



Yogini. (Performer: Tara Manandhar).
Photo: Bijaya Maharjan.

Caryāgītimanjarī: A Newā Buddhist Literature

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Abstract

Caryāgītimanjarī is an abstraction of Vajrayāna philosophy or an upaniśada of Vajrayāna Buddhism. It is a gist of Vajrayāna philosophy and its doctrine or a āgama veda – a divine religious text of wisdom. These caryāgīti bring to life the sacred scripture (āgama), a sacred knowledge (veda) of ancient time (purāṇa) and it is described (bakhāne) in caryāgīti. It is rightly said so on caryāgīti:

āgama veda purāṇa bakhāne 2

yoga dharma dīkṣā gurupadeśa II dhu II

The glory of caryāgīti is expressed in the stanza:

The one called great pleasure (mahāsukha) has arisen, protects by virtue of the song (gīta) and dances (nrityatu).

jātā eka mahāsukha nāmā 2

nṛtyantu gīta balena rakṣena II II

And to sum it up, an ultimate obeisance is paid to caryāgīti emphasizing the prominence of kāya (body), vāka (speech) and citta (mind):

ākāśakāyasambhūta ākāśavākapravartaka I

ākāśachittadharmāgra caryāpada namohstu te II II

Caryāgīti commands a place of pride in art, culture, religion and literature of Newā community.

Keywords: *caryāgīti, manjarī, newā, guhya, bāhya, niṣprapṇca, prapanca, pancabuddha, mahāsukha, supratimāṇḍita, kolāire, trihaṇḍā, pracalita caryāgīti, caryāgītiakoṣa*

Introduction

The collection of Buddhist religious songs inherited and put into practice by the *Newā* community of Nepal is a pride possession of the nation and it is a mark of its distinct identity. Conspicuously, the language the community is so possessive about is missing in the compilation of the literary material but the philosophy it preaches is the core of the community adheres to. The literature has a history of thousand years and probably more. The Buddhist literature has faced a negligent attitude by the scholastic genre but the significance of written treasure has survived the onslaught.

So called *caryāgīṭimanjarī* is apparently in two parts; the one is secretive and the other one is open to all. The one which is *guhya* is composed of the doctrine or the philosophy of the religion it intends to preach but the other one dwells in the descriptive narration of the world of deities the religion has created for the practitioners to follow in the rituals performed. The *guhya* material is of the somber nature while the *bāhya* has the propagator intents, it seems. It will not be out of place to call them *niṣprapnca* and *prapanca caryāgīṭi*, in other words, *guhya* and *bāhya caryāgīṭi*.

For the comparative study of the two separate traits of the songs, *guhya* and *bāhya caryāgīṭi*, *supratimaṇḍita caryāgīṭi* stands out distinctively as *guhya caryāgīṭi*. *Caryāgīṭi kolāire* and *trihaṇḍā* are the pillars of the *guhya caryāgīṭi* as a study material.

A. Guhya Caryāgīṭi

A.1. Supratimaṇḍita (guhya caryāgīṭi):

Supratimaṇḍita has been called a *tathāgata caryā*. In *supratimaṇḍita caryā nṛtya gīṭa*, we are being introduced to the concept of *pancabuddha*, and the virtue of *caryā nṛtya gīṭa* is established. It says:

Gloriously adorned circular orb of the realm proudly spreads umbrella flag. Glorious sounding fourth state of the soul in which it becomes one with Brahman (*turya*) is worshiped. After that it indeed chooses the song (*gīṭa*) and is worshiped. Of the nature of five-fold enlightened one (*pancabuddha*) is all knowing brutes (*paśu*), un-lustrous (*kurāḍa*), bad intended (*kucitta*) and un-divine (*kudiviyam*). The one called great pleasure (*mahāsukha*) has arisen, protects by virtue of the song (*gīṭa*) and dances (*nṛtyatu*). A vehicle of Buddhist thought (*śrāvakayāna*) teaches service (*bhikcho*), kill the animal in you and then animate or inspire true nature of the human soul (*tattva*). The world is awakened by the virtue of enlightened one. Approach the daybreak or morning thus- the universe would be Brahman (*swayambhū*). Whereby you kill much of spiritual ignorance or delusion you become enlightened one (Buddha). Against the clear perception of the enlightened one (Buddha) there is dullness of spirit everywhere.

This *caryāgīṭi* makes us think and brood. As is known, first ever introduction

of the concept of *pancabuddha* in *guhyaśamājatāttra* is a deviation point of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism from the main stream of Buddhism and a foundation of its thought process. All the gods and goddesses of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism emanate from *pancabuddha*. *Pancabuddha* is a deification of *panca skandha* – *vigyāna*, *rupam*, *vedanā*, *sagyā* and *samskāra* – the five objects of senses or the five forms of mundane consciousness or existence. Why of the nature of (*ātmaka*) five-fold (*panca*) enlightened one (Buddha) who are all knowing (*sarvogyam*) and they are being addressed as brutes (*paśo*), un-lustrous (*kurāa*), bad intended (*kucitta*) and un-divine (*kudivya*)? Are these manifestations being designated as *prapanca*? The clear perception of the enlightened one (Buddha) is suggested to remove ‘dullness of the spirit everywhere and the spiritual ignorance or delusion’.

Now the rise of great pleasure (*mahāsukha*) is declared protected by virtue of the song (*gīta*) and dances (*nrityatu*). The song and the dance have been given the prominence and *mahāsukha* becomes a goal. *Mahāsukha* or *mahāsuha* is a basic concept of *vajrayāna* religious doctrine. *Supratimaṇḍita caryāgīti* describes it as ‘*eka mahāsukha*’, emphasis being of its exclusiveness, and *cakrikunḍala caryāgīti* presents it as a blessing (for sentient being) or *prasāda*. The experience of *mahāsukha* is proclaimed to be contained in the moment or *kṣaṇa* as narrated in *tridalapadma*, derived in the embrace of the deity

with *pragyā* or female counterpart in the state of *advaya* or non-duality rendered in *caryāgīti atasi kusuma*, so does *dvādaśa pāramitā* in the embrace of *vārāhī* and *heruva* or *samvara*. *Mahāsukha* is compared to *mahārasa* in *vajrayoginī*. It has all the ingredients of *caturānanda* (*ānanda*, *paramānanda*, *viramānanda* and *sahajānanda*) says *akhayaniranjana* followed by *pravisatu* declaring *mahāsukha* to be a divine happiness or *ānanda*. In terms of yogic practice, ‘*prāṇa bindu*’ equals (*sama*) *mahāsukha* as described in *sahajasaroruha*. Achievements of accomplishing *daśabhūmi* is also capable of bestowing *mahāsukha* proclaims *namāmi 2 jinadharmadhātu*. The deities are capable of spreading *mahāsukha* says *vāma dahina*. *Tridalapadma*, *atasi kusuma*, *dvādaśa pāramitā*, *vajrayoginī*, *akhayaniranjana*, *pravisatu*, *sahajasaroruha*, *namāmi 2 jinadharmadhātu* and *vāma dahina* are all names of *caryāgīti*.

Vajrayāna caryā is understood as the practice of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism consisting of *caryāgīti*, *caryānṛtya* and worship. These are all tools and not the goal. With the use of *maṇḍala*, *mantra* and *mudrā* in the execution of *sādhana* prescribed, eliminating the duality of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, following the *daśabhūmi mārga* of *bodhisattva*, focuses on *nirvāṇa* as the ultimate goal. The final objective of the practice of *caryā* is the liberation from rebirth. In this process, achievements of accomplishing *daśabhūmi* are also capable of bestowing *mahāsukha* and deities are said to be capable of spreading *mahāsukha*.

A.2. Kolāire: (*guhya caryāgīti*)

The most mystical *caryāgīti* is *kolāire*. This is the only *caryāgīti* found in *vajrayāna* manuscript named *hevajratantra*. In the fourth chapter of *hevajratantra* where four questions are being asked by divine beings headed by *vajragarbha* to lord *vajrasattva*, the lord answers ‘on performance about singing and dancing as bestowing perfection’. In an elaborated answer to the question, three points (1, 2, and 3) forms the translation of the *caryāgīti kolāire*, initial part of the answer. The Lord replied in answer to the question:

- (1) The *yogin* stays at *kollagiri*, the *yoginī* at *mummuṇi*. Loudly the drum sounds forth. Love is our business and not dissension.
- (2) There we eat meat and drink wine in great quantity. Hey there, the true followers are come together, but the frauds are kept far away. We take the fourfold preparation and musk and frankincense and camphor, herbs and special meat we eat with relish.
- (3) Going this way and that in the dance, we give no thought to what is chaste or unchaste. Adorning our limbs with bone-ornaments, we place the corpse in position. Union takes place at that meeting, for *ḍombī* is not there rejected.
- (4) Dancing as *śrī heruka* with mindful application, undistracted, meditating with thought impassioned, the mind uninterrupted in its concentration.

- (5) Buddhas and masters in the vajra-doctrine, goddesses and yoginīs, sing and dance to their utmost in this song and dance.
- (6) There comes thereby protection for the troupe and protection for oneself. Thereby the world is reduced to subjection, and all reciting of mantras (is perfected) by it.
- (7) Decorously one sings there; decorously one dances there. The leader is first appointed, and then he should note the scent,
- (8) First of garlic, next of vultures and then of camphor and sandal-wood. Afterwards he should note the effective power of the song.
- (9) The sound of a goose and a bee is heard at the end of the song, and of a jackal too he should note the sound in the garden without.

A.3. Trihaḍā: (*guhya caryāgīti*)

Trihaḍā caryāgītinṛtya is one of those *caryāgīti* on which *caryānṛtya* is performed. The *gīti* is also the only song contained in *caryāgītikōṣa* which finds its place in the *vajrayāna* ritual practice of *vajrācārya* of the Kathmandu valley. *Trihaḍā* is also known as *strihaḍā*, *tiaḍḍā* or *trivṛttām*. *Trihaḍā* and *strihaḍā* is of Nepali tradition, *tiaḍḍā* is the expression found in *caryāgītikōṣa* and *trivṛttām* is the *saṅskṛta* version of the *gīti* by Munidatta. Meaning of *trihaṇā*, *strihaḍā* and *tiaḍḍā* mystically leads to feminine overtones but

Munidatta's *saṅskṛta* version interprets *trivṛttām* as 'three nerves' or '*tina nāḍi*' specified as *lalanā*, *rasanā* and *avadhūti*. The act of *caryā* of *trihāṇḍā* is indicative of the yoga process where the duality of *lalanā* 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 *sādhana* practiced as *trihāṇḍā*.

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*, *ghanṭha*; 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 *kundurū*. The yoga process begins in the sixteenth act of *ahorātrapadasāadhanavidhi* in the name of *trihāṇḍā*.

Trihaṇḍā translation by Nila Ratan Sen:

O *yoginī* 'pressing' (your) triangular organ embraces (me).

Stirring up lotus and thunder perform the evening rituals.²

I drink the nectar of lotus kissing your lips.⁴

Being sprinkled, O *yoginī*, it is not being smeared there.

Passing through *maṇimula* it enters into *oḍiāna*.⁶

Putting the house of the mother-in-law under lock and key,

(You) clip two wings, the sun and the moon.⁸

Guḍarī says, I am a man in *kundurū*.

(I) raised the genital among men and women.¹⁰

yoginī: Female ascetic

triangular organ: Female genital

lotus and thunder: Male and female genitals, denoting mind and void.

Rituals: Copulation (?)

maṇimula, *oḍiāna* : *Maṇikuṇḍala* and *mahāsukhacakra* are the two important positions described in the tantric practices.

mother-in-law: Breath

kundurū: The sexual game

B. *Pracalita caryāgīti* (*bāhya caryāgīti*)

In a descriptive narration of *śākyamuni* Buddha, he is described decked on eight illuminated petal lotus and *śākyamuni*'s eyes are closed in meditation. Sited on the right is *vajrapāṇi* and on the left is *kamalapāṇi* and to such a *mahāmuni* we bow. On the right he holds a *khikhirī* and on the left is held a *kuṇi pātra*. He wears a fascinating *civara* and he presides over the world.

In a descriptive narration of *pancabuddha*, continuous obeisance is paid to him. *Akśobhya muni* is placed on

the east and he is of blue color, in earth touching *mudrā* or hand gesture, sitting on an elephant or *gaja*. In the south is sited *ratna muni* that is of yellow color, exhibiting *varada mudrā* while riding a horse or *turaṅga*. *Amitāva muni* is sited in the west that is of red color or of blood color with *dhyāna mudrā* riding a peacock or *mayura*. In the north is sited *amogha siddhi muni*, of green color and riding an eagle or *garuḍa*. And in the middle is sited supreme *vairocana* who is sitting on vajra, whose presence is global, who is *svayambhū* or self-born.

Thus is the presentation of *bāhya caryāgīti* on *mahākāla*: my obeisance to *mahākāla* who kills the enemies, he takes away the fear; he holds *karati* in his right hand, he pierces all the enemies. In his left hand is *khaṭvāṅga* and *brahma kapāla* all moist with blood, burning above, riding a dead body, he looks impressive standing tall, he wears a *mālā* of skull around his neck and his girdle is wrapped of tiger skin.

C. *Caryāgīti*koṣa

Specimens of expressions contained in *caryāgīti*koṣa are cited below:

The body is a beautiful tree; only five are its branches.

Milking the she tortoise (it) cannot be contained in the pail.

The crocodile eats the tamarind of the tree.²

Oh learned woman, listen, the courtyard is towards the house.

The thief has taken away the ear-ring at midnight.⁴

The father-in-law fell asleep, the daughter-in-law was awake.

The thief has taken away the ear-ring; going where can it be asked for.⁶

There is female gong dealer; she enters into two houses.

She ferments wine with fine barks.²

Consume the wine, concentrating on sahaḥa;

So that you can be strong shouldered, being free from ageing and death.⁴

Cāṭila (*siddha*) builds a bridge for the sake of religion.

People intending to go the other side are crossing it confidently.⁴

Cleaving the tree of illusion, joining the planks,

Nirvāṇa was prepared with a strong axe of non-duality.⁶

The path is obstructed by *āli-kāli*.

Observing that *Kāhṇa* became sad.²

O *Kāhṇa*, going where will you reside?

One, who is perceptible by the mind, is unconcerned.⁴

The boat of *karuṇā* is loaded with gold.

There is no space for silver.²

Kāhṇa (*siddha*) intoxicated with wine, is making sports.

(He) is tamed after entering into the lotus-bed of sahaḥa.4

O *Dombi*, I shall copulate with you.

I am shameless *Kāhṇa*, the naked *kāpāli yogin*.4

Ālī and *kālī* are the bells and anklets on the feet.

The sun and the moon are made the kuṇḍala ornaments.6

On the chess board of *karuṇā* I play the game of nine powers.

By the advice of the good preceptor, I won the power of existence.2

The duality is killed, O *ṭhākura*, you are defeated.

O *Kāhṇa*, by the advice of the benefactor, the *jināpura* is near.4

There are numerous expressions of the kind in *caryāgītikoṣa* which are of explanatory nature meant for general masses, as is assumed.

Research Methodology

The research is based on the manuscripts on *caryāgīti*, published work on *caryāgītikoṣa* and scholarly work on *Vajrayāna* Buddhism along with texts. Three different traits of *caryāgīti* are explored, analyzed and interpreted to arrive at conclusion of its nature, characteristics and purpose of its creation.

Discussion

A review of *vajrayāna* Buddhist literature on *caryā* or on *caryāgīti*, to

be specific, has been neglected by the scholastic community. Publication of *caryācaryaviniścaya* or *caryāgītikoṣa* a century ago and its aftermath was the beginning and the end of the study of *caryāgīti* literature. The survival of the practice or *caryā* of *vajrayāna* in the form of *caryāgīti* as a song to be sang and dance to, is a remarkable achievement of the *newā* Buddhist community of Nepal. Preservation of the *caryāgīti* tradition in the form of *guhya* and *bāhya caryāgīti* rendering and dancing has kept the door open for the distinctive study of the Nepalese version of the *caryāgīti* from the content of the *caryāgīti* in *caryāgītikoṣa*. Moreover, *guhya* and *bāhya caryāgīti* put into practice by the *vajrācārya* community, is an intriguing subject for the analysis and interpretation of its subject matter.

Guhya caryāgīti can be divided into two parts – *caryāgīti* (which are only sung) and *caryāgītinṛtya* (which are sang and danced to). *Guhya caryāgīti* are titled thus:

dharadhara, nandinamaskāra, rāgamālā, viśvasaroruha, haraśira, akāra sanjāta, madhyameru, anila, raktavarṇa, namo hūm, uragābharaṇa and *jinavarajanānī* are some of the *caryāgīti* sung but not danced to and there are other *caryāgīti* which are sang and danced to e.g. *hādābharaṇa, tribhuvana jvalita, namāmī 2 śrī heruka candra śekhara, hum hum dehadharu, kolāi, paramarato, namo hūm, supratimaṇḍita, sūnyaniranjana, trihaṇḍā, bhāsvarakhaṇḍa, dvambīnī, ye mahimaṇḍala, jinajik, hūnkārasanjāta and cakrīkuṇḍala*.

Bāhya caryāgīti can be categorized into *caryāgīti* of gods *pancabuddha*, *vajrasattva*, *mahāmanjuśrī*, *padmapāṇilokeśvara*, *hayagrīva*, *gaṇeśa*, *bhairava*, *bhīmasena* and *nṛṣeśvara*; of goddesses *vajrayoginī*, *āryyētārādevī*, *tārā*, *aṣṭamāṭṛkā devī*, *sarasvatī*, *vasundharā* and *hārati*; of concepts *pragyāpāramitā*, *nāmasangīti*, *svayambhū* and *pañcarakṣā*.

Pañcabuddha can easily be categorized as gods of concept because it represents the concept of pancaskandha and so is *nṛṣeśvara*.

In contrast, *caryāgīti* of *caryāgītikoṣa* of is not titled, or in other words, it has not been given the title or contains no title.

Conclusion

Guhya caryāgīti sang and danced to by the *vajrācāya* priests in their secret rituals is rich in dissemination of *vajrayāna* philosophy inherent in religious edifice. On the other hand, the *bāhya caryāgīti* are representative of the symbolic manifestation of the deities created for the practice of the religion in the form of *sādhana*. *Guhya caryāgīti* is, and was; available to only those who are, and were; initiated in the religion but *bāhya caryāgīti* is in the reach of everyone and anyone who aspire to know *vajrayāna*.

Pracalita caryāgīti can be defined as those *caryāgīti* which are descriptive of the deities. Generally, these *caryāgītis* are not put to practice for the rituals. As of categorization of *caryāgīti*, it falls in the category of *prapañca caryāgīti*

– *prapañca* can be defined as delusory, conceptually proliferated, fabricated or visible world symbolically created for the purpose of *sādhana* or *dhyāna* or meditation in general. In other words, these *pracalita caryāgītis* are also known as *bāhya caryāgīti* or those *caryāgītis* which are not practiced in secrecy. These *pracalita caryāgītis* are usually danced to. The purpose of creation of *pracalita caryāgīti* can well be as an instrument for keeping the religion alive among the community of *vajrayāna* Buddhism followers. Title of the *bāhya caryāgītis* are indicative of the deities to be worshiped in the song. These *caryāgītis* are generally found documented in *devanāgarī* script. These *caryāgītis* are of later origin.

Secret *caryāgītis* consists of both the *caryāgītis* which are sang and danced to. For the rituals performed by the *vajrayāna* priests, there are host of secret *caryāgītis* which can be categorized as *niṣprapañca caryāgīti* – *niṣprapañca* can be defined as un-manifest, non-fabricated, transcendent, one which is beyond the world of matter created for spiritual practice of the philosophy propagated or put forward by the religion. Title of the *guhya caryāgīti* is derived from the first letter of *caryāgīti*. *Guhya caryāgītis* are mostly documented in *pracalita nevarī lipi* or script. These *caryāgītis* are of older origin. But, titles of the *bāhya caryāgīti* are of various gods and goddesses worshiped.

The titles of the *caryāgīti*, both *guhya* and *bāhya*, are reflective of their characteristics.

In contrast, *caryāgītikoṣa* contains the *caryāgīti*, not put in practice by the Nepalese *vajrācārya* priests, except *trihanḍā*, more of a propagative and emotive kind for the spread of the religion among masses and exclusively for close secret community group of secret practitioners, vehemently opposed by certain social genre or community of the time when it came into practice. It was primarily for digestion of the masses to be converted into the new formidable religion of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, propagated and written by *siddhas*, specially 84 *siddhas* of the time.

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