

A New Pictorial Concept of 'Yuggnaddha'

Tirthankar Bhattacharya

The Cambridge University Library has an unique manuscript of the '*Aṣṭasāhasrika-Prajñā Pāramitā*' with a date in Newari 135 (=C.E. 1015) bearing the Acc.No. ADD 1643. It contains numerous paintings depicting Buddhist deities, each of the paintings being accompanied by an identificatory label. A similar type of the manuscript of the same text is preserved in the collection of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. It has the date 191 in Newari era (=C.E.1071) and the Acc. No. is A.15. S.K. Saraswati studied these pictorial descriptions, and also the labels, of both the manuscripts in a detailed manner.¹ According to him one of the paintings in the Cambridge manuscript has the label *Varendra Haladī Lokanātha*.² The Asiatic Society counterpart has *Halada* in place of *Haladī*. Saraswati describes the image of the Buddhist God Lokanātha appearing in the painting as twelve-handed and as standing in the *samapāda*. Also, he has noted four miniature chapels, each with a deity not clearly discernible.

Lokanātha is an important Buddhist deity, one of the manifestations of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. However, the twelve-handed form of Lokanātha is not very common. The main interest is the enigmatic label. Obviously it refers to the deity *Lokanātha* of Varendra (approximately Northern Bengal) who bore the epithet *Haladī* or *Halada* which Saraswati has expressed inability to explain.³ One may explain the above mentioned epithet as the giver of the ploughshare (*hala*) by virtue of which the deity can be interpreted as the divinity bestowing agricultural bounty for which Varendra or North Bengal has always been very famous. But the twelve-handed *Lokanātha* in the present painting does not show the ploughshare as an attribute in any one of his hands. Had the intention of the painter been to refer to the cultural association of the represented deity he would have definitely shown the ploughshare or *hala* as an attribute. The interpretation of *Haladī*, or *Halada* seems to be not so simplistic. In fact in the Vernacular language, turmeric is known as *haldī* (Sanskrit - *Haridrā*), which is an agricultural product. This item is used in many auspicious ceremonies in India, and also as an spice in cooking. Moreover, *haldī* is supposed to be a good agent having therapeutic property. In the epithet of the relevant

pictorial label it is unlikely that such a reference to the divinity's association with turmeric is met with.

This communication is to share with the scholars a rare textual reference, which can explain the above mentioned epithet and also the pictorial form in a more likely manner. It is well known that Sir Brian Hodgson, the British administrator in Nepal collected, the floating Buddhist traditions through Pandit Amritananda, who also composed the well known *Dharmakośa Saṅgraha* in the 19th century.⁴ Whatever was collected by Hodgson through Amritananda is now preserved in the India Office Library, now known as Commonwealth Library, London. The materials, thus collected, are known as Hodgson Papers and they are mines of information about various aspects of Tantric Buddhist iconography and culture. Dr. D.C.Bhattacharyya personally studied these papers thoroughly, and he wrote a brief article highlighting the importance of these papers.⁵ He found a very interesting observation on the concept of Tantric Buddhist transcendence in one of the Hodgson papers. He allowed me to share this with the scholars, particularly because it can throw interesting light on the interpretation of the epithet *Haladī* or *Halada* mentioned above.

The relevant portion of the textual information is as under.:

Jñeyā Prajñā hyakāreṇa, lakṣareṇopāyāmstathā

Tayordvandvam yuganaddham dāntam tathāhithryakṣaram

Eṣā Hlādinī Prajñā, Caturbrahma samanvitā⁶

ज्ञेया प्रज्ञ ह्यकारेण लक्षरेणोपायांस्तथा

तयोर्द्वन्द्वं युगनद्धं दान्तं तथाहियक्षरम्

एषाल्हादिनी प्रज्ञा चतुर्ब्रह्मसमन्विता

The free English translation of the above extract will be; Prajñā (the Female Principle) should be indicated by the letter *ha*, likewise the letter *la* should be represented by Upaya (the Male Principle). The Union of the two is the *Yuganaddha* (combination of the two). In view of this the Trio of three letters (*ha, la, da*) has the ending with the alphabet *da*. This is known as *Hlādinī Prajñā* (the Ecstatic Transcendental Wisdom) which in fact is the result of the combination of the four *Brahmas* or basic elements of Transcendental Wisdom, like *Karuṇā* or compassion as the gesture of the soul, *Maitrī* or Camaraderie of equality, *Upekṣā* or Detachment from worldly trivialities and *Mudita* or Complete Submission to the Ultimate Reality. It is now clear from the above that the epithet *Haladī* or *Halada* has a metaphysical bearing of Tantrik Buddhist connotation. Haladī Lokanātha, therefore means the



Fig.21.1 : Haladi Lokanātha

Transcendental Form of Lokanātha. The epithet *Haladī* can be compared with similar *mantra* of Tantrik Buddhist ritual and iconography.⁷ We know of Arapacana form of Mañjuśrī which represents the four basic alphabets *a-ra pa-ca-na* required to be learned initially by the first learner children, Mañjuśrī being the God of learning for the primary education of the children (*bālabodhanārthāya*).⁸ We are aware of the six sylabelled mantra om *mañi padme hum* or the ten sylabelled Tārā *mantra* - om *tare ture tuttāre svāhā*, both of which have deep Tantrik Buddhist implications.

It has to be mentioned that the present depiction of the deity in the manuscripts mentioned above differs fundamentally to the well known representations of *Yab Yum* or *Yuganaddha* images, usually showing a male and a female figure in embrace while the female is shown seated on the lap of her male counterpart⁹ (Fig. 21.1). However, it is interesting to note that in the present pictorial representation of Lokanātha, the deity is shown with wide open eyes and with a smiling expression, perhaps indicative of the extatic feeling at the moment of receiving the Transcendental Wisdom. The four chapels around him perhaps are the artists interpretation of the four manifestations of *Caturbrahma: Karuṇā, Maitrī, Upekṣā* and *Mudltā*.¹⁰

References and Notes:

1. S.K.Saraswati, *Tantrayāna Art An Album*, Calcutta, 1977, Pl. LXXV f.f.
2. *Ibid.*, Pl. LXXXVI (item no. 242).
3. *Ibid.*
4. H.P.Shastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, V-I, Calcutta, 1917, pp. 191 ff.
5. D.C.Bhattacharyya, "An Art Historical Importance of Hodgson Papers," *KALĀ*, (The Journal of Indian Art History Congress), Vol. 1V, 1997-95, pp. 38-44.
6. I am grateful to Dr. D.C.Bhattacharyya for his kind permission to use his textual extract collected by him in 1974-75 when he visited London on John D.Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.
7. Although the scholars have read the expression as *Halada* or *Haladī*, according to us the expression should be read as *HIadd*. It should be kept in mind that in Newari script of the ancient phase the *a-kāra* is indicated both by a conventional vertical stroke on the left side of the letter, and also sometimes with a wavy configuration of the *mātrā* (the line joining the letters). It is likely that the scribe made the error of not indicating the wavy mode of the *mātrā*.
8. An interesting detailed article on this concept was written by Dr. B. N. Mukherjee long time back and the same was published in the Bengali journal *Desh*. The volume number etc. of this important publication has however escaped from the memory of the present writer.
9. H.,Zimmer, *Art of Indian Asia Its Mythology & Transformation*, New York, 1955, Vol.-II, pl. 603; Philip Rawson, *Tantra: The Indian Cult of Eestasy*. Delhi, 1973, p.119, fig., 85.
10. See *Sāadhanamālā*, ed. B. Bhattacharyya, Baroda, 1968.