

# Notes on the Newar Buddhist Homa Ritual

Notes<sup>1</sup> by Naresh Bajracarya and Todd Lewis

Only a trained vajracarya (who has obtained many initiations, along with Acharya initiation), is authorized to perform the Homa ritual in Newar tradition. On the morning of the ritual, he must have bathed and be fasting until all rites are completed. Every step of the homa ritual involves the vajracarya uttering either good wishes passage from a text, the details of visualization, or chanting mantras. There will be at least one couple who serves as devotee/patrons (*Yajamana* (New. *jajman*)).

## Special Homa Implements:

*Sulāpa* = special ladle with square shape

*Catwā* = pointed ritual spatula

*Dowa* = spoon ladle

*Yamkhasi* = tripod with ghee vessel with a hole & kusa-grass

## Ritual Tools used in all Bajracarya Rituals:

*Ghantha* (bell) *Vajra* *Makuta* (crown of Five Buddhas)

*Kalasha* (water vessel)

## Offerings:

Ghee, clarified butter      Kusha grass      Druva grass  
32 *Sosim* (specific wood pieces)      32 *Sintā* (specific wood pieces)  
*Homapi* 18 types of wood (esp. for homa, in ready-made small bundle)  
Pure water (clean, flowing river)      Flowers      Incense  
Light      Chalk  
Fragrance (red + yellow powder, [New. *sinha*])      Husked Rice      Puffed Rice  
taste items (food, fruits, cow milk, liquor)  
Five-fold thread      Pancagavya (5 cow products)      yogurt  
Baniya items (fruits, flowers, medicinal herbs, sweets, Saki, special incense, betel leaf)  
32 grains (*Vrihi*):

## Abbreviations:

☞ = item(s) offered into homa kunda

**Bajra.** = Bajracarya; all acts done by him unless notes

**PsP** = *Puspadi Puja*: A complete puja procedure: (in order:) Bajra. Visualizes deity, invoking, requesting divine presence, request for *adhithan*, offering fragrance, cloth, flower, food, milk, liquor, light, popped rice, rice and a flower with water, money and rice; requesting Vajrasattva to grant of all siddhis.

**Pp** = Pancopacara Puja: Offering 5 items: flower, incense, light, fragrance, food

**[Pa. La. Gha. St. Ta. Satakshara]**: An abbreviation of set of rites (in order):

**Pancopacarapuja, Lasya, Ghantavadana, Stuti, Tarpan and Satakshara.**

*Lasya* refers to showing Mudras (16 types of hand gestures); *Ghantavadana* stands for holding vajra and bell crossed at chest, then ringing bell and flipping vajra 3x; *Stuti* denotes chanting verse praise; *Tarpana* means flicking liquid from vase; and *Satakshara* is chanting Vajrasattva dharani that has 100 syllables

**[Pa. A. Dhu. Ni.]** An abbreviation of set of rites (in order):

**Padya, Ahvahana, Dhupa and Niranjana.** *Padya* stands for offering water from conch for feet, for cleansing mouth, and for argha; *Ahvahana* refers to invoking, *Dhupa* denotes offering incense, *Niranjana* means removing any enemies or problems.



<sup>1</sup> This outline of all major actions in the Newar Buddhist Homa is based on the printed ritual guidebook edited by one of the great modern masters, the late Pandit Amoghavajra Bajracarya. (Kathmandu: Sankhata Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1977?)

# Newar Buddhist Homa



## The Order of the Sahasra Ahuti Ritual

### Mandatory Preliminary rituals:

- I. Suryargha (Gurupadargha): Paying respect to Guru Vajracharya
- II. Gurumandalarchana (Paratmaparivartana):  
Offering *ratna-mandala* to Gurus  
Sevenfold supreme offering (Bodhisattva practice)  
Satisfying directional deities.
- III. Kalasha Archana: Invoking the targeted deity (today: Manjushri) into water jar (Kalash)

### Homa:

1. Bajracarya Priest [hereafter Bajra.] touches agni kunda 3X with *sulāpa/catwā* (**Homa-kunda adhithana**)
2. Jajman asked to put kusha grass in the *svastika* shape in the center of the homa-kunda (**kusa-asana**)
3. **Puspadi-puja** [hereafter: **PsP**] at the center of the kunda over *svastika*
4. Sprinkle water on the wood with conch; Pancopacara Puja [hereafter **Pp**] to the 32 *sosim* (32 pieces of a specific wood)
5. Stack the 32 pieces of wood in specific shape in the homa kunda
6. Small pieces *sinta* (a specific wood) placed in a clay pot, **Pp** to it
7. Bajra. lights flame from lamp, places it under wood in clay bowl (= **Bhuta Agni sthapan**)
8. **PsP** to the flame in clay bowl; small bit of each of the 32 grains dropped into clay bowl flame
9. Bundle of *Sinta* (wood) lit from the clay bowl flame, then put into homa kunda to ignite it (= **Agni sthapan**)
10. Place a flower into the homa kunda fire [☞]  
(= **Samayagni bhavana**: visualization of samaya Agni)
11. Bajra. shows *takki raja mudra*, lights incense, does *niranjana*, offers water used for foot-washing and mouth purification, from conch to Samaya Agni (= **samaya Agni ahvahana**: Invoking samaya Agni)
12. Sprinkle water fr conch and *panca-gavya* from bowl w/ durva grass ☞
13. **PsP** offered to the samaya Agni and 8 directional deities (*dikpala*)
14. Cooking ghee: jajman holds ladle; Bajra. 108 touches of ladle with ritual *catwā* (= **grhta sodhana**)
15. Jajman holding ladle, asked to take black sesame seeds in his right hand, touch his body all over, put them in the cooked ghee in the ladle; then told to look for his reflection in it
16. Bajra. offers ghee from ladle 3x to Agni ☞
17. Bajra. touches all 32 grains in bowls and *catwā* and *sulāpa*
18. 1 piece of kusha grass dipped in ghee ☞
19. 1 piece Hombi<sup>2</sup>, dipped into ghee, ☞
20. Each sample of 32 grains ☞ (each with mantra)
21. In *sulāpa*, place cow milk, wave it 3x over homa kunda
22. First ghee added to *sulāpa*, then **Pp** on this
23. All poured down ☞ (= **Pratham Agni Ahuti**)
24. Bajra. does **[Pa. La. Gha. St. ta. Satakshara]**
25. Pours water from kalasha to conch, then sprinkles it ☞  
(= **jnana-agni bhavana**: visualization of Jnana Agni + visualization of the union of Samaya Agni and Jnana Agni)

<sup>2</sup> [18 types of wood dipped in Ghee, placed one by one in fire kunda (each with mantra)] in text, not done today; replaced by step #20

26. **PsP** to Jnana Agni
27. 1 piece of Hombi dipped into ghee, ॐ
28. Sample of each of 32 grains ॐ (each with mantra)
29. Ghee added to sulāpa, then **Pp** on this
30. All poured down ॐ (= *jnana ahuti*)
31. Offering hoja-doja: hoja dipped/ cow milk ॐ, doja dipped/ ghee ॐ

### Deity Puja:

32. Bajra does [**Pa. A. Dhu. Ni. Adhesana**], then snana, dhara mandala made, then offerings of red + yellow powder (sinha), thread, flowers, food, fruit, cow milk, liquor, ending with lamp offering to deity
33. Offering sample of 32 grains ॐ
34. Ghee added to sulāpa, then **Pp** on this
35. All poured ॐ (= *devatā ahuti*)
36. **Taya Japa:** Bajra. pours water, does pushpa-nasya, then does [**Pa. La. Gha. St. ta**]. then recites mantra holding rosary in left hand, puffed rice in right hand
37. Puffed rice offered to deity
38. *Dakshina* offered to deity
39. Rice, water, flower offered to deity
40. *Satakshara* chant
41. *Kasayavastra* (New. Kasayaga) and Ahuti Affirmation (*samkalpa*) by jajman, then handed to the Bajra.
42. Bajra. ties on red scarf over one shoulder, offers Ahuti 1000 times
43. Ghee added to sulāpa, then **Pp** on this
44. All poured down ॐ (= *sahasra ahuti*)
45. [**Pa. La.Gha. Stu. Ta. Satakshara**]

### Bali Puja

46. Bajra. tells jajman to offer water from conch to big clay plate (bali) that contains many materials for offering
47. Bajra. shows garuda mudra
48. Jajman offers water three times from conch to bali
49. Bajra. shows akarshanadi mudra
50. Bajra. offers flower, jajman puts on bali
51. [**Pa. La. Gha. St. ta**]
52. Bajra. offers rice/flower/water in one hand; gives to jajman to offer to bali, done four times but with different mantras chanted by Bajra. Jajman told to pour cow milk [and/or liquor] on bali from container
53. **PsP** to Bali

### Cakra Puja

54. Jajman does **Pp** to deities in all the directions

### Sisha-adhivasana

55. Jajmans sitting in row, eldest closest to Agni, youngest at end; all hold the string from the *kalasha*; female Bajracarya or assists; Bajra. puts piece of flower from offering plate on the heads of each person in row; does *niranjana*; loha-Agni raksha;
56. deposits *pala abhisekha* on each one's head

### Kigatine

57. Jajama is asked to make a circle with white stone powder on the ground and to put ten pieces flowers on it to do the **Pp**, to put flower and rice with water on it.
58. All jajmans offer rice, following Bajra.

### Purna Ahuti

59. Shows garudamudra

60. Bajra. gives water three times from conch ॐ
61. Shows *akarashana adi* mudras
62. Puts other items (clothes, then various items supplied by baniya: fruits, flowers, medicinal herbs, sweets, [New]. Saki, special incense, betel leaf, in special package) ॐ
63. Homabi ॐ
64. Offering most of remaining 32 grains ॐ
65. Ghee added to sulāpa, a piece of pancasutra then **Pp** on this
66. All poured down ॐ (= *Purna ahuti*)
67. Sulāpa touched to heads of jajmans
68. Jajman asks for ash from homa, and gets with catuwā
69. Jajman holds catuwā with ash, Bajra. takes tika (*yajna raksha*) high on forehead for himself, then all get tika for themselves
70. [**Pa. La. Gha. St. ta. Satakshara**]
71. Bajra. chant of forgiveness for any mistakes in ritual
72. Jajman asked to offer curd sagan to kalasha, etc.
73. Bajra. receives tika and gives tika to all in attendance
74. **All in attendance get tika, give dakshina to Bajracarya.**<sup>3</sup>

### Sesa Ahuti

75. Bajra. visualizes oneself as *jnana devata* that invoked in the samaya Agani entered in oneself
76. Show garuda mudra
77. Offering padya, argha, acamuni
78. Remaining grains collected, put in common vessel, ॐ
79. Remaining ghee added to sulāpa, then **Pp** on this
80. All poured ॐ (= *Sesa ahuti*)
81. [**Pa. La. Gha. St. ta. Satakshara**]
82. Visarjana Closing: jajman takes vajra, touches everything in ritual; everything now can be dismantled



### Definitions of common ritual procedures

**Homabi:** 18 types of homa wood, in ready-made small bundle

**Sinta:** A specific fragrant wood

**Kasayavastra (New. Kasayega):** Red ceremonial garment

**Ahuti:** Offering oblation to Agni in the Homa kunda ॐ

**Bali:** A set ritual, consisting of sections defined above. It contains rites of invitation, visualizing, Pancopacara puja, Lasya, Ghantavadana, Stuti, Tarpana, offering materials (rice, flower with water), offering liquor and Puspadipuja. It also includes garuda-mudra, akarsanadi-mudra, 16 lasya-mudra and Takkija-mudra.

**hoja-doja:** pair of objects made of flattened rice, boiled rice, or fried wheat grains, solid and oblong in shape



### The Ritual Master

**Naresh Man Bajracarya** is a distinguished Newari Buddhist priest who commands the vast ritual repertoire and meditative practices of his native tradition. He is also the first Newar Buddhist to leave Nepal and gain a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies (University of Delhi). In 2000, Bajracarya was named founding director of the Buddhist Studies Program at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Associated with the sangha of Jhva Baha in Kathmandu, he also performs traditional rites and meditation initiations in his native Kathmandu and across the Kathmandu Valley.

<sup>3</sup> At this time, all in attendance who wish tika from the priest can come forward to receive the tika; giving dakshina (payment) is customary in return.