

A Presentation of Tenets

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Three Wheels of Dharma

- First Wheel (Varanasi)—for Fundamental Vehicle (Hinayana) trainees. Buddha taught the Four Truths of Aryas, and that all phenomena exist by way of their own character.
- Second Wheel (Vulture Peak)—for Universal Vehicle (Mahayana) trainees. Buddha taught that all phenomena do not exist by way of their own character.
- Third Wheel (Vaishali)—for trainees of both vehicles. Buddha taught which phenomena exist by way of their own character and which do not.

Reasons for studying tenets

- “Meditating without studying is like trying to climb a mountain without hands.”
- It enables us to identify innate misapprehensions we have and analyze these.
- Study of the lower tenet schools enables us to understand the higher schools—like a staircase.
- It provides us with an inner force to distinguish correct and incorrect perspectives so we can penetrate reality.

Meaning of “tenets” (drubta)

- Drub (ལྷུབ་) = established
- Ta (མཐའ་) = conclusion
- After studying a philosophical system, when one establishes the final meaning of a set of scriptures/teachings in one’s mind, and then explains these to others, one becomes a proponent of tenets.

Definition

- Definition of a proponent of Buddhist tenets: a proponent of tenets who accepts the three jewels as ultimate {perfect, correct, authentic} objects of refuge and does not assert any (ultimate) objects of refuge other than these.
- A Buddhist is someone who takes refuge in the three jewels from the depths of their hearts (CTA p. 150).

The Four Seals

Proponents of Buddhist tenets are distinct from proponents of non-Buddhist tenets by way of accepting the four seals:

1. All compounded phenomena are impermanent.
2. All contaminated phenomena are dukkha.
3. All phenomena are selfless (they lack a permanent, unitary, and independent self).
4. Nirvana (cessation of dukkha and its causes) is peace.

Divisions

Proponents of:

1. Vaibhasika (**Great Exposition**/Particularists),
2. Sautrantika (Sutra Followers),
3. Cittamatra (Mind-Only)
4. **Entitylessness** (Madhyamaka / Middle-Way)

The first two are also known as the two schools that propound [**truly-existent external**] objects

Each school is explained by way of seven points

1. Definition
2. Divisions
3. Etymology
4. Mode of asserting objects
5. Mode of asserting object-possessors
6. Mode of asserting selflessness
7. Presentation of grounds and paths.

Hinayana Tenets vs. Mahayana Tenets

- Hinayana Tenet systems:
 - Assert only selflessness of persons, but not selflessness of phenomena.
 - Assert truly existent external phenomena.
 - Do not accept omniscience nor obscurations to omniscience (cognitive obscurations).
 - Do not use the term “Buddha nature” nor accept that all beings can become Buddha.

Divisions of existents (phenomena, objects, objects of knowledge, etc.)

Impermanent Phenomena (change every moment)

Three types:

1. Forms (tables, bodies, etc.)
2. Consciousness (main minds, mental factors)
3. Abstract Composites (person, time)

Synonyms:

- Functioning thing
- Product
- Compounded phenomena
- Cause
- Effect

Permanent Phenomena (do not change)

Examples of permanent phenomena:

- Non-compounded space (the mere lack of obstructive contact)
- True cessation
- Emptiness (the absence of inherent existence)
- The absence of an elephant in this room

Synonyms:

- Non-product
- Non-compounded phenomenon

