

UPĀYAKAUŚĀLYA AS DEPICTED IN MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

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Abstract

Upāyakausālya has been one of the major concepts in Mahāyāna Buddhism but it can be traced in Pali Nikāyas, though the Theravādins did not develop it to the extent that the Mahāyānists did. In Mahāyāna the concept of Upāyakausālya has been explained in two different lines. One is how the Bodhisattva uses that skill to gain enlightenment and the other is how the Buddha uses that skill to train people in the spiritual path. The Bodhisattva fails to fulfil the Pāramitās without Upāya and this Upāya will help the Bodhisattva to remain in Saṃsāra without realising the Bhūtakoti until the beings are mature in his Buddhakṣetra to release them from this mass of suffering. Because of Upāyakausālya the Buddha can teach the absolute truth in conventional language and the Buddha uses three Yāna doctrine though only one Yāna exists in reality, that being the Mahāyāna, to attract the different characters to the path of enlightenment. In this manner the Mahāyānists developed the concept of Upāyakausālya to evince its importance in the spiritual path upto the enlightenment and to show how the Buddha uses this Upāya to make people understand the teaching (Dharma) after his enlightenment. In fact the whole life of the Buddha including his enlightenment, teaching the Dharma and the great decease are manifestations of this Upāyakausālya.

- (1) Upāyakausālya (Pali Upāyakosalla- skill in means) is a very important subject in Buddhism. In fact this is not a spiritual path to follow, but a method of doing things in the right way and at the right moment.
- (2) The Buddha was not a person who talked about God, but rather laid stress on human power. He always told his disciples to be reasonable, and maintain a clear mind. In the **Ariyapariyesana Sutta**¹ and the **Mahāsīhanāda Sutta**² we can see what kind of critical mind he had. He was aware of the best way of doing things. So, when he preached the doctrine, without the closed fist of the teacher, he told the disciples to discover the truth through their own efforts and not to expect anything from others. In the **Mahāparinibbāna Sutta**³ he exhorts them: "Be a lamp for yourself. Do not take refuge in others." Through these words the Buddha indicated that cleverness is essential to progress. Because the world is complicated, spiritual progress is very difficult for the weak person, but the clever person will overcome the difficulty. According to