

## Esoteric Buddhism is not MI

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Good morning! Welcome to International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to our Dharma talk today.

In the last two months, we talked about “CHAN” and “JING”, this month our subject is “MI”. CHAN, JING and MI are ONE. We say that CHAN is the body, JING is where we return to and MI is the action. We already knew that CHAN is the Buddha nature. Every being has Buddha nature and every being will become a Buddha. Let’s review what the ancient saint said, “The Buddha nature is functioning. It functions at the eyes and the eyes can see; it functions at the ears and the ears can hear; it functions at the nose and the nose can smell; it functions at the tongue and the tongue can taste; it functions at the mouth and the mouth can talk; it functions at the mind and the mind can think; it functions at the hands and the hands can take and hold; it functions at the feet and the feet can run.” The Buddha nature cannot be seen or touched. The Buddha nature functioning at the six roots is like the lamp emitting light when there is electricity. The Buddha nature is like the magnetic properties of magnets. Purify the body karma, the mouth karma and the mind karma, be egoless and unconditional, and when the heart is pure, the Buddha nature will appear itself. Seeing the Buddha nature is the starting point of cultivation. Cultivation returns to JING. JING is cultivation’s direction. If the mind is pure, then the land is pure. Cultivation is to cultivate a pure mind. MI is the action of cultivation. What is MI? In the *Nirvana Sutra*, the Buddha told Mahakasyapa, “The foolish people don’t know, so it’s called Esoteric Pitaka; wise people know clearly, so it’s not esoteric.” MI includes MI of the body, MI of the mouth, and MI of the mind. For example, joining the two palms together belongs to MI of the body; reciting Amitabha Buddha belongs to MI of the mouth;

meditating on something in mind belongs to MI of the mind. Because the body, the mouth and the mind is not separable, so the three MIs share one body.

From the moment that Sakayamuni Buddha got enlightened, he told us that all beings were equipped with the supreme wisdom, which was to tell us what was the secret treasure for everybody. The original Buddha nature is our secret treasure. So, MI is to open our secret wisdom treasure and to see our true original self which is of no birth nor death, no filth nor pureness, no increase nor decrease. So where is our true original self? Our original self is invisible, and cannot be seen by the eyes, but it's functioning all the time as explained in the beginning. We often say that "Causality rises and the nature is empty," which means that all things and all properties do not have the self-body and everything forms out of causes and conditions. There is not the original body. The nature is empty (to the eyes). There is no stuff. And this is the great secret that Sakayamuni Buddha wanted to tell us. Cultivating the three MIs is to open the door to our heart with the help of the three MIs, the body, the mouth and the mind, and to see our original self-nature. The three MIs, the esoteric methods, are not Tantric Buddhism, or Esoteric Buddhism, or Esoteric Religion, much less those strange cultivation methods or supernatural powers of Tantra. Instead, it's that you should be righteous, honest, kind and pure to be responsive to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas so that you can get blessings from them, and to build a secret channel between you and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which is the original meaning of MI.

Now, let's take a look at what is Tantra, or Esoteric Buddhism, or Esoteric Religion.

Tantric Buddhism, also named Vajrayana is one of the branches of Mahayana Buddhism. It developed during Gupta dynasty in India together with Tantra teaching of Hinduism. It absorbed partial theory and cultivation methods from Brahminism and certain Shaman sects by some cultivators of Saktism. It's full of mysteries. It takes supernatural power,

spirits, yoga and secret experiences seriously, and it transmits teachings between the master and the student one-to-one. This Indian teaching school has many closed secret teachings in the cultivation methods, but not in the teaching theory, and has the characteristic of mystery, so it's called Esoteric Buddhism. Relative to Esoteric Buddhism, the previous Buddhism is named Exoteric Buddhism. Besides, the cultivators of Esoteric Buddhism believe in what the CHAN Dharma emphasizes, "All living beings originally have a pure heart." But they think that all other teaching methods are the expedient methods given by the Buddha, and only their teaching method is the true esoteric meaning proclaimed by the Buddha. It is of higher level and more effective to one's cultivation. These secret teachings cannot be shown to people easily and need to transmit secretly, so it's called Esoteric Teaching.

In modern society, there are three well known Esoteric Buddhism branches, Mikkyō (东密), Tángmì (唐密) and Vajrayana (藏密). During the Dynasty of Tang Xuanzong in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian high monk Subhakarasiṃha, Vajra Bodhi and Dhyāna-bhadra came to China and they were called "the Three Great Beginning Scholars". The three Esoteric masters, under the support of the Tang Royal family, translated a large amount of esoteric teachings in Daxingshan Temple in Changan. They propagated Esoteric Buddhism and it's the beginning of Tángmì (唐密). Tángmì (唐密) focused on two main sutras, *Vajradhātu* and *garbhakosa-dhātu*, which were thought to be two pure Esoteric sutras. Of course, there were also some other cultivation methods handed down, such as Mengshan Spirit Feeding, Feeding Starving Ghosts, but these methods were not considered the orthodox school. Mikkyō (东密) is one branch of Tángmì (唐密). It was brought to Japan by Japanese monk Kong Hai after he came to Tang to learn Tángmì (唐密). The East Temple was its Bodhimanda and Mikkyo was also named Shingon Buddhism. Mikkyo is a branch of Tángmì (唐密) and the separation of Exoteric and

Esoteric Buddhism was brought up by Kong Hai. Mikkyo advocates that monks should take the vow of celibacy and should strictly hold precepts. Monks in Mount Koya of Mikkyo is still living a traditional monastic life, not like monks in other Japanese temples where the monks can marry a wife and have children.

Vajrayana (藏密) is the most well-known to Chinese and believers in Europe and America. It was brought to Tibet by Padmasambhava and Santaraksita. Vajrayana propagation in Tibet was first obstructed by its local primitive religion, Ben Religion (srid-pa-rgyud-kyi-bon). The primitive Ben had the characteristics of Shaman. Like many other primitive religions, it worships various kinds of creatures. People would divine, pray, curse, conjure, sacrifice, and they had many kinds of rituals. So, the current Vajrayana is composed of Brahminism, Shaman, Saktism and Tibet local primitive religion and some Buddhism theory. After knowing the history of Vajrayana, you would understand it's not the Proper Dharma, not the Proper Dharma proclaimed by Sakyamuni Buddha.

Vajrayana thinks that the exoteric teaching is causal and form method and it emphasizes on theory. Vajrayana is the method of results and it focused on practicing methods and various rituals and mantras, so it's more practical and highly effective. Vajrayana advocates that greed and desire is the aid for practicing. Through secret rituals, supernatural powers and meditation, the cultivator can attain the Emptiness and will get enlightened eventually.

However, in these practicing methods, many are against what the Buddha taught and not found in other Buddhism. They originated from Shaman, Saktism, etc.

Many modern cultivators tend to Vajrayana. Why? Because Vajrayana is mysterious, is easy, is a shortcut. It does not need cultivators to hold all the complicated precepts and the cultivators can release their desires and have supernatural powers. Self-cultivation is like going to some place by walking, while with the help of Buddha's blessing, it's like

taking a train or airplane, which will save efforts. It's good to understand this. However, many modern people brought impetus restlessness for the society to cultivation and they want to choose one that is easy to practice, fast to see result, and does not have precepts to restrict them. So modern Esoteric Buddhism, represented by Vajrayana, emerged as the times require. Ten thousand of living Buddhas are born accordingly. If you believe, if you give enough offerings, they will tell you that you have extradentary root; you have different affinity with the master; you do not need to hold precepts to cultivate; you do not need to abstain desires to practice; and, you may be born in the land of Utmost Happiness or even become a Buddha with blessings from the master and living Buddhas. However, those smart people who want to take the supreme path of cultivation, even forgot to ask, "Was Esoteric Buddhism transmitted by Sakyamuni Buddha? Which master, living Buddha was verified by Sakyamuni Buddha? Were the instructions they gave you from Sakyamuni Buddha? Which sutra did it come from?"

Probably, most cultivators did not consider these questions. The so-called supernatural powers, the so-called "expedient dharma-door" is too inviting. At the same time, due to the fear to go to hell if they have doubts or do not follow with a full heart, they just have to believe and practice obediently.

This is the sadness for religions; this is the sadness for believers. While for us, as the true cultivators, we need wisdom, in fact, not great wisdom, just a common sense of life: no pains, no gain. The sky won't drop a pie. It's impossible to become enlightened without great efforts of countless kalpas. It's impossible to become a Buddha while enjoying worldly pleasure without holding precepts. From the first day, we have said that learning from Buddha is to learn from Sakyamuni Buddha, to learn the Dharma transmitted from Sakyamuni Buddha. Always keep this in mind. Reform from the bottom. The Dharma that Sakyamuni transmitted includes CHAN, JING and MI. MI is called MI because it cannot

be explained by words and it needs the cultivators to comprehend perceptively. The one that is talked and sold to you for sure is not the real MI. CHAN, JING and MI are ONE. You only need to delve into the sutra pitaka, cultivate according to what Sakyamuni Buddha taught, and stay away from the so-called Esoteric Buddhism and the so-called Great Master and Living Buddhas.

The source of CHAN, JING and MI originates from your wonderful true heart, your Buddha nature, the Tathata, your self-nature, the Tathagata.

The source of CHAN, JING and MI originates from the Buddha heart, the nature ocean, the original source of the universe, the original body of the great Tao.

The source of CHAN, JING and MI originates from the Bodhi-tree, the Sarnath, the Vulture Peak.

The source of CHAN, JING and MI originates from becoming enlightened when seeing the bright shooting star, from smiling when seeing the Buddha holding the flower, from demonstrating the Dharma through the eight characteristic events.

Not knowing CHAN, JING and MI, one will never get out of the cycle of birth and death. One will be his/her own master only after he/she understands CHAN, JING and MI.

Don't pursue the Dharma outside. The Buddha is in your own heart, not somewhere else. Don't easily believe the so-called eminent monks, great masters, living buddhas. Don't prostrate yourself before anybody without knowing him. And, you will never know his heart, his thoughts, and his actions. The enlightened Sakayamuni Buddha is our only teacher. In this Dharma-ending period, our teacher is the sutras; our teacher is the precepts.

Religions are supposed to be the carriers of Dharma. Religions are supposed to propagate Cosmic Law.

The Buddha is on the Vulture Peak giving Dharma talks and the Vulture Peak is just in your heart, not somewhere in distance. Everyone has a Vulture Peak Stupa in the heart, so all have the chance to cultivate under it.

Be righteous, be honest, be kind, and be pure. Purify the body and the mind to respond with the Buddha, to the Dharma and to the Cosmic Law. And this is the Greatest MI.

Thank you for your listening! See you next week!