

FOUR SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM AND THE FOUR TIBETAN SCHOOLS

The Four Schools of Buddhism

Non-Mahayana

- View of karma and cyclic existence is simpler than that of the later schools and can be of more immediate impact in our daily lives.
- Practitioners work toward achieving individual liberation.

Vaibhashika
(Great
Exposition)

- Belief in the reality of atom-like building blocks
- Searched for the basic building blocks of the universe – and these basic particles were seen as truly existent.
- Only assert the selflessness of persons – not the selflessness of phenomena.
- Realism of Vaibhashika.

Sautrantika
(Sutra)

- Sautrantika is a doctrinal school, rather than a monastic sect.
- Also, searched for the basic building blocks of the universe – and these basic particles were seen as truly existent.
- Also, only assert the selflessness of persons – not the selflessness of phenomena.
- Dinnaga argued that if what exists endures for an infinitely small period of time before ceasing, then it follows that we never really see what we think we see. What we think we see is actually a constructed image, as such a fiction.
- Nirvana is commonly thought of as not a positive thing, but a simple cessation, and hence a mere negation.
- A new understanding about the mind developed and the presentation of Buddhist psychology was standardized.
- Realism of Sautrantika

Mahayana

- Practitioners in the Mahayana tradition work toward attaining full enlightenment in order to free all beings from suffering.

Chittamatra
(Mind Only)
(Yogachara)

- One of the major Mahayana schools in India – the Yogacara school was founded by two brothers, Vasubandu and Asanga in A.D. 400. It had a profound influence on Mahayana, and later, Tibetan Buddhism.
- Asserted that external objects have no reality separate from the consciousness that perceives them.
- Intrinsic reality of external objects is questioned – while the mind is real, the objects perceived by the mind cannot have independent existence because of the very reliance on the mind to ascertain them.
- The Yogacarins believed that everything we know and experience is a manifestation of the mind – their famous formula was Mind Only.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no objective world outside of the mind that perceives it. ▪ The very intelligence that we use to perceive our world is our own little drop of universal mind. ▪ The world is entirely illusory – all the methods we use to measure it and conceptualize it are like trying to grip air in your hand. ▪ The real nature of the world is empty, nothingness. ▪ This can be very liberating, because if the world is illusion, then the enlightened mind has no boundaries – it can deconstruct what seems to be indestructible. Nothing is there to obstruct us; nothing stands in our way. ▪ Consciousness is like the ocean, vast and deep. Waves are like thoughts. They are not different from the ocean, yet they are not the entire nature of the ocean either. They are simply part of it. ▪ Similarly, our thoughts are never all of consciousness, of Mind – yet they are always part of it. Thus we cannot hope to understand the ocean if we only know waves. ▪ Enlightened wisdom is described in positive terms as pure thought. If reality is non-reality, then it is an ultimate state of non-state. This is a positive conception – there is an Absolute Mind, even if it is empty of substance. (This differed from the earlier Hinayana idea of nirvana as extinguishing desires.) ▪ In Yogacara, a mentalistic factor ("Mind") is the one primary existent that serves as the substratum for everything else.
<p>Madhyamaka (Middle Way)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nagarjuna (considered one of the greatest Mahayana thinkers) lived in the 2nd century C.E. and was the founder of the Madhyamaka school. ▪ Their position lies between the <i>eternalism</i> of the first two schools (that sees objects as existing from their own side) and the <i>nihilism</i> of the Chittamatra school that asserts that things and events have no reality at all. ▪ Nagarjuna reinterpreted the Middle Path by stating that it is not simply a choice between luxury and austerity. ▪ The Middle Way is a path between the belief in the existence of things (based on superstition and faith), and the belief that nothing exists. ▪ Nagarjuna pointed out that no position is certain – we are left with a path that takes us between existence and non-existence, reality and illusion: neither and yet both. ▪ In this way, we escape from the delusion of dualistic, either/or thinking. ▪ Unlike Aristotelian logic, which says either a thing is (it exists) or is not (it does not exist), Buddhist logic says things are <i>and</i> they are not. From the perspective of enlightenment, this paradox disappears. ▪ On the relative, everyday level of reality, things do indeed exist. ▪ However, from the enlightened perspective of the absolute, everything is empty of any real, lasting existence. Both and neither are true at the same time. ▪ In Mahhyamika, emptiness is derived from dependent origination. ▪ All things without exception are akin to illusions because all things are without intrinsic nature. All things are only secondary existents – that is, conceptual constructs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are so because they are the results of causes and conditions, they are dependently-originated. Anything that is the result of causes and conditions must of course lack its own <i>intrinsic</i> existence, and hence its own intrinsic nature. ▪ Nagarjuna declares emptiness whenever anything is found to be the result of some sort of causal process. ▪ In this way, the assertions of complete emptiness "like an illusion" in the Prajnaparamita sutras can be demonstrated through reasoning. ▪ However, this is not the same as saying everything simply does not exist at all. ▪ Since emptiness is an implication of dependent origination, for something to be empty entails that such a thing must in some sense <i>exist</i>.
<p>Four Tibetan Schools</p>	
<p>Nyingma School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Founder was Padmasambhava – the first Buddhist to influence Tibet. ▪ Showed Tibetans how to practice Buddhism – and also introduced tantric practices, which were his specialty. ▪ Nyingma has nine sets of teachings, organized and guided by the practice of certain tantras: three common, three outer, three inner. ▪ Deity Yoga is an important part of the Nyingma school – practitioners can identify with and incorporate the best qualities of their guru and the many great Buddhas throughout time. ▪ Nyingmas clear their minds and focus attention on the present moment of experience without conceptualizing what the object of experiencing is. (Distorted, inaccurate perceptions of phenomena transform to accurate perceptions of reality's true nature – a union of luminosity and emptiness free from opposition and polarities without distinctions that could confuse or deceive.) ▪ The goal becomes the path – and the path is not reliant on images or visualizations.
<p>Sakya School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sakya descended from the Khon lineage – the Khon were followers of the Indian yogin Virupa, who taught Drogmi Shakya Yeshe (992-1074). ▪ Drogmi Shakya Yeshe journeyed from Tibet to India to study and brought back to Tibet teachings from Virupa on the Kalachakra, the Path and Fruit, as well as the doctrines of other Indian masters. ▪ An authoritative text for this school is Virupa's <i>Vajra Verses</i>. ▪ The Sakya's central teaching is called Lamdrey, which translates to mean "The Path and Its Fruit". ▪ Path and Fruit teachings direct the student to embrace existence in everyday reality, samsara, as inseparable from nirvana. Path and Fruit doctrine teaches that when Mind is obscured, it forms samsara; when clear, it shows nirvana. ▪ Mind is a union of <i>luminosity</i> and <i>emptiness</i> – and this unity of luminosity and emptiness is a fundamental construct in Sakya doctrine. ▪ Mind is not located in any place – when looked for, it cannot be found (not in your body, nor outside it, and not in the brain).

	<p>Yet, when you seek it, there is no place the Mind is not found. Thus Mind is not anywhere in particular – this is known as <u>non-abiding</u>, one of the characteristics of Mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Mind cannot be known by what it is, but it can be known by what it is not. The essence transcends any attempt to categorize it, and allows you to see through it – thus the characteristic of <u>luminosity</u> can be applied to the Mind.
Kagyü School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marpa Choyi Lodae (1012-1099) and Kyungpo Nyaljor (978-1079) were the founders. Marpa was a translator who traveled three times to India and four times to Nepal for teachings – he studied with 108 spiritual masters, most notably Naropa. ▪ The lineage began in India with Tilopa (988-1069), who had received his teachings from the Indian master Vajradhara – Tilopa passed his teachings to Naropa. ▪ Naropa's enlightenment taught him to develop clear, open self-awareness, like the clear skies. ▪ Naropa taught Marpa six doctrines of tantric yoga that he had learned from Tilopa: yogas of the transference of consciousness, illusory body, dream state, clear light, inner heat, and bardo. ▪ Naropa also taught Marpa the Kalachakra tantra – involving the construction of an elaborate mandala, symbolizing the world of phenomena and enlightenment. (The mandala is a diagram that encodes most of the fundamental insights of Tibetan Buddhism.) ▪ Milarepa (1040-1123), Marpa's student, became one of the greatest Tibetan Buddhist teachers. ▪ The Kagyü school includes both meditation and philosophical training – practitioners extend and develop visionary capacities and the mind. ▪ This school emphasizes the passing along of insight, from teacher to student, called Guru Yoga. The guru is the source of guidance, values, and instruction, giving deep wisdom to the student. (Guru Yoga requires a strong identification with the teacher as spiritual master.) ▪ The core of Kagyü is Mahamudra Yoga – a meditative discipline that puts into practice Yogacara and Madhyamika philosophies. ▪ Since all is Mind, and Mind is empty, all possible content is empty of absolute meaning and reality. ▪ Many varieties of practice can lead to enlightenment – and are all opportunities to actualize enlightenment as a lived and experienced awareness. (Tantric yoga can lead to enlightenment here and now, in this body and life.) ▪ The Kagyü use their carefully trained awareness to transform this body into Buddha – Buddhahood then becomes a means of helping others.
Gelukpa School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The second dissemination of Buddhism into Tibet came from the Indian monk, Atisa (982-1054), one of the greatest teacher-reformers of Tibet. His teachings started the Kadampa school that eventually became the Gelukpa school. ▪ The Gelukpa school was founded by Tsong Kha Pa (1357-1419) – it is an eclectic school based on the Kadampa tradition of Atisa. ▪ All the earlier traditions were integrated together to utilize the best from each.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gelukpas integrate the use of the intellect along with meditation and philosophy.▪ Gelukpas believe that everyone is born with a little enlightenment, possessing intuitive wisdom from childhood. From this small beginning, people can develop and learn, and become fully enlightened.▪ The First Dalai Lama advised: "Practice without bias toward the objects; embrace everything and cherish all from the heart." |
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- Simpkins, C. Alexander and Annellen Simpkins. *Simple Tibetan Buddhism: A Guide to Tantric Living*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2001.
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