

THE SAMĀDHI OF DHARMAŚAṆKHA DESCRIBED IN THE ĀRYAMAÑJUŚRĪNĀMASAṄĠITĪKĀ OF MAÑJUŚRĪKĪRTI

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I. Introduction: *Nāmasaṅgīti* (c. 700 AD. hereafter *NS*) is one of the Buddhist Tantras which describes the characteristics of Mañjuśrījñānasattva through various names (*nāma*) as well as the benefits (*anusamsā*) on reciting it. Since the tantra itself does not serve any specific doctrines and ritual practices, it was interpreted from various standpoints. The respective commentators were designated as the founder of the schools that offered their own doctrines and ritual practices. One of such commentaries is the *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṅgītikā* (hereafter *Ṭikā*), authored by Mañjuśrīkīrti in the first half of the tenth century¹, about which I already published a paper², describing its doctrines and ritual practices

The main purpose of this article is to focus on some account of the ‘the *samādhi* of *dharmasāṅkha*’ (hereafter Dh-samādhi)³ which is offered by Mañjuśrīkīrti in his *Ṭikā*, to annotate the ‘*dharmasāṅkha*’, found in the 78th verse of *NS*.⁴

II. Dharmasāṅkha and śaṅkha: From ancient times in India, the conch (*śaṅkha*) is a kind of musical instrument as well as one of the objects carried by Viṣṇu God. Since it produces the powerful

sound, it is used to assemble people and to convey messages to them. When adopted in esoteric Buddhism, it is regarded as one of the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭamaṅgala*) and is often used as a container of ambrosia (*amṛta*) just like the lotus- vessel. Moreover, the prosperous situation of a Buddhist preaching (*dharmā*) is used to compare with the blowing of the conch, so that it is called ‘the conch of the *dharmā*’ (*dharmasāṅkha* : Tib. chos kyi dung).⁵

The *Ṭikā* is the largest commentary of the *NS*, interpreted from the standpoint of Yogatantra class, where Mañjuśrīkīrti quoted different scriptures as well as ritual methods. In the *Ṭikā*, by comparison with the theoretical explanations, the practical ones are relatively small. The Dh-samādhi is one of those ritual practices in the *Ṭikā*. This *samādhi* is not seen in the other commentaries, and is therefore considered as the unique annotation which also provides the characteristic accounts of the *Ṭikā*.

III. The *samādhi* of *dharmasāṅkha*: I have divided the Dh-samādhi into eight stages as outlined as follows⁶:

¹ According to Bu sTon’s *The History of Buddhism* (Tohoku 5197). Ānandagarbha, who was one of the renowned scholars, and Mañjuśrīkīrti were the disciples of the same mentor. The *Ṭikā* is considered as Mañjuśrīkīrti’s prime work. Unfortunately, the original Sanskrit text does not exist. See [Shakya 2004: 77-79].

² [Shakya 2004]

³ *Ṭikā*, 213⁴-214a¹; Ch-32, p. 554. 1.7-p. 556./14.

⁴ *dharmasāṅkha mahāsabdo dharmagaṇḍi mahārannah / apratiṣṭhitānirvāṇo dasadigdharmadundubhiḥ* // R. Davidson: ‘The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī’, *Tantric and Taoist Studies*, Vol. 1, Bruxelles, 1981, p. 55. // 14-15.

⁵ H. Nakamura *Bukkyodaijiten* Tokyo Shoseki, 1987, p. 1238 (Compact Edition).

⁶ The summary of the Dh-samādhi is introduced here, using the *Ṭikā* as the main text. The contents of this *samādhi* is almost the same with the Sanskrit text of the *SM* (*SM* No. 81, pp. 157-158 = [*SM* - 81]) and Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s Tibetan translation (Tohoku 3474; Otani 4296 = [*Grags pa*]). The variants are seen and the latter notes will confirm only the main variants. The detail will be discussed later again.

(1) *Meditation of water-cycle; Visualization of self as Mañjuśrī* : At first, a lotus flower with eight petals is meditated upon the water-cycle which is white in color and has ambrosia (*amṛta*) as its nature.⁷ In the centre of the lotus flower Mañjuśrī is generated out of a syllable Maṃ⁸ and then one visualizes oneself as Mañjuśrī.

(2) *Visualization of a conch generated out of the syllable Khaṃ* : A syllable Khaṃ⁹ is meditated at the lotus flower on the moon-disc of one's heart. Then a conch is generated out of the syllable Khaṃ. The syllables of Vajra-tongue 'Om vajra jihvā Raṃ' are set up in the centre of the conch. Above the tongue there is a Jewel-lotus (**ratnapadma*)¹⁰ where Amitābha¹¹ is visualized. Then a syllable Vaṃ is meditated at the palate (*tālu*), from which a drop of ambrosia (*amṛtabindu*) flows. This kind of meditation should be done for half a month, a month, or half a year.

(3) *The method of drawing a Maṇḍala* : After obtaining the good omen, a maṇḍala is drawn, square with four gates where four guards are installed. Next, eight offering goddesses, Lāsya, Mālyā, Gītā, Nṛtyā, Puṣpā, Dhūpā, Dīpā, Gandhā, are installed at the outer circle.

(4) *Offerings* : After drawing the maṇḍala, either in the day of full moon of *Bhādra* or full moon of *Vaiśākha*¹², all kinds of offerings are made and one is seated in the middle of the maṇḍala in the cross-legged posture (*vajraparyāṅka*).

(5) *Visualization of Self as Amitābha* : Then Mañjuśrī transforms into Amitābha, and one visualizes oneself as Amitābha.

(6) *Re-absorption* : Next, one should meditate: "Arriving the signs of body, speech and mind of all-Tathāgatas from all directions, and entering into my body, speech and mind and be firm."

(7) *Emanation of all syllables to the universe* : The conch is now visualized at the lotus flower on the moon-disc of one's heart. It is encircled by all the syllables which have the *keśarabindus* as their nature. These *keśarabindus* become atoms of voice (*vākparamāṇu*) that ascend to the throat (*kaṇṭha*) and transform into sound (*svara*). Then this sound changes to the loud sound (*nāda*) which changes into the form of letters (*akṣararūpa*) and reach at the tongue (*jihvā*). They change into Vajra-like forms which emanate one after another, illuminating the space.

(8) *The merits* : Then, meter (*chanda*), verse (*gāthā*), *mantra*, *vidyā*, *hrdaya* etc. will arise from the conch¹³ without exertion. Furthermore, the significance of all speeches of the beings will be understood. The 'all-kinds-of-knowledge' will also be accomplished without taking a long time.

IV. *Relation with the Sādhnamālā*: It turned out that the contents of the above explained Dh-samādhī in the *Ṭikā* is almost the same with

⁷ The 'bdub rts'i'i rang bzhin can' (ambrosia as its nature)' is one of the characteristics of the water-cycle, read only by the *Ṭikā* 213a⁴, while the other texts are omitting it.

⁸ There is no different reading for the syllable 'Muṃ' in the *Ṭikā*'s other editions. The *SM-81* and the *Grags pa* both, however, read 'Maṃ'. Again, [Mallmann: 211-212] which is the revised edition of the *SM-81*, reads 'Aṃ'. For the syllable of Mañjuśrī, 'Maṃ' is thought to be the appropriate syllable.

⁹ [Mallmann: 211] reads 'Khaṃ', while the *SM-81* reads 'Vaṃ' which agrees with the *Grags pa*.

¹⁰ The reading of the *SM-81* and the *Grags pa* is the same, while [Mallmann: 211] reads as 'raktapadma = red lotus'.

¹¹ The *NS* is proclaimed as one of the extracted chapters of the *Māyājālatantra*, where the three Buddhas - Vairocana, Amitābha and Akṣobhya - are allotted to body, speech and mind respectively. See M. Yoritomi *Mikkyobutsu no Kenkyū*, Hozokan, 1990, p. 290. Since Amitābha symbolizes the speech, in the Dh-samādhī, one visualizes oneself as Amitābha.

¹² Here the reading of the *Ṭikā* is different from the three texts - the *SM*, the *Grags pa* and [Mallmann: 211] - which reads as 'the day of full moon of *kārttika*, *Phālguna*, or *Vaiśākha*'. These are the months of the Hindu lunar year.

¹³ *Tika*, 213a⁸; Ch-32, p. 556, l.10 reads 'dan', but Otani reads 'dung' which means a śāṅkha. The latter one is followed here.

the *sādhana* recorded under the title of “*Dharmaśāṅkhasamādhimañjuśrīsādhana* (hereafter *Dh-sādhana*)”¹⁴ in the *Sāadhanamālā* (hereafter *SM*).¹⁵ While the *Dh-sādhana* of the *SM* is recorded as one of the individual *sādhana*s, ‘the Dh-sāmādhi’ of the *Ṭikā* is described as an annotation of the 78th verse of the *NS*. This is the greatest difference between them.

The Tibetan Tripiṭaka lists three kinds of the *sādhana-collection*¹⁶ that edit and compile various kinds of individual *sādhana*s of esoteric Buddhism. Among those, the **Sādhanasāgara* (*sGrub thabs rgya mtsho*) is presumed to be the latest collection, translated into Tibetan by Grags pa rgyal mtshan in the latter half of the thirteenth century. This is the only collection where the Tibetan translation of the *Dh-sādhana* appears as *Chos kyī dung gi ting nge ’dzin ’jam dpal gyi grub thabs* (Tohoku 3474: Otani 4296), while the other two collections have no record of it.

V. Conclusion: Summarizing the above, the main points that I have attempted to make are as follows:

1. In the *Ṭikā*, we can see that Mañjuśrīkīrti’s doctrines and ritual practices have a tendency to value voice (*vāc*) when interpreting the *NS*. Therefore, his school is also known as ‘Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-school’. Assuming that the process of generating voice in a human’s throat is similar to that of a conch, in the ‘Dh-sāmādhi’. Mañjuśrīkīrti explained the structure of generating voice in the following steps: ‘*keśarabindu*’ → ‘atoms of voice

(*vākparamāṇu*)’ → ‘throat (*kaṇṭha*)’ → ‘sound (*svara*)’ → ‘loud sound (*nāda*)’ → ‘form of letters (*akṣararūpa*)’ → ‘tongue (*jihvā*)’ → ‘Vajra-like form’ → ‘emanation into space’

2. As mentioned above, it becomes clear that the contents of the Dh-sāmādhi, described in the *Ṭikā* of Mañjuśrī, is almost the same with the *Dh-sādhana* of the *SM*. And, the *Dh-sādhana* nor its Tibetan translation conveys the author’s name. However, judging from the similar contents and period of translation of the ‘**Sādhanasāgara*’, it can be thought that the ‘Dh-sāmādhi’ was extracted from the *Ṭikā* and treated as an individual *sādhana* in ‘**Sādhanasāgara*’ at the time of compilation.

References:

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8. S. Shakya, ‘Mañjuśrī’s Interpretation of *Nāmasaṅgīti*’ *Bukkyogaku* Vol. 46, 2004, pp. 77-109.

¹⁴ *SM* No. 81, pp 157-158. This *sādhana* is not included in the list of [GB: 31-36].

¹⁵ Bhattacharya, using 8 different kinds of Sanskrit manuscript, edited the *SM*. It is published in 11-vols where 312 Buddhist *sādhana*s are collected. See [Bongo-IV: 382-485].

¹⁶ The following are the three *sādhana*-collections found in the Tibetan Tripiṭaka, which are arranged in the chronological order of translation.

1. *Ba ri brgya rtsa* [Tohoku 3306-3399; Otani 4127-4220] translated by Amoghavajra and Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags in the first half of the 11th century.
2. *sGrub thabs brgya rtsa* [Tohoku 3143-3304; Otani 3964-4126] translated by Abhayakāragupta and Pa tshab Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan in the first half of the 11th century.
3. **Sādhanasāgara* (*sGrub thabs rgya mtsho*) [Tohoku 3400-3644; Otani 4221-4466] translated by Grags pa rgyal mtshan in the latter half of the 13th century. See [Bongo IV; 382-385] and [Sakurai 2000: 4-5].