

**SAHAJIYĀ CULT
OF BENGAL
AND
PANCHĀ SAKHĀ
CULT OF ORISSA**

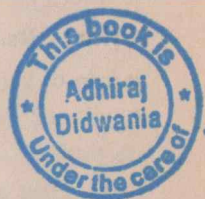


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SAHAJIYĀ CULT OF BENGAL
and
PANCHAKSAKHA CULT
OF ORISSA

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PREFACE

The present work is written with a view to delineate the religious movement, growth and development of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult along with the comprehensive presentation of its faith, ideas and ideals and practices. A modest attempt has been made in the present work to give, for the first time, a direct account of the much neglected religious system of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. As the presentation of religious ideas involves the necessity of interpretation, so the best effort has been made for giving a direct survey of all its important works in the spheres of Rasa-śāstra, theology and philosophy, ritualism and literature. Innumerable valuable manuscripts are available on the doctrines and practices of the Sahajiyā Cult. These texts possess much intrinsic merit. The lyrics of the Sahajiyās reality reached a high pitch of poetry and philosophy, and these songs assigned a sublime value to human love.

I have also made an attempt in the present work to give a comparative valuation of the different faiths of the Sahajiyān Buddhists, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. It should be clearly understood, therefore, that the subject has been approached, not from the standpoint of an adherent of the faith, but with the spirit of sympathetic understanding and in the spirit of historical and critical research which aims at truthfinding.

Before the publication of the present work, another book of mine written in Bengali entitled "Sahajiyā O Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Dharma" has been published. The present work should not be treated as the translation of my previous Bengali book. Though the subject-matter dealt with in both the books, is of the same nature, yet there is wide difference between the two books. The present work is written completely from

a new angle of view and more elaborately from the standpoint of the origin and development of the new religious movement of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult. This is why the present work may claim to be the first of its kind, as no serious attempt has so far been made to throw light on the growth and development of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā culture of Bengal.

I record my deep sense of gratitude to my grand-father-in-law Dr. Radhagovinda Basāk M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., Vidyāvācaspati for kindling in me the true spirit of research. He remains a true patron of my learning and research work.

In my elder brother Sri Ganesh Chandra Das, I have found a never-failing source of inspiration in undertaking the research work.

I also express my gratitude to Śrī Vikramāditya Mahāpātra, Sri Harekrishna Meher, Sri Bijoy Kumar Satapathy and Sri Bharat Chandra Nāth for thier valuable instructions and suggestions on "Pañca Sakhā Cult". They were all the Post Graduate Students of the Benaras Hindu University coming from the different parts of Orissa. I acknowledge my debt to them, particularly to Sri Vikramāditya Mahāpātra who has substantially helped me in the study of the doctrines of the Pañca Sakhā Cult. I deem it a priviledge to have their names associated with my book.

I offer my thanks to Shri Amarnath Chatterjee for preparing the Index.

Paritosh Das

Dedicated with great reverence to my Śikṣā Guru

Mahāmahopādhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj

M.A., D.Litt., Padma-Bibhūṣaṇa

Author

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SAHAJIYĀ CULT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND : ORIGIN OF SAHAJIYĀ CULT

The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā is an obscure religious cult of Bengal and is little known to the literate people of the modern age. It is because the educated community scarcely keeps contact with that class of people who live in the lower strata of the society. The religion of the Sahajiyās was prevalent and still continues among the class of people who are looked down upon and neglected by the upper and educated classes of the society. As a result, the philosophy, culture and mode of practice (Sādhan-padhati) of this religion are hitherto unknown to the literate class of the society. On account of negligence and want of support from the public, the Sahajiyā culture is on the verge of extinction.

The cult of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās once exerted a great influence on the religious life of the general people of Bengal and Orissa. But no serious attempt has so far been made to present a fairly systematic account of this religious sect and to give a definite shape to its philosophy. As a result, it does not find a proper place in Indian philosophy, though this religious culture was once held in high esteem as embodying the secret wisdom of the Sahajiyā-Sādhakas. It has been degraded to one of the obscure religious Cults of Bengal.

The reason why no serious attempt was made, is said to have been that it was deemed improper to drag down for rational examination the truths inaccessible to the experience of the common people. So it was confined only to a particular community who had deep faith and belief in this religion.

This is why it did not attract the attention of the modern elite persons. As a result there has not been any attempt to systematise the ideas and truths contained in the numerous manuscripts written by various Sādhakas of this cult in different times. Of course, Dr. Manindra Mohan Basu of the present age made the first attempt to write a book on Sahajiyā cult entitled "Post Chaitanya Sahajiyā Cult". In his work the author has tried to throw light on this religion. He has supplied us with valuable information regarding the literature of the Sahajiyā Cult and some of the doctrines and practices preached therein. Though an erudite scholar he has failed to depict the true aspects of this particular religion. However, credit should go to him for his first attempt to reveal this obscure religion to the literate society. Next attempt has been made by Dr. S. Dasgupta in his work "Obscure Religious Cults". In Chapter V of his book he has dealt with the fundamental tenets of the Sahajiyās and its relation with the Tāntricism of the Hindus and the Bouddhas. He has also provided us with the information of the process of evolution of devotional love from the ideology and methodology of Tāntric and Yogic sects. But his analysis on the process of love-sādhana of the Sahajiyās does not seem to me true to the spirit of this religion. No doubt his work on the Sahajiyā Cult is most praiseworthy.

The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult is the outcome of the amalgamation of two main religious cultures of Bengal. These two religions are : (1) Bouddha Sahaja-Jāna and (2) Gouḍiya Vaiṣṇavism. I have first collected the materials furnished by the Sahajiyā Sādhakas in their innumerable manuscripts. These manuscripts were written by them with a view to reveal the esoteric culture of their religion to their disciples in order to keep the continuity of their religious secrets amongst their followers. The Sahajiyās have their own theory as to the manner in which Supreme Knowledge descends on earth-conscious mind. The principle that they hold, was so long kept secretly guarded

within their own religious community. Many of the manuscripts have been lost, a few of them have been collected and are kept in the libraries of Calcutta University, Vishva-Bharati, Sahitya-parisad, Asiatic Society etc. I have collected the data, assessed their meaning and inner significance and have expressed them in this book as convincingly as possible. Before going to discuss their religious creeds and doctrines in detail, let me first trace out the sources of its origin. For this purpose I propose to make here a brief study of Buddhism. Because the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult is the last phase of the gradual transformations of Buddhism.

Buddhism and its gradual transformation

Far away in Northern India stood the old capital of Kapilavastu. And there, on a day more than twenty-five centuries ago, the young prince Gautama was born. The astrologers prophesied that the child would either be the greatest monarch on earth, or, stung by the woes of men would abandon the world and become a great religious teacher. King Suddhodhana, the father of Gautama, was determined to save his son from the fate of a religious teacher. But none can turn back the page of destiny. And so it happened. One day Gautama ordered his chariot and bade the driver, Chhandaka, take him through the city that lay beyond the walls of the palace. There he met three woes of men—weariness, disease and death. At these sights Gautama was silent, overwhelmed with horror and with pity. His heart became, as it were, a great throbbing ocean of compassion for mankind. Thus the three woes of men stung him as the astrologers had foretold at his birth. He left the house to find out the way of salvation which should be open to all the world.

For seven long years in the forest Gautama pursued his search. Then at last, meditating in the night, beneath a Bo-tree, he discovered the Great Secret and found all knowledge.

In that moment of supreme illumination, he learnt that the thirst for life was the cause of all wretchedness. By ridding themselves of desire men could attain Nirvāna.

Aśvaghōṣa in his "Buddha-Carita" has said that Buddha after his great renunciation went to two wellknown scholars of the time for instructions, one Arāḍa Kālāma and the other Uddaka. Both of them taught him the Sāṃkhya system of Kapila. They taught him of the advance of the human soul from the lowest sentient beings through Kāmadhātu, and Rūpadhātu to Arūpa-dhātu, i.e., through the world of desires and world of forms to the world of no form, i. e., of light. Arāḍa Kālāma further taught him that in the formless heaven there are two stages : 'Ākāśāntiyatana' i.e., the formless human soul as infinite as the sky, and 'Akīñcanyāntiyatana' or the formless human soul as infinite as consciousness. Uddaka taught him that there was another and a higher stage where the formless human soul is as infinite as 'Naiva-saṃjñā na-saṃjñānantayatana' i. e., no holder of a name and no name in infinity. At the final stage the human soul so advancing becomes 'Kevalī' or absolute, without any relations, i. e., beyond the world of relativity.

Buddha was not satisfied. He said : if the human soul exists, it must exist in relation to something, it cannot be absolute, and so he left his Gurus. He found that the whole of the Sāṃkhya is based on Satkārya-vāda, or the theory that the effects exist in a nascent form in the cause, i. e., the cause and effect are both permanent and abiding. So Buddha discarded this theory of permanent effects and established what is known as Kṣaṇika-vāda, i. e., all things exist only for a moment and they are not permanent. The soul also was momentary and so the highest position is that there is no saṃjñā and no Saṃjñī—no name and nothing to which a name may be attached. Thus Buddha exclaimed—"Sarvaṃ Kṣaṇikaṃ Kṣaṇikamiti/Sarvaṃ Duḥkham Duḥkhamiti/Sarvaṃ Svalakṣaṇam Svalakṣaṇamiti/Sarvaṃ Śūnyam Śūnyamiti." This is in fact

the nucleus of all schools of Buddhism. So Buddhism had its origin from the Sāṅkhya which was the only system of philosophy in India before Buddha. Sāṅkhya gave birth to primitive Buddhism. They looked so wonderfully different, but the fundamental difference is only in one idea : permanence or momentariness.

Buddha declared : there is no such thing as Ātmā. When a man dies, the elements return to their proper places and the vitality is gone. So Buddha taught that man is simply an aggregate of five Skandhas or bunches : (1) Rūpa (matter), (2) Vedanā (feeling), (3) Saṃjñā (conception), (4) Saṃskāra (activity) and (5) Vijñāna (consciousness). They come together by force of their previous 'Karma' and form a human being. At death the five separate and go to their own way as directed by their 'Karma'. So there is no Ātmā or soul. The five Skandhas enjoy or suffer according to their 'Karma'. This is directly opposed to Brahmanical ideas. As I have said before, Buddha's difference with his Sāṅkhya teachers turned mainly on the point of Ātmā. They said : it exists, it thinks, it enjoys ; Prakṛti is simply a dancing girl who dances according to her own sweet will. As soon as Ātmā, the seer of the dance, becomes conscious of itself, there is an end of the connection between the Puruṣa or the human soul and the Prakṛti, the internal world, and the Puruṣa becomes Absolute. Buddha says that this cannot be ; the Puruṣa is still subject to the condition of birth as it has the character of seed. The seed may remain dormant for want of requisite conditions but when these conditions are favourable it will again germinate, and so he said that the soul or Puruṣa is nothing but the aggregate of five Skandhas. All that was permanent in Sāṅkhya, Buddha made momentary.

The first council of Buddhists which met at Rajagṛha immediately after the Mahānirvāna of Buddha (cir, 487 B.C.) collected the teachings of the Master which formed the nucleus of the primitive Buddhism i. e., Hinayāna.

In the third century B. C. King Aśoka was the great figure in India. In the seventeenth year of Aśoka's reign the Buddhist monks assembled in the second council at Pātaliputra, prepared a book entitled the 'Kathā-vastu', in which they discussed the points of controversy with different sects of Buddhism. But in that book there is no mention of Mahā-yāna. This is the primitive 'Kathā' or the 'mode of controversy'.

Then comes the great Emperor Kanīṣka. His conversion to Buddhism is a great event in the first century A. D. He held a third council of Buddhist monks at Taxila or Jalandhar. A small body called Mahā-yānist were present in that council. They did not however succeed in making much impression ; but Aśva-ghoṣa some time after the council took up their cause and wrote many works on their system. One of his works is the 'Mahāyāna-Śraddhotpāda-Sūtra' and the other work is 'Sutrālaṅkāra'. The first one has not been found either in Sanskrit or in translation. The Śraddhotpāda-sūtra though not found in Sanskrit has been found in Chinese translation and has been translated into English. It gives within a small compass all the points in which the Mahāyāna excelled its predecessors. All the primitive Buddhists in Aśoka's time were indiscriminately relegated to a lower position and called Hinayāna. Aśva-ghoṣa wrote four other small works in Buddhist Sūtra form : (1) on Anātma-vāda ; (2) a sūtra on ten Akuśala Karma ; (3) on the relation between the Guru and Śiṣya and (4) on saḍgati or the 'six stages of existence' in the world of desire. All these works have their Chinese translations.

Aśva-ghoṣa distinctly calls his works as Mahā-yāna. Mahā-yāna with him is not a sect, not a school of thought, but a theory which later on crystallized into a school and a sect. All the great Mahāyāna ideas are to be found in his works, but not in the developed form which was given to it by his successor Nāgārjuna. Aśvaghōṣa also gives some idea of the three Kāyas : Dharma-kāya, Sambhoga-kāya and Nirmāṇa-kāya.

Dharma-kāya is the totality of the Universe to which nothing can be added and nothing can be subtracted, which is full of Prajñā, or 'all comprehending knowledge' and Karuṇā 'all comprehending love'. Then comes Sambhoga-kāya in which aspect the Dharma-kāya is said to enjoy the bliss of the Universe. This is a mysterious form which reveals itself only to the enlightened Bodhi-sattvas. The third aspect is Nirmāṇa-kāya or 'the body of transformation'. Sākyasiṃha is a Nirmāṇa-kāya emanating from the Universal Dharma-kāya. The idea of Tri-kāya was not in the 'Mohā-vastu'. Of the Tri-kāyas, the Dharma-kāya is absolute, others are mere emanations from it and are ultimately absorbed in it.

The difference between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna may be described here. Mahāyāna is active, Hīnayāna is passive. Mahāyāna takes an extended view of the Universe whereas the Hīnayāna is extremely narrow-minded. The Mahāyāna acts according to the spirit of Buddha's teaching, while the Hīnayāna adheres to the letters of his sermons. The Nirvāṇa of the Mahāyāna is complete absorption in the Dharma-kāya. It is called Nirvāṇa without an abode, while that of the Hīnayāna is an escape from birth, death and old age. It is simply 'Śānta' or 'Kaiballya' of Sāṃkhya. A comparison of these two sects, of their aims and objects is fully given in the first chapter of 'Mahāyāna sūtrālaṅkāra' of Asaṅga which has been edited with a translation in French by Prof. Sylvain Levi. Asaṅga's work, the editor says, is based on the 'Sūtrālaṅkāra' of Aśva-ghoṣa. After Aśva-ghoṣa came Bodhi-sattva Nāgārjuna, the great propagator of Mahāyāna. Nāgārjuna's 'Mādhyamakakārikā' is the great controversial work which made Nāgārjuna's name famous. The work examines from the point of view of the idealistic philosophy. It says that there are two aspects of truth, Paramārtha Satya and Samvṛta Satya, and the Mahāyāna school shows by gradual steps that the Samvṛta Satya merges into Paramārtha Satya. In Vedantic language this would be the merging of the Vyavahārika Satya into the

Supreme Brahma. The best means of studying the nature of these two truths is to be found in the ninth chapter of the 'Bodhicaryāvatāra by Śānti Deva. This chapter is called Prajñā-pāramitā or Knowledge par excellence. But what is this Prajñā? Examine it under the four heads; it is a thing which has neither existence, nor non-existence, nor a combination, nor a negation of the two. And this is what is called Sūnya. Some people think that Sūnya is negation of existence, but no, it is the Absolute which transcends human faculties and embraces the whole Universe. It is neither created nor can it be destroyed, it is the totality of our knowledge, this is Prajñā, it is Śūnyatā.

The four philosophical Schools

Buddhist philosophy has four different schools: (1) Vaibhāṣika, (2) Sautrāntika, (3) Yogācāras and (4) Mādhyamika. From the record of the Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hian, we come to know that while he stayed in India during the beginning of the fifth century A. D., these four philosophical schools had already reached their full development. The former two belonged to the Hinayāna Buddhism; the latter two supported the Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Vaibhāṣikas believed in the existence of both the external and internal worlds, though as a Buddhist school both the worlds are Kṣaṇika or momentary and Śūnya. The Vaibhāṣikas regarded Sākyamuni as a common human being who after attaining Bodhi and final Nirvāṇa by his death, passed into Śūnya or nothingness. The Sautrāntikas did not believe in the external world but thought that it is simply a projection of the internal world which we wrongly think to be external. The Sautrāntikas ascribed to Lord Buddha a Dharmakāya and a Sombhogakāya.

The Yogācāras and the Mādhyamikas, the supporters of Mahāyānism, were purely idealists. The Yogācāras denied even the existence of the internal world. This school thinks there is

a chain of ideas. The ideas may be momentary but the chain is not. This chain is called the Ālaya-Vijñāna and to the idealist this serves all the purposes of an ego or Ātmā. As the Yogācāras only believed in Vijñāna or consciousness, they were therefore designated as Vijñānavādins.

Last of all came the Mādhyamikas who did not believe even in the Ālaya-Vijñāna. They were Śūnya-Vādins, pure and simple. But Śūnya, as I have already said, is neither void nor a negation of existence, but the Absolute One. They called it Śūnya, because the human language has no word to express the idea of the Absolute which is beyond the comprehension of man and language concerns itself with those things which man can and does comprehend.

The Mādhyamikas had used the terms Prajñā and Upāya. These Prajñā and Upāya may be compared with Parama-Puruṣa and Paramā-Prakṛiti of Tantra. The whole process of Sādhana of the Mādhyamikas were concentrated on uniting Prajñā and Upāya, by means of which Buddhist Sādhakas might attain the perfect enlightenment.

These four philosophical schools have four other names : (1) Sarvāsti-vāda, those who believed both in the external and internal world ; (2) Bāhyārtha-bhanga, those who did not believe in the external world ; (3) Vijñāna-vāda, those who believed in consciousness alone ; and (4) Śūnyavāda, those who believed in nothing beyond Śūnya, the Absolute.

The Buddhists charged Śankarāchāryya with stealing the idea, Śūnya, from them and giving it a new name, Brahman. Following them the Brahmins of that period began to criticise Śankarāchāryya and designated him as a crypto Buddhist.

Nāgārjuna was the reputed founder and expounder of the Mādhyamika philosophy. He belonged to the second century A. D. His disciple, Āryadeva was the author of the 'Chaturśā-taka', which is the most authoritative work on the Mādhyamika system. The same period also saw the birth of the Yogācāra school founded by Maitreya-nāth in the third century A. D.

Maitreyanāth wrote a very short but a very pregnant work in eight short chapters entitled, 'Abhisamayāṅkārakārikā' and the 'Prajñāpāramitā'. This was the Prajñā-pāramitā which the Yogācāras took up as their standard work, and Asanga and Vasubandhu derived their inspiration from this historical Maitreyanāth. During the fourth century A. D. Asanga and his younger brother Vasubandhu expounded the philosophy of Yogācāra school and placed it on a sound footing. Asanga converted his Hinayanist younger brother Vasubandhu who later on systematised the philosophical views of the Yogācāra school and designated as Vijñaptimātra (mere ideation); attributing the existence of all the outer world to inner ideation—in short, holding that nothing but ideation exists. Thus he established Vijñānavāda in Yogācāra philosophy. In India Yogācāra idealism found place after the death of Vasubandhu. Dignāga was the first to follow this line. He was the disciple of Vasubandhu and was probably living about the beginning of the fifth century A. D.

Ācārya Dharmapāla, who came from Kāñchideśa, was a disciple of Dignāga. He was invited to the University of Nālandā near Rājgṛha where he adorned the seat of the chief abbot for a pretty long time. His commentary on the Vijñaptimātratā Siddhi is a monumental work on the Vijñānavāda.

Ācārya Dharmapāla had two very famous pupils : Chandrakīrti and Śīlabhadra. Chandrakīrti became a great Mādhyamika philosopher. According to Lāmā Tārānath, Chandrakīrti was born at Samanta in South India. He was chosen to be the high priest of the Nālandā University where he composed his great work, the 'Mādhyamikāvātāra' which reveals his profound philosophical insight. But by far the greatest contribution of Chandrakīrti was his commentary on the Chaturśataka of Āryadev, which as a masterpiece of lucid discussions on the subtle doctrines of Mādhyamika Śūnyavāda, had greatly influenced the Buddhist thoughts in China, Japan and Korea.

The other great disciple of Ācārya Dharmapāla was the famous Yogācāra philosopher Śīlabhadra who was a member of Brahmanical royal family of Samataṭa in Bengal during the period of the pre-Pāla age. By that time the University of Nālandā was recognised as the centre of transmission of Yogācāra philosophy. In A. D. 637 the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Nālandā where he found Śīlabhadra who was then 106 years old, as the head of the University. Hiuen Tsang himself studied there the Yogācāra philosophy under the guidance of Śīlabhadra. Buddhahadra, the nephew and disciple of Śīlabhadra, was also a great scholar in Yogācāra philosophy.

A new doctrine was afterwards introduced into the conception of Yogācāra. This new introduction was known as the Mahāsukhavāda. The form of Buddhism which was based on this Mahāsukhavāda, was known as Vajrayāna. In Vajrayāna Nirvāṇa had three elements : 'Śūnya', 'Vijñāna' (Bodhicitta) and 'Mahāsukha'. This triple combination of Śūnya was termed by them as Vajra : because, as they said, it is firm and sound, unchangeable, unpierceable, impenetrable, incombustible and indestructible. They formulated that Śūnya is a goddess in whose eternal embrace the Bodhicitta (Vijñāna) is locked and there it remains in eternal bliss and happiness.

From this brief survey we come to know that Buddha rebelled against Hinduism and established a new religion called Bouddha Dharma though the tenets and doctrines of his religion did not differ much from those of Hinduism. This is why Swami Vevekananda called him 'a rebel child of Hinduism'. However, it may be remarked that Buddhadev was a dynamic personality. He was universal love, kindness and perfect wisdom personified. He was a great rationalist in philosophical thoughts and conceptions, a great master of moral force, a great renouncer and a supreme physician for healing human diseases of passions and torments. He found that the people suffer all kinds of miseries and privations. They are subject to birth,

decay, disease, decrepitude, death and rebirth in consequence of the deeds, good or bad, done by them in this life or in the previous ones. He also showed the path how people can, by their own efforts in the form of acquiring Jñāna (Knowledge), doing Sat-karma (pious work) and practising Yoga (the practice of contemplation and meditation) and Bhakti (devotion), hope for release from worldly bondage. So we see that Bouddhadharma as preached by Buddhadev, is a curious mixture of Karma-yoga-jñāna-bhakti. These doctrines of Buddhism were developed by the different schools of Mahāyāna in later period. I shall try to show how the doctrines of karma-yoga-jñāna-bhakti of Buddhism were transmitted to the Sahajiyās of Bengal when Buddhism became extinct from Bengal.

We know that after the Mahānirvāṇa of Buddhadev his disciples and followers were divided gradually into two distinct different schools: one was Hīnayāna and the other was Mahāyāna. The aim of the Hīnayānists was the salvation (Nirvāṇa) of individual self. The nature of Nirvāṇa of the Hīnayānists was like that of 'Kaivalya' of the Sāṃkhya yogis.

The Hīnayāna Buddhism cared for the escape of its votaries from the miseries of birth and death. It thought of nothing else, it was intensely selfish and narrow-minded. It cared for its own self and not for others. Buddha himself could and did save lots of people but his Hīnayāna disciples could not save anybody but themselves.

The Mahāyānists emphasise universal salvation. The philosophy propounded by Mahāyānists like Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dinnāga and Dharmapāla, and the creed preached by them, appealed to the mind of the ordinary people more than the philosophy of the Hīnayānists. According to them Nirvāṇa is not the tranquillization of human aspirations, but the fulfilment of human life, one can live in the whirlpool of life and death and yet be above it, as the Bodhisattvas do. The Mahāvastu which is a pre-eminently

religious treatise at the initial stage of Mahāyāna Buddhism, has referred ten 'Bhūmies'. These Bhūmies are the various stages of development of the qualities of a Bodhisattva towards which he progressively advances. He gradually ascends from one to the next, upto the last or the tenth stage. The 'Mahāvastu Avadāna' gives a very detailed description of these which cannot be recounted here. The Bodhisattvas, in final stage, conceive the idea of attainment of perfect enlightenment (Vodhi) by accumulation of merits. According to the Hinayānistic view 'Arhat' is the perfect state of enlightenment, but according to the Mahāyānistic view an Arhat is thought to be only partially enlightened. The purpose of the Mahāyāna is that one should by passing through the ten Bhūmies of Bodhisattva, attain Buddhahood i. e., the final state of 'Parinirvāṇa' (highest nirvāṇa) which is spaceless and timeless, birthless and deathless, changeless and waveless. When this ideal Parinirvāṇa is realised, it will be nothing but the infinite light (Amitābha) and infinite life (Amitāyus). Amitābha and Amitāyus (infinite light and life) is Buddha idealised from the historical Buddha (Shākya-muni), whose is the 'Land of Bliss' (Sukhāvati). Amitābha's attainment of Buddhahood of Infinite Light and life, and his establishment of the Land of Bliss are all fully described in the Sukhāvati Vyūha text.¹

The Mahāyānists also hold this view that every Buddha of perfect enlightenment possesses 'Threefold Body' (Trikāya) i. e., Dharma-kāya (cosmical body), Sambhoga-kāya (enjoyment-body) and Nirmāṇ-kāya (transformation-body). Thus a Buddha is viewed as the ideal enlightenment itself, enjoyer of it being thus enlightened and giver of it to others as an enlightener. The enjoyment-body is obtained by the Buddha as a reward for long effort, while the transformation-body is freely assumed by him in order to meet the needs of others and the world.

1. The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy—Junjiro Takakusu

Buddha flourished and preached in the sixth century B. C. In the fourth century B. C. there was the split and the ideas of the splitters are embodied in the Mahāvastu. The Mahāvastu, therefore, must have been written in that century or the next.

Pāla dynasty of Bengal

The reign of the Pāla dynasty whose sway over Gauḍa and the adjacent regions, lasted from the eighth century A. D. to twelfth century A. D. The kings of the Pāla dynasty were the staunch advocates of Buddhism. During the time of the Pālas the Tāntrik Buddhism in Bengal flourished to its fullest extent. This period of the development of Tāntrik culture among the Buddhists is represented by a set of most powerful writers and popular Gurus, such as Dīpankar Srijñānā, Advayavajra, Avadhūtīpā, his disciple Lalitavajra, Tailopā of Cātigāon (Chittagong), Ratnākaraśānti, Prajñākaramati and Nāropā—the disciple of Tailopā. All of them were contemporaries of King Mahipāla I who flourished between A. D. 980 and 1030.

Chen Chub, the King of Tibet, despatched a mission under Nag-Tso to India in order to bring the Bengalee Paṇḍit Dipankara Srijñāna, the head-abbot of the Vikramaśīlā Vihāra which was then the famous centre of Buddhist learning. Dipankara Srijñāna was equally famous for his learning in the Tantras and in Mahāyāna philosophy. He arrived in Tibet in the second half of the eleventh century A. D. and undertook a reformation of Tibetan Buddhism. He was installed at the head of the ecclesiastical organisation. He spent thirteen years in the country and died in Nethan in A. D. 1054. His Tibetan name is Atisha. He was worshipped by the Tibetans as an incarnation of god Mañjuśrī, the Buddhist god of learning.

A manuscript named 'Prajñā-Pāramitā' containing eight thousand slokas was composed at Nālandā University during

the reign of Mohīpāla I, a copy of which is kept in the library of 'Asiatic Society of Calcutta (No. G 4713).'

Mohāmahopādhyā Haraprasad Shastri collected twenty two short works of Advayavajrapāda who flourished in the eleventh or early twelfth century A. D. and bore the titles of Paṇḍita and Avadhūta. This period of Advayavajrapāda has been fixed by Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya in his introduction to the 'Sādhanamāla'. These twenty two short works were collected by M. M. H. P. Shastri from Manuscripts lying in the Darbar Library of Nepal. Those Manuscripts are the records of collection of twenty two works by Advayavajrapāda. These twenty two works seemed to be very important for the history of the development of Vajrayāna Buddhism, because they threw light on the period of Buddhism between the rise and fall of the Pāla dynasty.

Growth and spread of Saṅghārām (Monasteries)

The Triratna creed of Buddhism places the Saṅgha on a par with Buddha and Dharma—the three concepts completing the cycle of the faith. At every seat of Buddhism, therefore, the existence of a Saṅghārām was indispensable. The Saṅgha life functioned and flourished there and each monastery became a centre of religious studies and discussions.

From the writings of Grünwedel, Fergusson and Hiuen Tsang we learn that between the beginning of the Christian era and the middle of sixth century A. D., there was a very rich development of Buddhism in the form of monasteries and Stupas. In good old age the caves were used as headquarters. During the rainy season all the Buddhist monks were assembled in some fixed dwelling places. It might have happened that a band of Buddhist monks came to Ajanta and took up their abode in its natural caverns, perhaps a couple of centuries before Aśoke. Those were the days when kings, rich citizens and great landowners could scarcely perform a work of greater

merit than hewing out caves for the residence of Buddhist monks. In course of time these natural recesses in the rock were transformed into monasteries. There are more than twenty monasteries, many unfinished, at Ajanta. Chaityas were built within the monasteries by the Buddhist monks for united worship; strictly comparable to Christian churches. A Stupa occupied the place of the alter. The Stupas were first erected over the relics of Buddha and afterwards it became the common practice to erect stupas over the ashes or relics of a great Buddhist teacher. Ajanta has four chaityas. There are stupas within all the four Chaityas at Ajanta.

There was a cave named 'Satapanni' at Rajgir. There can be a few places in the world so old as Rajgir. Satapanni Cave was the earliest Chaitya of old Rajgir. Outside this Satapanni Cave the first Buddhist Council was convened in the year following the Mahānirvāṇa of Buddha. Buddha entered the city, Rajgir during the reign of Bimbisara of the sixth century B. C. King Bimbisara erected a stupa over the nail-relic of Buddha in the middle of the city. This must also be the earliest stupa. Fa-Hian who visited India during the fifth century A.D., saw this stupa still intact.

In the days of Aśoka, Saṅgha was a well-organised body. The whole organisation of the Saṅgha and a good deal of the rules for monks and nuns were then introduced. Persons desiring to renounce the world and embrace the life of a monk or nun, were admitted without any distinction of rank or caste. The act of admission was termed Pravrajyā, in Pāli-language—Pabbajjā denoting the renouncement of the world and adoption of the ascetic life.

Most probably Bengal was outside the empire of Aśoka and Buddhism could have no access to this province during his reign in the third century B. C. However Buddhism as a religious faith spread in Bengal during the time of the Gupta emperors. Amongst Indian historical documents, there is none more fascinating than the books of travels written by the early

Chinese pilgrims. Of these, the three now best known to us, are those of Fa-Hian, Hiuen Tsang and I-Tsing. Fa-Hian might have been the very first of the travellers who came to India on the task of Buddhistic research. Fa-Hian visited India about the fifth century A.D. during the reign of Chandra-gupta II. This Chinese pilgrim noticed the existence of twenty four Saṅghārāmas in Tāmralipti (modern Tamluk in Midnapore), which were all residential seats for the Buddhist monks. After Fa-Hian, the renowned Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang came to India about the seventh century A.D. during the reign of king Harsha. He came to Tāmralipti or Tamluk where he spent two years copying manuscripts and painting images. He found ten Buddhist Saṅghārāmas with more than thousand monks residing in them in Tāmralipti, twenty Saṅghārāmas with some three thousand monks belonging to both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna schools in Pundravardhana, thirty Saṅghārāmas with about two thousand monks in Samatata and ten Saṅghārāmas with about two thousand monks in Karṇasuvarṇa. He also spoke of two most notable universities of his time, one at Pundravardhana and the other at Karṇasuvarṇa, both renowned as great seats of learning for the Eastern Buddhist scholars. Another Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing who visited India at the fag end of the seventh century A.D., spoke of the University of Bhārāhā in Tāmralipti. He referred to the great reverence of people of Bengal in general for the Buddhist faith and for the monastic life of the Bhikṣus (monks).

Coming to the times of Pāla Kings who were staunch advocates of Buddhism, we find many Buddhist monasteries established in different parts of Bengal mainly through the patronage of the Pāla dynasty. From the "History of Buddhism" written by Lāmā Tārānātha in the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D., we come to know that Gopāla I founded the Odantapurī Mahāvihāra. Dharmapāla, the son of Gopāla I, founded the monastery of Vikramśīlā. The monastery was situated in Magadha on the northern bank of the Ganges. An

inscribed clay-seal discovered in Pāhārpura bears testimony to the fact that the Mahāvihāra of Somapura in North Bengal was also erected by Dharmapāla. Another monastery which was already in existence in Bengal during the time of Dharmapāla, was the Traikutaka Vihāra where Ācārya Haribhadra wrote his famous commentary on the "Aṣṭasahasrikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā". There was another monastery in Devikot in North Bengal where Advayavajra, the great Tāntrik Buddhist scholar, lived. "Pāgsām-Jon-Zāng"¹ mentions the Paṇḍita Vihāra of Chittagong which was a great centre of Tāntrik learning and culture. Siddhācārya Tailapā is said to have been associated with this Vihāra. Tailapā had a disciple of the name of Nāḍapā who was also a renowned Bengali Tāntrik preceptor. He went to Tibet and preached Tāntrik Buddhism there for full fourteen years. Nāḍapā was also the author of the comentary on the 'Vajrapāda-Sāra-Saṃgraha' which is said to have been composed by Śākyabhikṣu Yaśobhadra of Kāsmīra.

Rāmpāla, the great king of Pāla dynasty, who reigned for more than fifty years during the eleventh-twelfth century A.D., founded the grand monastery of Jagaddal at the confluence of the Ganges and Karatoa by the vicinity of old Bhāsu Vihāra which was erected at Varendra.² The Jagaddal Vihāra speaks of the highest glory of Tāntrik Buddhism in East Bengal. King Rāmpāla installed in this Vihāra images of Avalokiteśvara and Mahā Tārā.

Ācārya Mokṣākara Gupta, Vibhuti Chandra, Dānśila and Subhākara Gupta are said to be the four great luminaries of Jagaddala Vihāra. Mokṣākara Gupta was the author of Tarkabhāṣā, a famous work on Buddhist Logic, and he is also

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1. History of Buddhism : Its Rise, Decline and Downfall by Sumpa Khanpo Yese Pal Jor, completed in 1747 A.D. edited by Sarat Chandra Das (Calcutta, 1908)
 2. Baṅger Jātio Itihās, Rājanyakāṇḍa, p. 206.

regarded as the commentator of Dohākoṣa in Apabhraṅśa. Vibhūti Chandra was both a prolific writer and a translator, and as many as twenty three Tāntrik works are ascribed to him in the Tāñhgyur¹. A palmleaf manuscript, preserved in the library of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, reveals that Vibhūti Chandra visited Nepal and Tibet with his preceptor Śākyaśrībhadra, the last hierarch of Vikramaśilā Vihāra, when that University was destroyed by the Muhammadans². Dānaśīla is also known as prolific translator and there are about sixty Tāntrik translations in Tibetan language to his credit³. The great tāntrik teacher Śubhākara Gupta lived in this Vihāra for some time and wrote a commentary on the Tāntrik text 'Siddhaikavīra-tantra'.

Another Buddhist Tāntrik scholar of Jagaddala Vihāra named Jñāna Mitra who hailed from Tripura of East Bengal, was proficient in 'Gūhyasamāja Tantra' and also in various Mahāyānic scriptures. "He learnt profoundly the collections on Yamāntaka, Saṃbara and Heruka, the Gūhya Chandra tilaka, Mahāpāni tilaka and Kālacakra"⁴.

From 'Pāg Sām Jon Zāng' and from the history of Tāraṅnāth we come to know that Ācārya Abhayākara Gupta was famous Tāntrik Siddha who was born at Jhārkhanda. He was educated in Nālandā where subsequently he became an abbot and he was also for sometime the chief abbot at Vikramaśilā Vihāra. This Ācārya is known to be the preceptor of King Rāmpāla.

From the existence of the above mentioned monasteries it may be concluded that during the reign of Pāla Kings the culture and learning of Tāntrik Buddhism had a wide circulation throughout the length and breadth of Bengal. The

1. N. N. Dasgupta, Indian Cult, Vol V, pp. 215-17

2. J. B. O. R. S., March 1937, p, II ff.

3. R. C. Majumder, History of Bengal I, p. 336

4. Bhubendranath Dutta, Mystic Tales of Lama Taranath p. 37

Buddhist Siddhācāryas would reside in those monasteries. Innumerable lay-Buddhist house-holders of Bengal would take lessons from those Siddhācāryas. There is no doubt, therefore, that the people of Bengal in general cherished the great reverence for the Buddhist faith and culture and for the Siddhācāryas.

Buddhist art and iconography

The Universities of Takshashilā near the modern Peshawar, Nālandā in Bihar and Sridhānya Katak (Amarāvati) on the bank of the Krishnā, comprised schools of religious painting and sculpture.

The early Buddhist records contain many allusions to 'pictures halls' which were no doubt the halls of monasteries. The great Chaitya-halls, used for general councils, worship and University purposes, gave rise to the magnificent schools of Indian painting, whose remains we still find in the caves of Ajantā. "The period covered by the religious paintings of Ajanta", says Mr. E. B. Havell in his book, 'Indian sculpture and Painting', "extends from about the second or first centuries before Christ to about the seventh century of our era." There can be no doubt that it was the monks themselves who spent their talent and energy in sculpturing or painting the ancient monasteries.

One of the principal deities worshipped by the Buddhists of the Mahāyāna school is Avalokiteśvara or Padmapāni. The Chinese travellers Fa-Hian and Hiuen Tsang saw images of Avolokiteśvara at all the Buddhist places of pilgrimage in India. Fa-Hian recorded that in the fifth century A.D. every Buddhist of Mahāyāna school in Mathurā and the Central Provinces used to worship Avalokiteśvara, Prajñāpāramitā and Mañjuśrī. Hiuen Tsang saw numerous images of Avalokiteśvara both in northern and southern India. The most remarkable of these was the silver one, ten feet high, situated on the

western side of the Bodhi tree at Gaya.¹ This Chinese traveller observed in many places the image of Tārā on the left side of Avalokiteśvara and in several other places images of Avalokiteśvara and Tārā on the right and left sides respectively of Buddha¹.

The Bengal school of art became distinguished by the high class of art it produced. Its flourishing period ranged from the ninth century A. D. or earlier to the conquest of Bengal by the Muhammadans i.e., it covered the whole period of Pāla dynasty. During the reign of Dharmapāla and Devapāla of the ninth century A. D. two famous artists of Bengal named Dhīmān and his son Vītpāl left a land-mark in the field of art and architecture. Jābhānese art was greatly influenced by the Bengal school of art. As Vajrayāna was mainly a product of Bengal, it is possible that the Bengalee colonists carried their art and religion to Jābhā by the sea-route probably from Tāmralipti.

The statue of Prajñāpāramitā seated on a lotus-flower in the pose of a yoginī was made during the period of the Pāla dynasty. The Vajrayānists regarded Prajñāpāramitā as the consort of the Ādi Buddha. She was also regarded by them as the mother of the universe. Many of such specimens of the Bengal school of art are preserved in the museums at Calcutta Dacca and Rajshahi. In these museums many interesting images of gods belonging to the Tāntrik Buddhism are to be met with.

The Development of Vajrayāna from Mahāyāna Buddhism

So far we have reviewed the history of Buddhism, we have come to know that Mahāyāna Buddhism both in its philosophical and religious aspects, was afoot in the first century A. D.

The great philosopher, poet and dramatist Aśvahośa, a

1. Beal's Si-yu-Ki, Vol II p. 103.

contemporary of King Kanīṣka in first-second century A. D., was one of the founders and leaders of the Mahāyāna. During the Vākātaka and Gupta periods in between the third and sixth centuries A. D. of Indian history, both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism flourished simultaneously. But there is no doubt that the Mahāyāna school was steadily growing stronger. The two schools of Mahāyāna philosophy, the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra, developed highly during the Gupta periods. Vasubandhu of the fourth century A. D. was a prominent member of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna. Vasubandhu wrote a book named "Abhidharma-koṣa" which enjoyed great popularity in India. His book was taught widely and several annotations of the book were made in Nālandā University. It was translated into Tibetan language by Jinamitra and into Chinese language first by Paramārtha of Valabhī during the sixth century A. D. and later by Hiuen Tsang who studied at Nālandā University during the seventh century A. D.

An organisation of Buddhists something like a Mantrayāna seems to have existed at Nālandā at the time of I-Tsing in the seventh century A. D., for he has mentioned the existence of a bulk of Mantra literature there and he himself is said to have been trained in the esoteric doctrine. The centre of learning of mysticism, however, seems to have moved to the Vikramaśīlā University farther down the Ganges and Vikramaśīlā Vihāra became famous for Tāntrika learning. All the inhabitants of that University belonged to Mantrayānas. Tibetan Buddhism had special connections with that University.

From the evidence of the Chinese pilgrims we cannot, however, ascertain the nature of Buddhism that was prevalent in Bengal. We find mention of Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as of Hīnayāna. It seems, however, that in the historical evolution of Buddhism, Mahāyāna with its more lofty ideal, captured the mind of the people of Bengal. But the Buddhism which prevailed in the Pāla period in Bengal, is of the new ideology

of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in the most developed Mahāyāna form. P. C. Bagchi in his book 'The History of Bengal', has written that in the Pāla period "the Mahāyāna has developed forms of mysticism which are known as Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna, and these, by their very nature, dealt with certain deeper metaphysical problems which had greater attraction for the religious man" (page 419). Still later, this mystic Buddhism assumed three forms in addition to the Vajrayāna. These three added forms to Vajrayāna are the Mantrayāna, the Kālacakrayāna and the Sahajayāna in which mantra, mudrā, maṇḍala and Yoga practices played important parts. Mahāsukha or perfect bliss was the goal of these new systems. Very little trace of the once powerful Yogācāra and Mādhyamika Buddhism of Mahāyāna can be observed in these new forms of Buddhism, which attached great importance to ceremonials against which Buddha himself had raised his voice of protest. Thus the religion of Buddhism introduced by the great master Buddha underwent another great change from Mahāyāna to Vajrayāna during the time of the Pālas completing the three cycles of Buddhism i.e., from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna and from Mohāyāna to Vajrayāna. Therefore Buddhism is not essentially one but three religions, one differing widely from the other in religious beliefs, practices and doctrines. The earliest phase is Hīnayāna which was more ethical than philosophical. The second and the most widely spread is Mahāyāna which was lofty in ideal and highly philosophical. And the third is Tantrayāna, otherwise known as Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna and Sahajayāna, which evolved a deep esoteric system of Sāadhanā maintaining at the same time the subtle philosophical ideals of Mahāyāna. Out of the three phases of Buddhism, Bengal made valuable contributions to the last. Lastly the Buddhist mysticism can be marked in some of the later Hindu religious movements of Bengal, viz., those of the Nāthas, Dharmas, Avadhūtas, Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, Bāuls and others.

INTRODUCTION OF TĀNTRIKA CULTURE INTO MOHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

The history of Tāntricism is highly interesting. I shall here make an attempt to trace this history, with special reference to Mohāyāna Buddhism from early times and shall show how it was passed on the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal at a very later period.

Professor Chintaharan Chakravarti, in an admirable article in 'Indian Historical Quarterly'¹ has traced the references to Tāntrik practices in their earlier stages amongst the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. These references in ancient literature show that some of the rudimentary Tāntrika practices are as old as the time of the Rg-Veda ; and the Atharva-Veda is full of them. In Buddhism such practices were found in abundance. From references in early Buddhist literature it can be seen that many varieties of Tāntrik practices were then in vogue. So it appears very probable that Tāntricism received a great impetus from Buddhism.

Guhyasamāja Tantra²

The secret conclaves that grew after the Mahānirvāṇa of Buddha, developed in course of time into big organizations known as Guhyasamājas. They practised their rituals in secret (guhya). The Guhyasamāja Tantra was composed in the Saṅgīti (verse) form, and in it reasons were given why the teachings of this book should be kept secret. This book deals with details the theories and practices, dogmas and rituals of Tantra. Before we give an account of the innovations introduced by Guhyasamāja Tantra, it is necessary to give some idea of the age in which it was written.

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1. 'Antiquity of Tāntricism', VI pp. 114
 2. Gaekwad's Oriental series, The earliest and the most authoritative work of the Tantra school of the Buddhists : edited by Dr. B. Bhattacharya, Ph. D., Director, Oriental Institute, Baroda.

The Tantras and Tāntrika ideas of a secret nature were as old as the time of the great Buddhist teacher Nāgārjuna who, as already said, flourished in the second century A. D. The school called Mantrayāna originated, according to Tibetan traditions, with Nāgārjuna, who is alleged to have received it from the celestial Buddha Vairocana, through the divine Bodhisattva Vajrasattva, at the iron tower in Southern India. The Mantrayāna, strictly speaking, concerns itself with mantras and yantras. The Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa is a Mantrayāna work which gives descriptions of deities, mudrās (poses), and maṇḍalas (diagrams), and of the processes by which the worshipper should proceed to offer prayers and perform the rituals. The Mulakalpa is the source on which the Guhyasamāja Tantra is based. The doctrines of the Guhyasamāja Tantra are substantially the same as those found in the Sāadhanā (practice) of the Prajñāpāramitā composed by Asaṅga, the elder brother of Vasubandhu, who flourished in the fourth century A. D. So it appears that the Guhyasamāja Tantra is the product of the fourth century A. D. or earlier. Now I shall proceed to state what it introduced into Buddhism and how it may be considered a landmark in the system of Buddhist thought as well as in the history of the evolution of the Tāntrika culture.

The most important element which the book, 'Guhyasamāja Tantra' introduced into Buddhism is that of Sakti (woman, considered as a manifestation of divine energy) for obtaining emancipation. In the very opening chapter of the Guhyasamāja Tantra, the Lord transforms Himself in the form of five Dhyānī Buddhas¹ (Buddhas in meditative pose) and associates each of them with a Sakti. Moreover, in the eighteenth chapter, while describing the different ceremonies in connection with initiation, mention is made of 'prajñābhiṣeka' or the initiation of the disciple with prajñā or a Śakti. In this connection, it

1. Five Dhyānī Buddhas, viz., Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Akṣobhya.

should be remembered that the Buddhist Tantras were divided into four classes for four different types of disciples, namely, (1) the Caryā Tantra, (2) the Kriyā Tantra, (3) the Yoga Tantra, and (4) the Anuttarayoga Tantra. Out of these four, the first two are preparatory and are not given Śakti which is prescribed for the last two classes, regarded as higher in the scale of perfection¹. This introduction of Śakti in Tāntrika worship, made for the first time in the Guhyasamāja Tantra, is one of the most important events in the history of Tāntricism. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal inherited this Tāntrik tradition of accepting Śakti in their mystic culture of yoga and practised it secretly even when they were amalgamated with Gouḍīo Vaiṣṇavism. The practice prevalent among the Sahajiyās is that each disciple belonging to this school is allowed to accept Śakti—a woman who is equally adept in the practice of Yoga. In which state and under what condition, the Sahajiyā yogis are allowed to accept Śaktis or Sādhana-Saṃginīs for practicing yoga, will be discussed elaborately when we shall deal with the rituals, doctrines and tenets as ordained by this particular religious sect and mentioned in their various manuscripts.

The Vajrayāna

Introduction of the Dhyānī Buddhas may be considered to be a landmark in the evolution of the Tāntrika culture among the Buddhists. When we investigate the origin of the Dhyānī Buddhas, according to the conceptions of the Guhyasamāja school, we find in the 'Saṃgīti' that a single power called Kāya-vāk-citta-vajradhara, that is, the holder of the vajra consisting of the three elements kāya (body), vāk (speech), and citta (mind)—the embodiment of Buddha,—manifests itself in the form of the five Dhyānī Buddhas, their Saktis and so on.

1. Sadhanamala (Gaekwad's Oriental series, No. 41) 11. Introduction

That is to say, the five Dhyānī Buddhas are nothing but the manifestations of one single power. This power, at other places in the same work, is described as the embodiment of Śūnya or vajra, from which the name of the school Vajrayāna is derived.

It is also note worthy that the Guhyasamāja Tantra not only gave instructions for attaining salvation, but also satisfied the popular needs by prescribing a number of mantras (charms), mudrās (mystic signs), maṇḍalas (circles of deities), and so forth. This book combined in one sweep all forms of mysticism in its system, such as yoga and hathayoga, mystic poses, Dhyānī Buddhas, deities and a host of other rituals. This system thus developed into a form of Tāntricism, which was named Vajrayāna or the Vajra path to salvation. It was called Vajrayāna, because śūnya came to be designated by the term vajra on account of its indestructibility. The śūnya of the Vajrayāna is something different from the śūnya of the Mādhyamikas (nihilists) or the Vijñānavādins (idealists), because it includes the three elements śūnya (reality), vijñāna (consciousness), and mahāasukha (great bliss).

The Vajrayāna made many contributions to Buddhism and Buddhist culture in general and thus became very attractive. This school introduced elements of yoga into ordinary worship and also gave regular system of mantras, which could be used for all possible purposes even by a lay householder. We have seen that the Tantras assumed importance in the Pāla period, when even the universities like those of Nālandā and Vikramaśilā had to introduce them into their curriculum, and keep regular professors to hold classes for those who wanted to have a higher education in the Tantras. The Hindus were also impressed by its grandeur and were induced to accept some of the Tāntric doctrines, deities, mantras, sādhanās etc. The Vajrayāna school introduced the worship of Dhyānī-Buddha accompanied with the goddess Tārā. The goddess Tārā is exclusively the deity of the Tāntrik Buddhists. The Tāntrik Hindus of Bengal accepted the worship of the goddess

Tārā whole heartedly. In mediaeval period Bengal was the seat of Tāntrik culture. Even to-day the Bengalees worship the goddess Kālī as the mother of the Universe. To worship the Absolute power as goddess Mother is the speciality of the Hindu-Tantras. The Hindu-Tantra has founded the worship of Daśa Mohāvidyā—an embodiment of ten deities such as Kālī, Tārā, Śoḍaṣī, Bhubaneśvarī, Chhinnamastā, Vagalā, Kamalā, Dhuravati, Mālatī and Durgā. So we find that the Buddhist goddess Tārā has been included as one of the deities of Daśa Mohāvidyā of the Hindus. The Hindu Tāntrik Sādhakas of Bengal do not make any difference between the goddess of Kālī and Tārā. They meditate both the goddesses chanting the same mantra. Sādhaka Rāmprośad, the famous poet of Bengal, worshipped the goddess Kālī and addressed her as Tārā and composed many poems in which he had mentioned the name Tārā in place of Kālī. Bāmākṣyāpā, the renowned Hindu Tāntrik Sādhakas of modern age, got spiritual illumination observing the Tāntrik rituals in worship of Mother goddess Tārā at 'Tārāpīṭha'—a place consecrated to the worship of the goddess Tārā. Tārāpīṭha is situated in the district of Birbhum of West Bengal. It is said that long long before Bāmākṣyāpā, another Hindu Tāntriksādhaka named Vaśiṣṭha worshipped the goddess Tārā here following the Tāntrik rituals and became 'Tārā-siddha' i.e., got perfection in Tāntrik-sāadhanā. There is a proverb that this Vaśiṣṭha went to Mahāchina to study the Tāntrik culture. There he was acquainted with the mysteries of Tāntrik practice, became master of it and came back to Tārāpīṭha. At that time the area covering Nepal, Bhutan and Tibbat at the foot of the Himalayas, was called Mohāchina. Even to-day we, the Hindu Bengalees when afflicted with distress and miseries, cry out with depression "Tārā-Tārā-Tārā"—thus invoking the mercy of goddess Tārā.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Nāthism derived its inspiration from the Vajrayāna ; or in other words, the

progenitors of the Nātha schools Hinduized the teachings of the Buddhist Tantras. From the existing literature of the Hindus, no reference to Tāntricism can be found which may be placed before the third century when the Guhyasamāja Tantra was composed. The Nātha-Siddhas are included in the list of the eighty-four Siddhas of the Buddhists. The Nāthas and their descendants are known in Bengal as the Yogīs or Yugīs. Regarding their origin and their present low status in Hindu society, many stories are prevalent; but it appears that they were the first to follow the Tāntrik practices amongst the Hindus, and were mainly the disciples of the Buddhists, who were not looked upon with great favour by the Hindus. The affinity of the Nāthas with the Tāntrik Buddhists and their practice of the Tantras were probably the reasons why the Yogis were regarded, in subsequent times, as 'untouchables'.

The Sahajayāna

The Vajrayāna gave rise to several later Yānas (paths), such as the Sahajayāna, Kālacakrayāna and Mantrayāna. All these later yānas, however, may be considered to be mere offshoots of the Vajrayāna school, without differing materially from the original yāna of the Guhyasamāja.

The Sahajayāna is believed to start with Lakṣmīṅkarā Devi (A.D. 729),¹ the sister of the King Indrabhūti who styles himself the king of Uḍḍiyāna. The newness of Lakṣmīṅkarā teachings consists in her declaration that no suffering, fasting, rites, bathing, purification or obedience to the rules of society are necessary for the purpose of obtaining emancipation. According to her, it is not necessary to bow down before the images of gods which are made of wood, stone or mud; but the worshipper should, with concentration, offer worship only to his own body where all gods reside. From her preachings a

¹ I. Bhattacharyya-An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism, pp. 76 f.

new doctrine, 'one's own body, in which the whole world is manifest,' was developed amongst the Sahajayānas. Lakṣmīṅkarā preached that when truth is known, there is no restriction of any kind for the worshipper. Like her brother Indrabhūti, she did not believe in restrictions regarding food or drink and advocated Śakti-worship. The Sahajayāna thus belonged to the Yoga Tantra class.

The Kālacakrayāna

The Kālacakrayāna seems to be a later development of the Vajrayāna. This concerns itself with the Yoga Tantra and Anuttarayoga Tantra, and incorporates the doctrines of the Sahajayāna also. According to this school, Kālacakra is a deity and an embodiment of śūnyatā and karuṇā (compassion), is embraced by the goddess Prajñā, and represents the philosophical conception of 'advaya' or non-duality. The deity Kālacakra, like many other Vajrayāna deities, is fierce in appearance and is embraced by the Śakti, which shows that the Yāna is merely a branch of the Vajrayāna in its higher forms of Yoga and Anuttarayoga Tantras. The maṇḍala (circle) of the deity, as we understand from the Kālacakra Tantra, consists of all the planets and stars. The central deity, as the name Kālacakra indicates, represents the circle of time and is surrounded by such minor deities as would indicate time. As a school, it started in the tenth century A.D.

The Mantrayāna.

As I have already mentioned that the Mantrayāna chiefly concerns itself with 'Bija-mantras' and 'Yantras' and incidentally, it includes such thing as Dhāraṇīs. Bijamantras (Seed-syllables) usually consists of syllables and represent the numerous deities. Different Bijmantras form the call-signs for the different deities. In other words, the Tāntrikas discovered the

supreme truth that the Bijmantras are endowed with the same vibrations as those of the deity and by employing the Mantras i.e., by constant meditation and repetition of the Mantras the corresponding deities can be attracted, visualised and realised. The Dhāraṇīs are only unmeaning strings of words which are said to confer great merit when muttered repeatedly. It believes that certain special mystic forces are generated by reciting words of a certain combination, pronounced in a certain manner, and that, with the help of these mystic forces, the worshipper can obtain 'Siddhis' and even emancipation. The 'yantras' (magic circles) are included in the same system, because the magic circles are not supposed to bestow any power unless the letters of the appropriate 'mantra' are placed in their appropriate places in the magic circle. In the 'Mañjusri-mūlakalpa'.¹ which was probably composed in the first century A.D., we find quite an astonishing number of Mantras, Mudrās, Maṇḍalas and Dhāraṇīs. Later on the 'Guhyasamāja'² is considered as the first systematic Tāntrik work of the Buddhists, which was probably written in the fourth century A.D.

Vajrayāna Buddhism in Bengal

In the Guhyasamāja there were many practices which could not be made public until the ground was prepared to receive them. Thus the Buddhist Tantra went into private hands and was transmitted in the most secret manner possible through an unbroken chain of Gurus and disciples, till it came to light after about three hundred years, mainly through the teachings and mystic songs of the eighty four Siddhācāryas mostly belonging to the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries A. D. At that time Vajrayāna Buddhism made a great headway in Bengal and other parts of eastern India. These Siddhācāryas wrote the

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1. Published in three volumes in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series.
 2. Gackwad's Oriental series.

mystic songs in a language which has been designated by Mohāmahopādhyā Haraprosād Śāstri as the Sāndhyabhāṣā. This language had always a hidden or a mystic meaning.

Very little is known regarding the Buddhist Tantras before they made an appearance in public in a well-developed form during the period of Vajrayāna school, which started in about the beginning of the seventh century A. D. By that time the Buddhist monks busied themselves with producing a variety of literature on the Tantras and during that Tāntrik age thousands of works were written. The wide Tāntrik literature was mostly written by the Siddhas who are called Siddhācāryas whose number is reputed to be eighty-four. Their innumerable works were readily transmitted through the Himalayan passes to Tibet and Mongolia, and thence to China and Japan. It is not strange, therefore, that many of these Tāntrik works which were originally written in Sanskrit, are lost. Those Tāntrik works are now preserved in translations in the pages of the Tibetan Tangyur.

The reputed Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing found Tāntric Buddhism flourishing in Uḍḍiyāna, Punjab, and in a satisfactory condition more eastward in the seventh century A.D. The latest great champion of Buddhism was Dharmakīrti who, as stated by the historians, was the contemporary of Kumārilabhatta, Guru of Śankarācāryya. The decline of Buddhism in India was hastened by the Arab conquest of Sindh in A.D. 712.

Lāmā Tārānātha¹ of Tibet informs us that Tantricism existed and transmitted in an occult manner in the period between Aṣaṅga and Dharmakīrti, but after Dharmakīrti's times the Anuttara Yoga became more and more general and influential. Let us now examine how the Tāntrik Buddhism gradually flourished in Bengal.

Uḍḍiyāna: In the history of the eighty four Siddhas, Uḍḍiyāna is described as a place where the Tāntrik Buddhism

1. History of Buddhism by Lāmā Tārānāth.

first developed. In the *Sādhanamālā* we find mention of four Piṭhas or sacred spots of the Vajrayānists, namely : Kāmākṣyā, Sirihatta, Pūrnagiri and Uḍḍiyāna. Kāmākṣyā and Sirihatta are situated in the province of Assam. Kāmākṣyā is also known as Kāmarūpa which is only a few miles distant from Gauhati. Srihatta is the modern Sylhet. But the identification of the two others has given rise to much speculation.

Luipā : Luipā who flourished in the later half of the seventh century A. D., is regarded as one of the earliest Siddhācāryas. In the Tibetan Tangyur Catalogue he is distinctly called a Bengali. According to Tibetan traditions Luipā is identified with Matsyendranath or Mīnanath who is regarded as the Ādi-guru among the Nāth Siddhācāryas. This tradition has also located the birth place of Mīna-nath in Candra-dwīpa, which is generally taken by the scholars to be some coastal region of East Bengal. Mohāmahopādhyāya Haraprasad Śāstrī identifies this Candra-dwīpa with the Candra-dwīpa of the district of Bakergunj ; whereas Dr. Bagchi is disposed to identify it with the Sundwip in the district of Noakhali (See Introduction to 'Kaula-Jñāna-nirṇaya' by Dr. Bagchi, pp. 29-32) Luipā composed a number of songs in Bengali language, which have been discovered and published in the "Bauddha Gān O Dohā" published by the Vangīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, Calcutta, under the editorship of Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Śāstrī, with a short account of Luipā and his songs in the introduction.

In other Tibetan book, namely "Pag Sam Jon Zan"¹ he is described to have sprung from the fisherman caste of Uḍḍiyāna. The King of Uḍḍiyāna employed him as a clerk. He met Śabaripā who initiated him into the mysteries of the Buddhist Tāntricism.

1. Pag Sam Jon Zan (History of Buddhism : Its rise, decline and downfall) by Sumpa Khanpo Yese Pal Jor, edited by Sarat Chandra Das (Calcutta, 1908).

There is, therefore, an apparent discrepancy in the two statements of the native place of Luipā. The testimony of the Pag Sam Jon Zan would take it to Uḍḍiyāna ; while the Tangyur catalogue will have it in Bengal. As the identification of Uḍḍiyāna has not been settled, we may take it for granted that it was located in Bengal.

Sarahapā : In the *Sādhanamālā* (pp. 80 and 83), Sarahapā is also associated with Uḍḍiyāna. This Sarahapā was one of the earliest Siddhācāryas. In the "Bauddha Gān O Dohā" are recorded a number of his songs composed in Bengali language.

Sarahapā was one of the Siddhas to popularise the Buddhist Tantra. The Tantra, which was practised in secret from the time of Asaṅga, first got publicity through the teachings of a band of Siddhas with Sarahapā at their head.

Nāgārjuna : This Nāgārjuna who is regarded as one of the foremost Siddhācāryas, is different from Nāgārjuna who is regarded as the founder of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhist philosophy. Nāgārjuna, the founder of Mādhyamika school, was the disciple of Aśvaghōṣa and he flourished in the second century A.D. The other Nāgārjuna was the disciple of Sarahapā and flourished in the middle of the seventh century A.D. Thus the two persons are separated by five hundred years. This later Nāgārjuna was a leading star in the Vajrayāna horizon and composed a large number of Tāntrik works. Two *Sādhanas* of his are recorded in the *Sādhanamālā*, one for the worship of Vajratārā, while the other relates to the worship of Ekajatā. In *Sādhanamālā* it is distinctly said that Nāgārjuna rescued the worship of Ekajatā from the country of Bhoṭa which is identified with Tibet. Nāgārjuna was the resident of Bengal.

Śabariṇī : Śabariṇī is described in Tibetan work, "Pag Sam Jon Zan" as belonging to the hill-tribe called the Śabaras or the huntsmen in Bāṅgālā Desh. He met Nāgārjuna who was then residing in that country. He along with his two wives, Lokī and Guṇī, embraced Buddhist Tāntricism after

being initiated by Nāgārjuna. He wrote a number of melodious songs in the vernacular of his country which, according to the Tibetan authorities, was Bāṅgālā or Bengali.

Jālandharipā : Jālandharipā, also known as Hāḍipā, is regarded as a very ancient Siddhācārya. In the Nāth Literature of Bengal he is described as a Nāth-Siddha. According to Tibetan works he is described as a contemporary of Dharmakīrti whose time is definitely known to be the first-half of the seventh century A.D.

A very interesting story is recorded of the life of Hāḍipā or Jālandharipā in a number of old Bengali books, such as the Dharmamaṅgala, Śūnyapurāṇa, Manikānder Gān, Mayanāmatir Gān, Gopicānder Gīt, Gopicānder Sannyas etc. In all these stories Hāḍipā is connected with several other important personages, viz. the queen Mayanāmatī, her husband Mānikandra who was the King of Caṭtigāon (Caṭṭagram) of East-Bengal, Gopicandra, their only son, and Kṛṣṇācārya of Kānhupā, one of Hāḍipā's disciples. It is said that when Gopicandra was born, the royal guru had predicated that he would not live for more than nineteen years. This fact was known only to the queen. When Gopicandra was only a boy of twelve, his father got him married to four princesses, namely Phandanā, Candanā, Rodanā and Podunā. Soon after this marriage King Mānikandra died. Mayanāmatī thereafter became very anxious on account of the possibility of her son's meeting with a premature death. In order to avert this calamity she persuaded her son to take initiation from Hāḍipā who was a great Siddha. But unluckily Gopicandra once became angry with Hāḍipā and buried him in a hole underground.

Kṛṣṇācārya, popularly known as Kānhupā was the worthy disciple of Hāḍipā. In the thirty-sixth song of the caryāpadas we find Kṛṣṇācārya mentioning Jālandharipā as his guru. For a long time he did not find his guru. So he made a search for him and became anxious at his sudden and mysterious disappearance. Later on he came to know about the whereabouts

of Hāḍipā in his meditation. He, then, went straight to Mayanāmatī and told her about the foolish actions of her son, Gopicandra. In order to protect Gopicandra from the anger of Hāḍipā, both of them devised a plan of placing a golden image of Gopicandra in front of the hole in which Hāḍipā was buried underground. They removed the earth and as soon as the body of the guru was seen, all those present there prostrated themselves on the earth ; but as the golden image of Gopicandra did not show any respect, Hāḍipā became enraged and through his anger the image melted and was turned into ashes. Mayanāmatī at this opportunity held some food and a bagful of Indian hemp before the guru who had been by this time in Samādhi for full five years. He broke his fast taking some food and a quarter of hemp. The queen Mayanāmatī then persuaded Hāḍipā to give initiation to Gopicandra so that his premature death might be averted. Gopicandra at first was very obstinate, but ultimately yielded. The queens of Gopicandra scented danger and wanted to dispose of Hāḍipā by means of poison, but Hāḍipā passed through the ordeal entirely unharmed. Ultimately Gopicandra took the initiation and Hāḍipā put him to a severe test for twelve long years, after which he obtained perfection.

Anangavajra : Anangavajra was one of the eighty four Siddhapuruṣas. He is characterised in the history of the eighty four Siddhācāryas as the son of King Gopāla of Eastern India. Anangavajra composed a number of works, the translations of which are found in the Tibetan Tangyur. He also composed several works on the Hevajratantra.

Indrabhūti : Indrabhūti was the king of Uḍḍiyāna which may conceivably be a part of Bengal. Indrabhūti's sister was Lakṣmīkarā. Indrabhūti has written a large number of works and most of them are preserved in the pages of the Tibetan Tangyur translations. One of his works, the Jñānasiddhi in original sanskrit, has been published in the Gaekwad's Oriental series. The Jñānasiddhi is an extremely interesting work in

twenty-two chapters, giving in a nutshell many leading doctrines and rites of Vajrayāna which throw immense light on this religion.

Kṛṣṇācārya : In the Tibetan Tangyur several Kṛṣṇācāryas are found and it is difficult to differentiate amongst them for the absence of more definite materials. This Kṛṣṇācārya whom I have referred to here, seems to be a contemporary of Jālandharipā and Gopicandra, both of whom in all probability flourished in the first quarter of the eighth century. According to the 'Pag Sam Jon Zan', this Kṛṣṇācārya was born of a Brāhman family of Orissa, and was initiated into the mystic cult by Jālandharipā. Kṛṣṇācārya wrote Dohās in his own vernacular, Uḍḍiyā which had a great affinity with the old Bengali language. No less than twelve songs of his are available and are printed and published in the 'Bauddha Gān O Dohā'.

Lakṣmīṅkarā : In the history of Vajrayāna the name of Lakṣmīṅkarā is interesting not only because she was a woman, but also because of the novel doctrine she preached. Born in the royal family of Uḍḍiyāna, a sister and disciple of Indra-bhūti, she showed remarkable boldness in preaching her own peculiar theories in a short but interesting work, entitled the 'Advayasiddhi'. This work in the original sanskrit, was lost, but was preserved in the Tibetan Tangyur in translation.

In the 'Advayasiddhi' a most remarkable and bold innovation was introduced by the authoress. Hitherto the Vajrayānists advocated the worship of the five Dhyāni Buddhas ; but what Lakṣmīṅkarā advocated was quite unusual and strange. She declared, "No suffering, no fasting, no rites, no bathing, no purification nor other rules of society are necessary, nor does anybody need to bow down before the images of gods which are made of wood, stone or mud ; but he should with concentration offer worship to his own body, where all gods reside". She further explained that when the Ultimate truth is known there is no restriction for the worshipper. Towards women,

she declared, no hatred should be displayed ; because they are the embodiments of the Prajñā. One of her most important preachings is that Nirvāṇa can never be achieved without the grace of Saṅguru. In the whole of the movable and immovable world there is nothing better than the Saṅguru, through whose kindness a sādhak is certain to obtain perfection. Since her time this new teaching gradually won many adherents who were styled the Buddhist Sahajayāna. The Vaiṣṇav Sahajiyās of Bengal imbibed almost all the characteristics of the doctrine preached by Lakṣmīṅkarā, of which we shall discuss later elaborately.

Līlāvajra : Līlāvajra was the direct disciple of Lakṣmīṅkarā. He had also a great reputation as a Vajrācārya and wrote a large number of authoritative works. No less than nine works of his are mentioned in the Tibetan Tangyur Catalogue and from their titles, it can be surmised that both Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna were in a flourishing condition in his time.

Dārikapāda : Dārikapāda was the disciple of Līlāvajra. His name is fairly well known through the publication of the 'Bauddha Gān O Dohā'. From this work it is evident that Dārikapāda belonged to Bengal and wrote a number of songs in his vernacular, some of which are recorded in the 'Bauddha Gān O Dohā'. In one of his songs he offers his obeisance to Luipā and this leads the editor, Mm. Haraprosad Śāstrī to think that Dārikapāda was a direct disciple of Luipā—which is a matter of controversy.

Sahajayoginī : Sahajayoginī was a female ascetic and a disciple of Dārikapāda. She is known to us as the authoress of the 'Vyaktabhāvānuga-tattvasiddhi'. A translation of it in Tibetan language also exists. She laid particular stress on 'Mahāsukha' which could be obtained by the combination of Prajñā and Upāya.

Dombī Heruka : Dombī Heruka was the disciple of Sahajayoginī. He, like Dārikapāda, is well known to many through the publication of the 'Bauddha Gān O Dohā'. In the

Tibeten Tangyur he is designated as one of the eighty-four Siddhācāryas. He wrote books on Sahajayāna and Vajrayāna, and composed a book of songs in vernacular entitled the 'Dombī-gitika'. Several of his songs are recorded in the 'Bauddha Gān O Dohā' and very probably they are taken from the 'Dombī-gitika' composed by him. Besides these he wrote a book intitled the 'Sahajasiddhi' in Sanskrit, an original copy of which is preserved in the Oriental Institute, Baroda. This is a highly interesting work. In it there are certain topics of absorbing interest and we take this opportunity of recording some of the views expressed by the author.

Dombī Heruka formulates that the worship of kula is the most important in the Tāntric religion ; without it no success can be achieved : but with it great success is possible of attainment—"Kulasavat Bhavet Siddhi Sarvakāmaprodā Śūbhā". While explaining the word Kula, he says that Kulas are five in number and they originate from the five Dhyāni Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Vairocana, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi : and this is the reason why they are called Kuleśas i. e., the lords of the Kulas. Dombī Heruka thus echoes the doctrines inculcated in the Guhyasamāja, the earliest Buddhist Tāntric work.

Dombī Heruka has explained Mahāsukha. The bliss obtainable from Mahāsukha has been fully dealt with. The bliss which can best be realised by the Siddhapuruṣa, has, according to him, four successive stages : Ānanda, Paramānanda, Viramānanda and Sahajānanda. By the combination of the two elements Prajñā and Upāya, these four stages of great happiness can be obtained. It can only be experienced by one's own self and when it is realised, perfection is easily attained.

All the Siddhācāryas enumerated above flourished between the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. They all belonged to either Vajrayāna or Sahajayāna school. Sahajayāna developed within the fold of Vajrayāna and introduced some new ele-

ments in it. Otherwise Sahajayāna does not differ from Vajrayāna. From the above descriptions we may come to this conclusion that Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism began to exert a great influence on the eastern parts of India, especially on Bengal and Orissa.

From the above investigation it is revealed that during the reign of the Pāla dynasty Buddhism in various Tāntrik forms gained much popularity in Bengal and many Tāntrik texts and commentaries in Sanskrit were written in the different Buddhist monasteries that were established in Bengal. Many of the authors of Dohās and caryā-padas, besides a good number of writers of Buddhist Tāntrik texts and commentaries, belong to the province of Bengal and to the close neighbourhood of Bengal. By furnishing the evidences as far as possible, I think, I have been able to establish the fact that those Siddhācāryas who composed the Dohās and caryā-padas, flourished during the reign of the Pāla Kings of Bengal, which extended from the eighth to the twelfth century A.D. The art and iconography of the same period also bear testimony to the fact that by this time Tāntrik Buddhism rose to the highest pinnacle of glory in Bengal. So we see that Tāntrik Buddhism, developed through a gradual process of centuries, had its fullest sway over the whole of Bengal during the period between the eighth and twelfth centuries A.D.

Decline of Buddhism

Historically it seems that the fall of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal marked also the decline of Buddhism in this province. The Sena Kings who followed the Pāla dynasty in the dominion over the Eastern India, belonged to Hinduism and were hostile to Buddhism. The enormous rise of Buddhism in Bengal during the reign of the Pāla Kings overwhelmed Hinduism dominated by the community of Brahmins. But with the rise of the Sena dynasty in Bengal Brahmanism survived.

The Brahmins and the orthodox community being encouraged by the Hindu Kings of Sena dynasty, began to take revenge upon the Buddhists. They regarded the Buddhists as enemy to the Brahmanical Society. So the Brahmins backed by the Hindu Kings, drove the steam-roller of severe repression upon the Buddhists. Suffering from innumerable tortures and terrible persecutions of the bigoted Brahmins and the no less bigoted Hindu Kings, the Buddhists of Bengal were relegated to the lower strata of the Hindu society and were regarded Vratyas (outcast). Many references to these tortures are found in Śūnya Purāṇa of Ramaī Pandita and in several Dharmamaṅgalas. Thus Buddhism declined during the reign of Sena Kings and more so after the invasion of the country by Mohammadans in the beginning of the thirteenth century A. D. The monasteries of Odaṅṭapurā and Vikramśilā were destroyed. After the destruction of Buddhism in India, the Buddhist monks and priests of the celebrated monasteries of Bengal and Magadha, who could save their heads from the hostile swords of Mohammadans, fled to Nepal which is protected on all sides by the natural ramparts of the Himalayas, and took refuge in that country and thus kept the culture of Buddhism alive there.

Dr. H. Kern has also written in his book 'Manual of Indian Buddhism' to this effect—"After the invasion of the country by the Mohammadans in A.D. 1200, the monasteries of Odaṅṭapurā and Vikramśilā were destroyed, and the monks were killed or fled to other countries. The learned Śākyashrī went to Orissa and afterwards to Tibet". But Buddhism also found a hiding place, as it were, in the Deccan, as we are told by the same author—"Many emigrants from Magadha rejoined their brethren in the South and founded colleges on a modest scale, in Vijayanagara, Kaliṅga and Kaṅkaṇa". (Manual of Indian Buddhism, p. 134).

Dr. H. Kern is one of the best authorities on the history of Buddhism. The above quotations from his 'Manual' establish

it beyond doubt that after the Universities of Nālandā and Vikramaśīlā were destroyed, and the wave of Mohammadan conquest had swept over Bengal and Magadha, the surviving Buddhist monks and priests migrated to Orissa and there built new monasteries. In Orissa the light of Boudha-Dharma blazed a-new for a while about in the middle of the sixteenth century A. D. under the Hindu ruler Mukunda-Deva Harischandra until it was extinguished owing to the conquest of the country by the Musulman governor of Bengal. We find mention of it in the writings of the Mohammadan historian Badaoni who lived at a time later than that of Caitanyadeva—"The Bengal governor, Sulaiman Kararani, despatched a force under his general Kālāpāhār to Orissa across Mayurabhañja. Kālāpāhār ravaged Orissa, defeated the Rājā's Deputy, and shortly afterwards the Rājā himself was killed and the Mohammadans finally conquered Orissa in A. D. 1568 (Badaoni, Vol, II p. 174).

New Hindu Religious Movements in sixteenth-seventeenth Century A. D. :

In surveying the religious history of Bengal in particular relation to the history of Tāntrik Buddhism, we can not deny that Vajarayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism exerted a great influence on the religious life of the vast majority of the people of Bengal. In previous chapters it has been described how the Guhya-Samāja went into private hands after its inception, and was handed down secretly through an unbroken chain of gurus and disciples for three hundred years ; and how it got first publicity through the teachings and mystic songs of the Buddhist Siddhācāryas in about the middle of the seventh century A.D. ; and how the Buddhist Tantras got wide publicity in about the beginning of the eighth century A. D. and after the eighth century A.D. how the principles of Vajrayāna were fully established and widely spread amongst the general people

of Bengal. Again I repeat that the most flourishing period of various forms of Tāntrik Buddhism was during the reign of the Pāla kings of Bengal and lasted till the Mohammadan conquest of Eastern India in the thirteenth century A.D.

Huien Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, was in India between A.D. 630 and 645. He has mentioned in his book of travel that there were ten thousand Bhiksus (Buddhist monks) in Bengal at that time. This Chinese pilgrim has further mentioned that more than three-fourths of the population of Bengal were Buddhists. We know that Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism flourished to their fullest extent and were prevalent in Bengal upto the end of the twelfth century A. D. So it can be taken for granted that during the period from the seventh century A. D. to the twelfth century A. D. the number of Buddhist monks, priests and Siddhācāryas were greatly increased. To support this vast mendicant population the number of lay Buddhists house-holders also increased to a great extent covering the major portion of the population of Bengal.

Now we may raise in the minds of thoughtful and inquisitive seekers after truth and knowledge, such question as, was the Buddhist religion of this land, which for centuries together held its supreme sway over the masses of Bengal, wiped out completely leaving no trace behind it ? Though the revival of Hinduism with the rise of the Sena kings of Bengal and the subsequent Muslim invasion dealt a death blow to all schools of Tāntrik Buddhism in Bengal and though many of the monasteries which were important centres of Buddhism, were destroyed, yet this question lingers in mind that can any religious movement of long-standing cultural influence be eradicated all at once from a land by any other religious movement or political causes ? If it is not so, such questions then arise in mind, how could the Buddhist religion maintain its existence under the terrible persecutions of the bigoted Brahmins ? How and where did these unknown and unrecognised bands of Buddhists maintain their ground, suffering as they did, innume-

rable tortures and persecutions, and driven further and further beyond the pale of civilisation and society? —These questions must have presented themselves to every serious student of the history. History takes its own course changing its colour with the evolution of each epoch. The medieval period is a turning point specially in the history of Bengal politically, religiously and literally. One of the first and foremost tasks before us is to rewrite the religious history of India in its true perspective. The Buddhists of Bengal being suppressed and pushed aside by the revival of Brahmanism during the period of Sena dynasty and being ruthlessly tortured by the Muslim invaders thereafter, were gradually assimilated into the cognate religious systems among the Hindus; and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult, Baul Sect, Dharma cult, Nath cult and various others were the outcome of such a popular assimilation. In Orissa ‘Pancha Sakhā Dharma’ and ‘Mohimā Dharma’ are also the outcome of such assimilation. All these forms of new religious outcomes are included into Hinduism as the Sikhism, Santa cult, Brāhma Samāj Dharma and Ārya Samāj Dharma are included into Hinduism. The term, Hinduism is very wide. Brāhmanism, Shaivism, Shāktaism, Vaiṣṇavism and even Buddhism and Jainism —all belong to Hinduism. Buddha himself is regarded as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Dr. Bühler says, “the oldest work with a fixed date in which I have found Buddha represented as an avatara of Viṣṇu, is Kṣemendra’s ‘Daśāvatāra-carita’ which belongs to the eleventh century A. D. “Buddhism so greatly influenced Bengal that even Jayadeva who was a court-poet of the king, Lakṣmaṇ Sen of Bengal in the twelfth century A. D., in his hymn to the ten incarnations, has made the same admission. Addressing the ninth incarnation, he has said, “Oh! thou hast revived all the Vadas which enjoin the sacrifice of animals at yajñas, thou kind-hearted; O Keśava, thou hast assumed the form of Buddha; O Hari, lord of the universe, glory be to thee!” This is why Swāmi Vivekānanda called Buddha, the rebel child of Hinduism. One of the mas-

ter-facts in Indian History, a fact is to be borne in our mind, is that religious history of India is and always has been a synthesis. Hinduism is the whole and all forms of the religious movements are but the parts of the whole.

Dharma Cult :

Of the Buddhists in Bengal those who were Mohāyānists, developed the religion of Dharma mainly based on the idea of the second of the Buddhist Trinity. Trinity of triple gems are :

I take refuge in Buddha (Buddhaṃ Śaraṇaṃ gachhāmi).
I take refuge in Dharma (Dharmaṃ-Śaraṇaṃ gachhāmi).
I take refuge in Saṃgha (Saṃghaṃ Śaraṇaṃ gachhāmi). So Dharma played an important part in the lives of the Buddhists. Lord Buddha's own notion seems to have been that his religion could find its fulfilment only in its acceptance by the general people of the world, not the monk-community alone. The famous passage in the Pali canon which conveys the Buddha's first exhortation to his monk-followers, is really meaningful :

“O Bhikkhus (monks), proclaim the Dhamma which is beneficent at the beginning, beneficent in the middle and beneficent in the end.” (Mahavagga II, 1)

The life of lay people was neither expected by Buddha to be subject to monastic discipline nor directed to the ideals of monastic life. The Dharma was not meant to be their all-absorbing occupation in life, but only a regulative principle in the conduct of life.

The Dharma cult of Bengal and of some parts of Orissa is a local cult having no element of esoterism in it. In religious practice the Dharma cult has got itself amalgamated with Hindu Śaivism. The main deity of this cult is the Lord Dharma, or, as popularly known, the Dharma-thakura. Credit must be given to late Mohāmahopādhyay Haraprosad Śāstrī who first brought to the notice of the public the existence of such a religious cult and the literature on it by writing a book, “Discovery of Living Buddhism in Bengal.”

Dharma cult is a local cult of Western Bengal. The fact that the Dharma cult originated and spread only in some parts of Western Bengal is proved beyond doubt by the Dharma-maṅgala-literatures. All the poets of the Dharma-maṅgala-literature belong to the districts of West Bengal. It is also clear from the references that are found in the texts that this cult of Dharma was prevalent among the low-class people of the Hindu society. Mr. N.N. Basu in his book "Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa", has clearly proved by a comparative study of the thoughts, beliefs and practices of the crypto Buddhist cults of Orissa (as he calls them) and the various forms of the Dharma cult of West Bengal, that the Dharma cult has emerged from the decaying Buddhistic ideas and practices.

The followers of Dharma suffered much for their religious beliefs and practices from the castes Hindus. When the Mohammadans entered Bengal as a conquering power, the Dharmites took shelter under them in order to save themselves from the high-handedness of the caste Hindus. We find that some of the poets of the Dharma-maṅgalas at first refused to comply with the request of Dharma to compose any poem in his praise for the fear of social persecution.¹ Again in the story of the wrath of Lord Nirañjana ('Nirañjaner Ruṣmā') found in the Śūnyapurāṇa of Rāmāi Pandit, we come to know the fact that the Muslim conquest of Bengal and the persecution of the caste Hindus by the Muslims were acclaimed by the Dharmites to be the grace of Lord himself to save them from the hands of the merciless caste Hindus. It will not be exaggerated to mention here that unless the common people turned hostile to king Lakṣmaṇ Sen, a handful of Muslims could not have conquered Bengal so easily. Jājapura, a village in the district of Hooghly, is described in the Dharma-maṅgala literature as very important place of the Dharmites and there is also the tradition that Dharma revealed himself as Muslim (javanavatara) in this place :

1. See Dharma-maṅgala of Māñik Ganguly, p. 9

“Jājapurer dehārā bandiva ekaman ।

Jeī khāne avatār haila javan” ॥

(Dharmer Bandanā, C.U. Ms. No. 2470)

Dharma cult owes many of its elements to that form of Mohāyān Buddhism. The term which is frequently used as a synonym for Dharma, is Nirañjana. The use of the word Nirañjana for the ultimate reality or the formless Supreme Being, is found common in Śūnyavāda of Mohāyān Buddhism. If we examine the descriptions of Dharma abound in the ‘Dharma-pūjā-Vidhāna’ of Rāmāi Pandit, we shall find that some of the descriptions are almost the same as are to be found in the Mohāyān Buddhistic scriptures in connection with the meditation of the supreme deity. And also we find that in these descriptions there is always the tendency of identifying Dharma sometimes with Śiva and sometimes with Viṣṇu.

Nāth Cult : Another popular religious cult, known as the Nāth cult, developed in Bengal out of the admixture of some relics of decaying Vajrayāna Buddhism with Śaivism. Of the Vajrayāna Buddhists who became more prone to Tantra and esoteric practices than other Buddhists, evolved the cult of Nāth within the fold of Śaivism. The traditional belief of the Nāths is that this cult first originated from Ādināth. This Ādināth is none but Śiva of the Hindus, and Vajrasattva of the Buddhists. As a matter of fact we come across the epithets of ‘Ādināth’ and ‘Bhūta-nāth’ applied to Vajrasattva or Hevajra in the Buddhist Tantras as well as applied to Śiva in the Śaiva Tantras.

The Nāth cult is essentially a yogic cult and the firm belief of the Nāths is that all secrets of yoga proceeded from Ādināth, and the yogīs of Bengal even in the present day speak of themselves as belonging to the Śiva-gotra (Śiva-lineage).

The Yogīs of the Nāth cult put much emphasis on the Kāyāsādhana i. e., the culture of the body in quest of immortality. Attainment of the immutability of the body and of many kinds of supernatural powers and of immortal spiritual life through

the perfection of body is regarded by these Nāth yogis as the highest achievement in religious life. All these are common features found in Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Growth of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult :

I have mentioned earlier that the Vajrayāna school of Bengal introduced elements of yoga into ordinary worship and also gave a regular system of mantras, which could be used for all possible purposes even by all lay householders. These lay Tāntrik Buddhists householders of Bengal mingled devotion (Bhakti) with esoteric practices. After the conquest of Bengal when the Muslims began to destroy the monasteries and persecute the Buddhist monks and priests, they fled to Nepal with their scriptures leaving the millions of lay Tāntrik Buddhist householders at the mercy of the caste Hindus. There is no doubt about the fact that lots of helpless Buddhists were induced to embrace Islam in order to save themselves from privation, depreciation, disaster, decay and destruction. A vast number of esoteric Buddhist householders who practised yoga mingled with devotion and faith in Buddha and anyhow maintained their existence in disguise, later on took shelter in Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism and thus formed a separate sect named "Vaiṣṇav Sahajiyā" within the Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism. Specially the Buddhist Sahajayānists embraced Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism. The Buddhist Sahajayāna cult was essentially an esoteric yogic cult. When associated with the Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism, the same esoteric practices is to be held responsible for the growth of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult.

Development of Bhakti in Buddhism :

In order to find out the rise of Bhakti in Buddhism let us revert once again to the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. Early Pāli literature furnishes an interesting account of first two disciples of Buddhadev. It is said that after having attain-

ned perfect enlightenment Buddhadev spent four weeks under the Bodhi tree. Then he went in the fifth week to a Banyan tree. After spending there a week, Buddhadev went to Mucalinda. There he was shielded during a rainshower by the coils and hoods of the Nāga King. After a week he went to the Rājāyatana tree, where he remained another week.

On the last day of the seventh week, while Buddhadev was sitting at the foot of the Rājāyatana tree, it so happened that two merchant brothers of Utkala (Orissa) named Tapussa and Bhalluka were passing by that road with five hundred trading carts enroute to Madhyadesh. Near about the Rājāyatana tree a deity—a spirit of the departed relative of the two merchants, directed them to pay reverence to Lord Buddha, which they readily obeyed and offered Buddhadev cakes of barley and lump of honey in a bowl. Buddhadev took the food and ate it.

When Buddhadev had finished his meal, the two marchants prostrating themselves made profession of faith with the words ; “We take refuge in Buddha and in Dharma ; take us, O Lord, from hence forward life-long as lay devotees (upasaka).” The two marchants thus became the first lay devotees, by pronouncing only two articles of faith, since at that time Sangha (congregation) did not exist. After their profession of faith they besought the blessed Master to bestow upon them something which in the sequel they might worship. And Buddhadev, according to the Aṅguttara commentary, gave them a few hairs of his head. The marchants took them to their native city named Asitañjana of Orissa where they erected a magnificent monastery and deposited the hairs as relics in it.

Here it should be noted that Siddhārta after getting the Buddhahood first initiated two persons who were only two lay men. These two lay men become his first devotees. At the sametime we should bear in mind that though an earnest seeker of true knowledge (jñāna), Buddha himself planted the seed of Bhakti (devotion) by initiating these two lay men with

two cannons : "we take refuge in Buddha and in Dharma," and also encouraged the form of worship by erecting shrines over the relics of his own.

After initiating the two lay merchants of Orissa, Buddhadev then pondered in his mind to whom he should first reveal the Dharma. His thoughts turned to the five mendicant friars who had for a while faithfully attended him. Discovering in his meditation that they were living in the Deerpark near Banaras, he determined to go there and inaugurate there the dominion of Dharma and declare Nirvāṇa (immortality) in this world which is groping in darkness. He lingered a few days more under the Bodhi tree and departed on the full moon day of Āṣāḍha.

On the evening Buddhadev arrived at the Deerpark and persuaded the five monks to hear him. Buddhadev then preached his first sermon. During the exposition of Dharma by Buddhadev, Koṇḍañña (Kauṇḍiṇya) got insight and realised the true significance of Dharma. He received ordination and thus acquired the fruit of the first stage on the path to Nirvāṇa. The next day Vappa (Vāṣpa) was converted, and on the three following days Bhaddiya (Bhadrika), Mahānāman and Assaji (Aśvajit) were converted successively.

In those days there was in Banaras a young man named Yaśas, a wealthy banker's son. Once he being disgusted with family life, fled from the house and went to the Deerpark. There Buddhadev initiated him into Arhatship. Soon afterwards the father of Yaśas became a convert as lay devotee. He was the first upāsak making profession of faith by taking refuge in trinity—Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The mother of Yaśas and his wife became likewise.

It appears from Scripture that after converting the five mendicant friars, Yaśas and others, Buddhadev gathered around him sixty disciples. Buddhadev then sent out the sixty disciples in different directions with the words : "Go forth, O monks, wandering and preaching". After a few months the disciples

who were sent out to propagate Dharma, returned with a large number of persons who wished to embrace Bauddha Dharma. At that time there were huge number of Vrātyas (out-caste) who outnumbered the orthodox community, readily responded to the appeal of those sixty disciples of Buddhadev. Under such circumstances Buddhadev considered that it would be better if henceforth his sixty disciples were permitted to convert the people. He accordingly gave that permission to his disciples saying, "Let the lay people utter the threefold formula : I take refuge in Buddha, in Dharma and in Sangha". In this way Bauddha Dharma spread all over India and gradually outside of India—in Singhal, Java, Sumatra, China, Japan etc. But the real Buddhist monks were a few in number in comparison to the large number of lay Buddhists. The Buddhist monks would reside in the monasteries and would engage themselves in discussion of Dharma and in writing scriptures. The lay Buddhists would lead the family life and would support the vast Buddhist monks who would reside in the monasteries built by the Buddhist kings or by the help of the Buddhist householders.

The Pre-Aḡokan Buddhism was mostly confined to the recluses dwelling in secluded monasteies under stringency of disciplinary rules. Buddhism, however, made a definite departure from the monastic exclusiveness and stepped towards the common level when the Buddhist canons were set in a frame at the Pālimokkha code and declared the practices of the Brahma Vihāras i.e., Metta (love), Karuṇā (compassion), Muditā (ecstasy) and Upekkhā (equanimity) as the ultimate factors for the attainment of Nirvāṇ. The Vatthupama Sūta of the Majjhima Nikāya asserted that Saddhā (faith) in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—the formulae of Triśaraṇa—produces spiritual joy which tranquilises both mind and the body, and leads to deep concentration. After that one is to practice the four Brahma Vihāras i.e., mettā, karuṇā, muditā and upekkhā. By this process one gets rid of the three āsavas (impurities) i.e., Kāma

(desire), bhava (birth) and avijjā (ignorance) and subsequently attains Nirvāṇ.¹ This new ideology had a remarkable appeal as it opened the gate of Nirvāṇ not only to the Buddhist monks, but also to all the faithful householders who could cultivate Śraddha in Triśaraṇa. The lay Buddhist householders with their Triśaraṇa and other rituals, remained outside the monasteries, supplied material needs of monks and nuns, and listened faithfully to the moral discourses delivered to them by the monks on certain occasions.

The Mohāyāna Buddhist philosophers later on completely erased the historical existence of the Sākyā Sinha and gradually unfolded the doctrine of Tri-kāya—the Nirmaṇa, Sambhoga and Dharma Kāyas. The Avataṃsaka Sūtra extolling the transcendental virtues of the Buddha, states that the Tathāgata is all pervading in the Dharmadhātu (universe) and that Buddha Kāya is visible everywhere in ten directions.² Thus the Buddhism in the Post-Aśhokan period under-went a profound transformation with the development of superhuman and theistic conception of Buddha, as well as, with the rapid unfolding of the Bodhisattva and Bodhichitta ideas which made a popular appeal through the doctrine of ten Pāramitās. I have already mentioned that the philosophy propounded by the Mohāyānist like Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Diṃnāga, and the creed preached by them, appealed to the mind of the ordinary people more than philosophy of the Hīnayānist of older times. It is the 'Bhakti-yoga' principles which influenced these philosophers in their views regarding the attainment of release from bondage and the ills of life. In this connection, we may quote a significant passage from 'A New History of the Indian People':³

"Atheism was replaced by the gospel of a divine helper of

1. Majjhima Nikāya 1.36 ff.

2. Avataṃsaka Sutra, Trien Bundle, Vol I, p.6a ff.

3. Edited by R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar VI, p. 384

men and the apprehensions created by the doctrine of 'anātmā' (non-existence of soul) were practically all removed by the doctrine of 'Dharmakāya', through which an individual could get eternal existence. Nirvāṇa was not the tranquillization of human aspirations, but the fulfilment of human life; one can live in the whirlpool of life and death and yet be above it, as the Bodhisattvas do, as a matter of fact. The latter are always ready and present to save the genuine devotees, and can also transfer to them their good karma to secure their salvation. What mattered was not 'Jñāna' so much as genuine 'bhakti'; a single obeisance made to a stūpa or Buddha image by a pious devotee would secure his eventual salvation. Naturally, a religion which offered this simple way to attain the spiritual goal, became more popular than its rival, which maintained that one must depend entirely on one's own exertions for getting the Nirvāṇa".

We find support of this Bhakti cult in Mohāyāna Buddhism from the observation of Dr. Kern :

"Mohāyānism lays a great stress on devotion, in this respect as in many others harmonising with the current of feeling in India which led to the growing importance of Bhakti. It is by the feeling of fervent devotion combined with the preaching of active compassion that the creed has enlisted the sympathy of numerous millions of people and has become a factor in the history of mankind, of much greater importance than orthodox Buddhism."¹

The Mohāyāna school indicates a conception of Brahman which is based on the lines of the Vedānta philosophy. Dr. Kern has rightly observed : "It would perhaps be more accurate to say that it is a pantheistic doctrine with a theistic tinge; Buddha takes the place of the personified masculine Brahman of the Vedānta".²

1. Dr. Kern's *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 124

2. *Ibid*, p. 124 note

It has been shown in the beginning of this treatise that the primitive Buddhistic community came to be divided, in course of time, into various sects. Of these the Yogāchāra school believed in the existence of the soul. It has further been noted almost at the outset that the sect of the Mantrayāna which sprang into existence about the fourth Century A. D., believed in the unification of the Jīvātman (individual soul) and the Paramātman (the Universal soul). Thus Mantrayānist tried to assimilate the Ātmavāda, doctrine of soul, as expounded in the Upaniṣad and the Gītā. Thus we find that the Mohāyāna Buddhism associated with esoteric tendency gradually came closer to the Hinduism.

From the above brief survey of the rise of Bhakti cult in Buddhism it is revealed that the pledge of Buddhadev and the Mohāyānist was the redemption of suffering humanity as a whole. With this end in view the Mohāyānist had to make their religion catholic enough to make it acceptable even to the most ordinary people of the society. This is why the Mohāyānist laid a great stress on devotion which led to the growing importance of Bhakti in Buddhism. It was by that feeling of fervent devotion, combined with the preaching of active compassion that the Mohāyāna creed enlisted the sympathy of numerous millions of people and thus achieved a great importance throughout India.

Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇava religion is essentially based on the principles of Bhakti-yoga. Bhakti (fervent devotion) plays the most prominent part in the religious lives of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The idea of the unification of the individual soul and the universal soul and the Bhakti cult infiltrated through the Mohāyāna and the Mantrayāna into the Vajrayāna and the Sahajayāna Buddhism along with the development of esoterism. Unflinching faith in Caitanyadev, refuge in Satguru, love and compassion to all creatures and equanimity in joys and sorrows are the common features in Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism. On finding the resemblance between the two religions, the

decaying Buddhist Sahajayānists and the lay Buddhist devotees of Bengal readily took refuge in Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism in order to save their existence from the cruel hand of complete destruction. Having merged in Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism they retained the Tāntrik yoga practices secretly, thus forming the new religious cults like the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, Bāuls, Kartābhajās etc. within the fold of Gauḍīo Vaiṣṇavism.

Worship of Buddha :

Buddhism was developed in India, not as a sect, but as a religious order, founded by one of the greatest of the World-Gurus. Its only function was to preach the Gospel and give individual souls the message of Nirvāṇa.

The Buddhist monks would live in an abbey. In culture abbey would act as a university. In ideals it represented the spiritual equality and fraternity of all men. Its inmates were vowed to religious celibacy. Many foreign students like Fa Hian, Hieun Tsang, came to these ancient monastic universities to drink of the springs of Indian learning. It was from these abbeys, again, that the missions proceeded to foreign countries.

Ajantā was the ancient abbey. Ajantā caves might probably have been natural caverns occupied long before the time of Aśoka by a handful of Buddhist monks. These caves formed the whole glory of Ajantā. When we enter cave nine for the first time, we find ourselves as if in the company of a great host of rapt and adoring worshippers. This silent throng of painted worshippers suggests to the mind's eye the worship itself that once filled the little cathedral chapel. It must have been the cause that led to the rapid organisation of a ritual. The ritual then followed, was to make Pradak-Shina about the Stūpa-shaped alter, to carry lights, to wave the incense and to make prostration.

Any ne who studies the religious movement of Buddhism, is

bound to notice two opposite influences which came into play one after another. At first the movement was highly abstract. The system then introduced, was atheistic, nihilistic and philosophic in the highest and severest sense. Personal realisation of Nirvāṇa was the only goal for the individual soul. Even in the reign of Aśoka we see the erection of rails, pillars and stūpas, the glorification of holy places and the worship of the sacred relics, but never see a trace of worship of the personality of Buddha himself. The religious symbolism of Buddhistic devotion seems to have been at this period the Bodhi tree, the Stūpa and the footprint.

But the recognition of the Bodhisattvas which came in with Kaniṣka, brought a great change in the religious movement of Buddhism. The doctrine of the Bodhisattvas might have been born in Magadha and from there have been poured out upon the Council of Kaniṣka at Taxila. Thereafter the doctrine of the Bodhisattvas flourished. From the doctrine of the Bodhisattvas followed the doctrine of the divinity of Buddha. Of course the Mahāsaṅghakas of Magadha first made Buddha a super god, and then the idea of trikāya emanated. The doctrine of the divinity of Buddha, in fact, gave rise to the emergence of a doctrine of the Incarnation. In later period Vaiṣṇavism incorporated Buddha in its own synthesis as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. However this new movement of Buddhism placed in each Vihar of Ajantā a Buddha shrine. Further more the ancient abbeys, the abode of the Buddhist monks and disciples, began to be transformed into Universities. It was with this emphasising of the function of the abbeys as the abode of learning that the image of the great Guru became all important. The image of Buddha in each abbey doubtless received a certain ritualised attention morning and evening, lamps were lighted, incense was burnt before it, but its main purpose was to keep the students in mind of the great Guru, the divine teacher, in whose invisible presence every act was to be performed. At first the Stūpa was the shrine in which the holy relic was depo-

sited. In later period the Stūpa was identified with Lord Buddha. The Stūpas, in the middle ages, were erected in abundance all over India and they were worshipped with great pomp and ceremony on festive occasions. With this new development of Buddhism, we find the growth in the belief of worshipping the image of Buddha and also of visiting the places of pilgrimage associated with life of Buddha. Thus Buddhism considerably stepped down to the stage of the common people from its high pedestal of monastic idealism.

Taking Buddha as the founder, not of a sect, but of a monastic order, it is easy to see that his disciples were those only on whom his idea had shone. Yet he must have had many lovers and admirers who could not become monastic. They were the lay devotees of Buddha. Though they could not go out in the life of the wanderer monk, leaving the duties towards the members of their family, yet they could not fail to be influenced by Buddha whom they loved so dearly in all their living and thinking. So it naturally follows that the posterior heirs of Buddha-Bhakti in Bengal might be on the one hand Vaiṣṇavite Hindus or on the other Śaivite Hindus. The Vaiṣṇava movement of Sri Chaitanya in the sixteenth century A. D. swept over Bengal and Orissa. The movement seized high and low alike. It penetrated into the hearts of the most ignorant and untouchable. So it embraced and transformed all that was left of Buddhism. Because Sri Chaitanya had the Buddha-like personality and compassion for all irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Fervent devotion and religious ecstasy of Sri Chaitanya had a magnetic influence which drew millions of admiring followers wherever he went. He was regarded by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as the double incarnation of both Kṛiṣṇa and Rādhā as Buddha was considered by his devotees as a Super-god. The day of the full moon in Vaisākha is a sacred day of the Buddhists. Throughout the whole Buddhistic world, the day is observed with rituals like worshipping and prostrating before the image of

Buddha, offering flowers, burning incense, lighting lamps, clasping hands and muttering prayers in connection with the birth, the spiritual enlightenment and the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Buddha. The same practice is also found prevalent among the followers of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu on his birth day of Fālgunī Pūrṇimā. A very great enthusiasm amongst the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas prevails on that occasion. On finding the glaring similarities between the two religions and the similar characteristics of two great Gurus, the decaying Buddhist devotees of Bengal did not find any difficulty to accept and adapt the religion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

It has already been mentioned that the most flourishing period of Tāntrika Buddhism was during the reign of the Pāla Kings of Bengal and lasted till the Mahammadan conquest of Eastern India. The Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism by this time exerted a great influence on the eastern parts of India, especially on Bengal and Orissa. Having given a survey of the history of Buddhist Tāntrik literature and the analysis of ideas, doctrines and concepts in previous chapters, we shall hence proceed to give a definition or rather a description of what is ordinarily meant by the word Tantra. Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Śāstrī has given the definition and the origin of Tantra as early as 1911, in his introduction to N. N. Vasu's 'Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa'. There he has written, "The world Tantra is very loosely used. Ordinary people understand by it any system other than the Vedas. But it really means the worship of Śakti or female energy. The female energy is worshipped in conjunction with male energy. The union of male and female is the essence of Tantra".

This definition truly applies to the Buddhist Tantras. The introduction of the Śakti worship for the first time found expression in the 'Guhyasamājatantra', where the theory of the five Dhyāni Buddhas was for the first time systematised and each was assigned a Śakti for the purposes of union.

The Buddhist Sahajayānists of Bengal were essentially Tāntriks. They resorted to esoterism in their religious life. The supreme goal of their esoteric practice is the attainment of Buddhahood of Infinite Light and Life and the establishment in the land of 'Sukhāvati'¹ i.e., the land of Bliss. To be established in the Sukhāvati land and to enjoy 'Mahāsukha' or supreme bliss are regarded the Pravritti Mārga by the Tāntric Buddhists. The Vajrayānists described Mahāsukha as a state when Bodhicitta merges in Śūnya on the attainment of Nirvāṇa. To symbolize this they conceived the idea of 'yuganaddha' deities where the male and the female divinities are represented as embracing each other.

The pure and simple Śūnya-vāda was supplemented by Vijñāna-vāda of Maitreyanath. But it struck to some minds that there was little difference between the two. One says, "I am śūnya", while the other says, "I am conscious that I am Śūnya". The prospect of Nirvāṇa was not attractive in either. So another idea was brought in; and that was the idea of Mahāsukha. With these three ideas Nirvāṇa became very attractive: "I shall be Śūnya, I shall be conscious that I am Śūnya and I shall enjoy supreme pleasure. There can be no supreme knowledge without pleasure; supreme knowledge is said to be the same as pleasure. This is the positive aspect of Nirvāṇa as against its negative aspect. This positive aspect of Nirvāṇa has been designated as pravritti Mārga as against the Nivritti Mārga.

Before the eleventh century had come to its close, divisions of Pravritti Mārga and Nivritti Mārga were effected in the camp of the Tāntrik Buddhism. The Sahajayāna Buddhists who were the followers of Pravritti Mārga aimed at the realisation of the unity of the Ādi-Buddha and Ādi-Prajñā (Param Puruṣa and Paramā Prakriti).

The Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas, the devotees of Sri Chaitanya, also

1. See "The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy" of Junjiro Takakusu.

follow the path of Pravritti. By cultivating the deep emotional feelings of love towards Kṛṣṇa they aspire after entering into the eternal land of Vṛiṇḍāban where the love-sports of Kṛṣṇa and His Hlādinī Śakti Rādhā are being eternally enacted. By witnessing and taking active part in helping the enactment of love-sports between the two counter parts of One Supreme Being, those fortunate devotees enjoy the supreme delight. When Buddhism had practically vanished from Bengal, the esoteric Sahajayāna Buddhists merged with the religion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism finding the full scope of retaining their system of Pravritti Mārga.

While merged with the religion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, the Buddhist Sahajayānist of Bengal maintained their identity within the religion of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and identified themselves as the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās retaining their yogic practices under the garb of the philosophy of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The newly formed Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās conceived Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the transformed forms of Rasa and Rati within the human body. Retainment of the same yogic practices and discipline of Tāntric Buddhism is highly responsible for the growth of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā movement of Bengal. And it developed widely during the post-Chaitanya period. A close study of the literature of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās will leave no room for doubting the clear fact that it retains the spirit and practices of the earlier Buddhist Sahajayānas, of course in a distinctly transformed form. The yogic processes, frequently referred to in the lyrical songs of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās as well as in the innumerable short and long texts embodying the doctrines of this cult, are fundamentally the same as are found in the Buddhist Tantras and in the songs and Dohās of the Buddhist Siddhācāryas. Again, the same spirit of Guruvāda that characterises the Caryā-padas, Dohās of the Buddhist Sahajayānas, characterises also the songs and other texts of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās.

It is very curious to note in this connection that some sali-

ent features of Śaiva and Śākta Tantras are found in the literature of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. Some of the Bengali texts of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, composed sometime between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, are introduced in the form of a dialogue between Śiva and Śakti, who are depicted as discussing the secrets of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Sādhanā¹ and in the 'Ānanda-Bhairava'² it is hinted that Hara or Śiva himself practised this Sahaja Sādhanā in the company of the different Śaktis in the country of the Kuchanis, women belonging to a aboriginal tribe :

“Ek ek guṇe Kaila ek ek prakṛiti,
Hara-ke bhajaye sabhe bhāv upapati.
Śakti jāne rasa-tattva āṛ jāne Śankare,
Sahaj vastu āsvādila Kuchani nagare”.

(Ānanda-Bhairava, p. 93)

As the Buddhist Siddhācāryas employed an extremely enigmatic style in their songs in describing the secrets of their sādhanā, so also it was the custom with the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās to veil the secrets of their Sādhanā under a similar enigmatic style. Many of the songs ascribed to Chandīdās who is regarded as a Sahajiyā Sādhak by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, are good specimens of such an enigmatic style. Thus it is clear that in spirit as well as in literary representation, the relation between the Buddhist Sahajiyās and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās clearly shows an easy gliding from the one to the other.

Caitanyadev and the Bengal Vaiṣṇava Community.

Caitanyadev had a forceful religious personality. His name before initiation into Sannyās was Viśvambhar. He was born at Navadvīp on the day of Phālgunī Paurṇamāsī in February

1. See “Chaitanyottar Pratham Chāriti Sahajiyā Punthi” edited by the author.

2. Ibid, p. 80

1486 A.D. His nickname was Nimāi. His personal charm and beauty earned the epithet of Gaur or Gaurānga. At the age of about twenty two Viśvambhar undertook a pilgrimage to Gayā for the purpose of performing his father's Śrāddha at the holy place. There Īśvar Purī, the disciple of Mādhavendra Purī, gave him the Kṛṣṇa-Mantra of ten syllables (daśākṣara) and what exactly happened is not known, but it is true that suddenly came a religious awakening in him. Before meeting with Īśvar Purī at Gaya, Caitanya whose early name was Viśvambhar, was a proud and light-hearted young scholar whose only hobby was to pick flaws in grammar with other Sanskrit scholars only to humiliate them. But meeting with Īśvar Purī at Gayā is said to have formed a turning point in Caitanya's life. He came back to Navadvīp as a complete different person. Wrapped in mystic and emotional experience he incessantly shouted the name of Kṛṣṇa and went into mystic trances which from this time became a striking feature of his religious experience. Very soon he was joined by Nityānanda who is said to have been for many years an Avadhūta ascetic. Coming in close contact with Caitanyadev at Navadvīp, Nityānanda became oblivion his former Avadhūta career, became excited with the religious ecstasy of Caitanyadev and played an important part in the history of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava movement. He was born at a village named Ekacakra in the district of Birbhum, which was a stronghold of Śāktism. The influence of Śāktism left a permanent stamp on his early life at Ekacakra. At the early age of eighteen (according to Jayānanda), Nityānanda left home and as a wandering Avadhūta travelled extensively over Northern and Southern India. He was older than Caitanya by eight years. Viśvambhar then became the centre of the devout Vaiṣṇava group of Navadvīp and came to be regarded as the very incarnation of their spirit of devotion : "Bāngāllīr hiyā amiya mothia Nemai dhorechhe Kāyā". His extra-ordinary emotional feelings had the power of evoking similar emotion in others. The very nature of his

deep religious ecstasy and the irresistible charm of his gifted personality made him the natural leader of the group.

We also find that the most commanding figure of the Vaiṣṇavas of the Navadvīp group was Advaita Ācārya who was a disciple of Mādhavendra Purī. His family name was Kama-lākṣa Bhāṭṭācārya. He was an elderly scholar of Sāntipur, who lived for the most part at Navadvīp. His scholarly attainments, pious life and sincere devotion made him a natural leader of this group before Caitanyadev took the reign. There can be no doubt that Advitācārya recognised the power of Caitanyadev and fell under the spell of his rapturous devotion. The 'Prema-vilās' (ch.I) of Nityānandadās—a Bengali Vaiṣṇava work—informs us that after Caitanyadev had left Navadvīp, Advitācārya took up the older doctrine of Mukti (Jñāna) and deviated from the emotional creed of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas Bhakti, which apparently indicates his leanings towards non-dualistic Vedānta. This also is supported by the statement of his conversation with Nityānanda in 'Caitanya Caritāmrita' (Madhya XII, 193f.) of Krishnadas Kavirāj. The Caitanya Caritāmrita refers unmistakably to Advaita Ācārya's leanings towards Jñāna-mārga (Adi XII, 40 ; XVII, 67).

After playing a vital role in his short life at Navadvīp, Caitanyadev induced Keśava Bhāratī to initiate him as a sannyāsī under the name of Srikṛṣṇa Caitanya, usually abbreviated to Sri Caitanya. The initiation took place at Katwa on January, 1510 A.D. when Caitanyadev was barely twenty four years old. After initiation he left for Puri. Although a close connection was kept up between Caitanyadev and his Bengal followers by their annual visits to Puri, yet his renunciation and departure to Puri came as a terrible blow to the Vaiṣṇava devotees of Navadvīp. His personality was not only the strongest asset of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava Community, but also the only powerful influence which kept the organisation into a unified compact body. After his departure, the organisation of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava community was left at the hands of Advaitā-

cārya and Nityānanda. But the dissension between the two leaders grew up quickly. As a result the Bengal Vaiṣṇava community was split up into two main rival groups : one under the leadership of Advaitācārya and the other under Nityānanda. Naturally Advaitācārya and Nityānanda had their separate group of followers. We hear also of a Gadādhara Sampradāya (group in addition to the sampradāyas (groups) of Advaitācārya and Nityānanda from Vṛṇḍāvandāsa's 'Caitanyabhāgavat' (Madhya III, X, XIII, Antya IV).

Of the biographies of Caitanyadev In Bengali, the earliest and by far the most important with respect to the early part of Caitanya's life, is the 'Caitanya-bhāgavata' composed by Vṛṇḍāvandās at the command of Nityānanda. It was written within a few years after Caitanya's death and at a time when Nityānanda was still alive. Vṛṇḍāvandās was so faithful and enthusiastic disciple of Nityānanda that a great deal of his attention was occupied in giving the detailed accounts of Nityānanda's life while writing Caitanya's biography. Very frequently in his work, Vṛṇḍāvandās refers in a somewhat impatient and immoderate abusive languages to those who speak ill of Nityānanda. His vigorous invective itself indicates the existence of some amount of ill-feeling in the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas against Nityānanda. It appears from it that at the time of his writing, which was probably ten to fifteen years after Caitanya's death, the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas were already split into several sects paying homage to Advaitācārya, Nityānanda and Gadādhara.

When Caitanyadev left Bengal immediately after his sannyās, we feel sure that he commended his followers at Navadvīp to the care of the venerable Advaitācārya as well as to Nityānanda. Advaitācārya was then too old to devote necessary energy for guiding the Vaiṣṇava movement. It is also said in the 'Prema-vilāsa' of Nityānandadās that for a time Advaitācārya gave up the way of Bhakti (devotion) and reverted to the doctrine of Jñāna. As a result of that the leadership

of Navadvīp and consequently of the whole of Bengal Vaiṣṇava community naturally fell upon Nityānanda. But his somewhat unconventional life, about which complaints were made to Caitanyadev at Puri, made him unpopular against which his disciple Vṛṇḍāvandās took much pains to defend him. Nityānanda married Vasudhā and Jāhnavī, daughters of Sūryadās Sārkhel. Jayānanda in his book 'Caitanya mangal' which was written at the instance of Gadādhara who was a favourite Navadvīp companion of Caitanyadev, speaks of another daughter of Sūryadās, named Candramukhī, as a beloved of Nityānanda. This sort of renouncing his ascetic life and vows was not liked by the ascetic Gosvāmīs of Vṛṇḍāvan and a group of conservative Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp. Moreover, he took also the revolutionary step of admitting under the banner of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism all classes of men without any discrimination. As for instance he converted the noted Tāntrik of Chhatrabhog named Tārācharan Chakravartty who was the worshipper of the Śākta-goddess 'Tripurāsundarī'. The initiation took place at Saptagrām in the district of Hooghly. At that time Saptagrām was famous for its prosperity, being the centre-place of merchandise of Bengal. After initiation Nityānanda named him Sri Caitanyadās.¹ Most of the Vaiṣṇavas of Navadvīp circle, under the leadership of Advaitācārya, appear to have adopted the conservative attitude; and they either did not approve of the step taken by Nityānanda or stood aloof from it. Thus a vital division took place early in the sect of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, which had enduring consequences. It is also remarkable that Vṛṇḍāvan Gosvāmīs seldom mention Advaitācārya and Nityānanda. Only in the introductory verses to the Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī (1578 A. D.) obeisance is made to Advaitācārya and Nityānanda.

A large number of the Navadvīp-followers of Caitanyadev

1. Sri Sri Vrajadhām O Gosvāmīgan, III Vol., p. 91

came from Śrīkhaṇḍa. Śrīkhaṇḍa is adjacent to Navadvīp. Prior to the advent of Caitanya-dev, Śrīkhaṇḍa was very famous for a centre of Tāntrik culture. There lived an influential gentleman named Nārāyaṇdās who was Vaidya by caste. His youngest son named Narahari Sarkār was an associate of Caitanya-dev and was recognised as one of his best disciples. Under the capable organisation of Narahari Sarkār, Śrīkhaṇḍa grew up a strong centre of Vaiṣṇavism. But the Śākta influence infiltrated into the Vaiṣṇavism of Śrīkhaṇḍa. This is why the Vaiṣṇavas of Śrīkhaṇḍa developed their own theology which was somewhat different from that of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

One of the biographies of Caitanya-dev in Bengali is 'Caitanya-mangal' composed by Locandās at the instance of his Guru, Narahari Sarkār of Śrīkhaṇḍa. Locandās in his work, has glorified his Guru, Narahari Sarkār into one of the five Tattvas of Caitanyaism. In 'Gaura-ganoddeśa' Kavikarṇapūr develops the doctrine of Pañca-tattva which regards Caitanya, Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadādhara and Śrīvās as the five tattvas of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava faith. Kavikarṇapūr attributes the origin of the doctrine of Pañca-tattva to Svarūp Dāmodar. Locandās in his work, substitutes his own Guru, Narahari Sarkār for Śrīvās.

A metrical work in eight Patalas, called 'Bhakticandrikā' (ed. Rākhālānanda Śāstri of Śrīkhaṇḍa, Satyaratna Press 1920), ascribed to Lokānanda Ācārya, deals generally with Caitanya-worship, but contains a great deal of ritualistic matter. The profusion of Tāntrik rites and formulas is a noteworthy feature of this book. The author tells us (iv. 21,24) that in the six corners of the Tāntrik lotus-circle (Maṇḍala), the various followers and associates of Caitanya-dev are to be worshipped—Gadādhara Paṇḍit in front, Svarūpa Dāmodar and Narahari Sarkār on the right and left respectively and so forth. It is to be noticed that the author has given Narahari Sarkār the foremost place of honour in the

inner region of the Maṇḍala whereas the notable associates of Caitanyadev are allowed place on the outer circle.

In this connection it is necessary to refer to a group of composers of Bengali Padas bearing on some aspects of the Navadvīp life of Sri-Caitanya. Sri-Caitanya's emotional life of devotion at Navadvīp inspired all his followers of the Navadvīp circle. These faithful devotees looked upon him with loving eyes, which matured in a spirit of worshiping him as the highest object of adoration. This, afterwards, gave rise to the theological ideas which inculcated the worship of the Supreme God, Krishna as imaged by Sri-Caitanya's life of devotion.

Of the contemporary Padas on Sri-Caitanya, those ascribed to Narahari Sarkar of Śrīkhaṇḍa and Vāsudeva Ghose of Kulāi (both the places belong to the district of Burdwan) are the most interesting. Some of their Padas are undoubtedly spurious. But there is no doubt about the fact that Narahari Sarkar composed many Bengali songs in which he symbolised his religious longings in the form of womanly love towards Śrī-Caitanya such as the Gopīs in the Bhāgavata felt towards Kṛṣṇa. His disciple, Locanadās and his other followers of the Navadvīp circle accepted this view. These devotees conceived themselves as Nāgarīs in love with Śrī-Caitanya as a Nāgar. About two hundred Padas to this effect are found in the 'Gaura-pada-taranginī' compiled by Jagadbandhu Bhadra, published by Vangīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, Calcutta, 1902. This Nāgarbhāva of Narahari Sarkar was not accepted, rather was condemned by other sects of Bengal Vaiṣṇavas and by the Vṛṇḍāvan Gosvāmīs.

The other Pada-writer, Vāsudeva Ghose believed in the Rādhā-bhāva of the Caitanya incarnation—a doctrine which is found in the Rāmānanda Roy episode described by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja in his work 'Caitanya-caritāmṛta'.

It is also to be mentioned here that Kṛṣṇānanda Āgama-vāgīś, the famous author of 'Tantra-sāra' and the great

exponent of Tāntrik doctrines in Bengal, is said to have been a contemporary of Śrī-Caitanya: and there can be hardly any doubt as to the wide-spread influence of Tantra at that time in Bengal. Navadvīp which witnessed the birth, youth and early manhood of Śrī-Caitanya, was at that time the stronghold of Tāntricism. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism of that time could scarcely escape its influence. Recognition of Śakti-tattva, classification of Śakti-tattvas of Lord Kṛṣṇa into three groups, such as, Svarūp-Śakti, Jiva-śakti and Māyā-śakti, and the idea of Rādhā as the Hlādinī-śakti of Kṛṣṇa, and the acceptance of Kāmāgāyatri—all these indicate the Tāntrik influence on Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Rūpa Gosvāmi, the most renowned Gosvāmi of Vṛndāvan and one of the best favourite disciples of Śrī-Caitanya, has declared in his book 'Ujjvala-nīlamani' that Rādhā is established in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as the Hlādinī Mohāśakti of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. The idea of Rādhā as the Hlādinī Śakti of Kṛṣṇa has been fully utilised by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in their own way of thinking and giving it a practical shape to their mode of practising the religious life with a view to arriving at the highest goal of spiritual life.

Virbhadrā, the son of Nityānanda, was a clever organizer. He did not fail to notice the importance of incorporating the Vajrayān and Sahajayān Buddhists of Bengal into the Vaiṣṇava community introduced by his father to make it strong and popular from all points of view and attract more adherents thereby. So he converted a large number of Tāntrik Buddhists and brought them into his fold. It is said that the number of conversion of such Buddhists was two thousand and five hundred including both men and women. The conversion took place at Khardāh in the district of Twenty-four Parganas of Bengal.

From the above investigation we may safely arrive to this conclusion that after the death of Caitanyadev the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas of Nityānanda Sampradāya (group), the decaying Tāntrik Vajrayān and Sahajayān Buddhists of Bengal and

the Tāntrik minded Vaiṣṇavas of Śrīkhaṇḍa were amalgamated into one group holding Nityānanda to be their foremost Guru and guiding inspiration. These three different groups shared a common and similar view towards Tantra. Therefore, the theology of these three religious sects were easily assimilated ; and thus emerged out of them a new religious movement named 'Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā' under the banner of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

DEVELOPMENT OF SAHAJIYĀ CULT : CONTRIBUTIONS OF MASTERS OF THIS SCHOOL

The most authoritative treatises of this school available today belong to Post Caitanya period. This period ranging from the sixteenth century A.D. to nineteenth century A.D., was the most creative period in the history of the Sahajiyās. Most of the standard works and the treatises based on Sahajiyā culture and commentaries on them by subsequent writers, fall in this period. This period was filled with numerous works of the Sahajiyās, but most of which have disappeared, though some have survived in a complete or mutilated form ; and some are known through references and quotations.

The master contributors of this school are Svarūpa Dāmodar, Rai Rāmānanda, Raghunath Das, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja, Mukuṇḍa Deva Goswāmī, Prema Das, Rasika Das Goswāmī and Akinchana Das. The Sahajiyās trace the origin of their doctrine to Caitanyadev whose teachings and mystic love of last eighteen years of his life at Puri, has come down to them filtered through the writings of Svarūpa, Rāmānanda, Raghunath, Kṛṣṇadās and others.

Svarūpa Dāmodar : Svarūpa Dāmodar was one of the few faithful followers of Caitanyadev during his last eighteen years' stay at Puri. He possessed great influence upon Caitanyadev and knew his mind. Caitanyadev himself paid a tribute to his scholarship and devotion when he laughingly confessed to

young Raghunāth that Svarūpa knew more about the secrets of his mysterious religious life than he himself did.¹

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his book 'Caitanya Caritāmṛta', has referred to Svarūpa Dāmodar's 'Kaṣacā' which was composed in Sanskrit, as his chief source for describing the last years of Caitanya's life. Kaṣacā of Svarūpa Dāmodar has not yet been found out. The well-known verse "Śri-rādhayaḥ praṇaya-mohimā Kīdrīṣā Bā" etc. quoted in Caitanya Caritāmṛta, is attributed to Svarūpa Dāmodar who composed it in his Kaṣacā. It is said that in this Kaṣacā he elaborately established the divinity of Caitanyadev. He first revealed by the above mentioned verse that "Caitanya is both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in one personality. Kṛṣṇa Himself assuming the Rādhā-bhāva (emotion) and Kānti (complexion) has appeared as Caitanya at Navadvīpa in order to relish the charm of his own with the emotional sentiments of Rādhā." So the Sahajiyās hold Svarūpa Dāmodar as the first interpreter of the mystic love of Caitanya.

We know that Caitanyadev sent his two famous disciples Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to Vṛiṇḍāvana with instructions to write religious books dealing with the mystic love peculiar to Vraja. In accordance with his instructions the Vṛiṇḍāvana Gosvāmīs engaged themselves in interpreting the Godhead of Kṛṣṇa and His Vṛiṇḍāvana-Līlā as revealed in 'Bhāgavat Purāṇa' and other scriptures. But they remained almost entirely silent about Caitanya-līlā and its place in the devotional system of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. The Sahajiyās of Bengal have accepted in their devotional system, the mystic culture of love as was evident in the last life of Caitanyadev and interpreted by Svarūpa Dāmodar. We shall later discuss this point elaborately.

Rāmānanda Roy : Śri-Caitanya's meeting with a scholarly and devout Vaiṣṇava, named Rāmānanda Roy was also an

1. See Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya XIII, p. 122, 134-5.

another important incident in his life of Orissa. Rāmānanda Roy is said to have held some high official position under the King, Pratāprudra of Orissa. The meeting between Śrī-Caitanya and Rāmānanda Roy, took place at the bathing ghat on the river bank of Godāvāri. Rāmānada recognised the intensity and power of Śrī-Caitanya's devotion and eagerly joined the circle of his intimate and faithful followers. A warm attachment sprang up between them. Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj himself has stated in his book 'Caitanya Caritamrita' that he has based his account of Rāmānanda-Śrī-Caitanya-episode on Svarūpa Dāmodar's Kaḍacā. Kavikarṇapura in his book 'Caitanya-Candrodaya', has characterised Rāmānanda Roy as a Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava. It is said by Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj that both Svarūpa Dāmodar and Rāmānanda Roy would instigate and fan the Rādhā-bhāva in Caitanya. Both of them accompanied by Raghunath Das, are said to be the sole and lone witnesses, for the last eighteen years, of the mysterious secret religious emotional rapture of Caitanyadev at Puri. For the last eighteen years of his exclusive madness of divine love (Dibyonmād) he was watched and tended with loving solicitude by Svarūpa Dāmodar and his disciple Raghunath Das.

Raghunath Das : Raghunath Das lived with Caitanyadev for sixteen years at Puri. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj made a considerable use of the personal reminiscences of this venerable Gosvāmī in his account of the last phase of Caitanya's career. Raghunath Das renounced the world for the sake of spiritual life. He was born in a very rich Zaminder family of Saptagrām in the district of Hooghly. His father's income was twelve lakhs of rupees per year. But Raghunath Das who was the only heir to this immense fortune, evinced deep religious tendencies from his boyhood. At his very young age he escaped the vigilance of his father and left home. After an arduous journey he reached Caitanyadev at Puri where he was handed over for spiritual training to Svarūpa Dāmodar. After the death of Caitanyadev and Svarūpa Dāmodar he left Puri for Vṛiṇḍavan

where he joined Rūpa and Sanātana, lived near Rādhā-kunḍa and led a life of hard asceticism till his death.

He wrote some verses in Sanskrit in the nature of fervent lyrical hymns, stavas or stotras which have been collected together and published under the title 'Stavāvalī'. In his verses he has dealt with the mystic erotic aspects of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship. The erotic mysticism of his verses consists of a deeply emotional spiritualisation of sensuous passions. Raghunath Gosvāmī's another composition was his 'Mukta-Caritra', a Sanskrit kāvya of the Champū type, written in prose and occasional verse. In the last verse of the Mukta-caritra he speaks of Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj in whose company at Rādhā-kunḍa he passed his last days in Vrīṇḍāvan. Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj tells us (Caitanya Caritāmṛita, Antya XIV. 7) that like Svarūp Dāmodar, Raghunath Das Gosvāmī also wrote some biographical account of Śrī-Caitanya in the 'Kaḍacā' from which is also found missing like the 'Kaḍacā' of Svarūp Dāmodar.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj : The author of the post-Caitanya period, who is frequently referred to in the Sahajiyā books, is Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. His 'Caitanya-Caritāmṛita' is the most popular work with the Sahajiyās of Bengal. What is the cause of the Sahajiyās' referring to Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj and his work Caitanya Caritāmṛita? The reason is obvious. Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj's standard Bengali biography of Caitanyadev gives a good account of the ideology of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā's religion. In the Caitanya-Caritāmṛita, Kṛṣṇa is represented to have made the following observations :

"When I look at my own image through a mirror I become captivated by my own beauty. I long to enjoy it, but fail in my purpose. When I think of the means of tasting it, I find that I can do so by transforming myself into Rādhā" (c.c. Ādi I, ch. 4). This, in fact, is the true spirit of the Marma Parakīyā culture which has been adopted by the Sahajiyās as a dogma in their religion. Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj also maintains that

the real cause of incarnation of Śrī-Caitanya was to popularise the devotional worship of Kṛṣṇa. In the last-stage of eighteen years of his life, Caitanyadev had offered an illustration of the Rāgānugā mode of divine love, so that the people could learn the emotional doctrine by imitating his own example (Caitanya Caritāmrita Ādi I, Ch. 4). The Sahajiyās have based their creed on the ideal of divine love as illustrated by Caitanyadev in his last life. In fact, they have based the doctrine of 'Bhakti' exclusively on the emotional service of love and devotion as a means of spiritual realisation of the nectar of God Kṛṣṇa as Caitanyadev relished during the last eighteen years of his exclusive madness of divine love. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his Caitanya-Caritāmrita (Madhya, ch. II) has clearly stated that this kind of emotional love is Sahaja love. Here Sahaja love means the natural affection of the Bhakta Sādhak used in the worship of God. This devotional love is inherent in man's nature, but is lying dormant on account of his ignorance and absorption in earthly pleasures.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have classified the divine love into four categories : (1) Dāśya (that of a servant), (2) Sakhya (that of a friend), (3) Vātsalya (that of parents) and (4) Mādhurya (that of a husband and wife). Of these four kinds of emotional love, Mādhurya is said to be the best of all. Mādhurya or Madhurā-rati is again subdivided into Svakīyā and Parakīyā, of which the latter is the better of the two. This will be elaborately dealt with in the Chapter of Parakīyā Doctrine. The masters of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism profess : "Serve God as a servant and love Him as you love your friend, own child or husband. Then and then only you can attain to the nearness of God under the influence of real love which subsists among persons of equal status only." It is maintained by them that a devotee may adopt any of the four kinds of devotional love in his attempt to realise God. Thus the followers of emotional service and love to God in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community are classified on the basis of the nature of their love falling into these four classes.

So the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have recognised all the four kinds of emotions, though they lay special stress on Madhurā-rati. But the Sahajiyās have adopted the Madhurā-rati only discarding the other three emotions, asserting that the mystic doctrine of love rests on the foundation of the Madhurā-rati (emotion). They hold fast to Mādhurya, the divine sentiment of love alone. We thus find that in the sphere of emotional culture, the Sahajiyās cannot think of any other emotion except that of Madhura. The ideal of conjugal love being the only ideal has been adopted by them in mystic culture accompanied with the sentiment of Parakīyā. From this stand-point the Sahajiyās differ from the Orthodox Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. This is the significant sign of the Post-Caitanya Sahajiyā doctrine of Bengal.

Caitanya-Tattva : Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj holds that the doctrine that Caitanya is the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa as well as of Rādhā, was first preached by Svarūpa Dāmodar in his Kaḍacā and then by Raghunath Das in his Stavāvalī. He himself received instructions and inspirations in writing Caitanya-Caritāmṛita from Raghunath Das. The 'Prema-vilāsa' tells us that Raghunath Das was his Dīkṣā guru who initiated him into ascetic life.

In the Stavāvalī of Raghunath Das who was the most fortunate of all the six Gosvāmins of Vṛiṇḍāvan in obtaining longer and closer personal intimacy with Caitanyadev at Puri, we have the first two stotras directly concerned with Caitanyadev. The most remarkable statement occurs in the first verse which refers chiefly to Caitanya's double incarnation by saying that Kṛṣṇa desiring to taste His won sweetness as it was tasted by Rādhā, was born in Gauḍa in the one indivisible body of fair complexion belonging to Rādhā.

The doctrine of double incarnation of Caitanya, we find, in its full-fledged form in the Bengali theological biography of Caitanyadev written by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the direct disciple of Raghunath. In his work Kṛṣṇadās took upon himself the task of analysing the Caitanya-tattva (concept). Kṛṣṇa in order to

relish the supreme taste of His own Mādhurya as it was relished by His most beloved Rādhā, assumed the feelings as well as the beauty of Rādhā, so that the two became one in Caitanya. The records of the last phase of his life show that Caitanyadev being overwhelmed with Mādana Mahābhāva of Rādhā, longed for his beloved Kṛṣṇa and pined for the separation from Him. In this emotional intense feeling of Rādhā-bhāva, Caitanyadev received support from Rāmānanda Roy. The idea of the Rādhā-incarnation of Caitanya is attributed by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj to Rāmānanda Roy. Kṛṣṇadās in his account emphasises that after Caitanyadev met Rāmānanda Roy, the Rādhā-bhāva in Caitanyadev became intensified, as if Rāmānanda Roy revealed him to himself. Rāmānanda held Caitanya an embodiment of Rādhā and characterised his Rādhā-bhāva as the highest emotion of the devotional state, namely, the Mādana Mahābhāva of Rādhā. It is definite that the association with Rāmānanda formed a turning point in Caitanya's career of *Rāgānugā* Prema-bhakti. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj has further told us that it is to Rāmānanda alone and to no other, Caitanyadev revealed himself in the united form of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Rāmānanda is called a Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava by Kavikarṇapūr as well as by the Sahajiyās. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj also informs us that from the time of revelation of Rādhā-bhāva in him Caitanyadev began to appreciate deeply Joyadev's erotic mysticism and mystic verses of Caṇḍidās, which he is said to have enjoyed in Rāmānanda's company at Puri. This is why Joyadev and Caṇḍidās are claimed by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās as their Ādi-gurus in the Pre-Caitanya period and recognised them as Rasik-Sādhakas. The Sahajiyās also depict Caitanyadev as a Bhakta of passionate devotion.

From the above analysis we may derive that in the Caitanya-līlā the Supreme Being combines the roles of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, as the subject (Āśraya) and the object (Viśaya) of Divine Blissful Love, who have separate existence

in eternal Vriṇḍāvan in spite of essential identity in the Supreme Being. In the incarnation of Caitanyadev, the Supreme Being again unites in Himself, for the purposes of relishing his own divine bliss and propagating the excellence of Prema-bhakti, the two forms of the Śakti and the Śaktimat in a kind of identity in non-identity. His blissful divine attribute (Hlāḍini Śakti) found its full play in Caitanyadev. This conception of the dual incarnation of Caitanyadev has played the most vital part in the mystic esoteric Sādhana of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. Those Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas regard Caitanya's devotional sentiments and rapture as an example of the Rāgātmikā Bhakti.

Mukunḍadev Gosvāmī : 'Vivarta-Vilāsa' is an important Sahajiyā work which is attributed to Akīñchan Das. The author of this book has compared Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj with Vyāsdev and Caitanya-Caritāmrita with Bhāgavat. From Vivarta-Vilāsa we come to know that Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj had many disciples; of them five were his chief disciples who founded the five schools of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Doctrine. The names of these five chief disciples are Gopal Kṣatriya, Viṣṇudās, Rādhākṛiṣṇa Chakravarty, Govinda Adhikāry and Mukunḍadev. The school founded by Mukunḍadev got prominence and wide popularity. Mukunḍadev was the youngest and the most favourite disciple of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. It is said that Mukunḍadev came of a very rich Zamindar family. But from very boyhood he was indifferent to all sorts of earthly pleasure and happiness. He became so keen to embrace the life of a sannyāsī (monk) that one day he discarded the family-life and took refuge to Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj who was moved to pity him and take him into the fold of his intimate disciples.

Having received grace from Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, Mukunḍadev wrote six books reflecting the mystic devotional ideas and describing the secret esoteric practices in relation to the mystic culture of the Sahajiyās. The names of these books are (1) Amrita-ratnāvalī, (2) Rāg-ratnāvalī. (3) Amrita-rasāvalī,

(4) Prem-ratnāvalī, (5) Bhṛṅga-ratnāvalī and (6) Lavanga-charitrāvalī. These six books together are known by the name "Mukunḍa-muktāvalī". All these books were written in Sanskrit. Premdās, one of the disciples of Mukunḍadev, translated the fifth-book, Bhṛṅga-ratnāvalī into Bengali verse and that was also done by him at the bidding of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj.

The third book, Amritarasāvalī of Mukunḍadev is found in the form of Bengali verse. This book deals with the higher aspect of the Sahajiyā doctrine. It is written on the principle of awakening spiritual consciousness by the culture of one's own self. It also maintains that the success of the devotional love depends upon a man's adopting the nature of a woman. All these have been treated in this book in the form of interesting allegories. The significance of the allegories is that the individual Soul is a spark of the Supreme Soul. It is by nature free, but enters into bondage owing to its connection with Māyā. Being of divine origin it naturally longs for nectar. But without culture of one's own self, one cannot get rid of Māyā and is thereby deprived of tasting nectar. The work, therefore, deals with principles of regular culture. In the sphere of mystic culture the senses should be trained and kept under perfect control. Perfect control of senses is a necessary condition for spiritual advancement. This done, the sight of divine beauty (Rūpa) enchants the soul. Then by adopting the nature of a woman if devotional sentiment towards God is cultivated, the object is attained and the final entry into the abode of spiritual bliss is accomplished. This is the nature of Sahajiyā culture as taught by the Amrita-rasāvalī.

Mohāmahopādhyāya Śrī Gopinath Kavirāj in his book "Śrīkṛṣṇa Prasāṅga", has mentioned the name, Mukunḍarām Dās, another disciple of Mukunḍadev Gosvāmī, as the translator of Amrita-rasāvalī in Bengali. It has also been mentioned in Śrīkṛṣṇa Prasāṅga that Mukunḍarām Dās

also wrote another Sahajiyā book named “Ādya Sarasvatī Kārikā” in Bengali and thus helped in spreading the Sahajiyā doctrine among the mass.

Mukunḍarām Dās has mentioned the following reason for the composition of Amritarasāvalī in Bengali. The mystic love of Śrī-Caitanya was first interpreted by Svarūpa Dāmodar in his Kaḍacā. Svarūpa Dāmodar imparted his teachings to Raghunath Dās Gosvāmī. Raghunath, in turn, imparted his knowledge to his disciple Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj who was brought up in the atmosphere of Vṛiṇḍāvan under the direct influence of the Gosvāmins, could not do the full justice to the Sahaja-Doctrine in his master-piece production, Caitanya Caritāmṛita. So he felt an urge within in writing a book dealing with the practical side of mystic culture, as the Caitanya Caritāmṛita could not satisfy that need. He then, took to writing a book named “Prem-ratnāvalī”. But Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj was already very old when he was writing the Caitanya Caritāmṛita. He was completely overtaken by the infirmities of old age at that time. Under these circumstances it was not easy to tax further his energies to write another book when he had practically come to the end of his life. So he fell in swoon and remained unconscious for days together. But Nityānanda who passed away towards the middle part of the sixteenth century A.D., ordered Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in a dream to write a book dealing with the practical side of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā doctrine. When Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj recovered from swoon, he handed over this arduous task to his favourite disciple Mukunḍadev Gosvāmī. Being ordered by him Mukunḍadev wrote Amrita-rasāvalī in Sanskrit, who, in turn bade his disciple Mukunḍarām Dās translate it into Bengali.

Like the Amrita-rasāvalī, Amritaratnāvalī, the first book of Mukunḍadev is also found written in Bengali verses. At the end of this Bengali book we find mention of the name of the author. The author is no other than Mukunḍa Dās. The book begins with a discussion about the nature of Rasa, Rati,

Rūpa and Rāga, and shows how they are inter-related. These subjects are purely based on mystic devotional culture. It then describes how a Sahajiyā devotee should pass through the three different stages of spiritual culture, namely, (1) Pravartak, (2) Sādhak and (3) Siddhi. At the first stage the devotee should be initiated by a Dikṣā Guru. After initiation he should recite Mantras and perform various pious acts under the guidance of the Guru. Then 'Āsakti' (attraction) towards Kṛṣṇa will grow up in his mind, which will gradually elevate the devotee to the next two higher stages of spiritualism. At the second stage of Sādhak, the devotee gets the sight of Kṛṣṇa. The sight of the all pervading beauty of God captures the mind of Sādhak. The Sādhak then approaches near to God by following the deep devotional love (Rāgānugā Bhakti). At the same time the author lays much emphasis on the practical side of yoga in order to spiritualising the body. The author asserts that without the knowledge of the secrets of human body the Sahajiyā Sādhak cannot enter into the sphere of mystic culture of devotional love. It is regarded by the author that the culture of human body is an indispensable accessory for the realisation of the Sahaja-nature as supreme love. This is why the author has introduced the topics of various nerves (Nāḍī), lotuses (Padma) and ponds (Sarovar) within the human body. Here we get the mention of male and female elements in every body and of Paramātmā living in the Aksaya-sarovar (eternal pond) over the head. Besides there are descriptions of Sahajapur, Sadānandagrām, Candrakāntipuragrām, of eight Nāyikās (damsels) and many other similar subjects. So we find that the Amrita-ratnāvalī is the first Sahajiyā Bengali book dealing elaborately with the subject of the gradual development of emotional and sentimental devotional-love under the guidance of the Guru, and with the psychophysiological system of the human body on Tāntrik model. Thus the work deals with various matters of spiritual significance which are the important features of the post-Caitanya Sahajiyā doctrine.

Thus we find that Mukuṇḍadev Gosvāmī, one of the close disciples of Kṛṣṇadās Gosvāmī, was the most erudite Sahajiyā scholar who wrote six valuable works on Sahajiyā culture in Sanskrit. But those works are found to be lost except the three books namely, Amritaratnāvalī, Amritarasāvalī and Bhringaratanvalī that are available in Bengali verse translated from the original Sanskrit works by the two disciples of Mukuṇḍadev.

Mohāmohapādhyay Gopinath Kavirāj in his book “Śrīkṛṣṇa-prasaṅga” has stated that Mukuṇḍadev had many disciples. Of them four are worth-mentioning. The names of these four disciples are (1) Nrisinhānanda, (2) Rādhāramaṇ, (3) Gokul Bāul and (4) Mathurānāth. These four disciples established four branches of the Sahajiyā religion in the line of Mukuṇḍadev.

From the above review we may derive that Mukuṇḍadev was practically the vanguard of the modern Sahajiyā doctrine of Bengal. Mukuṇḍadev was the disciple of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj who died sometime during the closing years of the sixteenth century A. D. We can, therefore, conclude that the modern Sahajiyā doctrine first issued forth as an independent cult from the fold of the post-Caitanya orthodox Vaiṣṇava faith in Bengal towards the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D.

Rasikdas Gosvāmī : Rasikdas Gosvāmī wrote two Sahajiyā books named “Rativilās paddhati” and “Rasatattvasār”. These two books were written in Bengali and published from the Battala Press of Calcutta. The author has mentioned in his book, Rasatattvasār that he was a disciple of Mathurā Das. In the colophon of the same book we also find that Rasikadas was a disciple of Mathurā Das who was, in turn, a disciple of Mukuṇḍadev who, we know, was a favourite disciple of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the author of the Caitanya-Caritamṛita.

We have found a Sahajiyā work named “Siddha-Tikā” written by one who calls himself Raghunath. This author should not be mistaken for the celebrated Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmī

of Vrīṇḍavan who bears the same name, because the writer himself has paid a great tribute in this book to Raghunāth Gosvāmī who was the Guru of Kṛṣṇadas Kavirāj. The author has also referred to Mukuṇḍadev and Śrinivās with due reverence. Śrinivās was a contemporary of Mukuṇḍadev. It may be that this Raghunāth was a pupil of the line of Mukuṇḍadev.

Akiñchan Das : Akiñchan Das is regarded as one of the best reputed Sahajiyā author who wrote "Vivarta-Vilās" that represents one of the most valuable works on Sahajiyā culture. It is a unique work in five 'Vilās' (chapters) devoted to an elaborate exposition of mysticism or secret wisdom of the Sahajiyā cult. This is why Vivarta-Vilās is held in high esteem by the modern Sahajiyās next to Caitanya-Caritāmṛita. Vivarta-Vilās has been published by the Baṭṭalā Press of Calcutta. In many places of his book Akiñchan Das has paid great respect and devotion to Rasik and Vihārī. Thus, we find that Rasik and Vihārī were two Gurus of Akiñchan. Akiñchan has also mentioned in Vivarta-Vilās, two kinds of Guru : One is Dikṣā (initiation) Guru and the other is Śikṣā (training) Guru. He has also elaborately discussed the necessity of having two Gurus for the spiritual advancement of a Sahajiyā Sādhak. This is for the first time we are introduced with two kinds of Gurus, each having a distinct function to play in the spiritual life of a Sahajiyā devotee. This is one of the characteristics of the modern Sahajiyā religion. From this we may suggest that of the two Gurus of Akiñchan, one was his Dikṣā Guru and the other his Śikṣā Guru.

The account that Akiñchan Das has given us about the composition of the Vivarta-Vilās, shows that one Raghunāth was the Guru of his Guru from whom he received inspiration. We are acquainted with the fact furnished by Akiñchan Das that this Raghunāth would live in a village adjacent to the village Ambika Vākhnāpādā in the district of Burdwan. He was fortunate enough to come in contact with Raghunāth and

to learn the secrets of the Sahajiyā doctrine from him. Akiñchan lived with Raghunāth in his village and served him faithfully in his old age. Six months after his death Akiñchan came back to his own village, and on the third night Raghunāth appeared to him in a dream and instructed him to write the *Vivarta-Vilās*. He narrated the incident to his Guru who also gave him permission to write the book.

Akiñchan Das has mentioned Raghunāth as Guru of his Guru. From the *Rasatattvasār* noted before, we come to know that Mukuṇḍadev was the Guru of Mathurā Das who had Rasik Das as his disciple. And this Rasik Das was the Guru of Akiñchan Das. This creates the impression that Rasik Das, the writer of *Rasatattvasār*, had two Gurus namely Raghunāth as his *Dikṣā* Guru and Mathurā Das as his *Śikṣā* Guru. However, we learn that Akiñchan was a disciple of the line of Mukuṇḍadev. Thus, we find that the modern school of Sahajiyā Cult of the post-Caitanya period owes its origin to Mukuṇḍadev, the most favourite youngest disciple of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. This branch of Sahajiyā school was further developed with the compositions of various works on Sahajiyā doctrine by the disciples and followers of Mukuṇḍadev. The name and fame of this school of Sahajiyā cult spread far and wide having a strong hold over the mind of the general people of Bengal during the period of three hundred years spreading from the seventeenth century A. D. to the nineteenth century A. D.

Aspects of Sahajiyā Doctrine :

Three stages of a Sahajiyā devotee: In the mystic culture of devotional love the Sahajiyās have classified three stages of a religious life, namely (1) Pravartak, (2) Sādhak and (3) Siddha. These three stages in the field of religious culture, are inter-linked, each succeeding to the next higher stage. Pravartak is the first stage, Sādhak, the middle stage and Siddha, the final stage of perfection. Connected with these three stages, is the conception of the five kinds of *Āśrayas*, such as, Nāma, Mantra,

Bhāva, Prema and Rasa. The devotee in the first stage of Pravarta should adopt Nāma and Mantra. When the Pravarta stage of the devotee attains perfection with the recitation of Nāma and Mantra, he is elevated to the middle stage of Sādhak and adopts Bhāva and follows the path of Rāgānugā Bhakti i.e. emotional love for Kṛṣṇa. While the culture of devotional love attains perfection, Sādhak is elevated to the final stage of Siddha and adopts Prema and follows the path of Rāgātmikā Bhakti which culminates into the direct enjoyment of Rasa, the nector of love for Kṛṣṇa.

We find a description about the particulars of different stages and Āśrayas in the Amritaratnāvalī : "At first a devotee should be initiated before a Dīkṣā Guru. He, then, should keep to the company of the pious devotees, which will lead him to the Bhāvāśraya stage. The Āśrayas of Mantra, Bhāva, Prema and Rasa are attributed to the three stages of Pravarta, Sādhak and Siddha. After initiation the devotee should recite the Mantra that he receives from his Dīkṣā Guru. This is a feature of the Vaidhī Bhakti. It is called Mantrāśraya to be adopted in the Pravarta stage. In the Sādhaka stage the devotee should adopt Bhāva and be guided by the Śikṣā Guru in culturing the spiritual emotional love. This will lead him to the final stage of perfection."

In another Sahajiyā work, "Rādhārasakārikā," we find mention of the objects of realisation from the three Āśrayas of Mantra, Bhāva and Rasa : "From the Mantrāśraya (otherwise called Nāmāśraya) stage one goes to Vaikuṇṭha, the abode of Kṛṣṇa. From the Bhāvāśraya and Premāśraya stages one realises within oneself the emotional and sentimental love for Kṛṣṇa respectively. In these two Āśrayas the intrinsic nature of the devotee is transformed to the blissful nature of Rādhā, who is regarded as the highest spiritual embodiment of love and Mohābhāva. From the Rasāśraya stage one realises the Mādhuryya-sudhā (nectar) of Kṛṣṇa."

The idea that is preached by the Sahajiyās, is that the

devotee of the Pravarta stage should begin spiritual culture strictly following the prescribed scriptural injunctions until he rises higher and higher to the final stage of Siddhi which is characterised by the enjoyment of perpetual bliss.

Now the question may arise, what is the source of the Sahajiyās to establish these three different grades among the worshippers beginning with the strict observance of rules in the lowest rank to the stage of Mohābhāva in the highest rank? This classification of Prabartak, Sādhak and Siddha seems to be in line with the classification made by Indrabhūti, the king of Uḍḍiyān. Indrabhūti recognised three classes of disciples who had different degrees of mental development, and prescribed for them according to their mental capacities different regulations for their spiritual uplift.¹

The Sahajiyās prescribed the strictest rules for the Pravartaks who were less advanced in the initial stage. When the Pravartaks would have sufficiently advanced in the matter of spiritual progress, they would be allowed to follow such advanced practices as are prescribed in the higher forms of the Buddhist Yoga-tantras.

Four systems of classification are found in Buddhist Tāntrik literature. These four systems are : (1) Kriyātantra, (2) Caryātantra, (3) Yogatantra and (4) Anuttarayogatantra. Beginners who wanted to be initiated into the mysteries of Vajrayān, were admitted to the lowest rank, namely Kriyātantra, and then Caryātantra where strict rules of discipline were imposed on them until they were considered fit to be raised to a higher class. Yogatantra appears to have been reserved for those who were considered fit to come in contact with the Śaktis and to observe secret practices as are prescribed by the Sahajiyās to a devotee of the Sādhak stage for the culture of emotional love in accompaniment of a Parakiyā maiden. The Anuttarayogins belonged to the highest class and

1. See, Two Vajrayān Works, G. O. S. No. 44, pp. 95 ff,

were immune from all laws and restrictions. Anuttarayogins were called the Siddhas. The traditional number of Siddhas is recognised as eighty-four, and most of them, as I have already mentioned, belonged to the Pāla period in the history of Bengal.

The Sahajiyās accepted the forms of classification with little modification from the Tāntrik Vajrayān system ; but keeping in conformity with the Rāg-sādhanā of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas they developed a new system of Sādhanā (worship) of their own in three different grades, which bore a little connection with the Tāntrik Vajrayān system.

Bathing in three streams : Corresponding to the gradation of the three different stages, the Sahajiyās have also mentioned the bathing in three streams at the each succeeding stage of Pravartak, Sādhak and Siddha and according to the degrees of spiritual development. We find mention in Caitanya-Caritāmrita and Vivarta-Vilās that at the maturity of the Pravartak stage, the devotee is bathed in the stream of grace of God, which is called “Karunādhārāi Snān” and is elevated to the stage of Sādhak. At the maturity of the culture of emotional love (Bhāva-bhakti) in the stage of Sādhak, the devotee is bathed in the stream of spiritualism and becomes free from re-birth, which is called “Tāruṇyā-mritadhārāi Snān” and is elevated to the stage of Siddha. Again at the maturity of the culture of sentimental love (Prema-bhakti) in the stage of Siddha, the devotee is bathed in the last stream of celestial beauty which is called “Lāvaṇyāmritadhārāi Snān” and is elevated to the state of Antaraṅgā Hlādinī Śakti of Kṛṣṇa. The beauty the devotee attains at this stage, is but the reflection of the all pervading beauty of Kṛṣṇa. It has been illustrated by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in his drama “Rājā”, where Sudarśanā, the queen of the ‘dark chamber’ has been portrayed as Jivātmā and the invisible King as Paramātmā. When the queen Jivātmā remains within the fold of Māyā, she fails

to recognise the King, Paramātmā, Paramātmā is always calling the Jivātmā and is trying to attract her towards him. But Jivātmā ignoring the biddings of Paramātmā, is attracted towards the wordly pleasures. At last when Jivātmā realises her mistake, she turns her face towards her beloved husband Paramātmā and with all devotion and love approaches towards her husband serving him with all humility. Being moved with the intense devotional love of the devotee, the King Paramātmā embraces her with all raptures and transforms her to his Hlādinī Śakti. At this final stage of re-union the sight of all pervading beauty of God overwhelms the devotee, Sudarśanā and she cries out, "Oh Lord, you are not only beautiful but also unparallel in beauty". At this the King says, "You are my counterpart, so my beauty resembles to yours". On hearing this queen Sudarśanā says, "If it be so, it is due to your infinite love for me. Your love illumines me, this is why you see your beauty reflected in me. It is of yours not of mine." (Rājā, p. 131).

Three forms of Bhakti (devotion) : Keeping in harmony with the three different grades of devotees, viz. Pravartak, Sādhak and Siddha, the Sahajiyās have developed the three succeeding forms of Bhakti, i.e., (1) Sāadhan-bhakti, (2) Bhāva-bhakti and (3) Prema-bhakti. Sāadhan-bhakti corresponds to Vaidhī Bhakti, Bhāva bhakti to Rāgānugā Bhakti and Prema-bhakti to Rāgātmikā Bhakti.

(1) Sāadhan-bhakti or Vaidhī Bhakti—

The stages, beginning from the awakening of the 'Ruchi' (liking) due to the association of ascetics (sādhū), to the instruction of the spiritual guide, are the preliminaries of 'upāsana' or worship. Therefore, Sāadhan-bhakti is the cultivation of 'ruchi' or inward feelings of devotion accompanied with the observance of the norms of Vaidhī Bhakti. This is followed by different stages of upāsana graded according to the increased capacity of the devotee. Karma-

miśra Bhakti or Vaidhī Bhakti as the preliminary stage, is taken up first for the rise of devotional feelings. Karma-miśra Bhakti gives rise to the concentration of mind and ultimately results in awakening the spiritual consciousness of the devotee. Then the devotee follows the Jñāna-miśra Bhakti. When the Jñāna-miśra Bhakti ripens to the fullest extent, then the Sahajiyā Bhakta gives up Jñāna completely and resorts to Bhakti exclusively. It is the opinion of the Sahajiyās that Jñāna-miśra Bhakti gives rise to the spontaneous growth of Bhāva Bhakti or Rāgānugā Bhakti and Bhāva Bhakti prepares the ground for the spontaneous rise of Prema-bhakti or Rāgātmikā Bhakti. Karma-miśra and Jñāna-miśra Bhakti are regarded as the stepping stones to Śuddhā (pure) Bhakti. Svarūpa-siddha Bhāva Bhakti and Prema Bhakti are accomplished by the spontaneous flow of emotional and sentimental feelings of sublimated love for Kṛṣṇa.

Some of the elements (Aṅgas) of the Vaidhī Bhakti are enumerated here : (i) Saraṇāgati, i.e., resorting to Bhagavān as the only refuge. It arises in the resignation of self. The next stage is (ii) Guru-sevā, i.e., devotion to the spiritual guide. This stage is followed by (iii) Śravaṇa, i.e., the act of listening to the accounts of the form, sports and name of Bhagavān. Closely allied to this is (iv) Kīrtana, i.e., chanting aloud the holy name of Bhagavān. This is said to be the most powerful means of effecting a devotional attitude. A still higher stage is reached in (v) Smaraṇa which consists of fixing one's thought on the name, form or sports of Kṛṣṇa. This brings mental concentration on Kṛṣṇa. The special concentration of mind with reference to the name, form or sports of Kṛṣṇa is effected through the acts of Dhāraṇā, Dhyān and Dhruvānusmṛti. Dhruvānusmṛti which is an uninterrupted flow of mind towards Kṛṣṇa, ultimately leads to Samādhi. In Samādhi Kṛṣṇa who is the exclusive object of thought in mind, appears before the devotee in the form of Brahma—an all pervading

spiritual consciousness. And then and then only the Pravartak Bhakta is elevated to the higher plane of Sādhak Bhakta.

At a preliminary stage of Sāadhanā the acts and ceremonies, mentioned above, are indispensable for the individual Pravartak-bhakta before he can pass on to the higher and spontaneous Bhāvabhakti or Rāgānugā-bhakti of the Sādhak. By Bhāva-bhakti or Rāgānugā-bhakti is meant the sublime emotional feelings of devotion which follows the lines of Rāgātmikā-bhakti. Rāga is defined as the natural attachment of a devotee towards Kṛṣṇa who is the exclusive object of desire or attachment. At this elevated stage of Sādhak, the five senses of the devotee cannot but come into direct contact with Paramātmā—a partial manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. The sense of sight is naturally drawn towards its beauty, that of smell towards its fragrance etc. In the same way the devotee when elevated to the highest stage of Siddha, cannot but be attracted towards Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. At this stage the spontaneous flow of devotion is called Rāgātmikā Bhakti which expresses itself as a deep and natural feeling of attachment and which springs spontaneously from the spiritually elevated Prakṛiti or Sva-bhāva of the devotee. This elevated spiritual and celestial Sva-bhāva (Nature) of the Siddha Bhakta is but the essence of the Ahlādinī Śakti of Kṛṣṇa.

Thus it follows that observance of Vaidhī Bhakti at the preliminary stage of Sāadhanā is necessary for those whose mind in the early stage of devotion is inwardly distracted and cannot attain the natural stage of composure which is essential for the growth of Bhāva-bhakti or Rāgānugā-bhakti. Hence the chief object of Vaidhī Bhakti (Sāadhan Bhakti) is to bring about this gradual concentration of mind and prepare it for the higher stage of Bhāva-bhakti (Rāgānugā-bhakti). It follows, therefore, that the Sāadhan Bhakti (Vaidhi Bhakti) is not to be ignored in order to bring about the spontaneous

flow of Bhāva Bhakti. But when the firm concentration of mind is achieved with observance of Vaidhī Bhakti, the Pravarta-sādhak becomes Self-conscious. With the reveal of Self, is also revealed to the Sādhak the Spiritual Nature of the Self i.e., Spiritual Sva-bhāva of the Sādhak. With the reveal of Ātmā as well as the inherent spiritual nature of the Sādhak, there is no further necessity for compliance with Vaidhī Bhakti. Because, at this spiritually elevated stage the spirit of Bhāva Bhakti springs spontaneously from the inherent spiritual nature (Sva-bhāva) of the Sādhak. But this view of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās is quite contradictory to that of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who firmly believe that Bhāva Bhakti (Rāgānugā Bhakti) is a natural inclination of a devotee towards Kṛṣṇa and is independent of Vaidhī Bhakti. It does not come out from the observance of Vaidhī Bhakti which is merely confined to the scriptural injunctions. They hold this view that acting according to scriptural injunctions brings merit in religious life but does not lead to the spontaneous flow of love for Kṛṣṇa.

(ii) Bhāva Bhakti or Rāgānugā Bhakti—

The terms 'Bhāva Bhakti' and 'Prema Bhakti' are difficult to translate, but they have been rendered into English by the terms 'emotional' and 'sentimental' devotion respectively. Bhakti resulting from spontaneous inward emotion is called Bhāva Bhakti. And Bhāva or inward emotion follows the natural inclination of heart. The inward emotional capacity of devotion increases with the increased cultivation of inward feelings of devotion. So Bhāva Bhakti consists of an emotional sublimation of intimate human sentiments towards Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāva Bhakti or inward emotional devotion which is the matured form of Sāadhan Bhakti (Sāadhan-paripākena), also develops through the grace of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa-Kṛipayā). It is, according to the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, called the bathing in the stream of grace (Karuṇā dhārāya Snān). This Bhāva Bhakti based on inward emotion (Bhāva), has not

yet reached the stage of sentimental love (Prema) or has not yet ripened into Prema Bhakti. It is defined as consisting of a particular pure feeling (Śuddha-sattva-viśeṣa) which partakes of the nature of the first dawn of Divine Love (Prema-sūryāṁśusāmyabhāk).

(iii) Prema Bhakti or Rāgātmikā Bhakti—

Bhakti ripened into sentiment of Divine Love is called Prema Bhakti. Prema Bhakti (Rāgātmikā Bhakti) is the source (Ādarśa) of Bhāva Bhakti (Rāgānugā Bhakti). One of the forms of Rāgātmikā Bhakti is 'Kāma-rūpā' consisting of a desire for erotic enjoyment of Kṛṣṇa culminating in Prema-rasa—celestial sentiment of love. Therefore, the highest type of 'Uttamā Bhakti' is Prema Bhakti which is a direct ripening of the Bhāva Bhakti itself (Bhāva-Bhakti-paripāka eva). It occurs when the Bhāva or in-ward emotion is developed into a sublime supreme sentiment of love (Prema). It also originates from the grace of Kṛṣṇa. It is said to be bathing in the stream of everlasting youth (Tārunyāmrita dhārāya snān).

Divine grace—It is believed by the Sahajiyā school that the man is essentially divine and can, by divine grace as well as by his own exertions mental and moral, enter into communion with the Divine Being. What is indispensable, is divine grace. Self-surrender (Prapatti) is a much quicker process for the attainment of divine grace. Devotional acts like chanting of Bīj-mantra, recitation of blessed name with deep faith, devotional services to Guru and Saints and performance of ritualism tend to the discipline and purification of mind and body. One of the fundamental creeds of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is the deep faith in the power of the blessed name. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school maintains the essential identity of the name and the possessor of the name (nāma-nāminor abhedah). In other words the school believes that the blessed name itself is the essence of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa (Bhagavat-svarūpam eva nāma), so much so that one who utters the blessed name with devotion, attains kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore, the blessed name of

Kṛṣṇa possesses a spiritual significance and efficacy. It is also true that mere mechanical performance of outward rituals is never taken to possess the efficacy ; exclusive stress is laid on inward earnestness and devotion. This is why it has lead the Sahajiyā school to think that Vaidhī Bhakti is a necessary preliminary step to the attainment of a higher devotional attitude after which the elevated Sādhak devotee discards all outward rituals and ceremonies. Because the higher Bhāva-bhakti and the highest Prema-bhakti arise spontaneously through man's self-surrender and God's grace. The Pravarta Bhakta (devotee) is first blessed with divine grace and simultaneously rises to the higher state of Sādhak Bhakta (devotee). So it is believed by the Sahajiyā school that the ultimate source of higher devotional attitude of Bhāva-bhakti is divine grace (Karūṇā). Bhāva-bhakti (emotional feeling) is inborn and natural, but it can operate only through divine grace. The Sahajiyā school does not believe that any kind of Rāgānugā-bhakti can be based on emotionalism alone and can grow independent of Vaidhī-bhakti as held by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school.

The higher mode of spiritual emotion undoubtedly implies purity and intensity of inborn nature (Sva-bhāva), but the Prema-bhakti resolves itself into a form of religious divine sentimentality, a continuous frenzy of divine madness (divyonmād), an all-engrossing mystic state of yearning, rapture and vision as were visible in the last twelve years of Śrī Caitanya's life. The Sahajiyās follow the ideal of Rāgātmikā-bhakti as shown by Caitanyadev in his behaviour of the last few years of his life. The Sahajiyā school holds the view that the devout attitude of the Prema-siddha Bhakti becomes identical with that of Gopī and consequently of Rādhā. We find support of this view of the Sahajiyās in the Padmapurāṇa where it has been stated that even men can follow this Rāgātmikā way of love of the Gopīs, for in the Mathurā-māhātmya of the Padma-purāṇa, it is said that the Munis (ascetics)

(community) founded by Rāmānujācārya ; ‘Mādhva’ Sampradāya, by Madhvācārya ; Nimbārkācārya Sampradāya, Vallabhācārya Sampradāya and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya founded by the followers of Sri Caitanya. The first four schools of Vaiṣṇavism propounded their doctrines by writing elaborate commentaries on the ‘Vedānta-Sūtra’ and interpreting it in their own way ; but the school of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism regards the ‘Śrīmad-bhāgavata Purāṇa’, as Vyāsadev’s own commentary on his ‘Vedānta-sūtra, and therefore confines itself to an interpretation of this Purāṇa in its own light, instead of composing a separate commentary on the ‘Vedānta-Sūtra’. The school of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, therefore, proceeds almost entirely on an explication of the ‘Bhāgavat Purāṇa’.

The highest Tattva which forms the central theme of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, is described in the following terms :

“Vadanti tat tattvavidas tattvaṃ yaj Jñānam advayam ।

Brahmeti Paramātmēti Bhagavān iti śabdyate ॥”

—The meaning of the verse is, “the Tattva which the knowers of ultimate Reality call ‘advaya Jñāna’, is expressed by the designations of Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān.”

This verse is said to sum up the concept of Absolute Reality as propounded by the Bhāgavat Purāṇa. In the first line of the verse the Ultimate Reality or Tattva is spoken of as Advaya-jñāna-tattva, while the second line designates the three aspects of the same Reality as Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. The term Jñāna is explained as consisting of pure consciousness which is self-luminous (Svapra-kāśa). The soul of Jīva (Jīvatmā) is no doubt pure conscious (cidrūpa), but is subordinate to Paramātmā who is the ultimate self-luminous conscious principle. The Ultimate Reality as the Advaya Tattva is the unity of the highest knowledge or consciousness (Jñāna) and the highest bliss (Parama Ānanda), as well as of eternal reality (Sat). This Advaya Tattva (Ultimate Reality) is finally identified

with Bhagavān who is no other than Kṛṣṇa Himself as the most perfect and supreme manifestation of the Absolute; and as such it forms the essential theme of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa also describes Brahma as the bodily lustre (tanubha) of Bhagavān, and Paramātmā as the supreme power (Aisvarjya) of Bhagavān. Jīva as a conscious element is a part (aṃśa) of Paramātmā. Brahma is the object of realisation of the Jñāna-yogins. Paramātmā is the object of realisation of the Tantra-yogins. And Bhagavān reveals Himself ultimately to the Bhakti-yogins.

Thus we find that according to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is the highest and most perfect manifestation of Advaya-Jñāna-tattva. At the same time it designates that though Bhagavān is Absolute and indivisible, yet He has threefold aspects. The same Ultimate Reality, therefore, is viewed respectively as Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagvān. According to the Sahajiyā school these three concepts of the Absolute are but the gradations of one and the same Reality. The devotee realises these three aspects of the Absolute through the three graded sādhanās. These three graded Sādhanās, as already mentioned, are (i) Sādhan-bhakti, (ii) Bhāva-bhakti and (iii) Prema-bhakti.

The concept of Paramātmā and Jīvātmā—

Paramātmā is a partial manifestation of Bhagavān. Paramātmā is endowed with the power of controlling the Māyā-śakti (Bahiranga Vaibhava) of Bhagavān as well as is the inward regulator of the individual Jīva as an Antaryāmī. Jīvātmā is a minute (aṇu) manifestation of Paramātmā. Jīvātmā possesses essentially the same characteristic of eternity as well as the same attributes of Cit and Ānanda of Bhagavān, but is liable to the influence of the Māyā-śakti who makes Jīva forget his true self and inherent nature (svabhāva). So the relation among Bhagavān, Paramātmā and Jīvātmā is really one of gradation in the hierarchy of manifestation of one and the same Reality.

The essential character of the Jīva—

Let us consider here the essential character of the Jīva in brief. Jīva is neither the body, nor the sense, nor the mind, nor life, nor intellect. It is self-luminous to itself consisting of Cit and Ānanda (cidānandātmakaḥ), and it is always pure (nitya nirmalaḥ). Though atomic in size (aṇuḥ), yet it has the attribute of pervading (vyāpti-śīlaḥ). As the Jīva is atomic (aṇu), so the Jīva is called atom of consciousness (cit-kaṇṭhā or aṇu-cit). And yet by virtue of its being a conscious principle, it is capable of pervading the whole world by consciousness. We find echo of this truth in the words of Sir Oliver Lodge. He says, "How large a subliminal self may be, one does not know" (Making of Man, ch. IX). One of the chief attributes of the Jīvā, however, is that it is an entity which possesses consciousness (cetanā) or in other words the Jīva is self-luminous, it reveals itself by its own consciousness. This self-luminosity, however, depends on the Paramātmā and from whose self-luminosity comes its illuminating power.

The Jīva is indeed a self-conscious entity whose mortal existence is brought about in the organic body by the Māyā-Śakti, but it is distinct from the body, and unlike the body it is not subject to change or decay. It is only through the Māyā-Śakti that the Jīva in delusion identifies itself with the body.

This self-luminosity of Jīva is represented by the word 'Aham' (I). This Aham is not the false ego (prākṛita ahaṁkāra), but the real ego (aprākṛita ahaṁkāra). This self-consciousness is pure and indivisible and is therefore to be distinguished from the impure consciousness derived from the organic senses.

From the analysis of the above characteristics of the Jīva, it can be inferred that the Jīva is always pure and this purity consists in its real ego which is not affected with the impure effects of the Māyā-Śakti. This state is the śuddha sattva of the Jīva, which is said to be Māyātīta beyond the sphere of Māyā. In relation to the body and the phenomenal world, however,

its gross consciousness, which is the effect of the Māyā-Śakti, over powers it and obscures its pure consciousness and its real nature even to itself. Poet Shelley has rightly observed :

“Life like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity”—

Functions of Svarūpa-Śakti and Māyā-Śakti—

In order understand the concept of Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān, it would be necessary to understand the nature of Svarūpa Śakti or Divine Energy, upon whose degree and quality of display the distinction really rests. Three Divine Energies or Śaktis such as ‘Sandhinī’, ‘Samvit’, and ‘Hlādinī’ reside eternally (Nitya) in Bhagavān, Paramātmā and also in Jivātmā. Divine Energies have their full play in Bhagavān and in lesser degree and quality in Paramātmā. Jivātmā also possesses these Divine Energies which are inherent in its nature but lie dormant owing to the overwhelming power of Māyā-Śakti. These Śaktis are, therefore, regarded as ‘Svarūpabhūta. Svarūpa-Śakti or Intrinsic Energy consists of ‘Śuddha Sattva’ (pure existence), which is ‘prākṛitātīta’ (beyond the sphere of the phenomenal world). Sattva signifies pure existence (Sat), pure consciousness (Cit) and pure bliss (Ānanda). Svarūpa Śakti possesses the characteristic of ‘Svābhāvikatva’. By Svābhāvikatva it is meant that the Svarūpa Śakti is natural and spontaneous to Bhagavān, Paramātmā and Ātmā ; and constitutes the very essence of them and is therefore inseparable from them.

Through Māyā Śakti Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa limits Himself into His partial manifestation as Paramātmā who, in turn, limits himself into minute (aṇu) manifestation as Ātmā. This Māyā Śakti causes the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the phenomenal world, and consists of an aspect of ‘Bahiranga Vaibhava’ of Kṛṣṇa in the form of the material ‘Prakṛiti’ (Nature). Paramātmā is the godhead immanent in Spirit (Jīva) and Nature (Prakṛiti). The Jīva (individual self) is an aspect of Māyā-Śakti which Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa displays in His role of

Paramātmā. Being subject to the Māyā-śakti, the Jīva cannot, until released from the bondage of Māyā, be connected with the svarūpa-śakti. Since Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate essential source of the Jīva, who can, in spite of his deviation, return to Bhagavān by shaking off the Māyā-śakti and being finally connected with His essential svarūpa-śakti. The Jīva is indeed a minute part of Bhagavān and is therefore liable to the influence of the Māyā-śakti. But on account of its ultimate affinity with Bhagavān, the Jīva even in bondage has the inherent capacity of releasing itself ; and when emancipated, it comes into direct contact with the svarūpa-śakti and goes eternally beyond the influence of the Māyā-śakti. According to the view of the Sahajiyā school this release comes through the practice of devotional Yoga-Tantra.

The function of the Māyā-śakti is two fold consisting of 'Avidyā' and 'Vidyā'. Avidyā acts as a covering (āvaraṇātmikā) which causes the concealment of the true nature of the Jīva. The Vidyāvritti acts as a revealer of the eternal self-consciousness of Jīva who is originally composed of 'viśuddha-sattva' of Bhagavān. Viśuddha-sattva is meant by the three attributes (sat, cit and ānanda) of Bhagavān. Therefore the vidyā-vritti of the Māyā-śakti must be taken to imply that it is not a form of the supreme consciousness itself, but only an opening to the revelation of that consciousness which is an aspect of the svarūpa-śakti.

Possessing the divine intrinsic attributes of eternity, consciousness and bliss (sat, cit and ānanda) the Jīva is disposed to the influence of God's highest svarūpa-śakti. Jñānyoga and Bhaktiyoga consequently bring the devotee under the influence of the svarūpa-śakti of Bhagavān. This intrinsic connection of the Jīva with Bhagavān is indicated by the qualifying epithet "Svataḥ sarvadā paramātmakaśeṣa-svabhāva". From the divine source the Jīva receives not only its attribute of consciousness but also its attribute of bliss (cidānandātmaka). Therefore the 'svabhāva' of the Jīva also consists of its inherent nature possessed with consciousness and bliss.

Relation between Bhagavān and Jīva—According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism Bhagavān is Pūrṇa Cit and Pūrṇa Ānanda, but Jīvātmā is Cit-kaṇa. Even when the Jīva attains pure consciousness (cidrūpa), it is yet inferior to Bhagavān who remains ever unaffected by his own extraneous Māyā-śakti. In its essence it is a minute part (aṇu-aṇśa) of Bhagavān, which makes it different from Bhagavān both in svarūpa and sāmāthyā. Therefore, there is an inevitable difference between Bhagavān and the Jīva and thereby absolute identity can never be established.

But at the same breadth this school declares that Jīva is identical in its intrinsic affinity with Bhagavān who is its ultimate source. This school further declares that in spite of its essential identity Jīva has a separate existence as an eternal spiritual atom.

The belief in the essential difference as well as identity between Jīva and Bhagavān forms the very foundation of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Although the Jīva consists of pure consciousness (cidrūpa), it is yet over powered by the Māyā-śakti, while Māyā is an extraneous śakti of Bhagavān. Hence Jīva and Bhagavān are perceived as different in essence (svarūpa) and capacity (sāmāthyā). The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism maintains that the individual Jīva, as pure consciousness, forms only a minute part of the highest being, Bhagavān. So the relation of master (sevyā) and servant (sevaka) between Bhagavān and Jīva is real. Jīva is an eternal servant of Bhagavān : “Jīva Kṛṣṇer nitya dās”. This eternal distinction continues even when the bondage, which is due to Māyā śakti, is removed and God’s grace is obtained. As Bhakti or devotion to Kṛṣṇa who is God Himself, is the highest good, the Jīva in its duality continues as a separate worshipping entity even after emancipation.

The views of Advaita vādins—The Advaita vādins hold this view that the difference between Jīva and Param Brahma is not real but is due to upādhi (condition or limitation), by means of which the really unconditioned Param Brahma appears to

condition Himself or limitedly reflects Himself as Jīva. Upādhi, according to the Advaita vādins, gives rise to a perception of difference which does not really exist. Jīva becomes Param Brahma as soon as he is released from the bondage of Māyā. Jīva is in essence Param Brahma. (Jīvo-Brahmaiva naparaḥ). It has already been mentioned in the chapter or historical back-ground that Śankarācārya was accused by the then Buddhists that he replaced 'Śūnya' by 'Param Brahma'. According to the followers of Śankarācārya an individual Jīva being released from the bondage of Māyā-śakti, is completely identified with Param Brahma. This view of the Advaita vādins has been retained by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas who profess that the emancipated self becomes, at first, a part of the Svarūpa Śakti of Bhagavān. Since bliss is an inherent attribute of the Jīva, it finds a point of contact with the intrinsic Hlādinī śakti or blissful energy of Bhagavān through the mode of Bhakti (devotion). Of course, Bhakti awakes in Bhakta (devotee) through divine grace (anugraha). Being free from the bondage of the Māyā-śakti by the natural capacity of the Sāadhan-bhakti and then with the intensity of Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti the Bhakta is restored to his original self and finally becomes identified with Bhagavān without any distinction. After being completely identified with Bhakta who becomes, at that highest stage of devotion, none the less than His blissful energy (Hlādinī śakti), Bhagavān splits Himself into two parts: one becomes the subject (viśaya) of love and the other, the resort (āśraya) of love and then both the parts, who are but the two aspects of the one and same reality otherwise known as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, are engaged in eternal love-sports in order to relish mādhyurya, the highest essence of Bhagavān. This is, according to the Sahajiyās, the real "Acintya Bhedābhed" tattva (doctrine) or the relation of non-identity in identity. This principle of dualism in non-dualism is something that transcends intellectual comprehension (acintya).

Gist—From the above review we may draw this conclusion

that Prema-bhakti or sentimental love for Kṛṣṇa is the highest type of Bhakti which brings imperishable happiness. It has also been declared by the Buddhist philosophers that the highest good of man is the discontinuance of the miseries of existence (duḥkha-nivṛtti) and the attainment of supreme happiness (paramasukha-prāpti). In all religions the Ultimate Reality is established as the real (sat), eternal (ananta), absolute (Kevala) and perfect bliss (parama-mahā-sukh). Although Jīva belongs to the Supreme Soul, its knowledge of the Supreme Soul is defeated by the external Māyā-śakti and this results in a loss of self-knowledge. Being absorbed in the phenomenal world created by the Māyā-śakti, Jīva is tied to the miseries of life. This does not mean that Jīva is want of knowledge of its real self; it exists from the beginning and can be revealed by divine grace accompanied with śādhana (religious efforts). In other words Jīva's knowledge of self may be temporarily non-existent, but Jīva possesses through mental efforts and divine grace, the inherent capacity of attaining self-knowledge. As soon as want of knowledge (avidyā) is removed, Jīva's loss of self-knowledge is automatically restored; for the knowledge of self consists entirely of the knowledge of the Self-manifesting Divine Self. The removal of the bondage of Māyā-śakti and escape from misery (saṃsāra) has, therefore, been described as the attainment of the Jīva's natural state ('Sahaj-abasthā' as styled by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas) and function by relinquishing its otherwise imposed state and function.

Jīva as a part attains the whole which according to the capacity and mode of worship, may be either Brahma, Paramātmā or Bhagavān. Of these three modes of attainment, the first consists merely of the appearance of the spiritual knowledge of all pervading Brahma on the destruction of that function of the Māyā-śakti, which is known as avidyā. The attainment of Brahma must not be understood to imply that the individual attains identity with Brahma as the Vedāntists think, but to the Sahajiyās who are mainly Tāntrik

devotees, it means that the individual merely possesses its own intrinsic character similar to the divine reality and gets back its inherent divine nature of Svarūpa-śakti, which for the time-being was suppressed by the Māyā-śakti. The second which is higher, consists of the attainment of Paramātmā through the process of Bhāva-yoga. But the third which is the highest, consists of the attainment of Bhagavān in His fullest and truest Self through the process of Prema-yoga. In this highest state of devotion the Jīva in its true essence and nature, is transformed into the highest energy of bliss or Hlādinī Śakti of God.

To come in contact with Brahma, Paramātmā and Bhagavān keeping at the same time one's own individuality, is much superior to the mere consciousness or Jñāna of Brahma. Of all the attributes of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, the highest is His special attribute of belovedness which implies the state both of loving and being loved. The degree of divine revelation depends upon the degree of devotional love (Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti). It follows from what has been said above that (a) the cessation of life's misery (saṃsāra) is attainable by Sādhan bhakti in conjunction with the mystic practices of Yoga, which culminates into direct vision of Brahma; (b) Sādhan-bhakti culminates into Bhāva-bhakti and Bhāva-bhakti into Prema-bhakti according to the stages of Prabarta, Sādhak and Siddha; (c) upon the quality and extent of devotional love depends the character and degree of vision; (d) without devotional love there can be no revelation of the Supreme Divine Self with His intrinsic attributes; (e) by intense devotional love in the stage of Siddha, there occurs the final revelation which consists of the attainment of the Ultimate Divine Reality in its truest and fullest character of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa in His eternal (nitya) place of Vriṇḍāvan; (f) the intense devotional love (Prema-bhakti) for Kṛṣṇa is thus the only 'summum bonum' of the Sahajiyā devotee.

All beings are naturally inclined towards love. A man seeks different objects of love in his life, but his search is never

fully satisfied. Everyone desires to love that object which brings the highest perpetual bliss and such an object is unavailable in this phenomenal world. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa alone as the source of such bliss, is the highest object of love. Emancipation (mukti) is insignificant to such divine love for Kṛṣṇa. Because there is no consciousness of feeling of supreme bliss and consequently no experience (anubhava) of supreme bliss in emancipation (mukti). The pure Jñāna-vādīns say that Jīva becomes bliss itself when it attains the state of complete identity with Absolute Being. To the opinion of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, the existence of bliss is useless unless it can be relished. Not a single devotee desires that he will lose his individuality in the ocean of bliss, but desires to relish the nectar of supreme bliss. If there is no relishment of bliss in the state of emancipation, then it would be a futile objective for which no effort would be undertaken. Before the Prema-siddha Bhakta (devotee) Bhagvān Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself in His full display of the intrinsic Divine Self, and in this case the essence of supreme bliss or Hlādinī-śakti springs from the perfect divine self of the devotee and enables the devotee to relish the nectar of supreme infinite bliss which is of a varied and wonderful character.

In the Pravartak stage or in the preliminary stage of sādhanā, the devotee contemplates Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa inwardly and Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself inwardly to the contemplative mind of the devotee. For the revelation of Bhagavān, purity of mind and body is a necessary qualification. Because such purity itself is the result of the self-manifesting energy of the divine will. Purity of body and mind is nevertheless necessary for reflecting, as in a mirror, the divine energy. The removal of the gross consciousness induced by the Māyā-śakti abolishes the phenomenal self; and the true self, standing out in its essential purity and tranquility, becomes a sort of supersensuous medium for the appearance of the divine being. And then Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself outwardly in the forms

of Paramātmā and Bhagavān succeedingly in accordance with the maturity of Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti to the eyes and other sense organs of the Sādhak and Siddha devotee. Thus the mind and senses of the devotee become means of divine manifestation. The outward vision is regarded by the Sahajiyās as superior to the inward revelation ; for the actual sight of Kṛṣṇa as a person is a higher realisation than the mere comprehension through mental meditation. Prema-bhakti results in the real sākṣātkāra of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. Bhāva-bhakti and consequently Prema-bhakti being a special function of the divine Svarūpa-śakti or being an essence of Hlādinī-śakti, appears of itself spontaneously within the devotee when he is graced with divine compassion.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Rasa-śāstra has classified devotional sentiments into five kinds, namely, Śānta, Dāsyā, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Mādhurya. The feelings of Śānta, Dāsyā, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Mādhurya form five basic aspects of Bhagavat-prīti and each succeeding one of these indicates a higher stage of realisation than the preceeding. Those devotees who are without the feeling of attachment, conceive the highest deity as Brahma and they are called Śānta Bhakta. On the other hand those devotees who possess the feeling of attachment, conceive Kṛṣṇa as Master (Prabhu) and themselves as His servant (Dāsa). They are called Dāsa Bhakta. Those who have the attitude of friendliness (sakhā-bhāva), conceive Kṛṣṇa as a friend and their feeling towards Kṛṣṇa is called Sakhya. Those who conceive Kṛṣṇa as a son, feel parental affection towards Kṛṣṇa and their feeling is called vātsalya. The climax of intimate feeling of attachment is reached in those devotees who are drawn towards Kṛṣṇa with irresistible love for Him. Their feeling is called Kānta-rati or Mādhurya-rati. This feeling of Mādhurya-rati can reach to the highest state of Mahābhāva. Mādhurya means loveliness of beauty and youth of Kṛṣṇa, which is the source of love in its sweet and melting quality. Mādhurya of Kṛṣṇa can be relished only by entering into

emotional intimacy with Kṛṣṇa. Those who desire and cultivate this sweetness of personal emotional relationship with Kṛṣṇa, are the best types of His premī-bhaktas.

The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas have resorted exclusively to the cultivation of Mādhurya-rati eliminating the other four kinds of Rāga-bhakti. In this regard they have followed the Rāgātmikā-bhakti of Śrī Caitanya manifested in the last phase of his life at Nilāchal. In the last twelve years of his life at Śreekhetra Caitanyadev would remain engrossed in deep love with Kṛṣṇa. In the Vaiṣṇava Rasa-śāstra, Bhagavat-Pṛiti is designated by the term Prema-bhakti and as such it is regarded as an expression of the intrinsic divine energy of the highest Hlādinī or blissful svarūpa-śakti of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. The incidental characteristics of Bhagavatprema or Prema-bhakti consist of such outward expressions of the sentiment as melting of the mind, thrill of pleasure and shedding of tears of joy etc ; and they signify that the relish of this kind of divine sentiment is Mādhurya, the outcome of Bhagavat-prema. This is why Prema-bhakti is described as natural or svābhāvikī. Even Sādhan-bhakti and Bhāva-bhakti possess these characteristics because of their direct relation to Prema-bhakti. Bhakti, in whatever form it appears, is to be considered as an expression of the divine attribute of blissful love. And when Prema-bhakti makes its full appearance, there is a complete attachment to Bhagavān-Kṛṣṇa, which is unchangeable in all conditions and situations. Viewed from this standpoint, it follows that in the blissful love of the devotee, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa also eternally realises His own intrinsic potency of blissful love which forms the very essence of His Divine Self. It is thus a form of self-realisation not only of the devotee who regains his natural divine blissful state of Rādhā, but also of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa whose very Self consists primarily of divine blissful love. This Divine Bliss which surpasses every other kind of bliss, being revealed within the prema-siddha-bhakta, becomes Bhagavat-prema, the experience of which makes both Kṛṣṇa and the

prema-siddha-bhakta completely engrossed in each other. Thus a direct channel of mystic contact is established between Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa and the prema-siddha-bhakta and the relationship continues for ever. But this view of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas is contrary to that of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who hold firmly that premī-bhakta Jīva can never possess the Rāgātmikā-bhakti which ever remains confined to the direct Parikaras of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. The premī-bhakta Jīva possesses only the Rāgānugā-bhakti and with the conceit of a particular relationship of an emotional character with Kṛṣṇa such as being a servant, a friend, a parent or a beloved, desires to experience a particular sentiment of Dāsa, Sakhā, Vatsala or Kānta by means of rendering help to the direct Parikaras in their services to Kṛṣṇa. Each of these Rāgānugā devotees seeks such favour as suits his capacity and inclination. This theory implies that the practice of Bhagavat-prema is based upon the distinctive consciousness of one or other of such indirect personal relationship of an emotional character with Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. No doubt this relationship is supersensuous in essence for its transcendental character.

Salient features of Sahajiyā Sādhana.

Self-realisation :—Contrary to the theory of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas believe in the importance of self-realisation. It expresses itself in the form of recognition of soul. Recognition of soul is destructive of ignorance lying at the root of worldly existence. When direct knowledge of soul is achieved, all smāskaras of previous lives are destroyed. But self-realisation or soul-consciousness or direct spiritual experience is very rare. It does not and cannot appear until the mind has been purified from the blinding effects of Māyā. Mind is purified through the propitiation of one's own divine self by means of meditation (upāsanā) and in chanting bija-mantra given by Dikṣā-guru during initiation. The importance of divine grace descending on the soul and purifying it, cannot be over-estimated. The dawn of divine wisdom which

is the result of purification of mind and of divine grace acting upon the soul, is the origin of the so-called śuddha-vidyā.

According to the opinion of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas performance of Karma-miśra-bhakti, chanting of bija-mantra along with the observance of mystic yogic practices lead to the manifestation of Brahma, an all pervading consciousness. At the sight of Brahma, the Pravarta-bhakta becomes conscious of his real self, i.e., he becomes conscious of his soul which is only partial manifestation of all pervading Brahma. As soon as the bija-mantra manifests itself, the Pravarta-bhakta is placed in śuddha adhvān. Śuddha-adhvān represents the higher world of pure matter beyond the influence of Māyā. And he is elevated to the stage of Sādhak-bhakta. Here lies the significance of divine grace.

As soon as the mind, by gradual training, becomes immune from impurities, it acquires the power of merging itself with soul. Then the mind (citta) is fully illumined and its real nature is perfectly brought out. This illumination is called by the name of Prajñā. In the process of mystic culture of Sahajiyā Sāadhanā, the emergence of Real Self consists in the relative unity of Soul (Puruṣ) and Mind (Prakriti). So the emergence of such purified and illumined mind is nothing but the original divine nature (svabhāva) of the Sādhak-bhakta. This illumined mind is but the essence of Hlādinī-Śakti of Kṛṣṇa, that remained dormant so long under the influence of Māyā-śakti. According to the Sahajiyā doctrine Brahma-darśan of Atma-darśan (soul consciousness) relates to the integral unity between the individual self and individual nature or Prakriti. This self-illumined original nature is called Cit-śakti or Cit-Prakriti of the Sādhak-bhakta. As soon as the Cit-Prakriti arises shaking off the power of Māyā. Paramātmā reveals himself to the Sādhak devotee. Recognition of Paramātmā relates to the integral unity between the soul of Sādhak and the universal soul. At the sight of Paramātmā the manifested Cit-Prakriti of the Sādhak feels an irresistible attraction for Paramātmā and

moves towards him with all her emotional love. The culture of emotional love at this stage of Sādhak is designated by the Sahajiyās as the sādhanā of Bhāva-bhakti. Cit-Prakriti of the Sādhak is the manifestation of Hlādinī-Śakti in a lesser degree. At the maturity of Bhāva-Sādhanā Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to the Sādhak devotee and attracts his Cit-Prakriti. At the sight of Kṛṣṇa who is the embodiment of all engrossing beauty, love and sweetness, Cit-Prakriti moves with all her sentimental love towards Kṛṣṇa. The culture of sentimental love is designated as the sādhanā of Prema-bhakti. When Prema-bhakti attains maturity, Sādhak becomes Siddha and is united inseparably with Kṛṣṇa. At this full grown stage of Prema-sādhanā, Cit-Prakriti also develops into full grown Hlādinī-Śakti, the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa and relishes the divine sentiment of love that varies at every moment of changes in the endless waves of emotion that ultimately culminates into Mohābhāva. Thus there is an order of progression in spiritual experience of the Sahajiyā devotee. The successive stages of spiritual perfection consequent on the dawn of wisdom are represented by the tattvas to which the soul is attached. The lowest stage is that of 'Mantra' which corresponds to Śuddha-Vidyā. The next higher state is corresponding to Ātmatattva, self-consciousness. Above it, is the state of Paramātmā. The state of Paramātmā is really transcendent, being that of pure and absolute consciousness. But the true absolute is Bhagavān Śree Kṛṣṇa, where identity with all the tattvas as well as their transcendence are present simultaneously. And in Kṛṣṇa there is the fullest display of all the divine śaktis, but what is prominent, is the highest expression of Hlādinī-Śakti or the energy of bliss. As Kṛṣṇa is the highest embodiment of divine Ānanda or Mādhurya, so the aspect of His mādhurya is reflected in the highest Prema-siddha devotee whose Cit-Prakriti, by this time, is identified with Hlādinī-Śakti, the highest essence of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

We have already mentioned that in the religion of the

Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas Sādhana-bhakti, Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti are the three succeeding phases of Bhakti. The Sādhana-bhakti is to be learnt from one's spiritual preceptor (Śikṣā-guru). Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti develop spontaneously within the Cit-Prakṛiti of the Sādhak devotee who then discards all the formalities of Sādhana-bhakti. By the Sādhana-bhakti Brahma-Jñāna or Ātma-jñāna (self-consciousness) is attained ; but Param-ātmā and Bhagavān are attainable only by Bhāva-bhakti and prema-bhakti respectively. The meritorious acts lead one in the way of Sādhana-bhakti, and in this way one becomes fitted for the higher Bhāva-bhakti and subsequently the highest Prema-bhakti. Thus we find that Bhakti is never considered inconsistent with Jñāna by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. Their attempt is to reconcile Jñāna and Bhakti in their devotional worship of Kṛṣṇa. But the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas dispense with Jñāna and take their stand exclusively upon devotional emotion. Devotion (Bhakti) is no doubt superior to every other mode of worship. But Karma-miśrā-bhakti (sādhana-bhakti) according to the Sahajiyās is indispensable at the initial stage of Sādhana. Works or Karma consisting of observance of the ceremonial duties, of obedience to scriptural directions and of dedication of all fruits of Karma to Bhagavān are helpful for the realisation of soul and are also productive of a proneness towards the supreme God, Bhagavān, Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. In all these modes of worship there must be an element of Bhakti and the devotee must be free from any desire of worldly objects. This mode of attitude produces in the mind of the devotee an inclination towards Bhagavān.

Emancipation from the bondage of Māyā is the realisation of the knowledge of self. The threefold aspects of the Supreme Reality indicates the three stages of realisation. The attainment of Brahma represents only a lower manifestation of the most perfect Bhagavān. The Jñānins who desire emancipation irrespective of Bhakti, merge in Brahma and become extinct. The Sahajiyās are the other class of Jñānins who desire emanci-

pation but also possess Bhakti. This is why they stand on a different footing from the Vedāntists who seek release from the Māyā-śakti only to be identified with Brahma without any distinction. Bhakti of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas leads them to enter into the intimate relation with Bhagavān. It is their Jñānamisrā-bhakti that prevails in the beginning, leads them to the highest realisation of Bhagavān. So their Jñāna-misrā-bhakti culminates into Prema-bhakti at the highest stage of Rāga-sādhanā (culture of sentimental love).

GauḍīyaVaiṣṇavas advocate śuddhā-bhakti (pure emotional devotion) from the very beginning of Rāga-sādhanā—culture of emotional love for Kṛṣṇa. Their justification is that at the maturity of Rāgānugā-bhakti (emotional devotion) Jñāna will come of itself. They are justified in this sense that by realising Bhagavān one necessarily realises along with His supreme bliss (Ānanda), the other aspect of His supreme consciousness (Jñāna). They regard Jñāna to be the offspring of śuddhā-bhakti (pure emotional devotion). So they are of opinion that the way of śuddhā-bhakti is far superior to that of Jñāna-misrā-bhakti, and thereby dispense with the necessity of Jñāna. They consider Jñāna as a hindrance to the way of culturing emotional love for Kṛṣṇa.

The theology of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas does not reject the way of Jñāna. They profess that in order to realise Bhagavān fully it is inevitable for a Bhakta-sādhak to pass through the three stages of sādhanā corresponding to the threefold aspects of Bhagavān. They are of opinion that unless one acquires self-consciousness, one cannot acquire Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti in real sense of the terms. The real Bhāva-bhakti dawns only when the Cit-Prakṛiti or svabhāva within one self is revealed after being conscious of one's own real self free from the influence of Māyā-śakti. This is why they prefer Jñāna-misrā-bhakti to śuddhā-bhakti in the first stage of Rāga-sādhanā.

Through the influence of Māyā-śakti the individual self (Jīva) forgets its true nature and becomes distracted by the phenomenal

world, with the result that it loses its tranquil state. In order to restore its self-consciousness the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas do not dispense with the ceremonial duties in the primary stage of Rāga-sādhana and attach much importance to the observance of ceremonial duties as a means to an end. But the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas consider the way of Karma as superfluous for the attainment of Rāga-bhakti that leads to the attachment of Bhagavān with love. They hold this view that following the Karma-mārga which lays down injunctions regarding the performance of ceremonial duties, cannot in any way help in evolving the Rāgānugā-bhakti within the devotee. On the contrary Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas hold this opinion that the ceremonial duties should be performed, as the Gītā teaches, without attachment (anāsakti) and desire of fruits (phala-tyāga) and even such dedication will be accompanied by Bhakti. The ceremonial acts accompanied with Bhakti consist of such acts as śravaṇa (listening to the praise of Kṛṣṇa), Kīrtana (singing in praise of Kṛṣṇa), mantra-japa (muttering mantra implanted in the mind of the devotee by Dikṣā-guru) etc., by which the supreme deity is worshipped and which are meant only for the pleasure of Bhagavān. These kinds of acts accompanied with Bhakti and esoteric practices, are productive of Jñāna and Bhāva-bhakti simultaneously. Being self-conscious the individual devotee in his purity and freedom from the Māyā-śakti realises not only his original self, but also his intrinsic divine nature (Cit-Prakṛiti or svabhāva). At that moment Bhāva-bhakti which is synonymous to Rāgānugā-bhakti springs up from his intrinsic divine nature which is the real Prakṛiti of the Bhakta-sādhak and is the essence (vṛtti) of Hlādinī Śakti of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. The spontaneous Bhāva-bhakti then leads the devotee to the attainment of Prema-bhakti which is synonymous to Rāgātmikā-bhakti. At the stage of Sādhak the necessity of performance of ceremonial duties comes to an end. Because only Bhāva-bhakti leads the Sādhak-devotee to a higher stage of realisation than that attained by Jñāna, for it goes beyond the stage of attain-

ment of Brahma to the realisation of Paramātmā, a higher aspect of Bhagavān. And then by the attraction of spontaneous Prema-bhakti or through the Premayoga the Siddha-bhakta ultimately realises the highest Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa. Thus Karma-miśra-bhakti produces Bhāva-bhakti and Bhāva-bhakti culminates into Prema-bhakti. Hence Prema-bhakti which may be termed Rāgātmikā-bhakti, occupies the highest place in the order of spiritual realisation.

Elements of Yoga-Tantra—In contrast with the Sādhana of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Sahjīyā Sādhana is intimately connected with Yoga-Tantra. It has already been pointed out that the first aim of the Sahjīyā devotee is to realise the self. Yoga-Tantra quickens to acquire self-consciousness. Yoga precedes Tantra. Our mind is always full of earthly desires and cravings. It always seeks satisfaction derived from the fulfilment of earthly desires. This kind of earthly satisfaction is not real pleasure. Real and everlasting enjoyment is derived only when our real self is attracted towards the Supreme Being and comes into His close contact. As our mind wants satisfaction from the fulfilment of earthly desires, so our mind always move from one object to other and thus becomes restless. As soon as one object is fulfilled, the mind moves to other and so on. As for example, if a man becomes thirsty, he drinks a glass of water. For the time-being he gets satisfaction, but after sometimes he again feels thirsty and so on. His thirst is not quenched for-ever. Likewise our mind seeks earthly pleasures and never remains content with what he has. So earthly desires and cravings always scatter our mind. Patanjali, a great exponent of yoga, has termed it 'vikṣipta' state of mind. Pātanjal yoga-śāstra advises us to get the mind rid of all kinds of desires and cravings, and concentrate it to one object for the realisation of spiritual knowledge. The practice of concentrating the mind into one object is the initial stage of yogasādhana. While the mind is fully concentrated to one object only without any interruption or while the streams of thought flow continuously towards one object, then at the

saturating point flashes the light of self-consciousness. The light of spiritual consciousness, thus revealed, does not linger long, in a moment it evaporates. Again and again the yoga-sādhak brings back that light through the repeated concentration of mind. While the light of spiritual consciousness becomes permanently fixed, the knowledge of self or soul dawns upon the yoga-sādhak and the sādhak gets rid of all miseries of life and of re-birth which is called Mokṣa (liberation of soul). The individual self consciousness, thus obtained, gradually pervades the whole world. In this way the sādhak first achieves the self-consciousness and then he realises the world-consciousness within himself. When the inner and the outer worlds mingle into one within the spiritual consciousness of the Sādhak, then the Sādhak acquires the knowledge of Brahma. The Tāntrik Sādhak after gaining the knowledge of Brahma, does not lose his own individuality as the Brahma-vādīns do being merged with all absorbing light of Brahma. Spiritually conscious Tāntrik Sādhak-bhakta is restored to his original nature (Cit-Prakriti) in order to relish the supreme delight of the Supreme Lord who is made of three qualities, 'Sat' (eternal existence), 'Cit' (supreme consciousness) and 'Ānanda' (supreme delight). Without the practice of yoga, the knowledge of self can never be achieved far to speak of the knowledge of Brahma.

The great emphasis is laid by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas on the human body which is conceived as a microcosm of the universe. This feature predominates in all the Tantras in general wherever the yogic element prevails. In the human body there are innumerable nerves, but amongst all these 'Piṅgalā', 'suṣumnā' and 'Iḍā' are most important. Wherever Piṅgalā and Iḍā cross each other at suṣumnā, there is formed a cakra or lotus (plexus). In the human body there are such six cakras or lotuses along the spinal cord. As these yogic-cakras or lotuses have got an extremely important place in the world of Yoga-Sādhanā, so let us have a cursory glance over these plexus.

(I) *The Mūlādhāra Cakra (Plexus)*—Mūlādhāra cakra is situated between the penis and the anus facing down with four petals of red colour. This cakra is the resting place for the Kuṇḍalīnī-Śakti (the divine power).

(II) *The Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra*—The second plexus of the human body is called Svādhiṣṭhāna cakra. This plexus is situated near the root of the penis with six petals of the colour of vermillion.

(III) *The Maṇi Pura Cakra*—The third plexus is known as Maṇipura cakra. It is situated in the region of the navel with ten petals of the colour of the cloud.

(IV) *The Anāhata cakra*—The name of the fourth plexus is Anāhata cakra. It is situated in the heart with twelve petals of the colour of Bandhuka-flower (red). It is generally assumed that brooding over this plexus, the yogī can conquer the maladies and miseries, sorrows and misfortunes. Some of the yoga-experts opine that simply concentrating on the Anāhata cakra, the spiritual seeker (sādhak) becomes 'Tri-kārajña', one having the knowledge of past, present and future (the omniscient).

(v) *The Viśuddha cakra*—The fifth plexus of our body is known as Viśuddha cakra. It is situated at the junction of the spinal cord and the medulla oblongata with sixteen petals of smoky colour.

(VI) *The Ājñā Cakra*—The sixth plexus of the human body is named as Ājñā cakra which is located between the eyebrows with two petals of white colour. Concentrating on this plexus, it is believed by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, the yogī comes face to face with Paramātmā. The Bhakta Sādhak yogī being free from the crude shackles of Māyā and redeemed from the miseries and misfortunes of the wordly life, is elevated to such a sublime position where he enjoys the state of ecstasy which is known as "Bliss".

Above all there is the Sahasrāra cakra, also known as the Śūnya cakra, in the highest cerebral region. This cakra is

regarded by the Tāntrik as the seat of Parama Śiva. The Sahaja-siddha Buddhists have located the Sahaja-kāya in the Sahasrāra kamala which is termed as 'Uṣṇiṣa Kamala' by the Tāntrik Buddhists. It is also called by them the 'Mahā-sukha-kamala' being the seat of supreme realisation. The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas have identified it with 'Golok-Briṅḍāvan'. Even in a popular Vaiṣṇava text like the 'Brahma-saṁhitā' which was brought by Śrī-Caitanya himself from South India, the Tāntrik influence on Vaiṣṇavism is perceived. In the fifth chapter, which is only available now-a-days, of *Brahma-saṁhitā* we find that the lotus of thousand petals in the cerebral-region is described as 'Gokula', the abode of Kṛṣṇa.

In the Mūlādhāra cakra remains the Kula-Kuṇḍalinī-Śakti, the Divine Power in the serpentine form. This Śakti lies down in the Mūlādhāra-cakra in the sleeping state. The sādhanā consists in rousing this Śakti lying dormant in the Mūlādhāra-cakra. The yogī, therefore, awakens this dormant Divine Power by continuously striking through 'Mantra-Śakti' (reciting the incantations) implanted by the Dīkṣā Guru in the heart of his disciple at the time of initiation. With his continuous practices and incessant efforts guided by the 'Śikṣā Guru' as is mentioned in the religion of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, the yogī enables the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti rise from her slumber. Thus awakened the kuṇḍalinī Śakti enters into the middle-nerve, Suṣumnā within the spinal cord, which is designated by the Hindu Tāntriks as 'Brahmarandhra' or 'middle path' by the Tāntrik Buddhists, and passes through all the cakras (plexus) of the body and ultimately enters in the Ājñā cakra and after acquiring the siddhi (perfection) of this plexus the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti finally merges with Parama Śiva, the Supreme Lord of the Universe, in the Sahasrāra cakra. This is the real yoga, the communion of Kuṇḍalinī Śakti (the Divine Power) with Parama Śiva (the Ultimate-truth). After this unique unison, the Bhakta-yogī becomes one with the Supreme God and thus attains Divine Beauty.

For the union with God, we have to merge our Unit (individual) soul with the Cosmic-Soul (Ātmā with Paramātmā), which is the very gist and purpose of the science of yoga. But, before being one with the Ultimate Reality we have to absorb our little individual 'ego' in the 'Universal-Ego' and this would pave the way for our individual identity with the Absolute-One. This whole universe is nothing but the manifestation of the Absolute-One and the souls in all beings represent the same supreme-soul (Paramātamā). Once the little individual-ego is merged in the universal-ego then the little individual-ego assuming the shape of the universal-ego automatically becomes the universal-ego. Thus, with the help of the yoga Microcosm is transformed into Macrocosm.

In order to achieve the highest goal of human life there are many methods, various ways and procedures. The different religious systems of India came into existence for the same purpose and almost all of them have their respective importance. But there are three fundamental paths (ways) which help us to a very great extent to carry us to the greatest aim of human life, these are—Karma yoga, the yoga of disinterested action ; Rāja yoga, the yoga of meditation and concentration ; and Bhakti yoga, the yoga of the sincere spiritual attachment with a flavour of emotion and sentiment. These three ways of yoga are intimately related to one another. Rāja yoga means to perform any action with full interest and complete concentration. It also means to calm down the propensities of mind, as the greatest champion of the yoga-system, Patañjali defines it : "Yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ". But in the spiritual sense yoga stands for the communion, the unison of the soul with the supreme soul—the microcosm with the macrocosm. The final yoga means the sublime state or merger where the Sādhaka, the spiritually conscious yogī, becomes one with the Sādhyā, the Absolute One. After attaining this supreme sublime state of unison the Siddha yogī enjoys extreme happiness which is termed as "Bliss".

To every Sahajiyā yogī who aspires to make a fast progress in the world of spirituality, it is almost imperative to meditate first of all on Kṛṣṇa sitting in the Mūlādhāra cakra which is the very base of the yogic Sādhanā. It is only with the grace and blessings of the Lord of the Mūlādhāra cakra that the sādhak-yogī attains the exalted state of "Paramānanda" (the Bliss). Even Śāṅkarācārya, the greatest champion of Monism, believed that the Tāntrik technique brings early success in the spiritual field and also precipitates in achieving the desired results.¹

Coming to the question of the esoteric practice of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, the first thing that we should take notice of, is the importance attached to the process of the yogic practices for making the body fit for higher realisation. This principle and practice of yoga is common to all Tāntrik schools of India. For the purpose of spiritualising the body the practices of 'Haṭh-yoga' are prescribed ; and it is for this reason that the Buddhist Sahajayāna Siddhācāryas were great Haṭha-yogins.

In fact, Tantras are intimately connected with the Rājyoga as advocated in the system of Patañjali and also with Haṭha-yoga. Rājyoga shows the correct way of developing mental faculties and of obtaining great spiritual powers. To obtain spiritual powers requires concentration of mind. The Tāntriks know the power of mind. The human mind has one peculiar power and with the help of this power the human mind adjusts itself to the deity and becomes one with the same. Even God can be conceived and realised if the mind is properly attuned to the Absolute.

Complete purification of body, as prescribed in the Haṭha-yoga, is essential for concentrating the mind. Complete control over breath and over wind in the whole physiological system has to be attained before real concentration of mind takes place. Therefore Tāntrik culture presupposes Rājayoga and Haṭhayoga. Rājayoga and Haṭhayoga give control over the

1. See Śāṅkarācārya's Prapañchāsāra, 16/36.

mind and body. Concentration in yoga produces a condition that makes the yogī oblivious to all surroundings, even the physical body, but the yogī does not lose his consciousness, but remains conscious throughout the process of the communion of the Jīvātmā with the Paramātmā and feels a kind of divine joy which words fail to describe.

At the initial stage yoga certainly purifies the mind and body of the Sahajiyā Pravartak and brings harmony in life. The above statement will clearly demonstrate that the highest degree of discipline in mind is necessary to follow the path of Tantra, and that it cannot be meant for all. In fact, Tantra is meant only for a few persons who are blessed with a high degree of mental refinement.

Sahajiyās' conception of yoga and Rādhā—To the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas yoga means commingling. The individual soul is called the Jīvātmā, while the highest soul is called the paramātmā. When the commingling of the Jīvātmā with the Paramātmā takes place it is called by them the real yoga. This spirit is imbibed by them from Buddhism. In Buddhism the individual soul is called the Bodhicitta and the highest spirit is called the Śūnya with three elements of Śūnya, Vijñāna and Mahāsukha. Śūnya, like Parama Śiva of Hindu Tantra, is the highest spirit and an inexhaustible storehouse of energy which pervades the whole universe. The chief aim of the Bodhicitta is to commingle with this Śūnya and be a part and parcel of the great energy, eternal knowledge and eternal happiness. This is, to them, the final yoga in the truest sense of the term.

Likewise the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas consider Kṛṣṇa to be the Absolute God who is the embodiment of three elements: Sat (eternal existence), Cit (pure consciousness) and Ānanda (Supreme Bliss). They have replaced Bodhicitta by Rādhā. Rādhā is the embodiment of Ānanda-element of Kṛṣṇa. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas can never think of obtaining Rādhāhood. Because Rādhā represents Kṛṣṇa's Hlādinī Śakti who belongs

to one of the three aspects of His swarūp Śakti. The devotion of Rādhā and her Sakhis (female companions) to Kṛṣṇa falls to the category of Rāgātmikā Bhakti that can never be obtained by Jīva who is regarded Taṭastha Śakti of Kṛṣṇa.

But according to the theology of Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism Rādhā is the supreme spiritual divine state that can be attained by a Sahajiyā Bhakta Sādhak who gets perfection (Siddhi) in Bhakti-yoga and is ultimately united with Kṛṣṇa as the Bodhicitta commingles with the highest spirit Śūnya. The creed of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas is thus fundamentally based on the question of self-revelation as a lover of God. The ultimate nature of the Sahajiyā-siddha serves as a mirror where love and beauty of the Absolute are reflected. This manifestation of love and beauty of the Absolute reaches perfection in man and it is for this reason that man is the microcosm in which all attributes of the Absolute are united and in him alone does the Absolute become conscious of itself in all its diverse aspects. Man thus represents in him a synthesis of the finite and the infinite. This conception of the Divine and the human combined in man may well be compared with the Upaniṣadic conception of the Paramātmā and Jīvātmā residing in the same human body. The conception of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas is that in love we realise that we are all separated from the Beloved with whom we were once one; and in love again shall we proceed in the regressive way and realise our true original self being one with the Beloved.

Man is the marginal being or a finite-infinite being. When associated with principles of illusory defilement, he passes on to his purely finite nature of animal existence, when he suffers bondage on all sides. But when he purifies himself in meditation and in self-less love of God, the principles of defilement in him being all burnt away, he passes again on to his true divine nature and becomes liberated by transcending all limitations of finitude and is united with God with rapture of joy. The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas have interpreted this in this way

that through the ecstasy of the purest love, the spiritual nature (svabhāva) of the Sahajiyā-Siddha passes into the divinity of Rādhā. But we should take notice that though love is the main religious mode of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the elements of yoga-Tantra are in no way less important in their Sādhanā. The element of love has been associated with the elements of yoga-Tantra in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā sect.

Tantra is divided into various sections, both in Hinduism as well as in Buddhism. With the Hindus Dakṣiṇācāra is to be followed first, after which Vāmācāra is permitted. In Dakṣiṇācāra strict celibacy, restriction of food and drink, meditation etc., are of primary importance and when the neophyte is sufficiently advanced, he is initiated into the mysteries of Vāmācāra when women are permitted for the purpose of practising the Yoga-Tantra together. Similarly, in Buddhism, Tantra is divided into four sections. In the two earlier sections, namely the Kriyā-tantra and the Caryā-tantra, strict celibacy and restrictions of food, drink etc., are enjoined. When this course is complete, the neophyte then can be initiated into the mysteries of Yoga-Tantra, in which women become necessary for the purpose of practising the Tāntrik rites. In Tantra to rouse the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti which remains sleeping in Mūlādhār cakra, is highly necessary for a Tāntrik Sādhak to obtain the spiritual knowledge. The great Tāntrik gurus allow the neophytes with much caution to take women in practising, Yoga-Tantra in order to rouse Kuṇḍalinī Śakti. But it must be remembered that both in Hindus' Vāmācāra and Buddhists' Yoga-Tantra, complete control over the wind that is contained within the body, is essential and this is obtained after a long continued practice of Haṭhayoga, Rājayoga, Prāṇāyām and so forth, so that the association with women does not upset rather help the initiated in rousing the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti. It is for this reason that the Tantras are to be taken recourse to when perfection is reached in controlling wind. Because wind that we breathe, gives motion to every cell in the body and is

responsible for the excretory secretions of the body. The primary object of practising the Tāntrik rites is to stop forever the excretory secretions from the body. But it is not easy to control wind and thereby mind. It requires years of patience and systematic practices. And the practices must be conducted on right lines under the guidance and control of a spiritual Guru. Because mistakes in the process bring untold miseries to the practiser. It is for this reason that we find in the Tantra a great reverence for the Guru.

Guru-vāda (the doctrine of the preceptor)—

In all Indian religions Guru is held in the highest esteem. In ancient India the necessity of a guru or a preceptor was always felt. The Upaniṣads were so called because the disciples had to sit near the guru to obtain spiritual knowledges. The preceptor opens the eyes of the disciple and makes him realise the existence of God. Spiritual knowledge is transmitted from the preceptor to the disciple just as light from one lamp to the other. The only way of knowing the spiritual truth is, therefore, to seek the grace of Guru. It is believed that the spiritual preceptor (Saṭ-guru) in his non-dual state identifies himself with the disciple and performs from within the disciple all that is necessary for the latter's spiritual uplift. This kind of spiritual performance by the Guru is called 'Dikṣā' (initiation). After initiation the disciple is called 'Dvija'. It means that the disciple is spiritually born after his material birth. We also find the paralal idea of initiation in Christianity, which is called 'Baptism'. Baptism means the Spirit of God descends upon the Baptised pupil. There are evidences in the Gospel story that from the time of his baptism the Spirit of God abode upon Chirst :

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptised of him.And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straitway out of the water : and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him."—(Mathew Ch. III, 14, 16, 17.)

Tāntrikism which lays emphasis on the practical aspect of religion, naturally lays great stress on the function of Guru. Most of the Tāntrik practices are secret practices involving complex process of esoteric yoga. Because of this stringent nature of the Tāntrik practice, the help of the Guru is enjoined to be sought at every step. These intricate esoteric practices, when properly and systematically carried out, lead a man to the highest spiritual elevation. On the other hand if they are not pursued very cautiously and methodically with the guidance and directions of the spiritual Guru they may lead and are very likely to lead a man into the darkest abyss of hell.

From the ancient time the Tāntrik practices were handed down from gurus to disciples in an unbroken chain. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā religion like all other esoteric religions, is characterised by the emphasis on Guru. They are of the opinion that nothing can be achieved without a guru. The spiritual knowledge cannot be defined, as it is dependent more or less on self-realisation. This perfect knowledge can only be obtained from a spiritual preceptor. So in Tantra, either Hindu or Buddhist, we find the position of guru altogether paramount. In every Sahajiyā work there is evidence of high esteem in which the gurus were held and eulogized by the disciples. In many of their work the characteristics of the guru and the disciple are enumerated. The disciple is first to be initiated by the guru, and if all instructions of guru are properly followed by the disciple, then and then alone Siddhi (perfection) is possible of attainment. Saṅguru is very rare to find. The soul of Saṅguru remains always in contact with the Supreme Soul from which Guru draws energy to be transmitted to the heart of the disciple in the form of 'Bijmantra'. The divine grace cannot in all cases operate directly. It operates through the medium of saintly persons and gurus who are free from the influence of Māyā-Śakti and are therefore direct receptacles of divine grace. Therefore the association with saints and devotees and rendering service to them are regarded by both the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas and the

Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas the first cause of Sprouting Bhakti (devotion) on the mind of the beginners. Because the association with saints and devotees and sincere service to them are the most effective medium through which the divine grace is communicated. The Sahajiyā cult suggests that in selecting gurus Jñāna-siddha and Prema-siddha Bhaktas are to be preferred. These kinds of gurus are termed by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas as Bhāva-siddha and Rasasiddha Manjuries who can only act as a medium of divine grace and generate Bhakti in the individual. This leads to the theory of the necessity of a spiritual guru, a theory which plays an important part in all kinds of religions. The justification of 'guru-vāda' lies in the fact that the spiritual guide must be one who has attained spiritual illumination. The contact and influence of such a spiritually illumined guru become of immense benefit to the beginner in the attainment of spiritual truth. From the association with the spiritually illuminated saintly persons (sādhu-saṅga) arises first of all 'ruci' or relish in the object of worship and also in the ways of worship and this produces 'śraddhā' or belief as a preliminary stage to Bhakti.

According to the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas gurus are of two classes: one is Dikṣā guru and the other, Śikṣā guru. It is a new innovation of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, as it is not found in any other religious system of India. The Dikṣā-guru or the Mantra-guru is he who imparts to the disciple the esoteric sacred formula for meditation and the Śikṣā-guru is he who undertakes to train the mind of the initiated disciple in order to attain the perfection (siddhi). The Śikṣā-guru is regarded by the Sahajiyās as 'Manjari'. By this way the two types of spiritual gurus occupy the high position in the religious life of the Sahajiyā devotee.

We have already referred to the three types of Bhakti of the Sahajiyās such as Sādhan-bhakti, Bhāva-bhakti and Prema-bhakti. Sādhan-bhakti is the first step to Prema-bhakti, that arises only from the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa through the guru (Tat-prasādāpekṣa). As the perfect knowledge can only be

obtained from a spiritually qualified guru, so it is the custom of the Sahajiyās that a Saṅ-guru well-versed in the Tāntrik lore should be served and worshipped with great devotion, so that the spiritual knowledge may be obtained. In response to the disciple's devotion and eagerness guru as a mark of great favour, grants him the requisite initiation which is called 'Karunādhārāi Snān'.

Keeping the above discussion in mind we shall proceed to unfold mysteries of Parakīyā Sādhanā prevalent in Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult.

The concept of Parakīyā Doctrine :

Parakīyā—The excellence of love rests on the sentiment of Parakīyā not on that of Svakīyā. Parakīyā indicates a mental attitude of intense longing. The views of the Gosvāmīs of Vṛṇḍāvan appear to have been that, as Svarūp-śakti of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, the Gopīs including Rādhā were His Own (Svakīyā), but the Gopīs under an illusion created by Yogamāyā, considered themselves to be the wives of the Gops. Specially the works of Jīva Gosvāmī did not lend support to the Parakīyā doctrine. But Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his book 'Caitanya Caritāmṛta', however, ascribed the Parakīyā belief to Caitanya himself. Yadunandan upheld that view (see Karṇānanda, p. 88) and in his time the efforts of Śyāmānanda and Śrīnivāsa had made the Parakīyā doctrine wide-spread in Bengal. Śrīnivāsa's descendant, Rādhāmohan Thākur became a formidable champion of this doctrine. There is, however, no doubt that this doctrine of Parakīyā developed and became established in Bengal.

We have seen that the Brāhmanism revived during the reign of the Sena-Kings who succeeded the Pāla-Kings. Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism, based mainly on the love dalliances of the cowherd boy Kṛṣṇa with the cowherd girl Rādhā, began to gain popularity during the reign of the Sena-Kings. Jayadeva who is said to have been the court-poet of the last Sena-King Lakṣman Sena in the last half of the twelfth century A.D., was the first Bengali Vaiṣṇava poet to write and sing the sweet

melodious immortal love-songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He wrote the famous book 'Gītgovinda' depicting the love-dalliances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Caṇḍīdāsa of the fourteenth century A.D. popularised the legends and ideals of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa through his exquisite lyrical poems. Similar lyrics were composed also by the poet Vidyāpati of Mithilā, who is said to be the contemporary to Caṇḍīdāsa. Though Vidyāpati wrote poems on the love-dalliances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Maithili language, yet he enjoyed enormous popularity in Bengal in comparison to meagre popularity in Mithilā. This wide-spread popularity of the love-songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa began to influence the mind of the people belonging to all substrata of the society. It was through the influence of these love-songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that the ideology of the Sahajayāna Buddhists while amalgamated with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, was changed. The Buddhist Sahājayānists were turned into the sect of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās and with the change of ideology their methodology also was changed.

With the popularity of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult the ideal of Parakīyā Rati gradually gained the ground. In almost all the theological discussions of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of the Post-Chaitanya period the superiority of these ideal of Parakīyā love to that of Svakīyā love was variously demonstrated: "Parakīyā Preme ati Raser Ullās" In his "Typical selections from Old Bengali Literature (Vol II, pp. 1638-1643)" Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen has quoted two old documents belonging to the first half of the eighteenth century A.D., where we find that regular debates were arranged between the Vaiṣṇava exponents of the Parakīyā and the Svakīyā ideals of love in order to ascertain which of the two is more congenial to the culture of Bhakti-dharma. In the debates the upholders of the Svakīyā view were defeated and had to sign documents admitting the supremacy of the Parakīyā ideal of love. This ideal of Parakīyā love has been the strongest factor in moulding the doctrine of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal.

The Vaiṣṇava movement of Bengal, in the line of the Kṛṣṇa-Gopī cult, grew along with the traditions of the Purāṇas like the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Viṣṇu-purāṇa, Brahma-Vaivarta-purāṇa etc. The first literary record of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism is to be found in the famous lyrical poem, the Gīta-govinda of Jayadev. After him Caṇḍīdās and Vidyāpati who, though a Maithili poet, was more popular in Bengal than in Mithilā, sang the immortal songs of the eternal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. According to some learned scholars Caṇḍīdās and Vidyāpati were the predecessors of Śrī Caitanya who flourished in the sixteenth century A.D. Caitanyadev took the initiative in bringing about a great revolution in the devotional movement which for a long time overflowed Bengal and some of the neighbouring provinces. Gauḍīy Vaiṣṇavite apostles like Mādhavendrapuri, Advaitācārya, Śrīvāsa and others flourished just before the advent of Śrī Caitanya. The advent of Śrī Caitanya was something like a fruition of all their devotional penances. Śrī Caitanya, as he is interpreted first by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his famous book 'Caitanya-Caritāmṛta', embodies in him the essential qualities of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Through his life and teaching Caitanyadev preached a doctrine of divine love which was philosophically systematised and theologically codified by the six Gosvāmīs of Vrindāvan viz., Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunāth Dās, Raghunāth Bhaṭṭa, Gopāl Bhaṭṭa and Jīva Gosvāmī. The philosophical and theological system known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, is really the contribution of these six Gosvāmīs who were all religious, apostles inspired by the life and teachings of Caitanyadev.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as interpreted by the six Gosvāmīs of Vrindāvan, generally flourished with the love-legends of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. But in the Post Caitanya Sahajiyā cult of Bengal the divinity of Śrī Caitanya as the synthesis of the two elements of the same Supreme Reality as the lover and the beloved was recognised. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his much reputed book 'Caitanya-Caritāmṛta' first informs us that in the eternal

land of Vrindāvan Kṛṣṇa being himself the subject of love, could not relish the nector of supreme love that his counterpart Rādhā would do at the sight of him. In order to be acquainted with the nature of Rādhā's love Kṛṣṇa himself assumed the emotional feelings of Rādhā and incarnated in the form of Śrī Caitanya at the sacred land of Navadvīp in Bengal. This theory of synthesis of the divine lover and the beloved embodied in Śrī Caitanya as propounded by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, was highly acclaimed by the people of Bengal. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal accepted this theory whole heartedly with some modification. They emphasised the necessity of synthesizing the two opposite elements in one body by the mystic culture of yoga-Tantra with accompaniment of Prakṛiti—a female Sādhikā—for the sublimation of sensuous love into divine love.

Both the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas accepted the ideal of Parakīyā love as contrasted with the ideal of Svakīyā love in their doctrines. The ideal of Parakīyā love was merely recognised as a theological speculation in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, but it was accepted even in its practical bearing by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. Caṇḍīdās who wrote innumerable love songs on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, is held by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās an exponent of the Sahajiyā practice in the Pre-Caitanya period. A love-episode between Caṇḍīdās and a washer-woman named Rāmī is prevalent in Bengal. It is said that Caṇḍīdās practised esoteric Sādhana with Rāmī. Though the love-episode can not be taken as a historical proof, yet judging from the number of Sahajiyā poems ascribed to him, it will not be far to speak that there might have been some truth in the tradition of Caṇḍīdās himself being a Sahajiyā Sādhak. The indebtedness of Śrī Caitanya to the love-lyrics of Jayadev, Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdās is well known through the 'Caitanya Caritāmṛita', a standard biography of Caitanayadev, written by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have held all the great poets like Jayadev, Vidyāpati, Caṇḍīdās to be the exponents of Sahajiyā practice in the Pre-Caitanya period.

It is curiously held by some of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās that Caitanyadev practised Sahajiyā Sādhanā in company of Sāthi, daughter of Sārvabhauma.¹ The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās hold that all the great Vaiṣṇava apostles of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism practised Sahajiyā Sādhanā with some female companion. Thus it is said in the 'Vivarta Vilāsa' of Akiñchanadās :

“Śri Rūpa karilā Sādhanā Mīrār sahite ।
 Bhaṭṭa Raghunāth karilā Karnabāi sāthe ॥
 Lakṣmahirā sane kariā goṁsāi Sanātan ।
 Mohāmantra preme sevā sadā ācharaṇ ॥
 Goṁsāi Loknāth Chaṇḍālinī-Kanyā saṅge ।
 Dohājan anurāge premer taraṅge ॥
 Goyālinī Piṅgalā se Brajadevī Sama ।
 Goṁsāi Kriṣṇadās sadāi ācharaṇ ॥
 Śyāmā nāpitānī saṅge Śri Jīva goṁsāi ।
 Param pirīti Kailā yār Sīmā nāi ॥
 Raghunāth gosvāmī pirīti ullāse ।
 Mīrābāi saṅge teha rāihā-kunḍa bāse ॥
 Gaurpriyā saṅge Gopāl Bhaṭṭa goṁsāi ।
 Karaye sādhan yār anya kichu nāi ॥
 Roy Rāmānanda yaje Devakanyā Saṅge ।
 Āropete sthiti teha Kriyār taraṅge ॥

(Vivarta Vilāsa, pp 106/107)

Here we find that the great Vaiṣṇava apostles like Rūpa, Rāgunāth Bhaṭṭa, Sanātan, Loknāth, Kriṣṇadās Kavirāj, Śri Jīva, Raghunāth Gosvāmi, Gopāl Bhaṭṭa and Roy Rāmānanda practised Sahajiyā Sādhanā in accompaniment of their respective female companions like Mīrā, Karnabāi, Lakṣmahirā, Chaṇḍālinī-kanyā, Piṅgalā, Śyāmā, Mīrābāi, Gourpriyā and Deva-Kanyā. Those Vaiṣṇava apostles were held to be the exponents of Sahajiyā cult by Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. Almost all the songs including the Rāgātmikā Padas ascribed to Caṇḍīlās and the Sahajiyā texts were composed by the

1. See Caitanya caritāmṛta, Madhya līlā, ch. XV.

exponents of the Sahajiyā Cult in the Post Caitanya period and mostly in or after the seventeenth century A.D.

Parakīyā ideal is, therefore, an important factor both in the doctrines of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas as well as of the Gauḍīa Vaiṣṇavas. But the Sahajiyā doctrine of Parakīyā has its practical bearing also. The Sahajiyā devotee takes Parakīyā companion for the spiritual culture of divine love. Parakīyā, according to the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, is of two kinds—(1) 'Bāhya' and (2) 'Marma', both of which have special utility at different stages of spiritual growth. In the sphere of Marma culture the term Parakīyā stands for a symbol of intense love. At first the culture of Mamra Parakīyā aims at the realisation of Paramātmā, when it enters into the domain of pure celestial love called 'Śuddha Parakīyā', the Sahajiyā Siddha devotee seeks to embrace God with all the ardour of devoted woman, as we see, manifested in Śrī Rādhā and in Śrī Caitanya.

Bāhya Parakīyā is meant for the practical culture of emotional and sentimental love for Kṛṣṇa in the company of woman. The Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas maintain that the practical culture of emotions and sentiments in the company of woman is an absolute necessity for knowing the secret of love; without such culture no one can become a true and sincere lover of God. Women are considered to be the best media for men for the culture of love, because women generally possess some finer sentiments favourable for the culture of love: "Āpani Puruṣ Prakṛti haive" (Rasasāra, p. 47). As the finer sentiments are the natural inheritance of women, so the necessity of a female companion is admitted by the Sahajiyās in the primary stage for the culture of love that culminates in the stage of Siddha (perfection), into the super sentimental love for God. Because in the sphere of Mādhurya God is to be loved with the sentiment of a devoted lover and thus is established an intimate personal relationship between God and the devotee.

To love God with the intensity of female sentiment is also a very familiar idea with the Christian Mysticism. The mystic

Christians like St. Bernard, St. John, St. Catherine, F.W. Newman etc., believe that at the highest stage of spiritual life a man should transform himself into a woman by adopting the female nature. A man cannot have experience of true divine love so long as he cannot realise the true nature of woman in him. (1) "If thy soul is to go on to higher spiritual blessedness, it must become woman—yes, however manly thou may be among men." (F.W. Newman). (2) "Prepare thyself as a bride to receive thy Bridegroom". (Markos, the Gnostic). With the Christian Mystics also God becomes intensely personal, at times almost verging on the nature of a human beloved. We find it in the prayer of St. John :

(a) "I will draw near to Thee in silence, and will uncover Thy feet that it may please Thee to unite me to Thyself, making my Soul Thy Bride, I will rejoice in nothing till I am in Thine arms". (St. John of the Cross)

(b) "Oh Love", said St. Catherine of Genoa, "I do not wish to follow Thee for sake of these delights, but solely from the motive of true love."

Only the adventurous spiritualised souls which are full of love for God, move towards the mystical sensations of Divine Love. To St. Bernard, throughout his deeply mystical sermons on the Song of Songs, the Divine Word (Logos) is the Bridegroom, the human soul is the Bride. (1) "Let Him Kiss me with the Kisses of His mouth"—Who is it who speaks these words? It is the Bride. Who is the Bride? It is the Soul thirsting for God.....If, then, mutual love is especially befitting to a bride and bridegroom, it is not unfitting that the name of Bride is given to a Soul which loves." (St. Bernard, "Cantica Canticorum," Sermon VII)

(2) "I longed for Thee ; and I still long for Thee and Thou for me. Therefore, when our two desires unite, Love shall be fulfilled." (Mechthild of Magdeburg)

The mystic Machthild further says :

"Orison (a prayer) draws the great God down into the

small heart, it drives the hungry soul out to the full God. It brings together the two Lovers, God and the Soul, into a joyful room, where they speak much of love." (Mechthild of Magdeburg)

Love is the essence of Kṛṣṇa ; and Rādhā is the symbol of all lovers of Kṛṣṇa. According to the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas every devotee who desires to follow the path of 'Rāga Sādhana'—the development of sentimental love for Kṛṣṇa—must imbibe the sentimental feelings of a devoted woman. This attitude of mine is also found in the Christian religion :

"Our work is the love of God. Our satisfaction lies in submission to the Divine embrace. Surrender is its secret : a personal surrender not only of finite to Infinite—but of bride to Bridegroom, heart to Heart." (Ruysbrock)

Complete self-surrender of the devotee to the wishes of God as the devoted bride surrenders to her loving bridegroom, is the main criterion of the religion of Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas. We find paralal ideas and feelings in the writings of hristian Mystics :

(I) "If thou wilt be a spiritual pilgrim, thou shalt strip thyself naked of all that thou hast." (Hilton)

(II) "If the soul were stripped of all her sheaths, God would be discovered all naked to her view and would give Himself to her, withholding nothing. As long as the soul has not thrown off all her veils, however thin, she is unable to see God," (Meister Eckhart)

(III) "It is then that, by the sublime arduours of a stripped and naked spirit, we obtain the immediate contact of the Divine." (Ruysbrock's De Contemplation)

When the pure devotional love for the Supreme Soul arises in the soul of the devotee, without doubt the Supreme Soul also feels love for the devotee. It is a mutual attraction between the finite and the Infinite Soul. Rippling tide of love flows secretly from the Infinite Soul into the finite soul and draws it mightily back to its source.

St. Teresa has described in the following words the august passion of her soul thirsting for God :

“The pain was so great that it made me moan and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain that I could not wish to be rid of it. The pain is not bodily but spiritual ; though the body has its share in it, even a large one”.

It is that august passion, a heavenly madness, in which the human draws nearest to the divine. We find support of this view in the doctrine of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas. In the initial stage of ‘Siddha’, the soul of the Sahajiyā devotee suddenly enjoys the rapturous sight of loving Kṛṣṇa. But to bring the state of Siddha in perfection in order to unite the Siddha-devotee permanently with Him, Kṛṣṇa deliberately withdraw His presence from him for the time-being. Then the Siddha devotee who has, by this time, attained the Rādhāhood, feels a profound emptiness and the anguish of separation. This period of destitution is called the ‘Dark Night of the Soul’ by the mystic Christian writers :

“Thou didst begin, Oh my God ! to withdraw Thyself from me ; and the pain of Thy absence was more bitter to me ; because Thy presence had been so sweet to me, Thy love so strong in me.” (Madame Guyon)

And, “In union when ‘basking in the sunbeams of the Un-created Light’ he forgets that he has not yet reached the ‘Perfect Land’—is yet far removed from the true end of Being. So the Light withdraws Itself and the ‘Dark Night of the Soul’ sets in.” (Underhill’s *Mysticism*, p, 287)

This Divine Absence comes between the first mystic life or illuminative way and the second mystic life—the unitive way. Therefore, this type of ‘darkness’ with its accompanying and overwhelming sensation of distress and anguish is common in the lives of the mystic devotional lovers of God. In another place St. Teresa has vividly described the inner feelings of her ‘dark rapture’ :

“The pain grows to such a degree of intensity that inspite of

oneself one cries aloud. Moreover, the intense and painful concentration upon the Divine Absence, which takes place in this 'dark rapture' induces all the psychophysical marks of ecstasy. Although this ecstasy lasts but a short time, the bones of the body seem to be disjointed by it. The pulse is as feeble as if one were at the point of death She is no longer the mistress of reason She burns with a consuming thirst and cannot drink at the well which she desires."

This description is not exaggerated as this sort of Divine madness became prominent in the life of Caitanyadev during the last twelve years of his stay at Puri. This state of Divine distress and anguish of Caitanyadev, burnt with a consuming love for Kṛṣṇa, was witnessed by Svartūp Dāmodar, Rai Rāmānanda and Raghunāthdās Gosvāmī.

In the midst of a psychic storm caused by the ecstasy of deprivation, corporeal love is for ever disestablished and the new state of pure divine love is established in its place. Regarding this transfiguration St. Teresa has said :

"'In order to raise the soul from imperfection' said the Voice of God to St. Catherine, 'I withdraw Myself from her sentiment —which I do in order to humiliate her, and to cause her to seek me in truth. Though she perceives that I have withdrawn Myself, she awaits with lovely faith the coming of the Holy Spirit, that is of Me, Who am the Fire of Love.'" No doubt that Love-dalliances (sports) of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are full of eroticism. But it must be borne in mind that the Love of Rādhā is Platonic Love that kills lust. Only with the annihilation of self-desire, comes the fulfilment of Divine Love. Platonic Love grows up from the wedding of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. It is spiritual union.

The Sahajiyās advocate the company of the woman-sādhikā for this purpose that Kāma (lust) should be duly subdued by the mystic culture of yogic practices with the accompaniment of a female. They hold this opinion that Kāma (the carnal desire) transforms itself into Prema (Divine Love) when Kāma is

dissociated from ego-centric desires through the practices of yoga. They further hold that Prema (Divine Love) which is the highest spiritual gain, cannot be attained through the absolute negation of Kāma, it is to be attained rather through the sublimation of Kāma. To them Prema is but the purified form of Kāma. The Prema of the Sahajiyās is the most intense sentimental love of man towards God. The religion of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās is thus a religion of sublime love.

Therefore, we find, the Sahajiyās advocate not suppression but sublimation of the feelings of love. The famous western philosopher Ouspensky is of the same opinion. He says —

“Of all we know in life, only in love is there a taste of the mystical, a taste of ecstasy. Nothing else in our life brings us so near to the limit of human possibilities, beyond which begins the unknown. And in this lies, without doubt, the chief cause of the terrible power of sex over human life.”

He further says—

“Love, sex, these are but a foretaste of mystical sensations... Consequently in true mysticism, there is no sacrifice of feeling. Mystical sensations are sensations of the same category as the sensations of love, only infinitely higher and more complex.”

According to the opinion of the Sahajiyās the passionate longing for women is not love in the true sense of the term. Real love can dawn only on the sublimation of the sexual impulses. And when sentiment of sensuous love is sublimated, it turns into a deeply religious sentiment of Divine Love. To them Rāgānugā Bhakti of Bhāva Bhakti is but the means of an emotional sublimation of intimate human sentiments by directing them towards Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. To achieve their end they resort to the esoteric practices of yoga. By means of practical yoga they want to establish a direct personal relationship with the deity. At the same time they have warned that the esoteric practices of yoga in accompaniment of a female must not be resorted to in a lower plane, otherwise the result would be dangerous. It is for this reason that the Sahajiyās

have repeatedly declared that a real Sahajiyā Sādhaka is rarely found even among crores : “Koṭhike goṭhik hai”. The important thing in yoga proper is to well-prepare the planes (bhūmi) of mind for spiritual culture of Divine Love and for deep spiritual experience of Self.

Therefore the Sāadhanā of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā sādharma primarily concerns with the mystic culture of Divine Love in association of an equally religious female sādhanikā. So it is the custom of the Sahajiyās to take a female companion in order to imbibe the intense emotional feelings of the female, which are inherent in her female-nature. Man realises his ultimate mature made of pure emotional feelings after coming in contact with his most beloved female companion. Man cannot realise his love-nature without being in relation to his female sweet-heart ; it is through the touch of the sweet-heart that the svabhāv (the ultimate nature) of the Sādhaka as a lover of God, is evolved within. So the Sahajiyās hold the female companion (sādhikā) in high esteem as the preceptor for guiding them towards the culture of Divine Love.

In this connection we may refer to the following opinion of Sir John Woodroffe :

“In His manifestation as Rādhā He (Kṛṣṇa) is both the fount of emotion (Rasa) and emotion itself which includes the sexual sensation (śṛṅgāra) and the higher love (Madhura), which, in the more spiritually evolved marriage, is associated with it. The worshipper rises above the unconscious animal life, and the evil consciousness so often accompanying this upward movement in which the passions are regarded as things only of and for the limited self. The gratification of senses in serving self alone is a ‘sowing to the flesh’. He, therefore, identifies himself with Rādhā, and thus places himself under the direction of Her Lord with whom She is one, and who as the Antaryāmin or indwelling spirit guides and controls the body and its senses. Thus gross desire is purified by its direction towards that abode of Kṛṣṇa wherein He as Gopāla plays and

becomes as it were the Vehicle on which subtle aspiration is made to rest. —This is exemplified by the Sakhībhāva of the Vaiṣṇava, and certain ritual details in the Rahasyapūjā of the Śāktas.”¹

We may say that this is exemplified more so by the mystic culture of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas. They say that the human body is the basis of mystic culture :

“Sakaler sār hai āpan Śārīra ।

Nija deha jānile āpane habe sthira ॥”

(Amṛtaratnāvalī, p. 3)

Or

(i) “Bhajaner mūl ai narabapu deha ।”

(ii) “Āpanā jānile tabe Sahaja vastu jāne ॥”

(Amṛtarasāvalī, p. 4)

What is considered important by them, is that every body is made up a male and a female half, i.e., both the male and the female elements are present in every body :

(i) “Sakal śarīre hai ardhāṅga abalā ।”

(ii) “Puruṣ prakṛti dui deha madhye achhe ॥”

(Amṛtaratnāvalī, p.4)

Men and women are different externally, but so far as the soul is considered there is absolutely no difference of any kind ; in other words, “all body is but soul externised in matter”:

“Ak rūp dui hai, bhinna deha nai ।

Prakṛti puruṣ nām bāhire dekhai ॥”

(Premānandalaharī. p. 8)

Emotional realisations have been classified by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in terms of human sentiments into five broad categories of Rasas, namely, Śānta, Dāsya, Sakhya, Vātsalya and Mādhurya. The climax of emotional sentiment is reached in the stage of Madhura Rasa. The reason that is advanced by the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas in support of the custom of taking a female companion in spiritual culture is that women are adopted

1. Tāntrik Texts, vol. III, Intro., p. 63.

primarily for the culture of Madhura Rasa. Madhura Rasa adopted in divine worship assumes the characteristics of Svakiyā and Parakiyā :

“Ataeb Madhura Rasa kahi tār nāma |
Svakiyā Parakiyā bhāve dvidivha sañsthāna ||”

(Cait. Carit., 1-4)

The dawn of love which is called ‘Purva-Rāga’, is really the outcome of the desire for a union before marriage. But when the love-affairs end in wedlock, it gives the stamp of Svakiyā on those who are Parakiyā before. Then the Svakiyā love loses its irresistible attraction and charm as they were felt before marriage. Anguish of Parakiyā serves to intensify the impulse of love. So Parakiyā love is considered deep, while the Svakiyā is shallow :

(i) “Parakiyā Rāga ati Raser ullās
Svakiyāte Rāga nāi, kahila ābhās”

(Rasaratnasāra, p. 65)

(ii) “Parakiyā Rase hai Raser ullās |
Svakiyā je svalpa, tāhā jāniha niryās ||”

(Sudhāmṛtakaṇikā, p. 8)

In the sphere of the spiritual culture of love, therefore, the Parakiyās are considered better than Svakiyās both by the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas and the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas.

From the above review we find, in the field of spirituality the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas are chiefly concerned only with the intensity of love. So Parakiyā is considered by them better than Svakiyā for the purpose of esoteric culture. In esoteric culture Parakiyā companion is adopted for the sublimation of Kāma and the cultivation of Divine Love.

According to the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas Parakiyā is of two kinds : (I) Gauṇa and (II) Mukhya.

“Parakiyā ak nahe dui mat vate |

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Gauṇa Mukhya dui mat hai Parakiyā ||”

(Sudhāmṛtakaṇikā, p. 15)

When a Sahajiyā Pravartaka is associated with a Parakīyā woman for the sublimation of Kāma, it is Gauṇa ; but when without taking a woman, the ideal of Parakīyā love is cultured by the self-revealed ultimate nature (svabhāva) of the Sahajiyā Sādhak for further advancement towards spiritual love, it becomes Mukhya. In the most important Sahajiyā work, 'Vivarta-Vilāsa', the former is called Bāhya, while the latter as Marma Parakīyā :

“Bāhya Marma dui Parakīyāte sādhan ॥

Bāhya Parakīyā kara nāyikār sañge ।

Antarañga Parakīyā vāner tarañge ॥”

(Vivarta-Vilāsa, p. 97)

In another Sahajiyā work, 'Rativilāsa-Paddhati' they are called Prākṛta and Aprākṛta respectively :

“Aprākṛta Parakīyā, ār deha aprākṛta ।

Bahirañga prabṛtti ai sadhan kathita ॥”

(Rativilāsa Paddhati, p. 28-29)

While the 'Rati' is practised in the material body with the association of a Parakīyā woman, it is called Prākṛta which is also designated by the term 'Sāmānya'. While the 'Rati' is cultured by the ultimate spiritual nature of the Sahajiyā Sādhak independent of any woman's association, it is called Aprākṛta which is designated by the term 'Viśeṣ'. It should also be observed that the idea of external and internal culture of Rati has been expressed by Kṛṣṇadās Gosvāmi in his famous book 'Caitanya Caritāmṛta' :

“Bāhya' 'Antar' ihār dui ta sādhan ।”

(canto II, Chap. 22)

The Sahajiyā work like the 'Sahaj-Tattva-Grantha' speaks of the same two main divisions :

“Bāhya Antar dui mat jājan ।”

(Sahaj-tattva-grantha, p. 4)

In spite of such terminological differentiation, it is, however, quite clear that only two kinds of Parakīyā culture are meant, one of which is the Parakīyā culture of love with the association

of a female companion, while the other is the Parakiyā culture of love by the 'svabhāva', the ultimate spiritual nature, of the Sahajiyā Sādhak.

Bāhya or Practical Culture—In esoteric culture of Rati the selection of a female companion is of primary importance. Any and every woman cannot be adopted for this purpose. In the 'Vivarta-Vilāsa' it is said that the women taken for the purpose of mystic culture, should be very beautiful, and that both in character and physical grace they should be quite heavenly :

“Eh sav nāikāgaṇ param suṇḍari |

Ākār svabhāve yana Brahmadevi nārī ||”

(Vivarta-Vilāsa, p. 99)

There are also other considerations in the matter of selection and culture. In the esoteric culture of love both the sādhak and the sādhiikā should be of identical spiritual temperament :

“Ubhaiya saman haile tave ihā meelee |

Sādhāraṇī haile ithe yāi rasātale |”

(Premavilāsa)

In one of the Rāgātmikā Padas attributed to Caṇḍīdās, it is said that in the culture of the Rati the Sādhak and the S dhikā should be of the same nature :

“Puruṣ Prakṛti

Dohe ek rīti

se Rati sādHITE hai |”

Not only the sādHaka and the sādhiikā should be of the same nature, but also they must be of one mind and take to spiritual culture with perfect unanimity of purpose :

“Dohār mon Oikya bhāve dubi ek hai |

Taveta Sahajsiddha jāniha niścai ||”

(Premānandalaharī, p. 8)

The 'Svarūpakalpataru', another Sahajiyā work, says that the Sahajiyā sādhak should submit himself in every respect to the Sādhiikā and take her as his guru. He should completely forget himself being fully absorbed in love in association with the

Sādhikā. Then the couple should have the spiritual realisation of the Supreme Being :

“Nāyak yodyopi hai Nāyikār vaś ।

Ātmasukh nāhi jāne rāgete āvaś ॥

Sai Nāyak Nāyikā sata-siddha hai ।

Sahaja mānuṣ Kṛṣṇa tāhāte āśrai ॥”

This shows how the esoteric culture advocated by the Tantras, either of Hindus or of Buddhists, has been adopted by the Sahajiyās within the fold of their own religion.

By practising the mystic rites the Tāntriks arouse the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti and push up this spiritual Śakti or Energy through the middle nerve, ‘Suṣumnā’ in order to unite individual Energy with the Supreme Energy located in the head. The Sahajiyās also in the Pravartak stage practise the mystic rites of the Tāntriks, but as soon as the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti arises, they give up the path of observing the mystic rites and follow the path of devotion saturated with emotional and sentimental feelings in order to unite the personal soul with the Supreme Soul in conjugal love. The Sahajiyās also have located the personal (finite) soul and the Supreme (Infinite) Soul in the microcosm of the human body. Both the cultures are esoteric in nature and are advised to adopt them under the proper guidance of Sat-guru (Spiritual preceptor).

The Sahajiyās lay great stress on the esoteric culture in association with an equally religious temperamental woman in order to purify the element of passion that is in our body. It is held that bindu or semen (śukra) is contained in the Sahasrār. The three important nerves within our body are Iḍā, Piṅgalā and Suṣumnā in the left, right and the middle respectively. Due to sexual attraction semen comes down through the Piṅgalā nerve and is secreted. The Pravarta Sādhak’s first duty is to control the secretion of semen through the constant practice of Prāṇāyāma. The nerves like Iḍā and Piṅgalā are controlled and purified through processes of Prāṇāyāma. Prāṇāyāma also leads to the control of the mind. It is also held that Khecarī-

mudrā, a yogic process, has the capacity of controlling all kinds of secretion, and if a yogī practises Khecarī, his bindu becomes solidified and unmoved and becomes as hard as the thunder-bolt. But the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā yogīs do not remain content by making bindu solidified, unmoved and as hard as the thunder-bolt. Though it is recognised by many of the yogic schools as one of the highest state of yoga, yet the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā yogīs aspire further. Because they know that this yogic-state does not help them in relishing the nector of Divine Love. They hold that bindu thus solidified with the process of Prāṇāyāma, hoṭhayoga and Khecarī mudrā, should be melted and purified in the fire that is in the woman. They have compared bindu which is the essence of body and the source of extreme joy, with milk. It is said by them that as milk does not thicken without being boiled over the fire, so also bindu which is the root of attraction and love, does not become intense enough to be transformed into Divine Love without the woman of heart, who serves as the oven to boil and thicken love. It is held by them that in practical yoga with the association of a female sādḥikā, bindu is distilled in the form of 'soma' or nector (amṛta) and is repositied in the Sahasrār. The 'Vivarta-Vilāsa' says, "Now hear about the nature of the Bāhya Parakīyā. Just as milk is usually boiled over the fire, so the Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmis have utilised the fire that is in women for the purpose of purifying the passion :

"Bāhya Parakīyā ebe śuna Ohe man ।
 Agnikuṇḍa vinā nahe dugdha āvarttan ॥
 Prakṛtir saṅge jai agnikuṇḍa āchhe ।
 Ataeb Gosvāmirā tāhā yojiāchhe ॥"

(Vivarta-Vilāsa, p. 97)

At the same time the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have warned that the Pravarta sādḥak should not take any ordinary woman as his Sādhan-saṅginī (female companion). The female companion also should be equally religious minded woman who should not drag the Sādḥak to the carnal cravings :

sentimental feeling which is experienced by a young girl for her young and beautiful lover. This, in short, is the principle of śuddha Parakīyā. Here we get glimpse of Śuddha Parakīyā ideal enacted in the eternal land of Vṛṇḍāvan. In this sphere of śuddha Parakīyā, the Sahajiyā Siddha devotee simply becomes mad after love, always wailing for union with Kṛṣṇa like a deserted lover, transforming himself, as the Sahajiyās say, into Parakīyā Rādhā. This, in fact, is the true spirit of the Marma Parakīyā culture, which has been adopted by the Sahajiyās as a dogma in religion. This is considered by them to be the most natural divine sentiment of the Siddha devotee for union with Kṛṣṇa, which was manifested in Śrī Caitanya specially in the last phase of his divine madness. It is said that he was born with the sentiment of Rādhā :

“Akhaṇḍa niścome tār svābhāvic Rati ।

Sai svābhāvic Rati Caitanya Gosāi ॥”

(Bhṛṅgaratnāvalī, p. 11)

Thus we find, Bāhya Parakīyā culture in the company of a woman, which is allied to the Tāntrik culture, is considered the stepping stone to Śuddha Parakīyā culture by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās.

The Sahajiyā doctrine resembles Tāntrikism in this respect that both of them advocate Parakīyā companion for mystic practices with a view to spiritual advancement, which is completely adverse to the theory of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Though the Sahajiyā writers have acknowledged their indebtedness to Tāntrikism in clear terms, though they have adopted the cakra theory of the Tantras with some modifications to serve their own purpose and the Rāgātmikā ‘padas’ which are ascribed to Caṇḍīdāsa, supply proofs of adoption from the Tantras, yet the spirit of these two doctrines is quite different from each other. The Tāntriks are mainly the worshippers of indomitable Power and Will, but the Sahajiyās are the followers of Divine Love and to serve their purpose they adopt female partners whom they designate by the term ‘Mañjarīs’.

Sahajiyās hold fast to the ideal of Parakīyā and 'Madhura Rasa' only. Rasa, as we have noted before, is of four kinds : (1) Dāsyā, (2) Sakhya, (3) Vātsalya and (4) Madhura. Some of the poetics do not regard 'Śānta' as Rasa. However, of these four kinds of emotional feelings 'Madhura' is said to be the best of all. Madhura Rasa is again subdivided into Svakīyā and Parakīyā. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, though they lay special stress on Madhura, maintain that a devotee may adopt any of the four emotions in his attempt to realise God. But the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas have adopted the Madhura Rasa only ; and in support of this they advocate that the mystic doctrine of love rests on the foundation of this emotion. In this respect the two schools differ from each other.

We have already stated that the ideal of Parakīyā love was accepted by both the schools of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism. Though the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have given preference to Parakīyā, yet Svakīyā has not been discarded by them. On the other hand they have advanced various arguments to ascribe Svakīyā character to Rādhā. But the Sahajiyās have firmly declared that Svakīyā is merely a semblance of love and that Parakīyā stands supreme :

“Parakīyā Rāge ati Raser ullās ।

Svakīyāte Rāga nāi, kahila ābhās ॥”

(Ratnasāra, p. 65)

It is thus quite evident that the conception of the Sahajiyās is quite different from that of the Gauḍīya Vniṣṇavas.

Thus we find that in the sphere of Rāga culture the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas could not think of any other emotion except that of Madhura, the ideal of conjugal love being the only ideal that was adopted by them in the esoteric culture of love and that was also of the Parakīyā complexion. They maintain that some sort of practical culture is necessary for the realisation of the Divine Love of Parakīyā complexion. They, therefore, take Parakīyā companions for the growth of this Divine Love. It is for this reason that in the Sahajiyā works there are references to

the practical culture of love in association with female companions, while the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas simply adopt the ideal of Parakīyā love to be imitated in the culture of Rāgānugā emotion.

In this connection the human body has received great attention from the Sahajiyās. They maintain that the mystic culture of the body imparts the best spiritual knowledge which is a necessary factor for the culture of emotional and sentimental love for God. The Sahajiyās have indulged in a sort of philosophical conception about the human body with regard to the origin of creation. According to their perception every human body contains a male and a female element, the former being located in the right half, while the latter in the left. At the origin of creation there was unity, then came the division to be united again in individual form :

(1) "Sakal śarīre hai ardhāñga avalā ।"

And

(2) "Puruṣ Prakṛti dui deha madhye āchhe ।"

(Amṛataratnāvalī, p. 4)

(3) "Ek Prabhu dui hailā Rasa āsvādite ।

Duia ek haiā pūrbe āchhilā nīscite ॥

Ekhan duhete dekha rahe ek haiā ।

Deha madhye dui jan dekha vicāriyā ॥

Vām añge Prakṛti, Puruṣ dakṣhiṇe ।" etc.

(Nigūḍhārtha-Prakāśāvalī, p. 7)

The theory of the origin of Creation :—According to the Sahajiyās the male and the female elements taken separately are simply halves of an ideal whole, and it is only through the culture of Divine Love that the two elements become perfect again in union. This is why the Sahajiyās not only advocate the company of women as equal partners in spiritual culture, but it is also their favourite maxim that the man should cultivate the feminine nature in order to be united with God with the warmth of Parakīyā maiden love.

In the "Bṛhad-āranyakopaniṣat" we find that in the beginning was the Ātman and it became self-conscious. It never enjoyed,

and as it was not possible to enjoy all alone it longed for a companion ; it then divided its own self into two as the male and the female and from their union proceeded the creation.¹ These two aspects of the Ātmanas the male and the female have been variously conceived in the Upaniṣads. This view of the Upaniṣads has been reflected in many of the works of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās with some modifications to serve their purposes ; such as :

(1) Ek Brahma jakhan dvitiya nahi āṛ |

Sei kāle śuni Isvar Karen vicār ||

Apurva raser cheṣṭa apurva karan |

Kemane haive ihā karen bhāvan ||

Bhāvite bhāvite ek udaya haila |

Manete ānanda haiyā vihval haila ||

Ardha aṅga haite āmi prakṛti haiva |

Amśinī Rādhikā nām tāhār haiva ||

Āpani Raser mūr̥ti kariya dhāraṇ |

Rasa āsvādiva āmi kariyā jatan ||

* * *

Rasa āsvādan lāgi hailā dui mūr̥ti |

Ei hetu Kṛṣṇa hai puruṣ prakṛti ||

(Dvipako-jjvala-grantha, Ms. C.U. No. 564)

(2) Paramātmār dui nāma dhare dui rūp |

Eimate ek haiyā dharaye svarūp ||

Tāhe dui bhed hai puruṣ prakṛti |

Sakaler mūl hai sei Rasa-murati ||

Paramātmā puruṣ prakṛti dui rūp |

Sahasra-dale vās kare Raser svarūp ||

(Ratna-sāra, Ms. C.U. No. 1111, p. 52, B)

In Śaiva or Śākta Tāntrikism we find that the two aspects of the Absolute Reality have been conceived as the Śiva and the Śakti or the primordial male and the female. One of the fundamental tenets of all the esoteric schools is to hold that the

1. Bṛhad-āraṇyaka, I.4. 1-3.

human body is the epitome of the universe, all "tattva" is contained within the body. Consistent with this view it has been held that Śiva resides in the Sahasrāra, the lotus of thousand petals situated in the cerebrum region, as the principle of pure consciousness and Śakti as the principle of world-force resides in the other pole of the Mūlādhāra cakra in the form of the coiled serpent. This Śakti remains sleeping. The sādhanā consists in rousing and raising this Śakti from the Mūlādhāra cakra to Sahasrāra i.e., from one pole to the other and to unite her there with Śiva; and this union of the Śiva and the Śakti produces the state of the Absolute. Thus, according to Tāntrikism, the principles of Śiva-Śakti or the male and the female are contained within the person of every man and woman.

Again it has been held that the principles of the male and the female are contained within the body of a man in the right and the left respectively; the right half being the masculine part and the left half the feminine part. This will explain the conception of the Absolute as "Ardhanārīṣvara" or the half-male and half-female deity. Thus, there are principles of masculinity and femininity contained in every man and woman, a man is a man because of the predominance in him of the principle of masculinity, whereas a woman is a woman because of the predominance of the principle of femininity in her. The division of the creatures of the world into the male and the female has an ontological reason behind it. The male and the female represent in the visible world the division which is present in the nature of the Absolute as Śiva and Śakti, and the perfect union of the Śiva and the Śakti is the highest reality. The supreme bliss that proceeds from such union is the highest religious gain.

In Vijñāna-vāda Buddhism Śūnyatā was conceived as something like the Ultimate Substance or the primordial element from which evolves the visible world. In Tantrabased later Mahāyāna texts, Bodhicitta was conceived of the nature of the Ultimate Substance from which everything originates. This

Absolute Ultimate Substance have two elements in it, viz., Śūnyatā and Karuṇā. The commingling of Śūnyatā with Karuṇā is designated by the Vajrayānists as 'Advaya'. It is a theory which is very important for understanding the underlying features of Vajrayāna, for, on this alone the foundation of Śakti worship is based. The introduction of the Śakti worship for the first time found expression in the "Guhyasamāja-tantra", where the theory of the five Dhyāni Buddhas was for the first time systematized and each was assigned a Śakti for the purposes of union. In Vajrayāna Advaya was also deified and we find two deities—Heruka and Prajñā, embodiments of Śūnya and Karuṇā, commingled in Advaya and fused together in embrace in the Yuganaddha form. The duality merges into one and gives rise to the single form of Heruka only.

In Mahāyāna texts we find that Śūnyatā is Prajñā and Karuṇā or universal compassion is called Upāya. The highest spiritual knowledge is called Prajñā. When Prajñā and Upāya are merged into one without distinction, it is called Prajñopāya—a state of Yuganaddha. This Prajñopāya is, on the one hand, the creative principle of the universe and everything emerges and develops from this principle; and on the other hand, is called Mahāsukha, because it gives eternal happiness to him who attains this state. This Prajñopāya may well be compared with the Hindu deity of Arddhanārīśvar.

The two principles of Śūnyatā and Karuṇā or Prajñā and Upāya were transformed in Vajrayāna to the female and the male elements. In the Hevajratantra, it has been said that in the ultimate state there is the cognition of neither Prajñā nor of Upāya i.e., there is no sense of duality. In the Sādhana-mālā,¹ it has been said that the one body of the ultimate nature which is the unity of both Śūnyatā and Karuṇā is called as Yuganaddha. This principle of Yuganaddha is the same as the principle of non-duality (Advaya). The principle of conjugal

1. G.O.S., Vol. II, p. 05.

union of Śiva and Śakti in Hindu Tantras refers to the same principle. All these indicate the two aspects of the Absolute Reality. Closely associated with the idea of Yuganaddha and Advaya is the idea of "Samarasa" or oneness. This Samarasa has been extensively used in many of the Buddhist as well as Śaiva and Śākti texts to signify the union of Prajñā and upāya or of Śakti and Śiva.

It is, therefore, clear to see that the significance of Prajñā and Upāya is exactly the same as that of Śiva and Śakti. The only difference is that pure consciousness which is absolutely passive by nature, is conceived as the Lord Śiva in the Śaiva-Tāntrik school and it is conceived as the goddess Prajñā in Tāntrik Buddhism ; where-as the active element is the goddess Śakti according to Śaiva Tāntrik view, it is the Lord Upāya according to the Buddhist view. But notwithstanding this difference in notice, Prajñā and Upāya are the symbolies of Śiva and Śakti. As in the Śaiva-Tantra Śiva and Śakti are regarded as constituting the two aspects of One Absolute Reality, so also is the case with Prajñā and Upāya—they are explained as two aspects of One Reality. In either case the relation between the two is inseparable.

According to the Hindu Tāntrik view, the first manifestation of the Unmanifest is in the form of 'Ardhanārīśvar'. The general view is that the creative impulse is supplied to Prakṛti by Puruṣa through his contact just as active power is supplied to inactive iron by magnet through its contact. Of course, the school of Sāṃkhya holds a different opinion. They say that creation proceeds from the spontaneous disturbance in the equilibrium of the three qualities in Prakṛti viz. Sattva, rajas and tamas. In Bouddha-Tāntrik view Prajñā as a pure consciousness and perfect enlightenment, is the principle of pure passivity, Upāya is the world-force, it is the dynamic principle, through the activities of which the phenomenal world comes into existence.

From the above discussion we come to know that every

individual is a manifestation of Śakti or may be called energy and our individual ego-consciousness with which our existence in this world is linked up, is but a small appearance in a fixed time and space. In other word the human existence is part of the whole. We suffer, because we have become alienated from the whole, because our ego, in its self-confinement, is a distortion of our real nature.

We move in the circle of existences. We are prevented from attaining our true-self by ignorance. Ignorance does not mean intellectual stupidity, but spiritual blindness and darkness, the inability to see the inner light that endures and is imperishable and untouched by death and decay, the light of wisdom that dissipates the darkness of spiritual blindness. If by grace of spiritual Guru, we turn our eyes inwardly, we are able to find liberation from ignorance. Liberation does not mean the isolation of an immortal soul from the mortal human body, but is the transfiguration of the whole man. So liberated man is not dissolved into nothingness but he becomes pure and transparent.

Man's yearning is directed towards entireness. Man wants to have what once fell asunder, reunited on a plane where the danger of a split is eliminated. Man's integral nature is the experience of the inseparability with Absolute Being before the dawn of creation. At the dawn of creation the Absolute Supreme Being divides Himself within Himself into two contrary parts : Puruṣ and Prakṛti, Śiva and Śakti, Prajñā and Upāya, Masculinity and femininity. These two contrary elements in the Supreme Plane appear through many gradual processes of changes as man and woman in this phenomenal world. Man's integral nature is called by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās as "Sahaja-siddha" nature which Sahajiyā devotee aspires to get back after a sojourn of many painful lives in this material world.

According to the Indian conception the highest aim of man is to break away dualism and to be one with Absolute Being. In order to achieve this goal a man should have to go through the long process of Tāntrik Sādhanā for uniting the masculinity

and femininity from within as an integral whole. Because masculinity and femininity are not two different factors but they are inseparably associated with each other. The inseparability of masculinity and femininity is a symbol for the true man. From the very beginning of the idea of enlightenment expressed under the symbol of the conjunction of two elements—masculinity and femininity, has been linked up with a most intensive emotion which is called bliss (Mahāsukha). Indrabhuti speaking of enlightenment as pure bliss, says :

“Sarvatathāgatam jñānam svasamvedyasvabhā-vakam ।
Sarvasukhyāgṛbhūtavāt mahāsukham iti Smṛtam ॥”

(Jñānasiddhi, G. O. Series No. XLiv)

—The All-Buddha-Knowledge which is to be experienced within one's inmost self, is called Great Bliss (Mahāsukha), because it is the most excellent of all pleasures.

Advayavajra states that :

“Sukhābhāve na bodhiḥ syāt matā yā sukarūpinī”

(Mahāsukhaprakāśa, G.O. Series No. XI)

—Without bliss there is no enlightenment, for enlightenment is bliss itself ;

All this shows the ideal of the inseparability of enlightenment and bliss.

The Tantras have aptly illustrated the relationship of man and woman by the symbols of masculinity and femininity. The symbol of 'yugal' of the Vaiṣṇavas or 'Yāmal' of the Śāktas or 'Yuganaddha' of the Buddhists, symbolizes the harmonious union of the opposites viz., masculinity and femininity. Justy as in the outer world we meet men and women, so also within the human body there are tender feminine traits in the soul of the male and the hard masculine traits in the soul of the female. The Sāadhanā of the Tāntriks is to establish a lasting relationship between these two elements. Whenever a man comes into contact with his latent femaleness or a woman with her hidden maleness, thus giving up the one sidedness of conscious life, his or her whole being will be

spiritually enriched. This spiritual enrichment is of utmost importance for realising the supreme goal of life. When an individual is elevated to the spiritual level with the accumulation of merits earned through the *sādhana*, he experiences an inner awareness which is superior to his egocentric consciousness. Because he has then risen above the contraries. He has become what he has been at the very beginning of creation.

All manifestations in this world are characterised by a dual aspect. Modern science speaks of positive and negative electricity, of potential and kinetic energy and in the realm of man, of masculinity and femininity, but the one is always the co-implicate of the other—masculinity and femininity cannot be treated as distinct elements.

The custom of taking woman in the esoteric system of *sādhana* means to acknowledge the value of the woman and to take her as a guide in the profound culture of integration. The *Tāntrik* *sādhak* undergoes the mystic *sādhana* in accompaniment of a female ascetic in order to bring to light his true nature, his incredible potentialities. Thus Tantra elevates the image of the woman. The religious experience involved in the relation between man and woman, is unique. It is this uniqueness of experience of man's own femininity that transcends the limited male individuality and paves the way for man's spiritual growth and development toward the Absolute whole.

In Buddhism great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) is the means or the method (*Upāya*) by which man's highest aim may be realised. Method is thought of as the male aspect of the One.

Wisdom (*Prajñā*) is thought to be female aspect of the One. The commingling of Great compassion and wisdom is the highest affirmation. It makes man realise what he actually is. But this realisation of his true nature has nothing to do with the fictitious values of the ego. The integration of maleness and femaleness deepens the awareness of emotional enjoyments (bliss) arising from this reunion of what once became separated.

The man who achieves this integration, is spiritually enlightened. When an individual arrives at this goal of the realisation of the inseparability of maleness and femaleness, at enlightenment, then there are no fictitious contraries. Because he has found again what he has been from the very beginning. All his worries resulting from the exaggerations of his ego, cease. Saraha has explained this state of Supreme Bliss elegantly :

“Ghaṃbhīraha ubāharṇe ṇāū para ṇāū appānā
Sahajānande chaūthṭha Khaṇe nia sambeaṇa jāna”.

(Verse-98)

—If I speak of the Ultimate, there is neither an Ego nor a Thou. Experience your inmost nature in that blissful state of what you are in this state which we call the fourth moment.

According to the Sahajayāna Buddhists the integration of maleness and femaleness is an internal subjective process of integration. The apparent dual aspect of man as well as of the whole universe, of which the human is but a certain manifestation, has been symbolized by the Prajñopāya. Prajñā is the female aspect and Upāya is the male aspect. We see in the Buddhist sculpture that Prajñā and Upāya embrace each other touching at all points of contact. This is to show that one cannot be without the other and that they are basically one. This symbol is of special significance, because it comprises the physical symbol by means of which man's spiritual journey is pictured. The Tāntrik yogi goes for the root from whence everything has started split up into contradictory elements. The Ultimate Reality is the undivided and indivisible whole symbolized by the oneness of the Void (Śūnyatā).

The internal subjective process of integration of male and female elements within the body has been adopted by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in their esoteric culture of Divine Love. According to them soul is inseparably connected with its spiritual nature 'Svabhāva' as compassion in Buddhism is inseparably connected with wisdom.

Mahā-sukha (Supreme Bliss)—The other important innova-

tion in Tāntrik Buddhism is the idea of Mahāsukha (Supreme Bliss) which evolved from the idea of 'Nirvāṇa' in earlier Buddhism. The word Nirvāṇa was held by the earliest Buddhists as the complete cessation of the cycle of birth and death or the eternal tranquility resulting from the cessation of all the vāsanā and Saṃskāra. From the idea of complete cessation and perfect tranquility developed the idea of perfect peace in Nirvāṇa. In popular belief as represented through the Pāli literature Nirvāṇa was conceived as something positive. Nirvāṇa is spoken of in many popular Pāli texts as not only something positive, but as a state of infinite bliss :

“Santīti nibbāṇaṃ jñātvā” (sutta-nipāta, 933)

or, “Nibhaṇaṃ paramaṃ Sukhaṃ.” (Majjhima-nikāya, 1'508)

or, “Nibbāṇa-ṭhāne Vimuttā te pattā te acalaṃ sukhaṃ.”

(Therī gāthā, 350)

This positive aspect of Nirvāṇa as supreme bliss was emphasised in Vajrayāna Buddhism. In later times Nirvāṇa and supreme bliss (Mahā-sukha) were held by the Sahajayāna Buddhists to be identical. When Nirvāṇa was thus identified with a state of supreme bliss, the attainment of an absolute state of supreme bliss was accepted to be the 'summum bonum' of life by the Sahajayāna Buddhists. For the realisation of such a state of supreme bliss they adopted a course of yogic practice.

The conception of 'Sahaja'—The word 'Sahaja' literally means that which is born with the birth : “Saha jāyate iti Sahajaḥ”. Sahaja is the svarūpa of all. But it cannot be explained by words, because it transcends the capacity of all verbal means. It is said in the Hevajratantra :

“Nānyena Kathyate sahajaṃ na Kasminn abhilapyate ।

Ātmanā jñāyate puṇyād guru-pādo-pasevayā ॥”

(Hevajra-tantra, Ms. P. 22B)

—'Sahaja' can neither be explained by any man nor can be expressed by any speech ; it is realised by the self through the merit of serving at the feet of the Guru.

So we see that 'Sahaja' can be attained through self-

realisation, "Sva-samvedyam", none else can make one realise it. Because it is of the nature of transcendental reality. According to the Sahajayāna Buddhists the state of Sahaja is a waveless sea of perfect purity. It is unchanging without any transformation ; here mind has no function at all, this is what is called Nirvāṇa. In the conception of Sahajayāna Buddhism Śūnyatā (Void) and Karuṇā (Compassion), transformed as Prajñā and Upāya, are held to be the two primary attributes of the ultimate Reality which is 'Sahaja'. The two aspects of the Ultimate Reality, Prajñā and Upāya, are conceived in Sahajayāna Buddhism just as Śakti and Śiva of the Hindu Tāntrik school. Prajñā and Upāya thus represent the principles of dualism and the unification of the two in a supreme non-dual state is the final aim of the Sahajayāna Buddhists. The practical yogic method for the realisation of the Sahaja is, therefore, fundamentally based on the principle of the union of Prajñā and Upāya.

According to the Gouḍīya Vaiṣṇava-school the two aspects of the Absolute Reality are explained as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā—the eternal enjoyer and the eternal enjoyed.

All kinds of esoteric sādhanā of India have a common background. The secret of all esoteric sādhanā is to destroy all principles of dualism and to attain the final state of non-duality. This ultimate state of non-duality is variously called in the different esoteric systems as the state of Advaya, Yuganaddha, Yāmal, Yugal, Sama-rasa or Sāhaja. The final state of yoga is called the Sahaja state. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Cult is the outcome of the amalgamation of Sahajayāna Buddhism and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. So this cult lays much stress on yoga for realising the Sahaja-nature of the self.

The other most important thing common to all schools of esoterism is the culture of the body (Kāya-sādhanā). But the esoteric culture of body is not the final aim of the Buddhist Sahajayānas or the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. The process of Kāya-sādhanā is regarded in both the sects as an indispensable:

accessory for the realisation of the Sahaja-nature as supreme bliss. But there is a marked difference between these two sects in respect of their final goal. The Sahajayāna Buddhists lay the highest stress on the realisation of Sahajanature as the 'summum bonum' of their religious life. But the devotional spirit of love is, however, conspicuous by its absence from the Sahajayāna Buddhists, which plays a dominant part in the devotional culture of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās.

In the Buddhist Sahajayāna school the physical organism was regarded as the epitome of the universe and the physical body as such was regarded as the abode of all truth. We have seen that it is a salient feature also of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult.

A study of the poems of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā literature will reveal that the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās developed a yogic system of their own involving the theory of the lotus or plexus, the nervous system and the control of the vital wind. Among the nerves of the body, three are the most important, two by the two sides of the spinal cord and one in the middle. The middle nerve Suṣumnā which is the meeting place of the other two nerves Idā and Piṅgalā, has always been regarded by them as the path to Sahaja. This Sahaja, according to the Buddhist Sahajayānas, is the state of vacuity (Sahaja Śūnya). This Sahaja is a non-dual state of supreme bliss (Mahāsukha). There is no fundamental difference in the conception of Sahaja between the Buddhist Sahajayānists and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. But it is to be observed that the sole emphasis of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās seems to be on the intensity of devotion and love through which the Sāddak's nature attains the perfect state of unity and non-duality and this state is what they call the state of Sahaja. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is none but the non-dual Ultimate Beloved and that Ultimate Beloved is the Sahaja. This Sahaja is to be realised not simply through the austere esoteric practices, but also through a state of deep immersion in the intensity of supreme love and devotion. The religion of the Vaiṣṇava

Sahajiyās is, therefore, marked by a dominating spirit of love which is the watchword of their sādhanā, although yoga and Tantra have influenced greatly in the initial stage of Sādhanā.

In the "Prīti-saṃdarbha" of Jīva Gosvāmi it has been shown that Rādhā represents among Gopīs the highest degree of the supreme love : "Premotkarṣa-parākāṣṭhā". Therefore Rādhā, as the greatest devotee, is said to have attained the highest state of Mahābhāva and obtained Kṛṣṇa in the fullest manner. The superiority of Rādhā to all other Gopīs consists in the fact that in her is prominently displayed a particular essence of love-sentiment ('Premarasasāra-viśeṣa') which in its turn is the essence of the supreme Hlādinī Śakti of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa ('Hlādinīsāra-vṛtti-viśeṣa'). This is why Rādhā is entirely identified with Kṛṣṇa's greatest attribute of bliss or Hlādinī Śakti. The relation between the highest and greatest devotee (Rādhā) and Bhagavān (Kṛṣṇa) is, therefore, one of absolute identity but appears non-identity inspite of identity which may be compared to the relation of the scent to the flower. It follows, therefore, that Rādhā is the highest type of Bhakta (devotee) as well as the closest consort of Kṛṣṇa. This is the view of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās who hold that the highest state of Rādhā may be attained by a sādhanika-devotee through the culture of both the Tāntrik yoga and the intense devotional love-sentiment.

The doctrine of divine love, as enunciated by the school of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, is based on a principle of duality. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have conceived a kind of duality between God and the individual (Jīva). This principle of duality cannot be surpassed even when the devotion of the individual culminates into sentimental love for God. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās admit this principle of duality in the lower plane for the culture of devotion, but in the highest plane when devotion culminates into sentimental love for God, the individual self melts and merges in God being inseparably united with Him. At this

supreme state the relation between God and the individual soul is a relation of non-dualism, and yet they admit of a kind of dualism in order to relish 'Mādhurya'. This principle of dualism in non-dualism is something that transcends intellectual comprehension (acintya).

After the brief account of the general characteristics of Sahajiyān Buddhism in general and after indicating the mode of transformation of the principle Nirvāṇa of Mahāyāna into the positive state of Mahā-sukha of Sahaja-yāna, and thereby the development of esoteric doctrines and their influence on the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult, let us now once again turn our attention on the study of the special features of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā school.

Four kinds of mānuṣ—The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have discovered four kinds of mānuṣ and have differentiated them according to their virtues :

- (1) Sāmānya mānuṣ—the ordinary man of passions ;
 (2) ayoni mānuṣ—Soul or Ātmā ; (3) Rāger mānuṣ—Paramātmā ; and (4) thence the Sahaja mānuṣ or nityer mānuṣ—
 Kṛṣṇa :

“Mānuṣ mānuṣ trividha prakār
 mānuṣ bāchiyā leha ।

Sahaja mānuṣ ayoni mānuṣ
 Saṃskārā mānuṣ deha ॥

(Sahajiyā song No. 22)

Cf. also—

Rāger mānuṣ Nityer mānuṣ
 ekatra kariyā nive ।

Paraṣe paraś ekānta kariyā
 Rūpe miśāiyā thuve ॥

Ei se mānuṣ āsak kariyā
 rati se bujhiyā nive ।

Rūpa rati tāhe ekānta kariyā
 hṛdete mānuṣ have ॥”

Samarthā Rati—Sahaja mānuṣ Kṛṣṇa cannot be attained

through the 'Sāmānya rati'. He is to be attained through the 'Viśeṣa rati' (samarthā rati). When a Sahajiyā-sādhak sublimates the Sāmānya rati into Viśeṣa rati through the mystic culture of sentimental love, then the Sādhak becomes siddha and attains the nature of Rādhā :

"Sei deha rati jāyā Kṛṣṇete battaya ।

Krame krame rati Śōla ānā haya ॥"

Thus the sāmānya rati when transformed into the 'Viśeṣa rati', it becomes fit for undertaking the culture of Supreme Love. In the 'Ujjvala Nīlmaṇi' of Rūpa Gosvāmi we find description of three kinds of Rati, viz., 'Samarthā', 'Samañjasā' and 'Sādhāraṇi'. Samarthā rati is the best of all, because in it there is no selfish motive of self-satisfaction, rather there is complete self-surrender to the beloved. The Samañjasā Rati, however, wishes to have equal share of enjoyment with the lover. The Sādhāraṇi Rati is inspired in love-union only with the desire of self-satisfaction. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have recognised this classification of Ratis but they have accepted the Samarthā Rati as the only Rati suited for the culture of Divine Love. They have termed the Sādhāraṇi Rati by the Sāmānya rati and Samarthā Rati by Viśeṣa Rati. They have vehemently asserted that Sāmānya Rati is converted to Viśeṣa Rati by following the mystic practices of Tāntrik yoga-sādhana.

The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have laid stringent conditions regarding the culture of divine love. They have declared that for the attainment of divine love a man must become dead first of all—dead in the sense that the lower animal instincts in him must be eradicated, giving scope for full play to the divine emotional feelings in him. They have described it as "Jiyante morā". This kind of death enables a man to be imbued through and through with the radiant glow of his real svarūpa. With the revelation of realself (svarūpa), svabhāva (spiritual nature) also is revealed within. Because Svarūpa and Svabhāva i.e., soul and its spiritual nature remain intermingled. The Sahajiyās have put sole emphasis on the process of esoteric sādhana by

which a man must do away completely with the egoism of manliness and transform his nature to that of a woman. According to the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, real sādhanā (culture) of emotional love for Kṛṣṇa does not begin until 'Svabhāva' (the ultimate nature) that lie hidden in man, is revealed within. We find, this theory corroborates with that of Christian mysticism and Sūfism.

The stringency of Sahaja-sādhanā and the great danger sure to result from the slightest deviation have been repeatedly declared by the Sahajiyās. The process of sādhanā has frequently been compared to the process of diving deep in the ocean without getting wet in the least or to the process of making the frog dance before the serpent :

“Samudra paśiva nīre nā titiva
nāhi dukḥa sukha kleś”

(Caṇḍīdās)

Or, Sāper mukhete bhekere nācāvi
tava ta rasik-rāj i”

(Caṇḍīdās)

Whenever the esoteric practices are resorted to in a lower plane, the result must be dangerous ; it is for this reason, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās have more than once declared that a real Sahajiyā sādhanak is rarely found even among crores—“Koṭike goṭike hai”.

Three stages of Sādhanā—This stringency in the Sahaja-sādhanā leads to the importance of strict physical and mental discipline without which it is simply disastrous to enter upon such a course of sādhanā. It is for this reason, the three stages have been marked in the course of sādhanā, viz., 'Pravartaka' or the stage of the beginner ; 'Sāthaka', i.e., an advanced stage ; and 'Siddha' or the perfect stage. Closely associated with these three stages of sādhanā are the five 'Āśrayas' (refuges), viz., Nāma (divine name), Mantra, Bhāva (divine emotion), Prema (Divine love) and Rasa (divine ānanda or bliss). Nāma and Mantra are associated with the stage of Pravartaka, Bhāva

“Vastu āche dehe varttamāne ।”

Or,

“Rasa-vastu thāke sei rasik śarīre ।

Piriti murati hai prem nām dhare ॥”

(Dvīpakajjala grantha, C. U. Ms. No. 564)

It is said in the ‘Ratnasāra’ that if one can realise the truth of the body (bhāṇḍa), one will be able to realise the truth of the Universe (Brahmāṇḍa). It means that the realisation of the mystery of the body leads to the realisation of the truth of one’s own self. Not only that, the realisation of the mystery of the body also reveals to the Prema-sādhaka that Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Vṛndāvan reside within the body. So body is held by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās to be the basis of Rāga-sādhana :

“Bhāṇḍake jānile jāni Brahmāṇḍer tattva ।

* * *

Bhāṇḍa bicāriḷe jāni āpan māhātma ।

Āpanā jānile jāni Vṛndāvana tattva ॥

* * *

Bhāṇḍa haite jāni jata Kṛṣṇar mahimā ।

Bhāṇḍa haite jāni Rādhā-prema tattva śīmā ॥”

(C. U. Ms. No. 1111)

The proverb goes that ‘human body is the temple or God’. So the body be kept purified. The same view is held by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. To them the ideal love of Rādhā can be realised only in a perfectly purified body and mind, whence all kinds of defilement are absolutely eradicated. Our body and mind are the outcome of the combination of three elements : Sattva (subtle virtue), Rajas (energy) and Tamas (inertia). By the purification of body and mind means the subsidence of the elements of Tamas and Rajas, and the predominance of the element of Sattva. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās say that above the state of Sattva is the state of “Śuddha-sattva” where sattva is only prominent eradicating completely the other two elements Rajas and Tamas. This state “Śuddha-sattva” is achieved through the yoga-sādhana. Again with the help of Rāga-

sādhana, Śuddha-sattva is further purified and is transformed into "Viśuddha-sattva". This state of Viśuddha sattva is a transcendental state. The culture of pure love of the nature of Rādhā-love is possible only in such a transcendental state. Thus the Rāga-sādhana of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās is the culture of love that transcends from the finite to the infinite, from the sensual object to the spiritual object. To them, the esoteric culture of love is based on the realisation of the Self as well as of the Ultimate Nature which is the embodiment of infinite supreme love of Rādhā. So we find that the final aim of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās is the realisation of the Sahaja-nature of the Self through the culture of Rāga (love). Supreme love flows from the Sahaja-nature, which in its ultimate character is the Rasa—the intense sentimental feelings of Love Divine.

The above, in a nut-shell, is the fundamental basis of the religious creed of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās expressed in their lyrical poems and other prose and poetical works.

CONCLUSION

PRACTICAL ASPECT OF YOGA BETWEEN THE TWO SCHOOLS OF BUDDHIST SAHAJAYĀNA AND VAIṢṆAVA SAHAJIYĀ

It is important to note that in the practical aspect of yoga, the system of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā school is essentially the same as that of Buddhist Sahajayāna school. Of course, there is a remarkable difference in their respective religious attitude, but in spite of all differences in views and the religious approaches the Yogic process seems to have been substantially the same. The final goal of the Sahajayāna Buddhists is the attainment of Mohā-sukha (supreme bliss). The practice of the Sahajayāna Buddhists for the realisation of the Mohāsukha was intimately connected with the esoteric practices in association with the woman. This is why Sahajayāna Buddhists eulogised the woman in all possible glowing terms as the incarnation of Prajñā and her company was regarded as indispensable for the attainment of perfection in spiritual life. Of course, we must remember that Prajñā is not the corporeal woman ; she is the Sahaja-damsel.

In the same way the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās explain the necessity of the company of woman in their Sahaja-sādhana. The ideal of Mahāsukha of the Buddhist Sahajayānist has been further modified by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās into the intense emotion of supreme love flowing from the Sahaja-nature of the Sahajiyā Siddha devotee. Neither Mohāsukha nor supreme love of the purest and of the most intense nature is attainable without the help of the same religious minded woman ; and it is for this reason that the Buddhist Sahajayānist always spoke of her as the incarnation of Prajñā and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās as the embodiment of Mohābhāva, i.e., the supreme emotion of love as personified by Rādhā. This attitude of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās presents a sharp contrast to that of the Buddhist Sahajayānas. One school had recourse to the esoteric sādhana from

a particular outlook, the other approached the Yogic practices from a different point of view. The approach of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā school to the supreme goal lies in the element of intense feelings of emotional love and devotion which is conspicuous by its absence in the Buddhist Sahajayāna school. Though devotion may be recognised to be one of the characteristics of later Mahāyānic Buddhism, yet the Buddhist Sahajayāna cult was pre-eminently an esoteric yogic school.

Let us now have a brief comparison between the ideology of the Buddhist Sahajayānas and that of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. We have found that the final aim of the Buddhist Sahajayānas was supreme bliss. This conception of the final state of the Buddhist Sahajayānas differed greatly from that of the earlier Tāntrik Buddhists in this that the Mahāsukha state of Nirvāṇa is a definitely positive state, while the earlier Buddhist tendency was towards negation or a state of absolute dissolution. Mahāsukha has been held by the Buddhist Sahajayānas to be the final state—the state of perfect enlightenment. The final state of Mahāsukha as the state of ‘Sahaja’ of the Buddhist Sahajayānas is also the final state of ‘Sahaja’ with the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās. But the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās conceived this ‘Sahaja’ state as the state of Supreme Divine Love. The conception of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas has been interpreted by the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in a sense akin to the conception of Upāya and Prajñā of the Tāntrik Buddhists on the one hand and Śiva and Śakti of the Hindu Tantras on the other hand. The principles of Upāya and Prajñā of the Tāntrik Buddhists or Śiva and Śakti of the Hindu Tantras are but the two aspects of One Absolute Reality. The principles of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism are also the two aspects of One Absolute Reality. According to the opinion of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, ‘Rādhā’ is the supreme state where a Sahajiyā can reach passing through three stages of sādhanā namely ‘Pravartaka’, ‘Sādhaka’, and ‘Siddha’. Tāntrik Buddhists or Hindus hold the view that through the process of esoteric sādhanā a Sādhaka is able to

unite Prajñā and Upāya or Śiva and Śakti. Thus uniting the two aspects of One Absolute Reality the Sādhaka enjoys the supreme bliss (Paramānanda) arising out of the union of the two. According to the principle of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the Sahajiyā Sādhaka, after attaining the highest state of Rādhā, enjoys the supreme love arising out of the unending love-sports with Kṛṣṇa who is no other than God Himself: “Kṛṣṇastu Svayaṃ Bhagavān” (Sreemat Bhāgavat Purāṇa). So Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism have easily been assimilated by the Sahajiyās into their cult. Moreover, the supreme state of the Vaiṣṇavas is no state of absolute cessation or annihilation, rather it is a positive state of the eternal flow of Divine Love. This ideal of the final positive state of love was very well utilised by the Sahajiyās in a slightly modified way and thus the Sahajiyās accommodated their esoteric practices with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava theology. Having been adopted with the Vaiṣṇava theology of Bengal, their whole ideology and methodology were changed differing greatly from those of Sahajiyān Buddhists. The whole aim of Tāntrik sādhanā of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās was to discipline the mind in order to concentrate the whole energy in the culture of Divine Love. Thus the Sahajiyās gave a new interpretation of human love. The Sahajiyā Sādhaka followed Tāntrik practices only to prepare the mind to be absorbed in the unfathomable depth of Divine Love and emotions. The whole process of esoteric sādhanā of the Sahajiyās was to sublimate the passionate love of man into a selfless devotional love for God. Thus to the Sahajiyās the Tāntrik practice was only a religious process for the divinisation of human love and the consequent discovery of the divinity in man.

The esoteric sādhanā of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās grew mainly with the ideal of eternal love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the celestial land of Vṛndāvan—the land of eternity. The philosophy that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas has developed, is that Rādhā is the transfiguration of the infinite potency of Divine Love

contained in the very nature of Kṛṣṇa who is God Himself. Kṛṣṇa, the Ultimate Being, has been conceived in three successive states—(i) 'Brahma', (ii) 'Paramātmā' and (iii) 'Bhagavān'. These three states are but the three different aspects of One Supreme Reality. Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavān or Supreme Reality possesses three powers, viz., 'Svarūpa Śakti', i.e., the power which He possesses by virtue of His ultimate nature, 'Jiva Śakti' or known as the 'Taṭasthā-Śakti', is His power through which all the beings are produced, and the 'Māyā-Śakti' through which evolves the material world. The Svarūpa-Śakti of Kṛṣṇa has again three attributes, viz., 'Sat' (the attribute of eternal existence), 'Cit' (the attribute of pure consciousness), and 'Ānanda' (the attribute of bliss). The potency of these three attributes of Kṛṣṇa are known as 'Sandhinī'—the power of existence, 'Saṃvit'—the power of consciousness and 'Hlādinī'—the power of bliss which is of the nature of infinite love. Rādhā is the emblem of 'Hlādinī-Śakti' of Kṛṣṇa. Though Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa as conceived by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, appear to be two, yet these two are but one and the same in the ultimate principle. They are inseparable from each other. The apparent separation of Rādhā from Kṛṣṇa is for the self-realisation of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of Supreme Love. Kṛṣṇa fails to relish His attribute of Ānanda or love when He is alone. Taste of love depends on the lovesports between the two. In other words Kṛṣṇa has within His nature two aspects, the enjoyer and the enjoyed. Without the object to be enjoyed He can not even realise His Own Nature as the enjoyer. So He separated from Himself His Hlādinī-Śakti known as Rādhā. So Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are co-relative. The apparent separation of inseparable relation between the two, is for the relish of Mādhurya arising out of the eternal love-dalliance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This mutual relation of eternal love-sport which is called 'Lila', is, according to the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the secret of the whole drama enacted in the eternal land of Vṛndāvan.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj was the first to proclaim in his famous book, 'Caitanya Caritāmṛta', that Sree-Caitanya was born combining in him the enjoyer and the enjoyed of the eternal love. Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj has pointed out that Sree Caitanya was none but Kṛṣṇa Himself hallowed with the lustre of the supreme emotion of Rādhā : "Rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalita". Though Rādhā is the Hlādinī-Śakti involved in the very nature of Kṛṣṇa, yet in the eternal land of Vṛṇḍāvan Kṛṣṇa fails to realise the intensity of emotion of Rādhā, that enables her to enjoy the infinite potency of love and bliss that is in Him. In order to enjoy His all-pervading beauty and infinite love, He combines the beauty and intense emotion of Rādhā in Him and descends on earth as Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This speaks of the religious attitude of Caitanyadev. In the latter half of his life in 'Nīlācal', he remained overwhelmed with Rādhā-bhāva or the love attitude of Rādhā towards Kṛṣṇa. Thus Kṛṣṇa Himself in the embodiment of Sri Caitanya practised Rādhā-bhāva and preached how to practise Rāgātmika Bhakti—a religious attitude of the devotee towards Kṛṣṇa.

The ideal of devotional love as preached by Caitanyadev, is imbibed by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. But the religious attitude that they follow, is not exactly the same as that of Sri Caitanya. The religious attitude of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is 'Sakhi-bhāva' rather than 'Rādhā-bhāva'. They place themselves in the position of the Sakhis—the female companions of Rādhā, who never long for direct union with Kṛṣṇa, but ever long for witnessing from a distance the eternal love-making of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the supra-natural land of Vṛṇḍāvan (Aprākṛta Vṛṇḍāvan). They desire like the Sakhis of Rādhā to take part in the preparation of eternal love-sports between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and thus to enjoy by witnessing the playful love-making of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, which is called the eternal 'līla' being enacted eternally in the eternal land of Vṛṇḍāvan. Thus they hanker after just to have a peep into the Divine 'Līlā', and this peep into the divine 'Līlā' is the highest spiritual gain

beyond which they cannot think of.

Again the general view of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is that Jīva being the Taṭasthā-Śakti of Kṛṣṇa, can never be elevated to His Svarūpa-Śakti. The reason they put forth in support of their view, is that Jīva is 'Ciṭ-kaṇa', i.e., a very little fragmentation of unlimited pure consciousness of Kṛṣṇa. So Jīva, however religiously advanced he may be, can never attain the status of Svarūpa-Śakti. There is a permanent line of demarcation between Svarūpa-Śakti and Taṭasthā-Śakti though the two kinds of Śakti are involved in the ultimate nature of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava do admit a difference between the devotee and God, which goes against the principle of 'Advaitaism'.

The religious attitude of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās is exclusively 'Rādhā-bhāva'. They follow the Rādhā-bhāva of Sri Caitanya who placed himself in the position of Rādhā and longed with all the tormenting pangs of heart for union with his beloved Kṛṣṇa during the last twelve years of his Rāgātmikā sādhanā in 'Nilāchal'. We have seen that the religious approach of Sri Caitanya, as depicted by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj in his work, 'Caitanya Caritāmṛta', is somewhat different from that of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. No doubt the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās received their philosophy of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa from the Vaiṣṇava religion and also believed in the eternal dalliances of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the highest spiritual land of Vṛndāvan. But they have taken all these views in some modified form and applied them in their practical sādhanā in order to serve their religious purpose. According to them the Absolute Reality has, from the very beginning of creation, divided Himself for the sake of self-realisation into two counterparts as the enjoyer and the enjoyed or as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. They hold this view that like Sri Caitanya who combined in himself the essence of Rādhā, every man has within him the spiritual essence of Rādhā, which is his svabhāva (ultimate divine nature). Man is oblivious of his ultimate nature owing to the influence of 'Māyā'. One has to

reveal first one's own ultimate nature by resorting to Tāntrik Sādhanā and then to Rāga-sādhanā.

According to Śaiva or Śākta Tantras of the Hindus, Parambrahma or Absolute Reality has at the beginning of creation, divided Himself for the sake of Self-realisation, into two counterparts known as Śiva and Śakti. Śiva and Śakti are nothing but two aspects, named 'Puruṣ' and 'Prakṛti' of one undivided Absolute Reality. Śiva is the incarnation of first-half essence, and Śakti is the incarnation of second-half essence of One Absolute Energy. This division of Śiva and Śakti as positive and negative forces of One unlimited Absolute force, was required for the manifestation of the world. And then the polarisation began. At one end of the pole there is One Supreme Absolute Being and at the other end there are diverse manifestations of phenomenal world. Men and women of the world represent the two opposite elements in millions of fragmentation of One Absolute Reality. In a man the element of Śiva predominates and the element of Śakti lies dormant. In a woman the element of Śakti predominates and the element of Śiva lies dormant. So the man feels the want of female element and the woman feels alike the want of male element. Therefore we find in the outer world that man and woman are attracted to each other irresistibly in order to unite the opposite elements in them. This is why in the Hindu Tantras all men and women have been held to be nothing but the incarnation of Śiva and Śakti manifested in the physical form; and also in the Buddhist Tantras they have been held as the embodiment of Upāya and Prajñā respectively. This view of Tantras either of the Hindus or of the Buddhists, has influenced the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in their belief of accepting a religious minded female companion in the process of their Tāntrik Sādhanā with a view to imbibe and culture the intense emotional feelings of his female companion and to revive his real feminine nature which remains veiled behind the false ego of masculinity. We find, many of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā

texts are introduced in the form of the earlier Āgamas and Nigamas in which Śiva has sometimes been described as practising the Sahaja sādhanā with Śakti.¹

The Sahajiyās further hold this view that Jīva being the Taṭasthā Śakti of Kṛṣṇa is, after all, a Prakṛti and her pride as being the Puruṣa (puruṣābhimāna) must be removed before she can be permitted to have her proper place in the eternal region of Svarūpa-Śakti. Being included in the Svarūpa-Śakti of Kṛṣṇa, the Sahajiyā sādhanaka acquires the merit by practising the intense emotional 'Bhakti-dharma'. By virtue of merits thus acquired, the Bhakta Sahajiyā sādhanaka is converted to Hlādinī Śakti of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus a Sahaja-siddha sādhanaka by developing his Svaiūpa Prakṛti to the highest spiritual extent, is converted to Svarūpa Śakti of Kṛṣṇa and obtains the nature of Hlādinī Śakti. So the Hlādinī Śakti, the Ultimate Blissful Nature of Kṛṣṇa, which is termed by the name 'Rādhā', is nothing but a supreme religious status to which a Jīva has the right to attain. Conforming to the blissful nature of Kṛṣṇa, Jīva is united with Kṛṣṇa in the supra-natural or aprākṛta Vṛndāvan. This status of Rādhā, the blissful nature of Kṛṣṇa, according to the Sahajiyās, can never be attained even by the gods except the man. This is why the renowned Sahajiyā sādhanaka, Caṇḍīdās has said that man is the highest reality. There is none above man :

“Śunaha Mānuṣ vai ।

Sabār upare Mānuṣ satya

Tāhār upare nāi ।”

So the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās are of opinion that Jīva, though belonged to Taṭasthā Śakti of Kṛṣṇa, may be converged with the Svarūpa Śakti and thereby the Rāgānugā Bhakti of Jīva may be elevated to Rāgātmikā Bhakti of Rādhā. From this point of view the Sahajiyās differ greatly from Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavs.

1. See the author's book 'Caitanyottor Pratham Cariti Sahajiyā Puṅthi.'

It is very interesting to note in this connection that there is a small poetical work entitled "Sādhaka rañjana"¹ by Kamalā Kānta who flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. In this book Yogic Kula-Ruṇḍainī Śakti has been conceived exactly in the image of Rādhā. The rise of the Śakti to meet Śiva in the Sahasrāra has been sung as the coming out of Rādhā to meet her beloved in private. The concepts of the pairs Śiva-Śakti, Projñā-Upāya and Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā were gradually mixed up; and as a matter of fact Puruṣa-Prakṛti, Śiva-Sakti, Projñā-Upāya and Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā meant all the same in popular theology. This fact has helped the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās to develop their theological belief on this line.

1. Edited jointly by messrs. Basanta Ranjan Ray and Atal Bihari Ghosh, Sāhitya-Pariṣad granthāvalī, No. 71.

PANCHA SAKHĀ CULT
OF
ORISSA

PANCHA SAKHĀ CULT

Likewise the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā cult of Bengal, 'Pancha Sakhā Dharma' and 'Mohimā Dharma' of Orissa are also the out-comes of a popular assimilation of the religious ideas of the later Tāntrik Buddhism with those of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavaism represented by Chaitanyadev.

In order to ascertain how were the popular religions like Pancha Sakhā Dharma and Mohimā Dharma originated and developed out of the admixture of the remnants of Mohāyān or Vajrayān Buddhism with the elements of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavaism, let us once more go back to the primitive age when Buddhism flourished in Orissa and have a brief survey with regard to the gradual development of this religion in course of time in the land of Orissa.

The story of conversion of two merchant brothers of Orissa named Tapussa and Bhallika into Buddhism by Buddha himself just after his enlightenment, has already been mentioned. The story has revealed the association of Orissa with the development of early Buddhism. While Tapussa and Bhallika, the two merchants of Orissa, are regarded as the first lay disciples of Buddha by the 'Mahāvagga' of Vinaya texts, the Aṅguttara Nikāya as well as by the Jātaka, the Nikāya literature also points out that the Vassa and the Vañña tribes of Orissa recognised the teachings of Lord Buddha.

Tārānāth, the Tibetan historian, gives Oḍiviśa (Orissa) the credit of being the earliest centre of Mahāyān Buddhism. Some of the Mahāsaṅghika monks who very likely dwelt in Orissa in the post Aśoke period, were the forerunners of Mahāyān Buddhism in Orissa.

An important centre of Mohāyān Buddhism in the early Christian centuries was Tāmralipta. In ancient times the important cities of Magadha like Rājagṛha, Gayā and Pāṭliputra

were connected with the south eastern countries by roads. The famous port of Tāmralipta was the meeting place of these various routes.¹ By the time when Fa-Hian came to India (fifth century A.D.) Tāmralipta had as many as twenty four monasteries, all flourishing and lively with resident Buddhist monks. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian was so much fascinated with rich libraries and sanctuaries of those monasteries that he stayed there for long two years. Tāmralipta continued to be a great Buddhist centre as late as the time of I-Tsin (673-87 A.D.) who praised highly of the fame and grandeur of the Bhārāhā monastery of this place.² The Bhārāhā monastery of Tāmralipta was a stronghold of Buddhism in Eastern India. The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing, who learnt sanskrit and philology in this monastery, has left a vivid account of the institution which was then inhabited by both monks and nuns with perfect discipline of life and conduct.³ After I-Tsing, his monastery came under the influence of Tantrayān. The early Bhañja rulers of Orissa extended their sway over Tāmralipta and under their patronage Tāntricism as well as Śaivism began to flourish there from about the tenth century A.D.⁴

It is also known from the Tibetan sources that Muñjashī was a famous sacred place in Orissa, a centre of Buddhist learning frequented by the celebrated teachers and Āchāryas during the Mediaeval period. When King Mahīpāla was ruling over Magadha (988-1036 century A.D.) this sacred place was a stronghold of Buddhism in Orissa and it was then visited by the great Tāntrik scholar Ānandagarbha, one of the preceptors of Mahīpāla. Virācārya, the then ruler of Orissa paid great honour to Ānandagarbha.⁵

Even as late as the fifteenth and the sixteenth Centuries

1. See Mahāvamsa VI.
2. See Takakusu, I-Tsing, ch. X.
3. Ibid.
4. See Hunter's 'Orissa' I.
5. See Pāg Sām Jho Zāng, p. 115.

A.D. when Buddhism declined almost from the whole of India, Orissa could preserve the vestiges of the different schools of later Buddhism. Achyutānanda Das, the reputed religious leader and philosopher of the sixteenth century A.D. in Orissa, has referred, in his most famous book 'Śūnya-Saṁhitā' (chap. X), to different schools of Buddhism that were then secretly existing in Orissa namely 'Nāgāntak' followers of Nāgārjuna, 'Vedāntak' or Sautrāntik school and 'Yogāntak' or Yogāchār school. He has also mentioned in that book the various systems of religion observed by the Tāntrik Buddhists but in secret, such as yoga practices inaugurated by Gorakṣanāth under the command of Vīra Sinha, the yoga system of Mallikānāth, the doctrine of the Bāuli or Bāul sect and the Sākṣimantras of Lohidas and Kapil.¹

From the observations of Achyutānanda Das in his 'Śūnya Saṁhitā,' we can safely assert that Nāgāntak or the Mādhyamik philosophy introduced by Nāgārjuna, the Yogāchār or the system of rites and observances akin to those of Yoga as introduced and enjoined by Asanga and others, and the Sautāntrik dealing with Buddhistic dogmas—these three schools of thought; and the Haṭha-yoga systems introduced and propagated by Gorakṣanāth and Mallikānāth, and the doctrines of the Bāul sect, and the mantras introduced by Lohidas and Kapil—all these different sects were all along alive and active in Orissa though they were driven underground by the forces of many antagonistic circumstances. It is evident from 'Śūnya-Saṁhitā' that all these schools and sects devoted to Yogic practices. They represented the ideology of Tāntrik Buddhism in Orissa during the sixteenth century A.D. Even

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1. Nāgāntak Vedāntak Yogāntak jete |
 Nānāproti vidhire kohile toi chite ||
 Gorakṣanāthañka Vidyā Virasīrṁha Ājñā |
 Mallikānāthañka yoga Bāuli pratijñā ||
 Lohidas Kapilañka sakṣimantra jete |
 Kahile je jemanta Se hoichhi gupte ||

(Śūnya-Saṁhitā, ch. X)

the followers of the Vedāntic school came under the influence of Tantra, because they looked upon Tantra as the fifth Veda which was also regarded as the 'Śiṣuveda'¹ by Yaśovanta Das who was also another great philosopher of Orissa in the sixteenth century A.D. The esoteric sādhanās of these sects attracted the common people of Orissa of that period. Besides, it has also been clearly established from the 'Viṣṇugarbha' of Chaitanya Das and the 'Dharmagītā' of Mahādeva Das that the worship of the Pañcha Dhyānī Buddha was in vogue in Orissa at that time.

The most prominent among the Buddhist teachers of Orissa in the sixteenth century A. D. were Varaṅga Swāmi, Lohidas and Virasiṁha and all of them used to practise yoga on the banks of the river Prāchī, which was then densely covered with forest. Quite a large number of their followers were residing in the caves of Dhauti, Khaṇḍagiri Udayagiri in modern Purī district and in the hillocks of Mahīparvata, Maṇḍukā, Jalaukā, Ratnagiri, Naltigiri in the district of Cuttack and in various feudal states of the Gaḍjāt.² The area of the Gaḍjāt, including the feudal states, comprises Sambalpur, Balāngir, Dhenkāna, Mayurbhanja, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Nayagarh, Khandapara, Ranapur, Khurda, Korāput (?) and Bhawanipātnā. Many are of opinion that Ranapur is the birthplace of Achyutānanda. But from the accounts of his autobiography inserted in 'Śūnya-Saṁhitā' published by 'Prāchī Samiti (Committee) we came to know that Achyutānanda was born in 'Tilakana' at a mile's distance from the village, 'Lembalo' where he returned at the fag end of his life after preaching his religion in different places only to breath his last. The villages 'Tilakana' and 'Lembalo' belong to the District of Cuttack. A tomb in memory of Achyutānanda was erected over his grave at 'Lembalo', which still exists.

1. cf. Prema Bhakti Brahma Gītā of Yaśovanta Das, ch, I.

2. See Śūnya Saṁhitā of Achyutānanda.

Vīra Siṃha, the greatest and the most enlightened Buddhist of his time, was professing the intricate and mystic philosophy of the Nāgāntak school. According to Īśwara Das, the Utkal author of "Chaitanya Bhāgavata," Vīra Siṃha was a great philosopher, a yogic Puruṣ, a renowned physician and at the same time a Tāntrik Siddha, and he commanded respect not only in Orissa but also in many parts of the Āndhra territory.¹ He is also known to be a great writer of esoteric texts and many of his books in the form of Mantra, Saptāṅga, Bhajan, Ajñā and Chautiṣā are preserved in manuscript forms in many places of Orissa.

From the biography of Buddha-Guptanāth, the guru of Tārānāth, we come to learn the existence of Buddhism in Orissa as well as in various places of India in the seventeenth century A. D. Buddha-Guptanāth was born in Indraliṅga near Rāmeśvaram in south India. His family name was Kṛṣṇa. He was initiated by an ascetic called Tirthināth. In the Census Report of Bengal, (1901, Pt I, p. 203) we find, "In the seventeenth century Buddha-Guptanāth wandered in various parts of India and found Buddhism flourishing in many places. Then it was lost altogether. For two or three centuries Buddhism became absolutely unknown in India."

It is known from the records of the reputed Sādhu Buddha-Guptanāth that he visited Kaliṅga where Buddhist remains were in plenty. Passing through Jhārkhanda he came to the land of Jagannath, which was then a great stronghold of Buddhism. The Tibetan sources also corroborate the fact that Buddhism was prevalent in Kaliṅga, Jhārkhanda and in the territory round about Jagannath as late as the sixteenth, seventeenth and even the eighteenth centuries A.D. Mr. Fergusson is also of opinion that Puri was an ancient seat of Buddhism and that the worship of Jagannath is a relic of some Buddhist cults.

1. See Īśwara Das, Chaitanya Bhagavata, ch. 53.

The most ancient name of Puri was Nīlāchal. At present this name, however, is not in common use. It is also known by the name Jagannath-Kṣetra, Kṣetra means the sacred place. For centuries past, the city has been looked upon as the holiest on the face of the earth. And the tradition everywhere accepts Jagannath identified with the Buddha-avatār (incarnation). To the Buddhists of Nepal Dharmarāj and Jagannath are only other names of Buddha. The Hindus regard Buddha as the ninth avatar (incarnation) of Viṣṇu, and this opinion of the Hindus is also endorsed by the Buddhists of India. Achutānanda Das in paying homage to Lord Jagannath, has described in his book 'Gaḍura Gitā' (ch. I) :

“Shri Nilkaṇḍare Bije Kariāchha Buddharūp Vahichha |

Bhakta nimante Tuṃbhar eh-sabu Bhaiyān Prabhu

Shri-Vasyachha ||”

“Oh Lord (Shri-Vasyachha) ! you have appeared at Nilgiri (Nīlāchala) in the incarnation of Buddha. Your all these incarnations are made for the cause of the devotees.”

Not only Achyutānanda Das but almost all the ancient poets of Orissa when singing of the ten incarnations, have referred to Jagannath or the Dāru-Brahma as being identified with the incarnation of Buddha, the saviour of men in the Kaliyuga. Saralā Das, the first great poet of Orissa, probably of the twelfth century A. D., says in his 'Mahābhārat' :

“Navame vaṇḍaha Shri-Buddha Avatār |

Buddharūpe bije kale Shri-Nīlkaṇḍar ||”

“In the ninth I pay my humble respects to the incarnation of Buddha who in the form of Buddha dwell in the Nīlāchala i.e., Puri.”

From a detailed account in 'Yasomatīmālikā,' a scripture of the Mahimā Dharma sect of Orissa in the nineteenth century A. D., we find that Jagannath of Puri generally passed for Buddha till the forty-first aṅka (year) of the reign of Mukndadev, the son and successor of Rājā Pratāprudradev of Orissa. And we have learnt from the pen of Tibetan lāmā Tārānāth, a noted

historian of Buddhism, that this Mukundadev was in reality a staunch and faithful worshipper of Buddha. It was during his time that the notorious Kālāpāhār carried on his formidable crusade against Hinduism and Buddhism, and it was with the end of long reign of Mukundadev that the Buddhists began to pass their lives in concealment and seclusion.

From 'Yasomatīmālikā' we further learn that the revival of Buddhism in the name of Mahimā Dharma took place in the year, 1875, the twenty-first year of the reign of Divya Sinha of Puri. Bhīma Bhoi was the leader and propagator of Mahimā Dharma. Shri Nagendra Nath Basu, Prāchya Vidyāmahārṇava, a noted Archaeologist of Bengal, is of firm belief that the Mahimādharmins of Gaḍjāt are but the converted Buddhists.¹

From the above investigations we feel sure that the people of Orissa in general would believe that Buddha was in reality an avatāra (incarnation) of Viṣṇu and so they were justified in substituting the name of Jagannath for Buddha. From the survey of the history of Buddhism in Orissa we find that so far back as the sixteenth century A.D. Buddhism was a prevalent and highly influential creed in Orissa influencing the thoughts and lives of many thousands of people of Orissa.

Rājā Pratāparudra appears to have ruled Orissa from the year 1497 to 1540 A.D. He was a Hindu king and a staunch supporter of Hinduism. We learn from Mr. Sterling's "Orissa" that although the followers of Buddhism were at first received with favour and treated with marked consideration by Pratāparudradev, they were afterwards persecuted by his court. It was the dread of persecution by the king that compelled the Buddhist priests to seek shelter in concealment. And to evade these persecutions and avoid incurring the displeasure and disfavour of the Brahmins, the common Buddhist people played the hypocrite by adopting the religious observances and practices of the Hindus. Owing to persecutions at the hands of the

1. See Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa.

king and his courtiers, the enormous influence that Buddhism once exercised upon the minds of the people in Orissa, began subsequently to wane. Although the crusade carried on against the followers of Buddhism, no doubt, compelled them to take refuge in the impregnable hilly parts of the country, yet Buddhism was never wholly extirpated from Orissa. Though the Buddhists were persecuted during the time of Rājā Pratāparudradev, yet they succeeded in securing largely the patronage of his son and successor Mukundadev. Speaking of Mukundadev whose dominion extended from Triveṇī in the North to Ganjam in the south, 'Pāg Sām Jon Zāng', a Tibetan work written by Sampo Khampa, states that king Mukundadev favoured Buddhism and Buddhists were found in large numbers residing in his territories. We quote from the work the following words in English :

"Mukundadev, king of Odivisa (Orissa) who favoured Buddhism, became powerful. His power extended upto Magadh. He too did some service to the cause of Buddhism."

During the reign of Rājā Pratāparudra in Orissa, Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu came from Navadwīp of Bengal to visit the temple of Jagannath. Chaitanyadev settled permanently at Puri at about the age of thirty. His long residence of last eighteen years of his life produced a religious fervour and enthusiasm all over the province and thus made Orissa a stronghold of the Vaiṣṇava faith. His long stay at Puri was marked by two important incidents. The first was the conversion of a famous Vedāntist, Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. The conversion of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma was an important achievement for the movement of Vaiṣṇava faith which Chaitanyadev represented and which in this way made its first deep impression in Orissa. The second was the homage paid by Rājā Pratāparudra who was favourably impressed by the fervent devotion and religious ecstasy of Chaitanyadev. His religious personality and magnetic charm overwhelmed Rājā Pratāparudra so much that he considered Chaitanyadev an incarnation of Lord Jagannath.

Indeed Chaitanyadev was revered by the people of Orissa as the living personality of Lord Jagannath of Puri temple.

It is also needless to mention here that one of the foremost cause of receiving Shri Chaitanya with warmth and regard by Rājā Pratāparudra was to counteract the spread of Buddhism in Orissa. In order to escape the persecution and oppression which followed in the reign of Rājā Pratāparudra, upon the Buddhists of all sects and schools, a large majority of them embraced the Vaiṣṇava religion of Lord Shri Chaitanya. But it does not seem likely to expect that all of them were earnest and sincere converts to the Vaiṣṇavism. On the contrary they were, in their heart of hearts, but votaries of Buddha.

From the various religious books of Orissa of the sixteenth, and seventeenth and even of the eighteenth centuries A. D. we come to know that many modified Buddhists were then residing in various parts of Orissa. They cherished the loving memory of their religion and made no secret of it amongst themselves, though, in society they passed for devout Vaiṣṇavas. In consequence of it a new force of Buddhist culture in Orissa appeared by the sixteenth century A. D. and transformed it into a vigorous Vaiṣṇavite movement centering round Lord Jagannath.

The names of Achyutānanda Das, Balarām Das, Jagannath Das, Ananta Das and Yaśovanta Das are held in high esteem by the pious Vaiṣṇavas of Orissa. These five illustrious persons were the principal poets who sang the glories of Shri Krishna. The Oriya works of Balarām Das, Jagannath Das and Achyutānanda Das are permeated with a spirit of devotion; and in those works there are many songs which display a high spiritual emotion. This is why these five persons have been regarded as five apostles of Vaiṣṇavism of Orissa. The most renowned religious poet Achyutānanda has left us an immortal literary work of his, named 'Śūnya Saṁhitā' from which we learn that he flourished in the Nilāchala during the reign of Rājā Pratāparudra. In his work we also find mention of Balarām Das, Jagannath Das, Anantaran Das and Yaśovanta

Das as his contemporaries.¹ It is beyond doubt that by the presence of all these five faithful followers or servants (Das) of the Supreme Lord, Orissa was honoured and sanctified early in the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. It also cannot be overlooked that though these five Dasas outwardly professed the Vaiṣṇava faith and propagated the Chaitanya cult, yet from their writings we come to learn that in their heart of hearts they were but sincere and staunch followers of Buddhist religion. The 'Śūnya Saṁhitā' of Achyutānanda Das, the 'Gupta Gītā' and 'Siddhānta Ḍambarī' of Balarām Das and in a later period 'Viṣṇugarbha Purāṇ' of Chaitanya Das, 'Dharma Gītā' of Mahādev Das and Stuti-Bhajans of Bhīma Bhoi (the propounder of Mahimā-Dharma)—all these works preserve the philosophy of Śūnyatā of the Buddhists. A close study of these texts would reveal that the essence of Buddhism was retained by the thinkers of Orissa upto a very late date and at the sametime show how Buddhism was absorbed by the Vaiṣṇavism. The main interesting feature of these works is that their philosophical conceptions bear close relation to those of Buddhism. The theory of incarnation of the Great Void maintained and explained by these veiled followers of Buddhism, were largely influenced by the Vaiṣṇava faith of Shri Chaitanya Mohāprabhu. This is why Sri Nagendra Nath Basu, Prāchya Vidyāmahārṇava, in his work entitled "Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa", has drawn the attention of scholars to a modified form of Buddhism that prevailed in Orissa from the sixteenth century onward. The book on which he mainly based his conclusion that Achyutānanda Dās and his four companions were crypto-Buddhists, is the "Śūnya Saṁhitā" of Achyutānanda.

Śūnya Saṁhitā—It is one of the most renowned works of Achyutānanda. In it he has thrown a flood of light upon his spiritual life. He has referred in this work that he was ordained

1. Śūnya Saṁhitā, ch. X.

by Lord Jagannath in his dream to take initiation from Shri Chaitanya :

“Śuna Achyut mo vachana ।

Chaitanya thāru dīkṣī ghena ॥”

(Śūnya Saṁhitā)

It is related in his Anākār Saṁhitā that obeying the direction of Shri Chaitanya he first became a convert to Vaiṣṇavism under Sanātana Gosvāmi. Referring to himself in Śūnya Saṁhitā he says that shortly after his conversion to Vaiṣṇavism he could in no way bring his mind to take the least interest in any of the wordly affairs. With the lapse of time this tendency became more and more marked. In course of time Nirguṇa Brahma made himself manifest to him, illumined his innermost heart and pacified the storm of passion and desire. Ten years and ten months after his conversion Achyutānanda came to the forest of Daṇḍaka on the eastern bank of the Pr. chī river and visited there many Ṛṣis and Tapasvins who were at variance with each other. About a week after he had reached the forest of Daṇḍaka, he was graced, at dead of night and in the midst of a dense forest, with the presence of Lord Buddha. Achyutānanda has described this celestial visit in his Śūnya-Saṁhitā in the following lines :

“Pancha Sat dinare probeś hai jāu ।

Gahane khatu prabhu niyogare thāu ॥

Niśi ardhabhāgeno paḍai taratam ।

Ke pāilā nā pāilā prabhu niyogena ॥

Abadhan honti monu dinamāne pai ।

Aehi Samoyaku Se darśan kalu jāi ॥

Koile mo prān pancha Śākhā kāhi thīla ।

Niyog nā ruche mote tumbheta naila ॥

Aehā śuni charaner tale mu paḍili ।

Nistārili nistārili bolin boili ॥

Janāili chhāmure sakal kathā muhi ।

Hasin uthile prabhu taha taha hoi ॥

Boile Achyut tumbhe śuna āmbha bāṇī ।

Koliyuge Buddha rūpe prakāśila puni ॥

Koliyuge Bauddha rūpe nija rūp gopaya ।

* * *

Tumbhe mor pañcha ātmā bata pañcha prāṇa ॥

Avatār śraṇi jete tumbha pai puna ॥

Nirākār montre sarva durgati hariba ।

Āpane tarin se je pare tarāiba ॥

Buddha mātā ādiśakti saṅgha chhanti kahi ।

Nirākār bhajane nirmal bhakti pai ॥

Aemanta kahi se dele montra nirādhār ।

Ājñā dele koliyuge kara jā prochār ॥

Chinhiva kahile prabhu swayang Brahma aehi ।

Muhi aehi rūpe achhi sarva ghate rahi ॥

Jāu Achyut Ananta yaśovanta Das ।

Balarām Jagannāth kara jā prokaś ॥

Ājñā pāi āmbhi pāncha jana je ailu ।

Monyān nā chalilā vane probeśilu ॥

Ṛṣi tapi sannyaśi nāmak Vīrsingha ।

Rohidās Bāuli kapil jete sangha ॥

Sabhā moṇḍāila je vasile sarva tapi ।

Pachārile prabhunka ki ājñā hoiāchhi ॥

Kohili mu śūnya montra yantra karanyās ।

Topi māne jai jai phale je prokaś ॥

Dekhile je śūnya Brahma svayam Jyoti hoi ।

Ghate ghate vije aehi śūnyakāyā dehī ।

Sthāvar jangam kīṭ patangādi jete ।

Śūnya kāyā śūnya montra vije ghate ghate ॥

Śūnya kāyāku je nirākār yantrasār ।

Bhalā dayā kale dīna janamka sādār ॥”

(Śūnya Saṁhitā, ch. X)

“For five or seven days I walked into the dense forest in search of my Lord. One day at dead of night when I was deeply absorbed in studying, I was graced with his presence. He said, ‘Long and tedious has been the separation between myself and the five souls of my life. I would not rest till I met

you.' Having heard this I fell prostrate at His feet, cried aloud, 'Saved, Oh ! I am saved now', and informed him of all the thoughts and ideas of my mind. Having heard me the Lord burst into a fit of laughter and said, 'Listen Achyut, to what I say. In the Kaliyuga I have made myself manifest again as Buddha. It is desirable, however, for you in the Kaliyuga to hide your Buddhistic frames of mind away from public view. You (five) are indeed my five souls, my five lives. Having undergone incarnation I have found you back. All troubles and calamities will now be put to an end by means of Nirākār mantra. Having saved yourselves first by this, you will save others afterwards. I tell you, take refuge in Buddha, in mother Ādi-śakti or the first primordial energy and in the sangha. By devoting yourself to the Nirākār (Void) you will be chastened and purified with an influx of transparent devotion.' Having said all this, He initiated me into the religion of Nirādhār (Void) and instructed me to go back into the world and propagate this religion in this Kaliyuga. The Lord said also, 'Know that Buddha is none else but Brahma Himself. And in this form do I dwell inside all bodies :

Chinhiva kahile prabhu swayang Brahma aehi ।

Muhi aehi rūpe achhi sarva ghate rahi ॥

Go, you Achyut, Ananta, Jaśovanta, Balarām and Jagannath, go and publish what I say to you.' Having been thus ordered, we five entered the forest where Ṛṣis and Tapasvins, Sannyāsins and the followers of Vīrsingha, Rohidas, Kapil and the Bāul sect gathered together in an assembly and wanted to know what were the directions of the Lord, I explained to them the Śūnya-mantra, yantra and karanyās appropriate for the worship of Śūnya or Void. Upon this all the sages assembled there blessed the name of the Lord. They got the vision of Śūnya Brahma who is devoid of all forms, residing as light inside all bodies. The stationary and the moving, the insect and the fly—inside all these remain the Śūnya Puruṣ and the Śūnya-yantra.

Through the Nirākār yantra which is the essence of the Śūnya Puruṣ, He has, out of grace, revealed all this.”

From the above statement of Achyutānanda Śrī Nagendra Nath Basu, Prāchya Vidyāmahārṇava, have come to this conclusion that the five great souls viz. Achyutānanda, Jagannath, Balarām, Ananta and Jaśovanta Dasas who have generally passed for devout Vaiṣṇava poets, were, in fact, the devout Buddhists of Orissa in the sixteenth century A.D. Though they were sincere Buddhists being votaries of Buddha, yet they found it necessary to keep their Buddhistic frames of mind hidden under the garb of Vaiṣṇavism for fear of persecutions by the Brahmins and the king. It is for this that we find the following line in Achyutānanda's Śūnya Saṁhitā, “Kaliyuge Bauddarūpe nija rūp gopya”—it is desirable in the Kaliyug that the followers of Buddha should remain in disguise.

All that can be said in defence of those who regard these five pious and devout souls as five apostles of Vaiṣṇavism, is that their religious lives and views were moulded and regulated to a considerable extent by the preachings of the Vaiṣṇava masters. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava creed gained the upper hand in regulating their faith. Although the theology of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas exerted a great influence on them, yet they interpreted the cult of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in a new way, and one quite different from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava point of view. The following extract from the writings of Achyutānanda and Jagannath will show how this sect propagated its own doctrines quite differently from those of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism :

(a) “Jīva ātmā Rādhe boli param murāri |”

(Śūnya Saṁhitā, ch. II)

Rādhā is the Jivātmā and Murāri the Paramātmā. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas never think that Jivātmā in its essence is Rādhā. To them Jivātmā is a microscopic part of Kṛṣṇa and belongs to His Taṭasthā Śakti. According to the view of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism Taṭasthā Śakti can never in any circumstances attain the state of Rādhā, Svarūp Śakti of Kṛṣṇa.

- (b) “Anākār je Śri Brahma Saṁhitā grantha mone kara sār ।
 Śri Krishṇa charaṇe śaraṇ pośilā dīn Achyut pāmar ॥”
 (Anākār-saṁhitā)

‘Only do think of the great Brahma-saṁhitā which deals with the Ānākār. And with this advice to you all, the low and sinful Achyutānanda resigns himself absolutely to the grace of Śrikrishṇa’. Here Śrikrishṇa of Achyutānanda is not Śrikrishṇa of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. He is Anākāa Śūnya Puruṣ comparable to Absolute Brahma of Upaniṣad, who is unlimited and devoid of any frame and quality.

- (c) “Krishṇar krīḍā-ras eihi ।
 Gupta Vṛṇḍāvan kahi ॥
 Mathurāpur mohā śūnya ।
 Gopnagar sehu jāna ॥
 (Jagannathdas, Tulābhīnā, ch. IX)

‘Such is the meaning of the love sports of Kṛṣṇa. Vṛṇḍāvan is really a secret place. Mathurāpur means nothing but the great Void, and this is also the meaning of Gopnagar’. Thus Jagannāth Das has openly declared that Vṛṇḍāvan, Mathurā and other holy places should not be localised. In reality they signify Mahā-śūnya or Great Void.

From the above quotations it is evident that the interpretation given to the cult of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa by this class of Vaiṣṇava poets of the sixteenth century A.D. does not tally with the mythological accounts of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The above quotations leave little room for doubt that Mahā-śūnya, the Great Void, was the highest goal of their religious aspiration. They had their own scriptures composed by the highest and greatest amongst them.

In view of the above discussions let us now ascertain how far justified it is to call those five illustrious ascetics of Orissa either crypto Buddhists or veiled Vaiṣṇavas. In order to do this I propose to present here the life-history of Achyutānanda, the vanguard of Pancha Sakhā Dharma and to analyse in brief some of the works of this religious sect.

Life of Achyutānanda Das : After a great deal of calculation Paṇḍit Vināyak Miśra arrived to this conclusion that Achyutānanda Das was born round about the year 1490 A.D. According to the calculation of Śri Artavallabh Mohānti, the date of his birth was fixed in the year 1511 A.D. Paṇḍit Suryanārāyan Das after quoting some padas (verses) from the book, 'Udaya Kahānī' in concern with the birth of Achyutānanda Das, had established that he was born in the year 1489 A.D. Paṇḍit Suryanārāyan Das had also established the dates of birth of other four religious leaders of Pancha Sakhā Dharma. According to his calculation the date of birth of Balarām Das falls on the year 1473, that of Anantarām Das on the year 1475 and those of Jagannath Das and Yaśovanta Das on the year 1477. All these dates of birth of the five religious apostles based on the calculations of Paṇḍit Suryanārāyan Das have generally been accepted.

The birth-place of Achyutānanda Das has already been mentioned. He came of a poor family. His parents' names were Śri Dīnabandhu Khuntiyā and Smt. Padmāvati Khuntiyā. His grand father's name was Gopināth Khuntiyā. It is presumed that Achyutānanda was Khaṇḍāyat (Khhatriya) by caste, and was unmarried. From the auto-biography of Achyutānanda, which was inserted to his work, 'Śūnya Saṁhitā' and was published by the 'Prāchi Samiti', we come to know that his father Dīnabandhu Khuntiyā was a great devotee of Lord Jagannath at Puri. It is said that no son was born to him even in his much advanced age. So Dīnabandhu prayed for a son to Lord Jagannath, and out of grace of the Lord, his son Achyutānanda was born. When he was five years old, Achyutānanda was admitted into a village school. Besides this we do not get any information from his auto-biography about his childhood. But it is certain that as Dīnabandhu was a great devotee of Lord Jagannath, he would frequently visit Puri and it is highly probable that Achyutānanda also would accompany his father. At that time Śri haitanya Mahāprabhu

accompanied by his faithful followers and disciples came from Navadwip and was residing at Puri. The devotion and the religious ecstasy of Chaitanyadev attracted all the people, high and low, equally. Even Rājā Pratāparudra himself fell under the spell of his charming religious personality. At this Dīnabandhu could not resist the temptation of following the religion of Śrī Chaitanya. At the biddings of his father Achyutānanda took refuge under the feet of Chaitanyadev who directed his favourite disciple Sanātan Gosvāmī to give initiation to Achyutānanda. Thus Achyutānanda was initiated to Vaiṣṇavism at a very premature age when his knowledge had not properly developed. So the selection of Dikṣā Guru was not made out of the deep faith and eagerness on the part of Achyutānanda. However, after initiation he came back to his native village, Tilkanā and gave up the family life and embraced the life of a monk. At Tilkanā he sat under a banian tree and sank in deep meditation. After long days of meditation self-consciousness dawned upon him. Being illumined with self-consciousness he saw a glaring light descending before him. That light took the form of a person and initiated him with 'Bija-mantra'. Achyutānanda has described this luminous Guru as an Absolute one who has no beginning or end. After this celestial initiation Achyutānanda became the votary of Absolutism, the attributeless Supreme Being. Absolute is but the synonym of what the Buddhists call Śūnya. Achyutānanda has named the celestial guru as "Jyotirānanda."¹

After having been initiated by the celestial guru, Achyutānanda came on a pilgrimage to the sacred places of Rāmeshwar, Chitrakūt, Ayodhā, Dwārkā, Kāshī, Proyāg, Mathurā, Vṛṇḍāvan. After the extensive tour over the different places of consecration, he came back to Puri. By that time Balarām Das, Anantaram Das, Jagannath Das and Yaśovanta Das were present at Puri, and were initiated into the Vaiṣṇava faith represented by

1. Auto-biography of Achutānanda.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprobhu. Having returned to Puri, Achyutānanda joined with those four converted Vaiṣṇava apostles and brought about a new religious movement called 'Pancha Sakhā Dharma'. Achyutānanda, though youngest of them, was the vanguard of this new religious movement. In this new religious movement all the faiths and religious practices of Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism and Tāntricism were assimilated. Thus the 'Pancha Sakhā Dharma' became the meeting ground of the three main religions that were current in Orissa at that time. Pancha Sakhā Dharma of Orissa was the outcome of the merger of three different religious thoughts and theories.

Literatures of Pancha Sakhā Dharma :

Towards the end of the sixteenth century A.D. those five religious poets of Pancha Sakhā Dharma composed innumerable books on the philosophy and religion representing the views of that new religious movement. It is said that Achyutānanda alone wrote more than hundred books. Most of his books were lost. By the extensive search the members of 'Prāchī Samiti' have recovered many of his books. Some of them have been published and the rest are lying in manuscript-form preserved by the 'Prāchī Samiti'. So far my knowledge goes, the book named 'Gopālañka Ogāl' (Songs in praise of Kṛṣṇa) is the first work of Achyutānanda and the book entitled 'Anākār Saṁhitā' is his last work. In between we find many of his works that are now available. Let us mention below some of the names of those available works :

| | | | |
|--------------|------|----------------------|---------|
| Gopālañka | Ogāl | Śūnya | Samhitā |
| Kaivarta | Gītā | Chhāyā | „ |
| Kaliyug | „ | Jyoti | „ |
| Gurubhakti | „ | Anāhata | „ |
| Gaḍur | „ | Akalita | „ |
| Jñānpradīp | „ | Avāḍ | „ |
| Nīśchal Jñān | „ | Brahmavat | „ |
| Nītya Rās | | Yantra-mantra-Tantra | Samhitā |
| Ananta Goi | | Gaḍur | „ |

Tattwabodhinī

Aṅgākar

Brahma Sañkuli

Hari Vanśa

Bhabanāvar

Besides these he had composed innumerable short poems, Bhajans etc. By writing various Gītas and Sañhitās Achyutānanda has left before us a landmark of his gradual spiritual progress towards the path of self-realisation and in the attainment of maturity in religious thoughts. His writings have also enriched the literature of Orissa and have established the new theory of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma.

Gopālañka Ogāl—In the eighth chapter of *Gopālañka Ogāl* Achyutānanda has described, “We, the five apostles of Vaiṣṇavism, are born according to the desire of Śrī Kṛṣṇa only to express the magnanimity of the love-sports between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.”

Gurubhakti Gītā—In this book Achyutānanda has put great emphasis on the importance of Guru :

“Bolanti Guru śuna Vrajasuta, Kahiba tote bujhai ।

Prathamare guru-vidya paḍvanti Brahma-bhāg dūre thoi ॥”

“Guru, the spiritual preceptor, says, ‘hear me, O Vrajasuta, I shall explain to you in detail. Aim, at the outset, at a knowledge of the guru keeping aside for a while the knowledge of Brahma.’”

In it he has mentioned in order the seventy names of his gurus beginning with ‘Mahāsūnya’ and ending with Śrī Kṛṣṇa Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. In the second part of *Gurubhakti Gītā* we find support of the Tāntrik yoga conception :

“Thoke Gopālañku tumbhe rāhāse miśāo ।

Thoke Gopālañku tumbhe Tantrare bujhāo ॥

Yantramān Gopālañku Kehu Śikhaiva ।

Mantramān Kehu Gopālañku bujhaiva ॥

Yyotirānanda murati Keban Gopala ।

Chhāyā murati darśana kariba Hṛdam la ॥

Avāḍ murati Kebā Kariba darśana ।

Samādḥiniśchale Kehu Karibe ti puna ॥”

(Gurubhakti Gītā, part II, p. 48)

Here the conception of Tantra as described by Achyutānanda is mainly in the line of the ‘Bhāgavadgītā.’ He has also supported here the significance of Bija-mantra, yantra, ḥṛdamūla which are indispensable elements of Tantra-sādhanā.

In the third part of this book Achyutānanda has clearly mentioned that ‘Jñān’ and ‘Bhakti’ are but the two inseparable aspects of Sādhanā. Sādhak, the seeker of the Ultimate Truth, should tread on the paths of spiritual knowledge and devotion. Otherwise, Supreme spiritual realisation can never be achieved :

“Jñān bhakti ek dānā

Sagun bhakti ek jānā ।

Nirgun-sagunādi mata

Bhakta-mananḥka ek vitta ।

Mādhurye aisvarjya je achi

Aisvarjye mādhurya miśichi ।”

(Gurubhakti Gītā, Part III, p. 183)

Brahma-Saṅkuli—Achyutānanda has elaborately dealt in ‘Brahma Saṅkuli’ the process of Yoga-sādhanā. The process of yoga-sādhanā of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma is based on the same line as propounded by the Nāth Yogins, the Buddhist Sahajiyās and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of Bengal. We find in this book the instructions on Yoga for making the body immutable, as for example :

“Yantra binyasi tantra kaha ।

Yemante rahiva ah deha ॥”

(Brahma-Saṅkuli, p. 4)

Not only that but also the yogic system involving the control over the sun and the moon, is advised to be adopted for the perfection of the body :

“Chandra sūryaṅku kale goṣṭhi ।

Biśama Brahma agni uṭhi ॥

Pralaya tāku na bādhai ।

Teveti siddha aṅga hai ॥” (Brahma-saṅkuli, p. 17)

Thus we find, the ideal of immortality in the 'Siddha-deha' as propounded by the yogins of the above Siddha-schools exerted considerable influence upon the Pancha Sakhā Dharma of Orissa. Those Siddha-schools held the realisation of the ultimate nature of the self as well as of the supreme-self, either in the form of perfect enlightenment, which is great bliss as in the case of the Tantrik Buddhists or in the form of perfect love as in the case of the Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavas, to be the final aim of all Sādhanā. Of course there are the differences in outlook and approach and also the differences in practices, yet the general conception of the final state is much the same among all the yogic schools including the schools of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma of Orissa.

Achyutānanda in this book, has also described how to control the mind. He has said, it is useless to study religious books whilst our mind is completely under the influence and control of the lower attributes of ignorance and passion. These attributes, as opposed to the third and highest attribute, Sattva, i.e., the spiritualistic tendency, drag us down and hold us back from the way of salvation. So having our mind absorbed in materialistic world we have no chance of finding the real nature of brahma. To have an effective control of mind we should first try to get rid of passions or lusts which have occupied our mind by substituting them with meditation of 'Vairāgya' (self disassociation), purity and bhakti (devotion). By constant practice of purity of thoughts we can make our mind clean from vicious thoughts. If we can always engage our mind with noble thoughts, noble ideas, noble purposes or meditation, prayer or reciting mantras, then the mind will become noble and pure. Thus we should make our mind a nest of pleasant, loving, noble, pure and holy thoughts and then we can be cheerful, noble, pure and holy. Our cells of the body also respond to our thoughts and moods of the mind.

Thoughts are forces which work in our mind and through mind they influence our physical nature as well as our spiritual nature. The noble, pure and holy mind leads to the spiritual

transformation of life. Therefore the secret of inner development is purity and ennoblement of thoughts, emotions and actions. If we make proper and sufficient inner development by making our mind pure and noble and by proper communion with Lord, then we can be guided by the Holy Spirit from within. For this, our complete self-surrender to Lord is necessary. His guiding force will then be the moulding power within us, the source of peace and spiritual strength. Its realisation will give us freedom from fear and worry and will lead to our spiritual unfoldment.

We generally follow our sense-nature and do not follow the higher spiritual-nature within us. So our spiritual nature remains undeveloped, latent and almost in a slumbering state. As the sense-nature can connect us with the external things of the world, so our spiritual-nature can connect us with the Holy Spirit within and extract love, strength and divine force from Him, if we know how to draw them. This slumbering spiritual-nature may be awakened by our living a pure life, by communion with the Holy Spirit, by deep prayer and selfless service. Unless we have sufficiently renounced our selfish animal-nature, this slumbering spiritual-nature would not be aroused. When the spiritual-nature within us is properly and sufficiently aroused, then by its help we can connect ourselves with Him in deep prayer and draw love, strength and divine force from Him.

How to arouse this slumbering spiritual-nature? In answer to this question Achyutānanda has pointed out that our mind has the power of arousing our spiritual-nature by keeping it pure, elevated, calm, humble and devout. A mind, elevated and tuned to a high mood, can be a receiver of the necessary divine force. All true prayers elevate our mind and unfold our spiritual-nature. If we can unite our mind with God-mind as the clay when modelled, is united to the potter's mind, then our mind would be in harmony with Him. If we can surrender or offer ourselves to God with devotion, then our mind would be in proper high mood, then our spiritual-nature would arise

and connect us with God. A whole hearted devotion to God is a potent factor for keeping the mind in proper high mood and arousing the spiritual-nature.

Achyutānanda has classified mind into five categories : (1) Kumon (evil mind), (2) sumon (noble mind), (3) bimon (scattered mind), (4) mon (concentrated mind), and (5) amon (dwindled mind). The philosophers also advocate that mind has three states : conscious, sub-conscious and the super-conscious state. If the mind be sufficiently purified, calmed and elevated, then with the help of concentration of mind or 'dhyān' we can reach the 'samādhi' or super-conscious state in which our spiritual vision is opened. With repeated 'samādhi' when mind is sufficiently illumined, then it comes in commune with Supreme Being. In this supreme elevated state, mind dwindles away and only the spiritual consciousness of the Sādhak remains to realise the Supreme Being. According to Achyutānanda this is the real yoga or commune with Absolute. Achyutānanda has also described this in his Jñānprodīp Gītā :

“Monku amon jebe karipāru tuhi ।
 Avidyā modhye purichhi toḍe kara tuhi ॥
 Chaḍaḡakti chanchachaḍe eh kalpanadi kari ।
 Kheḍuchhi monrūpare māyāñku ābari ॥
 Nirbikalpa nirmoha je sthirschitta hoi ।
 Mohānitya hole mon amon bolai ॥”

(Jñānprodīp Gītā, ch. IV)

We find support of this view of Achyutānanda in the third chapter of 'Amarkoṣ Gītā', and in the second chapter of 'Gupta Gītā' of Balarām Das.

Balarām Das in his 'Amarkoṣ Gītā' has stated of piercing of six plexus (chakras) as is found in Tāntrik yoga-sāadhanā.

Thus we find that Achyutānanda has laid great stress on making the mind the lamp of spiritual consciousness which is the reflection of the last word of Lord Buddha. At Kuśī-nagar when Lord Buddha was about to leave his mortal body, then Ānand, his most favourite disciple, began to shed tears

profusely. At that Lord Buddha told him, "Be a lamp on yourself" (Ātma-dīpo Bhava).

To Achyutānanda religion is the spiritual consciousness. He has directed in the ninth chapter of 'Tattva-bodhinī' that the path of salvation lies in the union of the individual soul with the all embracing Soul. It is the hunger of the soul for its union with Lord by breaking all the fetters of lower world. Therefore, self-realisation is the ultimate aim of Achyutānanda. Śruti of the Hindu religion has also declared, "Know thyself" (Ātmānaṃ viddhi) which is synonym to self-realisation of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma cult.

Kaivartta Gītā and Jñānprodīp Gītā :

In Kaivartta Gītā and Jñānprodīp Gītā and in many verses of Achyutānanda, mention has been made of 'Piṇḍa' (microcosm) and Brahmāṇḍa (macrocosm). In those books and verses he has discussed elaborately the relation between the human body and the universal body. The human body (microcosm) is an exact counterpart of the Universal body (macrocosm) in every respect except its external form. When a man is termed a microcosm, it is not to be inferred that he is merely a part of the world, but is in reality a miniature of the world, the difference lies in magnitude rather than in quality. Therefore the human body bears the mysteries of the universe, which is unknown to the mortal man. The yogis have tried to unravel those mysteries by adopting the secret processes of Kāya-sādhana i.e., the yogic culture of body. The only aim of the Kāya-sādhana or the cultivation of the body through the processes of yoga, is to spiritualise the body. The most important thing common to all yogic schools is the culture of the body or kāya-sādhana through the process of Haṭha-yoga.

Abundant materials are on record to prove sufficiently that Haṭha-yoga obtained popularity largely among the Tāntrik Buddhists of Orissa. According to Lāmā Tārānātha, Tāntricism which was only a popular form of yoga, was transmitted from the time of Asaṅga and Dharma-kīrti. While endorsing the

above view Dr. Kern writes, "After Dharma-kīrti's time the Haṭha-yoga became more and more general and influential".¹ The Oriya works of Balarām Das, Jagannāth Das, Achyutānanda Das etc., are permeated with a spirit of Haṭha-yoga and at the sametime with a flavour of emotional devotion. Balarām Das, one of the five exponents of Pancha Sakhā Dharma of Orissa, have discussed about the theory and practices of Kāya-sādhana with reference to the human body in relation to the universal world in his books 'Amarkoṣa Gītā and Gupta Gītā'. Of course, Kāya-sādhana is not the final aim of the Pancha Sakhā Dharmists. The process of Kāya-sādhana is regarded by them as an indispensable accessory to the realisation of Supreme Lord of Śūnya Puruṣ as described by Achyutānanda in his 'Śūnya Saṁhitā'. It should be remembered here that the element of yoga in its various forms is a common heritage to Tāntrik Buddhism and Śāktaism or Śaivism of the Hindus.

Gaḍur Gītā—In *Gaḍur Gītā* Achyutānanda has sung in praise of Supreme Being who has not been personified either as Krishṇa or Buddha. To his religious perception that Supreme Being is an all pervading consciousness having a luminous body only to be compared with the 'Jyotirmoy Puruṣ' of Upaniṣad.

Tattvabodhinī—In *Tattvabodhinī* Achyutānanda has combined the unmanifestation and manifestation of Supreme Being into an ideal unity. He has vividly described that the Infinite and the finite have embraced each other in the personality of Supreme Being. Therefore, the best realisation of the Ultimate Truth consists of the spiritual realisation of the Infinite through His Self-manifestation :

"Arūpa rūpa prokaśa eba, rūpa jaiṇa arūpa miśiva |

Rūpa arūpa sama kari thibu, samatā upare sabu pāibu ||"

(*Tattvabodhinī*. ch. I)

Śūnya Saṁhitā—Achyutānanda's treatment of the doctrine

of 'Śūnya' in Śūnya Saṁhitā is some what different. In this book he has mentioned :

“Buddha mātā ādiśakti saṅgha chhaninta kahi ।”

(Śūnya Saṁhitā, ch. X)

“Thus I say, take refuge in Buddha, in Mātā Ādiśakti i.e., the primordial energy (in place of Dharma) and in Saṅgha”. ‘Dharma’ performs an important part of Buddhism being the second of the Buddhist Trinity. But Achyutānanda has ignored Dharma. In his religion Dharma has yielded to the supremacy of the primordial energy. In fact Achyutānanda was a follower of esoteric Buddhism, though openly professing Vaiṣṇavism. Thus inspite of his profession as a follower of Śrī Chaitanya and disciple of Sanātan Gosvāmi, he incurred the severe displeasure and open hostility of the Brāhmaṇ-paṇḍits of the court of Rājā Pratāparudra for his openly upholding the doctrine of the ‘Śūnya’. The references to Tāntricism are also found in many places of his Śūnya Saṁhitā where he had alluded to Kāmaviḷa, Kāma-gāyatrī, yantra, mantra, nāvī-kamal, cakras, maṇḍalas which are indispensable elements in Śakti-worship :

“Dvābinśa akṣara hṛde sthāpili ।

Nāvi pare basi dhyān mu kali ॥”

(Śūnya Saṁhitā)

Nityarās—In ‘Nityarās’ of Achyutānanda Rādhā has been depicted as the Primordial Energy. The eternal love-sports of Rādhā and Krishna have been displayed on the basis of esoteric Tāntricism. The evidences of the influence of Tantra are found enough in this book, specially in the eighth chapter of it.

Anākār Saṁhitā—In his last book ‘Anākār Saṁhitā’ we find that Achyutānanda had reached the final stage of his spiritual realisation of Void. In this book he has highly praised the magnanimity of ‘name’. He has said :

“Gītā Bhāgavata Purāṇ paḍibā kahibā chāturi aba ।

Tattva Anākār nām Brahma-bhed na pāi vayartha heba ॥”

(Anākār Saṁhitā)

“Unless you are bent upon the salvation of your soul, you will read the *Gītā*, the *Bhāgavata*, the *Purāṇas* and yet learn nothing but tricks and cunning to impose upon the wordly minded people. All your painstaking will be fruitless. You will know nothing of the mystery of the conception of Godhead as devoid of all forms and images, which means a complete unification and identification of the ‘name’ and the conception of Absolute Brahma.”

The influence of ‘name’ is so much that without any formalities of yoga, worship or meditation, it can reveal the mysteries of Absolute Brahma to the devotee who has taken refuge to ‘name’ only. Thus *Anākār Saṁhitā* bears the testimony of his final realisation of Absolute Brahma that cannot be explained in word but to be realised with the matured spiritual consciousness. At the end of his work he refers to the scriptures, the main theme of which, he says, is to sing the glories of Śrī Krishna; and his own *Anākār Saṁhitā* is simply an epitome of all these scriptures.

From ‘*Gopālañka Ogāl*’ to ‘*Anākār Saṁhitā*’ we trace the gradual inter-connected stages of spiritual progress of Achyutānanda and the final salvation of his immortal soul.

Īśvardas wrote a book on the life of Śrī Chaitanya giving a detailed account of his last twenty four years’ events at Orissa. We get in many places of this book the references of Chaitanya as the incarnation of Buddha and at the same time he has mentioned that Lord Jagannath Himself has descended on the earth in the embodiment of Śrī Krishna Chaitanya. Thus he has made an attempt to impress upon us that Buddha, Jagannath and Chaitanya are identical with one another. It is written in this book that one of the important members of the Pancha Sakhā cult named Ananta Das was directed in his dream by the Sun-god of Konārak to take initiation from Chaitanyadev. In the same way Lord Jagannath ordered Yaśovanta Das in his dream to take initiation from Śrī Chaitanya. In his book, ‘*History of Oriā literature*’, Paṇḍit Vināyak

Miśra has mentioned that Balarām Das was initiated by Chaitanyadev. In the 'Kaḍchā' of Govinda Das we find that Chaitanyadev in his tour over South Orissa was accompanied by Balarām Das. It is said that Jagannath Das was turned into a great vaiṣṇava devotee after coming in close contact with Chaitanyadev at Puri.

Each member of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma has proclaimed with firm faith that Chaitanyadev was no other than the incarnation of Lord Buddha and Jagannāth. To them there lies no distinction among Buddha, Jagannāth and Chaitanya. They are but one, with only difference in names and appearances. Though they were initiated into Vaiṣṇavism of Chaitanyadev, yet they followed a different mode of religious life that did not conform to that of Vaiṣṇavism. This is why they had to appear at the test to prove the efficacy of their religion. Rājā Pratāprudra was a staunch Hindu. He warmly received Chaitanyadev in order to arrest the spread of Buddhism and to wipe out its existence altogether from the land of Orissa. With the advice of his Brahmin courtiers he took the test of religious efficacy of Pancha Sakhā Dharma. Balarām Das, Yaśovanta Das and Achyutānanda Das had to appear at the test. All of them were acquitted of the charges of following Buddhism after the test.

From the brief review of the religious and the philosophical works of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma cult, we may draw this conclusion that their religion was not confined within the boundary of Buddhism or Vaiṣṇavism or Tāntricism or Vedic injunctions. They have drawn inspirations from all these religions and have assimilated them like the chemical mixture. And thus have evolved 'Pancha Sakhā Dharma', a new religious movement of Orissa in the sixteenth century A.D.

After Śrī Chaitanya had passed away, the task of propagating his religion in Orissa devolved upon two great Vaiṣṇava apostles, Śyāmānanda Das and Rasikānanda Das. The expansion of Chaitanyism in Orissa is due chiefly to the personality

and influence of these two Vaiṣṇava worthies. Accounts of their lives and activities are to be found in almost all the important Vaiṣṇava works, but chiefly in 'Bhaktiratnākara', 'Śyāmānanda-prakāś' and in 'Rasika-moṅgala'. Even to-day the peoples of Orissa claim Rasikānanda as their great spiritual master who had brought the light of Vaiṣṇavism to their ancestors. Rājā Vaidyanath Bhañja of Mayūrabhañja accepted the tenets of the Vaiṣṇava faith at the time and became an ardent disciple of Rasikānanda. Rasikānand's labours did not end in converting to his faith the chiefs and Rājās. The great body of the Buddhists who were persecuted by Rājā Pratāprudra and were lying scattered throughout the whole province, were also converted to the Vaiṣṇava creed by the proselyting zeal of the two devotees as Birbhadra, son of Nityānanda, did in Bengal.

From the above brief survey of the history of the origin and development of Pancha Sakhā Dharma, a popular religious cult of Orissa, we may arrive at this decession that this cult is the outcome of a popular assimilation of later Buddhistic ideas, beliefs and practices with the beliefs and practices of Chaitanyaism, Śāktaism and Upanisadic thoughts. The idea of Śūnya (Void), as conceived in all forms of Tāntrik Buddhism, is almost as conceived in many systems of Hindu theology. In the vernacular works of Pancha Sakhā Dharma cult we find that as a popular religious cult it owes some of its elements to that form of later Buddhism and the most of its elements to the religious systems other than Buddhism. Then how far will it be correct to say that the nature of the Pancha Sakhā Dharma cult is essentially Buddhistic? And how far will it be justified to hold Achyutānand Das, Balarām Das, Jagannath Das, Ananta Das and Yaśovanta Das as devout Vaiṣṇava apostles?

Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism, Brahmanism, Śaivism and Śāktaism are but the different fundamental elements out of which the Indian religious history is composed. Out of these principal religious elements many popular religious sects like Brāhma Samāj and Ārya Samāj, were developed in modern

times. Thus were the outcomes of Sahajiyā cult and Pancha Sakhā Dharma of the mediaeval period. One of the master-facts in Indian history, we should bear in mind, is that India is and always has been a synthesis. At some intervals of time a mind more powerful than others descends on earth, breaks up the elements of the established religions and recombines those elements in an unexpected fashion. This is the whole of what we call religious personality. The proof of a mind's vigour lies in its ability to work upon the materials it meets with. In fact, religion is a great creation of individual genius and its achievements appear to us unique and miraculous.

If Sahajiyā cult of Bengal and Pancha Sakhā Dharma of Orissa shared some elements of beliefs and practices with other religions, there is nothing to be astonished. The question is not, where did they come from? But what had they made out of them? If there is the least bias in favour of one direction or the other, it is just like a weight or one side of a balance. Fair measure does not come that way.

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