WHAT IS VAJRA? — 2

In the previous issue (Vol VII, No. 2) of this Bulletin I wrote in protest of the new fangled Powerbolt in place of the customary Thunderbolt as the English rendering of Sanskrit Vajra. Several scholars write in support. Some think that I have overstated in my zeal of writing English. My expression "Thunder and not Bolt is the essence of Thunderbolt" is suspected as an exercise in English.

My knowledge of Sanskrit (language) is poor and my knowledge of English (language) is poorer. I happen to read and write English as a student of history. For writing I try to follow the ideal of Japanese English and never care to practice Indian English or Chinese English. For translation I try to follow the Tibetan tradition e.g. Nirmamkaya as Sprul-pha and not Avatar or Living Buddha. I thus say that Thunder is the essence of Thunderbolt and that Bolt is not its essence.

In Sanskrit Vajra begins as the weapon of Indra, and both in Brahmanism and Buddhism this weapon is Thunder or Thunderbolt. One of the many names of Indra is Vajrapani.

In the most important Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka, occurs an interesting dialogue about the king of gods.

Q. Who is Indra? A. Indra is thunder (stana-jnana).Q. What is thunder? A. Thunder is thunderbolt (sana-hing-longing). [Sankara renders 'sana-h' as 'vajra' and derives 'vajra' from 'vira' which is destructive like Indra.]

Brihadaranyaka II, 4, 6. with Sankara’s commentary is reproduced below.

Vajra (sana-h) is the weapon of Indra, and both in Brahmanism and Buddhism this weapon is Thunder or Thunderbolt.

Śrīla Prabhupāda

Nirmal C. Sinha
In SakyaKayon ( gợi vajra ) we find four meanings of rdDo-rje (Vajra): 1. Dharmata Vajra ( རྣ་པ་ བསྡེ་ ) 2. Lakshana Vajra ( ལྣ་པ་ བསྡེ་ ) 3. Guhya Vajra ( ལྣ་པ་ བསྡེ) and 4. Rupa Vajra ( ལྣ་པ་ བསྡེ )

Dharmata Vajra is Sunyata itself. In Kanjur the question is posed: "You say Vajra Vajra. What you mean by Vajra?" and the answer is offered "Vajra is hard, void, indestructible, indestructible, which can not be cut, which cannot be born, that is, why it is called Sunyata Vajra." In Kanjur a more precise definition is found: 'Vajra is Dharmakayausnaka which is like Akasa (space)."

Lakshana Vajra that is the symbol of Vajra is made of iron, bronze or some sacred metal. The form of the symbol may be with nine spokes, five spokes, three spokes and sometimes with even unclawed spokes. The spokes represent virtues and functions. In a Vajra with nine spokes, the central spoke stands for Dharmadhatu. A Vajra with five spokes represents the five Jinas or Buddhas in upper half and the five mother goddess in lower half. The five Buddhas are Vajrayana, Arhatsiddhi, Akshobhya, Aparanirvada, and Amitabha, that is the Five Wisdoms ( ཨ་་་ ). The five deities are Mami, Panchavasini, Tara, Lakshmi, and Vajradhatiisvari; that is the Five Elements ( ཨ་་ ).

The two surnames, called Dharmadhatu, are the two vanishing points and thus also known as Stonata. The spokes are known to represent the horns ( ང་ ) projecting from crocodile's mouth and are regarded as instruments to draw out the sufferings of transmigration. The spine or centre of the Vajra consisting of the moon and eight lots on either side of the moon is itself the Ton-pi-rig or Stonata.

The Secret Vajra as its name suggests has no known appearance. The Substantial Vajra is also a matter more for meditation than for portrait. Diamond has two names in Tibetan: rdDo-rje rin-poche and rdDo-rje phags-lam ( རྣ་པ་ རིན་པོཞི་ བསྡེ་ ), and in hardness it is compared to the bones of Shu-thung ( རྣ་པ་ ) that is Dalhirch'i. Hindu legends describe Indra's weapon, thunder or thunderbolt, as made of Dallirch'i's bones. In Tibetan legends and literature rdDo-rje is thought of in its material form as thunder or thunderbolt. I give below the extracts from Kanjur, Tanjur and Sakya Kayon describing rdDo-rje as Ton-pi-rig or Stonata.
(3) अनुसूचित

(4) अनुसूचित

Kunga Yonten Hochotsang

GILGIT IN ANCIENT TIMES

Professor Buddha Prakash, in a learned account of ancient Gilgil (pp 15-40), has narrated the fascinating events of political history. For a non-specialist reader of the bulletin it is necessary to state that the English renderings of Chinese terms like "tribute" or "tribute-bearers" are not to be understood in modern sense. The Han diplomatic diction has its own terms to describe protocol, gifts, etc. Vide Hugh Richardson's article on Fish Bag in Bulletin, Vol VII No. 1.

Gilgit (Gruza), belonging to Tibet-Buddhist complex, has an equally fascinating cultural history. A non-specialist reader may read Kulimaksha Dutt, Gilgit Manuscripts (Srinagar 1939), Vol 1, pp 1-46.

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