CONCEPT OF PRAJNA AND UPAYA

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If we just enter into a Mahayana Monastery in any Himalayan region, we may notice that monks, besides other ritualistic objects keep Vajra (Tib. Dorje) and Ghanta (Thilbu) on chokje (small longish table). During the ritual performance a Dorje is held in the right hand and a bell in the left hand with a particular gesture. These gestures symbolically reproduce the conjugal play of wisdom and method as female and the male principles respectively and are represented by the two ritual objects viz; Ghanta and Vajra. While the Ghanta (Tib. Thilbu) stands for wisdom, the Vajra (Tib. Dorje) represents the method.

In the Tibetan Hagiographical literature we come across a name of Ter-ston (Revealer of hidden Treasures) Dorje Lingpa. He is said to have visited Denzong several times in the remote historical time. The name of Darjeeling is most probably derived after the name of mystic saint, which means "The Place of Thunderbolt".

The two objects as mentioned above also figure in sacred art, pictorial or sculptural. In the artistic representation they are seen either separately as also grasped in the hands of various gods and goddesses. The supreme manifestation of Buddha Vajrapani or Vajradhara is Chanadorje and Dorjechang respectively in Tibetan.

According to the traditional symbolism wisdom the bell as female principle should be brought in divine play being harmoniously blended with that of the male (Dorje) if ever the spirituality is to bear its proper fruit of Enlightenment. Usually this idea is expressed in the following analogy that wisdom is the eye and method the leg and that if one of these fails the man will be helpless. There is a happy parable current in Tibetan painting depicting this morale which runs as follows: Two men set out to the city of Nirvana, but neither could make much headway because one was blind while the other was lame. Eventually they decided to join forces so the lame man climbed on the blind man's back and so they set out together with the man who had eyes pointing out the way while the man with sound legs advanced along it and thus they arrived safely in

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the city. Hereunder we quote the parable from a Tibetan text, *mdo-dus* (*Sutrasamuccaya*):

"dmu-long-mig-bu-med-pa-bye-ba-krag-khri-g-rnams/
lam-yang-mi-shes-grong-khyer-'jug-par-ga-la-nus/
Shes-rab-med-na-mig-med-pha-rol-phyin-lnag-yang/

Knowledge, in real sense, the one invariably given to it by the Tibetan Lamas, is always to be regarded as "Concrete" that is to say it implies equating of knowledge with the being, intellect with existence, theory or vision with the realization. Wisdom to remain as such therefore, demands the latent presence of method and vice versa.

The bell, which always bears the same devices and is cast from a special metal yielding a clear and melodious sound (note) is regarded as we have said earlier as the female principle. The handle is crowned with head of a goddess *Prajñā-Parāmitā* (Tib. Yum-chen, the great mother) or Transcendental Wisdom, here with Tara (Tib. Sdrol-ma)-the mother of the *Bodhisattvaas* or being dedicated to Enlightenment. As for the Dorje, its symbolism is multiple; firstly, it is an axial symbol implying stability and is signifying also the thread of Enlightenment passing through the centre of every being or world and especially of man, who is a central or axial being by definition; hence is the frequent reference in the injunctions that this rare opportunity should not be wasted but turned to profit while the going is good.

In *Yogatantramālā*- the symbolic definition of vajra is as follows: -

dṛḍham śāram asausingyam acchedya-abhedya laksanam/
adāhi avināṣī-ca śuṇyatā vajramucyate/

Thus Sunyata is termed as vajra because it is firm and sound, unchangeable, unpierceable, impermeable, incombustible and indestructible.

The axis of the Dorje is flanked by four (sometimes further sub-divided into eight) phalangs, with constriction where the hand lays hold of the Dorje in the middle. The phalangs correspond to the four directions of space which between them "encompass" the
universe. A precisely similar symbolism attached to the three-dimensional cross of the Dorje is but a variant.

Wisdom cannot be pursued in isolation. According to Mahayana followers this is just the error of those who seek Enlightenment for themselves, ignoring the interest of other sentient beings and try to escape from the world without compensation and integration of the world. In contrast to this the Bodhisattva, who, is discarding his own exit into Nirvana until last of the sentient being is released.

Abstracting wisdom is bad, because it inevitably leads to a confusing of wisdom itself with what are merely its reflections in the discursive mind, mental formulations, or conceptualism in general. All Buddhist schools agree that here lies the danger.

Secondly, method when divorced from wisdom has the effect of chaining the man fatally to the Samsāra, the world of birth and death, without hope of escape.

We now briefly relate Tibetan Buddhist School of thought. First we take up the Gelugpa spiritual method i.e., Gelugpa or righteous Sect or reformed school, or the established Church of Tibet. According to this school, the spiritual concept can be summed up in three words: study, meditation and contemplation. The Gelugpa text (the graded way), the standard treatise of the order composed by its founder Tsongkhapa, the object to be striven for, is the simultaneous acquisition of vipaśyanā (Lhagmthong) or Transcendental Vision and Samāthā (zhi-gnas) abiding tranquility, which respectively correspond to the active and passive poles of contemplation. In the teaching of the School, the compassion is actually identified with the method itself. This coupled with a pushing of impermanence to the point of recognizing the voidness or lack of self-nature of all things, brings the spiritual traveller to that sublime state where vision transcends all possible expression and when every agitation is stilled in the peace that passes understanding. The Nyingmapa, Kargyupa and Sakyapa have almost the same views about Prajñā (shes-rab) and Upāya (Thabs). The indigenous literature of all Tibetan Buddhist sects, abounds in new interpretation of twin concepts of sutra, or the Mahayana texts rendered in Tibetan from Sanskrit, and Tantric litera-
ture. Study and research of these literature will shed further light on the of above concept.

Hereunder we discuss some concept from Buddhist Sanskrit texts. It is well-known to the scholars in the field of Buddhistic studies that there is a book extant in Sanskrit Prajnopāya- viniscaya-siddhih of Ananga-Vajra (G.O.S.Vol XLIV ch.1 verse 1) which expounds whole theme from various angles.

To attain perfect bliss either for self or for the three worlds, the wise must first do away with the notion of existence while one should not go either to the opposite extreme of adopting a nihilistic view (non-existence). In the above text the author says 'It is better to have the imagination of existence (bhava-kalpana) then that of non-existence (abhava-kalpana) for the burning lamp can be extinguished; but if it be not burning at all can it be extinguished? nirvati fvalito dipo nirvṛtah kam gatim brajjet. (S.B. DasGupta, An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism p.36 Calcutta 1958).

He, who abandons the idea of both the real and unreal, attains a state which is neither Samsāra nor nirvāna, and this is Pure Knowledge (Prajñā). In realising the truth one should meditate neither on the void (śunya) nor on the non-void (aśunya), when the conception of egohood (ahamityesa sankalpah) does not determine itself in the negative manner as non-void or in the positive manner as void it becomes bereft of all basis of thought, the wise therefore, without any attachment and desire, absolutely sinless, unruffled in mind and freed from the constrictive imagination of a beginning as an end, pursue the path of pure knowledge (Prajñā).

The jñānasiddhi also asserts that the ultimate truth is neither positive nor negative, for in the positive there is the possibility of all the defects (sarva-dosa-prasaṅga) and in negative there is no way left for the relief of all sorrow (G.O.S.Ch.1 verse 19-20).

Pure knowledge is neither with any form (sakara) nor is it formless (nirakara). If the knowledge had any form, it would have been sanskṛta (conditional and defiled) as all existence is. Had knowledge, on the other hand, been absolutely formless, there would have been no possibility of becoming omniscient, and without omniscience there would be no possibility of universal compassion (Jñānasiddhi ch.vi). A distinction is drawn here between ordinary
knowledge (Jñāna) and the knowledge of the highest truth. The
distinction is ultimately the same as that between Prajñā alone and
Bodhicitta, the combination of both Prajñā and Karuṇā. The Prajñā
however is nirvikalpa i.e. free from all the false constructions; while
the tattva-Jñāna with which there is the existence of universal com-
passion (Karuṇā) should not be taken as a complete cessation (niscit-
tāta) of consciousness (S. B. Das Gupta: An Introduction to Tantric
Buddhism, p.39).

In the Pañcakrama of Nagarjuna-pada we find four gradations
in the Śūnyatā doctrine: The first is Śūnya, the second ati-Śūnya, the
third Mahā-Śūnya, and the fourth or the final is the sarva-Śūnya and
these are all different according to their cause and effect. The first
stage Śūnya has been explained as light (āloka) Prajñotpannah-āloka
Prādurbhūtah. It is relative (Paratantra) by nature, aloka Śūnyam prajñā
cā cittam cā paratantrakam. In this stage mind has got as many as
thirtythree impure state (dosa) associated with it, such as sorrow, fear,
hunger, thirst, feeling etc. The second stage viz., ati-Śūnya is said to
be the manifestation of light (āloka-bhāsa), it shines like moon-rays
and it proceeds from the former (aloaka-jnana), and while Śūnya is
said to be Prajñā, ati-Śūnya is said to be Upāya or the means. It is
said to be of the nature of constructive imagination (Parikalpita) and
it belongs to the mind, as its (mind's) state (caistasika). It is also said
to be the right (dakṣina), the solar circle (sūrya-mandala) and the
thunderbolt (vajra). The third stage viz. Mahāśūnya proceed from
union of Prajñā and Upaya aloka and ālokaabhāsa or Śūnya and ati-
Śūnya, and it is called the intuition of light (ālokopalabdhi) and it is of
the absolute nature (pari nispanna), yet is called ignorance (avidyā).
It has also been said to be the svādhisthāna-citta. The fourth stage,
viz. sarva-Śūnya (all void or perfect void) is free from all three-fold
impurities and is self-illuminant. It is called perfect void because it
transcends the principles of defilement. It is the purified knowledge
- the ultimate - it is the supreme omniscience (Ibid p.41).

We ha seen above how the Śūnyata doctrine of the
Mahayanic philosophers was adopted by the esoteric Buddhists, but
the emphasis of Mahayana is not only on Śūnyata; as a religion it is
characterised by its stress on universal compassion adopted by these
Tantric Buddhists in toto.
According to Dr. S.B. Das Gupta the concept of Kālacakra is not a distinct school of Tantric Buddhism, but a particular name for the vajrayana school. It will be clear also from the text Sekoddesa-tika which is a commentary on the Sekoddesa section of the Kālacakra-tantra. There it is said that ultimate immutable and unchangeable one, remaining in the skylike dharma-dhātu (the element underlying all the dharmas) is called Kāla; it itself is the immutable knowledge; Cakra implies the unity of the three kinds of existence - the manifestation of Kāla. It (the Cakra) is the body of Lord - point like, containing the potency of existence of the universe, Kālacakra, therefore, implies exactly the same as the unity of Prajñā and Upāya.

Kāla means, the state of absorption in the original cause potency, this is the state of śunyatā; it is the pure consciousness of the principle of subjectivity, cakra on the other hand means the principle of knowledgeability or the cycle of world process which is also the principle of Upāya-Kālacakra which therefore means absolutely unified state of Prajñā and Upāya (Ibid pp. 46 and 49).

The Vajra -sattva, as the Lord supreme of the Tantric Buddhists, representing monolithic conception of the Godhead, has variently been described in the Buddhist Tantras with all sorts of positive and negative attributes. He is Bhagavan as he possesses bhaga which means that which breaks or removes, śunyatā or Prajñā removes all afflictions and drives away māra and so the śunya is called the bhaga. He is saluted as the śunyatā-essence, transcending all imagination, omniscient of Pure Wisdom.

Vajra-sattva is not merely of the nature of śunyatā, it is a non-dual of sunyata and karunā; to imply that the void-consciousness is also of the nature of identity of both śunyatā and karunā. In the Hevajra-tantra, upāya, and Prajñā have been described under the imagery of yogin and the Mudrā (the great woman to be adopted in yoga-sadhana) and the Bodhicitta is the perfect union of yogin and mudra who stand for karunā and śunyatā respectively.

Kṛpopāya bhaved yogi mudrā hetuviyogatah/
śunyatā karunābhinnain bodhicittamiti smṛtam//
Patala X, Ms p.30(a) quoted by S.B. Das Gupta (Ibid. p.93)
In all classes of Buddhist Tantras most important thing is the stress on the union of Prajñā and Upāya in philosophical sense or the esoteric yogic sense.

The authority of the renowned Buddhist Acarya like Aryavimalakirti and other have often been quoted, who are said to have stressed the truth that Upāya is bondage when unassociated with Prajñā, and even Prajñā is also a bondage when unassociated with Upāya; both of them again become liberation when the one is associated with the other. Their co-mingling through the instructions of the competent teacher, like the inseparable co-existence of the lamp and the light, will conduce to success in realising the real nature of the self and the dharma. Whatever practices there are, they should therefore be preceeded by a knowledge or rather the realisation of the true purport of the union of Prajñā and Upāya. The cardinal principle of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha says the Dakini-vajra panjara, points to the state of citta shining in the unity of śunyaśr and karuṇā.

śunyaśr-karuṇābhinnaḥ yatra cittam prabhāyate/
so hi buddhasya dharmasya saṅghyāpi ca deśānā///

(quoted in the Advaya-vajra-samgraha p.96)

Upāya has again very nicely compared to a boat in the Prajnopāya-viniscaya-siddhiḥ. There it is said that compassion is called raga (affection) as it affects or causes happiness to all beings who are distressed with infinite sufferings. The compassion is like a boat which brings all beings to the favourable shore, and it is for this reason that it is called the Upaya. The co-mingling of the prajñā and upāya like the mixture of water and milk in a state of non-duality is called Prajnopāya (p.93)

In the chapter of meditation on the ultimate truth (tattvabhāvanā) of the Prajnopāya-viniscaya-siddhiḥ it has been said that the truth is both prajñā and upāya combined together; for it is prajña as it is the absence of all phenomenalization (nispapāṇca-svarupatvāt), and it is compassion because like the wish-granting gem it does everything for the good of the beings, supportless is prajñā; and supportless (Nirālamba) is the great compassion; they should be united like the sky with the sky. In that stage there is no thinker - no thought - nothing to be thought of, there, all seeing of sights,
hearing of the sounds - muttering, laughing - enjoyment- doing of all deeds - all become yoga for a man. (S.B.DasGupta: *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* p.94).

It is said in citta-viśuddhi-prakarana that as by rubbing of two logs of wood fire is produced which is pure in the beginning in the middle as well as in the end, and which shows everything by its illumination, so also by the union of Prajñā and Upāya the pure and luminous wisdom of the yogin is produced. The absolutely pure dharma-dhātu, that is attained by properly churning of the milk of prajña and upāya, is the destroyer of both pleasure and pain.

In the foregoing discussion we have hinted that the conception of Prajñā and Upāya acquired a cosmological and ontological significance in course of time. In the conclusion we do not want to elaborate these topic in detail and only give a brief references to them.

*Prajña* as the passive principle is the dharma-kāya the thatness (tathatā) with perfect purity and perfect knowledge in her; while the whole world i.e. Sambhogakāya and the nirmanakāya is a display of the Upāya.

According to esoteric doctrine, varahi who represent Prajña is spoken of as of the nature of knowledge, whereas God Heruka representing Upāya is spoken of as the knowledge. The concept of Prajñā and Upāya have important ontological and cosmological bearing on the four philosophical systems of the Nepalese Buddhism. They are (i) Svābhāvika, (ii) Aisvarika, (iii) Karmika; (iv) Yatnīka. The Svābhāvika school holds that there is immaterial ultimate truth in the form of the soul substance; matter is the primordial substance from which the world proceeds. The matter has two modes which are called Pravrtti and nivrtti and so are the powers of matter. Thus when these powers pass from the state of existence of the powers in the state of nivrtti as rest as the abstractions from all phenomena, when the powers pass from the state of rest into their causal and transitory state of activity, the phenomenal world comes into existence, and it again ceases to exist when the powers repass from pravrtti to nivrtti. This nivrtti is the prajñā and pravrtti is said to be the Upāya.

In the aisvarika school these Prajñā and Upāya are defined as adi-prajñā and adi-Buddha and visible world is said to be created
from the union of the two. According to the Prajnika (a sub-division
of the Svābhāvika school) Buddha as the principle of active power,
first proceeds from nivṛtti or adi-Prajñā and then associates with her
and from their union proceeds the actual visible world. The principle
is symbolised as Prajñā being first the mother and then the wife of
the Buddha. The triad of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha has often
been explained as prajñā (dharma), upāya (Buddha) and the world
(sangha). Produced by their union, Buddha symbolises the generative
power, Dharma, the productive power and their union produces
Sangha.

Lord Vairocana-the Lord Supreme- in Dharma-cakra Mudrā,
which the Tibetans call thabs-dang-sherab (Upāya and Prajñā) as the
union of wisdom with matter.

With this conception of Prajna and Upāya as nivṛtti and
pravṛtti or as Adi-Prajñā and Adi-Buddha we may compare the concept
of Siva and Sakti and the aham or the 'I-ness' produced by their union
(siva- sakti-mithunapinda). According to Hindu Tantras the ultimate
truth in the union of Siva and Sakti, Siva represents Pure Conscious-
ness which is inactive-static aspect of the Ultimate Reality; while Sakti
represents the world force - the kinetic energy of the Ultimate Truth.
Siva is nivṛtti and Sakti is pravṛtti and in the ultimate state they
remain in a Union of Oneness.

In Buddhist tantra Prajñā and Upāya are also called Lalana
and Rasana which are the names for the two nerves Ida and Pingala
well-known in the Hindu Tantric nerve-system.

The above discussion on the nature of Bodhicitta will bring
it home to us that the central point of all Sadhanas of Tantric
Buddhism was the principle of union.