

NUCLEUS OF TANTRA IN PALI VINAYA—PITAKA

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TANTRA

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 laws 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 visualised 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-bhāva) 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 esoteric 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 Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, and the

Mantraśāstra 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 systematisation and stratification. The Tantra develops a basis of man's life determining his day-to day functions, the ways of life, his endeavour to attain a state of equality, and lastly, the seeing of the Oneness 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 esoterism, so that a practitioner seeking immanence may succeed within his span of life here.

DHAMMACHKKAPAVATTANA

Śākyaputra Gautama is said to have achieved a distinction of being the Awakened One (Buddha). The Pali Vinayaṭṭaka preserves the traditions in a Discourse with Upaka prior to his turning of the Wheel of Dharma (Dhammacakkapavattana). Gautama Buddha declares the immanence :

Victorious one all, Omniscient am I,
 Among all things defiled,
 Leaving all, through death of craving freed,
 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
 No one equals me.
 For I am perfected in the World,
 The teacher supreme am I,
 I alone am all-awakened
 Became cool am I. nirvana attained.²

The above sayings explicitly refer to the core of the Tantra practice tending to retroversion (parāvṛtti). A successful practioner 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 Sākyaputra.

The Buddhist literature, deals with the measures how to realise man's self-nature. The life-force of a being emerges out of bindu and dissovles in bindu that is, arrives at the condition from which it originates. That is retroversion (of matter). In the deep-mind similar retroversion functions. Retroversion is distinct from extroversion (pravṛtti), and introversion (nivṛtti). The living beings, inclusive of men, according to Gautama Buddha, are the conglomeration of mind and matter (nāma-rūpa) with a strong attachment (upādāna) under the latent impressions (saṃskāra) on account of ignorance (avidyā). 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 fetters of craving.

Gautama Buddha knowing 'himself' becomes 'Victorious' (Jina). He claims : 'Victorious one all, Omniscient 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 (sva-bhāva) which is essencelessness (niḥsva-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 ! why should I make it known ?
By folk with lust and hate consumed,
This dhamma is not understood,
Leading on against the stream,
Subtle, deep, difficult to see, delicate,
Unseen it will be by passions' slave
Cloaked in the musk of ignorance. ³

The teachings of Buddha are also 'leading on against the stream' but these are aids to develop vision of eyes (cakkhukarāṇi) and awareness of mind

(Nānakarajī). His followers thereby possess an appropriate contemplation to concentrate on the source or root of beings in the worlds (yonisumanasikāra) for right sight (sammādiṭṭhi) and right concentration (sammāsamādhi). The self nature (sva-bhāva) of beings is correctly visualised by 'going on against the stream'. In other words, practices are done in the method of retroversion (parāvṛtti) which is followed in the Tantra. The Tantra seeks how to extinguish five passions to attain Buddhahood when the attainer exclaims :

"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 Dhammacakka in Kashi city for the welfare of beings in the worlds.

NATURE OF BUDDHA'S DHAMMA

The Pali Vinayapitāka refers to the nature of Buddha's Dhamma prior to his deliberation in presence of the group of the Five Elders (Pañcavaggiyabhikkhu). 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, rejoining in sensual pleasure. So that for a creation delighted in sensual pleasure, delighted by sensual pleasure, rejoining 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.⁴

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

UTTARIMANUSSADHAMMA

At the first sight of Gautama Śākyaputra, while he was approaching to the group of the Five at Isipatana near Kashi, 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 hermit hood. 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 Pali Vanayapiṭaka refers to similar stories regarding Buddha Gautama in many instances. For example, the Rājāyatana story, the Mucalinda 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 Lokapala deities appeared to accept the offerings with requisite bowls for Tathāgata.⁵

BRAHMACARIYA

Gautama Buddha is said to have laid highest emphasis on Brahmachariyā i.e. the leading of moral life as the way to end suffering. The first ordination made by Buddha declares the praise of Brahmachariya.⁶ Any failure in observance of Brahmachariya amounts to expulsion from monkhood (pārājika offence) from the Saṅgha. Among the moral precepts to be observed by the yellow-robed, Brahmachariya is the foremost.

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

The Tantra is equally strict in the pledge of Brahmachariya and observance of moral precepts for discipline of a practitioner. Any amount of departure from Brahmachariya leads to utter ruin. The Guhyasamāja (7.5) reads: Bodhi is to be attained when body, speech and mind remain in their respective

self-state; failing that, untimely death awaits and thereafter fall into the dungeon of hell.

THE CRYPTIC EXPRESSIONS (SANDHĀYABHĀṢĀ)

The Tantra justifies the nature of Buddha's dhamma when a number of cryptic forms of expression have been occasionally used. For instance, the Guhyasamāja (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 (duranubodha) as mentioned in the Vinayaṭṭaka. In elucidation of the propriety of such cryptic form of expressions (Sandhāyabhāṣā) Candrakīrti states :

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

Regarding such state of variedness in grasping ability of men the Pali Vinayaṭṭaka refers to the visualising of the Buddha through mental state of beings by Buddha eyes. An excellent simile of lotuses in a big lake clarifies the actual state of affairs.

NO PRAJÑOPĀYA (VAJRĀBJA) YOGA IN PALI

The Pali Vinayaṭṭaka does not refer to Prajñā (Wisdom) nor Karuṇā (compassion) as principles; nor their unification leading to nonduality (yugaṇaddha) or Oneness (samarasa) as the Tantra holds.¹⁰ Despite that, the Pali Vinayaṭṭaka lays emphasis on the higher state of meditation when the perceptual world unifies with the immanent mind under state of deep concentration of formlessness (arūppasamāpatti). That occurs in the sphere of Nirvāna where no attachment of skandha remains: The Pali Vinayaṭṭaka

refers to that state through an udānagatha uttered by Buddha immediately after the attainment of Nirvāna:

Truely when things grow plain to the ordent meditating Brahman
Routing the host of Mara does he stand
Like as the sun white lighting up the sky.¹¹

Likewise, the Tantra aims at the co-ordination of the mundane (idam) and the supra-mundane (tat).

RESUME

To sum up, it has been evident from the above that Gautama Buddha's experiences as traditionally depicted in the Pali Vinayapitaka bear resemblance with experiences of an accomplished Tantra practitioner (ratnapudgala). Entrance of the Tantra in the Buddhist thought is generally said to be a later addition or a phase of the later Buddhism since 3-4 Century A.D. At the earliest such entry of external matters may date back to the lifetime of Nagarjuna 1st Century A.D.

The Tantra is generally regarded as secret esoterism relating to male and female principles with symbolism. Mantra, mudrā, cakra, maṇḍala, homavidhi etc. are more or less rituals as prescribed in the Tantra. These have been mostly applied for abhicāra karma including śāntika and paustika. In fact, they are the ways or means how to empower a practitioner for being eligible to enter in the realm of abhisambodhi full awakening of the self-nature of the universe inclusive of this world by the extension of effulgence (raśmi).

Since Gautama is said to have achived supramundane attributes like bala, vaśitā, vaiśaradya, abhijñā and bodhyaṅga as his experiences narrated in details in the vinayapitaka. These evidences suggest that the nucleus of the Tantra prevails in the Pali Vinayapitaka, as the earliest source come down to us.

NOTES

तन्वते विस्तार्यते ज्ञानमनेनेति तन्त्रमु/तन् उणादि स्त्रन् ३ तन्त्रम् । कासिकागम reads तनोति विपुलानर्थान् तन्त्रमन्त्रसमन्वितम् । द्राणञ्च कुरुते यस्मात्तन्त्रमित्यभिधीयते । In the शतपथब्राह्मण (12.7) tantra means 'core', 'essence'. Some disciplines of human knowledge are thereby called as tantra, such as, āyurvedatantra (medical science for availing long life), Sankhyā tantra (portions of astronomy and mathematics).

The importance of सावीत्रिमन्त्र mantra has been appreciated in the धिनयपिटक—महावग्ग—केणियजटिलवत्थ : (6.23.42) अग्निहोतृमुखा यञ्जा सावीती छन्दसो मुखम् । राजा मुख मनुस्सान नदीन सागरां मुखम् । Occasional references of mantra may be observed in Pali literature, मिलिन्दपञ्चो, जातकत्थकथा पेतवत्थु अट्टकथा 279, PTS; धम्मपद अट्टकथा II.p. 5f. The definition of tantra in गुह्यसमाजतन्त्र is प्रवन्धं तन्त्रमाख्यातं. It further elucidates : प्रकृतिश्चाकृतेर्हेतुरसहायफलं तथा । आधारस्तदुपायश्च त्रिभिस्तन्त्रार्थसंग्रहः ॥ पञ्चकं त्रिकुलं चैव स्वभावैकशतं कुलम् । सहोक्तिर्बोधिवज्रस्य सोत्तरं तन्त्रमिष्यते ॥ (XVIII, 33-35)

Tibetan rgyud corresponds to the Tantra which may be divided into four classes-rgyud sde bzhi; namely (1) Bya ba'i rgyud (Kriyā tantra), (ii) spyod pa'i rgyud (caryā tantra), Rnal 'byor ba'i rgyud (yoga tantra) and Rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud (anuttarayoga tantra). In the Btsan 'gyur collection 'brgyud suggests also the tantra manuals and is classified in five successions 'brgyud pa rnam pa lna.

2. Vinayapitaka 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. Vinayapitaka, p. 2ff (P.T.S)
6. एत्थ भिक्खवे'ति भगवा अवोच स्वखातो धम्मो चरथ ब्रह्मचरियम् सम्मा दुक्खस्स अन्तकिरियाय । Ibid p. 18
7. कायवार्कचित्तसीस्थित्यं प्राप्य बोधिं समश्नुते । अन्यथा कालमरण पच्यत नारके ध्रुवम् ॥ गुह्यसमाजतन्त्र : (ed. B. Bhattacharya GOS. 1931 VII. 5)

8. मातृभगिनीपुत्रीन्श्च रमयेद्यस्तु साधकः ।
 स सिद्धिं विपुलां गच्छेत् महायानाद्यधर्मताम् ॥ गुह्यसमाजतन्त्र ॥
 व्रज्याहि माता इत्युक्ता अविद्या च पिता तथा ।
 विषयावबोधोद्घाटिज्ञानं बुद्ध इत्युपविश्यते ।
 अर्हन्तो ह्यनुशयाः पञ्च संघाः स्कन्धकदम्बकः ॥
 निरन्तरान्तरच्छेदात्कर्मस्थानन्तरं भवेत् ॥ Lankavatara suttra (3.3-4)

The Pali Vinayapitaka (Mahākhanda) categorically debars a yellow-robed one for such heinous offences like मत्तुघातुक, पितुघातुक, अर्हन्तुघातुक, भिक्षुनिदुषक (I.55.112, II.20.30), सङ्घभेदक and लोहितुप्यादक The Guhyasamaja uses the above words in सन्ध्याभाषा ।

9. सर्वकामोपभोगैश्च सेव्यमानैर्येषेच्छतः ।
 अनेन खलु योगेन लघु बुद्धत्वमाप्नुयात् ॥ गुह्यसमाजतन्त्र (VII,1)
10. प्रज्ञोपायसमापत्तिर्योग इत्यभिधीयते ।
 योनिस्वभावतः प्रज्ञा उपायो भावलक्षणम् ॥३२॥
 वज्रपद्मसमायोगाज्ज्वाल्य सन्ताप्य योगिना ।
 उद्यते स्फटिकाकारं ज्ञानसूर्यमिवापरम् ॥१३०॥
 प्रकर्षकृतविज्ञानं यत्तत् प्रज्ञेति कल्पते ॥४३॥
 मोहो द्वेषस्तथा रागः सदा वज्रे रतिः स्थिता ।
 उपायस्तेन बुद्धानां वज्रयानमिति स्मृतम् ॥५१॥ गुह्यसमाजतन्त्र (XVIII,)
11. यदा हवे पातुभवन्ति धम्मा आतापिनो भ्रायतो ब्रह्मणस्स ।
 विधूपयं तिट्ठति मारसेनं सुरियो व ओभासमन्तलिक्खं ॥ Vinayapitaka Mahavagga I.1.4.
 (PTS)