



# Buddhism and Medicine

- **Buddhism**
- **Ancient Indian Buddhist Medicine**
- **Tibetan Buddhism**

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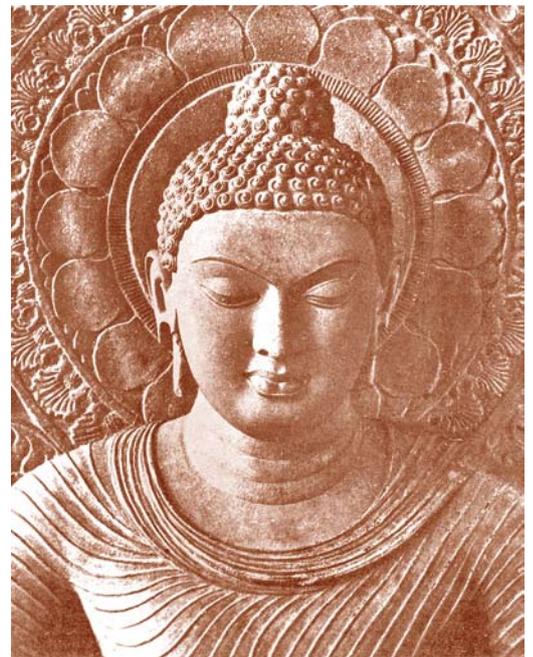
## **BUDDHISM**

Gautama Buddha, the historical Buddha, stated the doctrine of Buddhism more than 2,500 years ago. Since then, it has become the salvation for people seeking liberation from sickness and death. It is a doctrine without discrimination of caste, race or wealth. It respects equality between human beings and animals and solves everyday life difficulties. With time, it has become a religion and system that protects millions of people from suffering.

### **Sidhartha, a Prince**

Buddha, born the son of the Northern Indian King Shudhodhana in 564 B.C., was a brilliant child around whom many miracles occurred. One day the king, his father, took him in a field, left him under a tree and went to work. In the evening, he returned to the tree and, to his surprise, saw that his son was meditating and that the shadow of the tree had not moved all day. There are many extraordinary stories such as this one available in Vinaya sutra<sup>1</sup> and Jataka tales.

Until he was 29 years old, Prince Sidhartha studied formal education and enjoyed his royal luxury life. One day he decided to renounce to live in the palace, after seeing the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death in his country. He went to his father and begged to let him go search for the truth. He left for the jungles in search of the masters and since the meditations he had learned were not the absolute methods to cease suffering, he went to Bodh Gaya and meditated there for six years. On the last day of meditation, he conquered the Lord of death and Kamadeva (God of desire who gives samsaric illusions) and achieved enlightenment. A human being thus became the historical Buddha Shakyamuni with a golden light halo around him.



Buddha taught dharma to his disciples on this earth for 46 years. His first wheel of dharma is the universal 'Four Noble Truths':

 *“Suffering is existing  
Because it has cause,  
Cessation is there  
Because it has paths (cause)”*

This is a true science and real evolution for humans and sentient beings. It is indeed pointed out in the medicine as Buddha said:

 *“Disease is existing  
Because it has cause,  
Free from the suffering is there  
Because it has methods (cause)”*

**The first ‘turning the wheel of the Dharma’**, *khoro-dangpo* (sk. Prathama dharmacakra) taught by Buddha at Deer Park, Sarnath, (Varanasi) Bihar India, expounds the ‘Four Noble Truths’ and sets forth the basis of the *Sravaka*<sup>2</sup> views of two lower tenets - *Jedrag-mawa* (sk. Vaibhasika) and *Dhodepa* (sk. Sautrantika) – which accept that phenomena have a truly existent nature.

**The second ‘turning the wheel of the Dharma’**, *khoro-barpa* (sk. Madhya dharmacakra) Half way through his life, Buddha expounded the second turning the wheel of the Dharma at Vulture’s Peak (*Jagod-phungpoi-ri*), Rajghir. He taught the ‘Sutras of the Wisdom Perfection’, *sherabkyi-pharoltu-chinpa*; this teaching is the basis of the Middle View (*Umapa*), which introduces the doctrine that all phenomena lack a truly existent nature.

**The third ‘turning the wheel of the Dharma’**, *khoro-thama* (sk. Antya dharmacakra), was held at Vaisali (*Yangpachen*), where Buddha taught the ‘Sutra of Clear Discrimination’, *Semtsampa Cittamatra*, which lays the basis of the ‘Mind-Only School’ and introduced the doctrine stating that from an ultimate point of view, due to the law of impermanence, phenomena lack a truly existent nature, but, from a relative point of view, due to the law of causes and conditions, they are truly existent.

These three teachings concern principally the thoughts or the different views of Buddhism according to the different people’s natures and capacities to understand Dharma. There are also number of miscellaneous teachings on different subjects, concerning the individual’s life, karma, reincarnation and broadly speaking 84,000 teachings against the 84,000 negative emotions that manifest from our ignorance in daily life.

Buddha said

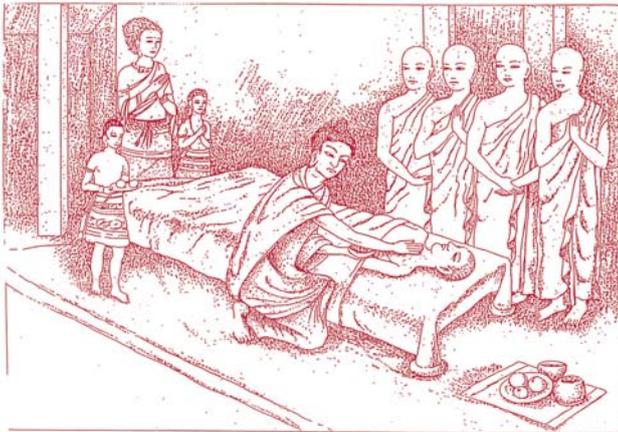
 *“Empty this boat, O monk!  
Emptied, it will sail lightly,  
Rid of the lust and hatred,  
You shall reach Nibbana”<sup>3</sup>*

Buddha taught Dharma in Pali language because the message also reached the low castes more easily as Buddhism makes no difference between religions and castes. The experience in suffering and the various difficulties the low castes went through were indeed more numerous than for others. He became the master of the three worlds and supreme healer of the mind’s disease.

The fame of Buddha grew enormously as he cured the disease of the mind. One day, Kumara Jeevaka ‘King of physician’ became a disciple by having his pride cured by Buddha (see the story later) who healed the Maghada kingdom emperor Ajatashatru’s suffering of heavy depression. Buddha’s miracles were discussed in the courts of the kings and also became a hope of salvation for the poor and helpless people. Therefore many people followed Buddha who was surrounded by Bhikhus, Bhikhunis, novices and lay people. He fulfilled the wishes of people who had the desire to learn and listen, and be liberated. Buddha gave three principal teachings (the three

different tenets mentioned earlier), among many others, which are classified in three models of practice:

- *Silasiksa* morale discipline for disease of attachment.
- *Samadhisiksa* training of concentration to cure hatred.
- *Prajnasiksa* training of wisdom to cure ignorance.



He also gave his first discourse on Medicine in his spiritual community, where, because of monastic discipline, monks suffered from diarrhoea and poor health. One day Ananda, his nephew and attendant, asked him to help the monks. Buddha held a discourse on medicine and then allowed them to take medicines for certain periods of time, and only under the physician's prescription, even when some medications were not permitted by monastery codes of behaviour.

There are many stories recorded in Kagyur and Tengyur<sup>4</sup> and Jataka tales<sup>5</sup> about the life of Buddha, and medicine. According to Tibetan Medicine history, Buddha held a discourse on 'Four Tantras' with special four groups of physicians in the medicine forest in Varanasi (see in the ancient Indian Buddhist medicine part).

He lived mainly in Maghadha, Vaishali, Kausali, Varanasi and Rajghir. He achieved parinirvana when he was 80 years old in Kush Nagar village and left the following words to his disciples and people of the world:

*“All that is composed is perishable,  
Work diligently for your salvation”<sup>6</sup>*

After Buddha's mahaparinirvana, his disciples and believers built many stupas and monasteries all over India as a sign of remembrance and to orally study his teachings. His doctrine was preserved and developed by his seven successors and their disciples.

### The Tripitakas, or three baskets

After some time, due to the different understandings of the doctrine among the 'great hearers', *Nyenthoe*, eighteen different Buddhism branches developed. Thus three great councils were held in different places in India under the patronage of different Indian kings. The teachings, said by Great Kasyapa, Shaliputra and Maugalyayanaputra among others, were then written down and collected in three tripitakas :

- *Vinayapitaka* collection of the Buddha's teachings on knowledge of moral disciplines for lay people, novices, monks and nuns.
- *Sutrapitaka* collection of teachings on different discourses.
- *Abhidharmapitaka* collection of teachings on knowledge of wisdom.

### The great seals

The heart of Buddha's teaching is called the 'four great seals' of Buddhist doctrine. To become a Buddhist, one has to study and accept this doctrine which possibly was developed during the propagation of Buddhism by Acarya Nagarjuna. The 'Four Great Seals' are:

- All products are impermanence.
- Contaminated things are misery.
- Phenomena are empty and selfless.
- Nirvana is peace.

## Four Indian Buddhist schools

With time and the development of Buddhism, four major Indian Buddhist schools emerged and expounded, establishing their own tenets.

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| 1. <i>Jedrag-mawa (Vaibhasika)</i>           | twelve branches  |
| 2. <i>Dhodhepa (Sautrantika)</i>             | two main branches  |
| 3. <i>Semtsampa Cittamatra (Vijnanavada)</i> | two main branches  |
| 4. <i>Umāpa (Madhyamika)</i>                 | two main branches:<br><i>Umatalgyurpa (Madhyamika prasangika)</i><br><i>Umarangyupa (Svatantrika madhyamika)</i> |

All tenets are based on Buddha's teachings and interpret the correct view of Buddha, depending on their own philosophy and concepts, although scholars consider Madhyamika prasangika to be the highest one which explains Buddha's view most correctly. It mainly flourishes in Mahayana Buddhist countries.

## Theravadan Buddhism

The Sravaka vehicle is the original Buddhism, which has come directly from the lineages of the schools mentioned above. It was spread by many Indian kings and masters, especially Emperor Asoka the Great (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) who became Buddhist after having won the Kalinga war. He saw suffering and lives lost and then took refuge in the Three Jewels. He built many monasteries temples and public hospitals, established veterinary surgeries and planted medicinal herbs and trees. He propagated Buddhism throughout his entire kingdom. Theravadan Buddhism is mainly practiced in Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos and other south east Asian countries. It is also the base for teachings in Mahayana countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Nepal, etc.

## Mahayana tradition

Mahayana Buddhism, also called 'the great vehicle', has two sections: Paramitayana and Mantrayana. The core of Mahayana is to cultivate the great heart for all sentient beings. To generate love, compassion or *bodhicitta*, work and live for others or have a selfless practice is the Mahayana tradition. The altruistic life is nourished by the Buddha's teaching of three paths: moral discipline, concentration-meditation, and wisdom development.

Master Nagarjuna acarya (see p. 10), an extraordinary scholar, philosopher, saint, attained siddhi, alchemist and physician, propagated this doctrine laid down by Buddha. He refined the concepts developed in the Buddha's teaching and composed six works on the madhyamika philosophy, which were introduced in the monastic universities. He revised the monastic disciplines and resurrected Buddhism. His philosophy was further spread by his disciples like Arya deva. He built monastic universities in which sciences, arts - including medicine - were taught, such as in great Nalanda, Bikramshila, Taxila, Kasi, Bodh Gaya and Varanasi that later became the main centres for the study of Buddhism. Smelting ovens for preparing metallic medicine (alchemy) and sculptures have actually been found in these places<sup>7</sup>. Later, Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan<sup>8</sup>, Persia, Iraq, Pakistan, Nepal, Tibet, Burma, China and south east Asian countries. The Mahayana tradition of Buddhism mainly spread in the north of India and has been highly developed in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, China and Mongolia. But Theravadan tradition remains the base of all Mahayana teachings and practices.

## Paramitayana

The development of Buddhism became more scholar in the Mahayana Schools and the learning and practice of the Buddha's teachings. Mahayana is the perfection vehicle or path also called 'Bodhisatva Vehicle' as taught in the sutras. It is a causal vehicle, which leads the achievement of Buddhahood by the great practice of the six perfections:



- *Dhana* giving
- *Sila* morality
- *Ksanti* patience
- *Virya* effort
- *Dhyana* concentration
- *Prajna* wisdom

### **Vajrayana**

Buddhism developed more and more in India and the surrounding countries, especially in north western countries like Afganistan and transasian countries. It further went to China through the silk road and developed in the Turkistans. Mahayana Buddhists believe that Tantrayana practice came from these countries to India.

It is believed that the fastest way to attain nirvana is based on the Madhyamika view with the Vajrayana tantra practice. Unlike in Paramitayana where the emphasis is put on the accumulation of the six perfections virtues, Vajrayana uses meditations on a deity for one purpose and bestowal of initiation or empowerment for others. According to the tantra, it is possible, with this particular method, to attain Buddhahood even in one life. Mahayana Buddhists say that Buddha first taught tantra in Udiyana (probably in Swat Valley in Afghanistan), then Kalachakra in the south of India as well as many tantras in other places. There are number of tantra traditions which are translated in Tibet and practiced widely.

The Four Indian Buddhist groups of tantras

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|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Jagyud</i>           | Kriya tantra        | action tantra                |
| 2. <i>Chod-gyud</i>        | Carya tantra        | performance tantra           |
| 3. <i>Naljor-gyud</i>      | Yoga tantra         | cohesive tantra              |
| 4. <i>Naljorlamed-gyud</i> | Anuttarayoga tantra | highest cohesive yoga tantra |

Buddha said:

 *“The monk who abides in universal love  
And is deeply devoted to the Teaching of the Buddha  
attains the peace of Nibbana,  
the bliss of the cessation of all conditioned things.”<sup>9</sup>*

## ANCIENT INDIAN BUDDHIST MEDICINE

The life story of Buddha mentions a lot about the medicine as described in the Vinaya sutra. During his life, Buddha sometimes went to a city where a patient was abandoned by his family or physician. Buddha's enlightened mind could see the patient and that his mental passions could be responsible for the disharmony of the body/mind. At some times Buddha himself nursed Bhikkhus and sick people. Buddha's love and compassion towards the patients and his teachings influenced the ancient medical practice during the period of Buddhism development. Medicinal relief and nursing were thus strongly encouraged. However, the use of knife was discouraged and surgery was given up.<sup>10</sup> Buddha put an end to animal sacrifice for ethical reasons and insured respect to the life of all beings. His followers built many health centres for men and animals.

From the collections of Buddha's teaching, the Vinaya sutra is a special collection concerning the story of Buddha's life and Buddhist Medicine.

We can read that Buddha taught the eight Medicine Buddhas' sutra, widely practiced in Mahayana Buddhist countries, to heal patients, harmonize ecology and climate, prevent natural calamities and remove black magic and misfortunes. Buddha also held a discourse on the 'golden sutra' *gSer-od-dampa*, where he retold the story of his previous life - how he became a physician.

### 'The Four Tantras' *Gyud-shi*

Tibetan medical history says that, before the discourse, Buddha transformed the place (a forest near Varanasi), into the pure medicine land of Tanadug, a Medicine Buddha mandala and himself into medicine Buddha Bedurya (aquamarine color). Representatives of the four medical traditions were gathered in the four directions of the mandala and looked at the Medicine Buddha, waiting for the teachings. They were:

#### Non Buddhist physicians

(Brahma, Mahadeva, Vishnu, Kartika and thousands from non Buddhist beings)

#### Gods physicians

(Indra, Aswins, Lhamodutsima and thousands of others from heaven)



#### Buddhist physicians

(Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, Vajrapani, Ananda, Kumara Jeevaka<sup>11</sup> and thousands of others.)

#### Rishi- Ayurvedic physicians

(Atreya Punarvasu, Agnivesha, Kashyapa, Dhanvantari and thousand of others from human and heaven gods mixed)

Buddha gave then the discourse of the 'Four Tantras' *Gyud-shi*. This knowledge was transferred in India through an unbroken lineage till the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was developed in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Nepal and finally reached Tibet. The whole collection was translated into Tibetan in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by the great translation masters Vairochana and Chandranandana of Kashmir. According to the Kagyur and Tengyur collections, there are also numerous available teachings of Buddha concerning the medicine, alchemy practice, etc.

### Kumara Jeevaka

The most interesting story is the life of Kumara Jeevaka and his service to Buddha.

Kumara Jeevaka, son of King Bimbisara of Maghada kingdom, India, and a courtesan, was a physician, surgeon and pediatrician contemporary to Buddha. He studied Medicine in Taxila and performed cranial and other major operations mentioned in the history of Indian Medicine. He had learned this art for seven years from master Atreya who was the crown physician of the Ayurvedic physicians at that time. The young Kumara Jeevaka was also crowned three times 'King of the physicians' because of his extraordinary cures performed on his father, queen stepmother, and others. He became greatly ambitious about gaining more knowledge of medicine and surgery. He thought, "now, I should go see Lord Buddha whose teachings are believed to be cures to the disease of the mind." So he went to the place where Buddha was teaching. He sat among the disciples and listened to the discourse, but he did not find any useful meaning in the teaching.



*Kumara Jeevaka and surgery*

Buddha called Jeevaka and asked him to go to collect herbs at the 'Snow Mountain' (*Riwogangchen*). A disciple of Buddha called Vajrapani, helped him. They brought many plants, herbs and minerals. Jeevaka demonstrated them well to the Buddha. Finally, some substances were left aside and Buddha asked him: "What are these?" Jeevaka replied: "Omniscient One, they also possess medicinal values but I don't know them." Buddha explained them one by one and it surprised Jeevaka, who asked Buddha "Do you also know Medicine?" Buddha said: "Yes Kumara Jeevaka, I know, and I am an expert in the four branches of medicine:

- examining pathology
- discovering the origin of disease
- pacifying the disease and
- preventing the disease."

Buddha also said to Kumara Jeevaka, "The physician who knows these four branches of Medicine possesses the qualification to become the court physician to the king. Therefore, Tathagata who destroyed the demons and possesses the knowledge of the four branches of Medicine is a supreme healer in the three worlds. Kumara Jeevaka, Tathagata also knows the following four supreme healing medical branches of science which are beyond somatic medicine. They are:

- There is a truth of suffering,
- Truth of cause
- Truth of cessation and
- Truth of path.

Kumara Jeevaka, common physicians don't know how to prevent the patients from the root of the diseases such as aging, sickness, death, lament, sadness, sorrow, unhappiness, and disharmony

of the mind. Only Tathagata knows the Medicine for the disease caused by aging through the evolutions that lead to death. Therefore, I am declaring here that Buddha is a supreme healer in the three worlds.”

At that moment of teaching and transformation, by the blessing of Buddha and his own intelligence, Kumara Jeevaka understood the teaching like a mirror held in the hand. He saw all and every existence separately without any dirt of ignorance. He earned the knowledge of hearing without border, deep experience, non-dependence, without doubting the teaching and achieved knowledge without having fear. He stood up from the seat and put his symbol of scholar shawl on one shoulder, folding the hands towards the Buddha and said, “Oh Tathagata, I became realised! I shall take refuge in you Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Please accept me, your disciple, as a novice. I shall take vow to you from today until the end of my life. I shall be with you, take care of you and your disciples.” Kumara Jeevaka offered his *Jeevakamravana*, ‘mango grove’ and Buddha lived there for many years<sup>12</sup>.

Also, in the contemporary period of Buddha, The Emperor Ajatashatru, misguided by his evil master Devadatta, murdered his own father and many others and destroyed the religious centers and monasteries. Later he felt guilty and fell into heavy depression. No one succeeded in curing him. He consulted with Jeevaka, who was his half brother, and Jeevaka took him to the Buddha. Buddha, who was already waiting for King Ajatshatru outside his meditation vihara <sup>13</sup>, called the King’s name three times and cured him with the following words:

“Having slain mother and father,  
Two warrior kings,  
and destroyed a country,  
together with its treasurer,  
Ungrieving goes the holy man”<sup>14</sup>.

The meaning is:

“Having slain craving and self-conceit,  
Two warrior kings of eternalism and nihilism,  
and destroyed a country of sense organs and sense objects  
together with its treasurer of attachment and lust,  
Ungrieving goes the holy man”.

The emperor Ajatashatru, confused by the above words, went to meditate to understand their deep meaning, which then awoke him from depression and led him to realization.

The Vinaya sutra records many other stories about Buddha and Kumara Jeevaka concerning medicine. A popular story in Buddhism literature is the one of Devadatta the Buddha’s inseparable cousin, consumed by jealousy. Devadatta became the master of Ajatashatru, the Maghadha king (mentioned above) who destroyed the religious centers while Devadatta waged war against Buddha. The soldiers catapulted a rock which hurt Buddha’s big toe. It bled for a long time, Jeevaka treated it but failed. Finally Jeevaka told Buddha that it could be cured by the milk of a first born male child’s mother. So he succeeded to stop the bleeding. Later, Tathagata and his disciples went to the Himalaya and stayed there for a while. Tathagata got indigestion due to cold and cold wind wave. Jeevaka treated him and the next day, Jeevaka asked Buddha about his health. Buddha said “Kumara Jeevaka! There are some diseases which can be cured by medicine. There are some which could be moved out but are not by medicine. There



Kumara Jeevaka treating Buddha



are diseases that can only be partially moved out and others that are on motion because they haven't been removed.”

Then Jeevaka told Buddha: “Your omniscience! You have to receive a medication made from herb *Meconopsis torquata* Prain (Tib. *Utpala*) by 32 Srang<sup>15</sup> (dose)<sup>16</sup> for purification”. Buddha took it, and it cured the indigestion. The next day, Devadatta heard this and burnt up with jealousy. He went to Jeevaka and wanted to receive the same treatment as Buddha even if he was not sick. Jeevaka tried to dissuade him, but he failed. So Jeevaka administered the same dose and Devadatta felt sick and cried for help. Jeevaka told him: “I can't help you, you should ask Tathagata”. Buddha visited Devadatta and put his lotus like hand on Devadatta's head and solved the disorder originated in jealousy by his true words saying that “In my mind and forever, there has been no difference between my own son Rahula and my jealous cousin Devadatta, then Devadatta's disease may be healed by these true words”. Immediately the disease disappeared. Later Devadatta realized that it was Buddha's hand on his head that made him more jealous and he paid ungratefulness to Buddha.

Jeevaka served the Buddha's Sangha community for his whole life, collected the *Gyud-shi*, the four tantras and passed them down to his disciples until they finally reached Master Nagarjuna acarya as recorded in the Tibetan Medical history. Jeevaka achieved a rainbow body and immortal life and it is believed that he lives somewhere in this world.

## Nagarjuna

Nagarjuna acarya was born around the 1<sup>st</sup> century. He was not only a master and the founder of the Mahayana Buddhism by bringing the philosophy of Madhyamaka, but also a master in medical science and the first one to discover alchemy practice in India. He was a great saint, philosopher, physician, alchemist and the leader of all Buddhist orders of that time<sup>17</sup>. Arya Nagarjuna created one hundred and eight Mahayana centres and hundreds of temples. Several times, he took care of Vajrasana, the place where Buddha attained illumination at Bodh Gaya and protected the Bodhi tree from damages caused by wild elephants, the river and so on. He expelled the monks who violated the discipline from monasteries and he composed five Mahayana texts to clean and nourish the Buddha's teaching. He also composed the *prajnaparamita-sata-sahasrika*, which extended and further developed his Mahayana doctrine of the great vehicle. Many kings and rich Brahmans converted to Buddhism and built monasteries and temples like Nalanda, Pukhan, Odivisa, Bhangala, Radha, etc.

His works helped to protect Buddha's teaching including *Abhidharma* (Buddha's teachings on metaphysic philosophy) of both Mahayana and Sravaka vehicles. According to Tibetan history and ancient Indian masters, he lived 600 years while modern historians disagree and prefer the theory of two different Nagarjuna at different times. Anyhow Acarya Nagarjuna became *rasayana-siddhi*<sup>18</sup> which means that he achieved the miracle power of long life. His complexion looked like that of gem. As the result of his meditation in the Sri Parvata, he attained the first *Bhumi* (land or grade, spiritual level of development) and his body was ornamented with thirty-two auspicious signs. He composed several medical treaties like *Yoga sataka* and introduced alchemical works in Indian Ayurvedic and Buddhist Medicine, which spread in India.

From his tradition, the secret lineage of *Gyud-shi* came to Vagbhata who wrote the very important medical texts called *Astanga-hridaya samhita* and *Astanga-hridaya sangraha* used in Ayurveda even as today. His descendant Physician Chandranandana of Kashmir received this *Gyud-shi* tradition and passed it on to the Tibetan great master and translator Vairochana. They translated the *Gyud-shi* which finally came to Tibet in the 8<sup>th</sup> century as recorded in the history of *Gyud-shi* of Tibetan Medicine.



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## TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Wise Tibetan kings and masters who transformed the corrupted land and people into peace and harmony provided a home for Indian Buddhism. Much influenced by Tibetan style of practice and experience of the later Indian and Tibetan masters, the colour of Buddhism has changed but it is still the same message of Buddha Shakyamuni's dharma light.

### Bon

The religion of the antique Bon tradition is based on Tibetan-Siberian shaman practices. It was modified by **Shenrab Miwoche**, the Tibetan Bon founder, who laid down the disciplined Bon religion even before the direct coming of Buddhism from India. The Bon tradition has nine vehicles including the Dzogchen practice which is almost the same as the Nyingmapa School's. They are also scholasticism on sutra and tantra and especially training in philosophical debates like in the Sakyapa and Gelukpa Schools. Currently, the tradition is developing very fast and the main centre is the Menri monastery in Tibet, and Dolanji monastery in Simla, India. The current Bon School is a Bon Tibetan Buddhism that also preserves some antique healing traditions.

### Introduction of Buddhism in Tibet

Before the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Tibet suffered from political and economical turmoil like other countries and many small kingdoms. People believed in natural mystic power and spirits that contributed to bring a violent culture and life. Tibet was then a small kingdom just expanding its strength between the Byzantine Empire in the West, Chinese Tang emperors in the East, Indian King Harsha in the South, and Shangshung Kings in the North. **Srongtsan Gampo** (617- ?) was the king of a small kingdom in central Tibet, and his main policy was to bring peace to his land. This could only happen with the change of the violent religion into a peaceful one. He adopted the theory and brought Buddhism from India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. He married Nepalese, Chinese and Shangshung princesses and two other Tibetan women. The Chinese and Nepalese brought Buddhism and Buddha statues of Ramoche and Jokhang from their countries. Srongtsan Gampo built the Potala and Jokhang temple of Lhasa and 12 other temples all over Tibet. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, his descendant Tibetan King **Trisong Deutsan** invited Abbot **Bodhisatva Shantarakshita** and Indian tantric Master **Padma Sambhava** and many others to propagate Buddhism. He built Samye monastery, and many Tibetan children became monks to study Buddhism. Padma Sambhava controlled all the negative spirits in Tibet. Gradually, Tibetans converted into Buddhism and the land became peaceful.

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism flourished widely and many people who achieved spiritual enlightenment were recorded in history. Before the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Tibetan king Langdarma (Bull King) who had tried to destroy Buddhism, brought the Tibetan monarchic system down. He was killed in 842 A.D because of his destruction of the dharma. Buddhism then almost disappeared from central Tibet. The tantric tradition that has remained is called '**Nyingmapa school**', also called 'elder school'. Its main practice is composed of nine vehicles including Dzogchen. The Nyingmapa's sanga is composed of a particularly important part of lay married yogis along with monks and monasteries with strict discipline.

### New Dharma flourished

The 10<sup>th</sup> century is the revival period of Buddhism after Tibet's dark era. New Buddhism translations appeared and were called 'sarmapa' or 'newer Dharma Schools'. The first and main religious education centre to appear at that time was the Sakyapa order.



### Sakyapa School

Sakyapa tradition called 'sakyapa order' started with great master **Khon Konchogyalpo**, and the monastery in Sakya town was built. Great masters such as Sakyapandita (1150-1203), Drogon Choegyal Phagpalha and Jetsundragpagyaltsan (1147-1216), among others, became the spiritual and political leaders that ruled over Tibet for a long time. Drogon Choegyal Phagpalha Rimpoche then converted Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan and his son who became Buddhists. They offered Tibet to the Drogon Choegyal Phagpalha Rimpoche for his initiation of tantric practice, but the country became independent from Mongolia 82 years later. The Sakyapa order is scholarly studying all secular and Buddhist sutras and tantras called '13 great texts' and is mainly a practice of the Hevajra tantra. It has reached great fame in Tibet in scholastics, the field of philosophy, culture and secular sciences and it has been a great contribution to the practitioners of dharma. The head of the Sakyapa school is Sakya Trizin of Dolma Phodrang now in India and the main center of the order is in Sakya city in Tibet, and in Rajpur in India.

### Kagyupa School



Milarepa<sup>19</sup>

The tradition of meditation started with Master **Marpa Lotsawa** (1012-1096) the great Tibetan translator and meditator. He was born in Lhokha, central Tibet, went several times to India to search the dharma, and met many Indian Buddhist masters, the most essential being Pandit Naropa from whom he received the Naropa's six yoga practice. Back to Tibet he started teaching his knowledge. Many great disciples gathered, such as Gampopa, Tsurton, lama gNogpa and the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa who, following these teachings, achieved enlightenment. This practice of Mahamudra and Naropa's six yogas developed rapidly in Tibet. Marpa's lineage still has a great number of disciples like the stars everywhere in the sky, and practitioners in tummo and tantric yoga. This tradition is called Kagyupa order, as well as 'meditators,' and its head is Gyalwa Karmapa. Tsurphu monastery in Tsang in the northern part of Tibet is the main center of the Kagyupa order.

### Gelugpa School

**Lama Tsongkhapa** (1357-1419) studied all traditions existing in Tibet, and mainly the tripakas of Indian origin translated from Sanskrit. He made great practice of what he learned and received direct instructions from his masters and Buddha Manjushri. He also composed *Lamrim chenmo*, the 'great stages of practice' and *Ngagrim chenmo* for the tantric practice tradition laid down by great Indian Master Atisha Divamkara Shrijyana. He won the title of the 'crown of the Snow Mountain country' and taught widely in central Tibet. His disciples consequently built the monasteries of Ganden, Sera, Drepung and Tashi Lhunpo, two tantric colleges etc. Gelugpas are famous in scholastic philosophy of sutras and tantras. Thousands of monks studied in each monastery the 'five great texts' and the Gelugpa tradition became the biggest spiritual community in Tibet. Lama Tsongkhapa started the 'Lhasa Great Prayer Festival' and rejuvenated the life of Buddhism. The tradition is called 'Gelugpa' which comes from the name of Gandhen monastery in Lhasa and 'yellow hat order' in the West. The main practice of Gelugpa is externally strict sutra discipline with internally tantric practice. The head of the tradition is Gandhen Tripa who is the 'regent of Lama Tsongkhapa' and H.H. the Dalai Lama and H.E. Panchen Lama are highest Gelugpa Lamas in Tibet.



Each order, much influenced by Tibetan culture and environment, comprises many sub-orders carrying their own traditions and practices. Together, they compose Tibetan Buddhism and are in competition like in a horse race for reaching the destination on the path shown by Buddha.

Buddha said

 *“Those disciples of Gotama  
Ever awoken happily  
Whose minds by day and night  
Delight in the practice of non-violence”<sup>20</sup>.*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Sutras are a collection of teachings given by Buddha on various subjects. The sutras collection is one part of the “Three Baskets” of the Kagyur collection. Tantras developed later, around the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and use special methods of meditation with visualization and mantra recitation of a particular deity. According to Mahayana buddhism, tantras were also expounded by Buddha himself but had been kept secret until their exposure.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Sravaka tradition, generally called Hinayana, is one of the buddhist schools and traditions in south east Asian and western countries.*

<sup>3</sup> *Dhammapadha verse 369*

<sup>4</sup> *Kagyur is a collection and translation of Buddha’s teachings, and Tengyur is a collection and translation of Indian Buddhist scholars and pandits’ works on Buddhism.*

<sup>5</sup> *The series of life story of Buddha in Indian Buddhist tradition*

<sup>6</sup> *Parinirvana Sutra*

<sup>7</sup> *Museum guide of Institute of History of Indian Medicine, Hyderabad , India.*

<sup>8</sup> *Xuanzang, A Buddhist pilgrim on the silk road by Sally Hovey Wriggins*

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<sup>9</sup> *Dhammapadha verse 368*

<sup>10</sup> *See detail in Museum guide of Institute of History of Indian Medicine, Hyderabad, India. Also could be one reason of losing the surgery work in Tibetan Medicine.*

<sup>11</sup> *See more details in the commentary of first tantra*

<sup>12</sup> *Where Jeevakamravana can still be seen in the ruins of Kumrahar*

<sup>13</sup> *A vihara is a meditation house for the monks.*

<sup>14</sup> *Dhammapadha verse 294*

<sup>15</sup> *Srang is the Tibetan system of weighing objects. It is like grams. E.g. Karma is equivalent to milligram and Srang is gram, while Dre is to the Kilogram.*

<sup>16</sup> *It is a rather heavy dose, which can only be tolerated by Buddha.*

<sup>17</sup> *More details can be found in the life of Arya Nagarjuna in Taranatha’s History of Buddhism in India pub. by Motilal Banarsiadass, Delhi 1990, Chapter 15, pg. 106.*

<sup>18</sup> *Chudlen-grubpa*

<sup>19</sup> *Collection of Rubin Museum of Art ([www.rmanyc.org](http://www.rmanyc.org)) [www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=65120](http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=65120)*

<sup>20</sup> *Dhammapadha verse 300*

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