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GANGTOK, INDIA**

-The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field-

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CONTENTS

	Page
CONSIDERATIONS ON TANTRIC SPIRITUALITY - <i>THUBTEN TENDZIN</i>	5
EMERGENCE OF KALACHAKRA TANTRA - <i>B. GHOSH</i>	19
DHARMA, TANTRA AND ATISA - <i>NIRMAL C. SINHA</i>	33

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CONSIDERATIONS ON TANTRIK SPIRITUALITY

—THUBTEN TENDZIN

There are three ways of considering the *Tantra*, each acceptable in its own degree: firstly, there is the relatively external way of scholarship, concerned largely with accumulating information and sifting source-material—here questions of influences and origins, and of historical affinities generally, will play a part; secondly, there is the essential and normal way of regarding *Tantra*, which can also be called the “traditional” way, under its twofold aspect of a wisdom (*prajna*) and a method (*upaya*) or, in other words, a metaphysical theory (lest we forget it, the primitive meaning of the Greek word *theoria* is “vision”=दर्शन,=ज्ञान) together with its appropriate means of concentration, its yogic expedients; thirdly there is what might be described as a generalised “tantrik sense”, whereby it is possible to recognise the existence, in places where the name of *Tantra* has been unknown, of analogous doctrines and methods, thus providing concurrent evidence in favour of the spiritual methods in question. Let us see how the *Tantra* will appear when viewed from each of these different angles.

Firstly, the scholarly approach: it should be pointed out, from the outset, that this manner of regarding the subject (or indeed any subject) can be given both a legitimate and an illegitimate form. The true value of scholarship is an ancillary one: it is obviously advantageous to the student, whether engaged in a strictly religious pursuit or otherwise, to be provided with reliable texts and references of various kind, a task which he himself, lacking the detailed knowledge and training, could hardly undertake for himself; likewise it may be helpful, in an indirect way, to form a picture of the historical background of one's religion; and again, a discussion by experts of the exact bearing of the various technical terms figuring in one's texts can be very useful, since in course of time people often lose sight of certain shades of meaning these terms will have borne for the authors who first used them and which more or less thoughtless repetition may afterwards have blurred—this applies especially to translated texts. All this pertains to the cardinal Buddhist

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virtue of "mindfulness" in varying proportions, from which it can be seen that the conscientious scholar is able to render a very genuine service in this field.

The abusive employment of scholarship, on the other hand, which has become well-nigh all-invading in recent times, consists in examining sacred writings and other religious phenomena in the light, or rather in the darkness, of an inbuilt profane prejudice, with the set purpose of reducing them, one and all, to the status of historical, anthropological or sociological accidents, by an explaining away of every transcendent element to be found there—revelation, inspiration, intellection—in purely humanistic terms. The latest and in many ways deadliest addition to this process of subversion is the psychological interpretation of religion, of which the Freudian and Jungian schools provide two representative forms, the one being avowedly materialistic and hostile, while the other affects a sympathetic attitude on the strength of a deftly nurtured system of equivocations, as between things of the spiritual and of the psychic order: the Tantrik doctrines have not escaped an attempted annexation to this point of view and the same applies to *Zen*. The fact is that nowadays even Oriental commentators, who might be expected to see further than their Western colleagues, often exhibit a most uncritical haste in adopting the latest exegetic aberrations and this trend has amounted, in many cases, to a regular intellectual stampede before the modern "scientism" or, in other words, to an urge towards religious and intellectual suicide. It is necessary to be warned of this danger, which is spreading far and wide on both sides of the globe today!

It is under the heading of scholarship, which here must be taken in a very broad sense, that a question is best discussed which has largely entered into the present symposium on the *Tantra*, namely the relationship (if any) between its Buddhist and Hindu forms: admittedly, to answer a question like this fully, more than conventional scholarship is required; any attempted comment must in fact be accompanied by a certain metaphysical insight, able to look beyond the letter of texts and formulations to the underlying spirit in both the cases under comparison.

When the Tantrik writings first began to attract serious notice outside the Indian world, largely thanks to the outstanding studies of a late Chief Justice of Calcutta High

Court, Sir John Woodroffe (better known by his pen-name of Arthur Avalon), the fact that he himself, as a Sanskritist in close touch with Bengali *pandits*, devoted the greater part of his work to the Hindu *Shaktas* and their doctrines, led to a hasty assumption, by many, that the Buddhist *Tantras*, which Arthur Avalon had barely touched on, were but an extension of the Hindu Tantrik corpus : the existence in both cases of an "erotic" symbolism, that is to say a representation of reality as the inter-play of a pair of conjoint principles respectively pictured as male and female, seemed to lend colour to the above conclusion : it hardly needs saying that this seeming polarisation into two divinities, as *Shiva* and *Shakti* in the one case and as the various Buddhas with their female counterparts, in the other, implies no radical dualism; the Tantrik point of view is *advaitic* through and through, so that it is only at the point of indistinguishable union (*maithuna*) of the male and female principles thus depicted that the truth is effectively to be found. The male divinity and his partner essentially *are* one another and can never be regarded apart; the static *is* the creative or productive power and *vice versa* and indeed, it is the very fact that a numerical unity has been avoided in the symbolism, in favour of the more subtle idea of non-duality, that makes the Tantrik symbolical language so peculiarly eloquent and its corresponding methods so effective in unloosing the hold of dualistic habit on the human mind².

Prior to the publication of Arthur Avalon's series of volumes, the Tantrik practices and also their associated iconography had become a favourite target of vicious insinuation, firstly on the part of ignorant Western commentators, especially missionaries, obsessed with unclean suspicions wherever the word "sex" is even mentioned and, following their example, also on the part of Westernised Orientals; this prejudice has died hard and it is only in the last few years that the *Tantra* have begun to be regarded in the world at large as respectable, let alone as spiritually important, doctrines. It is largely thanks to observations carried out in the Tibetan field that this welcome, if belated change has come about. When one looks back to the end of last century and the early years of the present one, barring the lonely voice of Avalon, very few Western writers had a good word to say on the subject : typical examples of the then prevailing prejudice are Madame Blavatsky³ and Waddell⁴, to mention two well-known names. Even as late as 1936 an

excellent scholar like the Japanese professor Tajima, himself an adherent of a Tantrik school (*Saichō*), voiced the current prejudice, not against Tantra as a whole, but against the Tibetan form of it, by saying that wherever those Chinese and Japanese Tantrik doctrines he himself favoured had originated, historically speaking, from Nalanda the Tibetan ones, according to him, had mostly issued from Vikramashila which he wrote off as the home of relatively popular and superstitious beliefs and practices; his evidence for so thinking was, however, by no means clear. In any case, one is minded to ask, what about Naropa and his Six Doctrines, since he certainly belonged to Nalanda? And where would Marpa and Mila Repa and so much of Tibet's finest esoteric flowering have been without them? If a man as well informed as Professor Tajima could still echo, even slightly, these old prejudices, this but goes to show how thoroughly the various slanderers of *Tantra* had gone about their work of slinging mud. There is no doubt, however, that it is the "sexy" denigration of the erotic symbolism that has chiefly helped to fog the issue, over and above whatever genuine problems the question of origins might have presented for more informed minds.

If I may be allowed here to strike a personal note, I should like to explain that when I first became aware of the place of *Tantra* in Tibetan tradition and art, my first impulse was to strike a blow in its defence, in opposition to the prejudiced reports still current at the time, as described above; in the first flush of discovery that such a thing as a Tantrik Buddhism existed and that it was a treasury of beautiful and eminently significant symbols I was ready to give tongue to my enthusiasm, but certainly was not competent to go very far on the interpretative side—Avalon's treatises were then almost my only source of information, and very precious they were at the time. That is why I readily resorted to Hindu usage, by referring to the *Yum* divinities as "Consort-Energies" when writing my first book *Peaks and Lamas*; too much, however, should not be read into this allusion, which was largely accidental and certainly did not amount to a technical appraisal of a definitive kind.

Even at that early date, however, I did perceive one thing, which others have since pointed out from a position of greater information, namely that the sexual symbolism, common to the Buddhist and Hindu *Tantra*, nevertheless exhibits a divergence, as between the two schools, touching

the way in which the sexual attributions are respectively applied: that is to say, in Hindu Tantrism, *Shiva* (or any other male form of divinity), represents the static aspect while the corresponding female form represents the dynamic or creative aspect; hence her quality of *Shakti*, female-energy² which in Hindu parlance, has become the generic term for all heavenly Consorts. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the symbolical pairing takes on an impersonal form (which agrees with the Buddhist "spiritual economy" in general) and it also works the other way round inasmuch as here it is *prajna*, the female partner, who seems to indicate the more static aspect of the symbolism—"wisdom" is essentially a state or quality of being—while the male element in the syzygy is referred to as method (*upaya*) which, on the face of it, carries dynamic implications, since it is thanks to a deploying of the right means, with their accompanying effort, that *prajna* is able to be realised in the heart of the *Sadhana*. Moreover, the traditional assimilating of *upaya* to *compassion* (itself a dynamic conception) lends additional weight to the view that the Buddhist Tantrik symbolism works the opposite way to the Hindu: from which some polemically-minded writers, filled with pro-Buddhist patriotism, have gladly drawn the conclusion that Buddhist Tantrism is something entirely alien to the Hindu Tantrism; to which they add, as a rider, supported by rather tendentiously selected and interpreted evidence, that it is anterior in origin and that it was the Hindus who borrowed these methods from the Buddhists (as well as other things) and then imposed on them, *a posteriori*, the specifically Hindu notion of power, *shakti*.

Without claiming to be a scholar myself, I do not consider an explanation of this kind necessary in order to account for the available evidence and the same applies in regard to criteria of a more profound kind; the truth would rather seem to be that what can, without abuse of language, be called the "Tantrik Revelation" belongs to both the great Indian traditions which it embraced, as it were in answer to a "cyclic need", in one providential overflowing of the Spirit in a manner that implies no derogation respecting the originality of either traditional form—rather let us see herein an example of that universal and divine Compassion which, in apparent disregard of all rationally delimited frontiers, provides what is needed for the salvation of suffering beings at a given time and place. It is not without reason that the Tantrik *Sadhanas*, wherever these are followed, are regarded as a way most appropriate to the conditions of

the present phase of the world cycle, where more primordial and, in a sense, more inflexible ways no longer fully match the need.

To sum up the above view : the representation of non-duality in the guise of a merging of male and female conjugal love, as well as the variously characteristic yogic practices connected therewith, is enough to prove the fundamental kinship between the Hindu and Buddhist *Tantra* and that despite some important divergencies as to detail. Granted this basic identity it is going too far, however, to try and establish a point to point correspondence in the respective symbolisms : *shakti* and *prajna* are not simply interchangeable ideas, and each of the two Tantrik currents has evidently given rise to some original features, consonantly with its own peculiar genius, so that the impersonal *prajna-upaya* relationship that has characterized *Mahayana* Buddhism on the one hand and the personified presentation characteristic of Hindu theism, *Shiva-Shakti*, on the other, have been able to grow out of the same erotic symbolism without risk of confusion in either direction. I doubt if one will get much nearer the truth of the matter than this.⁶

By way of illustrating what might be described as a "metaphysical subterfuge", typical in its way, whereby an underlying identity is able to be discerned across an apparent expression of inter-religious rivalry, I would like to relate a rather amusing explanation given me by a Lama when I was staying near Shigatse in 1947 : we were speaking about the Kailas and its pilgrimage and I had just made the observation that the divinity dwelling on the sacred summit, *Demchhog* (འདེ་མཚོ་གླང་མ་ = महासुख/सम्बर) for the Tibetans and Lord *Shiva*, for the Hindus, appeared to have much the same attributes : might one not infer from this, I asked, that *Demchhog* and *Shiva* are one and the same divinity and that each is, in effect, the other under a different name ? "Oh no" said the Lama "you are mistaken in thinking thus. *Shiva* is the name of a Hindu god whom *Demchhog*, in the name of Buddhism, challenged and overcame, after which he appropriated his mountain and all his major and minor attributes, his *Yum* included"—a truly delightful way of by-passing traditional differences while seeming to make no concession to the other side. Nor must we overlook the fact that, according to this explanation, the Lady *Parvati* exchanged her former quality of *Shakti* for that of her new husband's *prajna* without turning

a hair, which in a way sums up the whole position, but without trying to rationalise it in an unnecessary degree.

Having dwelt so long on this much canvassed question of affinities, it will only be possible to touch briefly on the second of our three aspects of *Tantra*, on what was described at the outset as its normal or traditional aspect. In this connection it may well be asked, in view of the worldwide religious crisis going on today, whether any of the Tantrik *Sadhanas* still remain viable for men of the present generation and if so, what are the conditions allowing a man to opt for this way. The answer is that wherever the traditional structure has withstood the pressure of the times sufficiently to allow a would-be *Sadhaka* to find a *guru* qualified to initiate and give instruction there is no reason for him to hold off from following this line; let him profit from any discoverable opportunity while the going is good. If a door that is open today becomes closed tomorrow it will then be time to think again; but there is no reason to anticipate on this worser eventuality. Admittedly, the sacrilegious over-running of Tibet, the chosen home of *Tantra*, has left the adjoining countries sadly unsupported : it is as if a bountiful fountain of spiritual influence has suddenly dried up. It would be going too far, however, to say that all opportunities of this kind have disappeared in the neighbouring region; in Japan also, the Tantrik initiations of *Shingon* and *Tendai* still carry on, which is marvellous in a country where profane forms of education together with industrialism have been developed to an extreme degree, as has happened there. It is these developments, fruits of the conjunction of an asuric substitute for *prajna* with a no less asuric *upaya* which everywhere constitute the greatest threat to religious life. Contemporary man, helpless slave of his own mechanical creations, remains as if suspended between two karmically interconnected explosions, the nuclear one and the "population explosion". Lacking all discernment, he diverts to the purveyors of rockets to the moon that admiration that once was offered to the Buddhas and the Saints. This fascination exerted on the human mind by trivialities inflated to monstrous proportions is in fact one of the characteristic notes of the fearful era foretold by Tsong Khapa (and also by the Scriptures of all peoples) "when impurity grows greater and greater" (ཉེན་མེད་འགྲོ་བའི་དུས་ལ་). This era is now upon us as part of our *karma*, which we cannot hope to by-pass but have to face: what then is the attitude required of us under these unavoidably distressing circumstances ?

Surely the answer every true *Sadhaka* will give is this, namely that "the world is always the world even when times seem fair; so also *Bodhi* is *Bodhi* even in an accursed hour. Therefore I myself, be I even left as the sole follower of the Way in a world grown hopelessly inattentive, shall continue to pursue the Way and not look back"—surely this is the only practical attitude for anyone to take up, under whatever circumstances: the essential message of the *Sutras* and *Tantras* does not differ from this.

Though it was natural to refer first, when broaching the above question, to the parent lands of *Tantra*, in Asia, it might also be asked whether, under the exceptional conditions now prevailing, some exporting of Tantrik methods might not take place in other directions, leading to a fresh local flowering; those who put this question are usually thinking of the dispersion of Tibetan Lamas in various alien lands, whereby some are hoping that a new impetus may be given to slumbering spiritual forces in the West. To such a question one can only answer that exceptional adaptations are always theoretically possible; they cannot be ruled out in principle. Humanly speaking, however, and on a more obvious showing, the kind of spiritual *upayas* that will be feasible under conditions where the environment is no longer traditionally receptive are likely to differ in various respects from those to which recourse can be had under circumstances of greater human normality; less complex spiritual instruments would seem to lend themselves best to so critical a situation.

Among *upayas* of this nature, requiring very little in the way of set conditions for their methodic utilisation, the various forms of "invocation" (*japa*) centred round the presence of a holy Name, focus of mantric power, are the first to come to mind. One characteristic example is the *Nembutsu*, the *mantra* belonging to *Shin* Buddhism in Japan and enshrining the name of *Amitabha Buddha* as its operative theme; it is moreover evident that the similar use of the *mantra* of *Chenrezig*, in Tibet, which could also be called the "quintessential invocation", is closely akin to the *Nembutsu* in intention, if only by reason of the principal relationship of the *Bodhisattva Chenrezig* and the *Buddha Opagmed* (*Amitabha*), as proved "mythologically" by the origination of the former from the head of the latter. Similarly, in Eastern Christianity, we have the "Jesus Prayer", an invocatory formula the use of which by the contemplatives of Mount Athos is extremely reminiscent of certain Tantrik methods;

Again, in the Islamic world, we find the invocation (*dhikr*) of the Supreme Name, which is the central *upaya* of the Sufic initiations and of the spiritual confraternities (*uruq*) attached to them. The important thing to note in every such case is that the formula invoked as *mantra* will always point to three possible levels of realisation : when used as a means of gaining merit, good *karma*, it has a relatively external applicability; it can also be used as a means of deepening piety, when it comes under the heading of a *bhaktic* support; lastly, the same formula can be the basis of a properly *jnanic* realisation (this implies a methodic invocation under guidance by a qualified Spiritual Master), whereby this *upaya* rejoins the methods of the *Tantras*, inasmuch as it is able to take one to the gate of Deliverance itself.

It is evident that, by comparison with the ways described above, the Tantrik meditations, which by the nature of things demand long periods free from interruption for their normal accomplishment, remain relatively unadaptable; what is suitable in a spiritual summer may not be so in the wintry days of profane degeneration. To speculate on what is or is not any longer possible hardly falls within the scope of the present discussion; all one can do is to watch for signs and, where these appear, to respond in the most appropriate way.

What, however, does deserve attention, not only within the Hindu-cum-Buddhist world but also in the lands beyond, is what may fittingly be called "the Spirit of *Tantra*", our third category in the preamble to this essay. What then are the criteria wherewith to recognise that spirit, wherever it may occur? In its way, this question is important under all circumstances and every man of spiritual intent stands to gain from its answering, even if his own way of realisation does not assume one of the forms coming under the Tantrik label. A short discussion of this question will therefore provide a natural conclusion to the present considerations on Tantrik spirituality.

Essentially one can speak of a "Tantrik sense" or a "Tantrik spirit" (the former being the faculty wherewith to recognise the presence of the latter) in connection with any doctrine or method of which the conscious aim is a *transmutation* of the human soul in such a way as to enable the true Intelligence, the "mind of *Bodhi*" to emerge and take command. This process is properly an *alchemical* one, inasmuch as no element in the soul is actually to be destroyed or cut out;

the Tantrik technique consists in putting to use whatever exists there, without exception; which in its turn implies the possibility of converting whatever is base or polluted into something pure and noble.

In medieval Europe, as also in the Islamic world, the alchemical sciences were founded on this idea: according to the mineral symbolism they used, *lead*, the basest metal, was to be transmuted, quickly or by stages, into the solar metal, *gold*; in Hindu terms, this is a question of redressing the balance of the *gunas*, lead being the metal in which *tamas* predominates while gold is the most *sattvic* metal of all. In the course of this process certain other symbolical substances, notably *sulphur* and *mercury*, were called into play at various stages of the alchemical operation. If even in the Middle Ages the ignorant sometimes credited the alchemists with a literal intention of getting rich by manufacturing gold from lead, historians of modern science have displayed a similar ignorance in believing that Alchemy was simply a primitive attempt to do what the present-day chemist does and that the various materials referred to were what their names indicate and no more; it is thanks to a few investigators who have taken the trouble to study the alchemical writings with proper care and an open mind that this hitherto misunderstood science, so close to the *Tantra* in intention, has at last been cleared of the crude misconceptions that had gathered round it especially in modern times⁷.

A particularly important point to note in connection with Alchemy, is the recognition, across all apparent differences, of a common essence linking together the two substances to be found at the beginning and end of the transmutative process. If the Alchemist in course of his investigations happens to find lead mixed in with other metals, he does not hastily throw it on the scrap heap since, to his discerning eye, its leaden dullness already masks the potential radiance of pure gold. Therefore he treasures it like the rest while considering the proper means for converting it into what by rights it should be; his attitude is typically "advaitic" and so is his technique. In fact, certain Alchemists have declared that lead, or any "base" metal, is essentially gold fallen sick; gold is lead free from all illness. One might well parallel his statement, from the Tantrik side, by saying that a worldly man is nothing but a sick Buddha; a Buddha is a man who has been wholly healed of his existential sickness.

Together with the idea of transmutation, on which all alchemical processes depend, has gone a certain attitude towards the ethical prescriptions of religion which, in the case of the *Tantra*, is among those features that have on occasion provoked accusations of moral laxity of the kind alluded to earlier in this essay. This attitude consists in regarding even a person's vices as a source of latent power, as a virtue misapplied but still utilisable if one knows the proper way to handle it; simply to suppress the outward expression of a vicious tendency, by a single-handed effort of the will carried out when in a state of relative unawareness, may not be the most effective way to rid the soul of the tendency in question—not to mention the danger of letting in another and worse evil in order to fill a vacuum created in a psychic substance not yet conditioned to attract a compensating element from a purely spiritual direction : Christ's story of the seven devils rushing in to occupy the house left empty after the expulsion of the single previous devilish occupant provides a vivid illustration of this particular danger. The Tantrik or Alchemical healer bases certain of his practices on an awareness that, by comparison with the characteristic slipperiness of human thought, a passion often displays a relatively simple and graspable character, such as allows of its being made to serve as the "raw material" of an alchemical operation in its early stages; to handle a passional element provisionally as an *upaya* for an avowedly spiritual purpose does not in the least imply a condoning of passion as such and, still less, any writing down of the virtue whereof that passion is the negative reflexion or shadow. All such a healer does is to view any particular passion in relation to the process of purification considered as a whole, which may sometimes require that it be tolerated provisionally for reasons of psychic equilibrium, though certainly not excused in itself. The true Tantrik practitioner is interested in an integral regeneration, nothing less; that is why, for him, every property of body and mind will have its proper place there, the art being to know how to put each thing in its place, without omission or suppression of any utilisable factor, be appearances as they will. Individual abuses apart, it is in the light of this general principle that those Tantrik practices must be judged which have been the occasion of "scandal" to the conventional moralists; anyone who approaches the question in this way will need no further convincing that the Tantrik tradition is as much concerned as exoteric religion with the promotion and practice of the virtues; only its manner of pursuing this purpose goes deeper than symptoms, than the mere form of acts, being in fact most

concerned with the medium in which these acts are able to arise, which it tries to transmute so that only virtue is able to survive there.

A virtue, for one engaged on any esoteric path, is primarily a mode of knowing or, to be more accurate, a factor dispositive to Enlightenment. Similarly, a vice will be rated as a factor of ignorance, or as a cause of thickening the existential veil between the human subject and the light; this way of regarding good and evil is a properly "intellectual" (*jñanic*) one, the usual perspective of merit and demerit being, by comparison, relatively external and dualistic, but not wholly untrue for that—indeed far from it. To practice a virtue is then like clearing a window in the soul, to indulge a vice is like smearing that same window with dirt; that is why the practice of the virtues is not less important for one pursuing the *jñanic* way than for the *karma yogin* or the *bhakta* (for the latter it is pleasing or offending the Beloved that counts); more or less enigmatic references in the Tantrik writings to the man for whom the distinction between good and evil has ceased to matter need not deceive anyone on that score.

No better description of *Tantra*, in a European language, can be found than to call it an "alchemical science of the soul!" whereby the lead of samsaric existence becomes transmuted into what it already is in principle, namely the *Bodhic* gold, eternally gleaming.

NOTES

1. In this connection, attention can fittingly be drawn to a very important article published in the quarterly review *Tomorrow*, from the pen of Mr. Titus Burckhardt, in which, among other things, the theories of Jung are critically examined: the article is entitled *Cosmology and Modern Science* and appeared in the summer and autumn numbers 1964 and in the winter number 1965 of the journal in question; part iii deals with the psychological theories concerning religion. Another work containing similar criticism is *Western Psychology and Hindu Sadhana* by Dr. Hans Jacob (published by Allen and Unwin, London); the author is himself an eminent psychiatrist who at one time studied under Jung but later came to discover both the fallacies underlying so much of Western psychological teaching and also the vast superiority of the Hindu and Buddhist handling of the human *psyche*.

2. The Chinese symbolism of *Yin-Yang* conveys a similar message : here *Yin*, the female principle portrayed as dark in hue and representing the passive and potential side of things (*Shakti* might well be rendered as "potency") and *Yang* the male, light in hue and representing their active or essential side, are combined in a circular diagram (in its way a kind of *mandala*) the interlocked halves of which evidently correspond to the state of *maithuna*; each half moreover displays one tiny spot of the opposing colour whereby is indicated the non-dualistic interpenetration of the principles thus depicted.
3. See *The Voice of the Silence*, where the Tantrik methods are repeatedly stigmatised as dark and unsavoury : it is evident that the lady founder of the Theosophical Society accepted the current libels without the least suspicion that they were tainted. Incidentally, this attitude of hers shows up the absurdity of the claim that *The Voice of the Silence* was a translation, or shall we say a free adaptation, of an ancient Tibetan scripture. Anti-Tantrik sentiments in a supposedly Tibetan context take a lot of swallowing, to say nothing of the obviously European flavour of the whole text.
4. See his *Lamaism* (Heffer) which despite its much factual material is a regular tissue of misleading statements prompted by sectarian dislike. Waddell's persistent rendering of the female Wrathful Deities as "fiendesses" is but one example of the lengths to which his own prejudices carried that writer.
5. It might be mentioned, in passing, as an instructive example of "spiritual coincidence", that in the Christian Church under its Orthodox (Eastern) form the doctrine of the "Divine Energies", first fully expounded by the great 14th century doctor St. Gregory Palamas, is distinctly reminiscent of the Hindu idea of *Shakti* which the word "energy" admirably renders. According to the Palamite theology God creates the world, not by His Essence, but by His Energies.
6. Similar views have been expressed by Dr. S. B. Dasgupta in his abundantly documented *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* published by the University of Calcutta in 1950; second edition in 1958. This distinguished scholar, while readily admitting the greater extent and variety of the Buddhist Tantrik literature as compared with the Hindu, nevertheless maintains and, as it seems to me, substantiates the thesis that "Tantricism, whether Hindu or Buddhistic.....are fundamentally the same". He certainly does not overlook any of the differences of expression and practice that distinguish the two traditions. His appraisal of the basic theology behind the symbolism is clear and concise, while the wealth of illustration and commentary is of the most satisfying proportions. It is noteworthy that here and there in this book the author refers to one or other Buddhist goddess as the *shakti* of her corresponding male divinity : the content shows, in every case, that here he is making a purely conventional use of the term, as is but natural in one Indian-born; had he been speaking of the Hellenic gods, he would doubtless have referred to Hera as the *shakti* of Zeus : nothing further is to be read into this

proceeding on his part, which explains itself at a glance. All that one can usefully add is to say that, given the slight verbal inaccuracy in introducing the term *shakti* into a Buddhist context, the word "Consort" (which exactly renders the Tibetan *Yum*) is to be preferred as precluding all possible terminological confusions.

7. One of the most authoritative, as well as intelligible, works on the subject now available is *Alchimie*, by Titus Burckhardt, the same author whose name figured in note 1; the publisher is Walter-Verlag, of Olten and Freiburg in Breisgau. This book, which is copiously documented, exists at present in German and Italian; an English translation is much to be desired.

EMERGENCE OF KALACAKRATANTRA

-B. Ghosh

The characteristics of Tantra/Agama/Yamala as in important Hindu works are present in the Buddhist Tantras. The Buddhist Tantras are found in three great divisions into which esoteric Buddhism is divided namely, Vajrayana, Sahajayana and Kalacakrayana. Besides these, three other minor yantras with no marked individuality, such as, Tantrayana, Mantrayana, Bhadrayana etc. (B. Bhattacharyya, *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (GOS) Varanasi, 1964, pp. 52-55). The advanced Buddhist Tantras are Kriyatantra, Caryatantra, Yogatantra and Anuttara-tantra.

It appears from the following citation from the Mulatantra that Kalacakrayana is the earliest source of all later Buddhist Tantric systems. Naropada/Naropa/Narotapa flourished about 990 A.D. (B.Bhattacharyya, *Sadhanamala* Pt. II). In *Sekoddesatika* (Ed. Merriio E, Carelli, GOS, 1941) while narrating the manifestation of Bhagavan Sri Vajrapani Naropa quotes verses from the Mulatantra:

गृध्रकुटे यथाशास्तः प्रज्ञापारमितानये ।
तथा मन्त्रनये प्रोक्ता श्रीधान्ये धर्मदेशना ॥
गृध्रकुटे महाशैले प्रज्ञापारमितानयम् ।
सन्देश्य बोधिसत्त्वानां महायानं निरुत्तरम् ॥ (1)

At the outset it should be noted that "Kalacakra" is one of the epithets of Vajri :

मूलतन्त्रे । ए रहस्यारव्यधातो वा भगे धर्मोदयेम्बुजे ।
 सिंहासने स्थितो वज्री उत्कस्तन्त्रान्तरे मया ॥
 वं वज्री वज्रसत्त्वश्च वज्रभैरव ईश्वरः ।
 हेरुकः कालचक्रश्च आदिबुद्धादिनामतः ॥
 सर्वज्ञो वज्रघृक् शास्ता बुद्धः सिंहासने स्थितः ।
 देशकः कालचक्रस्य सुचन्द्राद्येषितस्त्वया ॥ (२)

The *Sekoddesatika* deals with the origin of Vajrayana giving a short account of the legend which was the source of the doctrine. In Tantric Literature there are several systems, each of which is attributed to a different revelation. Here it is said that the teachings of Mantrayana (Vajrayana) were given first by Dipankara, the Tathagata Buddha, preceding the historic one. But they had to be adopted to the later age and for the purpose the king Sucandra, whose realm is located by *Sekoddesa* in Shambala (bDe-hByung) on the north of river Sita.

सुचन्द्र आहति शीतानद्युत्तरे षण्णवतिकोटिग्रामशम्भल-
 महाविषयाधिपतिः ... ।
 मूलतन्त्रे । द्वीपङ्गरेण वा पूर्वं मन्त्रयानस्य देशना
 कृतास्माकं तु कर्तव्या गौतमेनाद्य साधुना ॥
 अथातः शम्भलास्व्यातो वज्रपाषिक्निमित्तः ।
 सुचन्द्रन्तप आयातः स्वर्द्ध्व श्रीधर्मधातुकम् ॥ (३)

Being the Nirmanakaya of Vajrapani Sucandra went to heaven and begged Sambuddha to explain the theory of Seka (initiation/conversion). The Sambuddha (that is Buddha Gautama) summoned a council in Sridhanya. The Council of Sridhanya was held after that of Griddhrahkut, in which the doctrine of Prajnaparamita was first expounded, and as it appears from the text was the

source of Vajrayana.

The "Kalacakra" is conceived in the following manner. In that joyful heaven, that the ultimate immutable and unchangeable one, remaining in the sky like Dharmadhatu (the element underlying all the dharmas, elements) is called "Kala". It itself is the immutable (adamantine) knowledge. "Cakra" implies the unity of three kinds of existence--the manifestation of Kala (trans, S.B.Dasgupta : *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, Calcutta 1958, pp. 67-68). The "Kala" with the characteristic of five constitutive group, (skandha), noumenic perception (dhatu) and means of the sensorious sets (ayatana) is "Cakra". It (the cakra) is the body of Master-point like containing the potency of existence of three spheres of universe, can be visualised by undefiled illumination (niravarana-jneyam), that is Vajra-dhatu-Mahamandala (trans, Carelli).

वा तत्र महासुरवावसे धर्मधातावाकाशलिङ्गणे परमाङ्गरो
अच्युतङ्गणः काल इत्युच्यते तदेव वज्रज्ञानम् । तस्य
कालस्य निरावरणस्कन्धधात्वाद्यतनं चक्रं त्रिभवस्यैकत्वं
निरावरणज्ञेयम् । तदेव वज्रधातुमहामण्डलमित्युच्यते ॥ (4)

Again while elaborating the form of AdiBuddha (the primeval/primordial one), Naropada quotes verses containing concepts of Kalacakra from Namasamgiti: The Buddha who is without beginning and end the Adi-Buddha. He is without connections (Niranvaya--bereft of lineage). His aspects are universal charity (Karuna) and unsubstantiality (Sunyata-Murtih) which is connected with Karuna as Prajna and Upaya. He is 'time' (Kala) in so far as his Sakti is 'the involuted one' (Samvriti-

rupini). He is round as wheel (cakra) since he is without end (Sunyata). So he is the Wheel of Time (Kalacakra), without an equal, imperishable.

Analysing each syllable, KA means the causality which is lost in him. LA means cosmic reabsorption, CA is the mobile mind, KRA is the process of both are to be checked (trans. Carelli)

नामसङ्गीतौ । अनादिनिधनो बुद्ध आदिबुद्धो निरन्वयः ।
करुणाशून्यतामूर्तिः कालः संवृतिरुपिणी ॥
शून्यताचक्रमित्युक्तं कालचक्रोद्भवोद्भारः ।
एकैकाक्षरसंज्ञया वा । ककारात्कारणे शान्ते लकारात्सर्वोद्भवैः ।
चकाराच्चलचित्तस्य ककारात्क्रमबन्धनैः ॥ (5)

The editor of *Sekoddesatika*, M.E. Carelli, does not mention Tibetan version of the work. In Dege Tanjur, Rgyud (Tantra) section Vol. Na. FF 220 (b) -289 (a), however, the Sanskrit title of the book occurs as **परमार्थसंग्रहनाम सेकीद्देशटीका** (xylograph in the collection of Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok). The date of compilation of the Sanskrit text appears to be obscure; we only know that the author flourished during 10th-11th centuries. In the colophon of Tibetan xylograph (6) it is stated that Kashmiri Pandita Dharmadhara and Tibetan Lotsawa Grags-pa-Rgyal-mtshan collaborated in translation of the text into Tibetan in the metropolis of Nepal. If Dagpa Gyaltsen be the third Sakya hierarch, his date of birth is 1147. Again Sanskrit Grammarian, Rinchen-Rgyal-mtshan, revised the translation at Sakya monastery (dpal-sa-skya'i-chos-grwa-chen-por).

In this work Sakya Dakpa Gyaltsan (1st vol. p. 245) claims Naropa as his pupil (vide Khentsun *Biographical dictionary of Tibetan Buddhism*, Pt. I, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives 1973, p. 834).

Sarat Chandra Das in his article on "the Kalacakra system of Buddhism which originated in Orissa" (*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1907, vol. 3) states: In the Sutra of great renunciation (Abhiniskramana-Sutra) Buddha delivered the Kalacakra-Mula-Tantra at Sridhanyakataka in the beginning of the Twelfth month after his attaining the perfect Buddhahood in the new moon of the year (Water Sheep), at the request of king Chandrabhadra.

S.B. Dasgupta in his book *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* (p. 68) also narrates the above legendary account of propagation of Kalacakratantra from a manuscript (Sri Kalacakra-Tantra) preserved in the Cambridge University Library.

In conclusion we may discuss briefly about the introduction of Kalacakra Tantra in India from Central Asia. Scholars like Giuseppe Tucci and Helmut Hoffmann have discussed many points from mostly Tibetan literary sources. Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra in their work *Kalacakra Tantra and other Texts* (Sata-pitaka series, vol. 69, 1966) made a review of the various opinions on the Kalacakra.

According to Buston diffusion of Kalacakra was first in India and therefrom to Tibet (Sung bum vol Nga,

f27). Lokesh Chandra holds the Kalacakra to be one of the last Sanskrit works written in Central Asia, whence it is said to have travelled into India (Lokesh Chandra Ibid. p.6). The Kalacakra and its commentary were then brought into India by a Pandita from Odivisa (Orissa) named Cilupa, who after long travels by land and by sea came to Sambhala, and having become an expert in this Tantra, this Pandita spread this esoteric doctrine in India under the king Kataka's patronage and transmitted these teachings to Pitopa of Bengal and to Kalapada of Varendra (G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Pt. I, p 212). The Kalacakra had reputedly come to India from Sambhala sixty years before its advent into Tibet. As this Tantra entered Tibet about the year 1026 A.D. its penetration into India may be dated in the year 966 A.D. which is consonant with the fact that it was a dominant creed in India under King Mahipala of Bengal (c.974-1026). Its introduction into India must have been effected by Cilupa and not by Pitopa who is alternately suggested by Sumpa Mkhempo in Dpag-bsam-ljon-bzan (Lokesh Chandra p. 7).

Pitopa, whom we have already met, was a pupil of Atisa and who is also described by Taranatha as a disciple of Naropa. According to Lokesh Chandra, Naropa first had knowledge of Kalacakra through that original exponent in India whoever he would be. Lokesh Chandra has expressed doubt about Pitopa being the first Indian exponent of the Kalacakra, basing on many other sources (Ibid p.7).

The fact that an Indian mystic received a new name after each initiation adds to the difficulties of identification, but it seems likely that Tsi-lu-pa and the great (i.e., the older) Kalacakrapada are identical (Hoffmann: *Religions of Tibet*, London 1961, pp. 126-127).

According to Tibetan historian Pad-ma-dkar-po (1526-1592) while Tsi-lu-pa is the great Kalacakrapada, Naropa is the lesser Kalacakrapada; when Tsi-lu-pa went to Nalanda from South India, Naropa, the presiding abbot, entered into disputation and was vanquished; and thereafter Naropa studied Kalacakra under Tsi-lu-pa and was initiated in the Kalacakra (Hoffmann: *ibid*, p 128). Naropa wrote the Commentary on Sekoddesa and initiated Atisa into its secrets. Atisa later systematized a new chronology in Tibet starting with 1027 A.D., the year of the introduction of the Kalacakra in Tibet (Lokesh Chandra, *ibid* p.9). Pad-ma-dkar-po is also reputed to be author of a commentary on Kalacakra.

The new doctrine (Kalacakra) where the Adi Buddha concept found efflorescence, later branched into several schools (Lokesh Chandra, *ibid* p. 8).

The legend of propagation of Kalacakra from Indian sources may be supplemented from Tibetan sources thus: "Tibetan authorities state that it (Kalacakra) was introduced into Nalanda by a Pandit called Tsilu or Chilu and accepted by Narotapa who was then head of the university. From Nalanda it spread to Tibet. Manjusrikirti, king of Sambhala, is said to have been

an exponent of it and to have begun his reign 674 years after the Nirvana of Buddha. But since he is the second precursor incarnation of the Panchen Lama and since the fourth precursor (Abhayakara) lived about 1075, he may really have been a historical character in the latter part of the tenth century. Its promulgation is also ascribed to a personage called Siddha Pito. It must be late for it too mentions Islam and Mohammed. It is perhaps connected with anti-Mohammedan movements which looked to Kalki, the future incarnation of Vishnu, as their Messiah, for Hindu tradition says that Kalki will be born in Sambhalagrama (as in Kalika Purana Vishnupurana, Bhagavata Purana). We have also a Siddha called Telopa or Tailopa, who was a vigorous opponent of Islam. The mythology of the school (Kalacakra) according to Eliot is Vishnuite, not Sivaite, and it is noticeable that Pancaratra having some connection with Kashmir lays stress on the wheel or discus (Cakra or Sudarsana) of Vishnu which is said to be the support of universe and the manifestation of creative will. The Kalacakra is mentioned as special form of this cosmic wheel having six spokes (Charles Eliot : *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Pt. III, p. 387).

As already stated the concept of AdiBuddha found acme of its development in the Kalacakra system; in support of this point we relate the doctrine from scriptures and modern literary sources. The concept and form of AdiBuddha, appears to be enigmatical. *Karandavyuha* relates how the original AdiBuddha produced

Avalokita by meditation. *Lalitavistara* describes Buddha as a Tathagata. The five Jinas and other supernatural personages are often regarded as manifestations of single Buddha-force and as the force personified as AdiBuddha (Charles Eliot : *Hinduism and Buddhism*, pt. II, p. 31). Asanga in his *Sutralankara* (IX 77) condemns the doctrine of AdiBuddha showing that the term was known then, even if it had not the precise dogmatic sense which it acquired later. His argument is that no one can become Buddha without an equipment (Sambhara) of merit and knowledge. Such an equipment can only be obtained from a previous Buddha and therefore the series of Buddha must extend infinitely backward (Charles Eliot, *Ibid* pp. 31-32).

This (AdiBuddha) admittedly theistic form in Buddhism is late and is reported from Nepal, Tibet and Java, a distribution which implies that it was exported from Bengal (Eliot: pt. II, P. 32). For the prevalence of the doctrine in mediaeval Bengal one may see B.K.Sar- kar, *Folklore Element in Hindu Culture*, which is however sparing of precise references. The Dharma as Niranjana of *Sunya Purana* seems to be equivalent of AdiBuddha (Eliot : Pt. I. p. 32). The *Guna-Karanda-vyuha* and *Karanda-vyuha* relate the primeval Buddha spirit, AdiBuddha or Svayambhu producing Avalokita by meditation. According to Eliot the first book was translated into Chinese in 270 A.D. (*Ibid*, Pt. II, p. 57). The idea that Five (Dhyani) Buddhas are emanations or manifestations of a single primordial Buddha-spirit was a natural

development of Mahayana creed. But no definite statement about it earlier than Kalacakra literature is forthcoming though many earlier works throw hints (Eliot, Pt. II, p.118).

It may be stated here that there are two versions of the book Karanda-vyuha: an earlier one in prose and a later one in verse. The book is based on a theistic view of the universe. It relates how, at the beginning of all things, AdiBuddha, also called "Svayambhu", the "self existent" and Adinatha "the first Lord" appeared and created the world through meditation. Now we know that in the fourth century A.D. there were already Buddhist saints who believed in AdiBuddha as "God" and "Creator". This is proved by Maitreyanatha saying in *Mahayana Sutralankara* IX. 77. "There is no AdiBuddha" (*A History of Indian Literature* by Maurice Winternitz Vol. II, University of Calcutta 1933, p. 306).

The well-known Visva Bharati scholar, Biswanath Bandopadhyaya, relates the real nature of Sri Kalacakra. "The nature of Sri Kalacakra becomes clear from the commentary of Vimalaprabha (Asiatic Society Mss. No. G 4727). He is saluted here as Sunyata, Karuna, bereft of origination and destruction, the unitary embodiment of knowledge and knowable embraced by Prajna (Transcendent Wisdom), who is both endowed with and bereft of forms (contents). He is sublime bliss and devoid of all lower pleasures. He is creator of all the Buddhas and knows the three periods of time. He is omniscient,

he is the great Adibuddha and the only Lord. The commentary begins with ... salutation to the Lord Kalacakra (Journal of the Asiatic Society vol. XVIII, 1952 no. 2, A note on the Kalacakratantra and its commentary).

Reference may be made to a later work describing Mandala, namely, Nispannayogavali of Mahapandita Abhayakaragupta (C. 1114 A.D.) (Ed. B. Bhattacharyya, GOS 1949, p. 22). The way Hindu deities are incorporated in the Mandala of Kalacakra as in Nispannayogavali shows conclusively that there was considerable exchange between Buddhist and Hindu Tantras by 12th century A.D. This work was composed when the Kalacakra cult was firmly established in India.

Gautama the Buddha was silent on God and the Dharma in the beginning was not frankly interested in any theistic view of the universe and its creation. The Dharma even after Nagarjuna, that is in its Mahayana form, did not exhibit any firm notion of God or Creator. The concept of Adibuddha as in the Kalacakratantra introduced the notion of Eternal Creator.

Central Asia, particularly the basins of rivers Oxus, Jaxartes and Tarim, was the meeting ground of the theistic, rather mono-theistic, creeds like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and later Islam. Mahayana monks must have encountered the exponents of these creeds in Central Asia. This is mentioned to refer to several theories about foreign (West Asian) inspiration behind the concepts of Shambhala, Kalacakra and Adibuddha.

The corresponding Tibetan Texts (translation) from
Tanjur are as follows:-

ལྷོ། རྩ་བའི་རྒྱུད་དུ་གསུངས་པ་ཡང་།
སྟོན་པས་བྱ་རྒྱུད་པོ་རུ། །ཤེས་པ་བཟོ་བའི་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་ལ་བཞིན། །
ཚེས་བསྟན་དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲམ་ལུང་དུ། །དེ་བཞིན་གསུངས་སྐད་གསུངས་ལྷོ་ལ་འབག་སྟུང་། །
བྱ་རྒྱུད་པོ་རུ་འཛིན་པོ་རུ། །ཐོག་པ་ཚེན་པོ་རྒྱུ་ལེད། །
ཤེས་པ་བཟོ་བའི་ལྷན་པོ་རུ་ལ། །བྱང་རྒྱུ་པ་ལེ་མས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་བསྟན། ། (1)

སྐྱུང་ཡང་དེ་ཉིད་དུ།
ཡེ་དང་གསུང་ཚེན་ལམ་མཁའ་ལེ་བམས། །སྒྲ་ག་ཚེས་འབྱུང་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་ལ་དང་། །
མེད་གའི་ཁྱིམ་གནས་དེ་རྗེ་ཅན། །རྒྱུད་གཞན་དག་ཏུ་བདག་གིས་བརྗོད། །
དེ་རྗེ་དེ་རྗེ་ཅན་གྱི་བོ། །དེ་རྗེ་འཇིགས་བྱུང་དབང་ལྷུག་གང་། །
རྩ་རྒྱུ་ཀ་དང་དུས་འཁོར་ལོ། །དང་པོ་འི་སངས་རྒྱལ་ལོགས་མིང་གིས། །
ཀུན་ལ་ཁྱེན་སྟོན་པ་དེ་རྗེ་འཇིན། །མངས་རྒྱལ་མེད་གའི་ཁྱིམ་བཞུགས་པ། །
དུས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་སྟོན་པ་ལོ། །རྒྱ་བཟང་བྱོད་ཀྱིས་གསོ་ལ་བཏབ་པ། ། (2)

རྒྱ་བཟང་པོས་གསོ་ལ་བ་ཞེས་པ་རྒྱ་བོ་གི་ཏེ་བྱང་ཕྱོགས་ན་གོང་བྱེ་བ་ལྷག་
དག་པ་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་ག་དང་ཉ་རྒྱུ་ལའི་ལྷུ་ལ་གྱི་བདག་པོ།
མེད་མེ་མེ་འཇིན་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་དུ་གང་། །སྐད་གསུངས་ཀྱི་ཐོག་པ་བསྟན་པ་ཡིས། །
བདག་ཅན་བྱེ་བ་མེད་དེ་དེད། །གོ་ཏེ་མ་ལེགས་པ་ཡིས། །
དེ་ནས་ཉ་རྒྱུ་ལའ་གྲགས་ལས། །ཕྱག་ནེ་རྗེ་འཇིན་ལ་བཞིན། །
མི་བདག་རྒྱ་བཟང་རྒྱ་བསྟུན་ཀྱིས། །དང་ཉིད་དཔལ་ལྷན་ཚེས་དབྱིངས་བྱོན། ། (3)

ལང་ན་བདེ་བ་ཚེན་པོའི་གནས་དེ་རྩོམ་གྱི་དབྱིངས་ན་མ་མཁའ་འི་
 མཚན་ཉིད་ལ་མཚན་གྱི་འགྲུབ་པ་མི་འཕོ་བའི་སྐད་ཅིག་ནི་དུས་ཞེས་བརྗོད་དེ་
 དེ་ཉིད་རྗེ་རྗེ་ཡོལ་ཤེས་སོ། དུས་དེའི་སྐྱེ་བ་པ་མེད་པའི་ཡུང་པོ་དང་ཁམས་དང་
 སྐྱེ་མ་ཚེད་ནི་འཁོར་ལོ་སྐྱེ་སྤོང་པ་གསུམ་གཅིག་པ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་བ་པ་མེད་པའི་
 ཤེས་བྱ་པོ། དེ་ཉིད་རྗེ་རྗེ་དབྱིངས་ཀྱི་དྲིལ་འཁོར་ཚེན་པོ་ཞེས་བརྗོད་དེ། (4)

མཚན་ལང་དག་པར་བརྗོད་པར་ཡང་། །
 མངས་རྒྱལ་ཐོག་མ་ཐ་མ་མེད། །དང་པོའི་མདུས་ཤིག་མ་མེད་པ། །ཞེས་སོ།
 སྐྱེད་རྗེ་དང་ནི་སྐྱེད་ཉིད་སྐྱེ། །དུས་ནི་ཀློག་རྗེ་བ་གསུམ་གསུམ་ཅན་ལ། །
 སྐྱེད་ཉིད་འཁོར་ལོ་ཞེས་བརྗོད་དེ། །དུས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་གཉིས་མེད་འདོད། །
 ཡང་ན།
 མིང་གི་ཡི་གེ་རེ་རེ་སྟེ། །ཀ་ཡི་ག་ལས་ནི་རྒྱ་ཞི་བ། །
 ལ་ཡི་ག་ལས་འདི་རྩེ་མ་པ་ཉིན། །ཅ་ཡི་ག་ལས་ནི་གཡོ་བའི་མེམས། །
 ག་ཡི་ག་ལས་པ་བཅིངས་ལས་སོ། ། (5)

ཁ་ཚེའི་པ་རྒྱ་ཉ་རྒྱ་མ་རྒྱ་དང་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བ་གྲགས་པ་རྒྱ་ལ་མཚན་གྱིས་
 བལ་པོའི་ཐོ་ལ་དུ་བསྐྱུར་བ་ལས། སྐྱེར་ཡང་ལོགས་པར་སྐྱེར་བའི་
 སྐད་ཀྱི་བདེ་སྐྱོད་པའི་རྩུ་ལ་རིག་པ་རིན་ཚེན་རྒྱ་ལ་མཚན་གྱིས་དཔལ་
 ལ་སྐྱེའི་ཚོས་གྲུ་ཚེན་པོར་ལོགས་པར་བསྐྱེར་ཅིང་ལུས་ཉེད་ག་པར་
 བྱས་པ་པོ། ། (6)



DIPANKARA ATISA

DHARMA, TANTRA AND ATISA
- Nirmal C. Sinha

PROLOGUE

Tantra in Sanskrit or Rgyud in Tibetan is generally rendered in English as mysticism, mysteries etc. Like 'religion', the term 'mysticism' has multiple or diverse and even contradictory connotations. Not being a scholar in the discipline of religion or philosophy, I begin this article with a prefatory explanation.

In a recent controversy about Dipankara Atisa (982-1054) I am accused as having said that the great savant was a Tantrika preaching "debased Tantra" in Tibet. I have contradicted this as a false allegation in the last issue of this *Bulletin* pp. 41-43. My Tibetan friends, who know my opinions and sentiments well expect an elaborate writeup on what they consider slanders and insinuations against their Dharma of which Tantra is an essential component. I comply as a student of history-hard facts of history, and as one with particular interest in the history of Buddhism.

I hold here no brief, pro or contra, for any religion or ideology. Born in a conservative Bengali Hindu family, schooled early with Presbyterian Scots, I had the unique opportunities of sitting at the feet of Muslim scholars of Bihar Sharif and Jamia Milia and also with the Jesuit scholars in Darjeeling and elsewhere. My important and relevant credential for the present debate is my close association for three decades with the Mahayana or

Northern Buddhist monks and lay believers. I do not deny my highest veneration for Gautama Buddha. However I join this debate not so much as a believer but as a student of history.

DHARMA

The Dharma taught by Gautama Buddha is different from all other religions because of Buddha's silence on God or Godhead and because of his reservations on miracles and mysteries. Nevertheless will be historically wrong to assert or affirm that Buddha was not a superman or that he was neither a Muni nor Yogi, as these appellations implied in the sixth century B.C. and down to the current century A.D. Buddha's teachings cannot be bracketed with the teachings of mere intellectuals; his life as well as his teachings were more phenomenal than noumenal. Madhava, the encyclopaedic scholar, in *Sarva-darsanasangraha* (c. 1380 A.D), classes Buddha Dharma as *sui generis* and places Buddhism in a central position between the clearcut atheism/materialism on one side and the clearcut theism/spiritualism on other side.

On this point I can do no better than express my findings in the words of Edward Conze from his book *Buddhist Thought in India* (London 1962). "There are of course, a few modern writers who make Buddhism quite rational by eliminating all metaphysics, reincarnation, all the gods and spirits, all miracles and supernatural powers. Theirs is not the Buddhism of the Buddhists". (p. 29 foot note) Conze continues "Bitter and incredible

as it must seem to the contemporary mind, Buddhism bases itself first of all on the revelation of the Truth by an omniscient being, known as "the Buddha", and secondly on the spiritual intuition of saintly beings." (p 30)

A brilliant Theravada scholar, K.N. Jayatilleke, in his monumental work *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London 1963), presents the teachings of Buddha with a studied avoidance of supernatural or transcendental matters. Yet the concluding sentence of Jayatilleke's book is a runaway deduction. "It was not that there was something that the Buddha did not know, but that what he 'knew' in the transcendent sense could not be conveyed in words because of the limitations of language and of empiricism." (p. 476)

A saint of modern India, Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), not read in Pali Canon, used to say that Gautama Buddha had the Vision of Brahman but had no adequate or appropriate words to convey his experience. Ramakrishna would quote wellknown as well as obscure Vedic texts to emphasise that Revelation of Truth or Enlightenment of Mind is not capable of expression in terms already coined.

EARLY RELIGIONS

It is now admitted that the earliest spiritual speculations of man were about the Nature - its forces and wonders, and the ancient man made efforts to propitiate

and utilize the Nature. The mysteries or mystic rituals were thus the first religions generally designated Shamanism by modern scholars. A comprehensive handbook by a foremost authority is Myrcia Eliade: *Shamanism* (London 1964).

In India mysteries or mystic rituals were no doubt practised by the Indus Valley and other peoples (c. 3000 B.C). Whether the so-called Aryans borrowed any idea or ritual from the Indus people or not, the later Vedic religion as in *Atharva Veda* was full of mystic rituals and magic spells. The wonder and veneration for Nature and the deities representing the different forces of Nature was however the independent speculations of the Aryans. This mystic cult found its sublime expression in the Upanishads.

In *Katha Upanishad* it is clearly stated that deepest learning or highest instruction can not lead to realization of the Absolute for which Inner Illumination is the only means. Upanishadic lore began on the eve of Gautama Buddha's advent and several texts were composed before Buddha's teachings. On this subject reference may be made to Deussen : *Philosophy of the Upanishads* (1906), Ranade : *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* (1927), and Dutta : *Early Monastic Buddhism* (1960).

The point to press here is that though elaborate rituals and animal sacrifices were denigrated, mystic contemplation, Dhyana and Yoga were prized. Gautama Buddha was thus come in a milieu, where supernatural or transcendental knowledge was not taboo. Tantra as

a sublime process was not altogether unknown in Buddha's time.

Mahayana believers need not quote extensively from Kanjur and Tanjur or Rinchen Terzod and Tsongkhapa to prove that Gautama Buddha was a mystic who did perform miracles. My friends from Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan regions ask me to note the Southern Buddhists' adoration of the Buddha relics, their adherence to the epithet Tathagata ('the meaning of which non-Buddhists may not comprehend') and above all their pilgrimage to Sankissya (Farukhabad : UP), site where Gautama landed after preaching to his mother in the Heaven of Thirty Three Devas.

The above digression is made to repeat a truism that all religions have a core of mystic rituals or mystic philosophy. From my limited knowledge, I would consider 'sacrament of bread and wine' among Christians as a necessary reminder for the hope eternal.

MYSTICISM : SACRED & PROFANE

Mystic rituals or mysticism can be overdone and even debased. History of different religions abounds with malpractices; and neither Buddhism nor Hinduism can claim completely clean record. This however does not detract from the merits of mysticism as a sublime process. A Roman Catholic scholar, R.C. Zaehner, while Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, wrote in his book *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford 1957) the following.

"Let us first consider what is common to all mysticism. Now it is generally agreed that there are two primary instincts in man, the instinct of self-preservation and the sexual instinct. The first is a wholly individual instinct and is concerned with maintaining individual life; the second, *qua* instinct rather than *qua* biological purpose, is the instinct to unite with what is other than and different from oneself. The form the union will take will, naturally, depend on the sex of individual concerned. The crude instinct of the male is to hunt and subdue, of the female to surrender and accept. The sexual instinct is in any case inimical to the instinct of self-preservation, as anyone who has observed animals in heat will have noticed: for when an animal's sexual instinct is overwhelmingly strong, its instinct of self-preservation is reduced practically to zero. So on the psychological plane, on the one hand there is pride in being a unique person, different from all others, alone, and rejoicing in one's isolation: on the other, there is the desire, usually submerged in the unconscious, to lose the sense of individuality and to merge into a greater whole. There seem to be two motives for this; first the sense of isolation becomes unbearable, for as Aristotle correctly pointed out, man is a social animal, however much he may regret it. Thus there comes a point in most lives when one tires of the ceaseless responsibility of having to act and choose, and one longs for a higher power to take over the direction of one's life even if the higher power is only the army or a party organization. Further one longs for a more intimate union with one's

surroundings, one has a pathetic desire to belong. The equivalent of both instincts can be found in the varieties of mystical experience and mystical theory as we shall have occasion to see". (pp.141-42)

THE TANTRAS : PROS & CONS

The Tantras, Buddhist and Hindu, have devout admirers as well as bitter critics. John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) and Marco Pallis (Thubten Tenzin) wrote in admiration while Austine Waddel was the leading denigrator. It may cover both sides if I quote an Anglo-American member of the Ramakrishna Mission, Christopher Isherwood, from his book *Ramakrishna and his Disciples* (Calcutta Edition 1974).

"The Tantras are a vast body of literary works in Sanskrit, dating from the ninth to the fiteenth century A.D. They deal with various forms of ritualistic worship, magical and sacramental formulas, mystical letters and diagrams. On the upper level, the aim of Tantra is union with God, and specifically with the Divine Mother. On the lower level, it is success in love or business, avoidance of disease, revenge upon your enemies. So Tantra ranges from ritual worship to mere magic. It is two-faced, and therefore very easy to condemn. What is symbol to one participant is gross physical action to another. For example, the many Tantrik pictures to be found in India and Tibet may be taken either as representations of the symbolic play of Shiva and his Shakti, Brahman with the Power of Brahman : or as illustrations to a manual on the art of sexual intercourse. In the practice

of left-handed Tantra, male and female devotee translate the Shiva-Shakti relationship into an act of copulation". (p. 74)

The male-female feature in Tantra has attracted great notice from Western Psychologists. Much is written by such scholars on "sublimation of biological energy into art, literature or religion" in both Buddhist and Hindu Tantras. This point however does not concern the present debate, that is, whether Buddha accommodated Tantra and whether Atisa was a Tantrika; and I would refer any interested reader to Jung's introduction in Evans Wentz : *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (Oxford 1954).

Materialistic interpretation of Tantra, with no emphasis on purely carnal aspects, is however not much attempted, at least in our country, in modern times. This relates to the productivity of earth and the more important role of woman in productive economy of mankind. It is a matter of pride for our country that an Indian scholar, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, has made an original and substantial contribution. The work is *Lokayata* (People's Publishing House 1959). I mention this study to high light that Tantra is not all black magic and that history has some good words for Tantra in the past.

TANTRA IN BUDDHISM

Highest heights of Yoga involving clairvoyance and such supernatural powers are attributed to Gautama Buddha in Sanskrit (Mahayana) texts and more in Tibetan

and Mongol literary works. Pali (Theravada) sources are not so categorical and much less spoken. Whatever the monks, scholars and intellectuals of early Buddhism and later Theravada school said and believed, the masses along with the less intellectuals like kings and other patrons of Dharma knew Gautama Buddha as Yogi, Muni, Bhagavan and Tathagata. Buddha was not described as Tantrika in contemporary or even later Indian records. But was Buddha ignorant of Tantra and yet could do miracles ? His Sankissya landing was a physical impossibility, so far as history would attest, but feats like levitation and communion with beings in other worlds were admitted by even rationalists and puritans.

Nagarjuna (c. 150 A.D) and the Prajnaparamita texts are accepted from the historical point as the incorporation period of Tantra in Buddhism. The Mahayana deities Manjusri or Avalokitesvara and the consort deities Prajna or Tara are objects of mystic meditation, and more approximately deities of esoteric mysticism, which came to be universally known as Tantra in both Buddhist and Hindu scriptures. By the end of the Gupta Age, Tantra was an established fact.

Whether the import of the esoteric mysticism, Tantra, and the saviouress, Tara, was from the north-western frontier regions or from the heart of Dravidian south is a matter of controversy. (Hirananda Shastri: *The Origin and Cult of Tara* (ASI Memoir 20) and E. Conze : *The Prajnaparamita Literature* (The Hague 1960) may be seen). The popularity of this new cult was same with

Hinduism as with Buddhism. Mahayana had completely made Tantra a Buddhist mode of spiritual striving.

The monasteries and universities in eastern India, generally called Vangala in Tibetan literature, specialised in Tantrik learning as much as some Mahayana centres of learning in south India. There was nothing un-Buddhist or anti-Buddhist in such studies and as Chinese pilgrims had noted Mahayana and Hinayana (Theravada) sects and sub-sects lived in harmony in the monastic universities that the Chinese visited. Under the patronage of the Palas of East and the Cholas of south, monks and priests of different schools and sects travelled to Suvarnavipa and the adjacent lands. These monks and missionaries carried the new learning, that is, Tantra across the seas. In this new development there was sometimes incorporation of similar concepts and rituals from the native past of the islands. These facts, I mention, not to glorify or malign Tantra, but to make clear that much before Dipankara Atisa journeyed to Suvarnavipa the new learning from India was an old affair. Whether this learning was all sacred, all profane or all hocus-pocus may be the theme of a separate discussion. But what must be said here is that even the concept of Adi-Buddha, the focal point of the Kalachakra, was not unknown in Suvarnavipa etc before Atisa came here for advanced courses. The advent of the Kalachakra in India is amply discussed by B. Ghosh in this issue of the *Bulletin* and nothing I may add on this point.

References to source material about introduction and development of Tantra, including Kalachakra, in

Suvarnavdipa regions will be found in two standard handbooks. These are Quaritch Wales : *The Making of Greater India* (London 1961) and Reginald le May *The Culture of South East Asia* (London 1954). Authoritative works of Indian scholars like Ramesh Majumdar, Nilakanta Sastri, Nihar Ray, Bijanraj Chatterjee and Hemanta Sarkar are too well-known to be detailed here.

DIPANKARA ATISA NOT A TANTRIKA !!!

"Dipankara Srijnana was not a Tantrika." Under this caption a Lama wrote an article in *Atish Dipankara Millennium Birth Commemoration Volume* (Calcutta: Jagajjyoti Publication 1983). In view of its diverse and contradictory implications, the term "Tantrika" is sparingly used and is used if adequate explanation is provided. The Lama has obviously no inhibitions or reservations and on clear presumption that "Tantrika" means an adept in black magic, sorcery and all that, he issues a sort of character certificate with a blanket statement that Atisa was not a Tantrika. The basic premises for the Lama's simplification are obviously that "Tantra" is nothing but a corrupt cult and "Tantrika" is nothing but a corrupt man. I have already commented on such basic premises.

I have also to say much about the Lama's fact finding and reasoning processes for his novel theory that Atisa had nothing to do with Tantra after his return from Suvarnavdipa, and that in Tibet he did not speak on Tantra and never on Kalachakra Tantra.

The too simple premises of the Lama are as follows.

First, Dipankara was not satisfied with his education at Nalanda and Vikramasila which was Tantrik and "alien to Buddhism". Second, Dipankara went to Suvarnavipa for schooling in "classical Buddhism". Third, Dipankara's ordination in Suvarnavipa was a break with his earlier career, according to Indian colleagues of the Lama. Fourth, on return to his homeland Dipankara dropped Tantra and had no associations with Tantrika masters. Fifth, the works of Dipankara in *Tanju* do not speak of any preachings on Tantra in Tibet Last, there is no evidence in the Lama's knowledge that Dipankara preached Kalachakra in Tibet.

Before I comment on these premises of the Lama, I would submit that I am not proficient in Tibetan language and am not read in Tibetan literature to a degree that I should confront a Lama without hesitation. I have disputed the Lama's "basic premises" about Tantra and Tantrika on purely academic grounds at some length. Now I dispute the Lama's "simple premises" about Atisa with my elementary knowledge of the language and a fair acquaintance with the sources and traditions relevant to the present question.

My credentials are a few. I have three decades' close association with Tibetan monks, scholars and lay believers; I have lived in the monasteries and temples of Central Tibet for a whole winter and mostly with Gelugpas who trace their concepts of Dharma and Tantra to Atisa; I have learnt much about religion and culture of Tibet through lessons and sermons of Lamas, largely Gelugpa; I gained much about Gelugpa tradition and

Atisa legacy from the last Indian Pandita, Rahul Sankri-tyayan; I learnt also from the Northermost Buddhists, Baikal Buriats, about Atisa's great role in the spread of Saddharma; I consider my knowledge of Tibetan literary sources as a supplementary to the other credentials; another supplementary credential is my knowledge of Indian history acquired from masters like Devadatta Bhandarkar, Ramesh Majumdar, Hem Ray Chaudhuri, Upendra Ghoshal, Prabodh Bagchi and Niranjan Chakravarti (1). It has to be noted that Indian sources are all blank on Atisa in Tibet but Indian sources are indispensable for correct comprehension of the milieu of the period.

The Lama's contention that in Dipankara's time Buddhism "was withering in India" is not so novel as that a discontented Dipankara went in search of "classical Buddhism" in Suvarnadvipa. Dipankara's principal teacher in Suvarnadvipa was Acharya Dharmapala at whose feet had once sat Mahasiddha Ratnakarasanti, the master of Dipankara at Vikramasila. Besides further studies in Pitakas, Dipankara took interest in Tantras in Suvarnadvipa and was duly initiated in the mysteries of the Tantra. As in Vikramasila, Nalanda and Vajrasana, Dipankara took greater interest in Vinaya and Prajna but never disowned the merits of Tantra. On his return to Vangala, Dipankara kept regular company with the Mahasiddhas. He even went through a full course of the new Tantra called Kalachakra from Mahasiddha Tilopa. All details are found in Tibetan sources, besides Tanjur.

The Lama and his Indian colleagues assert, without

any qualification, that Tanjur is the "only source" for the knowledge of Indian Panditas and their works. It is completely forgotten that for Guru Padmasambhava and a few other Indian Panditas very important sources are Tibetan original works, that is, not translations from Sanskrit as in *Tanjur*. For Dipankara Atisa, the more important sources are the original Tibetan works like *Kadam Phacho*, *Kadam Phucho* and chronicles of Bu-ston, Pema Karpo, Taranatha and Sumpa Khenpo. Details of Atisa's life - in India, Suvarnavdipa and Tibet - are all recovered from the works of Tibetan disciples of Atisa and later monk writers.

The pioneer scholar, Alexander Csoma de Koros (1784-1842) had a thorough and systematized knowledge of the contents of *Tanjur* and yet could not gather details of Atisa's life. Sixty years later Sarat Das (1849-1917) could find a wealth of data in Tibetan works and revealed the life of a great Indian savant forgotten in his homeland. The Tibetan works including Gelugpa writings, make it abundantly clear that Atisa wrote commentaries and gave sermons on Kalachakra Tantra. I recall with pride my stay for a couple of days at Yarpa where Atisa expounded Kalachakra for some weeks. The Lama's Indian colleagues are obviously innocent of all Tibetan sources. I would not bracket a Lama with such Indian scholars.

EPILOGUE

I conclude by firmly stating that Mahayana had

the seeds of Tantra in Nagarjuna's time. No Mahayana scholar or saint of later days could deny or disown the doctrinal metaphysical truth in Tantra. Guru Padmasambhava (+750+) attained full mastery in the application of Tantra. Acharya Santarakshita or Acharya Kamalasila were not adepts in such art but would not deny the Tibetans a matching cult from India against their pre-Buddhist, Bon/Shaman.

Dipankara Atisa was certainly not interested in the art of Padmasambhava and was totally hostile to rituals involving women devotees. He laid down strict rules of Dharma (Vinaya), and Atisa's disciples and their successors openly fought the older sects on charges of debasement of the Tantra. But not even the most puritan Gelugpa would deny or disown Tantra as a component of Dharma.

About Dipankara Atisa I would only remind the Lama scholar that Tara was the Yidam (Istha) of Atisa's meditation. And that Dipankara Atisa had sought advice and blessings of Vajra Yoginis for his historic journey to Tibet. (2).

NOTES

(1) I have mentioned these six great names not to enhance my credit. I learnt in 1930-34 from the first four and in 1940-50 from the last two, that besides the Kanjur-Tanjur, the Tibetan literature is of immense value for Indian history and that for lives of Indian Panditas Tibetan historical literature is indispensable. I

can never forget the name Taranatha first heard as an undergraduate student more than fifty years ago. The names Bu-ston down to Sumpa Khenpo I first had from P.C.Bagchi and N.P.Chakravarti forty years ago. I am sorry that the Lama and his Indian colleagues do research about Dipankara Atisa with *Tanjur* only.

(2) In this article I have confined myself to the current controversy. I and my colleagues, Indian as well as Tibetan, plan to write at length on the true role of Atisa the monk cum scholar cum statesman across the Himalayas. I have written several notes on the place of Atisa in the history of Tibet and Mongolia which Atisa did not visit. I do not know why and how Lama Chimpa, an old friend, misrepresents me.

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