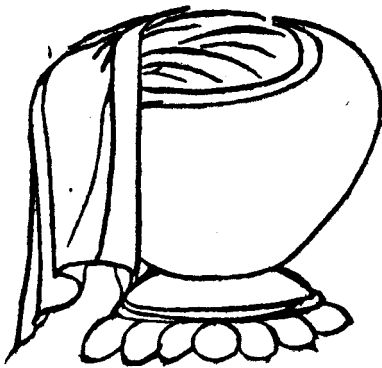


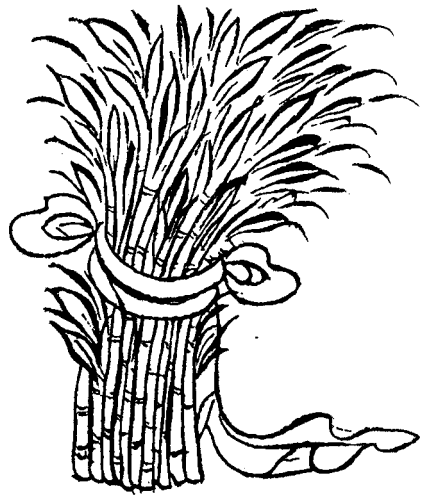
(1) Mirror



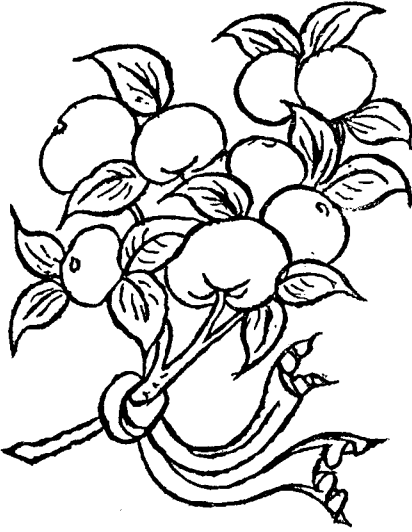
(2) Concretion



(3) Curd



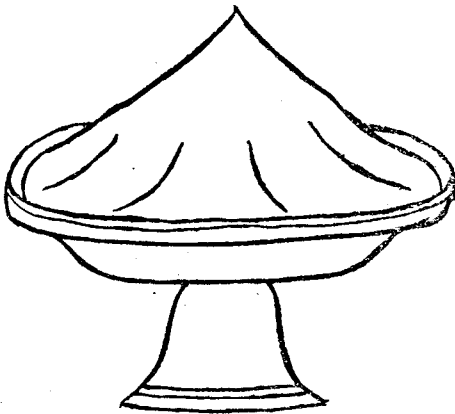
(4) Grass



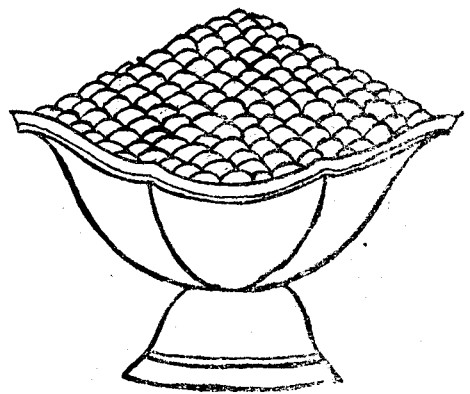
(5) Fruit



(6) Conch-shell



(7) Vermilion



(8) Mustard

Notes & Topics

SABDA & RUPA

Every religion has an element of symbolism. Dharma, Mahayana or Chhos is not an exception. Word or sound and mark or portryal are characteristic expressions.

We often receive enquiries about hymns and prayers and symbols and images. Material in answer to such queries will be presented in the pages of this *Bulletin*.

Tsong-kha-pa's Song of Spiritual Experience, original text with Lhalungpa's English rendering, is the first item in this issue. A note on the Eight Auspicious Objects is the concluding item.

NCS

EIGHT AUSPICIOUS OBJECTS

Tashi (Skt. Mangala or Subha) is explained in *Maha Mangala Sutra* | བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཚེན་པོ་འི་མ་དོ་ (1) and also in *Mangalagotra* | བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱི་ ཚོགས་སྲུ་བཅད་པ་ (2). Both the books define the word Tashi in four and other ways. Nagarjuna (ཀླུ་སྐུབ་) in *Surhid-lekha* (བཤེས་པའི་རྒྱུ་རྩེས་ ཡིག་) expounded this further and said that one can gain salvation by these ways(3).

It is also said that one who knows the Dharma (ཚོས་) and practises it, gains the luck for this world and as well as in the other world. In this connection Jampal Shenien (འཇམ་དབལ་བཤེས་ བཞིན་) explains thus: to understand the Dharma is accumulation of learning (ཇཉན་འབྲོག་ / ཡི་ཤིས་ཀྱི་ཚོགས་) and the good fortune is accumulation of moral merits (ཕུག་ལོ་འབྲོག་ / བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱི་ཚོགས་).

Because the Buddha had blessed (4) the eight objects in order to bestow good fortune or happiness on the living beings these objects came to be known as Eight Auspicious Objects. (མཇམ་རྒྱལ་འཇམ་མཁའ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་)

In Tibetan tradition these objects are displayed after a consecration or installation ceremony to bestow good fortune or happiness on all living beings. The eight objects can be explained in two ways: legendary and symbolic.

LEGENDARY

One can find in the pages of *Lalitavistara* (གྲུ་རྗེ་རོལ་པ་) that some of these objects were offered to Gautama the Buddha on different occasions. There is controversy about the gods and people offering these objects. The scholars of Sakya and Gelug were almost agreed on the following offerings(5).

1. Mirror (མེ་ལོང་) —The light holding goddess (གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ལྷ་མོ་ རོད་འཆང་མ་) offered the mirror to the Buddha and He rendered it holy.
2. Intestinal concretion (གླི་ལྲང་) — found in the entrails of certain animals and in the neck of an elephant—The land guarding elephant (སྐང་པོ་ཆེ་ས་སྤུང་གི་བྱ་) offered it to the Buddha and He blessed it as a holy medicine.
3. Curd (ཞོ་) — Daughter of farmer (ཞིང་པའི་བུ་མོ་ལེགས་སྦྱིས་མ་) offered it to the Buddha and He blessed it as a food free from impurity (sin).
4. Durwa grass (ལྷ་དུར་བ་) —The Buddha was offered this holy grass by the grass seller, Mangalam (ལྷ་རྗེ་རོལ་པ་). This was blessed by the Buddha as symbolic of long life. It is also said that Gautama attained Enlightenment sitting on this grass, under the Bodhi tree.
5. Fruit (ཤིང་དོག་བེལ་བ་) — wood apple—Brahma (རྗེ་རྗེ་པ་) offered it to the Buddha and He blessed it to be the best fruit.

6. White conch-shell (དུང་དཀར་)—Indra (བརྒྱ་བྱིན་) offered it to the Buddha after His Enlightenment, when he (Indra) begged Him to turn the Wheel of Law (ཐོམ་ཆོལ་ / ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་). The Buddha blessed it and blew it before He preached the First Sermon. It is symbol of propagation as well as the fame of doctrine “དུང་ཅི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྐྱོ་ནམས་སྐྱོག་པའི་ཚུལ་” (6).

7. Vermilion (ལེ་ཁྲི་)—The Brahman Kargyal (བྲམ་ཟེ་སྐར་གུལ་) offered it to the Buddha and on Buddha's blessing vermilion became the mark of overpowering knowledge.

8. White mustard (ཡུངས་དཀར་)—Vajrapani (ཕུག་ན་རོ་ཇེ་) offered it to the Buddha and which was blessed as a demon defeating mustard.

In *Rinchen Terzod*/ རིན་ཆེན་གཏེར་མཚོ་ (7) one finds that the Brahman Kundali (བྲམ་ཟེ་ཀུདྲཱི་ལེ་) offered the grass (No.4), goddess of tree (ཤིང་གི་སྐ་མོ་) offered the fruit (No.5) and mother of earth (ས་ཡི་སྐ་མོ་བདན་མ་) offered the vermilion (No.7) to the Jina i.e. the Buddha.

SYMBOLIC

I

The Eight Auspicious Objects symbolise the Noble Eightfold Path (མཉམ་མཇུག་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་འགྲོལ་ལུགས་ལྷན་ལག་བརྒྱུད་) laid down by the Buddha.

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of—

1. Right Thought (སམྙལ་ཤིང་ལྡན་ / ཡང་དག་པའི་དེོག་པ་)
2. Right Mindfulness (སམྙལ་སྣང་ལྡན་ / ཡང་དག་པའི་བློ་པ་)
3. Right Livelihood (སམྙལ་འཇོག་ / ཡང་དག་པའི་འཚོ་པ་)
4. Right Effort (སམྙལ་བྱུང་བྱུང་ / ཡང་དག་པའི་རྩོལ་པ་)

5. Right Action (सम्यक् कर्मान्त / ཡང་དག་པའི་ལས་ཀྱི་མཐའ་)
6. Right Speech (सम्यक् वाक् / ཡང་དག་པའི་ངག་)
7. Right Meditation (सम्यक् समाधि / ཡང་དག་པའི་དྲིང་ངོ་འཛིན་)
8. Right View (सम्यग् दृष्टि / ཡང་དག་པའི་རྩི་བ་)

Right Thought is the correct understanding of the doctrine and the thought which gives rise to exposition of the doctrine (8). The mirror symbolises the Right Thought as it holds the right reflection without change.

The great philosopher, Santi Deva (ཞི་བ་ལྷ་) explains the Right Mindfulness as meditation on Right Mindfulness which protects one from ignorance and impiety and sufferings “གང་ཡང་རྒྱ་པའི་སྐམས་སྐོས་ནས། །བསྐྱེད་བའི་དོན་དུ་གནས་གུར་གྱི།” (9). Giwang represents the Right Mindfulness being a medicine, which cures the ailment and keeps one’s mind free.

Curd symbolises the Right Livelihood as it is a food free from any impurity (sin).

Vasubandhu’s (དབྱིབས་གཉེན་) commentary on *Sutralankara* / མཐོ་ལྷེ་གྱུན་ (10) describes the Right Effort as the practice of Dharma for Life Eternal without any difficulty or harm. As we shall see below the symbolic meaning of the grass is longevity.

Right Action is forsaking the sin and adhering to the virtue(11). Fruit symbolises success in such action.

White conch-shell stands for Right Speech as it produces a melodious sound which can put down other sounds. Right Speech is always free from any faulty statement or evil words.

Vermilion represents the Right Meditation. The great reformer Tsongkhapa (ཚུང་ཁ་པ་) explains that by Right Meditation one can gain the highest power (12).

White mustard symbolises the Right View. It subdues the evil spirits as the Right View can defeat the wrong views.

II

Symbolism of these eight objects can be read from the point of benefit. Thus Eight Auspicious Objects symbolise benefit either to self (आत्मार्थ / རང་དོན་) or to others (परार्थ / གཞན་དོན་). The mirror represents the self and the rest symbolise the others.

Mirror, as one can see one's own reflection in the mirror, the Buddha knew all the things without leaving any doubt when He had the vision, that is the Bodhi (Knowledge). In this way mirror symbolises the self benefit.

The Buddha's kind deeds that is deeds for others' benefit can be in four ways: quiet (ཞི་བ་), abundant (རྒྱས་པ་), power (དངང་) and terrific (རྒྱལ་པོ་).

Generally the quiet service can be performed in two kinds, relief from illness and ignorance.

Intestinal concretion stands as relief from illness as itself is a medicine and as we have seen above as the best medicine which was blessed by the Buddha.

Curd symbolises relief from suffering due to ignorance. According to *Uttaratantra* the essence of the Bodhi is in the ten stages of perfection of a Bodhisattva “ དེ་ལྟར་རྒྱལ་བའི་སྒྲིང་པོ་ནི། །ནལ་བཞག་ནམ་པ་བཅུ་ཞེས་བརྗོད། ” (13). In this way curd symbolises the essence of Bodhi ; the curd being made from milk which contains the essence of all grasses “ ཞི་ནི་ཀུན་གྱི་སྒྲིང་པོ་གྲུང་པ་སྟེ། ” (14).

Abundant service may be in three ways: life (ཚོ་) happiness (བསོད་ནམས་) and doctrine (བསྟན་པ་)

Grass represents long life; in Konchog Tendon's (དགོན་མཚོ་ག་བསྟན་སྟོན་) works one finds the name of this grass as Chikah འཆི་དཀའ་

(15) which means hard to die. Sometimes the name of the grass is Tshe- phal-dzes (ཚེ་འཕེལ་རྫོང་) (16) or the object of long life.

Fruit symbolises the abundant happiness. In *Lalitavistara* it reads as “བསོད་ནམས་ལྷན་བས་མི་ཡི་བསམ་པ་ནམས་ཀྱང་འགྲུབ་” (17), that is, a virtuous person will succeed. The fruit has the name as Sripthal དཔལ་འབྲས་ (18) and the the word Sri (དཔལ་) is good for virtue as well as success; Sri also means Siddha དེན་གྲུབ་ (19).

White conch-shell symbolises the hearing of the doctrine. To understand the doctrine one must hear first and in this way the hearing is important as it is said in *Uttaratantra* “ཤིས་རབ་སེམས་སྟེ་དེ་གཞི་ནི། ཐོས་པ་དེ་ཕྱིར་ཐོས་པ་སེམས་” (20). Besides the sound of the conch-shell can drown the other sounds, stands for preaching of Sermon which can subdue the sound of non-religion.

The power service is rendered by vermilion. Vermilion represents the power of the knowledge. The Sanskrit word Sinduram (सिन्दुरम्) has lost its correct pronunciation and became Sidurra (སི་འདུར་ར་) or Sedura (སེ་འདུར་) in Tibetan(21). It has a name as red sand རྩམ་ལུ་གུ་/བྱེ་ས་རམར་པོ་ (22) and the red colour itself stands for power when the four services are symbolised by the colours “ལི་ཁྲི་དམར་པོ་དབང་གི་རང་བཞིན་དེ།” (23).

The terrific service is that of the white mustard. The white mustard symbolises force. The other name of mustard Kadampakah, གཞོན་འཛོམས་ (24), means conquest or suppression of evil. The white mustard is also known as Siddha (25). It is significantly the last in the display of the Eight Auspicious Objects. It guarantees the success of the seven previous offerings as well.

BENEDICTORY

At the conclusion of the ceremony the head priest greets as follows :

- May mirror purify defilements in your thought.
- May concretion end your misery.
- May curd quieten the three poisons (i.e. lust, hatred and ignorance)
- May grass prolong your life.
- May fruit fulfil your desires.
- May white conch-shell spread your reputation.
- May vermilion make your dominion firm.
- May white mustard subdue your enemies (26).

NOTES

1. Kanjur, དེས་རབ་སྒྲ་ཚོགས་ Vol. ྐ: p.283.
2. Tenjur, སྒྲ་ཚོགས་ Vol. ྑ: p.337.
3. Tenjur, སྒྲིངས་ལེག་ Vol. ྒ: p.43.
4. ཚོ་དཔག་མེད་ལྷ་དབྱེད་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་གྱི་ཚོ་ག་འཚི་མེད་གྲུབ་པའི་ལམ་བཟང་
by དཀོན་མཚོ་གླུ་མ་གྲུབ་ (published by Sa-ngor-chos-tshogs, Gangtok,
1967) p.2, and Second Dalai Lama's works, Vol. 2: book No. ཚ: p. 18.
5. Same as under note No.4.
6. Second Dalai Lama's works, Vol.2 book No. ཚ: p.18.
7. Rinchen Terzod, Vol. ྒྷ: རབ་གནས་དགའ་ལགས་འདོམ་མེད་
པོན་བདག་བསྐོ་བའི་སྒྲིང་གུན་ p.12 and also in རབ་གནས་ལེགས་པར་
བཤད་པའི་རིལ་མོ་ p.17 in the same volume.
8. Kanjur, དཀོན་བརྩེགས་, Vol. ཚ: p.238.
9. Tenjur, དབྱ་མ་, Vol. ྔ: p.11.
10. Tenjur, སེམས་ཅན་, Vol. ྕ: p.228.

11. Kanjur, དཀོན་བརྗེ་གསུང་པོ་ Vol. མྱོང་པོ་ p.239.
12. Tsongkhapa's works, Vol. མྱོང་པོ་ རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པོ་ p.29.
13. Tenjur, རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་, Vol. རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་ p.69.
14. Second Dalai Lama's works, Vol. 2. book No. མྱོང་པོ་ p.18.
15. Konchog Tendon's works, Vol. མྱོང་པོ་: book No.5. p.9.
16. མངོན་བརྗེན་ལམས་པའི་ན་གྲུ་ (Lhasa edition) p.37 and GESHE CHHOSDAG: *Tibetan Dictionary* (Delhi) p.587.
17. Kanjur, མངོན་པོ་ Vol. མྱོང་པོ་ p.171.
18. SARAT CHANDRA DAS: *Tibetan-English Dictionary* p.791.
19. Amarakosha Sanskrit/Tibetan (Calcutta 1911) Vol. II. p.224.
20. Tenjur, རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་ Vol. རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་ p.72.
21. S.C. DAS: *Tibetan-English Dictionary* p.1269 the word reads as "Sidurra" and in རྒྱ་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷན་པོ་ (Lhasa edition) p.14, reads as "Sedura".
22. S.C. DAS: *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p.891 and GESHE CHHOSDAG: *Tibetan Dictionary*, p.485.
23. Second Dalai Lama's works, Vol. 2. book No. མྱོང་པོ་ p.18.
24. Amarakosha Sanskrit/Tibetan, Vol. II. p. 224.
25. Amarakosha Sanskrit/Tibetan, Vol. II. p.224.
26. Same as under note No.4.

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