

The Yoga of Six Branches Formulated in the Hevajra Cycle *Sādhana*

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0. Introduction

The process of meditational realization (*sādhana*-) is one of the main rituals in Tantric Buddhism. *Sādhana* texts formulate a ritual in which the practitioner attempts to become united with the mandala or a single deity which he has visualized. Some texts relating to *sādhana* not only explain visualizations, but also explain rituals such as the Completion Stage (*utpannakrama*-) and its concomitants. The yoga of six branches (*ṣaḍaṅga*-) is one of the most important visualizations and is presented in some Tantras (the GST, the HT and so on), along with commentaries and the relevant rituals. Thus, it is necessary to identify the qualities of that visualization in order to properly investigate the content and development of the *sādhana*s. This paper gives particular attention to the Hevajra cycle, especially Saroruhavajra's Teaching and examines the features of the yoga of six branches as expressed in the *sādhana* of the Hevajra cycle.

1. The six branches in the HT

Before referring to the *sādhana* of the Hevajra cycle, I shall show the six branches in the HT I . viii . 22cd–24ab.

Firstly, the practitioner should visualize as black, secondly as red, thirdly he should visualize as yellow, likewise fourthly as green.

Fifthly he should visualize as blue-black, sixthly as bright-white body.

The yogin should visualize the six branches. Furthermore, he [should visualize] the end of [the bliss of] cessation.¹⁾

Because the subject is the *yoginīcakra* in this chapter, it is stated that the practitioner visualize the *Nairāṇmyā* and the goddesses, visualizing the *Nairāṇmyā* as six colours and the

end of the bliss of cessation, the innate bliss mentioned above. However, the concrete contents of this visualization is not stated in the HT²⁾, and it is different from that in the six branches instantiated in the GST. Though we ought to investigate the yoga of six branches in the HT including the commentaries on the HT in detail, this paper has a word limit. I will therefore keep such discussion to a minimum here and present that investigation in another paper.

2. The six branches in the *sādhana* of the Hevajra cycle

In the HSU, firstly, Saroruhavajra did not explain the six branches directly, but he did write: “*karmabhedeṇa tu varṇabhedaḥ kāryaḥ*.” This word, “*varṇabhedaḥ*,” may indicate the yoga of the six branches by six colours. In order to understand what this sentence means, we must examine the VP. Next, I shall examine the VP, the commentary on the HSU written by Suratavajra³⁾ (aka Jālandhari), which seems to have similar characteristics to the essential rituals of the Hevajra cycle. Suratavajra stated the six branches as follows.

Then, in the center between the sun[-disk] and the moon[-disk] after visualizing the seed-syllable of the great king of mantra, the ruler of the world, the practitioner should visualize the [yoga of] six branches.

Where from? **From the gathering of the rays which has gone out from the *hūṃ*-syllable which is in between the sun[-disk] and the moon[-disk] which is in his own heart.** Then, firstly he should visualize the lord of the *samādhi* in the heart of the *Jñānasattva* as black. Next, transforming Him, [the lord of *samādhi*,] he meditates on Him as the one having the form such as a drop, and he flows [with] the mandala and deities which is in the mandala from the pores of *Bhagavān* by the rays; he should visualize it as the great black.

Secondly [the practitioner should visualize it] as red, thirdly as yellow, fourthly as green, fifthly as blue-black, sixthly as bright-white. The practitioner should meditate on the six branches with this visualization. Visualizing the six branches, then he should dismiss the colours.

The understanding is of two kinds by the wording “dismissing the colours (*varṇavisarjana*-)”.⁴⁾ “The colour (*varṇa*-)” is identifying oneself with *tathāgatas* in accordance with the purpose of the peaceful rite section and so on. By the word “dismissing (*visarjana*-)”, the relation/ telling of the expedient way of entering into the pure light (*prabhāsvara*-) is [understood].

tataḥ śaśiravisamputamadye mahāmantrarājacakraṇvartibhīṣaṣaṇaṃ dṛṣṭvā śaḍaṅgaṃ bhāvayet/ kutaḥ svahṛdayasthacandrasūryāntargatahūṃkāranīrgataraśmisamūhāt/ tato jñānasattvahṛdaye prathamam samādhinātham bhāvayet kṛṣṇam/ taṃ pariṇāmya bindurūpaṃ dhyātvā tadraśmibhir niḥśṛṭya bhagavatromakūpataḥ samāṇḍalamāṇḍaleyaṃ mahākṛṣṇaṃ paśyet dvitīye raktaṃ tṛtīye

*pītaṃ caturthe haritaṃ pañcame nīlaṃ śaṣṭhe sitaṃ iti/ anena ṣaḍaṅgaṃ dhyāyāt/
 ṣaḍaṅgaṃ bhāvayitvā tu paścād varṇaṃ visarjayed iti//
 varṇavisarjanaśabdena dvidhā bodhaḥ/ varṇas tathāgatāhaṃkāraḥ śāntikādibhedārthataḥ/
 visarjanaśabdena prabhāsvavarapraveśopāyākathanaṃ//* (Matsumura 2017, 213–214; Gerloff 2017, 238)

These contents are stated under the 21st heading, “the Six Branches,” of the VP. This section has the heading: “The *Samādhi* of the Supreme King of the Mandala,” and this visualization is contained in “The *Samādhi* of the Supreme King of Action.” Also, under the 25th heading “The Truth of Oblation”, the sentence: “*karmabhedenā tu varṇayogataḥ*,” is given.⁵⁾ If we take account of the explanation regarding “the colour,” we may suggest that this sentence indicates visualizing the six branches. Therefore, it is possible to surmise that “*karmabhedenā tu varṇabhedaḥ kāryaḥ*” as written in HSU teaches that colours correspond with ritual actions.

The six branches have also been stated under the 21st heading in the PAHP⁶⁾ written by Rāhulagupta. The contents are quite similar to those of the VP but the visualization of “dismissing colour” is not included, and the practitioner visualizes the goddess as six colours. This is also contained in the *Samādhi* of the Supreme King of Action.⁷⁾

In the DVS, the six branches are similarly explained in a section of the *Samādhi* of the Supreme King of Action, and it is stipulated that the practitioner visualizes six colours and then dismisses the colours.⁸⁾ This is similar to the visualization in the VP, so it is possible to infer that Bhadrāpāda⁹⁾ received the ritual as it appears in the VP.

Anaṅgavajra explained the six branches in his *Hevajrasādhana*. The contents are as follows.

Now, the practitioner emits from the group of *ḍākinīs*, *Gaurī* and so on, to the lord of mandala in order in ten directions, causing them to make the suitable places, withdrawing them in each places, and he should visualize the one consisting of comfort which is far from conception, the whole mandala done and to be done. Immediately, firstly [he should visualize] the *nirmāṇacakra*, having the seed of *aṃ*, with the black colour and rays. It transforms the form like a drop, which blazes and shines again and again, going out from the pores of [the *Bhagavān*] with its rays, making the group of the goddesses of *Gaurī* and so forth appear, and the practitioner should meditate the Great black, the mandala and its lord, having the body of emission and withdrawing like a broken *añjana*. By this manner, he should visualize [it] secondly as red, thirdly as yellow, fourthly as green, fifthly as blue-black, and sixthly as white, namely the six branches.

(Xc 14/39, 121v3–7)

idānīm gauryādiḍākinīgaṇamaṇḍaleśvaraparyantam ekaikam anukrameṇa daśadikṣu saṃsphārya¹⁰⁾
yathānūrūpadeśanām kārāyitvā yathāsthāne saṃhṛtya kṛtakaraṇīyaṃ sakalamanḍalaṃ
nirvikalpakasukhamayaṃ paśyet//
tadanantaraṃ prathamam nirmāṇacakra[m] aṃkāraṃ kṛṣṇavarṇam¹¹⁾ saraśmikaṃ/ tat¹²⁾ pariṇatam
bindurūpaṃ dedīpyamānaṃ tadraśmibhiḥ pratiromakūpato nirgatya gauryādevīgaṇam avabhāpya
maṇḍalaṃ maṇḍaleśvaraṃ ca mahākṛṣṇaṃ ca
bhinnāñjana¹³⁾ saśaṃsphurat¹⁴⁾ saṃhāraviḡrahaṃ dhyāyād/ anenaiva krameṇa dvitīye raktaṃ tṛtīye
pītaṃ caturthe haritaṃ pañcame nīlaṃ ṣaṣṭhame sitam iti ṣaḍaṅgaṃ bhāvayet//

In this passage, Anaṅgavajra also formulates the visualization of six colours as the six branches. Its contents are similar to those of the VP and the PAHP, and the visualization is presented in a section of “the *samādhi* of the supreme king of action.” Anaṅgavajra is commonly thought to have been the person who granted Saroruhavajra the teaching of the Hevajra cycle.¹⁵⁾ If this is indeed the case, it is possible to surmise that Saroruha had not adopted the visualization of Anaṅgavajra for his own visualization, but other monks (Suratavajra, Bhadrāpāda, and Rāhulagupta) had accepted his teaching on the contents of visualization of six branches and his teaching was passed on to them with little variation in terms of content.

Similarly, Ratnākaraśānti presented the yoga of six branches by six colours in the end of a section on “the *Samādhi* of the Supreme King of Action” in the BhHS,¹⁶⁾ though he did not describe its contents in detail.¹⁷⁾ The yoga of six branches or the innate bliss is recommended for visualization at time of sleep. This, however, is not stated in the VP or in similar texts.

3. Conclusion

I have examined the yoga of six branches as written in the *sādhana* of Hevajra cycle. The main points I have raised may be summarized as follows.

- Saroruhavajra did not clearly state the six branches in the HSU, but the VP, the DVS, the PAHP, and the BhHS definitely formulated its visualization. “Dismissing colour” is not included in the PAHP and the BhHS.
- For the most part, those visualizations are in accordance with the contents of Anaṅgavajra’s *Hevajrasādhana*. However, the content relating to this visualization as given by Saroruhavajra differs

to that presented by Anaṅgavajra.

• In the BhHS, the concrete manner in which the practitioner is to visualize the yoga of six branches such as the HT I. viii. 22cd–24ab is not mentioned. It is possible to understand that this is based on the explanation of MĀ to some degree.

As a next step in this research, it is necessary to examine not only other *sādhana*s of the Hevajra cycle but also all the commentaries on the HT. Having done so, we will be in a position to understand the tendencies within and development of the six branches in the Hevajra cycle, and differences to them in the GST will be clear.

Notes

- 1) As for Skt., see Snellgrove 1959, 28.
- 2) For example, MĀ explains: “*śaḍaṅgaṃ yogam iti śaḍbhir varṇaiḥ śaḍcakravartīsamatāprāptimadasya sūcanāt śaḍaṅgaṃ/ evaṃ prāpte made punar iti paścāt vīramāntaṃ bhāvayet sahaḥjānandamātram ity arthaḥ*” (Tripathi and Negi 2001, 81). YRM also explains that “*idāṇīm cetasaḥ samarthakaraṇāya/ śaḍaṅgaṃ yogam āha śaḍir varṇaiḥ śaḍcakravartīsamatāsūcanārthaṃ ca/ punar iti paścāt/ vīramāntaṃ sahaḥjānandamātram ity arthaḥ*” (Tripathi and Negi 2006, 67–68). Furthermore, *Padminī* explains that “*da ni mīam pa nīd kyī don la kha dog tu mīon par shen paḥi skyon bsal baḥi phyir yan lag drug bsgom pa gsuīs pa/ dañ por shes bya ba la sog paḥo/ dgaḥ bra mthaḥ yañ de bshin no/ shes pa ni dgaḥ bral gyi mthaḥ ni gañ lhan cig skyes pa ste/ de ni dgaḥ bral gyi mthaḥ lhan cig skyes pa tsaṃ yin pas deḥi phyir bsgom par byaḥo shes paḥi don to/*” (CTT vol. 1, p. 1142, ll. 5–9).
- 3) If we consider the content of KGyN (17a3–4) and the lifetime of Sarorūha (AD 9th–10th centuries), it is possible to suggest that Suratavajra might be lived in AD the latter half of 9th–the latter half of 10th centuries or AD 10th–11th centuries.
- 4) Before this sentence, some manuscripts add “*vakṣyamāṇasūkṣmayogaṃ bhāvayitvā*.” Also, this is not translated in Tib. Gerloff (2017, 378, n. 239) indicated that this might be influenced by the reading transmitted in the DVS. Regarding the question of adding this or not; though I think that it is necessary to investigate the connections between each of the rituals, I provisionally follow the text edited by Gerloff 2017.
- 5) See Matsumura 2018. Moreover, under the 24th heading: “Recitation,” the visualization of six branches is also given. So, we can understand that this visualization is used as one of the elements constituting other rituals.
- 6) Gerloff (2017) has edited the Sanskrit and the Tibetan editions and provided an English translation.
- 7) See Gerloff 2017, 515; 667.
- 8) See Gerloff 2017, 425; 457.
- 9) As for his lifetime, see Gerloff 2017, 20.
- 10) saṃsphārya] em; saṃspharya MS
- 11) kṛṣṇavarṇaṃ] em; kṛṣṇaṃ varṇaṃ MS
- 12) tat°] em; tata MS, Tib. de yōñ su gyur pa mar meḥi ḥod ltar ... (CTT vol. 5, p. 981, 11)
- 13) The reading of “nibhaḥ” is deleted.
- 14) °sasāṃsphurat°] em; °sasampurat° MS, Tib. ... lus spro shiñ msdu ba ... (CTT vol. 5, p. 981, 14)
- 15) For example, in the BJK, there is one of the records of hearing the Sarorūha’s Teachings in Hevajra

cycle of Bu ston has passed down as follows: *rDe rje ḥchan—Si la vajra—Yan lag med paḥi rdo rje—mTsho skyes rdo rje—Indra bhū ti...* (34b7–35a1, See Matsumura 2017, 15–16). Further, in the end of Saroruha's biography, there is as follows: *...Yan lag med paḥi rdo rje—mTsho skyes—Indrabhūti...* (40a2–4, See Matsumura 2017, 17; Gerloff 2017, 13). Also, see Sobisch 2008, 80–81.

16) Isoda (1976, 24) has previously pointed out that the three *saṃādhis* appear in Anaṅgavajra's *Hevajrasādhana* and this system was accepted in the BhHS. Moreover, he indicated that this common point might constitute supporting evidence for a connection of Anaṅgavajra with Ratnākaraśānti in the lineages of Hevajra cycle.

17) See Isaacson 2002, 172.

Abbreviations

BhHS: *Bhramahara-nāma-Hevajrasādhana*. **BJK:** *Bla ma dam pa rnam kyis rjes su bzun baḥi tshul bkaḥ drin rje su dran par byed pa* (Toh. 5199). **CTT:** 中華大藏經 丹珠爾. **DVS:** *Dveṣavajrasādhana*, em: emendation. **GST:** *Guhyasamājatantra*. **HSU:** *Hevajrasādhanopāyikā*. **HT:** *Hevajratantra*. **KGyN:** *bKaḥ babs bdun ldan gyi brgyud paḥi rnam thar ṅo mtshar rmad du byuñ rin po cheḥi lta buḥi rgyan*. **MĀ:** *Muktāvalī*. **MS:** Manuscript. **PAHP:** *Pañcakra mānuttarahevajraprakāśa*. **YRM:** *Yogaratanmālā*. **VP:** *Vajrapradīpā*.

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