An Investigation into
The Exhibition of Buddhist Objects
in British Museums

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Abstract

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This work gives an overview of Buddhist material culture in British museums. It first attempts to be a comprehensive study of the objects. It also examines Buddhists' impressions upon using their objects in displays. Displays and interpretations are rarely constant and neutral. They reflect merely a viewpoint from a specific angle. There are, however, many other valid interpretations about an object. An identical object has different significances under different contexts. Nowadays, community people play an increasing role in the whole processes of the work of a museum. Museums should reflect this fact in their approaches.

The study discusses such issues: the nature, common characteristics, specific characteristics, symbolic messages, provenance, surviving threats, displays, interpretations, themes, communities, misunderstandings, misplacements, and suggestions for improving the use of these objects. In addition to analyse the merits and shortcomings of displays, the study also explores new insights into the objects. As visual expressions of a living spiritual heritage, the objects are not dead relics. Instead, emanating timeless messages of Buddhism, the objects are relevant to the human condition today. Besides, being displayed as solid objects, they signify intangible truths. They are meant to help people to know more about themselves and the world in which they are living. It is a challenge to museums to decode their in-depth significance rather than their outside features to viewers. The relevance of the objects should be re-interpreted in this social cultural context.

Objects housed in museums are for men rather than vice versa. A person should look forward rather than backward. Thus, the study also explores the relevance of the objects in this multicultural society. Buddhism has become an integral part of British culture. Its objects are no longer exotic rarities. Far from being the antique specimens of many dead civilisations, the objects still articulate vividly the perennial realities of wisdom and compassion. They are more than aesthetic arts. Displays ignoring the spiritual dimensions of the objects would be expressing an injustice to them. The messages embodied in these objects can not only enrich the content of a culture but can also widen one's vision. Museums should use them to transcend the division and barriers of different beliefs.

Above all, the study proposes conception-oriented themes to find a common ground for dialogue, comparison and communication among different beliefs and cultures. As 'religion' is a dangerous topic, many museums dare not take the risk of being criticised by displaying religious themes. They usually tackle the objects as aesthetic arts. Besides, many displays have not explored the connection of the objects to the general public. This kind of trite approach seems unable to kindle the curiosity and imagination of viewers. The study attempts to explore other alternative options for using them. In this interdependent world, mutual understanding and mutual respect become more important. Men should seek common ground for co-operation rather than for discrimination, division or conflict. Through sympathetic approaches, e.g. take the viewpoints of the original makers and owners of these objects, museums can contribute to peace and harmony in society.
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I am much obliged to the Buddha who has shown mankind a way to uncover the profundity of their innate potentials without depending on the help of any inconceivable force outside. Everyone can achieve bliss, serenity and awareness if they make the same effort to transform their acts, speaking and thinking. The Buddha's teaching was meant to lead people to freedom and liberation rather than to shackle them submissively. It means to help men to know more about themselves and the world in which they live. Each person should depend on himself for salvation. Happiness or unhappiness is originated from one's own mind rather than any imaginative power outside. His teaching is a source of inspiration for human beings to pursue a meaningful way of life, which has led people to happiness and liberation. It has also motivated the creation of so many splendid objects now stored in British museums. Emanating the timeless realities of existence, this common precious heritage of mankind still can give viewers much inspiration and imagination if their mind is open and mature enough. It is reflected precisely in the visual art of splendid Buddhist objects.

This thesis could not have been produced without the help and unfailing support of a large number of people. It is impossible to acknowledge each person who has helped me in the study, but there are a number of individuals I would like to mention. First of all, I am particularly grateful for the guidance and inspiration of my supervisor Dr Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, with whom I have had many fruitful discussions. In addition to the acceptance of this topic as an interesting field for enquiry, she has always been ready to offer advice and support. I will always cherish her contribution to my work.

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INTRODUCTION

Pearce points out that objects can be used to produce a whole range of interpretations of immense social historical interest. There are almost as many approaches to material culture as there are curators themselves (Pearce, 1989a: 140). Accordingly, the significance of Buddhist objects can also be re-interpreted in this social and cultural context. These objects can still articulate the timely messages which are relevant to the human condition today. They can not only widen people's vision but also inspire people's curiosity and imagination. They are the media for people to understand more about themselves.

Is it enough to depend merely on captions as the major tools of communication and transmitting? What are the limits and shortcomings of using labels as the major tools of interpretation? Except words captions, are there other alternative options which museums can take to complement the insufficiency of words interpretation? What kind of presentation technology can be applied in displays?

Since the display of "Buddhism: Art and Faith" in the British Museum in 1985, there have been some museums using the objects in displays (see Figure 4.1). However, there is still no comprehensive study to investigate the way in which these objects were or should be displayed. Because of an increasing interest in Buddhism, these issues deserve to be examined. Without exploration, it is difficult to comprehend the points of focus in the displays. Were the themes, interpretations, and arrangements in the displays appropriate? Have these displays kindled the imagination and curiosity of visitors? Have these displays widened the awareness and appreciation of these objects among the general public? What attitudes do museums usually adopt regarding these objects? What are the most salient issues which visitors may propose while viewing these objects? Undoubtedly, this kind of
information would be useful to display the objects. However, except for the publications of some exhibition catalogues, there is no comprehensive study to explore these issues.

It is becoming clear that there is no one valid interpretation about an object. Each interpretation cannot be regarded as a final or settled one. It merely reflects a point of view from an angle. Hooper-Greenhill explained it vividly, ‘Some things, and perhaps particularly art objects, can tell a story, put a point of view, record or explore a response to a function. Thus the examination of the intentional messages of objects can be fascinating, particularly where the messages are no longer topical and are therefore more or less invisible’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 99). Thus, the study attempts to find other approaches to uncover the fascinating aspects in the objects.

Nowadays, the work of museums should have a close link with communities. Museums can no longer design their programmes whimsically. However, the voices from taciturn people and minorities have still not received deserved attention. At this multicultural society, this kind of attitude is inappropriate. The time requires that museums should attend to these issues positively. Then they can justify their existence. What kind of impressions Buddhists usually have about their objects in displays? Are they positive or negative? When they are negative, how can they be improved? Have those responsible for the displays consulted Buddhists sufficiently? Do museums display and interpret these objects appropriately? If not, how can this be dealt with? What are the perception gaps in which museum staff and Buddhists themselves view the objects? How can these gaps be bridged?

As museums paying too much attention to the needs of the elites, inevitably, the needs of most of the taciturn people get neglected. This shortcoming should be rectified. Have the displays achieved the aims of education and entertainment for visitors? What can museums help visitors to understand and appreciate the objects? What kind of
complementary information have museums provided? What kind of participatory programmes have museums designed?

The future of museums is closely linked with communities. Have displays, themes, and interpretations appropriately reflected this fact? Do the programmes provided by museums have any close connection with the general public? Are they appealing and inspiring? Have they aroused the interest of visitors? Do they deserve visitors re-visit?

In this high-tech age, other audio-visual media seem more attractive and more appealing to audiences than most of the programmes which museums provide. How can they survive this impact? How can they compete with other entertaining attractions? How can they enhance their function of education and entertainment? How can they assure the quality of museum experience? Indeed, museums need some creative ideas and flexible approaches to deal with these new situations.

In this multicultural society, Buddhism and its objects have become a permanent part of British culture. This can be witnessed by the proliferation of Buddhist organisations and Buddhist publications in recent years. Have museums reflected this fact in their displays and interpretations? Have museums used modern language to re-interpret the significance of these objects in this social and cultural context? Have museums designed any programmes to promote communication between museums and Buddhist communities?

In order to explore the above mentioned questions, the study takes the stance of museum education to investigate the use of the objects in displays in Britain. It discusses the issue of regarding the objects as aesthetic art or historical specimens. It also explores the real nature, original dimension, authentic messages, and profound significance of the objects. Besides, it examines the shortcomings of using these objects. Furthermore, it
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opens the way to view these objects in a significant way. While exploring the issue of how to view the objects appropriately, the study opens a door to help people to discover the innate purity, bliss, completeness and resourcefulness within themselves which the objects are geared to expose. Above all, the study explores how the messages embodied in the objects can be relevant to the condition today.

Though a lot of displays using the objects have been held and a lot of exhibition catalogues have been published in recent years, there is no comprehensive study to investigate the issues of displays and interpretations in museums. It attempts to be the first comprehensive study to investigate the use of these objects in British museums. Besides, it is intended to be the first comprehensive survey to investigate the impressions of Buddhists about displays and interpretations of their objects. In addition, the study interviewed some visitors to investigate their understanding and impressions about viewing these objects.

The thesis consists of six chapters. The motivation and hypotheses of the research, as well as the scope and literature review, and research methods which the researcher has adopted are outlined in the first chapter.

Chapter 2 gives a brief review of the origin and nature of Buddhism. It explores the specific characteristics of Buddhism and its differences from other religions. Chapter 3 explores the issues relating to Buddhist objects, such as the definition of the objects, their common characteristics, the specific characteristics developed in different areas, the value of these objects, and their symbolic messages.

Chapter 4 undertakes a survey of the use of the objects in displays. This chapter discusses how these objects came to Britain, museums' collecting and its connection with the surviving threat to these objects, their use in displays, and the shortcomings of using them in displays. Chapter 5 discusses misunderstandings about Buddhism and its objects
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and elements which might hamper the understanding of these objects and the use of them in displays.

The last chapter turns to the issues of using these objects. It proposes some constructive suggestions for displaying the objects. It explores some significant displays and develops some recommendations. The thesis concludes with a brief summary of the research findings and its limitations.

The aims of the research are fourfold: firstly, to review and analyse the use of the objects in British museums. It attempts to identify the merits and shortcomings of using them. Secondly, the study aims to examine the significance of these objects and the new debate of contextual display and interpretation. Thirdly, the researcher analyses the interaction between museums and Buddhist communities. Finally, the researcher offers recommendations for creating inspiring and appealing displays.
CHAPTER 1 METHODOLOGY

1.1 The motivations of the study

In promoting educational activities, museums depend largely on solid objects because documented objects can be used for the study of ethnology both for research and display. Pearce said, 'Objects are material manifestations of societal transformations and form a crucial part of the understanding of society and culture and their changes over time' (Pearce, 1989a: 86). However, objects cannot articulate themselves spontaneously. The meanings of objects are much dependent on themes, interpretations, displaying contexts and the complementary information and programmes accompanying displays. Each object can be viewed and realised from various aspects. The superficial value of an object is not the only valid one. The motivation for creation, the past contexts, the original functions, and even the messages embodied in the object might be more significant than its surface value.

Many objects in museums have a religious meaning, but this is usually seen as less important than their artistic or historical significance. Art displays do not intend to provide information on the object's cultural background but to present the object's aesthetic qualities. Objects were often decontextualized, their culture of origin unimportant. The aesthetic approach focuses on objects claimed to have an intrinsic merit which speaks for itself (Pearce, 1986b: 79). Context is usually neglected. Emphasis has been put on the right of the object to stand alone, to be admired for its own sake. As educational institutions, museums have the responsibility to transmit the profound and authentic messages of objects to visitors. Exotic objects should not be regarded merely as rarities or the folk art of other peoples. With proper consideration, these objects originating from other cultural areas might be an effective medium to promote multicultural and cross-
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cultural experiences, to enhance mutual understanding and mutual respect, and to meet the
demands of plural communities.

However, Buddhist objects are still a relatively unfamiliar area for most visitors. Philip Rawson wrote that even people professionally concerned with India had known nothing about Tantric art (Rawson, 1973: 7)- Generally speaking, these objects are much neglected.

In addition, the religious courses provided by the public schools still put much emphasis on the traditional Christian faiths, and the average knowledge of ordinary visitors about these objects is seriously insufficient. Even today, John Patten, the education secretary, still issued a 62-page document detailing Christianity should dominate in lessons and collective worship regardless of the faith of pupils (Preston, 1993: 7). Deplorably, in this multicultural society, his attitude is still so arrogant and hostile to other faiths. He seems to mean that Christianity is the only religion and only truth.

Inevitably, the move provoked a hostile response from head teachers, who said the guidelines were heavy-handed and threatened to create difficulties for schools with large numbers of parents and pupils from other faiths. David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, comments, 'I do not think national diktats make a construction contribution to a sensitive issue. My worry is that the government is in danger of tipping over the edge and preventing schools from reflecting the multi-faith nature of communities in many parts of the country' (Preston, 1993: 7). Indeed, Hart has pointed out the jaundiced attitude of that document. As a result, the general public find it difficult to appreciate these objects.

For instance, in Tibetan monasteries one often finds many beautiful scroll paintings and images depicting Buddha figures locked in sexual union. There is no sexual or erotic
suggestion whatsoever. If one observes Tibetan Buddhists moving around their temples, one sees that when they come upon these figures, far from reacting in the way that the Westerners often do, they seem to feel more reverence, more devotion, than ever. In some ways, these figures are considered especially sacred inasmuch as the symbolism pertains to the highest level of spiritual experience, the level of enlightenment on which love and wisdom are finally integrated. For the Tibetans, these figures are a symbolic expression of a profound spiritual truth, the truth of the inseparable integration of love and wisdom. However, Westerners usually regard these figures as examples of Eastern erotic art, not to say even pornographic art. This only shows that there is hardly anybody in the West free from sexual hang-ups (Sangharakshita, 1989: 61). His words remind us that each individual uses his language and his background knowledge to interpret the messages of an object.

As a living precious spiritual tradition, the Buddha’s perennial messages, such as tolerance and compassion, still can inspire people to develop themselves and to pursue a meaningful and satisfied life in this world today. For, in spite of the ravages of time and destruction by Indian and foreign fanatics, Buddhism is still speaking vividly and majestically through thousands of inscriptions, about one thousand rock-cut sanctuaries and monasteries, thousands of ruined “stupas” and monastery establishments (Joshi, 1967: 357). It can still give mankind some precious inspirations. Obviously, all the splendid Buddhist monuments and magnificent objects were mainly inspired by the Buddha’s teachings. Thus, treating these objects merely as art of decoration or sculpture seems insufficient to divulge the significance of these objects.

Buddhism was once a precious part of Chinese culture. The impact of this religion in the lifestyle of the Chinese people cannot be over-emphasised. A prevailing proverb “Chia Chia Kuan-su-yin, Fu Fu Mi-to-fo” (Every family worships the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, every house displays Amitabha Buddha in the altar.) can vividly reflect this fact.
Consequently, the religion also has inspired the creation of many magnificent objects, including rock cave carvings, stupas, stone carving sutras, relief, wood-block printing and publications. However, much owing to the inner disturbances and foreign aggressions in the recent centuries, many Buddhist objects were much disregarded by the authorities. Many of the objects were transferred to foreign museums. Hopkirk observed:

The penetration of China by Buddhism not only gave Chinese a new religion but, of central importance to this narrative, it gave to the world an entirely new style of art which has come to be known as Serindian. This term is coined from the two words Seres (China) and India. Logically it should have been simply a fusion of Indian Buddhist art and the art of contemporary Han China (Hopkirk, 1980: 23).

One of the most famous cases is Aurel Stein's collection in the British Museum. Some warlords and the later communists even charged Buddhism as the consolidated symbolism of outdatedness, conservatism, and superstition. Certainly, this is far from the truth. If divested of all the elements of Buddhist influence in China, the Chinese culture would lose its lustre greatly. Deplorably, while blindly aping the West to endeavour to solve the material problems, China seems to fall into a state of profound spiritual confusion. If only the Chinese understood what a jewel they have thrown away- the spirit of Buddhist compassion is still one of the strongest contemporary spiritual traditions. Hence, with a view to rejuvenate Chinese culture, it is necessary to appreciate and preserve this spiritual heritage which belongs to all mankind.

Despite the copious amounts of Buddhist collections in British museums and the great significance these objects played in the Buddhist world, few exhaustive researches have actually been conducted on the utilisation of these objects in displays. In addition, Britain already has specific museums contributing to the preservation and exhibition of Jewish and Islamic objects, but still has no specific Buddhist museum. For instance, there is a Jewish Museum founded in 1932 (Museums Yearbook 1992/93: 177). The V & A also has a room specifically contributing to Islamic objects. But there is still no specific museum contributing to the display of Buddhist objects in Britain. This way of treating an
important world religion is inconsistent with its actual importance and influence in the world civilisation and cannot be considered as a balanced treatment of Buddhist objects.

In comparing the treatment of other religious objects, Buddhist objects still have not received their deserved consideration. Hence, the symbolic messages, the mudras, the common characteristics of these objects or unique features of the objects in a specific region are merely interpreted piecemeal on labels and in catalogues. They expose little information about an overall picture of various aspects of the objects. The sublime significance of the objects is still inconceivable for many people. Besides, while using these objects in displays, the emphasis is put on arts, materials or techniques. Inevitably, this trite approach would do injustice to the objects.

Though there are already a lot of Buddhist objects in British museums, so far they still have not received deserved treatment in displays. In a world which seems to be moving faster and faster towards cultural uniformity, it is refreshing to see museums making efforts to promote mutual understanding and mutual respect among different faiths and cultures. Indeed, no religion can claim to be the unique religion. Truth is not the monopoly of any person or any religion. However, the traditional educational courses still concentrate on Christian faiths. Obviously, they are not sufficient to deal with the urgent needs of the multiple communities. No one cuisine can hope to cater to the tastes of all people. Likewise, no religion can hope to convert all other faiths. A modern person should broaden his vision and cultivate a sensitive feeling to other beliefs. Indeed, museum education can do a lot to supplement the insufficiency in this aspect.

Museums which have Buddhist object collections might take advantage of shouldering the responsibility to enhance people's awareness of mutual understanding, tolerance, and co-operation and to cultivate people's multicultural perspectives. With appropriate exhibitions and interpretations, museums can widen the understanding of these
objects, to eradicate bigoted prejudices, and to nurture empathetic attitudes to get along with others who espouse different convictions.

Undeniably, these objects deserve further study, e.g. the block wood printed *Diamond Sutra* might be the earliest printed material remaining in the world. Largely due to various factors, such as the exigency of space, the scarcity of specialists in this field, the shortage of resources, security considerations, and the fragility and deteriorating situation of some items, many Buddhist objects are still merely kept in storage. They are inaccessible to the general public.

Buddhist objects, though originally created in the Oriental world, were mercilessly destroyed in some areas, especially in the communist ruled countries in recent history. In the case of Tibet, Communist China has executed a systematic destruction of Tibetan culture since it invaded Tibet in 1959. Many hundreds of monasteries and temples were torn down, and sacred objects destroyed or plundered (Roberts, 1992: 32). Besides, Orientals, under the imperialistic aggressions in recent centuries, are deeply concerned about Westernisation. Inevitably, the work of preserving Buddhist objects is much neglected. Blofeld points out that when a Westerner met a Chinese, he had no interest to learn anything from the Chinese, he was determined to impose Western ways upon them (Blofeld, 1977: 3). Furthermore, he found that large numbers of Chinese supposed that progress lay in blind aping of the militarily powerful Western nations (Blofeld, 1977: 5). As a result, many Buddhist objects were plundered or destroyed mercilessly (Moncrieff, 1992: 34). Their remarks reflected the serious situation which these objects had endured in recent years.

Now even the Republic of China, though always claiming its authority over Tibet, has at least one specific public sponsored cultural centre contributing to the collecting of African objects in Hualien County entitled "the Hualien Africa Museum" which has a
collection of over one thousand pieces on permanent display (Chang, 1991: 65) but still has no specific public sponsored institution devoting to the storing and preservation of Tibetan Buddhist objects. This, at least, illustrated how Buddhist objects were usually neglected by the authorities in Taiwan. Conversely, there are more than thirty museums in twelve different countries from Japan to the USA contributing to the collecting of Tibetan Buddhist objects today. This phenomenon does deserve the Orientals re-consideration while regarding them as the burden for modernisation. Displaying these objects in exhibitions might be an appropriate way to arouse people to ponder the significance of the objects.

No interpretation or display is neutral. The significance and meanings of an object are usually dominated by its themes, contextual placements, and interpretations. Without deliberate consideration and appropriate placements, museums cannot transmit the authentic messages and spiritual dimension of these objects to visitors perfectly. Knowing only that these objects were made of certain kinds of material, the makers or the names of these objects does not mean visitors have already grasped their profound significance. These objects expose intangible truths which are more than solid objects. Museums should take a deeper approach to decode their in-depth significance.

Sometimes, the labels attached to the objects in displays are too brief. They convey little information. They do not help visitors much. Besides, too much jargon can easily be found in captions. It is very discouraging and confusing to the general public. Usually, visitors ignore or skim over difficult words. Indeed, specific terms do not mean much to ordinary visitors. Frequently, the descriptions on labels are piecemeal and rarely can give the whole picture of the objects.

So far, most of the objects were categorised in arts, materials, ethnology, archaeology, chronology or regional history areas. Usually, they were exhibited as pieces
of aesthetics, decoration, handicrafts, and even dead relics. Disregarding the sacred aura, the original context, the real function and the spiritual dimension of these objects, displays and interpretations usually do injustice to them. Representing a living tradition, the objects still can serve as living symbols which worshippers can experience, feel, and realise with their whole beings today. As displays and interpretations are no longer the sole work of museums, the participation of Buddhist communities should be encouraged. Buddhists can offer much help in this field if only museums like to broaden their vision to accommodate different views.

Sometimes, Buddhist objects are jumbled with the idols of primitive superstitious beliefs. This might lead to confusion and misunderstanding. The magnificence and profundity of these objects is diluted in the placement. When a Buddha statue is jumbled with other superstitious images, the majesty of the Buddha and his sublime teachings would very likely be distorted. Furthermore, a specific Buddha has a specific emblem, e.g. the emblem of Amitabha is the lotus flower, and he was often placed definitely with some Bodhisattvas. A specific Buddha is usually flanked by two specific Bodhisattvas. The centre Buddha represents the ideal Buddha, the Bodhisattvas his two principal aspects of love and wisdom. Museums cannot mate them arbitrarily. Hence, the contextual placement of the objects is also a problem in displays.

Pearce observed that all archaeological projects, whether they are collecting and archiving policies or exhibition and other interpretative work, have ethical and political content (Pearce, 1990b: 57). However, Buddhist objects are often regarded as art of decoration or aesthetics and seen nothing more than that. Museums merely pay attention to the artistic or historic value of these objects rather than their deeper significance. Under this kind of approach, visitors are led to appreciate the superficial value rather than their profound messages.
In one sense, Buddhists have never intended to be artists. In their perspective, life is art, and art is life. They don't want to be seen as artists standing above the masses and away from reality. They craved neither for fame nor for profit nor for aesthetic appreciation. Usually, the pure motivation for creating the objects is simply for religious purposes. They never used a model for their portrayal of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas. They always strove to express the ideal person in human form, whereas the ancient Greeks portrayed their fellow people as gods. Nor did they consciously create works of art. The major aim of their efforts was to teach, by the symbolic value of their artefact, the way to the spiritual experience of which their art was the outward and visible sign. Aesthetics had no part in their thought, and the Western valuation of a Buddhist work of art as being or not being 'beautiful' is irrelevant to its original purpose (Humphreys, 1983: 209). He points out the true nature of these objects.

For instance, the Buddhist who made the image of Donsho Risshi (an ancient Japanese great monk) displayed in the British Museum in November 1991, has represented the monk during the last fifteen years of his life, which he devoted to the recital of Nembutsu, a Buddhist spiritual exercise (Graham-Dixon, 1991: 14). This act of devotion, indeed, suggests no idea of self-expression. Instead, it suggests the idea for self conquest.

Indeed, the creation of the objects has a practical purpose to remind and to inspire mankind to develop their inner potential to the utmost. The objects transmit this message. The objects were meant to widen people's awareness of the natural universal laws of cause and effect and the reality of existence which Buddhism always divulges: suffering, insubstantiality of everything (voids), and impermanence (see Figure 3.1). They are merely tools rather than aims in themselves. Completely disregarding the spiritual dimension of these objects cannot bring about meaningful displays and interpretations. Without relevant textual references, complex iconography of the objects would remain largely unexplained. For this reason, the study intends to explore their in-depth rather than their surface nature.
Compared with other religions, Buddhists show great tolerance towards different convictions. In the recent case of Salman Rushdie, the Moslems threatened to take his life simply because his book has allegedly ridiculed the Allah. Also, a Japanese professor was assassinated at the end of 1991 because he had translated that book. If Rushdie satirised not Allah but the Buddha, one could predict precisely that Buddhists would simply ignore it and not resort to any violent action. This, at least, demonstrates the attitude which Buddhists always have.

Likewise, if museum exhibitions relating to Islamic objects had some shortcomings, Moslems would protest it vehemently and ask museums to improve or rectify them immediately. In the latest case at the St Mungo Museum, the Moslem community strongly protested against the museum opening a pub on the ground floor (*Evening Times*, 4 March 1993: 23). But few Buddhists will take this kind of action to express their dissatisfaction about the mis-exhibitions or mis-interpretations of their objects. They have paid little attention to how their objects were displayed or interpreted. This does not mean that displays are usually devoid of flaws. Contrarily, it simply demonstrates the nonchalant attitude of Buddhists about the issues. Undeniably, without the active stimulation, response, demands and participation of visitors, museums have little chance to know how effective their displays really are and hence have little hope to improve them.

As most of British museums were founded during the imperial colonial period, they still keep some superior bias. Pearce observed that the existing distribution of the Oceanic ethnographic collections still reflects more the history of imperialism than present-day geopolitical and cultural realities (Pearce, 1989a: 80). Objects procured from the colonial period were discovered to be full of racial biases at that time. Inevitably, displays often precisely reflect a discriminatory attitude towards exotic objects. This can be noticed from the themes, arrangements, and interpretations in displays. Usually these objects are used to justify the superior convictions and the past glories. Similarly, objects from Buddhist
culture are displayed in ways that reflect the Westerners' view of an "inferior" culture. Conze observes that the bulk of Buddhist monuments are treated as museum pieces and Buddhist beliefs as deplorable superstitions (Conze, 1986: 127). Obviously, one's pre-conception will cloud or distort his real understanding of others.

Comparatively, people in the West have been well served by a number of volumes devoted to the history of Christian thought in the nineteenth century. But very few studies has been devoted to the nineteenth century interpretations of non-Christian religions or to the role that these played in the shaping of Victorian culture (Almond, 1988: ix). In addition, current school religious education merely concentrates on traditional faiths. Accordingly, with regard to Buddhism and its objects, the ordinary public are usually much under-educated. Indeed, current school religious education is still insensitive to the reality of this multicultural society.

Though there are often very large differences in the philosophical field, the basic goal of improving life is more or less the same. Each faith has special methods and its specific contribution in the world civilisation. Although the cultures are naturally different, the various systems are coming closer together as the world is becoming smaller and smaller with better communication, providing good opportunities for people to learn from each other. Displaying the objects, museums can help people to broaden their vision in this area.

Currently, mankind faces many problems. Some are created essentially by mankind itself based on divisions due to ideology, religion or other factors. The tragedy in Bosnia, the Middle East, and Northern Ireland can witness this. The time has come for people to think on the human level and to appreciate and respect the sameness of others as human beings. They must build a closer relationship of mutual respect and help, disregarding the differences of religions.
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The paramount thing people must learn to accept is the sameness, that people are human beings who have the same affection for happiness and bliss instead of suffering. In addition, love, compassion, and kindness are common to all religions—Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and so forth. Their value is clear for all human beings. Even in a materialistic society, compassion and love are the basics of happiness. All suffering and discouragement emanate from a selfish cherishing mind; otherwise, all happiness originates from a selfless attitude of altruism. Wisdom and compassion are beneficial even in daily life. Indeed, these common messages, not their differences, among different faiths are much deserving of people’s attention. Human beings do need mutual understanding to promote tolerance and mutual respect. The use of the objects in displays would be able to enrich the heritage of Western culture and to widen visitors’ awareness of a living spiritual tradition. The perennial messages embodied in the objects are relevant to the time and the people. They would be helpful to the peace and harmony at this multicultural society. Intelligent and appealing displays should explore their in-depth significance.

1.2 The aims of the study

The study attempts to identify the scope of Buddhist objects held in British museums and to investigate the ways these objects are usually displayed. It examines the merits and shortcomings of using them in displays. In addition, it tries to find alternative options to display and interpret the objects. The study focuses on the issues such as: how these objects should be displayed, what are the significance and messages of these objects, and how to transmit their authentic messages to viewers. It will identify the permanent and temporary presentations. Simultaneously, it also explores the elements which might obstruct the use of these objects in displays and the factors which might hamper the understanding of the objects.
The study will clarify some of the prevailing misconceptions about Buddhist objects. It attempts to explore the appropriate attitude and perspective for viewing these objects. The study hopes to widen the understanding and appreciation of these objects. In order to catch up with new debate on display and interpretation in this multicultural society, the study tries to find appealing and inspiring themes which are relevant to the human condition today. Displays and interpretations are not constant. Each generation and each culture must re-interpret them in their own contexts. Besides exploring the survival threat of these objects, the study aims to widen an awareness to preserve this spiritual heritage.

Buddhist objects are the visual expression of Buddhist ideals and the embodiment of Buddhist teachings. Ordinary visitors are often ignorant in this field. In order to promote visitors' curiosity and appreciation of the objects, the study attempts to explore their original context and spiritual dimension. Besides, it also explores the attitudes which museum professionals usually hold in tackling the objects.

Buddhist objects are more than art. An inspiring exhibition should be able to disclose the older context and sublime dimension of these objects. The messages embodied in the objects should be re-interpreted in this social and cultural context. As most museums still show little interest and make little effort in the study of the objects, the study might arouse their attention and consideration of the objects and stir up their willingness to catch up with the increasing interest in Buddhism in recent years.

Nowadays, museums must be sensitive to the demands and responses of the general public. The study also explores how museums respond to this issue. Certainly, the appreciation of these objects is varied according to each individual's background knowledge, experiences, inclinations, and many other factors. Appealing and intelligent displays should be more considerate to the demands of visitors. Besides, displays and
interpretations should reflect the values of this multicultural society. The study will identify how these collections can be used for teaching purposes at all levels—adults, children, and scholars.

Since most of the published exhibition catalogues and interpretation labels merely provide fragmented information rather than an overall picture of the objects. It is difficult for ordinary visitors to grasp a clear idea about the specific worshipped images or specific ritual objects used in a specific region.

As the embodiments and visual expression of Buddhist ideals which still exist as a living tradition, Buddhist objects can widen visitors' awareness of these ideals and inspire people to pursue a meaningful way of life. Museums have the responsibility to transmit their real messages to visitors. The study will propose what intelligent displays should be.

Besides, the study analyses the effects of cultural bias demonstrated in displays and interpretations. Without a world-wide vision, human beings are inclined to fall into the trap of the preconceived bias unconsciously. Obviously, this is very obstructive in understanding a different tradition and its objects.

Above all, after investigating the problems of using the objects in displays, the study proposes some practical suggestions for using them in an appealing way.
1.3 Literature review

With regard to the teachings of Buddhism, the study referred to the bibliography in Britannica (Britannica, vol. 15, 1988: 313-15). This bibliography is not updated and it takes a Christian stance to discuss Buddhism. The text on Buddhism reads: “Though retaining tolerance, it is inclined to a certain distrust of other religions, especially of Christianity, which it sees as a rival, a reaction to the historical effects of its alliance with colonialism.” The study also referred to The Encyclopedia of Religion (The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 2, 1987). The description of Buddhism in the book stops in the 1970s. It cannot catch up with the latest development. Though there are a lot of books on Buddhism, some of the translations and conceptions are quite doubtful. In addition, the study referred to the Humanities Index to search for the latest studies in this field.

Although many exhibition catalogues are now available, and many scholars have undertaken a lot of researches relating to Buddhist art, there are still few books which can help ordinary visitors to grasp the basic information about these objects. Besides, no comprehensive museological study of Buddhist objects is available at this moment. The symbolism of the objects, like other aspects of Buddhist culture, remains insufficiently studied and the chronology, localisation of styles and techniques continue to pose obstinate problems. It is still an untouched topic from the standpoint of museum education.

There are now many books relating to Buddhist iconography and art. These books are either too specific or too narrow. Hence, they cannot meet the needs of the general public. Even after perusing all these books, visitors would find it still difficult to grasp an overall picture of the nature and various aspects of these objects. So far, though some museums have published a few exhibition catalogues, there still is no comprehensive study to introduce these objects in a meaningful way to the general visitors. Usually, there is
only fragmented rather than an overall information of these objects. So far, the works which are most related to the study are as follows.

Rawson’s *The Art of Tantra* is a book about tantra. But he does not distinguish the difference between Indian tantra and Tibetan tantra. He confuses embracing deities with sex aberration. He explains with many pornography pictures of secular ordinary human beings. However, the postures of sexual embrace are only confined to deities and not to ordinary human beings in Tibetan tantra. There are vast differences between tantric embrace and ordinary sexual contact. While in ordinary sex it is the man who enters the woman’s body, in true tantric embrace it is the woman’s energy that penetrates the man (Yeshe, 1987: 148). Indeed, Rawson misinterpreted their symbolic meanings.

Chakravarti’s *A Catalogue of Tibetan Thangkas in the Indian Museum*, gives a general introduction of the Tibetan thangkas and proffers the identification of various deities of the Lamaistic pantheon. A brief survey of this textile art, its nomenclature, history of its origin, growth and development, technique of preparation, functional aspects, stylistic variations and religious background have been summarised in the introductory chapter followed by detailed description of the thangkas on display and a brief account of all the temple-banners kept in reserve in that museum. However, the book deals only with Tibetan thangka paintings.

Rowland’s *The Evolution of the Buddha Image* was an exhibition catalogue at the William Hayes Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University. According to his preface in the book, not only has he written the complete text of this catalogue but he has also selected the illustrations to his text, as well as the works of art that permit readers to trace the evolution of the Buddha image through a series of original documents. However, the book discusses only Buddha images. It does not include other kinds of the objects.
Valrae Reynolds' Tibet: A Lost World is an exhibition catalogue in the Newark Museum collection of Tibetan art and ethnography in the United States. The exhibition offered to thousands of people across the United States an opportunity to see for the first time one of the finest collections of Tibetan art in the world. The extensive scope includes exquisite works of Buddhist art and provides a rare insight into Tibetan life over four centuries. But, the catalogue confines itself to Tibetan objects. It is mainly a book for specialists.

Powell's Living Buddhism explores the Buddha's teachings and the spread of Buddhism in the Far East. In preparing the book, author Andrew Powell and photographer Graham Hamson travelled throughout the Far East to see the living religion for themselves. They visited Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, India, Nepal, Tibet, China, and Japan and interviewed some of the religion's leading figures, including the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. The book presents a unique and beautiful portrait of one of the world's greatest spiritual and artistic traditions. However, it neglects the current development of Buddhism in Taiwan. The omission has detracted from the thoroughness of the book. Besides, it contains nothing about Buddhist art and objects.

Barret's Catalogue of the Amaravati Sculpture in the British Museum is a descriptive catalogue of the British Museum's Amaravati material and, for the first time since the acquisition in 1880, provided an illustration of every object in the collection. The introduction to the catalogue places the development of the stupa in a historical context and examines the structure of the monument as well as the date and style of the exquisite sculptures attached to it. Indeed, it discusses only the stupa. It is an academic book which ordinary people are scared to peruse. Besides, it emphasises merely the value of aesthetic.

Whitfield and Farrer's Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route explored the objects of Dunhuang, especially those collected by Aurel Stein in the beginning of this century. The catalogue contains Aurel Stein's collection of Central Asian
antiquities at the British Museum. It was designed to accompany the exhibition 'Caves of the Thousand Buddhas', which was to inaugurate the newly refurbished exhibition gallery of the Department of Oriental Antiquities in Spring 1990.

It contains colour illustrations of most major works of art in the Stein's collection. The most striking and important works are illustrated here and range from large banners of paradise scenes to miniature sutra books and sumptuous textiles. Many of the works of art are so fragile that they are rarely exhibited, yet their vigorous beauty has survived a thousand years, making the collection one of the most important in the world. Indeed, it is a book for specialists rather than for ordinary visitors. Besides, it deals only with the items from Dunhuang.

Huntington's *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: the Art of Pala India (8th-12th centuries) and Its International Legacy* investigates the Pala arts and its influences. This period in India is considered one of India's most magnificent and most influential periods—a period rich in history, culture, and artistic productivity. However, the book discusses only the marble sculptures of that period in India.

Maria Barretto has researched perceptions of the Buddhism exhibition at the British Museum as part of her Ph.D. thesis on "Museum Semiotics", Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. She undertook the study on visitor perceptions of the *Buddhism: Art and Faith* (1985). However, the study discussed only that display as a case-study to illuminate her semiotic theory. It does not explore the profound messages and spiritual dimension of Buddhist objects. It was confined to that exhibition. Thus, it is not a comprehensive study of the objects. Accordingly, there are still a lot of fields, such as the purposes and the spiritual dimension of the objects, the symbolic emblems, displays, interpretations and significance, deserving to be further studied. It is important to take a broader view to include other museums which hold the objects in Britain.
Zwalf's *Buddhism: Faith and Art* was published to accompany an exhibition of "Buddhism: Faith and Art" in the British Museum in 1985-86. This catalogue is mainly written for experts in this field. It deals with pieces of Buddhist objects item by item. Much academic jargon is used in the book. It is an academic book rather than an introductory book for ordinary visitors.

Zwalf's *The Heritage of Tibet* introduces some of the objects in the British Museum's magnificent collections of Tibetan culture. It explores only Tibetan Buddhist objects. It discusses nothing about exhibitions and interpretations which museum education should do. The catalogue treats each item in a fragmented way. However, it gives no information about the diversification of Buddhist objects developed in different areas of Tibet in the past.

Knox's *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stupa* is a descriptive catalogue of the British Museum's Amaravati material. It provides an illustration of every marble sculpture of the stupa in the British collection. It deals only with the marble sculptures of the stupa. It regards these objects as delicate sculptures. Besides, the book seems mainly to cater to the taste of specialists rather than ordinary visitors. As a result, for the general public, the content of this book seems unappealing.

Herbert's *The Life Of The Buddha* is a coloured Burmese manuscript which displayed at the King's Library (Ran from 8 April until 26 September 1993 at the room 30). As a curator, Herbert has prepared the exhibition. She has translated Burmese into English. It is quite helpful for ordinary visitors. But the book covers only the Burmese manuscript paintings in the nineteenth century. The display illustrates the life of the Buddha as depicted in Burmese manuscripts in the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collections.
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The Newark Museum of the United States has published an excellent catalogue named *Catalogue of the Tibetan Collection*. It is as the title suggests a catalogue of the exhibited objects. It stresses on the introduction of individual pieces of Buddhist objects rather than the original context, significance, and meanings of Tibetan objects.

In addition, Thurman and Rhie's *Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet* was a catalogue of the exhibition of "Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet" in 1991. The exhibition has already been shown in the United States with considerable success. It also created the same interest when it was inaugurated by the Royal Academy on the 18th September in 1992. Some of the rarest paintings and sculptures from museums world-wide, plus private collections, have been gathered to illustrate the highly developed civilisation and culture of Tibet.

However, the book contains only Tibetan Buddhist objects. It deals mainly with painting and statue images. In addition, it is a voluble catalogue. The voluble content, academic jargon, and expensive cost would discourage a lot of people from purchasing it. It is also an academic book for specialists.

Kerr's *Chinese Art and Design: the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art* is edited to accompany the inauguration of the T.T. Tsui Gallery on 13th June 1991 in the V & A. The book divides Chinese culture into six different areas of usage. In the section of "Religious Worship", the book includes some Buddhist objects. However, though some indications of indebtedness are given in the introduction, if bibliography and footnotes could be added in the book, it would be more perfect.

Obviously, most of the above mentioned books deal with Tibetan Buddhist objects. In addition, most of the published exhibition catalogues are mainly concerned about the needs of specialists rather than of the most of the general public. There are very few books which meet the needs of ordinary visitors and give them a comprehensive
introduction about the significance of these objects. So far, there is no book which systematically introduces the symbolic motifs of Buddhism in a comprehensive way. They do not give viewers an integral idea or an overall picture of these objects. Besides, emphasising aesthetics means neglecting other values. Hence, the original context and authentic messages of these objects were divested.

Furthermore, most books seem to regard all these objects as unique. Hence, disregarding the differences and specific characteristics developed in different areas during the long period of time in the past is inevitable. In the case of stupa, one of the most important symbol of Buddhism, the designing types and functions are varied in different areas. It was usually made of stone in India and Tibet; while in China and Japan, it was mainly made of wood in the past. Besides, it was only used to hold the ashes and relics of the great spiritual teachers but in China the laity’s ashes also held in it.

These books do not explore the issues of displaying and interpretation. They do not discuss the relationship between communities and museums. They do not analyse the factors which might hamper ordinary visitors’ understanding and appreciation of these objects. Above all, they do not discuss other optional approaches of displays and interpretations which have a direct connection with the general public in this social and cultural context. That is to say, they do not take the stance of museum education to discuss the significance of the objects and its relevance to the people today. Thus, the study might complement the insufficiency in this field.

Indeed, there is still no book addressing the problem of arrangements, themes, displays, and interpretations of Buddhist objects. Few books have ever discussed the issues of displaying and interpreting these objects. Few books have systematically studied the symbolic meanings of these objects as a whole. No study investigates the gaps of viewing these objects between Buddhists and museum staff. In addition, no study
investigates the responses of Buddhist communities about viewing these objects. Above all, no book proposes suggestions for displaying these objects in an inspiring way.

Thus, the study is an attempt to complement the insufficiency of the above mentioned issues. It hopes to explore the deeper significance of these objects.

1.4 Hypotheses of the research

As a result of the literature review, three hypotheses were derived. The work of collecting Buddhist objects has been conducted for a long period of time. In the past imperial period, the objects collected by travellers and missionaries were used to justify the stagnation and backwardness of other non-European cultures and to prove the superiority of Western culture. The goodness of these objects was expressed in aesthetics. From the point of view of museums, they were exotic rarities. Having been deprived of their original dimension, Buddhist objects became a part of museum collections.

Accordingly, the first hypothesis of the study is that Buddhist objects are often regarded as aesthetic arts rather than religious objects. This kind of approach, more or less, reflects the past imperial bias of cultural superiority. Inevitably, the original context of these objects has been removed. Accordingly, displays, displaying themes, and interpretations also focus on aesthetic value of these objects. As a result, the profound significance of original makers and owners of these objects is ignored under this kind of approach.

The second hypothesis of the study is that the work of interpreting Buddhist objects still uses the stereotyped approach and cannot catch up with the pace of this multicultural society and the new debate on interpretation. The possibilities of other approaches are neglected. Some museum professionals still consider that they can
arbitrarily give each object an absolute and valid interpretation as a final settled explanation. Consequently, arbitrarily produced interpretations usually alienate a lot of people.

The third hypothesis of this research is that the work of mutual interaction between museums and specific Buddhist communities in Britain is still insufficient. Some museum professionals are still ignorant of the various appearances of many Buddhist institutions in Britain and the increasing interest in Buddhism in the recent years. They still deem Buddhism as a foreign culture and its objects as exotic materials. However, Buddhism and its objects have become an integral part of British culture here.
1.5. The scope of this research

The creation of Buddhist objects is closely linked to the religious aspiration of Buddhists. The Buddha’s life and his teachings inspired the creation of many splendid works in the past. However, the original context and authentic messages of these objects are usually ignored in displays. Thus, the study will explore these objects from a deeper level to explore their significance and messages.

Though these objects are not the products of the appreciation of beauty, the artistic value of these objects still cannot be overemphasised. With the spread of Buddhism to different areas, specific Buddhist objects corresponding to each specific cultural circumstance were created. Consequently, the scope of these objects is very broad. Almost all techniques, aesthetics, decorations, architecture, paintings of the Orient have more or less a smell of Buddhism. For reasons of study convenience, the research confines its scope especially to Buddhist iconography, painting and ceremonial materials which have the most obvious link with the ideals and aspirations of Buddhists.

Though the private sector in Britain also stores a bulk of precious Buddhist objects, it is difficult to trace and identify them. The study confines itself to public sectors which are open to the public. It explores the issues of displays and interpretations. The study will analyse the merits and shortcomings of using these objects. It also investigates the attitudes which museums hold to regard these objects.

The study has no intention of being comprehensive to include all Buddhist objects in museums. Instead it has drawn on the exhibited objects to provide a meaningful sample of the depth and variety of religious aspirations and experience as reflected in the objects. Besides, though in order to illustrate some conceptions among different religions and to illustrate the specific characteristics of Buddhism the study might mention to other faiths, it has no intention to proclaim any religion as a unique one. Instead, it seeks common
ground for tolerance and mutual understanding rather than contempt or distrust among different beliefs.

The study concentrates on the use of the objects in displays. From an aesthetic viewpoint, these objects are artistic objects. However, they are more than art. They are religious objects in their original context. In order to decode the authentic messages embodied in these objects, the study explores the symbolic meanings, the original contextual placements of specific images, and the specific characteristics of the objects in specific regions.

Originating from the East, a quite different cultural tradition, Buddhism cannot be regarded simply as a counterpart of any monotheism. For this reason, it is necessary to explore the specific nature of Buddhism for those who were reared in different religious and cultural traditions. Then they can modify their misunderstandings about Buddhism and grasp the authentic messages of its objects. It is a sound way to promote an understanding and appreciation of the objects. Hence, the study will analyse the misunderstandings and distortions which visitors often hold regarding these objects.

In addition, the increasing interest in Buddhism can be demonstrated in many aspects, such as the proliferation of Buddhist institutions in Britain. Museums should catch up this situation and reflect it in displays and interpretations. However, few studies have ever been conducted to investigate Buddhists' viewpoints about using their objects in museums. It seems that museums are so complacent at displaying these objects. They show no interest in the participation of Buddhists. However, without criticism and stimulation, it is difficult to know the performance of museums and the way to improve it. Accordingly, the study also investigates Buddhists' viewpoints about displays and interpretations of their objects.
Above all, the study also attempts to find alternative ways to use these objects. It will not passively concur with stereotyped displays which regard these objects merely as folk art, exotic curiosities, antique rarities, artistic decorations, sculptures, handicrafts, or historic specimens. Indeed, the creation of these objects was not for aesthetic displays. Intelligent displays should be able to transmit the authentic messages embodied in the objects. Finally, the study provides suggestions for viewing and displaying these objects.

1.6. Research methods

The study is concerned with the use of Buddhist objects in displays in British museums. The central issue around which I write is the need for better displays and appropriate interpretations. The last twenty years have witnessed an increase interest in Buddhism. This can be proved by the expansion of the subject headings in the newest edition of Dewey's classification table in 1987, which suggests the drastic expansion of English Buddhist works; the proliferation of Buddhist organisations in Britain in the Buddhist Society's published The Buddhist Directory (1991 edition); the British Museum's exhibition of "Buddhism: Art and Faith" in 1985, which was interpreted by John Snelling as an indication that Buddhism's hour has come; the opening of Amaravati Buddhist Centre in May 1985, which is a tradition of Theravada Buddhism which totally depends on the lay community for every meal turns out can survive in Britain (Baxter, 1986: 173-74); and the appearance of many big English Buddhist publishing companies in the United Kingdom and the United States, such as The Wisdom, The Windhorse Publications, The Tharpa, The Snow Lion Publications, The Dharma Publishing, and Shambhala. Indeed, it is a new situation for museums to catch up with and to pay more attention to Buddhist objects. It is with this issue that the study is engaged in.

The ideas and data presented here arise from research carried out in 1991-93. This involved postal questionnaire investigation and fieldwork. Firstly, questionnaires were
Chapter 1

sent to 34 museums which hold Buddhist objects, exploring the status quo of using these objects in displays, the total number of the objects, the past displays, the themes, the supplementary information and the complementary programmes. Secondly, interviews and site observations were conducted with museum staff who are responsible for using these objects. This information was supplemented by taking photographs, collecting associated data, viewing objects and labels, studying the arrangements and placements, themes, interpretations, and especially, evaluating whether they were appropriate or not. In addition, the study also investigates the attitudes which museum staff keep towards these objects. It also analyses the factors which might hinder the understanding of these objects and the elements which might obstruct the use of these objects in displays.

In addition, appealing exhibitions cannot disregard the feelings and responses of visitors and communities. Deplorably, this is often the most neglected work by museums. Side by side with interviews and site observations, the study undertakes some random questionnaire interviews with visitors. It attempts to get a better understanding of the visitors' impression of the objects. The study also explores what local Buddhist communities can do to contribute to the work of using these objects in displays. In addition to the above work, a related literature review was undertaken and continues. The study was designed with four key components:

1. An exploratory study amongst staff responsible for Buddhist objects to explore the nature and use of these objects in their museums and examine their attitudes toward the objects. The study was designed to find the merits and shortcomings of using these objects in displays.

2. An investigation of specific display schemes and programmes which aimed to stir the interest in and curiosity about these objects and widen people's appreciation and understanding of the objects. Especially, the study will find alternative options to display and interpret the objects.
3. A review of existing literature concerning Buddhist objects and displays in Britain;

4. An analysis of the visitors' understanding of the objects and Buddhist communities' responses to these objects in displays.

These four strands of activity, discussed more fully below, ran in parallel throughout the study. Further details about the research methods are as follows:

At the first stage, it was necessary to gather the fundamental information about current Buddhist collections in British museums. The study started with a questionnaire to investigate the fundamental information of the nature and the total number of these collections, the arrangements, the research, the exhibitions, the interpretations, the complementary information and the participatory programmes.
(Figure 1.1  The museums which hold Buddhist objects)

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<td>0224-646 333</td>
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<td>Marischal Museum, Aberdeen University</td>
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<td>0224-273132</td>
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<td>Aberdeen University</td>
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<td>The Bowes Museum</td>
<td>Barnard Castle, Durham DL12 8NP</td>
<td>0833-690 606</td>
<td>Elizabeth Curran (Curator); Howard Couts (Ceramics Officer)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Powell-Cotton Museum and Quex House</td>
<td>Quex Park, Birchington, Kent CT7 0BH</td>
<td>0843-42 168</td>
<td>Mr Derek R. Howlett (Curator)</td>
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<td>Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH</td>
<td>021-235 2834</td>
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<td>Bolton Museum and Art Gallery</td>
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<td>155/157 Walworth Road, London SE17 1RS</td>
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Chapter 1

(Figure 1.2 The calculus of the status quo of Buddhist objects in British museums)

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Notes:
(a) The information on total number of Buddhist objects in each museum was supplied by the respondents.
(b) Ten museums did not give the total number of their Buddhist objects.

1. A total of 85.3 percent has returned the questionnaire (Figure 1.3).
2. The approximate total number of items in museums is 15,122.
The number does not include the objects of the British Museum and the V & A. The magnificent objects, such as paintings, drawings, prints, texts, stucco images and wooden fragments, brought back from Chinese Central Asia by Aurel Stein at the beginning of this century, are not counted in it. Being divided between the British Museum and the British Library, the collection is difficult to count its number (Gillman, 1985: 329). Besides, even the provided numbers are not totally correct. For instance, in the case of the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Peter Hardie writes that there are about 8,000 items, but according to my investigation, the total number of the objects is less than thirty in that museum. While at Aberdeen Museum, the responsible person says that they have about ten pieces of these objects, according to my observation, only one item is Buddhist object. The others are Taoist images.

38.24 percent of those surveyed said that their total collections were less than 100 items.

3. The percentage of documented items (Figure 1.4) in:
   - University museums : 61%
   - National museums : 95%
   - Local museums : 84%

The mean percentage of documented items in museums is 80%.
4. The percentage of educational officers (Figure 1.5) in:

- University museums: 17%
- National museums: 75%
- Local museums: 22%

The mean percentage of educational officers in museums is 38%.

![Figure 1.4: Percentage of Documented Items in Museums](image)

![Figure 1.5: Percentage of Educational Officers in Museums](image)

5. Museums which have ever held displays relating to Buddhist objects (Figure 1.6):

- University museums: 50%
- National museums: 75%
Local museums : 50%

The mean percentage of displays held 58.3%

6. A total of 32.2 percent thought they would display these objects in the future.

With this basic information, after having analysed the returned questionnaires, the study continued to do the follow-up visiting and interviewing work. The study interviewed staff responsible for this work in order to understand their attitudes toward these objects, their future plans, their associated work with displays, their communication with local communities—especially the Buddhist institutions, and the responses of visitors. In addition to interviews, the study also collected the related documents which each individual museum could provide and any photograph that they allowed to be taken.

Visiting and interview Records (see Figure 1.7):

Not all exhibitions can be viewed in just one day. On some occasions when the exhibitions are very large, the study should perhaps be prepared to go back several times. As a result, there are the situations that the same places might have been visited many times.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fo Kuang Shan Buddhist Cultural Museum, Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6th April, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The October Gallery, London</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Festival of Tibet&quot;</td>
<td>9th May, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Archaeology Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>27th November, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Room 51</td>
<td></td>
<td>29th November, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Veronica Johnston</td>
<td>Assistant Curator</td>
<td>17th December, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gandhara case</td>
<td></td>
<td>18th December, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leonardo M. Pole</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>20th December, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Room 51</td>
<td></td>
<td>30th December, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fo Kwang Shan Buddhist Cultural Museum</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Exhibition of Dunhuang Antiquities</td>
<td>10th January, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Room 51</td>
<td></td>
<td>20th February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>John Ruffle</td>
<td>Keeper</td>
<td>24th February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Anthony Shelton</td>
<td>Keeper of Ethnography and Musical Instruments</td>
<td>25th February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ruth A. Shrigley</td>
<td>Acting senior Keeper of Decorative Art</td>
<td>27th February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Room 51</td>
<td></td>
<td>29th February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Robin Crighton</td>
<td>Dept. of Applied Arts Keeper</td>
<td>3rd March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Aneta Herle</td>
<td>Assistant Curator</td>
<td>3rd March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>G.H.A. Bankes</td>
<td>Keeper of Ethnology</td>
<td>4th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Peter Hardie</td>
<td>Curator of Oriental Art</td>
<td>9th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>David L. Jones</td>
<td>Keeper of Human History</td>
<td>11th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>John Allan</td>
<td>Curator of Antiquities</td>
<td>12th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fiona Talbott</td>
<td>Assistant Keeper</td>
<td>13rd March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>John Clarke</td>
<td>Curatorial Assistant</td>
<td>13rd March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ruth Shrigley</td>
<td>Acting Senior Keeper of Decorative Art</td>
<td>17th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mary Greenstead</td>
<td>Keeper of Museums</td>
<td>18th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Catherine Collcutt</td>
<td>Keeper of Collections</td>
<td>19th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Ken Teague</td>
<td>Assistant Keeper, Ethnography Dept.</td>
<td>23rd March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Angela P. Thomas</td>
<td>Keeper of Archaeology</td>
<td>24th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Shelagh Vaincker</td>
<td>Assistant Keeper</td>
<td>25th March, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Linda Mowat and Sandra Dudley</td>
<td>Assistant Curator and Museum Assistant</td>
<td>6th April, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Room 47b</td>
<td>India: Sculpture</td>
<td>12th April, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>John Reeves</td>
<td>Head of Education</td>
<td>5th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Rose Kerr</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>12th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Charles Hunt</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>14th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A. Hidalgo; Karen Livingston</td>
<td>Head of Operations; Assistant Keeper</td>
<td>14th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Charles Hunt</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>18th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dr. E.W. Mackie</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Archaeology and Anthropology</td>
<td>22nd May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jennifer M. Scarceo</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>27th May, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Derek R. Howlett</td>
<td>Curator</td>
<td>1st June, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Adrian Zealand</td>
<td>Assistant Keeper of Human History</td>
<td>3rd June, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>John Clarke</td>
<td>Curatorial Assistant</td>
<td>12th June, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Room 47b</td>
<td>India: Sculpture</td>
<td>15th June, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tamara Lucas</td>
<td></td>
<td>24th June, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Christina Baird</td>
<td>Curator of Oriental Collections</td>
<td>6th July, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Sue Graves</td>
<td>Assistant Keeper</td>
<td>14th July, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7th August, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Royal Academy</td>
<td>Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet</td>
<td>26th September, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Royal Academy</td>
<td>Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet</td>
<td>4th October, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Royal Academy</td>
<td>Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet</td>
<td>15th October, 1992</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>The Royal Academy</td>
<td>Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet</td>
<td>29th October, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Royal Academy</td>
<td>Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet</td>
<td>10th November, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Room 24 &amp; 33</td>
<td>Oriental Gallery</td>
<td>5th January, 1993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Oriental Art Gallery, Bath</th>
<th>Min Liu</th>
<th>Vice Curator</th>
<th>25th, February, 1993</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 Room 33</td>
<td>Oriental Gallery</td>
<td>3rd March, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>24th April, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Room 69a</td>
<td>“Silk Road Coins: The Hirayama Collection” &amp; “Southeast Asian Manuscripts: The Life of the Buddha”</td>
<td>14th May, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room 30 (King’s Library)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Room 47b</td>
<td>“India: Sculpture”</td>
<td>15th May, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Pagoda Temple, Milton Keynes</td>
<td>Maruta Nipponzan Myoeiji, abbot</td>
<td>Japanese pagoda, zen garden, and shrine</td>
<td>24th May, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mungo Museum, Glasgow</td>
<td>Harry Dunlop, Curator of History</td>
<td>8th June, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Burrell Collection, Glasgow</td>
<td>Nick Pearce, Curator of Eastern Art</td>
<td>8th June, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma Link Tibetan Culture Centre, Leicester</td>
<td>Scott Brown, Director</td>
<td>Tibetan altar</td>
<td>18th June, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Pagoda Temple, Milton Keynes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Anniversary celebration</td>
<td>20th June, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>The Samsung Gallery of Korean Art</td>
<td>27th July, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Magazine Museum in the Newarke Gateway, Leicester</td>
<td>Temple bell</td>
<td>30th July, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vihara Temple, Leicester</td>
<td>Ananda</td>
<td>11th September, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Buddhist Centre, London</td>
<td></td>
<td>24th September, 1993</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire results

Q.1: *Approximate total number of individual items in your Buddhism collection?*

As shown in Figure 1.2, the total number of the objects varied between 5 and 8,000. Thirteen museums have less than 100 pieces of these objects. Three museums cannot provide this kind of information.
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Q.2: Please estimate the percentage of these objects which have been documented.

Fifteen museums (51.7%) have documented all the objects. Five museums (17.2%) have not documented completely. Four museums (13.7%) have no documentation at all. Others gave no answer in this issue.

Q.3: Do you have any educational officer responsible for these collections?

Only seven museums (24%) express that they have educational officers. Sixteen (55%) answered no. Others (21%) gave no answer in this issue.

Q.4: Have you ever held any display related to Buddhism collections?

Sixteen respondents answered that they had ever held displays relating to Buddhism (55%) (see Figure 4.1). Ten respondents said no (34%). Eight respondents gave no answer in the issue (11%).

Q.5: What was the name of your last display using Buddhist collection?

The themes of using Buddhist objects in displays were various, such as: "Images of People", "Tibetan Xylography Prints", "Buddhism: Art and Faith" and so on.

Q.6: Do you have any plans for a display related to Buddhism in the future?

Nine respondents expressed that they planned to display these objects in the future (31%). Seventeen respondents said no (58.6%). Others (10.4%) had no answer.

Q.7: What are the problems in displaying your Buddhist collections?

On this issue, almost all respondents expressed the exigency of expertise and the scarce of resources. The issue will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Q.8: Has any book related to this topic been published in your museum?

Only seven respondents gave positive answers in this issue (24.1%) (see Figure 4.2). Others gave no answer.
Q.9: Further comments about their Buddhist collections

Few respondents gave comments on the issue.

In accord to the work of interviewing, the researcher also perused the works of Buddhism, Buddhist art, Buddhist iconography, and exhibition catalogues. Besides, the researcher also pays attention to new ideas, new trends, new debate on interpretations and new technology about multicultural education in museums. This basic background knowledge is necessary to do this research and propose recommendations for displaying these objects.

The growth of museums is much dependent on the outer support of communities. Visitors' service should be put on the priority of museums' work. In order to educate, entertain, and inspire visitors, museums should understand the potential visitors and their needs. They must know their targeted audiences. For this reason, the study also conducted a random survey of visitors to investigate their understanding about the objects.

Undeniably, so far, the relationship between museums and Buddhist communities is insufficient. This human resource deserves to be tapped. According to the description of the Buddhist Directory, there are already over 200 Buddhist institutions in the United Kingdom. However, the information is not updated. For instance, it mentions only one institution at Leicester. But, indeed, there are already at least four different Buddhist institutions here. Actually, it is interesting to know how Buddhists feel about using their objects in displays. To better understand how Buddhists viewing these objects and the level of their satisfaction, the study despatched 120 letters to enquire them their activities, their impressions about Buddhism, and their viewpoints about using their objects in displays in May and June, 1993. A total of 41 respondents returned their surveys.
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The postal survey enquired their impressions of viewing the objects in displays. In addition, in order to explore the original placements and dimensions of these objects, the researcher visited some Buddhist monasteries and retreating centres in Britain and Taiwan.

(Figure 1.8 The investigation of Buddhists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correspond Institutions</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Impressions of Buddhism</th>
<th>Impressions of Buddhist Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms Anna Laplan, Skirling House, Skirling, Biggar</td>
<td>Stopped</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan MacCormick, Nottingham and District Buddhist Society</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemarie Vernon, Bedfordshire Buddhist Society</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmachuri Arthadarshin, Padmaloka, Norwich</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyaanavaca, Buddhist Retreat Centre for Women, Shropshire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jac King, Buddhist Group, Somerset</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Jack Austin, Shin Buddhist Association of Great Britain, West Sussex</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Barker, Chichester Serene Reflection (Soto Zen) Meditation Group, West Sussex</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Nordzin Lhamo, Sang-ngak-cho-dzong, Cardiff</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N (Museum display can be sterile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Lynne Heidi Stumpe, Liverpool Serene Reflection Meditation Group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memadhammo Bhikshu, The Forest Hermitage, Warwick</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Myfanwy Abbie, Throssel Hole Priory, Northumberland</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Horana Pannasekare, Thames Buddhist Vihara, Surrey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clive Sherlock, Zen Buddhism in Oxford</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Durran, Chithurst Buddhist Monastery, Petersfield</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Burnikel, Croydon Buddhist Centre, Croydon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dh. Amritavajra, The Karuna Trust, Oxford</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmachuri Jayasana, Salathud Buddhist Group, Cornwall</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Lavin, The Lipbok Serene Reflection Meditation Group, Hampshire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Haistead, Delightful Mahayana Buddhist Centre, Yorkshire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Morrell, Staffordshire Buddhist Society, Staffordshire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Scholes, Kagyu Dzong, Lancashire</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawdon Goodier, Edinburgh Serene Reflection Meditation Group, Edinburgh</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questionnaire results

The first part of the survey concerned Buddhist institutions and their activities. When asked about their activities, 99.52 per cent of respondents gave positive answers. Only two institutions have stopped to work owing to the health reason of the respondents. When asked their impressions about Buddhism, all respondents expressed that Buddhism could help people to develop themselves. It not only can promote peace and harmony but also can enrich the content of a culture.

Next, the questionnaire asked Buddhists to express their impression about viewing their objects in displays. This was the heart of the survey, designed to understand their
viewpoints. 61 per cent respondents answered satisfied. 27 per cent respondents answered disappointed. 12 per cent respondents gave no answer (see Figure 1.9).

Finally, the survey asked respondents for their advice on improvements in displays. The responses were encouraging. There were numerous suggestions, including the following one, "My own view is that I would prefer exhibits to be in context, displayed as they would be in shrines, where visitors can feel and express devotional feelings" (pers. comm. of the 8th June, 1993).

Buddhist activities
Q. Would you be so kind as to offer me some of the basic information about your institution and activities?

Two institutions have stopped to operate. The Skirling House, has ceased to operate as a retreat centre since August 1992. Linda Jones also wrote that though the Kirksheaf Cottage had been a meeting place for the congregation of the highlands and islands, there have been no meetings for some time and this was largely due to the state of her health.

Impressions about Buddhism
Q. Do you think that Buddhism has some specific characteristics, comparing to other faiths, which can benefit the spiritual development of mankind?

The whole respondents agreed that Buddhism had special characteristics which could benefit the spiritual development of mankind. Indeed, the study can only cite few of their comments. Linda Jones wrote:

The tolerance encouraged by Buddhism is of great value and would benefit the multi faith and multi cultural society. Compassion in action leads to respectful and peaceful solutions. The understanding of "All is one and all are different" means that different opinions can be transcended. Spiritual training is a possibility for all, not just the few, and is not dependent upon social status. Responsibility is stressed, and people are more likely to realise that their thoughts and actions do matter. The fact that there is no intermediary to a god encourages the effort on one's own part, as well as acceptance. Because Buddhism is non dualistic. People are not so likely to feel labelled as 'bad' and therefore to feel it to be inevitable that they will go to
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hell, and that therefore they may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. There is some difference between Darma and punishment. The rational is not discarded, and Buddhism is not anti science and there is therefore access to many Western people who have otherwise rejected religion. Whilst faith is required, it is not a blind powerless ignorance, which it may have been seen as expedient to encourage by Christianity in the past, and which is therefore associated with the word 'faith' by the West (pers. comm. of the 4th July, 1993).

(Figure 1.9 Buddhists' impressions of their objects in displays)

Neutral
12%

Negative
27%

Positive
61%

Impressions about using Buddhist objects in museums

Q.: What are your impressions of looking at Buddhist objects in museums? What is the value of this? Have you found any specific problem? Can you make any suggestion for improvement? (see Figure 1.9)

(a) Positive impressions about using Buddhist objects

Linda Jones wrote, "I have appreciated seeing some Buddhist religious/art work in museums and have been glad of my understanding of them, which I have partly from my art college training and mostly from training at the Priory" (pers. comm. of the 4th July, 1993).

Kalyanaprabha expressed, "My impression of looking at Buddhist objects in museums is that if the object is of genuine artistic and spiritual value it can be a moving and uplifting experience" (pers. comm. of the 24th May, 1993).
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The respondents disclosing positive impressions about using Buddhist objects are 61 per cent (see Figure 1.9).

(b) Negative impressions about using Buddhist objects

Memadhammo Bhikkhu expresses that he doesn't like museums because they usually feel rather dead and he rather regrets having to see sometimes very sacred objects that have been made with enormous love and devotion being gasped at by people who cannot begin to comprehend their true value or meaning.

Sue Bamikel expresses that the objects are often jumbled up with other religious objects. He thinks that gives a confusing or even misleading impression to those who know nothing of Buddhism. Besides, he observes that sometimes the accompanying texts are misleading or incorrect.

Dharmachari Jayaratna finds that viewing the objects in museums is not interesting, apart from the beauty inherent in the objects themselves. Little effort is made to explain the importance or use of these artefacts within the Buddhist tradition, i.e. as things to be used to inspire people towards reaching Enlightenment.

Peter Lavin is not very interested in museums. He has been involved in design for museums where he has tried to involve the visitors in the subject and makes it as relevant for them as possible. Rana Lister also expressed:

My impressions of looking at Buddhist objects in museums are usually feeling sadness when viewing them. The majority in British museums have been stolen at some stage and then sold etc. When they are displayed i.e. thangkas, they have to be behind some protective glass so one can't view them properly - I think there is wrong about protecting them from the light. Some thangkas have been cut from their brocade surrounds and placed in ordinary picture frames. As a Buddhist I am not able to venerate these objects (as they should be). Usually the best viewing is aided by a helpful curator who lets you view thangkas that are stored so at least they can be looked at closely i.e. at the Liverpool and Ashmolean (pers. comm. of the 10th July, 1993).
Negative impressions about using Buddhist objects in displays are 27 per cent (see Figure 1.9).

Those who exposed no opinion about this issue are 12 per cent (see Figure 1.9).

(c) Suggestions for improvement

Rana Lister thinks that Buddhist objects should be displayed in religious surroundings. Part of museum can be made into a traditional shrine room to display the objects where people can sit quietly on cushions on the floor if they so wish (pers. comm. of the 10th July, 1993). It means that the sublime atmosphere of these objects should be regarded. In addition, Rev. Myfanwy Abbie expressed:

We feel that it would be of great benefit if Buddhist statues etc. were displayed in museums with more sensitivity to what they are actually used for. For example, if an altar was set up that would give a context in which to understand how statues etc. are used. This would give people a better understanding of what they are looking at than merely stating the height, dimensions and materials from which the statue is made (pers. comm. of the 29th May, 1993).

It means that the original context and spiritual dimensions of these objects should be appropriately explored because they express insubstantial truths which are more than solid materials.

This chapter deals mainly with the motivations, aims, literature review, scope and methodologies of the study. It attempts to be the first comprehensive study to investigate the issues relating to the use of Buddhist objects in museums. It discusses the use of these objects in education. It explores other alternative options to re-interpret the meanings of the objects in this social and cultural context. It investigates the responses and impressions of visitors and Buddhists about the use of the objects in displays. This study attempts to widen the understanding of the objects and the awareness of preserving them. Above all, the study not only proposes suggestions for better displays and interpretations but also reminds people the importance of mutual understanding and mutual respect in this world.
CHAPTER 2 Buddhism: origin and nature

Buddhist objects are closely connected with Buddhism. The creation of these objects was much inspired by Buddha’s life and his teachings. Early Buddhists did not conceive of art as an adjunct of their life, but the Mahayanists soon realised its value and bent their efforts to further their religion through the display of art. Consequently, Buddhist sculpture and painting as represented by Mahayana artists are not surpassed anywhere (Suzuki, 1981: 120). Spiritual communion between the Buddha or Bodhisattva and the devotee is the Mahayana ideal, and this has resulted in splendid examples of art, in the erection of monasteries, in rock-cut figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in many places.

It is only when a deep understanding of the Buddha’s teaching is gained that one can appreciate more clearly the real meaning of the symbolic representations of the objects. Then his regard for these objects is increased and in that case he comes to distinguish clearly the uses served by a work of religious content, as distinct from a mere plaything. Dagyab argues that the symbolic illustrations of abstract qualities should be viewed in their entirety, and explanations should not be looked for in every line and stroke as that is not in keeping with the artist’s intention. There exists no written work which enumerates the significance of such details. The understanding and the ability to interpret the great variety of symbolic representations will come only after one has made a thorough study of the religion (Dagyab, 1977: 25-6). Hence, in order to grasp the spiritual dimensions of the objects, this chapter attempts to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism.
2.1 The origin of Buddhism

Buddhism, in its historical form, began with the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama, an Indian prince in the sixth century B.C. With a view to solve the riddles of life, he renounced his enjoyment of nobility and pursued a wanderer's life of homelessness, much to the disappointment of his father. Through deep meditation, he finally gained insight into the reality of existence, the cause of suffering and death, and the way in which to deal with suffering and death. This is known as his perfect enlightenment, defined as full experiential knowledge of the authentic nature of reality to see all things as they really are. From that time on, he became the Buddha, the All-Enlightenment and All-Compassionate One.

He proclaimed to the world the immense potential of the human mind. Through his own achievement, he showed mankind a way to liberation, bliss, serenity and ultimate enlightenment. He taught that life is unsatisfactory because of the transitory nature of all things and because of man's imperfections, such as craving, animosity, and ignorance. He discovered that liberation was in the palms of each individual's hands. Realising the precise way to enlightenment, he taught that mankind could also find their own ways out. Comprehending all living beings possessed all the same innate nature of purity and clarity, the Buddha pledged to help them to re-discover it.

If the notion of 'religion' is to be regarded as to believe in an omnipotent God who creates everything and dominates the fate of mankind, then certainly Buddhism cannot be regarded as a religion because it does not decree this kind of statements. Nor can it be regarded as a philosophy in the Western sense of the word, because of its stressing on the rectification of one's defilement and the purification of one's own mind, it must be put into practice rather than merely the basis for discussion. It cannot be approached in a distant manner, rather, it should be experienced and practised by each individual to see its effectiveness.
Buddhists consider that all sentient beings are interdependent and interconnected. The dualistic perception of good or bad arises only from one's own discriminating thinking. In their perspectives, the most splendid magic in the world is nothing when compared to the ability of an individual person to transform his negative thinking into a positive one. What counts in a person is the way he really behaves. None of the belief is worth anything unless it influences one's actual conduct.

Buddhism never attempts to convert people, but only to enlighten them to realise the reality of existence. It is the higher evolution of the individual. A person following the way to liberation not only finds that his mental state becomes happier and more lucid but also his being expresses a more radiant consciousness in every way: his life is simplified and yet more filled; his behaviour is more adroit and fruitful; and in his relations with others he develops honesty and love, enhancing all he meets.

Buddhism considers that everyone can experience Buddha's experience if he makes the same effort. A genuine Buddhist, while feeling great reverence towards Buddha, is always determined to realise the reality which the Buddha has realised and can never be content to worship him passively from a distance as a God. As it is based upon human experience and human potential, Buddhism is unique among the major world religions.

In accordance with the dissemination of Buddhism, it developed various schools emphasising specific teachings and practising methods in different areas. The most obvious distinctions are the Theravada and Mahayana schools as shown in Figure 2.1.
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(Figure 2.1 The comparison of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Theravada</th>
<th>Mahayana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td>The &quot;Doctrine of the Elders&quot; which was the earliest form of Buddhism.</td>
<td>It arose some 300-400 years after Buddha's death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic teachings</strong></td>
<td>It concentrates on renunciation, self-liberation, and achieving personal liberation oneself. The end of discipline is to escape all kind of sufferings. It is concerned primarily with the non-harming of others. It considers monastic life as the ideal way to transcend suffering.</td>
<td>The special characteristic of Mahayana is the intention, aspiration and practice to accomplish the happiness and liberation of others (Talbott, 1986:16). It recognizes the importance of renunciation but regards the way to liberation is not only confined in monastery. Enlightenment is accessible by everyone. There are many spiritual beings formed out of the infinity of Buddha-essence. Gautama Buddha is but one manifestation. Mahayana developed those things which the Buddha did not tell about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplines</strong></td>
<td>The primary emphasis is on forms of physical discipline and a solitary, isolated life to avoid circumstances that might generate emotional defilement (Talbott, 1986: 15).</td>
<td>The main emphasis is on the mental attitude of cultivating beneficial thoughts for others; meditation, contemplation and wisdom, and physical discipline are treated as supports for sustaining this essential attitude. With this kind of mind, one can transmute one's daily life into meritorious actions, the cause of enlightenment (Talbott, 1986:16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living Style</strong></td>
<td>Hinayana monks do not do manual work for their living. They beg food for their living.</td>
<td>Mahayana monks do not live by begging as Hinayana monks do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worshipping objectives</strong></td>
<td>It reveres only the historical Buddha as the only Buddha and Bodhisattva.</td>
<td>It reveres all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in all directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major topic in paintings</strong></td>
<td>In Hinayana paintings, the attending disciples of the Buddha only included Ananda. In the Parinirvana scene of the Buddha, it included no secular disciples.</td>
<td>In Mahayana paintings, it included many secular disciples. Spiritual communion between the Buddha or Bodhisattva and his devotee is the Mahayana ideal, and this has resulted in splendid examples of art, in the erection of temples, in the sculpture of beautiful images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and in painting of all kinds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideal object</strong></td>
<td>arhat- the state of conquered the enemy or defilement.</td>
<td>Bodhisattva</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Ideal goal | Nirvana- the supra-personal experience of ultimate Reality; the complete extinction of all desires and attachments that bind sentient beings to samsara. | Buddhahood- the fully enlightened state. |
| Individual effort | Nirvana can be achieved through the self-effort alone. | Salvation can be achieved by the help of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas through the use of prayers and faith. However, personal effort is also required. |
| Monks and the laity | The Sangha are the centre of the religious community. The laity gained merit through serving the Sangha by providing food and donations in return for its teaching. However, in order to live a satisfied life, the laity are also encouraged to act according to the precepts. | The Sangha are important as a preserver and transmitter of Buddhist tradition and learning. However, the laity also can pray directly to Bodhisattvas and can seek salvation directly through them. |
| The relative importance of wisdom and compassion | The highest attribute of Theravada Buddhism is wisdom. The attainment of it brings the goal of Nirvana. | The highest attribute is compassion to bring the whole chain of beings to salvation. However, wisdom is also paramount because enlightenment is the union of wisdom and compassion. |
| Languages | The Theravada scriptures were in Pali. | The Mahayana scriptures were composed in Sanskrit. |
| Branching Schools | Theravada has only one school of religious thought today. | The Mahayana has many schools. Their liberal interpretation of Buddhism was more open to new schools of thought, which are constantly evolving. |
| Spreading routes | The Theravada spread to the south. The countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia all practice Theravada Buddhism. | Mahayana spread from Northwest India across Asia to China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Tibet, and Mongolia. |

However, the differences between the Theravada and Mahayana are dissimilar to those between, say, the Catholic and Protestant churches. The fact is that in comparison, and in the things that most matter, the differences between the schools are not of great importance (Stryk, 1968:1). Although they employ different methods of practice, their common purpose is to attain enlightenment. The goal is the same: the total eradication of suffering and distress. All Buddhists are geared to the traditional goals of Buddhism: to understand suffering, the cause of it and how to be liberated from it, to reach
enlightenment and see the reality of existence as it really is, and to work compassionately for the welfare of all living beings.

It should be noted that all the different schools are equal Buddhists. They are all Buddhists because they are all based upon the ideal of human development towards the goal of enlightenment. Their purpose is to attain or to lead towards the attainment of the fully enlightened state. These common factors transcend various differences and make it possible for any barrier and difficulty to be superseded.

2.2 The basic teachings of Buddhism

Buddhist schools are compatible because there are many common characteristics among them: the unsatisfactoriness of life and the possibility of achieving liberation through the purification of one’s own acts, speaking, and thinking. They all respect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha as the three Jewels. There are many characteristics in common among different branches of Buddhism, which bind them together as "Buddhism". Schumann observed:

The characteristic features of all Buddhist schools are (1) the evaluation of individual existence as sorrowful and consequently requiring deliverance, (2) the belief in rebirth, (3) the assumption of a moral natural law which rules the process of "karma" and rebirth and was neither created by a deity nor is supervised by him, and (4) the view that the phenomenal world is without substance and in a constant flux. Analogous to this (5) the empirical person is considered as without Self and as a complex of soulless factors, with which (6) the goal of extinction of the sorrowful personality is logically connected. Further characteristics are (7) the conviction that liberation is only achievable through the extirpation of greed, hatred and delusion and by gaining enlightenment and lastly (8) faithful confidence in the Buddhas, be they regarded as human teachers, supermen or transcendent beings. Any doctrine which possesses all these features must be called Buddhist (Schumann, 1973: 94).
In short, Buddhism is for the cessation of men's suffering. The Buddha taught, "Who, unless he be quite mad, would make plans that do not reckon with death, when he sees the world so insubstantial and frail, like a water bubble?" (Croass, 1974: 58). Recognising the inevitability of suffering and death, the Buddha reminded mankind about the reality of life but avoided frightening them.

As the innate nature of all sentient beings is the same and equal, every person, with appropriate effort, is able to achieve enlightenment. Then what are the differences between Buddhas and the sentient beings. It is interesting to see why sentient beings are sentient beings, while Buddhas are Buddhas. The comparison, which may inspire people to ponder some profound issues, can be illustrated as follows:

(Figure 2.2 The comparison of Buddhas and sentient beings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddhas</th>
<th>Sentient beings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The omniscience nature of Buddhas is the utmost development of wisdom and compassion.</td>
<td>All sentient beings possess the same innate nature as Buddhas. Making the right effort, they can actualise the state of omniscience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have abandoned the self-cherishing attitude and always cherish others. Though possessing nothing and living the simplest life, they enjoy the richest way of life. They give what they have. They are denoted as &quot;the undaunted givers&quot;.</td>
<td>They are under the grip of the self-cherishing attitude. Sentient beings are obsessed with self-cherishing attitude and selfish thoughts. They are eager to possess something outside for the fulfilment of their emptiness of inner life. They have strong desire to compete with others, to defeat others, and even to dominate others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They cherish the welfare of others. They reduce the force of clinging to themselves, and rather hold the welfare of other sentient beings as paramount precious.</td>
<td>They cherish mostly the welfare of themselves. Though all sentient beings desire happiness, they lack it, and though they do not desire suffering, they undergo it. That is the ignorance of sentient beings that impels them to work for the fulfilment of their selfish aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their mind is clear light. They face the vicissitudes of fate with the same equilibrium. They are not dominated by conditions.</td>
<td>Their mind is tainted with defilement. They are much afraid of death, deprivation, defeat, discouragement. When things are in their way, they are elated. When things turn against them, they become discouraged. They are dominated by outside circumstances or conditions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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They are the glory conquerors and undaunted givers. They are not afraid of giving whatever they have, even their lives.

They are eager to possess something which can catch up with, compete, or even surpass others. They think that only then can they be truly happy.

They have conquered themselves. They are free and satisfied. The Buddha also is denoted as the glory conqueror.

They are under the dominance of outer conditions and circumstances. If things turn against them, they blame others for their own faults. They are not free and satisfied.

They realised that life is impermanent, and the things of this world cannot protect one from unhappiness or from the inevitable: death and rebirth. Only by extinguishing desire and attachment to material objects and to other human beings can one find peace. Hence they always show serenity, calmness, and bliss. They have found the richness and completeness within themselves. They crave nothing outside.

Man suffers because of discontent, lust and craving for what are, in the end, ephemeral goals and material objects. They act as paupers and are always craving for something outside which they think were the indispensable elements that can make their life complete and satisfied.

They have awakened into reality, into a state of utter freedom.

The unenlightened sentient beings are like dreamers who get deeper and deeper enmeshed in the net of their self-created illusions.

A Buddha is someone who has recognised the nature of the mind. He differs from all other people in that He has by Himself found the truth, and that He knows everything that is necessary to salvation.

A sentient being is someone who has not recognised the nature of the mind. His mind is obsessed with desires.

They do not repent the past, nor do they brood over the future. They live in the present.

They are usually immersed either in the past or in the future. They live never at this moment.

They are liberated and free.

They are disturbed and confused.

They have attained to the utmost development of mankind- Buddhism.

They have the possibility to attain enlightenment only if they make the same efforts of the Buddha.

Indeed, Buddhism is a way to help people to discover their innate potentials and to develop them to the utmost. It is the way to uncover oneself.

2.3 The specific characteristics of Buddhism

The general public are often ignorant about Buddhism and its objects. They are unfamiliar to the significance and spiritual dimension of the objects, which were the
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embodiment of Buddhist teachings. In comparison with other theistic beliefs, the specific characteristics of Buddhism can be explained as follows:

Buddhism is a Homo-centric religion which concerns itself much with the development of one's potential rather than anything about deities.

Buddhism is a humane religion. It concerns basically the development and transformation of one's own mind. In order to live a satisfied and meaningful life, each person must make his own effort to discover and to develop his innate potentials. The Buddha's teachings are meant to carry mankind to safety, peace, happiness, tranquility, and bliss. Buddhism is a rational approach to human life which does not emphasise something external but rather the personal responsibility for his own inner development. As each person has an infinite capacity for development far beyond his own imagination, one must become one's own master, and there is no higher being or power that sits in judgement over one's fate or fortune. Every person must take full responsibility for his own fate.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching is 'suffering and the ceasing of suffering'. The fundamental essence of Buddhism is 'All suffering springs from ignorance', and a Buddhist's obligation is to endeavour to acquire correct views, which attack the causes of his sufferings. Buddhism is concerned with a very practical problem- how man should live his life- and never for an instant allows its attention to be diverted from that issue. What Buddhism teaches is to overcome torment of desire and live in calm and love. As all human beings possess within themselves the same innate nature of Buddhahood, thus through the practice of deep meditation and virtuous actions, a person can transform gradually his gross mind into a pure Buddha mind.
Buddha's teaching is that human beings are their own masters: everything depends on people themselves. Pleasure and pain arising from virtuous and non-virtuous actions come not from outside but from within people themselves. Buddhism represents the opportunity for human beings to transcend themselves and is essentially about transforming oneself to become a kinder and more compassionate human being. The Buddha's teaching is most closely connected with the awakening, chiefly concerning personal misery and personal liberation. Buddhism teaches that within a person there are great powers—powers of love, of healing, of clarity, that can lead him to bliss and liberation.

As each person possesses the same innate potential as the Buddha, Buddhists do not need the professional priests to mediate the relationship between this world and the world beyond or the devotees and Buddhas. The appearance and existence of the sangha community do not mean to be served as a hierarchical system. Instead, it shows merely people a model of a simple life-style which can lead them to liberation and enlightenment. Hence, there is no rigid hierarchical system established in the Buddhist communities. Each individual must take full responsibility for his own liberation. 'By oneself the evil is done, by oneself the evil is undone, no one can purify another' (*Dhammapada*). The monks or nuns, serving merely as the inheritors of the Buddha's teachings, show people a way to bliss and liberation. Accordingly, there is no arrogant persecution within the Buddhist community.

According to Buddhism, life is harassed by three things: craving, animosity, and ignorance. Only by overcoming these defilements and foibles can one achieve enlightenment. Hence, Buddhism encourages people to realise that they can accomplish anything which they set their minds to. In the world, at least, there is one thing which one can handle effectively: one's habits and motivations. The solution of one's problems is not in reforming the world at large, but in reforming oneself.
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When the situation is against their way, ordinary people often blame others. They think that it is someone else who is responsible for making them unhappy. However, Buddhists think that there is no such enemy to be found. The feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction originated merely from one's own mind. One should take full responsibility for one's own happiness or disturbance. The law of causation is impersonal, not administered by a supernatural power, and universal for it applies to all sentient beings, who perceive happiness or unhappiness in accordance with their own volition and acts.

The Buddha has shown people that although they should help others to find their own way to bliss and liberation, they cannot earn or give salvation to others. In this sense, Buddhism is a very personal religion because every one must walk this way for himself and win his own salvation and enlightenment. The Buddha has never claimed that he can redeem or pardon the sins of others. He has no capability to disturb or obstruct the proceeding of the universal law of cause and effect which everyone merely reaps what he had sowed beforehand. Hence, he is not an omnipotent God.

When the Buddha was dying he said, 'I am not a God. I am only a man who has learnt how to cross the Sea of Being and shown you the way. Go and work out your salvation with diligence' (Harvey, 1983: 138). As Buddhism is not a theo-centric religion and the Buddha is neither a God nor an ordinary human being, then what really is he and what are the distinctions between God and Buddha? Ordinary people may think that Buddha is a God of another faith. This is not true. Drukchen Rinpoche explains it clearly:

The Buddha never wanted to be treated as a Special Being. Everyone is Buddha, everything is Buddha. We each of us contain heaven and hell, ignorance and Nirvana. The Buddha always said, "I am not a God, I am a man. And that is why what I say is of use to you- because I say it to you as a man and not as a God, as someone like you" (Harvey, 1983: 179).

The issue can be illustrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God</th>
<th>Buddha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figure 2.3 'The comparison of God and Buddha)
Chapter 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A superhuman being who is worshipped as having power over nature and the fortunes of mankind; a deity.</th>
<th>An all-Enlightenment and all compassionate person.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westerners see God as the ultimate cause of all events. He is the Creator of the universe. The opening verse of the Christian Bible sets the theme of God being the creator of all things.</td>
<td>The opening verse of <em>The Dhammapada</em> sets its own theme with the words: Mind is the forerunner of all things (Gomes, 1993: 24). The Buddha conceives that creation from nothingness is contradictory to reality. Concerned with suffering and the expiration of suffering of sentient beings, he showed people a way to liberation and bliss. He did not like to speak about supernatural problems because these problems are beyond men's experience and have no benefit to their development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is omnipotent. He can ransom and pardon the sins of others merely as others believe in Him.</td>
<td>He did not have the power to solve every one's problems. He possessed no power to ransom or pardon the sins of others. He simply offered people a way to liberation. Everyone must depend on his own effort to liberation and enlightenment. Each individual must be his own lamp and master.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He dominates the fate of living beings.</td>
<td>One reaps merely what one has sowed. This is a natural law. Accordingly, one can achieve what one sets his mind on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He makes the religious laws and then judges and punishes the sinners accordingly. Heathens will perish merely because they do not believe in Him. He serves as the Creator and the Judge.</td>
<td>The way the Buddha showed was not something new that had never been understood or found, and he said of it that he had only 'rediscovered an ancient road leading to an ancient city.' His compassion to all sentient beings are equal and without any disparity. The Buddha, on the other hand, is only love. He rewards, but does not punish. A sinner, in his view, punishes himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men cannot hope to become God. God means to be adored sublimely and obeyed submissively.</td>
<td>Everyone has the potential to achieve enlightenment- to become Buddha. Buddha means the ultimate development of each individual to the fullest of his inner potential.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this comparison, we can understand that the Buddha reveals himself as the spiritual leader whose mission is to pull men from quicksand of their own making. He was a teacher rather than a God. Indeed, there are no Gods in Buddhism. All the so-called "Gods" and "Bodhisattvas" of the Mahayana pantheon are inner principles, energies of spiritual growth that are in every man. The Buddha was an enlightened man and Buddhism is a humane philosophy of Being.
Buddhism provides practical methods for taming the mind, realising reality of existence and achieving liberation

An enormous amount of philosophy, theology, and even psychology strikes people as a discussion of words and concepts without relation to experience. However, Buddhism is a very humane religion, entirely practical. It cannot be approached in an aloof attitude. It must be put into practice. It must be experienced. The Buddha did not impose any idea for his disciples to accept dogmatically. He was impatient with philosophical arguments, because they were no use or relevance to the spiritual life. They did not help mankind to develop themselves, to achieve detachment, tranquillity, deep realisation and, ultimately, enlightenment. What he has said is about suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the way to bring about that cessation. He taught these things because they are fundamental to the spiritual life. His teaching provides a complete and fully documented path to the ultimate evolution of mankind. It provides systematic and penetrative analysis of the human condition, and a way to go beyond even that— to complete freedom. It is the royal road to the cessation of suffering.

Buddhism differs from many other forms of religion in that it does not demand of its followers that they should believe in anything that lies beyond the experience of each person. It allows a fresh view of reality to ripen within one's own mind, which grows from an experience that is only possible through hard work on oneself and service to others. The only faith the Buddha expected his followers was faith in their inner potentials. Everyone should be his own master, his own lamp, and his own island.

Blofeld points out that Buddhism offers two special advantages: it refrains from insistence upon set beliefs, which often prove obstacles to spiritual progress; and it provides a whole panoply of contemplative methods for cultivating intuition of the reality (Blofeld: 1977: 55-6). He adds that his personal preference for Buddhism is rooted in two circumstances: it offers a wide variety of means suited to different temperaments and
levels of understanding; even more important, it clearly propounds the doctrine of Mind as Supreme Reality (Blofeld, 1977: 55-6). Stryk also observed:

Buddhism, better than most religions, seems to have adapted to modern life, many considering it to be, among other things, not only a method of self-discovery but a source of ideas for social orientation without equal in the West. By some it is not thought to be a religion at all: it lacks the ritualism of most world religions, including the hebetude [sic]- inducing regularity of church going, and the one thing all the others most certainly have- a God. As a religion-philosophy it has had for centuries a strong appeal to rationalists, who have felt the need for spiritual guidance but wanted, at the same time, some assurance that it was toward a realizable end (Stryk, 1968: xxxi).

Indeed, Buddhism is a system shaped by experience, which concerns itself only with the actuality in the sense of that which is active, and not with the results of speculative thought. This self-imposed rejection of speculation gives Buddhism a universal validity and a freedom from theological dogmatism, which is based on mere belief and wishful thinking. Hence, it is primarily a religion of conduct, not a religion of observances and sacrifices. Buddhism does not demand anyone to accept its teachings on trust. There is no compulsion in it. What makes a Buddhist a Buddhist is the respect for the Buddha and for the manner in which he conducts his search for spiritual development. From this stems spontaneously a sense of belonging to the tradition that the Buddha established: a liberal tradition of free inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality.

Buddhism transcends the boundaries of all psychological systems, because it is not confined to the analysis and classification of recognised psychic forces and phenomena, but also teaches how to use, transform, and transcend them. Nor can Buddhism be reduced to a moral system valid for all time or a 'guide to doing good,' because it transcends dualism and is based on an ethic that grows out of profoundest understanding and inner vision. Instead of taking an interest in metaphysics and academic theories, the Buddha deals with problems per se and approaches them in a concrete way. Harvey wrote, 'I found in Buddhist philosophy a way of thought that enthralled me by its calm and
radical analysis of desire, its rejection of all the self-dramatising intensities by which I lived, and its promise of a possible, strong, and unsentimental serenity’ (Harvey, 1983: 4). Actually, Buddhism identifies one's defilement as one's obstinate enemy.

Buddhism provides many practical methods to tame the mind. There is a vast array of spiritual practices, ranging from moral precepts that one can apply in daily life and merits that one can cultivate, to meditative practices which help to develop untapped spiritual resources. This implies a spiritual transformation of the Buddhist practitioner. Alan Watts points out that Buddhism is not really a religion- a way of obedience to someone else's rules, a regula vitae- but a method for clarifying and liberating one's state of consciousness (Watts, 1972: 62). That is to say, it is not a faith to believe in. Instead, it must be put into practice to see its usefulness in transforming oneself.

Buddhism considers not so much at defeating others than on vanquishing one's own defilement. Thus, the Buddha is entitled to be the sublime and supreme conqueror of the world. A Buddhist regards his own delusion and ignorance as his obstinate enemy. This recognition is much in accord with the findings of modern psychology, "The source of most of our trouble is in our inner conflicts rather than in disturbing outer conditions and obstacles" (Hutschnecker, 1970: 12). People forget easily that darkness exists not only in the evil persons whom they oppose but also in themselves too. Hence, the dark forces within oneself must be acknowledged and brought up into the light. Then, through awareness and understanding, they can be transformed into the stuff of true wisdom and compassion. Buddhism provides practical methods to help mankind to get rid of defilement and to develop the clarity of their innate nature.

Obviously, it is easy to find the faults of others or to blame others for anything, but it is difficult to find one's own defilement. Ordinary people are usually caught in the grip of turbulent desires and passions which are the source of paralysing inner conflict and the disturbing hostilities existing between them and their fellow people. The turmoil within
human personality cannot be transcended without the active participation of each individual in the long and arduous labour of cleaning up the underground of his own confused and compulsive motivations, a labour that eliminates eventually the conflict and returns all the powers of personality to their uninhibited relationship with the rest of world. The result is a joyous sense of harmony with one's fellow people and with the universe at large. As everyone is Buddha, containing the Buddha principle, then how to actualise it? Thulsey Rinpoche said, 'It is not a question of becoming, it is a question of uncovering what you really are, of letting yourself be yourself, of letting everything that is not yourself fall away' (Harvey, 1983: 138). In short, Buddhist practice is about knowing the mind, taming the mind and then freeing the mind.

**Buddhism espouses all embracing compassion which shows more compatibility and tolerance towards different beliefs and hence Buddhists show a more radiant personality**

One of the most important attributes every practising Buddhist cultivates is kindliness. Entertaining compassionate thinking, Buddhists demonstrate a radiant personality. Rhys Davids often expressed his deeply felt tribute to a Sri Lanka monk (Yatramulle Unnanse) for teaching him Pali language. He spoke this monk as 'the best man I ever knew' who had 'an indescribable attraction about him, a simplicity, a high-mindedness, that filled me with reverence' (Oliver, 1979: 28). Besides, Michael Carrithers had also observed the contemporary monks in Sri Lanka were not disturbed by facing wild boars and elephants in the forest. He was astonished at seeing that. Besides, he noticed, "Many monks were evidently healthy and content, 'radiant' and 'without remorse', and this in itself impressed me" (Carrithers, 1983: 77). Lama Nawang also observes that while all other folk literature are full of the misery of passion, however, there are no unhappy love songs in Ladakhi folk literature. He explains:

Buddhism teaches the transience of all things, a certain calm detachment from others and from oneself. We are taught not to take ourselves too seriously, and we are taught to believe that there is little ultimate truth in grief or misery. The real wisdom is joy. The real wisdom is happiness. The real wisdom is that of the Buddha, who is always shown at peace with all things. There is no tragedy in
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Ladakhi literature, no concept of tragedy, in fact. There is a Ladakhi saying, "The greatest courage is the courage to be happy." It takes a great courage when you are suffering to see beyond your suffering to the clear relations between things, to the laws that cause and govern your suffering; it takes great courage to be ruthless with one's grief (Harvey, 1983: 104).

From the above mentioned cases, it is easy to realise what Buddhism has moulded the jovial nature of Sri Lanka monks. Much owing to the mastery of moral discipline, the monks showed a lack of remorse, a freedom from regret and anxiety. As they commit no injury to themselves or to others, their conscience is clear, and this leads them naturally to a serenity upon which meditative accomplishments may then be founded. When asked why his disciples, who lived a simple and quiet life with only one meal a day, were so radiant, the Buddha replied, "They do not repent the past, nor do they brood over the future. They live in the present. Therefore they are radiant. By brooding over the future and repenting the past, fools dry up like green reeds cut down in the sun" (Rahula, 1972: 72). Obviously, Buddhist monks live radiantly in the present.

Throughout the Buddhist world, loving-kindliness, supplemented by compassion for the suffering of others, was to become the model for social sentiments beyond the family and a value in its own right. Marilyn Silverstone describes her impression about Buddhism as follows, 'I liked its all-embracingness, taking in all beings, including animals and insects- and the fact that there are no chosen people. No one is doomed. And I particularly liked its compassion' (Khan, 1992: 12). According to Buddhism, the innate potentials within all living beings are all the same. That is to say, ultimately all sentient beings have the same possibility to attain enlightenment. Hence, Buddhists consider that people ought not only think in terms of human beings in this regard but of all sentient beings.

Buddhists realise that as human beings the most important thing is compassion. They mind not those who make them angry and seek no revenge on those who have committed crimes against them, or reply to those crimes with other crimes. They know
that all living beings have the same desire to pursue happiness and are much afraid of affliction. The universal reality is that animosity cannot be ceased by animosity but by loving-kindness.

The compassionate attitude of Buddhists also extends to the natural environment. While most of the civilised world has spent the last few centuries in conflict with the environment by treating nature as an enemy to overcome, Buddhists have maintained a reverence for the interdependence of humans and nature. Instead of seeking physical comfort in altered surroundings as a pathway to happiness, Tibetans gain spiritual awareness through encounter with adversity in their natural environment (Gyatso, 1990: 8). The basic teachings of the Buddha can be expressed by two words: wisdom and compassion. Wisdom in its passive aspect is that penetrating insight into the nature of all existence and the balance of mind this illumination brings. Compassion is the active aspect of this wisdom, the expression in the world of a deep understanding of the reality, the universal laws of nature.

In the past, some religious expansion was accomplished through violent actions. For instance, "With the 'Koran' in one hand and a sword in the other", as the saying goes, Islam is bent on conquest and conversion (Dutt, 1966: 2). Alan Watts also wrote:

I was brought up in a culture that for more than a thousand years had been smothered in and diseased with religion. On at least the pretext of religious zeal it had initiated the Crusades, the Holy Inquisition, the Puritan Revolution, the Thirty Years War, and the subjugation and cultural destruction of India, Africa, China, and the native civilizations of North and South America... On the whole, therefore, I am ashamed of this culture and have done my best to tame it with more peaceful and convivial principles derived, for the most part, from Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist philosophy (Watts, 1972: 46).

The spread of Buddhism is not accomplished this way. Buddhism has spread and maintained itself without recourse to violence, and has remained unstained by religious wars and crusades. It spread into large areas in the past, never imposing itself by force,
but taking its place at the pinnacle of whatever religion was already there. Even in this modern world, the new followers of most religions are mainly procreated by themselves. Few can transmit beyond their ethnic communities. However, Buddhism, showing great vitality in this aspect, can attract new followers beyond family and ethnic groups. This can be proved by the tremendous proliferation of Buddhist institutions in the West. While most religions are worrying about succeeding priests today, Buddhism has no problem of enrolling new followers.

Demonstrating more tolerance and more embracing, Buddhism spread beyond its original ethnic group. It is relatively easy to adapt to other religious traditions. It could co-exist with archaic Hinduism in India and Sri Lanka, Taoism and Confucianism in China, the Bon religion in Tibet and Shinto in Japan. Even followers of all sorts of Buddhist schools can live together in the same monastery and argue together without the problem of one condemning the other's point of view, as so often happens in the confrontations within monotheistic religions. On the whole, Buddhism has kept its record remarkably clean of inquisitions, religious wars and massacres, heresy-hunting and the burning of books or even people. Alan Watts wrote:

I didn't like Christian love as I saw it exemplified in the lives of those who preached it. They were always going to war with other people to save them. They believed that suffering was "good for you" and considering flogging their children an act of mercy. Formerly, they had even burned heretics at the stake in a desperate attempt to save them from their own fantasies of everlasting damnation (Watts, 1972: 79).

Conversely, Buddhism lays special emphasis on the virtues of patience, acceptance and loving-kindliness. It also extols not harming others, for if one regards one's own suffering as an unwanted burden, it follows that all sentient beings feel likewise. Life is dear to every living being. One should therefore refrain from any action that might bring injury to any sentient being.
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Buddhism is not culture-bound, not bound to any particular society, race or ethnic group. It spreads very easily from one culture to another because the emphasis in Buddhism is on internal practice rather than on external practice. Its emphasis is on the way people develop their mind rather than the way they dress, the kind of food they take, the way they wear their hair and so on. Though having millions of followers divided between many different schools of thought, Buddhism has doctrines diverse and apparently contradictory, and it has spread over broad areas and come into contact with many other religions; yet neither has there been appreciable bigotry and intolerance within its own body, nor has it conflicted with other faiths.

The Buddha's teaching addresses the individual, not an ethnic or racial group, and hence, in contrast to the ethnic religion of Hinduism it was able to win followers outside India and become a world religion. Denise Cush, a British monk, observes, 'Unlike the majority of Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs in Britain, the majority of British Buddhists are ethnically British, and are usually converts rather than from Buddhist families' (Cush, 1990: 12). Buddhism is the world religion which can spread beyond the society in which it was born. The new followers of Buddhism are not procreated by Buddhist families.

The world today presents a striking contrast to the spirit of tolerance prevailing in Buddhism and very few people indeed can doubt the value of this virtue today. The world is full of doctrines, unjustified self-claimed absolute truth, which, since they are dogmatic, must clash with each other. Christian teaching is at loggerheads with Islam, while the latter has strongly persecuted many other faiths. All such teachings, though they talk much about peace, because of their dogmatic assertiveness actually provoke many troubles from which the world suffers. Thus, the Buddha's teaching of tolerance must be of great relevance in the present day.
Buddhists cherish no substantiality in self-conception, everything is interrelated and interdependent.

For centuries, people have speculated about the beginning and end of life and the universe, although they are matters beyond the conception of the human mind. Concerning the beginning and end of things, Buddhism says nothing, because there is nothing which can be said. It presents people with the fact that people's belief that the cosmos must have had a beginning is grounded in a delusion. A beginning of the phenomenal world out of nothingness is an impossibility, and to ascribe its origin to a Creator is only to remove the problem one step further. The Buddha advised people not to participate in this futile speculation because they were problems to which they could not find the answer, and which have nothing to do with the moral life or to help them to the goal of attaining enlightenment. These issues are not relevant to the re-discovery and development of people's potentials.

Comparatively, Buddhism has an intellectually satisfying world-view. The Buddha did not make statements regarding the origin of the world. While many religious founders made unjustifiable claims based on rather simplistic logic on how the world originated, Buddha did not commit himself to any statement about a beginning. This was because he knew his listeners did not have the proper intellectual training and understanding of the physical world to comprehend what he himself had discovered.

The Buddha was ascribed with wide-ranging vision and penetrating scrutiny of existence. His teachings were undogmatic, realistic and eminently practicable. He was resolute in rejecting whatever could cloud or distort people's moral, intellectual and spiritual vision. Hence, the total picture of man's situation in the world as given by Buddhism was much more in accord with observed facts, and much more likely to be true, than the account given of it in the mixture of myth and history the West has inherited from Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt and Judea (Story, 1973: 20). Buddhists conceived no myth that men were sinners expelled from Garden of Eden.
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Buddhism is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. If anything at all, it is realistic, for it takes a realistic view of life and of the world. It does not falsely lull people into living in a fool’s paradise, nor does it frighten and agonise people with all kinds of imaginary fears and sins. It tells people exactly and objectively what they are and what the world around them is, and show them the way to freedom, bliss and happiness.

Buddhists neither speculate about the future nor remorse the past, nor concern about such recondite questions as the beginning or end of the world. Buddhists have learned not to worry about success or failure. They can give all their attention to the work at hand, without feeling the burdens of anxiety or fatigue. They focus their concern and efforts to only one thing- the arising and cessation of suffering at this breathing moment. Only those grasping this immediate experience are of relevance to the Buddha’s disciples in their search for liberation and enlightenment.

The fundamental aim of Buddhism is to examine the basic ills of human existence and to discover some way to overcome them. Suffering in Buddhism is not the expression of pessimism. It is the fundamental thesis of a world-embracing thought, because there exists no experience which is equally universal. All sentient beings endure suffering, because all are subject to old age, decay, death (see Plate 12), and all unsatisfactory perceptions (see Plate 2).

The Buddha did not like supernatural theories. What he was really concerned with was the cessation of suffering which was attainable by the people who want to follow his way and live a noble life. Accordingly, his teaching has perennial importance. It is beyond specific times and circumstances. It is universal in its application, capable of expressing itself wherever there are sentient beings.

Buddhists consider that birth and death are not once-for-all events in human life but are taking place in people themselves continuously. Every moment, something dies in
them and something is reborn (Govinda, 1991: 137). Thus, introducing death into daily life is really not to arouse a distaste for life but, in fact, to come to understand death as something inseparable from life and necessary to it. Death and life are not contradictory opposites in Buddhism, but two sides of the same reality. People have to accept them as a necessary part of reality. Otherwise, they would be kept in bondage through fear and not allowed to live their lives fully.

Govinda observes that, generally speaking, Tibetans show comparatively far less fear of death than other people because they realise the reality of existence. Thus the necromantic ritual instruments in which the symbols of death, like skulls, skeletons, corpses, and all aspects of decay and dissolution, are impressed upon the human mind. They are not means to create disgust for life but means to gain control over the dark forces which represent the reverse side of life. They have power over people only as long as people fear them (Govinda, 1966: 117). Accepting death or decaying as a necessary part of reality, which teaches people not to get attached to any particular form of appearance and thus liberates them from bodily bondage or attachment, people can lead a more liberated and satisfied way of life and develop their potentials to the utmost goal of enlightenment.

The Buddha realised that the reality of all things lack any independent self and are naturally free of any intrinsic identity or isolated substance. All things are interrelated and interdependent. The practice of meditation is not a selfish one, and is not undertaken for the personal satisfaction of the self. One who practises the observation of impermanence will possess understanding and penetration of the reality of existence (see Plate 12). He will live independently, free from attaching to anyone or anything in the world. He will not be the slave of his strong desires. He will overcome all tendency of discontent; he will not be dominated by fear or anxiety. He will endure the vicissitudes of outer circumstances with calmness and dignity. He even can face death peacefully just as the Buddha has shown in his parinirvana. Thuksey Rinpoche said:
To be a Bodhisattva is to be free from all delusions of selfhood, to have finally realised that all things arise contingently and have no separate absolute existence, to be free of the falsity of the notion of Personality. The Bodhisattva does not act for his own benefit; he acts in full awareness of emptiness, of the emptiness of all things, in even, of the emptiness of his compassion. And yet his whole being is compassion. Everything he does is dedicated to others, every action, every thought, every ecstasy, every meditation- given effortlessly, dedicated without regard for the "Self" that gives' (Harvey, 1983: 153).

Recalling the insubstantiality of everything, one feels free and liberated. He craves nothing and attaches nothing. He is a self-conqueror. The way he treads leads to liberation and awareness.

The reality which Buddhism divulges is universal and perennial: permeating everything and everywhere

While many religions claim that they possess the absolute truth and the only true religion, Buddhism asserts no this kind of idea. As there are so many of this kind of absolute truth in the world, incompatibility, persecution, and even conflict are inevitable. Besides, the truth of most religions seems to be embodied into just a sacred book. It is the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. It was regarded as the revelation of God. Hence, it must be observed as a command and should not be doubted at all. Most deplorably, when their revealed truth can no longer convince others, these "only" religions usually resort to persecution or violence to compel others to abandon their deviated viewpoints.

Contrarily, Buddhists do not conceive this idea. Once upon a time, the Buddha picked up a leaf and held it out to his disciples and said, 'This one leaf represents what I have told you. Look at all the other leaves. They are what I have left unsaid' (Harvey, 1983: 182). Accordingly, every fresh awareness of Buddhism, every new expression of the Buddhist Way, is another leaf. Buddhism considers that the Truth is not the monopoly of any one school of religious or philosophic thought. In comparison with so many
jaundiced ideas, Buddhism conceives a more flexible perception about the reality of existence.

It regards that what can be beneficial to the spiritual development of mankind can be considered as Buddhistic teachings, not necessarily to be categorised as "Buddhistic". From the viewpoint of an enlightened person, as his mind is purified, he views all the mountains, the streams and the broad grounds as the sublime teachings. Even the roaring sound of ocean waves can be regarded as the sound of the innate purity voice in his perspective. That is to say, everyone is Buddha, everything is Buddha for him. Indeed, the volition of a person affects his vision. To be able to see the beauty of nature, one must be purified himself first. As permeating everywhere rather than being consolidated in a book, the reality can be perceived, experienced, and realised by everyone only if his mind is open and mature enough. The Buddha was a practical teacher and taught only those things which would bring peace and happiness to mankind.

Reality in the perspective of Buddhists is perennial and universal- permeating everywhere and everything in the universe. It is expansive and extensive and cannot be embodied into any absolute sacred book. The teachings are merely as an instrument rather than an end in themselves. Reality needs no label. It is neither Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, nor Moslem. It is not the monopoly of anyone or any religion. Sectarian labels are a hindrance to the independent understanding of reality, and they produce harmful prejudices in men's minds (Rahula, 1972: 5). What can be helpful for the inner development of one's potential can be regarded as the Buddha's teachings. Metaphorically, they are just like the rafts which can lift people to the other side of bliss, the finger which can point the direction of the moon, or the signpost which can show people the right way to a destination. People should not think rafts, fingers, or signposts as the absolute aims anyway. Hence, truths are not to be obeyed, observed, or abided by as commands. Instead, they are merely instruments to help people re-discovering themselves. Each
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individual must test its effectiveness through his own practice and experience. Khantipalo wrote:

The Tathagatas (the other name of the Buddha) do not teach Dharma that is dependent on letters... Anyone who teaches a doctrine that is dependent on letters and words is a mere prattler, because Truth is beyond letters and words and books... But no one must become attached to the words of the scriptures because even the canonical texts sometimes deviate from their straightforward course owing to the imperfect functioning of sentient minds (Khantipalo, 1964:23-4).

That is to say, Buddhist scriptures are not to be regarded as absolute or only truth which cannot be doubted, but are in fact indications, guides, skilful means to aid the unenlightened persons to attain enlightenment. They are merely the means rather than the ends in themselves. In most religions, truth is thought of as something to be believed, in the sense of adopted as a correct proposition, embraced as a credo, or submitted to as a command. But Buddha's teachings could not help its adherents much just by being believed. As a religion of conduct, rather than an emotional one, merely understanding it is not enough to attain enlightenment, one must practise constantly.

Almost all religions regard that to be the believers of their belief is more important than other things. Buddhism does not claim so. The paramount thing is to be a good human being, with good heart, towards others. Besides, while many religions claim that the omnipotent God can ransom the sins of believers, Buddhism exposes that one must take full responsibility for his own conduct. Hence, if one indulges in alcohol which gradually deteriorates his mind and body, he cannot blame anyone for his downfall. The law of karma, cause and effect, is universal. It is not the command of any supernatural power.

Besides, while many faiths keep the dualistic viewpoint of the absolute distinction of good and evil, Buddhism does not conceive this kind of idea. Deplorably, usually, most faiths seem inclined to consider themselves as the embodiment of good while blame non-
believers or pagans as the solidified symbol of evil. Buddhism thinks that the obstinate enemy of oneself is one's own craving, animosity, and delusion. Buddhism considers that one who conquers himself is the most honourable conqueror in the world. Realising this fact, Buddhists are concerned much with taming and transforming themselves rather than with converting others.

Thus, Professor T. W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) has a very vivid impression about Buddhism. He wrote, 'I have examined every one of the great religious systems of the world, and in none of them have I found anything to surpass in beauty and comprehensiveness, the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha. I am content to shape my life according to that Path' (Oliver, 1979: 34).

However, there are some points for which Buddhism is often under attack, such as non-productivity, obstinately resisting social change, staying out of government, rejecting wealth, and refusing to be involved in secular affairs (Edmonds, 1978: 49-50). McNeill also points out:

In its early forms, Buddhism had no rituals for the ordinary emergencies of human life—birth, death, marriage, coming of age, and the like. The texture of ordinary life therefore continued to call for the services of the Brahmans, and the need for Brahmans kept alive Vedic learning and priestly practices in all their complexities. The Buddhist way of life offered a complete guide only to the unusual individual who renounced normal family life and devoted himself entirely to the pursuit of holiness. Others could not afford to do without traditional rites and priestly assistance. For the ordinary crises of life early Buddhism had nothing to offer. India therefore never became a thoroughly Buddhist land, and Indian civilisation never entirely fitted itself to a Buddhist mould (McNeill, 1979: 87-8).

He added that only for monks could Buddhism provide a complete way of life. Ordinary men in ordinary walks of life were still compelled to resort to Brahmans for rites appropriate to birth, marriage, and death, not to mention all the lesser crises of human life (McNeill, 1979: 168). Bak and Benecke also wrote:
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not have the same links to local communities that gods of the popular religion have. Buddhist temples, similarly, do not have close community ties, and the monks or nuns who run them often come from other areas. They do not organise local residents in the same way as a major community temple would, and they do not perform rituals for the benefit of the community as a whole (Bale and Benecke, 1984: 394).

In dealing with these unavoidable matters in life, secular people would ask other religious priests to help them. This, inevitably, would alienate a lot of ordinary people from Buddhism. Hence, Buddhism may become a religion for monks rather than for ordinary people. This is already true for some Theravada countries today.

Indeed, most of the criticism is misguided because it is based on the idea that those involved in the manual output are the sole producers and ignores the contribution made by intellectuals. Another factor was that the ethos of Buddhism conflicts with the values required of an efficient and compliant work force. Buddha's message of peace was also at variance with the ruling elites.

2.4 The differences between Buddhism and other religions

Having discussed the specific characteristics of Buddhism, attention is now focused on the differences between Buddhism and other theistic beliefs.

(Figure 2.4 The differences between Buddhism and other religions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Other religions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ground basis</strong></td>
<td>It is grounded in reason.</td>
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<tr>
<td>People's place in this world</td>
<td>The innate nature of all living beings are as pure and sublime as Buddhas. Buddhahood is within people themselves. All fellow people are as loveable as Buddhas. Hold to the mind of compassion and regard all beings as your parent (Khantipalo: 1964: 17). We owe a tremendous debts of gratitude to our parents for give us the opportunity to be born human beings (James, 1993: 45).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>The hope of men</td>
<td>As possessing the same innate nature with Buddhas, all living beings can hope to attain bliss, serenity and enlightenment here and now in this life, this world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men cannot hope to become God. There is a great gulf between men and God. It cannot be overcome. They can only hope for the mercy and ransom of God. In comparison with the almighty power of God, men are just like the pawn of God. Life is to be redeemed in the hereafter, in heaven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarding women</td>
<td>Sex discrimination is foreign to Buddhism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The woman was the one who handed the apple to man. This identification of the woman with sin has been given to the whole story in the biblical myth and doctrine of the Fall (Campbell, 1988: 47). Women are booty and goods. In the Exod. it reads, &quot;Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife- except abroad. Then you should put all males to the sword, and the women you shall take as booty to yourself&quot; (Campbell, 1988: 171). The idea of sexual equality is hard to square with Islamic marriage laws: a man may marry up to four wives; a woman only one Muslim man (Simon Huddleston's letter to The Times on 18th November 1993, p. 21). Koran, ch. 4.38 &quot;men are managers of the affairs of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty the other...&quot; Thus, (4.4) men can have up to four wives (Ian Moshead's letter to The Times on 18th November 1993, p. 21). They are particularly obsessed by sexuality and gender. Even today, women are denied to administer high priest post.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regarding animals</td>
<td>Buddhism does not regard humans and animals as radically distinct (Harvey, 1990: 300). Animals also possess Buddha-nature. In due time, they have also the possibility to attain Buddhahood. Thus, it is the duty of Buddhists to recognise and respect their Buddha-nature and to treat them as kindly as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals are considered as existing only for the use of man and having no rights of their own (Suzuki, 1981: 120-21).</td>
<td></td>
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| Considering the material world | To an Enlightened man, the whole world becomes a revelation of his own inner nature, of the inner nature of all things. The whole world has Buddha-awareness— even flowers and stones (Harvey, 1983: 105). | In classic Christian doctrine the material world is to be despised (Campbell, 1988: 67). In biblical thinking, people live in exile. |
| Requirement to believe in | If anything to believe in, it is to believe in oneself. One must be one's own master. 'By endeavour, diligence, discipline, and self-mastery, let the wise man make (of himself) an island that no flood can overwhelm' (Khandtalo: 1964: 17). Buddhists do not believe in God; they believe in man, in the transforming power within man (Harvey, 1983: 161). They believe in the innate and possible perfection of human spirit. It is not a sentimental faith. | God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" is purely a Hebraic idea (Campbell, 1988: 101). In some countries, notably the Islamic Republic of Iran, the punishment for anyone converting from Islam to another faith can be death (A. Mirhosseini's letter to The Times on 18th November 1993, p. 21). |
| Demandning | Belief is insufficient. Action is required. It must be put into practice (Powell, 1989: 189). | Belief is all, is enough and nothing more is needed. |
| Embracing | Buddhist embraces all, including animals, nature and even enemies. | They embrace only the selected people. All heathens or unbelievers should be doomed. |
| Regarding different voices | Allows the variation of different ideas as the demonstration of varied maturity of intelligence and wisdom. If one is open and mature enough, one can understand the reality spontaneously. Just as the lotus in a pond, some are immersed in the water, some are grown above the water. Only those grown above the water and opened enough can receive the freshness of dew and sunshine (see Plate I). | All different voices should be extirpated as heathens. They are concerned too much about what Wycliffe, Martine Luther, Galileo Gililei, Charles Robert Darwin, Thomas Henry Hurley, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, or even Salman Rushdie had said something. If the revealed truth can no longer convince others, then they resort to persecution. They are easily infuriated or disturbed by others and respond with violent actions. In an essentially secular tolerant society such as Britain it is not difficult to convert to a new faith. However, a Muslim woman within an Islamic society wishing to become a Christian could well be penalised (Simon Haddelstone's letter to The Times on the 18th November 1993, p. 21). |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The teachings of their religion</th>
<th>They are the universal reality which cannot be monopolised by any person or any religion. Coherent. Monks from any different branches speak the same teachings, justified by impermanence, suffering, and insubstantiality of everything, which are compatible and coherent.</th>
<th>They are all the revealed truths. Only one's religion is unique, others are all deviated. The teachings of one sect are different from other sects. Usually, they conflict.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enemies</td>
<td>One's own greed, animosity and delusion are one's obstinate enemy. The most evil force is within people themselves.</td>
<td>Any different voice is their enemy. They can mount a sacred war to extirpate it. If their faiths have not sufficient logic to convince others, they resort to violence to supplement the shortcomings of their beliefs. 'With the &quot;Koran&quot; in one hand and a sword in the other', as the saying goes, Islam is bent on conquest and conversion (Dutt, 1966: 2). Likewise, with the Bible in one hand and a machine gun in the other, Christians are also bent on conquest and conversion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on</td>
<td>Finding oneself, controlling oneself, and developing oneself. In comparison with the issue of transforming one's own mind, all other matters are trivial. They focus only on one thing that is to transform themselves. They are not interested in converting other people to Buddhists but in how they can contribute to human society, according to their own ideas.</td>
<td>Finding God and curry for the mercy and favour of God. Blaming other faiths as idolatry or superstition. They tamper too much with others' matters. They concern nothing about transforming themselves. Instead of taming their minds, they emphasize converting others. They forget themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insist on</td>
<td>Understanding one's own shortcomings and uncovering one's innate purity, perfection, completeness, and clarity which was temporarily clouded by craving, animosity, and delusion.</td>
<td>Finding the inferiority of others. Selling their self-justified righteousness, bigoted truth, arrogant bias, and only religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical spirit</td>
<td>Any truth should be tested through one's own experience to see whether it works. The Buddha's reformulation of the perennial wisdom was designed to counteract the evil of violence. It had to be avoided in all its forms, from the killing of human and animals to intellectual coercion of those who think otherwise (Conze, 1986: 11).</td>
<td>The revealed truth cannot be doubted. It allows only submissive obedience. It cannot be doubted with any critical spirit. Walsh points out that Islamic thought today is a closed system that admits no analysis, no debate of what are today common interpretations of the revealed word (Walsh, 1992: 31).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Talks much about</th>
<th>Men- the cessation of men's unsatisfactoriness in the world.</th>
<th>The almighty God. Alan Watts observes that the Church is the world's most talkative institution. The Christians do nothing in their religious observances except chatter (Watts, 1972: 48-9).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The origin of the universe</td>
<td>The Buddha said nothing about this issue. Because it is beyond men's experience and has no direct relevance to men's spiritual development.</td>
<td>They all claim that they know how the universe was formed even it may be conflict with the reality of physical world. They all believe in a single primary cause for existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inevitable calamities, misfortunes, unhappiness in the world</td>
<td>One just reaps what one has sown in the past. It is a natural law.</td>
<td>It is the trial or punishment of the God. When things turn against them, if they are believers, according to their simple logic, it is the trial; if they are heathens, it is punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truths in their perspectives</td>
<td>Truths permeate everything and everywhere. They cannot be monopolised by any person or any religion. If one's wisdom and intelligence are ripen enough, one can perceive the reality of existence. Sanghas only show people a way to find themselves. Ultimate truth is not a theory, but a description of fact. Something that can be tested and proven through observation.</td>
<td>They all possess the monopoly of truth. Even different sects in the same religion charge each other as heathen. Hierarchy priesthood mediates this world and the world beyond. Except their &quot;holy&quot; scriptures, their &quot;absolute&quot; truths, and their &quot;only&quot; religions, they closed their minds and show no intention and no interest to understand other beliefs. Bible/Koran is the whole Truth to them, and nothing but the Truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Positive or negative thinking all originate from one's own mind. Buddhist view transcends limited notions of good and evil, but only because only a Buddha is perfectly good (Thaye, 1993: 46).</td>
<td>They keep dualistic viewpoints about good and bad. Deplorably, they consider only themselves as the embodiment of goodness and righteousness, while others are considered as bad. Under the name of God, they can justify all their acts, including to impose intolerable and cruel things to other fellow people. Above all, they deem their ethics as the only valid criterion of moral principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious attitudes</td>
<td>One should be one's own master. One can achieve what one sets one's mind on.</td>
<td>Dr Jung said that nothing in the Christian religion encourages the idea of the self-liberating power of the mind (Stryk, 1968: 198).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2

| Living styles | Polygamy, monogamy, vegetarian, carnivore, omnivore, herbivore, headdress, or dressing are trivial things in comparison with controlling one's own mind. Buddhism showed relatively disinterestedness and self-effacement in the past (Conze, 1986: 132). Buddhism is not culture-bound. It moves very easily from one culture to another because the emphasis in Buddhism is on internal practice rather than external practice. Its emphasis is on the way people develop their mind rather than the way they dress, the kind of food they take (Santina, n.d.: 3). | They meddle into things such as how many wives one can marry, what headdress one should wear, what dressing one should put on, what kind of food one should eat, or what time one cannot eat without any convincing reasons. Above all, the religious regulations even mix with national laws and become an integral part of the national laws. Even today, public beheadings in Saudi Arabia are taking place almost weekly in main towns after Friday prayers (Hirst, 1993: 7). |
| The paramount thing in this life | "A loving heart is the greatest requirement! Not to oppress, not to destroy, not to exalt oneself by treading down others, but to comfort and befriend those in suffering" (Khatipalo: 1964: 17). To be a good person is paramount in this life. Religion is for the good of mankind rather than that mankind is for the purpose of religion. | To be a religious disciple of their sect is the paramount thing because it ensures that they can obtain eternal life in heaven. In this regard, mankind seems to be for the good of religion. |
| Regarding other faiths | With sincere respect and compassion. Acknowledging that different religions have their specific contribution in specific time and areas, Buddhism is compatible with other religions. In the perspectives of Buddhists, one's prejudice and jaundiced bias are one's true idolatry. | Charging other faiths as superstition or idolatry. Conceiving themselves as the absolute truth and only religion, they have no intention to see the goodness of other faiths. |
| Regarding other faith believers | Minds, Buddhas, and living beings are all equal in their innate nature. | They deem all other faith believers as stupid and inferior. Only they are wise and superior. Thus, they are craze at selling their truths. They don't like to know that Socrates, one of the most wisest man in the ancient world, always said that he knew one thing was that he knew nothing. |
| Life | cyclic People have many, many lifetimes. The connection to a life is made under the influence of desire, hatred, and ignorance. Until these afflictions are overcome, one is as if bound in chains without freedom. This is not done just once, but again and again without break (Rinbochay & Hopkins, 1979: 11). | linear People have only one lifetime. They have two options to choose after death, either ascending to heaven to serve God submissively as a lamb or descending to hell for punishment forever. |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The cause of suffering</th>
<th>One's own craving, animosity, delusion, and attachment.</th>
<th>Not believe in God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The cause of bliss and happiness</td>
<td>A compassionate heart with wisdom.</td>
<td>Believe in God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study has no intention to portray any faith as inferior. However, as there are so many "absolute" truths in the world, mutual understanding is merely a slogan. Though proposing much about peace and tolerance, the theistic faiths, demand an exclusive allegiance "Thou shalt have no other God than me", is very incompatible with other beliefs. Alan Watts wrote, 'I deplore missionary zeal, and consider exclusive dedication to any advocacy of any particular religion, as either the best or the only true way, an almost irreligious arrogance' (Watts, 1972: 63). Indeed, one's bias will distort one's understanding of the reality as it is. Having closed his mind, a bias person shows no interest to know the goodness of other faiths.

Simply because of the belief in their absolute religions, theistic believers consider they are wiser and superior than others. Simultaneously, they consider other faiths as inferior. This attitude just confirms Shakespeare's famous words that every fool does think that he is wise. Indeed, every one should have the privilege to keep his prejudice and bias. Just as Socrates said that he agreed with others' privilege of speaking though he might disagree with their viewpoints. However, the crazy fanatics are inclined to sell and impose their absolute truths to others or even compel others to convert. That does make troubles for the world.

Conversely, the analyses are used to illustrate the great hurdle of exclusive allegiance which might obstruct mutual respect and mutual understanding. As the world constricting drastically, it is time for people to seek common grounds for mutual benefits. The Dalai Lama points out that love, compassion, and kindness are common to all
religions- Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and so forth. Their value is clear for all believers and non-believers (Gyatso, 1985: 20). He further explains:

If we put too much emphasis on our own philosophy, religion, or theory, are too attached to it, and try to impose it on other people, it makes trouble. Basically all the great teachers, such as Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, or Mohammed, founded their new teachings with a motivation of helping their fellow humans. They did not mean to gain anything for themselves nor to create more trouble or unrest in the world...Most important is that we respect each other and learn from each other those things that will enrich our own practice. Even if all the systems are separate, since they each have the same goal, the study of each other is helpful (Gyatso, 1985: 49).

Though the cultures are so diversified, peoples are coming closer together because the world becomes smaller and smaller with better communication which provide good opportunities for them to learn from each other. There is nothing wrong with learning from each other. It helps to develop harmony and unity. People should look deeply into the value of a religion in the context of the world-wide situation, they can easily transcend the unfortunate happenings. There are many areas of common ground on which people can have harmony. People should cultivate this kind of attitude in this multicultural society. Then the diversities of cultures and beliefs become merits rather than shortcomings.

The basic desire of all human beings is for happiness and to avoid suffering. In that sense people are all the same. 'All tremble at weapons; all fear death. Comparing others with oneself, one should not slay, nor cause to slay' (Khantipalo, 1964: 129) Man-made beliefs can divide and estrange individuals. People must cultivate world-wide vision to acknowledge the differences and diversities of cultures and religions, and tolerate them rather than make more troubles for this world. Proposing the supremacy of reason rather than emotional attachment to any cult, museums can do much work contributing to mutual understanding through the use of Buddhist objects in displays.
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As the world shrinks drastically with the advancements of technology, mutual communication becomes more important in this internationalised world. People should be allowed to access other beliefs to widen their vision. However, there are still many strange beliefs, venerating cows, dogs, ghosts, or even stones as deities (Shahar, 1991: 64 and Wei, 1991: 70), which not only cannot help people to uncovering themselves but also entrap them in ignorance and credulous superstition. Hsieh Chin-ting, head of the provincial government's civil affairs department in Taiwan, issued a recommendation on 1st October 1993 to urge Taiwan residents to stop burning wads of imitation paper money when worshipping ancestors and folk gods at temples and sidewalk altars. He notices that the tons of imitation bank notes burned in Taiwan each year are a waste of natural resources (anon. 1993: 4). Indeed, it is a case of superstitious belief.

Howatch, a best-seller writer, points out, 'Often religious people are afraid of science. There is lot of bad religion about. I am looking for wisdom' (Coles, 1993: 1). Besides, Alan Watts observed that he had found himself in agreement with Lucretius that Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum: that too much religion is apt to sway people to evils (Watts, 1972: 62). In addition, Meister Eckhart wrote, 'Your soul ought to be without ghosts, to be void of all forms and images that are ghosts. You should strive to keep it so. For if you love God as a god, a ghost, a person, you are not loving Him as He is, One, in Whom there is no duality' (Harvey, 1983: 230). Obviously, bad religions cannot help people to develop themselves. They only consolidate people's emotional credulity.

Though each individual should have the privilege and freedom to respond to religions in his own way, the study does not suggest that each religion is the same in its quality. Some can liberate people, while others seem to entangle people to arrogant stupidity and bigoted ignorance. Buddhism is far from sacrifice, credulous superstition, idolatry, or currying the favour of any outside force. While there still remains so many strange beliefs in the world, Buddhism, stressing the transformation of oneself through one's own experience rather than converting others, should not be considered as merely
one of these theistic religions. It deserves appropriate consideration and further understanding. Without this understanding, charging of others as heathens, arrogant persecution of others as idolatry have never ceased in history and they still re-occur in the world. Mutual respect is merely an unattainable ideal. Realising the differences between them not only can promote mutual understanding but also can enrich the content of a culture. From this viewpoint, the issue is still very relevant in the present world. Thus, this comparison is merely used to illustrate the differences between Buddhism and other faiths.

The creation of Buddhist objects was inspired by Buddha's acts and teachings. In order to realise the significance of these objects, it is necessary to grasp the fundamental messages of Buddhism which inspired the creation of them. This chapter explores some basic questions which visitors usually propose, such as, the differences between God and Buddhas, Buddhas and human beings, and the origination of happiness and unhappiness in the perspectives of Buddhists. All these issues are very relevant to each individual no matter whether he or she is a religion believer or not. Besides, it also explores the shortcomings of Buddhism. In addition, it also examines the differences between Buddhism and other faiths. With a basic understanding of Buddhism, a person can appreciate its visual expressions in Buddhist objects. Next chapter will explore them.
Bliss, serenity, and liberation are attainable

The Way to Buddhahood
- Altruism
- Concentration
- Diligence
- Wisdom

The Way to Ego-hood
- Craving
- Self-cherishment
- Animosity
- Delusion
- Attachment

Mind is the forerunner of all things.
Happiness or unhappiness is originated from mind.

Insubstantiality

Unsatisfactoriness

Discouragement
- Grief
- Misfortune
- Downfall

Figure 3.1 What Buddhist objects signify? Emanating the perennial messages of Buddhism, these objects are relevant to this human condition. They inspire people to know more about themselves and to search a way to bliss, serenity, and liberation.

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Chapter 3 Buddhist objects

In order to mount intelligent displays of Buddhist objects, it is necessary to explore the creative motivations, the authentic nature, the original context, the characteristics and even the symbolic messages of the objects beforehand. Thus, this chapter will discuss these issues.

3.1 The definition of Buddhist objects

Buddhist objects are often regarded as folk handicrafts, good paintings, delicate sculptures, historic specimens, or exotic rarities in the perspectives of museums. However, the significance of the objects is more than their surface value. They are the embodiments and visual expressions of Buddhist ideals. Undeniably, the Buddha's life and his teachings were the major inspiring force which had stimulated the creation of many splendid paintings, statues, and monuments. The ideals of Buddhism and the aspirations of Buddhists are embodied and also reflected precisely in the objects. Accordingly, to view the objects as aesthetics would do injustice to them. The profound messages embodied in them should be further explored, then a balanced viewpoint can be applied to displays and interpretations.

As the stock of images is almost bewilderingly rich, while visiting museums, many visitors cannot distinguish clearly the objects from other religious items, very few can identify the specific characteristics demonstrated in different areas. That is to say, many of the general public still have not a clear understanding of these objects.

In a lexical sense, 'object' is something placed before the eyes, or presented to the sight or other senses; an individual thing seen or perceived, or that may be seen or perceived; a material thing; specifically the thing or body of which an observation is made, or an image produced, by means of an optical instrument, or in a drawing or perspective.
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Usually, the words 'material culture', 'object', and 'artefact' have been used as interchangeable synonyms in museums.

That is to say, an object is a solid and tangible thing which can be viewed or perceived. Accordingly, Buddhist objects are the solid objects, demonstrating themselves in paintings, carvings, sculptures, statues, ceramics, textiles and even buildings, which can be perceived and viewed by visitors.

But this definition seems to reflect merely the surface values rather than the in-depth significance of the objects. In the perspective of Buddhists, the objects have practical purposes in religion, such as the reflection of Buddhists' aspiration and the revelation of Buddhists' ideals. No matter what materials these objects were made of, they were often treated with devoted attitudes and had the practical purpose of inspiring, transforming, and enlightening people. They are not playthings for pleasing eyes.

In the perspective of Buddhists, the objects are not arts in the Western sense, though they might have the value of aesthetics. Western arts seem to revolve around a theory of purely individual expression, regardless either of the spiritual stature of the person behind the expression or any value it may have for others. Western arts also aim to become both desire-stimulating commodities and investment stocks; and have close links with advertising and entertainment. But this is rarely the situation of Buddhist objects.

The prevailing idea of creating art for the sake of art in the West is foreign for most Buddhists. They have no intention to be artists. The paramount motivation for creating the objects is for transmitting the messages of the Buddha for the welfare of all living beings. Though realising the ephemeral phenomena of everything, including these objects, Buddhists were eager to carve or paint perishable materials into the exponents of imperishable reality by creating them as symbols of a timeless truth far surpassing the limits of individual life-span and their intellectual knowledge. Engaged in the work of
painting or carving does not mean an onerous work but actually an act of transforming the artists themselves.

Undeniably, though many images in the sculpture stores in the East are indeed meant to be sold for profit, devout Buddhists would not like to do this kind of thing. In their perspectives, the work which is geared to enlighten viewers should not be involved in selfish aims. They should be for free dissemination and ask nothing in return. For instance, the Dalai Lama has voiced his concern at Tibetan refugees selling religious artefacts at inflated prices (Rosellini, 1990: 92). In Tibet, the objects were often created anonymously. They were created neither for individual profit nor for self-aggrandisement. They are not the outcome of self-gratifying desires. Nor do the creators of the objects have the intention to be artists. Their works are neither for individual expression nor for artistic appreciation nor for commercial purposes. In short, they are religious objects.

The simple motivation for making them is often religious. For instance, the inscription on the back of the skirt of the "standing figure of a Buddha" read: "On a fortunate day of the fourth year ping-tzu of the Hung-wu period (AD 1396) Chou Fu made forty-eight identical sacred images, to repay the four debts of gratitude" (i.e. to parents, teachers, elders and monks) (Anon. 1966: 18). Indeed, these objects are self-conquest works rather than self-expression or self-inflation works. Usually, the making of the objects must follow strict established rules containing prescriptions and guidance regarding technique and spiritual attitudes in the Himalaya areas. They were the symbol and the embodiment of the Buddha's teachings. Regarding them merely as ordinary objects of art seems to have divested their sublime dimensions.

Though having the artistic value, their significance is more than merely art. The objects are not the art works for enjoyment. Western attitudes to art run exactly contrary to the values cherished by Buddhists (Rawson, 1991: 5). The objects are meant to be of specific use and spiritual benefit to everyone. They are instruments which are geared to
help people to uncover their innate potentials and to know more about themselves and their fellow mankind.

Though the universal reality, taught by the Buddha permeates everything and everywhere, which Buddhist objects signify (see Figure 3.1), only the enlightened beings can realise it and experience it. From the viewpoint of an enlightened person, everything is Buddha, everyone is Buddha. There is no conceptual knowledge which can illuminate or describe it perfectly. It is not to be discussed. Instead, it can only be experienced through each individual’s practice. However, this kind of definition is inappropriate to be applied to define them in museums. It is difficult to define them this way in museums. Actually, only concrete objects, no matter whether they were identified in painting, relief, sculpture, statue, decoration, architecture which can be perceived and viewed, are valid to be regarded as objects.

Certainly, there may exist divergent responses from the ordinary visitors and from those of the devoted Buddhists when viewing the objects. Undoubtedly, different people might have various perspectives about these objects according to each individual’s background knowledge, experience, intelligence, tendency, and even mood. The impressions cannot be identical and they need not to be so.

Undeniably, on the most public level, some persons may think that just to hold these objects, itself guarantees them, as if magically, spiritual progress or at least material well-being. Indeed, this is superstition and hypocrisy. However, regular spiritual practice, a skilful routine and ethical observance are all essential in following the Path. The objects constitute only objects of grasping and craving attachment if instead of using them to bring about changes or transformations in viewers’ inner consciousness, ordinary people use them as talismans, the possession of which will give them good luck.
From the museum staff's viewpoints a Buddhist object is just another artefact among their collection. It possesses neither sacred aura nor specific significance more than other pieces in their collections. But devout Buddhists may not think so. As the viewpoints are varied, the definitions will also be shifted. This can be illustrated in the attitudes which museums applying in tackling the objects. For instance, Tibetan images are consecrated by placing prayers or mantras. Besides, relics and scriptures are put inside the base of images and sealing them with a copper plate engraved with a double thunderbolt.

A statue, no matter if it was made of wood or metal, usually was scooped hollow inside in order to put some sacred scriptures, relics, jewels, or mantras in it. It is considered a devotional act. Indeed, it means something for Buddhists. But museum staff usually deem these objects differently. Most images reaching the West have had the relics removed (Lowry, 1973: 13). That is to say, the sublime dimensions of a statue makes no specific sense for many museum professionals. Many staff fail to decode the significance of Buddhist material culture from a Buddhistic viewpoint.

Besides, relics, no matter whether it was the cremated relics or other materials, are sacred objects which mean to be revered. A famous pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka, for instance, is the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, where the Buddha's tooth is kept. Today it is in a gold shrine, in a temple within a temple and has become a powerful symbol of national identity (Booth, 1992: 29). However, few museums treat relics with such a sensibility. This demonstrates, at least, the discrepancy of viewing these objects between museum staff and Buddhists.

Indeed, it seems difficult to trace the beginning of making the objects. However, without the inspiration of the Buddha's life and his teachings there would be neither Buddhism nor its objects remaining to this day. They are closely linked with Buddhism.
As Buddhist images are not descriptive expressions of any particular person, they do not have the same countenance to represent an identical figure. Every cultural region does have a unique stylistic preferences and artistic techniques, if not always of materials and styles. For instance, Tibetan images look very much like Tibetans, while Chinese images look Chinese in appearance. Thus, the symbolic significance embodied in the objects is far more important than their descriptive features.

Buddhist objects have a practical purpose in spiritual development. They are used to inspire living beings to uncover their innate potentials. They can be used to widen a viewer's awareness, enhance his understanding and appreciation of the objects, and most of all, to remind him to actualise his innate potential. Even Tibetan Terrible Deities painted for meditation purposes on the walls of the gompas (monasteries) have the inner usefulness and the psychological value. In their frank portrayal of the horror of anger, desire, greed, and lust for power, the paintings did not merely terrify the onlooker, they give him an opportunity to confront those parts of his energies which he was repressing, to confront, understand and master them, to turn them into a power to heal (Harvey, 1983: 82-3). Therefore, these objects are the visual embodiment of Buddhist philosophy. Artists produced them to reflect intangible truths of Buddhistic ideals.

Besides, Buddhist architecture is essentially religious. Among the architectural forms adopted by Buddhism, it was the stupa that represented the cosmic mountain, the pivot of the world. The earth mounds which had been built over the relics of the Buddha and holy men evolved into what became known as 'stupa'. Over the centuries and across the Asian continent the architecture of stupa developed, becoming multi-storey pagodas, and is one of the most distinctive examples of Buddhist architecture.

In addition, relief carvings play an important part in Buddhist art. They illustrate various aspects of religious life, as well as the legends and epics of the Buddha. Additionally, paintings also play a great part in the decoration of sanctuaries. They were
mediums for describing events and teachings through depicting different episodes in Buddhist legends. Owing to the delicacy of the materials employed, only fragments of mural paintings from the ancient periods have survived to this day. They are some of the finest manifestations of Buddhist art.

Furthermore, there are miscellaneous Buddhist objects, such as thangkas (intricate Tibetan paintings encased in silk brocade), tapestries, scriptures and mandalas (sacred diagrams), developed in various cultural spheres during the past 2,500 years. Almost all cultural aspects of the past in Asia have some degree of association with Buddhism. It is not an easy thing to define the detailed scope and kinds of the objects. However, the study attempts to classify them into some major categories as follows:

Worshipping or visualising statues: Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Masters, Monks, images in tangkas and mandalas

Ceremonial objects: Vajra, vajra-sceptre, thunderbolts, prayer wheels, prayer flags, skull drum, trumpet, bell, drum, wood-fish, radongs (the twelve-foot-long bass-horns), rosaries, rice-vessel, butter-lamp, oil-lamp, water-bowls, incense burner and so on.

Symbolic emblems and objects: vacant Buddha, footprints, Dharma wheel, stupa, chortens, pagodas, bodhi tree, jatarka tales, auspicious marks (such as ushinisha, urna,...), mudras (hand gestures), mantras (the sacred invocations, such as "Om Mani Padme Hum"), nimbus (or halo), stupas, deer, lion and elephant.

Paintings and appliqués: The paintings and images seem to have their own controlling forces and emotional moods, ranging from the centred calm of the Paradise of Amitayus to the demonic frenzy of the Dharmpala. Mystical and visionary, the liturgical art of Tibet portrays a reality beyond the world of everyday perceptions (Valrae Reynolds,
1978: 58). That is to say, it expresses insubstantial messages that can only be experienced rather than possessed by each individual.

Other miscellaneous objects: relics, sutras, decorative textiles and many contemporary produced media, such as records, video discs.

In short, Buddhist objects are the items of Buddhistic material culture. They signify the timeless realities of existence which each individual viewer should use his own efforts to realise and uncover.

3.2 The creation and functions of Buddhist objects

Art is a universal language which can easily transcend the boundaries of languages and cultures. All great art has a universal and eternal appeal and could be appreciated without special knowledge or the experience of connoisseurship. If they are significant in their cultural context, their provenance are irrelevant. From its inception, Buddhism has been a universal religion which was not confined to any specific caste or tribe. Through the creation of art, Buddhists transmit their ideals to different areas.

To most of the general public, Buddhist images have a worship function. Though having devotional function at the most popular level, the main function of the objects is inspirational. The purposes of the objects are essentially religious. They are linked inextricably with Buddhism. They are works of the spontaneous expression of an overwhelming inner experience. To view them as rarities or art which can be accumulated and transacted is not an appropriate attitude. They are not something to be possessed, enjoyed or accumulated but something to be revered, to be learned.
The creation of the objects means to transmit the Buddha's teachings for the benefits of human beings. They are served as mediums to remind people to develop their innate Buddhahood, of the great ideal that the historical Buddha Shakyamuni realised in his own life. They are meant to remind people to pursue a meaningful way of life which leads to spiritual serenity and happiness.

In early Buddhist art, between about 200 BC and 200 AD, the Buddha was never represented in human form. On the relief sculptures decorating stupa railings and gateways at Bharhut and Sanchi (second to first century B.C.) his presence was indicated by anionic symbols. It was felt that to represent the Buddha in ordinary form was wrong. The fact that he had attained Nirvana implied that he had passed beyond the limits of humanity. Accordingly, simple objects were usually used to signify his presence in relief sculpture representing events in which he had taken part: a cushion on his seat, a tree, a stupa or a pair of footprints (Rawson, 1991: 12). Some symbols, first used to represent the Buddha in a particular event, later continued to symbolise an aspect of his doctrine, e.g., the dharma-cakra ("wheel of law"), used to indicate the Buddha's presence in early relief depicting his first sermon at Sarnath, is also used to symbolise his teachings. Indeed, Buddhists did not portray the Buddha in anthropomorphic form at first.

The earliest images of the Buddha in human form dated from the first century AD and came from the Gandhara region (broadly speaking, Northwest Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan) and Mathura (in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India). The Gandharan sculptors drew upon Greco-Roman models and portrayed the Buddha with a youthful Apollo-like face, sometimes dressed in robes similar to the Roman toga, whereas the Mathura images were based on prototypes of Indian yaksa (nature deity) images and demonstrated a similar sense of inner power, with wide shoulders and legs firmly planted (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, 1988: 306). From the first century AD sculptors began depicting the Buddha as a personage, a composite of the various lakshanas- the Buddha's auspicious transcendental marks (op. cit.).
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At first, the objects were meant to be decorative, instructional and to serve as an act of devotion by the artist who gained merit by his creation, by sponsors who sponsored the act, and even by the observers who were guided by the moral precepts they illustrated (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 26). Buddhist art emerged from inner peace and happiness. That is quite different from the mystique of anguishing artists, like Vincent Van Gogh.

To the artist and his patron, a Buddha image is never a mere work of art but a sacred object to be revered. In addition, the image must be blessed by monks when it is made and again when moved or placed in a new setting (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 26). Representing the utmost developments of mankind, the objects are usually tackled with appropriate sensibility by Buddhists.

Besides, the strict adherence to established canonical rules for icons in Nepal and Tibet made for changeless repetition of earlier types. This rigid traditionalism in the making of icons is to be explained by the fact that a special sanctity was attached to Buddha images (Rowland, 1976: 133). The Buddhist art and imagination of Tibet, for example, are full of brilliant stimuli for invention. If visitors explore the ideology and methods behind the art properly they can lead them far beyond merely appreciating the external appearance of original Tibetan work and enrich their lives immeasurably (Rawson, 1973: 5). Tibetan art is entirely devoted to inducing the realisations of Buddhahood. Therefore, while appreciating the beauty and handicrafts of the works, people should notice their spiritual dimension as well.

The objects are meant to represent the fullest potentials of all living beings, to inspire them all to transform themselves and attain their own perfection of evolution (Thurman, 1988: 127). Naturally, a Buddhist image is not necessarily an outside object for adoration but indeed is the consolidation and ideal model of people's own purified mind. The statues, whether symbolic or anthropomorphic, have served as a presentation of the
Buddha's ideal (Snellgrove, 1978: 7). In short, they signify insubstantial messages permeating everything and everywhere which are the realities of existence.

Even though the worship of images was encouraged in Tantric Buddhism, it was only used as a means towards realisation. Precise instructions dictate how and under which conditions the icon, symbolic of the union, should be conceived. Visualisation of the icon during meditation transports the practitioner onto a higher plane; it intends to incorporate the sacred power represented by the icon into oneself for identification with it and in order to awaken the dormant energy force within oneself (Berkson, 1986: 33). Accordingly, these objects are inspiring tools rather than idols.

The subject-matters of Buddhist art were entirely religious and covered a wide range of forms and intentions. Many paintings were devotional: sacred pictures inducing positive thinking, illustrating positive conducts and helping to accumulate merits. Paintings could also be meditational, serving to illustrate theological positions, to concentrate the mind and train its power ultimately to project the image of the deity and its entourage, conceived as arising out of the void, without recourse to visual aids (Zwalf, 1985a: 102). That is to say, except for the purposes of devotion and worship, the major functions of the objects are for inspiration and visualisation. They are served as the means for transforming the mind but not as an end in themselves. Thus, the messages of the objects are not merely represented on aesthetic appreciation.
3.3 Common characteristics of Buddhist objects

Buddhist objects demonstrate a specific expression which is different from the Occidental's. For instance, ancient Greek artists usually used real persons as their models to create their deities. However, Buddhists rarely created Buddhas in this way.

As the objects took their origin from a single source and then branched out in various directions, they still have some common characteristics, such as lotus (see Plate 1), Buddha's footprints, mudras (hand gestures), bodhi tree, stupa (see Plate 13), Jataka tales (the stories of the Buddha's former lives), Dharma wheel and so on. They are different from other religious objects.

Even Buddha images, the most common seen Buddhist objects, demonstrate some common characteristics, such as a serene attitude, smiling face (see Plate 3), closed or half-closed eyes, and while in a sitting posture, they are often seen crossed-legged (see Plate 5, 8, 9, 10) and sitting on a lotus seat. Besides, Buddhist images usually have a disc light around their heads (halo) (see Plate 5). They demonstrate the homogeneity and inner constancy, which can be identified easily. Though Buddhist art was strongly influenced and greatly stimulated by the creative genius of many people with whom it came into contact, and this led to great complexity and diversity, it possesses nevertheless an underlying unity.

3.4 Specific characteristics of Buddhist objects developed in different areas

Though possessing unity, the objects have developed specific characteristics of stylistic preferences and artistic techniques found in different areas during the past two thousand and five hundred years. It can be illustrated as follows:
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(Figure 3.2 Specific characteristics of Buddhist objects developed in different areas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different Regions</th>
<th>Diversified Characteristics</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>India:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandhara</td>
<td>It reflects Hellenistic and Roman influence, especially in portrayal of drapery, hair, and the human body. It first depicted the Buddha in human rather than in symbolic form. One of the most lively and appealing aspects of Gandhara art consists of the friezes and panels of relief carving which decorated shrine and monastery buildings. They depict narrative scenes from the life of the Buddha, or groups of disciples, musicians and dancers in which classical elements such as garlands, acanthus leaves and cupids mingle with Indian styles of dress. A distinction of Gandhara from Mathura Buddha images appears in the form of the throne, which in Gandhara is usually a lotus, in Mathura, a rectangular pedestal supported by lions (Coomaraswamy, 1980: 20). Great differences are also seen in the treatment of the hair. In Gandhara the hair is thick and undulating. In Mathura, Buddha images are represented with a spiral protuberance which is a lock of hair and not an &quot;usnisa&quot; (Coomaraswamy, 1980: 23). The wavy hair and draped robes of Gandharan art recall the naturalism of Graeco-Roman art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathura</td>
<td>Mathura has the emphatic display of the attributes of fecundity, the heavy breasts and enormously exaggerated pelvis (Rowland, 1953: 46). Mathura Buddha heads show the swelling roundness of the interlocking planes which gives an impression of fullness and warmth. Among the most beautiful features of the Mathura Buddhas are the carved haloes, the ornament consisting of concentric rings of floral pattern about a central lotus. (Rowland, 1953: 230.) Buddha figures are shown standing or seated (the latter being more common), often with a single curled top-knot of hair. Haloes with scalloped edges are a distinctive mark, and foreshadow the dense decoration of haloes seen in Gupta figures. (Norwich, 1990: 286.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 China</td>
<td>In China, the stupa evolved into the pagoda, a tall, multi-storied tower. Chinese pagodas are octagonal in shape and always have an odd number of stories, ranging from three to thirteen. Unlike the Indian stupas, they also used to enclose the laity’s ashes or relics. Easy sitting posture of Buddhist images, such as Kuan-yin Fei-tein (Flying heaven goddesses) The most worshipped Bodhisattvas are Kuan-yin, Ti-tzang, Po-sien, Manjusri, Maitreya. Sometimes, Guanyin is depicted as a serene beautifully dressed woman with a child on her knee. Muye Monk Boddai The &quot;Ten-thousand&quot; character symbol ( ) on the bosom of the Buddha. The whole body relics, not like the Egyptian mummy, are very specific Buddhist objects which cannot be seen in the West.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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3 Tibet

Avalokitesvara, the Lord of Compassion, is the most widely worshipped Bodhisattva. The goddess Tara was also widely worshipped. Images of historic figures, usually eminent monks represent an important genre in Tibetan art. The awesome powers of deities were signified by the symbols held in the multi-faced and multi-handed deities. Tibetan Buddhist figures were often shown with a female consort in sexual embracing: In the monasteries and temples of Tibet one finds many beautiful scroll paintings and images depicting these Buddha figures in sexual union. For the Tibetans there is no sexual or erotic suggestion whatsoever. There are more wrathful deities in the 'Vajra' family than in the family of any other Buddha. Mantras Skull and bone ritual instruments Thangka paintings Strange weapon utensils, e.g. dorje and phurpa Prayer flags Prayer wheel Peacock feathers are quite often used in Tantric ritual. They are placed like flowers in the vase which contains the consecrated water. Butter sculpture is very specific. Ritual Helmet is worn by Vajracarya’s Buddhist priests, when officiating at religious ceremonies.

4. Nepal

Nepal Buddhist objects show a remarkable degree of religious syncretism, in which images and motifs were appropriated free to serve common religious ends.

5 Himalayan areas

Crowned Buddha in royal attire Standing Buddha with both hands raised in exposition (“vitarkamudra”) is an iconographic variation unique to South East Asia. Buddha image in walking posture is unique to Thai art. The Buddha seated within the coils and hood of a snake spirit (Serpent Guardian). Arhat Exaggerated top head Skirt dressing of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas

6 Burma

The elaborate flame-life crown is characteristic of Burmese images. Another distinctive feature was the creation of the Buddha wearing an elaborate winged crown. Burmese craftsmen have been famous for work in lacquer as well as silks and embroideries. In Burma, the top of the stupa became elongated into a distinctive spire.

The specific characteristics of Chinese Buddhist objects

The Chinese favourite images are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (Kuan-yin, Ti-tzang, Manjushri, Pu-sien, Matrieya). Avalokitesvara has been transformed to a female form since the tenth century in China, while it is still a male form in Tibet. Chinese Bodhisattvas usually sit in relaxed pose, adorned with jewellery and thrones.

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Chinese temples were provided with images in gilded or lacquered bronze, iron or ceramic. Their bright glazes are typical of the vivid surfaces that were part of the Chinese visual world (Rawson, 1992: 3). Besides, a pagoda is the Chinese form of a stupa. The materials of the building were bricks or wood instead of stone (Rawson, 1992: 3). In addition, the pagoda also used to hold ashes of the laity instead of merely holding the spiritual masters in India.

The character of "Ten thousand" on the bosom of the Buddha is specific to Chinese Buddhist images. It represents the perfect merit of Buddhas. Besides, Muyu and rosaries are frequently used by Chinese monks as well as by the laity.

Splendid coloured relics and whole body relics are very precious Buddhist objects which have never seen in the West. Whole body relics are different from Egyptian mummies. In the case of making mummies, all the organs in the body should be scooped out. Besides, mummies were intended to be kept from ordinary people to view them. This is not the case of the whole body relics of Buddhists. The whole body of Hui-neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in the Tang dynasty (617 AD-907 AD) remains intact in the Nan-zong Temple, Canton today. In Taiwan, there are also two whole body relics (Ven. Tsyi-harn and Ven. Ching-yan) displaying in temples for adoration.

The specific characteristics of the Himalayan Buddhist objects

Buddhist objects in this region have a unity of stylistic preferences and artistic techniques. This identity is defined most obviously by geography, and also by religious rites, demography, and aesthetic preferences. Perhaps the main feature affecting artistic production in the region is the syncretism of the different religions, for example, the harmonious co-existence of Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal. There are also the biographies of great leaders known in the oral and written traditions of all the hill regions, such as that of Padmasambhava, who spread Buddhism from Kashmir to Bhutan and Tibet in the eighth century. There is, in addition, a repeated stress on certain architectural
forms such as the multi-stage roofs of temples or mosques, and the development of layered-wood construction, mural paintings and stupas and the finest workmanship in cast bronze are also common features of the area (Bernier, 1993: 60).

The unique characteristics of Tibetan Buddhist objects

Ebersole observes that Tibetan art is essentially religious art. It is not "art for art's sake", but art that serves as a means to achieving the spiritual goal of enlightenment. It was produced and then used in the service of religious practice (Ebersole, 1990: 116). The mandala is an instrument by which one integrates spiritual essences, cultivating divine pride combined with clarity and insight (Ebersole, 1990: 118). That is to say, Tibetan visual art is primarily religious art. Religious statues and paintings are revered because they are used as aids to meditation and visualisation of the deities, and they have the ability to inspire and motivate the practitioner (Lipton and Dorjee, 1990: 122). Thus, they are not visual art for entertainment.

Many skulls and bone objects were often used in Tibetan Buddhism (see Plate 6). Introducing death into daily life is not to arouse an aversion for life but, in fact, to come to understand death as something inseparable from life and necessary to it. Death and life are not contradictory opposites in Buddhism, but two sides of the same reality. People should consider them as a necessary part of existence. Then they can live freely and to the utmost of their lives.

Unlike the linear theology of the West, Buddhists conceive that life and death present the same cyclic continuity occurred in all aspects of nature. Just as two sides of a coin. Either side is indispensable. Realising this reality, a pious Tibetan Buddhist shows far less fear of death than most other people. This can also be shown by their dealing with corpses. The so-called 'heaven' or 'air' funeral rite, mutilating corpses into pieces for feeding vultures, also shows their conquest of egocentric obsession (Kling, 1985: 5). They
realise that people should put down their ego obsession (see Figure 3.1), then they can
taste the freshness of liberation.

Many advanced meditation techniques involve an appreciation of the inevitability
of decay and death. Such methods as the recollection of death, practised under the
appropriate circumstances, leave one feeling free and light (Kennedy, 1983: 50).
Attaching nothing, conceiving nothing as substantially existing forever (see Plate 12), one
not only feels free and liberated but also can live his life fully.

Besides, Tibetan Buddhism absorbed many indigenous deities and contributed to
the vast pantheon depicted in Tibetan art. Especially, there are many female Bodhisattvas,
such as White Tara and Green Tara, which precisely reflect Tibetan’s specific female-
centred society. The main figures of Buddhism when it had become imbued with Tantric
views are those of the goddesses in their two-fold aspect, as Sakti, that is, as working
energy, and as mother and those of the Bodhisattvas, with their girlish charm. The goal of
the much-discussed Tantric Buddhas cults is the intuition of the cosmic spirit, its throwing
forth female energy and their final union, the understanding of which brings about
salvation and bliss (Miller, 1983: 210). The deities of the pantheon are numerous and are
depicted in special ways. Their appearance, attributes and colours differ according to their
functions. Indeed, Buddhism took many Hindu deities into its fold, and wherever the
religion spread it absorbed many of the indigenous gods and demons (Gordon, 1963: 10).
Indeed, Tibetan pantheon is the most complicated one in the Buddhsit world.

However, a Buddhist deity is not God in the Christian sense, because Buddhists
conceive no idea of a supreme creator. Any act of creation occurs entirely within one’s
consciousness (see Figure 3.1). At the most basic level, Buddhist deities are awareness-
beings that represent aspects of personal consciousness. Personifying a deity as a living
being aids meditation on otherwise abstract concepts (Gyatso, 1990: 11). Just as Hooper-
Greenhill observes:
We learn better and at a more basic level through the concrete and the material than through abstractions, then we have a deep requirement for objects throughout life to give us a sense of being in the world, and to have a solid material basis for our mental symbols and abstractions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991: 102).

Besides, Tibetan images also show terrible and ferocious faces. Whereas in most other Buddhist art Buddhist images express only kindliness and compassion, in Tibetan art all may be shown wearing 'furious', energetic aspects which express the supernatural power of their redirected merit-energy. Such figures can even appear hostile or wicked, because their ultimately benevolent effects are only visible to the long-range insight of the Bodhisattva (Rawson, 1991: 1). They served as the protectors of the dharma, the doctrine of Buddha. The ferocity of these threatening deities is dedicated to the compassionate protection of the holy Teaching (Cork, 1992: 1). For instance, Yidam Yamantaka, the Slayer of Death, is a ferocious deity in Tibet. Therefore, their forms are usually fierce and forbidding (Gordon, 1963: 57). They do not depict divine wrath; rather, they represent the energy devoted to battle against negative passion and delusion (Blofeld, 1970: 110-11). Obviously, they are not demons in the Western sense.

The Dalai Lama says that the many Tibetan deities reflect the different facets of the human personality. Buddhism recognises that at various times in their lives people benefit in different ways from meditation in different aspects of their characters. Tantric images in wrathful poses suddenly become frightful and more understandable when viewed in this context (Gyatso, 1991: 11-2). Besides, the Bardo Thodol (the Tibetan "Book of the Dead") emphasises that the terrifying demons are of people's own making: it is quite sufficient for people to know that these apparitions are the reflections of their own thought-forms (Burrows, 1970: preface). That is to say, entangled in self-cherishing attitudes, people feel afraid of viewing terrifying deities.

There are many multi-faced (many headed monsters), multi-handed images (see Plate 4), and emanated figures in Tibetan iconography. Joshi points out that to represent
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saints with many faces and arms is attributable to Tantric influence (Joshi, 1967: 64). It must be appreciated that the symbolic meanings of these multi-handed figures denote a willingness to give suffering beings needy hands which are embodied in every compassionate persons' hands rather than in any specific image. It reminds people to develop that willingness, that mind, and the hands to alleviate the suffering of others.

Female figures often appear in Tibetan art in sexual union with male counterparts. The females may be referred to as 'Wisdom', since they personify particular kinds of intuitive insight, the wisdom of selflessness, while the males personify spiritual methods or means (Rawson, 1991: 21). Until recently, Westerners often denounced the art of Tibet as obscene, vulgar and degenerate. They shuddered at images of Buddha or Bodhisattva as a union of male-female figures locked in an ecstatic sexual embrace. Whether erotic or terrific, such uninhibited paintings of passionately intertwined deities lie at the very centre of Tibetan belief (Cork, 1992: 1). However, they suggest nothing of sexual intercourse.

It is to be understood as a symbol of unity, and not as a reality per se (Govinda, 1990: 43-4). The erotic deities are said to symbolise the transcendence of apparent duality, to represent the fundamental oneness of the cosmos. Their union symbolises the transcending of the seeming polarities or duality of nature: good and bad, sacred and profane, sensual and spiritual. They are seen as but two aspects of one reality (Burrows, 1970; preface). That is to say, it reminds viewers transcending dualistic attitudes to view things.

Besides, Tibetan monks use many strange ritual instruments (see Plate 6). Few religions have such a variety of ritual objects connected with their worship as does Lamaism (Gordon, 1963: 81). The objects used comprise of temple banners, images, books, tablets, musical instruments, amulets, charms, objects for the altar (such as holy water vases), cups for offerings of butter, water, incense and perfume, the Eight Symbols of Buddhism; the Seven Jewels of a Universal Monarch, bells, thunderbolts, magic
Mandalas, constructed of coloured sand or other materials, are very intricate maps in Tibetan Buddhism. These sacred diagrams or structures symbolise the transcendental land which the purified mind embodied. Buddhists conceive that the completed sand mandala embodies a vast store of spiritual energy, as each grain of sand is charged with the blessings of a ritual. Each mandala is seen by Buddhists as a sacred mansion with a particular deity residing at the centre. Buddhists regard a mandala as an expression of the Buddha's fully enlightened mind. Mandalas are devoted to peace and physical balance. The Dalai Lama says that one who sees the Kalachakra mandala will feel the world's tensions and violence transformed into beneficial wisdom and intuition (Anon., 1992a: 6). Thus, they are also tools for transforming mankind and their world.

The unique features of Mahayana Buddhist objects

In short, the unique features of Mahayana Buddhist objects, are enormous: transcendental Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, celestial ladies and pantheon guardians. Lohans or Arhats are the individuals who reach a stage of almost-Buddha, using their stock of merit entirely for their own Enlightenment. In China, arhats, known as "Lohan", are very popular subjects for art, and they are also represented in Tibetan art. But later Buddhism tended to regard such persons as selfish, and to prefer the ideal of the universally compassionate Bodhisattvas (Rawson, 1991: 14). Because Mahayana Buddhists think Bodhisattvas are the embodiments of self-sacrificing altruism.

The particular features of Hinayana Buddhist objects

Initially, Southeast Asia indebted culturally much to India, but later developing many distinctive variants of great individuality and strength (Rawson, 1992: 8). That is to say, each specific area has evolved its specific characteristics.
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The reclining Buddha, the Buddha under a canopy of cobra’s heads (Booth, 1992: 29), and the standing Buddha with both hands raised in exposition (“vitarka mudra”) are particular features of Hinayana Buddhism. Besides, Buddhas in walking posture and exaggerated head tops of Buddhhas- the typical tall conical head-dresses are specific characteristics of the objects developed in Thailand.

3.5 The values of Buddhist objects

Pearce points out that material culture is studied because it can make a unique contribution to our understanding of the workings of individuals and societies- because, in short, it can tell us more about ourselves (Pearce, 1989a: 2). Hooper-Greenhill also observes:

Some things, and perhaps particularly art objects, can tell a story, put a point of view, record or explore a response to a phenomenon. They have a deliberately communicative and expressive function. Thus the examination of the intentional messages of objects can be fascinating, particularly where the messages are no longer topical and are therefore more or less invisible (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 99).

Besides, she writes that objects can also be read for their unintended messages. All objects are the product of their time and place, and in their material, shape, decoration and so on will reveal technological possibilities and cultural values (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 99). Accordingly, the unintended messages embodied in Buddhist objects should be further explored.

In spite of the ravages of time and destruction by Indian and foreign fanatics, Buddhism is still speaking vividly and majestically through its thousands of inscriptions, about one thousands rock-cut sanctuaries and monasteries, thousands of ruined stupas
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and monastic establishments, and an incalculable number of icons, sculptures, paintings and emblems (Joshi, 1967: 357). Indeed, the objects spread a large part of Asia.

As a spiritual heritage of mankind, the value of the objects cannot be over-emphasised. They have artistic, historic, scholarly, educational and religious values. They can introduce people entering into the inner world of Buddhists. Visitors can learn much from viewing the objects. Their values and usefulness are multi-faceted: art, aesthetic, decoration, handicraft, sculpture, and historical specimens. They can be used in the study of Buddhist art and archaeology. They offer visitors an intriguing glimpse into the extraordinary diversity of the accomplishments of Buddhist artists in portraying deities, historical figures, depicting anecdotes, literary episodes and idealised behaviour. Above all, the spiritual messages embodied in these objects can inspire viewers to uncover their potentials. These instruments can help people to know more about themselves and the world in which they live.

Nowadays, there are a lot of problems threatening the very existence of mankind. The environmental problem is one of them. People are gradually beginning to realise that environment is not an abstract concept, but rather a place that they and their fellow mankind have to live. They should know there is only one earth. Emphasising interrelationship and interconnection of everything, Buddhism can give mankind a lot of inspiration. Reflecting the spiritual messages, such as: compassion, tolerance and equilibrium, these objects are relevant to the time, to the people. Their in-depth significance should re-interpreted in this social context.

As the visual expression of Buddhist ideals and aspirations, these objects can usher visitors toward an understanding of the inner world of Buddhists. These objects can free people's minds from tension and pressure. Besides, they can foster a greater awareness of the current problems which people encounter today. They are not dead relics. The
timeless messages embodied in these objects are not cold or obsolete. Instead, they are relevant to the human condition today.

Barnikel observes that Buddhist objects are very inspiring and often very beautiful. They demonstrate the universalism of Buddhism. Through looking at the objects people can realise that Buddhism has flourished in many countries throughout the world and over more than two thousand years (pers. comm. of the 27th May, 1993). He wrote:

If Buddhist objects are of genuine artistic and spiritual value they can be a moving and uplifting experience. The value of looking at Buddhist objects in museums is that for some people these objects may be able to communicate something about Buddhism to people unfamiliar with them. For instance, a member of the Western Buddhist Order, when he was a teenager, journeyed to Japan with his parents. At that time he knew nothing about Buddhism. While he was in Japan, he visited a Buddhist temple. In the temple was a huge golden statue of the Buddha. This statue moved him so deeply that when he saw it he felt immediately I'm a Buddhist'. That is to say, the statue communicated to him something about the Buddha, who symbolises the ideal of human Enlightenment (pers. comm. see Fig. 1.8).

Indeed, that moving experience did not need any label to explain the details of that statue. Hence, these objects in displays might have the same impact on some persons, if they are appropriately displayed and interpreted with real spiritual sensitivity.

Besides, in the delicately executed sculptures in low-relief in many remaining monuments there is a remarkable record of Indian life with its characteristic environment, manner, and cults, set out with convincing realism and a wealth of circumstantial detail, such as the relief at Borobodur, Sanchi, and Amaravati (Coomaraswamy, 1964: 325-26). That is to say, they can also be served as historical specimens. The conception of material culture as a signifying system in which the external physical attributes of artefacts and their relationships are not regarded as exhausting their meaning.
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Creative works of the objects can be of great value to the developing individual. Great music or painting, poetry or literature, can awake people to new possibilities and to a wider dimension of consciousness (Kennedy, 1983: 181). Alan Watts also wrote:

For me, this rich and venerable tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, touched with the nature-wisdom of Taoism, has seemed one of the most civilizing and humanizing and generally amiable movements in all history. Its humane and compassionate attitudes, its tolerance of many views, and its incomparable expressions in architecture, sculpture, painting, and literature arise- most paradoxically for Westerners- from prajna, a way of experiencing ultimate reality so unencumbered with concepts and propositions that it is called sunya, the Void, like a flawless diamond or crystal in which the universes come and go as shifting reflections (Watts, 1972: 65).

While using these objects in displays, it is a marvellous opportunity for widening the awareness and enhancing the understanding and appreciation of them. Buddhism and art are closely connected. They can also be used to promote cultural exchange and nurture mutual understanding among different faiths. The objects can inspire people to ponder some common issues which each individual faces today. Museums can use these objects to remind visitors to appreciate and preserve this spiritual heritage. As more people grow increasingly distraught by violence as a means to a political end, Buddhist teachings of compassion and tolerance deserve more recognition.

Buddhist art in many temples and monasteries is the vehicle to transmit the messages of Buddhism. The art mirrors the life of Buddhists, of their metaphysical embodiment, of their rites and ceremonies, of their habits and behaviour, of their philosophy and their religion, of their relation to environment and nature. In short, the objects may be ancient, their messages, otherwise, are relevant to the people today.

The co-relation between nature, religion and art is vividly pronounced in the Himalayan regions. In the mighty Himalayas Buddhists suddenly realise what transcends them- a dimension that makes them realise their real place in the universe. They translate
this incredible phenomenon into symbols, diagrams and paintings, into thangkas and mandalas, which they use for meditation. The images they created are the translations of their dreams, of their beliefs, of their hopes and wishes (Bonn, 1993: 41). Indeed, these objects are transforming instruments which Buddhists use to uncover themselves.

King observed that many Buddhist objects were extremely beautiful and displayed great craftsmanship. They are therefore important to all those who appreciate beauty whatever their own religious backgrounds. In this overcrowded and increasingly aggressive and alienated society, these objects perhaps create an opportunity to ponder on a religion which especially values compassion, tolerance, and self discipline (pers. comm. in May 1993). Kalyanavaca also expresses that if properly displayed in museums, these objects can be great sources of inspiration (pers. comm. on the 3rd June, 1993). In short, they can tell people more about themselves- about their possibility of attaining awareness and bliss.

Indeed, the significance of the objects would be hard to be over-emphasised. The matter of the objects is of importance is not of great aesthetic significance, but just because when too much stress is laid upon it. For this reason, the way to a clear apprehension of the general meaning and significance of these objects is obscured. However, the art-work is seen as part of the body of Buddha. Buddhists are convinced that icons convey a living presence, enhanced by rituals of consecration.

In addition, these objects can be used to promote intercultural communication. In order to achieve this goal, museums should select themes which are relevant to people whether they are believers or not. Intelligent themes should be inspiring and appealing. Through the use of religious objects to explore the responses to the same issue from different beliefs, museums can bridge different believers to search common grounds for mutual learning and mutual understanding. Such projects are particularly welcome today
because the distance in space and time is growing ever smaller with the advance of new transporting and communicating technologies.

3.6 Symbolic motifs of Buddhist objects and their significance

No icon of the Buddha was ever meant to represent his physical likeness, to be appreciated externally. All figures of Buddhist iconography are meant to be understood in a special symbolic sense (Rawson, 1991: 13). Each shape and pattern portrayed in Buddhist sculptures and paintings has its own special significance and symbolism. The Buddha is portrayed in sculpture and paintings making different gestures and postures, each of which have their special significance. Ordinary visitors do not necessarily understand that. However, without a basic understanding, sexual embracing may be conceived as encouraging sexual indulgence, a smiling face may suggest an idiot, closed eyes may be explained as sleeping. Indeed, the symbolism and messages of these objects are abundant.

However, the significance and meanings of an identical object cannot be necessarily the same in the viewpoints of different peoples or cultures. For instance, while the Chinese regard moon as the symbolism of graceful, the Westerners usually consider it as lunatic. While the Chinese regard a "dragon" as an auspicious animal to be revered, the Westerners regard it as a monster to be killed (Conze, 1986: 12). When someone put on white colour clothing, it suggests the person may be going to attend a cheerful party in the West, conversely, it suggests that the person might have lost his beloved relative for a Chinese.

Just as Christianity has many symbols, e.g. cross, lamb and lily, Buddhism also has plenty of them. Initially, Buddhists were reluctant to depict the physical form of the Buddha, in early Buddhist art he was represented by symbols: footprints indicated his
presence, a standing woman his birth, a tree the enlightenment, a wheel the Dharma and the first sermon, and a stupa his death. With the spread of Buddhism, its symbols also increased. Some of the most often seen ones are as follows:

(Figure 3.3 Symbolic messages of Buddhist objects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Symbolic Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>It symbolises the ultimate development of mankind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimbus or Halo</td>
<td>The light shown around an image's head symbolising the radiating power of Buddha's body, voice and spirits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshana</td>
<td>A mark of the Buddha by which a Buddha can be recognised. It symbolises sublime wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushnisha</td>
<td>Protuberance on top of the Buddha's head which may be likened to a topknot. It is regarded as an important lakshana and is often crowned by a flame, symbolising the fiery energy of his intellect. It is the embodiment of wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elongated Earlobes</td>
<td>The elongated earlobes of the Buddha are references to his princely life of luxury in the palace which he renounced later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footprints</td>
<td>It denotes the Buddha's presence, in an anthropomorphic form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jataka</td>
<td>It represents the sacrificial and altruistic merits of the Buddha in his previous lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Seat</td>
<td>It denotes the presence of the Buddha in an anthropomorphic form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhi tree</td>
<td>As the Buddha attained enlightenment beneath the tree, it became the symbol of enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupa and Pagoda</td>
<td>Stupas were associated with the final assumption of Nirvana; they therefore came to represent the Buddha and his doctrine, and were places of devotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma Wheel (Dharmachakra)</td>
<td>It symbolises the Buddha's teachings. Usually accompanied by deer symbolising the Deer Park at Sarnath in north-eastern India where the Buddha preached his first sermon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wheel of Life</td>
<td>It is a symbol of the Buddhist vision of mundane existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>It is the symbol of Enlightened Consciousness. The Buddha was born on the full moon and entered into Nirvana on the full moon (Harvey, 1983: 134-35).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus</td>
<td>The lotus flower is a traditional Buddhist symbol of purity (see Plate 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudras</td>
<td>Various hand gestures. Express different significance, mudras are used to convey the Dharma in a subtle way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gesture of fearlessness</td>
<td>It conveys confidence and serenity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Touching-earth mudra</th>
<th>It suggests confidence and determination which the Buddha manifested at the moment before his attainment of Enlightenment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandalas</td>
<td>It is a sacred plan of the universe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantras</td>
<td>It is a sound-symbol of sublime purity and enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Om Mani Padme Hum</td>
<td>It symbolises the purity body, word and thinking of the practitioner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodhisattva</td>
<td>The enlightened sage who has made an earnest vow to deliver all beings from suffering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avalokitesvara</td>
<td>The principal incarnation of compassion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monk Budai</td>
<td>His always smiling denotes his wisdom. His big belley symbolises his great tolerance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manjusri</td>
<td>It is the symbol of wisdom and eloquence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>Tara is the most popular of the female Bodhisattva in Tibet and Nepal. She is seen as the female manifestation of Avalokitesvara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arhat</td>
<td>The sage with full developed personality. He will not be reborn again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mara</td>
<td>It symbolises the evil force of temptation and death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>The elephant is the biggest and strongest of all land animals- it is not very easy to push an elephant around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>The Lion's Throne of Tibet is a symbol of majesty and power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>It symbolises speed and energy, especially energy in the form of 'prajna', or vital breath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>It symbolises listening to the teachings of Buddha (Gyatso, 1990: 75).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacock</td>
<td>Living on snakes, including poisonous snakes, peacock symbolises immunity from poison, immunity from defilement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cock</td>
<td>It denotes craving and gravity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snake</td>
<td>It symbolises animosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>It denotes ignorance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monkey</td>
<td>As a monkey springs from branch to branch in the forest, it symbolises the disturbed thinking flitting ceaselessly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose</td>
<td>It symbolises the flight or spread of Buddhist doctrine to all realms. (Rowland, 1953: 12.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewel</td>
<td>It symbolises the means of the method- the altruistic intention to be illuminated, compassion and love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conch</td>
<td>It symbolises the voice of the Buddha, wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>It symbolises voidness- the wisdom of emptiness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorje (or Vajra)</td>
<td>It is a symbol of &quot;ultimate reality&quot;—highest spiritual power which is irresistible and invincible. It symbolises great bliss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunderbolt</td>
<td>It is a symbol of ultimate reality, or voidness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utarrananga (Punched robe)</td>
<td>It symbolises the renunciation of material comfortlessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muyu</td>
<td>It symbolises vigilance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ten-thousand character on the bosom of the Buddha</td>
<td>It symbolises the sublime merits of the Buddha.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Eight Glorious Buddhist Emblems in Tibet | 1. White Parasol; keeps away the heat of evil desires. It symbolises the royal authority.  
2. Two fishes; symbols of happiness and utility and spiritual liberation. They are symbolic of beings saved from the ocean of earthly life and suffering.  
3. Seashell; with its coils spiralling to the right proclaims the fame of the saints. It is the symbol of blessedness of turning to the right.  
4. Lotus; pledge of salvation and symbol of divine origin. It is the emblem of original purity.  
5. Vase; treasury of all desire. It contains spiritual jewels.  
6. Banner, erected on summit of Mount Meru, centre of Buddhist universe, symbolises victory. It is the flag that celebrates the victory of Buddhism.  
7. Wheel; leads to perfection, its eight spokes symbolising the eight-fold path which must be followed.  
8. Endless knot; mystic diagram, a symbol of the endless rebirths. It is popularly called Knot of Love. |
| The Seven Precious Royal Symbols of Tibet | 1. The Wheel of Law. 2. The Jewel that fulfils all wishes. 3. The best Queen. 4. The best Minister, without whom no ruler can exist. 5. The best War Elephant which was to the armies of ancient times as the tank is to ours. 6. The best Horse. 7. The best Army Leader, without whom an empire would be lost. |
| Bowl                    | It symbolises a humble and simple way of life.                           |
| White scarf             | White scarf is the symbol of purity. Tibetans present it to others as a gesture of reverence. |
| Victory Banner          | It symbolises the victory of the activities of one’s own and others’ body, speech and mind over obstacles and negativities. It also stands for the triumph of the Buddhist Doctrine over all harmful and pernicious force. |
| Prostration             | It symbolises a humble attitude.                                       |

**Buddha images**

Buddha’s image is the most important symbolic object in the whole Buddhist world. The eternally youthful countenance of the Buddha, and the eternally preaching sermons from the heights of the Vulture’s Peak, which almost all the Buddha images wear,
demonstrate articulately the symbolic significance of the images. Even the anecdotes about his birth, his comprehension of the suffering of existence, his victory over the Mara, the evil forces, all expose symbolic significance.

Though Buddhism is less focused on the person of its founder than other religions, Buddhists do show great reverence to Shakyamuni as a supreme teacher and an example of the ultimate goal that all strive for, so that probably more images of him exist than of any other historical figure (Harvey, 1991: 2-3). Obviously, Buddha image became a paramount symbolism of Buddhism. Agrawala wrote:

The story of Buddha in stone, is woven out of a series of symbolical patterns...His eternal youthful face, his descent from the Tushita heaven, the dream of Maya seeing a white elephant, Buddha's oblique birth from the mother's side, his seven steps, the first bath, presentation of the four cups, the miracle of fire and water, the taming of the elephant Nalagiri, the vision of a Thousand Buddhas, the Dharma-Chakra, his visit to Indra, the ascent to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods and coming down by the three ladders of gold, silver and copper- these appearing as part of art are in reality symbols of the metaphysical pattern of Buddha's life, pointing to the concept of the Superman (Agrawala, 1965: 6).

On early works the Buddha's august presence was indicated by an empty space or by such significant symbols as an empty throne beneath a tree or by a pair of foot-prints (Snellgrove & Skorupski, 1977: 9). That is to say, the Buddha's physical image was not represented in the early days of Buddhism in India. Instead his passage on this earth was recalled by the representation of objects linked to his earthly career: the wheel of the law at Benares, the tree at Bodh-gaya under which he attained enlightenment, the stupa containing his relics. These were signs of his absence at the same time as they projected on this earth the example of his life and kept his message alive among his posterity (MacDonald & Sathl, 1979: 41). Actually, the creation of these objects was inspired by the Buddha's life and his teachings. The Buddha image is meant to represent the fullest potential of all mankind, to inspire them all to transform themselves and to attain their own perfection of evolution.
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The Buddha images that came into being at Gandhara and Mathura gradually became the classic representation of the Buddha that was to spread throughout the Buddhist world. This shows the Buddha with a serene, inward-looking expression, slightly smiling lips, hair arranged in a series of spiral curls, dressed in a monastic robe most often covering both shoulders, backed by a nimbus and, if seated, generally in a cross-legged posture and on a lotus throne (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, 1988: 306). Indeed, these characteristics make distinction from other religious objects.

A Buddha image is to serve as a reminder of a great spiritual teacher who, through his strenuous endeavour, showed people a way to cease suffering and to attain bliss and serenity. It is a symbol depicting a man more than a god. It is meant to represent the fullest potential of all mankind, to inspire them all to transform themselves and attain their own perfection of evolution. Thus, it is the image of each individual’s own perfection (Thurman, 1988: 127). That is to say, it is a tool for uncovering one’s innate nature. It is the symbol of one’s spiritual direction and eventual realisation.

The characteristics and expression on the Buddha’s face convey a feeling of bliss, peace, and perfect harmony. The always half-smile countenance suggests an experience of unearthly beauty (see Plate 3). It represents an ideal of calm and inner peace. It is the spontaneous reflection of the boundless compassion towards all sentient beings. The serene attitude denotes wisdom which can help mankind to overcome difficulties. Often the eyes are closed, but the Buddha is not sleeping; he is looking within. It is the very symbol of Perfection—the ultimate development of mankind.

The images are symbolic representations of qualities and do not pretend to be 'photographic' likenesses. It is impossible to express Buddha in a physical form because he is nothing but the attributes of wisdom and compassion found in supreme reality. The whole figure of Buddha expresses complete inward harmony and peace and at the same time dynamic compassion to all suffering sentient beings (Matsunami, 1984: 168). The
appearance of images might have been made by Greek converts to Buddhism, at Gandhara in Northwest India. These Greek craftsmen gave the images the same likeness as Apollo. These sculptures, and the millions which have followed, have given a tangible representation of the Buddha to many (Mahinda, n.d.: 37). In the very oldest sculptures and paintings, a blank space was used to indicate, rather than portray the presence of the Buddha. In the omission of the Buddha figure, this early Buddhist art is truly Buddhistic, but in nearly all else it is an art about Buddhism, rather than Buddhist art.

Iconographically, the types of Buddhas and even of Buddhissattvas are few. Tradition decrees four positions for the Buddha image: seated (the Maravijaya or Victory over Mara, being the most common), standing, walking (very rare), and reclining (as the Buddha was at his death) (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 27). The purpose of exercising these four positions is served by seeing them, they may inspire mankind to experience the arising of the altruistic compassion (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 137). Because these images signify wisdom and compassion.

Usually, the walking posture is comparatively scarce compared to other postures. The most common one is the seated posture of the Buddha, showing him in the attitude of meditation, it is in itself an impressive symbol. It indicates his detachment from all things terrestrial and from the three-dimensional world of phenomena, of human action and suffering. It demonstrates a state of utter tranquillity from which emanates the enlightenment that leads sentient beings to salvation (Seckel, 1964: 166). In some cases where the Buddha is represented in a different seated posture, either sitting in 'European' fashion or standing, this suggests abandonment of this detached attitude in favour of action and manifestation (Seckel, 1964: 166).

Finally, there are reclining images, indicating the great nirvana of the Buddha. It implies that even facing death, the Buddha, remained a serene mind, so contented and so magnificent, without any hint of agony or sorrow even at this critical moment, showing
human beings a way to face death with equanimity, dignity and peace. It also exposes that all conditioned things, even the physical form of the Buddha, are impermanent and subject to decay, a person who expects to get progress in spiritual development must endeavour his best to purify defilement in the mind. Above all, it is said that this posture, lying on the right side, is most salutary to a serene and sweet rest.

**Halo**

The head and the body of a Buddha are encircled by spheres of light, symbolising the radiating power of Buddha's body, voice and spirit. The radiation is depicted in both the celestial and the earthly manifestation of a Buddha (Olschak & Wangyal, 1973: 14). The halo or nimbus signifies the divine radiance emanating from the person of Buddha (Coomaraswamy, 1980: 9 and Rowland, 1976: 9). It signifies that the light of wisdom can lead people out of their darkness of ignorance.

**Lakshanas**

There are various "lakshanas" or magic marks which characterise the Buddha's head and body and limbs. The representation of certain individual "lakshanas" is extremely interesting for the varieties in form and iconography in the Buddha image. One of the more distinctive of these marks is the "usnisha", the lump at the top of the Buddha's head which, as a kind of auxiliary brain according to the texts, accommodates that cosmic consciousness or supreme wisdom which the Buddha attained at his enlightenment (Rowland, 1976: 9). An ultimate development of this feature in late Thai sculpture places a flame-shaped finial at the top of the Buddha's head, perhaps as a symbol of the divine radiance emanating from this magic centre (op. cit.).

**Mudras (Hand gestures)**

In Sanskrit, "mudra" means 'sign' or 'gesture'. It is a term used to describe the ritualised gestures of the hands and fingers, notably in sculpture and dance. Such hand postures, regulated by iconographic treatises, may denote a specific attitude (for example,
meditation or preaching) or may indicate a specific moment in a legend (Norwich, 1990: 307). Actually, they are not created by free imagination.

There are a lot of various mudras in Buddhist figures. In Buddhist images, a Buddha or Bodhisattva is generally shown standing or seated with various expressions. Aspects of the Buddha are conveyed by mudras, indicating specific virtues or incidents in his life (Norwich, 1990: 64). Specific mudras may help to identify the event being depicted, as in the case of life scenes of Shakyamuni, or they may identify which specific Buddha is being portrayed (Huntington, 1990: 103). Indeed, the various changing gestures and expressions are very inspiring.

Generally, for seated Buddha images, there are five major symbolic gestures of the hands (mudra): "dharmacakra mudra", in which both hands are held at the breast; "dhyana mudra", in which both hands rest with palms upward on the lap; and another in which the left hand rests in the same way on the lap, the right hand either hanging over the right knee ("bhumisparsa mudra") or resting on knee, palm upwards in "varada mudra" (Rowland, 1976: 52 & 134), or raised in "abhaya mudra." Sometimes the left hand grasps the folds of the robe. In standing images the right hand is generally raised in "abhaya mudra", while the left holds the folds of the robe. In seated images, the Buddha sometimes demonstrates the earth-witness gesture, i.e. touching the earth with his right hand and holding the begging bowl in his left (Olschak & Wangyal, 1973: 8-9). This symbolism remained standard in all Buddhist countries (Seckel, 1964: 167). Indeed, mudras are not whimsical expressions. Each gesture denotes a specific significance. Some important mudras in Buddhist images are as follows:

**The Bhumisparsa (or Earth-touching) mudra**

The bhumisparsa, or earth-touching, mudra with the right hand of the seated Buddha reaching down to touch the earth (The earth-witness gesture). This is a reference to an episode of the Great Enlightenment when, assaulted by the Demon Mara,
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Shakyamuni called upon the Earth Goddess to support his right to take his seat beneath the bodhi tree at the pole of the universe.

Although popular imagination regards it as a symbol with which the Buddha defeated the entice of Mara, in reality, the evil forces are all those habits, tendencies, the results of past actions in untold numbers of past existence, which bind people to certain views and to certain ways of doing things. And the Buddha now sought not merely to uproot the tendencies to unwholesome views and evil conduct but also to be free from the bonds of conventional goodness (Khantipalo, 1970: 12-3). Accordingly, the dark force is not necessarily the outside evils.

The Abhaya mudra

The abhaya mudra is a gesture of reassurance or blessing, in which the right hand is raised with palm outward. This gesture represents the dispelling of fear, as the Sultanganj Buddha image, displayed in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, shows. The right hand raised and palm outward is in blessing (Rowland, 1976: 28). It assures viewers bliss and hope.

The mudra of the Six element

The mudra of the Six Element. The gesture of the hands with the five fingers of the right hand grasping the index finger of the left is the mudra of the Six Elements, the five material elements of which man is composed and the spiritual essence or mind of the cosmic Buddha. The joining of the hands thus signifies the union of the material and spiritual worlds of the two mandalas (Rowland, 1976: 144).

The Jataka tales

Ever since Buddhist monuments have been built, scenes from the Jatakas have been used to decorate them. They have been the subject of sculpture and painting throughout Buddhist Asia (Zwalf, 1981: 105).

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These illustrations are not merely ornamental; their primary function is to teach. From the early centuries of Buddhism in India, the Jatakas were an inspiration to the painter and sculptor. This is attested by the remains of the stupas at Bharhut and Sanchi in central India and those at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the south. Stupas were sometimes surrounded by stone fences with great carved gates called "toranas", covered with eloquent scenes of the life of the Buddha or from the Jataka tales (Wry et al, 1979: 112).

The tales are the record, through countless lifetimes, of both the historical Buddha's and any ripening Budhisattva's compassion and often heroic self-sacrificing. Its core is the Bodhisattva ideal. In it, tales of compassion and self-sacrifice are given thematic pre-eminence (Martin, 1988: 97-8). It illustrates that awareness can only be achieved by self conquest or self sacrifice. The tales are a collection of some five hundred and fifty parable-like legends, purporting to be episodes in previous lives of the Buddha. They have always been extremely popular and contain a good deal of ancient folk-lore clothed in Buddhist morality.

The stories have persisted through the centuries and have been immensely popular in all the traditional Buddhist countries. The enormous influence of the Jatakas on the whole of Asia is unmistakable, in literature, painting, and sculpture. Thus, many of the greatest Buddhist monuments of Asia are carved and painted with hundreds of scenes from the Jatakas (Martin, 1988: 97). For instance, it can be demonstrated from the frescoes and sculptures of Ajanta and the marvellous relief of the Borobudur (Govinda, 1990: 73). The tales make vividly clear to everyone the ideal that reveals the essential basis of the Dharma: selflessness, readiness to sacrifice oneself for the benefit of others.
Footprints (Buddhapada)

A footprint left by the Buddha on his travels and venerated as a reminder of his doctrine. Buddha footprints are depicted in art with the shoe bearing the 108 auspicious signs by which a Buddha can be recognised.

Bodhi tree

Since the time of the Buddha's enlightenment in the sixth century B.C., countless pious visitors to Bodh Gaya departed the site carrying with them shining leaves from the sacred "bodhi" tree. Safeguarded in pockets, books, scraps of cloth, and other makeshift presses, these precious treasures are venerated as living links with the physical body of the Buddha, for it was under the predecessor of this very tree that the great teacher meditated and attained enlightenment (Huntington, 1990: 69).

The original bodhi tree and its descendants were, like relics, more than symbolic reminders of the Buddha. The tree is tangible links with him and his spiritual power (Harvey, 1990: 71). It indicates vividly the culmination of spiritual growth: enlightenment (op. cit.: 73). Evidently, it becomes the symbol of enlightenment.

Lotus (see Plate 1)

Lotus flowers symbolise the possibility of maintaining personal purity in an impure world. One of the most common and important early Buddhist symbols is the lotus. In India it has always been looked upon as the most beautiful flower. Its bursting into blossom above the water made it a symbol for the birth of gods and of the world. A passage which frequently recurs in the sutras gives a good indication of the symbolic nuances of the lotus in Buddhism. "Just as, monks, a lotus, blue, red or white, though born in the water, grown up in the water, when it reaches the surface it stands there unsoiled by the water; just so, monks, though born in the world, grown up in the world, having overcome the world, a Tathagata (other name of the Buddha) abides unsoiled by
the world" (Harvey, 1990: 73). It emphasises especially on the merit of remaining purity in a soiled world.

It indicates that the Buddha was a teacher in this confused world of desires and defilement but he rose above them; he was "in" this world but not "of" this world. Not even the slightest desire afflicted his mind. This is the symbolism of the lotus (Khantipalo, 1970: 6). It articulates vividly that awareness can only be actualised in the world rather than secluded from the world.

It has become the paramount symbol of Buddhism because it is born from the mud at the bottom of a lake but blossoms above the water as a stainless flower that brings pleasure to all who behold it. Likewise, living beings are born in the ocean of suffering with impure bodies and impure minds; but if they train in meditation they can attain a completely pure body and mind, and bring peace and happiness to all they meet.

Lotus is a symbol of Buddha. The emblem of Amitabha Buddha is the lotus flower, which signifies spiritual rebirth and spiritual growth. Its petals form the base of the throne of the Awakened. Most Buddhist images are seated or standing on a lotus. It is a symbol representing the spiritual potentialities in all human beings. One who determines to follow the Buddha's way should be like the lotus in being unsoiled by defilement, such as attachment to any person or anything, which worldly beings are usually entangled.

Stupas and pagodas

The symbolic importance of a stupa is very great. Stupa is a complete Buddhist symbol (Zwalf, 1981: 77). Originally, a burial mound, it was built to house the holy relics of the Buddha and his disciples. In early Buddhist India, it had stood for the death of the Buddha which was the final proof of his conquest over life and death for as a Buddha he was never again to be reborn. In time the stupa came to represent Buddhahood itself, the Absolute as pure consciousness or voidness.
Both stupas and pagodas are closely identified with the practice of Buddhism. When the Buddha passed away, his relics were sealed in stupas placed at the sites of important events of his life. The number was increased greatly in the reign of Asoka. They were used for worship and meditation.

The stupa is regarded as an architectural symbol of the whole material universe as existing in space (see Plate 13). The successive stages in the stupa represent the transformation of psycho-spiritual energy: from earth to water, from water to fire, from fire to air, from air to space. These are the stages of the Tantric path to enlightenment, stages symbolised by the five elements as incorporated into the Tantric symbolism of the stupa.

Buddhists consider that the various shapes of a stupa symbolise the basic elements of the universe. The square base represents earth, the round dome represents water and the various conical shapes on top of the dome represent in turn fire, wind and space. The stupa reminds Buddhists of the Buddha and of the state of nirvana. They also serve to remind people of the peace for which Buddhism aims, and several stupas have been built as symbols of peace among peoples of the world (Cush, 1990: 58) (see Plate 13).

In the anionic art of early Buddhism relief of a bodhi tree, Dhamma-Wheel and Stupa were used to represent the three key events of the Buddha's life: enlightenment, first sermon and nirvana (Harvey, 1990: 82-3). Thus, stupa was regarded as reminders of the Buddha's enlightenment, and as tangible links with his great spiritual powers. The stupa is also a world symbol for Buddhahood (Berkson, 1986: 46).

Pagoda, the Chinese style of stupa, was the symbol of the Dharma, which Buddhists erected for all those who wanted to see beyond the narrow horizon of their mundane world.
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The Dharmachakra (Wheel of the law or the Dharma-wheel)

The dharmachakra, with the hands in the gesture of Turning the Wheel of the Law, of the First Preaching, has been one of the major Buddhist symbols (Rowland, 1976: 16). It is a means to represent Buddha's Doctrine and is the object referred to in the mudra for "setting the Wheel of Law in Motion." It was first devised in India during the reign of the third century B.C. Buddhist king Asoka (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 30).

The Buddha's teachings are said to be like a precious wheel because wherever they spread, the people in that area have the opportunity to learn the teachings and put them into practice. It has come to symbolise that the Dharma was originally a solar disc in Indian tradition; and it later came to be considered an attribute of kingship. The king was the one who occupied the position of the sun in society and so he held the sun-wheel as a symbol of his authority. The Buddha occupies that same position in the universe from a spiritual point of view. He is the source of the nourishing light of Truth and, when he turns the Wheel of the Dharma, it sends forth golden beams which illuminate the hearts of men, darkened by ignorance.

The circle denotes the completeness of the Buddha's teaching, which is always in motion. The eight spokes symbolise the Eight-fold Path and the rim, all-encompassing Wisdom and Compassion. The axle is the bar of truth on which the wheel turns, and the hub represents the Oneness of Life (Matsunami, 1984: 173). Buddha's sermon in the Deer Park is known as the 'Setting in motion of the Wheel of Existence' (Govinda, 1977: 22).

It also was known as the 'Wheel of Law', for the Buddha compared the spokes of the wheel to the rails of pure conduct, justice being the oneness of their length, wisdom the rim, while the axle of truth is attached to the hub, which is modesty and thoughtfulness. The Buddha's explanation of the reality of existence was based on this conception of a metaphorical wheel. The wheel became an important symbol in the Buddhist art of many countries (Ridley, 1978: 21).
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This symbol refers not only to the Buddha’s act of preaching; but also to his spiritual experience and realisation. By this act the Buddha inaugurated the spiritual path and the realisation to liberation. This act is clearly paralleled to the wheel-turner emperor’s inauguration of an earthly empire (Harvey, 1990: 78). From this sermon it naturally came to symbolise the Buddha as a teacher, the Dharma as teaching, and the power of both to transform people’s lives (op. cit.). Obviously, it is an important symbolism of Buddhism.

Bodhisattvas

A Bodhisattva is a being dedicated to enlightenment and seeking the salvation of all beings (Cush, 1990: 26). There are many Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. The most popular ones are Avalokiteshvara, Manjusri, and Maitreya (Huntington, 1990: 106). Unlike Buddhas, who wear the robes of monks, Bodhisattvas are arrayed like kings. The luxurious worldly attire of a Bodhisattva indicates that the Bodhisattva participates fully in worldly life, but does so out of compassion and therefore without any loss of purity or equanimity (Huntington, 1990: 106). Indeed, it is the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism.

Avalokiteshvara

A few Mahayanist Bodhisattvas were adopted as central figures of cult worship and rank with the Buddha himself. The figure of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Chinese: Guan-yin; Japanese: Kannon)- has become a religious landmark of East Asia. This personified Bodhisattva of wisdom and mercy, like the figure of the Buddha himself, forms a unifying link between the many sects of Buddhism (Dumoulin, 1976:159).

Sometimes Avalokitesvara is demonstrated as a multi-headed and multi-handed figure. This feature does not model any natural human being in the world. It contains superfluous religious meaning and significance to show the great compassion of this Bodhisattva. He is filled with compassion and desperately wants to alleviate the pain of all living beings. Thus, it is said, his head was transformed into eleven heads, and his one thousand hands were stretched out in all directions, always and everywhere present, ready
to help. This all-embracing presence of the compassionate Bodhisattva, who will not enter Nirvana until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment, is a fundamental concept of Mahayana Buddhism (Olschak & Wangyal, 1973: 23). Obviously, the tendency to represent gods and goddesses with many faces and arms is attributable to Tantric influence.

**Manjusri**

In most monasteries usually there is a large statue of Bodhisattva "Manjusri" seated on a lion which has big, doleful eyes. Manjusri, represents enlightened wisdom and the lion the untamed self, which is not really separate from the eternal but thinks it is.

His principal attributes include a sword with which he destroys delusion and a sutra that symbolises his profound insight into reality. Sometimes he also carries a blue lotus. Besides, like Avalokitesvara, he also has a variety of forms, including peaceful and wrathful manifestations (Huntington, 1990: 106).

**Maitreya**

Maitreya is the embodiment of Amoghasidhi's all-embracing wisdom, that is, the selfless loving act that does not bind the doer but makes him happy and free, because his action flows from devotion and not self-reference (Govinda, 1990: 28). This Bodhisattva is always sitting in "European" style, that is, with both feet on the ground- not sunk in meditation, but ready to stand up in order to bring consolation and help to suffering humanity (Govinda, 1990: 28). It is said that Maitreya is the forthcoming Buddha (Berkson, 1986: 80).

**Monk Budai**

The characters of his name mean 'cloth sack'; but they can also be understood as 'big belly'; he is therefore commonly portrayed with a huge stomach and a cloth sack. Known for his travels around the countryside for alms, Budai is the subject of numerous
popular legends. His always smiling face denotes his liberated wisdom.

**Tara**

The name means 'The Saviouress' or 'The Star'. A beautiful legend relates how she was born from the tears of Avalokitesvara as he wept over the sorrows and miseries of the world. Her female form demonstrates that enlightenment is attainable by all women and men alike. Her green colour symbolises her ability to act.

Tara's left leg is drawn up, signifying complete control over sexual energy. Her right leg is extended, indicating that she is ready to rise to the aid of all beings.

**Mara**

In Buddhist iconography, Mara attempted to disturb the Buddha from his purpose of attaining enlightenment by promising him all the delights of earth. It was considered as anything that can obstruct the attainment of enlightenment. Actually, as Buddhists consider the obstinate enemy is within themselves, thus Mara is an embodiment of their own delusions.

**Lion**

Lion, a royal animal in Indian tradition, is also strongly associated with Buddhism. The Buddha himself was known as the lion of the Shakyas race and when he expounded his doctrine it was called the lion's roar (Khantipalo, 1970: 15). It symbolises the Buddha's fearlessness in proclaiming the Truth. A throne is called the lion's seat and in Gandhara, thrones and chairs are supported by carved lion's feet or the whole animal. The lion in the seat is referred to as the "simhasana", meaning the royal seat (Berkson, 1986: 185).

It denotes, just as the ferociousness of a lion, that the Dharma can suppress all anxieties. The lion roars in the jungle at night, without fear of other beasts. Other animals are afraid to make a sound, lest they be pounced on by their enemies. The lion roars,
according to myth and legend, to proclaim his kingship of the whole jungle. So the Buddha's fearless proclamation of the Truth, his proclamation of his sovereignty over the whole spiritual universe, is compared to the roaring of the lion. The Buddha's teaching is a lion's roar because all lesser teachings are silenced by its depth and grandeur.

In addition, the vehicle of Manjushuri, a Wisdom Bodhisattva, is a lion. The symbolism indicates that the lion is the king of all animals. When it roars, all the animals, denoting the anxieties in human beings, are suppressed. This analogue depicts that the truth of Buddha's teaching also can dispel various anxieties and worries of human beings.

_Horse_

The horse, to nomadic people, means wealth and in many cultures it has been a sign of aristocracy. It also suggests a journey— a spiritual voyage such as that on which the Buddha-to-be set forth when he left his life at home, riding on his faithful charger. Additionally, it signifies a messenger bringing news from distant places just as does the Buddhist 'Windhorse' which carries the Three Jewels on its back, to all beings. The horse in Buddhist symbolism is the embodiment of speed and energy, especially energy in the form of 'prajna', or vital breath. In Tibetan Buddhist art one often finds the figure of a horse galloping through the air, carrying the Three Jewels on its back. This figure suggests that only through the concentration and proper direction of all one's energies can one attain Enlightenment.

_Deer_

Statues of deer appear on the tops of monasteries. Deer is depicted on either side of a Dharma wheel, which symbolises the teachings of Buddha. Because they have an attraction to sound, they were depicted with their heads lifted up, looking at the wheel and listening to the teachings of Buddha (Gyatso, 1990: 75).

_Peacock_
The peacock was thought to derive the brilliant hues of its plumage from the poison of the snakes on which it was said to feed— a symbol, thus, of purification and transformation. Its feathers are quite often used in Tantric ritual. They are placed like flowers in the vase which contains the consecrated water.

Other miscellaneous Buddhist objects

In addition, there are a lot of miscellaneous Buddhist objects. The most important ones are as follows:

Jewel

Just as the jewel is capable of removing poverty, the altruistic spirit of awakening is able to dismiss the indigence, or the difficulties, of cycle existence and solitary peace. Likewise, just as the jewel fulfils the desires of sentient beings, so the altruistic intention to become enlightened accomplishes the wishes of sentient beings.

The jewel was made the symbol of the three vessels of enlightenment, namely, the enlightened one (Buddha), the Truth (Dharma) in the realisation of which enlightenment consists, and the spiritual community (sangha) of those who have entered the path of enlightenment. All Buddhists should go for refuge to the Three jewels because Dharma is like a boat that can carry them across the ocean of samsara, Buddha is like the skilful navigator of the boat, and the Sangha are like the crew.

Rosary

Buddhists often use rosaries to concentrate and purify their minds. It is a convenient tool for alleviating negative thinking and hence contributing to the equanimity of one's mind. If one's mind is enthralled with greed or aversion, it is necessary first to alleviate it. Meditation on the inhalation and exhalation of the breath up to a count of twenty-one is the prime means for doing so. Since the mind cannot have two modes of
apprehension simultaneously, this meditation causes the former conceptuality to fade (Gyatso, 1985b: 22).

Usually, a rosary is a long circle of beads joined together on a string consisting of 108 beads symbolising mankind's 108 worldly passions. It is said that while reciting a mantra or a Buddha's name for each bead on the string, the Buddhist can set his mind and body free from worldly passions. The largest bead in the middle represents the Buddha, the two beads on each side represent one's parents or Wisdom and Compassion, and the rest represent each individual. The string represents a uniting force to strengthen men's fellowship. It should be carried all the time with reverence on the left wrist, and is grasped by the right hand (Matsunami, 1984: 170).

As people's thinking hops here and there, while counting the rosary and reciting the name of a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or a mantra, a person can focus his mind on some positive thinking thus expelling the negative thinking. As a positive thinking cannot co-exist with a negative thinking simultaneously, it is wise to espouse altruistic thinking always. It is the best way to be happy and cheerful. Accordingly, a rosary is a convenient tool for taming mind.

Mayu (see Plate 6)

In Chinese and Japanese monasteries, it is easy to find a wooden fish ritual instrument called "Mu yu". The fish is stylised so that the tail and head come together to form the handle. A slit is located in the under-side of the belly.

It adopts the ever-opening eyes of fish to denote awareness. It means that one who aspires to achieve liberation and enlightenment should always be vigilant over one's entire way of life, including words and thoughts as well as actions.
Chapter 3

**Bowl**

It is the begging and eating utensil of monks and nuns. It reminds them that as the spiritual pursuers, they should abandon arrogance and pride. The seven bowls of water placing before the image of the Buddha symbolise the gift of all the senses and appetites to the Buddha (Harvey, 1983: 105).

**Prostration**

Prostration counteracts pride and arrogance. It is not an act of submission to something external, but a recognition that the potential for awareness lies within people themselves. In reality, he is prostrating to his own true nature. The homage and respect paid to the Buddha is but a symbolic veneration of his greatness and the happiness people find in his teachings.

**Mandala**

"Mandala" means magnificent building. It is usually in the form of a circle and square. It represents the self-identification of the microcosm (the human person) with the macrocosm, which has the nature of samsara for the unenlightened mind, conversely, it reveals itself as the perfect expression of Buddhahood when all misleading distinctions disappear in the state of nonduality (Snellgrove, 1987: 200).

**Mantra**

The sound symbol of enlightenment. It carries the qualities of Enlightenment just as does the shape, colour and gesture of the visual image. The mantra is the Bodhisattva in terms of sound. It does not really mean anything, or rather what literal meaning it has is scarcely relevant. For instance, the mantra of 'OM MANI PADME HUM' has become a distinctive emblem of Buddhism in Tibet, being so omnipresent in Tibet and so charged with meaning for the Tibetans.
Chapter 3

The Wheel of Life

The Wheel of Life is painted at the gateway of Tibetan monasteries. The Wheel consists of four concentric circles. In the central circle are three animals: a cock, a snake and a pig, each of which bites the tail of the one before it so that they are linked together in a circular chain. The next circle forms a thin band around the hub and is divided vertically into two segments, the left coloured white and the right, black. In the black half, naked beings tumble downwards, harried by demons, their faces contorted in agony and their arms flailing helplessly to prevent their fall. In the white section, beings are performing all kinds of meritorious actions: meditating, distributing money, venerating the Buddha. They rise upwards with joyous faces.

The next circle is placed close to the rim so that the third area occupies almost half the Wheel. It is divided into six equal segments. Each segment represents a realm. The outer ring of the wheel is divided into twelve segments which represent the twelve cyclic links in the chain of dependent origination as revealed in the process of human birth and death. Above the rim of the Wheel, a ferocious face with three fiercely glaring red eyes and a crown of skulls appears. This is the monster of impermanence who allows nothing conditioned to stand still. He devours the Wheel with his fangs and tears at it with strong talons.

Prayer flags

Prayer flags are usually used by Tibetans. The devices serve to protect their owner and to contribute to their spiritual advancement (Bell, 1946: 180-81).

Prayer wheel (see Plate 6)

Prayers are written on strips of paper, and enclosed in little wheels that are turned by the hand. The purpose of doing it is to concentrate people's minds on positive thoughts, thinking kindly of all beings and how they may help those who are in trouble.
This is the role of the prayer wheel (Bell, 1946: 180-81). Accordingly, it serves as prayer flags or a rosary.

Scull cups and drums (see Plate 6)

The skulls and the emphasis on the esoteric serves as a reminder to the devotee of the transient nature of earthly existence and the possibility of release through the Buddhist faith (National Palace Museum, 1971: 71).

Common ceremonial tools such as skull cups and drums, bone trumpets, garlands and wands with skulls are now all referred to be a consistent symbolism. They are thought as particularly suitable for the ascetic to overcome natural human instincts connected with the illusory concepts of pleasure, pain and the vanities of life. To eat and drink from a skull was a recognised technique of asceticism. They symbolise the conquest of these fears and thus were considered wholly compatible with spiritual endeavour (Zwalf, 1981: 58). After all, people should know that impermanence is a reality in existence. They should face it with serenity.

The skull signifies bliss, and the blood which was held in the skull cups symbolises the mind realising the emptiness of inherent existence. In other contexts, a skull symbolises impermanence; a corpse symbolises selflessness (Gyatso, 1985a: 98-9). The reason why the skull is associated with bliss is that the basis of the bliss of the melting of the basic constituent (sexual bliss) is said to be at the crown of the head. A professor of medicine at the University of Virginia explained that the ultimate source of the generation of semen is in the head (Gyatso, 1985a: 98).

Thus, the skull filled with blood symbolises emptiness and bliss. Indeed, the symbols of death, like skulls, skeletons, corpses, and all aspects of decay and dissolution, impressed upon the human mind- are not means to create disgust for life but means to gain control over the dark forces which represent the reverse side of life. People must
make themselves familiar with them, because they have power over them as long as they fear them. To propitiate the dark forces does mean to accept them as a necessary part of reality, which teaches human beings not to get attached to any particular form of appearance and thus liberates them from bodily bondage (Govinda, 1977: 117). Indeed, it is a sound way to liberation.

Undoubtedly, the mystery of death was the greatest challenge to the human mind and the birth of religion. The origin of religion was not the fear of death, but the recognition of death as the great transformer and initiator into the true nature of man's innermost being. The fear of death could only originate at a time when human consciousness had hardened into an extreme form of ego-centrist, based on the illusion of being a permanent entity, a self-existing soul. This illusion becomes an obstacle which blurs the reality of life and death (Govinda, 1977: 179-80).

It should be noted that remembering death, the impermanence of this personality, acts as a discouragement to excessive desire and ill-will. Meditation on death is extremely beneficial (see Plate 12). Mankind needs to remember the certainty of their death. From the moment of their birth, they move inexorably towards death. Remembering that at the time of death, wealth, family and fame will be of no use to them, they must turn their minds to the practice of the Dharma.

**Tibetan chorten**

In some respects, Tibetan Chorten is very like an Indian stupa. It is always used to bury the saintly ascetics. It became the symbol of a saint's heavenward-striving spiritual power and his will to attain enlightenment. Obviously, it symbolises enlightenment (Olschak & Wangyal, 1973: 14).

Usually, the basic structure of a Chorten consists of a square foundation symbolising the earth, a dome symbolising water, and thirteen tapering steps of
enlightenment symbolising the element of fire. These steps lead to a stylised parasol, the symbol of wind, which is topped in the ethereal sphere by the well-known 'win-symbol' uniting sun and moon, which is the shimmering crown of a Chorten (Olschak & Wangyal, 1973: 18).

**Thunderbolt and bell**

These are the most important Tibetan ritual objects often kept on altars. The thunderbolt (Vajra) was held in the right hand and the bell in the left and both were moved in formal gestures during recitation and reading. The vajra represents on its own the adamantine or unbreakable and unchanging essence of Buddhahood which can be defined as 'total void'; in conjunction with the bell, however, it represents one of the joint factors in the quest for liberation, the male principle of compassion as the means, while the bell is the female principle of wisdom or knowledge of the voids of all things (Zwalf, 1981: 83).

**Vajra (or dorje)**

Tantric Buddhism saw the "Vajra" as a good symbol for its powerful methods and the enlightened mind. This was because it saw it as a substance which was: as irresistible as a thunderbolt, suggesting the strong power of the enlightened mind to destroy spiritual obstacles; as hard as diamond, suggesting the indestructible nature of the enlightened mind; and as clear as empty space, suggesting the 'empty', void-like nature of such a mind (Harvey, 1990: 135). As a visible symbol the vajra takes the shape of a sceptre (the emblem of supreme, sovereign power), and therefore it is correct to call it 'diamond sceptre'.

'Vajra', 'dorje' in Tibetan, means both 'thunderbolt' and 'diamond', two metaphors for the energy of the void in which all opposites are reconciled. It also refers symbolically to the erect male sexual organ. The shape of the 'dorje' seems to be derived from an ancient power-emblem shaped like the thunderbolt that classical Zeus is sometimes hurling. The thunderbolt or lightning-strike is a universal and natural symbol for
concentrated energy, while the diamond is the hardest and most brilliant of stones, interpreted as the crystal form of pure light (Rawson, 1991: 15).

Vajra-sceptre

The Vajra-sceptre became a symbolic ritual implement, as did the Vajra-bell. The centre of the sceptre symbolises emptiness, and the three bulges represent the sense-desire, pure form, and formless worlds, which 'emerge' from emptiness. In addition, the sceptre and bell also symbolise skilful means and wisdom, a complementary pair whose perfect union is seen as sparking off enlightenment (Harvey, 1990: 135).

Uttarasanga (Patched robe)

The outer robe of a Buddhist monk. By tradition, the uttarasanga was the discarded robe formerly belonging to a dead man. In later times, monks began to wear new robes but continued the tradition by sewing together several small pieces of cloth to form the whole robe. The rag patched clothing serves to remind the monks to renounce attachment. Though dressing like beggars, monks possess a wealth of kindness for others. The wearing reminds sentient beings to sow welfare seeds by generous giving.

The vase of plenty

It is an early Buddhist symbol of some importance which became one of the eight auspicious symbols in the Sinhalese and Tibetan traditions. In early Buddhist art the ‘vase of plenty’ was often shown with a lotus or bodhi tree sprouting from it, so suggesting spiritual growth from the reservoir of "Dharma" which it symbolised (Harvey, 1990: 75-6).

This chapter deals mainly with Buddhist objects. It discusses the nature of the objects. It explores the creative motivations and the real functions of the objects. Besides, it examines the unity of the objects. It analyses the specific characteristics of the objects developed in different areas. In addition, it explains the symbolic motifs of the objects and
their significance. Through the exploration of the above mentioned issues, the study gives an overall picture of the objects.
Chapter 4 The use of Buddhist objects in displays

After discussing the authentic nature, functions, and significance of Buddhist objects, this chapter examines the use of them in British museums in past and current displays. It begins with the issue of how these objects came to the collections of British museums. Then it explores museums' collecting with the surviving threaten of the objects. Finally, it analyses the merits and shortcomings of using the objects.

4.1 How Buddhist objects came to British museums

The channels which brought the bulk of Buddhist objects into museums were various. Jones wrote that by the latter part of the 19th century at least three strands in collections can be identified: the missionary, the academic and the collector (Jones, 1992: 25). The most found channels are as follows:

Missionary collecting

Some Buddhist objects in the West were collected by missionary personnel during the imperial period. The Times of January 9th 1823 gave an account of the Indian collection of the London Missionary Society read, 'idols given up by their former worshippers from the folly and sin of idolatry' (Nicholson, 1983: 26). Besides, some of Buddhist objects in Bolton Museum were donated by W.E. Hampson, an Irish missionary in China.

Jones observed that material associated with non-Christian religion were collected as trophies of conversion. To take an example from a collection acquired by Ipswich Museums, a typical documentation consists of: 'Fetish given by witch-doctor converted by Mr Salmon at Bolobo Mission' (Jones, 1992: 25). Usually, there is no information about the significance of the objects from this channel.
Besides, according to the description of a pamphlet published by the Liverpool museum, some of the objects in this museums were acquired from missionaries who had returned from the Darjiling area.

**Travellers' collecting**

It is the nature of mankind to collect curiosities. Some Buddhist objects in museums were collected in this way. According to the introductory information of the Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, the first known museum in Bolton was Sharple's Museum of Curiosities dating from 1832. Besides, Zwalf wrote:

> After the annexation of Gandhara by the British East India Company in 1849, great quantities of Buddhist cult images and relief in grey-blue and green schist and lime plaster gradually came to light. They were found in ruined Buddhist complexes- shrines and monasteries, nearly always grouped together- situated on the valley floor and the hills and mountain slopes to the north. By the end of the nineteenth century scholars were using Gandhara as a convenient term for what was being recognised as a remarkable, long-lived and influential tradition of Buddhist art and architecture (Zwalf, 1979: 1).

According to the description on the labels of the display *Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet* which was held in the Royal Academy in 1992, in the early part of this century, the Russian explorer P.K. Kozlov made spectacular discoveries in a stupa, or burial mound, near the ruined city of Khara Koto. The works he discovered there are now in the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. The stupa in which they were found was sealed before 1227, so the works can be dated before that. Lacking the means to transport everything as he went back to Russia, Kozlov buried part of the hoard. When he returned in 1926, however, he could not find the place, probably because the sand has had shifted. The works are in a variety of styles, reflecting both Tibetan and Chinese stylistic and iconographic traditions. They contain a great deal of information about early Tibetan art.
In the case of the Ipswich Museum, most Buddhist objects were gifts from local people. At the Art Galleries and Museums of Dundee, the objects were also collected by local people who travelled to the Far East. For instance, Dr. T. Wyse, who worked in India, donated some of the objects to the university.

The objects at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum were collected by local people who went to India in the last century. After the death of these persons, their families gave these objects to the museum. Besides, according to the explanation of captions in that museum, the objects were collected by Annie and Merton Russell Cotes. Whilst at the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, similar objects were offered by F.M. Boyd and John Guy.

In addition, Nicholson pointed out that the first major character on the stage of Indian collection was Charles Stuart. As a General with the East India Company’s army, he took an enthusiastic interest in Indian sculpture, gathering together fragments from ruined temples which were lying about in neglect. His resultant fine collection, particularly of sculpture of the Pala period, eventually found its way into the collection of the British Museum in 1872 (Nicholson, 1983: 26). Indeed, they included a lot of Buddhist objects.

Tibetan objects began to enter Western collections in the last century. In 1893 the British Museum acquired a sizeable number of Lamaistic images from a collection formed in Peking and in the following years there were further significant accessions, particularly from the Tibetan fringes of India as well as from Sikkim and Bhutan. There are many distinguished Tibetan collections in Europe (Paris, Leyden, Rome, Leningrad), the United States (the Newark Museum has published an excellent catalogue) and in this country (Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and Merseyside Museums, Liverpool); there is also much important material in private hands (Zwalf, 1981: 10-1). Indeed, the total number of Tibetan objects is very large in British museums.
The most famous case is Stein's collection in the British Museum. The explorers of Mid-Asia of the last century, chiefly Aurel Stein, brought to light not only a mass of Buddhist terra-cotta, manuscripts and paintings but also uncovered the sand-buried foundations of many a temple and convent from the vanished oasis-states around the Taklamakan desert and in the valley of the Tarim river (Dutt, 1966: 2). Wood also wrote that the most significant items in the British Library Chinese collection are those made by Stein in Dunhuang and other parts of Chinese Central Asia on his three expeditions (1900-1916), a vast archive which included the Diamond sutra and other illustrated Buddhist items dating from the 5th to the 10th centuries (Wood, 1985: 6). Undoubtedly, Stein's collection is a priceless treasure.

The antiquities Stein collected mostly date from the Tang and Five Dynasties period (AD 618-960). The paintings were found in cave 17 at Dunhuang and range from large works on silk and paper to sutra illustrations in handscrolls and books. They are valuable sources for the history of Chinese figure painting and architecture, and contain some fine examples of early landscape painting in the scenes of the life of the Buddha (Wilson, 1989:153). Indeed, many items in the collection are Buddhist objects.

Now some of the most valuable and unique materials of Stein's collection are housed in the Oriental Department of the British Museum. Especially the collections which were found in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Dunhuang on the edge of the Gobi Desert, they included many Chinese Buddhism manuscript scrolls (Francis, 1971: 250-51). The Diamond Sutra is one of the most famous items in these collections. Teichman in Journey to Turkistan, an account of his travels along the old Silk Road on a Foreign Office mission in 1935, described that the Chinese complained, and the foreigners cannot well deny it, that caravan-loads of priceless treasures from the temples, tombs and ruins of Chinese Turkestan have been carried off to foreign museums and are forever lost to China (Hopkirk, 1980: 1). It made the Chinese 'boil with indignation'. He added, 'to read in the books of foreign travellers descriptions of how they carried off
whole libraries of ancient manuscripts, frescoes and relics of early Buddhist culture in Turkistan' (op. cit.).

The V&A began collecting Tibetan art more than one hundred years ago with, amongst other things, the acquisition of part of the collection made by the brothers Schlagintweit during their travels in Tibet in the sixties of the last century (Lowry, 1973b: 8).

_Plundered trophies_

Undeniably, some Buddhist objects were plundered in wars. Wood wrote that five cases of Chinese books in the British Library Chinese collection, seized during the Opium War, were donated by Queen Victoria in 1843 (Wood, 1985: 6). In addition, the collection in the imperial summer palace outside Peking was sacked by British and French troops during the Second Opium War. James Spencer, the curator of the Chang Foundation Museum, said, 'It is commonly believed that a lot of the pieces were lost during the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901), but most of the best and most important things were lost in 1860, during the Second Opium War' (Ma and Bergkamp, 1991: 52).

Besides, Younghusband also plundered a lot of Tibetan objects when he invaded Lhasa in 1904. A pamphlet published by the Liverpool Museums read, "There was also a series of everyday objects, bought from a sergeant who had accompanied the Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa in 1904." In the vaults of the Liverpool Museum is a vast collection of Tibetan material, the result of Sir Francis Younghusband's campaign. Younghusband and his party returned home laden with souvenirs (Moncrieff, 1992: 36).

Indeed, many Buddhist objects were the collection of Sir Francis Younghusband (1863-1942). His personal collection is now in the Liverpool Museum where it is joined by the collection of Sir Charles Bell (1907-1988). They were lent by Lady Lees and Miss Eileen Younghusband and from other sources, such as Dr. D.L. Snellgrove's collection.
In the case of the Aberdeen University Museum, according to the interpretations on the labels, the Buddhist objects were collected by General Leslie MacDonald, who accompanied Younghusband's invasion into Tibet. Besides, the Burmese materials at this university were collected by Dr. James Wellis c.1820 during the suppression of a Burmese revolt. In addition, a temple bell in the Magazine Museum at the Newarke Gateway, Leicester, was captured in a Burma war. The label read, "Temple Bell 'OOktimar': Captured in Burma in 1889 by the 2nd Battalion during the pursuit of the rebel leaders OOtyar and OOOktmar. For many years it hung outside the guard room at Glen Parva and was used for striking the hour until it cracked."

Kerr also wrote that in the V&A, an incense burner is probably the booty General Charles Gordon (1833-85) acquired when British and French troops looted the Summer Palace of the Chinese emperors in 1862. The V&A bought the piece from the auction sale of General Gordon's estate (Kerr, 1991: 6).

Transactions
In the case of the Cuming Museum in London, some Buddhist objects were obtained in art auctions.

The collecting channels in the British Museum are very broad. In 1893, it acquired a sizeable number of Lamaistic images from a collection formed in Peking and in the following years there were further significant accessions, particularly from the Tibetan fringes of India and from Sikkim and Bhutan (Zwalf, 1985a: 10). The Qi sha tripiitaka volume 9 and the Ming Buddhist booklet in the British Library Chinese collection were acquired in 1983 (Wood, 1985:6). While the Amaravati sculptures were acquired by Augustus Wollaston Franks, keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities (Knox, 1993: 4). In addition, Pal also wrote:
In 1948, the then Maharaja of Kashmir abdicated his throne and retired to Bombay. Soon thereafter, a group of bronzes appeared in the art market, but the majority was considered by local scholars and collectors to be Tibetan because they were overpainted in cold gold. A number of these were subsequently published by Douglas Barrett as examples of Kashmiri bronzes in an article (1962) that still remains the most authoritative in the field. In the early fifties, further political upheavals—this time not in Kashmir but in Tibet—resulted in a continuous exodus of Kashmiri bronzes from that ill-fated country. Most of these have now found their way, quite predictably, into private collections and museums in the United States (Pal, 1975: 9).

**Donations**

In the Hunterian Museum of the University of Glasgow, according to the records of its documentation, most of the Buddha statues came from the Audersonian museum which closed in 1888. Besides, most of the objects at the Manchester University Museum came as part of the A.F. Warden collection of antiquities which was given to the Manchester Museum in 1964.

Some Buddhist collections were developed through the generosity of donors whose gifts ranged from single works to large collections. Presents are exchanged in Tibet as a sign of friendship. Sir Charles Bell (1907-1988) received many presents, some of them very precious and unique, particularly those from the 13th Dalai Lama. For instance, a pair of temple trumpets, of dark wood mounted with silver gilt and set with turquoise, coral and lapis lazuli which was given to Bell by the Dalai Lama XIII in September 1910. They came from the college of monks at the Potala, and were blown before the Dalai Lama wherever he went in the morning and evening. A brass statue of Amitayus, the Buddha of the Eternal Life. It was given to Bell by the Panchen Lama, head of the Tashilunpo monastery, the second most important abbot of Tibet after the Dalai Lama. A copper gilt statuette of Chenrezi, the guardian deity of Tibet, was given to Bell by Maharajah Kumar of Sikkim. These collections are held in the Liverpool Museum.
Chapter 4

The famous large copper statue of the Sultanganj Buddha in the Birmingham City Museum, according to the explanation of an attached label, was discovered on the evening of 6th December, 1861 by E.B. Harris, a railway engineer working on construction of the East Indian Railway and later given to the Museum.

In the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, most of its Buddhist objects were from Williamson's collection in the 1930s. In 1972 Mrs. Margaret D. Williamson presented 155 artefacts from Tibet and the neighbouring countries of Sikkim and Bhutan to Emmanuel College Cambridge, in memory of her late husband Frederick Williamson. The items have been placed by the College on deposit at the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (registration numbers 1976.D.1-155). Seven further items were added to the gift and deposited in 1985 (numbers 1985.D.1-7). The Williamson specimens add greatly to the quality and range of the Museum's holdings from Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. The collection includes items of outstanding interest and quality: their importance is enhanced by the detail of some recorded provenance and by the fact that some were gifts to the Williamsons from the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the Maharaja of Bhutan (Williamson, 1987: 229). Whilst at the Aberdeen City Art Gallery, according to the description in a document, the objects were bequest by James Cromar Wah, a local citizen, in 1940.

The oriental collections at the Manchester City Art Gallery are little known, but include some fine objects. They came into the gallery largely by bequest. For example, Leicester Collier, Harold Raby, and Sir John Scurrah Randles bequeathed most of the Chinese porcelain items to this gallery. The collection of 69 Chinese cloisonné enamels were largely bequeathed by Sir William Boyd Dawkins in 1920. In 1934 John Yates presented 118 jades and hardstones, mostly 19th-century in date, but of splendid quality. A magnificent Song dynasty Guanyin was given to the collection by G. F. Williams in 1935.
It is an interesting phenomenon that although the British Empire ruled India in the past, the total number of Indian Buddhist objects in British museums is not very large. Especially in comparison with objects collected from other areas which were also under the British Empire rule, such as Egypt and Babylonia. The reason was much owing to the imperial government thinking that as India was so diversified in languages and faiths, Britain could rule it forever. Thus the British government adopted a policy to preserve the objects locally whether they were found or excavated.

Therefore, the large pieces of Buddhist objects in Britain may be the Tibetan items. Certainly, this is much due to the dissemination of Tibetan refugees after 1959. Now there are several important collections of Tibetan Art in Great Britain. The institutions which held Tibetan Buddhist objects include: the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Museum of Mankind, the Horniman Museum, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Museum of Art & Anthropology in Cambridge, the Durham Oriental Museum, the Liverpool Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, the Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, and the Manchester Museum in the University of Manchester.
4.2 Museums' collecting and its connection with the surviving crisis of Buddhist objects

Pearce observed that with the enormous increase in excavation an acute awareness that excavation is essentially a destructive exercise, so that a former site now exists only in its preserved archive (Pearce, 1990b: 67). That is to say, most of the provenance were lost. In regarding to the excavation of many ancient Buddhist sites, her observation is precisely valid.

Buddhists consider that nothing is permanent in the world. Buddhist objects are no exception. The first damage of the objects comes from nature. In 1968, UNESCO published a sadly revealing book, *The Conservation of Cultural Property*, in which the various plagues that affect the past were appraised. The plagues range from climate and vegetation to insects and pollution (Meyer, 1974: 203). Indeed, nothing is permanent.

In the case of many buildings at Ayudhya, an ancient capital of Thailand from the fourteenth century to 1767. Meyer observes that most of its buildings are in ruins, and most of its murals have been lost. Heat, rain and vegetation growth have caused extensive damage (Meyer, 1974: 205). Dr Paul Coremans of UNESCO remarks, 'No hope of real preservation work at Ayudhya and other sites unless a specialised technical division is set up within the Department of Fine Arts' (op. cit.)

In India, scores of great temples are menaced by infiltrating water, stone diseases, vegetation, and illicit looting (Meyer, 1974: 207). Cambodia's Angkor Wat is a special case. For 1,200 years Cambodia's historic royal complex of Angkor, one of the world's architectural wonders, has survived all threats from man and nature. It is being nibbled by weather and jungle rot, and in the absence of prompt remedial steps the damage could be irreversible (Meyer, 1974: 207-08).
In Burma, heavy rains in the monsoon season have been largely responsible for the continuous destruction of once vivid mural paintings in Pagan's pagodas. Dr Paul Coremans commented, 'The preservation of Pagan will only be possible when the Archaeological Survey has the means to cope, first, with the structural problems of the ancient buildings, and then with the preservation of the mural paintings within them' (Meyer, 1974: 204). However, the funds are lacking. In addition, the most famous monument of Borobudur in Indonesia also faces the same fate. Its terraces, lined with 2,460 carved panels, are being chewed away by vegetative growth and eroded by seeping water. Looters are decapitating its idols (Meyer, 1974: 204).

In addition to the natural calamities, such as earthquake, flood, humidity and stone diseases, the great threat to the survival of the objects comes from mankind. In the past, there were many rulers who took a hostile attitude to Buddhist objects. King Kshemagupta destroyed the Jayendravihara because an enemy of his had taken shelter in the monastery. Subsequently, the king melted the image of the Buddha and used the brass for an icon of Siva. Probably owing to this extreme iconoclastic zeal, few monumental bronzes have survival in Kashmir (Pal, 1975: 12).

Reynolds also described that the missionary onslaught on Asian religious traditions was sometimes physically violent, as in the Portuguese destruction of Buddhist temples and relics in Sri Lanka (Reynolds, 1981: 347-48). Obviously, the Portuguese intended to sell their only religion.

Besides, the old Buddha statues in some pavilions in Peking have been smashed by the Red Guards (Pas, 1989: 164). The Red Guards burned the name labels of the five hundred "lohans" in the Qiongzhu Temple. Now no one can remember the names. The old scholars were dead, and even the researchers can only come up with a few names (MacInnis, 1989: 130). In this case, the provenance was lost forever.
In 1987 testimony during the hearing of the United States congress on human rights violations in Tibet, William B. Kerr, an American medical doctor who had made an extended visit to Tibet earlier that year, said that "all of the rural monasteries we saw were more fragments of bombed-out buildings... The total destruction of the vast majority of Tibet's monasteries has led to the irreplaceable loss of the majority of Tibetan religious texts, paintings, religious artefacts, medical texts, history and art work" (Maclnnis, 1989: 185). According to his witness, all temples except Ganden were destroyed or vandalised by Red Guards who came in from China in 1966. Ganden was destroyed by local people, who looted it, taking anything of value, even the wood timbers, doors, and window frames. Some religious statues were taken to China and sold in Hong Kong (Maclnnis, 1989: 190). Rosellini also wrote that after forty years of Chinese occupation, much of Tibet's civilisation has been destroyed. Over 6,000 of their monasteries have been razed. Their libraries have been burnt (Rosellini, 1990: 94). Actually, it took a great toll on Tibetan objects.

Now, it is not an unusual situation to see a lot of broken pieces of Buddhist objects in displays (see Plate.7). Obviously, the damages which brought the objects to museums are irreplaceable.

People's greed and ignorance also took a great toll on the objects. These include: the ruthless collectors, the iconoclasm of the arrogant and fanatic local Mohammedans and the ignorant farmers. The ruthless collectors, such as von Le Coq, have made great damages to the objects (Hopkirk, 1980: 3). 'If we could secure these pictures,' von Le Coq wrote in Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan, 'the success of the expedition was assured' (Hopkirk, 1980: 126). He was determined at all costs to remove every one of the paintings and transport them to Berlin. 'By dint of long and arduous work', he wrote, 'We succeeded in cutting away all these pictures. After twenty months of travelling they arrived safely at Berlin, where they fill an entire room of the museum'. He added, 'This is one of the few temples whose total-sum of paintings has been brought to Berlin'
(Hopkirk, 1980: 126). Evidently, this kind of procuring method had brought irrevocable
damages to Buddhist monuments. Besides, Cecilia Geary Mable, a local music teacher
and Buddhist, also said that her husband had witnessed his fellow British soldiers shot
down the jewels decorated on pagodas when they were served in Burma before World
War II.

The advance of Islam along the Silk Road spelt the death of figurative art (the
portrayal of the human form) as this was anathema to Muslims. Countless statues and
wall-paintings were damaged or destroyed by these iconoclasts, while temples and stupas
were left to crumble and vanish beneath the sand. By the fifteenth century, Islam had
become the religion of the entire Taklamakan region. Under the Ming Dynasty (AD
1368- 1644) the Silk Road was finally abandoned when China shut herself off from all
contact with the West, and this led to the further isolation and decline of the area
(Hopkirk, 1980: 31). Indeed, from that time on, that area became a Muslim world.

Undoubtedly, the Mohammedans have defaced a lot of Buddhist statues. Colonel
Regional Schomberg, a British traveller who passed the Silk Road in 1928, reported that
most of the frescoes from one site had been removed by von Le Coq, but added,
'providentially so, for nearly all the remaining ones had been shamelessly defaced by the
local Mohammedans'. He went on, 'it cannot be too often emphasised that it is solely due
to European archaeologists that any of the Buddhist treasures of Turkestan have been
saved form Turki fanaticism and vandalism'. At one site he wrote, 'The damage done to
the pictures was lamentable, for the faces of the Buddha had been slashed across or
scarred and the few remaining statues almost destroyed' (Hopkirk, 1980: 3 & 31). The
vandalistic destruction proved the bigoted arrogance of some crazy fanatics.

Professor von Le Coq in his Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan recounts the
local farmers have destroyed countless sites by their constant digging. They scraped off
the brightly coloured pigment from the frescoes, regarding this as a particularly powerful
fertilizer. Ancient beams from ruined temples, moreover, preserved for centuries by the moistureless climate, were especially prized, either as fuel or for building in a region where wood was so scarce. The wall paintings were an abomination to Muslims, and hence whenever they are found they are damaged - at all events on their faces (Hopkirk, 1980: 4-5).

Professor von Le Coq was told by one villager who pulled down a wall had unearthed carloads of manuscripts, many decorated in colour, including gold. As a Moslem he dared not to keep them as the mullah (Muslim priest) would punish him for possessing infidel books. In the end, he had thrown the whole lot into the river (Hopkirk, 1980: 4-5).

Mildred Cable and Francesca French, famous missionaries at the beginning of this century, in their book *The Gobi Desert*, described the casual damage they witnessed in progress not far from Bezeklik at the ancient walled city of Karakhoja. "Destruction of the buildings had been going on for a long time and we saw farmers at work with their pickaxes pulling down the old ruins and probably destroying many relics in the process" (Hopkirk, 1980: 3&4). The local farmers found the old earth valuable for enriching their fields. Besides, they ploughed up the land within the enclosure and sowed crops round the old monuments. They added: 'Unfortunately the irrigation which is necessary for raising crops is fatal to structures made of earth, to mural decorations and to all other remains which depend on the dryness of desert conditions for their preservation' (Hopkirk, 1980: 3&4).

In addition, warfare also threatens the survival of these objects. Hopkirk points out that on seven terrible nights in World War II, more masterpieces of Central Asian art were wiped out in Berlin (Hopkirk, 1980: 5). In another case, Tibetan monasteries and works of art also encountered merciless damage by the Communist China in 1950s (Haber, 1992: 124).
Furthermore, Garfield points out that the greatest pressures on Angkor have come during the late 20th century, especially the devastation caused by more than two decades of war and civil strife (Garfield, 1992: 42). For the past two decades no one knew exactly what toll the nation's warfare had taken on the monuments of Angkor. Bonnie Burnham, the executive director of the World Monuments Fund, writing in the Winter 1990 issue of Art International, summarised what they found: "The greatest detriment brought on by the war was the loss of continuity in the conservation process that is so necessary to the survival of these magnificent temples. Their imposing appearance conceals an extreme fragility that will, unless action is taken, turn rapidly to irreversible decay" (Garfield, 1992: 43).

As museums always claim that they are contributing to the preservation of material culture. It seems ironic to connect museums' collecting with the destruction of Buddhist objects. How can their work link to the damage of Buddhist objects? The issue quite deserves further analysing. Alsop wrote:

In the 19th century, after the French scholarship took the Khmer monuments in hand, Western art collecting soon followed art history; and these developments together automatically produced the new situation which endured until the Communists came. In this new situation, guards had to be posted to protect the works of art of Angkor Wat and the other Khmer monuments from all sorts of people like Andre Malraux, who wanted Khmer sculpture for their own collections, or for museum collections, or for sale on the market (Alsop, 1982: 27).

Besides, Hopkirk wrote that the first Western travellers to reach the Gandhara region from India during the nineteenth century were astonished at the sight of this art. In a rush to obtain examples of it for museums and collections dreadful and irreparable damage was inflicted on temples and sites there (Hopkirk, 1980: 24).

The torsos of Buddhist statues and Buddhist heads are often found in displays (see Plate 7). Usually they are sawed down or chiselled down from many rock temples in
Chapter 4

the East. Sometimes one couldn't help feeling that there was something wrong about them being in British museum collections. Clearly they had been part of larger monuments. Besides, many precious wall paintings, such as from the Dunhuang, were glued down violently. The Berrell Collection in Glasgow, for instance, houses a piece of these cave wall fresco paintings. Consequently, as museums endeavoured to collect exotic objects, many precious Buddhist objects suffered irrevocable vandalism (see Plate 7).

Aurel Stein of Britain is unquestionably regarded as the most villainous of the foreign archaeologists, followed closely by Professor Pelliot of France. For their removal of the so-called 'secret' library from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Dunhuang is something that the Chinese can never forgive. Sven Hedin of Sweden, who dug up highly important historical documents from sand-buried Lou-lan, comes third on the blacklist (Hopkirk, 1980: 6).

Arthur Waley, a well-known British Orientalist, expressed strong disapproval of the method of travellers' (such as Stein) acquisition, referring to the affair as the sacking of the Dunhuang library (Hopkirk, 1980: 175-76). von Le Coq wrote, 'Then this painting is sawed out; and when this process is complete, the board is carefully moved away from the wall, the upper edge being first carried out and down, bearing the painting with it, until at last the latter lies quite horizontal on the board' (Hopkirk, 1980: 127).

Obviously, when museums seek to interest mass visitors through the acquisition of masterpieces, there is a distortion. Hugues de Varine-Bohan, director of the International Council of Museums and an archaeologist, put it this way:

I believe the root of the problem lies in [a] false conception of a museum. An object of scientific interest should not be considered primarily as an art work. Yet museums, which are supposed to educate the public, often contribute to the idea that such and such a culture is represented only by uniquely beautiful objects... In fact, the picture the public builds of ancient cultures can be permanently
destroyed when the past is consistently presented as a kaleidoscope of masterpieces. Tourists and collectors, art dealers and museum curators, become obsessed in this quest for the unique work, and this "Mona Lisa complex", as I call it, can give rise to an illegal market, leading in turn to looting and the destruction of monuments (Meyer, 1974: 195).

Regrettably, Museum collecting not only links closely with the devastation of Buddhist objects but also causes the destruction of their provenance.

Unfortunately very few shrines and monasteries have been methodically investigated; early excavations carried out by soldiers, amateurs and treasure hunters have seriously disturbed the archaeological record. No structures remain undamaged and little sculpture has been found in position, for where there was no deliberate destruction, the decline of Buddhism, neglect and the instability of building materials also greatly affected the sites in antiquity. Thus many questions remain unanswered about chronology, sequences and localisation of styles, the form and character of structures and their relationship with the sculpture (Zwalf, 1979: 9).

Judged by any reasonable standard, Buddhist objects, with their profound messages, do not belong simply to Buddhists. Nor do they belong to the rich collectors or the curators. Instead they are the common heritage of mankind. They belong to the entire world. If they are destroyed, it is because of people's inability to view their preservation in larger terms.

Then, what role can museums play in the salvation of Buddhist objects? The work relies heavily on a vigorous educational system, government support, and management co-ordination of limited resources. Museums can inform the public of the desperate need to preserve Buddhist monuments. Through educational programmes and exhibits, museums can draw attention to the wonders of Buddhist culture and convey the fact that this culture belongs not only to a specific country, but to the whole of mankind.

The naturalist, the collectors, and the curator all have made a claim upon the past, and each in his own way has made a contribution. However, each usually looks upon the
past as a piece of property. Now it is time to regard the cultural remains as a resource whose title is invested in all humanity. It is not a renewable resource; once exhausted, it cannot be replaced again. Now many precious remains dwindle meaninglessly away, not so much because anyone has willed it, but because not enough people are aware that the problem exists.

4.3 The use of Buddhist objects in displays

Museums and art galleries display only a fraction of their collections. Thousands of works of art lie in storage, never or rarely seen by visitors. It is difficult for the general public to see the hidden collections. For instance, the Victoria & Albert Museum can display only a fraction of its holdings. Only five per cent of the V & A's Indian collection of 35,000 objects is currently on show. About 80 per cent of its holdings were never meant to be seen, says John Murdoch, the Indian deputy director at the V & A. (Geddes-Brown, 1992: 15). Basil Davidson, the author of Turkestan Alive, also observed how Sir Aurel Stein's collection was displayed in the British Museum 'tucked away in a corner with little room to explain or reveal its unique value' (Hopkirk, 1980: 2). The reasons why these objects were not put on display will be further explored in chapter 5.

Though their educational usefulness were acknowledged by some persons, Buddhist objects are still not frequently used. Hence, visitors still know little about these objects. Besides, most labels only give trivial features rather than their in-depth significance. Indeed, if museums could present a more intelligent exhibition, then ordinary people's understanding of the objects could be much increased. Thus, accessibility is an important work.

At the Leicestershire Museums, there is a multi-cultural teacher who has tried to encompass Buddhism into her teaching. She developed loan boxes based on material
from the Tibet Foundation. These boxes have items such as incense holders and Buddhas, which relate to Buddhism together with teaching notes and illustrations. Now they are loaned to schools for study. There is also some Buddhist material in the handling collection/education collection but it has not been used extensively as yet.

The V & A often lend Buddhist objects to foreign and British institutions; 1980 *Arts of Bengal* Hayward Gallery; 1981 *Sku Thang- Thangka exhibition* in Turin; 1985 *Buddhism: Art and Faith* in British Museum; 1991 *Sacred Art of Tibet* in San Francisco; 1992 *Sacred Art of Tibet* in the Royal Academy in London.

In the Ashmolean Museum, Buddhist objects are available for university teaching, research and general display.

**Past and current Buddhist object exhibitions**

Currently, some museums have always used a part of their Buddhist objects in displays. As the study finds, the objects have permanent displays in some museums (e.g. 11, 14, 15, 28). Five Buddhist objects are on long-term display in the Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. While at the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, in addition to *Images of People*, they have Buddhist objects in their Japanese and Burmese collections.

In Cambridge University Museum, they expressed that they have refurbished their permanent anthropological displays. Some of the objects are shown in the Mongolian, Tibetan, Indian, and Chinese sections. Selected items from the Williamson collection are on public display at the Museum from time to time: other specimens may be examined there by researchers through prior appointment (Williamson, 1987: 229). The Tibetan section has the strongest emphasis on Buddhism. This is due to the status of Buddhism in traditional Tibetan culture and to the nature of their collection in this area.
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In Glasgow, in the Museum of Religion opened in 1992 three Buddhist items, an elaborate Sino-Tibetan Avalokitesvara, a simple dry-lacquer Burmese Buddha, and the Japanese shrine cabinet, were displayed in the gallery of Religious Art. The Buddhist iconography display looks at illustrations of the Buddha's life story, the contrast between the complex imagery on Tibetan thangkas with the easily recognised symbolic gestures and postures of Burmese Buddhas, they compare Hindu and Buddhist ideas of reincarnation, and the contrast of Kuan Yin as goddess of Mercy with the Christian Mary.

At the Ipswich Museums and Galleries, Tibetan Xylography Prints and the Fine Gandharan collection are in their permanent exhibitions.

While in the Liverpool Museum, the most recent display connected with Buddhism, according to their explanation, was the British Museum's travelling photographic exhibition Living Buddhism. It was shown earlier in 1991.

Besides, the British Museum and the British Library have jointly mounted a major exhibition drawn mainly from their collections at the British Museum, Buddhism: Art and Faith (inaugurated in 1985 until 5 January, 1986). The exhibition in fact gave a graphic visual survey of the whole spectrum of Buddhist inspired art forms from the earliest extant remains dating from the Asokan period (3rd century BC) to the stylistic sophistication of 19th century Japanese colour woodblock prints.

There was also a special ancillary section dealing with the transmission of the scriptures through the various countries and another dealing with the development of Buddhist images. In the former was a magnificent array of scripts, some finely printed but others produced by hand with much skill and great devotion, making the spectator strongly aware that there had been times and places where spiritual matters really counted for something in people's lives. Besides being a survey of Buddhist art, the exhibition also
exposed admirably to the secondary purpose of informing the public about the Buddhist religion itself, its origins, doctrines, development and spread. Both functions were well-served by the very complete and informative notes attached to each exhibit (Snelling, 1985: 189-90). The exhibition showed great sympathetic treatment of the subject. John Snelling regarded it as an indication that Buddhism's hour has come (Snelling, 1985: 189-91). However, Nicholson thought it only showed those Buddhist images of established significance as fine art or archaeological specimens, hence confusing the Buddhist theme with notions of European taste (Nicholson, 1983: 29). That is to say, the original dimensions of these objects have not explored exhaustively.

In addition, on the 11th November 1992, the British Museum inaugurated a new Oriental antiquities' exhibition which includes pieces from the Amaravati stupa. The western section of the exhibition traces the development of the three great religions of ancient India- Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. Huge resources were poured into temple construction and the manufacture of religious images. The buildings were embellished with rich relief carvings of deities and representations of religious teachings, and the images inside the Gallery includes major sculptures from the Medieval Kingdoms of India, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Himalayan region. The Gallery presents a new vision of ways of life and systems of belief very different from those of Western cultures.

Among the greatest achievements of ancient Indian art, and one of the most important groups of sculpture in the British Museum, is the series of over 100 carved stone slabs from the great stupa at Amaravati. The stupa, a monument housing the relics of one or more Buddhist dignitaries, was first constructed in about the 2nd-1st century BC at a great religious centre on the Krishna River in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh, southern India. Their remains were first discovered in 1797 by Colonel Colin Mackenzie, first Surveyor General of India. A number of slabs dating from the 2nd-3rd century AD,
including those now in the Museum, were recovered by Sir Walter Elliot, a Madras civil servant and scholar, while excavating at Amaravati in 1845 (Anon., 1992b: 163-65).

All these sculptures are Buddhist in character and depict a wide variety of themes. The most important of these are images of the Buddha and scenes from his life. Objects of purely symbolic nature also appear throughout the carvings, such as the Buddha's footprints, the "Wheel of Dharma", the "triratna", a three-pronged device symbolising the 'three jewels of Buddhism', and the lotus, representing purity. Other pieces, from the drum and platform, depict the stupa itself. The devotees who visited the monument followed a path around its base that was lined with relief illustrating the fundamental principles of Buddhism through scenes in the life and previous lives of the Buddha. The dome itself was covered with narrative roundels, swags, garlands, urns-of-plenty, and rows of animals set above richly decorated rectangular slabs containing scenes full of human figures and animals.

Examples of sculpture from all the major parts of the stupa are represented in the Museum's collection. To convey some of the effect of the sculptures in their original position, the stones are mounted on the wall up to a height of 15 feet and a part of the railing has been reconstructed at the front of the gallery. Besides, the marble pieces were arranged architecturally to indicate something of the original shape and size of the building (Knox, 1993: 4). The Amaravati relief not only reveals the wealth of Buddhist iconography and symbolism, but also shows the extraordinary richness of decoration and natural beauty that is intrinsic to Indian culture. They are an ideal starting point for an appreciation of the ancient art of Buddhism in India. However, emphasising sculptures and decorations, the display neglects to disclose the sublime messages embodied in these objects.

On 1 April, 1993 the Department of Coins and Medals in the British Museum opened an exhibition of coins illustrating the history and cultures of the ancient peoples
who lived along the Silk Road (see Plate 11). The theme was *Silk Road Coins: The Hirayama Collection*. The material has been selected from an important Japanese private coin collection formed over the last fifteen years by Professor Ikuo Hirayama, Japan's First Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO, and his wife Mrs Michiko Hirayama. Professor Hirayama is one of Japan's leading exponents of "Nihonga" painting, specialising in views of the Silk Road.

In documenting cultural exchanges between East and West in the ancient world, this display mirrors the growing programme of collaboration between the Museum's Department of Coins and Medals and Professor and Mrs Hirayama (Cribb, 1993: 21).

Besides, in the summer of 1993, it displayed *Textiles from the East* in the British Museum introducing contemporary religious hangings, shown in Room 88 until 30 August. The textiles in this display represented the most recent phase in the development of votive and decorative hangings for temples and shrines in China, South and Southeast Asia. Unlike singular objects of contemplation, they are part of a more complex whole, involving the buildings and portable shrines which they decorated. Their iconography belongs to the major Asian religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam and Chinese popular religion- a mixture of Buddhism, Daoism and local folk religion (Harrison-Hall, 1993: 16-8). The display showed the traditional methods of manufacturing these textiles has adapted to incorporate modern technological developments. However, Buddhist objects were a small part of the display. Besides, the nature of these textile items are decorative arts. They are not the objects of adoration or inspiration.

The V & A has always had a selection of objects on permanent display. The temple and worship section in the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art opened on the 12th June 1991. The gallery aims to promote interest in Chinese culture in the West. The museum uses thematic displays to make the long timescale of the collections comprehensible to the visitors (Bedlow, 1989: 1). It is contributing to show items from
the museum's Chinese collection, some of which have never been on public display before.

The gallery was funded by a Hong Kong businessman, Mr T.T. Tsui, who hopes that Chinese people in the UK and the Far East will view the gallery as their own, and that it will promote interest in Chinese culture in the West. The gallery was designed by a design consultant, Fitch-RS, who had a belief to create a distinct identity for the gallery and use thematic displays to make the long timescale of the collections comprehensible to the visitor (Bedlow, 1989: 1). There are six main themes in this gallery. They are "Burial", "Temple and Worship", "Living", "Ruling", "Eating and Drinking", and "Collecting". New interactive technologies have also been applied in display. Environmental control has allowed delicate objects to be included in the 700 objects to be on display. In addition, there is now a permanent display on Eastern Religions, which includes Hinduism, Jainism and Islam. Besides, the Samsung Gallery of Korean Art, opened in December 1992, also contains some Buddhist objects. However, there is still no room specifically for Buddhism in the museum.

The Horniman Museum mounted a small exhibition entitled, *Tibetan exhibitions* in 1991. Besides, the Manchester Museum expresses that they have two cases on Buddhism (Chinese and mainly Southeast Asian Buddha figures) in the Oriental Gallery and one large Burmese Buddha which has been on exhibition since the autumn of 1989. The permanent display on Buddhism featuring Chinese and Southeast Asian Buddhas in their Oriental Gallery was opened in April 1983.

The Manchester City Art Galleries held an exhibition entitled *Expressions of Enlightenment: A Celebration of Buddhist Art* which ran from 1 March to 25 April 1993. This display explored the use of figures and symbols to express intangible and universal truths which are at the heart of Buddhism. Historic and contemporary artefacts from the East and West illustrated common themes inspired by Buddhist teaching and
practice. All the objects are made in appropriately rare and beautiful materials—bronze, silver, enamel, ivory and porcelain. The exhibition coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order.

While at the Nottingham Castle Museum, according to their explanation, a display on the development of Buddhist Art existed at the Castle Museum for about 18 years until 1990 when the case and two rupas (statues) were smashed during a robbery.

In the Pitt Rivers Museum, many items are on permanent display. These items are accessible to school parties and students. In a past display, there was Tibet: A Great Mountain Land which was photographed by Sir Charles Bell in 1920-21.

At the Graves Art Gallery, a large part of the Chinese Ivories collection is permanently on display. A small changing display of items from their non-European collection is shown in the same room.

Future Buddhist object exhibitions

According to this study investigation, about 32.2 per cent museums have plans to exhibit Buddhist objects in the near future. In the Leeds Museum, Veronica Johnston expects that when re-displaying the Ethnographic gallery, she hopes to use one case for a series of displays on world religions, major festivals, and so on.

The Royal Pavilion Art Gallery and Museum expresses that in the next two or three years they hope to be able to re-display all the ethnographic collections and they are examining the various options open to them. One of these options is to exhibit material typologically to provide an introduction to the world's different religious faiths. They are carefully examining the possibility of a thematic display in order to tie-in with educational programmes and, more particularly, to offer a teaching resource for the national curriculum.
Besides, *British Museum Magazine* (No. 15, Autumn 1993: 23) advertises that the British Museum will display *Himalayan and Japanese Art from the Schmitt-Meade Collection* at Room 91 from 28 January to 24 April 1994. It will display the eclectic bequest, notable for Tibetan religious art and Japanese tea ceremony artefacts. In addition, the Leicestershire Museums are also considering to hold a Buddhist object exhibition within the next two years.

According to the questionnaire survey, some museums still have not used these objects for cross-cultural comparative religions education (e.g., 1, 2, 16, 25). The objects are merely kept in storage. In the case of the Saffron Walden Museum, they acknowledged that little use was made of collections to teach comparative religious ideas. Hence, these objects are inaccessible to visitors. The reasons for failing to use them in displays are varied. Some ascribed it to the small amount of the objects. The issue will be further analysed in the next chapter.

*Exhibition themes:*

According to the findings of this study, some museums did not offer any specific themes for exhibiting the objects (e.g., 1 and 15). So far, the themes used for displaying the objects were as follows:

Marischal Museum (2) mounted a display entitled *Ancient Buddhist Art of Gandhara* in 1982. The Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum (7) held *Images of People* on the 12th April 1991. City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (9) held *Ladakh, Little Tibet* in 1989. In the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (11), Buddhist objects were assigned to several sections of their new permanent displays: Tibet, Mongolia, India, China, opened in July 1990. Art Gallery and Museum (17) held *Asian Buddhism* in the Ethnography Gallery until 1988. Besides, it displayed a section of a mini touring exhibition on the different world religions, done by their outreach programme with the local 'Sharing of Faiths' group, covered Buddhism
and used material from their collections together with loans from local Buddhists. The Ipswich Museums and Galleries (20) also held a small display case named *Tibetan Prints* within the general ethnographic display. The travelling photographic exhibition of the British Museum *Living Buddhism* was held at the Liverpool Museum (23) in 1991. The October Gallery held *Festival of Tibet: An Exhibition of Living Culture* in May and June 1991.

The British Museum (24) has exhibited: *Buddhism Art and Faith* in 1985, and *The Life Of The Buddha* in 1993 (ran from 8 April until 26 September). In addition, *The Joseph Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities* was opened in 1992. The gallery illustrates ways of life and systems of belief very different from those valued by Western cultures. In the gallery, Buddhist art is put in a completely non-Buddhist setting and represented as "trophies of empire", Andrew Renton points out (pers. comm. in August 1993). Simultaneously, the Asahi Shimbun Gallery in the British Museum exhibited the Buddhist sculpture from the Great Stupa at Amaravati, most of which dates from the second and third centuries AD.

The Nottingham Castle Museum (30) mounted a display *The Development of Buddhist Art* until 1990. While at the Manchester City Art Galleries (28), they held a display entitled *Expressions of Enlightenment: A Celebration of Buddhist Art* in 1993 (ran from 1 March until 25 April). The display was held to accompany the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. In short, the displays relating to Buddhist objects in British museums are as follows:

(Figure 4.1  Buddhist object displays in British museums)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mus</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ancient Buddhist Art of Gandhara</td>
<td>1982</td>
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Chapter 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Sultanganj Buddha</td>
<td>1885-</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Images of People (Buddhism forms a section under religion)</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ladakh, Little Tibet</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tibetan, Mongolian, Indian, and Chinese sections in their permanent anthropological displays.</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tibetan display (part of permanent displays in Oriental Gallery)</td>
<td>1980-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Religious Art Gallery ('Asian Buddhism', plus Buddhist items in 'Tibet' case formerly displayed in Ethnography Gallery)</td>
<td>19607-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tibetan Xylography Prints and Fine Gandharan collection in the permanent display.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>One small display case within general material ethnographic display.</td>
<td>ca 1980-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Living Buddhism (loaned from the BM)</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Buddhism: Art and Faith</td>
<td>1985-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>The Great Stupa at Amaravati</td>
<td>1992-</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>The Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities</td>
<td>1992-</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Silk Road Coins</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The Life of the Buddha</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Textiles from the East- in the British Museum</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tibetan exhibitions</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Indian Sculpture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Samsung Gallery of Korean Art</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Display of objects from the permanent collection of Decorative Arts</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Expressions of Enlightenment: A Celebration of Buddhist Art</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Apart from two cases on Buddhism (Chinese and mainly Southeast Asian Buddha figures) in the Oriental Gallery, one large Burmese Buddha was shown in an exhibition on the history of the Museum in the autumn of 1989.</td>
<td>1989-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>The Development of Buddhist Art</td>
<td>1972-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Tibet: A Great Mountain Land</td>
<td>1987-88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
October Gallery.  
Festival of Tibet: An Exhibition of Living Culture  
1991

RA  
Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet  
1992

St Mungo  
Multi-faith city Glasgow Has Been for 200 Years  
1993

October Gallery  
Mongolian Buddhist Objects  
June 1993

Supplementary information:

Only very few museums have ever prepared related information for visitors' reference. In addition to the Guide to the Japanese Collection, the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum (7) prepared teaching materials. To accompany the Tibetan object exhibition, the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (11) has published a book entitled, Memoirs of a political officer's wife in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan, which was written by Margaret Williamson. However, the book is mainly a person's memoirs and hence only assigns a very small part mentioning to Buddhist objects.

Undoubtedly, on the issue of supplementary information, the British Museum has published more books than the other museums. Obviously, this reflects not only on comprehensive its collections but also its many experts. To accompany the exhibition of "Buddhism: Art and Faith" in 1985, they published Buddhism: Art and Faith and Living Buddhism. The former is an exhibition catalogue which is useful for academic reference. The catalogue is excellently illustrated, with many full-colour plates. The latter is a photographic selection for that display.

To accompany the exhibition of Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in spring 1990, Roderick Whitfield and Anne Farrer edited Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese art from the Silk Route. The catalogue contains objects from the great Aurel Stein collection of Central Asian antiquities at the British Museum. It was designed to accompany the inauguration of the refurbished exhibition gallery of the Department of Oriental
Antiquities in that year. It includes colour illustrations of most major works of art in the Stein collection which are inaccessible to the general public.

At the opening of the Hotung Gallery in 1992, the British Museum published *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stupa* and *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*. The former discusses the marble sculptures from that stupa, the latter assigns a small part to deal with Buddhist objects. Complementing the exhibition of *The Life Of The Buddha* in 1993, Patricia M Herbert edited a book entitled *The Life of the Buddha*. Besides, Wood's *Chinese Illustration* also relates to Buddhist booklet, especially the Buddhist sutras.

The V & A also published a lot of books in this field, such as: *Tibetan Art*, *Guanyin: A Masterpiece Revealed* and *Chinese Art and Design: The T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art*.

In addition, Edwards' *Tibet- A Great Mountain Land* can also be categorised here.

However, free literature is very scarce. The study found there are two introductory guide (*China and South and Southeast Asia*) circulated in the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities in the British museum. They are not free. The Palace Museum in Taipei, otherwise, provides free introductory pamphlets in each displaying room. In short, British museum publications relating to Buddhist objects in recent years are as follows:

(Figure 4.2 Publications relating to Buddhist objects in recent years in Britain)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>Publications</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Guide to the Japanese Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indeed, it is not an exhaustive list. It illustrates only publications in recent years.

**Complementary programmes:**

Generally speaking, complementary programmes are insufficient. Museums still give meagre effort to encourage the participation of visitors. Though some participatory activities exist, they are far from being perfect. The work should be further strengthened.

In 1991, one section of a mini touring exhibition on the different world religions, done by the Outreach programme with the local 'Sharing of Faiths' group, covered Buddhism and used material from the collections of the Art Gallery and Museum at Glasgow together with loans from local Buddhists.
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In the Far Eastern Department of the V & A, staff are available to answer questions from the public. There have also been a series of gallery talks, one specifically on temple and worship. John Clarke of the V & A says that some persons have shown interest in Tibetan collections. They made appointments to see collections not on display or to take photographs.

The Manchester Art Gallery plans to assess the quality of the objects with Buddhist content and the feasibility of a small display to mark the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the 'Friends of the Western Buddhist Order'. The Manchester Museum of the University of Manchester also expressed that the local Western Buddhist Order has a keen interest in the objects.

Research work:

Concerning this issue, some museums do not work very well. Over half the museums have no clear idea about the total number of the objects in their collections. Some museums, such as: the British Museum, the V & A, the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Bristol Museum, expressed that they had no clear idea about how many pieces of the objects in their collections. It is very difficult to approximate the total number of the objects in their collections. Some museums disclosed that their collections were very large and the pieces came from all over the world. Obviously, the issue is still a continuing problem for many museums.

At the Durham University Oriental Museum, Ruffle was vague about the number of the objects because he was not sure about the degree of connection with Buddhism (see Plate 10). Some museums recognise that Buddhist objects are the least studied areas of their collections (e.g. 16, 17, 22, 24, 34). So far, there is no comprehensive record of how the many aspects of Buddhism represented in museums are being, or have been, studied in these museums. Accordingly, in order to use the objects, research work should be strengthened.
4.4 The shortcomings of using Buddhist objects in displays

As Buddhist objects were originally created for the purpose of inspiration, devotion, worship, and even visualisation in meditation, intelligent displays and interpretations should be able to reveal their in-depth significance. Ordinary visitors are still unfamiliar to these objects. They even get wrong or distorted messages. They may think that these objects as exotic rarities, that their value only exists in aesthetics, decorations, and handicraft techniques and nothing more than that. Certainly, this kind of attitude is a very stereotyped way of viewing the objects.

Indeed, emphasising the aesthetic value, many displays failed to disclose the deeper significance of these objects. This does not mean that all museum staff are not aware of the nature of these objects. It merely reflects that few people like to take the risk of mounting a dangerous theme of religion which might bring a lot of argument.

Much owing to the limits of staff expertise, appropriate arrangements and interpretations, vigorous support and stimulation from outside world, displays and interpretations of the objects are far from being satisfactory in many museums. They usually touch only the superficial aspects of these objects and do not delve into the profound messages embodied in them.

So far, many Buddhist objects are rarely used in displays. In the case of the Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, according to the introductory information provided by that museum, the collections in the museum were poorly arranged in the old Exchange News Room in the past. Indeed, this is not a unique case. Other museums also face this same problem. In short, the most commonly seen shortcomings of using these objects can be illustrated as follows:
Devoid of reverence and consideration for Buddhist objects

Pearce observed that no study in the humanities is objectively free from bias or subjective distortion, archaeological work is not an exception (Pearce, 1990b: 57). Hooper-Greenhill also pointed out that in the past the human, social, and cultural contexts of material things were rendered invisible by fixing them in a monolinear frame of reference (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 204-05). Ethnographic displays in museums are often shown in isolation as aesthetic sculpture rather than the context in which the artefacts were produced.

Usually, the objects are displayed as artefacts of ethnology, archaeology, or aesthetics. Nicholson pointed out that Indian sculpture and painting before 1935 were straddled in an uncomfortable position between South Kensington’s tasteful decorative arts under Birdwood’s care and the British Museum’s archaeological and ethnographic approach (Nicholson, 1983: 28). He added that the displays at the British Museum today continue to take a scholastic archaeological approach by dividing the collections into regional style, with comprehensive accompanying interpretative panels of historical and archaeological background information (Nicholson, 1983: 29). Even today, some of the objects in the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of the British Museum are placed together for the same size or for the same material. A big Lohan is put together with two same size Taoist images (see Plate 8). Besides, same size metal statues are placed together in glass cases. Such arbitrary arrangement by size or material rather than theme has obvious disadvantages. With this kind of treatment, merely emphasising the face value rather than the inner significance of the objects, the authentic messages of the objects are often deprived.

Memadhammo wrote that he does not really like museums because they usually feel rather dead and he regrets having to see sometimes very sacred objects that have been made with enormous love and devotion being grasped at by people who cannot
begin to comprehend their true value or meaning (pers. comm. in June 1993). (see Plate 8, 9).

Lhamo wrote that from the point of view of a practitioner, the statues, thangkas and so forth are more effective in the context of a temple/shrine room. Museum displays can be sterile (pers. comm. in June 1993). Indeed, ethnographic displays in museums have often tended to romanticise cultures by focusing upon artefacts in isolation rather than the context in which the artefacts were produced (Simpson, 1991: 73).

Amindo also wrote, "The problem with learning 'Buddhist objects' in museums is that people are invited to equate the Buddha-image with other gods or relics from some distant land or tradition, or past, and which have no meaning for them. Objects and relics always have this deadness about them which offends the eye and dulls the spirit" (pers. comm. in June 1993). That is to say, the living atmosphere was smothered in museums' trite approaches.

Besides, some displays demonstrate still the smell of racist overtone. Buddhist objects are displayed to justify the past glory of the imperial period. The objects were often interpreted as deplorable superstitious idols. Nicholson observed that during the early 19th century, Indian art and craft had been presented as curiosities, manufactures (as in the East India House Museum), or as reflections of moral inferiority (as in the Missionary Society's museum) (Nicholson, 1983: 27). Museums show no qualm to display the objects this way. The objects were clumsily displayed with other superstitious objects of primitive religions which emphasise blind faith and sacrifice. For instance, the Pitt Rivers Museum put all exotic religious objects in a glass case. It is a jumble display of what happens to be in an existing collection. However, the museum expresses no intention to rectify it.
Inappropriate context

Pearce observes that art displays do not intend to provide information on the object’s cultural background but to present the object’s aesthetic qualities. The object is decontextualized, its culture of origin unimportant. The aesthetic approach focuses on objects claimed to have an intrinsic merit which speaks for itself. Emphasis has been given to the right of the object to stand alone, to be admired for its own sake (Pearce, 1989a: 100). Obviously, it neglects the motivations of workers and sponsors of these objects.

A problem of looking at Buddhist objects in museums is that some objects are so culturally determined that it is hard for a Westerner to make any sense of them. Too many displays are a jumble of what happens to be in an existing collection without any clear underlying philosophy. Consequently, confusion is implicit in such an approach. For instance, unknown in Western culture, the ‘Eight Auspicious signs’ in Tibetan Buddhism are unfamiliar to Westerners.

Obviously, cultural assumptions are of primary significance in this respect. Artefacts may become less meaningful, and consequently less useful for teaching of all kinds, if they are taken out of context. Saddhaloka, the Secretary of the Norwich Buddhist Centre, observes that his main impression on looking at Buddhist objects in museums is how they often seem to lose their real significance placed in a context far removed from that originally intended (pers. comm. of the 26th May, 1993). That is to say, the objects are displayed without any consideration for the context in which museum staff place them. Inevitably, it would make injustice to the objects.

Saddhaloka thinks that a beautiful Buddha statue should have been placed on a shrine with flowers, candles, incense and often fine cloths and offering bowls, and should have been a focus of devotional and meditation practice. If museums were to create, at least, one such shrine so that people could appreciate more the context the figures were
intended for, or include photographs of such shrines in their exhibitions, then museums would come closer to doing Buddhist objects justice (pers. comm. in June 1993). Indeed, he points out the shortcomings of decontextualised displays.

Goodier said that his experience of viewing Buddhist objects in museums has been very mixed. They are often set out in a way more relevant to their cultural than religious significance (pers. comm. of the 20th May, 1993). According to his observation, Buddhist objects are not well situated - e.g. a Buddha statue symbolising the tranquillity of meditation in a busy concourse when one would like to be able to sit and contemplate it in stillness.

Amritavajra found that some museums, whilst being able to display an impressive array of Buddhist objects, arrange them in a predominantly anthropological fashion rather than emphasising their innate spiritual value (pers. comm. of the 21st May, 1993). Barnet also points out that since most of the objects come from temples or monasteries she suggests that displays should make this clear. She regards that jumbled displays give a confusing or even misleading impression to those who know nothing about Buddhism (pers. comm. in June 1993). Indeed, the significance of an objects is precisely dominated by its contextual placement.

Usually, Buddhist objects have been acquired piecemeal to enable them to present some overall picture of Oriental art. Their items are displayed in various ways, sometimes grouped to illustrate a particular culture, e.g. Tibet, or a particular aspect of more than one culture, e.g. religions of the Far East, or to illustrate the history of art or technology generally, e.g. the development of ceramics. The objects were placed in all these different contexts.

Jones wrote that he is not sure how far museums can or should indicate respect by adopting the various rules concerning images, texts and ritual objects found in
monasteries and temples. A museum is not a temple, it has a different function, and in a sense the objects have been rendered ordinary by being removed from their setting in the first place. Consequently, the original nature and function of the objects were neglected in this kind of approach.

Some museums argue that there is no "Buddhist collection" as such (e.g. 2 & 9), but there is a Buddhist content in the Tibetan, N. India, and Burmese collections. They argue that there are few museums in Britain that collect on religious lines. Oriental collections in the West were generally formed on an art basis, the aim being to acquire the finest examples of craftsmanship, or sometimes to cover the social history of a given area, Peter Hardie insisted. He seems to suggest that this kind of approach is the only valid one and there is no other approach.

Tregear also said that they would not classify objects according to religion. Being primarily an art museum (31) they are much more likely to classify them according to country / material / artist, their exhibitions also are planned as art displays with emphasis on history and techniques and inter cultural influences. As for the Fitzwilliam Museum (10) and the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (11), Buddhist objects were categorised under the anthropological displays. The documentation is organised according to geographical area and accession date (11).

While in the Durham University Oriental Museum (14), the curator said that he had no intention to build up a specifically Buddhist collection though obviously many items associated with Buddhism are now within their collections. Their items are displayed in various ways, sometimes grouped to illustrate a particular culture, for example Tibet, or a particular aspect of more than one culture, such as religions of the Far East, or to illustrate the history of art or technology generally, for example the development of ceramics. 'Buddhist' items appear in all these different contexts.
At the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (16), the Buddhist collection forms a part of a very wide-ranging ethnographic collection which is one of the responsibilities of the curator of Antiquities. While at the Leeds City Museum (21), Buddhist objects compose one small display case within the general ethnographic display (ca 1980-1986).

At the Leicester Museums (22), they do not actually have a Buddhist collection as such. They have a Chinese collection in Decorative Arts in which many motifs are derived from Buddhism and Buddhist concepts.

In the British Museum (24), Buddhist objects are not separately housed, documented or exhibited but form integral parts of the cultural or regional collections, i.e. India, South-east Asia, China, Japan and are held mainly by the Department of Ethnography (Museum of Mankind). Their display is divided into regional cultures and there is no policy to emphasise Buddhism separately.

The collection of the Horniman Museum (26), according to their explanation, is organised on a similar basis to the Pitt Rivers, classifies the collections by human activities: agriculture, basketry, pottery, writing and printing rather than religions. Other collections such as the Museum of Mankind are based on a country or area classification, for example Tibet or Malawi. Indeed, they reflect some smell of the cultural superiority of past colonial times. They do not organise their collection on the basis of religions.

In the V & A (27), Buddhist items are not always displayed as Buddhism. They may be displayed as an example of a jade carving rather than as an object used in Buddhist worship. The T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art is arranged in themes rather than chronologically. The Gallery 129 contains examples of carving, and so although some of the objects are Buddhist, they are displayed according to material (jade, ivory, hardstone), rather than by religion. The Far Eastern Ceramics Gallery, room 143 and
room 145, also have objects relating to Buddhism. But these are also not arranged by religion.

While at the Manchester City Art Gallery (28), Shrigley said that any objects with Buddhist significance were catalogued by material and country of origin rather than as a coherent Buddhist collection, it is difficult to make an accurate statement about the number of Buddhist objects.

Banlces (29) points out that although the religious importance of Buddha figures is indicated in the Manchester University museum's labels the figures tend to be shown as cultural rather than religious objects. Hence, they do not have a Buddhist collection set apart from the rest of the ethnology collections.

MacCormick (30) said that Buddhist objects were not classified according to religion. As primarily an art museum the objects are much more likely to be classified according to country / date / material / artist, their exhibitions also are planned as art displays with emphasis on history and techniques and inter cultural influences. Consequently, the objects in the Nottingham Castle Museum were collected for quality as art objects. They belong to the Eastern art and archaeology. Besides, Goodchild of the Sheffield City Art Gallery (34) said that non-European art often used in thematic displays with Western art.

In the case of the Art Gallery and Museum at Glasgow (17), four large Buddhist images are placed under the escalators. Visitors step over these images when they go upstairs. Indeed, the placement cannot be regarded as a satisfactory one.

In addition, some Buddhist images, which were displayed in pairs in temples, have been seen in terms of single figure asserting their individual identity rather than the appropriate setting of these objects. Paludan observed:
The Chinese statue was not carved as an independent entity; it was not meant to be moved and the angle of observation was decisive. Just as in Chinese architecture a building cannot be judged in isolation but must be considered as part of the whole formed by the surrounding balustrades and courtyards, a Chinese stone statue must be seen as part of its architectural and natural setting. It is designed as part of a complex which includes not only other monuments, buildings, and courtyards but also the surrounding landscape (Paludan, 1991: 5-6).

Indeed, the significance of an object is definitely decided by its contextual placement. However, Buddhist objects are mostly categorised according to materials, chronology, and areas. The objects were appreciated as aesthetics in this kind of approach. Indeed, it is a disadvantage to reveal the significance of the objects.

**Insufficient or improper interpretations**

Pearce observed that the culture area approach was often arranged with a maximum of specimens and a minimum of interpretation (Pearce, 1989a: 100). This phenomenon is especially true in the interpretations of Buddhist objects. Few museums have felt the necessity to change the interpretations which they gave to the objects. They seem to think that as the text is academically correct, then all things are settled forever. For instance, the caption content describing the same Lohan which was placed at Room 51 and newly placed at the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery in the British Museum shows no difference at all.

Interpretations of objects are not constant, varying according to the time, place, background, opinions and degree of knowledge of the interpreter. Each generation and each culture should re-interpret the significance of Buddhist objects in its specific context. Besides, all objects have a range of possible interpretations, and, in the learning process, this is one of their strengths (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 100). Obviously, considering that an object has only a definite and valid interpretation is obsolete. An interpretation of an object is merely a point of view. It is not final and constant. That is to
say, the meaning of an object is fluid. An identical object, appearing under different thematic constructions, can show different significance and meanings.

Insufficient interpretation makes little sense to visitors. It is difficult to kindle the curiosity and enthusiasm of visitors. Superficial interpretations cannot convey the profound messages of the objects. However, information provided in many displays is minimal. It cannot give visitors a clear picture of these objects.

Hookham wrote that, concerning objects on display, generally speaking, there is no explanation, or not enough, in any true sense of what the object means and no context given for the exhibits. Explanations of objects and explanation of the use of objects is not given, and their place within a particular culture is not shown (pers. comm. see Fig. 1.8). Faunce also expressed her doubt about how long such an experience, lacking in context, can stay in the mind (Faunce, 1992: 37).

Besides, there is neither a guide nor guide-books for visitors nor references for specialists. Visitors still cannot comprehend an overall picture of the objects. They are ignorant at the most basic questions, such as, "who was the Buddha?", "what is Buddhism?", "what do Buddhists believe?", "what do Buddhists practise?" or "what do Buddhists realise?". They have no idea about the significance of the objects. In addition, many explanations contain many academic terms which seem to alienate the ordinary visitors. Exhibition labels are usually found to be too simple or with too much jargon. They are unfamiliar to the general public.

Additionally, the contents of labels usually seem to be either out of date, or ill-conceived. There are numerous examples of insensitivity on labels. Besides, interpretations usually are irrelevant to the general public. They do not mean to provide messages which are valid for life. Additionally, many captions are too brief. They merely give names or no explanation at all. It would be very difficult to arouse visitors' interest
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and curiosity, to inspire their imagination, to widen their awareness or to increase their appreciation of these objects.

There are five stone Buddhas which were displayed in 1989. However, there was no detailed interpretation on the significance of these objects (19).

Concerning this issue, the display Buddhism: Art and Faith in the British Museum is acceptable. Barker thinks that it was arranged in an attractive way. There was generally enough information supplied about the actual objects on display, however, less so perhaps about Buddhist faith and practice itself and how the objects relate to it (pers. comm. see Fig. 1.8). That is to say, the religious dimension of these objects were divested. Most people might not like to take the risk of being criticised by displaying religious themes.

Jones observed that once upon a time he heard a small child enquiring of his father what a certain statue was. The father read out from the label, 'Statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara wearing a Sanghati, Bihar Pala period'. He doubted that either of them came to understand it. There is also a problem faced by the display of Buddhism that is shared by displays relating to all non-Judeo Christian Islamic religions and cultures. The ideas and technical terms of the religion cannot be easily translated into English.

Sometimes, though the religious importance of Buddha figures is indicated in the museum labels, the figures tend to be shown as cultural rather than religious objects (29). Sometimes, the documentation is existent but very poor (33). Morrell found that captions rarely give the real or symbolic meanings to Buddhist objects (pers. comm. in June 1993).
Many Buddhist objects merely have brief labels attached without further interpretations. Besides, there are many chopped stone Buddhist head statues without clear provenance. Naturally, without sufficient interpretations, these objects make little sense to viewers.

Trite interpretations and themes alienate the general public. They tackle merely the superficial aspects rather than the deeper significance of Buddhist objects. They have no close relationship with the human condition today. To know what Buddhist objects were made of and who have made them do not mean visitors have already grasped the purposes of these objects. This kind of interpretations makes little sense to the general public.

In addition, the names of Buddhist objects are very incoherent and inconsistent. Even at the same museum, the same image may have various names, e.g.- Kuan Yin, Guanyin, and Kuan-yn (Goddess of Mercy), Kannon, or Kwannon (Manchester and Horniman); Wenshu, Manjusri, or Monju (Manchester); Budat, or Hotei; Mi Lo Fo or Mirok; Lohan, Luohan, or Arhat (V & A). In addition, the translation of the multilingual captions is not absolutely correct. A greatest difficulty is that no agreement has yet been reached on the precise translation of the religious terminology. Besides, the perfunctory attitude on displaying the objects also frequently can be perceived. In the recent case in the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities, a label describing a popular Chinese Bodhisattva Ti-tzang (Kshitigarbha) merely denotes it as a Bodhisattva. However, from its specific attire and head dress, it is one of the most popular Bodhisattvas in China.

Frequently, the interpretations merely reflect the cultural background of caption writers rather than the authentic messages of the objects. In the case of the Cheltenham Gallery and Museum, the label attached to Phurba (Ritual dagger), reads, "Wooden used in ceremonies to pin down evil forces- for stabbing demons." At the Horniman Museum,
it reads, "Phurbu or Thunderbolt Dagger is a magical weapon for stabbing demons." However, in the perspective of Westerners, 'demons' denote 'monsters'. Considering all phenomena as insubstantial and ephemeral, Buddhists conceive no permanent enemy outside like this. They regard their own craving, animosity, and delusion as their most obstinate enemy to be suppressed. If one's mind is pure, he would be able to regard all beings and all things as Buddhas. Accordingly, the interpretation is insufficient.

The content of a label is still not coherent. In one situation, it may contain the name, the material, or the provenance of that object. In another, it may denote the function or symbolic meaning of an object. There is no standard stipulation to abide by. Confusion is inevitable under this kind of approach. Deplorably, captions scarcely offer the most fundamental messages, such as the functions or significance, of an object.

Another phenomenon is the great use of technical jargon, without proper interpretations. It is very easy for Buddhism to get clogged up with all its wonderful scriptures and stories and Sanskrit, Pali, Japanese, and Tibetan terms. Unless the visitor has a firm grasp of the heart of the matter, it is easy to get enchanted, alienated or confused by all this. Few visitors really comprehend them. Inevitably, visitors usually skim over these unfamiliar words.

*Insufficient documentation*

Sometimes, documentation is very sparse and unreliable. This is particularly true for objects that were bought on the primitive art market, or came to the museum through a series of intermediaries and were collected by an amateur in the first place, but it also holds true sometimes for those purposeful expedition administered by professional anthropologists. Many collectors did not bother to bring home information on the objects they acquired that went beyond the minimum of 'culture, function, and constituent materials' (Pearce, 1989a: 102). Information on the cultural context of the objects is often limited.
Indeed, not all Buddhist objects have clear and reliable provenance. Hooper-Greenhill pointed out that research on the collections was carried out after the object had entered the collection in the past. Acquisition and research were seen as two separate processes (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 206). In some situations, the provenance was very difficult to trace. Besides, since most of the objects were created anonymously, it added difficulty to trace the artists. In addition, as their creation usually must follow strict established rules, Buddhist objects of different periods may look very similar. This, inevitably, adds more difficulty to trace their real period. However, documentation is an important basic work for manifesting material culture. Pearce wrote:

> With documented histories, objects can be used for more diverse exhibitions and are particularly important for the study of persistence and change. Objects are material manifestations of societal transformations and for a crucial part of the understanding of society and culture and their changes over time (Pearce, 1989a: 86).

The study found that the provenance of some Buddhist objects is untraceable (e.g. 6, 17, 29, and 34) or lost it in later (17). At the Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow (17), only around five per cent of items have a more exact source or provenance. Goodier also observed that Buddhist objects are often misleadingly labelled. Sometimes the labels appear to date back to the days of British imperialism (pers. comm. see Fig. 1.8).

Museum staff should have a clear idea of the kind of information that is most essential to ordinary visitors. Complete documentation should include a brief description such as: artist, title, size, medium, signature, date, inscriptions on back and front, the way in which they came to the museum, literary references, exhibitions, acquisition number, date of acquisition, purpose of making them, function and symbolic meanings of these objects. They should include the fundamental information of an object. However, some labels still cannot meet this basic requirement. They merely exist.
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A few museums admit that most items have been documented in a rudimentary way, but not any specific details of date, source, craft technique and so on are recorded for any specimen (16). One museum said that only a small percentage of the objects in their museum has more detailed description and provenancing (17). Some museums acknowledged that their original documentation was not good, with only brief documentation (e.g. 21, 22, 33). While other museums admit that Buddhist objects are not researched or documented as they have no expert in this field (e.g. 1, 12, 29, 34).

So far, only the T.T. Tsui Gallery in the V & A and the St Mungo Museum have provided bilingual labels. As visitors who come to view these objects are not all English speaking people, English is insufficient. The Sanskrit, the Pali, and even the indigenous languages which produces these objects should be used in interpretations.

Indeed, without the basic work of documentation, it is difficult to provide fundamental information for visitors. Museums must make more effort on this work.

Cultural bias

As institution mediating between lived experience and the archives of the past, a museum does not merely present history in a neutral sense through the display of objects. It displays the past and interprets the history as a spectacle according to its own established terms of reference (Tawadros, 1990: 30). A closer examination of museums reveals that they have not valued equally historical, political and social experiences, nor have they given equal and objective interpretation to non-Western achievements in science, art, literary or scholarly endeavour (Dickerson, 1991: 21-3). It means that museum displays of material culture reflect European notions of taste, rather than other peoples as seen through their eyes. More or less, they emanate an aroma of cultural superiority.
Implicit in the organisation and presentation of museum displays is the superiority of Western culture over those of non-European peoples. Considering non-European cultures as essentially static and primitive, some displays and interpretations still give people a strong hint that Western culture is inherently progressive, sophisticated and, above all, superior (Tawadros, 1990: 31). Hence, they disregard the significance of other cultural objects.

In the past, ethnographic collections were formed through social Darwinism and the idea that material culture reflected a single evolutionary movement towards greater complexity. Various cultures in the colonial period were described as 'earlier' or 'later' stages in human evolution. Such an orthodoxy approach was used to justify European colonialism and racism: it was not merely expedient, but scientifically inevitable if humanity was to progress, that certain groups and cultures should be destroyed and others, if not technically enslaved, at least placed firmly under European domination.

A lot of disdainful words were found in displaying labels, such as describing Tibetan ritual daggers as 'devil daggers and herbal compounds as 'filthy mixtures' (Jones, 1991: 18). Attitudes behind such museum displays were frankly both racist and imperialist.

This attitude demonstrates the fact that a number of ethnographic collections, such as the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Horniman and others, have been laid out to show the evolution of material culture. Ethnography was used to justify colonialism and oppression, and museums contributed to this by constantly placing contemporary cultures in the past and normalising their vanishing (Jones, 1992: 24). Indeed, this kind of approach is inappropriate in this multicultural society. People should know that no culture is absolutely superior or inferior than others.
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Unclear aims

Not all displays have clear aims. Even if they really have one, sometimes, it is not so appropriate. One of the basic management tools that helps to identify, select, prioritise and evaluate the educational roles and provision of museums is the policy document. Hooper-Greenhill points out that without a clear idea of aims and objectives it is difficult to decide which of the host of possible activities is relevant or appropriate (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 79). She argues that the many variations of structure, function, funding, and consequent objectives can lead to education services operating in an idiosyncratic, and sometimes spasmodic fashion. The development of a policy will help in defining a coherent way forward (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 80). Obviously, each museum should have its specific aims.

Accordingly, with a view to display the objects, the main thing to bear in mind is the aim of the exhibition. From a Buddhist perspective, for example, the aim of a display is to increase the understanding and appreciation of Buddhist objects.

At the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum (7), the main aim of the Images of People exhibition was to look at how the West has perceived and understood other people and their culture. The staff of the T. T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art in the V & A (27) explained that their aims in the display were to encourage the Chinese community to visit the collection and to promote Westerners' understanding of the Chinese culture. While at the Manchester City Art Gallery (28), its aim is to open up the gallery to new non-gallery audiences and to present parts of the collection that are little known or have been in store for many years.

Wrong information

Sometimes, the accompanying texts are misleading or incorrect. It is easy to find wrong information on labels such as denoting "ushinisha" as "the swelling on the head of the Buddha" (9), or denoting "Amitabha" as "Shakyamuni" (24). Besides, there is often
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the problem of dating an object. In the case of V & A, a huge Buddha head has been
singled out for special treatment, placed in a case supported high on four red pillars in the
very centre of the T.T. Tsui Gallery. According to the label, it is a Tang dynasty object.
However, Whetefield thinks that as no Tang sculpture has the high conical head-dress,
thus the date is doubtful (Whetefield, 1991: 790).

At the Ethnography Gallery in the Museum and Art Gallery in Brighton, a caption
attached to a red lacquered wooden fish reads, "This instrument, a form of slit-drum, is
beaten by the Chinese with the accompanying stick in order to summon divine attention.
It is considered especially useful in prayers for rain. Small 'Mu yì' [sic] like this one
tended to be used by pilgrims" (R549/3).

Obviously, the instrument models no natural fish. It indicates some symbolism. As
a fish does not close its eyes even during its sleep, the wooden fish suggests vigilance
over one's entire way of life. Hoping to be liberated from the labyrinth of the world, a
Buddhist practitioner should keep this kind of vigilance to identify the entice of fame,
wealth, sex, food, and sleepiness. Then he can keep the clarity of his mind.

This object is much used in Chinese monasteries to remind Buddhists to be alert
while doing meditation. Thus, it has nothing to do with the issue of summoning divine
attention. Realising the frailty of a life, a Buddhist should not waste it indolently. A daily
reciting of a Bodhisattva Samantabhadra's stanza reads, "As this day has passed away, so
our lives have decreased as well. Just as a fish in a little pond, what joy do we have in this
plight."

It reminds people to value their lives. They cannot afford to squander it in trifle
matters and in meaningless ways. A verse of the Dhammapada tells people the
importance of vigilance. "Vigilance (Attentive observation) is the Way which leads to
immortality. Negligence is the Way of death. Those who are vigilant do not die. Those
who are negligent are already as though they were dead" (David-Neel, 1978: 60). Obviously, the practice of vigilance is a means of learning to know oneself, to know the world in which one lives, and consequently to acquire "Right Views."

A caption in the British Museum describes the Amitabha Buddha as the Sakyamuni. However, this interpretation is unjustifiable. Additionally, a caption in the British Library Gallery interprets the Diamond Sutra, colophon dated 868 AD, as the world's earliest printed book (Wood, 1985:11). The statement is also doubtful. The Untainted Purity Light Mahamantra Sutra found in Korea (printed before 751 AD) and the Million Pagoda Mantra Sutra found in Japan (printed ca 766-770 AD) are earlier than this sutra (Pam, 1986: 44). Indeed, the block printing technique of Korea and Japan was introduced from China in the Tang dynasty (618 AD-907 AD). However, most owing to warfare and turmoil, the earlier block publications in China were rarely found.

At another caption in the British Museum describing the Tibetan five-pointed "vajra" read, "The five-pointed 'vajra' symbolises many things, such as the five elements which are earth, water, air, fire, and stone, the five Buddhas and the five wisdom". However, as 'stone' has been included in the element of earth, it is not one of the five elements. Another element usually refers to 'voids' or 'emptiness'.

A label in the Manchester University Museum read, "Buddhism is the world's first historic religion. Gautama Shakyamuni the Buddha, lived several centuries before Christ (probably 563-483 BC)...." Indeed, there were many religions before Buddhism. Accordingly, Buddhism is not the first historic religion.

In the late case, some of the information in "The St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art", which was published by the St Mungo Museum in Glasgow, is not correct, thus incurred great criticism. Besides, it is said that the Zen Garden at the back court of that museum is the first one in the Great Britain. However, the Peace Pagoda Temple at
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Milton Keynes has already built a Zen garden many years ago. In addition, the translation of multi-lingual captions in this museum is not precisely correct.

**Stereotyped displaying**

Pearce wrote that art exhibits do not intend to provide information on the object’s cultural background but to present the object’s aesthetic qualities. The object is decontextualized, its culture of origin unimportant. "The aesthetic approach concentrates upon objects claimed to have an intrinsic merit which speaks for itself" (Pearce, 1989a: 100). Besides, museum displays in general, instead of stirring the imagination of visitors, tend to perpetuate the visitors' stereotypes of 'savages' and 'quaint primitive' cultures of non-European peoples (Pearce, 1989a: 101).

Besides, the information of an object is far more than a label can transmit. What a writing caption can convey is quite limited. A caption merely demonstrates the viewpoint of one aspect rather than an overall picture of that object. Focusing on one aspect, such as aesthetics, naturally, displaces the attention to other aspects of that object. However, few museums have applied new approaches and technologies into interpretations.

In addition, many displays limit themselves to an art form or a chapter of the past with no connections to the present; regarding a story can stand on its own (Chavez, 1991: 48). Ignoring the relevance of the objects to the society, this trite approach is unappealing because the version of the past is very shallow and sanitised, that having been once, people do not want to go again. Longman, director of the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), said, 'for far too long too many museums have been kept in the doldrums by those responsible for running them' (Longman, 1992: 42). For instance, the Pitt Rivers Museum, displaying other cultures that it did a hundred years ago, without incorporating any of the intervening debate, can hardly present itself as a stimulating intellectual institution at the forefront of knowledge and worthy of serious funding (Jones, 1992: 26).
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It should be noted that an object can be viewed from various angles. Regarding Buddhist objects as artistic is merely one sterile approach. As 'religion' is an arguable topic, most museums do not like to display the objects as 'religious' through fear of being criticised. They would rather like to display these objects as arts. However, sticking to one approach would dispel other optional approaches.

In addition, many exhibitions regard Buddhist objects as unique. Usually, they tackle these objects in a simplified way. They did not distinguish the specific characteristics of these objects developed in different areas. Since Buddhist areas are so broad, categorising all the objects together is misleading and confusing. For instance, the skull and bone ceremonial objects used in Tibet are not necessarily used in other areas. Conversely, the "Mu-yu" used in China is not used in Tibet. A specific cultural area developed its specific characteristics in the making of these objects. For example, Chinese "Kuan Yin" is female, while Tibetan Avalokitesvara is male. One who is familiar with the objects of one area does not necessarily mean his grasp of the objects used in another area. Accordingly, regarding all objects as unique is inappropriate. Intelligent displays should distinguish them.

Besides, Buddhist objects are often displayed as dead relics or antiquities of dead cultures which seem to have little connection with this human condition. Museums seem so confident that they can display, arrange and interpret the objects at their whims. However, the fact is that the objects still represent vividly a living tradition which still can be perceived and experienced in many monasteries and altars. Divested of all the living elements, these objects are just like other relics of many dead civilisations. Accordingly, the lively context of Buddhist was deprived under this kind of approach.

In addition, the objects are no longer foreign objects. Buddhism has become an integral part of British culture. Many Western Buddhists have produced a lot of Buddhist
works, such as displayed in the temporary exhibition room of the St Mungo Museum in May 1993. This fact should be reflected in museums' approaches.

**Insufficiency of specific knowledge**

This is a common problem which many museums encounter. For instance, some other religious images are wrongly regarded as Buddhist's, such as in the Leeds (see Plate 10) and Edinburgh museums. The posture of the parinirvana of the Buddha is usually lying on the right side. However, there are still some statues which describing this scene as lying on the left side. This must be the product of an ignorant worker who has no idea of Buddhism. However, some museums seem not to know it. Even the British Museum cannot identify one of the Chinese most worshipped Bodhisattvas, Ti-tzang (Kshitigarbha), in its new Oriental exhibition.

Besides, some of the southern Indian images of gods and goddesses in stone or bronze are almost impossible to identify, especially female figures that appear alone or out of context, as the Chola artists did not have distinct iconographic formula, for some consorts of Shiva and Vishnu (Lanius, 1993: 48). Indeed, the same artists produced various images for different religions at that area.

Undoubtedly, staff's background knowledge and attitude would affect displays and interpretations of these objects. As the exigency of specialists, some museums cannot distinguish the objects from other religious objects. At the Sheffield Museum and the Glasgow Museum, Chinese indigenous deities, such as Tuti Kung and Fu Te Chen Shen, are regarded as Buddhist images. In a caption entitled "Transcendent Buddhas" at the display of *Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet* which was held by the Royal Academy from 18 September to 13 December 1992 read, "... This was an attempt on the part of the later Vajrayana philosophers to create a monotheistic system; it failed, and Buddhism remained a polytheistic religion." However, as a Homo-centric religion rather than a theo-centric religion, Buddhism concerns itself only with the cessation of
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suffering. It never deviates itself from this issue. Accordingly, the caption reflects precisely this caption writer’s obsession with God rather than the reality of Buddhistic ideas.

At the Bristol Museum, Buddhist objects are categorised by materials. The labels are too brief, and the interpretations merely emphasise the significance of aesthetic, ethnology, or archaeology.

Disregarding the needs of the general public

Hooper-Greenhill points out that adult and community work is the least mature of all areas of museum education in Britain, and is perhaps the most vulnerable when resources are limited (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 150). Indeed, many museums still pay meagre attention to visitors’ responses. Many displays and interpretations are not so considerate of the general public. Sometimes, interpretations are insufficient, distorted, or even wrong. The most disadvantage is that they have no close connection with the human condition today.

Some surveys suggest that despite museums’ democratic intent and their efforts at inclusion, museum-going remains the pass-time of relatively affluent, relatively well-educated families (Kulik, 1992: 69). Some museum staff even have contempt for the general public. For instance, one British museum director once labelled his visitors as ‘wretched public’ (Kulik, 1992: 57). Indeed, visitors’ responses are still not much regarded by museums. Museums are so satisfied with taciturn visitors. All labels and interpretations seem to be correct absolutely. When labels are written, all things seem to have been settled. This kind of approach would alienate a lot of visitors. However, in order to educate, entertain and inspire visitors, museums should put visitor service at the forefront of their work. They should know their potential visitors and meet their demands.
Few investigations have ever been conducted on the needs and responses of visitors. The needs of visitors or minorities are usually neglected. Few bulletins have ever been issued to publicise forthcoming exhibitions of museums. In addition, few Buddhist communities have ever been contacted by museums. These issues reflect that the needs of most of the general public are still much neglected by museums.

This chapter discusses the channels to bring Buddhist objects to Britain, the museums' collecting and its connection with the destruction of the objects, the use of these objects in displays, and the merits and shortcomings of using them. After explored these issues, the next chapter will continue to analyse the factors which might hinder the understanding and use of these objects.
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Chapter 5  Misunderstandings and the factors which might hamper the understanding and use of Buddhist objects

According to the analysis of last chapter, the use of Buddhist objects in British museums are still far from being satisfactory. There are still some shortcomings in the past and current displays. Most displays and interpretations merely ape the stereotyped interpretations and interpret rarely the significance of these objects from a broader social and cultural context. Most approaches are so cold to the general public. As a result, Buddhist objects seem have no close connection with the time and the society.

Thus, this chapter attempts to discuss misunderstandings about Buddhism and its objects. Then, it examines the elements which might hamper the understanding of these objects and the factors which might obstruct the use of them in displays.

5.1 Misunderstandings about Buddhism and Buddhist objects

Without background knowledge, ordinary visitors are inclined to view the surface splendour rather than the in-depth significance of these objects.

Even the viewpoints of scholars about Buddhism are not absolutely correct or reliable. There are a lot of these cases. Michael Ridley wrote that "The Hinayana scriptures also teach a passage which has become known as the 'Chain of Dependent Origination'. This is a vague and ambiguous passage which practically no one fully understands..." (Ridley, 1978: 26). Merely because his ignorance at this topic, he claimed that nobody fully understood it. On page 47, he wrote, "The last Chinese Patriarch was the 6th, Hui-neng." This reflected merely his unfamiliarity about the topic because Hui-neng was not the last Zen Patriarch.
On pages 152-53, he wrote, "This non-intellectual form of Buddhism necessitated the complete and unquestioning faith of the believer in Amitabha. By calling on him by name, the pious believed they would be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitabha and be under his protection. This blind trust contrasts strongly with the doctrine of the Ch'an...". The word "blind" demonstrated his unsympathetic arrogance. As a religion emphasising practice, Buddhism demands no such thing as believing in anything beyond human experience. If there is anything that the Buddha demands his followers, it would be, be your own island, be your own lamp, be your own master, and take full responsibility for yourself. Hence, the statement is unjustified.

Edmonds wrote, "While there is a comparison between the way each was born to save humankind, there is also a major difference which is important to each religion. Christ was born only one, and His death on the cross provided the way to salvation for all time. The Buddha continues to be born through all time" (Edmonds, 1978: 38). If he really understood that the Buddha had already attained Nirvana which was neither birth nor death anymore, then he would not have written the words. On page 42, he wrote that Tantrism was the "magic Buddhism". This viewpoint showed merely his ignorance about this topic. On the following page, he added, "Tantrism- differing from the Buddha's beliefs- teaches that human beings have souls." However, Buddhism teaches nothing about souls which I have explored in chapter 2.

In addition, on page 45, he claimed, "Sexual intimacy between men and women outside of marriage was distinctly forbidden by the Buddha and this rule was included in the Precepts. Left-Hand Tantrism argues that the Buddha taught that all actions must be judged according to the intention behind them. Since the motive behind the sexual acts of Left-Hand Tantrism is the attainment of salvation and nirvana, the intention is praiseworthy. Therefore, it is no sin." This viewpoint is unjustified because Buddhism deems that attachment in sensual pleasure brings only unsatisfactoriness.
Fickle wrote, "An eternal, omnipotent Buddha watching over the universe was attractive to the masses, who longed for a deity to whom they could appeal for intercession and assistance" (Fickle, 1989: 3). The words of "omnipotent" and "deity" are really not Buddhistic ideas. The Buddha had never claimed he was omnipotent. He, at least, could not intercept or change the natural law of cause and effect. What he taught was that a person must take full responsibility for his own conduct, he could blame nobody for his own misfortune. The jaundiced statement that "the masses are longing for a deity" merely demonstrates his obsession with a deity. Besides, Wangu's Buddhism: World Religion uses a photograph which obviously is not a Buddhistic, it is a Taoistic (Wangu, 1993: 32-3). Besides, on page 85, the picture of the Dhyana Mudra is not correct because the tips of thumbs should touch each other.

Another case, Buddhism heading in the Britannica reads, "Though retaining tolerance, it is inclined to a certain distrust of other religions, especially of Christianity, which it sees as a rival, a reaction to the historical effects of its alliance with colonialism" (Britannica, Vol. 15., 1988: 312-13). Conversely, Wells wrote, "The Jesuits, in a phase of ascendancy, persecuted and insulted the Buddhists with great acrimony" (Wells, 1920: 543). Accordingly, the viewpoint is not an impartial one.

With a view to widen the understanding and appreciation of these objects, it is necessary to examine the misconceptions about Buddhism and its objects. Sometimes misunderstandings are inevitable as the cultural differences are so broad. The most seen misunderstandings can be illustrated as follows:

Regarding Buddhism as pessimism and idolatry

Early Western scholars of Buddhism, beginning with Max Weber, perceived Buddhism as "other-worldly" and without specific formulations of social ethics. They understood the release from this world as Buddhism's goal. Yet the Pali scriptures abound in passages where the Buddha deals explicitly with social ethics, and many more cases
where the social implications are certainly obvious (Macy, 1988: 173). Indeed, Buddhism considers that awareness can only be achieved by involving in the world rather than be secluded from it.

In the past, Buddhists were usually regarded as vulgar idolaters by European missionaries. They persisted in the Christian apologists' polemic spirit to exclude Buddhists from any profound doctrinal understanding (Welbon, 1968: 18). Even today, some churchmen still keep an arrogant attitude towards Buddhists. For instance, while all Evangelicals stress Jesus Christ as "the way, the truth and the life", the fundamentalists among them take that literally and exclusively: all religions which do not invoke that Name are, at least technically, idolatrous (Times, 11th December 1991: 15). Indeed, with jaundiced ideas, people can see nothing good in other religions. They regard their religions as the embodiment of good, while all other religions are all deviated. If they still keep this kind of attitude in this multicultural society and very secularised world today, it is easy to surmise how suppressive they would have been in their past hey-days. However, the point is that Buddhism is neither pessimism nor fatalism, it is realistic, dealing objectively with the human experience. Lama Nawang said:

When I was younger I wanted to renounce everything. Now I understand that was vanity, and a desire for safety. The Tantric way is harder and demands a greater purity and fearlessness. It is harder to love the world than to leave it; it is harder to work with our emotions of greed and desire and anger, to face them and transform them slowly into loving power, than it is to cut them off, to deny them. And because it is harder the rewards are greater. The Tantric Way is one of discipline without dogma, renunciation without contempt (Harvey, 1983: 160).

Indeed, it is easier to seclude oneself from the world or commit suicide rather than to face the reality of existence, to take the challenge of life.

Buddhism emphasises that everything people need for their own and others' happiness is to be found in their own mind (see Plate 2). Happiness originates from a kind and considerate heart within people themselves rather than any outside objects. One can
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achieve what one wants to be. If everything was predestined, frozen into a pattern long before it happened, that would be fatalism. The Buddha described that as a wrong view (Khema, 1992: 153). If it was true, one could find no reason for being a truthful, decent person. One would not even find a reason for getting up early in the morning, but could just as well stay in bed.

People do have choices, however. They can get up in the morning or stay in bed. They can tell themselves that early morning is a good time for meditation, or they can say to themselves, how silly it is to get up early and prefer to stay in bed. They can convince themselves either way. Thus, people do have choices. They have choices under all circumstances. Indeed, they are not merely the pawn of any almighty power outside. All the possibilities are within people themselves. Besides, Buddhism is far from idolatry. In early Buddhist art Buddha was represented by symbols: footprints indicated his presence, a standing woman (his mother) his birth, a tree the Enlightenment, a wheel the Doctrine and the First Sermon, and a stupa his death (Norwich, 1990: 64). Initially, there was reluctance to depict the physical form of the Buddha. A notable feature of early representations of Gotama is that he is only shown by symbols.

The development of Buddha images, in the second century AD, was probably preceded by the practice of visualising the Buddha's form in the mind's eye (Harvey, 1990: 80). The creation of the 'image' of the highest ideals is the real 'magic', namely the power that acts, forms, and transforms. An ideal, therefore, can only act as if it is represented by a symbol- not merely a conventional sign or a mere allegory, but a valid, living symbol that can be visualised, experienced, felt, and realised by one's whole being. It is for this reason that Tibetan Buddhism lays much stress on visualisation of the symbols of Buddhahood-which are as numerous as its qualities- on the contemplation of images, mandalas (sacred diagrams), mantras, and so forth. All these things are not so much objects of worship but aids and instruments of visualisation (Govinda, 1977: 115). Thus, they are far from being idolatry.
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Buddhism is a non-religion, and denies not only the existence of God, but also, in Hinayana, the divinity of the Buddha. The Buddha himself is regarded as a man, a teacher, and not a god. Thus, although images of the Buddha are included in Hinayana temples, he is portrayed simply as a symbol. There is no division in a Buddhist temple an area of god and an area of man, it is all the domain of human beings. Hinayana teaches reliance on oneself. One should not expect miraculous intercession from some almighty deity in heaven, but rely on one's own efforts and conduct- there is no hope of external help, but only of the help within. The Buddha himself said that his teachings were not to be taken on faith and that he was not to become an object of special veneration. Zen carries this insistence on independence to extreme lengths. For example, there was a Zen monk who chopped up his temple's image for firewood (Swearer, 1971: 1292). Evidently, true Buddhists attach to nobody, nothing. They live freely.

The homage and respect paid to the Buddha is but a symbolic veneration of his greatness and the happiness people find in his teachings. Naturally, this respect should express itself in some of the finest and most beautiful art and sculpture the world has ever seen. Signifying intangible truths, they are far from being idols. Alan Watts wrote:

> Verbal definitions of God in the form of creeds, dogmas, and doctrines are far more dangerous idols than statues made of wood, stone, or gold, because they have the deceptive appearance of being more 'spiritual', and because a creedally formulated God has been reduced to words, and is no longer experienced immediately, like clear water or blue sky. This is why Christians have lost all magical powers except those of a false anointment, or antichrist: petroleum, powering a technology which is fouling the whole human nest (Watts, 1972: 75-6).

That is to say, one's bias are really one's obstinate idol which can cloud the clarity of one's mind.

**Considering Tantrayana as pornography and degenerated form of Buddhism**

Nowadays, the danger of Tantric doctrine arousing inimical criticism has turned into its opposite- the danger that the Tantric symbolism of sexual embracing in the man-
woman relationship is misunderstood and hailed as an endorsement and encouragement of the modern obsession with sex and its indiscriminate satisfaction. The misunderstanding goes so far that the average Westerner equates Tantra with 'sex-indulgence', or an exaltation of sex as the main factor of human life through which final liberation can be attained. This kind of wishful thinking is far away from the reality as mistaking the sacrament of marriage for an encouragement of sensuality and sex-indulgence (Govinda, 1977: 40). Guenther also pointed out, "When certain scholars speak of an 'eroticized' form of Buddhism, blowing the trumpets of righteous indignation, they merely advertise their ignorance of the symbol-language" (Guenther, 1963: 112). That is to say, in order to know the messages, people should know the language.

Again, when the first knowledge of the Tantras penetrated the Western world such indignation was aroused that the average Sanskrit scholar, (brought up under the ideals of the Victorian era) tried to dismiss them as a degenerate form of religious tradition not worthy of serious attention. They considered Tantrism as a medley of ritual acts, yoga techniques, and other practices, mostly of an 'objectionable' type, and, therefore, as a degenerative form of Buddhism which had lapsed into a world of superstition and magic. Blofeld also observed that mantras were now esteemed as a means of wooing good fortune and as magic spells rather than as aids to spiritual development (Blofeld, 1977: 16). Shearer also said that the Christian West usually deemed the multi-armed and hybrid formed heathen images as monstrous and diabolic (Shearer, 1992: 94). Indeed, pre-occupied ideas blur only one's understanding.

Anybody who tried to recognise the important role which the Tantrayana played in the religious life of India and Tibet or who endeavoured to justify basic ideas of Tantrism by demonstrating their general human validity was suspected of favouring immorality or libertine views. A scholar was expected to remain personally aloof from the subject of his research in order to maintain 'subjective objectivity.' Consequently, any form of personal
involvement or conviction, which led a scholar to identifying himself with the doctrines under study, was regarded as unscholarly.

As a result, objects connected with Tantra are frequently misunderstood, they are especially mistaken for sex indulgence. To ordinary visitors, such strange figures may sometimes seem alien to the point of repulsion, and bewilderment is not diminished by the convention of showing many gods in close sexual embrace with female partners and adopting fierce and terrible forms, part human, part strange animal. However, these representations are symbols of the highest importance for Buddhists. In the sexual form they stand for the components of liberation: wisdom and compassion joined together to achieve the elimination of all opposites. Indeed, the union represents that reality transcends dualism. Govinda explained it clearly:

The essential fact is to experience this basic unity and never to lose it again. This lasting experience can certainly not be achieved by the satisfaction of a sudden biological urge. The realisation and the experience of the basic unity is very like sexual fulfilment. Therefore, sexuality is to be understood as a picture or a symbol, but not as a reality per se (Govinda, 1977b: 43-4).

Besides, this symbolism is also different from the primitive people's worship of proliferation. As a spiritual way which leads to liberation, Buddhists conceive that obsession with sensual pleasure is a defilement of attaching and the cause of suffering. Hence, it suggests no idea about the adoration of proliferation.

Misunderstanding about Tibetan furious deities

A large majority of images representing fierce and angry-looking deities occupy an important place in Tantric texts. Thus, a unique image of Buddha-kapala is preserved in the Baroda Museum. It is a terrific posture, "with three blood-shot eyes rolling in anger, distorted face, canine teeth, ornaments made of bones, a garland of severed heads, and an attitude of menacing dance" (Joshi, 1967: 64). It seems to be a demon for a Western viewer.
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The fierce and wrathful aspects are symbols of the power that brings the aspirant to liberation and protects him against the dangers on that path. Meditation on such deities and their entourage is an intense and arduous progression by which one may become identified with the Absolute. In this function the fierce deities are manifestations of that Absolute in one of its emanating form (Zwalf, 1985a: 56-8). Thus, they are symbolic forces which can be applied to suppress one’s negative thinking.

In Tibet, the favourite subjects were ‘wrathful deities’, which look to Western eyes like demons but are in fact guardians of the faith (Norwich, 1990: 455). The wrathful deities in Tibetan Buddhism do not depict divine wrath; rather, they stand for the energy devoted to battle against passion and delusion. The Bardo Thodol (the Tibetan Book of the Dead) emphasises that the terrifying demons are of people’s own making— it is quite sufficient for people to know that these apparitions are the reflections of their own thought-forms (Burrows, 1970: preface). Indeed, heaven and hell are all in people’s mind.

*Conceiving Buddhism as superstition and ignorance*

In the past, there were many disdainful comments and an overwhelming sense of superiority and indignation of words towards Buddhism in Europe (Welbon, 1968: 20). Hence, as most people are not thinking persons, they are easily to regard that there is no good in understanding Buddhism and its objects. Consequently, Buddhism and its objects are still an obstinate field for many visitors.

Indeed, Buddhism possesses some specific characteristics which are different from many monotheist religions. Monotheists are difficult to understand that. Usually monotheists believe in an omnipotent God; a Heavenly paradise, which is only reserved for believers; a sacred text, which monopolises and consolidates the absolute Truth. In their perspectives, the faith which they happen to be committed to is the unique religion in the world while all other beliefs are all devious and wrong. As God, according to their conviction, is omnipotent, therefore, He was claimed to be the Creator of everything.
Certainly, it is the easiest logic to answer the riddles of life. But as knowledge advances, this kind of explanation inevitably brings many contradictions with real facts and cannot stand steadily. For instance, in Albert Einstein's biography, Banesh Hoffmann describes:

One striking effect of the science books on the impressionable Albert was to make him suddenly anti-religious. He could not fail to see that the scientific story conflicted with the biblical. Hitherto he had found the solace of certainty in religion as it had been taught him. Now he felt he had to give it up, at least in part, and this he could not do without an intense emotional struggle. For a while he became not just a non-believer but a fanatical sceptic, profoundly suspicious of authority (Hoffmann, 1975: 24).

In the past, if anyone dared to doubt the "truth" of Genesis or to entertain a different viewpoint, would definitely be persecuted as a witch, wizard, pagan, or heathen. There were countless cases in history. In addition, as only the believers can be saved, naturally monotheists have the greatest craziness in selling their beliefs to other deplorable heathens and even resort to coercive or violent actions to compel them to convert. They all believe that people have only two options to choose after death, either ascending to Heaven or descending to Hell forever.

However, the Buddha preached nothing like that. He was not a prophet, but a teacher, and that was what he took himself for. Nothing he ever said indicated a conviction of being the mouthpiece of a divine being. He regards himself merely as a road sign to deliverance, appeals to people's intelligence and recommends adaptation to the natural laws of existence. He shows people a way to liberate people from suffering of craving, aversion and delusion. The attainment which he attained is open to all who devote themselves to the earnest practice of his teaching. His teaching addressed the individual, not an ethnic or racial group, and hence, in contrast to many ethnic religions it was able to win followers outside India and become a world religion. The way which the Buddha treaded was a way to uncover and to develop people themselves rather than to adore the greatness of an almighty power outside.
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The Buddha condemned or compelled none, even non-believers, to a hell forever. Thus, Buddhism shows more compassion and more tolerance than other monotheists. As all living beings possess the same innate Buddha nature, they all possess boundless potentials to witness the reality of existence and to attain enlightenment. The idea that suffering is a trial is foreign to Buddhism. Conversely, the aim of Buddhism is to vanquish suffering. A human being, in the perspective of Buddhists, is very precious. Certainly, this is not the conviction of monotheists. They believe that mankind, possessing an original sin, is very mean and cannot hope to become God. The only hope for them is but to beg for God's mercy. Accordingly, Buddhism and its objects are obstinate topics for people raised in monotheistic cultures.

Unlike the religions of Middle Eastern origin, the idea of an almighty God does not play any role in Buddhism. Not god or gods (though such are recognised), but mankind is the object of Buddhist thought (Schumann, 1973: 169-70). It dealt mainly with the problems of mankind. In contrast to those religions that are based on unproved articles of faith, the basis of Buddhism is "understanding". Beginning with the experience of suffering as a primary, universally valid axiom, Buddhism adopts the standpoint that only what has been experienced, and not what has been thought out, has real value. It does not appeal to unproved revelations derived from a supernatural realm such as the adherents of a faith or religion that normally have to be accepted.

Buddhism is a system shaped by experience. It concerns itself solely with what is attainable for people, not with purely speculative theories about gods, or about an almighty creator of the universe who is only an imaginary ideal of people's personality inflated to infinity (Govinda, 1990: 46). Rev. Anthony Freeman says in his book God With Us that he does not believe in God. He argues that "there is nothing 'out there'- or if there is, we can have no knowledge of it" (Thompson, 1993: 3). Indeed, if a dog could draw pictures, it would inflate itself to infinity and create its God in its own form. Likewise, it is said that men created God in their own form rather than vice versa. Conceiving no idea
about the creation of the universe, Buddhism has no qualm about conflicting with the new discoveries in the physical world.

The Buddha proclaimed no new faith, but attempted rather to free people's thinking from the prejudices of dogmatic precepts, so as to make possible an unprejudiced viewing of reality. He did not want people to be sheep-like followers; he taught teaching to them so that they could investigate it for themselves and know it for themselves. Then people would become bold like mountain lions, not stupid like sheep. Thus, Buddhism cannot be condemned as superstition.

Buddhists do not put their faith in the power of gods, residing in some heavens high up, but they believe in the power of motivation or volition and the purity of intention within people themselves. Buddhas are only masters and guides for those who really want to listen. It is up to each individual, whether or not he chooses to take advantage of their advice. The Dalai Lama said, "For me, Buddhism is first a humane religion. In fact it seems to be basically concerned with the development and improvement of the mind" (Levinson, 1988: 236-37). As mind is the forerunner of everything, it is wise to tame one's mind rather than to transform the world in which one lives.

Modernists describe Buddhism as 'the religion of reason' as opposed to the religions of blind belief in dogmas. The ideas about god and soul propagated by the monotheistic religious traditions are criticised as incompatible both with reason and with a realistic view of the world (Bechert & Gombrich, 1984: 276). From Buddhists' viewpoints, everyone must take full responsibility for his own fate, nobody can be blamed for his happiness or unhappiness. Everyone is merely reaping what he had sowed in the past.

For an ordinary observer, the creation of an image of a deity might suggest idolatry but a devout Buddhist has no such qualms, recognising in the image is not a person, but a reminder of a set of precepts by which a person can chart the course of his life and of his
individual actions. It is a reminder that makes people a little more aware of the Buddha and his teachings. While looking at a Buddhist image, people should regard it as something to remind them of their potential Buddhahood within themselves. Indeed, they are reminders for people to know more about themselves and their fellow people.

It is foolish to suppose that by venerating a Buddha image people are performing a service to the Buddha. Rather, by such veneration people strengthen their volition to follow in the Buddha’s path and realise his teaching. On his passing away, Buddha admonished his disciples that it was not he they should remember but his doctrine (Beek & Tettoni, 1991: 25). The reality of existence was merely uncovered rather than created by the Buddha.

In early Buddhism, which was a way of life or a philosophical system based on the doctrine of the Buddha, there was no need for representations of the Buddha. The first representations of the Buddha in human form were only created centuries after his death when a special need was felt for such anthropomorphic representations of the teacher. It was conceived that since the Buddha has gone beyond the fetters of the body cannot be endowed by art with the likeness of a body (Rowland, 1976: 6). Hence, early Buddhist art did not depict the Buddha in a human form. It must have been due to the feeling that the profound nature of a Buddha could not be adequately conveyed by a mere human form.

Accordingly, while people bow to the statue and praise the Buddha in words, they are not paying respects to the image but to the ideal of enlightenment which the image represents. The Buddha is not a god to contact and ask for favours. The real idols that people believe in and worship, and that constantly delude people themselves, are their thoughts, their views and opinions, their loves and hates, their self-conceit and pride (Sumedho, 1989: 13). Indeed, these kinds of delusions are just what Buddhism inculcates people to disentangle.
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Conceiving Buddhism as inferior

In the past, Buddhism was usually conceived as inferior. This may be revealed especially from many Christian missionary studies about Buddhism before the nineteenth century. John Snelling wrote:

Sadly, bigotry prevented most contemporary Westerners from seeing any good in any religious system other than the Christian one. Buddhism was therefore almost invariably dismissed as benighted idolatry and efforts were made to convert its misguided followers, or even forcible suppression. When efforts were latterly made by missionaries—by Spence Hardy and Samuel Beal, for instance—to study the religion, it was usually with a view to finding ways of discrediting or undermining it (Snelling, 1987: 224).

As a result, its objects were presented as reflections of moral inferiority as in the Missionary Society’s museum (Nicholson, 1983: 27). In 1910, Sir George Birdwood, then Art Referee for the Indian Section of the South Kensington Museum, commented the Javanese Buddha displayed at the Royal Society of Art as, ‘The senseless similitude, by its immemorial fixed pose, is nothing more than an uninspired brazen image, vacuously squinting down its nose to its thumbs, knees and toes. A boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionately purity and serenity of soul’ (Nicholson, 1983: 28). His remarks provoked many influential intellectuals to criticise. A defence was vigorously asserted in a letter to The Times, on 28th February 1910: ‘We the undersigned artists, critics and students of art... find in the best art of India a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and of their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine. We recognise in the Buddha type of sacred figure one of the great artistic inspirations of the world’ (Nicholson, 1983: 28). This letter precisely expressed the displeasure that has been caused by an arrogant viewpoint.

Even today, some persons still keep a smell of jaundiced viewpoints. For instance, Philip Hebbert wrote: "I was brought up to believe firmly in the superiority of the Roman Catholic church—indeed, in the virtual futility of all other religions." Later, he confessed, "It was a joy to shed my superiority. It was a great sadness now to hear many of my co-
religionists claim that they find all they need within the Roman Catholic church and have no wish to look outside" (Hebbert, 1992: 13). Indeed, it is not a unique case.

**Perceiving Buddhism as atheistic nihilism**

Since Buddhism does not accept the concept of a Creator God but emphasises instead self-reliance and the individual's own power and potential, other religions regard Buddhism as a kind of atheism. It is not the truth. Though "Nirvana" and "Shunyata" are often translated as Void or Emptiness, it is not empty in the sense of nothingness, but rather in the sense of beyond name or form, empty of anything permanent or enduring.

As an essentially religious art, Vajrayana (Tantric) art must in some way be concerned with such notions as "the unsatisfactoriness of worldly existence" and "salvation". Now it is a commonly observed fact that people, when confronted by the need to choose between these two states, are often given to extreme antics. He tries to forcibly seize and cling to some 'salvation' and, failing that, totally surrenders himself to a blind faith that a certain saviour or doctrine will somehow carry him through. To some degree or other, many people follow this easy pattern.

But, Tantra does not lend itself to such crude treatment and, on the other hand, it may harmlessly accommodate it. Tibetan art supplies the devotee with objects which, considered in the light of the sunyata doctrine, may be taken without thereby augmenting the ego's greed, and with deities to whom one may give one's self without creating an unhealthy dependence. In this case, any over-enthusiasm on the devotee's part does not result in an exhaustion or degradation of either him or of the deity involved. One is not expected to fixate on- or slavishly surrender to- these deities (Tulku, 1974: 12). He should think these deities arise from voidness and also dissolve into voidness.

Over the centuries, Tibetan Lamaism acquired an enormous pantheon. Over 7000 deities have been identified so far. Buddhism had absorbed gods of other religions and
other regions into itself. Also, abstract and complex doctrinal concepts were often personified as deities; further, saints, kings and heroes were included as objects of worship (Burrows, 1970: preface). From this point of view, Buddhism cannot be denoted as atheism. However, these deities are not in the Western sense of God. Actually, they are the emanation of one's own nature.

Thinking meditation as evil

The most common posture in Buddhist images may be the crossed-legged posture. It shows in many Buddhist images and paintings. This posture, indicating the figure as calm and motionless, in the attitude of meditation, is in itself an impressive symbol. People practise it to calm their disturbed minds and attain serenity.

However, Peter Gregson, the vicar of the St Andrew's church at Ashburton, Devon, after his arrival at the church, immediately prohibited twelve women from holding their weekly yoga session in the church hall at the end of 1991. He told them that their activities are "unchristian" and evil could enter their minds during meditation (Dunn, 1991: 5). Certainly, it is difficult to judge whether Gregson is an expert in this field or not.

But according to Thero's realisation the point of meditation is to gain insight into the truth about life, to learn awareness and control of the mind (Cush, 1990: 34). Besides, a London study of relaxation and meditation training for people at risk of coronaries also found that, four years later, not only did members of the treated group show lower blood pressure than the control group, but they also showed less angina and fewer symptoms of heart disease, as well as a lower number of deaths from heart attack. All this after one hour of relaxation and meditation training each week for eight weeks (Robertson, 1993: 13). This information did confirm the benefits of meditation.

Meditation itself is based on the interaction of physical, spiritual, and psychic phenomena, in so far as the effects of breath-control and bodily posture are combined with
mental concentration, creative imagination, spiritual awareness, and emotional equanimity (Govinda, 1977: 63). The aim of meditation is to unify all the scattered mental energies, to bring all the different aspects of personality into consciousness, and to refine and sublimate the mind (The Guardian, 1989: 19). Usually, it is regarded as a royal way to awareness. There was nothing to deal with god or devil as that vicar indicated.

In the sense of the Buddha’s teaching, meditation is actually based on a letting go (or putting down) of both craving and aversion. As a result of which an inner calmness arises into people's mind that permits them to observe themselves and the continuous stream of their thoughts without valuation and without fixation (Govinda, 1990: 133). Indeed, it is an inspiring news for many people because today's industrialised society makes the lives of city workers nerve-racking and ruin relations between people. It reminds people to relax and not to take themselves too seriously (see Plate 14). However, what counts in meditation is not that posture, as a hen also sits incubating its eggs for a long period of time without a hope to attain enlightenment, but a letting go or putting down of all craving or aversive thoughts in the mind. It is not the monopoly of Buddhists. Many persons, as the above mentioned twelve women, also practise it.

**Inappropriate words about the Buddha’s transcendental marks**

A label at the Bristol City Art Gallery and Museum describes "usnisha", one of the Buddha’s auspicious transcendental marks on the top of his head, as "a swelling on the skull" (N2915). But as "swelling" is a morbid symptom, it is not an appropriate word to describe the Buddha’s auspicious sign. Zwalf wrote that usnisha indicates wisdom. It is one of the thirty-two major and eight minor marks of a Buddha (Zwalf, 1985: 91). Accordingly, the interpretation may be unjustified.

It is said that a Buddha has a number of bodily marks that indicate his transcendental nature. In the case of Shakyamuni Buddha, thirty-two of these special signs were present on his body at birth. In art, only a few of these are typically shown, including
his usnisha (a knot of hair, sometimes described as a bump, on the top of the head), urna (a mark in the centre of his forehead), webbed fingers, and inscribed wheels (cakra) on the soles of his feet and the palms of his hands (Huntington, 1990: 103). Thus, the label may be incorrect.

**Considering smiling face as an idiot laughing**

As a natural expression of compassion and wisdom, Buddhist images usually wear light smiling faces (see Plate 3). In Western art, they denote the idiot (Graham-Dixon, 1991: 14). Conversely, they demonstrate a state of serenity, which is unknown to Western religious art whose function is always to affirm "significance", it is a divinely charged plenitude of meaning at the heart of things (Graham-Dixon, 1991: 14). The expression shows wisdom and compassion rather than ignorance.

A true Buddhist usually is the happiest being in the world. He has no fears or anxieties. He is always calm and serene, and cannot be upset or dismayed by changes or calamities, because he sees things as they are. The Buddha was never melancholy or gloomy. He was described by his contemporaries as 'ever-smiling'. In Buddhist art the Buddha is always represented with a countenance happy, serene, contented, and compassionate. Never a trace of suffering or agony is to be seen (Rahula, 1972: 27-8). Not like Jesus' loud crying on the crucifix, even on the dying bed, the Buddha demonstrated still this noble contentment, peace and serenity.

As the main theme of Buddhism is altruism based on compassion and love, Buddhist images always show smiling countenances. All Buddhist ideas are based on compassion. It is the essence of the Buddhist teaching. Thus, Buddhas' faces are naturally radiant with spiritual ecstasy and the smiling countenances with downcast eyes adequately convey the divine, compassionate love of Buddhas for all beings (Bapat, 1986: 250). These expressions are the perfect symbols of the self-contained serenity and reassuring
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benevolence inherent in Buddhism as a religion dedicated to the salvation of humanity (Rowland, 1976: 18-9). Hence, this natural smiling is far from being idiotic.

Improper placements of Buddhist objects

Without sufficient understanding, museums are easy to make blunders in using the objects (see Plates 6, 8, and 9). Usually, the spiritual dimension of these objects is divorced in displays. They are merely museum collections, no more, no less. As a result, the objects are frequently displayed with other unrelated objects in a jumbled way, without a meaningful theme or an underlying philosophy. The sublime aura and spiritual messages of the objects were divested completely in this kind of approach. They transmit nothing sublime. These can be illustrated with some cases. For instance, Buddha statues were put on the lowest ground or under escalators.

Without appropriate arrangements, the significance of these objects would be impaired greatly. People are usually confused by these placements. In the case of the Art Gallery and Museum at Glasgow, four big Buddhist images were put under the escalators. Hence, visitors will step certainly over the top of these images. While in the case of the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum at Bournemouth (see Plate 9) and in the case of the Manchester University Museum at Manchester, Buddha statues had ever been placed on the ground floors. The latter, after local Buddhists showed concern, had rectified it immediately. The former also expresses a sincere intention to reconsider its proper placement after its main hall is re-displayed. Indeed, they are sensitive to visitors' feelings and responses.

However, not all museums seem so care to visitors' viewpoints or suggestions. At the Pitt River Museum of the Oxford University, all the Oriental religious objects in that museum were crammed into a small glass case. It looks very dense and crowded. Besides, there are neither lucid labels nor clear themes nor sufficient information nor any underlying philosophy in it. Above all, they put two black monkey statues just in the middle of that
case and did not know why they had done so. But the responsible person insisted that she, following past arrangements in the colonial period, had no intention to rectify it. She says that the display is dubbed as the "storage exhibition". If the middle place is customarily regarded as the paramount place, then, this placement seems to mean that the monkeys are more precious than other images in that case. The point is that the meanings of an object are unmistakably dominated by its contextual placement. An identical object, if placed in different contexts, would mean differently. Once the context of an object changed, its meaning also changed. Accordingly, the placement seems not a convincing arrangement.

This may be the succession of the colonial approach. Jones wrote that in the nineteenth century, ethnographic collections were formed through social Darwinism and the idea that material culture represented a single evolutionary movement towards greater complexity (Jones, 1992: 24). He points out that the Pitt Rivers Museum has been laid out to show the evolution of material culture.

Besides, a bronze Buddha head statue in the Victoria and Albert Museum was used to give visitors to learn the hands-on experience. The label asks visitors to touch the item. Indeed, hands-on experience can increase visitors' learning in museums. However, it is inappropriate to use a Buddha head statue as a medium for learning this experience because it represents man's ultimate development. They should be regarded with appropriate reverence. In addition, many Buddhist objects, such as rosaries, prayer wheels, drums and bells, are more appropriate to be used in learning hands-on experience.

**Regarding Tibetan ritual instruments of skulls and bones as predatory trophies**

Another source of disquiet may be found in the attributes of many fierce deities in Tibet, for many of them also express aggression and death. The most common attributes are knives, daggers, skull cups and drums, bone trumpets, garlands and wands with skulls or severed heads (see Plate 6, 12) and flayed human and animal skins. All these materials can be referred to a consistent symbolism, but in origin they must, at least, in part go back
to cults involving cemetery rituals, for in India a cemetery or burning ground was thought a particularly suitable place for the ascetic to overcome natural human instincts connected with the illusory concepts of pleasure, pain and the vanities of life.

The Buddha is said to have meditated in cemeteries to achieve this kind of indifference on his way to enlightenment. To eat and drink from a skull, to live amongst corpses and to brave the physical and emotional dangers of the charnel house were a recognised technique of asceticism. That deities should carry emblems symbolising the conquest of such fears was thus wholly compatible with spiritual endeavour. These deities, like all phenomena, were in the final instance illusory and valueless except as transmuted into symbols by which fears, evil, hatred and cruelty were accorded their place in a world characterised by suffering and put into the service of the quest for liberation (Zwalf, 1981: 58). Indeed, reminding oneself to view impermanence as a universal phenomenon, a person is easy to suppress his inflated self and arrogance.

However, the nature of Tibetan skulls are different from other primitive tribes' skulls which were taken savagely from defeated enemies. This is not the case of Tibetan ritual skulls. The ritualised warfare, head-taking and cannibalism was a prominent feature of many New Guinea societies and indeed many others (Jones, 1991: 18). But Tibetan ceremonial skulls are not procured this way. Only the spiritual masters' skulls are qualified to serve sublime religious purposes and not ordinary lay persons'. Because ordinary persons are so infatuated with sensual pleasures and obsessed with worldly craving or aversion which definitely obstruct them from achieving bliss and deliverance.

_Considering Buddhist objects as precious assets of exotic rarities_

Buddhist objects, as they can be categorised in the exquisite objects or aesthetic arts, do have commercial value. Though people who made them and who patronise the creation of them had no idea to create art objects or accumulate wealth for themselves, however, when such material things have become intimately involved in human activities,
when history has become etched on them, they are no longer simply pieces of matter. They become objects which cannot be described merely in terms of economic value (see Plate 11). The most concerned topic is to inspire human beings and to offer blessings to human beings even simply by seeing these objects. Thus, they are not merely commercial materials or art-work.

Now Buddhism has become an integral part of British culture. Buddhist objects are no longer exotic rarities. A lot of contemporary Buddhist art works produced by Western Buddhists were displayed in the temporary exhibition room at the St Mungo Museum this past June. These works will widen the vision and enrich the aesthetic taste of the general public.

Obviously, the above mentioned misconceptions and blunders to Buddhist objects are much owing to the insufficiency of understanding.
5.2 The factors which might hamper the understanding of Buddhist objects

As Buddhist iconography and symbolism are so abundant and so complicated, the messages which the objects carry may be a perplexity for the general public, especially for those who were raised in different cultures. Obviously, it seems difficult for them to comprehend specific expressions and meanings in the complicated Buddhist iconography, especially with regard to its various symbolism. Everywhere Buddhism spread, it took a fine culture, everywhere it produced superb artistic symbols, the outward manifestations of the people's religious aspiration and faith. The factors which might hamper the understanding of Buddhist objects can be illustrated as follows:

Devoid of experience and background knowledge

Pearce wrote: "Lack of training in the objects on show means that they are assessed only in terms of colour, size, and unfamiliarity, as anybody who has spent an unobtrusive ten minutes in his own gallery knows, and so boredom soon results from an inability to make the objects mean anything" (Pearce, 1990: 134). She added: "A number of museums have experimented with the use of (disposable) archaeological artefacts placed at intervals in a display so that the visitors can handle them, but the experience can be disappointing if the visitor does not understand what the object is" (Pearce, 1990: 165). Obviously, the problem is that the visitor has no background knowledge and experience. Thus, in order to learn something new effectively, people must possess some required experiences. Then they can grasp the messages.

Likewise, a person's understanding of Buddhism would affect his appreciation of the objects. Without proper basic knowledge and experience, ordinary visitors find it difficult to understand the symbolic language, purposes, and sublime messages of the objects. For instance, considering Buddhism as idolatry would view Buddhist images as idols. With a view to sharpen the capability of appreciating them, visitors should possess some prerequisite knowledge. Visitors are often under-educated in this field. The
significance of the most noticeable attire of Buddhist monks and nuns and shaven heads, for instance, is not realised by them. In the East, the attire of monks and nuns has always been a sign of a life based on developing inner understanding rather than seeking material success and comfort. Indeed, this is beyond the ken of Occidentals' knowledge and experience. The background knowledge and experience are learned afterward rather than innate possessed. Thus, only through active learning can a person sharpen his own ability of appreciation.

The learning potential of a person varies from individual to individual according to his education and previous experience. As museum visiting is a voluntary act, interest, therefore, plays a crucial factor which opens the mind to accept a message. However, an identical object means different things to different people. Each person's learning is different, each seeks education in a different way.

Accordingly, the significance of the objects is varied according to each person's experience and realisation. It can either be reminding tools for transforming oneself or the objects of worship. Different people would have different perception and comprehension. As the comprehension is varied, so the usefulness also varied. Besides, a person's impressions and understanding of an object may diverge according to each individual's mood, inclinations, experiences, background knowledge, and even his intelligence. External objects are not the primary source of people's understanding of that object. For instance, certain food appeals to some members of a particular family, but it often happens that others in that family will not even touch it. How can such contradictory properties exist within one and the same type of food? Evidently, the interpretations of an identical object cannot be constant or neutral.

The world of one's experience is partly of one's own making, coloured and distorted by the past experiences that each person identifies with his personal ego. As a result, two persons can share the same house and literally live in different worlds. Every
image created embodies a way of seeing. People's ways of seeing are shaped by what they know or believe- a subject consciousness is inherent in their perception of the world around them. The mind interprets what the eyes see (Davison, 1987: 347). In order to see the beauty of the world, one should remove the defilement in one's mind beforehand. Every image created embodies a way of seeing. The artist interprets reality through a particular perceptive lens; the work of art so produced is re-interpreted through the perception of the viewer.

Improper placements and interpretations

Objects cannot articulate themselves perfectly. The significance and meanings of an object are usually dominated by its contextual placement and interpretation. The placement of an object will denote the significance, meaning, and interpretation of that object. Disregarding its original context would do injustice to that object. Exhibitions and interpretations are neither neutral nor constant, they either commemorate or condemn an idea, an event, or a person. An identical object, if placed at different place, would mean differently. For instance, some specific statues are arrayed together in monasteries and some ritual instruments are used in pairs. At this situation, divide them into different places would be a blunder. Besides, specific ritual tools used in one area are not necessarily used in other areas. Disregarding the divergence and distinctions of the objects used in different areas only brings confusion.

In the case of V & A, its objectives were contributed to elevate the standards of design in British manufactures, to make available works of art on public display to the working people, and use the museum as an instrument in the education of public taste. Thus, Buddhist objects are not exhibited under the theme of religion. As a result, the original context and spiritual dimension of these objects were often neglected. Hence the mixture of these objects with other unrelated objects can easily be noticed. The objects are usually categorised under the themes of aesthetics, techniques, or materials. The point is
that no maker of these objects had an intention to create objects for museum displays. Divested of all their spiritual aura, the objects become neither sacred nor sublime.

Whatever the technique or medium employed it is essential that there is a clear message and definite aim. In the context of a museum this is most likely to be the story of a place, a person or an event. It may present a series of related ideas, such as the attitudes to life, death, politics, work or pleasure. It may record the work of an individual or an institution. Too many displays are just a jumble of what happens to be in an existing collection without an underlying philosophy, confusion is implicit in such an approach.

Limited explanation is difficult to stimulate the curiosity of visitors. A brief label cannot convey too much. Simply displaying an object with a label giving its name and vital statistics is not enough. The messages of an object is far more than a label can contain. A label merely demonstrates an aspect of that object. Focusing on one aspect displaces the attention to other aspects.

Most captions in describing the objects are too brief. Usually, they give merely names or even no label at all. They offer scarcely the most essential messages. Without sufficient interpretations, it is very difficult to arouse people's interest, to widen their awareness, or to meet their information demands. Consequently, people still cannot grasp real messages about the objects after they have viewed them in displays. Unfortunately, they even got the wrong conceptions. They may think that these objects are merely pieces of exotic rarities, that their values merely exist in aesthetics and nothing more than that. Certainly, this kind of attitude is far from being a wholesome perspective to view the objects.

Though a few pieces of visual art have ever been bought and published here and there as oddities, curiosities, or as accessories to the study of Indian religion, no one had recognised in them an art worthy of serious attention (Wawson, 1973: 7). So far many
displays still offer little information about the sublime expressions, significance, purposes, meanings and symbolism of these objects. Usually there is no answer available when visitors ask "who was the Buddha?", "what is Buddhism?", "what do Buddhists believe in?", "what do Buddhists practise?", "what do Buddhists realise?" or "Is Buddhism idolatry?", "what is the nature of Buddhist objects?". Accordingly, an exhibition which cannot provide the essential information, inspire imagination, and kindle the curiosity of visitors is drab and does not deserve further visiting.

An interpretation reflects merely a viewpoint of an object. It should not be regarded as a final settlement or an only valid explanation. Hooper-Greenhill explains it clearly, 'Interpretations of objects are rarely constant, varying according to the time, place, background, opinions and degree of knowledge of the interpreter (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991: 99-100). An object is the product of a specific time, place, culture, and circumstance. It can tell a lot of stories if people give it an appropriate consideration. There are limitless approaches. Merely emphasising the aesthetic value of these objects is insufficient to answer all the issues originated from a multicultural society. People who linked closely with these object should play a more important role in using the object.

Without sufficient complementary information, it is difficult to compare cross-culturally. What periods does the Tang dynasty, for instance, correspond to the times in Europe? There are severe problems in conveying the most basic information. Indeed, interpretation is one of the most important features of an exhibition. The proper interpretations of an exhibit is to answer visitors' questions.

Superior bias

Pearce observes that no study in the humanities is objectively pure and free from bias or subjective distortion. She writes:

Modern archaeology is a product of the capitalist system, and its interpretative modes tend to reflect these origins, creating all kinds of problematic biases in our
views about the nature of work and the relationship of different groups in the past, particularly the pre-industrial past. Archaeology exhibitions certainly do give greater prominence to past elites, chiefly, of course, because elites leave more in the way of eye-catching material culture, and they do tend to glorify the pursuit of war by highlighting weapons of all periods. More insidiously, perhaps, they also tend to offer a progressive view of the past, with the suggestion that Roman Britain was 'better' than prehistory, with more space given to villas than to slaves, and that the high Middle Ages were 'preferable' to the Dark Ages. Every interpretation is arguable, and the important point is that curators are now aware that they are participants in the debate (Pearce, 1990: 60).

Usually, people in a particular area might value highly their own traditions and cultures. They believe obstinately the superiority of their own culture and belief. They even contempt other cultures as inferior. For instance, it is said that the most vicious words Eskimos used to scold others were "White men". They mean laziness and immorality in the perspective of Eskimos. Likewise, in the past colonial period, Westerners seemed to have over-confidence that their cultures and their religions were the superior and ideal model for all the world to follow. Consequently, they not only had great interest in selling their culture but also showed little interest to know other cultures and religions which happened to be different from theirs. Welbon pointed out that during the colonial period, European missionaries encountered cultural and religious institutions and traditions which they were generally unable or unwilling to fathom out the level of ideas. For this reason, the solid information conveyed by them was superficial and distorted (Welbon, 1968: 18). Evidently, they were distorted by people's pre-occupied bias.

Undoubtedly, people usually have the inclination to think what happened to be "theirs" was highly valued and otherwise express contempt for "others" as inferior and not worth observing. Jim Blythe, a local AA driving instructor at Leicester, said, "I don't like Moslems because they think that only they are right and all other beliefs are wrong" (per. conversation with him on the 29th July, 1993). His remarks reflect a fact that many people, while exhibiting their "righteousness", are so ignorant of themselves and others. They are in need of a broad vision and an ability to introspect themselves.
In the past, Buddhism was often regarded by Westerners as nothing but one of the primitive religions, and the real interest in it was only seen in the academic fields. Thus, its objects were merely used to prove the ignorance, stagnation, idolatry, dogmatism and superstition of this heathen faith and to justify the supremacy of the Western culture. As a result, while viewing Buddhist objects, they think that if these objects really have any good or value, they represent merely in aesthetics and techniques. This is the most stereotyped approach which museums often hold with to tackle these objects.

Thurman wrote that although the West appreciates other cultures for various excellences and exotic beauties, such as their spiritual treasures or works of art, it tends to consider itself the dominant intellect on the planet because of its mastery over the material universe (Goleman and Thurman, 1991: 8). They tragically thought that as Westerners they were greatest, the smartest on the planet.

Privat also observes that generations of Europeans have learned history from textbooks that tended to glorify national achievements and downplay those of other countries (Privat, 1992: 16). Museums in Britain are products of an imperialist history. The fundamentally exploitative nature of British history enabled individual explorers to plunder artefacts from countless regions. And this theft was often legitimised by philanthropic gestures- donations to museums for the education of the general public. But at its core, the museum remains an institution which culturally upholds an imperial Britain; its collections portray the non-European as barbaric, uncivilised, exotic and unchanging. Above all, the possession of so much wealth and knowledge still expresses the enduring power of the West (Ramamurthy, 1990: 23). Accordingly, the Victorian world in all its diversity, confident of its cultural hegemony, was incorporated, and crucially so, in its interpretation of Buddhism (Almond, 1988: 141). Under this circumstance, the objects perform a symbolic function in the re-creation of a golden past. Always they are displayed as an instrument of national glory and honour.
Thus, implicit in the organisation and presentation of the museum's displays lies the superiority of Western culture over and above those of non-European peoples. It is a picture of history reflected and corroborated by academic scholarship which extends back to the writings of the art historian Winckelmann and the philosopher Hegel in the 18th century. Characterising the culture and thought of non-Europeans as essentially static and primitive, both Hegel and Winckelmann gave currency to the notion of Western culture as inherently progressive, sophisticated and, above all, superior - a notion which remains firmly embedded in the cultural institutions of Western Europe, not least in its museums (Tawadros, 1990: 31). Obviously, it is a superior bias.

MacDonald expresses that in British society, rooms and homes are presented in isolation; little reference is made to social history, to trade, to contacts with other cultures, to emigration and immigration, or to colonialism. The result is a very Eurocentric message, which for some time now has been looking out of date (MacDonald, 1990: 32). Besides, David Jones referred to a display in a museum, since closed, in which all masks were 'devil masks', Tibetan ritual daggers were 'devil daggers', herbal compounds were 'filthy mixtures' and African sculptures were 'jujus'. Such language was combined with the display of Zulu skulls next to skulls of the mentally defective, objects collected in colonial battlefields and so on. Attitudes behind such museum displays were frankly both racist and imperialist.

As a result, current ethnographers not only inherited the collections but also the anger that the attitudes that controlled the display of such collections has caused (Jones, 1991: 18). Ethnographic displays in museums remained static for many years, set in patterns established in the colonial and imperial period. Such attitudes are still unconsciously enshrined in displays and approaches to the subject, particularly as many ethnographic collections have been the responsibility of those without formal training in the subject (Jones, 1992: 25). Obviously, these kinds of approaches are inappropriate to this multicultural society.
In addition, when the new St Mungo Museum, which contributed to the multi-faith exhibition, opened on the second April 1993 in Glasgow, Rev Donald Maclean of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Glasgow said that his church would not contribute to the collection. "This is all part of the multi-faith movement. But as we consider Christianity to be the unique religion, we are against it" (Cusick, 1993: 9). Regrettably, there is still such an arrogant statement in this multicultural society. However, Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, showed more enlightened in the matter. He said he was convinced that God had not hidden himself from other faiths. "His grace is not absent from them. To fail to honour the faith of other people soon leads to a failure to honour them as human beings made in God's image" (Brown, 1992: 2).

Besides, the Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions from Chambers, the Edinburgh-based publisher, has enraged Christian shopkeepers throughout Britain who describe it as "poisonous" and offensive (Sunday Times, 23 August 1992: 21). Fundamentalist Christian book-shops were refusing to stock it. They are concerned that out of Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and Zoroaster, listed in alphabetical order, Christ does not emerge supreme. The dictionary aims to educate British people about other faiths and traditions in an increasingly multi-faith society. It was the work of a team of 25 academics. It covers all living and dead religions under 2,900 entries, including contemporary issues such as feminist theology and new religions. It is deliberately non-Christian centred and is considered suitable for children aged from 14 of any faith.

In responding to the boycott, Rosemary Goring, editor of the dictionary said, "The whole point was to open people's minds and get away from a Christian-centred view of religion and the idea of seeing Christ as good and Buddha as a bit suspect. You know before you step into the religious arena that it is a minefield. But it is still sad that at this stage religion is still so utterly divisive." Indeed, he felt sorry for a divisive religion.
Nevertheless, there are some comfort for supporters of this book. The Church of Scotland said its book-shops would treat the book on its merits. Liz Landsman, co-ordinator of the Kirk's shops, said: "Students of comparative religion need to know both sides of the story. We try not to censor books in the church." Other religious persons were enthusiastic. Dr Zaki Badawi, principal of the Muslim College and chairman of the Imams and Mosque Council, said: "This dictionary could build bridges between faiths and religions, and it is so unenlightened for book-shops to refuse it." The abbot of the Buddhist temple in London said: "It gives mutual understanding and mutual respect which leads the way to harmonious living" (Sunday Times, 23 August 1992: 21). Indeed, any truth should be put into practice to see its usefulness. Otherwise, it might be merely a dogmatism.

Unavoidably, museum people are still faced with the problems of inheriting museums born out of this attitude, and with engraved behavioural habits. When covering exotic areas, many aspects of traditional society have been caricatured to justify European superiority. Obviously, a bigoted viewpoint would hamper the understanding of exotic objects.

One of the central functions of museums is to make sense of the past, to transform the often chaotic and diverse objects, even fragments, from various cultures and periods, into a coherent and comprehensible picture of history. Yet the picture of history which is presented to the viewer in the museum as natural and even objective, obscures the fact that the museum and its displays have emerged from a specifically Western cultural and ideological framework. As a result, the feeling of superiority will affect the appreciation of Buddhist objects.

Cultural barriers

Pearce observed that the pragmatic British tradition, respectful of rational science and scholarship, interested in effective action and workable policies, uneasy with strange gods and foreign philosophies. They have a predominate conviction that all knowledge and
all value-aesthetic or social- have no external reality but are socially constructed (Pearce, 1990: 2). Walt Anderson also observed:

The greatest hindrance to our understanding of Tibetan Buddhism is our habit of compartmentalising knowledge. Western civilisation has isolated areas of inquiry from one another in a way that the East has not, so when we want to approach an Eastern subject, we naturally ask first what compartment it belongs in [sic.]. As soon as we put it in its place, we study it according to our definition of that 'subject'- always a Western definition (Anderson, 1980: 105).

Indeed, this kind of approach is quite a Western way. Jones also wrote that there seems to be a reluctance to put on displays based on ideas, one wonders sometimes whether the curator's knowledge has become so specialised that the general background information and the wider context is missing, to put it bluntly knowing more and more about less and less (per. comm. of the 3rd September 1991).

Naturally, this kind of approach is difficult to bring about the breakdowns in cross-cultural communication. For instance, when the Dalai Lama travelled to Europe in 1973 and met with the Pope and other religious leaders on the continent and in England. Sometimes they tried to draw him into conversations about God; he pleaded ignorance of the subject. "God is your business," he told one questioner, "Karma is my business" (Anderson, 1980: 106). They did not know that Western sense of God made no sense in Buddhism.

Westerners are accustomed to cross, crown and lamb which are parts of Christian symbolism. They understand the significance of these objects. But Buddhist objects are foreign to them. Nowadays, the term "religion" in the West has gradually become the synonym of "superstition" and "backward". Anything which was categorised in religion is very likely to become the joking butt. In this situation, Buddhism is easily to be considered as another form of religion. Accordingly, people usually show little interest to know or to learn something from these objects. Unavoidably, their understanding of the objects is superficial and indirect.
Kamakura art, for instance, the renaissance of Japanese sculpture 1185-1333, one of the most impressive exhibitions at the British Museum in recent years, is liable to impress visitors with its sheer exorcism. This is most apparent in the assembled images of Buddhist monks, which are brilliant, compelling works, but far removed from anything in the Western tradition of religious art (Graham-Dixon, 1991: 14). Indeed, this is another case of cultural barrier.

Religious differences

The general public are ignorant of Buddhism. Besides, representing a conception of spiritual attainment, Buddhist images are foreign to European psychology. In addition, its formula is also quite un-European in its indifference to natural fact (Coomaraswamy, 1980: 1). Above all, the knowledge of the history of religions now transmitted by general school education is entirely insufficient. Even in this multicultural society, it still stresses traditional faiths and pays little attention to other faiths.

Furthermore, the value and power of myth and symbol, ritual and ceremony, has been largely distorted in the West. This is the legacy of the confusion wrought by Christianity. The Christian churches have failed to make a crucial distinction between the truths of history and the truths of myth. They have dismissed the myths of others as superstition and proclaim the mythic in their own religion as historically true (Kennedy, 1983: 62). The resultant contortions of common sense have soured many Westerners' appetite for myth.

Not only do ordinary visitors have the problem of identifying Buddhist objects, but many museum staff are not so sure whether they housed real Buddhist objects or not (see Plate 6, 8, 10). Hence, mistaken regarding Jainist's statues as Buddhist images is not a scarce phenomenon.
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The Buddha image is not, as Westerners have assumed, merely an object of devotion. Though it has a devotional function at the most popular level, its main function is inspirational. It is meant to represent the fullest potential of all living beings, to inspire them all to transform themselves and attain their own perfection of evolution. For this reason, the Buddha image is that of each individual’s own perfection (Thurman, 1988: 127). It means that Buddhist images are tools to help people to know more about themselves and others. These were religious objects. Buddhist statues, whether symbolic or anthropomorphic, have served as a presentation and visual expression of the Buddha’s teaching. They are meant to teach and to inspire. From this viewpoint, they are sacred objects.

Generally speaking, the Buddhist objects represent a conception of spiritual attainment which is foreign to European psychology. This attainment is not to be discussed as knowledge but should be experienced by each individual. They contain symbolic messages representing Buddhists’ aspirations. Even though the worship of images was encouraged in Tantric Buddhism, it was only used as a means towards full development of one’s innate potential. Precise instructions dictate how and under which conditions the icon, symbolic of the union, should be conceived. Visualisation of the icon during meditation transports a practitioner onto a higher level; it intends to incorporate the sacred power represented by the icon into oneself for identification with it and in order to awaken the dormant energy within oneself (Berkson, 1986: 33). They are meant to help people to uncover themselves.

The subject-matters of Buddhist art were entirely religious and covered a wide range of forms and intentions. Many paintings were devotional: sacred pictures inducing positive thinking, illustrating positive conducts and helping to accumulate merits. Paintings could also be meditational, serving to illustrate theological positions, to concentrate the mind and tame its power ultimately to project the image of the deity and its entourage, conceived as arising out of the void, without recourse to visual aids (Zwalf, 1981: 102).
Undeniably, a lot of audiences view Buddhism as old fashioned, irrational and too much tied up with superstitions. This attitude would definitely hamper the appreciation of its objects. In order to get a kind of balanced understanding of the objects, visitors should discard their unwholesome viewpoints beforehand.

The nonchalant attitude of Buddhists

Buddhists usually demonstrate a nonchalant attitude to trivial things. Khin Kyi Htay, a Burmese civil engineer, works for a foreign businessman. Having been asked if she was bothered by the lack of democracy, she replied: "I don't like politics, I don't read newspapers" (Tan, 1992: 8). Indeed, in order to defend herself in a corrupt and suppressive regime, it is wise for her to be taciturn. In the perspectives of Buddhists, all worldly arts and crafts are described as unworthy of those who seek ultimate liberation (Joshi, 1967: 358). Indeed, the study found that some Buddhists expressed having no interest in Buddhist object exhibitions (see Figure 1.9).

Certainly, without the active participation and support from the outside people, museums would lose the opportunity to know how their performance really is and hence to improve it accordingly. In comparison with other believers, Buddhists seem not so much concerned about how these objects were displayed or interpreted. There are sufficient Muslims well organised that if a museum is felt to have made an error in presentation of a display on Islam the Muslim community may make its feelings felt. Indeed, intolerance and persecution still prevail in some closed societies. Alaa Hamid, an Egyptian author found guilty of defaming Islam, was sentenced to eight years in prison by an Egyptian judge in December 1991. His novel, The Distance in a Man's Mind raises the question of how religion is acquired- by birth or by choice. Perhaps more damningly, Hamid writes of the "backwardness" of religious believers. He writes, "I feel very sorry for the people in my country, the human beings. They have reached a point of backwardness". He said his goal had, in part, been achieved, "To move the mind at a time when there is complete passivity" (Berger, 1992: 10). It is less likely that these matters will happen in Buddhist communities.
and, hence, museums may well remain completely unaware that there is any problem in their displays.

In the case of Salman Rushdie, his life is under great threat by Moslems because his book has the suspicion of satirising Allah. Besides, the Associated Press reported that offended by a cartoon in a children's book, Muslims smashed police cars and assaulted armed officers in the Chinese city of Xining. Because the book, *BrainTwisters*, has a drawing of a pig next to a praying Muslim, with a riddle playing on the Islamic religious ban on eating pork (Zhao, 1993: 28). It is less likely that Buddhists will be so easily infuriated by these kinds of matters. This may be ascribed to the fundamental attitude and living philosophy of Buddhists, which were moulded by the tolerance teaching of Buddhism. They would like to transform themselves rather than to rectify others. Accordingly, they pay little attention to paltry things. Without stimulation and active responses from visitors, museums may well remain completely unaware any shortcoming in their approach.

**Museums' attitude regarding Buddhist objects**

Though the role and function of museums have changed drastically during the last two decades, Buddhist objects still cannot get deserved attention and consideration in many museums. Nowadays, museums have transformed from storehouses of rarities and curiosities into institutions actively involved in education. However, some of them still regard these objects merely as exotic art. They still put little effort on divulging the significance of these objects in displays (Reynolds, 1978: preface). Consequently, the original dimension of these objects remains unexplored.

While emphasising their aesthetic beauty, museums often neglect the original context and spiritual dimension of the objects. This does not mean that nobody in museums realises the nature of these objects. It only means that "religion" is a dangerous topic which most museums dare not to take the risk. Andrew Graham-Dixon said that to
see an exhibition of ancient Mexican sculptures in a modern art gallery is to see them
doubly distorted. For one thing, it is to be tempted to see them as art in the modern sense,
as objects of intellectual or aesthetic contemplation divorced from their older ritual
contexts (Graham-Dixon, 1992: 14). Likewise, Buddhist objects were often regarded as
exotic curiosities. Consequently, the profound messages of these objects often cannot be
appreciated.

Peter Hardie expresses that as Buddhism has already disappeared in its native land,
what good does it have to use the theme of "Buddhism" to display its objects. Besides,
Elspeth King, a curator at Dunfermline Heritage Trust, has accused the St Mungo's
museum of religion of "bending over backwards to please the minority communities". Her
comments suggest a strong smell of superiority and bias. However, Christianity had not
been a majority religion since its beginning in the country. Except death, nothing is definite
or certain, everything is uncertain and changeable in the world. In this secularised world,
Christian faith is deteriorating day by day, who dares to predict that it will continue to
dominate a majority of followers in a secularised society.

For instance, facing the drastic dwindle of nuns from about 60 to 32, the abbess of
the Benedictine nuns of the abbey of Notre Dame du Pre acknowledged, "This is obviously
due in part to a crisis of faith" (Jacobson, 1992: 9). Besides, three leading theological
colleges will close because of falling student numbers and poor facilities for women
students (Schwarz, 1992: 7). In addition, Mark Markiewicz, administrator of Youth With
a Mission, also observed that about three hundreds young people were leaving the
churches each week. Once they reach the age of 13 they have their own culture and ethos.
The church is missing out on all that (Cox and Hamilton, 1993: 7). Besides, Mark O'Neil,
the curator of the St Mungo Museum, also said, "I was brought up a Catholic, but I don't
have a faith" (O'Neil, 1993: 22) The above remarks may hint that religion is not appealing
to the youth today.
Davison thinks that a museum display is never neutral; it takes a position-inclusion of material implies exclusion, selection is a form of controlling what is communicated. The representation of images and meanings is part of a social dialogue between those responsible for the content of museum exhibitions and the public. This is especially pertinent when considering different museum approaches to the collection and display of African material culture (Davison, 1987: 347). Obviously, museums' attitudes play a paramount role in this aspect.

Language barriers

Transliteration is a problem. Some basic terms used commonly in Buddhism is difficult to render into English. English is not sufficient for some of the terms common to the Buddhist training. For instance, there are many concepts in the Tibetan philosophical and spiritual sciences for which there are no precise equivalents in English. The ambiguity of different terms, Sanskrit or Pali, referring to the same objects may be a confusion to visitors.

As Buddhism spread to broad areas, an identical object may have different names among different cultures. For example, the teachings of the Buddha was called 'Dharma' in Sanskrit, but named 'Dharmā' in Pali. Again, in Japanese it was called "Zen"; but in Chinese it was called "Chan". This may increase the perplexity of viewers who do not have this background knowledge.

Besides, Giuseppe Tucci points out that no agreements has yet been reached on the precise translation of the religious terminology, of the technical terms, that is, which are used in Tibetan religion and gnosis (Tucci, 1980: vii).

Individual penchant

Pearce wrote that individuals are socialised primarily by their families into ways of thinking and feeling (Pearce, 1990: 133). Very few people see life as it really is. Most of
them see things only as they are, looking at others through their own likes and dislikes, prejudices and prepossessions, desires, interests, and fears. Hutschnecker also wrote, "Our subjectivity, our discontent, our unhappiness and wishes for something else, blind us to reality" (Hutschnecker, 1970: 136). It is this separatist outlook that fragments life for us-person against person, religion against religion. In order to see life as it is, one undivided whole, people have to shed all attachment to personal profit, power, pleasure or prestige. Otherwise, they cannot help looking at life through their individual conditioning, and they will see the world not as it is, but as conditioned by their desires.

A proverb says, 'You hear what you want to hear.' 'We see things not as they are, but as we are', said Koffka, a German psychologist (Claxton, 1992: 39). It is a very accurate psychological statement. For people who are wedded to the idea that the way they see things is the only possible way, that their point of view is the only right point of view, for such persons the suggestion that things could look different, or that other people who do not share their opinions might be at least as 'right' as they are, is going to be hard to take. Marcouse wrote that the matter of learning from objects varies from person to person according to the preoccupation, the prejudices, and the differing interests which bring each person to the museum; these in turn influence the approach to the exhibits, and what each visitor sees in them (Marcouse, 1961: 1). Indeed, we can lead a horse to a river, but we cannot force it to drink.

Wrong discernment may interfere with one's understanding of the reality. For instance, if a person is addicted to drugs and one of his friends advises him against using drugs, he will not like the advice. That person has mistaken discernment. Only people they see, enjoy and take delight in what they see, just as they do with a beautiful painting or sculpture, then the painting can speak to them, and the beautiful sculpture can answer back. This makes it very exciting and stimulating indeed.
For instance, in the *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought*, Macquarrie wrote, "The latter (Buddhism) is made vulnerable by some of its special beliefs, and Broad (Charles Dunbar Broad, 1887-1971) takes a gloomy view of its prospects" (Macquarrie, 1988: 234.) However, in the whole book he used less one page, only slightly mentioned Buddhism and other religions in merely three paragraphs. Obviously, the title is doubtful. If it was changed to *Twentieth-Century Christian Thought*, it would be relevant. The book reflects that the author seems to regard Christianity as the only religion.

The effectiveness of exhibition is in putting across the message. More than just the label, it represents everything that flows from the display to the visitor during a visit. It is the message which educates and changes the visitor’s understanding or perception of the subject matter of the display. However, the success of the message depends on two major factors. Firstly, it must be clear. Secondly, those who receive it have to be open-minded and willing to accept it.

Nowadays, people may regard religion as the synonym of backwardness and superstition and irrelevant to the human condition today. They may think that religion is for those who remain in remote places and is not much needed in the areas of business or politics. Church-goers, to the outsider, ‘appear to think in a funny way’. The regular use of ideas which do not appear to be rooted in everyday experience makes them appear not merely odd but largely irrelevant. Evangelism was considered to be imprisoned in a special, cultic language and even some modern hymns contain endlessly recycled old religious phrases (Gledhill, 1991b: 2). John Whitehead, a lawyer in California, also said, “Society has been secularised, and the religious person finds he’s the odd person out”. “In public schools, religions is something to be avoided, obsolete” (Gibbs, 1991: 53 and Campbell, 1988: 84). Indeed, their viewpoints reflect the irrelevancy of Western ‘religion’ to this human condition today.
Many people are appealing for the revival of ethical standards but they are thinking of reviving the Christian traditional ethic and religious attitude. That's not going to work: not enough people are convinced (Schwartz, 1989: 19). Churches are failing to meet the spiritual needs of youngsters (Gledhill, 1991a: 5). Alan Watts also expressed:

I simply couldn't get along with the Christian God. He was a bombastic bore, and not at all the sort of fellow you would want to entertain for dinner, because you would be sitting on the edge of your chair listening to his subtle attempts to undermine your existence and to probe the unauthentic nature of your life. He was like the school chaplain who took you aside for a VERY SERIOUS TALK. He had no gaiete d'esprit, no charm, no lilt, no laughter, and no sensual delight in the world of nature which he had supposedly created. At least, this was the version of that God conveyed to me by my preceptors, who were busily preoccupied in keeping virile young men off the labor market and from sowing their oats to the begetting of unfamilial bastards (Watts, 1972: 73-4).

In this secularised society, religion becomes more and more away from people. People may think that anything relating to 'religion' is obsolete, said John Whitehead. The topics of Heaven and hell, Paradise and Purgatory no longer appeal to the modern mind (Gibbs, 1991: 53). Armstrong also observed:

The history of religion shows that each tradition represents a dialogue between an ineffable reality and mundane events. A Church which cannot respond to modernity will become obsolete. We now have a very different notion of homosexuality from that of the biblical writer who described the destruction of Sodom. Unless we can relate this new insights to the revelations, the Gospels will become irrelevant to our current condition. Above all, if the Roman Catholic Church cannot respond to AIDS and the population explosion in a more creative and compassionate way than Veritatis Splendor, it will fail the test of the late 20th century (Armstrong, 1993: 24).

Disgusted with so many nonsense hackneyed phrases, the general public is inclined to think that all religions are more or less the same. Accordingly, they have little interest to see objects which happened to be categorised as 'religious'. As a result, it is difficult for them to understand Buddhist objects.
However, some people still think that their faiths are the 'only true' religions. In the case of the St Mungo Museum in Glasgow, a Shiva, an Indian deity, was intentionally damaged by a bigoted visitor. Besides, a label introducing the biography of the Buddha at the Peace Pagoda at Milton Keynes was scribbled by a viewer with the words "Jesus is the only truth". In addition, the study survey also finds that some persons do keep a jaundiced attitude toward other faiths. During my viewing *The Sacred Art of Tibet* display in the Royal Academy in 1992, a visitor, disappointed at my answering his question that I would believe in men rather than God, began to curse me vehemently to go to hell forever. Accordingly, people who keep a jaundiced viewpoint is very difficult to appreciate the beauty and magnificence of other religious objects. They see no good of other faiths.

*The scarcity and inaccessibility of Buddhist objects*

Hooper-Greenhill observed that all historic objects in museums have complex histories of movement from one place to another, have often suffered damage and repair, may have been witness to momentous events, and may have had a particular significance which may have shifted over time. Some objects can tell a story, put a point of view, record or explore a response to a phenomenon. They have a deliberately communicative and expressive function (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 99). Indeed, solid objects can divulge an enormous information for viewers. The point is that all these possibilities are much hinged on accessibility and the intelligence and imaginations of viewers.

Many precious materials, scattered around museums and private collections in the Britain, are inaccessible to the general public. The few displays about the Indian subcontinent that exist tend to be piecemeal, apologetic and confined almost exclusively to London. The consistent non-display of large sections of the collections and the inevitably limited accessibility, even to scholars, has not made the situation any easier (Smith, 1990: 34). Consequently, many "Ramayana" scholars in India have remained unaware of the existence of the two "Ramayana" manuscripts in the Oriental collections of the British Library. Actually, without exhibition, it is difficult for visitors to view these objects, not
mention to the matter of understanding or appreciation. Accordingly, accessibility is the most important work which can widen the awareness of these objects.

However, according to the finding of this study, only twelve museums house over one hundred pieces of Buddhist objects. Other museums store less than one hundred pieces of these objects. Most of all, less than sixteen museums have ever used them on exhibition. Obviously, the scarcity of the total number of the objects and their rare use in displays would affect the understanding and appreciation of these objects.
5.3 The factors which might obstruct the use of Buddhist objects in displays

There is no dearth of historical, decorative and fine art objects from Buddhist areas, in both public and private collections in Britain. The existence of these objects would have ensured the continued and comprehensive display and research of the materials. However, the bulk of museum collections is in storage. For instances, According to the site observation and survey of this study, the factors which might obstruct the use of Buddhist objects in displays are as follows.

Museums' attitudes

Pearce observed that despite the increasing implementation of collecting policies in museums, curators are ultimately free to collect whatever they feel like acquiring. Even within the terms of collecting policies there is immense scope for the free reign of a curator's whim (Pearce, 1989a: 140). Obviously, museums' attitudes still play an important role in determining the exhibits and interpretations of Buddhist objects. Hooper-Greenhill also observed that museums often fulfilled other symbolic functions. The larger national museums were expressions of nationhood and of advanced culture, and the local town museum often carried messages about important local individuals and civil pride (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991: 1). Indeed, museums' attitudes play a crucial role in collections, displays and interpretations.

Some museums do not put Buddhist objects on their priority list to display. Only a small part of the objects has ever been put on display. Some museums acknowledged that all their Buddhist objects were kept in storage. Besides, they express that they have no intention to display them in the future (e.g. 11 and 13). Insufficient research and poor documentation also prevent museums to display these objects (16). This might be the natural effect of scarce expertise.
In the case of the Cuming Museum its current collecting policy will not allow it to continue to collect Buddhist objects. The collecting policy in this museum is to collect and display the social history objects from Southwark and its people. Hence, Buddhist objects are irrelevant to their current policy.

Besides, displaying "religion" is an arguable and dangerous topic. Most museums dare not to take the risk of being charged with displaying religious themes. In the case of the St Mungo Museum, when some person accused the Glasgow city's new £3m museum of religion of "bending over backwards to please the minority communities", Patrick Lally, the deputy leader of Glasgow's Labour administration, explains immediately that the emphasis should have been on religious art and not on religious life (MacCalman, 1993: 2). His remarks reflect, at least, a reality that displaying art is less likely to be criticised. However, it must be noted that the creation of Buddhist objects has a close link with Buddhism. Buddhists had no idea to create art for museum displays. All Buddhist objects have their practical purposes in religious life. Disregarding the religious significance of the objects means distorting their messages arbitrarily.

Above all, almost all captions, except the labels in T.T. Tsui Gallery, V & A and the St Mungo Museum, are only written in English. Few museums have taken positive measures to attract foreign visitors.

The scarcity of the total number of Buddhist objects

Concentrating on individual societies enabled researchers to achieve a greater depth of scholarship which was often coupled with their own personal experience of the cultures concerned. This was reflected in the scholarly and detailed reconstruction of contexts and situations which remain a hallmark of such displays. Unfortunately, only museums with large enough collections are able to show many aspects of the same society. Others have to show agriculture from one society, hunting from another, markets from a third, kingship from a fourth and so on, as visitors could see in displays at the Ipswich and
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the Horniman (Jones, 1992: 26-7). Naturally, it is very difficult to mount comprehensive displays in museums with only meagre Buddhist objects.

In the case of the Royal Pavilion Art Gallery and Museum at Brighton, though the Buddhist objects were derived from different regions where there are significant variations in beliefs and practices, the insufficiency of related objects greatly obstruct the possibility of properly contextualising the religion in any one region.

As this study shows, most museums have not sufficient materials to display Buddhist objects in a comprehensive way. In some museums the total number of the objects is very small (e.g. 1, 6, 12, 19, 25).

*The fragility nature of some Buddhist objects*

Owing to the deterioration of age, some painting and calligraphy works have to be treated with extreme care. Especially fragile are those works on silk or rice paper, which have been meticulously preserved through the generations. Unfolding, hanging and exposing them would cause a certain degree of damage to these priceless paper artworks. Because of these constraints, most objects are inaccessible to the visitors (Lin, 1992: 4). Most of them are only kept in storage.

For instance, a few works in Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum are in a very poor state. As there is no temperature control facilities in this museum, these frail works were not opened to visitors. Because lacking light control and air-condition equipment, some museums do not put delicate objects, such as thangka paintings, in displays (e.g. 15). Textiles from the cave of 1000 Buddhas are very fragile (27). In addition, owing to fragility and light sensitivity, two thangkas at the Manchester University Museum are also excluded from the access of visitors.
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The Amuravati sculptures in the British Museum are off display for many years for conservation reasons until late 1992. These marbles needed to be protected from the action of the atmosphere or from mischievous handling. By the end of the 1950s it was noticed that slight erosion of the surface of the stones was occurring (Knox, 1992: 22). The limestone is very susceptible to moisture, so it must be kept in a dehumidified atmosphere. The carving on the stone is prone to flaking, because it has been done on the face of the original seam of rock and not into the natural bed (Wood, 1993: 11). Besides, many of the Dunhuang paintings in the British Museum, ranging from large banners of paradise scenes to miniature sutra books and sumptuous textiles, are so fragile that they are rarely exhibited (Whitfield and Farrer, 1990: preface). In order to preserve them for longer time, these objects are usually kept from the public.

In addition, the low quality of some objects also affects their use in displays. Mike Bullions, manager of the Maritime Information Centre at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, says, "Much has no visual appeal, so there is no point in displaying it." Indeed, there are a lot of trivial objects in museums. The low quality of these objects would prevent them from being displayed.

The shortage of resources

Hooper-Greenhill observed that museum educational personnel do not constitute large sections of the staff of museums and galleries. The Museums Association study "Museums U.K." found that educational staff at the time of the survey made up a tiny percentage of the staff as a whole: 1.8 per cent in national museums, 3.6 per cent in local authority museums, 2.1 per cent in independent and other museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 83). She further writes that many museums do not have specialist educational staff, and in these cases it is often the curators who carry out educational work (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 86). Besides, according to Elizabeth Goodhew's investigation that about 60% of the museums in Britain have only a single museum education officer coping with onerous work, such as dealing with visiting groups, arranging holiday activities and often
doing loan services. Indeed, not all museums have experts in this field. In the case of the Aberdeen Art Museums, they mistook other objects as Buddhist objects. They failed to distinguish the objects from other religious objects. In fact, they house only a small piece of the objects. In many situations, there is no specialist to offer information assistance. These demonstrate the exigency of educational staff.

Space limit is a great problem. For instance, only 5 per cent of the V & A's Indian collection of 35,000 pieces of objects is on show and about 80 per cent of its holding are never meant to be seen (Geddes-Brown, 1992: 15). The City of London's collection has an even greater problem—since the Guild-hall Art Gallery was destroyed in the last war, it has had nowhere to show its 3,700 objects. Over 2,000 are nearly always in store and some have not been seen since 1941 (Geddes-Brown, 1992: 15).

Basil Davidson, the author of Turkestan Alive, also pointed out how Stein's collection was displayed in the British Museum 'tucked away in a corner with little room to explain or reveal its unique value' (Hopkirk, 1980: 2).

Certainly, no museum can afford to display all its collections all the time, but here the non-display has gone on for so long that both the unknown objects and their quantity have begun to take on a mystical quality (Smith, 1990: 35).

Edith Mayo, curator of political history at the National Museums of American History in Washington DC., says the escalating costs of exhibitions is making outside, particularly corporate, sponsorship a necessary corollary of the exhibition process. And while certain exhibition concepts are attractive to business and receive easy funding, other topics, particularly those dealing with issues of minorities and women, are not attractive to corporate decision makers, are difficult to fund, and therefore are difficult to complete. In this sense, business becomes a silent partner in determining a museum's interpretational
content (Watkins, 1991: 61). He noticed the necessity of outer world support for museums' growth.

Nowadays, many museums are under the great stress of the shortage of resources, such as space, staff, budget and specialists. Generally speaking, most museums have not sufficient budget to purchase new items, even if they have this intention. They can afford to purchase the cheaper pieces which inevitably mean low value and low quality. In most situations, if they still like to hold Buddhist objects, they can only hope the donation from the public. Under the strict limitation of resources, a lot of Buddhist objects are held in storage and inaccessible to the public. It is difficult for visitors to view them, let alone the dissemination of their messages.

Lack of funds has dissuaded some museums from mounting Buddhist object exhibitions (e.g. 8, 20). On the problem of inaccessibility to Buddhist objects, some museums ascribe it to the lack of time, space (e.g. 2, 11, 12, 15, 20, 27, 28, 30). As the study shows, though many museums house Tibetan objects, owing to the pressure of space, only a small part of these objects is in displays.

Moreover, most museums are facing a common problem of the shortages of personnel expertise in Buddhism (e.g. 2, 12, 16, 21, 28, 33). Undoubtedly, this phenomenon will affect the intention and the quality of using these objects.

Security considerations

Theft and vandalism pose a great threat to display precious objects. In the case of the Nottingham Castle Museum, a display on the development of Buddhist Art existed for about 18 years until 1990 when the case and two rupas (objects) were smashed during a robbery.
In another case, some Tibetan statues at Marischal Museum (2) were stolen in March 1992. Besides, a big Buddha image at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum was carelessly damaged by visiting school children. In the latest case, the Shiva, an Indian deity, was intentionally damaged by a jaundiced visitor in May 1993 simply one month after the St Mungo Museum opened. Obviously, theft and vandalism would affect the willingness of museums to display delicate pieces which might be easily stolen or some themes which might bring misunderstanding in displays.

Other considerations

The awkward situation arises such as from the controversial circumstances in which Stein acquired the Dunhuang library, exposing him—like Lord Elgin—to everlasting criticism. Despite the wealth of other art treasures which Aurel Stein removed from Dunhuang that his name will always be linked. For this, there are two principal reasons. The first obviously is because of its spectacular nature— the discovery has been compared to that of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The second arises from the controversial circumstances in which he obtained the objects. This puts the British Museum in an awkward situation. It is perhaps for this reason that the British Museum seems to be at such pains to obliterate his memory. Only a pitifully small selection of Stein's finds are currently displayed (Hopkirk, 1980: 173).

Besides, objects are ideally accessible to visitors; it can thus communicate with incomparable vividness and immediacy. However, very seldom is its nature or the mode of its existence the reason for its being displayed. The museum worker places it on display in order not merely to define it, that is; he uses it also and mainly to explain a process or function or to illustrate the significance of relationships, and the object's meanings in these circumstances are not real but potential. In a real situation, the considerations of security and conservation within the museum severely limit contact between objects and visitors.

Placed in a case, scaled down as a model in a diorama, or roped off, the object can communicate only visually, and usually this visual access is itself interfered with or
restricted by such matters as lighting, distance and angle of view (Villiers, 1987: 284-85).
He identified the practical difficulties of using and viewing the objects.

This chapter deals with the reasons for improving the use of Buddhist objects in displays. It begins with the discussion of the general misunderstandings about Buddhism and its objects. Besides, it examines the factors which might affect the understanding of the objects. Lastly, it explores the factors which might obstruct the use of these objects in displays. After analysing these issues, the study attempts to provide suggestions for improvement in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6 Recommendations for improvement

Having examined the issues of misunderstandings about Buddhism and its objects, this chapter continues to discuss the way to improve them. As each individual's perception about an identical object might be different, there might exist perception gaps of viewing these objects between museum staff and Buddhists. Accordingly, this chapter explores the gaps first. Then it proposes a better way to view them. Finally, it discusses the issues with some practical cases and provides recommendations for better use of these objects in displays.

6.1 The perception gaps of viewing Buddhist objects between Buddhists and museum staff

Buddhists' impression about Buddhist objects might be different from non-Buddhists. The perception gaps between them might be various. For instance, Buddhists display only whole body images in shrines or altars. They consider that it is inappropriate to place broken statues in shrines, altars, or temples. However, following the Western tradition of displaying torsos, museums also display a lot of chopped down Buddhist head statues (see Plate 7).

As a universal communicating vehicle, art is a common language of mankind. However, Buddhist art does not coincide with the generally accepted Western view. The familiar idea of creating art for the sake of art in the Western way is foreign to Buddhists. They have no intention to be artists merely for the sake of art. They even have no intention to leave their names posthumously in the future which they consider as another type of entanglement and attachment. For them, the works are not arts for pleasing eyes. The act of creating Buddhist objects is devotional. They are visual expressions of Buddhist ideals. The principal idea of creating these objects is for vanquishing one's vanity and self-
attachment rather than for inflating oneself. They are the tools for attaining 'Buddha-hood' rather than 'Ego-hood' (see Figure 3.1).

Although museums display objects which once had religious meaning, these have largely taken on significance as artistic, anthropological or historical specimens (O'Neill, 1993: 22). Hence, before exploring a better way to view these objects, it is necessary to examine the gaps of viewing them between museum staff and Buddhists. Usually, museums regard them as artistic works, exotic rarities, antique delicacies, historic specimens, or folk utensils. However, Buddhists do not view them this way. No matter what they are made of, Buddhist images were regarded as equal as actual Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. Representations of the Buddha recall his life and teachings and inspire his qualities in the devotee. They are meant to inspire the reverence of a devotee, to transmit the aura of equilibrium and serenity, and to accumulate the merits for those who sponsor, make, and even merely view these objects by chance.

The perception gaps of viewing Buddhist objects between Buddhists and museum staff can be illustrated as follows:

(Figure 6.1 Perception gaps about Buddhist objects between museum staff and Buddhists)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment of Buddhist objects</th>
<th>Museum staff's viewpoints</th>
<th>Buddhists' viewpoints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist objects have largely taken on significance as artistic, anthropological or historical specimens. They are part of museum collections, no more, no less.</td>
<td>They are sacred objects which have religious purposes in the perspectives of Buddhists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>They are used in displays for education and entertainment.</th>
<th>They are meant to be of specific use and spiritual benefit to everyone. They are served as mediums for inspiring people to develop their potentials to the utmost.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Significance | They are something solid which can be perceived and stored. They can be possessed or accumulated by someone as assets. What paramount of these objects is object itself. | Though displaying as concrete materials, these objects signify intangible truths. They do not mean to be possessed or accumulated as possessions. Anyone who creates, sponsors, or even merely views them by chance can be benefited. |

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| Value | The value of these objects is much decided by their face values, such as historic, artistic or commercial values. Regardless of their materials, the objects, dealing with intangible messages, should be treated with the same regards. They should not be sold for profit. Images, paintings, and statues are the relative Buddha. Because the relative is an aspect of the actual, images of the Buddha are placed in the temples and respected in the same way as is the actual Buddha. Buddhists conceive that by Honouring these relative images one can receive the actual blessings of the Buddha. |
| Classification | These objects are often categorised into ethnology, archaeology and folk arts. These objects were placed in appropriate context. |
| Arrangement | Being regarded merely as pieces of museum collections, these objects can be placed together under any subject, such as region, period and material. The significance and function of each Buddhist object decides its contextual placement. |
| Display | Torso and broken pieces of the objects are also displayed in museums. Only whole pieces of the objects are appropriate to be used in visualisation or adoration. This does not mean that the broken ones should be discarded. Conversely, the broken ones were put into stupas or placed in the purified places with high regards. |
| Interpretation | In the past, museums displayed and interpreted these objects solely. They gave these objects labels, names and descriptions. Now, these work have become the joint efforts of museums and communities. The paramount essence of these objects is beyond words. Hence, neither labels nor words are needed to name them. |

Indeed, an object can be viewed from various angles. The significance of an object should be re-interpreted in each generation and each culture. Each society should discover the relevance of these objects in its context. There is no one valid or final interpretation for an object. However, intelligent and appealing interpretations should be relevant to the human condition today.
6.2 The better way to view Buddhist objects

Those who look at Buddhist objects out of sheer curiosity will only increase their doubts and perplexities, or, at best, add another item to their collection of exotic curiosities. The soft hue of serenity, compassion, and wisdom effusing these objects is difficult to be perceived or experienced by collectors of antiques or ordinary people. Ajahn Amindo expressed, "A good Buddhist would examine not the objects in a museum so much as his reaction to the objects, thereby waking up to what is happening for him/her in that moment" (pers. comm. of the 29th June, 1993). Indeed, these objects should be used to inspire people to know more about themselves, to develop themselves and to uncover their awareness within.

It is easy to look at the pictures and statues in a museum but very difficult to do the actual practice of Buddhism, the Dalai Lama says (Gyatso, 1985: 99). The passages on the labels cannot help visitors very much. They are only words, and they do not convey very much. It is not possible to comprehend these objects in captions without trying to put them into practice. The peace and joy which the objects convey come not to the sceptic or to him who is proud of his intellect or learning. It is reserved only for the humble in spirit, who brings to his/her worship a fullness of faith and an undivided singleness of mind. The authentic messages of these objects do not come to people through any intellectual feat. The simplest things have the knack sometimes of appearing to viewers as the hardest. If their hearts were opened enough, they should have no difficulty to understand these objects.

Attitude is all-important in viewing these objects. The trouble is that most viewers do not have the correct one. A Tibetan art textbook refers to the "lazy, dull and vicious qualities of our immature minds", which prevent viewers from visualising the deities through their images (Gittings, 1992: 34). That is to say, defilement in the mind will distort
one's awareness of these objects. It should be removed before one can see the reality of these objects.

Undeniably, a lot of people mistreat Buddhism as old-fashioned, irrational and too much tied up with superstition. This attitude works against the appreciation of Buddhism and its objects. In order to get a balanced perspective of viewing the objects, unjustified preconceptions should be removed beforehand. People should have a deeper understanding of these objects, not to view them only as artistic works, and not to contempt them as the superstitious idols of the heathen belief. He who would bring back the wealth of Buddhist objects, must take the wealth of these objects with him.

To see a display of ancient Buddhist sculptures in a modern art gallery is inclined to see them doubly distorted. Because it is tempting to see them as art in the modern sense, as objects of intellectual or aesthetic contemplation divorced from their texts. However, by Tibetan standards, Western arts seem to have a hollow centre, for they revolve around a theory of purely individual expression, regardless either of the spiritual stature of the person behind the expression or any value it may have for others.

Western arts also aim to become both desire-stimulating commodities and investment stock; and, of course, have close links with advertising and entertainment. Such attitudes to art run exactly contrary to the values cherished by the Tibetan imagination, which inspires arts meant to be of specific use and spiritual benefit to everyone (Rawson, 1991: 5). For the artists who produced them, and the societies which received them, these were seldom "works of art" in the modern sense, but descriptions of revealed truth and objects of veneration and inspiration. Traditional Buddhists still consider commercial dealings in religious art immoral and disrespectful, since this trade shows a lack of appreciation for the ritual purposes for which the art was created (Lipton and Dorjee, 1990: 132). In Buddhists' perspectives, doing something beneficial to others is not meant...
to receive rewards from them. The motivation of doing favours to others should be pure. It should not be entangled with selfish aims.

Accordingly, Buddhist objects cannot be judged by purely aesthetic measures, they are not just art for the sake of art. They do not represent, they signify (see Figure 3.1). It is a reflection of the soul that can be seized, emotionalised, raised or threatened and afflicted by archetypal images. Aesthetic beauty is the expression of ultimate reality. As for the right way to view the objects, the Dalai Lama suggests practitioners to concentrate on the thangka or mandala until they can "identify totally with the deity" (Gittings, 1992: 34). He further expressed:

It's best to use a small Buddha image as the focus for concentration; it plants a good seed for your own future Buddhahood. But make sure you have a well-made Buddha image; if you meditate a lot on a crooked Buddha image, there's a danger you will one day become a crooked Buddha! (Haber, 1992: 124).

He admonished people to use well-made Buddha image because the image represents really one's own innate nature. It is one's utmost aspiration and goal for development. Thus, it is important to view a well-made image rather than a deformed one.

Just as no icon of the Buddha was ever meant to represent his physical likeness, to be appreciated externally, so all other images of Buddhist iconography are meant to be understood in a special symbolic sense. Each invites the viewer, as he or she contemplates it intently, to identify with it- to absorb not the stone or painted image as such, but the state and stage of personal development to which its characteristic features refer. In Tibet, these features are explained in doctrinal texts. So the various icons represented in Tibetan art are not meant to depict separate objective or imaginary human-shaped beings, or even particular spirit-beings, but states of being which the human viewer is meant inwardly to adopt.
To achieve this, everyone needs to carry out long, continuous, often repeated acts of dedication and concentration. This constitutes the central activity of Tibetan Buddhists, which religious rituals, recitations, music and art are all meant to help along (Rawson, 1991: 13). Thus, people should think of all Buddhist figures in Buddhist art, including the sexual pairs, as high prototypes, ever more inclusive patterns of the Dharma-conscious person. The Buddhists contemplate every image as showing a spiritual condition to which they can personally aspire and expect to reach one day, may be millennia into the future.

Art does not simply portray Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is a means to bring them into physical presence. The Bodhisattva-image, particularly, brings a seemingly remote and difficult doctrine into direct touch with the hopes and fears of ordinary people, and meets their spiritual needs. People should search for the true content of Buddhist art rather than weaving tissues of abstract thought around it. Malraux wrote: major arts use their visual imagery to present what cannot be seen, rather than reproducing everyday fact that can be seen. So, if people are to experience Buddhist art, they need to enter as fully as possible into the region of meaning where the art itself moves (Rawson, 1991: 5). That is to say, they should integrate their whole beings with the art.

The complex mythology is difficult to a person until he understands the symbolism and becomes familiar with the images. His comprehension depends upon his desire to understand and his sympathetic approach. A properly drawn mandala is a book, in itself, containing a great deal of information but he who would read the symbols must learn the language. It is first of all necessary to make the organ of vision analogous and similar to the object to be contemplated. Never would the eye have perceived the sun if it had not first taken the form of the sun; likewise, the soul cannot see beauty unless it first becomes beautiful itself, and every person must make himself beautiful and divine in order to attain the sight of beauty and divinity (Arguelles, 1972: 34). Otherwise, one's defilement will distort one's vision of beauty.
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When the significance of the symbols is understood, the images become familiar and lose their strangeness. It is then that appreciation begins. To appreciate Buddhist objects one must appreciate himself, the fact of his being, the quality of his awareness and all that is manifested therein. These objects are a part of this miraculous process of manifestation, not a comment on it or an entertaining alternative to it. If one fully understands himself, then he is aware of being a Buddha in a Buddhafield (Tulku, 1974: 6). Because Buddhahood is one's potential development to the utmost. One needs not to become. One needs only to uncover what is already within.

The images are not merely objects of adoration but aids to meditation. When looking at the image of the Buddha, people should regard it as something to remind them of the potential Buddhahood within themselves, of the great achievement that the Buddha attained in his own life, and to the realisation of which they too are called in their lives.

The significance of the holy dimension in the objects would be hard to be over-emphasised. These objects transmit intangible messages. The images are almost all anonymous, and the absence of makers' names reflects a prevailing belief that the artist should act as a selfless vessel for the revelation of religious knowledge. The art-work is seen as part of the Buddha's body. Buddhists are convinced that icons convey a living presence, enhanced by rituals of consecration. Once an image was satisfactory from the iconographic and stylistic point of view, the statue began to glow of its own accord, because a "wisdom duplicate" of the deity represented in the image came down from heaven to merge with the icon (Cork, 1992: 1). Obviously, they should be regarded with appropriate consideration.

In short, if one's mind is clear and open enough, then he would have no problem to view the beauty of these objects. Beauty is merely a medium to remind the ultimate reality which must be realised through each individual's own efforts and experience. To approach
them through an appropriate attitude, might not only bring the non-Buddhist viewer closer
to a major segment of Buddhist art but also closer to the awareness of his innate nature.

6.3. Intelligent exhibitions of Buddhist objects

The messages which Buddhist objects convey, permeate everywhere and
everything and await every person to discover them personally. Everything is Buddha.
Everyone is Buddha. The realities embodied in these objects must be rediscovered from
generation to generation, from one civilisation to another, and each individual has to
realise them by his own experience, in the depth of his own being. Museums cannot display
or interpret the objects arbitrarily. It is not the sole work of museums. It becomes clear
that community plays an increasing role in museums' work. Displays, themes and
interpretations should reflect this fact. Intelligent displays should be able to re-interpret the
significance of the objects in this cultural and social context. Following are some examples
of significant displays in recent years.

In the first case, the Buddhist Cultural Museum of Fo Kuang Shan, a great
Buddhist monastery in the southern part of Taiwan, was established in January, 1983. It
was set up according to the ideals of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun to "bring Buddhism
to people and live by the doctrines". The purpose is to help the general public to become
familiar with Buddhism through the exhibition of modern and ancient Buddhist cultural
productions; to realise the compassionate wish of propagating the Dharma by
demonstrating the doctrines of Buddhism through the exhibition of Buddhist sutras and
ritual instruments; and to maintain Chinese culture and history.

In April 1991, the themes on display included, *Records of Ancient and Modern
Buddhism, Fo Kuang Shan In Modern and Future, Five Famed Mountains and Ritual
Sites, Buddhist Folkways House, Fo Kuang Shan Gallery, Ritual Articles House, Dagoba*
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Temple, Calligraphy and Painting House, Spread of Buddhism (contains '2500-year Buddhism', 'Ten Thousand Buddha Sanctuary', 'The Commissary'). The total number of Buddhist objects is about 600 pieces at that time. The content of a label usually includes the name, provenance and periods. The display has a distinctive aim. It has a clear distinction to divide the specific Buddhist objects in different areas. Every single piece of the exhibits serves as a practical means to expound the Dharma. However, some captions were too brief.

In 1992, it mounted a Dunhuang Antique's Exhibition. The most significant thing is that the exhibition demonstrates Buddhists' contributions to civilisation in history. Usually, some people are inclined to regard Buddhism as a symbol of the unscientific and superstitious. However, the exhibition demonstrated that some technology improvements have close link with the creative imagination of Buddhists, such as, wood-block printing, the improvement of paper-making, water pumping instruments, stupa building. Besides, it also showed that Buddhism had enriched the content of Chinese culture in various aspects. However, the themes were unfamiliar to the general public.

In the second case, the October Gallery (24 Old Gloucester Street, London) held a small display entitled Festival of Tibet: An Exhibition of Living Culture in May and June of 1991. The display included about 200 pieces of items, such as Jewry, wall hanging, masks, big tea pots, clothing and thangkas. Most of the items were photographs which were taken by five photographers, such as Brian Beresford and Simon Westcott. The former took the photographs in 1986 and 1988. The latter took the photographs in 1989. The aims of this show was to bring a knowledge of Tibetan culture to as many people as possible. It was sponsored by The Tibetan Community, The Tibetan Foundation, The Tibet Image Bank, Tibet Support Group, The Times, Yeshe Tsultrim, The Victoria & Albert Museum, Phuntsog Wangal, Simon Westcott, and Samye Ling.
The programmes in this show included shops where visitors could purchase souvenir, clothing, posters, and books. It also held workshops and lectures for the public to attend. The lecture themes included, 'Tibetan Yoga' by John Renshaw, one of the few yoga teachers in England specialising in Yantra Yoga; 'Tibetan Culture' by Phuntsok Wangyal, Director of the Tibetan Foundation in London; 'Tibetan Medicine' by Dr Tandin, a Tibetan doctor working in London; 'Tibetan Tangka Painting' by Robert Beer, a Western artist who has studied the ancient art of thangka painting for many years; 'Appropriate Technology For Tibetans' by Greta Jensen, Executive Director of that institution; 'The Tibetan Way of Life' and 'Tibetan Culture "Can It Survive?"' by Glen Mullin, a renowned scholar of Tibetan Buddhism gave a talk on the unique Tibetan way of life; 'Tibetan Art' by John Clark, an authority on Himalayan art from the Victoria & Albert Museum; 'Tibetan Singing Bowls' by Geff Highley. Though merely a small show, it was attractive because it provided many programmes for visitors to participate in. It was a reciprocating rather than a monolinear display. It promoted mutual communication between museums and visitors. However, except some books for sale and attached labels in the display, it offered no further information service.

In the third case, the Royal Academy in London exhibited Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet in 1992. It was a magnificent exhibition of Tibetan Buddhist objects in recent years. The splendid exhibition introduced visitors to the legendary world of Tibetan art. More than 160 pieces of the finest examples of 'thangka' paintings, sculpture, temple banners, tapestries and metal images demonstrated the rich colour and exquisite craftsmanship of a civilisation that stretched back over one thousand years.

The exhibition not only had a clear theme and aim but also had an underlying philosophy. It proved a revelation to many, showing the full development of Tibetans' pre-occupation with religious image-making from the ninth century until now. The exhibition was organised by themes, taking visitors from the historic Buddha through the various
schools, and ending with the images of the transcendent bliss land, the Buddhist paradise. The exhibition gave visitors a glimpse of the Tibetan Buddhism and its related manifestations in visual art.

Richard Gere, the American actor who founded the Tibet House in New York, which had co-organised the exhibition, said its aim was to celebrate "the beauty of Tibet and the open-heartiness of the Tibetan people, as well as to increase world awareness of their plight" (Gittings, 1992: 34). Indeed, visitors could perceive easily a sublime spiritual aura permeating in these objects and a melancholic awareness of Tibet's recent history hanging over this exhibition.

The exhibition was more than just an exhibition; it was a symbol of hope for the Tibetans. Despite the Chinese wanton destruction of their culture, the interest which the exhibition aroused, together with the living aspect demonstrated by the monks creating the sand mandala, proved that this ancient culture was undoubtedly worthy of further preservation. The exhibition also showed vividly through the film the vigorous vitality of Buddhism which was demonstrated in the enrolment of thousands young monks to follow the Buddha's step for spiritual development.

The exhibition took appropriately the spiritual dimension of these objects into consideration. One of the highlights was the creation of the large circular sand mandala. The mandala was believed by Buddhists to bring spiritual healing to all who saw it. Above all, the Royal Academy spared no effort to foster a spiritual aura of reverence for visitors to view these objects. It acknowledged the mandala's significance by allowing its governing principles to dictate the structure of the display. Just as the mandala was seen as a sublime mystic mansion, a "total purified universe which could be used to transform our environment," so the display itself had been conceived as a journey to the heart of an exalted building. Made from countless grains of brightly-coloured sand mixed with mineral pigments, the finished "mandala" had an intricate jewel-like design. The Mandala of
Kalachakra was created as an arresting yet profoundly meditative testament to the survival of the beliefs underpinning Tibetan art in its entirety.

In accordance with the exhibition, there was some supplementary information for visitors to purchase and many associated programmes for visitors to participate in. Many programmes, such as seminars, lectures and films, were designed to widen visitors' understanding and appreciation of these objects. There were pamphlets with concise explanations which visitors could collect. And there was a package of background material for teachers. On the departing site, there was a notebook requiring visitors to make comments and suggestions. It is very specific. Above all, there was a splendid exhibition catalogue, which was regarded as the most lucid introduction to Buddhist art and thought in recent years (Dorment, 1992: 33). Indeed, it was an inspiring display.

However, no exhibition is perfect. The exhibition had also some slight shortcomings. For example, except for a lot of guards, there was no specialist on site to offer any needed explanation or further information. For instance, a label introducing the transcendent Buddhas read, "...This was an attempt on the part of the later Vajrayana philosophers to create a monotheistic system; it failed, and Buddhism remained a polytheistic religion". However, Buddhism is neither monotheism nor polytheism. Deities, the beings beyond human consciousness and experience, have no place in the perspectives of Buddhists (refer Figure 2.4). This I have already discussed in chapter two.

Buddhism concerns itself only with the sufferings of sentient beings which each person can perceive and the cessation of sufferings which each individual can actualise rather than any idea which is unconceivable. The unceasing mumbled words about God is foreign to Buddhism. Hence the label reflected precisely the label writer's obsessed with theistic ideas. Buddhism pays no attention to the metaphysical issues which are beyond the experience of mankind. In addition, there was too much complicated jargon on captions. It
might bring confusion to visitors rather than increase their understanding and appreciation of these objects.

Naturally, performing specific functions, museums are not monasteries. They should not ape monasteries meticulously. They can offer no flower, incense, food, water and lamps to images in their original context. However, without relevant reverence, something precious seems to be losing. A young Tibetan monk on site said, 'It's beautiful, of course, but it doesn't mean much in a hanging room. The Buddhas need someone to worship them, offer them biscuits and butter lamps' (Dorment, 1992: 20). It did not mean that the images would eat biscuits. Instead, it highlighted that these objects should be approached with suitable regards. Actually, without appropriate reverence, they cannot create a sublime atmosphere for these objects.

In the fourth case, Manchester City Art Galleries held an exhibition entitled *Expressions of Enlightenment: A Celebration of Buddhist Art* in March and April of 1993. Like other great world religions, Buddhism has evolved its own symbolism and aesthetics in the search for spiritual fulfilment. This display explored the use of figures and symbols to express intangible and universal truths which were at the heart of Buddhism. Historic and contemporary artefacts from East and West illustrate common themes inspired by Buddhist teaching and practice. All the objects have been made in appropriately rare and beautiful materials- bronze, silver, enamel, ivory, porcelain, and even gold. The display was suggested by Manchester Buddhist Centre, as a way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). It was a collaborative venture which began in September 1992 and ended in April 1993. The exhibition was prepared by:

a) two members of Manchester Buddhist Centre;

b) Ruth Shrigley, keeper of decorative arts at Manchester City Art Galleries (MCAG);

c) Andrew Renton, as a volunteer worker at MCAG.
The overall aim of the display was to show how Buddhist art and spirituality influenced and reinforced each other. A further aim was to attract broader and new audiences both to MCAG and to Manchester Buddhist Centre (MBC). The main aim of the Buddhist Centre was to bring Buddhism more into the public sphere, and gave non-Buddhists a taste of Buddhism through images rather than through words. Besides, the gallery had several aims of its own:

i) to improve knowledge of the collections by using Buddhist expertise;
ii) to use a part of the collections that has not been given a high priority recently;
iii) to interest ethnic minority communities;
iv) to respond to a community initiative;
v) to juxtapose historical and contemporary material.

In terms of content, objects used in this exhibition came from the following sources:

a) MCAG's Chinese, Japanese and South East Asian collections: ceramics, metal work, sculpture (in wood, stone, ivory, jade and other hardstones) and prints of Buddhist temples and festivals;

b) loan materials: i) National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside- Liverpool Museum's huge Tibetan collection provided objects of a type not possessed by MCAG, e.g. ritual objects; ii) Manchester Museum- two Buddha figures; iii) Contemporary Western Buddhist artists- thangkas, sculpture, stupas, ritual masks.

Materials were grouped as follows:

a) Case 1: The shrine. Cloisonné enamel altar vessels, Japanese Buddha figure and ivory miniature shrine.
b) Case 2: The art of ritual. Incense burners of various types, Tibetan musical instruments, prayer wheel... and so on.
c) Case 3: Buddha figures.
d) Case 4: Devotional figures. Bodhisattvas, arahants (luohan) and Buddhist lions.
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f). Case 6: Contemporary Buddhist Art in the West. Buddha figures, Bodhisattva, stupas... and so on.

g). Handling collection: contemporary Western statue of Vajrasattva, prayer beads, bell and other objects for visitors to touch and pick up.


i). Walls: Japanese prints, contemporary and historic thangkas, Western ritual masks, photographs of Nepalese temples.

The display was linked to a small gallery. The design was distinctive, in order to create an atmosphere that contrasted strangely with the uniform grey decor of neighbouring galleries. Hence, a dark orange-brown colour was used for the walls and cases, text was in white on black panels and the roof space was closed down by stretching fabric above the central space of the gallery. It was felt that an intimate atmosphere would be most suitable for spiritual art of this kind.

There were three layers of factual textual information for each case: identification labels for each object; a wall panel explaining the theme of a case (e.g. the role of symbols, the different types of figure, the links between ritual and spirituality); and a loose laminated sheet which provided more detailed information on selected objects from each case.

They tried to make the display a truly Buddhist one, by involving Buddhists in associated events: a Buddhist ceremony was held at the opening of the display; Buddhists gave talks to the public; Western Buddhist artists ran workshops in the gallery to allow the public to understand their work (they also provided written statements about their work, which were included in the display).
In short, the overall aim of the display's interpretation was to highlight the depth of inspiration that Buddhism had provided for artists from very different places and times, including modern Britain. They hoped to help people to understand what beauty means to a Buddhist. This was a distinctive display. Renton commented:

My own interest in the exhibition was of a slightly different nature. I was interested in the way that other cultures have been represented (to be more precise, misrepresented) in Western museums. My starting point was such writing as Edward Said's book "Orientalism", which shows how the West has maintained its "superiority" over the Islamic world by misrepresenting it as inferior and strange. I felt that the same had been done with the cultures of East Asia, and was interested to see if our exhibition could take a different, fairer approach.... My aim for the exhibition was, therefore, to represent Buddhist objects not as something strange, and exotic, not as something inferior to Christian, Western culture but in a way that respected the intentions of their original makers and owners, and that recognised how cultures are not wholly separate from each other, but influence and mix with each other (in this way, the idea of cultural superiority could be counteracted) (pers. comm. in August 1993).

In accordance with this display, there were many complementary programmes. They included lunch talks, demonstrations of contemporary Buddhist thangka art with Ani Kelsong Wangmo, evening lectures at the Manchester Buddhist Centre, A Brush with Death- Art and Buddhism by Dharmacharini Sinhadevi of the Western Buddhist Order, Buddhist Rock-cut Temples of Ancient Western India, and a slide talk by Dharmachari Kulamitra of the Western Buddhist Order. However, owing to the limit of budget, introductory information was scarce.

Indeed, it was an appealing display. It did respect the spiritual quality of the objects, because Buddhists played a crucial role in their interpretation. The use of Western Buddhist art was an excellent way of counteracting traditional 'Orientalist' approaches. It showed that once a strange and foreign tradition that is now a permanent and growing part of British culture. The display created a new audience not only for MCAG but also for MBC. The display was very popular, both for those who already had some knowledge of Buddhism and those who had none. Many visitors were pleasantly surprised and said that
the display was much more interesting than the rest of the gallery (pers. comm. in August 1993). Generally speaking, the display was a successful way of using part of MCAG's collections, and showed that these objects were much more of an asset than a library. It took Buddhists' viewpoints to approach these objects. Above all, it reflected that the messages embodied in these objects were still relevant to the general public.

In the fifth case, the new St Mungo Museum demonstrates the "multi-faith city Glasgow has been for 200 years" on 3 April, 1993. This museum of religious life and art was the first museum of religion in the world. The city is claiming the new museum to be the world's first based solely on humanity's struggle to find a meaning for life (Cusick, 1993: 9). The museum is also the first of its kind in the world to explore all religions. So far, there is no museum anywhere so wide ranging in its approach to religion in the world. There are probably very good reasons why there are no other museums of religion. Indeed, it is too difficult a subject, it is too controversial, it is too dangerous. So why is Glasgow breaking this particular taboo?

Representing the major religions and the beliefs of ancient and tribal worlds, was never going to be an easy work. The museum's senior curator, Mark O'Neil, was involved when the project first started two years ago. "It's been a fascinating and frightening two years," he said. During the preparatory period, Glasgow's numerous religious groups had been consulted and contributed. Besides, in order to address the non-Christian imbalance, £100,000 was allocated for purchasing other religious objects.

The aim of the museum is to reflect the central importance of religion in human life. It was to give objects a meaning which they had lost by becoming a part of museum collections. The museum aims at bringing together the world's different religions under a single roof through its collection of religion. It intends to contribute to mutual respect and understanding among people of different religions-and none- and provide moving and inspiring insights into how people have responded to the ultimate mysteries.
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O'Neil's main hope for the St Mungo is that it will contribute to greater mutual understanding and respect. It hopes to create an atmosphere of greater tolerance and mutual respect among those of different faiths and those with none. The display is to acquire the right to represent religion at all (O'Neill, 1993: 22). O'Neill added:

We were reviewing the history of Glasgow. One of the things that was most noticeably missing [from existing galleries and museums] was that Glasgow was a multi-cultural society. Religion seemed an interesting way of approaching the problem. Our aim is to promote mutual respect and understanding of different religions. We are trying to get rid of prejudice on the grounds that it is mostly based on ignorance (O'Neill, 1993a: 22).

Indeed, the museum provides an opportunity for comparison and dialogue among different beliefs. It is fascinating to put all the world religions under the same roof. There has been a high level of co-operation from all the faiths which are represented in the museum. The museum will, in some way, contribute to the creation of a society better able to celebrate and respect the diversity of belief.

The museum has tried to give a meaningful sample of the religious experience of humanity by dividing the subject into three galleries. The Art Gallery aims to communicate something of the meaning of the main religious traditions in the world through the beautiful objects they have created. The Religious Life Gallery explores the way religion is woven into daily life, from birth through childhood, coming of age, marriage, how it affects politics, war and persecution and how it shapes men's attitudes to death and the afterlife. Moving through this gallery allows the visitor to examine how the different religions deal with common themes like birth, coming of age, marriage, missions, rulers, death and the afterlife. The Scottish Gallery looks at religion in Scotland and different faiths that have been practised there in the past. It displayed contemporary Buddhist works in June 1993. The courtyard at the back of the building contains a Zen Garden drawing on an age-old Japanese tradition. It reminds people to search their inner peace and serenity.
Besides, there is a cafe shop on the base ground floor. Visitors can eat vegetarian food there. In addition, there is a book store providing various religious books.

The museum’s charm lies in how it displays small everyday objects that influence the belief and behaviour of mankind. The spectacular objects do not dominate. The multi-lingual captions are very attractive to visitors who use languages other than English. The vivid audio-visual installations are very impressive. Moving verbal testimonies from local communities have been recorded and are replayed in the museum.

Though it attempts to represent the balance of religions, some Scottish churches have voiced quiet unease. For instance, the Rev Donald Maclean, of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Glasgow said his church was not asked to contribute to the collection. "But even if we had, we would not have done so. This is all part of the multi-faith movement. But as we consider Christianity to be the unique religion, we are against it" (Cusick, 1993: 9). It is deplorable to keep this arrogant and jaundiced viewpoint at this shrinking world.

However, there are some slight shortcomings. The exhibition still cannot get rid of the non-Christian imbalance completely. All over the window glass are the Christian pictures. Besides, the total number of Buddhist objects is very small. This would limit the use of these objects in other approaches. In addition, the translations of multi-lingual captions are not precisely correct. Furthermore, there is an empty Japanese shrine cabinet on display without an image inside. Complementary information is also scarce.
6.4 Suggestions for using Buddhist objects in an intelligent way

Indeed, museums can do a lot more work to help visitors to widen their awareness of these objects. The worst obstacle in using these objects is in need of creative ideas. The possibilities are limited only to the extent of one's imagination and ability to employ technology. The competitive advantage of a museum comes fundamentally from improvement, innovation, and change. Sustaining competitive advantage of a museum ultimately requires a practical approach to its programmes. Each museum should have creative ideas to keep its competitive advantage.

Accessibility is paramount

An exhibition is one of the best ways to present an idea to others, because it uses the real thing rather than just words or pictures. This kind of experience is inspiring and attractive. Indeed, it is a challenge for museums to satisfy a visitor's desire to learn. If displays can actually give visitors something to fill up their hearts; if museums can give something to remember, then museums have done their duty properly. Certainly, museums can touch visitors' hearts through the displayed objects and give visitors a new insight on life, on themselves.

Undoubtedly, accessibility is the most important thing which museums can do to widen the appreciation of the objects. Displaying the objects, museums can help the general public to get a better understanding about Buddhism and its objects. Especially, in this multicultural society, Buddhism has become a growing part of British culture. For instance, the works of artists like Odilon Redon and Whistler were much influenced by Buddhist ideals (Shearer, 1992: 95). In addition, contemporary Western Buddhists have created many splendid Buddhist works. These objects can be used to widen the vision of the general public and enrich the content of British culture.
However, according to the *Daily Telegraph* (3 April 1993: 5) reports that four out of every five pieces at St Mungo Museum have never been on public view before. Besides, some museums still merely put these objects in storage. It is a dereliction. It is deplorable to hold objects which museums do not have sufficient staff and expertise to deal with and have no intention to display them. The time requires museums to be more economical in utilising their resources. Museums cannot neglect the pressing demand of accountability and quality.

Westerners still know little about Buddhism in comparison with other religions. Current education still emphasises the courses of traditional faiths. However, with growing interest in Buddhism in the West and the gradual appearance of multicultural society, it is definitely an opportunity for museums to catch up. Through the exhibitions of the objects, museums can provide an opportunity for dialogue, comparison, and communication among different beliefs.

Undoubtedly, accessibility is an important measure to clarify the misconceptions and widen the understanding of these objects. It is museums' duty to provide opportunities for viewing these objects. A travelling exhibit entitled "The heart of Buddhism" which could travel around the country from museum to museum would be very interesting, Joe King suggests (pers. comm. in May 1993). Indeed, mobile displays would be more convenient to reach audiences than still ones. So far, British Museum and V & A have ever loaned the objects to other museums, including foreign ones.

**Contextual placement**

An identical object, displaying at different places, can suggest different significance and meanings. Hooper-Greenhill points out clearly that objects can look different and mean different things when they are displayed or grouped with a different collection of companions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 100). She further explains:
The same material object, entering the disciplines of different ensembles of practices, would be differently classified. Thus a silver teaspoon made during the eighteenth century in Sheffield would be classified as 'Industrial Art' in Birmingham City Museum, 'Decorative Art' at Stoke-on-Trent, 'Silver' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and 'Industry' at Kelham Island Museum in Sheffield. The other objects also so classified would be different in each case, and the meaning and significance of the teaspoon itself correspondingly modified (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 6-7).

Actually, when the contextual placement of an object changes, the significance of that object changes as well. Without appropriate context and sufficient interpretations, the significance of these objects and their symbolic messages are foreign to many visitors. People might regard closed eyes as sleeping, smiling faces as idiotic, and sexual embracing as the justification of sexual indulgence.

As Buddhist objects came from temples, monasteries or family altars, frames of reference that can contextualise material things should be displayed along with the things themselves. Lavin expresses that he is not very interested in museums because the exhibits are usually irrelevant to the authentic messages of Buddhist objects (pers. comm. of May 26, 1993). Jayaratna also expressed that viewing Buddhist objects in museums was not interesting:

Little effort is made to explain the importance or use of these artefacts within the Buddhist tradition, i.e. as things to be used to inspire people towards reaching Enlightenment. It should be possible to get away from the mere ideas of the antiquity, value or geographical origin of the objects, and try to put across their importance as objects of spiritual inspiration and veneration, as artistic interpretations of Enlightenment (pers. comm. of May 25, 1993).

His remarks got the point of holding an inspiring display. Accordingly, if these object are shown in the context of their actual physical usage in their original place, it would be more appealing. Attractive exhibitions must take cultural context and spiritual dimension of these objects into consideration. Halstead wrote that he had visited Indian and Pakistan Museums and found that their Buddhist displays have a more devotional
atmospheres, similar to looking at a shrine in a temple. Thus, he suggested that offering bowls (full of water) could be placed in front of the largest Buddha statue in display (pers. comm. in May, 1993). He thinks that this kind of approach would be more able to show the original context and significance of the objects. Obviously, it is merely one way to explore the dimension of these objects.

As the role and function of museums are different from Buddhist temples, the approaches of using these objects should not be identical. They do not need ape the approaches of temples. The point is to transmit the intangible messages embodied in these objects. The power of religious aspiration to move and motivate people means that this is more than an attempt to create an interesting display. It is an intervention in society, a contribution towards creating greater tolerance and mutual respect among those of different faiths and those with none.

Stumpe, a curator at the Liverpool Museum, wrote that she had ever put together for an interfaith weekend in Liverpool in January 1993. Her working group set up an altar with sitting places for meditation and simple explanatory labels. Group members were available to answer any questions visitors might have. She regarded it as a real and meaningful display because it was a real, functioning altar, transported from a local Buddhist centre, locates at 22 Bridge Road, Liverpool, and they made incense-offerings in the usual way throughout the weekend (pers. comm. of May 30, 1993). Having paid attention to the sublime dimension of these objects, she created the room for visitors to relax, ponder and meditate. It is an appropriate circumstance to experience serenity and peace. Besides, Rana Lister also expressed:

My personal feeling is that these religious artefacts should be displayed in religious surroundings where they are always available for viewing to ordinary people e.g. part of the gallery made into a small or large traditional shrine room to display these objects where people can sit quietly on cushions on the floor if they so wish, carpeted so that non-Buddhists can be respectful and remove their shoes whilst viewing them (pers. comm. of July 10, 1993).
Indeed, the essential messages of these objects are not their width, weight, height, materials, makers, periods, or regions. Instead, they are intangible truths. Ajahn Amindo expresses:

The best way of presenting the Buddha is to have one image of a Buddha, with no relics at all, or pictures. And there must be a short piece of information below the images, involving the reader to wake up to the here and now and realize what it means to be human. Then, perhaps, there might a small chance that the visitors to your museum will catch a glimpse of the meaning of a Buddha image (pers. comm. of May 29, 1993).

The viewpoint makes sense. Because Buddhism is not merely for discussion. Instead, it should be put into practice. Thus, it is appropriate to create a similar circumstance to transmit the messages through the use of these objects. To give the feeling of an alien religion it is necessary to do more than expound its concepts and describe its history. One must catch its emotional undertone, enter sympathetically into its sentiments, feel one's way into its symbols, its cult, its art, and then seek to impart these things not merely by scientific exposition but in all sorts of personal involvement.

It would be of great benefit if Buddhist statues were displayed in museums with more sensitivity to what they were actually used for. An altar set up in museums may help visitors to understand the function and contextual placement of statues. This would give viewers a better understanding of what they are looking at than merely stating the height, dimensions and materials from which the statue is made of. A meditation room may help visitors to experience serenity. An art studio may help visitors to grasp the messages transmitted through beautiful arts. Indeed, it would not have been difficult to include examples of contemporary Buddhist iconography and items relating to Buddhist worship today, so as to convey the spirit of a living belief rather than of a fossilised religion with its accompanying art forms.

Displaying irrelevant objects together might misinterpret the messages of Buddhist objects (see Plate 5-8). Without deliberate design and appropriate placement, the original
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atmosphere would be divested and the significance of objects would be distorted. Hooper-Greenhill wrote that a painting of "Madonna and Child" would be understood in the Medici Palace as both a magical and a religious thing. Because the painting might well have been an integral part of the decorative scheme of a room, or executed upon a piece of delicate furniture (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 194). Objects cannot speak for themselves spontaneously. If an identical object had been held at different arrangements, the meaning of the object would have changed radically. The way in which the object was understood and enjoyed would have shifted.

Some ritual objects are used in pairs. For instance, bell (used in the morning) and drum (used in the evening) or bell and striking stick; 'gong' and 'woodfish'; incense burner and lamp lights; Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, are often put together. However, there are many cases of displaying merely a piece without its other counterpart one. Disregarding this fact would be a blunder. Accordingly, it is necessary to remove irrelevant objects away and to put associated pieces together. Then visitors would find it easier to understand the significance and usefulness of pairing objects. That is to say, each object should be put to its best advantage and explain its cultural role in human terms.

Indeed, museums are not monasteries. Museums do not necessarily to ape the placement of monasteries meticulously. However, this does not mean that museums are inappropriate to create a similar arrangement of a shrine in displays. The point is to transmit the significance of these objects. The significance should be re-interpreted in this time, in this society.

Cerny thinks that to make future interpretation possible, museums must collect folk art in whatever fashion best retrieves its lost context. Otherwise, the objects will inform future curators of little more than current aesthetic tastes. She wrote that museums need to learn to approach the task of collecting with the goal of attaining an insider's point of view. Then what they collect will truly represent the values and aesthetics of the culture of
origin, which is important to the people themselves (Cerny, 1990: 58). The words are applicable to displaying the objects as well.

Choosing conception-oriented themes

With a view to attract audiences, the theme should be relevant and appealing to them. Then the goal of entertainment and education can be achieved easily. Material things should be understood in their relationship to man. Hooper-Greenhill wrote:

As a museum teacher, he must make the collections interesting, relevant and exciting for people. He must select relevant objects and discover a theme that links the objects... The choice of themes and objects must be made in relation to the needs of the group and in collaboration with the group leader and his or her objects for the visit to the museum. Very often the objectives of the museum visit will need to be developed and clarified as part of the process of deciding on the objects and the themes (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 4).

She observes that the stories of man, life, and civilisation have become more important than the physical identities of material things (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 198). That is to say, objects are for men rather than vice versa. Pearce also expresses:

The past can give us its objects and its texts, but in every other sense it is beyond us and cannot be helped or marred. We try to understand it not for its sake, but for our own, not only in the immediate sense of trying to understand the processes which brought our society into being, but also in the inward sense of appreciating the range and variety of human experience to understand ourselves. In the Jugian sense, artefacts are continuously reinterpreted as symbol messages, and we can all understand what is said and done at the level of that common humanity from which the symbolists start (Pearce, 1986: 134-35).

That is to say, the messages of these objects should be re-interpreted in every cultural circumstance and every generation.

The themes of displaying Buddhist objects are usually focused on regions, chronology, material, ritual utensils, worshipping images and culture. They can be academically correct. However, they are cold to the general public. It is difficult to kindle
a viewer's interest and imagination. People might enquire, 'what is the relationship of these objects with us?'. It is easy to display these objects as dead relics. But it is difficult to display them in a vivid way. The issue is hinged on how museums re-interpret these objects. Aping the themes of others does not work. Each museum should have its unique characteristics and creative ideas.

Attractive themes should relate closely to the people and the time. They should be practical. It is more important to live well than to have mystic revelations all the time. It is more important to comfort a boring old woman or give to the poor than to see God in a tree-trunk or a grain of sand. The human psyche is essentially the same all over the world. The diversities of beliefs should be used to widen people's vision rather than to arouse division. The significance of Buddhist objects should be re-interpreted in every social and cultural context. Contemporary people must be communicated with in modern languages. Museums must have the commitment to present the contemporary world, not as helplessly fettered to the past, but as a creative and developing engagement with diverse histories and geography that continuously shape and reshape present realities, and people's place and obligations in an increasingly global community. As educational and entertaining institutions for serving communities, museums should reflect the central concerns of society.

From a broad viewpoint, religion can be regarded as men's spontaneous aspiration for evolution or development. The phenomena of life, such as birth, marriage, death, are the common issues each person faces, no matter whether they believe in anything or not. There are many common problems people face today. A theme such as 'Exploring Death', using Buddhist bone trumpets, skull drums, or reclining Buddha image, can lead viewers to ponder many contemporary issues like 'committing suicide', 'marrow or organ transplantation', 'natural death or procrastination of agony', 'Is abortion an act of murder?' and 'euthanasia'. Why do Tibetans feel so free to sever their skulls for making skull-drum and to mince their corpses for feeding vultures while other people are so scare to imagine
the same issue? Buddhists everywhere feel so free to cremate their corpses while other believers are not. Besides, it is easier to get ample sources of donated corneas for organ transplantation from Sri Lanka Buddhists than from other people. In addition, Janice Yu also found that because of cultural superstitions against donating parts of one's body, doctors could not find a Taiwan resident with the appropriate type A marrow who was willing to give away his "dragon bone fluid". Hence, a search of bone marrow banks in Europe and Japan came up empty (Yu, 1993: 4). Indeed, the approach offers concepts through which material culture can speak for itself.

Since people usually are very ignorant of death, they felt helplessly at facing it. Even Jesus Christ was showing great agony while facing death. According to the description of New Testament, He cried with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' (St Mark, Chapter 15, Verse 34). It is said that the ache and agony of dying is very like a living turtle being retrieved of its shell. It gives people great agony, anxiety, disappointment, remorse, and horror. Naturally, most people would like to die peacefully. However, few people know that they cannot hope to die peacefully if their lives have been full of violence, or if their minds have mostly been agitated by emotions like anger, attachment, or fear. So if they wish to die well, they must learn how to live well. The Dalai Lama wrote, 'Hoping for a peaceful death, we must cultivate peace in our mind, and in our way of life' (Rinpoche, 1992: ix).

Indeed, there are several approaches to deal with this issue. Almost every faith has its specific approach to it. Comparing different approaches to tackle the same issue is interesting. Hence, conception-oriented approach will bring them together for dialogue, comparison, and communication. It is a better way for mutual understanding and mutual respect among different beliefs.

Besides, themes exploring the perennial issues like 'How to live a happy and significant life' and 'How to overcome difficulties' would always be relevant to people no
matter whether they are believers or not. Since Buddhism concerns mainly the cessation of suffering and Buddhist images always wear a smiling face (see Plate 3), it is easy to select sufficient objects to explore these personal issues. Each belief would have its answer to this same issue. The dialogue and comparison of different approaches to deal with the same issue would be very helpful to widen one's vision. The possibility of optional approaches is limitless.

Obviously, one's cultural background, such as custom and belief, plays a crucial role in one's response to these issues. Each person might have his answer to the same problem according to his own cultural background and experience. Comparing the diversities of answering the same question is very inspiring. With a world-wide vision to tackle these common issues, the diversity of cultures and beliefs becomes a merit rather than a shortcoming. The esteem with which museums regard the multiple cultures offered in their society enhances the possibilities for healthy survival and continued social development. It enriches the content of a culture. Conception-oriented themes not only stimulate people to ponder their common issues but also promote mutual understanding. Indeed, these objects can reveal limitless messages through re-interpretations.

The paramount thing people must know is their sameness as human beings. Their basic expressions of happiness, sorrow, laughing, crying, singing, and so on are similar. They all hope happiness rather than unhappiness also the same. The diversity of religions, colours, and cultures should not be used as a pretext for making division and discrimination in this drastically internationalised world. No recipe can cater to the taste of all people. Diversity should be used to enrich the content of a culture rather than to divide individuals. However, religious, racial and cultural bias distort each individual's understanding of the world, of their sameness as human beings. Museums have the mission to help people overcome differences.
Monod, chairman of the French multinational corporation, La Lyonnaise des Eaux-Dumez, said, 'The knowledge (for young people) not only of languages but also of the culture of different European nations, the study of Japanese and American civilisation and of the Arab world, in short, a knowledge of others is an absolute must' (Woodcock, 1992: 15). Dr Cunningham, chief executive of Roffey Park Management College, also said that the understanding cultural sensitivities is now a vital part of the modern manager's work (Woodcock, 1992: 15). Involving in education and entertainment, museums have the responsibility to promote this world-wide vision. It becomes clear that people are living in a world that is highly interdependent, in which their future is highly fused.

Museums should promote greater understanding among the different groups and to promote peace and harmony by demonstrating the very real similarities in experience rather than the differences, and by showing how people will depend upon each other in the future. Peoples of different cultures and beliefs have many values and practices in common which have been part of their cultures since the earliest times.

In a shrinking world, museums must promote the diversity and creativity of human cultures (Kurin, 1991: 342). Increasingly, a museum's responsibility is to change the priorities in its work from the strict focus on collecting, preserving and presenting evidence of the past to a greater concentration on the reasons for their collecting. A museum's resources should be used to foster a multicultural perspective. Surely, museums can provide a valuable contribution towards alleviating the real problems of cultural misunderstanding among different ethnic and religious communities.

He explains clearly that collecting is not for the sake of collecting. It is for educating and inspiring people. It is not for justifying the past glory. Instead, it is for the purposes of today and the future, to help people to find a direction in life. Intelligent themes should promote harmony, co-operation and mutual understanding rather than make more troubles for this world. Re-interpreting these objects in contemporary language to
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denote current issues would inspire people to face, to learn, and to reflect on their personal issues and the common problems of the contemporary world.

The insights which Buddhists discovered are not for Buddhists only; if they are worth anything, they must be valuable and useful in many different circumstances. If Buddhists discovered anything truly important, it must be of use to the world. People should not attached to one particular tradition or another. They can learn from the past, but they should not remain addicted to its insights, even to its ways of doing things. No society, no belief, no culture has a monopoly of spiritual insight, of spiritual truth. At this time of change, people, Buddhists and Christians, and atheists alike, should share all the awareness they have, all the compassion they can find in themselves, build up every possibility of goodwill that exists within them towards the world.

First and foremost, people are all the same human beings. They are human beings of the time. They should concern for their time and for the establishment of peace and truth. They should move forward and deeper towards each other, towards the world. What is not useful for this endless transformation must be abandoned; anything that prevents a finer flowering of their spirit must be left behind; anything that hinders them from dealing with the world as it is, with people themselves as they are, must be renounced without grief. Every truthful transformation takes people closer to the world, closer to things, closer to each other. Indeed, there are many other ways of life and many other ways of attaining awareness. No culture or belief is absolutely superior or inferior to others.

Appropriate interpretations

Pearce observed that an artefact has many attributes, some of which are intrinsic (material, decoration), others relative (context, history, function), and all of which are necessary for a balanced interpretation of the object (Pearce, 1989a: 40). Interpretation is one of the most important features of display. The meanings and interpretations of objects are endlessly rewritten according to new perspectives. Hooper-Greenhill also observes:
The radical potential of material culture, of concrete objects, of real things, of primary sources, is the endless possibility of rereading. In contemporary culture, where contextualised and mediated messages surround us, and where reality and hyper-reality can barely be distinguished, the potential of a return to the concrete material evidence is of overriding importance. Effective history teaches us that, because meanings and interpretations are endlessly rewritten, we too can seize the opportunity to make our own meaning, and find our own relevance and significance (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 214).

Indeed, exploring the meanings of objects is for people themselves rather than for objects. People who view objects can learn something to enrich their life only if their minds are open enough. Objects mean different things to different people. The learning potential varies according to each person's education and previous experience. People are interested in a display that 'said' something rather than simply presents 'masterpieces' of its art (Goswamy, 1991: 69). Confronted with an identical Buddha image one person might want to know how it was made, another what it was like to be an Indian, and a third stand in admiration of its beauty. Each person's learning is different, each seeks education and enjoyment in a different way.

It is very difficult to explain the significance of the objects to someone who is not familiar with Buddhist doctrines. Current interpretations only serve to reinforce the trite approach rather than introduce fresh ideas. Interpretations should be made to show a little more sensitivity in handling religious subject, especially in a society that has undergone rapid social and economic changes in recent years. It is better to use the daily familiar language rather than the difficult terms. Above all, it should re-interpret these objects in this social context. Then, the messages embodied in the objects are relevant to this human condition today rather than cold or obsolete.

Museums should use simple and clear words as best as they can and avoid the use of complex technicalities and obscure terminology. Without previous experience and background knowledge of Buddhist teachings, ordinary visitors have often been confused and discouraged by the copious technicalities of Buddhism. The significance of these
objects should be explained in terms which ordinary visitors can understand, without obscure technicalities. Some people often put off Buddhism, finding it is difficult and boring. But this is mainly because they are not being taught properly.

Bilingual or multi-lingual labels are more appealing to foreigners than the single language labels. Nowadays, museums are competing with many institutions for support. The time requires that museums meet the needs of visitors rather than the other way round. In addition, at this internationalised society, visitors usually are not confined to local people, hence, multi-lingual labels would be an appropriate measure to catch up with this trend.

To know what a statue has been made of ordinary clay or stone does not mean that visitors have grasped the significance of that statue. The content could be academic correct. However, they make little sense to the general public. The point is to make these objects relate to people. Indeed, the significance of these objects can not spontaneously be conferred to viewers unless, through their strenuous efforts, they can experience, feel, and realise with their whole beings. An information on captions should tell the relevance of these objects to the development of the present people- written in consultation with practising Buddhists- of the objects, as well as dating, location and art-history information.

Nowadays, museums are not the sole interpreter of Buddhist objects. They can not display and interpret these objects arbitrarily. Community people play an increasing role in the work. Museums should know what these objects are really placed and used in their original context. Hence, research is an important imperative. Museums should not be complacent at providing trivial information of the objects. They should be able to interpret the timely messages of these objects.

Exhibitions are not neutral, they interpret the messages of objects in some stance. It takes either a positive or a negative stance but never a neutral one. If moved from one
place to another, the meaning of an object would have changed completely. The way in which the object was perceived would have changed. It cannot remain constantly. Objects do not passively await interpretation. They generate certain kinds of meaning in themselves and in the relationships among them. Each selection of an object, and each placement of objects, is an act of interpretation.

Besides, displays of Buddhist material culture in museums are never free from bias, as the very process of selecting objects for presentation involves some form of prejudice. With the increasing participation of Buddhist communities in Britain, it is time to shift the bias. Some of the culturally biased elements which have long infused in museums should be rectified. Museums should aim to select, show, and interpret Buddhist material culture through the eyes of the makers and users.

Flexible approach

The very nature of museums is undergoing a gradual evolution as levels of education rise and people look for an increased understanding of their heritage and culture, society itself is changing even more rapidly. In the face of the profound changes occurring at every level of the environment, museums become more sensitive to the pulse of the time and more responsive to the demands of communities. If they cannot demonstrate utility to patrons, public agencies, and changing audiences, they will be in jeopardy. Hooper-Greenhill wrote:

At a time when all other social fields are in a period of rapid change, which willy-nilly impinges upon the practices and possibilities of museums, the lack of a flexible model for museums leads to severe problems in accommodating and working with the new elements that are imposed upon the existing field. Without this ability to adapt, to find new ways of being museums, and new ways of recruiting support, museums are being closed down, collections sold, and staff dismissed (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 8).
Currently, museums are actively involved in educational and recreational activities. Their growth relies much on the outside support. The diversity of cultures and religions must be reflected in collections, displays, interpretations, educational programmes, and in the audiences which museums attract and serve.

Accordingly, it is essential that museum professionals should be sensitive to the many different and changing ways of viewing Buddhist objects. Their collections should not reflect limited museological perceptions which have tended to stress the historical and the 'traditional' over the vital and the new, but expand to include current cultural material expressive of a broader, contemporary popular consciousness.

Hooper-Greenhill observed that objects can be classified and reclassified. It follows that they are interdisciplinary, and can usefully be employed to reveal and transcend subject boundaries (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991: 100). She further expressed that nowadays the many frames of reference that can contextualise material things are displayed along with the things themselves (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 204-05). Hanging art on the blank walls of sterile galleries might distort Buddhists' motivations of creating these objects. What visitors want to see are life experiences, all those aspects that constitute Buddhist culture. That may involve the arts of dance, drama, story-telling, music, sculpture, painting and literature.

Museum displays should not illustrate merely texts with objects. Nor should they tell one story but encourage the recounting of many stories. Rather than overemphasising the privileged position of the text, a museum should be involved in a dialectical exchange with such viewpoints by presenting the very material that anthropology or archaeology makes it its task to interpret. Then, the visual response to the object itself becomes an integral part to play in the learning process of visitors.
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In short, museums must bring their displays forward in time to see what they mean in the context of contemporary life. Representing a living tradition, these objects should not be displayed as dead relics. With fresh ideas, museums can make the bones of folklore and anthropology alive.

Supplementary information

In developing various aspects of long neglected objects, good taste and reverence are needed. When displaying these objects in displays, it is important to offer associated information, such as Buddhist music, language, oral literature, religious rites, festivals, carving and sculpture. This kind of information should not merely be dealt with in stale ways. Instead, it should be stored in print, electronic, audio and visual media. They should collect also works of Buddhist art to enhance visitors' awareness of the historical development of the objects. In addition, fragmented information in captions or exhibition catalogues is not sufficient to offer an overall picture of Buddhist objects to viewers. Hence, museums should provide an overall picture of the objects.

Besides, what labels can transmit is very limited and rigid. Any exhaustive label cannot convey the whole messages of an object. It merely reflects the viewpoint from a specific angle. In addition, few people have sufficient patience or time to view all of them. In order to kindle the curiosity and enthusiasm of visitors, museums should provide the instruments for viewing these objects from different angles or even different places. A vivid impression get from audio-visual presentation is stronger than the insipid display of merely solid objects. Visual viewing is merely a channel of learning knowledge. Learning processes which use multiple senses, otherwise, assure longer remembrance and stronger impression.

In order to widen the awareness of these objects, museums should provide souvenirs, postcards, musical tapes, and video-tapes of festivals and duplicated artefacts for selling. Maps, glossary list and chronology tables can also be provided for reference.
They also can provide pamphlets and brochures to answer the essential questions which visitors are eager to know, such as: what is Buddha, what is the basic teachings of Buddhism and what is the significance of these objects in the present world. Visitors usually have an inclination to purchase something to behold and remember. Museums should meet this demand. These materials can enhance learning experience on viewing these objects. Certainly, it cannot charge too much. Otherwise, it would discourage many visitors from buying them.

Besides, shops and cafes are playing an increasingly important role within museums. Butler took a closer look at just how effective museums are as entrepreneurs in the following extract from his recent survey of museum retailing and catering. However, he finds that few museums offer products that differentiate them from other museums or souvenir shops, or seek to originate products (Butler, 1993: 22). It seems that they are devoid of uniqueness. This runs the risk of customer boredom. Certainly, the products must link with collections.

Mei-yei Pam says that the total money of selling duplicated objects and admission tickets in the Palace Museum, Taipei, is over N.T. 100,000 every day (per. conversation in July 1993). Indeed, it is a great income for that museum. However, except some postcards, there are very few delicate duplicated objects or publications for selling in British museums. With a view to overcoming the difficulty of constricting budget and to elevate the realm of education service, museums should have some creative ideas. Duplicating delicate Buddhist objects for circulation is an option which museums can take. The Royal Academy of Art had duplicated some thangka paintings for dissemination in its The Sacred Art of Tibet: Wisdom and Compassion display. Undoubtedly, these materials not only can widen the awareness of these objects but also can strengthen the remembrance and experience of visiting museums.
As a part of the whole recreation chain, museums can also learn something from the recreational institutions. John Parke, the associate director of the National History Museum, wrote:

It is well known that the standards of customer care at Disneyland are extremely high, and good is their reputation that they are able to give highly successful courses and seminars. We want to become an involving organisation and we want our staff to recognise how good standards of customer care can be and at least to equal them (Tait, 1989: 14).

Besides, visitors may not speak English as their first language. Accordingly, museums should provide labels in the most widely used languages other than English. So far, very few museums have bilingual labels. The T.T. Tsui Gallery in V & A has provided bilingual labels which include Chinese and English. However, the content of these two languages are not identical on the same label. The St Mungo Museum in Glasgow provides multi-lingual labels which include Urdu, Punjabi, Chinese and Gaelic and English. However, the multi-lingual captions are also not translated words by words. Indeed, multi-lingual captions are attractive to visitors who speak those languages.

Above all, information for visitors should be correct and clear. Sometimes, the provided labels are doubtful. Visitors may enjoy the idea of providing bilingual labels, and of seeing objects with some idea of the context of their use, but what emerges is that there has been insufficient consultation with scholars, particularly Buddhist scholars, who have a working knowledge of the accepted conventions, correct terminology, and current research in this field. Hence, museums should encourage the active participation of Buddhists in using their objects.

*Participating programmes*

The paramount function of museums is their potential to kindle the curiosity of visitors and give them opportunities to make discoveries. Museums were described as expanding repositories of all knowledge- as places for living history and generalised
learning, as time capsules, as libraries of visual information, as homes where one might search for roots in a rootless society (anon., 1984: 45). Hemming describes the benefits of working with the minority Chinese community in Hackney as follows:

It was this continual involvement which proved especially valuable. Through this, confidence was built up, participation took place on a variety of levels and decisions were taken on an equal basis. I feel that this has been the most important legacy of the exhibition, for both groups. The museum staff have learnt much about the problems and rewards of working in a more democratic and devolved way with local people, while the Chinese community, and particularly those directly involved with the exhibition, have gained in confidence as a result (Hemming, 1993: 7).

Indeed, it is a successful case of mutual communication between a museum and its minority community. It enhances the relationship between them. Each side has learnt something valuable from other side. Gill Tan, Hackney's Chinese Liaison Officer, also observed that many of the Elders who worked on the exhibition are now far more involved in the Chinese community and that the community as a whole has developed in terms of the services offered to its members (Hemming, 1993: 7). Besides, Kurin also observed that the volunteer programme helped bring into the consciousness and programmes of the Smithsonian a relatively recently arrived immigrant group that heretofore had not identified the Smithsonian as being concerned with their culture or history. The Festival of India displays helped the Smithsonian reach a new and broader audience (Kurin, 1991: 324-25). He wrote:

By their exhibitions and programmes, museums can assist in the generation and articulation of the symbols and statements by which a community might represent itself. The production of ideology and rhetoric is something museum professionals and academic scholars are trained to do, and can be of great importance to those they seek to study and represent (Kurin, 1991: 341).

Actually, it is a good idea to arouse the participation of community people. However, Kulik points out that many contemporary audience surveys suggest that museum-going remains the pastime of relatively affluent, relatively well-educated families (Kulik, 1992: 69). In order to counterbalance this situation, museums must shed their
elitist associations as they integrate themselves more fully into the mainstream of global culture. They should acquaint themselves more with the sources of revenue and support. They must become more sensitive to the feelings of the general public.

A stronger involvement by the public in museum activities will lead naturally to a stronger and more reliable base for financial support. Indeed, some museums not only realise that they need friends but also take some steps to arouse people's participation. Susie Dawson, controller of the Royal Academy's very successful Friends organisation, observes that varying exhibiting programme promotes infidelity (Dawson, 1993: 23). Besides, the most effective recruiting resource is the existing members, so make it possible for membership as a gift. Some 36% of their members first heard of the organisation through someone who was a Friend, and a further 9% first received membership as a gift (Dawson, 1993: 24). Indeed, this is merely a creative idea to win friends. Museums should search other options to win more friends.

She further writes that the package of privileges is very attractive and impels action: instant enrolment. However, she suggests that mindful of the fact that one is competing for discretionary expenditure in the leisure industry, take care that the 'package' given to new members is appealing and professional in appearance (Dawson, 1993: 24). Above all, she suggests that museums should avoid disappointment, offer only what can be actually and practically given, and pay attention to the subliminal factors (Dawson, 1993: 24). That is to say, museums should know the psyche of their potential visitors.

In competing with other institutions for support, museums should adopt an active approach to attract people. It is a sound way to assure growth and development. Museums should take visitor service to the forefront of their work. Buddhist objects should not be a privilege of a limited elite. It is insufficient to concentrate the service on the elite. The needs of ordinary visitors and underprivileged persons should be properly concerned. What is fascinating to the scholar might not be popular with non-specialists. Appealing
themes should be relevant to the people and to the time. Museums cannot afford to mount displays merely at their own whims or to interpret them arbitrarily. They must take the real feelings and responses of ordinary visitors into account. Displays, interpretations, and even collections, are now sometimes the product of joint efforts between audiences and museum workers. The active co-operation and participation of the private sector will also be an indispensable part of museums' effort to improve their image and to assure their existence.

As audiences become the priority of museums' work, the mutual-interaction between museums and communities becomes more important. All considerations in displaying the objects must cope with the needs of visitors- to inspire, to educate and to entertain them. They must inspire the curiosity and imagination of visitors.

Museums must justify their existence on the grounds of quality and social relevance. Numbers of visitors will no longer be sufficient. The quality of the museum experience becomes a significant measure of its success. There are many programmes which museum educators can use to develop a dynamic relationship between the collections and the audiences. The scopes of participating programmes indeed are very broad. They can include courses, lectures, group activities, meditation, thangka painting, sculpture, drawing, Buddhist music, Buddhist ceremonials and festivals.

In order to enhance the appreciation and understanding of Buddhist objects, participating programmes should be designed and encouraged. Visitors will learn much about these objects not only in textbooks but through active participation. Indeed, the programmes which museums can design to attract visitors are limitless. The limit is only in the imagination and willingness of museums. Specialists in this field could tell museums how good their exhibitions really are. They can help museums to overcome some practical problems, such as language barriers and cultural gaps. Share their understanding and
experience with visitors, they can complement the insufficiency of expertise which most museums encounter. Above all, they can be the living models to signify these objects.

It also needs active, generally good-willed but sometimes acrimonious dialogue, debate, and conversation among artists, scholars, organisers, and above all, the ordinary visitors. Museums can recruit volunteer workers as tour guides. Of course, museums must stimulate and promote the willingness of visitors' participation. They should make good use of community human resources to elevate museum education to a new realm.

Arousing the participation of Buddhist communities

Hooper-Greenhill wrote that museums have two primary remits: to collect and to enable people to relate to the collections (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991a: 5). In order to relate Buddhist objects to communities, the voice from Buddhist community should be noticed. Any group, institution, or culture when given the opportunity to demonstrate itself will portray its image in the most positive manner (Chavez, 1991: 48). However, the dialogue between museums and Buddhist communities is rare and insufficient.

Represent a living tradition which still have great vitality in the world, the objects are not ancient relics of dead civilisations. The sublime messages of Buddhist teachings still can be conveyed through these objects. Indeed, museums do not monopolise the interpretation of these objects. Buddhists should play an important role in displaying and interpreting their objects.

The best qualified persons to help the work of displaying Buddhist objects are those who have an interest in these objects and possess some experience and knowledge. Museums should develop their relationship with their communities. In the questionnaire, Dr G.H.A. Bankes wrote that this approach is possible because the local Western Buddhist Order in Manchester has the strongest interest in these objects. John Clarke of the V & A in his returned questionnaire also expresses that there is much interest in Tibetan collection
expressed by members of the public; visitors make appointments to see collections not on display/take photographs.

In a recent case, the Manchester Buddhist Centre assisted the Manchester City Art Gallery displaying, *Expressions of Enlightenment*. It was a successful co-operation between Buddhists and museum. It was the result of collaboration between curators and local Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. It is inspiring to see more collaboration between museums and the religious groups represented in the local community, as this can benefit both. The exhibition made use of artefacts on open display and included contemporary artefacts, both of which worked well in the context of the displays. It was remarkable that the exhibition was the result of collaboration between curators and local Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (pers. comm. of Stumpe on the 30th May, 1993). Indeed, collaboration of this kind benefits both participants.

Concerning display of different religious objects on exhibition, O'Neill suggests that the only way the museum would work was to involve believers of a wide range of faiths and to settle the museum issues in the light of their views (O'Neill, 1993: 22). Actually, it is a better way to avoid arbitrarily approach.

Museums cannot display Buddhist objects at their fancy whims. All themes, topics, arrangements, and interpretations must have reliable information resources and philosophy. There are a lot matters which museums can learn and get help from Buddhist institutions and Buddhists who actually use these objects. In order to avoid mistakes, Buddhist specialists should be consulted sufficiently. Though Buddhist objects are owned by museums, the religion which inspired the creation of these objects was owned by others—those who practised it. Usually, Buddhists have the impression that exhibitions in museums have the great difference between academic and practising Buddhists. Thus, if Buddhists were consulted beforehand for their comments, this would be a way forward.
Buddhists can be invited to give lectures, teaching meditation, introducing their art and assisting in displays and interpretations. The joint work between museums and Buddhists and the living model of these men would make Buddhist objects articulate vividly. Besides, their goodwill and support can also alleviate the financial constraints of most museums.

However, Buddhism is not monolithic— one finds great variety and sometimes sectarianism. This needs to be taken into consideration so that generally it would not, for instance, be helpful to seek advice from a Sri Lanka Buddhist on the labelling of Tibetan artefacts. Indeed, the diversity of these objects is very broad. Tibetan monks may not know Burmese Buddhist objects, and vice versa. Accordingly, museums cannot hope to get much help from Buddhists of a particular school to solve all the issues of displaying all these objects. More participants involved in consultation would be better.

Collaboration with other museums

The health of a museum, in part, depends upon others. The importance of establishing and maintaining communication within the profession and with their constituents must be acknowledged. It is important to build mutually beneficial associations with other museums. They must value co-operation and seek to form partnerships and coalitions that will benefit museums and communities. As a part of the whole tourism and recreation chain, museums can pool their resources together.

As the resources of each museum are limited, collaboration among museums will be feasible and practical. Indeed, if information were shared more systematically, the burden on each institution would be alleviated and their individual missions and public service would be very likely strengthened. Thus, the museum community must begin to look at its collections as having an aggregate importance, the ultimate goal being not individual possession, but understanding, knowledge and appreciation (Je Roux, 1986: 184). Obviously, through a collaborative effort, museums can complement the
insufficiency of each other and promote their services to a new horizon. Moreover, museums can arrange loan displays at various places so that larger audiences can acquaint themselves with these objects.

Berck points out that global interdependence and partnership are increasingly significant elements in the new world order. Museums exist in societies whose new partnerships reflect their interdependence; ever-shrinking financial resources at a time of ever-increasing costs will require that museums either form functional partnerships or slowly bleed to death (Berck, 1992: 72). Actually, museums should integrate their merits rather than their individual shortcomings together.

The linking of each museum's respective strength would push museum education to a new realm. Such a co-operative effort is conducive to museum's performance. In order to share resources and experiences, museums must intensify the exchange of professional staff, and promote experience sharing among museums while exhibiting the objects.

**Applying new technology on exhibitions**

An extensive visitor evaluation programme conducted by McManus discloses that the most popular and memorable displays are the hand-held replica masks with the interactive video and musical instruments joined together. The survey shows that visitors find the interactive video easy to use, it has good holding power and visitors are stimulated to think about the issues raised (Ramamurthy, 1992: 32). Machin also observes that the more learning process goes on the greater people's power of understanding becomes (Machin, 1987: 12). Obviously, new technology can elevate museums' performance to a new realm. Indeed, it confirms the impact of new technology on displays.

Displays that engage more than one sense (usually the sense of sight) is more likely to make a lasting impression (Schuessler, 1992: 88). Machin also has a similar observation. He writes that the more learning process goes on the greater the people's power of
understanding becomes. New experiences are seen in the light of old ones, and from them people will reach some state of belief about the world which will help interpret new experiences (Machin, 1987: 12). An Russian research finding also suggests that handling an object results in clearer, more accurate, more easily recalled images of the object. That is to say, the more the tactile senses are used in learning, the clearer and longer lasting the image will be (Goodhew, 1980: 17). Museums should take this lesson and apply it in displays.

Applying audio-visual technology in displays, today's museums have a firmer grip on public attention than ever. Large museums are staging increasingly elaborate permanent and temporary displays that combine everything from simple audio recordings to giant-screen projections and interactive computer installations, all in an attempt to create a 'total experience' (Schuessler, 1992: 88). Its effect on a viewer's learning experience and remembrance cannot be over-emphasised.

One of the fastest growing areas of exhibit technology is in the use of audio-visual presentations. Video is a powerful tool which can produce very effective results. Visitors who bought a tape in the museum shop would have an enhanced understanding of the objects on display and a better appreciation of their relationship to the original context. A video presentation can help to liberate exhibitions from the glass case and give the visitor a sense of experiencing history.

Many hidden treasures in store, because there is insufficient space to display them in the conventional manner, could be made available to the public through a video display. Museums could use this medium to take the excitement and enthusiasm for their work into homes and schools, and the hearts and minds of the country. Videos could supply sounds associated with objects, events and so on. It is excellent for showing real things such as museum objects which, for a variety of reasons, could not be shown any other way.
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Museums have one thing in common. They deal primarily with visual objects and images which need to be presented to the public in an informative, accessible and attractive manner. Exhibitions should also demonstrate. There is a need for interactive exhibitions. Original objects could be used with videos and computerised question and answer programmes which could give a fuller, more sounded view of the content of Buddhist objects and the beliefs and practices behind them, which is usually far beyond the scope of most museum labelling. The in-depth interpretation through the application of new technology would be very stimulating. The impression got from multimedia would be stronger than the written labels.

Now it is not unusual to find museums exploring the wonders of interactive multimedia and applying the latest computer technology in areas of electronic documentation, public interactive catalogues and displays, visual information libraries, image capture and display. These creative computer systems have the potential to transform the traditional approach to museums from seemingly drab collections of impersonal exhibits into truly accessible and exciting information-sharing rather than simply information-gathering centres. Interactive multimedia offer museums exciting options for exhibitions, providing unparalleled access to enormous amounts of information without forcing visitors to wade through information that does not interest them.

In this audio-video age, museums should apply this new technology in exhibitions to improve their former drab image and create a living one to visitors. The trend toward museum displays as being totally physical, psychological and sensory experiences becomes more exciting. Audio-visual technology will make museum display go beyond the limited, generally unsatisfactory printed expositions that accompany so many displays. The opportunity to call up multimedia explanations in detail will also be particularly effective in the "hands-on" museums. With a view to widen the understanding of these objects, the audio-visual techniques can be applied to introduce Buddhist temples, ceremonials,
Buddhist festivals, music, practices and artefacts to visitors. In short, it can give visitors a very vivid impression.

In many respects, organising and managing information about exhibits has become as important as the exhibits themselves and museums are competing for the attention of visitors brought up on the audio-visual images and the sophistication of computer information systems. Computers are now finding their way into museums as a means of making detailed information available and accessible to a wider public. It is necessary for museums to explore the wonders of interactive multimedia and apply the latest computer technology in areas of electronic documentation, public interactive catalogues and displays, image capture and display.

In order to appreciate Buddhist objects, it is necessary to simulate the original context by using new technology. The use of various new audio-visual technologies, such as the "hands-on" pressing buttons, are very stimulating. Visitors can learn much from these exciting instruments. Not every visitor has sufficient time or patience to peruse much documented information or to experience the Buddhist life in viewing these objects. Undoubtedly, new technology will compensate for the shortcomings of trite displays. Indeed, it can create a jolly atmosphere in museums.

For instance, in order to understand the symbolic messages, labels are very insufficient to transmit much information. So, it is with Tibetan dancing; each step and each movement of the hands, arms and head has its own symbolic meaning and brings an increase of understanding both to dancers and spectators. This is seldom understood in the West where this deeply religious art is still, at times, misrepresented as 'devil dancing' because the masks which monks wear were so strange and terrible. Nothing could be more ill-founded. These dances have no connection with magic and still less with sorcery, for they originally came from Buddhist India and embody the methods of different spiritual teachers. Indeed, written labels cannot transmit much. Otherwise, audio-visual instruments
can give viewers a vivid impression and resourceful information what ritual objects were used in the dancing.

Furthermore, images are nowadays increasingly prone to "digitisation", after entering a virtual electronic world, they can be manipulated at will. Pedro Meyer, a contributor to the *PhotoVideo-Photography in the Age of the Computer* an exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery in Covent Garden in December 1991, explains its benefits as follows, "By presenting my work in the form of a disc it gives the viewer the option to select which images to linger over, or the opportunity to go through my images without adhering to my version, or viewing order" (Finch, 1991: 14). The impact which this new technology brings to museum work as well as to the daily life of every individual person become more clear. The more museums adopt and install these instruments in their exhibitions, the higher the benefits. It will be more convenient to loan, to display and, especially, to elevate the performance and learning effects. Definitely, it can decrease the pressure of staff insufficiency and visitors' complaint.

The main problem non-Buddhists have with present displays is (a) they view the objects through the filter of their own religious or cultural background or (b) they see these objects as strange, outlandish, perhaps superstitious: they have no point of contact. This is where sounds and moving images could be used to attract, then explain (pers comm of Mac Cormick on the 26th May, 1993). Indeed, new technology will play an increasing role in the whole process of museums' work. Museums must catch up with this trend.

Create specific Museums contributing to the preservation of Buddhist objects

Buddhist objects are not dead relics of deceased cultures. The ideals emanating in these objects still reflect in the daily life of many people. These objects still inspire many people to explore their potentials. Accordingly, the attempt to preserve Buddhist material culture as a kind of museum specimens would be futile. When being enquired about whether he concerned about that many masterpiece paintings were crumbling off the walls,
Thuksey Rinpoche said, 'It is more important that the tradition of religious art should be kept alive in the hearts of the people than that Ladakh should become a museum'. Indeed, a culture can only be preserved in the daily life of its people rather than in museums. He added further, 'Schools are more important than paintings. The future is more important than the past. Why preserve the paintings if there will be no one left in the country to understand their meaning?' (Harvey, 1983: 133). Indeed, people should look forward rather than backward.

However, it is still need specific Buddhist museums in this multicultural society. The reasons are various. As the study discusses, Buddhist objects demonstrate a broad diversity in different areas. The objects used in one area are not necessarily used in other areas. Chinese Buddhists are very likely to be completely naive of Buddhist objects in a Tibetan monastery.

In addition, the style of an identical figure also may be dissimilar in other areas. Chinese Kuanyin usually show the female body; while Tibetan Avalokitesvara, though they are the identical Bodhisattva, always show the male stature. Accordingly, though Buddhist institutions and Buddhists hold many Buddhist objects, they usually only know their own objects but not others'.

Besides, an identical Buddhist image might have a very broad diversified terms in different areas. A specific Buddhist museum would be able to solve this problem. Obviously, only specific Buddhist museums can contribute to display an overall picture of Buddhist objects developed in different areas.

Besides, though Buddhism was once a major part of Chinese culture as well as many other cultures in the Far East and has inspired the creation of many splendid Buddhist objects, it was much neglected. It has not received the deserved appreciation and preservation. Most of all, it even faces persecution and destruction in the recent centuries.
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The creation of specific museums of Buddhist objects would be able to widen the understanding of these objects as well as the awareness to preserve this common heritage of mankind.

In addition, now there are already some Jewish and Islamic museums in Britain. There are two Jewish museums in London. The Jewish Museum has an important collection of ceremonial art, is strongest on the 17th and 18th centuries, while the Museum of Jewish Life concentrates on later history. The two collections are complementary (Greene, 1991: 8). However, there still is no specific museum contributing to the preservation and dissemination of Buddhist culture. The treatment which Buddhist objects received cannot correspond with the actual role it played in the world civilisation. It also ignores the truth that Britain is a multicultural society. Some museums still regard these objects as foreign materials. As the world becomes more internationalised, it is necessary for museums to catch up to display the objects of other faiths rather than merely their traditional ones. It is time to counter the imbalance of religious bias. It is time to rectify the jaundiced viewpoint that one's own faith is the unique one. It is a sure measure to widen the understanding and appreciation of other faiths and cultures.

Furthermore, in this constricting world, pluralistic cultures and societies should be appropriately reflected in displays. Displays should reflect the balanced viewpoints and perspectives of a multicultural society. Museums should act as forums for social and cultural debate. They should provide access for the widest possible range of cultural representations. Hence, displays which emphasise the superiority of Western culture should be reformed. Museums must catch up with the times and excise blatant stereotyping and discrimination from displays and interpretations. Much of the material is so little known, it would be helpful to know the comments and criticisms of competent scholars, before formulating definitive interpretations in every case. Museums should allow other cultural groups to explore ways of presenting themselves, and should have staff with expertise in non-Western cultures, they should experiment with new ways of presenting
objects and assign sufficient resources to them. Thus, a specific Buddhistic museum is necessary.

However, the study does not suggest that the work of conserving Buddhist culture should be shouldered by museums solely. A dead culture represented in museums is no longer alive. Kurin explained it clearly:

If culture is to be conserved, it must live. It cannot be frozen in time and preserved by museums, anthropologists, folklorists, or historians. For a culture to live, its bearers must be empowered to practice that culture, to revise, transform, and adapt it to new and changing circumstances— to find new meanings for old practices and old meanings for new practices (Kurin, 1991: 342).

That is to say, a culture can only preserved in its people's daily life rather than in museums. The Dalai Lama also says:

The objects of a culture represent that culture in part, but the main part of a culture is not in paintings and so forth but inside the mind. If it is alive in the daily life of people, we can know its usefulness. For instance, because of Tibetan culture, Tibetans for the most part are jovial people (Gyatso, 1985: 95).

Indeed, the living tradition of Tibetan Buddhism is not preserved in the Potala Museum which was founded by the Communist China. Instead, it is preserved in the living life of Tibetan refugees. It is due to their Buddhist culture that emphasises the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion in a great many way, Tibetans are jovial rather than melancholy in nature.

Above all, displays should have close link with the contemporary issues and close relationship with the daily life of the general public. Material things now present themselves in their relation to human beings. They are now constituted as objects through organic, historic links, through stories, and through people. The living life of man and civilisation are more important than the physical identities of material things. It is not the
object as an art object or historical specimen which is of primary significance, but the cultural significance attributed to the object. Indeed, as these solid objects reveal intangible truths, intelligent displays should lead viewers into the inner world of Buddhists rather than to explain their concrete characteristics. A specific Buddhistic museum would be able to counteract the trite approaches.

This chapter explores mainly the issues of mounting intelligent and attractive displays. It includes the appropriate way to view these objects, the magnificent displays and their merits in recent years, and, finally, it offers practical suggestions for improvements in displays. Especially, conception-oriented themes might transcend the division of different faiths and propose opportunity for dialogue, comparison, mutual learning and mutual respect. It might promote a harmony world. Besides, multiple senses learning experiences might strengthen the effect of museum experience. The study provides them for the reference of using these objects.
CONCLUSIONS

1 The findings of the research

Pearce observed that Britain is now a multicultural society (Pearce, 1990b: 133). Indeed, Buddhism has become an integral part of British culture. Buddhist objects are familiar to more people than ever before. A lot of splendid works are produced by the Western Buddhists. Most of the images at each FWBO’s branch all over Britain are the works of local Buddhists. Reflecting spiritual potentials of mankind, these objects can not only inspire people to review their very common issues but also widen their visions. Through intelligent displays and re-interpretations, these objects are relevant to the time and the people.

The study does not claim that Buddhist objects are the actual Buddhas or the Dharma itself. Nor does the study suggest that the reality which Buddhism transmits is merely embodied in these objects. However, because of their inseparable links with Buddhism, these objects are used as a vehicle to transmit the sublime messages of wisdom and compassion. They are reminders of the greatness of the Buddha and his teachings. The study examines many subtle levels of meaning, and the context in which these objects should be displayed and interpreted.

The specific characteristics of Buddhism

The specific characteristic of Buddhism is that it allows each person to find his own way to develop himself. It allows everyone to judge and for a lifelong time to witness for himself. Recognising different levels of mental maturity, it tolerates various opinions and beliefs among different people and never compels them to convert. The Dalai Lama said, ‘I am not interested in converting other people to Buddhism but in how we Buddhists can contribute to human society, according to our ideas’ (Gyatso, 1985a: 48). His viewpoint
expresses precisely the basic attitude of Buddhism towards different religions. Ajahn Chah also expressed:

Those who don't practise don't be angry with them. Don't speak against them. Just continually advise them. They will come to the Dhamma when their spiritual factors are developed. It's like selling medicines. We advise our medicines and those with a headache or stomach-ache will come and take some. Those who don't want our medicines, let them be. They're like fruit that are still green. We can't force them to be ripe and sweet- just let them be. Let them grow up, sweeten and ripen all by themselves. If we think like this, our minds will be at ease. So we don't need to force anybody. Simply advertise our medicines and leave it at that. When someone is ill, he'll come around and buy some (Chah, 1993:47).

While there are so "many", indeed, countless, self-justified absolute truths prevailing in the world, Buddhism is a unique teaching which has never claimed that truth can be the monopoly of any man or any religion. Instead of claiming any idea of absolute truth, Buddhism shows more tolerance to people of different voices and faiths. Its admittance of the various levels of spiritual developments in different persons, allows various opinions and different beliefs in the world. Metaphorically, just like lotus in a pond, while some have grown above the water, some are still immersed in water. Amongst those buds that have grown above the water, some are in bud, some are opened enough to receive the freshness of rain drops and dew and the warmth of sunshine, while other buds remain unable to enjoy it (see Plate 1).

This is very similar to men's spiritual development. While recognising the mental and cultural diversities of different peoples, Buddhism shows more tolerance and compatibility to other beliefs. It does not force its message down people's throats. It does not tell people anything they are not yet ready to hear. This may be the reason why it is becoming increasingly appealing to many Westerners in recent years. Alan Watts said that he was fascinated with almost all religions, so long as their followers do not try to convert him (Watts, 1972: 6). Indeed, he expressed the voice of a thinking person. Considering it as merely another exotic faith, it would be difficult to realise the true nature of Buddhism.
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The attitude of 'let them be' and 'leave it at that' is quite different from other faiths. The Buddha always reminds his disciples that they should speak Dharma, otherwise, they should keep noble silence. The Dalai Lama also says, 'If you believe these teachings, put them into practice, if not, forget them' (Nickson, 1988: 21). Indeed, if a child told us that his father was the greatest man or his mother was the most beautiful woman in the world, should we argue with him? Likewise, each person has his privilege to claim his religion is the only faith. No matter whether we believe in it or not. The person also deserves to be respected. This attitude allows him time to ripen. It opens the door for dialogue, comparison, introspection and communication. Proposing mutual respect and mutual understanding, Buddhism would be able to supplement the insufficiency or shortcomings of dogmatic ideas of theism.

Besides, Buddhism offers many practical methods which each individual can experience and put into practice to see whether they work. Buddhism shows people the way to transform themselves, to transcend the vicissitudes of success and misfortune, to attain bliss and awareness. Each individual can test them through his own experience. Metaphorically, Buddhism is like a mirror which can reflect one's defilement. It helps one to re-discover oneself. It is also like a lamp which can give people brightness and hope. For this reason, some modern scholars describe Buddhism not as a religion but as a science of mind, and there seem to be some grounds for this claim (Goleman and Thurman, 1991: 18).

Nowadays, many people are obsessed with the pursuit of material achievements and sensual pleasures. 'Religion' has become an outdated and superstitious idea for many people. It becomes remote from the world. Christianity is regarded as unable to mix with the youth (Cox and Hamilton, 1993: 7). Many people think that religion is obsolete. However, they do not know that the nature of Buddhism is quite different from the ordinary conviction of religion.
Conclusions

Though there existed some mystic aspects in Buddhism, like Milarepa - an ancient Tibetan yogist who could endure the cold weather in the Himalayan mountains wearing merely thin cotton clothing; the sublime attitude of practitioners to face death with dignity and serenity; the jewel like relics of practitioners; the whole body relics; reincarnations, Buddhists pay little regard to these things.

The Buddha disapproved of miracles. Once, by the bank of a river, he met an ascetic who claimed that by practising austerity for 25 years, he was at last able to cross the river by walking on the water. The Buddha said he was sorry that the man had wasted so much time and effort: the ferryboat would take him across in a short time (Morrow, 1991: 63 and Shearer, 1992: 20). Buddhists do not believe in boasting about powers. Harvey also wrote that the Buddha once defrocked a monk because he did a miracle (Harvey, 1983: 156). Buddhists regard each moment as a miracle. The real miracle is a transformed mind rather than an Almighty power outside. Nagarjuna, a very famous ancient master in India, says, 'Life is as fragile as a bubble on a stream. After breathing out it is a miracle that we breathe in again. On going to sleep, it is a miracle that we wake up' (Thaye, 1993: 45). Unknowing where or when to find a miracle, people usually search for it blindly.

Sceptics would dismiss miracles as being imaginary. Cicero once argued doggedly, "Nothing happens without a cause, and nothing happens unless it can happen. When that which can happen does in fact happen, it cannot be considered a miracle. Hence, there are no miracles" (Morrow, 1991: 63). Realising the reality of existence as it was, Cicero's viewpoint was very Buddhistic.

Indeed, Buddhists pay no attention to miracles. What is of paramount importance in daily life is to tame one's mind, control one's speech, and transform one's conduct. Not to be obsessed with any almighty power outside, Buddhists are engaged in uncovering the richness and fullness possessed within themselves. Buddhism conceives that each person
possesses within himself not only the answer to his own problems, but the potential to live life on a much higher level than he currently imagines possible. The utmost miracle is within people themselves - their transformed minds.

The nature of Buddhist objects

Splendid art is an expression of philosophical reflection and probing. When these objects are exhibited contextually, there are passages that shake people to the very core of their beings. It is very powerful and moving. It inspires people to see the beauty of everything. Only when the defilement in one’s mind is cleared, then one can see the beauty of everything. Buddhist objects can somehow touch people's lives, with all their passions and struggles. If people view these objects, they might feel the themes of life and death. In life there is always conflict and contradiction, but without those things there is no life. Each person remains capable of finding a way out of any crisis as long as he is allowed to explore, to think and to be creative.

The creation of Buddhist objects was not for museum displays. It was inspired by the Buddha's life and his teachings and the religious aspiration of Buddhists. It has great links with Buddhism. These objects have specific purposes and practical usefulness in the daily life of Buddhists. They were the embodiment and visual expressions of Buddhist ideals. In the perspective of Buddhists, these objects are sublime and sacred. They are the mediums for transmitting the messages of Buddhism and for reminding Buddhists of the goodness of the Buddha and his teachings. To follow the way of the Buddha means to uncover oneself, finding a role, and empathising with others. These objects are merely means rather than ends in themselves. The reality embodied in these objects is beyond the description of words. It can only be experienced by each individual. Having been inspired by the mystery and the norms of the Dharma, the objects are more than aesthetics. They are religious objects. Joshi wrote:
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It is to be noted that the Buddhist seers made a distinction between the pursuit of abstract beauty which they found through the spotless spiritual eye of the Dharma, and the delights of its ephemeral beauty. All that is holy and wholesome and is conducive to the attainment of the supreme Goal, is indeed beautiful. This is the spiritual dimension of aesthetics (Joshi, 1967: 360).

Actually, he disclosed the insubstantial messages embodied in the objects. It means that the objects were the mediums to help practitioners to find the beauty within themselves. The purposes of these objects are meant for visualisation, inspiration, worship, and even for the accumulation of merits. The creation and function of these objects are linked with the devout aspiration of Buddhists. They were not produced for museum displays. Instead, they were made for religious purposes, such as, transmitting the teachings of Buddhism and accumulating the merit for those who sponsored and created the work and even to those who happened to view them. As a precious common heritage of mankind, these objects convey profound messages that are far beyond their superficial values as aesthetic art or historic specimens. The messages embodied in these objects might enrich and complement the content of the Western culture which usually emphasises the pursuit of outer material achievements rather than inner introspection.

According to the analyses of this study, the original function of Buddhist images was intended to serve as a reminder of the Buddha and his teachings. Regardless of the materials, however simple or artful the style, or whatever the gesture or posture, they all reflected the great teacher who lived over two thousand five hundred years ago and inspired the psychological and ethical teachings that became the Buddhist religion. They were neither artistic products nor exotic rarities. Indeed, they were religious objects.

Buddhism is not a dead culture. Its objects are not relics of deceased civilisations. As a vigorous living tradition, Buddhism's ideals of wisdom and compassion still speak vividly through many of its splendid objects. What Buddhism is concerned about is man and the end of man's suffering. Flexible approaches would be able to link these objects closely with the common issues of the general public. The messages embodied in these
objects should be re-interpreted in this social context. Each society should have its new insights on the meanings of these objects. Themes like 'How to overcome difficulties', 'How to live happily and meaningfully', 'How to face death with dignity and peace' are very relevant to every person no matter whether they are religious believers or not. Intelligent themes would be able to inspire people to view, enjoy, relax and appreciate these objects and to ponder the perennial issues of life.

The nature of these objects is religious. Like other great world religions, Buddhism has evolved its own symbolism and aesthetics in the search for spiritual fulfilment. Buddhist objects are closely linked with Buddhist teachings. They are a living reminder and visual expression of Buddhist ideals. They did not have aesthetic delight as their primary function. For instance, both Tibetan thangkas and bronzes were regarded as instruments of invocation and meditation tools which were used to help practitioners to rid themselves of the outer world of illusion and so to find salvation within. The sacred art is not, therefore, the fruit of free invention, but is rather, the product of rigid liturgical canons that have dictated the iconography, the proportions, and even the colours of the paintings and sculptures.

Obviously, Buddhist images are reflections of the spiritual potential of each individual. They have great importance to practitioners, who upon looking the images represented and reflecting upon their gracious qualities may thereby be led to meritorious achievement. As a result of such virtuous thoughts as these, religious aspiration is born in the practitioners. They are symbolic representations to which reverence and worship is paid, whereby the practitioner gains merit. It is, therefore, only fitting and, indeed, of the greatest importance, that these objects of worship should be made accurately in accordance with the dimension and measurements laid down (Dagyab, 1977: 25). Indeed, they are not freely created art works. They are not meant merely to please the eyes.
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Instead, these objects were dedicated to the growth of humanity, peace and understanding in the world. The real benefit of viewing them is the development of peace and mutual understanding—understanding of the world and of the people around us and of ourselves. These objects may help to bring closer understanding between people and between nations. They are meant to remind people of their limitless potentials within and give some kind of inspiration. Buddhists turn to Buddhist images for guidance in every difficulty, and the desired guidance has always been forthcoming. One who approaches the images in all reverence never experiences disappointment, but enjoys bliss in perfection. The images give the devotee fresh knowledge, hope and power through every moment of his life. To be able to enter the quiet world of these objects helps to calm the metropolitan spirit. Intelligent displays should explore and re-interpret their in-depth messages in this social and cultural context rather than their superficial features.

Buddhist arts are functional in that they serve either utilitarian or spiritual purposes. Many figures were made to express fundamental values. Conceptions of compassion and detachment were often expressed in material form. In practice there is a subtle manipulation of cultural symbols; this is one of the ways in which social relations and material culture interact to perpetuate or transform existing conditions. The challenge to museums is to recognise the intangible symbolic dimensions of these objects in their collections, and to find ways of communicating the dynamic process of symbols in displays and their interpretations.

The drawbacks of displaying Buddhist objects

The sublime significance of the objects was virtually ignored after they became part of Museum collections. Collecting is not neutral, including some materials means excluding other items. Besides, arrangements and interpretations are neither constant nor neutral. There are limitless approaches to the use of these objects in displays. An identical object appears under different thematic constructions, would have a different meaning. Rose Kerr and Craig Clunas argued (Kerr and Clunas, 1991: 15), that museums did not enjoy a
privileged position to deal with these issues. Obviously, displays are no longer the sole work of museums. Community people play an increasing role in the work. It becomes clear that these work have become the joint efforts of museums and communities. Karp observes:

Museums and their displays are morally neutral in principle, but in practice always make moral statements. The alleged innate neutrality of museums and displays is the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience (Karp, 1990: 14).

In dealing with displays and interpretations, dialogues and participation become more executable. However, some museum professionals are still unaware of the recent debate on interpretation. For instance, Peter Hardie expresses that museums can still offer a precisely valid arrangement and interpretation for displaying objects (Kerr and Clunas, 1991: 15). He deems that museums still possess the privilege to give objects only valid meanings.

The motivations for creating Buddhist objects were closely linked with the religious aspirations of Buddhists. The significance of these objects are varied according to each individual’s background knowledge and spiritual development. Emphasising the superficial value of these objects is merely one trite approach. The point is that there are still other optional approaches to view these objects from other angles. Museums have the responsibility to explore them. If museums can help people to realise that most religions are a limited vision of truth, then they have properly fulfilled their mission and purposes.

Although museums display these objects which once had religious meaning, these have largely taken on significance as artistic, anthropological or historical specimens. These objects are often presented, whether in displays or in teaching/handling sessions, without any consideration for the context in which they place them. Their cultural significance was deprived. This kind of approach touches merely their superficial features
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rather than their profound significance. The religious aspiration to move and motivate people means that this is more than an attempt to create an interesting display. Undoubtedly, divesting their original context and disregarding their spiritual dimension, museums would do injustice to these objects.

To describe what they were made of, their date, their makers, their names, misses the point. Clive Bell argues that if the forms of an artwork are significant, its provenance is irrelevant (Harrod, 1993: 15). For the general public, they need something to be relevant to contemporary society and to their personal life. They want to know the essential messages rather than trivial descriptions of the objects. Only when the current values can be revealed and dispensed can the prospect of museums be assured. Contemporary people should use a contemporary language rather than an obsolete one as a communicating instrument. The significance of these objects should be re-interpreted. Above all, it should be relevant to the people and to the time.

Any approach should not be considered as the only valid or possible approach in this multicultural society. Different values and different voices should be reflected in the whole processes of museums' work. The meanings of an object are relative. The construction of meaning can always be undertaken again, in new contexts and with new functions. That is to say, new relationships can always be built, new meanings can always be discovered, new interpretations with new relevance can be found, new codes and new rules can be written (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 215). Evidently, there is no one valid interpretation for an object no matter how it may be academically correct.

The real function and creating motivations of Buddhist objects are usually ignored in stereotyped approaches. Displays should be attractive and inspiring. Only intelligent displays deserve to be re-visited. Meditations on Buddhist images help people to open their hearts to the pure energies of love, compassion, wisdom and strength that are ever-present, all around them, wherever they may be. As the potential for enlightenment lies within
people themselves, they should consider the images they contemplate to be reflections of their own true nature. Although ultimate reality is inexpressible, words lead people to discover it; so too can images remind people of the experience of enlightenment until it becomes a living reality.

Besides, most displays paid little attention to the different characteristics of Buddhist objects developed in different areas. They often treated these objects as unique, disregarding the broad diversity and varieties developed in different areas. The fact is that Chinese monks might be completely ignorant of Tibetan Buddhist objects, and vice versa. Hence, disregarding the differences originating from different areas, displays become superficial and confusing.

Clearly, each specific region has its distinctive characteristics of Buddhist objects. It is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study to explore the whole range of objects used in each specific area before a display. A ritual object used in one area is not necessarily used in another area. For instance, many skull drums used in Tibet are not used in China; while the Woodfish used in China, is not used in Tibet. These diversities should be further explained. Then the general public can grasp a clear understanding of the diversity of the objects. In addition, some of them, such as ritual instruments and images, are used or arranged in pairs. Displays should take this factor into consideration.

Another issue is that the terms used to define an identical object are incoherent. The divergence originates usually from different spellings or pronunciations. In addition, there is too much academic jargon which is unfamiliar to ordinary visitors. Above all, the copious symbolic messages of these objects are merely dealt with piecemeal. Visitors usually cannot grasp an overall picture of these objects.

In a nutshell, according to the investigation of this study, there are five key problems in using these objects: First, most of them are still inaccessible to the general
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public. Second, they are usually displayed as aesthetic, ethnic, or historical specimens. This inevitably divested all their original context and dimension. Third, the impression left with some visitors is that the objects are carelessly displayed at the whim of those in control. Usually, they are jumbled with other objects without considering their appropriate context. Nevertheless, as the messages which these objects represent are still a living tradition, interpretation is not the sole work of museums. However, some museum professionals are still unfamiliar with the current debate on interpretation. They still deem they have the sole privilege to display and interpret these objects and regard their stale approach as the only valid one.

Fourth, interpretations are often insufficient. Captions which give only names, makers, materials, sources of Buddhist objects make little significance. Realising trivial information concerning these objects does not mean that visitors have already grasped their significance. Besides, the provided information is not always correct. In addition, display mediums still depend heavily on writing words rather than on new interactive audio-visual instruments. Last, the links between museums and communities are not highly cultivated. There are few associated programmes to arouse the co-operation and participation of visitors. Few investigations have ever been conducted to discover the responses of visitors, especially the Buddhist communities. Measures should be taken to tap potential human resources and win their support. The existence of museums can then be justified. It is a definite way to elevate museum education to a higher plane.

2 Limitations of the research

The researcher has been engaged in the study for over three years. Much of the early period was devoted to familiarisation with the new trend in museum education, material culture, displays and interpretations. Subsequently, the researcher was able to conduct postal questionnaires and undertake an extensive literature review on the subject
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of Buddhism and its objects, and devote himself to gathering data on the use of the objects. This involved a large number of visits to museums and Buddhist institutions, interviews with relevant respondents, observation of displays, and other activities.

Despite the extensive data which has been collected and analysed, there are inevitably a number of limitations from which the research has suffered. The first is time and resources: if more time had been available, and more funds had been forthcoming for travelling, it would have been possible to build a more detailed picture of the use of these objects in museums and of the mutual relationships between museums and their specific Buddhist communities. However, the researcher believes that a sufficiently large number of visits, interviews, observations and questionnaire responses have been analysed to provide a good insight into all aspects on the issue.

As the museums studied, cover the whole Britain, the comprehensive investigation is a time consuming exercise as an appointment must be made beforehand. Even then, due to unforeseen circumstances, some visits have to be done twice, as in the case of the Ipswich Museum where the person in charge had taken ill. Besides, large displays usually need more than one visit.

A second limitation to the research is concerned with the accessibility of some frail objects. Delicate items are usually put in glass cases. It is difficult to take photographs. Sometimes, there may be the stipulation to prohibit the use of a camera, such as the Pitt River Museum, or the use of flash, as in the case of the British Museum, the V & A, the St. Mungo Museum. In this situation, the effect of photographs is far from perfect. It is difficult to take a clear photograph through a glass case without the obstruction of reflection. Besides, owing to the inadequacy of appropriate equipment or effective facilities of museums, some frail objects, such as the Tibetan thangka paintings and paper paintings, are inaccessible to visitors. As the study only focuses on displayed objects, a lot of precious objects, such as the splendid Tibetan thangkas, deserve to be further explored. In
addition, over the last two decades the study on Buddhism in Britain has comprised the following: Vorasak Candamitto's *Buddhist Organizations in Great Britain* (M.A., Durham 1972), Graham Ken's *The Nature of Buddhism in Britain* (M.Phil., King's College, London 1975), and Ian Oliver's *Buddhism in Britain*. However, the information in these books is outdated. In order to know more about Buddhist communities, a comprehensive investigation of its current development is much needed.

The third problem is that the provenance of these objects is sometimes difficult to trace. Documentation in some museums is very poor. Indeed, not all the sources of the objects can be traced now. Sometimes, there are no records documenting where the objects came from. Some museums, such as, Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, Leeds City Museum, have lost their original data in World War II. In this situation, the interpretation work is rendered strenuous.

The fourth factor is the unco-operative nature of some people. It was not rare to encounter some impatient visitors who did not like to answer any enquiry. The reasons may be various, such as impatience or religious bias. However, the result is the same; it is difficult to get the required information. Besides, it is difficult to anticipate a response from each dispatched questionnaire. Nonetheless, some replies did include some very useful data and opinions, and some questionnaires were accompanied with an invitation to visit museums and Buddhist institutions to gather further information.

A fifth issue is that minorities have still not obtained museums' sufficient attention. Few surveys have been conducted to investigate their needs and responses. Few programmes have been designed to attract them. The study dispatched a postal questionnaire to investigate Buddhists' impressions about using their objects in displays and I visited some of them. However, owing to long distances, I visited less than ten Buddhist institutions. A comprehensive investigation of them would be more capable of
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bringing about an overall understanding of Buddhist communities and their activities. In order to mount appealing displays, museums should know their potential visitors.

Undoubtedly, there could have been some related displays in recent years. However, due to the limits of resources and the late arrival of information, the researcher was unable to see them, for example, the Horniman Museum held an exhibition of the Tibetan objects in 1991; the City Gallery of Manchester held a display entitled "Enlightenment" in the beginning of 1993; the October Gallery in London held an exhibition of Mongolian Buddhist objects in June 1993.

3 Further analyses and recommendations

The principal aims of this research have been to examine the use of Buddhist objects in British museums, to identify the merits and shortcomings and to provide suggestions for improving it. The researcher has found that the hypothesis that Buddhist object displays focus on aesthetics can be proven. Comprehending the limitations of the research, the researcher now offers some suggestions for using these object in an appealing way, which can not only give visitors a vivid and fresh impression, but can also inspire them to ponder some perennial issues of life.

Intelligent displays should be attractive and inspiring. They must be linked with the human condition today. They should use modern language to transmit the profound messages of these objects. Thus, conception-oriented displays can give fresh ideas to explore the issues which have close links with the general public. It is inspiring to see how these objects can still inspire viewers to ponder the perennial problems of mankind and to develop themselves. Above all, it opens a door for dialogue and communication among different beliefs through the display of their objects and the comparison of their specific approaches with the same issues today. Each individual's response to the same problem is
moulded much by his specific background culture, knowledge, experience, and intelligence. Likewise, each faith's response to the same current issue is not the same. Through re-interpretation of these objects, museums can help people to learn from each other and hence much contributing to harmony and peace for the world. Indeed, there exist limitless approaches in using the objects.

Museums are changing at a drastic pace now, as new educational demands and new perceptions about society, knowledge, and the nature of objects and collections are explored, and as the impact of these factors is absorbed into the daily work of museums. An interpretation of an object merely reflects a viewpoint of a specific angle. It is not an only valid interpretation. A lot of optional approaches can still be found. They are hinged on the imagination of museum professionals, the mutual communication of museums and communities, and the new possibilities which new technologies impact on museums.

Museums should take a broad vision to view these objects. Reflecting the perennial messages of Buddhism, these objects can still articulate vividly to people of this day. They can inspire people to ponder the common problems today. No approach can claim to be the only valid one. Focusing on the themes of regions, chronologies, materials, or ethnology, museums neglect other approaches. Besides, sterile themes are irrelevant to the general public. They may be academically correct. However, they may estrange a lot of the general public. Museums must justify their existence and reflect multiple values today. In these multicultural communities, museums should be more sensitive and responsive to the views of those whose culture is being shown.

The general public is obsessed with their own personal problems. They like to use their familiar language to communicate. They like the themes that have close links with their daily life and can give them some inspiration, reference or useful answers. They like the themes which do not consume too much of their time. Sometimes, people come to museums just for entertainment and enjoyment. They often show little interest and patience
in topics of a too serious nature. Intelligent displays should be able to attract people, to win people, then they can transmit something to them. It is a sound way to fulfil museums' missions of education and entertainment.

Are the themes relating to 'religion' or 'religious objects' irrelevant to the general public? Certainly, they need not to be so. Indeed, all are hinged on museums' creative ideas. They can follow many stereotyped ways to explore the localisation, chronology and material of these objects. However, the point is that these themes have no direct relevance to the daily life of the general public. As a result, people show little interest in them.

Since the beginning of history, mankind, no matter what their beliefs are, still face the same issues, such as birth, marriage, old age, death, war, crime, sex. With the advancement of civilisation, people now encounter many new added problems, such as divorce, suicide, abortion, rape, drug abuse, environmental pollution, natural preservation, euthanasia, marrow or organ transplantation and so on. These more complicated issues have a direct connection with everyone. They are not the matters of a single person or a single country.

In responding to these issues, religious impact on each person's life can still be identified. For example, the Catholics prohibit abortion, while the Protestants are not against it. What are the differences between them? What other religions tackle these same issues? It is easy to get sufficient corneas for organ transplantation from Sri Lanka Buddhists, but it is very difficult to get anyone from Moslems. Why? Obviously, because beliefs and customs still play a crucial role in these issues.

If museums can use their religious objects to interpret these common issues, they can still attract a lot of people through the viewing of religious objects to ponder these problems. This kind of approach makes a distinction from drab ones. Through the use of religious objects, museums offer opportunities for dialogue, comparison, communication,
mutual learning and mutual understanding. These conception-oriented themes would be very relevant, vivid, and attractive to each person today. Cultural renewal usually comes about when highly differentiated cultures mix. It is as when, by triangulation, a distant position is ascertained by sighting it from two different points. Alan Watts said, 'Our grasp on reality is better when we look at it from the standpoints of different cultures, and the comparison brings to light aspects of one's own point of view so basic as to have been ignored' (Watts, 1972: 260-61). Diversities are merits rather than flaws. From this viewpoint, the diversities of different beliefs become a merit which can widen one's vision and enrich the content of a culture.

As the consolation of men's spiritual life, religion should provide more positive answers to contemporary issues rather than to divide and bring more troubles to this world. There is no recipe which can cater for the taste of all peoples. It is time for all religions to seek a common ground for co-operation and for the benefits of all human beings. The diversity of cultures and religions should be used to learn from each others and broaden one's vision rather than to alienate or estrange individuals. Different beliefs should have their specific answers and approaches to the above mentioned same issues. Buddhist objects can be used as an instrument to bridge the gaps and to transcend the divisions among different beliefs.

Peace museums are now emerging as a global trend in museum development. The product of state, group or individual efforts, these museums have attempted to explore the relationship between conflict and the visual art. They have engaged in disseminating peace education by preserving the heritage of peacemaking and peace culture and by promoting a more informed understanding of the origins of conflict (Duffy, 1993: 4). Displaying Buddhist objects would be very relevant to this trend. These objects not only reveal the origin of suffering but also offer propositions to attack its origin. People can learn much from these objects.
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By using different religious objects in displays to explore the same issue, museums provide precious opportunity for people to reflect on the contemporary issues. Under this kind of approaches, religious objects become the best medium for communication, understanding and comparison among different beliefs. They are not dead relics. They are relevant to human condition today. They can still give people much inspiration.

As the general public are ignorant about Buddhism and its objects, the best way to widen their understanding of these objects is not only in textbooks. Accessibility of these objects is very important. A serene room for meditation would be very appropriate to help people to know more about themselves. A dialogue approach is better than a monologue one.

Buddhist objects should be used to promote mutual understanding and mutual respect rather than to confirm the superior bias. No culture is better or worse than others. Every culture deserves equal respect. The jaundiced viewpoint of cultural superiority and religious bias should be rectified in this constricting world. Mutual understanding is not merely a slogan. It is a necessity. Most problems of mankind originated from intolerance and incompatibility. Buddhist objects, otherwise, divulge the messages of tolerance and compatibility which may help people to transcend their boundaries and rediscover themselves.

The themes and interpretations of Buddhist objects must be linked with the daily life of the general public. In order to counteract trite approaches which ape merely the themes and interpretations of others, intelligent themes which can inspire people and give them some fresh impressions would be relevant to this time. Relevant themes which can entertain and inspire the general public deserve to be re-visited. Buddhist objects are far from being the playthings of aesthetic enjoyment. Buddhist spirituality, far from being cold or austere, is warm and appealing. Embodying the messages of Buddhism, these objects are very appropriate to tackle many personal issues. The smiling faces demonstrated on
Buddhist images can be used to illustrate a life of serenity and contentment. The reclining Buddha, otherwise, demonstrates how to face death with dignity and serenity rather than merely to prolong the agony period of dying which most people usually do today. If displaying themes are really relevant to the human conditions today, displays become a conversation of ideas worth viewing as well as pondering.

It is an appropriate way to counter-balance the hackneyed approach to these objects as aesthetics or exotic rarities. Clive Bell argues that if the forms of a work of art are significant, its provenance is irrelevant (Harrod, 1993: 15). Indeed, provenance is not the essential messages of an object. In order to divulge the significance of these objects, the spiritual dimension and original contexts of these objects should be further explored.

Accessibility is a fundamental work which museums can help visitors to widen their understanding and thus appreciate these objects. Through viewing these objects, visitors can appreciate the beauty, feel the effusion of the soft hue of wisdom and compassion, and experience the serenity of Buddhists. Indeed, it is very inspiring to view these objects from various countries and different angles. They can serve as an effective medium for international cultural exchange. Museums can fulfil a useful function when they give historical and explanatory details of these objects in displays.

Buddhist objects, representing a living tradition, cannot merely be regarded as relics of many dead civilisations with which museums can impose their interpretations arbitrarily. Many objects can still be found easily in many Buddhist monasteries. Accordingly, displays and interpretations are not the sole work of museums. Practising this religion and using these objects, Buddhists should play a more active role in these matters. The proper reference to Buddhist communities should be stimulated. The thesis concludes with an assessment of some of the ways in which Buddhist communities in Britain can be involved in the development of museum displays and collections to effect a more subjective and interpretative approach, in place of notions of European taste.
Complementary information and programmes should be strengthened. Interpretations should be stressed on conveying the inner significance of these objects. Captions should be written in multi-languages and in the most familiar ones rather than in technical terms. Too many academic terms discourage a lot of visitors to appreciate these objects. The terms used to describe an identical object should be coherent. Above all, displays should transmit the essential messages of these objects. It is also necessary to prepare some basic information for visitors to collect or to purchase. In addition, participatory programmes also should be designed.

Furthermore, in this multi-media era, museum exhibits should catch up with the development of new technology. In order to present and interpret the contextual dimension of Buddhist objects, interactive audio-visual instruments should be installed to give visitors a more vivid impression. Writing labels are insufficient to explain the various aspects of an object and answer the miscellaneous questions which visitors may propose. What a label can explain is quite limited. A stereotyped display is drab. Audio-visual information, otherwise, can lead visitors to new experiences.

For some rare objects, temperature and humidity should be kept under strict control. Museums should showcase the finest frail objects from their outstanding collections. They should display these objects to the general public in a deliberate way. In order to prevent any possible damage or theft, museums should take some preventive measures to protect them.

As the role of museums is different from monasteries, museums do not have to follow a monastic way to display these objects. Nor should museums completely take over the function of monasteries. This living spiritual tradition should be preserved in living people rather than in museums. Though the Potala, the holy Grail above the Tibetan capital Lhasa, the Vatican of Tibetan Buddhism has been changed into a museum by Communist China (Bonn, 1993: 40), it can no longer shoulder its mission of preserving its culture.
Conclusions

Obviously, a specimen of an animal on display is no longer living, appealing or attractive. Likewise, a mummified culture is no longer alive. If there were only museums but not Buddhist monasteries in the world, then the creative imagination and inspiration for creating these objects would be lost completely. The messages which these objects transmit permeate everything and everywhere. The vitality of these objects is difficult to transmit in displays. It demonstrates only in the daily life of Buddhists. In short, these objects are for mankind rather than vice versa.

Museums should be a tool for development. In this fast changing age, changes have to be made if museums are to move beyond a merely custodial role and become significant agents for public education. Museums must become active agents of public education in a range of exhibition and outreach activities, and one assumes that this commitment will in turn have a feedback effect on both collecting and exhibition activities.

A teaching which emphasises tolerance and self-discipline should be much appreciated in this world. The depth of the words of the Compassionate Buddha: "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love". This "unalterable law" has inspired many persons to lead a noble way of life, such as Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and the Dalai Lama. The tragedy of religious conflict has never ceased in history and still exists in Bosnia, in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, and in many other places. The sublime messages of Buddhist objects, which closely linked with Buddhism and served as the visual expression of Buddhist ideals, should be prominently exposed in displays. Besides, the interest in Buddhism can be vividly recognised from the proliferation of Buddhist institutions and activities in recent years. In order to catch up with this movement, further investigation of Buddhists can bring more fruitful results in using these objects in displays.

Since this study only focuses on displayed objects, further studies are needed to explore the objects which are kept in store. Because of various limitations, a lot of
precious objects, such as the Tibetan thangka paintings, are still inaccessible to the general public.
4 Concluding comments

The study finds that the profound significance of Buddhist objects is usually neglected in displays. It explores the close link between Buddhism and its objects. It illustrates not only the common characteristics but also the specific characteristics of these objects developed in different areas. The study also examines the perception gaps between museum staff and Buddhists about these objects. It attempts to be the first comprehensive investigation about the use of these objects in British museums. The study has explored the merits and shortcomings of using them in displays.

The study likes to re-emphasise the view that Buddhist objects and their messages which these objects represent are still not adequately divulged in many displays. Museums show real things, and although Buddhism has inspired the creation of many beautiful and fascinating objects, by definition it deals with non-material beliefs and values. It is, indeed, the museums’ challenge to communicate something of importance rather than visual interest to visitors. Though these objects in museums have a religious meaning, this is usually regarded as less important than their artistic or historical significance. Though they might be antique and exotic in features, the truths they signify are timeless. That is to say, they are relevant to the time and the society. It is a challenge for museums to decode, re-interpret and transmit them.

As already discussed in the introduction, there are five main aims of this thesis: firstly to review and analyse the way in which Buddhist objects were displayed in British museums. It discusses the merits and shortcomings of using these objects in displays. The second aim of the thesis is to explore the nature of these objects in their original context and the close connection of Buddhism and the creation of its objects. The third aim of this thesis is to analyse the misunderstandings about Buddhism and its objects. The fourth aim of the thesis is to examine the elements which might obstruct the understanding of these
Conclusions

Some people may think that religion is obsolete. It is outdated and superstitious that is no longer valid in this world. Indeed, if the definition of "religion" means merely to worship an absolute Creator, then naturally, with the advance of knowledge, it is very difficult to convince every thinking person to continue to believe in the so-called revealed truth. As there are so many "absolute" truths, Gods, and "only true" religions in the world, incompatibility, conflict, contempt, and even persecution are inevitable. However, if the definition of religion is denoting to the pursuit of meaning and the experience of inner development, then actually it is not an irrelevant issue. It is the spontaneous nature of mankind to experience inner life and to uncover themselves.

Buddhism, emphasising true reality rather than any "revealed" truth, has to conform to experience at all levels of human affairs. It has never claimed any imagined ideas far beyond the experience and perception of mankind. It deals mainly with the practical problem of alleviating the suffering of mankind and developing oneself to one's full potential. Religion should not be used to estrange, divide, and even contempt people. People should seek common ground for co-operation. The fact that they are all human beings is more important than other things. Religion should not be used to shackle man, rather, it should be able to set people free to develop themselves. In Buddhist perspective, religion is for the sake of men rather than men for the purpose of religion. It is very flexible. Emanating the messages of compassion and tolerance, Buddhist objects are relevant to people today.

It is becoming clear that mutual understanding and mutual respect is a necessity. Much of the animosity, intolerance, incompatibility, and even persecution in the world are largely due to misunderstanding and mistrust. It is the responsibility of museums to
Conclusions

educate the public on the importance of this issue. Museum education, if appropriately
designed would be able to do much to contribute to the harmony and peace of this world.

Undeniably, appropriate themes, deliberate arrangements, proper interpretations,
sufficient information and complementary programmes are necessary to achieve a better
understanding of these objects. The themes, the arrangements, and the interpretations
should be designed with great care. Then visitors will not be disappointed or confused.
Only intelligent and appealing displays deserve visitors' re-visits.

In short, the concluding chapter highlighted the specific characteristics of
Buddhism, the nature of Buddhist objects, the findings of this study, the shortcomings of
using the objects in displays, the close link between Buddhism and its objects, and
suggestions for improvement. Indeed, as these concrete objects expressing the intangible
messages of the universal truths which each individual possesses innately and must be re-
discovered by himself, it is a great challenge to museums to decode their perennial
significance for each viewer to enjoy and to ponder.
Appendix A Glossary

Arhat (or Lohan)  A spiritually matured being who has succeeded in rooting out from his or her mental stream all delusions and the ignorance underlying them. He has no attachment, in whom all craving is extinct and who will no more reborn in this world. Often this Sanskrit term is translated into English as 'foe-destroyer', 'foe' here referring to delusions. In Chinese, it is called 'Lohan'.

Buddha  A being who has completely abandoned all delusions and their imprints and attained fully enlightenment.

Bodhicitta  An altruistic attitude to benefit others.

Bodhisattva  A spiritual trainee who has successfully generated a non-simulated aspiration to become fully enlightened for the benefit of all. He wishes to save all his fellow-beings and who hopes ultimately to become an omniscient Buddha.

Dharma  This Sanskrit word has many different meanings. The most common usage denotes a 'way of life'. Usually, it refers to the true paths and the true cessations to which the paths lead. It denotes the law governing all existence.

Four Noble Truths  The truths of (1) suffering, (2) its origin, (3) the cessation of suffering, and (4) the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. They are called 'noble' truths because they are supreme objects of meditation.

Hinayana  Lesser Vehicle, the path of beings with lesser capacity, and a system that concentrates more on individual liberation rather than a universal enlightenment for all.

Karma  The Sanskrit word 'karma' (Pali: kamma) means action. In Buddhist parlance this word usually refers to 'action and its concordant reaction', cause of successive rebirth in ever varying states of existence, according to the merit or demerit thus incurred.

Lama  It means 'superior', by derivation a 'spiritual teacher'.

Liberation  In the Buddhist context, the term refers to a liberation from the bondage of delusions and sufferings in the cycle of existence.

Mahamudra  The 'great symbol', which transcends expression and contains the Universe; the most profound form of Tantric meditation.

Mahayana  Great Vehicle, the path of great capacity, that emphasizes others' welfare over one's own. It includes two branches: Perfection Vehicle and Tantric Vehicle.

Mandala  A symbolical design, usually circular in shape with an inscribed square, meant to serve as a 'mnemonic key' for those who practise yogic meditation under one of its many forms. Such a 'mandala' may be painted or merely pictured in the mind; in connection with certain rites 'mandalas' are sometimes carried out in coloured sand upon the ground. It represents various levels and aspects inherent in Buddhahood.
**Mantra**
A mantra is a series of syllables that corresponds to certain subtle vibrations within us. Its effectiveness does not lie in our understanding its literal meaning but in concentrating on its sound as we recite it.

It is the sonorous form expressive of Buddhahood under one or other of its aspects; formula pregnant with the influence of a particular Bodhisattva or Sage. The language of ‘mantra’ is Sanskrit, the words are never translated. Such ‘mantras’ play an important part in various rituals. Chiefly, they are ‘invoked’ as a means of concentrating attention and as an element of initiatory method.

**Mudra**
It is a symbolic gesture, used both in rites and yogic exercises; an essential feature in the sacred iconography of divinities and saints.

**Nirvana**
The cessation of desires.

**Rinpoche**
It means diamond. When a man has achieved perfection, then he was called a diamond. It means that he has transformed every evil in himself into wisdom, every dark energy into an energy of light, every movement of hatred or impatience into a blessing (Harvey, 1983: 161).

**Samsara**
The continuing round of birth and death. It extends to the higher levels of life, and the hells below that of the human world.

**Sangha**
The congregation founded by the Buddha; his dedicated followers; the whole Order of Buddhist monks or nuns. One of the Threefold Refuge.

**Stupa**
The symbolic monument common to the Buddhist world since early times. In Tibet, the tiers and other details of a stupa denote various stages of spiritual realization.

**Sutra**
A book of the canonical Scriptures.

**Tangka**
Tibetan sacred paintings usually hung up in monasteries.

**Tantra**
A treatise relating to methods of spiritual concentration; a book of instruction concerning particular forms of yoga. As compared with ‘sutras’, ‘tantras’ remain relatively ‘secret’ documents, for the use of initiates only.

**Vajra**
A symbol of the nature of reality indicating its eternal or ‘adamantine’ quality; a ritual sceptre, shaped like the thunderbolt of Jupiter. In Tibetan it is called ‘dorje’, meaning the ‘noble stone’.

**Vajrayana**
The highest of the three Vehicles or Ways in Buddhism. They way from which there is no turning back until enlightenment is reached.
Appendix B

Interview guide for curators of Buddhist collections:

Collections:
- History of the collection of Buddhist objects in this museum

- Date of first Buddhist object collected?

- Date of bulk of Buddhist collection collected?

- State of documentation of collection

- Collection arrangements
  - by culture
  - by region
  - by date
  - by technique
  - by material
Appendix B

.others

What were your aims in collecting these objects?

How many persons are in charge of documenting and labelling these objects?

Do you continue to collect this kind of objects?

Formative evaluation
Audience involvement / participation
  Local Buddhist groups
  How many these kinds of organisations in your community?

  How do you arouse their attention and participation?
    - do you value their assistance highly
    - use their newsletters to advertise your activities
      or exhibitions
    - other means
- never do this kind of things

Do you actively seek the opinions and collaboration of your target audiences?

Exhibitions using Buddhist materials

Aims

Selections

Displaying themes

Contextual arrangements

Range of resources for mounting the exhibitions

Auxiliary instruments (such as time contrast tables, maps, term explanations... etc.), complementary materials, and published works for interpretation

Summative evaluation-
Appendix B

Exhibition:
- Appealing and significant

- Stimulating

- Articulative

- Normal

Evaluation of response-
  - Demands

  - Degree of satisfaction

  - Degree of comprehension

Extension of exhibition
  - Loan

  - Exchange

  - Access (to stored collections and take photographs)

  - Future plans

Paramount problems
Appendix B

-why are Buddhist objects not displayed?

-why is it difficult to understand Buddhist objects?

-museum's attitude towards these objects
Appendix C

Appendix C Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

Department of Museum Studies

Questionnaire

Institution Name: _______________________________________

Respondent Name: _______________________________________

1. Approximate total number of individual items in your Buddhism collection?

2. Please estimate the percentage of these objects which have been documented.

3. Do you have any educational officer responsible for these collections?

4. Have you ever held any display related to Buddhism collections?

   If NO, please go on to Question 6.

5. What was the name of your last display using Buddhist collection? _____________________________________________

   When was it held?

   What were its aims, please tick as many as apply
   a. promote mutual understanding and tolerance;
   b. promote the comprehension of Buddhism;
   c. appreciate the craft techniques of Buddhist objects;
   d. enlarge the public's perspectives;
   e. satisfy the public's curiosity;
   f. others (Please specify). ________________________________
Were teaching materials available?
Was anyone on the site to answer visitors' questions?

6. Do you have any plans for a display related to Buddhism in the future?
   If yes, then when?

7. What are the problems in displaying your Buddhist collections?
   Please tick as many as apply.
   a. the scarcity of these objects in your collection;
   b. the fragility of these works;
   c. the poor condition of these works;
   d. the ambiguities of the sources;
   e. unnecessary and inappropriate to display it in the West;
   f. others (Please specify). __________________________

8. Has any book related to this topic been published in your museum?
   If yes, what are the titles? _________________________

9. Further comments about
   a. nature of your collection
       ___________________________________________
   b. documentation
       ___________________________________________
   c. educational use
       ___________________________________________
   d. overall viewpoints about Buddhism collections
       ___________________________________________
Appendix C

Thank you very much for your help.

Please return this questionnaire to: Chuang Yiao-hwei/ 105 Princess Road

East, Dept. of Museum Studies, Leicester LE1 7LG
Appendix D

Appendix D Interviewing Questionnaire

Chuang Yiao-hwei
Dept. of Museum Studies
Leicester University

Interviewing Questionnaire
Please tick the answer that you want to give.

1. Have you ever seen an exhibition of Buddhist objects or Buddhist art? YES NO

2. What was your impression of them?
   Sacred objects
   Exotic rarities
   Aesthetic objects
   Heathen idolatrous objects

3. Was it inspiring?
   Delicate aesthetics
   Proper context arrangement
   Detailed explanation
   Bilingual labels
   Spiritual serenity

4. Was it dull?
   Improper arrangement
   Insufficient explanation
   Too much specific terms
   No related pamphlet was available

5. Which kind of information you were eager to know?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kind of material these objects were made of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who did them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why people created them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the usefulness of these objects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they were brought here</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much money are these objects worth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the significances and meanings which were shown on the various expressions of Buddhist images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did it enhance/widen your understanding of Buddhism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you have the desire to know further information about these objects?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Buddha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do Buddhist believe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do Buddhist practise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do Buddhist realize</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you think that your faith is the only truth which all human beings should choose to believe?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you think that it is necessary to know other faiths?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Have you ever read a book or learnt anything about Buddhism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

11. Do you think that Buddha's teaching is one of the religions which can inspire people to live a more meaningful life?

12. Is there a Buddhist institution in your community?

Thank you very much for your help.

Date: / / 1992
Dear Sir/Madam,

Project: Objects and knowledge - A survey of Buddhism artefacts in British museums and galleries

Your institution is one of the museums which, I believe, has Buddhist material in its collections. As a museology student at the University of Leicester, I need information about this study topic. I would be very grateful if you could spare the time to help me.

Three points are specially important:

1. The total number of individual items and scope of your Buddhism collections;
2. The state of documentation level of research of these collections in your institution;
3. The problems which you face in presenting them to the public.

I do hope that you will feel able to assist me and look forward to receiving your reply during the next few weeks. I enclose an addressed envelop for your reply and I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Chuang Yiao-Iwei
Dear Sir,

How nice it is to write to you.

Would you be so kind as to offer me some of the basic information about your institution and activities?

Do you think that Buddhism has some specific characteristics, comparing to other faiths, which can benefit the spiritual development of mankind?

What are your impressions of looking at Buddhist objects in museums? What is the value of this? Have you found any specific problem? Can you make any suggestion for improvement?

Thank you very much in advance.

Sincerely,

Chuang Yiao-hwei
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