



# Essence of Buddhism: An Introduction to Its Philosophy and Practice

*Traleq Kyabgon*

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This lucid overview of the Buddhist path takes the perspective of the three "vehicles" of Tibetan Buddhism: the Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. While these vehicles are usually presented as a historical development, they are here equated with the attitudes that individuals bring to their Buddhist practice. Basic to them all, however, is the need to understand our own immediate condition. The primary tool for achieving this is meditation, and *The Essence of Buddhism* serves as a handbook for the various meditative approaches of Buddhist practice.

Beginning with the Four Noble Truths, Traleg Rinpoche incorporates the expansive vision of the bodhisattva path and the transformative vision of Tantra. The final chapters present the transcendent view of Mahamudra. This view dispenses with all dualistic fixations and directly realizes the natural freedom of the mind itself. Along the way, the author provides vivid definitions of fundamental concepts such as compassion, emptiness, and Buddha-nature, and answers common questions: Why does Buddhism teach that there is "no self"? Are Buddhist teachings pessimistic? Does Buddhism encourage social passivity? What is the role of sex in Buddhist Tantra? Why is it said that "samsara is nirvana"? Does it take countless lifetimes to attain enlightenment, or can it be achieved in a moment?

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