

Revisiting The Lama's Universe

Paper Id.:14016, Submission Date: 10/01/2022, Acceptance Date: 20/01/2022, Publication Date: 22/01/2022

Abstract

An analysis of Buddhist philosophy is incomplete without understanding the concepts of Buddhism and the methods of their implementation. A theory which supports existence of three forms of inhabitants surviving in the birth, death and rebirth cycles divided in spheres is distinctly essential to observe to understand the concept of Lamaism. Methods and approaches employed in the Gyuto monastery have been described by the details provided in this paper. It would not be an exaggeration to state that the lifestyles of the monks would be barely understood without diving in the knowledge about their ethnography which makes this research a conducive source of information.

The Buddhist opine that the universe consists of three domains which are populated by mortal beings which are crossing the phase of birth, death and rebirth. Truncated of all the regions is sphere of desire, the others are sphere of forms, region of subtle matter and at the pinnacle is sphere of formlessness. The celebrated region of impalpable beings is known as sphere of formlessness. These domains are further categorised in thirty one territories. Territory of this realm is occupied by typical variant of living beings. The lowest realm is regarded hell and the most appreciated is the region devoid of perception or non perception. In this realm responsiveness exceeds to allow existence of clarity.

Keywords Vajrayana, Tibetan, Buddhist, Lama, Dhyana, Enlightenment

Introduction

Tibetan Buddhism can be described as the new Buddhist tradition which was popular in India in seventh century CE it took a form of movement which affected the life of the people inhabiting this country for the centuries to come. It got spread widely to Tibet and the neighbouring countries of India by the end of first millennium. The Tantrayana Buddhism was third chief ideology of Buddhism which was originated from Mahayana. It was based on the scripture known as tantra thus it is also called Tantric Buddhism. As chanting mantras was its focal practice it is also known as 'Mantrayana' (Mantra vehicle). It is considered a secretive sect as the knowledge of the mantras and scriptures is entitled to only those who are commenced. The maintenance of secrecy of the scriptures was so important that they were coded and were kept camouflaged. A modification of this tradition was known as Vajrayana (the diamond vehicle or the thunderbolt vehicle). Vajrayana was motivated to cut all the obstacles and bindings which enslave a being to the samsara. Vajrayana originated from the Yogacara school of fourth century and is believed to be inspired by theories of Madhyamika. These ideologies help the individual to achieve his ultimate aim of spirituality within a short duration of time. The methods which are popularly used are the mandalas and the mantras to develop a concentrating focus which helps in reaching higher levels of meditation initiating enlightenment. Due to large following of new Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia and Russia it is well known as Northern Buddhism. It started during early years of fifth century. It was followed and revered by so many that even left Hinduism and Jainism were impacted. A unique feature of Buddhism was that it absorbed the regional cults and took a new variation wherever it went. All schools of Tibetan Buddhism give importance to a sacred Guru who leads the path and idolizes the spiritual achievements for its followers. The sanctity of all sects is identified by the technique followed by them of meditation, visualisation and forming mandala.

Objective of the Study

The present study aims to highlight how Tibetan Buddhist lamas using colourful and imaginative tantric rituals aims to engage themselves emotionally and physically not just intellectually. Tantra involves not just thinking about the spiritual achievements but also process of acting out. This kind of lamasitic involvement is not just of intellect but of whole person encouraging him to feel what it would be like to be enlightened.



Geetika Yadav

Research Scholar,
Dept. of Sociology,
Samrat Prithviraj
Chouhan
Govt.College,
Ajmer, Rajasthan,
India

Shilaja Nagendra

Associate Professor,
Dept. of Sociology,
Samrat Prithviraj
Chouhan
Govt.College,
Ajmer, Rajasthan,
India

Realm of rebirth

The rebirth could happen in any sphere of the Buddhist world because it is a repetitive process or *samsara* and is continuously taking place in the three mentioned domains. To transcend in the sphere of formlessness is very near to achieving deliverance. But at the same time the beings of lower spheres can also gain enlightenment through their acts of consciousness. The achievement of enlightenment liberates one from being bounded to any of the three spheres. Being successful in taking a form of Human birth is considered very favourable as it increases the ample chances to achieve enlightenment through paths of knowledge resulting in the liberty from *samsara*. However those who accumulate good Karma have a chance to take birth in the higher spheres of Buddhist world. Taking birth in the most higher level populated by Gods is beneficiary but aim should be directed to achieve enlightenment and get liberation from the cycle of rebirth because there is a chance of rebirth in the lowest sphere in another lifetime. Truncated than humans sphere are the realms of 'bad destiny' those who take birth in such domain are not edified. There are many hells in the lowest realm which may include of tortures like freezing and burning in the fire to give a punishment for evil karmas. According to the legend once the suffering for evil deeds is experienced there are possibilities to take rebirth in the upper spheres. Birth in the animal realm is undesirable due to lack of opportunities to achieve enlightenment. Former humans who are now in the form of ghost as a result of their voracious yearning occupy third sphere. As the scriptures mention there is a fourth sphere which is populated by warlike Titans who are inflicted with violence and aggression resulting in disenfranchised existence in this realm. The focal application to attain enlightenment is meditation and regardless of schools of Buddhism it is regarded as pathway to ultimate knowledge. Postulant practitioner begins with mind control once they experience some high levels of stupor, known as *dhyanas* they may make it to the upper spheres known as sphere of formlessness. At this stage it becomes more approachable to attain the level of higher meditation levels of infinite space. The Buddha had reached the eighth level of the Buddhist world, known as realm of nothingness as from there he passed into Nirvana as claimed in the Pali texts.

The wheel of life

The wheel of life or the *Bhavacakra* or in other words it can be stated as Wheel of becoming is a symbolic representation of *samsara*. At its axis are a pig, a snake and a cock. These are the obstacles in spiritual developments. The pig stands for greed, snake for hatred and the cock for delusion. Misapprehensions are negative feelings such as acrimony, obstinacy, anxiety and indolence. The three animals keep the wheel in constant motion by persuasion. These apprehensions are a constant hurdle in obtaining enlightenment. The individuals which are constantly failing in achieving spiritual upliftment are destined to remain in the *samsara*. The circles at the axis of the wheel of life depicts vividly the beings that are drawn in the bad destiny which make it difficult for them to attain enlightenment and the higher levels that increases the hope of Nirvana. Yama is described with his eyes which symbolise evanescence, harm and non self. His five skulls represent liberation from illness, decaying, old age, death and rebirth.

Meditation

Meir levels of meditation. The distinctions between I and it gets omitted during the trance meditation as it destroys all the hurdles in the process of concentration. This develops an elation of the mental state. These status of mind give a spiritual definition to the mendicants and new apex is touched in concentrating while meditation. After *samadhi* next comes the *vipassna* practice or insight meditation. The teachings of Buddha are visualised on every step to attain good result. The awareness is directed towards the body through the breed and a state of attentive thought which is focused on one object is achieved. At the next step in this same technique is applied to the mind and it's thoughts achieving a trance state. Three marks of existence impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non self (*anatman*). Thus it can be concluded that meditation is the prime requirement to

follow the noble eightfold path .ditation or *bhavna* was the prime practice of the mendicants introduced by the Buddha employed to reach to enlightenment . Buddha used meditation for prolonged durations to achieve his spiritual progress. Meditation is the focal method used by the ascetics of all Buddhist schools. In a state of meditation an modified stage of mindfulness is brought for in some controlled condition which facilitate the achievement of enlightenment. Attaining knowledge can therefore be understood as proficiency of mind regulating methods which constitutes to form the Noble eightfold path. for a beginner it is a difficult practice as the mind is always diverted and is in a habit of being distracted with unwanted thoughts. This issue is encountered by daily practice sessions of meditation for the novices. It was an ancient culture that only Theraveda monks were permitted to constantly practice meditation. A committed daily practice routine results in reaching advance levels of meditation. The beginners focus on calming down the thoughts by repeating a mantra or a word which helps in focussing. *Samadhi* or trance meditation was practiced by the followers of Buddha which helped them to improve the

Devotion

Buddha had asked his followers to remain diverted from the practices of forming different sects and maintain their path of spirituality by focusing on the methods to gain enlightenment . notwithstanding with his expectation within hundred years of his departure from this world Buddha was deified and was being worshipped as a prodigious personality . The early sangha had always emphasize the sanctified Identity of the stupas and Buddha's relics. The monks used to claim that they felt an emancipating presence of Buddha at such venerated places. Such visualisations resulted in the formation of the images and statues of Buddha which took the Buddhist cultures many steps ahead . It was a common tradition to consecrate Mandalas and inscribe holy words on the pedestal of such statues which increased the veneration of the disciples towards such images. Circumambulation was further added in the devotional practices of the Buddhist monks which includes rotating circles around the venerated stupa or relics to obtain blessings. *Dhyana* is the meditative process which was practiced by the mendicants to calm the thoughts. The first level can be understood as an exaltation that is achieved by concentrating on one focal point during meditation. The second level meditator is a master of one pointed meditation technique he raises himself to the next level through increased composure in his concentration . At the third level reposeful joy adds to the one pointed meditation and at the fourth level happiness takes the form of equilibrium and cognitive skills like remembering past lives are acquired.

Mandalas

In Sanskrit mandala means circle , literally mandala means sacred circles . In ancient past they were a part of Brahmanic culture and were a symbol of devotion in Hindu religion . They might have linked with the Buddhism along with the inclusion of chanting of mantras of Rigveda which is divided in ten mandalas ,which claims that universe has sprouted from its verses. Mandalas are used for meditation in Tibetan Buddhism and is an inseparable practice of this cult. They are very significant during the initiation ceremony of the Buddhist monks in which they are associated with the Buddha's presence . Drawings of mandala in a simple but intricate form are found in the cave located at the route between India and China at the place known as Dhunhuang (China). Mandalas are located at the Tabo monastery in Himachal Pradesh painted on temple walls dates around tenth century B.C. There is a tradition to make temporary mandalas of paper, coloured sand or chalk at the ceremony of initiation of Tibetan monks. These mandalas are destroyed after their purpose is served that is after the ceremony is ended. The sand is thrown down in a lake or water body to indicate the perishable identities of substances . Permanent mandalas are painted on cloth or wood and they have a

higher purpose of invoking the bodhisattvas . these mandalas are often square shaped instead of circular and their intricate designing makes them auspicious.

Rebecoming

We can quote Buddha by stating that 'whatever things have an origin must come to an cessation'. Buddha never preached that after death the soul takes in new form as in case of rebirth. his reference is often explained with resemblance to a candle that like a candle which has an extinguishing flame can add a spark to another candle in the same way cessation of a personality is a cause of rise for other. According to Buddha a soul never transmigrates but form of thought could be transferred after death. Buddhism appreciate the joy that is brought forth by youth, friendship, success and love but never establishes happiness has its ultimate aim . Dharma establishes *anitya* or impermanence at it's pinnacle . Every form of contentment that world can offer may pass away . The experiences of sickness and sorrows are unavoidable , these sufferings are *dukkha* which can lead to misery, grief and pain . To understand our existence and its reason it is inevitable to realise the origin of the sufferings as the young Siddhartha when he encountered old age, sufferings and death. The continuous process of sufferings. The concept of Karma doesn't establish that suffering comes from the wrath of gods. It suggests that clearly the sufferings that people have experienced through are the result of their direct actions and thoughts . The ethical choices in life that are selected by the individual which form their destiny . The emotions like greed hate ,selfishness harms not only the others but also the person himself who is performing them . These karmas accumulate during life and are required to be repented through sufferings. According to Buddha even death and rebirth are temporary they are not final. On the basis of Karma those individuals who have failed to achieve enlightenment enter the five or six forms of rebirth. Reborn beings constitutes to form the thirty one spheres of the Buddha universe . The upper spheres are heavens where Gods reside but whether it is God ,animal or human all are subjected to the results of accumulation of Karma.

Enlightenment

Individual that claim to experience Nirvana explain it on a platitude that their experience of Nirvana is inexpressible . It is stated by observer that he was experiencing cosmos and was devoid of any perception of life and death . Nirvana is described as a state of peace and liberation. The protein structures described it as a liberation of thought which has an attribute of non attachment towards substances. It is an absolute state of lack of anxiety, fear, doubt and it can be described as a state of non existence . *Udana* scripture of Buddhist Pali Canon describes it as 'unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed'. The third noble truth declares that complete end of desire is liberation or Nirvana. Samsara is considered as extinguishable and only an enlightened person can deal with bad karmas or *kleshas* like ignorance, delusion and hatred by replacing them with compassion and love because he has achieved the great wisdom .

Conclusion

Thus it can be concluded that the Lama universe describes the spheres of the world which consists of all beings which strive to survive in the cycle of death and rebirth. Their accumulated karmas which are determined by their actions effect their destiny and bind them to a realm in next life if they are enslaved by the vices of hatred, jealousy ,anger, ignorance and delusions. If provided with a chance to be reborn in upper spheres which is close to heaven and inhabited by gods they have a chance to attain enlightenment so that they could get liberation from this pretentious cycle of life and death .If they have a favourable destiny and they are born as an human they could achieve enlightenment by following the eight fold path as suggested by lord Buddha with employing methods of meditation , dhyanas and practicing mandalas. The aim of the individual must be to attain Nirvana so that he could get rid of suffering which the world provides at every

occasion. Buddhism presents a solution in form of the life of the lamas which if followed could bring to the life of an individual inner peace and liberation. These are the elaboration of some of the concept which are inseparable entity of Lama's identity and this analysis is an effort to simplify the complexities of understanding lamahood.

References

1. *Tsering, Tashi, and Philippa Russell. 1986. An Account of the Buddhist Ordination of Women. Cho yang 1 (1) : 21-32.*
2. *Tsomo, Karma Lekshe. 1988. Sakyadhita: Daughters of the Buddha Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.*
3. *3.Tucci, Giuseppe. 1949. Tibetan Painted Scrolls. Vol.2. Rome: La Libreria dello Stato.*
4. *4 Religions of Tibet.1980. Trans. Geoffrey Samuel. Berkeley: University of California Press.*
5. *5 Vitali, Roberto. 1990. Early Temples of Central Tibet. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips.*
6. *6 Waddell, L.Austine. 1985. The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism. London: W.H. Allen & Co.*
7. *7 Warren, Henry Clarke. 1885(1995). Buddhism in Translation. Reprint. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.*