Authority

Vajrayana: system of lamas

In Vajrayana Buddhism, “the Thunderbolt Vehicle”, there is a central focus on the ritual use of vajras, which influences the significance of the lama system. This branch of Buddhism is called the “thunderbolt vehicle” “to signify the absolutely real and indestructible in a human being… *yana* is the spiritual pursuit of the ultimately valuable and indestructible” (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica) which correlates to the high influence in Vajrayana Buddhists’ lives. The use of aids, like mantras or lamas, are highly prevalent to prevent the mind from wandering into the world of fictions and remain aware of reality.

The system of lamas is part of the reincarnation system. Based on the theory that Buddha’s soul never vanishes, but instead reincarnates into his followers in order to accomplish his mission (("Reincarnation System."). Lamas are living buddhas. For instance, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have had a profound impact on practicing Vajrayana Buddhists and other branches. In order to identify that one is a lama, there are many religious rituals used in identifying a reincarnation. For example, most go on a religious retreat.

Lamas are “enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity” ("Brief Biography."). They are looked upon as a symbol of peace; instead of an ‘authority’ figure they are referred to as a mentor. They have a proud influence in aiding those in need of guidance (aka all Vajrayana Buddhists). They are venerable teachers, “bestowers of initiations and esoteric teachings” ("Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism.") a bestower of “spiritual energy” ("Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism.") and “the focus of passionate devotion for the aspirant” ("Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism."). The also embody the Three Jewels (Buddha, his teachings, and the Sangha) and qualities of meditational deities.

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