

BUDDHISM AND NEPAL



By

KULADHARMA RATNA,
M.A. (Com.), B.L.

Dhamma.Digital

**DHARMODAYA SABHA
FOURTH WORLD BUDDHIST CONFERENCE
KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

Serial No. 38

2,500

Annas -/6/-
(/40)

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Buddhism in Nepal is as ancient as Nepal herself. This is proved by the *Swayambhu Puran*, some extracts from which are reproduced below :—

“The Tathagata also blessed all the people and described the importance of Nepal area, the fame of Manjudeva.

...Then He circled this forest (Swayambhu Mount) three times and described its importance and recalled past experiences. As He climbed the mount he said, “In my seven births, I have visited this place seven times, and each time I found it in a different colour”.

“When Sri Swayambhu Jyoti Rupa (Swayambhu Light) and Sri Sakyamuni (Lord Buddha) met face to face, there was auspice everywhere and there were earthquakes of six different kinds which shook (mount) Sumeru and the Oceans and Seas, creating mighty waves. There were rains of sweet-smelling water and flowers from the skies...Then He folded His hands and scanned—

“My respects to him who is the Adi Buddha (Prime Buddha) among Buddhas, who has benefitted the world in various forms, who is the mine of all the Light, who is Personification of the Samyak Sambodhi, who is famous for three Qualities (Guna) and who is the reason for five Knowledges, who is without colour and without shape, and who is Omniscient.”

“...Then the Lord (Buddha) offered gold lotus, paid respects, circled and went to *Puchhagra Parbat* along with His followers. To the west of *Swayambhu*, at the summit of the mount, in a nice place and to the west of the Chaitya built by Manjusri, in the middle of the mount in an open space in a verdant grassy place full of trees of all seasons and deers and birds, the Lord (Buddha) walked along with Sariputra on His right and Maudgalyana on His left followed by Bhikkhu Ananda.

“...At that time kneeling down on his right knee Maitreya Bodhisattva with his shawl thrown over on left shoulder (keeping his right shoulder out and folded hands) prayed : “O Right Teacher ! we all are very anxious to know when and how this Swayambhu Dharmadhatsu Chaitya, the home of all Buddhas appeared and came into being. Please have loving kindness upon us and tell us.”

“Upon this He turned towards all those present including Maitreya Bodhisattva and said : “O Maitreya, many times have past, in the Satyayuga, the longevity of a person was 80,000 years. When the height of longevity was 1,00,000 years, there was a Chakravarti (World Conqueror) King, Bandhunan by name in the city of Bandhumati. . . His son, with all good signs, with influence of previous birth, Vipaswi by name acquired the Silent Complete Knowledge (Anuttar Samyak Sambodhigyan) according to process under the Patali tree. At that time I, His disciple, under the name of Satya Dharma was serving Vipaswi by giving Him Begging Bowl, Yellow Robes. This Tathagata lived in His Vihara along with His 32 crores (320,000,000) disciples and preached for the salvation of the world, O Maitreya, this Nepal area then was a great lake known as Naga Daha. Once this Vipaswi Tathagata with his 32 crores (320,000,000) disciples wandering into many countries, reached the side of this lake and circled it three times and camped in an open space on the summit of the hill, in the Bayubya corner. And when He observed this lake, the length and breadth of it was Seven Koses (14 miles). This lake was full of nice water with the following Eight Qualities : (1) Clean (2) sweet smelling (3) not too cold (4) Cool (5) tasty (6) light (7) beneficial (8) white. There were water flowers of different colours and varieties, swans, water-ducks and birds of different varieties ; fishes and other water denizens all playing in unison produced foam as if it was a Sea of Kshir (milk). Barun and other Nagas (Snakes) on the way to Karkotak Naga’s house, catching one another, produced a scene resembling the knot of ropes ; the collection of fangs produced an effect of boats and it appeared as if it was a sea crossed by Sartha Bahu. As it

was the home of Karkotaka Naga, it was known as Naga Basa ; again his wife's name being Kali, it was also known as Kali Daha. At many places the water being clean and blue like the sky, it was also known as Kalinjal.

“All directions surrounded by mountain ranges like a house surrounded by walls and abounded with all sorts of gems displayed by the Naga (snake) king, Nidhi Darshan by name ; and full of gold, silver and all other minerals, full of different varieties of flower, plants, trees, fruit orchards and birds and beasts ; this place was exceptionally beautiful and pure. Thinking that this is the place where Sri Swayambhu would appear Sri Vipaswi wished for a seed of lotus. And by the influence of the Lord of Akanista Bhuvan, who was the greatest of all in the world at that time, there appeared a seed of lotus which Vipaswi Buddha took. At that time nobody saw this... Then He said to the disciples as follows : “O disciples, this lake, the abode of Nagas (snakes) and resembling the Manasarovar is the home of Karkotak, the king of Nagas. You take your ablution here” Then he chanted thrice the Mantra (hymn) of seven letters and threw the lotus seed into the fathomless water. This seed circled and went in air-speed and, after going two Koses (four miles) away towards the northern direction, was drowned inside the water. Seeing this and wondering, the Bhikshus (monks) humbly enquired of Vipaswi : “O Lord ! what is this ?” Then Vipaswi said—“Listen, O Bhikshus, in this lake, upon the lotus I planted, in course of time, would appear Swayambhu the Lord of Akanistha Bhuvan. He would be famous as Swayambhu Dharmadhatu and at that time this lake would be holy. Afterwards all persons of the three worlds would take ablutions in this boon-conferring lake. This lake would bestow the fruits of Dharma (piety), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), Moksha (beatitude). Afterwards, in course of time, some great Bodhisattva from the north would come here and cut a way for the water of this lake to pass out via the southern direction, and after the water has been dried, the thousand leaved lotus, the seat of Swayambhu, would be covered by a hill-shaped cover...After this there would be many Tirthas (places of pilgrimage) and

many gods, each of whom will have a rule of his own. And there would be created cities and villages at many places. There would be observed many Niyams (rules), so this area would be known as Niyampala. Again, NE = to send to beatitude, and PALIT = to protect the beatitude ; therefore, this place would be called also "NEPALIT". Again and again the names of this place would be increased. As Amitabha Loka Dhatu is the home of happiness and therefore called Sukhavati, so also many other kings would call this "Niyamapala Bhoomi"—as beatitude would be attained here by observation of rules and piety.

After thus foretelling the future events, He got up from His seat, bathed and also let others take bath and then addressed the hill : "O Hill, you have been trodden by 64 crores (640 million) feet, but do not get angry with me. You are really lucky. When Swayambhu would appear Himself, then you should bow your head. At that time you would get higher. And because you would get higher simultaneously with the appearance of Swayambhu, your name would be 'Jatamatrochcha Parbat'. (NOW A DAYS THIS PLACE IS CALLED JAMACHO). The open space in your summit would be the sanctuary of Siddhas. On your head would be the pigtail of Swayambhu." After saying this and paying respects to the Hill, He took the right side and returned to His Vihara (monastery) along with the Sangha, thinking of His approaching Nirvana."

Thus it is clear that Buddhism prevailed in Nepal long before Gautam Buddha was born in Nepal 2500 years ago and that He was not the first Buddha who visited the sacred Swayambhu mount in Nepal. That must be the reason why Buddhism is still the religion of the majority of the total population of Nepal inspite of vicissitudes and metamorphosis through which it had to pass. In the *Vamsavali* of Nepal, it has been recorded that Shankaracharya of Deccan (South India) came to Nepal and persecuted the Buddhists, towards the beginning of the Kali Yuga. Here is an extract from the *Vamsavali* : "Shankaracharya thus destroyed the Buddhist religion, and allowed none to follow it ; but he was obliged to leave the Buddhists in some places

as priests of temples, where he found that no other persons would be able to propitiate the gods placed in them by great Buddhists. He then returned to the sea-side, leaving the northern parts of the world unconquered." Yet as late as the 6th century A.D. we find not only Buddhism flourishing in Nepal itself but also spreading towards the north from Nepal. This is evident from an article in "PEOPLE'S CHINA" (May 1956). The article is entitled: "CHINA AND NEPAL" by Huang Sheng-chang. And here are some excerpts from the same:

"...The first Chinese traveller to Nepal, the noted Buddhist monk and scholar, Fa Hsien, came to Nepal in the year 406 on a pilgrimage to the places where the Sakyamuni Buddha was born and died. Altogether, he spent seventeen years away from home, starting for Nepal and India in 399 and returning in 416. He wrote "Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms", the first Chinese account of these countries and a very reliable one

"Fa Hsien visited and described a number of places in Nepal. They included Kapilavastu, capital of the kingdom of Suddhodana which had been ruled by the Buddha's father; the Lumbini grove, where the Buddha was born....

"Tradition says that in 406, the same year in which Fa Hsien reached Nepal, the Nepalese monk Buddhahadra, a native of Kapilavastu and a member of the Sakya clan to which the Buddha himself belonged, came to Changan, which was then the capital of China. In 418 he was invited to Chienyeh, the modern Nanking. There he became the senior translator at the Tao Chang Ssu Monastery, giving guidance to more than a hundred monks engaged in putting the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. This monastery was the main centre of such work in China. Fa Hsien also worked there on his return, collaborating with Buddhahadra in the translation of several famous Buddhist sutras. ...

Nepalese and Tibetans—

"Since the part of China that borders on Nepal is Tibet, the Tibetans and Nepalese have always maintained close contact. In about the year 584, Srongtsan Gambo, king of

Tibet, married the daughter of Amsuvarman, king of Nepal. The princess brought many precious images to Lhasa. Her coming brought with it the introduction of the Buddhist religion. Tibetan architecture too shows Nepalese influences. The style of the world famous Potala Palace is Nepalese in origin.

“Many of Tibet’s artisans came from Nepal. They contributed to the building of Lhasa’s sixth-century Jokhang Temple, the oldest Tibetan Buddhist place of worship. Constructed to house the images brought from Nepal, it is still a goal of pilgrimages from that country. The nine storey tower which is connected with the Potala by an iron bridge is also reputed to have been built by King Srongtsan Gambo’s Nepalese bride.

Sung, Yuan and Ming Periods—

“..... In 1260, Pagspa the Grand Lama and local ruler of Tibet, was instructed by the emperor to build the “golden stupa” at Lhasa. To help him, Nepal sent 80 of its skilled artisans. The chief among them, Aniko, a painter, sculptor and master at casting metal statues, accompanied by Pagspa on a visit to Peking, where the latter was honoured by Kublai Khan with the title of ‘imperial teacher’.

“It was Aniko, it is believed, who made most of the Buddhist images in the temples of Shangtu (modern Tolun) and Tatu (modern Peking), the two capitals of Yuan dynasty. Later he became head of the Office of Architectural Works under the Yuan dynasty, having charge of all matters concerning architecture and cast statuary. One of his six sons succeeded him in that office. Another became chief of the Office of Fine Arts. Aniko also trained a Chinese disciple called Liu Yuan. So adept was Liu Yuan in the modelling and casting of Buddhist religious statues that he was known as ‘The Peerless’”

This shows clearly that even after the attacks of Shankaracharya, Buddhism not only survived in Nepal but also Buddhism and Buddhist architecture was spread from Nepal towards the north—to Tibet Region and many parts of China. This is evidenced also by Dr. Henry Ambrose

Oldfield in his "SKETCHES FROM NEPAL" (1880 A.D.) Here is an extract :

"The mountain countries lying between China and India afforded a secure asylum to the victims of religious persecution. In Nepal, Bhotan, and Tibet the Buddhist religion was, from the first, cordially received and zealously supported ; and although Sankara, in pursuit of the fugitives from Hindustan, penetrated into the valley of Nepal, and inflicted the greatest injury on the sacred literature and architecture of the Newars, yet he was unable to overthrow their religion.

A thousand years have now elapsed since Sankara perished in Thibet in the vain attempt to destroy the worship of Buddha; but Buddhism has triumphed over all his persecutions, and, in those mountain regions, has continued to be the national faith until the present day."

Hinduism is also a very ancient religion of Nepal. And according to the Hindu mythology, there are many sacred places in Nepal. The Himalaya is known as the abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and Nepal is also considered as the home of Kuvera, the god of wealth. And just as Swayambhu and Bauddha in the Valley and Lumbini in the Terai are the objects of pilgrimage for Buddhists, so also Pashupatinath and Dakshinkali in the Valley and Janakpurdham in the Terai are objects of pilgrimage for Hindus. That Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side in Nepal since very ancient time also is evidenced in "HISTORY OF NEPAL" edited by Dr. Daniel Wright. Here is an extract :

"The Rajas of Kirati dynasty were :—

1. Yalambar, who reigned 30 years.
2. His son Pabi, in whose reign the astrologers announced that the Kali Yuga (Iron Age) had entirely overspread the earth, and that mankind were bent on sin. The gods' period of Dwapara (the third of the four Ages) ended, and the first quarter of Kali Yuga commenced.

3. His son Skandhara.

4. His son Balamba.

5. His son Hriti.

6. His son Humati.

In this reign the Pandavas were destined to reside in forests, and one of them, named Arjuna, fought with Mahadeva, who was in the form of a Kirati, and pleased him by his skill in archery.

7. Humati's son Jitedasti.

This Raja, by the order of Arjuna, went to Kurukshetra, to fight against his enemies the Kauravas, mentioned in the Mahabharata. During this reign Sakya Sinha Buddha came into Nepal (Valley), from a city Kapilavastu and having visited Swayambhu Chaitya and Manjusri Chaitya, he fixed his abode at Puchhagra Chaitya. While there, he accepted the worship and offerings of Chuda, a bhikshuni, and made 1350 proselytes, viz. Saliputra, Maudgalyana, Ananda, etc., from the Brahman and Chhetri castes..... "

As Raja Jitedasti did not return from the wars recounted in the Mahabharata,

8. His son Gali ascended the throne.

9. His son Pushka.

10. His son Suvarma.

11. His son Parba.

12. His son Bunka.

13. His son Swananda.

14. His son Sthunko.

In the reign of this Raja Asoka, the Raja of Pataliputra (Patna), having heard of the fame of Nepal as a sacred place, and having obtained the permission of his spiritual guide, Bhikshu Upagupta, Asoka came on a pilgrimage to Nepal accompanied by his family and followed by a large number of his subjects. He visited every holy place, and bathed in every sacred water, and went to Sway-

ambhu, Guhjeswari and eight Buddha chaityas. He also built several chaityas. His daughter Charumati, while playing one day, saw an iron arrowhead turned into stone by a god, and determined to remain in Nepal, having concluded from this that it was a land of miracles wrought by the gods. Asoka, therefore, gave her in marriage to a descendant of a Chhetri, named Devapala. They therefore resolved each to build a Vihar. That of Charumati was first completed, and she died in it, after living the life of a bhikshuni. Devapala died in great distress, from not being able to complete his Vihar before his death. All this happened in the reign of the Kirati Raja Sthunko."

And in course of time, there has been such fusion and synthesis of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal, that Perceval Landon in his Preface to "NEPAL" writes that one of the aspects by which she is best known to the world at large is "the strange blending in her shrines of the worship of Buddhism and Hinduism without clash or conscious inconsistency. And this is how it happened. Writes Dr. Oldfield in his "SKETCHES FROM NEPAL."

".....The distinctions of caste were unknown among this simple people, and society was merely divided into the monastic and secular orders. The monastic order, collectively called Banhras, were divided into four classes, who differed from each other only in the relative degree or amount of asceticism which they respectively practised. The secular orders devoted themselves to various trades and occupations which gradually became hereditary in their families. In the course of time, however, numerous exiles, pilgrims, and adventurers from the plains of Hindustan migrated to Nepal and settled permanently in the sacred valley. These new comers and their descendants intermarried with the original or Thibetan colonists, and this gave rise to a mixed Indo-Thibetan race, from which the Newars of Nepal are lineally descended. The majority of these emigrants from Hindustan were Buddhists, who had either been driven from the plains by persecution, or had voluntarily repaired to Nepal as pilgrims or missionaries. Many, however, of those who visited the Himalayas were Hindus, and it is specially

recorded that they belonged to "all four castes" of that religion. Of these Hindu emigrants, many were converted to Buddhism after their arrival in Nepal, but a considerable number of them remained faithful to the Hindu creed, and although they intermarried with the aborigines of the country and became naturalized in the land of their adoption, yet they probably succeeded in proselytising a portion of the simple inhabitants to their own Brahmanical religion. In this way the original Newars of Nepal became divided into two classes, professing different religion,—the majority being Buddhists, the minority Hindus.

"The Newars, Buddhists and the Newar Hindus both, being sprung originally from the same common stock have always lived together in a state of perfect peace; and the followers of the two rival creeds have never had their social intercourse disgraced or embittered by religious feuds and animosities. This friendly and free intercourse with Hindus has, however, been purchased very dearly, as it has been fatal to the purity of the Buddhist faith in Nepal.

"The distinctions of caste, which were consistently retained by the Hindu Newars, were gradually adopted, for the sake of uniformity and the convenience of social intercourse, by the Buddhist Newars also. The Hindu Newars have retained until the present day the fourfold division of classes into Brahmans, Kshetryas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, but it was utterly opposed to the fundamental principles of their religion for the Buddhist Newars to adopt this or any other system of caste. The force of example, however, and their constant association with Hindus, led to the gradual introduction of a modified system of caste among the Buddhist Newars. It has existed from time immemorial, but it has not the sanction of religion, it is opposed to the scriptures, and is based upon popular usage, and on such usage alone.

This universal adoption of caste by the Buddhist Newars naturally led to the gradual decline of the purely monastic institutions which had hitherto flourished among them. As long as society was divided only into the religious and secular orders, and when the ranks of the Church

were open to all who were prepared to take and keep the necessary vows, monasteries and convents were required for the accomodation of those who abandoned worldly pursuits, and sacrificed their temporal prospects, in order that they might devote themselves exclusively to a holy and religious life.

“When, however, the Buddhist community adopted the system of caste, when celibacy on the part of the clergy was no longer necessary, and the sacred calling of the priests became, like all other occupations, hereditary in certain classes, then monastic institutions became superfluous; and though the existing establishments were maintained, yet they gradually lost their exclusively religious character.”

The position deteriorated further at the time of King Jayasthiti Malla (1380 - 1394 A. D.) who enacted many compulsory social laws and divided the people into 64 castes. This was further aggravated by the first Rana Prime Minister Janga Bahadur (1857—1877 A.D) who codified laws making proselytising a serious offence punishable by law. This law applied only against conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism and/or other religion but not vice-versa. It is no wonder, therefore, that Dr. Oldfield laments in his “SKETCHES FROM NEPAL” regarding Buddhism.

“It (Buddhism) is now in the last stage of its existence ; it is rapidly being supplanted by Hinduism ; and before the lapse of another century, the religion of Buddha—after enduring for upwards of two thousand years—will, in all probability, be as extinct in Nepal as in the plains of Hindustan.”

In line with the observation of Dr. Oldfield, in Nepal, the home of Lord Buddha, Buddhism remained stagnant. It was not, however, due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of the populace. It was due to the hostile policy of the autocratic and oligarchical government in power against Buddhism. Yet, people continued to worship and offer prayers in their traditional manner in their homes and in the temples and Viharas. Finding it impossible to spread

Buddhism in Nepal itself, Sri Dharmaditya Dharmacharyya (now Sri Jagatman) published a Buddhist journal in Nepalbhasa (Newari) from Calcutta named "BUDDHADHARMA VA NEPALBHASA" and also an English journal named "Buddhist India". He also organised many Buddhist conferences in India. In this effort, he received full co-operation, help and inspiration from the Maha Bodhi Society of India and specially from its founder the late Anagarika Dharmapala. This was during the twenties and thirties of the 20th century. Even the religious journal was banned in Nepal, as it was found that it attempted the renaissance of Buddhism in Nepal.

At this time, in the year Vikram Sambat 1981 (circa 1924 A.D.) a Tibetan Lama named Kyangtse came from the eastern province of the Tibet Region named Kham to Nepal. All the way he came prostrating and praying. When he reached the valley he began to preach the gospel of Lord Buddha, in various places. Soon he became very popular. And inspired by the "Buddhadharma Va Nepalbhasa" and the preachings of this Kyangtse Lama the dormant intellect of the Buddhist population was beginning to reawake. In a way the advent of this Tibetan Lama can be taken as a return gift from Tibet Region and other places of China where the Nepalese Princess, the bride of the Tibetan King Srong-tsan-gompo, had spread Buddhism and where the Nepalese artist Aniko contributed to the Buddhist architecture. And at this time one such ardent worker Sri Yogbirsing published a Buddhist poem entitled "Sansara Sagara Biche" (In Midst of This Universe).

But this was not tolerated by the then Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher who fined this Buddhist poet and the publisher of the poem Sri Bhavanibirsing Rs. 10/- each for composing and publishing the poem respectively. At the same time attempts were made to foment quarrels among the Buddhists by bringing in the question of violating the rules of the caste system which had been by now compulsorily introduced among the Buddhist populace also.

In the year 1926 A. D. a Tibetan Lama Tsering Norbu by name, who came to Nepal to repair the Swayambhu Stupa, was meditating in the holy Nagarjuna Hill. Many people were impressed by him and five among them were ordained as Bhikshus including a non-Buddhist whom he named Mahapragna. This development also roused the ire of the then Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher, who at once exiled the Bhikshus and the Lama. The Lama was not even allowed to repair the Stupa.

In Vikram Sambat 1987 (about the year 1930 A. D.) eleven persons—Yogbirsingh, Manikman, Dharmaman, Karunaratna, Siddhiratna, Dasratna (now Sthavir Dhammakok), Khadgaraj, Manjuharsha, Mandas, Harshadas, and Chittadhar was prosecuted, under a charge of spreading an Ostentatious Religion, and deported out of the Kathmandu valley simply because they preached non-violence and exhorted the people not to sacrifice animals or eat meat or drink, true to the tenets of Buddhism. Before deportation they were whipped personally by the then Prime Minister Bhim Shamsher.

Towards the end of Vikram Sambat 1998 (A. D. 1941), Bhikshu (now Sthavir) Amritananda returned to Nepal after his studies in Ceylon. By his eloquence he collected a fair number of admirers. At this time, other Bhikshus, Bramaners and Anagarikas also returned from Burma, Ceylon and India. He was also joined by Bhikshu Saarnankar and Mahasthavir Chandramani. They all propagated the message of Lord Buddha in the Swayambhu Parbatsthan, Kindol Vihar and other places and kindled the faith of many people in Buddhism. This was not, however, tolerated by the then Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher and about a dozen of Bhikshus who were on Varshavas (monsoon repair) were expelled from Nepal, in the year 1944 A.D. And the next year even a group of chorus prayers known as Gnanamala Bhajan Khala were arrested and prosecuted for singing Buddhist songs. Bhaktabahadur, the publisher and seller of the book "Gnanamala" was also arrested and his shop closed. This was a sequel to an order which the Prime

Minister had served on the Bhikshus without success. On 30th July 1944, the Nepal Government (Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher) had served a notice to the Bhikshus to cease forthwith (1) the giving of sermons (2) the performing and observing of Buddhist ceremonies and festivals and (3) the ordaining of any one into the Sangha (not even one born a Buddhist). An even stranger injunction was added that the monks and nuns must return to worldly life. A time limit of three days was given to think it over. The Bhikshus refused to obey this very impossible command and hence they had to leave Nepal even during the Vassana (rainy season repair). The nuns were, however, permitted to remain in the Viharas during the Vasaana, on condition that they are to return to lay life at the end of the period, but if they decided contrary they too faced expulsion.

The Bhikshus arrived at various places in India and some went to Tibet Region and China. Thus in a way Dr. Oldfield's prophesy came true partially. But it came true only partially, because Buddhism, though it sustained many persecutions, did not become extinct in Nepal.

The news of the expulsion of the Bhikshus was received with much surprise and great grief by the Buddhist world. Meetings were held in several countries to protest against the unjust treatment meted out to the Sangha in Nepal. The Maha Bodhi Society of Ceylon wrote ; "It gave a great shock to hear that the Nepalese Theravadian Bhikshus have been driven away from Nepal." Extending the hospitality of a Vihara under kindlier skies, the M. B. S. of India wrote : "If those who are exiled have no place to stay, they are all welcome at our Sarnath centre." A similar kind invitation was forthcoming from the Maha Nayaka Thera Pelene Siri Vajiranana of Ceylon. The Ven U. Dhammisara, presiding priest of the Burmese Buddhists of Banaras pleaded with the Maharaja, the President of the Burmese Buddhist Society, India, the Ven U. Anandapanditabiwuntha also wrote a long letter to the Maharaja (Prime Minister of Nepal) and explained the purpose and mission of Buddhism to him. He wrote in his letter—".....It is a matter of regret to all the Burmese Buddhists to hear this news and it

will naturally have the same effect on the Buddhists all over the world irrespective of race or creed when they hear about this deplorable incident.....”

The monks in exile conceived the advisability of forming a society in order to maintain some sort of cohesion amongst themselves and to do such service as they could possibly render to the Sasana. On 30th November 1944, a meeting was convened at Sarnath by the Bhikshus and some Nepalese philanthropists living at that time in India and the *Dharmodaya Sabha* was founded with the Ven. U. Chandramani Mahasthavir and Bhadant Ananda Kausalyayana as the President and Vice-President respectively. And Bhikshu Amritananda, the pioneer Buddhist worker as the General Secretary of the Sabha. Membership of the organisation was thrown open to the laity too.

In 1946 on the request of Bhikshu Amritananda a Goodwill Mission from Ceylon, under the leadership of the Ven. Narada Thera and with Bhikshu Amritananda, Bhikshu Priyadarshi, Dr. Ratnasurya, Professor Aryapal as members visited Nepal. The mission also secured the permission for one among the exiled monks to return home at once and an assurance that the ban on the return of the rest of the monks will also be lifted soon. This happened during the Prime Ministership of Padma Shumsher. The Ven. Narada Maha Thera, leader of the mission, was also able to obtain permission to build a Chaitya at Ananda Kuti, Kathmandu in Ceylone's style.

The Venerable Narada Maha Thera visited Kathmandu again for the opening ceremony of the Sri Lanka Chaitya where a sacre relic brought from Ceylon was enshrined. A sapling of the sacred Bo Tree of Anuradhapura was also planted and a Sima for Bhikshus was established. Mohan Shumsher, the then Prime Minister declared Vaisakha Purnima a holiday for Buddhists in the service of the Nepal Government. Gradually but steadily Theravada Buddhism thus gained ground in Nepal. Since the return of the monks many Viharas were built at Kathmandu, Patan, Bhojpur, Pokhra and Palpa Tansen in Nepal. In this task a number

of Nepalese merchants residing in India and Tibet also helped a great deal. The headquarters of Dharmodaya Sabha was removed to Kalimpong in 1947 and after the advent of democracy in Nepal, the headquarter has been removed to Kathmandu.

With the establishment of a democratic Government in Vikram Sambat 2007 (1951/51 A.D.), the Dharmodaya Sabha was able to extend its activities and similarly the Buddhists were now at liberty to profess their faith freely. Consequently, a number of Tibetan monasteries were also built in the Swayambhu Mount. The late King His Majesty Tribhuvana Bir Bikram Shah Deva visited Anandakuti Vihara and participated in the Buddha Puja on Vaisakh Purnima in 1951, thus breaking the age old tradition of the Gurkha rulers which forbade them the worship of the Buddha. On that same occasion, the then Minister for Home Affairs, the Honourable Sri Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala announced that His Majesty's Government have been pleased to declare Vaisakh Purnima a national holiday.

With the active support and co-operation of the Government, the Dharmodaya Sabha was able to bring the sacred relics of Sariputta and Moggallana Arhants to Kathmandu from India. A semi-official reception committee was formed for the purpose with following members :

President—The late King His Majesty Tribhuvana Bir Bikram. Vice-Presidents—Ministers for Home Affair, Sri B. P. Koirala and Minister for Commerce, Sri G. M. Singh. Secretary—Bhikshu Amritananda. Assistant Secretaries—Sri Kuladharmaratna M. A (Com.), B. L. and Sri Kulratna, B. E. Treasurers—Sri Bhajuratna and Sri Pushparatna. Publicity Members—Professor Narayan Bahadur M.A., Ph.D., Sri Daya Bir Singh, and Sri Tirtha Narayan.

The relics were received at Gauchar aerodrome in Kathmandu with all due solemnity. The late King Tribhuvan personally went to the airfield and received the relics and brought them to his palace where they were kept overnight before handing over to the Sabha for worship at various places. And He placed His personal Dakota at the disposal

of the Delegates who came from India, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Ceylon, Greece, England, Germany, etc. A mammoth meeting was held at Kathmandu to welcome the relics. It was an international event unparalleled in the history of Nepal. In the same year a Buddhist boarding school was opened at the Swayambhu Mount by Bhikkhu Amritananda Thera.

Since the discovery of the Asokan pillar and the temple of Maha-Maya, the Mother of Lord Buddha, worldwide interest has been aroused. And thanks to the late King H. M. Tribhuvan and His ex-Prime Minister, the Hon'ble Sri M P. Koirala, the sacred site has been handed over to a Committee consisting of two government officials (the adjoining district Bada Hakims), one local non-official representative and three nominees of the Dharmodaya Sabha in the year 1952 A.D. The immediate programme of the Sabha in regard to Lumbini is to make provisions for the residence of a Bhikkhu, to construct roads and to provide facilities for the visit and lodging of pilgrims. And the construction works towards these objectives are going apace.

The present King His Majesty Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev also, like Emperor Asoka, visited the sacred site of Lumbini and celebrated the National Day of Nepal on 7th Falgun 2012 (1956 A.D.) and gave Abhayadan to the mute animals by forbidding the slaughter of animals in the whole kingdom of Nepal on every Vaisakh Poornima (full-moon) day. Verily a Mahendra Pillar is being erected to commemorate this occasion.

And this year (1956 A.D.) in November His Majesty King Mahendra's Government is giving every assistance and co-operation to the Dharmodaya Sabha in conducting the Fourth Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in the land of Lord Buddha's birth—Nepal. All possible help—financial or otherwise have not been spared during the preparation for this an historic event in the annals of Buddhism in Nepal, nay the whole world.

This is how this supreme event in Nepal materialised. To the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference held at

Colombo in 1950, the Dharmodaya Sabha sent a two-man delegation consisting of the Ven. Amritananda and Sri Maniharsha Jyoti, Hony. Treasurer. Nepal was then recognised as a regional centre and a member of the Nepal, Assam and Bhutan group taken in the General Council. The Second World Buddhist Conference was held in Japan in 1952. And this time also Bhikkhu Amritananda led the delegation from Nepal with Kesharlal as Secretary. The Third World Buddhist Conference was held in Rangoon, Burma in 1954. This time also Bhikkhu Amritananda attended the conference as representative from Nepal. It is in this conference that he proposed the next conference should be held in Nepal. He carried with him the message of the late King His Majesty Tribhuvan which concludes thus—"I am happy to let all of you know on this auspicious occasion that my Government are intending to invite a World Buddhist Conference on the occasion of Buddha Sambat 2,500." He had also with him the ex Prime Minister, M. P. Koirala's message which concludes—"It is a privilege for us to be associated with this conference and I have the pleasure to inform you that the Fourth World Buddhist Conference will be held in Nepal under the auspices of the Dharmodaya Sabha to which the Government of Nepal have assured full support in holding it. I hope the proposal will be acceptable and I look forward to meeting you in this sacred birth-place of Lord Buddha." The year 1956 being the 2,500th anniversary of the Maha Pari Nirvana of Lord Buddha, it was thought fit that the conference be held in the land of the Lord's birth. And the proposal was unanimously accepted in the conference.

During the interval between the third and this fourth conference, the Dharmodaya Sabha received an invitation from Japan to attend the World Religionists Conference held at Tokyo, and other parts of Japan in 1955. One of the members of the Dharmodaya Sabha, Sri Kuldharma Ratna M.A. (Com.), B.L., represented the Sabha in this conference, which was held in August 1955. At the Osaka Conference, he was elected leader of the foreign

delegates where he spoke as follows :—

“We the foreign delegates, attending this first and historic conference, in which delegates from different parts of the world and composed of many faiths have gathered at one place to seek the way for peace, are very happy indeed on account of the warm reception given to us by the religionists of Japan. For me specially, who have come from Nepal, the birth place of Lord Buddha, this effort towards peace gives much more happiness, because the essential aim of Buddhism is peace and democracy. In the history of Buddhism, there never has been fighting or war in the name of religion such as Jihad or Crusade. And if this conference could be able to be a harbinger of unity and fraternity among the different religions of the world and thus strengthen the path of peace and democracy, we would feel that the aim of this conference would have been amply achieved.”

And this year, after the conclusion of the Fourth World Fellowship Conference of the Buddhists in Nepal, Bhikkhu Amritananda Sthavir, President of Dharmodaya Sabha is going to participate in the 2500 Buddha Fellowship Jayanti Celebrations in India at the invitation of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru as the Honorary Chairman of the Working Committee. During the celebrations lasting three weeks from November 23, 1956, a symposium is going to be held in New Delhi in the last day of which Bhikkhu Amritananda Sthavir is going to deliver the discourse the subject being — “MESSAGE OF BUDDHA.” And it is also fitting to the occasion of the year 1956 when the 2500 Buddha Jayanti Celebrations are going on in India that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar with two hundred thousand (2,00,000) followers have embraced Buddhism finding it as the religion best suited for unity and fraternity among mankind and for the peace of the world.

Thus for the good of Nepal and also for the good of India, Dr. Oldfield's ominous prophecy about the extinction of Buddhism in Nepal and India did not materialize. Though Buddhism received a little setback for some time,

with the dawn of independence in India and of democracy in Nepal, Buddhism is flourishing again not only in these countries but in other distant corners of the globe also. Truly, Buddhism is now experiencing a glorious renaissance as a democratic religion transcending the materialistic ideologies of this age.

It will thus be seen that the advent of democracy in Nepal coincided with the renaissance of Buddhism in Nepal. But much still remains to be achieved. The old laws of the caste system, which is against the tenets of Buddhism, are still applicable even to Buddhists of Nepal. And the laws against conversion are still in force discriminating one religion against the other. These laws have to be changed according to the principles of democracy. But there is reason to hope and believe that will be done so in not distant future.

The late King His Majesty Tribhuvan in His speech in the mammoth public meeting held in honour of the Relics of Sariputra and Maudgalyayana in 1951 A.D. declared : "Today's event reminds us once again that there is an ideal yet to be pursued by mankind, and that is the ideal of Buddha. when the world is groping in the dark, the solitary light of the great Buddha beckons us and guides our steps.

Our country is undergoing a tremendous change and the proces of change necessarily brings about some kind of dislocation in the psychology of the people as also in the social and political structure. After a great shake-up, Nepal has taken the first decisive steps towards Democracy. Old order is giving place to new.

"...But it is a matter of pride for the people and my Government that normalcy was so soon restored and the country made to advance on peaceful lines towards Democracy based on social justice."

Further, Nepal being a "CONFLUENCE OF VARIOUS CULTURES" as described by no less a person than Dr. Rajendra Prosad the cultured and learned Presi-

dent of the Republic of India during his state visit to Nepal, in this valuable speeches, we can safely hope and prophesy that the evil and/or undemocratic phases of cultures will die out or thrown away during the continued process of fusion and synthesis that is going on in Nepal.

For this Nepal has a very strong background. It was during the reign of Jayasthiti Malla who had a very marked Brahmanic tendency that one of the most famous Buddhist temples of Nepal—Maha Buddha of Patan was built. And it is Joodha Shumsher, though apathetic to Buddhist monks, who rebuilt or repaired this temple after the great earthquake of Vikram Sambat 1990 (cilca 1934 A.D.). Again it is Jayasthiti Malla who, despite his marked Brahmanic tendency, worked with fervour and piety to restore the ancient stupa of Swayambhu which had been partly destroyed during a previous century before his reign.

King Ranabahdur of the Shah Dynasty (1774—1805 A.D.), though a Hindu Royalty, have composed a Buddhist song in Nepalbahsha (Newari) entitled—“Sri Karunamaya Lokanatha Darshan Yaye Nhan.” (See “Dharmodaya” Vaisakha Poornima Special, May/June 1956). And King Rajendra Bickram Shah of the same dynasty and religion (1816—1846 A.D.) has written a drama entitled “Mahasattwo Raja” (based on the Byaghri Jataka) in Nepalbahsha (Newari), a Buddhist play. This drama is going to be staged by the Nasha-Khalak (Dramatic Society) for the benefit of the delegates to the Fourth World Buddhist Conference in Nepal.

Mention has already been made of the late King H. M. Tribhuvan's espousal of the cause of Buddhism. And the very fact that the construction works of Lumbini is proceeding on and the holding of the Fourth World Buddhist Conferenc in Nepal is happening during the reign of the present King of Nepal His Majesty Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev are proofs enough of the espousal of and support given to the cause of Buddhism in Nepal by the Shah Dynasty, though the Kings themselves profess Hindu faith.

And there is no doubt that the tradition and the unique culture of Nepal, perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the world, will prompt the people of Nepal irrespective of their faith towards the effort to make the Fourth World Buddhist Conference in Nepal a grand success. For never before in the history of Nepal such an event of International importance has taken place. Invitations have been issued to 42 countries to send their delegates and observers to the conference, while 8 heads of state also have been invited to attend the conference. And their presence in Nepal will give an opportunity to the Nepalese—the people and the Government of Nepal—to demonstrate to the world her culture of the “Confluence of cultures” and of mutual co-existence and goodwill among people of different faiths. This will no doubt be a significant contribution of Nepal to the world which is suffering from mutual animosity. For Nepal has never forgotten the following significant words of Lord Buddha—“Hatred is never ended by hatred in this world. Through loving-kindness it comes to an end. This is an ancient Law.”

Verily Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, in laying the foundation stone of the monument to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of Buddha in New Delhi said—

“It is good to remember the message of the Buddha today when the world is torn with conflicting forces and there is not only talk of war, but war preparations are going on and big nations opposed to each other speak in voices full of anger. It is a strange thing that when the “off-spring of the sword” should have grown into such devilish proportions, this 2500 year-old soft voice of peace and love should still ring in people’s ears. How many military geniuses the world has seen, who conquered large territories and earned fame and glory and acclamation in their time. The world has, however, forgotten them. But this soft voice this voice of the Buddha even now rings in our ears and often to some extent puts us to shame because in this past thousands of year, we did not understand and learn it fully

and often wrong things were done. Even so, by remembering the Buddha, the greatest son of India, good is done. The Buddha's teachings and message have their effect on all peoples, whether they believe in religion or not. The message is for all and it is for this reason that we all are drawn towards the Buddha's ideas. If the world understands even a little of these ideas and ideals of the Buddha, then it will bring good to us and the world."

But Buddha is not the greatest son of India only. He is the son of Nepal also and for that matter of the whole of Asia and the World. For though Buddha was born in Nepal and He attained Enlightenment and Nirvana in India, his message and ideals are for the whole of humanity and more than one-third of the world's population profess the faith now, which in the beginning he first preached to His five disciples. Writes Dr. Oldfield in his "SKETCHES FROM NEPAL":—

"Besides being more or less prevalent through the whole length of the Himalayan mountains, Buddhism is now the established religion in Ceylon, in Burmah, in Siam, in China and the greater portion of Chinese and Russian Tartary.

If the populations of these countries be calculated, it will be found that now, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the religion of Buddha is still professed by a larger portion of the human race than has ever before been brought to agree in the belief of any other creed whatever, either in ancient or modern times."

To day, in the middle of the twentieth century, we can say that besides the above countries Buddhism is now prevalent in Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Japan and many other countries of Asia. Buddhism is now slowly but steadily spreading in the new world, the American continent, and in many European countries—which to day are the places where the message and ideals of Buddha can do the greatest good to the greatest numbers. It is a happy augury to find that those countries are also being represented in the Fourth World Buddhist Conference in Nepal.

This, then, is the spirit of Buddhism in Nepal. And this is the spirit of Nepal, the confluence of various cultures, where not only Buddhism and Hinduism co-exist together but also their different sects do co exist together. This is amply illustrated by the close existence of the now famous Mahabudha and Srikrishna temples, the Bhimsen and other shrines and the Buddhist Viharas in Patan or Laliptur, the city of fine arts, so far as co-existence of Buddhism and Hinduism goes. And now as for the co-existence of the different sects, we can very well point out the proximity of the famous Pashupatinath and Ram Mandir temples at one and the same place. This is an example of the peaceful and mutual co-existence of the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects of Hinduism. And as for the same kind of happy relations among the different sects of Buddhism, one has only to visit and see for oneself the Mahayana, Vajrayana and Hinayana or Theravad monasteries and Viharas and temples flourishing side by side in the Swayambhu mount. The holy places of Guhyaswori and Vajrajogini are visited and worshipped by both the Buddhists and the Hindus of all sects.

If the countries who are going to be represented in this Fourth World Buddhist Conference and also the rest of the world would try to emulate this heritage of Nepal, then most of the animosity now prevailing in this earth would soon vanish. And this would then be the high light of the Fourth World Buddhist Conference in Nepal and the significant and weighty contribution of "Buddhism and Nepal" to the whole world.

THE END

DHARMODAYA PUBLICATIONS

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Dharmodaya Sabha, Srigha Vihar, Naghal Tole.
Kathmandu, Nepal.

Printed at
Thacker, Spink, Calcutta (India).