CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. Hodgson's Blind Alley? On the So-called Schools of Nepalese Buddhism by David N. Gellner 7
2. Truth, Contradiction and Harmony in Medieval Japan: Emperor Hanazono (1297–1348) and Buddhism by Andrew Goble 21
3. The Categories of Ti, Hsiang, and Yung: Evidence that Paramārtha Composed the Awakening of Faith by William H. Grosnick 65
4. Asaṅga's Understanding of Mādhyamika: Notes on the Shung-chung-lun by John P. Keenan 93
5. Mahāyāna Vratas in Newar Buddhism by Todd L. Lewis 109
6. The Kathāvatthu Niyama Debates by James P. McDermott 139

II. SHORT PAPERS

1. A Verse from the Bhadracarīṭprāṇidhāna in a 10th Century Inscription found at Nālandā by Gregory Schopen 149
2. A Note on the Opening Formula of Buddhist Sūtras by Jonathan A. Silk 158

III. BOOK REVIEWS

1. Die Frau im frühen Buddhismus, by Renata Pitzer-Reyl (Vijitha Rajapakse) 165
2. Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogacāra Philosophy by Lambert Schmithausen (Paul J. Griffiths) 170

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 178
Mahāyāna Vratas in Newar Buddhism

by Todd T. Lewis

This study is concerned with the Mahāyāna vrata, a particular type of devotional ritual that is still performed in the Newar Buddhist community of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Part I briefly traces the vrata's Indic origins and history, introduces the Nepalese context, then outlines the most popular contemporary Newar observances. In Part II are case studies of vrata dedicated to Mahākāla and Tārā; a preliminary understanding of Mahāyāna vrata is developed both ethnographically and through translations from modern printed texts.

This article explores the role of ritual in this Buddhist community of Nepal. Although the Newar tradition represents a unique yet continuing survival of later Indian Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism, it has received scant attention to date by scholars. This article is intended to begin the documentation and description necessary for an emerging and important field within Buddhist studies.

I. Background and Context

The term vrata dates back to Vedic times, where it has the meanings "will" and "law" (Monier-Williams 1899:1042; Kane 1974:5). In ancient India, the vrata was apparently an obligatory ritual prescribed for high caste individuals to atone for different misdeeds. By the time the Purāṇas were composed, it also referred to a religious vow or a voluntary ritual practice designed to please a particular deity. In these texts, and in the popular tracts produced by medieval Indian commentators (niбан­dhakaras), vrata dedicated to a divinity were highly elaborated,
occupying substantial portions of popular religious literature (Wadley 1983:148). Brāhman-led vratas are still an important part of modern Hinduism (Babb 1978) and are performed throughout the Indian sub-continent, including modern Nepal.

Vratas are one example of the many Indian religious practices that have been adapted into later Mahāyāna Buddhism. That vratas date back many centuries in the Newar tradition is attested to by the antiquity of manuscripts describing the proper forms of observance (Malla 1981). This genre of printed ritual text remains one of the most common in modern Kathmandu.

The stories recounted in these texts (vratākathā) provide important source materials for understanding Newar Buddhism and the layman’s religious ethos characteristic of later Indian Buddhism. Because they are one of the simplest and most common genres of doctrinal explication, the vratākathā provide a focus of study that simplifies the often bewildering multiplicity of the Newar Buddhist tradition. Simply stated, vratākathā join the avadāna and jātaka texts as source materials that show what form Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhism takes on the popular level.

Newar Civilization
The fertility of valley soils, the riches from trans-Himalayan trade, and relative geographical isolation all endowed the Kathmandu Valley (until 1769, the defining area of all “Nepāl”) with the ability to support a rich, artistic, and predominantly Indicized civilization. Many ancient Indian traditions endure in the distinctive urban society and culture of the Newars. In one of the most complex civilizations in Asia today, both Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions are observed in rich multiplicity.

Caste defines the social order and dominates socio-cultural discourse, with Hindu or Buddhist identity a boundary marker at the highest levels. The former city-states of the Valley—Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu—all evolved in parallel form according to the catuṛvarṇa model (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Śūdra), though differing in details of caste nomenclature.

The Newar Buddhist community consists entirely of householders (Locke 1986). The priestly elite, an endogamous caste of vajrācāryas, has for centuries married, though they still inhabit
dwellings referred to as vihāra (New. bāhā). Like married Tibetan lamas of the Nyingmapa order, they serve the community's ritual needs, with some among them specializing in textual study, medicine, astrology, and meditation. The spiritual elite still passes on vajrayāna initiations (Skt. abhiṣeka; New. dekka) through guru-chela ("teacher-disciple") lineages.

All born as vajrācāryas should take formal initiations that establish their caste and ritual status, empowering each man to be eligible to perform basic rituals for laymen (Gellner 1988). The traditional line of this abhiṣeka is in the main vihāra (mū bāhā) of the father's lineage. If a vajrācārya wants to perform special rituals for clients, however, he must seek further instruction. This, too, is often found in his bāhā, although connections with "outside" vajrācārya specialists have been common. Today, a school exists in Kathmandu for teaching young vajrācārya men in these and other priestly subjects.

The Newar Buddhist tradition is formally two-tiered, with access to ritual initiations an indexical determinant. At the top are those who take esoteric vajrayāna initiations (Skt.: dikṣā; New.: dekka) that direct meditation and ritual to tantric deities such as Śaṃvara, Hevajra, and their consorts (yoginis). In modern practice, only the highest castes—Vajrācārya, Śākya, and Uray—and select artisans (Chitrakārs) are eligible for admission into this elite realm. The Vajrayāna Masters who pass on the dikṣā go on meditative retreats (New.: purusān cvanegu) to acquire their powers and insight (Lewis 1984: 446). Only about 15 percent of Newar Buddhists today can claim these initiation rights and only a small minority of them actually take dikṣā.

Most Newar Buddhists participate in the exoteric level of Mahāyāna devotionalism. They direct their devotions to caityas (especially the great stūpas such as Svayambhū) and make regular offerings at temples dedicated to the celestial Bodhisattvas (such as Avalokiteśvara) and Buddhist savioresses (such as Tārā). They also support the local vajrācārya saṃgha that helps them, in return, look after their spiritual destiny in this world and beyond. This exchange between laymen and the saṃgha—with ritual protection and merit accumulation gained in return for material patronage—is fundamental to all Buddhist societies. Indeed, despite the anomalies of caste and saṃgha in their community, Newar Buddhist laymen closely resemble co-religionists in other
countries. A vast and complex web of ritual relations link laymen to their vajračārya priests.

As was common throughout Asia, local merchants are prominent among Buddhist laymen. Eligible for dekka, the Urāy and Śākyas have been the major patrons of Buddhist shrines across the Kathmandu Valley and most active in performing special devotions. For them, the vratas are especially popular. Merchants also make the most conspicuous donations, such as those that paid for the publication of the ritual guidebooks presented in Part II.

**Newar Vratas: Overview:**

Vratas are special forms of priest-led, lay-sponsored worship that focus devotional attention on an individual deity. Groups of individuals devote one or more days to making offerings, while maintaining a high state of ritual purity and abstaining from certain foods. Tradition specifies a series of boons for each type of vṛata and all are supposed to add appreciably to one's stock of punya. By so doing, the vratas here, as in India (Wadley 1983), are performed to improve the devotee's destiny.

In the Buddhist vratas, there is a standard structural order: led by a vajračārya priest (who is often aided by several vajračārya assistants), laymen worship a guru-maṇḍala that includes all major deities of the Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmos. They then participate in a kalaśa pūjā to the special vṛata deity, take refuge in the trivatna-maṇḍalas (Buddha, Dharma, Samgha), and finally make offerings to the vṛata deity, again on a maṇḍala. Most texts specify that the vajračārya should explain the maṇḍala symbolism(s) and tell the story (kathā) (or stories) associated with the particular vṛata. As the latter is done, all participants hold a special thread (New. bartakā; Skt. vratasūtra) unwound from the kalaśa. This symbolic act links the deity to each individual and binds the circle of devotees in worship. Broken up and tied around the neck, this thread is a special prasād laymen take away from all vṛata ceremonies.

According to a recent Newar pūjā manual, there are texts specifying vratas for every deity in the Indic pantheon and for every special religious occasion (Vajracarya 1981: 135). We now survey the most important vratas still observed by Mahāyāna Buddhists in modern Nepal.
Dhalaṃ Danegu or Aṣṭamī Vrata

By far the most popular of the Buddhist vratas, dhalaṃ danegu, has ancient roots in Nepal (Gellner 1987: 347ff). A twelfth century Tibetan source mentions what was probably an early version of this rite (Roerich 1953: 1008) and notes its transmission from Nepal to Tibet (Lewis 1988). Locke (1987) has provided a long description of this observance, rightly noting that variant traditions for it exist in the Valley.

This vrata should be performed on one of the two aṣṭamī days, i.e. the eighth day of either lunar fortnight (Wilson 1828: 473). The deity is one of the forms of Avalokiteśvara, popularly called Amoghapāśa Lokesvara or Karunāmaya. Groups may be organized to perform the vrata once, or monthly for one or more years (Macdonald and Stahl 1979: 129, 131).

The traditional day to start a year-long vrata series is mukha aṣṭamī, in the fall. Organizers for these longer programs arrange for the vajracāryas' services and prepare for the main pūjās. In taking on this considerable task, they usually have a specific religious goal in mind. The group may do the vrata in one place, travel to different Avalokiteśvara temples in the Kathmandu Valley, or choose other landmarks in the religious geography. In whatever context, each person usually performs the vrata individually, although a woman may sometimes perform it for an absent husband, making two sets of offerings. This vrata is open to all laymen and nowadays women are by far in the majority.

Basundhara Vrata

Newar Buddhists regard Basundhara (Sanskrit: Vasudharā) as a goddess of fertility and prosperity. In a recent printed text, Kumāri, Lakṣmī, and Basundhara are all said to be forms (rūpa) of Prthivi, the Earth goddess (Vajracarya 1981: 81). If pleased, Basundhara can multiply the family's wealth and sustain the vitality of the lineage. Given these benefits, it is understandable that most Newar Buddhist merchants have done the Basundharā vrata at least once in their lifetimes (Lewis 1984: 242). Many do it yearly.

This vrata is most commonly observed on a regular basis in families with a guṭhi to underwrite the expenses. One time of the year is designated as best for starting this two day rite: the
dark thirteenth day of the month Bhadra.

As with dhalam danegu, a vajrācārya must direct the pūjās, with the family fasting. Because gold is the goddess' favorite color, all of the pūjā accessories, including the ritual thread and the women's shawls, are made with materials of this color. The most popular form of Basundhara vrata observed in modern Kathmandu is a two-day version: the first day proceeds according to the general order, but on the second day, all of the offering materials are gathered together, resanctified by the vajrācārya, then carried to the riverside and discarded. A large feast is held for the family afterwards.

Pūrṇimā Vrata (Dharmadhātu Vrata)

This vrata is done to worship Svayambhū as this was the favorite vrata of the stupa's mythological founder, Santikār Acārya (Shakya 1977). The proper moment for this observance is relatively rare: it should be done on a day when there is a conjunction of a full moon and sarāhū, the start of a new solar month. Performing Pūrṇimā Vrata is intended to awaken the desire for reaching complete enlightenment (Vajracarya 1981: 84).

Esoteric Observances

Those who have taken dekka form a closed community defined by the vajrācārya guru-chela lineage into which they have been initiated. On an occasional basis (typically alternate years), the vajrācārya gurus collect subscriptions and host ritualized gatherings that include vrata-styled devotions to the chief esoteric deities and special dances. (One popular venue for such gatherings is the Bijesvari (or Ākāsa Joginī) temple west of Kathmandu.) These are, of course, closed to non-initiates and still largely unknown. We mention them to demonstrate that in the context of Newar Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna Buddhism, the vrata constitutes a recurring principle of ritual and community organization.

Satya Nārāyaṇa Vrata

This vrata to the Indic deity Viṣṇu is done on ekādaśī, the
eleventh day of either lunar fortnight. The ritual specialist is usually a Newar Brāhman. Though the requirement of fasting and purification is the same in the Buddhist vrata, the ritual is simpler, a straightforward exoteric series of offerings to a Viṣṇu image placed in a small ratha located in the midst of the devotees. As it is done across the Nepalese hills, the Brāhman also tells stories about Viṣṇu. (Wadley includes a sample of these stories in her article on Hindu vrata (1983: 152–154).)

The Satya Nārāyaṇa vrata is common in modern Pahari Hindu practice and many Newar lay Buddhists still perform it.⁶ The reason commonly given for doing this vrata is the boon of securing good fortune in worldly matters such as finding a suitable husband, having a male child, and insuring business prosperity.⁷

Vratas and Hindu-Buddhist Relations

The Buddhist community’s involvement with the Brāhman-led Satya Nārāyaṇa vrata raises the complex issue of Hindu-Buddhist relations. The vrata text for Ārya Tārā illustrates the great influence that Brahmanical ritual orthopraxy has exerted on Vajrayāna ritual practice. The priests use pañcagavya (the five cow products: milk, curd, ghee, dung, urine) for purification; pour oblations from conch shells (argha); chant mantras essential for the success of the ritual; and bestow prasād and tīka marks on patrons’ foreheads. In short, Newar vajrācāryas conform to most of the ritual procedures derived from ancient Brahmanical tradition⁸, although it is not completely correct to regard them as “Buddhist Brahmins”⁹.

Beyond the fact that their outward form is organized in ways congruent with Brahmanical ritual usages, the vratas presented in Part II clearly exemplify the Buddhist textual tradition’s classical statements of spiritual superiority over Hinduism. First, the rites are always anchored in worshipping the triratna—Buddha, Dharma, Saṃgha—and the guru maṇḍala of the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna pantheon. Second, the great gods of the Indian tradition are specifically proclaimed as converts to Buddhism, as in the case of Śiva-Mahānkāl, who “wears Akṣobhya Buddha on the crown.” According to the later Buddhist texts, Viṣṇu is also a world guardian who emanated from and serves
the celestial Bodhisattva Śrīstikāntaka Avalokiteśvara (Lewis 1984: 474). For Mahāyāna Buddhists to worship Viṣṇu for worldly boons is not a "syncretic action", as some observers have claimed: it is consistent with ancient Buddhist texts defining both orthodoxy and orthopraxy which allow laymen the choice of worshipping all gods for their worldly betterment (Robinson 1966). To perform a Mahāyāna vrata is to be reminded explicitly of this subordination of all "Hindu" deities, as the classical norms of Buddhist hierarchy are translated into popular devotional practice.

Summary: Vratas and Mahāyāna Buddhism

Vratas create one of the main religious constituencies within the Newar Buddhist community, uniting families and friends who regularly perform rites to a chosen deity. Most groups are not exclusive, have shifting memberships, and are relatively ephemeral. The esoteric rituals are important and recurring occasions of demarcation between Vajrayāna initiates and the rest of Newar Buddhist society.

Vratas underline the Mahāyāna Buddhist layman's chief religious orientations. The most popular vratas, not surprisingly, are to deities with the most important temples in Kathmandu: Avalokiteśvara, Mahākāla, Svayambhū, Tārā. Relying on priests from the samgha, laymen make offerings (dāna) to these deities who, in return, are thought to grant specific boons, good fortune, heaven, or even supernormal powers and the possibility of enlightenment itself. As the stories in the accounts below proclaim, the vrata devotee's underlying religious motivation is to make large quantities of punya that can unambiguously improve one's destiny in samsāra.

It is important to highlight the vratakathā, the stories inserted in the ritual proceedings. Recounted by the officiant for the patron, these tales provide a doctrinal element in the performance of the vrata. Both translations in Part II provide examples of the literary style common in "popular" Buddhist texts: to illustrate a doctrinal point or explain a practice, the Buddha tells a story and often, as we see in the Tārā text, stories are embedded inside of stories. The plots are simple and the lessons clear, if simple-minded. All the kathā also assert linkages between
their accounts and the Buddhas, making explicit claims for their authority. These sorts of stories, thus, are important sources for articulating the Mahāyāna Buddhist layman’s sense of world, religious ethics, and ethos.

Finally, we can comment on the structure of Indic Buddhist tradition from these vrataś in their Nepalese setting. Newar Buddhist tradition is centered in the vajrācārya samgha whose members preserve the texts and serve as “masters of ritual ceremony”. Tradition is outlined in the texts, but it must be “extracted” recurringly by those taking on the roles handed down through guru-guru lineages. Buddhism in every society is as dependent on vihāra institutions as on the lay patrons who provide a livelihood for the samgha specialists. The Newar vrata observances show that this inter-relatedness and synchronicity was fundamental to all Buddhist societies, including those adhering to Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna traditions.

II. Studies of Two Modern Vrata Texts

Notes on the Author and the Texts

Kathmandu vajrācāryas have long been known as the most skilled ritualists in the Valley (Locke 1985: 256); not surprisingly, the two modern vrata texts translated in this article were composed by a member of a Kathmandu samgha. For the past 30 years, Badri Bajrācārya has been a dominant figure working to revive the condition of Newar Buddhism. In 1977, he started a school for vajrācārya young men to teach them the proper ritual forms, mantras, and literary traditions that are at the foundation of their priestly role. These efforts have been supported by many laymen and Badri has a regular enrollment of over fifty students, ages 8 to 25, who come for instruction. He has succeeded in having other prominent elder vajrācārya pandits periodically participate in the teaching, including Sanskrit study.

The texts presented here are a product of his attempt to revive the modern Vajrayāna tradition. To reverse the decline in the ritual proficiency among many vajrācāryas, a trend that has accelerated since the conquest of the Valley in 1769, Badri and other leading vajrācāryas have written many ritual manuals.
These texts are similar in the way in which they outline and explain the chief pūjās of the Newar tradition. Both draw upon older Sanskrit manuscripts. Texts such as these are intended primarily for fellow priests and devout laymen (upāsakas). Besides providing a wealth of information on Newar Buddhism, these selections can also be read as examples of modern efforts to restore the older Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna tradition.¹²

In terms of general content, both texts present the same information: they specify the vrata’s ritual agenda, then recount the story (or stories) that explain the origin or proven efficacy of the observance. Our texts do differ in their depth of coverage: the Tārā vrata manual is more for vajrācārya priests, as it contains a detailed outline of each ritual, complete with mantras; the Caturdaśī vrata text is more for laymen: it is much shorter, giving only the most minimal ritual outline, and focuses on describing the supernormal powers (siddhi) that can be attained by performing the vrata.

In rendering the translations I have retained the author’s terse shorthand style and insert minimal explanatory glosses parenthetically. The divisions in the guidebooks have also been retained. Further exploration of many subjects in these texts must be reserved for later publications.

The Tārā Vrata

Background

Tārā is the most popular goddess of the Northern Buddhist tradition (Beyer 1973; Sircar 1967): she is regarded as the embodiment of Avalokiteśvara’s compassion and has 21 forms. In Nepal, Tārā is most often worshipped in her white and green incarnations (Vajrācārya 1972); Saptalocanā Tārā, the “Seven-eyed Tārā,” is also common in Newar shrines.¹³ In the Kathmandu Valley, there are two especially popular places for performing this vrata nowadays: the Tārā temple in Itum Bāhā and the Tārā tirtha north of Sāṅkhu, at Bāgduvāl. (The text translated below is to the green Tārā and describes an incident from the sacred history of the latter place.) We also should note that the old Newar Buddhist greeting, “Tāremām” (popularly
thought to be derived from “Tārā Sāraṇam”: “I take refuge in Tārā”), indicates this deity’s historical importance in the Nepalese setting.

According to the popular Newar understanding, the Tārā vrata should be done at least once early in one’s lifetime, since performing the vrata can avert a person’s premature death. For this reason it is also observed in the name of a person who is seriously ill.

This very detailed text alludes to several practices that merit special comment. The requirement of toramā offerings suggests connections with Tibetan Buddhist ritual traditions and is doubtlessly a marker of cultural history (Lewis 1988; Lewis 1989; Templeman 1981: 38). The guide also prescribes that the participants make clay caityas, a ritual called dyah thāyegu in Newari. For this, householders use special molds to fashion caityas of various styles from black clay. Chanting mantras during every part of the process, they impart life (“jiva”) to each caitya by inserting paddy grains into it. Dyah thāyegu is usually done in the holy lunar month called Gunlā, a time in the early summer monsoon for special Buddhist devotions (Lewis 1984: 349–368). In the Kathmandu Valley, this is also the period when the Tārā vrata is most commonly observed.

Translation

(Badri Bajracarya, Śrī Āryya Tārā Devyaih Vrata Vidhi Kathā Kathmandu: Popular Art Printing Press, 1980.)

Rites and practices to be performed for the worship of Ārya Tārā

Construct a Tārā maṇḍala. Place in the centre of the maṇḍala an iron tripod (mas) for [holding the] kalaśa. Place on the tripod a big kalaśa. Arrange the following items in their proper place around the kalaśa: medicine powder (kalaśavāsa), five different kinds of grain (pañcabihi), jasmine flowers, grains of unpolished rice (ākhe), parched rice (tāye), buds of a kind of long lasting grass (pañcappallava kosbum), a jasmine branch, a tuft of tuphi (yellow flowering shrub that is usually used for making brooms), a ceremonial umbrella (chatra), feather of a pea-fowl, and a tiny earthen bowl filled with polished rice with a whole betel nut and a coin set on it (kisali). Place grain powder symbolic of the
astamangala on a traditional dish called thāyebhu.

Place on the four corners: ceremonial metal mirrors (jolā nhāyekan) and vermillion powder stands (sinhabhmū). Pass the sacred green string of five strands five times round the kalaśa space. Place astamangala and wind bells (phayegan) in their proper places. Also put up a canopy. Arrange around the mandala of Ārya Tārā certain items: Buddhist begging bowls (gulupā), water bowls (tiṅcā) and barley flour images (toramā). Place oblation pots (bau̱pā), curd bowls (pati), a small kalaśa, a tiny earthen vessel with a serpent painted on it (nagabhoñcā), and a lamp (mata) in front of the mandala. Consecrate the pañcagavya in a small earthen bown and an oval-shaped bowl of rice beer (patra), and perform the gurumandala pūjā on a maṇḍala with a lotus pattern and with an image of a deity at the center.

Do a ceremonial cleansing with water from a holy river. Perform argha pūjā (an offering of water to the Sun god). Consecrate the votive offerings. Perform gurumandala pūjā. Purify with pañcagavya. Sanctify the clay to be used for fashioning caitya shrines. Have the shrines fashioned from the sanctified clay that has been pressed into moulds. Sprinkle red power and holy water over them. Perform samādhi meditation. Offer pūjā to all of these: the small kalaśa, pati, nāgabhoñcā, lamp (mata), the large kalaśa, astamangala, mirror, and the sinhabhmū. Worship the image of the deity installed there. Offer pūjā to the gulupā, devā, tiṅcā, and the toramās. Sanctify the big maṇḍala and place flower petals on it. Sanctify also the ball of thread by sprinkling water on it. Perform pūjā as prescibed in saptabidhāna (i.e. with mūdra sequences accompanied by mantra recitations). Make a bali offering [for spirits] and perform cākupūjā [in honour of the guardians of the four quarters].

After this, all those who are undergoing the Ārya Tārā vrata may be asked to squat in an orderly row and to construct maṇḍalas before them. Have them receive pañcagavya and make votive offerings. Have them perform gurumandala pūjā. Make them worship the mata lamp and the clay caityas made with their own hands. Have them duly perform maṇḍala pūjā of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Have them take refuge in the triratna by repeating in chorus "Ratna triyam me (Buddha/Dharma/Samgha) sāraṇam" three times.
Method of Worshipping the Large Ārya Tārā Maṇḍala

Sprinkle on the maṇḍala holy drops of water from a conch shell while reciting these mantras:

OM TRUM KHAM HUM  
OM MEDANĪ VAJRĪ BHAVA VAJRA BANDHAVAM  
OM VAJRA RAKȘE HUM.

Keep touching the maṇḍala with your ring finger covered with yellow powder while reciting the following devotional couplet:

SARVA TATHĀGATA ŚĀNTĀṆ SARVA TATHĀGATA LAYĀṆ  
SARVADHARMA GANAĪRĀTMĀ DEŚĀ MAṆḌALA MUKTĀṆ

Place a flower on the small wheat cake image (gojā) while reciting: “OM TĀRĀ MAṆḌALE SARVA BIGHNĀNUTSĀRE HUM.” Then sprinkle a drop of water on the gojā while reciting: “OM ŚRĪ ĀRYA TĀRĀ BHAṬTA-RASYĀGRE PADYĀRGAḤA ĀCA-MANṆ PRACCHAMANṆ PRATĪCCHA SVĀḤĀ.”

Placing Flowers on the Maṇḍala

Recite: “OM ŚRADHARĀ TĀRĀYE VAJRA PUṆPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀḤĀ” [and place a flower] on the head [of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “OM TĀRE TUTĀRE TURE SVĀḤĀ” [and place a flower] on the heart [of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “OM HRM TRIM HUM PHAT SVĀḤĀ” [and place a flower] on the navel [of the maṇḍala].

Placing Eight Lotus Flower Petals on the Maṇḍala

Recite: “OM PUṆPAM TĀRĀYA VAJRAPUṆPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀḤĀ” and place a lotus petal in front [of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “OM DHUPATĀRĀYA VAJRAPUṆPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀḤĀ” and place a lotus petal on the right [of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “OM DĪPĀ TĀRĀYA VAJRAPUṆPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀḤĀ” and place a lotus petal [behind the maṇḍala].
Recite: “OM GANDHATĀRĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ” and place a lotus petal on the left [of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “OM BRĀM VĪNĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ” and place a lotus petal [on the right down side corner of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “BĀM VAMSĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ” and place a lotus [petal on the right upside corner of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “MRN MRDANGĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ” and place a lotus petal [on the left upside corner of the maṇḍala].

Recite: “MŪM MŪRUJĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ” and place a lotus petal [on the left down side corner of the maṇḍala].

Placing 21 Lotus Flower Petals on the Maṇḍala

[Recite:]

1. OM TĀM SIDDHIPHALA PUṬṬIMKURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
2. OM HRIH SARVAKARMA SIDDHIPHALA PUṬṬIMKURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
3. OM TUMTĀH MAMA ĀYU PUṬṬIMKURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
4. OM TĀH SARVA BHAYAPĀDA SIDDHIKURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
5. OM HRIM BHAVAŁOKA TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
6. OM TUH SARVASYĀTUSU MAHĀNAYE TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
7. OM HRIH SARVALOKASIDDHI HĀSYAKURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
8. OM SVAH SIDDHICITTĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
9. OM STĀH SARVA DUHKHA ŚĀNTI KURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
10. OM HĀH SARVA LOKAHASYA KURU TĀRE VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
11. OṂ ĀḤ SАRVAМАANGALA SИDDHI PHALAHE JYO TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
12. OṂ DUḤ MАMA ĀYUPУŚТИН KУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
13. OṂ ĀḤ SАRVA ITITĀMU SИDDHI KУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
14. OṂ NИH SАRSАSИDDHI PUŚTИМKУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
15. OṂ ĀḤ SАRVA ŚАΝТИ KУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
16. OṂ SVAḤ SАRVAJÑĀNĀ PУΝYАH PUŚTИMКУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
17. OṂ KИH MАMA ĀYУ PUŅYАJÑĀNА PUŚTИMКУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
18. OṂ JĀH SАRVAŁОКА DUHKHA ŚАΝТИ KУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
19. OṂ CИH DHАNASИDDHA TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
20. OṂ HАH SАRVA KАRMASИDDHI PUŚTИMКУRU TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.
21. OṂ TАH TĀRE TUTАRE TУRE SVĀHĀ TĀRE VAJRАPUŚPАM PRАTĪCCHA SVĀHĀ.

Placing Flower Petals at the Four Corners of the Maṇḍala
Recite: OṂ VAJRА LĀŚYE HUM and place flower petals on the right up side corner.  
Recite: OṂ VAJRА MĀLETRĀM and place flower petals on the right down side corner.  
Recite: OṂ VAJRА GĪTYE HRĪM and place flower petals on the left up side corner.  
Recite: OṂ VAJRА NRTYЕ AH and place flower petals on the left down side corner.

Placing Ten Flowers on the Square-shaped Daśakrodha Patra
Recite the following mantras and place flower petals in the east, in the south, in the west, in the north, in the southeast, in the southwest, in the northwest, in the northeast and, for the last two, on the either sides.
OM HUM JAMĀNTAKĀYЕ VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM PRAJÑĀNTAKĀYЕ VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM PADMĀNTAKĀYЕ VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM VIGHNĀNTAKĀYЕ VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM TAKKIRĀJĀYА VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM NĪLĀ DANḌĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM MAHĀBALĀYА VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM ACALĀYА VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM UŚNIṢA BĪJAYĀYА VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.
OM HUM SUMBHARĀJĀYА VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ.

Placing Flowers on Four Entrances of the Maṇḍala

[Recite:] OM VAJRĀM KUŚĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ [and place flower petals] on the eastern entrance.
[Recite:] OM VAJRĀ PĀŚĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ [and place flower petals] on the southern entrance.
[Recite:] OM VAJRĀ SPHOTĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ [and place flower petals] on the western entrance.
[Recite:] OM VAJRĀM BEṢĀYA VAJRAPUŚPAM PRATICCHA SVĀHĀ [and place flower petals] on the northern entrance.

Placing Flowers for the Governors (Lokapāla) of the Ten Directions

Do ṭūjā with [offerings consisting of] wheat, maize, peas, rice, sweetmeats, fruits, betal leaf, betal nuts etc.

***
Sprinkle holy water on the sacred string from the conch shell. Apply a yellow *tika* mark to its knot. Have the worshippers bow twenty-one times to the sacred string with their palms, the right for males, the left for females. When bowing, the *mantra* for recitation is: "OM NĀMO ĀRYA TĀRĀ DEVĪ DHARMA SŪTRAM PRECCHĀMI VAJRA DHARMA TĀM TĀM TĀM SVĀHĀ".

After this, the sacred string is placed round the *maṇḍala*. [The mantra recited is:] "OM ŚRĪ ŚRAGDHĀRĀRYYA TĀRĀYAI SARVABHAYA DHĀRAṆĪ SARVABIGHNA ŚĀNTI KARI PRAKRĪTI PRABHĀ SVARE SARVA DUHKHA NĀSANĪ MAMA SARVASATVĀ NĀṅCA ŚĀNTI SVASTIM PUṢṬIM KURU RAKŚAMĀN HUM HUM PHAT PHAT SVĀHĀ".

Then twenty-one jasmine flowers are placed in the center of the sacred thread with the recitation of the *mantra*: "OM NĀMAH ŚRĪ ŚRAGDHĀRĀRYYA TĀRĀYAI SARVABHAYA DHĀRAṆĪ SARVABIGHNA ŚĀNTI KARI PRAKRĪTI PRABHĀ SVARE SARVA DUHKHA NĀSANĪ MAMA SARVASATVĀ NĀṅCA ŚĀNTI SVASTIM PUṢṬIM KURU RAKŚAMĀN HUM HUM PHAT PHAT SVĀHĀ".

Perform *paṇcopacāra pūjā*.

Offer *argha* water. Recite the *daśa kuśala* and offer the [whole] *maṇḍala*.

OM SAMAMNVĀ HARAMTUMĀM BUDDHĀ DAŚADIGA LOKADHĀTU SANNI PATITĀ BUDDHĀ BHAGAVATO BODHISATVA MAṆJUŚRĪ UPĀDHYĀ YAŚCĀRYYA TĀRĀ, AHĀM MEVANĀMĀ YATKIMCITA KĀYEṆĀKA MANOBHI SARVA BUDDHĀ BODHISATVEBHYO MĀṬĀ PITARAU TADAMNYĀ NI SAGAMYA YĀHA JANMANI BHAṬṬAREṢU MAYĀ PĀPA KARMA KṛTA KĀRTA BHABET TATAH SARVA MEKĀM PIṆDAYITVĀ TARAYITVĀ SARVABUDDHA BODHISATVĀ NĀMĀCĀRYA ŚĀNTĪKE AGRAYĀ VARAVĀ PRAVALAYĀ STHĀ NEHAṆĀM PRATIDESYĀMI MANASMṚṬA PRATĪCCHĀ DAṆYĀMI ŚRĪ DHIHMADHĀTU BĀGĪŚVAR ŚRAGDHĀRĀRYYA TĀRĀSAGANA MAṆḍALE IDAM PUṢPAMANDALAM NIRYYĀ-TAYĀMI.

Take rice and flowers dipped in water and let the liquid flow down to the *gojā*. [The mantra recited is:] OM ŚRAGDHĀRĀṬARĪṆA SARVADUHKHA BHAYAHĀ RAṆĪ CATURMĀ RAṆĪ VARĀṆĪ SARVA DEVAṆĀURA GARUDA GANDHARVA KINNARA MAHORAGĀDI UPADRAVA PRAŚA-
Mani Sarvabhuta Preta Pishca Yaksha Rakhas Dak
Dakinyadi Hayabidhvamsani Parakrta Jantra
Mantra Prayogadi Binasanii Bhagavati Durgata-
Raani Agaccha Idam Bali Grhnagrhna Mama Sarva-
Satra Hanahana Khakha Khakhikhahi Sarvabandha-
Na Byadhii Biprahadi Nasani Humhum Phatphat
Svaha.

[Chant:]

// STOTRA //

Taramara Hayankari Suravaraih Sampujita Sarvadah
Lokamah Hitakarinii JAYATISAA MATEVAYARAKSAATI
Karunyena Samahita Bahuvidhansasara Bhiru-
Njanan
Mata Bhaktimatam Vibhati Jagatam Nityambhaya
Dhvamsini.

Offer the ratnamandala and bow to it. Put the sacred string
round the worshipper's neck. Read from the holy manuscripts
the teaching of the dharma [i.e. the vratahatha]. Take a special
fruit-scented bath (phalabhiseka). Construct [a small] mandala and
worship it with offerings of rice and sanctified food (sagam).
Dispense the tika benediction. Then the pujia is over. Gently rub
the sacred string with sacred water from the kalaasa. Give out
the astamangala stuff from the special ritual plate (thayabhu).
Holy water from the kalaasa may not be distributed at this time:
it is distributed only on the river bank.

Hand over the mirror and sinhayam [ready for carrying].
Let the chief worshipper carry the kalaasa and other worshippers
the mandala to immerse them in the river.

Place at the river bank the kalaasa. Fashion a caitya and naga
from sanctified sand. Duly worship and circumambulate them.
Take water in the cupped palm and splash gently on the kalaasa.
Take consecrated water collected from the kalaasa as a blessing
and return home and have a feast.

***
A Brahman named Gunakar dwelt in a village called Himavati Nagar near the Himalaya. He had only one son named Dhanakar. He was married to a lovely woman of high birth. Dhanakar was addicted to the habits of eating abhorred food, drinking alcohol, and visiting prostitutes. Gunakar, his father, insisted on his total abstinence from such addictions, but was unable to deter him.

Ultimately, his father died. After the death of his father, Dhanakar became much more addicted to the habit of drinking alcohol and visiting prostitutes. His wife, on the other hand, was very kind and faithful to her husband. Although he had such a good wife, he did not abstain from visiting prostitutes, eating unclean food and drinking alcohol. Very much fed up with his bad habits, [one day] his wife implored him, “My lord, why have you taken up the harmful habit of drinking? Your father did all he could to prevent you from becoming an addict. He is no more and now there are none to tell you not to be given over to such bad and harmful habits. Since you have not [yet] given up your bad habits, I pray that you not be an addict.”

Dhanakar grew very angry with his wife for all that she had said to him. He beat her and sent her away. She did not know where to go and so went to the forest with her heart broken. Finally she sat down to rest under a tree and sobbed to herself, “I might have acted sinfully in my previous life as a result of which I am now punished and married to such a cruel husband. I must be the most ill-fated woman in the world. Where am I to go? Who shall I stay with? I am distraught with my life. I wish I were taken away by death but death is not imminent. So I should kill myself.”

Thinking in this way while roaming round the forest, one day she saw a sage living in a cave. She approached him and asked, “Why, saint, are you living alone in the forest?” The sage said that he would tell her something helpful. He said, “All those who are born must die. All in this present life must face the consequences of the actions that they performed in their previous lives. Similarly in our next lives we reap the results of the deeds that we do in our present life. If we do good deeds, we live a happy life. If we do evil deeds, we live an unhappy life. To be born, to be old, and to die are great sufferings. The cause of my
living in such a lonely place near the Himalayas is to get rid of all this suffering." He further went on to say, "Oh gentle lady! Whose wife are you? What is your name? Why have you come to this forest? Who is here escorting you? Who have you come here with? Tell me the truth."

Upon his asking these questions, the female Brahman could not hold back her tears and sobbed out her story to the sage: "Close to this village lived a Brahman named Guṇākara who had a bad-natured son called Dhanākara. He was addicted to drinking and prostitution. His father died without being able to correct his character, despite great exertions. After the death of his father he went from bad to worse and even stopped returning home. Once when he came home I begged him to give up his bad habits. But he beat me and sent me away. I am this wretched man's wife. I feel I am very unfortunate and roam this forest now with the intention of committing suicide."

After hearing what the female Brahman said in her tearful words, the sage said, "O gentle lady! I am going to tell you something good. Listen! Human life, you know, is very precious. Only very fortunate beings can have a human life. You need to remember with reverence Ārya Tārā and pray to her for deliverance from your sufferings. Mind you, O gentle Lady! Those committing suicide become blemished with an evil destiny, as illustrated in the following story:

"Once there lived in a city a devout and pious merchant whose wife was arrogant, unfaithful, and ill-natured. No matter how well fed and nicely clad she was by her husband, she never acknowledged it gratefully. She always found fault with him and picked a quarrel. Dissatisfied with this wife, the merchant married a second wife. Upon doing this, his first wife committed suicide by throwing herself into a pond. Because of this suicide, she was doomed to hell and subjected to untold sufferings. For this reason, O gentle Lady, do not commit suicide! If you want to be liberated from your sufferings, pray to Goddess Ārya Tārā. To the east of this Sankhod Mountain is the bathing spot of the Goddess Ārya Tārā who, as instructed by Amitābha [Buddha], visited the holy spot to liberate suffering people from their miseries. Go to bathe at this holy tīrtha and offer sincere prayers to the goddess Ārya Tārā. Then you will be delivered from your sufferings."

Hearing this from the sage, the female Brahman asked him how the Tārā tīrtha came into being. The sage replied, "O Gentle Lady, Listen, I'll tell you how it originated. Once when the de-
mons ousted Lord Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara and Indra from their thrones, these gods went to take resort in Ugra Tārā, a goddess who in turn asked them to pray and recite the mantra of Ārya Tārā. Straight away the gods went to the present site of the Tāra Tirtha and recited the mantra of Ārya Tārā as directed. After the recitation of the mantra by the gods, the goddess Ārya Tārā made her appearance right at the tirtha and liberated Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara and Indra from their miseries. O Gentle Lady! You also may perform pūjā to Ugra Tārā Bajrajogini; go to bathe at Tārā Tirtha where you should also meditate and offer prayers."

Hearing this [second story] from the sage, the female Brāhman climbed up the hill with enthusiasm to have a darśan of Ugra Tārā Bajrajogini [of Sānkhū] and thereafter went to the Tārā Tirtha. On reaching the tirtha, she bathed and offered pūjā, and said heartfelt prayers.

In answer to her prayers, the goddess Ārya Tārā took pity on the female Brāhman and appeared before her in green complexion and in abhaya mādrā holding a flower in one of her hands. The female Brāhman fell prostrate on the ground before the goddess and offered her pūjā while chanting devotional songs. The goddess blessed her and vanished out of sight. The female Brāhman spent the rest of her life at this Tārā Tirtha living upon fruits and water nearby, meditating and observing the Ārya Tārā vrata and offering prayers to the triratna. When she finally died she was transported to Sukhāvatī bhuvana.

***

The Caturdaśi Vrata

Background

Our second Mahāyāna vrata concerns Mahākāla (New. Mahāṃkāla dya:), a very popular deity in Nepal who is found in many different settings. Opposite Gaṇesha or Hanumān, his images guard the entranceways of most Newar vihāras (Locke 1985: 8). Mahākāla is also commonly found alone as a protector inside the exterior niches of private homes. Moreover, a free-standing temple of Mahākāla is located just outside the former town boundaries of Kathmandu and this temple receives great atten-
tion from both Hindu and Buddhist devotees. The regular priests of this temple are *vajrācāryas*.

Mahākāla likely evolved from the Indic Śiva-Bhairava as later Buddhists incorporated this fierce deity into their pantheon. (One Newar Buddhist myth, in fact, recounts his coming to Nepal from Tibet (Lewis 1984: 75).) The deity's Buddhist identity is also shown iconographically: he is depicted with the eastern celestial Buddha, Aksobhya, on his crown. There are also several later *tantras* dedicated to Mahākāla known in Sanskrit and Tibetan recensions found in the Kathmandu Valley.

The introduction to the *vrata* text states that the *Caturdāsi vrata* is also called the *Mahākāl vrata* and that it has been popular in Nepal “from ancient times.” The *vrata* should be observed only on the fourteenth day of the dark lunar fortnight, a time typically associated with dangerous, blood sacrifice-taking deities. The introduction also cites the textual source of the *vratākatha* as “the *Kanitabādāna*” in which Śākyamuni Buddha explains the rite to his famous disciple Śāriputra.

Translation

Bathe in a holy river. With the purity of mind and body, clad in clean clothes, display a scroll painting of Mahākāla in a pleasant place. Decorate the site with flags, festoons, and a canopy. Get all of the materials required for the *vrata* ready and then begin the *pūjā*.

The *pūjā* may begin by invoking the great teacher for blessings. Seek refuge in the triple gems. Construct a *mandala* of Mahākāla, the guardian deity of the Buddhist Dharma, and worship it by making offerings of flowers, incense, lighted wick, and then make an *olibali* offering*. Look at Mahākāla and pledge to observe the eight precepts.* He who on this fourteenth day of the dark lunar fortnight performs this fast, pledging to observe the eight precepts wholeheartedly, will have full control over his enemies and can ascend to the status of head of state. The Emancipation that may result from this *caturdāsi vrata* is well illustrated in the following story:
In the remote past there dwelt in the city of Vārānasi a king named Brahmadatta. Every month on the fourteenth day of the dark lunar fortnight he visited the Śiva temple located to the south of the city, bathed, worshipped Mahāmkal, fasted, and then pledged to observe the eight precepts. As a result of this meritorious act, his country never suffered from natural disasters and his reign was blessed.

One day, a foreign king came to attack Vārānasi with his army that was well equipped with weapons. At the sight of the enemy, the people of Vārānasi were panic-stricken. They approached the king, led by spokesmen. One of them said, "Your Majesty Brahmadatta! Our country is about to be attacked by a foreign enemy. The country is in a panic. Oh Your Majesty! Command us as to what we should do!"

The king responded: "Countrymen! Pleasures are short-lived. They are as precarious and transitory as silvery water drops on lotus leaves. Do not panic because of this king's army. Be assured that they will be driven away through my meritorious action."

Upon hearing this, the spokesman replied, "Your Majesty! We have no knowledge of what powers you have by virtue of your meritorious actions. We want you to demonstrate this power by resisting and destroying the present enemy. It will be pointless to repent after our country has fallen into the hands of its enemies."

After hearing the request of his people, King Brahmadatta immediately went to the holy river and bathed. The he went to the Śiva temple that night, fasted, and worshipped Mahāmkal. He also meditated upon Mahāmkal constantly without diverting his attention from other things. As a result, the deity Mahāmkal in his terrifying form appeared before the king and asked in a kind manner: "Oh King! Why are you invoking me in meditation?" Once the king saw Mahāmkal, he bowed down to him and chanted a hymn of praise which is written here:

[ 1 ] Hail to you Mahāmkal, destroyer of evildoers and bestower of boons!
[ 2 ] Hail to you of the round red eyes, bright like a flaming light!
[ 3 ] Hail to you with curly brown hair and rough skin!
[ 4 ] Hail to you with a big and terrifying dark body that is surrounded by a halo!
[ 5 ] Hail to you with shapely body and shapely limbs!
After chanting this hymn, the King then said, “O Lord Mahāmākāl, the mightiest of the mighty, I am going to the battlefield. I pray to receive your boon of the aṣṭasiddhi, the eight powers that will enable me to vanquish my enemies.”

Upon hearing this supplication, Mahāmākāl granted him the aṣṭasiddhi powers and then vanished out of sight. These siddhi were as follows:

1. añjanasiddhi: power of being invisible to enemies;
2. guthikasiddhi: power of being invulnerable to enemies;
3. padukasiddhi: power of being able to fly in the sky;
4. sidhausadhisiddhi: power of being immune to diseases and for living a long life;
5. manisiddhi: power of being able to have inexhaustible wealth;
6. mantrasiddhi: power of being able to materialize one’s desires;
7. basyasiddhi: power of being able to vanquish enemies;
8. rajyasiddhi: power of being able to rule over the country peacefully.

Armed with such precious powers, when King Brahmadatta went like a lion to the battlefield with his hand raised high, his enemies were panic-stricken and ran to him for refuge.

***

Mahāmākāl, who has been regarded as an effective ally in vanquishing enemies and who has acted as a guardian for the protection of the Buddhist Dharma and Sangha, deserves our veneration and invocation.

Buddha, the Enlightened One, narrated this story to Śāriputra on how the Mahāmākāl vrata helped King Brahmadatta single-handedly vanquish the enemy king and his army and peacefully rule over his country for many years. Therefore he
who observes the *caturdasi vrata* invoking Mahāmākāl will succeed in his work and be free from dangers posed by enemies.

**NOTES**

1. Field work was conducted in Kathmandu from 1979–82 and in 1987. The author gratefully acknowledges grant support from the Fulbright Fellowship Program and assistance from the U.S. Educational Foundation in Kathmandu. Ratna Muni Bajracarya and Mani Gopal Jha merit special recognition for their most helpful critical readings of the translated texts.

   Note that Newari and Sanskrit terms have been rendered according to the spellings in the texts, and except for rendering *vrata* consistently throughout the article, I have made no attempt to correct their spellings to conform to classical Sanskrit orthography. The problem is that as yet there is no authoritative, comprehensive dictionary for the Newari language (New.: Nevā: Bhāy), although Manandhar (1986) has been used where relevant. Readers will note the Newar author's inconsistency in rendering *b* and *v*, and *y* and *j*, among others. Although this may appear sloppy to the philological scholar, the Newar reader suffers no loss of understanding.

2. This overview aptly presents the hierarchy of Newar society (based upon Quigley 1986: 78 and Gellner 1986: 105):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priestly castes</th>
<th>High Castes</th>
<th>Agricultural Castes</th>
<th>Service Castes</th>
<th>Unclean Castes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Hindu</em></td>
<td><em>Buddhist</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deo Brāhman</td>
<td>Vajrācārya</td>
<td></td>
<td>Painters, potters, oil pressers, barbers, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karrvacārya</td>
<td>Śākya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śreṣṭha</td>
<td>Urāy</td>
<td>Jyāpu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural Castes</td>
<td>Service Castes</td>
<td>Unclean Castes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other important studies on Newar society have been made by Gerard Toffin (1975 and 1986), Colin Rosser (1964), and Hiroshi Ishii (1986 and 1987). Consult Toffin (1986) for the most complete bibliographical information. For an important study of a *vrata* performed predominantly by Hindu Newar layfolk, see Linda Ilitis' monumental translation and analysis of the *Svastānī Vrata* (1985).

3. The *kalasa* is a ceremonial vessel. As stated in a modern Newar commentary, "The main aim of the *Kalasa pūjā* is to make the deity present in the *Kalasa* by means of *Śādhanā* and then through the *abhiseka* of the *Kalasa* bring about a participation in *nirvāna* itself." (Quoted in Locke 1979: 96).

4. According to the Newar Buddhists, this is the day when an image of Aksobhya Buddha is placed on top of the *linga* at Pašupati, the central...
temple of modern Nepalese Buddhism.

5. This vrata is included because it is commonly done among non-vajrācāryas, i.e. among the Mahāyāna laymen that constitute roughly 95% of Newar Buddhists.

6. Most Newar Buddhist laymen do not express embarrassment for their participation in a ritual guided by a Brāhman priest. This willingness to do so exemplifies the extent to which urban Buddhists feel free to utilize the extraordinarily broad spectrum of religious options in their midst. It is not surprising that business families would take to this vrata, just as they readily worship Lakṣmī during the Tihar festival.

7. According to my surveys, about 65% of the Kathmandu Uray families have a member who once did Satya Nārāyaṇa Vrata.

8. The proper assessment of later Buddhist ritualism must proceed from the following historical perspective: modern Newar Buddhist and Brahmanical ritualism represent two lineages originating from ancient Indian religious traditions. Both draw upon a common core of symbolism, ritual procedure norms, and basic cosmological assumptions.

Despite each being doctrinally diverse and institutionally acephalic, Hindu and Buddhist traditions have, at times, profoundly affected each other, as Hindu-Buddhist relations for 1700 years created the chief dialectic in Indian religious history. Both should be seen as totalizing cultural phenomena, with philosophical doctrines and myths that proclaim their spiritual domination in any religious environment, including over each other. (See Lewis 1984: 468-481 for a fuller treatment of this complex issue.)

9. To regard the Vajrācāryas as “Buddhist Brahmins” (Greenwold 1974) is more true is the social domain than in religious content: most Buddhist ritual implements differ from Hindu analogs, the mantras chanted are distinctly Vajrayāna, and later Buddhist doctrine is interwoven in a thoroughgoing manner. One must emphasize the transformations as well as continuities between the Vajrācāryas and Brāhmans to understand Newar religious history.

10. This accommodation is well-documented in Theravāda societies (Tambiah 1970; Gombrich 1971). It is noteworthy that there are also passages in the Mahāyāna literature that object to offerings made to non-converted deities. (See Snellgrove 1987: 76.)

11. The other main sources of Newar religious organization are the guṇhis, institutions created to facilitate members’ performing specific rituals (cremations, temple worship, pilgrimage, etc.), usually on a regular basis. Much has been written on the wide array of guṇhis in the Newar communities (Toffin 1975; Gellner 1987; Lewis 1984: 174-182). A few guṇhis in Kathmandu were formed to underwrite regular vrata performances.

12. Wadley’s comments on these manuals in India apply to the Newar context, as do several of her conclusions, “While an explanation for this growing popularity cannot be explicitly stated, several factors clearly are important. Increasing literacy allows thousands to use texts where once they had relied solely on oral traditions . . . Finally, texts are valued in Hinduism in part because of their traditional inaccessibility: to many newly literate persons, reading a pamphlet is more authentic and prestigious than reciting the stories
of their elders. The stories of the elders had themselves taken the place of
the teaching of gurus, to whom people had little access. Currently, then, written
texts are replacing the elders and act as a stand-in for the traditions of the
guru (1983: 150).”

13. This pamphlet includes a sixty-verse Sanskrit dhāraṇī to Tārā called
Atha Aṣṭottaraśata (Tārāśata) Nāma Stotra Prārambha. The first 27 verses describe
the setting of Sākyamuni’s revelation of this dhāraṇī on Mount Potalaka, Vajra-
pāṇi Bodhisattva’s request to preach, and a brief account of the boons won
for reciting this dhāraṇī. The next fifteen verses give the 108 Names of Tārā,
with each form’s mantra. The final verses give rules concerning the recitation
and again recount the fruits of recitation. The published text (Vajracarya
1972) also provides another Tārā avadāna different from the one translated
in this study.

14. A common Indic ritual that consists of five kinds of offerings: flowers,

15. This dhāraṇī very commonly chanted by a vajracārya priest for a
patron. This recitation is said to absolve the hearer from 10 forms of pāpa
(“demerit”).


17. This Sanskrit title for this text, the Kanitāvadāna, has not been men-
tioned in any published Nepali account. The only study of a Newari avadāna
is that by Jorgensen (1931), the Vicitrakārnikāvadānoḍḍhṛtā; but in this work,
there is no mention of the Mahākāla story.

18. In the Newar tradition, this bali can literally mean an animal sacrifice.
While blood offerings are approved by some tantric Buddhist texts, some
laymen prefer to offer substitutes that do not entail actual killing. See Owens
(1988) for a discussion of the relationship between Newar Buddhist traditions
and blood sacrifice.

19. This ancient Buddhist custom of laymen taking on extra precepts
(beyond their usual five) during a special observance is also still common in
Theravāda countries (Wells 1975).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Babb, Lawrence A.
1975 The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Buddhism in Central India. New York:
Columbia University Press.

Beyer, Stephan
1973 The Cult of Tara: Magic and Ritual in Tibet. Berkeley: University of
California.

Gellner, David N.
1986 “Language, Caste, Religion and Territory: Newar Identity Ancient

Oxford University: Ph.D. Dissertation.

Gombrich, Richard F.

Greenwold, Stephen M.

Ilitis, Linda

Ishii, Hiroshi

Jorgensen, Hans

Kane, P.V.

Lewis, Todd Thornton

Locke, John K., S.J.

Macdonald, A.W. and A. Stahl

Manandhar, Thakur Lal

Malla, Kamal P.

Monier-Williams, Sir Monier
Mullin, Glen (translator)  

Owens, Bruce  

Robinson, Richard H.  

Roerich, G.N.  

Rosser, Colin  

Sakya, Hemaraj  

Sircar, D.C.  
1967 *The Śakti Cult and Tara.* University of Calcutta.

Snellgrove, David  

Stablein, William  

Tambiah, Stanley J.  

Templeman, David  

Toffin, Gerard  


Vajracarya, Amoghavajra  

Vajracarya, Ratna Kaji  

Wadley, Susan S.  

Wayman, Alex  

Wells, Keokneth
1975 *Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Customs*. Bangkok: Suriyabun. (Second ed.)
Wilson, H.H.
1828 "Notices on Three Tracts Received from Nepal," *Asiatic Researches*, 16, 450–478.