

**BUDDHIST PRACTICES IN NEPAL MANDALA TODAY**  
With Special Reference to Nepalese Buddhism

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27<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2011

For  
International Conference  
27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> January 2011

On  
Buddhism-Past and Present

Organized by  
Department of History  
ABASAHEB GARWARE COLLEGE  
Karve Road, Pune, India-411004

# Buddhist Practices in Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley) today with special reference to Nepalese Buddhism<sup>1</sup>

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*“By the standards of South Asia the Buddhist Newars are not a large religious community, but they have an importance out of all proportion to their number. As the last remaining south Asian Mahayana Buddhists, that is, the last remaining Buddhists whose scriptures are written in Sanskrit and whose sacred language is Sanskrit, they have much to teach us about the history of Buddhism in South Asia.” – Sylvain Levi (France early 20th centuries)*

In religio-cultural history of Nepal, the term Nepal Mandala stands for the present Kathmandu valley. The Newar community that speaks a Tibeto-Burman language is one of the oldest, and perhaps the original, ethnic group in this valley. This community can be divided into two groups according to religious faith: one is Hindu, the other is Buddhist. The co-existence of these two, a fact attested to as early as the late Gupta period by the Chinese pilgrims, stands as a clear example of religious peace and harmony in the world.

As the early British diplomat-scholar Brian Hodgson discovered, and the French Indologist Sylvain Levi affirmed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Newar Buddhist tradition stands as a singularly interesting surviving tradition in South Asia: “The Buddhist Newars are not a large religious community, but they have an importance out of all proportion to their number. As the last remaining south Asian Mahayana Buddhists, that is, the last remaining Buddhists whose scriptures are written in Sanskrit and whose sacred language is Sanskrit, they have much to teach us about the history of Buddhism in South Asia.”<sup>2</sup> Newar Buddhist community has preserved until

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<sup>1</sup> This article is presented chiefly based on observation of Buddhist practices in Newar Buddhist community, Kathmandu Valley as a Bajracharya, a Buddhist Acharya. The author is serving the community from last 30 years. He was founding head of the Central Department of Buddhist Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal and founding member of Bauddha Darshan Vibhaga, Mahendra Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, Dangh, Nepal. He was also member secretary for the Proposed Lumbini Buddhist University, Lumbini, Nepal.

<sup>2</sup> Levi, Sylvain. *Le Nepal* (3 Vols.) (Paris: Leroux, 1905-8).

today a vast library of Sanskrit manuscripts that have been preserved nowhere else, including Indic vajrayana traditions. It is also known for a rich legacy of arts in metal, wood, and stone; Newar Buddhist ritual practices are also similar to those likely practiced a millennia earlier in northern India.

At present there are prominently three types of Buddhism in practices in Nepal. They are as follows:

- i) Tibetan (Northern) Buddhism in Nepal
- ii) Theravadin (Southern) Buddhism in Nepal
- iii) Newar Buddhism/Buddhism of Nepal Mandala/Nepalese Buddhism

Although the history of Buddhist heritage of in the present country of Nepal goes back to more than a 1500 years, in fact its heritage has been influenced by many directions. On one hand, the Buddhist heritage of northern Nepal has been carrying out the Tibetan Tradition. On the other hand and more recently, Nepalese Theravadin Buddhist monks and nuns have reintroduced Theravada or Southern Buddhism from Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. An example of this converged of traditions in the Kathmandu Valley is the Newar Mahaprajna, who had taken Buddhist ordination according to Theravadin tradition in 1928 A. D. from U. Chandramani Maha Thera, a monk of Burma (Myanmar) was the first Theravadin monk in modern history of Nepal, an individual who also engaged in Tibetan and Newar Buddhist practices as well. In the last century, modernist Theravada has also become rooted deeply in Kathmandu Valley.

When I use the term Newar Buddhism, this stands for the particular type of Buddhism, which is in practice in Newar Community whose cities, towns, and villages are predominate in the Kathmandu Valley, and in a few areas outside it. Newar Buddhist sages centuries ago defined this Valley as a sacred realm, and their texts define it as “Nepal Mandala.” This tradition has been in practice without any interruption going back to the Licchavi period, with the first inscription found in 464 CE. The form of monastic Buddhism mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions suggest that early Newar Buddhism resembled that in northern India, with a few hints of the origins of Mahayana tradition found there.<sup>3</sup> Several indigenous values along with the

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<sup>3</sup> Riccardi, Theodore. "Buddhism in Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal", in A.K. Narain ed. *Studies in the History of Buddhism*. New Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 1980, 265-281.

uniquenesses<sup>4</sup> are noticed in the Newar Buddhism so it is known as Nepalese Buddhism. My paper in the time allotted can attempt only to highlight several aspects of its monasticism, major ritual practices etc. and thus to situate Nepalese Buddhism in the modern Buddhist world.

**a. Legendary and Historical Background of Nepalese Buddhism:**

Newar textual traditions dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century assert that Buddhism prevailed in this Valley called Nepal Mandal even before the advent of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni.<sup>5</sup> The legend of Nepal Mandala as a kingdom begins with lake blessed with the sacred appearance of a lotus enfolding a flame representing the Adibuddha Svayambhu. Legends of previous Buddhas visiting this site such as Dipankara and other Tathagatas are so deeply rooted in the culture that their stories are narrated; Stotras and Dharanis (magical phrases) are still chanted very often on many occasions. The Pancha-Buddha, (the Five conceptual Buddhas) are central to Buddhist shrines and stupas, and worshiped widely. Mahayana-sutras, Avadana and Jataka literature are the foundation for people's belief on Buddhism and practices. Buddhist Tantras are the main sources for esoteric Buddhist practices such as initiation, Yoga practices etc.

In the Mulasarvastivadin Vinayavastu,<sup>6</sup> a Buddhist text dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, one passage states that Shakyas from Kapilavastu and Vanikas (merchants) from Sravasti migrated to Naivala (identified as Nepal mandala) during the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha. Then Bhiksu Ananda, the attendant of Shakyamuni Buddha, is also said to have visited Nepal Mandala to meet the Shakyas and Vanikas there. It may be that these Shakyas and merchants introduced Buddhism in Nepal Mandala and Bhiksu Ananda supported its foundation. Another textual story states that Emperor Ashoka had visited Nepal along with his one of daughters and gave her in marriage to a local king.<sup>7</sup> To this day, There are four shrines popularly known as Ashoka Stupa around Lalitpur city and many shrines called "Ashok Caitya" found in dozens of monastic courtyards and these are still worshipped. Little

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<sup>4</sup> See for the uniquenesses of Newar Buddhism: Naresh Man Bajracharya, "A Brief Introduction to Nepalese Buddhism" *Vajrayan*, Nepal: Vol. 5, No. 2, 2010 A.D., pp.1-10

<sup>5</sup> Shakyamuni was born in Lumbini, a site near the southern border of the modern state of Nepal, a site about 100 miles distant from the Kathmandu Valley. "Nepal" until the formation of the modern state in 1769 meant only the Kathmandu Valley.

<sup>6</sup> Gyannamani Nepal, *Nepal Nirukta* (Nepali), (Kathmandu: Nepal Pragyna Pratisthana V.S. 2040), pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> See for details: Naresh Man Bajracharya, *Buddhism in Nepal 465 B.C. to 1199A.D.* (Delhi: Eastern Books Linkers, 1998), pp. 1-12.

archaeological research has been done in Nepal, and none yet has corroborated these stories.

The ancient history of Nepal comes to life in the Licchavi inscriptions (440A.D. to 879A.D.)<sup>8</sup> These testify that some Licchavi kings were inclined to Buddhism, supported the sangha, built monasteries and stupas, and supported the creation of images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Both they and merchants likely contributed to the promotion of Buddhism. Other Licchavi kings, however, were devotees of Siva and Vishnu, and built large temples to honor them and the brahmins who served them. The Bhikshu and Bhikshuni Sanghas resided in monasteries, and one of the earliest mentions of the term “Mahayana” is found in Nepal; the term “Vajrayana” is also found to have been inscribed in one stone inscription belonging to the first half of 7<sup>th</sup> century.

According to Tibetan records, a Nepalese Princess named Bhrikuti played an instrumental role in introducing Buddhism to Tibet after her marriage with Tibetan emperor Srog-tSen-Gam-Po (617-650 A.D.). After the year 1000 CE during the “second introduction” of Buddhist from the Gangetic plains into Tibet, Nepal was an intermediary point for many Indian masters like Atisha and Dharmasvamin. Nepal Mandala was a transit place for Indian Acharyas to go to Tibet.<sup>9</sup> In this and subsequent centuries, Nepalese Buddhist masters were invited to Tibet and many Tibetans came to Nepal to study and collect Sanskrit texts for translation. Nepal Mandala by 1300 was a center for Buddhist learning for Tibetans.

In the later medieval history of Nepal (1200-1769 CE) Buddhist traditions continued to evolve and grow, with the strongest influence exerted by the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. The traditions were now cut off from the Pala and Sena centers in the Gangetic plains, and while Sanskrit texts from the south remained central, new works were composed that adapted these traditions to the circumstances of Nepal Mandala itself. Sangha

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<sup>8</sup> Generally, history of Nepal is divided into three periods. The earlier history deals with the period from the Licchavi King Manadeva to King Raghavadeva (440A.D. to 879A.D.) This period is also known as "Ancient Nepal". In this context, Nepal (sometimes Nepal Mandal) usually refers to the valley namely Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Patan and the vicinity of these towns. The second period, the Medieval History of Nepal covers the later Licchavi and the entire Malla period that is from 879 A.D. to 1768 A. D. Covering the period from Shaha Conquest over the Kathmandu Valley (1769 A. D. up to the present day) is known as the period of Modern Nepal.

<sup>9</sup> See for details: Naresh Man Bajracharya, *Buddhism in Nepal*, (Delhi: Eastern Books Linkers), 1998, chapters 2 to 6.

members increased and hundreds of monasteries were built, especially in the main cities of Kantpur (Kathmandu), Lalitapatan, and Bhaktapur. New Buddhist festivals were introduced. As individuals and entire social groups migrated for trade or agriculture, they assimilated and adopted the language and Buddhist culture that flourished due to the fertile Valley soils and the extraordinary wealth earned from Indo-Tibetan trade. The Newar artisan community also reached very high standards of artistic merit, and so they were called upon by the aristocrats and monks of Buddhist Tibet to build new monasteries, cast new images, and paint devotional works of art. In the medieval period, all who wished could likely be granted Buddhist ordination without any discrimination.

During the later Malla dynasties in Nepala Mandala (1482-1769) the cultural tide supported in the royal courts seems to have come under greater Hindu influence, with brahmins at court, and the rule by Hindu law (Dharmashastra) affecting all communities. At this time, the Newar community had to observe pollution and purity norms to a greater degree, so that marriage norms came to be observed on group lines, and the principles of caste law were now followed. The Buddhist masters seem to have made the best of this situation, adapting Mahayana principles and Vajrayana practices to create rituals that conform to Brahmanical temple practices and samskara rites of passage. Some of the monasteries had their monks form patrilineages and marry, closing off ordination as “monks” only to their male descendants, a pattern that continues until the present day. Many of these “married monks” who adopted the surname “vajracarya” served the wider Buddhist community by performing rituals for them. This formulation of hundreds of rituals for individuals, temple images, festival processions is still a characteristic of Buddhism in Nepal today.

Buddhism in modern Nepal (1769 CE up to the present day) was affected by the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by outsiders of the Shah dynasty, and their partisan support of Hindu traditions, and their disestablishment of land tenure and other Malla laws that supported Buddhist monasticism and culture. The Shah Royal Court established in the new state was located right in the heart of Nepala Mandala and did not favor Buddhism. By the end of the Rana period (1900-1950), discrimination against Newar language and rituals reached its peak.

The political movement for democracy in first half of twentieth century brought awareness to the public. Newars disenchanted with the wrong

practices that were in practice in terms of Mahayana-Vajrayana practices helped bring the reformist Theravada Buddhism into modern Nepal. The Theravada movement commented strongly against most ritual practices prevailing by the time and supported resistance to unfavorable royal policies. People were attracted towards the Theravada practices

Today, then Newar Buddhist community is becoming less conservative in regard to caste ideology and more open to new interpretations of the Dharma. A number of new Buddhist organizations are endeavoring to conserve and reform Newar Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism.

## **1. Aspects of Nepalese Buddhism: Monasticism**

### ***a. Monasteries and common features of monasteries:***

More than three hundred Viharas (Buddhist Monasteries) are in existence until today in the Kathmandu Valley. Each Vihara has two names, one is in Sanskrit language and other is in local (Newar) language.<sup>10</sup> The Vihars are categorized as the Mu-Baha (Main Monastery), Baha, and Bahi each with satellite Kacha-bahas (Branch Monasteres) based on Samgha and architectural differences. But all Viharas have been given a title with “Mahavihara”<sup>11</sup> in it.

Across the Newar settlements in Nepal Mandala, a Vihara is a four-sided monastic building built around an open courtyard. It is a brick and wooden structure, usually of two storeys. Their foundation, walls and pillars are of bricks; doors and windows are made of wood, many with intricate carving. Wooden struts support the clay-tile roofs. The courtyard is defined by a ground floor plinth that is a foot or more above this brick pavement. A caitya known as Vajradhatu Caitya is installed at the center of the courtyard. Many viharas have other caityas located there, the donations of local Newar families.

The three sides of the floor are open halls, each situated in the centre of each arm. The main entrance hall has two benches and images of Mahakala and

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<sup>10</sup> Sriratnaketu mahavihar is a Sanskrit name of a Vihara that is located at Kathmandu city. The same Vihara is popularly known as Jhwabaha in local (Newari) language but it is not translated from the Sanskrit name.

<sup>11</sup> For example: a Mu-Baha: “Sriratnaketu Mahavirar ”; a Baha: “Sri Shantighat-Caitya Mahavihar”; a Bahi: “Sthavirapatra Mahavihar ” a Branch Baha “ Gunakara Mahaviara” . See for more: L. K. Locke, *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd, 1985).

Ganesh set into the wall. On the fourth side, opposite to the entrance is the main shrine of the Vihar. The ground-floor shrine houses a big image of Buddha along with a few other small Buddhist images. Only members of the samgha of each Vihara are allowed to enter into the shrine, but all individuals but can view it from outside. Above the shrine is a fivefold windows room where esoteric or tantric images are established. This upstairs room is known as the “Agama”. Only the initiated samgha members are allowed to view the images found there. All Viharas had been renovated many times. At present a few viharas are with an intact architecture.

***b. Monastic Order:***

It has already mentioned above that that Vihars are categorized according to the type of Samgha that has its lineage located in the Vihara. Architectural differences are matched by differences in sangha membership of those inhabiting them. The Newar samgha is divided into two parts, Shakya and Bajracharya. Males born into these families become Shakya and members of Shakya Samgha by obtaining the Buddhist ordination called “Pravajya;” those born into Bajracharya families become members of the Bajracharya Samgha by obtaining “Acharyabhiseka”.

Following the types mentioned above, most of the Mu-Baha (Main Monastery) samghas consist of male Bajracharyas as the members of the Samgha. The Samgha of that Mu-baha is also popularly known as the Bajracharya Samgha. A few Mu-bahas are mixed, consisting of male Bajracharys and a third group called Shakya-bhikshus as the members. All the Bahis have samghas that consist only of Shakya-bhikshus.

Each sangha is organized according to age seniority and tantric initiation. In some Viharas the first five, in some the first ten, in some the first twenty and in some the first thirty Samgha members are referred to as “Sthavira.” After death of a Sthavira the next junior member is promoted into the Sthavira rank. In the case of the Bajracharya Samgha, the senior most Sthavira is regarded as “the Chakresvara”. The senior most Chakesvara in Kantipur is regarded as “Mula-chakresvara.” The use of this term of course refers to tantric practice since to be promoted to the Sthavira rank, an individual must take the Chakrasamvara-initiation. The committee of Sthaviras in each Vihara is authorized to make decisions for the samgha of its own vihara.

For at least the past two centuries, the samgha members of each Vihara can get married and can have a family. The wives of Shakyas and Bajracharyas



are also regarded as the Shakya-bhikshunis and the Bajracharyas respectively. In fact Shakya bhiksus of one monastery prefer to arrange marriages with Shakya-bhishunis of other monasteries. Similarly male Bajracharyas of a monastery prefer to arrange marriages with female Bajracharyas of other monasteries.<sup>12</sup> It is mandatory for the male children of Shakya-bhikshus to take Buddhist ordination in their respective Vihara, or their forfeit their rights and ability to worship in the monastery shrine.<sup>13</sup> Shakya-bhikshus/ bhikshunis are regarded higher ranking and Bajrachary are the highest ranking above Newar all Buddhists social hierarchy.

***c. Major Monastic Activities:***

**i. Buddhist Ordination and Acharya initiation:**

Buddhist ordination is one of the main monastic activities in Newar Buddhist communities. It takes place as needed that is when there are enough young men who want to complete this life-cycle ritual. In some Viharas, the Samgha elders organize the ordination program; in some Viharas, an individual family will organize it when its sons come of age. A team of the Sthaviras gives the ordination and Acharya-abhiseka following a specific ritual in their respective Viharas. Male children of Shakya family become the member of Shakya Samgha by obtaining the Buddhist ordination.

Male children of Bajracharya family become Bajracharya by obtaining the first ordination, but then doing the second, the “Acharyabhiseka” in their father’s home monastery. After obtaining the Acharya-abhiseka the new Bajracharyas are trained in performing the most common ritual, the Buddhist Homa and from that time afterwards they are empowered to perform it for patrons.<sup>14</sup>

**ii. Other major Initiations:**

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<sup>12</sup> Two different family lineage of the same monastery can also marry each other. Nowadays, Bajracharya family members do frequently marry Shakya Bhiksunis and vice versa.

<sup>13</sup> In most of the Vihars it is mandatory for the male children of Bajrachayrs to take Acharyabhiseka but in some Vihars it is optional. One, who received ordination but does not take the Acharya bhiseka, is regarded as only Shakya-bhikshu. As the female children of Shakya-bhikshus and Bajracharyas they do not have to get Buddhist ordination and Acharyabhiseka but they are regarded as the Shakya-bhikshunis and Bajracharyas.

<sup>14</sup> New Bajracharyas begin their Acharya career performing Mamsahuti Homa at Pithas (now known as astamatrika temple).

The Shakyas and Bajracharya used to undertake several initiations and trainings on several Yoga practices. At present, some members of the samgha take the Initiation of Avalokitesvara, Chakrasamvara (Sriheruka), Vajravarahi, and Chandamaharosana (Achala) (in order of practice today). Chakrasamvara Trisamadhi, Chandali-Yoga, Chandamaharosana Trisamdhi, Balyarchan yoga, Smasana yoga, Utkranti yogas are practiced very secretly. All these initiations are now limited within a very few Shakyas and Bajracharyas communities and are followed according to strict rules of secrecy. Besides to the Shakya and Bajracharya, the members of the Uray community in Kathmandu also can obtain these initiations and practice the meditations in their own family Agams (Esoteric Buddhist Shrines).

### **iii. Daily Rituals in monastery:**

Daily ritual takes place in every monastery. Each member of the Samgha performs the daily ritual by rotation. Esoteric ritual named “aumshi puja” used to take place on the fifteenth day of dark half of a month (aumshi tithi) in the Agama of every monastery but only a few monasteries observe the ritual today. Samgha members used to recite several Mahayana-sutras and praising verses (stotras) jointly in all monasteries daily, and only a few still do so today. Most do this twice in a month; one on the every eighth day of bright half of a month (sukalpaksha astami) and the other on every full moon day. Samvarodaya Parva (dishu puja), an esoteric ritual is observed on the tenth day of dark half of Paush month (Paush Krishna Dashami) in every year in most of the monasteries marking the accomplishment (Shadhana) of Hevajra-nairatma by Acharya Manjudeva.

Buddhist images, especially those of Dipankara Buddha are displayed for public for a month of Sravana in most of the monasteries.

Each Monastery used to conduct its assembly once in a year. Now a days a very few monasteries are following the traditions. In Kathmandu, there are eighteen mu-bahas (main monasteries) and grouped into three according to the geographical location like northern (upper), middle and southern (lower) directions. Each group conducts its regional assembly once in a year; finally all in united form conduct a national assembly known as “De Acha Guthi” (“Country Acharya Assembly”) once in a year.

## **2. Buddhist Community:**

Buddhist community is found to have formed with the combination of Samgha and the laity. Masters in the Newar samgha used to serve the other

Buddhists by several means: as spiritual master teaching meditation; as priests performing rituals; as doctors using herbs and mantras to promote community health; as astrologers conjuring the best time for marriages and other events. Shakyas do not serve as priests. Nowadays a very few Shakyas and Bajracharyas are involved engage in religious service, and it is the Bajracharyas who are still active in doing rituals for patrons. Today, only a few support themselves only through ritual service and most have other main sources of livelihood. One old and important specialization the Newar samgha of Shakyas and Bajracharyas has long undertaken is fashioning jewelry, ornaments, and Buddhist images.

The Newar laity community is comprised of several caste communities. The last name of each society is entitled after their traditional professions. For example the society, which involves in copper works by tradition, is entitled Tamrakara. Similarly, by the last names like Kamsakara, Sikharakara, Silpakara, Tandukara, Chitrakara, Mali/Malakara, Ranjitkara, Lohakara etc. can be understood their traditional profession. Now a days Buddhist communities do not follow their traditional professions strictly and the professions are not limited within them too.

### **3. Family Priest and follower System:**

Each Bajracharya family used to have a circle of followers whom it served as their Buddhist family priest, serving by performing rituals in both happy (birth, marriage, etc.) and sorrowful events (sickness and death). Most of the major Buddhist practices are observed in the presence and under the guidance of family priest. At present, this Buddhist priest's work cannot compete with the modern politics; administration; education; business. Most Bajracharyas have given up their priestly profession and so their followers, too. Today, Newar householders depend on a small number of individuals who still know and understand the old traditions.

### **4. Major Buddhist Practices:**

#### **i. Ritual for passages of life:**

Buddhist community observes rituals on the occasion of all major passage of life. It also observes rituals for the cremation of a death body. If further observe rituals on different days and months after death till a year. Afterwards death anniversary ritual is observed annually. Family priest performs all the rituals for the followers. Some rituals are very common as well as open to all but some are very secret. All the practices commence

with ritual and end with ritual. Ritualism is one of characteristic of Nepalese Buddhism.

### **ii. Visiting Viharas and temples:**

Visiting Viharas and temples is considered as one of major Buddhist practice. People visit temples and monasteries near by their residence in very day. The every eighth day of white half of each month and full moon day are considered as the most auspicious days to visit temple and monasteries. People visit Stupa/Caitya and monasteries for a month of Sravana. Again people visit Bodhisattva temples for a month of Kartika. Occasionally People make plan to visit all the monasteries in one day with musical instrument, offering materials etc.

### **iii. Pilgrimage Visit:**

As a part of Buddhist practices people pay pilgrimage visit in several local Buddhist sites like temples, conjunction of rivers (tirth), natural wells/ponds, hills, mountains etc. Taking bath in the conjunction of rivers and natural wells and ponds is the one of objective of pilgrimage visit. Priest narrates history and legends behind the spots. Pilgrims receive moral precepts in the holy places and observe Vrata ritual too. Giving (Dana) a specific object according the places is an important part of the pilgrimage visit.

### **iv. Vrata:**

Vatra is a package of Buddhist practice. Shadhana of a particular deity/mandala like Manjusri, Avoalokitesvara, Tara, Vasudharaj, Dharmadhatu, Mahakala etc., following eight precepts (astasila), discourse on ten misdeeds and on vrata-kath (Sutra, Jataka, Avadana etc.), Dana etc. are the main contents of Buddhist Vrata. Followers observe one day long Varat on particular date according to the deity under the guidance of priest. It is observed either once a year or once a month for a year or two years and further more. Vrata is observed in residence courtyard, residence, monasteries, Tirths and other pilgrimage sites.

### **v. Chaitya Establishment**

People establish Chaitya in side the monastery courtyard or residential courtyards or bank of river or on the top hills. Some people dedicated the establishment of a Chaitya after the name of demise people. Establishment of a Chaitya is followed with the Pratistha ritual. Establishment of a Chaitya is regarded as one of great Dharma.

**v. Saptavidhanuttara puja:**

Saptavidhanuttara puja is a very popular Buddhist practices. It is an union of meditation and ritual practices. Main Aim of this puja is to take vow to be a Buddha in future. Observers/followers are given Bodhisattva Abhiseka (initiation) at the end of ritual.

**vi. Harati puja:**

Harati puja is also very popular Buddhist practices. Shakyamuni Buddha had transformed Harati Yakshani as a savior from killer through his psychotherapy and miracle power. Since then Harati is regarded as protective deity in Buddhism. In fact Harati puja is a Yakshani Shadhana.

**vii. Homa puja:**

Kalasharcana and Mamaki puja are the common mode of ritual. Homa puja is an other mode of puja among many modes. Rituals are some time performed along with Homa puja. In some case Homa puja is compulsory and in some case option. Observation of ritual along with Homa ritual is considered as a high level of ritual by the society. There are independent Homa rituals too.

**viii. Sutra Patha:**

Reading, make read, listening and make listen the Mahayana-Sutras like Prajnaparamita Sutra, Pancharaksha Sutra etc. is a meritorious deed as mentioned in Mahayansutra. It is a traditional Buddhist practices that followers make priests read the Sutras and listen them. Sutras are read in many occasions like different phases of installation of Caitya/Stupa, construction of monastery, birthday celebration etc.

**5. Festivals:**

Buddhist people celebrate a series of festival every year. Most of the festivals are celebrated according to lunar calendar while a few according to solar calendar. Buddha's birth day that celebrated in Vaishkha full moon day; Gumla for a month of Sravana; Dana festivals in Sravan; Samvaroday parva in the month of Paush, Dana festival and Sri-panchami festival in the month of Magha; Namasamgiti parva on Chaitra full moon day are of remarkable Buddhist festivals. Among them couples of festival like Buddha's birth day, Namasamgiti Parva etc. are introduced in modern period of Nepal.

## **6. Co-existence:**

Buddhism could survive in Nepal mandala following the Buddhist theories of co-existence, patience, skillful means etc. Most of the kings were strong followers of Hinduism (Saivism etc.). Castism was implemented even for Buddhist people as the law and order of the country in the medieval history of Nepal mandala. Buddhist people are granted fund to celebrate Hindu festivals by ruler and administration then. Buddhist people have followed the Buddhist theory of co-existence, patience and harmony with skillful means so they never exiled from their land. Now a day Buddhist followers are living together even with Islam and Christian communities with peace and harmony.

## **Ultimate Goal of Nepalese Buddhist Practices:**

People practice Buddhism throughout the life. People practice Buddhism after the name of demised people too. Finally, they dedicate the merits (punya), gained from their practices, wishing Buddhahood for all living beings. They make wish or state in inscription “By doing all these practices all living beings may attain Samyaksambodhi”

## **Situation of Nepalese Buddhism in Modern Nepal:**

However Nepalese Buddhism is the only one tradition, which carried out its long history along with history of country, it's situation not sound. It, which splendid country with unique Buddhistic identity through its unique Buddhist cultural heritage, unique Buddhist monasteries and Temples, is in shade now. It, which has preserved Original Buddhist Sanskrit literatures and had produced several Buddhist Acaryas, is poor now in Buddhist monastic education. It, which was honored with royal patronage in past history, is ignored at present by concerned authority. However couples of new Buddhist organizations being emotional are endeavoring to conserve and reform Nepalese Buddhism but lacks of scientific plans and methodological efforts can be noticed. It would be in position to disappear from its country, if strategic plan and action are not implemented on time.

## **Views:**

The sole responsibility for preservation and development of Nepalese Buddhism before its disappearance chiefly goes to Government of Nepal because it is matter of Buddhistic Identity of Nation itself.

Responsibility for preservation of Nepalese Buddhism before its disappearance also goes to Buddhist world and Buddhist academicians. It is

not simply because of Nepalese Buddhism but **it is the only one living original Buddhist Sanskrit Mahayana-Vajrayana tradition in the world.**

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