Chapter 2 Vajrayāna As a Social Religion

2.1 Medieval Religions in Early Medieval historiography

As outlined in the prologue, historiography of early medieval India in general and Orissa in particular sketches the religious developments of the period in terms of spurt in brahmanical religions on the one hand and corresponding decline of Buddhism on the other. The images gleaned from the existing literature and elaborated in Chapter I can be summarised thus:

- The brahmanical religion and culture became predominant and immensely popular.
- This occurred through land grants to the brahmanas, construction of temples by kings, appropriation of tribal cults and their integration into brahmanical religions and growth of pilgrimage.
- In the popularisation of brahmanical religion and culture, there was a close interface between temporal and sacred authority, between kings and royal elite on the one hand and brahmanas on the other. The political elite patronised temple building and a set of ideologies whose main protagonists were brahmanas, the latter inventing these ideologies for the purpose of royal legitimisation.
- Tantric Buddhism was confined to peripheral areas where Vajrayāna Buddhism incorporated tribal autochthonous practices in order to bring tribal people of the peripheral areas into the fold of brahmanical culture (Sharma 1974: 189).

2.2 Degenerate and Imitative Hypothesis: Some reflections

In contrast, Buddhism of early medieval times is characterised as ‘degenerate’; which was reduced to psychosexual practises, with little or no resemblance with the ‘Nibbanic Buddhism’ of Buddha’s times or the devotional bodhisattvahood of Mahāyānism. The conventional view is that Vajrayāna Buddhism was confined to a few pockets of eastern India. The abstruse and secret practises were limited to monastic institutions without having any popular base or distinct identity of its own (Chakrabarti 2001: 142). This dominant view

1 According to Sharma, Tantricism was the ultimate product of the brahmanical colonisation of the tribal areas through the process of land grants. Land grants gave rise to not only serfdom in the outer circle but also to bhakti and tantricism, all of which penetrated to Madhyadesa. The confrontation between the brahmana beneficiaries and the tribal people created social and economic problems, which were partly solved through tantricism (Sharma 1974: 189; Sharma 1962: 53-59).

2 The lack of distinct identity of Vajrayana Buddhism or its imitative nature has been argued as an important factor for the decline of Buddhism. A recently published book on the religious processes in Bengal argues on the same line. It holds the view that Buddhism in the manifest aspects of religions has little difference with the brahmanical religion (Chakrabarti 2001:142).
projects Vajrayāna religion as a bundle of popular cults and superstitions without being ‘organised’. It had no or very little popular base and was parasitic in nature as the monks and monastic institutions survived on royal patronage alone. As soon as the political elite shifted their patronage to brahmanical religions, Buddhism declined in India (Bhattacharyya 1981: 15).

Charges of corruption and degeneration originate in the assumption that religion in question was essentially egalitarian, ascetic and hostile to magic but over time, displayed characteristics contrary to these. This line of argument has three shortcomings. The scholars who formed this view (mainly 19th century European scholars) studied Pali scriptures in order to recover from them the teachings of the Buddha. But these texts contain other narratives besides Buddha’s teachings, and there is no historically valid way to establish that his teachings were followed ad verbatim in the initial days of the religion. On the contrary, recent scholarship of Schopen and Huntington has questioned the basic assumptions about the nature of early Buddhism (Huntington 1992:111-56). The assumptions, which Schopen has questioned on the basis of epigraphic and archaeological evidence, include the following:

- The assumption that monks did not venerate stupas and images, nor perform other meritorious rituals;
- They did not exercise concern about their own dead;
- That the merit transference and filial piety are non-Buddhist accretion on the tradition
- That Buddha relic are totally lifeless
- That monastic practice is distinct from lay practice

On the other hand Schopen has concluded that Indian Buddhism was more than the sum total of its Śāstras where monks and nuns actually surpassed laypeople as patrons and devotees of stupa and image cults; where residents of monasteries not only handled but minted money and were often exceedingly rich and powerful; where the Buddha relic was virtually alive in his stupas, treated as an exalted co-residents of the monasteries in which the stupa existed and endowed with all the rights of regular residents there, including the ownership of property; where monks and nuns were actually quite preoccupied with the treatment of their own dead and possible evil consequence of failing therein.” (Schopen 1997: 200–278)

This deviation from Buddhist texts is only one strand of the changed paradigm. The other aspect, which is equally important, is the degree to which the Buddhist texts were actually known in later times. Epigraphic evidence, at least, does not support the idea that
the Buddhist literature was widely known in actual Buddhist communities, but in fact, points in the opposite direction (Schopen 1989: 145).

This analysis of the nature of early Buddhism on the basis of early Buddhist texts was the result of ethnocentricism in the sense that those early scholars, who studied the Pali texts, equated Buddhism with Christianity and Islam. Like these two religions, the early European scholars found Buddhism to be egalitarian and universal.

The third source of the ‘decline hypothesis’ stems from very little appreciation of the Vajrayāna form of Buddhism. The symbolic ‘texts’ were dismissed as ‘imitative’ and imbued with sexual symbolism. Vajrayāna literature was branded as abstruse, dense and philosophical. They needed in-depth study, and those who skimmed through them treated these texts like a ‘red herring’, which provide little knowledge about the philosophical basis of Vajrayāna. Recent research has resulted in the publication of huge corpus of literature, which can now be brought into comparative relationship, both as regards to theory and practices with other religions, as well as the philosophical schools which existed at other periods.

Mahāyāna Buddhism is considered to be a ‘right step in the popularisation of an ascetic religion’. On the contrary, Vajrayāna Buddhism is characterised as corrupt and degenerate. Vajrayāna Buddhism, on the other hand, was seen to have lost ‘Buddhist tinge’ and was a mere imitation of Brahmanical religions and tantricism. The answer to the question whether Vajrayāna Buddhism was ‘Buddhist’ in nature or not consists in its receiving or not receiving sufficient acceptance within the body of teaching and practice of any group who considered themselves to be Buddhists. As regards to the question of imitative, non-distinguishable character of Vajrayāna, it is worth quoting Snellgrove:

“It is indeed time that Buddhist and non-Buddhist tantras are based upon similar material and that many parallels may be obvious, but one may well ask at what previous stage of the doctrine was this not true.” (Snellgrove, 1959 II: 7).

However, these approaches take a very naive view of the religious processes of early medieval India and in the process make oversimplistic generalisation. First, there are functional similarities between brahmanical and Buddhist pantheon. However, such

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3 Kunal Chakrabarti holds the view that the ‘in popular understanding Buddhist and brahmanical icons came to perform the same function. Even in the realm of underlying metaphysical premises tantricism brought the Buddhist and brahmanical ways of worship close. When both the religions began to receive royal patronage irrespective of the personal faiths of the rulers it carried the universal message that the differences between them, if any, were marginal and that both were entitled to be venerated in almost equal manner. (Chakrabarti 2001: 142)
similarities cannot be argued as imitative because many of the Buddhist deities with their assigned functions developed quite early in comparison to their brahmanical counterparts. For example, Xuanzang and I-tsing found altars dedicated to Hariti in every monasteries in India and her image, either in statutory form or painted on the wall, was always near the door of, or in the porch leading to the refectory (Beal 1958: 100-111). Hariti, as a form of mother goddess, antedates *Saptamatrika*. Moreover, the simultaneous patronage to different religions by the ruling powers of the day, like the Bhaumakaras and the Palas, was not a new phenomenon, as opined by Chakrabarti, but goes back to the period of Asoka and Kharavela (Chakrabarti 2001:142).

The Vajrayana literature is in no way inferior to earlier Buddhist literature. It shows considerable knowledge of the subject, is well written and is serious in their intention. In no sense is it degenerate or even inferior to the earlier commentaries on Buddhist texts. It integrates *tantra* and gives a distinct Buddhist hue to it. And as argued in this chapter, it integrates *tantra* with Buddhist metaphysics of the Mādhyamakakārikā and Yogācāra system. They attempted to make the religion more social by inventing divinities, *mantras* and ritual for their worship.

From the very beginning Buddhism tried to increase its social base by incorporating many features that provided instrumental benefits to the practitioners. This process continued into Vajrayāna phase. Vajrayāna Buddhism made an attempt to make the religion more practical by introducing many instrumental deities, elaborate rituals, priesthood and *dbbhrāns*. The esoteric aspect – with secret *tantra* initiation, secret rites, complex psycho-sexual practices – is considered to be a spiritual advancement upon Mahāyānism; its exoteric aspects – instrumental deities, elaborate rituals, temple, priesthood – made Buddhism more this-worldly.

### 2.3 Practical Buddhism

Buddhism made its beginning in the Indo-Ganga Plain in 6th century BC. Normative Buddhism as found in Pali canons revolved around, as Bateson has conceptualised, *anātama* (non-soul), *anatta* (impermanence), atheism, pessimism and reunion (Bateson 1911). The kind of salvation, which was promised to the mendicant monk, certainly was not that of the

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4 Practical religion in the sense of Leach means everyday kind of religion practiced by ordinary people with interests centred on the world. In it, there is a tremendous stress on the attainment of the putatively good things of this world even though it is eminently responsive to sotenological pressure. This level of religious culture is socially operative (Leach 1968).
oppressed strata, which would have demanded compensation in the hereafter or this-worldly hopes for the future (Weber 1958: 228). The ideals that early Buddhism preached were meant for a religion made of ‘well educated intellectuals recruited predominantly from great noble families and for rich burgher (Ibid. 225-227; Chakravarti 1987). This line of argument about the nature of early Buddhism loses its validity if one categorises normative Buddhism as an ideal type, distinguished from practical Buddhism. Edgerton (Edgerton 1942:151-156) has pointed out that Indian religious systems is characterised by ordinary norms for majority and extraordinary norms for a few who are oriented towards soteriological goal. Even early Buddhism makes a conceptual distinction between upasakas (lay worshipper) and the Bhikkhus (the wandering mendicants who have renounced the world). The religious life is considered to be a pilgrimage and so far as the worldling accepts these ordinary norms, attending to its message and complying with its disciplines, they are viewed as having reached the halfway house to normative Buddhism (Spiro 1982: 7). Despite the religion being conceptualised as providing a mārga to free one self from the ‘wheel of life’, Buddhist laity formed an important component of Buddhism and adopted practices contrary to normative Buddhism of the Pali canon.

2.4 Early development & ritual practices

Even though Buddha admonishes his disciples for rituals of various forms existed from a very early period. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta Buddha said to Ananda,

“Although it is proper for a Buddha to be given homage, it is not through ritual and offering that he is rightly honoured, reverenced, venerated, held sacred or revered. But the brother or the sister who continually fulfils all the greater and lesser duties, who is correct in life, walking according to the precepts...it is he who rightly honours reverences... and reveres the Tathagata with the worthiest homage.” (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta vol. 3: 150).

However, many rituals, both expressive and commemorative, appeared in Buddhism from the beginning, which were believed to provide instrumental benefits, even though early Buddhism strictly prohibited instrumental rituals. The rituals of early Buddhism were primarily commemorative and expressive. Offering homage to the relics of Buddha, to dharmacakra symbols were encouraged, but these rituals, in no way, affect one’s salvation. They merely created a fertile condition for the growth of ‘objects’, which the Buddhists can identify as sacred. People thronging to worship symbols like Bo-tree relics are instances of expressive rituals were represented in early arts of Sanci and Bharhut. Similar is Asoka’s tour to express his reverence to Buddha and important places associated with his life are examples of expressive rituals.
The *Kalingabodhi Jātaka* records a conversation between Ananda and the Master regarding the former's inquiry about three shrines to be made at Jetavana *Vihāra* of Sravasti.\(^5\)

The master replied,

“No Ananda, not a body shrine, that kind is made when Buddha enters Nirvāṇa. A shrine of memorial is improper because the connection depends on the imagination only. But the great Bo-tree (Bodhi tree) used by the Buddha is for a shrine, be they alive or be the dead...”

Ananda inquired, “Sir while you were away on pilgrimage, the great monastery is unprotected and the people have no place where they can show their reverence...” While planting the tree...”the instant it drops from his (Ananda’s) hand, before the eyes of all, up sprang as broad, no plough hand a Bodhi sapling, fifty cubits tall; on the four sides and upward, shot forth five great branches of fifty cubits in length, like the trunk. So stood the tree, a very lord of the forest already; a mighty miracle.”

Replied on the importance of the Bodhi tree, the Buddha said, “there is no other place which can support me, if I sit there and attain to that which I attained in the enclosure of the great Bodhi tree’...”Sir”, said Ananda, “I pray you for the good of the people, to use this tree for the rapture of enlightenment, in so far as this spot of ground can support the weight...”At that time they (monks) began to talk of it in the Hall of truth: “Brother while yet the Tathāgata lived, the venerable Ananda caused bo-tree to be planted and great reverence to be paid to it.” (Cowell 1957: 142-149).

This important tale, quoted at length, offers several significant insights. First, Buddha approved expressive ritual like worshipping of Bodhi tree and also body relic. Second, the miracles associated with the planting of Bodhi tree and subsequent observations of Ananda, made the ‘object’ sacred, and invested it with miraculous power. Third, the physical presence of the Buddha assured protection to the people; in his absence and after his *Nibbāna*, the Bodhi tree and holy relic would take his place and hence, they enjoy hallow, sacredness and power of the physical Buddha. Lastly, the fact that Ananda succeeded in the task of planting the Bodhi tree as a substitute of the Buddha even when he was alive, and which fellow monks note as something unique and subject of conversation marked the beginning of worshipping the sacred objects around him.

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\(^5\) Three shrines are relic of the body, a relic of use or a relic of memorial.
The realm of sacred is not seen in a binary category in opposition to 'profane' but to suggest something which is imbued with supernatural power and hence, an object of awe and respect. Thus, his mahādhatu (relic) and other symbols had spiritual powers (like that of consecrated images as in Hinduism) and are conceived of magical power station. The spiritual power emanating from the sacred objects which commemorate the Buddha – the Bo-tree, dharmacakra symbol or corporeal relic – is attested from the above-mentioned Jātaka where Ananda exhorted the Master to sit under the Bo-tree as to invest the place with powers, which would help others in their rapture to enlightenment. The Buddha’s attainment of enlightenment is symbolised by various symbols of his corporeal relic, and when people pay respect to and give gifts to them, goodness is caused to arise within them, and therefore, the symbols of Buddha act as a field of merit. All these sacred objects are called ‘cetiya’ (from which cāritya has come) on account of tranquillity they brought about in mind. Thus from the very beginning the Buddha was regarded as one who was invested with spiritual, miraculous powers; by worshipping him one can attain merit. Buddhism of early period developed reminders whom the people worshipped and paid homage, namely (a) śārira cetiya (corporeal relic), (b) dharmaraja cetiya (doctrinal reminders); (c) paribhoga cetiya (reminders by association which include Bo-tree, alms bowl, etc. (d) and uddeśika cetiya (indicative reminders like, footprints, representation of great events in Buddha’s life as in Sānā and Bharhut (Griswold 1968:14).

Fa-hein and Xuanzang refer to a tradition about the origin of Buddha image in the lifetime of Buddha himself. Whereas Fa-hein was only reporting a tradition about the origin of a Buddha image, Xuanzang claims to have seen such an image of the Buddha in sandalwood at a large vihāra in Kausambi in contrast to Fa-hein’s account of the image belonging to Sravasti (Beal, vol. 1: 235–6). Fa-hein’s account of the origin of Buddha’s image during Buddha’s absence in Sravasti is recorded in the Pannasa Jātaka (originated in northern Chiang-meiin in Thailand in 13th-14th century). A certain Jātaka tale known in Burma as Chiang-meiin, which is extra-canonical, and is unknown to Buddhist traditions anywhere except in the countries of Southeast Asia, contained a story about the origin of Buddha’s image, which resemble closely with the account of Fa-hein. The thirty-seventh Jātaka of this collection, entitled Vattangula-nāga-jātaka contains a reference to the first image of Buddha, made in Sravasti by king Prasenjit in Buddha’s absence (Vaidya 1961:100). I-tsing also refers
to Buddha’s image in Sravasti but instead of a sandalwood image, he refers to a golden
coloured image of Buddha (I-tsing 1966: 190).

Whether these latter accounts refer to an actual historical tradition is not conclusively
proved but worship and paying homage to the Buddha’s reminders in early times was
prevalent and popular during early Buddhism. They were considered as ‘fields of merit.’ This
worship and devotion to various cetiyas started in Buddha’s time (Schopen 1987; 1989 b).
One important ritual, the Confession of Faith, which refers to taking refuge in the Buddha, in
the sangha and in the Dharma, is an instance of universalisation and internalisation of an
important ritual of paying obedience to the ‘cetiyas’ associated with the Buddha. The first
reference to Confession of Faith is found in the Khuddaka Pātha. (Khuddaka Pātha 1960).

In early Buddhist literature Gautama Buddha was projected as one who followed a
succession of Buddhas beginning with Vipassi. The fact that the historical Buddha was
projected as one who merely followed a tradition was seen as a justification for the future
Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, who is believed to be now reside in the Sukhavati heaven. He
will be born in a Brahmin family to resurrect waning Buddhism. The first reference to
Maitreya Bodhisattva is found in the Mūlādhāra (Thorner I 1964: 159) and the Cakkavatī
Sihanāda Suttaṃta of the Dīgha Nikāya. Even though the Sakyamuni had achieved Parinibbāna,
till such time when Maitreya comes as the Buddha, the ‘reminders’ will take care of the
dhamma and the order (sangha).

2.5 Cetiyas, Pilgrimage and community identity:

The development of cult worship in the form of cetiyas of the Buddha had profound effect.
These objects provided an immediate context to layworshippers to identify themselves as

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6. I-tsing: “The origin of the image called Gambu~adavarna (golden coloured) is mentioned in the Vinaya. When
Buddha was not among the assembly, the members of the order were not reverential; this circumstance caused
the rich Anathapindaka to ask the Buddha, saying ‘I wish to make a golden coloured image of thee to put it in
front of the Assembly’. The Great Master allowed him to make this image.” (Takakusu 1966: 190).

Buddhist brethren (Turner 1978; Eade 1991). They brought together people from different quarters and led to greater interaction between laity and monks. Pilgrimage and paying homage to Buddha in sacred sites was considered to be an important ritual in early Buddhism. Buddha himself states the importance of pilgrimage. In an oft-quoted passage of the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, Ananda asks the Buddha what the monks should do after his death when they were no longer able to receive his audience. The Buddha replied:

> There are four places, Ananda which the believing man should visit with the beliefs of reverence and awe. Which were the four? The place where the Tathāgata attained the Supreme and perfect insight, the place...the kingdom of righteousness was set on foot by the Tathāgata. The place...at which the Tathāgata finally passed away. The pilgrims upon visiting the sacred sites will say, “here was Tathāgata born (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta: 1921: 54).

It is to be noted that Asoka while on his *Dhamma jatūrśi*, repeated the same formula in the Rumindei Pillar inscription (Hultzsch 1991: 164-65).

The growth of pilgrimage and sacred sites led to corresponding changes in Buddhist *sangha*, which was often found near the Buddhist sacred site or *stupa*, which contains the Buddha or his disciples' relics. The change from eremitical to cenobetical life occurred due to increasing association with the layworshippers, who gave *dana* (gifts) to monks and Buddhist establishments. The interaction and resultant gifts to monks led to the growth of a permanent *sangha*. From the beginning the Buddhist monks maintained their distinctiveness. The Buddhist *sangha* was called the *sangha* of 'Bhikkhus of the four quarters' and others called it Sākyaputra Śramana. There were bonds of common dharma, a body of cardinal doctrines and a master (*satttha*). However, the institutionalisation of *sangha* took place with the introductions of *pāṭimokha*, of which *uposatha* was the most important. *Vassa* provided a context for union of different monks at one place. Originally a disciplinary code, *Pāṭimokha* was transformed to a congregational ritual. Rain retreat developed as a necessity, grew up as a ceremonial observance of a Bhikkhus. Rain retreat in collective bodies occurs in the *Mahāparinibbāna*

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8 There are three approaches to pilgrimage. The Durkheimian approach regards pilgrimages as means of producing a wider sense of social consciousness within the dispersed local communities, thus reinforcing the concern of the societies. Turner's theory asserts that many pilgrimages involve the rejection of social structure. Social relationships between pilgrims are perceived ideally unmediated by mundane social status and hierarchy (Turner and Turner 1978). On the other hand Eade and Sallnow consider that pilgrimage, as a social scientific category should be deconstructed. Sites do not provide arenas of Durkheimian consensus or Turnerian Communities but rather the expression of divergent meaning which divide the Great and Little Traditions, lay pilgrims and orthodox authorities, local inhabitants and temporary visitors. In this perspective, the key aspect of major shrines is their ability to absorb varieties of interpretation. The power of shrine, therefore, derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meaning and practices, though the shrine staff might attempt with varying degrees of success, to impose a single, official discourse (Eade and Sallnow 1991:15)
Sutta where the Buddha calls upon the Bhikkhus to spend the vassa “each according to the place where his friends, acquaintances and inmates lived around (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, II: 27).

At first the viharas served as lodging houses for the individual monk. This is also known from the architecture of early monastic complex. (Ferguson: 1910). The early cave monastery like the Jivatarama monastery of Raigar is a single cell dwelling. Subsequently viharas developed as a whole complex within an enclosure where many monks resided in contrast to earlier times when the viharas used to be a private apartment of a single Bhikkhu. The third stage in the development was uposatha-grhya. Subsequently in early centuries of the Christian era, the viharas became elaborate structures, with a planned layout that includes courtyard, a number of cells, kitchen and sanctuary within the monastery (Dutt 1962: 61).

The mythological aura around the sacred places and objects was highlighted both in art and texts. The Asokavadana refers to how a free spirit who had witnessed the birth of the Buddha described the glory of infant’s form to king Asoka. At Bodh Gaya the serpent king Kalika who encountered the Buddha immediately before the enlightenment recounted his (the Buddha) body splendour.

The eyewitness accounts of free spirit, serpent king, which sent Asoka to ecstasy of devotion, emphasises the person the lord was, his charismatic qualities at pilgrimage sites (Strong 1983: 246). Artists at Sanci chose to depict two such encounters of Asoka at Buddhist sacred places – the visit to the Bodhi tree and the encounter with the nāgas at the Ramagrama stupa. The visit of emperor Asoka to the Bodhi tree is depicted on the eastern torana of Sanci stupa. The art of Bhar hut and Sanci depicted many of the jātakas and popular stories associated with the
Buddha’s supernatural powers. Among the iconical sign, the focus was on the worship of *stupa* by devotees with the beat of music, dance and offering. Other iconical signs represent sacred sites like Sarnath and Bodh Gaya (on the adjacent sides of the west pillar of the southern gateway), one featuring pillar, and the other, a tree. Indexical signs which represent the Buddha in the form of footprints are also depicted in early Buddhist art (Dehejia 1997: 36-54). These representations in sacred sites bound the devotees in direct communion with the life of the Master. These visual narratives in the sacred sites were preached among the laity by distinguished preachers, called *dhammakathika*, *bhânakas*. Epigraphic records of Sanci, Bharhut, Karle refer to *bhânakas* (*EI* VIII 9: 155; *EI* II 33: 36; Cunningham 1962 no.45: 230).

The efficacy of pilgrimage and worship of cults is attested in the Buddhist literature. The *Sutta Piṭaka* especially abounds with passages describing the fruit of worshipping the Buddha and the *cetiya* associated with him. In the *Milindapanhō*, the king of Sagala queried that since the Buddha is dead, how can he accept gifts? Nagasena answered that even homage paid to the attainment of the supreme god under the form of jewel treasure of his wisdom; the people themselves attain one or the other glorious states (Thorn 1964 II: 144-54).

“Therefore it is great king that acts done to the Tathagata, notwithstanding his having passed away and not accepting then are, nevertheless of value and bear fruit.” (Ibid.) The *Mahāvastu*, one of the earliest Mahayana texts, proclaimed the efficacy of worshipping the Buddha and his *cetiya*. By worshipping a *Paribhogiya cetiya* the text continues, “the devotees become wealthy, affluent, ablaze splendour and a mighty universal king and inhabitant of heaven (*Mahāvastu* 2: 329-54).

### 2.6 Mahāyāna Development—*Bodhisattvas*, devotion and transference of merits

Buddhist rituals and worship became more elaborate with the Mahayana emphasis on the worship of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*. It highlighted the works of the Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* who are ‘skill in means’ (*upāya kauśala*), who strive tirelessly for the upliftment of all beings. Skill in means (*upāya kauśala*) allowed Buddhism to be spelled out in details while not being ensnared by the false discrimination of the unenlightened. Skill in means is about the way in which the

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9 Sign has been classified as iconic, indexical and symbolic. The iconic sign most clearly evokes the non-existent object to which it refers. Potrait is an example of iconic sign. Indexical signs are the markers or traces of a particular cause, and that cause is the thing to which they refer. Indexical icons similarly encode dual meanings: On the one hand the icons represents the likeness of an original object or person, and on the other it transfer values to its users. Symbols, on the other hand, denote the interpretations of a thing. *Tiratna* symbol, for example, denotes the Buddha, *dharma and sangha* (Burke IX: 673–89; Tambiah 1979).
meaning of Buddhism was correlated with the unenlightened conditions of living beings. It brings out particularly how Mahāyānists thought Buddhism was a religion to be understood. The concept was used to explain/ accommodate various existence of Buddhism as a functioning religious system (Pye 1978: 1). In this notion the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas assume different roles in order to take mankind in right direction to the final goal of enlightenment. Since lay-worshippers cannot understand the high wisdom of śūnyatā, the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas preached the essentials in a language that is in conformity with people's needs and abilities. The abilities to frame salutary statements and to act in conformity with people's needs spring from this faculty of upāya kausālā, which came to the Bodhisattva quite late i.e. on the seventh stage, when the prajñā-pāramitā (perfection of wisdom) has thoroughly shown him the emptiness of everything (ibid.21). Even though the Buddhas know the fundamental unity of all dharma (qualities) and have inner grasp of the nature of diverse factors of existence, the Tathāgata is able to discriminate in rightful manner for different people.

Thus, the doctrine of 'Skilful Means' justifies many facets of Mahāyāna Buddhism at the existential level. While the doctrine of śūnyatā gave a philosophical justification to the new religion and pantheon, the doctrine of 'Skilful Means' brought about changes at four levels (a) in the vinaya rules where old rigid rules gave away to flexibility in the doctrines (b) in the doctrines where the emphasis was shifted from arhat hood to bodhisattvahood; (c.) in the interaction with the laity where the monks became increasingly associated with them in different roles—as astrologer, as healer, as a ritual specialists. Mahāyāna Buddhism even created a popular Buddha called Bhaisajyaguru, Buddha, the healer and (d) in the form of pāramitās, where the emphasis was on dāna. However, Karma (good work) acted as a restraining factor in the opportunistic use of upāya kausālā. It is not that all acts can be justified as 'skilful means'; only those actions, which are productive of merit, can be justified as a necessity.

The concept of Bodhisattvahood was extremely fertile. It succeeded in coalescing two phenomena, which are sociologically distinct. On the one hand, it provided an altruistic rationale to the increasing association of the monks in the everyday affairs of the laity and worldly religious action (the rational comes from upāya kausālā) and accepted the acceleration of a married clergy. On the other, the bodhisatta doctrine permitted the development of a pantheon of Buddhist saints whose essential natures and iconographic forms had derived from the attributes of Śākyamuni Buddha.

The most important characteristic of Bodhisattva was his karuṇā (compassion). His compassion was boundless and infinite and reached even to the lowest of low beings. In the
Ganakarunādavyahya, where the example of Avalokitesvara, the all-compassionate Bodhisattva is set up, the latter refused his salvation, though fully entitled to, until all creatures of the world were in possession of Bodhi knowledge (Mitra 1981:95). Derived from his insight, which sees unity of things, he is seized by compassion for fellow beings, who suffer from the burden of their karma; still others who have acquired unfortunate births which keep them away from the Buddha and his teachings. The Bodhisattva radiates great friendliness and compassion over all those beings and gives his attention to their thinking, “I shall release them from all their sufferings.” (Aṣṭaśāhasrikā XXII: 402-04). “The whole world of living beings must resume from the terror of birth, of old age, of sickness, of death and rebirth, of all kinds of moral offences, of all states of woe, of the whole cycle of birth and death... from all these terrors I must rescue. My endeavours do not merely aim at my own deliverance. For with the help of the boat of the thought of all knowledge, I must rescue all beings from the streams of saṃsāra which is difficult to cross.” (Śīkṣāsamuccaya: 280-281). The twin characteristics of the Bodhisattvas — karunā and skillfulness increased the appeal of the Mahāyāna system. It brings in the externality elements in the form of dedication of merits. Further, the karunā of Bodhisattva ensures a helping hand for people suffering from distress. The concept of saviours (trīrāṇa) added to the appeal of Bodhisattva. Here was a deity who worked for the people in distress. He demanded not any austere samādhi (meditation) but only devotion and faith. He saved/ worked tirelessly for all people who are “self-sufficient and self-inflated; suspicious, crooked and faithless in mind. Men such as those are hard to be saved (Kato et al 1971: 49). What the devotee has to do is to learn (grahana) his name and bearing this in mind (dharayati), invoke him, to pay homage to him, to recollect of him, think of him without hesitation/ of Avalokitesvara, the being so pure/ in death, disaster and calamity/ He is the saviour, refuge and resort. The merit derived from bearing his name in the mind or chanting the classic formula Oṁ Manipadma Hum (Gana Karuṇādavyahya) or even paying homage to him is immeasurable and lasts through aeons. The other ‘saviour’ is Tara, who developed quite late but acquired great popularity from 6th century AD onward. Avalokitesvara, Tāra, Amitabha occupy place of prominence and popularity. Amitabha, the Perfectly Enlightened presides in the Sukhavati heaven. He is a famous Mahāyana deity and his mantra is found everywhere in Japan. These three and Manjuśrī, the god of wisdom are the four most popular deities in the Buddhist pantheon. The Amitābhavahyā contains information about Amitābha’s forty-eight vows in front of Buddha Lokesvaraṇāja.

The Buddhists were exhorted to show devotion to them, and to invoke their mantras. A simple act of faith could fetch double results: one through his faith, worship and devotion and
the other through the transfer of merit of the bodhisattvas, when faith is turned to them. The Śikṣāsamucçaya in its Ratnamegha section speaks of celestial birth, untainted by the impurities of womb” as a result of consecration of stupa. “Verily for countless aeons he is not born or lame if he venerates stupas of teachers (Śikṣāsamucçaya 291-300). The devotion to Avalokitesvāra brings out immeasurable merit. “In quarrels, disputes and strife; in battle of men and in greater danger, to recollect the name of Avalokitesvara will appease the troop of the evil foes (Saddharmapuññarika XXIV, vv: 17 – 27). The longer exposition of the same text (verse 95) elaborates the efficacy of simple devotional actions, such as drawing or painting images of the Buddha or paying homage at the stupa or shrine with flowers, incense, flags and umbrella or even employing others to perform to music (ibid: 57). The Saddharmapuññarika elaborates: “Or those who have offered worship by folding the hands or even raising a hand or by slightly bending the head; By this paying homage to the images gradually see the innumerable Buddha; themselves attain the supreme way extensively brings across countless and enter nirvāna without residue (ibid: 58).

In his account, I-tsing gives elaborate reference to such practices in India and Southeast Asia. He talks about the consecration of stupa in household, visit of monk to perform the rituals in consecration, elaborate rituals associated with it and ritual meals and so on. (Takakusu 1966:150).

2.7 Vajrayāna as a social religion

Vajrayāna Buddhism combines the devotional needs of the masses with meditation practices of the Yogacāra School and the metaphysics of the Mādhyamika in a framework, which these serious practitioners claimed to be Buddhist in nature. Vajrayāna Buddhism catered to the devotional need of the masses by inventing Buddhism, where one finds numerous Buddha, bodhisattvas, gods and goddesses, both in peaceful and wrathful moods. Each god and goddess was assigned an instrumental role to fulfil the everyday needs and aspirations of the masses. The germ syllable (bijamantra) of each deity is believed to possess magical powers and recitations of these mantras guarantee fulfilment of desires. It also incorporated other elements of the period, viz. incorporation of deities from brahmanical religion, incorporation of motifs and symbols from

10 “The priests and the laymen in India make caityas or images with earth or impress the Buddha’s images on silk or paper and worship it with offering wherever they go. Sometimes they build stupas of the Buddha by making a pile or surrounding it with bricks. They some time form these stupas in lonely fields and leave them to fall in ruins. . . . On the upavasatha day in India the host comes previously to the priest and after a salutation, invites them to the festival. Priests sit according to their rank. At the upper end of the row of seats are the images of Arhats, to whom offer being made first. At the lowest end of the row an offering of food is made to the mother Hariti (Takakusu 1966: 150).
it, incorporating tribal, Tantric-goddess tradition to its fold as well as developed an elaborate ritual structure. The philosophical basis of Vajrayāna is the sunyavāda of the Madhyamikakārikā, while the rationale for psycho-yogic practices was derived from the principle of the Yogācāras, thus ensuring significant continuity with the Mahāyāna tradition.

2.8 Vajrayāna Buddhism: Basic tenets

The normative goal of Vajrayāna is the attainment of 'bodhicitta', which is a state of mahāsukha (great bliss). This is an ineffable state. The summon bonum is described both in earlier Buddhist literature as well as in brahmanical literature as an ineffable state and hence, the emphasis on mahāsukha is essentially a continuum of earlier tradition even though the nomenclature changed in this period. However, the soteriological means, it prescribes, distinguishes Vajrayāna Buddhism from earlier yānas. In Buddhism of the early period, the highest state of Nibbāna is located either in the next birth as in the career of bodhisattva (in Mahāyāna Buddhism) or at the termination of one’s rebirth as in canonical Buddhism. However, the Vajrayāna was unwilling to postpone this soteriological aspiration to future existence; for them, salvation is an imminent goal to be achieved in the present and immediate existence (The Guhyasamāj Tantra: 167) Sabhajñāyāna, a form of Vajrayāna Buddhism, as the name suggests aims at realising the ultimate and innate nature of the ‘self’ as well as of the dharma and it is sabhajñā because it prescribes the way in the most natural way i.e. by following the path along which human nature itself leads him. Esoteric Buddha is called Vajrayāna (Adamantine vehicle) because like vaijra (the thunderbolt), the ‘Absolute’ (identified with śunyā) is firm, substantial, indivisible, impenetrable, incapable of being burnt and imperishable (Snellgrove 1959b II: 37). Vajrayana Buddhism developed with three forms — Mantrayāna, Sabhajñāyāna and Kālacakra yāna. In Mantrayāna, the emphasis was on proper recitation of the mantras; Sahajajñāyana refers to the innate nature of the self and natural soteriological means. Kālacakrayāna is associated with the development of wrathful deities in Vajrayāna Buddhism.

The main aim of the Vajrayāna was to attain bodhicitta, which embodies both śunyatā (identified with prajñā/wisdom) and compassion (karuṭa). They identified śunyatā with vaijra (the Absolute). In Vajrayāna Buddhism all deities, articles of worship are marked with vaijra to distinguish them from their originally accepted nature. The supreme deity of Vajrayāna, Vajrasattva (derived from vaijra=śunyatā and sattva=essence), who is the nature of Pure Conscience (from the Yogācāra tradition) is associated with śunyatā in the form of absence of subjectivity and objectivity. In Vajrayāna practice, particularly in Sahajajñāyāna, śunyatā and karuṭa,
the two elements to be united for the production of bodhicitta, were identified with the female and male principles. Unlike brahmanical Sākta tantra, in Vajrayāna, prajñā (female principle) is given a dominant role. The coming together of the two leads to bodhicitta, which is conceived as an extremely blissful state of mind, and could be attained by psycho-yogic practices. The iconographic form of this principle is found in the yuganadha ( yab-yum) deities of Vajrayāna.

The realisation of bodhicitta entails a rigorous method. The first step of which is to seek a guru who will initiate the seeker. After initiation, the steps include specific recitation of mantras invocation of a particular deity, representation of maṇḍalas, representing śunya in mind, ritual union with yogini, etc. the entire ritual process is saturated with symbolism. To label these as rituals having symbolic significance are to ignore the fact that symbolic elements are integral to the ritual system of Vajrayāna. The rituals of Vajrayāna involve practices, which are a contradiction of early Buddhism. But these practices are symbolic in nature and they cannot be understood without decoding these symbols. Externally they involve practices which are authentic to canonical or Mahāyāna/sūtra Buddhism, but these practices cannot be understood on the model of conduct in the sphere of science which organises means to achieve ends on a foundation of essential grasp of cause and effect (Parson 1937:209). Ritual means and ends are connected by symbolic longevity. And this becomes clear once one grasps the symbolic significance of ritual practices and complexes.

2.9 Philosophical continuity:
The Vajrayāna practices which in its extreme form includes five 'm' kāras (mātya, mādya, maithuna, etc) are in direct opposition to the to the earlier Buddhist practices. Both canonical texts and sūtra literature of Mahāyāna emphasise on šīla. In older Buddhism the higher planes of spiritual life were considered to be beyond the reach of woman. Even the early Mahāyāna teaches that in the Sukhavati heaven of Amitābha, there is no woman. The reservation against the female was also emphasised in the Sadharmapundarika in a story about a Bodhisattva, who was a daughter of a dragon king turned into a man when she attained Bodhisattvahood (Sadharmapundarika: 226–228).

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11 Parson remarked that when an observer in possession of the best available scientific knowledge, examines the nexus between the means used and the ends they are supposed to encompass, such an observer can discern "no reason why the operation in question should serve to bring about the realisation of subjective ends aimed by the ritual actor (Parson 1937: 204)."

12 Beyer’s documentation of rituals associated with the worship of Tārā is one of the excellent studies on the symbolic aspect of Vajrayāna ritual (Beyer 1973).
However, the later Mahāyāna texts began to include in its fold the female principle and emphasised its relevance. The worshippers are enjoined to identify with Prajñāpāramitā and merge with the principle of femininity, without which they will be mutilated men. Like a woman, the Perfect Wisdom deserves to be courted and wooed and the sutras on Prajñāpāramitā constitute one long affair with the Absolute. Meditation on her as a goddess has the purpose of getting inside her. In Vajrayāna a sexual attitude to Prajñāpāramitā is explicit when Prajñā is identified with the female principle. However the philosophical justification of these sexo-yogic ritual practices has the undertone of all the seriousness. This is obvious from the tenor of the many Vajrayāna texts and commentaries.

Like Nagarjuna’s Śūnyatā, Vajrayāna Buddhism believed in the essential identity of nirvāṇa and saṃsāra and believed in the reality of Absolute void which pervades everywhere. The Absolute is defined as thought in pure cognition and all phenomenal existence as mere representation of mind. What causes to perceive the duality between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is the accidental defilement (āgantuka kamala) which inhibits man to realise the Buddhahood in them (Snellgrove 1959 b II: 20). The purpose of yogin (seeker) is to realise the essential Buddhahood by removing these defilement. The whole training of the yogin is to ‘conceive of existence in the knowledge of its non-existence,’ and one will automatically realise its pure nature which is innate and a matter for self-experience.

This can be achieved by using existence itself as the means (upāya) for there is no other possibility. One creates mentally (bhāvyat) an idealised representation of the process of emanation of existence (utpattikrama), which is the saṃsāra, and by realising the dream like nature of its apparent diversity one realises its unity in this process of realisation, which is nirvana.

To realise the unity of existence, one needs to have karuṇā (compassion) which is the ‘means’ (upāya) and prajñā (wisdom). The coming together of the two leads one to ‘think’. Both Vajrayana iconography and symbols reflect this unity of the two, viz., Hevajra means He = compassion; vajra wisdom). Wisdom is represented by lotus, bell, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Various symbols of prajñā (wisdom) and karuṇā (compassion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cosmical</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other facets of Vajrayāna like imagine forms, divinities, and seed syllables, symbolism represent the identity of nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. This unit of the upāya and prajñā is called the body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas, as the Three Adamantine once, as the unit of the three states of being. The absolute pervades of all things and there is nothing other than this but it, which transcends all other things.

2.10 Tantric practice

The yogins engage in intense meditation on the absolute by mental representation of the deity and by invocation of the deity by reciting the seed syllable, representation of deities in mandala, ritual union with the yogin and other psychic exercises. The practices of the yogin can be summarised thus: 1. Recitation of spells, 2. Performance of ritual gesture, 3. Identification with the deities by means of a special kind of meditation. The system of meditation on deities is marked by a sequence of four steps, 1. There is the understanding of śūnyatā and the sinking of one's separate individuality into that of emptiness, 2. Recitation of seed syllable, 3. One form say mental representation of deity, as in a sculpture, 4. Through identification, one becomes deity.

One important aid in Tantric practice is the representation of maṇḍalas (see Chapter 3). The ritual union of the yogin with the yogini represents the coming together of upāya and prajñā. This particular rite is envisaged as proceeding by four steps, which are marked by consecration by the guru, and are experienced as four successive joys known at five successive moments.

2.11 Vajrayāna Deities

The Vajrayāna Buddhists developed family of five Dhyāni Buddhas who are ultimately linked to Adi Buddha, the primeval Buddha. The Vajrayāna pantheon as developed in Buddhism around 7th century offers rich diversity in iconographic forms as well in their instrumental roles. Their conception of Godhead made even minor ritual objects as deity. The Buddhist pantheon, which became full-blown in this period, provides interesting evidence of religious competition, borrowing from other religions, adaptation and incorporation of iconographic symbols and integration of them in the Buddhist framework. They developed a rich variety of deities. These deities were invested with certain instrumental roles. The worshipper by worshipping these deities in specified manner can attain certain instrumental goals.

2.11.1. Philosophical Basis of Vajrayāna Pantheon

In the Vajrayāna form of Buddhism the external world has no existence, the only reality is śūnyatā which is also identified with Bodhicitta. The yogin regards himself as a chain of
momentary consciousness full of compassion for humanity and invoke the aid of śūnyatā with the three elements – śūnya, viṣṇā (compassion) and mahāsukha (great bliss). The aid of these three elements can be invoked when the Bodhi mind of the yogin is also with the śūnya and only when this is done, the Absolute responds. In accordance with the germ syllable or the purpose for which the Absolute is invoked, the Absolute takes the form of divinity with which Bodhicitta is identified (Sadhanamālā I: xxix). The identification makes the yogin inherit all the power of the deity and realise the deity.

The Sadhanamālā gives minute description of the forms of these Buddhist divinities. The deities vary according to the purpose for which he/she is invoked and, hence the Vajrayāna Pantheon includes numerous deities, each is assigned with specific roles. Thus, the invocation of deities, according to the Sadhanamālā, is to realise the divinity within. The Śrī Vajrānīta-tantra states, “Why does one speak of divinity? In the body is located the body ‘possessor’, in order to comprehend, there is the comprehender, in order to comprehend oneself, and there is divinity. For this reason one speaks of divinity.” (Wayman 1996: 45)

2.11.2 Pentadic Classification

The multifarious form of Adi Buddha is neatly divided into different families to form a complete system. The families are conventionally five and from them, all others have sprung up. They are vijñā, tathāgata, ratna, padma and krama. The five skandhas (elements) are identified with five Dhyāni Buddhas – Vairocana, Aksobhya, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi. They are regarded as progenitor of respective families (for their emanation and sculptural representation in Orissa see Ch. 3).

The pentadic classification is generalised at many other levels to include many other aspects. The following table gives a list of such a pentadic classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five quarters</th>
<th>Embodiment Of personality</th>
<th>Root evils</th>
<th>Buddhas</th>
<th>Their Consorts</th>
<th>Seed syllable</th>
<th>colour</th>
<th>Guardian deity</th>
<th>Family Symbols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>centre</td>
<td>Vijnāta (Consciousness)</td>
<td>Maha</td>
<td>Vairocana</td>
<td>Locana</td>
<td>Buni</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Cakra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Rāpa (Form)</td>
<td>Dvaja</td>
<td>Aksobhya</td>
<td>Mamaki</td>
<td>Hun</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Yamantaka</td>
<td>Vajra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Samyāda (Perception)</td>
<td>Raga</td>
<td>Amitabha</td>
<td>Pandara</td>
<td>Jrim</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Padmanantaka</td>
<td>Padma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Sānakuśa (conformation)</td>
<td>Ṣrīśa</td>
<td>Amoghasiddhi</td>
<td>Tara</td>
<td>Kshāh</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Viśnuntaka</td>
<td>Kshatga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Vedanā (sensation)</td>
<td>Praśnaya</td>
<td>Ratnasambhava</td>
<td>Vajrād-</td>
<td>Ṣtri</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Prajnanatka</td>
<td>Rāma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such pentadic classification and the philosophical explanation, the Buddhists achieved several things at the same time. First they incorporated tantra. Tantra became Buddhistic. Second, they
were successful in exotericise the esoteric doctrine of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra and render the
religion full of life by miracles of boldest symbolism filling space with divine and hallucinatory
visions. Third, the Buddhist theologians, by making use of finest doctrinal points, had
constituted a scholarly theory of popular religion. They took into account the everyday aspect
of religion by assigning specific roles to the deities, by incorporating popular elements. By 8th –
9th century, Śaktism became quite widespread. Buddhism incorporated female goddesses and
associated rituals into its fold. Vajrayāna Buddhism, rather than being a degenerate form of
Buddhism, tried to make the religion practical by innovating new deities, rituals and practices.

2.12. Motivational Basis - Vajrayāna as an Instrumental Religion

In a way the innovation of multitude gods and goddesses could be seen as a culmination of the
process of making Buddhism more instrumental. The soteriology of Vajrayāna is the attainment
of śākya, which can be achieved by esoteric means, but as an esoteric religion, it is more akin
to Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna. The similarities with Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna were over the
worship of Buddha, chanting of mantra, monastic ritual like Caityavandanā, etc. Gellner has
shown in his studies of Newar Buddhism that in practice, Newar Buddhists (who are mainly
Vajrayāna follower) rites are Śrāvakayāna during the rites themselves, but bracketed by an
inoffensive esoteric version of the Vajrayāna. The Samvarodaya Tantra (17.1-6) had described the
characteristics of a vajra master, which include the ideas of Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna
(Tsuda 1974: 274). In the esoteric form of Vajrayāna the deities appear without their female
partner and singly. In Orissa not a single image is found embracing his prajñā. This tradition of
observing śrāvaka practices in a limited context within a framework of Vajrayāna is characterised
as Mahāyāna in Nepal (Gellner 1996: 143-144). Buddhism in practice was closer to this form in
Orissa during 7th-12th centuries AD. There are two reasons to support such a formulation. First,
there is not a single Buddhist male god found embracing his prajñā, which is an integral part of
Vajrayāna ritual. This suggests that rituals were more Śrāvakayāna in its form. The second
evidence in support of such a formulation is that Vajrayāna Buddhism was not restricted to

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13 As will be discussed in Chapter 3, goddess cult became widespread in Orissa from 7th century AD, but more
particularly from 9th century AD onwards. For the popularity of Saktism in this period see, (Sircar 1967;
Donaldson 2002).

14 Instrumental actions are those behaviours, which are oriented “to changing the state of the world as a means
to the end of one’s subjective experience (Southwold 1983: 185). If a prayer, a spell, in its correct formulation
tends to achieve the purpose for which it was recited, will be characterised as instrumental. To take an instance,
if a childless woman goes to Hariti and worship her in the correct manner, perform the enjoined rituals, we will
conclude that the prayer is an instrumental mean to achieve the desired end i.e. to get a child. The desired goal
(getting a child) leads to change in one’s subjective experience. Prayer or performance of rituals in this situation
will be considered as an instrumental means while the deity performs an instrumental role.
serious practitioners but had wider appeal as known from the niches of numerous votive stupas. The votive stupas contain in their niches many deities introduced during Vajrayāna phase and reveal the cult preference of the pilgrims. None of these depict any *yugānadhā* (embracing) pose. In fact some important Vajrayāna texts, like the *Hrīṃḍra Tantra*, betray an attempt to routinise many esoteric Tantric practices (see Ch. 5).

Moreover, it is to be noted that many of the Buddhist deities who trample on Hindu divinities are largely absent in Orissa and India. This seems to be a conscious decision by the Buddhists. On the other hand, Buddhism developed an elaborate pantheon structure and rituals for the laity. Such a structure requires the need of a specialist because these divinities who were invested with powers to solve specific problems required a particular mode of worship as well as a set of rituals.¹⁵ For the average populace, who constituted the base of a widely spread religion, the saliency of existential wants predominated over other objectives. The Buddhist deities seem to cater to these needs. A poor man prays to Vasudhāra to give him plenty. An infertile lady worships Harīti for conception. Vajrayāna Buddhism developed a vast structure of pantheon, from Buddhas to *dākinī*, who fulfil these existential needs of people. The *Sūdhanamālā* and other texts refer to instrumental functions of each deity. The following table represents them.

*Table No.2.3 Instrumental Functions of Buddhist Divinities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Buddhist deities</th>
<th>Instrumental Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Dipankara</td>
<td>Islanders’ deity favouring merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bhaisajyaguru</td>
<td>Healer Buddha; worshipped for curing illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Vajrapani</td>
<td>God of Rain (i) provide elixir of life (ii) to cure snake bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Avalokitesvara</td>
<td>Saviours. As savours he saves from eight or eleven fears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Avalokitesvara in feminine form</td>
<td>Worshipped by woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Manjusri</td>
<td>(i) For learning (ii) destroys ignorance (iii) god of agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sankhananga Manjusri</td>
<td>5. for bewitching woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁵ See Beyer for the mode of worship and rituals involved in Tara cult (Beyer 1973)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodhisattvas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arogyasali Lokesvara</td>
<td>6. God of healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Vajrapani</td>
<td>7. God of rain, protector of snakes and elixir of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Simhanada Lokesvara</td>
<td>8. Invoked to cure leprosy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Kaitagarbha</td>
<td>Master of six worlds of Desire (ii) God of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Akasagarbha</td>
<td>God of Wealth, God of Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Cintamani Lokesvara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Akaśagarbha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Cintamani</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Aparajita</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Hariti</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Vajra-Sarasvati</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Prajñaparamita</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Uṣnisavijaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Aparajita</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other deities</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hārtī</td>
<td>1. Goddess of fecundity, prevents smallpox, protects kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Aparajita</td>
<td>2. Goddess of ghosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jambhala</td>
<td>3. God of wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Trailokyavijaya</td>
<td>4. Conqueror of evil spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Astamahabhaya Tara</td>
<td>5. Saviouress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hayagriva</td>
<td>6. God of horse traders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Janguli</td>
<td>7. Cure snake-bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurukulla</td>
<td>8. For bewitching lovers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Vajra-Sarasvati</td>
<td>9. Goddess of wealth, learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Vasudhara</td>
<td>10. Goddess of abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Parnasabari</td>
<td>11. Smallpox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Mahamayuri</td>
<td>12. Invoked in snake bite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Mahakala</td>
<td>13. God of wealth and hearth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Yamantaka</td>
<td>14. Invoked to conquer death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Prajñaparamita</td>
<td>15. Goddess of transcendental wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Uṣnisavijaya</td>
<td>16. Goddess of Intelligence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 Aparajita was said to have delivered the Lord the *bṛdṛga mantra* of all ghosts. It is invoked during the journey to save from fear of ghosts. Xuanzang crossed the Gobi desert reciting this mantra.
2.13. Priesthood and rituals

Two other aspects of Vajrayāna also contributed to the extension of Buddhism. Of course, the Vajrayāna texts were highly metaphysical in their meaning but many of the idioms and expressions provide an indication of the way it tried to reach out to different groups. In many texts and caryāpadas there are reference to lower-caste women like doma, bāji etc. The Tantric yoginis themselves have occasionally gone out of their way to emphasise the low social status of their preferred partners, specifying on occasions that the ideal consort was a sixteen year female partner of the despised doma caste (Shaw 1994). The societal implication of such a position is difficult to ascertain because it is important to know how far the gender polarities that existed in Buddhist Tantric circles had anything to do with the conventional gender role. However, it is certain that the inferior position accorded to women within the monastic establishment was some what retrieved by Vajrayāna according an important position to feminine principle. Further women were accorded religious authority on the basis of religious realisation and the timely display of their magical power.17

More important aspect is the implication of female principle and the need of a guru for initiation to Vajrayāna. Initiation into Vajrayāna, both for laity and monk, required ritual. A guru who is an accomplished one can do this. An accomplished one in Vajrayāna traditions requires various practices including the need of a female partnership. Through this logic Vajrayāna established a married priest system who could act as gur~ initiate the new to its fold. Dumont summarises this process thus:

An individualistic soteriology is in fact used to define another hereditary group. Tantricism combined mysticism and ritual to great effect. It gave value to the individual. Yet at the same time, the emphasis on secrecy, the necessity of a guru and the importance of sexual partner and therefore, marriage, Tantricism also provided a Sanskritic idiom for the religion of the group (Dumont 1980: 187–191).

2.13.1 Rituals

The Vajrayāna rituals are not Tantric in their entirety. The Vajrayāna form treats not only the tantric rites but also the Mahāyāna rituals like the erection of stupa, setting up of images stotras, and daily rituals. The Kriyā tantra deals with ceremonies at the building of images, erection of

17 Some Buddhist texts abhor certain social practices. Using the Mahānirvāṇa-sūtra (X 79-80), “they pointed out that woman was the embodiment of the Supreme Goddess, and boldly declared that if a person burnt her with her husband, she would be condemned to eternal hell.” The Buddhist Tantras also stress the sacred nature of all women, and the fourteenth of the fourteen fundamental transgressions (mulapattis) of the Abhidharmakosā-Tantra code is “to disparage women, who are the source of insights” (Wayman 1959: 36).

40
images of Buddhist divinities. The *Catuha-tantras* deals with the cults of daily practice. In the category of *Kriyā-tantra*, the *Adikarma-padamapada* was the most important. (Poussin 1898: 177-232). The *Kriyā-sangraha panjikā*, which is catalogued in the brahmanical manual of rituals category in the *Asian Society of Bengal* Manuscript section (Shastri 1927: 119 ff.) is actually a Buddhist text. It describes the ceremonies and religious rituals, which the *Adikarma Bodhisattvas* i.e. the adherents of Mahāyāna had to perform. The work consists of a *sūtra* text with a running commentary and contains precepts on the initiation ceremony for disciple (which can be a layman or monk). They include sprinkling of water, washing and prayers, rules for rinsing mouth, morning and evening devotion, offering of water to departed, alms giving, worshipping of Buddha at various times of the day. The Jayarampur plate of Śri Gopacandra (5th century AD) records that the grant of villages was made in order to make provisions for *bāṭi* (offering to all creatures), *cāra* (offerings to the ancestors), *gandha* (sandal paste), *pujpa* (flowers), for *hānavi* (oblations), *pinda pātra* (the pots for offering oblations) (Rajaguru 1962: 206-29).

The *Aṣṭamihra-viḍhāna* contains the rules for the ceremonies to be held on every eighth day of the first half of the month, dedicated to Manjusri (Mitra 1981). Sri Harsha in the *Naiṣadha-carita* speaks of the custom of making a circle of camphor mixed with musk in the shrine of the goddess.19 I-tsing refers to many customs which were practiced by the people in 7th century AD. These customs vary from bathing of deities to offerings to various deities.19

2.14: Vajrayāna as religion of Magical Protection

The ontological explanation on the identity of *nirvāṇa* and *sāṃsāra* is the philosophical basis of magic of Vajrayāna. The absolute is the only reality and pervades the entire universe. Each thought, action and word is in its true essence an activity of the Absolute. As its manifestation, this phenomenal world contains all the mysteries of reality and its hidden forces can be used for salvation. As a reflex of the Absolute, the universe everywhere reflect, manifest and reveal this Absolute Unity. If all things are fundamentally one pure spirit, all cosmic phenomena is linked to each other in a thread; each word, action and thought is somehow connected with the

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18 "Tāṇḍhāra-bhūta candramayim cakra; yanmanḍalam himabhūbam manānābhūbam; Tāṇḍhāra tamśi sākratena māte jīnaṃya" (Naiṣadha-carita Chapter 22: 136).

19 When the laity invites a monk to a festival at his home “priest sit according to their ranks... At the upper end of the row of seats, are the images of Arhats to whom offer being made first. At the lowest end of the row an offering of food is made to the holy mother, Hariti (P.37). " There is likewise in great monasteries in India, at the side of a pillar to the kitchen or before the porch a figure of a deity carved in wood, chair, with one foot hanging down towards the ground. Being always wiped with oil, its countenance is blackened, and the deity is called Mahakala... At mealtimes those who serve in the kitchen offer light and incense and arrange all kinds of prepared food before the deity. (P.38) In Ch. XXXI (p. 147) I-tsing records the Rules of decorum in cleansing the sacred object of worship. (Takahusu 1966).
Eternal Ground of the world. Magic is this unity. If the thought is the only reality, the thought condensed to *mantras* have powers over material thing. The *śīnya*, in turn, form of a god or goddess in whose power the magician can share by identification.

Even before this philosophical justification of magic Buddhism had developed a number of rituals which are now considered to be a Vajrayanist – recitation of spells, worship of images, performances of rites, etc. Theravāda Buddhism, in response to psycho-physical needs, had developed a number of non-soteriological goals within the domain of legitimate Buddhist concerns.

The Buddhists used magical formulas as shields to protect themselves from physical dangers from the very beginning. Buddha himself believed in supernatural powers and was ascribed to have classified four kinds of *iddhipadas* (supernatural power) – will, effort, thought, investigation. The early Mahayanists used the *sūtras* as protective spells and called them *dhāranis*. Fa-hien recited the *Surangama sūtra* as a *dhāraṇī* in his journey, while crossing the Gobi desert, Xuanzang recited the *brdāya sūtra* (*sūtra* of the Heart of Perfect Wisdom) by calling for the aid of Hwan-yin (a form of Avalokitesvara), who had taught this *sūtra* (Nakamura 1987: 314-318). The use of *dhāraṇī* (*dhārayati anaya iτi* – by which something is sustained) as protective spells was very popular in this period. Numerous *dhāraṇī* in clay seals are found from Ratnagiri. Vasubandhu in the *Bodhisattvabhumi* categorised four kinds of *dhāraṇī* – *dharma dhāraṇī*, *artha dhāraṇī*, *mantra dhāraṇī* and the *Bodhisattvakāśasāntilīlābhā dhāraṇī* (Winternitz 1933: 380-87). From 5th century AD onwards, independent *sūtras* of Vajrayāna were composed and they were credited with powers, which can lead to salvation. In many *stupas* of Orissa, one finds *dhāraṇī* being inserted inside a *stupa*. An inscription, now in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar (OSM) states that the construction of a single *caitya* (*stupa*) with a deposit of a *dhāraṇī* inside it confers on the donor the merit of one *lakṣha* of *Tathāgata caityas* (*EI* XXVI 1941: 171-174). The following table gives a list of some *dhāraṇī* and their functions.

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21 Some formulas expressing the four noble truths in Dravidian languages were used as a sort of *dhāraṇī* by the Sarvastivadins owing to the belief in *sakṛṣṭā*, which was supposed to be effective. (Bernard 1967: 162-63).
Table 2.4. Various Dhāraṇīs and their Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dhāraṇīs</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The sūtra on the dhāraṇīs for</td>
<td>1. For the protection of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protecting children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. (i) Mahāpratisara dhāraṇī</td>
<td>2. Invoked for longevity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahā-pratyangira- dhāraṇī</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Vasundhara dhāraṇī</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mahā Pratyangira-dhāraṇi</td>
<td>3. Invoked to ward off evil and endow with all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Maniratna sūtra dhāraṇi</td>
<td>powers to do good to the devotees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pañcarakṣā (five Protective</td>
<td>4. Recited to dispel diseases and disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spell) dhāraṇī</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Mahāpratisara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Mahāsāhasa Pramardini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Mahāmayuri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Mahā –sitāvati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Maharakṣa-mantrānusarini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Uṣṇisāvijñāya dhāraṇī</td>
<td>5. For protection against sin. Disease and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Vajravidāranāma-dhāraṇī</td>
<td>other evils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pīllachi Parnasavariṇāma-dhāraṇī</td>
<td>6. Efficacious in curing diseases and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prolonging life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. To ensure robust health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. to ward off disease.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R. L. Mitra in his book *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature* cites many of the *bratas* and *avādānas*, which are popular among the Newari Buddhists. These *bratas* and *Avādānas* are important for they allude to the number of rituals and fasts practised by the lay Buddhists. In one of his writings on why Buddhism died out in India where as Jainism continued to exist in few pockets, Jaini concludes that one of the most crucial factors for the decline of Buddhism in India was the relative absence of specially Buddhist observances for the laity (Jaini 1980). The *Anguttara Nikāya* ridiculed Jaina laity for becoming a monk for a day (*Anguttara Nikāya* I: 206). Fasting on holy days of *Eight Precepts* (*Aṣṭamābrata*) was one of the ancient *bratas* for the laity (Gellner 1996: 220). Amoghapasa Lokesvara is worshipped during *Aṣṭamābrata*. Many Sanskrit manuscripts, copied in the *Nepal Samvat*, describe these *bratas* and *Avādānas*. But most of them belong to 18th century. Some of these rituals are associated with the worship of stupas. The *Upasadha Avādāna*
deals with *upasatha* ceremony during *Aṣṭami vrata*, which was celebrated on the eighth of waning moon. A hut was erected with five kinds of sacred wood in which Lokesvara was worshipped. The performer observes the purification of the eight members of the body before after it for week (Mitra 1981: 265). The *Suchandredvadāna* (NS 245) was dedicated to Vasudhara, the Buddhist counterpart of Laksmi. The rite should be undertaken on the 3rd of the waning moon in the month of *bhadra*. The rite consists of bathing in a river, putting on clean clothes filling a pitcher with pure water over which the mantra of Vasudhara has been repeated. Placing the pitcher on *kusa* grass spread on a pure spot, and the washing in the pot goddess Vasudhara. The *Chaitya puñgana* (Nepal Samvat 905 i.e. 1894) is a rite of the adoration of caityas and rituals and merits there of. The caitya is to be made of pure clay mixed with the five products of the cow, the five nectars (sic), the five jewels and five aromatics. The mixture is then to be kneaded seven times while repeating *Sāmantabhadra* mantra (Mitra 1981: 281-282). I-tsing refers to popularity of caityas thus; the priest and laymen in India make caityas or images with earth or impress the Buddha’s image on silk or paper. Sometimes they build stupas of the Buddhas by making a pile and surrounding it with bricks. The *Kathināwadāna* describes on the merit of chastity, abstinence, etc. during the period of Buddhist lent *kathina*. This period extends to thirty days from the first of the new moon in the month of *Aśvin*. Gift to monks and recitals of the stories in praise of charity are the principal observances (ibid. 265). The *Tarābhottara śata-nāma stotra* is a collection of 108 epithets strung together in the form of a hymn in praise of a goddess Ekajata Arya Tara. The hymn is alleged to have been imported by Avalokitesvara to Vajrapani and is intended to be worn as amulet to avert evils proceeding from thieves, war, fire, lions, waters, elephants, tigers (ibid. 259-260).

There are other protective mantras in Buddhism as well. The classic mantra of Avalokitesvara Padmapani ‘*Om Manipadma Huḥ*’ is one of the most important mantras of Avalokitesvara and is widely popular in Tibet. The surest protection from physical danger is the love and graciousness of Tara. In sculpture as in the *Aṣṭamahābhaya* Tārā image of Ratnagiri, Tara is depicted as guarding her devotees from the eight great perils. Similarly Avalokitesvara emerges as eight different deities to free from eight fears as acolytes of *Aṣṭabhyya-trīṣa-Ekūdasaṭunska* Avalokitesvara (Lokes Chandra: 1987: 632-638). The short mantra of Tara ‘*Om Tāre Tuttare Tūrya svāhā*’, when recited properly, is believed to confer many boons and is highly efficacious. The power of these mantras is derived from their “consecration by the Buddha, which exerts upon them a deep and inconceivable influence.” (Mahāvairocana Sūtra: Ch IV). Other stotras are elaborated in Chapter 4.
2.15 The Three Yānas: A Total System

However, these experimentations to broaden the social base of Buddhism operated within Buddhist schema, and Buddhists viewed different Yānas as part of a single Buddhist system. The Buddhists themselves maintained a conceptual separation between soteriology and this-worldly religion. Theravāda Buddhism or Mahāyānism theoretically presuppose that all can attain salvation but they do not envisage — in spite of the changes in emphasis in Mahāyānism — that all could do so in one's own life. For example, Snellgrove (Snellgrove 1987:90) quotes a Mahāyāna text which prescribes generosity (i.e. almsgiving) for the lowly, the practice of morality for the middling and tranquillity for the advanced. Thus, spiritual hierarchy is built into Buddhism and was so even in the time of Buddha himself (Gombrich 1988: 73-74). The three Yānas of Buddhism was not merely a chronological development in the evolution of Buddhism as a religion. They also provided different mārgas (paths) and built up / different cognitive structure and an affective belief patterns to cater to the needs of different sections of the society. The three Yānas are like three mārgas of salvation. They attempt to incorporate different philosophical traditions and practices within a Buddhist system, thereby, enriching the religion and enlarging the boundary. The three Yānas can be conceptualised as a totality, important according to the relative affiliation of the seeker. The three vehicles document not merely different practices and philosophical traditions, they also account for an evolving Buddhism through centuries of changes and adaptation. At the epistemological level, the three Yānas were seen as constituting a whole. The Buddhist, while conscious of the differences, also thought of the unity of three Yānas. The Tattvaratnavali represents the interrelationship between different vehicles as part of one single Buddhist system thus:

*Table 2.5: Ekāyāna Conception in the Advayavajrasaṅgraha*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arhatayāna (Arahathood)</th>
<th>Pratyeka Buddha-yāna (Enlightenment for oneself)</th>
<th>Sravakayāna (Disciple's way)</th>
<th>Mahāyāna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paramitayāna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mantrayāna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hinayāna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ekayāna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vajrayāna Suhajyāna Kālacakra-yāna
(Source: Tattvaratnāvalī in Advayavajraasaṅgraha (Shastri 1927).
Vajrayāna Buddhists were considered to be a spiritual advancement upon the earlier two. Thus a sort of hierarchy was attempted. The Hevajra Tantra refers to this hierarchy thus: “First the Eight Precepts should be given, then Ten. Then he should teach the Vaihāya, then the Saṃāntrika. After that he should teach the Yogācāra, then the Mādhyamika. After he knows all the levels of the Way of the Mantras, then he should begin on Hevajra. The pupil who lays hold with zeal will succeed, there is no doubt.” (Snellgrove 1959 a II: 90). Same sort of interrelationship between various yānas existed at the iconographic level. One problem encountered in identifying Vairocana of Udayagiri Mahāstūpa is his close resemblance with Dharmasāṅkha-samādhi Manjusri, with which he is identified in various texts. (See Chapter 3). In Tantric Buddhism some sort of unification had taken place between the celestial Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as in case of Vairocana and Manjusri (Van kooij 1977: 77). As noted in Chapter 1, when I-tsing visited India, he did not find much difference between Theravāda and Mahāyāna form of Buddhism.

Some of the religious practices of Vajrayāna were significantly different from the earlier one, but it operated within the Buddhism schema, employing distinct Buddhist terminology. The Vajrayāna texts tried to build an elaborate epistemological system to explain, accommodate and adapt certain baseline beliefs and practices. As ethnographic works on Newar or Tibetan Buddhism show, the three Yānas still fail to encapsulate the entire spectrum of Buddhist practices and beliefs. The cult of amulets, terracotta plaques, inscribed dhāranīs with their mystical powers along with the development of numerous gods and goddesses, elaborate rituals, etc. were some of the steps taken by Vajrayāna Buddhism to make the religion more instrumental. The characterisation of Vajrayāna Buddhism as corrupt stems from its literature and esoteric practices but as an exoteric religion, Vajrayāna was extremely popular and widespread in Orissa between 7th to 12th centuries AD. Numerous Buddhist sites came up during the period. Their spatial distribution and archaeological remains clearly indicate the popularity of this religion. So also the proliferation of Buddhist deities, who are ultimately linked to Adi Buddha, the Ultimate, identified with the ‘void’ of the Mādhyamikākārika. The votive stupas found in plenty at Ratnagiri and other mahābhāras of Orissa reveal cross-regional pilgrim flow and the popularity of different Buddhist centres. Extensive fieldwork reveals a variety of Buddhist gods and goddesses not classified and documented earlier. In short, the Buddhist presence in Orissa clearly indicates the practical and social dimension of Vajrayāna Buddhism. And Vajrayāna Buddhism was not confined to Orissa, Bengal or Bihar will be clear as we document the presence of it in other parts.
Amaravati, Kanheri, Sanci continued well into this period. The epigraphic records of the period (in Bihar) reveal interregional and long distance pilgrims coming to Buddhist centres.

These developments—use of spell, recitation, praise for physical protection and boons, growth of a number of deities looking after the everyday needs of the individual, power of Buddhist sacra—all these had the potentiality of making it popular and extensive. This was so is known from the distribution of sites across coastal Orissa, from their size as well as the temporal continuity. The architecture of votive stupas as found from Ratnagiri reveals that pilgrims from Krishna valley were thronging to Ratnagiri (Mitra 1981: 110). Similarly the inscriptions, both on the bronzes and sculptures at Kukutpadan monastery record the pious donations of devotees who had come to these sacred sites from places like Sakala (Sialkot), Kanci, Pandya and the island of Bali (Banerjee-sastri 1940: 236 – 251, 299–308). We will discuss these developments in the next chapter by studying from archaeological perspectives. The expansion of Buddhism in this period (7th century AD onwards) took place at a time when brahmanical religions also spread in Orissa. However, historians focus only on the brahmanical religions and explain the religious developments from mono-religious perspective, whereas historical evidence points out a poly-religious landscape in Orissa between 7th–12th centuries AD. The next chapter documents, not only the spread of Buddhism as a social religion (discussed in this chapter) but also makes an attempt to document the growth in brahmanical and other religions in Orissa between 5th to 12th centuries AD.