

## THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL YANAS (THE SYMBOL OF ULTIMATE PATH)

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Unawareness generates a trouble and consequently the trouble generates innumerable suffering which gradually submerge the human life into the whirlpool of Samsara(worldly life) where one endures long term suffering for the sake of short term happiness. Ignorant about the eternal happiness and its paths, one clings to samsaric cycle of life and indulge in its pleasure which is a breader of future sufferings.

To escape from such a cycle of existence, three fundamental yanas were initially preached by Lord Buddha which are widely known as MAHAYANA AND HINAYANA(Higher vehicle and Lower vehicle). But many among us are not well informed about the Yanas and as a consequence they wrongly interpret the same which put the people in misconception. Some are unaware of the fact, lodges baseless criticism to the nature of practice of highestform of yana(E.Doctrine) and directly or indirectly accumulate demerit by themselves. Therefore, in my opinion, those interested person must have a basic knowledge on the different aspects of YANA. For instance, we the sentient beings of this mundane world have been swimming together in this vast ocean of Samsaric suffering from the time immemorial. But ignorance about the ultimate truth, many among us struggles in mid of the ocean, in temptation to hook a basket of fishes for the purpose of filling up their hungry stomach. Some desperately tries to find a gem for luxury forgetting the unknown danger of tempest that lied in the offing.And some among us, during this continuous swimming; got tired, became weary anxiously look for a boat to ferry themself to the shore, aspiring for sigh of relief. Similarly, the YANA as illustrated in Buddhist theory of liberation of sentient beings from the suffering Samsara is like a boat. Mounting on this boat of Yanas one is at his own will to ferry himself to the shore of salvation he chooses. The word called 'RELIEF' is essential to each and every life even to smallest life-leach and lice. One cannot endure suffering, trouble and tension all the time and desires to have a relief. Likewise, we are all enduring suffering life after life and desire to have a relief. And that relief is non other than salvation (Nirvana). To reach this one needs a Yana (vehicle). Therefore, we must know how to drive the Yana.

### INTRODUCTION

**THE YANA:** which literally mean vehicle (Tib: Thegpa) is , in real sense a symbol of Path which leads to the place of great bliss or one's choosen salvation according to the Budhist doctrine. In the Sutra called 'Dues-Pa' the definition of YANA is illustrated as follows:

The Yana is like a space  
which is immeasurable

The Yana is like an immense mansion  
where one obtains comfort and joy  
Mounting on this Yana,  
One escapes the suffering.

Another source, the doctrine of Path(Lam-cho) defines thus: 'Yana leads one to one's temporary or ultimate goal-the salvation'. Primarily there are two classes of Yanas:

- (a) The Yana of Path (Lam)
- (b) The Yana of attainment (Deybu)

And these Yanas may be categorised into two groups:

- (a) Worldly Yana (Samsaric Yanas)
- (b) Non-Worldly Yanas (Adhyatmic Yanas)

Now, the present subject is on non-worldly Yanas. This too can be classified as follows:

- (a) The Yana of Path
- (b) The Yana of attainment

The nine category of Yanas according to Nyingmapa school are epitomized into these two classes of Yanas. However, to know the basic knowledge of Yanas we may start from the very beginning. There are three fundamental Yanas: (Gyu-Tsenyi-kyi Theg-pa) viz:

1. Sravakayana (Nyen-thod)
2. Pratyakabuddhayana (Rang-rGyal)
3. Bodhisattvayana (Chang-sems)

These three fundamental Yanas are categorised into two stages viz: (1)Sravakayana and Pratikabuddhayana of Hinayana stage and (2) Bodhisattvayana of Mahayana stage. The purpose of setting up these two stages of Yana is to enable the Buddha to impart his teaching according to the mental level of his followers.

#### **(1) THE THEORY OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE SRAVAKAYANA(HINAYANA-I)**

They firmly hold the belief of non-existence of the essence of the eternity of worldly matter. They also condemn the belief of the some heretic religion (rGyang-Phenpa) as to non-existence of the cycle of the natural phenomenon. For example, sometimes in the situation of darkness, a rope lying on the ground is mistaken for a snake and thereby arises a doubt that there is a snake. With the help of light one ascertains that there is no snake but only a rope lying on the ground which looks like a snake. In this manner, one can eliminate the baseless doubt and ascertain the reality that one seeks. The Sravakayana firmly holds the belief of the existence of the indivisible practices(compare atom) of the physical and elementary objects viz; earth, water, fire and air etc. and also hold the belief of the existence of the essence of the sensual matter. The followers of this Yana profess themselves in ascetic life wearing yellow robes with begging bowl aspiring for self-liberation from the suffering Samsara.

On the basis of these theories and practices, the Sravakayanas contemplate on four noble truths viz:

- (a) Truth of suffering
- (b) Truth of causation
- (c) Truth of cessation
- (d) Truth of path

and thereby gradually attain their own salvational stages viz:

- (a) Gyunshuk (First stage)
- (b) Chhirhong (Second stage)
- (c) Chhirmihong (Third stage)
- (d) Dachompa (Final stage)

## **2. THE THEORY OF THE FOLLOWERS OF THE PRATYKABUDDHAYANA (HINAYANA-II)**

The Pratyekabuddhayana's idea like non-existence of the essence of the eternity of worldly matter etc. are no different from the idea of former, the Sravakayana. However, in regards to the idea of existence of the indivisible particle of the physical and elementary matter, the Pratyekabuddha believes the partial existence of the said particles in both elementary and sensual matters.

The procedure of attaining its salvational stage is unlike that of Sravakayana. He needs no tutor as he attains his salvational stage called 'Rangchhangchub' through the process of research and practice on the cycle of twelve dependent origination (Tendrel chunyes), the different aspect of life. His research for truth assumes from the cemetery. In the cemetery he finds bone particles and thereby discovered a 'death', the twelfth dependent origination. After careful study, he discovers that the cause of death is 'Old age or decay' and so on he finds the birth as a cause of old age or decay and conceiving as a cause of birth. In this manner he gradually discovers the causes step by step and reaches the root-cause of suffering i.e. unawareness (Tib: Ma-rig-pa). Now he realises that the root cause of all the suffering is Ma-rig-pa (unawareness). On the basis of these theories and practices the Pratyekabuddha contemplates on twelve dependent origination in reverse manner and gradually attains its own salvational stage, which is considered superior salvational stage than the former, the Sravakayana.

## **3. THE THEORY OF THE BODHISATTVA YANA (MAHAYANA)**

The Bodhisattva, in realized stage firmly holds the idea of non-existence of the essence in regards to worldly and non-worldly matters.

At the time of unrealized stages, the Bodhisattva accepts the idea of existence of the essence of all the matters to the extent of magical phenomenon. To attain Bodhisattvahood they have to qualify themselves through the practice and contempla-

tion on the Ten transcendental virtues (Ten Paramitas): (i) Dhan Paramita (charity), (ii) Shila Paramita (morality), (iii) Akshanti Paramita (Patience and forgiveness), (iv) Virjya Paramita (industry and assiduity), (v) Dhyana Paramita (Meditation and contemplation), (vi) Prajna Paramita (wisdom), (vii) Upaya Paramita (means or measure), (viii) Pranidhana Paramita (Prayer), (ix) Bala Paramita (fortitude or moral strength) and (x) Jnana Paramita (divine knowledge). There after they gradually attain Sa-bcu (the ten stages of saintly perfection) and reaches the taste of Bodhisattvahood. Sa-bcu (Ten stages)-(i) Rab-tu dga'-ba (beautitude), (ii) Dri-ma med-pa (spotless purity), (iii) Hod-byed-pa (enlightenment), (iv) Hod-'phro-ba-can (illumination), (v) Shintu sByan-dka'-ba (unconquerable), (vi) Mngon-du gyur-pa (salvation), (vii) Ring-du sang-ba (far-reaching), (viii) Mi-gyo-ba (immoveable), (ix) Legs-po'i blo-gros (righteousness), (x) Chos-kyi sPrin (spiritual cloud).

The Bodhisattvayana, unlike the former two yanas, dedicates his life and pleasure for the sake of others or whole sentient beings and always pledged to deliver others from the suffering of Samsara. Therefore, this Yana is regarded superior to formers.

The three fundamental Yanas as illustrated above from the Sutra path, which is said to be working on the level of the body and known as the path of renunciation. There are two more Yanas exist in Mahayana category viz. (a) Mantrayana (Tib: sNgags-kyi Theg-pa), and (b) Vajrayana (Tib: rDo-rje Theg-pa). They are classified as supreme yanas which work more on Energy or 'Speech'. Again, they are classified in three stages- (i) Outer, (ii) Inner, (iii) Mystic or most secret. And these Yanas contain the methods of purification and transformation.

I hope this little contribution of mine may benefit the seeker for the truth of YANAS.