

THE TRINITY PRINCIPLE

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Lama Doboomb Tulku

The Buddhist concept of *Trikaya* is similar to the Christian Holy Trinity and the Hindu Trimurti concept says LAMA DOBOOMB TULKU.

The trinity concept is common in many religions, not only as a triple entity but also in the idea of their essence. In the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, it is one God in essence, subsisting in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It may be comparable to the Hindu *Trimurti* idea only in that Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer are three highest manifestations of the one ultimate reality. The *Trikaya* concept of Buddhism is comparable with the Trinity of Hinduism more clearly than that of Judeo-Christianity.

For Hindus, with a few exceptions, there are no temples or pilgrimage spots dedicated to Brahma. Buddhism also, again with some exceptions, generally does not have iconographical portrayal of *Dharmakaya*. In both the cases, Brahma and Dharmakaya prevail more in the realm of ideology to point to ultimate truth rather than to the embodiment of a notion.

The original meaning of *Dharmakaya* might have been a reference to a body of Buddha's teachings. Gradually, it came to mean the mind of Buddha and the ultimate nature of that mind. Buddha has said in a Mahayana sutra, "O Bhikshus, do not consider my physical body as Buddha, you should see me as Dharmakaya".

Of the triple gem, Dharma is the actual saviour because by following the Dharma path, one can be saved from all distress. That is to say, when you finally attain *Dharmakaya*, the root and all traces of suffering are eliminated permanently.

The idea of Vishnu is that of preserver. He is the source of emanations and one example of that is the 10 avatars. In some schools of thought, Buddha is one avatar and in some others, it is Balarama which makes the 10. Vishnu contributes through his many incarnations to the evolution of the world. He is quasi-physical in appearance; that is, he is subtle-bodied, quasi-material preacher of scriptures, neither fully human nor fully Absolute.

In Buddhism, the *Sambhogakaya* idea is comparable to Vishnu. The best illustration is Vajradhara, who is described as Mandaleshvara, lord of *mandalas*. It is from him that a host of deities and mandalas are emanated. Sambhogakaya, Buddha's body of enjoyment, reflects the complete ideal situation and surrounding of existence. It has a quasi-physical representation. There is rich iconography of pure environment such as *sukhavati* paradise, deities, teachings and other activities described in Mahayana Buddhism.

Shiva is the destroyer — of ego as I understand. The sound of his *damaru* ripples through the world just like the sound of the dharma drum shakes the world from a state of ignorance.

Nirmana kaya is the earthly linked body of the Buddhist trinity. It chiefly refers to the historical Buddha Sakyamuni who is visible to people as inspiration to follow the Buddhist path to enlightenment. He has a physical body, and a bio-data. His recorded teachings about the path of Dharma are there for everybody to learn. His mission on earth is to end sufferings of all beings. There is a reference to the Hindu Trinity along with the Buddhist Trikaya concept in Tibetan literature. So there are parallels, similarities and distinctions among world religions. To learn from each other is the key.