

Vihara's 15th Anniversary with Various Events

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Portland, Nov 10, A day-long program was organized on Sunday, Nov 10, 2024 to mark the 15th anniversary of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, the first and only one Newar Vajrayana Buddhist monastery in the West. The anniversary celebration kicked off with the Gurumandala Puja and Homa Puja in the morning.

Gurumandala and Homa Puja were elaborately conducted by Prajwal. Other participants of the Gurumandala Puja were Sangha members: Joshua Proto, Anna Shustrova, Anastasia Roderick, Riyaz Khan, Adam Bidema, Gabriel Quitslund and Naveena Shakya. To mark the occasion, 108 butter lamps were lit and illuminated.



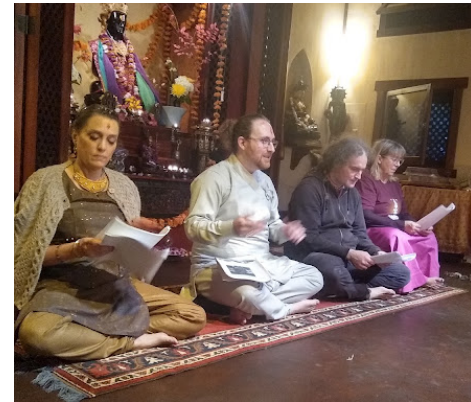
After that, Sangha members and other guests welcomed the 15th anniversary of the Vihara with Refuge dance for 108 consecutive times. Refuge dance, which is a performance of Buddha Bandana dance was performed

108 times continuously by American and Nepali devotees. Buddhist practitioners take refuge daily in the Buddha, the teacher, the Dharma, the teachings and the Sangha, the



community. In Charya Nritya, a practitioner takes refuge through embodiment of these "three jewels" - the Buddha, as the teacher of meditation, Shakya Muni Buddha; the Dharma teachings as Manjushree wielding his wisdom sword and text, the Sangha as the supportive community in the form of the lord of compassion.

Evening celebrations of the anniversary started with Buddha Bandana Bhajans: Jaya Namō Shree, Dasparamita Purna Yana, Najato Namō Buddhaye and Anitya Lumanke Nu. Buddha Bandana Bhajans were beautifully performed by Joshua Proto, Anastasia Roderick, Adam Bidema and Susan Morningstar.



The anniversary celebration wrapped up with the international Charya dance presentation. Refuge Dance and 16 Offering Goddess Dance were presented by Prajwal Vajracharya, Joshua Proto, Anna Shustrova, Anastasia Roderick, Susan Morningstar, Riyaz Khan, Adam Bidema and Corinne Nakamura-Rybak. Sixteen Offering Goddess dance, also known

as, Sodasha Lasya in Sanskrit, are sixteen dance postures representing various musical instrument offering as well as other sense offerings. They are personified as the sixteen goddesses of sensual enjoyment who show honor to the central deities of the Mandala through their pure offerings.



After that, Rakta Ganesha Charya dance was presented by Joshua Proto. The image of Rakta Ganesha (Red Ganesha) is generally found along with Mahakala at the entrance of monasteries in the Kathmandu valley as a protective deity. He has an elephant head, three eyes and ten arms. This is a mask dance song by prajwal.

Little later, Charya Nritya dances "Pancha Tara" and "Singhamukha" were performed by the Sangha members of Hong Kong Dance Mandal on the zoom. Pancha Tara dance was offered by Dr Tina Ho, Shira Chan, Patty Chan, Sanniti Leung, Nora Ng, Dickon Kong, Wing Yee Lam and Valisha Ping.

Pancha Tara creates a three dimensional Mandala of five colored Taras. It is beautiful to see myriad emanations of the Goddess Arya Tara and the different activities of each deity. According to Praises of Twenty-One Tara, it is said that Tara has 21 forms of ultimate emanations. Each of the Tara has its specific color that serves a specific function -- White Tara represents





ultimate purity and enlightenment. Green Tara is the first Tara, the beginning of every other Tara. She is regarded as the Goddess of luck when depicted with other Taras. It is believed that Yellow Tara who represents Avalokiteshvara's wrathful form and is thought to have been born from his scowl, is the protector of compassionate and loving people. Blue Tara who is the powerful companion of Green Tara is frequently seen in artwork and is thought to guard both the Taras and all good beings. The original Tara's strength of love is symbolized by the Red Tara.

Singhamukha charya dance was performed by Dr Tina Ho, Eliza Lau, Saldon Wu and Lingling Lee. Singhamukha is a lion-faced female Buddha who is red in color, fearless and very wrathful, emphasizing that enlightenment is not a passionate state, but rather a state of wholeness in which one has access to all the energies and capacities of one's being.

Likewise, Padmasambhava Charya Nritya was presented by Bobby Romansky. Padmasambhava is wrathful and smiling, wrathful like Vajrayogini. His two eyes are always wide open straightforward - always awakening the people.

Similarly, another one of the Tara dance -- Arya Tara, White Tara, Avalokiteshvara -- was performed by Anna Shustrova, Pepper Koscis and Adam Bidema.

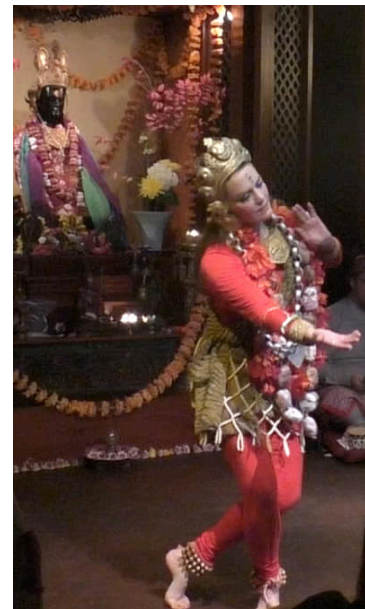




Avalokiteshvara is a compassionate Bodhisattva who hears the cries of sentient beings, and who works tirelessly to help those who call upon his name. Avalokiteshvara is

the embodiment of universal compassion and has the softest, gentlest and most fluid of dances represented in the Charya nritya tradition.

Moreover, Khadgayogini charya dance was displayed by Anastasia Roderick. This deity is called Khadgayogini because she holds a Khadga (sword) in one of her hands. Khadgayogini, who is red in color, is a semi-wrathful Dakini. She is four-handed or six-handed goddess. She holds lotus, Kapala, Khadga, Kartri on her different hands and wears tiger's skin. Khadgayogini is short in height and has a conspicuous belly. She is an embodiment of compassion but she also can eliminate the evil forces.

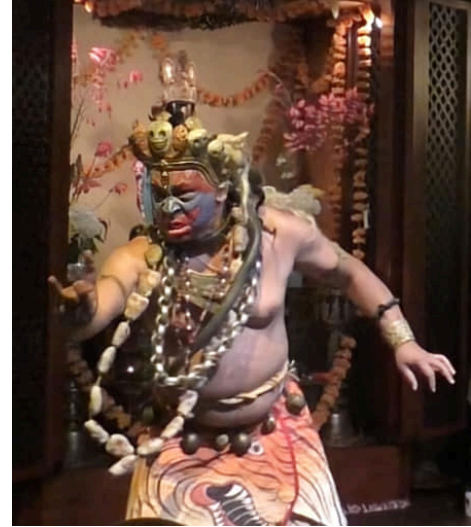


Next, Vajrayogini charya dance was rendered by Riyaz Khan. This dance is named after Goddess Vajrayogini. It is one of the ancient classical Charya dances of Nepal. According to Tantric Vajrayana Buddhism, there are four yoginis or Tantric Goddesses in the Kathmandu valley. In this dance, symbolic movement of hands and legs are skillfully timed with general body movement and facial expressions. This dance



shows beautiful mixture, strong sense of protection, preservation, anger and peaceful emotions.

Finally, ferocious Vajrapani charya dance was performed by Prajwal Guruji. Vajrapani is a wrathful Bodhisattva dark blue in color, with bloodshot eyes and an angry glare. He holds a rope in his left hand and a Vajra in his right, and wears a tiger skin garment, snakes wrapping around his body, and ornaments made of bones and skulls. Wrathful deities dance upon the negative forces they have overcome and laugh with glee as they feast on raw painful negativity, the very means to enlightenment.



Board member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara Kuon Hunt was the master of ceremony during the Charya nritya dance presentation. About 80 people took part at the anniversary ceremony. Among them were the Sangha members of the Vihara, community members and representatives of Nepali Association of Oregon (NAO), Nepa Chhen, NRNA - Oregon chapter and Nepal Oregon News. The participants and guests at the Vihara's 15th anniversary celebration were provided with breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Virtual Presentation on Newar Buddhism Held

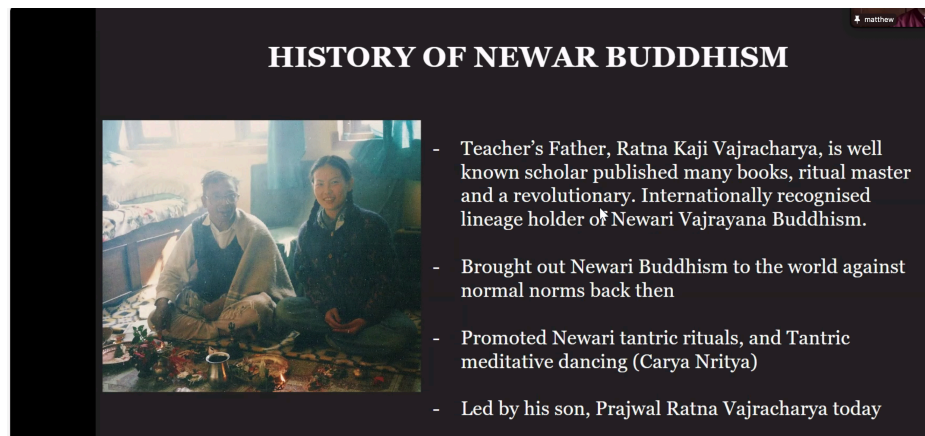


Portland, Nov 15 , A virtual presentation on "An Introduction to Newar Buddhism" was organized on Friday, Nov 15, 2024. The on-line presentation was skillfully offered by Matthew Ang from Singapore.

On the occasion, Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya, co-founder of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara welcomed the virtual participants and gave a short introduction of Math Ang.

Stressing on the need for promoting Newar Buddhism in America, Prajwal Guruji said that the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara has been carrying out a lot of activities, programs and events to enhance Newar Buddhism and culture in USA.

Singaporean Matthew Ang considers Prajwal as a teacher and says: "Teacher's father Ratna Kaji Vajracharya is a well known scholar who has published many books on Newar Buddhism, is an internationally recognized lineage holder of Newar Vajrayana Buddhism. He was the one who brought out Newar Buddhism to



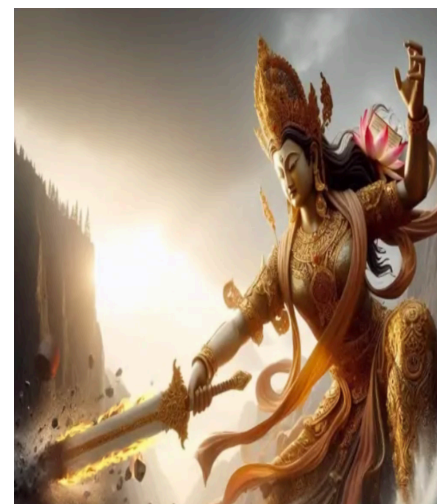


- Lineage from the Mantra Siddhi Mahavihar (Literally meaning magical powers of the Mantras imbued within the temple)
- Teacher's ancestors were called Swortha Vajra. 2200 years ago, built many Viharas serving as universities in old days.
- Esoteric knowledge and transmissions passed from generations to generations

the world against normal norms back then."

According to Matthew, he met with Prajwal Guruji and got acquainted with Newar Vajrayana Buddhism in 2020.

Throwing light on the legend of the Swayambhu Purana of the Kathmandu valley, Matthew said:" During his visit to Nepal Mandala, Bodhisattva Manjushree sensed a radiant and powerful lake. Manjushree surveyed the lake, realized its spiritual benefits, and sliced through the hill, draining its water to make way for pilgrims and human settlement. Then, Manjushree established Buddhism in Nepal and became the first Vajracharya, or a teacher of Tantric path, followed by Shantikaracharya."



Matthew also shed light on suppression of Newar Buddhism by major and powerful dynasties for 800 years.

Furthermore, underscoring the importance of Gurumandala puja in Newar Buddhism, he said:"The Gurumandala puja, the most ubiquitous and fundamental of all Newar Vajrayana Buddhist rituals is at its root a healing ritual, and can be used to remove impediments and bodily ills. Combined with the chanting of appropriate, powerful Mantras (Dharani), it can provide a healing powerhouse of energy in only an hour and a half or two hours. This can be done in the temple or in the home."


Moreover, talking about the importance of Sanskrit in Newar Buddhism, he said that ancient Tantric texts are still from the original Sanskrit language. Famous Sadhanamala text, Pragyaparamita Sutras are also in Sanskrit. All the Charya gitis are in Sanskrit, he added.

Ang pointed out the significance of Kaya (body), Vak (speech) and Chitta (mind) Mudras, and threw light on the use of Mudras for healing purposes. Addressing the remotely-held program, Ang also focused on Protection Mantras, Seed Syllable Mantras, Protection Mudras and so on. Speaking about Chakras in Newar Buddhism, he zeroed in on awakening Chakras, esoteric and syllable mantras and added that each Chakra has different Mantra. "Lifecycle rituals are quintessential in Newar Buddhism", he went on saying.

Matthew Ang also stressed on the need to further popularize and promote Newar Buddhism in the world. Matthew's talk presented a detailed description of Newar Buddhism, deity yoga and Charya Nritya and so on.

At the end of the online interaction program, Ang answered the questions of the participants. The zoom presentation was attended participants from different countries including the Sangha members of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara and Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association. Prominent guests at the remotely-

UNIQUE FEATURES OF NEWAR BUDDHISM: CARYA NRITYA



- Hevajra Tantra: "Without dance and singing, no way to attain enlightenment"
- Deity Yoga as Foundation
- Emphasis on **Body**, not only mind
- First Meditative contemplation on Deity's form, quality, energy, then Ritual Dancing (**Carya Nritya**) comes
- Body transforms as mind goes deeper into the deity's contemplation
- Every moment, every movement has a divine meaning
- Actual embodiment of divine qualities in meditation and dance
- Visualise Deity, become deity, embody deity, to bring enlightenment to all of us as sentient beings

held program were the founder of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara Helen Appell and Prof Dr Miranda Shaw. Since Nov 15 was also the Full Moon Day, the presentation was followed by Manjushree Naamsangiti Chanting.

