

Musashi Tachikawa, Shrikant Bahulkar, and Madhavi Kolhatkar, *Indian Fire Ritual*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, xii + 212 Pp. Rs. 495.

Nowadays, we can see *homa* rituals, or fire offering worships, at Buddhist and Hindu temples in Asian countries. These *homās* originate from Indian ancient Vedic *homa*. This book deals with a Śrauta-homa ritual named Pavitreṣṭi performed in Pune in 1979. The contents of the book are as follows:

1. Forward and Preface (pp. vii-xii)
2. Introduction (pp. 1-22)
3. List of Figures (pp. 23-28)
4. Photos and Figures of Pavitreṣṭi (pp. 29-173)
5. Translation of the *Pavitreṣṭiprayoga* (pp. 175-189)
6. Sanskrit Text of the *Pavitreṣṭiprayoga* (pp. 191-201)
7. Bibliography and Index (pp. 203-212)

The authors' intention for dealing with Pavitreṣṭi in this book is very clear. According to the introduction, the Pavitreṣṭi discussed in this book is one of the modifications (*vikṛti*) of Darśapūrṇamāsa, which is considered the prototype of all Iṣṭi rituals. And Pavitreṣṭi has almost the same procedures as Darśapūrṇamāsa. The authors wanted to show the process of this fundamental ritual, which has had a long tradition since ancient period. By doing so, they aimed to present one of the basic materials of fire rituals to the readers who are interested in Hindu and Buddhist rituals.

The introduction contains a chart of procedures and brief explanations of each process. With the introduction, the photos and captions of the ritual should be referred to. This visual data is helpful for us to understand what kinds of materials are used, and how the priests actually perform the ritual. The English translation of the text is also understandable. It is beneficial that the sentences and mantras in the text are referred to with the numbers of the figures.

The Pavitreṣṭi ritual consists of three parts: (1) Preliminary Rites, (2) Main Rites, and (3) Concluding Rites. In (1) Preliminary Rites, tools, an altar, offerings, and the like are prepared for the ritual. Especially here, the performance of making the things sacred is important. In this 'sacralization,' the functions of fire and water are important. These two have the roles of making the tools, offerings etc. sacred. The fire, which was vitalized by the priests, is carried to the hearths. Then, the clarified butter is offered to the fire of each hearth along with *darba* grass. This act is the purification and consecration of the fire. On the other hand, the water used for purification and consecration of the materials and tools in the ritual is brought to the ritual place. This water (*praṇīta*) is repeatedly consecrated by the water itself. In the second part, the Main Rites, clarified butter and sacrificial cakes consecrated with the water in the first part, are offered to ten gods, such as Agni Pavamāna and Sarasvatī Priyā. In the third part, the Concluding Rites, the concluding offering called *samiṣṭayajus* is performed. Then, the priest disposes of the remaining holy water.

As previously mentioned, the photos and traces are helpful to understand the actual performances. However, I believe it would be more understandable and

appropriate to insert the photos into the explanation of the procedure in the introduction. Some pictures such as Figs. 32 and 56 are from a distant view, so it is difficult to clearly see the priest's acts. The other pictures such as Figs. 33 and 54 are not clear because of the smoke from the hearth. Tracings should be added to such pictures. On the other hand, Figs. 110, 118, and the like are taken from a closer distance and are very clear.

The Pavitreṣṭi ritual described in this book is a rather long and elaborate one. The authors explain the structure of the ritual simply using two conceptions: the 'sacred' and the 'profane.' Here, the things, which are *alaukika* (the supermundane one), are called the 'sacred'; the things, which are *laukika* (the mundane one), are called the 'profane.' With the mantras and rites, the offerings, utensils, etc. are purified and magically charged in the ritual, and they become 'sacred.' Then, in the 'meta-world' the ritual performances are done. The authors claim that this Pavitreṣṭi shows a journey from the profane to the sacred. However, after the main rites, the priests leave the ritual site after disposing of the holy water (*pranīta*). I think this is the process of the ritual from the sacred to the profane. The process of this ritual is not one way, but a round trip.

In the conclusion, the comparison of the Vedic *homa* and the Buddhist *homa* is referred to. In the Buddhist tantric *homa*, mental aspect is important. There, the act of offering into the fire is considered to consume mental affliction (*kleśa*). On the other hand, Vedic *homa* is unrelated to the spiritual well being. On this point, one performance depicted in this book is of interest to me. That is: the Adhvaryu priest asks the sacrificer's wife to gaze at the vessel containing the clarified butter (pp. 13, 97). But there is no explanation here why the wife is asked to do so.

In Nepalese Buddhist tantric *homa* (Newar Buddhist *homa*), there is a similar performance. In Newar *homa*, the sacrificer should gaze at the clarified butter in the ladle, which was melted by fire. There, by doing so, the sacrificer imagines that his own sins are melting into the butter. This act also shows a mental aspect of the Buddhist tantric *homās*. The comparative study of *homās* in Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as *pūjās*, should progress now. This book is of great value for this study.

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