A Sanskrit Text of the Nepalese Buddhist Homa

Shinobu YAMAGUCHI

1. Homa rituals in Newar Buddhism

In the Kathmandu Valley, Newar Buddhism, preserves the tradition of Indian Buddhist Tantrism to a great extent. In Newar Buddhism, *pūjā* (offering worship) and *homa* (fire offering ritual) are popular. Homa rituals are performed in order to remove obstacles and diseases.

On the second of August, 1994, a homa ritual was performed at the house of a Newar Buddhist priest, Rev. Ratnakajee Vajracharya. In that year, his first and second sons were married. In the Kathmandu Valley, Buddhist priests perform several kinds of homa rituals such as *Māṃsāhutihoma* and *Śīrāhutihoma*. The homa performed in 1994 was called *Sahasrāhutihoma* (one thousand offering homa ritual), which is very popular among Newar Buddhists. *Sahasrāhutihoma* is also performed for other occasions such as the construction of a *stūpa* or the celebration of someone becoming seventy-seven years old, and so on. The homa that I observed began at 8 o'clock A. M. and continued for three hours. At that time, the priest performed the ritual according to the Sanskrit text named *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi*.

2. *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi*

There are several Sanskrit manuscripts and a few printed editions of *Sahasrāhutihoma*. The titles of the text are various: *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi*, *Sahasrāhutihomavidhi*, and *Yajñavidhāna*. The content of each text differs. In most texts, mantras are written in Sanskrit and explanations are written in Newari.

The text *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi*, which was used in the homa in 1994, was edited by Newar Buddhist priest Rev. Amoghavajra Vajracharya in 1973. It was published in a twenty-page booklet. In the text, mantras and some explanations of the process of rites

are written in Sanskrit, and the some additional explanations are given in Newari.

The contents of *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi* are as follows :

1. Preliminary rite : *Kalaśārcanapūjā*

1. 1 *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā*
1. 2 *Trisamādhi*
1. 3 *Kalaśapūjā*

2. Main rite : *Homa*

2. 1 Purification and lighting of the fireplace (*agnisthāpana*)
2. 2 Fire offering (*āhuti*) to the fire god *Agni* (*agnyāhuti*)
2. 3 Fire offering to the main deity
2. 4 Bali offering (*balipūjā*), worship of holy places (*piṭhādipūjā*) and sacred places located in the eight directions (*cākrapūjā*)
2. 5 Purification of disciples (*śiṣyādhivāsana*)
2. 6 Filling the fireplace with offerings (*pūrṇāhuti*)
2. 7 Offering the remainders of oblations (*śeṣāhuti*)
2. 8 Sending forth the gods (*visarjana*)

Kalaśārcanahomavidhi is divided into two parts ; that is, a preliminary rite and a main rite. The first part, *Kalaśārcanapūjā*, consists of three rites: (1) *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā* (Worship of *Gurumaṇḍala*), (2) *Trisamādhi* (Three meditations), and (3) *Kalaśapūjā* (Worship of a jar). *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā* is one of the most fundamental rituals in Newar Buddhism. In *Gurumaṇḍalapūjā*, a priest performing the ritual invites *Vajrasattva*, who is considered a master (guru) of Newar Buddhist priests, into a circle called “*gurumaṇḍala*” drawn in front of the priest. The priest puts flowers, rice, incense and other materials to the *Gurumaṇḍala*.

The second part of the preliminary rite, *Trisamādhi*, contains three steps of meditation and the worship of *Cakrasaṃvaramaṇḍala*. The third rite, *Kalaśapūjā* is the worship of the deity invited into a jar put in the ritual place. In the main rite, *Homa*, oblations are offered to the deity. Therefore, *Kalaśapūjā* is indispensable for *Sahasrāhutihoma* (Locke, 1980, p.106).

After the preliminary rite, the main rite, *Homa* begins. In Newar Buddhism, the *Homa* is often called “*homapūjā*.” That is to say, *Homa* is considered a kind of *pūjā*. In the first part of the main rite, the *yajamāna* (sacrificer) or the patron puts the *kuśa* grass in the form of *swastika* inside the fireplace for purification. Then the priest salutes the *guru Va-*

jasattva reciting “om vajrasattva āḥ.” Then, the priest recites a prayer to remove all obstacles from the yajamāna.

After the purification, the priest puts fuel sticks called *soṃsi* (Nw.) in a small clay vessel (Nw. *salī*) before him. Next the fuel sticks are lit. The fire on the sticks is called *bhūtāgni*. Then the priest fires the sticks piled up inside the fireplace, reciting a prayer asking for the completion of the homa in order to fulfil yajamāna’s desires.

Then, the priest meditates upon *Samayāgni* (the fire god of promise), who is yellow-colored with one face and four arms. He has a staff (*daṇḍa*) and a water jar (*kamaṇḍalu*) in his two left hands, and a rosary in one right hand. His other right hand shows a boon-giving gesture (*varadamudrā*). He wears a yellow garment and a crown decorated with the image of *Vajrasattva*.

Having meditated, the priest invites *Samayāgni* to the fireplace. Then he offers water, and flowers, etc., to the deity. Later, he draws *Samayāgni* into the fire. Having done this, the priest pours clarified butter (*ghṛta*) with a ladle into the fire one hundred eight times. The action is called *agnyāhuti*.

As soon as the butter is offered, eighteen kinds of fuel sticks (Nw. *hoṃvi*), grains, beans, and milk etc. are offered to *Samayāgni*. Then the priest meditates upon *Jñānāgni* (the fire god of knowledge). Later, the priest meditates that *Samayāgni* and *Jñānāgni* should be united as milk is mingled with water (*kṣīranīram iva*). Then, the clarified butter is offered to the unity of the *Samayāgni* and *Jñānāgni*. Meditations of *Samayāgni* and *Jñānāgni* are often referred to in Indian Buddhist Tantras, such as *Samavarodayatantra* (Tsuda, 1974, p.139).

Next, the third part of the main rite, the fire offering to the main deity of the homa, starts. In the homa I observed in 1994, the image of *Akṣobhya Buddha* was put as the main deity of the ritual. The third part is divided into three steps : (1) Worship of the main deity (*devapūjā*), (2) Offering clarified butter and grains to the main deity (*devatāhuti*), and (3) One thousand offerings (*sahasrāhuti*).

In (1), the yajamāna offers water for sipping and washing feet, five kinds of nectar (*pañcāmṛta*), and a mirror, etc., to the main deity. In (2), the priest pours water from a conch shell and five kinds of nectar into the image in order to bathe the main deity. Next, the priest offers fuel sticks, grains, clarified butter to the main god. This rite is called *devatāhuti*.

In (3), Sahasrāhuti, the declaration of the ritual (saṃkalpa) and the offering to the fire are done. First, the priest wears a red cloth (Nw. kasāyḡā, Skt. kaṣāyavastra). Then he declares the date, the place and the purpose of the homa to be performed. The declaration is called kasāyḡā-saṃkalpa. Next, the priest offers a mixture of rice, clarified butter, milk and black sesame into the fire one thousand times. The action is called sahasrāhuti, which is the climax of the Sahasrāhutihoma.

As soon as Sahasrāhuti has been performed, the fourth part of the homa, the Bali offering (balipūjā) starts. Bali is offered to the guardian deities such as Indra, Yama and Varuṇa etc., goddesses yoginīs and dākinīs, spirits, and so on, who, while not called directly, accompany the invited deities. In order to pacify them, Bali is offered. In Sahasrāhutihoma, the Bali oblation usually contains cooked rice, beans, and flowers.

In the Bali offering, the priest salutes the guardian deities of ten directions. At that time, the yajamāna pours water from the conch shell into the Bali oblation. Next, the yajamāna pours rice beer into the Bali oblation in order to again pacify the goddesses yoginīs and dākinīs, while the priest is reciting the mantras.

Then, the worship of the holy places (pitha) and the sacred places of the eight directions begins. The text refers to ten kinds of holy places, such as pīṭha, upapīṭha, kṣetra, upakṣetra, chandoha, and upachandoha. Those names often appear in the Buddhist tantras such as *Samvarodayatantra*.

Most of Newar Buddhist rituals end with the Bali offerings. In the Sahasrāhutihoma, however, some rites follow the Bali offering such as the purification of disciples (śiṣyādhivāsana). There the text says briefly, “Śiṣyādhivāsana should be done by the members of the yajamāna holding five-colored strings, if it is necessary.” In the home in 1994, the family of the yajamāna performed Śiṣyādhivāsana, while the priest was reciting mantras. However, no mantras are mentioned in the text. Rev. Gautam Ratna Vajracharya, who was the yajamāna of the homa ritual, says that Śiṣyādhivāsana is performed to purify the individual soul (ātman) of each member of the yajamāna's family.

Then, the sixth part of the homa, namely, filling the fireplace with offerings (pūnāhuti), starts. The priest offers water from the conch shell for sipping and washing the feet of the main deity. Next, reciting mantras, he throws fifteen kinds of offerings into the fire. The offering materials are a bel fruit, a sacred thread (yajñopavita), flowers, incense, coconut, sugarcane, sweets, and thirty-two kinds of medicinal plants and so on.

According to the late Rev. Ratnakajee Vajracharya, who was the priest of the homa I observed, the medicinal plants are offered in order to take away diseases from the yajamāna's family members. Offering various kinds of oblations, the priest recites a prayer, asking that the homa should be completed by performing Pūrṇāhuti. The Pūrṇāhuti seems to be a confirmation of the Sahasrāhutihoma.

Then, the seventh part, the Śeṣāhuti or offering the remainder of the oblations, begins. It is the concluding rite of the homa. Here in the Śeṣāhuti, the priest meditates upon the maṇḍala of Agni who was meditated in the Agnyāhuti. He draws the maṇḍala into his body, and meditates upon Agni again. Next, he offers the remainder of clarified butter and grains to Agni, reciting a prayer indicating that all the creatures should be happy. The text ends with sending forth all gods and spirits, etc. who came to the ritual place (visarjana).

3. Conclusion

The *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi* explains the process of the Sahasrāhutihoma, which is one of the most popular homa rituals in Newar Buddhism. The text consists of two parts, namely, the Kalaśārcanapūjā and the Homa. The former includes three kinds of pūjās; the latter, the Homa and some additional pūjās. Sahasrāhutihoma, mentioned in the *Kalaśārcanahomavidhi*, is a complex combination of two different rites: the homa and the pūjā.

In the main Homa, there are four kinds of fire offerings: Agnyāhuti, Devatāhuti, Pūrṇāhuti, and Śeṣāhuti. In the first Agnyāhuti and the last Śeṣāhuti, clarified butter, grains, etc., are offered to the fire god Agni. In the second Devatāhuti and the third Pūrṇāhuti, however, the oblations are offered to the main deity. The homa in Newar Buddhism has preserved the structure of ancient Indian Śrauta homa to a considerable degree.

The priest meditates upon Samayāgni and Jñānāgni and unites them in Agnyāhuti. Then in Śeṣāhuti, the priest draws the maṇḍala of Agni into his own body. The process is a kind of yoga, which is popular in the Buddhist Tantrism. It is obvious that the concepts of Samayāgni and Jñānāgni are based upon the two famous concepts of Buddhist Tantric sādhana (realization): Samaya-sattva and Jñāna-sattva.

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(Associate Professor, Chukyo Women's University, Ph. D.)

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