

A Study of Tantric Rituals in Nepalese Buddhism

Samādhi of Tārā in Saptavidhānuttarapūjā

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1. Introduction

Most of the major rituals in Newar Buddhism consist of a stage where a Vajrācārya priest contemplates the nature of a certain deity as a part of the main rites. The rite is called '*samādhi danegu*' and it consists mainly of contemplating his own tutelary deity, which in most cases is the Saṃvara. The *samādhi* of Saṃvara, called *tri-samādhi*, is so common among Newar Buddhists today that it is worshipped in most of the rituals performed by Vajrācāryas, regardless of the deity in question. This is true also in the case of *Saptavidhānuttarapūjā* (hereafter *SP*), which is one of the most popular and fully developed exoteric Newar Buddhist rituals. The ritual of *SP* employs the Sevenfold Supreme Worship¹⁾ and the deity to be worshipped in it are in most cases Tārā, Lokeśvara, or Śākyamuni Buddha. Exceptionally, in the *SP* that I observed on August 28, 2004 in a private house at Lalitpur city, a *samādhi* of Tārā was performed instead. Depending on the ritual performed and the manuscript of the ritual manual used on that day, I will describe the *samādhi* below. The manuscript, which is a private collection of Dharmarāja Vajrācārya, has 43 folios with 14 lines per folio. It is dated as Nepal Era 1061 (1941 AD) and compiled by Siddhirāja Gubhāju of Būbahā, Patan.

2. The *samādhi* of Tārā

The *samādhi* rite is the beginning of the main rites. It is performed after the preliminary rites like *sūryārgha* (reception of the Sun), *gurupādārgha* (reception of the Vajrasattva and the priest), the purification, and the *gurumaṇḍala*. The *Tārāsamādhi* of *SP* can be described in the following stages:

[I] **Salutations:** In the beginning, salutations are made to the triple gems. Then the Bud-

dhas and Bodhisattvas are requested to be present in every direction.

[II] **Contemplation of Mahattarītārā:** A syllable *Tām* is visualized at the middle of a moon-disk in one's own heart. Buddha and Bodhisattvas are arisen from the ray of light streamed from the syllable. Then the text describes that one should first perform exterior and interior worships (*bāhyādhyātmyapūjā*) and then the sevenfold supreme worships. Then *sūnyatā* is conceived followed by the pronunciations that all the phenomena and the self are pure in nature. Then from the *Tām* syllable, a white *utpala* flower is generated in which another syllable *Tām* is present. From that syllable, Mahattarītārā is generated who is fully ornamented and seated cross-legged (*paryaṅka*) over a great-moon-disk (*mahācandrāsana*) on a lotus. She is green in color and has no companions. She is granting boon (*varada*) with her right hand and holding a stalk of blue lotus (*indīvara*) in the left. Then conceiving the posture of *samayamudrā*, one visualizes oneself as Mahattarītārā. Pushpendra Kumar discusses, by referring to several labelled images, that Mahattarītārā was also known as Mahāttārāyi, and Mahat-tārā.²⁾ He also gives iconographic variations of this form of Tārā as being flanked by two female companions and other one as being seated in *lalitāsana*.

[III] **Contemplation of Varadatārā:** The second *samādhi* is that of Varadatārā. After contemplating *sūnyatā* as in the former *samādhi*, one visualizes in oneself a all-sided lotus (*viśvakamala*) born from the syllable *Pam*. A green colored syllable *Tām* is then visualized on a moon-disk which is born from the syllable *A* in the middle of the lotus. Then from the syllable *Tām*, the green colored Varadatārā is generated.

She is distinguishable by her four female companions. She is holding a water-lily (*nilot-pala*) in the left hand, granting wishes (*varada*) in the right and seated in the *ardhapary-aṅka* posture. She is flanked by Aśokakāntā and Mahamāyurī in the right side and by Ekajaṭā and Āryajāṅgulī in the left side. Aśokakāntā is yellow in color, and holding a branch of Aśoka tree and a Vajra with her left and right hands. Mahamāyurī, yellowish in color, holds a peacock-tail-feather (*mayurapicchikā*) and a yaktail-fan (*cāmara*) in her left and right hands. Ekajaṭā is dwarfish, dark colored, and holding a tiger skin (*vyāghrājina*). She has three eyes and terrible tusks. She has blazing hair and is also holding a chopper (*karṭṭ*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*). Similarly, Āryajāṅgulī, green in color, is holding a black snake (*kṛṣṇoraga*) and a fan (*cāmara*) with her left and right hands. Then one visualizes these deities as oneself.

[IV] **Adhiṣṭhāna:** After that, one performs the empowering (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the moon, the sun, one's hands, conch-shell, flowers, the bali, the ritual ground, and one's body, speech and mind, etc.

[V] *Nyāsa*: This is followed by *nyāsa*, a process where *mantras* of various deities are implemented into different parts of the worshipper's body. A total of 26 *mantras* are implemented using both right and left hands.

[VI] *Ākarṣaṇa*: At this point, one meditates that Āryatārā who is in the *Akaniṣṭha* heaven is invoked into the *maṇḍala*. The mantra *Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā* is muttered 108 times to her.

[VII] *Worshipping*: In the next stage, Āryatārā is worshipped with five transcendental Buddhas. It is followed by the worshipping of 40 Tārās.

[VIII] *Concluding rite*: At the conclusion of the *samādhi*, one recites praises to the transcendental Buddhas, Āryatārā, Mahattarītārā, and Prasannatārā followed by the worshipping of the crown (*maḥa*).

3. Conclusion

- The *samādhi* of Mahattarītārā described in the text is almost similar to the *sādhanā* no. 90 of the *Sādhanamālā*.³⁾ The text misses the parts where *vikacotpalamudrā* is performed and the mantra *Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā* is muttered. On the other hand, in *Sādhanamālā*, we do not find the line where Mahattarītārā is identified with the self.

- In the second *samādhi*, the text does not mention the name of the central deity. But the *sādhanā* no. 91 of *Sādhanamālā*⁴⁾ is identical to the *samādhi*. As in the former *samādhi*, the text misses the mantra *Om Tāre Tuttāre Ture Svāhā*. Considering the similarity, we may assume that the *samādhis* of both the Tārās were extracted to this *SP* text from the *Sādhanamālā*.

- The process of *nyāsa* in this *samādhi* is different than that of the *trīsamādhi*. In the *trīsamādhi*⁵⁾, 24 seed syllables are implemented in 24 parts of the body (*caturviṃśaty-aṅga-nyāsa*) using the middle finger of the right hand. In the case of present *samādhi*, 26 *mantras* are implemented using both right and left hands.

The Text

1 *tārāyā samādhi dane. jāki svām svapotane.*

om namaḥ śrītriratnabuddhāya. samanvāharantu mām buddhāḥ aśeṣādikṣu saṃs-
thitāḥ. 3.

2 *hānam jāki jvane.* oṃ namaḥ śrīāryatārāyai.

prathamam svahrdaye indumadhyasthatāmbijavinirgataras̄mibhirmiṣpannān gurubuddhabodhisattvān dhyāyāt. tāṃsca bāhyādhyātmya pūjābhīḥ sampūjya tadagre saptavidhānuttarapūjām kuryyāt. oṃ śūnyatām vibhāvya oṃ svabhāvasuddhāḥ sarvadharmāḥ svabhāvasuddho'ham iti uccārayet. tat candre tāṃsambhūta-sītopal asthatāmkārodbhūtām tārām śyāmām dvibhūjām ekamukhām dakṣiṇe varadām vāme sanāla[in]dīvarī sarvābharaṇabhūṣitām mahācandrāsane paryyaṅkaniṣaṅṅām cintayet. [samaya]mudrām bandhayet. mahattarītārātmanām bhāvayet.

3 oṃ pūrvavat śūnyatāparyantām vibhāvya paṃkārājaviśvābjadalamadhye akāreṇa-candre śyāmatāmkārajām tārām śyāmavarnām sarvālamkāradharām. vāme nilotpalavatīm dakṣiṇe varadam ardhaparyyaṅkaniṣaṅṅām. dakṣiṇapārśve aśokakāntām nānāratnamakuṭām vāmadakṣiṇahastayoraśokapallavakulisadharām. tathā mahāmāyūrīm vāmetarakarayoḥ mayūrapicchikācāmaradhāriṇīm. vāmapārśve ekajātam kharvām kṛṣṇām vyāghrājīnadharām trinetrām daṃṣṭrākārālavadanām jvalatpīṅgalordhvakeśām kartṭkapāladhāriṇīm. tathā āryajāṅgulīm śyāmām vāmadakṣiṇahastayoḥ kṛṣṇoragacāmaradhāriṇīm svabhāvayet.

4 *maṅdale tane. thana bhāvanā yāye.* oṃ akāreṇa candramaṅdalaṃ. *javam.* oṃ ākāreṇa sūryamaṅdalaṃ. *khavam.* oṃ vajrapadmahastau hūṃ. *śaṅkha thiye.* oṃ śaṅkhādhiṣṭhāna hūṃ. *pūjābhah thiye.* oṃ puṣpādhiṣṭhāna hūṃ. *balī.* oṃ tiṣṭhavajre hūṃ. *maṅdale.* oṃ vajrabhūme hūṃ. *śire thiye.* oṃ āḥ hūṃ.

5 *thana nyāsa yāye. lāhā jvalapā.* oṃ āḥ hūṃ āryatārāyai hūṃ. *javagu lāhā puyeke.* oṃ akāreṇa candramaṅdalaṃ. *khavagu puyeke.* oṃ ākāreṇa sūryamaṅdalaṃ. *javagu aṅgu rāniya.* oṃ krūṃ āṃ jīm kham hūṃ. *khavagu rāniya.* oṃ lām mām pām tām krūṃ. *javagu lāhā cakamkā kyane.* oṃ āḥ hūṃ svasvāhā. *khavagu cakamkā kyane.* oṃ vajrayakṣa hūṃ. *śire thiye.* oṃ āryatārā hrīm. *kathusa thiye.* oṃ jayāyai hūṃ. *nugalay thiye.* oṃ vijayāyai hūṃ. *tyapusa thiye.* oṃ jayavijayai hūṃ. *pālī thiye.* oṃ hūṃ svāvaladāyai hūṃ. *paṃcāṅga lāhā nipām cakamke.* oṃ hūṃ hā abhayapradāyai hūṃ.

khavam yāyegu. śire thiye. oṃ maitrye hūṃ. *kapāle.* oṃ kṣitigarbhe hūṃ. *mhutusa.* oṃ tāre hūṃ. *nugale.* oṃ mañjughoṣe hūṃ. *tyapusa.* oṃ sarvanīvarṇaviṣkambhi hūṃ.

javagubāhā thiye. oṃ ajitāya hūṃ. *khavagubāhā thiye.* oṃ aparājitāya hūṃ.

*khvāle thiye. oṃ mārasainyapramardanāya hūṃ. nugale thiye. oṃ hūṃ kālamṛtyu-
prasamanāya hūṃ. javagu pulī thiye. oṃ hūṃ dhanadāyai hūṃ. khavagu pulī thi-
ye. oṃ vasudharāyai hūṃ. jādhū thiye. oṃ amitābhāya hūṃ svāhā. lāhā nipāṃ
kyane. oṃ āryatārāṅkuśa jaḥ hūṃ vaṃ hoḥ svāhā.*

6 *thana jāki jvanā lāhā jvalape. oṃ ḥṛdisthitapamkārajarasmim mudrayā saṃhārya
akaniṣṭhabhuvanasthitṃ śrīāryatārāṃ maṇḍale ākarṣaṇena bhāvayet.*

jūpayāye. dhāḥ 108. oṃ tāre tuttāre ture svāhā.

7 *svabhāvasuddhā pādyaḍi taye. śrīmatśrīśrīāryatārāmaṇḍale pādyaḍamanārgḥaṃ
praciccha svāhā. oṃ āryatārāyai vajradhātumaṇḍale svāhā. oṃ dharmadhātave
namaḥ svāhā. āryavairocanaāya svāhā. oṃ akṣobhyaāya svāhā. oṃ ratnasambhavāya
svāhā.*

*oṃ amitābhāya svāhā. oṃ amoghasiddhaye svāhā. āryatārāyai svāhā. puṣpatārāyai
svāhā. dhūpatārāyai svāhā. dipatārāyai svāhā. gandhatārāyai svāhā. rasatārāyai
svāhā.*

*prasannatārāyai svāhā. śuklatārāyai svāhā. dhanadatārāyai svāhā. locanatārāyai
svāhā. māmakitārāyai svāhā. paṇḍarātārāyai svāhā. tārāyai svāhā. bhṛkuṭitārāyai
svāhā. saptalocanitārāyai svāhā. svetatārāyai svāhā. nilatārāyai svāhā. pītatārāyai
svāhā. raktatārāyai svāhā. syāmatārāyai svāhā. siddhilocanitārāyai svāhā. vajratā-
rāyai svāhā. ekajaṭitārāyai svāhā. yogatārāyai svāhā. bhūvanatārāyai svāhā. can-
dratārāyai svāhā. sūryatārāyai svāhā. maṅgalatārāyai svāhā. hāsyatārāyai svāhā.
lāsyatārāyai svāhā. rasaraṅgatārāyai svāhā. mahāmaṅgalatārāyai svāhā. sumaṅ-
galatārāyai svāhā. saṃpūrṇaḥaṭatārāyai svāhā. dvīparājatārāyai svāhā. basantā-
rāyai svāhā.*

*dharmatārāyai svāhā. puṇyatārāyai svāhā. śrīāryatārāyai svāhā. vajratārāyai svāhā.
oṃ vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā.*

8 *pūjā. lāsyā. stuti. oṃ namo śrīāryatārāyai namaḥ.*

*oṃ akṣobhyaṃ ca mahābodhiṃ śrīratnasambhavāya namo namaḥ /
amitābhaṃ ca mahārāgaṃ amoghasiddhaye namāmy ahaṃ //*

āryatārāmahādevīmahattarītārāyai namo namaḥ /

prasannatārādevīm śrī tā tu tāre namastu te //

oṃ namaste tārādevīnāṃ tāre ture vīre tuttāre bhayanāśanaṃ /

ture sarvākāraṃ svāhākāraṃ namāmy ahaṃ //

om sarvavyāpibhavāgryāgryam sugatādhīpatijinaṃ /
traidhātukaṃ namaskaromi sarvabhayanāśanam //
naivedya. mata. yedharmā.
thana makutaṭpūjā yāye. iti śrīāryatārā samādhi samāptam.

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Manuscript:

Om Tārādharmaḃyā Saphū Thva, in the private collection of Dharmaraja Vajracharya, Patan, Number of folios: 43, NS 1061.

Notes:

- 1) The sevenfold supreme worship in the *Bhadracaryāpranīdhāna* has been described as: (i) *vandanā*, (ii) *pūjana*, (iii) *deśanā* (iv) *modana*, (v) *adhyeṣaṇa*, (vi) *yācana*, and (vii) *nāmana*.
- 2) Prof. Pushendra Kumar (1992): p. 58
- 3) Benoytosh Bhattacharya (1968): pp. 176-177
- 4) *Ibid.*, p. 177
- 5) See Herakaji (1995): pp. 20-21

(Key Words) *tārā*, *samādhi*, *saptavidhānuttaraṭpūjā*, Newar Buddhist Ritual
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