

Reported by Dr.Rabin Man Shakya

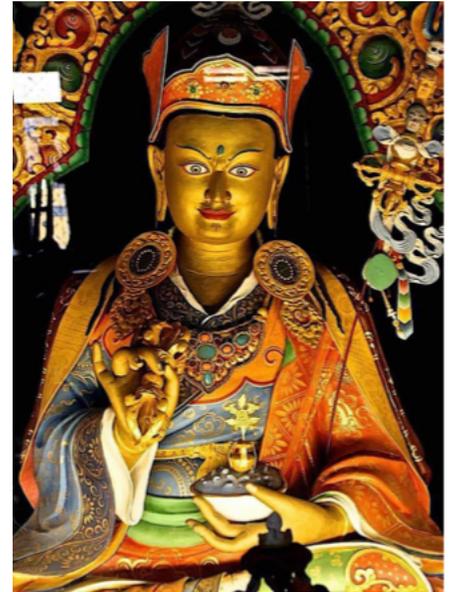
Edited By Kuon Hunt

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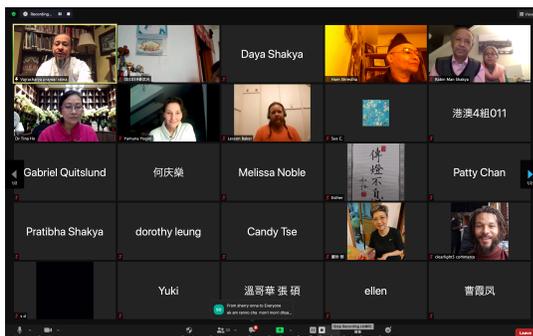
Talk on Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche

"Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, is regarded as a 'Second Buddha' by Newar Buddhists. He possesses miraculous powers, including the ability to subdue Rakshasas (demons) and evil spirits. Guru Rinpoche's birth was foretold by Gautama Buddha." These were some of the interesting facts shared by Prajwal Vajracharya in his recent Zoom teaching organized by Dance Mandal Hong Kong.

Prajwal's talk presented a detailed and comprehensive portrayal of Guru Rinpoche's role in Newar Vajrayana Buddhism. "Guru Rinpoche was both a bodhisattva, and a Buddha," said Prajwal. Lotus-born, he was found as a baby in Nature, already fully conscious. As with any bodhisattva, Padmasambhava's intention is to help all sentient beings. His way is not always the "compassionate way," however. He can be smiling like the Buddha, but also fierce and wrathful like the protector deity Vajrapani.



Guru Rinpoche came from Oddiyana, the land of Dakinis, Prajwal continued, and his precious teachings include Tantric Buddhism. During his three years of travels in Nepal Mandala, Padmasambhava went to Patan and stayed in Yempi Mahavihara in Lalitpur. 84 Mahasiddhas from India came to meet him in that place, Prajwal told the Zoom participants. He also meditated in the caves of Pharping, where it was said he was empowered by either the Vajrahumkara or Vajrayogini, Prajwal explained.



A number of Thangkas, paubas and other art forms portray the "rainbow body" of Guru Rinpoche; others show him with Apsaras, or Nature spirits, at each side, several of whom were his consorts. One of his consorts was from Nepal - Shakyadevi - whom Guru Rinpoche met at Swayambhu. Together they deeply and profoundly practiced secret mantras, Prajwal indicated.

In writings about himself, Padmasambhava

indicated that no one can explain who and what he is, that he is a formless yogi, who must be seen with internal eyes. In 2003 a huge 64' golden statue of Guru Rinpoche was erected just to the right of Lord Buddha's statue in the Amidev Buddha Park in Kathmandu.

After his dharma teaching on Padmasambhava, Prajwal began teaching the charya dance dedicated to him. Joshua Proto, a sangha member, sang the charya giti for all the dancers learning the dance on Zoom. Prajwal demonstrated the movements of legs, gestures of hands and fingers and expressions of face and eyes appropriate to the Padmasambhava dance. "His two eyes are always wide open looking straight forward - always awakening the people," Prajwal said.

At the end of the Zoom teaching, Prajwal replied to several questions from the 35 participants from various states in the USA, Hong Kong, Germany and Canada.

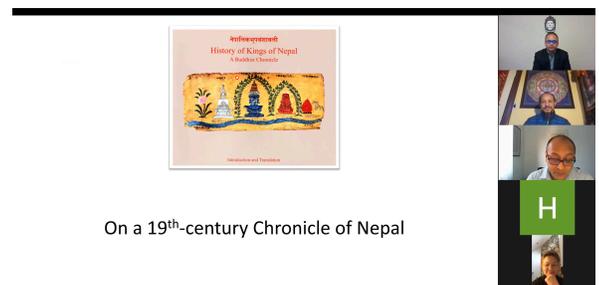
Saturday, 3 April 2021 Vamsavali Talk by Dr. Manik Bajracharya



Prajwal Vajracharya, the Director of the Heritage Division of the WNO-USA chapter, moderated a WNO-USA-sponsored Zoom talk by Dr. Manik Bajracharya on Vamsavali, pre-nineteenth century chronicles of Nepalese history. Born in Lalitpur, Nepal, Dr. Bajracharya is now based in Germany at Heidelberg University, where he is a visiting professor and Research Fellow of the German Research Foundation Project "Wright Chronicle."

In his presentation Dr Bajracharya characterized Vamsavalis as unattributed retellings of the past, often written by monks, priests, or merchants, who freely offered their own perspectives and opinions. Many are focused on genealogy; historical or legendary events and exploits related to specific kings, clans, sages or deities; as well as the origins of places and monuments. There is an emphasis on the teaching of ethics and spirituality, he said.

In 2015 Bajracharya and others published *Nepalika-Bhupa-Vamsavali*, a history of the Kings of Nepal up to 1838, based on a number of Vamsavalis. Dr. Bajracharya also mentioned the role played by Nepal German Manuscript



Preservation Project (NGMPP), a joint project between the governments of Nepal and Germany in the 1970s for the preservation of manuscripts and epigraphic documents.

Dr Bajracharya indicated that this rich trove of traditional historical texts about Nepal should be treated as a distinct form of historiography, not just as sources of history, feeling that their scientific value must be recognized. Vamsavalis can be found now in multiple libraries throughout the world.

The Sanskrit word “Vamsavali” - consisting of “Vamsa” and “Avali” - means the line of a family, a pedigree or genealogy. The earliest Vamsavali found in Nepal was Gopalaraja Vamsavali, a 14th century handwritten manuscript during the rule of Jayasthiti Malla, Dr Bajracharya said. A variety of information was often included in a given Vamsavali in addition to events, people and places; they might include notes, reports or even lists.

Saturday, 24 April 2021 Virtual Talk on Apsaras in China (Dunhuang) and Nepal

Characteristics of *vamśāvalī* writings

- Retelling of the past (*itihāsa*, "so indeed it was")
- Generally compiled from various sources
- Authors unknown
- Scribes are Buddhist and Hindu priests, merchants, vaidyas, or possibly of any other class
- Narrators are omnipresent
- Narratives are often centered in a particular landscape, monument or deity
- Cyclical concept of time
- emphasis on soteriological goal

飛天 (अप्सरā apsarā) female

多為女性，梵文 अप्सरा Apsarā 男性為乾闥婆 (Gandharva) 又作健闥婆、健羅神。飛天：中天有司樂之神，又稱香神、樂神、香音神。

Apsarā: most of them are female.

They are called Gandharva in male form.

They are the god of music in Buddhism, also known as the god of incense, the god of music, skilled singers and the god of fragrance

飛天一詞出自於《法苑珠林》(534A.D.)卷二載：「五禮佛事，有摩竭國寺亦摩竭國所共立也，有金樂華，去地三尺，旃寶羅，四面垂金鈴七寶珠，飛天伎樂，聲之震衣。」飛天最早誕生於古印度，後傳入中國，與中國藝術融合，魏晉南北朝 (220年—589年) 初期，壁畫中的飛天亦稱飛仙。

The word Apsara came from a historical and literary book "The Scenery in Luoyang Temple" (《法苑珠林》) in 534A.D.

The Apsara in the murals (early C3rd) was also called flying fairy (飛仙).



A virtual talk on Apsaras in China (Dunhuang) and Nepal was organized by Dance Mandal Hong Kong sangha and presented by Dr. Tina Ho in Hong Kong and Prajwal Vajracharya in Portland. Twenty-five people from the USA, Canada and Hong Kong participated online.

“Apsara” is a Sanskrit word which means beautiful celestial nymph. Although the concept of Apsara is found both in Hinduism and Buddhism, there is

fundamental difference between Apsaras in Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hinduism, there are numerous legends where Apsaras were used to seduce Gods, Sadhus, Asuras and men, whereas Apsaras usually play a supporting and helping role in Buddhism.

Dr Tina Ho's presentation on Apsaras dealt with Apsaras in Chinese Buddhism and murals in ancient Chinese caves. Mythological angels and nymphs dancing and playing celestial music is a common tableau from the Dunhuang fresco. "The Apsara in the murals (early third century) was also



1. 曲舞飛天 (北涼 莫高窟272窟)

"小" 字號 (莫高窟428窟)

2. 拍琵琶飛天 (北魏 莫高窟257窟)

3. 西域式飛天 (高魏 莫高窟249窟)

4. 少女飛天 (北魏 莫高窟296窟)

5. 舞花伎樂飛天 (隋 莫高窟420窟)

6. 散花飛天 (初唐 莫高窟322窟)：受菩薩對舞和仕女畫的影響



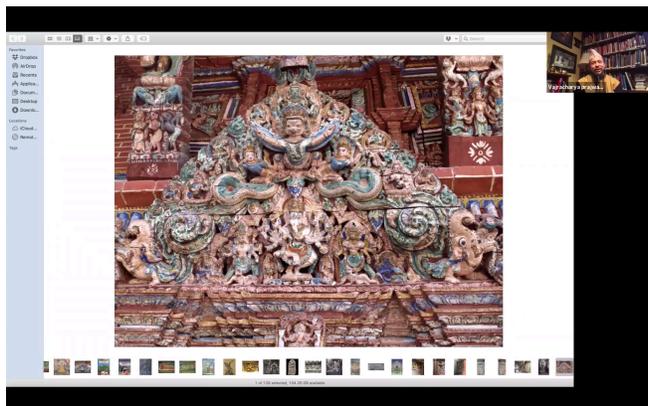
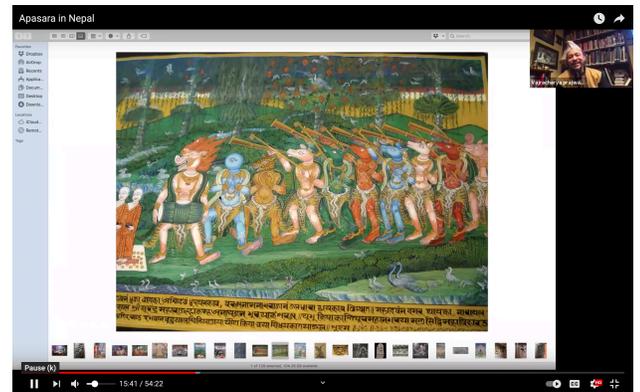
called a flying fairy,” Dr. Ho said. "Apsaras - most of them - are female. They are called Gandharva in male form. Apsaras are goddesses of music in Buddhism, also known as goddesses of incense and goddesses of fragrance."



In Chinese Buddhism, according to Ho, the three duties of Apsaras are: (1) worship service (2) to disperse flower and incense and (3) dancing and playing music. Ho included pictures of the flying goddesses of Dunhuang using pipe music and showing 'Silk road flower rain.' She also demonstrated paintings of Apsaras by different Chinese artists, including by herself.

In the second part of the talk Prajwal Vajracharya presented a comprehensive description of Apsaras in Newah Vajrayana Buddhism. He said that Apsaras are mentioned in *Lalitvistara*, *Avadanas* and *Mahavadanas*. He indicated that there are multiple types of Apsaras in Buddhism: some manifest as human females, as human males, as animals, as well as in other sentient beings.

Vajracharya relayed that Buddhist Apsaras are particularly helpful to the gods and to practitioners, always helping them with whatever is needed on their spiritual path. Prajwal included a folktale about Bhasmasura and an Apsara named Mohini, illustrating her “skillful means” in achieving what was needed. He said: "Bhasmasura was an Asura who wanted power, absolute power. So, he performed great Tapasya in order to get a blessing from Shiva. Lord Shiva was pleased with his Tapasya and asked him what he wanted. The Asura requested that he be granted the power to burn up and immediately turn into ashes anyone whose head he touched with his hand. His wish was granted and he started to become a big menace for the people. He even wanted to kill Lord Shiva by touching his head. Shiva had to hide himself underneath the ground. That is why people still worship him as a Lukma Dyo (Hiding God) in Nepal.



As a result, Lord Vishnu had to become an Apsara named Mohini to help Shiva and eliminate the Asura. Mohini was so beautiful that Bhasmasura instantly fell in love with her. The Apsara encouraged him to dance with her, and to do whatever she did in the dance. During the dance, when Mohini placed her hand on her head, Bhasmasura placed his hand on his head. He immediately burnt up and turned into ashes."

Prajwal's presentation also included many pictures of Apsaras in various forms: as offering goddesses, as goddesses relaxing above the benevolent crocodiles' mouth in sculptures and Toranas in the temples in the Kathmandu valley, as any creature or human form giving aid to practitioners or leading people onto a spiritual practice.

Weekly Activities in Viahara

Dharani Chanting Every Tuesday

NMM'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 Prajnaparamita Hridayam Sutra concludes the chanting and is followed by a brief dharma talk. Please join us.

Sadhana Practice Every Wednesday

Sadhana is a Sanskrit word that means spiritual exercise. 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. 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. This Sadhana practice time also includes a dharma talk.

At a time when the whole world is bogged down in coronavirus crisis, political turmoil and economic dilemma, it is valuable to embrace meditation, yoga and Sadhana.

Singing Practice Every Friday

The practice of singing Charya Giti is a sadhana of its own. It is deity yoga practice in simple Sanskrit, for which Prajwal will provide the lyrics. These songs focus on the gods, goddesses and philosophy of Vajrayana Buddhism.

Anyone interested in learning about this singing tradition, as well as learning to sing these songs, is welcomed to join in.

Three Month Course Almost Finished

Prajwal's three month course on the Foundations of the Sacred Buddhist Dance of Nepal, sponsored by Yangchenma will end shortly. Discussion and training on "Charya Nritya," dance as a spiritual discipline, has been ongoing since 20 February and will complete on 8 May. Participants have learned the Refuge Prayer dance, the Sixteen Offering dance, the dance to the god of compassion, Avalokiteshvara and the dance to the green Tara, Arya Tara. By uniting movement, visualization, and awareness, one learns to emulate and then fully embody the qualities of the variety of Buddhist deities — male and female, peaceful and wrathful — and to genuinely express those enlightened qualities through one's own body, speech, mind, and activities.

