

“The concept of Five Meditating Buddha’s and Bodhisattvain Art and Iconography”

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ABSTRACT: *Buddhism is the most specific chapter of Indian history. From ages, Buddhism has been the result of Buddhist ideology and its integrated extraordinary individualities, which have played an important role to make it marvelous. In all these ideals, Five Meditating Buddha and Bodhisattvas was one of them. We have got the evidence of these meditating Buddha and bodhisattva not only in the literature but also in the art and iconography. After the Mahaparinirvana of Gautama Buddha, Buddhism has divided and got distinct into several parts. During Post Gupta dynasty (6 - 7 century A.D.), Vajrayana entered into the Buddhism and thereafter the concept of five meditating Buddha and bodhisattva was introduced for the very first time. Both of the Five Meditating Buddha & Bodhisattva has been called as Buddhist deities after Buddha. Yet this mythology has so many individual concepts in Buddhist history but I want to throw some light on art and iconography part of five meditating Buddha and bodhisattvas.*

KEYWORDS: *Concept of Five Meditating Buddha, Concept of Bodhisattva, Meditating Buddha and it qualities, Eight great Bodhisattvas Concept, Iconographical features of these Deities.*

I. INTRODUCTION

After the time period of Gupta dynasty, when Vajrayana concept was first introduced, Buddhism got surrounded with theory of polytheism. This polytheism gave new enthusiasms in Buddhist sects in a form of five meditating Buddha and Bodhisattvas. At that time the icon of bodhisattvas had been made together with Gautama Buddha icons. These Bodhisattvas icons represent the form of Buddha before enlightenment. The iconic form of Buddha got him represented as a Prince but with decorative crown and jewelry. There are so many types of bodhisattvas but five bodhisattvas are directly connected with five meditating Buddha's. According to Buddhist theory they are made by the five elements of earth. Without knowing the concept of these five meditating Buddha's we can't indicate the concept of Bodhisattvas. As there is a very less number of work has been done on this topic so I would like to throw some lights on the concept of five meditating Buddha's and Bodhisattvas as to How they form, their Iconographical features, qualities and elements of power.

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III. CONCEPT OF FIVE MEDITATING BUDDHA'S

The pantheon of the northern Buddhist revolves around the theory of the five meditating Buddha's. According to Buddhist theory these five meditating Buddha have made up of five cosmic elements or Skandhas of earth. The five Skandhas are Rupa (Form), Vedana (Sensation), Samja (Nante), Sankara (Conformation) and Vijnana (Consciousness). These elements have eternal cosmic force which do not have any starting or end and according to Vajarayana especially these elements or cosmic force defined as five meditating Buddha's. In Vajarayana mythology, Five Buddha's has been imagined with his consorts (power), who lived in heaven and was the reason behind the bodhisattvas. These meditating Buddha's are eternal and are always in meditated form in heaven. It will not be wrong and exaggerated if we say that because of these meditating Buddha innumerable Buddhist deities have taken a specific place in Buddhist iconography. These five meditations Buddha's are Amitabh, Aksobhya, Vairocana, Amoghsiddhi, Ratnasambhava. All of these are in the same form. They are meditating in yoga form, sitting on the double lotus platform but they have difference in their color, gesture, vehicle, emblem, power (consort), elements, sense, and there Bodhisattvas.

1.1. Amitabh

"Amitabh" meditating Buddha has been shown on lotus pedestal in meditated mode. "Amitabh" is described as on the western petal on the disc of the sun there is Amitabha of red color originating from the red syllable hrih. He has a lotus as his sign and he exhibits the Samadhi Mudra in his two hands. He is of the nature of the cosmic element of Samjna (name) and is an embodiment of attachment which belongs to the lotus family. He stands for the vital fluid and endowed with Pratyaveksana (looking after) knowledge. He represents the summer season and the acid taste. He presides over the group of letters beginning with Ta (cerebrals) and rules over the evening twilight. When represented on the Stupa, he always faces the west and his two hands with palm open lie on his lap, one upon the other forming the Dhyana or the meditated mudra. His color is red and his vehicle is a pair of peacocks. His recognition symbol is the lotus.

1.2. Aksobhya

"Aksobhya" is recorded as the second meditating Buddha. His description appears almost everywhere in tantric literature. Aksobhya originated from the blue syllable hum which is placed on the orb of the sun. He has two arms and one faced, exhibited in the Bhumisparsha (earth touching) mudra and sits in the Vajraparyanka (adamantine seat) pose. He represents the primordial cosmic element of Vajna (consciousness). He is the embodiment of the Vajra family and represents the winter season, noon time, pungent taste, faculty of hearing, the element of Ether and Sound the Ca (palatal) group of letter. His vehicle is a pair of Elephants and his recognition symbol is the Vajra or the thunderbolt.

1.3. Vairocana

"Vairocana" is the third meditating Buddha. He is white in color and his two hands are held against the tips of the thumb and forefinger of each hand united. His vehicle is a pair of dragons or gryphons and his recognition symbol is shown to be the cakra or the disc. According to Nepali text he is assigned a place between Aksobhya in the east and Ratnasambhava in the south. Vairocana originates from the white syllable OM placed on the orb of the moon on the eastern petal of the lotus and is white in color. His recognition symbol is the white discus. He exhibits the bodhyangi mudra and represents the cosmic element of rupa (form). He represents the Hemanta season, the sweet taste, the Ka (guttural) group of letters, and the morning and evening of the day.

1.4. Amoghsiddhi

"Amoghsiddhi" is the fourth meditating Buddha. He originates from the green syllable kham placed on the orb of the sun on the northern petal of the lotus and is of green color. His recognition symbol is Visvavajara or the double thunderbolt. He exhibits the Abhaya (protection) mudra and represents the cosmic element of Samskara (conformation). He is the embodiment of the rainy season and is a demon (karma) by nature with bitter taste, the Pa (labial) group of letters and the middle part of the night. When he is represented in iconographic form his color is green and he always faces the north. His Vahana is the pair of Garuda (eagle).

1.5. Ratnasambhava

"Ratnasambhava" is the fifth meditating Buddha. He originates from the yellow in syllable tram placed on the orb of the sun on the southern petal. He is yellow in color, his recognition symbol is the jewel and he exhibits the Varda (gift bestowing) mudra. He represents the cosmic element of Vedana (sensation) and is the embodiment of slander (pisuna). He presides over the blood in the human system and belongs to the Ratna (jewel) family of deities. He possesses the knowledge of Samata (equality) and presides over the spring season, the saline taste, the Ta (dental) group of letter and the third and fourth parts of the day and night. In iconographic feature he represents as yellow in color and he always faces the south. His left hand rests on the lap with open palm and the right exhibits the Varada mudra or the gift bestowing attitude. His vehicle is a pair of lion.

IV. CONCEPT OF BODHISATTVAS'

The concept of Bodhisattva is very important in Buddhist religion and especially in the Mahayana. Some researcher of Buddhism predicted that the follower of Mahayanaphase set up the ideals of the Bodhisattva in such clear cut and altruistic terms that it relegated into the background importance of the Arthahood. The term Bodhisattva derived from two world "Bodhi" (enlightenment) and "Sattva" (essence) and they represents the class of deities who derive their origin from the five meditated Buddha's and representing the five primordial elements. According to Buddhism theory Bodhisattva represents Sangha. Main Bodhisattvas are only five but later on their numbers were increased. These main five are bodhisattva are Padmapadi, Vajrapadi, Samnhabhadra, Vishvapadi, Ratnapadi, and two other most famous bodhisattvas are Manjushree, Maiterya.

1.6. Padmapadi

Padmapadi is also known as Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Padmapani is the Bodhisattva attached to the Padma (lotus) family which is presided over by the meditated Buddha Amitabha whose spiritual consort is Pandara or Pandaravasini. The lotus is the symbol of this family and the color assigned to this family is red. The Bodhisattva Padmapani begets the red color and a full blown lotus as his symbol. He has 108 different forms in Buddhist pantheon. According to Buddhist sect Sadhanmalahis some fifteen forms are Sadaksari-lokesvara, Simhanada, Khasarpana, Lokanath, Halahala, Padmanarttesvara, Hariharivahana, Trilokyavasankara, Raktalokesvara, Mayajalakrama, Nilkantha, Sugatisandarsana, Pretasantarpita, SukhavatiLokesvara. Padmapani is well represented in the Buddhist countries of the north including Tibet and china.

1.7. Vajrapadi

The Bodhisattva with the Vajra symbol is the spiritual son of the meditated Buddha Aksobhya, who is the progenitor of the Vajra family. His spiritual mother is Mamki. Vajrapadi, when represented, either stands or sits and carries usually a lotus on which is placed the family symbol of Vajra. Sometimes he holds the Vajra against the chest in one of his hands.

1.8. Samnhabhadra

The Meditated Buddhas are the progenitors of the different families and they have each a spiritual consort and spiritual son. These spirituals sons are called the bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas bear the same color and the same recognition symbol whether they sit or stand. The bodhisattva with the Chakra symbol is Samnhabhadra and is thus affiliated to the meditated Buddha Vairocana with the chakra symbol. He belongs to the Tathagata Kula. When represented, he either stands erect or sits in different sitting attitude, such as meditation, Lalita or Bhadra poses on a full blown lotus. He usually holds the stem of a lotus on which family symbol, the chakra, is shown.

1.9. Vishvapadi

Vishvapadi, as the name indicates, is the holder of the Visvavajra or the double thunderbolt which is the symbol of the meditated Buddha Amoghsidhi, whose spiritual consort is Tara or Tarini. They all belong to what is called the Karmakula to which the green color is assigned. It shows the Visvavajra on the lotus. When represented, he may stand erect or sit in different sitting postures.

1.10. Ratnapadi

"Ratnapadi" belongs to RatnaKula which is presided over by the meditated Buddha Ratnasambhava, whose spiritual consort is Vajradhatvisvari. Ratnapani is of the same nature as the meditated Buddha and when represented, he either stands erect or sits in different sitting postures. He holds the stalk of a lotus on which appears the Kula symbol which is here the jewel (Ratnacchata). He is represented sparingly in the Buddhist countries of the north like Nepal and China.

1.11. Manjushri

Manjushri also have the different forms like Avlokiteshvara. In the Manjuvajara Mandal, Manjusri comes as a bodhisattva in the third circle of deities surrounding the principle God Manjuvajara, who represented along with his Prajna or female counterpart Manjusri, as God of learning who bears a sword for destroying ignorance. He also holds the Prajnaramita book which symbolizes transcendental knowledge. The two attributes (1) Dispeller of ignorance and the (2) Disseminator of knowledge are very appropriate for Manjusri. Representing an intellectual character, Manjusri remained a detached figure and as such he could capture very little popular imagination. Manjusri is three faced having yellow, blue and white color. He is endowed with six arms out of which in his three right hands he holds the Soward, Varada, Mudra & Arrow and in the three left shows the Prajnaramita book, the blue lotus and the bow in representations sometime accompanied only by Yamari, sometimes only by Shakti or female counterpart, sometimes by Sudhanakumara and Yamari and

Sudhanakumara and Yamari and sometime by four deities Jaliniprabha, Candraprabha, Kesini, Upakesini. According to Sadhanmala Manjusri have several distinct form of the Bodhisattva like Vajradhara, Dharmadhatu, Vagisvara, Manjughosh, Siddhaikavira, Vajrananga, Namasangti Manjusri, Vagisvara, Manjuvara, Manjuvajra, Manjukumara, Arapacana, Sthiracakra, Vadirat.

1.12. Maiterya

According to Buddhist, text Maiterya or the loving one is the future Buddha. He is still in the Tushita Heaven leading the life of a bodhisattva. It is believed that he will be born as Manushi Buddha some thousand years after the disappearance of Sakyamuni Buddha, for deliverance of suffering souls. Maiterya is the only bodhisattva venerated by both the Hinayanists and the Mahayanists. He is a symbol of hope for deliverance in the future. Alexander Soper pointed out that Maitreyahad three distinct roles: (1) As Member of Sakyamuni audience (2) As a great bodhisattva in the Tushita Heaven and its ruler who welcomes devotees to enjoy its joy and (3) As the future Buddha who a specified time would come down to this earth to lead a countless host to salvation. Maiterya heads the list of bodhisattvas in the Manjuvajra Mandala. Maiterya is of golden or yellow in color and with the two principal hands he displays the Dharmacakra Mudra. The other two hands show the Varda Mudra in the right and the twig of a Nagakesara flower in the left.

V. LIST OF FIVE MEDITATED BUDDHA'S AND THEIR ELEMENT OF POWER

BUDDHA	COLOUR	GESTURE	VEHICLE	EMBLEM	ELEMENT	SENSE	CONSORT	SON
Amitabh	Red	Meditation	Peacock	Lotus	Water	Taste	Pandara	Padmapadi
Aksobhya	Blue	Bhusparsh	Elephant pair	Vajra	Air	Touch	Locana	Vajrapadi
Vairocana	White	Dharmacakra	Snack pair	Cakra	Sky	Word	Vajradhatvishvan	Samnathbhadra
Amoghsiddhi	Green	Abhaya	Eagle pair	Vishvavajra	Soil	Scent	Aryatara	Vishvapadi
Ratnasambhav	Yellow	Varada	Lion pair	Jewel	Fire	Eye	Mamki	Ratnapadi

VI. CONCLUSION

At the end, I would like to sum up that each and every notion of Buddhism, whether its iconographical features, literary evidence or deities of different types, have a perfect description. In Buddhism there are so many Buddhist deities who have their own perception for identification. When Tantrism and Vajrayanism entered into Buddhist religion these deities have taken place in Buddhism and because of these deities a new face of Buddhism has introduced in the history which is called polytheism of Buddhism. And we have seen that all these five meditating Buddha's and bodhisattva were the backbone of this polytheism.

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