

TIBETAN VAJRA-DORJE AND DRIBUL-BELL

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VAJRA and DRIBUL represent wisdom and skillful means. As wisdom and method are an undivided unity, so the vajra and bell are never parted or used separately. Vajra represents the masculine principle, the compassion of the Buddha. Bell represents the feminine principle, wisdom.

These two principles must be combined to achieve enlightenment. Bell is visualized as Buddha's body. Vajra is visualized as Buddha's mind. The sound of the bell is visualized as Buddha's speech in teaching the dharma.

VAJRA, Sanskrit meaning "the hard or mighty one." The Tibetan equivalent *dorje* means an indestructible hardness and brilliance like a diamond, which cannot be cut or broken. Vajra symbolizes the impenetrable, immovable, immutable, indivisible, and indestructible state of Buddhahood or enlightenment. A vajra may have nine, five or three spokes. The spokes of a peaceful vajra meet at the tip, whereas those of wrathful vajra are slightly splayed at the end. When paired with a bell, their length can vary from four to twenty-eight finger widths.

FIVE-SPOKED VAJRA. The five lower spokes symbolize the five mothers. The upper sets of spokes symbolize the five wisdoms:

- **Mirror-Like**, which reflects all sense perceptions is purified when one attains enlightenment and realizes mirror-like wisdom.
- **Equality** arises after all the feelings of pleasantness, unpleasantness and indifference have been purified.
- **Individual Analysis** arises when the factor of discrimination, which distinguishes one object from another, is purified. It enables one to benefit each sentient being according to his or her needs and disposition.
- **Accomplishing Activity** arises when the basic ability to perform acts according to particular circumstances is purified.
- **The Sphere of Reality** arises when consciousness is purified and becomes the mind that is the seed of the wisdom truth body of Buddha.

NINE-SPOKED VAJRA. The upper spokes symbolize the Buddhas of the five families and the four mothers, one between each of the Buddhas. The lower spokes represent the five wisdoms and the four immeasurable wishes of love, compassion, equanimity and joy.

SEA MONSTER'S MOUTH, from which each spoke emerges, represents freedom from cyclic existence. Of the two lotuses at the hub of the vajra, the upper one symbolizes the eight Bodhisattvas and the lower one, the eight goddesses.

DRIBUL, the Bell, must be round and can be eight, twelve, sixteen, eighteen, or twenty-two finger-widths high. A vase above the base is surrounded by the face of the goddess, Prajnaparamita. Above these are a lotus, moon disc, and vajra. The hollow of the bell symbolizes the wisdom realizing emptiness. The clapper represents the sound of emptiness. The eight lotus petals are the four mothers and four goddesses. The vase represents a container for the nectar of accomplishment.