Introduction

Of the various Buddhist Tantras, the Hevajra Tantra of the Vajrayāna tradition of Buddhism, is extensively practiced by most of the Tibetan Tantric schools. This Tantra was composed in northeastern India around the 8th century A.D. It was introduced in Tibet during late 10th century A.D. In the Hevajra Tantra, a strong influence of all the major Mahāyāna Buddhist schools of philosophy is evident.

The philosophy propagated by Nāgārjuna in his Madhyamaka works and that of Asaṅga, Dharmakīrti and other contemporary philosophers form the philosophical basis of the Tantric doctrine. These philosophers' views are permuted to create a method of practice that effectively uses the phenomenal world and its defilements to attain the highest state of enlightenment, without discarding the conventional world, rather to work for its benefit. Therefore, according to Tibetan masters like Tsong kha pa the Tantric Buddhist schools do not form a separate third vehicle but they are classed under the Mahāyāna vehicle. They have classified Mahāyāna into two sub vehicles Sūtra or Perfection vehicle (pāramitāyāna) and Vajrayāna vehicle. They are placed under the Mahāyāna banner as the ultimate goal of both the vehicles is one and the same — Buddhahood — a non-dual state of bliss and emptiness when one perceives the ultimate truth of emptiness of inherent existence of all phenomena directly and all obscurations to omniscience is removed. No attainment can be superior than the attainment of the Truth and Form bodies of the Buddha.

If the goal differed then the two schools could not be considered as subdivisions of the mahāyāna vehicle. The Perfection vehicle is based on Nāgārjuna's Madhyamika teaching on emptiness. If the goal of Vajrayāna was different then the subtle emptiness that which Nāgārjuna had established with different arguments in his treatise on middle way or Madhyamika Śāstram would be rejected and a more subtle one would...
have to be established. The object — emptiness or ultimate truth that is viewed by the two vehicles is same though not the consciousness that realizes it.

There is, however, a more subtle consciousness cognizing it than that taught in the Perfection Vehicle. Furthermore, this consciousness is not common to all four Tantras (the four schools of tantra are Action Performance, Yoga, Highest Yoga Tantra) but unique to Highest Yoga Tantra. It is said that by practising the Tantra path recommended in Highest Yoga Tantra, such as Hevajra Tantra, a more subtle consciousness is generated to realize the same emptiness of inherent existence.

According to the great Tibetan scholar Jam yang she ba, Buddhahood is ultimately achieved through the Completion stage, of Highest Yoga Tantra. Even if a Bodhisattva starts on Sutra path, to attain enlightenment he must adopt Tantra path in the final stage.

If a yogi adopts the Tantra path he must follow the method specified in the Highest Yoga Tantra texts for the attainment of Buddhahood. This thesis is an endeavor to analyse the path to the Non—dual state of Buddhahood as prescribed in Hevajra Tantra. For this purpose the points of similarity between the two sub vehicles of Mahāyāna must be referred.

Is the wisdom aspect of Tantra and Sutra the same Emptiness and do both vehicles prescribe the union of Wisdom and Means as an essential condition to reach the non dual state of Buddhahood? Further, is the Means adopted by the Sutra and Tantra great vehicle based on altruistic motivation to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings?

A comparative study of the two schools of Mahāyāna reveals that in Tantra as well as in Sutra the wisdom aspect of the path is the same Emptiness and both vehicles prescribe the union of Wisdom and Means as an essential condition to reach the non dual state of Buddhahood.

Also the Means adopted by the Sutra and Tantra great vehicle is based on altruistic motivation to become enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings.
beings. The other aspect of the Means is the deeds and practices that one performs motivated by altruistic aspiration. These are the Six paramitā practices of giving, ethics, patience etc. In Tantra there is greater emphasis on the deeds of perfection. The difference occurs in the aspect of the special technique adopted by Tantra to hasten the yogi’s progress on the path – deity yoga. By this method one meditates on one’s body as having the same aspect as that of Buddha’s Form body by imagining oneself as an ideal altruistic being. Tantra in general and Hevajra Tantra in particular adopts the method of the indivisibility of Wisdom and Means to attain Buddhahood. However, the special Means advocated in this tantra is the act of seeing oneself as a deity, after developing a preliminary understanding of emptiness.

A deity is a supramundane being who is a manifestation of compassion and wisdom. This special practice of deity yoga involves one joining his own Body, Speech and Mind with the exalted Body, speech and Mind of Buddha, thereby projecting on the path a similitude of the state of effect. In Hevajra Tantra the practitioner is advised to practice deity yoga by generating himself in the form of Hevajra in union with his principal consort Nairatmya. The lord Hevajra symbolises Means or Compassion and Altruistic motivation to attain the state of a Buddha for the sentient beings and his consort – Nairatmya Wisdom or Lack of inherent existence of all phenomena and self. In this Tantra one finds Sūtra precepts intertwined with Tantric ones.

Through an analytical study of Hevajra Tantra, I have strived to establish the principles of Sūtrayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna philosophy that forms the Wisdom aspect of the Hevajra Tantra and also to validate how the special Buddhist Tantric technique of deity yoga advocated in it as the Means to attain Buddhahood, is compatible with the wisdom aspect.

For this analysis we will depend primarily on Kṛṣṇacārya’s commentary Yogaratnamālā and His Holiness Dalai Lama’s teachings on the Sūtra and Tantra works of dGe lug pa masters like Tsong kha pa.
As the main text G.W. Farrow & I. Menon (tr. and ed.), The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra with the Commentary Yogaratnamāla (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992) and Snell Grove's corrected Sanskrit edition of गृहजा तन्त्र has been used. Snellgrove, D.L. skt. & tr. The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study. Part 2. Skt. & Tibt. London: Oxford University Press, 1959 has been used.


In chapter I the focus is on the essence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Altruistic Motivation or Bodhicitta is the foundation stone of Mahāyāna. This feature is common to both Perfection and Tantra schools of Mahāyāna and so is the doctrine of Emptiness. The theory of emptiness is discussed both from the Mādhyamika and the Cittamātra view. The superiority of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika view of emptiness is explained with citations from the teachings and writings of His Holiness and Tibetan masters like Tsong kha pa. The conjoining of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika view of emptiness with deity yoga as a unique feature of Tantra path is discussed. The chapter is concluded with the tenets of Vajrayāna as evinced in गृहजा तन्त्र

In chapter II a brief history of Buddhist Tantric literature is presented. The place of गृहजा तन्त्र in tantric literature is also discussed and a brief history of the tantric text along with that of its commentary पुरुस्तट्ट-रत्नमालाः and the commentator कृष्णचार्य has been put forward.

In chapter III the main features of Vajrayāna such as union of wisdom (prajñā) and means (upāya), deity yoga, etc. as presented in गृहजा तन्त्र are discussed. This chapter analyses the doctrine of Tathāgata garbha or Buddha Nature to establish that गृहजा तन्त्र propagates
the theory that Buddha Nature is inherent in all beings, and this acts as a cause for their enlightenment and for the formation of the three Buddha Kāyas or Bodies. The two stages (Generation and Completion) of the path as cited in "Hevajra Tantra" is also analysed to prove that the path prescribed in this tantric text is based on Mahāyāna principles on Śūnyatā, Bodhicitta, Prajñā and Upāya.

In chapter IV the different tantric rites and cults mentioned in "Hevajra Tantra" is discussed. The rites of purification, mantra recitation, maṇḍala construction, gaṇacakra (assembly of the circle of initiates), are features that typical of tantric cults and have been prescribed in "Hevajra Tantra". In this chapter the purpose behind these cults is also analysed.