The Vajra or “rdo-rje” (in Tibetan) is a five-pronged ritual object extensively employed in Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies. It is the symbol of the Vajrayana school of Buddhism. Vajra, in Sanskrit, has both the meanings of “thunderbolt” and “diamond.” Like the thunderbolt, the vajra cleaves through ignorance. The thunderbolt was originally the symbol of the Hindu rain god Indra (who became the Buddhist Sakra) and was employed by the 8th-century Tantric (esoteric) master Padmasambhava to conquer the non-Buddhist deities of Tibet. Like the diamond, the vajra destroys but is itself indestructible and is thus likened to sunya (the all inclusive void). The vajra is fashioned out of brass or bronze, the four prongs at each end curving around the central fifth to form a lotus-bud shape. A nine-pronged vajra is less commonly used. In ritual use the vajra is frequently employed in conjunction with the bell (Sanskrit ghanta; Tibetan dril bu), the various gestures (mudras), when correctly executed, having considerable metaphysical power. The vajra (symbolizing the male principle, fitness of action) is held in the right hand and the bell (symbolizing the female principle, intelligence) in the left hand, the interaction of the two ultimately leading to enlightenment. In art the vajra is an attribute of many divinities, such as the celestial Buddha Aksobhya and his manifestation as a bodhisattva (“Buddha-to-be”), Vajrapani (In Whose Hand Is the Vajra), The visva-vajra is a double vajra in the shape of a cross with four equal arms.
Gau/Ghau
A prayer box usually made of metal and worn as jewelry. In Buddhism, the prayer box is a shrine that contains an image wrapped in silk representing the owner's personal deity.

Laughing Buddha
Laughing Buddha statues are perhaps one of the most loved artifacts. They are commonly seen in homes, offices, hotels, gardens, restaurants, shops, and museums and temples. They are made of wood, metal, porcelain, and stone or painted in color and line.

The Laughing Buddha is a symbol of happiness, contentment and prosperity. He is called ‘Budai’ in Chinese. According to Chinese tradition, ‘Budai’ was an eccentric Chinese Zen monk who lived during the later Liang dynasty (907-923 AD) of China. He was considered a man of good and loving character. Some Buddhist traditions consider him a Buddha or ‘Bodhisattva’, usually Maitreya (the future Buddha). His large protruding stomach and jolly smile have given him the common designation “Laughing Buddha”. It is believed that if one rubs the belly of Buddha, it brings good luck and wealth.

Mahamangala Suttam
A discourse of the Buddha on ‘blessings’ written on palm leaves from Sri Lanka. Palm leaf texts are a way to preserve sacred texts and for temple worship. The Discourse is a charter in outline of family responsibility, social obligations, moral purification and spiritual cultivation.
Mandala of Green Tara
A mandala is a symbolic diagram used in the performance of sacred rites and as an instrument of meditation. The Green Tara (Sanskrit: Syamatara; Tibetan: Sgrol-ljang) was believed to be incarnated as the Nepali princess. She is considered by some to be the original Tara and is the female consort or sexual partner of Avalokitesvara. She is generally shown seated on a lotus throne with right leg hanging down, wearing the ornaments of a bodhisattva and holding the closed blue lotus (utpala).

Prayer Beads
Many Tibetan Buddhists carry prayer beads to help them count the number of times they repeat a mantra on the Triple Refuge (Buddhist rituals of devotion to the Buddha, his teachings, and the monastic community). Most strings are made up of 108 beads, which is the number of desires that must be overcome before reaching enlightenment.

Tibetan Prayer Wheel
The Tibetan prayer wheel is a cylindrical metal drum that rotates around an axis. It is not an uncommon sight to see a Buddhist devotee constantly rotating the hand wheel and chanting a mantra (i.e. hymn, invocation) as he or she walks. The mantra appropriate to the contained prayers within the wheel must be repeated when the wheel is turned and also at the end of the rotation to gain merit.
Singing Bowl with Mallet
Tibetan bowls have been traditionally used for ceremonial and meditation purposes, but are also increasingly being used in contemporary music-making. They are handcrafted using alloys of several metals and produce different tones, depending on the alloy composition, their shape, size and weight. A sound is produced by either striking the bowl or rubbing the surface with an excitation stick or mallet. This practice is referred to as puja. A prayer of peace ‘Om Mani Padme Hum’ is inscribed on the side of the bowl.

‘Om Mani Padme Hum’ (translation: Hail the jewel in the lotus) is a six-syllable invocation (mantra) of Avlokitesvara, one who is invoked as the Protector from danger. It is claimed that one who recites this mantra will be saved from all dangers and will be protected. This mantra is widely used in Mahayana Buddhism.

Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction
This Very Short Introduction offers readers a superb overview of the teachings of the Buddha, as well as a succinct guide to the integration of Buddhism into daily life. What are the distinctive features of Buddhism? Who was the Buddha, and what are his teachings? Words such as "karma" and "nirvana" have entered our vocabulary, but what do they mean? Damien Keown provides a lively, informative response to these frequently asked questions about Buddhism. As he sheds light into how Buddhist thought developed over the centuries, Keown also highlights how contemporary dilemmas can be faced from a Buddhist perspective.