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# Esoteric Buddhist Practice in Ancient Sri Lanka

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*Abstract: Historical evidence clearly shows that during the 8 -15 century A. D. Esoteric Buddhism played a considerable role in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism. This paper is the result of an attempt to examine two inscriptions found at the Abhayagiri Stupa during 1940-1945 and which shed light on this subject. I was able to identify the original source of these two dharani inscriptions, which have remained unidentified for five decades. These dharanis have been taken from the Sarva-Tathagata-Tattva-Samgraha-Mahayana-Sutra (STTS). This paper is mainly based on the contents of those two dharanis and other information relevant to the STTS Sutra. The first part of the paper will explain the practice of dharmadhatu deposition in stupas and esoteric fragments found at the Abhayagiri stupa. The second part will examine the accounts given in the Nikayasamgraha on esoteric Buddhism in Sri Lanka and their relations to the STTS Sutra; further it will also contain an analyse of the contents of the newly identified dharanis. Finally, the paper will discuss why esoteric Buddhism was severely criticized in the Nikayasamgraha.*

Keywords: Abhayagiri Stupa, Abhayagiri Dharanis, Esoteric Buddhism

## Introduction

A LARGE COLLECTION of Tantric artifacts found at various sites throughout Sri Lanka shows the significance of esoteric Buddhist practices in the Island's history. Paranavitana [1928]<sup>1</sup> and Mudiyanse [1967]<sup>2</sup>, in their monumental research works on Mahāyāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka have discussed esoteric elements extant there. The facts found in works on Tantric Buddhism in Sri Lanka can be categorized into two.

- Facts based on fragmentary Tantric writings
- Facts based on Tantric iconography.

Even though exoteric and esoteric Buddhism had been practiced in ancient Sri Lanka, surprisingly, the prevalence of the latter practice lay hidden until they were brought to light in the British colonial period during the 19th century. Since then, scholars have begun investigating this field. Mudiyanse has cited a wealth of Tantric iconographical evidence in his work. The eight *dhāraṇī* inscriptions found at the Abhayagiri Stūpa serve as another important source of evidence. Paranavitāna has read them and Mudiyanse has suggested that they are probably the works of Sri Lankan Vajrayānists.

The eight *dhāraṇī* inscriptions discovered near the Northern *dāgāba* [Abhayagiri *Stūpa* seem to be have been composed by the Vajrayānists who, as attested by study of the monuments of the 8-10th centuries, appear to have commanded a considerable following in Ceylon.<sup>3</sup>

Many years after its discovery, Gregory Schopen<sup>4</sup> was able to identify the primary source for six *dhāraṇīs* out of the eight. He showed the “*Ārya Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānāhāḍḍaya-dhānukaraṇḍa mudrā-nāma-dhāraṇī-mahāyāna sūtra*” (here after the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra*) as the source for the six *dhāraṇī* tablets nos. I, II, III, IV, VI, and VIII. He used the Tibetan version of the above mentioned *Sūtra*, which is entitled in Tibetan ‘*Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi byin gyis rlas kyi snying po gsang ba ring bsrel gyi za ma tog ces bya ba'i gzungs theg pa chen po'i mdo*’.<sup>5</sup> Schopen's identification is very important for us as it proves that the Abhayagiri had used Mahāyāna literature as well as Theravāda. He further says that “This, in turn would appear to be fairly clear evidence of the fact that the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī Sūtra* circulated and was known in Ceylon in the ninth century C.E. This, in

<sup>1</sup> S. Paranavitana, “Mahāyānism in Ceylon”, *Ceylon Journal of Science Vol. G-II*, ed., Colombo, 1928, pp. 35-71 (=CJS Vol. G-II).

<sup>2</sup> N. Mudiyanse, *Mahāyāna Monuments of Ceylon*, Colombo, 1967 (=MMC).

<sup>3</sup> MMC, p.100.

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5.1 (1982) pp. 100-8 (=JIABS); see also *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India*, 2005, Ch. XI, pp. 306-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.102, Schopen mentions two copies of Tibetan translations which come at Vol. 6, no. 141, 151-3-5-6, and at Vol. 11, no.508, 112-2-2 to 114-4-7 in the Peking Kanjur.



fact, would seem to be the chief significance of the identification.”<sup>6</sup>

Sri Lankan Buddhist work in Sinhala named the ‘*Saddharmaratnākaraya*’ composed in the 15th century C. E. provides information about a King named Kassapa who increased the height of the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* up to 140 feet and enshrined the *dharmadhātu* in it.<sup>7</sup> Considering the size of these *dhāraṇī* inscribed stone tablets, it could be surmised they would have been enshrined in the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*. The largest tablet is 16 inches in length, 7 inches in breadth and 3.5 in thickness.<sup>8</sup> The Abhayagiri *Dhāraṇī* number eight consists of several phrases taken from different sources including the most well known formula of *Pratītyasamuppāda*, “*Ye dharmā hetupprabhavā ...*,”<sup>9</sup> and some fragmentary parts of the *Stūpa Dhāraṇī*. According to the records of *Yi Jing* two relics are enshrined in the Buddha statues and *stūpas*. They are relics of the Buddha and the verse on Dependent Origination. “Whatever things arise from conditions the Tathāgata has expounded their causes and also their cessation.

Thus was spoken by the Great *Śramaṇa*.”<sup>10</sup> From the above evidence it is clear that the “*Ye dharmā hetupprabhavā*” formula was mainly used for enshrining in *stūpas*. According to Paranavitāna, this stanza had been widely used in Sri Lanka.<sup>11</sup> The Pāli version of this *Paṭiccasamuppāda* formula has been inscribed in the Vijayārāma copper inscriptions.<sup>12</sup> Bentor commenting on such enshrinements says: “The great majority of Indian *stūpas* did not contain entire scriptures, but only parts of them. ... The most common piece of scripture deposited in *stūpas* was the verse of dependent origination, considered to be the epitome of the Buddhist teaching.”<sup>13</sup> This observation further supports this view that these *sūtra* inscriptions would have been enshrined in the *Stūpa*. As the scriptures belonged to the ninth century, they would have been enshrined there approximately about eight hundred years after the construction of the Abhayagiri *Stūpa* by Mahārāja *Vaṭṭagāmiṇī Abhaya* (103-102 and 89-72 B.C.). Because of invasions and consequent plundering of ancient monas-

teries by foreign enemies, *Abhayagiri Stūpa* would have lost many precious items. Besides, since the Capital was shifted to Polonnaruva from Anuradhapura for safety, this sacred city was almost forgotten and left abandoned until re-discovered by the British government in the 19th century A.D. Many sacred places were deserted and the *stūpas* looked like hillocks overgrown with vegetation. “... Their walls and roofs pierced by the thrust of trees and tangled roots, and the great *dāgāba* [the Abhayagiri *Stūpa*] became a tree-covered hillock the size of a town”.<sup>14</sup>

### The Nikāyasamgrahaya and the Sarvatathāgatattvasamgraha Sūtra

Having identified the six of eight *dhāraṇīs* at the Abhayagiri, Gregory Schopen states that he cannot identify the texts on the tablets nos. VI and VII.<sup>15</sup> As a result of my research, I have been able to trace *dhāraṇīs* no. VI and VII to the *Sarvatathāgatattvasamgraha Sūtra*. The name of this particular *Sūtra* has been given in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* as “*Tattvasamgrahatantra*”. In accordance with the sequence given in the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, this book appears as number ten within the long list of 34 non-Theravāda works.<sup>16</sup> Mudiyanse is of the view that *Tattvasamgrahatantra* is the *Tattvasamgraha* composed by *Śāntarakṣita*.

He says: “The *Tattvasamgraha* by *Śāntarakṣita* is a large philosophical work of the 8th century. It is a criticism of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, from the standpoint of the Svātāntrika Yogācāra School”.<sup>17</sup>

His view, however, is untenable. In the *Nikāyasamgraha* list of 34 non-Theravāda Texts, the *Tattvasamgrahatantra* comes under Tantric category together with such other works as *Gūḍha Vinaya*, *Māyājālatantra*, *Samājatantra*, *Mahāsamayatattva*, etc. Mudiyanse also accepts this classification and says that “nos. 6 – 31 were all composed by the Vajraparvatavāsins, i.e. the Vajrayānists”.<sup>18</sup> Another important fact is that the word “tantra” is added to

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.102.

<sup>7</sup> *Saddharmaratnākaraya* Chapter 13, *Caitya Kathā*, p.328.

<sup>8</sup> MMC, p102.

<sup>9</sup> *Ye dharmā hetupprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tat hāg ato ā ha- teṣāṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃ vādi mahāśramaṇaḥ*.

<sup>10</sup> See Yi Jing’s Records, p.137.

<sup>11</sup> See CJS Vol. G-II.

<sup>12</sup> MMC, p.93.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Bentor, “Indian Origins of the Tibetan Practice of Depositing Relics”, *Journal of American Oriental Studies*, Vol.115, No.2 (Apr. –Jun., 1985) p.251.

<sup>14</sup> T.G. Kulatunga and Athula Amarasekara, <http://www.lankalibrary.com/heritage/abayagiri.htm> .

<sup>15</sup> *JIAS* 5.1, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> *Nks*, pp. 10-11; see also *MMC*, p.17.

<sup>17</sup> *MMC*, p.17.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

the end of the work. But *Tattvasaṃgraha* of Śāntarakṣita is devoid of “*tantra*”. On the other hand, *Tattvasaṃgraha* belongs to the *Yogācāra Mādhyamaka Svātāntrika School*. There are three Chinese translations of *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* but two of them compiled by *Vajrabodhi* and his disciple *Amoghavajra* are not complete works. The *Jāpa Sūtra*, which is a recitation text translated by *Vajrabodhi* into Chinese (T.866) is said to be a section of the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*.<sup>19</sup> Since *Vajrabodhi* lost a large part of the *Sūtra* while he was crossing the sea, he translated the remaining sections available to him, of which *Amoghavajra* translated the first part comprising chapters 1-5.<sup>20</sup> According to Giebel *Amoghavajra*’s translation of the first chapter of the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* was completed in 754 C.E. on the bases of a text that himself had brought back to China from Ceylon.<sup>21</sup> The explanation given above by Giebel clearly proves that *Amoghavajra* studied specific Tantric practices elaborated in the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* in Sri Lanka and not from India or elsewhere. Therefore, *Tattvasaṃgraha* mentioned in the *Nikāyasaṃgraha* could be the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* (hereafter *STTS*), which is considered as one of the three most important Tantric works belonging to the Esoteric Buddhism of East Asia.<sup>22</sup> The *Sūtra* concludes with the statement: “The well expounded *Sarvatathāgata Guḥya Mahāyānābhisaṃgraha* which is belonged to great *Vajrayāna* (Subhāṣitamidaṃ sūtraṃ vajrayānamuttaraṃ-Sarvatathāgataṃ guḥya mahāyānābhisaṃgrahaṃ)”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in Tibetan Kanjur *Piṭaka* this *Sūtra* has been categorized under the section of rGyud (Tantra). According to Chinese accounts *Amoghavajra* (Chin. *Pu-k’ung-ching-kang*) studied how to erect altars in Sri Lanka under *Samantabhadra*, who lived at the *Abhayagiri Vihāra*. On his return to China *Amoghavajra* took many books and one of them was the *STTS*. Later on he translated this book into Chinese.<sup>24</sup> Before

*Amoghavajra*’s visit to Sri Lanka, *Vajrabodhi* (Chinese. *Chin-kang-chih*) had taken it to China but on the way he lost a great part of it when the ship he was sailing in was struck by a terrible storm. Chinese accounts prove that the *STTS* had been circulated in Sri Lanka in the first millennium.

## A Brief Introduction to the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*

The *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* is mainly based on various *maṇḍalas* and it extensively explains the rituals and practices, which should be performed accordingly. This voluminous work consists of twenty six chapters. It begins with the common formulaic phrase “*evaṃ mayā śrutamekasmim samaye bhagavān ...*” and so on. The *Bhagavān* referred to here is not Śākyamunī Buddha but *Vairocana Buddha*, who was residing in a palace of the highest Realm of Form, the *Akaniṣṭhaka Bhraṭmaloka* surrounded by countless Buddhas from the countless Buddha Realms (*Buddhakṣetras*) and ninety *koṭi* Bodhisattvas headed by eight Great Bodhisattvas namely *Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Vajrapāṇi*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Mañjuśrī*, *Ākāśagarbha*, *Vajramuṣṭi*, *Sahacittotpādadharmacakrapravartin*, *Gaganagaṅṅa*, and *Sarvamārabalapramardin*.<sup>25</sup>

The *STTS* belongs to the division of Buddhist Tantric scriptures or Yoga Tantras, the third category of the fourfold Buddhist Tantras and it is the basic text of this category.<sup>26</sup> Lokesh Chandra says: “It is the fundamental text or *mūla-tantra* of the class of yoga-tantras”.<sup>27</sup> Hence we can see how important this text for Yoga Tantra Buddhism.

All the Tathāgatas assembled in a cloud near the *Bodhimaṇḍa*, where Bodhisattva *Sarvārthasiddhi* was practicing asceticism. Transforming into the *Sambhogakāya* they all questioned Him as follows. “Good sir, how will you, who endure ascetic practice without knowing the truth of All the Tathāgatas,

<sup>19</sup> *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 35 (2), p.339.

<sup>20</sup> See Introduction of the *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra.

<sup>21</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> The Three texts are: The *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*, the *Mahāvairocanaṃbhisaṃbodhi Sūtra* and the *Susiddhikara Sūtra*. For details read *Two Esoteric Sūtras*.

<sup>23</sup> See *STTS* edited by Lokesh Chandra, p.198.

<sup>24</sup> See *Tantrism in China* by Chou Yi-liang.

<sup>25</sup> See *STTS* Chapter I, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.5. The four categories are: *Kriyā Tantra*, *Caryā Tantra*, *Yoga Tantra* and *Anuttara-yoga Tantra*.

<sup>27</sup> See *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p.10

realize unsurpassed perfect enlightenment?"<sup>28</sup> Then the Bodhisattva *Sarvārthasiddhi*, who was aroused by All the Tathāgatas from deep meditation, venerated them and urged them to instruct him as to how to attain the Enlightenment. Thereafter, All the

- i. *Om cittaprativedanaṃ karomi - Om*, I penetrate the mind.
- ii. *Om bodhicittaṃ utpādayāmi - Om*, I generate the mind of enlightenment.
- iii. *Om tiṣṭha vajra - Om*, stand, O vajra.
- iv. *Om vajrāṃko'haṃ - Om*, I am the nature of vajra.
- v. *Om yathā sarvatathāgatās tathāhaṃ - Om*, as are All the Tathāgatas, so am

I. \*

\* *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, pp. 23-4.

Having followed this gradual process of attaining enlightenment, Bodhisattva *Vajradhātu* realizes Himself to be a Tathāgata. Finally, He urges All the Tathāgatas to empower Him and make His enlightenment firm. Thereafter, All the Tathāgatas consecrate Him again with the maṇi-gem of Bodhisattva *Ākāśagarbha*, generate Dharma-knowledge of *Avalokiteśvara*, establish *viśvakarmatā* of All the Tathāgatas in Him. From the *Bodhimaṇḍa* they fly into the sky and all of them appear in a pavilion made of maṇi-gem and vajras on the peak of the Mount Sumeru. Then they enthrone Him on the *Simhāsana* of All the Tathāgatas facing all directions. Tathāgata *Akṣobhya*, *Ratnasambhava*, *Lokeśvararāja*, *Amoghasiddhi* enthrone themselves as All the Tathāgatas and sit in the four corners centering the *Simhāsana*. Tathāgata *Śākyamunī* is fully qualified to be in the centre now.<sup>30</sup> This is how the *STTS* elaborates the attainment of *abhisambodhi* of Bodhisattva *Sarvārthasiddhi*. What all this attempts to point out is that *Abhisambodhi* is impossible without practicing Yoga Tantra.<sup>31</sup> Attributing this story to the enlightenment of *Śākyamunī* Buddha, the author<sup>32</sup> has taken pains to acknowledge that this *Sūtra* explains nothing but the great enlightenment of the

Tathāgatas instructed him step by step how to practice the Mantras of the five stage process of enlightenment (*pañcākārābhisambodhikarma*).<sup>29</sup> The process is explained as follows.

historical Buddha. Giebel says the process of enlightenment elaborated here may be regarded as a recasting in Tantric terms of *Śākyamunī* Buddha's own enlightenment.<sup>33</sup>

The *STTS* is also known as the *Vajraṣekhara Sūtra*. *Śubhakarasiṃha*, in his caligraphical presentation of this *Sūtra* on a scroll, has used the word *Ṛta-saṃhāra* (TZ 54, 55, 56) which is named in Japanese *Ṛta-sogyara-gobu-shinkan*. The two names are similar *Ṛta*, means Tattva *Samgraha*, equivalent of *Samhāra*. In Chinese *Vajrabodhi* named it "Chin-kang-tang [ting] yü-ch'ieh chung liao-ch'u nien-sung ching", Jap. "Kongōchō-yuga chū ryaku shutsu nenju-kyo" (Nj 524, T 866, K 429). Amoghavajra's Chinese translation is named as "Chin-kang-ting i-ch'ieh ju-lai chen-shih shē ta-sheng hsien-chêng ta-chiao wang ching", Jap. "Kongōchō-issai-nyora—shinjitsu-shō-daji-ō-genshō-daikyō-ō-kyō" (Nj 1020, T 865, K 1274). *Dānapāla* did a complete Chinese translation in the eleventh century. This work is named as "Fo-shuo i-ch'ieh ju-lai chên-shih shē ta-chêng hsien-chêng san-meī ta-chio-wang-ching", Jap. "Issai-nyorai-shinjitsu-shō-daijō-sammai-daikyō-ō-kyō". *Śradhākaravarman's*

<sup>28</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.23. See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p.4; "Kathaṃ kulaputrānuttaraṃ samyaḥsambodhiṃ abhisambotsyase, yastvaṃ sarvatathāgatattvānabhisatayā sarvaduḥkaraṇyutsahasi?"

<sup>29</sup> The five stages are: (I) Penetration into the fundamental heart (*bodhi citta*), (II) The asceticism of *bodhi-citta*, (III) The acquisition of the heart of vajra, (IV) The attestation of the body of vajra, (V) The achievement of the total personality of Buddha. See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p. 31.

<sup>30</sup> See *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, pp 23-5.

<sup>31</sup> Since we are not supposed to discuss about the contents of the *Sūtra*, for more information on chapters please read the Introduction of *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L Snellgrove, and the Introduction of *Two Esoteric Sūtras* by Rolf W. Giebel.

<sup>32</sup> Since this *Sūtra* seems to be an apocryphal *sūtra*, I use the word 'author' instead giving its authority to the Vairocana Buddha or to Arahant *Ānanda* who is traditionally accepted as the reporter of the *Sūtras*.

<sup>33</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.10.

Tibetan translation is entitled “*De-bzhin -gśegs-pa thams-cad-kyi De-kho-na -ñid bsdus-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa-chen- poñi mdo*”.<sup>34</sup> Giebel’s English translation is named “*The Adamantine Pinnacle Sūtra*”. Probably, he uses that name considering its alternative name “*Vajraśekhara Sūtra*”. Snellgrove uses the name “the Compendium of Truth (or Essence) of all the Buddhas”.<sup>35</sup>

As shown by Lokesh Chandra and Snellgrove the *STTS* is a highly influential text in many Buddhist countries not only as a Tantric philosophical treatise but also as a basic text for Tantric Buddhist art.<sup>36</sup>

On the request of *Subhakarasiṃha* (637-735 C.E.) the *maṇḍalas* were illustrated by Chinese court artists on a scroll. These illustrations can be taken as the oldest pictures based on this *Sūtra*. Later on these pictures have been given to *Enchin* by Chinese *Ācārya Fa-ch’üan*. Several copies of this illustration were done in different times and kept in different places in Japan. Since then, many *maṇḍalas* have been used in Japan, and *maṇḍala* paintings are existing in Japan up to the present day.<sup>37</sup> In the Tabo monastery in Himachal Pradesh in Tibet, life size stucco images of the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala* have been set up. Lokesh Chandra says this temple is a complete three-dimensional *maṇḍala*. In Indonesia, the *Sūtra* has been used widely even for building struc-

tures such as Borobudur. Within the monuments of Chandi Sewu some ruined images of Tāntric deities of the *Mahāmaṇḍala* in the *STTS* have been identified. Bailey has identified Khotanese verses of Cā-Kimā-śani pertaining to Vajrayāna. These verses explain the deities of the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* of the *STTS*.<sup>38</sup> At Chandi Plaosan Lor temple in Indonesia, the figures of the *maṇḍalas* are assumed to be the deities and goddesses represented in the *Vajradhātu* and *Vajraguḥya maṇḍalas*. They are also said to correspond with the goddesses and deities in the *maṇḍala* murals at the Alchi Monastery in the Himālayas [Tibet].<sup>39</sup> Recent discovered reliquaries from the *stūpa* at the Famensi [Famen monastery], show the figures of deities and goddesses of the *Vajradhātu-mahā- maṇḍala* have been engraved on the golden the relic casket in which the Buddha’s finger relic had been enshrined.<sup>40</sup>

### The Contents of the Abhayagiri Dhāraṇīs nos. VI<sup>41</sup> and VII

After Gregory’s finding, although several studies have been done on the Abhayagiri, no one had yet identified the remaining two tablets until the present writer’s attempt to find their source. What follows is a comparison of the text with the Abhayagiri inscriptions.

<sup>34</sup> For details see *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, pp.10-11.

<sup>35</sup> *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> The *STTS* is of signal importance for the historic development of philosophic speculation in India, Nepal, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia. Moreover, the text could be presented as a ‘visual dharma’, as a *maṇḍala*, in the form of a large painted scroll, as sculptures, or an intricately sculptured monument. Thus it exerted a mighty influence on the fine arts of several countries. See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>38</sup> For more details see *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, pp. 10-22.

<sup>39</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India*, Vol. 4, pp.167-75.

<sup>40</sup> See I-mann Lai, *The Famensi Reliquary Deposit: Icons of Esoteric Buddhism in Ninth-century China*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, SOAS, London, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> The number VI Abhayagiri inscription is almost overlapping the *Dhāraṇī* number VII. Therefore I have shown here only the number VII which is exactly identical with the text.

The Abhayagiri Inscription The <i>dhāraṇī</i> no. seven*	Text from the <i>STTS Sūtra</i> **
<i>Oṃ guhya sarva [satva] vajri hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ guhya ratna vajri hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ guhya dharmā vajri hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ guhya dharmā [karma] vajri hūṃ //</i>	<i>Oṃ guhya-sattvavajri hūṃ</i> <i>Oṃ guhya-ratnavajri hūṃ</i> <i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajri hūṃ</i> <i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajri hūṃ</i>
<i>Oṃ vajra guhya rati pūjā samaye sarva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya pūjābhiśeka *** pūjā samaye sarva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya dhātu [gāṇa] pūjā samaye sarva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>  <i>Oṃ vajra guhya nṛtya pūjā samaye sarva pūjā pravartaya hūṃ //</i>	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyarati pūjāsamaye sarva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyābhiśeka-pūjāsamaye sarva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyagāṇapūjāsamaye sarva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>  <i>Oṃ vajraguhyānṛtyapūjāsamaye sarva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ.</i>
<i>Oṃ vajra dhūpa hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ vajra puṣpa hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ vajra dīpa hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ vajra gandha hūṃ //</i>	
<i>Oṃ vajra taila hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ vajra ... hūṃ //</i> <i>Oṃ vajra ... hūṃ</i> ... ... ...	

\* *MMC*, p.104.

\*\* See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p. 35 and also *STTS* ed. by Isshi Yamada p.104.

\*\*\* Here we find something interesting, please refer to the explanation of Four Outer Goddesses

This table shows both versions are fairly identical. Probably, due to long time exposure to the different weather conditions some parts of inscriptions cannot be read and some characters have become indistinct in shape. A few words in the *Abhayagiri* version are with scribal errors. The highlighted words on the left side chart seem to be scribal errors. Had Paranavitana come to know about this *Sūtra*, he could have corrected the errors. No doubt that the *Abhayagiri dhāraṇīs* have been quoted from the *STTS*.

It is seen that the contents of this particular *Sūtra* have not been understood in full measure despite it is the basic text for the 24 *Vajradhātu- maṇḍalas* of Tantric Buddhism.<sup>42</sup> Within the “Twenty Four

*Vajradhātu- maṇḍalas*”, the “*Vajradhātu-mahā-maṇḍala*” comes first whereas the “*Vajra-guhyadhātu- maṇḍala*”, comes as the second. Each *maṇḍala* consists of thirty-seven figures. Other than the twenty-one male figures<sup>43</sup> in the *Vajra dhātumaṇḍala* there are sixteen goddesses<sup>44</sup> represented there. The male deities represent the *Vajradhātu-mahā- maṇḍala* including the five Buddhas, i.e. 1. Mahā Vairocana, 2. Akṣobhya, 3. Ratnasambhava, 4. Amitābha and, 5. Amoghasiddhi. But the case is not the same with the *Vajraguhyadhātu maṇḍala*. The significant feature of the

<sup>42</sup> *Cultural Horizons of India* Vol.4, p.167.

<sup>43</sup> The twenty-one deities are: 1. Mahā Vairocana, 2. Akṣobhya, 3. Ratnasambhava, 4. Amitābha, 5. Amoghasiddhi, 6. Vajrasattva, 7. Vajrarāja, 8. Vajrarāga, 9. Vajrasādhu, 10. Vajraratna, 11. Vajrateja, 12. Vajraketu, 13. Vajrahāsa, 14. Vajradharama, 15. Vajratikṣṇa, 16. Vajrahetu, 17. Vajrabhāsa, 18. Vajrakarma, 19. Vajrarakṣa, 20. Vajrayakṣa, 21. Vajrasandhi.

<sup>44</sup> The sixteen goddesses are: 22. Sattvavajrī, 23. Ratnavajrī, 24. Dharmavajrī, 25. Karmavajrī, 26. Vajralāsī, 27. Vajramālā, 28. Vajragītā, 29. Vajranṛtyā, 30. Guhyadhūpeśvarī, 31. Guhyapuṣpā, 32. Guhyadīpā, 33. Guhyagandhā, 34. Guhyāṅkuṣī, 35. Guhyapāśa, 36. Guhyasphoṭa, 37. Guhyaghaṭṭā.



*Vajraguhyadhātu maṇḍala* is its representation of female goddesses.<sup>45</sup> *Vajriṇī*, the consort of Vairocana Buddha is the chief goddess here and she represents the centre of this *maṇḍala* in the same way that the Buddha Vairocana represents the centre in the *Vajradhātu-mahā - maṇḍala*.

In this paper we are basically concerned about the *Vajra-guhyā- maṇḍala*, since the *Abhayagiri dhāraṇīs* (no. VI and VII) contain corresponding mantras of twelve goddesses out of the sixteen god-

- i. Five *Vajriṇīs* - *Vajriṇī*, *Vajravajriṇī*, *Ratnavajriṇī*, *Dharmavajriṇī*  
*Karmavajriṇī*
- ii. Four *Vajradhāraṇīs* - *Samantabhadrā*, *Tathāgatāṅkuṣī*, *Ratirāgā*, *Sādhumati*
- iii. Four *Ratnadhāraṇīs* - *Ratnottamā*, *Ratnolkā*, *Dhvajāgrakeyūrā*, *Hāsavati*
- iv. Four *Dharmavajriṇīs* - *Vajrāmbujā*, *Ādhāraṇī*, *Sarvacakrā*, *Sahasrāvartā*
- v. Four *Sarvadhāraṇīs* - *Siddhottarā*, *Sarvarakṣā*, *Tejaḥpratyāhāriṇī*,  
*Dhāraṇīmudrā*
- vi. Four *Pāramitās* - *Sattvavajrī*, *Ratnavajrī*, *Dharmavajrī*, *Karmavajrī*
- vii. Four *Vajralāsyās\** - *Vajralāsyā*, *Vajramālā*, *Vajragītā*, *Vajranṭyā*
- viii. Four Offering goddesses - *Guhyadhūpeśvarī*, *Guhyapuṣpā*, *Guhyadīpā*,  
*Guhyagandhā*
- ix. Four Gatekeepers - *Guhyāṅkuṣī*, *Guhyapāṣā*, *Guhyasphoṭā*, *Guhyaghaṅṭā\*\**

\* This group has been named after the first goddess "*Vajra-lāsyā*".

\*\* For details see *Vajraguhyā-maṇḍala* of *STTS*.

This classification shows the *Abhayagiri dhāraṇī* inscriptions number vi and vii are exactly compatible with group number vi, vii and viii. We will examine those inscriptions one by one comparing with the *Sūtra*. Actually, Mudiyanse's proposition is correct. He named those writings as *dhāraṇīs*. The *STTS* ex-

plains about mechanism of the 24 *maṇḍalas* and each deity and goddess is ascribed his or her own *mantra*. The so called *Abhayagiri dhāraṇīs* are the *mantras* of the goddesses who represent the group number vi, vii and viii in the abovementioned categories. In the first part of the number VII *Abhayagiri* inscrip-

<sup>45</sup> The thirty seven goddesses are: 1. *Vajriṇī* (the consort of Vairocana), 2. *Vajravajriṇī* (the consort of *Akṣobhya*), 3. *Ratnavajriṇī* (the consort of *Ratnasambhava*), 4. *Dharmavajriṇī* (the consort of *Amitābha*), 5. *Karmavajriṇī* (the consort of *Amoghasiddhi*), 6. *Samantabhadrā*, 7. *Tathāgatāṅkuṣī*, 8. *Ratirāgā*, 9. *Sādhumati*, 10. *Ratnottamā*, 11. *Ratnolkā*, 12. *Dhvajāgrakeyūrā*, 13. *Hāsavati*, 14. *vajrāmbujā*, 15. *Ādhāraṇī*, 16. *Sarvacakrā*, 17. *Sahasrāvartā*, 18. *Siddhottarā*, 19. *Sarvarakṣā*, 20. *Tejaḥpratyāhāriṇī*, 21. *Dhāraṇīmudrā*, 22. *Sattvavajrī*, 23. *Ratnavajrī*, 24. *Dharmavajrī*, 25. *Karmavajrī*, 26. *Vajralāsyā*, 27. *Vajramālā*, 28. *Vajragītā*, 29. *Vajranṭyā*, 30. *Guhyadhūpeśvarī*, 31. *Guhyapuṣpā*, 32. *Guhyadīpā*, 33. *Guhyagandhā*, 34. *Guhyāṅkuṣī*, 35. *Guhyapāṣā*, 36. *Guhyasphoṭā*, 37. *Guhyaghaṅṭā*

<sup>46</sup> See *STTS* Sanskrit Text, ed. by Lokesh Chandara, p.6.

<sup>47</sup> *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva - Saṅgraha - Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, ed. by Isshi Yamada, p.7.

<sup>48</sup> Refer to footnote 47.

tion represents the mantras of the four Pāramitādevīs, i.e. *Sattvavajrī*, *Ratnavajrī*, *Dharmavajrī* and *Karmavajrī*. They are also named as *Karmavajreśvarīs*.

The following table gives details of the Four Pāramitās.

Four Karmavajreśvarīs	Pāramitā	Corresponding Mantra
Sattvavajrī	Vajra-pāramitā	<i>Oṃ guhya-sattvavajrī hūṃ</i>
Ratnavajrī	Ratna-pāramitā	<i>Oṃ guhya-ratnavajrī hūṃ</i>
Dharmavajrī	Dharma-pāramitā	<i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i>
Karmavajrī	Karma-pāramitā	<i>Oṃ guhya-dharmavajrī hūṃ</i>

In the second part of the *Abhayagiri* inscription number VII represent the mantras of Four Inner Goddesses. The following table provides details.

Four Vajralāsyās – Inner Goddesses of Offering	Corresponding Mantra
Vajralāsyā - adamantine amorous dance	<i>Oṃ vajraguhya-ratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ</i>
Vajramālā - adamantine garland	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyābhiṣeka-pūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ</i>
Vajragītā - adamantine song	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyagītāpūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ</i>
Vajranṛtyā - adamantine dance	<i>Oṃ vajraguhyānṛtyapūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjām pravartaya hūṃ</i>

In the third part of the *Abhayagiri* inscription number VII represent the mantras of the Four Outer Goddesses. The following table provides details.

Four Outer Goddesses of Offering	Corresponding Mantra
Guhyadhūpeśvarī - secret incense	<i>Oṃ vajra dhūpa hūṃ</i>
Guhyapuṣpā - secret flower	<i>Oṃ vajra puṣpa hūṃ</i>
Guhyadīpā - secret lamp	<i>Oṃ vajra dīpa hūṃ</i>
Guhyagandhā - secret scent	<i>Oṃ vajra gandha hūṃ</i>

In the *Abhayagiri* inscription there is an interesting feature with reference to the Four Outer Goddesses, for unlike in the Nepalese Sanskrit version, or in the Chinese or Tibetan versions of *STTS*, we find the mantra of them in the *Abhayagiri* inscription. In

other maṇḍalas of the *STTS*, these four goddesses are represented by other names and they all are ascribed with their own mantras. For instance, the mantras of the “Four *Buddhapūjāḥ · pūjādevyaḥ*” and their corresponding mantras are as follows.

Four Buddhapūjāh pūjādevyah*	Corresponding Mantra**
Dhūpa-padminī - lotus incense	<i>Om dhūpa padminī hūm</i>
Padma-puṣpā - lotus flower	<i>Om padma puṣpinī hūm</i>
Padma-kula-sundarī-Dharmālokā-beautiful dharma lamp of lotus family	<i>Om padmakulasundarī dharmāloke pūjaya hūm</i>
Padma-gandhā - lotus scent	<i>Om padma gandhe hūm</i>

\* STTS ed. by Lokesh Chandara, Introduction p.68.

\*\* Ibid, p.120.

In the *STTS Sūtra* the Four Inner and Outer Goddesses of other *maṇḍalas* have been ascribed mantras, but in the *Vajraguhyadhātu maṇḍala*, the Outer Goddesses have not been ascribed their own mantras. It is difficult to explain this omission. While Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan versions do not have the mantras for those Outer Goddesses, the Abhayagiri inscription has mantras for them. This is a unique feature of the Abhayagiri version. A question arises here as to why only the Abhayagiri *dhāraṇīs* give mantras for the Outer Goddesses of the *Vajraguhyadhātu maṇḍala*. Is it possible that those four mantras of the Outer Goddesses have been dropped from aforementioned versions, or the Abhayagirivāsīns have extraneously added these mantras for their version? If it is their contribution, Abhayagirivāsīns are credited for creating those aforementioned four mantras of the Outer Goddesses in the *STTS*.

When we consider the periods in which those manuscripts, (i.e. Chinese, Tibetan and Nepalese Sanskrit) were made, the Abhayagiri inscription seems to be the oldest among them.<sup>49</sup> The Abhayagiri *dhāraṇīs* have been inscribed in North-Eastern Nagari of about the 9th century.<sup>50</sup> Therefore the *Abhayagiri* inscription could be the oldest among extant ones. The authenticity of the *Abhayagiri* inscription can be proved based on two grounds. First, according to Chinese accounts, both Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra had taken *STTS* from Sri Lanka, and not from India. Second, the similarities between Abhayagiri and Nepalese versions, which can be taken as older than the Tibetan and Chinese versions.

The mantra of *Vajramālā*<sup>51</sup> “*O ṃ vajraguhyā pūjābhi ṣ eka-pūjāsamaye sarvva - pūjā ṃ pravartaya hūm .*” is exactly the same in the Abhayagiri and the Nepalese versions. But in the Chinese and Tibetan version it has been used as “*Om vajraguhyābhiṣeka-pūjāsamaye sar vva- pūjāṃ pravartaya hūm .*”<sup>52</sup> In these two versions the word “*guhya*” has been omitted.

### Possible Fragmentary Evidence Related to the *STTS* Found in Anuradhapura

Another fragmentary copper inscription, which has been found in Anuradhapura, is also important for our study as it gives the name of a Tantric deity found in the *STTS Sūtra*. In that particular inscription there is a mantra, which has been read by Parānavitana as “*Om vajratikṣa (?) raṃ*”. Parānavitana suggests that the word ‘*vajratikṣa*’ could be read as either *Vjratikṣa* or as *vajranikṣa*. He further says that he doesn’t know of any Mahāyāna deity called either ‘*vajranik ṣ a*’ or ‘*vajratik ṣ a*’. Commenting on this word, Mudiyanse has shown a Nepalese inscription, in which the name ‘*vajratikṣa*’ can be found. In the Anuradhapura inscription ‘*ṃ*’ is missing. He thinks Anuradhapura inscription probably referring to ‘*vajratikṣa*’. Giving an example from Chinese Buddhist dictionary he suggests that it could be ‘*Vajrayakṣa*’, which is an

<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere we cited that the full version of the Chinese *STTS* was transliterated by Dānapāla in the 11th century. Tibetan version was written in the early eleventh century by Śraddhākaravarman (958-1055). The Nepalese Sanskrit manuscript is written in Brahmī like script and it is assigned to in 9th -10th centuries. Please refer to footnotes 27 and 28, *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p.11, and *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tatva-Saṅgraha - Nāma-Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, ed. by Isshi Yamada, p.5.

<sup>50</sup> *MMC*, p.99.

<sup>51</sup> Please refer to the *Vajramālā*’s mantra of the Four Outer Goddesses.

<sup>52</sup> Yamada has cited thousands of different words which exist within these three versions. For instance the word ‘*pravartaya*’ is used in the Tibetan version ‘*pravartānāya*’. In the Chinese version the ‘*Cakramaṇḍala*’ named as ‘*Vajramaṇḍala*’ See Yamada, p.104.

emanation of the *Dhyānī-Buddha Amoghasiddhi*. “Assuming that *Vajratīkṣa* or *Vajranīkṣa* here is a scribal error for *Vajrayakṣa* (who probably was a Tantric deity as his name suggests), it could be assuming that it was *Vajrayakṣa* who was thus addressed by a *mantra*.<sup>53</sup> However when we study the *STTS* we find two Tantric deities, who represent the *Vajradhātu-mahā maṇḍala*, by the names *Vajrayakṣa* and *Vajratīkṣa*.<sup>54</sup> From this it is far more logical to hold that the deity mentioned in the Anuradhapura copper inscription is ‘*Vajratīkṣa*’ represented in the *Vajradhātu-mahā maṇḍala*. *Vajrayakṣa* and *Vajratīkṣa* represent number 24 and 18 in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala* respectively.<sup>55</sup> According to the *STTS Sūtra*, actually, these deities are different forms of *Śākyamuṇi*.<sup>56</sup> Another instance also can be quoted here from the same *Sūtra*. In the *Vajra-kula-karma- maṇḍala -vidhi-vistara*, the mantra of *Vajramaṇḍale karmamudrā* which is ascribed for *Vajratīkṣa* reads: “*Om vajra tīkṣa rāge rāgāya hūm*.”<sup>57</sup>

Tārā worship also a greatly influential cult in ancient Sri Lanka. The Tārā cult was even more popular in Sri Lanka than it was in China.<sup>58</sup> In the *Padma-Guhyā- Mudrā - Maṇḍala -Vidhi-Vistara* of the *STTS*, the Tārā mantra “*Om tāre tuttāre hū ṃ*”<sup>59</sup> is similar to the Tārā mantra in Vijayārāma inscription in Anurādhapura. Paranavitāna has read it thus. “*Om tāre tuntāre ture svāhā*”. Mudiyanse also has shown this mantra in his work. He assumes that this mantra would have been used by Tantrikas to worship Tārā. Bhattacharya shows a mantra quoted from the *Kiṅcivistara- Tārā Sādhana*, which corresponds

exactly with the Tārā Mantra found at the Vijayārāma monastery in Anurādhapura.

... He who is unable to meditate in this fashion should mutter the mantra, *Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā*. This is the lord of all mantras. It is endowed with great powers, and it is saluted, worshiped and revered by all the Tathāgatas.<sup>60</sup>

In the mantra found at the Vijayārāma in Anuradhapura, the word ‘*tutt ā re*’ ‘*तुतारे*’ has been read as ‘*tunt ā re*’ ‘*तुतारे*’ perhaps due to the similarity in writing these two letters. The ‘*tī*’ (ती) and *nī*’ (नी) confusion could also be due to the same reason.

### The Nikāyasamgrahaya and Its Criticism of Esoteric Practice

The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* is an important primary source which provides accounts of the arrival of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The word “Vājiriyavāda” is used here to refer Vajrayāna. ‘Vājiri’ is an ancient Sinhala term for Vajira (Pāli) or Vajra (Skt.) words. According to the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, Vājiriyavāda arrived in Sri Lanka from Vajraparvata<sup>61</sup> of India during the reign of king Matvalasen (846-866 C.E.).<sup>62</sup> Vajrayānists had settled down at the *Virāṅkurārāma* of the Abhayagiri Monastery.<sup>63</sup> King Matvalasen has been identified as the Sena I, who showed more favourable attitude to Abhayagiri than to Mahāvihāra. What is of interest here is that this *Virāṅkurārāma* vihāra was also built by Sena I in the precincts of the Abhayagiri and offered it to the *Mahāsamghikas* and Theravādins of the Abhayagiri.<sup>64</sup> The *Cūlavamsa* recounts that the

<sup>53</sup> *MMC*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>54</sup> See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p. 19. *Vajratīkṣa mahāyāna vajrakoṣa mahāyudha - ma ṅ juṣṭī vajragāmbhīrya vajrabuddha namostute* // (10) *Vajrayakṣa mahopāya vajrada ṅṣ tra mahābhaya - mārapramrdhin vajrogra vajracāṇḍa namostu te* // (15)

<sup>55</sup> Then the Lord (Vajradhara) entered an adamantine *samādhi*, called “Dharma-Empowerment Born of Samaya of the Great Bodhisattva Maṅjuṣṭī,” whereupon there came forth from his heart the heart[mantra] of all the Tathāgatas called “Samaya of Great Knowledge-Wisdom of All the Tathāgatas”. *Vajratīkṣa* (Adamantine Acuity) See *STTS* ed. by Lokesh Chandra, pp. 83-84.

<sup>56</sup> *Two Esoteric Sūtras*, p.40.

<sup>57</sup> *STTS* Chapter 9, ed. by Yamada, p.239.

<sup>58</sup> Many Tārā images have been found in Sri Lanka. See *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, Ulrich Von Schroeder, 1990.

<sup>59</sup> *STTS* Chapter 16 ed. by Lokesh Chandra, p. 119.

<sup>60</sup> *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 108.

<sup>61</sup> It is very interesting that investigating the birthplace of the Vajrayāna Buddhism, Lokesh Chandra asserts that *Vajraparvata* means *Sriśailam* in south India. He says: “It is Śrīparvata of the Tibetan traditions, Vajraparvata in Sri Lanka, and the Diamond Mountain in Korea. Vajrayāna developed here hence is termed Vajraparvata-vāsi-nikāya in the Sri Lankan work *Nikāya-sa ṅ graha*”.<sup>69</sup> Lokesh Chandra’s supposition illuminates the information given in the *Nikāyasa ṅ grahaya* with reference to the Vajraparvata. See *Cultural Horizons of India* – 4, p.207.

<sup>62</sup> *Nks*, p.22.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>64</sup> *Katvā virāṅkurārāmaṅ - vihāre abhayuttare mahāsa ṅ ghikabhikkhūna ṅ - teriyāna ṅ ca dāpayī*, *Mahāva ṅ sa* 50.68.

king practiced religious rituals unheard before. Bhikkhūs and bhikkhūnīs found those activities as something different from Pāli tradition.<sup>65</sup> This information shows that King Sena I had practiced the new teaching introduced by Vajraparvata Bhikkhūs.

The oldest chronicle of the Island, the *Dīpavaṃsa* criticizes monks who created new teachings as heretics. “Those heretics were shameful ones, sinful monks who were like foul corpses and blue flies in conduct, and who were wicked and were not true monks”.<sup>66</sup> The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* also follows the early chronicles and shows a strong negative view of the Esoteric Buddhism. It records that the king was foolish, and accepted Vajrayāna Buddhism in the same manner that a moth enters a flame thinking it is gold and without knowing its danger.<sup>67</sup> However, king Sena I seemed to be delighted with the new teaching and he had been admonished by Vajrayānist masters emphasizing that the Vajrayāna as a secret Dharma (Sin: *rahas bana*).<sup>68</sup> The term “*rahas bana*” that *Nikāyasamgrahaya* used to designate Vajrayāna teaching is very much compatible with the word “*guhya dharma*” of esoteric Buddhism. In the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasamgraha*, when the ‘Maṇḍala of the Four Symbols’ (*Caturmudrāmaṇḍala*) is taught to the pupil, the master gives instructions to the neophyte not to reveal this secret teaching to anyone.<sup>69</sup>

The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* further recounts that an extreme Tantric movement, which was known as “*Nīlapaṭadarśana*” or “Blue-dressed Philosophy” also arrived in Sri Lanka. This new movement had originated in Southern Madhurā during the reign of Śrī Harṣa. The leader of this school wore a blue robe and associated with *Veśyās*. He worshiped *Vidagdha Veśyās* (refined prostitutes), *anavasthiti surāpāna* (sipping liquor), and *Kāmadeva* (The God of Love) as incomparable gems in this Triple-world<sup>70</sup> (*bhuvanatrāyehi asādhāraṇa ratna*). The followers of the *Nīlapaṭadarśana* paid homage to this Triple

Gem (*Vidagdha Veśyās*, *anavasthiti surāpāna*, and *Kāmadeva*) and neglected the Triple Gem (*the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sa[gha]*) as glass stones (*kaḍā pahāṇa*). And also composed a book named *Nīlapaṭadarśana*.<sup>71</sup> These ideas are very much similar to the esoteric practices explained in Buddhist Tantric texts such as the *Cittaviśuddhiprakaraṇa* and the *Candamahārosana Tantra*, which are approximately dated to 700 C.E. The *Nikāyasamgrahaya* quoted two *ślokas* but the original source still remains unidentified.

One of these *ślokas* is:

*Veśyāratnaṃ surāratnaṃ devo manobhavaḥ*

*Etadratnatrayaṃ vandehyanyatkācamaṇṭrayaṃ*

Further it provides details that these teachings were rejected by king *Harṣadeva*, who burnt all the scriptures including the followers. But some followers who managed to survive continued that practice, which later on became as a deep rooted cancer.<sup>72</sup>

What the *Nikāyasamgraha* mentions is very similar to the Pañca Tattva or Five *Makāras* advocated in Tantric practice.<sup>73</sup>

The author [Dharmakīrti]<sup>74</sup> of the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* refers to the extreme Tantric practices that prevailed in India. We do not know any Tantric Buddhist school of the name *Nīlapaṭadarśana*. But Heruka, the most important deity of *Guhya* Tantric practice, is represented in blue colour. His various other forms such as *Dvibhuja Heruka*, *Buddhakaṭāla*, *Samvara*, and *Mahāmāyā*, all represent him as blue in colour. If may be that Dharmakīrti, the author of the *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, coined the term *Nīlapaṭadarśana* on this basis. Therefore, for Dharmakīrti, this kind of strange practice would have been seen as a Blue-dressed Philosophy. When Heruka’s images represent *Samputayoga*, Father-Mother union or *Yab-yum* in

<sup>65</sup> CV 50.3 – Geiger translates this stanza: “he performed also pious actions before unheard of ...” Geiger does not give an explanation as the Sinhalese translation does.

<sup>66</sup> “The Spread of Heterodox-Buddhist Doctrines in Early Ceylon”, *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Numbers 1 to 4, July 1969-April 1970, p.18; See also the *Dīpava ṃ sa* 22, 67-69, p.220.

<sup>67</sup> *Nks*, p.22. The *Nikāyasa ṃ grahaya* vehemently criticizes this King for accepting the Vajrayāna Buddhism. As a result of this bad karma he lost his kingdom of Anuradhapura, betrayed the country to South Indians and died in Polonnaruva. *Nks*, p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> This teaching is protected as secret due to people’s ignorance, wrong views, and evil actions and so on. Therefore the information given in the *Nikāyasa ṃ grahaya* on the secret practice of the Vajrayāna Buddhism is acceptable. See *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chanda and David L. Snellgrove, p. 38. *Na tvayā kasyacid ima ṃ rahasyapaṭāla ṃ udghāṭayitavyaṃ*. See *STTS* ed. by Isshi Yamada, p. 144

<sup>70</sup> The Triple-world is: The Realm of Sensual Desire (*Kāmaloka*), The Realm of Form (*Rūpaloka*), and The Realm of Formless (*Arūpaloka*).

<sup>71</sup> *Nks*, 23.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Wine (*Madya*), meat (*Mā ṃ sa*), fish (*Matsya*), cereal (*Mudrā*) and sexual union (*Maithūna*).

<sup>74</sup> He is an orthodox Theravāda monk belonged to the Mahāvihāra Tradition in Sri Lanka and lived in the 14th century.

Tibetan, for Dharmakīrti, these figures may have been appeared as the union of *Kāmadeva* and *veśyās*. Especially, Heruka's form of Buddhakapāla denotes these attributes. The *Sādhanamālā* explains that in the form of Buddhakapāla, Heruka is embraced by his *prajñā* [concert] named *Citrasenā*, who seems to be intoxicated, nude and fearless, and also with disheveled hair she kisses the god incessantly.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to find an orthodox Theravāda monk severely criticizing and opposing these teachings. This anti-esoteric stand by Sinhala monks is further seen from Tārānātha's Record, which says *Śaindhava Śrāvakas* and *Sinhala* monks destroyed the *Heruka*'s silver image at *Vajrāsana* temple in Buddhagaya and burnt the Tantric scriptures saying that they are the works of *Māra*.<sup>76</sup> But for Vajrayānists, they do not see any different between the Buddha and the Heruka. For them Heruka is an emanation of *Śākyamuni* Buddha.<sup>77</sup>

The fifth chapter of the *STTS* is mainly concerned with sexual yoga. "Saying 'You are the Pledge' one should gratify all women. Do not turn away from the affairs of living beings. Thus one soon gratifies the Buddhas ... Gratification should not be despised. One should gratify all women".<sup>78</sup> Again in the last chapter of the *STTS*, Bodhisattva *Vajrapāṇi* explains a *guhya* practice, which is named "the Highest Perfection of the Action Dharma of the Tathāgata Family".<sup>79</sup> Probably, the author of the *Nikāyasamgrahaya* must have heard all these teachings of the *STTS*. That is why he vehemently criticized this practice. In Sri Lanka, at Nālandā<sup>80</sup> monastery in Matale in the Central Province, two granite stone sculptured panels have been found depicting sexual union of human beings. But one of them has been misplaced or fallen face down.<sup>81</sup> Commenting on this specific artifact,

Mudiyanse says this picture is sufficient to compare with the erotic figures on the Jagamohan at Konarak, Orissa (13th cent.) and at the *Kandariya* temple at *Khajuraho* (11th cent.). He further says that Indian examples are later than the *Nālandā*, which can be dated in the eight century. Those epigraphical and sculptural evidences are sufficient to prove that the worst forms [most extreme forms] of Tantric Buddhist practices prevailed in the Island. The words 'Rati-pūjā' and 'Guhya Pūjā' in the inscriptions are sculptured in stone at *Nalanda-gedige*.<sup>82</sup> The Mantra of Vajralāsyā is "Om vajraguhyaratipūjāsamaye sarvva-pūjāṃ pravartaya hūṃ". This mantra seems to be related 'rati-pūjā' or sexual ritual. Vajralāsyā's mantras in other *maṇḍalas* of the *STTS* are related to "rati-pūjā". 'Om rati pūje hūṃ jah', 'Om padma rati pūje hoḥ', 'Om vajra guhya rativaśaṃkara hūṃ' are can be quoted as examples.<sup>83</sup>

Patel assumes that even though esoteric Buddhism contradicts with objectives of early Buddhist teachings, it originated in accordance with the social and religious conditions in India.<sup>84</sup> The various Buddhist practices in India would have come to Sri Lanka due to its close proximity. Presumably, due to social and religious conditions of the Island, in different periods these strange practices would have influenced Sri Lankan culture. Though we are not sure whether the Abhayagiri Vihāra had accepted Tantric Buddhist practices, literary records and also archeological findings prove that Tantric Buddhism had been practiced in ancient Sri Lanka. Due to lack of academic works on the field, it still remains somewhat of a mystery. Therefore, there remain many issues concerning the practice of Tantric Buddhism to be resolved by future researchers.

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<sup>75</sup> *The Indian Buddhist Iconography: Mainly Based on the Sādhanamālā and Other Cognate Tantric Texts of Rituals*, p.64.

<sup>76</sup> See *Robe and Plough*, pp. 244-5.

<sup>77</sup> See *Essence of Vajrayana: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala*, p.5

<sup>78</sup> *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, p.63. See also *STTS* ed. by Yamada, p.150 *Virāgasad ṛśaṃ pāpaṃ anyan nāsti tridhātuke / Tasmāt kānavirāgivaṃ na kāryaṃ bhavatāpuna ḥ*

<sup>79</sup> "Having drawn the form of a vagina on a wall, what ever woman one thinks of, as penis is erect one makes it pliant, she comes into ones power." See *STTS* reproduced by Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, p. 66.

<sup>80</sup> Probably, this temple also has been named after the great *Nālandā Vihāra* in India.

<sup>81</sup> *MMC*, p.71.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *STTS* ed. by Yamada, p.368.

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