

ABSTRACT FOR
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR AND EXIBITION ON
“KUMARJIBA: PHILOSOPHER AND SEER”

**Principles and Philosophy of Tantric Buddhism as
reflected in the works of *Kumarajiva***

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Kumarajiva as an ardent follower of *Madhyamika* literature translated many texts into Chinese which became very popular afterwards. He took this *Madhyamika* School to China from India in 5th century A.D. The history of Buddhism informs us that in north India *Theravada* and *Sarvastivada* was popularly practiced. Later on the Philosophy of *Madhyamika* and *Vijnanavada* developed and worshipping of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas came into practice. Buddhist rituals and worship became the dominating factor with the *Mahayana* emphasis on the worship of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are ‘skill in means’ (*upaya kausala*), who strive tirelessly for the upliftment of all beings. Skill in means allowed Buddhism to be spelled out in details in which the meaning of Buddhism was correlated with the unenlightened

conditions of living beings. In this stage Buddhas and Bodhisattvas assume different roles in order to make mankind in right direction to the final goal of enlightenment.

Since lay worshippers cannot understand the high wisdom of *sunyata* the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas preached the essentials in a language that fits to the mind of public needs and abilities. The theory of 'skilful means' justifies many facets of Mahayana Buddhism at the existential level. The doctrine of *sunyata* gave a philosophical justification to the new changes in four fold manner.

- i) the old *Vinaya* rules gave away to the flexibility in the doctrines.
- ii) where the emphasis was shifted from *arhathood* to *bodhisattvahood*.
- iii) In the interaction with the laity where the monks became mostly associated with them in various roles like- a healer, a ritual specialist and as astrologer. Buddhas as a header was introduced. and
- iv) in the form of *paramitas* , where the emphasis was on *dana*. It is not that all actions can be justified as 'skilful means' and those actions which produce merit can be justified as necessary.

Both canonical texts and *Sutra* literature of *Mahayana* emphasize on *sila*. In older Buddhism the higher planes of spiritual life were considered to be beyond the reach of woman. However, the later *Mahayana* texts began to include in its fold the female principle and emphasized its relevance. The

worshippers are enjoined to identify with *Prajnaparamita* and merge with the principle of femininity and finally with the absolute void.

This paper aims at highlighting the above principles which developed to Buddhist Tantricism in the texts of *kumarajiba* and travelled to China.

