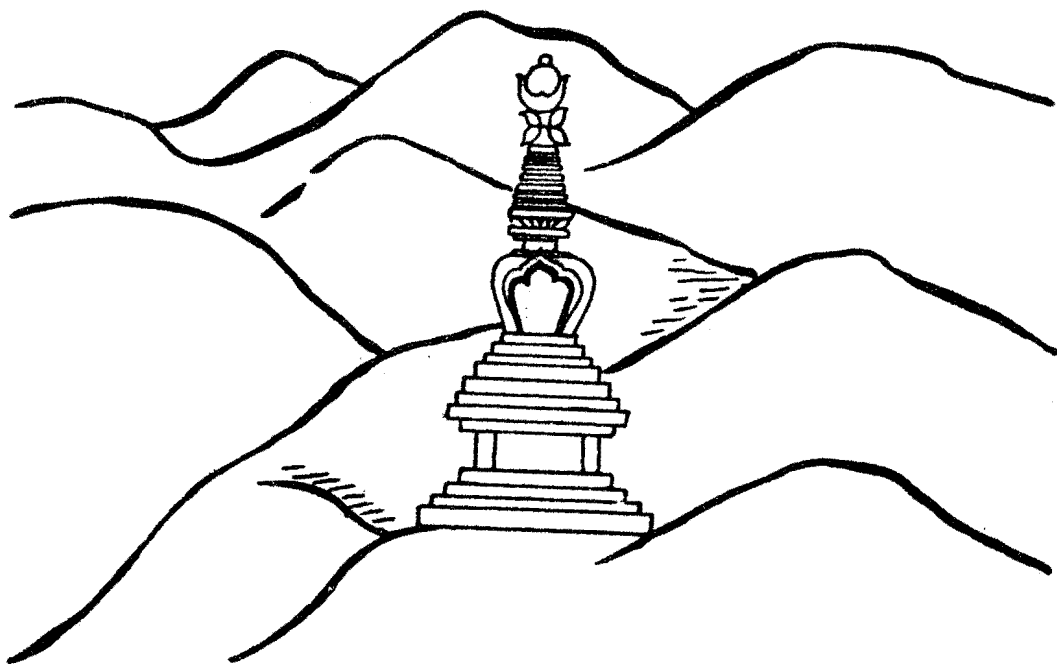


Bulletin of Tibetology



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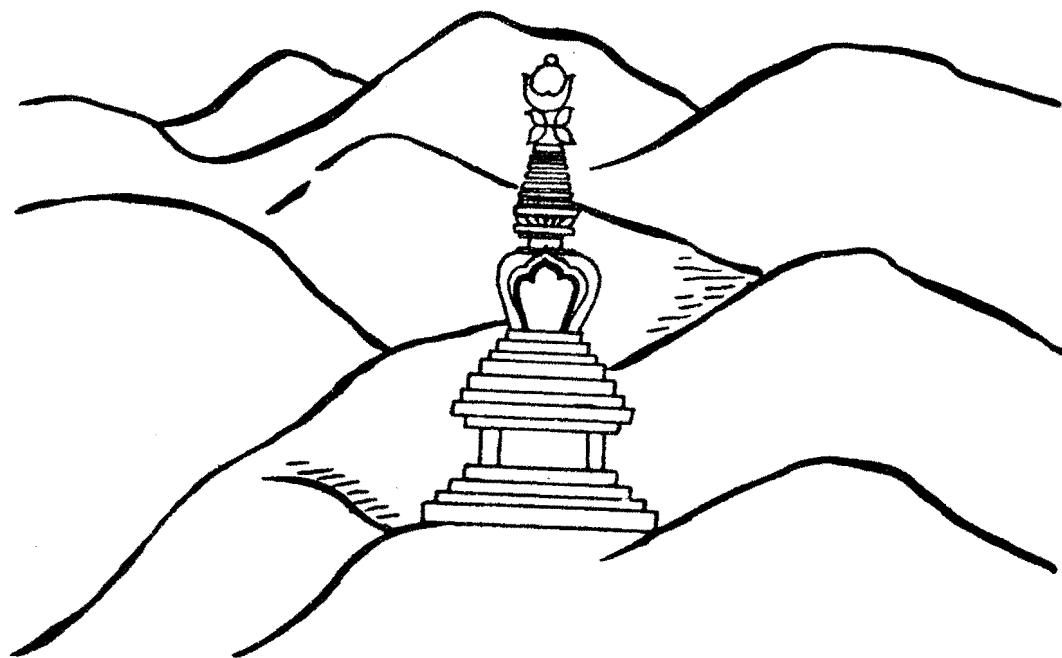
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- The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in this field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field -

EDITORS
JAMPAL K. RECHUNG
KUNGA YONTEN HOCHOTSANG
BHAJAGOVINDA GHOSH

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ŚĀKYAMUNI'S FINAL NIRVĀNA

- David L. Snellgrove

Despite the admonitions of responsible scholars, writers of books on Buddhism still tend to assume that a reasonably historical account of the life and personal teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha may be extracted from the earliest available canonical accounts. This quest of the historical Buddha began as a Western nineteenth-century interest, imitating both in its pre-suppositions and its methods of inquiry the parallel quest of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. The general principle of operation is set forth succinctly by Hermann Oldenberg in his impressive work, *Buddha, sein Leben, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde*, Berlin, 1881, 92 :

‘ Abstrahiren wir nun von den Traditionen der bezeichneten Kategorien, welche sämtlich unhistorisch oder doch des unhistorischen Characters verdächtig sind, so behalten wir als festen Kern der Erzählungen von Buddha eine Reihe positiver Thatsachen übrig, die wir als einen zwar sehr bescheidenen, aber vollkommen gesicherten Besitz für die Geschichte in Anspruch nehmen dürfen ’.

Within the terms of his enunciated principles, Oldenberg's work is responsible and scholarly. He has created a figure of the historical Buddha, which has been now popularly accepted by Westerners, and by Westernized Asians. However, cast as it is in the mould of European nineteenth-century liberal and rational thought, it might seem to bear on examination no relationship to the religious aspirations and conceptions relating to Śākyamuni Buddha, as revealed in the earliest Buddhist literature. Furthermore it can easily be shown that the whole process of deliberately abstracting everything of an apparent unhistorical and mythical character, all too often leads away from any semblance of historical truth. This is because the elements that are deliberately abstracted, usually those relating to religious faith and the cult of the Buddha as a higher being, may be older and thus nearer the origins of the religion, than the supposed historical element. This easily reveals itself at best as an honest but comparatively late attempt at producing out of floating traditions a coherent story, and at the worst as a tangle of tendentious fabrications produced to justify the pretensions of some later sectarian group.

In this short article I propose examining briefly the traditions relating to Śākyamuni's final *nirvāṇa*, for it might be supposed that of all the events of his life, the final ones would be the best remembered. It is well known that a complete ‘ biography ’ was a late and extra-canonical operation. As early canonical material we have consecutive accounts of just two separate periods of his life, one describing his leaving home, his six years' training, his enlightenment and the conversion of his first five disciples, and the other describing his last journey and decease. It is this last with which we are concerned here.

The best-known account is based upon the Pali version of the Theravādin sect, already examined in some detail by E. J. Thomas in his *Life of the Buddha as legend and history*, third ed., London, 1949, 142-64.¹ Fortunately a parallel account with interesting variations is available in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, as published by Ernst Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Berlin, 1950. This second version represents the traditions of the Mūlasarvāstivādin sect, which was active in north-western India up to the time of the final eclipse of Buddhism in its homeland.²

The description of the itinerary of the last journey and the accounts of the various lengthy sermons delivered, run generally parallel in the two versions. Śākyamuni travelled with a company of monks from Rājagṛha, regarded traditionally as the centre of much of his teaching, to Pāṭaligrāma (Tib. dMar-bu-can) on the Ganges. Here he stayed by the *caitya* (Tib. *mchod-rten*), where he was visited by Brahmins and householders, to whom he preached a sermon. Later, when he found Varṣākara, the minister of the land of Magadha, organizing the building of a fortress in preparation for their intended war against the Vṛjis to the north, he prophesied the future greatness of the place as Aśoka's capital city of Pāṭaliputra. Then having crossed the Ganges miraculously, he travelled via Kuṭigrāma (Tib. sPyil-pa-can) and Nādika (sGra-can) to Vaiśālī. Many people had died at Nādika because of a plague, and his monks asked him the reasons for this. He gave general teachings on impermanence, said that all beings must die and there is no need to ask useless questions, and repeated the teaching of the twelvefold 'causal nexus' (*pratītyasamutpāda*). At Vaiśālī he was visited by the Licchavi princes, and entertained by the popular courtesan Ambapālī. Afterwards he went into retreat nearby at Beluvagāmaka (Skt. : Venugrāmaka, Tib. : 'od-ma-can-gyi

¹ This is the *Mahāparinibbānasūtra* as it occurs in the *Dighanikāya*. Another and very short version occurs in the *Samyuttanikāya*, as translated by E. J. Thomas in his *Early Buddhist scriptures*, London, 1935, 51-3.

² As edited by Waldschmidt, the Sanskrit version is taken from the edited text of N. Dutt, *Gilgit manuscripts*, III, part I, Srinagar, [1947], and the Tibetan version from a manuscript copy of the Kanjur in the former Prussian State Library in Berlin, and from the rNar-thang block-print, 'Dul-ba, xi, folio 535b ff. I have referred throughout to the Peking block-print as reprinted conveniently in the *Tibetan Tripitaka*, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1958, XLIV, page 210, leaf 1, line 5. Future references to the text will appear in the form e.g. p. 210-1-5.

Waldschmidt provides a translation of the Chinese version from the *Taishō Tripitaka*, XXIV, pp. 382b ff.

One may note that the various indexes to the Tibetan canon refer not to this *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, but to later *Mahāyāna* versions in the *Sūtra (mDo)* section, viz. Tokyo-Kyoto ed., XXXI, items nos. 787, 788, and 789. I have referred to points of contact with these later works in the footnotes. The corresponding Chinese versions of these later works occur in the *Taishō Tripitaka*, XII.

A most detailed and brilliant analysis of these Pali and Sanskrit versions and of four other Chinese versions has just been completed by André Bareau, namely his *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapitaka et les Vinayapitaka anciens. Vol. II. Les derniers mois, le parinirvāṇa et les funérailles*, Paris, École Française d'Extrême Orient, Tom. 1, 1970, Tom. 2, 1971. His conclusions leave hardly any basis for a historical substratum in the texts, certainly even less than I myself envisaged when first writing this short article.

grong). Here he fell ill, and Ānanda who now alone remained with him as his foremost and much devoted disciple, requested him not to enter *nirvāṇa* before he had made some decisions for the order. It was then that Śākyamuni made a reply, which is often quoted as symptomatic of the subsequent lack of organized leadership in the community³:

‘Ānanda, I do not have the idea that the order of monks is mine, that I must cleave to the order and lead it, so how should I have a last exhortation, even a slight one, with which to instruct the order? Whatever teachings I have had which were relevant to the order of monks, I have already taught them as the principles which must always be practised, namely the four applications of mindfulness, the four proper efforts, the four magical proficiencies, the five powers and the five strengths, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eightfold path.⁴ As Buddha, I do not have the close-fistedness of a teacher who thinks he must conceal things as unsuitable for others. . . .

From the beginning, Ānanda, I have taught you that whatever things are delightful and desirable, joyful and pleasing, these are subject to separation and destruction, to disintegration and dissociation. So Ānanda, whether now or after my decease, whoever you are, you must remain as islands to yourselves, as defences to yourselves with the *Dharma* as your island and the *Dharma* as your defence, remaining unconcerned with other islands and other defences. If you ask the reason for this, then know that

³ See Waddschmidt, op. cit., 197-201, and for my extracts as translated *Ti. T* (= *Tibetan Tripitaka*, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1958), XLIV, p. 216-2-6 onwards and p. 216-3-6 onwards: *kun dga' bo nga la ni 'di snyam du dge slong gi dge 'dun ni nga'i yin te / ngas dge slong gi dge 'dun lu bstan par bya'o / ngas dge slong gi dge 'dun drang ngo snyam du dgongs pa mi mngu' na / ngas dge slong gi dge 'dun gyi phyir zhal chens kho na chung zad bstan du ci yod /*

gzhan yang kun dga' bo nga la dge slong gi dge 'dun gyi rag lus pa ci zhig yod / kun dga' bo ngas rtag tu goms par bya ba'i chos / 'di lta ste / dran pa nye bur gzhas pa bzhi dang / yang dag par spong ba bzhi dang / rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi dang / dbang po lnga dang / stobs lnga dang / byang chub kyi yan lag bdun dang / 'phags pa'i lam yan lag brgyad pa ni bshad zin to / . . .

kun dga' bo gang yang ngas khyod la sdug pa dang / 'phags pa dang / dya' ba dang / yid du 'ong ba thams cad ni 'bral ba dang / 'jig pa dang / 'gyes pa dang / mi ldan par 'gyur ba nga nas bshad zin to / kun dga' bo de lta bas na da lta 'am / 'das kyang rung gang su dag bdag nyid gling dang / bdag nyid skyabs dang / chos kyi gling dang / chos kyi skyabs kyi gnas par bya'i / gling gzhan dang / skyabs gzhan ni ma yin no / de ci'i phyir zhe na /

kun dga' bo da lta 'am / 'das kyang rung / gang su dag bdag nyid gling dang / bdag nyid skyabs dang / chos kyi gling dang / chos kyi skyabs kyi gnas par byed kyi / gling gzhan dang / skyabs gzhan gyis ma yin pa de dag ni 'di lta ste / nga'i nyan thos bslab-pa 'dol pa rnam kyi mchog yin no /

⁴ These are the 37 *bodhipaksyā dharmāḥ*. For a detailed analysis of them see Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva doctrine*, London, 1932, 80-164. It is interesting to note that this same list forms the climax of the third and shortest *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, *Ti. T*, XXXI, no. 789. See p. 209-4-3. This sūtra is in the form of a prophecy concerning the success of the Dharma under the Emperor Aśoka 100 years after the *parinirvāṇa* and a subsequent decline gradually worse up to 1,100 years after. Ānanda is distressed and asks what are the essential teachings for restoring order. The Buddha quotes the 37 'principles', adding 'total repose' (Skt. *śamatha*, Tib. *zi-gnas*), 'special insight' (Skt. *vipaśyana*, Tib. *thag-mthong*) and 'final release' (*vimokṣa*, *rnam-par thar-ba*), referred to as 'three doors' (Tib. *sgo-gsum*).

whether now or after my decease, whoever remain as islands to themselves, as defences to themselves, with the *Dharma* as their island and the *Dharma* as their defence, not concerning themselves with other islands and other defences, such ones are the foremost of my questing disciples'.

After this he returned to Vaiśālī, and having been on a begging round and finished his meal, he went, still accompanied by the faithful Ānanda, on a visit to a near-by shrine (*caitya*) named Cāpāla. It is here that he is said to have proclaimed: 'Whoever, Ānanda, is versed, skilled, and much practised in the four magical powers, can, if he wishes, remain for a world-age or even longer than a world-age. Since I as Buddha, Ānanda, am versed, skilled, and much practised in the four magical powers, I too could, if I wished, remain for a world-age or even longer than a world-age'.⁵ Since Ānanda said nothing in reply to this claim, Śākyamuni repeated it up to three times, and in some accounts up to six. Still greeted by silence, he sent his companion away with the harsh-sounding words: 'Lest there should be contention between us, go and sit under another tree'. Then Māra, the lord of death, who had attempted previously to persuade him to pass immediately into *nirvāṇa* at the time of his enlightenment, appeared again and extracted a promise from him that now at last since his rounds of teaching were complete, he would finally leave the world. Earthquakes greeted this decision, and Ānanda, who came to ask the reason for this, was given a lesson in the causes of earthquakes and was sternly chided for not having begged his master to remain in the world when the chance of making such a request had been repeatedly given him. Thus certain later traditions chose to blame Ānanda for the normal limited human life-span of the Buddha of our present world-age.

Śākyamuni then announced his decision of continuing to Kuṣṭhagrāma (Tib. Ru-rta), not mentioned in the Pali version, and on the way he looked back to the town of Vaiśālī and announced his imminent *nirvāṇa* in the realm of the Mallas under two *sāla* trees. From Kuṣṭhagrāma, they passed on to Bhoganagara (Tib. Longs-spyod grong), where Śākyamuni gave more discourses, on the causes of earthquakes, on the various grand assemblies human and divine in which he had taught, and on how to distinguish true from false scripture. Except for the last these are repetitions of previous sermons.

At Pāvā, the next place of rest, Śākyamuni accepted a meal in the house of the metal-worker Cunda.⁶ Afterwards he fell ill, possibly from dysentery, and he had to rest by the wayside while Ānanda fetched water which had become

⁵ Waldschmidt, op. cit., 205-7.

⁶ The Pali version mentions a dish described as *sūkaramaddava*, which is interpreted by Sinhalese commentators, at least from the fifth century A.D. onwards, as specially prepared pork. However, the term is so unusual that others were able to explain it as a kind of mushroom. See E. J. Thomas, *Life of the Buddha*, p. 149, n. 3, and see especially Arthur Waley, 'Did Buddha die of eating pork?', *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, 1, 1931-2, (pub.) 1932, 343-52. The possibility of Śākyamuni having actually died of dysentery as a result of eating pork has fired the imagination of Western commentators from the nineteenth century onwards. Even so careful and reliable a scholar as Alfred Foucher exclaims: 'Quelle dégradation pour l'Être

clear quite miraculously, although 500 carts had just passed through the near-by stream. While Śākyamuni was resting and recovering, a wealthy layman named Pukkusa, who was the follower of a rival teacher, came and boasted of the powers of concentration of his religious master, who was not disturbed in his meditation when 500 carts passed by. In reply Śākyamuni told how on a certain occasion he himself had remained undisturbed by a thunderstorm and the noise of the villagers, which he had not even heard. Pukkusa was so impressed by this that he sent for two garments of golden hue which he presented to the Buddha in token of his faith and devotion. When Śākyamuni put them on, their splendour was eclipsed by the brilliance of his own corporeal form, and he explained to the astounded Ānanda that this bodily brilliance was the sign of a Buddha's approaching enlightenment or, as in the present case, of his imminent passing into final *nirvāṇa*.⁷

They continued slowly on their way, for the master was still sick, and at last they reached the outskirts of Kuśinagara, where he lay down, head to the north, between two *sāla* trees, which let fall their blossoms out of season in order to cover him. It was here that he finally expired.

Just as with his final journey, so too with the death scene, a large number of later additions may be easily identified, and especially noteworthy are the later attempts to denigrate Ānanda, who from being once the favourite and most trusted disciple, comes to be presented as a blunderer who lags well behind others in the spiritual quest. A good analysis of the last rites of the Buddha was made by Jean Przyluski in a series of articles published just over 50 years ago, and despite subsequent publications many of his theories would seem to remain valid.⁸ Since the verses are less liable to tampering than prose, he concentrates first upon the series of verses pronounced by various mourners

sublime qu'un siècle ou deux plus tard ses fidèles auraient volontiers exempté de toutes les nécessités naturelles ! Mais aussi quelle garantie d'authenticité pour un trait que la légende aurait eu tant d'intérêt à taire ou à déguiser ! ' (*La vie du Bouddha*, Paris, 1949, 305). On such a special dish, reserved for the sole consumption of a Buddha, see A. Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha. II. Les derniers mois*, Tom. 1, 268-73. One should note also his article 'La transformation miraculeuse de la nourriture offerte au Buddha par le brahmana Kasibhāradvāja' in *Études tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou*, Paris, 1971, 1-10. Thus as is so often the case, this supposedly historical incident may be a later interpretation of an interesting Buddhological concept.

⁷ It is interesting to note that this 'transfiguration' story, which is here placed in a quasi-historical setting by the mention of a wealthy layman, named Pukkusa, is expanded in an extraordinary manner in one of the later Mahāyāna versions, mentioned above, p. 400, n. 2. See *Ti. T.*, xxxi, pp. 134-2-5-135-1-6. The Buddha puts on a pair of garments as he sits on his lion-throne, and he becomes the colour of purified gold, filling the directions with rays before an astounded fourfold assembly. Again and again he mounts to the skies in a chariot made of the seven jewels, and as the display goes on, he explains repeatedly that this is the sign of his approaching *nirvāṇa*.

⁸ 'Le parinirvāṇa et les funérailles du Buddha', *Journal Asiatique*, XI^e Sér., xi, mai-juin 1918, 485-526; xii, nov.-déc. 1918, 401-56; xiii, mai-juin 1919, 365-430; xv, jan.-mars 1920, 5-54.

over the dying Buddha. Of several similar versions I quote from the Tibetan *Vinaya* version.⁹

'The Lord expired like a lion at the foot of those two excellent *sāla* trees in the grove of twin *sāla* trees which let fall their blossoms as soon as the Lord Buddha passed from sorrow. Then some other monk recited these verses :

" Here in this grove of fine trees,
of this beautiful pair of *sālas*,
The Teacher as he passes from sorrow
is thoroughly scattered with flowers "

As soon as the Lord Buddha passed from sorrow, Indra, chief of the gods, recited these verses :

" Impermanent, alas, are compounds,
for being born they are subject to destruction.
Having been born, they are then destroyed,
but their tranquillization is bliss "

As soon as the Lord Buddha passed from sorrow, Brahmā, the lord of the universe, recited these verses :

" All beings in the world cast off
the accumulated totality (of their own persons).
Thus he who is peerless in the world,
all-seeing Buddha, winner of special powers,
Even a teacher such as he,
has finally passed from sorrow "

* Waldschmidt, op. cit., 399-401: *sangs-rgyas bcom ldan 'das mya ngan las 'das ma thag tu shing sa la zung gnyis kyi tshal sa la'i ljon shing mchog las me tog 'thor ba'i drung du / bcom ldan 'das seng ge lta hur gzims pa dang / de'i tshé dge slong gzhan zhig gis tshigs su bead de smras pa / sa la zung ni rab mdzes pa'i / ljon shing mchog gi tshal lu 'dir / ston pa mya ngan 'das pa la / me tog dag gis rab tu glor / sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das mya ngan las 'das ma thag tu / lha'i dbang po brgya byin gyis tshigs su bead de smras pa /*

kye ma 'du hyed mi rtag ste / skyé zhing 'jig pa'i chos can yin / skyes nas 'jig par 'gyur ba ste / de dag nye bar zhi ba bde / sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das mya ngan las 'das ma thag tu / mi mjed kyi ldag po tshangs pa tshigs su bead de smras pa /

'byang po kun gyis 'jig rten 'dir ni bsugs pa'i mtha' / 'dor 'gyur 'jig rten 'di na gang zag zla med cing / de bzhin gshegs pa stobs rnam brnyes pa spyan ldan pa / ston pa 'di lta bu yang yongs su nya ngan 'das / sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das yongs su mya ngan las 'das ma thag tu / tshé dang ldan pa ma 'gags pas tshigs su bead de smras pa /

brtan pa'i thugs kyi bskyob mdzad cing / mi g-yo zhi ba brnyes gyur pa / dbugs 'byung ba dang ragub 'gags nas / spyan ldan yongs su mya ngan 'das / rnam pa thams cad mchog ldan pa / gang tshé ston pa dus mdzad de / de tshé rab tu sangs gyur cing / de tshé spu yang lung par gyur / zhun pa med pa'i thugs kyi ni / tshor ba dag lu thag par gnas / de yi thugs ni rnam grol ba / sgron ma de 'dra mya ngan 'das /

For the text of the Peking print, see *Ti. T.*, XLIV, p. 232-3-6 ff. Once again it is interesting to glance at the expanded Mahāyāna version in XXXI, p. 136, where the Lord lies down 'on a jewelled couch' under the *sāla* trees, and at the following elaborate account. The general framework of the earlier version is preserved in that sets of verses, much lengthened, are recited in turn by Brahmā (p. 137-1-2 ff.), Indra (137-2-1 ff.), Aniruddha (137-3-1), and Ānanda (137-4-3 ff.).

As soon as the Lord Buddha passed from sorrow, the Venerable Aniruddha recited these verses :

“ He who bestowed protection firm-mindedly
and has won unshakeable tranquillity,
His in-breathing and out-breathing have stopped,
the all-seeing one has passed from sorrow ”.
Possessed of all forms of excellence,
when our Teacher made an end of life,
We were most terribly afraid
and our hairs stood up on end.
But with spirit undismayed,
extremely steady in his feelings,
Like the extinguishing of a lamp
his mind was liberated.’

It is significant that in the two versions preserved in the Pali canon, the second set of verses suggesting fear and alarm are pronounced by Ānanda instead of by Aniruddha, and Ānanda’s set of verses, which now follow Aniruddha’s in certain other versions noted by Przyluski, do not occur at all in Pali.¹⁰ The *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin canon, however, preserves them, as quoted below, but after several accounts of various happenings, all related in prose and corresponding more or less with the Pali, as retold by E. J. Thomas.¹¹

After the verses just quoted, some monks were quite distraught, but others, remembering their master’s teaching that one must finally part with all things that cause pleasure in the world, reacted more in accordance with his doctrine of renunciation. Aniruddha consoled them with suitable words, but it is significant that in the Mūlasarvāstivādin version, where he appears as by no means unshaken himself, he first asked Ānanda to do the consoling. How shameful, he said, that monks should behave in such a way, when hundreds of shocked gods are all looking on in amazement at such lack of restraint. Then he sent Ānanda into Kuśinagara to tell the inhabitants what had occurred. Hearing the news, they too were distraught, and came out in throngs, both men and women (the Pali discreetly omits the reference to women) to honour and worship the corpse. Then they asked Ānanda how they should prepare the corpse, and he replied that they should do things as for a universal monarch.

“ O, most worthy Ānanda, how should things be done for a universal monarch ? ”

“ Townsfolk, the body of a universal monarch should be wrapt in muslin. Having been wrapt in muslin, it should be wrapt in 500 pairs of

¹⁰ These other versions occur in the Sanskrit original in the last story of the *Avadānaśataka* (ed. J. S. Speyer, St. Petersburg, 1906, II, 198–200), and in Chinese translations of a Mūlasarvāstivādin *Saṃnikā-āgama* (Nanjio nos. 544 and 546). See Przyluski, art. cit., *J.A.*, XI^e Sér., XI, mai-juin 1918, 496–505.

¹¹ E. J. Thomas, *Life of the Buddha*, third ed., 154–5.

clothes. Having been wrapt in 500 pairs of clothes, it should be placed in an iron coffer. When this has been filled with vegetable oil, it should be closed with a double iron lid. Then heaping up all kinds of scented woods and having burned it, one extinguishes the fire with milk, and having placed the bones in a golden vase, one constructs a tumulus for the bones at a cross-roads, and honours it with parasols, banners of victory, flags, scents and garlands, perfumes, powders, and music. One has a great festival, honouring, venerating, and worshipping it." ' ' 12

The townsfolk replied that it would take them quite seven days to do all this. Having prepared everything as detailed by Ānanda, they prepared to move off. According to the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, an elder instructed the women and maidens to hold up the processional canopy over the bier which was to be carried by the men and youths. They were to pass through Kuśinagara, entering by the west gate and leaving it by the east. According to the Pali account, where no women are mentioned, they were to carry the bier to the south side of the town. In neither case could they lift the bier, for the gods prevented them, in the case of the Mūlasarvāstivādin account because they wanted to have a full part in the worship of the bier themselves, and in the case of the Pali account because they wanted the corpse to be carried to the north side of the town, entering at the west and going out at the east. Once they acceded to the gods' wishes, as interpreted by Aniruddha, the procession was able to move off.¹³

When everything was ready on the funeral pyre, the gods again interfered, this time to prevent it from taking light, because the Venerable Mahākāśyapa was on his way to salute the Buddha's corpse. Mahākāśyapa was regarded afterwards as the first patriarch, who presided over the first council, supposedly held at Rājagṛha immediately after the Buddha's death, and so later tradition considered it desirable that he should be given a place of honour at the funeral rites, and be shown to establish his authority over Ānanda. He duly arrived, took off all the 500 sets of garments, worshipped the corpse, and then replaced them all. Then he placed the corpse in its iron coffer, filled it with oil, closed it with a double lid, all the details being repeated just as before. Only then did the pyre ignite ' of its own accord by the power of the buddhas and the power

¹² Waldschmidt, op. cit., 411; *Ti. T.*, XLIV, p. 233-2-2: *blaun pa kun dga' bo 'khor lo sgyur ba'i rgyal po la ji llar bgyid lags / gnas 'jog dag 'khor lo sgyur ba'i rgyal po la ni / lus shing bal gyi 'da' bas dñri zhing / shing bal gyi 'da' bas bkris nas / ras zung lnga bryas bkri bar dya o / ras zung lnga bryas bkris nas lcags kyi sgrom du bcug ste / 'bru mar gyis bkang ste steng nas lcags kyi kha gab gnyis kyis bkab ste / dri zhim po'i shing thams cad spungs te / des beregs nas / me de dag 'o mas bead de / de'i rus pa gser gyi bum pa'i nang du bcug nas / lam po che'i bzhi mdor rus pa'i mchod rten brisags nas / gdugs dang / rgyal mtshan dang / ba dan blaugs te / dri dang / phreng ba dang / bdug pa dang / phye ma dang / rol mo'i sgras bkur stir byed / bla mar byed / ri mor byed / mchod par byed cing / dus ston chen po yang byed do /*

¹³ Waldschmidt, op. cit., 415-17. In the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions the gods object in particular to the women of Kuśinagara honouring the bier. The Chinese version has removed all reference to women, and in this respect comes into line with the Pali account. For detailed comparisons see Przyluski, art. cit., *J.A.*, XI^e Sér., xv, jan.-mars 1920, 26-34.

of the gods'. Finally Ānanda, coming to the fore again, pronounced his final verses over the ashes, which do not appear in the Pali canon ¹⁴:

'The leader with his jewel of a body,
the great worker of miracles, has gone to the Brahma-world.
His Buddha-body was wrapt with five hundred pairs of garments
and with a thousand religious costumes.
By its own splendour this corpse
has been consumed although so well wrapped,
But the two religious garments were not burnt,
these two, the inner and the outer'.

These verses were clearly pronounced by Ānanda in the role of master of ceremonies, and their absence from the Pali canon, where he is given a verse to say which expresses fear and alarm and which is elsewhere attributed to Aniruddha, may reasonably be connected with the early tendency to denigrate Ānanda, which is one of the most significant features of early Buddhist 'history', or at least of some of its interpreters. His real denigration takes place at the supposed first council at Rājagṛha, and it is interesting to note that one of the accusations made against him on that occasion was that he allowed women to see the Buddha's naked body.¹⁵ As Przyluski has observed, there may be preserved here a reference to women attending upon the corpse of Śākyamuni immediately after his death, possibly washing it as would have been the normal course of events; whereas such a suggestion was later removed from the accounts of the last rites as something unseemly, it may have been well enough remembered to be included in the later concocted charges against Ānanda.¹⁶

The comparative antiquity of the pair of verses spoken by him in the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions, is indicated not only by such a term as Brahma-world, used as equivalent for the more negative term *nirvāṇa*, but also by the specific reference to religious garb (*cīvara*), whereas the previous prose account refers only to muslin and to the 500 pairs of garments. If one assumes that Śākyamuni was cremated, if indeed he was ever cremated, in simple religious garb, one must clearly treat the number 500, which occurs in Ānanda's verses, as a readjustment in the text in order to bring it more into line with the previous prose account. Once, however, one embarks upon this

¹⁴ Waldschmidt, op. cit., 431; *Ti. T.*, xlv, p. 234.4-3:

rnam pa 'dren pa rin chen sku mnga' ba /
rdzu 'phrul chen po tshangs pa'i 'jig rten gshegs /
sangs rgyas sku la ras zung lnga rgya dang /
chos gos stong anyed kun tu dkris gyur pa /
nyid kyi gzi brjid kyis ni sku gdung dang /
shin tu bkris par rab tu tshig par gyur /
de la chos gos gnyis ni ma tshig pa /
nung rim dang ni phyi rim 'di rnam gnyis /.

¹⁵ See A. Bareau, *Les premiers conciles bouddhiques*, Paris, 1955, 9-12.

¹⁶ Przyluski, art. cit., *JA*, xlv Sér., xv, jan.-mars 1920, 11-12.

kind of speculation, it becomes difficult to set any limit, and the whole story begins to disintegrate.

Śākyamuni's death at Kuśinagara may well be historical fact. Old and ailing, he was possibly travelling from Rājagṛha, which had been probably the centre of his years of wandering and teaching, on a last visit to Kapilavastu to see what remained of his homeland. The route lay through Pāṭaligrama (Pāṭaliputra), Vaiśālī, Kuśinagara, and Pāvā. Taken extremely ill as he travelled, he could go no further than Kuśinagara, and he died in a grove just outside this mud-hut village, attended by Ānanda and Aniruddha, whose verses of lament must represent the earliest account of his death that is ever likely to be traced. The gods Indra and Brahmā would have been associated very early on with this last scene, and their lament was joined with that of the two disciples. The inclusion of verses by some 'other monk' suggests already a certain vagueness about who was present, and is in marked contrast with the precision, however fantastic, of names, attributes, and so on of all the other visitors ranging in importance from Mahākāśyapa downwards, whom later traditions felt bound to associate with these last scenes. It is possible that Śākyamuni died attended by a very few followers in a remote place, where he was little if at all well known. The memory of the actual place of his death may have represented a firm and so inviolable tradition, but later devout apologists found the death of their lord and teacher in such a remote place insufficiently edifying. The words are put into Ānanda's mouth: 'O holy one, why have you avoided the six great towns of Śrāvastī, Saketa, Campā, Vārāṇasī, Vaiśālī and Rājagṛha, which are distinguished in the world, and resolved on passing from sorrow by this wretched village, so remote and so vile, the appendage of a village, the mere remnant of a village?'¹⁷ In reply Śākyamuni is made to explain that this place was once one of the greatest cities of the world, and so eminently suitable for the 'passing from sorrow' of a Buddha. This insertion may suggest a firm historical tradition, for doubtless story-tellers would have preferred, if they could have dared, to transfer the death scenes to a more glorious place, but perhaps it was known that he had indeed died at Kuśinagara which was a wretched little place.¹⁸

Apart from these few reasonable assumptions, one is free to make up the rest of the story in accordance with one's own deductions. It is likely that the villagers visited the corpse of this renowned holy man, wailing in accordance with conventional mourning rites. It is not impossible that the womenfolk

¹⁷ Waldschmidt, *op. cit.*, 305; *Ti. T.*, XLIV, p. 222-3-5: *btsun pa ci'i slad du 'jig rten tha dad pa grong khyer chen po drug po gang dag mnyan yod dang / gnas bcas dang / tsam pa dang / bā rū na si dang / yangs pa can dang / rgyal po'i khab la sogs pa grong khyer chen po drug po 'di lta bu spangs nas / gang grong khyer ngan pa dang / dgon dung dang / mkhar ngan pa dang / grong khyer gyi yan lag dang / grong khyer gyi tho shul tsam 'dir yongs su mya ngan las 'da' bar dgongs /*

¹⁸ One must note, however, that Śākyamuni's reply represents an insertion of traditional material in the form of the *Mahāsudārasaṃvāsa*. For references, see É. Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, II, Louvain, 1949, 763-6.

washed the body, for this would have been normal practice, and wrapt it in a piece of hempen cloth, as used for shrouds in those times. The corpse was probably burned and perhaps the remains were somewhere entombed. Because of the persistent reference to the coffer filled with oil, in which the corpse was said to be immersed, and references to a shrine containing the Buddha's relics which was said to be looked after by water spirits (*nāga*), mentioned in many later legends, Przyluski has evolved the ingenious theory that Śākyamuni's body was preserved in oil so that it could be transported to the banks of a river, probably the Ganges, and either cast in the stream, or interred on the bank.¹⁹ This is certainly one way in which one might have disposed of a revered ascetic. If the bones were indeed entombed in any particular place, especially in the vicinity of Kapilavastu, it is strange that tradition preserved no memory of a single original *stūpa* (tunulus) for Aśoka's benefit. The land of the Śākyas had long since been laid waste, but tradition was able to identify for him the birthplace at Lumbini.

This brief analysis should be sufficient to indicate how unsatisfactory a proceeding it is to produce a plausible biography from these materials by simply accepting the parts which seem humanly possible and rejecting the miraculous elements as obvious accretions. In fact most of the materials which make up the stories, whether miraculous or not, are later accretions, and thus very little indeed can be established with historical certainty. The earliest account was probably very brief, consisting of the verses of lament and already introducing Indra and Brahmā. A factual account of Śākyamuni's passing probably never existed as traditional oral material learned and recited, but verses of lament might well have been intoned, and it would have been around such a kind of ritual core that stories were woven to satisfy later tendentious requirements. They need not be regarded as pure invention, for many of the discourses now appearing in the account of Śākyamuni, such as that about earthquakes or the eight kinds of august assemblies, could well have existed as a kind of floating material. On the other hand Mahākāśyapa's intrusion with his 500 monks was presumably a deliberate fabrication of those who later could not allow that the supposed organizer of the sacred canon, assuming there was such an early canon, was not also present at the funeral ceremony in a primary position of importance.

The cult of the stūpa

Despite Śākyamuni's supposed instructions that a *stūpa* should be built over his remains at a cross-roads, the canonical accounts insist that his relics were shared at the very start between eight contestants, the Mallas of Kuśinagara, who were under attack by the other seven, the Mallas of Pāpā, the Bulayas of Calakappa (or Allakappa), the Brahmanas of Viṣṇudvīpa

¹⁹ See J. Przyluski, 'Le partage des reliques du Buddha' *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, iv, 1935-6, (pub.) 1936, 341-67.

(Vethadīpa), the Kraudiyas (Kolliyas) or Rāmagrāma, the Licchavis of Vaiśālī, and the Śākyas of Kapilavastu. Then the Mallas of Kuśinagara gave the vase which had contained the relics to the Dhūmrāsagotra Brahman who had divided them, and he took it back to his village named Droṇa and built the ninth *stūpa*. 'Then a Brahman youth from Pippalāyana said to the Mallas of Kuśinagara: "Listen, O noble ones. For a long time the Lord Gautama was beloved and dear to us. He has gained *nirvāṇa* in your village, but we deserve a share in the relics. So give us now the burning ashes as our share, and we will build a *stūpa* for the ashes of the Lord Gautama in Pippalāyana."' He was given the ashes and so a tenth *stūpa* was built.²⁰

This is a curious story, and the little-known places included in this list of 10 *stūpa*-sites give it a semblance of veracity, but the most one can safely deduce from it is that in pre-Aśokan times there were in existence 10 special Buddhist tumuli, situated in the area between Rājagṛha and Kapilavastu, where Śākyamuni had lived, taught, and died. Tombs, sometimes in the shape of semi-spherical mounds, may have been common in pre-Buddhist India, as in many other parts of the world at that time, and tombs of the great would have presumably enjoyed a special distinction in the richness of the offerings to the dead that might be periodically placed by them. This may be conjecture, but what is absolutely certain so far as the earliest pre-Aśokan testimony is concerned, is that these early Buddhist tumuli, usually known as *stūpas*, were believed to contain relics of past Buddhas, and especially of the latest Buddha, Śākyamuni. 'Historically' it would seem to be incontrovertible that according to the earliest traceable Buddhist traditions, Śākyamuni's physical remains, through the extraordinary story of the contesting townships, dissolved into a cult of relics enshrined in these special tumuli.

There is no reference in the earliest known traditions to staid philosophically-minded disciples simply honouring the tomb of a revered religious master, who has left the world for ever. There is certainly reference to all the complex last rites as the proper responsibility of the layfolk rather than the monks, but we know from the evidence of inscriptions and scriptures that even in the earliest period the cult of the relic-containing *stūpa* was by no means left to the layfolk, and all the accounts of the extraordinary cult were recorded, recited, and finally written down by monks.²¹ There is no over-all account of Śākyamuni's final *nirvāṇa* which is not heavy with mythological significance. Apart from this cult, which identified him effectively as a Buddha, like the Buddhas of former times, Śākyamuni would probably remain quite unknown to us. It was precisely because of the faith that he instilled, that subsequent efforts were made to reconstruct important parts of his life. But these attempts were not made before the actual events were forgotten, or were so interpreted in accordance with mythical beliefs as to submerge almost entirely the historical person.

²⁰ Waldschmidt, op. cit., 447-51; *Ti. T.*, XLIV, p. 235-5-3 ff.

²¹ For elaboration of these points see Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Nirvāṇa*, Paris, 1925, 7 ff.

It is true that his subsequent followers included a number, certainly a minority, of philosophizing contemplatives, who were suspicious of excessive religious enthusiasm, but it is significant that they have preserved no tradition of a plausible historical figure. Their Buddha remains still the great miracle-working and omniscient sage. They may argue that since he has passed into final *nirvāṇa*, he can no longer give help to his followers in the realm of *samsāra*, and many of the more rational philosophical sayings that they attribute to him, may well represent a reliable tradition of some of his actual teachings. But of the events of his life they record nothing which does not correspond with the presumably earlier mythological and legendary conceptions.

This may seem to be much ado about very little, but the recognition of the primacy of mythology and legend over factual story-telling in the canonical presentation of Śākyamuni affects radically any history that we may produce of the Buddhist religion. Having produced a kind of Socratic sage by ignoring the earlier mythological elements, and taking carefully from the legendary elements those references that do not offend rational thought, one assumes that one has discovered an historical figure, who was the founder of a small rationally and philosophically minded community, and that this movement represents 'original Buddhism'. One then goes on to assume that this originally pure doctrine was distorted by later mythical and popular beliefs. There were certainly pure philosophical doctrines propounded during the early history of Buddhism, just as there have been ever since, but there is no such thing as pure Buddhism *per se* except perhaps the cult of Śākyamuni as a supramundane being and the cult of the relic *stūpa*. These ideas are not new. They were propounded long ago by Louis de La Vallée Poussin, probably the most keen-sighted of Western scholars of Buddhism. In his *Nirvāṇa*, Paris, 1925, he writes: 'Il est utile de distinguer dans le Bouddhisme, comme dans d'autres religions, la foi et les systèmes, celle-ci essentielle et stable, ceux-là secondaires et variables. L'indianisme officiel ignore la foi bouddhique au profit d'un des systèmes que la communauté a patronés, et fait sortir le Bouddhisme de ce système' (p. 26).

With direct reference to the main thesis of this article, one might also quote from *The Buddhist religion* of Richard H. Robinson, who died tragically in 1970: 'The quest for the objective Gautama, like that of the historical Jesus, is foredoomed to a measure of failure. We cannot get behind the portrait that the early communities synthesized for their founders; their reports are all we have. But though the Community (*Saṅgha*) created the image of the Buddha, the Buddha created the Community and in so doing impressed upon it his personality. The master exhorted his disciples to imitate him, and they formulated and transmitted an image of him, along with his teachings, as a model for later generations to imitate' (Dickenson, Encino, California, 1970, 13). It is not for us to distort this total image, in order to fit it into an invented historical framework, suitable perhaps to other times and other places, but entirely remote from the religious life of India in the fifth century B.C.

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BUDDHARUPA

Observations on the evolution of Buddha image

- Nirmal C. Sinha

I

In the first two decades of this century, Western scholars like Albert Foucher and John Marshall had concluded that image or icon was not a characteristic feature of Indian religions till the advent of the Greeks, Iranians, and others from Western Asia. This conclusion about the origins of image and image worship under foreign influence was supported by the progressive and reformist Hindus - mostly belonging to Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj or Prarthana Samaj - who held that idolatry was un-Vedic and un-Brahmanical and that image or image worship was a later Puranic feature. Theravada Buddhists spread all over South Asia and flourishing in Eastern India also accepted the concept of image being a foreign import to Indian soil; Theravadins pointed to Gautama Buddha's objection to any attachment or adoration of Rupakaya (Buddha's physical form).

Conservative and orthodox Hindus, who held that Pratima (likeness = image) was an indigenous and original item of Brahmanical religion, very strongly reacted to the findings of Western scholars and their Indian supporters. The Hindus had their stoutest champions in Kashiprasad Jayaswal and Ananda Coomaraswamy, who contended that Rupa (form) was not unknown to the imagery of early Vedic priests and sages, and that in later Vedic period instances of making or worshipping images are clear and frequent. Besides they contended that archaeological evidence of Indian images before the advent of the Greeks and other foreigners was not forthcoming for the simple reason that both ravages of time and iconoclasm of some invaders from the West account for such phenomenon. In 1924 a Western scholar, Victor Goloubew challenged the findings of Foucher and Marshall and pointed out that generations before the Gandhara image was designed in North Western India by Greek devotees, image of typical Indian style was made in Mathura.

Almost the same time the excavated objects, including images and icons, from the Indus Valley were being sorted and displayed for scientific investigation. The study of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa remains was somewhat completed by 1930, and an Indian scholar, R.P.

Chanda, found the earliest representation of Siva Pasupati and Yogi in Indus Valley culture. Chanda's finding was accepted by Western scholars and was ably utilized by brilliant men like Kashiprasad Jayaswal.

Jayaswal and other Indian scholars, including progressive or reformist Hindus, referred to the Tibetan tradition that there were exquisite and grand images in the Indo-Gangetic plains even before the Mauryas were ruling. The evidence of Lama Taranatha was quite handy.

An altogether new dimension was added to the question of Buddha image when the Soviet archaeologists made extensive excavations in Russian Turkistan shortly after Second World War was over. The Turkistan hauls contained a good number of Buddha and Bodhisattva images. The study of these images from Turkistan, made in 1960-70, is still on.

II

Modern scientific study of the Vedic religion was undertaken towards the end of 19th century but still now no categorical answer about the prevalence or absence of idolatry in Vedic religion is found. Max Muller and Macdonell, to mention only two Western scholars, were of opinion that 'the religion of the Vedas knows no idol' or that 'the religion of Vedas was not idolatry'. Indian scholars, except those who subscribed to the philosophy of Vedanta and Samkhya, straightaway rejected the findings of such Western authorities. Reference to the many deities featuring in the Vedic pantheon was emphasized by the Indian scholars who also contended that the Rupa (form) of such Vedic deities was not unknown and that in the later Vedic period images of some of the Vedic deities were well under way. Whether these images grew out of Rig Vedic imagery or were borrowed from the pre-Aryan inhabitants is the moot question; there could be no question about prevalence of images or icons in later Vedic period.

The scholars on either side, it appears lost sight of the great fact that many deities, many rituals or many ways of worship were accommodated in the Vedic religion. The Vedic seers made a most profound statement:

EKAM SAT : VIPRA BAHUDHA VADANTI "That which Is, is one. Wise men speak of it in many ways" (Eng. tr. Suniti Kumar Chatterrji).

We have in this pithy utterance the truth that the Absolute or Transcendental may be realized in diverse ways. In such climate of co-existence 'a deity with form' (Sakara) and 'a deity without form' (Nirakara) could be worshipped in same hermitage or same household; men of different intellectual or moral denominations would aspire for spiritual bliss in their respective ways.

The Upanishads, aptly called the Vedanta, discuss the form of God in highly critical manner. Kena Upanishad makes clear that the Brahman cannot be comprehended with our sense organs. About vision of God, it says 'that which one sees not with the eye, that by which one sees the eye's seeings, know that indeed to be the Brahman, not this which men follow after here' (Eng. tr. Sri Aurobindo). Svetasvatara Upanishad states that the Great One has no likeness or form and lays down 'His form is not to be seen; no one sees him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know him as abiding in the heart become immortal'. (Eng. tr. Radhakrishnan)

Rupa or form of God is expounded in Bhagavadgita by Krishna in answering Arjuna's query. Arjuna wanted to know in which forms or objects God should be meditated. In answer Krishna first enumerated all phenomenal objects, all fauna, all flora, and so on and so forth. Krishna then gave Arjuna a supernatural eye to behold the mystic power of God. Arjuna had then the vision to look up the entire universe, the process of its creation and the process of destruction of the universe. In short, Arjuna beheld that God was identical with cosmos. Such Cosmic Vision would lead to meditation or worship of God in multiple forms, diverse forms, even contrary forms as Sakara and Nirakara or Rupa and Arupa.

In a later supplement to Bhagavadgita it was thus proclaimed : 'Agni (fire) is the object of worship for the Brahmin, Devata (divinity) is worshipped in the heart of the Muni, Pratima (image) is adored by the men of low intellect, while one whose sight is not limited notices God everywhere' (Uttaragita). The spirit of co-existence between diverse forms and modes of spiritual striving eventually flowered into the great Puranic pantheon. Meanwhile Gautama Buddha's religion developed into what came to be called Mahayana. Mahayana had a grand pantheon and the Indo-Gangetic plains witnessed a period of co-existence between Puranic Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. Exchanges of deities and rituals between the two religions developed the iconography of both.

The deity which had the same leading role in both Hinduism and Mahayana was Tara (Dolma). It is not yet established which religion had worshipped Tara first and which religion borrowed it from the other. There is controversy even about the provenance of the Goddess. Most scholars hold that Tara originated somewhere in Inner Asia. While some scholars locate Tara's homeland in the Pamir's region, others point to Mahachina on southern borders of Mongolia.

III

The Theravada tradition of Gautama Buddha's ban on BuddhaRupa is well-known among scholars both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Mahayana (i.e. Northern Buddhist) tradition that Kausambi King Udayana, a devotee of Gautama Buddha, had the Buddha image made during the life time of the Master is treated as a mere legend by the modern scholars; many modern scholars would even profess ignorance of the First Image legend. With my lifelong experience of Mahayana scholars and monks in the Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan monasteries I cannot reject the Udayana legend of BuddhaRupa. According to Tibetan tradition, the first images, a few indeed, made in some sacred wood, were not meant for exhibition; Gautama Buddha's Rupakaya was not intended for public gaze. Generations later, according to the tradition, images were made in stone or clay and this was definitely before the Hellenistic devotees made images conforming to their own aesthetics.

The Gandhara Image raises a fundamental issue about Buddhism and Buddhist art. In discussing the origins of Buddha image it is hardly noticed that Gautama Buddha was the first prophet who spoke on spiritual matters for all mankind.

In India the Vedic Rishis and outside India Zoroaster, Moses, and Confucius preached for their own group: racial or tribal. In short the prophets before Gautama Buddha were founders of ethno-centric religions. Buddha spoke for all men and had no rules for eligibility on grounds of birth, caste and race. Five centuries after Gautama Buddha, Jesus

Christ preached for all mankind and another five centuries later Hazrat Mohammed preached for all mankind. Buddhist scholars point out that the Asokan missionaries, Theras and Theraputras visiting West Asia in 3rd century B.C. were pioneers in the movement that Spiritual Truth (Dharma) was not to be confined to the so-called elect.

For any appreciation of Buddhist art or Buddhist iconography, we must note as our first premise the fact that Dharma (as Buddha called his religion) was not for any particular race, tribe or caste. As in the expounding of BuddhaDharma, so in the shaping of BuddhaRupa, there was no question of civilized or barbarian. The Buddha image was thus destined to develop under diverse racial and territorial trends or styles. With Mahayana which was frankly and outspokenly a religion for all men belonging to different races and languages; therefore BuddhaRupa was bound to reflect diverse schools and styles of art. Buddhist iconography in India and outside India had no inhibition in learning new ideas and new forms every where. This resulted in a multi-splendoured iconography portraying a multi-splendoured pantheon.

IV

Gautama Buddha himself noticed a tendency among his disciples to adore the Master's Body. He very much deplored this tendency and disapproved any cult of image or icon for his followers.

An old disciple Vakkali, while on deathbed, was very eager to see Buddha in person. Buddha came to him and said "O Vakkali, why you crave to have a look at this body of impure matter. Vakkali, one who perceives Dharma perceives me. One who perceives me, perceives Dharma" (Samyutta Nikaya). Buddha said that his Teaching was important and not his Body. On different occasions through dialogues and sermons Buddha spoke against adoration of his Rupakaya i.e. Buddha Rupa. Disciples and devotees would not defy the Master while present on earth. King Udayana of Kausambi had however got the master's image made in sacred wood. This image was for record and not for public exhibition or wide circulation. However the tendency to adore BuddhaRupa continued and even the Stupas containing the Buddha relics would have often events of the Master's life depicted on the walls around. The reliefs and friezes executed by Maurya and Sunga artists on the Stupas preserve the first expositions of BuddhaRupa. By the first century of Christian era Rupakaya was popular with the common people, that is, believers of lower intellect. Buddha images in stone and clay were quite prevalent in the first century A.D.

The portrayal of the Master's Body was however after the Indian tradition which stood for an idealistic form. The Master's Body, to quote Buddhaghosha (5th century A.D.), was adorned with eighty minor signs and thirty two major signs of a great man. Therefore a Rupakaya adorned with eighty minor and thirty two major signs could not inspire a grossly realistic form. Mathura, Amaravati and Sarnath produced different types of BuddhaRupa but none of these types was realistic. Gandhara under the influence of Hellenistic aesthetics produced what may be labeled as "most realistic"; Gandhara style could not spread all over Jambudvipa.

This does not mean that Buddhist artists and devotees were hostile to all foreign aesthetics. The image of Gautama Buddha as shaped in Indian ethos was a sublime synthesis of realism and idealism, a perfect mixture of fact and fancy. In this process there

was to be no compromise with gross realism as found in so many Gandhara images. Mahayana with a pantheon of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas was free to adopt or incorporate ideas and forms of other peoples who took refuge in Buddhism. Vast and varied contents of Mahayana could be depicted to the satisfaction of both Indian and foreign imagery.

Theravada (Hinayana) permits only one image, the image of Gautama SakyaMuni, the Historical Buddha. Mahayana pantheon contains the Historical Buddha, other mortal or mundane Buddhas, celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the Primordial Buddha manifested in five forms. The number in Mahayana pantheon is conventionally counted as thousand. This large number, thousand or more, is grouped in three tier; the top tier is composed of the Five (Primordials), the middle tier consists of emanations or reflexes from the Five, and the bottom is composed of Historical Buddha and his precursors and successors. For the believer the tiers are Three Bodies : Dharmakaya or the Cosmic Body, Sambhogakaya or the Body of Bliss, and the Nirmanakaya or the Mundane Body.

Mahayana accommodating many peoples, many regions, and many languages could thus adopt ideas and forms of so many different cultures. Even the most important members of the Mahayana pantheon may have begun in foreign lands and under foreign aesthetics. Thus Amitabha, one of the five Dharmakaya, is considered by some scholars to have originated in Iranian climate. Manjusri, the topmost Sambhogakaya, is claimed by many scholars to have originated in borderlands of Manchuria and Mongolia. Avalokitesvara, the lord of the pantheon, is also thought of having some non-Indian elements.

The recent discoveries in Russian Turkistan suggest connections of Mahayana with many cultures besides the Bactrian Greek.

Researches by Russian scholars like LITVINSKIJ, MASSON and BONGARD-LEVIN have thrown much light on many obscure points but the history of BuddhaRupa is yet to be completed.

This article presents a gist of the first part of the book, "Buddha Image in Mahayana Tradition", scheduled for publication in autumn 1991. Details of references and the original Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan texts will be found in the scheduled publication.

OUR THREE MAJOR ART PUBLICATIONS

- 1 **RGYAN DRUG MCHOG GNYIS** (Six ornaments and Two Excellents) reproduces ancient scrolls (1670 A.C.) depicting Buddha, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Gunaprabha and Sakyaprabha. Reproductions are as per originals today after 300 years of display and worship with an attempt at restoration or retouching. The exposition in English presents the iconographical niceties and the theme of the paintings, namely, the Mahayana philosophy; the treatment is designed to meet the needs of the general reader with an interest in the Trans-Himalayan art or Mahayana. A glossary in Sanskrit-Tibetan a key to place names and a note on source material are appended. Illustrated with five colour plates and thirteen monochromes. (English text) Folio 54 Second Reprint. 1980 and priced at Rs. 150 /-
- 2 **SANGS RGYAS STONG**: Subtitled An Introduction to Mahayana Iconography. This book of 75 pages (11 and half inches x 8 inches) contains 4 colour plates and more than 80 line drawings (sketches); thick paper back with Jacket depicting 33 Buddhas. Intended for the lay readers, this introductory account is based on original sources in Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan. The basic concept of thousand Buddhas is explain at length, while all the important symbols and images in their variant forms are presented from believers' point of view. Art critic or academician will find the book worthy of perusal. (English text), Folio 75 pub. 1988 and priced at Rs. 150 /-
- 3 **TALES THE THANKAS TELL**: Subtitled An Introduction to Tibetan Scroll Portraits. The book has 64 pages (11 & half inches x 8 inches) and contains well produced eleven colour plates, with Jacket depicting Buddha Sakyamuni and his two disciples. The book tells much about Mahayana Pantheon and particularly about the legends and myths around Buddhism as depicted through numerous Scroll Portrait forms. These colourful portraits speak about the contacts with the traditions of Tartary, China, India, Iran and Byzantium. Pub. 1989 and priced at Rs. 200 /-

HĪNAYĀNA AND MAHĀYĀNA

A BROAD OUTLINE

- Anukul Chandra Banerjee

About a century after Buddha's Mahāparinibbāna, dissension arose among the monks regarding his actual words and their interpretation. This controversy led to the origin and growth of more than eighteen schools of thought, all claiming to have preserved Buddha's teachings. They took up the cause of Buddhism with great zeal and endeavoured hard to popularise it in the territories in and outside India. E. Conze observes, "The first five centuries of Buddhist history saw the development of a number of schools, or sects, which are traditionally counted as eighteen. The historical traditions about them are uncertain, contradictory and confused¹". André Bareau has, however, discussed chronologically the origin of these different schools². Lamotte³ has also dealt with the geographical distribution of the different schools on the basis of the inscriptions.

The first dissension was created by the monks of Vaisālī through their breach of the rules of discipline as laid down in the Vinaya-piṭaka. The Cullavagga and the Ceylonese chronicles record that the Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaisali just a century after the passing away of Buddha to examine the validity of the ten practices (dasa vatthuni)⁴ indulged in by the Vajjian monks. The works of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinitadeva, extant in Tibetan and Chinese translations provide us with a quite different account. According to them the Council is said to have been convened, because of the differences of opinion among the monks in regard to the five dogmas⁵ propounded by Mahādeva a man of great learning and wisdom".

Traditions differ in regard to the cause of convening of the Second Council. But all the accounts record unanimously that a schism occurred about a century after the Mahāparinibbāna of Buddha, due to the efforts of a few monks for a relaxation of the vigour of conduct current at the time; the orthodox monks were not ready to allow that. The orthodox points of view prevailed and the monks opposed to them were expelled from the Saṅgha. They were not, however, disappointed. They gained strength gradually and convened shortly another Council in which ten thousand monks participated. In the history of Buddhism it is known as Mahāsaṅgīti (Great Council). The monks who joined the Council later on were called the Mahāsaṅghikas, while the orthodox monks were distinguished as the Theravādins. Thus occurred the first schism which divided the early Buddhist Saṅgha into

two primitive schools - the Theravāda and the Mahāsaṅghika. Undoubtedly this Council marked the evolution of new schools in Indian Buddhism.

It would be quite pertinent in this context to point out that this schism was followed by a series of schisms, and in course of time several sub-sects branched off from these two sects. The Theravāda was split up into ten sub-sects and the Mahāsaṅghika into seven. These appeared one after another in close succession within three or four hundred years after Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. But these different sects could not maintain their individual existences for long. Most of them either disappeared or merged with other sects shortly after their origin, only four schools survived. The four schools that could outline and expand their own field of influence were the *Vaibhāṣika*, *Sautrāntika*, *Mādhyaṃika* and *Yogācāra*. In course of time these four schools, however, coalesced together gradually and their philosophical views were formulated into two schools - *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*.

Buddhism today has two main sects well-known as *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*. The former prevails in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma (Myanmar), Thailand (Siam), Cambodia and other countries, the latter in Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan and others. The epithet *Hīnayāna* has been given to the Theravāda Buddhism by the *Mahāyāna* ists. The Theravādins never call themselves *Hīnayānist*s. Asaṅga's *Sutrālaṃkāra* mentions the points of difference between the *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna* and indicates that it attempts to show the inferiority of the *Hīnayānist*s on mental calibre and their unfit ness to comprehend the truth.

The Pali canon (Tipitaka) forms the basis of the *Hīnayāna* while *Mahāyāna* has no such three-fold division of the canon. Of the numerous *Mahāyāna* works, nine books 'so called Nine Dharmas', which are held in great reverence are the most important works of the *Mahāyāna* school, as they trace the origin and development of *Mahāyāna* as also point out its fundamental teachings.

The ideal of *Mahāyāna* is Buddhahood while that of *Hīnayāna* is Arhatship. The *Hīnayānist*s want their own Nibbāna first as they do not care for others, while the *Mahāyānist*s do not care for their own Nibbana - they strive hard for the emancipation of all beings. Their principal objective is to make beings attain nibbāna in life. *Mahāyāna* has further inculcated the concept of Bodhisattva which is its another ethical ideal. Bodhisattva means a being who is on the way to Buddhahood (enlightenment) but has not yet obtained it. In order to remove the sufferings of the world a Bodhisattva desires that he should stay as long as the sky and the world exist. He further declares that let him alone experience all the wordly miseries and, let all the beings of the world enjoy happiness owing to the meritorious deeds done by him as a Bodhisattva⁶.

With the development of Bodhicitta (thought of enlightenment) the practice of the six paramitas, the fulfillment of which is compulsory for the Bodhisattva is enjoined upon. As the Bodhisattva practices the paramitas, his mind rises higher in path of spiritual progress and ultimately becomes a Buddha. The *Hīnayāna* also recognizes stages for the attainment of true knowledge. But the two schools differ in their conception of the highest truth. According to the *Hīnayāna* it is *pudgalaśūnyatā* (non-existence of soul) while according to the *Mahayana* it is both *pudgala* and *dharmaśūnyatā*/non-existence of soul as also of all things of the world.

Another distinguishing feature of *Mahāyāna* is its conception of *Trikāya*. Each Buddha has three bodies: (i) *Nirmāṇakāya*, (ii) *Sambhogakāya* and (iii) *Dharmakāya*. *Nirmāṇakāya* is the human body of the Buddha. *Sambhogakāya* is the subtle body of the

Buddha. Dharmakāya is the body made pure by the practice of the Bodhipakṣiya and other dharma that make a Buddha. It is not a body at all it is simply the 'void', śūnyatā. It can be equated with tathatā, tathāgatagarbha and dharmadhātu.

According to the Hīnayāna the world is in a state of flux but is not unreal. But the Mahāyāna maintains the flux and reality are two contradictory terms and therefore the world is the creation of the mind. In his *Vijnaptimātratāsiddhi* Vasubandhu has like wise pointedly shown the advocates of Hīnayāna labour under misconceptions, complete eradication of which is the main object of those of the Mahāyāna.

Mahāyāna further lays emphasis on the practice of the four Brahmavihāras, viz, maitri (friendliness), Karuṇā (compassion), muditā (sympathetic joy) and upekṣā (equanimity). Through their practice one attains purity of heart, and it is these Brahmavihāras which made Buddhism also very popular.

Lastly, Mahāyāna is metaphysical and speculative while in Hīnayāna there is no such ground for speculation. Both the sects, however, agree in the fundamentals of Buddhism, viz, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the non-existence of the soul, the gradual stages of the spiritual advancement and the doctrine of Karma. The two are closely related to each other, hence the study of one entails the study of the other.

REFERENCES

1. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, pl 119.

2. BEFO, 1956, pp. 16 ff.

3. *Historic du Buddhism Indien*, p. 578

4. 'They are' :-

- (i) Singilonakappa - the practice of carrying salt in a horn, i.e. storing articles of food.
- (ii) Drangulakappa - the practice of taking meals when the shadow is two fingers broad, i.e. taking meals after midday.
- (iii) Gamantarakappa - the practice of going to an adjacent village and taking meals for the second time.
- (iv) Avasakappa - the observance of the Uposatha ceremonies in various places in the same parish (sima).
- (v) Anumatikappa - doing deed and obtaining its sanction after wards.
- (vi) Acinnkappa - the customary practices as precedent.
- (vii) Amathitakappa - drinking of butter-milk after meals.
- (viii) Jalogimpatum - drinking of today.
- (ix) Adasakam nisidanam - use of a rug without a fringe.
- (x) Jataruparajatam - acceptance of gold and silver.

5.

- (i) An Arhat may commit a sin under unconscious temptation.
- (ii) One may be an Arhat and not know of it.
- (iii) An Arhat may have doubts on matters of doctrine.
- (iv) One cannot attain Arhatship without the aid of a teacher.
- (v) The noble ways may begin by a shout, that is, one meditating seriously on religion may make such an exclamation as 'How sad ! How sad !' and by so doing attains progress towards perfection - the path is attained by an exclamation of astonishment.

6.

Akasasya sthityryavad yavaca jagatah sthitiḥ/
Tavanmama sthityirbhuyat jagadduhkhani nighnataḥ//
Yatkincit jagato dukkham tat sarvaṃ mayi pacyatam/
Bodhisattvasubhaiḥ sarvaṃ jagat sukhitam astu.//



Sman-gyi-bla Vaidur-ya
'od-kyi-rgyal-po
 (Bhaisajya-guru-vaidurya-Prabharaja)

VAIDURYA

- Marianne Winder

The Tibetan Medicine Buddha

THE COLOUR OF THE GEM *vaiḍūrya* plays a great role in Tibetan medicine. The Medicine Buddha is called *be-du-rya hod-kyi rgyal-po*, or 'King of the *Vaiḍūrya* Light'. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* of about AD 200 he is only called 'King of Healing'. But in a Chinese medical text of AD 500 to 600, the *Sūtra on the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Master of Healing* in Hsüan Tsang's *Tripitaka* version, he is called the '*Vaiḍūrya* Radiance *Tathāgata*'.¹ The Chinese word is *liu-li*. In Tibetan *vai-ḍu-rya* or *be-ḍu-rya* and other variant forms remain untranslated loan words. According to Jäschke's *Tibetan-English Dictionary*,² *be-du-rya* means 'azure stone, lapis lazuli'. It quotes *Dzanglun* (i.e., *hdzanis-blun*), a collection of legends, in which are mentioned the *Vaiḍūrya dKar.po*³ 'White *Vaiḍūrya*' and *Vaiḍūrya sNon.po*⁴ 'Blue *Vaiḍūrya*', which are titles of works on astronomy-astrology and on medicine, respectively. The *Tibetan-English Dictionary* of Chandra Das says:⁵

¹ Raoul Birnbaum, *The healing Buddha* (London: Rider, 1979), 151.

² H. A. Jäschke, *A Tibetan-English dictionary*, reprint of 1881 edition, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 371.

³ Short title of *phug-lugs rcis-kyi legs-bśad mkhas-pa'i vaiḍur dkar-po'i do-sal dpyod-ldan sñiri-nor*.

⁴ Short title of *gso-ba rig-pa'i bstan-bcos sman-bla'i dgonis-rgyan rgyud-bžihi gsal-byed bai-dur sñon-pohi mallika*.

⁵ Rai Sarat Chandra Das, *A Tibetan-English dictionary* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1902), 877.

bai-du-rya – malachite or chrysolite. There are three descriptions ... the yellow lapis-lazuli called *Mañjuri* [sic], the green lapis-lazuli called *Sugata*, the white lapis-lazuli called *Sūnya* [sic].

Mañjuri is probably an allusion to the Yellow Mañjuśrī, *Sugata* 'having fared well' is easily associated with green, the colour of growth, and the colour white with *Sūnya* 'empty'. However, there is no such thing as a white, green or yellow lapis lazuli. The colour blue is not mentioned by Chandra Das. The works called 'White *Vaidūrya*' and 'Blue *Vaidūrya*' to which can be added a book called 'Yellow *Vaidūrya*' on history do not seem to mean 'lapis lazuli'. Even the title 'Blue Lapis Lazuli' would not make sense because of the tautology, as lapis lazuli can have no other colour. Jaques André and Jean Filliozat compare the meanings of *vaidūrya* in nineteenth century dictionaries and come to the conclusion that the early nineteenth century ones favoured the meaning 'lapis lazuli',⁶ and that those near the end of the nineteenth century preferred 'cat's eye'.⁷

Beryl, cat's eye or lapis lazuli?

What, then, does *vaidūrya* mean? Etymologically it is related to Pāli *veḷuriya* and Prākṛit *veḷuriya*, *verulia*, *velurya* and *veḷulia*.⁸ Prākṛit *verulia* became Greek *βερυλλιον* whence came English 'beryl'.⁹ While Greek *βερυλλιον* and, from there, English *beryl* were derived from Prākṛit *verulia*, the Persian and Arabic words *billaur*, *ballūr* and *bulūr* meaning 'crystal or beryl' were also borrowed from India, but according to Alfred Master, they are not derived from Sanskrit *vaidūrya* or Pāli *veḷuriya*.¹⁰ He does not sug-

⁶For example Horace Hayman Wilson, *Dictionary, Sanskrit and English* (Calcutta: Education Press, 1819).

⁷*L'Inde vue de Rome. Textes latins de l'Antiquité relatifs à l'Inde* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), 371–372, note 216.

⁸Richard Pischel, *Comparative grammar of the Prākṛit languages*, translated from the German by Subhadra Jhā, 2nd edition, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), 173. § 241 gives various Prākṛit forms.

⁹J. Halévy, 'Mélanges etymologiques', *Mémoires de la Société Linguistique*, xi (1900), 82, thinks that the Prākṛit form *velurya* is a corruption from Greek *βερυλλιον*, diminutive of *βερυλλος* 'beryl' and that this word of Greek origin was imported into India either during the campaigns of Alexander the Great or later. This view does not hold water because the word *vaidūrya* is found in Sanskrit sources of as early as the *Adbhuta Brāhmaṇa* of 650 BC.

¹⁰Alfred Master, 'Indo-Aryan and Dravidian, Section II', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xi (1943–46), 304–307.

gest a Prākṛit form from which they could be derived. 'Crystal' can be a generalised term for 'beryl' because the beryl occurs in crystalline form.

The meaning of the Sanskrit word *vaiḍūrya* is also 'beryl' according to Mayrhofer.¹¹ To corroborate his opinion he quotes A. Master who gives a chronology of the occurrence of *vaiḍūrya* and its Prākṛit and Pāli forms and asserts that the evidence for the meaning 'beryl' is conclusive for all of them.¹² But he mentions¹³ that Mallinātha¹⁴ of the fifteenth century identifies *vaiḍūrya* with lapis lazuli, and that Apte followed his example.¹⁵ He also mentions that Sten Konow¹⁶ and A. C. Woolner¹⁷ translate Prākṛit *veḷuria*, *verulia* as 'cat's eye', and Dines Andersen does the same with Pāli *veḷuriya*.¹⁸ The passage in which Mallinātha explains *vaiḍūrya* as lapis lazuli connects it at the same time with the meaning of 'cat's eye' as follows:¹⁹

The women are afraid of the rays of the moon coming through the window, which are reflected on the *vaiḍūrya* walls and therefore
biḍālekṣaṇabhīṣaṇābhyaḥ

which Buddruss explains as 'frighten like cat's eyes' and Master translates as 'make terrible cat's eyes'. Thakkura Pheru translates *vaiḍūrya* in this context as 'chrysoberyl' or 'cat's eye' saying that Māgha's use clearly indicates the chatoyancy of *vaiḍūrya*.²⁰ Perhaps the difference in the dates is significant: Māgha wrote his work during the seventh century AD and

¹¹ Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen. A concise etymological Sanskrit dictionary* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), iv, 267.

¹² Master, loc. cit., 305.

¹³ Ibid., 304.

¹⁴ Kolāchala Mallinātha, *Commentary on Māgha's Śiṣupālavadha*, iii. 45. (Bombay: Nitya Sagar Press, 1923).

¹⁵ Vaman Shrivram Apte, *Sanskrit English dictionary*, revised edition, (Bombay: Gopal Narayan, 1957-59).

¹⁶ Rājasekhara, *Rāja cekhara's Karpūramañjarī*, edited by Sten Konow, with notes and translation by Charles Rockwell Lanman, (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1901).

¹⁷ A. C. Woolner, *Introduction to Prākṛit*, 3rd edition, (Lahore: Motilal Banarsidass, 1939), § 58, pp. 24, 228.

¹⁸ Dines Andersen, *Pāli Reader*, 4th edition, (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1935).

¹⁹ Quoted from George Buddruss, 'Zum Lapis Lazuli in Indien', *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*, v/vi (1980), 6.

²⁰ Thakkura Pheru, *Rayanaparikkhā, a Medieval Prakrit Text on Gemmology*, translated by S. R. Saṇma, (Aligarh: 1984), 67-68, verse 94. Pheru's reference to Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, i. 24 (fifth century AD) suggests the crystals of beryl. Pheru's book was not accessible to me, and I am indebted for this and other references to Dr Arion Roşu.

Mallinātha's commentary is of the fifteenth century. Louis Finot translates *vaiḍūrya* as 'cat's eye' because of the passage in Buddhapaṭṭa's *Ratna-parikṣā*, 200, which says that the *vaiḍūrya* shows such a variety of brilliances that it gives the impression of flashing sparks.²¹ The passage in the *Karpūra-maṇjarī* which Konow interprets as 'cat's eye' is taken by Lanman to mean 'beryl'.²² Böhlingk and Roth translate *vaiḍūrya* as 'beryl' without explaining why.²³

In the Pāli canon

Looking for *veḷuriya* in the Pāli Canon we find in *Dīghanikāya*, ii. 84:²⁴

Just, O King, as if there were a *veḷuriya* gem, bright, of the purest water, with eight facets, excellently cut, clear, translucent ...

Now, a lapis lazuli is opaque, and the whole purpose of this passage is to show that a coloured thread going through a translucent gem can be clearly seen, comparing it to a purified mind recognising the truth easily. Lapis lazuli is a rock and does not form crystals. The beryl is six-sided but the writer of this passage and similar ones may have regarded the two ends as two more sides. Otto Franke says to this passage that in other passages eight-sided columns are mentioned made of *veḷuriya* and that the listeners' ears may have got attuned to this so that the idea of eight facets are an assimilation to this habit of thinking.²⁵ There is also the association of the Eightfold Path.

Vinayapitaka, ii. 12 has:²⁶

You are not, O Bhikkhus, to use bowls made of gold, silver, set with jewels, or made of beryl, crystal, copper, glass, tin, lead, bronze.

²¹ Louis Finot, *Les lapidaires indiens*, (Paris: Bouillon, 1896), xlv-xlvii and 43.

²² Cf. note 16.

²³ Otto Böhlingk, and Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch*, (St. Petersburg: K. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1855-75).

²⁴ Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol. ii, reprint of 1899 edition, (London: Pāli Text Society, 1973), 87.

²⁵ *Quellen der Religionsgeschichte*, (Göttingen: Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Religionsgesch. Kommission, 1923), 77, note 4.

²⁶ Translated by Max Müller, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xx, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 82. I. B. Horner also translated *veḷuriya* as 'beryl' in *Cullavagga*, 5th Khandhaka, 'On Minor Matters', *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol. xx, (London: Luzac, 1952), 152.

Max Müller's note 1:

It is clear from verses 192–196 of the 13th chapter of the *Rājanighaṇṭu* written by Narahari in the 13th century (or according to B. Laufer, the 15th) that at that time *vaiḍūrya* meant 'cat's eye'. But it is uncertain that that was the only meaning ... at the time when this passage was composed.

I shall come back to the *Rājanighaṇṭu* later.

Samyuttanikāya, i. 643 has:²⁷

Even as a beautiful, illustrious berylstone of eight facets, well polished, when laid on an orange coloured cloth shines and glows and blazes ...

Mrs. Rhys Davids' choice of stone seems right since the implication is that the gem is transparent and has facets.

Aṅguttaranikāya, iii. 70, 24 has:²⁸

Within this *cakkavāla* [sphere] there are pearls, gems, cat's eyes ... all these are not worth one sixteenth part of the merit resulting from a fast with eight vows.

Here again is the pre-occupation with the figure eight. Nyānatiloka's German translation has Türkisen for *veḷuriya*.²⁹

Aṅguttaranikāya, ii. 19, 8 has:³⁰

Lord, the mighty ocean has many and diverse treasures; there is the pearl, the crystal, the lapis lazuli (*veḷuriya*), the shell, quartz, coral, silver, gold, the ruby and cat's eye (*masāragalla*).

E. M. Hare's note to *veḷuriya*: 'the colour of bamboo, of the acacia flower' must be taken from a Pāli commentary. Here I thought I would find out what colour *veḷuriya* was: bamboo when young is usually dark green but turns into yellow wood after one year, and the acacia flower is white or yellow. This was inconclusive until I read the passage in the *Rājanighaṇṭu*.³¹

²⁷ Part I, chapter ii, section 3, *The Divers Sectaries Suttas*, 9, translated by Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 89.

²⁸ *Tikaṇipāṭa, Mahāvagga*, translated by Edmund Rowland, reprint of PTS 1885 edition. (Galle: J. Gooneratne, 1913), 235.

²⁹ *Die Reden des Buddha aus dem Aṅguttara-Nikāya. Inhalt: Einer-bis Dreierbuch* 2nd edition, (München: Oskar Schloss, 1923), 348.

³⁰ *Aṭṭhanipāṭa, Mahāvagga*, translated by E. M. Hare, (London: Luzac, 1935), 137.

³¹ *Die indischen Mineralien. Narahari, Rājanighaṇṭu, Sanskrit und deutsch herausgegeben von Richard Garbe* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1882), xiii. 194.

The cat's eye can be recognised from three types of sheen, that is, when it slightly shimmers like a bamboo leaf, shines strongly like a peacock's neck or has the reddish-brown appearance of the eye of cats.

Apart from the fact that my favourite cat would object to the latter description, this seems to be a standard comparison unless it has been lifted out of the Pāli commentary used by Hare. The comparison with a bamboo is probably due to a conventional false etymology which associates *veḷuriya* with Pāli *veḷu* or *veṇu*, both meaning 'bamboo'. E. M. Hare, in spite of his note, 'the colour of the acacia flower', translates *veḷuriya* as 'lapis lazuli'. The reason for this is not far to seek. At the end of the enumeration in the *Anguttaranikāya* a new gem has appeared, the *masāragalla*, which Hare translates as 'cat's eye'.

While the *Rājanighaṇṭu* compares the sheen of the cat's eye to that of the bamboo leaf,³² Hare's note to the passage in the *Anguttaranikāya* compares the colour of the *veḷuriya*, translated by him as 'lapis lazuli', to a bamboo.³³

The *Rājanighaṇṭu* is a compilation of various works. Verse 194 combines the comparison to a peacock's neck with a comparison to the eye of a cat, and therefore in that passage clearly means the 'cat's eye' gem. In verse 216 in chapter 13, the lapis lazuli is described and also compared to a peacock's neck as follows:³⁴

That lapis lazuli must be regarded as genuine and auspicious
which is without white flecks, is blackish or dark blue, smooth,
heavy, pure, shining and like a peacock's neck.

This description of lapis lazuli corresponds to the mineralogical facts. The white flecks are caused by calcite. Here five Sanskrit words are translated by 'lapis lazuli', but not *vaidūrya*.

The comparison of *veḷuriya* to a peacock's neck in Hare's note³⁵ can be substantiated with a passage in Jātaka no. 32, the *Naccajāṭaka*:³⁶ 'peacock, your neck in hue like lapislazuli ...' This translates *veḷuriyavaṇṇupanibhā*. Pāli *nibhā* means 'lustre', and *vaṇṇa*, Sanskrit *varṇa*, does not have to mean 'colour' but just 'beauty, appearance'. So the passage could equally mean,

³² Garbe, *Die indischen Mineralien*.

³³ Hare (tr.), *Mahāvagga*, 137.

³⁴ Ibid., 13, 216.

³⁵ Hare (tr.), *Mahāvagga*, 137.

³⁶ Translated under the editorship of E. B. Cowell by Robert Chalmers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), i. 84.

‘peacock, your neck has more lustre than the appearance of beryl’. The *Rājanighaṇṭu* may have borrowed the simile from the *Jātaka*.

Now, while Chalmers translated *veḷuriya* in *Jātaka* no. 32 as ‘lapis lazuli’, H. T. Francis and R. A. Neil, the translators of volume three, still under Cowell’s editorship, translated in *Jātaka* no. 419 *veḷuriya* as ‘emeralds’.³⁷

idam suvaṇṇakāyūraṃ muttāveḷuriyā

Here is a golden necklace and emeralds and pearls.

In volume four of the same edition, translated by W. H. D. Rouse, in *Jātaka* no. 463, the word *veḷuriya* is translated as ‘coral’:³⁸

tasmim̐ pana samudde vaṃsarāgaveḷuriyaṃ

Now, this ocean was full of coral the colour of bamboos.

Rouse’s note says: ‘the scholiast explains that the sea was red, like the reeds called ‘scorpion-reed’ or ‘crab-reed’, which are red in colour’. He adds that the haul was coral, which is also the word used at the end of the story (*pavālo*). In fact, on the next page the sequence of precious substances found in the ocean, itself a fanciful notion, is:³⁹ diamonds, gold, silver, emeralds, *vaṃsarāgaveḷuriyaṃ*; at the end of the passage it is: ‘gold, silver, jewels, corals (this time *pavāla*), and diamonds.’ Thus ‘emeralds and *veḷuriya* the colour of bamboo’ was replaced by ‘jewels and corals’.

The *Dhammapada* is believed to be an early text. It is mentioned in the *Milindapañha* which belongs to the beginnings of the Christian era. The commentary to it is called *Dhammapadāṭṭhakathā* and is attributed in its colophon to Buddhaghosa which fixes its date to about AD 400 even if Buddhaghosa was not himself the author. In the part commenting on *Sahassavaggo*, viii. 3, the line *ime suvaṇṇakāyūrā sabbe veḷuriyāmayā* is translated by Eugene Watson Burlingame as, ‘Take these golden bracelets, all set with beryls’.⁴⁰

The *Milindapañha*, i. 267 has an enumeration of precious substances in which *masāragallaṃ veḷuriyo* are juxtaposed.⁴¹ I. B. Horner translates the two words as ‘cat’s eyes, lapis lazuli’.⁴² Here is the same situation as in

³⁷ *Sulāsajātaka*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), 262.

³⁸ *Suppārakajātaka*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁰ *Buddhist Legends Told from the Original Pāli Text of the Dhammapada Commentary*, (Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1921), 229.

⁴¹ Edited by V. Trenckner, 1928 reprint of PTS edition, (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1880), 267.

⁴² Translated by Isaline B. Horner, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol. 23, (London: Luzac, 1963), 85.

the *Aṅguttaranikāya*. Again, *veḷuriya* is translated as 'lapis lazuli' because *masāragalla* is 'cat's eye' or 'beryl'.

The Dictionary of the Pali Text Society renders *masāragalla* as 'a precious stone, cat's eye' and compares Sanskrit *masāra* 'emerald' and Sanskrit *galva* 'crystal'.⁴³ Childers' Pāli Dictionary quotes the *Abhidhānappadīpika* as saying that the *masāragalla* is a stone produced in the hill of Masara (otherwise unknown).⁴⁴ Note 10 by E. M. Hare to the *Aṅguttaranikāya* passage explains *masāragalla* which he has translated as cat's eye, as a 'variegated crystal.'

There does not seem to be any necessity for *masāragalla* to be regarded as 'cat's eye'. Recapitulating, one can say that the translators of Pāli usually rendered *veḷuriya* as 'cat's eye' or 'beryl', except when mentioned together with *masāragalla* which for unknown reasons came to be translated as 'cat's eye', and then *veḷuriya* was translated as 'lapis lazuli'.

Something very special

For Sanskrit, Monier Williams' dictionary says:⁴⁵

Vaiḍūrya – a cat's eye gem; at the end of a compound anything excellent of its kind.

This may well be the clue to the change in interpretation in Chinese and Tibetan: because lapis lazuli seems to be something very precious to the Chinese and the Tibetans they want to give this meaning to *vaiḍūrya* which is to express something very special though different from 'diamond' which in Sanskrit is *vajra*. Berthold Laufer maintains that not only *liu-li* was the Chinese word for *vaiḍūrya*, but that the whole word was *pi-liu-li* which occurs on a Han bas-relief and is a phonetic transcription of the Sanskrit word.⁴⁶ This is borne out by Stanislas Julien's list of loan words from the Sanskrit where, indeed, the syllable no.1374, *pi*, is shown to correspond regularly to Sanskrit *vai*, and *liu* corresponds to Sanskrit *rū*, and *li* to Sanskrit *rya*.⁴⁷

⁴³(Chipstead: Pali Text Society, 1925), ii. 249.

⁴⁴Robert Caesar Childers, *A dictionary of the Pali language*, reprint, (London: Kegan Paul, 1974).

⁴⁵(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899), 1021.

⁴⁶Publication 154, Anthropological series, volume x, (Chicago: Chicago Field Museum of Natural History, 1912), 111.

⁴⁷Stanislas Aignan Julien, *Méthode pour déchiffrer et transcrire les noms sanscrits qui se rencontrent dans les livres chinois* (Paris: Imprimerie Imperiale, 1861), 168.

It seems not unlikely that in some Sanskrit dialect the word was *vairūrya* from which the Prākṛit form *verulia* was derived. The 'cat's eye' is called in Chinese *mao tsing* 'cat's essence'. Laufer does not favour the 'lapis lazuli' translation though that is advocated by the books of Eitel⁴⁸ and F. Porter Smith,⁴⁹ which he quotes.

Chrysoberyl and aquamarine

Isidorus of Seville (560–636) mentions that beryl comes from India and is pale green, but that in chrysoberyl, i.e., cat's eye, a gold-coloured lustre can be observed.⁵⁰ Laufer decides it should be 'chrysoberyl' because this stone has an opalescent sheen. He also remarks: 'How could the Tibetan authors distinguish blue, green, white and yellow *vaidūrya* if the word should denote the "cat's eye"?'⁵¹ Thus, the cat's eye can be of only one colour and always has a sheen, while the beryl can be of many colours and without a sheen though it may have a sheen as Laufer's 'chrysoberyl'. There are yellow, green and white beryls, and the blue beryl is the aquamarine. It must be due to this that the Tibetan doctor Yeshe Donden and his translator Kelsang Jhampa were using the phrase 'King of Aquamarine Light' for the Medicine Buddha.⁵²

Also, they were, no doubt, aware that *vaidurya* must have meant 'aquamarine' in early Tibetan writings as is testified by the three lines from the *bKa'-than sde lna*^{52a} (Five sections of the reports of Padmasambhaya's words, chapter 22, item d) which is believed to have been composed during the lifetime of Padmasambhava and edited later.

'dab-chags rgyal-po gyu bya khu-byug-ni
sku-mdog bai-dur mthin kha'i-mdog chags-pas
hams-cad zil-gyis-non-pa bya'i rgyal-po

'the king of the birds, the turquoise bird, the cuckoo, which surpassed all because it was born with the colour of the blue *vaidurya*'. Here the colour of the blue *vaidurya* is at the same time the colour of the turquoise bird. This could well apply to the colour of the aquamarine which is a transparent bluish green while the turquoise itself is opaque bluish green but it could never apply to the dark blue opaque lapis lazuli.

⁴⁸ E. J. Eitel, *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism* (London: Trübner, 1888), 191.

⁴⁹ F. Porter Smith, *Contributions towards the Materia Medica of China* (London: Trübner, 1871).

⁵⁰ *Etymologiae*, xvi. 7. 5–7: *Beryllus in India gignitur, gentis suae lingua nomen habens, viriditate similis smaragdo, sed cum pallore... Chrysoberyllus dictus eo quod pallida eius viriditas in aureum colorem resplendat. Et hunc India mittit.*

⁵¹ Laufer, op. cit. in note 46, 111.

⁵² *The Ambrosia Heart Tantra, with annotations by Yeshe Donden*, translated by Jhampa Kelsang, (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1977), 15 and *passim*.

^{52a} In: Helmut Hoffmann, *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion*, in *Proceedings of the Academy of Science and Literature*, Mainz, 1950, pp.348 and 250, quoting *bKa'-than sde lna* "Five sections of the reports of Padmasambhava's words", chapter 22, item d, *bLon-po bka'i than-yig*.

Chinese interpretations

The Chinese *pi-liu-li* usually appears just as *liu-li* because the Chinese are as fond of abbreviating as are the Tibetans. Édouard Chavannes is cautious in the 1912 volume of his *Cinq cents contes et apologues*: 'des parures de *vaidūrya* (*lieu-li*), d'or et d'argent'.⁵³ But by 1921 he has made up his mind: 'des parures de béryl, d'or et d'argent'.⁵⁴ Demiéville in 1924 thinks it designated a purely mythical substance.⁵⁵

E. Burnouf in his translation of an incomplete version of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarika* from the Sanskrit enumerates the seven precious substances *suvarṇa*, *rūpya*, *vaidūrya*, *sphaṭika*, *lohitamukti*, *açmagarbha*, *musāragalva* [sic], interpreting them as 'gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red pearls (connecting *mukti* with *mukta*), emerald, cat's eye'.⁵⁶ W. E. Soothill in his translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika* from the Chinese, has gold, silver, lapis lazuli, moonstones, agates, coral, amber'.⁵⁷ In his note, Burnouf informs us that he is following the *Abhidhānappadīpika* in using 'lapis lazuli', and that, according to A. Rémusat, *musāragalva* means to the Chinese a blue and white stone, perhaps 'ammonite'.⁵⁸

Babylonian appreciation of lapis lazuli

A recent author dealing with Chinese scriptural accounts on the Medicine Buddha, in translating texts from the Chinese *Tripitāka*, consistently translates *liu-li* with 'lapis lazuli'. Raoul Birnbaum in his *The Healing Buddha*,⁵⁹ gives the reason for his choice, saying the Gandhāra is near the only source of lapis lazuli in the ancient world (i.e., Afghanistan) and that 'these images are noted for their emphasis on the depiction of light and flames emanating from the form of the Buddha.' As lapis lazuli is opaque dark blue it is not the best colour to depict light or flames, although dark blue pervaded with golden rays often appears on *thankas* as the back curtain or back plate

⁵³ Édouard Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitāka chinois et traduits en français*, 4 vols., (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910-34), iii. 362, no. 500.

⁵⁴ Chavannes, *Contes et légendes du Bouddhisme*, (Paris: Bossard, 1921), 151.

⁵⁵ Paul Demiéville, review of Hong-Tchang *Lapidarium Sinicum*, *Bulletin d'école Française d'Extrême-Orient*, xxiv (1924), esp. pp. 276-283. John Irwin in his article 'The Lāt Bhairō at Benares (Vārāṇasī)', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, cxxxiii (1983), 328, f.n. 20, subscribes to this opinion.

⁵⁶ *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1852), 319-320.

⁵⁷ *The Lotus of the Wonderful Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), xiv. 187.

⁵⁸ Burnouf, *Bonne Loi*, 319-320.

⁵⁹ London: Rider, 1979, 60.

of a deity. The gold flecks in lapis lazuli which are caused by pyrite were the reason why it was highly prized by the ancient Babylonians who compared them to the stars in the night sky.⁶⁰ The etymology of *lapis lazuli* directs us also to Persia. The word occurs first in the fourteenth century as a compound of Latin *lapis* 'stone' and Mediaeval Latin *lazulum* from Arabic *lāzaward* from Persian *lāzhuward* 'lapis lazuli'. From this was derived the Sanskrit word *rājavarta* for 'lapis lazuli'. About this, the *Laghuratnaparikṣā*, verses 19–20, says: 'it is without white spots and the colour of a peacock's neck'.⁶¹ According to the *Rājanighaṇṭu*, xiii. 215, *rājavarta* used against bile diseases is soft and cool, while *vaiḍūrya*, according to *Rājanighaṇṭu*, xiii. 193, is warm. The English word *azure* goes back to the same Arabic word *lāzaward* through Old French and Old Spanish, omitting the initial *l* which was mistakenly regarded as an Arabic article.

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, it seems that *vaiḍūrya*, *veḷuriya* and *liu-li* mean 'beryl', and that Pāli *veḷuriya* is interpreted as 'lapis lazuli' when juxtaposed with Pāli *masāragalla*, while Chinese *liu-li* and Tibetan *be-ḍu-rya* are often translated as 'lapis lazuli' because lapis lazuli was an extremely rare and special stone which could only be obtained from Afghanistan before the rocks near Lake Baikal were discovered, and because it resembled the night sky with its stars, the most exalted symbol of the divine.

If 'beryl' translates *vaiḍūrya*, and the Medicine Buddha is traditionally surrounded by a blue radiance, it would have to be called 'blue beryl radiance.' According to Dongthog's *New Light English-Tibetan Dictionary* the Tibetan word for 'aquamarine' is *pu.shka.ra*, a loan word from a Sanskrit word for 'blue lotus'.⁶² But as a blue beryl is an aquamarine, 'aquamarine radiance' still seems to be the best translation for Tibetan *be.du.rya.hod*. Why *puṣkara* is the Tibetan word for 'aquamarine' is another question. Is the colour of the blue lotus aquamarine?

⁶⁰ Ernst Darmstädter, 'Der babylonisch-assyrische Lasurstein', in *Studien zur Geschichte der Chemie, Festgabe für E. O. von Lippmann* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1927), 2.

⁶¹ Edited by Louis Finot, in *Les lapidaires indiens* (Paris: E. Bouillon, 1896), 201.

⁶² T. G. Dongthog, (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973), 21.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE BUDDHIST AND THE NAIYĀYIKA PHILOSOPHERS :

A BRIEF SURVEY

- Dr. Sanjit Kumar Sadhukhan

Philosophy is nothing but the human quest for truth. From very remote time Indians are blessed with the spontaneous curiosity about what truth is. The first literature containing the truth realized by the ancient Indians is the Vedas. The philosophy revealed in this literature was more or less tuned with human helplessness together with submission to nature Gods. This went on unchallenged till the Buddha preached his new doctrine which afterwards brought about a head-on collision with the Vedic stricture, but the Buddha denied to give any positive answer to any Vedic approach and consequently in later period a gigantic philosophical system was built up against the Vedic philosophy or more accurately there rose a protest against the unverified doctrine. In the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of *Dighanikāya*, *Kathāvatthu* and the Upanisads we find that the philosophy has taken a challenging attitude by now¹. The people also were clearly divided into two major groups. On the one hand, the Brahmins were there with the Vedic philosophy and on the other, the Buddhists came forward with their new philosophical doctrines.

It was the beginning of the Christian era when such a situation was created that the Brahmin and the Buddhist philosophers considered their respective philosophical views unsuccessful if those were not directed against the opponent and at the same time not victorious. It is obvious that the introduction of the debate system was largely responsible for the creation of this situation.

The fundamental difference in outlooks between realism and idealism led to mutual confrontations which continued in an unbroken line for generations of scholars resulting in the growth of a rich and vigorous literature. In this way a section of the Brahmin philosophers developed a philosophical system predominantly with the science of reasoning (*nyāya*). Later the system was known as Nyāya philosophy. The first systematic work on the Nyāya philosophy is the *Nyāya-sūtra* of Gautama. It is supposed to be a work of about 150 A.D. Going through this work, we can undoubtedly say that much before the

composition of this work the Buddhists had already put forward a lot of strong arguments that helped their views to give birth to a concentrated self-sufficient system of philosophy.

We find in the *Nyāya-sūtra* that Gautama refutes several doctrines of the Buddhist philosophy, such as, the whole is not separate from its parts⁴, momentariness of things⁵, denial of the external object⁶, voidness of everything⁷ and so on. But it should be kept in mind that these doctrines could not assume the highly sophisticated forms by that time. And Gautama's refutation also does not show much complicity of thought to turn those down.

Then there is a century of silence. In this period the followers of these two schools obviously went on with their studies but, no remarkable work was composed.

Now came ahead a Buddhist scholar to protest against the views of Gautama. He is none other than Nagarjuna⁸, who is the first outstanding philosopher to propagate the fundamental philosophy of voidness (*śūnyavāda*). Dr. Stcherbatsky seeks to explain the background of the advent of this school in this way, "... Monism took the offensive and finally established itself triumphantly in the very heart of a new Buddhism. Transplanted upon a fresh soil the old Monism produced a powerful growth of various systems. In the schools of Nagarjuna and Deva it received a dialectical foundation, in the way of a dialectical destruction of all other systems⁹".

In the *Mādhyamika-Kārika*, Nagarjuna tries to establish his theory of voidness by contradicting many of the actual *Nyāya-sūtra*. He composed the oldest Buddhist treatises on the art of debate, viz., *Vigraha-vyāvartanī* and *Pramāṇa-viśetana*. In *Vigraha-vyāvartanī*, going to prove the voidness of things Nāgārjuna has shown his daring attitude of uprooting even the existence of the *Pramāṇas*. As he was an exponent of a particular 'nihilistic' theory, naturally he could not also check the temptation of striking at the root of the categories proposed by Gautama. His *Pramāṇa-viśetana* is exclusively a refutation of the sixteen categories contained in the *Nyaya-sutra*. By applying his critical axe of relativity he claims that all the sixteen categories are relational and therefore ultimately unreal.

This Buddhist theory of voidness was one of the crucial points for a Nyaya exponent named Vatsyayana. Going to prove his theory, the Buddhist Nāgārjuna started with demolishing even the existence of the instrument of valid knowledge. But Vatsyayana started with a strong protest and a crucial defense of *Pramana* and the very first line of his commentary reads *Pramāṇato' rtha pratipattau pravṛttisāmāthyād arthavat pramāṇam*.

Gautama formulated the *sūtras* but Nāgārjuna flayed them mercilessly and Vātsyāyana who belonged to the lineage of the Naiyāyika was prompted to write a commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra* in about the late 4th century or early 5th century. The commentary bears the title *Nyāya-bhāṣya*.

In course of explaining the *Nyāya-sūtras*, Vātsyāyana raises objections against Nāgārjuna's doctrine of voidness of things which is discussed in the *Mādhyamika-kārika* according to which our means and objects of knowledge are as unreal as things appearing in a dream or exhibited in jugglery or as the city of the celestial choirs or as a mirage. Vātsyāyana argues against the Vijñānavāda philosophy (i.e., the theory of idealism) on the *Nyāya-sūtras* iv. 2. 26-7 and iii. 2. 11 and against the momentariness on the *Nyāya-sūtras* iii. 2.11-13.

To answer the objections raised by Vātsyāyana, a Buddhist philosopher, Vasubandhu (c. A.D. 410-490), composed three works, viz., *Vāda-vidhi*, *Vāda-vidhāna* and *Vāda-hṛdaya*. But unfortunately all the works are lost⁸.

This philosopher however became also famous for propounding a fundamental doctrine of some Buddhists, the doctrine of idealism (*Vijñānavāda*), as a sophisticated philosophy. As to the advent of *Vijñānavāda*, Dr. Stcharbatsky says, "When Nāgārjuna's standpoint of extreme relativism was forsaken, the brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu took up the study of Nyāya logic and the work of its adaptation to the idealistic foundations of this philosophy"⁹.

As all the logical works of Vasubandhu has been lost, so the complete assessment of his view on logic is not possible at present. From the later works it is found that Vasubandhu opposing the nature of perception and inference, the number and nature of the members of syllogism recommended in the *Nyāya-sūtra*, gave new definitions of them¹⁰. He wrote his *Vāda-vidhi* challenging the laws regulating the debate as advocated by Gautama.

This dispute between the realism of the Nyāya school and the dogmatic idealism of the *Vijñānavāda* school of Buddhist philosophy went on. But it was the 5th century A.D. when India gave birth to her glorious philosopher-logician son, Dignāga. In his hand Buddhist idealism assumed a critical shape. Dignāga's *Pramāṇa-samuccaya*, perhaps the most outstanding one of his five works¹¹, shook the world of Indian logic. Notwithstanding the truth the Buddhists realized, Buddhist philosophy was suffering from insufficiencies of details in logic for their own to establish their realization. Now with Dignāga, Buddhist philosophy got the elixir of life. Dr. S.C. Vidyabhusana writes, "Both in matter and in manner his works marked a distinct departure from those of his predecessors. The keenness of his insight and the soundness of his critical acumen combined to stamp him with an individuality all his own. No praise seems too high for him. Indeed he may fittingly be styled as the first and last of Indian logicians"¹².

Pramāṇa-samuccaya is a logical work written in Anuṣṭubh metre. In this work Dignāga explains his own theories of Buddhist logic. By this Dignāga pushed the Buddhist philosophy in the duel ground where the Naiyāyikas were the chief opponents. He criticizes a Nyāya view : *Nyāya-sūtra* i. 1.12, enumerating the sense-organs, does not mention the mind, but the Naiyāyikas admit it as a separate sense-organ. In support of their view they say that the mind can unhesitatingly be admitted as a sense-organ because nowhere in the *Nyāya-sūtra* the view is contradicted. Now Dignāga says, well, if absence of contradiction means admission, there would have been no necessity at all of formulating this *sūtra* because the group of sense-organs as mentioned there has not been contradicted anywhere in the *Nyāya-sūtra*¹³. A few more objections like the above can be found which are nothing but trivial¹⁴.

The crucial points of dispute are the definitions of perception *pratyakṣa* and inference *anumāna* also with the definitions of probans (*hetu*) etc. given by Gautama. Refuting those Dignāga formulated fresh definitions of them¹⁵. Comparison (*upamāna*) and verbal testimony (*śabda*) are not separate instruments of valid knowledge in the Buddhist view¹⁶. It is Dignāga who for the first time draws attention to the theory of *Apoha*, i.e., the law of contradiction¹⁷. It contains the view opposite to 'the view of knowledge gathered in a direct way'. According to this *Apoha* theory, the law of cognizance is explained as "we can actively cognize or determine a thing only by opposing it to what it is not".

A spark which ignited the criticism in the realistic philosophy is Dignāga's 'definition of perception'. If the difference in the very basis appears too serious then that in the consecutive stages of development obviously turns to not only doctrinal dispute but also bitter relation in life. And exactly this happened in the later period. In the Nyāya philosophy being a realistic philosophy 'the knowledge resulting from sense-object contact' if also associated with terms is given the respect of nothing but perception and real knowledge. But reality, according to Dignāga, is inextricably involved in causal efficiency. A fire which burns and cooks is a real fire. A fire which is absent, which is imagined, which neither really burns nor cooks nor sheds any light, is an unreal fire. A reality which is stripped off from every relation and every construction, which has neither any position in time and space nor any characterizing quality, cannot be expressed because there is in it nothing to be expressed. If we express that sensation in words, the thing to be expressed must be attached with some kind of mental imagination which pushes it to the real of unreality. Representing this view Dignāga's definition of perception *pratyakṣam kalpanāpōḍham* has got the perpetuity.

In this way his observation of the truth rendered him into a perpetual enemy to the realistic group of philosophers. But whatever harm might have been to him, we have touched with a thrilling sensation of his revolutionary ideas. Unfortunately India could not protect any of the serious works of her worthy son from being lost for ever¹⁸.

Time rolled on. Then came the seventh century. During this intervening period the Naiyāyika philosophers exercised with their philosophy and logic but there was no one to put pen to paper. A Bhāradvāja Brahmin Uddyotakāra wrote an extensive commentary on Gautama's *Nyāya-sūtra* and Vātsyāyana's *Nyāya-bhāṣya* under the title of *Nyāya-vārtika*. The very purpose of composing the work, as the author himself declared, was to write an expository treatise on the *Nyāya-sūtra* to remove the veil of error cast by the quibblers¹⁹. These quibblers are none but Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga chiefly and other Buddhist logicians²⁰.

It is quite natural that there are many things to be said for and against both the realists and the idealists. Uddyotakāra carried out his duties as a realist. But he is much more vociferous against the Buddhist doctrines. His temper can only be compared with that of Udayana.

The first thing to be mentioned is Uddyotakāra's discussion and refutation of Nāgārjuna's doctrine of voidness in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS ii. 1. 8-19. In our world of cause and effect we cannot think of such a situation where there is no *pramāṇa*. The all-powerful *pramāṇa* can by no means be discarded. Only what he has done is that he has set the *pramāṇas* on an invulnerable foundation. The definitions of perception and inference given by Vasubandhu and those as given by Dignāga are vehemently criticized in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS i. 1. 4-5. Dignāga in his *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* recorded a number of views regarding what actually is inferred in an inference and finally expressed his own view. All this is discussed and Dignāga's views are criticized in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS i. 1. 5²¹. The definitions of proposition (*pratijñā*), probans (*hetu*) and example (*dṛṣṭānta*) given by Vasubandhu and Dignāga are refuted in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS i. 1. 33-37. Uddyotakāra criticizes the law of debate as suggested by Vasubandhu, in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS i. 2. 1. Apoha theory has been refuted by him in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS ii. 2. 65. He also criticizes the denial of the evidences of comparison (*upamāna*) and verbal testimony (*sābda*) in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS i. 1. 6-7. He is actually on a criticizing spree

to refute the Buddhist theory in which the whole is viewed as identified with its parts, in *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS ii. 1. 33. He also records a series of *pūrvapakṣa* arguments. The later Naiyāyika logicians took up this Buddhist theory by the expression 'identity of quality and the qualified'²².

The essence of the Buddhist philosophy lies in the doctrine of momentariness. In *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS iii. 2. 10-17, Uddyotakāra shows his erudition to refute the doctrine.

In *Nyāya-vārtika* under NS iv. 2. 26-37, Uddyotakāra criticizes the Buddhist theory of 'Denial of the external objects'. Some remarkable passages from this discussion may perhaps be quoted : "pleasure or pain is quite different from knowledge (*jñāna*), for pleasure or pain is an 'object to be cognised' (*grāhya*), while knowledge means its comprehension (*grahana*). The object cognised and the act of comprehension can never be identical. Secondly, the admission of illusory knowledge necessarily entails the acceptance of its opposite, i.e., valid knowledge also. An object which is never known rightly can also be never known falsely. Thirdly, one who does not admit the reality of any object other than mere consciousness will not be in a position either to defend one's own position or to refute that of other's, because one will not be able to communicate or explain anything to others with one's own mere consciousness which is intelligible to everyone else, just as the dream-experiences of a particular person are known to himself alone. To this, it may be replied that when a person defends his own thesis or refutes that of others he employs words and with the aid of 'consciousness as endowed with the word-form' (*śabdākāra-citta*) communication or explanation becomes possible, consciousness as endowed with the word-form is not unintelligible to others. The reply however does not fit in, for the Vijñānavādins do not admit the reality of *śabda* as an external object and hence, they cannot speak of consciousness as endowed with the word-form. Fourthly, on the claim that no external object apart from consciousness exists really, no distinction can be made between the states of dream and waking, for, in that case, objects will be equally non-existent always".

What Uddyotakāra says against the soul theory of the Buddhist has been more or less followed by the Nyāya logicians of later period²³.

Uddyotakāra criticized the Buddhists a lot. But he never mentioned the name of any particular work or philosopher except in a single case where the names of the two works *Vāda-vidhi* and *Vāda-vidhāna-tika* are mentioned. Though in most of the cases we come to know who that particular philosopher or logician is, he perhaps thought it would be sufficient to know that the refutation was directed against the Buddhist whoever he might be, an eminent one or an ordinary one.

Some argue that the mode of Uddyotakāra's refutation of the Buddhists is concerned more with verbal trickery than with true philosophical insight. It is found that while refuting a Buddhist theory he poses a number of alternative as to the opponent's theory, as if he is asking the opponent in front to answer those. But, he tries to show, not a single alternative is per missible and the only alternative which is found left does nothing but prove the Nyāya view. Probably this charge against Uddyotakāra is partly true. Though generally Uddyotakāra allows this kind of style and sometimes does not hesitate to distort the opponent's view, still in some cases he sticks to actual philosophical stand, which is found to be adopted continuously by the Nyāya logicians of later period.

But *Nyāya-vārtika* could not reign unchallenged in the field of Indian philosophy for a long time. In the middle of the 7th century challenges came from one of the famous Buddhist philosophers, Dharmakīrti.

This philosopher has written seven logical works, the celebrated "seven treatises", which have become the fundamental works for the study of logic in the Buddhist community and have more or less surpassed the works of Dignaga. Among the seven works the *Pramāṇa-vārtika* is the chief one, written in mnemonic verse; the next work *Pramāṇa-viniścaya* is an abridgment of the first, written in stanzas and prose; the *Nyāya-bindu* is a further abridgment of the same subject; *Hetu-bindu* is a short classification of logical reasons; *Sambandha-parikṣā* or an examination of the problem of relation is a small tract in stanzas with the author's own comment; *Vada-nyaya* is a treatise on the art of carrying on disputation and *Santānāntara-siddhi* is a treatise on the reality of other minds, directed against solipsism.

The *Pramāṇa-vārtika* was lost in India but we are lucky enough that the manuscript of this work has been discovered by Rahul Sankrityayana from Tibet.

In this pioneering work, Dharmakīrti discusses his own philosophy of idealism, generally by giving up the temptation of pricking the opponent's view. Though some refutations of the Nyāya views are found there, still its own remarkable philosophy and logic spontaneously inundated the castle of Nyāya philosophy, built by Uddyotakāra.

He criticizes the Nyaya view of the existence of God in the chapter called *Pramāṇasiddhi* (verse Nos. 12-18). The Nyāya view of perception is criticized in *Pratyakṣa* chapter (verse Nos. 136-40). The theory of generality (verse Nos. 145-48) and the theory of the existence of the whole also (verse Nos. 149-53) are refuted. The Nyāya definition of *Pakṣa* is refuted in *Parārthānumāna* chapter (verse Nos. 164-71). In the same chapter the definition of *pratijñā* also (verse Nos. 172-75) is criticized. But all these are matters of general logic.

"Although produced by a stimulus coming from an external object, but from an absolutely property-less pure object, is it indeed a reality? It is supposed to be absolutely stripped off from every vestige of an imaginative or constructive element. But is it not pure imagination?" No. "A single moment, just as an absolute particular, is not something representable in an image, it cannot be reached by our knowledge, that is to say, it is not something empirically real. But it is the element which imparts reality to all the others. It is the indispensable condition of all real and consistent knowledge. It is ~~trans~~empirical, but it is not metaphysical, it is not a 'flower in the sky'. ... Dharmakīrti proposes to prove its reality by an experiment in the way of introspection. The metaphysical entities are metaphysical just because they are pure imagination, just because there is no point of reality, no moment of pure sensation to which they could be attached. They are 'unattainable as to place, time and sensible quality'. But this point and this sensation are present, directly or indirectly, in every act of empirical reality and empirical cognition. This we can indirectly prove by introspection. Dharmakīrti says - That sensation is something quite different from productive imagination -- can be proved just by introspection. Indeed, everyone knows that an image is something utterable (capable of coalescing with a name). Now, if we begin to state at a patch of colour and withdraw all our thoughts on whatsoever other (objects), if we thus reduce our consciousness to a condition of rigidity, (and become as though unconscious), this will be the condition of pure sensation. If we then, (awakening from that condition), begin to think, we notice a feeling (of

remembering) that we had an image (of a patch of colour before us), but we did not notice it whilst we were in the foregoing condition, (we could not name it) because it was pure sensation"²⁴. This coruscative observation has given Dharmakīrti immortality in the history of Indian philosophy.

*śahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoh/bhedaśca bhrāntivijñānair dṛṣyaten-dāvivādvaye*²⁵ //, a verse of *Pramāṇa-viniścaya* is one of the most remarkable representation of the idealistic philosophy of Dharmakīrti. Practically there is no opponent philosopher who did not criticize this verse.

Even then Dharmakīrti was not unaware of the danger to which Idealism may ultimately lead in the shape of its direct consequence, solipsism. He therefore singled out this problem from his great work and devoted to it a special tract under the title *Santānāntara-siddhi*, i.e., Establishment of the existence of the other minds. This work contains a verification of the whole of Dharmakīrti's epistemology in its application to a special complicated case. Dharmakīrti makes a gift to us of this brilliant piece of document narrating the realistic and Buddhist position in a problematic matter in the day.

He however did not want to discuss about a metaphysical entity, which is a compulsory matter of discussion for the Nyāya logicians. It is said that Dharmakīrti, when studying under Iśvarasena wrote the chapter on Buddhology in *Pramāṇa-vārtika*. But this religious part was dropped in all the other treatises and he himself most emphatically and clearly expresses his opinion in the closing passage of *Santānāntara-siddhi*, "... Our knowledge being limited to experience, we neither think nor speak out anything definite about Him, we can neither assert nor deny His existence"²⁶.

For a century, from Dharmakīrti's time down to the 1st quarter of the 8th century, Buddhist philosophy was conspicuous by the absence of any remarkable original work due to absence of any talented philosopher in their school. At last a brilliant composition from the Buddhist school came to light. It is the *Tattvasaṃgraha*. Its author Śāntarakṣita (A.D. 705-65) was a professor at Nalanda. He visited Tibet at the invitation of king Khri-sron deu-tsan (8th cent.). The king with the assistance of Śāntarakṣita built in 749 A.D. the monastery of Sam-ye in Tibet, and Śāntarakṣita was its first abbot. It is sure that *Tattvasaṃgraha* was composed before its author had gone to Tibet. He as elaborately explains the Buddhist doctrines of his own line as he vehemently criticizes the Nyāya views.

Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārtika* was then inaccessible. The *Tattvasaṃgraha* throws literally a flood of light on Buddhist metaphysics of the Sautrantika-Yogacara school and logic and epistemology. The most remarkable feature of this work is its reproduction of the views of scholars who otherwise would have remained in perfect oblivion. Kamalaśīla gives the names of the authors and quotes from them...."²⁷

From the study of this work along with Uddyotakāra's *Nyāya-vārtika* and Kumārila's works one can fruitfully gather some ideas about the philosophical activities of the centuries. The attack on realism, on the Soul theory and on the infallibility of the Vedas, provoked simultaneously the Nyaya, and Kumarila's Mīmamsa schools. This counter-criticisms of the orthodox stalwarts succeeded in undermining the prestige of the Buddhist monastery. But the Buddhists were not supine and reacted with vigour and nerve. The *Tattvasaṃgraha* preeminently represents this phase of the Buddhist reaction. In fact, Dharmakīrti started to criticize directly the Mīmāṃsā school and as a result Kumārila tried

to take revenge on the Buddhists. Naturally it was not possible for Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla, to keep silence against Kumārila's criticism.

We are here concerned with the conflict between the Nyāya and the Buddhist. Therefore from Śāntarakṣita's criticism of the Nyāya views, particularly of Uddyotakāra, it appears that as Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla (c. A.D. 750) accepted Sautrāntika view in which the external object exists (though this existence can be proved only by inference), it has been easier for them to criticize the realist's objections.

In *Tattvasaṃgraha*, Uddyotakāra's views on the part and the whole (verse Nos. 560-62, 583, 592-98), on momentariness (verse Nos. 370-84, 388, 466-67, 471-75), on *Apoha* (verse Nos. 981-99, 1184- 99), and on Soul (verse Nos. 180-84, 195-216, 220) are criticised.

There were other famous logicians also in the intervening period. They were Bhāvivikta, Aviddhakārṇa and Śāṅkarasvāmin²⁸. Bhāvivikta may be prior to Uddyotakāra. Bhāvivikta's *Bhāṣyaṭīkā* and Aviddhakārṇa's *Tattvaṭīkā* are known to us only by name. Anyway, those Naiyāyika logicians were "pillars" of the system. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla naturally attacked them. Many minor views of these scholars are found mentioned and criticised in *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Pañjikā*.

Here one among many of the objections can be mentioned to assess Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla as to how far the objection was justified. What we call existence, they are never tired of repeating, is always related to an action. 'Existence is work' says Śāntarakṣita. It is an anthropomorphic illusion to suppose that a thing can exist only, exist placidly, exist without acting, and then, as it were, suddenly rise and produce an action. Whatsoever exists is always acting. The conclusion that whatsoever really exists is a cause is urged upon the Buddhist by his definition of existence quoted above. Existence, real existence, is nothing but efficiency. Consequently what is non-efficient, or what is a non-cause, does not exist. 'A non-cause', says Uddyotakāra, addressing himself to the Buddhist, 'is double, it is for you either something non-existing or something change less'. Kamalaśīla corrects this statement of Uddyotakāra and accuses him of not sufficiently knowing the theory of his adversaries, 'because', says he, 'those Buddhists who are students of logic maintain that a non-cause is necessarily a non-reality'. This means that to be a real is nothing but to be a cause, whatsoever exists is necessarily a cause.

The growth and development of the ideas and the sentiments of these two different groups of philosophers have been reflected in a rich literature which can make the subject extremely interesting.

Now with Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, the Buddhist philosophy is in a safe situation, but on the contrary the Nyāya philosophy was rather pushed to the wall without any brilliant logical production up to the middle of the 9th century from the time of Uddyotakāra. In this situation, Vācaspati Miśra (c. A.D. 841)29, a Brahmin logician wrote an elaborate gloss on the *Nyāya-vārtika* under the title *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparyā-tīkā*.

In the writing of Vācaspati we find his exemplary observation of the logical nuances which can rarely be found in others. He possessed the rare qualities of erudition and faithfulness of representing the opponent's views. As a Nyāya exponent he followed Uddyotakāra in refuting the Buddhist doctrines but not always without some differences of opinion. His refutation is much more deep and subtle in comparison with Uddyotakāra's

refutation, being pungent and aggressive. Under NS i. 1. 4-5, Tika shows us Vācaspati's clear understanding about the nature of the Buddhist perception and inference.

Vācaspati quotes the relevant verses of Dignāga while explaining Uddyotakāra's refutation of Dignāga. He found the fresh scope of refuting Dharmakīrti's views of perception and others. He quoted verses of *Pramāṇa-vārtika* and *Pramāṇa-viniścaya*³⁰. The verse of *Tattvasaṃgraha* is found to have been quoted in *Tīkā* but it seems that Vācaspati did not give much importance to that text.

Up to the time before Vācaspati, God was not so much considered to be a matter of dispute in debate with the Buddhists. But starting with him, to prove or to refute the existence of God became a prestige issue.

Generally it is found that a philosopher having faith in a certain philosophical system cannot show his adherence to another philosophical system. When a philosopher in course of explaining seeks the permanent justification of the doctrine containing in the philosophy of his own like and tries to adopt those in thought and practice, it is very difficult for him to make his mind agree to give importance to another system of philosophy. Vācaspati is rather a conspicuous exception. He wrote three commentaries, *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparyatīkā* on Nyāya philosophy, *Sāṃkhya-tattva-kaumudī* on Sāṃkhya philosophy and *Bhāmātī* on Vedānta philosophy. We do not know which one of them he preferred. But in all the three commentaries, his coruscative explanation of the different doctrines makes us believe that none, in actuality, is negligible. Now even after a long journey we are struck with doubt if the objections against the Buddhist philosophy actually forbid us to believe in it.

Now the objections against the Buddhists came from a new direction -- Kashmir. After Vācaspati there flourished another talented Nyāya logician named Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (A.D. 840-900) who was the younger contemporary of Vācaspati. He wrote an independent commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra*, called *Nyāya-mañjarī*.

He was an orthodox Brahmin who zealously defended the authority of the Vedas and saw the refutation of Buddhism as a religious cause. Yet he was no fanatic. He was capable of retaining his sense of humour under adversity. He tells us that as he writes *Nyāya-mañjarī* he is being held prisoner in a cave and "I have beguiled my days here by this diversion of writing a book"³¹. A rare virtue which is indicative of true greatness is his humility in declaring that he could lay no claim to originality³².

Many of the Buddhist views are mentioned and refuted in *Nyāya-mañjarī*, such as, there are only two instruments of valid knowledge, perception is conceptual construction which is free from determination by the imagination and is non-illusory³³. *Apoha*, momentariness, two theories of illusion -- *asatkhyāti* (of the Madhyamikas) and *atmakhyāti* (of the Vijñānavādins), etc. Among these the Buddhist theory of momentariness exhausted Jayanta's maximum energy.

It is needless to say that Dharmakīrti among the Buddhists is no doubt the main opponent of Jayanta. Numerous verses from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārtika* have been quoted and refuted in *Nyāya-mañjarī*. Dignāga also is occasionally mentioned. Dharmottara (c. A.D. 829) also is criticised by Jayanta in a few places³⁴.

It is a perpetual matter of dispute whether knowledge is like the eye or a candle. The philosophical discussion, however, about knowledge has been divided into two groups on

the basis of these two differences. And this stretched long. Naturally to refute the Viññānavādins we find this kind of discussion made in a great detail in *Nyāya-mañjarī*.

After Dharmakīrti, the Mīmāṃsā school turned up against the Buddhists. Kumārila (c. 8th cent.) a great Mīmāṃsaka scholar attained great success in refuting them and establishing his opinion. But it was a fact for the Naiyāyikas that an old enemy is vanquished by a new enemy.

Prabhākara (c. late 8th cent.) another strong Mīmāṃsaka scholar played the same role. So the Naiyāyika scholars thought it necessary to stop the group of these new enemies.

Properly going through *Nyāya-mañjarī*, it however appears that Jayanta was also attentive to the refutation of the Mimamsa views of Kumārila as well as of Prabhākara. Actually with the decline of Buddhism in India the doctrinal and logical conflict was shifted to between the Nyāya and the Mīmāṃsā schools of philosophy. It will not be improper to say that Jayanta accelerated the criticism against the Mīmāṃsā school though it is found to have been started long before by Uddyotakāra and rather prominently by Vācaspati. In fact, Jayanta had to protect the Nyāya philosophy from the attack not only of the Buddhists but also of different groups of other philosophers. In spite of this Jayanta has retained his renown by faithfully representing the opponent's views.

Over and above, the activities of the Buddhists are not consistent with what they say. That is why Jayanta also was very much aggressive against them. He says: "You, Bauddhas, hold that there is no soul, yet you construct *cāityas* (towers) to enjoy pleasure in paradise after death; you say that everything is momentary; yet you build monasteries with the hope that they will last for centuries; and you say that the world is void, yet you teach that wealth should be given to spiritual guides. What a strange character, the Bauddhas possess, they are verily a monument of conceit"³⁵.

In the 10th century the Nyāya system of philosophy is divided into two courses. One flowed in the old line and the other course started with Bhāsarvajña. To put it clearly, Bhāsarvajña was the first known proponent of a number of doctrines which diverge boldly from the accepted traditional views. A Kashmirian like Jayanta, Bhāsarvajña must have been flourished contemporaneously with him (c. A.D. 860-920).

Nyāyabhūṣaṇa is a monumental work composed by him. It is an auto-commentary of *Nyāyasāra*. It was supposed to be the lost for a long time, but it is a miracle that perhaps the only manuscript of *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* has been suddenly discovered from the personal custody of Satya Swarup Shastri, in 1959.

Profuse quotations and verses from Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇa-vārtika* and Prajñākara's *Pramāṇa-vārtika-alaṃkāra* are found in this work. He criticizes the views of Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Prajñākara, Dharmottara, Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Kaṇagomin and many others. Prajñākara (c. A.D. 940) started the philosophical school of interpretation of the *Pramāṇa-vārtika*. He wrote a voluminous commentary on *Pramāṇa-vārtika* under the title *Pramāṇa-vārtika-alaṃkāra*.

Now appeared in the field a great Buddhist scholar named Jñānaśrīmitra. He was associated with the Vikramaśīlā mahāvihāra which was established by the famous Buddhist emperor Dharmapāla (c. A.D. 770-810) and flourished under the liberal patronage of his successors. In the 11th century, we find it in the form of an international University attracting scholars from other parts of Asia. All the Śāstras were taught in it. Buddhism

received priority among them. There were six great Erudites there. Four of them were called keepers of the four gates -- Dvārapaṇḍitas of the seat of learning that was the mahāvihāra and the two others, still greater, were called the two "Great Pillars" of wisdom. We find Jñānaśrīmitra as the second Great Pillar of this University. He tried to revive the Buddhist philosophy against the attack of the Nyāya logic.

He criticizes the views of Trilocana and his disciple Vācaspati, Bhāsarvajña and a few other Naiyāyika logicians with the utmost strength of his intellectuality. His writing on the one hand ascends the acme of intellectual analysis and on the other hand unveils the background of Udayana's arguments. Among those who were refuted by him, Trilocana was a dominant figure between Kamalaśīla and Vācaspati to receive the special attention of Jñānaśrī³⁶. Anyway, Jñānaśrī was more concerned with the views of Bhāsarvajña, a strong opponent who flourished immediately before him. It is known that Trilocana composed a work under the title *Nyāya-prakīrnaka*. We do not know whether this work is the same as the *Nyāya-bhāṣya-ṭīka*, composed by him. One *Nyāya-mañjarī* also was attributed to him. But unfortunately we do not find any of his works.

Vittoka³⁷ must have been a Nyaya author of considerable importance. His views on Īśvaravāda alone have been recorded by Jnanasri and his disciple Ratnakīrti. It seems that he wrote a treatise on Īśvara.

Śātānanda³⁸ is the last Naiyāyika whose view on Isvara alone has been quoted by Jnanasrimitra.

It appears from his writing that being a teacher at Nalanda, Jñānaśrī directly realized the insult coming from the Nyāya logicians. But though Jayanta and Bhāsarvajña criticized the Buddhist doctrines very strongly, the warmth of opposition cannot be realized on their body. But Jñānaśrī and after him Udayana boiled over the dispute. They directly perceived the heat of hostility³⁹.

The biggest tract composed by him is on momentariness. To establish the theory of momentariness, the verse: *yat sat tat kṣaṇikam yathā jaladharah santaśca bhāvā imelsattā śaktirihārthakarmanimiteḥ siddheṣu siddhā na sa nāpyekaiva vidhānyadāpi parakṛṇnaiva kriyā vā bhaved dvedhāpi kṣaṇabhaṅgasamgatirataḥ sādhye ca viśrāmyati* // was emanated from his pen and got the honour of fulcrum of the theory. *Apoha*, *anupalabdhi* and invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) were discussed in a great detail. On God, Jñānaśrī made such a heating discussion under the title Īśvaravāda, that practically this aroused in Udayana's writing an assaulting attitude, later.

Ratnakīrti, a worthy disciple of Jñānaśrīmitra, in his ten small treatises on different topics, tried to refute the Nyāya philosophy. He gave more attention to refute Trilocana and Vācaspati rather than Bhāsarvajña. A close scrutiny reveals that Ratnakīrti has summarized the works of his *guru* in many cases and the debt has also been eloquently acknowledged. But the fatal thing that Ratnakīrti did, is his writing a treatise *Santānāntara-dūṣanam* and it is a great risk of inviting solipsism which scared Dharmakīrti and led him write *Santānāntarasiddhi*. But Ratnakīrti was daring enough to compose a work refuting the crucial view of their honoured-by-all preceptor.

Jñānaśrīmitra made his last try to ameliorate the injuries inflicted by Vācaspati and Bhāsarvajña on the Buddhist philosophy, but their philosophy again got a mortal hurt, when a Hindu logician Udayana (A.D. 984) composed two pungent works under the titles *Nyāya-kusumāñjali* and *Ātmatattvaviveka*.

The fundamental philosophy of momentariness and the denial of the existence of God are challenged in these two works, *Ātmatattvaviveka* is mainly devoted to the refutation of the Buddhist doctrines of Soul. It criticizes several Buddhist views like those of Universal flux, *Apoha*, Universals, unity of knowledge and its object. Citrādvaita, Vijñānavāda, identity of the quality and the qualified, self as knowledge alone, Īśvaravāda, Sarvajñādvāda, etc. In most of the topics Jñānasrimitra's works supply the *pūrvapakṣa*. Jñānasrimitra has been quoted and referred to by name. Everything is obviously to prove the existence of God. It can humorously be said here that God will himself intend to exist no more, if He comes to know that his existence depends on so much painstaking efforts done in *Ātmatattvaviveka*. In fact, Jñānasrī gave a heavy jerk to the Nyāya view of the existence of God as for which Udayana had to compose a separate work against that. In the practical life the bitterness travelled so penetratively between the Buddhists and the Naiyāyikas that a controversy was decided (So goes the story) even by way of jumping from a palm tree. Udayana was very much proud of thinking himself as a protector of God. Here is his utterance: "Oh Lord, you have been puffed up with pride as you are now illustrious (when I have made you safe after defeating the Buddhists) and dare ignore me. But (be sure) when the Buddhists come again, your existence will depend upon me"⁴⁰.

The continuous hurt inflicted by the Nyāya logicians made the Buddhist philosophy helpless to survive in the common mind. It is also a point that after Jñānasrimitra there was no Buddhist scholar who could efficiently hold up their philosophy. Many works undoubtedly were composed but those lacked sharpness of original thinking⁴¹. In fact, from the 10th century the struggle for existence of the Buddhists in India due to Muslim aggression over the Buddhist education centres was the main cause of unproductiveness of a brilliant philosophical literature for them. But the gradual fall of Buddhism in India was noticed much before. Dr. Stcherbatsky writes, "Notwithstanding the great scope and success of his propaganda he (Dharmakīrti) could only retard, but not stop the process of decay which befell Buddhism on its native soil. Buddhism in India was doomed. The most talented propagandist could not change the run of history. The time of Kumāṛila and Śaṅkarācārya, the great champions of Brahmanical revival and opponents of Buddhism, was approaching. Tradition represents Dharmakīrti as having combated them in public disputations and having been victorious. But this is only an after- thought and a pious desire on the part of his followers. At the same time it is an indirect confession that these great Brahmin teachers had met with no Dharmakīrti to oppose them"⁴².

But in the Nyāya line two commentaries at least on Udayana's *Ātmatattvaviveka* (alias *Bauddha-dhikkara*), one *Bauddha-dhikkāra- tika* by Śaṅkara Miśra (A.D. 1450) and the other *Bauddha-dhikkāra-śiromaṇi* by Raghunātha Śiromaṇi (A.D. 1477-1547) extinguished the last hope of the Buddhists to escape from the trap of the Nyāya logic.

In Śaṅkara Miśra's *Vāḍḍivinoda* Jñānasrī's name is found in the list of the foremost Buddhist logicians. But during Śaṅkara's time the Buddhist works lost much of their importance as they were historical documents rather than part and parcel of living faith in India. NOTES

NOTES

- 1 Brahmajala-sutta : vide a History of Indian Logic, pp.227-29
Katha-vatthu : vide -do- pp. 234-40
Upanisads : vide -do- pp. 3
- 2 2.NS iv. 2.6-11

- 3 NS iii. 2.10-17
- 4 NS iv. 2.26-37
- 5 NS iv. 1.37-40
- 6 H. Nakamura gives the date of Nagarjuna as c. 150-250 A.D. vide *Indian Buddhism*, p. 235
- 7 .BL, I, p.22
- 8 For informative notes vide BL, I, pp. 29-30
- 9 BL, I, p. 29
- 10 Definition of perception : *tatorthat vijñanam pratyakṣam*, i.e., Perception is cognition coming from that same object.
Definition of inference : *nantariyakartha-darśanam tadvido'numanam*, i.e., Inference is the cognition of a thing which is invariably concomitant on the part of one who knows the said concomitance. Definition of thesis : *sadhyabhidhanam pratijñā*, i.e., Thesis is the mention of the probandum. Definition of probans : *heturvipakṣad viśeṣaḥ*, i.e., Probans is that which is disconnected from where the probandum is known to be absent.
- 11 *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* (Tib. *Tshad-ma Kun-ias btus-pa*), *Nyāya-praveśa* (Tib. *Tshad-ma rigs-par 'jug-pa'i sgo*), *Hetu-cakra-hamaru* (Tib. *gTan-tshigs-kyi 'khor-lo gyan-la dbab-pa*), *Alambanaparīkṣa* (Tib. *dMigs-pa brtag-pa*) and *Trikalā-parīkṣa* (Tib. *Dus gaum brtag-pa*).
- 12 *A History of Indian Logic*, p. 270
- 13 *na sukhādī pramēyam va māno vastvīndriyāntaram/*
anīśedhād upattām ced anyendriyārutām vrtha//
Quoted in NVTT, vide *Catur.* pp. 235-6
- 14 "Dignāga laughs at Vātsyāyana by saying that the Naiyāyika (Aksapada) takes pride in borrowing his definition of perception (*pratyakṣa*) from the Sūtra of the Vaiśeṣikas, viz., that perception is knowledge which arises from the intercourse of the soul with the mind, the mind with a sense-organ, and the sense-organ with its object. The Naiyāyika is however careful not to connect his perception with generality (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*) and action (*Karma*) on which, as pointed out by Dignāga, the Vaiśeṣika's intercourse is dependent. Oh ! what a strange consistency".
A History of Indian Logic, p. 279
- 15 Definition of perception : *pratyakṣam kalpanāpodham*, i.e., perception is that which is free from mental construction. Definition of inference : *anumēye'tha tattulye sadbhavo nastīti'sati*, i.e., Inference is that which is present in the subject of inference and also in things similar to it and which is absent from where the inferable property is non-existent. Definition of probans : *grahyadharmastādamsena vyapto hetuḥ*.
- 16 The controversy regarding comparison as a separate instrument of valid knowledge is very ancient. We find certain references of this in *Nyāya-manjari* and *Nyāya-Kuṣumanjali*. e.g., NM, pp. 129-30; NKM, pp. 193-204
G. Jha in his 'The Nyāyasūtras of Gautama' (fn. p. 198) says : In chapter IV of his *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* Dignāga objects to *upamāna* as a separate instrument of cognition; he includes it under perception. Uddyotakara says that comparison does not differ from perception and word. (But *āgama* is not admitted as a separate instrument of valid knowledge by the Buddhists.) (vide *Catur.*, p. 356). Vasubandhu accepted *āgama* as a separate instrument of valid knowledge. (vide BL I, fn. p. 72)
Stcherbatsky : The Buddhists from the time of Dignāga fall in line with the Vaiśeṣikas. They admit only two different sources of knowledge, which they call perception and inference. Verbal testimony and reasoning by analogy is for them included in inference. (BL, I, p. 72)
Though the Vaiśeṣikas and the Buddhists advocate for two instruments of valid knowledge, perception and inference, still the Naiyāyikas are not so much objectionary towards the Vaiśeṣikas as they are against the Buddhists. Only it was Udayana who gave a strong objection to the theory of two 'instruments of valid knowledge' of the Vaiśeṣikas.
- 17 .Chapter V of *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* contains the doctrine of *Apoha*.
- 18 Fragments from Dignāga have been found in several logical texts of Indian philosophy. Besides, also a large number of reconstruction works of Dignāga's texts has been done by a number of scholars of different countries. Translations in different languages from the extant Chinese and Tibetan translations are also available. vide *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol I, pp. 51-55

- 19 kutarkikajnananivrttihetuh karisyate tasya maya nibandhah//
NV, vide Catur., P. 6
- 20 kutarkikairdignagaprabhrtibhih.
NVTI. vide Catur., p. 23
- 21 Actual verses of Dignaga's Pramana-samuccaya (chap. II) are found quoted in VTT on NS i.1.5.
- 22 Udayana in his third chapter of his Atmatattvaviveka discusses, in a great detail, the Buddhist view of quality and qualified.
- 23 Recognition is considered by Uddyotakara as a strong ground to establish the existence of soul. It is seen that recognition is a strong argument in Nyaya-manjari. (Ref. NM, pt. II, p. 11). In NKM (I.15) also we find:
nanyadrstam smaratyanyo naikam bhutamapakramat/
vasanasamkramo nasti na ca gatyantaram sthire//
Remembrance also a ground which has been shown repeatedly in favour of a permanent soul.
In this connection it should be mentioned that though Uddyotakara elaborately refutes this ancient view that rejects the reality of the soul, Uddyotakara himself does not admit that such a view was true to the real teachings of the Buddha.
- 24 BL, I, pp. 150-1
- 25 The first half of the verse found in Pramana-viniscaya. The Tib. version runs as follows : lhan-cig dmigs-pa nes-pa'i phyir/snon dan de blo gzan ma yin/ (mDo xcv II. fol. 263b). But the second half is not found in verse form though the idea contained there has been clarified in prose. The verse form is found in Pramana-vartika.
- 26 BL, I, p. 39
- 27 vide Preface of Tattvasamgraha.
- 28 Manorathanandin in his Pramanavartika-vrtti mentions one Sankarasvamin as acaryiya whose view was criticised by Dharmakirti. vide Pramana-vartika, p. 143
In Nyayamanjari-granthi-bhanga, Cakradhara mentions Sankarasvamin as a commentator of Nyaya-bhasya. of. Sankarasvami nyayabhasyatikakrt, vide NM(S), II, p. 146
- 29 The latest researches seem to justify the Saka era theory and place Vacaspati in 976 A.D. (Date of Vacaspati Misra and Udayanacarya - D.C. Bhattacharya, Jha Research Institute Journal, vol. II, pp. 349-56.) vide Ratnakirtinibandhaval, Introduction p.21 f.
- 30 Numerous verses of Pramana-vartika are found quoted.
arthopayoge 'pi punah smartam sabdanuyojanam/
aksadhiryadyapekseta so'rtho vyavahito bhavet//
yah pragajanako buddherupayogavisesatah/
sa pascadapi tena syadaksapaye 'pi netradhih//
are the verses of Pramana-viniscaya quoted under NS i.1.4. These can be identified with the Tibetan translation of the text : don ni ne-bar sbyor-ba na'n/ gzan yan sgra sbyor dran-pa la/ gal-te dban-po'i blo lto na/ don de chod-par 'gyur-ba yin// gan snon blo-yi skyed-byed min/ ner sbyor khyad-par med-pa'i phyir/ de ni physis kyan 'gyur tes na/ don med na yan mig blor 'gyur// (Tshad-ma mam-par nes-pa, mDo xcv. II. fol. 253a)
- 31 grantharacanavinodadiha hi maya vasarah gamitah. NM(S), II, p.147
- 32 kuto va nutanam vastu vayam utpreksitum ksamah/
vacovinyasavaicitramatram atra vicaryatam// NM(S), I, p.5
na hiyam kavibhih purvairadastam suksmadarsibhih/
sakta tmamapi drastum matimama tapasvini// NM(S), II, p.147
33.kalpanapodham abhramtam pratyaksam.
- 34 A History of Indian Logic, p. 150. vide also NM(S), I, pp. 91, 159. Those were identified also by Cakradhara in his Nyayamanjari-granthi-bhanga.
- 35 nastyatma phalabhogamatramatha ca svargaya caityarccanam/
samskarak ksanika yugasthitibhrtascaite viharah krtah/
sarvam sunyamidam vasuni gurave dehiti cadisyate/
bauddhanam caritam kimanyadiyati dambhasya bhumih para//
NM, II, p. 39

- 36 A.L. Thakur, "The Naiyayika Trilocana as a teacher of Vacaspati", *Indian Culture* 14, 1947, 36-40.
A.L. Thakur, "Nyaya-manjari of Guru Trilocana - a forgotten work", *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society (Patna)* 41, 1955, 507-11.
Collections of different views of Trilocana from the works of Jnanasri and others can be a valuable contribution to the Indian philosophical studies.
- 37 Vitoka is mentioned several times in Isvaravada of Jnanasri. vide *Jnanasrimitranibandhavalī*, pp. 235, 237, 242-3, 255, 260. Also vide *Ratnakirtinibandhavalī*, p. 47
- 38 "The name of this scholar does not actually occur in these works. Jnanasrimitra introduces his views as those of a 'a certain scholar' (aparah) (Isvaravada, pp. 237, 255). The marginal notes supply the lacuna. Now what we could gather about this scholar is this : Satananda wrote some tract on Nyaya philosophy in which the refutation of the Buddhist position with regard to Isvara occurred. The five arguments put against the Buddhist position by him have been proved ineffective in the Isvaravada. *Jnanasrimitra-nibandhavalī*, Introduction, p. 22.
- 39 "... Jnanasrimitra had to face a number of scholars who wielded considerable importance at his time. Many important texts he consulted are now lost and perhaps irreparably. In the Nyaya system the works of highest importance only have been preserved. Those intervening between two such works are lost. Sometimes their views were quoted anonymously in later works. Thus some of the older views on Isvara can now be traced in Nyaya-kusumanjali of Udayana. But the Buddhist and Jaina authors have preserved passages from ancient masters with proper reference to their authors. Jnanasrimitra is responsible for preserving actual passages from the works of many important scholars that came between Dharmakirti and Udayana and thus his Nibandhas became an important document to a student of Indian Logic".
Jnanasrimitra-nibandhavalī, Introduction, pp. 22-23.
- 40 .aisvaryamadamatthā san atmanamavamanyase/
punarbaudhe samayate madadhina tava sthitiḥ//
- 41 In the 11th century the Buddhists, Jnanasribhadra, Ratnakarasanti, Yamari, Sankarananda contributed voluminous writing on Buddhist thought and logic. In the Nyaya line from the beginning of the 13th century the Naiyayika logicians were much engaged with the philosophy of the New school of Nyaya logic, i.e., with Tallvacintamani of Gangesa.

42 BL, I, p. 35

ABBREVIATIONS

BL - Buddhist Logic.

Catur. - Caturgranthika.

NKM - Nyayakusumanjali.

NM - Nyayamanjari, Ed. S. Sukla.

NM(S) - Nyayamanjari, Sampurnananda Sankrita Visvavidyalaya ed.

NS - Nyaya-sutra.

NV - Nyaya-vartika.

NVTT - Nyayavartika-tatparya-tika.

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VAJRADHARA



BUDDHA ŚĀKYAMUNI

THE BUDDHIST PAINTINGS AND ICONOGRAPHY

ACCORDING TO TIBETAN SOURCES

- J.K. Rechung

In *Bkash-rgyur-hdul-ba-lung*, it is stated that until the Mahaparinirvana of Lord Buddha, there were artists who drew human beings that could be mistaken for real. After the Mahaparinirvana of Lord Buddha, for a hundred years, there were still several such artists in existence.

During the time of Lord Buddha, there were two great kings, Bimbisara of Magadha and Udayana of Sgrasgrog (Vatsa). Both were contemporaries of Lord Buddha in the 6th century B.C and were close friends. King Udayana sent a priceless gift of a coat of mail to king Bimbisara which could ward off the effects of weapon, poison, fire etc. The latter could not find a suitable return (present) and was depressed. Then his Prime Minister Dbyar Tsul (Varshakara) suggested that since Lord Buddha was residing in his kingdom and as he was the most precious jewel in the three worlds, it would be a fitting present if a painting of Lord Buddha was presented to king Udayana (U-tra-ya-na). Therefore, Bimbisara requested Lord Buddha to permit him to draw his portrait on cloth. The artist found it impossible to draw the portrait, due to a brightness that radiated from Lord Buddha's body. The artist finally finished the portrait, looking at the reflection of Lord Buddha in a pond. This painting of Lord Buddha was called 'Thub-pa-chhu-lon-ma' which means Buddha's portrait made from the reflection in water.

While Buddha was preaching in Ser-skya (Kapilavastu), the wife of the house-holder Ming-chen (Mahanama) was listening to Buddha's teachings. She sent her maid Rohita to fetch her jewellery from her house. Rohita was reluctant to go as she too, wished to hear Lord Buddha's teachings, but as she had no alternative but to obey her mistress' order, she went to get the jewellery. On her way back she was hit by a pregnant cow and killed, but before she breathed her last, she took refuge in Lord Buddha, having great faith in him. As a result she was reborn as a princess to the king of ceylon. Her birth was accompanied by a miraculous rain of pearls, for which reason, she was named princess Mutig-khri-shing (a creeping plant of pearls). When the princess grew up, she heard about the Buddha and his teachings from Magadhan traders coming to ceylon. Having great faith in the Buddha, she

sent a letter and a present. As a return present, Lord Buddha sent her a painting of himself on cloth, which an artist had drawn from the spiritual ray of light that radiated from his body. This painting is called 'Thub-pa-hod-zer-ma' which means the portrait of Buddha made on cloth from the rays that emanate from him. On seeing the portrait, the princess was overwhelmed by deep faith in Lord Buddha and as a consequence, she perceived the truth. This painting was a model of aesthetic perfection. Later paintings of Central and Eastern India evolved from it.

Once a house holder named Dad-sbyin invited Lord Buddha and his disciples for a feast. Since the Buddha could not be present at the feast, his disciple Mgon-med-zas-sbyin (Anatha Pindada) thought that it would be most improper and the gathering would not look majestic. Therefore, Anatha Pindada requested Lord Buddha to allow him to make an image of the Lord from precious jewels to represent him at the feast. Permission was granted and he made several Buddha images.

When Buddha went to heaven to preach to his mother, the king of Gsal-Idan (Kashi), Gsal-rgyal (Prasenajit), made a sandalwood image of Lord Buddha and when the Lord descended to earth this sandalwood image took six steps to welcome him. Buddha directed the sandalwood image to go to China for the benefit of the people there. The image flew to China and is there till this day. It was called 'Tsan-dan-gyi-jobo' (Sandalwood Buddha). In China many paintings were done of this Jobo, and such paintings were known as 'Se-Thang'. These were the earliest of Buddhist paintings.

Before Lord Buddha attained Nirvana, he instructed that his image be made to act as his representative so that his teachings may flourish unhindered by heretics. Rahula made the image 'Thub-pa-gangs-chan-mtsho' from several precious Naga's jewels.

Once, Indra told Vishwakarma to make an image of Lord Buddha from gems collected from gods., men and Asuras. Vishwakarma made three images of Lord Buddha of the age of eight, twelve and twentyfive years. The former two he was able to make by asking Buddha's nurse as to how tall Buddha was at the respective ages. The image at the age of twentyfive was taken by Indra to heaven. The two other stayed for many years in Uddiyana and in the land of Naga's and in Bodh Gaya. During king Srong-btsan Gampo's time (617-641 A.D.) his Chinese queen Hun-shin-kun-ju and his Nepalese queen, Bal-sa Kri-btsun, brought these two images to Tibet. The image of Buddha at eight is in the Lhasa Gtsug-lag-khang and the one at twelve is at Ramo-che-gtsug-lag-khang. These two images were considered to be very sacred as they were blessed by Lord Buddha himself.

After the Mahaparinirvana of Lord Buddha, there were very few human artist who could make images of Gods. Hence, many Gods took the form of men and helped human artists to make beautiful images of Lord Buddha.

About eighty years after Lord Buddha, there lived three Brahmin brothers in Magadha. The eldest made a temple and an image of Lord Buddha from precious stones, the second collected earth from eight sacred places in India (Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, Rajgir, Sravasti, Sanshyg, Nalanda and Kushinagar) and erected an image of Lord Buddha in Rajgir, and the third made an image of Lord Buddha at the age of thirty five from the best powdered sandalwood (Goshir-sha) and from several precious jewels. This image was known to be a perfect replica of Lord Buddha and was called Mahabuddhi. Several patrons made unique and precious images in Magadha.

During Ashoka's time (273 B.C. to 236 B.C.) eight chortens (stupas) were built by Gnod-sbyin (demi-god artisans) in eight pilgrimage centres, and during the time of Nagarjuna 58 B.C., 78 A.C., or 120 A.C. (400 years after Buddha according to Tibetan sources), Naga artists made several Buddha images. Images made by Gods, Nagas and demi-Gods were made in such a way even after several years they could be mistaken for real. Images made later did not have the same effect of realism. Several artists made several images from their own imagination and thus many styles were evolved. In Magadha, during the reign of King Sangs-rgyas-phyogs, there lived an artist called Bimbisara, in Marur, during king Ngag-tshul, there lived an artist named Sigdari, and during King Devapala's reign, there lived in Bengal an artist Warendra Deman (Dhiman) and his son Bedapala. These artists were extremely good in painting and making images. From Bimbisara, there evolved the image style of Central India, from Sigdari, there evolved the image style of Western India, from Warendra Deman evolved the image style of Eastern India and from his son Bedapala, the image style of Magadha and Central India.

In Nepal, images of the old Western Indian style were used but later the style of Eastern India was adopted. In Kashmir, the original images were that of the Western Indian style but later a completely new style was brought in by the great artist Hasuraja, which to this day is called 'Kha-che-ma' or Kashmiri style. In Southern India the art of making Buddha images became widespread and styles of three masters Jaya (Rgyal-ba), Prajaya (Gzhan-las-rgyal-ba) and Bijaya (Rnam-par-rgyal-ba) became popular. However, much of the skill was lost and there was a general decline in the art. Of all the styles, only the Southern style did not reach Tibet.

There were many self-evolved images at the time of King Srong-btsan-gampo. Such as the principal images of Khra-hbrug temple of Yarlung in Southern Tibet and the most precious eleven-headed Avalokitesvara of Lhasa Gtug-lag-khang. During the reign of king khri-Srong-Ide-btsan (740 to C. 798) many images were erected and one such image was the Buddha image at Bsam-yes monastery known as 'Jobo-byang-chhub-chenpo'.

The Nepalese style was the most popular in Tibet. Later on Sman-bla-don-grub-shabs (1440-A.D.) of Lho-brag-sman-thang in Tibet, who was regarded as an incarnation of Manjushri, went to Tsang and learned the art from Rdo-pa-bkra-shis-rgyal-po. He saw the painting called 'Sithang' which he had painted in his former life in China. The painting brought back his recollection of his former life as an artist and he painted a great Thangka called 'Sman-thang Chen-mo' with which he established a new style. His son and pupils established two schools of arts. Besides, Mkhyen-btse-chen-mo of Gong-dkar-sgong-stod in south of Lhasa also started a new style. Sman-bla-don-grub-shabs and Mkhyen-btse-chen-mo were considered two of the greatest artists of Tibet.

Another new and beautiful style was started by Sprul-Sku-byi-bu, whose colour surpassed the former two. Another artist Gtsang-pa-chos-dbying-rgya-mtso (1645 - A.D.) started the Sman-gsar school of painting. Subsequently, many other styles were evolved which merged into the three early schools.

Sprul-sku-nam-mkh'a-bkra-shis (1500 - A.D.) of Yar-stod in the south of Lhasa, believed to be the incarnation of Karmapa Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, learnt the Sman-thang style of painting from Skal-Idan-shar-phyogs-pa dkon-mchog-phan-bde of Ae, in South Tibet. Later he copied the Indian style of line drawing of images, and for background and colours he followed the Sithang style of Chinese painting that was prevalent during the time of the emperor Tai-ming. This style of painting was known as the 'Sgar-bri' style. Sprul-sku

Nam-mkah'a-bkra-shis, Chos-bkra-shis and kar-shod-karma-bkra-shis were responsible for the spread of the Sgar-bri style of painting. Sprul-sku Sle-hu-chung-pa and Pad-ma-mkhar-po were famous for making images. Karma-shid-bral was known for making images of the Sgar-bri style but this style is lost now. During the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617 - 1682 A.D.) time, Hor-dar and Skul-sku Bab-phro were famous for making images. Their style of making images was followed by Hdod-dpal (government craft centre in Shol, below potala).

Hbrug-pa-padma-dkar-po (1527 to 1592 A.D.) gave a brief description of Buddhist images made in India, Tibet, Mongolia and China. In India the images were classified according to the different regions of north, south, east, west and central India 1. The images made in central India were made of bronze, Zikhyim, red bell metal, white bell metal, red bronze, Bodhi tree, clay of Nagas and stone. Zikhyim was found in the river beds of Sindhu in western India, and was known as red gold as it appears like red gold. Zikhyim contains seven precious Naga's jewels and was like the wishfulfilling jewels. The real colour of Zikhyim is a glowing red but on close examination, it radiates the colour of a rainbow. Rainbow colours were more distinct when the juice of a certain virulent poison (Tsen-duk) was applied on Zikhyim.

Rje-shes-rab-rgya-mtso relating to images, stated that Zikhyim contains several precious jewels. Real Zikhyim radiates five rainbow colours when the poison Tsan-duk is applied on it 2. There were some natural copper alloys found underground which were identified as Zikhyim. Artificially manufactured Zikhyim was prepared by melting gold, silver, copper, iron, kar-tho, white and black lead and quick silver.

Hjigs-med-gling-pa (1729 - 1798 A.D.) states that there were two types of Zikhyim - red gold, and the other was prepared by adding seven precious jewels to the molten metal 3. In artificially prepared Zikhyim, joints between the various metals could be visible and when placed in the shade, rainbow colours radiated like the Lhasa Jobo Rimpoche. In the biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, it is mentioned that the Lhasa Jobo Rimpoche was made from ten jewels of human beings and Devas 4.

Red bell metal was red in colour with a marked yellowish shade and white bell metal white in colour with a distinct yellowish shade. Red and white bell metals found in Liyul (Khotan) were considered to be the most valuable materials for making images in ancient times as it was believed that the very existence of these materials was due to the blessings of the past four Buddhas. Hjigs-med-gling-pa again states that red and white bell metal found in the hills of Ceylon and Liyul (Khotan) were considered as the most precious materials for making images as the hills of Ceylon were blessed by the past four Buddhas. There were, however, variations in the art of casting metal. According to some, artificial bell metal was prepared by mixing equal quantities of nine metals of gold, copper, iron, tin, zinc, zil, bronze and lead. The body of the Buddha image made of white bell metal and the cloak of red bell metal was called 'Thub-pa-zang-thang-ma'. This was also mentioned by Hbrug-pa-pad-dkar. However, according to Rje-shes-rab-rgya-mtso, the Buddha image of central India, the body of which was of yellow bell metal and the cloak, of red bell metal, was known as 'Thub-pa-sang-thang-ma'.

Images made of red copper were easily distinguishable. It was believed that Lord Buddha through his prayer had made that whoever touched an image made from the Bodhi tree would be freed from taking rebirth in the three lower worlds of beasts, hungry ghosts and hell. There were images made from soft clay of the Nagas and white marble.

Hjigs-med-gling-pa states that the Nagas gave soft clay to Nagarjuna (four hundred years after the demise of Lord Buddha according to Tibetan sources). Similarly, Rje-shes-rab-rgya-mtso mentioned that Nagarjuna was invited to the land of Nagas and was presented with soft clay. Several images like 'Thub-pa-klu-hjim-ma' and 'Ha-shang-klu-hjim-ma' of Ngo-mtsar temple in Amdo were made from the soft clay of the Nagas. There were images made from the soft clay of the Nagas. There were images made from the Thangka painting 'Thub-pa-hod-zer-ma' (the portrait of Buddha on cloth) which Buddha sent to the princess Mutig-khri-shing of Ceylon. In this image, the body was slim, the crown on the head was horizontal, the nose high, long and the tip sharp. The point between the eye brows was absolutely parallel to the tip of the nose. The space between the eyes was narrow and the lips were beautifully shaped. The Lhasa Jobo Rinpoche was classified amongst this image.

The sandalwood image of Lord Buddha made by the king of Gsal-ldan (kashi) was later reproduced. Images made in this form were well shaped and proportionate. Clothes were well-draped and the folds evenly spaced, hands supple and heels fairly thick and the face was a longish oval shape. These images were mistaken to be made in Bukhara and khotan. Like the sandalwood jobo, 'Thub-pa-gser-gling-ma' of rtsé-thang in southern Tibet belongs to this type of image.

The images of Bodhisattvas had a relaxed posture and were never stiff. They had a handsome face, proportionate and good bodily features. The plaited hair bound on the top of the head was in an upright position, adorned with ornaments. Some of these ornaments were made from the precious Naga's gems. Images of wrathful deities (khro-bo) were neither stiff nor curved in posture. Some images had no throne, whereas others had thrones beautifully shaped and ornamented, supported by figures of men with great physical strength or by lions. Hjigs-med-gling-pa mentions that very few wrathful figures were made in India because the Tantric teachings were kept in great secret at that time 5.

Images of three-faced deities resting on fully opened lotus cushions and others on a partly opened lotus cushions but in a upright position were also found. In some cases the lotus were double, some rows of lotus facing upright and some rows turned downwards. Between the two lotus, one above and other below, were drawn two lines adorned with a chain of pearls.

Pandita Rdo-rje-gdan-pa-chenpo (Maha-Vajrasana. 11th cent. A.D.) made the image 'Gdan-chhung-ma' purely of white bell metal. The head of the image was slightly small in proportion to the body. The cheek bones were high and full. The image 'Thub-pa-hdud-hdul-ma' (Buddha image) was made in Magadha and the image 'Chos-hkhor-ma' in Varanasi.

The images made in east India had a broad forehead. The upper portion of the body was broad resembling that of a lion. The face was short and the fingers were joined together. The crown of the head (Gtsug-gtor) was placed slightly towards the back. These images were placed on the thrones as those of central India, except that the petals of the lotus cushion made in east India were turned slightly inwards. Spacing between the upper and lower lotus was filled with chain of designs, but the designs along the lower lotus had bigger gaps than the designs in the upper lotus which were compact. Images made in Zahor (near Dacca in Bangladesh) were mostly identical with others made in east India, except that the white bell metal images of Zahor were studded with gold, silver and copper. The eyes were of silver and copper; some were decorated with precious gems and some were

adorned with pearl necklaces. The belief that these images originated in Delhi and later spread to east India is a mistaken notion. According to Higgs-med-gling-pa, images made in Bengal were of white bell metal with eyes and lips of silver and gold, and they looked lovelier than those made elsewhere. Precious stones were studded on these images to beautify them.

Most of the images in south India were made of red bell metal though there were some made of the soft clay of the Nagas and white bell metal. The face of these images was small but with marked cheek bones. The gap between the eyes was slightly wider than normal. The forehead was narrow and the nose slightly flat like that of an ancient Dravidian race. It is very rare to find south Indian images in relaxed postures. The cloak was well-draped without any chisel mark. The throne and the single-petalled lotus were broad with tips of the lotus petal slightly hollow. The images were thickly gilded with gold of a reddish colour. The shape of the images made in Betha (Kerala) resembled those made in other parts of south India, except that the cheek bones of Betha images were not prominent. Chisel marks were noticeable on the cloaks. The face was small with fairly large eyes. The upper part of the nose was lightly hollowed. The lips were slightly protruding with the ends curled up. The images were supple and in a comfortable posture, adorned with beautiful ornaments and clothed with loose robes but their finishing was rather crude, specially the fingers, toes and lotus cushion. The lotus cushions have a double lotus touching one another in upside down position. Most of them did not have the bordering designs running parallel above and below the lotus cushion. Very few white bell metal images were made in south India. Marble images were exquisitely shaped and beautifully adorned with ornaments. The mouth was well-shaped and the space between the eyes was narrow. The upper part of the nose was slightly flat, while the lower portion was slightly high. The images were made with a slight curve in posture and the spacing between the folds of the robes was even.

Images made in North India were made from an alloy of white bell metal and brass, giving the image a whitish shade. They were well-shaped and proportionate to a relaxed posture. The face was small with a prominent nose and the gap between the eyes was narrow. The throne and the ornaments were exquisite. Some images of this kind were also made of red bell metal. Higgs-med-gling-pa says that most of the images in north India have a simple standing and sitting posture. In Kashmir, images were not only made of white but also of red bell metal, stone, enamel and Zikhyim. Images of Zikhyim were mostly made in Kashmir. Images made in this part have long, heavy faces with thick lips. The gap between the eyes was narrow and the tip of the nose slightly rounded. The posture with supple limbs was in an uncomfortable position. Several images have copper lips and silver eyes. The tip of the crown on the head was slightly depressed. The cloak was well draped with even spacing between folds which extended fairly long. Some were adorned with pearl headdresses and pearl necklaces, while others had floral head dresses. Some were seated on thrones and some on lotus cushions, the petals of which were plain, large and open. Some of these images were identical to those made in central India, the difference being that the necks of these images were thin, the cheek bones prominent, the shoulders and ankles thin and the heels thick. Higgs-med-gling-pa had stated the same except that he had not mentioned the supple limbs.

In Tibet, the Chhos-rgyal-Lima (Bell metal image made during the reigns of different kings) was encouraged during three different periods. It was first introduced at the time of king Srong-btsan-sgam-po (7th century A.D.). During this time images were made of Zikhyim, pure red and white bell metal. Besides, images were also made of gold, silver

and crystal glass. Some images were made in the chess board design with red and white bell metal. These images have a wide and proportionate body with a longish face and big nose. The eyelids were long, the limbs supple and the robes with few folds. Some were seated on lotus cushions which resembled those made in south India and some images were without a stand. Some images wore gowns, shoes, and were crowned with three spikes slightly bent inwards. In most cases chisel marks were visible on the robes. Images of kings were adorned with turbans and shoes with chisel carved designs. Some images were gilded with gold whereas other were polished or unpolished. Hjigs-med-gling-pa mentions that during king Srong-btsen-sgam-po's time, images were made mostly of red bell metal adorned in laymen's robes. Images of khro-bo (wrathful deities) made during this period have a less fierce expression.

The second period of Chhos-rgyal-lima was begun in the time of king Khri-srong-lde-btsen (8th century A.D.). The shape and quality of these images were like those made during the time of king Srong-btsan sgam-po, except that the faces were small and fingers badly shaped. Although the images were well polished and adorned with multicoloured ornaments with three spiked crowns, they did not have a good finish. Images of this period did not have turbans but had plaited hair loosely held on all sides. According to Hjigs-med-gling-pa, images made during the reign of king khri-srong-lde-btsen were heavily polished.

The third period of Chhos-rgyal-lima was during the reign of king khri-ral-pa-chan (9th century A.D.). The images of this period were very much like those of Central India except that they had a heavier face and relaxed posture. The eyes were of silver and copper. The Zang-thang-ma images have copper lips and silver eyes. The brass images have a poor finishing and the images made from an alloy of bell metal and copper have a darker complexion than those made during the time of the former two kings. All the images were gilded with gold.

At the time of king Ye-shes-hod and Byang-chhub-hod (11th century A.D.) of Mngah-ris-stod, images were made from an alloy of red copper and zikhyim. These images were well built with a sharp nose and were in an eased posture, resembling those made in Nepal. They were gilded with gold from Shang-shung, a province in Western Tibet. Images of this period were known as "thon-mthing-ma". According to Hjigs-med-gling-pa, these images were made from different coloured bell metal. Images made during this period were excellent in material and shape. In shape these images resembled the Chhos-rgyal-lima and were often mistaken to be made in China.

In Mongolia, images were chiefly made in upper Bokhara, Yugur, Khotan (Li-yul) and lower Bokhara with slight variations in their styles. During the reign of king Hulahu, upper Bokhara images were mostly made from an alloy of lead, white bell metal and red bell metal. The colour was darkish but a little lighter than the Chinese brass. The faces of these images were small and round with a sharp nose and well built posture identical to those made in Kashmir. The clothes were well draped with closely spaced frills like sea waves. The lotus cushion had a double lotus design with a large single petal, hollow in shape. There was a slight depression at the base. The cushions were circular or square, supported by Nagas, and in some cases the images were placed on rocks instead of thrones. Their images made by Chinese artisans from an alloy of lead and bell metal. These images have a narrow face, stumpy body, small eyes and mouth with the chin slightly scooped out. The cloak had numerous pleats. The fingers carried religious offerings. The thrones and cushion had Chinese characters inscribed on them. These images were made of dull bell metal by

the Muslim artisans and they resembled those made in Kashmir. Some images were gilded whereas others were not. In Yugur (part of Mongolia situated north of Amdo) the images were made from an alloy of white bell metal and silver and have a silver shade. They were also made from an alloy of lead and bell metal. The faces of these images were small, round, with a slightly flat nose and thick hair. The bodies were proportionate but the fingers and toes had a crude finishing. These images were seated in an uncomfortable posture. They were scantily ornamented and the ornaments were poorly made. The cloaks were well draped with few pleats. Most of these images were seated on a lotus cushion or thrones. The lotus cushions were similar to those made in upper Bokhara.

Images made in Liyul (Khotan) were similar to the ones made during the time of king Srong-btsan-sgam-po. The main images of Bsam-yes-dge-rgyal temple and khri-hbrug temple were believed to have been brought from Li-yul.

In lower Bokhara, images were made from an alloy of lead and bell metal. They were also made from white lead and wood. The faces of these images were badly shaped, the lower half being larger than the upper half. The eyes and mouth were small but the lips were well-shaped. The fingers were short and the feet and hands looked like those of a young boy. Robes were closely fitted with the folds and pleats evenly spaced. Most of the images were placed on thrones and on rocks. During the time of emperor Godan, when China was under the Mongolian sovereignty till the time of emperor Yesum-themer (a period of six generations have lapsed between the two), images were made from an alloy of congli (a kind of bell metal) and red bell metal, and were gilded with gold. These images were made exactly like the ones that were made in China. Images were also made from sandalwood, crystal glass, red jade, white jade, rhinoceros horn, gold, silver and Zikhyim.

In China we find two categories of images, ancient and modern. The older images were made during the reign of emperor Thang-chehu. These images were well-shaped, heavily built with long faces, slit eyes, lips perfectly shaped, nose slightly flat and hands slightly shorter. They were heavily adorned with ornaments and their clothes were loose fitting with evenly spaced folds. The modern Chinese images were made during the reign of emperor Tai-ming. These images have a flat face and long eyes. The gold colour which was used to gild these images were outstanding. The folds of the robes were evenly spaced. The lotus cushion had a double design all round and the tips of the petals were bent outward. The bordering design running parallel to the lotus above and below were evenly spaced. The base of the image was firmly sealed with the crossed Vajra design carved on it and painted with red Chinese varnish. Images of poorer craftsmanship do not have the crossed Vajra design or the red varnish. These images were known as 'Skurim-ma' and were made of brass.

According to Hjigs-med-gling-pa the older types of Buddha images in China were made during the reign of emperor Thang-chehu. These images were made from an alloy of bell metal and lead. Modern Chinese images, according to him were of two types 'Thugs-dam-ma' and 'Sku-rim-ma'. The 'Thugs-dam-ma' images were well-shaped with long faces. They were finely attired and thickly gilded with gold. On the base of these images was carved and painted the crossed Vajra and some had Chinese marks. The 'Sku-rim-ma' images were mostly made of brass and do not have good finishing. In China copies were made of 'Chhos-rgyal-lima' which can be identified only by experts.

Rjes-shes-rab-rgya-mtso states that at the time of king Glang-dar-ma, (863 - 906) many Buddhists were persecuted and many images destroyed. Some of those images were

believed to have uttered words of pain and some to have even bled. Such images were known as 'Glang-dar-khrims-phog-ma'. Reference to such images were also made by the Fifth Dalai Lama in his autobiography 'volume Dza'.

This is only a brief account of the history of ancient Buddhist art from the materials I have so far been able to glean from manuscripts at the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology. In future, I hope to be able to expand on this subject in greater detail.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Book Review

SANGS-RGYAS STONG

- An Introduction to Mahayana Iconography

By Nirmal C. Sinha

**Published by Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology,
Gangtok, India, Price Rs. 150/-**

That the Buddhist art and Buddhist tenets go together needs hardly any elaboration and is conspicuous through its various modes of creation of such artistic objects as painting, sculpture or icons. It is more so in the case of Mahayanic art forms as developed and practised in Tibet, Mongolia and trans-Himalayas. What is however, not so well known or usually go unnoticed is the fact that these art forms together with their basic concepts had also travelled to the north along with Buddhism from India. The principles underlying these art forms totally differ from those of the Western mode of expression essentially representational in character and based on mass, volume, dimension etc. treated against perspective view of things and objects. On the other hand the art forms practised and developed in India and the countries of South East Asia, China, Japan, Central Asia and Trans-Himalayas professing both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have been based on linear decorative compositions on a single plane in total disregard of the perspective view. This applies with the icons both Brahmanic and Buddhist where the same linear-decorative principles predominate rather than the anatomical preciseness of the Greek models be it depicted in Buddha Rupa, forms of gods and goddesses or symbolic representation of men, animal, floral or other motifs or any other natural phenomenon.

Buddhist art or for that matter the Mahayanic art due to its strict adherence to scriptural injunctions and intricate doctrinaire preoccupations defy any direct understanding by a common observer. It is with a view to facilitate such understanding that the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology has come out with its latest publication 'Sangs-rgyas Stong, (Sahasra Buddha) sub-titled 'An Introduction to Mahayana Iconography' -- a handy exposition of the secrets of Mahayana Buddhist icons, lucidly narrated by Prof. Nirmal C. Sinha, the Director of the Institute and formally released by Mr. T.V. Rajeswar, the Governor of Sikkim and the President, Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok. The author in his preface has stated the objective of the publication thus: "A book on Mahayana iconography simple for the beginner and lucid for the general reader is not an easy task. The task is made doubly difficult when it is desired that the book should be acceptable to the specialist". That both these purposes have been amply served is clearly manifest on the pages of the book. In fact and as stated by the author, he followed the advice of a specialist of Stella Kramrisch's standing according to whom "the best exposition of Mahayana icons was to present or project the believer's point of view". The author had accepted the assignment "with due humility keeping in mind the advice" of a leading authority as Madame Stella Kramrisch and drawing upon his "on-the-spot knowledge of Mahayana monasteries" in Himalayas, Trans-Himalayas and Baikals. Himself a distinguished historian and an authority on Northern Buddhism, the author's treatment of the

subject testifies to his insight and his claim of direct access to the mysteries of the Mahayana pantheon as depicted through art forms.

It is indeed a fascinating study to know about the proliferation of Buddha Rupa into thousand (Sahasra) through the meditative visions of the devotees or through the believers' eyes, about the symbols (Pratika) and their significance, the emergence of three levels of Buddha Rupa (Trikaya) and above all the overriding principles of 'Dharma' encompassing all animate being through which one gets a glimpse-- a rare acquaintance with a world at once shrouded in mystery but profoundly inspired with a sense far exceeding the mundane estimates of our life.

If we consider the circumstances of Buddhism's entry into Tibet, we would find that its impact was that of a distant echo-- much of it had an appeal towards mystery so that the search was more inwardly. Naturally, the result was partly fantasy, partly deep meditational trance-- further resulting into vision of images and emergence of numerous forms with numerous variations depending on the individual attainment of the devotees.

In this context, Buddha Rupa also becomes symbolic in the eyes of the believers. Buddha is not 'Rupa Kaya' (mundane form or 'Sharira'). He is an 'embody' (of the Absolute-- 'Shunya' or Void) rather than a 'body' (of impurities). However for the sake of comprehension of our senses we need to pass through the stages and travel gradually from transient to transcendent. Hence, is the emergence of Buddha Rupa in three levels (Trikaya). Nirmana kaya (assumed body) Manusha Buddha or Bodhisattvas, who appear in human form to alleviate sufferings of sentient beings; Shambhoga kaya (the body of bliss) super humans capable of blessing the devotees in personal manner; Dharmakaya (the cosmic body) the incomprehensible Absolute beyond all limits of time, form, cause and effect cycle-- the void or 'Shunyata'.

This is the conceptual framework under which the artist who is also a devotee and belongs to the Sangha has to visualise the technique, forms and colours suitable for depicting the imagery. The process is therefore, one of complex appreciative perception achieved through meditative practices. The artist in this case is himself a believer and a visionary with a third eye.

The author who knows his job as well as the land of Sahasra Buddha well, we have a lucidly compressed account of Mahayana iconography though as an introduction and would look forward to a more comprehensive history of the subject comprising a much wider perspective of its occurrence over the past centuries.

However, the author's occasional turn towards emotionally arousing episodes from the Gita, Upanishad or even the Tantra could only reveal his deep sense of commitment and belongingness to the high order that gave rise to such splendid fruition of a spiritual culture hidden for long behind a mysterious world of existence. Mr. T.V. Rajeswar, the Governor and the President SRIT in his well written foreword has rightly commended the author in the following words: "His knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist Doctrine is encyclopaedic".

Last but not least, the beautifully produced book became all the more revealing with highly ornamental canonical line drawings of Lama Karjam Atsen and the colour plates reproduced from the Thankas that gave much more to it than a mere collection of printed matter between the covers.

TALES THE THANKAS TELL

by Prof. Nirmal C. Sinha

Published by Director SRIT Gangtok, 1989, pp. 64, Price Rs. 200.00

Prof. Nirmal Sinha's contribution towards Buddhist studies especially that of the Mahayanic Lamaist tradition is immense. Equally true is his interest in arts and a deep sense of aesthetic values besides his prowess and rather 'encyclopaedic' knowledge in the subject of Mahayanic Buddhist lore. It is the interest in the realm of arts and aesthetics in general and art forms as related to Mahayanic pantheon and revealed through believers' vision in particular that made him wander across the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region extending through desert lands of Central Asia including Tun-Huang (Known as 'Cave of the Thousand Buddhas') important seats of Buddhist learning from Urga in Mongolia to Kham in eastern Tibet observing and studying the relics, monuments, icons and art objects of all varieties through the eyes of not only a connoisseur but with the humbleness of a believer and a devotee having faith in concepts otherwise seemed obscurantist to sceptics or the uninitiated. His latest work 'Tale The Thankas Tell' is a book dedicated to the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru on his birth Centenary Year and published by Director SRIT (Gangtok- 1989) is intended to be a "popular guide" for lay readers as well as specialists "about the scroll portraits of Tibet and Mongolia" and seeks to "present in simple language all aspects of Thankas". The book is a follow up of the earlier publication by the author entitled SANG-RGYAS STONG (An Introduction to Mahayana Iconography, Gangtok, 1988) and fulfills, though belatedly, the wishes of a great soul who was himself an explorer in the vast realm of human intellect, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It will also go a long way in fulfilling the long felt needs of lay observers who are often bewildered at the splendid portrayal of figures, symbols and apparent riot of colours that these fabulous art forms reveal.

While acknowledging the fact that "The original and sole inspiration of Thangka has been religious more precisely ritualistic" the learned author traces the sources for the mode and technique of these exquisitely decorative paintings in the following words, "for sculpture or icons in round in Tibet and Mongolia, the dominant if not the sole, influence was from South, that is, India and Nepal. The Northern Buddhist pictorial art....drew inspiration from all directions... Iranian, Nestorian or Byzantine murals and icons on wooden slabs or on textile made their influence felt..... further into Tun-Huang, Lhasa and Sakya. Above all the Chinese aesthetics made a heavy impact on portraits on textiles, silk or shrine wall."

As regards themes, the Thangka "paintings from the monk artists of Sakya, Narthang, Tashi Lhunpo or Lhasa in Central Tibet, Chamdo, Derge, Palpung or Kathok in Kham, Kumbum or Pomra Machin in amdo and Urga (Ulan Bator) in Mongolia constitute a very valuable source of not only the history of the Dharma but also of the general history and culture of the different religions concerned."

It is indeed a fascinating turn of history that transformed as if in one stroke a whole mass of humanity into believing in the Supreme message of compassion as propounded by Gautama Sakya Muni, leaving aside their traditional hostilities and primitive postures, that too with a rare display of faith and perhaps the staunchest adherence to Dharma and the teachings of Guru Rimpoche.

More striking feature of this spectacular spiritual resurgence was its humanistic inclination and a spurt of activities accompanying it over a period literally extending for centuries finally evolving into a pattern of culture that sought to promote side by side with the intense religious pursuits such secular practices as art, architecture, medicine and craftsmanship of superb excellence. The Thankas bear the unmistakable imprint of this highly impressionable order; the spiritual content expressed (or revealed?) through artistic forms--transcendental bliss realised at the level of the immanent. The master concept of 'Trikaya' (Three Bodies) was the foremost principle that provided the basis for all Mahayanic art forms including the Thankas. The Thankas tell the tales through innumerable legends, myths, imageries and mystic visions, the ascending order of the Three Bodies; Nirmanakaya (Assumed Body) leading to Shambhogakaya (Body of Bliss) and finally to Dharmakaya (Cosmic Body), the Absolute or Shunyata. This is the essence of the two books produced in succession by the author with characteristic mastery over the subject matter and the readers will be well advised to possibly go through them together in order to derive full benefit out of them.

Lastly, a word or two about some shortcomings certainly not of content but of form. Firstly, the size of the plates are too small to facilitate any objective comparison with the expository texts following them. Secondly the cover design leaves a little more to desire both in respect of selection of type face for the title as well as the broad colour areas in red and white. It seems a distribution of some blue (Lapis-Lazuli) somewhere, would have been possible without violating the scriptural injunctions.

That the book dedicated to the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru has come out just in the Nehru Birth Centenary Year will be welcomed by all.

- H.R. BHATTACHARYYA

The articles 'Sakyamuni's final nirvana' by David Snellgrove and 'Vaidurya' by Marianne Winder were originally published in the BULLETIN OF THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES, Vol. 36, Part II, LONDON 1973 and GRONINGEN ORIENTAL STUDIES, Vol. 2, 1967 respectively while the Book reviews were published in SIKKIM EXPRESS, GANGTOK, SIKKIM (INDIA) Vols. 19 & 18, 1988 & 1989.

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