

JAMACHO: NAGARJUNA HILL

It is one of the famous Buddhist stupa on the Nagarjuna Hill which is about 7km. from Kathmandu on western skyline. A motorable road leads through Raniban [Queen] forest to this stupa. It takes about 45 minutes to reach there in motor/jeep while trek is about 5 km. on foot and takes about 2 hours. It is quite steepa and one has to climb about 2480 ft. [754 m.] in altitude as the stupa is situated on the top of the Nagarjuna hill at 700 ft. [2128 m.] altitude. Nagarjuna hill is also described in literature as Vindya mountain.

The Swayambhu chronicles by Nas Lung Ngang-dbang Do-rje, mention about this place as follows. To the northwest of Swayambhu, on the peak of the Vindya mountain is the thrones of the teacher [Sakyamuni] and the thrones of Sariputra and Maudgallyana. On the eastern flank of the mountain is Nagarjuna's meditation cave and the spring he brought forth. Very close on the north sides are the stupas of Shakyamuni's father, Suddhodaha and his mother Maya Devi. On the eastern side of the peak is the place of Buddha Makhya [Mahe, the Buffalo Buddha]. Here is the soil which halumanjhu [Hanuman], the monkey king brought Vulture Peak. There are five stupas here. Today, there is Tibetan Charnal ground here.

At present there is only one stupa to mark the throne of the Buddha. The hill is called Nagarjuna as cave of residence of Nagarjuna a famous Buddhist saint exist, here. The stupa is about 20-30 ft height. It is made of clay standing in the flat ground with three bases having a dome. Above the dome are usual stupa structure with harmika and 13 spires. The canopy is lotus flower and a small linga-like pillar raising above. The other features are as usual. The niches have four Buddhas in usual poses.

On the east side of the stupa there are two rows of Buddhist gods and goddesses. In the first row Mahankala is in meditation pose and third Vasundhara while second row includes white Tara, Padmapani green Tara, and Vajrapani.

The legends say that at this place Adi Buddha gave his first sermon Hi forecasted about Nepal about its religion and future of Buddhism Tibetans therefor called Nagarjuna as Ri-glang-ru lung-bstan.

[Ox-horn Prophecy Mountain]. The stupa on the top of this hill is to mark the throne of the Buddha.

On the Nagarjuna mountain there is a old tree. It is said that one person cut out a part of it and when he reached his house he died. Later on people found on exacavating some elephant headed stones under that tree. This place is related to Lord Shive. It is said that when there are no rain in the valley then people come here and pray god for the rain. It is the belief that rains immediately

follow after prayers. On one side of the stupa there is about 50-80 ft. high view tower recently built for seeing the commanding view of the adjoining hills and area. Recently, several small shelters are constructed for the devotees and pilgrims. Tibetans visit this place offer prayer flags. It is the common belief that those who offer and hang flags at top of this will get their good luck' as high as flags are fixed.

According to Cho-Kyi-ma in front of the Buddha throne on the peak is a local cremation ground. In middle of dense forest beneath the throne of Sakyamuni is the cave of Nagarjuna in which are stone images of Nagarjuna and Shakyamuni. Near by are the tracks of Mahe Buddha [the Buffalo Buddha]. Also nearby is the cave of Achary Vasubandhu. The two stupas said to be the reliquaries of the father and mother of the Buddha are found on the face of the hill behind [the Balaju] Nilkantha.

There are several caves on the Nagarjuna hill. Out of which some are empty while other are almost in ruins. Out of these caves two most important one are situated inside the Rani Ban forest while another situated outside the gate on the Balaju-Trishule Road. The cave inside the Rani Ban forest is said to be made by Nagarjuna to worship Swayambhu and placed an image of Akshobhya Buddha when the water felled the valley during the Naga's attempt to reclaim it for man it rose up to the navel of this image. Then Nagarjuna caught Naga [serpent] which was playing in the water lift it up and conquered him in the cave. D. Weight describes that according to the legend water required in this cave is provided by nag and therefore he is called jalpuri [making full of water]. It is mentioned that the Nagarjunapad made some Chaitya and composed many tantric shastra, and discovered many Buddhist deities. Later he died in the cave. The mountain therefore, become known as Nagarjuna is regarded very sacred. Wright further mention, "People who are anxious to gain salvation instruct their relatives to send their skull or frontal bone to this mountain where it is thrown high in the air and then buried and a chaitya is built over it".

On the northern side of the hill outside the forest there is famous cave of Nagarjuna which still exists. There are images of Akshobhya and Nagarjuna inside. Tibetans call this caves of Guru Rimpoche, while local population call it as Lakshmi Gupha. Within the cave there are images of Amoghasiddhi or Nagarjuna. In 1980, during monsoon, a large boulder fell and broke the old image of Vajrayogini which can be seen behind the boulder. The way to inside of the cave is very narrow and one has to crawl to go inside where is a figure of Buddha. Another tunnel is equally enough and lead to a chamber having an image of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. Besides, there are many caves on Nagarjuna's hill, some caves are empty while others can not be located. Keith Dowman [1981] mentions that there is a reputed cave on this Nagarjuna spur having about 12ft. high image of crystal Buddha. It is accessible by rope down a 40ft. pit through a narrow tunnel. However, the author could not trace it beside best efforts.

Near the Nagarjuna cave is a cave known as Buffalo Buddha by the Tibetans. There is a legend that once Nagarjuna was living in this cave. A buffalo herdsman used to visit the master and was offering milk, curds, etc. Once he invited the Master to town but Master told him to meditate at the same cave. But the herdsman was always thinking of his buffaloes. Later he himself became a buffalo. After meditation he shot through the roof of the cave and went to paradise.

Some related legends also mention that few people were not able to meditate on emptiness [sunyata] therefore, they were suggested to have creative visualisation which dissolve the perfect image in the fulfilment process of identification with their original nature. Untill they attained salvation and a transubstantiated body. Similarly Nagarjuna also instructed a thief named Nagbodhi to vesualise a red horn of avaric protuding fromhis forehead. Later: he was asked to meditate on emptines [sunyata] after which he attained salvation. Such legends and that of Buffalo are also mentioned in Abhayadana Shri's legends of Eighty four Mahasidhas.

By: Prof. Dr. T. C. Majupuria

i *Buddhist Himalaya*, Vol 1, No. 1 – 1988