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Edited BY Kuon Hunt

Tuesday, 3 May 2022

I'hi Ceremony Celebrated in California



Rev Guru Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya performed an I'hi ceremony for three young girls in the Newar community in California's Bay Area at the home of Niroj Tamrakar. The girls initiated in the ceremony were

Urna Tamrakar, the daughter of Niroj and Karishma Tamrakar; Neebha Nakarmi, the daughter of Gautam Nakarmi and Geeta Chitrakar; and Shaleen Basukala, the daughter of Binay Basukala and Sushmita Joshi.

The ancient pre-pubescent ceremony Guruji performed has been in practice for at least hundreds of years and is an important part of the Newar tradition. It celebrates the girls' movement from young childhood to a more conscious and purposeful commitment to their own lives, health and community. It is based around the Bel fruit, or "wood apple," which can remain fresh and healthy for a very long time. The wood apple tree also promotes the conscious mind, and is a symbol of the girls' new conscious awareness of themselves and their actions.



Friday, 6 May 2022

Rice-feeding Ceremony Held at the Temple



Another important life cycle ritual performed by Guruji this month was the Macha Janko, or rice feeding ceremony, of Avnee Maharjan, the daughter of Pravin and Ambika Maharjan. Life cycle rituals are crucial parts of Newar culture; one of the important purposes of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara is to preserve and promote such Newar cultural and religious traditions. The Macha Janko is the first of these life cycle

rituals, typically performed when a baby is about six months old.

The rice-feeding ceremony celebrates the child's first solid food. Prajwal Guruji notes that "Although this is a centuries-old tradition, modern science has now established that a child's digestive system is best able to process solid food when they have reached approximately six months." The religious rituals performed in the ceremony are accompanied by cultural elements that make it both a significant and an enjoyable experience for the entire family.



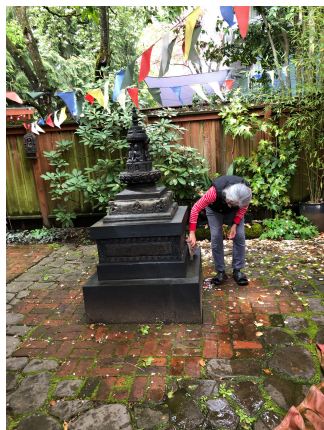
Saturday-Sunday, 7-8 May 2022

Buddha Jayanti Cleaning Campaign Organized

This weekend saw the semi-annual deep cleaning of the temple in preparation for the celebration of Buddha Jayanti the following week. Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, the only Newar Buddhist temple in the West, was built with materials brought to Portland from Nepal. They have to be preserved and protected, taking into consideration the differences of climactic conditions between Kathmandu and Oregon.

The doors of the temple, the windows, the toranas, all the offering goddess struts, the statues of Buddha, the Bodhisattvas and Dakinis, the stupa and most of the decorations were brought from Nepal for the Portland temple, and need to be maintained and cleaned appropriately.

Stressing on the need for a clean and green temple, Vajracharya says that cleanliness is not only crucial for the physical maintenance of the temple, but also to promote a healthy environment around the temple. The volunteers who offered help with cleaning activities were provided with lunch by Prajwal Guraju



Sunday, 15 May 2022

2566th Buddha Jayanti Celebrated in Portland



The auspicious 2566th Buddha Jayanti was celebrated at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara with a variety of programs. The day began with a children's procession with the Baby Buddha around and around the temple, while joyfully playing music. After the procession, they gave the Baby Buddha a bath.

Following the children's activities, adult Buddha Purnima celebrations began with the chanting of Maha Manjushri Namasangiti by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya and other Sangha members in person and on Zoom.

108 butter lamps were illuminated during the religious ceremony, followed by the dancing of the Refuge Prayer Dance, a Charya Nritya dance, 108 times continuously by all American and Nepali devotees present.

Several Buddhist Bhajan songs were presented by Joshua Proto, Casey Redman, Riaz Khan, Mario Mastrangelo, accompanied by Satya Vayu on the drum.

At the end of the function, a talent show was held. Sangha member Naveena Shakya recited a poem entitled 'Buddha Was Born in Nepal'. Poonam Ghimire, a physics instructor at the University of Portland also presented a short poem, and Ganga Sharma, secretary of the Nepali Association of Oregon (NAO) lauded the talent of Buddha Bhajan group. Carline Schossau then





spoke about arts and presented a gift to the Mahavihara. She was followed by Daya Shakya, president of NAO, on Zoom, who recited poems by famous Newah poet Durga Lal Shrestha.

After enjoying the talent show, those present were treated to a Nepali dinner of kheer (rice cooked in milk with sugar, cashews, cloves, cardamoms, raisins, coconuts, etc), along with Sel Roti, Barfi, Maarpa and other Newah delicacies.

According to Guruji Prajwal, about 100 people attended the Buddha Jayanti program in person at the mahavihara, while 25 others from Nepal, USA, Hong Kong and Canada took part on Zoom.

Talking to Nepal Oregon News, Guruji said, "Lord Gautama Buddha was born to the Queen of Kapilvastu Mayadevi and King Shuddhodhan in 623 BC as Prince Siddhartha on the full moon day of the Nepali month of Baisakh. After being brought up in the royal palace, Prince Siddhartha left his palace and consort and newborn son in quest of the liberation of mankind at age 29. Then, Siddhartha Gautam attained enlightenment in Bodhgaya after meditating in various places for nearly six years."

Prajwal Grurji, a priest and ritual master of Newar Vajrayana Buddhism, explained that "Lord Gautam Buddha's birth, enlightenment and Nirvana all took place on the full moon day of Baisakh. That is why the Buddha Jayanti Day is very sacred and auspicious for Buddhists. The celebration of Buddha Purnima in a number of countries across the world highlights the significance of Buddhism as a major religious force in the world, with an estimated 480 million adherents."



Saturday-Sunday, 21-22 May 2022

Prajwal Guruji Performs Guru Rinpoche, Vajrasattva and Padmanateshvara Charya Dances at Himalayan Fair, Berkeley



Rev Guruji Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya performed two Buddhist Charya dances at the Himalayan Fair in Live Oak Park in Berkeley the weekend before Memorial Day. Charya Nritya is a Newar Vajrayana 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 is a senior Charya Nritya guru and prominent ritual master in Newar Vajrayana Buddhist tradition.

The Himalayan Fair transformed the park into a bustling Himalayan Bazaar, offering a wide spectrum of award-winning stage performers, including international groups performing traditional music and dance with vibrant ethnic, religious and traditional costumes. Numerous booths showcased Himalayan Arts and Crafts, culture, food, travel and trekking. The World Newar Organization, an umbrella organization of Newar people living across the world, also had a presence.

The Himalayan Fair was co-founded in 1983 by Arlene Blum, who was part of the Bicentennial Everest Expedition in 1976 that set an altitude record for American women, and who also led the first female expedition up the world's 10th





highest peak, Annapurna, in 1978. A biochemist, Arlene co-founded the Himalayan Fair with Tibetan Buddhist Monk, Lama Kunga of the Ewam Choden Center.

The Fair offered a rare opportunity for Americans to experience a Himalayan festival of traditional music, dance, food and exhibits.

Weekly Activities in Vihara Continue

In May, as usual and as always, Dharani chanting on Zoom was conducted once a week every Tuesday evening. Similarly, Sadhana practice and Buddha Bhajan singing practice were held on each Wednesday evening. Likewise, the practice of singing Charya giti was performed in the mornings every Friday. For times and login information, see the websites PortlandBaha.org and DanceMandal.com or Google “Nritya Mandala Mahavihara.”



