

Friday, 5 February 2022

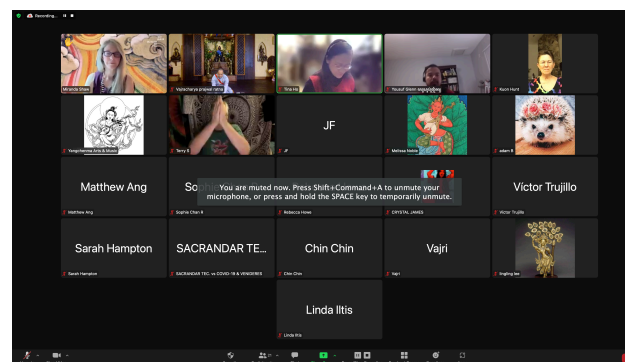
First On-Going international Webinar on Gurumandala Puja



Nritya Mandala Mahavihara's Priest, Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya, began the 12-week webinar on Gurumandala Puja with participants from 15 different countries with the statement that "the Gurumandala Puja purification ritual is the most common ritual practiced in Newar Vajrayana Buddhism in Nepal." The webinar is being hosted by Yangchenma Arts & Music every Friday from 5 February to 23 April.

Touching on the history of Gurumandala Puja, Vajracharya who is a scholar on Newar Vajrayana Buddhism, said the ritual has been passed down for over 1000 years. "At all important moments in life, from birth to death, this important Newar Buddhist ritual is performed to remove obstacles and bring spiritual blessings." It is also the ritual that precedes all others in a larger, longer ceremony because of its focusing, cleansing and protective qualities.

Vajracharya indicated that the course would not only familiarize the participants with the Gurumandala Puja itself, but the Sanskrit in which it is recited, the instruments and materials needed for its implementation, the purpose and access to the astrological references used in it, and the benefits that can be derived from its continued use.



During the first virtual lecture, Guruj Vajracharya shed light on the history and purpose of Gurumandala Puja. He focused on the name itself, stating the meaning of the words in Sanskrit: Gu = darkness, Ru = bringing light, Manda = essence, and La = form, Puja = worshipful ritual. Therefore, a worshipful ritual bringing light into darkness and (cosmic) essence into form, or, using a mandala, which might represent any element of cosmic essence, to bring light to any aspect of darkness, a most useful tool.

Dr Manik Bajracharya assisted Vajracharya in the first lecture. Bajracharya is a visiting professor at Heidelberg University in Germany and has published several papers on Gurumandala Puja and Newar Buddhist traditions. He helped participants to understand the meaning and import of the mandalas they would be creating and using.



The second and third sessions focused largely on the astrological inputs that would be used in the ritual and the materials that would be required, as many are not common household items, although some can be fashioned from such items.

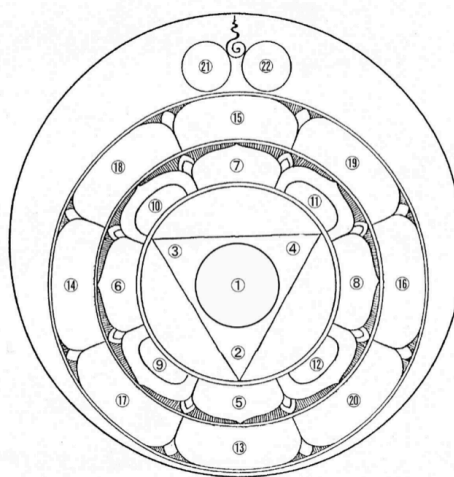
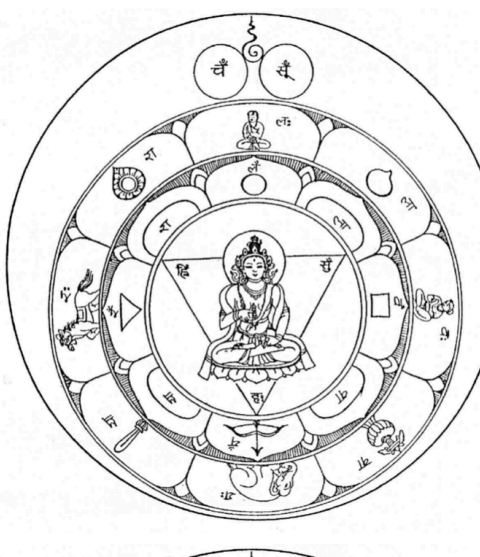
Along the way, Vajracharya also discussed ancient and medieval Mahasiddhas in the Vajrayana tradition, including Shantikaracharya - the first Bajracharya Guru of the Nepal Mandala, Surat Bajra Bajracharya, Manju Bajra Bajracharya and Lila Bajra Bajracharya, considered jointly as the Four Pillars of the tradition. According to the Charya Giti, there were 75 Mahasiddhas in Nepal Mandala. Biographies of 32 of them have been written so far, the Guruji said.

Giving specific details about the puja, Vajracharya indicated that "the Gurumandala Puja begins with honoring the sun, if it is daytime; making

a detailed declaration of the ritual performer's geographic location; stating the astronomical state of the sun, moon and other planets at the time; and the intention of the patron for doing the ritual.”

"We then ask permission from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to conduct the ritual. We perform a self-empowerment, creating our own mandala and inviting into it the Buddha of purification - Vajrasattva. Within the Mandala of Vajrasattva, we invite all the protector deities and any additional specific deities we may be addressing. And the puja proceeds from there.”

The last session in February focused largely on the term “Vajracharya,” its history and its meaning. All who take on the Gurumandala Puja practice sincerely, and “who carry the truth of the vajra,” may, with time and dedication, be eligible for the name, according to Gurujū Prajwal. He indicated that Friday, 4 March 2022, will focus on chanting Gurumandala in Sanskrit, according to the manual provided.

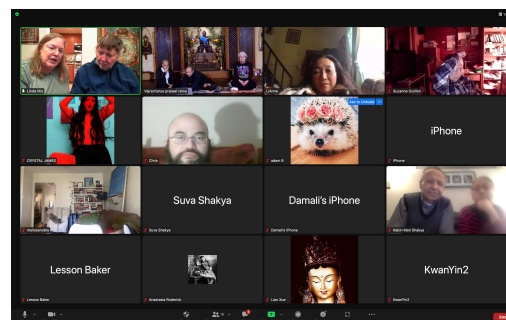


1. vajrasattva
2. mahāmadhyameru (seed syllable: haḥ)
3. madhyameru (seed syllable: hrīm)
4. sūkṣmamadhyameru (seed syllable: sūṃ)
5. pūrvavideha (seed syllable: yaṃ)
6. jambudvīpa (seed syllable: raṃ)
7. aparagodāyanī (seed syllable: laṃ)
8. uttarakuru (seed syllable: vaṃ)
9. upadvīpa (seed syllable: yā)
10. upadvīpa (seed syllable: rā)
11. upadvīpa (seed syllable: lā)
- 11.2. upadvīpa (seed syllable: vā)
- 11.3. gajaratna (seed syllable: yaḥ)
- 11.4. aśvaratna (seed syllable: raḥ)
- 11.5. puruṣaratna (seed syllable: laḥ)
- 11.6. strīratna (seed syllable: vaḥ)
- 11.7. khadgaratna (seed syllable: yā)
- 11.8. cakraratna (seed syllable: rā)
- 21.9. maṇiratna (seed syllable: lā)
- 22.0. sarvanidhāna (seed syllable: vā)
- 22.1. candra (seed syllable: caṃ)
22. sūrya (seed syllable: sūṃ)

Wednesday, 16 February 2022

Sri Punhi Observed

Si Punhi full moon day was observed by Nritya Mandala Mahavihara with the chanting of Maha Manjushri Naamsangiti on Zoom. Twenty five people from Hong Kong, Canada, Washington, California and Oregon took part in the virtual recitation practice, including Chris Antonio from California, Suzanne Scollon from Washington and Suva Shakya from Hermiston, Oregon.



Coincidentally with Si Punhi, the month-long Hindu Swasthani sacred story reciting festival ends. Si Punhi is also known as Maghi Purnima in Nepal.

Weekly activities in Vihara

(Each of these activities can be accessed through Zoom links on either the PortlandBaha or DanceMandal websites.)

Dharani chanting every Tuesday evening:

Nritya Mandala Mahavihara's Dharani recitation is the only chanting program of this kind in the West, and helps to preserve this special heritage. The session begins with a Refuge prayer, the Guru Bandana. This is followed by a protective Dharani, the Graha Dasha Ya Paath, and then the Saptavidhana - or Seven Limb prayer. These are followed by mantras to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and then recitation of a variety of appropriate Dharani. The Pragya Paramita Hridayam Sutra concludes the chanting and is followed by a brief Dharma talk by Prajwal Guruj.

Sadhana Practice and Buddha Bhajans every Wednesday evening:

Sadhana is a spiritual practice in which the practitioner invokes divinity, identifying and absorbing it into himself. It is the primary form of meditation in Vajrayana Buddhism. Sadhana practice can bring positive changes into one's life and has many benefits for mental as well as physical health. It can also be performed in order to attain detachment from worldly things. This Sadhana time also includes a Dharma talk by Prajwal Guruj.



Buddhist Bhajan chanting is practiced immediately after Sadhana, usually at 7:30 pm. It is possible to participate through Zoom in either one or both, as desired. Buddha Bhajans are lead by Prajwal Guruj and Buddha Laxmi Shakya Zooming in from California.

Singing Practice each Friday morning:

The practice of singing Charya giti is deity yoga practice in simple Sanskrit, for which Prajwal Guruj provides the lyrics. These songs focus on the Gods, Goddesses and philosophy of Vajrayana Buddhism.

