

Saturday, 1 Jan 2022

By Dr. Rabin Man Shakya

Edited by Kuon Hunt

Devotees Benefit from Purification Ritual

“The New Year Mha Purification Puja helps devotees to move forward with new vigor, energy and enthusiasm all year long,” said Gurujal Prajwal Vajracharya, when initiating the puja to welcome the new year at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. Twenty-one sangha members took part at the temple in Portland, while 20 more from Oregon, Washington, California, Hong Kong and Canada joined on Zoom.



Vajrayana tradition, based on Tantric Buddhism, includes mantras, mandalas and the visualization of deities and the Buddhas. The Mha Puja is generally meant to purify the old energy from the previous year and help overcome obstacles to open up fresh potential in the new one. In the trying times of Covid, it was also meant to mitigate stress, as well as build a sense of community, if only online for some.



A sand mandala, a circle, or cosmic diagram for use in ritual or inner visualization, had been drawn for the use of each participant. In and around it were placed three gojas, dough cones representing Mt. Meru, used during the ritual. A puja plate holding rice, beaten rice, dry fruits, red and yellow powder, flowers, a little cow milk, three small incense sticks, six cotton wicks, three jajankas, three coins, etc, had also been meticulously prepared for each.



The traditional community ceremony honors oneself and others by making offerings of purified elements, as guided by Gurujū, placing them in or near one's own Mandala of sand. Participants were also given time for a short meditation. At the end of the ceremony, a long pasuka (sacred thread) was passed among all the New Year purification ritual participants. Jointly held by each, then broken into individual necklaces

for each, it represented their unity as one sangha. As is customary in the temple, the event was followed by a Nepali style dinner.



Monday, 17 Jan 2022

Mila Punhi Celebrations Fall on Monthly Namasangiti Chanting

Serendipitously this year, both Mila Punhi and Swosthani Brata fell on the monthly full moon chanting of the Namasangiti by the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara sangha. Joined on Zoom by twenty-five people from Hong Kong, Canada, Nepal, Washington and Oregon, chanting in the temple was led by Guruji Prajwal and Suva Shakya, joined by Chris Antonio from California, and Suzanne Scollon from Washington.

Naamsangiti is chanted at the Mahavihara and on Zoom once a month on the day of Purnima, or full moon, which is a sacred day for Buddhists. "In Vajrayana Buddhism, Naamsangiti is one of the most important preachings of Lord Buddha, and reciting of Naamsangiti is useful for mitigating stress and gaining health," Guruju said.

Coincidentally, both Mila Punhi (a full moon celebration) and the Swosthani Brata (a month-long season of story telling, which begins on Mila Punhi), events celebrated in the Hindu religious calendar, fell on this date. Dr. Linda Iltis, a sangha member

participating from Washington, whose PhD was on Swosthani Brata, enlightened the group on the recital tradition that is part of the fasting and rituals of this annual Hindu event. Traditionally, female devotees wearing red saris take a dip in the Shali River in Sankhu in the morning and fast for a month, worshipping the Goddess Swosthani.

Jan 7th 2022

Macha Janko (Annaprasana) Ritual Performed in Seattle



The first important life-cycle ritual of a Newar is their Macha Janko, or Annaprasana in Sanskrit, their rice feeding ceremony. Gurujū Prajwal was in Seattle, Washington, recently to perform the Macha Janko ritual of Sahaj Raja Shakya, young son of Bhai Raja Shakya and Vishnu Devi Shakya.

During the Macha Janko, the Gurumandala Puja was performed, as well as a variety of mantras and repeated offerings of the five elements in the form of flowers, fruits and rice, incense, water and candle light. It is a ceremony that confirms the young child as a thriving member of

the community, one ready to take on more of life at this point in his development, ready to eat a wider variety of foods and to begin moving around more on his own.

Prajwal Guruji mentioned, "Although this is a centuries old tradition, modern science has established the fact that child's digestive system is capable of processing solid food when he or she is approximately six months old, which is why Macha Janko is held for when a baby turns 6 months old, but it can vary between daughters and sons."



While in Seattle, Gurujū Prajwal also called on old friends and sangha members Linda Iltis, an anthropologist, Ter Ellingson, an ethnomusicologist and Subhash Prajapati, an ethnomusicologist.

Saturday, 29 January 2022

Hong Kong Sangha Marks Chinese New Year

A program entitled 'Hong Kong Dedication Practice' was organized on Zoom by the Hong Kong Buddhist



Studies Association (HKBSA), an affiliate of our Portland sangha, to mark the Chinese New Year.

The multi-layered program kicked off with recitation of the Refuge Prayer, followed Seven Limb

prayer, chanted by Guru Prajwal other others in Portland and online. Vajradhatu Apsaras Zen dance offering was presented by Sangha members of HKBSA: Shira Chan, Yuk-ling Chung, Ping Zhang and Betty Wong.

This was followed by Ten Paramita chanting by Sangha members in Hong Kong, as well as a showing of Vasundhara paintings by Hong Kong Sangha members. Afterwards, a Buddhist Bhajan on Vasundhara in Nepal Bhasa was presented by Guru Prajwal, Joshua Proto and other Portland sangha members. Music on harmonium for the Bhajan was rendered by sangha member Ashley Low.

Later, Manjushri was danced by Dr. Tina Ho of HKBSA, followed by a display of Mahamayuri



paintings and a Mahamayuri Zen dance performed by Ho and her team in Hong Kong.

Guruju Prajwal concluded the dancing with a charya dance to Vajrasattva, followed by the recitation of the One Hundred Syllable Mantra to Vajrasattva by all, a fitting ending to the lovely event.



Weekly Practices Held on Zoom

Throughout this month, as previously, Dharani recitation has been held every week on Tuesday, Charya Giti Singing Practice on Friday, and

Sadhana Practice and Buddhist Bhajan chanting on Wednesday. Each can be accessed via Zoom links at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara and Dance mandal websites.

