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Socio-Cultural Aspects of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal*

by Ramesh Chandra Tewari

I

Any observer of the contemporary Buddhist religious life in the Kathmandu valley is bound to be impressed by the religious fervour and activity of the Theravādin bhikkhus. One can see them going from one vihar to another, holding Pāli classes, preaching religious sermons, and going around the city raising donations for the construction of new vihars or for making additions and alterations in the existing ones. When they are not on the move they can be found busy in their vihars—relatively small and unpretentious in appearance but invariably clean and orderly—reciting sūtras, performing pūjā or busy in preparing booklets or editing magazines. In fact, at present they constitute the most busy and active group of religious people in Nepal. The prominent bhikkhus are endowed with the qualities of religious leadership and instill confidence among their followers. Many of them are learned and well versed in Pāli. It is a measure of their success and ability that they command respect from both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Apart from the bhikkhus, there are *anagarikas*, the Theravādin nuns, some of whom are as active as the bhikkhus. The *anagarikas* work mostly among the womenfolk. The religious involvement and busy life of these people makes one realise that the Theravāda has found a foothold in Nepal and is making its presence felt. It has all the traits of a religious movement and is on its way to develop certain characteristics which are not present in Theravāda elsewhere.

By placing the Theravāda movement in Nepal in a wider

perspective, this paper attempts to analyse its social and cultural dimensions. In the process, some of the latent features of the movement have also been highlighted. Obviously, the ideological and organisational dimensions have not been touched. The main thrust of the analysis relates to the sociological factors crucial for the development of the movement. The movement has also been seen as an expression of the cultural needs and urges of the people. The paper is based on a first-hand study made during visits to Nepal between 1978 and 1982. Much of the study is based on observations made in the course of fairly close and intimate association with Theravādin bhikkhus, *anagarikas* and the Buddhist laity. During the study contacts were also established with some leading bajracharyas, shakyas and other traditional Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley.

II

We can discern two different patterns behind the emergence, growth and establishment of any religious movement in a society. According to the first pattern a religious movement may germinate from within the society in which it later develops and flourishes. The interplay of various cultural and social forces creates an historical situation that demands complete overhauling or even outright rejection of the existing social, cultural and religious arrangements and requires a new orientation for the entire complex of values, norms and behaviour in a given society. Under such a situation, various responses, cultural and religious, spring forth from within the society. History is full of instances which follow this pattern. The rise of Buddhism and Jainism in India or the emergence of Protestantism in Europe provide examples of the religious movements of endogenetic variety, generated from within the given socio-cultural formation. Under the second pattern, social and cultural influences external to the given society operate to give rise to a religious movement. Although it is true that even in this case it is necessary that the historical situation within the society in question be receptive to such external influences, the key is that the inspiration has its source outside the system. A religion that expands beyond the confines of the country or the

society to which it owes its genesis and spreads to other lands and cultures falls under the second pattern. The great religions of the world—Buddhism, Christianity and Islam—owe their “greatness” to the fact that they followed this pattern when they spread far and wide in different societies and cultures.

When we look at the Theravāda movement from the point of view of its genesis and emergence in Nepal, *prima facie* it follows the second pattern, i.e., it is a religious movement that owes its origin to extrasystemic, as against intrasystemic, influences. It did not spring from the Nepalese society; its inspiration came from outside Nepal. The whole process began when, about fifty years ago, a few highly religious and adventurous Nepalese young men came in contact first with Burmese and later with the Ceylonese Theravādin bhikkhus who were working for the revival of Buddhism in India. Since then, constant and lively contacts with Theravāda in Ceylon and Burma and, of late, Thailand, have been crucial for the growth of the movement in Nepal. At the same time, it would be entirely wrong to conclude that the Nepalese Theravāda movement has been relying completely for its existence on extraneous inspiration and support. In spite of the fact that it appears a novel phenomenon in Nepal, it is not striking roots and spreading in a society in which Buddhism is unknown. It is entrenching itself in a society where Buddhism has existed in some form or other for many centuries, perhaps since the times of the Buddha. For Theravāda, the social and cultural climate is not wholly foreign and uncongenial in Nepal. It has not to till fresh grounds and break barren soil, but to recultivate the old soil. It strives to give a new and radical orientation to the existing form of Buddhism in that country.

What is remarkable about the movement is the fact that Theravāda has become a source of religious renewal or resurgence in a country that is the oldest seat of living Mahāyāna and has served as the nursery of Tantric Mahāyāna, or Vajrayāna, which over the centuries spread in the entire trans-Himalayan region and beyond.

At the very outset it should be made clear that Theravāda has not found its way into all the Buddhist communities in Nepal. It is restricted primarily to the Buddhist Newars. The Buddhist communities inhabiting the cis-Himalayan belt in Ne-

pal and practising the older forms of Tibetan Buddhism have so far remained unaffected by it.

The Theravāda movement in Nepal offers a unique area of study to students of Buddhism interested in its changing aspects. Although it cannot be claimed that Theravāda has entrenched itself deeply, there is no denying the fact that it has come to stay and cannot be ignored in Nepal. Its growth has not been spectacular, but slowly and steadily it is gaining ground, attracting adherents and drawing wider support and admiration. Its impact is felt by the entire Newar society, including the Hindu Newars. Its presence has proved beneficial even to the traditional Newar Buddhism, in the sense that some orthodox Buddhists—who have no intention of turning to Theravāda and who do not want to see it replace Vajrayāna—have been forced to reflect on their own beliefs and practices.

With one or two exceptions, scholars have largely ignored this movement.¹ The present paper tries to analyse some of the important social and cultural factors that have provided anchor to the movement in Nepal and have also been responsible for improvising and innovating certain religious practices within Theravāda tradition.

Unlike in India, the Theravādin movement in Nepal is not advancing through proselytisation. In India, following the inspiration and lead given by B. R. Ambedkar, most Theravādin adherents are new converts drawn from the Hindu scheduled castes, like Mahars in Maharashtra and Jatavas in Uttar Pradesh. But, as pointed out earlier, in Nepal Theravāda is not converting non-Buddhists. It is a movement which gets its strength and support overwhelmingly from those who are already Buddhists by tradition. It has assumed the role of giving novel and rational orientation to the established Buddhism. It aims to promote a renewed religious consciousness in a traditional Buddhist community. Hence, the role of Theravāda in Nepal cannot be appreciated properly without having some knowledge of the socio-cultural milieu in which it is embedded.

The Theravāda movement in Nepal in its entirety is the concern of Newars. It has been so right from its very inception. All the bhikkhus, *anagarikas* and *upasak-upasikas*, whether in the past or present, have been drawn from among the Newars. As we shall later discuss in some detail the social composition of

the Theravādins, it will suffice here to point out that it is predominantly a Newar phenomenon. Hence, it will not be out of place to give a very brief account of the social and cultural attributes of the Newars.

III

The Newars are one of the most important ethnic groups in Nepal. They are the oldest inhabitants of the oval shaped valley of Kathmandu, the heartland of Nepal. There are three main towns in the valley, viz. Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktpur. The city of Kathmandu is not only the capital of the Himalayan kingdom but is also the most important religious, cultural, educational and commercial centre of the country. The Newars constitute the majority in the valley, and they dominate trade, handicrafts, manufacture and agriculture there. They speak Newari, a monosyllabic language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family. The Newars are a race of mixed Indo-Mongolian origin.

Religiously, the Newars are a unique comingling of Hinduism and Buddhism. They are the earliest Buddhists of Nepal. In ancient times they were predominantly Buddhists. Later in history, under the influence of the immigrants from India, certain sections of the Newars were attracted to Hinduism. Anyone visiting the Kathmandu valley is struck by the remarkable tolerance and understanding between the Hindus and the Buddhists. Religious syncretism has become so much a part of the Newar way of life that in many cases it is quite difficult to distinguish between the followers of the two major religions. They have existed side by side for ages and one can find few instances of religious bigotry in the long history of their coexistence. However, this does not mean that both religions enjoy equal status and power in social and political spheres. For the last several centuries, particularly since the 13th century, Hinduism has been gaining ascendancy through state patronage and Buddhism has been waning and losing its vigour. The process of its decline started during the Malla regime. Although, unlike the later Gorkha rulers, Malla kings were themselves Newars they followed a systematic policy of Hinduisation

of the Newar society. This trend was most striking during the regime of Jayasthiti Malla, who for the first time promulgated a social code fixing the hierarchy of caste among the Newars on the model of *Manusmṛiti*; it is significant that the king was assisted by a group of Indian Brahmins in drafting the code. The Hindu ascendancy received a further fillip with the overthrow of the Mallas and with the advent of the Shah dynasty in the later half of the 18th century. The new dynasty was drawn from the Gorkha stock as distinct from the Newar. Unlike the heterodox Newars, the Gorkhas were exclusively Hindus. Nevertheless, for about three quarters of a century after the establishment of their rule the powerful but prudent Shah rulers followed a policy of accommodation and tolerance towards the Buddhist Newars. However, this policy received a jolt with the rise of the Ranas, a clan of warriors. The Ranas, who remained the *de facto* rulers of Nepal for over a century, relentlessly pursued a policy of vigorous Hinduisation. In order to promote their political power they implemented a rigid code of caste hierarchy.³ The social and political position of the Newars suffered a grave setback under the partisan rule of the despotic Ranas and it was only after the end of the Rana regime in 1951, followed by the establishment of democracy in Nepal, that a policy of liberalisation was instituted by the state and a more favourable atmosphere created for the Buddhists.

Traditional Newar Buddhism has two distinct features which set it apart from all other varieties of Buddhism. The first is the complete absence of bhikkhus, or Buddhist monks. Everywhere else, Buddhism is a religion pre-eminently associated with the bhikkhu Saṅgha, the monastic order. Normally, Buddhism without monks is unthinkable, but the traditional Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley does not have ascetic bhikkhus. Long ago, the institution of the homeless monk was replaced by the institution of hereditary Buddhist priests, known as Bajracharyas. The second distinguishing feature of Newar Buddhism is its rigid caste structure. This caste rigidity is, by and large, the result of prolonged domination by a Hinduism buttressed by the power of the state. As the social base of the Theravāda movement in Nepal is largely patterned by the caste system, it is necessary to have some idea of Newar caste structure.

Newars have about twenty-six major castes, each of which is further divided into sub-castes. Patterned on the lines of the caste structure obtaining in the Gangetic Plain of North India, the Newar castes are ranked according to their place in the ritual hierarchy, which is closely related to their position in the hereditary occupational structure. Despite the fact that there are certain Newar castes which are exclusively Hindu and others which are exclusively Buddhist, all non-Newar groups generally consider the Newars as belonging to a single ethnic group. Also, in the case of some Newar castes, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between Buddhists and Hindus. This explains why anthropologists and sociologists classify all Newar castes under a single scheme.⁴ One can distinguish between a Buddhist and a Hindu caste among Newars by finding out whether the particular caste traditionally utilises the services of *gubhajus* or *bajrācāryas*, the Buddhist priests, or of the *dev bhajus*, the brahmin priests—although there are certain Newars who get their domestic rites performed by *gubhajus* and *dev bhajus* both. This again underscores the liberal and syncretic traits so prominent among the Newars, who do not see any contradiction in following a dual set of rituals or employing two types of family priests.

Another important aspect of Newar social structure is the division of castes into two blocks, the *ju pi* and *ma ju pi*. The *ju pi* block consists of those castes from whom water can be taken by all the Newars, where the *ma ju pi* block includes castes from whom the *ju pi* block cannot accept water. The *ju pi* block includes more than ninety per cent of Newars. It is noteworthy that the division of castes into *ju pi* and *ma ju pi* groups applies both to Buddhist Newars, known as *Buddhamārgis* and the Hindu Newars, who are called *Śivamārgis*. Normally, Buddhists will neither uphold the distinctions of caste and birth nor discriminate among men on the basis of purity and impurity, but such is not the case with the Buddhists of the Kathmandu Valley. The Theravādins of Nepal do realise that if they are going to restore the rationalism and humanism they believe essential to the original Buddhist tradition, they will have to eradicate caste distinctions and end the social injustice meted out to the untouchable and impure castes for centuries. Under the circumstances, this will be difficult, for caste distinctions and discrimi-

nations are as real for the *Buddhamārgis* as they are for the *Śivamārgis*.

Being primarily concerned with *Buddhamārgis*, we need not go into the details of the entire Newar caste structure. As noted, although it is not easy to distinguish certain *Buddhamārgis* from *Śivamārgis*, a broad distinction can be made according to religious affiliation of the priests who are called to perform domestic rites. The *Buddhamārgi* castes can be broadly divided into four major groups—(1) the Gubhaju-Bare group, consisting of two sub-groups, viz. the Gubhajus or Bajrācāryas and Bares or Shakyas; (2) the Udas group, divided into seven main sub-groups; (3) the Jyapu group, consisting of eight or so sub-castes and (4) the residual group, in which groups or sub-groups other than those in the above three groups can be placed. Of these four groups the first two—the Gubhaju-Bare group and the Udas group—form the core of the *Buddhamārgi* Newars and, as we shall see later, it is from among these groups that most of the Theravādin bhikkhus have been drawn.

The Bajracharyas, who belong to the first group, are placed at the top of the intra-ethnic caste hierarchy among the *Buddhamārgi* Newars; they are the *purohīts* or family priests. Along with the Shakyas they have the right of hereditary membership of the *bahas* or viharas. The Shakyas, who are next to the Bajracharyas in the caste hierarchy, can also be called vihar priests. However, while the Bajracaryas' exclusive occupation is priesthood, the Shakyas follow the hereditary occupation of goldsmiths. The Udas group is composed of the castes of hereditary merchants and artisans. Some Udasas, like the Tuladhars, are among the most prosperous and wealthy people in Nepal, and used to have property interests in places like Lhasa, Darjeeling, Kalimpong and various other trade centres outside Nepal. They carried trade between Nepal and Tibet and between Nepal and India. Their trade links with Tibet were extensive. Their occupational obligations brought them into close contact with the people, religion and culture of Tibet. Being traditional Buddhists, the Udas merchants could gauge the depth and the hold of Tibetan Buddhism and could very well assess comparatively the plight of their own Newar brand of Buddhism. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the earliest adherents of Theravāda came from the Udas ranks, particularly from among the Tuladhars.

The third group of *Buddhamārgi* Newar castes is composed of the different sub-groups of Jyapus, or agriculturists, and is numerically the strongest. Although a section of the Jyapus exclusively professes Hinduism, particularly in Bhaktpur where they are in majority, most of them are Buddhists. However, many of them are truly heterodox, utilising the priestly services of both the *Gubhajas* and *dev bhajas*, visiting Buddhist vihars and Hindu temples with same devotion and celebrating both Buddhist and Hindu festivals with equal fervour. This section of the Jyapus is perhaps the best representative of religious syncretism in the Kathmandu Valley. Apart from the above mentioned main caste clusters, there are a few others who almost exclusively follow Buddhism. Among them, Manandhars are the most important. Other castes, like Chitrakars and Putuwars, can also be included in this group. As compared to the other three groups the numerical strength of this residual group is not very significant.

IV

The leading groups active in the Theravāda movement in Nepal have been constituted by the *Buddhamārgi* Newars. The social origins of the bhikkhus, *anagarikas* and other active section of the Theravādins unmistakably show that as compared to others some particular groups have become more involved in the movement. Firstly, let us take the bhikkhu Saṅgha. We find that most of the bhikkhus have been drawn from those caste groups of *Buddhamārgis* who in the face of all odds have been the bearers and upholders of Buddhist tradition and have been able to preserve it, in whatever form, through the centuries. It is significant that 38.4 per cent of the members of the Theravādin bhikkhu Saṅgha have been recruited from the Shakya ranks.⁵ The next largest number of bhikkhus (22.7 percent) have come from the Jyapu group. The third important caste category, from which 14 per cent of bhikkhus have been recruited, is the Udas group. The representation of the Bajracharya caste in the Bhikkhu Saṅgh is relatively low—only 7 per cent of the monks are from this priestly caste. It is also noteworthy that 7 per cent of the bhikkhus have come from the Shrestha caste, the most important and powerful caste of the

Sivamārgi, or Hindu Newars.⁶ There are also bhikkhus drawn from various other *Buddhamārgi* castes, like the Manandhars, Naus and Kumas.⁷ With certain minor variations, the social composition of the *anagarika* group follows the same pattern. As many as 42.6 per cent of the *anagarikas* have come from the Shakya families and the percentages of nuns drawn from the Udas, Jyapu, Manadhar and Bajracharya castes are 14.2, 12.6, 10.6 and 7.1, respectively.⁸

The above description of the social origins of the bhikkhu Saṅgha and of the *anagarika* order reveals that it is mainly from the three castes of the *Buddhamārgi* Newars—the Shakyas, the Udas and the Jyapus—that most of the Buddhist monks and nuns have been recruited. We have already noted that taken together these three castes constitute the bulk of the population of the *Buddhamārgi* Newars, their association with the Theravāda Buddhism shows that they perceive the potential of Theravāda for restoring the lost élan of Buddhism in the Valley. Nevertheless the differential participation of the three caste groups requires further analysis. Let us take the Shakyas first.

There are some solid reasons behind the preponderance of Shakyas in the Theravādin order. They occupy the place just next to the Bajracharyas in the caste-hierarchy. Along with the Bajracharyas, they have hereditary rights over the old vihars. Although they are not family priests like the Bajracharyas, they are the practitioners of Vajrayānic esoteric tantric rituals. It is not without significance that Shakyas are also known as Shakyabhikshus. This nomenclature indicates that in the *Buddhamārgi* tradition the Shakyas are accorded, at least symbolically, the status of bhikkhus. Perhaps it would be more apt to call them *grihastha-bhikkhus*. Moreover, the existence of the Buddhist initiation rite, *bare chuyegu* (which must be performed for every boy from the Bajracharya and Shakya families) further confirms the close traditional affinity of the Shakyas with the institution of the Buddhist ascetic order. The *bare chuyegu* rite confers the status of a bhikkhu on a boy for four days.⁹ It is also to be noted that Shakyas, like the Bajracharyas, inhabit the *bahas*, the Buddhist vihars. This provides further evidence of the historical association of the Shakyas with the Saṅgha. It has been found that the Bares, or the Shakyas, always want to be identified as true Buddhists, and are proud of their ritualistic

and symbolic status of a bhikkhu. In this context, it is also notable that even today, like bhikkhus, male Shakyas have their heads completely shaven. With their high status in the *Buddhamārgi* caste hierarchy, and with their ritualistic affinity to the Buddhist monk order, they are naturally the most suited to become real bhikkhus. For this, the opportunity is offered by the Theravāda movement. When a Shakya dons yellow robes and renounces the life of a householder he is readily given due social recognition by all sections of Newar society. Bearing all these facts in mind, it is no wonder that the Theravādin movement has recruited the largest number of bhikkhus from the Shakya ranks. By joining the Theravādin monastic order, the *de jure* bhikkhus, the Shakyabhikkhus, get an opportunity to attain the status of virtuoso ascetics, the true bhikkhus.

Another caste closely associated with the Theravāda movement is that of the Udasas. It is believed that the term Udas has been derived from the word *upasaka*, which denoted the Buddhist laity. It is also said that Udas are the descendants of that class of laity from which the Shakyabhikkhus were recruited in the past. There is no doubt that the Udas, along with the Bajracharyas and Shakyas, are exclusively *Buddhamārgins*, and there are reasons to believe that when the Shakyabhikkhus were real ascetics, the Udasas formed the elite among Buddhist householders.¹⁰ Being hereditary merchants, they were economically well-off. The Udas, many of whom are wealthy are among the best *jajmans*—the hereditary clients of the priests—of the *gubhajas*. Their generosity in spending large amounts for religious ceremonies is well known. In the past, they virtually monopolised the Tibet-Nepal trade. Their frequent visits and prolonged stays at Lhasa and other important trade centers in Tibet, the citadel of Vajrayāna, strengthened their devotion to Buddhism. Several Udas traders were so enamoured of Tibetan Buddhism that they went to the extent of renouncing the world and entering the Lamaist order.¹¹ Thus, it can be seen that with better economic and occupational status, along with their strong attachment to Buddhism, the Udasas occupy a key position in the community of the *Buddhamārgis*. Some of the early leaders of the Theravāda movement were drawn from this group and, as already noted, we find that a good number of the bhikkhus in present day Nepal are erstwhile Udasas.



The main contribution of the Udasas to the cause of Theravāda in Nepal lies in the economic support they lend. There are reasons to believe that without their timely and magnanimous support the movement would never have achieved much success.¹² Every religious movement has its economic aspect, and even Buddhism, known for its emphasis on asceticism and non-attachment, needs economic support from the laity or the masses for maintaining monks and nuns, for constructing viharas and for propagation of religion. As a developing movement, the Theravāda in Nepal needed support, social as well as economic, which was provided in full measure by the Udas group. However, it is not being suggested that only the Udasas provide economic support. All sections of the laity, even the poorest, contribute their mite. On any full moon day in front of the viharas in Kathmandu, Patan and elsewhere one can see numerous poor Jyapu women in tattered clothes standing in queues waiting for a chance to make their humble offerings of coarse rice to the bhikkhus and *anagarikas*. As successful religious movement must have wide moral and material support from the masses, but for its expansion, growth and sustenance, it needs some substantial material support. For the Theravāda movement in Nepal, such material support has come to a large extent from the highly religious and prosperous Udas families.

Another mainstay of the Theravāda movement has been the Jyapu group. The Jyapus, with their overwhelming numerical preponderance in the Kathmandu valley, occupy a very important place in Newar society. Theirs is a caste of peasants, known for their hard work. They constitute the bulk of the Newar masses. In the absence of their support, Theravāda would not have made any viable social impact. After all, every movement needs people, and unless the bulk of the population backs it directly or indirectly, it cannot make much headway. Jyapus are very enthusiastic in performing rituals and attending festivals. They turn up in good numbers whenever pūjās or other religious ceremonies are held in the Theravādin viharas. In several viharas, the overwhelming majority of the laity consists of Jyapus.¹³ Without their involvement, the Theravādin movement would have remained confined largely to urban Buddhist elite groups.

There are some other Newar castes whose support has

been of considerable value for the progress of the movement. Among them, Manandhars deserve mention. Although Manandhars are hereditary oil-pressers, by dint of their industriousness and resourcefulness many of them have made a mark in trade, and a few, after receiving higher education, have obtained important positions in administration and in other white-collar occupations. The Manandhar caste is known for its powerful *guthis*, organisations that control and regulate the social and religious life of their members. This has helped the members of this caste to acquire some sort of expertise in organisational affairs, and, compared to others, they seem better able to manage the affairs of social organisations. The organisational talents of Manandhars have been put to good use in running the various Theravādin religious and educational organisations, like Dayak Sabhas and Vihar Guthis.

The foregoing analysis makes it clear that Theravāda in the present day Nepal has found its social base in the traditional caste structure of the *Buddhamārgi* Newars. As true Buddhists, the bhikkhu leaders of the movement ideologically reject all caste distinctions, and many among them are sincere in their efforts to eradicate the evils of the caste system, which has struck deep roots in Newar society. But, they cannot wish it away. The very caste system they wish to abolish provides a solid base for the Theravāda, and that, too, without their asking. This may sound contradictory, but it cannot be helped. After all, man's life and social existence are full of contradictions, as Buddhists well know.

V

It is an important feature of Theravāda in Nepal that despite its declared rejection of the traditional Vajrayāna Buddhism of the Newars and despite its ultimate aim of completely reorienting Buddhism in Nepal on the Theravāda pattern obtaining in countries like Ceylon or Burma, it has never followed a policy of confrontation with the established form of Buddhism. The bhikkhus have carefully followed a positive policy of introducing beliefs and practices associated with Theravāda without hurting the feelings of the traditional Bajracharyas and

Shakyas who, in spite of their weakening religious power and authority, continue to have a hold over the deeply religious *Buddhamārgis*, and continue to practise their religious rituals and carry on their priestly functions.¹⁴ It is true that the bhikkhus lay emphasis on rational elements in Buddhism and tacitly disapprove of the elaborate ritualism of Vajrayāna. But, at the same time, they know very well that any confrontation with the Bajracharyas and Shakyas can prove counterproductive. Not only do the Theravādins avoid such confrontation; but they are prudent enough to make use of certain traits and practices associated with the traditional Buddhism of the Newars. From the orthodox Theravādin point of view, such compromises would be considered unwarranted deviations from the time-honoured pattern but, as the things stand in Nepal, they are unavoidable. Let us take a few instances which show how some of the practices and traits of traditional Buddhism have been fruitfully utilised and wisely exploited by the Theravādins.

As noted earlier, the Bajracharyas and Shakyas are required to be initiated into the Buddhist ascetic order for a brief period. Their initiation rite, *bare chuyegu*, confers the ritualistic status of bhikkhu upon the initiate. Sensing the potential and value of this ritual, the Theravādins took advantage of it by starting the practice of giving ordination for a limited period. Of course, this practice is not new to Theravāda, being in vogue elsewhere, particularly in Thailand, but what is significant in the case of Nepal is the relative ease with which it has been introduced. It is not seen as an alien practice by the Buddhist public. However, to be fair to the Theravādins, the practice of temporary ordination conforms entirely to the accepted ritualistic pattern of giving *pravajya*. Moreover, they give such ordination to anyone who desires it, without distinction of caste and status. This is quite at variance from the Newar Buddhist custom of limiting the right of symbolic ordination only to Bajracharyas and Shakyas, with the exclusion of all other Buddhist castes. Further, according to the Theravādin practice, the minimum period of ordination is seven days. This, if desired, may be extended to several months, whereas the old Newar custom limits the period to four days. Thus, the Theravādins have patterned the practice of temporary ordination on different lines. Nevertheless, what is significant is that the Theravādins

have succeeded in introducing their own pattern of temporary ordination primarily because an earlier form of such practice was already in existence in the Newar Buddhist tradition.

Another instance of use of the existing Buddhist tradition by the Theravādins is in the establishment of their vihars. As the rules of the Vinaya enjoin bhikkhus to reside in vihars, the Theravādin bhikkhus needed vihars for themselves. Although at present we find vihars being constructed with relative ease in Nepal, in the early stages of the movement Theravādins faced difficulties in founding them.¹⁵ Before the early bhikkhus, the pioneers of Theravāda in Nepal, raised their own vihars they resided in an ancient vihara, known as Kindola Vihara, which due to long neglect was in ramshackle condition.¹⁶ Situated in the vicinity of the great Swayambhu shrine, it was frequented by all sorts of itinerant ascetics, and particularly by Tibetan lamas, who often would stay in Kathmandu for a fairly long time. Later, the first Theravādin vihar was constructed on the slopes of the Swayambhu Hill.¹⁷ It has to be noted that although the first vihara, Anand Kuti Vihar, was built anew in the midst of woods, the choice of its location was largely influenced by its proximity to Swayambhunath, the oldest and most venerated Buddhist shrine in Nepal. Later, the bhikkhus gradually established other vihars in Kathmandu, Patan and elsewhere, and we find that a good number of vihars have been built either within the precincts of the ancient Vajrayāna vihars or are located so close to them that it is not easy to demarcate their respective boundaries.¹⁸

There are two main factors which have prompted the bhikkhus to establish their vihars in the vicinity of the old ones. Firstly, they were sure to attract the *Buddhamārgi* laity who traditionally visit the old Vajrayāna vihars for worship. Had they built their vihars far away from the old shrines, they might not have succeeded in finding a following. This was more true in the early stages of establishment of Theravāda in Nepal.¹⁹ Secondly, when the bhikkhus mooted the idea of establishing vihars near the vicinity of old but almost neglected vihars they received enthusiastic support from the *Buddhamārgi* people. The Buddhist public was very much pleased with the idea that their dilapidated and decaying vihars and neglected shrines were going to be resurrected and inhabited by the dedicated

bhikkhus. It is also possible that the conscious or unconscious attachment of the bhikkhus to their ancient Buddhist tradition and their longing to restore the glory of Buddhism may have prompted them to choose the old sites for their new viharas. However, the tendency to build their viharas in the vicinity of old ones was more pronounced in the early days of Theravāda in Nepal. Of late, the bhikkhus have started constructing viharas in new locations, away from the old viharas. This could happen only after the Theravāda gained a foothold in Nepal.

During the course of their work among the Buddhist masses, the Theravādin bhikkhus found that certain old Newar religious practices and customs could prove very helpful to them and, consequently, they adopted them with slight modifications. One such customary practice is known as *gunla dharma*. It is the name given to a complex of rituals, worship and ceremonies held for one full month, sometimes during July-August. Although *gunla dharma* is considered important by all Newars, it has special significance for *Buddhamārgis* like Shakyas, Udas and Manandhars.²⁰ For them, the period of *gunla dharma* is the period of the general worship of shrines and Buddhist deities. The most important part of the elaborate rituals is the worship of *caityas*. Every day, devotees make a large number of miniature clay *caityas*, and at the end of the month the number of *caityas* made by a family may surpass a hundred thousand. On the last day of the month, after the performance of *havan*, all the miniature *caityas* are immersed in the river. Throughout the month, Buddhist devotees visit viharas, particularly the Swayambhunath shrine. Generous offerings are made to Bajracharyas and Shakyas. The Theravādin bhikkhus were well aware of the place and importance of *gunla dharma* in Newar Buddhism. Assessing its potential, they wisely adopted and moulded it according to their needs. They introduced the convention of holding special sessions of preaching, pūjās and sūtra recitations during the whole month of the *gunla dharma*. Narrations of Jataka stories were also popularised. The Newars were impressed by this new style of celebrating *gunla*, and the bhikkhus, anagarikas and their viharas began receiving liberal support, both moral and material, from the laity. Thus, it can be seen how a customary religious practice of the Vajrayāna Buddhism in Nepal has been adopted to their advantage by the Theravādins.

The Theravādins have not considered it improper to take advantage of the Nepalese love of music. *Kirtans* and *bhajans*, religious group singing, are old traditions at the religious shrines in Nepal. Even today, in the celebrated ancient viharas and shrines of Kathmandu and Patan, the *chacho* songs—the esoteric songs composed by the great Bauddha *siddhācāryas*—are regularly sung by the Bajracharyas and the Shakyas. One can find a large number of *kirtan* and *bhajan mandlees*, groups of amateur musicians, in the towns of the valley, holding regular evening sessions of mass singing in the temples and viharas. In the early stages of the Theravādin movement, when the bhikkhus were struggling to find ways and means to gain public support, they realised the importance of devotional music and, consequently, promoted their own musical groups, known as *jñanamala khals*. The senior bhikkhus themselves composed songs for mass singing, and their musical compositions quickly became popular.²¹ It is worth recalling that the Theravāda tradition prescribes that entertainment and merriments like dance and music are to be strictly avoided and discouraged but, in the present case, we find the Theravādins themselves giving encouragement to music, of course of the devotional type, and utilising it for the propagation of the Dharma. The bhikkhus themselves admit that to promote music is a sort of deviation from the established norms, but they point out that without making such adjustments with the tradition it would have been almost impossible to attain any degree of success in their mission.

As the Theravāda movement in Nepal was faced with the problem of entrenching itself in an environment entirely created by the old Vajrayāna tradition, it was natural that it adjust itself to the requirements of the situation. In the process it made some compromises which to the Theravādin orthodoxy would appear as deviations from its own tradition. To take an example, the bhikkhus started going to the old *caityas* for worship. Students of Vajrayāna know that the old *caityas* of Nepal contain the images of *Pañcabuddhas*, sometimes known as *Dhyānibuddhas*: these are omnipresent in Kathmandu valley. The concept of *Pañcabuddhas* is foreign to Theravāda, yet the worship of old *caityas* by the bhikkhus implied the worship of the *Pañcabuddhas*. The situation posed a dilemma for them. They neither wanted to give up the worship of the *caityas* be-

cause it paid dividends to them in the form of the growing number of their followers, nor were they ready to admit that they had compromised their position as Theravādins by worshipping the *Pañcabuddhas*. But pragmatists that they are, the Theravādins gave a ready and plausible explanation. They said that they were not propitiating the *Pañcabuddhas* known in the Mahāyāna tradition but were, as a matter of fact, worshipping images of the historical Buddha in his different mudrās, or postures. Thus, according to their explanation, Akṣobhya, one of the five *Pañcabuddhas*, was the Buddha in *bhūmiśparśamudrā*. Similarly, Amoghsiddhi was seen to represent the Buddha in *abhāya-mudra* and Amitabha was none else than the Buddha in *dhyānamudrā*, and so on. The Theravādins claimed that they were not concerned with the Mahāyānist pantheon, but with the Buddha, his qualities and his precepts. Notwithstanding these explanations, there is no denying the fact that the bhikkhus found it convenient to worship Mahāyānist *caityas*.

Another such adjustment by the Theravādins is to be found in the existing arrangements relating to the use of the old Buddhist vihars—which, being neglected, were fast turning into historical ruins—renovated by the bhikkhus. As the tradition has it, the Bajracharyas and Shakyas have exclusive hereditary right of ownership and possession of the old vihars, where they are expected to perform their priestly and ritualistic functions. The bhikkhus could not use even the forlorn or dilapidated vihars without the consent of their rightful owners. The Bajracharyas and Shakyas having rights over the vihars allowed the bhikkhus to repair them for use on certain conditions. Without foresaking their general rights over the vihars, they reserved the right to worship in the old shrines situated within the vihars and, what is most important, retained exclusive rights to receive the entire donations and offerings from the laity at these shrines. The bhikkhus could worship at these shrines, but could claim no right over the offerings. However, all such offerings that were given directly to them or which were not offered at the old shrines were to be taken by the bhikkhus. In this way, workable agreements over the use of some of the ancient vihars were forged between the bhikkhus and the traditional Buddhist priests. There is no doubt that such adjustments have not only proved beneficial to both par-

ties, but have also been highly appreciated by the Buddhist laity, who find that such understanding promotes the cause of Buddhism in general.²² Perhaps no better proof of the co-existence of Theravāda and Vajrayāna in Nepal can be given. After all, if Hinduism and Buddhism can exist in close cooperation for centuries, why cannot two schools of Buddhism?

It is evident that in the process of development, the Theravāda movement in Nepal has striven to steer a course of its own. It was incumbent upon the bhikkhus, the leaders and activists of the movement, to judge the whole situation, thrash out their own strategy and explore new methods and improvise the existing ones to achieve their central aim of establishing Theravāda in Nepal. As the followers of the Buddha, who was known for his *upāya-kauśalya*, or expedient skillfulness in the propagation of Dharma, the Nepalese Theravādins have been pragmatic enough to assess the situation and devise ways and means to achieve their end. Being drawn from the traditional Buddhist ranks they were well aware of the complexities of the situation. They had to be prudent and cautious. They avoided confrontation with the traditional Buddhists as also with the ruling elite and the establishment. As true products of the Newar culture they have always been accommodating, tolerant and resilient. As the movement forges ahead in Nepal, it is possible that a new version of Theravāda may emerge in the Himalayan kingdom, bearing a deep imprint of the rich Newar culture.

VI

Religious movements originate, develop and take shape not in a vacuum but in a given social and cultural context. Every movement must have the capacity to stir individuals and groups, and to catch their imagination by answering their felt needs and promising to fulfill their cultural aspirations. Unless it comes to represent the aspirations of the people in a society and unless it conjures a vision of a better alternative to the existing situation, a religious movement cannot sustain itself anywhere. It quite often offers the vision as well as the method which enables a given social group to reinterpret and restructure its cultural identity. The Theravādin movement in Nepal

is no exception: it has arisen and developed in a given social and cultural milieu, and this milieu provides not only the ground where a movement germinates and strikes its roots but also the framework within which it has to operate and grow. Theravāda in Nepal has to be seen in this perspective. In the foregoing sections of this paper, we have already made an attempt to delineate important linkages of the movement with the Newar social structure and also with traditional Vajrayāna Buddhism. But, the analysis of the social and cultural forces shaping the movement will remain incomplete and inconclusive unless we place it within the framework provided by the historical processes of social and cultural change.

The Theravāda movement in Nepal can be viewed as a product of a particular historical situation. Despite the fact that it primarily involves the Newar people it has also to be seen in the larger social and political context in which various ethnic groups, including the Newars, have been mingling, interacting and influencing each other for centuries. Let us sketch briefly the historical and cultural situation which is relevant to the present discussion.

The Newar culture is known for its richness and refinement. In the course of its known history of more than two millennia, the Newar genius developed and nurtured a distinct civilization. The earliest form of Newar civilization is said to have existed around the 6th century B.C.²³ Through the centuries, this civilization acquired depth, variety, aesthetic elegance and splendour, and in the process, the religions, Buddhism and Hinduism both, provided the necessary impetus for its achievement. The earlier inspiration was derived from Buddhism. The Newars are perhaps the earliest Buddhists in Nepal. Until the appearance of Hinduism, they were exclusively Buddhists.²⁴ Shifts in political power tilted the balance in favour of Hinduism, and evidently its ascendancy did not prove conducive even to the normal sustenance of Buddhism in its older form.

With the passage of time, Newar society, culture and religion underwent far-reaching changes, both in content and form. A process of decline set in. Although Newar civilization in general received a setback, it was the Newar variety of Buddhism that faced the greatest difficulty. The ruling elite pur-

sued a policy aimed at the integration of the Newar society, along with the integration of other ethnic groups, into the larger, homogeneously constituted Nepalese society. The model for such an integration was provided by the Brahmanical culture, and caste was its basic organising principle. But, one of the most remarkable features of the policy of unification of various ethnic and autochthonous groups has been its avoidance of oppression. Integration was to be achieved not by oppression but by cultural subordination.²⁵ This policy of cultural subordination was pursued with extreme vigour and almost with vengeance during the regime of the Ranas. Under the provisions of the *Mulki Ain*, the legal code, enacted by the founder of the Rana regime, the conversion of Hindus to other religions was prohibited but, to the great disadvantage of the *Buddhamārgi* Newars and other Buddhist groups, the conversion of Buddhists to Hinduism was allowed. The Ranas, in the relentless attempt to perpetuate their political power through the policy of unification by subordination, went farther still, and placed administrative restrictions on the cultivation of Newar language and literature.²⁶ Thus, Newar culture and Newar Buddhism both were being subjugated, gradually but systematically.

No ethnic group or society likes cultural subjugation, the less so in a community with a heritage as rich as the Newars'. During the oppressive Rana rule, the Newars became increasingly conscious of their social and political subjugation and cultural emaciation. There were ethnic groups other than the Newars that were subjugated, but the odds were heavier against the Newars, particularly against the Buddhists. However, under the influence of rapid and far reaching social, political and cultural changes taking place in India, signs of restiveness began to surface up in various sections of Nepalese society, including the Newars. As there was no freedom of association in Nepal, any attempt to protest was curbed brutally. But, as often happens under oppressive regimes, the voices of dissent normally appear not in political form, but in cultural or religious spheres, and this happened in Nepal, also. During the last phase of Rana rule, efforts were made to organise social and religious reform movements, chiefly by caste Hindus belonging to social groups other than the Newars.²⁷ Though it was far

more difficult for the Buddhist Newars to organise such movements, a few among them, particularly some Buddhist monks, were the first to give expression to their deep sense of deprivation and frustration.²⁸

It is worth recalling that the first Buddhist monks of Nepal to work openly for the renewal of Buddhism and to face exile at the hands of the Ranas were not Theravādins but the Lamaist monks who, after coming under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, had been ordained by rajas from Tibet, and who came to Nepal and stayed for a considerable period. Later, some of the exiled Nepalese Lamaist monks and a few other Newar Buddhists came into contact with Burmese and Ceylonese bhikkhus who were working for the revival of Buddhism in India. It was this contact that ushered in the Theravāda movement in Nepal. With this, the initiative for inspiring and guiding these young Newars—who for personal and social reasons toyed with the idea of becoming Buddhist monks—came into the hands of Theravādin bhikkhus living in India. Among these bhikkhus the most outstanding was the famous Burmese bhikkhu Chandramani Mahathero of Kushinagar who, almost single-handedly, took upon himself the task of giving inspiration, help and guidance to the young Theravāda converts from Nepal. Under his guidance, Nepalese bhikkhus went to Burma and Ceylon for education and religious training. After the completion of their studies, they returned to Nepal and worked for the propagation of Theravāda.

In the initial stages, the people tended to ignore the new yellow-robed bhikkhus, who faced various hardships, but carried on their work undauntedly. While propagating Buddhism in rational terms, something relatively new for the traditional Buddhists, they also emphasized that Buddhism had lost its élan and vitality in Nepal, and called upon the Buddhists to restore its lost vitality. This evoked favourable response, and gradually people began to shed their initial reluctance and turned sympathetic towards the Theravādins. We find that the bhikkhus partly adopted a cultural approach in promoting Theravāda. They pointed out that the decline of Buddhism has proved detrimental to Newar culture, drawing people's attention to the fact that with the withering of Buddhism, the Newar heritage, preserved in ancient viharas and contained in shrines

scattered all over Kathmandu valley and elsewhere, was facing extinction. They cogently argued that the decimation of Buddhism and the neglect and impoverishment of the Newari language and literature were different manifestations of the general decline of Newar culture. Such an approach was in accord with the general sentiments of the *Buddhamārgi* population.

As the Theravādin movement increasingly appeared to the people as an expression of their cultural aspirations, they became more inclined to support it. The Theravādins gradually came to represent and lead the Newar cultural resurgence. This resurgence has its own distinctive features. It is marked by unobtrusiveness and tolerance. Under the prevailing conditions, the Theravādins were probably best suited to give it an expression in their own way.

In this context perhaps one of the most important contributions made by the Theravādins relates to *Nepal Bhasha*, the Newari language.²⁹ From the very beginning, the Theravādins used Newari as their chief medium of communication. There is nothing surprising about this, because the bhikkhus and their *upasakas* both were Newars. The importance lies in their extensive use of *Nepal Bhasha*, or Newari, in the written or printed form. Prior to their arrival, publication work in Newari was very limited. Faced with the problem of introducing Theravāda Buddhism to people who were strangers to it, the bhikkhus started publications in Newari. Almost every learned bhikkhu published something in *Nepal Bhasha*. Their publications are mostly translations of sūtras and other canonical literature in Pāli. The translations of Jataka stories also became popular. A few novels and plays have also been written by them. The Theravādins also started regular publication of periodicals and newsletters. By the end of 1981 they had brought out more than 400 publications, about ninety per cent in *Nepal Bhasha*.³⁰

Here, it must be noted that a fair number of publications in *Nepal Bhasha* have been brought out by non-bhikkhus. The modernistic trend of writing and publishing in the *Bhasha* was pioneered by a few persons dedicated to the cause of the advancement of their language. The adoption of Devanagari script and the use of printing facilities was started by them in the early decades of this century. In this context, it is also significant that almost all the pioneers of the modernistic trend in

Newari were staunch Buddhists and some of them, in the company of the Buddhist monks, had faced the wrath of the Ranas.³¹ Nevertheless, the contribution of the Theravādins in the field of *Nepal Bhasha* is most substantial and impressive, and they can rightfully take credit for salvaging the language from the morass in which it was placed.

Thus, it can be seen that the Theravāda movement has developed in an historical situation marked by the growing awareness among Newars of the need for cultural rejuvenation, if not renaissance, in their society. The movement has been successful, in so far as it has activated languishing cultural forces and given a expression to the religious urges of the Newars. The movement has become an inseparable part of the wider process of the Newar resurgence. There is no denying the fact that though it is thoroughly religious in character, and it has come to play an important role in the cultural life of contemporary Nepal. With its deep anchorage in Newar culture and society, it is on its way to developing its own variety of Theravāda. One cannot predict the future, but present trends clearly indicate that the Theravāda movement will continue to perform its function of channelising the religious and cultural aspirations of Newars in general and the *Buddhamārgi* Newars in particular.

NOTES

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Thera, Ven. Bhikkhu Sudarshan and Anagarika Dhammawati. I must also record my thanks to eminent scholars like Shri Hemraj Shakya and Shri Dhanbajra Bajracharya and leading *upasaks* like Shri Tirthanarayan Manandhar.

1. The most notable exception is the contribution of Ria Kloppenborg of Utrecht, who has published a paper primarily relating to the historical development of the movement. See, Ria Kloppenborg, "Theravada Buddhism in Nepal," *Kailash*, Vol. V, No. 4, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1977.

2. Some important studies on Newars are: G.S. Nepali, *The Newars*, United Asia, Bombay, 1965; Colin Rosser, "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System," in *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon*, C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, (Ed.), Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966; S. Greenwold, "Monkhood vs. Priesthood in Newar Buddhism," in *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf (ed.), Aris and Phillips, Warminster, 1974. See also *Himalayan Anthropology*, edited by James F. Fisher, Mouton, The Hague, 1978.

3. See *Surendra Vikrama Shah Dev Ka Shashan Kalma Banayeko Mulki Ain*, Kanun Tatha Nyaya Mantralaya, Kathmandu, 1965.

4. See Nepali, *op.cit.* p. 150. See also Rosser, *op.cit.* pp. 85-89.

5. The total strength of the Nepal Bhikkhu Sangh is about 60. The 82 year-old Bhikkhu Prajnanand Mahathera, who entered the Theravādin order 52 years back, is the present *Saṅghanayak*. Other senior *Mahasthavirs* of the Saṅgha are Bhikkhu Shakyanand, Bhikkhu Aniruddha, Bhikkhu Amritanand, Bhikkhu Subodhanand, Bhikkhu Buddhaghosh, Bhikkhu Mahanam and Bhikkhu Prajnarashmi.

6. It is worth recalling that the first Theravādin monk in Nepal was the late Bhikkhu Mahaprajna Thera, who was a Hindu Newar by birth, belonging to the Shreshtha caste.

7. There are two bhikkhus who are not Newars. One of them was a Brahmin prior to his ordination, and the other belongs to the Tamang tribe, which follows Tibetan Buddhism.

8. There are about 65 *anagarikas* in Nepal. As noted in the case of the bhikkhus, there are a few *anagarikas* from the *Śivamārgi* section of Newars. We find that 7.1 per cent of the *anagarikas* have come from Hindu Shreshtha families. Further, as with the bhikkhu Saṅgha, there is also a nominal representation of the Brahmin caste and the Tamang tribe in the *anagarika* order.

9. For details regarding the *Bare Chuyegu* rite, see, John K. Locke, "Newar Buddhist Initiation Rites," *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1975. See also Stephen M. Greenwold, *op.cit.*

10. See, Nepali, *op.cit.*, p. 162.

11. It may be recalled that the present head of the Nepal Bhikkhu Sangh, Saṅghanayak Bhikkhu Prajnanand Mahathera, was born in an Udas family. Prior to his ordination as a Theravādin monk was a red-robed lama. He had entered the Tibetan monastic order at Lhasa in 1928.

12. Senior bhikkhus of Nepal often recall the timely and substantial help given by the Udas *upasakas* to them after their expulsion from the country by the Rana rulers in the forties. Wealthy "Kothiwal Sahus" or "Lhasa Sahus"

like Bhaju Ratna Sahu or Mani Harsh Jyoti were always willing to help bhikkhus in distress. Also see Bhikkhu Dhammaloka Mahasthavir, *Mahacheen Yatra*, Dharmodaya Sabha, Lumbini, 1974, pp. 201–203.

13. For instance, in Banepa, an important centre located fifty-two kilometers from Kathmandu, more than ninety percent of *upasakas* and *upasikas* in the Theravādin viharas are Jyapus. Incidentally, it is interesting that a large number of them are traditional Hindus attracted to Buddhism.

14. It has been observed that the Theravādin bhikkhus have maintained good relations with the traditional Bajracharyas and Shakyas, and that no traces of rancour are noticeable between them. The Bajracharyas and the Shakyas, on their part, pay due respect to the bhikkhus. Some of the most orthodox Bajracharyas are known to have performed major *bhikshu-dan* on certain occasions.

15. There are more than 40 Theravādin viharas in Nepal at present. Of these, 27 are full fledged viharas. Apart from the viharas, there are no less than a dozen nunneries of which two or three are very well established.

16. See, Bhikshu Dhammaloka Mahasthavira, *op.cit.*, pp. 184–186 and 191–193. See also, R.B. Vandya, *Sanghanayak Prajnand Mahasthavira*, Published by Chandradevi Ratnadevi Shakya, Pyukha, Kathmandu, 1978, p. 13 and pp. 23–27.

17. See, Bhikkhu Amritanand Thera, *A Short History of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal*, Anandkuti Vihar Trust, Syambhu Hill, Kathmandu, 1982, pp. 7 and 8. See also, Dhammaloka Mahasthavira, *op. cit.*, p. 192-199.

18. Such established and reputed Theravādin viharas, like the Gana Mahavihara, Shrigaha Vihar and Dharmakirti Vihar in Kathmandu, the Suman-gala Vihar and Manimandap Vihar in Patan or Samnkrit Vihar in Bhaktpur, are all located in the compounds of old *bahas* or viharas.

19. For example, when Bhikshu Amritanand Mahathera, at present the most important leader of Theravāda movement and known for his scholarship, foresight and demaneour, started his month long recitation of *Vessantara Jataka* for the first time in Nepal, he located himself at a spot near the Swayambhunath shrine, where Buddhist devotees used to come for worship in large numbers during July-August. See Bhikkhu Dhammaloka Mahasthavira, *op.cit.*, pp. 193 and 194.

20. See Nepali, *op.cit.*, pp. 398–400.

21. The oldest devotional musical society formed under the patronage of the bhikkhus is the *Swayambhoo Juanamala Khal*, which for the last four decades regularly has held its mass singing sessions in the compound of the Swayambhu Shrine.

22. Instances of such arrangements can be seen in the case of viharas like the Gana Mahavihara in Kathmandu, the Sumangal Vihar in Patan or the Samkrit Vihar in Bhaktpur.

23. Dor Bahadur Fishta, *The People of Nepal*, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1972, p. 17.

24. Dor Bahadur Bishta, *Sabe Jat Ko Phulwari*, Sajha Prakashan, Kathmandu, 2nd Edition, 1976, p. 10.

25. Andras Hoffer, *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal*, Universitatsverlag Wagner, Innsbruck, 1979, p. 208.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Nepal Parichaya*, Tribhuvan University Publication, Kirtipur, 1976, pp. 230–232.

28. In this context, it is worth recording that one of the pioneers among Buddhist Newars working for the cause of Buddhism was Dharmaditya Dharmacharya. Although he was not a Buddhist monk, he fully devoted his energies to the task of rejuvenating Buddhism in Nepal. He established a few Buddhist organisations, the first as early as 1925.

29. As distinct from Nepali, *Nepal Bhasha* is the language of Newars. Nepali is the national language of Nepal.

30. See Bhikshu Sudarshana, *Buddha, Buddha Dharma Sambandhi Granth Soochi*, Gana Mshavihar, Kathmandu, 1975. A supplementary list was prepared by the same author in 1981, but it has not been published.

31. Among such pioneers, the name of Dharmaditya Dharmacharya has already been mentioned. In 1925, he launched the first journal in *Nepal Bhasha*, known as *Buddha Dharma Wa Nepal Bhasha*. The contribution made by the late Chittadhar "Hridaya" for the resurrection and development of *Nepal Bhasha* is by far the most significant. He was not only the foremost poet and literary figure of Newari, but also dedicated his entire life and property to the cause of the language. It is notable that he was arrested along with others in 1931 for actively helping the Buddhist monks.