NOTES & TOPICS

TANTRA IN MAHAYANA TEXTS

Apropos of S.K. Pathak’s learned article published in this issue a few other extracts from Pali literature may be presented here. I confine myself strictly to early Buddhism that is Pali literature and would not pay my note with similar, parallel or even identical extracts from Jaina or Sankhya texts. I may be permitted to say that the ethos of Pantheism or Macrocism was prevalent when Gautama Buddha the Superperman preached the Four Truths and the doctrine of Inter-dependent Causation but did not refer to any transcendent or miraculous agencies.

In, Brahmapala Sutta (Digha-Nikaya, 1.1) The Buddha said that the common man held him in high esteem simply for his excellent ethical perfection, and failed to understand his deep philosophy which did constitute his real greatness.

इहा मात विस्तार के अति प्रमुख आस्थिति शिक्षावर हेतु पुरुषस्ती प्रसिद्ध गाणि रचयो। प्रामाण विस्तार के अति प्रमुख शिक्षावर हेतु पुरुषस्ती शिक्षक सर्ववर्ष, आस्थिति शिक्षावर हेतु पुरुषस्ती शिक्षक सर्ववर्ष, आस्थिति शिक्षावर हेतु पुरुषस्ती शिक्षक सर्ववर्ष, आस्थिति शिक्षावर हेतु पुरुषस्ती शिक्षक सर्ववर्ष.

These brethren are trifling matters, the matters detail of near morality of which the unconverted man, when praising the Tathagata, might speak.

These brethren, are those other things, profound, difficult to realise, hard to understand, tranquillising sweet, not to be grasped by mere logic, subtle, comprehensible only by the wise, which the Tathagata, having realised and seen face to face hath set forth; and it is concerning these that they who would rightly praise the Tathagata in accordance with the truth, should speak : (Brahmapala Sutta; Mahasala 3 Max Muller SBH p. 26)

In Khuddakanikaya 2nd book - Dhammapada, Naknakayagga occurs the cryptic expression.

महासागर नामं तिरस्करं समस्याः ॥

A true Brahmin goes scathless though he have killed father and mother and two kings of the warrior caste and a kingdom with all its subjects. (trans Max Muller, SBH)

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A true Brahmin goes sightless though he have killed father and mother and two holy kings and an eminent man (lit. veeyaghha—tigerrish man) as the fifth.\(^\text{5}\) (ibid).

Beal in his translation of the Dhammapada Introduction p.5, a stanza quoted from the third book of Lañkāvatāra as having been recited by Buddha, in explanation of a similar startling utterance which he made to Mahāmati:

"Lust, or carnal desire, this is the mother
Ignorance, this is the Father
The highest points of knowledge, this is Buddha,
All the Klesas, these are the Rahats,
The five skandhas, these are the Priests;
To commit the five unpardonable sins
Is to destroy these five
And yet not suffer the pains the pains of Hell"

(Max Muller, SBE Vol.X)

The two padas quoted above do not bear normal etymological or literary sense as in Gobyasamāja and Mahayana texts. Radhakrishnan elucidates the real sense conveyed in the slokas of Dhammapada as follows. “The verse is an exaggerated way of expressing the doctrine that a saint cannot commit any sin. Those who have attained enlightenment are lifted above the world of good and evil. They are beyond the reach of any temptation to evil.”

“The commentator is startled by the literal view and so offers an allegorical interpretation that mother is passion, father is pride, the two violent kings heetical systems and the kingdom is sensual pleasure and veeyaghha represented as the place infested by the tigers of obstruction to final beatitude.”

(Radhakrishnan, Dhammapada p. 152).

B.Ghosh

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OBITER DICTA ON ATISA AGAIN

Just as the material for this Bulletin (1986:2) is completed for printing, we receive a copy of Jagannath Buddha Jayanti Annual 1986 (Calcutta 1985). In this issue Lama Chimpa has written a length disputing the accepted fact that Dipankara Atisa did subscribe to the doctrine of Tantra, though he fought against Tantra abuses, and that he preached Kalachakra Tantra in Central Tibet. We have to notice this article because the Ven. Lama’s principal target is the undersigned, and his references are to articles in previous issues of this Bulletin (1985:1:2). While we refer the interested readers to the special number of Jagannath Buddha Jayanti Annual, we present below only two contentions of the Ven. Lama.

According to the Ven. Lama, Kalachakra Tantra was preached for the first time in Tibet not before the middle of 11th Century AD and that Atisa died in the beginning of the 11th Century. It is well known and well admitted that Atisa passed away in 1054 near Lhasa. For this expression “beginning of 11th Century” Ven. Lama takes advantage of a slip of Sarat Das.

According to the Ven. Lama, Tara is not a Tantrik deity but cannot be Isha (Yidam) of Buddhist (Mahayana) monk or saint. Practice of Tantra without Tara is like staging Hamlet without the prince of Denmark. We have no further comments.

There are many statements in Lama Chimpa’s article which are novel, original and unacceptable to Lamas and Tibetan scholars we have consulted.

The undersigned agrees without any reservations with one statement of Lama Chimpa, namely, “the Chinese people are not fools”. The undersigned has high opinion of calibre and diplomacy of the Han race. This agreement between us is full though the undersigned had no early schooling in China like the Ven. Lama.

-Nirmal C. Sinha