

Saturday, 15 April 2022**By Dr. Rabin Man Shakya
Edited by Kuon Hunt****Lhuti Punhi Observed at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara**

Lhuti Punhi was observed today in the temple with the recitation of the Manjushri Namasangiti by a small group led by Guruji

Prajwal Vajracharya. This full moon celebration commemorates a primal event in the *Swayambhu Purana*, an ancient story of the origins of the Swayambhu Mahachaitya. On this occasion Vipasyin Buddha, the first of the Sapta Tathagata, the Seven



Buddhas of Antiquity, in passing the lake from which Swayambhu arose, tossed in a seed of the lotus flower. Whether from the flower or from the lake itself, a rainbow light radiated, attracting Manjushri to the lake from a great distance.

Manjushri then cut a gorge with his sword, draining the lake and creating the Kathmandu Valley.

In Nepal, thousands of devotees take ritual baths in the sacred water spouts at Balaju, Kathmandu to celebrate this auspicious day, also offering prayers at a Buddhist chaitya located on Nagarjuna Hill.

Friday, 22 April 2022

Virtual Webinar on Gurumandala Puja Wraps Up



The 12-week virtual webinar on the Gurumandala Puja hosted by Yangchenma Arts & Music and conducted by Guruji Prajwal concluded today. The webinar was attended by Sangha members Joshua Proto, Anna Shustrova, Gabriel Quitslund, Riyaz Khan, Adam Bidema and Naveena Shakya in the vihara, and

was attended over Zoom by 45 participants from 15 different countries.

The webinar covered both the practical and theoretical aspects of the Gurumandala Puja, empowering participants to perform it for themselves and for others. Numerous materials were provided to participants to assist them in this endeavor, and videos of Guruji reciting the challenging Sanskrit text were made available. Consecration of implements and a very simple initiation of participants was achieved online, to support the use of this important ritual by those so desiring.



Monday, 25 April 2022

Guruji Vajracharya Calls on Rinpoches Yamgi and Mingyur

Co-founder and priest of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara called on Yamgi Rinpoche and Mingyur Rinpoche at the Maitripa College in Portland today. Yamgi Rinpoche is the president of Maitripa College in Portland while Mingyur Rinpoche is a renowned Buddhist scholar from a Buddhist monastery in Kathmandu.

Prajwal Guruju and Dance Mandal Nepal have been providing Charya Nritya training to Mingyur Rinpoche's disciples in his monastery since 2018.

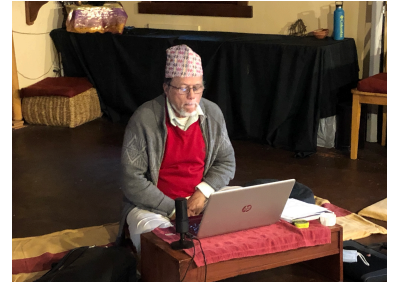
While at Maitripa College, Vajracharya visited the library, auditoriums and administration offices, acquiring information about the ongoing activities at the college. Discussions also included Charya Nritya and various updates about the Newar Buddhist temple in Portland.

Earlier that day, a brilliant lecture on mind was presented by Mingyur Rinpoche at the hall of the Maitripa College. The program was packed with the guests onsite and attended by 100 participants on Zoom.

Saturday, April 30, 2022

Discussion Held on the Global Newah Movement

Nritya Mandala Mahavihara sponsored a round-table discussion on the Global Newah Movement with Daya Shakyas, Dr Rabin Man Shakyas, Aniruddha Shakyas, Ishan Shakyas, Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya and Adam Bidema in the vihara and 20 others on Zoom. The main focus was on how to achieve goals for the next decade in drawing attention and awareness to the Newah identity in global perspectives.



Daya Shakyas, patron of the World Newah Organization, was the keynote speaker. In his presentation Shakyas said the main objective of WNO was to connect the Newah people around the world in a democratic forum and alliance intended to support Nepalese Newah to achieve their aspirations and dreams for freedom, political and human rights and overall development in all aspects of their daily life.



In discussing the American connection, Shakyas pointed out that, "The landmark of sowing the seed of the Newah movement in America began with the celebration of New

Year Nepal Sambat in 1991 AD, when the Newah people of America exchanged the message of Bhintuna in the Washington, DC, area."

Stressing the need for detailed plans to promote and preserve Newah language and culture, Shakya expressed the view that the Newah are a unique civilization on the verge of extinction due to loss of language and formal education for the new generation.

Co-founder of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara Prajwal Vajracharya commented that the temple was created in 2009 in Portland to promote Newar Vajrayana Buddhist tradition and practices, to preserve and promulgate charya nritya, its music and crafts - such as the making of masks, costumes and jewelry used in the dances - as well as to protect and preserve the sacred Buddhist art of Nepal. Vajracharya also expressed the view that avenues must be explored to open up job opportunities for those who earn their certificates and degrees in Nepal Bhasa, or their achievements will be wasted.



Dr Tina Ho from Hong Kong Dance Mandal offered the hope that cooperation between Hong Kong Dance Mandal and US Dance Mandal would help make the Newah Buddhist heritage more fully known to the world.

The interaction among the group was focused on world Newah movement, issues on Newah identity and plans and projects to revive Nepal Bhasa language and Newah culture.

Newah Dey Daboo's former president Naresh Tamrakar, Ratna Jyoti Shakya, Bidi Kayastha, Krishna Kayastha, Naresh Shakya, Vikram Vaidya, Paubha Sayami, Sushil Tamrakar, Bidya Dali, Crystal, Dina Shakya, Pramesh Shrestha of WNO USA chapter, Keshar Man Tamrakar of Newah American Daboo and Narayan Rajbhandari were some of the Zoom participants for the day.

Friday, 29 April 2022

“First after COVID” Special Dance Offering, Food Lecture and Newar Feast Held at Temple

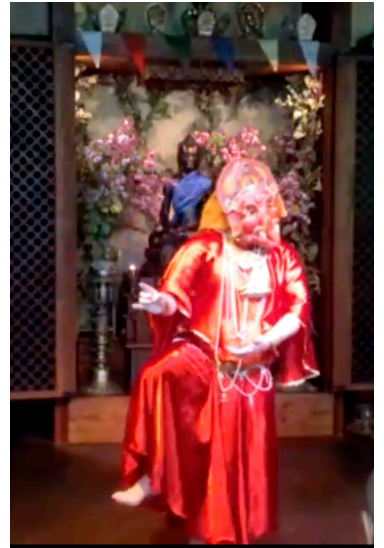


A program of charya dance, followed by well-known Newar chef Vikram Vaidya's verbal presentation “A Culinary Journey to Nepal,” followed by a sumptuous Newar style dinner prepared by him constituted this evening spectacular at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. The program and feast in person was limited to forty people at the temple, although twenty-five attended on Zoom.

Sangha member John A. Rybak, who skillfully conducted the charya program, opened by saying that charya nritya is a Buddhist ritual dance with a history going back to more than 1,000 years. Charya meditational dances were then and are now

performed by Newar Buddhist priests as part of their esoteric practices and rituals, Rybak added.

The dance program began with the Rakta Ganesh, performed by sangha member and singer Joshua Proto. Lord Ganesha is not only a protector of Dharma practice and prosperity, but he is also a deity who removes obstacles and difficulties for all.



The Refuge Prayer dance and Sixteen Offering dance were then both performed by the members of Hong Kong Dance Mandal over Zoom. Buddhist practitioners take refuge daily in the Buddha - the teacher, the Dharma - the teachings,

and the Sangha - the community. The Sixteen Offering dance, also known as Sodasha Lasya in Sanskrit, includes sixteen dance postures representing various musical instrument offerings as well as other sense offerings. The two dances were performed by Hong Kong Dance Mandal members: Dr Tina Ho, Shira Chan, Jennifer Tang, Teresa Tsui, Patty Chan, Mary Lau and Chin Chin Chang.



Tina Ho then went on to dance Maha Vairochana, as well. Vairochana is considered the supreme Buddha among the Pancha Buddha, white in color, and Maha Vairochana sits in the center of the Dharma Datu Mandala.

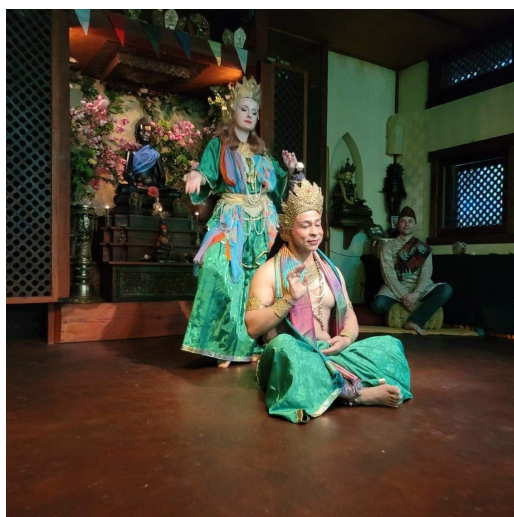


Guruji Prajwal

Vajracharya and Anna Shustrova then danced together the lovely and respectful Amoghasiddhi and Arya Tara charya dance. In a beautifully-choreographed performance, it appeared that Guruji Prajwal and his student Anna had gone into a meditative state and let their bodies flow in movements with incredible hand

and finger mudra. The Goddess Arya Tara and transcendent Buddha Amoghasiddhi are both green in color and as partners create perfect all-accomplishing activity that benefits sentient beings. The feminine energy of foundational wisdom and the male energy of skillful means - dance and interact in mutual recognition, respect and harmony.

Charya dance 'Vajrasattva' was performed by sangha member Riyaz Khan. Vajrasattva is considered the essence and source of all the Buddha families. Vajrasattva is peaceful in appearance, white in color with one face and two arms, seated in vajra posture. Vajrasattva has an upright vajra in his right hand at the



level of his heart, while in his left hand he holds a vajra handled bell turned up at the left hip.

Following this Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya brought forth the heart-pounding charya dance to the wrathful protector deity Mahakala. Mahakala is dark blue in color and awesome to behold. He is beautiful with his short, stout body and angry face. Mahakala wears a tiger skin, bone ornaments and snakes. Though fearsome, he is destroyer of all fears, as he dances upon the negative forces that fuel the path to enlightenment. The tinchu and dramatic, staccato damaru drum playing - as well as the dancer's wrathful facial gestures - make the Mahakala charya dance scary and terrifying at times.



Anna Shustrova then returned with the Vajra Yogini charya dance. Vajra Yogini is one of the ancient classical dances of Nepal Mandala. Vajra Yogini dance is performed as a ritual devotion to the red, semi-wrathful Goddess, Vajra Yogini, a symbol of female energy. All the beautiful and fascinating charya performed by Prajwal Guruji and other dancers reflected the inner and outer qualities of Buddhist deities. Joshua Proto, a seasoned and skilled Charya giti singer, sang the giti for all

the charya dances performed and also played the tinchu. The damaru drum was played by John Rybak.



The second part of the program was chef Bikram Vaidya's on Newar food. Vaidya indicated that Newar people are known for their food heritage. While Vaidya was making his presentation, sangha volunteers handed out appetizers to participants. The appetizers, called Sagun, consisted of mung beans batter, flavored with ginger juice and shaped into thin pancakes, topped with a hard-boiled quail egg and a sauteed, sundried whole anchovy. Sagun is only found in the Newar culture, Vaidya told the audience, and is part of a giving tradition to wish good luck. "Sagun is also offered during the life cycle rituals: birthdays, coming of age rites, old age rites, and the New Year, etc," he informed the participants.

Chef Vikram Vaidya was born and raised at Ason Tole in Kathmandu, Nepal. He spent years in the



hospitality business before starting a culinary career. After graduating from Western Culinary Institute, Le Cordon Bleu, he worked at renowned restaurants and hotels with top chefs, traveling the world, studying international culture and cuisines with chefs, locals, and farmers. Vaidya's talk presented a detailed and comprehensive description about the rich and diverse Newah food heritage.



Other foods provided to participants during the dinner included a salad, a vegetarian platter entree, dessert and shikerni, a fruit flavored yogurt. Newah style Kheer was one of the many items particularly liked by the participants.

Weekly activities

Dharani chanting, Sadhana practice, Buddhist Bhajan practice and Charya giti singing practice

All were conducted on a regular basis at the Mahavihara and through Zoom.