

From Buddha to the Dalai Lama

Week 2: The historical Buddha, the Pali Canon, and
contemporary U.S. Theravadan

Link to extended readings and slides:<https://parusanalytics.com/fb2dl/week-two.html>

Monastics frequently mentioned in suttas

- **Ananda:** first cousin, primary attendant, and often the straight man (asks Buddha a question and Buddha explains why he is wrong) but Buddha also lets him teach periodically. Known for his memory. Critical in the establishment of the order of bhikkhuni (nuns) by persuading the Buddha to ordain the Buddha's foster-mother Mahapajapati Gotami and got a lot of crap for this. Enlightened just in time to be at the First Council
- **Sariputta:** foremost in wisdom and by implication literature/theory
- **Moggallana:** foremost in experience and psychic powers...
- **Khema:** foremost nun, wife of King Bimbisara but exceeds him in spiritual accomplishments. Like Sariputta, excels in wisdom
- **Uppalavanna:** female parallel to Moggallana; achieved enlightenment two weeks after becoming a nun, but prior to that had a difficult life (in some versions)

The Pali Canon and other literature

The Tripitaka (ca. 30BCE)

- **Vinaya Piṭaka** ("Discipline Basket"), dealing with rules or discipline of the monastic **sangha**;
- **Sutta Piṭaka** (Sutra/Sayings Basket), discourses and sermons of Buddha, some religious poetry and is the largest basket; this is subdivided into a number of parts, albeit these are largely based on length, not topic.
- **Abhidhamma Piṭaka**, treatises that elaborate Buddhist doctrines, particularly about mind, also called the "systematic philosophy" basket.

source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C4%81li_Canon

Dhammapadam: relatively short (and readable) collection of 26 chapters of verses, organized by topic, so it is much like Proverbs or the Gospel of Thomas.

Visuddhimagga: Core text for the Theravadan approach, compiled by Buddhaghosa around 500CE from existing Sri Lankan knowledge and practice. Far more systematic and philosophically rigorous than the Sutta Pitaka, though also differs quite significantly in some aspects, particularly meditation practices.