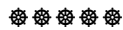


1 Vajrayana Buddhism

Also known as Tantrayana, Mantrayana, Tantric Buddhism, and Esoteric Buddhism



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WSDC 6-8-2021

2 Theravāda vs. Mahāyāna

- 1 • Sravaka ("voice hearer")
 - Arhat ideal
 - Oral tradition
 - Preserve the "word"
 -
 - Shakyamuni focused
 -
 - Aniconic until 1st century BC

WORD

- 2 • Bodhisattvayana
 - Bodhisattva ideal
 - New texts (written)
 - Narrative stories
 - Images and imagination
 - Cosmic Buddhas & Celestial bodhisattvas
 - Visualization practices ("see" the Buddha)
 - Iconography (1st cent.)

IMAGE

3 New Philosophy in Mahāyāna

- Śūnyātā (emptiness): reformulation of dependent origination
 - dharmas lack own being (*svabhāva*)
- Perfection of Wisdom Sutras (*Prajñāpāramitā*)

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Heart Sūtra ("Heart" of the *Prajñāpāramitā*)

"...Seeing the five *skandhas* to be empty of nature. Form is emptiness; emptiness also is form. Emptiness is no other than form; form is no other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness are emptiness. Thus, Shariputra, all dharmas are emptiness...."

So what is "Emptiness"?

"Empty" of independent existence or any eternal/unchanging essence

6 Emptiness in Context

7 Implications of Śūnyatā (Nāgārjuna)

"There is no distinction whatsoever between *samsāra* and *Nirvāna*; and there is no distinction whatsoever between *Nirvāna* and *samsāra*."

In other words, Nirvāna and samsara are identical in their emptiness. This is true of ALL dualities.

8 Nagarjuna on the Two Truths

The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma

Is based on two truths:

A truth of worldly convention

And an ultimate truth.

Those who do not understand

The distinction drawn between these two truths

Do not understand

The Buddha's profound truth.

Without a foundation in the conventional truth

The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.

Without understanding the significance of the ultimate.

Liberation is not achieved

9 Two Truths

1 Ultimate

emptiness

non-duality

wisdom

Ineffability

2 Conventional

inter-dependence

dualistic

compassion

verbal categories

10 History and Overview of Vajrayāna

• India: Jainism, Hinduism (Saivism, Vaisnavism)

• Pan-Indian religious influences

– Magic

– Mandala

– Brahmanism: magical rites and mantras

- Guru model and necessity
- Two transmissions to China
 - ca. 400-750: China then Japan (8th cent.)
 - ca. 700-900: Tibet
 -

11 **Names and Terms**

- Tantra: “ritual text” vs. sutra
- Mantra: “instrument of mind”
- Mantrayāna: “Vehicle of the true word”
- Vajrayāna: “Vehicle of the thunderbolt/diamond”
- Esoteric: “secret”

12 **Vajrayana Buddhism—Key Features**

- Texts (tantras) public but language is obscure, not literal. Require interpretation (secret knowledge)
- Teachings are powerful and dangerous—requires initiation under teacher (guru)
- Reality non-dual
 - Nirvana=Samsara
 - Ultimate reality=phenomenal reality
- The 3 M’s: Mudras (“seal” or “sign”), Mantras (“instrument of the mind” or “true word”) Mandalas (“world circle” or “map of cosmos”)
- Metaphor of sex prominent (why?)

13 **Remember Mahāyāna Critique**

- Madhyamika and “emptiness”
 - nirvana not different from samsara
 - distinctions have only conventional validity
- Apply to pure/impure distinctions

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“Those who do not perceive the truth think in terms of Samsara and Nirvana, but those who perceive the truth think neither of Samsara nor Nirvana. Discriminating thought is then the great demon that produces the ocean of Samsara. But being free of this discriminating thought, the great ones are freed from the bonds of existence...Just as water that has entered the ear may be removed by water and just as a thorn may be removed by a thorn, so those who know remove passion by passion itself. Just as a washerman removes the grime from a garment by means of grime, so the wise man renders himself free of impurity by means of impurity itself.”

Cittavisuddhiprakarana (trans. David Snellgrove, in Conze’s, ed. *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, 1964, p. 221.)

15 **Merging Duality**

- Madhyamika and “emptiness”
 - nirvana not different from samsara
 - distinctions have limited validity
- Apply to pure/impure distinctions
- Both sides of duality needed to unite
 - Conceptualize dualities symbolically/ritually, bring together

– Yields Great Bliss = Thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*)

16 **Symbolizing Duality**

17 **Esoteric Ritual: Releasing the Burning Mouths**

18

19 **Tibetan Mūdra Offerings**

20 **Mantras**

21 **Mantras: *Om mani padme hum***

- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's definition
"The mantra *Om Mani Päme Hum* is easy to say yet quite powerful, because it contains the essence of the entire teaching. When you say the first syllable Om it is blessed to help you achieve perfection in the practice of generosity, Ma helps perfect the practice of pure ethics, and Ni helps achieve perfection in the practice of tolerance and patience. Pä, the fourth syllable, helps to achieve perfection of perseverance, Me helps achieve perfection in the practice of concentration, and the final sixth syllable Hum helps achieve perfection in the practice of wisdom." So in this way recitation of the mantra helps achieve perfection in the six practices from generosity to wisdom. The path of these six perfections is the path walked by all the Buddhas of the three times. What could then be more meaningful than to say the mantra and accomplish the six perfections?"
- HH Dalai Lama
"Thus the six syllables, *om mani padme hum*, mean that in dependence on the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha"

22 **Mandalas of the Two Worlds**

- Womb mandala: body, Truth, seed of enlightenment

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26 **Mandalas of the Two Worlds**

- Womb mandala: body, Truth, seed of enlightenment
- Daimond mandala: mind, Knower, progression of practice

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30 **Mandalas of the Two Worlds**

- Womb mandala: body, Truth, seed of enlightenment
- Daimond mandala: mind, Knower, progression of practice
- Focus of meditative practice

31 **Time Lapse Sand Mandala**

32