

# 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 pad 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 Macrocosm was prevalent when Gautama Buddha the Superman preached the Four Truths and the doctrine of Inter-dependent Causation but did not refer to any transcendental or miraculous agencies.

In Brahmajala Sutta (Digha-Nikaya, I.I.) 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.

इदं खो तं भिक्खवे अप्पमत्तकं ओरमत्तकं सीलमत्तकं येन पृथुज्जनो तथागतस्स वण्णं वदमानो वदेय्य । अत्थि भिक्खवे अज्जेव धम्मा गम्भीरा दुद्दसा दुरनुबोधा सान्ता अतक्कावचरा निपुणा पण्डितवेदनीया ये तथागतो सयं अभिज्जा सच्चिक्कत्वा पवेदेति, येहि तथागतस्स यथाबुच्चं वण्णं सम्मा वदमाना वदेय्यं ।

These brethren are trilling 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, tranquilising 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 fourth; and it is concerning these that they who would rightly praise the Tathagata in accordance with the truth, should speak : (Brahmajala Sutta/Mahasila 3 Max Muller SBB p. 26)

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

मातरं पितरं हन्त्वा राजानो द्वे च खत्तिये ।

रद्वं सानुचरं हन्त्वा अनीघो याति ब्राह्मणो ॥५॥

A true Brahmin goes scatheless though he have killed father and mother and two kings of the warrior caste and a kingdom with all its subjects.<sup>5</sup> (trans Max Muller, SBE)

मातरं पितरं हन्त्वा राजानो द्वे च खलित्ये ।  
वेय्यग्घपञ्चमं हन्त्वा अनीघो याति ब्राह्मणो ॥६॥

A true Brahmin goes scatheless though he have killed father and mother and two holy kings and an eminent man (lit. veyyaggha–tigerrish man) as the fifth.<sup>6</sup> (Ibid).

Beal in his translation of the Dhammapada Introduction p.5, a stanza quoted from the third book of Laṅkāvatāra 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 point 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 Guhyasamāja 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 heretical systems and the kingdom is sensual pleasure and veyyagghais represented as the place infested by the tigers of obstruction to final beatitude.” (Radhakrishnan, Dhammapada p. 152).

B.Ghosh

## OBITER DICTA ON ATISA AGAIN

Just as the material for this **Bulletin** (1986:2) is completed for printing, we receive a copy of **Jagajyoti Buddha Jayanti Annual 1986** (Calcutta 1986). In this issue Lama Chimpa has written at length disputing the accepted facts 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 **Jagajyoti**, 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 and cannot be Ishta (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