

Chapter Eight Cinacara (Vashishtha and Buddha)

It has been the subject of debate whether the Tantrik Pañcatattva ritual with wine and so forth is a product of Buddhism, and whether it is opposed to Vaidika Dharma. Some have supposed that these rites originally came from yellow Asia, penetrated into India where they received its impress, and again made their way to the north to encounter earlier original forms. I have elsewhere put forward some facts which suggest that these rites may be a continuance, though in another form, of ancient Vaidik usage in which Soma, Meat, Fish and Purodasa formed a part. Though there are some Maithuna rites in the Vedas it is possible that the Bengal Shakta ritual in this respect has its origin in Cinacara. Possibly the whole ritual comes therefrom. I have spoken of Bengal because we should distinguish it from other forms of Shakta worship. The matter is so obscure at present that any definite affirmation as to historical origins lacks justification. Most important however in the alleged Buddhist connection is the story of Vashishtha to be found in the Tantras. He is said to have gone to Mahacina (Tibet), which, according to popular belief, is half way to Heaven. Mahadeva is said to be visible at the bottom of the Manasarova Lake near Kailasa. Some of the Texts bearing on it have been collected in the Appendix to the edition of the Tara Tantra which has been published by the Varendra Anusandhana Samiti. The Tara Tantra opens (l. 2) with the following question of Devi Tara or Mahanila-Sarasvati: "Thou didst speak of the two Kula-bhairavas, Buddha and Vashishtha. Tell me by what Mantra they became Siddha". The same Tantra (IV. 10) defines a Bhairava as follows: "He who purifies these five (i.e., Pañcatattva) and after offering the same (to the Devata) partakes thereof is a Bhairava." Buddha then is said to be a Kula-bhairava. It is to be noted that Buddhist Tantriks who practice this ritual are accounted Kaulas. Shiva replied, "Janardana (Vishnu) is the excellent Deva in the form of Buddha (Buddharupi)." It is said in the Samayacara Tantra that Tara and Kalika, in their different forms, as also Matangi, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, and Dhumavati belong to the northern Amnaya. The sixth Chapter of the Sammohana Tantra mentions a number of Scriptures of the Bauddha class, together with others of the Shakta, Shaiva, Vaishnava, Saura and Ganapatya classes.

Vashishtha is spoken of in the XVII Chapter of the Rudrayamala and the 1st Patala of the Brahmamala. The following is the account in the former Tantrik Scripture:

Vashishtha, the self-controlled, the son of Brahma, practiced for ages severe austerities in a lonely spot. For six thousand years he did Sadhana, but still the Daughter of the Mountains did not appear to him. Becoming angry he went to his father and told him his method of practice. He then said, "Give me another Mantra, Oh Lord! since this Vidya (Mantra) does not grant me Siddhi (success); otherwise in your presence I shall utter a terrible curse."

Dissuading him Brahma said, "Oh son, who art learned in the Yoga path, do not do so. Do thou worship Her again with wholehearted feeling, when She will appear and grant you boons. She is the Supreme Shakti. She saves from all dangers. She is lustrous like ten million suns. She is dark blue (Nila). She is cool like ten million moons. She is like ten million lightning-flashes. She is the spouse of Kala (Kalakamini). She is the beginning of all. In Her there is neither Dharma nor Adharma. She is in the form of all. She is attached to pure Cinacara (Shuddhacinacararata). She is the initiator (Pravartika) of Shakticakra. Her greatness is infinitely boundless. She helps in the crossing of the ocean of the Samsara. She is Buddheshvari (possibly Buddhishvari, Lord of Buddhi). She is Buddhi (intelligence) itself (Buddhirupa). She is in the form of the Atharva branch of the Vedas (Atharvedashakhini). Numerous Shastric references connect the Tantra Shastra with the Atharvaveda. (See in this connection my citation from Shaktisangama Tantra in Principles of Tantra.) She protects the beings of the worlds. Her action is spread throughout the moving and motionless. Worship Her, my son. Be of good cheer. Why so eager to curse? Thou art the jewel of kindness. Oh, son, worship Her constantly with thy mind (Cetas). Being entirely engrossed in Her, thou of a surety shalt gain sight of Her."

Having heard these words of his Guru and having bowed to him again and again the pure one (Vashishtha), versed in the meaning of Vedanta, betook himself to the shore of the ocean. For full a thousand years he did Japa of Her Mantra. Still he received no message (Adesha). Thereupon the Muni Vashishtha grew angry, and being perturbed of mind prepared to curse the Mahavidya (Devi). Having sipped water (Acamana) he uttered a great and terrible curse. Thereupon kuleshvari (Lady of the Kaulas) Mahavidya appeared before the Muni.

She who dispels the fear of the Yogins said, "How now Vipra (Are Vipra), why have you terribly cursed without cause? Thou dost not understand My Kulagama nor knowest how to worship. How by mere Yoga practice can either man or Deva get sight of My Lotus-Foot. My worship (Dhyana) is without austerity and pain. To him who desires My Kulagama, who is Siddha in My Mantra, and knows My pure Vedacara, My Sadhana is pure (Punya) and beyond even the Vedas (Vedanamapyagocara). (This does not mean unknown to the Vedas or opposed to them but something which surpasses the Vaidik ritual of the Pashu. This is made plain by the following injunction to follow the Atharvaveda.) Go to Mahacina (Tibet) and the country of the Bauddhas and always follow the Atharvaveda (Bauddha deshe' tharvaveda Mahacine sada braja). Having gone there and seen My Lotus-Foot which are Mahabhava (the great blissful feeling which in Her true nature She is)

thou shalt, Oh Maharisi, become versed in My Kula and a great Siddha".

Having so said, She became formless and disappeared in the ether and then passed through the ethereal region. The great Rishi having heard this from the Mahavidya Sarasvati went to the land of China where Buddha is established (Buddhapratishthita). Having repeatedly bowed to the ground, Vashishtha said, "Protect me, Oh Mahadeva who art the Imperishable One in the form of Buddha (Buddharupa). I am the very humble Vashishtha, the son of Brahma. My mind is ever perturbed. I have come here (Cina) for the Sadhana of the Mahadevi. I know not the path leading to Siddhi. Thou knowest the path of the Devas. Seeing however thy way of life (Acara) doubts assail my mind (Bhayani santi me hridi: because he saw the (to him) extraordinary ritual with wine and woman). Destroy them and my wicked mind which inclines to Vaidik ritual (Vedagamini; that is, the ordinary Pashu ritual). Oh Lord in Thy abode there are ever rites which are outside Veda (Vedavavahishkrita: that is, the Vaidik ritual and what is consistent with Veda as Vashishtha then supposed). How is it that wine, meat, woman (Angana) are drunk, eaten and enjoyed by naked (Digambara) Siddhas who are high (Vara), and awe-inspiring (Raktapanodyata). They drink constantly and enjoy (or make enjoy) beautiful women (Muhurmuhuh prapivanti ramayanti varanganam). With red eyes they are ever exhilarated and replete with flesh and wine (Sadamangasavaih purnah). They are powerful to favor and punish. They are beyond the Vedas (Vedasyagocarah). They enjoy wine and women (Madyastrisevane ratah)" (Vashishtha merely saw the ritual surface).

Thus spoke the great Yogi having seen the rites which are outside the Veda (Veda-vahishkrita. v. ante). Then bowing low with folded hands he humbly said, "How can inclinations such as these be purifying to the mind? How can there be Siddhi without Vaidik rites?"

Manah-pravrittireteshu katham bhavati pavani

Kathang va jayate siddhir veda karyang vina prabho.

Buddha said, "Oh Vashishtha, listen the while I speak to thee of the excellent Kula path, by the mere knowing of which one becomes in a short time like Rudra Himself. I speak to thee in brief the Agama which is the essence of all and which leads to Kulasiddhi. First of all, the Vira (hero) should be pure (Shuci). Buddha here states the conditions under which only the rites are permissible. His mind should be penetrated with discrimination (Viveka) and freed of all Pashubhava (state of an uninitiate Pashu or animal man). Let him avoid the company of the Pashu and remain alone in a lonely place, free from lust, anger and other passions. He should constantly devote himself to Yoga practice. He should be firm in his resolve to learn Yoga; he should ever tread the Yoga path and fully know the meaning of the Veda (Vedarthanipuno mahan). In this way the pious one (Dharmatma) of good conduct and largeness of heart (Audarya) should, by gradual degrees, restrain his breath, and through the path of breathing compass the destruction of mind. Following this practice the self-controlled (Vashi) becomes Yogi. In slow degrees of practice the body firstly sweats. This is the lowest stage (Adhama). The next is middling (Madhyama). Here there is trembling (Kampa). In the third or highest (Para) stage one is able to levitate (Bhumiityaga). By the attainment of Siddhi in Pranayama one becomes a master in Yoga. Having become a Yogi by practice of Kumbhaka (restraint of breath) he should be Mauni (given over to silence) and full of intent, devotion (Ekanta-bhakti) to Shiva, Krishna and Brahma. The pure one should realize by mind, action, and speech that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are restless like the moving air (Vayavigaticanalah). Quere. Perhaps the transient nature of these Devatas, as compared with the supreme Shakti, is indicated. The man of steady mind should fix it on Shakti, who is consciousness (Cidrupa). Thereafter the Mantrin should practice Mahavirabhava (the feeling of the great hero) and follow the Kula path, the Shakti-cakra, the Vaishnava Sattvacakra and Navavigrah and should worship Kulakatyayani, the excellent one, the Pratyaksha Devata (that is, the Deity who responds to prayer) who grants prosperity and destroys all evil. She is consciousness (Cidrupa), She is the abode of knowledge (Jñana) and is Consciousness and Bliss, lustrous as ten million lightnings, of whom all Tattvas are the embodiment, who is Raudri with eighteen arms, fond of wine and mountains of flesh (the text is Shivamangsalapriyam, but the first word should be Sura). Man should do Japa of the Mantra, taking refuge with Her, and following the Kula path. Who in the three worlds knows a path higher than this? By the grace gained therein, the great Brahma Himself became the Creator, and Vishnu, whose substance is Sattva-guna, the object of adoration of all, highly deserving of worship, the great, and Lord of Yajurveda, became able to protect. By it Hara the Lord of Viras, the wrathful one, Lord of wrath and of mighty power, became the Destroyer of all. By the grace of Virabhava the Dikpalas (Protectors of the quarters) became like unto Rudra. By a month's practice power to attract (Akarshanasiddhi) is attained. In two months one becomes the Lord of Speech. In four months one becomes like unto the Dikpalas, in five months one becomes the five arrows (probably masters the five Tanmatras), and in six months he becomes Rudra Himself. The fruit of this method (Acara) is beyond all others. This is Kaulamarga. There is nothing which surpasses it. If there be Shakti, the Vipra becomes a complete Yogi by six months' practice. Without Shakti even Shiva can do nought. What then shall we say of men of small intelligence".

Having said this, He whose form is Buddha (Buddharupi) made him practice Sadhana. He said, "Oh Vipra, do thou serve Mahashakti. Do thou practice Sadhana with wine (Madyasadhana) and thus shalt thou get sight of the Lotus Feet of the Mahavidya." Vashishtha having heard these words of the Guru and meditating on Devi Sarasvati went to the Kulamandapa to

practice the wine ritual (Madirasadhana) and having repeatedly done Sadhana with wine, meat, fish, parched grain and Shakti he became a complete Yogi (Purnayogi).

A similar account is given in the Brahmayamala. There are some variants however. Thus while in the Rudrayamala, Vashishtha is said to have resorted to the shore of the ocean, in the Brahmayamala he goes to Kamakhya, the great Tantrik Pitha and shrine of the Devi. (The prevalence of Her worship amongst the Mongolian Assamese is noteworthy.) It may be here added that this Yamala states that, except at time of worship, wine should not be taken nor should the Shakti be unclothed. By violation of these provisions life, it says, is shortened, and man goes to Hell.

According to the account of the Brahmayamala, Vashishtha complaining of his ill-success was told to go to the Blue Mountains (Nilacala) and worship parameshvari near Kamakhya (Karma in Assam). He was told that Vishnu in the form of Buddha (Buddharupi) alone knew this worship according to Cinacara. Devi said, "without Cinacara you cannot please Me. Go to Vishnu who is Udbodharupi (illuminated) and worship Me according to the Acara taught by Him." Vashishtha then went to Vishnu in the country Mahacina, which is by the side of the Himalaya (Himavatparshve), a country inhabited by great Sadhakas and thousands of beautiful and youthful women whose hearts were gladdened with wine, and whose minds were blissful with enjoyment (Vilasa). They were adorned with clothes which inspired love (Shringaravesha) and the movement of their hips made tinkle their girdles of little bells. Free of both fear and prudish shame they enchanted the world. They surround Ishvara and are devoted to the worship of Devi. Vashishtha wondered greatly when he saw Him in the form of Buddha (Buddharupi) with eyes drooping from wine. "What" he said, "is Vishnu doing in His Buddha form? This map (Acara) is opposed to Veda (Vedavadaviruddha). I do not approve of it (Asammato mama)." Whilst so thinking, he heard a voice coming from the ether saying, "Oh thou who art devoted to good acts, think not like this. This Acara is of excellent result in the Sadhana of Tarini. She is not pleased with anything which is the contrary of this. If thou dost wish to gain Her grace speedily, then worship Her according to Cinacara." Hearing this voice, Vashishtha's hairs stood on end and he fell to the ground. Being filled with exceeding joy he prayed to Vishnu in the form of Buddha (Buddharupa). Buddha, who had taken wine, seeing him was greatly pleased and said, "Why have you come here?" Vashishtha bowing to Buddha told him of his worship of Tarini. Buddha who is Hari and full of knowledge (Tattvajñana) spoke to him of the five Makaras (M: that is, the five commencing with the letter M are Madya, or wine and so forth) which are in Cinacara (Majnanam Cinacaradikaranam) saying that this should not be disclosed (a common injunction as regards this ritual and renders it from the opponents' standpoint suspect). "By practicing it thou shalt not again sink into the ocean of being. It is full of knowledge of the Essence (Tattvajñana) and gives immediate liberation (Mukti)." He then goes on to explain a principal feature of this cult, namely, its freedom from the ritual rules of the ordinary worship above which the Sadhaka has risen. It is mental worship. In it bathing, purification, Japa, and ceremonial worship is by the mind only. (No outward acts are necessary; the bathing and so forth is in the mind and not in actual water, as is the case in lower and less advanced worship.) There are no rules as to auspicious and inauspicious times, or as to what should be done by day and by night. Nothing is pure or impure (there is no ritual defect of impurity) nor prohibition against the taking of food. Devi should be worshipped even though the worshipper has had his food, and even though the place be unclean. Woman who is Her image should be worshipped (Pujanam striya) and never should any injury be done to her (Stridvesho naiva kartavyah).

Are we here dealing with an incident in which Sakyamuni or some other Buddha of Buddhism was concerned?

According to Hindu belief the Ramayana was composed in the Treta age, and Vashishtha was the family priest of Dasharatha and Rama (Adikanda VII. 4, 5, VIII. 6), Ayodhya-kanda V. 1). The Mahabharata was composed in Dvapara. Krishna appeared in the Sandhya between this and the Kali-yuga. Both Kurukshetra and Buddha were in the Kali age. According to this chronology, Vashishtha who was the Guru of Dasharatha was earlier than Sakyamuni. There were, however, Buddhas before the latter. The text does not mention Sakyamuni or Gautama Buddha. According to Buddhistic tradition there were many other Buddhas before him such as Dipankara "The Luminous One," Krakuccanda and others, the term Buddha being a term applicable to the enlightened, whoever he be. It will no doubt be said by the Western Orientalist that both these Yamalas were composed after the time of Sakyamuni. But if this be so, their author or authors, as Hindus, would be aware that according to Hindu Chronology Vashishtha antedated Sakyamuni. Apart from the fact of there being other Buddhas, according to Hinduism "types" as distinguished from "forms" of various things, ideas, and faiths, are persistent, though the forms are variable, just as is the case with the Platonic Ideas or eternal archetypes. In this sense neither Veda, Tantra-Shastra nor Buddhism had an absolute beginning at any time. As types of ideas or faiths they are beginningless (Anadi), though the forms may have varied from age to age, and though perhaps some of the types may have been latent in some of the ages. If the Vedas are Anadi so are the Tantra-shastras. To the Yogic vision of the Rishi which makes latent things patent, variable forms show their hidden types. Nothing is therefore absolutely new. A Rishi in the Treta Yuga will know that which will apparently begin in Kali or Dvapara but which is already really latent in his own age. Vishnu appears to his vision as the embodiment of that already latent, but subsequently patent, cult. Moreover in a given age, what is latent in a particular land (say Aryavarta) may be patent in another (say Mahacina). In this way, according to the Hindu Shastra, there is an essential conservation of types subject to the conditions of time, place, and person (Deshakalapatra). Moreover, according to these Shastras, the creative power is a reproducing principle. This means that the world-process is cyclic according to a periodic

law. The process in one Kalpa is substantially repeated in another and Vashishtha, Buddha, and the rest appeared not only in the present but in previous grand cycles or Kalpas. Just as there is no absolute first beginning of the Universe, so nothing under the sun is absolutely new. Vashishtha, therefore, might have remembered past Buddhas, as he might have foreseen those to come. In Yogic vision both the past and the future can project their shadows into the present. Every Purana and Samhita illustrates these principles of Yogic intuition backwards and forwards. To the mind of Ishvara both past and future are known. And so it is to such who, in the necessary degree, partake of the qualities of the Lord's mind. The date upon which a particular Shastra is compiled is, from this viewpoint, unimportant. Even a modern Shastra may deal with ancient matter. In dealing with apparent anachronisms in Hindu Shastra, it is necessary to bear in mind these principles. This of course is not the view of "Oriental scholars" or of Indians whom they have stampeded into regarding the beliefs of their country as absurd. It is however the orthodox view. And as an Indian friend of mine to whose views I have referred has said, "What the Psychic research society of the West is conceding to good 'mediums' and 'subjects' cannot be withheld from our ancient supermen -- the Rishis."

The peculiar features to be noted of this story are these. Vashishtha must have known what the Vedas and Vaidik rites were, as ordinarily understood. He is described as Vedantavit. Yet he was surprised on seeing Cinacara rites and disapproved of them. He speaks of it as "outside Veda" (Vedavahishkrita) and even opposed to it (Vedavadaviruddha). On the other hand the connection with Veda is shown, in that the Devi who promulgates this Acara is connected with the Atharvaveda, and directs Vashishtha always to follow that Veda, and speaks of the Acara not as being opposed to, but as something so high as to be beyond, the ordinary Vaidik ritual (Vedanamapyagocarah). He is to be fully learned in the import of Veda (Vedarthanipuno). It was by the grace of the doctrine and practice of Cinacara that Vishnu became the Lord of Yajurveda. The meaning therefore appears to be, that the doctrine and practice lie implicit in the Vedas, but go beyond what is ordinarily taught. Vishnu therefore says that it is not to be disclosed. What meaning again are we to attach to the word Visnubuddharupa? Buddha means "enlightened" but here a particular Buddha seems indicated, though Vishnu is also spoken of as Udbodharupi and the Devi as Buddheshvari. The Tara Tantra calls him a Kulabhairava. As is well known, Buddha was an incarnation of Vishnu. Vashishtha is told to go to Mahacina by the Himalaya and the country of the Bauddhas (Bauddhadesh). The Bauddhas who follow the Pañcatattva ritual are accounted Kaulas. It is a noteworthy fact that the flower of the Devi is Jaba, the scarlet hibiscus or China rose. As the last name may indicate it is perhaps not indigenous to India but to China whence it may have been imported possibly through Nepal. This legend, incorporated as it is in the Shastra itself, seems to me of primary importance in determining the historical origin of the Pañcatattva ritual.

Next: Chapter Nine: The Tantra Shastras in China