

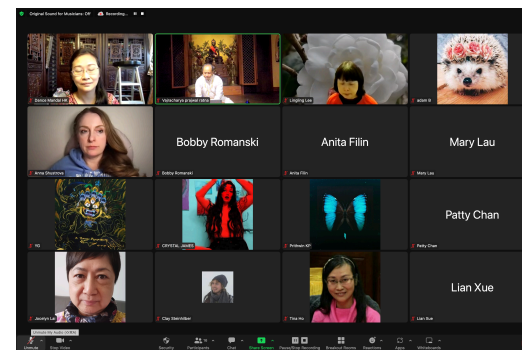
By Dr. Rabin Man Shakya

Zoom Teaching on Avalokiteshvara Held for HK Dance Mandal participants April 1st

A virtual teaching on Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva was organized by the Hong Kong Institute of Buddhist Studies Association on Saturday, April 1, 2023.

The zoom teaching for Hong Kong participants was conducted by Gurujī Prajwal Vajracharya, a 35th generation Newar Vajrayana priest. Prior to the virtual teaching, Prajwal Gurujī recited a charya giti on Avalokiteshvara.

The virtual teaching presented a detailed and comprehensive description of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva.



Prajwal Gurujī, who is also the co-founder of Nriya Mandala Mahavihara, said: "When we do Sadhana of Avalokiteshvara and chant mantra Om Mani Padme Hung with unyielding belief and dedication, we will surely achieve realizations of great compassion and supreme Buddhahood."

Laying emphasis on the importance of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva in the Newar Vajrayana Buddhism, Vajracharya said that each of the Bodhisattva's six qualities are said to break the hindrances respectively of the six realms of existence - hell-beings, pretas,

animals, humans, asuras and devas.

Vajracharya, an expert on Newar Vajrayana Buddhism, stated that Avalokiteshvara is a compassionate Bodhisattva who hears the cries of sentient beings, and who works relentlessly to help those who call upon his name. Informing the participants that there are 33 different manifestations of Avalokiteshvara, the rev Guruji said that Jana Baha Dyo and Bunga Dyo are popularly worshipped by the Newahs of the Kathmandu valley.

According to Karandavyuha Sutra, the sun and the moon are said to be born from Avalokiteshvara's eyes, Shiva from his brow, Brahma from his shoulders, Vishnu from his heart, Sarashwati from his teeth, the winds from his mouth, the earth from his feet, and the sky from his stomach, Vajracharya added.

During the remotely held discourse, Prajwal Gurujib said: "Avlokiteshvara charya dance is an ancient form of deity yoga meditation for physical transformation, refinement of emotions and spiritual awareness." He went on saying, "Avalokiteshvara dance is the embodiment of universal compassion and has the softest, gentlest and most fluid of dances represented in the Charya Nritya tradition."

At the end of the virtual teaching on Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, Guruji Prajwal answered to the questions of the participants. The zoom teaching was participated by 20 members of the Hong Kong Sangha.



Home Purification Ritual held in Hermiston April 22 nd

When Suva and Uppa Shakya moved to their new home at Hermiston, Oregon from the old one, they needed a house purification ritual which was performed by Guruji Prajwal.



“In the Buddhist tradition, a purification ritual is conducted before people move into a new house. The purpose of the ritual is to purify the house from the evil spirits,” said Prajwal Guruji.

Gurumandala Puja and Pancha Bali Puja were performed by the Guruji on the occasion.

Uppa Shakya, a Charya nritya dancer, is a board member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, while Suva Shakya, an engineer, is a Sangha member of the Mahavihar.

Meanwhile, all the usual events including the Lhuti Purnima, Dharani chanting, Sadhana practice, Buddha Bhajan practice and Charya giti singing practice were conducted on a regular basis at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in person and on the zoom.

Buddha Jayanti Cleaning Drive Organized April 24-28

A cleaning drive of the temple was organized right before the Buddha Purnima celebrations.

Community members came to extend helping hand for the clean up of the temple and its surroundings.

Gabriel Quitslund, Terry Satterthwaite, Anastasia Roderick, Adam Bidema, Casey Redman, Aniruddha Shakya, Sharmista Amatya, Frank, Casey, Naveena Shakya and Rabin Man Shakya were among the volunteers who cleaned up the temple. The volunteers were provided with the lunch by Prajwal Guruji.



Charya is an Important Form of Buddhist Yoga, Says Prajwal Guruji

April 26

An interview of Prajwal Vajracharya was podcast by Nepal Bhasa Times on Wednesday, April 26, 2023.

The interview was conducted by journalist Heena Bajracharya in Nepal Bhasa, the language of the Newar people of Nepal.

In the interview podcast by Nepal Bhasa Times, Prajwal Guruji threw light on importance and relevance of Kaya, Vaka, Chitta.

The Vajracharya priests maintain a Buddhist dance tradition that dates back over a thousand years and has remained, for the most part, hidden from the world. This ritual art is known as Charya Nritya which means 'dances as a spiritual discipline', Guruji Prajwal said during the digital interaction.

During the digital conference with the Nepal Bhasa Times, Prajwal Guruji went on saying: "In the Newar Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, it is taught that there can be no liberation without singing and dancing - the physical body and the voice are the tools of transformation with which we awaken and free our minds."

In the zoom interview, stressing the importance of mudra and gestures, Prajwal Guruji added: "The practice of deity yoga supports an appreciation of the inner beauty of the body and cultivates understanding of our personal mudras as unique expression."

In the course of the remotely held interview, the Guruji took time to shed light on role of jewelry in Charya dance. The symbolism of ornaments is





Chacha Song sang by Leson Baker, Oregon.

important in the Charya dance. "They are associated with six paramitas (transcendental perfections) of Buddhism. The necklace expresses Dana Paramita (Generosity), while the bracelets and anklets symbolize Sila Paramita (Morality and self discipline). Similarly, ear-rings represent Ksanti Paramita (Patience) whereas sash around the waist signifies Virya Paramita (Joyful effort and diligence). Likewise, the third eye implies Dhyana Paramita (Meditation), while the crown with its five jewels (or skulls) stand for the integrity of Prajna Paramita (Wisdom).

On the occasion, Prajwal Gurujī also presented a beautiful and mesmerizing Charya dance "Vajrasattva". The charya giti for the dance was rendered by Sangha member Leson Baker.

International Dance Day Marked at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara April 29 Saturday

International Dance Day as celebrated at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in Portland, USA on Saturday, April 29, 2023. The world famous day in the field of dance and culture was observed by the Portland Baha with the presentation of several Newar Buddhist charya dances.



International Dance Day is celebrated worldwide on April 29 every year. The International Dance Day was created and proclaimed by the Dance Committee of the International Theater Institute (ITI), the main partner for the performing arts of UNESCO.



Speaking briefly on the occasion, co-founder of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara and one of the senior most Charya Nritya guru in the world, Prajwal Vajracharya, stressed on the need to promote and preserve the ancient and esoteric Charya dances.

John Ryback, who was the master of ceremony at the event, said: "The Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in Portland, USA is the first and only Newar Vajrayana Buddhist temple established in 350 years and it is the first Newar Vajrayana Buddhist monastery built outside of Nepal."

The event dedicated to the International Dance Day kicked off with the Rakta Ganesh charya dance carried out by Sangha member and charya giti singer Joshua Proto. Lord Ganesh is not only a protector of Dharma practice and prosperity, but he is also a deity who removes obstacles and difficulties for all. The image of Rakta Ganesh 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. 'Rakta Ganesh' is a mask dance.

After that, charya dance 'Vajrasattva' was presented by Sangha member Adam Bidema. Vajrasattva is considered the quintessence 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.

Next, Guruji Prajwal and Sangha member Anna Shustrova 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 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 male energy of skillful means dance together and interact in mutual recognition, respect and harmony.

Likewise, Vajrayogini charya dance was performed by Sangha member Anastasia Roderick. Vajrayogini is one of the ancient classical dances of Nepal Mandala. Vajrayogini dance is performed as a ritual devotion to Goddess Vajrayogini. Vajrayogini is one of the four Tantric Goddesses of the Kathmandu valley who is revered as the goddess of yogic practices. In this dance, symbolic movements of hands and legs are skillfully timed with general body movements and facial expressions. This dance shows beautiful mixture, strong sense of protection, preservation, anger and peaceful emotions. This dance is performed mainly in the Buddhist temples of the Kathmandu valley during special occasions.



Similarly, charya dance 'Padmanateshvara' was performed by Bobby Romansky. Padmanateshvara (Nasa Dyo) is the deity who represents performance arts, the yidam of charya nritya - the Lord dancing on Padma. Padmanateshvara's initial gesture is to indicate the wisdom of the heart, with the second one he touches heaven, with the third the earth. All the other symbols he holds in his different hands refer to the Buddha Dharma, and about one making decisions to follow this path. The

initiation into Padmanateshvara is to incarnate the wisdom by dancing, and by dancing, share it with all. Padmanateshvara is the source of artistic inspiration, joy, compassion and equanimity.

Then, charya dance 'Nairatma' was presented during the event by Sangha member Anna Shustrova. Nairatma is the mother of selflessness. Nairatma is the limitless clear blue sky. She is the spontaneous wisdom female energy, empty of all projection and judgement. Nairatma is a female Buddha. She is the consort of Hevajra in the Hevajra - tantra. The word 'Nairatma' in Sanskrit means 'a woman without any ego'.



Also, charya dance 'Maya Jaal' was offered by Prajwal Guruji on the occasion. 'Maya Jaal' is a charya nritya that is not a particular deity, but is an expression of the grim reality of samsara, or cycle existence. The Sanskrit term 'Maya Jaal' literally means 'the net of confusion'. This charya nritya depicts a yogi who sees the sufferings of all beings as they wander in the misery of attachment to transient existence.

The event came to an end with the Refuge dance which was participated by Prajwal Guruji, John Ryback, Joshua Proto, Leson Baker, Anna Shustrova, Anastasia Roderick, Adam Bidema

and Bobby Romansky.

The program was participated by 25 people at the temple of the Mahavihara and 25 people on the zoom from the USA, Nepal, Hong Kong and Canada.

Sangha members Leson Baker and Joshua Proto sang charya giti for all the charya dances performed on the occasion. Joshua and Leson

are seasoned and skilled charya giti singers. Taa (little cute cymbal) was played by Leson while Kanta Dub Dub (little handy drum) was beaten by John Ryback.

All the charya dances performed by Prajwal Guruji and other Sangha members during the International Dance Day program were beautiful and fascinating and were able to reflect the stories of the inner qualities and awakening of Buddhist deities.



The news story about the celebration of International Dance Day - showcasing several ancient Charya dances by Guruji Prajwal and his students - organized by Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara was also extensively and visually covered by Image Channel, one of Nepal's prominent mainstream television station.

Meanwhile, to mark the International Dance Day, Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association also organized an event on Friday, April 28, 2023 in the zoom in which the Hong Kong Sangha members presented Mudra Zen dances and Vajra dances offerings.

Fourteen Zen dancers of the Hong Kong Dance Mandal took part at the event: Dr Tina Ho, Dr Eliza Lau, Saldon Wu, Sophie Chan, Chin-chin Chang, Simone Ng, Kerry Ho, Lok-yee Eliza Lau,

Shira Chan, Patty Chan, Mary Lau, Sin-ying Leung, Wing-yee Lau and John Lui.



Lord Buddha's Teachings Still Relevant April 30th



On the occasion of the Buddha Jayanti, Prajwal Vajracharya, chief pujari of Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara and ritual master of the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition of Nepal, has sent a message of felicitations to all the Buddhists of the world.

The message of felicitations was published in "The Newarland", the online news of the Newar diaspora in the Netherlands.

In the message, Prajwal Guruji expressed the view that today more than ever, Lord Buddha's teachings and preachings are more relevant.

"The Newarland" is an online news outlet which is dedicated to Newar culture, identity and environment. Jyoti Tuladhar is the editor of the online news.

Meanwhile, a thought-provoking article "Nritya Mandala Mahavihara: Shining an International Light on Newar Vajrayana Buddhism" was published in the magazine 'Matina'.

The article was written by Kuon Hunt who is a board member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. 'Matina' is one and only Nepalese international magazine being simultaneously published from the two continents of the world. It contains articles in three languages: Nepal Bhasa, Nepali and English.

This is help to edited by Adam