



# Pragmatic Movements of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal

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## Abstract

*Buddhism demonstrates a tremendous capacity for pragmatism, which allows it to coexist with current religions. This study demonstrates how it works on behalf of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. However, the Theravada tradition in Nepal is still in its early stages, therefore comparisons with other Theravada countries are inappropriate. But how did it become a big Buddhist sect in Nepal? This study's data was collected using both an ethnographic and descriptive method. The monks' existence and various undertakings closely resemble practices found in other Theravada communities. Nonetheless, there is a tendency to incorporate practical methods, such as the well-established Newar traditions of interim ordination, as long as they do not violate the ideals of Theravada Buddhism. The rising interest in Newar culture and literature is inextricably linked to the Theravada mission within the Newar community, and it is beginning to attract attention from other ethnic groups as well. The significance of this study is to demonstrate the adoptability of Buddhism and pragmatic movements in establishing brand new religious communities in a short period of time.*

**Keywords:** *Theravada, Movements, History, Monastic, Pariyatti, Hymns*

## Introduction

Theravada was reintroduced in Nepal less than a century ago<sup>1</sup>. However, it has long been recognized as one of the major Buddhist traditions in Nepal. Specific pragmatic movements that were established in Nepalese society. The cultural adaptation of specific

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1 Bhikshu Mahanam (ed.) (1958). *Dharmodaya*, No. 135. Calcutta. p. 26

Vinaya norms, along with leniency on some regulations and community duty, enhances the appeal of Theravada Buddhism. The integration of religious life with the substance of Buddhist teachings, presented in a simplified manner and made accessible to all, enhances their appeal. The experience of early monastic life, along with a focus on morality and mental purification, allows individuals to encounter authentic Buddhism. Adaptation to local cultures creates their own identity. Literature in one's native tongue is perceived as a personal possession. Regular Dhamma talks, discussions, questions and answers, or debates enhance their knowledge significantly, without question. Pariyatti education for children and the elderly established the foundation for Theravada Buddhism<sup>2</sup>. Result-oriented activities such as health camps and pilgrimages attract youth. The practice of mindfulness meditation intensified their commitment to Theravada Buddhism.

Consequently, the objective of this study is to elucidate the pragmatic developments of Theravada in Nepal. This research endeavors to examine the historical progression of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal by exploring significant movements. This research will utilize an ethnographic approach alongside library resources to achieve its aims. The work will be formatted according to MLA guidelines. This study's constraints are derived from the Pali Vinaya literature, examined through the lens of Theravada Buddhism within the Kathmandu Valley.

The history of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal is intricate, with evidence tracing back to the lifetime of the Buddha. There exists a body of evidence suggesting that Buddhism enjoyed considerable popularity during the era of the Buddha in Nepal. There exists substantial evidence suggesting that the Buddha journeyed to Nepal, imparted teachings to his relatives and fellow Buddhists, and conferred ordination upon Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis.<sup>3</sup> King Asoka of India visited Lumbini, Nepal, in 250 BC and erected a stone pillar inscribed in Prākṛit marking the birthplace of Sakyamuni Buddha with the phrase 'Hida Buddha Jāje Sakyamuniti'<sup>4</sup>. Chinese travelers Fa Hian and Hiuen Tsang documented the presence of stupas, monasteries, and numerous Hinayana monks in their travel narratives. Political instability characterized by frequent changes of leadership did not benefit Theravāda Buddhism. Newar Buddhism appears to have emerged subsequently to sustain Buddhist practices. The Rana government prohibited all Buddhist religious practices and permitted traditional Buddhists to convert to Hinduism.

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2 Sabita Dhakhwa Shakya (2021). *Nepalma Buddha Sasanako baliyo Adhara Baudha Pariyatti Shikshya*, In Pariyatti Pravaha Vol. I. All Nepal Bhikkhu Association. Kathmandu, p. 1

3 Triratna Manandhar (2005). 'Present of Buddhism in Nepal', Lumbini; A Journal of the LNBDS UK, Vol. 8. p. 15

4 Gautam V. Bajracharya (2019). *Lumbine Hida Buddha Jate Sakya Muniti*. Taradevi Bajracharya, Lalitpur, p. 103

Theravada Buddhism was reintroduced in Nepal in the late 19th century by Nepalese individuals who encountered the Maha Bodhi Society of India. The activities of the Maha Bodhi Society motivated Nepalese, primarily traditional Buddhists, traders, and pilgrims, who significantly contributed to the Theravada revival movement in contemporary Nepal. Students of Buddhism, including Mr. Jagatman Vaidya, who traveled to India for advanced study, spearheaded the Theravada Buddhist revival movement with the assistance of the Mahabodhi Society. Jagatman Vaidya, thereafter recognized as Dharmaditya Dharmacariya, dedicated most of his time and efforts to the Buddhist Revivalist movement in Nepal, disseminating Buddhist periodicals in multiple languages and advocating for Buddha Jayanti, an annual celebration in contemporary Nepal. He ended animal slaughter at the Mayadevi temple in Lumbini and restored Kindol Vihar in Kathmandu, establishing it as the focal point for the Theravada revival movement.

Nepalese adolescents underwent Theravada ordination in 1928, with Ven. Mahapragna, a Hindu Shrestha, being the first. He was ordained as a Gelung in the Tibetan school in 1926 and subsequently converted to Theravada Buddhism. Pragyananda, who transitioned from Gelung to Theravada, was the inaugural, yellow-robed monk to emerge in the Kathmandu valley. He was apprehended for his conversion, incarcerated, fined, and subsequently freed. He undertook a pilgrimage to India with many devotees, culminating in the inaugural ordination of a nun in Theravada Buddhism in contemporary Nepal. Ven. Amritananda was a notable Buddhist scholar and a key figure in the resurgence of Theravada Buddhism in contemporary Nepal<sup>5</sup>. He was ordained by Ven. Chandramani, a Burmese monk, at Kusinagara in 1936 CE and was incarcerated alongside Ven. Mahapragna in Bhojpur in 1937<sup>6</sup>. In 1942, he returned to Nepal and delivered speeches at Ven. Dharmaloka's invitation during the vassavasa period<sup>7</sup>. This represented a significant advancement during the isolationist Rana regime, which prohibited public gatherings owing to concerns over political instability. The exiled monks established 'Dharmodaya Sabha', the inaugural Buddhist organization in Nepal, with assistance from various Buddhist entities and individuals. Ven. Amritananda composed a letter of protest to the Nepalese government and solicited support from other Buddhist organizations on behalf of Dharmodaya Sabha. In 1946, he visited Sri Lanka and initiated a goodwill expedition to Nepal. Ven. Narada visited Nepal thrice, erected a Sri Lankan Cetiya at Anandakuti Vihar, and instituted the first Sima (Uposatha) for Bhikkhus at the Vihara. He petitioned Prime Minister Mohana Shamasher J.

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5 Amritananda, B. (1986). *A short history of Theravada Buddhism in modern Nepal*. Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust. p. 8

6 Amritananda, (1986), p. 3

7 Bajracharya, N. B. (1992). *Amritanjali: A homage*. Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust. p. 32

Rana to designate Baisakh Purnima as a public holiday, which was approved. Since then, Theravada Buddhism has proliferated within Nepalese society and advanced significantly.

In 1950, democracy supplanted the despotic Rana monarchy, resulting in the swift advancement of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. Buddhist monks and nuns were permitted to perform their responsibilities unimpeded across the nation. In 1951, Bhikkhu Sangha, under the leadership of Ven. Amritananda, established the All-Nepal Bhikkhu Association to advance the dissemination of Buddhism<sup>8</sup>. He performed a pivotal role in disseminating Theravada Buddhism across the nation, traveling to numerous countries and transporting relics of Sariputta and Maudhgalyana to Nepal. In 1956, King Mahendra visited Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace, and proclaimed Buddha Jayanti as a public holiday. Theravada Buddhist monasteries were established, facilitating Buddhist education, Buddhapuja, meditation, public talks, the printing of Buddhist scriptures, and mass ordination. Burma (Myanmar), Sri Lanka, Thailand, and additional nations assisted Nepal in its endeavor for Theravada resurrection. Theravada monks and nuns furthermore established complimentary health clinics, training facilities, elder care centers, and kindergartens. In 1964, the All-Nepal Bhikkhu Sangha developed a Theravada educational framework known as Pariyatti Sikkha, which conducts classes in Theravada Buddhist monasteries, Tibetan monasteries, and several other Buddhist institutes. Buddhist organizations operate educational institutions and research centers. The resurgence of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal significantly influenced the cultural and religious practices of the Nepalese, incorporating daily chanting, temporary ordination, adherence to Sila, the dismantling of the caste system, Vesak Day celebrations, and a celibate lifestyle. Ven. Sudharshan established the Sri Kirti Buddhist Center in Sri Kirti Vihar, with the objective as a movement of disseminating Buddhism to other ethnic groups, especially the indigenous populations of the Kathmandu Valley<sup>9</sup>. This initiative effectively integrated several ethnic groups into Theravada Buddhism, resulting in the establishment of Buddhist conferences and events. The Gyanmala Bhajan Khala, a Buddhist hymn ensemble, has effectively advanced Buddhism through uncomplicated, melodic melodies. Theravada monks and nuns possess a distinctive identity in Nepal, engaging in Buddhist rituals while concurrently adhering to Hindu traditions. Theravada Buddhism is distinctive in Nepal because it encompasses three distinct traditions: Newar Buddhism (Vajrayana), Tibetan Buddhism (Vajrayana), and Theravada Buddhism. These traditions persist in contemporary Nepal, with adherents remaining unchanged. Theravada Buddhism attained prominence in Nepal due to its straightforward teachings, the austere lifestyles of monks, advantageous initiatives, and pragmatic endeavors conducted by Viharas. Despite its relatively small size

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<sup>8</sup> Vipassi, n.d., p. 102

<sup>9</sup> S.M. Sujano. (n.d.). *Theravada Buddhism in Modern Nepal*. Lumbini Nepalese Buddha Dharma Society. UK. p. 29

compared to other Asian nations, the population of monks, nuns, and monasteries under this tradition is on the rise, establishing it as a significant religious tradition in Nepal.

The Theravada tradition flourished and integrated into Nepalese religious life due to prompt movements. Ven. Mahāprajñā, Prajñānanda, and Amritananda significantly contributed to the institutional advancement of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal by establishing the Dharmodaya Sabha, the All-Nepal Bhikshu Association, and translating Buddhist scriptures. Ven. Ven. Buddhaghosa, Ven. Ashwaghosa, Ven. Sudharshan, Ven. Jnanpurnika, and Ven. Dhammavati advanced the cause by establishing training facilities, educational institutions for diverse ethnic groups, publishing materials, and providing social services. Currently, Newar Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism are all recognized as legitimate Buddhist lineages within Nepalese society. Here are several movements that have been highly successful and continue to be followed to this day.

### ***Pabbajita - The Renunciate Life***

The monastic lifestyle has consistently been a fundamental aspect of Buddhism from the time of Sakyamuni Buddha. If there are renunciates, Buddhism will thrive along its historic path. The primary aim of promoting Theravāda is to augment the number of mendicants. Historically, layman Jagatman Vaidya introduced Theravada Buddhism to Nepal, but it truly flourished with the commitment of young monks and nuns who devoted their lives to its practice. It appears that Theravāda has consistently been the predominant movement in Nepal.

Until now, it has been customary for Nepalese monks to study in Burma (Myanmar), Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Since 1966, Thai Buddhists have articulated their desire to assist in the spread of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. Currently, over 200 monks and novices reside in 120 monasteries. Kathmandu is home to 90 monasteries<sup>10</sup>. Nepal has a total of 28 nunneries. A majority of the 210 nuns predominantly chose to reside independently in nunnery monasteries, but some choose to live alongside monks<sup>11</sup>. Currently, the practice of temporarily becoming monks or nuns is gaining popularity among the Nepalese.

Similar to the early monks and nuns, they originated from Newar families. Currently, it is integrated with all castes, ranging from Brahmins to Dalits. The current situation is markedly different; the Newars are significantly diminishing in number as they transition to renunciates. Primarily originated from ethnic groups external to the Kathmandu Valley,

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<sup>10</sup> Data provided by Bhikshu Bodhijnana, Treasurer, All Nepal Bhikkhu Association.

<sup>11</sup> Data provided by Anagarika Subhawati, Secretary, Youth Anagarika Association.

namely Magar, Tamang, and Tharu. Moreover, the Thakuris from Karnali are progressively increasing in population in Nepal<sup>12</sup>.

The monasteries or structures they occupy are provided to them for this reason by secular individuals. Some possess private resources for their sustenance, while others rely on contributions. The majority have not married and joined the order at an early age. Their motivations for choosing a religious life include the pursuit of education, the desire to escape the demands of domestic life, and the aspiration for spiritual fulfillment and greater purpose<sup>13</sup>. The monks' religious activities include meditation, study of canonical scriptures, recitation of texts, Puja, preaching, and teaching.

Due to the emphasis on quality of life and education centered on morals, parents are happy to relinquish their child. A weak family background provided significant compensation for the child's future. Another factor is the fascination with studying abroad in foreign nations regardless of the circumstances. Currently, there is a trend of emigration in Nepal. A further reason is a Buddhist familial background, wherein individuals study Buddhism, endeavor to engage in Buddhist practices, experience inner peace, and disseminate Buddhist teachings. Some devotees renounce worldly life to embrace a noble existence, dedicating their remaining time to the Dhamma.

### ***Caryā* - Monastic Routine**

The sole purpose for renunciates is the attainment of Nibbana. To attain liberation from the cycle of suffering, one should renounce in pursuit of the realization of Nirvana (*Samsāra vatta dukkhato mocanattāya Pabbājāṃ mē Yacāmi*.)<sup>14</sup> All activities are directed towards the attainment of Nibbana. Most monks and nuns begin their routines with an early awakening. They perform pujas and meditate for several hours before having breakfast. On most days, there is a donor for breakfast. Following breakfast, they typically engage in Dhamma discourse and Paritta chanting as a kind of blessing. Subsequently, they possess some leisure time, as most young monks and nuns typically attend colleges or universities for advanced education. Other senior monks have leisure time till lunch at 11. Currently, most of the chanting or Dhamma discourse sessions occur prior to lunch. All lunch events in monasteries or at devotees' residences will conclude before 12 noon due to Vinaya regulations<sup>15</sup>.

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12 Mim Shakyā. Co-ordinator, Vishwa Shanti Baudha Shikshyalaya.

13 Bhikshu Jnanpurnika (trans.) (1970). *Yahmaha Mmhyaye*. Dharmakirti Vihara. Kathamandu.

14 Bhikkhu Bhodhijnana (ed.). (2019). *Sangha Karya Bidhi*. 5th ed. Dilharsha Tuladhara. Lalitpur, p. 5

15 Bhikkhu Bhodhijnana (ed.). (2019). *Sangha Karya Bidhi*. 5th ed. Dilharsha Tuladhara. Lalitpur, p. 144

General meetings are convened over issues of mutual interest. They observe Uposatha<sup>16</sup> bi-monthly; however, a general meeting is not always held during this event. All the monks are engaged in preaching. They conduct sermons in the viharas and the residences of laypeople. Currently, the majority choose to highlight in their sermons the shared concepts with the Newars, such as those related to moral obligations. They enhance their discussions with renowned narratives from the Jatakas and other Pali literature. During the month of Gula (August-September), daily special gatherings occur. Most attendees at these gatherings are typically women, who utilize social media and several other platforms such as television and radio for listening sermons.

Ascetic tendencies, particularly prevalent among younger monks, are encouraged alongside participation in missionary activities. Recently, there has been an increased interest in meditation, leading numerous monks to dedicate themselves to the practice of Satipatthāna (mindful or insight meditation) or Samatha (tranquility) meditation .

### ***Piṇḍapāta - Alms Around***

Sakyamuni Buddha personally announced alms as part of the Buddha's daily practice. In every Buddhist tradition, it holds the utmost significance<sup>17</sup>. Renunciates are referred to as 'Bhikkhu'<sup>18</sup> in Pali, which literally signifies one who subsists on alms. A distinctive feature of this movement is that even non-Buddhists can participate in this activity. It is a door-to-door service provided by renunciates to the communities. This is one of the most significant movements utilized by monks since the period of revival<sup>19</sup>. Because it became the primary economic resource for operating monasteries, schools, and nunneries The influence of the caste structure rendered the practice of house-to-house food solicitation challenging for the monks, a tradition rooted in Newar Buddhism. Upon accepting a Dāna from an individual of a lower caste, those of higher castes might upset about it. Consequently, numerous monasteries receive lunch invitations from laypeople, prompting the monks to attend either individually or in small groups. On other days, monks prepare their own meals or consume the food brought to them by laymen in the morning.

Earlier, pioneering monks undertook similar efforts to disseminate Theravada in Kathmandu, such as Ven. Prajnanda and Ven. Mahaprajna. In contemporary times, the majority of initiatives undertaken by monks and nuns, such as monasteries and training

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16 The monthly gathering at consecration hall (*sīmā*) on 15th day at which the monks' rules are recited and possible breaches confessed.

17 Dunda Bahdur Bajracharya (Trans.). (2011). *Jantak Vol.I*. Ashokratna Bajracharya. p. 104

18 Bhikkhati'ti Bhikkhu.

19 Tuladhara, T. R. (1975). *Sanghanayaka Prajnananda Mahasthavira ya Jiwani* [R. B. Bandhya, Author].



centers, are sustained economically through these endeavors. The cultural context of Nepal is significantly influenced by its traditional Buddhist and Hindu communities. In contrast to other Theravada nations, the Nepalese tend to contribute raw rice or monetary donations, largely influenced by the caste system. In various Buddhist countries, it is customary to offer prepared meals as a form of donation. According to Vinaya, a kitchen is not a requisite in a monastery<sup>20</sup>. Currently, it is practiced only on special occasions, which raises significant concerns among all relevant communities.

### ***Saṃskāra - Rituals Adoption***

The monks are fine with taking part in ceremonies that have their roots in Mahayana. But when non-religious people ask them to, they do a Paritta Chanting ceremony<sup>21</sup>. On special occasions, like as birthdays, weddings, or at times of illness or death, they recite the appropriate Suttas. Along with rituals like the Annaprāsana<sup>22</sup>, they carry out the rite. The laity's influence is obvious not only in their participation in administration and publishing but also in their requests and impact on many religious advancements. A Buddhist wedding ceremony was established a few years ago. The Theravada tradition has inherited the customary Newar practice of temporarily ordaining youngsters as monks. Boys are ordained through the pabbajja ('going forth') ritual, after which the young novices reside in the monastery briefly before returning to lay life. Girls too become Nun or Rishini for brief time.<sup>23</sup> Adults may also obtain the pabbajja or higher ordination for a limited duration, ranging from a few days to a complete three months during the rain-retreat, residing in a Vihara as a nun or novice.

Most individuals visiting the Theravada institutions are Newars. They participate in the meetings and religious services, and on specific occasions, they appear to favor the monks over the Vajracarya, particularly during the *Pañcadāna* ceremony, which organizes alms around the program. Initially, this led to a negative perception among certain Vajracharyas regarding the Theravada monks, given that some of them rely economically on their roles as priests. The opposition, however, lessened as it became clear that many Newars persisted in depending on them for their ritual services, which the Theravada refused to provide. Their interactions with other Buddhists and the Tibetans appear largely to rely on personal connections and are limited to instances of mutual interest. The lack of familiarity with this

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20 Jnanpurnika, B. (Trans.). (1988). *Ubhayapattimokkha*. Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust

21 Lit. 'protection'. At the ceremony Canonical texts are recited, which are considered as possessing protective properties; see also E. Waldschmidt, Das Paritta. (1967). in: Von Ceylon bis Turfan, Gottingen pp.465-478

22 'The Hindu ritual (Samskara) at which a child receives its first mouthful of rice.

23 Amita dhakhwa. (2011). *Antarastriya Bhavana Kendra ko Gatibidhi*, In Silver Jubilee Souvenir of IBMC. Kathmandu. p. 65



method of integrating interests appears to contribute to the Federation's currently subordinate position.

The impact of Theravada on Hindus in Nepal has been relatively constrained. Occasionally, a Hindu family may extend an invitation to a monk, or a group of Hindus might participate in a sermon. In contemporary times, there is a growing interest among Hindus in the teachings of Buddhism, with many perceiving it as an integral aspect of their own religious framework. There seems to be a notable curiosity among the younger Hindus; however, they typically do not perceive a compelling need to convert to Buddhism. This is largely due to the adaptability of their beliefs, which allows for the seamless integration of Buddhist concepts within a Hindu context. This could also serve as a significant rationale for why Theravada Buddhists are not perceived as contravening Nepalese law, which prohibits conversions to religions outside of one's ancestral beliefs.

### ***Dhamma Desanā - Dharma Discourses***

Individuals with a profound interest in Buddhism, seeking to engage beyond mere listening to sermons, receive personalized guidance within the monasteries. Recently, numerous study groups focused on Buddhism have emerged. The Young Men's Buddhist Association in Patan has been engaged in this endeavor, establishing libraries, Pariyatti centers, a Youth committee, and Dayak Samitee, among other initiatives. The Dharmakirti Bauddha Adhyayana Gosthi, guided by the late Ven. Ashvaghosa and orchestrated by the nuns of the Dharmakirti Vihara, along with the Buddhist Youth Group and others, convenes in Kathmandu<sup>24</sup>. In Bhaktapur, Banepa, Dhulikhel, and other areas beyond the Kathmandu Valley, a comparable collective is present. In addition to their instructional roles within educational institutions, the monks and nuns provide daily religious education to young children, while offering weekly sessions for high school students and adults. They provide guidance in meditation and engage in educating adults in literacy, as well as various skills such as cooking, handicrafts, painting, and more<sup>25</sup>. Instruction on health and the Pali language is available for those among the laity who seek knowledge. These educational endeavors garner significant interest among the general populace, often resulting in substantial attendance.

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24 Levine. (2005). p. 76

25 Anagarika Madhavi. (2022). *Mero Atmakatha*. Sunanadaram Vihar p. 19

## **Pariyatti - The Buddhist Education**

Initially, one can observe two distinct forms of the Buddhist education system in Nepal: The Monastic and the Academic. In the context of monastic education, it is referred to as Pariyatti. It was founded in 1962. Founded by Ven. Buddhaghosha, with the assistance of Anagarika Sushila and Dharmaratna Shakya<sup>26</sup>. This represents a fundamental aspect of education that significantly contributed to the establishment of Theravada within Nepalese society. Currently, a significant number of devotees, committee members of the Buddhist association, as well as monks and nuns, are influenced by Pariyatti in various ways. Currently, approximately 4,500 students participate in the Pariyatti examination each year, hailing from various regions across Nepal and even from abroad. Indian Buddhists are similarly motivated, leading them to translate Pariyatti course books into Hindi and initiate classes in a manner akin to that observed in Nepal<sup>27</sup>. Approximately 30 districts from 20 educational institutions, along with 100 local Viharas and several Gumbas, participate in regular Pariyatti education<sup>28</sup>. Pariyatti education has been enhanced and motivated to many with an agreement by allowing to do the Masters' degree course at Lumbini Buddhist University for those who have completed the Pariyatti education.

Regarding academic education, there are government schools, colleges, and universities. The government acknowledged academic education; Theravada endeavored to conform to its standards. The Buddhist institutions established by Ven. Amritananda were appropriated by the government in 1971. The Anandakuti Vidyapeeth was established by Ven. Amrtananda in 1952, initially within the monastery with four students, and subsequently in their own premises near the monastery at Svayambhu<sup>29</sup>. The Buddhist components in the school's operations are limited to the morning service, visits to the vihara on full moon days, and religious instruction provided by the three monks employed at the institution. During the annual Vesak celebrations, a unique program for the students is organized, featuring a parade. Relations with Sri Lanka remain robust. Monks from Sri Lanka, as well as from other nations, frequently deliver talks. A kindergarten, Siddhartha Sisu Niketan, was established on the premises of the Buddha Vihara by the Venerable Sumangala, who served as its head. The school received assistance from Sumangala's friends in the United States and Japan, who sent toys and educational equipment.

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26 Nepal Baudha Pariyatti Shiksha Progress Report (1988), On the occasion of Silver Jubilee. p. 51.

27 <http://nbps.org.np/StudentReqView>. Retrieved: 1-25-2025.

28 Bhikshu Bodhijnana (ed.). (2024). *Priyatti Bulletin*. Nepal Baudha Pariyatti Shiksha. p. 17

29 Holmes Welch. (1963). Asian Buddhist and China, In *Far Eastern Review*, 40, 18; Bechert, O.C. 160

In Patan, Anagarika Madhavi founded the Yasodhara School, which focuses on Theravada education and prayer practices. Students of this school, also received Buddhist education (Pariyatti). It is now under government control and is gaining strength<sup>30</sup>. The government's 'education for all' program has facilitated the establishment of official Buddhist schools. Through The inaugural Buddhist institution exclusively permitting the education of novices and nuns is Vishwa Shanti Baudha Shikshyalaya, established by Ven. Jnanajpurnika . It resembles a boarding school with a Theravada training center 25 years of continued existence. The Ehipassiko School, located in Kisipidi (Kipulcha) serves as a novice training center and was established in 2018, similar to its predecessor.

Several universities have also initiated programs in Buddhist studies. The initial institution is Tribhuvan University, which initiated a postgraduate program in Buddhist studies, subsequently expanding to include master's and doctoral degrees as well<sup>31</sup>. A separate university dedicated to Buddhist teachings was established in 2012 in Lumbini, where a master's degree program in Theravada Buddhism was initiated. A considerable number of students are pursuing PhDs in Theravada studies as well<sup>32</sup>.

### **Vipassana - The Mindfulness**

One of the most effective movements among the public is meditation, a Buddhist mindfulness practice based on Pali literature. Vipassana, which literally translates as insight wisdom, is typically made accessible to the public by Theravada. The teachings of monks and nuns emphasize the practice of meditation and the attainment of Bhavanamaya Prajna. The fascination of Westerners with meditation has led to the establishment of a study program for American students and those seeking an introduction to Satipatthana meditation<sup>33</sup> at Gana Mahavihara, under the supervision of the Venerable Sumangala. He also conducts meditation classes for Nepalese individuals and frequently invites monks from overseas to provide lectures. A Vipassana Bhavana meditation program has been run since 1975. Meditation centers are proliferating around the country.

During the initial stages of the revival of Theravada, monasteries in Nepal typically adhere to a consistent routine that includes the recitation of sutta, the observance of precepts, general practices, meditation, discourses, and the sharing of merits. Practitioners began to recognize the importance of meditation. They sourced meditation instructors from Burma

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30 Madhavi. (2022). p. 25

31 <https://cdbs.tu.edu.np/> Retrived: 1-25-2025.

32 <https://lbu.edu.np/faculty-of-buddhist-studies/> Retrived: 1-25-2025.

33 Satipatthana-meditation see *Digha Nikaya*, II, 290 ff.; *Majjhima Nikaya*, I, 55 ff.; Nyanaponika, *Geiststraining durch Achtsamkeit*, Konstanz 1970, Bhikkhu Sumangala, *Buddhist Meditation*, Lalitpur, 1974.

(Myanmar), including Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw , Panditaviwamsa, and Satyanarayan Goenka, who hails from India.

Subsequently, they founded meditation centers throughout Nepal. Currently, there are two predominant types of meditation institutes favored by the Nepalese: Mahasi and Goenka. Mahasi meditation is predominantly favored by Newar practitioners, although Goenka's teachings are widely embraced across other castes. Within the Mahasi meditation tradition, there exist three meditation centers, but the Goenka meditation tradition encompasses around twenty meditation centers.

### ***Sewā Karma* - Result Oriented Projects**

The Nepalese Theravada frequently emphasizes the significance of practical activity of movements in the dissemination of Buddhism. Most initiatives in this regard appear to be predominantly individual, but they align with the overarching principles of the business. It appears that the majority—if not all—of the actions stem from the dedicated enthusiasm of individuals, and that without their motivation, the movement would struggle to progress. Currently, some highly engaged monks and nuns are present, and their efforts have fostered growing confidence among Buddhists in Nepal. Their endeavors have led to a growing quantity of publications, connections with foreign nations, the creation of modest Buddhist libraries and educational facilities, the enhancement of health services, and the construction and restoration of monasteries. The monks and nuns hold a confidential role in their interactions with the laity. They frequently provide counsel on familial issues and visit laypersons in their residences.

#### **i. Health Camps**

A modest health clinic has been established in several Theravada monasteries to provide complimentary services. On Vaisakha Full Moon Day, the clinic dispatched a medical team for outpatients. On the same day, the nuns of Dharmakirti Vihara visited various hospitals to attend to patients and give meals<sup>34</sup>. By 1950, health services had been prominently integrated into the activity agenda of the Dharmodaya Sabha. Currently, numerous monasteries and organizations have enlisted the services of a medical practitioner and a nurse to offer free medical aid weekly at their facilities.

#### **ii. Buddhist Pilgrims**

For laypersons seeking to undertake a pilgrimage to Buddhist places in Nepal and India, the Theravādins organize excursions, typically accompanied by a monk as a

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<sup>34</sup> Levine. (2005). p. 90

guide<sup>35</sup>. The Venerable Sumangala undertook five pilgrimages to India, as well as to Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, and Malaysia. The practice of international visitation has been institutionalized in the majority of Theravada monasteries.

### **Gyanamala - Buddhist Hymns**

Gyanmala (Buddhist devotional songs), or the Knowledge Thread, represents a distinctive and esteemed movement within Nepal. The practice of singing hymns constitutes a significant ritual within Newar cultures. Adherents of Hinduism and Vajrayana are well-acquainted with this cultural milieu. It is believed that the articulation of knowledge, the invocation of divine words, and the naming of deities through one's own speech constitute a form of virtuous action. In fact, Theravada monks and nuns are prohibited from participating in singing or any form of musical performance. In the context of Nepal, it appears that monks play a significant role in the establishment of Gyanmala, particularly with the initial publication of a collection of Buddhist hymns by Sanghnayaka Prajnananda. Mahaprajna, Subodhananada, Bibekananda, Sudarshan, and others<sup>36</sup>.

The Swayambhu Gyanmala Bhajan Organization has been performing and vocalizing religious hymns each morning at Svayambhu for more than five decades and is now orchestrating a series of pilgrimages. Most Theravada Viharas possess their own teams dedicated to hymns, which are overseen by the Svayabhu Gyanamala Bhajan Organization. Following the establishment of Theravada monasteries throughout the Kathmandu Valley, one aspect that consistently drew devotees to these monasteries was Gyanmala. Even in the absence of monks or nuns, the devotees themselves established the Gyanmala Bhajan Khala (A team of Buddhist devotional singing) and occasionally, accompanied by musical instruments, began to sing Buddhist hymns, adhering to the guidance provided by the Gyanmala collection books and their associated singing styles from Swayambhu Bhajana Khala.

### **Kriti - Buddhist Literatures**

The Theravada persists in augmenting the corpus of publications in Newari and Nepali, a pursuit they regard as critically significant given the scarcity of literature on Buddhism in these languages<sup>37</sup>. A considerable number of monks and laypersons consistently disseminate sermons or booklets that address specific topics, typically within the realm of ethics. Furthermore, the translations of Canonical texts by the esteemed Venerable Amritananda are persistently being published. Almost all the publications engage

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35 Levine. (2005). p. 91

36 David N. Gellner. (2004). *"Three Buddhist Hymns from nepal"*, Pasa Puchan Guthi (UK)'s souvenir Journal.

37 Bhikshu Bodhiijnana. (2016). *Buddhist Literature in Nepal*. Tribhuvan University, PGD in Buddhist Studies Dissertation. p. 44

with various facets of Buddhist teachings, the Canonical texts, or ethical considerations, or they present enlightening narratives. Of paramount significance is the endeavor of the Buddhist devotee and scholar Dunda Bahadur Bajarcharya, who undertook the translation of the Tipitaka canon from Pali into both Nepal Bhasa and Nepali. His missionary endeavors continue to progress towards completion.

Magazines are infrequently available and their publication occurs in an irregular manner. The cessation of Dharmodaya's publication occurred in 1959. Currently, Dharmakirti is presented by the Dharmakirti Vihara Monthly, while Ananda Bhumi is disseminated by Anandakuti Vihar and it's available online too<sup>38</sup>. The journal Lumbini, which commenced publication in 1970, is released with notable irregularity. In a contemporary context, the integration of new technology significantly influences literature. A collective of young Buddhist monks and nuns, supported by devoted practitioners, has established Dhamma Digital to publish a comprehensive array of Theravada Buddhist texts.

### **Nirmāṇa - Architecture**

There is ongoing effort in the restoration or expansion of old monasteries, as well as the construction of new ones. To yet, the architecture of Theravada structures has primarily relied on the existing topography and its functionality for the inhabitants and designated activities. The typical rural monastery has a modest shrine chamber, a monk's cell, and maybe a separate washroom. The monasteries within urban areas frequently lack significant distinction from the adjacent residences or structures. The design of Anandakuti Vihara is distinctive, as it was originally conceived as a Sinhalese monastery, featuring a separate shrine room, preaching hall, monastery, Stupa, and Bodhi tree. However, following the earthquake, it has been designed in accordance with Newari culture<sup>39</sup>. Most Theravada structures lack distinctive features, except from a sign above the entrance and sometimes a tiny stupa within the premises or atop the roof. There appears to be a propensity to employ traditional Nepalese architecture in modern constructions, using woodcarvings and curving roofs, as demonstrated by the recent vihara at Lumbini and similar structures.

### **Conclusion**

The inquiry that arises is: Is there a potential for a distinctly Nepalese evolution of Theravada Buddhism? Historically, it is evident that Theravada possesses a notable adaptability, allowing it to align with the prevailing religious frameworks in South-East Asian nations. Given that Nepalese Theravada remains in a nascent phase of its historical

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38 <https://www.anandabhoomi.com/> Retrived: 1-25-2025

39 <http://anandakutivihar.com.np/> Retrieved: 1-25-2025

development, it appears inappropriate to draw comparisons between the Nepalese context and that of Theravada nations in South and Southeast Asia. We can observe certain distinctions and commonalities, as well as the nascent stages of what could potentially evolve into a characteristic feature of Nepal. The existence of the monks and their diverse undertakings closely mirrors the conventional practices of other Theravada communities. However, there exists a propensity to embrace established Newar traditions, such as temporary ordination, solely when they do not contradict Theravada principles. When viewed through the lens of Mahayana, particularly regarding certain rituals, they are dismissed. Conversely, one might assert that the recent fascination with Newar culture and literature is significantly connected to the achievements of the Theravada mission within the Newar community. The international relations of the monks have simultaneously inhibited an overly intimate connection with any single community, fostering a receptive stance towards all other religions present within the nation.

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