

The Iconographic Forms of *Vajrayoginī* Deity in the *Nepāla Maṇḍala*

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Abstract

This paper explores the deity Vajrayoginī in Nepāla Maṇḍala, highlighting her various iconographic forms and her religious importance within Newar Vajrayāna Buddhism. Vajrayoginī, regarded as the Sarba Buddha Ḍākinī and embodiment of prajñā (wisdom), holds a central position in esoteric Buddhist practice. The research identifies and analyzes the distinct forms of Vajrayoginī, including Nairātmā Guheśvarī, Vajrayoginī of Pharping, Khadgayoginī of Sāṅkhu, Ākāśyoginī Vijeśvarī, Vajravārāhī and Vajradevī. Each manifestation reflects specific doctrinal attributes, ritual functions, and historical developments within Newār Buddhism. The study reveals that Vajrayoginī's iconography symbolizes key Vajrayāna concepts such as śūnyatā (wisdom or emptiness) and transformation. By exploring textual sources, iconographic analysis, and field studies, this research underscores Vajrayoginī's role in sustaining Newār Buddhist identity. The findings highlight how her esoteric symbolism and ritual practices contribute to the lived experience of practitioners, ensuring the continuity of the tradition. This study enriches the academic discourse on Vajrayāna Buddhism by providing a comprehensive examination of Vajrayoginī's presence in the historical and contemporary religious landscape of Nepāla Maṇḍala.

Keywords: *Vajrayoginī, Nepāla Maṇḍala, Newār Buddhism, Iconography, Prajñā, Śūnyatā*

Introduction

In most of the Mahāvihāras of the Nepāla Maṇḍala (Kathmandu Valley), Cakrasaṃvara-Vajravārāhī is venerated as the principal *āgama* (esoteric) deity. While some Mahāvihāras enshrine Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī in union, others house them separately, and in certain instances, only Vajradevī is revered as the *āgama* deity. The image of Vajrayoginī is publicly accessible in select shrines across the Nepāla Maṇḍala, where devotees engage in *pūjā* through shrine priests. Among the most prominent Yoginī shrines in the valley are Vajrayoginī at Sānkhu, Nairātmā Guheśvarī near Paśupatinātha, Vijeśvarī (Ākāśyoginī) at the foothill of Svayambhū, and Vajrayoginī at Pharping. Additionally, other sites enshrining Vajrayoginī include Khadgayoginī at Pulchowk, Lalitpur; Vidhyādhārī at Mahābouddha, Lalitpur; and Vajrayoginī at Halchowk.

The deity Vajrayoginī is synonymous with Vajravārāhī, Vajradevī, and Vajravilāsinī (S. Bajracharya 46). In Vajrayāna Buddhism, all deities are classified within six *kulas* (familial lineages), each associated with one of the Pañcabuddha and Vajrasattva (Bhattacharya 129). The tradition of deity visualisation and idol formation can be traced back to *Guhyasamāja* literature, which introduces the concept of the Pañcabuddha (Bhattacharya 62). Vajrayoginī is regarded as an embodiment of wisdom. Iconographically, all forms of Vajrayoginī, like other Vajrayāna deities, are understood to be inherently *śūnya* (empty) in nature. In ultimate reality, no deities exist, yet Vajrayāna philosophy employs them as transformative meditative tools. The learned Vajrayāna *Siddhācāryas* developed these deities for ritual worship, meditation, and the attainment of *siddhi* (supernatural power) and spiritual perfection. As Abhayākara Gupta states, whenever deities are seen, they are *Śūnya* (non-existent) (Bhattacharya 109).

The term *Vajra* symbolizes indestructibility and represents *śūnyatā* (emptiness) in Vajrayāna Buddhism. *Vajra* represents the ultimate truth (English 4). In the *Hevajra Tantra*, *Vajra* is equated with *prajñā* (wisdom), as it signifies the ultimate truth (N. Bajracharya 19). *Śūnyatā* does not denote mere voidness; rather, it conveys the absence of inherent existence (*svabhāva*), emphasizing impermanence and the interdependent nature of all phenomena.

The term *Yoginī* is derived from *Yogī*, which itself comes from *Yoga*, meaning “union». In Vajrayāna philosophy, this union refers to the inseparability of *prajñā* (wisdom) and *upāya* (skillful means or compassion), collectively known as *prajñopāya*

(Y. Bajracharya 12). The meaning of *Yoginī* is also given as wisdom (Y. Bajracharya 21). The compound *Vajrayoginī*, formed by the fusion of *Vajra* and *Yoginī*, designates one of the principal deities in Vajrayāna Buddhism. She is revered as *Sarva Buddha Ḍākinī*, the supreme wisdom deity embodying the enlightened essence of all Buddhas. In tantric practice, *Cakrasaṃvara* personifies *upāya* (compassion), while his consort, *Vajravārāhī*, embodies *śūnyatā* (wisdom). Among all *Yoginīs*, *Vajrayoginī* holds the preeminent position, serving as a key meditational deity (*yidam*) in the Vajrayāna tradition.

Vajrayoginī is typically depicted in red and is considered an emanation of *Vairocana Buddha*. She is also described as *Vairocanakulodbhava* (Bhattacharya 139). *Nairātmā*, closely related figures, symbolize *śūnyatā* and are usually depicted in blue, as emanations of the *Akṣobhya* family. The male consorts of both *Vajravārāhī* and *Nairātmā* - *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra*, respectively - belong to the *Akṣobhya* family.

This article explores the diverse iconographic representations of *Vajrayoginī* within the *Nepāla Maṇḍala*, analyzing their symbolic meanings and contextual significance within the broader *Newār Vajrayāna* tradition.



fig. no. 1 Nairātmā



fig. no. 3 Ākāśyoginī Vijeśvarī



fig. no. 5 Vajrayoginī at Halchowk



fig. no. 2 Vajrayoginī at Pharping



fig. no. 4 Vajradevī

Vajrayoginī Iconographic forms

1. Nairātmā Guheśvarī

Nairātmā is depicted in blue, symbolizing *śūnyatā* (emptiness), the inherent absence of self-existence in all phenomena. The name Nairātmā itself means “soulless” or “without self.” *Śūnyatā* is often likened to the sky, which, though inherently colorless, appears blue. This might be one reason why Nairātmā is represented in blue (Bhattacharya 135).

Nairātmā has single face and three eyes. She holds a *kartri* in her right hand and a *pātra* in her left, while a *khaṭvāṅga* hangs from her left shoulder. Her right hand is raised above her shoulder, while her left is positioned near her heart. She is depicted nude, standing on her left foot in the *ardhaparyāṅka* posture. She wears the five traditional *mudrās* (*cakrī*, *kuṇḍala*, *kaṇṭhī*, *rucaka*, and *mekhalā*) along with a garland of fifty skulls as a necklace (A. Bajracharya 37-39). Beneath her feet lies a nude corpse in a prone position (fig. no. 1).

Among Hindus, Nairātmā is worshipped as the goddess Guheśvarī. Both the new Guheśvarī shrine near the Paśupatinātha temple and the older Guheśvarī site in Bālāju do not house physical images of the deity; instead, a *kalaśa* (ritual water pot) is revered as a symbol of Nairātmā. Painted representations of Nairātmā can be found in *paubhā*. She is depicted as one of the five Yoginīs in a Vajradevī Maṇḍala. She is featured among the four most venerated Yoginīs of Nepal.

2. Vajrayoginī at Pharping

The Vajrayoginī image at Pharping is the principal deity of Dharmacakra Mahāvihāra. Vajrayoginī is enshrined on the upper floor of the Mahāvihāra who faces south. She is depicted in red, with a single face and three eyes. She has two hands: her right hand holds a *kartri*, positioned near her right knee, while her left hand holds a blood-filled *kapāla*. A *khaṭvāṅga* rests on her left shoulder. She stands with her right leg pressing down on a corpse in the *ālīḍha* attitude, while her left leg is raised toward the sky in the *ūrdhvopāda* attitude. She is depicted nude, adorned with a *mekhalā* and the five *mudrās*. A garland of skull bones worn as a necklace. A necklace made of serpents is also worn by her (fig. no. 2).

Another image of Vajrayoginī, used in annual processional rituals, is also found at Pharping. Its iconography closely resembles that of the main deity in the temple,

with the primary difference being its larger size and a yellow-colored face.

3. Vajrayoginī at Sānkhu

At Sānkhu, Vajrayoginī holds a *khadga* in her right hand; therefore, she is also known as Khadgayoginī. Two distinct images of Vajrayoginī are found in Sānkhu. The primary shrine houses the red Vajrayoginī, known as Hyāumkhvāh Māju. Hyāumkhvāh Māju image is made up of either wood or earth (Shrestha 390). The second Vajrayoginī, Mhāsukhvāh Māju, has a yellow face and is the processional deity, celebrated annually. During the festival, the statue is brought down from the hillside to the town of Sānkhu, adorned with a *khata* (ceremonial scarf). Mhāsukhvāh Māju is made of wood and covered with gold-plated metal, presenting a fiercer appearance than Hyāumkhvāh Māju (Shrestha 390). Hyāumkhvāh Māju herself faces south, while Mhāsukhvāh Māju faces west.

The statue of *Mhāsukhvāh Māju* stands approximately two meters tall and is wrapped in cloth. Her wooden body is shaped like a *kalaśa* (ritual water vessel) and covered in copper. Her face is coated with gold, and she has three eyes. She holds a sword in her right hand and a golden flower in her left (Shrestha 406).

The Hyāumkhvāh Māju image is the fixed one. According to the inscription, it was built by Pratap Malla in the year 1655 (NS 775) (Shrestha 408). She is red-faced, with one face, three eyes and two arms. Her right hand holds a *khadga* and her left hand holds a flower. The flower in particular is “*Ufosvan*”, a lotus flower (S. B. Bajracharya). The lotus flower is blue in colour. She stands in *Pratyālidha Āsana* (Y. Bajracharya 109). She has necklace of the serpent *Bāsuki Nāga* (S. B. Bajracharya).

4. Ākāśyoginī Vijeśvarī

Ākāśyoginī, also known as Vidhyādhārī, Sarbabuddhadākinī and Vijeśvarī, is a red-colored. She has three eyes and is characterized by her joyous appearance and *khecarī mudrā*, appearing magnificent. As a sky dancer with two arms, she has freely flowing hair. She holds a *khatvānga* in her left hand and a *kartri* in her right hand. She is nude, adorned with a garland of human heads, and displays five *mudrā* (fig. no 3).

Asha Ram Shakya defines the word Vidhyādhārī as the deity holding *vidhyā* i.e. knowledge compounded with wisdom. Vidhyādhārī Vijeśvarī holds *khatvānga* in the crook of her left arm. She wears a garland of fifty skulls. She is in a flying posture with her left leg raised above the ground and left knee resting upon a dead

body (A. Shakya 89-91). The right knee is bent like flying, therefore one of her name is Ākāśyoginī. This attitude has been mentioned as *khecarī mudrā* (Y. Bajracharya 120).

5. Vajradevī

Vajradevī is one of the principal esoteric deities, sometimes depicted alone or alongside Cakrasaṃvara in certain Mahāvihāras of the Kathmandu Valley (fig. no. 4). Vajradevī has one head with red face and a second head in the form of a sow.

Tatvajnāna Samsiddhi (S. Bajracharya 46) mentions the way of visualising Vajradevī as; standing on chest of the dead body on *ardhaparyankanritya mudrā*, red coloured as dusk and *sindhura*, right hand holding light illuminating *kartri* which can even mask the light of seven sun, left hand holding white *kapāla*, and *khatvāṅga* hangs from left shoulder, garland of *Vajra* in head, garland of severed human heads, one face of sow and next divine charming face, with two head, three eyes in each faces, embodiment of *sahajānanda*, with strong greed, full of various nine *nātyarasa* (Y. Bajracharya 87), wearing ornaments (*khadamudrā*) like *cakrī*, *kundala*, *kanthi*, *rucaka*, *mekhalā* and *brahmasūtra*, nude, beautiful body as of sixteen years old Vajradevī (S. Bajracharya 46).

The Vajradevī Maṇḍala features Vajradevī at the center. Within the *dharmodaya*, an equilateral triangular figure, are Sarvabuddhadākinī, Vajravarnanī, and Vajravairocanī. These three Yoginīs embody the aspects of the Buddha's *Kāya* (body), *Vāka* (speech), and *Citta* (mind).

In one of the *paubhā* paintings, Sarvabuddhadākinīye, Vajravarnaniye, and Vajravairocaniye are represented by white, red and blue *kalaśa*. In Maṇḍala used for Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhī *dekhā*, the three deities are depicted by *vija mantra* “Om, Ah, Hum” respectively. In one *paubhā* (in place of Savabuddhadakiniye), white Vajrasattva, with two hands holding *Vajra* and *Ghantā* is found. White Dākinī on *ardhaparyankāsana*, standing on left foot, carrying *kartri*, *pātra* and *khatvāṅga* in place of Vajravarnaniye. Instead of Vajravairocaniye, a blue Dākinī in *pratyālīḍha āsana* with two hands is depicted.

The next circle consists of four Yoginīs; in *Samaya cakra* (circle), Dākinī, Lāmā, Khandorohā, and Rupinī starting from front in anti-clockwise rotation, east, north, west and south. They are in blue, green, red and yellow colours respectively. Four Yoginīs have three eyes, four arms, holding *kartri*, *pātra*, *damaru*, and *khatvāṅga*. They stand on a dead body in *ālīḍha* posture. In some maṇḍala, they are seen in

pratyālidha āsana.

The next circle consists of *Khadgayoginī* (six yoginīs) are depicted in *khatkon* (hexagon): Vajravārāhī - red, Yamini - blue, Mohini - white, Sāncārini - yellow, Santrāsini - green, Candikā - smoky hue colour. *Khadgayoginī* stand in *ālīdha* (bending left leg) posture. In some *paubhā*, they are presented in *Ardhaparyankāsana*, or *nritya* attitude. Vajravārāhī is with three faces and six-arm. Central face red, right face blue and left face green. The right arms hold *kartri*, *ankusa*, head of *brahma*, the left arms hold *kapāla*, *khatvānga*, *pāśa*. The other five yoginīs have one face and four arms, right arms hold *kartri* and *damaru*, left arms hold *kapāla* and *khatvānga* (S. Bajracharya 48-9).

6. Vajravārāhī

Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhī is the principal deity with a special position in the Mahāvihāras of Kathmandu Valley. Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī are depicted in the union posture. Cakrasaṃvara embraces Vajravārāhī, who has a red complexion with one head, three eyes, and two arms. Her right arm holds a *kartri*, while her left arm holds a *pātra*. She has a *khatvānga* on her left shoulder and freely flowing hair. Vajravārāhī is adorned with five types of *mudrā* and wears a garland of fifty human skulls as a necklace. She has nine types of expression on her face. Her right leg is taken up to embrace the left hip of Cakrasaṃvara. Her left foot in the right foot of Cakrasaṃvara.

In the Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala, the *Samaya cakra* Dākinīs are colored as follows, in anti-clockwise rotation from the front: Lāmā is blue in the east, Khandorohā is green in the north, Rupinī is red in the west, and the fourth Dākinī is yellow in the south. The iconography of the four Yoginīs features three eyes and four arms. They hold a *kartri*, *pātra*, *damaru*, and *khatvānga* on four hands. They stand on a dead body in the *ālīdha* posture.

In the *Citta cakra*, *Vāka cakra*, and *Kāya cakra*, eight Vīra and Vīreśvarī are depicted in the yab-yum posture in Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala. Eight pairs of blue, red, and white colours Vīra and Vīreśvarī in the three *cakras* respectively. The *Vīras* or *Dākas* have four arms and hold *vajra*, *damaru* on their right arms and *ghanta*, *khatvānga* on their left arms. Three eyes, five *mudrās*, fifty human head garland in *ālīdha* posture. Vīreśvarīs or Dākinīs have three eyes, five *mudrās*, fifty skull bone garland, nude with two arms. In the yab-yum posture, her right hand holds a *kartri*, and her left hand holds a *pātra*. Her right leg is locked with the left hip of the Vīra, and

her right foot is aligned with the Vīra's right foot.

7. Khadgayoginī at Pulchowk

One Khadgayoginī shrine is in Pulchowk, Lalitpur, near Akśeśvara Mahāvihāra. The temple is facing east and Khadgayoginī statue also faces east. The iconography is similar to Hyāumkhvāh Māju of Sānkhu.

8. Vidhyādhārī at Mahābauddha

The image of Vidhyādhārī devī at Mahābauddha, Lalitpur is similar to the Vidhyādhārī at Vijeśvarī temple. In the east of the Mahābauddha *caitya*, there is Vidhyādhārī temple. On the first floor, she faces east.

9. Vajrayoginī at Halchowk

Vajrayoginī at Halchowk was established on 1070 N.S by Manandhar family (Field observation, 11 June 2022). This monastery is not the old one and not associated with Nepalese Vajrayāna monastery and *sangha*. Vajrayoginī at Halchowk has one face, red in colour, three eyes, two arms. Right arm holds *kartri* and is placed near to the right knee, the left arms holds *pātra*, and the *khatvāṅga* is on the left shoulder. She wears five *mudrās*, fifty human skull garland, nude. She is in *ālida* attitude. Her right foot stands on *Ālī* and her left foot stands on *Kālī* (fig. no. 5).

Symbolism and attributes of Vajrayoginī (S. Bajracharya 46)

Although Vajrayoginī manifests in various forms within the Nepal Maṇḍala, all are Yoginīs, sharing many common iconographic features. This section explores the philosophical significance of their various attributes.

1. Red color body

A red complexion like *Sandhyā* (dusk) and *Sindhura* symbolises *Mahārāga*, strong attachment. It also represents pure oxygenated, red blood.

2. Sow's head

The sow's head symbolizes *Samvṛti Satya* (relative truth), representing attachment, ignorance, and externally perceived reality. Due to this feature, she is also called Vajravārāhī.

3. A sixteen-years-old girl's head with red face

The main head, with its red complexion, represents *Paramārtha satya* (ultimate truth), symbolizing enlightenment.

4. Kartri

The radiant *Kartri* symbolises the wisdom which can cut *Rāga*, *Dvesa*, and *Moha*. A part of *Kartri*, like handle, is *Vajra*. *Vajra* symbolises method or compassion.

5. Kapāla

The white *Kapāla* with red blood symbolises *Mahāśūnyatā* with *Bodhicitta*. It symbolises wisdom.

6. Khatvānga

Khatvānga represents *Bodhicitta*. It is also the symbol of compassion. *Khatvānga* is held by all Yoginiś, *khatvānga* or *khat Anga* (six organs/parts), or *khadānga*. According to *Guhyasamāja tantra* *Khadānga* are: *Prātihārya* (withdrawal), *Dhyāna* (meditation), *Prāṇāyāma* (breathing), *Dhāranā* (concentration), *Anusmṛiti*, *Samādhi* (absorption) (Y. Bajracharya 111).

7. Five skull bone in head

Five skull bones in the head symbolize *Bodhicitta* and *Pañcaśūnyatā* (five emptiness) within *Mahāsukha cakra*.

8. Human head garland

The severed human head garland represents sixteen vowel letters (*āli*; *a*, *ā* etc) and thirty-three consonant letters (*kāli*; *ka*, *kha* etc).

9. Blood dropping from mouth

The blood dripping from Vajrayoginī's mouth, along with the fierce roar of the sow's head, symbolizes the consumption of the *caturmāra* (four obstacles) into emptiness..

10. Three eyes on both faces

The three eyes symbolize omniscience, representing the ability to perceive the

past, present, and future simultaneously.

11. Navanātyarasa

The *Navanātyarasa* represents nine types of expression of emotions on Vajrayoginī's face. *Navarasa* includes (Y. Bajracharya 87); *Śṛṅgāra* (beauty, emotion of love), *Vīra* (courage), *Vibhatsa* (disgust), *Hāsya* (laughter), *Raudra* (anger), *Bhayānaka* (fearful), *Karunā* (compassion), *Adbhuta* (wonder), and *Śānta* (peaceful).

12. Khadamudrā

Khadamudrā represents perfection of the six *Pāramitās*: *Dāna* (generosity), *Śīla* (morality), *Kṣānti* (patience), *Virya* (vigor), *Dhyāna* (concentration/meditation) and *Prajñā* (wisdom).

13. Nagnāngā

Nagnāngā (nude) is the symbol of being devoid of *kleśāvarana* (obstruction of defilement) and *jñeyāvarana* (obstruction of intellectual).

14. Sixteen-years-old girl

Vajrayoginī is very beautiful and with special characteristics. A Sixteen-years-old girl represents sixteen types of *Śūnyatā*.

15. Pañca mudrā

The *pañca mudrā* are the five sacred ornaments worn by Vajrayoginī. They are: *cakrī*, *kundala*, *kanthī*, *rucaka*, and *mekhalā* (Y. Bajracharya 100-01). *Cakrī* is worn at the head as Tiara, *kundala* on the ear, *kanthī* on the neck, *rucaka* is worn on the arm and wrist, *Mekhalā* around the waist. *Pañca mudrā* are also regarded as symbols of the Pañcabuddha (Y. Bajracharya 101). Apart from *pañca mudrā*, garland of the human head, garland of the serpent, *nupura*, *ghunghuru* etc make *khada mudrā*. *Brahmasūtra* and *Yagyopabita* can also be sixth *mudrā*. The *khada mudrā* represents six *pāramitās*.

16. Khadga

Vajrayoginī at Sāṅkhu holds *khadga* (sword) in her right hand. It represents the method to cut ignorance.

17. Damaru

According to Dibya Bajra Bajracharya, all the weapons held in the right hand by Vajrayāna deities represent compassion or *Upāya* and the left hand represents wisdom (S. Bajracharya 68). *Damaru* also symbolises method. Two sides of *Damaru* are similar. When it is moved sound is produced, it represents *bhāvā-bhāva* (neither feeling nor non-feeling).

18. Ufosvān

Vajrayoginī in Sāṅkhu holds *ufosvān* (lotus), specifically *nīlotpala* (blue lotus), in her left hand, symbolizing wisdom (*prajñā*) (Y. Bajracharya 109).

19. Āsana (posture)

Vajrayoginī stands on *Ālī* and *Kālī*, who represents *trīsnā* (craving) and *ghrinā* (aversion). The meaning is that she is free from craving and aversion. Other forms of Vajrayoginī stands on *Saba āsana* (dead body or corpse). This symbolizes that Vajrayoginī has conquered death and achieved *Nirvana* (K. Bajracharya 19).

Materials used for presenting Vajrayoginī Deity

The images of Vajrayoginī are found in the form of sculptural arts and paintings. Vajrayoginī sculptural arts have been presented in different materials. The earth or clay has been used in Hyaumkhvāh Māju image of Sāṅkhu. Some images are made of wood; Mhāsukhvāh Māju of Sāṅkhu and Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhī wooden image preserved at National museum are few examples. Different types of metals are used for statue formation. Bronze and Copper are common metals. Vajradevī, Nairātmā, and Vajrayoginī images in Patan and National museum are few examples. Even silver statue and gold plated images are common.

The sculptural art in stone is also common; for examples Vajradevī and Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhī preserved in National museum. The Vajradevī image is also found sculptured in bone eg. *Hādābharana*, part of ritual apron.

The Vajrayoginī, Vajradevī, Cakrasaṃvara Vajravārāhī paintings are common, which is called *paubhā* in Newār Buddhism. One *paubhā* of Vajravārāhī of 731 N.S. is preserved in National museum, Chauni. In that *paubhā*, Vajravārāhī is at the center lies standing on left leg over corpse in *ardhaparyankāsana*. She is standing on triangular structure called *dharmodaya*. On three angle of *dharmodaya* are red, white and blue

coloured *devīs*. Four Yoginīs Dakinī, Lāmā, Khadorohā, and Rupinī are in right and left side. Cinnamastā Devī in the right side. Below or in front of the Yoginī maṇḍala, there are priest, priestess and *jajamāna* (Field observation, 11 June 2022). During *dekhā* Vajravārāhī maṇḍala is prepared from different colours, and they are dissolved after completion of *dekhā*.

Conclusion

This paper explores the diverse iconographic forms of Vajrayoginī within the Nepāla Maṇḍala, analyzing their symbolic meanings and roles in the Newār Vajrayāna tradition. The study highlights the various depictions of Vajrayoginī, her manifestations as Nairātmā, Khadgayoginī, Ākāśyoginī, Vajravārāhī, and Vajradevī, and their corresponding symbolic attributes. The paper situates these iconographic forms within the broader framework of Vajrayāna Buddhism, emphasizing their significance in meditative practices, ritual worship, and esoteric philosophy. The key findings and conclusion of the paper can be listed as;

Multiplicity of forms: Vajrayoginī appears in various iconographic representations across different shrines in the Kathmandu Valley, each carrying distinct attributes while maintaining her essential nature as the supreme wisdom deity. Despite being one deity, her multifaceted manifestations reflect the depth and richness of religious practices within Newār Buddhism.

Symbolism and tantric significance: The different iconographic forms express key Vajrayāna concepts such as *śūnyatā* (emptiness), *prajñā* (wisdom), and *prajñopāya* (skillful means and wisdom union).

Ritual and cultural context: The paper highlights the role of Vajrayoginī in Newār Buddhism, where her worship is integrated into Mahāvihāra traditions and annual festivals. The annual processional rituals at sites like Sānkhu and Pharping demonstrate her continued importance in contemporary practice.

Artistic and textual foundations: The iconographic depictions align with descriptions in Tantric texts such as the *Hevajra Tantra*, *Tattvajñānasamsiddhi*, and *Sādhana* literature. The artistic representations in *paubhā* paintings, statues, and maṇḍala configurations further affirm the richness of Vajrayoginī tradition. Vajrayoginī sculptural arts have been presented in different materials; the earth or clay, wood, different types of metals: bronze, copper, silver and gold plated. Sculptural art in stone is also common. The Vajravārāhī image is also found sculptured in bone.

Continuity of Vajrayoginī worship in the Newār Buddhist tradition: The study highlights the continuous tradition of Vajrayoginī worship in the Kathmandu Valley, demonstrating how her veneration has evolved over the centuries while maintaining its fundamental esoteric aspects.

The iconography of Vajrayoginī is rich in symbolic expressions, representing profound philosophical and practical aspects of Buddhism that can be adopted by practitioners. The diverse iconographic representations of Vajrayoginī in the Nepāla Maṇḍala reflect her pivotal role in the Vajrayāna tradition as the embodiment of wisdom. The continuity of her veneration within the Newār Buddhist tradition signifies the deep-rooted esoteric heritage of the Kathmandu Valley.

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