



Caryā of Padasādhana being performed by **Tara Manandhar** (Head of the Department, Department of Music and Dance, SCoFA)

CARYĀ OF PADASĀDHANA – A VAJRAYĀNA RITUAL

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Abstract

Padasādhana ritual or caryā is an alphabet of vajrayāna religion represented by twenty eight caryāgīti forming a major structure of the ritual performed. All the caryāgīti enacted during the ceremony is a climbing of steps one by one culminating in vajrapada. Construction of maṇḍala, utterance of mantra and formation of mudra in course of worships are the pillars on which edifice of salvation is built. All the worships are based on maṇḍala, mudra and mantra. What transpires for spiritual emancipation is through gīti or song and nr̥tya or dance which is meant for visualization and ultimate realization of the set goal of the vajrayāna religion that is Buddhahood or Nirvāṇa.

Keywords: caryā, padasādhana, vajrayāna, Ahorātra Pūjā

Introduction

Caryā of Padasādhana has been named Ahorātra Pūjā or Ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi. The ritual ceremony names it Ahorātra Pūjā but the manual for execution of the ritual is titled as Ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi. On write up of the ritual, the word caryā necessitates inclusion along with padasādhana as the word caryā denotes 'practice' of the religion through a ceremony called padasādhana.

Ahorātra Pūjā

Ahorātra Pūjā is a three-weeks long ritual which begins with guru pūjā and mata pūjā, śrī nr̥tyanātha āhvāna pūjā, yodhakābhiśeṣa pūjā and pīṭha pūjā, mūlasiddhi pūjā and ultimately padasādhana pūjā. Padasādhana pūjā is followed by maṇḍala ālekha and

adhivāsana, agni sthāpana, pūrṇāhuti (rātrī guhya homa), raja pravāha (kaumārī tarpaṇa), chaturthī pūjā, yodhakābhiśeṣa, śrī guhyehyeśvarī vana yātrā (vañjalā), tvañcchā pūjā and finally bhaṣma pravāha.

All the worships or pūjās are performed by vajrācārya gubhāyus with designated responsibility assigned and these ācāryās carry a name decorated with the title namely mūlācārya, upādhyāya, karmācārya, pūrvācārya, paścimācārya, dakṣiṇācārya, uttarācārya and host of others like thakālī, noku, svako, pyako, nyāko, khuko and nheko.

Some of the known names of vajrācāryas connected with Ahorātra Pūjās are śrī mañjudevācārya, śrī guṇākar and śrī śāntikara who find mentioned in the ceremonies for the establishment of vihāra in vajrayāna literatures like kriyā

saṅgraha written by śrī jagadarpyaṇa, kriyāsamuccaya written by kuladatta and sambodaratantra. Vajrāvalī written by mahāpaṇḍita Abhayakar is a major work on Ahorātra Pūjā.

Ahorātra Pūjā begins with construction of a maṇḍapa along with khambā, dvāra, toraṇa, nināla, dhvajā patākā and bitāna. Only those vajrācāryas who have undergone vajrācāryābhiṣeka and chaturdśābhiṣeka are eligible to perform the rituals. Entering the maṇḍapa these vajrācāryas perform kiraṇa koṭaṇa through padasādhana. With an aim to impart anuttara gyāna to disciples, a piṇḍikā maṇḍala and raja maṇḍala is constructed according to niṣpanna yogāvalī and then follows the tantric procedure of the ritual. To bring about peace to all the sentient beings, pratiśara pratāpa or flag, mārīci pratāpa and pratyāṅgirā pratāpa is hoisted following the instruction in pañcarakṣā pāṭha, mārīci tantra and pratyāṅgirā tantra in the sequential order. After the flag hoisting, a yagya kuṇḍa is dug for lakṣā huti. Completion of the process of Ahorātra Pūjā necessitates the simultaneous playing of tūrya vāddha and accompanying gīta or song and nṛtya or dance, and on completion of the ritual, a path to Buddhahood is accessed, so it is believed and this is the aim of padasādhana ritual.

Ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi

Ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi, a hand written synopsis of the manual of the ritual of padasādhana by a karmācārya of the ceremony, presently referred to, is a referral to conduct the ritual consisting of worships and singing of series of caryāgīti and caryānṛtya. The document of ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi consists of the different pūjā to be conducted, caryāgīti to be sung and caryānṛtya to be performed. The procedure follows the sequence prescribed for the ritual of padasādhana. It begins with some of the

worships and once basics required for the ceremony is set, a series of caryāgīti and caryānṛtya are mentioned to be sung and sang and danced to.

There are twenty-eight caryāgīti inscribed in ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi consisting of akāra sanjāta, anila, bhāsvarakhaṇḍa, cakrikunḍala, dharadhara, dvambīni, hāḍābharāṇa, haraśira, hum hum dehadharu, hūnkārasanjāta, jinajik, jinavarajanāni, kolāi, madhyameru, namāmi 2 śrī heruka candra śekhara, namo hūm, namo hūm (repeat), nandinamaskāra, paramarato, rāgamālā, raktavarṇa, sūnyaniranjana, supratimaṇḍita, tribhuvana jvalita, trihaṇḍā, uragābharāṇa, viśvasaroruha and ye mahimaṇḍala in alphabetical order. Half of it is only to be sung and the other half is to be sang and danced to. Caryāgīti and caryānṛtya are to be sung and danced in a given sequential order. These twenty eight caryāgīti are guhya or secret caryāgīti performed in various rituals but they form a different combinations and sequences when rendered and performed as caryāgīti and caryāgītinṛtya in different rituals.

Caryāgīti and caryānṛtya are followed by series of pada or foot postures.

There are fourteen pada inscribed in ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi which is composed of āliḍhapada, ekaśucika vajrapada, ekapada, jātapada, kurmapada, maṇḍalapad, pancaśucika vajrapada, pratyāliḍhapada, pravikatapada, samapada, vaiśāṣapada, vajraśucika vajrapada, vīkatapada and viśvasucika vajrapada.

Āliḍhapada and pratyāliḍhapada are the main feet postures which has been used four times in the ritual process. Vaiśāṣapada is the only one beside āliḍhapada and pratyāliḍhapada which has been used as many times.

Likewise, samapada and ekapada are used thrice; ekaśucika vajrapada,



viśvaśucika.vajrapada, kurmapada and maṇḍalapada has been used twice; and jātapada, vajraśucika vajrapada, pancaśucika vajrapada, pravikatapada and vīkatapada has been used only once in the ritual process,

Variants of the śucika vajrapada are viśvaśucika vajrapada, ekaśucika vajrapada and pancaśucika vajrapada.

Leaving aside āgney (south-east), three of the four direction of the space has been shown postured by ālīdhapada in naitṛtya (south-west) and vāyutya (north-west) directions and by samapada in iśāne (north-east) direction.

Besides other pada, angātapada and upapada are also find mentioned. Ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi manual does not describe the specific acts in detail but hints at the performances to be executed and its sequential timings. Categories can be defined as acts of worships and

artistic execution of music and dance. Acts of worship encompasses performing different pūjā along with construction of maṇḍala, utterance of mantra and mudrā formations, besides sādhana, samādhi, abhiṣeka and śloka rendering. Among these acts, mudrā formation is the basic component of caryāṅṛtya and caryāgīti are the tool for sādhana.

Caryā of padasādhana

The title caryā of padasādhana has three important components e.g. caryā, pada and sādhana. Caryā amalgamates the worships performed in the ritual of which rendering of caryāgīti and execution of caryāṅṛtya is a part and parcel; pada formations are the ultimate aim at the physical level; and sādhana is the method of visualization of the deities and the realization of the doctrines put in for the emancipation of all the sentient beings in their path to being Buddha.

Research Methodology

The research is primarily based on a literature review of ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi handwritten manual of a vajrācārya gubhāju, written in Nepālabhāṣā with devanāgarī script, who played a role of a karmācārya in the performance of the ritual of padasādhana in the year AD 1981. An accompanying manuscript of a collection of hundred caryāgīti, written in prācalita Newārī lipī, in use during the ritual and a printed publication of the ceremony details, in Nepālī with devanāgarī script, provided a strong backup for the research on caryā vis-à-vis vajrayāna Buddhism. Investigation into the subject matter of the literature required an acquaintance with prācalita Newārī lipī and devanāgarī script; knowledge of Nepālī and Nepālabhāṣā languages along with Saṅskṛta, some regional languages and so called Saṅdhyābhāṣā which required search into the literatures reviewed.

Long interaction with practicing



vajrācāryas was the beginning point of the dwelling in the subject chosen to probe and their feedback on vajrayāna religious knowledge and literary material support constituted the base of the work produced. Occasional observation of the ritual was a great booster in the improvement of the understanding of the religion and its practice.

Some published tantra literary work like guhyasamājantra including caryāgītikoṣa with few scholarly work on vajrayāna Buddhism formed a backdrop support for progress in the research work.

Discussion

Song and dance is the essential component of Caryā or practice of vajrayāna religion.

Song means caryāgīti and dance means caryānṛtya. Academic study of caryāgīti

began with publication of caryāgītikoṣ containing fifty caryāgīti written by various siddha. The language of the gīti were claimed to be of Bengali origin. Collection of gīti were discovered in Nepal but the origin had something else to tell, so it was thought. Many studies were carried out on the basis of the contents of caryāgītikoṣ. Study of the Nepalese caryāgīti were never taken up except a great work of compilation of caryāgīti in use by the vajrācāryas of the valley. It paved the way for investigation of the caryāgīti. The ones put into practice by vajrācārya of the valley had a different dimension in purpose of caryāgīti. They were written for practice of the ritual, and were sung in the rituals, whereas those in caryāgītikoṣa collection seems to be written for propagation purpose of the vajrayāna religion. Though, subject matter of both the caryāgīti are the same. The language of the caryāgīti used in ritual practice by vajrācāryas is dominant in saṅskṛta language with some regional languages, including so called saṅdhyābhāṣā, devoid of Nepālbhāṣā. Surprisingly, none of the caryāgīti which were a part of caryāgītikoṣ collection were in use for vajrācārya rituals except the one called trihaṅḍā .

Trihaṅḍā caryāgītinṛtya is one of those caryāgīti on which caryānṛtya is performed. The gīti is also the only song contained in caryāgītikoṣa which finds its place in the vajrayāna ritual practice of vajrācārya of the Kathmandu valley. Trihaṅḍā is also known as strihaṅḍā, tiaḍḍā or trivṛttām. Trihaṅḍā and strihaṅḍā is of Nepalese tradition, tiaḍḍā is the expression found in caryāgītikoṣa and trivṛttām is the saṅskṛta version of the gīti by Munidatta. Meaning of Trihaṅḍā, strihaṅḍā and tiaḍḍā mystically leads to feminine overtones but Munidatta's saṅskṛta version interprets trivṛttām as 'three nerves' or 'tina nāḍī' specified as lalanā, rasanā and



avadhūti. The act of caryā of trihaṇḍā is indicative of the yoga process where the duality of lanā and rasanā turns into non-duality or advaya form of avadhūti like merging of river gaṅgā and jamunā into unseen or hidden sarasvati. The state of advaya is aimed at by the sādhanā practiced as trihaṇḍā.

The deified god and goddess in the form of heruka and nairātma enact the drama to achieve mahāmudrā siddhi. In a symbolic way represented by trio of kamala, kuliśa, ghaṇṭha; duo of sun and moon; a yoga path leading to oḍiyāna riding on maṇikula is indicated at. Possessing a state of yuganaddha or advaya in the embrace of masculine and feminine nature is the expression represented in the word kunduru, a so called saṅdhyābhāṣā word. The yoga process begins here in the sixteenth act of ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi, out of twenty-eight, in the name of trihaṇḍā.

Kolāi, sang and danced in padasādhana, is the only caryāgīti which finds its place in vajrayāna text called hevajratantra. Title of a caryāgīti is named on the basis of the first letter of the caryāgīti and this is the most mysterious and esoteric of all caryāgīti.

Caryā in essence means practice of the religion through worships or pūjās in a ritual of padasādhana but song or caryāgīti as well as dance or caryāṅṛtya are a must.

Series of caryāṅṛtya begins with hādābharaa caryāṅṛtyagīta and ends with cakrikuṇḍala caryāṅṛtyagīta finally culminating into series of pada which ends in vajrapada. These caryāgīti and caryāṅṛtya capture small portion of the time consumed in the ritual of three weeks, as a song is rendered in few minutes time on which the dance is performed. But these caryāgīti or songs are used as a vehicle for the description of deities for sādhanā in the worship to visualize and it also contains the philosophy of the religion for realization of the doctrine adhered to. In the sense of the philosophy and the doctrines contained in caryāgīti, caryāgīti are upaniṣad of vajrayāna religious philosophy. The philosophical songs on which the dance is performed, accompanied by the music, turns caryā of padasādhana into an aesthetic spiritualism. Caryāgīti is an essence of vajrayāna which is rendered with musical components and performed as a dance divine.

In the process of the ritual comprising of worships, songs and dance, sādhanā is the binding factor which leads to emancipation envisaged and therefore it has been named caryā of padasādhana – worships, rendering of songs and execution of dance is a caryā reaching its crescendo in pada through sādhanā.

Sādhanas are the tools for visualization of deities for the ultimate realization of

the doctrine.

In vajrayāna Buddhism caryā or practice of the religion, sādhanā plays a pivotal role of a vehicle on which sādhanā rides towards his journey of ultimate nirvāṇa. Buddhism is a godless religion but vajrayāna Buddhism abounds in pantheon of deities. These deities are nothing but manifestations which begins with pañca skandha manifesting as pañch Buddha and all the other deities emanate from them.

Guhyasamājantra very categorically specifies pañcabuddha to be nothing but pañcaskandha or basic elements human beings are composed of:

pañcaskandhā samasena pañcabuddhāḥ prakīrtitāḥ |

vajra-āyatanānyeva
bodhisatvāgryamaṇḍalamiti || 50 ||

guhyasamājantra saptadasa paṭalāḥ
p.111

The five skandha or pañcaskandha are proclaimed to be the five Buddha or pañcabuddha.

Guhyasamājantra in its first chapter describes how other deities emanate in detail.

In the process of caryā or practice of the ritual, sādhanā becomes one with deities worshiped which is known as ahaṅkāra in vajrayāna Buddhism, killing of ego and identifying one's self with the deity visualized.

In this ritual practice, sādhanas are the tools for visualization of deities for the ultimate realization of the doctrine and sādhanamālā is the garland of religious practice. Sādhanas are basically descriptive of deities which helps to meditate on deities for the worshiper to be one with. In this context, prachalita caryāgīti plays the role of sādhanā through which a deity is visualized and those caryāgīti sang and danced to

in padasādhanavidhi are the basis for realization of the deity because they explain the philosophy and doctrine of the religion where as prachalita caryāgīti is mainly descriptive of the deity.

In the ultimate stage of the practice or caryā, the ritual of padasādhanā turns out to be a yoga of vajrayāna or, in other words, ṣaḍaṅga yoga of vajrayāna Buddhism.

Findings

Deities are mere manifestation of thought construction. An example referred to in guhyasamājantra of pañca Buddha being manifestation of pañca skandha and emanation of all other deities of vajrayāna from pañca Buddha detailed in guhyasamājantra suffices to establish vajrayāna as god-less religion in spirit as envisaged in its foundation.

Caryāgīti and caryānṛtyas are the main component of the rituals which are the specimen for the compilation of vajrayāna Buddhism doctrines as well as a tool of vajrayāna religious practice utilized for sādhanā of symbolic manifested deities with higher goal of achieving emancipation, or in other word, nirvāṇā.

Vajrayāna practice ultimately turns out to be practice of yoga or ṣaḍaṅga yoga.

Art contained in caryā was never taken as for aesthetic presentation by religious practitioners but it oozes out for those who are drowned deep down.

Vajrayāna accepts the physical body as vehicle and point of departure for spiritual transmission.

Hand gestures or mudra, āsana, leg postures and body movements are defined but a systematic manual on dance finds missing.

Use of nepālbhāṣā in caryāgīti contained in padasādhanā is none existent despite its being practiced among Newār



vajrācārya.

Conclusion

Buddhism arose out of opposition to *yagya* or *homa* but tends to entangle itself in once rejected practice. Ahorātrapadasādhana is one such example. Symbolism plays a prominent role in the practice of the religion and therefore leaning on to manifestations could be well understood but symbolic manifestations never replace the thoughts they represent. Therefore, the rituals like padasādhana are for realization of the symbolic manifestations presented in the form of deities for visualization through worships.

Caryāgīti and caryānṛtya incorporated in padasādhavidhi forms the essence of the practice or caryā as the crescendo of the ritual sums itself up with formation of vajrapada posture representative of the nṛtya or dance comprised in the religious practice of vajrayāna.

And sādhanā plays major role in the meditative practice which is a step towards achieving the goal of śaḍaṅga yoga inherent in vajrayāna spiritual aim.

The concept of ahaṅkāra helps in transformation of sādhanā into sādhyā or deity worshiped.

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