At the outset the Tantra may be described as a methodology of widening man's individual energy up to the extent of all beings in all worlds. That energy pervading the universe is the Cosmic Energy. The term 'Tantra' is derived from Sanskrit root 'tan' meaning to extend, to spread. The Tantra is practical as well as scientific knowledge how to extend man's potentiality for the good and welfare of beings. The aim of the Tantra refers to the extension of an individual's life force to that of universe; that is, to spread over the inner effulgence of an individual on the cosmic effulgence in the sphere.

The origin of the Tantra is controversial and that may be discussed in details elsewhere. In brief, the Tantra probably originated from the Jains of Nature reflecting on man's mind since the primitive days of human culture. In the early days of human history the primitive men could explore an existence of inherent power within themselves. They visualized embodiments of that power persuading all over the earth, the Sun, the Moon, the planets and the stars above.

The Truth which had revealed before them was the two-fold manifestations of the Energy; i.e. the potential energy, apparently static but is not and, the kinetic energy incessantly appearing as changeable and changing. The Tantra tends to a universal approach to find out equality and symmetry in the midst of diversities in the Nature. The Tantra promulgates an awareness of the self-nature (sva-lahara) of beings on the universe and has developed that through the ages.

The codification of the Tantra, as a branch of human knowledge came later on. As and when the ecstatic practices became familiar in the early Indian societies the Tantra practices were no longer obscure, and thereby those were accepted and codified. Many say, sruti is of two kinds, the Vedic and the Tantric. The Atharvaveda, the Mahajurim Sakales, and the,
Mantras of the Jains in the Indian literature may be cited as instances of codification when the Tantra was not systematised. Several customs, manners, rites and practices prevalent then among the primitive men entered and were incorporated. Subsequently these formulated the Tantra in the course of systematization and standardization. The Tantra develops a basis of man’s life determining his day-to-day functions, the ways of life, his endeavor to attain a state of equality, and lastly, the seeing of the Senses or unification of the twofold manifestations of the energy.

The seers attain an immanent life-force to do and to undo for the cause of well-being of the universe. Their performances occasionally appear mystic, magical, supernatural and, sometimes, unintelligible to man’s ordinary sense and reasoning. The effulgence that spreads around the seer unifies that of the cosmic universe. As a methodology, the Tantra prescribes many secret formula and practices of exotericism, so that a practitioner seeking immanence may succeed within his span of life here.

DHAMMACHKKAPAVATTANA

Sakyaputra Gautama is said to have achieved a distinction of being the Awakened One (Buddha). The Pali Vinaya Pitaka preserves the traditions in a Discourse with Upaka prior to his turning of the Wheel of Dharma (Dhamma-sakkapavattana). Gautama Buddha declares the immanence:

Victorious one at, Omniscient am I.
Among all things delineated,
By knowing for myself, when should I follow?
For me there is no teacher,
One like me does not exist.
In the world with its devas
I alone am all-awakened.
I alone am all-awakened.
Became cool am I, nirvana attained.2
The above sayings explicitly refer to the core of the Tantric practice tending to retroversion (paścāvyatīn). A successful practitioner confidently declares, ‘No one equals me’, ‘I am an all-awakened’. These are the characteristics of him who regains man’s self-nature having the mind free from cravings. It is not an instance of self-boasting or false vanity of Gautama Śākyamuni.

The Buddhist literature, deals with the measures how to realise man’s self-nature. The life-force of a being emerges out of bindus and dissolves in bindus that is, arrives at the condition from which it originates. That is retroversion (of matter). It is the deep-mind similar retroversion functions. Retroversion is distinct from etversion (pravṛtti) and introversion (anvṛtti). The living beings, inclusive of man, according to Gautama Buddha, are the conglomeration of mind and matter (nāma-rūpa) with a strong attachment (uṣadhi) under the latent impressions (sabukṣaśa) on account of ignorance (avidya). It is therefore other than their self-nature. On account of ignorance about self-nature a being always becomes delighted in several pleasures and enters again and again in the cycle of birth and death. A being fails to know what is deathlessness and finds pleasure in the realm of Māra under the letters of craving.

Gautama Buddha knowing himself becomes Victorious (jina). He claims: ‘Victorious one all. Omnipotent am I... by knowing for myself’. Man possesses omniscience in potentiality. Because of ignorance man fails to realise his self-nature. The Tantra teaches how to visualise the self-nature (ava-bhāva) which is essencelessness (nīlava-bhāva). He who visualises the essencelessness is ‘Awakened’ (Buddha) from the slumber-like ignorance. Gautama exclaims:

This that through many tides I’ve won -
Enough I why should I make it known?
By talk with lust and hate consumed,
This shamma is not understood.
Leaning on against the stream.
Subtle, deep, difficult to see, delicate,
Unseen it will be by passions’ slave
Cloaked in the mask of ignorance. 3

The teachings of Buddha are also ‘leaning on against the stream’ but these are aids to develop vision of eyes (oakkhusāraṇa) and awareness of mind

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His followers thereby possess an appropriate contemplation to concentrate on the source or root of beings in the world (vyāna samādhi) for right sight (samyaksati) and right concentration (sammāsamādhi). The self nature (āvīhi) of beings is correctly visualized by ‘going on against the stream’. In other words, practices are done in the method of retroversion (parāvrtti) which is followed in the Tantra. The Tantra seeks how to extinguish five passions to attain Buddhahood when the attainer esclamms:

“Become cool am I, nirvana attained”. With undaunted confidence a Buddha beats his drum of deathlessness among the ‘blind on account of ignorance’.

Thereafter, Gautama Buddha turns the Dhammacakkha in Kashi city for the welfare of beings in the worlds.

NATURAL OF BUDDHA’S DHAMMA

The Pali Vinaya Pitaka refers to the nature of Buddha’s Dhamma prior to his deliberation in presence of the group of the Five Elders (Pacceka bhikkhus). The words of Gautama Buddha follow as:

“The dhamma won by me, is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, intelligible to the learned”.

He further continues:

“But this is the creation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure. So that for a creation delighting in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoicing in sensual pleasure these were a matter difficult to see. That is to say casual uprising by the way of cause. This too were a matter very difficult to see, that is to say calming of all habitual tendencies the renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of cravings, dispassion, stopping, Nirvana.”

The Sammāsambuddha (thoroughly Awakened One) sees the worlds of existence through his wisdom-eyes (buddhasaccakkhu) and understands the real state of happening where he sees (yathābhūtā nādasaṃsāra). No dialectic therefore arises and his dhamma is beyond dialectic. The Tantra also disowns any debate or dialectic as it is based on direct visualization of the Truth.

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UTTARIMANUSADHAMMA

At the first sight of Gautama Śākyamunī, while he was approaching to the group of the Five at Isipatana near Keshi, the said hermits are said have determined not to pay any respect to Gautama who had been their mate in practice and left their company of hermithood. But they failed to hold their determination strongly as soon as Buddha appeared in person before them. It is not an instance of miracle, nor a charm (iddhi). The effulgence spreading out from the embodiment of Buddhahood perplexed the five hermits at a time and, instantaneously, they all paid regards to the Awakened One - Buddha. Such incidents make ordinary men astonished and succumb with wonder.

The Pañcavimsatika refers to similar stories regarding Buddha Gautama in many instances. For example, the Rāhāyantika story, the Munakālī story of the Serpent who is said to have spread his hood for the protection of Gautama. And, Tapussa and Bhallika story in which four Lokapāla deities appeared to accept the offerings with requisite bowls for Tathāgata.²

BRAHMACARIYA

Gautama Buddha is said to have laid highest emphasis on Brahmacariya i.e., the leading of moral life as the way to end suffering. The first ordination made by Buddha declares the praise of Brahmacariya.⁵ Any failure in observance of Brahmacariya amounts to expulsion from monkhood (pāṭihāra offence) from the Saṅgha. Among the moral precepts to be observed by the yellow-robed Brahmacariya is the foremost.

The observance of Brahmacariya gathers potentiality for performing four Brahmavihāras that is, love (mettā) compassion (karuna), rejoice in prospect of others (muditā) and, an attitude of indifference in pleasure and pain (upekkhā). In the course of gradual sanctification of Brahmavihāras strengthens a practitioner to extend good and welfare of beings in the worlds like the Brahmavihāriya gods.

The Tantra is equally strict in the pledge of Brahmacariya and observance of moral precepts for discipline of a practitioner. Any amount of departure from Brahmacariya leads to utter ruin. The Gukhasamāja (7.5) reads: Bodhi is to be attained when body, speech and mind remain in their respective
self stocks, failing that, untimely death awaits and thereafter fall into the
dungeon of hell.

THE CRYPTIC EXPRESSIONS (SANDHĪYABHĀṢA)

The Tantra justifies the nature of Buddha’s dhamma when a number of
cryptic forms of expression have been occasionally used. For instance, the
Guhīṃsārta (7.1) reads: The practitioner who desires the company with
mother, sister or daughter will achieve a great success, according to the
essential of the Mahāyāna. 8

Similar expressions may be read there (7.1):

By enjoying all sorts of desires, and being enjoyable to others as much as
one likes, one will attain Buddhahood quickly. 9 All such expressions are
difficult to understand (duramūdha) as mentioned in the Vinaya-piṭaka. In
elucidation of the propertiy of such cryptic form of expressions
(Sandhīyabhistā) Candrakīrti states:

In order to express the significance of Truth (dhamma śītra) among the
persons having different likings, the ambiguous expressions have been
used and this is known as sandhīyabhāṣa.

Regarding such state of vacedness in grapping ability of men the Pāli
Vinaya-piṭaka refers to the visualizing of the Buddha through mental state of
beings by Buddha eye. An excellent smile of statues in a big lake clarifies the
actual state of affairs.

NO PRAJÑOPĀYA (VAIRĀBIA) YOGA IN PALI

The Pāli Vinaya-piṭaka does not refer to Prajñā (Wisdom) nor Karuṇā
(compassion) as principles; nor their unification, leading to non-duality
(vyakta-dhāta) or Oneness (samāna) as the Tantra holds. 10 Despite that, the
Pāli Vinaya-piṭaka lays emphasis on the higher state of meditation when the
perceptual world unites with the inherent mind under state of deep
concentration of formlessness (vijñānātisamādhi) That occurs in the sphere
of Nirvāṇa where no attachment of skandha remains. The Pāli Vinaya-piṭaka

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refers to that state through an uddhārya-sūtra uttered by Buddha immediately after the attainment of Nirvāṇa:

Truly when things grow plain to the one meditating Brahman
(is the lotus of Maya does he stand
Like as the sun while lighting up the sky.)

Likewise, the Tantra aims at the co-ordination of the mundane (śaṃskāra) and the supermundane (sat).

RESUME

To sum up, it has been evident from the above that Gautama Buddha’s experiences as traditionally depicted in the Pali Viṣṇavādīkān are in striking resemblance with experiences of an accomplished Tantra practitioner (tanotaptī). Enters into the Tantra in the Buddhist thought is generally said to be a later addition or a phase of the later Buddhism since 3rd Century B.C. At the earliest such entry of external matters may date back to the lifetime of Nagasena 1st Century A.D.

The Tantra is generally regarded as secret system, leading to male and female principles with symbolism, Mantra, mantra, castra, mandala, homa-vādīka etc. are more or less rituals as prescribed in the Tantra. These have been mostly applied for bhūddha karma including śāntika and pañjika. In fact, they are the ways of means how to empower a practitioner for being eligible to enter in the realm of abhūsambhūti full awakening of the self-nature of the universe inclusive of this world by the extension of effulgence (śrāvī). Since, Gautama is said to have achieved supermundane attributes like, bala, vajrī, vasānā, abhisambhūti and bodhīnāma as his experiences narrated in details in the Viṣṇavādīkā. These evidences suggest that the nucleus of the Tantra prevails in the Pali Viṣṇavādīkā, as the earliest source come down to us.
The importance of शास्त्रीय mantras has been appreciated in the शास्त्रीय—साहित्य—विश्वासियों में (6.23.42). The importance of mantras is further elucidated: प्राणियों नामाकारणाः तथा (xvi). The importance of mantras is evident in the शास्त्रीय—साहित्य—विश्वासियों में (xviii). 33-35

Tibetan rgyud corresponds to the Tantra which may be divided into four classes: rgyud (sutra tantra), rgyud (yoga tantra), and rgyud (yoga tantra). Assam-Terai suggests also the tantra manuals and is classified in two categories in rgyud pa raam pa lha.

2. Vinaysapitaka Mahavagga 1.6.3 (p.7.5); Book of Discipline, I.B. Honer, Vol. IV, 1.6.8.
3. Ibid 1.5.3
4. Ibid 1.5.2
5. Vinaysapitaka, p. 20f (P.T.S)
6. एक विद्वानति वर्ण नामो नामात्रां सध्य व्रतस्तवायम धना व्रतस्तवायम धना व्रतस्तवायम (Ibid p. 18
7. वाराणसीवर्तस्तवायम धना व्रतस्तवायम (Ibid p. 18)
8. गुणमात्रायम (B. Bhattacharyya GOS. 193). VII. 5)
9. लक्ष्मीदेवीदुर्गा नेष्तायोविन्दितानि।

10. विष्णुवासाप्रतिकृत ध्वजशिलास्मृतिः।

11. विष्णुवास श्रीमानको।

The Pali Visaysajjika (bhājikasandha) categorically debar a yellow robed one for such heinous offences like प्राणाय, दुर्ग, भूस्मृति, ध्वजशिला, (विष्णुवासाप्रतिकृत (I.5.112, I.20.30), विष्णुवास and ध्वजशिला) The Guhyasamāja uses the above words in गुह्यशास्त्र.