A DHARANI-MANTRA IN THE
VINAYA-VASTU

—SUNITI K. PATHAK

According to the Tibetan tradition the Tantra had been taught by Śākyaputra Gautama the Buddha among the veteran disciples at Śrīsaila-parvata. The tradition disowns the views prevalent among some academicians who hold that the Tantra in the Buddhism is the 'Later phase of Buddhism' developed by the Christian era.

However, the Buddhist traditions preserved in the Indian languages (Pali and Prakritised-Sanskrit of the Buddhist texts) refer to some stray mentions about the Tantra-aspects in the scriptures. For instance, the Mahāvagga of the Pali Vinaya-piṭaka praises the 'Śāvitrī-mantra' as superior chandas to others. The fourfold practices for attaining supernatural power (iddhipāda/ṛddhipāda) in the course of thirty-seven acquisitions leading to the attainment of 'Bodhi' (bodhipakkhiyā-dhammā/bodhipakṣiya-dharmāḥ) may also be enumerated here. Furthermore, thirteen rigorous ascetic practices (dhūtaṅga) prescribed for 'dhūtavādin-monks' like Mahā-kassapa suggest that the austere livelihood of the Tantra-practitioners was in vogue among a section of capable monks and nuns. In the case of nuns nine dhūtaṅgas are prescribed. In respect of a Sāmanera during his probation period twelve dhūtaṅga-practices could be followed. An upāsaka or an upāsikā (male and female lay-devotee) may observe two practices, namely, to take meal at one sitting (ekāsanikangam) and to possess only one bowl for having all kinds of food offered to (pattapiṭṭułyakāngam). Many instances may be given in this regard from the Vaipulya Sutras in Prakritised-Sanskrit.

Parittā and Dhāraṇī

Sukomal Chaudhuri has discussed in details about the parittā (mantra) applied for protection from the evil eyes of supernatural beings like ghosts, spirits and to
cure from snake-biting and so on. A list of suttas and parittas selected for incantations has been given. Such as, Ratana-sutta, Mettā-sutta, Maṅgala-sutta, Su-pubbanha-sutta, Bojjhaṅga-sutta, Aṅgulimāla-parittā, Ātānaṭiya-parittā, Dhajagga-parittā, Mora-parittā, Vattaka-parittā and Khandha-parittā in the Pali Vinaya-piṭaka. The term parittā(a) is derived as 'parittayati iti parittā(a)'.

It is generally argued that Śākyaputra Gautama, who was basically a rational thinker and a dynamic personality did not allow such application of charms and magic to protect from the evil influence that caused harm and disease in man's life. Those were the then tendency of popularising the Buddhist faith in the existing societies in India and abroad.

As regards 'Dhāraṇi' the term itself suggests that which holds or supports. The Tibetan equivalent of 'dhāraṇi' is 'gzungs sngags' which explicitly connotes the incantations to hold (for protection from evil influence). In the Tibetan Bstan 'gyur collection more than 260 Dhāraṇi texts are available⁶. Mahāvyutpatti enumerates twelve Bodhisattva-Dhāraṇi (747-758). La Vallee Poussain assumes that there had been a separate piṭaka named the Vidyādhara-piṭaka of the Mahāsāṃghikas⁷. In the present context it is evident that the 'dhāraṇi' suggests varily the apotropaic (abhicāra) charms to safeguard from supernatural or evil influence. They had prevailed in the Preschismatic Buddhist sangha from which both the Sthavira-vādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas inherited parittā, mantra, vidyā and dhāraṇi. In the Vinaya texts whether in Pali Theravāda tradition or in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition 'parittā' and 'dhāraṇi' had been accepted unhesitatingly since the pre-Christian period in India.

Mahāmāyūrī-mantra

It is interesting to note that 'Mahāmāyūrī-mantra' had been prescribed by Śākyaputra Gautama, the Buddha, himself when a monk was not cured in spite of the treatment of a Vaidya from his snake-bite. The account is mentioned in the Bhaṭṣajya-vastu (T. Sman gyi gzhi) of the Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya-vastu ('Dul ba gzhi: Bka'- 'gyur. Nge. Vol. Peking Edn). As usual the method of narrating an account in the vinaya-texts is observed here. A monk named Sāri (Skt. Svāti) had a snake-bite. In this
connection a legend of the Peacock-king named suvarṇa-prabhāsa depicts the efficacy of the Mahāmāyūrī-vidyā who had been conversant in the Vidyā. He was in the right side of the Himalaya mountain when he was caught hold in a net of an enemy at the midnight after being allured in the company of peahens around him. He however regained his memory and chanted the Vidyā. Thereafter, he could run away. The net was broken off.

The Tibetan recension of the Vidya has been appended. It becomes evident that the Vidyā in Sanskrit had been prevalent in India. Then Moraparītā vide the Mora Jātaka in the Pali Jātaka-āṭṭhakathā (PTS edn No. 159) narrates the story of a peacock who had also golden colour. Some variations are observed in the contents of the Mora Jātaka in Pali which may be studied separately. But the parītā contains the spell chanted by that peacock who used to reside on the mountain called 'Daṇḍaka Hirāṇa' in order to save his life from fowlers.

For protection against snake-bite the Khandha-parītā from the Vinaya-piṭaka in Pali may also be referred here. The Khandhavatta Jātaka in the Jātaka-Āṭṭhakathā (PTS No. 203) also reads the parītā for the same purpose. The texts from the Vinaya-piṭaka and the Jātaka have been given in the Appendix.

In course of time the Mahāmāyūrī-vidyā became prominent for its power to stop snakes biting and it was called Vidyārāja, (Queen of the secret sciences). The Vidyā was included in list of the five protecting Dhāranis (Pancarākṣa) i.e. mantras chanted for safeguard against sin, evil influences of spirits, snakes and wild animals, harmful planets etc. The Mahāmāyūrī-vidyārāja has been available in two versions, such as in a longer form and in a shorter form in Chinese. The text has been translated into Chinese repeatedly by Śrīmitrā (307-342 A.D.), Kumārajīva (348-417 A.D.), Saṅghapāla (516 A.D.), I-tsing (705 A.D.) and Amogha-vajra (746-771 A.D.). Moreover, the Vidyārāja has been translated into Tibetan in the 8th cent. A.D. by Śīlendrabodhi, yeṣes sde and Śākya 'Od (Śākyaprabha). It is also to mention that incantations for snake-charming are also found in the Bower Manuscripts from Central Asia.
Resume

From the above mentioned evidence it leaves a room to hold that the nucleus of the Tantra in Buddhism prevailed in the pre-schismatic stage of the Buddhist sangha. For sake of the mental training to attain complete control over one's mind meditational exercises and esoteric practices had been regarded obligatory for a yellow-robed person since the beginning of the Buddhist sangha. By dint of the serious efforts some monks could excel and attained extraordinary efficiencies like clairvoyant vision (dibbacakkhu/divyacakṣu) and clairvoyant listening (dibbasotta/divyaśrotra) and so on. Moggallāna (Skt. Maudgalyāyana) was capable in this respect, besides Śākyaputra Gautama, the Buddha, himself. Moreover, Mahākassapa (Mahākāśyapa) was an excellent esoteric practitioner who could visualise the underlying significance of the Dharma taught by the Master and recited the Abhidharama-pitaka according to the Theravāda tradition. In spite of high rationale of the teachings of the Buddha the efficacy of mantra-syllables could not be ignored by the Buddhists since the period when Śākyaputra Gautama was alive. The incantation of paritā on occasions and the application of Vidyā-mantra pertaining to an apotropaion for protection, safety and shelter of the Buddhist preachers developed in the subsequent days when their Master was not present in his mundane form (nirmanā-kāya)

NOTES


2. 'Aggihutta-mukhā yānā sāvitti chandaso mukham/raja mukho manussānam nadīnam sāgaro mukham/ (Mahāvagga Keniya-jātīlavatthu VI. 23.42 PTS edn.)

3. Thirtyseven Bodhipakkhiyadhāmmas have been divided into seven groups and four iddhipadas (chanda, vīriya, citta and mimaṃsā) have been prescribed in the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta as a systematic course of meditational practices for the Bodhi. Digha Nikaya Sutta No. 16, (PTS edn.). It may be mentioned here that the Buddha discouraged the application of iddhi-pāṭihāriya by a monk to exert influence over a layman. He declared that any performance of miracles before laymen for
the sake of worldly gain would be a Dukkhaṇa offence (Vinaya-piṭaka, Culla-vagga, V. 8.2. (PTS edn). See also Kevatta Sutta (No. 11) Vol. p 214 (PTS edn).


5. Sukomal Choudhuri : Contemporary Buddhism in Bangladesh pp 116-125, Calcutta 1982, Winternitz. M. : A History of Indian Literature (Vol. II pp 80 refers to the 'PIRIT' or paritta ceremony in which recitations from the Khuddaka-ṇaṭha in Pali for sake of benediction or exorcism formula have been made among the Buddhists in Ceylon.


**APPENDIX**

**BKAH HGYUR, HDUL BA, : ņE (46a:2)**

A. Gleñ bzhì ni mnyan yod na'ol

Khyim bde gcig gis saṅs rgyas la sogs pa dge slob gi dge 'dun bsdro khaṅ la spyan draṅs so/ de'i tshes tshes ldan pa Sa ri zhes bya ba (46a:3) gzhon nu thor bu laṅ tsho dar la bab ci'n rab tu byuṅ nas riṅ po ma lon pḥ bsnyen par mdzogs nas riṅ po ma lon pḥ Chos 'dul ba 'dir roṅs nas riṅ po ma lon pḥ des bsams pḥ bcom ldan 'das
bzùn nas kun chub par byas te/ dge sloṅ sa ril suṅ rh ba daṅ yaw ži su skyab pa daṅ yaw ži su gzuṅ daṅ dum gzḥel la daṅ chad pa spāṅs pa daṅ dum gṣaṅ pa. (46b:6) daṅ/ mtshams gca dān sa bcin bar nus sa/ bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal du gṣoṅ gnyan te byes of/ 'dul ba gzhīn/ bams po drug bcu pa/


dge sloṅ (47a:3) rmams the tshom skyes nas the tshom thams cad gcod pa sāṅs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la zhus pa/ bcom ldan 'das ji tsam du bcom ldan 'das kyi rma bya chen mo'i rig sṅags sman pa daṅ gces sbras bgyid pa no mtshar che lags so/ dge sloṅ (47a:4) dag de ltar 'ba' zhiṅ tu ma yin te/ ji ltar 'das pa'i dus na yaṅ du log par thuṅ bai'i lus mi khom par gyur pa na rig sṅags gyi rgyal po rma bya chen mo sphan pa daṅ gces sbras byas pa de nyo ngig/

dge slon dag sṅon byuṅ rī'i rgyal po gāṅs (47a:5) rī'i lho phyogs kyi 'nos rma bya i rgyal po gser du snaṅ ba zhes bys ba zhiṅ gnas te/ de nāṅ bar rma bya chen mo'i rig sṅags 'dis bde legs su 'gyur pa byas te nyin mo bde legs su gnas/ nub kar bde legs su gnas pa
byas te/ mtshan mo bde (47a:6) legs su gnas so/ de dus gzhan zhig na 'dod par'i 'dod chags la ihag par chags/ 'dod pa' nams la zhen/ 'tshun/ bgyal/ myos/ rab tu rmo/los/ rab tu bgyal te/ bag med pas nags kyi rma bya chen mo rab tu ma'n po nams de'n ldan cig tu kun (47a:7) dga'i ra ba nas kun dga'i ra ba da'ny bskyed mos 'tshal nas bskyed mos 'tshal da'ny ri'i 'nos la ri'i 'nos su rgyu ba las ji tsam na ri'i Se'n ge zhig tu zhugs pa da'ny de der yun ri'n du phir rgo' l ba/ dgrar gyur pa 'tshe bar gyur pa/ glags lta ba nams kyi rma bya'i snyis (47a:8)/ 'bu'n s-te/ de mi mdza' ba'i na'i du so'n pa da'ny rab tu rmo'n pa las dran pa rmyed nas rma bya chen mo'i rig s'nags 'di kho na'yid la byas so//

B. (Mehâmâyûri vidyâ-mantra in Sanskrit)

"'Namo Buddhâya namo Dharmâya nama'h Sanghâya Tadyathâ amale vimale nirnale ma'ngale hira'nyagarbhe bhadre subhadre samantabhadre Śrî-bhadre Sarvârtha-sâdhanî paramârtha-sâdhani sarva-maṅgâla-sâdhana-ni manase mahâmanase acyute adbhute atyabhute mukte mocani mokâni'jara'je vira'je amrte amare (amarani) brahme brahmavare purñe purña-manorathe mukte jivate raksâ svâti'm sarvopadrava-bhaya ragebhyâh svâhâ//"

C. Four verses are common in the Cullavagga (v.2.9)-
Pali Ahirâja-parittâm (Khuddaka-vatthu-khandhaka) and in the Khandhavatta-jâtaka (PTS. p. 145-47) in Pali-

Virupakkhehi me metta'm metta'm erapathehi me/
Chabbyputtehi me metta'm metta'm Kanâgottameakehi câ'ti//
Apâdakehi me metta'm metta'm dvipâdakehi me/
Catuppadehi me metta'm metta'm bahuppadehi me ti//
Mâ mam apâdaka hi'msi mâ mam hi'msi dvipadako/
mâ mam catuppado hi'msi mâ mam hi'msi bahuppado ti//
Sabbe sattâ sabbe pâ'nâ sabbe bhûtâ ca kevalâ/
Sabbe bhadrâni passantu mâ ki'nci pâpamâgamâ ti//

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D. The verses partly recur in the Bower manuscripts in Sanskrit which are found in the ruins of the ancient city at Khasgarh (Journal of the Pali Text Society, 1893. p.64).

E. The Bhesajjakhandhaka (Mūlādi-bhesajja-kathā) in the Pali Vinaya-piṭaka (Mahāvagga) however does not read a paritta in Verses. The text is given below (6.2.9. PTS edn.) :

‘Tenā kho pana samayena aṁñātaro bhikkhu aṁñā datṭha hoti/ Bhagavato etamathāṁ arocesuṁ/anujānāmi bhikkhave’ cattari mahāvīkaṭāni datum—gūthāṁ, muttaṁ, chārikaṁ, mattikaṁ tī/ atha kho bhikkhunāṁ etadahosi:—

‘appatīgagahitāni nu kho udāhu patīggaḥetabbāni’ tī/ Bhagavato etamathāṁ arocesuṁ/ anujānāmi, bhikkhave, sati kappiyakārake patīggaḥeṭpetum, asati kepīya kārake sāmaṁ gahetvā paribhūnjī tum ‘tī/