

The Yogic Concepts in the Caryāgītikā of the Siddhacharyas of Odisha

Ajaya Kumar Sahoo*, Prof (Dr.) R.M. Dash**

*Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (Yoga), SOADU, Bhubaneswar (Odisha),

**Research Supervisor, Head, Department of Yoga, PPRACHIN, SOADU, Bhubaneswar (Odisha).

Abstract

The Caryāgītikā (also known as Charyāpada or Caryāgīti) represents one of the earliest extant bodies of mystical poetry in eastern India and occupies a significant position in the literary and spiritual heritage of Odisha. Composed by Buddhist Siddhacharyas between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE, these songs embody the philosophical and yogic teachings of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism. Many scholars associate prominent Siddhacharyas such as Kanhupa, Luipa, Sarahapa, and Sabaripa with Odisha and the ancient region of Uddiyāna, which has been identified by some researchers with areas of present-day Odisha (Mukherjee, 1981; Dasgupta, 1930). The present paper examines the yogic concepts embedded in the Caryāgītikā, focusing on Sahaja Yoga, guru-disciple tradition, kāya-sādhana, symbolism, inner realization, and the use of Sandhyā Bhāṣā as a vehicle for esoteric instruction. The study argues that the Caryāgītikā preserves an important yogic tradition that influenced the later spiritual and literary culture of Odisha.

Keywords: Caryāgītikā, Charyāpada, Siddhacharyas, Odisha, Sahaja Yoga, Vajrayāna, Sandhyā Bhāṣā, Kāya-sādhana

Date of Submission: 26-09-2026

Date of Acceptance: 05-10-2026

I. Introduction

The origin of Odia literary culture is closely connected with the development of Caryāgītikā literature, composed by Buddhist Siddhacharyas associated with Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna traditions (Mukherjee, 1981; Mansingh, 1962). These mystical songs are not merely literary compositions but spiritual documents preserving the experiential teachings of yogic practitioners. The verses employ symbolic language, metaphors, and coded expressions to communicate profound spiritual truths and yogic experiences (Shastri, 1916; Sengupta, 2019). The Caryāgītikā therefore constitutes an important source for understanding the development of yogic thought in eastern India.

Many scholars have identified Odisha as an important centre of Tantric Buddhism and Sahajayāna practice. The Siddhacharyas who composed the Caryā songs are believed to have flourished in regions associated with ancient Uddiyāna, which some scholars identify with parts of present-day Odisha (Mukherjee, 1981; Dasgupta, 1930). The association of poets such as Kanhupa, Luipa, Sarahapa, and Sabaripa with Odisha further strengthens the connection between the Caryāgītikā and the yogic traditions of the region (Buddhist Saints, 1989).

Historical Background of the Siddhacharyas

The Siddhacharyas were accomplished spiritual adepts who emphasized direct realization rather than ritual orthodoxy. Their teachings emerged within the broader framework of Vajrayāna Buddhism and focused on experiential wisdom, meditative discipline, and the realization of ultimate truth through yogic practice (Bagchi, 1938; Sankrityayan, 1957). Unlike scholastic traditions that relied heavily on philosophical debate, the Siddhas communicated their insights through songs that combined poetry, symbolism, and spiritual instruction.

The Caryāgītikā was composed in a language commonly referred to as Sandhyā Bhāṣā or “Twilight Language,” a deliberate form of symbolic expression that concealed esoteric teachings from the uninitiated while revealing them to qualified disciples (Shastri, 1916). This mode of expression allowed yogic doctrines to be preserved within ordinary imagery drawn from daily life.

Sahaja Yoga as the Central Yogic Ideal

One of the most important yogic concepts in the Caryāgītikā is Sahaja or spontaneity. The Siddhacharyas regarded enlightenment not as an externally acquired state but as the realization of an innate spiritual reality

already present within the individual (Bagchi, 1938; Sankrityayan, 1957). The term *Sahaja* signifies the natural condition of consciousness beyond conceptual dualities and mental constructions.

The Siddhas taught that liberation is attained through direct experiential realization rather than through elaborate rituals or scholastic learning. This approach became known as *Sahaja Yoga*, emphasizing simplicity, inner awareness, and direct experience of ultimate reality (Sengupta, 2019). The repeated references to *Mahāsukha* (Great Bliss) in the *Caryāgītikā* indicate the yogic state attained through the realization of Sahaja consciousness.

The Concept of Kāya-Sādhana

A distinctive feature of the yogic philosophy of the Siddhacharyas is the emphasis on *Kāya-Sādhana* or the spiritual transformation of the body. Unlike traditions that viewed the body as an obstacle to liberation, the Siddhas regarded it as a sacred instrument for spiritual realization. The human body was considered a microcosm containing all the elements necessary for enlightenment (Kar, 1989).

The symbolic imagery found in the *Caryāgītikā* frequently refers to bodily processes, subtle energies, and yogic experiences. References to lotuses, channels, rivers, mountains, and inner journeys often represent aspects of the yogic body and the process of spiritual awakening. Scholars have observed that the practices of *Kāya-Sādhana* and the worship of the feminine principle occupy an important place in the Siddha tradition associated with Odisha.

Guru and Yogic Transmission

The role of the Guru occupies a central place in the *Caryāgītikā*. The Siddhacharyas repeatedly stress that spiritual realization is impossible without proper guidance. The Guru is portrayed not merely as a teacher but as the living embodiment of wisdom who reveals the hidden meaning of yogic experience (Shastri, 1916).

The famous verse attributed to Luipa emphasizes the necessity of learning from the Guru in order to understand the path of realization. The Guru serves as the mediator between ordinary consciousness and awakened awareness. This emphasis on direct transmission became a defining characteristic of Siddha Yoga traditions and later influenced many streams of Indian spirituality (Bagchi, 1938; Sankrityayan, 1957).

Symbolism and Sandhyā Bhāṣā

The yogic teachings of the *Caryāgītikā* are expressed through a highly symbolic language known as *Sandhyā Bhāṣā*. Ordinary images such as boats, rivers, birds, women, mountains, and lotuses are employed to communicate complex yogic doctrines (Shastri, 1916).

The symbolic nature of the language serves two purposes. First, it protects esoteric teachings from misuse. Second, it encourages contemplative reflection by requiring the practitioner to move beyond literal interpretation. Thus, every image in the *Caryāgītikā* possesses both an outer and an inner meaning. Modern scholars interpret this symbolic language as a sophisticated pedagogical strategy for transmitting yogic knowledge (Sengupta, 2019).

Yogic Symbolism of the Lotus

Among the recurring symbols in the *Caryāgītikā*, the lotus occupies a special place. Kanhupa's celebrated reference to the lotus with sixty-four petals has been interpreted as a symbolic representation of higher consciousness and the subtle yogic body (Rajguru, 1984). The lotus symbolizes spiritual unfolding, purity, and the awakening of latent potential.

The imagery of climbing and dancing upon the lotus may be understood as an allegory for the ascent of consciousness through yogic realization. Such symbolism reflects the Siddhas' tendency to encode spiritual teachings within ordinary poetic imagery.

Yogic Psychology in the Caryāgītikā

The *Caryāgītikā* places considerable emphasis on the control and transformation of the mind. The Siddhacharyas describe ignorance, attachment, and dualistic thinking as obstacles to realization. Through meditation, mindfulness, and yogic discipline, the practitioner transcends these limitations and experiences the state of *Mahāsukha* or supreme bliss (Bagchi, 1938).

The songs repeatedly stress inwardness and self-realization. Rather than seeking liberation through external practices alone, the Siddhas advocate a transformation of consciousness. The inner journey described in the *Caryāgītikā* corresponds closely to broader Indian yogic traditions that emphasize mastery of mind and realization of one's true nature.

Influence on Odia Spiritual and Literary Traditions

The yogic ideas preserved in the *Caryāgītikā* exercised a lasting influence on the spiritual culture of Odisha. The symbolic mode of expression, emphasis on inner realization, and integration of yogic experience into poetic form reappeared in later Odia literary traditions (Mansingh, 1962; Panda, 2010).

Scholars have noted that many features of later Odia devotional and mystical literature exhibit continuity with the Siddha tradition. The influence of yogic symbolism, esoteric spirituality, and experiential devotion can be traced through subsequent centuries of Odia literary development. Furthermore, the close linguistic relationship between the language of the *Caryāgītikā* and modern Odia underscores the significance of these texts in the cultural history of Odisha.

II. Conclusion

The *Caryāgītikā* of the Siddhacharyas of Odisha represents a remarkable synthesis of poetry, spirituality, and yogic philosophy. The songs preserve essential concepts of Sahaja Yoga, Kāya-Sādhana, guru-disciple transmission, symbolic language, and meditative realization. Through the use of Sandhyā Bhāṣā, the Siddhacharyas encoded profound yogic insights within seemingly ordinary poetic imagery. The prominence of Odisha in the Siddha tradition and the strong linguistic and cultural connections between the *Caryāgītikā* and Odia heritage further enhance the significance of these texts. The study of the *Caryāgītikā* therefore contributes not only to literary history but also to a deeper understanding of the evolution of yogic thought in eastern India.

References

- [1]. Bagchi, P. C. (1938). *Dohākosha of Sarahapāda*. University of Calcutta.
- [2]. Bhattacharya, B. (1925). *Introduction to Sāadhanamālā* (Vol. 2). Government of Bengal.
- [3]. Buddhist Saints. (1989). *Āścarya Caryācaya*. Odisha Sahitya Akademi.
- [4]. Dasgupta, N. N. (1930). *Uddiyāna and Sahore*. Indian Historical Quarterly, 6, 129–144.
- [5]. Mansingh, M. (1962). *History of Oriya Literature*. Sahitya Akademi.
- [6]. Mukherjee, P. (1981). *The History of Medieval Vaishnavism in Odisha*. Vidyapuri.
- [7]. Panda, H. (2010). *History of Odisha Literature*. Anmol Publications.
- [8]. Rajguru, S. N. (1984). *History of Oriya Literature*. Grantha Mandir.
- [9]. Sankrityayan, R. (1957). *Bauddha Gāna O Doha*. Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad.
- [10]. Sengupta, U. (2019). A Sign in Twilight: Semiotic Interpretations of Sandhyābhāṣā Metaphors in the Charyāpada. *Translation Today*, 13(1), 1–15.
- [11]. Shastri, H. P. (1916). *Bauddha Gāna O Doha*. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad.