

Worship of the Goddess in Buddhist Traditions: with Special Reference to Vajrayāna

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Abstract:

India has had a great legacy of goddess worship. The Tāntric traditions that devoted to the divine feminine has been in vogue since ancient times. The worship of the almighty in the form of Mother is an exceptional feature of the Hinduism. Through the ages, the doctrine of worshipping the Goddess has established a firm root in Hinduism. The Buddhism, though it was opposed the Hinduism in early times, eventually influenced and adopted several aspects from the same. In the 6th century AD, the *Vajrayāna* became prominent in Indian society and it is extensively introduced the Goddess worship. Especially the Goddess *Tārā* with her various personifications like green *Tārā*, white *Tārā*, red *Tārā*, *Ugra Tārā* etc., *Vajravārāhi*, *Vajrayoginī*, *Cinnamastā* and several *Yakṣa-Yakṣi*'s were worshipped in *Vajrayāna* Buddhism. The *Vajrayāna* tradition was encompassed with a diverse range of the Goddess. Here the imagery of goddesses and the ritual practices were backed by profound ethical, Tāntric and philosophical canons. The present paper is a study of worship of the Goddess in Buddhism and explores the unique features of feminine devotion in *Vajrayāna*. Mainly focusing on the characteristics of the Goddess *Tārā*, *Vajrayoginī*, *Cinnamastā* etc., and also the impact of Buddhist philosophy on them. It also analyzes the various aspects of mutual influence between Hinduism and Buddhism in religious and philosophical perspective.

Keywords: Hinduism, Buddhism, Goddess, Vajrayāna, Tārā, Cinnamastā, Vajrayoginī.

The founder of Buddhism, the Gautama Buddha was very much reluctant to ordinate *Sannyāsa* and admitting womenfolk into the Buddhist *Sanṅha*. The Buddha believed that, for the women the *Bhikṣuṇī* status and the rules and rituals of that position isn't appropriate. Hence, he decided not to ordinate *Sannyāsa* to them. Later, due to the request of his stepmother, queen '*Mahāprajāpati devī*', he granted the *Bhikṣuṇī* status to the womenfolk. Therefore, the worship of any female deities in early Buddhism might be impossible. The Buddha opposed the worship of idols and he has forbidden the concept of *Īśwara*. Hence, in early Buddhism or Hinayāna, there are no evidences regarding worship of any male or female deities. Remarkably, one of the oldest texts of the Buddhism, *Divyāvadāna*, mentions some of the *Yakṣi*'s or demi-goddesses named '*Amale-Vimale*'.¹ With the beginning of Mahāyāna, several novel concepts influenced by Hinduism and Tāntric traditions were introduced in Buddhism. Buddhism changed qualitatively from the pristine simplicity to the most complex system with the creation of Mahāyāna.

1. Vajrayāna: The Vajrayāna (*the thunderbolt vehicle*) is a Buddhist sect that incorporates Tāntric rituals. It wasn't originated in a specified time and was developed through the ages with the various Buddhist ideologies² in India around the 5th century C.E. According to the Tibetan theories, the Buddha initiated the *Śramaṇa* religion through the very first "*Dharmacakra pravartanā*" in *Ṛṣipaṭṭana*. In the second, he

originated Mahāyānism in ‘*Gr̥dhakūṭa*’ mountains and in the third, he has begun the Mantrayāna or Vajrayāna in ‘*Śrīdhānyakaṭaka*’ (*Śrīparvata*) mountains.³

The *Vajra*, initially indicates a thunderbolt, but came to mean ‘diamond’ for its indestructibility. *Yāna* means ‘vehicle.’ According to ‘*Advajavajrasaṅgraha*’, the *Vajra* or diamond is unbreakable, never get melts, unchangeable and it is the symbol of ‘*Śūnya*’.⁴ Another significant Buddhist Tāntric text, the ‘*Jñānasiddhi*’ states, “All the knowledge of *Tathāgata* is called as the Vajrayāna”.⁵ The Tāntric Buddhism and Vajrayāna are not exactly same, but they are often used as synonyms. The Tāntric Buddhism has a precise literature and ancient history. The Vajrayāna is a major sect of that and it is an extension of Mahayāna Buddhism. The kind of Buddhism that is most often associated with the Vajrayāna is Tibetan Buddhism. Although it was born in India, Vajrayāna rather quickly spread out of India in 6-7th century C.E. and became established in several parts of the eastern Asia. It became the dominant form of Buddhism in Tibet. Indeed, the Vajrayāna is often referred to simply as ‘Tibetan Buddhism.’

The Vajrayāna is a Tāntric path, where enlightenment can be attained much more promptly than with the Common Mahayāna practices. Hindu tāntric practices were more ancient than Buddhist tantra. Hence, Vajrayāna was essentially influenced by Hindu Tantra. By the 8th century C.E., Buddhist tantra had become a large and influential movement. Buddhist monks were practicing tantra vastly and Vajrayāna was also being taught and practiced in the Buddhist *Vihāra*’s. Meanwhile, it was also spread to Tibet and China and Vajrayānic practices were extended to Japan and Korea through those countries.



Image 1. 84 *Mahā-Siddha*’s

From the 9th through 12th centuries in India, a group of *Mahā-Siddha*’s, traditionally 84 in number, began traveling around India. Saraha-pā⁶, Savari-pā, Lui-pā, Darikā-pā, Jālandhara-pā, Indrabhūti, Lakṣmīṅkarā devī, Sahajayogini cintā, Dombī Heruka, Anaṅgavajra, Padmavajra and Lilāvajra were the chief among them.⁷ They performed Tāntric rituals and introduced Tāntric rituals to laymen. Interestingly, their path of Tāntric practices was a unique combination of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. These *Siddha*’s were not connected to any Buddhist monastic tradition or any Hindu philosophical tradition. They played a huge role in the development of Vajrayāna.⁸ The *Kālacakra* tantra practices were developed in the 11th century C.E. in India. This is a very advanced tāntric path and had an important place in Vajrayāna and Tibetan Buddhism. Later Buddhism in India had been in decline and was virtually wiped out by the 13th century

C.E. With the weakening Buddhism the Vajrayāna also vanished in India and found a great position in Tibet and other Asian countries.

The Vajrayāna has a vast and rich literature. The *Manjuśrī mūlakalpa*, *Guhyasamāja tantra*, *Amitāyū sūtra*, *Jñānasiddhi*, *Advayasiddhi*, *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*, *Śrīchakrasamvara tantra*, *Hevajra tantra*, *Kālacakra tantra*, *Śrīsamputa (Yoginitantra)*, *Samājottārā tantra*, *Nāmasaṅgīti*, *Sekoddesa*, *Guhyasiddhi* and *Sādhanaśamuccaya* are the major texts of this tradition. The Vajrayāna Tāntric tradition has four parts⁹ – 1. Kriyātantrayāna, 2. Caryātantrayāna, 3. Yogāntayāna and 4. Anuttārātantrayāna. They are very much similar to Hindu tāntric divisions in the characteristics and theories. In Kriyā and Caryā tantra, the goddess is visualized as an external entity. Anuttārāyoga tantra is further divided into *Māṭṛu* tantra and *Pitṛu* tantra. In *Māṭṛu* tantra, the disciple's practices self-visualization in which they visualize themselves as the central meditation goddess of an elaborate and elegant mandala. The *Māṭṛu* tantra also consists of yogic practices of dealing with the systems of the central wind channel of the subtle body in order to gain the subtlest level of blissful awareness.¹⁰

2. Goddess in Buddhism: The Vajrayāna is a multidimensional system of Buddhism. It was influenced by Hindu tāntric traditions. Several theories, which are contradicting with the primal Buddhist philosophy are familiarized in the Vajrayāna. Introducing the worship of multifaceted Buddha, tāntric rituals and worshipping of Goddess are some of them. Frequent interchange of deities between the two religious systems happened from time to time. The confluence of Hindu tantra, especially the *Śaiva* and *Śākta* tantra and the Vajrayāna during the 10th century C.E. provided the ground for growing worship of the mother Goddess.¹¹ A Buddhist text, '*Sādhanaṁālā*' indicates about the mutual exchange of female deities between Buddhist and Hindu tantra.¹² According to the Buddhist Tantra, whereby male is compassionate skillful Means and female is wisdom of *Śūnyatā* or Emptiness. The female by deliberate choice in order to show that a woman's body is at least as good as a man's for benefiting sentient beings and attaining Enlightenment. Many noble women are portrayed in the scriptures, both laywomen and *Bhikkunī*'s, achieved the mighty grade of the *Arhat*.



Image 2. Hārīti

2.1. Yakṣiṇī (Hārīti): The worship of *Yakṣa*'s and *Yakṣiṇī*'s was an ancient ritual of pre-Buddhist India. The Gautama Buddha and other Buddhist scholars of that time never prohibited the worship of the *Yakṣa*-*Yakṣiṇī*. The early Buddhist art contains several depictions of them. Interestingly, some stories regarding

suppression of *Yakṣa*'s by the Buddha are available in Buddhist literature.¹³ Some of the names of the *Yakṣa*'s mentioned in the Buddhist literature are – *Umbradatta*, *Surambara*, *Maṇibhadra*, *Bhaṇḍīra*, *Sūlapāṇi*, *Ghaṇṭikā*, *Purṇabhadra* and the names of *Yakṣini*'s are – *Hārīti*, *Kuntī*, *Naṭā*, *Bhaṭṭā*, *Revatī*, *Tamāsuri*, *Ālika*, *Maghā*, *Bendā*.¹⁴ The common people had more fear rather than the devotion towards these *Yakṣa*-*Yakṣi*'s. The mesmerism or bewitchment, black magic and other left path t̃āntric rituals were very much famous in the society¹⁵ and also the people of that time were so superstitious.¹⁶ In the *Yakṣi* cult the '*Hārīti*' has an important place in early Buddhist literature and religion. She was the protectress deity of the children and also of the *Sangha* or monastery. The Buddha instructed his disciples to worship and make offerings to her. *Hārīti* is a female divinity of Rājagṛha and she was married to '*Yakṣa Pañcīkā*' of the Gāndhāra. According to Buddhist literature *Hārīti*, means a 'thief', at first, she was an abductor and devourer of children. After the blessings and teaching of the Buddha, she becomes the protector of children and the monastery.¹⁷ Every monastery of that time has the *Hārīti*'s statue at the entrance. Chinese traveler, I-tsing mentions about the statues of *Yakṣi Hārīti* on the porches and in the dining halls of *Vihāra*'s or monasteries.¹⁸ Buddhist stupas at Bharahut and Sāñci have several female statues, including the portrayals of *Yakṣi Hārīti*. She represents the resourcefulness, richness and wealth of the *Sangha*.

2.2 Tārā: The Goddess Tārā is the most popular deity, not only in the Buddhist tantra, but also in Hindu t̃āntric traditions. She is the Buddhist form of the mother Goddess, who has flourished in Asian countries from ancient times. The literature of Tibetan Buddhism is extremely occupied with the praise and glory of Tārā. She has the same status and divinity in Buddhism as the goddess *Durgā* has in Hinduism. She is worshipped in all over the India, Tibet, and South East Asian countries. An Nāgari Inscription of 778 C.E., found in Java Island, praises the magnificence of Tārā as “whose smile made the sun to shine and frown made darkness to envelope the earthly sphere”.¹⁹ According to the Tibetan Buddhist traditions she was a *Bodhisattva* or a female Buddha, who attained enlightenment. She always appears in a female form for the benefit of all living beings.²⁰



Image 3: The 21 forms of Tārā

The goddess Tārā is known by innumerable names, but consistently as *Tārā*, *Arya Tārā*, and, in Tibetan as '*Jetsun Drolma*'. There is a conflict between the scholars regarding the origin of Tārā. According to

some scholars she basically belongs to the Hindu Tāntric tradition and later Tibetan Buddhism and Vajrayāna embraced her divinity. In Śāktism Tārā is one of the ten *Mahāvidyā*'s of the goddess Kālī.²¹ The Śaivite philosophy considers Tārā as '*Mahāmāyā*'. Several Hindu Tāntric texts, both Śaivite and Śāktism, were plenteous with her magnitude and majesty. *Tārārahasya*, *Tārātantra*, *Tantrasāra* and *Mantramahodadhi* are some principal Hindu Tāntric texts for the study of Tārā. However, the Hindu and Buddhist perceptions of the Tārā are extensively diverse. In Buddhism Tārā has numerous manifestations - she is kindhearted, spirited, radiant, and protective goddess. The Hindu goddess Tārā – she is the *Mahāvidyā*, ferocious same as Kali and she is usually perceived as riding a corpse in the *Smashāna* or the graveyard.

In simple meaning Tārā means a 'star'. According to Tibetan mythology she was born from the water or sea. The *Svatantra-tantra* relates her origin in a 'Cholana lake', which lay on the western slope of the mount *Meru*, the Indo-Tibetan borderland which had around it several lakes and many monasteries.²² The Tārā was always there to help cross the lakes and she was the protector from drowning. This form of Tārā, is came from Sanskrit root '*tri*' means to 'to cross' or 'to traverse' or 'to escape' or 'swim across'. All her names prevalent in Tibet and other Asian countries give this meaning. In islands like Java, she was especially popular, perhaps for helping people against tempestuous seas. In Buddhism this aspect was not so significant, but as '*Tārīṇi*' she enabled her votaries to wade across '*Bhavasāgara*' - ocean of life.²³ The exact translation of Tārā's name in Tibetan is '*she who saves*'.

One of the significant Buddhist tāntric text '*Aryamañjuśrī mūlakalpa*' explains the characteristics and the mantra of Tārā – “the mother of the Vajra Family is a four-faced and eight-armed, the color of a conch shell, a young maiden. Her four faces are white, dark blue, red and yellow faces; they are marked with the five Families on the crown, and are three-eyed. Her eight hands have a *Vajra*, an arrow, a lance, and finally the gesture of granting boons; the left-hand signs being an *utpala*, a bow, a *Vajra* hook, and a noose, with threatening forefinger. She sits in *Vajra-paryāṅka* and has the nature of the *Dharmakāya*. As with her vast collection of names, appearances and roles, her ritual practices are very simple. Tārā responds well to just the calling of her name or a simple thought. This is her mantra:

***“Namo Ratna-Trayāya! Nama Aryajñāna-
Sāgarāya Akṣobhya-Vyuha-Rājāya
Tathāgatāya Arhate Samyak -Sambuddhāya!
Nama Āryāvalokiteśvarāya Bodhisattvāya
Mahāsattvāya Mahā-Karuṇikāya!
Tadyathā:
Om Tāre Ture Tuttāre Svāha”***²⁴

The recitation of this *mūlamantra* with performing some tāntric rites, a devotee can attain immense power from the goddess. He will recite the following mantra too -

'OM ĀMUKAM ME VAŚAM ĀNAYA SVĀHA'

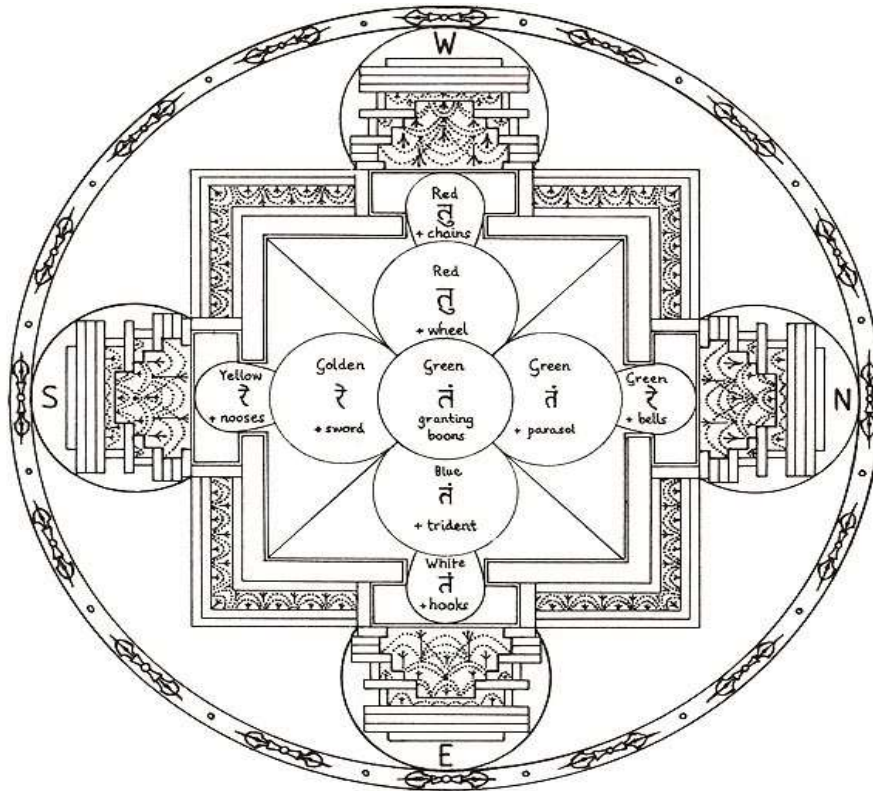


Image 4. Tārā Mandala

Tārā is a multi-faceted goddess.²⁵ She can manifest in myriad forms, suited to the need of the devotee. She has many personations and they are innumerable. Tārā appears in many aspects represented by different colors. Tārā has 21 primary emanations which perform different activities. Mainly she has five forms and they are –

2.2.1 Sita Tārā (White Tārā): The Sita Tārā is the primary form of Tārā. This form represents 'Prajñāpārmitā' (Perfection of Wisdom). She is considered as the 'Prajñā' or wisdom feature of *Amoghasiddhi*, one of the Bodhisattva. She is described in texts as 'Ṣoḍaśī' or having "the youth of 16 years". Generally, she is two armed (sometimes four), right held in *Varadā mudrā* and left in *Vitarka-mudrā*. As the Śakti of *Amoghasiddhi*, she carries stems of lotuses in both hands. She also has a *Viśvavajra* - a thunderbolt. Tārā is the Goddess of Action or Queen of the Action and she often appears in *Maṇḍala*'s with her consort *Amoghasiddhi*.

According to Tāntric texts, she manifests as white complexioned, with two arms, wearing white garment, white jewels and also, she carries white serpents. With her two hands she plays on *Vīṇa* like Hindu goddess *Sarasvatī*. Her charming body is garlanded with jewel necklaces, earrings, armlets. The Rays of moon form her white garland. The white Tārā usually has a third eye as the symbol of knowledge. The White Tārā as the Autumn Moon (*Candra-kānti-Tārā*) has three faces, representing the three *Kāya* or bodies of the Buddha.²⁶ White Tārā is referred to as "Mother of all the Buddha's." This is because she embodies the compassion. Her whiteness is "Radiant as the eternal snows in all their glory" and it indicates the selflessness and the purity.



Image 5. Sita Tārā (White Tārā)

2.2.2 Śyāma Tārā (Green Tārā):



Image 6. Śyāma Tārā (Green Tārā)

The Śyāma Tārā sits on an *Utpala* or lotus-throne and it is held by two lions. She usually stays on the right side of *Avalokiteśvara*. According to some texts, she is the forest goddess. The green form of Tārā is particularly associated with the earth, plant life and the wind.²⁷ She has her own eight forms, and the *Ekajaṭā*, *Marīchi*, *Jāṅguli* and *Mahāmayuri*, are her major manifestations. When she manifests as *Jāṅguli* and *Mahāmayuri*, she becomes *Dhanadā*, the giver of prosperity.

Some Tāntric texts perceive her as a two-armed, one hand in *Varadā mudrā* and the other one carrying a lotus Like White Tārā. Holding an *utpala* with the thumb and ring finger, she spreads the index, middle and little fingers towards her heart: in this manner she is decorated with the motion representing the three jewels of Buddhism.²⁸ She also has three-eyes and her hands are raised to proclaim the Dharma, with the *Varadā mudrā* she offers great Joy for the beings. She has a *Vajra* and bell on the crown of her head and she always encircled by several *Śakti*'s. She is perceived with a smiling face and ornamented with bright pearls.

2.2.3 Bhrikuti Tārā (Yellow Tārā):



Image 7. Bhrikuti Tārā (Yellow Tārā)

She is the symbolizer of the goddess '*Lakṣmi*' in Buddhist tantra. Yellow Tārā helps the poor, who are struggling with poverty and provides the resources to help other sentient beings. She also has the *Amoghasiddhi* in her crown and she has two hands. She holds her right hand in the *Varadā mudrā* and has a blue *Utpala* in the left hand. She is perceived as a holy goddess with eternal youth.

She always bejeweled with several beautiful jewels. She also has several manifestations like other Tārā's. In those the *Khādiravarṇi Tārā* and *Vajra Tārā* are her major forms. She also has three eyes and sits on the moon placed on a lotus signifying the universe. She is the most well-known wealth deity in Tibetan Buddhism. She is the Goddess of Wealth and Abundance. She has the power to increase fortune, assets, prosperity, wealth and financial stability.

2.2.4 Ekajāta Tārā (Blue Tārā):



Image 8. Ekajāta Tārā (Blue Tārā)

Blue Tārā or Ekajāta is a very ferocious goddess. She is Tārā's angriest manifestation and is hence known as '*Ugra Tārā*'. She is also very well known as *Mahācīnatārā*.²⁹ In her two right hands she carries sword and scissors, in the left two hands she holds a blue lotus and a skull. As denoted in Buddhist Tāntric texts, she stands in archer's pose, short in height, one face; three eyes and bulging belly, is fierce and terrible-looking, wears a necklace of human heads, and is adorned with a blue lotus. She rides a corpse, is decorated with eight snakes and five *Mudrās* - attitudes, has red and round eyes and protruding tongue, and is in the prime of youth. She wears tiger-skin around her waist.³⁰

She is the goddess of the uncontrollable energy, which is extremely volatile. *Ugra Tārā* was worshipped according to *Vāmācāra* or left-hand path of Tāntric traditions. According to a *Tantra*: "Tārā is the same as *Kālī*, the embodiment of supreme love. So also, is *Kāmākhyā*. In thinking of them as different from *Kālī*, one would go to hell."³¹ She is one of the most powerful and fierce goddesses of Vajrayāna mythology.³²

2.2.5 Kurukullā Tārā (Red Tārā):



The *Kurukullā* Tārā's body is red color. She sits on a red lotus and also wears a red costume. The name *Kurukullā* means "she who is the cause of knowledge." The origin of *Kurukullā* is *Amitābha*, the principal Buddha. She has four-armed and one of her right hands is held in *Abhaya mudrā*, while in another she carries an arrow, in left hands she holds jewels, and in another, an arrow. Her activity is described as 'overpowering' in the sense of overcoming obstacles.

Red Tārā is the remover of all obstacles, which can occur in the path of '*Nirvāṇa*'. She helps beings with the power of positive attraction and protects the welfare of all sentient beings. The power of *Kurukullā* is glorious and she is a magnificent Bodhisattva that transcends the world. As a female deity, she is understood to embody the wisdom aspect of enlightenment or *Śūnya*.

These are the main five Tārā's. Apart from her female form, her most common identifying symbols, throughout differences of her form, are the *utpala* (lotus) and the *Varadā* and *Vitarka mudrā*'s. The Buddhist t̃ntric text '*Sādhnamālā*' is a great source for the study of goddess Tārā. The scholars described that until some very experienced Tibetan artists were shown the details of the 21 Tārā's as illustrated in foreign texts, they often did not know or could not recall which colours, gestures and symbolic items belonged together.³³ Tārā is one of the most popular devotional and meditational deities, honored all around the world. She is practiced in all schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism, Hinduism and other traditions. The earliest images of Tārā's being dated around the 6th century C.E.³⁴ In t̃ntric Buddhism, goddesses who embodied supreme enlightenment were designated as 'the Buddhas' and "the mother of all Buddhas"³⁵. In Buddhism Tārā was the 'non-manifested' and at the ultimate level, she is the '*Prajñāpāramitā*' (Perfection of Wisdom).

2.3. Vajrayoginī:



The tradition of goddess Vajrayoginī originated around the tenth and twelfth centuries CE and was followed by both Hindu and Buddhist followers.³⁶ The name Vajrayoginī suggests a near relationship with the Vajrayāna. Thus, the wielder of *Vajra* is named as Vajrayoginī. In Vajrayāna, she is called as a '*Ḍākīṇī*'

or ‘*Vajra ḍākiṇī*’ and is considered as the queen of *ḍākiṇī*’s. She has the status of a Buddha and represents a complete Buddhahood in female form. Hence, she is often designated as ‘*Sarvabuddhaḍākiṇī*’, meaning “the *ḍākiṇī*, who is the Spirit of all Buddha’s”. Her divine consort is called as *Heruka* or *Cakrasamvara*. She is worshiped as the ultimate inspiration of devotion at the center of a *maṇḍala* with other minor deities. The *Guhyasamāja tantra*, *Sādhnamālā* and other tāntric texts are full of her praising and they admit she is the divine in the sense that she represents enlightenment.

The Vajrayoginī manifests in her fiery red, adoring, spectacular and robust form. She is red in color; wears elaborate ornaments of human bone and a necklace of skulls. In her right hand, she holds a knife and in her left hand she carries a skull cup filled with *mahāsukha* (the great bliss), which she pours out to her devotees. Vajrayoginī is the goddess of both grace and annihilation. The resemblances between Vajrayoginī and Hindu goddess Kālī are so evident that several scholars admit they are both one with some minor variations. Remarkably, Vajrayoginī also called as ‘Krodha Kālī’ meaning ‘black wrathful *Yoginī*’ in some texts.



Image 11. Mandala of Chakrasamvara

The Vajrayoginī meditation is moderately simple and Visualization of her image is so easy. Nevertheless, her rituals are advanced and highest Tāntric practice. It requires a massive amount of spiritual knowledge, commitment and strength of the practitioner. They should practice her sincerely, have guru devotion, involve in her *sādhana* every day, recite her mantra uninterruptedly and engage in offerings. At last, by the grace of Vajrayoginī the devotee will gain high attainments and enter ‘*Khecara*’ paradise. Therefore, Vajrayoginī practice is extremely powerful and significant.

2.4. Cinnamastā:



Image 12. Cinnamastā

The Cinnamastā is a very famous goddess both in Hinduism and Buddhism. She is one of the ten *Mahāvidya*'s in Hindu tantra. Usually, she is considered as Vajrayoginī in the Vajrayāna. The Buddhist Tāntric texts *Sādhanamālā* and the *Tantrasāra* describes the same form of goddess in the name of Cinnamastā and Vajrayoginī. In the Vajrayāna, she is also called as *Cinnamuṇḍā* and *Pracaṇḍa Caṇḍikā*. There are several stories about her birth available in Tāntric texts. In Buddhist texts, one story tells about the two *Mahāsiddha* sisters, *Mekhalā* and *Kankhalā*, who cut their heads, offered them to their guru and then danced. The goddess Vajrayoginī also appeared in this form and danced with them. Another story recalls princess *Lakmiṣṇkara devī*, who was an incarnation of *Padmasambhava*, cut off her head as a punishment from the king and roamed with it in the city, where citizens praised her as Cinnamastā or Vajravarāhi. The central themes of these stories of Cinnamastā are her self-sacrifice with a motherly aspect of the welfare of the world.

The Cinnamastā represents the *Kuṇḍalinī* energy and she is a very ferocious goddess. The streams of her blood are surging cosmic energy. This energy is sometimes described as a feminine serpent lying coiled at the base of our body's trunk. As it rises and awakens it can express itself in much uncomfortable and unrecognized physicality.³⁷ She also symbolizes the dual nature of life giving and life taking at the same time. The Cinnamastā's image conveys the eternal truth that "life feeds on death, is nourished by death, necessitates death, and that the ultimate destiny of sex is to perpetuate more life, which in turn will decay and die in order to feed more life".³⁸

3. Conclusion:

The Goddesses in Buddhism are sometimes beautiful, peaceful, and blissful and sometimes they are wrathful and hideous. They are the source energy of cosmic creation, *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*, mother of everything and ultimately the destructive force. According to Buddhist tantra, the goddess has countless ways of manifesting herself. The principle of *Śakti* begins to emerge in these texts as a potency manifesting

in powerful female deities. It comes to the fore through the figure of the female consorts and the many types of goddesses, witches, or female spirits-*Yoginī's* and *Ḍākinī's*-who haunt the wilds and live in the cremation grounds.³⁹

Significantly, we can also recognize the concept of *Śiva - Śakti* union in the Buddhist tantra's. Here every goddess always accompanies with her consort. But they are never mentioned as the *Śakti*. The associated Buddha's have a rightful place in their crowns of the deities. According to *Cakrasamvara tantra*, the absolute was singular in the ultimate essence, manifesting female and male aspects. The text further states that the male aspect was impotent and could act only through his female consort.⁴⁰ It is well known that *Śakti*, who without her *Śiva* is ineffectual.⁴¹ In Vajrayāna t̃antric traditions, the goddess eventually turns out to be the topmost commanding creator of the universe, but she is imperfect without her consort. Therefore, the concept of five 'female' Buddha's as the '*Prajñā's*' of five *Tathāgata's* was presented in the Vajrayāna.⁴²

NOTES:

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4. *Dr̥ḍham s̃āramasauśīryam acchedyābhedyalakṣaṇam | Adāhi Avināśī ca śūnyatā vajramucyate ||* (Vajrashekhara, *Advajavajrasaṅgraha*, Baroda Edition, 1927, p.23)
5. *Sarvam tathāgataṃ jñānam Vajrayānamiti smṛtam |*
6. '*Pā*' means '*Pāda*' or '*Ācāryapāda*'. The word indicates the respect towards the *Mahāsiddha's*.
7. *Masters of Mahamudra: Songs and Histories of the Eighty-four Buddhist Siddhas* by Abhayadatta, (1986). (Tr) Kieth Doweman, State University of New York Press, p.233
8. For more information about *Mahāsiddha's* – *Acarya Abhayadattasri Pranita Courasi Siddho ka Vrttanta*, (1979). (Tr) A. Sampa Dorji, Bhotavidya samsthanam, Saranath
9. According to some scholars, it has six parts. They add '*Mahāyogatantrayāna* and *Atiyogatantrayāna*' with above four.
10. Gyatso, Geshe Kelsang. (2000). *Guide to Dakini Land*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. p. 202
11. Shaw, Miranda, (2008). *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal. p. 33
12. Bhattacharyya, Binoytosh, (ed.) (1968). *Sādhanaṃālā*. Vol.II. Baroda: Oriental Institute of Baroda.
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14. Dr. Chandra, Moti, (1954). "*Some Aspects of Yakṣa Cult*", Bombay: Bulletin of the Prince of Wells Museum, p.43
15. Davids, Rhys, (1950). *Buddhist India*, Culcutta edition, p.143-144
16. For more information refer *Sāmañcaphala sutta* of *Dīghanikāya*.
17. Misra, Ram Nath. (1979). *The Yakṣa Cult and Iconography*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p. 73-77

18. I-tsing (1966). *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Maylay Archipelago AD 671–695*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal. p.37
19. Prince Shailendra's the Kalasan Chandi sanctuary Inscription of Java Island.
20. Rinpoche, Boker. (1999). *Tara The Feminine Devine*. San Francisco: Clear Point Press. p. 21
21. Mookerjee, Ajit, (1988). *Kali: The Feminine Force*, London: Thames & Hudson, p.63
22. Prof. P.C. Jain, Dr. Daljeet, "Tara and the cult of female in Buddhism", March, 2008, p.9
23. Ibid,
24. Willson, Martin,(1986) *In Praise of Tara*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, p.37
25. Image source - <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/>
26. They are – *Sambhogakāya*, *Nirmanakāya* and *Dharmakāya*
27. Templeman, David, (1981). (Trans) *The origin of the Taaraa tantra by Jo-nan Taaranaatha*, New delhi: Library of Tibetan works & Archives, p.16
28. They are – Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.
29. Bühnemann, Gudrun, (1996). *The Goddess Mahācīnakrama-Tārā (Ugra-Tārā) in Buddhist and Hindu Tantrism*, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol-59, No-3, p. 472-493
30. Prof. P.C. Jain, Dr. Daljeet, (2008). "Tara and the cult of female in Buddhism", p.10
31. Yogini Tantra
32. There is a temple dedicated to the **Ugra Tara** in Kathmandu, Nepal. Situated in the *Asan tole*.
33. Beyer, Stephan, (1978). *The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, Berkeley: university of California Press.
34. Ghosh, Mallar, (1980). *Development of Buddhist Iconography in Eastern India: A study of Taaraa*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, p.16
35. Shaw, Miranda, (2008). *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal. p.8
36. A temple dedicated to Vajrayoginī is located at Sankhu in Kathmandu, Nepal, built by King Pratāpa Malla in the 16th Century C.E.
37. Kinsley, David, (1997) *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 159
38. <http://www.chinabuddhismencyclopedia.com/en/index.php?title=Chhinnamasta>
39. English, Elizabeth, (2002). *Vajrayogini: Her Visualization, Rituals & Forms*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, p.4
40. Brown, Simmer J. (2001). *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, p.46
41. *Na Śivena vinā Śaktirna Śaktyā ca vinā Śivaḥ* ॥ (*Shivapurana*, Vayaviya Samhita, Uttarabhaga. 7.2.4.12)
42. The female Buddha's are Locana - consort of Akṣobhya, Māmakī - consort of Ratnasambhava, Pandaravāsini - consort of Amitābha, Tārā - consort of Amoghasiddhi, and Ākāśadhātēśvari - consort of Vairocana.

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