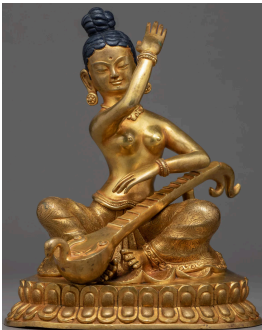


Sunday, November 5, 2023

Devi Saraswati Quintessence of Learning, Wisdom and Meditation

An Engaging Talk and Comprehensive Practice on
Vajrasaraswati Charya

Rabin Man Shakya



Portland, Oct 14 , An engaging talk and comprehensive practice on Goddess Vajrasaraswati Charya Nritya and Charya Giti was organized on the zoom by Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association (HKBSA) on Saturday.

The talk as well as the charya nritya practice on Goddess Vajrasaraswati was provided by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya. Addressing the zoom gathering, Vajracharya, a noted prajwal said: "Even as Goddess Saraswati is prayed and respected in Hinduism, she is also worshipped and adored in Newar Buddhism as well as in Tibetan Buddhism. In fact, she is known as Vajrasaraswati in Newar Buddhism and Yangchenma in Tibetan Buddhism."

Throwing light on the iconography of Vajrasaraswati devi, The Goddess of poetry, arts, music and learning is a four handed deity seated on a white lotus wearing a crown and white saree. Saraswati's





bahan (vehicle) is a white swan while she holds Veena (a musical instrument), a book 'Prajnaparamita' and a garland in her hands. One of her hands holding a book signifies that she is the epitome of true knowledge and another hand holding a flower garland represents the power of meditation and spirituality."

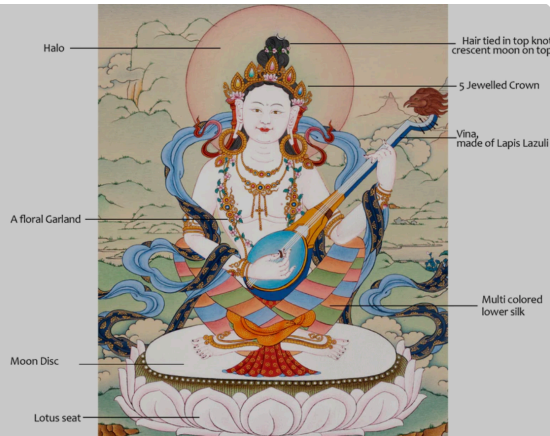
Saraswati's four arms symbolize a multitude of concepts: her immanence and transcendence, her front arms portray the Goddess' divine power in the material realm whereas the back arms in the spiritual realm. They also symbolize four learning-related personality traits of mind, intelligence, consciousness and ego.

Prajwal add on Saraswati's iconography also captures the quintessence of music, knowledge, wisdom and meditation. That is why, according to Newar Buddhism, Vajrasaraswati devi is a swan riding goddess who liberates the world with her wisdom and knowledge, he further said.

Saraswati is not just adored in Nepal, Tibet (China), and India, she is also worshipped in Hong Kong, Thailand, Myanmar, Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Buryatia (Russia) and many other countries, the Guruji said adding: "In Newar Buddhism, Vajrasaraswati is a protector deity who upholds the Buddha's teachings."



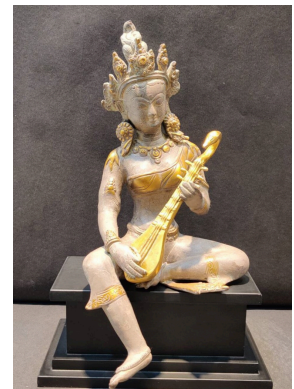
The subtle difference of Goddess Saraswati in Hinduism and Buddhism is that devotional part is more important in Hinduism while, in Buddhism, Saraswati is the quintessence and embodiment of wisdom, knowledge and meditation, he told the zoom participants.



Because she is white in color, has one face and occasionally three eyes, Vajrasaraswati is frequently compared to and regarded as White Tara.

On the occasion, a refuge dance and sixteen offering goddess dance was also performed.

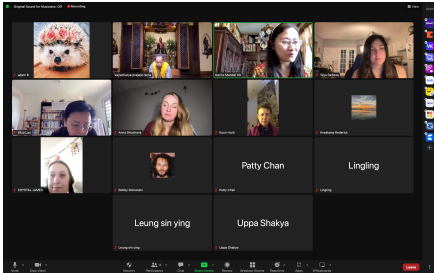
The presentation focused on Vajrasaraswati charya nritya and charya giti. The charya giti of Vajrasaraswati Devi tells us about the iconography of Goddess Saraswati, her divine power, the embodiment of knowledge, wisdom and meditation, what she is holding, what she is wearing and her bahan (vehicle), the Guruji informed the zoom participants.



"This charya dance is named after the Goddess - Vajrasaraswati devi. Vajrasaraswati charya dance is one of the ancient classical charya dances of Newar Vajracharyas. This dance is performed especially as a devotion to Vajrasaraswati devi.

Prajwal informed the participants: "The melody or Raga for charya nritya of Vajrasaraswati may be different, Raga for the saraswati is Karnadi and Tala Jhapa

Prajwal show the how to perform the charya nritya dance 'Vajrasaraswati' during the teaching. The charya giti on the occasion was vocalized by Sangha member Leson Baker. In Vajrasaraswati charya dance, hand mudra is crucial, symbolic movements of fingers, hands and legs are skillfully timed with general body movements and facial expressions. The Guruji answered to numerous questions of the participants. The teaching on Vajrasaraswati was attended by 25 people from different countries on the zoom and 7 participants took part from the temple.



Prajwal Guruji, Others Honored with Certificate of Appreciation at NAO AGM and Dashain Event



Portland, Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya was honored with Certificate of Appreciation at 22nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Dashain celebration event which was organized by Nepali Association of Oregon (NAO) on Friday, Oct 20, 2023 at Aloha Grange, Beaverton.

The certificate of appreciation mentioned: "This certificate is proudly presented to Prajwal Vajracharya and team for promoting the traditional Charya dance and showcasing the Nepalese culture in the Rose Festival Starlight Parade, 2023."

The certificate of appreciation was signed by NAO president Daya Shakya and secretary Ganga Sharma.

Vajracharya has been honored with numerous awards and certificates by different organizations in the past.

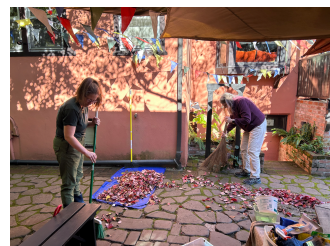
Meanwhile, Jangbu Sherpa, president of Non-resident Nepalese Association USA Oregon chapter and Laxman Darlamee, NRNA USA Board of Directors member were other personalities who were also presented with certificates of appreciation for their contributions to the community.

Anniversary Cleaning Campaign Organized



Portland, A two-day cleaning drive was launched on Saturday- Sunday, Oct 28 - 29, 2023 at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara (NMM), Portland as part of preparation for the fourteenth anniversary celebration of the NMM.

During the cleaning drive, not only were the doors and windows of the Mahavihara cleaned, but the idols and small statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were also



cleaned. The Chiva Dyo located on the premises of the Vihara was also cleaned.

The volunteers who offered help for cleaning were provided with Newah-style lunch by Prajwal Guruji

Vihara Celebrates Prajwal Guruji's Birthday with a Gathering



Portland, A gathering was organized to celebrate the birthday of Prajwal Guruji on Oct 8, 2023 at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara.

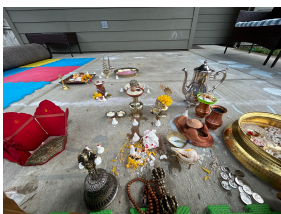
It is to be noted that 10.8 (Oct 8) is an auspicious figure in Newar Buddhism 108. About 35 Sangha

members and community members attended the birthday gathering



House Blessing Ritual Performed

Portland, (Nepal Oregon News): A house-blessing ritual was performed by Prajwal Guruji at the home of Corinne Nakamura-Rybak and John Rybak at south-east Portland in October, 2023.



Corinne is a board-member of the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara whereas her husband John is an active Sangha member.

The purpose of the ritual was to purify the house, to ensure its safety and prosperity. Similarly, a purification ritual was also performed in October, 2023 by Prajwal Guruji for the hairdressing salon owned by a member of the Nepali community in Beaverton.

Weekly Activities in Vihara Continue

In October, 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.

(Rabin Man Shakya is a Newah journalist in USA)

