not be discouraged. Use the keys of the Kingdom and believe that Jesus can open the eyes of your friend's heart.

In Buddhism perfection is attained through two levels of meditation. The first level of meditation is *Thamata bawana*. Buddhism says that by doing this meditation you will have great power to do magnificent things like fly through the air. The second level of meditation is called *Wipathana* (Vespassana) and once attained allows a person to get enlightenment. By this enlightenment Buddhists can realize Nibanna and they can become a Buddhist saint, *thu daw zin*.

However, there is no one to coach Buddhists to practice *Thamata* or *Wipathana* meditation because no Buddhists have reached sainthood since the time of Buddha. The only way that Buddhists can complete these two levels of meditation is that they receive coaching from someone who has already completed these two levels. Only saints (*thu daw zin*), not ordinary people can teach the perfect way.

There are five levels that one must reach in order to attain Nibanna.

- 1) The first is level is *Bu To Zan* and all people alive today are at this stage.
- 2) *So Ta Pan*, (No one is known to have reached this stage yet since the days of Buddha)
- 3) *Sa Gah Gan*,
- 4) *An Nah Gan*,
- 5) *Ya han da* (*thu daw zin* or sainthood). *Yahanda* (*Aharat* or *Sainthood*) are the only ones who can enter Nibanna.

The Nine Powers of Buddha

- 1) He is Buddha
- 2) He knows the Four Noble Truths
- 3) He has Miraculous Powers
- 4) He is the Teacher

- 5) He is greater than all humans and spirits
- 6) He knows all Buddhist doctrine
- 7) He deserves worship of all creation
- 8) He knows who is deserves to go Nibanna.

Jesus is greater than Buddha because He has the power to save the world from sin.

At this point the Lawyer presents the problem to his friends. "You have no one to coach you to Nibanna as a Buddhist, because there are no saints living today to help us. You have no means to get Nibanna, so we have to find a new way. In Buddhism we have lost our way in this step. It is very urgent for us to find a new way, because Buddha himself taught that Nibanna is the ultimate goal of all Buddhism.

If this is so, let us have a look at a different way. Here is a new way. Jesus Christ is the Way for us to reach Salvation. He himself declared, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and I am life'"

The Lawyer and those who he has trained show their friends that Jesus Christ sets us free from the cycle of sin and suffering and is the way to salvation. He explains that Nibanna is equal to salvation in the Buddhist mind. The Lawyer starts to tell the story about the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus. The Lawyer says that if you tell the story of Creation to sincere Buddhists at this point, you will encounter numerous problems.

A common barrier that Buddhists face with the Creation story is called the problem of evil in Christian theology. Buddhists will not understand WHY the Creator God would allow death to happen to His creation if it was only humans' fault. Buddhists really do not understand the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, so a wise and sensitive evangelist should start with Jesus and then go backwards. Please read the list of barriers with explanation in Appendix B.

The Lawyer illustrates the logic of the virgin birth of Christ to the Buddhist mind by sharing the story of Buddha's mother, Maya, and how she gave birth. There are many miraculous occurrences associated with the birth of the Buddha, so it impresses Buddhists when they hear of the miraculous events surrounding the birth of Christ.

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|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasize the magnificent great angelic host proclaiming the Savior's birth, and the tremendous distance that The Magi from the east traveled in order to find the Coming Promised One. 2. The flight to Egypt as a refugee, the slaughter of the innocents and Jesus' return to Nazareth. 3. The fulfillment of many prophecies. 4. John the Baptist announces that he is not even fit to carry His sandals. 5. At the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' shoulder as a dove and a voice is | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> heard: "This is my Son and I am very pleased with Him." 6. Jesus heals the woman with an issue of blood 7. The Sermon of the Mount 8. Love and Forgiveness 9. Giving joyfully 10. Prayer. Matt 6:5-15, Luke 11:2-4 11. Deny yourself and follow the Messiah like Jesus instructed the Rich young ruler to do. Matt. 6:19-21, Matt. 19:16-13, Mark 10 12. Practice the Lord's Supper like Jesus instructed in Matt. 26:26-28 13. Jesus' Sacrificial Death, Burial, and Resurrection. |
|---|---|

It is very difficult for Buddhists to understand the sacrificial atonement of Christ. They believe that Jesus must have done bad things in his previous life in order to die like He

did. You can explain the sacrificial atonement of Christ through three key stories of the pre-existing Buddha taken from the *Jataka Tales* in the *Sutan da Pitaka*.

Jivitadana (life-offering) is the term that you want Buddhists to understand about Christ's sacrifice. There are three suitable stories to illustrate this:

- 1) The Royal Rabbit's Life-Offering
- 2) Wei Thandara's ("The Generous King's") Life-Offering
- 3) Sa Din Seng Min's ("The White Elephant King's") Life-Offering

The Buddhist Story that illustrates the Resurrection of Christ is "Shin Mauk-gah-lan." This saint was Buddha's "right hand man" and was attacked by five hundred thieves. He was cut into very small pieces, but he rose again. Once Buddhists hear these stories they begin to understand that Buddha only saved himself, but Jesus saved all those who believe in Him.

- Story of His Ascension
- Story of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

These evangelists also take advantage of the current political situation and the Buddhist military government's claim that "We are the most Blessed people because we follow the most blessed religion."

They propose the question, "If we are the most blessed religion then why is every country around Myanmar (even the Muslim ones) more prosperous and overwhelming financially blessed?"

They then propose, "We can only concluded two reasons for this, either we are following our Buddhism in the wrong way or we are following the wrong religion."

The evangelist stops here and waits to see if hearts and minds are open. If so then he knows that the rock of Buddhism has been removed. Again, other Buddhists from rural villages are using this same method and are starting multiplying churches.

Even though this is happening we agree that this argument needs to be simplified and have made easily reproducible pictures to explain this simple concept. (See appendix 3). One of the primary church leaders has written a book with an educated monk discussing the claims of Christ and Buddha for discussion presenting the argument above.

It is the expressed vision of the leaders of this movement to call seekers out of Buddhism. They believe that calling themselves "Messianic Buddhist" (C 5 contextualization category) would bring Christ down to the level of Buddha.

I have repeatedly heard seekers first proclaim, "Oh this is just like Buddhism" half way through the Lawyer's Method presentation, however by the end they state, "This is completely different, I want to follow Christ." ▪

Appendix 1

31 abodes of Existence According to Theravada Buddhism

Adapted from Suvano Mahathera

www.accesstoinsight.org

I. The Immaterial World (*arupa-loka*)

31 Neither-perception-nor-non-perception (<i>nevasannanasa</i>)	84,000 Mahakappas	The inhabitants of these realms are possessed entirely of mind. Having no physical body, they are unable to hear Dhamma teachings.
30 Nothingness (<i>akiñcaññayatanupaga deva</i>)	60,000 Mahakappas	
29 Infinite Consciousness (<i>viññānañcayatanupaga deva</i>)	40,000 Mahakappas	
28 <i>akasañcayatanupaga deva</i>	2,000 Mahakappas world existences	

II. The Fine-Material World (*rupa-loka*)

27. (<i>akanittha deva</i>)	16,000 Mahakappas	These are the five Pure Abodes (<i>suddhavasa</i>), which are accessible only to <u>non-returners</u> (<i>anagami</i>) and <u>arahants</u> . Beings who become non-returners in other planes are reborn here, where they attain arahantship. Among its inhabitants is Brahma Sahampati, who <i>begs the Buddha to teach Dhamma to the world</i>
26. (<i>sudassi deva</i>)	8,000 Mahakappas	
25. (<i>sudassa deva</i>)	4,000 Mahakappas	
24. (<i>atappa deva</i>)	2,000 Mahakappas	
23. (<i>aviha deva</i>)	1,000 Mahakappas	
22. (<i>asaññasatta</i>)	500 Mahakappas	Only body is present; no mind.
21. (<i>vehapphala deva</i>)	500 Mahakappas	Beings in these planes enjoy varying degrees of bliss.
20. (<i>subhakinna deva</i>)	64 Mahakappas	
19. (<i>appamanasubha deva</i>)	32 Mahakappas	
18. (<i>parittasubha deva</i>)	16 Mahakappas	
17. (<i>abhassara deva</i>)	8 Mahakappas	
16. <i>Appamanabha deva</i>	4 Mahakappas	
15. <i>Parittabha deva bhumi</i>	2 Mahakappas	

14. <i>Maha brahma bhumi</i>	1 Mahakappas	One of this realm's most famous inhabitants is the Great Brahma, a deity whose delusion leads him to regard himself as the all-powerful, all-seeing creator of the universe.
13. (<i>brahma-purohita deva bhumi (abode)</i>)	½ Mahakappas	Beings in these planes enjoy varying degrees of bliss.
12. <i>Brahma-parisajja deva bhumi (abode)</i>	1/3 Mahakappas	

III. The Sensuous World (*kama-loka*)

Thai: *Sawan*
Levels 6-11

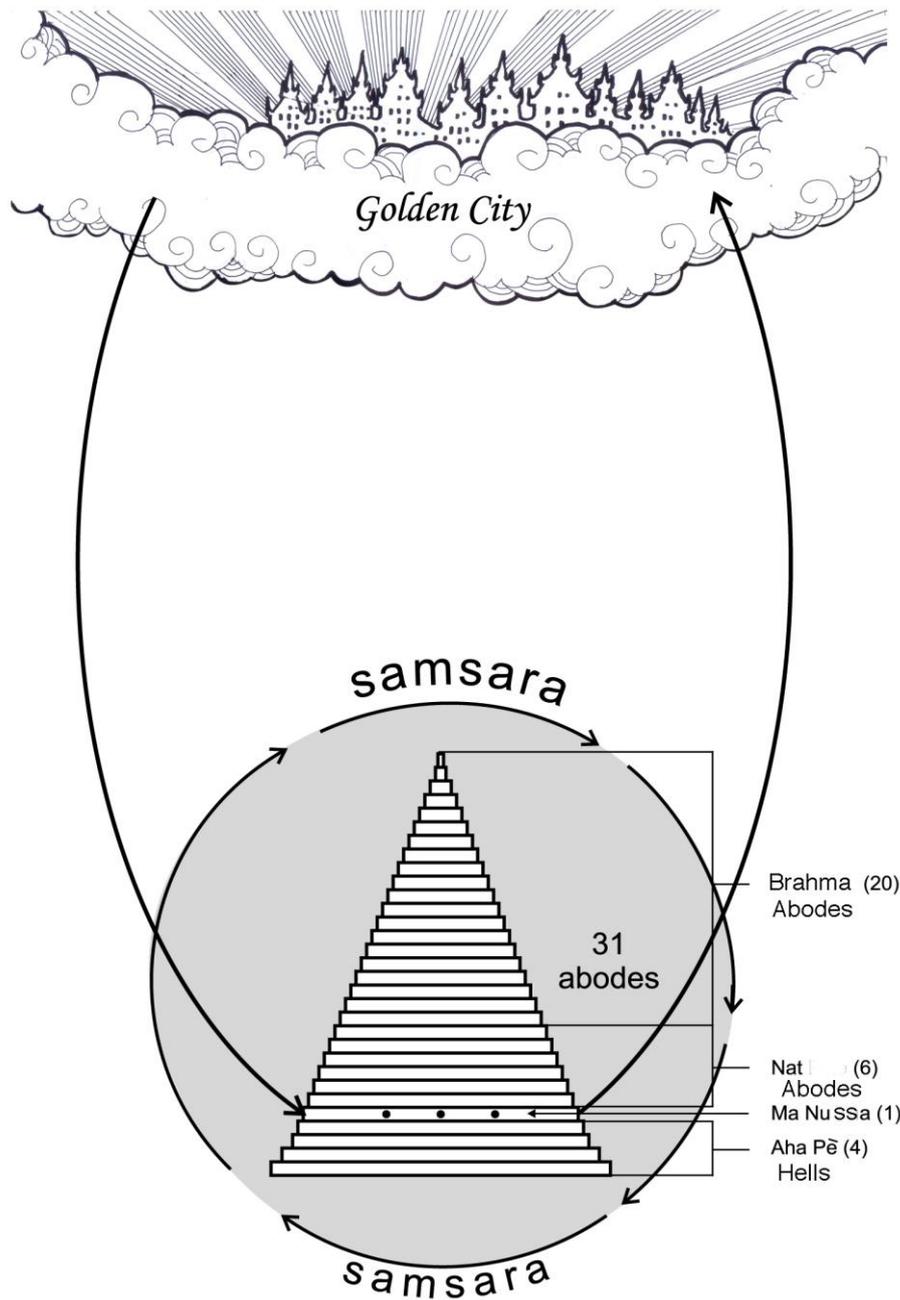
(11) <i>Paranimmita-vasavatti deva heaven</i>	9,216 million years	Mara, the Evil One lives here. Notice that this abode is far above the Christian term for Heaven in all Theravada Buddhist countries
(10) <i>Nimmanarati deva heaven</i>	2,304 million years	These devas delight in the sense objects of their own creation
(9) <i>Tusita deva heaven</i>	576 million years	Bodhisattas abide here prior to their final human birth. The coming Buddhist Messiah, Metteya, is said to dwell here.
(8) <i>Yama devas heaven</i>	144 million years	Ruled by Suyama deva, the devas who here are free of all difficulties.
(7) <i>Tavatisma heavens of 33 devas (gods)</i>	36 million years	Sakka (Indra), a devotee of the Buddha, presides over this heaven
(6) <i>Catumaharajika</i>	9 million years	Home of the <i>gandhabbas</i> , the celestial musicians, and the <i>yakkhas</i> , tree spirits of varying degrees of ethical purity. The latter are analogous to the goblins, trolls, and fairies of Western fairy tales.
(5) <i>Ma nu ssa Loka</i> (Human world). According to Theravada Buddhism	<p>Burmese: <i>Kaung Kin</i></p> <p>↑ The Christian term for “Heaven” in all Theravada Buddhist countries is at the top of/above this level. 70-80 years. You are here, for now, according to Theravada Buddhism</p>	the attainment of <u>stream-entry</u> (<i>sotapatti</i>) guarantees that all future rebirths will be in the human or higher realms.
(4) <i>Asuras (demons)</i>	These “Titans” that dwell here are in constant conflict	
(3) <i>Petas (hungry spirits)</i>	Ghost or unhappy spirits who	

	wander the earth	
(2) Tiracchana (animals)	This realm includes all the non-human forms of life that are visible to us under ordinary circumstances: animals, insects, fish, birds, worms, etc.	
(1) Niraya (Hell) 8 levels of Hell	These are realms of unimaginable suffering and anguish. Should not be confused with the <i>eternal</i> hell proposed by other religions, since one's time here is — as it is in every realm — temporary.	

This diagram is occasionally drawn as a Buddhist stupa.

Appendix 2

A Theravada Buddhist's view of the Cosmos and understanding of Salvation



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