

by- **Dr.Rabin Man Shakya**

Itumbaha: May 1st 2021 A Live Newah Buddhist Heritage in Nepal Mandala

Portland, (Nepal Oregon News): A virtual conversation on heritage entitled "Itumbaha: A Live Newah Buddhist Heritage in Nepal Mandala" was organized on Saturday, May 1, 2021 by World Newah Organization (WNO) - USA chapter. The presentation on that theme was made by Daya Shakya, a linguist and writer based in Portland, USA.

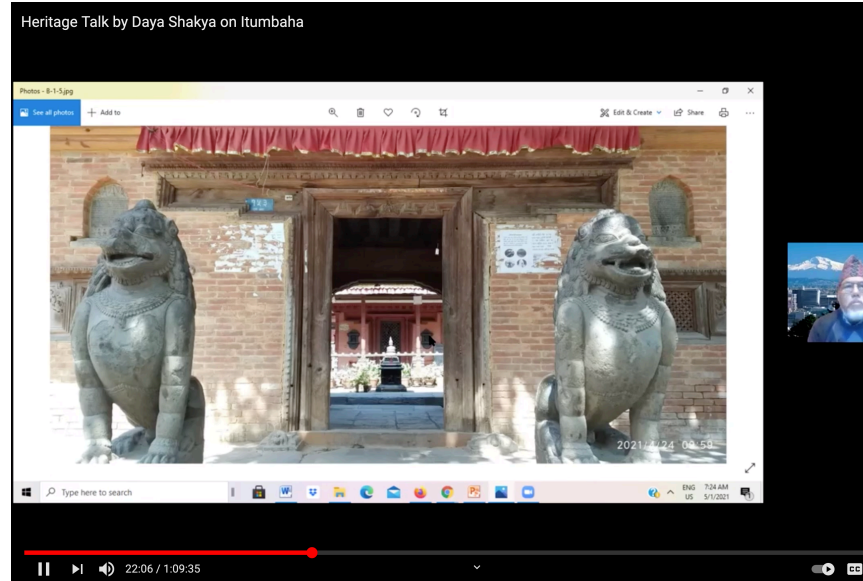


Addressing the zoom gathering, Shakya said that there are 18 Vajrayana Buddhist Mahaviharas in Kathmandu and Itumbaha is the largest Mahavihara among them. Itumbaha is rich with ancient heritages, he added.



The Sanskrit full name for Itumbaha is Shree Bhaskara Deva Sanskarit Keshchandra Krit Paravarta Mahavihara. The name itself gives information that the Mahavihara by the name of Paravarta (pigeon) was constructed by Keshchandra during the reign of King Bhaskara Deva, Shakya went on saying.

Shakya said: "There are two other small Viharas and many Nanis in the periphery of Itumbaha. The main Baha is popularly known as Keshchandra Mahavihara and it also houses Kwapa Dyo - Akshobhya Buddha."



Keshchandra was the person who donated money and time to build the Mahavihara, Shakya reiterated.

According to a myth, a demon called Gurumapa helped Keshchandra to carry and bring a lot of gold, and with that wealth Keshchandra constructed Itumbaha. Later on, Gurumapa started becoming a big menace, as he started abducting small kids for his food.

With the order of Keshchandra, Gurumapa was held up and was ordered to stay at Tundikhel for good. In turn, Gurumapa will be offered once every year on the Day of Falgun Purnima a huge feast consisting of one Muri cooked rice, cooked meat out of a whole buffalo, Ayla (traditional liquor) and Thwon (traditional white beer). This tradition is still alive and there is a provision of Guthi for this purpose.

Mahavihara like Itumbaha is a great heritage of Nepal, said Shakyu underlining the need for preserving and protecting the ancient and medieval Mahaviharas of Kathmandu.



"A number of life cycle rituals, such as, Chudakarma and Ihi, are performed in the

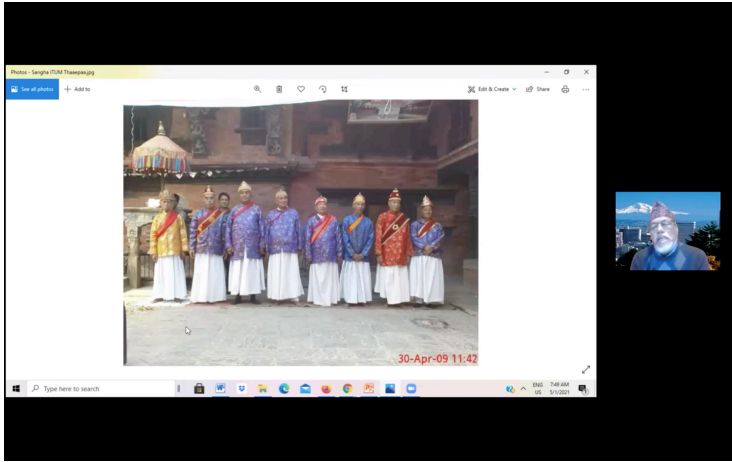
Mahaviharas of Kathmandu," Shakyu added.

"All the Shakyu boys and male persons living at and around Itumbaha who have been ordained with Chudakarma at the Mahavihara have to perform the San Yayegu rituals for seven days turn by turn all year around. This kind of ritual is carried out in all Mahaviharas of Kathmandu, though," Shakyu observed.

"Gulan Bajan is another one of the important activities of the Mahaviharas in Kathmandu. That is why there is a Keshchandra Mahavihara Gula Bajan Khala. They recite Naamsangiti and other Tutas during the Gunla month at the Itumbaha," he said.

At the end of the virtual talk program, Shakyu answered the questions of distinguished participants. The virtual e-heritage program was conducted by Pramesh Shrestha of the WNO-USA

chapter while it was moderated by co-founder of Nritya Mandala Mahavihara Prajwal Vajracharya.



Daya Shakya who is the patron of World Newah Organization is also president of Nepali Association of Oregon and NRN-USA Oregon chapter. He has also been instructor in Nepali, Nepal Bhasa and

Sanskrit at Mount Hood Community College and Portland Community College.

Bara Tayegu Ritual May 14 to May 16, 2021.

Portland, (Nepal Oregon News): Bara Tayegu ritual signifies a lot in Newah Vajrayana tradition. The Vajracharyas, Shakyas and other Newah Buddhists have been honoring this tradition as a



significant sacrament for young girls. It is a Newah ritual in which a young girl is hidden in a sunless room for twelve consecutive days.



Bara Tayegu - which is one of the important life cycle rituals of Newah women - is one of the traditional rituals which has been performed in Nepal for centuries. In Newah Vajrayana tradition, Bara Tayegu is a ritual carried out for young girls before the start of menstruation.

Meanwhile, a Bara Tayegu ritual for Amrita Nakamura, Arya Tara Shakya, Beena Tara Shakya and Trisha Shrestha was performed at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara for three consecutive days from May 14 to May 16, 2021.



Back in good old days, Bara Tayegu was performed for 12 days in Nepal. That is because at that time girls and women were deprived of education. And during a short period of 12 days, girls were provided with good sanskara, education health awareness and discipline, said Guru Prajwal Vajracharya.

Today more than ever, boys and girls are getting equal opportunity for education, health and sports etc. Keeping pace

with changes in life and society, even in Nepal Bara Tayegu is not performed as comprehensively as before, Vajracharya added.



Bara Tayegu of four girls kicked off at the Mahavihara on May 14 Friday with offering of Kisali, with Bhawana Puja and installation of Bara Khya (Bara ghost).

There was necessary arrangement of Bara Pasa for the girls during the period of Bara Tayegu. There were lots of activities for Bara girls during the three day 'hidden' ritual. Kusumabati Vajracharya and Jaya Shakya brought Chhusya Musya for the girls. Kolan Buigu tradition and Yakandhala pebble games were also played during the period.

Refuge dance and walking meditation was taught to Bara girls by Koren Nakamura, short lessons of mindful Yoga training by Ashley Low and talks on awareness, discipline and protection by respective mothers.



On Sunday, the last day of Bara Tayegu, the girls were taken out from the hidden room Then, they were allowed to give a look to the Sun God from the



reflection of water. After that, they were given a laskus (auspicious welcome) to the temple.

Gurumandala puja and Bali Puja were also performed by Guru Prajwal. Ayala, Thapin and Thwon were offered to Bara girls during the Mamaki puja signifying that the girls are on the threshold of

becoming young women. Mohani Sinha or Haku Sinha was dabbed on the forehead of Bara girls by Guru Prajwal for protecting against hypnotism and overcoming different obstacles.

The Bara Tayegu ritual wrapped up on Sunday, May 16 with the bestowing of blessings by Guru Prajwal and giving away presents to the girls from the family.

That the Nepalese people living in Oregon and the US west coast are celebrating traditions like Bara Tayegu is a testimony to the fact that Newah people and Nepalese people still do not forget our culture and traditions even in America. And the role played by the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara - the only Newah Buddhist temple in the West - in preserving and protecting the cultural and traditional heritage of the Newah people like



Bhimratharohan, rice feeding ceremony, Ihi, Bara Tayegu and Bratabandha etc is very commendable and praiseworthy.

Buddha Jayanti Cleaning Campaign Monday May17 and Monday May 24, 2021



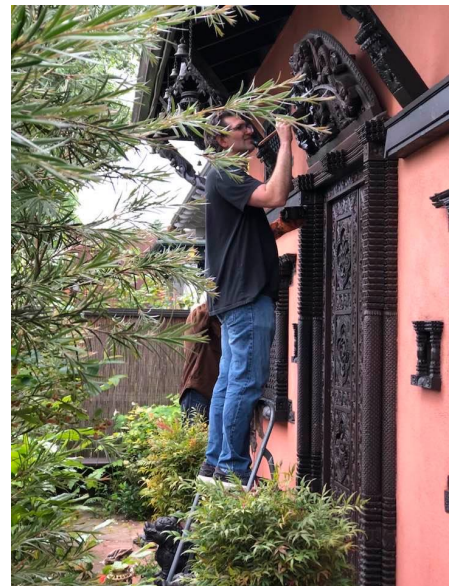
Portland: A cleaning drive was launched on Monday May17 and Monday May 24, 2021 at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara, Portland as part of the Buddha Jayanti preparation.

Prajwal Vajracharya, priest of the Mahavihara said:"The cleanliness campain is carried out twice a year: for the temple's anniversary and for Buddha Jayant celebration.

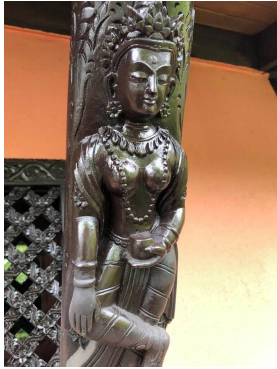
Nritya Mandala Mahavihara family members have been offering voluntary help for cleaning the Mahavihara, said Vajracharya. Because

of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the temple has decided to carry out cleaning work separately on Mondays, and on the day the Sangha members are free.

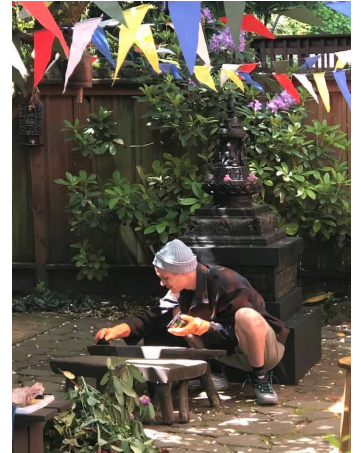
During the cleaning drive, not only were the doors and windows of the Mahavihara cleaned, but the idols and



small statues of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were also cleaned.



In fact, some windows were oiled and painted too. Offering Goddesses and Toranas were also painted during the cleaning campaign. All the offering goddesses, Toranas, idols of Buddha and Bodhisattvas were brought from Nepal. That is why the idols and Toranas have to be well preserved and protected in view of difference of climatic conditions in Nepal and Oregon.



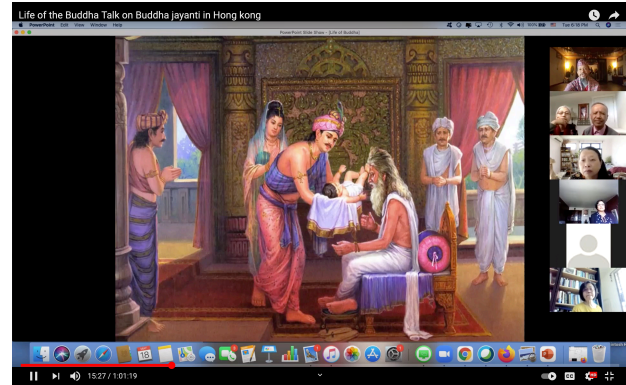
Especially, wood carvings brought from Nepal need special care. The volunteers who offered help for cleaning activities were provided with lunch or dinner.

Dance Mandal Hong Kong Sangha Celebrates Buddha's Birthday Tuesday, May 18, 2021



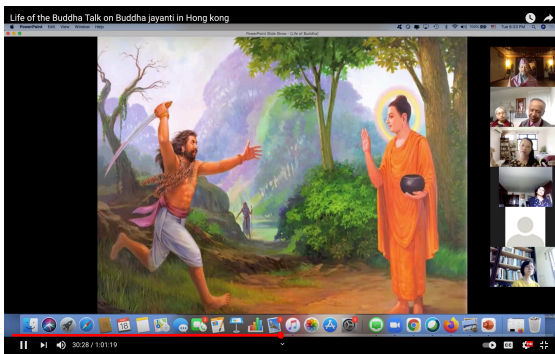
Buddha's birthday is a Buddhist festival which is celebrated by Buddhists across the world commemorating the birth of Prince Siddhartha at Kapilvastu, Lumbini in Nepal.

A virtual program was organized by Dance Mandal Hong Kong Sangha on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 to celebrate Shakyamuni Tathagata's 2565th birthday.



Addressing the zoom gathering, Guru Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya, co-founder of Nritya Mandala

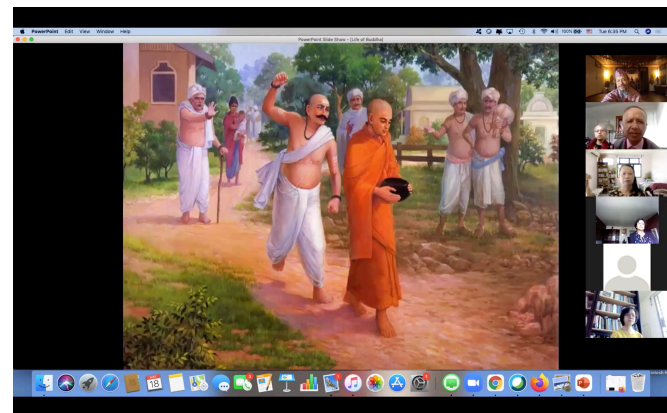
Mahavihara said that Buddha Purnima is the most sacred and most important festival in the Buddhist world.



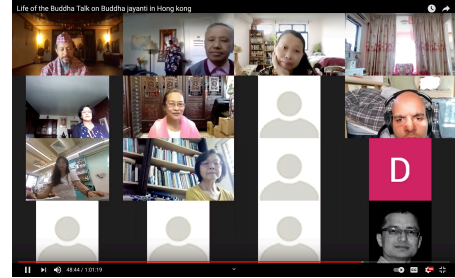
Underlining the importance of Lord Buddha's teachings, priest of the Mahavihara Vajracharya said that the

Buddha's preachings are more alive, more practical and more relevant today more than ever at a time when our world is mired into different problems of wars, civil wars, violence and pandemic etc.

Talking about life of Buddha, Vajracharya gave a detailed description of Buddha's life from his birth at Kapilvastu, Nepal up to his enlightenment and Nirvana, by displaying useful and interesting pictures about Buddha's life.

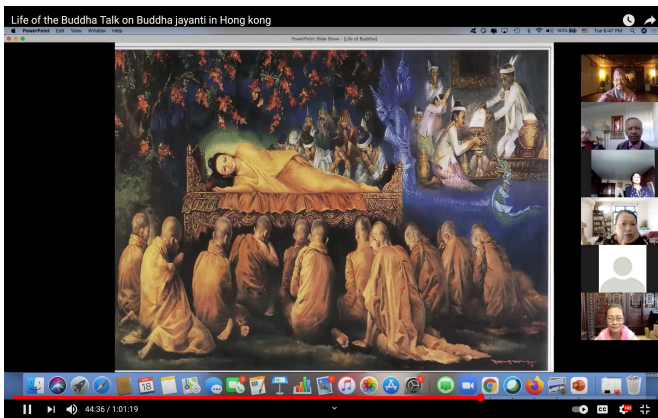


On the occasion, Eliza Lau, Dr Tina Ho and Saldon Wu of Hong Kong Dance Mandal threw light on how Buddha's birthday is celebrated in China and Hong Kong. As Eliza said, usually, in Hong Kong, people visit Buddhist monastery and give a bath to child Buddha's idol.



Also, during the zoom event, Uppa Shakya from Hermiston, Oregon presented a lovely Charya dance "Pancha Buddha".

The virtual program was followed by 108 Refuge Dance by Prajwal Vajracharya, Gabriel Quitslund and Aniruddha Shakya at the Mahavihara followed by all the zoom participants from Oregon, California and Hong Kong. Daya Shakya expressed his views about Buddha based on Chitta Dhar Hriday's "Sugat Saurav".



Meanwhile, in a Facebook post on May 18, 2021, Dr Tina Ho of Dance Mandal Hong Kong Sangha wrote: "Thank you our teacher Prajwal R. Vajracharya to celebrate Buddha's birthday with us this morning.

According to Newari calendar, we will have another Buddha's birthday celebration on next Tuesday too. Welcome!"

Buddha's Birthday Celebrated in Portland amid Covid-19 Pandemic May 25 Tuesday 2021

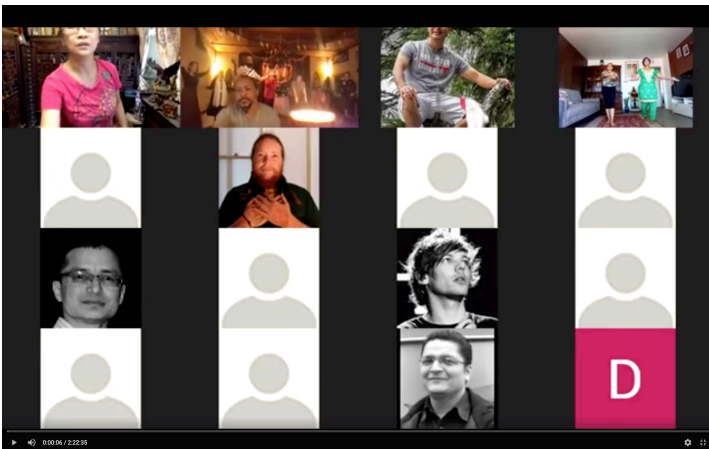
Portland, (Nepal Oregon News): At a time when the United States is slowly recovering from the coronavirus pandemic, Lord Buddha's 2565th birthday or Buddha Purnima was celebrated at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara amid various programs.



Buddha Purnima was celebrated in person at the Mahavihara as well as in the zoom. Although all the Nepalese and American participants who were present at the Buddha's birthday celebrations were fully vaccinated, still masks were used by them.

Buddha Purnima celebration started with the Gurumandala Puja

which was ritualized by Guru Prajwal Vajracharya and other participants of the Puja were Anastasia Roderick, Gabriel Quitslund, Joshua Proto, Matt Bourgeois and Naveena Shakya. During Gurumandala Puja, among other rituals, a long pasuka (sacred thread) was



used, spread and passed over to all the Gurumandala participants and other guests.

Gurumandala Puja was followed by Maha Manjushree

Naamsangiti chanting at the Mahavihara as well as in the zoom in the morning

celebrations. About 15

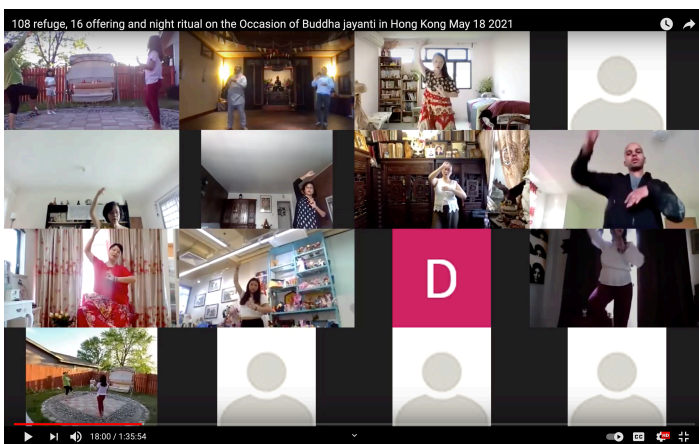
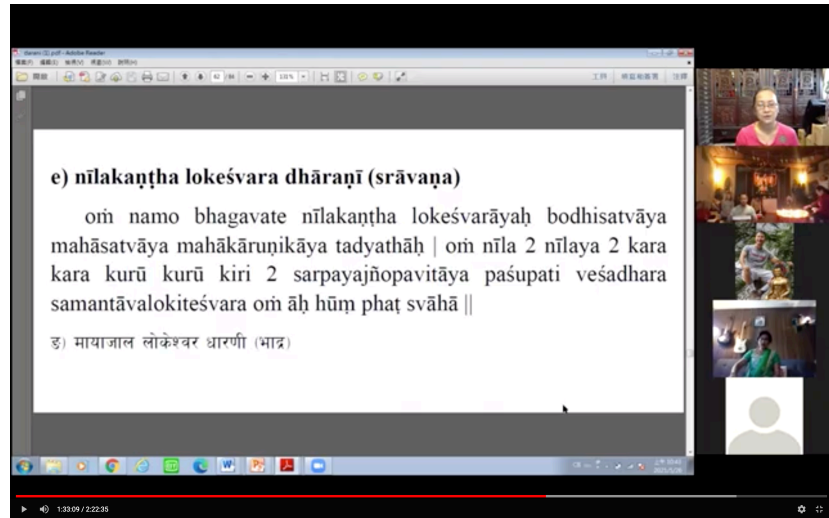
Nepalese and Americans participated in person in the morning celebration at the Mahavihara where as the

number of people

participating from the zoom

from various countries was 20. Kheer lunch with various curries

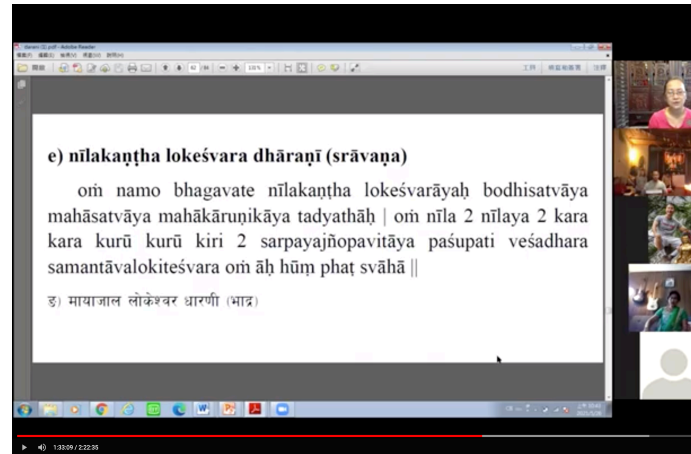
and Achaars was served to the participants at the Mahavihara.



Likewise, the evening celebration of Buddha Purnima started with the illumination of 108 butter fed diyos (candle-like lights) at the Mahavihara. Guru Prajwal Vajracharya threw light on the importance of Buddha Jayanti celebrations.

A Refuge Dance (a performance of Buddha Bandana Dance through Charya Nritya) was performed 108 times continuously at the Mahavihara by Nepalese and American devotees: Guru Prajwal Vajracharya, Anastasia Roderick, Joshua Proto, Matt Bourgeois, Naveena Shakya, Ashely Low, Casey Redman, Mario Mastrangelo, Stormi Hoebelheinrich and Kusumabati Vajracharya,

Likewise, on the occasion, a Pancha Buddha nritya was performed by Guru Prajwal and other community members. Also, on the occasion, Dharani recitation was held at the Mahavihara and in the zoom. About 15 people recited Dharani in person at the Mahavihara whereas 22 people from across the world in the zoom.



The evening Buddha Jayanti program was followed by a Kheer dinner (rice cooked in milk with sugar, cashews, cloves, cardamoms, raisins, coconuts etc) along with Dudhvari and other delicacies

The celebration of Buddha Purnima in Nepal, Hong Kong, the US and 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.

Ihi Ceremony Held at Portland's Buddhist Temple May 26, 2021.



Ihi ceremony of Sanaya and Sahana (daughters of Bibek Bajracharya and Preeti Shrestha Bajracharya from Seattle) and Shivani Shrestha (daughter of Rabin and Sandhya Shrestha from Beaverton) was held at Portland's Nritya Mandala Mahavihara on Saturday, May 26, 2021.



Ihi ritual is a unique tradition in Newah culture. Also, Ihi, like Bara Tayagu, is an important lifecycle ritual for Newah girls. Girls from Newah community in Nepal are married thrice in their life time. The

first ceremony is called Ihi where dedication is committed to the Bel fruit (wood apple) by the young pre-adolescent girls.

The second ceremony is "Bara Tayagu" ritual where girls are married with Sun God, and third ceremony is an actual marriage with a man.

During the ceremony held at Portland's Baha, the girls were prepared as little brides dressed in a fancy red and golden colored blouse, saree and shawl.



The Vihara was cleaned for the Ihi ceremony. The little brides walked in around the Buddhist temple three times. Then, the girls were given a laskus (auspicious welcome) at the main door of the temple.

The Ihi girls were measured from head to toe with yellow thread 16 times and then garlanded the thread around their neck.

Gurumandala (purification) puja was performed on the occasion by the priest of Mahavihara Prajwal Ratna Vajracharya. Puja Bha Demas consisting of Sinha, Swan, Jaki, Ita, Goja, Dhup etc were carefully prepared for the ceremony. Auspicious Vajra and

sacred Bell were used during the Puja by Prajwal Guruju. Sukunda lamps were also lit. Four men sprinkled water on the Ihi girls who were sitting crosslegged around the Mandala, wishing them health and happiness.



The Tri-Ratna Sharana chanting of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha was performed by the Ihi girls during the ceremony. After Jwala Nhayakan worshipping and Sinha Mu praying, Prajwal Guruju gave a dab of Sinha to the Ihi girls and others who were present at the ceremony.

Different ritual items used at the Ihi ceremony give the Ihi girls various kinds of knowledge and wisdom, said Guru Prajwal. Salt gives knowledge about sea, fruits provide wisdom about nutrition, anchovy teaches them to be frolic, Madan Swan offers knowledge about fragrance, Chaku gives information about sweetness, Taye and Aakhay give wisdom about the origin and end of the world, Paalu gives knowledge about planet's underground and Bhimpu gives knowledge about rock, Prajwal Guruju went on saying.



Also, during the ceremony, pratidaan ritual was offered by using bel, panko paat, two betel nuts and a coin. The father of the Ihi girls put them into his lap and the girls were sworn in that they will always do good things in their lives.

Girls were given the touch of the auspicious Vajra and sacred water was sprinkled on them from Shankha by Guruju - wishing them prosperity, happiness and health. Bali Puja and Naag Puja were also ritualized . Lord Ganesh was worshipped on the occasion.



Chaka Puja was also performed at eight different corners outside of the temple. Prayings were offered to all the Gods, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Dakinis. Dhau Sagun, egg and anchovy were offered to the Ihi girls at the end of the ceremony. Gwe Daan and presents were given away to

Ihi girls from the family and relatives.

About 25 people who were fully vaccinated against Covid-19 were present at the Ihi ceremony held at the Mahavihara.

Presented by Dr.Rabin Man Shakya, Edited By Kuon Hunt

