

Is there an affinity between Tantrayāna Buddhist tradition and Vaitulyavāda, Vājirayvāda and Nīlapatavāda which are known to have appeared in SriLanka?

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It is a well-known fact that the geographical situation of SriLanka and India has had much influence on the political, social, economic and religious aspects of both countries. This study examines how SriLankan religious culture was benefited by Indian philosophy. Buddhism which appeared in India was introduced to SriLanka during King Asoka's era and it can be seen that a number of Buddhist sects seem to have evolved and introduced their philosophies subsequently. Among those traditions, Tantric can be regarded as one of the specific traditions which had a major influence in the teaching of Buddhism in the country. Although it was not mentioned in the same name that of Tantrayāna (tantric), scholars say that the Buddhist traditions such as Vaitulyavāda, Vājirayavāda, and Nīlapatavāda (Blue robe sect) which existed in the Anuradhapura period, are none other than branches of this same Tantric tradition. Influences of the tantric tradition on Buddhist art can be clearly observed in the archaeological remains belonging to the Polonnaruwa period. Even today, tantric influence can be seen in various aspects especially in the rituals (Abhicāra) of today's Theravāda Buddhism. The aim of this research is to prove the possibility of comparing the relationship between Tantrayāna Buddhist tradition and Vaitulyavāda, Vājirayvāda, Nīlapatavāda traditions which have from time to time appeared in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, it has become evident that the name Tantrayāna is absent from the beginning of Anuradhapura era and it has been existing in other names and characteristics.

Keywords: Tantrayāna (Tantric) Buddhism , Vaitulyavāda, Vājirayvāda, Nīlapatavāda