

## Classical Singing is Based on Improvisations, Says Dhakal ,August 28 2022

Dr Rabin Man Shakya



Portland, Aug 28 (Nepal Oregon News): A classical Raga concert by Prabhu Raj Dhakal was organized by the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara on Saturday, Aug 27, 2022 at its temple in Portland, USA.

At the beginning of the Raga concert, Guru Prajwal Vajracharya, co-founder of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, gave a short introduction of Raga singer Dhakal.

I am very happy that Maestro Dhakal is here at the Temple to perform Raga singing, Guru Vajracharya said.

The enthralling and mesmerizing Raga performance of Prabhu was accompanied on Tanpura by senior American Raga artist and teacher Michael Stirling and Sangha member and Charya giti singer Joshua Proto.



Prior to the starting of the concert, Dhakal spoke to the enthusiastic gathering and said that classical singing is a singing which is based on improvisations.

Laying emphasis on the relevance of Raga singing, Dhakal expressed the view that people need to be aware of classical music's meaning and its role in a civilized society.



I am so grateful to be presenting Raga recital at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, the first and only one Newar Vajrayana Buddhist temple in the West, said Dhakal.

Maestro Dhakal on the occasion played Swar Mandal (a kind of harp) and gave a spirited rendition of such classical Ragas as Yaman, Raga Bhairavi and Charukesh.

This was the first Raga concert at the Portland Baha -- attended by about 30 people -- after the relaxation of the Covid-19 pandemic guidelines.

Majority of the audience were Americans. Nevertheless, there were also some Nepalese guests at the Raga gathering.

Dhakal, who has been working as a music teacher at Kathmandu University for about three decades, has performed Raga concerts in different European countries, but this is the first time he is



giving musical performances in the US cities, and he believes he will again come to the US in future for more Raga recital.

Prabhu Raj is a deeply passionate, experienced and focused singer, musician and teacher following on the footsteps of his father late Sangeet Praveen Nara Raj Dhakal (1920-2004) who was a Maestro of classical music and was an academician of Nepal Government Academy.

Dhakal has received several important awards for his contributions in the classical music and singing, such as, Natikaji Rastriya Sangeet Bishesh Samman, Gold Medal from Narayan Sangeet Ashram, Rangaraw Kadambari Purashkar etc.

Dhakal has so many CDs and albums to his credit. His album 'Khumlay', which was a collaboration with Norwegian artists, was nominated Norwegian Grammy Award.

Meanwhile, Michael Stirling, who is a teacher of Hindustani Voice (Raga Singing) at Portland's Lewis & Clark College and who is a disciple of late master of Indian classical Raga singing Pandit Pran Nath (1918-1996), posted a story on Facebook on Aug 27, 2022 about Dhakal's Raga concert at the Buddhist Mahavihara.

Master Singer and Gold Medalist **Prabhu Raj Dhakal** presenting Raga Concert  
Saturday, August 27, 7pm in  
Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, portland baha



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Raga Guru Stirling's Facebook post read like a much-needed shot in the arm for the Raga enthusiasts. He said: "Oh my goodness, what a beautiful evening of Raga and Buddha Temple. Thanks to Prajwal R Vajracharya, a very wonderful Nepali Raga singer Prabhu Raj Dhakal gave a stunning and heartfelt recital this evening at Dance Mandal, Nritya Mandala Mahavihara."

Maestro Stirling said: "My student and dear friend Joshua Proto and I accompanied Prabhu Raj on a pair of my tamburas for the concert. The instruments have never sounded better. What a beautiful evening. The audience was showered with love and Raga."

"It's the second opportunity that I've had to accompany a classical singer since I got sick. Such a wonderful thing to do. Very healing as well as immersive in the very human and musical expression," Stirling went on saying in the Facebook post



## **Dance Mandal Portland Team Performs Charya Dances at Nepal Festival 2022 in Seattle. August 29 2022**



Portland, Aug 29 (Nepal Oregon News): Dance Mandal team consisting of Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya and his students performed rare Chacha Pyakhan (Charya Dances) with live singing at Nepal Festival 2022.

Dabuli's seventh annual cultural event 'Nepal Festival 2022' was organized at Volunteer Park, Seattle. Dabuli is a 501(c) 3 charity organization. It aims to advance deeper understanding and strengthening of rich music, arts and cultural heritage of Nepal and the Himalayan region to build strong intercultural communities.

The free event, presented by Dabuli in partnership with a number of



organizations

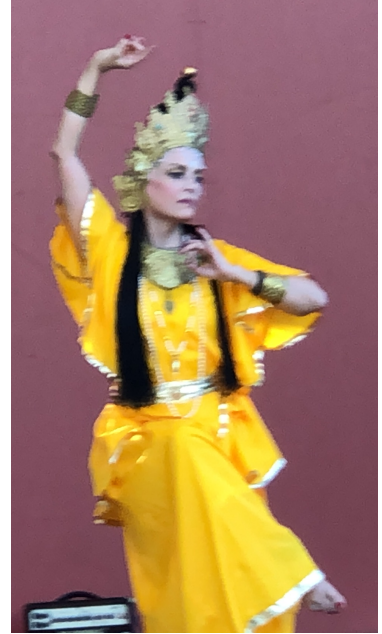
including Dance Mandal Portland (Nritya Mandala Mahavihara) and Newah Organization of America - Seattle Chapter, showcased traditional and contemporary Newah and Nepalese art, music, dance and more.





The focus of Nepal Festival 2022 was to preserve the Newah and Nepali culture in the community and also provide an opportunity for the broader public to experience the very rich and unique but often inaccessible culture.

Dabuli's Nepal Festival 2022 provided an artistic platform for different indigenous and ethnic communities of Nepal to demonstrate their traditions and rich cultural apparels.



The event, which showcased the diversity and talent of Newah and Nepalese culture, also featured culturally relevant activities and ethnic food like Momos and Chhoyela Baji.

All the cultural items presented at the Nepal Festival 2022 were stunning, amazing and enthralling but the esoteric Charya dance 'Pancha Buddha' was the one that stole the show.

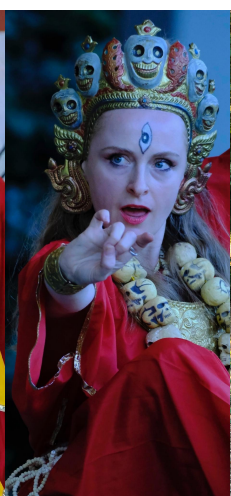
The Pancha Buddha charya dance was performed by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya, Anna Shustrova, Anastasia Roderick, Adam Bidema and Riyaz Khan.



Likewise, Anna Shustrova also presented a Charya dance 'Vajrayogini', while Anastasia Roderick performed another Charya dance 'Manjushree' on the occasion.

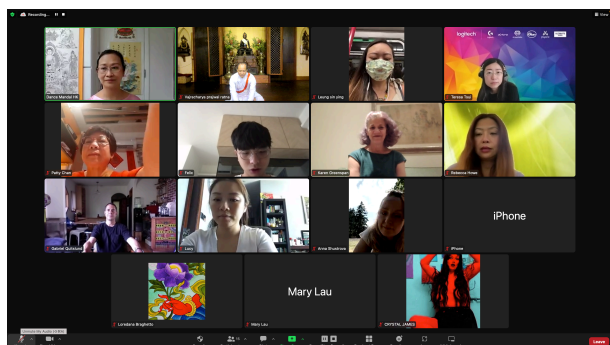
The vocal singing for Charya dances was provided by Joshua Proto, a senior Sangha member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. The whole program at the Nepal Festival 2022 was also conducted by Joshua.

Similarly, Prabhu Raj Dhakal, one of the prominent Raga singers of Nepal presented Kedar Raga and Mangal Dhun at the Nepal Festival.



## Virtual Foundation Teaching for Hong Kong Sangha Members August 7th 2022

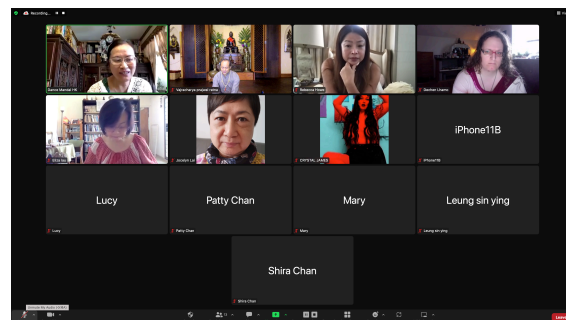
Portland, Aug 7 (Nepal Oregon News): A virtual Foundation Teaching on Charya Dance was organized on Saturday, Aug 6, 2022 for Hong Kong Dance Mandal members. The Foundation Teaching on Charya dance was conducted by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya.



Guruji Prajwal, who is one of the senior-most Charya Nritya gurus in the world, said the foundation teaching lays groundwork for all to-be continued studies in the tradition of sacred Buddhist dances of Nepal.

Addressing the zoom participants from Hong Kong, Guruji Vajracharya underscored the importance of Charya dance in Newar Vajrayana Buddhism.

Prajwal, who is a ritual master of both the Charya Nritya dance tradition and other ritual forms performed by the Newar Vajrayana lineage, told the virtual gathering of Hong Kong Sangha members: "You don't practice Charya as a form of entertainment. But you do it as a form of spiritual movement, as a meditation, as a prayer, as a sadhana."



The Guruji went on saying: "Charya nritya is a Buddhist ritual dance with a history going back to more than 1,000 years. It is performed by Newar Buddhist priests known as Vajracharyas as part of their esoteric meditation, practices and rituals."

Guruji Prajwal added: "Charya dance is a meditational dance that tells stories of the inner qualities and awakening of Buddhist deities."

Touching on Charya giti, he said: "Charya giti also tells us about the iconography of deities and yoginis, about what they are holding in their hands and what they are wearing." Charya giti focuses on compassion, liberation, enlightenment and transformation, he said.



Guruji Prajwal threw light on the history of this ancient practice. We must train our bodies in the movements, exercises, hand and foot mudras, and techniques that are the foundations of Charya dance and we must practice the Refuge and 16 offering Goddess dances, the Guruji said.

At the end of the virtual Foundation Teaching, Guruji Prajwal answered to the questions of the participants. The zoom teaching was participated by 20 Sangha members of the Hong Kong Dance Mandal.



## **Panjaran (Panchadan) Observed at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, August 26 2022**

Portland, Aug 26 (Nepal Oregon News): Newar Vajrayana Buddhist festival Panjaran (Panchadan) was observed modestly at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara on Thursday, Aug 25, 2022.

Panjaran is also Panchadan which means giving away different kinds of alms, such as, grains and fruits like rice, paddy, salt, peas, bananas, radish etc to people from Vajracharya and Shakya communities.

Joshua Proto, Anna Shustrova, Anastasia Roderick, Riyaz Khan, Adam Bidema who are American Buddhists and Aniruddha Shakya, Rabin Man Shakya were given auspicious alms by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya on the occasion of Panjaran.

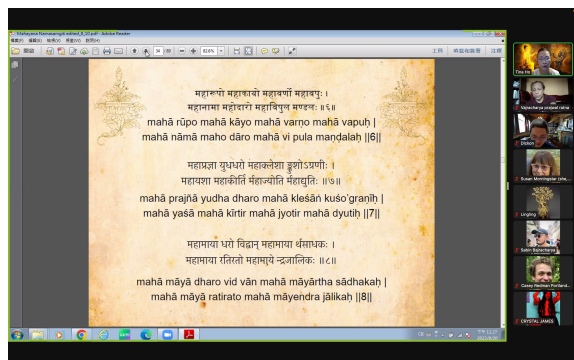
Daan Gatha was recited by Guruji Prajwal along with the Panjaran participants. At the end of Panchadan program, a Kheer bhojan was offered to Panjaran participants by Guruji Prajwal.





## Month-long Gunla Dharma Celebrated Amid Naamsangiti Chanting in Portland

Portland, Aug 29 (Nepal Oregon News): Nritya Mandala Mahavihara celebrated month-long Gunla Dharma by reciting Naamsangiti everyday in the zoom for the whole month of Gunla in the Nepal Sambat era.



This year, the month-long Gunla Dharma kicked off on July 29 and ended on Aug 28, 2022.

In Newar Vajrayana Buddhism, Naamsangiti is one of the most important preachings of Shakyamuni Tathagata. It consists of 167 verses and mantra sentences.

Guruji Prajwal said: "Gunla is a holy month for Newar Buddhists when they recite the scriptures particularly Naamsangiti, observe fasts and visit places of worship playing devotional music."

"It is one of the most important and auspicious times of the year in Newar Vajrayana Buddhism," added Vajracharya.

The month-long Gunla Dharma Naamsangiti reciting in the zoom was participated by people from USA, Hong Kong, Nepal and Germany etc and



included Guruji Prajwal, Dr Tina Ho, Ling Ling, Dickon, Sabin Bajracharya, Susan Morningstar, Joshua Proto, Lesson Baker, Riyaz Khan, Adam Bidema, Anastasia Roderick, Dina Shakya, Gabriel Quitslund, Kacey Redman, Ashley Low, Crystal, Naveena Shakya and Rabin Man Shakya.

## **Ihi Rituals of a Newar Girl Held in Victoria, Canada**

**August 22 2022**

Portland, Aug 22 (Nepal Oregon News): Girls from Newar community in Nepal get married at least three times in their lifetime. The first ceremony called Ihi is where pre-adolescent girls make a commitment to Bel fruit (wood apple).



The Ihi is followed by Bara Tayegu where girls are again married to the Sun

God. The ritual is practiced before the girl hits puberty or before her first menstrual period.

A girl named Neeva Shakya attended an Ihi ceremony organized on Sunday Aug 21, 2022 at the home of Rajendra Shakya in Victoria, Canada. The Ihi ceremony was ritualized by Prajwal Vajracharya, a 35th generation Vajrayana priest and





chief Pujari at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara.

Ihi girl Neeva Shakya is the daughter of Rajendra Shakya and Nina Kansakar Shakya living in Victoria, Canada.

Guruji Prajwal, who is also a scholar on Buddhism, said: "The Ihi ritual has been in practice since hundreds of years. It is an important part of Newar tradition where the young pre-adolescent girls make a commitment to the Bel fruit (wood apple). The Bel fruit has a peculiar quality of remaining fresh forever and healthy and longlasting. Wood apple tree can bring conscious mind.



## Sacred Rituals Performed to Pay Tributes to Late Maharjan and Late Mali



Portland, Aug 16 (Nepal Oregon News): Guru Prajwal Vajracharya performed the Dakila ceremony death rituals for late Jagat Maharjan on Aug 15, 2022 at the residence of Bikas Maharjan, son of late Maharjan.

Likewise, on Aug 16, 2022, Nida Tithi ceremony was performed by Guruji Prajwal at the home of Raju Mali in Tigard to commemorate the second anniversary of the demise of his mother late Ms Chandra Mali.

The Gurumandala Puja, Maamaki Puja and others were also conducted during the both rituals by the Guruju. The Shraddh rituals are conducted so that the heavenly journey of the deceased souls after death is comfortable and stress-free.

