Buddhism: Its Silhouette and Identity in the Post-Buddhist Period

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Abstract

The Buddha, who is truly regarded as the "Light of Asia", his dharma enlightened the entire human of Asia. The Buddha blessed the human fight with a unique wisdom and a spiritual culture which taught us the basics of sympathy, love and friendliness towards one and all. This paper draws attention to the Buddhist thought and culture, which took a different shape and identity in the post-Buddhist period. It will try to highlight the hermeneutic nature of Buddhism when it enters into the North-East India especially in Assam. Later, it became a religion, mostly in the period of development of Tantric Buddhism, which denies the Buddha's doctrine entirely and initiates to improve the worship of gods in general. Although Buddhism developed into popular religion, it moves away from the doctrine of historical Buddha.

Keyword: Brahmanism, Buddhism, Tantrism, Transformation, North-East India, Assam,

1. Introduction

Buddhism, which was the most influential religion of India, plays a significant role in the development of Indian philosophy. The teaching of Buddhism covers a considerable part. It has a significant contribution in making the rich culture of India. Various schools and sub-schools came into existence under the influence of Buddhism. It is sometimes said that the Brāhmanical and the Jaina system was developed under the direct influence of Buddhism. It is a mixture of philosophical, religious, epistemological, and ethical principles. Buddha's teaching was more often concerned with the ethical principle rather than the metaphysical and intellectual knowledge. Buddha observed that since metaphysical questions are always intellectually unsure and doubtful, so metaphysical questions are not a kind of ethical question. The Buddha was entirely reluctant for metaphysical discussion, and whenever some metaphysical question was put to him, he remained silent. Instead of that, Buddha always tried to make clear to persons on the essential questions of sorrow, the roots of sorrowfulness, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation.

It is said that there were lively interchanges between the Buddhist and the Brāhmanical logicians for centuries. As the oldest religion, Buddhism occupied a strong position in India. People also strongly believed in Buddhism. At that time, Hinduism makes every effort for evolution. This was the most crucial and significant period in the history of Hinduism. Because people at that time were not at all interested to believe in a new doctrine. Their mind was fixed with the Buddhist ethical principle. By taking that opportunity, Buddhists also fling some doubt to the well-regarded belief system, which is regarded as the

cause of people's disinterest. However, it was challenging for Hindu thinkers to make the expansion of the Hindu nation. So, they tried to find a lavish who could influence the people with new doctrine without shattering the past. "One who could expanse the old patterns without breaking them and synthesize the opposing sects on a general basis of truth, which would have scope for all men of all grades of intelligence and culture. Sankara "set to music" the tune which had been haunting millions of ears, and announced his Advaita Vedanta as offering a frequent basis for religious unity" (Radhakrishnan, 1927). Sankara attempted to overcome the philosophical tradition of his age, and according to the needs of his time, he illuminated it.

Sankara claimed that the belief system which he is propounding is already there in the Vedas. He assumes that what he is asserting is a constant process of evolving, and he is expressing only an important age-old tradition that we are getting as a gift from our ancestors. However, it is challenging to decide whether Sankara's philosophy is a continuation or reinterpretation of, or addition to, the old teaching. We cannot distinguish the old from the new, for in the living, the old is new, and new is old. Natalie Isayeva says, "even such an astute Buddhologist as Rozenberg was of the opinion that a precise differentiation between *Advaita Vedanta* and Buddhism is impossible to draw." (Isayeva, 1992)

Many present-day scholars maintain that Advaita was formed through the decisive influence of earlier teachings and that its main notions were intentionally or unintentionally borrowed from earlier and contemporary systems, some of them even from heterodox ones. S. Radhakrishnan, asserts that "there is no doubt that Samkara develops his whole system from the Upanishads and the *Vedanta sutra* without reference to Buddhism, says as follows: "we need not say that the Mādhyamika doctrine has very much influenced the Advaita Vedanta philosophy… the Nirguna Brahman of Samkara and Nagarjuna's *sunya* have much in common." (Radhakrishnan, 1929)

It is well known that one of Sankara's closest teachers was Gauḍapāda, whose main work, *Mändükya-kärikä,* was undoubtedly composed under the direct impact of Buddhist ideas. Sankara wrote a deferential commentary on the *Kärikä;* it was owing to the intermediary position of Gauḍapāda, in Sankara's work, there appeared the notion of different levels of reality, the concept of higher and lower truth, and even the idea *of mäyä,* which was not clearly elaborated in the Upanishads. Although the word *māya* occurs in Bhagavad-Gita, scholars argue that Shankara's theory of *māya* is nowhere to be found in Vedas or Upanishads. Surendrnath Dasgupta argues: "Much of the dialectics of the reasoning of Shankara and of his followers and the whole doctrine of māyā and the fourfold classification of existence, and the theory of Brahman as the ultimate reality and ground, were anticipated by the idealist Buddhist, and looked at from that point of view there would be very little which could be regarded as original in Shankara" (Dasgupta 1969). For this very reason, Ramanuja, the founder of the Visistadvaita Vedanta School and other orthodox Hindu schools, went so far as to describe Shankara as a pracchanna bauddha, "crypto Buddhist." On the other hand, Mudgal says, "The doctrine of māyā as understood by Shankara was first introduced in the Vedanta by Gauḍapādakarika". (Isayeva, 1992)

However, the theory of Maya forms one of the pillars upon which the Vedanta rests. The oldest idea of Maya that we find in Vedic literature is the sense of delusion. Before the word, Maya means something like magic. Nevertheless, the word Maya has been used in various manners, much later on, in one of the latest Upanishads, we find the word Maya reappearing, but this time, a transformation has attached itself to the word. In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, it is stated that "Know Prakṛti (nature) is

Maya, and the great Lord the Mayin (maker) (or know nature to be Maya and the Ruler of this Maya is the Lord Himself)" (Muller, 1884).

The Buddhist also used the doctrine of Maya. However, when the Buddhists used this doctrine, it turns out to be mostly like idealism. Now Maya is perceived in that way. But the concept of Maya that the Advaita Vedanta brings into the light is not similar to the Buddhist uses. It is neither Idealism nor Realism. It is not even a theory. It is a simple statement of facts. It is a fact of what we are and what we see around us.

According to Sankara, the phenomenal world is nothing but Maya, which he regards as an illusion. The world is real when we perceived it apart from its basis in the ultimate or Brahman. When we observed the world in its relation to Brahman, we will find that it is nothing but the Brahman. Which is called in Upanishads as 'sarvam khalu idam Brahma' that is, all this is Brahman. Sankara sometimes says that the world does not exist in reality, and its manifestation disappears when the reality is known. He regarded the world's appearance as Maya.

According to Sankara, all objects of the world are the products of Brahman and Maya. Maya controls all relations and order of the universe. In connection with the intelligence of Brahman, Maya acts as an intelligent power. Maya is also responsible for the systematization of all things and their interrelations. The jiva is the phenomenal self that feels, suffers, and is affected by the experiences of the world. The individual self is an appearance while the truth is Brahman; the world is the play of Brahman, his vilasa, his Maya. Radhakrishnan, in his book *The Brahma Sūtra: The philosophy of spiritual life* wrote that:

> Badyaranya compares the world's appearance to a painting, where the white canvas stands for the pure Brahman, the white poster for the inner controller, antaryamin, the dark colour for the dispenser of the crude elements and the coloration for the dispenser of the concrete elemental world, Virat and the figures that are manifested there are the living beings and other objects of the world. Brahman reflected through Maya assumes various forms and characters. (Radhakrishnan, 1960)

In the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Sankara, Brahman is the vivarta cause, where the effect is nothing but an illusion. In contrast to that, Maya is the parinama cause, where Maya is the power or shakti of Brahman. The Shakti and its transformation or the effect of the parinama cause is not an illusion. It looks like the real transformation, till the possessor of shakti is perceive as real and absolute.

According to Sankara, the world is an appearance. The existence of the material world is real only due to ignorance. It is nothing but an illusion. The physical world is as illusory as the appearance of a snake in a rope. We can say that an illusion is nonexistent. Something perceived though it is misapprehended. The rope, which is the perception of the snake, disappears. But the world does not disappear. The Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Sankara asserts that the world is real or sat because it exists for a time; it is unreal, or asat for it does not exist for all time. It is almost like the Buddhist concept of momentariness. However, it is a contradicted statement. A thing is said to be valid only in the condition of if it is not contradicted. In Advaita Vedanta philosophy of Sankara, the appearance of the world is found to be non-existing at the rise of the right knowledge, so it is not valid. Maya is neither sat nor asat, or it is neither being nor non-being. It is the indefinable cause due to which this world of different individual existence arises.

The intellectual thinkers suggest us to liberate ourselves from Maya. Liberation from Maya signifies free from bondage. It is the bondage of the theoretical values which are dominating us. However, free from bondage does not mean to treat life as an illusion or be indifferent and unconcern to the world's welfare. It just means that liberation from the illusion which holds us back from getting the real knowledge and prevents us from seeing the actual cause. The Maya or illusion makes us run after the material satisfaction and produce self-interested as the highest end. However, a life of solitude, prayers, and worship is not easy to apprehend. It is turning exceptionally challenging in our age. A never-ending fight is going on between personal insight and human creation. We tend to do what others do, believe what others believe, and always overlook and neglect to think, feel, and act with insight and conviction. We tend to lose ourselves in the obscurity and namelessness of the human crowd. Life becomes more complicated than before. We are inclined to destroy our existence, whatever is human, creative, and spiritual in us.

However, there is also controversy regarding the concept of Mayavada. Some scholar asserts that the Sankara's doctrine of *māya* or *avidyā* is not found in the Upanishads and it is borrowed by Sankara from Buddhism. For example, Sankara's junior contemporary, Bhaskara, thought that Sankara's notion of *māya* is derived from Buddhism. Regarding the similarities between Maya theory of Sankara and the Maya of Buddhism Bhaskara, stated that the proponent of Maya is "men who rely upon Buddhist theories." Again, it has also been said that the non-dualistic theory is an idea, which precisely of Buddhism (particularly of Mahāyāna Buddhism). Bhaskara says Maya-vada as groundless and stated that "Expatiating on the contradictory and groundless Maya-vada, propagated by the Buddhist, they have misled the world" (Nakamura, 1983).

Again later, Ramanuja was to call Sankara a crypto Buddhist (*pracchanna-bauddha*). According to some scholars, Sankara adopts the Buddhist concepts of monasteries or *sangha.* and when he travelled all over India, he established four *mathas* (monasteries) in order to bring harmony among the diverse thought currents that were prevalent in the Indian Society. By doing this, he just wants to restore the Brāhmanism, when divergent trends are struggling for supremacy. Thus, Advaita succeeded in absorbing and reshaping some major concepts that originated within the Buddhist frame of thought. However, Mayavada was strongly criticized by other sects on the point that its thought is similar to Buddhist theories. The most ancient use of this example at present exits in Padma Purana. In the Padma Purana, Mayavada is criticized as being incorrect teaching. According to Padma Purana, Mayavada is not based on the Vedas. It is a theory of crypto Buddhist, and this view has been inherited by the later centuries[1]. In the Padma Purana, Isvara is said to have declared to Parvati: "the theory of Maya is a false doctrine, a disguised form of Buddhism, I myself, o goddess, propounded this theory in the kaliyuga in the form of a Brahmin[2]." The words of Siva in the Padma Purana, later in the same chapter, are to the effect that "that great system, the Maya theory, is not supported by the Veda, though it contains the truth of the Veda[3]."

Vijñānabhiksu also often discussed this matter and stated that this thought actually is not a Vedanta theory, and the exponent of this theory are crypto Buddhists, and apparently, they are those who calls themselves Vedantists. Vijñānabhiksu, commenting on the Sānkhya system, observes, "There is not

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[1] A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy, By Hajime Nakamura, pp-120-121

[2] S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol-II, op.cit., pp-471.

[3] Ibid

a single Brahmasutra in which our bondage is revealed to be due to mere ignorance. As it is to the original theory of Maya propounded by persons calling themselves Vedantists, it is only a kind of the subjective idealism of the Buddhist. The Maya theory is not an ideology of the Vedanta." (Nakamura, 1983)

But the point is that Sankara himself never claim Mayavada as his own theory. Moreover, none of the thinkers prior to him had ever proclaimed it as their own theory. Mayavavda may be said to be the idea that only the Brahman is real, and everything else is false. But this term is not applicable to Sankaras philosophical theories.

There is also disagreement regarding the Maya-theory within the schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda. Vallabha called the proponents of Maya, the incarnations of Mādhyamika school. Vijñānabhiksu, on the other hand, says that one should regard the proponent of Maya as "a section of the Vijñānavadins" (Nakamura, 1983). The Yamuna also says that the Mayavada and Vijñānavāda are essentially one and the same[4]. Ramanuja stated that the theory, that of Sankara and others, who are known as crypto Buddhist, and the Vijñānavadins, particularly of Dignāga, who claim to the advocator of the Mayavada, seems indistinguishable. Although there is a correspondence between them, both are making common theoretical mistakes[5].

But other philosophers like Sriharsa, who stated that although there is a resemblance between the non-dualistic monistic school and Buddhist theory, there is also a difference between the two. For example, while Buddhism asserts the falsity of the infinite existence, the Vedanta school teaches the 'non-difference' of the infinite existence, and so they are different on this point.

It is held that in an attempt to preserve the continuity of thought, he attempted to combine logically incompatible ideas. However, this may be admirable to the elasticity of Sankara's mind or his spirit of genuine consideration, it cannot but affect the logical consistency of his thought, and the theory of Maya works as a screen to cover the innermost phrase of his system. However, that be, there is no doubt that Sankara develops his whole system from the Upanishads and the Vedanta sutra without reference to Buddhism.

Interestingly although there are lots of differences, Sankara's interpretation keeps much scope for two-way dialogue with Buddhism as it is considered as a love-hate kind of relation between them. On the one hand, Sankara was criticized for being a 'Buddhist as a disguise,' on the other, as between the *Āstika* and the *Nāstika* systems. He is the one who is responsible for restoring the supremacy of the *Āstika* tradition and Brāhmanical Hinduism. He is against the rising supremacy of Buddhism and is opposed to the *Anātmavadi* doctrines, which is a growing threat of nihilism. According to F. Whaling,

> Part of the story of Sankara's own development is his own reaction against the undue Buddhist influence he felt he had received from Gauḍapāda. Sankara applied Gauḍapāda's key to his interpretations, but the fact is that Sankara's canvas was so much wider, and his task more varied, meant that he could not follow Gauḍapāda in every detail (Whaling, 1979).

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[4] Hajime Nakamura's *A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy*, (1983), pp-120-121. Yamuna says that Vijñānavāda, particularly of Dignāga and Mayavada are identical. The only difference is that Vijñānavāda of Dignāga is an open Buddhist and the propounder of Mayavada is a Crypto Buddhist.

[5] Ibid, pp-121

There are some differences between pre-Sankara Vedanta and Sankara's standpoint. For example, pre-Sankara Vedanta did not talk about the theory of appearance or vivartavada, "no need was felt to draw any distinction between the paramartha and the vyavaharika or of the text into para and apara. Pre-Sankara Vedanta is best described as ekatvavada, monism, it is not Advaita- Absolutism. Advaitism is the conscious rejection of duality and difference as illusory. Brahman is established, not positively, but by the denial of duality" (Murti, 1980). Another important point is that the word 'Advaita' existed before Sankara because it is evident that the Buddhist Vijñānavadins called themselves Advaitavadinah (Nakamura, 1983). The term Advaita as the name of a school came first to be employed in the later centuries. Sankara himself did not reveal it.

Another most essential point is, as we find that pre- Gauḍapāda or pre-Sankara Vedanta was monistic, not Advaitic, but it abruptly takes an absolutistic turn. It is a kind of enigma. We can speculate that either Advaita Vedanta borrowed some concept from the absolutism and dialectic which is already well-established in the Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda system or due to its inner dynamism the Upanishadic tradition too was heading towards absolutism. (Murti, 1980)

If we carefully examine their perspective, we would find that all of them agree concerning the logical form of the absolute, as free of empirical determinations and as the essence of phenomena and also as realized in an intuitive experience. However, they hold opposing views concerning the nature of the absolute and the mode of their approach. It can only make for confusion to ignore the difference. What is real for one, the same thing is the appearance for another. Though this hypothesis of developing absolutism without external help cannot be rejected completely, it is, however, a fact that absolutism had already been developed in the anatma tradition. Moreover, there were lively interchanges between the Buddhist and the Brahmanical logicians for centuries.

Establishment of Brāhmanism over Buddhism

Acharya Sankara, one of the most radiant characters in the history of Indian thought, was born and lived in an era when Buddhism had a strong predominance. In the words of Isayeva:

> When the Buddhist monasteries became rich centers of vested interests and their disciples became lax, and magic and superstition crept into the popular forms of worship. He felt it necessary to formulate a philosophy which was not only a direct interpretation of Upanishadic texts but also different from Buddhism. Sankara is one of such a philosopher, who had a firm grasp of the real significance as well as the limitations of Buddhist thought, tactfully interpreted the concepts of Upanishads, and gradually replaced the blind forces by conscious and rational foundations and offered the prevailing ethical practices a new direction. (Isayeva, 1954)

So, Sankara was the one who understands the pulse of the situation and inclines to introduce it in a new way. It is said that "Brāhmanism killed Buddhism by a fraternal embrace" (Radhakrishnan, 1929). Mudgal (a Brahmin Rishi) says that "Sankara adopted practically all dialectic (of the Buddhist), their methodology, their arguments and analysis, their concepts, their terminologies and even their philosophy of the absolute, gave all of them a Vedantic appearance, and demolished Buddhism" (Isayeva, 1954). Brāhmanism, although they never revealed, we can see, knowingly or unknowingly, they incorporated many Buddhist rituals and practices. Brāhmanism also believed Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu. Thus, Brāhmanism assimilated most of the principles of the Buddhist faith without reference to Buddhism. It was the time when Buddhism became a fundamental strength in the life of the country. (Choudhury, 1959)

The truth; that Buddha advocated, has remained only for 500 years. Then there must need a fresh revelation of renovation. Five hundred years after the Buddha's death, that is to say, about the beginning of our era, his doctrine was approaching the height of its flowering season. Indeed, it was no longer quite the same as he addressed it; it had gone on developing.

So later, it became a religion, mostly in the period of development of Tantric Buddhism, which denies the Buddha's doctrine entirely and initiates to improve the worship of gods in general. Although Buddhism developed into popular religion, it moves away from the doctrine of historical Buddha, which stated that liberation from rebirth or reincarnation could only be attained by the monastic life and renunciation of the world.

Although Buddhism remains one of the most influential religions of India, it is not so easy to say whether ancient India was Hindu or Buddhist. Ancient paintings, constructions, the structural design gives the evidence of strong Buddhist predominance and that "it was overwhelmingly Buddhist for over a millennium" (Omvedt, 2003). "The earliest religious architecture exists such as Buddhist— vihara, stupas, caves including chaitya halls monasteries and statues. Until the time of the Guptas, there is no Hindu temple, and whatever was there, those were small. Even the construction of most magnificent architecture, the stupa, sculptures, and monument at Sanchi, which began earlier, but completed during the period of the Guptas, which is considered to be the classical Hindu kings" (Omvedt, 2003). Likewise, the corresponding assertion also can be made for literature. The literature of that period, for example, the Tamil Sangam period, Kavya period was mostly influenced by the Buddhist literature. "Brahmanic religious literature like the Upanishads, the Dharmasashtras, the *Arthasāshtra,* and others of its type is available only from the Gupta period. Even the great epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana* took their final form in the 1st century CE." (Omvedt, 2003)

By the 1st century onwards, the Prakrit-Pali had become an elite language. The early Buddhism or the original Buddhism that has existed before its various sub-sects mainly advocates the Pali language. It was the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism. The texts of Theravada Buddhism were preserved in the Pali language. However, "Pali could not be able to continue to exists as 'language of the country' when the other new languages developed throughout India" (Omvedt, 2003). By that time, the Sanskrit language developed, and it developed as a complex and challenging elite language. Although Sanskrit was a difficult language, it emerged as the only one that could help to connect the different parts of the country. Consequently, for an extended period, Sanskrit becomes a general and widespread language. Many Buddhist monks also had to conduct their education and research in Sanskrit. Mahāyāna Buddhism mostly uses the Sanskrit language. The monks who came from outside to learn Mahāyāna Buddhism, first they need to become skilled at Sanskrit. "The Chinese and Tibetan monks, who came to India, studied and preserved Mahāyāna texts only in Sanskrit and translated from that" (Omvedt, 2003). Thus, Sanskrit distinctly became the most privileged and scholarly language. Scherbatsky, in his book 'The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana' wrote that "the Mahāyāna Buddhism reached its full development in north-east India, perhaps for the period of the two first centuries of our era. Its sacred writings are not in the Pali language but in Sanskrit and mix Sanskrit, and also its principles are not similar to those of the older Buddhism." (Stcherbatsky T., 1975).

Buddhism in North East India especially in Assam

However, Buddhism prevalent in North East India, especially in Assam, was Vajrayāna, or tantric Buddhism. As a further expansion of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Vajrayāna or Sahajayāna Buddhism developed

in Assam. 'The effectiveness of Dharani (Buddhist chant or protective spell), which constitutes a large and important part of Mahāyāna texts, appears more prominent in North East India than the ethical and philosophical beliefs.' (Nakamura, 1987).

From early Mahāyāna Buddhist work like *Aryamanjusrimulakalpa* and *History of Buddhism in India* of Taranatha, *we* can speculate the nature of Buddhism that existed in early Kamrupa. According to the writings of Taranatha, in early Kamarupa, Buddhism was widely spread and promoted by one Dhitika. From the illustration of Taranath, the teachings spread by the Dhitika, was similar to Mahāyāna Buddhism[6]. When Mahāyāna Buddhism had not fully developed as a separate identity, a group of Buddhists entered the region and associated with the cultic centers of non-Aryan or pre-Vedic People.[7] The common believers, who did not confine to the monasteries, expressed their faith and devotion by constructing numerous stupas. It may be presumed that this group of Buddhists constructed the stupas of the Suryapahar area. Taranatha has mentioned that Dhitika, using magic or some kind of black arts, came closer to the existing place of the Sun worship by a Brahmin that is also known as Siddha for the propagation of Buddhism in the region[8]. Sun worship has been prevailing in Assam from a very early period. Sankhayāna Grihyasamgraha refers to the prevalence of the worship of Sun in ancient Assam, which is of Alpine–Iranian origin."[9]

One of the most significant evidence of tantric practices found in the stupa complex of the Surya Pahar is that there are some Siva lingas along with Yunipitha, which symbolizes the shiva and Shakti. Shiva and Shakti are regarded as the basis of tantric cosmology[10]. Another place is the Nilachala hills[11]. The image and sculpture of Nilachala hills indicate that it was also a major Buddhist shrine in the past, which leads to the belief that at that time, these places became the central place of tantric practices. Another remarkable point is that in this region, *Buddha* statues depicted with the *Bhumisparsha* mudra. Buddha in *Bhumisparsha* mudra signifies the tantric Buddha, which is different from the image of the original Buddha that is depicted in the pali or Mahāyāna Texts.

In Nilachala hills, Buddhist tantrism evolved with female deity Sweta Tara and Vajrayogini. However, at the same time, with the Buddhist tantric deities, Hinduism also starts a form of tantrism with the female deity Mahagauri. However, later goddess Kameswari Devi or goddess Kamakhya takes the place of goddess Mahagauri[12]. 'Pranab Jyoti Deka in his book *Nilacala Kamakhya* discussed thoroughly how the goddess Kamakhya or Kameswari has evolved through the intermixing of the Buddha cult of Chinnamasta-Vajravarahi and Hindu Kameswari cult. Kamakhya or Kameswari was conceptualized from

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[6] Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India, Edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, pp-46-47

[7] Joseph Walser's Nāgārjuna in Context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and Early Indian Culture, pp-13-36

[8] Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India, Edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, pp-47

[9] P.C. Choudhary, The History of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D, pp-434. See also Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India, Edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, pp-47

[10] P.C. Choudhary, The History of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D, pp-442

[11] Archana Barua, Elements of Magic, Esotericism, and Religion in Shaktism and Tantrism in Light of the Shakti Pitha Kāmākhyā, published in The Pomegranate, pp-51-70

[12] P.C. Choudhary, The History of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D, pp-445-450

the synthesizing Hindu Sakti Tantra and Buddha Annuttara tantra. Buddhism in Asia, the seed of incarnation of the tantra for the goddess Kamakhya, addressed to Vajra-Yogini, VajraVarahi, and Vajra-Vairocini, which became closely associated in the form of Chinnamasta and Buddha Chinnachamunda in the 9th century. This Chinnachamunda, with time, was modified to the Kamakhya or Kameswari cult[13]. Thus, the deity Kamakhya, which seems to appear as a new deity in the early-medieval Brāhmanical literature of Assam, was contributed by both the Buddhist tantrism and new Brāhmanical religion. Nevertheless, Kamakhya is a Hindu goddess, but her roots lie in the BuddhaVajrayāna Tantricism'. Similarly, it is assumed that Mahacina Tara, another Buddhist tantric goddess, entered into Hindu fold as Ugra Tara[14].

Thus, Buddhism in Assam emerged in the form of Vajrayana, mainly based on *the mahasukhavād* principle. Later it split into Sahajjan, Kalacakrajan, Mantrajan, Bhadrayan, and Tantrajan. To quote Bhattacarya: "We have evidence to show that these systems gained ground in Assam, which was noted for the esoteric doctrines of Tantric Shaktism. Both the Indian and Tibetan sources provide us with materials regarding the prevalence of later Buddhism in the form of Vajrayana in Assam." Again, it is mentioned in the "Sankara Digvijaya[15]" that when the great reformer Shankaracharya came to Kamarupa in the early part of the ninth century AD in order to defeat Abhinava Gupta, the noted Buddhist scholar in controversy, he took recourse to Black magic practices to defeat Sankara.

Thus, when Buddhism came to Assam or Northeast India, it took a different shape and identity. However, the language problem and the insufficient sources from vernacular literature have created a vast gap in evidence and information about the widely accepted religion and the way in which large sections of people of the time reacted to the Buddha's teachings. The influence of Buddhism in India slowly became weaker, and by the second millennium C.E., the widely practiced religion vanished from the land of its birth. Hence, it becomes evident that in the post-Buddhist period, Buddhism itself gets several interpretations. The hermeneutical revisions of Buddhism transform it and change it in various ways.

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[13] For details, see Pranav Jyoti Deka, *Nilacala Kamakhya, op.cit.,* pp. 45-46.

[14] For details, see Pranav Jyoti Deka, *Nilacala Kamakhya, op.cit.,* pp. 45-46.

[15] Antarkar, W.R. "Sanksepa Sahkara Jaya of Sri Madhvacarya or Sankara Digvijaya of Sri Vidyaranyamuni." Journal of the University of Bombay. November 1972, vol. 61, no. 77.

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