

Notes & Topics

THE ANCIENT PATH OF THE BUDDHAS

The article on Upanishadic terms in Buddhism (pp 5-17) traverses a controversial ground involving academicians as much as believers. The controversy boils down to Buddha's notion of Atman and we invite scholars to throw light from Tibetan and Mongol literary sources.

It is appropriate to add here, for the general reader, that as Brahmanical terms in Buddhism raise a presumption in favour of borrowing, Buddhist terms like Buddha or Niratma in Brahmanism have the same bearing. If the Buddha had appropriated the thunder (Vajra) from Upanishads, Nagarjuna returned it in a refined form; Gaudapada, Govinda and Sankara retrieved it. In Tibetan tradition Sankara is a beneficiary and a renegade of the Dharma. Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya*, drawn upon by the Jonangpa school of Tibet, drew considerably from Buddhism.

Sankara is even known to have offered this salutation to the Buddha.

धराबद्धपद्मासनस्थांघ्नियष्टिः ।
नियम्यानित्रं न्यस्तनासाग्रदृष्टिः ।
य आस्ते कलौ योगिनां चक्रवर्ती ।
स बुद्धः प्रबुद्धोऽस्तु मच्चित्तवर्ती ॥

Radhakrishnan takes the word Buddha here for the historical Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha. Those who deny the historic allegation that Sankara was "a Buddhist in disguise" would read this as for any or all the Enlightened before Sankara. Radhakrishnan's particularization does not diminish the glory of Sankara but emphasizes the precise historic legacy which, along with others, contributed to the greatness of Sankara's philosophy.

A millennium and a half before Sankara, Gautama Siddhartha said: I have discovered an ancient track. In olden times the Enlightened Ones trod this path. (*Samyutta Nikaya* 12.65).

The encounters between the two creeds resulted in exchanges at different levels from philosophy to rituals. While the worshippers of Siva adapted much from the Buddhist Tantra as practised in the north west (Swat-Gilgit) or in the north east (Lohit-Branmaputra), Guru Padmasambhava of Uddiyana had no less authority among the Hindu devotees than Risi Vasishtha of Kamarupa. The worshippers of Vishnu adored Gautama Siddhartha as an Avatara.

निन्दसि यज्ञविधेरहह श्रुतिजातम्
सदयहृदय, दर्शितपशुघातम्
केशवधृत बुद्धशरीर जय जगदीश हरे ॥

“O you of merciful heart denounced the Veda where the slaughter of cattle is taught: O Kesava, you in the form of Buddha, victory to you, Hari, lord of the world”. (Eng. trans. Radhakrishnan)

The Buddha's revolt was primarily against the animal sacrifices and the social injustice sanctified under the label of Vedic infallibility. The Buddha preached against Ego either in life or thought; he refined and redefined the Vedic Ego. With the humility of a Bodhisattva, Gautama Siddhartha affirmed that he had found a lost path.

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SEVEN SOVEREIGN JEWELS

RGYAL-SRID RIN-CHEN SNA-BDUN on pages 19–27 is a fresh interpretation of the symbolism of a sovereign's Seven Precious Jewels from the erudite pen of Lama Anagarika Govinda and will no doubt engage the experts in several fields of religion and anthropology in pursuing the matter further.

As a student of history, I draw the notice of the general reader to a similar institution in Vedic polity. The royal consecration called Rajasuya consisted of a number of rituals. While most of these rituals were purely or dominantly of the nature of sacrifice in ordinary sense, one unique ritual related directly to kingship, namely, Ratna-havimshi (Jewel-offerings). While in other rituals the sacrificer was usually called Yajamana or Suyamana, in the Jewel-offerings he was called Rajan.

The rite of Jewel-offerings begins in the preparatory stage for the Rajasuya. The king makes offerings to certain appropriate deities on successive days at the houses of certain specific persons. These persons count upto 14. The list in *Taittiriya Samhita* enumerates 11 persons: Priest (Brahman), Noble (Rajanya), Chief Queen (Mahishi), Neglected Consort (Parivrikti), Army Chief (Senani), Minstrel (Suta), Village Headman (Gramani), Carver (Kshattri), Charioteer (Sangrahitri), Collector (Bhagadugha) and Master of Dice (Akshavapa). Each person symbolizes or represents a deity; Brahmana represents Brihaspati, Rajanya Indra, Mahishi Aditi and so on and so forth.

It may be noticed that the different persons called Ratnin represent, though not in a perfect system, the different vital limbs of community or state, significantly called Limbs of the Ruling Power. The Priest has the first place in all lists, except that in *Satapatha Brahmana* the precedence is for the Army Chief; the Chief Queen has a top place (third) in all lists. The Ratnin is indeed the King's Jewel; it is for him (or her) that the King is consecrated and by worshipping the relevant deity the king earns the allegiance of the custodian of the deity. The loyalty of the VIP, in modern terminology, is sworn through the ritual; even the Neglected Consort or the Master of the Dice cannot be omitted, and in the context of a semi-tribal semi-territorial society, as the Vedic one, every potential source of power like Charioteer or Village Headman is recognized and propitiated. A comprehensive description of the ritual will be found in Heesterman: *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague 1957).

There are conflicting interpretations of the Jewel-offerings ritual. Jayaswal in *Hindu Polity* (Calcutta 1924/Bangalore 1944) holds that the ritual partakes the character of election and thus the consecration amounts to election of the king. A correct assessment, in my submission, is that of Ghoshal in *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (Calcutta 1957/1965). "The true significance of the ceremony" in Ghoshal's words "consisted in winning for the king the allegiance of these important persons". Coomaraswamy, in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (New Haven 1942), reads this ritual as another symbol of the marital bond between the Purohita (i.e. Church) and the Rajan (i.e. State). I do not accept Coomaraswamy's warning that the Vedic King's Jewels are not to be confused with the Seven Jewels of a Chakravartin (p.17). Coomaraswamy admits that "the categories partly coincide".

Like many Vedic categories, both in doctrinal and ritualistic matters, Ratna itself was transmitted into Buddhism. Most of these categories undoubtedly underwent changes in content in Buddhism. It is not unlikely that the Seven Jewels of Sovereignty in Buddhism were a development from the King's Jewels as in Vedic polity. The Seven Jewels symbolize the vital limbs of state: in the Ven. Lama's language the Seven Jewels are the seven nerve centres of the body. Historical data about consecration ceremony of a Buddhist king in India are altogether lacking. Evidence from Northern Buddhist countries would testify to the Indian origins of such ceremony; these origins are to be traced in the Vedic (and Brahmanical) literature.

A recent celebration of the Buddhist Jewel-offerings was witnessed in Sikkim on 4 April 1965 at the GSER-HKHRI-MNGAH-GSOL of

Miwang Palden Thondup Namgyal as the 12th Chogyal of Sikkim. For a student of Indian history, this recalled Indian (Vedic and Buddhist) ritualism. The Vajracharya (Rdo-rje slop-dpon of Padma-yang-tse: the royal chaplain and presiding priest) offered to the Chogyal, in iconic symbols, the Seven Jewels: Chakra (Discus), Chintamani (Wish fulfilling Gem), Mahishi (Consort), Mantri (Minister), Hasti (Elephant), Asva (Horse), and Senani (Army Chief).

The *Brihad-devata*, a later Vedic compendium of deities and rituals, lists the Jewels thus: Discus, Chariot, Gem, Consort, Earth, Horse and Elephant.

चक्रं रथो मणिर्भार्या भूमिश्चो गजस्तथा ।
पतानि सप्त रत्नानि सर्वेषां चक्रवर्तिनाम् ॥

Vishnu Purana, a Brahmanical composition of a few centuries after Nagarjuna but anterior to the migration of Mahayana into Trans-Himalayas, lists 14 Jewels in two sets, Inanimate and Animate. These are (i) Discus, Chariot, Gem, Sword, Armour, Flag and Treasury; and (ii) Consort, Priest, Army Chief, Charioteer, Soldier, Horse and Calf Elephant.

चक्रं रथो मणिः खड्गश्चर्म रत्नञ्च पञ्चमम् ।
केतुनिधिश्च सप्तवमप्राणानि प्रचक्ष्यते ॥
भार्या पुरोहितश्चैव सेनाना रथकृच्च यः ।
पत्न्यश्चौ कलभश्चेत प्राणिनः सप्त कीर्त्तिताः ।
चतुर्दशैतानि रत्नानि सर्वेषां चक्रवर्तिनामिति ॥

There were several eminent scholars like Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (India) and Professor P.H. Pott (Holland) who witnessed the Coronation in Sikkim and such scholars may enrich the pages of this *Bulletin* with their views. Meanwhile I expect a Sikkimese scholar to carry this discussion into the next number.

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