



# Glossary of Buddhist Terms



## - A

**Abhidharma (Sanskrit) / Abhidhamma (Pali):** The third of the “Three Baskets” of the Tipitaka (Buddhist scriptures); a systematized compendium of Buddhist philosophy and psychology. In the discourses of the Pali Canon, this term simply means 'higher Dharma,' and a systematic attempt to define the Buddha's teachings and understand their interrelationships.

**Abhisheka:** Empowerment

**Acariya (Pali):** Teacher; mentor.

**Adhitthana (Pali):** Determination; resolution. One of the ten perfections (paramis/paramitas).

**Adibuddha:** The First or Original Buddha. The primordial and eternal Buddha with no beginning or end. He is self-created and originally revealed himself in the form of a blue flame coming out of a lotus. Over time this symbol became personified in the form of the Adibuddha. In Tibetan Buddhism, the Adibuddha is variously referred to as Vajradhara or Samantabhadra/Samantabhadri (these being a male-female pair).

**Afflictions:** Negative emotions. Also see *kleshas*.

**Aggregates:** See *Skandhas*.

**Ah:** The Sanskrit syllable or mantra “Ah” is the essence of all phenomena, known as shunyata or emptiness; the formless ground out of which creation emerges. Ah symbolizes the word or speech of all the Buddhas; the Speech Vajra of the Buddhas. Ah is associated with the Body of Bliss, the color ruby red, and the throat of the tantric practitioner. The syllable Ah helps to dissolve difficulties in speech. It brings awareness of one's speech; words are no longer harmful or confused but filled with the compassion and wisdom that benefits others.

**Ahimsa (Sanskrit):** Non-harming or not hurting; gentleness to all forms of life; harmlessness.

**Ajaan (Thai; also Ajarn or Ajahn):** Teacher; mentor. Equivalent to the Pali 'acariya.'

**Altar:** The altar can consist of several groups of objects. Formally, the altar consists of three objects representing the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha. A statue of a Buddha or Bodhisattva placed in the center. A sacred text representing the speech of the Buddha; this is wrapped in maroon or yellow cloth and placed on the left side. On the right side of the altar, a stupa represents the mind of the Buddha. Pictures may be used as substitutes for all of these objects.

**Amida (Japanese):** Also known as Amitabha. The Buddha of Limitless or Boundless Light. The Buddha who is the main object of devotion in the Pure Land school of Chinese Buddhism, and the Jodo and Shin schools of Japan.

**Amitabha:** The Buddha of Limitless or Boundless Light. He is the Buddha in the Land of Ultimate Bliss (Pure Land), in which all beings enjoy unbounded happiness. Amitabha has forty-eight great vows to establish and adorn his Pure Land. People who also recite or call upon his name, and at the time of death will be born into the Land of Ultimate Bliss with the reception by Amitabha.

**Amitayus:** The Buddha of Long Life, or Boundless Life. A form of Amitabha Buddha.

**Analytical Insight:** The contemplation of the Dharma. This is done by placing the mind in tranquillity meditation (shamatha/shine) and single-pointedly focusing on what one has been taught.

**Anapanasati (Pali):** Mindfulness of breathing. A meditation practice in which one maintains one's attention and mindfulness on the sensations of breathing.

**Anatman (Sanskrit) / Anatta (Pali):** Non-self; non-ego; ownerless; impersonality. The Buddhist negation of the Hindu understanding of Atman (the True Self) as an indestructible and immortal core of personal individuality. However, the Buddhist view of Emptiness (No Self / Ultimate Reality) corresponds exactly with the Hindu view of Atman (the True Self / Ultimate Reality).

**Anicca (Pali):** Inconstant; unsteady; impermanent.

**Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (Pali):** Sanskrit word meaning 'unexcelled complete enlightenment,' which is an attribute of every Buddha. Supreme perfect enlightenment. It is the highest, correct, and complete or universal knowledge or awareness, the perfect wisdom of a Buddha.

**Anuttarayogatantra:** The highest of the four levels of tantras in Vajrayana Buddhism (the Diamond Path). Within the Anuttarayogatantra class, there are three further subdivisions: non-dual tantra, wisdom tantra (mother), and method tantra (father).

**Arhat (Pali: Arahant):** One who has fully awakened to selflessness, who has eradicated all selfish passions and desires. One who has “conquered the enemy” of ignorance and misperception which keep one locked in samsara/suffering and rebirth. A 'worthy one' or 'pure one.' A person whose mind is free of defilement (kilesa/klesha), who has abandoned all ten of the fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, whose heart is free of mental defilements, and who is thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

**Ariya-sacca (Pali):** Noble Truth. The word “ariya” (noble) can also mean ideal or standard, and in this context means 'objective' or 'universal truth.' There are four noble truths: the truth of stress (suffering), the truth of the origin of stress, the truth of the ending of stress, and the truth of the path of practice leading to the ending of stress.

**Asanga:** The 4th century Indian master who founded the Yogacara or Mind Only School of Buddhist philosophy. He is said to have directly received the instructions of the celestial Bodhisattva Maitreya, which he transcribed in the form of five works known as the Five Treatises of Maitreya.

**Ashoka:** A Buddhist monarch of 300 B.C., the third emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty, who unified most of India under his rule and fostered the dissemination of Buddhism. It is said that the Third Council was held during his reign. Ashoka set the model for many other rulers who sought to govern in accordance with Buddhist philosophy.

**Asura:** Demi-gods of the desire realm are called Asuras. A race of beings who, like the Titans of Greek mythology, fought the devas for sovereignty over the heavens and lost. Asuras populate one of the six lower realms of samsara. Asuras are typically depicted as titans or warrior demons.

**Atisha (AD 982-1054):** A famous Indian Buddhist scholar and meditation master. He was Abbot of the great Buddhist monastery of Vikramashila at the time when Mahayana Buddhism was flourishing in India. He was later invited to Tibet and his arrival there led to the re-establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. He is the author of the first text on the stages of the path, Lamp for the Path. His tradition later became known as the Kadampa Tradition.

**Atman (Sanskrit):** The True Self. A permanent Self or Soul which exists before and after death according to the Hindu tradition.

**Attachment:** A deluded mental factor or perception that observes a person or object and regards it as a cause or source of happiness, and wishes for it.

**Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit) / Chenrezig (Tibetan):** The Buddha of Universal Compassion and Mercy. "He who hears the cries of the world" and attends to the suffering of the sentient beings who populate the universe. Avalokiteshvara is one of the most popular Bodhisattvas found in Mahayana Sutras. In Chinese Buddhism, Avalokiteshvara is known as Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, and is female in the Chinese traditions.

**Avidya (Sanskrit) / Avijja (Pali):** Unawareness; ignorance; nescience; obscured awareness; delusion about the nature of the mind. Ignorance is the primary root of all evil and suffering in the world.

**Awakening:** Spiritual realization; complete purity and wisdom. The ultimate goal of Buddhist practice. Full liberation from ignorance and suffering. Purified of all obscurations, defilements, and misperceptions of reality. The development of all perfect qualities and wisdom. Also see *Enlightenment*.

## - B

**Bardo:** Literally, "between two." Six bardos are usually spoken of in the Vajrayana teachings: In the west, bardo usually refers only to the states between death and rebirth. These states are no more and no less illusory than dreams and ordinary waking consciousness.

**Bell:** Paired with the vajra (dorje or lightning-bolt), the bell represents wisdom, and as wisdom and method are an undivided unity, so the dorje and bell are never parted or employed separately. The hollow of the bell symbolizes the wisdom recognizing emptiness. The clapper represents the sound of emptiness. The vase represents the vase containing the nectar of accomplishment.

**Bhakti (Sanskrit):** Devotion. The path of devotion and love. Seeing and being devoted to all beings as the manifestation of the Divine.

**Bhante (Pali):** Venerable sir; often used when addressing a Buddhist monk.

**Bhava:** Becoming. States of being that develop first in the mind and can then be experienced as internal worlds and/or as worlds on an external level. There are three levels of becoming: on the sensual level, the level of form, and the level of formlessness.

**Bhavana (Sanskrit and Pali):** Mental cultivation or development; meditation. Literally, "calling into existence; producing."

**Bhiksu (Sanskrit) / Bhikkhu (Pali):** A Buddhist monk; a man who has given up the householder's life to live a life of heightened virtue (sila) in accordance with the Vinaya in general, and the Patimokkha rules in particular. One of the four primary classes of Buddhist disciples, the male who has taken the monastic precepts.

**Bhiksuni (Sanskrit) / Bhikkhuni (Pali):** A Buddhist nun; a woman who has given up the householder's life to live a life of heightened virtue in accordance with the Vinaya in general, and the Patimokkha rules in particular. One of the four primary classes of Buddhist disciples, the female who has taken the monastic precepts.

**Bhumi:** Literally "ground." Refers to one of the ten stages of realization and activity through which a Bodhisattva progresses towards enlightenment. The Ten Bhumis or Stages of the Bodhisattva are as follows: 1) Supremely Joyful, 2) The Stainless or Renounce the Defilement, 3) The Illuminating, 4) The Radiant or Burning Wisdom, 5) Very Difficult To Train For, 6) The Manifesting or The Appearance, 7) The Far Going or Far From the World Journey, 8) The (Unwavering, 9) Excellent Intelligence, 10) Cloud of Dharma or Dharma Cloud.

**Bodhi:** Awakening. Bodhi has traditionally been translated as 'enlightenment'. Bodhi is the direct insight into reality which destroys the ignorance of mental afflictions and misperceptions, bringing true peace and wisdom. As such, it is the goal of personal practice for the Buddhist and the nurturing of bodhi in all living beings is one's foremost dedication.

**Bodhicitta:** The awakened heart-mind of love, wisdom, and compassion. Mind of enlightenment. Bodhi means enlightenment, and chitta means mind. Generally speaking, the term 'bodhichitta' refers to the mind which is motivated by the great compassion that spontaneously seeks enlightenment to benefit all living beings.

**Bodhidharma (470-543):** Bodhidharma is credited with bringing Zen Buddhism to China, being the First Patriarch of the

Chinese Zen Lineage. Bodhidharma's Buddhist Master, Prajnatarā, was the 27th Patriarch of Indian Buddhism. He taught Bodhidharma for many years, gave him Mind Transmission, made him the 28th Patriarch, and gave him the name Bodhidharma. Following the instruction of his Master to transmit Dharma to China, Bodhidharma traveled east to Southern China in 526 A.D.

**Bodhisattva (Sanskrit) / Bodhisatta (Pali):** One who has taken the great vow to rescue all beings from suffering and guide them to enlightenment. A being striving for awakening. The term used to describe the Buddha before he actually becomes Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full awakening.

**Bodhisattva-mahasattva:** The suffix mahasattva ('Great Being') signifies a bodhisattva whose awakening is very advanced, approaching that of a Buddha.

**Bodhisattva Vow:** This Vow is essential to Mahayana Buddhism, and thus also to Tibetan Buddhism. Various forms are current. The essence of the Bodhisattva Vow is: May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Here is another form of the Vow: However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to liberate them all. However inexhaustible the defilements (kleshas) are, I vow to extinguish them. However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them all. However incomparable enlightenment is, I vow to attain it. This Vow may be used as often as one wishes.

**Bodhi Tree or Bo Tree:** Sacred fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*), under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. This type of tree was referred to as pippala or ashvattha in Sanskrit. Since Shakyamuni attained enlightenment under this tree, it became known as the Bodhi (enlightenment) tree.

**Bon-po (Tibetan):** The oldest spiritual tradition and indigenous religion of Tibet. The ancient roots of the Bon religion derive from a profound respect for nature and emphasize the healing of physical and environmental as well as spiritual afflictions. As Indian Buddhism was being established in Tibet, a number of native Bon elements were assimilated into Buddhist practice, resulting in the distinct religion known today as Tibetan Buddhism.

**Brahma:** Great One. An inhabitant of the non-sensual heavens of form or formlessness. One of the three major deities of Hinduism, along with Vishnu and Shiva. Adopted as one of the protective deities of Buddhism.

**Brahman:** The highest of the four castes in ancient India at the time of Shakyamuni. The priestly caste. They served Brahma with offerings and were the keepers of the Vedas. The Brahman caste of India has long maintained that its members, by their birth, are worthy of the highest respect. Buddhism borrowed the term Brahman to apply to those who have attained the goal, to show that respect is earned not by birth, race, or caste, but by spiritual attainment. Used in the Buddhist sense, this term is synonymous with arahant or arhat.

**Brahmaviharas:** The "sublime" or "divine abodes" that are attained through the development of boundless metta (loving-kindness, goodwill), karuna (compassion), mudita (appreciative or altruistic joy), and upekkha (equanimity).

**Buddha (Sanskrit) / Sangye (Tibetan):** Awake; one who knows; the awakened one; one who represents the state of enlightenment or awakening. The name denotes a state of mind. 'Sang' means 'fully' or 'perfectly purified' of all obscurations. 'Gye' means 'perfect unfoldment' or the 'full development' of all enlightened qualities and wisdom. The name given to one who rediscovers for himself the liberating path of Dharma, after a long period of its having been forgotten by the world. According to tradition, there is a long line of Buddhas stretching into the distant past. The most recent Buddha was born Siddhartha Gautama in India in the 6th century BCE.

**Buddhahood:** See *Enlightenment*.

**Buddha-land:** A land that is spiritually pure due to the presence of a Buddha. Also known as a pure land.

**Buddha Nature:** The internal cause or potential for attaining Buddhahood. Also referred to as the Seed of Buddhahood or Matrix of the Tathagata. Mahayana generally holds that all people possess the Buddha Nature inherently, although it may be obscured by delusion and negative karmic tendencies.

**Buddha Rupa:** an image of the Buddha.

**Buddhi:** Intuitive awareness, true intelligence, that mental faculty capable of the most profound insight.

**Buddhism:** The teachings of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, are the basis of what is called Buddhism. Buddhism can be subdivided into Hinayana (the Small Way), Mahayana (the Great Way), and Vajrayana (The Diamond Way).

**Buddhist:** Anyone who from the depths of their heart goes for refuge to the Three Jewels—Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

**Buddho:** Awake; enlightened. An epithet for the Buddha.

**Butsu (Japanese):** Buddha.

- C

**Central Channel:** This is a subtle energy channel of the body which is roughly located along the spine.

**Chakra / Cakra (Sanskrit):** Dharma wheel. Energy centers located along the spinal column in the subtle body, having a direct relationship to the endocrine glands of the physical body.

**Chakrasamvara:** Also known as Heruka, Chakrasamvara is a meditation deity of the Anuttarayogatantra class. The study and practice of this tantra is widespread in the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, while related forms known as Buddhasamayoga and Shriheruka are well-known within the Nyingma tradition.

**Ch'an (Chinese) / Zen (Japanese):** Dhyana; meditation; concentration. Also see *Zen*.

**Chenrezig (Tibetan):** See *Avalokiteshvara*.

**Chod (Tibetan):** 'To cut off.' Chod refers to a practice that is designed to cut off all ego involvement and defilement. The practice was founded by the famous female saint Machig Labdron in the 11th Century.

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**Citta:** Mind; heart; state of consciousness.

**Cittamatra (Sanskrit):** 'Mind Only' School. More accurately, a group of schools of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy stressing the fundamental role of consciousness (citta) in creating our experience of reality. This is one of the major schools in the Mahayana tradition, founded in the fourth century by Asanga, emphasizing everything is mental events.

**Clear Light:** The state of mind wherein the highest realization is attained.

**Coemergent Wisdom:** The advanced realization of the inseparability of samsara (suffering) and nirvana (peace) and how these arise simultaneously and together.

**Compassion:** The mind that cannot bear the suffering of others and wishes them to be free from it. To vibrate in sympathy with others. True compassion is guided by wisdom and love, not emotional reaction and pity.

**Contemplation:** Abstract contemplation. There are four levels through which the mind frees itself from all subjects and objective hindrances and reaches a state of absolute indifference and annihilation of thought, perception, and will. Also see *Meditation*.

**Cyclic Existence:** The cycle of death and rebirth, which is influenced by the power of delusion and karma. The cycle of death and rebirth is fraught with the dissatisfaction and suffering which arises from ignorance of the true nature of reality. Also see *Samsara*.

## - D

**Daka:** A male counterpart to a dakini.

**Dakini:** A female emanation of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. In Tantric Buddhism, divine wrathful beings believed to be intermediaries between practitioners and the transcendental Buddhas. Female initiatory deity in Vajrayana Buddhism; some human women are regarded as incarnate dakinis.

**Dalai Lama:** Spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet, recognized as an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara the Buddha of Compassion.

**Dana (Sanskrit and Pali):** Giving; charity; offering; alms; gift; donation. The altruistic inclination to give, without expecting any form of repayment from the recipient. Dana is the first theme in the Buddha's system of gradual training, the first of the six paramitas/paramis.

**Dedication of Merit:** The act of devoting or dedicating the merit produced by one's positive actions to a specific goal. The highest form of dedication is to have the intention that the merit of one's positive actions or spiritual practice is dedicated to awakening so one may better assist the awakening of others; or that one's merit is simply dedicated to the ending of suffering and the awakening of all living beings.

**Deity:** See *Yidam*.

**Dependent Origination:** The principal that nothing exists independently, but comes into existence only in dependence upon various previous causes and conditions. There are twelve successive phases of this process that begin with ignorance and end with old age and death.

**Desire:** According to the Hinayana teachings, since earthly desires, and the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion, generally obscure the Buddha Nature and are an obstacle to spiritual practice, one must eliminate them all in order to attain enlightenment. In the light of the Lotus Sutra, however, earthly desires and enlightenment are not different in their fundamental essence. 'Earthly desires are enlightenment' is a principle which teaches that one can attain Buddhahood by transforming defilements, delusion, and innate earthly desires into enlightened wisdom rather than extinguishing them.

**Desire Realm:** One of the three realms of cyclic existence mentioned in Buddhist scriptures. This is a realm where beings enjoy five external sense objects: form, sound, smell, touch, and taste. There are six realms within this desire realm: god, demigod, and human, which are the happy or higher realms, and the animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms, which are the unhappy or lower realms.

**Deva (Devata):** Literally, "shining one." An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.

**Dhamma (Pali):** See *Dharma*.

**Dhammapada (Pali) / Dharmapada (Sanskrit):** A sutra consisting of two sections and 39 chapters, with 423 short verses of the Buddha, and teachings given at various times and places. It is regarded as the original teaching of the Buddha, which can be used for reference, moral instruction, and inspiration.

**Dhamma-vinaya (Pali):** Doctrine (dhamma/dharma) and discipline (vinaya). The Buddha's own name for the religion he founded.

**Dharani (Sanskrit):** A formula, said to protect one who recites it. Also said to benefit one's progress towards awakening by virtue of its mystical power. The word dharani literally means "to preserve and uphold" the Buddha's teachings in one's heart. Dharanis are recited in Sanskrit and sometimes have no literal meaning. They are especially valued in esoteric Buddhism.

**Dharma (Sanskrit) / Dhamma (Pali):** The word 'dharma' derives from the Sanskrit 'dhri' which means to preserve, maintain, keep, uphold. 'Dharma' has a great variety of meanings, including law, truth, doctrine, the Buddha's teaching, steadfast decree, customary observance, prescribed conduct, duty, virtue, morality, good deeds, religion, justice, nature, quality, character, characteristic, essential quality, elements of existence, ultimate constituents of things. 'Dharma' also refers to that which subsists; event, a phenomenon in and of itself; principles of behavior that human beings should follow

so as to be in accordance with the right and natural order of reality; righteous living. Dharma is the underlying meaning of the Buddhas' teachings; that truth upon which all Buddhist practices, scriptures, and philosophy have as a foundation.

**Dharmadhatu:** The essence and spacious character of all phenomena. The true nature of phenomena, which is like that of all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning.

**Dharmakaya:** One of the three bodies of the Buddha. Literally, "body of the law." Truth or Reality Body of the Buddha. Body of the Great Order. This is the state of Buddhahood itself; the essential nature of mind or emptiness; identical with Reality; the essential laws of the universe. The Dharmakaya represents the law (dharma), the teaching expounded by the Buddha. The experience is timeless, permanent, devoid of characteristics and free from duality.

**Dharmata:** The essence of all phenomenon. A combination of form and emptiness. Suchness; the true nature of things; things as they are. Refers to the true nature of existence.

**Dharma Wheel:** The "Dharma Wheel" or "Wheel of Dharma" is a metaphor for the unfolding and maturation of the Dharma in the world, once it has been revealed by a Buddha. 'Setting the Dharma Wheel in motion' is another way of saying revealing and propagating the Dharma.

**Dhatu:** Element; property, impersonal condition. The four physical elements or properties are earth (solidity), water (liquidity), wind (motion), and fire (heat). The six elements include the above four plus space and consciousness.

**Dhyana (Sanskrit):** Meditation; concentration. The practice of focusing the mind on one point in order to purify one's heart, eradicate illusions, and perceive the ultimate truth. Practiced widely in India before Shakyamuni, meditation acquired new significance as the fifth of the six paramitas in Buddhism. In China the Ch'an (Zen) school was established with meditation as its sole practice for attaining enlightenment. Dhyana is the Sanskrit word of which Ch'an and Zen are Chinese and Japanese transliterations.

**Dogen Zenji:** Founder of the Japanese Soto school of Zen. He established Eihei-ji, the principal Soto training monastery of Japan. He is the author of the *Shobogenzo*.

**Dojo (Japanese):** Spot or place of enlightenment of the Buddha under the bodhi tree; one's own place of enlightenment; the training center.

**Dokusan (Japanese):** To go alone; to work alone; the personal interview between the teacher (Roshi) and student.

**Dorje (Tibetan) / Vajra (Sanskrit):** See *Vajra*.

**Duality / Dualistic Perception:** A confused perception of reality that does not recognize the interdependent and inherently unified nature of all existing things. Dualistic perception is the result of partial or incomplete knowledge which arises from one's mind creating separation between subject and object. For example, the wrong or dualistic view of seeing oneself as separate from others or from nature.

**Dukkha (Pali):** Stress; suffering; dissatisfaction; discontent. Unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the way things are. The inherent insecurity, instability, and imperfection of conditioned existence and phenomena. A central factor in the human condition; one of the 'three marks of existence.' Dukkha is the First Noble Truth. However, Buddha did not say "life is suffering." In relation to material existence, he used the word 'dukkha,' which is to say this impermanent and ever-changing existence is 'incapable of providing constant satisfaction' for our self-centered desires and expectations.

**Dzogchen (Tibetan):** "The Great Perfection" or "Great Completion." The Dzogchen teachings have been passed down in an unbroken line from teacher to student from the Primordial Buddha Samatabhadra to the present day, retaining all their freshness, immediacy and power. According to H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: "Dzogchen is the primordial state, that state of total awakening that is the heart-essence of all buddhas and all spiritual paths, and the summit of an individual's spiritual evolution." Dzogchen is one of the highest teachings of the Nyingmapa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Regarded as a final and higher teaching to be undertaken as the culmination of Tantric practice. In Dzogchen teachings, all phenomenon are regarded as being originally pure; the Primordial State of Buddhahood is revealed as none other than one's immediate experience. This inherent purity of all things and all beings, beyond all time, conditioning, and conceptual limitations, is the natural, spontaneous, and great perfection of Dzogchen.

- E

**Eight Auspicious Symbols:** A Tibetan tradition identifies the eight auspicious symbols as forming the body of the Buddha. *White Conch Shell:* symbolizes the deep, far-reaching, and melodious sound of the Dharma teachings, which being appropriate to different natures, predispositions, and aspirations of disciples, awakens them from the deep slumber of ignorance and urges them to accomplish their own and others' welfare. *Precious Umbrella:* symbolizes the wholesome activity of protecting and preserving beings from the heat of suffering, desire, illness, harmful forces, and other obstacles. *Victory Banner:* symbolizes the victory of the activity of body, speech, and mind over all obstacles and negativities. It also stands for the complete victory of the Buddhist doctrine over all harmful and pernicious forces. *Two Golden Fish:* symbolizes the auspiciousness of all living beings in a state of fearlessness, without danger of drowning in the ocean of sufferings, and migrating from place to place freely and spontaneously, just as fish swim freely without fear through water. *Golden Wheel:* symbolizes the auspiciousness of the turning of the precious wheel of Buddha's doctrine, both in its teachings and realizations, in all realms and at all times, enabling beings to experience the joy of wholesome deeds and liberation. *Endless Knot:* symbolizes the mutual dependence of religious doctrine and secular affairs. Similarly, it represents the complete union of wisdom and great compassion. *Lotus Flower:* symbolizes the complete purification of the defilements of the body, speech, and mind, and the full blossoming of wholesome deeds in blissful liberation. *Treasure Vase:* symbolises an endless rain of long life, wealth, and prosperity and all the benefits of this world and liberation.

**Eightfold Path / Noble Eightfold Path:** The Eightfold Path offered by Shakyamuni Buddha whereby one may achieve liberation from suffering and attain full awakening. Eight factors of spiritual practice leading to the extinction of suffering: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. It is important to realize that no matter how profound one's conceptual knowledge of this Path may be, this will not be sufficient for true accomplishment. It is essential that one follow, cultivate, and practice this Noble Path with diligence, sincerity, and full confidence.

**Eight Worldly (Mundane) Concerns:** The eight mundane concerns arise in connection with worldly or material life, they are: Gain and loss, honor and dishonor, happiness and misery, praise and blame.

**Empowerment:** Ritual initiation into a particular practice of meditation, conferred by a lama who is part of a lineage and thus himself a recipient and practitioner of such transmissions. Authorization to engage in the meditative practice is not complete without the formal instruction and textual transmission. The purpose of an empowerment is to ripen one's mindstream for Tantric practice by making a connection with the particular deity. Normally, if you take a Tantric empowerment, you must take vows and/or promise to do certain meditation practices daily. If you do not wish to take the commitments, you can simply take the empowerment as a blessing, thus creating a karmic connection with that particular Tantric deity and practice.

**Emptiness:** Shunyata (Sanskrit), Sunyata (Pali). A description of enlightenment. The ultimate nature of all phenomena. The actual way in which all things exist. To the western mind, the idea of Emptiness is often difficult to understand, leading to the notion that it is 'nothing,' and therefore quite unattractive. However, emptiness can be understood as the Buddhist way of saying that Ultimate Reality is incapable of being described, much the way that Christian theologians view God as beyond human description. Emptiness should not be thought of as another location. Instead, it is identical to the world or universe humans experience in this life. In this way, it is much like the Hindu notion that this world is simply maya (illusion), which prevents humans from seeing the true unity of the cosmos (which in Hinduism means the identity of Atman and Brahman, the True Self, God is everything and everyone). Thus Emptiness and the phenomena of this world are the same. As the Heart Sutra says, "form is emptiness, emptiness is form."

**Enlightenment:** The full enlightenment of Buddhahood. Awakening. Enlightenment is the full liberation from and a true cessation of ignorance and suffering. The Tibetan word for Buddha, 'sangye,' is made up of two syllables that illustrates the two aspects of Buddhahood. Sang means 'fully purified,' that is, purified of all obscurations, including the sleep of ignorance. Gye means 'fully developed' and refers to the development of all perfect qualities and wisdom. Enlightenment or Buddhahood is a state of complete purity and wisdom.

**Equanimity:** An impartial and imperturbable composure of heart. A love that embraces all living beings and circumstances with equality, wisdom, and complete serenity. With this sublime quality of equanimity our love is impartial, rightly discerning, balanced, not carried away by emotion, and free of attachment. Equanimity is the essential foundation on which one develops the compassionate motivation of a Bodhisattva.

- F

**Five Hindrances:** Nivarana in Pali. The Five Hindrances are the hindrances to concentration; the five qualities which are obstacles to the Path and blind our mental vision. They are: 1) sensuous desire; 2) ill-will; 3) sloth and torpor (drowsiness); 4) restlessness and worry (anxiety); 5) skeptical doubt (uncertainty).

**Five Precepts or Five Training Rules:** The five basic guidelines for training oneself in wholesome actions of body and speech: (1) refraining from killing other beings; (2) refraining from stealing; (3) refraining from sexual misconduct; (4) refraining from lying and false speech; (5) refraining from using intoxicants that cloud the mind.

**Formless Realm:** In this realm, which is further beyond the desire realm than the form realm, beings have renounced form and exist only within the stream of consciousness. Although they have temporarily abandoned attachment to form pleasures, their minds are still bound by subtle desire and attachment to mental states and ego. Therefore, this formless realm is still within samsara (cyclic existence).

**Form Realm:** One of the three realms of cyclic existence beyond the desire realm. Here beings have renounced the enjoyment of external sense objects, yet still have attachment to internal form, that is, their own body and mind.

**Foundation of Mindfulness:** See *Satipatthana*.

**Four Noble Truths:** The fundamental doctrine of Shakyamuni Buddha, the foundation of all Dharma teachings. 1) The Truth of Suffering and Dissatisfaction (Stress). 2) The Truth of the Origin of Suffering and Dissatisfaction (Stress). 3) The Truth of the Ending of Suffering and Dissatisfaction (Stress). 4) The Truth of the Path Leading to End of Suffering and Dissatisfaction (Stress).

- G

**Gampopa (1079-1153):** One of the great fathers of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He was the most famous disciple of Jetsun Milarepa and teacher of the first Karmapa. Gampopa is known for blending two traditions, the Kadampa lineage of Atisha and the Mahamudra lineage transmitted to him by Milarepa. He founded the first Kagyu monastery in Tibet.

**Gassho (Japanese):** To join the palms in reverence or respect.

**Garuda:** An ancient Indian mythological bird that hatches full-grown from the egg and thus symbolizes the awakened state of mind.

**Gelugpa / Geluk (Tibetan):** “The Virtuous Order.” The “reformed” sect of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Lama Tsong Khapa and his disciples in the early 15th century. Also referred to as the Yellow Hat sect. The head of the Gelugpa lineage is the Dalai Lama.

**Genjokoan:** Realization of Ultimate Reality or The Way of Everyday Life. One of the key chapters of Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo; an important Soto Zen text which subtly explores the relationship between practice and realization.

**Geshe:** Originally, this term referred to one who is qualified as a spiritual friend. In the Gelug tradition, it is now used as a title for one who has mastered Buddhist philosophy and meditation techniques. 'Doctor of Buddhism.'

**God Realm:** There are three god realms of various kinds, one is in the desire realm, the other two are in the form and formless realms.

**Graduated Path:** “Lamrim” in Tibetan. The teachings outlining the progressive training of the mind leading to enlightenment.

**Guhyasamaja (Sanskrit):** The essential tantric practice at the highest level of tantra. This practice is based on meditation upon a specific tantric deity named Guhyasamaja, meaning ‘collection or containing the whole essence of the highest tantric practice.’

**Guru (Sanskrit):** Spiritual teacher and guide. Also see *Lama*.

**Guru Rinpoche:** See *Padmasambhava*.

**Guru Yoga:** A form of meditation through which one realizes that one's own mind (essential nature) is inseparable from the mind of the teacher/guru and inseparable from ultimate reality; enlightenment. One of the four preliminary practices (ngondro).

## - H

**Hara (Japanese):** The center of gravity of the body, located deep inside the lower abdomen, a few inches below the navel. The center of awareness in zazen meditation.

**Heart Sutra:** A distillation of the vast Prajnaparamita literature, it is chanted daily in Zen monasteries.

**Hell Realm:** The lowest of the realms within the desire realm.

**Higher Realms:** The god, demigod, and human realms, which are all part of cyclic existence or samsara.

**Hinayana:** Of the three Buddhist vehicles (yana) of practice, the three being Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana (also called Tantrayana). Hinayana literally means “lesser vehicle.” However, this term should not be taken in a way that diminishes the importance of these teachings. In fact, the teachings of the Hinayana are very important because they suit the capacities and development of a great number of students. As the ancient form of Buddhism, Hinayana has its origins around 500 BC. It is still found in Sri Lanka and most of Southeast Asia. The Theravada school of today is a descendent of the Hinayana. The fundamental teachings of the Hinayana are the main subject matter of the first dharmacakra or turning of the wheel of dharma. These teachings include The Four Noble Truths and Noble Eightfold Path, Interdependent Origination, Selflessness, Impermanence, and so forth.

**Hotoke: (Japanese)** Buddha.

**Hum or Hung:** A mantra or mantric syllable regarded as the 'Essence of all Buddhas' (vajra spirit). The non-dual wisdom of the Buddhas. Hum/Hung symbolizes the integration of the universal/absolute into the individual. It is the inseparability of emptiness and bliss. Hum/Hung is often used at the end of mantras as the spiritual achievement of one's intentions, bringing the absolute into form; corresponding in a certain way to the word Amen of the Christian. Hum/Hung is associated with the heart center and the color deep blue. Practice with this mantra dissolves harmful and disturbing thoughts and feelings and brings spontaneous joy.

## - I

**Insight Meditation (Sanskrit: Vipashyana):** Meditation that develops insight into the nature of mind. The other main meditation is shamatha meditation. Also see *Vipashyana*.

## - J

**Jataka:** Birth Stories. Stories of the previous lives of Shakyamuni Buddha. A collection of 547 such stories contained in the Pali canon is also called Jataka. The stories depict the series of good acts by which Shakyamuni was able to be reborn as the Buddha in India.

**Jhana (Sanskrit: Dhyana):** Mental absorption. An advanced state of strong concentration or samadhi, wherein the mind becomes absorbed into its meditation subject (such as the breath). It is divided into four levels, each level progressively more refined than the previous one.

**Jiriki (Japanese):** The way of salvation by *self-power* or self-effort as distinguished from Tariki, the way of salvation by *other-power* or an external savior.

**Jnana:** Wisdom; higher intellect.

**Jodo Shinshu Buddhism (Japanese):** True Sect of the Pure Land; one of the Pure Land Schools. Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, or Shin Buddhism, is based upon the teachings and writings of Shinran Shonin (1173-1262). Shinran expounded the 'True Pure Land Way,' or the path whose practice is total faith in and reliance upon Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. Jodo Shinshu Buddhism teaches that faith in Amida (Amitabha) Buddha cuts the bonds to our negative karma from the infinite past and into the infinite future. In this school of Buddhism, one's faith is expressed by the grateful recitation of the 'Nembutsu,' pronounced 'Namu Amida Butsu' in Japanese, which means: I take refuge in Amida Buddha.

**Jukai (Japanese):** The ceremony of becoming a Buddhist.

## - K

**Kadampa Buddhism:** A Mahayana Buddhist school founded by the great Indian Buddhist Master Atisha (AD 982-1054). His followers are known as 'Kadampas.' 'Ka' means 'word' and refers to Buddha's teachings, and 'dam' refers to Atisha's special Lamrim instructions, known as 'the stages of the path to enlightenment.' The Kadampa tradition was later promoted widely in Tibet by Je Tsongkhapa and his followers, who were known as the 'New Kadampas.'

**Kagyupa or Kagyu:** One of the four main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism founded in the 11th century by the great Tibetan yogi, Marpa the Translator. The lineage continued through Milarepa, Gampopa, and their followers. The other three lineages of Tibetan Buddhism are the Nyingma, Sakya, and Gelugpa.

**Kalachakra:** Literally, "wheel of time." Kalachakra is one of the most well-known meditation deities of Anuttarayogatantra. The Kalachakra Tantra is also a complex teaching which embraces the Buddhist systems of cosmology, astrology, astronomy, history, psychology, subtle energy systems, and spiritual practice in one coherent system. Kalachakra is also associated with the myth of Shambhala.

**Kalpa:** A vast expanse of time; an eon. In Indian creation mythology, the duration of the world consists of four asankhya kalpas, during which the world arises, subsists, decays, and is destroyed. Then, the cycle is renewed.

**Kama (Sanskrit):** Desire of the senses, especially sexual desire. The craving which arises from the false belief in an ego or self separate from the rest of manifestation.

**Kamma(Pali):** See *Karma*.

**Kanzeon (Japanese):** Avalokitesvara; "One Who Perceives (Hears) the Sounds (Cries) of the World." Embodiment of mercy and compassion.

**Karma:** Actions or volitional activities. The cosmic law of cause and effect. Every deed has its consequences as determined by the person's intention. Through the force of intention we perform actions with our body, speech, and mind, and all of these actions produce effects. The effect of virtuous actions is happiness and the effect of negative actions is suffering. Intentional acts that result in states of being and birth.

**Karmapa:** Spiritual head of the Kagyu lineage. The Karmapas embody all Buddha activity. This is expressed in the name itself, since 'karma' means 'activity.' The first Karmapa, Tüsum Khyempa (1110-1193) was Gampopa's main disciple. Before his death, he left behind a letter explaining the precise circumstances of his next rebirth. In accordance with his description, the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1206-1283) was born deliberately as an incarnation of the first. He was the first incarnation to be recognized in Tibetan history. Since that time, the Kagyu lineage has been transmitted by the Karmapas, with each successive Karmapa leaving behind specific instructions concerning his next incarnation.

**Karuna: Compassion;** sympathy; the aspiration to find a way to be truly helpful to oneself and others. One of the ten perfections (paramis/paramitas) and one of the four 'sublime abodes' (brahma-vihara).

**Katsu (Japanese):** The shout given by Zen teachers.

**Kaya:** Body. Usually refers to the physical body (rupa-kaya, but sometimes refers to the mental body (nama-kaya).

**Kensho (Japanese):** "Seeing into one's own nature." The first experience of realization and enlightenment. Kensho and Satori have virtually the same meaning and are often used interchangeably. Also see *Satori*.

**Khandhas (Pali):** See *Skandhas*.

**Ki or Chi (Japanese):** Breath; spirit; spiritual strength.

**Kinhin (Japanese):** Meditative walk; the formal group walk between periods of zazen. Walking meditation.

**Klesha (Sanskrit) / Kilesa (Pali):** Defilement. Passion, aversion, and delusion in their various forms, including such things as greed, malevolence, anger, resentment, hypocrisy, arrogance, envy, miserliness, dishonesty, boastfulness, obstinacy, violence, pride, conceit, intoxication, and complacency.

**Koan or Kung-an (Japanese):** In Zen Buddhism, a koan is a word, or a phrase, or a story expressed in seeming irrational language which cannot be solved by intellectual/conceptual processes, but whose meaning must burst upon the mind directly. Because the koan does not succumb to conceptual analysis, it requires a more direct response from the meditator; it is used as an exercise in breaking down false thinking and developing deep intuition and awareness.

**Kshanti:** Patience; forbearance. One of the six paramitas/paramis (perfections).

**Kshitigarbha:** Also known as "Jizo." In Chinese, "Ti Ts'ang." "He Who is the Earth's Treasure House." A Bodhisattva who is the embodiment of benevolence and kindness and a special protector of children, animals, travelers, and pregnant women. **Ku (Japanese):** Sky; shunyata; emptiness; the void.

**Kundalini (Sanskrit):** Life-force. Blissful energy dormant within the physical body, aroused through tantric practice and used to generate penetrative insight into the true nature of reality.

## - L

**Lama (Tibetan) / Guru (Sanskrit):** The title for an experienced and highly learned religious teacher, especially of Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism. Can also be the head or leading figure within a spiritual community. A properly qualified performer of Tantric ritual. The word 'lama' alludes to the compassion a mother has for her only child.

**Lamrim:** Literally "the stages of the path." A special arrangement of all Buddha's teaching that is easy to understand and put into practice. It reveals all the stages of the path to enlightenment. **Law of Causal Condition:** The fundamental

doctrine of Buddhism that all phenomena in the universe are produced by causation. Since all phenomena result from the complicated causes and effects, all existing things in the universe are interdependent (i.e., no self nature or existence on its own). Moreover, all phenomena and things are impermanent (changing constantly). It was to this law that Shakyamuni was awakened when he attained enlightenment.

**Law of Dependent Origination / Pratitya-Samutpada (Sanskrit) / Paticcasamuppada (Pali):** Also known as Dependent Causation; Conditioned Co-arising. A fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the interdependence of all things. It teaches that all beings and phenomena exist or occur only because of their relationship with other beings or phenomena. Therefore, nothing can exist in absolute independence of other things or arise of its own accord.

**Liberation:** The state of complete freedom from suffering and its causes (ignorance/misperception of reality, selfish desire, attachment, and negative actions).

**Lotus Sutra:** Short name of the “Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law,” or Saddharma-pundarik-sutra in Sanskrit. It is one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. Basically, it states that all sentient beings can attain Buddhahood. It also states that the Buddha is eternal, and the supreme form of Buddhist practice is the way of the Bodhisattva. The lotus flower is used to describe the brightness and pureness of the One Buddha Vehicle.

**Lower Realms:** The animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms, which are all part of cyclic existence or samsara.

- M

**Madhyamika (Sanskrit):** The Middle Way; a system of analysis founded by Nagarjuna in the second century C.E., based upon the Prajnaparamita Sutras of Shakyamuni Buddha, and considered to be the supreme presentation of the wisdom of emptiness. The most influential of the four schools of Indian Buddhism. The main postulate of this school is that all phenomena—both internal mental events and external physical objects—are empty of any true nature. The school uses extensive rational reasoning to establish the emptiness of phenomena. This school does, however, hold that phenomena do exist on the conventional level of reality.

**Magga (Pali):** Path. Specifically, the path to the cessation of suffering and stress. The Fourth Noble Truth.

**Maha:** Great.

**Mahakala (Tibetan: Nagpo Chenpo):** “Great Black One.” A wrathful deity, protector of the Dharma. An emanation of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig in Tibetan). A meditation deity of the non-dual Anuttarayoga classification from the tradition of the Indian pandita Vararuci. Mahakala is also a category of wisdom Dharma protector within the Vajrayana path.

**Mahamudra:** The “Great Seal” or great symbol of reality. A distinction is made between Ground, Path, and Fruition Mahamudra. Ground Mahamudra concerns the nature of mind and the proper view; Path Mahamudra concerns the application of mahamudra meditation; and Fruition Mahamudra concerns the realization of the nature of mind.

**Mahasiddha:** A practitioner who has a great deal of realization. These were particularly Vajrayana practitioners who lived in India between the eighth and twelfth century and practiced tantra.

**Mahatma:** The highest principle in man; a great sage.

**Mahayana:** “Great Vehicle.” The spiritual path to great enlightenment. The Mahayana goal is to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings by completely abandoning delusions and their imprints. The category created by a group of reformist sects of Indian Buddhism to distinguish themselves from the older preexisting sects. The Mahayana movement was characterized by a metaphysical theology which made extensive use of mythology and metaphorical supernatural events, the development of the Bodhisattva as a new model for the ideal practice of Buddhism, and a general impetus for the reformation of the monastic orders. The Mahayana is also noted for its advocacy of the laity and women as being capable of deep awakening, often depicting Bodhisattvas in the guise of lay people and women in scripture. The feminist aspect of this is particularly notable. It is probably the earliest example of a theological feminism in a major world religion.

**Maitreya:** A Sanskrit word meaning friendly or benevolent. The Bodhisattva Maitreya is the embodiment of the loving-kindness of all the Buddhas. At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni he manifested as a Bodhisattva disciple. In the future he will manifest as the fifth universal Buddha.

**Majjhima-patipada (Pali):** Middle Path. This is the entire noble eight-fold path or middle path which, by avoiding the two extremes of sensual desire and self-torment, leads to enlightenment and deliverance from suffering.

**Makyo (Japanese):** Fantasies, hallucinations, and seemingly real mental or physical experiences that arise during zazen; they are said to be an obstacle to practice.

**Mala:** A strand of prayer beads consisting of 108 beads. A mala is used for reciting a mantra during meditation practice.

**Mandala:** The term has several meanings. It refers to the spiritual force-field of the Buddhas; to the utterly beautiful universe full of precious objects that one visualizes mentally in order to offer it to the Buddhas in the mandala offering; to the round disk in which this universe is constructed symbolically. Microcosmic diagram, a circular picture or power circle used as an aid and object of contemplation in the rituals of Tantric Buddhism.

**Manjushri:** The Buddha of transcendent or perfect wisdom. Manjushri represents the ability of the enlightened mind to cut through the afflictions of delusion, hatred, and greed, seeing all things as they truly are, free from limited, dualistic, and separative views of reality. One of the principal Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana and Zen Buddhist traditions.

**Mantra:** Literally “mind protection.” A mantra is a combination of sacred seed syllables or a verse which protects the mind from ordinary appearances and conceptions. The mantra embodies in sound the qualities of a specific deity or quality of enlightenment.

**Mara:** The personification of evil and temptation. The evil one who takes away the wisdom of life.

**Marpa (1012-1097):** The “Great Translator.” Founder of the Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He was a renowned tantric master and translator, a disciple of Naropa and the Guru of Milarepa. Marpa traveled three times from Tibet to India in order to receive teachings from his main gurus Naropa and Maitripa.

**Maya (Sanskrit):** Illusion. Philosophically, the phenomenal universe; being subject to differentiation and impermanence is Maya.

**Medicine Buddha:** The embodiment of the collective healing power of all the Buddhas; the enlightened healer who protects living beings from physical and mental sickness, as well as other dangers and obstacles.

**Meditation:** The process and practice of concentrating the mind and becoming deeply acquainted with one's own True Nature.

**Meditation Deity:** A visualized figure, used in meditation, representing a specific aspect of the fully enlightened mind. For example Tara or Avalokiteshvara. Also see *Yidam*.

**Merit:** The good fortune created by virtuous actions. Positive energy. The practice of all positive actions which bring about the accumulation of merit to be used as a reserve of energy for spiritual progress. It is the potential power to increase our good qualities and produce happiness. This accumulation of merit is done by various means: gifts, offerings, selfless actions of compassion, recitation of mantras and prayers, visualizations of divinities, constructions of temples or stupas, prostrations, circumambulations, etc.

**Metta (Pali):** Universal loving-kindness, friendliness, and goodwill. Metta is an all-embracing, unconditional love. One of the ten perfections (paramitas/paramis) and the first of the four Brahma-viharas (Sublime Abodes, also known as The Four Immeasurables). The subject of the famous Metta Sutta; the Buddha's Discourse on Loving-kindness.

**Milarepa (1040-1123):** Foremost disciple of Marpa, Gampopa's guru. Famous for his intense practice, devotion to his guru, attainment of complete enlightenment in one lifetime, and his many songs of spiritual realization. An important teacher of the Kagyu school. Milarepa is also called the greatest of yogis.

**Mindfulness:** Unlike concentrative meditation, which focuses awareness on a specific object, mindfulness is the practice of open, noninterfering alertness or pure, fully present attention. One can practice mindfulness at all times, giving alert attention to all experiences without conceptualizing, judging, or controlling, allowing sensations, feelings, and thoughts to arise and disappear without being followed or resisted in any way. Such non interfering attention allows one to be fully present in the experience of the moment. Mindfulness is also a state of awareness before the mind is disturbed by thought.

**Mudita (Pali):** Appreciative joy. Sympathetic or altruistic joy. The genuine ability to rejoice and delight in the happiness, success, and good fortune of others. To be able to appreciate and be inspired by the positive qualities and virtuous deeds of others. One of the ten perfections (paramitas/paramis) and one of the four 'Sublime Abodes' (Brahma-vihara).

**Mudra:** Gestures and signs made with the hands and fingers, symbolizing different meanings and used to effect specific energetic changes in the body/mind system. These signs and gestures also symbolize the enlightenment and vows of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

## - N

**Nagarjuna:** Indian Buddhist philosopher who founded the Madhyamaka philosophy of emptiness. Nagarjuna was a brilliant philosopher and formidable dialectician who flourished in the late 2nd century A.D. Taking Buddha's advocacy of the Middle Way between the extremes of avid indulgence and austere asceticism, and between sterile intellectualization and suffocating mental torpor, Nagarjuna developed a rigorous dialectical logic by which he reduced every philosophical standpoint to an explosive set of contradictions. This led to the elusive standpoint that neither existence nor nonexistence can be asserted of the world and of everything in it. The Madhyamikas, therefore, refused to affirm or deny any philosophical proposition.

**Nagas:** A primeval race of mystical, divine serpent beings, associated with the water element, who live in oceans, lakes, rivers, or wells and play an important part in most religions and mythologies worldwide. They are half human and half snake, and are still worshipped as the bringers of fertility, especially in southern India. Nagas are always associated with having strong magical powers (siddhis), a vast esoteric knowledge, and a capricious character, which can quickly change from friendly and helpful to angry and malicious.

**Naljor (Tibetan):** Union with one's true nature; remaining in the natural state. Tibetan word for 'yoga' (union).

**Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo (Japanese):** Mantra used by the Nichiren sect of Buddhism. Namu (devotion) means to fuse one's life with the universal law. Myoho (mystic law) is the fundamental principle of the universe: the Dharma. Renge (lotus flower) refers to the lotus, which blooms and seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect. Kyo (sutra, or teaching of a Buddha) broadly indicates all phenomena or the activities of all living beings. Chanting Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo helps one to awaken and manifest their innate Buddhahood, eradicate accumulated bad karma from the past and replace it with positive changes, and frees one from illusion. This mantra can be practiced by anyone, anywhere, at any time; it expresses the ultimate truth of life and allows each individual to tap into their innate enlightened nature.

**Namu Amida Butsu (Japanese):** “Veneration to Amitabha Buddha.” The Nembutsu; mantra of the Pure Land Buddhist schools.

**Naropa (1016-1100):** One of the most prominent and authoritative Indian mahasiddhas and masters of Mahayana and Tantra. He received the Mahamudra and Tantra lineage teachings from his guru Tilopa and transmitted them to his disciple, Marpa, the Great Translator of Tibet.

**Ngondro (Tibetan):** Pronounced *nundro*. 'Preliminary' spiritual practices for purifying negative deeds and accumulating merit. One usually begins the Vajrayana path by doing the four preliminary practices which involve about 100,000 refuge prayers and prostrations, 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras, 100,000 mandala offerings, and 100,000 guru yoga practices.

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**Nichiren (1222-1282):** The 13th century Japanese priest who founded Nichiren Buddhism. His philosophy centered around the final teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni. This teaching, called the Lotus Sutra, declares that all living beings have the potential to attain enlightenment or Buddhhood. Nichiren ('Sun-Lotus') taught that all of the benefits of the wisdom contained in the Lotus Sutra can be realized by chanting the mantra 'Namu-myoho-renge-kyo.' Chanting this mantra, along with excerpts from the Lotus Sutra, is the core of the practice in Nichiren Buddhism. The revolutionary nature of Nichiren's achievement lies in the fact that he made it possible for all people to actually practice the highest teachings of Buddhism by providing a methodology whereby they can establish a life-condition of absolute happiness, undisturbed by changing outer circumstances.

**Nirmanakaya (Sanskrit):** One of the three bodies of a Buddha. The 'transformation or emanation body.' The manifest body or form in which the Buddha or other enlightened being appears. Nimanakaya Buddhas, such as Shakyamuni Buddha, manifest out of compassion for the benefit of all beings. They manifest as human and can be perceived by people with no particular realization. Whereas Sambhogakaya Buddhas, such as Vajrasattva, can only be experienced directly by realized Bodhisattvas.

**Nirodha (Pali):** Cessation; disbanding; stopping; the end to ignorance which causes suffering. The Third Noble Truth as taught by the Buddha.

**Nirvana (Sanskrit) / Nibbana (Pali):** The "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, delusion. Awakening; liberation from the entire round of death and rebirth (samsara). The state of having extinguished suffering. Nirvana is a spiritual state in which the bonds of existence are cut away. It is held to be an ineffable, indefinable experience. Nirvana/Nibanna also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries the connotations of stilling and cooling. Profound peace, limitless awareness, bliss, unity.

**Nyingmapa:** One of the four principal traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, whose name ('The Old Ones') reflects fidelity towards the first Tibetan translations of the text of Buddhism. The Nyingma School is the oldest tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Its origins date back to the 8th century reign of the Dharma King Trisong Deutsen in Tibet. During this time, with the help of Padmasambhava and Bodhisattva Shantarakshita, the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha and commentaries of the Indian scholars of Nalanda University were translated in very pure form at Samye, the first Tibetan monastery.

- O

**Om:** The pure energy of the divine body of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

**Om Ah Hum Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hum (Sanskrit) / Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung (Tibetan):** The mantra of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). It is said that the blessings of Padmasambhava's wisdom mind are transmitted through this mantra and that the twelve syllables carry the entire blessing of the twelve types of teachings taught by Buddha. This mantra is said to be of great benefit for dispelling fear and assisting one on the path of liberation.

**Om Mani Padme Hum (Sanskrit) / Om Mani Peme Hung (Tibetan):** The Great Compassion Mantra of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig), the Buddha of Universal Compassion and Mercy. This mantra is said to contain the essence of all Dharma teachings, and its ability to benefit those who use it is beyond measure. One of the most popular mantras of the Tibetan people.

- P

**Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche):** Padmasambhava ("Lotus Born") is the embodiment of active wisdom and compassion. Also known as Guru Rinpoche ("Precious Guru"), Padmasambhava was a renowned tantric master of Northern India. He came to Tibet in the 8th century and through his mastery of tantric practices he subdued the hostile spirits obstructing the spread of Buddhist teachings and converted them into powerful protectors of the Dharma. During his time in Tibet, Padmasambhava founded monasteries, taught tantric doctrine, and benefited countless beings.

**Pali:** The canon of texts preserved by the Theravada school and, by extension, the language in which those texts are composed.

**Paramita (Sanskrit) / Parami (Pali):** Perfection. Perfection of the character; perfect realization. To cross over to the other shore; reaching beyond limitation. The Paramitas are the framework of the Bodhisattva's religious practice, usually consisting of six categories, sometimes ten. These enlightened qualities or perfections are developed over many lifetimes by a Bodhisattva. The Six Paramitas are: Generosity/Charity (Dana), Virtue/Ethics (Sila), Patience/Forbearance (Kshanti), Effort/Perseverance (Virya), Concentration/Meditation (Dhyana), Wisdom (Pajna).

**Parinirvana:** Total unbinding; the complete cessation of the skandhas that occurs upon the death of an arhat/arahant. When the Buddha died, he did not die an ordinary death to be followed by rebirth. Because he had achieved complete enlightenment, his death is referred to as the parinirvana, because it was the end of all rebirths. This term also refers to the

passing of any great realized master, in which they die and then can emanate back to aid sentient beings. However, their death and rebirth is propelled not by karma but by compassion.

**Phowa:** An advanced tantric practice concerned with the ejection of one's consciousness at death to a favorable realm.

**Prajna (Sanskrit) / Panna (Pali):** Wisdom: discernment; discriminative awareness; insight; intelligence. Understanding the nature of existence.

**Prana (Sanskrit):** Life-force. Internal or psychic wind energy, which flows through our subtle nerve channels.

**Preta:** A hungry ghost or famished spirit. One of a class of beings in the lower realms of samsara. Pretas are often depicted in Buddhist art as starving beings with tiny mouths through which they can never pass enough food to alleviate their hunger. The world of the pretas is characterized by the emotion of greed and the inability to appease their desires; a psychological characteristic of our own human nature.

**Puja:** A ceremony of offering, honor, respect, and devotional observance. Most commonly, the devotional observances that are conducted at monasteries daily (morning and evening) or on special occasions.

**Pure Land Buddhism:** This school of Buddhism emerged in China in about 400 C.E. and later spread to Japan. Pure Land venerates the Bodhisattva Amitabha who is said to reside in the Western Paradise (Sukhavati), or Pure Land. This is very much a faith based school. The belief is that devotion to Amitabha will result in being reborn in the Pure Land from where the attainment of Nirvana is guaranteed. Pure Land Buddhists use the mantra Namu Amida Butsu (Hail to Amitabha Buddha) as an expression of their faith.

**Pure Lands:** Realms beyond cyclic existence or samsara.

- Q

- R

**Refuge:** Taking refuge involves the decision to integrate the Three Gems of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha into one's life. Also see *Three Jewels*.

**Rigpa (Tibetan):** The innermost nature of the mind; nondual awareness; presence of awareness; nondual presence. The nonconceptual and totally unstained natural state of the mind. Rigpa is mental activity devoid of all fleeting stains of obscuration. With its essential nature of being devoid of all stains, rigpa can be recognized as the basis of each moment of our cognition.

**Rinpoche (Tibetan):** Literally, "precious." A Tibetan title and form of address for a realized Buddhist teacher. Honorific title applied to reincarnate lamas and other highly respected persons.

**Rinzai Zen:** Founded by Rinzai Gigen Zenji (died: 866), the Rinzai School represents dynamic, powerful Zen, in which people are demanded to experience enlightenment and realize this experience in their own lives. Rinzai Zenji was known for his unusual methods, such as shouting, hitting, and the use of paradox, which he employed to jolt students out of their fixed ways of thinking and habitual behavior.

**Rupa:** Body; physical phenomenon; sense datum. The basic meaning of this word is 'appearance' or 'form.' It is used, however, in a number of different contexts, taking on different shades of meaning in each. In lists of the objects of the senses, it is given as the object of the sense of sight.

- S

**Sadhana (Sanskrit):** Method of accomplishment; spiritual practice. The step-by-step instructions for practicing the meditations related to a particular meditation deity (yidam).

**Samadhi:** The mental state of being firmly fixed. The practice of fixing or centering the mind on a single sensation or object. Complete concentration; mental stability; a state of calm mental absorption from meditation practice.

**Samantabhadra:** Primordial Lord of Unchanging Light; the Primordial and Eternal Buddha; the symbol of the state of Dharmakaya. Samantabhadra is symbolically represented as being naked and without ornaments, showing that the essential mind of enlightenment is free and pristine awareness, without the ornaments of discursive thoughts and conceptions; empty, clear, and open like the sky. Also see *Adibuddha*.

**Sambhogakaya:** One of the three bodies of a Buddha. The 'complete enjoyment body' by which the Buddha exists as a transcendent, eternal, celestial being. A primordial archetypal deity or Tathagata Buddha. The form in which the enlightened mind appears in order to benefit highly realized Bodhisattvas.

**Samsara:** Transmigration; the round of death and rebirth. Samsara, characterized by dissatisfaction and suffering, is the cycle of death and rebirth in which all beings wander under the influence of karma. There are six realms of samsara. Listed in ascending order according to the type of karma that causes rebirth in them, they are the realms of the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods, and gods.

**Sangha:** Community of Buddhist practitioners. Those who are purely devoted to the virtuous path taught by Buddha. These are our best spiritual friends. In general, ordained or lay people who take Bodhisattva vows or Tantric vows can be said to be sangha. More recently, the term 'sangha' has been popularly adapted to mean the wider sense of the 'community of followers on the Buddhist path.' According to the Vinaya tradition, sangha is any community of four or more fully ordained monks.

**Sanskrit:** The classical Aryan language of ancient India, systematized by scholars. With the exception of a few ancient translations probably from Pali versions, most of the original Buddhist texts used in China were Sanskrit.

**Sati (Pali):** Mindfulness; self-collectedness; powers of reference and retention. In some contexts, the word 'sati' when used alone covers alertness as well.

**Satipatthana (Pali):** Foundations of Mindfulness; literally, “awareness of mindfulness.” The frames of reference for this mindfulness are contemplation of the body, feelings, mind (mind-state), and mental events (mind-objects), viewed in and of themselves as they occur.

**Satori (Japanese):** Enlightenment, or a “flash of sudden awareness” in the Zen Buddhist tradition. A state of consciousness beyond the plane of discrimination, differentiation, and duality. The feeling of Satori is that of infinite space.

**Sayadaw (Burmese):** Teacher, or senior monk.

**Secret Mantra:** Synonymous with “Tantra.” Secret Mantra teachings are distinguished from Sutra teachings in that they reveal methods for training the mind by bringing the future result, or Buddhahood, into the present path. Secret Mantra is the supreme path to full enlightenment. The term 'mantra' indicates that it is Buddha's special instruction for protecting our mind from ordinary appearances and conceptions. Practitioners of Secret Mantra overcome ordinary appearances and conceptions by visualizing their body, environment, enjoyments, and deeds as those of a Buddha. The term 'secret' indicates that the practices are to be done in private and that they can be practiced only by those who have received a Tantric empowerment.

**Seiza (Japanese):** Quiet sitting. An alternative posture for zazen.

**Sensei (Japanese):** Teacher.

**Sentient Being:** A being who has not yet reached enlightenment. The sentient being is generally defined as any living creature which has developed enough conscious awareness to experience feelings, particularly suffering. This generally includes all animal life and excludes botanical life forms. Sentient beings are the object of Buddhist ethics and compassion. Buddhism exists in a larger sense not simply to aid its own practitioners in their personal liberation but also to function within the world to improve the conditions of life for all sentient beings.

**Sesshin (Japanese):** To touch, receive, or convey the mind. The Zen retreat, conventionally seven days.

**Shakyamuni Buddha:** Sage of the Sakyan clan. Shakyamuni Buddha was the founder of Buddhism in this age. He was born about 2600 years ago in what is now Nepal as the Prince of the Sakyans and was called Siddhartha Gautama. He attained supreme enlightenment at age 35 and was called Shakyamuni. The word means 'capability and kindness.' Shakyamuni Buddha taught the Dharma for the remaining years of his life. He died at the age of eighty on the full moon night in May.

**Shamatha (Sanskrit) / Samatha (Pali) / Shine (Tibetan):** Literally, “stable pacification.” Calm abiding or tranquility meditation that develops inner peace, clarity, and concentration. It is one of the two types of meditation found in all Buddhist traditions, the other being insight or Vipashyana meditation (Vipassana in Pali).

**Shikantaza (Japanese):** Just sitting. An alert, non selective attention which neither pursues nor suppresses thoughts, feelings, or sensations, but gives alert and detached attention/awareness to whatever arises in and vanishes from consciousness. Also see *Zazen*.

**Shin:** The Pure Land School of Japanese Buddhism. Also see *Jodo Shinshu Buddhism*.

**Shine (Tibetan):** In the Dzogchen teachings, the method of finding oneself in the space of Mind without conceptual content while maintaining presence of awareness. Also know as Shamatha (Calm Abiding) meditation.

**Shobogenzo:** ‘Treasure of Knowledge of the True Law.’ The masterwork of Dogen Zenji, founder of the Soto sect of Japanese Zen, which he wrote between 1231 and 1253. Considered a milestone in Buddhist literature, in this work he discusses the continued practice of seated meditation, daily life of practitioners, the regulations and teachings of the sect, etc. It is revered as the most important text of the Soto sect.

**Shunyata (Sanskrit) / Sunnata (Pali):** This is a difficult and philosophically complex term, usually translated as 'emptiness, voidness, nothingness,' but more positively as 'openness' or the 'open dimension of being.' As a doctrinal term it refers, in Theravada, exclusively to the Annatta doctrine (the insubstantiality of all phenomena). However, Emptiness should not be taken in a nihilistic way as the denial that anything exists, rather that all phenomenon are 'empty' in the sense of lacking independent and permanent existence. The Absolute Reality, Beingness, or Pure Awareness is shunya or shunyata, as it is devoid of empirical forms and thought constructs.

**Siddhartha:** The given name of Shakyamuni Buddha when he was born to the King Suddhodana. The name means “wish fulfilled.”

**Sila (Sanskrit and Pali):** Virtuous conduct; morality; moral discipline. The quality of ethical and moral purity that prevents one from falling away from the Noble Eightfold Path. Also, one of the training precepts that restrain one from performing unskillful actions and one of the ten paramis/paramitas (perfections).

**Six Realms:** See *Desire Realm*.

**Skandhas (Sanskrit):** Heap; group; aggregate; gathering; collection. The five skandhas (khandhas in Pali) are the five primary elements or mental components of the personality and of sensory experience which come together to form a living being. The five components of the individual existence specifically applied to humans: 1) material form or matter; 2) sensation/feeling; 3) perception; 4) mental formation or intention (samskara); 5) consciousness.

**Skillful Means:** Creating good causes for sentient beings to enter onto the Path. This includes practicing the five perfections (paramitas), explaining the Dharma in ways a person can understand, and using wise and compassionate means to assist others in their awakening.

**Soto Zen:** One of the major schools of Zen Buddhism, founded by Dogen Zenji (1200-1235). The Soto Zen tradition emphasizes the practice of zazen, or sitting meditation, and individual effort. By learning to put one's entire being into their practice, one is able to realize their original nature and carry that experience into daily life.

**Sravaka (Sanskrit) / Savaka (Pali):** Literally, “hearer.” A disciple of the Buddha, especially a noble disciple. On the Mahayana path, the sravaka is one who has heard and adopted the teachings of the Buddhas, but who has not yet understood them for himself. Thus, the sravaka’s practices are centered around faith and discipline.

**Sayadaw (Burmese):** Venerable elder; an honorific title given to a highly respected Burmese bhikkhu.

**Stupa / Thupa (Pali):** Originally, a tumulus or burial mound enshrining relics of a holy person, such as the Buddha, or objects associated with his life. Over the centuries this has developed into the tall, spired monuments familiar in temples in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma; and into the pagodas of China, Korea, and Japan. A symbolic monument containing holy relics and or religious texts. In Tibetan Buddhism, the stupa represents Buddha’s holy mind, Dharmakaya, and each part of the stupa shows the path to enlightenment.

**Sukha (Pali):** Pleasure; ease; satisfaction; contentment. In meditation, a mental quality that reaches full maturity upon the development of the third level of jhana (absorption/concentration).

**Sutra (Sanskrit) / Sutta (Pali):** Literally, “thread.” A Buddhist scriptural text purporting to present a narrative of a teaching given on a particular occasion by the Buddha or sanctioned explicitly by the Buddha. The sutras make up one section of the three sectioned canon (tripitaka). The other two are the monastic and ethical code (vinaya) and the body of canonized exegesis (abhidharma). A sutra/sutta is a discourse or sermon by the Buddha or his contemporary disciples. After the Buddha’s death the sutras/suttas were passed down in the Pali language according to a well-established oral tradition and were finally committed to written form in Sri Lanka around 100 BCE. Over 10,000 sutras/suttas are collected in the Sutta Pitaka, one of the principal bodies of scriptural literature in Theravada Buddhism. The Pali Suttas are widely regarded as the earliest record of the Buddha’s teachings.

## - T

**Tanha (Pali):** Thirst or craving. Craving for sensual desires, for becoming, or for nonexistence. Along with ignorance of one’s true nature, craving is the root of suffering and of the continuing cycle of rebirth.

**Tantra:** Literally, “thread” or “continuity.” The root scripture of Vajrayana Buddhism. The teachings of Buddhism which have as their basis the principle of transformation. A ritual tradition transmitted from guru to disciple. The process of transforming our impure state of body, speech, and mind into a pure state using tantric practice such as deity yoga, meditation on the inner chakras, channels, wind energy, energy drops, and so forth. The tantric texts are ascribed to Buddha Shakyamuni in his various manifestations, and each describes the mandala and practice associated with a specific being. Important Buddhist Tantras, mostly named after their principal deity, include Guhyasamaja, Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, Yamantaka, and Kalachakra.

**Tantrayana:** Also called Vajrayana. A school of esoteric Tibetan Buddhism that emphasizes not only meditation but also the use of symbolic rites, gestures, postures, breathing, mantra, and other secret means.

**Tapas:** The “purifying heat” of meditative practice.

**Tara:** “The Swift One” or “The Swift Liberator.” A female Bodhisattva regarded as the embodiment of all the Buddhas’ enlightened activity. Tara appears in many different aspects, the most popular of these being White Tara (associated with healing, long life, and compassion) and Green Tara (associated with protection and compassion). Tara is known as the Swift Liberator due to her immediate response to those who request her aid. Tara protects those who call upon her and releases them from the fears, dangers, and suffering of cyclic existence. However, as with all deities, their enlightened qualities are inseparable from our own true nature.

**Tathagata (Sanskrit and Pali):** “One who has truly gone” (tatha-gata) or “one who has become authentic” (tatha-agata). The living embodiment of Ultimate Reality. An epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest spiritual goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it can also denote any of his arhat/arahant disciples.

**Tathagatagarba:** Literally, the seed or essence of the Buddhas which is usually translated as Buddha-nature or Buddha essence. It is the seed or essence of enlightenment, possessed by all sentient beings and which allows them to have the potential to attain Buddhahood.

**Tathata (Sanskrit):** Thusness or suchness; the way things are. This term is used for the ultimate and unconditioned nature of things.

**Terma:** ‘Hidden treasure.’ Works which were hidden by great Bodhisattvas and masters, and later rediscovered. They might be actual physical texts or they may come from the mind as a direct transmissions from the sambhogakaya.

**Than:** (Thai; also “tan”) Reverend, venerable.

**Thangka:** A traditional Buddhist painting on fabric that can be rolled up and easily transported from place to place. Nomads in the Tibetan plateaus favored them since they could be carried easily. Thangkas generally feature paintings of Buddhist deities, symbols, or masters from the past.

**Thera:** Elder. An honorific title automatically conferred upon a bhikkhu of at least ten years standing.

**Theravada:** The Doctrine or Teachings of the Elders. The only one of the early schools of Buddhism to have survived into the present; currently the dominant form of Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Burma. Also see *Hinayana*.

**Three Jewels:** Also known as the “Three Precious Ones” or the “Triple Gem,” referring to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The three essential components of veneration and refuge in Buddhism. Buddhists take refuge in the Three Jewels by pronouncing the threefold refuge prayer, thus acknowledging themselves to be Buddhists.

**Three Marks of Existence:** These are suffering (dukkha), impermanence (anicca), and not-self or egolessness (anatta). The direct experience and realization of these through meditation is to see things as they really are.

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**Three Realms:** The Three Realms are the form realm, the formless realm, and the desire realm, all of which are within cyclic existence (samsara). Human existence is said to be a part of the desire realm.

**Three Trainings:** Training in morality or ethics (the foundation of the Path), concentration/meditation, and wisdom.

**Three Unwholesome Roots (Three Poisons):** Greed, hatred, and delusion. Greed refers to selfishness, attachment, and grasping for happiness and satisfaction outside of ourselves. Hatred refers to anger, aversion and repulsion toward unpleasant people and circumstances. Delusion refers to dullness, bewilderment, and misperception; our wrong views of reality. All three of these defilements are a byproduct of ignorance (of our True Nature), and motivate non virtuous and unskillful thoughts, speech, and actions. The Buddha describes these defilements as bonds, fetters, hindrances, and knots; the actual root cause of unwholesome karma and the entire spectrum of human suffering.

**Three Wholesome Roots:** Non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion. These are the antidotes or alternatives to the three unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. To antidote greed, we cultivate selflessness, generosity, detachment, and contentment. To antidote hatred, we cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, patience, and forgiveness. To antidote delusion, we cultivate wisdom, insight, and understanding.

**Tilopa (988-1069):** Tilopa was born a brahmin in India, but he renounced the world while still quite young to become an ascetic. He was an Indian Mahasiddha who was the spiritual master of Naropa. The Karma Kagyu lineage traces itself back over two hundred years before the first Karmapa, to the source of their knowledge—Tilopa.

**Trikaya (Sanskrit):** The three bodies (kaya) or vehicles of manifestation of the Buddha; Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya.

**Tripitaka (Sanskrit) / (Pali: Tipitaka):** The Buddhist Canon; literally, the “Three Baskets.” The Sutra Basket contains the discourses attributed to Shakyamuni Buddha; the Ordinance Basket contains the disciplinary rules of monastic life; and the Treatise Basket contains abstract philosophical treatises and doctrinal commentaries.

**Tsong Khapa, Lama (AD 1357-1419):** Founder of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. His appearance in fourteenth-century Tibet as a monk was predicted by Buddha. Tsong Khapa was a great Tibetan yogi, considered to be an emanation of the Wisdom Buddha Manjushri. He restored the purity of Buddha's doctrine, revitalized many sutra and tantra lineages and the monastic tradition in Tibet, and demonstrated how to practice pure Dharma during degenerate times.

**Tulku:** The Tibetan word for reincarnated Lamas. Tulkus are the great richness of Tibetan Buddhism. They are highly realized beings that have control over their birth and that choose to take rebirth amongst us for our benefit. Tulkus are recognized through careful tests and precise rituals and divinations. They come back life after life, in an unbroken lineage. Their minds are vast and stable and so they are called 'Rinpoche' which means 'precious'.

- U

**Upasaka or Upasika (Pali):** A male (upasaka) or female (upasika) lay follower of the Buddha. One of the four primary classes of Buddhist disciples, the male or female who has taken the lay precepts.

**Upaya (Sanskrit):** A means, device, or method. A Mahayana term for a practical and skillful means to accomplish a spiritual end.

**Upekka (Pali):** Equanimity. One of the ten perfections (paramis/paramitas) and one of the four “Sublime Abodes” (Brahma-viharas).

- V

**Vajra (Sanskrit) / Dorje (Tibetan):** Literally, “lord stone.” Indestructible; thunderbolt; diamond. Adamantine; pure. The “thunderbolt” or “diamond-scepter” held by certain meditation deities, that represents bodhicitta, the pure mind of enlightenment. An instrument used in Tibetan art and rituals which symbolizes the method or skillful means (male aspect) applied to reach awakening. The Bell, which is always used with the dorje, symbolizes wisdom (female aspect).

**Vajrakila (Tibetan: Dorje Phurba):** An important meditation deity belonging to the Mahayoga Tantras of the Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, and Kagyu traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Wrathful emanation of the water element. With his powerful dagger (phurbu or kila) in his hands he bans all kinds of hindrances caused by demons and evil spirits (like angry Nagas or Pretas) to protect the practitioners on their way to enlightenment. Vajrakila may be invoked as a protector. His most common mantra is Om Vajrakila Kilaya Sarva Benganin Bam Hung Phet.

**Vajrasattva (Tibetan: Dorje Sempa):** The Buddha of Purification. The embodiment of wisdom, clarity, and purity. The practice of Vajrasattva is one of the four preliminary practices used for eliminating impurities accumulated from past unwholesome physical, verbal, and mental actions.

**Vajrayana:** “The Indestructible Vehicle” or “The Diamond Vehicle.” Also called Tantrayana. A school of esoteric Tibetan Buddhism that emphasizes not only meditation but also the use of symbolic rites, gestures, postures, breathing, mantra, and other secret means. Vajrayana can be divided into Kriya-tantra, Caryatana, Yoga-tantra, and Anuttarayoga-tantra.

**Vajrayogini (Tibetan: Dorje Najorma):** A female meditation deity belonging to the Anuttarayogatantra, consort to Chakrasamvara. The meditative practice of this deity is popular in the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug schools and the most well known aspect of the deity is the one known as Kajari.

**Venerable:** An honorific title of respect for a Buddhist monk or nun.

**Vimalakirti:** A lay contemporary of the Buddha, whose spiritual attainment is highly regarded. He exemplifies the Mahayana model of fully realized non-monastic practice. The Vimalakirti Sutra contains his teachings.

**Vinaya (Pali):** Vows. The essence of the rules for monastics is contained in the Vinaya. The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six volumes in printed text and define every aspect of the bhikkhus' (monks') and bhikkhunis' (nuns') way of life.

**Vipashyana (Sanskrit) / Vipassana (Pali):** Clear, penetrating, and intuitive insight into physical and mental phenomena as they arise and disappear, seeing them for what they actually are, in and of themselves, free of delusion. Vipashyana/Vipassana meditation develops insight into the true nature of reality by gradually dissolving one's egoic sense of being a permanent self and reveals that consciousness is an open, dynamic field of spontaneously arising experiences. Insight (Vipashyana/Vipassana) meditation progresses through several stages, leading ultimately to the experience of pure dynamic emptiness or Nirvana. It is one of the two types of meditation found in all Buddhist traditions, the other being calm abiding or tranquility meditation (Shamatha in Sanskrit).

- **W**

**Wat (Thai):** A temple or monastery. Wat Pa, forest monastery.

**Wesak or Vesak:** The ancient name for the Indian lunar month in spring, corresponding to the Western April-May. According to tradition, the Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment, and death (Parinibbana or Parinirvana) each took place on the full-moon night in the month of Wesak (Visakha). The Wesak/Visakha Festival is celebrated annually throughout the world on the full moon day of May when these events in the life of the Buddha are commemorated.

- **X**

- **Y**

**Yeshe Tsogyal (777-837 A.D.):** The female Tantric Buddha; spiritual consort of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche). Yeshe Tsogyal is a famous devotional Yogini in Tibet. She is an emanation of Dorje Phagmo, Tara, and other Buddha-Aspects. As a young woman, she was one of the Tibetan King Trisong Detsen's serving-women. The King offered her as a "gift" to his teacher Padmasambhava; a Dharma-offering for his empowerment. From then on Yeshe Tsogyal became the main companion and pupil of Guru Rinpoche. She received nearly all of his teachings. When she had achieved spiritual maturity, she began to travel on her own, gathering followers for Vajrayana Buddhism.

**Yidam:** Meditation deity. Aspects of the Buddha. The great richness of enlightened mind expressing itself in countless forms of energy and light. The meditation deity, or 'yidam' in Tibetan, is an aspect of the Buddha, possessing the three bodies of the Buddha, and the five primordial wisdoms. Out of compassion, Buddha manifests as different aspects or yidams, each of which is literally "the divinity or deity to which we devote ourselves."

**Yogi / Yogini:** Male and female spiritual practitioners. Vajrayana practitioners of the spatial yogas; one who rests in the natural state of enlightenment (Buddhahood).

- **Z**

**Zafu (Japanese):** The cushion used for zazen or sitting meditation.

**Zazen (Japanese):** Seated meditation; dhyana; Zen meditation. Rooted in ancient meditative practices, Zazen differs from other forms of meditation in that it uses no meditation object or abstract concept for the meditator to focus on. The aim of Zazen is first to still the mind and then, through practice, to reach a state of pure, thought-free wakefulness so that the mind can realize its own Buddha-nature. And unlike other forms of meditation, Zazen is not simply a means to an end. Dogen Zenji said, "Zazen is itself Enlightenment, one minute of sitting, one minute of being Buddha."

**Zen (Japanese):** This school of Buddhism originally emerged from China and was known as Ch'an, a word derived from the Sanskrit word 'dhyana' which means meditation. The founder of Zen Buddhism was Bodhidharma, an Indian monk who came to China in 520 C.E. Zen passed from China to Japan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Zen approach can be seen as quite radical, favoring meditation, intuition, and direct experience as a means to enlightenment rather than the scriptures. The transmission of the Zen lineage of teaching goes directly back to Shakyamuni Buddha and has been passed on, mind to mind, from teacher to disciple for the past 2500 years.

**Zendo (Japanese):** Meditation hall. The space in a monastery in which zazen is practiced; it is often set aside exclusively for this purpose.