BUDDHIST HYMNAL

- B. Ghosh

In earliest literary antecedent of Pali Sanskrit devotional poetry and hymnology is to be found in Theravada Pali and Mahayana Sanskrit canon and non-canonical literatures. But hymns are abundantly offered to Buddha Sakyamuni, foregone Buddhas, Future Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, female divinities like Tara, Prajnaparamita and lesser divinities. Following the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist Stotras or Stotras the Lamas of Tibet and other Himalayan regions also composed many devotional poetries. Even metamorphosed historical personalities like Mahaguru Padmasambhava, Tsongkhapa, Sakya Pandita, Longchen Rabjam etc. were eulogised through many praises and prayers.

The earliest hymns are found in Rigveda, Purusa-suktas, extolling the supreme impersonal godhead for the creation of the universe. Hymns to Hiranya-garbha – the Golden-germ and to gods like Vishnu, Agni, Indra, Varuna, Mitra and other vedic gods are also found in Vedas.

The hymns are inspired by abiding sentiment of human heart, but while the devotional spirit of God-seeker (Deus-Seeker) and god lover (Deus-Lover) in that far of age is nearly the same as that formed in later times the respective theme and mode of expression are

As in vedic and puranic literature we find worship and inspiring praise to natural phenomena the elaborate and somewhat mechanical rituals to "Joma" with its pouring of libations, chanting and repetition as formulas, was replaced by more personal and sensible mode of Puja, with its offering of flower, food, incense, song and dance. These modes of worship are amazingly found in the ritual worship of Bubbhia Mahayana and Tantrayana. Hymnology has various facets of devotional sentiment and devotional spirits. But here abstain from discussing them in detail.

"With the development of inexorable doctrine of Karma and rebirth Sanskrit literature became pervaded with deeply pessimistic spirit. The classical system of philosophy, which greater leisure had brought into existence, started with the presumption of human misery and occupied themselves with theories of its eradication; and in this procedure the heterodox religious system of Buddhism and Jainism agreed" (Ibid. p.102)

But very soon the higher poetry and philosophy invaded the field, and the Stotra became an important, if somewhat neglected, wing of the Kavya poetry itself. Asvaghosa's early eulogy of Buddha in his Buddha-carita (XXVII) is unfortunately lost in Sanskrit, but the spurious gandi-stotra-gatha, ascribed to him, has been restored and edited. This Sanskrit text is small poem in twenty-nine stanzas, composed mostly in the sonorous srsthrara metre. It is a hymn in praise of Ganâi, the Buddhist monastery gong, consisting a long symmetrical piece of wood; the theme of the poem is the religious message which its sound is supposed to carry when beaten with a short wooden club (Ibid.103).

Of Asvaghosa's successors, Mâloota has ascribed to his credit some twelve works in Tibetan and one in Chinese. Most of these are in the nature of Stotra, and some belong distinctly to Mahayana: but only fragments of Satapsasatikâ-stotra and Catuk-satuo-stotra.

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penegyric of one hundred and fifty and four hundred stanzas respectively, have been recovered in Sanskrit. Both these works are simple devotional poems in Slokas. They are praised by Chinese pilgrim Yi-ting who spent 671 to 680 A.D., in India, to whom matsya is already famous poet. The later Buddhist stotras are true to the manner and diction of Hindu stotras, the only difference lying in the mode and object of adoration. The Lokesara-nataka of Vajradatta, who lived under devapala in the 9th century A.D., is composed in the elaborate sragdhara-metre. Describing the physical features and mental excellence of Avalokiteshvara. In the same sragdhara-metre and polished diction is composed a large number stotras to Tara, who is the female counterpart to Avalokiteshvara but who is absorbed with later Hindu Pantheon as as aspect of Sakti. It may be noted here in Mahayana-Vajrayana Sakti is replaced with Prajna. As many as ninety-six Buddhist texts relating to Tara are mentioned, but of these the Arka-Tara-sragdhara-stotra, in thirty seven verses, of the Kashmirian sarvajnanmitra who lived in the first half of 8th century A.D., is perhaps the most remarkable. (Aspects of Sanskrit literature, p. 117). We come across the repeated reference to great similarity between Mahayana-Sutras and puranas, many distinguished scholars like Maurice Winternitz, Keith, S.N.Dasgupta etc. in the field of Sanskrit literature have highlighted the theme in histories of the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina literature.

In the ancient Puranas, many texts which were connected with the cult of the Hindu gods, were included and appended, such as Maha-stotra (glorification of holy places), Stotras and Kalpas (sacred precept). In the same way there is also a Buddhist "Purana", the Swayambhū-Purana, which is not really a Purana, but a māhāmya. It is glorification of the holy places in Nepal, especially the Swayambhū-cetiya near Kathmandu. The work is a manual for pilgrims, and therefore, also contains descriptions of ceremonies e.g. for the worship of Naga, so that one obtain rain, and many legends attaching to the various holy places. Thus for instance in chapter IV, the mani-cudadahana is told by way of glorifying the river manimahini. In Swayambhū-Purana, Swayambhū, "the self-existence", which in Hinduism one of the names of god Brahma, appears as the
king as teacher of the world, seated on a wondrous Lotus, the root of which had been planted in bygone ages by an earlier Buddha. (A History Of Indian Literature Vol. II. Buddhist and Jaina literature by M. Winternitz, 1933 p. 375-76).

There is a collection of Four Hymns Cottuttava of Nagarjuna in the Tibetan translation (French translation, by La Vallee Poussin, 1914). King Haraswardhana (606-647, A.D.) who, under the influence of Chinese pilgrim Hsuen-Tsang, leaned more and more strongly towards Buddhism during the last years of his life, composed a suprabhata-stotra, a morning Hymn in Praise of Buddha, in 24 verses and an Asta-naha-arisovya-stotra (translation in Sanskrit by S. Levi, 1894), a "hymn in praise of the eight shrines," in 6 stanzas. The poet Vajradatta, who lived under king Devapala in the 9th century is the author of the Lokesvara-Sataka the hundred (stanzas) in praise of Lokesvara. Poet become a leper owing to a curse, he implored Lokesvara, i.e. Avalokitesvara to help him. There is a devotional poetry-stotra in 9 stanzas, the Saptas-Buddha, "praise to the seven Buddhas, Vipasa, Siddhi, Vaisakha, Kanyakumara, Kanakamuni & Kasyapa, and the Sakya Muni and future Buddha Maitreya worshipped and invoked one after another. There are numerous stotras or stavas, composed by devout Buddhists, in Tibetan canonical literature Tanjur commentaries, there is a collection of 71 important stavas in Bodhisattva, Folio-1-258. This contains Hymns to Buddhas Bodhisattvas, Prajnaparamita, Jataka, even to Indian Buddhist saints like Vamsinana from Pandita Vihara in Bengal.

While theology of Buddhist gods are abundantly discussed in vast Buddhist literature, the Hymnology - Stotras or Stavas, the devotional and inspiring invocation to Buddhist gods and goddesses nonte gestures denoting divine supramundane attributes, the recitation and contemplation of the Hymns bring about harmony and peace in the individual mind.

Hereunder, we propose to give some important Hymns which are available in Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan along with English
translation, owing to want of space we propose to bring out other in next issues of Bulletin.

NOTES


Buddha Püja Pali

I

I bow down to the victoriously passed beyond, who has conquered the enemy, to the perfectly enlightened one - The Buddha.

यो सर्वत्रिंशी वर्षाभिमुखी

मार सलिने तहति विविलित

सम्बोधिनायति अतनो गाँवि

सुभुद्धनो तै प्रभाविष कुटि
I bow down to the Supramundane Buddha, who having become victorious over the Forces of Evil and their retinue, seated on the basement of Bodhi-Tree, Attained complete Enlightenment.

II


I offer oblation to the benign Lotus-Feet of Lord Buddha, offering flower of beautiful hue, fragrance and endowed with divine qualities; I offer oblation to Lord Buddha with this flowers, through the merits I earn, may I be emancipated from the worldly sufferings. As the (beautiful) flower (gradually) decays, the same way gross body decays.

III


I have no other Refuge, The Lord Buddha is ultimate Refuge of mine; Through this utterance of truthful speech, may I become victorious and may good fortune prevail upon me.
I bow down to the Lord Buddha, who is overlord of Brahma-the creator, The Indra-the lord of gods, who is monarch among the men, The monarch the supreme;

Who is worshipped with five burning lamps of wisdom, who is blazing light is the Physician to heal others across the other shore of cyclic Existence (Bhavapara). (Tr. self)

II
BHAGAVAN ACARYA SHANKARA'S ELOQUENT INVOCATION TO BUDDHA

भरत्तिष्ठवंचताः स्वयम्

निविवद्विष्ठान्तताः: ।

व आते काले योगिनां वमावति

व बुद्ध: वंग्रदेवतु वनवतिस्त । ।

Whose slender legs like the sticks are fixed in Lotus-seat (Padmasana) gesture on the ground,

Whose vision is fixed on the tip of nose, through the control over the breathing,

Who is universal monarch among the yogins, in the Kali-yuga. That Enlightened Buddha may adorn our heart.

This is the 9th verse of Vaisnava-dasaavataara, verses, of Acarya Shankara(8th century A.D.) (Tr. self)
III
TRIKAYA-STAVA
DARMA - KAYA

||

"Homage to the Buddha!

Which is neither one, nor many, the foundation of great and excellent benefit to itself and others,

Which is neither non-existent, nor existent, equal to Heaven, of equal flavour of unconceivable nature,

stainless, immutable, peaceful, matchless, all-pervading, unmanifested,

I salute that, which is to be intuited, the incomparable Spiritual Body (Dharma-Kaya) of the Dhyenas !!

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Which is transcendental, inconceivable, consisting of a hundred well-achieved results, magnificent, which causes the source of joy of wise men to spread in the midst of a resplendent assembly, manifested in all the worlds of the Buddhās, eternal, lofty, the voice of the Good Law. I salute this Body of Glory (Sambhoga-kaya). dwelling in the great Realm of the Doctrine.2

NIRMANA-KAYA

Which is supernal, descending, gradual, manly, which is the Body of the Holy beings (Nirmanakaya). Assembly of the Buddha, correcting, manifesting,的伟大, the voice of the Good Law. I salute this Body of Glory (Nirmanakaya). dwelling in the great Realm of the Doctrine.2
Which to some shines like the lustre of fire in order to liberate all living beings,
Which, serene manifested to some the wheel of the Doctrine of Supreme Enlightenment,
Which, having destroyed the perils of the Three Worlds, manifested itself by various means, and in various forms,
I salute this Manifested Body (Nirmana-kaya) of Saints of great purpose, pervading the Ten Directions.3.

NIRVIRALPA-JINA-KAYA

Emancipated from the laws of the Three Worlds, equal to Heaven, containing all existences,
pure, serene, profound, which is understood by yogins, endowed with the highest serenity,
difficult of perception, hard to be investigated, of the highest benefit to one's self and others, all-pervading, causative,

I salute the Body of the Jinas, blissful, matchless, undifferentiated, of one form.4. (tr. Roerich)
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1148 'Spel-mar 'bod-pa - pa
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Misra-kstotra-nama
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1164 De-bzhin gelegs-pa bgyud-la
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